

Seascapes News Summary - 12th May 2005

TOM MACSWEENEY'S MARITIME MONITOR

REMEMBERING THE LUSITANIA

The bell chimed out, its sharp sound a contrast to the stillness as the Courtmacsherry Lifeboat rolled in the gentle swell. Then three wreaths were tossed onto the water and began to float slowly away. Lifeboat Mechanic Michael Hurley put aside the bell he had been ringing and gazed across the sunlit water towards the Old Head of Kinsale, shimmering in the distance: "We were out here one year with the Merchant Navy Association from Barry Dock in Wales, all strong men who had seen and experienced a lot at sea themselves and lost companions and relations during the Second World War and they all had tears in their eyes, imagining what it must have been like for those aboard the Lusitania ... the sudden hitting of a torpedo, then passengers who had been at their lunch onboard, now fighting for their lives in the water out here. It's one of the biggest graveyards off the Irish coast. Imagine that where we are now, there were hundreds of people fighting for their lives. It's a place that could be creepy. It must have been an awful sight. When the bow hit the bottom, the stern was sticking up out of the water. Imagine that and the screams and cries of the people struggling to live, others dying...."

I was with the crew of the Courtmacsherry Lifeboat last Saturday afternoon for the 90th commemoration of the Lusitania sinking on May 7, 1915 and Michael Hurley described the moment well. A man-made disaster, a tragedy in which 1,198 people died, caused by the bitterness of war when a German submarine torpedoed the liner. Whatever about the political machinations of the time or what caused a second explosion aboard the liner, this was a terrible tragedy and, as I looked out across the sunlit waters 15 miles south of Courtmacsherry, on a day when the weather was similar to that of the sinking, I shared Michael Hurley's feeling and began to imagine just what it must have been like for those struggling in the water and about man's inhumanity to man....

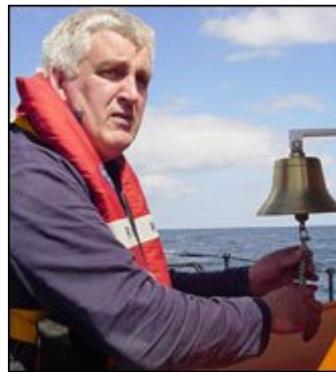
The people of the Old Head, of Kinsale and the surrounding area, also organised an impressive ceremony on shore and, under the Old Head the Courtmacsherry Lifeboat was joined by the national sail training vessel, ASGARD, in a salute to those who died.

ASGARD AT THE OLD HEAD OF KINSALE IN SALUTE TO THOSE WHO DIED ON THE LUSITANIA



COURTMACSHERRY LIFEBOAT CREW AT LUSITANIA COMMEMORATION

COURTMACSHERRY LIFEBOAT OFF OLD HEAD



MICHAEL HURLEY RINGING THE COURTMACSHERRY LIFEBOAT BEL

OLD HEAD COMMEMORATION SPECTATORS

