

# TREASNA NA DTONNTA

Newsletter of the  
Irish Sea Kayaking Association

Newsletter Number : 6

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Edited by : David Walsh,

## Editorial

Autumn is here again, with time to remember Summer, and plan for next year. By most accounts this Summer was breezy, and those with day jobs, who had to nominate a particular week and stick to it, regardless, needed to be very lucky. Many weren't.

This magazine continues, with the help of incoming articles and other input, but it will never be any better than you the members want it to be and put the effort into it being.

Perhaps surprisingly, despite the paucity of articles as such, there was a heavy influx of people telling me, in writing (and there isn't any other way) of things they had learnt during the year. It was all coincidental, and I am sure the various participants barely know each other, but it all happened, and all came from experienced sources. I feel this is a very positive development.

So a mainstay of this issue is a whole section on "helpful hints", the experiences of people who are known to me as keen, active and experienced Irish paddlers, gained in Irish waters, in 1996. I found some of them intriguing and helpful, and hopefully this will become a regular feature of TREASNA NA DTONNTA. I have re-expressed the original offerings in my own style, and give them anonymously, to protect the guilty.

## 1997 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subs may now be paid for 1997. The fee is £10.00 per person and an extra £5.00 per extra name on the contact list receiving shared communications. There is also the facility of I.C.U. registration for an extra £2.00 per person for those who want it, facilitating for instance eligibility for I.C.U. events, e.g. the Liffey Descent. I don't know when the Ska

financial year starts or ends, but payment will not be refused. The financial state of the Ska is perfectly healthy, and I will look next year at the possibility of reducing the sub once a bit of fat has been built up. I don't propose, at least yet, publishing accounts as such (habits are forming, even bad ones !), but basically, every newsletter costs £1.00 or so per person, other communications much less, and there are some other small expenditures. Once we stopped circularising lapsed members halfway through this year, the income and expenditure position went on to a sound basis, before that being a nightmare, with every paying member carrying another non-paying one, the cost of everything artificially doubled.

## **Meets 1997**

I have been getting vibes that we are running too many meets, i.e. two in Spring and one (the annual come and try it w/e) in Autumn. With the Symposium also being towards the end of the year (though who says that must be so ?), that means two each season. Summer meets have been failures, and winter meets haven't even been suggested. What is argued is that once there is more than one, then the occasion becomes "ordinary", less than "special", so that people put off going to the first, and then find they can't make the second. Yielding to this point of view means that we will have one only each year for fully fledged adults, in the Spring, and one for friends and all comers, usually mid - September.

I think we should try this for 1997, and see how it goes, but hold it early so that if we find we want another, we have the time to go for it. Doing it early means sheltered water, so why not Achill Sound Bridge on 12th / 13th April, a fortnight after Easter, with a view to camping on Achill Beg, or maybe day trips each day, and also visit Inishbiggle before it gets its cable car ?

This is a crucial part of what the Ska does, so ideas are urgently requested. Is the "come and try it" weekend as good an idea from our perspective as I presume it is, should there be more meets, should we vie with the I.C.U. for control of who what where and when symposiums are held, should there be a winter or summer or second spring or autumn meet, should there be bigger or smaller or fewer or more newsletters, questions, ideas, feedback, feedback, please please.

nigel foster boats

There is a new kid on the block, making Vynecks and Legends and other of Nigel's boats, under licence, based in Holland. He says the prices are competitive and he would really like to break into Ireland.

His name is Watermark (John Van Leeuwan)

Vryenbanselaan 31A,

2612Ch Delft,

Holland

w. 00 31 15 2622445

valley boats

If Batman was there, Robin was too. Several demo Skerrays were sold at good prices, and the Knoydart jackets and salopettes are holding interest, with several good new designs. They even have a new "bigger" Nordkapp called the Acquilla, expedition sized, and yes, it is stable. Ring for the brochure :

Robin Goodliffe, Valley Canoe Products,

Private Road 4, Colwick,

Nottingham,

ENGLAND NG4 2JT

w. 00 44 115 961 4995

1996 SYMPOSIUM

castletownBearhaven

The 1996 Symposium was held this year over the October Bank Holiday Weekend 25th / 28th October 1996. Truly exceptional bad weather marred the outdoor activities program, though paddling did occur two days out of three. On the third day, the female persons present having successfully negotiated a separate women's race for the first ever Irish sea kayak race(s) for a cash prize, this only meant that two races ended up being cancelled instead of just the one, due to weather that dismayed the entire country. There were lectures and lecturers from all over, even from Ireland, (and the one that stole the show was about Currach building), boat sales, conviviality, some little drinking and even bongo drumming.

### **Symposium 1997**

Connemara

Next year's symposium is understood to be going Westwards again, to be organised by Leo Hallissey, National Schoolteacher of high profile in Letterfrack, County Galway. Expect an environmental and community emphasis, and no harm. No stranger to organising outdoor related events in his area, Leo is Oisin's da, so if he is half the man his son is, we can look forward to a well disciplined weekend, except perhaps during the very occasional dignified bouts of CEOL, CAINT, CRAIC, AGUS SCLEIP.

Celtic Watersports Festival

Galicia,

Northern Spain

August 1997

This is a preliminary announcement of next year's Celtic festival, an event which has become a high spot of Irish Sea Paddling in recent years, always enjoyable, cheap, and cheerful, and that is just the paddling.

Contact Siun NiChinneide at Shielbaggan

FACS / TEL 051 562108.

Burren OPC (Joanna McInerney w / facs. 065 78066) are also supporting this year's event in a big way.

## **A Week in the West**

Doolin to Belmullet

By Des Keaney

It all began over a pint (as so many things do) with Stephen Hannon. Where best to paddle a week of my precious holidays? "Liscannor and go north" says The Man. "Hmmm, sounds good....." says I.

We set off from Doolin as light was fading on Saturday the 17th August. Brian Ormond, Sean Pierce, Josie Gibbons and myself. We'd decided on Doolin as work commitments prevented an earlier start and we wanted to get to the Aran Islands that evening.

None of us had much experience of the area. I'd done a bit around Inishboffin and Josie had been to the Aran Islands a few times.

The wind was a 3-4 south east with some swell out of the south that gave us some nice surfing conditions as we neared Inisheer. It was great to get my Nordkapp fully loaded again. It's much less tippy and the handling is a lot easier. We camped behind the beach on Inisheer, ate and set off to explore the night life. The place was hopping!

The next morning was miserable..... rain, low cloud, rubbish around the campsite, toilets that hadn't been cleaned for days and a touch of a hangover. I awoke to a donkey chomping an abandoned apple tart. We broke camp, cruised past Inishmaan and on to Kilmurvy on Inishmore for lunch. We ate crouched under a bush trying to shelter from the rain and wind. Ahh..... the life of a sea kayaker!!!

The wind was a force 3 from the south so the six miles to Golam Head wasn't going to be a problem. However, the mist and rain had blanketed the Galway coast so we took a compass bearing and set off. Sean spotted a rare black tern as we left the bay. Half an hour later, the tower on Golam Head showed faintly through the mist, exactly where we expected it to be. Great! By this time, we were in a big swell, rolling in from the West. I'd never been in anything like it before. The crests were 150 - 200 metres apart and big. I'm sometimes under the illusion that I have some control over my life but that swell put things in perspective! It was awesome.

Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels distracted us as they flitted across the surface of the water. We also got a very close to a Sooty Shearwater, a rare visitor from the South Atlantic.

Golam Head was approaching fast and we headed for a gap between the head and Gorumna Island. The clapotis was quite severe and we really wanted to get through that gap. However, the swell was breaking right across and we had to go around.

My stomach couldn't take any more and I left my lunch in the water. Too much food, the swell in the North Sound and clapotis off the head were more than I could take. I kept paddling and was soon in sheltered water behind the head where we set up camp.

From then on, I had a light breakfast and lunch and fuelled up in the evening when I had plenty of time to digest the food. It worked fine and I soon stopped worrying whether I would be ill. If you're seasick, tell someone, get off the water fast, keep warm and replace the lost fluid. You rapidly become a danger to yourself and the group as you lose body heat and strength. It's better to end the day early than to put the whole group at risk.

The next day, we set off west in beautiful weather. This is what we came for..... i slands scattered about us, inquisitive fulmars, sunshine, light winds....."now we're suckin' diesel!". We kept alert by watching breakers that only came up every ten minutes or so when a big set passed through. One of the guys had a narrow escape when of f on his own. He hadn't spotted the break and the wave missed him by a couple of boat lengths. Camp that night was in a beautiful sheltered beach at Dogs Bay, near Roundstone where we said good-bye to Josie who had to work the next day.

Slyne Head dominated my thoughts the next morning. The sailing directions and pilot were less than reassuring. But as Brian said, "they were for sailors"! We pushed into a moderate north-westerly and had lunch on a wonderful white beach just under the head. If it'd been 15 degrees warmer, we could have been in the tropics!

The Head was easy ..... No tide, no swell, no problems. We used the shelter on the inside of the islands north of Slyne Head only to find we had to portage as we'd got the tide wrong! Portaging heavily laden kayaks over seaweed covered rocks is not a good idea. I strained my back and was in foul form when we got back on the water. After some discussion, we set off on the four miles across Mannin and Clifden bays against a force 4 and a short choppy sea.

Brians Skerray was giving him a nice dry ride but I was half drowned! Great spouts of water were blasting up from either side of my bows and landing on my head. Complementing these were waves sweeping along my deck which leapt upwards when they met my

flare bag. "Yellow submarine" came to mind! I did most of the trip with my eyes closed. We landed at Turbot Island but Brian spotted a better campsite another mile further on. Sean objected and if you've ever heard two Corkmen disagreeing over a campsite, you know what I mean! I was beyond caring.

The next day dawned dull and overcast but soon brightened as we paddled past Omev Island and Aughrus Point and headed for Boffin. That area is so beautiful when the sun shines. We were surrounded by islands and mountains. Inishturk, Clare Island and the misty outline of Achill to the north, Boffin and Inishark to the west, Mweelrea, Tully Mountain and the Bens to the East and High and Friar Islands to the south. We resolved to return and circumnavigate the islands at a relaxed pace. We left Boffin after a leisurely lunch in the pub. Brian and I said goodbye to Sean as he headed for Cleggan and business at home. And then there were two.....

We paddled on to Inishturk and Clare Island and camped under the castle . This was our longest day on the trip, 28 miles.

Thursday dawned to heavy rain and a south easterly force 7 that was dumping the sea into the harbour mouth. We turned over and went back to sleep. By afternoon, the sun was out, the wind had dropped to a 3 and swung around to the south west. Beautiful. However, the mornings' weather had made an impression and we headed for the safety of Achill Sound rather than going west for Keem and Achill Head. In retrospect, we could have made Achill Head relatively safely as the weather held for the next 24 hours. However, the decision was the right one given our level of experience and a fresh to strong forecast.

Our late start had us fighting the end of the ebb into Achill Sound, a pull over the sandbanks at the top of the Sound and a push against the flood at the Bulls Mouth. Hardly textbook navigation but we knew what to expect and it worked fine. We camped with around a million midges on Inishbiggle that evening and got a lovely cuppa from Mrs.O'Malley the postmistress.

The 6:02 forecast was for light to moderate winds. "Hey, Brian, how'd you like to go to Sligo?" "ZZZZZ.... huh??....go back to sleep..... zzzzzz" I was gaining in strength and three good days would have seen us into my home waters. Any reasonable winds from the south would do fine.

The midges drove us breakfastless to the water. We eventually cooked up eight miles later watched by a herd of giddy heifers. Enough was enough when one took a fancy to my blue fleece. They disappeared over the hill in response to my best North Leitrim "Gioutathat".

In Blacksod Bay, we watched a "big brown bird" beating the hell out of a tern and wished Sean were still with us to identify it. We passed through the Belmullet canal and camped near the Ballyglass lifeboat at the southern end of Broad Haven. The forecast was predicting a 5-6 north-westerly. Our chance of getting to Sligo was gone.

In fact, when I awoke at 2:30 a.m. with a tent pole bearing down on my face and water dripping around me, our chances of getting anywhere seemed gone. This was confirmed in the morning when a look out to sea proved the forecast correct. We could have managed the conditions but if anything had gone wrong, we had no escape route and you'd have called us stupid. The Stags of Broadhaven and the cliffs of the Ceide fields coast would have to wait for another day.

Was the trip a success? Yes, definitely. In each of the six full days we paddled, we averaged over 20 miles. We didn't make any stupid decisions, gained a lot of experience and had a lot of fun.

Thanks guys, it was great!

## **The Rhythm of the Tides.**

### **Wexford to Dublin**

**by David Walsh**

The first and all important classification of sea kayaking trips is into "Tours" and "Tootles".

A tour involves stopping the kayak, sleeping, and continuing the next day, and the next, always in the one direction, unsupported, consistently further and further away from the original put in point. Tootles involve going from and arriving back to the same point, virtually regardless of the duration of the trip. Common-sense though dictates that tours may be short enough to really be tootles, and tootles may be long enough to really be tours. Typically a weeks holidays may consist of one tour or a few tootles.

Tootles are popular because of the comfort of periodic returns to base, and there is no logistics (shuttle) problem to overcome at the start or finish of excursions, but tours are the business because they have no such logistics problems except at the start and finish.

The West coast of Ireland is so fragmented that those who tootle can always vary the trip out and back into something interestingly circular, while those who tour are often presented with the loss of a complete day at each end of the trip, shuttling vehicles on bad roads over huge distances, and balance lends itself more readily to tootling.

The East coast of Ireland is substantially straight, has good roads and even trains running up and down it, and though it is generally considered the least committing of the four coastlines, less interesting, less remote, and more manageable, it is a place ideal for tourers. The entire coast is really unsuited to tootling, getting back to the starting point involving uninterestingly recovering the exact same ground on the way back home.

Emotionally, the real difference is that on tour the kayaker is governed totally by the rhythm of the tides, which spend half the time completely barring progress, and the other half urging it on, and nowhere is this truer than on the East coast.

Fred Cooney and I had become habitual tootlers and hadn't truly toured for years, and so the trip was planned : Courtown Harbour in Wexford to Howth in Dublin over four days in August 1996.

Spring tides were running strongly, South during the main central part of the day, and we had to wait for the slack till late afternoon the first day, making for split shift paddling. Northwards we headed from the Courtown Back Beach into a light breeze on our nose, which though it waxed and waned in strength, never once in the coming days for the entire duration of the trip, did it ever leave us, or get behind us.

At first the going was past sandy beaches backed by steep vegetated clifflets and Tara Hill as a backdrop, dotted with hamlets, caravan parks, and, in the remoter spots, the odd nudist running in panic for cover at our arrival. No other form of seagoer gets or causes this kind of surprise, because no other boat travels so far, so intimately close inshore, yet always so quietly. Many have been and will always be the seal, the whale, or the fisherman astonished to be thus accosted in remote spots totally unannounced.

Gradually the ground gives way to the low lying Kilmichael Head, round which we discovered the scale of the tide for the first time. All the way to Clogga Strand just South of Arklow, the urgency of the tide, the need to keep with it, and not to lose an instant of its benefit unnecessarily, gradually forced itself to the top of the agenda. Only weary bones (mine) forced us in for a rest stop at all.

Past Arklow breakwater the Wicklow Hills are seen well ahead, and at sea level, the land reaches out as a long finger blocking the way, Mizen Head. We passed a buoy and were astonished to find the tide trying to suck it under and root out its retaining chains from the sea bed. We became even more aware that we were paddling a truly fast flowing river, but with the wind dropped a little, we had no white water to fight. Any thoughts of stopping before Brittas Bay, just beyond Mizen, could not be entertained before dark, or after if the moon came up.

In this manner we clocked up 18 miles in 4 hours, arriving at Brittas Bay just before pitch dark. Brittas is a popular spot and crowded at its northern end but we were fit to drop when we stopped at the first bit of it we came to, setting up a barbecue and settling in for the night, laying out our bags on tufts of grass on the beach. We saw noone at all during

the night, until a lone horseperson galloping past after dawn was a magnificent awakening from a perfect bivvy.

Setting out with the morning tide, at first keeping well off shore to catch the full force of the current, in lovely sunshine and the cliffs providing increasing shelter, we made Silver Strand in an hour or so, and the infamous Wicklow Head shortly after. Nowhere on the East Coast is as inhospitable as this wretched place, unless wind and tide are both fair. Rounding the head, we suffered the full force of the head wind, depriving us of the logical option of keeping well out in the rip. We could see it all churned up, going forever, but in the

direction of Holyhead. Courageous would be they who stayed in it by choice, and we were not those men. Retreating close inshore, into the eddy found behind any great headland, we had to give up and rest on a storm beach after half a mile of constant effort, fighting for progress inch by inch. When we set off again it was worse, but we had to make Wicklow Town as a minimum to be in the right spot to take uncomplicated advantage of the evening tide when it turned.

Almost an hour passed before we made the beach, just North of the harbour, a distance of just over a mile. That is no play place, and passing that Head is not for novices. Landing onto the steep shelving and dumping gravel made for wet backsides, and the welcome of a furze bush behind which to snooze and munch through the afternoon contrary tide.

Back in action at teatime, we had been told to expect 12 miles North to Greystones of solid drudge, the straight gravel beach uninterrupted for mile after mile and no backdrop, and I have even written up this section in Oileain (as reported to me) as being, from the sea, the most boring bit of coastline in Ireland. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

The section is broken by Six Mile Point, a small headland half way along, unprepossessing, but something to aim at, to mark progress, and also by the golf course just South of Greystones, with trees to focus on. In the evening light the panorama of Wicklow Hills from Bray Head straight ahead and around by the Sugar Loaf to the lesser hills of East Wicklow confirmed why Wicklow is called the garden of Ireland. Certainly, this is a most unusual piece of real estate, but pretty, attractive and straightforward. Don't get the tide wrong though, or you will certainly agree with its detractors.

After Greystones, anxious to push as far North as possible before dark, we made our most serious booboo. Not wanting to camp on the Greystones North Beach because it has a sewerage outflow that would interfere with the night-time enjoyment of even the tiredest paddler, I talked Fred into camping on one of the storm beaches on the head itself. As dark fell about us we found out the hard way that Spring Tides leave no room for happy campers on storm beaches, as they go all the way up. The flow is really rapid hereabouts so there was no way back. On we had to go, to land eventually on the beach at the Promenade in Bray town.

Never in the history of sea kayaking did a more unlikely bivvy spot get chosen by passing paddlers. We came to rest finally under multicoloured festive lights, on a dunghap of seaweed, tucked under the sea wall. Drunks roam these streets after their sober colleagues finally depart the amusement arcades, and courting couples stroll past. That the pair of us are still talking is a sign of growing maturity, but I won't say whose.

We ate our barbecue and drank our wine in somewhat of a hurry, pestered only by curious older folk out for their evening strolls. Those that perambulate early are harmless, and we feared that the nightshift proper might be our problem.

And so we tried to be invisible. The main street lights were cantilevered inward from their poles above our little wall, creating a thin strip of shadow into which we squeezed the boats and ourselves in an elongated line. We hoped that the night vision of the average nocturnal boozier wouldn't be up to spotting us, and so it was. They chortled and hiccupped their merry way just a few feet above us, never suspecting the fun they could have had were they more observant. That is except for one group who, about to expectorate the nauseate contents of their innards at just our unfortunate spot, got some shock to have my splendid colleague leap up out of nowhere and exhort them otherwise.

It was a relief to be back on duty next morning, out into the flooding tide, making for Dalkey Island and home waters. We stopped only to see to our ablutions, and set out to cross the bay, the only open type crossing of the entire trip, to Howth, just in time to catch the H.S.S. going one way and a conventional mailboat going the other. We kept well out of the way of the first, but were somewhat more relaxed about our dealings with the other, stopping about 100 metres before its path. Timber, as they say, gives way to steel. It saw us, didn't like our calculations, hooted, and then swerved. The whole boat tilted towards us, the passengers at the rail leaning back all together in perfect synchronisation. None of them waved. We knew that all known seagoing craft except canoes lean out of the turn, but it was awesome to see it in the flesh.

Once across to the Bailey we treated ourselves to a little rest, and paid the usual penalty. We stopped at a tiny beach to stretch our legs, but in the blink of an eye the morning tide was exhausted and now ran the wrong way. If we hadn't been so close to final destination we would have rested up for the few hours, but we slogged on. Further along these outside cliffs of Howth Head is an outlet of raw sewerage, at Bill of Howth, the Northeast corner of the head. Heading upstream to such a spot is never a good idea, as it takes so much longer to clear the smelly zone. The water turned smelly and brown, then took on the consistency of diluted porridge. Seagulls may love it, and they do, but we were glad to emerge into the clearer open waters of Howth Sound beyond.

With Howth in sight the tide really picked up against us. With jaded muscles we snailed interminably ever closer until the harbour wall gave some relief, and so in beautiful sunshine we entered Howth Pier, 44 hours after we originally started out, a perfect "not quite an" end to what was quite a splendid trip.

Only a car back in Wexford to sort out now .....

## Helpful Hints Section

### towing

A towline must include suspension. In your system include a piece of strong shockcord, round which the towrope is spiralled, whipped at both ends, so that the towrope is one piece but possesses spring-prong. Read any good manual for the details if that isn't enough. Not to have it causes neckache, to you !

Make the towrope as long as can conveniently live permanently on your boat (you not the day nor the hour).

If a tow is necessary and you are the only one with a tow system, remember that others may have short tows or even slings. Position any such volunteer behind you, attach to their bow and tow them, and attach their stern by the short tow to the bow of the victim's boat. Anything else give directional stability problems (i.e. the three boats wobble all over the sea, a waste of effort, time, and patience).

### pumps

Pumps not built in, e.g. carried on deck, are of limited use. A pump not capable of pumping without interfering with a spraydeck is almost useless.

### saying no

From Scout Leaders to Hill Walkers to Sea Goers, the hardest thing any leader will ever be asked to do is to tell someone they cannot come along on the trip because their gear isn't up to it. The disappointed one has driven ten miles after they got out of bed at half eight, taken off work early, is a pal, or has been dropped off by parents who may not now be easily contacted. The omission may even be supremely obvious, tennis shoes to climb a mountain in winter, or no hatches with the borrowed kayak. The easy course, for the Leader, is to start out, wait until even the disappointed one sees for themselves, but is that fair on the rest of the group ? You may lose an hour that wasn't to spare. It must be the surest barometer of Confident Leadership, to say "no", in time.

### keeping groups together

Leaders of groups know that to lose a paddler, that individual must go too far in front, fall back too far, or fall out to one side or other (in that order of likelihood). Spot the greyhounds as soon as you set out and make them back markers for the group, spot the sluggard and put them on point, and then you can concentrate on the wayward ones. Any two individuals perceived to be "an item" will be unusually likely to give this particular bit of bother.

### x - rescues

Victims in an X - rescue in difficult water may help considerably, by grabbing the rescuer's boat between the rescuer and the bow, and handing the nose of the victim boat to the rescuer. This cuts down the manoeuvring necessary, renders it far more likely that the rescuer can do the business on the first "pass", and almost eliminates that horrible and evil moment during which the rescuer's paddle must be dropped and a second paddler may go into the drink. Also it means everyone is in exactly the right position to do what remains to be done.

Rescuers in an X - rescue in difficult water have cracked the problem once the nose of the victim's boat is securely grasped ( a bow in the hand is worth ..... ?). Stability returns instantly. Try pulling the waterlogged boat across your deck with its cockpit upwards, a subtle difference from river paddling techniques, which those without bulging biceps or who are at this point undergoing a stress attack may find makes the process much easier, as the victim boat will slither up nicely, at least a certain way, and it is then easily turned over to empty. Remember that there is usually no need to see -saw or the like. Sea kayaks empty much more efficiently than river canoes, and the emphasis is on speed getting most of the water out rather than fastidiousness getting it all out. To finish then, don't forget to turn the boats top and tail, and when holding the other boat to let the victim climb back in, really really lean over the victim boat and concentrate on holding the decklines on the outside. Then help the victim with the spraydeck, as they will be shivering and even more frightened than you are.

#### briefings

The two most needed briefing points, whether or not the group generally is experienced, are firstly the functions of the point, the back marker, and the leader, and secondly the functions of the victim and rescuer in an X - Rescue. There being so many variations on these themes, and how exactly these things are done, that going over them so that everyone will have the same understanding, achieves the same sort of priority as the need for a river descending party to work out a communal understanding of hand signals.

#### stowaways

Check your booties for wriggly creatures before putting them on. Unpleasant as it may be to find squatters, not finding them, until too late, oooooooooooooohhhh.

A kayak upturned on grass may also receive lodgers. A snail crawling up your thigh out to sea, alone or in a bounce (or both) has to be personally experienced to appreciate the full horror of what is hereby entailed.

#### on Tour

#### Navigation

A 1:253440 (quarter inch) by Bartholomew map covers the whole area of the area of the longest week-long tour, and is particularly useful for giving the wider view while still

showing superb detail. It can always be at the back of the mapcase. If you're not familiar with an area, the 1:50000 gives much too narrow a view and it's easy to paddle off the edge. That doesn't mean you don't need the relevant 1:50000 OS maps as well.

Charts give information on rocks and shoals, but before the trip, mark both sets of maps with the principal landmarks (as per the pilot), and the speed, direction and timing of tidal flows, as well as approximate distances between points. This greatly helps navigation on the water.

Use the information in the Sailing Directions and the Pilot but remember that they are written primarily for yachts. Consider bringing the relevant photocopied sections of Oileain, tide tables, Sailing Directions, Pilot, Bright Lights - White Water (on lighthouses), and some scribbling paper. The whole lot, including maps, pack into an A5 sized bundle about 2 inches thick.

### **Boat carrying**

If you've got 4 people, use them! A boat weighs 75lbs when empty. Add 100 lbs+ of gear and you've a serious weapon on your hands when full. Use one person front and back and one at either side of the cockpit. If anyone slips on rocks, you've still got 3 pairs of hands. Otherwise, it may be broken boats or crushed toes and fingers.

### **Food**

It isn't exactly unheard of to bring far too much. Groups may be fed for days on cheese and fruitcake. You'll nearly always find somewhere to stock up. 0.75 litres of meths was adequate for the Trangia, for those without their gas conversions. Bananas are great because they release energy very slowly, but they need careful handling and even then don't last forever. Baked beans are mighty food, are easy to cook, very little fat, much protein, and they travel well (pity about their image ?). A bottle of good whiskey can be a serious morale booster of a damp evening!

### **Kayaking Clothes**

Two good thermal vests and a pair of shorts are all that are often needed. Over that a (short sleeved) cag most days. A clothed swim on getting off the water each evening gets rid of most of the bacteria and salt build up.

### **Weather forecasts**

Ideally, bring a VHF. It frees you from the four times daily restriction of RTE. It is not uncommon to be either asleep or on the water at forecast time. Otherwise, bring a (waterproof ?) walkman. The earphones will pack into the cassette space.

### **To go or not to go ?**

Try to look at things as if you were outside the group i.e. "given the conditions, should *they* get on the water?" The reputation and freedom of all Irish sea kayakers depends on us all being sensible. This was made clear to Irish paddlers abroad at "the Celtic" last year when they experienced the restrictions under which the French operate.

### **Kit list**

If anyone is interested in a full kit list, give Des Keaney or myself a call.

### **Groups**

A group only exists when the members can communicate. Communication is usually oral. If you're out of earshot, you're too far apart. Also, a group of x with one other person wandering a half mile off is much weaker than the group of x alone.

### **Seasickness**

Those who suffer more than most might find a small breakfast and lunch helps, though how this would work on seriously long trip is to be wondered at. Alcohol the night before is not a good idea! Study your maps before you leave the shore. Even those with armoured stomachs suffer when mapreading in rough seas (pity the poor instructor !). Tablets help but they also make some people drowsy (as per the packet!). Try one as a confidence booster. Seasickness is often self fulfilling..... the more you think about it, the worse it gets. Don't dawdle. Paddling very slowly or rafting up in bad conditions is disastrous for those who do suffer.

### **Plans**

Don't expect to meet all your objectives. The sea is the boss. Enjoy it!

### **Storm beaches**

Spring tides can make beaches unusable, particularly storm beaches, because they are too steep at the top, or the water level may reach right to the top (if camping overnight).

### **cooking**

Disposable barbecues and a bottle of wine turn a miserable bivouac into a party. They are though bulky and suitable for the first and/or second night of the outing only. Grill chops, roast onions, bake bananas, heat cartons of custard, for up to four people, with no washing up, but remember that "disposable" does not mean you can leave them behind on the beach. Mind though to light them as soon as the overnight spot is chosen, as they take almost half an hour to get glowing properly.

### **keeping warm and dry**

First thing on reaching an overnight spot, any suitable spot, stop, don't wait for the ideal. You can get cold, tired and miserable searching for an idyllic location, especially at the end of a long day, when you could be cooking and resting. Remember that the secret to being warm and dry is not to get wet or cold. As soon as you hit the beach, dress dry and warm, overdo it even. A tired body needs to be mollycoddled until it is rested and victualled. Put off all the other chores.

group navigation rules

All members of a touring group should

1. Have a map of the area being paddled actually on deck.
2. Read it constantly.
3. Constantly pilot and know where they are.
4. Be on the lookout always for transit bearings.

Never ever get in front of the navigator. Those with more paddling speed than sea-going experience take special note that thoughtlessly forcing the rest of the group to follow in your wake to some unintended destination is probably the biggest single cause of personality conflict in even the most tried and tested groups.

getting home again

Always look behind you when you set out. Sooner or later you are going to have to find that place again, and this time from the water. It can look truly different out of context.

big trips

Big trips (not "expeditions" which have their own rules) have certain rules. Unless there is endless backup (Shuttle Bunnies they were called in less enlightened days), then the first hurdle is to transport both the materielle and the personelle to the chosen location. Now two immutable rules kick in, that not less than four is comfortable off a strange headland, and that not more than two is comfortable travelling long distance in a camper van.

The solution is to find a camper van, find two unemployed or semi-employed persons (or at any rate those who say they have more time than money to play with) to travel in it (teachers are ideal!), and find two paddlers with ordinary day jobs to make their own way by public transport. Four boats and all the gear go with the van. Cash can balance the logistical equations thus thrown up as between reasonable consenting adults.

Two paddlers travel overland for a 4 / 5 week trip, and two by air for the kernel 2 / 3 week stint. Q.E.D.

difficult launches / landings

Seal launches off rocks into a chop, or forced situations generally, are perfectly sound ideas, late at night after a few pints. Face the reality that difficult launches will often involve at least one person in the group deliberately swimming. This is even truer of forced landings. Remember that the key to any such difficulties will always involve everything being twenty times easier so long as there is one person on shore. Thus the real challenge will be getting the last person off dry land, or the first person ashore. Everything else follows.

methylated spirits

Methylated spirits are used in those ever popular Trangia stoves which have not for some unexplained reason been converted to gas. A hint is to mix the meths with water 10:1. It takes a little longer to get really firing, but it prevents burning and the blackening of pots and pans underneath. Never ever add meths to a lighting burner !