Admiral Scully’s dart claims lordship of river

by Marie Hobbins

CHOREOGRAPHED to blend in with the city’s Riverfest last bank holiday weekend, a centuries’ old ritual, revived by Mayor Diarmuid Scully marked another wave of development highlighting the river Shannon as the leading focal point it has become in the dramatic turnabout of Limerick city.

Two days into the pulsating programme of Riverfest events, the ancient ceremony of casting a silver dart into the river, which for centuries has signified the people and Limerick’s lordship over the river, was performed in some significant style by Mayor Scully, in his titular role as Admiral of the Shannon.

At 8pm on Friday, April 28, the mayor, viewed by thousands of Limerick citizens and visitors enjoying the medley of Riverfest attractions, cast a silver dart into the river, which, complying with tradition, was flowing at high tide.

As befitted the ceremonial occasion the casting of the dart did not take place from any modest vessel but was performed with some appropriate pomp and dignity from the deck of the navy vessel, the LE Niamh, which was officially adopted by Limerick City Council in 2002 as a deputation of officials from Quimper in Brittany second time. Previously Limerick had adopted the LE Deirdre, a ship that is no longer in service.

In early 2002 the LE paid a goodwill visit to Asia which formed part of the Government’s Asian Strategy. That visit was recog-nised as a great success which significantly increased awareness of Ireland in the various Asian countries it sailed to.

Rituals revived as the LE Niamh was called to action for the casting of a silver dart by the Mayor last weekend.

The Silver Dart ceremony, which dates back several centuries has its origins in medieval Venice and is performed by the Mayor of Limerick in his role as Admiral of the Shannon. In medieval times and until 1799, the river was used as a means of communication and the casting of a dart into the river signified the lordship of a city over its waterway.

On board the LE Niamh, which was officially adopted by Limerick City Council in 2002 as a deputation of officials from Quimper in Brittany second time. Previously Limerick had adopted the LE Deirdre, a ship that is no longer in service.

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with which Limerick city is identified.

The adoption of the LE Niamh by Limerick City Council was historical in that it marked the first occasion in which a city adopted a ship for the Shannon, which was officially adopted by Limerick City Council in 2002 as a deputation of officials from Quimper in Brittany second time. Previously Limerick had adopted the LE Deirdre, a ship that is no longer in service.

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