

Kinsale Monument.

BY LEO McMAHON – SOUTHERN STAR May 10, 2008

TRAGEDY at sea is something fresh in the memory of Kinsale people and with that in mind, a local committee is currently fund-raising to erect a Lost at Sea Memorial at Pier Road near the much admired 1601 Battle of Kinsale mast which is due to be unveiled on 'Sea Sunday', May 18.

The new memorial, designed by local architect Rob Jacob of JLS Design, will be a replica of the famed Kinsale Hooker from a drawing of one in a fisheries report for the House of Commons, London in 1849. It will feature a recessed granite stone deck on to which will be a miniature model of the vessel with the words 'In memory of all lost seafarers from the Port of Kinsale' and the following lines of a verse from the ballad 'The Boatman of Kinsale' .:

His hooker's in the Scilly van,

When seines are in the foam,

But money never made the man

Nor wealth a happy home.

So, blessed with love and liberty,

While he can trim a sail,

He'll trust in God and cling to me

The Boatman of Kinsale.

The much admired existing anchor memorial, which we're told, was the brainchild of the late Gerald Gimblett and donated by Jimmy Hurley, will be re-positioned and there will also be additional seating and cobblestone paving while access to the slipway will be maintained. Ray O'Callaghan is the boat builder and steel structural work is by Bart Desmond of BF Desmond Engineering, Kinsale. Rob and Ray have collaborated on the building of several racing boats for yawl rowing clubs in the south west and pointed out that the tilted hooker in cedar wood will be coated with copper and have a sculpted sail which will also represent the wings of sea birds and the fins of fish.

The estimated cost of the project, which is effectively an upgrading of the existing Seamen's anchor memorial at Pier Road where the annual 'Sea Sunday' ceremony takes place, is €30,000 and to date there has been support from Kinsale Harbour Board, Kinsale Town and Cork County Council and others.

The Kinsale Lost at Sea Memorial Committee, which was formed following the tragic loss of two locally based fishermen the trawler 'Honeydew II' off the south east coast in January 2007, is headed by Eamonn O'Neill, a member of Kinsale Harbour Board and also comprises John O'Mahony, secretary; Albert O'Neill, David Hurley, harbour master Capt. Phil Devitt; Billy Lynch of Kinsale Council and Harbour Board, Johnny Walsh, Canon David Williams and John Thuillier.

It is intended that the memorial will be a fitting place at the waterfront in Kinsale for people to remember, reflect and pray for those lost at sea.

The theme of a Kinsale Hooker was deemed most appropriate by the committee following the advice of Rob Jacob. Local historian, seafarer and former harbour board member John Thuillier said that back in 1808 there were around 50 such vessels fishing up to 35 miles off Kinsale and these were the backbone of a then flourishing fishing industry which in 1829 employed 4,500 people on land and sea.

The term hooker refers to the hooking of fish but in later years such vessels engaged in drift and seine fishing for which a small steam winch was fitted for hauling. The boats were usually 15 to 20 tons and 30 to 40 feet in length and noted for their speed. There is reference to "the hooker in Scilly van" in the famous poem and ballad 'The Boatman of Kinsale' written by Thomas Davis (1814-45).

"It is entirely appropriate that lost Kinsale seafarers would be commemorated in a monument based on the Hooker which is an integral element of Kinsale's maritime tradition" said John Thuillier.

