

# AN COSANTÓIR

Naval Service  
75<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary



[STRENGTHEN THE NATION]

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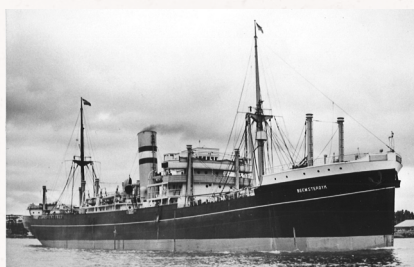


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## FRONT COVER

Irish Navy Front Covers  
from previous An Cosantóir  
magazines

# EDITORIAL

**Hello, and welcome to our fourth issue of 2021, our 81st volume of the An Cosantóir magazine. This issue marks a very special year in Naval Service history, with its 75th Anniversary occurring in September of this year.**

This issue we have a wide range of naval content. Starting off with forewords from Uachtarán na hÉireann Micheal D. Higgins, the Minister for Defence Simon Coveney TD, the Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM, the Secretary General Department of Defence Jacqui McCrum, the Flag Officer Commanding Naval Service Commodore Michael Malone and also forewords from PDFORRA & RACO.

On Parade features recent and past albums from the Naval Service which feature on our Defence Forces Flickr page.

Our first feature, along with many others like it, has an interview with Cdr Roberta O'Brien; also featuring through the magazine are interviews with Lt Cdr Mike Brunicardi on his life and career in the Irish Navy. An interview with PO Aileen Hanna, giving us an insight into life as a naval chef on pages 26-27. Concluding the interviews on pages 38-39 is the first female Irish Naval diver Lt Tahlia Britton.

Without spoiling too much I will leave it to you, the reader, to discover this special edition for yourself. Just to say that through this issue we have many articles ranging from history to present day operations of the Irish Naval

Service, along with some of our regular features, like our Internal Comms feature, Dirty Boots, Heapspace and Timing and our Book Reviews.

I will say this: it is an honour and a pleasure to be the Editor of An Cosantóir magazine for this 75th Irish Naval Service Special Edition. It could not have happened without the tireless work of our Naval Service Ambassador SCPO/ERA Ruairí de Barra, without whom it would have been a much smaller special edition, thank you Ruairí.

**«The Navy is much more than a job; much more than service to country. It is a way of life. It gets in your blood.»**

— Albert F Pratt



**Sgt Karl Byrne – (Stand-in) Editor.**

## Foreword from SCPO/ERA Ruairí de Barra

A dhaoine uaisle agus a chairde,

It is a great privilege to be part of the team which has delivered this special edition of An Cosantóir to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Naval Service. It is entirely fitting that the exemplary service rendered by the sailors of today and yesterday, is celebrated. It is also fitting that we should pause to remember those who are no longer with us, and their families. Sailors of each generation build friendships that last a lifetime and the loss of a shipmate who has shared the adventures and the hardships with us is never easy, no matter the passing of the years. Our commitment to the service would not be possible without the shared sacrifice of our own families; those who keep hearth and home together, when we sail out to do our work, far from sight over the horizon. This celebration is one for the entire naval community; sailors, families, veterans and friends. We are living through extraordinarily difficult times. Through it all sailors and their ships have sailed, to carry out their vital work

on behalf of the state. I have always been proud to be counted amongst these extraordinary citizens in uniform and I must thank everyone in service who has contributed to this publication. I must also personally thank all the contributors who have shared their work with this commemorative edition. The common bond between the many articles, which I hope all readers shall enjoy, is the obvious affection for our navy, its sailors, its ships and its rich history. The last 75 years have charted a course which guides us today and has prepared us to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Whatever the future holds, the navy will be here, bows turned towards the sea, ready to continue in the commitment to their promise.



**SCPO/ERA Ruairí de Barra. An Cosantóir Naval Service Ambassador.**



# PRESIDENT MICHAEL D HIGGINS

## 75TH ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE TO THE IRISH NAVAL SERVICE

The connection between Ireland and the seas that surround us is ancient as it is fundamental to our understanding of ourselves. Our seas have played an integral and formative role in our social, cultural and economic history. Through our existence at Europe's periphery, our proximity to water has informed that consciousness present in island people of a particular form of vulnerability to the forces of nature that surround us. It was ever-present as we contemplated and interacted with the world beyond landfall and sought to fashion a sustainable future from that great natural benefactor that constitutes our marine environment. Dependent on the sea, as we have been for millennia, for trade and connection with close and distant neighbours, it has been of the utmost importance that vital sea-lanes be safeguarded.

Our seas are central to the story of our people. With the life-giving bounty that the ocean has provided, and the possibilities that it presented to our people, the seas are also woven tightly into the joy, achievement, tragedy and loss of our past. While it was from across the sea that all of our ancestors arrived, changing and enriching our societies as they came, not everyone conveyed to our shores by sea had benevolent intent or the welfare of the Irish people at heart. In the 19th century, the ocean was synonymous with forced emigration on Famine ships, escaping An Gorta Mór of the 1840s, with so many perishing en route to North America. In the 20th century, many more crossed the Irish Sea in pursuit of opportunity that not available at home. In recent times, the relationship thankfully has become more positive.

The Treaty of 1922, in which 26 Counties gained their independence, did not however grant control of the seas around our coastline to the newly independent state. It would be 1938 before Great Britain surrendered the Treaty Ports and control of Irish waters.

In May 1939, the Irish government ordered two motor torpedo boats from Britain which were to become Ireland's first naval vessels. The process of raising some type of navy was greatly accelerated by the outbreak of World War II, as Ireland was required to have its own navy to uphold its neutrality. By 1941, the Marine Service consisted of 10 craft and approximately 300 personnel. Their tasks during the war included mine laying, regulation of merchant ships, the upkeep of navigational aids and fishery protection. In September 1946, the Irish Government decided that the Marine Service should become a permanent component of the Defence Forces. Thus was born the modern-day Irish Naval Service.

In line with our national and international commitments, the Navy protects Ireland's interests through its responsibility to defend territorial seas, to conduct maritime surveillance, and to tackle illegal fishing, smuggling, illegal dumping and pollution. Remarkably, the Naval Service is responsible for patrolling an area more than ten times the size of Ireland's landmass.

Looking back, it was during the 1970s and 1980s that the Naval Service first received significant investment, including the purchase of many of the ships it still operates today. By 1996 when the Naval Service celebrated its 50th Anniversary, it had progressed from being a small unit to a rapidly growing organisation, undertaking its duties with distinction. Fishery protection played an important role in the Service's day-to-day operations, as demonstrated through the numerous detentions made annually for infringements found during boarding operations. It was also during this period that the Service became involved in combating a new threat – drug smuggling. It is still



involved, on a constant basis, in patrolling our waters and preventing illegal drugs from reaching Irish shores. During the 1990s, the Service carried out Resupply Missions to Lebanon, Cyprus and the former Yugoslavia, ensuring that the needs of Irish peacekeepers were met.

Developments ashore continued apace with the construction of the National Maritime College of Ireland, a partnership between the Departments of Defence and Education and Munster Technology University. This state-of-the-art facility opened for its inaugural students in 2004, representing a significant advance in the training environment for Naval Service personnel.

The deployment of Irish Naval vessels to the Mediterranean to engage in humanitarian search-and-rescue tasks, as part of Operation Pontus from 2015 to 2017, was an important element in Ireland's response to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean. Overall, 17,509 migrants were rescued under Operation Pontus in a bilateral arrangement with the Italian authorities. This humanitarian response is an example of the very best of our values as a society.

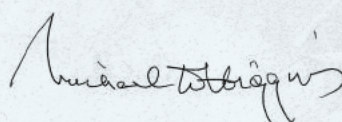
I also wish to commend the Naval Service's role in 2017 and 2018 in Operation Sophia, the EU Naval Mission which specifically sought to counter human trafficking and smuggling in the Mediterranean by taking action against criminal networks and disrupting the people smugglers' modus operandi.

The Naval Service has a tradition of excellence, one of which we all can be proud. The commitment and loyalty of the Navy's personnel has provided ballast for significant operations over the years – from search-and-rescue operations, such as the 1985 Air India tragedy, to numerous drug interdictions, to humanitarian operations, and, most recently, the role played in the COVID-19 pandemic, assisting the HSE by deploying vessels and operating testing sites in Dublin, Cork and Galway.

The Naval Service is part of our DNA, a great success story in the State's history. As part of Óglaigh na hÉireann, its existence is fundamental to the safeguarding of our State and our people. With this emphasis on defence, it is different from any other force established for aggressive purpose or for aggrandisement of interests. I am very proud of its work participating in multinational peace, crisis management and humanitarian relief operations in support of the United Nations, including regional security missions authorised by the UN.

Over a hundred years ago, Eoin MacNeill sought three qualities from those who had volunteered to serve in Óglaigh na hÉireann: courage, vigilance and discipline. These are the same attributes that are embodied in the oath taken by those who volunteer to serve in the Naval Service and wider Defence Forces. Gabhaim buíochas lena pearsanra go léir as ucht a gcuid oibre dian agus a dúthracht.

Mar Uachtarán na hÉireann agus Ardcheannasaí na Fórsaí Cosanta, ba mhaith liom comhghairdeas a dhéanamh leis an tSeirbhís Chabhlaigh, atá ag ceiliúradh 75ú bliain ar an uisce. Molaim sibh agus traoslaím leis na fir agus mná ar fad a thug seirbhís sa chabhlaigh ar son a dtír thar na blianta fada sin.



**Michael D. Higgins**  
Uachtarán na hÉireann



# MINISTER FOR DEFENCE SIMON COVENY

## 75TH ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE TO THE IRISH NAVAL SERVICE

To the men and women of our Naval Service, A Chairde,  
As I noted at the end of last year, I was proud to return as Minister for Defence in 2020. That pride is swelled by the opportunity afforded me to congratulate you and to celebrate with you on your 75th Anniversary. Being a Corkonian enhances my pleasure in celebrating this milestone and your achievements even more! The people of Cork and of Ireland applaud you on your Diamond Jubilee!

Your dedication to service, to maritime security, to the marine environment and to each other is evident in the professionalism and steadfastness with which you have undertaken your roles assigned by Government over these last 75 years. Key moments in the history of the Naval Service include the establishment of the Service in 1946, the extension of Ireland's Economic Exclusion Zone from 12 to 200 nautical miles in 1976, the visit of LÉ Niamh to Asia in 2002 and more recently during the last decade your considerable contribution to Operations PONTUS and SOPHIA in the Mediterranean.

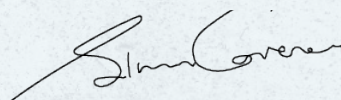
Beginning with an original three corvettes, LÉ Maev, LÉ Macha and LÉ Cliona in 1946/47 and moving to the current flotilla of modern class today, the next 75 years and beyond should be considered with an optimistic view. I was very fortunate and very proud as Minister for Defence during my previous tenure to have a role in the acquisition of new ships as part of the Naval Service ship replacement programme and I note the successes these ships have had whether on mission in the Mediterranean or carrying out fisheries protection across Ireland's entire EEZ. I also note that we recently launched the MRV project with the launch of the tender competition for the provision of external Marine Advisor services to support this



complex and important project. This is a hugely significant and positive step to take and it is fitting it happens in this your 75th year.

As the State's principal seagoing agency with a general responsibility to meet contingent and actual maritime defence requirements you are tasked with a variety of defence and other roles, roles which you fulfil to the highest standard. I'm sure the various agencies and groups you cooperate with, such as the Irish Coast Guard and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, among others, would join me in thanking you for your ongoing service and utility to the nation and her people. Today, your role at the national level cannot be understated and looking forward, your potential should not be underestimated.

Comhghairdeas agus go raibh an ghaoth go brách ag do chúl.



**Simon Coveney TD**  
Minister for Defence



# CHIEF OF STAFF VICE ADMIRAL MARK MELLETT DSM

## 75TH ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE TO THE IRISH NAVAL SERVICE

As Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, I am delighted to contribute to this Naval Service 75th Anniversary Edition of An Cosantóir. Throughout the history of the State, the members of Óglaigh na hÉireann have been the people of Ireland, citizens in uniform, soldiers, sailors and aviators. In 1946 following the evolution of the Marine Coast Watching Service the Naval Service was formed. Since then, the women and men of the Naval Service have served their country at home, and abroad, on land and at sea. Most of this service has been in what are statistically the roughest seas in the world.

Our Naval Service is a key component of Ireland's security architecture and part of the bedrock that underpins our sovereignty. Sovereign rights that are not upheld are more imaginary than real. With almost one million square kilometres of sea area, Ireland has one of the largest sea to land jurisdictions in the European Union. Tasked with defence, security and government roles, as the primary seagoing agency of the State, the Naval Service has an extraordinary responsibility.

I am so proud of all who serve, have served and who support the Naval Service. Whether it be in major search and recovery operations such as the aftermath of the Betelgeuse disaster, the terrorist attack on Air India flight 187 or more recent major maritime events, the loyalty, dedication and commitment has been exemplary. It has been evident in multinational operations such as Operation PONTUS and EUNAVFOR Mediterranean and Operation SOPHIA/IRINI where the Naval Service contributed directly to the rescue of tens of thousands of adults and children.

The courage and commitment of all our personnel has been evident in major counter terrorism operations such as the interception of the MARITA ANN and the MV CLAUDIA for



arms shipments during the years of "the troubles".

The Naval Service has been successful in the ongoing battle against the importation of illegal narcotics, since the first major interception of the KETCH BRIME in 1993. More recently the interdictions of the Sailing Vessels DANCES WITH WAVES in Operation SEABIGHT and MAKAYBELLA in Operation UNITY have helped prevent nearly 1 Billion Euro of cocaine from fuelling misery on the streets of Ireland and Europe thereby protecting our citizens.

The selfless manner that the members of the Naval Service meet all challenges, head on, reflects the spirit of the generations that proceeded them and inspires the next to make a difference.

I wish to thank all members of the Naval Service, past and present for your commitment. I wish to thank also, the families that remain at home while a loved one goes to sea in service of the State. We all serve because of the sacrifice of our families and friends.

In conclusion, down through the decades our Naval Service like our Army and Air Corps have strengthened the Nation, inspiring pride and leading excellence. I look forward to the celebrations in Dublin and Cork during their 75th Anniversary.

'Vice Admiral Mark Mellett'  
with 'Chief of Staff'



# JACQUI MCCRUM, SECRETARY GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

## MESSAGE TO MEMBERS OF THE NAVAL SERVICE ON THEIR 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Dear women and men of the Naval Service,

To begin, I would like to thank all past and present members of the Naval Service for their service and to acknowledge your tremendous work in support of the national agenda over the past 75 years.

In particular, the past 18 months have been extremely challenging and the professionalism, dedication and commitment of all members of the Naval Service has been recognised at a national level in a number of fora, not least your support of the national response to Covid and your sea fisheries role during the tumultuous months when a Brexit deal was being finalised and came into effect. I know that implementing Covid protocols on our ships has been extremely tough on all of you and your families. I would like to applaud you all for your perseverance and recognise your efforts working on the front line to protect the people of Ireland – thank you.

I have lived beside the sea most of my life in Rush, North Co Dublin (apart from 16 years inland in London). So I was delighted to visit the Naval Base in Haulbowline for the first time in October 2020. The drive over the long bridge to the Island was simply wonderful and a great start to a day's work. I was hugely impressed by the warm welcome, the levels of expertise and the vast array of roles which the Naval Service are capable of providing. The security role of the Naval Service, a role that by its nature can often go unrecognised or unacknowledged, is one that I would highlight, but this role is vital to Ireland's national priorities and interests.



The versatility of a Naval Ship and her crew on patrol are displayed by the ability to adapt; from a day-to-day fishery protection role to operations such as search and rescue, diving operations, drugs interdiction as well as many more. This is a testament to the varied skills maintained by each and every one of you. Given the Covid restrictions, I wasn't able to board the Ships but I very much look forward to being able to do so in the near future.

We are facing challenges and will continue to face challenges, however with the drive, ambition and agility shown by Naval Service personnel I am sure these challenges will be met head on. The Commission on Defence Forces are currently reviewing all areas of the Defence Forces, including the Naval Service. This valuable process will assist all of us in guiding us towards the next 75 years.

As Secretary General for the Department of Defence, I am in the very privileged position to be able to congratulate the Naval Service on the outstanding progress made in your first 75 years and I very much look forward to working with you during my tenure. I hope you all enjoy these much deserved celebrations marking this important milestone in the history of both the Naval Service and the State.

**Jacqui McCrum, Secretary General, Ard Rúnaí, An Roinn  
Cosanta, Department of Defence**



# COMMODORE MICHAEL MALONE FLAG OFFICER COMMANDING NAVAL SERVICE

## 75TH ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE TO THE IRISH NAVAL SERVICE

It gives me great pleasure to be able to contribute to this special anniversary edition of An Cosantóir. This is a celebration for all of the men and women who have served since the foundation of our marine services over three quarters of a century ago.

The Marine and Coastwatching Service was born in 1939 with an aim to protect Ireland's neutrality in the midst of World War II. Based at Haulbowline, the home of the Irish Navy, the service continued until 1946 when the Marine Service transitioned to the permanent maritime component of the Defence Forces. It is this historic moment in 1946 that we celebrate seventy-five years later, which gives us a chance to reflect on the achievements of the Naval Service and of the men and women who have served with honour and pride.

It is apt that this year of celebration coincides with such a time of regeneration for the Navy. Investment in our fleet, on our island and in our resources is helping to future proof the service and prepare us for the years ahead. At this special time we can recognise the rich history that has gone before and prepare for the busy and exciting future ahead. The Naval Service is always moving forward, modernising, diversifying and becoming more relevant so as to be best suited to face the challenges of our island nation.

Sitting on the periphery of Europe, dependent on the sea for the majority of trade, it is of utmost importance that sea lines of communication are protected and safeguarded. The Navy is responsible for patrolling an area over 10 times the size of Ireland's landmass. As the principle seagoing agency of the state, the Navy meets our National and International commitments on a daily basis. Conducting Maritime Defence and Security Operations, the Navy protects Ireland's interests at and from the sea through defending the State, Maritime Interdiction Operations, Surveillance and Intelligence Gathering and fishery protection while working closely with



our National, European and International partners.

For decades the personnel of the Naval Service have put their own safety second to fulfilling these duties and protecting the State and its inhabitants. Arms shipments onboard the MV Claudia and fishing vessel Marita Ann were intercepted in operations in the 1970s and 1980s. Ships crews answered the call in difficult and arduous conditions to rescue and recover those involved in events such as the Fastnet Disaster, the Air India Disaster, the HMCS Chicoutimi and the tragic loss of Coastguard Helicopter crew Rescue 116. From 2015 until 2018, the Navy rescued over 18,000 migrants in the Mediterranean as part of Operations Pontus and Sophia. Some of the largest drug shipments into Europe were either intercepted by the crews of the Naval Service; such as on the sailing vessels Dances with Waves and Makayabella, or Naval Service intelligence has been instrumental in their interception; such as in the recent case of the fishing vessel Odyssey. Most recently, the Navy was involved in supporting the HSE as part of Operation Fortitude in tackling the COVID19 pandemic, and in providing assistance in the wake of the HSE cyber security incident. The roles the men and women of the Navy undertake are as many as they are varied.

Underpinning our achievements over the last seventy-five years has been our personnel and their families at home. I would like to take this opportunity to thank, not only those who have served in the Naval Service, but those who have supported them. The mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, family and friends who have held the fort at home, who have also sacrificed so that others could serve. This year is a celebration for all of you.

**Commodore Michael Malone Flag officer  
Commanding Naval Service**



## 75TH ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE TO THE IRISH NAVAL SERVICE from PDFORRA

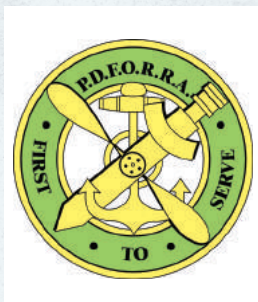
A Chaidre,

It is a great honour as Uachtaráin PDFORRA, and as a proud member of an tSeirbhís Chabhlaigh to commemorate the 75th anniversary of our Navy, and to look back with great pride on the rich, varied and sometimes tragic history of the service.

It's at times like these that we remember all those who have served, especially Leading Seaman Michael Quinn DSM who lost his life while carrying out mankind's greatest act of compassion, risking all so that others might live.

Since its formation in 1946, our Naval Service has progressed through time and technology; from the steam boilers on the corvettes, to the cutting-edge technology on today's P60 class vessels. The role of the Naval Service has also changed dramatically over its lifetime, from initially patrolling out to 12 nautical miles, to Irelands joining the European Economic Community, and the increase of Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone out to 200 nm.

The Naval Service has carried out a huge variety of roles throughout its history, including weapons and narcotics



interdiction. The 1980's witnessed the advent of UN re-supply missions. More recently we have witnessed the humanitarian missions in the Mediterranean, Operations PONTUS & SOPHIA, which filled the country with pride as members of the service brought their skill-set to the attention of the world and showed what a modern and professional Navy Ireland has. As the Naval Services history evolved so too has representation. Sailors such as our former General Secretary John Lucey (RIP) showed that through courage and leadership, collaboration between all the stake-holders in the defence community helps achieve better outcomes for all involved.

As members of the todays Naval Service, you represent the very best of Óglaigh na hÉireann and we are proud to represent you. A debt of gratitude is also owed to the families and loved ones of our members, who continue to play a vital role in seeing the Navy take its place on the world stage.

So, in finishing, I would like to congratulate and commemorate all the members of our Naval Service, past and present, who have given loyal and dedicated service to Óglaigh na hÉireann and the Irish people, and we look forward to facing the challenges that the future might bring together, united in the unique bond created by service at sea. The shared experience which turns colleagues into shipmates.

## 75TH ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE TO THE IRISH NAVAL SERVICE from RACO

RACO is privileged to be afforded the opportunity to mark the 75th anniversary of the birth of our Naval Service. We extend our warmest congratulations to all sailors, past and present. In particular to the families, without whose support this exemplary service would not be possible. We also remember all those who have passed in service.

Through the efforts of our highly professional personnel, our Naval Service consistently punches above its weight in upholding Ireland's sovereignty through the performance of regular Maritime Defence and Security Operations (MDSO). In patrolling Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the NS enforces Ireland's sovereignty. As sovereignty not upheld is more imaginary than real, this highlights the vital importance of the work our Naval Service personnel conduct.

Ireland is located in a key geostrategic location on the Northwestern edge of Europe. Our EEZ extends into the North Atlantic and is home to some of the most important trans-Atlantic trade routes, subsea cables, airline routes and some of the most plentiful fishing grounds in the EU.

The NS maintains strong links with Maritime Analysis Operations Centre - Narcotics (MAOC-N) through Naval Operations Command HQ. Using the Recognised Maritime Picture (RMP), NS assets conduct surveillance and ground truthing on a daily basis. The NS and Air Corps are regularly involved in MAOC-(N) led operations to locate, surveil and



potentially interdict Vessels of Interest (VOI). Intelligence gleaned through the efforts of the Naval Service recently facilitated an unprecedented seizure of €250m of hashish by the Spanish authorities.

The Naval Ship, as a 'floating piece of Irish soil' is also a Diplomatic tool which can be deployed across the globe to conduct defence engagement operations; as demonstrated in the run up to the achievement of the UNSC seat.

A welcome sign of Government's recognition of the need to invest in our MDSO capability, is the confirmation that it intends to proceed with purchasing a new Multi-Role Vessel (MRV). This new ship is likely to be designed to allow it the capability to carry out numerous different types of missions. It could be used to provide humanitarian aid in times of emergency in Ireland and in other countries, where conflicts or climate disaster threaten civilian populations.

Our members are committed to ensuring the Naval Service is best positioned to respond when required, be it for Maritime Interdiction Operations, Search and Rescue, Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance, ATCA, ATCP, or Fishery Protection. The current retention and recruitment crisis presents an immense leadership challenge; it can have a major impact on output delivery and MDSO. The single point of failure for any operational unit is its personnel, as without them they cannot put to sea. The imminent implementation of the Working Time Directive will bring the need to invest in our capability and human resources into sharp focus.

RACO will continue to advocate for improved conditions of service for our Naval Service members, to allow them to continue to proudly and professionally serve the State for the next 75 years and beyond.



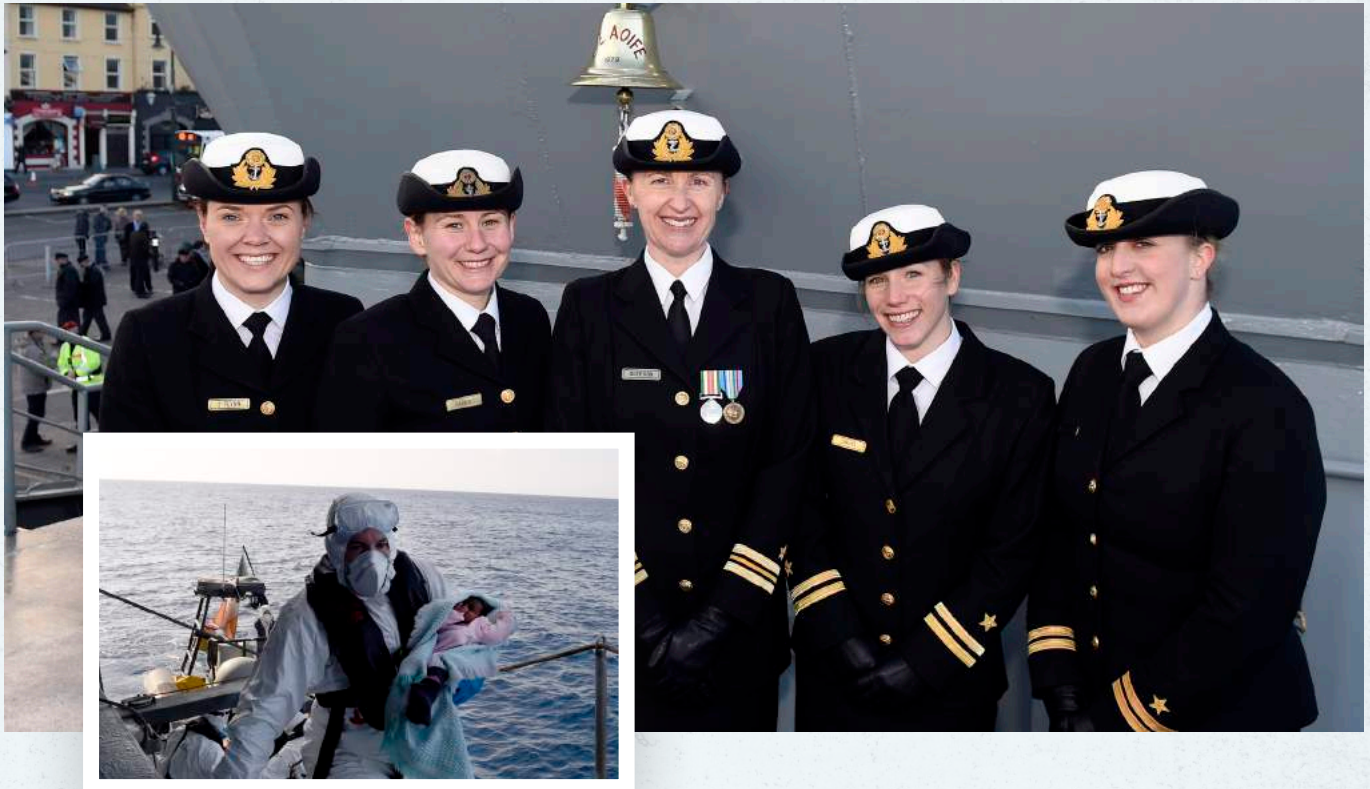
# ON PARADE

July  
August

2021

## Photos of the Irish Naval Service from the 2015 DF Flickr album 'Best of Naval Service 2015'

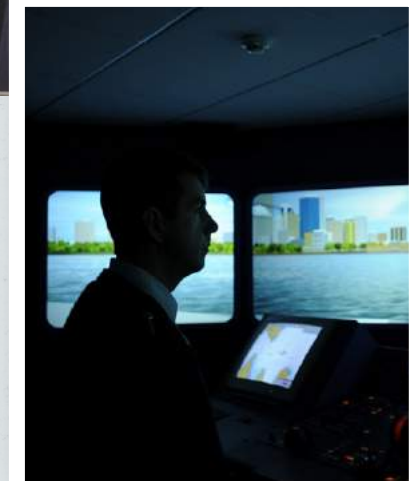
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums/72157660162561183/with/23169441314/>





## Photos of the Irish Naval Service from the 2009 DF Flickr album 'Photo Review of 2009'

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums/72157622895007027/with/4193334974/>





# Historical photos of the Irish Navy



Irish Navy Photo Section





# LT CDR STEPHEN STACK, DIVER

By Tony O'Brien    Photos provided by Lt Cdr Stephen Stack



Diving Operations with Chief Petty Officer Seaman John Fenton

If you hail from an inland county in Ireland, a maritime life may not be a career choice that springs to mind. But it didn't make a difference to Lt Cdr Stephen Stack who is now Officer in Charge, Naval Service Diving Section.

Originally from just outside Portlaoise, Stephen and his family (including Mam and Dad Philomena and Eamonn) had no seafaring links. "Coming from an inland county, the Navy wasn't exactly on my horizon when I was at school," he recalls. Then one year when he was in 5th year there was a flyer for place on the Naval Sail Training vessel, the Asgard II. "My brother Tadhg went on a trip on the Asgard; there was an age limited of 16 so I had to wait a year, but I got on the following year and it opened my eyes to maritime life".

He signed up when he was 17, joining the Naval Service as a Cadet in 2004, then was commissioned in 2006. He studied in the National Maritime College for a degree in Nautical Science. Stephen qualified as a Naval Watchkeeper in the Operations Branch in 2010 before being posted as Gunnery Officer on board the LE EITHNE.

As to his future specialisation, Stephen says: "I didn't know anything about diving when I joined. I didn't even know they had a Diving Section. But over the years, interacting with divers and seeing the range of operations they were involved in, piqued my interest." This led him to undertaking the Naval Diving Course in 2014. "The diving course is physically and mentally tough: there is a 70 per cent failure rate. It's 15 weeks long but everything we were learning was important. You could be working under fairly claustrophobic conditions and in very, very cold weather. The course is run from

January to May in order that the trainee divers experience the winter weather conditions," he explained. But as with all such courses, Stephen admits, it's only afterwards looking back on it you realise how rewarding they were.

There was a further spell at sea on the LE EITHNE as Navigation Officer before being sent to Canada for 12 months on the Minewarfare

and Clearance Diving Officer's Course in 2016. "It was a brilliant experience and I really learned a lot," said Stephen adding: "It was very intense, physically and mentally demanding. But it was an invaluable experience." All aspects of diving – SCUBA, Re Compression Chambers (RCCs), Mixed Gas Diving systems, Explosive Ordnances Disposal (EOD) etc – were covered. "It was fantastic from the point of view of what you were learning, but it also gave a chance of training with people from other Navies and being able to bring that experience back to Ireland and our Diving Section."

That experience has been put to good use over the years. Stephen has been involved in a number of Search and Recovery operations. The biggest one was in January 2020 when he co-ordinated the recovery operation for a missing fisherman onboard the fishing vessel, the "ALIZE", which sank off Kilmore Quay, County Wexford. "Unfortunately, often by the time we are brought in it is a Search & Recovery operation. But what gives you a sense of achievement is being able to bring a loved one back to the family. As you know, that is very important to Irish people, to bring closure to a tragic situation," he recalls.

The Diving Section is the primary diving team in Ireland. It is a fully operational unit of the Naval Service and provides assistance to An Garda Síochána and the Irish Coast Guard when requested. Stephen recalls that their first Irish Naval Diver was Commodore Joe Deasy (who passed away recently) in 1964 when he was a Naval Lieutenant. He had to train with the Royal Navy in the UK, something that was happening up to the early 1980s, before the Service developed its own course.



Promotion from Lieutenant to Lieutenant Commander



Jumping from a SEAKING Helicopter with the Royal Canadian Navy



Graduating as a Naval Diver in 2014

The Section has an establishment of 27 but, as with all areas of the Naval Service, they could do with more recruits. Stephen is hopeful that the Commission on the Defence Forces will bring good news with a recommendation for improvements. His recent promotion to Lt Cdr was a great personal achievement for Stephen.

Looking to the short-term future, he is hoping to stay on with the Diving Section but would ultimately like to go back out to sea as a Ship's Captain. Meanwhile, he is enjoying his work with the Diving Section and a happy home life in Ballinacollig, Co Cork, with wife Aisling and five-month-old daughter Peigí.





# CDR ROBERTA O'BRIEN

By Tony O'Brien

Photos provided by Cdr Roberta O'Brien

With a husband in the Army and her own role as a Naval Commander taking her away frequently, Cdr Roberta O'Brien thought a posting to Brussels would allow the couple and their three young children to be together as a family again.

"My husband Peadar – who is a Lt Col in the Army – is on the military staff in Brussels so I looked for a job where we could all be together. He was away a lot with his job and I was sometimes away too, so this was a great opportunity for us", Roberta recalls. She goes on: "I was to take up a post a Voluntary National Contributor in NATO HQ in Brussels but it fell through. So, I am currently on parental leave here in Brussels doing things like home schooling with our children, Saoirse (8) and twins Aishling and Antoine (6)."

But typical of this dedicated Naval Officer, she continues to study for a Certificate in General Data Protection in Carlow IT while in the Belgian capital and remains hopeful that "something will come up." In the meantime, Roberta can look back on a very successful, groundbreaking 26 years' service with the Navy. She and Lt Cdr Orlaith Gallagher were the first women to join the Naval Service back in 1994.

"I joined straight after school," she recalls, "I applied for a Cadetship when I was just 17. I was actually so young that my parents had to sign over my guardianship to the Naval Service. This was in 1995, the Naval Service had actually opened up to women in 1994 but they couldn't find anyone. It was all so new, they originally thought about sending us to the UK for training, but they changed their minds and we were sent off to the Curragh to join other Cadets from the Army and Air Corps. Being the first women to join didn't really concern Roberta at the time. "At 17 I didn't really know myself, so I didn't think too deeply about all of that, although I realised it was a bit of a novelty to be a woman amongst so many men. I just thought I had a job to do to get through the training, I was not thinking about being a woman."

From the Glen of Aherlow in Tipperary, Roberta was sporty and

outdoorsy. She played hurling with a male team in her home area, because they didn't have a camogie team and also played Gaelic football. "When I was trying to figure what to do, I looked at PE teaching but I had heard about the Naval Service and, coincidentally, it was just after opening up to women at the time. So that helped spark my interest, especially as I wanted to combine my love of the outdoors and sports etc with a job that was a little different. When I looked closely at the Naval Service, it seemed to meet that", she recalls.

But it didn't really come as a complete surprise that Roberta would have an interest in the sea. Although she hailed from a land-locked county, her mother grew up in Haulbowline, where Roberta's grandfather had been a Warrant officer with the Navy. "So I guess there was a natural link to the sea." Even as a schoolgirl she showed an interest: "I remember on a school trip to the Port of Waterford, we went on board a merchant ship and I asked all sorts of questions. I asked what it took to become a ship's Captain and one of the things mentioned was maths - and I really enjoyed maths."



Cadets Roberta O'Brien and Orlaith Gallagher carrying out Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat (RHIB) training as Cadets in Cork Harbour back in 1996

So Roberta eventually found herself on the Cadetship course, beginning in the Curragh. "In the early days it was essentially military training, marching, weapons use etc. Luckily, we went back to Haulbowline after a while and we began what I call 'Navalised' training. Basically, they wanted us to get used to life at sea, to being sailors."

Overall the Cadetship training was tough, mentally and physically, particularly in the Curragh. "You were settling into a military lifestyle, we were all strangers in a strange place. But you got to make friends, some I still have to this day." However,

when training shifted back to Naval HQ, Roberta quickly knew that the job was for her. "Especially when we got out to sea and spent time on ships like the LE Deirdre and LE Eimear. Putting into practice what we were learning was all the confirmation I needed that I had made the right choice."



An early trip was re-supplying Irish troops in Eritrea and then on to Malta where they hosted a reception onboard promoting Ireland. This she found an additional attraction in that they were doing their day-to-day work of Defence of the State but at the same time the ship was part of Ireland and could be used to promote the country for tourism and a place to do business. At the same time, there were very practical benefits for Roberta. She got to practice the Astro Navigation which was the old system of navigating by the stars.

The recent mishap in the Suez Canal brought back another memory



Commander Roberta O'Brien's Commissioning Day 4th of Sep 1997  
Pictured left to right:- Commander Charlie O'Donnell, Ens. Roberta O'Brien, Minister of State at the Dept. of An Taoiseach Seamus Brennan, FOCNS Commodore John Kavanagh, Ens. Cian O'Mearain and Ens. Orlaith Gallagher

for her. In 2002 she was Navigator on the LE Niamh when she had to help the ship manoeuvre through the famous Canal. "It is very narrow in parts and it was quite a challenge because you had the ship's safety to consider. You had to pay attention all the time", she said. That trip took her to India, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Tokyo as part of the Asia deployment. "We were gone for three months in total", she said adding that it was a particularly exciting time for her as navigator. "We were moving over to electronic charts but I still had to do everything on paper. It was a major learning experience as I had to contact the various ports, prepare briefing packs for crew etc."

Another memorable assignment was a visit to Germany and the port city of Kiel for a gathering of Navies from all over the world. "It was another opportunity to represent Ireland. We were working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Enterprise to promote the country." Roberta was Second in Command on that occasion, which brought with it considerable responsibility and was a great personal achievement. Not quite as big, however, as when as Lt Cdr in 2008, she became the first female to take control of a ship – the LE Aisling.

Life on board as Commander provided no major issues for Roberta. She recalls: "At the start some people did not think women should be in the Navy at all, but they would have been called out by their Superiors and by their peers. By the time I took Command I would have served with a lot of the crew already at different times. They knew I had the competency and capability to do the job." She added: But like any other job or anywhere else in society you have people



Cadets Orlaith Gallagher and Roberta O'Brien pictured during RHIB training in 1996

who don't behave and we have a very good complaints system to deal with that. Overall, there has never been a real problem. Any time I had



Pictured on the LE Aisling

negative comments, a Superior officer would deal with them."

Looking back over her long years of service, Roberta still picks out the day she was commissioned in 1997 as very special. "It was a tough two years training, they put you through your paces and you're away from family etc. They are preparing you, building up your resistance but it was all worth it in the end."

Plus, of course, taking command of her own ship in 2008 was very special and something she looks back on with very fond memories; emphasising that "I had a very good crew." That memorable event saw her win the Cork Woman of the Year Award. There was also another unique occasion when she was involved in the EU's Operation Sophia involving the rescue of migrants in the Mediterranean. While her comrades from the Naval Service were there also, Roberta served in the Operational HQ onboard an Italian ship, the San Giusto. "In addition to ships and personnel, they looked for staff officers in the Operational HQ."

I wanted to get to the rank of Commander, so I knew I had to get some overseas experience. I had a HR management role in the Naval Service so I had plenty of experience of dealing with people so I volunteered. "Headquarters wasn't in a building; it was onboard a ship, so that was different! It was a lot bigger ship than I was used to in the Naval Service. There was a crew of over 200 and I was part of HQ staff dealing with five different nationalities. We were a floating HQ in the area of operation in the Med." It was, she says, a very busy,



Commander Roberta O'Brien: Presentation from Mná UCC for giving a talk on Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion- Feb. 2021

different experience but this was good in that it kept her focused for the four months she was away from family and friends. "It was demanding as we had no down time but overall it was very enjoyable."

For now Roberta is happy with her mix of family life and study in Brussels. But there's more to come for her.





## KEEPING IT ALL GOING: THE NAVAL SERVICE VESSEL MAINTENANCE FUNCTION

A deep knowledge of marine engineering is required to keep it all going

By Lt Cdr Cian O'Mearain  
Photos by NS Press Office

"Right, there's a 500 hour on No.3 generator, a 3 monthly on the main ventilation fan and a six monthly on the emergency fire pumps to do tonight". This is a common worklist for an evening at anchor on NS ships. What are these, where do they come from and why do we do them?

Apart from their roles within the action organisation of the ship and performing normal steaming watches where they operate and monitor the propulsion and auxiliary equipment these technicians of the Naval Service also conduct much of the maintenance for the ship. It is essential that this is organically part of the crew skill set, as often there is no base workshop within 400 miles or a day's steaming.

We are all familiar with the idea of getting a car service every ten or twenty thousand kilometres. It is similar for a ship, just a lot more complicated. A modern P60 class vessel has approximately 700 different types of machinery, usually with a backup, so that there are up to 1800 individual maintainable assets. Each of these has several maintenance interval patterns that vary from one manufacturer to the next. Some maintenance is based on running hours and some is calendar based. Often both must be considered, so that there are nearly 6,000 maintenance activities to schedule and keep track of, for each ship. Then there are the associated spare parts to account for. Clearly a logbook or a ledger isn't going to do the job!

So the purpose of the Naval Service Vessel Maintenance Function is to make sure that ships are reliable and available, so that they remain capable at all times. This provides the OC of the unit with confidence that their ship is in sound condition and in date for the many certifications required for safety critical items. A well-managed maintenance system doesn't just reduce the amount of time a ship is unavailable to go to sea through breakdown, but can also reduce the (often unexpected) cost of breakdowns.

So how is this organised?

The Maintenance Strategy determines what work is done by whom and when and how this is overseen to assure quality.

### Maintenance Strategy

"If it isn't broken don't fix it" is a common but misapplied phrase. Occasionally it is prudent - where equipment is cheap and not mission critical - to choose a Run To Failure (RTF) strategy. However, this should not be confused with the unexpected breakdown of important equipment. This Unscheduled Corrective Maintenance

(UCM) is to be avoided at all costs. It is useful to track when UCM occurs as it is an important indicator of where a Maintenance Strategy needs to be improved. Some outcomes of this can include upgrading a piece of equipment or designing it out entirely.

Time interval based Planned Preventive Maintenance (PPM) was developed in the 1940s, as the increased pace of industrialisation of the second world war demanded dependable machinery and to avoid UCM. Initially, this was all time or running hours based and involves periodically inspecting, often by disassembly, equipment on a fixed time interval basis. It has advantages in that it does improve reliability and it has a predictable and stable workload over a time period. It unfortunately introduces a problem where the inspection itself can be the cause of equipment failure and the Naval Service doesn't want to take equipment apart on a regular basis to find out why it is still working.

Hence the next development was a move to Condition Based Maintenance (CBM). Equipment selected for this strategy will have some monitoring gauge or test that can be performed to assess its condition and determine if an overhaul is required. A good example of this is the steering gear, which has an annual performance test and must be able to perform specified changes of position within defined maximum time limits. If it fails, it is overhauled early.

Today with the Internet of Things (IoT) equipment is often being designed for continuous monitoring. Once the leading indicator of failure (or even reduced performance) is identified, a Predictive Maintenance (PM) strategy can be used. This strategy might predict that a piece of equipment is likely to fail in ten weeks and there are opportunities to overhaul it in 2 or 8 weeks' time - leaving the owner with options to decide how to address the imminent failure.



Cylinder Head Removal on the LÉ Eithne





Each class of vessel brings its own layouts and machinery



Engine Room Artificers are all skilled tradepersons

Unfortunately this technology, once connected to the internet, also introduces opportunity for hacking of equipment controls.

For now, the Naval Service uses a combination of UCM, PPM & CBM strategies for each asset, depending on the redundancy and criticality of the equipment.

### Maintenance Periods

At a minimum, the hull and every piece of equipment on a ship is inspected once in a 5 year period. Many of these are under the water line and can only be inspected in a dry dock, so this forms the foundation of the 5 Annual maintenance cycle. Typical dry dock activities include removing and disassembling propellers, shafts, rudders, stabilisers and bow thrusters, as well as painting the underside and renewing the anti-corrosion anodes and cathodes.

Major overhauls and upgrades are saved for refit periods. Currently the NS has moved to holding 8 week refits every 2 years or so. Interestingly, these were originally annual four week periods as this was how long it took to clean out the boiler tubes on the steam powered Corvettes. A common job during a modern refit might be a complete main engine strip down and inspection or replacing a boat launching system (Davitt) or the electronic navigation suite and radars.

Annually there is now an assisted self-maintenance period (ASMP), put in place to help a ship conduct annual certifications on life rafts, anchors and the like. In between 4 week MDSO patrols, ships conduct two week long Self Maintenance Periods (SMP), they have a lower priority for base support. These patrols themselves will contain periods of time set aside for On Patrol Maintenance (OMP)

### Maintenance Levels

There are three maintenance levels in use in the Naval Service:

Level 1 is work the ship can do for itself, often on patrol or SMP.

Level 2 is work that requires a return to base and assistance from



Only in drydock can certain critical tasks be undertaken

Naval Service staffed workshops in the Naval Base or Naval Dockyard support.

Level 3 is major planned work that is conducted by the Naval Dockyard or specialist contractors.

### Maintenance Management

Located in Block 6 of the Naval Base is the Maintenance Management Unit, (MMU).

At the start of each year, this unit runs the forecasting on all the maintenance activities for the year and fits them into the available Maintenance periods allocated to each ship on the Annual Patrol Plan developed before the end of the previous year.

This unit uses the Oracle Enterprise Asset Management Strategic Application to keep track of all planned and unplanned work. This system is due to move to an updated (Release 12) version in the next few years and when fully implemented this will allow the Naval Service to better predict workload and inventory demand to ensure the sailors have the right parts, at the right time, to do the job assigned.

Some of the maintenance activities and most upgrade work can be discrete projects in their own right within a refit. Often they involve hundreds of hours labour and tens of thousands of euro in capital and inventory costs. These are managed by Planning and Inspectorate located beside MMU. This unit also manages contracting commercial service providers and superintendancy of drydocking.

As a separate project a Life Extension Project (LEP) office has been set up to managed this work on LE ROISIN and LE NIAMH.

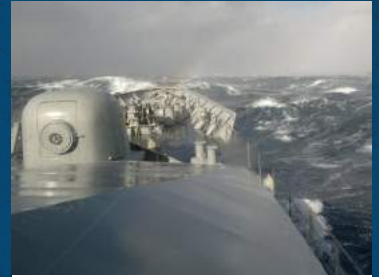
### Maintenance Execution

This brings us back to the sailor on the deck plate who does the work. A Petty Officer, Leading Hand or Able Rate will be given a Job Information Card (JIC) by their Chief Petty Officer and report back once the work is done.

The Chief Petty Officer for his part will check the EAM daily to see what work is due, record what work is done and how long it took, as well as enter the running hours for metered machinery. The Petty Officer Mechanician will write off inventory on the LMS to the same work order. Once the work is done and marked complete on the EAM and the parts allocated, the Engineering Officer on board certifies the work and closes the work order.

Each of these work orders can be rolled up into a labour and inventory cost history for each asset on board the ship, or for each system, department and even the whole ship for any time period. All of this history is monitored by MMU for deviations from the plan to identify any areas that might have implications for safety, quality or reliability on other ships.

The goal and the result is a fleet of ships that is safe, certified, reliable and capable.



Vessels need to be in top shape to handle heavy weather



# THE FIRST IRISH NAVY - THE COASTAL AND MARINE SERVICE 1923 - 1924

By Patrick McCarthy B.DC, PhD, MBA  
Photos provided by the Naval Service

ELCO Motor Launch. Here is ML 285 a sister launch to the four purchased for Ireland. (ML 1, 2, 3 and 4.)  
Photograph: [www.naval-history.net](http://www.naval-history.net)

In the summer of 1923, as the new Irish Free State emerged from the trauma of the Civil War, the naval arm of the Defence Forces - the Coastal and Marine Service - deployed nineteen, armed sea-going vessels flying the Tricolour. With headquarters at Portobello Barracks (now Cathal Brugha) and operational stations at Dun Laoghaire, Cork, Galway and Killybegs, it was adequately resourced for its role. Ten months later, all those ships - with the exception of the Muirchu - had been sold off or laid up pending disposal. This is the story of the short-lived and forgotten first naval force of independent Ireland.

In the spring of 1922, as the country appeared to be moving inexorably towards Civil War, Michael Collins was very aware of the potential of the sea as a route for the anti-treaty forces to obtain arms. He had been very much involved in the successful running of guns by Charlie McGuinness on the tugboat Frieda into Waterford Harbour on 10th November 1921. He also knew that McGuinness had run another cargo on the schooner Hannah into Helvick on 3rd April 1922. To add to his worries about the need to control the seas around Ireland, anti-treaty forces had commandeered the tugboat Warrior and had used it to pursue and capture the 700 ton cargo ship the Upnor off Ballycotton. The Upnor was under charter to the British government and was carrying arms and munitions to England as part of the British evacuation.



Major General Joe Vize.  
General Officer Commanding the Coastal and Marine Services

The coup yielded a considerable haul – 500 rifles, 33 Lewis guns, 700 pistols and a half a million rounds of ammunition. It is no wonder that Collins decided to act but what about the Anglo-Irish Treaty?

At first reading Article 6 of the Treaty precluded the establishment of an Irish navy. Article 6 stated:

Until an arrangement has been made between the British and Irish governments whereby the Irish Free State undertakes her own coastal defence, the defence of Great Britain and Ireland shall be undertaken by His Majesty's Imperial Forces. However this shall not prevent the construction or maintenance by the Government of the Irish Free State of such vessels as are necessary for the protection of the Revenue or the Fisheries.'

After the seizure of the Upnor, Collins spoke to Churchill and got agreement for the purchase of four ex-Admiralty 40 ton motor launches for coastal patrol. The sale was completed on 11th May. The launches were 110 ft long former American submarine chasers and were normally armed with depth charges, a 3" gun and a Lewis gun. The boats bought by the Irish Government were armed with the Lewis gun only. The total cost was £4,400 and the boats were designated M-L 1, M-L 2, M-L 3 and M-L 4. A Commander J.E. Blay was engaged to bring the ships to Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire).

The delivery voyage was eventful and almost





Royal Navy Motor Launches of the type purchased for the Coastal and Marine Service.  
Photograph: [www.naval-history.net](http://www.naval-history.net)

disastrous. The flotilla sailed from Southampton on 18th July. The weather was fine with a strong north westerly wind. That night M-L 2 began to take on water and at about 6am the engines stopped due to contamination of the fuel with sea water. The engines were eventually restarted but over the next twenty four hours the engines stopped repeatedly. Finally M-L 2 had to be taken in tow by M-L 4. That night the wind strengthened to gale force. By now M-L 2 was clearly sinking and her crew abandoned ship and were picked up by M-L 4 which then made for Bideford and landed the crew of M-L 2. While in Bideford, M-L 4 caught fire when fumes from a leaking petrol tank ignited, gutting the ship. Telegrams were sent to Portobello Barracks on 21st July to inform GHQ that M-L 2 had been lost at sea and M-L 4 damaged by fire. M-L 1 made it to Dublin followed by M-L 3 which had put into Ilfracombe with minor damage. Repairs and servicing were carried out and the three motor launches entered service. While the motor launches were being repaired, the government, in need of an immediate patrol presence around the coast, impressed the Helga (later Muirchu) from the



Portobello Barracks Dublin. (Now Cathal Brugha Barracks) Chosen as HQ for the fledgling service.  
Photograph: National Library of Ireland

Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and two small steam drifters, the Inisherer and the John S. Somers from the Congested Districts Board.

To command this motley collection of ships, the government appointed Major General. General Joe Vize as O/C of the new department – the Marine Investigation Department, part of the army - with headquarters in Portobello Barracks. Joe Vize must have been the obvious choice. From Wexford he had sea-going experience as a marine engineer with the Clan Line of Glasgow, was a member of the IRB, had participated in the 1916 Rising and served as IRA

Director of Purchases during the War of Independence. A letter from the marine surveyor of the Department of Economic Affairs reduced his tiny fleet. After inspecting the motor launches, he wrote: 'they are not suitable for bad weather and if they should have to patrol singly not to wander too far from the harbour. I am of the opinion, that with slight alterations and repairs the M.L. would be serviceable and seaworthy in narrow waters but are unfit for constant work in exposed positions round dangerous coasts.' This effectively confined the motor launches to harbour patrol. With only one ship immediately available, the Helga, other ships had to be procured, if the ambitious military plans of Michael Collins and his staff were to be implemented.



MURICHU. Ex HMY Helga (Shelled the GPO 1916).  
Photograph: [www.eastwallforall.ie](http://www.eastwallforall.ie)

Following the capture of the Four Courts, the anti-treaty forces regrouped in Munster and prepared to defend the 'Munster Republic' along a line from Waterford to Limerick. Limerick was captured by the government forces in July. There followed some of the most intense fighting of the Civil War near Kilmallock in the early days of August. While the Cork and Kerry anti-treaty brigades were engaged there, Michael Collins planned a series of seaborne landings along the south and southwest coasts, in the rear of the main republican forces. On 2nd August Free State troops were landed at Fenit in Kerry from the SS Lady Wicklow forcing the immediate return of the Kerry men from the fighting in Limerick. On 8th August there were a series of landings along the Cork coast: at Youghal from the Helga, at Passage West in Cork Harbour from the SS Lady Wicklow and the SS Arvonion and at Union Hall from the SS Alexandra. With the exception of the Helga, these were all privately owned vessels with civilian crews and had been requisitioned by the government. Further landings followed at Kenmare and Kinsale. All the landings achieved tactical surprise and captured their objectives. Their success played a significant part in bringing the first phase of the Civil War to a conclusion. After the fall of Cork, the government continued to use chartered vessels for both patrol work and to bring supplies and troops to isolated garrisons around the coast, particularly in counties along the west where republican flying columns disrupted overland communications.





The Irish delegation (from left) Arthur Griffith, Eamonn Duggan, Erskine Childers, Michael Collins, George Gavan Duffy, Robert Barton and John Chartres. Photograph: Hulton Archive

The use of commercial vessels and their crews on charter could only be a short-term expedient. Matters came to a head early in 1923 when the government refused to pay for damage to some of the chartered vessels, arguing that the vessels were under the command of the civilian captains and therefore the responsibility of the company that owned them. General Joe Vize put forward a scheme for the establishment of an effective sea-going patrol service which would interdict gun-running and protect sea fisheries. The establishment of the Coastal and Marine service was officially announced on 4th May 1923, but preparatory work had gone on before that. Haulbowline had been handed over to the Free State on 31st March 1923 and two days later the Tricolour was formally hoisted at the signal station in the presence of Major General Vize. With the base and dockyard came a number of small vessels and the almost new and powerful tugboat, the Dainty. Equipped with wireless and armed with a 12lb gun, the Dainty became the unofficial flagship of the new service. Vize identified armed trawlers as cost-effective patrol boats fit for service on the stormy Atlantic coasts of Ireland.

On the outbreak of World War 1, the Admiralty requisitioned hundreds of trawlers. Armed with a 12lb gun and depth charges they gave excellent service as patrol vessels, minesweepers and in anti-submarine warfare. They were noted for their sea-going abilities and over a hundred of them served from Irish bases at Lough Swilly, Larne, Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) and Cobh. In 1917, as the submarine war escalated, the Admiralty decided to build more of them to a naval specification. The first class of these new ships, called

admiralty trawlers, were modelled on the commercial ship the Raglan Castle. 195 ships of the Castle class were built in 1917. More were built to the same design in Canada and were called the Canadian class. All were 135 ft (41) in length with a standard displacement of 360 tons with a crew of 15 to 17. The names of the vessels were taken from the crew lists of ships that had fought at Trafalgar. A further class, the Mersey class, was also built. These were slightly larger. After the war, many were sold off for commercial use, but some were retained by the Admiralty. In 1923 these were readily available and the obvious choice for patrol vessels for the new service. In February 1923, the government agreed to purchase six of the Mersey class for £57,000 and six of the Canadian class or Castle class for £30,000. Mersey class vessels retained their original names, the John Dunn, Robert Murray, Thomas Thresher, Christopher Dixon, John Dutton and William Honner. Similarly, the Canadian class ships retained their admiralty designations – Tr24, Tr 25, Tr 27, Tr 29, Tr 30 and Tr 31. There is no record of when these vessels arrived in Ireland, but it must have been quite soon after the sale was agreed since there is a report of the John Dunn going to the rescue of a trawler, the Harry Milling, on 25th March and successfully towing it to Fenit. After being laid up for a couple of years, the trawlers required some maintenance and repair. They had been disarmed so guns had to be purchased separately and installed. When the establishment of the Coastal and Marine Service was officially announced on 4th May, it had a sizeable complement of armed vessels:

The Helga (renamed the Muirchu after a refit



that year).

- The Dainty,
- 3 Motor launches,
- 2 Drifters
- 6 Mersey Class armed trawlers
- 6 Canadian (Castle) class armed trawlers.

They were also five chartered motorboats for river patrol. Joe Vize, promoted to Major General in June 1923, commanded the new service and he brought with him fourteen army officers as a staff. Initially quartered at Portobello, Vize believed that the service should take over the former premises of the coastguard in Dun Laoghaire Harbour as headquarters of the new service. With four operational bases, nineteen armed seagoing vessels and plans for a new headquarters, the Coastal and Marine Service of the Irish Free State had got off to a good start.

Apart from General Vize, the key person in establishing the new service was Capt Eamonn O'Connor, a Master Mariner, who was appointed Marine Superintendent. He was responsible for accepting delivery of the twelve trawlers, supervising any necessary repairs and ensuring that they were seaworthy. He was also responsible for training the seagoing personnel. These new recruits were almost all ex merchant seamen. Basic training in gunnery, musketry and footdrill was given before they embarked for sea going duties. Each trawler had a crew of captain, two officers, five deck Petty Officers, three engine POs and twelve ratings.

The trawlers and the Dainty were soon operational with an emphasis on protection of Ireland's fisheries. The patrols also countered gun running and smuggling along Ireland's coasts. At times discipline was a problem as the ratings had to leave civilian habits behind. When TR 24 put in to Killybegs to refuel in July 1923 there was no stock of coal available. TR 27, also on patrol in the area, was ordered into the harbour and to transfer coal to her sister ship. The ratings on TR 27 refused to do the work and were subsequently paraded and fined. In another incident, Capt O'Connor had no difficulty in boarding M L 4, moored in Waterford. No sentry had been posted and the crew did not notice him coming aboard. Clearly instruction in naval discipline had not been adequate. Nevertheless, the service was making progress.

By September 1923, the new service appeared to be settling in well. That month it featured prominently in the army magazine, *An t-Óglach*. The cover illustration was a fine photograph of the Tricolour being hoisted on board the Dainty. Inside featured a well-illustrated article 'A day with the Coast Patrol' which described 'a dash on the M L - 1' and a 'voyage on the Dainty from Haulbowline to Dublin'. The October issue followed with 'exclusive pictures of Haulbowline'. It seemed that the service was now an essential part of the Defence Forces of the state, but all was not what it seemed. The

Department of Finance had not been happy with the expenditure of £87,000 on the purchase of the trawlers and with further expenditure on rearming the ships and some necessary repairs. In response to the Department of Finance, the Minister for Defence, Richard Mulcahy responded very defensively:

6. Until an arrangement has been made between the British and Irish Governments whereby the Irish Free State undertakes its own coastal defence, the defence by sea of Great Britain and Ireland shall be undertaken by His Majesty's Imperial Forces. This shall not prevent the construction or maintenance or armament of the Irish Free State of such vessels as are required for the protection of the Revenue or the Fisheries.

The foregoing provisions of this Article shall be subject to a Conference of Representatives of the British and Irish Governments to be held at the expiration of five years from the date hereof with a view to the undertaking by Ireland

Article 6 of the Anglo Irish Treaty. Photograph: National Archives

'We would never have suggested purchasing twelve trawlers and setting up a Naval establishment such as we now have, if it were not for the necessity and special circumstances of controlling the coast and dispatching troops by water to the different parts of the coast. ... it would be a great mistake to keep on a costly service not very pointedly applied to definite and required work. It would be more satisfactory and more administratively healthy to get rid of all these vessels, even if we had to start in two or three years time to rebuild the service. We would probably save much more in the meantime than would purchase boats for a well thought out service subsequently.'

That was the death knell of the Coastal and Marine Service. Vize did not accept the Minister's proposal, he argued strongly for the retention of a smaller service with four sea going patrol vessels – the Dainty and three Mersey class trawlers. But it was in vain. In November he was informed that the service would be disbanded. The Muirchu was returned to the Department of Agriculture and all the trawlers laid up pending disposal. That month the service had only one ship at sea – the Dainty - before it too became a civilian vessel, sold to a Canadian salvage company. The officers and men of the service were either laid off or redeployed. Major General Vize, his rank now reduced to colonel, was sent to Limerick as OC 4th Brigade. Apart from one solitary fishery patrol vessel, the Irish Free State now had no ships to control its seas or to enforce its laws. Even that vessel, the Muirchu would soon lose its armament. In the words of Commodore Thomas McKenna: 'So it would appear, that the first Irish navy lasted only ten months and 27 days from 4 May 1923 to 31 March 1924.'



# LT CDR MIKE BRUNICARDI

By Tony O'Brien  
Photos provided by  
LT CDR Mike Brunicardi



Lt Cdr Mike Brunicardi

LÉ JAMES JOYCE on Patrol in Ireland

As the old saying goes: "Join the Navy and see the world". In Lt Cdr Mike Brunicardi's case, he found it to be true.

"Here was a 21-year-old fella from Fermoy in the middle of Tokyo meeting a global mix of people on the deck of LÉ NIAMH", he recalls about an early visit to the Japanese capital on board the LÉ Niamh as part of a Defence Forces and Enterprise Ireland trade mission. That was only one experience over a distinguished career which has taken him from around the world, including routine patrolling involving Maritime Interdiction Operations, to rescuing stricken migrants in the Mediterranean, to assisting the civil powers in the fight against COVID.

But then Mike strongly believes that the multi-faceted role of the Naval Service and the many services it provides, often goes unrecognised by the general public. "We operate over the horizon, as I put it, out of view of the general public, but we are happy operating that way, working for the protection of the country and its citizens."

For Mike, a career with the Navy wasn't too hard a choice. His grandfather Niall and father Daire were both in the Naval Service. "In secondary school it was in my mind. I guess I followed in the family footsteps and I joined the Naval Service in 2001."

Commissioned in 2003, Mike served in a variety of posts on different ships until his most recent posting which was as Officer Commanding LÉ JAMES JOYCE. He played a major role in the early COVID testing programme. Now he is 2nd in Charge of Planning Policy at Naval HQ and also serves as Press and Information Officer for the Naval Service.

One early mission, while still a Cadet, Mike recalls was a visit to South East Asia in 2002; when the LÉ NIAMH visited Malta, Eritrea, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Tokyo. "The ship was used to promote Ireland, its people and businesses (small, medium and large) as a destination and also as a place to do business. It was a great experience for a "young person just starting out on a Naval career."

Remarkably, while in Inchon in Korea he met an Irish man from the same estate that he grew up in back in Fermoy! Even more poignant was a visit to the LÉ NIAMH when it was moored in Hong Kong Harbour by an Irish emigrant who had lived there since 1968. "He lived overlooking the Harbour and told me how he had watched ships from the US, the Royal Navy and Australia, coming in over the years and he was so proud to see the Irish Tricolour flying on the LÉ NIAMH."

A similar mission to London on the LÉ JAMES JOYCE in 2019 was another memorable experience. "We were deployed to London for a diplomatic mission for the St Patrick's Day festival. We hosted the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Irish Ambassador to the UK and over 250 diplomats from around the world, based in London. The Ships Company then took part in the St Patrick's Day parade which was great for us and a highlight of the deployment." As well as performing an important service on behalf of Ireland, the event also brought home to Mike the flexibility of the Naval Service ships. "It provided a unique venue for the event and showed we can do a lot more than people think."

While there, the LÉ JAMES JOYCE was berthed alongside the famous HMS BELFAST which meant they got a spill over of visitors from the popular tourist attraction. "People coming to visit HMS BELFAST would see us and that we were open to visitors and come on board out of curiosity. It was a great opportunity to engage with people, especially non-Irish people. You could help turn people's attitudes around. Some people didn't even know Ireland had a Navy!"

Interestingly, that was an attitude he had encountered back in his home town of Fermoy at the start of his career. "I told someone that I was joining the Navy and they were concerned that I would have to leave home and go to England to do this. They thought I was joining the Royal Navy and did not realise Ireland had a Navy." That misunderstanding has certainly long disappeared as the Naval Service has very publicly proven its presence in terms of Maritime Defence and Security Operations, Search and Rescue, drugs seizures, fishery protection, migrant rescue in the Mediterranean and their recent work on COVID.

"Those deployments to London and Asia showed not only the flexibility of our ships, but also that sailors can become diplomats, from junior ranks up to the highest. We are representing Ireland, and always proud to do so." Mike believes that as a Nation, we suffer from "sea blindness". In other words: Ireland is surrounded by water but many don't realise what we have under that sea and how large an asset we have. "If you were to turn that into land and paint it green, Ireland would be one of the biggest States in Europe. People are astonished when they hear that," he says. So that brings a huge responsibility for the Naval Service, whose duty it is to protect that valuable asset.

Ireland is positioned on the North Western edge of Europe. This geostrategic position places Ireland to the fore of many global trade routes. He points to the huge volume of sea and air traffic which pass



through or touch on our waters. Plus that is to say nothing of critical undersea cables carrying data and other important information, as well as more and more off-shore wind farms.

"We only have nine ships and some would say we need more to cover the area we have responsibility for. But we have very sophisticated monitoring technology which allows us to keep an eye on ships and movements etc. Each of our ships is now a sensor which feeds



LÉ JAMES JOYCE Travelling under the Tower Bridge in London, England



LÉ NIAMH escorting Sailing Vessel MAKAYABELLA after interdiction

near real-time information back to the Naval Base where it can be analysed. The Naval Service is constantly watching and monitoring. We are the principal sea going agency of the State and are the deterrent, just like the Garda patrol car at the side of the road.

Strong international links and co-operation are also vital. The Naval Service is part of MARSUR (the European Maritime Surveillance Network) which shares maritime information for Situational Awareness and also the Maritime Analysis Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N). These linkages have been very important and have aided the Navy - working as part of the Joint Task Force, with An Garda Síochána and Revenue Customs Service - to stop nearly 1 billion Euro of narcotics entering Ireland or the European Market. Mike and his Maritime Interdiction Operations Team working from LÉ NIAMH actually boarded the Sailing Vessel MAKAYABELLA in 2014 discovering a huge quantity of cocaine bound for Europe. "This is vital work but the interdiction is the last and critical part in getting boots on deck of these smuggling boats. That's why the Navy maintains a presence at sea at all times and aims to stop the illegal shipments".

Recalling his participation in Operation PONTUS in the Mediterranean, when the Naval Service heroically rescued thousands of migrants from the sea, Mike says: "We did not bat an eyelid when asked to help out. It was an incredible experience. We played a key role there and I am very proud of our people. When Government asked the Navy "could they do it?", the Navy turned LÉ EITHNE around in 2 weeks from Routine Operations to Humanitarian SAR operations.

In the Mediterranean, as he tells it, they were rescuing people who

they didn't know and were unlikely to meet ever again. But with Operation FORTITUDE and the battle to stem the COVID invasion, it was different: "These were our friends, our own communities. While we didn't know the individuals, these were Irish people who needed our help and it was very satisfying to be able to give that help."

He was Captain of the LÉ JAMES JOYCE which was one of the many Navy Ships docked in Dublin and provided an emergency testing centre for the HSE. "In January 2020 something was happening in China but soon enough it was like a tidal wave washing across the world and was going to impact Ireland eventually. The Defence Forces were asked to provide support and we did that willingly."

"Because of our experience internationally – including refugee rescue in the Mediterranean - we knew how to put people at ease. We supported the National Ambulance Service and HSE in running community testing centres from our ships in Galway, Dublin and Cork. "People coming in were frightened. They didn't know what they were facing and were fearful. Our people, even though they were in full PPE, put people at their ease, to calm them down, to talk to them..... this is what we do, as a Navy, as Irish people, we're natural talkers which can ease the tension/fears and ultimately support the citizen who needed it".

It proved a very rewarding experience. "We put our ships in to Galway, Dublin and Cork and put our people on the frontline. We were happy to be serving our people, these were our communities, and they knew that we were there to help them. When they saw the ships, they saw the flag and they saw our people, they relaxed because they knew help was at hand - symbol of the State standing ready to help and look after them. I believe it also gave people at lot of hope, at a time when they didn't know quite what we were facing as a country."

That particular role ended in June 2020 and the Navy has gone back to its framework operations of Maritime Defence and Security Operations. However, Operation FORTITUDE continues, including Defence Forces personnel helping out at vaccination centres and at hotels where incoming travellers are quarantined. The Air Corps are delivering vaccines around the country. The Defence Forces as a whole is still very active in the battle against this virus. Mike explains the balance between life on shore and at sea. "You rotate in and out of appointments. When you go to sea you leave behind your shore-based appointment."

But being at sea during a global pandemic can cause its own issues. "At sea everything was as normal as it could be, we maintained some level of our normal life at sea but with added protections measures to ensure our personnel and ship did not get compromised with the virus. But, in the COVID environment and in strict lockdowns, I was thinking about my wife Julie back home in Kinsale having to look after our two children Tadhg (6) and Niamh (4), my parents and family. I was one of 44 personnel on LÉ JAMES JOYCE who were experiencing the same worries and as the Captain, I had to ensure that my personnel and their families were supported while dealing with all the COVID restrictions."

He sums up the conflicts a sailor's life brings: "I hate going to sea, but I love being at sea, the Navy has given me great opportunities, professionally, academically and personally. It is a tough but rewarding career".



The real map of Ireland from a Naval perspective



LT (NS) Brunicardi carrying the Naval Colours in Dublin as part of the 100 year anniversary of the 1916 Rising





The Asgard on the Solent, Erskine at the helm in white, 1907

# ASGARD - FROM REVOLUTION TO REMEMBRANCE

By Erskine C. Childers

Photos provided by Erskine C. Childers

In Ireland we are surrounded by so much history, that sometimes it fades into the background and can become lost in the noise of modern living. Yet, access to this history is a true privilege; it should never be taken lightly.

If one should travel to Collins Barracks in Dublin, you shall find a wonderful 52-foot ketch gleaming under the lights. This is the famed 'Asgard'. While it lies now preserved indoors, its story is still living. The Asgard, the Asgard II and the Childers family name have been a part of our naval story from the beginning. An Cosantóir, on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Naval Service, is privileged to be joined by Mr. Erskine C. Childers to remember the first sail training vessel of the Irish Navy. Due to its pivotal role in a key moment in the story of our rebellion, it has sometimes been termed the 'first naval vessel' of our republic.

## Snapshots in time

In July 1914, as the Irish Volunteers marched and cycled back from the Asgard at East Pier towards Dublin along the Howth Road, they had 44 year old 1871 Mauser rifles (Howth Guns) over their shoulders. Many were worried about being caught red-handed and quickly buried those rifles in the gardens of houses along present day Raheny. A handful of those buried rifles have turned up (still pristine some 40-60 years later) by unaware residents tending their gardens; instant treasured heirlooms over the mantelpiece of the house thereafter.

Taoiseach Charles Haughey when launching Asgard II in 1981, attempted to smash the Champagne on the bow, but on the first try nothing broke. He tried again, and again, and again; only getting a result on the 9th try, to an eerie silence amongst those gathered that day on the dock.

Existing photos of the Asgard Howth journey show my great-grandfather Erskine at the compass with a tin of Jacob's Cream Crackers sat next to him. Jacob's the secret revolutionary fuel; from Howth 1914 to the Easter Rising 1916, where Howth Guns were found inside Jacob's factory in Dublin.

These are just three small vignettes related to the lore of the Asgard and Asgard II. There are hundreds more. They live on in me and in those Naval Service trainees that, in the 5 years between 1969 to 1974, learned to sail on her through Coiste An Asgard. Once at Kilmainham Gaol and now at the National Museum in Dublin, the yacht was the first sail training vessel of the Navy of the Irish Republic.

## Home from the sea

After 47 years, the Asgard did manage to return to Howth for the second time in its history, at a July 1961 East Pier commemoration. Upon its purchase by the Office of Public Works for less than five thousand pounds (UK); the Irish Navy picked up the Asgard in Southampton, came to Howth, then to its new home in Haulbowline, Cork. DeValera there that day wished my great-grandmother Molly Childers, then 86 and in poor health, his thanks on behalf of the nation.



The Asgard at Killmainham Gaol, Dublin 1980



Rita Childers, wife of President Childers at the helm of the Asgard, Killmainham Gaol, Dublin 1980





Under the Asgard, Killmainham Gaol, Dublin 1980

In my family, I was taught from as early as memory affords, that public service means everything. The pillars of character; of which all Irish Navy men and women have supplied in documented service. Decades of history - decades of pride. Globally, our Defence Forces members and veterans hold their heads high. My family was honoured to hear of the creation of the Robert Erskine Childers branch of O.N.E., something that I think about every time I go to Glasnevin and put flowers on his grave.

Growing up as a namesake; in one sense forever binds you to someone else's legacy. Their joys, milestones, mistakes, victories and heartbreaks become a lifelong influence. If your namesake was executed by Irishmen, it adds a particular next dimension of intensity. Often, I think about the sheer miracle, by luck or natural selection, that I get to be here breathing and enjoying life. As that might have never happened, as a result of that November morning in the yard of Beggars Bush barracks in 1922. Executions in families reverberate for decades.

## Erskine and Molly

My great-grandparents, Robert Erskine Childers and Mary "Molly" Childers were happily married for 18 years. The two sons born to them, one becoming a newspaper executive, the other President of Ireland, grew up between Ireland and England. The Asgard, a 52 foot ketch sailboat, was their

wedding gift from Molly's father and designed by both Robert Erskine Childers and Colin Archer, legendary shipwright of Larvik, Norway.

The first logbook of the Asgard is from 1905, the yacht delivered to the couple in the same year. Robert Erskine, then a 35-year-old clerk at the House of Commons, and Molly, then a first time mother of Erskine Óg, went out immediately on it, and they logged journeys up and down the coasts of England. The logbooks for the next decade are full of names of visitors, ports of call; voyages to Ireland and even north towards the Baltic Sea. It would be 1914, only a month before the outbreak of World War One that the couple took the boat into history, and infamy, depending on your political viewpoint.

## An echo through time

I bring up infamy because I want the readers here to understand the nuances of Howth through the long historical snake of Irish history. To pacifists, the events of that day in 1914 brought tremendous pain and suffering to our people. It successfully "...inserted gun culture into Irish culture" as one well known Irish writer remarked to me personally. Many view those years to Easter 1916 as ruinous and refuse to see the merits of the path to independence. All understandable points, but a view I don't share.

To those that consider themselves Irish Nationalists; the Asgard is very much seen as a vehicle for freedom and liberty. They look to it as the final push of an old wheel turning for centuries. Bulmer Hobson, Roger Casement and Robert Erskine Childers, as they sat together over tea in Buswells Hotel café in June of 1914, finalising the plans for Howth, had two big goals. One was to make sure that the event got into newspapers; and the other that the parade of armed Irishmen was seen and felt by the general populace. They counted on word of mouth to carry the news of an arms landing. Very few historians can argue that its mission was unsuccessful.

***"I am honoured to be asked to contribute to this special moment in the life of the Naval Service. The photos seen here are just a small glimpse into our family's connection to the legacy of the Asgard. Warm wishes to all our currently serving members of the Defence Forces, and gratitude to all our veterans, who put their lives on the line when duty calls".***



Commodore Peter Kavanagh and other Naval Service members discuss the condition of the Asgard with Erskine B. Childers and Erskine C. Childers, Naval Docks, 1977



Underneath the Asgard. Of note is the installed prop engine, which was added by previous owners. The Asgard never had a prop whilst owned by the Childers family, nor was a prop engine used at Howth 1914.



Erskine B. Childers and Erskine C. Childers look up at the Asgard, Naval Docks, 1977



# PO AILEEN HANNA

By Tony O'Brien

Photos by A/B David Jones



All female gaurd of honor celebrating 100 years since the Easter rising in Dublin Castle

When your family tells you that you may have a long-tailed link to the legendary Pirate Queen Grainualie (Gráinne Mhaol) then a life at sea seems set as your destiny. And so it was PO/ Navy Cook, Aileen Hanna.

"My grandfather, Louis McKeown, always told us we were descendants of Grainualie", explains Aileen, "And then a couple of years ago we did a DNA test and it told us that our ancestors came from the same place as Grainualie in Mayo. So maybe he was telling us the truth." The connection with the sea was, in fact, a little more obvious than that for Aileen. Grandfather Louis, father Joe and two Uncles were all in the Irish Naval Service.

Her bigger concern from a younger age was how to combine her love of cooking and the outdoors in a career for the future. "I wanted to go to college and at the same time work at something involving the outdoors. I realised I could do both in the Naval Service. I could get a qualification and then do all the things I wanted to do in the Navy", she said.

Interestingly, her Dad Joe was a Dub who travelled down to Haulbowline when he joined the Naval Service. There he met her mother, Rita, and that was how Aileen came to grow up in the very heart of Irish naval operations in Cork. Aileen had always wanted to be a Chef and knew there would be a lot of college work involved. But what made her hesitate was that she would end up in a restaurant or hotel kitchen doing the same thing every day for a long time into the future. "That made me question my future career choice", she said, but with the Navy, she found a happy solution. "I could be a chef but at the same time enjoy a very varied life with plenty of outdoor activity. With the Navy you don't know what you are going to be doing, it is very different."

Aileen quickly knew Navy was life for her and so at 17 in her Leaving Certificate year, she enlisted in September 2002. It was then into basic naval training, in the early days, before the practical instruction in how to be a qualified cook. At the interview stage Aileen says there was a lot of competition, with only four places on offer from 30 applicants. "It was a

time when there was a lot of talk about celebrity chefs and it seemed everyone wanted to be one."

Plus there was the issue of being the first female to do the course. "If you are a woman joining the Navy, or indeed the Defence Forces as a whole, then you must know that it is what you want to do. I was surrounded by men. When I went cheffing I probably felt there was a bit of a weight



PO Hanna's current posting onboard P64 LE GB Shaw Galley as PO/Cook



Christmas Day Duty onboard P64 GB Shaw 2020

of responsibility on me to do the best I could, not to let women down," Aileen remarks. That initial training was in the Army School of Catering in McKee Barracks in Dublin, where she spent a full year. "I loved it. There were small classes which mean you got the personal attention you wouldn't get in big classes," she said.

After that it was back to Navy and Haulbowline. "That was when you took up your trade; you learned on the job, including at sea, before it was back to college again".

At sea, Aileen explained you are only called a trainee cook six months after qualification. All the time you are learning with the senior staff. "There were three cooks on a ship and as a junior you were doing exactly what they were doing, but under supervision. It was a bit of a



culture shock, you are at college and then you go to sea and you see things you never saw before,” she said.

Her first time at sea was memorable for other reasons. “It was really bad weather; we were thrown up and down all over the place. I was seasick for two days, but I haven’t been since. I think I inherited my sea legs from my father. Not many people I know would get over it that fast. I know people who have been in the Navy for 20 years and they would still get seasick,” Aileen recalled.

But the small size of the Irish Navy flexibility is key, which means Aileen does not spend all day slaving over a hot stove. “We still have military duties to do”, she explained, “For instance I am part of the ship’s fire-fighting team and we also fire the weapons. There has to be a lot of multi-tasking because of the size of the crew. We are first and foremost sailors and military people and we have to be ready to go at any stage.” Her main job, of course, is in the kitchen. Aileen cooks for an average of 60 people on board the LE George Bernard Shaw. That’s three meals a day – breakfast, lunch and dinner – which means a very busy workload.

So what are the favourite items on the menu at sea? “You have people on board aged from 18 to 60 all with different tastes but usually the young guys prefer chicken and chips while the older men want their potatoes, veg and meat. I have to keep everyone happy because unlike in a restaurant they won’t be walking out the door at the end. When we are sitting around in the evening I’ll have to face them and listen to any complaints!”



Arriving home from operation Pontus 2016 onboard P52 LE Roisin

But there’s more to life at sea than slicing and dicing. Aileen was amongst the crew who took part in Operation Pontus rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean while on board the LE Roisin. “It was quite harrowing but we were good at it and you felt pride that you were helping people in distress. It was tough but because we were such a small unit we were able to look after each other if it got a bit too much for someone. At the end of the day we could be having a cup of tea and everybody talking about what they had seen and done,” she says of one of her more stand-out memories.

Aileen added: “It was pretty awful at times but there were happier times too. When we were rescuing people they would be singing because they knew they were going to be safe. And when they saw me in my white coat, they would smile as they knew food was coming.”

The mood on board ship could vary, she said, depending on what they had to face. “If the people were in a boat for



Parade Celebrating her completion of the 25th Senior NCOs Course FEB 2021

a couple of days without water under the hot sun with no shelter or if they had capsized and we were picking them out of the water, then things could be very quiet. When we lost a few lives amongst the migrants, you could feel the atmosphere on the ship.” At other times when the migrants were in better condition, they would be singing and celebrating they that have been rescued. “I had never seen anything like it and if I had my way, I would have taken every single one home with me,” said Aileen.

The whole humanitarian experience gave her great pride in the Naval Service and in the country. “It showed how good we were compared to bigger navies, we could hold our own and there was a huge pride when we came home.”

Then there was Operation Fortitude when the Defence Forces – including the Naval Service – were involved in setting up and manning COVID testing centres on behalf of the HSE when the Pandemic first struck Ireland in early 2020. “We would have been one of the first ships in Dublin. It was like a field hospital really. It was quite weird in Dublin at that time; there were no people and no traffic on the Quays. People were scared because it was all so new,” she recalled. But it was also very rewarding for Aileen and her fellow crew. “It was rewarding in that we were helping people out in a national emergency. The public generally don’t see what we do in the Naval Service but this time they could see us in action helping people and that was good.”

Back on regular patrol duties, only recently Aileen and the crew of the LE George Bernard Shaw were involved in a major search and rescue of a trawler off the West Coast. It was in very rough seas and weather but, thankfully, all of the trawler crew got off safely.

Aileen is married to former Merchant Navy seaman Richard and they live in Cobh, Co Cork.



Winning Bronze Medal Knorr Chef Ireland Competition





Irish Naval Service depart a fishing vessel after an inspection back in August 2013

# IRELANDS FISHERIES MONITORING CENTRE

By Lt (NS) Gillian Power  
Photos provided by DF Flickr

Ireland's Fisheries Monitoring Centre (FMC) is located on Haulbowline Island, Co Cork and is a designated EU Co-ordination Centre in Charge (CCIC) for multi-national fishery protection operations and operates 24/7/365. European Union (EU) fisheries legislation requires EU maritime states to operate an FMC for management of fisheries activity in waters under their jurisdiction. The FMC monitors all foreign and Irish fishing vessels equipped with a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) in the Irish 200 nautical mile EEZ. In addition, the FMC monitors all Irish vessels globally. The FMC also carries out monitoring and surveillance of all fishing vessels that are operating in the waters of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Confederation (NEAFC) adjacent to Irish waters. The FMC co-ordinates Western Waters pelagic fisheries operations and also co-ordinates multi-national Joint Deployment Plans where several EU Member States deploy ships and inspectors to a particular fishery such as Cod or pelagic. The FMC acts as the designated point of contact for fishing vessels operating in Irish waters. Fisheries information collated by the FMC and is distributed to Naval Service, Air Corps and the SFPA.

## What we do...

Surface monitoring, control and surveillance of Irish exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Surface monitoring, control and surveillance within Other Member States exclusive economic zones during Joint Deployment Programmes (JDP) and Article 80 inspections.

Tasking of the aerial component (CASA) of fishery protection.

Monitoring of Vessel Monitoring System reports from IRL, OMS and 3rd Country vessels in IRL EEZ and NEAFC.

Monitoring of VMS reports from IRL vessels globally.

Monitoring of entry and exit to any maritime areas where specific rules on access or control apply within the IRL EEZ & NEAFC.

Monitoring of ERS reports from OMS and 3rd Country vessels operating in IRL EEZ and from IRL vessels wherever they may be. The Port State Control (PSC) role has increased almost 700% post BREXIT.

Receipt of non ERS effort reporting and hail notifications from fishermen and their distribution to SFPA Port Offices.

Conducting risk-based inspections at sea based on agreed criteria set out in the control plan using all relevant open and closed information sources.

Assisting fishing vessels with ERS Fail Over procedures.

Providing personnel and evidentiary material for court cases as is necessary.

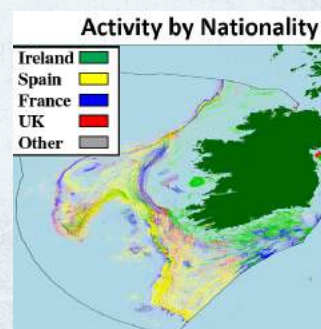
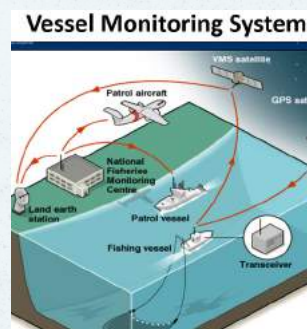
Ensuring accurate and current briefing material is provided at meetings which have consequences for Fishery Protection operations at sea.

Supporting Policy - SFPA (Clonakilty) & EFCA (Vigo Spain)

Co-ordination Centre In Charge (CCIC) for Joint Deployment Plans (JDPs) in Western Waters

Profiling and analyzing the activity of fishing fleets within the Irish EEZ and more importantly as a direct result of BREXIT.

## Fishery Protection Activity





## Some Statistics

Approx 300 vessels active per day in Irish waters

Approx 200 fishing vessels registered in Ireland

Approx 100 tuna vessels in Summertime

Approx 800 different foreign vessels operate in Irish waters

Irish port traffic accounts for over 90% of imports and exports moved in and out of Ireland.

The Irish commercial fishing industry is worth about €1.2 billion annually to the Irish economy.

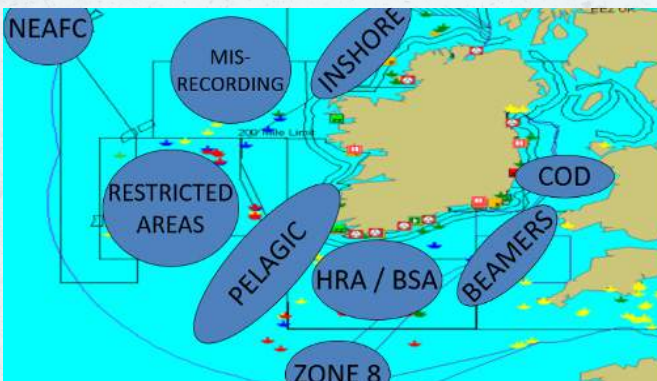
Irish industry employs approx. 16,000 people in the fishing industry.

## OIC FMC

Lt Cdr Claire Murphy, OIC FMC is responsible under legislation for the efficient management of FMC. Her role possesses significant responsibility regarding the Service Level Agreement between the SFPA / DOD / NS and AC and must ensure that the FMC provides a satisfactory service provision to NS Command and NS ships in the areas of Regulations & Legislation, Data Management, Operations, Training & Standards and External Liaison. Lt Cdr Murphy ensures that the FMC and NS fulfil their Service Level Agreement requirements and advises NS Command of any issues regarding the SLA obligations.

## 2ic FMC

Lt (N.S.) Gillian Power is the 2ic FMC. Her role ensures all Fishery Protection priorities are met at sea as well as co-ordinating the Air Corp weekly flight schedule. Part of her role is to provide a pre-patrol brief to NS ships sea fisheries protection officers. When a ship completes a sailing order, the 2ic will receive a post-patrol brief from NS ships, which is fed back into the risk analysis and intelligence section. 2ic FMC ensures that all fishery protection activity within Irish waters is effectively monitored through remote, surface and aerial means, ensuring that correct VMS, AIS and ERS is being transmitted from relevant fishing vessels. The 2ic participates in fortnightly European Fishery Control Agency meetings with Other member states for the sharing of fishery information. Another vital role of 2ic FMC, is to ensure we are completing the Port State Control (PSC) process timely and accurately for 3rd country landings into Ireland and IRL



Fishery Protection Activity

fishing vessels landing outside the EU. This role has seen a 700% increase since BREXIT.

## Risk Analysis Section

Lt Stephen Ryan, OIC Risk Analysis Section is responsible for the monitoring, surveillance and analysis of all IE, EU & 3rd country fishing vessels that are operating in the waters of the Irish 200 nautical mile EEZ in addition to all Irish vessels globally.

The Risk Analysis Section is responsible for monitoring all fishing vessels operating in the waters of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Confederation (NEAFC) adjacent to Irish waters. Lt Ryan must ensure all INT received is assessed and incorporated into weekly risk lists and coordinating risk lists with OIC FMC and the SFPA. OIC Risk Analysis Section monitors entry and exit to any maritime area where specific rules on access or control apply within the IE EEZ & NEAFC.

On a daily basis, analysis of ERS reports from IE, EU and 3rd Country vessels operating in IE EEZ is conducted and from IE vessels wherever they may be. Information is passed to command in order to conduct risk-based inspections at sea.

## Top 4 Threats To Fishery Resources

1. Under-recording of TAC quota species by foreign FVs – Leading to mis-recording when inspected. Large numbers of FVs all year (EU Reg 404/2011 Art 47(2)).
2. High Grading of pelagic species – Seasonal by significant numbers of FVs (EU Reg 227/2013 Art 19a).



A boarding team from P31 LÉ Aisling board a fishing vessel in March 2014

3. Mis-recording of quotas by Irish FVs with regards to certain species.
4. Other activities such as undersized mesh size, operating in prohibited areas and unauthorised landings.

## OIC Data Base Section

S/LT Jonathan Connolly is the OIC of the Data Base Section. As the database manager he utilises the Fishery Protection System (FPS) known as Lirguard to correlate, traffic and store the significant volume of data which passes through FMC daily. The FPS consists of three core systems that are used to ensure all data is stored and communicated, as necessary. These are:

## FIS (Fishery Information System)

The FIS application captures, stores, maintains and reports



on information regarding fishing vessels, owners, skippers, registrations, authorisations, boarding's, infringements, detentions, effort reports, fishing vessel positions and catch data. Each Naval Service asset has its own integrated Lirguard computer onboard that replicates, in real time, the core system within FMC. This allows ship's crews to add surveillance and boarding reports at sea which can be immediately communicated to internal and external stakeholders within the industry.

### FGS (Fishery Geographical System)

The FGS is integrated with the FIS, thus giving the operator a visual representation of fishing vessel within the Exclusive Economic Zone on an electronic chart display. As the Naval Service is Ireland's primary sea-going agency with responsibility for Fishery protection, policing this vast area requires such a tool so that Command onboard can plan and execute targeted inspections of high-risk fishing vessels operating within Irish waters.

### FLS (Fishery Legislative System)



A boarding team pictured here returning from a fishing vessel in August 2019

The Naval Service requires its sea-going personnel to have the most up-to-date European and Irish fishery legislation on hand. The FLS system records and stores a legislative bank from which onboard Fisheries Officers can consult the necessary legislation prior to or during a at sea inspections.

The FPS is a fluid component at the heart of FMC. Fishing vessel registrations, modifications, owner details, sightings, boarding's and detentions are constantly being recorded and updates 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. It is also important to acknowledge the significant technical support required from our colleagues in the Naval Computer Centre (NCC), whom contribute greatly behind the scenes.

### OIC Admin (HQ) Support Section

S/Lt Ayden Clarke is OIC HQ Support Section in the FMC. This section sits in the HQ cell within the FMC and is responsible for ensuring that various databases and reports are maintained and generated for distribution to internal and external stakeholders. OIC Admin gathers and consolidates operational information received from Fishery Protection Assets and Air surveillance assets and maintains accurate

databases which are used for briefings to command, the General Staff and to the European Fisheries Control Agency. As FMC is nestled within the INT Cell in the Naval Service, OIC Admin is also responsible for ensuring Op Sec of the FMC and the control of documents and the passing of confidential information.

### OIC Training Cell

S/Lt Robert Kelly is OIC Training Cell in the FMC. The role of the Training Cell is provide all elements of fishery protection related training within the Naval Service, encompassing both internal FMC personnel and ship based sea-fishery protection officers (SFPOs).

OIC Training Cell provides introductory and refresher training to all ranks and branches, from delivering the entry level Assistant Sea Fishery Protection Officer course to Cadets and Potential NCOS, up to more advanced courses on legislation and court procedures with Senior NCOs. We also run a number of technical skills courses including net measuring, fish identification and legal skills which can be requested by ships to reduce skill fade and keep their own personnel up to date with best practice, as legislation changes. We also maintain and calibrate the equipment SFPOs require to measure nets, weigh boxes and dip tanks at sea.

Internally within FMC we coordinate the training of new personnel with other sections. Over the last few months we have seen a significant training requirement with the increase of personnel and the new legislation and procedures that have arisen from Brexit. As the Naval Service upgrades its Fishery Protection software the Training Cell will be central to its roll out across the Service.

The following aspects of Training and Standards are provided by the FMC to NS Command and ships:

Legal skills training

Net inspection courses

Assistant Sea Fishery Protection Officers courses and Sea Fishery Protection Officer courses.

Ship's Fishery Officer courses

Boarding Equipment training

FORST Fishery Inspections

Fisheries IT systems training

### Expansion Of The FMC & Increase In Staffing

Towards the end of 2020, the Fisheries Monitoring Centre was at risk of not meeting its mandated legal obligations, as we did not have the level of staff required to deal with the impact of BREXIT. BREXIT resulted in a 'volumetric explosion' on the workload of the FMC. The resources available in the FMC did not allow for this increase in staff, therefore, the reconfiguring of existing office space as a short-term measure was progressed and additional office spaces off site was secured. The structure of user station in the FMC was reconfigured in line with COVID-19 and a high level of user station agility was required enabling a combination of 'hot desking', remote working and watch systems to ensure the operation on Ireland FMC on a 24/7 basis.





A boarding team depart the fishing trawler UDRA after an inspection in July 2020

Prior to BREXIT on 31st Dec 2020, Ireland's FMC increased its staff from nineteen to thirty-one and will shortly move towards a staff of forty-two. The staff of thirty-one (presently) is made up of a blended approach of Naval personnel, 1 Bde augmentees and civilian staff. The increase in staff arose due to the recognition of the volumetric explosion of administration, as a result of BREXIT.

## Interviews with the staff

### Who is the Regulation and Legislation Officer in FMC Ireland?

Lt Fitzgerald recommissioned in November 2020 after completing a number of years out of the Naval Service, as a SAR Mission Co-Ordinator in the Irish Coast Guard in Valentia MRSC. Prior to departing the Naval Service in November 2014, having already completed a shore rotation as a 2IC FMC, adapting into a role in Fisheries is second nature. Daily roles as Regulations and Legislation Officer include keeping ships on patrol updated with the latest fishery legislation: including EU Regulations, Statutory Instruments and Fishery Management Notices. Plus briefing ships' Fishery Officers on the latest Regulations and Legislation, prior to going on Fishery protection operations.

### Do you enjoy working in the FMC environment?

The Fishery Monitoring Centre is a very challenging but rewarding role and no one day is the same! In Haulbowline and the team we currently have here in FMC are from all diversities of the workplace spectrum and include Army and Civilian personnel, who are all key actors in ensuring that FMC Ireland maintains a 24/7 operational capacity. Although some risk assessed Fishery inspections may end in detaining a Fishing Vessel, Lt Fitzgerald believes having a Naval Service presence at sea - and risk assessing each fishery inspection - assists in deterrence of serious fishery infringements of EU and Third Country Fishing Vessel whilst operating in the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone. This ensures that the Irish Naval Service maintains impartial moderation whilst conducting fishery inspections at sea.

### What would you see as a key attribute in FMC staff?

Lt Fitzgerald believes that communication is a key attribute, whilst operating with the External Agencies such as European

Fisheries Community Agency, Sea Fisheries Protection Agency. Ensuring an open line of communication to all Fishermen is paramount in the role and responsibilities required in the Fishery Monitoring Centre Ireland based on Haulbowline. Internal communications are as important to ensure all Naval Ships conducting Fishery Inspections have been briefed on current Fishery legislation prior to commencing patrol by all FMC Officers.

### What challenges do you see in the FMC going forward?

There are plenty of challenges ahead in fishery legislation; including penalty points (which came into force at the end of January this year by EU legislation) and the Naval Service as required by the SFPD will ensure documentation requested by the SFPD Points Determination Panel is supplied, if serious infringements are detected during a fishery inspection at sea.

### Would you recommend a career in the FMC?

In my own opinion yes, I would recommend all positions in FMC Ireland as a career. I have always found it to be an interesting job in which all personnel in the Monitoring Centre need to work together as a team to ensure successful outcomes of deterrence of serious fishery infringements at sea. I portray FMC Ireland as a positive, challenging and a rewarding place to work.

In saying that, I have been in shore rotations for the past 5 years and I am looking forward to being posted into a sea rotation on one of the P60 Class Patrol Vessel in the not too distant future.

### New initiatives and future projects.

#### IE INSPECT

In collaboration with the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPD) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM), FMC has been conducting trials of a new web-based electronic inspection platform called IE INSPECT. This platform will allow boarding officers at sea to complete electronic inspections onboard fishing vessels. The move to IE INSPECT will reduce the manual inspection process and result in a faster inspection execution, whilst also improving the efficiency of the data management process for all ships' boarding Officers and the FMC. IE INSPECT will also bolster the security of sensitive data collected during the inspection process

#### IFIS over CISN

IFIS was accessed through two (2) DAFM computers on the DAFM network onsite in the FMC. As there were only two (2) pcs with access, this really limited the work output with availability of workstations. However, this limitation has been overcome by OIC CIS who created a VPN from the CISN to the DAFM Network. The link to the DAFM IFIS application is on the FMC IKON page in the publishing page and all FMC staff have been enabled with VDI user profiles (higher level service delivery on remote access solution). This initiative has had a positive impact on the work output of the MFC - allowing more risk analysis to be carried out on ERS logbooks.



# IMPENETRABLE SHADOWS

By Mr Paul O'Brien MA Photos by Sgt Karl Byrne & A/M Sam Gibney



A Mark XVII Sea Mine on display outside the Fort Dunree museum building

## Fort Dunree: Guardian of the Lough

The Gaelic Loch Súilí in County Donegal means the lake of shadows or the lake of eyes. Flanked on both sides by rugged cliffs and beautiful hilly peninsulas that consist of Inishown to the east and Fanad to the west, the Lough is a flooded river that stretches 40km into county Donegal from the Atlantic Ocean. It is navigable by boats at all stages, as far upriver as Letterkenny, reaching from fifteen to fifty metres in depth. One of three glacial fjords in Ireland, Lough Swilly has been a safe and secure anchorage and waterway for centuries. Its strategic importance has been recognised as far back as the first century with the construction of a fort, Griannan of Aileach. Positioned near the southern bend of the Lough, it is believed to have been constructed on the site of an earlier Iron Age hill fort. Those who controlled the Lough ensured the security of not only Donegal, but of the country.

In Ireland's attempt to break free from British rule, foreign assistance from abroad was sought on numerous occasions by those seeking Irish independence. Britain's wars with France and Spain provided opportunities of an amphibious landing of troops, weapons and supplies that would enable Irish forces to attack and seize control of the country. The abortive attempt to land French forces in Bantry Bay in 1796 under General Hoche, alerted crown forces to the possibility of fighting Irish insurgents, who were being supported by

regular French troops on Irish soil, thereby opening up another front that the British would struggle to maintain. Two years later in 1798, another French Force under the command of Admiral Bornpart was intercepted by the Royal Navy and defeated off the Donegal Coast. Theobald Wolfe Tone, leader of the United Irishmen who

accompanied the French frigate 'La Hoche' on this mission, was escorted into Lough Swilly by H.M.S. Doris, then arrested. This attempt at a seaborne landing prompted both British Naval and military authorities to draw up plans for more robust defences against amphibious landings along Ireland's coastline and in particular Lough Swilly.

Many defences such as the Martello towers were constructed along the coastline of Ireland between 1798 and 1800 to counter the threat of a Napoleonic invasion. Several forts were built along both sides of Lough Swilly at Dunree, Ned's Point, Saltpan Hill, and the Down of Inch on the east bank and Macarnish Point on the west. These early earthen works, some with permanent buildings, were equipped with a 42 pounder cannon that had been taken from the French ship 'Hoche' after its capture. The two most important forts were Knockalla and Dunree because they were positioned closest to the mouth of the Lough and at its narrowest. Because of this, by 1800 Dunree had several permanent buildings and two 42 pounder guns located on the highest point of the fort.

In 1810 more land was acquired at Dunree by the War Department and a large project to improve the defences in the region commenced. Martello towers were erected at Knockalla and Macamish and the Rathmullan battery replaced the one at Saltpan Hill. The strategic importance of the Lough saw the erection of permanent buildings on all the sites and an increase in personnel manning the posts with the garrison at Dunree numbering twenty-eight, including a Master Gunner.

As the threat of invasion from France subsided, some believed the defences should be abandoned to conserve money. However this was overruled due to the Lough's importance as a safe and secure anchorage for transatlantic convoys. A new plan was devised in 1894 that would only use the forts on the east bank resulting in the upgrade and rearming of Dunree and Ned's Point. A new Fort was also constructed at Lenan Head.

As Fort Dunree's defences were upgraded, so too were its armaments. After the Napoleonic wars, nine twenty-four pounder cannon were installed. In the late 19th century the guns were replaced with 4.7 inch and two 6 inch Mark IV guns. In 1911 6 inch Mark VII artillery pieces were in situ. A large searchlight was erected to assist naval passage through the Lough and also to pick out potential targets.

In 1914 soldiers from the



One of the searchlights on display outside the Fort Dunree museum building



A 4.7 inch gun looking west out onto Bunnaton across what is the north Atlantic sea





The view back towards Fort Dunree from one of the forward 4.7 inch guns

Royal Garrison Artillery manned the defences.

The strategic importance of Ireland and especially this region was that Buncrana, known as H.M.S. Hecla, was naval headquarters with a Vice Admiral in command. The Lough was busy as the Royal Navy carried out visits and manoeuvres in the area. With the outbreak of war in August 1914, the Lough became an assembly point for convoys heading to the United States and Canada.

When the naval base at Scapa Flow was compromised, the entire British fleet found sanctuary at Lough Swilly in October 1914. Admiral Lord Jellicoe later wrote that, 'for the first time since the declaration of war the fleet occupied a secure base.' Forty vessels, that included minesweepers, store and repair vessels and tankers as well as battleships, anchored in the Lough. A boom was laid between Macamish and Ned's point to secure the area. The threat of German submarines in the waters around Ireland was a constant danger to the British navy and merchant shipping, and they suffered numerous losses from mines and torpedo attacks.

As the war came to an end in 1918, Irish independence came to the fore, and between 1919 and 1921 the War of Independence waged throughout the county. The result was a signing of a Treaty in 1921 that partitioned the country. Within the Treaty (Article 6) stated that British Forces retained the control of port facilities at Berehaven, Cobh and Lough Swilly until the Irish Free State were in a position to put in place its own coastal defences. Britain wanted to retain control of these ports for its own defences.

In the years that followed, there were numerous improvements made to Fort Dunree with the addition



A side view of a 6 inch gun located on the upper level of the forts grounds

of more living quarters, the improvement of water supplies and the construction of officers' and NCO's' messes. Also generators were added to the complex that generated electricity to power the fort and the newly installed electric lights and perimeter floodlights, erected in 1933. Anti-aircraft guns were also installed as the nature of warfare had advanced with aerial attack becoming a threat.

The 4.7 inch guns had been superseded by two fixed 12 pounders and two 18 pounders that were mobile.

After lengthy discussions between the Irish and British governments, the British agreed to evacuate the ports. On 3 October 1938 the Irish tricolour replaced the British Union Jack at Fort Dunree and Irish troops took up position within the complex.

War was declared in 1939, and while Ireland remained neutral, Dunree was manned and in a state of readiness and the Lough guarded against any threat from an amphibious assault. The Fort and the Lough did not come under any direct attack during this period though numerous planes crash-landed in its vicinity and the garrison were often called out to secure the crash site and recover the remains of the crews.

As the war came to a close, the garrison at Fort Dunree was reduced. In the decades that followed the Fort was used for



A view from behind a 6 inch gun on the upper level looking out towards the north end of Ballmastocker beach

training purposes by various units within the Irish Defence Forces.

The guns were last fired in 1964 and then partially dismantled by the army in 1968. The complex was used in 1969 as a temporary reception centre for refugees from the north of the country and this was the last time the Fort was manned by regular troops.

In 1990 the Department of Defence vacated the Fort and in 1994 the Fort Dunree Military Museum Ltd gave the complex a new lease of life; a new and exciting chapter in the Fort's history commenced.

Today one can visit this magnificent Fort and museum with its breathtaking views of the Lough, and enjoy this magnificent piece of history that spans centuries.

For further information and to plan a visit

[www.dunree.pro.ie](http://www.dunree.pro.ie)  
[dunree@eircom.net](mailto:dunree@eircom.net)





"A ship is nothing without its crew."

# DF PODCAST

## LÉ ROISÍN REFIT - LT GARY JORDAN

By Tony O'Brien Photos provided by Lt Gary Jordan

It is some journey from helping to crew a luxury super yacht in the Caribbean to the sturdier, more demanding life on board an Irish Naval Service vessel. But for Gary Jordan it was an important learning experience.

Lt (NS) Jordan later transferred to the cruise liner Queen Mary II sailing between Southampton in the UK and the United States of America. Here came more valuable lessons which he would eventually bring back to his Navy comrades and working life.

In a Defence Forces Podcast interview with Capt Cian Clancy, the Cork native explained how he went from being a young Cadet commissioned in 2007 to these days overseeing the multi-million mid-life refit of the LÉ Roisín and LÉ Niamh. The life of both vessels will be extended by up to 15 years.

"I joined the Naval Service as a school leaver in 2003, as an Executive Branch Cadet. During that time I realised that the subjects I was doing were more aligned to Marine Engineering. I transferred during my first year in Cadets and studied Maritime and Plant Engineering in the National Maritime College of Ireland in Ringaskiddy. From there it was



Specialists from Original Equipment Manufacturer are often required during the most in depth inspections and overhauls.

between College and seagoing experience", he recalls.

After graduating in 2007, Gary took on further sea time to gain a Watchkeeping Certificate to become a 4th Engineer. Further time at sea led to completion of second engineering Watchkeeping ticket. "I took up a position on the LÉ Aoife in 2012. From there I was afforded an opportunity to complete a Diploma in small craft surveillance." Following completion of his time on-board the LÉ Aoife, Gary was engaged in shore-based appointments in what is called the Planning Inspectorate and Maintenance Management Office.

Then in 2014, he made a big decision: "I applied for Leave of Absence for a career break. The objective of that was to expand my education and gain a further qualification in Chief Engineering." But it certainly wasn't plain sailing. "I spent just over a year on a super yacht based in the Caribbean and South of France and during that time I was lucky to study for an MSc in Marine Surveying. I was doing that at the same time," he said adding: "When I finished on the super yacht I moved on to the Queen Mary II, the cruise liner that was again over and back between Southampton and USA."

Gary headed back to the Defence Forces in 2016 and completed his Chief Engineering course. In the role of MEO



The regular drydocking of naval vessels is key part of a multi-annual maintenance plan.





Every part of a LÉ Róisín main engine is machined to fine tolerances, and requires skilled rigging to lift safely.

on the LÉ Niamh, he eventually found himself back down in the Mediterranean - this time on a Navy ship as opposed to a super yacht and doing a much different job. In 2018 while still on board the LÉ Niamh he completed a Certificate in Naval Architecture to further his education. In fact, he also became a member of the Royal Institute of Naval Architects.

After finishing two-and-a-half years on board the LÉ Niamh, Gary found himself in his current role, as Project Manager on the mid-life extension for the LÉ Róisín. Built in the UK and commissioned in service in 1999, the 78 metres offshore patrol vessel would normally have a crew of 44. Explaining what would prompt a refit, Gary said such a ship would have a normal life expectancy of 30 years. "We've gone a little over the 15 years here. We also have major electrical upgrades that need to take place; there are technological advances constantly going on in the maritime industry as well, so we have to make sure we are up to modern speed with those systems. Mainly the objective then is to advance and upgrade the ship."

Dealing with his specific role as Project Manager, Gary said he wasn't actually involved in the planning stages for the programme itself. This was done by a separate team and Gary was still on board the LÉ Niamh at that time. "They would have touched base with me at the beginning to get some advice on what was required on the vessel. There was a separate project team based ashore, it took about two years for the planning of it. There was a lot of OEMs – original equipment manufacturers – and there were a lot of interviews with them. We would have engaged with a lot of stakeholders, we would have feasibility studies done, and surveys carried out and there would have been further investigations into the best equipment required to get on board," he stated.

There were three people in the Project Management Office and once the planning process was finished, it was into the execution phase. From there, said Gary, it was a case of continuously monitoring and controlling the project itself,



The servicing of main engine turbochargers is highly specialised work. They spin at thousands of RPM, and experience hundreds of degrees of heat from exhaust gases.

making sure the schedule of work is kept, the budget is maintained adding: "Obviously it is a significant budget for a project and programme like this – and there was constant engagement with the main contractor, including OEMs and service engineers coming over. The crew was also on board at the time, so there was constant engagement with them as well."

The actual work on the refit of the LÉ Róisín was done in three phases.



A row of engine cylinder heads awaiting individual overhaul in a marine engineering workshop.

Phase 1 – Dry Dock

Phase 2 – Wet Berth

Phase 3 – Outfitting and Refitting

Phase 1 involved bringing the ship into dry dock. "The ship is out of water on blocks and held in that dry dock. Underneath the ship is fully inspected, there is the removal of propellers, drive shafts, stabilisers etc. It is a full survey of the under hull of the ship," said Gary.

What also happened in the dry dock, for this project in particular, was full grit blasting of the ship from front to back. "Which is basically high pressure grit blasted at the ship to remove the paint which brings it back to red sealings. That gives us an opportunity to do ultrasonic testing on the full hull, to see if there is degradation on it. There is a minimum thickness required on the hull on ships and it is to see if that has gone down to its minimum and is there a requirement for steel to be replaced," he said.

Speaking about one of the major replacement jobs undertaken, Gary said sewage and fresh water equipment is normally located below the water line. These had to be removed and replaced in dry dock which required cutting out of the steel in that area of the ship. There was reconfiguration required there too, to conform to best practice and regulations. There was also a need to increase the size of the plant required.



Stabilization hydraulics are complicated systems which combine cutting edge electronic input with precision engineering to operate massive stabilization fins under the hull.





Each keel block and each supporting beam are placed according to a well laid plan.

Asked if this was to simply move on from what was needed in 1999, he said: "Yes, you have constant updates in maritime requirements and regulations, but it was also down to obsolescence in parts, which played a big role in the extension project as well. There was machinery and equipment there from the original build and those spare parts aren't available anymore. Also, the original manufacturing companies would have moved on in their technology and plant and machinery and we have to keep up to speed with them."

The second phase, he said, was over a much longer period. There was significant electrical work to be carried out. There was a full cable replacement on board, upgrading all the electronic systems, comms systems, talk-back systems, giro, compasses, control systems etc. Some minor services also took place such as removal of pipe work, removal of pumps, and replacement of all those systems, along with the replacement of the boat launching cranes with upgraded versions of the previous cranes. In addition, there was a replacement of all anchor handling machinery and anchor replacement as well.

A big challenge that was required to be addressed during this work, explained Gary, was that during the survey they found there was huge degradation within an exhaust gas silencer, a two-story unit with insulation and soundproofing. "Once we found they were damaged just from age, it was required to move the actual funnel of the ship, taking off the top of the ship basically to remove these and replace them with new ones. It was a challenge then, in the middle of that, it was throwing the schedule out of sync and adding to budgetary costs. These are all the challenges we faced as a Project Team," he said.

The silencers, he said, helped silence the noise of engines inside the ship and outside. "It is the exhaust gas coming up through it; we have insulation surrounding it the whole way up so the entire funnel had to come off."

Phase 3 was the outfitting and refitting of the interior of the



The galley is a key hub of any ship. Naval chefs work in all weathers to the highest standards.

ship. "This is where the ship was brought back to Haulbowline Naval Base and the work carried out here. The unfortunate thing is we met two challenges there: the Pandemic COVID-19 and Brexit. It just made things a lot more difficult, trying to get spare parts in, trying to getting service engineers over, that was the first challenge we faced. We were hoping it would be a straightforward phase."

He added: "Part of the interior work involved outfitting of the galley, the ship's kitchen. That was brought back right to the steel base – steel floor, steel walls – we brought in our own chefs from the Naval Base and got them to assist in the design of it. At the end of the day they are the end users, they are the guys that will be trying to cook our meals when they are out at sea, so it was just trying to make things easier for them."

Other interior issues included soft furnishings, decks, floors, mess areas and living spaces. "Again, the aim there was just to upgrade it and make things more comfortable for people when at they are at sea," said Gary.

Internally as well, there had to be machinery upgrades: the main engines were also serviced, generators, air compressors, all the machinery – all the work that could be done there without specialist contractors having to be



A generator is maintained according to its running hours. Here one is undergoing a complete rebuild; the only part remaining in place is its crankcase.

brought in. "Where we found those challenges with Brexit and the pandemic was bringing in OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) and service engineers in to commission systems," he said.

Gary explained how he had two colleagues in the office who were working in the background to bring in all the new equipment: "Assets as we call them. So they had to go on to the system, they had to be captured as new equipment and all their maintenance had to be uploaded. Basically, you are nearly starting fresh with a new ship!"

The important thing, emphasised Gary, was to speak to the people on the ground, the end users. "As I mentioned about upgrading the interior messes, this is where the crew have their downtime, it had to suit them. It had to be comfortable for them especially at sea, as they are all in there together. So it was a common-sense approach to bring all the end users in and discuss all these options with them."

Asked about the process of getting the Lé Roisín ready to go back to sea, he said: "Effectively you are breathing life into a ship that has been idle for two years. So it is going to be a slow process. We did our own snag list on-board first, to see what we were going to be facing. Then we moved into what's called the Harbour Acceptance Trials (HATS). This is a significant area, a significant milestone, it is a long



period as well. It is running up every bit of equipment, testing everything, testing their limits; alongside seeing what the issues are and dealing with the OEMs and service engineers on that. Basically, it is ticking all the boxes to ensure that the ship is safe to operate, prior to going out to sea."

Talking about the challenges they met, Gary said the pandemic was the major one. "It would probably have been completed sooner, but we ended up having a delay due to guys trying to get work done where there is social distancing involved; trying to get service engineers in from Italy or even the UK was difficult. There were quarantine issues, there were red lists, we've been through all that. We got over the Brexit side of things with delays in parts coming in, but we lost time due to the delays as a result of the pandemic."

Then, of course, when the work is done, the ship has to go back to sea: "One thing I noticed, when we were ready to go on sea trials, was the pride in the Captain's face – Cmdr Grace Fanning – it was a very proud moment for her, she has been with the ship since it began its downtime. For her to bring it out to the harbour then was a huge moment for her, for ourselves in the Project Management office, as well as for the crew. They then began the sea acceptance trails, which is putting all the machinery through its paces; pushing them to their limits, just to operate everything that has been changed and upgraded."

The majority of checks, he said, were completed during the HATS – the Harbour Acceptance Trials – when everything was run up. "The Sea Acceptance Trials were just about a week long; just to run everything up in the environment at sea and make sure everything held together in a way to take the sea. So they completed that within a week which was good. HATS was about four or five weeks long, that was the real important one."

But before LÉ Roisín heads out to sea on formal duty, another box-ticking exercise had to be carried out. The ship came back to dry dock for a week. "That is just basically to confirm everything underneath has survived the sea trails. Then she should be ready to go fully operational. So we are at the close-out phase of this project and opening up for the next one," said Gary.

Next in line to undergo work as part of the Naval Service's mid-life extension programme is the LÉ Niamh. She came into service in 2001 and, as a result, meets the criteria for the life extension programme. "So, we are beginning the initiation of that now as well. A lot of lessons have been learned so we can take them over to it. Myself and my Project Management team are carrying on this one. It will be a new crew to face their challenges over in dry dock," he said.

Of course, presiding over two such vital, multi-million euro projects for the Irish Naval Service is a daunting task. But Gary Jordon holds no fears: "It's been great experience, just learning the Project Management processes. I have actually begun undertaking a Master's in Project Programme Management since last September in the University of Limerick. So it's all kind of linked together, it suits being able to apply your theory to practise live with the programme."

## AN COSANTOIR – LÉ ROISÍN REFIT - PANEL

### LÉ RÓISÍN P51

LÉ ROISÍN (the first of the Roisín class of vessel) was built in Appledore Shipyards in the UK for the Naval Service. Naval Service engineers stood by her construction at all stages. She was built to a design that optimises her patrol performance in Irish waters (which are the roughest in the world), all year round. For that reason a greater length overall (78.8m) was chosen, giving her a long sleek appearance and allowing the opportunity to improve the conditions onboard for her crew. Onboard facilities include more private accommodation, a gymnasium and changing /storage areas for boarding teams.



### Ship's Name

Róisín or Róisín Dúbh, though now usually portrayed as an allegory for Ireland, was probably one of the daughters of Red Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone in the late 16th Century. Like many young noble women of the time, she was married several times while quite young. One marriage was probably to Hugh O'Donnell, Earl of Tyconnell and another to O'Cahain of Innishowen. Such Dynastic marriages were not unusual and under Irish law, marriage was a purely secular matter and the church had no real involvement in it.

The poem Róisín Dúbh is one of those poems of which almost everyone has heard but very few actually read. It is almost certainly a love poem to a real woman, not to an abstraction of idealised womanhood or an allegory of the country. Such poems were not unusual, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries, but the language of 'Róisín Dúbh' is quite different. The other poems tend to express admiration for the beauty and courage of the lady being eulogised but they never express the sense of lust that comes across in the poem.

### Ship's Characteristics

Type	Long Offshore Patrol Vessel
Length	78.84m
Beam	14m
Draught	3.8m
Main Engines	2 X Twin 16 cly V26 Wartsila 26 medium speed Diesels. 5000 KW at 1,000 RPM 2 Shafts
Speed	23 knots
Range	6000 Nautical Miles @ 15 knots
Crew	44 (6 Officers)
Commissioned	18 September 2001
Weaponary Aboard	
Main Armament	76mm OTO Melara Canon Radamec Fire Control System
Secondary Armament	2 X 20mm Rheinmetall Rh202 Canon 2 X 12.7mm Heavy Machine Gun
Small Arms	Various small arms ranging from: 9mm Pistol to 7.62mm General Purpose Machine Gun

\*You can listen to the full Podcast interview here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NmMniq-bbE>



# LT NS TAHLIA BRITTON DIVER



Lt NS Britton gives the thumbs up after initially entering the water fully kitted for a dive

By Tony O'Brien  
Photos by AB David Jones

After a helicasting exercise Lt NS Britton is seen here swimming to a RHIB

Surfing, lifesaving and a love of the sea in her native Rosssnowlagh, Donegal in many ways meant that Tahlia Britton's future was mapped out from an early date. It had to have something to do with water and the sea.

So it was no surprise then that the 30-year-old Donegal woman found her natural home in the Irish Naval Service. Nor was it any surprise when last year she became the first female member of the Navy's diving Unit (officially known as the Naval Service Diving Section).

Tahlia tended towards a military career from early on, but when she expressed that ambition to a careers adviser in school, it didn't go down well. "She kept saying 'no, no, you don't want to do that' and pointed me towards science. So I did a degree in Podiatry in NUIG, essentially a foot doctor. "But the lure of the sea and military life never went away. "I studied for years for the degree but I couldn't see myself working in Podiatry for evermore. Actually, in my final year had already applied for a Cadetship. I applied to the Army as well as the Navy, but as the process went on I knew it had to be the Navy."

With very supportive parents, once she had her degree, Tahlia set about her 24 months of training for the Naval Service with the 91st Cadet Class. The initial three months of the Naval Cadetship is conducted in the Military College, Defence Forces Training Centre along with cadets from the Army and Air Corps, the focus of which is to learn about the basics of soldiering. She found those early months – marching, learning to shoot etc – very Army focussed. "There was no naval element, very little mention of studying, as well as the practical elements; at the end of which Tahlia emerged with a Nautical Science Degree. "They were training us to be leaders and overtime, you had to develop your own leadership styles. We are all still developing in that regard, you never really stop. Looking back objectively on the training I now, I think it was great! Although at the time I thought it was hellish, including travelling home to Donegal at weekends, which could take as long as 12 hours depending on the means of transport I had to take. As cadets we initially were not permitted to use our own cars."

So she was happy when she shifted back to the National Maritime College of Ireland in Haulbowline and the training became more relevant to her future career. The first thing to happen there was "marinisation" where she had to get used to naval life and the basics of being a sailor, including seamanship, gunnery and engineering. "There was pretty intensive studying, as well as the practical elements; at the end of which Tahlia emerged with a Nautical Science Degree. "They were training us to be leaders and overtime, you had to develop your own leadership styles. We are all still developing in that regard, you never really stop. Looking back objectively on the training I now, I think it was great! Although at the time I thought it was hellish, including travelling home to Donegal at weekends, which could take as long as 12 hours depending on the means of transport I had to take. As cadets we initially were not permitted to use our own cars."

There was plenty of learning skills of seafaring and navigation too. "You go to sea for up to eight weeks: getting used to life on board, working

with the crew, learning basic seamanship skills," she recalls, adding that she spent plenty of time on board the L.É. NIAMH and the L.É. EITHNE. A particularly interesting element in the initial years was three months of "work experience" with the Merchant Navy, when she worked with a merchant shipping company called D'Amico. This was a real learning experience for Tahlia: "It was obviously much different from what we do in the Navy but it was a valuable lesson in terms of merchant shipping, dealing with cargoes and being at sea with various nationalities. I visited Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and other places and it was great to visit these parts of the world."

Tahlia eventually qualified as a Naval Watchkeeper, which is a big responsibility on board, as one is in charge of the safe navigation of the ship and all of her crew. Her first posting was as Gunnery Officer on the L.É. JAMES JOYCE. "You are essentially in charge of all weapons systems onboard. It's quite a responsible job but I enjoy it. I have a great crew within Gunnery Department onboard which helps make everything run well."

But Tahlia wasn't content to leave it at that. The former surf life-saving champion, who had competed for Ireland at international level, had her eye on becoming a Navy diver. "I guess it goes back to my younger days of surfing and surf life-saving in Rosssnowlagh. I always had a love of the sea", she explains, "They advertise every year, so I saw the advertisement looking for members of the diving Unit. I applied and was delighted to be given the opportunity to undertake the course."

There were 10 on the course and she was the only woman. But she found she had to put in a lot more work to, as she puts it, "level the playing field and catch up with the men" in terms of physical strength because of the weight of diving equipment etc.

"Beforehand I put in a good deal of gym work, because I had to gain upper body strength; an area where men may have a natural advantage," she said adding that the diving course is very much about perseverance and mental resilience as well as physical ability.

Even with training being interrupted for a period because of COVID, she came through it all and Tahlia became the first female member of the Navy diving Unit. "It's important to say that I am treated as an equal, because I've had to prove myself on the exact same playing field as everyone else, so that we can all be held to the same standard," she says.

But she is keen to emphasise that teamwork was a massive part of the Diving Course: "I wouldn't have been able to achieve what I have without the people who were willing to help me from pre-course training, to giving me advice and even the encouraging words of motivation to help me



through the course.

Tahlia loves her new role as a Naval diver. "Being the first female Irish Naval Diver is a great personal accomplishment. If what also comes out of this is more females applying or even more males applying for the course with the thought that 'if she can do it, I can', then I'll only be delighted." Naval divers are involved in search and rescue, hull surveys and underway maintenance as well as other "jobs" and Tahlia got an early introduction of what being a Naval diver really meant. "Only a few weeks after qualification we were called out on a search for a missing person off the Kerry coast."

Promoted to Lieutenant (Naval Service) since then, Tahlia is looking forward to a long and happy career ahead in the Navy. "There is a natural progression in the Naval Service but I suppose, ultimately, I would like to be a Ship's Captain, but for the moment I am very happy with what I am doing," she said.



Lt NS Britton prior to commencing a dive

## NAVY DIVERS

The Naval Service Diving Section (NSDS) has been in existence since the late 1960s. From humble beginnings as an internal diving team for the ships in the fleet, it has evolved into the State's primary State diving capability, carrying out many varied tasks for a number of State Agencies.

The NSDS have an air diving capability to go to 50 metres and a mixed gas capability, which adds an additional level of flexibility and capability. The NSDS operates one of Ireland's two Recompression Chambers (RCC). It also has several further capabilities allowing for enhanced search and even more complex operations. Examples include Remote Operated Vehicles (ROV), Side Scan Sonar and Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs).

These allow the NSDS to search and survey to a much greater depth than divers can operate. Indeed the ROV is rated to over 1000 metres depth. In deep water where diving is severely restricted or unattainable, the search equipment allows the Naval Service to perform search and recovery operations.

The following are the primary roles of the NSDS:

- Search and Recovery
- Underwater Survey
- Mine Counter Measures/Explosive Ordnance Disposal
- Underwater Engineering
- Military Diving Training

As well as naval diving, the NSDS is frequently requested, under Aid to the Civil Power and Authority mechanisms, to give support to other state



Diving team entering the water



Lt NS Britton with other members of the diving team

agencies. Divers are involved in an average of 15 searches for missing persons during each year. These tragic situations can last up to two weeks at a time and although there are never any guarantees, the NSDS has a high success rate when dealing with these operations.

In the ongoing battle against drug importation, the NSDS have assisted Revenue Commissioners and carried out underwater searches on many vessels arriving in Irish Ports.

The nature of Search and Recovery operations are varied, some recent examples however include:

- In search of missing persons
- Objects on seabed
- Recovery of evidence for an Gardaí Síochána.
- Underwater searches of suspect vessels for the Revenue Commissioners.
- Search and recovery of vehicles in water for Fire Services
- Search of missing vessels, persons, investigation of sunken vessels for the Department of Marine

The NSDS is the sole training establishment for military diving in the Defence Forces. As well as training Naval Service divers, the Section also provides training for the Army Ranger Wing, in air and combat diving techniques.

In order to achieve the capabilities outlined above, the training for Naval divers is intensive. While many apply and commence training, very few complete training and qualify as military divers. The diving course lasts over 10 weeks and takes volunteers from the Naval Service - with little or no diving experience - and trains them to dive using Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA) and Surface Supplied Diving Equipment (SSDE). Divers are trained in seabed search techniques including zero visibility and strong tidal conditions.

Typically 30 personnel will apply to commence the course — with, on average, four divers successfully completing the training. On completion of the training, the divers then begin to gain valuable experience as they respond to the many tasks that are undertaken by the NSDS.

In order to remain qualified as a diver or supervisor, divers meet the following annual criteria:

- General Defence Forces Fitness Test
- Diving Medical Examination
- Divers Physical Fitness Test
- Evaluation of Competency and Currency in Equipment
- Required time diving or supervising to be achieved on specific tasks



Divers completing decompression training after a deep dive





# REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVED

Eddie McCarthy, Branch Treasurer; Diarmuid Higgins Branch Secretary; Mick McCarthy Branch President; Pat Feen Branch Chairman, outside the new hostel in Cobh. Photo: Dermot Higgins

By NS Press Office  
Photos by NS Press Office

Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann (ONE) provides Support, Comradeship, Advocacy and Remembrance (SCAR) for Irish Veterans. The Organisation of National Ex-Servicemen was formed at the Mansion House in Dublin in 1951. It brought together the National Federation of Irish Ex-Servicemen and the Association of Regular Ex-Servicemen which had emerged following demobilisation after the Emergency.

ONE was strictly non-political and non-sectarian, and it remains so today. Lieutenant General Michael Joe Costello, the founder of An Cosantóir, was elected the organisation's first president. On the inception of the unified body there were approximately 180,000 ex-service personnel in Ireland, General Costello sent this message to all ex-servicemen:

"It is important that we remember what brings us together – what interest we have in common. It is quite simply the common bond of past service in Ireland in her armed forces. We are old comrades in arms wishing to maintain and strengthen old associations and traditions."

## Service matters

ONE believes that service matters, be it one or forty years. ONE defines a military veteran as one who has served at least one year and has been honourably discharged. Membership is open to Permanent Defence Forces (PDF), Reserve Defence Forces (RDF), An Slua Muirí, An Fórsa Cosanta Áitiúil (FCÁ), Maritime Inspection, Local Defence Force (LDF), Local Security Force (LSF), Coast Watching Service, Construction Corps, Irish Red Cross or Civil Defence and An Garda Síochána.

The majority of the veterans that ONE helps are male. The newly appointed Gender, Diversity & Inclusion Advisor Deirdre Carbery (Capt Rtd) says that, "ONE have developed a new Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, consisting of measurable goals and objectives that will assist us in identifying the barriers to full & equal participation and any opportunities there are to develop specific services."



ONE Colour Party Gordon Kinsella. Photo by SCPO Gordon Kinsella



ONE Chief Executive Ollie O'Connor and Irish United Nations Veterans Association member Paddy Gilford. Comrade Veterans.

As the first female to serve on the board she says, "We are committed to taking action to increase women's participation across the organisation and in identifying how we can better support the needs of women veterans."

ONE recognise diversity & inclusion as an organisational priority and are embracing it in its most holistic sense; sex, age, ethnicity, gender & sexual orientation. Deirdre says the message is that "ONE values you and wants you as a member because you are unique and because together, we are stronger. By nurturing different perspectives, we will encourage open dialogue and new ideas in a trusting and respectful environment. That will enable us to connect with veterans across Ireland."

## ONE Branches

While all ONE branches are open to any veteran member, there are three ONE branches with strong NS connections. We asked the incoming ONE President Dermot Higgins, who assumes office shortly, to tell us about its important work and its plans for the future.

"There are 3 branches with a large NS connection. Cobh, Commander George Crosbie and the Erskine Childers Branch in Dublin. The Cobh branch is my home branch."

"The Cdr Crosbie branch was founded in 1990. The Erskine Childers branch was set up in Dublin, and brought together former members living in the capital. It provides a link to continue their comradeship with former shipmates."

Dermot describes just some of the incredible work and community engagement of his local ONE branch: "The Cobh branch is involved in a lot of events locally in the Cobh and greater East Cork area. We play a big part in commemorations of the Lusitania and Titanic disasters. The branch also plays a part in remembering those who lost their lives in the War of Independence, the Civil War and the Cork Harbour Tragedy. We also commemorate those lost in the Great War."

As Dermot describes, all the branches are engaged in providing





Deirdre Carbery (Capt Rtd), ONE Gender, Diversity & Inclusion Advisor.

support to veterans. Much of the work being a collaborative effort, between all, to quietly assist those veterans who need it. He encourages any veteran to reach out, the ONE is here for them, because "...as well as remembrance we also provide assistance to veterans. We provide food hampers at Christmas and Easter and other times as necessary. Our branch welfare officer is Jimmy Losty, former PSS NCO in Haulbowline. As with all such services confidentially is a prerequisite, and guaranteed."

The Irish Naval Association is another independent group who, under their current President Bryan Gildea (Lt (NSR) Rtd.), provide an outlet for veterans.

### A life less ordinary

We asked Dermot to tell us about his own journey; he describes having a connection to the military from childhood, "From a young age I was always interested in the Army. Having grown up listening to stories of my grandparents, who were involved in the war of independence, plus my uncle who was in the Air Corps as an apprentice."

Military life began in 1977 when he "...started my career in September as an apprentice electrician. I spent three years in Naas, combining military and trade training. I passed out 3rd July 1980, a bittersweet moment, as my parents were not at my passing out. My dad passed away on 4th July about an hour after I arrived home. I was posted to the Naval Service as an apprentice electrical artificer. A big change to go from green to blue."

A ton class Minesweeper was Dermot's first posting in 1980. It was there on LÉ Grainne, that as Dermot describes it that "...my love of the sea was born. At that time, the Naval Service was unheard of outside of Cobh or the coastal towns. Indeed, a lot of people did not even know we had a Naval Service. I didn't until I was posted to it.

"I spent a lot of my early years in the NS on the Minesweepers, LÉ Grainne and LÉ Fola until their decommissioning in 1986. It became a matter of pride coming to the end of the sweepers to get them out for one more patrol."

Having had such a wide and varied career at sea, and having served on eight different ships, we asked Dermot what were the some of the most memorable occasions. He says that "One of the highlights of my career was when I was posted to LÉ Eithne in June 1986. She was NS ship to transit the North Atlantic. We made our first port of call in Bermuda and then on to New York for the rededication of the Statue of Liberty. We were the last surface ship to enter New York Harbour



Incoming ONE President Dermot Higgins

and took the salute from approximately 45 other naval ships from around the world. A proud moment as the Irish Navy took its place among the navies of the world. I still remember that trip even though it was over 35 years ago."

Another highlight for Dermot was the much loved and storied NS pipe band, "I started playing drums with the Thomas Davis Pipe Band in Mallow when I was 10. I was one of the first to join the newly formed Naval Service Pipe Band. The highlight of the band's short life was winning the Defence Force Pipe Band Championship in 1996. The band was disbanded shortly after that."

### Cobh Veterans Support Centre

Today, ONE is a veteran's organisation, a registered charity for all veterans of the Defence Forces, a company limited by guarantee (CLG) and an approved housing body (AHB). Its primary objective is to support the needs of Irish veterans - by the provision of accommodation to homeless veterans in its Veterans' Hostels - and the provision of other advice and support to veterans through its nationwide network of Branches and Veterans' Support Centres. ONE's services are available to all veterans, the women and men of the Defence Forces. They also facilitate homeless veterans from other countries living in Ireland from time to time.

ONE currently provides accommodation (board and lodging) for approximately 49 veterans, who otherwise would be homeless, in its three residential homes in Athlone, Dublin and Letterkenny. ONE has created a nationwide network of Veteran's Support Centres (VSC) based around its 36 Branches. ONE is developing a 5-bedroom hostel in Cobh to address the increasing challenge of homelessness among veterans. This will be followed by a 6-bedroom facility in Cork City, leading to the availability of more single rooms for homeless veterans.

Dermot says that 'Cobh and Cdr Crosbie branches will be running the VSC in Cobh jointly, ensuring that there will always be someone there to provide assistance when required.' One of its biggest fundraisers is the annual Fuschia Collection. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this vital source of fundraising has been unable to take place. Dermot, speaking to The Journal, said that 'Everyone knows what the British Legion poppy is. We're trying to promote what the Fuschia is.'

### Best wishes

In offering his congratulations to all serving sailors, veterans and their families, on the occasion of the anniversary, Dermot says that "In a career that spanned 21 years I thoroughly enjoyed my service life. I had good times and bad times but the good times far outweigh the bad. I made lifelong comrades that I'm still in contact with from my first day in Naas in 1977. Civilians have friends, we have comrades."



The Fuschia Appeal is ran annually, and its watchword is 'Cuimhnimis'.backroll into the water



The colours of the Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel.



# THE STEADFAST COAST WATCHERS: DEFENDING IRELAND'S COASTS THROUGH THE EMERGENCY

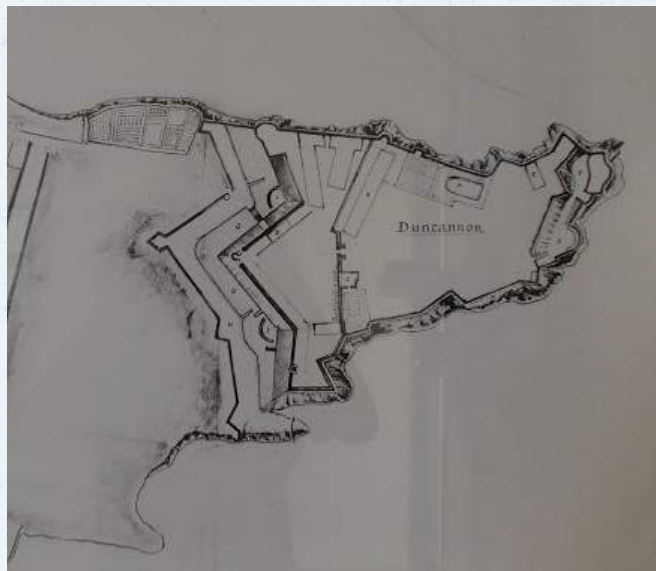
By Andrew Doherty

The outbreak of World War II put the new Irish state to a severe test. Faced with invasion from both sides in the conflict, and a need to protect its stated neutrality, a broad range of measures were introduced including the development of a sea bourn presence and a shore based watch. This new entity would be called the Marine and Coast Watching Service. This article will look at the latter service, and with one specific incident, highlight the important role they provided.

The Marine and Coast Watching service was established in September 1939. It combined a sea bourn presence and coast watchers. The coast watchers had been initiated earlier that year, on the understanding that war was imminent and look outs were needed to monitor and record events off the coast. Recruits were advertised for, and a preference was for men from the local area with experience of the sea. However payment was basic and those serving have been described as the cheapest men in the defence forces.

Waterford Harbour was served by two Look Out Posts (LOPs); Hook Head (LOP 16) in Co Wexford and Brownstown Head (LOP 17) in Co Waterford. Elsewhere in Waterford Harbour, preparations were made for the anticipated confrontation. Defensive pill boxes were built at Dunmore East and along some of the main roads into Waterford City. Road signage was removed, and in some cases the old limestone milestones that lined the roads from the mail packet era were toppled and buried where they lay. A minefield was laid between Passage East and Ballyhack operated from the shore, to be detonated on the arrival of an enemy fleet. The old quarantine hospital at Passage East was refurbished and readied for action and the Irish Army reoccupied Duncannon Fort.

Construction of the LOPs began immediately, but it took time to complete the infrastructure. Early positions were sometimes little more than a canvas tent to provide some semblance of shelter.



An old sketch map of Duncannon Fort

Initially some posts were lucky because of their positioning to have a telephone connection, but for many, communication was via bike to the nearest telephone, until lines could be run.

When fully established, the coastline was served by 83 LOPs with 700 recruits of all ranks. Seven men were led by an NCO to staff each post, and these were grouped in 18 districts. These were overseen by a district officer.

A manmade EIRE sign (made by the staff of the LOP) and the Post number was added from 1943. It seems that the initial signs were small and not a uniform design, but the final signs were of a standard measurement; the letters being twelve meters long by six meters high, surrounded by a rectangular stone border.

Each post had two men operating an eight-hour shift. LOP 17 was manned by the following: Corporals Richard Hanrahan and Thomas Keoghan. Volunteers: J Corcoran, Patrick Dunne, J Esmond, John Fitzgerald, J Keogh, John Keoghan, P Lennon, J O'Grady, J O'Shea, John 'Bulligan' Power

Basic training consisted of signalling, first aid,

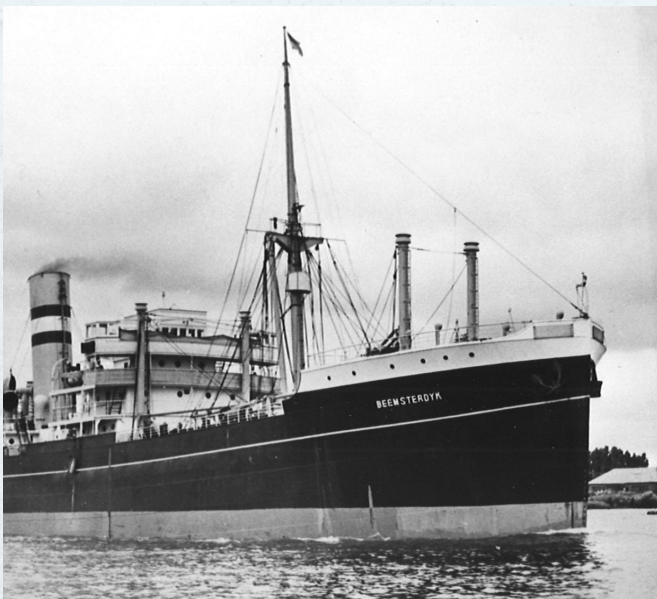


maritime practices, identification of ships, submarines and aircraft, meteorology and hydrography. The men of the LOPs were the eyes and ears of the State on the coastline. They were often the first on the scene of washed up corpses and mines, witnesses to aerial infringements and dog fights, attacks on shipping and they provided up to the minute reports to Army Intelligence.

The men at LOP 17 served their own part in this important work, but arguably their most crucial activity occurred on Thursday 30th January 1941 when the two men on duty spotted something floating off the coast. Their keen eyes picked out the figures of men clinging to a life raft which was steadily drifting westwards and into Tramore Bay. A telephone connection allowed them to quickly alert Dunmore East and within minutes, the signal was sounded and the local lifeboat crew began to assemble.

The men they had spotted were the last of the 42 crew of the SS Beemsterdijk. Although the coast watchers couldn't know it at the time, these shipwrecked mariners were entering their fourth day adrift and were close to their limit of existence.

The Beemsterdijk (1922) was steel built, 6869 gross registered tons, Dutch registered vessel and 122.1m long. She had departed the Clyde in January 1941, with a mostly Dutch crew and was sailing with a new degaussing system, used to offset the threat of magnetic mines. On Sunday



The SS Beemsterdijk, which sunk near LOP 17

January 26th, the ship struck a British mine and was abandoned, all the crew getting safely away. An SOS had been sent and a reply received confirming a rescue was imminent. After an hour, a party went back aboard the ship as she was staying upright in the water. Following an examination, all the crew returned but the lifeboats were left alongside in case of emergency. They waited on deck all Sunday with eyes on the horizon for the rescue that never came. Further communications were sent and received, and later that night rockets were set off into the wintry night sky. A search had commenced but the area was in a position many miles distant. It is speculated that the degaussing system may have impeded the ship's compass and the reported location was an error.

By the morning of Monday the vessel had sunk very deeply and in strengthening winds the vessel started to pitch and sway. Although the Captain decided to abandon ship again, the order came too late. Beemsterdijk sank within moments leaving her 42 man crew struggling to get away. A few lucky ones made it to the surface but it would seem only four made it to a life raft, with no cover, no food and no water. The men were; 4th Engineer Van t'Hoff, Steward Peter Schrage, Bosun's Boy Stanley Gillard and a Galley Boy named Lennerts. Alone they drifted and although they came within sight of land at times they had no way of signalling. At one point on Tuesday 28th they were washed off and had to swim back to their raft. On the Wednesday Lennerts became overcome through exposure and disappeared off the raft overnight.

By the time the shipwrecked sailors were spotted by LOP 17 on Thursday 30th January the remaining three men were in a weakened state. The Dunmore Lifeboat received the shout at 10.20am and were launched and heading west in very rough conditions within ten minutes. The raft was spotted near the rocks on Newtown Head but in challenging conditions the lifeboat managed to get safely alongside when it was less than 300 feet from the shore. The bowman (Davy 'Muck' Murphy) leapt aboard the raft and the weakened and distressed sailors were helped aboard the lifeboat Annie Blanche Smith.





3 of the survivors of the SS Beemsterdijk from left to right: Willem Marinus van 't Hoff, Petrus Jacobus Schrage and Stanley William Gillard



A log book entry from the crew of LOP 17 in 1941

The raft was left to drift and the lifeboat returned to Dunmore East where a reception committee including Red Cross volunteers and an ambulance were waiting. Once ashore, the men were placed onto stretchers and removed to a local hotel. Meanwhile the life raft drifted onto the rocks at Tramore and was smashed to pieces. Although a rescue party had assembled on the shore in full readiness, it was the generally held opinion that in their weakened condition, the ship wrecked mariners would not have survived.

The sailors were cared for initially in Dunmore, before being removed to the Waterford County & City Infirmary for follow up treatment. Later the Waterford Standard interviewed both Van t'Hoff and Stanley Gillard in the Sailors Home in Henrietta Street, where they are under the care of Mr and Mrs Marno. Both men are fulsome in their praise for their rescuers and the kindness shown to them in Dunmore and later in Waterford.

All three men eventually returned home, but as was their calling, they returned to sea and more adventures. Peter Schrage went on to serve on many ships, being torpedoed in 1944 while on board the SS Bodegraven near West Africa, an ordeal he survived. After further treatment Willem Van t'Hoff went back and served throughout the war, finishing his career in 1966 as chief engineer aboard the SS Rotterdam. 17 year old Gillard returned to England, where he was able to identify a handful of bodies washed ashore near St. David's in Wales as that of his crew mates. He also went back to sea, his last trip ending in another shipwreck, 6 days adrift at sea and suffering frostbite.

The war for the men of LOP 17 would continue until 1945 and they would call out the lifeboat on several more occasions, amongst other duties. However, it is hard for me to say that anything they did was of more immediate importance than the duty they performed on that cold and blustery Thursday morning in January 1941. Their work was one of patience, observation, most probably boredom and certainly drudgery. But they did it

nonetheless. They were only part of a nationwide response to an era of great suffering and fear in the country, providing a duty that is generally overlooked and unremarked.

I'm sure each LOP had their own individual story to tell, but as Michael Kennedy pointed out in his fine work, *Guarding Neutral Ireland*, it was collectively that they played a more vital role. For in reporting to Army Intelligence on an hourly basis on the happenings around our coastline, they allowed a full picture to be grasped of not just the immediate threats to the state, but intelligence that was to prove invaluable to the Allies in their fateful struggle with the Axis forces too.

At the end of "The Emergency", the Coast Watching Service was demobilised while the Marine Service element would go on to become our Naval Service. While it is with pride we can appreciate the work of the Naval Service over the past 75 years, it's also important to remember its origins and the activities that were its foundation.

1. McIvor.A. *A History of the Irish Naval Service*. 2006. Irish Academic Press. Dublin. p71

2. Kennedy.M. *Guarding Neutral Ireland*. 2008. Four Courts Press. Dublin p21-22

3. For more on this period in the harbour see Colfer B. *The Hook Peninsula*. 2004. Cork University Press. Cork specifically pp199-201, Power.P. *History of Waterford City & County*. 1990. Mercier Press. Cork pp275-288. Andrew Doherty. *The Missing Mile Posts, Waterford Harbour Tides and Tales*. <https://tidesandtales.ie/the-missing-mileposts/>

4. Kennedy. *Guarding Neutral Ireland*. pp42-48

5. *Ibid* p33

6. *Ibid* pp244-252

7. Information sourced from private correspondence with Michael Farrell, Chair of Barony of Gaultier Historical Society and via <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/reading-room-collections/look-out-post-logbooks-september-1939-june-1945>

8. Kennedy. *Guarding Neutral Ireland*. p34

9. This following account comes primarily from Waterford Standard. Saturday Feb 8th 1941. p1 It is based on an article featuring an interview with Arthur Wescott Pitt, then chair of Dunmore East RNLI, who gave a description of the incident based on talking to the three survivors.

10. Carroll D. *Dauntless Courage: Celebrating the history of the RNLI lifeboats, their crews and the maritime heritage of the Dunmore East Community*. 2020. DVF Print & Graphics. Waterford. pp127-129

11. *Cork Examiner*. Friday January 31st 1941. p4

12. *Waterford Standard*. Saturday February 22nd 1941. p3

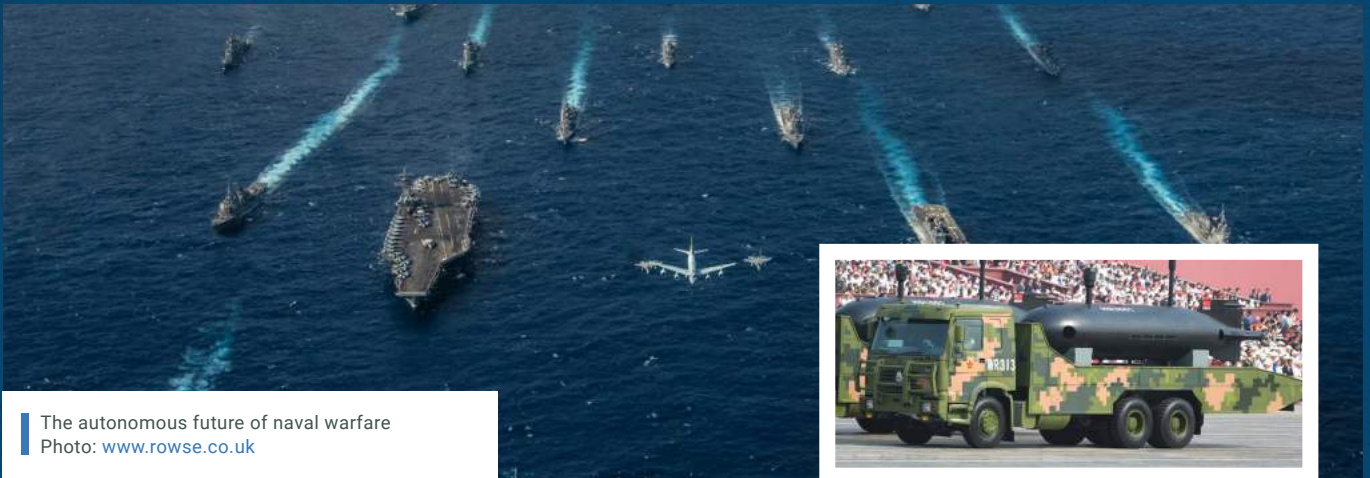
13. Personal correspondence with John van Kuijk, who also provided details from his blog on the topic at <https://www.nederlandsekoopvaardijww2.nl/en/>

14. See *Dauntless Courage* pp122-142 for the Emergency era call outs

15. Kennedy. *Guarding Neutral Ireland*. pp308-311



# THE NEXT 75 YEARS?



The autonomous future of naval warfare  
Photo: [www.rowse.co.uk](http://www.rowse.co.uk)

Chinese HSU-001 Unmanned Submarine Drones  
Photo Imagine China via AP Images

By Sgt Brendan Cruise, LLB, MA

**"A good Navy is not a provocation of war. It is the surest guarantee of peace"**

**US President Theodore Roosevelt 02 Dec 1902**

It's difficult to imagine what the first sailors of the newly formed Irish Naval Service in 1946 would think about the technology, operations, and personnel of today's modern flotilla. Would they think that modern sailors have gone 'soft' because of technology? Would they be surprised at the high standard and diversity of current naval operations? What would be their opinion of having a female captain of a warship?

For the large part, only speculation can answer these types of questions, but these thoughts about the past can also lead to considerations such as: what will the Irish Navy look like 75 years in the future?

It would be hard to see the Navy doing anything else other than embrace the rapidly developing technology of the world today. Evolving technology allow for high-level system performance analysis of dynamic systems thus giving decision-makers the insight they need to make confident choices while speeding up any risk analysis process. New technology on ship bridges will radically assist ships manoeuvring in narrow fairways, under difficult weather conditions making vast calculations in the blink of an eye. This type of system may help reduce situations such as the recent Suez Canal blockage. Ships may be able to 'talk' to each other through a system called Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships. This is being developed with the aim of creating fully autonomous systems that replace the role of human operators; thus potentially bringing about the demise of the Midshipman - although one or two may be kept to

ensure that the toll bridge at Dublin's East Link is paid.

Additionally, International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea requires there to be a human lookout present, in order to avoid collisions. The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea require ships to be able to assist in search and rescue operations, such as picking up survivors of a shipwreck.

New systems will offer a finite number of safe solutions, focusing on supporting collision detection in meeting and overtaking situations (for manned ships) or solving conflict automatically (for unmanned ships), much like Traffic Collision Avoidance System - which is found in modern aircraft. Navigation, route analyses and port operations will all become automated, by utilising advanced simulators and customised software. While the potential for this technology is endless, fully autonomous ships cannot replace all the manual ships overnight. Therefore, it is more than possible that the future waterborne transport system will include both human-operated and autonomous vessels.

The Gunnery Bay may see an upgrade in training of advanced weapons systems. One forerunner in this area is the AN/SEQ-3 Laser Weapon System or LaWS. This is a US weapons system currently deployed on the USS Portland and is designed to be a defensive laser weapon used against low-end asymmetric threats. It has scalable power levels that allow it to be used on low-power to dazzle a person's eye to non-lethally make them turn away from a threatening posture. It can have its power outage increased to 30 thousand watts to destroy sensors, burn out motors and detonate explosive materials. The LaWS has been used to shoot down small UAVs in as little as two seconds. It is also effective against larger aircraft, such as a helicopter, as LaWS can burn through some vital components, causing engine failure. When facing





JSV Maxlimer Shell Ocean Discovery X-Prize  
Photo by [MaritimeUK.Org](http://MaritimeUK.Org)

small boats, the laser would target a craft's motor to disable it and make it «dead in the water,» then repeating this against others in rapid succession, requiring only a few seconds of firing per boat. This advanced system is more efficient than individual crewmembers and also considerably accurate. These types of advanced defensive systems will only bring about the development of even more advanced offensive strike weapons, which may lead to a situation that is believed to have been described by Albert Einstein "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones" If this is indeed the case, then the Navy may have to employ an Hortator to control the cadence of any naval vessel.

The selection of a target or vessel will more than likely be done by means of optically equipped naval Unmanned Aerial Vehicle. These UAV will be able to provide real-time data and information about vessels, crew numbers, registration, weather fronts, port layouts, natural harbours. Plus provide long-term top cover in Search and Rescue scenarios, along with the potential for the delivery of on-site life-saving equipment, such as an inflatable life raft. The launch and recovery of these UAV will be easily managed from the stern of any naval vessel and will allow their operators to work in more comfortable surroundings, whether on a ship or on land.

UAV have been utilised to predict weather, an obvious key concern for life at sea, NASA have deployed drones to track and obtain data on hurricanes and other weather conditions - allowing for more accurate weather forecasts. An area of concern for the near and distant future is the changing arctic



U.S. Navy Afloat Forward Staging Base (Interim) USS Ponce (AFSB(I)-15) conducts an operational demonstration of the Office of Naval Research (ONR)-sponsored Laser Weapon System (LaWS) while deployed to the Arabian Gulf. U.S. Navy photo by John F. Williams

landscape and potential sea level rise due to climate change.

Global observational evidence shows the Arctic Ocean is losing sea ice and ice mass; hence the ice shelf is changing faster than any other location globally. Due to warming temperatures, sea levels are rising and precipitation patterns are changing with higher levels of weather extremes. Sea levels rose on average nearly half a foot over the 20th century, a rate faster than that in any century since at least 800 BC. The rise so far is mostly owing to thermal expansion, as warmer water takes up more space, but future sea-level changes are also likely to be driven by melting ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica.

All these events - either combined or singularly - could imperil and destabilise many regions domestically and abroad, resulting in strategic implications for many navies. Issues will range from drought-prone regions experiencing heightened disputes over water rights, to coastal areas facing mass human migration. The Arctic, where melting sea ice clears the way for new shipping lanes or more traditional lanes remaining open for longer periods of time, may also see an increase in mineral extraction. All these will be new opportunities for conflict.

Rising sea levels and related storm surges will have to be considered when designing new infrastructure projects on country scale and smaller organisational scale. The Navy may have to find innovative ways to protect its base from a beautiful enemy, Mother Nature. As the risk of damage to the domestic bases and ports, on which it depends to maintain fleet readiness, will also increase. Most navies, including Ireland, land-based assets—shipyards, bases, and other installations—are on seacoasts. So pre-emptive investment to prevent damage from rising seas and storm surges - along with enhancing the ability to recover rapidly when damage occurs - will be vital.

Climate change is also expected to increase the demand for disaster response and humanitarian assistance, with the latter being a task that the Irish Navy has already proven its worth at. However the need to plan - not for a new static world but for an increasingly dynamic one - may impair and test the capacity of any navy to deliver these services.

The Irish Navy can help mitigation against climate change by reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions. By switching to renewable fuels and replacing technologies with more-energy-efficient ones. Systems that will likely be capable of long-endurance missions, lasting several weeks to several months. This type of system efficiency may be found in the new era in naval power in unmanned underwater vehicles or UUVs. The underwater realm is a difficult environment because of the limitations of underwater communications, which makes some form of artificial intelligence (AI) mandatory. Although achieving interoperability - through the ability for UUVs to communicate with each other, even if they operate in the same area - will be difficult if not impossible. Different manufacturers UUVs mean a lack of common standards and protocols for wireless





A fleet of T-150's visited the flight deck of HMS Prince of Wales, photo by Malloy Aeronautics

communication. Even though AI has gone through a series of highs and lows, in terms of expectations, accomplishments and failures, there is an added security concern: as computer-based system artificially intelligent UUVs would be subject to enemy efforts to defeat them, including attempts to take control of the AI and possibly turn the system against its owners.

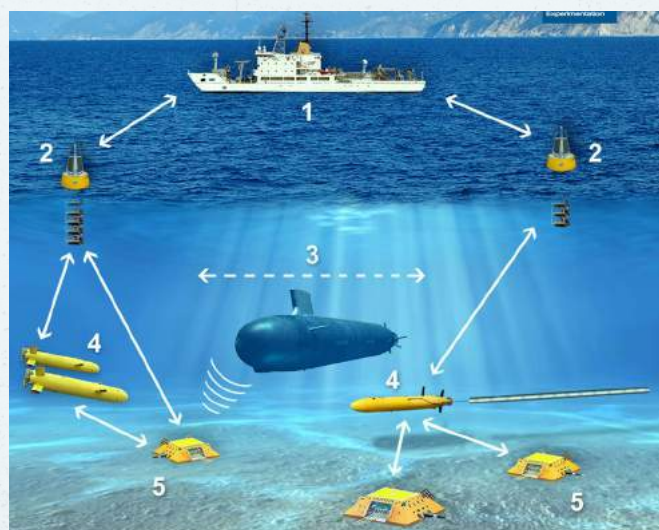
UUVs will bring significant changes to naval warfare, from longer range and endurance attack and surveillance operations amid minefields and enemy ships/submarines, to being able to strike undersea, surface, or land targets with improved targeting at long ranges. However, there will need to be established ethical guidelines for their use and it would be interesting to see just how this type of vessel could be integrated into the variety of operations conducted by the Irish Navy.

One aspect of concern where they may be able to utilise UUVs will be the protection of underwater cables within Irish maritime jurisdiction. Undersea cables carry more than 90% of the world's communications, including trillions of Euros worth of financial transactions every day! They also provide internet and communication links between nations and continents, so the need to protect these assets is vital. Now because of today's reliance on digital infrastructure, there is a growing concern that these underwater arteries could be vulnerable to attack and only recently the Irish Navy's Captain Brian Fitzgerald (now retired) stated that "....we have to develop a capability that will be able to respond to any threat to these sub-sea cables going forward, their importance is too great."

The British Royal Navy have indicated that they intend to order a new surveillance ship to monitor this critical infrastructure. The new Multi Role Ocean Surveillance ship is due to come into service in 2024 and be manned by a crew of 15. This vessel will be fitted with advanced sensors and will carry a number of remotely operated and autonomous undersea

drones, which will collect data. It is clear that these cables need to be protected and countries realise that they are of strategic importance. So as Captain Fitzgerald pointed out "...the ability to look under the sea is a crucial element of our state's architecture that we should be developing."

Technology will always be a forerunner in military services, but technology alone can only do so much. It is difficult to see the Navy being able to carry out the protection of marine assets, or countering arms smuggling and conducting illegal drugs interdiction via technology alone. Unless it's a first strike option, as opposed to a means of restraint. It is clear that countries and manufacturers are experimenting with new technologies such as autonomous systems, AI and directed energy weapons. The objective is to incrementally amplify existing symmetrical and asymmetrical capabilities and one wonders how long it will be and to what degree will the Irish Navy enter into the fray. Until such time it will be the fine and dedicated sailors who continue to ensure that the Irish Naval Service guarantee the security of Ireland's territorial waters.



Digital Underwater Networked Communications. NATO Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation (CMRE) graphic





Photo: NS Archives

# 75 YEARS OF SERVICE

By SCPO/ERA Ruairí de Barra MComm



A Group photo of the crew of the LÉ Grainne, date unknown.  
Photo: NS Archives

The celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Naval Service is a milestone in the long and rich history of service. No celebration could be complete with a look back on past operations. Yet to squeeze a proper accounting of the sailors and ships which carried them out, into these few pages, would be impossible.

Today the work of the NS is primarily carried out during what are termed Maritime Defence and Security Operations (MDSO) patrols. The range of work is vast and the area of operations is astonishing. The sailors of each generation have faced many of the same operations as today; maritime interdiction of narcotics and arms, search and rescue, fisheries inspection, all conducted in the harsh environment of the North Atlantic. While today's seas may be rougher, and the operational tempo higher, today's ships are bigger and their technology is more advanced. Yet, our old sailors would recognise much of the daily life of today's crews; for a ship is merely wires and steel without its crew.

## "...Our own flag to the fore..."

In 1948, the NS completed its first overseas mission. They were given the task of repatriating the remains of William Butler Yeats, the Nobel Prize winning poet, who had died in France in 1939. LÉ CLIONA was dispatched to bring his remains home to rest "under bare Ben Bulbena's head". The sailors, who carried out this solemn duty with such dignity and respect, would never have imagined that an Irish warship would carry his name someday.

## The Troubles

When the Northern Troubles were at their height, the Naval Service was at forefront of the interception of arms and munitions destined for the Provisional IRA. The death and destruction prevented by the foiling of these importations cannot be calculated.

The 'MV Claudia' in March 1973 was sailing from Cyprus to Helvick head, having embarked a cargo of arms supplied by the Libyan dictator Col Muammar Gaddafi, off the coast of Tunis. It was stopped before delivering its lethal load by the LÉ FOLA, LÉ DEIRDRE and LÉ GRAINNE.

In September 1984 the LÉ EMER and the LÉ AISLING intercepted the fishing vessel 'Marita Ann'. That faithful night they prevented seven tons of explosives, arms and ammunition from reaching the

horrendous conflict in Northern Ireland.

## Air India Disaster

Air India Flight 182, on the 23rd June 1985, will long be remembered as a most terrible event. A bomb exploded within the Boeing 747-273B and it disintegrated at a height of 9,400 metres above the coast of Cork. A terrible act of mass murder that resulted in the death of all 329 passengers and crew.

The LÉ AISLING was tasked as on-scene commander, and over the course of the operation they toiled in shark-infested waters to recover the dead. Four of the ship's company were awarded Distinguished Service Medals for their actions.

## Nuestra Señora de Gardtoza

On the night of 30th January 1990 the LÉ DEIRDRE was sheltering from severe gales in Lawrence's Cove, Bere Island. A Spanish fishing vessel, Nuestra Señora de Gardtoza, with 16 souls onboard ran aground on rocks near Roanacarrigmore Light, northeast of Bere Island in Bantry Bay.

LÉ DEIRDRE received the 'MAYDAY' at 2100hrs and, as quickly as she could, weighed anchor and headed out into the severe gale. With no helicopter support available and with no way to manoeuvre LÉ DEIRDRE in close, Leading Seaman Michael Quinn, from Drogheda, along with Able Seaman Paul Kellett from Dublin, volunteered to attempt a rescue, even in the face of the horrendous conditions.

Once the Gemini manoeuvred close enough to the 'Gardtoza' it quickly became apparent that boarding the stricken vessel or a rescue was impossible. They were making their return to LÉ DEIRDRE, when the small boat capsized in the extreme wind and wave, and cast both sailors into sea.

The brave comrades were separated in the darkness and an exhausted A/Sea Kellett was washed ashore near Dereen cove. A passing Garda patrol picked him up and he passed the word that L/Sea Quinn was lost out there in the blackness. Sadly, the next morning an Air Corps Dauphin helicopter, at 0800hrs on the 31st, recovered the body of Leading Seaman Quinn, 3 miles east of the tragic scene.



Leading Seaman Micheal Quinn DSM. Photo: NS Archives



In recognition of the unselfish bravery and devotion to duty, both sailors were awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and the Spanish Cross of Naval Merit in recognition of their attempt to rescue the Spanish crew.

### The Cocaine Trail

Ireland's position on the west coast of Europe has made her a key destination for international and domestic drug smugglers.

There have been huge successes against this horrendous trade; 'Operation Seabright' in 2008, when an estimated €675 million worth of Colombian cocaine was seized from a 60-foot sloop, 'Dances With Waves' off the Cork coast. This was an international operation where LÉ RÓISÍN and LÉ NIAMH were the tip of the sword.

Again, in September 2014, a huge inter-agency operation was conducted using the LÉ RÓISÍN and LÉ NIAMH. In challenging



Deceased persons recovered from the sea by LÉ Ailsing are carried ashore by sailors. Photo: NS Archives

conditions at night, 250 miles west south west of Mizen head, the yacht 'The Makayabella' was apprehended. The trial judge described the €350 million haul as "colossal" and "mind boggling" when he sentenced the crew to 73 years in total for their part in the smuggling.

In just the last few months the NS was involved in the seizure of €250m worth of hashish, seized by Spanish authorities acting on information received from Ireland.

Information provided by the Irish Navy, An Garda Síochána and Revenue Customs Service to the Portugal-based Maritime Analysis Operations Centre - Narcotics (MAOC-N) led to the find. The drugs found aboard the fishing vessel the Odyssey 227 represents one of the largest hashish seizures ever made in European waters.

### Operation PONTUS

It could be argued that the pinnacle of Naval Service operations have been those carried out in the Mediterranean since 2015.

In 2015, Italy was dealing with a migration crisis nearly alone. Fatalities were mounting as desperate people displaced by wars or conflicts, and vast numbers of people displaced by poor economic conditions, attempted the perilous journey across the Southern Mediterranean in unseaworthy craft.

The LÉ EITHNE was the first to depart in May 2015. She forged the trail that LÉ NIAMH and LÉ SAMUEL BECKETT followed over the course of the year, pausing as the winter weather closed in. Each year thereafter Ireland continued to answer that call, with three ships



The arms, explosives and ammunition from the Marita Ann. Photo: EMPICS Photo Agency



LÉ Eithne recovered 3,600 migrants approx during 22 missions in 63 days during OP PONTUS on her first mission in 2015.

Photo: NS Press Office

dispatched annually to conduct missions which were complex and dangerous, not just recovering panicky people from sinking craft; but the traumatic task of recovering deceased persons from dark and cramped bilges, and the sea.

### Operation SOPHIA

The NS transitioned to EUNAVFOR Operation SOPHIA in 2017 and committed vessels to this UN mandated mission until 2019. Op SOPHIA's mission was primarily a security operation, designed to disrupt the trafficker's business model, and to counter oil and weapons smuggling. Irish sailors continue to serve in EUNAVFOR HQ in Rome as part of Operation IRINI, the successor mission to SOPHIA.

Over 18,000 individuals were rescued over the course of the deployments, tragically with many deceased also recovered. Working in harsh environmental conditions, and bearing witness to human suffering (normally only associated with violent conflict) the sailors of the NS completed all tasks assigned to them. The manner in which they performed their harrowing duties, has been in keeping with the finest traditions of the service and of Óglaigh na hÉireann.

### Operation FORTITUDE

On 26th February 2020 the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was detected in Ireland. The entire country braced for impact of what was declared a global pandemic a few days later, in March. The Defence Forces launched Operation Fortitude to support the nation throughout this crisis. NS ships deployed in Cork, Galway, and Dublin. Operating as test centres and logistics hubs, six different vessels rotated through these duties while still continuing delivery of MDSO taskings around the coast. LÉ EITHNE, LÉ SAMUEL BECKETT, LÉ JAMES JOYCE, LÉ WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, LÉ GEORGE BERNARD SHAW and LÉ NIAMH all played their part to strengthen the nation. NS Reserve personnel supported the ships throughout these unique deployments.

### Bravo Zulu

The last seventy-five years have seen the NS prove itself capable, adaptable, resilient and responsive. The next thirty years are being charted by a Commission on the Defence Forces, which is examining every facet of its structure and its work. With a firm commitment to the fleet replacement programme by Government, including the purchase of a new large Multirole Vessel to replace our flagship, LÉ EITHNE, there will certainly be no lack of challenges to come.

It will be for the youngest of today's sailors to navigate what lies ahead. They have proven themselves equal to any challenge, proudly continuing a legacy forged by those who have gone before.



LÉ Samuel Becketts crew before departing on OP SOPHIA in 2018. The first NS vessel to complete a full EUNAVFOR mission.

Photo: NS Press Office



# THE FATE OF THE PV'S



LE DEIRDRE pictured very early before her FR 20 was changed to P20.  
Photo: Supplied from NS Archives by SCPO Gordon Kinsella

By SCPO/ERA Ruairí de Barra MComm  
Photos by SCPO Gordon Kinsella

They were the ships onboard which a generation of sailors came of age, and they lead the way for others to follow. Built in Cobh, they were designed for hard work in Irish waters, these remarkable ships delivered incredible service. The PVs occupied a special place in the heart of all who sailed on them.

## The Dark Days

In January 1970 the NS faced the new decade with only a single warship in commission, the venerable LÉ MAEV. For a number of months, which found LÉ MAEV non-operational, Ireland was left without any armed seagoing patrol vessel. It was late in 1970 when three Coniston class minesweepers were purchased. The first LÉ GRÁINNE was commissioned in January 1971, with LÉ BANBA and LÉ FOLA arriving in March. The minesweepers were capable ships, however, the need for a more suitable all-weather offshore patrol vessels was recognised. A contract with Verolme Cork Dockyard Ltd was signed in February 1971. From laying the keel in August, to its launch on 10th December 1971, the build may have only taken months, but the impact of the first homegrown warship would last for decades.

## Verolme Dockyard

LÉ DEIRDRE was 205 feet in length, and she displaced 960 tons, and was the first custom-built ship for the NS. All prior commissioned warships had been purchased from the UK. Most having seen long service in the Royal Navy before they arrived to Haulbowline. To the sailors who had endured the dark days, it must have been an enormous occasion to see her launched. Modestly armed when she arrived with just a single 40mm L60 BOFORS, her internal spaces and outfitting represented a huge advancement from the corvettes.



LE AISLING (P23) underway in perfect conditions. Photo: SCPO Gordon Kinsella

Advancements we take for granted today, but ones we never should.

## Notable Early Operations

In 1973 LÉ DEIRDRE joined the minesweepers LÉ FOLA and GRÁINNE in intercepting the MV Claudia. This arms interdiction operation garnered international attention. The seizure of over five tons of weapons and explosives removed any doubts that this island nation required a larger naval force. It was also in 1973, that Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC), which brought with it, what its today's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). In 1975, with the fisheries limit due to be increased to 200 miles from 12 Miles, the NS was on the brink of a remarkable expansion. The Government signed a contract for a new Mark 2 DEIRDRE class PV, and began evaluating the LÉ DEIRDRE to bring improvements for the next generation. LÉ SETANTA and LÉ FERDIA joined the flotilla to assist in the extra duties required of the service. LÉ FERDIA decommissioned again 1977 and LÉ SETANTA remained in service as an auxiliary until 1984.

Between 1977 and 1980 came LÉ EMER, AOIFE and AISLING. In 1977, the then Minister of Defence Robert Molloy TD laid out a plan which envisioned eight OPVs being built, one per year, to bring the NS to 15 offshore and 10 coastal patrol vessels. Sadly, this plan was never realised, yet three Mark 2 PVs, with their increased hull length, upgraded armaments, and improved seaworthiness were here. They contributed to maintaining the core of the NS for years to come. They were to be followed in 1984 by our flagship, the helicopter patrol vessel LÉ EITHNE, the very last ship to be built in Verolme.

## Fisheries Protection and Arms Interdiction

With the creation of the PV being due in no small part to European funding, it is no surprise that a day-to-day operational priority was fishery protection. Yet the primary role of the Defence Forces in to protect the state against armed aggression, so the military taskings of the NS were never far from the surface.

1984 was a most memorable year, when the two PVs LÉ Emer and LÉ Aisling carried out a significant arms interdiction operation when they seized the Marita Ann. On the night of September 29th, the trawler carrying nearly seven tonnes of arms was seized off the Kerry coast. The international intelligence operation found that the arsenal of weapons was been delivered from Gloucester, Massachusetts, supplied with connections to an organised crime gang. The huge haul included heavy machine guns, 300 rifles and over 50,000 rounds of ammunition.





LE Emer underway preparing for RAS with LE Aisling. Photo: SCPO Ruairí de Barra

Other arms shipments had made it through before, and the Marita Ann was not the last attempt. In 1987 the Eksund was intercepted by the French Customs Service of the coast of Brest. It contained a staggering 150 tons of munitions, including surface-to-air missiles and anti-tank rockets.

The four PVs and LÉ EITHNE held the line from 1987 until the purchase of the Coastal Patrol Vessels (CPVs) in November 1988.

### LÉ DEIRDRE

Over half a million miles of ocean had passed under LÉ Deirdre's hull before she was decommissioned. She was the original of the species of Irish patrol vessels, and over her long career, she delivered at every turn. From MV Claudia in 1973, to arresting an entire Dutch fishing fleet of ten vessels in 1977, to saving lives in 1979 during the Fastnet Yacht race disaster, this proud warship gave her all. It was from LÉ DEIRDRE that Leading Seaman Mickael Quinn cast off on a rescue mission in January 1990, and gave his life so that others might live.

She was sold in 2001 to a prospective conversion and retirement as a luxury yacht. After changing hands several times, this proud warship, the first of her class meet with a rather ignominious end in a breakers yard in Jacksonville, Florida. She will forever be remembered by those who served and sailed on her.

### LÉ EMER

In the course of her long service, LÉ EMER made history. She was the first NS vessel to carry out a UNIFIL resupply mission in 1979. She was there for Fastnet, and Martia Ann. She boarded fishing vessels in the thousands, and made detentions in the hundreds. She was replaced by LÉ SAMUEL BECKETT, yet to those who formed her crews, she remains irreplaceable.

LÉ EMER was decommissioned and sold in 2013 to the Uniglobe Group. She still sails today as a training ship of the Nigerian navy, as due to unforeseen circumstances the Nigerian government impounded EMER on her arrival. She was commissioned and renamed as the NNS Prosperity A497.

### LÉ AOIFE

The 'Wicked Witch of the West' sailed out of Velrome for the first time in 1979, and it departed Verolme for last time in 2015, as P62 of the Maritime Squadron of the Armed Forces of Malta. LÉ AOIFE joined her sister PVs in a long and proud career of service of the Irish coast, and many foreign trips, including joining the annual resupply missions to UNIFIL many times. She went to the aid of HMCS Chicoutimi, a Canadian submarine which suffered a devastating fire in 2004, and

she helped to coordinate the international rescue effort of British, American and Irish naval and civilian vessels which rescued the crew and towed the submarine back to Faslane on October 10. Sadly Lieutenant (RCN) Chris Saunders lost his life in this terrible incident.

She was donated to Malta to assist them in dealing with the migration crisis in the Southern Mediterranean, while they waited for their own patrol vessel to be built. Some of the sailors on service during Operations PONTUS and SOPHIA took the opportunity to visit her in her new home. A fitting end for a proud ship that had endured the worst of the wild Atlantic weather, to be able to continue her long history of service in assisting in the efforts to save lives at sea, and protect another island nation.



The PV were a familiar sight around the coast on MDSO patrols. Photo by SCPO Gordon Kinsella

### LÉ AISLING

Time marches on, and LÉ Aislings decommissioning after 36 years of the most loyal service was met with the heaviest of hearts. The last of her class, she was second to none. Her crews remember their time onboard with incredible fondness, and she had carried them over 628,000 nautical miles over the years. Onboard they had faced danger, saw adventure, witnessed tragedy, and made lifelong friends. She will be long remembered as a happy ship. She was there for the Marita Ann and the sinking of the Sonia, and she held the front line during the Air India disaster. LÉ AISLING also saw the first female ships commanding officer in 2008 when Lieutenant Commander Roberta O'Brien took command.

LÉ AISLING was sold to a Dutch brokerage firm in 2017. This aging warship, which was fully decommissioned prior to her departure from Irish waters, passed quickly through several hands and eventually it sailed to Libya where the Libyan National Army under Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar renamed it as Al-Karama (Dignity). This raised the disturbing spectre of a strange reunion in the Mediterranean of serving and former Naval vessels encountering each other.

### Sailing into History

When LÉ AISLING departed it truly was the end of an era. Once decommissioned the PVs began the final voyage of sailing into history. The slips of Velrome have been silent for many years, and who knows if an Irish warship will be ever built again at home. The myths and legends will grow with each passing year, whenever old shipmates gather and spin a yarn. But from the day they left the slips in Rushbrooke, to the day they left the lower harbour, they each left an indelible mark of the Navy and on the sailors who called them home.



The BOFORS 40mm was the main armament of the PV's. Photo: SCPO Ruairí de Barra



The PVs were excellent sea going vessels. Pictured here exercising with a Coast Guard helicopter. Photo by SCPO Gordon Kinsella





## FROM THE ARCHIVES

**T**HIS YEAR sees a programme being introduced to train newly-commissioned Executive Branch Officers to Degree standard in Science at University College Galway. This departure reflects the increased emphasis on technology in modern marine navigation techniques which offer software solutions to fundamental navigation calculations.

Naval Cadet training teaches an understanding of the fundamental principles and practices of marine navigation. The NS navigator must fully understand these and use them to monitor the accuracy of modern computation techniques for a variety of reasons.

The unique roles of the NS mean that naval navigation is inherently different to its standard commercial equivalent. NS ships do not restrict their passages to well-defined trade routes. Naval Watchkeepers must navigate throughout the 200 mile Economic Zone and frequently further afield to resupply Irish troops on UN duty, or to enforce international fisheries conservation measures in waters as away as the Newfoundland Banks. For this reason, the Naval Watchkeeping Certificate, granted by Flag Officer Commanding the Naval Service after the requisite training, experience, recommendation and examination, is not limited in its area of validity.

Furthermore, the NS navigator is also tasked with the navigation of dependent resources: boarding craft, helicopters, diving teams, or other elements. He must also be prepared to act as on-scene commander in Search & Rescue operations and to carry out specialised searches for marine casualties. These demands dictate that the naval navigator is involved in position *monitoring* rather than the traditional practice of position calculation. This requirement demands effective use of technology, particularly of integrated systems.

In the last 50 years, the navigation fit of NS ships has changed with technological advances. However, instruments that were used to navigate the Motor Torpedo Boats (MTBs) of old, such as magnetic compasses, sextants, optical distance meters and a sailor acting as lookout, are still to be found on the bridges of their successors.

Their continued use is necessary to conform to international carriage requirements and NS procedural standards. These dictate the use of traditional instruments as a back-up to calibrate and check their modern equivalents. Some are also used when radio silence dictates that transmitting systems such as radars must be switched off.

It was in the 1960s that total dependence on the magnetic compass came to an end with the fitting of a 'gyro' compass which has the advantage that it can be aligned to True North and is not affected by the Earth's, or the ship's, magnetic field.

It was about this time also that the first NS radars (Decca) came into use characterised by temperamental crystal oscillators and the distinctive smell from their chemically treated screens. A long-standing relationship had begun with Decca marine navigation equipment, which has lasted until this day.

The arrival of radar and 'gyro' compass allowed our ships to fix their positions more accurately in coastal waters. Until 1966, when the first Decca Navigator sets were purchased, navigation outside coastal waters was a bit more complex. Traditionally, 'astro' sights of the sun or other heavenly bodies, using a sextant, were used. Later, the German-developed Consol radio positioning system had been used, but without great accuracy.

The Decca Navigator system, still in use aboard the Naval ships today (now the Mk 53), was the first effective terrestrial-based electronic positioning system available in Irish waters. However, due to the lack of required shore-based stations up until the early 1970s, the system was unusable west of Cork Harbour ... not much use to a Corvette working off the West Coast! Since the 1970s, however, the system has been used in all areas of the 200 mile Economic Zone.

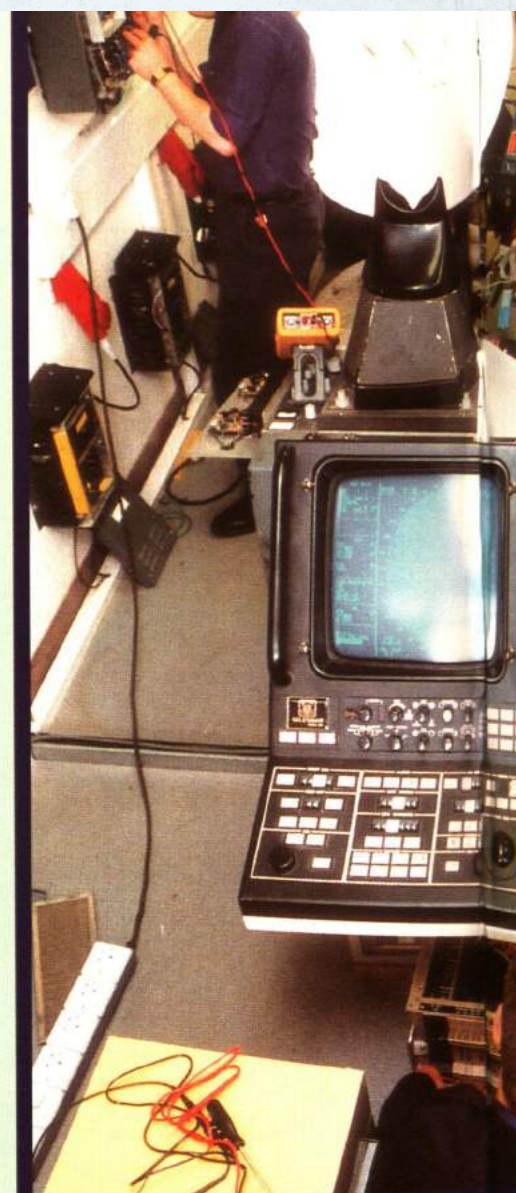
Research by the US military in the early 1950s into the development of a satellite-based positioning system resulted in the first non-terrestrial electronic positioning system, the Transit Doppler, becoming available to NS ships in 1981/82. Unlike terrestrial-based systems, Transit offered global coverage and consistency of reception irrespective of weather or atmospheric conditions. Naval ships used it on passages through the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic where there is no Decca service. The infrequency of satellite passes, however, made Transit unsuitable for Naval operations in Irish waters.

The most significant technological advances to affect naval navigation, began to happen as a result of emerging computer-processing power. When LE Eithne was launched in 1984 she was the first NS ship to be fitted with an Automatic Radar Plotting Apparatus (ARPA). This differs from the manual plotting radar in that information is displayed in digital form allowing unwanted radar noise to be processed out and for the remaining digital data to be manipulated and analysed using appropriate software. Ultimately, this means no more manual plotting of radar contacts to calculate their courses and speed for collision threat-assessment or, for the NS navigator, to assess the contact's likely activity.

'Blind pilotage' is the procedure navigating by radar in restricted waters and ARPA has considerably eased the complexity of this task. Digital processing has also led to radars with daylight-viewing screens. Until 1988/89, navigators were frequently operating behind black curtains or with their heads buried in plastic radar hoods to exclude daylight.

Nowadays, ARPA radars are fitted on all NS ships and current sets provide a variety of extra facilities such as patrol area maps, positioning systems and surveillance equipment interfaces as well as operational situation assessment tools.

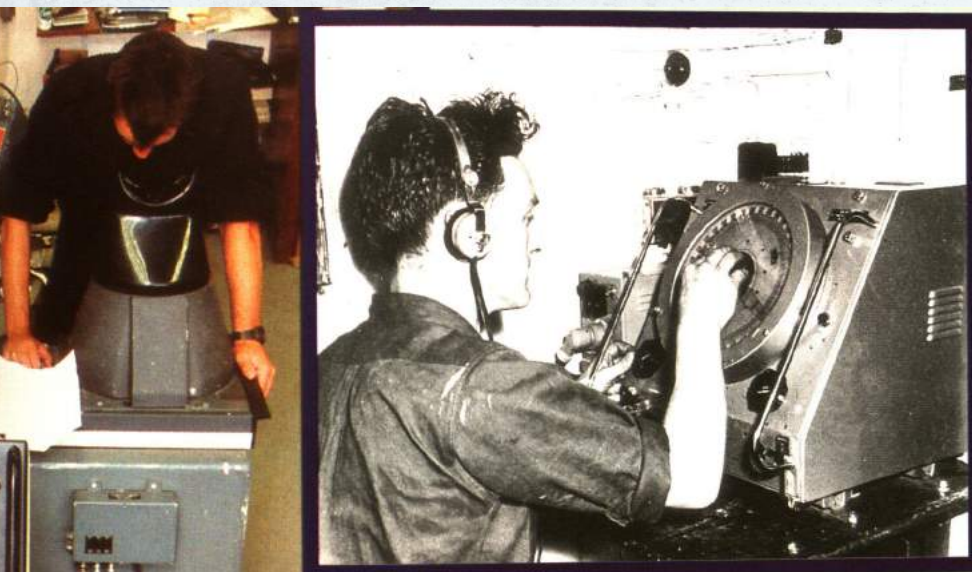
In the mid-1980s positioning systems also began to show the benefits of computer processing. Before then, radio signal measurements had to be interpreted using charts before position could be found. Software now carries out this process and converts these readings into latitude



# 50 YEARS NAVAL NAVIGATION



## Irish Naval Service 50th Anniversary article in the 1996 October issue of An Cosantóir



**Left:** An array of sophisticated equipment is now available to aid navigation (some of which may be seen in this photograph). However, the fundamentals of navigation have never changed. It is particularly important, given the varied roles of the Naval Service, that navigators are familiar with traditional practices as well as the new technologies.  
**Inset:** What would the naval navigator of yesterday have made of the computer based digitally enhanced technology of today?

and longitude for direct manual transfer to a paper chart or automatic interface to an ARPA radar or an electronic chart.

One of the biggest advances in navigation technology in recent years has been the advent of GPS (more correctly termed 'NAVSTAR GPS', standing for Navigation Satellites for Timing And Ranging – Global Positioning System). GPS is also a US military-designed satellite-based positioning system. It consists of 24 satellites orbitally arranged in such a way that at least four of them are visible to a receiver at all times, anywhere in the world.

Two services are provided by GPS: a Precise Positioning Service which provides an accuracy of  $\pm 20$  metres and is only available for US or Allied military purposes; and a Standard Positioning Service, used by the NS, capable of  $\pm 30$  metre accuracy. However, to prevent the 30 metre accuracy being used for adverse military reasons the US Department of Defence purposefully downgrades it to  $\pm 100$  metres: this downgrading is termed Selective Availability.

Although  $\pm 100$  metre accuracy is no better than the existing Decca service, for reception and coverage factors GPS represents a considerable improvement.

In searches for marine casualties, mine counter-measure operations, or locating contraband deposited on the seabed, however, even GPS on its own is not enough, as being 100 metres out of place could mean the failure of an operation.

Differential GPS (DGPS), using a method known as Carrier Wave Tracking which overcomes the downgrading associated with Selective Availability, offers a solution to this

problem and improves accuracy to as good as  $\pm 15$  metres — even better than the Precise Positioning Service.

Another drawback with GPS is that it is owned and operated by the US military and can become unavailable at any time. Whilst this is unlikely at present, it is one reason why the Naval Service still uses a back-up system such as Decca. However, a back-up terrestrial system which has better range and availability than Decca is needed. The proposed new North European Loran-C System (NELS) should provide the desired improvement due to its greater useable range and less reliance on normal atmospheric conditions for accuracy.

Charts, whether electronic or paper, are also vital to navigation. (The NS has been involved for several years in producing electronic charts of Irish waters for use in relation to fishery protection duties.) NS ships carry and maintain charts of all Irish and adjacent waters. Over the years, the Service has witnessed two major changes in these charts. The first of these was the advent of metric charts in the late 1960s which resulted in soundings being represented in metres rather than fathoms, the introduction of colour, and a large increase in the size of some charts.

The second major change was to charts covering the Irish Sea. Previously, one chart covered the western side and a second covered the east. However, due to pressure from ferry companies operating between Irish and UK ports, this arrangement was changed so that only one chart was needed for east/west passage. Now the two charts available for this area are divided north/south.

The accuracy of any calculated position is only as good as that of the chart on which it is shown and one concern among mariners using Irish waters is the dated nature of hydrographic information on current charts. Most major surveys of Irish waters took place before 1922 and the accuracy of these surveys was limited by the survey equipment available at that time.

With the advent of GPS, our understanding of the exact shape and dimensions of the Earth has improved greatly. For this reason, although the nature of the hazards described in old surveys may be correct, their position may not. The idea of establishing an Irish Hydrographic Agency to address these problems is currently being evaluated and proposals in this regard have been made by the Naval Service.

Because of the unique roles of the NS, and particularly its navigational emphasis in position monitoring rather than calculation, individual pieces of standard navigation equipment must be made to work together by integration. This process of integration is ongoing at present on NS ships and will continue to develop in line with available technology. With increasing expertise in the scientific background to this technology, the Naval Service will begin to influence not only the design of equipment used but also the type of navigation services provided for the safety of mariners in our waters. ■

**RS OF  
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# WALKING INTO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

By Sgt Thomas Deveraux DFPES, DFTC



## Part 3

You are clear and back to normal and you have decided to start taking up walking “congratulations” all you need now is a structured program and you are on your way. Firstly ask yourself “why” are you doing this? And most importantly what will you get from this?

The health benefits of walking:

- Increased cardiovascular and pulmonary (heart and lung) fitness.
- Reduced risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Improved management of conditions such as hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol, joint and muscular pain or stiffness, and diabetes.
- Stronger bones and improved balance Before commencing on your new journey you need a clear goal that you want to achieve and when you have this you need to give it your full attention. As a beginner, you should focus on using good walking posture and technique as you steadily build your walking time. Brisk walking for 30 minutes per day, totaling 150 minutes per week, is recommended by health authorities to reduce your health risks for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and other conditions. Nonetheless, walking is just fun and peaceful.

## Overview

Now that you have decided “Why” and “What” this four (4) weeks program will put you onto a better path to better health. Brisk walking for a total of five hours per week is associated with maintaining weight loss and even greater health benefits. For this reason, you should build up to walking for an hour a day, most days of the week. You can build a walking habit by walking at least five days per week and tracking your walks. If you have an ongoing health condition, talk to your doctor before starting any new exercise program. I believe tracking your walks will help as it becomes competitive and you will soon realise that you need to hit

your target each time when your out walking, and if you don’t hit your target you’ll be pretty annoyed with yourself. Right if you’re ready to start, let’s go. If you’re starting for the first time you need to be checking and correcting your walking posture, you also need to make sure you’re wearing comfortable clothing/ wet gear at the ready and comfortable footwear before setting off. Once you start walking, walk easily before picking your pace up, plan your walk before you leave your home and tell someone where you’re going and how long you’ll be out for.

## Week 1

Start with a daily 15 - minute walk at a relaxed pace. Walk five days the first week. You want to build a pattern, so consistency is important. Spread out your rest days, such as making day 3 a rest day and day 6 a rest day. Weekly total goal: 60 to 75 minutes.

## Week 2

You will need to add five minutes a day so you are walking for a total of 20 minutes, five days a week. On week 2 if you’re feeling good and you need to add extra time on you can and record this result on your page. Weekly total goal 75 - 100 minutes followed by 2 rest day.

## Week 3

Another week Congratulations, this week you need to add five minutes a day so you are walking for 25 minutes, five days a week, with 2 rest days Weekly total goal: 100 to 125 minutes.

## Week 4

Welcome to your last week and congratulations if you got this far, if you haven’t reached week four it’s not the world of the world, please just refocus yourself and start it again, clear mindset and have that finish line in your sights and the very best of luck. Congratulations your last week, you need to add five minutes a day to walk for 30 minutes, five days a week and two rest days Weekly total goal: 125 to 150 minutes During the four weeks “walking into a healthy lifestyle” if you did find a week that you found difficult instead of moving on repeat that week again till you are comfortable walking for that length of time. Once you reach your 30 minutes walk at a comfortable pace you are ready for different variations of workouts, adding more intensity and endurance. Again make sure you structure your plan before moving out, this will help you reach your goals, and why not push yourself that you can walk that Marathon or charity walk that everyone talks about.



# COVID RECOVERY CARD



## Post-COVID Recovery

### You should:

- Start slowly and introduce new activities gradually.
- Set yourself realistic targets each week.
- Rest when you feel tired.

### Physical problems after COVID-19

1. Muscle weakness and joint stiffness
2. Extreme tiredness, fatigue and lack of energy
3. Reduced mobility
4. Unstable physical fitness
5. Poor smell and taste
6. Difficulties swallowing
7. Breathlessness
8. Phlegm build-up
9. Stomach concerned.

### Walking

1. Walking is the best way to regain fitness.
2. Set yourself small realistic goals.
3. Plan your walk, bring someone with you.
4. After 6 weeks aim for 30 minutes walking, 5 times a week.
5. Your walk should be reasonably fast that you are slightly out of breath.
6. Monitoring your breathing.
7. Recommend starting a log journal

**Week 1:** 5 to 10 minutes

**Week 2:** 10 to 15 minutes

**Week 3:** 15 to 20 minutes

**Week 4:** 20 to 25 minutes

**Week 5:** 25 to 30 minutes



[www.military.ie](http://www.military.ie)

STRENGTHEN  
THE NATION

**Fundamental movement skills** categories include: Balance skills - Movements where the body remains in place, but moves around its horizontal and vertical axes. Locomotor skills - such as running, jumping, hopping, and galloping. Ball skills - such as catching, throwing, kicking, underarm roll and striking.

It's so important that we start **developing basic movement skills**

### Locomotor (Movement) Skills      Body Control (Stability) Skills

Walking	Side steps
Running	Swinging
Jumping for height/distance	Climbing
Skipping	Crawling
Hopping	Dodging
Leaping	Galloping

Between Locomotor Skills and Stability Skills implemented into your daily workout, this will improve your functional movement. All of the above skills can be carried out in the comfort of your own home, if you're feeling weak or fatigue at any point stop and rest, also support your weights with holding onto the wall or using a kitchen chair as you accomplish the exercises.

### Main body organs (Lungs)

COVID-19 has a tremendous impact on your lungs, research has shown once the lung is damaged it can cause fluid leaking from small blood vessels within the lungs. The fluid collects in the lungs "air sacs" or "alveoli" this makes it more difficult for the lungs to transfer oxygen from the air to the blood.

Exercise to improve adequately lung capacity "breathing exercise".

1. Diaphragmatic breathing
2. Simple deep breathing
3. "Counting" your breaths
4. Watching your posture
5. Staying hydrated
6. Staying active

### Why physical activity is important during Covid-19?

During the COVID pandemic, so many of us are restricted in our movements, people of all ages and abilities need to be as active as possible. Even a short break from sitting, by doing 3-5 minutes of physical movement, such as walking or stretching, will help ease muscle strain, relieve mental tension and improve blood circulation and muscle activity. Regular physical activity can also help to give the day a routine and be a way of staying in contact with family and friends.



Walking takes on many different forms in the Defence Forces, all of which are beneficial to your health both physically and mentally

*Thanks for taking the time to read this "walking into a healthy lifestyle" and I hope it inspires you to get out and get going.*

**Regards**

**Sgt Tom Deveraux**



# INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Internal Communications Update is created by the Defence Forces Internal Communications Team. Our aim is to deliver accurate and timely information of interest to our members in order to increase awareness on current and future developments across the organisation. Our segment in the An Cosantóir along with our online member's area on military.ie will allow information of interest to be distributed across the DF. The Member's Area of military.ie is to enable our personnel to access information while off-site.

General Staff Update from the 9th of June.

The General Staff Convened on the 9th of June to review a range of updates and provide clarity for the Defence Forces General Framework for Living with COVID-19 related restrictions.

The force protection of all personnel remains the priority of the General Staff. There was a new DF Framework for living with COVID-19 (Version 13) which was distributed mid-June. Please check your unit notice board for the latest info.

The following decisions were provided by the General Staff:

- 1 Bde RDF pilot induction programme is approved and can commence.
- DF outdoor events and outdoor matches may commence with up to 100 DF pers attending depending on venue.
- DF Gyms and Pools may open for individual training only.
- 5. Mess Bars may reopen for all mess member for outdoor service only.

The follow updates and guidance were provided by the General Staff:

- The DF has approx 230 pers deployed daily in support of Op FORTITUDE across a range of testing, vaccinating, logs and mandatory quarantine centres.
- The conduct of Occupational Medicals on a priority basis in continuing in line with DF and national guidelines. 2400 medicals have been conducted in 2021.
- Pregnant women are recommended by DMB to receive the COVID-19 vaccine between 14 and 36 weeks of pregnancy.
- All Formations and Units are required to comply with guidance issued by DCOS (Sp) to recorded COVID-19 vaccinations on the Socrates Medical System.
- Planning has commenced for the vaccination of those overseas who currently remain unvaccinated.
- With restrictions easing and increasing numbers of personnel being vaccinated, J1 has been requested to draft guidance with respect to Business Continuity in preparation for the return of personnel to the work place.
- All Formations and Units are requested to ensure that all their personnel are aware of the Letter of Instruction issued by DJ1 on 15Apr which states that only DCOS (Sp) may authorise the travel to the state by members of the DF as being in the course of performing their duties. No other travel to the state will be considered as travel in the course of DF duty (In the context of exemption from public health requirements)

## COVID-19 Vaccination info:

Information has been gathered from the HSE website and guidance from DMB. There has been a page added to the

Member's Area which will be updated should there be any changes to timelines or Government guidance. If there is any information or further clarification required please contact your Barrack MO or see the HSE website.

### **As Defence Forces personnel when will I get my vaccination?**

Apart from vaccinations for operational reasons (COVID facing duties, Overseas and naval ships) all remaining DF personnel will receive their COVID-19 vaccine through the Government Vaccination Program.

### **Do we have a timeline of when people will get vaccinated?**

The Government have advised that every adult in the state would be vaccinated by the end of September.

### **How will the vaccination confirmation be communicated to each individual?**

Direct contact between HSE and individual. This system is already rolled out and people are able to register on the HSE website when their age becomes eligible.

### **How do I book in to get vaccinated?**

Through the HSE website.

### **Should I apply to get my vaccine through the HSE when it becomes available to my age?**

Yes.

### **There has been talk in the private sector employees getting a day off after the vaccine to recover from any vaccination symptoms, Will DF pers be given 24/48 ED after getting the vaccine?**

No routine ED/LD post vaccine is recommended. Personnel who develop side effects should report them to their BKS MO and will be looked at on case-by-case basis.

### **What does it mean to be «Vaccinated» against COVID-19?**

This is when you have received the full dosage of the COVID-19 vaccine and the vaccine has had time to work.

### **Why should you get your COVID-19 Vaccine?**

COVID-19 vaccines offer protection from COVID-19. COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease that can cause serious illness, hospitalisation and even death. If you do get COVID-19 after vaccination, you should be protected from the serious illness the virus can sometimes cause. It is up to you to decide to get your COVID-19 vaccine. But the HSE, the World Health Organization and the Department of Health strongly recommend that you do as soon as it is offered to you.

### **How long does it take for the vaccine to work?**

This depends on which vaccine you have been given

- 7 days after your 2nd Pfizer-BioNTech dose.
- 14 days after your 2nd Moderna dose.
- 14 days after the Janssen vaccine (single dose).
- 28 days after your 1st Astra Zeneca dose - you still need to get your 2nd dose to make sure that your vaccine protection lasts.

### **Which COVID-19 vaccine will you get?**

You do not get to choose which vaccine you get. The type of vaccine offered to you will be based on supply. All the vaccines we use are safe and effective. The best vaccine to get is the one you are offered.

### **I have been vaccinated, what changes for me day to day?**



There is no one simple answer to cover all here. The HSE have created the “vaccine bonus” which updates regularly. For the latest information check the HSE website.

***I have already tested positive for COVID-19, do I still need to get vaccinated?***

If you have already had COVID-19, you still need to get vaccinated. This is because you could become infected with the virus again. There's a small chance you might still get COVID-19 even if you have been vaccinated. But you'll be protected from the serious illness the virus can sometimes cause.

***When should you not get your COVID-19 vaccine?***

Do not get your COVID-19 vaccine if you:

- Have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine.
- Currently have COVID-19 – wait until it has been 4 weeks since you first tested positive.
- Have symptoms of COVID-19 – self-isolate (stay in your room) and phone your GP to get tested.
- Have a fever (temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above) – wait until you feel better.
- Are restricting your movements- wait until you have completed your period of restricted movements to get your vaccine.

## COVID-19 Vaccines and pregnancy

Talk to your obstetrician, midwife, GP or BMO about getting your COVID-19 vaccine if you are pregnant. It's recommended you get your COVID-19 vaccine when it's offered to you. Being vaccinated will reduce the chance of you becoming very unwell.

***Once I am vaccinated do I still have to adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines?***

Yes, even if you are vaccinated, continue to follow advice on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 in public by social distancing, wearing a face covering and washing your hands properly and often.

***How does the COVID-19 Vaccine work?***

Vaccines prepare your immune system (your body's natural defences) to recognise and defend itself against a specific virus.

Some types of vaccine contain a live virus. For example, the flu vaccine contains a small amount of the flu virus. But none of the COVID-19 vaccines in use have the COVID-19 virus in them. They work differently.

There are currently 2 types of COVID-19 vaccine in use:

- mRNA
- viral vector

All vaccines are tested for safety and effectiveness before they can be used. The HSE only uses a vaccine if it meets the required standards of safety and effectiveness.

## Training/Courses:

The DF training environment continues to operate inside COVID-19 guidelines with essential training taking place.

Other courses starting in July onwards to highlight include 56 Potential NCOs Course in 2BTC, PTL Course, Joint Command Staff Course and the 15th All Arms Standards Course in the DFTC. Recce Course in 1 Cn Cois, ARW SOFQ Course.

To see a more extensive list of courses are starting in Sept onwards to December, please go to the Member's Area or Military.ie. This list gives details on upcoming Career and Skills courses. Other courses are available however check with your Unit Orderly Room for a full list of courses.

DFTC, 1Bde, 2Bde and the Air Corps Fitness Centre have supplied dates and information for upcoming fitness test dates. Most locations are testing for essential purposes ONLY which includes Overseas Qualification or selection for a course. Please check the Member's Area or your Unit Orderly room for more information.

All Formations and Branches are reminded of the importance of ensuring that the current Health and Safety guidelines, as issued by Government and Defence Forces are implemented and adhered to by all pers.

## Content on the Member's Area of Military.ie

The Member's Area of Military.ie has been updated with the below information and you will find the most up to date Internal Communication information will be published.

The Public Relations Branch has launched its monthly update video. The one minute ling video is available to watch on all Defence Forces Social Media channels as well as the MA.

Emergency Services and Essential Services Discount Application info.

Job Vacancies and opportunities: A page has been added to the Member's Area which includes open Expressions of Interest that serving members can apply for. For more information about job requirements or closing dates of the vacancies that are advertised, please check with your unit orderly room.

The Weekly Internal Communications Update is uploaded every Tuesday to the Member's Area of Military.ie. This will contain a summary from the previous week and also the JTF statistics highlighting the contribution of the Defence Forces to the fight against COVID-19.

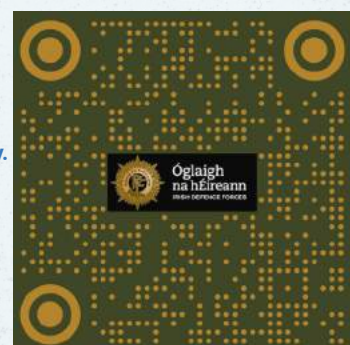
Link to the following photo albums can be found on the Member's Area:

- Air Corps crash rescue services.
- Maj Gen Maureen O'Brien press conference.
- Medical Officers Commissioning.
- Basic Firefighters Course.
- Air Corps Company Commanders Challenge.
- Infantry Weapons Wing Sniper Commanders Course.
- Famine Commemoration 2021.

To view more information on all the above please go to The Member's Area of Military.ie. Scan the QR code to straight the Member's Area.

If there is Defence Forces Internal Messages you wish to have published here or on Military.ie please email [feedback@defenceforces.ie](mailto:feedback@defenceforces.ie) and/or [internalcomms@military.ie](mailto:internalcomms@military.ie) and/or [internalcomms@military.ie](mailto:internalcomms@military.ie)

Pictures:  
[Maj Gen O'Brien](#)  
[Basic Firefighters Course](#)  
[Air Corps Crash Rescue Service](#)





# NOTICEBOARD

## THE MILITARY ARCHIVES AND THE MILITARY HISTORY SOCIETY OF IRELAND WAR OF INDEPENDENCE CONFERENCE

The Military Archives and the Military History Society of Ireland are proud to present a two-day seminar on the military aspects of the War of Independence, (1919-1921). This will be a Microsoft Teams live event, streamed on Friday 9th and Saturday 10th of July 2021. There is no need to register to view - access is via links which are available on [militaryarchives.ie](http://militaryarchives.ie) and which go live at 9am each morning.

The seminar is being organised jointly by Commandant Daniel Ayiotis (OIC Military Archives), Prof Eunan O'Halpin and Dr Pat McCarthy, and will feature presentations and panel discussions with both historians and archivists. The organisers would especially like to express their thanks to Commandant Mark Conway and his team in 2 Brigade CIS Company for looking after all of the technical arrangements.

Friday 9th of July		Saturday 10th of July	
09.00:	Conference link goes live <a href="https://tinyurl.com/j7ku8ntw">https://tinyurl.com/j7ku8ntw</a>	09.00:	Conference link goes live <a href="https://tinyurl.com/3d5f4vsu">https://tinyurl.com/3d5f4vsu</a>
09.30 - 09.45:	Opening Address - <b>Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM, Chief-of-Staff, Óglaigh na hÉireann</b>	09.30-10.00:	Bringing the War to the Enemy: IRA Operations in England <b>Dr Darragh Gannon</b>
09.45 - 10.30:	Key-Note Address: An All-Ireland War <b>Prof Eunan O'Halpin</b>	10.00-10.30:	The Belfast Troubles 1920-22 <b>Dr Alan F Parkinson</b>
10.30-10.40:	Questions	10.30-10.40:	Questions
10.40-11.00:	Break	10.40-11.00:	Break
11.00-11.30:	In Constant Flux: Evaluating the Development and Structure of the Irish Volunteers/IRA <b>Dr Eve Morrison</b>	11.00-13.00:	Panel Discussion: 'Every County was Different', the War in the Localities <b>Prof Marian Lyons, Brian Feeney, Seamus Cullen, Lar Joye, Patrick McGarty</b>
11.30-12.00:	Operational Art or Lack of Control? IRA GHQ and the Dynamics of Guerrilla Command and the War of Independence <b>Dr Thomas Tormey</b>	13.10-13.40:	Break
12.00-12.30:	Fianna Éireann - Organisation, Training and Membership 1919-1921, from Sources Held in Military Archives <b>Lisa Dolan</b>	13.40-14.10:	The Guerrilla War on the Water 1920-1921 <b>Dr John Borgonovo</b>
12.30-12.40:	Questions	14.10-14.40:	Ex-Servicemen in the IRA <b>Dr Emmanuel Destenay</b>
12.40-13.30:	Break for Lunch	14.40-15.10:	'I had a mouthful of steel': Cumann na mBan, Militancy and Violence 1919-1921 <b>Dr Mary McAuliffe</b>
13.30-14.00:	Women and Bloody Sunday - Participants, Witnesses and Victims <b>Liz Gillis</b>	15.10-15.20:	Questions
14.00-14.30:	Defying the IRA <b>Dr Brian Hughes</b>	15.20-15.30:	Break
14.30-15.00:	The British Army in Ireland, 1919-1921 - Dr Timothy Bowman	15.30-16.10:	Truce, Murder and Myth – the Build-Up to the Truce <b>Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc</b>
12.30-12.40:	Questions	16.10-16.50:	The Making of the Truce <b>Prof Tim Hoyt</b>
12.40-13.30:	Break for Lunch	16.50-17.00:	Concluding Remarks <b>Brigadier General Tony Cudmore</b> , President of the Military History Society of Ireland
15.20-16.50:	Panel Discussion: Archival Sources for the War of Independence - <b>Dr Caitriona Crowe</b> (Chair), <b>Cécile Chemin</b> (Military Archives – MSPC Project), <b>Natalie Milne</b> (NAI), <b>Brian Donnolly</b> (NAI), Stephen Scarth (PRONI), Dr William Butler (NA UK), Dr Niamh Brennan (Donegal County Archives).		



# NOTICEBOARD

## THE MILITARY ARCHIVES AND THE MILITARY HISTORY SOCIETY OF IRELAND WAR OF INDEPENDENCE CONFERENCE

This seminar is a part of the Decade of Centenaries programme of events and is supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media. A special edition of the Irish Sword (the journal of the Military History Society of Ireland) featuring the papers presented will be published later in the year.

### REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

I am creating a pictorial chronology of Women in the Defence Forces to mark 40 years of service. While the book will be predominately a photographic record, I'd also like to include some vignettes and anecdotal records of life in DF. Anybody who would like to be included in the book is strongly encouraged to make contact with me via [renken91@gmail.com](mailto:renken91@gmail.com). The book will feature the following topics - though this list is not exhaustive - early days following the foundation of the State, the Army Nursing Corps, change in legislation late 1970s, first eight cadets, first platoon, first apprentices, second platoon, integrated training from 1994, overseas, sport, family service (siblings, parent/daughter) and present day. I will need and would greatly appreciate members of the first two platoons from 1981 and 1990 to get in touch to educate me on their experiences, as having joined in 94 myself, I am somewhat familiar with life in DF since then! I would also like access to photos from those early days if people can share with me and I will conduct interviews with volunteers who are keen to be featured. This will be a publication that we can all take pride in and be a part of so I really would urge people to get in touch. My publication date is aimed at mid-summer and by then hopefully we can hold an event to celebrate 40 years without Covid-19 spoiling play. Thanks in advance.

Sgt Rena Kennedy



### REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

«Are you Michael, the good Samaritan, who helped an American tourist at LA Mazia Terme train station, Calabria, in May 2019?»

If so, then please ring 0860669269, John Tuohy (Retired RSM DFTC)

### UNIFORM SERVICES

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# HEADSPACE & TIMING

## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

By Lt Col John Martin, PSS    Photos by Sgt Karl Byrne, A/M Sam Gibney, DF Flickr & Mark Pollock

### Introduction

Life in the modern Defence Forces has many advantages – It can be fast moving and provide us with lots of variety and opportunities for experience and personal development. At the same time it brings its own unique stresses. We are required to challenge ourselves physically and mentally, and to be prepared to be away from our homes and loved ones on a regular basis. In order to get the best out of our military lives it is essential that we equip ourselves and our families with the tools we need to maximise the satisfaction and enjoyment that comes with being a military professional in 21st Century Ireland.



Privates Michael Ennis and Cathal Flaherty from Offaly serving in the Golan Heights, away from home and it's comforts for 6 months

The Personnel Support Service works towards reducing stigma around mental health, so that anyone who feels vulnerable or distressed can feel safe and supported in looking for help! In this article I would like to introduce you to Mental Health First Aid, one of our most important tools in achieving our mission.



To achieve the mission, sometimes we take casualties, but we never leave them behind, this should be the case for mental health issues on and off the battlefield

### So what is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an internationally recognised and evidence based training platform that gives us the skills and knowledge to assist our colleagues and anyone else who might be experiencing mental health distress. It is the standard training intervention used by the PSS to support positive mental health and wellbeing in the Defence Forces. People who have completed MHFA training should be better equipped to recognise when they or another person are in distress. They should have the confidence and knowledge to intervene, to help and to get that person to the right support as quickly as possible.



We're all carrying our own stresses, some heavy and some light, we struggle harder if we do it alone



An MHFA course is conducted over two days. Each day consists of two three hour sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The sessions are delivered in the Defence Forces by a team of two PSS MHFA trainers and normally takes place over two consecutive days.

During an MHFA course we are introduced to mental health as a subject of interest to every person, regardless of their employment, age or experience. We become familiar with common terms and language associated with mental health. We go on to learn how to recognise the signs and symptoms of a range of conditions, including depression, stress and when someone may be abusing alcohol or other substances. We are given the right tools to enhance our own ability to listen empathically to each other. We learn how to plan and conduct an intervention safely and effectively when someone is in distress. The end result is getting someone in touch with the help that they need to deal with the problems they are facing.

At all stages we take care to ensure that everyone is experiencing MHFA safely and comfortably.



A heavy burdens weight can be shared if you want it to be, the same goes for mental health issues, all you need do is ask for help

## How can I get to do a course?

PSS teams are currently conducting MHFA courses within all five of the formations of the Defence Forces. MHFA is open to all ranks and all appointments. The courses are usually conducted face to face (which is preferable) or by remote means. This is great because it means that we can offer the course to our comrades who are deployed overseas or on other duties. If you would like to get on a

course then please get in touch with your local PSS team and they will be happy to advise you. Our colleague Sergeant Richard MULDER is currently serving as BPSSO with 118 IRISHBATT UNIFIL. Richard is a MHFA trainer and is delivering training to our personnel deployed in South LEBANON.



You can see a head injury when it bleeds and you'll attend the wound, PSS can help you if you have mental health issues. Attend your wounds, physical or mental

As we go through the year we hope to offer MHFA training to adult family members of serving personnel. You can contact us at [pss@defenceforces.ie](mailto:pss@defenceforces.ie) if you would like to get more details about courses available in your area.

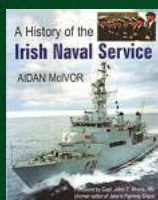
In the Defence Forces we have a strong cultural tradition of caring for each other. It is an essential part of what makes our organisation work. Mental Health First Aid builds on that proud tradition and gives us all the skill and the confidence to do what we do best – supporting our colleagues and taking care of our families.



In the Defence Forces, one of the first things we learn is to hide ourselves from sight, don't hide from your mental health issues



## BOOKS



**Author:** Aidan Mclvor

**Where to buy:** [www.irishacademicpress.ie](http://www.irishacademicpress.ie)

**Pages:** 256

**Price:** PB €24.95 HB €49.50

### A History of the Irish Naval Service

This book chronicles the important role of Ireland's seaborne military forces in the Civil War and in the Emergency and explains the rebirth of the Irish Naval Service in the past two decades. Ever since the Boreal Seas rose sufficiently to form the islands of Ireland and Britain some 8000 years ago, both have been dependant on water transport for their being. Their history has been formed by the sea from the days of the later Stone Age cultures to the present. In this century there have been so many changes to the approach of the Irish to the sea that Aidan Mclvor's book is both timely and necessary. Much has been written about the manifold problems of Ireland and many books deal with her extraordinary history. But this is a book in a different category. Based on a great deal of research, it is the tale of the maritime country which, since the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, has consistently turned her back to the sea unless unusual events have caused a temporary change of heart.

### Table of Contents

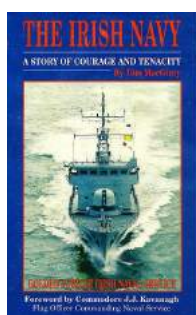
#### Introduction

- Irish Maritime Traditions
- Early Beginnings, 1921-39
- The Emergency, 1939-45
- The Naval Service, 1945-70
- The Naval Service, 1970-90
- The Irish Naval Service Today
- The 1990s and Beyond

#### Ship List

### About the Author

Aidan Mclvor was born in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, in 1962. He attended St. Malachy's College, Belfast, and is a graduate of the University College of Wales, Aberystwth and the London School of Economics. Since the early 1980s he has worked and travelled widely throughout Eastern Europe and the Middle East.



### The Irish Navy: A Story of Courage and Tenacity

**Author:** Tom MacGinty

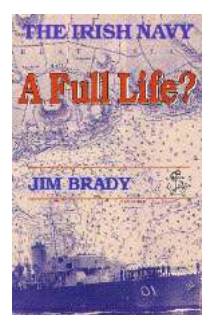
**Publisher:** Kerryman

**ISBN:** 978-0946277223

**Published:** 1995

**Price:** £7.82

**Available on** [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



### The Irish Navy: A full Life?

**Author:** Jim Brady

**Publisher:** Anchor Books

**ISBN:** 9780952844716

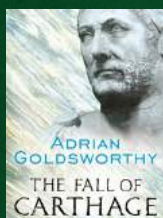
**Pages:** 224

**Price:** £7.00 (used)

**Available on** [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



## BOOKS



**Author:** Adrian Goldsworthy  
**Publisher:** Weidenfield & Nicolson  
**ISBN:** 9780304366422  
**Pages:** 412  
**Price:** €18.19  
**Available on** [www.easons.com](http://www.easons.com)



**Author:** Damien Larkin  
**Publisher:** Dancing Lemur Press  
**ISBN:** 9781939844781  
**Pages:** 252  
**Price:** €15.46  
**Available on** [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

## The Fall of Carthage

The Punic Wars are often described as the World Wars of the Ancient World. Carthage, a major maritime power in the Mediterranean Sea enjoyed unparalleled supremacy and dominated many trade routes. Rome, fresh from a series of wars to strengthen its position on the Italian peninsula sought to challenge this dominance and so began a series of wars that are still studied over two millennia later.

"The Fall of Carthage" by Adrian Goldsworthy is a fascinating insight into this succession of confrontations that helped shape the Ancient World and whose effects can still be seen today. Drawing from ancient sources and classical texts, we get a snapshot into not just the tactics and strategies employed, but also the mindset of these empires vying for glory.

In plain and easily understood language, Mr. Goldsworthy takes the reader on a journey through these life-and-death struggles. We learn of the murky motives behind the start of these wars, the various naval clashes, skirmishes and pitched battles.

This book is ideal for someone with even a passing interest in history, as well as anyone interested in learning about the background of military strategies still in use today.

## Blood Red Sands

This book is both a sequel and prequel to Larkins first novel in this series, titled 'Big Red'. It does a terrific job on both fronts. It builds on the fantastic world and mind-bending sci-fi created in Big Red. It promises a lot and it delivers.

This is at its heart military science fiction; its action is gritty and plentiful, and not for the faint of heart. I wanted this book to draw me back into that world, and to taste the dust and smell the cordite, and this book drops you right into a brutal conflict on Mars.

Larkin has succeeded in dealing with strong themes, such as violence, persecution, xenophobia, antisemitism, fascism in a unique and engaging fashion. This is layered fiction, it can be subtle in places, in others it a brick in a sock, swung directly at one's face.

This book has everything a science fiction fan wants; it has awesome technology, conflicted heroes, savage villains, a strange world, and an unknown future. The only bigger question that the unknown future is the unknown past. Larkin has dropped breadcrumbs along the way, and in the very best tradition of writing has left the reader desperately wanting more.

So, in conclusion, as soon as you can lay your hands on it ensure you read this book, and while you wait for its release to the general public in summer 2021, do yourself a massive favour and read the first title in this series.

*"We have always been here."*



# SOFQ ECHO-TWO

SEPTEMBER 2021

