

# Treasna na dTonnta

"Over the Waves"

Newsletter of the Irish Sea Kayaking Association

No.19 Autumn 1999 IR£1.50

## 7 Hours around the Fastnet

Don O'Brien and Darragh O'Donovan made the best of the summer weather to do one of the epic paddles of the Irish Coast – the Fastnet Rock.

This is the lighthouse where spray from waves has come cascading in the vent at the top of the dome and the vibration of the waves has knocked delph from the shelves.

Not this day however. Despite a bladder stretching seven hours in their boats, the lads had a great paddle in good conditions.

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July. Darragh O'Donovan and I set off west to meet up with the northern paddlers on their trip around Ireland. Having met one of them, Michael Barton, at a Sea Kayak Symposium two years ago we agreed to meet up with them on their trip. We had been keeping in touch with them as they came down the south coast hoping to meet them when they got to Cork. Having spent a night in Ballycotton they passed Cork, went through the caves at the Old Head and kept going to the Seven Heads, a total of 38 miles.

With the intention of paddling with them for a while and having done some shopping for them we met them the following day at Red Strand. But as we looked at the charts to decide how much paddling we would do, that small rock on the bottom left hand corner of the chart kept drawing my eye.

I had been there before but it's not the kind of place you only visit once! Darragh had not been there and was delighted, if not slightly apprehensive, about the prospect.

We decided to leave from Baltimore, head out around Cape and decide then whether or not to continue.

Fastnet is more than 4 miles off Cape Clear. With open water and tides of up to 3 knots, it is a committing paddle but also one that is very tempting! We left Baltimore just before 3 o'clock and headed out the eastern side of Sherkin and on to South harbour. It was 5 o'clock when we reached the south-western tip of Cape Clear.

The forecast was good so another hour seemed a reasonable price to visit Fastnet. We reached Fastnet at 6 o'clock and spent about 15 min. or so admiring and taking photos but decided to paddle on for a bit before stopping for a break as the water around the rock itself was a bit bouncy.

The paddle back was mesmerising, a slight swell and absolutely no wind. While we were watching some gannets gliding above us and trying to remember the names of the other birds, a splash ahead alerted us to some more unusual wildlife. 5 dolphins passed about 30 yards ahead of the kayaks, jumping in the evening sunshine. The speed of the dolphins reminded us how slowly we were travelling.

As we pushed on, the paddling became more of a slog as the tide slid along the cliffs of Cape Clear in the opposite direction! Passing the mouth of the Gascanane Sound it felt as if Neptune had pulled a plug somewhere near Schull to empty the whole of the Irish Sea. The water was glassy calm and it was only when I took a transit from a lobster pot buoy and a point on the land I realised exactly how strong the flow was. I ended up ferry gliding at an angle close to 45° to maintain the transit!

We got out of our boats at 10 o'clock in Baltimore having been in the seat for 7 hours (this gives real meaning to fluid balance). On the way home we stopped for something to eat in Skibbereen and caught Altan in an open air free concert.

Evan Roberts has been threatening to put a trawling engine in the kayak. It's the only thing that could have improved the day, but then again that's not on is it?

## What's on the Fastnet anyway?

The first light on the Fastnet rock was built in 1853. A 90 foot high cast iron tower replaced the lighthouse on Cape Clear Island, which was so high off the water that it was often shrouded in fog. The cast iron lighthouse survived fairly well until 1881 when, during a storm, the lantern was smashed by the waves and a 60 gallon water tank at the top of the tower was washed away. Also, the tower's stairs was outside which made tending the lamp impossible at times.

During this storm a similar tower on the west coast was completely washed away giving rise to fears about that type of structure. In 1896 work began on the construction of a granite lighthouse which would be over 200 feet high.

The work began in Crookhaven where a stores and workshop, later to become the lighthouse keepers' houses, were built. Then out to the rock itself to build another store and shelter for the work crew of 22 men and prepare the foundation. This work took 3 years.

A ship was built specially to ferry and land the 2,074 high-grade granite blocks weighing 4,300 tons, which came from Cornwall. The lighthouse would be 89 courses high and each block was dovetailed to fit into place. As the blocks were cut in Cornwall they were assembled to ensure a good fit. 6 to 8 courses would be assembled then taken apart again for the trip to Crookhaven but each time the top layer would be kept to act as the bottom layer for the next few courses. This amount of attention to detail resulted in a maximum deviation in diameter of ¼ inch and a deviation from the vertical of just 3/16 inch.

The first of the granite blocks weighing around 3 tons was set in 1899. For the next 4 years each stone was lifted from the ship and set in place without dropping one. The biggest difficulty was the weather and during this period the work log shows only two occasions when 5 consecutive days were worked. The new light first shone on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1904.

The last lighthouse keeper left Fastnet on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1989. It was one of the last lighthouses to be automated.

## Weekend in the West

### Level 5 Training, Achill, July '99

By Peter Cork

On Friday night we assembled our car-weary selves in the Outdoor Education Centre on Achill Island. We drifted into a classroom and spent the next two hours going through a refresher course on navigation, tides, chart work, route planning and other essential theory. A half-pint for the wimps, three pints for the hards and then off to bed.

The tides did not suit an early start on the water on Saturday. It was back to the classroom for another hour on Saturday morning before putting in at the harbour at Darby's Point at the south end of Achill Sound. The winds had eased back to Force 3, but the low temperatures and heavy showers were a bit unfair for early July. The tide was running at 3 knots in the channel so we initially spent some time practising paddling skills in these waters. This was a little tiring. While waiting for new instructions, Des Keaney unintentionally fished for crabs with his finger - and caught one! (*Editors note: it was definitely the other way around – the crab caught the paddler*)

The tidal stream eased off and, after sheltering from a squall at the harbour, we entered the sound between Achill and Achillbeg. We crept out into the open sea between some malevolent looking surf into Blind Sound and started off anti-clockwise around Achillbeg.

The sea was quite lumpy and we took turns leading the group on various legs. This included the sometimes forgotten practice of considering not only what lies ahead but also the group behind. Keeping a group together is a continuous operation. I think we are all guilty of the tendency to diverge. When we turned north again, the sea calmed and we went looking for a sandbar where The Boss, Kevin O'Callaghan, expected waves to break. We hung around for a while. At first nothing and then, almost unnoticed, the seas started to heap up and begin breaking. We played here for a while.

It's interesting how some mild mannered sea folk change demeanour when they catch a wave. The fully laden sea kayak racing down a wave is fine so long as you are not in its path! Frank Hogan, who is relatively new to sea kayaking, quickly demonstrated his rolling technique. With his scuba diving background, he was always the essence of relaxation when he went over during the wet exercises on the following day.

We landed on the easterly facing small beach on Achillbeg and made camp. The showers disappeared and there was much needed sunshine. Up went the tents on a small grassy perch richly carpeted in sheep raisins. This was fresh stuff and when you stood on it in bare feet, it got between your toes. When you later put on normally rotten smelling booties, it turned them into a marvellously lethal set of footwear.

We cooked up Daniel McDonnell soup followed by rice and tuna and afterwards went on a little hike. It is a lovely island and it shone in the evening light. We disturbed a family of foxes and watched their tails bounce away in different directions. Kevin and Seán Pierce, with their respective expertise in geology and birdlife, heightened the experience with their comments and explanations.

We returned to the tents to relax for a few hours before we went on the night paddle. As I lay on my cosy sleeping bag day dreaming of Dana, I wondered how I was going to get back into my smelly booties and wet gear (no, not a pop group).

Seán Pierce was eventually persuaded out of his tent and in a misty rain we paddled towards the Sound. Kevin set us various navigation tasks and we quickly developed an enthusiasm for the exercises. We had

been forewarned of the disorienting feeling when one suddenly gets caught by an unseen tide race in the dark. Even though it was anticipated, it did turn out to be a strange feeling.

On the return journey, the mist changed to heavy rain backed by a vigorous wind. At 2am I peeled off my wet clothes and, like three or four others who were still sane, dove into the comforts of my sleeping bag. The lunatic fringe stood outside in the inclement weather and total darkness and drank whiskey. I asked the boss to tell them to go to bed but, like the rest of us, I think he was afraid of them.

In the morningtime, catching the last two hours of the flooding tide, we headed up the sound at a leisurely pace. The cloud started to thin (shit, that reminds me, I started to go bald about two years ago) and a sultry heat developed. At the bridge, we stopped for lunch and changed into more appropriate gear for the forthcoming exercises. The heat was almost oppressive as we headed for the Bulls Mouth. The water was flowing smartly in the middle of the channel, but the lack of wind meant it was flat.

Kevin divided us up into pairs and we practised rolling, towing, re-entry and roll, x rescues, rescuing an unconscious person and even rescuing an unconscious rodent (in case one came across C J Haughey, Milosovic, a barrister, sewer rat, jet skier, etc.) in the fast stream. A delay in any of these exercises meant a lengthy paddle back to the starting point.

It became clear that it was imperative that both partners knew exactly what type of rescue was being carried out. There was one incident when Partner A was acting the unconscious upside down paddler, but Partner B thought A was the unconscious rodent. B duly went off to find out the score in the match and A, after an uncomfortably long submergence, nearly popped an eyeball and surfaced gnawing on his paddle (partly true!).

We had a long car shuttle and then packed up while listening to the Munster hurling final. As Cork won, Seán was only person happy with that result.

Personally, I thought it was a great weekend. As a training course for level 5 sea proficiency, it was both comprehensive and flexible. It confirmed to me that many procedures, rescues and navigation have to be regularly practised to maintain competency. The weekend was also good fun.

# Priorities When Buying Equipment

By Des Keaney

Where should your hard-earned cash be spent? Most of us spend a lot on our boat and everything else follows as we can afford it. An editorial by Chris Cunningham in *Sea Kayaker* and some queries from newcomers got me thinking.

First, spend money on clothes. You must be as comfortable as possible. Good thermals, cag, wetsuit, footwear, hat, buoyancy aid and spraydeck are essential. You might be in a £2500 boat but you'll still be miserable if you're wet and cold. If you're a beginner, you should be getting wet almost every time you go out and you need to be dressed for the water. An 'old hand' might have different requirements but comfort will still be top priority.

Second, get a good paddle. Buy light and strong, get the right length and don't be afraid to use a modified shaft. Anything that reduces strain over a long period is good.

Third, spend the rest on a boat. Make sure the seat and cockpit are neither too big nor too small. Too big and you'll never control it when it counts, too small is hell on earth. Make sure you have good support for your knees to allow the boat to become part of you. Only buy a narrow tippy boat if you're comfortable with it - there's a lot to be said for stability. Try different boats and always paddle before you buy. Five minutes around the harbour can tell you a lot.

Get out there and enjoy it, safely.

## **Achill lifeboat coxswain to receive award for rescue role**

**From the Irish Times of 20<sup>th</sup> September**

THE coxswain of the Achill Island lifeboat is to be given one of its highest awards by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution for the rescue of three crew on board a Donegal fishing vessel off Achill Head earlier this year.

Mr Brian Patten (46) is the first Irish lifeboat crewmember in 21 years to receive the RNLI's silver medal. The rest of his crew will be presented with letters of appreciation and medal service badges at a ceremony in London next May.

The rescue took place on February 27th last, when a 23-metre fishing vessel, *Carrigeen Bay*, suffered engine failure three miles off Achill Head and began to drift rapidly ashore. The Arun -class lifeboat proceeded at full speed towards the casualty.

Battling against severe gale force nine winds and eight -metre high seas, the coxswain, Mr Patten, and his crew managed to take the fishing vessel in tow - within an estimated eight minutes of it running aground on the rocks.

The announcement was made at the weekend as Achill's new Trent class lifeboat, the RNLI *Sam and Ada Moody*, was named. The vessel was partly funded from the legacy of Mrs Ada Moody of Richmond, Surrey, who ran a metal foundry with her husband. Sam. Family members travelled to Achill for the naming ceremony.

Lorna Siggins

Marine Correspondent

### **Finding Fish on the Net**

**By Conor Murphy**

I was snorkelling in Majorca last year with my son, Oisín when we spotted the most amazing creature we had ever seen - a fish with brightly coloured wings like a peacock. It was crawling along the bottom of the sea about 15 feet below. When I got home I trawled the net searching for "fish" AND "wings" but found nothing except sites on fishing and scientific sites with Latin indexes. Eventually I came across fishbase, <http://www.cgiar.org/ICLARM/fishbase/> and things got a lot easier. I did a search for Common name

containing flying and 167 entries dropped out. Pretty soon I'd found my fish *Dactylopterus volitans*, the Flying Gurnard.

The site has a simple, no frills front end that allows you to search by Common Name, Scientific Name, Species, Family or Country. Try Country=Ireland and filter on dangerous fish and you get the 28 dangerous Irish fish species. This includes the basking shark which is "regarded as ordinarily harmless and inoffensive but potentially dangerous if attacked (particularly when harpooned)". Try Country=Ireland and filter on Common Names and you get 34, all but 6 of which are in Irish ! This is because the Irish collections are from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The Lamprey Eel was known as Peist da shuíl deag - the ten-eyed worm ! The stickleback was known as Snathaid Mhara. If you've spent any time on Irish beaches you may have been unfortunate enough to step on the horribly painful spines of the Lesser Weever Fish with the wonderfully expressive Latin name *Trachinus vipera*.

# Millennium Meet

## Mayday Weekend 2000

### Connemara

Every Sea Paddler in Ireland must be there!! There'll be a Millennium Meet from the 29<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2000, the Mayday bank holiday weekend..

The probable location is south Connemara. This will allow ambitious targets such as a circumnavigation of the Aran Islands or more relaxed paddling in Kilkieran Bay.

South Connemara is also relatively accessible from all parts of the country.

Contact Robin Ruddock (08)01 265 823 871 or Des Keane for further details.

Be there!

# Oileáin

## Practical Completion

By David Walsh

Oileáin has reached a stage that builders would call "practical completion". That means that no-one would think the job finished, but the thing is capable of being presented to the world as a first edition, the idea is now visible, the concept is now clear, the product is now worthwhile. Had it been commissioned, it would now demand payment. It now has 219 islands, and some extra mainland.

What has happened is that Oileáin now has all the significant wild Irish islands. Fred Cooney and I hoovered up all the remaining missing entries, in May 1999 around Donegal, and in August 1999 around and generally about the Beara Peninsula in Cork / Kerry. For the sake of posterity, the last to go was Scariff Island off Lamb's Head on the Ring of Kerry.

What remains to be done falls into three immediate categories :

1. Remote, hard, adrenaline producing rocks, with or without obscure lighthouses, with names that include words like "Black" or "Stag" or "Bull", that, let there be no quibble in this regard, need better men than D. Walsh and F. Cooney. These will be got in time by a different breed of hardmen altogether.
2. Small wee things by the shore, that are more relevant than the former category, but perhaps less exciting, less likely to attract a sea kayaking party to their vicinity solely for their attainment. These will be got in time by kayakers who happen to be "in the area" and who take the trouble.
3. There are some bigger islands, inshore, possibly commercialised or agricultural, usually in bays that sea kayakers would not ordinarily travel to. Examples might be Great Island, Whiddy Island, the islands of the Fergus Estuary, etc. These will be attained in time by locals.

THEN, of course, follows the "obvious", the mainland. Oileáin started as a concept for several reasons, but it began with islands because it had to. It was felt that islands were finite, that some day the job might be done, or at least that progress might be visible. The coastline itself was written off as too much. And yet some of the coastline is done (almost all Clare, Wicklow, Down and Dublin), as well as choice bits of more remote spots.

Surely the great new challenge is to motivate local paddlers to report their own areas, bit by bit, beach by beach, race by race, headland by headland. Remember we are only talking (land / sea) accessibility, water availability, and camping spots. No university degree is needed. Tidal info and other details of interest are bookishly available and researchable by anyone, and may if required be ignored by the volunteers on the ground.

On a personal note, I am proud and sad in equal measures at this turn of events. For eight years now, Fred Cooney and I have set off once a year at least, and mostly twice (the first and last weeks of the national school holidays - don't ask). An area was targeted, the islands explored, camping (and bivouac) techniques perfected, the job done to the best of our ability. Now, though there be lots of paddling in Ireland to be done, and new objectives (we have discovered headlands, which probably everyone else knows about), there is no clear objective drawing us to any particular spot that would justify ten days or so. This new departure therefore means that for two individuals, the summer holidays will not thus be so familiarly punctuated as before. Instead, successions of long weekends beckon, appealing in their own way, but I for one could mourn the passing of an era.

Alexander the Great once "wept because there were no more worlds to conquer". Now I have an inkling how he felt.

# Escape to the Coast This Autumn

Author-signed copies at special rates

# 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

ISBN 0-9532768-0-5

# 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

Return to: **Wildland Press, Achlunachan, Inverbroom, Ullapool,**

**Ross-shire IV23 2SA Scotland**

Please send \_\_\_ copies of **Blazing Paddles** @ IR£8 each Total \_\_\_\_\_

Please send \_\_\_ copies of **Dances with Waves** @ IR£9 each Total \_\_\_\_\_

Add IR£1 P&P for each book. Total \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

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

---

---

## **The Story so far...**

Seán Pierce and Des Keaney started their 'Round Ireland trip in July 1998. Battered by strong headwinds, they make difficult progress along the South Coast. Dangerous seas in West Cork convinced Des to stop. Seán goes on alone – a difficult decision for both. More bad weather makes for slow progress in Kerry and Clare. While things improve in Connaght there is plenty of exposed coast to come and Seán is running out of time .....

### **Belmullet to Glencolmcille**

#### **The End of '98**

**By Seán Pierce**

**Belmullet to Portacloy, Co. Mayo.**

**13<sup>th</sup> August 1998.**

After a night in total silence and a deep soft bed, I found it hard to raise myself for another day. However the smell of a good rasher is hard to resist and Ken (a friend from Skerries) knew he had me beat!

The tide was right in Belmullet for a cruise down the narrow canal that links into Broadhaven Bay. I passed under a few waving spectators with Maeve reminding me that lunch was at Rinroe Point. I enjoyed the paddle to Broadhaven, a following wind and ebbing tide pushed me along the inner estuary at a fair old lick. The weather was grey, overcast with the odd heavy squall but I was used to that! The wind was my biggest worry as it steadily increased as I approached the Broadhaven Lighthouse. I gave chase to two very elusive Dolphins in mid channel but they were in no form to play. I saw enough to identify them as Bottle-nosed Dolphins but I was disappointed that they would not come near the boat.

I was surfing downwind into an increasingly bigger sea as I left the shelter of the inner channel and out into Broadhaven Bay. I began to ponder my day. Did I go for Kid Island and Benwee Head direct or hit Rinroe Point? I was early and making good time but a few heavy squalls put manners on me and a breaking wave over the boat had me in a flap! A downpour followed and although it instantly produced a lovely Pomarine Skua over the kayak, I ran for cover at Rinroe. I rattled into the little harbour and the now inevitable head appeared over the gunwale of a fishing boat. Our conversation moved along and he encouraged me to push on to Portacloy or even further!. He felt "sure it is too early in the day yet to be stopping". I agreed and asked him about the sea off the island and Benwee. He reckoned on 20 minutes of bad stuff but once I passed Kid Island I could go to Sligo!

He also said I had better go today because tomorrow would have a NW wind on the head. This encouraged me but a nagging doubt remained about what constituted "bad stuff". I paddled on to Kid Island entered the bad stuff and was damn glad to hit the sheltered water in its lee. I exploded into expletives... a mixed reaction of relief and awe at the sights. Benwee Head and the Stags of Broadhaven gave me a superb afternoon .

I was jittery at times, heavy downblasts off the cliffs combined with the odd sideswipe by the south westerly finding a gap in the topography had me on edge. I was surprised at myself as I had been in much

bigger seas on this trip but the combined effects of swell, clapotis and catabatic winds seemed much more troublesome. I was in a bit of a dither!

I pulled into the harbour at Portacloy about 3.30pm to find Maeve and Ken already there. The fisherman at Rinroe had passed on the word and given them my time of arrival at Portacloy! We organised the kayak with a local man and I then settled into another lovely evening. We visited Belderg and Porturlin in advance of tomorrow's plans and I met with Professor Seamus Caulfield of Ceide Fields fame. He kindly invited me to visit him in Belderg for lunch on my way up the coast.

A pint before dinner and another famous evening at Carrowteigue followed. I had really enjoyed my stay with Maeve and Ken.

I was looking forward to the next day as another friend from Dublin was due down to paddle the next stretch of the Mayo coast and the weather looked good!

### **Portacloy to Buntrahir Bay, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo. 14 August 1998**

Again slept beautifully, rising late to that irresistible smell of a good rasher on the pan. After breakfast Ken sorted out a nagging problem of a leaking pump with a gasket fashioned from an old wellie! I loved that. It had been a bloody nuisance and I smiled every time I shipped a wave during the days that followed. We drove down to Portacloy to find Christy Sinclair already in position. He had enjoyed a thorough interrogation about life in Dublin from the old man that had looked after the kayak overnight.

We had a bright clear day with even some sunshine! We were both looking forward to an interesting days paddle. We headed east and I found my mind slipping into thoughts and worries about the looming problem of crossing Donegal Bay. The weather was showing no real signs of settling and I was getting increasingly uneasy about the prospect.

The paddle was another classic, a following wind and sea made interesting by the spectacular scenery of the Stags of Broadhaven, Pig Island, Illaunmastir and the cliffs of the north Mayo coast. The Interpretative Centre of the Ceide Fields made a useful landmark. Christy paddled extremely well. He was very relaxed on what for him was his first big seatrip. "A nice one to begin with" I thought.

We eased our way into Belderg harbour where Maeve waiting for us. I had as usual left things behind and we sat, had some lunch and related our mornings work. I then wandered to visit Seamus Caulfield as promised and had a most interesting chat about the Ceide Fields and his family's considerable contribution to the project. We also discovered that we were not the first paddlers entertained by Seamus. Andy Stamp had overnighted at Belderg before crossing to Donegal several years earlier. Full of tea and barm brack we took our leave of Seamus and his infectious enthusiasm

Maeve waved goodbye with the promise of seeing me in Skerries and as we headed down the coast I found myself reflecting on all the people that I had met on the trip. All had displayed a keen awareness and sense of curiosity about the trip and great pride in their local areas. I had been offered extraordinary hospitality and all had contributed to make a dream happen. It was an unexpected but most welcome experience.

The afternoons paddle was a cracker and we pulled into Buntrahir Bay to find a campsite in the dunes very satisfied with our day.

We went in search of food and a pint and found Polks bar, a classic grocery in front, bar tucked away to the rear. A place where a man could be found to linger!. WE lingered and to my amazement in walked Maurice and Cait. What a great surprise. They had travelled down from Dublin for the weekend and of course a great evening followed! We crawled back to the tents on the beach and crashed.

## **Ballycastle, Co. Mayo 15 August 1998**

The day dawned well before I did. It was wild and clear with a very fresh W wind. I was worried by a major hangover. What a struggle. Frequent squalls lashed the tents and I knew that I would not cross Donegal Bay today. Over brunch we discussed the options with Maurice and Cait. Plan after plan was analysed and ruminated on but in my heart I knew the only possibility was a move down the coast to Easky. The whole psychological effort and worries of the last week seemed to multiply with yet another bad day and I knew that the whole project would slip away with a long battle around Donegal if the weather did not let up.

I came to a decision, the morning was not a goer! And it was time to go culture/vulturing at the Ceide Fields Centre. An interesting morning, followed by lunch and as my body improved so did the day. I made another decision! Christy and I would attempt to get around Downpatrick Head and on to Kilcummin Point at the entrance to Killala Bay.

As we prepared for sea the "Libertad", the Argentinian Tall Ship sailed into Donegal Bay under full sail. She was a most beautiful sight, her sails brilliant white against a dark squall over Slieve League. She was also bound for Kilcummin Point on a courtesy visit.

We launched into a very big swell and inched our way towards a very wild looking Downpatrick Head. Somewhere short of the tip I bottled out. I wasn't at all happy that this was a safe paddle in that sea and Christy, though handling the conditions quite well, was quite a distance behind me. I turned for shore "better safe than sorry" I argued. Christy was surprised but not unhappy with my decision. We both had the proverbial \* of a paddle to regain the strand. We had been at sea just over 2 hours and had travelled perhaps 5kms! We reached the beach whacked out. I think that was best decision of the day! Of course once on the beach we had the problem that our shore team had moved everything to Kilcummin Point and neither mobile phone could raise them. Christy is ever resourceful on occasions like this! With great charm he had talked me into a car with some people on holiday. As it happened, they had intended to go and see the "Libertad" at some stage.

I relocated Maurice and Cait in the crowds at Kilcummin. A commemoration to Admiral Brown from Foxford, Co. Mayo who had founded the Argentinian Navy was the reason for the visit.

It was back to Buntrahir for the indignity of re-pitching the tents. Out to dinner and a sad juxtaposition of a singer playing republican songs against the television images of the Omagh bombing. We found the going tough and retired early into another rising gale.

## **Buntrahir, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo. 16 August 1998**

I woke sometime around dawn to yelps of surprise and cries for help issuing from Cait's tent. The wind was catching it broadside and lifting it off the ground. We baled her out into my tent and shortly afterwards Maurice had to retire to his car as his keeled over.

Any thoughts of paddling went out the window and faced with another gale day we at least had the prospect of sleeping late. The wind hammered on the tent walls making real sleep difficult and I eventually gave up and walked the beach to wash in the river. A little bracing but it woke me up! Cait took off into the waves for a swim. She assured us it was lovely. Daft!

Having savoured the pleasures of Ballycastle for two nights we ventured into Ballina for a midday meal. Unfortunately, my visitors were all facing the prospect of returning to Dublin and I was beginning to feel that I might never leave Buntrahir. I sadly said farewell and I was suddenly alone again in a storm bound tent listening to the weather forecast and reports on the Omagh bombing. The feeling of anticlimax after all the company was being reinforced by the news and I reached for the newspaper. I had to laugh at a report of a bunch of eccentrics from New York had built a raft and sailed it successfully across the Atlantic to the

Cork coast. I felt comforted that there were some equally daft buggers out there! One individual asked how they exercised his dogs on the crossing replied " they were so busy just staying on board that no further exercise was necessary"! They were all going to sail on around the world after repairs were done. I never found out what happened.

Feeling better I walked into town in the pouring rain and made a few calls before sleeping soundly in the dunes.

### **Buntrahir Beach, Co. Mayo to Easkey Co. Sligo 17 August 1998**

The alarm did not register or figure in my world of dreams and consequently missed the forecast at 6 am... a tough regime that Des had imposed early in the trip. I dreamed on and surfaced at 9.00am to find the day grey, overcast and a fresh NW wind. No surprises there! I reckoned the wind had eased somewhat and I finally left my Mayo beach for the passage to Downpatrick Head. I didn't care what the conditions were like as I was heading east again and once around the head sure, I'd be laughing...

I was relaxed and fully rested. And, as I passed under the Head, a Sunfish passed under me! Curious creatures with a big disk shaped body and dorsal fin that flaps rather weakly on the surface. A present of the Gulf stream. It was a day for the wildlife. The successive NW winds had trapped migrating seabirds in Donegal Bay and now with the clearance to better conditions many were heading seaward past Kilcummin, Creevagh and Downpatrick Heads. The passage to Kilcummin produced 10 Great, 2 Pomarine and 10 Arctic Skuas, 1 Grey Phalarope and 2 Sabine's Gulls from the high Arctic. I wasn't at all surprised to see a group of birders in position on Kilcummin but they got a surprise in seeing me out in the flow. I paddled towards the head to have one of them waving madly at me in recognition. We had this attempted hilarious conversation trying to communicate over the din of the surf and wind. I did not understand a word of what he said and I never found out if he understood me!

The "Libertad" was still at anchor but as I approached the sails began to unfurl and she slipped away into the bay despite my sprint to reach her. Cursing my luck and my late morning start I waved her goodbye and headed ashore at Kilcummin for lunch.

I was an unwitting witness to a rapid transformation taking place at Kilcummin. The "Libertad" was just about out of sight when the blue/white bunting and flags were promptly and very efficiently changed to the tricolour of France. The energy of the individuals responsible was amusing as with military smartness the little harbour changed nationality before my eyes. I detected that I was the cause of slight annoyance and perhaps embarrassment with my swarthy complexion and blue/white kayak! I left the pier and headed across Killala Bay.

An increasing volume of seabirds passing the kayak heading out to sea dominated the afternoons paddle. Lots of Shearwaters including Sooty Shearwaters from the South Atlantic. The sky cleared the rain stopped and immediately the birds melted away out into the bay. I was left to enjoy the sunshine as I landed on the rocky platforms of Easkey, Co. Sligo. I met with an Irish surfer who told me he was into his fourth tent and third year living in the area and waiting for those dream wave days.

My mood had lifted considerably after dinner and I retired early in anticipation of a big day tomorrow.

### **Easkey, Co. Sligo to Glencloncille, Co. Donegal 18 August 1998.**

I poked my head out of the tent and sniffed the air. It was still and grey and overcast but that beats the hell out of windy, grey and overcast. I smiled to myself over breakfast as I found a beat up rasher in the bottom of a food bag....luxury!

Provisions were low on all counts so I needed to make a few decisions and not only on food and fuel. With a bare two weeks of possible paddle time remaining, a secondary objective for the trip was now needed. However, today I refused to draw myself into making any serious decisions.

It was one of those mornings when it takes a long hour to get the body humming. Everything from the skeg placement to the slight beam sea proved an irritation. I had to reprimand myself to stop whining and enjoy the day. By the second hour the magic of the west of Ireland had me captivated. The day began to brighten and the mist and cloud formations of the recent low-pressure systems rolled off the landscape. It was like a great unveiling as Slieve League emerged firstly and in a smooth unhurried way my views were drawn all around the coast to Inishmurray, Benbulbin and Knocknarea. The light was so clear after the recent rain it cried out for photographs to be taken. A ceremonial one was taken midway across my furthest point offshore to date. I contemplated pushing eastwards towards Teelin and to come back under the Slieve League cliffs. However my enthusiasm for such a project flagged with the realisation that it would put at least another two hours onto the days paddling. Slieve League would need another day, more plans! I satisfied myself with the views and a rare day with the camera. The seabirds paid their respects and a Basking Shark swam lazily by. Curious little jellyfish like blue water droplets with a sail like structure above the water and a flat bottom were plentiful in the middle of the bay.

I made Malinbeg and the lovely beach at Doon-Trabane at 3 pm. The crossing had taken five and a half hours from Easkey. I was bushed and landed amongst the holidaymakers who were taking advantage of the rare sunny day. I fell into conversation with a Sligo man who gave me a hand hauling the kayak up the beach. A long leisurely lunch followed soaking up the rays. I was delighted to be in Donegal. It was one of those milestones, like Carnsore Point, Mizen Head, Loop Head although this was the most significant. Every day from now on would be a bonus I would have to be content with finishing the trip somewhere on the Donegal coast.

I departed the beach at Malinbeg, determined to get around to Glencolmcille. The day was continuing warm and clear and as I rounded Rossan Point, I gazed longingly at Rathlin O' Binn and made another trip plan for the future. I found myself in a surprisingly lumpy sea off the point but enjoyed the run into Glen Bay where I beached again amongst the holidaymakers. A campsite was hard to find at the beach, the dunes and rocky foreshore both being unsuitable. In the end I found a grassy ledge well above the beach and set up the tent. Some chores, shopping and one pint later I retired for the night, very tired. I caught the late forecast and thought 'Oh shit' as I drifted off.

### **Glencolmcille, Co. Donegal 19 August 1998.**

I woke for the forecast at 6 am to hear rain on the tent but registered that the wind seemed light enough. It was grey, overcast SW 4-6 backing W 6-7 according to the Met men. I fell instantly asleep and forgot about the world. Woke with a start at 9.30am and cooked breakfast. The question of going to sea or not raged throughout breakfast and I sat about lacking enthusiasm for another battle in the waves. The weather cleared beautifully by 11.00am and I was mad at myself. I parried all attempts to motivate by throwing in all kinds of excuses.... I needed fuel, food ... etc.

To be honest I was fed up with difficult days on the water. Today would have been a very committing trip and in a nutshell, I didn't want to know. Other factors were also playing on my mind. I knew that today would also be my last chance to paddle for possibly two days as the long-range forecast was very poor. Also I was beginning to question how long more I wanted to continue up the Donegal coast on this stop-start basis.

I finished washing up and gave myself a day off! Always a popular decision. A walk to Glen Head and view the coastline northwards was decided upon. It was a day for photography and natural history. I studied the sea closely and the rugged coastline north of Glen Head. I was impressed and realised that I would have needed to have up early and fully committed for this stretch. I had been right this morning, with that ever-increasing wind it would have been a difficult day.

I had a great day pottering about, walked into the village and went into tourist mode. Solved my fuel problem and met up with others stranded in Glencolmcille. We all agreed that you could be in worst places. A decision to go on the town in the interests of inter-cultural understanding later that evening was agreed! A happy evening resulted in good-humoured assassination of the various national characteristics! I retired to the howl of the wind from the west and the certain knowledge, "no paddling tomorrow boy!"

### **Glencolmcille, Co. Donegal. 21 August 1998.**

A long melancholy day spent in a wet and windy tent. I lazed away the hours reading what was left of my books and getting closer by the hour to making an ultimate decision. Phone calls home helped to clarify the issue. The longed for high-pressure system was not on the way and the immediate forecast gave at least two more days of high winds. I had a week left to hang in there and suffer on or admit defeat and go and enjoy a week's holiday with the family in Cork. It was decision time and after a call to Eric in Dublin who was available to pick me up, I decided. I was beaten and it killed me to give in.

Eric would collect me on the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> August.

I was relieved and frustrated at having finally made a decision. I went off out into the weather and walked away the feeling of defeat. I cast my mind back over what had been a unique trip for me. My head was full of images of places seen, people encountered, good days, bad days and thought how much I owed to my wife Ann and family. I sat in the rain over looking a mad wild sea and felt happy with my lot. I had been lucky to get this far and sure there is always next year!

I had a great last evening out, crashed a party and got accepted on the condition that I sang a song. Managed to fool them on that one and returned to my coastal perch for a nostalgic last evening with the surf, a sound that will always reawaken memories from this particular journey.

A tidy up, a few more walks and the posting of many postcards to thank all those who had contributed to keeping a paddler at his task. A final phone call to the IMES who had been very professional in keeping tabs on me and I left Glencolmcille with Eric late on evening of the 21 August 98. Needless to say, the Irish summer arrived as soon as I was home!

**Next issue – better things to come!**

## **Scottyland**

### **Crossing the North Channel**

**By Kevin O'Sullivan**

I have always been fascinated with the versatility of the sea kayak..... light enough to carry on your shoulder..... happy on a roof rack..... and relatively cheap as an ocean going vessel. However it was only this June that I fully realised that, in the sea kayak, we have at our fingertips a very special key..... a key which we can use to open the door to a host of adventures to suit our appetite.

My appetite was whetted recently by a suggestion from my good friend Robert Bolton to paddle to Scotland's Portpatrick from Donaghadee in County Down. This quickly became one of my main paddling goals for this summer. We visited veteran racer Bob Coulter, a man who has completed the 19 mile trip solo, doing the homeward leg in a staggering 4 hours 16 minutes...quite an achievement as you'll see if you find yourself plying this passage.

The trip is best started from the slipway 1/4 mile north of Donaghadee harbour where access at all states of the tide is easy. We headed out from this point at 6.30 a.m., two hours before high water, anticipating slack water in mid channel and the ebb for the remainder, effectively neutralising any drift. The sea on departure was confused chop and swell with a south east force 3/4 adding a bit of spice to our morning plus shaking off any cobwebs. Some strato cumulus was scratching its way along as a dying warm front gave way to a brighter hazy day.

Having spoken to the Belfast Coastguard the night before and given them as much of our details as we had, we again rang in to let them know that our trip was now going ahead. We would try to make contact every hour subject to coverage on our mobile phones. These seemed to be good only out as far as 5 miles offshore, so for 9 of the 19 mile passage we were out of range. The first half of this journey passes well south of the Copeland islands, the first of the three is the Great Copeland, its the biggest by strange coincidence!!

Complete with its collection of holiday cottages and sporting two sounds, one to landward and one on the seaward side separating it from the remaining two smaller islands of the group Mew & Lighthouse, the latter being the one without the lighthouse! The tidal flows run hard in around the Copelands and must be respected especially if combined with any swell..... we skated by well south of any of their streams but on the return their effect was felt.

By the time we were just shy of halfway we could see the faint profile of 'The land of the Haggis'. Sadly it was met with little appreciation by me having suffered a headache and uneasiness for a short while I slowly but surely put two and two together and realised I was becoming seasick!!

I was in denial for a good while as it was my first time to suffer this ailment in a kayak ..... with 20 years kayaking under my belt, the last 6 exclusively on the sea, this was a new event for me..... my new motto..... pack KWELLS or other such lifesaver on every trip!!

Mew lighthouse was still in view at this point but we decided to continue on and see what transpired. Only three hours into the trip and Robert, himself a doctor, found himself on a busman's holiday..... the rest of my day was clouded by waves of nausea with a fish feeding episode followed by a short reprieve, my window as I called it, when I paddled hard often for only fifteen minutes whereupon the whole process repeated itself (an unfortunate pun!). All was not lost as Robert struggled to find the positive in this sad situation pointing out more than once our drift rate compared to our freshly laid trail of fishfood!!

Thankfully as the day wore on, things brightened up and the sea settled somewhat but not enough to stop my painful repertoire...Portpatrick came into view very slowly, long after the first identifiable point, namely the White building of the Killantringan Light 1.5 miles North of our landfall. The topography of this part of Scotland, called locally as the 'Rhins Of Galloway', is of a long low ridge about 100metres high running NW/SE with our goal the only port on its western flank. The high ground makes for more distant visual contact from a kayak and one we were glad of under the circumstances. Even though we had a GPS (thanks Cormac) capable of complete magic if you ask me, it was reassuring to see where we were headed from a good distance offshore.

After 7 hours and 10 minutes we gently entered the quaint harbour at Portpatrick which I could best describe as an amphitheatre of small dwellings. I gladly sunk my sodden bootees into Scottish sand and slowly but surely my body returned to normal. A quick call to Angela(my wife) and the Belfast coastguard on the mobile to say we had made it. Then the slow process of getting checked into the nearest B&B. We seemed to strike it lucky with the Melvin Lodge Guest House only 100m from the scars on the beach where we made our first impressions on this sleepy town.

They happily allowed us put our craft into their back garden and basically took good care of us till we parted the next day. Our stay consisted of eating & drinking & sleeping with only a little sightseeing to get

a flavour of Scottish life in a sleepy coastal town. A great seafood restaurant is only 20 metres from the guest house and this certainly helped to restock our fuel tanks for the homeward leg.

We awoke to the most amazing of days, the sun was out, the sea was like a mirror, and we were ready for off by 12.30p.m. We glided back out of port on what looked more like mercury than water and were greeted by a Minke whale when we were only one hour away from shore. After that length of time we could already see the coast north of Belfast Lough plus the generating station chimney at Carrickfergus.

The homeward crossing was easy going, a sea almost flat throughout with only the lightest of breezes gave little other than distance alone to contend with. The Sea Gods were with us and our mid-channel lunchbreak more resembled sitting in a heated pool than being completely exposed in the middle of the Irish Sea. We both dug deep and watched the Copelands draw nearer, stroke by stroke, until we eventually ended up abeam Mew Island well north of the direct line for our trip, having been taken by the ebbing tide. Our final few miles were along the eastern flanks of this island group back to the slipway we had left from the previous morning, this crossing having taken 5 hours and 20 minutes (the much improved time thanks to the magic of Kwells).

Who was waiting for us on our return only Big Bob Coulter (the 4hr 17 minute man!!) armed with congratulatory drinks and a strong handshake..... boy were we glad to see him. For anyone who hasn't completed a long paddle with no landfall, all I can say is that the peculiar joy of standing vertical again after such a test is one I will remember with fondness. As I gazed back over the sea towards Scotland, now completely out of sight, the last two days activities came flashing through my mind. My emotions danced a merry dance and I thought of all the training, planning and anxieties that were part of this adventure and concluded that once again I had been bitten by a bug..... sea kayaking was becoming for me a great platform for more challenges.....(Holyhead to Dublin next eh??). So we drove home, me to Skerries and Bob to Bangor with a feather in our caps and a pep in our step, dreaming about more adventures on the Great Ocean.

Kevin O Sullivan ( 01-8494811 for any queries if you are thinking of doing the crossing.)

## **Buying or Selling a boat?**

Contact Des Keaney (01) 2760263 who may be able to put you in contact with a buyer or seller as required.

Also, there should be some ex-demo boats for sale at the Symposium in October.

## **Advanced Meets 2000**

### **By Des Keaney**

June next year will see the first of a new series of meets for advanced paddlers.

#### **What's the idea?**

To run a series of meets with ambitious targets which would not be considered for the usual ISKA outings e.g. circumnavigations of Rathlin, Inishtrahull, Tory, Aranmore, Blaskets, Skelligs etc. These meets will be in addition to the usual ISKA schedule so the less experienced paddler will not lose out.

## Who?

"Advanced" means those people currently paddling at Level 5 / 5 Star standard and comfortable with distances of 20 miles. You are expected to be able to look after yourself in difficult conditions and to have a first time roll. These meets will not be 'led' as such although paddlers will be expected to work for each other and a local expert will provide direction.

## Where and when?

A circumnavigation of Rathlin is the first target and will happen on the weekend of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> June 2000. Robin Ruddock will be the local expert. Any suggestions or comments will be welcomed by Des Keaney.

# Courses

## Sea Proficiency Course

### Date Description Centre Cost

13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Nov. Level 5 Sea Prof. Assessment Saoirse na Mara, Achill IR£75

## *Sea Instructor Course*

### Date Description Centre Cost

18<sup>th</sup> –19<sup>th</sup> Oct Level 3 Sea Instructorship Cork IR£70

## 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>Centre</u>	<u>Cost</u>
8 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> Oct	REC Standard	Tollymore	GB£92
10 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov	REC Accelerated	Tollymore	GB£140

### CONTACT LIST

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

Marc Jegou, Ballyvaughan, Co.Clare 065 77043, riverocean@esatclear.ie

Stephen Hannon, Saoirse Na Mara, 094 27682, stephenh @iol.ie

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

ICU, (01) 4509838, [office@irishcanoeunion.ie](mailto:office@irishcanoeunion.ie)

## **Wild Geese Canoe Club**

The Wild Geese boys in Cork have bought 6 Skerrays and are doing great work introducing people to sea kayaking at a minimal cost. Anyone interested in getting out with them should contact Pat Smyth (021 874348) or Vincent Scannell (021 331000)

# **ACR Electronics**

## **By Des Keaney**

I've used a combined torch/strobe for the last couple of years with which I've been very happy. It's a *Firefly Plus 1916*, made by ACR Electronics in Florida.

It's very useful in that it has a torch at one end and a strobe at the other. It's genuinely waterproof, compact and only needs two AA batteries.

Then, the bulb in the strobe blew – well, it stopped working. I couldn't remember where I'd bought it so I sent an e-mail to the parent company in Florida asking where I might buy a spare. A week later, a courier arrives in rural Co. Wicklow with a brand new unit – not just a bulb but a whole new torch.

Was I impressed or what? Well done ACR, both on a good product and great customer service.

*ACR Electronics, 5757 Ravenswood Road, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33312 USA. Ph: + 1-954-981-3333 Web Site: [www.acrelectronics.com](http://www.acrelectronics.com)*

## **Whaling in Irish Waters**

### **by Paul Bracken**

At a time when many NGO's are campaigning the Irish Government to drop their controversial proposals to the International Whaling Commission it seems appropriate to reflect on our own history of whaling. Yes, strange as it may seem, Ireland once had two whaling companies. The Aranmore Whaling Company and the Blacksod Whaling Company both operated off the Mayo coast in the early part of this century.

The Aranmore Whaling Company began operations in 1908 on the tidal islet of Rusheen, near the Mullet Peninsula. During its six years in operation its annual catches totalled fewer than 400. In December 1913 the shareholders decided to cease business and by the end of 1914 most of the equipment had been dismantled, with much of it being sold to another whaling company in Spain. The locals took what was easily movable and this even included the corrugated iron off the roofs.

The Blacksod Whaling Company, Inishkea Island, Blacksod Bay operated between 1910 and 1914. During its five years in business its catch totalled over 300. Because of its position whales could be drawn up onto the slipway irrespective of the tide. It had a plentiful supply of local labour, as most locals were delighted with this additional source of income.

Although these figures may appear small in comparison to today's standards it is still a legacy that I feel we need to reflect on at times, especially when our own Government seems intent on promoting a set of proposals that the majority of NGO's worldwide are totally opposed to.

One of the earliest surviving documentaries made in Ireland is called 'Whaling Ashore and Afloat'. It is not recommended for the squeamish as it features a whale being shot, towed ashore and stripped for oil and bonemeal. It was mostly filmed at the Aranmore Whaling Company and can be viewed at the Irish Film Archive (1908, Robert Paul).

As mentioned in the last issue (summer 1999), Trevor Sargent tabled a question in the Dail requesting a meeting with the Minister and a response to the alternative 'Positive Strategy for the IWC'. The Minister gave a lengthy reply to the Dail, but it did not contain any new information on their position or indeed specifically address the issues raised in my letter. She did state that she was aware of the proposals being endorsed by 52 Irish groups and concluded her statement with these "proposals while well intentioned and idealistic are not very practical". The Minister did agree to a meeting between myself and Michael Canny, the Commissioner of the International Whaling Commission. I will be joined at this meeting with representatives from the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and Campaign Whale. By the time you read this, the meeting will have taken place (6<sup>th</sup>. October), but I will report on the outcome in the next issue. Also in the next issue a profile of the baiji (Chinese River Dolphin), the most endangered of all cetaceans.

Paul Bracken can be contacted at [pbracken@indigo.ie](mailto:pbracken@indigo.ie)

# "COME AND TRY IT" WEEKEND

**CLIFDEN 11<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 1999**

**By Mary Butler**

We arrived in Clifden on Friday Night just as Dave Walsh was directing traffic to the Bank of Ireland car park beside the hostel. The trailer load of ICU boats had already arrived courtesy of Ciaran Smith. Most were staying in the suggested accommodation – Leo's Hostel – the kind of place that would make you appreciate your tent even if it did leak and it was raining outside!

Saturday morning began with a pep talk in the kitchen of the hostel given by Dave. A plan for the day was set and all assembled headed for Streamstown, just outside Clifden. Gerry Murtagh had joined the group to see what ISKA was all about. He intends to build his own sea kayak. Immediately, he got a job... to do the shuttle and also tow the trailer.

Ciaran was busy organising the new recruits with boats and gear when he damaged his back. He had to retire for the weekend and take to the bed dosed with painkillers. Eventually, after getting an agreed figure of how many were sea worthy, the trip was logged with Clifden Radio, and the flotilla hit the water. The sun came out and 22 sea kayakers set out of the bay.

On leaving the shelter of the bay, we were confronted with a tidal race. Then as we headed for Inishturk Island, large waves began to roll under us in an attempt to intimidate us. Quietness descended on the fleet, as each had to concentrate on their paddling. Des Keane and Dave Walsh kept a watchful eye on their charges. As we made our way to the shelter of the island, the waves disappeared and conversations started again. With blue skies and sunshine at the island it was time to lunch; some took a dip, others sunbathed while more investigated the island. A few looked longingly out to Cruagh Island and a group of five united to visit it.

The rest of the group headed for Easlagh Island and then on to Turbot Island. Here, we investigated the island and visited the graveyard to discover unusual surnames such as Stuffle. It was time then to make tracks for Clifden where we rendezvoused with our support crew. After sustenance being received at various feeding areas in Clifden, we all, eventually, regrouped in Kin gs pub.

The next morning as we assembled in the hostel kitchen, the wind blew and the rain fell. While Dave outlined the plan for the day, I contemplated mutiny. A wee trip to Westport in the warmth and comfort of the car had a much greater appeal. But I decided to tag along to the start point at Letterfrack just in case the weather would miraculously change. Then the skies began to clear and the sun shone, so that was it. It was another day paddling.

Dave took one group under his wing while Des took a second group. I went with the latter. We set off out of Barnaderg Bay to Ballynakill Harbour and explored the coastline. En route, we stopped off for lunch at Bundouglas where Seán Pierce suggested that we would paddle out along the coast for a few more kilometres, as he knew the area to be interesting. It was spectacular; you could swear you were in Thailand (never been but I've seen the pictures). The sky was blue, the water was green and crystal clear, and large dome shaped rock formations stretched up from the sea. Sean pointed out the various sea birds and spotted a peregrine falcon.

We then set course for Freaghillaun South Island under Tully Mountain. Some were taking the island hopping very seriously and stopped at a small island on their way (must have been doing some research for Dave's Oilean!). We landed on Freaghillaun where rations were opened. Conor, One of the new sea kayakers donned fins, snorkel and mask to explore the seabed. He surfaced with an array of sea life and asked for orders from the on lookers!

It was time for me to make tracks as the road to Letterkenny awaited. My sister Martina and I moved off with a posse of fellow road travellers. As we approached Letterfrack, Sean invited us to practise the roll; some took up the challenge but not I. Dave's group had finished just before our arrival. They too had visited Freaghillaun and had an enjoyable day.

The ICU trailer was loaded up and Pat Fox, who had only arrived from Clare that morning was unanimously elected to tow it to its home. The come and try it weekend came to its end as everyone went his or her separate ways. Unfortunately, the ICU trailer decided to separate itself from its axle. Luckily, Pat spotted the trouble in time and after much clanging of hammers and chains, the trailer limped to Aengus Parsons in Moycullen. All's well that ends well!

## Double Wanted

Contact Conor Murphy (01) 6283325 if you have or know of a double sea kayak for sale.

# Sea Instructor Training A course with a difference

**By Frank Hogan**

You never know quite what to expect when you sit in your boat and set off for a trip. That is one of the many things I love about sea kayaking. No matter how much you plan and organise, something new and challenging can always present itself.

The same can be said for sea kayaking courses. The course in question was the Level 3 Sea Instructor Course, the first to be run by the ICU. I thought it was rather fitting that our instructor was Stephen Hannon as he was one of the main driving forces in the implementation of the sea instructor curriculum in the ICU.

There were seven participants in all and they all showed up relaxed and cheery on a lovely sunny Saturday morning at the sailing centre in Dunlaoghaire Harbour.

The morning kicked off with some lectures on training methods, qualities of a good instructor and various other topics. Stephen's style of teaching invites active participation and discussion which, given the crew involved, was just as well. You couldn't have shut them up anyway.

Actually, it was great because between the seven, there was a wealth of background and experience, which I greatly benefited from.

Although relaxed and easygoing, Stephen kept the morning moving nicely along with zero boredom content until it was time to hit the water for a look at some teaching methods.

Before we got on the water, we had to suffer the usual hilarious indignity of the stretching session. Funny thing about stretching, it's always taught but seldom actually done. I suppose it's because you look like such an eejit bouncing across the place in rubber. Seriously though, it's a great idea and everyone should do it.

The session that followed was, true to form, relaxed and informative with great input from all.

A quick break for lunch and it was off to Bullock Harbour for a paddle around Dalkey Island. Again, the emphasis was on teaching and leading a group but it was a nice classroom and very conducive to learning. Seán "The Birdman" Pierce was full of information on the indigenous bird population, which is quite prolific. For those of you who don't know Dalkey Island, it's a tern sanctuary and a very pleasant little paddle so close to the city. Seán's knowledge of sea birds was very informative.

A quick bite to eat in the Eagle pub in Sandycove and then it was off to the Irish Marine Emergency Service HQ in Leeson Lane. This was the first very enjoyable surprise of the course. Stephens's idea of demystifying the voice at the other end of your VHF radio was excellent and I was very impressed by the whole system and the available resources.

Should you ever find yourself in trouble at sea, these guys will be there for you. Mind you, it helps if you do your part and are prepared. If you ever get the chance to visit, make sure you check out the search program on the computer - it impressed the hell out of me.

From the IMES Centre it was back to Dalkey for a night paddle, an activity that I personally enjoy very much. Paddling at night always adds that little bit more to a trip even in a short paddle around Dalkey

Island. The emphasis again was on group control and Stephen gave everyone a chance to lead and try out whatever they wanted.

Before I ever paddled, I was a diver so I'm as fascinated by what's under the water as by what can be seen on the surface. I usually carry a diving mask with me to have the odd look around. On this occasion, there would not be a lot to see as it was dark but I donned the mask and rolled over. I let go of my paddles, waved my arms about and was rewarded with what I had hoped for - phosphorescence. These tiny bioluminescent creatures inhabit the sea and glow green when agitated. For those of you who have never tried this you won't be disappointed, it really is a beautiful sight. By the way, a diving mask is a useful tool for learning to roll as you can see what your paddle blades are doing.

A very pleasant evening finished with an agreement to meet up the next morning for a day of instruction on the water and a joint exercise with IMES.

On Saturday, Stephen had informed us that IMES was looking for two volunteers to be rescued by the lifeboat and the Search and Rescue helicopter in front of the bandstand in Bray. These demonstrations are PR for the IMES and heighten awareness amongst the public of the resources available through a simple phone call.

I have missed several opportunities to have a ride in a chopper so I was really hoping I would get a chance this time. The kid in everyone came out when it was time to decide. We drew lots whereupon Paul Durnan and I were chosen to be the helicopter victims and Mary Butler was to be picked up by the lifeboat.

Conditions were great with a nice lumpy sea and a fair bit of sunshine. The plan was to paddle in front of the bandstand a few hundred yards offshore, await the arrival of the helicopter and capsize. The rest of the group paddled toward the beach leaving Paul and I to wait. I have to admit I was rather excited at the prospect of getting winched up to the helicopter. I wasn't at all disappointed with what followed.

After a brief delay, the sound of the helicopter could be heard followed by the impressive sight of the Sikorsky coming in low towards the beach. Over we went and started thrashing about like eejits. This was the cue for the Greystones inshore rescue inflatable to come and drag us from the water. The crew did their jobs fast and well and it wasn't long before we were hauled unceremoniously from the water and left to sort ourselves out and await pickup by the chopper.

The boys in the rib really seemed to enjoy chucking it all over the place which made for a fun ride. After a couple of passes, the helicopter came in and matched the forward speed of the rib and dispatched the rescue crewman. I have never been under the downwash of a helicopter and although I was expecting it, the downwash from a helicopter the size of the Sikorsky is truly amazing. I saw my kayak blown over and over across the water toward the beach where I hoped it would get rescued.

After that I got caught up in the moment and forgot all about my boat. Lowered down on a slender cable, the rescue crewman came aboard the small rib, slipped the harness under my arms, gave a quick thumbs up and off I went. "What a cool feeling" - dangling from a thin cable, being reeled in by something that just doesn't look like it should fly. The unusual perspective of looking up at the belly of the beast only added to the fun.

Once at the open door, the winchman hauled me in and led me to the seats at the rear where, after picking up Paul, we sat and enjoyed about fifteen or twenty minutes flying around Bray Head. We came back in low over the bay where we were to be dropped onto the deck of the Dunlaoghaire offshore lifeboat. It just kept getting better. Paul was first, harness on and out the door. I couldn't really see much but I didn't have to wait long before I was sitting on the edge with the lifeboat moving below at a speed matching the chopper. It was great fun to be lowered onto the offshore boat and the helicopter crew did a great job placing me rather delicately on the aft railing where the lifeboat crew helped me aboard. What a rush!

The helicopter peeled off to go on an actual rescue and the rib came in to bring us back to shore and our waiting boats.

Both Paul and I were buzzed from the whole experience and it was quite a while before I could get the smile off my face.

Hooking up with the others, we continued on with some rescue and towing scenarios, which made for an informative wet session for all.

A fabulous weekend, great experiences and memories. I'm looking forward to the assessment. Courses are a great way to improve your knowledge and experience not to mention being a lot of fun. I look forward to the next one.

## **Using the Internet for weather and wave forecasting**

**By Conor Murphy**

### **Scruffy explains the weather**

I know very little about meteorology. But Scruffy Loftus, my Geography teacher, explained the Coriolis effect pretty well to me twenty years ago.

1. Low pressure areas are wind sinks.
2. The earth spins at about 1000 m/hr at the equator and decreases to 0mph at the poles.
3. Like a man jumping from a moving train (Scruffy's analogy), winds blowing towards the poles will veer in the direction of the earth's rotation i.e. west to east while winds blowing towards the equator will veer in the opposite direction. Effectively that means they will end up to the right of the point they were aiming for. The net effect is an anti-clockwise spiral towards the low pressure centre or depression.

The effect works for Ocean currents too - the North-South California current that passes San Francisco is drawn Westwards causing an upwelling of freezing water that pours into the bay with every tide. Hot air hitting this saucer of cold water turns into fog which rolls spectacularly across the city until it reaches natural mountain barriers. You can read more about ocean upwelling at <http://www.ocean98.org/cacoast2.htm>

All depressions except those formed at the equator will consist of a cold wind from the North and a warm wind from the South. A depression therefore contains a warm and a cold front which may eventually meet as the warm wind rises and spirals over the cold. The warm air turns to cloud and rain as it is cooled behind the cold front.

### **Predicting the weather**

The Farmer's Journal is posted on the web on Friday mornings with the MET office forecast for the coming week (<http://www.farmersjournal.ie/weather/index.html>).

### **The Sea area forecast - a rant**

Completely understanding the MET office sea area forecast requires a good knowledge of Irish geography and meteorology. Do not even attempt it without having a current weather chart with each station plotted.

Pressure tendency describes the change in pressure over the past 3 hours according to the scale:

0.0 - 0.4 hPa/3hr = steady

0.5 - 1.9 hPa/3hr = rising/falling slowly

2.0 - 3.4 hPa/3hr = rising/falling

3.5 - 5.9 hPa/3hr = rising/falling rapidly

6.0 hPa/3hr + = rising/falling very rapidly

Even if you had all that committed to memory, you'd still never be able to tell the weather from a falling barometer at Erris Head so I don't know why they bother.

"Here is the forecast from Erris Head to Rossan Point to Carlingford Lough and the North Irish Sea". You don't have to be a meteorologist to know that 99 days out of 100 the weather at Erris Head will bear no relation to the weather at Carlingford Lough.

The forecasts on RTE especially the farming one on Sunday are of course excellent.

Will the met office ever get a web site ?

## **Predicting waves - much easier**

Waves are formed by strong winds blowing in the same direction for a period of time. A static hurricane will generate enormous waves (as Dennis and Floyd did recently for the Florida coast). A deep depression holding static in the region of Iceland will also generate great waves off the North and West coasts of Ireland. Waves are easier to predict as they are slow to lose their power or change direction.

**<http://www.nws.fsu.edu/buoy/uk.html>**

## **Buoys**

This is a clickable picture of buoys in our waters which send their data every hour. I have found this to be by far the most valuable tool for short term sea-swell prediction. There is a free service called surfmail (<http://www.surfinfo.com>) which will send you an email or a message to your pager every time a chosen buoy exceeds a chosen threshold wave height and or period. In this way I have been able to record the maximum recorded wave heights over the past 12 months.

The biggest was last November:

**Surfmail for User:** conormurphy, **UserID:** 3531

**One of the following buoys has exceeded your threshold for surf**

**Based on Offshore Data at 16Z Nov 27**

**BuoyId:** 62108

**Min Height(ft):** 13 **Actual Ht (ft):** 34.448 **Min Period (s):** 9 **Actual period(s):** 13.000

**BuoyId:** 62105

**Min Height(ft):** 10 **Actual Ht (ft):** 13.123 **Min Period (s):** 8 **Actual period(s):** 8.0000

The relationship between wave height and period at a buoy and the subsequent wave height when that wave hits your favourite beach is explained very well on this page:

<http://www.diltd.demon.co.uk/ric/pages/energy.htm>

In summary:

1. the wave group speed in deep water of a swell with period 9s is roughly **1 degree of longitude per 4 hours.**
2. continental shelf friction reduces wave height
3. the size of the wave when it breaks is proportionate to its height and period.

In addition it is worth mentioning that waves arrive parallel to the shore due to refraction i.e. as the water gets shallower the wave slows down allowing any part of the wave front in deeper water (farther from shore) to catch up.

You may have read the article in the Irish Marine publication about their new buoys (<http://www.marine.ie/seastate/issue07/#icams>). These should be extremely useful for wave prediction on the south coast if they ever get them online.

## The WAM

<http://152.80.56.202/wam.html> These are wave height and direction charts produced by a computer wave model at the US Navy which allow quite accurate 6 day prediction of waves. For instance, compare the 6 day prediction from August 27, <http://www.angelfire.com/hi/ConorMurphy/images/27Aug99144.gif> to the 1 day prediction from Sep 1, <http://www.angelfire.com/hi/ConorMurphy/images/1Sep99024.gif> Cindy was overestimated but then it's hard to predict what a hurricane will do. Otherwise spot on !

## ECMWF

Waves are formed by wind and the ECMWF (<http://www.ecmwf.int>) 3-6 day plots are probably the most reliable wind forecasts available to us. Here is the 3 day chart from Aug 31 (<http://www.angelfire.com/hi/ConorMurphy/images/31Aug9972ECMWF.jpg>)

# Coastal Displays Ltd

# A Christmas Present for the Kayaker who has everything!

**Reviewed by Des Keaney**

I love maps and charts – I could look at them all day and still find something new. I was immediately drawn to *Coastal Displays* stand at an exhibition some time ago. Beautifully framed charts with working lighthouses – wonderful!

These are working navigation charts of your favourite coastal area, regardless of where in the world it may be. The timing of each light is accurate to within 0.1 seconds and is controlled by an electronic circuit board which plugs into a 13amp socket. The lights are LEDs which are virtually everlasting.

Each chart is approximately 40" x 28" and is created to your personal specification. You can have up to 8 lights, a frame choice of pine, medium oak or walnut frame and choice of clear or no n-reflective plastic glass.

This is a superb piece of work. The price? IR£280.

You can contact Fergus and Yvonne Treanor of *Coastal Displays* at 053-39305.

Their address is Seaview, Redshire Road, Murrin town, Co. Wexford, e-mail: coastaldisplays @tinet.ie, web page [http:// homepage.tinet.ie/~coastal](http://homepage.tinet.ie/~coastal)

## A Day in Paradise

### Paddling in Queensland

**By Mary Butler**

Queensland the ' Sunshine State' of Australia has endl ess sunshine, blue skies, the Great Barrier Reef, rainforests, tropical islands, white beaches and to top it all off – the water is 26° C! What more could you ask for? Yes – a sea kayak. Well "no worries " you can go on weeklong adventures, three -day trips or a day excursion and most of the prices are "fairdinkum".

We chose a day trip with Salty Dog Sea Kayaking based near the Whitsunday Islands. The day started with a pick up from our accommodation at 8.00am (it's dark by 6.00pm). My sister Martina and I w ere the only takers.... Four others cancelled due to the breezy conditions. Our guides told us that the day was ours and we could choose the itinerary. We had a choice of kayaks, double or single, I opted for a brand new Storm made by Current Designs while Martina took a Perception Sea Lion, both plastics but having the luxury of rudders. Our guides, Hayley and Neil paddled a double Mirage.

The launch spot was at Shute Harbour where many of the ferry and yacht trips also depart. From Shute Harbour you have access to all the islands of the Whitsunday's, so called as they were discovered by Captain Cook on a Whitsunday. The advice from Neil was "Give way to all boats. The big ferries sometimes can't see you while some of the yacht captains don't know how to avoid you". (In Queensland, anyone can charter a yacht without a helmsman or any sailing experience bare boat charter).

We headed for White Island – named due to the artistic work being carried out on a daily basis by sea birds called boobys. As we approached our landing spot on the white coral beach we spotted a large green turtle carelessly tossing about in the warm water. We had elevenses, perched precariously high up on the rocks, which pretty much made up the island, while watching a big tuna fish chase little fish around in the rock pools below.

We surfed across a few miles of open water, which brought us in no time to a tropical beach on South Molle Island. Here we would partake in my favourite occupation of any sea kayaking trip – lunch; and Martina's favourite part – sunbathing!

Our hosts arranged lunch at a picnic table shaded by palm trees. Platters, bowls, tropical fruit, salads, meats, cheeses and even a tablecloth, were all hauled out from the hatches of the boats. We also had the opportunity to experience snorkelling and there could be no better place to start than at the Great Barrier Reef.

The tropical fish are much more fascinating than any aquarium and the coral is amazing. Coral is formed by a small marine polyp that creates a hard surface by excreting lime forms this. When they die, the hard skeletons remain and new polyps grow on their dead relatives and hence the reef continues to grow. For this to occur the water must be clear enough for the sun's rays to penetrate; it must be salty and the temperature must be above 20° C.

South Molle Island, like many of the Whitsunday's, is a national park and therefore you need permission to land or to camp on them. Picnic sites and camping areas are provided as are eco friendly "rotoloo's"! These are dry toilets built on stilts and are hidden by the rainforest. Solar panels are used to run a fan drier; everything else returns to the soil. After inspecting these, we lounge about for a while before heading back to the mainland via a bay flanked by mangroves. These trees grow in the seawater, their roots being exposed at low tide, are able to store oxygen. Rumour has it that they are good haunts for estuarine crocodiles.

We paddled around "The Beak", a cliff area covered by tall pines. Here, the wealthy cane workers have built exclusive houses. All the time we were being watched by shy green turtles. Gar fish shot over the surface of the water like skimming stones. These fish have extremely sharp bodies and legend has it that a kayaker was cut in his side by one (he wasn't wearing a buoyancy aid). Our 20K trip came to an end as we paddled back into Shute Harbour. The sun sinks early and quickly in Queensland so we had to be off the water by 6.00pm.

We had hoped to do much more sea kayaking in Queensland, but unfortunately the wind blew stronger after our trip and none of the tour operators were venturing out on the sea. On the next page is a short list of contacts that we made regarding sea kayaking in Queensland. It is a brilliant place to go kayaking and would be an excellent area for non-kayakers to give it a go.

## Contacts in Queensland

### Salty Dog Sea Kayaking

Whitsunday Islands

North Queensland, Tel./Fax 07 49464 848

\*They sell their equipment in December

Day trips £30, 2 day/1 night £100

Daily hire of sea kayaks: double £20 per day, Single £12 per day

## **Raging Thunder Adventures**

P.O> Box 1109, Cairns, Queensland, Australia

Tel. 07 4030 7900, e-mail: sales @ragingthunder.com.au or web site at [http:// www.ragingthunder.com.au](http://www.ragingthunder.com.au)

Run full day trips at Fitzroy Island out of Cairns. They also do an overnight option. You are brought to the island on a luxury catamaran. This company has double sea kayaks only.

Day trips £50, Overnight £75

**Other information can be found on the internet ;**

[http:// www.sni.net/expeditions/seakayak/Australia/ daintreecoastal. html](http://www.sni.net/expeditions/seakayak/Australia/daintreecoastal.html)

**Or Townsville Canoe Club :**

They do trips for £15 per day, £75 per week

[http:// www.ozemail.com.au/~bailyd/sea.html](http://www.ozemail.com.au/~bailyd/sea.html)

## **Lost Tribe of Black Eskimos**

### **Nicholas Hallen**

A lost tribe of dark Eskimos who are descended from the first black man to reach the North Pole have been discovered living at the edge of the polar icefields. The hunters are the direct descendants of Matthew Henson a former Washington hat shop assistant who reached the pole with Peary in 1909.

Henson's polar explorations received little recognition in his time. While Peary became a Rear Admiral, Henson worked as a railway porter, a janitor, and a messenger. He died in 1955, ages 88. Now his 30 American descendants plan to rehabilitate his reputation by helping Debbie Allen, the Hollywood producer of Amistad, Stephen Spielberg's film about slavery, when she makes a film about the explorer. Denzil Washington is expected to play Henson, with Michael Douglas as Peary.

Black America has seized on Henson's story. He was selected for the final push to the pole ahead of five white men in Peary's team, but contemporary accounts relegated his role to that of valet. A row between

Peary and his rival, Cook, about whose expedition reached the pole first, also deflected attention from Henson.

The mixed-race eskimos still live close to the landing sites used by Peary's ship, the Roosevelt, in the 1909 expedition. Peary also had children by his eskimo lovers and academics now believe that other polar explorers left children behind. Samuel Allen Counter, professor of neuro-science at Harvard University, said "There are some exceptionally white eskimos living there."

Henson, who had a talent for dog-sled driving, first met the polar Inuit in 1891 when he arrived with Peary in a 28 ton sealing ship, the Kite. Both had little idea what to expect. The only previously recorded encounter between these eskimos and outsiders was in 1818, when a British navigator recorded that they asked him "Why do you bring this floating house into our land?"

They were right to be wary. Diseases introduced by the Kite reduced their number from 238 to 158 within eight years. Peary also stole three enormous meteorites which the eskimos had used as a source of iron for tools, and sold them to a New York museum for \$40,000.

Peary was anxious to build close links with the eskimos. To reach the pole he needed their skill in building igloos, driving dogs, and living on seal, caribou, musk ox and polar bear.

The explorer also had a more personal motive. On his earlier expeditions he had been accompanied by his wife, Josephine, because he claimed an active sex life was essential for "the retention of the top notch of manhood". Later he took nude photographs of eskimo women and both he and Henson installed Eskimo mistresses Alequasina and Aqattanntuau, in their ship during a later expedition in 1905. The women gave birth within days of each other in the ship's boiler room. Henson returned to see his son, Anaukaq, on the 1909 expedition.

Peary and Henson reached the north pole on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1909 and never saw their children again. Counter said "Each expedition relied on massive sponsorship, and there was no way for a man such as Henson to return in person".

However Henson took his responsibilities as a father seriously, sending presents to his son in the baggage of later expeditions. Separated by thousands of miles, Henson and Aqattanntuau resumed their previous lives. She married an eskimo man, and her son by Henson in turn had five sons, who still survive.

Some of Henson's descendants, who live on a diet of raw walrus and polar bear stew, hope to fly to America for a ceremony when the USA names a warship after Henson.

His bequest to the black eskimos may have been more precious. Allen believes the polar Inuit were dangerously inbred before the black explorer found himself a local girlfriend. "The influx of new Afro - American genes after centuries of isolation, may have saved them," said Allen.

## **Extreme Sea Kayaking**

### **Book Review**

**By Eric Soares and Michael Powers**

## Reviewed by Mike McClure

Des Keaney phoned me up last week and said "Mike - would you like to do a book review for me? - it's called "Extreme Sea Kayaking"". Sounds good - I thought - so I agreed. "A wee catch" says Des, "can you have it done in a week?". So I've been reading like mad ever since. The good news is that it wasn't a hard task for it's a very readable book.

The authors are Eric Soares and Michael Powers, both members of the elite Tsunami rangers. If you haven't heard of the famous Tsunami rangers - well, you haven't paddled on the other side of the Atlantic. They are the business over there - if you get to be a Tsunami ranger you've definitely made it to the big time!! I have seen video footage of the 'rangers' in action and you have to agree with Derek Hutchinson (and he & I have been known to disagree!!!) in his foreword in the book - "they are complete lunatics but you can't help but admire them. "

The Rangers are based around San Francisco in California and they are undoubtedly an American phenomena - they believe in just a bit of Hype!!!! It is written for the American market where calm water sea kayak touring is extremely popular and the rough water sea paddler is a rarer breed. The book is divided equally between factual information on equipment, skills, understanding sea conditions etc. and lots of wee stories that highlight the importance of learning the factual stuff. I do like a good story and enjoyed some great ones in the book. (As some of you know - I believe fervently that the truth should never get in the way of a good story!!)

The factual bits are full of useful information and well worth browsing. I was particularly interested in the chapter on the 'Mighty Sea' which contained a sea conditions grading (rating) system. It's quite complicated and something similar to a system John Ramwell came up with quite a few years ago. The 2 are set out below for interest. River grading is getting more complex with the letter system being added in recent years. At the end of the day there are only 2 grades for sea or white water - Grade YES & Grade NO!!

The other thing I particularly liked in this chapter was the bit on subjective navigation. There has been much written about sea kayak navigation - but remarkably little on 'seamanship' - i.e. the ability, through much experience, to read the sea, to be in tune with tides to make accurate predictions and to be aware of time, speed and distance. This section is a great introduction to this area of practical sea awareness. Throughout the book, our forebears in the sport the Inuit people are regularly cited as examples and their unique skills and lifestyles are used to illustrate some point or other.

The penultimate chapter is entitled "The Power of the Tribe" and is about teamwork. It is extremely "Californian" in style but nevertheless has some good ideas and advice to give.

The whole book is very enjoyable with lots of sound advice. However it is mainly worth the read due to the stories and entertaining style in which it is written. I would highly recommend it as a winters read which might just entice you to go out into the "mighty ocean on a mission with a team of wave warriors who have prepared to do battle with the elements"!!

(Get the idea of the style in which it is written!!)

*Published by Ragged Mountain Press, \$15.95 ISBN 0-07-050718-X.*

# Liffey Descent 1999

By David Walsh

Many tales of daring do emerge each year from this showpiece of Irish canoeing but none surely match the story told by our chairman. Looking back at the dreaded Palmerstown Weir, he spied our very own Mary Butler come over the top, capsize, get washed into the left hand stopper, lose her paddle and hand roll back up again. She then sculled bare handed "lamh nochtaithe" all the way to the bottom, upright all the way, to the sustained cheers of the waiting rescuers.

## Winter Paddling in Skerries

Call Seán Pierce (01-8490048) Friday evening/Saturday morning to check on weather. Meet at the lifeboat station at Skerries harbour at 10:00. The dates are as follows: Saturday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, Saturday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, and Saturday, December 11<sup>th</sup>

## Schedule 2000

The provisional schedule for next year.

Date	Event
1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> April	Spring Meet – South East
<b>29<sup>th</sup> April-1<sup>st</sup> May</b>	<b>Millennium Meet - Connemara</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> June	Advanced Meet - Rathlin
17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> June	Summer Meet - Kerry
16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Come and Try It Meet – North Clare
<b>28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> Oct</b>	<b>2000 Symposium</b>

Other meets may be added, particularly during the summer months.

Suggestions will be welcomed by Des Keaney.

**October 23<sup>rd</sup> –25<sup>th</sup> 1999**

**8<sup>th</sup> Irish Sea Kayaking Symposium**

**Achill Island**

***Don't miss it!***

## **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. 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 winter issue (No.20) is due in January