

News

Norwegian ambassador to honour Hannah Parr dead



Limerick's links with Norway will be cemented this weekend when the Norwegian ambassador visits the city. He will remember the four children who died in the city when their Quebec-bound ship, the Hannah Parr, spent six weeks here for repairs in 1868, **ANNE SHERIDAN** reports

LIMERICK

Anne Sheridan

A WREATH in memory of four Norwegian children who died in Limerick in 1868 will be laid at St Mary's Cathedral this weekend by the Norwegian ambassador, Truls Hanevold.

Mr Hanevold will be in Limerick this weekend to commemorate the six-week stay of a Norwegian ship, the Hannah Parr, and 400 of Norwegians in Limerick 140 years ago.

In May 1868, the emigrant ship, which was bound for Quebec in Canada, sailed into Limerick, having lost a foremast.

Hundreds of passengers were aboard, and they found themselves having to depend on the citizens of Limerick for hospitality as repairs were carried out to the vessel.

This Friday, Mr Hanevold, will visit Limerick to commemorate the event.

He will also meet the president of Mary Immaculate College, Dr Peadar Cremins, to discuss educational links between Norway and Limerick, and later that day will meet Mayor Ger Fahy and a meeting in the Hilton Hotel to discuss Norwegian and Irish business interests.

That night, the ambassador will attend the Mayor's Ball, and on Saturday, sample local and international cuisine at



Limerick remembers: a sketch of the Hannah Parr on which four Norwegian children died when the ship stopped in Limerick in 1868, and above, the Norwegian ambassador, Truls Hanevold, who will commemorate their deaths at a wreath-laying ceremony this Friday

Riverfest on George's Quay.

His visit to Limerick will conclude with a visit to the Bishop's Palace, King's Island, where four Norwegian children who died from illness during their stay in Limerick are buried.

It is hoped that, next year, Norway will send a tall ship to Limerick to commemorate their links with the city.

And on Friday, May 2, Lyric FM's Artzone will broadcast Great Need Was My Only Strength, the story of the 1868 visit.

The production will be voiced by an American and a Norwegian, descendants of two Hannah Parr families, along with Niamh Bowen of Impact Theatre Company who wrote and produced a Hannah Parr play in 2006 with children from the King's Island community as her actors.

According to a report in the Limerick Chronicle on May 9, 1868, the Hannah

Parr docked safely in Limerick.

"No accident occurred to crew or passengers, all on board are in excellent health, and as fine a looking lot as one could see."

"Every provision was made for their comfort by the Norwegian consul, Mr M R Ryan, who has visited them, and seen after their wants."

"The vessel is placed in consignment of Messrs Ryan, Brothers, & Co., who are getting repairs completed energetically."

But on June 9, the Hannah Parr set sail for Canada, and eventually arrived on July 27 in Grosse-Île, Quebec - the first stop for thousands of Irish immigrants who left Limerick's docks for the same location during the famine years.

One historian has noted that sailing ships in 1868 took an average of 51 days to get from Norway to Quebec, but when the Hannah Parr left Christiania in Norway that year, it



The Bishop's Palace: the final resting place of those who died on the Hannah Parr

was to be 107 days before her passengers could disembark in Canada.

Before its departure from Limerick, the Chronicle reported: "On this morning about eight o'clock this emigrant ship left the dock, and was towed down the river amid the farewell cheers of the crowd of citizens who thronged the pier, that were warmly responded to by the crew and passengers, and

which were continued on either side till the vessel had passed beyond Barrington's Quay."

The passengers also sent this note to the newspaper, praising local citizens for their generosity during their stay: "Before we, meanwhile, leave this city and its exceedingly friendly population, it is our wish to express our hearty thanks for all the kindness the ladies and gentlemen of Limerick

have shown us.

"With sorry hearts we came as shipwrecked to the coast of Ireland; but we came up the Shannon and saw the beautiful land on both sides, and we then felt that the good God had not yet left us."

They said people took them into their homes and treated them with "friendship and honour."

"All this have affected our hearts, and we shall never forget it."