

ATHLONE AERIAL

NEWSLETTER ATHLONE BRANCH INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

Autumn 2011 www.athlone.iwai.ie ~ Secretary Michael McDonnell 086 2621136

Chairmans Message

Well it's the time of year, when we look at the summer and reminisce. While the summer weather remained dull for most of the time, the various events did manage to avoid the worst of it. (Perhaps, with the unfortunate exception of the Richmond Harbour Visit). The 51st Shannon Rally was an exceptionally successful event and managed to avoid any poor weather. Many thanks to the organising committee, its chairman, Martin Donnelly, Commodore Tom Meegan and Vice Commodores, Blaithin Fitzgerald and Vivian Clabby.

I had the opportunity to visit most parts of the Shannon and some of the Royal this year. The Shannon, especially the harbours in Derg have really benefitted from attention by WI, with new jetties and facilities everywhere. Killaloe is a jewel in the crown and worth a visit.

We have several forthcoming events so please try and attend wherever possible. You may feel that branch meetings are dry affairs, but it is an opportunity to discuss your issues and here the thoughts of other members. Attendance at the branch AGM is especially valuable.

Between now and the winter Aerial, no doubt some of you will be taking your boats out of the water, don't forget to go through a careful Winterisation process, including putting anti-freeze in you raw water intake/cooling system. Too many owners were caught napping last year.

Dave McCabe
Chairman

Progress at Dunrovin

by Dave McCabe

The current tenants, the Harringtons have recently left. They are the last tenants before the start of the construction of the new building. To protect the building from



unwanted attention and possibly outright vandalism, the structure was recently boarded up and made secure. The IWAI is proceeding with the development plan, site percolation tests have begun and the environmental report has been drawn up. It is expected that the association will formally apply for planning before the end of 2011.

Athlone Branch IWAI Cruise in Company to Cloondara 16th/17th July 2011



Following an informal get-together at Coosan Point jetty on Friday night 15th July, the boats departed at 10am on Saturday 16th, allowing for a 3 to 4 hour passage to the junction of the Camlin River at Tarmonbarry through the 2 locks up into Richmond

Harbour. Following a lively cheese and wine reception sheltered from the heavy rains the group of twenty seven people sat down to a lovely meal in The Richmond Inn. Due to heavy rains all other activities were cancelled.

Notice of Athlone Branch Meeting

**Branch Meeting,
Saturday 1st October, 11 am,
Lakeside Marina Clubhouse**

**Athlone Branch AGM,
Saturday 5th November 8pm,
Lakeside Marina Clubhouse**

(please register on our text alerting system to be reminded of these events)

Reminder Text Alert Information System

We have set up a SMS (texting) information system, to allow the branch, to Text members with timely information and updates, like meeting reminders, cruise in company start dates etc. This is an OPT-IN service. **TO JOIN TEXT IWAI TO 51444.** This is a free service and costs you nothing. **Your number will never be used for anything else but branch information by text.**

Meeting with Ray Dunne, Area Manager, Waterways Ireland

The Shannon branches of the IWAI, now meet the Area manager on an annual basis, to discuss specific plans for the Shannon for the forthcoming year. Lough Ree has missed out on many developments lately and suffers from a lack of cruising destinations. This will be a major discussion issue. If you would like any specific issue to be discussed, let us know. The meeting will not take place until after the next branch meeting.

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End Of Season Cruise in Company

Able organised by Oona and Niamh Herraghty. The end of season cruise in company will take place on the Saturday and Sunday 1st and 2nd of October. The Saturday activities kick start at 3pm in Seans for Murphys and Oysters and Live music followed by a Pig on a Spit BBQ in the lakeside at 8pm.

Tickets for the BBQ cost €10 and can be got from Niamh on
086 8461564

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Portlick Amenity area

A design is currently being finalised for a new development earmarked for Portlick Lough Ree, incorporating two new walking loops, a horse track around the perimeter, horse exercise area, a playground slipway for boats, a new jetty for boats and new mooring facilities. It is proposed that this development will be undertaken in phases because funding is not in place to do the project in full at present.



Athlone Canal documentary

Keith Rowe is in the process of producing a short radio documentary on the topic of the Athlone canal. The documentary will focus on various aspects of the canal such as its history, present status and potential futures. It is being made in conjunction with Athlone Community Radio. As part of the documentary, he will be interviewing people who live on the banks of the canal to find out what the canal has meant to them and what they might like to see in terms of potential developments for the canal. There will also be contributions from the Athlone Canal Group, a group of people who have come together to explore the future of the canal, and any other interested parties.

If you feel that you would like to contribute to the documentary, regarding its history, present status or future, you can contact me at the number below and we can arrange a recording to suit.

Keith Rowe 0863379736. Email: keithrowe1@gmail.com

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Athlone Town Canal Restoration Project July 2011

Following representations from concerned local communities, who reflected a growing desire to do something to improve and develop the canal, Cllr. Aengus O'Rourke agreed to progress the issue in the broad interests of the town. In January 2011 Athlone Town Council agreed to a motion by Cllr. Aengus O'Rourke to provide money to clean part of the canal in co-operation with other private / public bodies.

In June 2011 a group of like minded local people came together to develop a plan to restore the entire canal. This is obviously a very ambitious plan and one that would cost unimaginable sums of money, particularly given the economic climate. However, taken over time (like all canal restoration projects) and in manageable time frames, it is possible to turn our redundant canal into a wonderful outdoor amenity for everyone to enjoy now and for generations to come.

The Athlone Canal Group are delighted that the Athlone branch of the IWAI are involved and supporting their efforts and will in fact play a major role in bringing together the various component parts that make up a viable canal restoration project.



Sean Fitzsimons RIP by Damien Delany

It was with shock and great sadness that we learned of the death of Sean Fitzsimons on the 16th July. Warm tributes were paid to Sean from a variety of organisations with which he was associated, Athlone Vintners Association; Athlone Boat Club; Athlone Sub Aqua Club; RNLI; Aware; and in particular The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland.

Sean had a deep and abiding love for the River Shannon, and indeed for all of the waterways of Ireland. He supported and attended cruises & rallies on most of them over many years, and despite being quite ill in recent years he always made an effort to travel to various events, and to attend branch meetings – always with a “to do” list.



Sean, born & reared in Dublin, fell in love with the Shannon in 1961 when he and some friends hired the barge St. Mary to take part in the first Shannon Boat Rally. The following year he and a friend Johnny Connon bought the St Mary and renamed it Ye Iron Lung. Sean attended all subsequent Shannon Boat Rallies with the “Lung” until he sold it to his nephew Andrew in 2001. Sean then acquired a smaller more manageable cruiser, An Spalpin Eile, and continued cruising and rallying up to recently. In 2010 when President Mary McAleese officially opened the 50th Shannon Boat Rally in Carrick on Shannon, Sean was feted as the only person to have attended all 50 rallies.

The “Lung” was always the “party boat” wherever it went, always music & craic, and inevitably the strains of Carrickfergus, as only Sean could sing it, could be heard into the wee small hours.

In his early years he worked as a church furniture & fittings salesman with Gills of O’Connell St. Dublin. He bought Sean’s Bar in Athlone in the late 1960’s, retired from the church supplies business and became a fulltime publican, running Sean’s Bar with his friend Dermot O’Brien. In addition to running the pub, they both found the time to attend rallies all over the country, north & south.

Sean was a member of Athlone Branch IWAI and we were fortunate to have him as Treasurer for over 30 years. He had the knack of persuading people to join the IWAI, and up to the present time, Athlone branch have members all over Ireland; in the UK; USA; Germany; Holland; and West Indies, all of whom were tourists, recruited by Sean in the pub.

He was largely responsible for building and maintaining our membership numbers, and a healthy bank balance, which contributed to branch activities over many years such as providing mooring buoys & jetties at Athlone town, Ballykeeran, Portrunny, and Lecarrow.

He organised the reprint, sale and distribution of Harry Rice’s book “Thanks for the Memory” in 1974 which built a healthy Development fund for the various branch projects and also for the benefit of various other organisations such as Athlone Sub-Aqua Club, Athlone Boat Club, RCAG, etc.

He also organised the more recent reprint, sale and distribution of “Thanks for the Memory” in 2002, which benefited the Dunrovin Trust redevelopment fund.

He also has organised and sold reprints of old charts (1808) of Lough Ree & Lough Derg which were found in Dunrovin, which also benefited the Dunrovin Trust fund.

Sean also organised the reprint of LTC Rolt’s book “Green and Silver” which raised over £10000 for the Royal Canal Amenity Group restoration projects.

He was the Chairman of the Athlone RNLI fund raising branch and organised flag days & other fundraisers every year. He acted as “Auctioneer” at the Shannon Boat Rally RNLI Auction which raised sums ranging from €5,000 to €10,000 each year for the lifeboats. He was instrumental in having the original plans for the development of the west side quay at Athlone drawn up by architect Noel Murphy and also the original plans for the Athlone Town Marina, also by Noel Murphy, and for promoting these developments with Athlone UDC.

Truly a remarkable contribution to the common good that anyone would be proud of, but Sean took it all in his stride, his mind never stopped thinking of ways to raise funds; to get things done; to improve the facilities.

Alas, in his 81st year, the handsome boatman has come to ferry him over and to lay him down. Members of Athlone Branch IWAI and Athlone Boat Club formed a guard of Honour at Sean’s removal to the Church of Saints Peter & Paul in Athlone, where he arrived to the moving strains of Carrickfergus, courtesy of the Henshaw family.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Anne, his nephews, nieces, relatives and a wide circle of friends. May he rest in peace.



Kerry Sloane RIP by Keith Rowe

August saw the sad passing of a well known figure to the boating community in the Athlone area. Kerry Sloane passed away after a short illness at the age of 81. Kerry led a full, varied, and interesting life, serving with the Irish army and also establishing one of the first boat hire companies on the Shannon in the early seventies. Although his army career was long and illustrious, serving in the Congo and Cyprus, many of us will remember him from his time as owner of the Athlone Cruisers boat hire company and the Jolly Mariner bar/restaurant marina. Kerry also owned the Rosebank Marina in Carrick on Shannon from where he operated the Flagline boat hire company for a period.

Over many years, Kerry worked tirelessly to build his business and to contribute to the economic and tourism life of Athlone. He had a very strong sense of community, being deeply involved with Westmeath Tourism, Midlands East Regional Tourism Authority (MERTA Westmeath Community Development Athlone Chamber and the Rotary Club of Athlone. and many other organisations large and small, to whom he gave his time, energy and expertise without question. A former Army officer and a successful businessman, he gave much of his time and energy to the promotion and tourism development of Athlone, the river Shannon and lakes of Westmeath and the Midlands. Kerry was also very supportive of the activities of boaters on the Shannon through the years, lending his cruisers to the rowing club for their regattas, providing cruisers to the Lough Ree Yacht Club, hosting IWAI Athlone branch meetings in the seventies and eighties, the Peoples regattas and festivals in the nineties and the Shannon Rally on occasion. In fact one of Kerry's cruisers won the Premier award on the Shannon Rally (Noel Maitland skipper) in recent years.

My own memory of Kerry is from a time when I worked for him as a schoolboy on summer holidays alongside him and my father and I remember him as an incredibly hard working man who never saw problems as something that could defeat you but rather as solutions waiting to be found. We extend our deepest sympathy to Maura, his wife and sons Diarmuid and Niall and his daughter Emer, sisters Eva and Nuala, grandchildren and all his relatives and a wide circle of friends. May he rest in peace.

Shannon Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study

The Shannon CFRAM Study (one of seven in Ireland) will focus on areas known to have experienced flooding in the past or are subject to significant development pressure now or in the future. Historically, flood risk in Ireland has been addressed through the use of structural or engineered solutions to existing problems, for example through the implementation of flood relief schemes to protect towns or areas already at risk. In line with internationally changing perspectives, the emphasis in addressing flood risk has now shifted towards:

- A catchment-based approach,
- More pro-active risk management, with a view to avoiding or minimising future increases in risk,
- Exploring the use of more 'non-structural' solutions as well as traditional engineering measures.

The Shannon Study area is divided up into five Units of Management (UoM) based on the hydrological characteristics of the area.

The following outputs will be generated for each UoM:

- Detailed flood maps that show where current and future flooding is likely to occur (to be produced by December 2013).
- An indication of the options they have for managing and mitigating that flood risk.
- Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) setting out how the OPW, local authorities, stakeholders and communities should work together to take actions that address specific local flood risks (to be produced by December 2015). The FRMPs are subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in order to:
 - Provide for a high level of protection of the environment;
 - Understand local community and social considerations; and,
 - Promote sustainable development by integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of specified Plans and Programmes.

The SEA process can be defined by four key stages:

Stage 1 - Screening of Plans and Programmes

Stage 2 - Scoping the SEA

Stage 3 - Identification, Prediction, Evaluation & Mitigation of Potential Impacts (Environmental Report)

Stage 4 - Consultation, Revision and Post-Adoption

They are currently at stage 2 in the process.

Over the coming months, they will be communicating progress on the Study via the website

www.shannoncfрамstudy.ie. If you would like to advise them of any information or data for consideration in the SEA process please contact us at shannon.cframs@jacobs.com.