

2018 | REPORT

# *Ilen*

School and Network for  
Wooden Boat Building



THE ILEN SCHOOL FACILITATES THE  
DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF HANDS ON WORK

# *Ilen*



*The eagerness with which youth engage & learn overflows into minor chaos of paper & colour on the ground at the Ilen Exhibition at The Hunt Museum, October 2018.*



Ilen sailing towards Limerick,  
September 2018.

*That which has for ages been longed for by many has, by many, come to pass.*

The project to bring Limerick to the sea, to open minds and lungs to deep draughts of sea air has begun, more manifestly, to take effect. This happens in two ways: directly and tangibly to people, like children learning their knots, and indirectly and intangibly, to the whole population who safely, vicariously and securely enjoy the A.K. Ilen's sea voyaging by report and, imagining, share the magnificence of the Irish coast as the ship rounds each battered headland and enters each fabled bay. Of the two modes, the second, the indirect mode, may have the more powerful and lasting effect.

The aspirations and goals of the Ilen Company are generally shared. They include the task of bringing happiness and prosperity to the youth of all ages of Limerick and the nation, the task of sharing the fruits of successful endeavour so that all of society enjoys the wonder of what happens. We address all and are happy particularly to see the very young apply themselves with speed and enthusiasm to the path of knowledge and skill. We rejoice too in the particular energies, availability for tasks and activities, and local commitment found in the areas designated as needing regeneration. Ours is a city and county wide programme that is ready to be scaled up to a national level. The seas and oceans beyond Limerick offer immense richness and wealth for all, and the impressive remnants of Limerick's and Ireland's maritime traditions and skills, together with our built and natural heritage give us the capacity to engage adequately and profitably with them.

Limerick is Ireland's natural gateway to the Atlantic and the New World beyond. To further develop and diffuse Limerick's relationship with the sea is an immense undertaking. How does one go about it? One way, a professional way, would be to bring in a major PR company with a budget adequate to the task. In this model, much hard money is spent up front in the hope that less tangible things like attitudes and impressions may change. This change then brings about happy decisions of destination and location.

Another way, the way that we are already going, is to actually do what we say should be done, and to do it authentically, stylishly and well, thereby inviting others to participate in the limitless wealth we discover. This second way is indeed facilitated by money up front, but the expenditure is already testing and achieving final goals from the outset. This second way is also financially very efficient for it enjoys a multiplier effect as it releases the great latent energy of the resources around us.

Supported by



**An Roinn Tithíochta, Pleanála,  
Pobail agus Rialtais Áitiúil**  
Department of Housing, Planning,  
Community and Local Government



Chelsea Canavan shows a youthful class the ropes.



Preparing for voyage to Limerick.



Welcoming visitors.

*Ilen returns successfully  
from sea trials.*





Knots mastered, ready to row.



Steady hands, common purpose.



Liam O'Donoghue shares the skills of knot tying.

One dimension of the Ilen Project's communication to society of the wonders at the very gates has been through formal education, through our own classrooms (fixed and floating), those of other schools and through the Hunt Museum, where an extraordinary level of enthusiasm for maritime affairs has been evinced, especially by the young.

Another dimension has been, and will continue to be, the Ilen's dramatic engaging with the seas around Limerick's gates in performances of theatre, street theatre and the theatre of the sea roads. This theatre is, of course, a strictly disciplined one, where obeying the rules and exigencies is a matter not only of artistic success but also, of life and death.

Gandelow participation in the Great River Race on the Thames, as well as gandelow racing among the gondolas of Venice, have been minor harbingers of Limerick's return to projecting power and presence onto the seas of the world. Our current maritime education ventures are

aimed at, among other things, the building of capacity for further such ventures over the seas of the globe.

More importantly, perhaps, the children of City and County have been very enthusiastic in the reception of their boat and have engaged in their hundreds and thousands in Ilen schools maritime projects and at the Ilen Exhibition in the Hunt Museum, practicing their sailors' knots and designing boats, all of them strikingly original, some even seaworthy. This Hunt Museum activity was a great addition to the more focused work in the participating schools of the area which included:

- Our Lady Queen Of Lourdes, NS, Rosbrien.
- St. Mary's NS, Bishop Street.
- CBS Primary NS, Sexton Street.
- St. John the Baptist, NS, Pennywell.

17 schools totalling approximately 500 students participated in this Ilen Project curriculum-linked programme.



*Full complement, heading for distant shores.*



## ILEN | PUBLIC EXHIBITION

7

14TH SEPTEMBER - 11TH NOVEMBER



Setting up.



Rosie Ní Ghallógláigh.



Light & colourfully styled public exhibition.

Ilen was a light and colourfully styled public exhibition which drew upon many of Limerick's historical elements, particularly rich maritime threads which converge at Limerick's Custom House building - today's home to the Hunt Museum.

The Custom House riverside aspect is no accident of 18c urban planning: under its roof, the City's vital activities of sailing ships, maritime trade and associated customs collection were regulated.

The exhibition took as its central theme, the ten-year work of a local community educational marine and boat building project, and its chief prize the sailing ship 'Ilen', which returned beautifully rebuilt to Limerick this year, after an absence of 92 years.

Integral to the exhibition was the opportunity for hands-on engagement, learning the ropes so to speak - an opportunity the youth of Limerick did not let sail by. Rather they engaged with it in dynamic and youthful fashion and were left with a new awareness of their local environment and the maritime and riverine culture of Limerick.

The exhibition was visited by an estimated 5000 visitors who left behind many generous and grateful comments.



Ilen in the low bright light of winter.

## ILEN | OUT OF THE SHED AFTER TEN YEARS

3RD - 4TH JANUARY

Like a salmon heading for the sea, the Ilen finally emerged, on a Heath Robinson trolley from the confines of the old Cornstore at Hegarty's Boatyard into the searing light of a cold 5th of January 2018. She was resplendent, fresh, bejeweled and purposeful, and seemed to swell slightly and loom larger than ever in the new open space. She also seemed indeed a noble, and possibly the last representative of the ancient Irish Atlantic seagoing tradition.

## ILEN | SEA TRIALS TOWARDS LICENSING

28TH MAY

Our hope of gaining a regulatory passenger licence for future sea operations was fulfilled in May. The Ilen presented herself on Baltimore Quayside, and received on board a Department surveyor. The occasion was a sea trial, and a vessel inspection, to assess if Ilen were in conformity with the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport, Marine Survey Office stringent guidelines.

Purposefully Ilen proceeded to sea, she responded capably, as did her crew, to the commands of the surveyor. The trial was a success, confirming that Ilen had attained a high standard of marine engineering, a testament to all who had given of their time, energy, skill and resources to the project of getting her back to sea once again.



Testing the waters by the Beacon at Baltimore Harbour during sea trials.



*Gary Mac Mahon, Gene O'Neill, Paddy Hegarty,  
Facthna O'Sullivan, Teddy O'Donovan, Liam Hegarty,  
Colm Ó Cuileanáin, Mary Jordan, Anthony Keane OSB,  
John Hegarty & Mary Hegarty (wife of Liam).*



JANUARY - DECEMBER

1. Tony Daly leathering rigging soft eyes, Ilen workshop, LEDP Roxboro.
2. Spars (composite Alaskan grown Sitka Spruce) nearing completion in the well-lit former Krupps factory, now LEDP, Roxboro. April 2018.
3. Loading the mainmast, Roxboro. April 2018.
4. The main men: Jim McNerney, Tony Daly, Liam O'Donohue & Robert Smalle.
5. Liam Hegarty directs the stepping of the mainmast. April 2018.
6. Masts & spars arrive on time at Oldcourt, West Cork. It will be several months before they all sail together back to Limerick again.
7. James Madigan prepares to send up the standing rigging.

Sponsored by

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council

The Ilen Workshop enjoys the generous hospitality of LEDP, a partnership which altruistically steered the defunct Krupps factory to the dynamic community and commercial project it is today. The original architects knew the benefits of diffused northern light. Consequently, the Ilen workshop enjoys a top class manufacturing environment.

Shipped from it this year were the innumerable components of a small tall ship, from a marine manufacturing process which not only produced for the exigencies of the sea but, at the same time, gifted many local people with new and transferable skills.



Gary Wilmot at work.

14TH MAY

Evidently, everything was fine, the ship was built, the quality of work was excellent and the materials were the best. But Ilen was still high and dry, inert and embraced upright with a strong supporting steel cradle. Early in May 2018 the Ilen was offered to the rising tide and was gently lifted by the seas and taken away as one of their own. Away from her cradle, she knew what she was doing having been through countless seas in her 92-year life.



Ilen floats beautifully if a little high.



Ilen is a wonderful celebration of Irish traditional marine culture.

*Ten minutes before she returns to the watery world she was designed & rebuilt to sail upon.*



## ILEN | LAUNCHING THE ILEN

26TH MAY

On the 26th of May, 2018, the Ilen was launched at Baltimore. This was an opportunity for all her builders, particularly the Oldcourt and Limerick teams, to show the outcome of their long labour and high craft.

It was a launch which celebrated also the vital contribution of the project's key sponsors, who with

fortitude and adventure came behind the good ship Ilen, to see things through to conclusion. We are confident that their investment will yield, with the multiplier effect, more than a hundredfold.



Michael Tiernan, LEDP, Gerry Boland, JP McManus Benevolent Fund & Maeve Tiernan enjoying the atmosphere of launch day.





*Ilen rises to a sea as she  
begins her long awaited  
voyage towards Limerick.*

23RD - 25TH SEPTEMBER



James Madigan on the approach to Limerick City raises the National & Limerick City flags.



Ilen Crew Mantas Seskauskis, Mike Grimes & Robert Smalle happy to be sailing homeward.

Once Ilen had sailed successfully through her regulatory sea trials off the South Coast of Ireland, preparation for her voyage towards Limerick began. A seven-day weather forecast indicated that the fair sea conditions, which had characterised summer 2018, were quickly moving away, compelling an immediate departure, once ship and crew were ready for sea.

The voyage towards Limerick afforded Ilen's crew the chance to gain a measure of the ship. They were not disappointed, her performance at sea delighted all: a long keel, a fine entry and a gentle run aft saw her easily ride the big seas of the South and West Coast, and as having a capacity and an assuredness which proclaimed the seaworthiness of her design

pedigree. Hers is an Irish design lineage which organically evolved out from the aeons of sailing ships voyaging amid the Atlantic seas and swells off Ireland.

Coming into Limerick, she left in her wake the unforgettable and mythically infused Mizzen Head, Bull, Cow and Calf, Skellig Rock, Blasket Sound, Brandon Mountain, and the lower reaches of the Shannon.

It was a magnificent voyage along a course which has much to teach on the subject of Ireland's mythic origins and relationship with the sea.

## ILEN | PRESIDENT OF IRELAND VISITS ILEN

5TH OCTOBER



President of Ireland Michael D Higgins, his wife Sabina & Gary Mac Mahon.



Gary Mac Mahon & Pat Keating, CEO Shannon Foynes Port Company.



Paddy Barry & Dr Edward Walsh.

On the evening of Friday the Fifth of October 2018, the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins and his wife Sabina came to the Floating Docks at Limerick to receive the newly returned Ilen on behalf of the nation. He seemed quite at home in this marine environment and we would have happily taken him on as the crew had he not, after a pleasant hour of conversation, been so swiftly and stylishly whisked away by his entourage. We were all very impressed: it would certainly seem that his skills are not limited to steering the ship of state.

It was indeed fitting that the Ilen should have been presented to *A Shoilse* the President of Ireland, for, as well as being a Limerick ship, she also belongs to the nation

and is ready to serve her country in ambassadorial role *Quo Fates Vocant*. Though small when among the great tall ships of other nations, her subtlety and nimbleness allow her to go further to visit communities that are more sheltered from the oceans. Her pedigree gives her already an international status and recognition. Without any effort on our part, she is already famous worldwide among those who read yachting classical books



*All lined out for presidential visit.*



3RD OCTOBER

On the third of October, the Lord Mayor of Limerick James Collins came to the Floating Dock to welcome the Ilen on behalf of Limerick City and County. He professed himself delighted to see this great labour of love come to such splendid completion. It was, he said an undertaking funded in part by Limerick City and County. The ship had been designed and commissioned by a Limerick man, ninety-two years ago it had sailed out of Limerick, and it had been recovered and rebuilt by Limerick men, and we are all delighted to see it back here again amongst us.



Ilen receives a warm welcome from the people of Limerick.

Supported by

Clár Éire Ildánach  
Creative Ireland  
Programme  
2017-2022



Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae **Luimnigh**  
**Limerick City**  
& County Council



Across the generations warm sea biscuits from the Ilen's stove are very popular.

## ILEN | OPEN HOUSE LIMERICK

20TH - 21ST OCTOBER

The Ilen at Limerick Docks was one of the many events of this year's very popular Open House Limerick, an annual festival of architecture, which throws open to all some outstanding examples of Limerick's built environment.

The Ilen crew were happy to share their ship. Guides, stewards and Ilen crew worked together to welcome and deliver the Ilen sailing ship experience. The guests were not disappointed: the ship had on her the perfect stow which is the due of any port and her galley served up sea biscuits and warm beverages.

## ILEN | CULTURE NIGHT

21ST SEPTEMBER

The Ilen's contribution to Limerick's September 21st Culture night was based in and around the Hunt Museum with some bold and nautical fun with everyone tying themselves and ropes into knots and gandelows with full crews sailing across polished floors. Many young people designed seaworthy ships in 3D and competitively sailed them down river from O'Halloran Bridge. Others took to the oars to try the gandelows on dry land. The more image-conscious chose paints and temporary tattoos to become mermaids and seadogs for the night. Limerick photographer Deirdre Power gave a fascinating account of the art of portraiture, referring in particular to her studies of the members of the Ilen crew, all on terrifying display.



Portraits of Ilen by artist Deirdre Power. Tony Daly, Ilen Crew.

*Ilen in afternoon sunshine  
welcomes visitors with warm sails  
& colourful marine bunting.*





Boat builder Liam Hegarty & Dr Jim McAdam editor of Falkland Islands Journal.

## ILEN | SHINDIG AT THE HUNT MUSEUM

1ST NOVEMBER

The Ilen Shindig emerged from an idea, put forward by the Hunt Museum, of opening up to the evening public the story of a Limerick community project. The format for the evening was a relaxed dialogue style, moderated by Tom Ryan, who skilfully extracted by interrogation just how the Ilen community came together to give the port of Limerick its first sailing ship in over a 100 years. It was an evening of conversation, shanty singing, storytelling in the convivial cultural world of Limerick's Hunt Museum.

## ILEN | NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK

25TH AUGUST

National Heritage Week which is coordinated by The Heritage Council seems a perfect fit for Ilen. Its aim of creating awareness around heritage comports well with the heritage objectives of the Ilen Project. A strong desire from the public for active participation in National Heritage Week was manifest in several heritage tours of the good ship Ilen when her preparations for sea trials and voyage to Limerick were nearing completion. That the Ilen refit was still a work in progress, limited the numbers of visitors that could be accommodated, but those that came were more than happy with what they saw, and all asked for a return visit when the work is finally finished. Something we now would welcome. The Heritage Council have been a valued supporter of the Ilen Project for many years.



Ilen, a celebration of marine craft, is always welcoming to visitors.



Ilen alongside at Limerick Docks, back in the service of community.

## ILEN | LOTTO GOOD CAUSES

25

OCTOBER

Ilen wins the Lotto. Not quite, but we did win a commendation, the citation that came with winning this year's regional heritage category of the National Lottery Good Causes Awards:

*"Being named Regional Winner is a true testament to the quality of your entry and a reflection of all the good work you do."*

No one may be a judge in his own suit. If good works make for a competitive sport, it remains for us only to say that we enjoy a major unfair advantage, namely, Limerick which is no mean city, and one with a magnificent heritage which keeps on giving.

## ILEN | TUFH CONFERENCE UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

20TH AUGUST

The Ilen Project was invited to participate in the University of Limerick, TUFH Conference on the Move 2018. TUFH promotes community empowerment for health which goes beyond the traditional methods of information sharing and consultation; it involves a change in power relations, and enabling people to have more control and responsibility for their own health.



Conference attendees get an inner City riverine experience.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

The educational task of the Ilen network is greatly furthered by the dynamic stability and equilibrium of our floating classroom: the good ship itself, which lend an atmosphere of salutary if not terrifying reality to the theory of sailing.

We recognise the importance of training a wide panel of mariners and crew, and this gently mobile platform serves well to give a tangible experience for those who wish to learn on a real sailing ship. Courses being conducted afloat deal with rigging, navigation, maintenance and use of engine (diesel, Gardener) and services.

In the near future we hope to run a course (sorry, already oversubscribed) on galley skills and cooking.



Senior Master, Captain Gerry Burns delivers an Ilen docking session at Limerick Docks.



Mike Ruane, Marine Instructor gives a RYA diesel engine operation course onboard Ilen.

*Ilen on the Shannon Estuary,  
a perfect learning environment.*



*Limerick's self - image and her nationally and internationally perceived image, as well as her prosperity, depend on many factors.*

Considerations of the splendour of Limerick's natural and built maritime environment, and of the cultured enthusiasm and energy by which she embraces it are no strangers in places where important decisions on location and destination are made.

The entry of the sea to the Midlands of Ireland by way of the Shannon Estuary is of the very essence of Limerick. It is profitable for the city that her response to the munificence of her endowment be adequate to its scale.

In summary, the Ilen project offers to facilitate an opening up of Limerick to the infinite riches around her. Our inclusive approach to this task has allowed us to find a social resonance within her that offers to release her capacity for this engagement.

Supported by



*Ilen voyages toward the Lower  
Shannon River & Limerick after  
an absence of 92 years.*



A person is climbing a tall, vertical wooden mast of a ship. The mast is surrounded by numerous ropes and rigging. The person is positioned about halfway up the mast, leaning against it. The background is a solid, vibrant orange color.

*The Ilen Project gratefully acknowledges the support, in 2018, of the following:*

- JP McManus Benevolent Fund
- Limerick City and County Council
- The Heritage Council
- Creative Ireland
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Social Intervention Fund 2018
- Culture and Arts Department, Limerick City and County Council
- Shannon Foynes Port Company
- The many volunteers who gave of their time and energy.

***Ilen***