

Treasna na dTonnta

“Across the Waves”

Newsletter of the Irish Sea Kayaking Association

No.26

North Atlantic, Passage Granted

Peter Bray landed at Belderrig Harbour, Co. Mayo on the evening of 9th September 2001. He had just completed a remarkable journey that had seen him successfully solo paddle a sea-kayak across the North Atlantic. Peter had departed St John's Newfoundland on 25th June and for those of us who followed his progress by e-mail and via the Internet his journey is a unique and fascinating achievement. An enormous well done from all in ISKA.

Aran Islands August 2001

Stan Pearson

I don't know what deal Des Keane has struck with whom but we are certainly getting the benefit as another SKA meet is blessed with perfect weather.

It's worth starting to plan major trips for these weekends.

This weekend in early August sees a fleet of around twenty, with many newfaces, assembled and on the water by 11.30. We are at Doolin heading for the Aran isles. We provided a brightly coloured spectacle for the tourists onshore and as we dodge the ferries in the bay.

The booming surf on Crab Island of last night has abated and now carries no menace but a material swell still gives life to the sea.

This is a leftover of the midweek gales that have been such a feature of this summer (Tuesday it must be force 8 on the West Coast) but now it reduces to a gentle playful nudge to remind you that we are on a bigger stretch of water than us in Dublin can get to midweek.

Bright sunshine and a sparkling green sea has coaxed out the optimism in the group and most have abandoned caution and cags to flaunt their foreign suntans and an expanse of flesh seldom seen in Irish waters.

A leisurely pace towards Inisheer allows full enjoyment of the occasion and there is much moving between boats as old friends are reacquainted. Most of the country is represented with only the far south missing.

On our right the coast of Co. Galway as far as Golam Head. To our left the huge grandeur of the Cliffs of Moher beckon, a perfect day for that but it is a trip that will have to wait for now.

Lunchtime time sees us at Inisheer and surveying the wreck of the Plassy stranded on the coast when we are joined by a dolphin. This creature, much to everyone's delight, decides to accompany us round to the bay where we stop at a well populated beach.

Historical attractions are dismissed for sun worship or ice cream while a hardy few from Wicklow manage to swim and frolic with this northern Fungi.

A lifetime experience I am assured despite the fact that it is big, manoeuvrable in the water and has teeth. Eileen finds time not only for this but to greet everyone on the beach on first name terms, provide some baby-sitting and check up on her own teenage offspring. Everyone has their own picture of relaxation!

Two late arrivals catch us up here with a boatload of excuses for their late departure as we head for Inishmaan. By late afternoon we potter into a beach on the west coast having rejected the first beach on the east. This was an idyllic spot to land but camping was restricted to the landing strip beyond.

As we pattered along the North shore admiring the ability to see the bottom our unusual presence on the water unsettled a local currachman until he could identify us by nearly running us down.

The meeting ensured an inquisitive welcome later as the locals shared a professional interest in the Kayaks so common amongst islanders used to small boats. The canoes were tilted lifted examined and discussed but there were no takers for a spin.

The locals sported a fine set of tweeds putting our goretex to shame as they treated us to the intricacies of pier building with local politics and grants.

The East got the money, the pier is deemed to be ineffective and the west pier is in the process of being extended.

The little village strewn out above the neatly parked boats hinted at our number but the party had splintered, to explore, fish, cook, escape to B&B's or collect girlfriends and wives. We increased the local population by 10%.

Mobile phones have changed things. And so it stayed through out the evening although a few hardy souls did manage to convene at the top of the hill for a few black jars while the rest fed their pyromaniac tendencies with a fire on the beach.

Both were treated to a windless night and a huge canopy of stars.

Next morning my slumbers find me debating the merits of famous forts or patterned jumpers famed in these parts - pictures or presents to placate the partner? Neither turned out to be on offer as we paid the consequences of Des forgetting to bring alcohol by suggesting 10.30 on the water.

10.30, the thought was too traumatic for some and Mary, Martina and Les slinked off to find some sun, no doubt at a quite beach round to the North. They did have the good grace to make some excuse about heading off to Inishbofin to administer assistance to some burley swimmers' race - a likely story, people swimming, let alone racing for 10K in the open sea!

But, it sounded good even if they admit to making up the miles between here and there by car. All in all the sunbathing sounded more plausible as again we had perfect weather.

Inishmaan and Killeany bay had been abandoned in favour of the east coast and cliffs of Inishmore. The tide was against us but not so much to make much impact and it was a happy troop who crossed to the southwest tip of the isle and a swell. Gentle rollers played up to the modest cliffs giving just a hint of more typical conditions around here.

The whole magnificent 13km stretched before us with the undercut limestone cliffs rising in the distance to Dun Aengus. Apparently this is one of the best preserved and grandest forts in Europe, a lot of stones on these isles.

More immediately two boats loaded with divers caught our attention as Pat explained the local diving attractions - sunken swimming pools, exotic caverns and plunging gullies all harbouring fish.

The spot we were now at, some four km along the coast had it all and is a must for the mask and flipper wearers. We left the paddling pleasures of this coast for another time and headed back east for the prospect of the south coast of Inishmaan and Inisheer, all blowholes and cliffs.

However, the unexpectedly early departure had played havoc with the coffee calculations whose consequences were now straining bladders. This encouraged a return up the west coast of Inishmaan for suitable relief. None was found before depth charging children at the pier heralded the beach and relief.

The normal one upmanship of the lunchbox - you know, smoked salmon or brie, fresh fruit or quails eggs were blown out of the water by the fisherman in the party. Not only had they caught local produce but Pat produced his smoker, not for the first time on this trip, and rustled up fantastic smoked perch.

Isolated beach, plenty of sun, warm sea, no wind, good company - work beckoned, uninvitingly. A few hours and we were afloat again by three heading west.

The modest wind against tide threw a few breakers as we crossed the sound between the two islands but we were soon back in the green sanctuary of the bay. There the dolphin joined us again. I found myself a little apart from the main group accompanied by the dolphin for ten minutes as she swam beside me breaching every third or fourth paddle stroke. She was only ten feet away and close enough to see the marking on her skin - close enough to wink.

Fungi has a rival.

The Galway coast was now laid out before us some six km at its nearest. The Cliffs of Moher to the right, a smattering of houses, a mast and a tower revealed Doolin and to the left the sweep of the coast to Black Head.

The wind had now moved from south towards the west and picked up in the process to generate a following sea. For the first time in the weekend the paddling was vying with the view and the chat.

And the sun still shone as the fleet bounced east. A few breakers some way outside Crab Island heralded land and a move left to enter Doolin at 5pm.

Roll on the rest of the summer.

Out On the Ocean

**In these waves
I am caught on shoulders
lifting the sky**

**each crest
breaks sharply
and suddenly rises**

**in each steep wall
my arms work in the strong movement
of other arms**

**the immense energy
each wave throws up with hand outstretched
grabs the paddle**

**the blades flash
lifting veils of spray as the bow rears
terrified then falls**

**with five miles to go
of open ocean
the eyes pierce the horizon**

**the kayak pulls round
like a pony held by unseen reins
shying out of the ocean**

**and the spark behind fear
recognized as life
leaps into flame**

**always this energy smoulders inside
when it remains unlit
the body fills with dense smoke**

David Whyte

News Snippets

Oileain: Photographic Appeal

The production of a new hard copy Oileain, updated and with maps and photographs is well underway. It is the intention that all paid up members of ISKA will receive a copy during 2002.

This appeal is for your photographic contributions. In particular islands and stretches of the coastline that promotes the purpose and objectives of the text. Photographs that show aids to navigation, safe landings and island features are especially sought after.

There are some "outstanding" islands that may just have slipped by peoples good intentions so this is the last chance.

Please note that contributions need to be in by 1 March 2002.

All photos, slides will be returned and credited.

Please send all contributions to Dave Walsh

South: the race to the Pole

The special exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London has been extended until March 2002. The exhibition details Scott, Shackleton and Admunsen's race to the South Pole.

Details at www.nmm.ac.uk

Get Rolling

Six one hour sessions at Newpark Pool in Blackrock, Co. Dublin are available for booking now. Sessions begin on January 19th until February 23rd 2002. Time. 1830 hrs. Please note places are restricted to ten boats. Some short polo type boats/paddles (bring own spraydeck) are available on site. **Bookings: £30 to Declan Donnelly** at

171 Ardmore Park, Bray secures a place.

Sea kayaks must be clean before pool use!

Come and Try It

Skerries, September 2001 – Gerry Laheen

Great, at last it's Saturday. I'm like a child. Once I was committed to paddling the CaTitWE (Come & Try Weekend) I couldn't wait to get on the water. I had encouraged a few friends of mine to join me, expecting the usual, "Yeah, but..."

This time they were ahead of the posse and were on board before I even asked. Sea Kayaking is taking a serious hold.

Anyway, Saturday morning, 8.00am. Kevin called and we loaded the boats. Last night's forecast of Force 7 gales in the Irish Sea with NW hadn't dampened our enthusiasm but secretly I fully expected that we wouldn't get out.

This was my first time in Skerries and indeed it was the first CaTitWE on the East Coast. I always had quaint ideas about how Skerries might look as I passed by on my way to Belfast. I didn't expect to see windmills but there they were turning to the wind and a beautiful sight, the day was starting well.

We arrived at the sailing club at the appointed time. David Walsh was there with a worried frown (What's new). There are more coming, he said. When Martina Butler headed off for a shopping trip shortly after we arrived I was getting worried that we wouldn't get out.

The preliminaries were dominated by David & his excellent organisational skills, which took the best part of an hour. However at the finish, everybody had a boat, paddle, vest, cagoule (not a cap), the works, some even had partners (no fighting for Daniele).

The group was divided in to two and Sean Pierce had the pleasure (or vice versa) of leading our group.

Destination:

- Out to Shenick's Island
- Around Shenick's to Paddy's (St Patrick's not to be irreverent).
- Lunch
- the final thrust through the wind into Skerries Harbour.

That was the plan. We headed to Shenick with a following sea. It took us no length to arrive on the beach where thankfully we disembarked and checked out the island. Sean's enthusiasm belied the many times he has landed on this island. We checked out the Martello Tower, which required Tarzan jungle skills to get in the front door. Then we could have done with night telescopes to climb the stone stairs it was so dark. It reminded me of the final scenes in Silence of the Lambs. I bet the dead seagull we found felt the same.

The tower was fantastic on top. I felt like Buck Mulligan looking out over the snot green sea even if that was in Sandycove on the other side of Dublin Bay. It was easy to imagine how the view might have looked 200 years ago with a cannon on top patrolling the waterways. The view may not have changed significantly if you disregarded the houses around Skerries. The tower was definitely in a very strategic position controlling the entrance to Skerries. This suggests that Skerries was a busy seaport in the past.

We traced our steps back to our boats but during our visit the wind had picked up significantly. The question was should we chance going around Shenick to St Patrick's or instead should we cut across to Colt Island. Colt won out and we headed off but it was not an easy paddle with the wind blowing across our beam. We made it to Colt where we gratefully disembarked for lunch. Out of the wind, the stone armchairs were very comfortable and I could have stayed longer.

As we finished lunch a squall sprung up and it was felt that the shortest route home was the best option. This we did in jig time against the wind (a much easier paddle). The final choice of the day was to beach or canoe around the headland into the harbour. The harbour won out and so we battled the elements once again.

Our pints were well earned but we all enjoyed the day. We hadn't covered large distances but we made new acquaintances, made new plans for further sea trips, some foolishly even discussed Wales but that was the drink.

Tomorrow is Rockabill or weather permitting Lambay Island. Who says the East coast isn't interesting?

The forecast for Sunday suggested an easing of the North Westerlies to F5. So Sunday morning as we headed for Skerries once again we were hoping for more benign conditions than Saturday.

But alas as we approached Skerries harbour, all boats were tied up and the wind was blowing hard F6 -7. Lambay & Rockabill did not look on.

David was doing his usual trick dishing out equipment and getting the group organised. Although some people hadn't returned after Saturday, the group had still grown to about 30. The group was graded into 2 classes, the trip was to paddle out to the North side of St Patrick's Island, loop around to Shenick Island where we would break for lunch. Thereafter we would see what conditions were like to plan the next stage. Wind was blowing F6 NW with a SE tidal flow. Somebody suggested we launch from outside the harbour. I was first on the water and cursed my enthusiasm. I reminded myself that I must get a backrest for my Nordkapp as I gingerly balanced on the incoming waves while waiting for everybody else to launch. Sean Pierce was to lead our group with Mary Butler.

Sean advised us that we would experience different types of sea states, beam, quarter, following etc. What we didn't realise was that Sean had devised a little test for us to assess standards of the group. So the first part of our trip took us up to St Patrick's Island on a beam sea. Tricky enough conditions with a strong wind blowing across our kayaks making paddling somewhat difficult. Conditions worsened as we approached the North headland of the island. Sean advised us to veer away from the island as waves were beginning to dump closer to the shore (rocky). The conditions had deteriorated and for a while maximum concentration was needed to get around the headland. Apparently the conditions had been created by the tidal flow bouncing off of a rock ledge, which extends from the headland. Nice one, Sean. With great relief we turned the corner into calm waters and were able to take a breather. We could also afford to look around us. We had the company of a few Cormorants and a curious seal. The coastline did not seem that far away after all the paddling we had done but that's always the way at sea. Rockabill looked wonderful with the sun lighting up the island and the white lighthouse.

Having taken a breather we then headed with the tide down to Shenick Island. We were to loop around the southern end of the island with the advice to watch out for a sewage outlet (no time to capsise). Conditions had eased significantly at this stage and while the wind was still a factor we made it down to the island, around the corner and landed on a stony beach. Empty stomachs were calling and everyone sought a sheltered spot for lunch. Conversation revolved around the sea conditions and overall Sean felt that everyone had handled the conditions satisfactorily.

We then relaunched and headed North into the channel between Colt and Shenick Islands and we returned to St Patrick's Island where we met up with the other group led by Des, Willie and David Walsh. After a little banter, an option that we hadn't considered on, suddenly presented itself. "Who wants to paddle out to Rockabill? It's only 3.5 miles." We were advised that wind conditions had eased but that the trip especially the return trip against tide and wind would be challenging. After some discussions a group of about eleven decided to take on the paddle. The rest remained with the other group on St Patrick's Island.

We expected the trip out to take about an hour and in fact beat that time by 5 minutes. Conditions were reasonable but with a quarter sea making paddling difficult at times. Nearer Rockabill we hit a few tidal races and the sea was mounting up a bit on the North side of the island. Sean quickly redirected us all around the south side of the island into an inlet where we could get a welcome break to stretch the limbs. We all clambered onto the small quayside, everyone giving a hand to pull boats up onto the rocks as the tide was falling. We took a tour around the lighthouse and grounds, Sean showed us where the terns were breeding this year. The lighthouse officials were on shore duty and the place was locked up. It would have been nice to see inside but we can keep that for another day. The view from the island was fabulous stretching from the Mourne mountains in the North to Bray Head and the Wicklow mountains to the South. Lambay seemed just a stone's throw away but Sean advised it was at least a $\frac{3}{4}$ hour paddle. Back down at the boats one of the Drogheda lads took the opportunity to do a bit of snorkelling around the natural harbour. He was followed by 4 indignant seals trying to figure out what he was doing invading their territory.

Time to go, we all clambered down the rocks and again with good co-operation everyone was launched successfully. Nobody was really looking forward to the long paddle back against the tide as the shoulders were already aching on the trip out but it had to be done.

In fact the return trip was not too bad and while we were against wind and tide, somehow it was easier to control the boat. It was decided to take the lee side of St Patrick's as the sea was dumping on DNS (de north side) of the island. The return trip took 1 hour 15 mins so the conditions added 20 mins to the journey.

With the tide now well out we had to pick our way from St Patrick's to Colt and then across the channel to Skerries beach. The last challenge of the day (as if we hadn't had enough) was to paddle back around the headland into the harbour. So most of us took on the extra 15/20 min paddle to get around the head and into the safety of the harbour.

Terra Firma, it was great to haul the boat up the quay. It was a long day and a tiring paddle but I was very pleased to have taken the chance to go to Rockabill. It was a very interesting and most enjoyable paddling experience around the islands and one I definitely will have to repeat.

We finished off the evening with a few pints in the Sailing Club bar and a delicious meal in Stoops.

Roll on the next CaTitWe. Many thanks to Sean, Mary, Des & David for all their help and organisation in making the weekend such a success.

Tour d'Irlande en kayak de mer

Solo Trip Around Ireland June -August 1998

Francois Chouvellon

(Translated from original French text by Ruth Bracken)

“With its origins deeply anchored in salt water the kayak is a most remarkable sea -going craft. Preparing a sea kayaking expedition requires special precautions, know-how and a thorough familiarity with the environment, every bit as much as does mountaineering. A considerable degree of commitment may also be called upon. Sea kayaking is a return to basics with great potential for adventure. It involves a thirst for learning and for confronting new experiences and difficulties. It is a call to go travelling, to come face to face with one's self and with the elements. Spurred on, no doubt, by all these things I first set out to roam those unforgiving seas and, as luck would have it, to do so alone.”

The following are some reflections captured en route in my logbook. For instance, that 12 June 1998 when, only a few miles out from Cork, I had to come to terms with the idea that, from here on, I would be making my way all by myself.

Alone, All Alone.....

In spite of strengthening winds backing southerly, I set out leaving Eric behind on the beach. For health reasons, he was obliged to set sail on the next ferry back to France. With a final wave of my hand in farewell, I set out to tackle this godforsaken headland we were supposed to have rounded two days ago. I have had little time to prepare for a solo trip, so the coming days are likely to be difficult. My stomach is a knot of anxiety as I reach the Old Head of Kinsale. I paddle into big seas stirred up by a wind against tide, which causes the waves to break around me. The rain pours down and visibility is poor. I am all alone in this bleak and menacing atmosphere. Some start to my journey!

But maybe the lighthouse perched high on its cliff top is watching over me? I certainly hope so. There is no going back now in any case, so on I go with no safety net. As the thoughts rush through my mind, one question keeps coming back: "What in God's name am I doing here?" The wind veers slightly southeast helping me to cross Courtmacsherry Bay. It is 20.00 by the time I reach my peaceful haven where a small stream pours into the sea. This spot is well protected and I'll sleep here tonight. There is no let up in the rain. No matter! Little by little my peace returns and I feel better.

16 June, 08.30: I head over towards the inlet at Crookhaven in order to make for Mizen Head. I don't feel too well and my stomach is already rumbling. I make a short stop in Barley Cove, during which I cook up some pasta with mackerel I caught a little earlier. I'm beginning to accept my solitude, although the level of commitment demanded by this west coast causes me some concern.

Escape routes are few and far between and I have two major bay crossings coming up. The *Pilot* tells of whirlpools on the way around Three Castle Head. Ever since I was a kid I've been afraid of whirlpools and there's no reason why that should change today!

The tide pushes me along towards my first major headland of the southwest. The calm is striking. There is hardly a ripple on the water as my bow cuts silently through the surface dotted with tiny raindrops in suspension. Occasionally a fog descends and envelops my kayak for a time, cutting me off from reality in a world of solitude. I'm paddling into infinity...

23 June: County Kerry turns out to be far more than I had bargained for! Weather conditions are disastrous and I remain stranded for two days on Great Blasket Island. I didn't sleep a wink last night because of the wind, tensing my every muscle with each successive gust. One of the poles broke and the tent groaned in agony. Everything is soaked. I haven't eaten since yesterday, but I'm not hungry in any case. It's 18.00. All I can do is wait... Keeping warm is my main priority. What a strange place is this west coast: all of a sudden at 2100 the rain stops, the sky clears and hundreds of rabbits poke their noses out. This small island which, barely five minutes ago I was cursing, now spreads before me a most picturesque landscape – a sea doing battle with the rocks, illuminated by the setting sun. The moisture-laden air gives a fairy-tale splendour to the scene. The very grass I'm sitting on is aglow and I forget everything...

24 June: The weather is clearer this morning and the wind drops to a Force 6, southwesterly. Some seals come to watch me get thrashed by the waves before I manage to get away from the beach at Shore-Break and make for Sybil Head. Swollen by the gales of the previous day the Atlantic lets rip with all its heart. A moment's inattention and I'm over, with just enough time to see the

bright blue tube that engulfs me, spinning me around. On one side I can see the ocean; on the other the sheer cliffs of this infamous west coast. Between the two, a poor, lonely paddler takes a battering. Setting out through huge surf and constantly having to watch for waves out to gobble me up, certainly gives pause for thought and reason for doubt. My head is brimming as I paddle for three hours, focusing all the while on making headway before finally finding a sheltered place to land.

The level of commitment involved in paddling these sections of coast is beginning to take its toll: I'm all alone – not a boat on the horizon. Indeed there is no horizon on account of the huge swell. I'm dancing on a tight rope with no margin for error. Paddling on and on through the same surroundings, it's easy to become complacent and miss landmarks, to become blinkered and no longer see what you should. How can you gauge your limits if you can no longer properly analyse the situation? It's most important to frequently take a step back so as not to lose track of your priorities. Even so, when learning by yourself, you sometimes find yourself in compromising and uncomfortable situations. It may be necessary to come close to the edge of the precipice in order to be able to see the bottom, but without falling. Things are even more complicated when boundaries become blurred and you have only your own judgement to rely on.

Southward Bound

16 July - North Donegal: I'm only a few miles from Malin Head, the most northerly headland of Ireland. Once around it I'll be heading southwards, on my way home and on a more sheltered sea... I can't wait! Meanwhile, I haven't been able to budge for three days due to deplorable weather conditions. A gale warning is issued and its accuracy is soon confirmed... and confirmed again! This imposed break once more affords me the opportunity to enjoy a warm welcome and some wonderful Irish hospitality.

Diversions of this sort enable me to break the solitude which sometimes weighs heavily upon me. Meeting people and discovering the culture and language are also the purpose of this journey. The downside, however, is that reverting to being a "land-lubber", even for just a few days, upsets my rhythm; it makes it hard to get back into the feel of things, to slide my legs back into my kayak and set off again. It's as if being looked at by people unbalances me. The sea now frightens me and I feel like it's waiting to get me round the next bend...!

28 July: I've been paddling down along the east coast for the last few days and, as expected, the sea is calmer, currents are not as strong and the overall conditions are less daunting. There nonetheless remains the same intermittent pattern of rain/sun, as well as the unrelenting wind – here to torment me and drive me insane.

...Normally the seals just watch as I pass, keeping their distance. Not so today! Three of the group I've just disturbed are a little braver than the others and follow me a while, popping up sometimes just 50 cm from my boat. Though I'm a little tense they show no sign of being aggressive...

7 August:... Many more hours of paddling into the wind. With my eyes wide open, I ponder, I dream, I make up stories, giving free rein to my imagination. I'm happy, sad and then happy again. My moods fluctuate, tossed about by the waves of this whipped up sea. Occasionally I'm roused from my reveries and called back to order by a good soaking. I have just been telling myself one of those jokes that only I find funny, when suddenly in a dark, black sky I see something making its way towards me. "Oh, oh! Now I'm for it!" I think to myself, and all I can do is laugh... But, boy! do I ever get what was coming to me!

10 August: I paddle along, about five metres out from a sandy beach. The sea is fairly calm and I can't help but think back to conditions on the west coast where I used to dream of this type of easy-going paddling! And now, today, here it is. Or rather, here I am and really lapping it up! There's a little less rainfall this side of the country, and when the sun manages to break through, the heat dries out the salt, whitening my cag and making my skin feel tight. I'm definitely headed southwards.

22.30: The night is dark as I sit facing the sea, lost in thought. The moon rises flaming red on the horizon and smiles at me. No, I'm not dreaming, it really is smiling at me!

19 August: ... Around every rocky promontory another one appears, but still no sign of Roche's Point! Progress is slow as the sun dips low on the horizon and my muscles cry out for mercy. Fortunately the wind has eased a little and, with any luck, may even let me finish in peace. ...Finally, after eleven and a half hours paddling, I cross the finishing line. I'm back in Cork Harbour and, just like a dream that's over; the whole thing is already blurred in my mind. Here tonight my journey is finished and there only remains for me to thank the sea for letting me go the whole way...!

And so I invite you to take the first step; because, to discover this island with all its nuances is to delve into a sublime countryside, to gaze in wonder before stretches of cliff and wild coastline. It is to be touched deep inside by the union of sea and mountain, and by the countless deserted beaches and coves. To know Ireland is to catch a fleeting glimpse a light-moment long, to behold, on rounding a bay, an almost imaginary world. It is also to wonder at the ferocity of the elements and to savour the spontaneous warmth of the people... Ireland is all these things.

I wish you bon voyage!

Democracy in ISKA

Des Keaney

We asked two questions of you recently

1. How democracy should be implemented in the Association and
2. Who'd like to do some work.

We sincerely thank those who took the trouble to contribute. It took you time and effort and we appreciate that.

With regard to those who offered to do a job, if you haven't heard from us already, you will shortly!

We got 11 responses in total, six of which referred specifically to the democracy question. The responses below are only sorted in the order in which they arrived. We'd like to share these with you in some detail, as the whole question of how we implement democracy is very important for the future of the Association.

Contributor A

- The ISKA has out-grown its initial stages in that it is now a national Organisation rather than a small club or group of friends.
- Retain a system which remains quick and competent in it's out -put but does reflect the views of the members at the same time.
- I would begin by having a two tier membership
 - Associate – new members, non participating members
 - Full – Level 3/3 Star and/or been a member for a year or attended a number of meets or had numerous years experience.

Contributor B

It has all seemed to work very well as it is. I think this reflects the general goodwill of the members as a whole, and the very hard work put in by the 'Committee'. So long as the Committee members are happy to continue to provide the level of service that they do, I think the rest of us get a very easy ride, and (from the basic member point of view) see no need to change it.

Contributor C

I for one believe the current situation of "benevolent dictatorship" is doing brilliantly and should be left intact because:

1. The achievements are self-evident i.e. Newsletter, website etc
2. It avoids all the messy club politics
3. It keeps the subs cheap
4. I like your style

You got my vote for one.

Contributor D

The problem with democracy is that one would rarely wish to vote for the people who wish to put themselves forward.... However giving the leadership a clear mandate can enable them to make difficult decisions.

I believe that it is very important to have an open and wide -ranging discussion to which anyone can contribute (eg on the web forum?) this should explore the ideas for ISKA development and / or constitution changes. This opportunity already exists, perhaps though it is not seen to exist?

My personal feeling is that there are small groups within the club who know each other very well and trust each other a lot so form quite tight cells. There is a risk that this togetherness can be perceived as exclusiveness, and that newcomers could feel that they need to have a lot more experience and acceptance within the inner circle before getting involved in organising anything.

This is quite possibly exaggerated for me as a quite quiet and introspective person, but is possible true of a majority of people drawn to sea kayaking. I think it is important that the committee structure or leadership style reflects the attitudes of a group of like minded sea paddlers... although I don't know what form this structure would take in practice, sorry.

Contributor E

Democracy vs Appointment of officers

Where appointments are all made quietly behind closed doors by a handful of individuals in "power", the remaining club members naturally have little sense of ownership, belonging or commitment etc to the process of maintaining the club. The phenomenon of a small handful shouldering all the work surrounded by a large community of disaffected members is common in many clubs.

Democratic deficit leads to worker deficit.

However, in dangerous sports many positions require a specific level of technical expertise, contacts within the sport, and a high level of commitment over a sustained period. Leaving committees entirely to open elections is potentially dangerous as it risks losing the cumulative learning built up by the existing committee, and leaving positions open to inadequately qualified members.

The ideal I believe is

1. Communicate a strong message that EVERYBODY is genuinely very welcome to get involved and shoulder some of the burden,

2. A very high level of transparency as regard appointments – i.e. open discussion of which positions need to be filled, clear criteria of the sort of person needed to fill it etc, so that nobody feels that they were excluded because of some vague clique, rather than there were specific qualifications they did not have.
3. Managed transition from one committee to another. Committees need both the experience of long-term members and the fresh enthusiasm and openness of new members, albeit with the risk that this may not be sustainable. A policy whereby the committee maintains e.g. 50% carryover members and 50% new members would address this.
4. Managed nominations. Elections as such in this context are rarely really democratic anyhow, nor indeed very efficient or fair. Excellent candidates may be too shy to present themselves; less qualified candidate may be more forward. While presented perhaps in the form of elections, I think what is needed is closer to “succession planning” – the existing committee scans new members for people who would be valuable additions to the committee, and (at the risk of contradicting point 2 above), approaches those who have contributions to make to the organisation. While this sounds potentially covert, open discussion of this with the membership at large, whereby it is obvious that X was approached because of his/her techno skills etc., should seek to maintain the transparency issue. Nominations for election would then be of the best candidates. It is unlikely that a counter candidate would run, and even less likely that a counter candidate not backed by the existing committee would win.

Accountability, Reports etc.

In the same spirit of developing a greater sense of involvement, ownership etc., some degree of accountability is clearly required, but I would push for this to be as simple and un-time consuming as possible. I think it would be useful to have a ***very short*** report, probably using Treasúra na dTonnta as a medium, of any major decisions, projects or activities of the committee, so that members have a fair idea of what’s going on, which would also give people a better idea of whether or not they want to/ are qualified to get involved more directly. Again I feel a reasonable and pragmatic level of transparency is a good thing, putting an onerous reporting burden on the committee is clearly unfeasible.

I think in asking for our views, you have already opened up the whole issue as regards transparency, which I feel goes a long way towards the above.

Contributor F

The light organisational touch of SKA suits. If it is getting too tough to organise the inclination would be to err on the side of downsizing.

I want a light touch, minimal organisation and to increase the use of the bulletin board and the symposium.

Response

We’re sharing this a) to let you know the opinions received so far and b) to generate more feedback.

C’mon People, there’s more in ye yet! Let us know what you think. Your anonymity is assured. Write, email or talk to Des Keaney. 01-2760263, 086 8205627, deskeaney@hotmail.com

Book Review – The Inishkeas

By Brian Dornan

Reviewed by Dave Walsh

This book is a factual history of a thriving Irish speaking island community from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. No native writer ever emerged to record their passage from their own perspective as happened elsewhere, so their story is pieced together from outside records. No pacy yarn or atmospheric re-creation this, cold hard facts are marshalled and presented logically to inform and educate rather than entertain or enthrall. A serious work that will be still regarded as definitive in 100 years time. Read it and be the better for it.

The first fact that disappointed and threw me was that the islands are not named for Inis Gé the “island of geese” as Gaeilge, but for Insulam Gedig in Latin, Naomh Geidh in Irish. The first written reference to the island was in a letter from Pope Innocent the Third appointing a Bishop to this area in 1198. If you can get that wrong

Read and learn. The population was either growing or more or less stable at about 300 between the two islands, but the South Island nearly always held more people than the North, until nearly the end, when this trend reversed. The islands ran out of turf by the 1830s, the islanders importing it thereafter. They survived the 1840s famine better than the nearby mainland, partly through fishing and through piracy. Circumstances suited the islanders in this regard because calm weather conditions in April and May becalmed many a sailing boat hereabouts. This all got so out of hand the coastguard had to place a presence on the island in 1840 to stop the practice. Ravaged always by storms they were almost beaten by a big one in 1857, and were finally defeated in 1927. To beat the wind they developed a special style of lazy bed for the potatoes, seven feet across and a foot higher on the windward side, to protect the fragile young plants. The climate being milder than the mainland potatoes could be sown in February or even January giving the islanders a huge competitive advantage at the market in Belmullet. They kept cows for milk,

pigs for meat, sheep for sale and for wool and even horses to work the land, but more so on the North Island where the widespread machair is more equine friendly terrain.

There was a typhus epidemic in 1897. They also grew barley and their poitin was well known over a wide area, being favoured by the Boycotts (a well known but not particularly popular local landed family), but despised by the visiting artist Paul Henry whose boat crew got sozzled and gave him a trying journey back to Westport. A pier was built on the North island in 1863 but got blown away within the year, and a sturdier model was built on the South island beginning in 1888 which is there to this day and looking well on it, sheltering the strand in front of the village. Schools were established on both islands about 1894, and 3 policemen were stationed on the North island about the same time to try to stop the worst of the illegal distillery industry.

The Norwegian whaling industry then as now wanted to do things its own way, and seasonally controlled at home they established out stations in other countries to bridge the gap, including one such station at Rusheen, the small tidal islet off the strand in front of the South Island village in 1908. They rented the island from the Congested District Board who had bought out the whole of Inishkea and in a typical Norwegian solution to a Norwegian problem they also paid rent to the islanders who liked to think they owned the place and wouldn't be persuaded otherwise.

Within months there was a thriving industry, with modern buildings, piers and slips, though made of wood. The Norwegians kept themselves to themselves, living on their boats, but some learnt Irish to deal with the workers. Steam power helped with the hauling and boiling of the whales to reduce them to oil and fertiliser, but water was in short supply and hence the dam to be seen behind the houses.

The South islanders wouldn't let North islanders work for the Norwegians, which suited everyone because the Southerners employed mainlanders to till their fields and harvest their crops for them. As less fishermen meant better fishing (and lobsters seemed to thrive on the discarded whale offal, as did the pigs of the island who all went feral), the North island fishermen thrived.

Cray and lobsters were plentiful and valuable, and were transported live, the crayfish to Paris and the lobsters to faraway London. The whaling lasted only until 1911 when a combination of events including a strike, the stench (of which even the mainlanders miles away to the east complained), and finally a fall off in demand for whale products, killed it.

The rusting and rotted remains of all this endeavour are still to be seen as litter all over Rusheen.

Relations between the islands were never good, except when absolutely necessary. Burials took place only on the North Island, which also took in the Coastguard in 1849 and a police barracks fifty years later. Perhaps all this influenced things so that the North Island took the pro-Treaty side in the Civil War 1922/23, and the South Island the Republican side. On one occasion they all drew up on their own side of the narrow channel between the islands and pegged stones at each other.

In 1927 they were united in grief when on the 26th October their young were cruelly taken, ten of them lost in one go in one storm. A big low came in and they were fooled by the lull. They were yards off the north island when the west winds struck so suddenly and so strongly many couldn't retreat, so that the last to drown were almost on the mainland well to the east. Each of the five currachs contained two brothers, mostly in their late teens. The community spirit broke and another drowning a couple of years later emptied the islands by 1934.

This is a story repeated all over western Ireland's offshore. By 1900 there was a good pier, there were police, teachers, foreigners, information. Then as now the young wanted better than they grew up with. Then as now, migration was the key, to the mainland, to England, further. It wasn't an uncaring new Republic that destroyed things, just the march of time. Certainly the UK "pre-freedom" was more generous to those marginalized in this way, but firstly they could afford it, and secondly the house of cards would have fallen in anyway afterwards, improved knowledge of an alluring outside world and not money being really the issue. If anyone wants to get into all that, there couldn't be a sounder base from which to start.

Kayaking Skills - Towing

(Article courtesy NSW Kayaking Magazine)

David Winkworth

Hello Everyone,

This month, I thought we'd have a look at towing sea kayaks. It's something that everyone has to do sooner or later on the ocean so we might as well be ready for it!

Towing can be a real chore or possibly a chance for some hard exercise with a slower group. Whichever way you look at it, when you need to tow someone...you **NEED to tow them and that's all there is** to it. So, let's have a look at all aspects of towing on the ocean and make it as simple as possible.

Why do we need to tow?

Well, the most obvious reason is a paddler's incapacity to paddle due to exhaustion in headwind conditions or complete incapacity due to seasickness. Our old friend tenosynovitis is another reason for a tow. Group cohesion always pops up on the ocean and towing can be a simple way to keep a group together and arrive at the destination before nightfall or before weather conditions deteriorate.

We'll have a closer look at towing for these reasons in a moment but I just want to mention the importance of observation first. Although you may be on a trip with a designated leader, it's everyone's responsibility to observe fellow paddlers and the weather. You may notice that a fellow paddler is having difficulties, falling behind perhaps or favouring one arm due to cramp. Incoherence may be a sign of hypothermia onset. Communicate your thoughts to the leader as soon as possible and possibly avoid a minor problem becoming a full-blown disaster. Does the group need to pick up speed to avoid a predicted wind change? Look for the signs - look around you!

OK, back to the tow! Towing an exhausted paddler.... exhaustion on the ocean is dangerous. Apart from the obvious speed reduction it can mean a loss of balancing skills and more importantly it can affect a paddler's reasoning and decision making skills.

So, exhaustion is a good reason to tow someone. Usually the paddler can paddle on slowly while under tow to contribute to the effort and use their rudder or paddle to maintain course.

Complete incapacity to me means an associated loss of balance and a paddler in this condition will most likely need a support paddler to raft up with them as part of the tow. Seasick paddlers fall into this category. They need support.

If it's serious they just want to curl up and die where they are. This means aborting a planned destination and heading straight for shore with a supported tow. Now, if there are only two of you out there, the situation is not hopeless.

We'll cover this in the section on towlines.

There is undoubtedly a real stigma attached to towing which is unfortunate because there shouldn't be. Towing is a means of keeping moving while having a rest!

IT'S OK TO BE TOWED

Think of bushwalking. If someone is tired, the group sits down and has a rest together. You can't hook a rope around their legs and drag them along the track!

But you can on the ocean! Think of it as a bonus for sea kayaking! If a paddler group leader suggests for a reason that they should tow you, accept it gracefully because there is obviously a very good reason. It's just that you may not be able to see it!

A few years ago on a two week coastal expedition, one of our paddlers in a double sea kayak had a severe case of tenosynovitis. Despite protests of fitness, we hooked on to the double in a V tow for the remaining 4 days of the trip. By the end of the trip, the paddler had recovered OK but more importantly had accepted that this was the only way we could keep the group together... and still enjoy the trip.

We could have reduced the daily distances but that would have meant compromising the sense of achievement for the other paddlers.

All right, we've decided that someone needs a tow. What now?

You're the leader, the weather is deteriorating and a paddler is falling behind quite exhausted. Paddle up to that boat and raft up with your boat at 180 degrees to the other. Reason? This is your assessment time for this paddler. Tell them in firm reassuring tones what you plan to do and have a good look at the paddler. (I'll use the male gender here)

Is he sweating? Red eyes perhaps? Is it salt spray or exertion? Is he cold? Is he shivering? Are his lips blue? Does he respond readily to questions?

The reason for the boats being opposite here is so you can observe the paddler closely. Obviously something is wrong or you wouldn't be planning a tow would you? The question is...how wrong are things? So, be in front of the paddler to find out. Also, in this position, you can hold his boat by the foredeck deck lines while he gets ready for the tow.

Get ready, what's he got to do? Well, this paddler has been burning up the kilojoules at a great rate and now he's going to sit there in the wind getting cold during the tow.

Tell him to put on his cag if he hasn't already done so. If he is wearing it, he may need another layer under it. Poly, not cotton obviously. If he's not sick, give him some muesli bars or chokky and a good drink of water. Does he have a whistle to signal you if the wind and waves pick up?

Tow time folks!

If there are a number in your group, you could use a V tow for this paddler with another to paddle beside him for company and to check his condition regularly.

If he is OK but just tired, the accompanying paddler can alternate with the towers to give them a break.

Getting the tow started is where paddlers can easily make a dog's breakfast of the whole operation. Remember, this sick/exhausted/scared paddler is looking to you for confidence and reassurance. Getting your tow lines hooked around every piece of boat in sight is not going to inspire him! So, after getting him ready for the tow, get your own line ready but DO NOT deploy it yet. Decide which side of your boat you are going to attach the line to, and then back away from the paddler and re-approach with your favoured towing side against their boat. Move to the bow of his boat, hook on, a last call to the paddler and move off. Don't

stuff around here get the line taut gently and paddle off. If the wind has spun your boats around opposite to the desired direction, paddle in a wide arc to get on course. Gently does it!

If you decide that a V tow (2 towing paddlers in a V configuration) is the way to go, and the sea and swell is messy, have one paddler get the tow underway.

The second paddler can then come in beside the "towee", hook on, and paddle off to form the V with the other paddler. Nice and smooth, no tangles, no capsizes.

Don't underestimate the ability of the wind and waves to make a mess of your endeavours. Towing systems (and your plans) should be simple and easily understood by any helpers. More on this soon.

Let's have a look at towing configurations .

Obviously, one towee, one tow-er is the simplest and most often used. If the wind isn't too strong and the distance not too great, this set-up is fine. You can zip along at a pretty good rate you'll find.

If the wind and seas pick up, you've got to tow a seasick paddler plus support boat or it's a loaded double, you may want to try a V tow. (See Figs 1 & 2).

You'll have double the power but also double the potential for stuff ups. It helps if the two towlines are equal lengths so that the towing paddlers will know if their partner is not pulling their weight! It's also good for company.

Towing can be lonely work!

Another tow configuration (which I haven't tried) is called the Husky. Basically a V tow with another paddler on a longer line right up the middle. More power but again increased chances of foul ups. I would be interested to hear from any paddler who has used this method in a real wind and wave rescue. (See Fig 3)

Another method I have read about is a straight in line tow with 2 or three towing boats (See Fig 4). Not a method I would try but if anyone has used it speak up. This method seems to me to take away independence from the towing boats. ie they cannot unclip when they need to do so.

The last method is a good one for an incapacitated paddler when there are only two of you out there in total. The line is short about 0.5 metre, boats get scratched but it works. Pretty self explanatory really. See Fig. 5. Oh yes this method requires strong deck fittings, Now, setting up your boat for towing. In case you may one day need a tow and in any case, you should have a toggle/rope loop set-up right on the bow of your boat. Deck lines are an obvious requirement.

When a boat (incl. kayaks) turns, it typically pivots on an area about 20% of the boat length from the bow. It follows does it not, that if your tow rope attaches well back from your cockpit, the boat being towed will pull your kayak all over the ocean? You'll also have lots of trouble hooking your line on in a lumpy sea. Think about it!

The best place for a towing attachment is right behind the cockpit on either side of the deck. The attachment there is accessible and yet out of the way of normal paddling movements.

Some books and magazines, indeed some club members prefer to tow from their PFD with a whitewater quick release system. It's definitely not my cup of tea for a long ocean tow with boats going up and down swells at different times but you may wish to check it out before deciding on a system. Just look for paddlers with more stuff hanging off their bodies than California Cops.

Quick release systems.

Are they really necessary on the ocean? I don't think so. You wouldn't be silly enough to tow through the surf zone would you? Apart from that (and gauntlets) I really can't see the need for these items. I find simple 50mm stainless snap hooks are fine for both ends of the tow line.

Make your towing attachment on your rear deck strong. Stainless saddles, decklines, loops of cord whatever make it strong and waterproof under the deck.

Check out your rear deck for places where a tow line could lodge and not be freed during a tow. Rudders are an obvious problem. If it gets stuck well back on your deck where you can't reach it, you may have lost the ability to control your kayak in wind while towing.

Let's have a look at actual tow lines for your boat. These are my requirements for a tow line:

- (1) **Simple to use** - not just for me either. **And quick!**
- (2) **Reliable** - deploys all the way every time. No tangles. It **FLOATS**.
- (3) **Compact** enough that it is no problem to take on **EVERY** paddle.

When you get a tow line, see if it fits the above criteria. Point No. 3 is important. It's no use in the shed when you need it.

Years ago we used to make tow lines from ski rope with lengths of 8mm shock cord built in for shock absorption. They were huge and suitable for towing the Titanic. They did not fit Point No.3

Many of us are now using simple 3mm nylon cord. It's strong enough for towing doubles, has great stretch - just enough, and it's compact. Its drawbacks are that it needs to be kept out of the sun and washed regularly to remove salt build and it will tangle if not put carefully into its bag. I've detailed my system in Fig 6 and I suppose it's also a Mk 6 version too. There are a few club members with them for you to copy if you like it.

Length of tow line?

It makes sense for us all to have equal length lines does it not! A few years ago, the club standard was 7 metres, which I don't think is long enough for towing in ocean swells. Many of us are now using 15 metre lines. I'm not sure if it's an official club standard but it does make sense. You can always reduce the length if you need to do so during use.

Towing needs to be practised. When you've made up a line, go out and practise with your paddling companions. Good luck.

Offshore Winds

“Those deceptive but 'orrible offshore winds”

Paul Caffyn

(Article Courtesy of New South Wales Sea Kayakers)

Wind is the curse of sea kayakers. It generates the bulk of problems that arise, choppy seas, capsizes, wind chill, weather, tide effects, surf and so on.

There is however an exception; a following breeze, or one quartering from astern, can be a real boon in aiding progress through surfing rides. A breeze on the beam requires continuous corrections for drift and more concentration on balancing the boat. A breeze on the nose, or quartering from the bow generates soul destroying, tiring, very wet, slogs.

The most deceptive and horrible wind blows offshore. Deceptive in that conditions may appear flat calm against shore with a light breeze wafting offshore, but with increasing distance offshore wind strength increases dramatically.

Cliffed coastlines or those with marked topographic relief such as dune ridges, or swathes of forest, are particularly deceptive. Lurking sea kayaker traps are wherever those continuous cliffs or dune ridges are broken by gorges, fiords, steep sided valleys and narrow entrance bays.

Recently I received a swag of E mail messages from Sandy Ferguson relating to a party of New South Wales sea kayakers who were subjected to the deceptive but 'orrible offshore winds at Jervis Bay, south of Sydney. I can sympathise with the N.S.W. paddlers' predicament, for yours truly was caught during the Australian trip a long way offshore immediately south of Jervis Bay. A sudden, dramatic wind shift, that left me with such a struggle against an offshore wind that I felt like throwing in the towel and abandoning the trip.

Limping into the lee of St. George's Head I coined the phrase, 'Wind was definitely the curse of the canoeing class.'

An article on offshore winds is pertinent, particularly after the article by John Ramwell in the last magazine on the Lyme Bay tragedy.

Wind Strength

Above an altitude of 500 to 600m, wind has an unobstructed flow over the sea while below that height; there is increasing frictional or drag effect between the air and the surface over which the wind is blowing. This results in a diminishing of wind speed as the ground or sea is approached.

The amount of wind strength reduction depends on the nature of the surface; over forested hilly terrain the air flow will be less than that over open sea because of greater frictional drag.

Approximate values have been determined for frictional drag: over open sea a wind 500m above the sea reduces by about 33% at sea level, while over land the reduction is 66%. Thus a 30 knot wind at 500m will produce a 20 knot wind over the sea and 10 knots over land.

There is where the 'deceptive' description for offshore wind applies, for a factor of 50% can be applied to wind when it blows from land out to sea. A gentle breeze of 6 knots inland becomes a moderate wind of 12 knots offshore and a 15 knot wind inland becomes a near gale of 30 knots at sea.

The height and nature of a coastline govern the zone width of calm, sheltered water in offshore wind conditions:

(a) a long beach with a low sand dune ridge providing minimum relief, dictates a minimum width with the offshore wind felt at the water's edge.

(b) a continuous line of vertical cliffs will provide a maximum width of calm, sheltered water, naturally depending on the height of the cliffs which govern where the offshore wind hits the sea

The obvious problem with offshore winds is being blown offshore. Where there is no off-lying shelter, such as a reef or island, and the next continent is thousands of miles away, the chances of survival without a radio or batphone are zilch. I maintain that once a wind rises over 30 knots, paddling progress into the wind grinds to a halt.

Any misadventure such as a dropped paddle or capsize, both occurred with two paddlers off Jervis Bay, resulting in instant seawards drift and a greater distance to reach shore after recovering from the misadventure.

By way of example to those who have yet to experience such conditions, I struck diabolical offshore conditions during my first day in the Bering Sea, on the northern side of the Alaska Peninsula with a gale force wind blowing offshore over a low dune ridge and flat tundra inland. The sea was flat calm, a low surge against a gravel beach, wind ripples close inshore and an increasing density of whitecaps with distance out from the beach. Deceptively good paddling conditions, but bear in mind the 50% increase in wind strength from land to sea, and conditions more than 10m offshore were well beyond my limit to reach the beach. I spent many hours crabbing my way along the beach, the kayak at a 45 degree angle to the line of the beach to check offshore wind drift, the bow rising and falling against the beach with each surge. I was fully aware of the risk, realising the next stop offshore was the ice pack and unbearable polar bear country.

At the base of a long continuous line of cliffs, excellent shelter is afforded in strong offshore winds. Steep hillsides close to the coast, continuous dune edges and tall forest also offer shelter close to a beach.

But wherever that continuous line of shelter is broken abruptly, for instance by a narrow fiord, narrow bay or harbour entrance, gorge, river or stream valley, the offshore wind is funnelled through that break with unbridled force, causing williwaws and violent gusts or bullets of wind. And it is the violence of the turbulence that can cause the loss of a paddle or a capsize.

Many sheltered bays and harbours have narrow entrances that open back into broad areas of calm water. Jervis Bay in New South Wales is a classic sheltered bay, which has a narrow entrance with tall cliffed headlands on both sides and we have many such examples in New Zealand. Offshore winds funnel through such narrow entrances with double or triple the wind strength of that inland.

Also where a continuous line of cliffs of steep coastline is broken by a headland or cape projecting seawards, increasing wind strength must be expected often accompanied by williwaws and strong gusts or bullets of wind.

What to Look For

An increasing density of whitecaps with progressive distance offshore is the best indicator of strong offshore winds, along with spray fanning seawards off breaking wave crests.

White spray dancing over the water indicates a wind funnel with bullet like gusts of wind lifting spray off the sea.

Suggestions for Remedial Action

1. If an offshore wind is blowing at the launch site, be prepared to abort or shorten the length of the trip.
2. If caught in a sudden or gradual change to an offshore wind, turn tail immediately and run for the beach or nearest shelter. Sea conditions will deteriorate as the wind continues to blow offshore.
3. When faced by a wind violently funnelling out of a harbour or fiord etc., either return to the launch site or attempt to land and wait until the wind strength abates. Patience is the order of the day. If there is any doubt, it is better to wait.
4. When caught on an exposed coast by a change to offshore wind conditions, hug the coast intimately, even if this adds considerably to the distance paddled for example by paddling around the curve of a bay.
5. Do not make straight line crossings of the narrow entrances to bays, fiords or harbours. Paddle upwind into the feature far enough before kicking out on the crossing. This is to combat ensuing wind and chop drift during the crossing and ensure reaching the far side safely.

Weather Forecasts

Marine forecasts relate to powered vessels and not paddler powered kayaks. Offshore winds commonly knock down the sea state, diminishing swell size and generating reasonable fishing conditions for powered vessels. Listen to the marine forecast and if the stated wind direction is offshore in your area, be extra wary before commencing a paddle. We know forecasts are not always accurate, hence a final decision to paddle or not must be made at the launch site.

Points to Remember

1. Offshore wind conditions are deceptive, with calm water and light breezes against the beach. Always look for whitecaps offshore.
2. Wind strength increases by 50% when passing from land to open sea.
3. Narrow topographic features funnel offshore winds, with dramatic turbulence.

[With reference to the now infamous Jervis Bay incident - wind speeds measured at the airbase on the south west side of JB at 4pm on that day averaged 27 knots gusting to 35. This wind then travelled over a fetch of 12 km before meeting up with our paddlers (and I was one of them) as they rounded Point Perpendicular.

Paul Caffyn's factor of 50% would mean we faced gusts of up to 70 knots - veritable supermen! Comments from our experienced sea paddlers who wish to argue with the sea-kayaking legends theory are welcome and should be directed to the Editor.

Both these articles were taken from the New South Wales Kayakers Website. Any comments regarding content are welcomed by the Editor of *Treasna na dTonnta*.

Tents and Camping Equipment for the Sea Kayaker

By Les Harrington

Since my last article on tents, there have been many improvements in design and also significant price reductions. My basic preferences have not changed i.e. a two, three or four pole dome, one size bigger than the suppliers recommendation, e.g. choose a three person tent for two campers. There should be two entrances / cooking areas opening to the sides of the occupants not at their heads and feet, this layout makes cooking and exiting the tent much easier. The inner tent length is very important in that it should be at the very least one foot longer than the occupant, in order to avoid the feet or head touching the inner and bringing it into contact with the outer. I still have a very strong preference for either outer pitching first or better still both together to avoid the inner being soaked in the time it takes to put on the outer during heavy rain.

Recent improvements include, many lower price tents now having alloy poles, better, heavier waterproof groundsheets, better quality pegs and even a new method of fixing the outer flysheet, of an inner pitching first tent, to the pole sleeves of the inner with Velcro to enable simultaneous pitching.

Another useful addition to look out for is the groundsheets extending into the entrance areas, which aids crawling into and out of the tent on wet ground.

You should be able to find tents that meet most of my recommendations priced around £ 140

COOKING

Powerful petrol cookers, which needed priming, have traditionally been very expensive, however, Coleman now sell their two kilowatt, self priming (lights instantly) Sporster model for about £ 35 which is about half the price of other petrol cookers, I have used this model for about two years now, it is very economical but be very careful when close to the tent, especially when lighting it.

SLEEPING BAG

Most of us have had the unfortunate experience of having to sleep in a wet sleeping bag, however sleeping in a damp or wet Buffalo (Pertex and Pile) bag is much more pleasant. Anyone who has a Buffalo bag or trousers will understand what I mean. These bags are not expensive (approx. £ 80) and are very long lasting.

BEDS

There is nothing worse than an uncomfortable night's sleep on hard, cold ground, for real luxury try a cheap plastic or rubber air bed under your camping mat or thermarest. An airbed alone can be very cold but when covered with an insulating mat it's just like sleeping in a warm hotel bed.

(Only joking)

Natural History File

Original Watercolour drawing by Archibald Thorburn (1860 -1935) for *British Mammals*, 1920-1921

White-beaked Dolphin *Lagernorhynchus albirostris*

(Gray, 1846)

Derivation: From the Greek *lagenos* for "bottle, flask" and *rhynchos* for "beak, snout" and from the Latin *albus* for "white" and *rostrum* for "beak, snout"

Description:

Measures about 3.1 m, with short, thick beak which is white or light grey. Usually two white to light grey areas on each side of the body, one in front of and the other behind and below, the dorsal fin. When the species is swimming the best features are the two areas of pale colouration on the sides and flank.

Natural History:

This dolphin is very similar to the Atlantic White-sided Dolphin, although it is a bit larger and more robust. White-beaked Dolphins can occur in herds of several hundred.

This species is found in the northern North Atlantic, in cold temperate and subarctic waters. In west it is common off Cape Cod in spring, and abundant at least seasonally off southern and western Greenland. In east, it is found from Norway to Ireland and is said to be the most common dolphin off Iceland. Migrations are poorly understood. The diet of the White-beaked Dolphin includes squid, octopus, cod, herring, capelin and sometimes benthic crustaceans.

This species and the very similar Atlantic White-sided Dolphin are more pelagic than the more familiar Bottle-nosed Dolphins e.g. Fungi, and those found in the Shannon Estuary and Connemara. However kayakers off SW, W and NW islands and headlands have every chance of encountering them.