

SEAFARING

Moville & Greencastle

There has always been a **GREAT HISTORY OF SEAFARING** in North-East Inishowen.



Boats outside Montgomery Terrace, Moville c.1950



American Liners at Moville c.1950



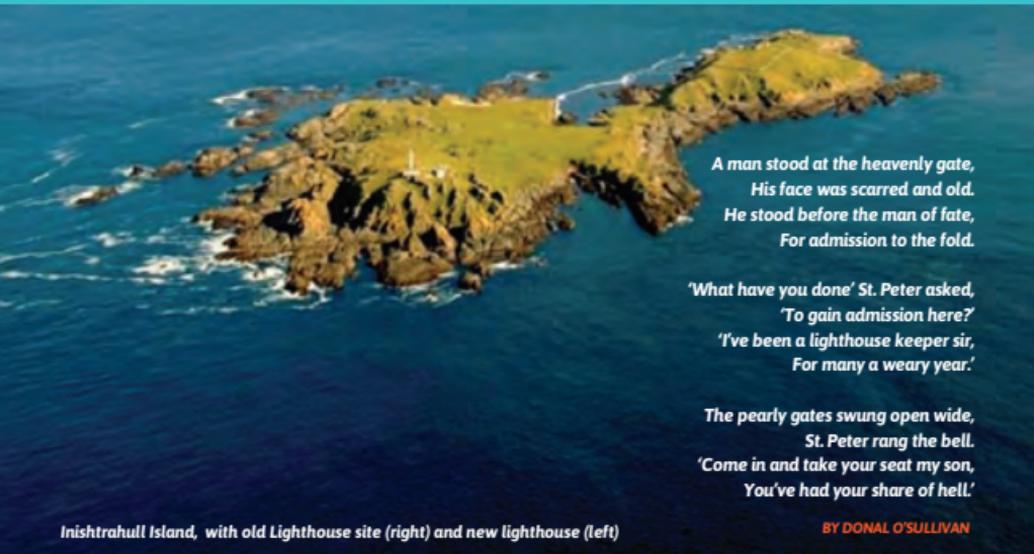
Nestled on the shore overlooking busy shipping lanes and waters that are traditionally rich with sea life, the towns of Greencastle and Moville have seen many changes over the years, but they have always maintained a strong seafaring community. There have been local services here for many years that have helped to ensure that fishermen can work as safely as possible. Well-built boats, lighthouses and a local Coastguard station are all important features in the local community.

This exhibition takes a closer look at these services and their place in the future of seafaring. Patrick Gillespie, Donal O'Sullivan and Brian McDonald contributed the text for this exhibition.

LIGHTING THE WAY HOME



Donal O'Sullivan



*A man stood at the heavenly gate,
His face was scarred and old.
He stood before the man of fate,
For admission to the fold.*

*'What have you done' St. Peter asked,
'To gain admission here?'
'I've been a lighthouse keeper sir,
For many a weary year.'*

*The pearly gates swung open wide,
St. Peter rang the bell.
'Come in and take your seat my son,
You've had your share of hell.'*

Inishtrahull Island, with old Lighthouse site (right) and new lighthouse (left)

BY DONAL O'SULLIVAN

"My father was a lighthouse keeper, and his father before him was one also. My grandfather was a keeper on Bull Rock off Cork. He went fishing one day and never returned. My father eventually decided he wanted to be a keeper like his father before him.

I started when I was 18. After working years on lighthouses around the country eventually I was appointed to Inishtrahull and I spent five years there. Inishtrahull is a great wee island, a mile long and it has the same shape as a pair of glasses sitting on the table. The rock formation is not of Irish origin at all, but more similar to Greenland. Twelve families lived there until 1928.

There were two lighthouses in Inishtrahull; the first shut down in 1957, having been built in 1813. My father was the keeper there before it closed down. The second lighthouse opened on the other side of the island after that.

There were three of us in Inishtrahull. You had to do a lot of painting and general maintenance. You had to make sure the radio beacon was set to the second, according to the BBC radio timescale, because if you didn't you might interfere with other signals. You did four hours on duty, and eight off.

I never really found it lonely. We had great comrades; the isolation didn't bother me at all. In fact, I welcomed it; getting clear of all the hustle and bustle. It made coming home all the better too because you looked forward to it.

Now all the lighthouses are controlled from Dublin. There are about 74 around the coast and they are all controlled by big solar panels. They're all linked up by computer. Say in Inishtrahull if the light goes out, they can control another one to slide in. If another one fails, they have one on the balcony railing that they can turn on remotely also.

Boats don't really rely on lighthouses much anymore, although I was talking to a ship's captain and he says he likes to see the lights. When you're coming into land it gives you great confidence. He said, Even with all the technology now, I'd rather see the light."



Donal O'Sullivan in 1990



Donal and two windswept technicians on Inishtrahull



Donal Today

Greencastle Coastguard

There is a great tradition of seafaring in the Foyle. With this comes tragedy. In the 80s there was a lack of a sufficient rescue service. All we had was what was left after partition, mainly an old 'Rocket Cart'. In the late 80s a new organisation was formed called the 'Coast and Cliff Rescue Service'. New members volunteered and it evolved into a new service which eventually became the Irish Coastguard in 2000.



Members of the Greencastle Coastguard on receiving an award for 20 years service: L-R: Brian Thompson, Patrick Gillespie, Charles Cavanagh, (Area Officer) Michael Doherty (past member) Michael Mc Laughlin

"The Greencastle Coast Guard at the moment has 29 volunteers on its team. The reason for this is if we have a call out we can at least have about half turning up to respond to the incident.

The team consists of an Area Officer and Deputy Area Officer. Then we have the rest of the team who will be given tasks within the station. Different duties include maintaining and checking equipment, repairing wet suits and any other tasks to ensure that the station is ready for the next incident.

Most of our call outs are usually with boats around the coastal waters. We get a few callouts to help people who have gotten into difficulty or injured themselves along the coastline. If the ambulance crews cannot reach the casualty we would recover the casualty to a safer place to be dealt with.

The work is rewarding because when we get a call out, we get to help people injured and in distress. If someone was to ask why we do it, the answer is 'because we can'.

We've come an awful long way in the last 25 years. We've seen the establishment of new stations, a new fleet of boats and vehicles, new and modern communication systems. All put together by mostly voluntary contributions and the work of the volunteers themselves."



WATER SAFETY FOR SCHOOLS

Educating Children

The Greencastle Coastguard often visits schools to **EDUCATE CHILDREN** in what they do and **PROMOTE THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER SAFETY**. As we are an island and a lot of coastal towns have a strong association with the sea, it is important to educate people about the dangers around our coast.



These images feature students from Scoil Eoghan in Merville.

We do this through activities including the wearing of lifejackets and how to fit them properly, asking the children questions to find out what they know, and finally, give them a chance to ask us questions about what we do in the Coast Guard.

We educate young people and give them important information which some day could save their life or someone else's.