

TREASNA NA DTONNTA

Newsletter of the
Irish Sea Kayaking Association

Newsletter Number : 7

6th January 1997

Edited by : David Walsh,

Editorial

Youth canoeing is reported across every section of Irish canoeing to be in crisis. Despite the fact that hundreds, thousands perhaps, of youths are being introduced to the sport through friends, Outdoor Pursuits Centres, Scouts, Schools, adults and in every conceivable fashion, very few are keeping it up, and the lean harvest is now manifest. The Irish Canoe Union does not have any youth development policy.

Neither for that matter does Irish Sea Kayaking. Should we have one? Is youth and sea kayaking an inappropriate connection? Is sea kayaking so responsible an activity that youths should be kept away, in their own interest? Has anyone out there ever thought about this subject?

The problem seems to be that after finishing a course, or leaving school, even just for the holidays, youths have no access to further paddling. Club Development was immediately identified as a key to the solution, but the roots of the problem go deep. The lack of Insurance protection for adults leading or instructing is seen as a major contributor, as is the mushrooming of "roofrack" clubs (such as ours !)

which serve the immediate interests of their own members but leave little enough in the way of positive contribution in their wake.

Club development means community based clubs accessible to youths with gear provided. Apparently there may be many towns and areas where concerned adults will put in the effort, but they don't know how to go about it all.

To get to the bottom of the problem and suggest solutions, a committee was formed by the Executive of the ICU and "ratified" at a meeting last month of those concerned paddlers who turned up to consider things generally. It has the brief to analyse and report by mid - February, in time for an EGM in early March to consider its proposals. Anyone with an interest in formulating a youth policy for Irish Sea Kayaking, or generally with youth / development related views to express may do so by writing to me, as I am the Chair of the committee.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are now due. Please fill in the enclosed information sheet to be cross checked against the contact list. Fees are unchanged at £10.00 per member, and an extra £5.00 for each second / third member at the same address content to share one newsletter. ICU membership is again available as an optional extra for an additional £2.00 each for those who specify and pay up. The record payment in 1996 was £27.00 (4 people, one opting for ICU membership). can we beat that.

Greek Warning

Cormac Daly adds a disclaimer to his article, in that Greek Island Hopping weather is not always as good as you might think or get the notion from his article. In season a very strong wind, called The Bora, occasionally blows from the North. He says though that Money, Accommodation, Food, Travel, are not a problem. Also he has useful contact numbers

Buy and Sell

Brian Ormonde is again looking for a second hand canoe to buy, but has given up on Yellow Skerrays. Now he wants a fibreglass modern ruddered etc. craft. He is a pussycat to bargain with, so if you can help, ring him at home 01 - 4537076 and leave a whacky message on his answering machine.

Dublin Pool Session

Cormac Daly of Greek Island fame has managed to organise a pool training session for the Dublin area, which the Ska will underwrite, in Clondalkin S&L Centre on Saturday 8th February 1997 at 6.45 to 7.30. There will be briefing session first starting at 6.15. The charge per head will be £3.00. Remember that a good roll is better than a long swim, so if you can organise a session in your area, the Ska will underwrite any reasonable proposal. Contact Cormac about Clondalkin at home in Dublin

01 8303459

Skiathos

By Cormac Daly

Changing into a damp wetsuit in Howth at 8 am on a winters morning can do wonders at rekindling memories of balmy summer paddles. Imagine then the delights of two weeks in the Greek islands. This was the situation I found myself in two summers ago due to a tip from Stephen Hannon.

He put me in touch with Roel Zuidema of Seamount Tracks in Holland and the following July found me on a charter to Athens, a short flight to the island of Skiathos and a hydrofoil to Platania their mainland base. This is tented accommodation in an adequately serviced if not luxurious campsite. Here I met the group leader and a mixed group of Norwegians and Dutch.

The next few days were spent practising the basic skills and rescues as abilities in the group varied widely. Although, this a joy in Aegean waters, those who were mad for road might be irked. Also beware of people who only come for one week as this limits activities in the first week. These it must be said were very enjoyable and included a two night trip along the coast.

Thus it wasn't 'till the second week that we set forth, plastic Skerrays heavily laden for Punda, a headland on the island of Skiathos. There we had an idyllic beachside campsite and a lovely evening meal, washed down with Baileys brought by the Norwegians. The next day we hugged the South coast stopping at a cantina for a delicious Greek meal sort of like Spanish tapas. Fortified we set off for the island of Argos. This involved crossing the shipping lanes to the major part of Skiathos town. The traffic consists mainly of hydrofoils called Flying Dolphins which really move! So in this area extreme caution is necessary. Rene insisted throughout on a tight Diamond formation. This didn't make him any friends but here everyone could see his point.

We reached Argos, an island uninhabited except for one cantina, in the evening, and spent two nights there. This led to some enjoyable day-trips, two lovely night paddles, sunbathing, swimming day and night and a lot of snorkelling which for me was one of the highlights of the trip. Night snorkelling is just fantastic despite the lack of a huge variety of marine life. Personally I only managed to spear one octopus which turned out to have been dead already. The others only managed one between them and this **was** eaten.

Leaving Argos we set out for Kastro the abandoned former capital of the island, passing some lovely scenery and a fabulous strand on the way. The night was spent in the empty house and church. The cantina on the beach provided food. Camping is tough at times. The morning was spent exploring the ruins and sunbathing. We had to wait 'till evening to launch anyway as it was dumping fairly heavily on the beach. This led to a funny incident where a large ferry hove into view and came close to the beach - then closer and closer, and then to our amazement caught a wave and beached its bow. We all stood poised to rush to the rescue when a gangplank was lowered and about 70 -80 tourists alighted for 45 min.

Later Kastro behind us we completed the circumnavigation with one stop at a cantina for refreshment and finished up back at Punda. The next morning we set forth for Platania and the eventual farewells. The end of a very relaxing trip with lots of leisure time, perhaps too relaxed for some, but that happens with a mixed group. I travelled back from Platania to Athens via Flying Dolphin and Bus. Athens is worth a few days at the end of any trip with a wealth of sites such as the Acropolis to be visited. Then back on the plane and images of damp wetsuits and the winter ahead.

The Round of Great Island

by Sean Pierce

Sitting at “home”, besieged by wind and rain that had thwarted other plans, I sat staring out across Cork Harbour. I had “packed” the boat along with wife and kids from Skerries to visit grandads and grannies and we were into day 3 A thought struck - it was time to re-enact a trip from my boyscout days. That had been an epic, a three day circumnavigation of the Great Island on a raft that Thor Heyerdahl would have been proud of!, good sound timbers lashed to eight 45 gallon oil drums with a 20 foot mast and half a patrol tent as a sail.

It broke our hearts; it really only moved once in the three days, on the full ebb of 3 knots down the East Ferry with a full NW gale behind us. All the grinding back braking pull down the North channel were gloriously blown away in that mad half hour.

I checked the tides for the following morning and it was perfect. I needed to get away early to catch the flood the Belvelly Bridge and then the ebb down the North Channel to the East ferry. The critical part of the trip is from Belvelly Bridge to Rossleague Point where the tide drops rapidly leaving only various shallow channels through the mudflats.

I launched from the slipway at White Point into a choppy sea. It was blowing hard from the SE 4 - 5 with fog and drizzle. At least it was going to be behind me for the first stretch to Marino Point!

The “paddle” had a slightly surreal touch to it for the first hour. Passing the piers and dry-dock of the old Verholme Cork dockyard in thick fog was rather weird. The fog deadened all sounds and the old ship tied up there loomed suddenly out of the fog and looked huge in comparison to the kayak.

Keeping to the great Island side of the river, Lord Haw Haw’s house was barely visible when I found myself being outpaced by the Glenbrook - Carrigalow ferry. A fairly mad sprint saw me squeeze past the landing slipway with not a lot to spare. A tootle on the whistle and a big happy “head” leaning out the bridge window seemed to suggest he had enjoyed the challenge!

Shipping continued to be a challenge when two big container vessels coming downriver from Cork and a chemical tanker offloading at Marino Point held me up for a while. I rounded the point and relaxed. I was now clear of shipping and headed for the railway bridge just north of the Martello Tower at Marino. Two trains passed in front of me appearing out of the fog rattling along to Cobh and Cork. I passed under the bridge near Fota Island Wildlife Park and the Howlers Monkeys there started shouting their heads off at me.

I couldn’t help reflecting that it was all just a little weird, not at all the usual sounds associated with a sea paddle, but certainly interesting and different. The weather began to clear as I approached Belvelly Bridge and the motorists leaving Cobh did their usual double-take, never waving, just that blank disbelieving stare.

The paddle from the bridge to East Ferry was very pleasant. Lots of wintering waders and ducks of all kinds provided great interest all down the North channel. The countryside was now a pleasant mixture of wooded slopes, estuary, and some fine houses to add interest. Then from Ashgrove Castle to Morlogue Point is quite scenic, East Ferry heavily wooded on both sides and the steeply sloped sides giving the feeling of a gorge. The ebb tide was running so I got out into mid-channel to enjoy the full flow. The question of a pint in either Dirty Murphy’s or the Murlogue Inn arose and I passed my favourite house in the world!!

I can’t believe that Elizabeth Hurley didn’t snap it up for a mere million. I lingered offshore just in case she was over for the weekend but alas no joy. I pulled in to the Morlogue Inn and “lunched”. The paddle from Murlogue Point to Cobh was quite lively for harbour paddling. The stiff SE breeze was still hard at it and gave quite a roll. I half-surfed up this section enjoying the views until near Cobh where shipping and ferry traffic began again. There was dirty backwash and considerable clapotis off the piers and jetties of Cobh which unfortunately took my attention off the best views of the day.

Cobh is best seen from the sea when all its fine architectural heritage can be fully appreciated. I continued to White Point after three and a half hours paddling time, a distance of 15 miles.

It had been an interesting day, a mixture of nostalgia, natural history, and architecture, combined with a good paddle, with a lovely tidal flow down the East Ferry time for a pint of the local brew en route. Not a bad alternative paddle when the weather dictated open-sea paddling wasn’t on.

Irish Sea Kayaking Association

Name

Home Address

Work address

Work Phone

Home Phone

Work Fax

Home Fax

Work Email

Home Email

Mobile Phone

Remember : **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 ? Meet 11.00 AM at the island side of the bridge.