

TREASNA NA DTONNTA

"Across the Waves"

Newsletter of the Irish Sea Kayaking Association

No.20	Winter 1999/2000	IR £1.50
-------	------------------	----------

In this Issue

Atlantic Paddle

Achill Symposium

First Aid course for Sea Kayakers

Kayaking in Tasmania

RNLI Exercise in Achill

Millennium Meet

Brehon Law and the Sea

Donegal – The ‘Round Ireland continues

Galapagos

Blaskets article feedback

Galician Fishermen

Sound Navigation

5th European Symposium – Jersey

Kayaks, Kidology and Kirton

Shetland Symposium

Courses update

Trips that Pass in a Fright

What's on?

Atlantic Paddle

One of the last great kayak voyages will be attempted this summer by Peter Bray who will paddle from Newfoundland to Ireland in a 24ft kayak.

At the age of forty, Peter Bray has a formidable track record in endurance kayaking and has demonstrated time and again his capacity for surviving everything the elements can pit against him. He developed his kayaking and survival skills in the British Army's elite Special Air Services Boat Troop where he served for 15 years.

Over the years Peter has entered endurance kayaking competitions all over the world and has spent many months in remote locations taking on rivers and seas in one and two -man craft. Apart from innumerable exercises and expeditions, Peter has completed the 700km Arctic Canoe Race from the Arctic Circle to the Baltic, is a ten times veteran of the Devizes to Westminster kayak race, has explored the west coast of New Zealand's South Island by kayak, paddled across the Caribbean and paddled 3000 miles around Britain with a partially-sighted friend, raising £53,000 for charity.

Tides, currents, unpredictable winds and some of the world's busiest shipping lanes made the journey round Britain hazardous. Peter believes that the North Atlantic crossing offers fewer dangers for a person with the right equipment and the will to keep going.

Peter is currently employed as an instructor with Outdoor Challenge, a company based in Porthcawl on the South Wales coast run by Mark James. Peter manages to divide his time between teaching and NAKC2000 organisational and fundraising duties.

The Kayak

The kayak is 7.3 metres long and 0.91 metres wide. It will have the space to keep enough food, water and for three months. The cutting-edge carbon fibre and kevlar honeycomb construction will give the kayak the great strength and durability needed to cope with North Atlantic storms.

With the addition of a deep, weighted keel, more usually associated with sailing yachts, the craft is designed to right itself in the event of a capsize.

An open-sided hood covers the cockpit and the cockpit can be sealed for watertight rest periods.

Solar panels will provide sufficient energy to allow Peter to keep in touch with the world via the Internet. He will be able to send and receive e-mail and download pictures taken with a digital camera.

One of the last great kayak voyages will be attempted this summer by Peter Bray who will paddle from Newfoundland to Ireland in a 24ft kayak.

At the age of forty, Peter Bray has a formidable track record in endurance kayaking and has demonstrated time and again his capacity for surviving everything the elements can pit against him. He developed his kayaking and survival skills in the British Army's elite Special Air Services Boat Troop where he served for 15 years.

Over the years Peter has entered endurance kayaking competitions all over the world and has spent many months in remote locations taking on rivers and seas in one and two-man craft. Apart from innumerable exercises and expeditions, Peter has completed the 700km Arctic Canoe Race from the Arctic Circle to the Baltic, is a ten times veteran of the Devizes to Westminster kayak race, has explored the west coast of New Zealand's South Island by kayak, paddled across the Caribbean and paddled 30 000 miles around Britain with a partially-sighted friend, raising £53,000 for charity.

Tides, currents, unpredictable winds and some of the world's busiest shipping lanes made the journey round Britain hazardous. Peter believes that the North Atlantic crossing offers fewer dangers for a person with the right equipment and the will to keep going.

Peter is currently employed as an instructor with Outdoor Challenge, a company based in Porthcawl on the South Wales coast run by Mark James. Peter manages to divide his time between teaching and NAKC2000 organisational and fundraising duties.

Sponsorship

Peter Bray has personally invested several thousand pounds of his own money in NAKC2000, much of which has gone towards the design and building of the kayak, and numerous individuals and companies have already provided support through donations of money, equipment or services.

If you think you could help with equipment or with any level of sponsorship, please contact Jim Rowlinson.

Our Charity Goal

The primary objective of NACK2000 is to raise a total of £1 million for our selected children's charities.

The two charities Peter Bray has chosen to support both carry out wonderful work with children, but in contrasting ways. The Taste for Adventure provides outdoor activity courses for disadvantaged children, both able-bodied and disabled. The Rainbows

Children's Hospice near Loughborough gives care and support for children who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness and their families.

Challenges

Peter doesn't believe the distance is a problem when crossing the Atlantic. He covered over 3000 miles during his fundraising paddle around Britain and in many respects he says that the conditions in coastal waters are more difficult than those he will experience in the North Atlantic.

Only Peter knows if he has the dogged determination needed to spend three months or more alone in a 24 foot kayak, paddling up to fourteen hours every day, and facing all the dangers of the North Atlantic from supertankers and killer whales to hurricane-force winds. All his training and experience show him that meticulous preparation can minimise the dangers in any task and that the human body can withstand enormous punishment if the mind is willing. In Peter's view, only a major misfortune can prevent him becoming the first man to paddle across the Atlantic.

Accidents can happen.

There is no-one alive, Peter Bray included, who can be certain that some unforeseen set of circumstance will not bring NAKC2000 to a premature end. Equipment failure can be guarded against by ensuring that everything is rigorously tested, but, as every car owner knows something can always go wrong when you least expect it. Everything will be done to minimise the chance of failures and all essential equipment will be covered by back up systems.

The major hazard is damage to the hull. Floating debris, particularly steel containers lost from ships, present a significant danger. The hull is designed to take a great deal of punishment but even if the worst comes to the worst and a sinking occurs, Peter will rely on his Adec Marine Pal 2 liferaft complete with emergency supplies and Sea Marshall EPIRB electronic beacon to ensure his survival. He will never be far from shipping lanes and it is unlikely that he would spend more than 48 hours in the liferaft before rescue.

We wish every success to the project.

Achill Symposium

By Cormac Daly

New Age Travellers have Stonehenge, Motorcyclists have the Isle of Man, even Fianna Fail have the Ard Fheis to look forward to as the high point of the year. But surely none can compare with that premier event, The Irish Sea Kayaking Symposium. We paddlers all set out every year for the long and arduous journey to our own Mecca which this year

took the fine form of Achill Island. It is a mighty pilgrimage and after the furious preparations, partners and housemates surely heave a sigh of relief as we literally vanish into the sunset heading West. The same sigh of relief many of us heaved when Lavelle's hove into view promising a pint or two to wash the journey's dust from our throats. OK, I get carried away but it is a hell of a drive from most places.

Lodgings were at The Achill Outdoor Education Centre and Tom McLoughlin went out of his way to ensure the weekend went well. Strange chanting sounds and the smell of incense emanated from the office where Des Keaney and Mary and Martina Butler spent a lot of Saturday morning.

Rumours circulated of strange satanic pacts and promises but they swear it was just the first few decades of the rosary. Whatever it was, the weather gods got onside. The day was chock full of activity with workshops and full and half day trips. Two nefarious individuals calling themselves Robin and Al beguiled the unwary with boats and gear galore and many a soul left with a lighter wallet but a heavily laden roofrack and a boot full of goodies thanks to Valley and Knoydart.

Workshops over the few days were very varied and interesting and most people were frustrated at having to make choices which meant missing an other event. Topics included First Aid, Advanced Navigation, and Very Advanced Navigation (for which read my preferred method of letting a machine do all the hard work i.e. GPS) among others. Once again Willie Stedmond attracted great interest in wooden boat building and the word is on the street that Coillte shares have soared with severe shortages of cedar strip being predicted. Trips on the day were led by Stephen Hannon and Dave Walsh and the weary paddlers returned to the prospect of Frank Nugent supplying the evenings entertainment.

Frank gave a fascinating account of his adventures with the South Arís group, who tried to emulate the Shackleton crew's epic journey to salvation in 1916 and served to further enhance those brave and resourceful men's reputations when extreme conditions forced them to abandon their replica vessel. He must have fired some imaginations with his talk as Stephen Craig led the dash around Achill Head the next day. Locals were still speaking weeks later of the sonic boom and freak waves as the group accelerated away from shore. Less intrepid souls ventured into the Sound and around Achill Beg. Only one lucky group can say they had a 'whale' of a weekend and what kills this reporter is it was a mere ten minutes after he left the area.

Kevin O'Callaghan spent weeks before the Orienteering event interviewing potential candidates with the desired traits of wiliness and a devious mind married to a sadistic streak. He finally settled on Seán Pierce and Mary Butler to set out the course and all praise to Sheila Clavin and Dave Kavanagh for dragging their tortured and broken bodies across the finish line to win.

Dave "I'm a closet comic and cartoon fan" Walsh and Paul "Could I pretty please have your answers" Butcher ran the Table Quiz at evenings end, won by the Four Tanners who were grateful a song wasn't required.

The real hard core mustered for The Meenaun Cliffs on the Monday while the rest of us saddled up to depart for literally the four corners of the Island. How about we do it all again next year?

New Age Travellers have Stonehenge, Motorcyclists have the Isle of Man, even Fianna Fail have the Ard Fheis to look forward to as the high point of the year. But surely none can compare with that premier event, The Irish Sea Kayaking Symposium. We paddlers all set out every year for the long and arduous journey to our own Mecca which this year took the fine form of Achill Island. It is a mighty pilgrimage and after the furious preparations, partners and housemates surely heave a sigh of relief as we literally vanish into the sunset heading West. The same sigh of relief many of us heaved when Lavelle's hove into view promising a pint or two to wash the journey's dust from our throats. OK, I get carried away but it is a hell of a drive from most places.

Lodgings were at The Achill Outdoor Education Centre and Tom McLoughlin went out of his way to ensure the weekend went well. Strange chanting sounds and the smell of incense emanated from the office where Des Keaney and Mary and Martina Butler spent a lot of Saturday morning.

Rumours circulated of strange satanic pacts and promises but they swear it was just the first few decades of the rosary. Whatever it was, the weather gods got onside. The day was chock full of activity with workshops and full and half day trips. Two nefarious individuals calling themselves Robin and Al beguiled the unwary with boats and gear galore and many a soul left with a lighter wallet but a heavily laden roofrack and a boot full of goodies thanks to Valley and Knoydart.

Workshops over the few days were very varied and interesting and most people were frustrated at having to make choices which meant missing another event. Topics included First Aid, Advanced Navigation, and Very Advanced Navigation (for which read my preferred method of letting a machine do all the hard work i.e. GPS) among others. Once again Willie Stedmond attracted great interest in wooden boat building and the word is on the street that Coillte shares have soared with severe shortages of cedar strip being predicted. Trips on the day were led by Stephen Hannon and Dave Walsh and the weary paddlers returned to the prospect of Frank Nugent supplying the evenings entertainment.

Frank gave a fascinating account of his adventures with the South Arís group, who tried to emulate the Shackleton crew's epic journey to salvation in 1916 and served to further enhance those brave and resourceful men's reputations when extreme conditions forced them to abandon their replica vessel. He must have fired some imaginations with his talk as Stephen Craig led the dash around Achill Head the next day. Locals were still speaking weeks later of the sonic boom and freak waves as the group accelerated away from shore. Less intrepid souls ventured into the Sound and around Achill Beg. Only one lucky group can say they had a 'whale' of a weekend and what kills this reporter is it was a mere ten minutes after he left the area.

Kevin O'Callaghan spent weeks before the Orienteering event interviewing potential candidates with the desired traits of wiliness and a devious mind married to a sadistic streak . He finally settled on Seán Pierce and Mary Butler to set out the course and all praise to Sheila Clavin and Dave Kavanagh for dragging their tortured and broken bodies across the finish line to win.

Dave "I'm a closet comic and cartoon fan" Walsh and Paul "Could I pretty please have your answers" Butcher ran the Table Quiz at evenings end, won by the Four Tanners who were grateful a song wasn't required .

The real hard core mustered for The Meenaun Cliffs on the Monday while the rest of us saddled up to depart for literally the four corners of the Island. How about we do it all again next year?

Advertising

By Des Keaney

We are happy to have advertising for the first time in this issue. Great Outdoors, Knoydart and Scottish Paddler Supplies are all companies who offer expert and excellent service to sea paddlers. If you do business with them, please mention *Treasna na dTonnta* as we'd like to keep them coming back!

Also in this issue we're asking if you object to your postal address being released to selected companies. If you do have an objection, please return the attached form to us. Otherwise we will assume that you're happy for your address to be released. We will only release data to companies in whose product we think you will be interested.

First Aid Course for Sea Kayakers

Rescue Emergency Care is a First Aid Scheme set up to provide training at a variety of levels. It is a hands on approach which will give the First Aider the confidence to deal with an emergency first aid situation safely.

REC 3 (Standard) has a syllabus that looks at applying the basic life support skills. The course covers CPR as well as dealing with common medical illnesses and injuries associated with the outdoors. This course is a prerequisite for Level 3 instructor qualification and the Level 5 personal proficiency.

An intensive REC 3 course, tailor made to suit sea kayakers, will be given by **Paul Butcher**, sea kayaker and professional paramedic. We are delighted to have the services

of Paul who understands so well the dangers of sea kayaking and spends his working day in the hot seat of an ambulance.

Date: 10th-12th March 2000 (3 days)

Venue: Liffey Centre, Dublin.

Cost: £50 (as this course is being run at cost, no further subsidy is available)

Places will be limited.

To book, call Mary Butler at 074 28177

Kayaking in Tasmania

By Des Keaney

Dave Kavanagh from Galway was in Tasmania recently. Before he left, he introduced me to the web site of the Maatsuyker Canoe Club which is very impressive. Have a look at <http://www.vision.net.au/~jennings/index.html> They cover area guides, trip reports, equipment, slide shows and video clips. Their equipment is interesting in that they are strong advocates of sails, rudders and electric pumps. Good action shots of the sails in action can be seen from the accompanying photos, courtesy of their web site.

I wrote to Laurie Ford, Commodore of the club, thanking him for putting a link to the ISKA page. Here's his reply.....

"The reason I put a link to your site is because I found it personally very interesting - as you people seem to get out and do a bit of real paddling. Not like a lot of people who own sea kayaks but only ever use them on flat water. I did download a couple of your magazines and printed them out. Good stuff.

I hope to get Dave out in a Sea Leopard, sailing in a decent breeze - say 25 knots or more. He'll be converted instantly. Looking forward to meeting Dave to exchange ideas - we can all learn from each other."

There you are, it's official - you're real paddlers!

RNLI Exercise in Achill

Achill Island, October 1999

The ISKA and RNLI Achill conducted a useful and sobering exercise during the recent Symposium. The general objective was to establish how to find and rescue kayakers in trouble.

Scenario

12 kayaks paddled out between Achillbeg and Clare Island in calm conditions. The first exercise was to test handheld VHF range. The lifeboat went to about 7 miles off and tested reception at various ranges. The second exercise was to find the kayaks and the third was to rescue injured kayakers from their boats.

Here is the feedback given on behalf of the RNLI by Tom Honeyman, 2nd Coxswain and Training Officer of the Achill Lifeboat and on behalf of the ISKA by Stephen Hannon, group leader and Coach Tutor with the ICU.

Visibility

Honeyman: The first thing that's noticeable (or not!) when dealing with sea kayaks is their invisibility! Even with the relatively large group that we were dealing with (around 12 or so) they were very hard to spot with the unaided eye beyond about 1.5 miles. Conditions were very good with a calm sea, moderate swell and good visibility. Just imagine what it would be like trying to find one or two kayaks in deteriorating conditions in poor light. Radar did pick up an indistinct smudge but this would be easily confused with 'sea clutter' when looking for smaller groups amidst heavier sea conditions.

The most noticeable kayak colour was yellow with the darker colours being least effective. A good aid that wouldn't cost a lot would be the addition of reflective tape on the kayak and on the paddle blades. Where searchlights are being used it's literally absolutely brilliant.

Hannon On his return, he drove about 800 metres to our right and seemed not see us at all and circled before he spotted us. A simple conclusion -he is big, we saw him - we are small, he couldn't see us. His comments about visibility are interesting and seem to emphasise what Pat Smyth and Ruth Bracken said afterwards - they hitched a ride to shore on the 'ferry'.

VHF

Honeyman: VHF radio is probably the best bet in locating kayaks in the open sea. Our basic tests were conducted at 3.5 and 6 miles. Reception, even at 6 miles (the official limit for handheld sets), was still quite good. At about 6.25/6.5 miles reception was

breaking up with the messages from the kayaks becoming unreadable to the lifeboat. However, messages from the lifeboat to the kayaks were still readable presumably because our aerals are much higher above sea level. Leading on from this, it was brought to my attention that our tests were monitored by a land based station (private) whose aerial is sited up on a hill in Pollagh (Keel) with Dooega Head in between it and the kayaks. This station was able to pick up the kayaks without a problem. Also, the ka yaks had made contact with Clifden CRS so from a safety point of view, a handheld VHF seems to be essential for a kayaker. All Weather Lifeboats carry direction finding equipment and are able to locate VHF signals and EPIRBs

Hannon: The Lifeboat went off three miles and called us up and he could be heard loud and clear. In fact we could hear the lifeboat at all stages though at six and a half miles he said we were beginning to break up.

Casualty Recovery

Honeyman: Recovering kayakers on board the lifeboat was also tried and, as was pointed out to me at our Sat. meeting, you can't just lift a person straight out of a kayak (the legs get in the way!). We found that the easiest way was for us to put a man in the water (with a dry suit on) to assist the kayaker to get out of the canoe first and then they can be hoisted on board by our 'A - Frame'.

Hannon: The exercise of rescuing a person from a boat in the water wasn't impressive to look at. I feel that if there was any sea at all I would instruct my victim to get in the water and allow them to be rescued by the drysuit man. The victim ended up in the water anyway and the only worry in the whole exercise was when the large lifeboat was bobbing about beside the small kayak. Add a larger sea and a real victim and I think the methodology used to rescue the victim would not be possible. We didn't try making a raft and having the victim sitting on it. Possible disadvantages of this in a real situation would be that non-victim kayaks would be damaged.

The Kayak

Honeyman: Now comes the sticky part - the question that all kayakers will ask is - what's going to happen to my kayak? I cannot speak for all lifeboat coxswains so what follows is my own

personal view of the matter. The main considerations a coxswain has is the saving of life at sea, the safety of his crew and maintaining the integrity of his vessel. Nothing can compromise these things. However, that being said, I'm sure that if circumstances allow, the kayak will be recovered and put on board the lifeboat. We did this with two kayaks and were able to lash them alongside our deck rails without any problem (it was either that or tow them behind us at 25 kts!). I'm sure that most coxswains would look favourably on kayak recovery as we know that you love your kayaks as much as we love our boats. But it will all depend on the circumstances.

Conclusions

1. Sea kayaks are virtually invisible
2. Yellow is the most noticeable boat colour
3. Use reflective strips on boat and paddle
4. A VHF is a very important piece of kit
5. The victim needs to be recovered from the water rather than the boat

The exercise took place on the Sunday. On the Saturday, we had a meeting with Tom and Bob Kingston, the Secretary where we demonstrated safety gear and boats, discussed our training and the problems for the lifeboat crew. One useful suggestion which will be tested in the near future is a radar reflector 'kite' which gives altitude and therefore range to the reflector.

A final word from Stephen Hannon "The most positive aspect to the rescue was to give the RNLi first hand experience of how to handle sea kayaks and in addition to give them some inkling as to how a good sea kayaker would be prepared. It gave us a glimpse of the RNLi capabilities and an opportunity to come out of the closet and announce th at sea kayakers were going out to sea on ambitious trips and that we would like them to know us."

Mayday Weekend 2000

Sth. Connemara

Every Sea Paddler in Ireland must be there!! Come to the Millennium Meet from the **29th April to 1st May 2000**, the Mayday bank holiday weekend, both North and South.

The location is South Connemara, in the Kilkieran Bay area. 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 Keaney for further details.

Be there!

Brehon Law and the Sea

By Des Keaney

I had an interesting email from Vincent Salafia in the U.S. recently.

"We are building a website entitled The Brehon Law Project: Brehon Aid at <http://www.brehon.org>. We seek to collect and present information relating to Brehon Law and its application throughout all aspects of Irish life, from prehistory, through its eradication in the mid-seventeenth century, up until its relevance to today's society.

I hope to be able to present information relating to regulation of sea travel. I invite your readers to contribute any information regarding this issue they possess or find. I will be happy to credit the author and publication accordingly."

Does anyone have an interest or knowledge in the subject? Vincent can be contacted at salafia@gte.net

A Fresh Start in '99

By Seán Pierce

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. Conditions improve in Connacht but Seán runs out of time in Glencolmcille in south Donegal but resolves to carry on in 1999

A new beginning, Easter 1999.

Glencolmcille to Portnoo,

2nd April 1999.

I had wintered well and with the discipline of having to count the birdlife of the Skerries islands all winter, I was reasonably fit. A renewed sense of anticipation and excitement drew near as Easter approached. This was the section of coast that Brian Wilson had

some 'hairy' moments on and the words 'committing stretch of coast' seemed to crop up frequently in conversations. The 'grand plan' was to undertake the Donegal coast for a week over Easter and do the remainder in early June. The arrogance of it!

Eric, my shore team organiser and best critic agreed to drop me back to the Glen. An early start from Skerries had us in Donegal by noon. A Garda checkpoint outside Ballyshannon slowed us down enough to get a wave from Mary Butler...small country!

Lunch at the little pier at Doonalt just west of Glencolmcille in bright sunshine and a light south-easterly seemed too good to be true. I slipped onto the water at Doonalt at 1330 hrs full of apprehensions and excitement. I just could not believe the day...I overcame the initial jitters of the Atlantic swell of the first few minutes and I had a fabulous paddle. The stretch of coast from Glencolmcille to Gull Island c.15 kms was stunningly beautiful. High cliffs, offshore stacks and hidden pocket beaches gave wonderful variety and surprises around every corner.

I had a most enjoyable 2 hours to Gull Island passing Sturrall, Torlaydan and through the sea arch inside Tormore. A lovely beach NW of the townland of Glenlough tempted me shorewards but what I had assumed to be boulders turned out to be 250 Grey Seals 'hauled out' in the sunshine. They detected my presence and I took off seawards as they 'charged' in panic into the sea.

At Gull Island it was time to turn the kayak north again and I reluctantly left this beautiful stretch of coast knowing I had had a rare privilege and headed for Inishbarnog off Rossbeg. It was time for nosh,(an item never far from my mind) and I had decided that the island made the ideal place to make a few decisions. Inishbarnog is an attractive place and like many of the islands of the north-west holds wintering Barnacle Geese. As I landed 150 birds took to the wing calling evocatively. April is a good month to visit these islands as the birds are preparing for the long haul back to Greenland and are palpably excited.

I called Eric on the mobile and revised my day plan to finish at Portnoo and had a walkabout. The views south were superb and as I turned northwards Errigal and Aranmore were catching the afternoon sunlight. Wow! It was to become a familiar mixture... the best of Irish coastal scenery every few miles. I made my way back to the kayak and disturbed two Snow Buntings from the heather and 4 Eider did a fly past. There was a distinctive 'northern' feel to the wildlife interest. I was enjoying myself!

I paddled on, rounded Dawros Head and into Portnoo landing at 1730 hrs feeling guilty at not having done more. The wind had died completely and we pitched tents near the pier, cooked and lingered and lingered over a few beers watching the light fade in the NW. I was tired but delighted with my day... it beat the hell of many a more gloomy Good Friday! The sky cleared completely and the temperatures dropped rapidly. It was time to wear the winter woollies and snuggle into the sleeping bag.

Portnoo to Gweedore Harbour

3rd April 1999

Rather a fitful night, a combination of extremes of heat and cold. Eric in the tent next door was totally out and I woke at six to catch the forecast. Brilliant, the day looked like being another cracker. Wind SE 4-5ish and lots of sun...I mean could it be better? The Barnacle Geese arrived at 0700hrs to circle over Inishkeel and then settled to graze the sward. I went walkabout and drank in the early morning views and planned the days paddling. Roused Eric for breakfast and found he had decided that a 'real' sleeping bag was needed in order to join the Roughty Toughty Club!

I had the unenviable task of packing the kayak, had the satisfaction of seeing it all go into the boat and was ready for the off by 1030hrs. Bade farewell to Eric and made straight for Inishkeel. Another attractive island with a beach and early Christian churches to explore. I slipped into tourist mode for an hour, rattled off some photographs and took some notes for David Walsh.

The birdlife was good, Barnacle Geese and Long-tailed Duck continued the northern flavour of yesterday. The passage across to Crohy Head was pure joy. A following sea and wind! Good God! I fairly buzzed along and had a second day of being able to enjoy the scenery! Could this be what all those paddlers were talking about? NO hardship? The views north dominated by Aranmore and I liked the Donegal mixture of bays, headlands, high cliffs and beaches coming at you in rapid succession.

I stopped on the islet of Illauncrone at the entrance to Aran Sound and picked out a good collection of Great-northern and Black-throated Divers in the bays. Their distinctive calls carried across the water, a sound track much used by American movie makers.

The coolness in the air matched the northern coast and I pushed on up Aran Sound. The pilot was correct, the sound was shallow but I was having no problems with a following wind against the last of the ebb. I again had the problem of wanting to stop every few minutes to check out all the islands but reluctantly pushed on passing Rutland and Aran itself. I rounded the beacon on the Ballagh Rocks and the view north-east opened up.

I found myself taking in continuous lovely views, Owey and Cruit, the beaches and the shifting light on Errigal and Agla More. What a panorama, a superb days paddling. To hell with it I decided! I just have to stop and I landed at the beautifully protected slipway on Owey. I enjoyed a most delicious hour potting and exploring through the village. The island had a feel of only being recently abandoned (1980's). Several houses were in reasonably good condition and I found it hard to leave. However I needed water and as the day was still reasonably young I headed for the mainland and beached at the eastern entrance to Gweedore Harbour amongst the dunes. A lady in a very ramshackle old house satisfied the search for water but I failed miserably to draw her into conversation.

The evening light lingered and I relished the heat of the sun as I cooked and made plans for the morning. I made contact with Paul Durnan who agreed to join me at Magheraroarty Pier the following afternoon. Another phone call to a friend in Donegal

proposed that I walk to Gweedore, grab a taxi to Crolly and meet him there for pints at 2330hrs! He assured me the crack would only be starting ! and I would be grand getting back....! I must admit to being curious and if... However sense prevailed and I opted to rest the body, read and write up a few words in the diary....very boring indeed was disgusted with myself. Drifted off to the sound of the surf reflecting on another cracking day.

Gweedore Harbour to Tramore (west of Dunfanaghy)

4 April 1999

The alarm startled me although I had been conscious in anticipation of the dreaded event. The forecast was reasonably good and I duly relaxed and crashed into a heavy sleep for another hour. I'm rarely at my best at dawn! During breakfast I looked hard at the maps and had a dilemma regarding how far I might advance today. The problem went unresolved as I readied for sea and took off towards Inishmeane.

I had decided overnight that the area was perfect for a big meet/symposium week end and I longed for more time to explore all the islands. "This," I argued "is not the job in hand" but I soon found myself off Inishshirrer and again the debate raged. I had not read my notes properly and assumed that the eastern side of the island would have a beautiful landing spot. I whizzed past the slipway on the southern side and wasted several minutes thrashing around on the eastern flank before having to covertly sneak back to the slip.

A tricky landing on a falling tide and south-easterly wind with a heavy boat. I knocked a few spots off the gel coat with a particularly inept landing and reprimanded myself thoroughly. The theatrics over I cooled down by stomping around this very Atlantic island and enjoyed it immensely. An interesting place, larger than I had imagined and full of interest. The island wetlands gave a wide variety of breeding waders and an Iceland Gull flying westwards over the beacon enhanced the 'northern' aspect. The island is nearly split in two by a lagoon where there was good evidence of a healthy supply of cockles. A place to definitely revisit.

I reluctantly went back to sea and was bound for one of those significant places on the mental map of Ireland...Bloody Foreland. As I made the headland, I reflected on how many of those significant places the Donegal coast seems to have for the paddler. However I was one paddler that felt completely short-changed by a very mediocre Bloody Foreland. What a bummer... low and utterly uninspiring. I rounded it and found myself heading into the wind and a long plod to Magheraroarty Pier.

The views towards Tory and Inishbofin were at least good and Bloody Foreland faded into the memory banks. The paddle to the pier was not nice ! the wind and sea were head to beam on and it began to feel like the summer of 98 again. I ploughed on and had a thoroughly miserable lunch sitting in the kayak in the rain at low tide in the mud below the pier wall. Paul was not there and I decided that I would move on up the coast towards Dunfanaghy. I debated the problem during the afternoon's paddle. I rounded the Dooey Peninsula and decided on Tramore near Dunfanaghy. What a beautiful beach....I lay offshore a few minutes trying to gauge the best landing spot. There had to be an access

point from the dunes but the beach was deserted. Eventually a body appeared from the dunes and I got a fix. Surfing in and had beached the boat. I stood looking around at one of the most unspoilt beaches in the country. Not a house nor Golf Course and later found that it was a good half hour walk across the dunes to the nearest road. It was definitely the most isolated campsite on the mainland of the entire trip.

Set up house, cooked and buried all valuables.. it was time for a pint ! I set out across the impressive dunes system and after what seemed an age hit the road at the Horn Head Bridge. It was raining hard at this stage and after learning that the local shop closed at 2300hrs on Easter Sunday night (Ireland you have changed) I relaxed over a pint. Now at the princely sum of £2.20 ..(£2.00 in 1997) same pub...same décor...

I made contact with Paul and we tried to come up with a plan that would allow him to get his car into position so he could join me in the morning. That was a complicated problem. I reckoned that if the weather held Malin Head might be feasible as an ultimate objective. This gave Paul the problem of trying to decide where to leave the car and more importantly how would he get back to it later in the week. Donegal's coastline from Horn Head to Malin would leave us on the ends of peninsulas all week ..not exactly teeming with bus companies or taxi services.

Despite a few pints we still had not resolved as Paul dropped me back to the Horn Head Bridge for a sobering walk through the dunes. Luckily I had brought a torch and following a fence line in the teeming rain until I hit the beach was all my tired brain could cope with. I stumbled into the tent registering the calls of Barnacle Geese on the lake before unconsciousness fell.

Tramore to Trá na Rossan

5th April 1999

I woke to a dull lifeless day...the forecast had warned of southerly gales and with the tides at either end of the day I was already too late for a quick sprint around Horn Head. I reflected on the problems of going solo, the safety margins needed that bit more care and the exposure factor seemed larger.

Paul arrived out of the dunes and found me dithering about my plans over my breakfast. The length of the walk in had surprised him also and the reality of how awkward it was going to be to hook up with me on this stretch of the trip began to dawn on both of us. We talked out our options for the entire morning.

I had lunch and we scratched heads, there was great sucking of teeth and still it rained and I was happy to talk ! In the end my reasons for avoiding going to sea ebbed away. The forecast gave no gale warning at midday and the wind was obviously slackening off. We walked out towards Pollaguill Bay to judge the conditions. One look had me decided. A mad hour followed, packed the boat and launched into the surf. I was glad to get off this west facing but beautiful beach. As I departed Paul was busy solving a small mystery

that had intrigued me since I had landed. A girl! had been collecting and burning all flotsam and little fires dotted one end of the beach . She had spent two days at it so an interview was required we decided. Paul did the necessary and not surprisingly she turned out to be German. The beach was a credit to her and probably the only one in Ireland not destroyed by plastic rubbish. The surf slammed me good and hard and knocked the wind out of me but I did not want to roll as my ribs were rather tender after being talked into playing a daft Hurling match the week before. Some guys never learn!

The first half hour to the very aptly named Rough Point was the crux of the journey. Horn Head was mighty! and in relatively benign mood. I gazed up at its imposing cliffs and the calls of Razorbills and Kittiwakes dominated the air as they set up shop for the breeding season. A proper headland I thought not like that pimple Bloody Foreland. I ambled along under those high ledges willing myself to remember the scene. I played a game of trying to find the best adjective to describe the situation. None sufficed. I became aware of the tide pushing me on eastwards and I rounded Horn Head and relaxed in the calmer waters on its sheltered side. I gazed across Sheephaven Bay towards my objective Tra na Rossan. I could just about make out the little cluster of islands Tormore and Stowney at the entrance. It was still dull gloomy and raining hard which had spoilt my passage somewhat since leaving Tramore but about midway across I got once of those magical clearances and I drank in the superb views. It just underlined again what a magnificent stretch of coast Donegal is. The variety and scenery changes from big bays to islands and headlands and sometimes in very quick succession to my mind make Donegal special for the sea paddler.

I went into semi-automatic mode as the rain returned and I punched out the kms towards the bay. I formed a tentative plan to use the facilities of the Youth hostel if necessary and anyway Paul was going to meet me on the beach. A bit of company would be welcome. I entered the bay and in the calm waters the highly evocative call of a Great-northern Diver came out of the drizzle. I stopped and let the kayak drift .The bird continued to call as I drew near but wary of a loon that did not call back ! it dived silently and surfaced a safer distance away.

Paul flashed the headlights of the car and I beached the kayak pleased to have knocked anything out of the day. The forecast had again not been accurate for the north Donegal coast. We settled in to a pleasant campsite in the dunes and chatted about options for the following day The forecast again did not augur well.

We took off to the Singing Pub at the little village of Clontallagh and overdosed completely on Country and Western. God it was awful! .brought back memories of a previous holiday but at least I knew what to expect. Paul was culture shocked and horrified that I could enjoy it in a nostalgic kind of way! Unable to endure it any longer we retired to a cold blustery night and strong winds. Tomorrow did not look good and both slept badly.

Tra-na Rossan

6th April 1999

Paul roused me out of a heavy sleep at 9.00 am. He had been up an hour helping a local farmer taking in ewes and new-born lambs out of the weather. It was cold and blustery and as I had had a few naked dashes in the night tying down bits of gear I was slow to leave the comfort of the bag. Paul persisted and I roused myself for breakfast. Our plans were again being dashed and I knew in my heart that a gale day was on the cards. The forecast held out a thin possibility that the winds would moderate by late evening but there was little comfort in that! Where do you go on this coast that late in the day?

I was concerned that Paul would not get to paddle at all if he stayed. I decided to present him with an alternative as I felt somewhat responsible for having dragged him up to Donegal. I suggested that he should return to the Bunbeg area, do an overnight on Owey or Gola and at least get something out of his trip. We discussed it and Paul reluctantly agreed that it made some sense. We finalised the details and Paul headed west...we never got to paddle together for the remainder of the trip!. The experience had been interesting in that it underlined to some extent how focused and perhaps selfish I had become in my objectives. My agenda was to get up the coast, neatly, quickly and when conditions were right. It had just been proved difficult and probably unrealistic to expect others to fit into this game plan however attractive the notion seemed. We had tried but it just would not go!

I pottered about putting out my washing as the rain cleared and I decided a good bracing walk out Melmore Head was in order. Slipped into tourist and photographic mode and found a wild sea and landscape to enjoy. I was very disappointed to find an ugly sprawling caravan park on Melmore Head. It was a mess and ruined a beautiful area and my day to some extent. So much for the planners I thought.

On returning to the dunes I was press ganged into taking in more sheep and lambs and I found the farmer also quite annoyed with the haphazard developments in his area. I lazed away the rest of the day and decided to eat out! Returned to the Singing Pub and had a repeat performance with a different band equally awful! Paul would have horrified! I exchanged a few pleasantries with the two other people in the bar got completely bored and retired early with the wind still fresh from the NW.

Tra-na-Rossan to Drumnacraig Strand, Portsalon, 7th April 1999

It was 2.00pm before the wind began to slacken and a quick search of the sea through binoculars indicated that the white horses had eased. The day cleared to being cool and grey with good bursts of sunshine. I launched into a hefty surf at Tra -na-Rossan at 3.00pm. The paddle to Melmore was memorable. The sea was big enough to command respect, a nice big swell from the NW causing the usual chaos off the minor headlands and plenty of boomers on the outlying shoals. I choose the inside line and rounded Straughan Point. The sea was now behind me although it remained an anxious day out!

I was paddling at a fair old lick and Melmore fell quickly to starboard. Ballyhourisky Point kept my concentration focused and I beached at Ballyhiernan Bay somewhat surprised that I was only an hour and a half at sea!

It was decision time and of course I paddled on towards Fanad Head . A rather lonely paddle in the waves with little but the occasional party of passing Eider ducks for company. The sea was my own as not a boat in Donegal seemed to be on the water. I came under the lighthouse on Fanad Head and whooped with delight and relief. More new territory for me and another small ambition realised. I had wanted to see Lough Swilly for many years as a teacher in primary school had insisted that we started each day with O'Donnell Abu.." Bonnacht and Gallowglass thronged from each mountain pass" was a line that had always thrilled me and I gave a rendition as I made for Pincher Bay. However my enthusiasm was dampened as I realised that my choice of campsite was not 'gelcoat friendly' and I wearily continued up the Swilly to Drumnacraig Strand.

I was tired mentally, it had been one of those days when the paddling was dominated by solving the next problem.

I had landed unwittingly at another caravan park but the girl in charge had no problem with me pitching a tent overnight and invited me to dinner with her friends of Pasta and wine. We passed an enjoyable hour and they gave me a lift into Portsalon. I made it to Rita's Bar on the harbour and had a rather surreal few pints in the bar -cum shop-cum hardware store. The clientele, all male were in the 'dangerously drunk' stage. From moment to moment the air was charged with tension as one after another the clientele cajoled, ridiculed and insulted each other and staggered about the place. It was hilarious at times and I watched consumed with curiosity. The barman was completely impassive and quietly filled pints to unheard orders. I surmised all were locals and it wasn't long before my presence became a focal point. All present paid me a visit and excitedly extolled his views on politics, women, sport or work. The combination of whiskey, beer and Donegal accents had me wrong-footed most of the time and my Cork returns were greeted with hoots of derision. I was seriously behind in the alcohol stakes and began to eye a bolthole as the temperature began to rise as they began to press!

The most 'genial' of the bunch read my intentions and said "Aye, it would be wiser to go as they had had a long day of it"! I bolted and hightailed it into the night. I had to laugh, it had the makings of a truly "wild" night and I partly wished that I could have stayed to witness the outcome.

Lough Swilly was quiet and damp as I rolled into my sleeping bag. Tomorrow would take me to Malin and a psychological test of my resolve and determination .

Portsalon to White Strand Bay (Malin) 8th April 1999

A grey overcast morning had been slow to wake me and I had slept soundly through all relevant forecasts. I was not unduly worried. My assessment of much of the forecasts over the trip was now bordering on the cynical. I had found them entirely general and often inaccurate in terms of the critical factor of wind speed. Was I getting confident or arrogant.? I tossed the idea around in my head as I looked at my route plan over breakfast and decided that somewhere short of Malin Head would do grand. I had two days left and I was in no great hurry to finish Donegal off. The tides were also going to be late in the

day before they turned in my favour. I resolved that a paddle to White Strand Bay and a late afternoon recce' of Malin Head was entirely sensible.....maturity at last!

Conditions as far as could be judged from the campsite were much the same as yesterday so a NW roll and a SW breeze was my lot. My predictions were only reasonably accurate

. A very pleasant paddle across Lough Swilly for the first half hour was followed by three hours of pure slog and were entirely forgettable!! A 4-5ish with frequent toppling waves made me regret my morning arrogance about the forecasters at Glasnevin. A good sized lump of Dunaff Head had me "busy" for the remainder of the day. I struggled to get to windward of Glashedy Island and a fine big roll began to dominate events as I approached White Strand Bay. No natural history delights today I mused as I struggled to find the pier. I was surprised how invisible it remained and I was only some 300 yards offshore before I could make it out. I beached and met with Aidan McKinney. His questions indicated a knowledge of kayaking and it transpired that "Aye he had done a bit" which of course meant something completely different.

Aidan was very helpful, got me set up and invited me to visit him later in Bulbinbeg. On his recommendation I left most of the gear in the yard of the deserted Youth Hostel and struck out for Malin Head.

I great feeling of anticipation crept over me as I approached this "psychological" headland . I had not been there before and I was impressed by the swells and overfalls. The place was wild and forbidding and I walked the cliffs sketching out my route for the morning. I reckoned that it was possible to pass along inside much of the turbulence and if the wind stayed in "my quarter" i.e. the NW, much of the lump would be over early in the day. I sat in a sheltered spot watching the seabirds pass , mentally noting the clap and haystacks sections which I calculated should be done in a half hour. This was what is was all about I decided. The mixed feelings of anticipation and excitement with the exposure values of what the weather might do. The crux had arrived .

I made my way back to base camp called for tea and chatted to Aidan and his family for a few hours. Dinner was duly dispatched and I retired early with a clear head.

White Strand Bay to Culdaff Co. Donegal 9th April 1999

I stood on the foreshore looking out at the white horses. I knew I had been standing there a little while. I was stalling, doing what those American lecturers termed " mental practice"! I looked around and Yes! those people still there waiting for my decision.. "It is not a big wind Pierceboy just enough to put manners on you" my little inner man was back.

Malin Head had decided to be memorable so I launched and began the day. I was feeling strong and pushing into the NW swell. It was a roller-coaster but I was pumped up and moving rapidly. The coast fell away to starboard and I studied the lump ahead. A few more stretches of heavy clapotis and I drew level with Breasty Bay.

I was excited as a little while later I gingerly turned the nose eastwards and began to surf the swells past my goal. Wow, I seemed to fly along whooping with adrenaline and waving to a few onlookers on the tower above. Delighted with myself I pumped along full of zizz. This I knew was the last major obstacle of the journey and I sat off Dunaldragh Head remembering Dave Walsh's note that it was the most northerly point and savoured the moment.

My mind eased, the morning's anxieties flowed away and I determined to enjoy, enjoy, enjoy the paddle along the eastern cliffs of Inishowen. I gazed longingly at Inishtrahull and the Garvan Isles another trip for the future. The paddle now was a leisurely one in the lee of the peninsula and a lovely backdrop of high cliffs above me. I couldn't help thinking that these northern coasts are just that little bit brooding. Maybe it was the fact that they are nearly always in shadow and have a cold aspect to them. Not cosy or sub-tropical like the deep south! The wildlife improved and parties of Eider and Razorbill lifted off the water and the occasional high stack had its complimentary groups of Fulmars and Kittiwakes.

I rounded Glengad Head and got a little surprise... my first headwind since Belmullet. I reflected on how long ago that seemed but the pull on the arms quickly came back to remind me. I turned westwards towards Culdaff and found a sheltered storm beach. I admit to a long leisurely sun-soaked lunch and tried to decide where Eric would pick me up. Culdaff was chosen and my last hour ended when I pulled into the little river estuary at Culdaff beached the kayak and set up the tent. I was surprisingly tired and slept for a few hours until the mobile phone and the imminent arrival of the shore team awakened me.

The conversation flowed as we travelled south. I had really enjoyed this leg of the journey. The Donegal coast has everything for the sea-kayaker, cliffs, beaches, islands tidal flows and as much exposure as you wanted. I knew that I had been lucky with the week. To get such a settled period in early April was reinforced when the following week was NW gales rain and snow!

The forced break in my journey had had an unexpected bonus in that it nearly seemed an entirely new one. The "feel" of the landscape and the wintering birdlife of geese, white-winged gulls and calling divers gave a new edge and season to the trip. It all had a distinctive "northern" flavour and contrasted beautifully with the previous years summer journey.

We were nearly home and minds began to turn to the remaining Causeway Coast to Skerries. A suitable family time?... maybe June and of course there was the question of solo or perhaps Des?? Now that would be an idea.... time to plant a seed!

Blaskets Article Feedback

I've had very positive comments on Donal O'Dowds article on his trip around the Blaskets. You could almost taste the salt! Here's a comment from Peter Cork.....

"'Never alone at sea', issue no.18, was an interesting and very enjoyable description of a solo paddlers trip around the Blaskets. It was a long article and the author obviously went to considerable effort to share his experiences. It is therefore with some reluctance that I take this opportunity to take issue with part of it, i.e. the encounter with the killer whales or Orcas.

I have seen Orcas from the shore, but never from my kayak and this is something that I hope to experience some day. I know that being alone on the water and meeting a giant of the deep could naturally make one feel very small and vulnerable. However, the reality is that Orcas are not aggressive to humans and there should be no reason to be afraid of them.

In the Pacific, off the north-west coast of North America, there are resident groups of Orcas that dwell for extended periods in well known localities off-shore. Local sea kayaking outfitters organise trips that allow people to paddle among these exotic creatures. I understand that many people initially feel anxious, but quickly learn to relax. It is looked upon as a perfectly safe activity and kayakers, sometimes in family groups with children, travel to the Seattle/Vancouver area for this purpose.

Lyll Watson, one of the worlds leading experts on whales, writes as follows, "There is not one authentic report of a Great Killer Whale ever having harmed a human (*) in any way without provocation. Today it is common, though nevertheless demeaning, for trainers in marine shows to place their heads into the enormous mouths of captive killers, and to ride on their backs. But it must have taken a great deal of courage for the first diver, in a seal-like black wetsuit, to enter the water with wild whales before it was established that they unaccountably exclude man from their otherwise omnivorous taste for warm-blooded prey."

So, the message for kayakers is that they should try not to feel threatened if Orcas appear; just hope that they stay around.

(*)This does not apply to members of an outwardly identical but lower form of species, e.g. C.J. Haughey, Milosovic, Barristers, Gerry Ryan."

Peter Cork

Galapagos

Fancy a trip with a difference? Here's a note I received recently.....

I'm spreading the word on a new sea kayaking program that has been developed in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. We are a North American adventure company operating in

Ecuador and have added a 10 day sailboat supported sea kayaking trips to the Galapagos Islands into our agenda.

Our first run is from March 28 until April 6, 2000 and is intended for paddlers of ALL skill levels (but designed for the beginner to intermediate), and offers them the opportunity to explore the flora and fauna on the region via sea kayak.

The cost for our Galapagos Islands trip is going to be \$2200 for the one in the Spring which does not include any airfare but does include - logistics, most meals (all meals in the Galapagos), and shelter. The trip will probably rise to the \$2700 dollar range thereafter

I can be reached at gregschuster@hotmail.com or at info@evolutionaryexpedition.com.

Our vitals for the company are as follows -

Evolutionary Expeditions

PMB 332

265 Eastchester Drive #133

High Point, NC 27262-7718

phone- (in the US) 1 (336) 885-5752

fax 1 (336) 885-5950

url- www.evolutionaryexpedition.com (under construction)

Greg Schuster

From CK/Mer, February 1999

Written by Michel Descoux, translated by Ruth Bracken

10 a.m. in a small corner of Paradise... somewhere in GALICIA.

After a substantial breakfast - it's going to be a long day - we get our fishing gear ready. In fact we have decided today to trail our bait around the Cabo Ortegal, this mythical place at the extreme north-westerly point of the Iberian Peninsula.

Everything is in order and carefully arranged on our kayak decks (handlines, fish nets, box of lures, knives, etc.) A short portage and we're at a white sandy beach where finally we get on the water. A few paddle strokes take us out of the bay and as soon as we've passed the first headland the fishing begins. In spite of the choppy conditions we paddle

as close as possible to the edge right in the champagne bubbles where the predators are to be found.

Eric and I use two quite different types of lure. In order to be effective both must be life-like: a home-made job with the line attached to the middle finger of the right hand by a loop and a swivel system producing a jolting movement while paddling. The first bite isn't long in coming: "Michel! I've got one..." The fish is brought in: it's a beautiful sea trout with orangey-coloured flesh. A good start...

We now cross the bay of St Marta de Ortigueira, hopping from reefs to islets, under the watchful eye of dozens of curlews, oyster catchers, cormorants and sandpipers. A short time after, we take in our lines because the water is thick with floating seaweed making fishing impossible. Two hours later, we arrive back at the coast.

The rock is covered in *Pollicipes Cornucopia* (Percebes in Spanish). They are considered a delicacy here. But gathering them is difficult and several lives are lost each year doing so. We spot a tiny patch of fine sand dotted with big, smooth boulders and bordered with magnificent, fragrant eucalyptus trees. Once we've taken our lunches out of the hatches I avail of the opportunity to empty my boat. I'm taking in a litre per hour. I hate that!

From the chart we know that from here on for several nautical miles no further shelter is possible. The whole stretch is one long line of sheer cliffs and fallen rocks swept by a swell which makes landing impossible. The utmost care is required!!! All the more so because in this area the weather forecast is unreliable as the sea can become huge at a moment's notice.

As soon as we've rounded the headland of Los Aguillones we finally spot it: the long dorsal spine spiked with pointed rocks and huge boulders whose heights gradually diminish as they stretch out and down into the sea: this is the Cap Ortegá, with its lighthouse on top. You can "smell" the fish in this place... If we don't catch them here we'll catch them nowhere! For a while now bands of mullet have been flitting about before our bows... a huge sea trout jumps... We are now paddling in a big sea with considerable turbulence.

Eric continues on towards the Cap. I head out to sea in the direction of Aguillones islet. A flock of birds swarms about: terns and gulls rising up and diving on invisible targets. I approach softly so as not to disturb them. A sudden, tugging bite. Heavy, then nothing. When I quickly rewind the line I notice that the hook is open at a 90° angle. Definitely a bonito or a big sea-bass. What a letdown! My full repertoire of swear words is loosed!

I put another hook on. In quick succession I catch a beautiful mackerel and a garfish. But fishing alone in these conditions is unwise. It has become impossible to take my hands off the paddle. I go back to my buddy. The birds are excited... The fish are there and we haul them in, one after the other. It's easier with two of us. When one hooks something the other holds on to his boat and steadies it. Then the fish is brought in.

The location is magnificent. Amid a deafening racket at the foot of these needle-like formations each cast of the line results in a prize. We bob around like two corks. The few tourists present in the lighthouse car park must be wondering what we are doing.

Suddenly there is a cry: "Michel! I've caught a ray!" A ray? Some chance...! What Eric has in fact hooked is a LARUS MARINUS, more commonly known as a Greater Black-Backed gull... This is the pits for a bird lover!

Boat handling becomes tricky. I grab hold of the back of the Nordkapp and slowly draw the poor bird in close while he pulls with all his might in the opposite direction. I take a grip of the back of the head, avoiding the beak, and he's soon free. A few seconds to gather himself together and off up into the sky he goes. I hang onto my "lifeline" for a moment while I control a fit of laughter...

At this point we stop fishing and decide to round the final rock on the outside. What a buzz! We're on a veritable liquid roller-coaster... Up and down. The waves roll in. Lots of water and lots of power! We are held in awe and talk little as our full concentration is given to our paddling. Although we are confident in our ability to perform eskimo rolls and rescues if necessary, the very idea of taking a swim brings anything but joy to our hearts.

The Nordkapp, which is normally a little unstable at rest, demonstrates its full worth in these conditions. My Kitiwec, powered by an Eskimo-Ponant paddle, slows him down. We change direction. Two gannets pass on our left (the young, explains Eric, are the first to migrate). Finally, sheltered from the wind in a relatively calm spot, we pause to take stock. Our catch is considerable: we are guaranteed at least three meals. That's plenty.

On the homeward journey the cracks fly. It's a way of prolonging these hours together which will long remain in our memories. And tonight these humble fish will take on a very special flavour all their own. In the distance the setting sun illuminates the Punta de Estaca de Bares, twin sister of the Cap Ortegale. Our eyes, far better than any words, express the magic of these moments shared on a beautiful day's fishing.

Pool Sessions

Practice that roll or rescue in nice warm water!

Two pool sessions have been organised. **Sat 5th February** and **Sat 4th March** are the dates and they're at **1845 in Clondalkin** Sports and Leisure Centre.

It's only £3 for the hour and a max of 12 people are allowed. For booking, information or directions, call David Walsh at 01-4973611.

Sound Navigation

By David Walsh

All travel demands navigation, and because all methods of travel throw up their own typical situations, they all require their own practical and effective navigation solutions. Common to every such situation is the need to achieve adequate accuracy as simply as possible. Kayaks for instance often make short journeys sideways across ocean currents, so kayaks need a solution for crossing currents, to undemanding standards of accuracy, achieved unfussily.

Kayaks habitually cross, say, a 4 mile wide sound, "against" the flow, and are happy to achieve a degree of accuracy measured in hundreds of yards. Kayakers have traditionally been taught to attempt the required calculations in the yachtsman's way, with vectors drawn on maps and intersecting lines measured by orienteering compass. Never mind that a kayak has no chart table to work on ! GPS in 2D mode can be accurate to 10 yards, but in this context, so what ? There has to be a simpler way ?

The ancients knew how to do all these calculations simply and easily, with angles and elementary geometry. Remember that 600 years before Christ the Greeks calculated the circumference of the Earth, yet 1400 years after Christ, people were being put to death for suggesting the Earth was round. So be slow to scorn revisiting old ways.

Nowadays the Americans are back to doing things the simple way, navigating off the seat of their ass, on the hoof, from the cockpit (choose your own cliché), and they are writing it all down for our benefit. Of most immediate interest to modern sea kayakers is "Fundamentals of Kayak Navigation" by David Burch. It's the finest, most informative, simplest, clearest such book, that will change the way we habitually do most things at sea in very small boats and I concentrate here on only one of its many virtues, the Theory of Small Triangles.

To get the stuff out of the way first, this theory applies to any right angled triangle where there is one relatively small angle and one much larger angle (the third, obviously, is ninety degrees). So there are two long sides and one short side, to a degree of accuracy perfectly acceptable to any sea kayaker

The Theory of Small Triangles

- (a) The two long sides of the triangle may be regarded for practical purposes as being the same length ($B = C$), and
- (b) The ratio between the length of the one short side (A) and either long side (B or C) is the same as the ratio between the small angle [the one between the two long sides - x°] and 60° .

Mathematically, it happens that, below 6° , the accuracy of the relationship between $x/60$ and A/C is greatest, while above 6° , and the more so as x° increases, the accuracy of the relationship between $x/60$ and A/B is uppermost.

This becomes seriously useful when we consider an ordinary tidal vector calculation done the traditional (yachtsman's) way in an ordinary or even typical situation and you may even spot a "Small Triangle" in there.

By the traditional method, we vector in the direction of the tidal drift, scale off its speed, then scribe a circle representing boat speed and mark where it intersects the intended route, measure the direction with an orienteering compass, add 10° for magnetic variation, and then paddle that course. The truth is that in nearly every kayaking situation, the objective on the other side is visible, and all we really need to know is how much to "nudge up" into the tidal current, the "ferryglide" angle, even roughly. Once we start, we utilise transits anyway, to test that what we are doing is working out OK. All we need is a "start".

Small Triangles gives us the answer. Look back to Diagram 2. The angle between "B" (which is the same as the Course to Steer C.T.S.) and "C" the Course (hopefully) Made Good is the angle we want - x° . Apply the equation and we get :

$$\begin{array}{lcl} \text{Tide Speed} & & \underline{x} \\ \text{Boat Speed} & = & 60 \end{array}$$

Where x = The angle to nudge up into the current

This is not complicated. Boat speeds for a kayak group are generally agreed to be about 3 Kn. Imagine a 1 Kn. current calculated by the Pilot and Tide Tables. Nudge 20° up into the current, or in this case, subtract 20° from the compass bearing visible for the island. Calculations don't come any simpler than that ?

I have found this theory practical and usable to perfectly acceptable degrees of accuracy for kayak navigational purposes for crossing all currents, to or from islands, to or from a mainland. Just come round the corner of your headland and aim for the island. Note the bearing. Allow x° . Follow the amended course C.T.S. and see what happens, using transits, just as with the old ways.

Angles can be used for all sorts of other purposes, such as measuring the height of a tree without leaving the ground. But there is another practical kayaking purpose I can think of, namely that if a known distant target has a known width (a harbour entrance ?) or height (a hill ?), the "distance off" can be calculated by similar means, but that is another day's work.

5th European Sea Kayaking Symposium – Jersey

Saturday 27th May - Friday 2nd June 2000

The event starts on the evening of the Friday 26th May with a reception followed by 3 days of workshops, paddles and lectures. For the next four days there are guided paddles plus a number of other events such as a salt water sea kayak slalom and a paddling quiz night. Numbers are limited to ensure that every participant is able to benefit from the expertise of the coaches and other lecturers. Accommodation is extra but we have arranged the use of a local camp site. All in all, it is a great week.

Provisional programme of events

Some of the workshops, paddles and lectures include.....

Surfing	Weather	GPS Introduction
Basic Skills	Alternative Strokes	Inuit Paddling
Navigation,	Towing	Forward Paddling
Slide Show	Rolling and Rescues	Filming
South Coast Paddle	Coastal Scenery Paddle	N.Coast Paddle
Ecrehous Paddle	Fishing	Curraghs
Marine Wildlife	Navigation	Geology Paddle
Tidal Races	Tidal Races	One Pot Cookery
Caves and Jumping	Slide Show	Skills stage 2

The cost for the weekend (and following week) will be £85.00 per person. This includes the evening meal to be held on Saturday evening. Places will be limited. If you wish to bring a non-paddling partner, they may attend the keynote lecture and social events at a cost of £25.00.

Tuesday 30th May will have day paddles and a surf session

Wednesday 31st May will have day paddles, or 2-day paddle including overnight stay on a different island

Enquiries and bookings to:

Kevin Mansell

177 Quennevais Park

St Brelade, Jersey JE3 8JU

Tel: 01534 745936

e-mail kmansell@itl.net

Jersey CC Web Page: <http://www.jcc.org.je/>

A rare item, a boat for sale in Ireland and priced in Irish punts . With the way sterling is going, that can only be good.

It's a Mark Downey, fibreglass sea kayak and is a year old in July 2000. It's light blue in colour, has two hatches, one forward, one raised on aft deck. Used once.

The kayak can be viewed in the Dublin area and is priced £850 -£900.

Rónán Kane can be contacted on 087 -2464786 or rokane@gofree.indigo.ie

Kayaks, Kidology and Kirton

By Ernie Whalley

Anyone who's ever seen me afloat (and I anticipate a hoary chuckle from Mike McClure here) will know that what I know about kayaking technique can be scratched on the back of an aspirin with the sharp end of a Lendal paddle and still leave room for three Hail Mary's.

But having designed three development class racing dinghies and having been a measurer in two classes where designers were always striving to tweak the rules in search of a half of one per cent increase in boat speed, I can claim to know a little about hull design. In sea kayaking design is perhaps less of an exact science (it's always the racing classes who are at the cutting edge of development) and also compromised by aesthetic considerations (we do like our kayaks to look 'inuitesque').

'weight, as such, is only useful to designers of steamrollers'

Famous sailboat designer Uffa Fox once said that 'weight, as such, is only useful to designers of steamrollers' and here he hit on an essential truth which for our purposes may be translated as 'light boats are faster than heavy boats'. Also, long boats are faster than short boats and, by 'length' we mean 'waterline length', i.e. the linear amount of hull in the water when the boat is floating. So if the above is true, why aren't sea kayaks eight metres long, why don't they weigh, say, 15 kilos, why isn't the hull chopped off vertically at bow and stern? Simply because, like life, kayak design is a matter of trade-offs and compromises.

Given the limitations of the 'engine – the human body, sea kayak speed peaks at a Theoretical Maximum of about 7.2 knots unassisted by wind or tide, a speed I'd be willing to bet none of us has ever achieved (except maybe Ciaran Smith at ten minutes to closing time). While a light boat will reach its T.M. faster it also decelerates faster once the power is turned off, as anyone who has ever got in the way of a fully laden sea kayak will know.

So once you've stoked your expedition packed Skerray up to around four knots you're as good as the guy with the empty Sirius, in theory at least. Also, even with today's lightweight composites, every foot of length over say sixteen feet adds about another kilogram of weight – the trade-off starts.

Using space-age materials you could build a long, strong, ultra -lightweight sea kayak but the cost would be astronomic. And you can't design a hull with straight stem and stern to get max waterline length because an upswept bow and stern have a job to do –keeping a boat dry, increasing the hull's ability to surf and assisting manoeuvrability.

Are you beginning to get the picture? What about beam? Are thin boats faster than fat ones? Are fat ones more stable? Not an easy one to answer. You could glibly say 'yes' to both questions but that would only be hinting at the truth. Years ago, racing dinghy designers made the connection that all the fast boats in a particular class were built to the maximum rise of floor measurement allowed by the rules – in layman's terms, the steeper the underwater sections rise from the keel to the waterline, the faster the hull. But hulls with narrow waterlines in the aft third of the hull tended to be slow in waves, particularly at planing speeds. So designers warped out and flattened the waterlines aft, at the same time reducing rocker, so the hulls would sit on a wave and plane, not wallow in the trough. Then they added a little fullness in the forward sections to stop the bow burying. Finally, they increased beam above the waterline to enhance power and lend stability.

Of course, direct comparisons cannot be made as dinghy sailors have the opportunity to shift all but their ankles outboard to counterbalance heeling, a luxury kayakers are denied. Still, the principles apply. So, yes, thin kayaks are inherently faster, principally due to lower wetted area – although loading Fatso into a light displacement hull will slow a boat down by sinking it below the design waterline and increasing wetted area.

With regard to the relationship between beam and stability, the latter depends more on the shape of the sections in the mid third of the hull than on beam alone. You need two kinds of stability, initial, so the boat does n't roll over and drown you when you climb in and sit at rest and secondary, so the hull is tolerant of a high degree of heel when you are manoeuvring or coping with adverse waves. A hull with flattish floors in the cockpit area, progressively warping to flared topsides creating a firm soft chine or 'shoulder' for support when heeled, should offer optimum stability on both counts.

Having said all this, it only takes a grain of common sense to realise that, unless you are into sea marathons, there's no point in buying a sea kayak for straight line speed alone. A few support strokes, a bit of bird watching, chocolate munching, head scratching, a

smidge of naff navigation will soon reduce your Maximum Speed (Theoretical or otherwise) to around three knots, same as everyone else, so you can stop worrying. And, as far as sussing out stability goes I'm afraid there's no substitute for 'try before you buy'.



One Kayak builder who knows a lot about straight line speed is Kirton Kayaks who built my own beloved 'Beeswing'. Since the mid sixties they have been noted for their racing kayaks and canoes, chosen by many world champions. Kirton's exemplary build quality has become something of an industry benchmark, leading to the coveted ISO 9001 accreditation.

Managing Director David Green was a pioneer in marathon racing and a former Great Britain team member. His experience and 'hands-on' management style help keep Kirton at the forefront of development, employing the latest construction techniques and materials and maintaining scrupulous quality control.

Kirton turned their attention to sea kayaks over twenty years ago with the Meridian single, which a lot of old-timers apparently still rate highly for its handling. David himself designed the C-trip, a short (4.5m), manoeuvrable sea kayak ideal for coast hopping. However, it is the marriage of Kirton's build quality and designer Rob Feloy's flair that has really put Kirton on the sea kayaking map with the famous, or maybe, infamous Inuk. Rob, a lifelong kayaker, has designed successful offshore racing yachts and this quest for speed led him to see the attraction of a sea kayak that would be a little livelier and more responsive than those available. 'I wanted something that was a bit more fun than the average, a sort of sea kayak Gti', as he put it.

The Inuk is all that and more. Its gestation coincided with the infancy of the sea marathon and the prototype Inuk proved a more than useful mount, winning several events. It almost single-handedly drove a wedge between the guys with Nordkapps, Skerrays, Orions and Icefloes, who were on the start line just for the craic, and the win-at-all costs brigade. Still, as Rob is at pains to point out, that was hardly the boat's fault and further, while the Inuk is certainly lively it is a long way from being cranky.

In summer 1998 three Inuks were paddled across the Irish Sea in record time, despite rough seas and a head wind. The Inuk is no souped-up surfer, it is a genuine touring boat, albeit with a carrying capacity more suited to a weekend than a fortnight. It does look undeniably radical, when Rob sketched out the lines (with the aid of a CAD program) he certainly wasn't thinking of fur clad hunters.

The aft deck is long and flat, with minimal freeboard. A heavily cambered foredeck helps keep the driver dry. The transom is cut off vertical, to facilitate hanging an overstern rudder. The ends are short, the bow, in particular, more like that of a yacht than a traditional kayak. The Inuk looks what it is, rapid sea transport for the athletic and skilful, and I knew when I first saw one that if I'd been twenty years younger and light years more proficient I'd have bought one like a shot!

If the Inuk isn't a mega load carrier, Rob's recent design the C-Trek certainly is. This is one big boat, 5.66 metres long, with a maximum displacement of around 180kg. The C-Trek, of which 'Beeswing' is the first example in Ireland is stable and fast with ample capacity for extended expedition work. A rocker hull makes it surprisingly agile considering its size and a really positive skeg control endows excellent tracking and crosswind performance. With three hatches, two of them large ovals and a comfortable cockpit the C-Trek is definitely worth consideration as an alternative to the Valley, North Shore and P&H expedition kayaks, especially for us normal sized paddlers.

Rob Feloy, as you might imagine, has a lively mind and much salty wisdom to impart. Sample: 'If your rolling technique's dodgy, get yourself a pair of diving flippers and stow them on the aft deck. People may laugh at you. But at least you'll be able to tow the boat home'.

Kirton Kayaks are based at Marsh Lane, Crediton, Devon, EX17 1ES England.

Web Site: <http://www.kirton-kayaks.co.uk/index.html>

2nd Shetland Sea Kayak Symposium

Bridge-End O.C., Burra Isle, Shetland

7th-10th July 2000

Set in a group of islands which have some of the finest sea kayaking in the world, this is an event not to be missed. The programme will offer a range of activities from the leisurely to the strenuous and will be aimed at all paddling levels. There will be practical, on-the-water skills sessions, group sessions, lectures and talks about a variety of subjects, slide shows and also guided paddle trips – something for everyone.

There is dormitory accommodation, self catering, camping and B&Bs available.

There will be guided trips in the week following the symposium around the spectacular coastal scenery of Shetland. The Papa Stour get together is on the following weekend – why not make a holiday of it and come for a week or more!

For more info, contact Tom Smith, Sunshine Cottage, Bridge -End, Burra, Shetland, Ph: 0044 1595 859647 or email tom@telviradio.demon.co.uk

A complete rudder kit for a sea kayak, never used for £60. Contact Damien Cashin, phone (01) 2818212 or 086 8362343.

MASK (USA) - <http://seacanoes.org>

Marc Jegou River Ocean - www.riverocean.com

Knoydart - www.knoydart-kayaking.co.uk

Courses

We're delighted to welcome Mary Butler as the person responsible for Training within the Association. We strongly believe in encouraging you to improve your skills – hence our 50% training subsidy announced at Christmas. Mary's enthusiasm and organisational skills will be of great benefit.

Mary will be matching courses to people. Just because a course isn't listed in this section, it doesn't mean it can't be organised. Talk to her about what you'd like to do.

You can greatly help us to organise the courses **you** want by completing the short questionnaire that accompanies this newsletter.

Mary can be contacted on 074-28177 or at MaryTButler@hotmail.com

Saoirse na Mara

Sea Proficiency Courses

L.3 Prof. Training	May 5 th /6 th	£70	Killary Harbour
L.3 Prof. Training	June 10 th /11 th	£70	Sth Connemara
L.4 Prof. Training	Feb. 26 th /27 th	£70	Achill
L.4 Prof. Training	July 8 th /9 th	£70	Belmullet
L.4 Prof. Assessment	July 1 st / 2 nd		Connemara
L.5 Prof. Training	Sept. 23 rd /24 th	£70	Clare
L.5 Prof. Assessment	Oct. 14 th /15 th	£70	Achill

Sea Instructor Courses

L.3 Instructor Training	March 11 th /12 th	£70	Achill
L.3 Instructor Training	April 8 th /9 th	£70	Clare
L.3 Instructor Training	Aug 19 th -21 st	£90	Inishbofin
Assessment dates for Level 3 Sea Inst. can be arranged on demand.			

Island Hopping

6 day Island Hopping	July 14 th -20 th	£255	Connemara
4 day Island Hopping	July 21 st -25 th	£170	Connemara
7 day Island Hopping	Aug 1 st -7 th	£300	Connemara

Contact: **Stephen Hannon** at Stephenh@iol.ie

Saoirse na Mara, 69 Manor Village, Westport Road, Castlebar, County Mayo 094 27682

We are in Ballyvaughan in North Clare. We can organise your Sea Kayaking expedition and accommodation. Most of our sea kayaking trips start from Ballyvaughan or Kinvara, on the southern side of Galway Bay. This area, the Burren, is rich in geological, archaeological, and floral treasures and the sea surrounding it is no exception. There is also the opportunity to see seals living free in their natural habitat and dolphins which sometimes make an appearance further out in Galway Bay.

For those who want to explore the Burren further, cycling, walking and horse riding is also available. You can spend a morning or afternoon with us, or choose to make your holidays a ROK Adventure, make your choice...

Level 3 proficiency training and assessment

3 day course. 17th, 18th, 19th March

Price £100 per person, boat and equipment incl.

Level 4 proficiency training and assessment

6 day course over 3 weekends:

4th/5th March, 25th/26th March, 8th/9th April

Price £190 per person, boat and equipment incl.

For the full program you can contact Marc Jegou at 065 7077043 or marcjeg@esatclear.ie

Please see our website at www.riverocean.com

Tollymore Mountain Centre

Newcastle, Co.Down

Tollymore Mountain Centre is located at the foot of the Mourne Mountains. The waters of Carlingford and Strangford Loughs and the Co.Down coast can be either tranquil or challenging and are only a short distance away.

The Senior BCU kayaking instructor in the Centre is Oisín Hallissy and the sea kayaking schedule is as follows:

Overfalls and Tide Races	14 th -16 th Apr	£85 self catered
4 Star Training	5 th -7 th May	£85 catered
4 Star Assessment self catered	7 th May	£35
5 Star Assessment	19 th -21 st May	£67 self catered
Introduction to Expeditioning	26 th -29 th May	£90 self catered
Level III Coach Training	23 rd -25 th June	£95 catered
Level III Coach Assessment	4 th -6 th Aug	£95 catered
Expedition to Skye catered	20 th -26 th Aug	£260 self
5 Star Training self catered	6 th -8 th Oct	£75

Atlantic Sea Kayaking

Union Hall, Co.Cork

Atlantic Sea Kayaking is run by Jim Kennedy who is available to travel anywhere in the country with his fleet of sea kayaks. He runs monthly Level 4 Sea Prof iciency courses .

Contact Jim Kennedy for course dates at

Atlantic Sea Kayaking, Maria's Schoolhouse

Union Hall, Co.Cork.

Ph: 028 33002

Email: atlanticseakayaking@tinet.ie

By Mike Thomson, Owner of Scottish Paddler Supplies

This is a tale of some years ago when I was relatively new to the black arts of sea kayaking and went out to join the big boys and girls in the playground for the first time .

Destination Arduaine (pronounced Ardoony), South of Oban for the annual Scottish Canoe Association meet. This was the first time that a party of Scottish East Coast paddlers had arrived at this stronghold of West Coast paddling. We arrive at about 11.30 p.m. 36 boats on site. Spectacular. Alec and Bob arrive from their revels in the Chart Room Bar. My calculations show slack tide at the dreaded Corryvreckan to be 9.15 am which means a 7.00 start but local knowledge differs and prevails. An 8.30 start. We hope fervently they are right. Tents up, turn in.

Saturday

Sixteen kayaks ready to go at the appointed hour. The thought of THE sound is obviously concentrating minds most wonderfully. Several kayaking hard cases reputed to be about, men who have paddled out to St. Kilda and back and such like and they can hardly wait to find out what we are made of. Sea calm'ish. Wind slight. So far, so good. Other parties are off on less arduous trips. Into THE sound on the Scarba shore. One of the West Coast hard men has intimated it would be craven, cowardly and entirely girly to take the, reputedly, less dangerous Jura shore.

Not a lot happening. We hug the shore, except Alec who boldly goes down the middle. We concentrate hard on looking casual and experienced while keeping a very serious surreptitious eye over the left shoulder for any sign of sudden, large holes in the water . Some broken stuff, jabble, boils and swirls. Is that all there is? Mixed relief and disappointment. Round the corner of Scarba. Two boats break off to go to Belnagua to meet up with another party.

Then there were 14. The Garvellachs loiter temptingly on the horizon. What the hell, lets do it. Sunshine, big oceanic swell. Not a lot of wind. Boats and shoulders and heads are 'hull down' at times. The usual on and on, 'I swear those islands are drifting away' syndrome. Gradually they get nearer and then..... we're there !

Us, on your actual Garvellachs. Fantastic. It's not just people who write sea kayaking books who can get here. Into the monastery bay. Somehow we get fourteen boats onto a rocky space just about big enough for four. Settle down to enjoy a warm glow of achievement and some nourishment. School of Dolphins passes up the coast going north with the tide. Why couldn't we have been 10 minutes later or they have been earlier but its nice to see them anyway. Alec is conducting a detailed census of the local bird life. We climb up onto the west ridge. Unbelievable view all round the horizon. Guess who left his camera down in the bay ? The west side is a huge cliff falling vertically into the sea.

"We'll just pop round the south end of the island and go down the outside", says one of the St. Kildans. Oh good idea !?? Horrible looking break at the end of the island. We opt for a *slightly* less horrible, louping, heaving, foaming gap. The St. Kildans, of course, go through the break for a spot of light entertainment and to stop themselves falling asleep from sheer boredom.

*Big, BIG, **BIG** stuff going every which way*

On the West side the following Atlantic swell hits the cliffs at an angle. Big, BIG, **BIG** stuff going every which way. The boats pitch, yaw, roll, heave, jump and bury at the same time. This is in good weather, only about force 3. Nothing but cliffs. 2½ miles of this. Is this the commitment thing they talk about? The wash from a passing MacBraynes car ferry goes un-noticed in the general chaos.

The hard men and women are doing **VERY** well at looking casual. In the midst of all this one St. Kildan removes his cag, carefully rolls it up and stows it in his deck bag. Perhaps he is the product of some other planet where the indigenous natives only give birth to their young, in sea kayaks, on especially wild and stormy nights. Come to think of it, everyone looks remarkably unperturbed, Perhaps even **I** look like that to the uneducated eye. Alec remarks on the interesting rock formations we are passing. Round the corner at last. Better, but not a lot. At last into the shelter of Eilean Dubh Mor for a breather en route to The Grey Dogs. Terra Firma again !.

Bob is suffering a headache and not able to fully relish all the little excitements of the day. "Dehydration !", he reckons, "only drank one pint last night". Serves him right then, dunit ?.

It's play time in The Grey Dog folks! Break ins, break outs, ferry glides and all the rest of the things we mad sea kayakers feel obliged to do when confronted by a raging torrent of tortured sea water. Boat ashore having been hit by a fast moving rock. No puncture. Five boats depart to camp on Luing. Then there were nine.

One of the St. Kildans suggests that it would be quite unbearably boring to proceed round the south end of Luing and thence quietly home for food, rest and a pint or six. Much more interesting (he says) to fight our way up the west coast of Luing, against !!! the tide and then down Cuan sound which should be in an 'interesting ???' condition by then. "It's **only** an extra five miles or so". Oh well !...That's all right then, hardly worth bothering about. Ian encourages this lunatic and after much discussion, a marked degree of apathy and considerable foreboding, we eventually agree. We **MUST** have been out in the sun too long.

Half way up Luing - "By the way there are a few places where it's touch and go against the tide". Now they tell us. How right they were - arms and sinews straining and windmilling to make a few inches in places. Eventually we reach the top of Cuan sound. Unbelievable. Water going everywhere. A fair proportion of it - straight up. Zoom down the sound. Ian does a rapid, unscheduled 360 degree turn in a whirlpool. Where did they

say that hidden rock was ? Which side of it means certain death ? At last sanctuary in the bay below. Round the end of Torsa. Wind and tide behind us, at last. The hard men and women try to burn us off on the way home. No chance - we're learning fast.

LATER - On a map, in the Chart Room Bar of The Melford Hotel, Jeff got down to calculating the distance paddled with the help of the long edge of a trusty £10 note which he apparently keeps about his person for this specific purpose. **AN £85.57 DAY. W * 0 * W !!** (For those of you not as yet familiar with Jeff's innovative system of calculating nautical distance, this equates to about 36 miles).

Sunday

"For God's sake let's have a quietish day, nothing too strenuous". All are agreed. Three S.C.A. minders are detailed off to look after the five of us, none of them having been on the £85.57 trip yesterday. We decide to cruise down to the Dorus Mor and complete the round of ALL the local silly places to take a sea kayak. The three minders draw the line at crossing The Dorus. It's just a bit of innocuous chop and flow (to our ignorant eyes). We leave them to it. Bob and I exchange paddles about five yards from the start of the lumps (I think we're really getting the hang of this casual stuff).

Round the little chain of islands to the South. Fantastic, complicated tidal flows. At one point we come across two huge rivers of sea travelling very fast and in completely opposite directions and separated only by the thickness of a sheet of paper, as if there was an invisible wall in the water. Back across The Dorus which had by now developed some biggish standing waves, whirlpools and all sorts of nasties and we see exactly why our 'minders' opted out. We survive the crossing to lunch in the bay on the north edge of the race. Corryvreckan looks decidedly nastier today, a white wall at the end of the gulf. Home in beam seas and rising wind. Only a £42.78 day (18 miles)

Had we joined the ranks of 'serious' paddlers? We thought so then. Does it matter? We certainly learnt a lot more about the capabilities of ourselves, our boats, and each other. Our combined and individual confidence in what we could handle had taken a quantum leap. It certainly felt good.

What's on?

Clare Island Meet

22nd-23rd July 1999

We're organising a Meet next July on Clare Island to coincide with the Marine Millennium Regatta on the island. It will be exciting to be part of a larger festival. There'll be time for a circumnavigation on Saturday and Sundays programme includes

Currach Racing, Yawl Racing, Children's Beach Sports Events, **Kayak Racing** and Tug-O-War Competitions

You can get further information from our own Eileen Murphy (01 4582468) or from Donal O'Shea, Island Manager, Cliara Development Co. Ltd ., Community Centre, Clare Island, Co. Mayo. Tel: 098 – 26525. Fax: 098 – 26525, E-mail - cliara@anu.ie, web: <http://www.anu.ie/clareisl>

Winter Paddling in Skerries

The next dates are Saturday 19th February and Saturday 18th March. Call Seán Pierce (01 - 8490048) Friday evening or early Saturday morning to check on weather. Meet at the lifeboat station at Skerries harbour at 10:00.

Schedule 2000

Date	Event
19 th February (Sat)	Skerries paddle
10 th -12 th March	REC Course for sea kayakers
4 th March (Sat)	Pool Session, Clondalkin
18 th March (Sat)	Skerries paddle
8 th -9 th April	Spring Meet - Inishmurray
29th April-1st May	Millennium Meet - Connemara
3 rd -4 th June	Advanced Meet - Rathlin
17 th -18 th June	Summer Meet - Kerry
22 nd –23 rd July	Clare Island Meet
16 th -17 th Sept	Come and Try It Meet – North Clare
28th-30th Oct	2000 Symposium

Spring on Inishmurray

The Spring Meet will be held on the beautiful and interesting of Inishmurray off the North Sligo coast on the weekend of the 8th and 9th of April. The short (4 mile) option will go from Streedagh near Grange with longer options from Mullaghmore (10m) and/or Rosses Point(11m). Meeting point will probably be in Mullaghmore on the Friday night but we'll be in contact again in March to confirm.

Subscriptions Due

Subscriptions are £10 p.a. and *are overdue* and are payable to David Walsh at the address below. Additional names sharing Treasna na dTonnta at the one address may be added at £5.00 extra each. I.C.U. membership is available at an additional £2 p.a..

Next Issue

The Spring issue (No.21) is due in April. Editorial and advertising cutoff is Sunday 19th March.

Disclaimer

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