

Saturday, July 23rd 2008.



**Merchant Navy Branch Officer.**



**By Leo McMahon.**

**Kinsale and Barry have many family and maritime ties and one man who has played a major role in forging links of friendship in recent years and highlighting the role played by Irish and Welsh men in the Merchant Navy, especially during both world wars, is Jim Greenway.**

**He was in Kinsale recently with his wife, Doreen, his son Keith and partner Raelene from Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire and retired Merchant Navy Association colleagues, to attend the annual 'Sea Sunday' ceremonies and speak to South County.**

**Jim, who resides at Fryatt Street, Barry, is descended from James and Mary Greenway, of Kinsale, parents of Thomas and James. His grandfather Thomas, lost his life in World War I when the ship he was serving on was torpedoed. His Great uncle James suffered the same fate in World War II. His father, James Joseph Greenway was lost at sea in 1938 when Jim was aged only five and a half. Thankfully, Jim himself survived his days in peace time as a seaman and is currently chairman of the Merchant Navy Association of Wales, Barry Branch, which recently received the honour of Freedom of the County Borough of the Vale of Glamorgan in Barry.**

**Speaking to Jim at the San Antonio Guest House, Cork St, Kinsale. He said that "sea stories were often recalled during his childhood". His Great Grandfather James Greenway lived in Lower Fisher Street (now Lower O'Connell Street) with his wife Mary and family.**

**His Grandfather Thomas, a boatswain, was killed along with 20 other colleagues while serving on the West Hartlepool registered 'SS Daybreak', one mile east of the South Rock lightship near Lough Swilly in December 1917. The German U-boat 87 which torpedoed the ship he was serving on was sunk the next day, when attacking a convoy in the Irish Sea, by a British naval vessel 'HMS Buttercup'. Thomas was survived by his wife, Nora. In 2000, as secretary of the Barry MNA Branch, Jim presented his Grandfather's war medals at a reception in the Municipal Hall to the then chairman of Kinsale Council for display in Kinsale Regional Museum.**

**Jim's Great Uncle James also a member of the Mercantile Marine, was killed on September 17<sup>th</sup> 1940, on board the St. Ives registered 'SS Tregenna'. He is also remembered along with Thomas and over 24.000 Merchant Navy and Fishery comrades at the memorial in Tower Hill, London. James is further remembered on the internet based Irish Seaman's Relatives Association Memorial 'Seirbis onorac sa Muir-tractala 1939-46' 'Service with honour in the Irish Mercantile Marine 1939-46'.**

**Like many Kinsale and Irish people Jim's father left Ireland in the early 1930s and joined the Merchant Navy in Barry. In 1932, he married Elizabeth Daisy Trewicks of Barry and the family lived at Fryatt Street. Jim has two sisters, Joyce and Maureen. After his father's death at sea, which he found out about when asked to read from a newspaper by an elderly woman in the town, the young Jim Greenway was told that he would have to be the man of the house, at a very tender age although his mother subsequently married Len Arnold. Jim has two step brothers, Leonard ( Deceased) and Paul.**

**"I attended St. Helen's Roman Catholic School and was interested in going to nautical college after that but couldn't afford the fees or the uniform. However, I managed to go to sea by joining the Merchant Navy. I started off at 'Sea School' at Sharpness where I was taught the basics and subsequently did lifeboat and catering courses, excelling in the latter".**

**"As a rating, my first ship was a Canadian cargo ship, the 'Gatineau Park' in 1948. It sailed from Barry to Liverpool where it picked up a local cargo and went up the Manchester Canal to Salford and after that crossed the Atlantic to ports in Canada and the USA.**

**Over the following years, Jim Greenway was to travel all over the world on marathon voyages -one as long as nine months – which took him through the Mediterranean Sea and Suez Canal, to Aden, Singapore and Communist China and countless ports in between. Among many recollections was seeing a woman unloading heavy pit props from a ship in Turkey. During that time, he stopped off at Cobh, but the nearest he got to Kinsale was unsuccessfully trying to phone his father's cousin Gussie Greenway there. He also sailed for a time with Jack Lucy from Scilly.**

**Recurring stomach trouble and doctor's advice forced Jim to leave the Merchant Navy, after which he worked for BP Distillers for 25years as a polymerisation (PVC) technician. He had also been involved during his time with BP, as a works convenor for the Transport and General Workers' Union, a memory of which was actually holding a picket inside the gates of a factory. He opted for early retirement in 1983. Jim was also a candidate for Labour in a local election.**

**For the past ten years, Jim Greenway has been a major driving force as a founder member of the Barry Branch of the Merchant Navy Association and it's Welsh body. He passionately believes that all those who risked life and limb by going to sea and keeping essential supply channels open to Britain and its allies deserved much greater recognition. The first meeting of the Branch took place in the Liberal Club in Barry in 1996 and there was a positive response.**

Today the Branch has over 80 members. Merchant Navy Day is September 3rd but there are also other ceremonies locally and nationally which Jim and his colleagues attend, including of course annual visits to Kinsale for the 'Sea Sunday' service in St. Multose Church and ceremonies on the Pier every May. In addition to Barry and Vale, MNA Wales members have also been honoured with the freedom of Cardiff and Newport and succeeded in getting permission to hold an annual 'Flag Day'.

"It was only eight years ago", said Jim, "that I first visited the town of my fathers birth after more than half a century of being so close that day at Cobh". Yet his first impression he recalled was like "coming home at last".

In that regard, Jim paid tribute to Dennis Collins, Tim O'Brien (former councillor and harbour commissioner) and the late Michael Austin, who had family ties with Barry, and met members of the Barry MNA Branch and also members of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution headed by John Wells.

Others who have forged friendships across the Celtic Sea through maritime and family links and visits include Haydn Holmes and his late wife Margaret, John and Phyllis Wells, Michael and Richard Hemlock, Thomas and Michael Moore, Chris Burt, Pat Tobin, Joe Norton, Peter Walker, Ray and Olive Clemo, Bill and Audrey Clemo, Sid Wells, Dennis Tooze, Billy and Bernie Higgins, Peter Davis, Kay and Kevin McCarthy and his late father Adam, Sarley McCarthy, Rev. Malcolm Davies and his wife Jean, May Austin, Pat Collins, Des O'Hea, John Thuillier, Betty Collins, Marie O'Hea, Sheila Bogue, Eileen Collins, Sheila Roche, David Lynch, the Kent brothers, Timothy Sheehan, Donnie Lombard, Miah Sheehan, Damie Stapleton, Pat McNamara, Margaret Pierce, Jack Sheehan, Edric Conron, Alan Roche, Carmel O'Driscoll, Ann and May O'Leary, Philomena Barrett, Eileen O'Leary, Gareth O'Leary. Eleanor O'Brien, the late Mary O'Brien, William J. Connolly, John McCarthy and Paddy Sheehan and many more.

A major achievement of which Jim and his colleagues are very proud is the signing of the Friendship Pacts between Kinsale Harbour Board and the Barry Branch of the Merchant Navy Association. The first took place on May 14th 1999 at the Trident Hotel after which Jim laid a wreath at the Anchor Memorial on Pier Road in remembrance of all Seafarers who lost their lives at sea. Signatories were Jim Greenway, Barry and Michael Doran, Kinsale Harbour Board and the Barry delegation was Johnny Tagoe, Peter Walker, Niall McGarry, Syd Wells and John Wells. Harbour Master Phil Devitt organised the ceremony.

The second leg of the Friendship Pact was signed at the Seaview Labour Club in Barry on September 29, 2001 on behalf of the Harbour Board by councillor Billy Lynch and by Jim Greenway. The attendance included chairman of the vale of Glamorgan Borough Council, Maurice Nugent (who's father came from Cork), Irish born Mayor of Barry, Margaret Wilkinson; Kinsale Harbour Master Phil Devitt, councillor Tim O'Brien, Sheila Lynch and Colette Devitt.

**There have been numerous exchange visits and new friendships since with Barry not too far away from Kinsale's official Welsh twin town, Mumbles, including one led by then mayor Billy Lynch and Harbour Board Nicky Searles in 2002. On visit to Kinsale, said Keith Greenway, Barry MNA have adopted Brendan Nestor's 'Sam's Bar' in the Glen as their headquarters and presented a plaque four years ago. They have also enjoyed great hospitality at The Folk House, The Lord Kingsale, The Trident Hotel, The Spaniard and other taverns and made many friends in the RNLi Lifeboat stations at Courtmacsherry and Kinsale . Former Barry Mayor Dennis Tooze was accorded a reception and attended the St. Patrick's Parade in the town a couple of years ago. On the most recent visit for 'Sea Sunday' the Greenways were accompanied by Joe Norton, Pat Tobin, Dennis Tooze and former Barry MNA chairman George Liosatos (who served with Dennis Collins) and his wife Kysui and also attended receptions in Kinsale and Cork.**

**Great credit is due to Keith Greenway for compiling information about his father and the role of the selfless Merchant Navy men (many of them were Irish) over the years, many of whom never made it home. Jim and Doreen also have sons Kevin and Kerry, a daughter Claire and grandsons Jonathan, Dylan, and Kylan, and granddaughters Deborah, Carrie-Anne and Emma. ( Dylan aged 8, is the youngest member of the Barry branch.) Relatives of the Greenways in Kinsale include Cyril, Gerard, Senan, Kieran and Tony Greenway to whom Jim and family send greetings. Special thanks were extended to Jimmy Conron, their excellent 'home from home' in the San Antonio Guest House and all the people of Kinsale, Cork and County for the wonderful hospitality which it is hoped will be further strengthened by a local authorities 'Friendship Pact' between Barry and/or Vale and Glamorgan and Kinsale councils which in turn will further boost tourism in both costal regions.**

