

TREASNA NA DTONNTA

Newsletter of the

IRISH SEA KAYAKING ASSOCIATION

October 1998

Issue 15

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1998 Symposium - Bushmills

The 1998 Irish Kayaking Symposium is being held In Bushmills, Co.Antrim and is being hosted by Oisín Hallissy and Tollymore Mountain Centre. To complement day and half day paddling trips along the Causeway Coast, there will be workshops on

- Technology (EPIRBS,GPS,VHF)
- Boat handling skills
- Environment
- Surf coaching and competition
- The Body Beautiful (injuries, first aid, nutrition)
- Demo boats and trade displays

"Come and Try It" Wexford

September 1998

Paul Durnan

This year the 'Come and Try it' weekend was held in Ramsgrange Co. Wexford and was a resounding success. One of the reasons was the location of the centre being on the Hook peninsula allowing easy access to both the Waterford and Wexford coastlines and the added option of the estuary up to Waterford city if the conditions dictate so.

For many people travelling from afar, the weekend began early on Friday evening after work. Doing battle with the traffic is all part of sea kayaking trips. Luckily enough Ramsgrange is small enough that the centre is easily found without the need of signposts.

Saturday morning brought an increase in the numbers to twenty -one. Some arriving from Dublin, Wexford and Kilkenny. Declan Donnelly and a friend of his Alan travelled from Bray enjoying quiet roads on their journey down. My brother and myself arrived via the Passage East/ Ballyhack ferry, which I would recommend to anyone to reduce mileage if heading anywhere but to the east coast.

After breakfast on Saturday a plan of action was formulated. The forecast was force 2 -4 SW- SE and the visibility was moderate for the area. The two trips that were on the table were: -

* Start in Fethard on Sea and paddle along the coastline towards the Hook and put in along the way for a lunch stop. When the group felt tired they would return to Fethard on Sea.

* Depart from Fethard on Sea and work along the coastline to the Hook and paddle up the estuary to Duncannon.

Once the jack russells were sorted from the greyhounds we were off. I was in the greyhound group so a shuttle had to be organised. The finish was at the slip in Duncannon rather than the beach due to the ease of reloading the boats later in the day.

When I arrived in Fethard the others had off loaded their boats and were in the process of 'the long carry', which we all love so well. As we pulled out of Fethard on Sea the low lying fog began to burn off; maybe we might get some rays? The poor summer must have made many paddlers anxious to get going. Mary and Martina Butler, Ciaran Smith and Martin Busher to name but a few.

As we rounded Baginbun Head there was some clapotis and it was time to concentrate on the paddling and less on the scenery for a brief moment. Our destination for lunch was to be Slade which is a small village before the Hook. As we cleared the headland the sea settled again to allow paddlers to chat and soak up the coastline; for many of us it was new and fresh. Paddling towards the castle in Slade the sun shone and it was perfect, after about an hour we pulled the boats up on the sandy bank just inside the harbour wall in Slade.

As we sat along the harbour wall enjoying the weather, the tide began to come in to the inner harbour with speed. After lunch it was back on the water and on towards the Hook as it drew us closer with it's looming presence. Des Keaney, who was leading the group, asked us to tighten up as some lumpy/choppy water could be expected. There is a tide race off the Hook but at the time we would arrive, it would be slacking off. As we came around North point just west of Slade the wind was in our faces and some bigger waves were encountered.

On approaching the distinctive black and white lighthouse, Ciaran was extremely dehydrated and expressed a great desire to visit Dunmore East. So it was we decided to cross the two miles to Co. Waterford. Checking for any ships in the distance, we made no delay in crossing the shipping channel.

The strand in Dunmore was nearly completely covered as we, one by one, landed through the small bit of surf. A short stop was had as the group finished off the last of the tea/coffee and any snacks that were left. We did not wish to delay, as the time was pushing on and nobody wanted to miss dinner back at base. With Des as 'beachmaster', all were safely launched on the homeward journey. The last leg of the trip took in the Waterford coast as we made our way up the estuary to Duncannon in Co. Wexford.

we sat along the harbour wall enjoying the weather

The sea favoured us as the estuary was filling and the wind what little of it there was, was from the south-south west. As we hugged the coast just off Annamult Head a flock of oystercatchers took flight. The estuary has a plentiful number of cormorants who usually hang out just south of Creadan Head. Just beyond Creadan Head a ship overtook us silently out in the shipping channel. Some of the group paddled in to the cave at Creadan Head to check it out.

Pulling in to Duncannon under the watchful eye of the old stone fort standing silently on the cliff above, I wondered what was the history of the place and did it have any interesting tales to tell before it would completely fall into total disrepair. The old concrete gun emplacement might suggest sea defences built around the Second World War?

The estuary revealed yet more of itself as we arrived at the slip. It became clear that the danger to shipping over the years was very real indeed, with Woodstown flats guarding the Waterford coastline and Duncannon spit the Wexford side, there is very little room for human error. The shipping channel narrows right down so all ships must pass beneath the fort. Hence the position of the old gun emplacement. Further up on the Wexford coast another old lighthouse is cut into the hillside where it provided safe passage up the estuary towards Black Head.

On hauling the boats out at Duncannon Ernie Whalley met us. The other group had taken a while to round Baginbun Head as the clapotis slowed them down. They pushed on shepherding those less confident around the corner to the safe haven of a beach for a much needed lunch. A short time was spent investigating the shoreline and its surrounds; then back to the boats to battle the choppy water around Baginbun Head. Returning to Fethard on Sea a short time was spent experimenting with strokes and techniques for those who were up to it. The group led by Dave Walsh decided to retire for the day.

After recharging the batteries a few of the group took a stroll up to the Hook lighthouse via Slade village. Back at the centre, dinner was got and everyone retired to the 'Hollow' for the remainder of the night. For those seeking live entertainment the 'Sportsman' was the place to be, as Mary Darcy and her band had travelled from Portlaoise.

Sunday arrived and there was very little need to call anyone for breakfast as the rays of sun burst into the dormitory; - another good days paddling promised.

As I sat down to the table all talk was on the plans for the day. Was it to be the coastline west of Dunmore East towards the Metalman, a trip up/down the estuary or maybe a trip to the Saltees just off Kilmore Quay?

After the wash-up and the sandwich making activities we sat down to discuss the options. The Saltees trip was on offer for the whole group, those less energetic could explore Great Saltee while the remainder could circumnavigate the island.

the two went skyward and then seaward

Once directions were given it was into the cars and off to Kilmore Quay via Wellington Bridge. The launch point was on the beach to the west of the harbour. As we were joined by Pat Smyth and Vincent Scannell from Cork overnight the numbers increased to twenty-three in total. This meant the group would split in to ten and thirteen for practical purposes. The tide was making to the west so we headed for the west end of Little Saltee to offset the current, as a previous article in Transa has shown observation is fundamental in this area.

As we arrived in Great Saltee just below the steps we startled a couple and their two young children enjoying the peace and tranquilly. They had arrived via 'Topaz' their yacht anchored just off the small sandy beach. After about a half an hour the second group landed as we were already tucking into our well deserved lunch.

The last time I was on Great Saltee was May 18th/19th. This time the weather was even better; there was real heat in the sun with very little wind; but better still this was September 20th. All twenty three of us, made it out and before the day was finished the number of paddlers increased to twenty four as Dave Elwood popped over for a quick blast around the island; his own back garden so to speak.

After lunch Ciaran Smith began making shapes to depart, so after a while a group of ten of us left. We were accompanied by several seals along the western end of the island. Just as we rounded the southwest tip of the island near huge mass of white stone where the gannets nest in the summer the sea got lumpy. This was due to the last of the west running tide. Moving along the southern side of the island we had two swimmers whom shall be left nameless. Caught by a rogue wave coming through a gap between two huge rocks, the two went skyward and then seaward; within minutes the two lads from Cork and Des had the situation in hand. After we regrouped we worked our way amongst the rocks and crashing surf.

Just off the south-eastern corner as Ciaran paddled ahead of me a huge seal rose from the sea at least three to four feet to see the Dub off his territory but quickly retreated as he realised I was bearing down on him from behind only feet away.

The time was pushing on as we came around back to the main group. As we pulled in about twenty seals appeared to check us out. Back on dry land some people decided to cool off due to the exceptional hot September weather with a quick dip.

The weekend was coming to a close but nobody really wanted to leave; but as always happens the tide dictates the schedule. On turning my back to Great Saltee I hoped to return sooner rather than later. It would be nice not to have to return to work for Monday, but take it off as some people suggested earlier in the afternoon. Alas it was not to be; as I was reminded with the thud of my kayak on the beach in Kilmore Quay.

News and Views

Atlantic Sea Kayaking, Union Hall

A letter received recently from Jim Kennedy:

"I am going to be running some Sea Proficiency weekend's here over the winter and spring. I will give a 20% reduction to anyone recommended to me by the ISKA"

The schedule is included in the "ICU Proficiency Awards" article. If you're interested, call Jim at Maria's Schoolhouse, Union Hall, Co.Cork, 028 33002

"Ocean Paddler" subscriptions

We had a very good response to the subscriptions offer in the last issue. If any of those who subscribed haven't got the first three issues of OP, call Des Keaney who will sort it out with the publisher.

Buy and Sell

VHF

Uniden Water resistant VHF handset. Dual Scan, 1 & 5 watt operation, USA & International channels, one touch Ch. 16, complete with charger and waterproof bag. Compact radio with good battery life for multi -day trips. Price, IR£200.00.

Contact John Hannan in Galway at 087 3429179 or email at hannanj@msn.c om

Rockabill - A Postscript by Cormac Daly

"A word about Rockabill as a postscript to my article about the islands off Skerries in TnaD 13.

Rising steeply from the sea five miles from the coast are the two rocks, the larger of which supports a lighthouse. These two rocks were given the name of the Cow and the Calf. The story of how they were formed and given these names is as follows.....

There was once a miraculous cow in Thoney, Co.Monaghan which gave milk whenever asked and a calf a year nonetheless. Balor of the Evil Eye was a giant with the power of turning whatever he looked at to stone. He came to covet this cow and his servant stole her for him.

Setting out south, the giant led with the servant behind, driving the cow and calf. Near Skerries, the cow looked back at her tiring calf and seeing her native land disappear, lowed sadly. Balor, startled, turned to see and cow and calf were turned to stone.

Remember, if tempted to visit the Cow and Calf that they play host to Europe's largest nesting colony of roseate terns and in breeding season, are off limits. Call BirdWatch Ireland (2804322) if in doubt. "

Winter Paddling in Skerries

Get out on the water this winter with Seán Pierce in Skerries. Some nice gentle paddling (as if paddling with Seán is ever easy!) with a bit of bird and seal watching thrown in. Learn the difference between a cormorant and a shag (the big black lads) and that there's no such thing as a seagull.

Seán will be doing a monthly count, which consists of a paddle, walk around the Skerries islands, lunch and a trip to Rockabill or Lambay if the conditions are right. The warmest part of the day is the adjournment to Joe Mays in the evening!

The dates are as follows:

October 10 th	November 7 th
December 5 th	January 2 nd
February 20 th	March 20 th

Meet at Skerries Lifeboat Station at 10:00 a.m.

RTE 1 Weather Forecast Times

RTE, in their wisdom, have changed the evening forecast time. It's now at 19:02 during the week (Mon-Fri) and 18:34 at the weekend (Sat-Sun). I think of (week)End Earlier.

Dublin Pool Sessions

Cormac Daly has organised three pool sessions to keep you interested over the winter months. They're in Clondalkin Sports and Leisure Centre on the following Saturdays: 12th December, 16th January and 20th February. Be there at 7:00 p.m. to be on the water at 7:30. It's probably best if you buddy up and share a boat and please wash the boats and remove any debris before you come.

SKA Meets in 1999

It's been suggested that the SKA should hold more meets during 1999. We would be delighted to do so but we need people willing to organise. Would anyone interested in holding a meet in their area please contact David Walsh or Des Keaney. There's not a lot involved but you do need to address the following:

- Plan possible trips depending on conditions

- Organise accommodation / camping facilities
- Act as co-ordinator for the event

New Format

As you've seen, *Trasna na dTonnta* has been changing format recently and has almost found it's final form. Any constructive comment/suggestions are welcome.

Next Issue

The winter edition of *Trasna na dTonnta* will be out in January and will have travel articles, a guide to the courses available in the centres and gear reviews among others. AND, I'm sure our Chairman will have a reminder about subscriptions!

Paddling on the Web

The internet is opening up vast areas of information and sea kayaking is no exception. I'd like to have a directory of interesting sites which we could include on our own web page. If there are any you think are worth looking at, please let the editor know. I'm also happy to include the occasional article from an internet site if it is particularly interesting or relevant. Having recently had so many river paddlers on the "Come and Try It" weekend, it seems appropriate to include an article on forward paddling. It's a reminder that most of the speed comes through good technique rather than raw strength.

Area Guide

The Coast of Co.Down

Strangford Lough

By Mike McClure

Strangford Lough is one of the largest sea loughs in Britain and Ireland. In ecological terms it is unique and the jewel in Northern Ireland's coastline. It has a great deal to offer sea canoeists at every level, from sheltered backwaters for introducing novices, to powerful tide races, overfalls and whirlpools for the more experienced. The old name for Strangford was Cuan (meaning safe harbour) but the Vikings renamed it Strangford or "The Violent Fjord".

As the tide rises, it begins to make its way into Strangford Lough - an area of 150 square kilometres of sea or 1650 million cubic metres (approx.) of sea water at high tide. It takes approximately 350,000,000 cubic metres (or tonnes) of water to fill the Lough from low water to high water and all this water can only get into the Lough by passing through

"The Narrows". The Narrows are 5 miles long and at its narrowest point, only 2.5 cables (500 metres) wide. Hence a vast river of water rushes through the Narrows at speeds of up to 7.5 knots.

During the flood tide which begins at -0345 HW Dover, the bar mouth entrance to the Narrows is straightforward and fairly safe. However, during the ebb, a heavy breaking sea can be encountered. This is particularly dangerous with any form of wind from the south to east creating a swell. Breaking seas of up to 8 metres have been seen (from a car along the shore!).

Some overfalls and general broken water occur around the Angus rock both on the flood and ebb tide (see tidal stream atlas). On spring tides during the 1st to 3rd hour of the ebb, an interesting grade 2 style rapid occurs on the north side of the Angus rock. This can reach up to about grade 3 with a diagonal stopper during very big equinoctial springs. There is a drop in sea level across the rocks of about 3 feet and it is possible to get good surfing and pop-outs etc. on the stopper wave formed.

On the last hour of the ebb, an enjoyable set of waves often form, again on the north side of the Angus rock where you can join the seals for some surfing. For the more experienced and confident, excellent deep water surf waves are formed at the bar mouth and it is always advisable to only play here on the last hour of two of the ebb.

There are 2 species of seal to be found around our coasts. They are the common or harbour seal and the grey seal. They are quite distinctly different. The common has a spaniel dog type of head and is considerably smaller than the grey which has a flat head with a large obvious nose. There are about 400 common seals and 80 grey seals in the Lough.

The common seals give birth in June and it is most entertaining to watch the antics of the pups from the quiet position of a sea kayak. The greys give birth in October and it is a rare and beautiful sight to see the white furry pups to these much larger seals.

Just north of the Angus rock, another small set of overfalls are formed, especially on the flood tide. There is an obvious sea level drop followed by small boils and whirlpools.

The next point of interest is the Routen Wheel. This is characterised by heavy boils, whirlpools and short-lived but violent stoppers. It is caused by a ledge of rock only 4.6 metres below the surface, 1 cable south of Rue Point. The name "Routen Wheel" was given by the Vikings as they thought the sound of it was like cattle snoring.

The wheel occurs during both the flood and ebb tide although it tends to be more violent during the ebb. The turbulence lasts for about 2 cables (400m) and any swimmers can easily be collected beyond the turbulence. However rescues should be swift due to the speed of the current (7.5 knots). It is safer to play in it during the flood. It is quite easy to avoid the wheel by keeping to the west side of the channel or hugging the coast down the east side. A good point to view the wheel is from the wee island just to the south-east of

Rue Point. A good eddy exists between Rue Point and Gowland rocks, so that a number of runs of the wheel can be enjoyed. The area around here is used a lot by seals to haul out on the rocks. Care should be taken not to disturb them from their haul outs as it can cause injury to them.

One of the greatest dangers on the Narrows is the potential for being run down by the ferry which runs between Strangford and Portaferry. This ferry has to contend with a 6 knot tide and does a remarkably efficient ferry glide across the flow. The Captain does not appreciate having to contend with dodging canoeists as well. The ferry departs Strangford on the hour and half hour and departs Portaferry every quarter past and to the hour. The crossing time is about 5 minutes.

The tidal strength decreased from 6 knots between the two towns to 4 knots at Ballyhenry Island as the water disperses into the Lough. It further reduces to about 1.5 knots at Dunnyneill Islands. Audley's Castle, built in the 16th Century, lies on the west side of the Narrows about half a mile north of Strangford and is worth a visit. It is possible to land at the little beach and jetty beside it and climb to the top where there is an excellent view of the narrows and the towns of Portaferry and Strangford.

"Exploris", an excellent aquarium, is situated within a minutes walk from the main slip at Portaferry and is well worth a visit as it has displays of the marine wildlife of the Lough and the Irish Sea.

Another place well worth a visit is the barn at Castleward, owned by the National Trust. This is situated in Castleward Bay at GR 575497. Access from the water is best gained during HW as there are extensive mud flats in the bay. The Barn has excellent audio visual displays of the marine wildlife, particularly the bird and mammal life found in the Lough. They also have a number of excellent videos on the wildlife of the Lough. Entrance to this facility is free of charge.

The east coast of the Lough has a lot less of interest to the canoeist than the west due to the lack of islands etc.. However, at "The Dorn" (GR 593568), there is a reasonable tidal flow up to 2.5 knots, especially on the ebb and a spectacular marine waterfall about an hour to two hours after high water.

The west side of the lough is a fascinating maze of submerged drumlin hills forming over 100 islands and rock pladdies. Chapel and Jackdaw Islands are the first to be reached when paddling west out of the Narrows. In the spring, Jackdaw is an important nesting site for terns and so should be avoided. Many of the islands have large colonies of Irish Hares which can be often seen running along the beach.

Within the Quoile Estuary (2 miles west of Audleys Point), lies Salt Island, one of the many islands owned by the National Trust. The Trust have built a bothy on the south-east side of Salt which was an absolutely superb facility for the canoeist looking for a bit more comfort than a tent. The Bothy slept 12, had an open fire, gas cooker, running water and a

couple of WC's. However, due to stringent new health and safety laws, it cannot be used at present. Camping is permitted on Salt Island.

To the south-west of Salt Island lies the Slaney River where St.Patrick landed in 432 A.D.. He must have landed here during HW or he would have had to slog through the stinking mud to reach the shore. He went to Saul and was confronted by the local Chieftain who became Patrick's first convert to Christianity in Ireland.

Heading north from the barrage which protects Downpatrick from tidal flooding, there is Gibbs Island which is one of the few islands within the Lough to have trees. There are some mature Scot's Pines on Gibbs. Further north, out of the Quoile estuary, the first major island to be encountered is Island Taggart. This is one of the largest islands in the Lough and used to support two small farms. These belong to the National Trust and are well worth a visit as they show what life on the island was like. Look out for the coffin in the barn!! They were also used for the film "December Bride", a story of life in the area in the early 1900s. Foxes, badgers and otters are all resident on Taggart, meriting an overnight camp and exploration. Camping is permitted.

Between Taggart and Mahee Island (4.5 miles north), lies the "basket of eggs" - dozens of little islands which are excellent for night navigation as they are sheltered and safe. Tides can run at about 1-2 knots during springs in a north/south direction between some of the islands and particularly through Ringhaddy Sound.

Green Island Rock (GR 545 602) is often used as a haul out for common seals and is very accessible for a group of novices to experience canoeing with seals.

To the west and north of Rainey Island, two channels exist where the tide runs at up to 5 knots in its rush to fill or empty Reagh Bay. Again, this is an excellent area for introducing novices to moving water. HW in the area is at approximately +0220 HW Dover.

Mahee Island has an old Celtic Monastery and early Celtic monks were believed to have occupied the area from the 5th to the 10th centuries. North of Mahee Island holds little of interest to the canoeist, unless you're into mud wrestling in a big way, as large expanses of mudflats exist in this area. The mudflats do however support vast numbers of waders and during the winter, the statistics of birds using the Lough demonstrates the international importance of Strangford as a wildlife sanctuary:

Swans	290+
Geese	13,500+
(this includes 1300 Pale-bellied Brent geese, over 75% of the total world population)	
Ducks	9,000+

Waders

50,000+

Due to its importance, the Lough has areas which are designated for their beauty or scientific importance. Legislation protects this valuable and unique area. Access is unrestricted in the Lough and conservationists rely heavily on the goodwill of recreational users. The National Trust (NT) has produced "The Castaways Code" and map for those using the Lough for recreational boating. This should be consulted before paddling in the Lough during the nesting season (April -June) and the islands marked "Birds Welcome" should be avoided.

An extremely good relationship exists between canoeists and the conservation bodies in the Lough. It is in all interests that this should be maintained.

Access points within the Lough are few. The best are at Killyleagh, Ringhaddy (GR 536584) and Sketrick Island (GR 525627). There is limited parking both at Killyleagh and Sketrick and no parking facilities at all at Ringhaddy.

Irish Kayaking Symposium

Sea and Surf

The event, sponsored by Tollymore Mountain Centre, is being held on 23 -25th October 1998 at Bushmills Education Centre.

The full schedule is as follows:

Friday Night

Northern Russia and Cape Horn – talk by Colin Craig

Saturday Morning

- Full day trip
- Half day trip
- Technology
- Nutrition/Outdoor cooking
- Sports injuries
- Basic boat handling skills
- Surf coaching basic skills

Saturday Afternoon

- Weather/navigation/trip planning
- Rough water boat handling skills
- Technology
- Rescue – self/group
- Incident management and wilderness first aid
- Inuit kayaks – Come and try it with Gordon Brown
- Whales and dolphins

Saturday Evening

- Slide show by Brian Wilson. For those of you who attended Brian's Dublin lecture, this is substantially different.

Sunday Morning

- Half day paddle
- Full day paddle
- Basic boat handling skills
- Rescue – self/group
- Rough water boat handling skills
- Incident management and wilderness first aid
- Surf coaching advanced skills
- Inuit kayaks – Come and try it with Gordon Brown

Sunday Lunch

- Coastguard flares demonstration

Sunday Afternoon

- Fun surf competition

Crèche facilities are available for the duration. For further details, please contact Kerry Lavery on (08) 012657 31575 (limited availability).

The cost of the weekend is GB£75 inclusive

Whales and Dolphins

Strandings and Drift Nets

Paul Bracken

Our seas should be one of our greatest resources and the mammals that live in around Irish waters should be able to exist with the minimal amount of danger. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Our waters are being polluted from many sources and we now have the reputation of being surrounded by one of the most radioactive seas in the world. Over the next few issues, I will expand on the types of pollution that is poisoning our seas. I will also identify the species that inhabit our waters and outline the effects of this pollution on their survival.

Two threats to the survival of dolphins are strandings and the use of drift nets.

Strandings

Every year, thousands of whales and dolphins are found stranded alive or dead on beaches around the world. They may be alone or be a part of a group and, while some are sick, others are perfectly healthy. The causes of strandings are many; some animals may have died at sea and are washed ashore by tides. Live strandings can be the result of a change in the earth's magnetic field, which causes the animal to lose direction. Whales and dolphins have an extra sense, which is called biomagnetism.

This enables them to navigate and if a large variation occurs they may become confused and swim towards the shore. A heavy storm or a brain infection can cause disorientation or it may become sick and need to rest. When they are ill, cetaceans seek shallow water to avoid drowning. Pilot whales strand more than other species. The bond between them is so strong that they are often reluctant to desert one another, so as a result, large numbers may strand together.

A study currently being carried out by UCC has examined dead strandings ranging from the Harbour porpoise, Common dolphin, Striped dolphin to Pilot, Humpback and Sperm whales. The study is examining each animal to determine the health status of stranded cetaceans along the Irish coast. Many causes of death have been recorded including pneumonia, capture in fishing nets and heart problems. One animal's stomach was so full of plastic bags and rubbish that it probably helps to explain what happens to all those helium balloons!

In most cases, stranded cetaceans will be unable to return to sea without assistance. If you discover a stranded cetacean, you should listen for breathing to see if the animal is dead or alive. If it is alive, contact the police immediately and UCC to get expert help. Then you can help the animal by trying to keep its skin moist, provide shade if possible, make as little noise as possible and try to keep the animal upper side up. Don't stand close to the tail or head and don't let either water or sand enter the blowhole.

The Stranding Study being conducted by UCC is being assisted by the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group.

The Department of Zoology and Animal Ecology, UCC can be contacted at 021 -904053 or 021-904179

Drift Nets

Hundreds of thousands of dolphins are killed each year to maximise the profits of the tuna fishing industry. Until the 1950's, tuna were caught individually, mainly from small coastal fishing boats. There has always been a strong association between dolphins and tuna and dolphins are often used to find tuna.

Drift nets are made from non-biodegradable plastic or nylon and can be over 30km in length. They are suspended vertically in the water with floats attached to the top and weights fixed to the bottom. Once they are set, they are allowed to drift freely with the wind and currents, indiscriminately entangling and killing any living creature that swims into them. As dolphins are breathing marine mammals, once trapped, they drown. Because the nets are usually set far out at sea, it is impossible to get an accurate figure of fatalities or to regulate their use. The nets often break loose in the course of operations. They then float through the oceans, 'ghost fishing', until under the weight of the animals they have caught, they sink to the bottom of the ocean.

Many countries have banned their use as they realise the environmental impact their continued use is having on the marine eco-system. A recent survey by EU Fisheries Ministers to ban the use of drift nets to catch tuna from January 2002 has been welcomed by VOICE. While welcoming the new initiatives, we are disappointed that the Irish delegation had opposed the introduction of the ban and that its implementation has been extended to four years instead of the two years originally proposed. We believe that the continued use of drift nets is unacceptable.

Paul Bracken is the Whaling Spokesperson for VOICE. VOICE can be contacted at 14 Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin 2. Tel 01-6618123, Fax 01-6618114, E-mail avoice@iol.ie.

Sea Kayak Racing

By David Walsh

Sea kayak racing has come of age. It has split. The divisions have been there since 1997, but have now got much much worse. The division is between sea kayakers who want to race, and competitive racer types who want to strut their stuff on the open sea. I have been trying to follow the very publicly developing row, in canoeing magazines, and here is my best effort.

Nobody should be surprised that immediately sea kayakers first raced each other, someone somewhere would specifically design a racing sea kayak, and so it happened (in Australia / New Zealand apparently, as it happens). Now those who race ordinary sluggardly sea kayaks, such as Nordkapps and the like, are all afire that others race K1 type sea kayaks (as seen in Home and Away, you sit on them, not in them), pencil thin, with lighter hulls, racing cockpits, no carrying capacity, and mostly with understern rudders. They seem to be known as Squalls or Inuks.

When all this first became an issue, it was sorted out by none other than our very own Suzanne Kennedy, in Brittany at the Celtic festival meetings over the last few years. She drew up a list of rules excluding non-traditional expedition design sea kayaks, which had to be decked out, rollable, towable, watertight compartments reached by hatches front and rear, and no understern rudders. Drop skegs and C-Trim type rudders had to be secured up for the duration. Everyone had to carry a buoyancy aid and a towline. The aim was to test seamanship, not just fitness.

Fair enough, for a first try, it seems, but now there is a backlash from both ends (and the middle) of the spectrum. To give just one example, the racers, in order to get round one of the rules, have half-inch bung holes front and rear (with lemonade cap type stoppers), as "hatches". Then the owners of boats with drop skegs and C-Trim rudders don't want to secure them up, because their boats are designed to be used with them, and they are then at an artificial disadvantage. The VCP Skerray was quoted widely as an example of a boat that is designed for use with and really needs one or the other.

Voices of reason are being heard too. Experts are reminding us that the speed of all boats is first and foremost to do with the length of the boat. Weight, width and shape are very much secondary matters. Thus these Inuks are not at so much of an advantage as may be thought, as sea kayaking is not about acceleration. Any add-on type rudder, such as C-Trim, involves cutting six inches off the back of the boat to install, so makes the boat slower.

Race organisers in Cornwall and Anglesea have made novel proposals. Overnight camping built into the route plan excludes the too serious. Orienteering as a facet of the race advantages the better skilled seamen.

Somewhere in all this though there is danger of the fun being lost. All these symposium type events and get-togethers attract sea kayaking people who are attracted to other sea kayaking people. Let's not exclude anyone. The only reason there is conflict (debate?) is the common desire to level the playing field. The whole business is hardly unprecedented. With the growth of sea kayaking generally, there must eventually be room for multi-class races, just as on rivers, where there is a constant dynamic, the situation always under review and being updated. For example, look no further than the case of a new "Plastics" section within "Open Singles" being now under consideration. Open Singles used to be anything that floats that does not fit one of the other racing categories. Then the Gola Sprint and similar designs made a mockery of that idea by designing an "almost K1" lean mean racing machine, but which just about squeezed past the Open Single rules and started winning everything in sight. Sound familiar?

Deck Mounted Watch

By Des Keane

For years, I've been frustrated by my cheap water resistant watch. I've tried wearing it on my wrist, where my cuff always slips over it, and always in the nastiest clapotis around:

I've tried attaching it to my buoyancy aid and have gone cross-eyed trying to see it: I've attached it to the deck but it's *always* at the wrong angle. Finally, the catch broke and I was presented with the answer!

Here's how to do it.

Cut a triangular piece of wood about 4cm on each side.

Drill a 5mm hole for the deck elastic towards the front end and then cut a gap as shown on the diagram. It's important that the gap is smaller than the hole. It's also important that it meets the hole at the top end so that the deck elastic won't slip out. Tuck the watch strap over the top and the bottom and fix (preferably with stainless steel screws). Then trim the strap to size with a sharp knife or chisel. The bottom strap should cover the gap to provide extra security.

Advantages: Reliable, removable, cheap, recycles a watch with a broken strap

Disadvantage: the watch will never be on your wrist again!

Alaska

Peter Cork

Part two of Peter's Alaska account

Myself, Oisín and Mick headed north from Bartlett Cove into Glacier Bay Park. We passed through a labyrinth of small islands with narrow channels and emerged into a more open vista. Some of those islands, particularly the small treeless ones, are off limits, even for a landing, because of sensitive populations of seals and birds.

It was sunny and not too hot. The sea was ice cold. We sought a campsite on an island. The first task was to search for fresh signs of bear (scat, tracks, flattened vegetation, etc). This is a skill that one learns surprisingly quickly. In the southern section of the park there are black bears while in the north there are grizzlies. Some areas were out of bounds due to individual 'troublesome' grizzlies and other areas are out of bounds due to aggression from black bears where they congregate at choice feeding locations.

Oisín and I tramped across rough ground on the edge of the forest looking for one of those rare campsites, while Mick stayed with the kayaks. We discovered a nice area of flattened grass - and then a bear. We shouted at the bear to let him know of our whereabouts and he took off in Mick's direction. At least myself and Oisín were all right !

Clearly, this was not a good place to camp. We paddled about a mile south, set up camp and then stood pathetically while a bear growled at us from the dense vegetation 10 metres away. We were on one of the bear's prime wild strawberry patches. After a

nervous stand-off, the bear emerged out on the shore and moved on. He was the same bear we had disturbed earlier.

The next day we encountered some mildly confusing currents. We crossed these to the west side of the bay and entered into grizzly country. That night there was another bear growling outside the tent as we tried to let tiredness overcome anxiety and go to sleep.

At the end of the third day out of Bartlett Cove, we were cold and wet after grey skies and heavy rain. We had had daily contact (not very close much of the time) with humpback whales in those three days, but we wouldn't see them again until we returned south from the glacier area. We paddled up Reid Inlet to see our first glacier loom out of the mist.

We left exploration to the following day as we needed to get out of the cold rain, get some grub and climb into sleeping bags. That night the glacier calved (gave birth to icebergs) intermittently in thunderous explosions. Each time I was rudely awakened and remained wide-eyed until I had figured out what caused the noise.

In the morning a magnificent adult grizzly lumbered to within 50 metres of the camp. We shouted at him but, to our dismay, he didn't retreat. The kayaks were about 200 metres away and the sea a further 200 metres. A new lesson learnt – don't camp far from kayaks.

We broke camp in a controlled panic and all the while the boss of the situation circled around the area – possibly just curious or possibly contemplating something more sinister!

Once in the kayaks, we were a jolly bunch of Paddies again. The grey skies lifted and we rounded a small promontory to behold the glacier, a blinding white colour in the sunshine at the head of the steep-sided, glacier scoured valley. Roaring torrents cascaded from the mountains and, on the shore, a beautiful bear was scavenging for food. We paddled over to within less than 10 metres of this huge grizzly for a close up photo session. He ignored us.

We paddled up to face of the glacier, beached the kayaks and went for a little hike. On our return, we had to run for the boats as the bear was rapidly crossing the half -mile inlet at the glacier face. As we pulled from the shore, he surged from the water and ran at impressive speed along the water's edge. Drying his fur? Show of aggression? We didn't wait around to check!

We would have two more sightings of grizzlies in the following days, but none as spectacular as our first. From speaking to others more familiar with them, that encounter was almost as good as it gets.

For the next four to five days, we visited other inlets with glaciers. The landscape was superb. A treeless, glacier-scoured land rising steeply to 15,000 foot high, snow-covered peaks.

The sea conditions were kind. For some reason there was less pack -ice than normal and this allowed us to get as close to the glaciers as we liked. This was tempered by the respect for possible big waves caused by large calvings. A continuous stream of bergs drifted south in myriad shapes, sizes and colours. Occasional, sudden, violent gusts came down from the ice sheets and these were the only paddling problems.

We considered exploring the 'east arm' of the bay but, after two days of continuous rain and no sign of a change, we continued south. With no sun, the park area, which is always much colder than the area immediately south, becomes miserable. We were not to know that we would have rain every day for the next two weeks, with very limited breaks for drying out our gear.

The day before we left the park area we headed in a cold drizzle through duck - and seal-rich waters. We came upon a whale fluke pointing just above the surface and twitching about. It was as if the whale was upside down in the water. Going closer, the whale just dove out of sight. We sat around in a silence to see where it would surface and it did so after about ten minutes. Without any warning the large adult humpback burst through the surface so close to us that I thought that I could have touched it if I reached out with my paddle. I think that we all got the fright of our lives due to the sudden noise and the whale's powerful bulk.

That night, after more awful freeze-dried food, a whale (possibly the same one as before) came into our bay and cruised up and down. We joined it and had a series of remarkable close encounters.

That night, as I was drifting off to sleep, I heard a deep growling outside – probably a bear. At 4.30 a.m. booming and heavy smacking sounds came in off the sea. The whales were active. I peeked out of the tent to see if it might be worthwhile to get on the water for more whale-watching but the cold, wet mist changed my mind.

That morning we re-entered the group of small islands near the exit from the park and, only for Oisín's navigation, I would still be there. As we neared these islands we again had a heart-stopping experience with a whale suddenly surfacing almost underneath us (well, that's a slight exaggeration).

At the park headquarters we had a few hours of much appreciated sunshine that allowed us to dry all the gear. We had a hot shower and indulged in a dinner and a beer at the park lodge.

Two days later we crossed the notorious Icy Strait to visit a well-known whale feeding-ground at Point Adolphus on Chicagof Island. We were not let down and spent an afternoon in the company of six to eight whales. There were a small number of launches there also with people who had probably come from Juneau.

We re-crossed Icy Strait to send Mick on his way back to the Park to return home and then we began the long journey south. We had been paddling for 17 days and had

completed 270 miles. There were now approximately 430 miles between us and Prince Rupert.

Continues.....

The Long Distance Touring Stroke

by Ed Gillet (via AOW BBS)

Many athletic people, accustomed to using their legs for transportation, are not pleased when they are faced with their first 15-mile paddle. Why is it that some people can paddle strongly all day while others burn out in an hour or two? What are the day-long paddlers doing differently? Long-distance kayaking, like cycling, skiing, hiking and other endurance pursuits, requires conditioning, training, and above all proper paddling technique.

In this essay, I'd like to sketch the elements of an efficient kayaking stroke, so that anyone, regardless of size and strength, can paddle confidently over many miles.

Efficient paddling doesn't require a great deal of upper body strength.

Strong-armed people might appear to be strong paddlers at first but arm-only paddlers rarely go the distance. Some conditions do require power - surfing, sprinting, and paddling against a strong wind. But most of the time on a kayak trip you'll be trying to keep the boat moving forward at the cruising pace of 2.5 to 3.5 knots.

Beginning kayakers are all arms when they paddle. All they can think about is pulling the paddle through the water. Beginners seem to be clawing at the water. An accomplished paddler's stroke looks longer and smoother. Even when the beginner and pro paddle at the same stroke rate, the pro's kayak moves faster, while the pro seems to be hardily working.

What's going on here? The paddling pro is working with a different model.

Rather than thinking about pulling the paddle through the water, the pro thinks of the paddle as almost stationary and tries to pull the kayak past the paddle. The long kayak paddle is used as a lever to move the boat forward. Using leverage to pull the kayak past the paddle allows the experienced paddler to employ every major muscle group including the lower back, abdominal muscles, and thighs in moving the kayak forward. For a really powerful stroke, forget about paddling through a liquid. Think of the water as viscous mud. If you pretend that you are levering yourself along through a sea of mud when you paddle, you'll have the elements of a power stroke.

Here are some points of concentration. Try planting the paddle in the water as far forward as you can reach with a slight forward lean. Push forward with your upper arm at jaw height until the pushing arm is almost straight.

Use your lower arm as a fulcrum. This increases the leverage in your paddle stroke and prevents you from pulling too far back with your lower arm. Keep your feet on the kayak's foot-braces while you paddle. You need something to push against so you can pull the kayak along with you. Near the end of your arm extension, a little torso twist combined with a forward thrust of the shoulder adds extra power to this stroke. End your stroke with your arm upper nearly straight and level with your shoulder. Your fist should be at chin level, and your thumb should be at the centre-line of the kayak deck.

Keep a relaxed grip on the paddle. When you grip the paddle too tightly you feel tense, your forearms tire and cramp and you promote tendonitis or carpal tunnel syndrome. If your hand falls asleep during or after paddling, or your wrist and forearm are swollen and sore from paddling, you're probably gripping the paddle too tightly. If you are using a feathered paddle, and you think you are developing carpal tunnel problems, try adjusting your grip on the paddle shaft so that very little wrist movement is needed to feather the blade. Always try to keep your wrist, forearm, and shoulder in a straight line for the pushing part of the stroke. Try stretching tight forearms by bending your wrist while pulling your fingertips towards your elbow.

Most kayaks have flexible backrests to prevent back injuries. The drawback to this kind of backrest is that they give little lower back support. Consequently, people who lean back in the seat are quickly uncomfortable. Leaning back or slouching while you paddle destroys the symmetry of your paddle stroke too. A slight forward lean while you plant the paddle gives you a longer stroke and lets you rest your back. Sitting up straight strengthens your abdominal muscles and allows for the torso-twist and shoulder-thrust that make up the efficient forward stroke. With practice, you can learn to "hang" horizontally on the stroke and you'll feel no lower back fatigue at all. If your back begins hurting, simply lean and stretch forward on the next stroke. Stretch your neck and drop your shoulders every few minutes. Vary your paddling technique slightly through the day, resting some muscles while you work others harder. Relax, breathe and look around.

With practice the paddle will disappear and you'll be surprised how quickly the time and the miles fly by. The more poised and relaxed you are in rough water, the more energy you can put into moving forward to your day's goal.

Paddling upwind can be hard work but you can still make good progress against the wind if you bear down and paddle effectively. When it's really windy and headway is difficult, wait for a lull in the wind and then paddle hard to the next spot where you can rest. Work your way upwind as close to the beach as possible. Take advantage of natural windbreaks like points or rocks or kelp beds for rest stops. Don't try to power up the faces of waves, you'll wear yourself out quickly working against gravity, and your kayak will pound - slowing you down. Do accelerate down the backsides of waves, helping gravity accelerate your kayak into the troughs between waves. Remember that boat speed is paramount. Don't let the kayak slow down, especially when you are paddling upwind. Keep the kayak flat - don't rock the boat - and control your stroke so that you don't pull too hard at the beginning or end of the stroke. Pulling too hard makes the kayak porpoise

up and down and slows your progress. If you concentrate on your boat speed and work every little wave, the hours will fly by. Set mileage or distance goals, not time goals.

You'll know that you have attained true paddling enlightenment when the paddle seems to take on a life of its own. You only need to guide the paddle through the water to move forward. A balanced stroke lets you rest your arms and back while you paddle, and a leveraged stroke means you can paddle strongly with little fatigue. The act of paddling becomes automatic, unconscious and effortless. When you have truly mastered the long distance touring stroke, you will be able to relax and enjoy the rest of your kayak trip.

The Thoughts of Brian

Reflections on the Summers Paddling

By Brian Ormond

I like Mike McClure's quote about 'the kayak leaving no trace of its passing' but it makes you think. We all travel many nautical miles each year and yet besides swimming, rowing and sailing we are one of the few water pastimes that don't leave a mark on the environment. Speedboats, jet skis and motor boats pass us, polluting the air with their exhausts and crumbling the shores with their washes and wakes. How many times on a beautiful calm day have you paddled along a shore or across a bay smelling the fumes of a passing boat? Sea air is peaceful and tranquil, power boats noisy and smelly. Strong fumes travel quickly across the water from burning dumps, factories and houses on the shores. I do not always expect to inhale these fumes when at sea. Meanwhile, you've got fishermen leaving nets abandoned, hooks hanging on trees and rocks, rubbish dumpers and gardeners throwing their wastes and old shrubs into the sea.

Here I go again, but does it not just sicken you to see how our country is treated? Near harbours around the coast you are guaranteed to see floating debris, oil slicks and effluent. Recently in Galway I saw a well known ferry boat being painted as she was moored against the quay. The harbour was full of stripped paint and fresh paint that did not quite make the hull. I read Coastwatch Europe's recent coastline survey resulted in us having the most rubbish in northern Europe.

Speaking of pollution - the names that people choose for their boats! Mary J, Rockabill, Pride of the Bay.... can they not be a bit more exciting and even original? We cannot ignore 'em.

Seasickness and travel sickness can be prevented by wearing pressure point bands on one's wrist. They are similar to a thin sweat band with a magnet which rests against your wrist. They act on your nei kuan points and save you from taking any medicines. It is vital that the magnet corresponds with the point on your arm. You must wear one on each wrist to make it work.

I kayak a lot by myself. Let's not get into the rights and wrongs of this. But one thing I've begun to do recently is to tie the kayak up with a painter. Especially on a rocky shore, I pull up, take out the items I need and then tie the bow to a moored boat, to a large rock or to a pier. If the wind is off shore she will drift off. If the wind is on shore I tie a shorter painter. Okay, there are situations where this may not work - a very windy day, a tide quickly rising or falling, etc. But if you can save your boat from getting unnecessary scratches and dents, it's worth it. And of course your back. On a windward or falling tide shore wade out and tie your kayak onto a heavy rock which you have carried from the shore... anything to stop your boat from getting marked. Anybody got other ideas ? Use a free running mooring, climb on a punt off a pier and tie your kayak off the stern....off the slip in a sheltered harbour...

I've got slagged before about loading my kayak on a carpet on tarmacadam.....most of us dislike getting slagged, I dislike getting my kayak marked. The way I look at it is that the hull is a mere 3.5mm thick, it costs a lot and yes I do treasure it and want it to last !

Oh, sandy beaches are great.

At sea, when I see a local fisher(wo)man, I make an effort to talk to him/her. These people have travelled along their patches for years. They have a wealth of knowledge about the tides, currents and coastline. They can give you information about get out points, caves, rocks, campsites, shops, etc that will not be marked on your OS or chart. It's worth the effort and if you meet them later in the pub you'll have lots to talk about !

Make sure that you do not get run down ! Recently, in the distance, I saw a motor boat heading towards me. No problem, it was along way off. I changed course, they changed course. I changed back again and slowly they did too ! Eventually, I stopped and they passed fairly close by. It was obvious that they had not seen me at all . They did get a shock to see a canoe with a young fella (that's me) with his paddle in the air ! They just never expected anybody to be in the area and probably had not seen anything so small there before. Be careful out there....

Dances with Waves

By Brian Wilson

Review by Cormac Daly

Battling the elements around the four corners of Ireland, even the hardened paddler might be tempted to ask why? Read this book and find out. Brian Wilson has hit the motherlode. All the reasons for paddling are between these pages. Flora, fauna, folklore, endurance, culture.... you name it.

It was impossible not to compare this book with "Commitments and Open Crossings" by Bill Taylor. My conclusion is that, as a read, there is no comparison. The latter seemed to be merely a "we got in, ate, paddled, ate, paddled in more miles and collapsed wrecked"

to do the same, day after day. Wilson seems somehow more interested in people and his book is populated with some very colourful characters, amongst them our very own Dermot Blount and Mick O'Meara.

Those of you who have read "Blazing Paddles" and enjoyed it are in for another treat. Any book about a long trip has its pitfalls but all in all, "Dances with Waves" is a relaxed, nontechnical look at life maritime with a font of new information for the interested paddler. Read it.

Skerries to Dingle

By Des Keane

Sat.4th July 1998

Moving at last! 7:00 a.m. on a damp, overcast morning in Skerries and Seán Pierce and I were sitting in our Romany Explorers for the first time. Our 'Round Ireland trip was beginning. All the planning, preparation, new babies, hassles over boats etc. were being left behind at last. We had a light northerly behind us as we headed south for Dalkey. After the initial elation of departure, my thoughts went to the trip ahead. 1100 miles around the coast of Ireland. Two months of continuous paddling. Could we do it? What experiences lay ahead?

The sun burst through the clouds as we lunched on Ireland's Eye. We'd got the tides right, conditions were calm, it was the best possible start. All was well with the world. We rounded Howth Head with the yachts sailing to the day's racing in Dublin Bay and headed for Dalkey. Rats!! There was the HSS, still at her berth in Dun Laoghaire harbour. I'd had a scrape with her predecessor and wasn't keen to renew the acquaintance. Ten minutes out into the bay, a rumble of engines on our left and the SuperSeaCat appears on the horizon, just as the HSS starts to move. We rafted up near the North Burford buoy and let the high-speed giants go their respective ways.

We were soon pulling into Colimore Harbour in Dalkey for an afternoon's bath, beer and barbecue with the Bracken family who live nearby. There were the first mutterings from Seán about "South Side Decadence" but it didn't noticeably slow his consumption.

Tuesday, 7th July.

"Jeez, would you look at that?" There were whitecaps and clapotis all over Wicklow Harbour. We were heading for Wicklow Head after a sick day. Seán had a nasty chest infection which needed a course of antibiotics and would sap his energy for the next couple of days. Conditions eased once we got clear of the harbour and we roared past the Wicklow Head lighthouse on the ebbing tide race. The low cliffs and long beaches of the Wicklow coast are very attractive. It was great to get away from the city.

We ended a super day at Clones beach, 10km south of Arklow.

Wednesday, 8th July

"Seán, do you see those walkers?" "Yeah..." "They've just passed us....." We were a couple of km south of Cahore Point and conditions had changed for the worse. We had a southerly F4-5 "on the nose" and were making very little progress - a taste of things to come! We'd hoped to make the Raven at the north end of Wexford Harbour but hadn't a chance. We had to be content with a dumping surf landing at Morriscastle in North Wexford.

Thursday, 9th July

The weather was much improved in the morning. Seán had a bad start to the day. The antibiotics were taking their toll but he gradually recovered as we got into our rhythm. We paddled down the coast for a while and then set a compass course for Rosslare, over the horizon and 30+km away. Conditions were perfect. The sea was calm, the spring tide was in our favour. It was to be the last day of good conditions for two weeks.

We eventually had lunch at Carnsore Point, delighted to have covered almost 40 km without a break and got around the first "corner". The afternoon saw us crawling along the beach, against the tide to Kilmore Quay. It was a tough finish to the day. We'd liked to have made the Saltees, just a couple of miles offshore, but all energy was gone. Pub grub, a couple of pints and we hit the Thermarests tired but happy.

We'd planned to start easily as neither of us had done enough training before our departure. We were confident that if we could avoid injury, then our fitness would build on the east and south coasts. And so it proved. We'd done around 190km in the first five paddling days and were reasonably satisfied with our progress, particularly considering Seán's infection and the tendon trouble he'd had for the previous month.

Sun. 13th July

Ardmore, Co. Waterford. 0602 forecast "...westerly, force 5 to 7 with gale gusts" "Oh God, not again" I tried to crawl deeper into my sleeping bag and pretend that the wind-shaken tent was just a dream. The thoughts of another seven hours beating into a fresh westerly didn't appeal at all. We'd been fighting strong headwinds since we'd rounded Carnsore Point. We'd used every bit of shelter we could and taken advantage of every easing of the wind, but it was hard work.

Seán was returning from the leithreas when he saw frenzied activity at the tent. A fireball sails through the air and crashes to the rocks 20 metres away, followed by panicked beating of flames by the tent. The MSR had gone on fire! I'd allowed some petrol to escape, which had set the dry marram grass alight near the tent. The melting valve on the fuel tank was happily spraying burning petrol all over the dunes. We eventually extinguished the blaze with pots of water.

The day was as tough as expected. We battled into Youghal against F7 gusts and were nearing the town as the flashing bikes of the Tour de France peleton went by. By evening, we'd made Ballycotton, having taken six hours to make less than 30km. Seán knocked on a cottage door to ask if they'd keep an eye on the boats while we summoned his brother from Cobh. Two elderly ladies, the Conlon sisters, kindly offered us the use of the adjoining cottage to get changed. By the time we were in dry clothes, they'd prepared a chicken salad, tea, scones, apple tart, the works. It was a brilliant welcome to Co.Cork!

Wed.15th July

Roches Point. Another day of F5 headwinds. Ford Cork Week is in full swing and most of the 680 yachts seem to be racing through the channel where we want to cross. Throw in an ebbing tide race with wind over and excitement was guaranteed! We threaded our way across a closely packed fleet of one tonners under full sail. There is no doubt as to who has the right of way, they don't give a fiddlers about sea kayaks! Having got through that lot, we met two more fleets coming in under spinnaker on the far side. What a sprint!

The wind eased in the afternoon and we had a wonderfully relaxed paddle into Oysterhaven. It was raining but who cared? The Old Head of Kinsale was next but we'd worry about that tomorrow.

Fri.17th July

We'd passed the Old Head without any problem and were now west of Galley Head and heading for Castletownshend. I was on a high. We were paddling into a F4 -5 but I felt I could keep going forever. Yesterday was the opposite. The wind had to be overcome by sheer determination and physical effort and I was low on both. I had to concentrate on every paddle stroke, just to keep going. The contrast between highs and lows on a trip like this is much sharper than in normal life. Today was great, yesterday was crap, conditions were the same. It had been the opposite for Seán. That's how it goes. One pulls the other along one day and the next day the roles are reversed.

The great God of the Wind had more in store for us! From one second to the next, the wind went from a F5 to F7. No warning, no gusts, just instant change. Huge effort and little progress so we hooked a right and made for the shelter of Glandore. After six hours without a break, we were glad to see a welcoming committee and pints of Murphy's on the shore. We were to be guests of the Dwyer family of Skibbereen for the next couple of nights, which had Seán muttering about "southside decadence" again!

Mon.20th July

We picked our way through the islands of Roaringwater Bay, seeking what shelter we could get from the strong south-westerly. What a beautiful place! There is no hardship in this. After a leisurely lunch on Castle Island, we paddled up Long Island Sound, past Schull. We wanted to make Crookhaven, as it would be the best jump off point for the Mizen when we got a break in the weather. The last kilometres to Crookhaven were a

bitch. A F6 on the nose again. When would it ever stop? I'd read Brian Wilson's account of his circumnavigation shortly before we left. He seemed to be paddling into a force 6 for 10 weeks. I'd thought, "he's got to be exaggerating". He wasn't. Now I understood.

Wed.22nd July What a day! It's the first time I've really been scared in a seakayak. It started badly. Crookhaven was eerily quiet as we slipped down the bay to Streak Point. A fishing vessel came in, rolling violently under the overcast sky. A big swell from the south was throwing up nasty clapotis for the 6km from Crookhaven to Brow Head. I was dropping behind Seán and my confidence was taking a battering. The Mizen itself was fine - a big change from yesterday when we'd watched an angry sea from the shore. Seán was elated - another major turning point achieved! I was trying to pick up my spirits from the battering of Brow Head. We had a following sea for the first time in weeks. Jeez, it felt different! Seán had pulled some way ahead, enjoying the surfing. Suddenly, the wind dropped, there was a second of silence and Whhuumpp... I was engulfed by a breaking wave. The boat was thrown to the left and somehow I managed to stay upright. Phew.... not the way to start the 30km crossing to Dursey.

On rounding the Mizen, we had headed north towards Three Castle Head and Sheep's Head on the other side of Dunmanus Bay, as we couldn't see the Beara Peninsula in the gloomy conditions. Approaching Sheep's Head, we decided to continue on across Bantry Bay despite the dirty weather out to the SW. Any landing on the Sheep's Head peninsula would have put a lot of distance on us. Also, the forecast was for a SW 5-6 in the afternoon and we wanted to make as much distance as possible before it arrived. We set course for Black Ball Head.

After more than five hours on the water, we were approaching Black Ball Head. It was fading in and out of the mist and rain. The SW onshore swell was breaking up into very lumpy clapotis and we hadn't even got near the Head. I was dropping behind again. Our only options were to continue and hope we could get into Black Ball Harbour or turn right for Castletownbere. Both were about the same distance and the narrow entrance to Castletownberehaven was also likely to be difficult. We had to make Black Ball Harbour. With unbroken cliff for 10km on either side, there were no escape routes. To make matters worse, the long hours of lumpy conditions had got to my stomach and I was seasick.

As Seán said, "Black Ball Head was mad!". With the onshore swell and rising wind, the clapotis was sending great spouts of water skyward. The tide was running against us, which was totally unexpected. I was barely making forward progress. At times I glanced right or left and there was a deep hole in the water. Nothing to brace on there. The boat was being picked up, shaken, twisted and flung on to the next eruption of water. The scariest was what I could see happening in front. An explosion of colliding waves "Jesus, if that one had caught me....."

It was psychological war between the elements and me. On their side, "you're going to capsize", "your roll will never work", "you'll be on the rocks", "Seán can't help". On my

side, "relax...., relax...., relax...., you'll be ok", "you'll make it". I don't know who won but I survived, just.

That was it really. I decided to stop. I could see a similar situation arising several more times on the trip and I wasn't sure I would come out of it every time. For me, that's not what sea kayaking is about. The toughest part was the feeling of letting Seán down. The chances of him making it on his own were much reduced. He'd put so much into it, we'd got on well as a team, had shared tough times on the water and had a great time on shore.

Fri 24th July

The best and the worst, back to back. What an absolutely stunning day! We were woken before 6 by Meadow Pipits chirping over the tent. Sunshine, warmth, light winds, amazing scenery, good mileage, what more could one ask for? We'd left a completely different Black Ball Head. Gentle seas, wonderful cliff scenery and a visit from a pod of Rissos dolphins before we got to Dursey Sound.

Once under the cable car at Dursey, the beauty of the Kerry coast opened up before us. The mouth of the Kenmare River to our right, Kenmare itself being 45kms away. Ahead were the beautiful beaches of Derrynane, Scariff and Deenish Islands and the mighty Skelligs away to the left. Behind us was Dursey with the Bull, Cow and Calf rocks beyond. A great day to restore ones confidence.

We did 30km before lunch among the fish farms of Deenish. After lunch, we passed Bolus Head on our way to Puffin Island and Valentia and watched the changing profile of the Skelligs out to sea. Such a dramatic place. Maybe next time we'll get out there.....

Sun.26th July

Dingle. We crossed from Valentia yesterday with a roller coaster following sea behind us and a southerly force 4 to our backs. 18km in two hours. Despite the grey skies and the need for a compass course as Dingle was hidden in the rain, it was an exhilarating trip. I started tentatively but soon got going. "Yeeehaaaaa!!!" We had a brief visit from Fungi, which was a great finish for me.

Today was different. We did a final sorting of the gear after breakfast and then a sad farewell. I felt very emotional as I pushed Seán off the beach in Dingle Harbour. I was sad at the end of a dream for myself and was concerned for him as he continued on his own. I reassured myself that he was tough, competent and sensible. It was time for me to move on.

Sea Kayak Training

The ICU Proficiency Awards

Stephen Hannon

The Irish Canoe Union has recently launched a full range of training programmes for sea kayaking. There are ten programmes of training and assessment in all, five for personal proficiency and five for those wishing to instruct on the sea. The following diagram illustrates how the training is organised in progressive stages.

These training courses offer useful waymarks by which you can gauge your progress and experience in sea kayaking. The training courses cannot replace experience built up over the years however they focus learning on essential aspects of sea kayaking and offer opportunities to practice those techniques in safety.

There is a full syllabus available for each of the programmes as well as a calendar for training and a list of those qualified to provide the training.

The calendar is updated frequently during the year as new courses are organised but those presently arranged are as follows:

Date	Description	Location	Contact
14/15th Nov.1998	Level 4 Sea Proficiency Training	County Cork	Jim Kennedy 028 33002
21/22nd Nov.1998	Level 5 Sea Proficiency Assessment	Achill Island	Stephen Hannon 01 4509838
13/14th Mar.1999	Level 4 Sea Proficiency Training	County Cork	Jim Kennedy 028 33002
6/7th Mar.1999	Level 3 Sea Instructor Training	West Cork	Stephen Hannon 095 43411 01 4509838
3/4th Apr.1999	Level 5 Kayak Proficiency Training	Kinvarra County Galway	Kevin O Callaghan 091 796 511 01 4509838

Level 4 Sea Kayaking Proficiency Award

Level 4 Sea Proficiency Syllabus

1.00 General aims of the Level 4 Sea Kayaking Proficiency Award

The Level 4 Sea Kayaking Proficiency Award aims to ensure that successful candidates have sufficient skill and knowledge to undertake simple sea journeys with safety under the guidance of other more experienced paddlers .

2.00 Course Outline

The course should cover all practical and theoretical elements of the syllabus. The course may take the format of a weekend course or a number of individual days of instruction. Where candidates have the necessary previous experience they may be assessed on the second day of a weekend course. Attendance at a course is strongly recommended before a candidate presents for assessment. While attendance at a course is normally necessary. Exemptions to that rule are accepted based on the candidate's presentation of an extensive range of logged sea trips. Before assessment the candidates must present their logged trips. (See details of qualifying trips in Guidelines)

3.00 Requirements for the Level 4 Sea Kayaking Proficiency Award

To obtain the Level 4 Sea Kayaking Proficiency Award a participant must successfully explain and/or demonstrate the following techniques and skills. It is recommended that the practical skills and rescues are assessed in sea state 2 -3 and not, if possible, within harbours.

- 3.01 an ability to control a kayak in following and beam seas.
- 3.02 an ability to deal with breaking waves.
 - 3.03 efficient forward and backward paddling, turning into and away from the wind (360 degrees in both directions).
 - 3.04 an ability to perform an Eskimo Rescue (Paddle Presentation).
- 3.05 An ability to perform a
 - Draw Stroke
 - Low Brace Support.
 - Stern Rudder
 - Sculling Draw
 - Low Brace Turn
- 3.06 an effective X Rescue of a capsized kayak.

3.07 effective method of towing another kayak. An assessment candidate should be familiar with the Fan and Tandem Tow. The Towing System must be accessible and have a quick release mechanism.

3.08 Transits. Transits are very important in Sea Kayaking. The candidates should be able to explain and demonstrate the use of transits up ahead, laterally and behind.

3.09 an ability to follow a compass bearing.

3.10 a basic knowledge of First Aid, to include the symptoms and treatment of exposure and an awareness of the technique of artificial resuscitation.

3.11 an introductory knowledge of the coastal environment.

Theory

The candidate should demonstrate a basic knowledge of the following:

3.12 Tidal Streams, causes and effects and how to predict them.

3.13 Weather Forecasting, obtaining and understanding forecasts.

3.14 Sea Kayaks, equipment and clothing.

3.15 Sea Kayaking Camping Procedures.

3.16 Sea Kayaking Safety Procedures.

3.17 Sea Charts.

3.18 The effects of wind on sea conditions.

4.00 Assessment for the Level 4 Sea Kayaking Proficiency Award

4.01 Normally assessment will be scheduled between May and September, subject to weather conditions being suitable.

4.02 On the day of an assessment there will be a short written assessment followed by a sea trip.

4.03 The assessment trip will be of 3-4 hours duration and will include a lunch break. The practical skills taught on the Level 4 Sea Proficiency course will be assessed on this trip.

4.04 The assessment must be taken at sea under moderate conditions (wind or sea state 2/4)

4.05 Before setting off on the trip the candidate will be required to produce a route summary for the day based on information gleaned from the chart, tide tables, pilot and weather forecast.

4.06 Using waterproof bag(s) each candidate must pack the following in their kayak:

Packed lunch	Charts (or copies)	
Flask	Tow and Deck Lines	
Spare clothing	Torch	
First Aid Kit	Watch	
Repair Kit	Compass	
Emergency food/drink Whistle	Bailer/Sponge	Bivvy Bag

Flares(*one red parachute flare and one red pinpoint flare*)

Spare paddles (*can be shared between candidates*)

4.07 while a candidate will not fail by not having the following items it is very strongly recommended that the candidate should seek to make them part of their personal sea kayaking equipment as soon as possible. Flares should be available for purchase at assessments and courses.

Repair Kit

Spare paddles

Flares (one red parachute flare and one red pinpoint flare)

4.08 All equipment must be packed and should be readily accessible. Equipment must remain secure during rescues and **spare clothing should be dry at the end of the day**. The candidate must be fully conversant with the use of all equipment carried.

Level 4 Sea Proficiency Award Guidelines

Guidelines for Qualifying Trips - On the sea trips which the candidate undertakes under the supervision of a recognised/qualified leader, no unnecessary risks should be taken and all the necessary planning and preparations should be seen to have been taken. It is recommended that the candidates seek to gain his/her experience in a measured way and not attempt trips they haven't the experience for.

Qualifying trips must be completed under the supervision of a competent leader who will verify details. Details of four qualifying sea trips must be submitted along with an application for assessment. At least one of the qualifying sea trips must be on the Atlantic coastline. The candidate must show active participation in navigation and planning of trips. Qualifying trips should be of at least three hours paddling duration and should include a lunch stop.

Level 5 Sea Proficiency Award

Level 5 Sea Proficiency Syllabus

1.00 General aims of the Level 5 Sea Kayaking Proficiency Award

The purpose of the Level 5 Sea Proficiency course and assessment is to encourage, train and qualify sea kayakers wishing to lead others on advanced sea journeys .

The course also aims to provide the candidates with the necessary skills and knowledge to help develop sea kayaking and help promote awareness of safety procedures with the groups they lead.

2.00 Course Outline

The course for the Level 5 Sea Proficiency may be held on one or two weekends. Training on a Level 5 Sea Proficiency Training course prior to assessment is necessary .

3.00 Previous Experience

On presenting themselves for assessment the candidate must show in their log book, evidence of having completed six quality canoeing trips (see notes on qualifying trips) in a variety of locations with no more than two on the East coast of Ireland. In addition, one other trip with at least one hour in darkness must be shown, this can take place in any section of the coast.

The candidate must have an advanced first aid certificate such as the REC or an equivalent.

It is expected that the candidate makes safety a priority in the planning of the sea trips and that the candidate seeks to increase their experience by a measured approach. Proper attention to preparation and safety should be in evidence in the candidate's log.

Given that the advanced paddler will, in the course of their sea kayaking, be paddling and leading others with sea kayaks it is essential that the assessment be undertaken in a sea kayak.

On the logged or additional trips, evidence of having been exposed to the following should be shown:

- 3.01 Open crossing of at least 7 miles, 3 miles of which should be one mile from the coast
- 3.02 Navigation in poor visibility
- 3.03 Wind of at least Force 4
- 3.04 Tidal Streams of at least 2 knots
- 3.05 Exposure to no landing zones
- 3.06 Overfalls and clapotis
- 3.07 One of the trips should include an overnight reached by carrying all the equipment in the canoes, this camp should preferably be an island.

4.00 Format for the Advanced Level 5 Sea Proficiency Award

- 4.01 The candidate will pack the kayak with suitable equipment for an overnight camp in preparation for a two-day journey. The assessment will be carried out with kayaks thus loaded and may include an overnight camp. The candidate must be prepared for the paddling to continue into darkness, and must be able to navigate their kayak in hours of darkness.
- 4.02 Flares must be easily accessible and the candidate must be conversant with the procedures for firing them.
- 4.03 The candidate must demonstrate an ability to keep a compass course on open water and make good a course across a tide stream using transits. He/she must demonstrate an ability to take bearings on known features.
- 4.04 Candidates must demonstrate an ability to plan from a chart an alternative route to a safe landing whilst afloat on a journey, in the event of a change in weather or emergency, taking into consideration the tide stream.
- 4.05 The candidate must demonstrate an ability to effect successful landings and launchings in a variety of situations. The ability to handle their kayak competently in 1-2 metres of surf including the full range of

turning manoeuvres and rolling must be demonstrated in either breaking waves, tide races or overfalls.

The following skills must be demonstrated in an area of choppy water as these are the conditions in which they are most likely to be needed:

- 4.06 Capsize and exit from a kayak followed by a successful solo re entry and retreat to calmer water to bail out. Rafted assistance may be given to empty out the kayak.
- 4.07 Demonstrate an Eskimo Roll after capsizing to the left and to the right.
- 4.08 Tow a capsized casualty and kayak from an area of disturbed water into a calmer area for a rescue.
- 4.09 Show sufficient leadership skills under a variety of situations.

Whilst afloat a candidate must demonstrate their ability to cope with problems of the following kind:

- 4.10 Repairing a hold kayak
- 4.11 Towing an incapacitated person. (Dislocated shoulder)
- 4.12 Safely landing an injured paddler
- 4.13 Demonstrate an approved method of resuscitation
- 4.14 Produce spare paddles
- 4.15 Produce whistle, emergency food, and bivvy bag or preferably kissue
- 4.17 They must be prepared to deal with likely emergency situations or incidents.
- 4.18 Produce flares which are easily accessible.

5.00 Theory

Answer questions on the following:

- 5.01 Repairs and maintenance of sea kayaks

5.02 General knowledge of sea kayaking, its history, kayak design and equipment.

3. Sea conditions and the effects of wind, particularly on: Shelving Bottoms, Lee Shore, Rips, Overfalls, and Tide Races. In addition the causes of tides and tidal streams, how to allow for them, and the cause and effect of clapotis.

5.04 Weather forecasting from observation of cloud formation e.g. recognising approaching fronts and line squalls, and the means of obtaining and understanding weather forecasts.

5.05 Group Leadership and Control.

5.06 Estuary Canoeing to include buoyage, understanding of chart symbols, light and sound signals, particular dangers such as moorings, moorings in tide ways, and movement of shipping.

5.07 The Irish coastline and marine environment.

6.00 Chartwork

6.01 Plan an advanced sea journey using an unfamiliar chart, pilot tide stream atlas, and tide tables.

6.02 A weather forecast will be given which may take the form of a shipping forecast.

6.03 The prepared journey should be summarised to a form whereby it may be simply explained to a group as instructions for a day's paddle. Instructions should include the following information:

Estimated paddling speed, compass bearings, and times estimated allowances made for wind.

Tidal considerations.

Places of interest (scenic or seascape).

Transits for gauging progress.

Departure and estimated time of arrival.

Sound and light signals in the area.

Information for shore contact.

7.00 Lecture

1. As part of the assessment candidates will be given a 'lecturette' topic at least one week in advance, and will have to prepare a 10 minute lecture on this topic and answer any relevant questions those present.

Level 5 Sea Proficiency Award Guidelines

- It is necessary to hold the Level 4 Sea Proficiency Certificate before applying for assessment.
- All trips must be logged and sent to the Sea Kayaking Officer 10 days prior to the assessment.
- First Aid Certificates must also be sent to the Sea Kayaking Officer 10 days prior to the assessment.
- The assessment should take place in a location where sea conditions are likely to be moderate i.e. choppy. All personal skills must be assessed under these conditions. If the conditions do not present themselves on the day reference may be made to logged experience. If possible an area with some tidal interest should be chosen.

The Beaufort Scale For Kayakers

A practical, light-hearted look at the Beaufort Scale. Please note that the comments are those of the Florida Association of Sea Kayakers, not the ISKA!

Beaufort No.	Wind Description	Water Description	Velocity in knots
0	Calm	Water like a mirror. Completely still	Less than 1
Go for a paddle ,Take a camera for pictures with Reflections			
1	Light air	Ripples with the appearance of scales are formed, but without crests	1 to 3
Everything else can wait. Go Paddling			
2	Light breeze	Small wavelets, still short but more pronounced. Crests have a glassy appearance and do not have break.	4 to 6
Paddle , Gentle learning conditions			

3	Light breeze	Large wavelets. Crests begin to break. Foam of glassy appearance. Perhaps scattered white horses.	7 to 10
Good learning conditions, Practice Bracing			
4	Gentle breeze	Small waves becoming longer, fairly frequent white horses.	11 to 16
Be careful , might get in trouble, time to practice Wet Exits and re -entries			
5	Fresh breeze	Moderate waves, taking more pronounced long form; many white horses are formed. Chances of some spray.	17 to 21
Problems for Beginners. Good for Experienced, Rolling time!			
6	Strong breeze	Large waves begin to form; the white foam crests are more extensive everywhere. Probably some spray.	22 to 27
Experienced Kayakers only , who have practiced their Rescues and Rolls			
7	Near Gale	Sea heaps up and white foam from breaking waves begins to be blown in streaks along the direction of the wind.	28 to 33
Write a Will, Watch Reruns on TV, Stay Home, Don't call Me to go Kayaking			
8	Gale	Moderately high waves; edges of crests begin to break. The Foam is blown in well-marked streaks along the direction of the wind.	34 to 40
Pretty hairy, even for experts , Surfs Up			
9	Severe Gale	High Waves. Confused breaking crests. Panic stations.	41-46
No body in their right mind (or with any MIND) would go out			
10	Violent Storm	Exceptionally high waves hiding ships from view. Sea covered in white foam.	48-55
FORGET IT !!! You got to be Kidding!!!			
11/12	Hurricane	Watch a movie, Visit your granny or dig a hole and climb in	56 upwards
Kamikaze Kayakers and Suicidal Idiots or Kayakers with British Accents!			

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Irish Sea Kayaking Association. Reference to waters does not imply that access is permitted or that they are safe in all conditions. The Editor and ISKA cannot be held responsible for any omissions of references to hazards from notes on these waters. They do not necessarily support advertising claims nor do they hold themselves responsible for inadequacies in items of equipment reviewed here.

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