

TRASNA NA DTONNTA

Newsletter of the

IRISH SEA KAYAKING ASSOCIATION

June 1998

Issue 14

The County Down Coast

South East Alaska

Roofrack Design

A Voice for the Environment

Brian Ormond

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Editor: Des Keaney

News and Views

Editorial

TRASNA NA DtONNTA has a new editor. Des Keaney (that's me) has taken over from David Walsh who has done the job with such dedication for the last number of years.

I'm lucky to take over TnaD at a time when the Irish Sea Kayaking Association is enjoying it's greatest popularity ever. Much of the credit for this lies with David Walsh. Without his organisation, leadership, training, enthusiasm and commitment, the SKA wouldn't exist in it's current form. I'm glad to say that David will continue as Chairman of the Association.

TRASNA NA DtONNTA is essentially for and about Irish sea kayakers. We'll tell you what's going on and what people are doing, whether at home or abroad. The major aim is to improve communication. The newsletter will only be as good as you make it. You have a wealth of experience that you can share and I'm delighted with the level of co-operation I've received so far. To reward the work on your part, we're offering an incentive, as you'll see in the next item.

Free 1999 Subscriptions!

We're giving away subscriptions to the SKA for next year. All you gotta do is write an article for TnaD. As you can see from the number of contributors in this issue, the list is growing fast, so get scribbling!

7th Irish Sea Kayaking Symposium

This year's symposium will be hosted by Tollymore Mountain Centre and will be held on 23-25th October at Bushmills Education Centre. Any of you who attended the 1995

symposium in Ballycastle know that Oisín Hallissy's organisation skills are second to none. A good weekend is guaranteed!

The weekend will consist of workshops on

1. Technology (EPIRBs, GPS, VHF)
1. Sports injuries
1. Food nutrition
1. Boat handling skills
1. Trip planning
1. Environmental
1. Surf competition
1. Incident management and wilderness first aid

There will also be full and half day trips in the area, demo boats, trade displays and slide shows. Further info from Oisín in Tollymore on 013867 22158 or book with Diane on 01232 381222, ext 255. If dialling from the Republic, prefix these numbers with 0 8. More in the next issue.

Subsidised subscriptions to "Ocean Paddler"

A new sea-kayaking magazine is now available and is reviewed later in the newsletter. The annual subscription is GB£10. We're making it easy for you to subscribe. Send IR£10 to the TnaD editor before the end of June and we'll pass it on to OP and pay the sterling difference. The end of the month is a serious cutoff date as the editor won't be around for a while after that.

Kinsale Head.

Southern kayakers, attention please. "Oileain" badly needs a chapter on Kinsale Head. David Walsh is taking regular flack for this omission. Also needed is any infill for between Puffin Island up Kerry way down to the Roaringwater Bay side of Mizen Head.

Mull of Kintyre Ferry

Rumour has it that a new ferry service is starting between Ballycastle in Antrim and Campbelltown on the Mull of Kintyre. This would allow a one way trip for those wishing

to paddle to Scotland. We have been given a phone number 1800 551743 For those of you in the Republic, beware as we understand that this is a UK freephone number.

Dublin Pool Sessions

There have been two useful sessions in Clondalkin pool since the last issue. Thanks to Cormac Daly for his organisation. He plans to set up a number of sessions next winter and will publish the dates in an upcoming issue of TnaD.

Principles of SKA Meets

With a lot of new members, it's important to understand the principles of the SKA meets. With the exception of the "Come and Try IT" weekend (mentioned later), the Meets are a gathering of like-minded kayakers. Date and time are organised. That's it. Leadership or instructorship is not necessarily provided. It is each person's individual responsibility as to who they paddle with, where they go and in what conditions.

Tide Tables

As the Irish Nautical Almanac has not been published in 1998, you have a number of choices. One, get the tide tables for your local port. For example, Dublin Port and Docks Board (01 -8722777) publish the 1998 tide tables in a neat and compact format.

Your second option is to go for one of the large yachting almanacs that will set you back £30 -£40 and provide excellent ballast for an unloaded boat.

The best alternative found by the Editor is "The Small Craft Almanac". This covers Ireland and the UK and Western Europe from Denmark to Gibraltar. There's far too much information for what local Irish Sea Paddlers need. However, in a useful A5 format and at 20mm thick, it's still reasonably compact. On the plus side, there is a whole heap of useful information such as tidal stream charts, secondary port data, lighthouse data, VHF stations, local radio stations etc. etc.. You can buy it from Windmill Marine (01 - 6772008) at around £12 or from any decent bookstore. The publisher is Boatswain Press, Dudley House, 12 North Street, Emsworth Hampshire PO10 7DQ (0044 -1243 377977). ISBN 1-873432-78-X

Buy and Sell

We offer a 'buy and sell' section where you can advertise/look for boats, gear, paddles, new or second hand. If you want to buy it or sell it, tell the editor and it'll be in the next issue. There are already two people looking for decent fibreglass boats. Call for more details if you're selling. He'll also run an informal 'database' between issues.

Seen on Great Outdoors noticeboard – Yellow Nordkapp, £550, (01) 2858837

InterCeltic Watersport Festival

Bude, Cornwall 9th-14th August 1998

The InterCeltic Watersport Festival, sponsored by Guinness, brings together competitors from nine Celtic Nations – Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man, Brittany, Asturias, Galicia and North Portugal. It's a five day event covering canoeing, sai ling, rowing, windsurfing, surf life saving and water polo. It isn't only about sport though, as anyone who has been there knows – in the evenings, Celtic music and dance to suit all ages and tastes will be performed throughout the town.

Sea Kayak events will be held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There will be three races, all of 10 - 12 nautical miles. Pleasure paddles have been arranged for the other days. Please phone or fax Ann at the AFAS office, ph.01 -4509845, fax 01-4502805

Cornish Sea Kayak Rally

15th - 22nd August 1998

This is an informal week's gathering for sea kayakers, based in West Cornwall, 2 miles from Penzance and 10 miles from Land's End. It will follow immediately after the InterCeltic Festival to make the trip even more worthwhile. There is stunning scenery and coastal paddling with simple camping on a dairy farm @ £1.50 pp/pn. Contact Richard Uren, Trescrowan, Heamoor, Penzance, Cornwall TR20 8US.

New Series

There are four new series starting in this issue.

South East Alaska

There is the first part of an account by Peter Cork on the trip he and Oisín Hallissy did to South East Alaska last year. Peter has previously done a 700 mile Canadian canoe trip down the Back River in the Canadian Arctic when he and his paddling partner saw two people in two months!

Area Guides

We're introducing a new series of articles that will give you the lowdown on different areas of the Irish coast. People who really know their local area will write these. We're starting with Part 1 of the guide to the County Down coast by Mike McClure. Mike is a BCU coach and has many years of kayaking experience. If you have a weekend free and want to go somewhere different, watch that space!

Book Review

A regular feature will be a review of a sea kayaking related book. This issue looks at the bible of "Kayak Navigation", written by David Burch and reviewed by Seán Pierce.

David Walsh was explaining the intricacies of calculating the 'distance off' as by suggested by Burch at the last 'Come and Try It' weekend in Donegal. This involved closing one eye, fully extending his arm and calculating the number of 'finger widths' that it took to cover a particular feature. This is all very well at sea but in the breakfast room of the hostel in Dungloe, it's a different matter. Even David was embarrassed when a young German walker came in to witness David, standing at attention in a very Hitler - like pose. The fact that he had only three fingers extended didn't cut any ice at all.

The next issue will look at 'Dances with Waves', a recently published account of a solo circumnavigation of Ireland by Brian Wilson.

Environmental issues

We're also starting an environmental series. The regular contributor here will be Paul Bracken who is the secretary of VOICE, the organisation established when Greenpeace Ireland closed last year. We're giving an introduction to VOICE in this issue and Paul has done a write up on the Shannon Dolphins.

R.N.L.I. Donation

The SKA donated £100 to the R.N.L.I. The money, they tell us, will be directly used by the Dun Laoghaire Station where two lifeboats are stationed, the all-weather Trent Class RNLB "Anna Livia" and the D Class inflatable "Irish diver". Dermot Desmond signed the receipt.

"Come and Try It" Weekend

Wexford, 19/20th September 1998.

The "Come and Try It" (seakayaking!) weekend will be based on the east side of Waterford Harbour, probably in Sheilbaggin. There is Waterford Harbour itself if it blows with the option of Hook Head for the more experienced. This is the chance to bring your spouse, partner, river buddies or anyone else who'd like to try a seakayak. The 10 ICU Skerrays will be available with paddles and buoyancy aids at a very reasonable cost. There will also be instructor/leader types to keep things under control (on the water). Contact David Walsh for up-to-date info and boat bookings. Don't leave booking a boat 'till the last minute. We had a great turnout last year and the ICU boats were oversubscribed. It's first come, first served.

This is not just for rookies either. It will be the last SKA meet of the year and all are welcome.

Next Issue

The next issue will be out in early September although this is subject to the success (or otherwise) of the Editor's summer paddling plans. He and Seán Pierce are attempting a circumnavigation of Ireland in July and August. They'll be keeping land to the right and look forward to meeting some of you along the coast. So, TnaD 15 will either have a preliminary report of the trip or a new editor!

Area Guide

The Coast of Co.Down

Carlingford and the coast to Strangford

Mike McClure

Carlingford Lough is certainly the most dramatic sea lough on the east coast of Ireland with the Mourne Mountains to the north and the craggy Carlingford Mountain to the south. It contains both pleasant and sheltered paddling within the lough to heavy race s and overfalls located at its mouth.

The south side of the lough is in the Republic of Ireland while the north side is in the North. Up until the 1950's a lucrative smuggling trade reputedly ran between Greencastle and Carlingford harbours.

The tidal streams with the lough are weak and a pleasant and undemanding crossing can be made from Killowen or Rostrevor Quays to Carlingford village. However, during strong west-northwest winds, squalls are funnelled from the hills around Rostrevor and cause little cyclones and mini tornados on the sea. These are known locally as "Kettles" as the water appears to boil and steam off the surface. Access to the Newry Canal can be gained on the south side of the lough beyond Warrenpoint at GR 108207. This is really only practicable during HW as the area surrounding the access to the canal dries to extensive mudflats. There are reports that the canal is going to be reopened. However, a passage even by canoe to Lough Neagh is exceptionally difficult, as it is heavily overgrown and silted.

The tidal streams run up to a maximum of 5 knots on springs at the entrance of Carlingford and a heavy breaking swell may be encountered during the ebb, particularly in southeast winds.

Good overfalls and races occur during both the flood and the ebb around the Haulbowline Lighthouse and pleasant, relatively safe playing in these overfalls can be had during the flood tide. Access to these races can be gained from a small car park and beach at GR 263107 near Soldiers Point. The area is used by local clubs and centres for rough water training on a regular basis.

From the entrance of Carlingford to Newcastle, the coastline is dominated by the scenery of the Mourne Mountains and is made up of rocky beaches and small cliffs – a relic from the ice age that shaped the panorama of the Mourne scenery more than 10,000 years ago.

The fishing port of Kilkeel lies 4 miles from Cranfield. This is one of Northern Ireland's busiest fishing ports with up to 70 boats using the harbour.

Passing Lee Stone Point, the large granite boulder (another relic of the ice age known as an erratic) is an obvious feature. Further up the coast is a small rock called Selk Island, which appropriately enough often has a small colony of common seals on it. The next principal port is Annalong which has a small harbour, used mainly by small craft engaged in creeling (laying lobster pots).

From Annalong to Newcastle, the coastline becomes gradually more interesting, particularly from Bloody Bridge. At Glassdrumman Port (GR 380220), there is good access to the sea and a very pleasant little sandy beach from which to launch or enjoy your lunch. The National Trust owns the section of coast between the mouth of the Ballagh river (3 miles north of Annalong) and Bloody Bridge. The small cliff scenery from Bloody Bridge to Newcastle provides enjoyable rock dodging, particularly at high water, when many of the caves and channels become more accessible.

There are a number of small but enjoyable caves, one of which has a blowhole at the top. However, there are also two main caves, one of which involves a 50m squeeze where paddles become redundant and hands have to be employed to paddle through. This cave is not obvious from the sea but good exploring will reveal it and it's worth going through (especially in plastic boats!). The other large cave has a small rocky beach at the back and if there isn't much swell, it's good fun landing and exploring on up the cave a bit. A short trip from Newcastle to Bloody Bridge and back is ideal for introducing relative novices to fairly spectacular sea canoeing.

Newcastle lies 6 miles from Annalong and is very much the seaside holiday tourist town and is usually thronged between Easter and September, especially at weekends. However, good access to the beach exists from various car parks in the town. Access is also available from the harbour where there is very limited parking. It should be noted that this dries out at low water. Access may still be gained over the wall to the stony beach to the south of the harbour.

The sewage outfall pipe lies about 1 cable offshore to the south of the harbour and although Newcastle's sewage works are meant to be one of the most sophisticated in the UK, the area surrounding the pipe should be well avoided!! During southerly to easterly winds, good surfing can be had at the beach and a good break exists at the mouth of the harbour at lower water. During particularly strong winds i.e. above force 6, the surf is very broken and you can find yourself half a mile offshore still looking for a way out through the soup. In saying all that, this must be one of the most picturesque places to surf – "Where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea".

From Newcastle to St.John's Point (a distance of 8 miles as the crow flies or as the canoeist paddles) the scenery is dominated by the beach and sand dune systems of Murlough National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Within the inner bay at Dundrum, there is a causeway and bridge that connects the farms and dwellings within Murlough NNR to the main Dundrum – Newcastle road. The tide flows through this bridge at up to 6 knots on springs in its rush to fill or empty the southern half of the inner bay. Good eddies are created by the bridge stantion and this is used almost constantly at HW by local paddlers to teach and practice moving water techniques. HW at the bridge is +0030 HW Dover. The best crack is to be had during springs. This occurs every other weekend when the tide is usable from approx. 1000hrs until 1500hrs, HW being around midday.

During the ebb from the inner bay, tremendous deep water surfing waves can be formed if there is even a little swell from the south or east. However, once the tide has finished ebbing, the only practical course of action is to paddle to Newcastle 3 miles away as the inner bay will be dry.

For a mile to the south and 2 miles to the north of the entrance to Dundrum inner bay, car must be taken due to the rifle range at the army camp at Ballykinler. There are 3 yellow marker buoys marked DZ and the paddler should keep to the seaward side of these when the red flag (day) or red lights (night) are visible over the base just to the north side of the entrance to the inner bay. However, tracers have been sighted by local canoeists doing a night paddle from St.John's Point to Newcastle that would indicate that they can travel more than a mile beyond these buoys. The Coastguard (Ph: 01247 -463933) should be contacted before paddling this section of coast. The tides along this section of coast to St.John's Point are weak. A trip from St.John's Point to Newcastle is a very popular night paddle on a good moonlit night as you have the lighthouse flashing behind you, the twinkling lights of Newcastle to aim for and the foreboding outline of the Mourne's dominating the paddle.

From St.John's Point to the entrance of Strangford Lough is a distance of 7 miles and is a lovely paddle along small cliffs and a rocky shore of siltstones and shales believed to be formed during the Silurian period, 435 million years ago. This area is known as the Lecale and shortly after the

ice age, this would have been a large island with the tide connecting Dundrum inner bay with Strangford Lough.

Along this piece of coast lie the villages of Killough and Ardglass. Although Killough was an important fishing port, the harbour is now derelict, whilst Ardglass has taken over a principal fishing port, famous for its herrings, pronounced locally as "hearns". A new marina has been built at Ardglass and there is easy access to the sea from both Killough or Ardglass. A mile before the entrance to Strangford Lough lies Gun Island. The southeast side of this island is a mass of nesting kittiwakes, guillemots and cormorants on the cliff ledges and paddlers should

keep a reasonable distance offshore to avoid disturbance during the nesting season (April-June). The north side is favoured by a large colony of gulls that nest on the tussock grass just above the shore. A reasonably strong tide runs between Gun Island and the mainland – up to 2 knots. At extreme low water springs, it is possible to walk/wade across to the island.

Ballyhornan Bay, followed by Banderg Bay are pleasant sandy beaches with clay cliffs behind them to where there are nesting fulmars. Never disturb these birds at their nest as they have the ability to douse you with an extremely evil smelling mucus from their nostrils which sticks better than any glue known to man!

Killard Point, a National Nature Reserve, is well worth a visit from the kayaker, especially in June to see the abundance of butterflies and wild flowers growing on the sand dunes. Among these can be found the beautiful bee orchid, spotted orchids, wild thyme and yellow rattle. Butterflies include the Common Blue, Small Heath and Meadow Browns.

This brings us to the wonders of Strangford Narrows where stories abound of boat swallowing whirlpools and canoe munching boils. The beauty of Strangford and the challenges of the Narrows will be looked at in the next issue.

"The kayak leaves no trace of its passing and will not disturb the unique and fragile ecosystem described in this article. However, the kayaker could do immense damage. So let us follow in the footsteps of our mentors, the Inuit people and be as sensitive as the craft we paddle to explore our marine environment."

I.S.K.A Spring Meet 1998

Inishbofin

Richard Dalton

After working with machines all day, I drove home to pickup my canoe and off I went to Declan Donnelly's house as he was going too. You see, we were headed for Clifden for the night and on to Cleggan next morning.

When we got to Clifden there was a chap we stopped along the road, flashing lights and beeping horns, then he retied his load. I swear he was like an Indian on a narrow trail with the canoe like a very long bone through his nose (yes, he nearly lost his nose) and I don't like paddling with people with no nose.

When we booked into the hostel, the man said he was glad we were not later as he wanted to go for a pint. After a bag of chips and some tea we went for a pint ourselves. Then back to the hostel. The hostel beds were very high and I'd landed the top bunk. During the night they got higher as I used the bathroom onetime, then dug out my

crampons to get back into it. After that I dreamt of the Himalayas and woke up with an icicle on my nose. The weather had got cold during the night!

Breakfast was a kettling affair, with none at first and then all going at the same time. We packed our gear with some soup and toast for lunch and drove to Cleggan, meeting time 11:00 sharp. A good turn out, ten in all, for this time of year.

Cleggan was bitterly cold and a split decision was called for, tea or gear on. The sea didn't look too wild and the wind, mild, so gear on it was. Eight loaded sea kayaks (two were going by ferry), floating in the harbour, flat calm, cold, solid if you know what I mean? "Nothing of him doth fade suffer a sea change, into something rich and strange"

We paddled out into the Atlantic Ocean, swell calling "come to me". The sound in the sound and the bright green white and blue cutting freshness in your face that takes your cares away.

We headed for the north east point of Inishbofin, the first of a group of islands that are inhabited on the west coast of Ireland going north. Five nautical miles from Cleggan harbour. The group pulled up at the point and checked that all were happy to go on. One darting through the baby shags, the rest circling round past the light, sighting Damhoiléan to the north and into East End Bay.

Pillage time was called, the taste on all their lips, with crystal clear water and an easy landing for appetisers, heated up with a glimpse of sunshine. Food, talk and craic galore. Some climbed up to the highest point to see his highness and what lumpy mess he had in store around the next corner. The view was amazing, a picture to behold. The sheep turn into kangaroos at night you know! Then back to our beautiful ocean going ocean. We decided to head west along the island coast with a possible circumnavigation in mind. Turk, which is the next island of the group to the north, looked possible but we had arranged to meet up with the others that got the ferry. Past Dún Dubh, Dún na hIníne, and around towards Ardlea Cove, lumpness himself was true. We gathered together in close formation and continued on. This wonderful seascape, clapotis swell bounced back off sheer rock, columns of water direction unknown, falling helplessly back from the belt the night before. Vision tossed in an unending fury of balance, we paddled on through foam like spilled milk. Then in the middle of this churn, the drama did unfold, when one was green (you know the scene), every captains fear. We sent a scout into the sun towards a distant bay. Following a blinding light, we pulled into a nice calm storm beach and all was well.

Some pitched their tents while the rest of us crossed muddy roads past the way of life of island folk and geese that protect their turf, friendly smiles and dogs that look for "pets".

Into Days Hotel where we ordered dinner. We were lucky that it was open. Only some poor soul had died so it was open for the mourners. The hostel was quiet also for this time of year. There weren't many tourists around. It's a big hostel but the top bunks are

balance conscious and I'd recommend bed belts, like seat belts. The kitchen was ready for a bigger crowd, maybe next month.

After breakfast the following morning, we strolled back across the island to the kayaks. It was raining along the way but when we got there, it stormed. The forecast was for a force 5 in the afternoon but it was like it had come in early.

North beach was sheltered enough for a launch so five of us set out to go around the Stags of Bofin and complete the circumnavigation. It got rougher the further out we went, waves breaking on our decks. So we turned back, thinking "maybe another day". Instead, we portaged, across Loch Bó Finne and a 500m walk to the south beach. Bofin Sound didn't look as bad as the other side of the island, but looks can be deceptive. An old man went by on his bike. He had lived on the island all his life. He said he'd been in Spain for two weeks holidays, his first time outside of Ireland. He'd got back yesterday and said he was "bloody freezing". After I told him my story, he said that we must be all mad.

But mad or not, we wanted to paddle to Cleggan. It was 12 o'clock and the tide was full out. The wind was blowing off the mainland into our faces. The island man took one look out into the sound and said "Ah sure there isn't a drop in it, the wind has nothing to get a hold of and ye should be alright for two or two and a half hours yet I suppose". So off we went, six and a half miles and sure enough, in two and a half hours, it started to kick up a stink but we were in Cleggan Harbour by then.

I was the one who was "green" in Riches account. He's been very kind in his narrative as "green" wasn't the word that came to mind at the time! I was repeatedly and convulsively sick.

The problem started when we came around the back of the island where the Atlantic swell was bouncing off the cliffs. Everything was OK for the first 20 minutes. During this time, we went through a particularly disturbed patch that was a "point of no return". We could also see the Stags of Bofin a couple of miles away to the west. As soon as I started feeling queasy, I was in trouble. I knew my stomach wouldn't make it around the Stags or back the way we had come. The only option was the North Beach and the hope of a decent landing.

Once I was sick, I was only able to state that I needed to get off the water as soon as possible. Mapreading and decision making were impossible and I was in the hands of the rest of the crew. They were very supportive. I regretted scuppering their chance of completing the circumnavigation but I was still objective enough to realise that the situation was potentially dangerous.

As the sickness got worse, several of them took turns in rafting up with me until I recovered enough to go on. I can't imagine they enjoyed my throwing up on their deck in a choppy sea! At that later stage, I had to have the extra support or I would probably have gone over. Others went off to investigate the landing and at no stage did I see anyone only looking out for themselves.

I'd guess that I was sick 10-12 times, each bout being longer, more draining and less controllable than the previous, even though my stomach was empty. The time between the bouts also became shorter. I estimate that I paddled 2 miles before reaching sheltered water. I would not have been able to go much further and can understand how seriously ill people cannot stay upright. Any further deterioration of conditions would have left us in a serious situation.

I made a mistake when I went past the "point of no return". Even though I was feeling fine at the time, I should have known better. I'd just had lunch, hadn't taken any seasickness tablets and as it was early in the season, had very little sea time.

My sincere thanks to Fred Cooney, Peter Cork, Clare Crinion, Richie Dalton, Declan Donnelly, Joe Gibbons and Seán Pierce. My best memories of the afternoon?.....crawling into my sleeping bag in Peter Cork's tent behind the North Beach!

I.C.U. News

Major Training and Development Unit Innovation

David Walsh

The T.D.U. of the Irish Canoe Union, under the current leadership of our own Stephen Hannon, have developed a comprehensive and completely new system for the grading of personal paddling proficiency, leadership capacity, and (coaching and) instructorship ability.

Generally, (though with the honourable exception of sea kayaking) Leadership as a concept has been abolished, the thinking being that instructorship includes leadership (which is the truth and nothing but the truth, though hardly the whole truth?). Then personal paddling proficiency and instructorship skills are in each case simplified in being divided into levels 1 – 5, and to be an Instructor at any level, it is first necessary to be personally paddling proficient at the level immediately above (which is entirely logical). This affects Canadian type canoeists, river kayakers, competition heads, and sea paddlers all differently, but the principle is the same.

For example, levels 1 – 5 (River) Kayak Proficiency equate to Intro, Basic, Intermediate, A.P. and Leadership. The important difference is the change from Leadership to (Very) Advanced Proficiency as the highest award (Level 5), heralding the death of the whole concept of (River) Leadership. The cause of death was suffocation, the concept of Leadership now being swallowed whole by the concept of Instructorship.

It is a self evident truth that to instruct in any aspect of canoeing (or any risk activity) first requires that one can safely look after (i.e. keep safe, or at least alive) the course participants (a concept called leadership). One cannot instruct at a particular level unless one can lead at that level. It is certainly not however axiomatic that the concept of

leadership must therefore be subsumed into the concept of instructorship, i.e. that one cannot lead unless one can instruct, or even that it is valueless to lead without also instructing. Put another way, the I.C.U. believe, correctly, that one cannot teach without the ability to lead at the required level, but also believe, incorrectly, that one cannot lead without teaching, or at least, they disregard (or place no value on) such ability, and I regret that.

Paddlers will remember that there was never a Leadership award nor any recognition of leadership as such on grade II or III fresh water, only on grade IV and above, but now even that is gone. The new (more attractive?) level 5 Personal Proficiency award (in itself an excellent idea, reflecting increased standards everywhere) has no "minder" aspect, other than as between the members of a group among themselves.

On salt water things have changed less. There are the new levels 1 – 5 personal proficiency, but levels 1 & 2 are the same as 1 & 2 on fresh water, (only perhaps the assessment carried out on salt water) and only the upper levels need looking at. Level 3 is entirely new, equating to nothing that existed in 1997 Irish sea-canoing, reflecting about the standard of the old (river grade) Intermediate personal Proficiency (new river level 3) personal proficiency, but with some basic understanding of weather and the like as salty differences. Sea Levels 4 & 5 equate to the old Sea Proficiency and Advanced Sea Proficiency. Level 4, as before, equates to a competent member of a sea-going group, while level 5 equates to Leadership of such a group. It is undoubtedly a mark of respect or tacit acknowledgement of the nature of sea going activities that Leadership as a concept should be preserved in the sport of canoeing (even if only by implication) only in sea-kayaking. Only in sea kayaking is leadership as a concept (minding without teaching) recognised and acknowledged.

Instructorship also comes in levels 1 – 5. Relating these first off to fresh water, Level 1 means looking after a stationary group on non-threatening stationary water. Level 2 means taking them for a ramble on similar water, and equates to what was formerly called the B.K.T. Level 3 means journeying on moving water, e.g. simple grade 2 rivers like the Liffey or Boyne, and must be singly the most attractive new qualification on offer. Expressed in terms of "return" i.e. qualification level, on "investment" i.e. the effort achieving the qualification level, this has the most to offer. Grade 4 equates to what was formerly called simply the "Instructor", a jack-of-all-trades-master-of-none entity that has glued the I.C.U. together for so long that no one knows how to abolish the concept. Level 5 equates to the olden-days "Senior Instructor", and was, and still is, achieved by acclamation (of ones peers), and thus holds little mass relevance, or at least not yet. Level 5 instructorship is really to do with assessing instructors and setting standards generally.

Therefore, level 4 Instructorship is really the top of that tree. The beauty of the system is the simplicity and logic of its operation. Combining a Level 4 Instructorship with a particular level of personal proficiency of the instructor in a particular discipline determines precisely what the instructor is qualified to do. As a simple example, a Level 4 Instructor with a Level 5 Sea Proficiency can go further out to sea with a larger group than a Level 4 Instructor with a Level 4 Sea Proficiency.

The scheme includes for coaching (i.e. teaching competitive skills) for the first time. It effectively recognises the skills of de facto coaches with years of experience, in a way that is fair and long overdue. It also dovetails nicely into the new Euro thinking on coaching skills.

There are bits I like in all this and bits I don't, but on balance there is no doubt that this innovation from the T.D.U reflects great credit on them for its logic and simplicity, not to mention the huge effort that manifestly went into conceiving and instituting it. Well done.

Cataleatin'

Brian Ormond

A day off in Los Angeles normally means visits to Universal Studios, Hollywood, Magic Mountain or Venice Beach. But on arrival at LAX, I stood and waited for a shuttle bus to Long Beach Harbour. To be honest, the harbour is not a very interesting place. It has one of the largest container ports in the world and trucks queue endlessly in and out with their container loads.

This port covers the Pacific Rim Countries. Inside a manmade breakwater one can visit the Queen Mary, an elegant ocean liner, WW2 troopship that is permanently docked as a tourist attraction. Her maiden voyage was in 1936 and now she has 365 original staterooms and a royal wedding chapel. You can stay in any of the 120 suites and for unique American originality even enjoy a pizza and a movie for that very special nights entertainment!

Me, I'd much prefer to escape to Catalina Island, 21 miles offshore. The high-speed catamaran rips through the continuous lines of driftwood from the recent Californian storms. Passes oil rig platforms and delivers us to Avalon town (latitude 33 49 N, longitude 118 16 W) in 75 minutes. There Randy met me in his beige and white VW beetle truck. We drove through the small streets passing some of the 800 golf carts that locals use to transport themselves and their belongings, but also to use on the golf course. The waiting list for car or cart importation is seven years, great! We pass the fine monumental casino with the world's tallest freestanding pillar and on the beach next door, Jake is fitting out a plastic Perception Aquaterra Sea Lion. Stocked with basic essentials - map, wet weather gear, pump, float and a PFD I launch off the stony beach. Contingency plans are made, directions are given. It's 6pm, sunset has begun, the sea is calm and I leave Avalon Bay and paddle west along the northern shore.

It gets dark very rapidly; I'm paddling along the shore, finding my way with the sound of the gentle waves arriving at their destination. I don't see the seals jump off rocks but their loud splashes give me regular little shocks. After 60 minutes I haul the slim yellow item onto White's Cove sandy beach. I tie the painter onto a railing outside the no trespassing SDYC fence. I eat my fruit and nuts. I walk the beach under the light shining through the

open door of a beach shack. When the dog barks there's a long timber pier, which I sneak under just above the lapping, waves. The man and his dog disappear into the hut and I crash out on the sand next to my kayak.

During the night I woke every two or three hours. Yes, it was cold. I walked and jumped around to warm up and then went back to sleep under the shooting stars and the continuous hum of aeroplanes passing overhead to and from Hawaii, San Francisco and LAX.

At four am the sky spits slightly. At five am daylight appears and I get up, eat some bagels and a muffin and pull away from the beach on flat seas as a pod of approximately six porpoises pass. I head west. Birds are active, stocking up on their early morning fishing. Brown pelicans glide along the top of the waves making numerous short dives for their fill. Just after six am the sun rises and appears just to my right shoulder and I warm up, the sea reflects the orange rays. The red garibaldi fish swim amongst rocks and kelp, they are California's state fish and the male takes care of the eggs after they are laid! The tall hills are very green, so green that in the winter locals call it the Emerald Isle. It makes me feel at home, especially when it begins to rain. Oh, so green and luscious. Trees, plants and grass grow everywhere. In contrast, the prickly pear cacti are plentiful and their red berries edible and tasty like melon. Be careful of those thorns!

Moving steadily along I pass Twin Rocks, Goat Harbor, Empire Landing and Shouting Caves. Many of the cliffs and shores are crumbling. Mud slides and rocks tumble from the heavy rains and stormy seas. The island is sitting on volcanic rock. The submersed plate is pushing the whole island slowly northwards and the mainland plate is moving south. It is estimated that in a million years Catalina will be rotated 180 degrees and positioned somewhere off San Francisco!

The coastal erosion began in the 1800s when 150,000 grazing animals stripped the island of its protective covering. Then in 1896, Mr. William Wrigley, of the famous Chicago chewing gum family, purchased the island and made it a nature reserve. In 1972 his family set up a non-profit foundation called the Santa Catalina Island Conservancy. To this date 86% of the land is preserved and protected and it will never be developed. The landscape appears to be free of ruins and buildings. Wrigley's mandate was to restore, protect and educate. This is a positive thing because as you paddle the coastline the only built up area is Avalon after that, only a very few beaches have four to twelve single buildings. The countryside is wild and untouched, locals own 1% of the island. Catalina has a year round population of 3,200 and up to a million visitors per year.

Fourteen miles later I reach Two Harbors. There are two small towns, one on each side of the island, a mile from each other via a low valley. Native American Indians who peacefully lived in harmony with nature first inhabited them. A few years before me, in 1542, Don Juan Cabrillo the Spanish explorer arrived, sixty years later Viscaïno named the island Santa Catalina after St. Catherine of Alexandria. Later fur traders, pirates and smugglers came and went. Meanwhile I stock up on fruit, nut bars, yoghurt and an ice cream. The timber clad bars and restaurants are noisy with builders preparing for the

summer season. It's taken me four paddling hours to get here so I leave immediately, returning along the same route as I need to get back to LA this night.

But at Isthmus Cove I take a diversion and pull up between the slip tracks. Here is the Philip K. Wrigley Marine Science Centre where the educators believe that students of all ages benefit more with a hands-on approach to learning. Hmm... Courses are held on plate tectonics, earthquakes and geology (wow!); emergency diving accident management; marine animals and seabirds; biological oceanography and natural history. The large, modern building has a hyperbaric chamber (suitable for four patients), helipad, diving centre, various size housing, library, etc. Seawater is pumped from a submarine, sunk just off the headland, into storage tanks and is used for experiments and then returned to the sea. Members and associates are allowed to moor their boats next to the centre. At present they are working on a kelp restoration project and they have many sea animals such as black slugs and sea hares in their tanks.

I continue east again this time staying about a half a kilometre offshore hoping to spot some porpoises or whales. In March and April over 22,000 grey whales pass from Alaska on their migration south to the warm waters of Baja (6,000 miles) to give birth to their young and to mate. Alas mate, none I did see. Neither did I see the foxes, deer, buffalo or bisons left after a 1924 movie shoot. Amongst others, Mutiny on the Bounty was filmed here. However I did pass a disused quarry whose fallen rocks had spotted harbor seals resting on top. They are the first seals I have met who do not scurry into the water on the sight of man. One can get quite close and not disturb them. Yes, it is illegal to kill them but as everywhere in the world some fishermen here feel they are a threat and so take the law into their own hands.

Fishing is only allowed with a licence. There are very few people working as fishermen. The ones that do live by the sea are very kind - one did ask was I thirsty during the force four that quickly blew up. He thoughtfully thrust the beer in his hand over the gunnel as he drank from can in the other hand and I sheltered my kayak on the leeward side of his boat. They told me that there are wrecks on both sides of the island mostly on the west side. In winter the visibility under water is increased up to 100'. And about the 31,000 young white seabass that were delivered to test the feasibility of raising this fish in captivity for market purposes. They are kept in four 30' x 25' floating net pens. Fifty percent of all fished raised will be released into the wild, the remainder will be harvested. They joked about the good fishing they would have next year and inquired if I wanted a lift? Then the rain began and pelted down, the sea rose and I enjoyed the headwind home.

Speedboats full of screaming school camp kids, all dressed in dayglo yellow, bounced along the waves. I ignore their calls and when they are gone I creep into the large surf for a skinny dip. Returning to the bustle of Avalon I sneak between the small buoys with tall floating poles which make it easier for craft owners to grab. Boats are moored by both bow and stern. There is a seaplane landing area to the south and (the law insistent) three miles off the promenade an enormous eight-floored high passenger ship on its three-day trip from LA! This is basically a floating casino that must stay offshore. Five ferries transport gamblers ashore in the rain and carts buzz around the wet streets.

I return to the kayak base. The small surf pushes me onto the rocky beach and Randy's brother Royale dashes across the rocks in his sandals. The strong whiff of incense fills my nostrils and we greet each other. You see, Royale has the only Hari Krishna temple on the island and we share stories of the Hari's excellent foods from all over the world. I partake in another short swim, change my clothes in the rain and still with food in my brain head to town for some nourishment. I stumble on the excellent Cafe Prego where I got what I wanted. Warm bread with pure fresh garlic butter, minestrone, pasta, pesto and salad. Contented, much warmer and with the possibility of an earlier ferry I depart.

I sit on the ferry and think about my short two-day excursion to this wonderful romantic island. With tepee hire, endless walking trails and coves with names such as Willow and Rippers one could spend up to a week exploring its 54m of coastline. Maybe even spot those red tail hawks, bald eagles and bison. With no sign of any litter and such friendly people you get the impression that everyone is very proud of their island.

The shrieking calls from the Utah gymnastic schoolgirls is louder than the force seven howling wind. The ferry slows down when the waves get too big. The girls quieten down and regularly visit the restroom to empty their stomachs. For me the trip is entertaining and we talk about life in Utah and Ireland.

Once ashore I realise that there is no transport. I ask as many friendly people coming off the ferry as possible for a lift to LA. Cold answers, no, no, no's and dodgy replies make me feel that none of Catalina has rubbed off on these people. The ferryman says he has worked there for twenty-two years and could not tell the time or location of the bus stop. Everyone in LA has a car, he said. Well I did not...

It's eight p.m. It's torrential rain. It's LA and the man gives me a blue plastic bag which I cut and put over my head. I leave the terminal and proceed to the main road a kilometre away. There I wait for a bus, taxi, limo or even someone with a helicopter. With so much rain you could nearly paddle on these roads. Yes, another kayak would do nicely. After thirty minutes a bus slows down, kinda stops and the driver screams get in. This I did. "What are you doing?" she asks. "A white man should not be walking around this place, get down" she yells.

Now, don't get the wrong impression. Ruby is a very kind lady. Twelve months previously she had driven these roads with a drug addict on the floor, a sub machine gun piercing her thigh and a wall topped with hoods firing at her. She ran the bus across the centreline against the oncoming traffic and said that never again she would travel this route. Now, she was doing it for me! I wished the helicopter would have come instead and brought me to the hotel twenty miles away! With the lights turned off she made me divide my monies into socks and jocks. She gave me a free trip, free transit tickets, safe route instructions and scared me with her stories. No, she wasn't pulling my leg.

When I did land on my legs, outside the only place she would stop – the police station, she reversed her bus and shouted at me to get out of the bus shelter because the next driver would think I was dodgy and would not stop. Thank you Ruby for welcoming me

back to LA. Safely back in my hotel, I quickly dozed off thinking about the rolling hills of Catalina.... and giving myself stern instructions to stay offshore on the wild side..... It was so much safer!

Useful contact numbers: Descanso Beach Ocean Sports 310 510 1226 (Randy & Jake)
Box 386 Avalon CA 90704 \$45 per day includes PFD, paddle, pump and float kit.

Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies 310 510 0811 or 213 740 6780. Email at wies@wrigley.usc.edu

Catalina Express Ferry 310 519 1212

Cafe Prego 310 510 1218 Fine Italian foods

Catalina information - www.catalina.com

US Coast Guard VHF channel 16

Emergencies dial 911

Hare Krishna at Tremont Hall 310 510 8595 (Royale)

Book Review

"Fundamentals of Kayak Navigation"

by David Burch

Review by Seán Pierce

"Fundamentals of Kayak Navigation" is a fascinating book. Its 320 pages are a treasure trove of ideas, suggestions and insights enthusiastically written by a skilled communicator.

Burch's depth of knowledge and experience of his area is enormous. To be able to write on navigation for kayakers of all abilities would seem an impossible task, yet Burch achieves this goal with disarming ease. The book simplifies complex areas wherever possible and is stuffed with invaluable nuggets of information. The tone throughout is consistent, information is offered to help paddlers on how "not to navigate" and the reader finds himself swept along by the author's infectious flow of ideas, humour and experiences.

The mysteries of fixes, piloting, dead reckoning, currents and compass bearings are laid open to all and the fascinating world of kamals, winking, doubling bow angles and hand widths are introduced.

There is extensive use of maps, diagrams, tables and line drawings throughout the book. I found them extremely useful in supplementing and summarising the text. The line drawings are all drawn to illustrate the kayakers view of his world while navigating and I found myself offshore more than once re-evaluating past experiences!

The book is to be delved into repeatedly and the various chapter headings are well thought out. Chapter 11 on Navigation Planning provides a useful summary of the main thrust of the book as well as giving a detailed example of the skills needed in planning your next weekend trip.

The author must be congratulated on this definitive book on kayak navigation. There is something for everyone here.

The Fundamentals of Kayak Navigation by David Burch. The Globe Pequot Press, Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475, USA, 1993. ISBN 1-56440-155-3. Available in Great Outdoors, Chatham St. Dublin 2, Ph.(01) 6794293 for £13.20 app.. Also from Sea Kayaker Magazine, PO Box 17170, Seattle WA 98107-0870 USA, Fax 001-206-781-1141, Ph. 001-206-789-9536 for \$17.95 + p&p \$1.50 (surface) or \$5.00 (airmail).

Sea kayaking in South-East Alaska

Part 1

Peter Cork

In the summer of 1997, Oisín Hallissy and myself completed a wonderful sea-kayaking trip in Alaska. It entailed approximately eight weeks of paddling.

It was all of three years previously when I first conceived of the journey - a short life after a long gestation. I had given a slide show on open canoeing in Co. Fermanagh and the organiser, Robert Livingstone, loaned me a book called Blue Water Summer by an English couple who had paddled from Vancouver to Juneau. I read it, thought it seemed like a wonderful trip, but not for me.

I knew nothing about sea kayaking and I didn't think it would be fair to use family funds on such an extravagance. Then, as the months went by and middle class life began to oppress, I started to reconsider.

My partner, Sarah, gave me encouragement and the next thing I was committed. That's the worst about reading books. You never know where you'll end up. At the moment my reading backlog ranges from 'Proportional Representation as it Affects Bray' to 'Polygamy in Co. Cavan!' That should be safe enough.

I bought a wide, stable, plastic sea kayak and began paddling. Up and down the local lakes I went, speeding up whenever I thought anyone was watching. As Oscar Wilde

once said, "The first thing any man should acquire is a pose." In late spring 1996 I had my first outing with the SKA outfit on the west coast of Ireland.

The participants made polite enquiries about my sea kayak, but were doubled over laughing at it behind my back. I was crestfallen. I would have to invest in a sexy, tippy fibreglass number if I were going to rub paddles with this lot .

I scouted around for a paddling partner. My first preference was for a tried and trusted friend with whom I was compatible. Some were interested but none could commit themselves for six weeks. Then I met Oisín and about nine months before departure he confirmed himself as a starter.

Oisín's contacts in the kayaking world were invaluable and we obtained very reasonable deals on paddles, cags, paddling pants and kayaks. The latter were Romany Explorers that the manufacturer shipped to Juneau.

A third member of our group would be Michael Byrne, originally from Ireland and now living in North Carolina. He would join us for two weeks. Michael was able to source maps and other essential data.

Despite such long-term planning we still had a hectic final week before departure getting all our equipment sorted out. We did not want to arrive in Juneau, the capital of Alaska, with a long shopping list. The town can only be reached by sea or air and it is expensive to buy gear there.

We flew out: June 25 Dublin-Amsterdam-Vancouver-Seattle-Juneau. It was the worst part of the trip; 24-hours of non-stop planes and airports. We spent two days in Juneau getting organised.

Just before leaving we collected a cheque for \$2,400 in payment for our kayaks which the purchasers would pick up in Canada on completion of our trip. They were unusually trusting.

We were off.

We paddled north in the channel between Juneau and Douglas Island. The main shipping route lay to the south. We missed the tide and were soon beached on extensive sand flats. I had hoped to leave the environs of the town on that first day but we ended up camping within sight of Juneau. Opposite, in the distance, lay the mighty Mendenhall Glacier. Its glacial deposit had created the bar on which we were stranded.

We paddled for the next five days in a northwest direction to reach Bartlett Cove, the park headquarters at the entrance to Glacier Bay National Park. This park comprises 3.3 million acres of pristine wilderness. The bay itself is 62 miles long and contains tidewater glaciers discharging into sidearms of the bay. A horseshoe rim of mountains crowned by Mount Fairweather at 15,300 feet surrounds it.

We were lucky with the weather and had blue skies, blue seas and pure white snow - capped peaks. Bald eagles were as common as crows in Ireland. We watched a five - member otter family cavort in the sea one evening after dinner and a pair of Orcas (killer whales) surged up the coast approximately 50 metres from the shore as we ate lunch.

Within three miles of Bartlett Cove we beached twice to observe black bears and minutes later had the first of many close encounters with the enormous humpback whales. After they exhaled, their fishy breath hung in the air. I never thought I could feel so much affection for such an olafactive creature.

The next issue will contain a second article by Peter Cork describing the glaciers, bears and whales.

Magazine Review

"Ocean Paddler"

Review by Des Keaney

A new sea-kayaking magazine is now available. It's published quarterly, and, while based in the UK, is firmly aimed at an international audience. It's now into the second issue which has an excellent article on Ireland by Brian Wilson.

Brian did a solo circumnavigation of Ireland some years ago and has written of his experiences in "Dances with Waves" which will be reviewed in the next issue of TnaD.

There are also articles on

- wildlife, including an excellent brochure "A Guide to Good Environmental Practice"
- kayak design by Frank Goodman
- trip reports from Scotland and Newfoundland
- technical articles on GPS and Meteorology,
- gear tests and much more.

There is also a good classified section with everything from photography to mosquito bivis.

Overall, it makes a very good read, is great value and deserves our wholehearted support.

The subscription is GB£2.50 per issue or GB£10 per year, including postage throughout Europe.

You can either avail of our subsidised offer or make your payment directly to "Ocean Paddler", PO Box 314, Bolton BL5 2FS, Lancs., UK and tell them we sent you!

Roof Rack Design

Pat Ewan

The problem arose when trying to accommodate an Aleut Sea II Kayak on top of a 3 door Honda Civic. The boat, being about 7 metres long, not only projected a long way behind the car but, more seriously, the spacing of the conventionally bar roof rack – the bars were less than a metre apart – resulted in an unacceptable amount of rocking motion by the boat. There was also a serious stress problem due to the great overhang on either side of the rack. The answer to the problem seemed to be to move one of the bars as far back as possible. To do this I built up an A-frame behind the rear bumper, braced off the rear rack bar and supported on two bars projecting back under the bumper. This gave a spacing of well over 2 metres between the boats supports and this has proved satisfactory. The attached sketch shows the general idea.

A secondary problem that owners of large sea boats like the Aleut experience is that of actually lifting it from the ground onto the rack. This is particularly so if one member of the crew is tired, of shorter than average stature or otherwise unable to lift his/her end of the boat high enough to get it onto the roof rack.

My solution was to incorporate a swivelling member on top of the A-frame supporting the stern of the kayak. Thus, to remove the kayak from the rack the stronger/taller member simply lifts the bows of the boat up off the rack and then walks them around in a quarter circle before lowering them gently onto the ground. It is then possible to lift the stern of the boat off the rack and lower it to the ground. Apart from screwing up the traffic if this operation is done on the side of a busy road, this all works quite well. If the lift of the stern proves to be too high, the second member can hold the bows at waist level which will make the stern more accessible.

Notes:

1. Any conventional bar type roof rack can be used. I have a "Thule" and find it excellent.
1. The kayak sits on a "Thule" kayak carrier – an entirely satisfactory rubber pad mount which conforms to the shape of the hull.
1. The DIY parts of the rack were welded up on the garage floor using 12.5, 25 and 30mm square mild steel tubing. This is available supri singly cheaply from

Heitons on the Naas Road. But beware, it comes in 10m lengths so bring a hacksaw to cut it down for transport.

1. Stainless steel nuts and bolts are well worth the slight extra expense – Tucks of East Wall Road supply them.
1. How you fix the bottom support bars onto the car depends on the vehicle but a bit of grovelling underneath will probably suggest a solution. These bars take the main load and can be reinforced if necessary by sliding a length of 25mm tube inside a 30mm length.
1. The tube ends can be finished/sealed by using proprietary plastic plugs widely available from hardware shops. Or use car body filler. Undercoat the whole thing with an anti-rust primer.
1. I generally leave the rack in situ during the season but it is the work of only a few minutes to demount the A-frame and the braces. It is worth painting the ends of the bottom supports in florescent paint to same wear on shins.
1. Finally, a flag by day and red light by night (connected into the tail lights) is essential with the stern of the kayak projecting so much as it does.

If anyone is trying something like this and wants to discuss the idea. I'd be happy to help.

I.S.K.A Summer Meet, May 1998

Saltee Islands

Jackie Hunt

On the sunniest May weekend on record, 17 sea kayakers from all over Ireland, congregated on the Great Saltee Island along with the birds.

I left on Saturday at about 3 p.m. with Cormac Daly, famed for his roll over the Seber Bridge (hat stayed on) and one of the team who rounded the back of the Great Saltee in 1995. On that trip the sea was high and it was every man for himself (the women didn't have a problem).

With the memory of this experience fixed in our heads we left Kilmore Quay and its lovely new pier with trepidation. There was a west going tide running fairly quick over St. Patricks Bridge, but we headed into it, missed all the action and were across to the Little Saltee in no time. According to the tide tables we were hitting the flow at close to its peak, but it was not such a struggle.

Over our heads, Terns were screeching and chasing sand eels out of the sea, a few Cormorants ambled by and around the back of Little Saltee, groups of Guillemots and Razorbills sat on the sea. Also overhead was the sun in its full glory, there was a bit of a wind but not a real one. What a lovely pace.

Next we crossed the Sebbler Bridge and Cormac tied his hat on. But again heading into the flow we missed the main turbulence and reached the back of Great Saltee with a fairly calm heart. A great spike of rock was above us and lots of clapotis below.

We paddled on, the tide taking us around. Here we met so many birds, the spike of rock was covered in Gannets, settling on nests which covered the ledges. As we passed the gannets, the waters calmed and ahead were thousands of birds, Guillemots, Razorbills, Puffins, Fulmars and Kittiwakes. They were resting on the sea and nesting on the ledges. We paddled slowly through, causing birds to take flight. Above us there was now more Gannet than sky, these big birds with great wings and yellowy heads. They came from another spike of rock, which held the larger of the two breeding colonies.

Soon we were nearing the west end of the island where previously we had met great waves and hung onto our kayaks. But this time there was nothing, not a bit of swell nor breaking water to be seen. We think the last time we hit it on an east going tide, perhaps on Springs and perhaps at its strongest flow.

Paddling on, the birds continued to join us, with puffins jumping out of their burrows and flapping into the sea just to get a closer look. Then we met some seals, pups with their Mum or Dad, they were friendly.

Reaching the entrance to the Kingdom of the Great Saltee we found five kayakers already there and following behind were Des Keaney, Seán Pierce and Brian Ormond, who had been on the water for five hours. They took the long route to the Saltees, starting at Rosslare. Later that evening four more paddlers arrived and later still, another three. In total there were seventeen paddlers from Dublin, Waterford, Kilkenny, Cavan, Wicklow and Clare.

We found a place to camp. The island was swathed in a great carpet of bluebells and around the edges there was sea campion, making a great mixture of blue and white. In a space with green short grass near the house we pitched our tents. Two other groups were already on the island. One was a group families and birdwatchers, up from Cork. The other we think were doing research on the Grey seals. Another visitor was Oscar Merne, who has been studying the Island's birds for many years. He was there to count the growing Gannet colony and to ring small birds passing through from Africa and heading north.

That evening we had another look at the seabirds and some food, (by the way, camp food need not necessarily mean noodles and tomatoes, Des and Seán had fillet of chicken with a bottle of Haute de White wine (they're not real men). Meanwhile Dave Elwood was defreezing his pork chops and preparing his barbecue (real man)).

The Cork families collected driftwood and created a great blazing fire and invited us to join them. The night was clear, the sea calm and the fire roared. Then the singing started, and the whiskey and beer began to flow. It was a great night with tunes from Dave Walsh, Dave Elwood and craic from Richie Dalton. We also has a sea shanty from the Cork man.

Then the Manx Shearwaters arrived, they flew in through the night calling their strange call overhead before thumping the ground and landing at their burrows, they were good an alternative to listening to some of the tunes!!

Up at six the next day to see the birds and to see Des, Sean and Brian on their way. Training for their trip around Ireland they now faced a five -hour paddle back to Rosslare. They paddled off into the waves of the Seber Bridge and into the wind. We heard later that Brian Ormond went further, onto Cahore Point.

Just on a tidal note, the three had planned to leave at the start of the east gong tide and had worked out their departure time from the tables and pilot. However, the tide began to flow about two hours earlier than it should have. This pattern also applied later in the day when the rest of us left.

Back on the island the rest of us had a more leisurely morning, wandering along the cliffs and shore, finding many birds. A Tree Pipit, was spotted or "twitched" by Dave Walsh, a rare migrant passing through.

We found the cliffs ruled by nesting seabirds and the land was ruled by nesting gulls. Some types of gull are falling in numbers, probably due to botulism caught from feeding off dumps. There were also Lapwing breeding on the island, and Mallard, though their chicks never survive, picked out of the sea by gulls as they take their first paddle.

After strolling, we had an exchange of glances and plans between the Dave Walsh camp, the Richie Dalton camp and the Cormac camp. What time are you leaving, what's the tide doing, are you going around the back. In the end we all left about 12/1pm, except the Mick O'Meara Camp, who were last seen in the bothy crashed out.

The day was another of sun, sea and no swell. The wind died and the paddle back to Kilmore Quay was like a Sunday stroll. Around the back of the Great Saltee for more birds, over to the Little Saltee for lunch and a swim. Back to Kilmore Quay for a pint. It just didn't seem quite right for a sea-kayaking meet in Ireland.

The Saltees belong to the birds and of course to King Michael. The SKA meet was a great success all thanks to Des Keaney for his coordination and an even greater success in that Dave Walsh came along. The question now is where next, the Blaskets, Skelligs, across the Irish Sea....?

Port...land

Brian Ormond

Portland is situated one hundred miles inland on the Willamette River. It was a cloudy overcast April day. It was another day off on my USA jaunt. With not enough time to venture to the Oregon coast I had to make do with a river paddle. My Iranian cab driver dropped me off at Nebraska Street where I found 'Ebb and Flow'. Equipped with wet weather gear and a trolley I pulled the Kyook kayak across the streets to the riverside. Must get a trolley I swore, such a pleasant way to transport our little ships. The nearby park had a huge car park with places for up to a hundred jeeps and boat trailers. The slipway was wide enough for six jeeps and it was here that I had my first encounter with the Americans who just don't care. While sitting on the slip in the kayak adjusting the footrests, a gentleman reversed his enormous jeep alongside. When he hopped out to launch his 250hp speedboat, he left the jeep engine running. Now, in America, manufacturers have this tendency to position the exhaust on the rhs just behind the rear wheel and just at the level of my personal breathing apparatus. Meanwhile the fisherman had disappeared down the pontoon to prepare his boat.

Launching as quickly as possible I proceeded to him and inquired that would it be possible for him to turn off his engine since he was not at present motoring? Well, I was wrong, this man was still motoring and he proceeded to give out some of his not so environmentally friendly views to me for being such a pestering kid. Do Americans care for their environment? Yes, some do, but these guys simply don't know or else just don't care.

Pontoon and large combat clad men behind me I seek out into the 1.5 knot current seawards. Battling with the straight blades that I had, not realising that feathered paddles were uncommon, I made the most of the situation although it did take me at least thirty minutes to get used to them. The river immediately appeared murky and grey. I wondered what the endless convoy of fishermen was actually fishing for. Regular signs were posted on the banks telling people, including me, not to touch the water as raw sewage was deposited when it rained! Yes, I kept my hands out!

Later, I was to find out that in the 1930's any fish put into this river did not survive for more than one hour! There has been some improvement since then and it is reckoned that there is approximately two million salmon in the river. I did not see any jump, birds were few between, two herons, two cormorants, geese and ducks. Please tell me that it was a bad day or I was looking the opposite way.

Ross Island is situated in the centre of the river opposite the park. With strict no trespassing signs on all sides its quite hard to know what is going on there. Well, let me tell you. The quarry company involved is excavating the whole inside. If you were to see an aerial view of the island you would see a tree lined circle filled with open water and with very little landscape remaining.

They plan to remove the whole island! What a contrast to see and admire the floating timber houses on the opposite side. An interesting dwelling for us kayaker types - each

house has an individual design but all with full services, large windows and even kayaks and yachts tied up alongside.

Travelling west I passed a fireboat in practice, old collapsed disused wharf's, a maritime museum on a permanently docked paddleboat, floating restaurants and numerous ferries. I paddled under eight high bridges that ranged from lifting centre types to doubles to a railway on which a locomotive slowly pulled twenty-three carriages. Under bridges with names like Broadway, Burnside, Morrison and Hawthorne.

After two hours I crossed the Willamette and turned east up the other side. Large ships with Panama and Keeling, Indian Ocean registrations were loading wheat into flour mills and gravel barges were being washed down. Big tugs motored up the river and an old naval submarine appeared to be a popular tourist attraction.

The constant loud hum of traffic on flyovers and freeways on both sides of the river drowned out any sounds of nature. Old shopping trolleys littered the riverside, rubber, timber and debris was mounted on the banks. Abandoned clothes and old campsites added to the not so pleasant views. Yes, the Willamette River at this point is not so pleasant but don't let me paint a completely dull picture. It rises in the south and joins the Columbia River that flows at up to three knots from Washington State and then heads north and west to the Pacific at Astoria. From here there are endless routes we hear about. The ones of endless adventure north or south.

The Oregon coastline is known as the hardest to paddle, there is continuous surf due to the high cliffs and shallow waters. North of Oregon are the coasts of Washington and British Columbia which Peter Cork and other famous kayakers have ventured.

For thousands of years people have paddled these coasts, working and travelling. Americans have been kayaking a bit longer than us in Ireland. They are into a lot of different styles, designs and equipment. Sailing kayaks with sailing rigs and kites are popular. I've seen them with one hull and two sails and even trimarans with up to three sails - a long way from kayaking if you ask me.

Bag portable, folding and DIY home built kayaks are also popular. In the warmer waters surf ski designs enable the kayaker to be strapped on top of an open kayak. Its wet, but fun. Some still have storage hatches but are only really suited to day trips.

Every kayak I saw in the States had plastic or fibreglass hatch lids with neoprene covers all held down with straps. Our Valley covers must be unique. It is rare for their kayaks not to have rudders and even the most basic kayaks are fitted with them.

Many people are trying to come up with ideas of how to re-enter a kayak. Two new sea floats that stabilise the boat by making it wider on both sides have got mixed reviews and theories of getting back into the cockpit over the stern are being continuously debated. But you'll always hear there's nothing like a good roll. Yes, I must start practising.....

Their stores and shops are dedicated to the kayakers needs. 'Ebb and Flow' is a store that we need in Ireland. It is a pure kayakers shop, it sells nothing else. A large range of Canadian and USA sea kayaks, paddles including timber versions, clothing, books, trolleys, caddy wheels, head lamps, designer roof racks fill the shelves and walls. Detailed local knowledge on trips and routes is readily available.

Take my little but simple advice - get a seakayak, stay away from the river and keep to the coasts. Sample and check out the other western shore.....

Contacts:

Ebb and Flow 604 S.W. Nebraska St., Portland, OR 97201

Ph.503 245 1756 (Donna, Peter, James, Scott).

Plastic kayaks day rate \$30, week rate \$115 - maybe a better deal over long period. Book in advance as their twenty kayaks are always rented out.

Ask for their feathered blades!

A VOICE to protect the Environment

Paul Bracken

Following the closure of the Irish Greenpeace office last year, the former Board of Greenpeace Ireland Limited set up VOICE in order to retain the resources and knowledge that Greenpeace had built up over its 10 years existence. It was a difficult time for the Board, staff, volunteers and supporters of Greenpeace Ireland but after seven long months of negotiations, it was obvious that we were not going to change the resolve of Greenpeace International.

Since our launch in November 1997, Voice now has nearly 900 members who support the aims of the organisation, which are as follows:

1. To provide an opportunity for individuals and communities to add their voice to the ever increasing call for safeguarding the environment.
1. To promote positive solutions to environmentally destructive activities.
1. To encourage a way of life which is in harmony rather than in conflict with nature.

The emergence of Voice is appropriate at a time when more and more people realise that they cannot assume that the environment is protected by the Government and Local Authorities, and that they themselves have a part to play.

The projects currently being undertaken by Voice include the following:

1. Information Service
2. Water

Voice is continuing the work that Greenpeace Ireland carried out on the Shannon in 1996 and the Liffey in 1997. This campaign includes lobbying the Government on issues related to water pollution and ongoing research into the state of the Liffey. We are also developing a Liffey Catchment contact database. Many groups that use the river, including canoe and angling clubs are supporting this campaign.

3. Genetic Engineering and Biopatenting
4. Waste
5. Whaling

Voice continues to monitor the activities of whaling nations and the initiatives being taken by the International Whaling Commission. Voice is committed to the conservation of all cetaceans and is working closely with other groups to ensure their protection. Voice is part of a network of worldwide organisations representing around 9 million people who are striving to protect some of the world's great creatures.

Nationally, Voice supports any initiatives being proposed to protect the whales and dolphins that swim in Irish waters. This includes over 100 dolphins living and breeding along the coastline at the mouth of the Shannon.

6. Education

Voice recognises the huge role that research and education must play in order to change attitudes. One of the projects being developed covers whaling and the importance of conservation and we hope to launch it in September.

Paul Bracken is the secretary for Voice and spokesperson on Whaling.

If you would like to join VOICE (Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment), you may contact them at 14 Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin 2. Telephone: 01 -6618123, Fax: 01-6618114, E-mail: avoice@iol.ie

Membership rates are £15 (individual) £7.50 (unwaged), £25 (family or £20 if you pay by standing order) and £30 (groups).

The River Shannon and its New Inhabitants

Paul Bracken

The first references to the Shannon date back to the Roman cartographer Ptolemy when in 300 BC, he mapped out the path of the river as it formed an important trade route from Europe. A thousand years ago, Viking long boats sailed up the river as they travelled to loot the medieval monastery at Clonmacnois. Brian Boru used the river in 1014 when he deployed a fleet of war galleys on Lough Ree to destroy the Viking fleet.

Today, the River Shannon forms part of a vast network of inland waterways. It is the longest river in both Ireland and England and has always had a profound influence on the social and economic history of Ireland. Travelling over 200 miles from its source to the sea, it is home to over a dozen lakes and about a hundred islands.

The river should be one of our natural treasures but it is continually under threat from agricultural and industrial waste, sewage and pollution from landfills. If steps are not taken now to protect the river, its tributaries and lakes are at risk from environmental damage that will take many decades to reverse.

A recent study conducted by Emer Rogan and Simon Ingram of the Department of Zoology at University College, Cork, in partnership with the IWDG, has confirmed the existence of over 100 bottlenose dolphins living and breeding along the coastline at the mouth of the river. Although pods have been spotted at different times over the years, it is now thought that the dolphins have been located in this region for hundreds of years.

The bottlenose dolphin is perhaps the best known of all cetaceans. They are found worldwide in temperate and tropical waters and are frequently seen in harbours, estuaries and river mouths. They are highly active at the water's surface, bow riding, breaching and jumping high in the air.

Studies indicate that there are two bottlenose dolphins: coastal and offshore. They usually form groups called pods of less than 20 nearshore; offshore groups of several hundred have been sighted. Males usually reach sexual maturity at 10 to 12 years, while females reach maturity between the ages of 5 to 12 years. The female bears a single calf every second or third year, the gestation period lasting 12 months. As they grow older, they become more independent and eventually learn to hunt for themselves.

The feeding habits differ between coastal and offshore groups; the former adopt their feeding to take into account human activity and their geographical location, eating netted fish and fish discarded by fishermen. Offshore groups prefer to eat squid and often travel with pilot whales in search of food. An adult bottlenose can consume 15 to 30 pounds of food each day and the members of the pod often cooperate when hunting.

Although protected by many nations, they are often accidentally caught in a variety of fishing gear, including gillnets, purse seiners used to catch tuna and shrimp trawls.

The Shannon ferry crossing from Killimer in Clare and Tarbert in Kerry provides one of the best vantage points for viewing dolphins. The best times of the year are in late spring and during the summer months, although there have been sightings during all months.

The following poem illustrates the strong feelings that children have about whales and dolphins and their desire to protect them.

"Whales have tails as big as sails,

And little eyes that blink,

And holes to blow the water out.....otherwise they'd sink.

And most of all: A right to live!"

by Clare Duffy, aged 11. Glasoige Maghbhile Environmental Youth Group, Movile, Co.Donegal.

The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group can be contacted at 77 Westland Square, Pearse St., Dublin 2. Tel: 01-2874919

Back Chat

"What a Sight"

Brian Ormond

Bottles, bottles, cans and bottles.

Now, where do they all come from?

Who puts them there?

Why?

Wine bottles corked or broken, foreign vodka bottles, beer cans, cut plastic containers, tetra paks, aeroboard and timber.

Anything interesting?

Abandoned on our shore.

Mayonnaise, ketchup, salt, milk, shampoo, engine oil, sun tan lotion, take your pick, these are not required by anyone.

They're dumped, discarded, desolate and certainly not degrading.

Ropes, nets, a toilet seat, fish trays, pieces of hose, lobster boxes, buckets, trees, forty - watt bulbs, shoes, sandals....

Should I go on?

A telegraph pole, a dead donkey, yacht wastes, three in one glue, a large circular industrial floor brush and of course the essential rusted and empty cans of floor polish.

But there's more - fertiliser bags, plastic bags and guess what? More plastic, more bottles, buoys, golf tees, lighters, bottle tops and even a full length unbroken fluorescent bulb, now how did that get here?

Disposable razors, definitely disposed of - sure who needs them now?

Maxwell House, who's for coffee? Sorry, empty of course, always empty, not recycled, not reused just washed up on this beautiful beach.

A "welcome aboard" timber step arrives ashore, oh so welcome indeed, "shall you be staying long"?

Where do they come from? Who puts them in the sea?

Do they know they do not disintegrate?

Do they know that they harm animals and birds, choking them and destroying their fur and feathers.

Don't people know that things just don't disappear?

That they have to go somewhere, that they're not biodegradable?

Does anyone care ?

Ah sure won't one good gale blow them all elsewhere?

I vaguely remember seeing the sand!

Sightings on the west beach on Middle Calf, Roaringwater Bay, 14/05/98

Contact List

Membership List of the Irish Sea Kayaking Association - June 1998

Seamus Aylward and Marie Clonan, 144 Grace Park Heights, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

Philip Beattie 20 Moss Road, Ballinaskeagh, Banbridge, County Down BT32 5EF

Phone Nos.: H. 08 01 8206 51422 W. 08 01 846 682 305

Ruth Bracken, 7 St. Patrick's Park, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. Phone Nos.: H. 8202769

Paul Butcher 38 Braemor Road, Churchtown, Dublin 14. H. 2982826 Mob : 087 440675

Martina Butler

Benaughlin, Strandhill Road, Sligo.

Phone Nos.: H. 071 62999 W. 071 46462

Mary Butler

71 Elmwood Downs, Letterkenny, County Donegal.

Phone Nos.: H. 074 28177 W. 074 45389

Bernie Carroll

15 Woodville Close, Woodville Downs, Lucan, County Dublin.

Phone Nos.: H. 6240479 W. 8215522

Brian Cooney

14 Hanover House, Ardilaun Court, Patrick street, Dublin 8.

Phone Nos.: H. 4549755 W. 8425200

Frederick J. Cooney

Shean Park, Ballycomeclone, Gorey, County Wexford.

Phone Nos.: H. 055 25712 W. 8425200

Peter Cork

Mullaghmore, Ballyjamesduff, County Cavan.

Phone Nos.: H. 049 44408 W. 049 31799

Finbarr Corkery

Baronsland, Bennetsbridge, County Kilkenny

Phone Nos.: H. 056 27258 W. 056 27112

Clare Crinion

Elm House, Miltown, Dublin 6.

Phone Nos.: H. 2698882 W. 6717787

Richard Dalton

163 Redford Park, Greystones, County Wicklow

Phone Nos.: H. 2877765

Cormac Daly

17 Ashgrove, The Baskin, Clonsaugh, Dublin 5.

Phone Nos.: H. 8460398 Mob : 087 2370078

Declan Donnelly

171 Ardmore Park, Bray, County Wicklow

Phone Nos.: H. 2828790 W. 2301860

Paul Durnan

18 The Fairways, Old Golf Links Road, Kilkenny

Phone Nos.: H. 051-832582 W. 056-71301 Mob : 086 8130705

Patrick Ewen

196 Glenvara Park, Firhouse, Dublin 16.

Phone Nos.: H. 4931975 W. 6796111 x 3441

Tim Flavin

Dysart, Saint Anne's Road, Killarney, County Kerry.

Phone Nos.: H. 064 36256

Patrick Fox

Moneypoint Outdoor Club, Moneypoint Station, Kilrush, County Clare.

Phone Nos.: w. 065 51652

Ivan Gibson and Anna Jeffrey

Ballyclery, Kinvara, County Galway

Phone Nos.: H. 091 637074 W. 091 750398

Email : ivan.gibson@ucg.ie

Malcolm Goodbody

14 St. Mary's Terrace, Taylors Hill, Galway

Phone Nos.: H. 091 522661 W. 091 582124

Oisin Hallissey

Tollymore O.E.C., Bryansford, Newcastle, County Down.

Phone Nos.: W. 08 0139 672 2158

Stephen Hannon

21 Sallynoggin Road Lower, Dunlaoire, County Dublin.

Phone Nos.: H. 2855364

Email : stephenh@iol.ie

Bernard Hayden

25 Ashleigh Lawn, Malahide, County Dublin

Phone Nos.: H. 8453920 W. 8082703

Email : haydenb@forbairt.ie

Ines Hercher

"Finisterre", Ballygihan Avenue, Sandycove, County Dublin

Phone Nos.: H. 2841711 Mob. 086 8210337

Email : bodywork@indigo.ie

David Hughes

47 Ardenlee Avenue, Belfast BT7 OAB.

Phone Nos.: W. 08 1232 274014

Email : d.hughes@qub.ac.uk

Jackie Hunt

21 Sallynoggin Road Lower, Dunlaoire, County Dublin

Phone Nos.: H. 2855364

Gerry Keane

6 Delaford lawn, Knocklyon, Dublin 16

Phone Nos.: H. 4941506 W. 7032229

Des Keaney

Cluainin, Barchuillia Commons, Kilmacanogue, County Wicklow.

Phone Nos.: H. 2760263 W. 6603744

John Keogh

30 Willowfield Park, Goatstown, Dublin 14.

Phone Nos.: H. 2981795 W. 4510544

Michael MacCormick

10 Shangannagh Road, off Hollybank Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

Phone Nos.: H. 8305641

Email. cdrfs@tinet.ie

Irene Manning

162 Orwell Park View, Templeogue, Dublin 6W

Phone Nos.: H. 4568791 W. 087 440522

Kevin Mansell

177 Quennavais Park, St. Brelade, Jersey JE3 8GD, Channel Islands, U.K.

Phone Nos.: W. 00 44 1534 45936

Mike McClure

9 Tullybrannigan Drive, Newcastle, County Down BT33 OUT

Phone Nos.:

Joanna McInerney

Burren O.E.C., Turlough, Bell Harbour, County Clare.

Phone Nos.: W. 065 78066

Eileen Murphy

Manor Kilbride, Blessington, County Wicklow.

Phone Nos.: H. 4582468

Humphrey Murphy

Slade Harbour, The Hook, County Wexford

Phone Nos.:

Mick Murphy

Russagh Mill Hostel & Adventure Centre, Castletownsend Road, Skibereen, County Cork.

Phone Nos.: H. 028 33298 ?? W. 028 22451

Kevin O'Callaghan and Michelle Hughes

Killeenaran, Kilcolgan, County Galway.

Phone Nos.: Mob : 088 2782480

Eamon O'Sullivan

Dun Kerron, Glounthane, County Cork.

Phone Nos.: H. 021 353281 Mob : 087 441195

Brian Ormond

Lissadell, Ballylinchy, Baltimore, West Cork

Phone Nos.: H. 028 20577 Mob : 087 2789955

Sean Pierce

13 Shenick Grove, Skerries, County Dublin.

Phone Nos.: H. 8490048 W. 8412388

John Ramwell, Ocean Paddler,

15b St. Michael's Square, Ashton Under Lyne, OL6 7LF England

Phone Nos.: W. 0044 161 343 5255 Mob : 0044 411 740711

Email : dhart@btinternet.com and jramwell@provider.co.uk

Colin Redmond

c/o Bank of Ireland Trust Company(Jersey) Limited, Bank of Ireland House, Francis St.,
St. Helier, Jersey JE2 4QE, Channel Islands.

Phone Nos.: H. 00 44 1534 25441 W. 00 44 1534 638669

Email : col@boi.ie

Robin Ruddock

12 Glenvale Avenue, Portrush, County Antrim BT56 8HL.

Phone Nos.: H. 08 02675 31599

Michael Scanlon

23 Pidgeon House Road, Ringsend, Dublin 4.

Phone Nos.: W. 4509838

Vincent Scannell

Ballygromn-Ovens, County Cork.

Phone Nos.: H. 021 331000 W. 021 873445

Fidelma Sheridan and Maeve Sheridan

Ballyhealin, Kilnaleck, County Cavan.

Phone Nos.: H. 049 36201

Ciaran Smith

37 Willington Crescent, Templeogue, Dublin 6W.

Phone Nos.: H. 4565486

Pat Smyth

2 Lee View, Carrigrohane, County Cork

Phone Nos.: H. 021 874348 W. 021 319966 Mob : 088 503364

Terry Storry

c/o M. Gard, Bronmeirion, Nantmor, Caernarfon, Gwyneddm N. Wales LL55 4YG.

Phone Nos.: H. 00 44 1766 890552

Tony Viney

Drumcose, Enniskillen, County Fermanagh BT93 7BE

Phone Nos.: H. 0801 365 341206 W. 0801 365 326604

David Walsh

109 Ranelagh, Dublin 6.

Phone Nos.: H. 4967281 W. 4973611 Mob : 087 546054

Email : dwalco@iol.ie

Tony Walsh

10 Sycamore Avenue, Carpenterstown Park, Castleknock, Dublin 15.

Phone Nos.: H. 8208533 W. 2983577

Ernie Whalley

65 Sandymount Avenue, Sandymount, Dublin 4

Phone Nos.: H. 2692580