

# LIMERICK CHRONICLE

Celebrating  
250 years -  
1768-2018

INSIDE THIS WEEK



*Out and about in  
Limerick city*

PICTURE SPECIAL: PAGE 51

DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH THE COUNTRY'S OLDEST TITLE

## Not just any port in a storm

Stricken Norwegian emigrant ship finds safe harbour and hospitality in Limerick

FROM THE ARCHIVES

SHARON  
SLATER

LIMERICK CHRONICLE HISTORIAN



ON April 12, 1868, the Hannah Parr set sail from Christiania (now Oslo), Norway bound for Quebec, Canada.

The ship was carrying 366 emigrants, with ages ranged from those born on the journey to a seventy-four year old, and crew on a voyage due to take 51 days. Their journey took an unexpected turn after two weeks at sea and it was to be 107 days before her passengers disembarked in America.

Once the ship hit the Atlantic, it was struck by an intense storm, which caused extreme damage to the mast and steering devices. Within a few days the crew had strapped a sail together and heading for the nearest port for repairs. That port was Limerick. They arrived into the city on May 7, 1868, after spending the previous day at Scattery. The Chronicle reported that day: "The Norwegian ship, Hannah Parr, from Christiania, bound to Quebec, put into Scattery roads yesterday, with foremast gone, and 400 emigrants."

Two days later, the Chronicle had gathered more detail on the plight of the ship and her passengers:-

"The Norwegian ship, Hannah Parr, Captain Lorsen, with 380 passengers on board, put into the Shannon, dismantled, and loss of sails. She was towed into the floating docks on Thursday night, for being refitted. This vessel sailed from Christiania, in Norway, on the 13th of April, when in Lat. 54 46, Long. 26 56, it came on to blow very hard, and increased violence until the following day, when about 10 o'clock, forenoon, a heavy sea struck her astern and broke on deck, carrying away the roundhouse, binnacle, with compass, &c. The gale still raging until it became quite a hurricane, vessel only showing close reefed top sails, when at 9 o'clock at night a fearful wind blew those sails out of the ropes, the vessel then became unmanageable, broached to, a sea striking her bow, and sending

the foremast over the lee, storm still unbaiting. About four o'clock, a.m., the wind began to subside, and the crew immediately commenced cutting away the wrecked spars, which were endangering the safety of the vessel, rigged up spars for those that were cut away, and bore up for Ireland. Thinking the Shannon the easiest of access she made it. No accident happily 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 the repairs completed most energetically."

A few days later on May 16, the Chronicle gave an update on the progress of repairs, which were taking place in one of Richard Russell's docking sheds:-

"The repairs upon this vessel, in order to fit her for sea, continue with great rapidity; and as the old foremast was found on examination too defective even for splicing, a new one has been procured from Cork (there not being in Limerick a baulk of timber large enough for the purpose) the weight of it being several tons, and which was received yesterday evening."

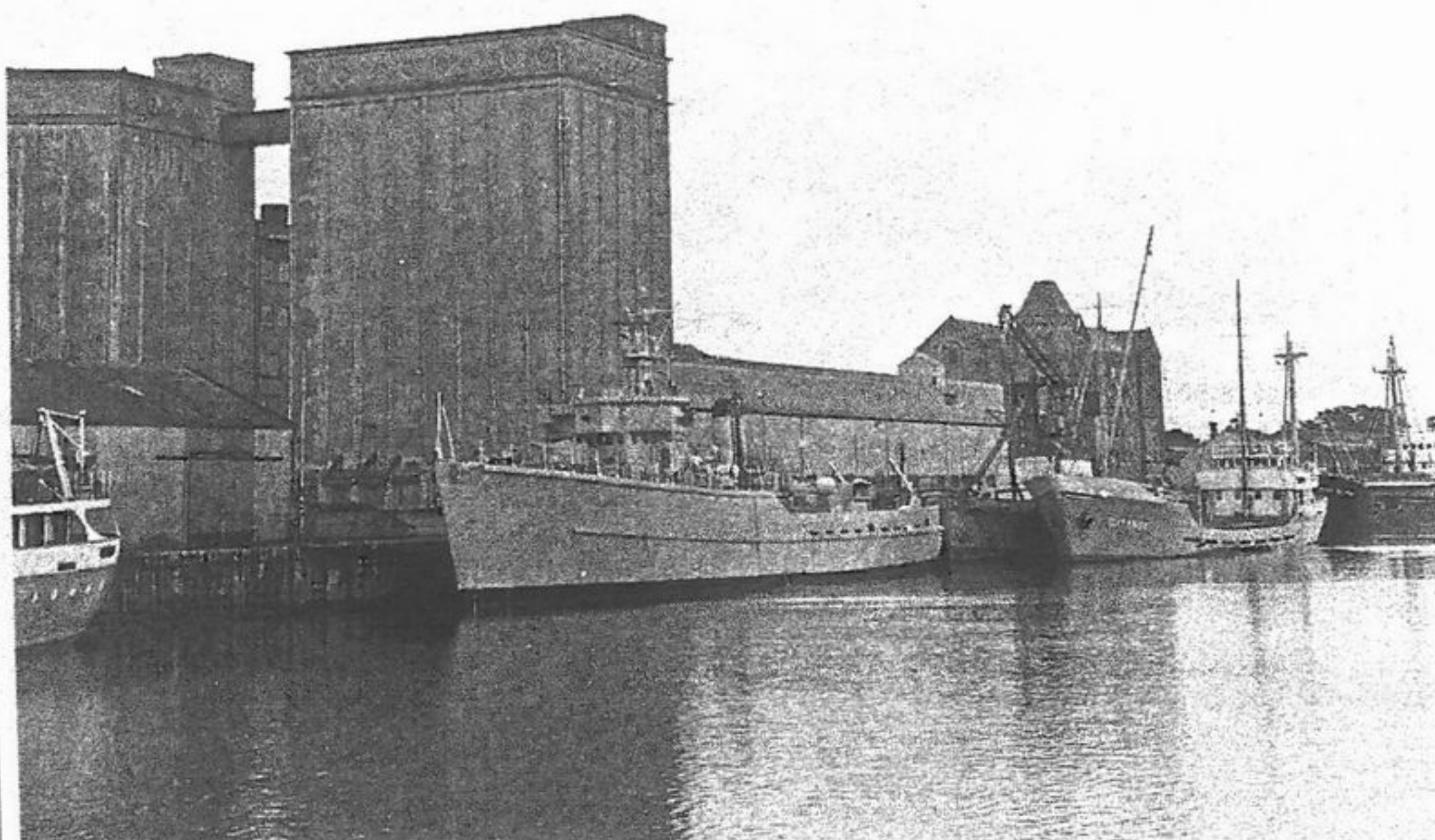
That same article also noted the condition of the passengers:-

"In addition to the death reported on our last of a child, two more children have since died one yesterday, the other this morning; and although several deaths took place on the voyage - as we have been informed - several births have also taken place."

The children who passed away were all buried in St Munchin's churchyard. In 2008, a plaque was raised, by the grave of Anne Kearsse, by the Limerick Civic Trust in the churchyard to their memory.

The article continued with:-

"In addition to a doctor, there is



Visit of the minesweeper LÉ Gráinne to Limerick in July 1971. The Hannah Parr from Christiania (now Oslo), bound for Quebec with 366 emigrants had to make an emergency visit to Limerick port in 1868 after a severe storm

also an agent of the Norwegian Government on board the vessel, whose duty it is to see to the passengers being properly cared for and fed; and as the owner had to give security to the Government to the extent of £2,000 for the faithful performance of all the conditions laid down in his contract with the passengers, any infringement of the Government regulations would ten to the forfeiture of that sum. This clearly shows that the Norwegian Government have not left the poor emigrant to be treated as the owner of the ship might choose, thus exhibiting a paternal care on their behalf which every government should observe to its subjects."

The last pointed remarks came on the back of a number of scandals involving the treatment Irish emigrants on board unsuitable ships. Francis Spaight was the most famous of Limerick's unscrupulous ship owners who once stated that the famine was the greatest advantage as it provided a means to clear his lands with ease. In 1847 alone, he used the government grant scheme to clear over a thousand people from his lands by the shore of Lough Derg.

While the Norwegians waited in Limerick, great efforts were made to

keep them entertained. A city woman, forty-eight year old, Anne Kearsse was instrumental in helping the Norwegians by writing to the Chronicle asking the public for contributions of money, food and clothing for the stranded emigrants.

The migrants spent one of the evenings in the Protestant Orphan Hall, Baker's Place, listening to the "inmates of the female Blind Asylum", Catherine Street, singing hymns while surrounded by tables "tastefully laid out, vases filled with the choicest flowers of the season being arranged upon them".

While the ship was being repaired, the passengers slept in a docking shed, returning to the ship when it was safe to do so.

The Chronicle on June 9, 1868 recorded the departure of the Hannah Parr from Limerick:-

"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 by the crew and passengers, and which were continued on either side till the vessel had passed beyond Barrington's quay. The interest felt by our fellow citizens in the Norwegian

emigrants was of an exceptional nature, and calculated to arouse the sympathies of generous hearts. Strangers in this city, unacquainted with our language and institutions - driven by a storm to take shelter in this port, and compelled to remain here for weeks before they could leave for their destined home - all those circumstances combined to create on behalf of these helpless travellers, those feelings of commiseration which have been particularly, given expression to by the leading citizens of Limerick, and even by the populace, for their orderly and unobtrusive demeanour, as they walked in groups through the streets, or rambling into the suburbs to enjoy the surrounding scenery was such as to heighten and intensify that respect at first entertained for our temporary sojourners. There was but the one opinion generally expressed as to their conduct during their stay in port - that those natives of a northern region were a credit to the land that gave them birth, and the monarch whose subject they were.

Previous to the vessel leaving the dock, and while a number of the passengers were on the pier, taking

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## 46 ARCHIVE SPECIAL

# Just 'a boy from the country' your honour

Before the court: Young fella tries to explain drunkenness charge

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**T**HERE were two cases of drunkenness brought up at the City Police Court on Monday, June 8 1868. Presiding were Dr. O'Shaughnessy and Mr. Oliver Moriarty, R.M.

The first case involved a young man named Murphy, who was recorded as "a boy from the country". He was charged with being drunk on the previous Saturday evening last in the Milk Market and with "indulging in disorderly conduct, and when ordered by the overseer to leave". The overseer sent for the police who put Murphy into custody.

Murphy admitted he was "rather lively", but explained that one of the milk girls in the market began to tease him on the subject of matrimony, and "being a man of straw" he proceeded to tease her. As it was a leap year, the traditional year for women to propose to men, she "axed" him to marry her he responded with "and be gorrs, maybe I will... for you must be possessed of

the milk of human kindness, no doubt, to cast your purty glance on a poor goreoonen like me". They continued to tease each other until she slapped him in the face as he approached her, which put an end to the light-hearted banter.

Murphy's excuses did not soften the heart of Dr. O'Shaughnessy who said "that was no place for indulging in a courting match, particularly in a drunken state". He then warned Murphy about going to the market again in a similar state. He was fined two shillings and six pence with costs but the would be Romeo could not pay the fine he was sentenced to 48 hours' imprisonment.

The second case that appeared before the court was that of "a stout able-bodied young man named O'Brien". He in the custody of "an antiquated pensioner, who happened to be a member of the Night Watch". O'Brien was charged with being drunk in Irishtown the night before. The Night Watchman witnessed him "standing there coughing and spitting" and when he was ordered to "be off", O'Brien refused.



The Milk Market, where young Murphy was proposed to by a milk seller

As a police patrol was passing O'Brien "squared up and walked on soberly, passing through one of the lanes, and returning after the police had got out of sight". Soon after the Night Watchman arrested him

and placed him in the watch-house.

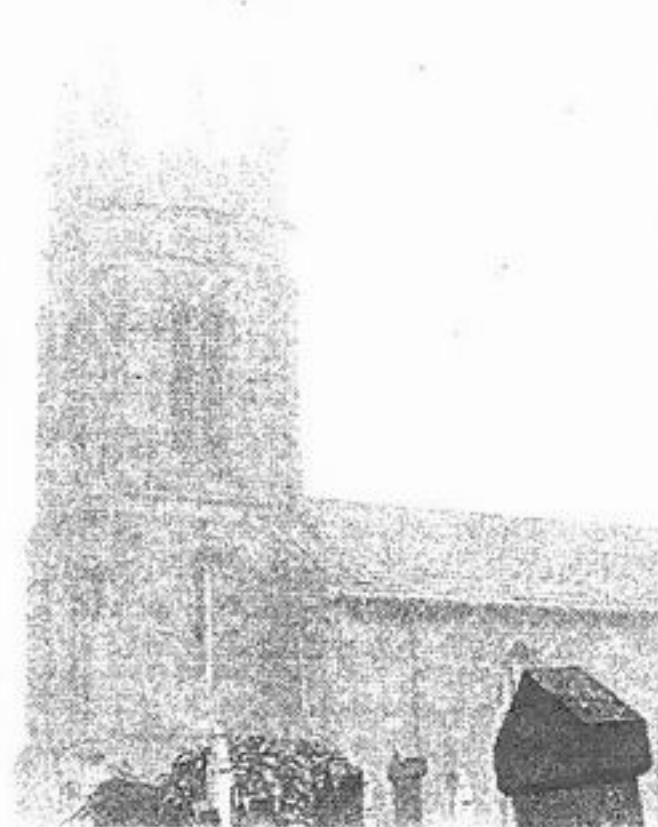
One of the passing police, Constable Tynan told the court "at the time the prisoner appeared a little worse for the drink, that he was the

son of a respectable man, but a night-walking scamp". The court ruled that no offence against the peace had been committed and O'Brien was discharged with a caution.

## Captain thanks the people of Limerick for help

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leave of those friends whose acquaintances they had made during their stay in Limerick, one old man, just as he was about to go on board, with tears in his eyes, expressive of the feelings that actuated him, turning to the ladies and gentlemen, whom he had shaken hands with, took out a pocket-book, and opening it, handed it, with pencil attached to a gentleman, and at the same time pointing to a blank leaf, motioned him to write something in it as a souvenir; so the gentleman took the book and immediately wrote in it the following sentence--"God bless the Hannah Parr with her living freight, and bring them through a speedy and prosperous voyage to the land of their adoption; and bless them abundantly for time and eternity." The old man next presented the book, for a similar purpose, to another gentleman, who thus wrote in it--"with feelings of deep regret, both I and my family part with our dear Norwegian friends." Both gentlemen appended



St Munchin's Church where the remains of three children who passed away on the Hannah Parr were buried

their names to what they had written. a number of ladies from George-street and the Crescent, also attended, and presented several of the passengers with memorials of

their visit, such as bible markers containing appropriate texts of scripture, and were received with feelings reciprocal of those that actuated the presenters.

On the last evening the doctor of the ship, accompanied by the commander of one of the other Norwegian vessels called at this office, and having expressed the regret of the ship's captain at his not being able to call with him, owing to being engaged in making preparations for departure this morning, he handed us to the following, which was drawn up by the passengers on board as acknowledgement of the reception they have met with in Limerick. We publish it verbatim as we received it but emanating from those unfamiliar with our language, our readers will be able to form a tolerably correct idea of the opinion which the writers entertain of the hospitality shown during their stay.

One of the Norwegian's had a piece published in that same issue of the Chronicle:-

"In about short time ready for again to try the Atlantic Ocean and we will pray to God that the ocean will meet us with more friendship than that time we last were its guests. Before we meanwhile leav[sic] this city and its exceedingly friendly population, it is our wish to express our hearty thanks for all the kindness the ladies[sic] 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. In this pretty land we also met people who took great deal in our sorry - who strained to give all the animation as possible - who, by gifts of Christian books and speaking friendly to us, laboured to open our hearts for the grace of God - who took us I their houses and treated us with friendship and honour :- all this have affected our hearts, and we never shall forget it."

The Limerick branch of the Hibernian Bible Society gave 154

copies of the bible, in Danish and Norwegian to the emigrants.

The Hannah Parr was towed by two steamers, the Privateer and Bulldog, to Foynes where it remained for a few days before continuing the voyage to Quebec. She arrived in her destination port on July 28, 1868. It would take until August 15, before news of her safe arrival was reported in the Chronicle.

The following month a letter was received in Limerick from the captain of the Hannah Parr thanking the citizens of the city for their kindness and hospitality.

The storm that hit the Hannah Parr was disastrous to a number of other ships, including the Eloise, which was owned by John McDonnell and Sons, of Limerick. The ship had left Limerick in April with ballast to Quebec, and on its return journey to Limerick with timber it was sunk by the storm. The Raudier, of Sunderland had left Limerick about the same time as the Eloise to Montreal, and floundered while returning with grain.