

President

March saw the election of a new officer team for the IWAI. Nuala Redmond talks to new president Paul Garland to find out a little about him, and his hopes and dreams for the association

When did you first become interested in boats or the waterways?

■ I was brought up in Malahide, and if you live beside the sea, it's hard not to be interested in boats. Before my parents built their house in Malahide, we used to rent what was known as the boathouse, which was on the foreshore where the village green is now. It was an upsidedown sailing trawler with doors and windows cut out of the hull. Inside it was magic, with all the ribs and frames, but I was only a baby and maybe time has glossed the image.

Growing up, the summers were defiantly hotter and longer, with Hatch the boatman bringing us over to the island for picnics. I was really disappointed when I found out that it was not an island but part of Portrane.

Early teens would regularly consist of a detour into Skinner's boatyard on the way home from school. This is now Marina Village, but to me it was a heaven of rotting hulks on which I made voyages to all corners of the world. And I was still home for tea.

My father died when I was 14 and my mother was determined to keep

family holidays going. I still don't quite know how I sold the idea of a boating holiday on the River Shannon to my recently widowed mother and my older brother, but they went for it. So on a glorious June Saturday we presented ourselves to Brian and Christen Kennedy on Jamestown Bridge and took charge of *Inis Crealta*, a 30' motor cruiser at the cutting edge of early 1960s design. Hot water and all. I was smitten.

Lough Key with Rockingham House still standing – even glass in the ballroom conservatory, Carrick-on-Shannon where we were given a speedboat ride – probably by Tom Maher, I was to enthralled to ask! I still feel my mother and brother may not have shared my enthusiasm.

Many people on the Shannon will know the Garland clan, but the majority of members throughout the system may not know the boating history in your family. Tell us a bit about that.

■ Well, I did not get back to Kennedy's until I was 21 and had my son Robby this time in *Plover*, a

lovely centre board 19' sailor with a Seagull. This was followed by years of renting and hoping that some day we could have a boat of our own.

Aisling, a petrol Freeman 22 with a seized engine, fitted the price bracket in the mid '70s, and I was away, with wife, three kids and two dogs. And even the occasional visitor.

How long have you been on the IWAI council?

■ I served on the Shannon Boat Rally committee in the late '80s and gradually got sucked in, taking over the chair of the Carrick-on-Shannon branch (and consequently becoming a member of council) in 1996. I served as chair of Carrick for ten years, which in my opinion is too long, as did my predecessor Tom Maher who also broke ten years.

What projects have you been involved with in that time, and what might you call your own pet projects?

■ Anything that brings kids on to the water would be close to my heart. The Carrick Cubs was very close to all who were involved in it and gave tremendous fun. It was a pity that our best efforts to get more people involved were not more successful. Even getting my own kids and grandkids out to some of grandad's secret places is pure joy.

You are a pilot and a power boat trainer. What qualities do you bring from that to this presidency?

■ The pilot was a long time ago, and I really think that if the steward comes back to say 'the crew are dead can anyone fly the aircraft?' it would have a very different ending to the normal Hollywood one.

The powerboat trainer idea was first considered after a near fatal accident with my daughter Julie on the Shannon Rally over 20 years ago. She was thrown from a RIB in the speed boat race. There was no kill chord and



Some of the Garland clan

Paul



**IWAI president
Paul Garland**

the RIB came back over her and caused serious lacerations to the back of her leg.

The level of professional shown by the rally committee that day got me thinking that the message needs to go out and how can I help?

Julie lives to tell the tale, and is now a successful airline captain. I started by fitting kill chords on everything, but when I knew we were going to retire to Roosky, I started training with the ISA to become an instructor. What a life. You meet great people, drive great boats, and get paid!

One thing that this training has given me to bring to the IWAI presidency the ability to find out from waterways newbies what they want. Be it ski ramps or chill-out moorings out of the way of all powerboats. Pilots and boat trainers all use checklists, so if people see me refer to notes, it may be simply 'thank Bert for the teas ... Check!!

What do you like to do when you're not involved in boating or IWAI activities?

■ Well, I have a six year old son, as well as a 40 year old son, two daughters at 30-something, and four grand children! So it is seldom there is not something going on. I have a huge garage full of things, most of which need fixing. I also secretly enjoy the

morning walks that my wife Patsy drags me out on – as she says to clear my head for the day ahead.

What do you see as being the biggest challenges for the association in the coming years?

■ One major challenge has to be the rise in the number of powerboats. Both the IWAI and the ISA have an 'educate before you legislate' policy and I fully agree with that, but what do you do with 'dumb and dumber' when they get their first powerboat? There are bylaws, but enforcement is haphazard. Shannon numbers are too small to read at speed but members do not want their pride and joy with numbers like a north sea ferry. There may be a role for insurance companies to look for basic qualifications or offer discounts.

The effectiveness of the IWAI poses another challenge. Is our work done? Why should anyone join? Waterways Ireland provides everything a boater could want, and vast sums of money are allocated to restoration projects. We must have an association that offers a service to members – a reason to belong. We may have more fights on our hands bringing back the core ethos of the IWAI. Water abstraction could, if not planned in an integrated way, leave the North Shannon even lower than its present critical levels. We have been hearing

about new bylaws in the pipeline for over two years now – if there were not contentious issues within them, wouldn't they be out by now?

All these issues may well rally support among boaters, but we need to break through the fact that only 50% of inland boaters are members of the association, that's over 6,000 people. I believe this can be done.

Jump forward to the year 2050, what is your vision of our waterways?

■ I believe that I will probably be boating in a different area by then, where Saint's Island will have real saints and the inspector of navigation



Patsy and Paul Garland with their winning 2007 Shannon Boat Rally crew

is really god (sorry Charlie), but I hope to look down (or up!) on an inland system that is as good as it is today. Let us not have our usual Irish modesty here, we have the best system in the world from underused canals to powerboat-filled lakes. It is wonderful, and on a good day there is nowhere I would rather be. I regularly train people for international certificates to go to France, Holland and Germany, most come back and say it was a great experience but give me the Shannon any day. The levels of bureaucracy needed to navigate in Europe puts most people off – please keep it simple in Ireland, we do not need a nanny state.

I would see the future in improving and adding quality to infrastructure. I might be on my own here but I would hate to approach a canal lock with a zapper which deducted the lock fee from my credit

card filling the chamber while electronic devices kept the boat off the wall and possibly a recorded message telling me to 'have a nice day'.

I know that eco boating is the new way forward and I expect that the progress in this area will have even an environmental big foot like myself extinct.

What kind of facilities would you like to see in 2050?

■ Charging points for eco boats, broadband or its next generation everywhere, small treatment plants within the boat to treat waste water and battery power for weeks rather than hours. All jetties with power and satellite TV and waste compactors that notify the local authority when nearly full. And a water frame work directive that works to let water quality improve at the same pace it has been let decline.

Have you any 'pipedream' ideas?

■ The IWAI is the largest boat club in Ireland, with nearly twice as many members as the next biggest – Howth Yacht Club, and yet we may as well be a virtual club. I think this association needs a centre, a clubhouse, a meeting place. It is only then that our members really feel part of a serious organisation.

Initially it could be quite modest, but I would like to see room to grow. It needs to eventually have scope to pay its way either through a marina, a bar, an events venue or all three. It would take all of the association's resources and more to get up and running. But personally, I think it is worth it.

The politics and demographics would dictate Athlone to Carrick-on-Shannon. Perhaps there are potential benefactors out there – Waterways Ireland, private developers, county councils – who could see the benefits of helping with land or building. ■

Vice-president

Part of the new officer team for the IWAI is Grag Whelan, taking up the role of vice-president for the next three years

When did you first become interested in boats or the waterways?

■ Aged 11, I was swept to sea on an airbed, luckily I survived. I then joined the sea scouts and progressed to An Slua Muirí, the Naval Service Reserve. So I have always had a water interest, in 1999 we took the plunge and bought our first inland boat, Orinoco, a Seamaster 27 and have been enjoying all parts of the waterways since.

How long have you been on the IWAI council?

■ When we started in 1999, some of my Slua friends were involved in the Shannon Harbour branch and they 'encouraged' me on the committee. In 2003 I was co-opted to the executive to fill the liaison and lobbying role.

What projects have you been involved with in that time, and what might you call your own pet projects?

■ I suppose the two conferences and the new Officers Handbook stand out as pet projects. Currently I am working on a members' handbook and another conference.



IWAI vice-president Greg Whelan

What is the role of the vice-president of the IWAI?

■ My role is to support the president in his role, at council meetings I have a health and safety role and of course after every meeting I usually figure on the action list. A key part of the role is representing the association with key bodies such as WI and other government agencies.

Do you have a favourite spot on our waterways?

■ Even though we regularly use the canals and the Shannon system we have yet to find that favourite place.

How much of your time is given over to the role? Is it hard to balance your real (paid) work with your voluntary (unpaid) IWAI work?

■ I have always had time for the voluntary side of my life, I find it a great change from the day job. One of the greatest pleasures I have found in my time with the association is meeting members and sharing the common enjoyment of the waterways that we are passionate about.

What do you like to do when you're not involved in boating or IWAI activities?

■ Is there something else? I enjoy cooking even the challenge of cooking 200 steaks at the Shannon Harbour Rally each year.

Have you any 'pipedream' ideas?

■ Greater use of the canals, they are fabulous waterways that if we don't use we will soon lose. ■