



This item contains the Dublin core metadata attributes and Curatescape item type metadata fields for a story from the Ports, Past and Present archived collection on the digital repository of Ireland. It has been provided in .odt format for easy copy and pasting.

For more information about the Ports, Past and Present Project, see

<https://portspastpresent.eu/>.

For more information about Omeka Classic, see <https://omeka.org/classic/>.

For more information about Curatescape, its Omeka plugin suite and this item type metadata schema, see <https://curatescape.org/>.

For a .csv containing tabular data for all stories, see the larger collection at

<https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.ht259b362>.

For an archived snapshot of the story as it appeared between 2020 and 2023 on

<https://portspastpresent.eu/>, see the Relation field below.

Dublin Core

Title

Drama on the Irish Sea

Subject

Anglo-Irish Treaty

Holyhead

Michael Collins

Creator

Catherine Duigan

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

Rights

CC BY 4.0 International License

Relation

<https://perma.cc/3L6F-P3R7>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Coverage

53.42862216970099, -4.651232496527097

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

Holyhead and the Anglo-Irish Treaty

Story

Travel is often eventful and never without risks. One hundred years ago the mail boat and train service between Dublin and London Euston was the critical travel infrastructure supporting the Anglo-Irish treaty negotiations. On the morning of 3rd December 1921, some of the Irish delegates involved in treaty negotiations experienced a dramatic marine accident just outside Holyhead Port, and it was extensively reported in the newspapers.

Shortly after 3am Michael Collins, Erskine Childers and Gavan Duffy left Holyhead on the maiden voyage of the *Cambria* Mailboat, enroute to Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire). They were returning to Dublin with draft Anglo-Irish treaty proposals to be discussed at a critical Cabinet meeting.

In the darkness off North Stack, their vessel collided without warning with a schooner, *James Tyrrell*, which was cut in two, and three of her crew were drowned. Four of the crew were rescued by a boat lowered from the *Cambria* which remained at the location for two hours to search for the missing crew members. The passengers were mustered on deck, and when Michael Collins was handed a lifebelt, he said “I have been in tighter corners than this.”

Afterwards the mailboat had to return to Holyhead to be examined and it was only slightly damaged. However, the delegates and other passengers had to transfer to another ship, the *Hibernia*, to continue their journey to Ireland. When eventually they docked in Dún Laoghaire, Collins told reporters asking about the sailing, “it was not so exciting at all”. Then they went directly to The Mansion House for one of the most contentious Cabinet meetings in Irish history. Amendments to the proposed treaty text were vigorously debated but division remained between the Cabinet members.

After six hours, at 7pm, the Cabinet meeting concluded to allow the delegates to return to London. They travelled in the early hours of the morning as two separate parties. With little sleep during the previous night Michael Collins, and Arthur Griffith returned via Dún Laoghaire, and the other delegates used Dublin Port. Griffith was the grandson of Rev. John Griffith, pastor of Buckley in Flintshire and he frequently spent holidays with family and friends in Wales.

One can only imagine how the effort of travelling at all hours of the day added to the stress and exhaustion of the delegates who faced many tough debates with Éamon De Valera and David Lloyd George. Next time you travel this route on the train crossing westwards over the Britannia Bridge on to Anglesey, remember these tired Irish men gathering their papers into briefcases as Holyhead approached. No doubt they looked out the window and contemplated sea conditions.

The author, Catherine Duigan (@c_duigan), is a writer and researcher who was born in Dublin but now lives on Anglesey watching history pass by. She is a Professor (Hon.) of Environmental Science at Aberystwyth University, and she has a keen interest in history and heritage issues.

Factoid

American film director John Ford also travelled on the same dramatic crossing. He wrote to his wife Mary that the 'shock of the impact was terrible'.

Related Resources

Lettons, J., Wrecksite. (2008) *James Tyrrell [+1921]*. Available at:
<https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?67103>.

Maritime Officer, RCAHMW. (2009) *Site Record: James Tyrrell*. Available at:
<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/272132/>.

Gibbons, L. (2001) 'The quiet man and the big fellow'. *The Irish Times*. Available at:
<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/the-quiet-man-and-the-big-fellow-1.341297>. Archived at:
<https://perma.cc/WF9B-83SY>.

Official Website