

SHIP would have liked to have completed much more projects during the period April 2022 to March 2023 than we were able to do. The sudden passing of our Chairperson Liam McCormick, who was a driving force for SHIP was a major factor in that.

In early 2022 SHIP members including Liam paid a visit to the Speaker of the Assembly, former Belfast deep-sea docker Alex Maskey, where we presented Alex with a miniature SHIP Connolly banner and a bog oak piece that was skilfully hand crafted by Gerry McAtamney, also a former fellow Belfast dock worker and Sailortown man. Gerry sculpted the bog oak to represent a ship and a wharf with images of founder members of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union (ITGWU) Belfast Branch, Connolly, Carney, Larkin, McMullen and Quinn inserted into the piece. The carving was complimented with a Winifred Carney coin that SHIP launched in St Patrick's School, Donegall Street where Winifred attended and returned to teach in. When Gerry was asked for the bill to cover the bog oak carving, his sharp reply was 'Tell Alex the bosun paid for it.'

It was unbelievable that Liam died suddenly around six weeks later, a shock to his family and to SHIP.

In August 2022, an event was held in the McCracken Irish Language in Belfast where the family of our Honorary President Robbie Hunter presented SHIP with a cheque from Robbie's Trade Union Retirement Charity Fund. Robbie could not make it back from America at that time, but he was keen that we got the cheque as soon as possible and asked his family in Belfast to present the award. Robbie was President of the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California for 12 years until his retirement and was keen to make sure that SHIP benefitted from his retirement.

In November we held the 2022 Remembrance Service which was attended by around one hundred people. Obviously at that time, some people were still unsure about gathering in enclosed spaces due to the threat of COVID. Our long serving Minister, the Reverend Colin Hall Thompson had retired, and we were most fortunate to have had the Reverend Bill Shaw from the 147 Trust celebrate the Service alongside Father Gary. The music was performed as usual, by Gerard McCabe whose father and grandfather were Deep Sea Dockers. The entire Service was professionally recorded and posted on the SHIP Facebook page. Despite being a newcomer to the Service the Reverend Bill was confident throughout and is looking forward to the 2023 Service. We had the attendance of the Belfast's First Citizen, Lord Mayor Councillor Tina Black and SHIP is confident that the present First Citizen will attend the Service this year.

On New Years Eve 2022 an enhanced plaque to recognise the original Belfast Branch office of the ITGWU at Corporation Street was erected, replacing the previous one that had been put up in 2019. The only difference being that new plaque has a silver border around the entire script that should make it more noticeable to those passing by.

In early 2023 SHIP committed to producing another tribute board showing the faces of another 50 Belfast deep-sea to add to the four tribute boards that we have on display in the Dockers Club. We are hopeful that the new board will be ready in time for the 2023 SHIP Remembrance Service.