

RINA Scottish Branch

21st Anniversary Celebration Dinner

13th March 2020



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Executive Summary.

The Academic year 2019-2020 marks the 21st anniversary of the formation of the Scottish RINA branch. Ian White, branch Chair 2018-2020, presented to the committee that this is an occasion worth celebrating through a formal dinner, or similar event.

A membership survey was carried out in early 2019 to gauge interest and expectations of branch members. Feedback from the survey was that membership would prefer a dinner with a business dress code, and would be content to pay a maximum of £50 per plate. With the majority of our membership being western central belt based it was agreed to look at venues around Glasgow.

The committee found reasonable offerings from: the Tall ship at the Riverside Museum; 1599 at the Royal College of Surgeons; the Anchor Line restaurant; the Riverside Museum itself; and the Hilton Glasgow hotel. After considering the options and the best value in line with the information from the membership it was decided that the Hilton Glasgow would be the preferred venue, and they would be able to support us with their experience of hosting dinners similar to this, some of which the committee had attended in the past.

The cost of a ticket for the dinner from the Hotel was a set price of £38 per person for a 3 course meal, half bottle of wine per person, and drinks on arrival, as part of this price it was expected we would have a complement of at least 80 persons in attendance. In order to support our student members it was decided to offer a limited number of 20 student tickets at £20 per student, and increase full member tickets to £45. It was believed this offset would still cover costs if the event was fully attended.

Dinner, as selected by a delegation of the committee, was Haggis Bonbon starter, followed by a Duo of Chicken main course and Sticky Toffee pudding.

Attendance on the evening by the membership was 46, including 2 Students. This was of 51 tickets confirmed for the evening. It is thought that Coronavirus and delayed event information were key factors behind the low numbers for the event.

A charity Raffle was held with donations from organisations around the local area. In total £488.50 was raised and donated to the RNLI.

The event was enjoyed by all who attended, and saw the history of the branch reflected by not only the Chairman and first chair in their addresses, but also by guests who asked to contribute throughout the evening.

The financial loss as a result of not selling enough tickets was £872.50, however the committee finances have been healthy for a number of years, and the committee believed when committing the event in October 2019 that this would be worth spending the money to celebrate this milestone if required.

Introduction and Purpose of the event.

The Academic year 2019-2020 marks the 21st anniversary of the formation of the Scottish RINA branch. Ian White, branch Chair 2018-2020, presented to the committee that this is an occasion worth celebrating through a formal dinner, or similar event.

The event would be open to all members of the Branch and their guests, and would be held at a venue in Glasgow. The event would reflect on the history and tenure of the previous chairs and honour their service with the presentation of a "Past-Chair Medal". These medals had recently been donated by a generous benefactor to the branch and made available in time for the event.

The intention was to also ask the local maritime community to lend decorations for the evening, so that the chosen venue would have some form of nautical theme. In addition, the committee would generate its own decorations for the evening, creating physical and digital media for the evening.

Managing and setting up the event

The members of RINA Scottish Branch were consulted early in 2019 as to what was expected from the evening and their preferences. This took the form of a short survey which had a fantastic response from our membership and helped form the shape of the dinner. The overwhelming majority of responses were in favour of a dinner and Friday as the preferred day, with a formal business dress code.

Indications from the survey was that the majority of people were happy to spend a maximum of £50 per plate for the dinner.

Considered Venues and Value-for-money.

As the majority of the branch membership is focussed in the greater Glasgow area, the committee agreed to look at venues around Glasgow.

A number of quotes were requested from venues around the city. In addition to venues with a nautical theme, venues that were attached to other professional institutions and venues readily involved in providing this sort of event were approached for information.

The companies/venues which were approached were asked for the best offering they could provide, including:

- Venue hire, including Charity discounts.
- Price for 3 Course Meal (with options for a variety of dietary requirements)
- Options for Refreshments:
 - for Drinks Reception;
 - Provision of a drinks bar.
- Audio and Visual equipment
- Other discounts for our members.

A summary of the total cost of 3 course meal with refreshments (where possible) for 100 guests is shown below, however a detailed breakdown is presented in the appendix.

Venue	Suggested capacity	Total cost (£)	Cost per person
Tall Ship at the Riverside Museum, with catering by the Really Delicious Food Company*	100	£6210	£62.10
1599 at Royal College of Surgeon	100	£5460	£54.60
Anchor Line**	100	£4564.50	£45.65
Riverside Museum***	100	£6180	£61.80
Hilton Glasgow*	100	£3800	£38.00

* 3 course meal with Refreshments, cost provided per person.

** cost for Meal only, per person.

***3 course meal only, cost of a random bottle of wine selected from the provided wine menu was £17 a bottle.

Venue and Menu Choices

Considering all the options shown in the table overleaf, the Chair and working group suggested that the offering from the Hilton Glasgow hotel was the best choice in terms of value for money, previous experience of events at the venue, and the support we would receive from the hotel events department who would have considerable experience working on this type of event. The Committee agreed with the decision.

The offering provided by the Hilton Glasgow included:

- Capacity between 80 and 120 guests, up-to 12 tables of 10 persons.
- Set 3 course meal with meat and vegetarian options for £30pp;
- Menu tasting for 4 persons to decide the menu for the event;
- Drinks reception, and half-bottle of wine with dinner per person for +£8pp;
- Discount on hotel rooms on the evening for those who are interested.
- Option to take delivery of items for the event.

In order to support our student members the committee discussed options for ticket pricing. The final decision was that a limited number of 20x “Student tickets” would be made available at £20 per student, with Full member tickets selling for £45. This decision was made considering information from the membership survey on a dinner event from 2019, and the healthy branch budget. When we considered an event attended by 100 guests, this offset would result in the ticket sales covering the cost of the meal.

The final menu decided by 4 committee members was:

Starter:

Panko crumbed haggis bonbon on a bed of leak and smoked bacon stovies

A vegetarian equivalent would also be made available.

Main:

Garlic & herb Marinated chicken breast, chorizo jam, confit leg, parmentier potato, charred courgette, wilted spinach and sun blush tomato jus

The vegetarian option was a tomato & mascarpone tart, lemon dressed courgette and black olive crumb.

Dessert:

Sticky Toffee Pudding

With the range of capacity, it was decided to aim for the minimum capacity of 80 persons. The hotel stated that final numbers could be confirmed up to a fortnight before the event, therefore giving us room to grow our audience if we wanted to.

Events insurance

As part of the contract with the venue for the event, the Branch committee were required to provide indemnifications and insurance for the event.

In the first instance the branch approached RINA Headquarters to see if the institutes insurance could be provided to cover this event, as this event was similar to those that RINA organises throughout the year at that level. Feedback from that question, was that we needed to get our own insurance.

After some research and a discussion with the committee, Chairman Ian White purchased a one-off insurance policy for the event from Event Insurance Service Ltd for £112.50.

This satisfied the venues stance on insurance and we were able to sign off the contract with the venue.

Final Decision to commit to the Event

As a result of the delays associated with the challenges of securing the venue and the events insurance it was realised that it was unlikely that the committee would meet the 80 person limit. It was discussed and agreed that where the committee was not able to meet the minimum guest requirement, that a proposal would be presented to the venue for the option of holding the event with smaller numbers whilst paying for the full 80 capacity as agreed in the contract with the hotel. This decision was lead by the financial impacts met as a result of signing the contract with the venue for the event for 80 persons. The financial loss of lower numbers on the committee budget would be lower than not holding the event at all.

Coronavirus

In the weeks and days leading up to the event, there was considerable media coverage about the developing coronavirus now present in the United Kingdom.

After number of discussions within the working group, considering individual experiences of how things were going across the country it was decided that we would continue on with the event, and accept that individuals would consider their own reasons for whether to attend. Financially we were already committed to the venue and going through with the event or being liable for the total value. Additionally, the insurance policy which had been taken out for the event would not cover communicable diseases, under which Coronavirus was deemed to fall.

It was decided with the financial commitment to go ahead with the event and accept the further losses of less people attended, if any occurred.

Activities for the night.

The main focus of the event was to celebrate the past 21 years of the branch history. Separate to, and alongside, the event organisation, the committee had received a donation from a benefactor for the commissioning of a branch Chairman's medallion, and past chair medals, which could be worn on formal occasions. These medals had been approved by the committee and by RINA Headquarters, and the delivery date from supplier meant these would be available for the Dinner.

With that in mind the Chairman wished to invite the previous chair's of the committee to join us for the evening and recognise their service with a few words and the presentation of their past chair medal. This would be a focal point of the chairmans address for the evening.

After a number of discussions between the committee and hotel, it was agreed that the programme for the evening would be as follows:

- 1900-1945: - Drinks Reception
- 1945: Selkirk Grace - by Vice Chairman Malcolm MacLean
- 1945-2100: Dinner
- 2100-2200: Chairmans address
- 2200-2215 Raffle prize draw

Having recently had a presentation by RNLI Naval Architect Christopher Smith, it was decided that a Raffle Draw could be organised to raise donations to go to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. Committee members were asked to approach employers for donation of Raffle Prizes, the Hilton hotel were also asked for a donation. The details of the Raffle are expanded on later in this report.

Decorations for the Venue.

In order to add a nautical theme to the venue it was decided to ask local businesses if they lend any model ships and similar decorations for the evening.

Declan MacDonald (CMAL) liaised with management at CMAL, who were very generous, and provided 3 ships models of some of their vessels. These models were of:

- MV Finlaggan
- MV Hallaig
- MV Lochinvar



Additionally, Lewis Hammell (CMAL) organised table name cards in the form of posters of important, significant ships built on the Clyde in recent years. These included pictures and a small amount of information on the ship in question.

As a backdrop for the entire evening, Chris McNair (Babcock International) developed a Presentation slide pack, which in addition to the regular slideshow put on at branch lectures by Ian White, included pictures, information and graphics about our previous lectures through the years, and pictures of significant ships locally and globally from the last 21 years.

Record of attendance

The event was attended by 46 guests. Originally 51 guests had bought tickets with a view to attending, with the build up of the Coronavirus pandemic surrounding the event it is believed that these 5 outstanding tickets did not attend following government advice at this time.

Of these guests, a number of companies expressed intent to support the event through a number of ways.

- CMAL paid for a whole table for their guests

- BAE Systems Scotstoun offered to buy a table of 8 for their members to attend. Unfortunately, they decided not to attend as a result of risks associated with the developing Coronavirus pandemic.
- Brooke's Bell asked that their members were able to sit at the same table together.

Of the attendees only 5 students took advantage of the reduced priced tickets to be able to attend the event. Of these only 2 attended.

Although BAE Systems pulled away from supporting the event, they did agree to pay for the tickets they had previously committed to.

Past chair attendance

The following past chairs were able to attend (in no order):

- David Harley;
- Patrick Carnie;
- David Smith;
- Douglas Brown;
- Allan Gilfillan;
- David Smith;
- Scott Whiteford;
- Tony Crow.



Following the event, Ian White received correspondence from Tom Dunn's wife, who apologised for not being able to attend on his behalf.

Allan Rodgers also expressed his apologies for being unable to attend.

Summary of the Raffle.

As part of the event a Raffle Prize draw was organised. It was decided that instead of buying raffle books that named envelopes which would double up as table place name cards, would be used. Donations would be placed into the envelopes over the course of the evening and collected by committee member into a vase provided by the hotel.

The raffle prize list was as follows:

- 1 bottle of HMS Queen Elizabeth Commissioning Port - donated by Chair Ian White;
- 1 Bottle of HMS Prince of Wales Commissioning Whisky - donated by Chair Ian White;
- 2 sets of vouchers for CALMAC sailings - donated by Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited;
- Afternoon Tea for 2, at the Hilton Glasgow - donated by Hilton Glasgow;
- A £100 meal voucher at Miller and Carter - donated by Lloyds Register EMEA Glasgow Office

Raffle Prize tickets were drawn out at random by 1 guest per table:

- Robert Harley;
- David Harley;
- Rachel Cardy;
- Craig Cameron;
- Malcolm MacLean;
- Denny Whiteford.

The total raised for charity through the raffle was £488.50.

Breakdown of the costs and financials surrounding the evening.

In order to confirm the booking, we had to agree to commit to the minimum capacity for the venue of 80 persons, with a cost of £38 per person. Additionally we were charged £250 for the PA system hire.

Total cost of event:

Cost of the meal (inc. half bottle of wine and jugs of fresh orange juice) & reception refreshments	£38 x 80	£3040
cost of PA system	£250 x 1	£250
cost of single event insurance	£112.50 x1	£112.50
		£3402.50

As already mentioned 46 full member tickets and 5 student tickets were bought by members, and BAE Systems committed to supporting with a table of 8. This made up the total ticket sales as shown.

Total ticket sales:

total student tickets	£20 x 5	£100
Total Full member tickets	£45 x 46	£2070
BAE systems tickets	£45 x 8	£360
	Total sales:	£2530

Total Cashflow for the event:

Label	Description	total
Total cost of event	80 plates at £38pp; plus PA system rental	£ (3402.5)
Total ticket sales	5 Student tickets 46 full member tickets 8 BAE systems sponsored places	£ 2530
	total revenue from the event	£ (872.5)
		-£872.50

Discussion and summary of the event.

SWOT Analysis

A quick SWOT analysis was carried out by the authors during the writing of this report to highlight the overall performance of the event. The points from the analysis is as follows;

SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Backing of the membership via survey questionnaire returned the year before.- Eager committee members willing to deliver- Personal experience of having attended other similar events- Vision of what the event should be.- Sufficient budget in the accounts to support initial deposits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inexperience of organising this kind of event- Irregular meetings of the main committee to develop event quick enough- At the outset there wasn't a lot of content to fill an evening- Lots of committee on secondments and working far and wide- Limited experience of the charitable committee taking funds for an event.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Many former committee members may attend.- Student members may be interested to attend to begin their networking experiences- Potential for this to be a good event- To develop as a committee in how we work and use technology to improve our delivery- Employers across the branch region may be willing to support through providing ship models/decorations and sponsoring prizes- Inviting the wider professional marine community to the dinner may be an opportunity to build numbers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- University deadlines distracting students- Coronavirus outbreak- competition with other events in the local maritime community (James Watt Dinner, IMARest dinner)

Areas that worked well:

Communication and Specific working groups:

During the period of October 2019 to March 2020, the committee increased its use of virtual conferencing to allow for a larger audience at meetings to discuss progress whilst supporting committee member's work and personal commitments. This became an invaluable tool to the dedicated working group which was formed in early 2020 to focus on delivering the event and would meet on a weekly basis to

discuss actions and progress prior to reporting back to the monthly branch committee meetings. This was especially useful as 3 of the regular working group members were regularly on business around the country, as well as in Europe.

One piece of feedback received from the hotel, was that we were good at staying in communication and keeping them up to date with progress, where we were having problems and when we expected to have actions done by. This has created a good name and relationship with staff at the Hilton Glasgow hotel

Membership engagement:

Having carried out the membership engagement survey in early 2019 was particularly valuable throughout as it provided a baseline for the membership's expectations for the event. This was referred to a number of times during the planning of the event.

Areas which could have been, or were, improved:

Decision making

By the nature of how the branch carries out its regular business, decision making was a drawn out process in the initial stages, as developments in planning were having to be made in the run up to and presented to the committee, this also had a knock on impact on the regular activities of the committee. The working group mentioned before helped to considerably speed up this process.

Advertising the event

As a result of the lack of experience in organising this sort of event, the committee did wait to ensure that all the component parts of the event were set up, and the venue confirmed before advertising the event fully. Where interest had been gauged prior to starting the planning of the event, only advertising by the Chair at technical lectures and through word of mouth were done before everything was finalised. This could have been started earlier in the form of an initial poster.

Ticket handling

Ticket handling was processed by the secretary personally. In future the committee could take advantage of available web-services like EventBright to register interest and collect funds. Since the restarting of the virtual technical meetings in May/June 2020, the committee has since registered for an EventBright account to collate individuals interested in attending the online technical events.

Thoughts for next time:

Sponsorships

There would be an opportunity to engage with local industry to engage sponsorship of the event, through the purchasing of full tables or sponsoring certain aspects of the evening.

Conclusion:

To conclude, following the discussions within the committee since the event, overall it is considered as a success despite the complications caused by the inexperience of the committee organising such an event, the threat of coronavirus pandemic developing at the time, and the financial loss as a result of running the event despite not meeting the 80 person lower limit for the venue.

The event was enjoyed by all who attended, and saw the history of the branch reflected by not only the Chairman and first chair in their addresses, but also by guests who asked to contribute throughout the evening.

The financial loss as a result of not selling enough tickets was £872.50, however the committee finances have been healthy for a number of years, and the committee believed when committing the event in October 2019 that this would be worth spending the money to celebrate this milestone if required.

Image Gallery







Appendix - Breakdown of offers provided by venues.

Tall Ship at the Riverside with catering by the Really Delicious Food Company

Venue hire: £600 charity rate - available 5pm - midnight.

Catering

- £32pp ex vat for 3 courses (£38.40pp),
- £38pp ex vat 3 course plus canapés (£45.60)
- £10.50pp for drinks package

Payment terms:

- Venue:
 - Deposit £600 to be paid on booking
 - Balance to be cleared 1 month prior to event.
- Catering: will require payment 14 days (maximum) after the event.

Extras:

- Do not provide PA or projection equipment internal
- External partner Cameron Presentations can provide AV/PA.

Total cost for 100 persons: £6210

Total cost per person: £62.10

1599 at the Royal College of Surgeons, Glasgow.

Venue hire: included in rate

Catering:

- £30pp ex vat for 3 courses (£36pp)
- £45pp ex vat for 3 courses arrival prosecco, half bottle of wine per person. (£54pp)

Payment terms:

- Deposit: 50% of value at booking
- Balance: To be paid 4 weeks in advance.

Extras:

- PA equipment free of charge.
- projection equipment available for £60.
- Offer to showcase their own historical collections.

Total cost for 100 persons: £5460

Total cost per person: £54.60.

Anchor line

Venue hire: included in rate

Catering:

- £36.95pp for meal (excluding discretionary £10% service charge)
- option for food and beverage not provided

Payment terms:

- Deposit of £5pp required. No information provided as to when.

Extras:

- no internal PA and projection offering, however we could organise our own.

Total cost for 100 persons: £4564.50 tbc - Total cost per person: £45.64 tbc

Riverside Museum

Venue hire: £1500 + VAT = £1800. (hire from 5pm-9.30pm, access from 6pm).

Catering

- £36.50 + VAT = £43.80pp for meal
- drinks: cost of a bottle of wine c.£17.00. (menu)

Payment terms: no info

Extras:

- no PA and projection is offered at an extra price.

Total cost for 100 persons: £6180.

Total cost per person: £61.80

Hilton Glasgow.

Venue hire: Free, available 8pm to 1am.

Catering:

- £30pp - 3 course meal
- £38pp - 3 course meal, prosecco on arrival, half bottle of wine

Deposit: 20%. £600.

Payment terms tbc

Extra:

- External PA cost of ...

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Total cost for 100 persons meal and refreshments: £3,800 tbc

Total cost per person: £38.00 tbc