

‘MEET THE FLEET’ CELEBRATES 75TH NAVAL SERVICE ANNIVERSARY

The Irish Naval Service marked its milestone 75th anniversary by showcasing its fleet of vessels to the public during its ‘Meet the Fleet’ experience in Dublin in Cork in early September 2021.

Minister for Foreign Affairs & Defence Simon Coveney was joined by Dublin’s Lord Mayor Alison Gilliland, An Cathaoirleach of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Lettie McCarthy, Defence Forces’ Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett, Defence Department Secretary-General Jacqui McCrum and Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) of the Naval Service Micheal Malone, to mark this important milestone for Ireland’s Naval Service.

Beginning in Dún Laoghaire Port with a Ministerial Guard of Honour inspection and a gun salute to herald the anniversary, the Minister and the entourage sailed from Dún Laoghaire on-board the LÉ Samuel Beckett, arriving at

Dublin Port on 1 September.

Upon arrival in Dublin Port there was a fly-past by the Air Corps, and the Minister accepted the salute from the three Naval Ships already docked in Sir John Rogerson’s Quay –LÉ James Joyce, LÉ William Butler Yeats and LÉ George Bernard Shaw. All four ships were open to the public, in line with all Covid restrictions, as part of a ‘Meet the Fleet’ experience.

Minister Coveney praised the Naval Service men and women, past and present, for their dedication and excellence, and their families for their commitment and support. “Your dedication to service, to maritime security, to the marine environment and to each other, is evident in the



LÉ Samuel Beckett pictured arriving at Dublin Port to join the LÉ James Joyce, LÉ William Butler Yeats and LÉ George Bernard Shaw for a 'Meet the Fleet' experience at Sir John Rogerson's Quay in September 2021.

professionalism and steadfastness with which you have undertaken your roles assigned by Government over these last 75 years," the Minister remarked.

"As the State's principal seagoing agency with a general responsibility to meet contingent and actual maritime defence requirements you are tasked with a variety of defence and other roles, which you fulfil to the highest standard. Your role at the national level cannot be understated

and your potential should never be underestimated," he noted.

COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION
In marking the important milestone in one of his final official duties as the Defence Forces' Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett thanked all members of the Naval Service, past and present for their commitment and dedication.

"No matter what tasking, be it on fisheries monitoring and protection

patrols, major search and recovery operations, counter terrorism and drug interdiction operations or multinational humanitarian operations, the selfless manner in which you meet these challenges head on, reflects the spirit of the generations that proceed you and inspires the next to make a difference."

The Secretary General of the Department of Defence thanked the Naval Service Jacqui McCrum said that while the past 18 months had



Minister Simon Coveney disembarks the LÉ Samuel Beckett upon arrival at Sir John Rogerson's Quay in Dublin.

been extremely challenging, “the professionalism, dedication and commitment of all Naval Service members has been recognised at a national level in a number of fora, not least supporting the national response to Covid and the sea fisheries role during the tumultuous months when a Brexit deal was being finalised and came into effect.”

CORK CIVIC RECEPTION

The celebrations and the ‘Meet the Fleet’ experience continued to Cork three days later, with the LÉ Samuel Beckett first stopping off at the Naval Headquarters in Haulbowline before sailing on towards Cork City.

Minister for Defence, Simon Coveney was joined in Cork by An Taoiseach Micheál Martin who took the salute during a fleet review, and as the Naval Service Ship entered the Port of Cork there was another fly-past by the Air Corps.

They were accompanied by the Lord Mayor of Cork City Colm Kelleher, the Defence Forces Chief of Staff Mark Mellett, Secretary General of the Department of Defence Jacqui McCrum and FOC of the Naval Service Michael Malone to celebrate the occasion.

Taoiseach Micheál Martin said: “As an island nation, the sea is of central importance to Ireland and her people, and



Pictured outside Cork City Hall to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Naval Service (l-r): Defence Forces Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Mark Mellett; Chief Executive of Cork City Council, Ann Doherty; Minister for Defence, Simon Coveney TD; Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Colm Kelleher; Secretary General at the Department of Defence, Jacqui McCrum; and Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) for the Naval Service Commodore Michael Malone. (Pic: Michael O'Sullivan /OSM PHOTO)



Defence Forces' Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett, An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, Minister for Foreign Affairs & Defence, Simon Coveney and FOC Commodore Michael Malone pictured on board the LÉ Samuel Beckett during celebrations in Cork Harbour on 4 September 2021.



Defence Forces' Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett and Minister for Foreign Affairs & Defence, Simon Coveney, on board the LÉ Samuel Beckett entering Cork Port.

I thank members and their families for the dedication and service shown during a challenging year and congratulate the Naval Service for all its achievements over 75 years.”

Cork’s Lord Mayor Colm Kelleher, who hosted a civic reception in Cork City Hall, said that it was a great honour to formally mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Irish Naval Service in Cork City, a city whose motto is “a safe harbour for ships”, with a long and rich maritime heritage.

“Since 1946, the Naval Service has been dedicated to protecting the safety of both the Irish nation and our maritime interests, and in the wider global context, has played huge role in international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions,” he noted.

The Office of the Lord Mayor of Cork has a unique maritime connection, in that the Lord Mayor is also Admiral of the Port of Cork. Each year, in their capacity as Admiral

of the Port, the Lord Mayor takes part in a ceremony at sea known as the 'Throwing of the Dart', symbolising the city's control over the port.

The Naval Service was also welcomed by a blue lights Guard of Honour from the Irish Coast Guard and the RNLI in acknowledgement of the Naval Service's diamond jubilee and to mark National Services Day for frontline emergency services on 4 September 2021.

BIRTH OF NAVAL SERVICE

While the main day-to-day role of the Naval Service is to provide a fishery protection service in accordance with the State's obligations as a member of the EU, it also undertakes several tasks such as search and rescue, diving operations, drugs interdiction as well as many more.

In May 1939, the Irish Government ordered two Motor Torpedo Boats (MTBs) from Great Britain, which were to become Ireland's first naval vessels. The process of raising some type of Navy was greatly accelerated by the outbreak of World War II as Ireland needed to have its own Navy to uphold its neutrality. The order for MTBs was increased from two to six and the Marine and Coastwatching Service was established in September 1939.

By 1941 the Marine Service consisted of six motor torpedo boats, plus four assorted vessels and 300 personnel of all ranks. Tasks during the war included mine laying, regulation of merchant ships, upkeep of navigational aids and fishery protection. At the end of the war in

1945, the Coastwatching Service was disbanded, while the Marine division had a reduced role. In September 1946 the Government decided that the Marine Service should become a permanent component of the Defence Forces, and the Irish Naval Service was born.

