



# IRISH SEAMEN'S RELATIVES ASSOCIATION [1939-1946]



Seirbis onorac sa Muir-tractala na hÉireann 1939-46  
[Service with honour in the Irish Mercantile Marine 1939-46]

Mr Maurice Egan



Co.Cork

03 October 2016

## Fire on board Irish Naval Vessel - LÉ Cliona - 29 May 1962.

Dear Mr Egan,

I am pleased to hear that you received your Scroll of Recommendation on the 1st September last in Dublin on board LÉ Niamh, and were present on the 30th September on the Naval Base, Haulbowline, Cobh, County Cork, at the unveiling of the plaque to honour ALL the crew of LÉ Cliona for their efforts in extinguishing the boiler room fire and returning their ship safely to Haulbowline on the 29th May 1962, and importantly, without loss of life. You will appreciate the difficulty we had to get this reviewed and I am pleased many organisations and individuals came on board in support. Interestingly, you did not deem it appropriate to Publicly declare support in 2015, which is regrettable. Irrespective, we are pleased you were the beneficiary of the efforts of Pat, Bill and ourselves to redress the omission by previous Department of Defence managements to recognise personnel for their gallant efforts in 1962.

However, despite my letter to your son Mervyn on 25th August 2016 requesting past issues to be binned, and left on the quayside, I was most surprised to hear that when Commander Pat O'Mahony NS (Rtd) put out his hand to you aboard Niamh on the 1st September in Dublin, in an act of reconciliation, you then thought it proper to turn your back. Having been briefed about your recent desparaging comments on the Naval Base in particular directed to Pat's brother on what should have been a day of celebration, and although the matter re LÉ Cliona has been honourably concluded, and you seem to have no intention of permitting the past to remain in the past. Consequently, it is appropriate to point out the following:

Your letter of the 31st August 2015 raised serious questions and although one issued a reply on the 19 October 2015 you seem to be unaware of the legal implications that could flow from your statements, or perhaps you do not care? Either way one intends to robustly address some issues here.

In this regard you continually express the opinion that your version of historical events has more probative value than Pat O'Mahony's. Indeed, Mervyn your son, described Pat's version as being SELF SERVING. Just a reminder, your version of events in relation to the boiler room incident on board Cliona is unsupported by contemporary documentary evidence and therefore its probative value lacks authority. However, Bill Mynes and Pat O'Mahony's version is inter-alia corroborated by contemporary documentary evidence and reliable. If your version had any standing, I put it to you, that the name of CPO ERA Egan would have been mentioned in dispatches by McKenna in his official report dated 31st May 1962 to the then Chief of Staff? significantly you were not so recorded? Consequently, there is only one conclusion, and I put it to you that you were not in the boiler room with Pat O'Mahony tackling the fire, although you were involved in support

Peter Mulvany B.C.L ; H Dip Arts Admin, [REDACTED] Dublin 3,

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email: [mulvanypeterie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mulvanypeterie@yahoo.co.uk) Website: <http://www.irishseamensrelativesassociation.com>



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like the rest of Cliona's crew. I also put it to you that one of the reasons senior commanders and the Department of Defence did not act to issue awards to Bill Mynes and Pat O'Mahony at the time was they had become aware of the obvious conflict in evidence, and they had reason enough to determine that you had embellished your evidence submitted to the internal naval enquiry held post incident to investigate the circumstances surrounding the fire?? and rather than set up a military tribunal to adjudicate understandably decided in the best interests of the Naval Service to bury their enquiry transcripts and conclusions ??

Of other concern is the issue of a missing steam drench valve wheel on board Cliona which was a crucial fire prevention piece of equipment to be used in case of a fire emergency in the boiler room. Consequently, in my previous communication, I put the following to you: **Quote:** *"As the report of Captain Tom McKenna 31 May 1962 clearly states, inter alia, that all the main electrical leads and pipes through it (No 2 Boiler) were destroyed, and as I understand from boiler fire accidents in naval vessels of other countries, the boilers on Flower Class Corvettes may have been fitted with a manually operated drenching fire prevention system in case of fire, which may also be fed in an emergency via the header tanks, and as it appears from your letter that you were the ERA in charge: Can you explain why the drench valve, if fitted on Cliona, was not used? Was that defective ? and if so why?"* **Unquote:**

As you have not commented in reply, I put it to you that the reason the steam drench valve was not used was because the wheels were removed from the spindle making them redundant and inoperable from the boat deck? I also put it to you that it was your responsibility as CPO ERA in charge to make sure all fire prevention equipment was in situ, accessible and operable? I put it to you that your failure to do so jeopardised the safety of the crew of Cliona? and but for the quick reaction of Pat O'Mahony who immediately entered the boiler room putting his life in danger to tackle the fire on his own, an action corroborated by others, it could have been a disaster.

On the 10th June 1948, Pursuant to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) the Irish Government appointed its High Commissioner in London as plenipotentiary and thereby accepted in common agreement with other countries uniform principles and rules as directed for the Safety of Life at Sea. You should be aware of the legal imperative pursuant to this convention which the Irish Naval Service in 1962 was also bound by, in particular **REGULATION 47: (a) QUOTE:** *"Where provision is made for the injection of gas or steam into cargo spaces or boiler rooms for fire extinguishing purposes, the necessary pipes for conveying the gas or steam shall be provided with CONTROL VALVES OR COCKS WHICH SHALL BE READILY ACCESSIBLE FROM THE DECK IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCE"* **End of Quote.**

I therefore put it to you that as the Chief Petty Officer ERA responsible on board Cliona at the time you should have faced a General Court Martial post incident and have allegations tested and decided upon by a convened military tribunal of the Irish Defences Forces, as in my opinion the evidence suggests negligence on your part?

Peter Mulvany B.C.L ; H Dip Arts Admin, [REDACTED] Dublin 3,

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In Conclusion, it beggars belief as to how you got away with that cock and bull story for 54 years. Indeed you seem to have been able to embellish your own involvement in the fire control effort on board Cliona to the detriment of others thereby ingratiating yourself with the chain of command and lifting yourself nicely up the ranks. One has been dealing with British veterans and their stories over many many years and have been amazed and humbled by their strenght of character, resolve and honesty when talking about their past experiences. However, I find your antics and behaviour utterly contemptable and unbecoming of a former senior NCO of the Irish Naval Service. Old Men should learn to fade away gracefully and with due respect for their former shipmates, regretably Mr Egan you seem to have gone adrift and into a space which is full of hatred for others, and its a space which is an anathema to this British Army Veteran and which I do not wish to engage any further. Thankfully the Cliona Project is concluded and ALL concerned including yourself can take immense pride in saving your ship, however, for what its worth, you should consider putting the past behind you and let sleeping dogs lie?

Yours Sincerely

[Redacted signature]

Peter Mulvany  
Chairperson  
Irish Seamen's Relatives Association (1939-46)

CC via Email attachment to Mr Mervyn Egan

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Peter Mulvany B.C.L ; H Dip Arts Admin, [Redacted] Dublin 3,

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email: [mulvanypeterie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mulvanypeterie@yahoo.co.uk) Website: <http://www.irishseamensrelativesassociation.com>