

Lough Erne Branch AGM 2015 Chairman's Report

I would like to thank you all for coming to our 2015 AGM.

We all seem to be getting older and inevitably some dear friends have passed on since our last AGM. I am thinking of Austin Gunning, John McCrea, Pearl Crawford, Stephen Chambers, and Ralph Pattens, to these names I would also like to include the large number of victims of the French massacre last night. I would like to offer our condolences to their close friends and family and would like you stand for a moment in their memory.

I would particularly like to thank Frank for the marvellous support he has given as secretary, he has a great eye for detail and a great ability through his skilful use of words to avoid controversy, Mike has proved to be a very able and capable treasurer and Mervyn, as minute secretary, and publicity coordinator has done sterling work in publicising our efforts to the IWAI. Robert has been instrumental in developing the charting side of our branch. We are grateful to John for organising our last committee meeting and evening dinner, which included our partners at the Royal Ulster Yacht Club. Alan, could always be relied upon to come up with dependable advice and Jim, was very generous in inviting our members to many of the activities he organised with the Lisburn branch. And of course, my wife Jane, who I could not manage without.

Waterways Ireland

We have continued to enjoy a good relationship with Waterways Ireland and are delighted that some work has started on the **Ulster Canal**. I am still hopeful of living long enough to sail to Clones. We had a very productive meeting with them at their headquarters when we discussed their plans for the future development of Lough Erne.

We made a detailed submission to them in relation to the proposed amendments to the **byelaws**, which we were generally in favour of with a few reservations.

Harbour Hoggers

We agreed that there was need to curtail the selfishness of the persistent harbour hoggers, but concerned with the needs of the legitimate boater who should be facilitated on the few occasions where he needs to leave his boat for more than three days at a public mooring.

Waterways Ireland assured us that when an application for an extension was made their decision would reflect the history of the individual and their use of public moorings.

Speed Limits

Waterways Ireland assured us that a common sense approach would be made to speed limits particularly when safety is an overriding factor. They confirmed that byelaw 37 still applied to speed in the vicinity of moored craft. Speed would

generally be measured through water rather than over land. Radar guns were only effective against large steel boats.

Seizure of Boats

Waterways Ireland stated that if they could not find the owner of a boat they could still seize it by pasting a notice on the hull.

Other Branches

We are very fortunate in the Lough Erne branch of having many good friends. Although the weather was awful and some of our members had a road accident on the way to Fermanagh and were unable to join us, we had a very successful day out when members from Lagan, Newry, and River Bann joined us on the May Bank Holiday. Thankfully the accident victims all recovered.

Erne Rally

The 50th Erne Rally was a terrific success, with over 80 boats taking part. Gerald Mackerel was very effective in encouraging all craft to leave on time, while Colin Beattie, the joint commodore, did sterling work behind the scenes. Cathal Kinney produced an excellent book on the history of the rally. Our branch should be justly proud of co-sponsoring such a prestigious event.

Newry Branch

We were happy to support the Newry branch in their enterprising efforts to restore the Newry Portadown canal. The restored Sluice keeper's cottage, which they man at weekends, is a real beacon for IWAI. We were delighted that they have managed to get lock gates erected and a good stretch of the canal rewatered. Their receipt of the Queen's award for voluntary service was well deserved.

Lough Derg

Frank organised a memorable boat expedition to Lough Derg which took part in very inclement weather and some members were glad to get back to the relative sheltered waters of Lough Erne.

Cruise in Company

May Burke organised a very successful cruise in company which culminated in a dinner in the Seven Horseshoes in Belturbet for more than 40 participants. This was a joint enterprise with the Lough Erne Yacht Club and we are grateful to her for a well organised event.

I have enjoyed many years with the IWAI and really appreciate all the good friends that have added to Jane and my enjoyment. We have had exciting times over the years and I still remember Myrtle Alerdice's reaction when I asked for her help in organising the Falkirk Wheel trip. She asked me how many were likely to come and when I replied 50, there was bit of a gasp at the other end of the phone. She came up trumps and that trip set the scene for many other wonderful adventures that we had.

Now that I am 75 I get a feeling of De Ja Vue. I have lost the enthusiasm and excitement I once had, and although it has been a great privilege to be Chairman of the Lough Erne Branch, I feel it is time to stand aside and let someone younger with fresh ideas and enthusiasm to take over. I therefore have decided not to stand for re-election.

Ken Bell