

Church service keeping alive the story of lifeboat heroes from Donaghadee



The Royal National Lifeboat Institution's volunteer crew at Donaghadee in Northern Ireland, aboard the Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat, risked their lives in monstrous seas to save 33 passengers on the ill-fated MV Princess Victoria in 1965.



MV Princess Victoria

A service took place yesterday in Donaghadee to mark the 65th anniversary of a ferry disaster which resulted in the greatest peacetime loss of life in UK waters.

On the morning of January 31, 1965 the MV Princess Victoria left Stranraer bound for Larne, but due to a severe storm it sank off the coast of Scotland with the loss of 134 people.

The Donaghadee lifeboat Sir Samuel Kelly rescued 33 of the 44 survivors from the wreck and brought in many more bodies the following day.

The Rector of Donaghadee Parish, Reverend Ian Gamble, said: “This was an opportunity to commemorate a disaster that made a lasting impression on Donaghadee.

“Many people still alive have painful memories of the awful news and the bodies being brought ashore following that dreadful storm.

“This service was a time to remember those who died in the tragedy and the grief of their families, but also to celebrate the astonishing bravery of the lifeboat crews, and the crews of other ships that came to the rescue in the most extreme conditions.”

The service held in Donaghadee Parish Church (Church of Ireland) was accompanied by an exhibition in the church hall, organised by Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

In addition, Stephen Cameron, who wrote the book on the Princess Victoria tragedy ‘Death in the North Channel’ gave a talk in the church hall last night.

Donaghadee Heritage’s chair Kenneth Walsh said: “Taken together, the service and the exhibition represents an important step forward



RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly

for the town in obtaining recognition for the significance of the Princess Victoria disaster, and will give greater impetus to our campaign to create a permanent memorial to the tragedy in the shape of a heritage centre centred around the historic lifeboat.

“With help from Ards and North Down Council we are taking steps to conserve and restore the lifeboat, and we have submitted preliminary drawings to the planning office to begin the process leading up to a formal application for planning permission.”

He continued: “The lifeboat is sitting at the marina, it’s in quite bad state.

“We’re raising money for the last few years to get the boat covered in the first instance. We have the funding available but need permission.

“And then hopefully it will be restored to not quite its former glory but a static display exhibit. That will depend on what funding comes.”

The last of Sir Samuel Kelly’s crew passed away last year.

Mr Walsh said: “We lost the last crew member last year. Hugh Nelson Jnr, who died about nine months ago, was actually the father of one of our directors Shirley Cochrane.

“I believe that there is a survivor still alive living in England, quite an elderly gentleman now. Unfortunately he can’t be with us this weekend.”

He added: “A lot of people remember what they were doing the day when the Princess Victoria sank.

“What we’re attempting to do is keep the story alive because the number of people who remember it are now 70 years plus.” Report courtesy The News Letter.

Plough Sunday in Carlow celebrates contribution of women to Irish farming

Yesterday was ‘Plough Sunday’, and a service to celebrate the contribution of women to Irish farming at the start of the growing season, was organised in Staplestown Church, Carlow Union of Parishes,

This year’s speaker was Lorna Sixsmith – who is a farmer, farmer’s wife, blogger, author and social media consultant.

She manages the calf rearing in the spring, blogs weekly and provides social media training throughout the year. Her books ‘Would You Marry A Farmer?’ and ‘How To Be A Perfect Farm Wife’ offer a realistic yet humorous look at life as a farming family.

Her fourth book, ‘Till the Cows Come Home: Memories of a Rural Childhood,’ will be published in May.

The Reverend David White, rector of Carlow Union of Parishes, said that harvest celebrations are one of the highlights of the calendar year in Church of Ireland parishes.



Over the past few years there has been the re-emergence of ‘Plough Sunday’ services which are a very old observance originally taking place after the 12 days of Christmas, the rector said.

Rev. White explained: “In days when work was scarce in winter, the observance looked forward to the time of sowing with the promise of a harvest to come. After all, harvest is impossible without the sowing of the seed.

“During the service itself, the plough is blessed – as representing all the work that will take place, then the seed – reflecting the growth which is hoped for, the soil – as nothing is possible without good land and finally the people of the land are blessed,” he said.

“The service took place in a Church of Ireland church, but with our Roman Catholic and

Methodist neighbours and friends present, since farming people know the importance of community.

“This year we decided to name the event: ‘A Service to Celebrate the Contribution of Women to Irish Farming at the Start of the Growing Season,’ and to invite Lorna Sixsmith to speak,” said Rev. White.

“She is known to so many through her realistic yet humorous books. A sense of humour is a vital part of any way of life. However, the many challenges and joys of farming can seem relentless. So, a sense of humour is not an optional extra. Your survival in the industry may depend on it.” Report courtesy of AgriLand.

Donegal teacher becomes first female principal of one of Derry’s oldest schools

Michelle Ramsey has been appointed the principal of the Model Primary School in Derry’s city centre.

The Lifford native has taught at the school for 25 years and was the acting principal for two years before she took over the role of principal last month.



Michelle Ramsey has been appointed the principal of Derry's Model Primary School

Born Patterson, she grew up on her family's farm outside Lifford.

A teacher for 30 years she did her teacher training at the Church of Ireland College of Education in Dublin and taught in London and Carndonagh before moving to the Model.

"I am proud that I am the first female principal and over the years I worked hard to be part and

parcel of the school," she told BBC Radio Foyle. The Model Primary School was founded in 1862 and is seen as one of the most culturally diverse schools in the city.

The school is like a country school in the heart of the city, Mrs Ramesy said. "There is a lovely warm welcoming atmosphere. Our ethos is celebrating cultural diversity. We are very much inclusive and to us, everyone's the same." Mrs Ramsey said she is blessed by the staff that works at the school.

"I have an absolutely fantastic staff, a very experienced staff. They are a fantastic staff and I am very, very blessed like that."

Not being in the classroom as a teacher has been hard to adjust to since she became principal, she said.

"I am first and foremost very much a teacher and I very much love the children. It was a huge decision for me to leave the classroom and any opportunity that I get I will go into the classroom and cover for teachers and pop in and out of

classrooms.” Report courtesy Donegal Democrat

Irish government threatens Catholic marriage agency over gay couples



The Irish government has threatened to stop funding the bishops' marriage counselling agency unless it changes its policy to accept gay couples.

Accord, an agency of the Irish bishops' conference, received £1.4 million in state funding last year and could potentially be forced to close if such funding is withdrawn.

The Times said that Tusla, the government's childcare agency, has said that any agency it funds must make its services "accessible to everyone". A new agreement has been sent to state-funded counselling services including Accord.

In England and Wales the bishops' marriage counselling agency, Marriage Care, already offers its service to same-sex couples. (This service is offered as part of its general counselling, which is separate from its Catholic marriage preparation.) The agency received over £850,000 from national government contracts in 2014-5.

The dilemma facing Accord recalls that of Catholic adoption agencies in England and Wales following the 2006 Equality Act. About a dozen agencies either had to stop placing children with families, which often meant closure, or offer services to gay couples and cut their links to the Church.

Holocaust survivor returns to Millisle

She survived the horrors of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, where most of her family were

murdered by the Nazis, reports Robbie Meredith of BBC News NI.

But it was on the County Down coast that Rachel Levy began to recover from the Holocaust.



Rachel Levy was brought to live in a farm near Millisle in the immediate aftermath of World War Two

She was among a small number of Jewish orphans brought to live in a farm near Millisle in the immediate aftermath of World War Two.

BBC News NI met her as she returned to the town for the first time in 72 years.

The Jewish refugee settlement farm had been set up in 1939 for young Jewish refugees fleeing Europe on the 'kindertransport.'

Mrs Levy, however, was among a group of 39 teenagers brought there in 1946, after the war ended.

All were concentration camp survivors.

Now 88, Ms Levy remembered encountering the notorious Nazi doctor Jozef Mengele at Auschwitz.

"He presented himself as a very kind man, but he wasn't," she said.

"He was cruel and he was involved in lots of experiments that are too horrific to talk about.

"He selected who would live and who would die, and those who would die were going to the gas chambers."

During her visit, Mrs Levy visited pupils at Millisle Primary School.

Outside the school is a large, striking sculpture of a gold star - a permanent memorial to the town's role in helping survivors of the Holocaust.

Pupils sang for her and read poetry, while she spoke to them about her life.

She told them that she had been "lucky" to be brought to Millisle.

"We were well looked after," she said.

"Because we had all been in concentration camps we were undernourished and small for our ages, and we needed help.

"There were dormitories that we slept in, and a dining room and a beautiful view of fields.

"We relished the food served to us and there were cooks to serve the food.

"We started to feel that we were alive."

Later, Mrs Levy settled in London where she taught, married and had two children.

She said that it was important that the children in Millisle Primary were learning about the Holocaust.

"I find that they are so knowledgeable about things and want to learn," she said.

"One just hopes that it's the beginning of a life that will be different for them, and that we won't

have the horrific things that are still happening in this world.

"The future generation is, hopefully, going to be better than my generation.

"The very fact that they are interested, and they will take that away and improve life, is very important."

Mrs Levy's return to Millisle was organised by the Executive Office and Ards and North Down borough council to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

Run a Big Brekkie for Christian Aid Week 2018

Last year, over 1500 Big Brekkies took place throughout the UK and Ireland. We're looking for individuals, couples or groups of friends to host a Big Brekkie in their church or community, to help raise vital funds for Christian Aid's work in Haiti.

Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world. After the devastating earthquake in 2010 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016, thousands of families were displaced or left homeless.



Christian Aid has been in Haiti for decades. A spokesperson said, “We were there before the last hurricane, and we’ll be there after the next one. We’re committed to fighting for Haitians, building sustainable solutions to help them deal with everything natural disasters and climate change throws at them. We’re not going to leave them in their hour of need.

“But we need your help. We’ve already repaired hundreds of houses and built dozens of new homes that can weather storms in Haiti, but there are still people we haven’t reached.

“Our hope is that people will come together over breakfast, learn more about our campaign and

give generously towards it. Plus, it's a great non-threatening way to build community and friendships in your local area.

Meet, eat and give!

“The idea is simple. Find a venue, get some friends or family to help you organise the breakfast and invite others to attend, enjoy breakfast together and give generously to Christian Aid!

“Once you register your Big Brekkie with us, we'll provide a resource pack with posters, flyers and other helpful material to use on the day to raise awareness of our work.

“If you're interested and would like to find out more about what running a Big Brekkie could look like in your area, come along to our Big Brekkie Taster Morning at [East Belfast Mission's Refresh Café](#) on Saturday 3rd March at 9.30am.

“We'll provide a complimentary cooked breakfast, tell you more about the Christian Aid Week 2018 campaign and share great tips on how to run a Big Brekkie that suits your community.

“Places are limited and we can only take a maximum of two people per organising group.

To book your place, call us on 028 9064 8133 or email belfast@christian-aid.org “

Sean O’Boyle, publisher of thinking books for a thinking church

Sean O’Boyle born June 14th, 1946 – died December 20th, 2017

The death of Sean O’Boyle in a Dublin hospital after a long illness ends an era in Irish publishing. He was founder of Columba Press, which specialised in religious books. Columba Press’s motto “thinking books for a thinking church” expressed its mission. Columba Press provided a platform for writers from all the main Christian denominations, which was free of church oversight. However, there is a suspicion some in the [Catholic Church](#) saw it as too thinking and ensured it failed to obtain certain work.

Columba Press was O’Boyle’s creation, bearing the mark of his personality. He valued words, thus working hard to present them in a form that did justice to their meaning, to their importance, and to the authors who wrote them.

A natural publisher, he took to the trade like a duck to water: first with [Veritas](#) (the Catholic



Sean O'Boyle: A natural publisher, he took to the trade like a duck to water: first with Veritas, then establishing Columba Press as his own imprint

Church-owned publisher), then establishing Columba Press as his own imprint.

As a publisher he had many achievements. While at Veritas his job title was “editor” but in fact he was a publisher. There he published the new Irish catechetical programmes, the *Veritas Hymnal* and *The New Testament Message* series of biblical commentaries. Pope [John Paul II](#)'s visit to [Ireland](#) in 1979 was a challenge he rose to magnificently. Within six weeks, he organised the production of hundreds of thousands of booklets for the congregations at the Pope's Masses, the bishops' concelebratory altar

missals, and a specially bound version of that missal for the Pope himself.

Major contribution

Columba Press made a major contribution to Irish religious thought. One of the firm's greatest achievements was the publication of the *New Book of Common Prayer* for the [Church of Ireland](#). O'Boyle performed a huge amount of work on this, editing and making corrections. He sourced paper and binding for a superb piece of work. Despite weekly use in Sunday worship over almost a decade and a half, the standard of his work means that copies are still in excellent condition. Such professionalism meant that for a long time Columba Press was one of the main publishers the Church of Ireland used.

as well as Columba Press, he had two other imprints: [Gilbert Dalton](#) and Currach Press. Gilbert Dalton published books dealing with traditional music, some as Gaeilge. One of Currach's most important books was Don Mullan's *Speaking Truth to Power*, dealing with the forced resignation of Lieut Dónal de Róiste from the Army, apparently because he refused to cover up for a senior officer who had been driving while drunk.

As a man, O'Boyle had a deep spirituality rooted in Gaelic tradition. That made him at ease with the changes of [Vatican](#) Two, which he felt represented Gaelic communal spirituality and love of scripture.

Great kindness

Above all, he was a man of great kindness and amazing generosity. A couple of years before he died he told a friend: "I feel so blessed with all the wonderful people we knew and worked with."

Preaching at his funeral, long-time friend Fr [Oliver Crilly](#) summed O'Boyle's gifts up:

As do bhinneas is do chruinneas,

as do líofacht is do dhíograis,

as do dháiríreacht is do dheise labhartha,

Míle altú do Dhia.

O'Boyle was born in [Armagh](#) City in the summer of 1946, fifth of seven children, and third son to Seán Ó Baoill and his wife Alice (née Woods). Both parents were teachers, and his father was a noted Irish scholar and collector of music.

He was educated at “The Chapel School” (St Malachy’s Primary School), St Patrick’s College in the City, and UCD, where he studied [Celtic studies](#). While a student, he did some work as a record producer for [Gael Linn](#). He worked as a teacher for a few years, first in St Malachy’s [Intermediate School](#) in [Castlewellan](#), then in St Colman’s College, [Newry](#).

As an ambitious man he found teaching restrictive. Escaping those restrictions led him to publishing, and the blooming of his talents.

He is survived by his wife, Monica: daughters Eimear, Laoise and Máire: son Fearghal: sisters Máire and Roisín: and brothers Colm, Cathal and Manus. He was predeceased by his sister Eilís.

Obituary courtesy The Irish Times.

California congregation returns home, two weeks after being uprooted by deadly mudslides

The Revd Aimee Eyer-Delevett and her congregation heard on Wednesday last week that they could return to their church for the first time in two weeks, but they have no expectations of an immediate return to normal



The Revd Aimee Eyer-Delevett, second from right, rector of All Saints-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in Montecito, California, chats with parishioners at Trinity Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara, where members of both congregations worshiped while All Saints was under an evacuation order due to the recent mudslides.

life or business as usual at All Saints-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in Montecito, California. Fire and flood have changed everything for this community sandwiched between mountain and ocean on the east side of Santa Barbara.

All Saints and its neighbours have suffered weeks of disaster, from the massive wildfire that threatened in December to the 9 January mudslides that have killed at least 21, with two people still missing. The church and its parish school have been closed since authorities ordered a mandatory evacuation from the neighbourhoods in the path of the mudslides. The church wasn't damaged, but the sprawling debris field left Highway 101 impassable and split the congregation in two, with parishioners on the Santa Barbara side isolated from those in the region to the east and south.

“It's been a very difficult time,” Eyer-Delevett told *Episcopal News Service* by cell-phone. “The community has suffered a collective trauma, the entire community of Montecito.”

Her uprooted congregation has found solace in faith and fellowship. Until they can worship in their own church again, All Saints parishioners are attending services at Episcopal churches in Santa Barbara and Ventura and at home churches outside the evacuation zone. After Highway 101 reopened on Sunday, January 21, all were invited to a “Service of Healing and Hope” on Friday last at Trinity Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara.

All Saints clergy and lay leaders, meanwhile, are focused on providing pastoral care to their now scattered members, including to the newest member – a baby boy, born last week to Montecito residents who have been staying with a fellow parishioner in Santa Barbara. Such generosity has been replicated in countless ways across the region since early December, when the Thomas Fire began threatening.

The wildfire grew to become the largest in California's history, and though Montecito and the Santa Barbara area were largely spared by the fire, the smoke and ash still upended daily life for weeks.

It also forced All Saints to cancel Sunday services on 10 and 17 December. Trinity Episcopal Church in downtown Santa Barbara invited the All Saints congregation to join Trinity for worship on 17 December, but then Trinity had to cancel its service, too, when the downtown church became part of the evacuation zone.

All Saints leaders were able to return to their church on 19 December, just in time to prepare a full complement of Christmas Eve and Christmas services. They turned their focus to clearing ash from church grounds, including facilities used by

the Friendship Center, an elder-care day centre that operates on All Saints grounds.

Then, heavy rain began to fall.

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