



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

19 October 2015

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

Dear Mr Egan,

Further to my telephone call in response to your letter dated 31 August 2015, I am pleased to say that Minister for Defence Simon Coveney TD has now referred the issues surrounding LÉ Cliona to the Chief of Staff for a review, the outcome of which is a matter for the Chief of Staff and the Minister to decide upon. You will appreciate the difficulty we had to get this to be reviewed and I am pleased many organisations and individuals came on board in support. Interestingly, the Irish Naval Association did not deem it appropriate to Publicly declare support which is regrettable. Irrespective the matter re LÉ Cliona will be decided elsewhere and is all that can be achieved, for the moment.

However your letter of the 31 August last, raised other questions, in particular the allegation in your conclusion:

Quote: The fellow who wrote the book that you copied in composing your article had no idea what was involved in putting out the fire:

Reply: I did not access any books written by anybody for the article in the Irish Examiner. That excellent article was written by Sean O'Riordan based on McKenna's Report May 1962 to the then Chief of Staff, and includes a recollection published in 1994 by Roy Hammond who was a journalist on board Cliona on the day of the fire and press reports by other journalists who all were on board Cliona. Thankfully the journalists were witnesses to events as they unfolded, and their written reports can legally be relied upon as evidence of the facts. In this regard, I have rechecked all the published information and can find no mention of the name Maurice Egan in the records. Attached McKenna's Report along with Roy Hammond's article for your information.

You also mentioned:

Quote: Then we had a major setback, which very few people knew about; our general service pump had broken down completely, we couldn't pump water on the fire:

Reply: During the early eighties I worked around the boilers in Poolbeg Power Station as an instrumentation technicians mate, and was the union representative on the Fire safety committee within the station. We had a drench valve system operating in case the boilers needed to be shut down in an emergency, which could be operated automatically by the control room operators, and in case of a malfunction, or if required, could be operated manually by turning a drench valve wheel to open the valve. These valves were located on each level from the floor of the station to the top of the boilers. I was also involved in periodic tests to check if the

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valve opened and closed as part of the fire prevention safety measures we had to adhere to. One is assuming the same fire safety principle applies re drench valves on the boilers of Flower Class Corvettes. Consequently to assist in understanding the fire prevention measures on board Cliona on the day of the fire the following for your consideration:

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?

Subsequent to the fire on board LE Cliona 29 May 1962, a Naval Enquiry was convened to fully investigate the incident on board Cliona. Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2014, I recently sought access to the transcripts of that Naval Enquiry, but was refused. Perhaps your name is included in the transcripts as a contributor to that confidential report, which the Department of Defence will not give access.

In Conclusion, as the Department of Defence has all the information at their disposal, I expect they will make their decisions based on all the contemporary evidence held in their archives, and I am sure their final conclusions will be awaited with great interest by all concerned.

Yours Sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

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