

Global support to honour Irish Navy veterans

Naval associations around the world are backing a campaign to ensure two Irish veterans are given bravery awards 53 years after they helped save a ship's crew during an explosion.



WED, 26 AUG, 2015 - 01:00
SEAN O'RIORDAN

LÉ Cliona had been conducting an anti-submarine exercise off Cork harbour on May 29, 1962, when catastrophe struck.

The vessel had been deploying hedgehog mortars and depth charges in an exercise witnessed by a number of Naval Service officers, civilians, and members of the press.

One of the depth charges exploded prematurely, just metres from the vessel, and led to a major fire breaking out in one of the boiler rooms.



The accident happened 20km south of Daunt Rock, near Kinsale. The explosion also put the ship's steering gear out of action.

At first, the fire appeared completely uncontrollable and the ship sent out an international distress signal (SOS) which was picked up by British naval bases and lifeboat stations as well as the Naval Service headquarters in Haulbowline.

The heroic actions of two men in particular saved the lives of the 80 people onboard.

They were able stoker Bill Mynes and the ship's second-in-command, Lieutenant Pat O'Mahony (O'Mathuna), both of whom are still alive.

Peter Mulvany, chairman of the [Irish Seamen's Relatives Association \(ISRA\)](#), recently wrote to the Department of Defence seeking to have bravery medals awarded to the two men.

However, in recent days, a negative reply was received from the department. He has now written to Defence Minister Simon Coveney seeking his personal intervention.

Mr Mulvany has also set up a dedicated Facebook site for the campaign and support is pouring in.

"I find it incredible that this wasn't dealt with back then when it happened. If they [the two men] had done this in Britain I think they would have been honoured immediately," Mr Mulvany said.

THE TRAIL OF THE TOWN WOODFORD'S DELICATESSEN DEPARTMENT

The Cork Examiner

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Valiant Crew Saves The Ship—Three Injured

FIRE DRAMA ON CORVETTE

Depth Charge Fractured Oil Feed Pipe

Injured Hero



THE Irish Naval Service personnel experienced their first real test of emergency conditions at sea yesterday when, as she was approximately 10 miles off Roches Point, fire broke out in No. 2 boiler room and spread to No. 1 boiler room of the U.E. Cliona following the dropping of depth charges. It appears that the cause of the outbreak was the fracture of the oil feed pipe to the furnace caused by concussion from a stem rail depth charge.

At one stage the situation became so fraught with danger that it was thought that the ship would give the order to abandon ship, but valour and work by the crew averted a serious situation for all concerned. Two of the engine room staff were injured. A third member of the crew who received one knee, showed great presence of mind by reaching off the oil controls in the engine room.

REDS Near Thai Border

Khrushchev Talks Of Paradise



3 BODIES FOUND

Liquor Bill Gets

To support the case, ISRA recently came across a report into the incident which was conducted by a senior officer who sent it to the then chief of staff of the Defence Forces. The report, seen by the Irish Examiner, had been compiled by investigating officer Captain Thomas McKenna within days of the accident.

Capt McKenna, director of the Naval Service, had praised the crew for being able to save the ship which was extensively damaged. He said the "fire was intense in the extreme". After three hours LÉ Cliona was able to get under way again and limped back to her base.

The investigating officer made special mention of Lt O'Mahony who led the fire-fighting team and able stoker Mynes who had "coolly evacuated the area" and kept fighting the fire despite receiving some severe burns.

He was one of three men who had been kept in for treatment at the military hospital in Collins Barracks.

Support for the campaign has come from the National Council of the Royal Naval Association. Its general secretary Paul Quinn has written a letter, which will be sent to Mr Coveney, in which it was stated: "One of the functions of Government is to right wrongs where they perceive them to be — and this would appear to be an occasion where Government discretion could be exercised safely."



Mr Mulvany said: "We also had messages of support coming from the US Navy and from navies in South America. The Royal Navy (branch) in Belfast has written to the Taoiseach about it. Minister Richard Bruton has also made a submission and Minister of State for Business and Employment Ged Nash has written to Mr Coveney.

"I suspect the Department of Defence (at the time) was only too happy to bury the Cliona incident in the Military Archives. The implication of McKenna's report which highlighted the courage of shipmates was not acted upon by the chief of staff or Government.

"Mynes and O'Mahony saved lives on that day on board and in doing so also saved the Department of Defence from being sued for damages by the civilians/journalists who were aboard," Mr Mulvany said.

The Facebook site for supporting the courageous acts of the two men, and demanding official recognition of their deeds, is at ~~facebook.com/ ForgottenIrishNavalHeroes~~
<https://www.facebook.com/LECliona/>