# News

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## IN BRIEF

### Historical outing

■ LIMERICK Historical Society will hold the next evening outing to Clonlara on Wednesday July 10. Local historian Freddie Bourke will give a guided tour of the Church of Ireland and the local graveyard. Meet outside Brown Thomas main door on O'Connell Street at 6 30pm when lifts will be available for people without transport.

### Raheen extension

■ RAHEEN Hospital has been granted planning permission for an extension to provide accommodation for five bedrooms and en suite facilities. The plan includes staff rooms and a new sitting room. The application on behalf of the HSE is part of a phase two development to improve accommodation for clients and to provide single and double room facilities. While the plan is to upgrade facilities at Raheen, there will be no increase in the numbers of clients catered for.

### Parteen pre-school

■ PLANNING permission has been granted for a new pre-school in Parteen. The new facility will cater for up to 22 children and will have four staff. It will be located in the former supermarket, close to Browne's pub and St Patrick's Church. Written permission has been given for parking in the church grounds and for people using the facility to pass through the church grounds. The applicant, John Healy, has been told that the pre-school can only operate between 7.30am and 6.30pm.

### Thermal upgrades

■ A THERMAL upgrade programme will be starting on houses in the Kileely and Thomondgate areas over the coming weeks after Limerick City and County Council received a grant from Sustainable Energy Ireland to fund the scheme. Local Sinn Fein councillor John Costelloe said that the programme needs to be extended to other areas as quickly as possible. "Contractors will be contacting residents in the next week or so to begin the process of surveying and preparing the works. The upgrades will include windows, external doors, attic insulation, upgraded heating controls, boiler upgrades and ventilation. The council should now redouble its efforts to secure funding for other areas," Cllr Costelloe said.

### Highly rated

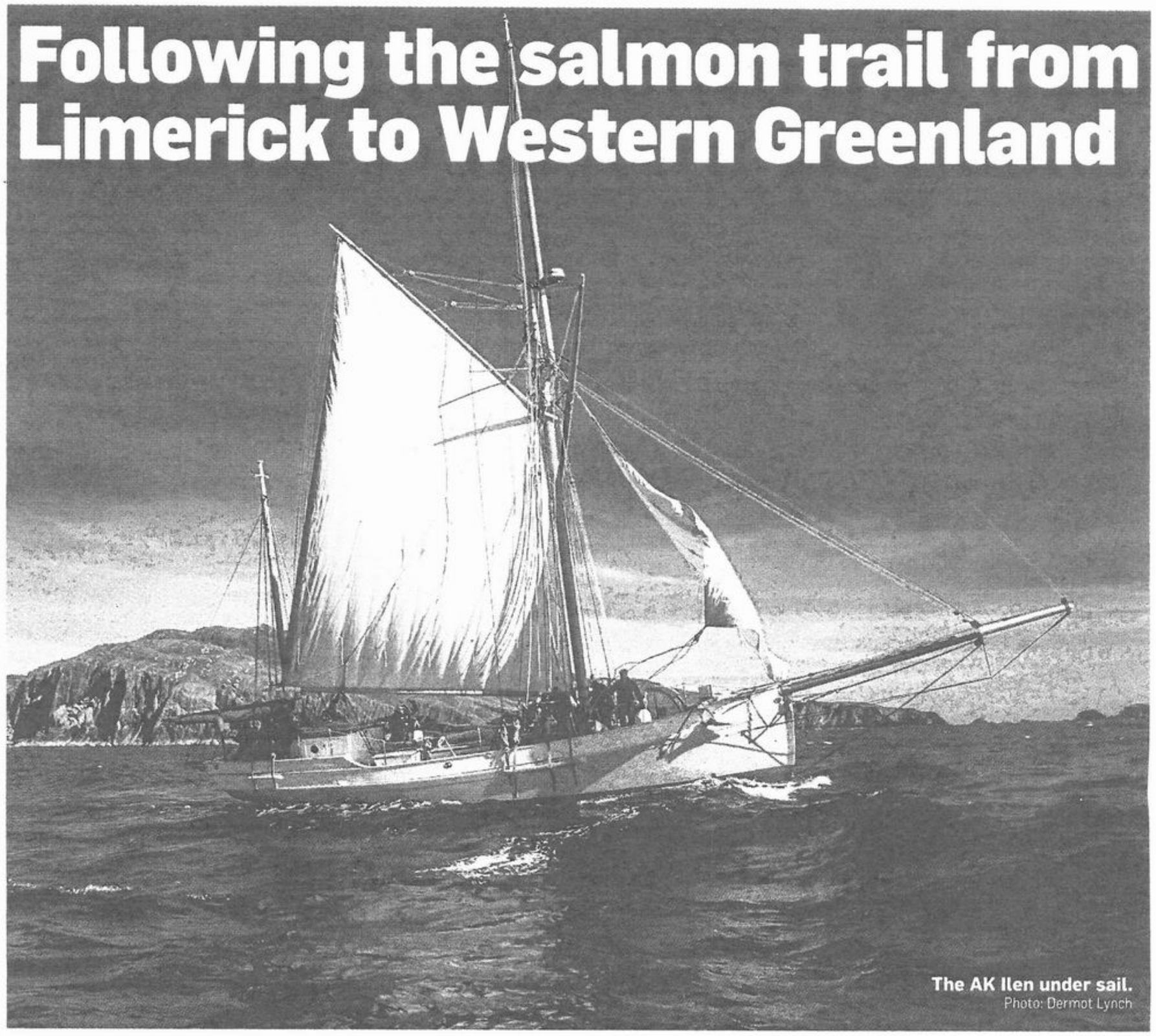
■ THE Shannon Springs Hotel in Shannon has been awarded four star status by Fáilte Ireland and The AA Hospitality Services. The upgrade from three star ranking is due to the major refurbishment of the hotel, involving an investment of over €1.5 million by its owners/ directors, John Gavin and Dermot Kelly. "Over the past three and a half years, we have endeavoured to deliver a product that would be noted in the industry and in the locality for exceptional standards in every aspect of its offering, from the décor, through to the accommodation, the culinary experience and its friendly and helpful staff," the co-owners stated.

### Shannon role

■ THE SHANNON Group is seeking a new chief executive following the departure of Matthew Thomas. The Group says it is seeking a candidate who will "build on its achievements in recent years and focus on the implementation of Shannon Group's strategic plan, in which growth and revenue generation will be key indicators or success. One of the main requirements will be to drive up passenger numbers, improve productivity and offer increased customer service".

ACHIEVEMENT

# Following the salmon trail from Limerick to Western Greenland



The AK Ilen under sail.
Photo: Dermot Lynch

**by Alan Jacques**
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THE last of Ireland's timber built ocean going sailing ships set sail from Limerick Docks this week to ride the waves of the North Atlantic once again.

The nation's sole surviving ocean going wooden sailing ship, the 'Ilen', which was re-built through a community educational programme in Roxboro, will now follow the migratory journey of salmon in the Shannon River to West Greenland.

Designed by Limerick man Conor O'Brien and built in Baltimore in 1926, the 'Auxiliary Ketch Ilen' was first delivered by Munster men to the Falkland Islands where she served valiantly for 70 years.

After being returned home to Limerick and given a new breath of life with powerful ribs of grown Irish oak, and long planks of European Larch, the 56-foot vessel was readying herself this Monday to take to the high seas for this historic 1,200 nautical mile voyage.

Skipper for the nine-week educational-expedition is Polar yachtsman Paddy Barry. The crew will also include Limerick graphic artist and director of the Ilen Project, Gary McMahon, who spearheaded the community project to rebuild the trading ketch in Limerick and West Cork.

"The Ilen is today setting off for its longest voyage in decades. It is the culmination of a lot of hard work by so many in our community who helped us realise our vision of reimagining this impressive ship. Throughout this journey, participants in the project have shared and learnt skills through the build which will remain with them for a lifetime. It is a symbol of what can be achieved when people work together and it is fitting therefore that our 'Salmon Wake' journey is highlighting the decline in salmon populations." Mr McMahon commented.

Atlantic salmon populations are widely distributed throughout Irish freshwaters with over 140 such systems designated as salmon rivers. While in the 1970s, the number of Atlantic Salmon returning to Irish waters peaked at 1,800,000, the numbers returning have decreased by 70 per cent in recent decades.

'Salmon Wake' is the Ilen Project's Community and Schools Education Programme which is highlighting the decline of salmon during International Year of the Salmon.

The rebuilding of the Ilen and her preparations for sea were completed in June and the crew from all parts of Ireland are looking forward to her longest ocean voyage since 1926.

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>
> GARY MCMAHON

The voyage follows a creative programme which saw building workshops and community days take place at multiple locations across the city with local schools, artists, craft makers and institutions all playing a role in bringing this majestic ship back to sea. Young people from Limerick and West Greenland are participating in this project and discovering what both communities share as North Atlantic maritime island peoples.

"We know that for every 100 salmon that leave Ireland to go out to sea, 95 don't make it back due to a range of challenges which they face at sea. The Ilen Project's 'Salmon Wake' programme is a timely tribute to this iconic species during International Year of the Salmon and it is hoped that it will help create awareness around their decline in Ireland and across the northern hemisphere." Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) explained.

Kerry musician Breanndán Ó Beaglaoich, Mike Grimes, Mantas Seskanskis, James Madigan, Ronan Ó Caoimh, Mick Ruane, Seamus O'Byrne, and Justin McDonagh are also on board the Ilen, which is destined for Nuuk, Greenland's capital city.

The Captain of the Ilen will provide updates on the ship's progress as it follows the route of salmon migration to West Greenland as a guest blogger on IFI's blog www.fishinginireland.info.