



Lighthouse Bi-Centennial Project.

Yew Tree Park,
Kilmorey Street, Newry.
Saturday 9th November
2024 at noon.



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne
and Down
District Council

A Service of Remembrance in
Tribute to 7 of our local Merchant Seamen
who received Civic Recognition in WW2.

Text by James McArevey

The Merchant Navy in World War II

During the Second World War, the Merchant Navy played a crucial role in ensuring the survival of Britain by ferrying food, fuel, and supplies to and from ports.

These were civilians, not trained for combat, and their ships were not designed for war. Despite this, they found themselves on the frontlines of the conflict.

As non-combatants, they could be inducted into the war effort by the government at any time, making them part of the war machine despite their civilian status. Known as the 4th Force, they paid a terrible price for their service.

**4,700 British-flagged ships with a total of
11,500,000 gross
registered tons (grt) were sunk during the war.**

29,000 men lost their lives in the process.

**After the war ended, these brave sailors were all
but forgotten, despite their immense sacrifices.**



Our Maritime Heros

During World War II, the Ministry of War Transport (MOWT) had the power to take control of any vessels as needed. Merchant seamen from Newry found themselves not only crossing the perilous Irish Sea but also participating in significant battles, including Dunkirk and Normandy. Seven of these brave men were officially recognized for their gallantry.

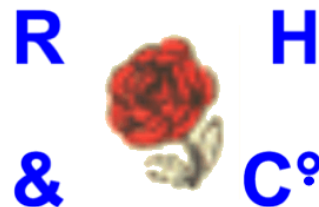
In the early months of 1940, the German army relentlessly pushed British forces back to the European coast. In response, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered an evacuation before the army could be decimated.

This led to the launch of Operation Dynamo, calling for every available vessel to assist in the rescue of the beleaguered troops.

Ships of all sizes and purposes responded: coal boats, fishing smacks, trawlers, pleasure craft, and freighters all took part in what would become the largest-ever evacuation by sea. Over nine days, 338,000 men were rescued from the beaches of Dunkirk and repatriated.

One of the "little ships at Dunkirk," also known as "the ships who saved an army," was the elderly tramp steamer S.S. Dorrien Rose. Part of the Hughes fleet, she was a 1,000-ton coaster typically employed in the coal trade. Her crew of thirteen included Barney Murphy (Chief Engineer) and Terry O'Hanlon (Mate).

Barney Murphy DSC Terry O'Hanlon DSC



The little ship and her brave crew defied German bombardment and aerial attacks to rescue 900 men. They brought them to safety and were returning to Dunkirk when they came on S.S. Queen of the Channel, a River Thames pleasure boat, in serious difficulties.

They succeeded in rescuing the 700 men on board and landed them safely in Folkestone. Every member of the crew of the Dorrien Rose was decorated for their incredible feats of bravery.

Terry O'Hanlon and Barney Murphy were each awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC).

Terry, later a captain, on retirement from sea, served as lockmaster at Victoria Locks from 1951 to 1968. Barney retired to the family farm and later also received an MBE. Neither man ever spoke much about the horrors they experienced.



Terry O'Hanlon DSC and Barney Murphy DSC
(Courtesy of Eileen Murphy RIP)

Captain David Bruce Ivor MBE.

David Bruce Ivor was born in Newry on 28th November 1879, the fourth of nine children born to John and Anna. His father was a bookbinder and the family lived at Basin Walk, later moving to Kilmorey Street, adjacent to the Port.



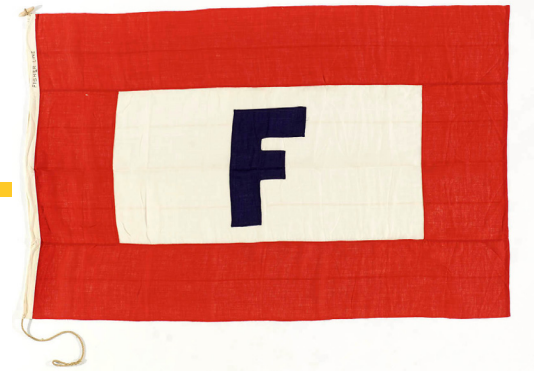
Upon leaving school and following a brief spell with the "Newry Telegraph," he embarked on a career in the Merchant Navy, enjoying periods of employment with several coasting firms before a long association with John Kelly of Belfast.

During his career, Captain Ivor sailed through two World Wars, and it was during the dark days of WW2 that he displayed raw courage and bravery. This was highlighted at Dunkirk, when beleaguered Allied troops were rescued from certain annihilation by their German foes. An incredible 338,000 men were plucked from the beaches in the biggest and most successful amphibious evacuation in history.

His award of the MBE came in the wake of his bringing down a German bomber, which attacked his ship, "SS Clew Bay," as he withdrew from Dunkirk.

Captain Ivor lived to relate the tale and enjoyed a long and well-earned retirement until called to His Maker's Watch on 29th July 1967, severing a direct link to our fast-disappearing Maritime History.

First Officer, Paddy Mc Parland MBE.



Near neighbours of the O'Hanlon's were the McParland family. Mrs. Ellen McParland was the sub-postmistress of Fathom Post Office.

She had a family of nine to support. Again, following the tradition in Fathom, four sons, Paddy, Jack, Jimmy, and Eddie went to sea, Eddie had an incredible escape from death when his ship was torpedoed off the Kent coast during WW1.

The S.S. Dingle was on passage from Sunderland to France on Government service when she was sunk. The survivors clung to an upturned lifeboat. Aged just seventeen, Eddie was the sole survivor. He managed to cling to the lifeboat for fifteen hours. After this tragedy he carried on with his career at sea, becoming a captain along with his three brothers. Paddy worked for Fishers of Barrow. This was lifelong employment and although

he qualified with a Master's Ticket Paddy declined the responsibility, preferring to remain as First Officer. During the War, S.S. Empire Jill was one of the ships Paddy served on. A collier, she was one of "the coal scuttle brigade." Most of her time was spent ferrying coal to the North Atlantic convoys on the Firth of Forth and the naval base at Loch Ewe. It was dangerous work, and Paddy survived being torpedoed. He was awarded an MBE in 1942. He said the honour was in memory of and in tribute to his shipmates who perished.

Paddy lived in Preston. He died in 1985 after almost forty years at sea.

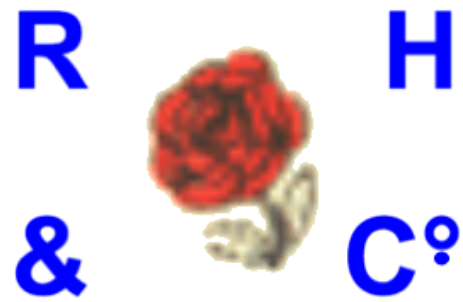
Jack McParland, a respected captain with Fishers of Newry, died at an early age. In 1950, his son John joined the Fisher fleet as a deck boy. He too became a Captain and served with Esso Petroleum for 30 years.



Fathom – The S.S. Margaret Lockington steams past the houses of the seafaring O'Hanlons (foreground) and McParlands (background.) McParlands' house was also the post office and later the childhood home of Michael O'Hare, the only deep sea fisherman from Fathom. The Greenore Railway line is to the left. The house to the right is the old Fortesque Lock House (Courtesy of Michael O'Hare, R.I.P. O'Hares' Mills)

Captain Patrick Leo Mc Court DSC.

Another of our decorated seamen was Leo McCourt from Bridge Street. Leo was born at Mountbagenal, his mother's place, on the Cooley Peninsula in County Louth. He was the eldest of four children and was named after his father, Patrick Leo. His father was a sea captain who, in his later years, worked for Joseph Fisher.



In 1898 he was in command of S.S. Herbert, a Leith-registered sailing ship. On route from Liverpool to Sligo, the ship foundered off the notorious Strangford coast. Just like Eddie McParland, the Captain, Leo's father, survived by clinging on to a lifeboat for an unbelievable 17 hours. The remaining crew, including two Newry men, were lost.

Young Leo followed in his father's footsteps, starting a career at sea with Joseph Fisher and Sons, located just around the corner from his Bridge Street home. He moved to the Larne firm of Howdens and then accepted a position as master with the prominent Liverpool firm of Richard Hughes and Co. On June 6, 1944, as Master of the MOWT-requisitioned S.S. Wallace Rose, Leo was involved in "Operation Neptune," the Allied invasion of Normandy.

It was the largest amphibious operation ever undertaken, when over 155,000 men and their equipment were landed from a fleet of ships. Eventually, over two million men were transported across the Channel using over 800 ships. Captain McCourt ferried supplies



Leo McCourt DSC (Courtesy of Maureen Salter)



Normandy Invasion - The largest ever amphibious operation and Newry men were in the middle of it

Captain Patrick Leo Mc Court DSC.



S.S. Wallace Rose (Courtesy of Maureen Salter)

to Normandy and despite four days and nights of German bombardment, he held the line. The cargo was discharged, and Captain McCourt's ship withdrew safely. Captain Leo McCourt was awarded the DSC.

In January 1954, alas, despite courageously surviving the Normandy invasion, Leo died tragically in the River Thames. He had arrived in London from France with a cargo of slag for a power station. The Wallace Rose was lying at anchor when she was struck by the Dutch Coaster, Yvonne, and sank. Leo and seven of his crew died.

There were two survivors. "Big Leo" as he was known was buried in St. Mary's cemetery, Newry, alongside his parents.



The wrecked Wallace Rose – Captain McCourt and seven others died in the collision on the Thames with the Yvonne
(Courtesy of Maureen Salter)

Fireman Paddy Mallon BEM.

As we have seen, the port of Newry is associated with courage and hard work. Paddy Mallon personified these virtues. Born in Mayobridge, Paddy grew up in Castle Street. He married Mary McAteer from Boat Street, and together they raised a family of seven children. Unlike most seamen, Paddy did not take to the sea on leaving school. He first worked in Dempsters Mill, Cornmarket, but was made redundant as a result of the 1930s depression.

With young children to support, Paddy joined Fishers of the Albert Basin. He sailed on the S.S. Palm, where he spent over 14 years as a fireman, stoking to build steam. The job was gruelling. A typical trip to Liverpool involved shovelling 5 to 6 tons of coal in temperatures of 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Being slight of frame and in cramped conditions, Paddy was better suited than a heavier man to this back-breaking work.

Through the war years, the men in the engine room, deep below the waterline, had the added mental anguish of knowing they most likely would perish in the event of something going wrong. Paddy completed his service on the S.S. Rowan. He was awarded the BEM at the end of the war. His award is unique. King George VI presented it at Stormont, whilst on a visit to Belfast.



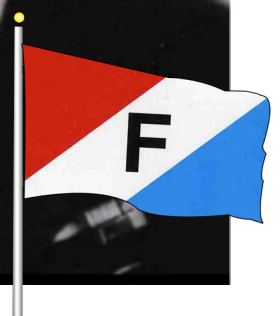
Commodore Captain Harry Hollywood MBE.

Perhaps the most iconic personality in the story of the port is Captain Harry Hollywood. Harry was born and reared in Hawthorn Cottage on a site overlooking the Newry Canal, on the Omeath Road, in the townland of Fathom.

He was born in 1876, just 26 years after the canal had been extended and Victoria Locks and the Albert Basin built. At the age of 14, like his father Paddy, Harry embarked on a career at sea. Standing at just over 5 ft. tall, he was known universally as "Wee Harry." He earned this cognomen because he needed to stand on a box to see over the ship's wheel.

However, what Captain Hollywood lacked in height, he made up for with his skill as a seaman, his courage, and his decency. The safety of his crew and their vessel was paramount, and he won the total respect of all those who worked with him.

His long career saw him sail through both World Wars. Following World War One, he received letters of commendation from Admiral Beatty. During his distinguished career, he experienced the eras of sail, steam, and motor ships. He became



Commodore Captain of the Fisher Fleet, which peaked with 17 vessels. "Wee Harry knew his job inside out," commented Mickey Fearon, who sailed with him. He was known across Ireland, Britain, and North West Europe. Interviewed in Brest, France, in 1950, whilst loading tomatoes for England, he remarked that it was his thirty-fifth visit to that port.

He took command of his last new ship for Fishers, S.S. Balsa, in 1947. He retired in 1953 and died barely a year later in 1954, aged 78. Captain Hollywood had spent more than six decades at sea. He had worked with the founder of the Fisher firm, Joseph. He then worked alongside Frank Fisher, through his 49 years in charge from 1902 to 1951.



The port has gone, and with it, all the firms which congregated around it. The seamen, their ships, and the dockers are now fading memories. Where once, to quote Captain John McParland, "almost every house in Fathom had at least one seaman," today there are none. In June 2013, Hawthorn Cottage was demolished... truly an end to an era.



Thank You.

We at NMA wish to thank everyone who has assisted with the delivery of our Remembrance Tribute today, especially,

**Colin Whiteside and Newry Branch RBL.
Pipe Major David Hanna, Altnaveigh Memorial Pipe Band.
John Henry, Tullyvallen Silver Band.
Kerri Morrow, Newry DEA.
Rev Louise Boland.
Rev FR Ruaidhri Grieve OP.**