

Treasna na dTonnta

Newsletter of the Irish Sea Kayaking Association

Issue No.17 Spring 1999

A Great Weekend in Kilrush

By Cormac Daly

Let it be known to all and sundry that all has changed, changed utterly. From now on, leaky tents pitched at strange angles and the draughty corridors of hostels located in converted Famine Workhouses are a thing of the past for SKA meets. We have no-one else to blame except the Clare Chapter of the association in the person of the bould Pat Fox. He has spoiled us forever by arranging accommodation in the luxury of the Kilrush Creek Hostel. Five star surroundings were the order of the day as the hordes assembled from the four corners. It's a long way from there to anywhere but especially from Belfast, 250 miles in fact as Stephen Currie informed us. Dublin, Wicklow, Wexford, Cork, Cavan, Donegal, you name it, all were represented at the meet.

Despite a dodgy forecast, Saturday offered the opportunity for a lovely paddle along the Clare shore of the Shannon Estuary. As we set out from Kilbaha taking advantage Martin Busher's invaluable local knowledge, the intrepid duo of Don O'Brien and Sean Pierce headed off for a look at Loop Head. The larger group began to make for a sea arch a mile or so to the west of Kilbaha but, given the swell, decided to turn for Carrigaholt making use of the following wind. Dave Walsh assured us that the wind, tide and current conditions along the way were fascinating and has offered to explain them. As I was just trying to keep a straight line at the time I will be taking him up on the offer.

Any spare attention available was being expended on the primary aim of the weekend i.e. Dolphin Watching. A suspicion is growing that Jackie Healy-Rae, worried about Dingle's long term viability, has reached an agreement with the Government. A flash of fin under Stephen's boat was the day's only reward and even it appeared to be heading towards Kerry. Perhaps Willie Stedmond's cedar strip boat looks just a little bit too like a whaling vessel.

We lunched in a sheltered cove about 2k short of our final destination where the dynamic duo rejoined the company. A bit of spice was added by the sight of the Marine Rescue Helicopter heading towards the head. We listened in on Des Keaney's VHF as 4 people were lifted off a dive boat and Fenit and Kilrush Lifeboats competed to reach the abandoned vessel first. Richie Dalton, undaunted by the previous nights experience, launched into a series of the jokes only he can tell.

After lunch we launched for another spotting attempt en route to port. One over eager paddler decided to make sure the Dolphins weren't just hiding on us and the cry of "swimmer" went up. Stephen, Don and Martin rushed to the rescue with Martina Butler and Dave retrieving paddles. A tight fitting spray deck allowed the cliffs to loom a little close and an anxious Des stood by to tow if necessary. On we made for Carrigaholt and the group split with 4 eternal optimists making for mid channel in a last vain attempt to spot Flipper. The last k or so proved to be more of a slog than expected so a steaming bowl of chowder in the local went down a treat. Sean, with a little help from local publican Mrs. Crotty provided the evenings entertainment.

Sunday seemed like a lovely day from the sheltered side of the hostel but a turn of the corner brought the sound of a force 6 in the rigging of yachts in the Marina. People disappeared to the harbour to look out towards Hog Island. Some of us even went so far as to have two looks. A strong flow with wind over tide gave a choppy looking sea so all but 8 opted for the Kilkee Cliff Walk. Those who ventured on the water were rewarded with visits to Hog and Scattery Islands. Those who gathered on the quay to watch our inevitable demise were instead treated to Sean and Don's imitation of Torville and Dean on the tidal flow. Dave took the opportunity to update Oileain with notes on the fabulous Round Tower, ruined churches and Gun Battery on Scattery Island. Eagle eye Des spotted a shorteared owl and a couple of Shelducks to keep the Twitchers happy. Ruth and Paul showed us how a ferry glide in a swift flow should be done as we raced to beat closing time at the lock. No not "The Lock" pub.

The paddle and the weekend ended in the style to which we have become accustomed with a HOT shower, soup and sandwich in the adventure centre beside the hostel.

News and Views

Virtual Irish Islands

Singly the most interesting development, in publishing terms, regarding Irish islands since Oileain in 1996, has arrived. Welcome please, perhaps a little surprisingly, a new web page for Saint Cronans School in Bray, County Wicklow. A very varied page, with lots of school projects advertised, they have included what started out as a study of population trends on Irish islands in the last two centuries or so (a frightening matter in itself), and has moved on to including a modern photographic study of the islands.

Now as it happens, every sea kayaker knows that the only people with endless photos of multitudinous islands are sea kayakers, and so it is in this instance. Some Irish sea kayaker seems to have supplied this page with lots of shots of remote marine places with sea kayakers lending the human touch.

If you fancy a treat, have a look at the web site

<http://indigo.ie/~cronews/islands/oil1.html>. Do remember though, and it is truly easy to forget, that this huge offering is but a piece of a larger webpage, so don't get lost, but if you do, the islands subpage is a subcategory under the Geography section.

David Walsh

Web Kayaking

The Web is a fascinating place to go kayaking. There are some super sites available. There are satellite photos of the North Atlantic updated every 30 minutes, an "Islands" web page based in a school in Bray, wind forecasts, technique articles, trip reports and so on.

If there is interest, I'll maintain and publish a list of interesting sites in each issue. Let me know of any you'd like included.

Irish Sea Kayaking Interest

"Islands of Ireland" page. Well worth a look.

<http://indigo.ie/~cronews/islands/oil1.html>

Irish Weather

Irish Internet Weather Centre

<http://www.locknet.com/client/gs/iw.html>

Irish Meteorological Society links

<http://indigo.ie/~kcommins/links.htm>

Irish Weather Forecasts and satellite maps from the Interactive Travel Guide to Ireland

<http://homepages.iol.ie/~discover/meteo1.htm>

Specific data and forecasts

RTE Sea Area Forecast from Aertel

<http://www.rte.ie/aertel/p162.htm>

Wind forecast map for the North Atlantic

ff.halo.hi.is/fcst

Satellite Photos

<http://www.sat.dundee.ac.uk/pdus/BI/>

Sea Kayaking Links

Florida Sea Kayaking Association

<http://www.jacksonville.net/~dldecker/fska.htm>

New South Wales Kayak Club pages

<http://www.nswseakayaker.asm.au/>

Bergen Canoe Club links

<http://www.nif.idrett.no/padling/world.html>

"Sea Kayaker" magazine

<http://www.seakayakermag.com>

ILENA site - a great site of manufacturers, organisations (inc. ISKA), weather, events, magazines, clubs, people

<http://www.ilena.demon.co.uk/>

Irish Surfing Information

http://www.surfsystem.co.uk/ireland_frame.html

Symposium '99

The '99 symposium will be on the October Bank Holiday. You'll have full details in the next issue in July.

Paul Durnan

Paul will be co-ordinating the **Training Section** of the newsletter from now on. So, if you're offering or looking for a relevant course, he's The Man. He can be contacted on 051 71301 or 086 813070

What's On??

Donegal Meet

Mayday Bank Holiday 1st-3rd May

The next meet is on the wild Donegal coast and will be based in Bunbeg. Those looking for a challenge will be aiming for Tory or a circumnavigation of Aran. Other options include Gola, the sea caves of Owey and there's the shelter of the Sound of Aran if it really blows up. With the three days of the Bank Holiday, we'll have plenty of time to explore the area.

We hope to meet up with Tollymore who are running an intro to sea kayak expeditioning. Give them a call if you'd like to turn the weekend into a course.

Accommodation will be in Tír na nÓg Hostel in Bunbeg (ph.075 31232). It's self catering, £10 per night with linen supplied but bring your own towel.

Be sure to book soon as they're guaranteed to be busy that weekend. If you need any further information, call Mary Butler on 074 28177.

Midsummer Meet

Strangford 18th- 20th June

ACKC invite ISKA sea paddlers to South Bay in Strangford Lough over the weekend of 18th 19th 20th June. Paddle the Rouden wheel or simply enjoy exploring the many Islands in the Lough.

Come prepared to camp and cook for yourself, there is water and toilets on site. We will provide the BBQ pit and Band on Saturday night in the lavish surroundings of the barn ! Arrive Friday night or Saturday morning. There will be a trip on Saturday and Sunday. Location near Portaferry GR J632485 (See Strangford Lough OS map, Sheet 21) If you are travelling from the South and need to get the Ferry from Strangford town to Portaferry the last one leaves Strangford at 11pm.

Contact Phil Beattie 0801 8206 51422 or Mike Barton 0801 3967 68285 for further details.

2nd International Sea Kayak Meet - Île de Batz, Brittany

From the 24th to 31st July, there is a meeting of European sea kayakers on the Île de Batz, 20 minutes by kayak from Roscoff. While you're expected to organise your own equipment and trips, local kayakers will be available to ensure your week is enjoyable.

The campsite is at the foot of the lighthouse, overlooking the beach. Charges are very reasonable and there is a water supply etc.. A 15FF contribution to mail costs will be requested on site.

The fundamental idea is meet new people and make new friends whilst retaining one's own freedom and independence and taking responsibility for one's own activities.

Anyone who has paddled in this beautiful part of Brittany will be familiar with the wonderful hospitality of the Breton paddlers. For further information, contact:

JM Terrade

Muriel Robert

534 rue Korn Yar

16 quai Pierre Brossolette

29250 Santec

94340 Joinville le Pont

bonvent @infini.fr

tec @ckmail.com

Escape to the Coast this Springtime

Books by Brian Wilson

Blazing Paddles

Brian's classic adventure of the Scottish coast. A well-written account of an epic 1800 mile journey, sometimes harrowing, frequently philosophical, often hilarious. The ideal companion for all lovers of the sea and shore. From BBC Radio 4 'Book at Bedtime' to Ceilidh Place Bookshop number one bestseller. Now in attractive paperback edition with revised photo section.

Special Offer IR£8

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Dances with Waves

Just out! The thrilling story of a 1200 mile journey round the coast of Ireland. Lashed by gales, dive bombed by incontinent gannets, kidnapped by pirates, befriended by dolphins – *Dances with Waves* is a tale of high adventure, seasoned with local myth, legend and history.

A great read for landlubbers and sea dreamers alike.

Special Offer IR£9

ISBN 0-86278-551-0

Order Form

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Add IR£1 P&P for each book. _____ Total

I enclose cheque made payable to **The Wildland Press** for Total _____

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If you would like any message or dedication on the books, please indicate below

MSR Vs. Trangia

Des Keaney

The debate has been going on for years... which is the better cooker? I've used both and have strong opinions on the pluses and minuses of each system.

Equipment

An MSR Dragonfly stove and one of the small Trangias (the kind that fit into a round 7" hatch). The equipment used is really only suitable for one person.

Cooking Speed

I did a comparative tests by bringing an uncovered pint of water to the boil in similar pots.

Cold Fuel

With the fuel and both cookers cold i.e. a normal setup situation,

MSR	4 minutes 20 seconds
Trangia	15 minutes, 5 seconds

Hot Fuel

Immediately after the first test...

MSR	3 minutes 35 seconds
Trangia	8 minutes 50 seconds.

Fuel availability

The MSR will burn just about anything from aviation fuel to ordinary petrol. The Trangia burns only meths. This can be a serious disadvantage as meths is not that easily available. The only fuel the MSR *will not* burn is meths as I found out to my cost. My diplomatic paddling partner chased away all helpful onlookers before pointing out that I'd attached the meths bottle to the MSR.

Cleanliness

The Trangia leaves a sooty residue on the base of the pot. This can be reduced by diluting the meths with water (1:10) but it also reduces the heat of the flame. The MSR is much cleaner.

Reliability

There is nothing to go wrong on the Trangia – it’s simplicity itself. While the MSR includes a basic repair kit (you can buy a more comprehensive one for around £15), it’s much more complicated, the plastic pump could be stronger and the repair kit is prone to rust if exposed to seawater.

Economy

In my rather unscientific test, the MSR is much more economical.

MSR 160ml per hour (unleaded petrol)

Trangia 250ml per hour (meths)

That means that the Trangia burns 56% more fuel by volume. It’s also important to note that the MSR was at full power which is really only used for boiling water, not for cooking.

Safety

The MSR MUST NOT be used in a closed bell end of a tent. The ignition process can be dangerous as are the CO2 emissions from the petrol. The Trangia can be used, with care. Both will singe your hands on lighting, If the ground is dry, the MSR ignition process may cook more than your food i.e. the surrounding countryside. NEVER add fuel to a lighted Trangia.

The Trangia is safer.

Weatherproof

Both are good in a wind. The MSR doesn’t like water e.g. a pot boiling over will extinguish the flame.

Size

Both pack down well. Don’t get the MSR with the rigid fuel line. The Trangia is a little more compact but you’ll need to carry more fuel. The MSR, which comes without pots, will pack inside the small Trangia.

Durability

You can’t beat the Trangia

Cost

The MSR is expensive (around £80) and you also have to buy pots. The Trangia is comparatively cheap (starting around £40, including pots).

Overall

	MSR	Trangia
Cooking Speed		
Fuel Availability		
Cleanliness		
Reliability/Durability		
Economy		
Safety		
Initial Cost		

They're both great cookers

If you want complete dependability at a low price and have room for fuel, bring the Trangia. If you want speed and fuel economy, bring the MSR. If you're in a group, bring both!

"Sea Kayaks Banned"

David Walsh

Could it ever happen here ? Could the discouragement of surfing at Strandhill (in the wake of the tragic drowning of two teenage swimmers last summer) be the thin end of a wedge? If only "they" knew. Beaches such as Strandhill are amongst the safest of venues that surfers use. Think of Tullan, Easkey, and Crab Island. I wonder what they'd say at sea kayaks surfing through sea arches out the back of Tory?

In France, kayakers are not allowed more than 2 miles off shore, need a licence for their boat, and cannot paddle at night. The lesson may be that were there a serious sea kayaking incident here, we could end up having all sorts of restrictions imposed on us.

Yet Irish sea kayakers are safe. We believe in safety in numbers, teamwork, cooperation, working for and with each other. We know that any group is stronger than its individuals, though weakened by its weakest member. The strong help the weak. The weak learn. We have common sense rules. We prepare properly. We only go out in conditions that we know we can handle.

All those who go to sea in small boats are well trained, because they have to be, and cautious, because their experience makes them so. That is why there are old sea kayakers, and bold sea kayakers, but no old bold

sea kayakers. We survive by our good sense, and we get our good sense from our training and our experience. Training and experience are two peas in a pod. Experience without training is the slow track to staying alive.

Only raw recruits should need to be "brought out to sea for a paddle". No one should enter their second summer in sea kayaking without entering the organised proficiency training available cheaply in Ireland from the Irish Canoe Union and others. There is simply no excuse for not being, fairly soon, a competent sea going group member, and soon enough after that, a leader. The sea simply won't go on forgiving your arrogance. Respect the sea and you will always be at risk when you are out there. Don't, and "risk" is far too mild an expression altogether.

Boat Stolen

A 17', all yellow fibreglass sea kayak was stolen from Garadice Lake, Ballinamore, Co.L Leitrim in the early summer of 1998. It had a large cockpit with a white seat and had had some recent repairs to the underside in white fibreglass.

If you're aware of the whereabouts of the above, Gabriel Toolan will be very pleased to hear from you at 078-44004(w) or 049-33350 (h)

£££ Offer

As an incentive to improve your skills this year, we're offering a training subsidy.

How Much? We'll pay IR£30 or 50% of the cost, whichever is lower.

How many? Only the first 4 applicants will be accepted.

How do I apply? Enrol for the course and send a photocopy of your application and payment to the Editor.

How do I get the dosh? Tell the Editor when you've completed the course and we'll send you a cheque.

Who is eligible? Anyone who is a paid up or honorary member of the ISKA on the 31st of March 1999. Each member may only apply once.

What courses are eligible?

Any courses leading to

- ICU or BCU personal proficiency (Sea)
- ICU or BCU instructorship (Sea)
- REC qualification

These courses must be run by a qualified instructor who is based on the island of Ireland. You do not have to have a qualification at the end of the course. For example, a Level 4 or 4 star training course is quite acceptable.

Time limit Courses must be started before the 31st of December 1999. Those already completed don't count – sorry!

The final decision as to eligibility rests with the Chairman and his decision is binding

Courses

Paul Durnan

It is important to realise the need for training. Is it time to think about doing that course in personal proficiency or of starting an instructorship? If not then consider the importance of a R.E.C. (Rescue Emergency Care) course as none of us knows what future sea trips will throw our way. There is no substitute for being prepared.

Sea Trips/Expeditions

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u> <u>Cost</u>		<u>Centre</u>
30 th Apr-3 rd May	Intro. Sea Kayak Expedition	Tollymore	GB£90
28 th June-1 st July	Sea Week (Trips daily)	Russagh O.E.C	
1 st – 6 th Aug IR£385	Connemara Island hopping		Saoirse na Mara
15 th -21 st Aug IR£385	Connemara Island hopping		Saoirse na Mara
25 th - 0 th Aug IR£385	Connemara Island hopping		Saoirse na Mara
22-28 th Aug GB£240	Skye Expedition		Tollymore
18 th -24 th July IR£620	Feroy Norway		Saoirse na Mara
25 th -29 th July IR£620	Feroy Norway		Saoirse na Mara
1 st -7 th Aug IR£620	Feroy Norway		Saoirse na Mara
8 th -14 th Aug IR£620	Feroy Norway		Saoirse na Mara
18 th -19 th Sept.	Saltees – Intro to Sea Touring	Saoirse na Mara	IR£75

Sea Proficiency Courses

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u> <u>Cost</u>	<u>Centre</u>
2 nd -3 rd May	Level 3&4 Prof. Train & Assess.	Russagh OEC
9 th -10 th May	Level 3&4 Prof. Train & Assess	Russagh OEC
15 th -16 th May	Level 3 Prof. Train & Assess.	Russagh OEC
3 rd - 4 th July	Level 5 Sea Prof. Training	Saoirse na Mara, Achill IR£75
28 th June-1 st July	General Sea Prof. Training	Russagh OEC
10 th -12 th July	Level 3 Sea Prof.	S. na Mara, Connemara IR£95
17 th -18 th July	Level 3&4 Prof. Train & Assess.	Russagh OEC
9 th -10 th October	Level 4 Sea Prof. Training	S. na Mara, Connemara IR£75
13 th -14 th Nov.	Level 5 Sea Prof. Assessment	Saoirse na Mara, Achill IR£75

Sea Instructor Course

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u> <u>Cost</u>	<u>Centre</u>
17-18 th July	Level 3 Sea Instructorship	Saoirse na Mara

REC Courses

Note: REC 2 = REC Emergency is a prerequisite for Level 5 Sea Proficiency. REC 3 = REC Standard and is a prerequisite for Level 3 Sea Instructor. REC Emergency is a prerequisite for REC Standard. REC Accelerated combines REC Emergency and REC Standard into one 3 day weekend. Follow that if you can!

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u> <u>Cost</u>	<u>Centre</u>
17 th -18 th Apr IR£60	REC for Canoeists (REC 2)	ICU
23 rd -25 th Apr GB£92	REC Advanced	Tollymore
24 th -25 th Apr IR£99	REC Standard	Tiglin
1 st - 3 rd May IR£165	REC Accelerated	Tiglin
15 th - 16 th May IR£99	REC Emergency	Tiglin

21st– 24 th May	REC Accelerated	Tollymore	GB£140
31 st Jul – 2 nd Aug IR£165	REC Accelerated	Tiglin	
3 rd – 5 th Sept GB£115	REC Refresher	Tollymore	
3 rd – 5 th Sept GB£92	REC Emergency	Tollymore	
8 th – 10 th Oct GB£92	REC Standard	Tollymore	
10 th – 12 th Nov GB£140	REC Accelerated	Tollymore	

CONTACT LIST

Jim Kennedy, Atlantic Sea Kayaking, 028 33002, atlanticseakayaking @tinet.ie

Mick Murphy, Richie Keating, Russagh Mill Adventure Centre, 028 23238

Stephen Hannon, Saoirse Na Mara, 01 2855364, stephenh @iol.ie

Tollymore Mountain Centre, 08013967 22158, admin @tollymore.com

ICU, (01) 4509838, office@irishcanoeunion.ie

Tiglin REC Offer

Tiglin are keen to do a deal on a REC course if we come up with 6 -8 people. As well as a reduced price, they will tailor the course to the needs of a sea kayaker. If you're interested, tell the Editor.

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Short Courses

For those completely new to kayaking, **Jim Kennedy** is offering introductory courses each Saturday from his centre in West Cork. On Sundays he offers a short sea trip to cave/arches and wildlife. One of the unique trips is a 'Full Moon' paddle.

From Clare to Mayo

The trip continues...

Seán Pierce

Furrera Strand, Co. Clare to Golam Head, Co. Galway. 8th August 1998.

My wife Ann had dropped me back to this now very familiar strand on the evening of 7th. Camped overnight and the 6.00am call from Radio 1 augured well, the wind had decided to take a rest and ease down to a threeish! I was eager to be away. County Clare had been tough to crack and had taken far longer than I had expected.

I pushed away from the beach at Furrera Strand with both a sense of relief and of mounting anticipation. The relief stemmed from the feeling that today I might crawl out of Co. Clare. However the outer end of the Cliffs of Moher were unknown to me so there was a slight sense of the what ifs! Hags Head loomed out of a heavy brooding sky and I passed well out to sea avoiding the worst of the boomers. A decision was needed, cruise up under the famous Cliffs in tourist mode or be a hero and put some mileage in? "Put the mileage in you wimp!" was the rapid response from my little inner man and so heavy slogging was called for as I "aimed off" for Inisheer, the closest of the Aran Islands.

The passage was lively in a beam sea but the Fulmars and Manx Shearwaters came again to visit and buzz the boat thereby easing the flow of moans and groans. The fact that I now regularly talked to myself had ceased to amaze me and on occasions I quite surprised myself with the standard of conversation! The tide was running hard against me as I eased my way around the NE corner of Inisheer. A bit of a struggle and with a real sense of relief I continued to the beach and harbour at An Baile Thios.

"Another classic Irish summer's day" I reflected as I brewed up on the beach. Got talking as usual to people passing and spent an hour comparing the curraghs, all beetle like, resting on their beer barrels waiting for the next day's racing. The decision to pull away from all these interesting places was one of the negative sides of the trip and interestingly, became harder the further I travelled.

The days paddling was now focused along the northern side of the Aran Islands and apart from the odd roller in the sounds, the paddling conditions were the easiest in days. I meandered my way across to Inishmaan and then Inishmor, landing briefly on both. On Inishmaan I had the beautiful beach at Ceann Gainimh to myself while on Inishmor I watched a local man catch pollock on every throw of his line. Consumed with curiosity, I tried out my best Munster Irish on him! He explained the secret was in the way you present the crabs to the fish and enquired as to where I was bound. Pointing across to Golam Head on

the Connemara coast he reckoned on 2 hours in my craft. The crossing of Galway Bay was a pleasure. The sun came out, the wind dropped away to nothing and the sea calmed to glass. I had camped at Golam Head before and I was looking forward to revisiting a very attractive spot. I eased the kayak ashore on a most beautiful evening. It had been a long day but one that had truly rewarded the effort. A local fisherman was caulking his lobster boat and we chatted for a spell. I then cooked a long, calorie loaded dinner, went into photographic mode and even had a swim! I climbed a small hill to watch a lovely sunset and take a few calls on the mobile phone. All was well until the mossies arrived, the only night on the entire trip I encountered them!

Golam Head to Doonloughan Harbour

9th August 1998

What a lovely morning. A party of Whimbrel woke me at dawn calling incessantly and reminding me that autumn had started for the birds. I was looking forward to the day, the weather had at last a settled look to it and the Connemara coast has it all for the paddler.

Lingering over a leisurely breakfast listening to the natural sounds of sea and skylarks I planned the days paddle. I just revelled in the luxury of trying to decide between Oileain mac Dara or Croaghnakeeragh for lunch? Mac Dara's is a personal favourite of mine but my thoughts were disturbed with the arrival of Josie Gibbons and his wife Maire from Connemara. I detected that a day's paddling had been negotiated and I was delighted to have a local pilot! Josie and I have paddled this stretch of coast several times and we both enjoy the very individual "feel" to the islands along Josie's home stretch.

We were away by 10.00am. I was slow to leave Golam Head it was looking particularly attractive in the morning sunshine. Curlew, more Whimbrel and Common Sandpipers were disturbed as we pulled out into the bay and pointed our kayaks NW (nice feeling that). The coast opened out in front of us giving stunning views of the islands and the Twelve Ben. By midday we were off MacDara's but, as Josie had pointed out, it was not quite halfway and furthermore we had not visited Croaghnakeeragh before. How can you argue against that! It was time to bag another island. There is no obvious landing beach on Croaghnakeeragh so we hauled out seal fashion on the kelp-covered rocks near the beacon.

Lunch was wolfed and Josie was off to explore. We tried in vain to locate an oratory shown on the map and found the islands vegetation of low furze and heather uncompromising! Relunched thoroughly peppered and headed for Slyne Head.

We were fully aware of the reputation of Slyne and of the boomers and breakers in the shallows of Ballyconneely Bay. However given the conditions, we had a very pleasant passage on a flooding tide and although tired, we enjoyed the last 4 kms to the picturesque harbour at Doonloughan. We were satisfied with our day and it was a nice one for Josie after the battles of the Clare coast. He could not give any more time to the trip but Máire arrived with a bottle of wine and dinner and we had a small celebration! They had both made my passage from Clare to Galway very enjoyable and their hospitality was tremendous. I sadly waved goodbye and lit a fire on the beach in the gathering gloom.

The fire crackled and I have to admit to sneaking a little tot from that little recess that all kayak makers leave in the bow for whiskey heads!

Doonloughan Harbour to Clare Island

10th August 1998

Maybe it was the Jameson or maybe it was the excitement of seeing sunshine all day the day before! At any rate I woke feeling jaded having heard the birds calling all night... 1am, 2am rang out. I crashed and then... it was 6am? Strange... grog!

I dozed through the weather but registered that I could have an unprecedented third day! The summer had arrived. I must admit that I celebrated the fact by going back to bed! Of course, woke in a lather to find the day at 8.15am. It was a gorgeous morning. A light southerly rippled the surface and those blasted Whimbrel were at it again. Parties of 35-40 birds all passing south yelling their heads off. Two fishermen arrived and we chatted over a mug of tea. They were off laying pots for the day and wished me well. The fishermen all around the coast have been great, taking an interest in the trip and giving advice on the best way to tackle the next section of coast.

Slipped away from another memorable mooring down the channel into Mannin Bay. I was back solo paddling and the now familiar mixture of excitement and caution dominated my thoughts. The first hour spent in assessing the water and testing the old body. How tired are you really? No way are you getting a soft day! "Enjoy the weather boy and get up the coast!" The inner man always seems to win so I plough on. Mannin Bay was heaving a bit and I was surprised by the odd huge lift over so me underwater shoal. The scenery was superb. The Ben was now behind me Mweelrea and the Mayo Mountains dominated my views to shore. Seaward, Cruagh, High Island, Inishshark and Inishbofin all vied for my attention. So many projects to do in the future. What a place!

The problem of lunch again began to surface. More happy decisions... what a choice! "Hmmn, Inishbofin perhaps?" but the old distance animal within reminded me that it was not on route and that the last time I was there I had a pint in the far too convenient hotel! No, far too tempting. Instead a solitary place was called for and Inishlyon just off the eastern end of 'Bofin was en route. Nice bit of excitement in the tidal push off Lyon Head reminded me I was getting soft. I found a long narrow ge o, tied off the kayak and brewed up. Enjoying the heat and the solitude, I peeled off and decided to even out my tan!

A pleasant hour. I calculated my chances and decided that I was not going to get it this good very often. I crossed the sound towards Davillaun, cut through the narrow gap between it and Ox Island and got briefly buzzed by two Dolphins. They were really moving, pushing hard out to sea and gone in seconds.

A super crossing to Inishturk followed. A following breeze and sea, glorious sunshine, and fantastic views all round. Was this the same trip? The Storm Petrels kept me company all day. I noticed that anywhere there was some surface turbulence they tended to feed in those areas. They help to make the more open crossings interesting. Pulled into the harbour at Inishturk with serious intent in mind. I had visions of murdering a pint! You cannot imagine my despair when a yachtsman anchored against the harbour wall told me I would have to walk half the island to get one! What? No bar on the pier? A local fisherman stuck his head out over his boat and commiserated! Well! Blast it! I was stumped! I smiled weakly at my tormentors but my disappointment stopped all further jokes. I was invited on board the yacht and I swapped stories for a few Buds... ah relief! Brian the skipper knew the area well and cruised it regularly during the summer months. He recommended the hotel on Clare Island for grub and the main beach for camping so I hit the sea again and slogged it out to Clare Island. What a lovely place. Another island first for me and I was making plans for yet another weekend trip.

The hotel was checked out and found wanting in good company. I was too tired to await the real opening hours after midnight.

Clare Island to Achill Sound Bridge

11th August 1998

I woke to the sounds of fishing boats putting to sea. The morning was pleasant enough, wind still from the south but the skies had become overcast. A change was on the way. I longed to linger and explore the island but the drive to go north prevailed. I was finding increasingly difficult to pull myself away from each new area as the trip progressed. I potted about the harbour and took advantage of the hotel toilet facilities to wash and shave..ahh luxury!

As I prepared to head to sea I met and talked to various holiday makers, some of whom were "island specialists" and were very much up to speed on Oileain via the Net. I was surprised that non -kayakers would take such an interest but as they explained, the document was clear, concise and summarised the main features of the islands. I made a mental note report back to dwalco @iol.ie.

The trip to Achill I had decided would be through the Sound. The forecast had given an "increasing blow 5 - 7 ish from the SW". It was time to "chicken Shute" and take the inside passage. That decision gave me a lazy day as I would have to wait on tide conditions at Achillbeg.

The trip across to Achill was wild. The wind had lost no time in getting up and I was soon "scudding" towards the sound at a fair old lick. The views towards Achill and its rugged western side were tremendous. I was enjoying myself thoroughly.

The turbulence at the entrance to the sound was impressive. The water was emptying from the inner bays and the strong SW wind was whipping up a good old froth. I played for a while in the waves until that 'inner man' again hammered on the tummy walls for eats! Beached the kayak on a lovely quiet stretch of sand on Achillbeg and after the brew up, went into exploration mode. I passed a very evocative few hours around the old schoolhouse and ruins of the island. I didn't meet a sinner. I was enjoying the novelty of being able to explore take a few photographs and walk! The day however was changing rapidly and the wind by midday was gale force with heavy squalls. I entered the inner estuary and had a rather comical passage up to the Achill Sound Bridge. I surfed from sandbank to sandbank with a curious feeling of being surrounded by land!. Everytime I hit a shallow spot the kayak was spun around and I had a hell of a job holding onto my paddles. Did a 360 for lousy technique and suffered the final indignity of having to haul the kayak the last 200 yards to the bridge!!

It was bucketing down at this stage and as I fought to get the tent up, a German chap with perfect English appeared from nowhere. I couldn't figure it out at first but after we succeeded in getting the tent to behave itself, I noticed a crowd of onlookers viewing our performance. I had managed to pick a campsite immediately opposite a hostel and must have presented the occupants with a rare insight into a certain type of Irishman!

Cooked and considered my position. Be a hero and stay out in the rain or admit you were the only person in the world that did not know there was a hostel at Achill Sound Bridge? My pride won and I stayed out. A bad decision as it proved later! I rambled across to Angel's Bar for a pint and some planning. A great big barn of a bar providing everything from meals to pool tables, 4 TV's, all going simultaneously, a juke box and some drunken youths playing darts. This was the "Real Ireland" all right, I reflected. What a day of contrasts. I never met Angela and retired before the row started. My night consisted of the tent being shaken to death and rain hammering on the canvas.

Achill Sound Bridge to Belmullet

12th August 1998

A fairly mixed nights sleep but a couple of "super" earplugs fashioned from the first aid kit gave me some relief from the noise. I was away from a singularly unattractive campsite by 9.00am. The wind fresh out of the NW was going to make for another log day at the office.

The Pilot had said not to underestimate the flow at the Bulls Mouth and I was fairly horsed about in the race. Wind and rollers, character building stuff dominated the paddle across towards Blacksod Point!. As I neared Kinfalta Point on the eastern side of Blacksod Bay, my mind was increasingly focused on a huge need to "off load some ballast". I was getting quite desperate but the shoreline was rocky and reef strewn. A patch of sand that I reckoned was feasible to beach at concentrated the mind. I turned the kayak towards shore desperate for relief.

Instinctively I registered "bad move boyo" and the manual screamed "lee shore, lee shore!" On cue, a green meanie rose behind me and I thought "Oh shit". I felt that awful sucking as the kayak was pulled onto the roller. All hell broke loose and with all types of slaps and braces I managed to stay upright. I had a few seconds to get some backward momentum going before being sent shorewards again at speed. I registered an ugly rocky bottom and backpaddled like crazy. This went on for a few more waves and either I got better or the waves got smaller but I found myself in safer water. "Jesus" I thought, "that was sloppy" and the recriminations followed. I stormed "adrenaline pumped" around Kinfalta Point, beached the kayak and peeded tremendously!

Phew! I stayed on the beach for a while and had lunch. The afternoon's paddle was instantly forgettable - just a straightforward battle of wills and I glad to reach Belmullet.

Some young lads on the beach helped me up with the kayak and I soon turned the harbour wall into a drying room. Brewed up and soaked up the warmth of the late afternoon's sun until my hosts, Ken and Maeve arrived. They had tried to locate me off the Blacksod Lighthouse earlier in the day but had been successful given the swells.

I relaxed into what was going to be two days of tremendous hospitality at Carrowteigue.

Ken and Maeve are friends from Skerries know the north Mayo coast well. We drove on to Rinroe Point and Portacloy planning out my next leg. What a coastline! A predinner pint, followed by a meal, conversation and a little wine left me relaxed and mellow!. I was satisfied with another good day's mileage.

Next issue..... Belmullet to Glencolmcille.

Prosecution

Or the Tale of the Frozen Friesian.

Last August, a paddler set out alone against an awful forecast (if he heard it) from NW mainland Germany to the island Langeness in "Riddle of the Sands" country. He got into trouble. Nothing exceptional perhaps except that as he floundered in the water, a ferry passed him, quite nearby, and several passengers, who saw him waving his paddle, reported his plight to the captain, then assumed all was alright when the ferry didn't stop. In fact the captain ignored the information.

The paddler died, from hypothermia. The body washed up eventually. Some passengers heard the news on radio, and reported the captain of the ferry, who is now being prosecuted.

On land it is quite legal to ignore anyone needing assistance and even a doctor can ignore anyone needing attention. Not so at sea. There are international conventions, but in Germany there is also a specific criminal law and they intend roasting the bad guy.

David Walsh

Causeway Coast Paddling Schedule

The ISKA have a reciprocal membership agreement with the CCKA. They'll be happy to have you along on their Tuesday evening paddles. Start time is 7:00 p.m.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Contact</u>
24/04	Surfing session at West Strand, Portrush	Paul Blanchard (08)012657 31663
27/04	Surfing session at White Rocks Beach	Mark Dick (08)01266 45967
04/05	Sea trip. Portstewart – Portandhu	Ivor Neill (08)01265 329051
11/05	Sea trip. Portballintrae – Portandhu	Norman Rowe (08) 01265 824190
25/05	Sea trip. Portballintrae – Dunseverick	Aubery Beggs (08) 01265 44693
01/06	Sea trip. Dunseverick – Ballintoy	Robert Walker (08) 01265 834109
08/06	Sea trip. Ballycastle – Ballintoy	Robin Ruddock (08) 01265 823871
22/06	Sea trip to the Skerries + Bar-b-q + music	Robin Ruddock (08) 01265 823871

A Stormy Lahinch

Ruth Bracken

The near gale-force wind fairly pummelled my eager little sea-kayak as it bobbed it's way northwards along the coast heading for Lahinch on the roofrack of my car. Having driven about 170 miles my big fear now was, would I be able to get the boat down off the car? In view of the waves I'd seen as I made my way along the coast and the weather forecast which I nonetheless assumed must be total exaggeration, it seemed inconceivable that any salt water other than spray would touch my boat this weekend.

The ten o'clock rendezvous on the Lahinch prom happened at about 10.15 in the Lahinch Hostel. With my raincoat zipped up and my woolly hat plucked down about my ears I made my way from the car into the hostel kitchen. I was greeted by Dave Walsh, whose face lit up in a huge smile on seeing me. He opened his arms wide and blurted out, "Ah, Ruth, just the right person!" as he grabbed my woollen hat and placed it snugly on his tea-pot! So much for being appreciated!

With the arrival of Stephen Hannon, who was giving the course, the group got down to discussions on how best to achieve our aim (i.e. learn surfing for sea-kayaking) in spite of the adverse conditions. He told us that, as we could see, Lahinch was too rough and messy and that Spanish point might not be any better. Just to prove that he was right we made our way to Spanish Point, had one look at the ferocious waves and agreed to abandon Plan A.

Plan B took us to New Quay some 40 miles away near Ballyvaughan to a little harbour behind a pub. The white horses were in fine fettle when we finally put in at the pier. It was decided to head up -wind and out to sea for as long as we could. This wasn't surfing, but it sure stirred up a jumble of memories from all those talks and books on wind against/behind wave, and calculations on paddling rate plus or minus wind, plus or minus tide. God! It's all so clear when you're reading it from your armchair!

As I battled forwards trying not to go backwards, I wondered what would happen when it would eventually be time to turn around. But in the event the necessary manoeuvre was just a breeze accompanied by some floundering braces and muttered swear words. But God! What a thrill to see the land career past with just a few gentle paddle strokes.

After that there followed a session of kayak randori, as we each set ourselves little tasks and aimed to reach chosen points by whatever combination of techniques we might. It was great being able to try out such things knowing that there were plenty experts around and that the wind was on -shore.

Post-paddle activities commenced with chowder or soup in the pub just behind us where we jostled for seats nearest the fire. Then the convoy of some seven cars took off again across the Burren back to Lahinch. Later, quite a few of us gathered for something to eat in O' Looney's the sea -front pub in Lahinch. Then off to another pub called the Corner Stone. The plan was to try this one for a while, but we all got very happy and comfortable there and only left it when ready to call it a night.

The following morning in the hostel kitchen I couldn't help musing about issues like the passing of time as the various arrivals commented on "the great night's sleep" they'd had. Whatever became of "What a great night" everyone had?

Just as well, however, as there was plenty more in store for us on Sunday thanks to the undauntability of Stephen. He'd come to teach us to surf...and teach us to surf he would!

This time the convoy struck out for Tracht Beach, a little nearer to Kinvara. We studied wind force and direction to start with and were thus able to make an informed decision as regards which side of the public toilets to get changed on.

I don't know what impression the passers-by had but we were very taken with Stephen's clear, concise explanation and car-park demonstration of the essentials of surfing. He achieved the various effects of running down the front of a wave, or bracing sideways onto a braking wave or whatever by expertly propping boats on top of each other on the tarmac and hopping aboard. No need for an audio -visual workshop when you have Stephen improvising the close ups, stills, reruns or anything else you might fancy!

And it worked extremely well on the sea also. At first the waves weren't great but we got to apply the basic techniques – stern rudder on the down-wave side, leaning forward as appropriate, etc. And then just as we were getting reasonably handy at all that and the tide was coming in quite far, the waves improved in volume and regularity so we really could surf as intended.

No doubt Stephen had it planned that way all along. First the awe -inspiring conditions at Spanish Point to psyche us out and tame us into compliance. Then the hard slog up -wind rewarded by elation on the ripping return trip to New Quay harbour. And finally, finding the crest of the wave and running zigzag before it. So now we're ready for anything thanks to you Stephen. Just tell us where to go next.

Boat Wanted

Secondhand sea kayak. Contact John Keogh, 01-2981795(h)

Around Ireland '99

Mike Barton and Stephen Campbell, members of ACKC, are embarking from Annalong (on the South Down coast) on the 1st July for a clockwise circumnavigation of Ireland. They will probably be on the Cork and Kerry coast by the 3rd week in July. Keep an eye out for them, the camaraderie of ISKA would be very welcome, particularly paddling companions and hot showers! You can contact Stephen on his mobile telephone (0411 712226).

Solo... you can go your own way

Brian Ormond

In the Spring of 1994 I visited a Mr. J. Kennedy in West Cork. He suggested that we go canoeing. I enquired whether I should wear fingerless gloves... that was how little I knew about the sport. Now Jimmy didn't have to do too much except keep an eye on me. I like challenges and this method of transport certainly could keep me busy for a while. We ventured out of the bays, climbing waves, surfing floods, island hopping, and rescuing sheep off cliffs and beaching to eat Tony Bullimore style food and to stock up on calories. I was already hooked and not just to the cocoa bean.

Returning to Baile Atha Cliath, I enrolled in a basic course and rolled into the weirs at Palmerstown. The only mistake they made was on the last day to bring us to Ireland's Eye in river canoes. Seals, seabirds, vast open space, cliffs, waves, oops, I would not be returning to the river. Next thing was to find out as much as possible about this sea kayaking caper. I went to the local canoe club AGM and made enquiries to the seafaring bearded gentlemen chattering away about their ventures on the high seas.

They seemed wise and very content with life. They told me stories of how difficult it was to purchase a second-hand kayak in Ireland, that there were some group events, but that most paddlers did their own thing, even when someone organises an event! These were very hard creatures to try to paddle with, they told me. Well they were kinda right. I was unable to purchase a second hand kayak but there were many shops keen to do a deal.

The first trips were solo as I didn't know anyone with this kind of vessel. I remember the voyages in Cork Harbour, always thinking what would happen if I capsized knowing damn well that it would not be advisable to swim and abandon the kayak but also knowing that there were strong currents and shipping lanes (lets not talk about the ramming pilot boats). Little can I believe that I did a three day trip on the coast without spare paddles, paddle float, flares, radio... Jesus man...

Dave Walsh and Des Keaney motivated a lot of paddlers in the right direction and between weekends away, magazines and courses, some of us lucky chaps became more informed. Now, I would not leave

home without not one but all of the above. Nothing takes more priority, they are all most essential second to common sense.

I really enjoy going out in groups. There is so much to learn and share. But there are many occasions when I end up by myself and yes, it does have its advantages. Make sure that you carry enough food in your cockpit as on your own you may not get a chance to go ashore where you wish and you cannot get to one of your hatches ! Always carry plenty of accessible water, wear your lifejacket and have flares and a vhf to hand.

I store an enormous plastic bottle, with one end cut off, under my seat.

This serves as a piss bottle for those moments that you are out at sea and you just can't hang on any more. I'm told that it's very good to drink lots of water and yes I do. When in a chop do be careful that you do not dedicate all your attention to relieving yourself! And please do not ask me to design a lady's version, I cannot even advise women how they should tackle this procedure! Take time to work out your route, the tides and currents you will encounter and most importantly your escape routes if the need arises.

I live right by the sea. I work mostly from home and so, if the tide is in, I have a spare hour or four for lunch, it's particularly calm or invitingly choppy, I cycle on my salt air fuelled bike the whole three minutes down the hill, jump over the wall and there's my kayak on the side of the beach.

There's no need to tell any one (or so I like to think) in communities like this many people notice what you are getting up to ! Locals have got used to seeing me battling against a force five, not out at sea, but in one of the many sheltered bays. But Kieran, the local lifeboat coxswain, told me that you could fire twenty flares off the coast and nobody would see them. This really shocked me as I was relying on these for my survival. I rapidly purchased a VHF. However, under the cliffs, on the far side of an island or even in a high swell where the aerial of the radio will not be high enough to receive or transmit the coverage can be quite poor, even on the calmest of days.

The distant trawlers and little shipping give me little consolation, that's if they are even looking this way or the radios are turned on ! Remember also that you are not always seen no matter how bright your clothes are. You cannot rely on other people. You must be able to fend for yourself.

Telling people where you are going and when you are returning is a sensible wee chore before you set out. Once while kayaking in a large well known Irish bay (is that vague enough) I noticed a lot of people running along the pier walls towards me. Baffled with their sudden sprinting on a nice blustery Sunday afternoon I chanced to look around only to see a grand large lifeboat looming down on me. She stayed with me until the port master assured them that I was standing on the shore. Yes, I had flares, paddles and all the gear. But no I hadn't called her out, I was mortified and upset that the crew had to get up from their family dinners to go out after a false alarm. Someone sitting in a pub had seen me and then between drinks and sea mists couldn't see me again. Look, I didn't call you but hey please do come out the next time if you see me in trouble, please ! I had told someone where I was going and when I was coming back, it did not make a difference. Many times I have gone out, only to have to rush back, abandoning some exciting location or situation so that I didn't get someone to raise an alarm because I had overstayed my time. One has to be very clear with the routing and timing and especially the return time.

When I started this form of travel I used to keep going to and through any situation that arose. I never had fear, 'twas like getting behind the wheels of a fast car in the desert, like ripping down an off road path on a mountain bike. Well, at least that was on the ground, now what we are talking about is a little fragile kayak in hundreds of fathoms of water. Nothing would scare me, waves, fog or rocks. But I started to realise the consequences if I got into trouble. It never dawned on me that I would be putting myself (and others) at risk, not thinking that I was immortal or anything, just that it could never happen to me, now how could it?

Once I was faced with a situation where to go forward would be risky, initially I proceeded but then thought for a moment and stopped and turned back. Believe me, it was a changing moment in my life. The adrenaline in deciding to turn back was amazing. Since then I know when I have reached the limit, the risk element limit.

Its essential when kayaking alone that you know your limits!

If you intend to go kayaking for more than two days and intend to camp on islands or beaches, there are certain things to take into account if travelling alone. The main issue is safety and this should always be a priority no matter what your intentions are. It is a good idea to advise local radio stations, passing boats and friends of your intentions. It is also essential to advise them of your safe arrival. When camping on your own, everything becomes a little harder and takes a longer time to set up.

With some local short excursions you can find what way things suit you and what you need to bring. I carry as little as possible but still carrying the vital essentials. This is important as I can string my tent, sleeping bag, mat, cooking gear, change of clothes and food over my shoulders and carry them all at once up to the tent site. There is nothing worse than making umpteen journeys up and down to the waterfront.

I immediately set up the tent as the weather in Ireland can change so quick and it gives immediate protection for belongings. One must put a bit of extra thought into solo tent erecting unless you have a very small basic tent. Make sure that you peg the base down as you do not want to be scampering down a hillside chasing your house as it blows across the sea! I like to face the door to the west as you'll get that extra few minutes of light in the evening however you'll miss that sunrise when you wake up. There's no feng shui layout in my abode, it's all about wind direction, condition of the ground and what I need to store inside. When all is set up and the food is cooking, I bring the kayak up above the high water line. There is no way one could carry a kayak by yourself fully loaded, at least you stand some chance if it's empty.

Camping and soloing on your own is great, if you need space there's lots of time to think, write and read. Although it is super to share the experience. But it is possible to meet lots of people, visit moored yachts and discuss routes, chat away for hours with friendly fishermen and of course there's always the reliable local pub.

Next day, I carry the kayak to the water before I load it. I do stretch exercises before any paddle as its good to make your body a bit supple before undertaking such a demanding exercise as a day's paddling.

I do not have any definite psychology about solo paddling. I just get on with it, feel part of the environment. I listen to the waves, feel the wind, treasure the sun rays and time flies as my mind leaps from one thought to another. I am always in touch with where I am and what I am doing, but hey, I do dream so hard. And when I am out there I am known to sing loud and yes, mostly out of tune!

Rough Stuff

Paddle Review

Declan Donnelly

When buying a new sea paddle about a year ago, I decided to splash out on a Rough Stuff paddle. It was expensive but I have not been disappointed. Two words could be used to describe this paddle "strong" and "light". On the kitchen scales mine weighs 925 grams. Despite its light weight, the paddle does not feel flimsy. The blades are strong and move through the water without flutter. They leave all the water in the sea so there is no need for drip rings.

Mine are 218 centimetres long from tip to tip and feathered to a 70 degree angle to reduce the risk of developing tenosynovitis. I have had no problems and enjoy paddling with them. A slight hiccup occurred when I bought the paddle and discovered that it was a few centimetres shorter than I had ordered. I returned it unused and received a replacement paddle without question.

For the technically minded, the blades are made of layers of carbon fibre and diolen (14 layers narrowing to 4) on a titanal spigot. Rough Stuff guarantee that the neck won't break. They are "Tempest" paddles which have had about twenty per cent of the blade area trimmed away (mostly from the sides) to produce a blade more suitable for the sea. The result is a blade which is smaller than the Lendal Nordkapp. I find it comfortable to paddle with and manageable in wind. The paddle shaft (a Lendal) is 15 per cent carbon fibre and 85 per cent glass fibre hence it is strong and doesn't become cold in winter.

All this carbon results in a black paddle. The colour is not ideal for the sea but Rough Stuff can apply dayglo colours or you can add reflective strips for that flash-flash effect well known to West Coast fishermen.

Rough Stuff will make the paddle to whatever length and feather it to whatever angle you require. It costs £169 (dayglo colours are £4 extra), Its not cheap but I don't think it will let me down and that's worth a lot.

Come and Try It Weekend

The "Come and Try It" Weekend is on the 11th and 12th of September, the weekend after the Liffey Descent.

If any of your river buddies are interested in trying a sea kayak at minimal expense, talk to David Walsh. The 10 ICU Skerrays will be available and we may even be able to swing some extra boats.

A reminder that this is not for complete beginners. It's aimed at those who have at least paddled before although this does not have to have been in sea kayaks.

We'll have full details in the next issue.

BOOK REVIEW

Sea Kayak Navigation

By Franco Ferrero

Review by Gordon Brown

This latest offering from Franco Ferrero, head of canoeing and kayaking at Plas y Brenin, is a long awaited manual for the sea paddler. Whether you are a novice starting out on your first attempt to cross your local water or a more accomplished paddler looking for an easier way to work out your passage planning then this book is well worth the buying.

The layout of the book is good with an index that lets accomplished navigators find the relevant section that they require. There is also a good contents list which the novice will find very useful. Topics such as tidal theory, buoyage and the compass are covered in enough detail to introduce these aspects of navigation to the beginner while still refreshing memories of a distant past for others. However, Franco has understandably placed more emphasis on the actual nitty gritty of navigating your kayak.

I think that Franco is gradually becoming less of a Jerseyman and more of a Welshman with some of the spellings. However this is not a criticism, more an observation. There is enough humour within the text and accompanying good illustrations to amuse even the saltiest of old sea dogs!

Filled with "top tips and handy hints" this book is a must, not only for sea kayakers, but also for anyone who ventures onto the ocean whatever their craft and level of navigational ability.

Sea Kayak Navigation is a book on what can, at best, be described as a "dry" subject. Franco has succeeded in turning it into an interesting and user-friendly resource.

The black art demystified? It is indeed!

Special Offer!

We've negotiated a deal whereby members of ISKA can buy the book at trade price (35% saving) if you buy it through the Association and we order a minimum of 5 books. This means that we can offer it to you for a mere

£5

This is in Pounds and **includes postage**. Send your fiver to the Editor (address on the back page) **before Friday 23rd of April**. He's only going to put in one order so you must have your cash in by that date.

About the Author

In 1978, Franco Ferrero was one of a team of three Jersey men who completed the first circumnavigation of Ireland by sea kayak.

In 1989 with Kevin Danforth he made a record breaking unsupported crossing of the North Sea; ninety nautical miles as the crow flies, over a hundred after allowing for the tidal streams, in twenty seven hours and ten minutes

He was brought up in the Channel Islands. The small scattered islands, fast tidal streams and summer fogs meant that navigation was a key skill learnt at an early age. He currently works at Plas y Brenin, the UK National Mountain Centre where he is the head of the Canoe and Kayak Department.

Whales in Irish Waters

Paul Bracken

In the last newsletter I wrote about the most common sightings of whales and dolphins that occur around the Irish coast. I outlined some of the threats to their survival and gave a few details of some of the whales that regularly visit our shores. As we enter the season when many of you will kayak around our coast the next two articles will profile the dolphins and porpoises that you are most likely to see. Also included in this article are the latest figures on reported strandings and an update on Earth Day.

Common Dolphin

The common dolphin is often confused with the Striped or Atlantic White-Sided Dolphin. Its body is an elaborate pattern of criss-crosses with yellowish patches on both sides and a white underside. It has dark flippers and a prominent fin and beak. Although there is some evidence to suggest a decline in its population it is still one of the most abundant of all cetaceans. Their main distribution is centred off the southwest coast, which is considered to be a breeding ground. Sightings are best between the months of July to September. They usually calve between March and July in deeper waters.

Common dolphins are highly active and are often found in large groups. They can be spotted at some distance and their high-pitched vocals can be heard above the ocean surface. They are very fast swimmers, friendly and love to bow-ride. There have been recorded dives that lasted up to eight minutes. They feed mainly on a diet of fish and squid. An adult can grow to a length of 8 feet and typically weights between 155 and 245 lb.'s.

Risso's Dolphin

Risso's Dolphins are usually easy to identify, especially as they get older. Their body gets covered in white scars, the result of many encounters with other Risso's Dolphins. The colour of their body also tends to lighten with age becoming a very pale grey. They are sometimes seen in mixed schools with several species of dolphin and with pilot whales. They have a large rounded head, prominent fin and long pointed flippers. They are quiet active at the sea's surface, will breach, lobtail and sometimes spyhops in the water. They tend to be shy and will seldom bow-ride.

Rissos Dolphins have a wide distribution and prefer deep offshore waters and where there is a narrow continental shelf. Sightings are most common during the months of March, August and September. Calving takes place during April to July, and breeding grounds include the south and southwest coast. Their diet consists mainly of cephalopods. An adult can grow to a length of 12.5 feet and typically weights between 660 and 1,100 lb.'s.

Harbour Porpoise

Although the Harbour Porpoise is one of the most common cetaceans in Irish waters it is difficult to see as it rarely shows itself at the surface. It is nervous of boats and rarely bow -rides. When it does rise to breathe it will appear as a slow, forward-rolling motion. It has a small, rounded head and a low triangular fin. They usually swim alone or in small groups.

Sightings are best during the months August to October and although their range can cover all coastal areas they are more common off the southwest coast. From the figures below they are the most likely to strand and this mainly occurs during the winter months. They feed on pelagic fish, mainly herring, whiting, mackerel and cod. Females move offshore during May and June to breed off the southwest coast. An adult can grow to a length of just over 6 feet and typically weights between 125 and 145 lb.'s.

Number of Strandings Reported to the IWDG :

January 1997 – September 1998

Species	No. of strandings
Harbour porpoise	26
Common dolphin	24
White-sided dolphin	11
Striped dolphin	7
Rissos dolphin	6
Pilot whale	6
Bottlenose dolphin	3
Cuviers beaked whale	2
True's beaked whale	1
Bottlenose whale	1
Minke whale	1
Fin whale	1
Sperm whale	4

Unidentified dolphin	6
Unidentified whale	1

Source: The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Newsletter, January 1999

Earth Day

Earth Day is a celebration which began in North America in 1970 and is now almost worldwide. VOICE will celebrate Earthday with a series of events from Saturday 17th. To Sunday 25th. April 1999.

We invite individuals, students, schools, environmental groups and groups of all kind to join in the spirit of the celebrations and so raise awareness of local and national environmental issues.

Our full programme of events will be available from April 1st. and published on our earthday website – and available on request from the VOICE office. Please let us know how you are planning on celebrating and we will include it with our publications and inform the media. The funds raised with your help on Earthday and during Earthweek will enable VOICE to continue to campaign in an effective way on behalf of the Irish Environment for another year.

"Such destruction of the environment and the life depending upon it is a result of ignorance, greed and disregard for the richness of all living things. This disregard is gaining great influence. If peace does not become a reality in the world, and if the destruction of the environment continues as it does today, there is no doubt that future generations will inherit a dead world."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from the Assisi Declarations.

Next edition will include a profile of the Bottlenose, Striped, Atlantic White -Sided and White-Beaked dolphins and an update from the 51st. International Whaling Commission meeting in Grenada which takes place in May.

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The Summer Isles of Coigach

North West Scotland

Brian Wilson

Decisions, decisions, decisions... so many islands, so little time. That the Scottish coast has so many more groups of off-lying islands than the Irish - 3 major archipelagos at the last count - is not so much a sign of fate being better disposed towards the Scottish paddlers and yachtsmen, as a symptom of a fairly ancient country in a seriously advanced state of physical decay and disintegration.

The result, of course, is a spoiling choice of superlative sea-paddling locations such as the Inner and Outer Hebrides, the Orkneys or the Shetland Isles which, in the right weather conditions, are the equal of any other coastline in the world. But if your ideal archipelago is not a remote windswept wilderness where your entire trip is spent dreading the long return crossing, or the prospect of being stormbound for a further week; where the seduction of soft-sand beaches is tempered with the reality of shoulder-wrenching surf landings and launchings; and where one day in three is probably spent gale-bound in a tent reading about the wildlife - then read on!

Now, picture a group of a dozen or so islands, scattered like misfit jigsaw pieces within a circle of some ten miles diameter, and surrounded by the kind of mountain scenery which makes it almost possible to understand why some folks have no time for sea paddling in the first place. Imagine an archipelago where the wildlife is as fine as anywhere on the western seaboard; where shelter can be found in most states of wind or tide; where crossings range from a half mile to six miles offshore, and where you can meander and explore for anything from an energetic day to a laid-back week; whose individual names and stories draw you into a fascinating tapestry of human and natural history, and whose collective name sounds as if deliberately dreamed up by the marketing department of the Scottish Tourist Board. Welcome, then, to the *SUMMER ISLES*, and as they have been for the last ten years my 'local patch', why not join me for a whistle-stop tour...

Driving north from the busy, picturesque ferryport of Ullapool on the inner reaches of Loch Broom, we pass through some of the finest mountain scenery in the country, past the cliffs of snow-capped Ben More Coigach towering over Ardmair Bay, then westward through the Inverpolly nature reserve towards Achiltibuie. *Anyone need a photo stop? Pee break?* Fine, then taking the right turn on the single track road at Achnahaird brings us over a rise of higher ground, and suddenly the sea appears - and with it the most amazing panorama of the Summer Isles is spread out before us like a 3D map. *This really must be a photo stop*; a fine place to pause, assess sea conditions, plan a route, and perhaps to ponder the name. *Summer Isles* - Nothing to do with the *Wicker Man*! The official line is that these were fairly accessible islands which the local crofters used for grazing stock in summer only; or that it's simply the English corruption of a Gaelic name whose meaning is now lost. However by far the best 'tongue-in-cheek' explanation I ever heard was from a local man who explained, with reference to some of the tidal islands and skerries in the group, that "*Well, summer isles and some're not!*"

We drop down, single-mindedly passing *Am Fhurain* pub at Alltandhu, to the stone pier at **Old Dornie** where the small fishing boats lie at moorings awaiting the rise of the tide. A five minute crossing takes us to Isle Ristol, the closest and gentlest of the Summer Isles, whose north-facing sandy beach is one of the finest in the area: a grand place for a camp or, in this case, coffee and a snack. Once an important fish-drying base, there used to be a small community and an inn for seamen on the island, but today it is busy only with sheep and wildflowers and is under the care of the Scottish Wildlife Trust. A great place for an evening walk too, but we must push on... Anti clockwise round Ristol takes us through the channel inside **Eilean Mullagrach**, a roughish tussocky lump used mainly for sheep grazing, where kayak-fishing for pollock is usually successful, and then out through the swell until we reach the shelter of Glas-leac Mor (the big green slab) - a total of about 3 miles from Old Dornie.

A further mile, with the swell now astern, takes us quickly to **Tanera Beag** (66ha, ht83m), where grey and common seals follow the boats for a while and the rising tide allows us to flush through the pink coral-sand channel *Caolas a'Mhill Ghairbh* (channel of broken pieces) eastwards toward Tanera Mor. *Anyone fancy another brew?* Tanera Beag is one of the best islands for a break. Dwarf willows, aspens and deep heather clothe the island, and climbing to the summit through honeysuckle and wild irises takes you to a vantage point with views over the entire archipelago and surrounding mainland peaks. We have often camped above the west-facing storm beach, burning extravagant piles of driftwood and playing Trivial Pursuit

around tables of makeshift fishbox design. There are many lovely pebble coves around the island, but landing on most of these is generally difficult in any swell. The sheltered north side offers easier landings, and Tanera's coral sand lagoon, where oystercatchers and curlews call and seals bask, is one of the most peaceful places I know.

Looking southwest as we cross toward the main island, local boats can be seen laying pots for lobster and velvet crabs, or trawling for prawns in the deeper channels between the islands. Several rock stacks slide into view and then dominate the foreground. One of these, **Stac Mhic Aonghais**, rising like a petrified iceberg from the waves, is associated with a history of bizarre local adventures. A long time ago a man called Aonghais Care was left on the stack as a punishment. When his guardians came out to check on his welfare he hid from them and while they were ashore looking for him he swam around, stole their boat and pushed off! But as they had taken the precaution of removing the oars, Aonghais could only drift, out of control, northward round the cliffs of Rubha Coigach, to fetch up almost 20 miles away near the Point of Stoer where his descendants still live today. I often wonder what happened to the stranded guardians! And one local fisherman remembers being out in his father's boat off the Stack during the second World War when they were almost killed by shells from a French-Canadian gunboat using the Stack for target practice.

Tanera Mor (310ha, ht 122m), the largest of the Summer Isles group, is host to a small community with its own Post Office, school boat and cafe. Most of the adult population are today employed by the fish farming enterprise whose cages dominate the main anchorage bay. Ten centuries back this was already an important shelter for the Viking explorers and settlers, who called this Tanera (Hawnaroy - island of the Haven) and left names for many of the coastal features in these parts. During the early Nineteenth century he rring booms, Tanera was an important Fishing Station, and the anchorage was filled with smacks and drifters from all over Scotland. Up to 200 boats at a time would anchor here, exporting salted herring to colonies as far afield as the Baltic and the West Indies. Later Tanera became famous for its illicit whisky stills and then was bought in 1900 by Captain Macdonald, a notorious local smuggler - and there are stories of unrecovered caches of rum and treasure still on the island. From 1938 -1944 the renowned ecologist Frank Fraser Darling lived, farmed and studied on the island and wrote of his experiences in his fascinating book *Island Farm*. Today tour boats from Ullapool stop here briefly, but the twice -daily ferry from Ullapool to the Outer Hebrides steams past without stopping, and the deep sheltered anchorage, so important to the Vikings and the fishing fleets of bygone days, is now a peaceful one. But despite the arrival of aspects of modern life on Tanera, it is said by some local people to have retained a dark side. Tanera Mor has a ghostly reputation that spans centuries. Even in the last few years there have been unexplained 'sightings', and there are still some of the mainland locals who refuse ever to set foot on the island.

An hour of determined paddling takes you right round Tanera, but let's head southeast across 3½ miles of sea, to the uninhabited **Horse Island** (53ha, ht60m). Separated from the mainland cliffs by the deep channel of Horse Sound, this is a high-backed lump of Torridonian sandstone covered with lichens, thrift, campion and tussocky grasses. Despite its name there are no horses on the island; instead there are wild goats, and indeed the northern part of the island is named *Meall nan Gabhar* (Hill of goats), and the highest point is *Sgurr nan Uan* (lambs peak). With no water, and no great camping ground, this island has little to lure you ashore; unless, that is, you are feeling lucky. Treasure from a galleon of the Spanish Armada is said to have been hastily hidden here in 1588 and in the 19th century, a local shepherd found a gold doubloon inside his boot after taking a tumble in the heather. The rest of the loot has never been found!

Eilean Dubh, a dark and forbidding mounded shape lying about a mile west of Horse, is not permanently inhabited - and probably never has been but it was occupied for a time in the mid -eighties by a reformed alcoholic who wrote poetry and children's stories. It is now used, for at least part of each year, by an American couple who have built a wooden house near the cove on the island's northeast side; and although they are generally friendly to passing visitors, they have been known to turn down requests for water, as water supplies are precious on the island.

Heading southwest now we weave among a group of islets and rocks - **Carn Iar**, **Carn Deas** and the intriguingly named **Bottle Island** - whose only inhabitants are the gaunt, sinuous black shags perched

patiently on rock ledges, before a final crossing, westwards for a mile and a half, to perhaps the most interesting island of the entire group - *Eilean a'Chleirich* or **Priest Island**.

Priest Island (122ha, ht78m), is the most westerly - and one of the larger - of the Summer Isles. Rock strata tilted and cliffs contorted into a random jumble of broken ramparts, cave, and blow-holes, the island looks like an automobile's crumple-zone after a crash. Like Tanera Mor it has known longer term settlement in past times. Middens in some of the island's caves have provided evidence of some very early settlement indeed. Prehistoric stone circles, some early cultivated ground and the remains of an ancient chapel have been uncovered in the southwest of the island's lush, damp interior. The priest himself was probably a follower of St Columba in the 6th century, and certainly fits the bill in terms of having found the obligatory lonely Atlantic rock on which to pursue his vocation.

After the failure of the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion there was a plan to evacuate Bonnie Prince Charlie via Priest Island, and a French crew were landed here ready to assist the rescue attempt, although in the end, the Prince set sail from a location much further south. Local stories also tell of 'The Outlaw' who was banished to Priest Island in the 18th century for stealing sheep. Instead of perishing, this hardy individual built a house, settled his family here and founded three generations of crofters. His descendants are thought to have abandoned the island for the mainland in the 1850s.

The island is very exposed, and subject to heavy swells from the south and west, and a nasty sea when the wind strengthens in the east. It has no proper landing place, the best options being a bay (*Acarsaid a'Chleirich*) in the centre of the east coast; a cleft in the bay on the west side; or at the cave on the island's southeast corner. If you can get ashore there is reasonably good drinking water in the lochs, and a wooden shelter near the east bay, built by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) who now own the island.

Trout fishing is excellent in the lochs, otters are frequently seen on the island, and bird life abounds. Eider, shelduck, snipe, heron, greylag geese and merganser can all be commonly seen, as can oystercatchers, gulls, shags, skua, guillemots and others. But the most memorable experience on Priest Island is surely a midsummer night spent amongst the eerie chortlings and elfin croonings of the tiny burrow-dwelling storm petrels impatiently awaiting the cover of darkness.

Even if you can't land, the coast itself is worthy of exploration, with several caves, natural arches and boulder beaches to amuse the ocean wanderer. But now it's time for the long haul back, eight miles north, by way of the lush, green, gull-manured **Glas-leac Beag** (11ha, ht29m), and familiar Tanera Beag, to the haven at Old Dornie.

Today, as I write in early February, the Summer Isles seem a peculiar misnomer, blanketed as they are in a rare covering of snow. But sea-kayaking sneaks into the diary again before the end of February, and the Summer Isles will slowly, shyly begin to unfurl their secrets again. Late spring is the time of wild flowers and frantic bird activity around the islands. The climate is fairly mild all year, although strong winds can whip up at almost any time. Summer brings more frequent sightings of porpoises and whales, with Orca venturing occasionally even as far inland as Ullapool itself. The sea shimmers with shoaling mackerel and young fish feeding, and wild salmon leap from the water en route to their spawning rivers.

Phosphorescence, and the occasional *Aurora Borealis* display, livens the long, rarely-darkening evenings. Autumn brings many changes to the islands. Icelandic pink-foot geese pass over in long chevrons, followed soon by the black and white Barnacle geese taking refuge from the Arctic winters as temporary residents of the Summer Isles.

Well, thanks for your company; it's been a long and memorable day: be sure to come back soon - and next time, bring a tent and a bottle of Jamesons!

Main Supplies: Supermarket, camping & outdoor supplies, and most items available in Ullapool. Some basic supplies also available at village shops in Achiltibuie and Polbain.

Tourist Information, Ullapool (Accommodation, public transport etc.) Tel 01854 612135. Also Achiltibuie Tourist Association, PO Box No 1, Achiltibuie, Ross-shire, Scotland.

Admiralty Charts: 1:100,000 No 1794, 1:25,000 No 2509

OS. Maps: 1:50,000 Landranger Sheet No 15, 1:50,000 Pathfinder Sheet no 101

Further Information - contact Brian Wilson on Tel/Fax 01854 655243

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Please be sure to keep us up to date on your personal details. Have we got your address right? Have we got you email address?

Email Addresses

Half the SKA has registered an email address with us. If the rest would too, or most of the rest, it follows that our service to members would hugely improve, and the cost of so doing would hugely decrease.

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We have trouble enough collecting the modest tenner we charge for membersh ip, but even it isn't enough, or won't continue indefinitely to be enough. We will be broke next century for certain unless we modernise.

So please, before Y2K, get connected, or get on side with someone who is

David Walsh.

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Subscriptions

Subscriptions are £10 per calendar year and can be paid to either David Walsh or Des Keaney at the addresses below.

Honorary memberships are available to people who make a significant contribution to the Association. This is currently interpreted to mean a couple of articles in *Treasna na dTonnta* or organising a Meet. The Association reserves the right to change these criteria at any time!

Additional names sharing *Treasna na dTonnta* at the one address may be added at £5.00 extra each

I.C.U. membership/registration is available at an additional £2 p.a.. This is only useful for those who are not registered with the I.C.U. either individually or through another club.

Next Issue

The summer issue is due in July. As to content, you're going to have to wait and see as it's guaranteed to be different from what I'm planning now. Des Keaney

ISKA Contacts

Edited by: Des Keaney

Disclaimer

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