



Connecting Dublin Port Seafarers with Dublin Port Walkers

### **Podcast 3 : Sea Change**

You are listening to Port Walks an art project of podcasts creating a temporary link between Dublin Port Workers and Dublin Port Walkers. The workers are the seafarers who pass through Dublin port. The walkers are the people who use Dublin Port & Bay area for recreational walking, particularly on the Great South Wall leading to Poolbeg Lighthouse. All ships entering Dublin Port pass along the channel adjacent to this area. Hence it's at the Great South Wall that we begin, but of course you can listen from anywhere.

The walk from the Sluice house to the Poolbeg lighthouse and back again is 4km. The cobbles underfoot are uneven so take care and be aware of prevailing weather and tidal conditions. Wind & tide together can periodically submerge the wall.

#### **Part 1: Shoreside**

Its difficult to get to the Great South Wall. By car, there is one access route funneling traffic north and south from Sean Moore Roundabout down Pigeon House Road. On the way you pass industrial complexes old and new. The old ESB Pigeon House generating station lies decommissioned beneath its twin towers. The new Covanta Energy incinerator sparkles brilliantly beneath its plumes. Older facilities such as the waste-water treatment plant, recycling and civic amenity site add to an atmosphere of urban decay.

By foot and by bike you can follow the shore through the Nature Reserve at Sean Moore Park to join the last section of road leading to the Great South Wall. The nearest public transport will drop you close to the start of this pedestrian route. If you walk be prepared. It's a 3km walk just to get to the start of the wall.

Still people come from all over to walk on the Great South Wall, from all continents, countries, counties and of course the city of Dublin. Some of them been at sea, most of them haven't, some of them worked in Dublin Port or have family working in Dublin Port, most of them don't. All of them have an interest in what's happening around them as walkers, watchers, photographers and fishers.

*its lovely to come down here and see the ships coming in early in the morning you come down like a nice walk see the sun rise in the east there and the ships coming in. My brother was a sailor I went to sea myself for a while like being living over there in Ringsend. It was always adventure, people down around Ringsend born beside the river with ships coming in and out of the ports A lot of lads around Ringsend went away to sea and like done trips and that It was an adventure to see something else and see other parts of the world you know. Oh its changed much changed totally now you don't see many local people going to sea now. I only know one chap, he is actually a captain now he is away foreign like, he wouldn't be trading in and out of Dublin you know.*



Connecting Dublin Port Seafarers with Dublin Port Walkers

*My father worked on the docks he was a winch driver he used to drive the winchers and was a deep sea docker a lump man. We lived off the river and worked the river, whitebait fishing over here used to come down and tie off this alongside this lighthouse here we'd climb up and change our clothes here and we'd wear our old clothes going down, on the low tides wed shoot a ring net around and do whitebait fishing with the local dockers . all the fishing is stopped on the river now by regulation that's gone by regulation yes*

*I was with the port about 4 years I served my time there. As a carpenter we used to go out there in a small boat to the Poolbeg lighthouse to repair things and that you know and you worked on the walkway out to Dollymount oh ya I worked on the wooden walkway ... and then I went to England on one of the old mail steamers. Tell her about it. The MV Leinster that was a shocking trip everyone getting sick.*

*The port has revolutionised the cranes are fantastic we had a couple of cranes Remember the 100 tonne crane yea did you ever of that one. My father was had a big job in the port and he used to bring me down as a kid on a Sunday and he showed me the 100 tonne crane it was a gigantic thing they put up nowadays a lorry can nearly take 100 tonnes, that's all gone now they built beyond what was needed really you know but it was very primitive.*

*There was one particular ship and they lost there where the captain would be. One of the cranes was travelling on tracks and they swung the crane too much and they took the bridge off the ship.*

*Our two sons work on the port. They're stevedores. Yeah, we'd just watch any ships coming in, and take photographs*

*I'd bring the sisters 3 kids down.*

*They're 10 now even from her side, but they'd still go with hooks and rashers on them to get the crabs. ...she likes it down here she does*

*It's not only today or yesterday I've been coming down here. I used come down here as a teenager, and we used to go around there and bring our goodies and all and swim. There used to be a number one bus that would leave us at the pumping station just there and we'd walk the rest of the way.*

*That's where people used to sit and have their sandwiches and that, and behind that wall there's all sand and that and we used to sit. We used to call that the dead wall because you get loads of sun but no breeze. And it's the same around the corner there. There used to be lovely paintings of sailing ships on those walls. But now it's all gone to rack and ruin, which is a pity, cos its lovely here when the sun is shining*

*We're here to put some time in just to get some practice for long distance surf casting, which is a club run here in Ireland and the UK and all across the world for the world championships in long distance surfcasting. They're basically high quality fishing rods and multiplier reels, and there are certain diameter lines you have to use for certain weights you're going to cast. They range anywhere from 13*



Connecting Dublin Port Seafarers with Dublin Port Walkers

*to 15 feet. The distances that some people are getting are up to 300 yards, with anything from a 4 ounce lead to a 6 ounce lead.*

Watching ship traffic is a popular pastime. The internet and VHF radio provide additional detail of the ship movements observed from the wall.

*When you see a ship off the in the bay there coming in you can come down to the narrowest point of the river where it comes in and go around the back of the lighthouse there and stand and watch and you can nearly touch them and you can see the people waving and coming in especially in an early morning and when you've a liner or anything like that coming in whereas a big one had to come in here two weeks ago. She had to turn out in the bay and come in astern up the river. Its great to be able to see that you know to be able to sit down there, peace and quiet nobody to worry you its very nice.*

*You 'll see the Stena Adventure will be leaving around 8:30 Ulysses at 9:00 Jonathan Swift will come in now and she'll lie overnight and she'll sail again in the morning 9:00 back in again 2 o'clock 2, half 2 and then she'll sail again and be back again for 7 o'clock tomorrow evening. I come down myself and the missus my wife is sitting in the car she has the VHF radio there with her, I have a radio licence I just keep that with me and listen in I don't transmit I don't enter into negotiations with anybody I just listen in.*

*When I'm looking at the big cruise ships there is a couple of sites and some of them they have the live webcam and you can actually watch them coming in on the live webcam and so thats quite interesting at times. Its great with the internet now you can look anything up if you want to find out anything out about any of the boats you can just look it up so whenever we see the boats and Tony does ask me questions, I just look it up.*

Getting a ship into and out of port requires the skills of many: navigators, engineers, pilots, marine traffic control, mooring crew, and a ships agent. The ships agent plays a key role for every ship entering Dublin Port.

*Yeah, I'm what's known as a port agent or ship's agent. So we're based here in Dublin Port, and each individual ship that comes into the port, they'd appoint a different agent to look after any requirements or needs they have here in the port. I suppose predominantly ship owners come from all over Europe, or all over the world, they wouldn't have an office or a base here in Dublin so if they need local arrangements or things done locally, they'd appoint a local representative to act on their behalf, which is what we do. So from... In advance when the ship comes into the load port or when it comes in to discharge or load a cargo we'd be talking with the captain in advance, checking on ETAs, seeing what requirements he needs when he gets here. We'd make arrangements for booking the berth, booking the stevedores to load or unload his ship, getting the pilot and the tugs if needs be to bring the ship alongside, the mooring men to tie it up, arranging the cargo*



Connecting Dublin Port Seafarers with Dublin Port Walkers

*operations and then you'd have more stuff looking after the crew if they had any requirements for provisions or trips to the doctors, dentist as the case may be.*

*I suppose and it's a good role to be in because, everyday we're going aboard the ships, we're meeting crew from various nationalities. You might be with a Chinese crew one day, Ukrainian the next. I suppose UK and Irish captains, I suppose, we get them from all over, so it's a different day everyday. The ships have different requirements on a day-by-day basis but you definitely get some strange requests alright. You might have captains looking for a dog, a parrot, or even simple things like they're looking for certain computer games or toys for they want to bring home it's just different challenges and requests everyday.*

There is an increasing trade in cruise liners visiting Dublin and often crowds gather along the Great South Wall to watch them enter and leave Port.

*Our son and his girlfriend. They've gone off to Iceland on a cruise. The Magellan. Reykjavik, yeah. Yeah, yeah. They were on the back of the ship, waving to us. We told them we'd be here.*

*They're going to Liverpool first, stop over in Liverpool tomorrow. And then Faeroe Island, Scotland, then I think Finland I think, then to Reykjavik. I wish I was on it myself. I wouldn't care to ever get off the boat*

*We were on a cruise on Royal Caribbean a few years ago and it was the same, the Filipinos and that. And very nice people they are as well. Work hard, and it's not an easy job really. And they're a long time away from their families as well.*

Working on a cruise liner is not a piece of cake as these Indian seafarers explain

*its not a piece of cake if you are thinking about working on the ship you literally have to work on the ship I mean its not like today you get up and say I am not feeling well I take a rest you have to work your hours and regardless, if you plan to work on the ship you have to make up your mind because you have sometimes you have a rough weather, sometimes you don't find the right cabin mate, sometimes your supervisor is not what you expect him to be, so literally you have to, to be ready to work in the ships like you know you are working in one family and you have to get along with everyone,*

*you have to adjust yourself, you have to adjust yourself we are different nationality and different culture everything*

*Basically The crew members working are like a mini UN we 60 + nationalities onboard. My cousins and all are basically seafarers my grandfather was a seafarer , so basically I am not saying I was destined for it but somewhere along the line I would have gone on the ships*



Connecting Dublin Port Seafarers with Dublin Port Walkers

*its my intention we were working the hotel management also we have done training and we have done training and work in a 5 star hotel to come here.*

*I did consider working on the cruise ships, I think I would like it, I'd do anything bar work, shops, ah he would he'd fit in all right he'd probably end up wrecking the boat, sinking the boat Actually we did the Shannon cruise one year, remember that? So that's the biggest boat we've captained. He went a couple of years before me with a friend of his and he said he nearly sank the boat so ya great fun ya the water can be fun.*

*I did a ferry there a couple of years ago from Stockholm to Riga and that was an overnight one, it was great craic because there was a night club upstairs and the Swedes used to go on that for the cheap drink and the duty free because we were going over to Riga so it would be like what we had before the duty free I wonder if the UK goes out with Brexit are we going to have the duty free cruises back.*

## **Part 2 Autonomous Shipping**

The sea can be great fun, but it is also a dangerous place. Every day, ships are lost and millions paid out in claims. The insurance industry is a key player in shaping global shipping in commissioning reports and analyzing statistics to set premiums which guide industry behaviour.

An Allianz review of safety & shipping bizarrely reveals that Saturday is the safest day of the week at sea and that shipping incidents are most frequent on Thursdays.

On a more serious note, the top loss hotspot for the past decade is the South China, Indochina, Indonesia and Philippines maritime region. In 2015 more than a quarter of all worldwide losses occurred there. This is double the figure for the next highest loss region in the East Mediterranean and Black Sea.

In total, worldwide there were 2,687 reported shipping incidents during 2015. Cargo and fishing vessels accounted for over 60% of ships lost. Foundering, that is sinking or being submerged, was the most common cause of loss, often driven by bad weather.

I spent a lot of my time working in the offshore supply industry as a ships captain. The particular story I am telling you relates to one of those times. We were working with a deep-water drilling vessel on the Indian coast. The vessel I was on was called the *Waveney Castle* and we were hove too outside Mumbai waiting for a pilot so we were about 15 miles maybe off the harbour. It was Monsoon season. The Southwest Monsoon is fairly kind of severe out there it generally produces winds of maybe 30-40 knots and 3-4 metre sea. It was that kind of a day.

*Anyway we were just dodging around waiting for word from the pilots when we picked up a very faint mayday message at about 9 o'clock in the morning. We could*



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*hear a mayday but we couldn't hear any details or a position. Then a little bit later at about 10:30 we got a clear distress message on channel 16 and it gave a position and the position was about 2 and a half miles away from us so we responded to that immediately and headed off towards the position. We called up the Port radio and told them what we had heard and what actions we were taking. So when we got to that position we couldn't see anything. We sort of had information from the mayday message that there was people adrift in a life raft so we turned downwind and followed the potential line of drift of a life raft. About 10 minutes later we started to see diesel in the water and some debris and we kind of knew we were on the right track. A couple minutes after that we got another call on the VHF from the liferaft. They could see us and they were only about a mile away.*

*So we sounded the general alarm, mustered everybody, got everybody ready. And after passing through some more diesel and floating wreckage we found the raft upside down with 7 survivors on top. So upside down as in her canopy was underwater, they were sitting on the underside of the raft. There was one man on board who was injured, but he was mobile. He had dislocated his shoulder. Now the weather conditions were fairly severe and we were in shallower water in a difficult area North of the port of Mumbai. We manoeuvred into the weather and brought the raft into our lee on the starboard bow where we have a pilot boarding door. And we managed to get the raft alongside, get all the survivors on safely and cast the raft adrift. The master was Captain Aurora and he reported that one man his bosun was still missing. He had been wearing a life jacket so there was some hope that he might still be alive and in the water somewhere. So we sort of started to search back up the line of the wreckage. A man in the water would drift a lot more slowly than a life raft in that wind. We were always conscious of the danger of colliding with the submerged vessel, the vessel, which was called the Dorset. She had been a livestock carrier. She had sat off Mumbai waiting for tugs to tow her up to Alang where she was due to be broken up on the beaches of Alang. But she had been struck forward while at anchor and progressively, flooded, blacked out and finally went down completely. Anyway that's by the by. The man in the water was obviously our focus of attention at this point in time so we continued searching up and finally we saw him. We saw his arms raised and he was just floating there in a lifejacket among the wreckage. So we followed the same procedure to try and recover this casualty, but it wasn't as easy it's very difficult to pick up a man in the water from a large ship. So finally, he managed to get hold of a doubled bowline on the end of a rope and we managed to get him out not before he had slipped out of his life jacket and gone under for a few minutes which was a real worry at the time because we had all our bow thrusters and manoeuvring equipment running so there was a real risk of him being sucked into a thruster. Anyway we finally got him on board and that was it that was the full number there was 8 on board and we had 8 survivors. It was great to find him because you'd always be kind of wondering could you have done more if you missed one out of the crew. So we continued on our way then to the Mumbai pilot station and got into the inner anchorage and got everybody safely ashore. There were all Indian nationals. But the vessel was registered North Korea. So we gave them food and drink and treated*



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*the injured party. They were all very thankful for their saviours and disembarked at Mumbai about 4 o'clock that afternoon. It was a busy day but a very rewarding day. It's interesting because in a place like that. Its not like around here where we have great emergency services and a great response comes about to any tragedies at sea or any potential dangers. Out there when we spoke to the Indian coastguard we expected a response we expect helicopters or vessels bearing in mind there is a huge naval base in Mumbai but they were really unsupportive. In fact somewhere in the whole, as the whole thing was unfolding they asked me could I fax details If they got a fax maybe they'd do something about it. Needless to say they are still waiting for the fax. That's it that's about the whole story.*

The world we live in has been called a risk society by academics such as Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck. They describe a world that is increasingly preoccupied with the future and with systematic ways of dealing with the hazards and insecurities created by modernisation itself. So as shipping scaled up in terms of ship sizes and cargos carried, the consequences of greater losses following accidents scaled up too. The management of these increasing risks becomes a driver in industry development.

Human behaviour is cited as the source of virtually all losses at sea. In shipping this is called the human element. Advances in technologies have made it possible to envisage a future where the human element as a risk and cost factor in shipping will be displaced. This is through the innovation of autonomous ships. These are self-navigating ships capable of operation at sea without onboard crews.

*Autonomous shipping I suppose it's a concept at the moment although having said that there were trials only last week. Rolls-Royce have developed vessels that can be controlled completely from land. They did sea trials with tugs in the North Sea. So the captain is sitting on a virtual bridge ashore, it's a very new world.*

*I think autonomous shipping, it's just a continuation I think of what we see in every aspect of our lives, and if you look at the docks in general, just let's go beyond the ship onto the land side, we have seen a huge amount of mechanisation and indeed automation. So the most obvious example is the shipping container, the coming of the shipping container, and it is now not unusual to have cranes, if not completely unmanned, then at least remotely controlled, so essentially controlled by people in an office using the skills, which are the skills that you would develop from video games. You would also have landside cranes for stacking and delivering containers, putting them on and off trucks which will be entirely automated. So I think it's a logical thing to envisage that this extent of automation and this extent of mechanisation will jump over the quayside onto the ship. And in many ways, when you look at automation I think one of the first reactions very often is the negative reaction. It's the instinct perhaps it's the, the instinct that gave rise to the Luddites all those centuries ago, but automation will certainly do certain things better than*



Connecting Dublin Port Seafarers with Dublin Port Walkers

*people can. Automation is fantastic for repetitive tasks, it is fantastic when there is, is arduously long hours where repetitive tasks have to be done repeatedly.*

*The Norwegians now are building a few for all their river cargo – its going to be driverless I mean its only a matter of time, we have to try and advance because everything we are doing at the moment is like prehistoric.*

*I would imagine the first place it would happen is that a ship would be taken out of port by humans, who would then get off as pilots get off, then the crew get off, the ship will sail across the wide oceans, where perhaps the benefits of autonomy are most easily seen. If you think of a ship going from let's say from Dublin Port down to Buenos Aires, that is an awful long stretch of sea for a crew to be on board the ship when perhaps automation can do the job just as well. That's how I would imagine it might happen and then other humans would get on board the ship at Buenos Aires and bring it safely into port. So there's colossal challenges, but I think it is inevitable. It's not something to be feared, it's something to be, to be developed over time with great care, but I can't see it not happening.*

*So it's happening. Is it a good thing or a bad thing I don't know. If you take it purely from a health and safety perspective, it's such a dangerous job to be at sea, to be a seafarer. Dealing with all types of weather, dealing with the huge, you know, containers for shipping our products all over the world. We know that there are constantly accidents. We know that seafarers are not treated well in all instances, and therefore you have organisations like the ITF and SIPTU who tie in with that. If it does away with that element of it, I would say that's a good thing. But it's doing away with work, and I just wonder where the human race is going if we don't have work to do.*

*What's going to happen if there is a mayday at sea? Who is going to look after the people in distress you know what I mean? If you have a ship passing by with no crew on board you gotta have a look out you know yourself there is always tragedies at sea and there's containers floating around half submerged, and you know these things have to be watched for too and all that so I think human error will come along but people looking out all the time is a bit safer.*

*Like we can't trust humans, honestly yea*

*What does it mean? I suppose it's a further disconnect of people from the sea. We spoke earlier today about containerisation and how that reduced massively the numbers of people not just seafarers but dockworkers and their families and the tradition in this city of dockworkers. I doubt that there's a family that didn't have somebody that worked on the docks or worked at sea. So it's possible that we'll lose the connection completely and the only connection to the sea will be for fun and enjoyment on cruise ships.*





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*But even as I try to envisage what that might look like, there's obvious questions that come to my mind. What happens if something goes wrong with the ship while it's at sea? Can you fully depend on the technology? I would have worked over the years, my background is engineering, I would have worked at times with guys, tradesmen, who would have worked at sea, and the one characteristic of all of them I worked with was they were immensely resourceful. When they didn't have the tools for the job they always found a way of fixing whatever needed to be fixed. If you don't have that resourceful mechanic or electrician on board a ship and something goes wrong, what situation are you in then? What I think is as you sort of think your way into these problems, exactly the same process is happening for autonomous cars at the moment. What happens if a child runs out in the road, or there's a bicycle or there's an electrical storm and signals get lost. All of these issues are out there but I would be by nature an optimist and I just think human ingenuity would answer the questions. The most we can do today is just pose questions, but in posing questions I think we need to be open minded that there could well be answers to them, and be optimistic that those answers will indeed be found. I think that will be the case.*

Walking on the Great South Wall you are standing on history and facing the future. The innovations that new technologies bring will introduce new seascapes. High tech autonomous ships will replace current models, just as purpose designed containers vessels replaced break bulk cargo vessels.

Just as containers presented huge challenges in terms of standardising intermodal transportation. The next big challenge of innovation is to put in place worldwide systems to implement autonomous ship technologies.

Seafarers will have to adapt too; in the functions they carry out, the skills that they use and to numbers employed. The globalised industry of shipping foreshadows a future of depleted work opportunities. What happens at sea will happen on land too. There will be a sea change, for seafarers, shoreworkers and walkers. Get ready.

***ENDS //***

This is the third and last podcast in a series about contemporary seafaring. Source information is available on the website [portwalks.ie](http://portwalks.ie). You can follow the project on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram

Port Walks is an art project by Sheelagh Broderick supported by a Dublin Port Port Perspectives Commission. The Seafarers Mission at the Seafarer Centre in Dublin Port provided a base for research. Thanks to Rev Willie Black, Noeleen Hogan, Dermot Desmond, Ed Taylor and all the volunteers who welcomed me. Rose Kearney of Stella Maris also at the Seafarer Centre gave generously of her time and experience and Michael Whelan of the International Transport Federation. Eamonn O'Reily, Chief Executive of Dublin Port, Jerry Brennan, SIPTU, Port, Docks & Harbour Section, Vinny



Connecting Dublin Port Seafarers with Dublin Port Walkers

Dunphy, DSG, Captain Eoin Ryan. Thanks to all participating seafarers whose identities are being kept confidential in this podcast and to all the walkers met on the Great South Wall, Noel Murphy, Esther & Joe Kelly, Jim Keenan, Cormac & Tony, for whom I have no surname. *Cutting Through Clouds* was written and performed by Ewa Gigon, *Sea Changes (with Danse Macabre)* was written by Raymond Deane performed by Nancy Ruffer, Darragh Morgan, Andrew Shrimshire, Ian Pac and Jo May. The conductor was Mikel Toms. Sound by Dan Guiney.