

Naomhóga Chorcaí

Annual Report

January 2009

Foreword:

The year 2008 has been a remarkably busy and successful one for Naomhóga Chorcaí. On the water a great number of events were attended within Cork harbour, throughout Ireland, and abroad. Off the water there has been much activity for club members too, ranging from a Marine VHF operators course to putting down gravel, to the regular meetings of the committee. In particular I would like to thank the members of the committee for their work, and their own personal time that they put in to the club throughout the year. Thanks also to every member, and to everyone who rowed with the club for your enthusiasm and for helping to make 2008 such an enjoyable year of rowing. I'm sure that we can all help make 2009 an even greater success.

*-Vincent Foley
Runaí 2008*

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Rowing events in 2008:

19 th January	Blackwater row - Villierstown to Cappoquin
3 rd February	Ocean to City training begins (8 rows)
13 th April	Lifelong learning festival, Fitzgeralds Park
24 th May	Baltimore Wooden boat festival & Stay on Sherkin Island
31 st May	Ocean to City
14 th June	Crosshaven Traditional Sail
14 th June	Lord Mayors Picnic in the Park
27 th June	Monkstown Classic Sail
4 th August	Ahakista Festival
15 th August	Oldcourt on the Ilen, to Hare Island & to Ballydehob
5 th September	Oldcourt to Sherkin Island
13 th September	Great River Race, London
20 th September	Sherkin Island to Horse Island via seal sanctuary
5 th October	Kilkenny 1 mile races
26 th December	St. Stephens day row

Other club events in 2008:

11 th January	Captains Training
8 th February	Gravel spread over boat-yard area
25 th February	VHF classes, with subsidy for 10 club members.
17 th March	St. Patricks day parade
22 nd March	Saturday morning rows changed to 10:30am start.
2 nd April	Wednesday evening rows start
11 th April	Social in Idle Hour bar, with Bantry longboat rowers
12 th April	Ocean to City launch & Fionnbarra launch
19 th April	First aid workshop, run by Cork Coastguard
6 th August	Slipway cleaning, maintenance of boat-yard
31 st October	Captains Training night
15 th November	Fionnbarra return party, after trip to Quebec

Captean's Report for NC AGM 16th of January 2009

2008 again centred pretty much around O2C, however there was less member activity in comparison to previous years (we had 5 crews this year in comparison 8 last year), quite a few of the old heads had dropped out for various reasons (we saw the miraculous spread of the baby virus, that befell some of them), also the advent of Fionnbarra (Bantry Bay Longboat) on Cork Harbours shores had its lure for some. This is all good, as on one hand new rowing stock is being bred and reared and on the other hand new rowing (and sailing) grounds are being explored, all for the good of NC (one hopes). At last this year the weather gods allowed for the full O2C course to be rowed, at least for boats in certain categories; it sure was a fine day, literally producing some hot and heavy rowing. There was a massive improvement of the O2C organisation altogether, but particularly at the finish area, with well organised boat recovery facilities, entertainment, french market, nice crowds and a fabulous prize giving event in the Clarion (thanks to Siubhan, Lynn, Falk and many others)

We had 3 (1 up to last year) high-octane-crews for this year's GRR, who were giving it their all...but unfortunately not managing to prise the coveted Cork Currach Trophy out of the Coona crew's claws. But our time will come, specialised training sessions to inch closer to their abilities have already started. A big thanks is due for one to Darragh Newman who organised for our trailers to be made superbly roadworthy, thanks Darragh. Another big thank you is due to Paul Gallagher who provided plenty of enthusiasm, time and his van to get the show rolling over to London and back. He bailed us out when everything else failed, thanks is also due to Cathy who went along with him to keep him on the straight and narrow. Also thanks to Mags who initiated the organisation of the trip.

Other rowing activities see as below, quite a few of these were courtesy of Rob, who (as everybody who organises these kind of things) spent considerable time to get them off the ground

NC Rowing and other activities

19 January	Blackwater row - Villierstown to Cappoquin (3 crews)
Feb-May	7 training sessions of increasing intensity in preparation for O2C
13 April	Lifelong learning festival, Fitzgeralds Park
24 May	Baltimore Wooden boat fest. + stay on Sherkin, 3 crews, towed back
31 May	Ocean to City, 5 NC crews
14 June	Crosshaven Traditional Sail, 4 crews, Rob org
14 June	Lord Mayors Picnic in the Park, shipped over 100 kids up and down
5 July	Return of Rinceoir na Greine from Crosshaven
15 August	Oldcourt on the Ilen, to Hare Island & to Ballydehob, Rob special
13 September	Great River Race, London, 2 crews
20 September	Sherkin to Horse Island, Rob org
5 October	Kilkenny 1 mile races, 3 NC participants,
26 December	St. Stephens day row, 4 crews

- **Throughout the year:** Saturday public row
There has been a consistently good turnout for the Saturday rows between regulars (members) and guests, in the run up to O2C as well as after the summer
- **31st of May: O2C Race**

Boat	Captain	Crew2	Crew3	Stroke
Rinceoir Na Greine	Claire Hayden	Niamh Twomey	Marianne Keane	Reija
Rogaire Dubh	Jim O'Donovan	James Newman	Jim Newman	Peadar Cox
Graine Mhaol	Kevin G	Louise B.	Mags O'Sullivan	Colleen
3hand Connemara	Vincent Foley		Colin	Paul Keogh
4hand racer	Oisín Creagh	Elaine Falvey	Eamonn O'C	Stanislav
Jim M's 2hand N.	Jim Malone	Danny Malone		

Members/Captain's Training

New Rota-Captains under supervision have emerged (Mags, Colin, Eamonn, Mike) more opportunities at a workshops in November. More skills training for even more interested rowers ought to be pursued and delivered on regular basis.

Water Safety

There is appropriate water safety awareness and sufficient adherence among the NC membership, continuous and enhanced training on that matter needs to be furthered. New Life jackets are currently being acquired

Boats/Equipment

NC stock:

An Rogaire Dubh: good condition

Rinceoir na Greine: good condition

Grainne Mhaol: good condition

Magic Brat: good condition

Dlutaca: completely overhauled, good condition

3hand Connemara Racer (Ocean to City): ???

black 4hand racer: probably in need of replacement

white 4hand racer (formerly 'Yellow Banana): needs touching up of gunnels

Arann 3hand: acceptable condition

Non NC stock:

orange 4hand Naomhog: being overhauled as we speak

3hand Connemara Racer (Gallagher owned)

Oar mending or complete replacement is currently in process and will be done in MM on a phased basis

General issues that need tackling:

Timely planning and commitment of members to, for and during big events such as O2C and GRR as there are a lot of logistics involved; trailer license and driver issue re insurance needs to be sorted
Communicating efficiently to and between members; up to date data base essential, website improvement, newsletter once or twice sent per post

Stefan Wulff, NC captean, 14.01.09

Secretary's Report, 16th January 2009

Administrative and committee operations:

Meetings of the committee were held monthly throughout the year. Early in the year we decided to hold the meetings on the last Saturday of the month, after the Saturday row. On the few occasions when this clashed with rowing events, the meetings were re-scheduled. The majority of the meetings were held in The Market Bar, on Anglesea street, starting at 1pm. The meetings lasted up to 2 hours and were attended by between 3 and 10 people.

Minutes were recorded at each meeting by myself, which were subsequently typed up and circulated to all committee members by email. Each of the actions identified in the minutes were assigned to a committee member, who could then form a subcommittee to tackle the issue if necessary. The urgency of items was recorded in the minutes when known.

The club website at www.naomhogachorcai.com was also used to distribute information about club events. In January I added a calendar function to the website, displaying events for the next 30 days. This has been most useful for keeping track of the Rota Captains assigned to each Saturday morning row. Through the year the front page of the website received 4 major updates, giving club news and notice of upcoming events. The desire for some re-design of the website has been raised at points in the year, and hopefully this will be achieved in 2009.

For communication of general rowing events, I sent emails to a large group of full members and day members. As of now there are 90 email contacts on this list. Unfortunately I do not have an email list exclusively of the clubs full members, and this is another task which should be addressed in 2009.

Funding was sought through a Cork City VEC grant scheme : "Once-off Small Scale Equipment Grants for Local Youth Clubs". The maximum grant amount was sought, and we were granted a generous sum which we received in June. This money has been lodged in the club bank account and used towards boat repairs and general club costs.

Club rowing events:

2008 saw a change of starting time for the Saturday rows. In March the Saturday public row changed from a 1pm start to a 10:30am start. This move was enabled by the installation of a pontoon at Shandon Boat Club, which greatly reduced the usage of their second slipway. The 10:30am start is more popular as it gives rowers more free time on Saturday afternoons.

Evening rows started in April and continued through the summer. These were organised informally by club members, and were usually held on a Wednesday at 6pm.

A program of training rows to prepare for Ocean to City was drawn up by Stefan. This program consisted of 8 rows ranging from 6 miles to 15miles long, and started in early February.

Two events were held by Meitheal Mara in Fitzgeralds park, which Naomhóga Chorcaí members were involved in. In April the Lifelong Learning Festival was an opportunity to take out the youth of Cork for 15 minute spins in the boats on the Lee alongside Fitzgeralds park. Again in June groups of youngsters were given spins in the boats. On both occasions around 100 children were taken out on the water, - a testament to the organisation and level of participation from all the volunteers.

Other club events:

Aside from rowing events, Naomhóga Chorcaí members were involved in various events throughout the year. Two nights of captains training were held, in January and October. A night of socialising for Ocean to City crews was held in April in the Idle Hour bar. In March a number of members participated in the St. Patricks day parade dressed as pirates, pulling a currach through the streets of Cork city.

In February, a group of ten NC members took Marine VHF classes at KelticWave in Blackrock, very kindly receiving a group discount on the tuition fees. Furthermore, the committee voted to subsidise these classes as VHF operators are an asset to the club. All those who took the course received their licence to operate hand-held marine VHF radios. Ie: The "Radio Operator's Short Range Certificate of Competency and Authority to Operate".

In April a group of NC members attended an excellent training day held by Cork Coastguard at the NMCI. This has been described by Jim O'Donovan elsewhere in this annual report.

Boat repairs and maintenance of the grounds were performed throughout the year. In February we improved footing in the boat yard by spreading 20 tons of gravel. This was a very sociable event with members bringing shovels, rakes and lots of enthusiasm. Thanks also to the City Council parks dept. for the loan of a dumper truck, wheelbarrows and shovels. The gravel surface has been a complete success and has eliminated the mucky conditions that prevailed in the past. Another clean-up of the yard and slipway was done in August, mainly to remove slippery growth from the slipway, and also trimming down of grass and weeds. Finally in November the railings at the edge of the slipway were replaced. The old rusted dangerous railings have been replaced with a shiny new set, which should give improved safety for many years to come.

-Vincent Foley,

Rúnaí, Naomhóga Chorcaí,

16th January 2009

Our day at the National Maritime College, 19th April

By Jim O'Donovan

Thanks to Rob O'Leary's eagle eye in spotting an invitation from the Irish Coastguard Service a motley crew of Naomhóga Chorcaí and Meitheal Mara members assembled with numerous other sailing and boating enthusiasts at the National Maritime College at Ringaskiddy in March 2008.

The structure of the day was outlined to us and we were invited to register for a variety of sessions including first aid and navigation. One group including several Naomhóga Chorcaí members was given a talk on emergency first aid by an A and E doctor from the HSE and a team of paramedics. We were given a crash course in emergency resuscitation and CPR which included hands on practice and simulated scenarios.

Lunch was provided and after lunch the full group was assembled in a lecture theatre. There was a further talk on safety at sea and we were shown some hair raising videos of how not to take a line from a rescue helicopter and some advice on how to do it correctly such as ensuring that all loose and obstructive material is removed from the deck area before the approach of the Helicopter.

A hilarious exercise followed where a group was placed in an imaginary boat which starts to take water in worsening sea and weather conditions created by the use of a small hand spray used to moisten flowers. None of the crew is wearing a life jacket and their efforts to put on a range of ill fitting jackets from a barrel was a great lesson in the need for everyone to wear a properly fitted and working lifejacket. At that stage the exercise was stopped and the various jackets and their fitting was examined.

The importance of regular checking and maintenance of lifejackets was brought home to all of us.

As part of the day CH Marine gave a free assessment of lifejackets brought along: a high proportion were found to be defective in various ways. The day finished with an impressive rescue display in the grounds of the College by the Coastguard Service using a Sikhorsky Helicopter.

Baltimore Wooden Boat Festival, 23rd - 25th May 2008

By Pat Ruane

Friday:

There's always something exciting about skiving off early on a Friday afternoon to go down to west Cork for a boat event. I travelled down with Colin and Vincent to the edge of Baltimore where we met up the rest of the gang. There were pints, barbecue and chat at the Rectory on the way into the town. The sun shone, no leaf stirred, the drink flowed - I thought it would be like this forever...

We were called away by Diarmuid Murphy of Bantry who encouraged us to get boats in the water before it got dark. We got the Bantry crew's longboat Unité off her trailer and into the water, then Fionnbarra and the two were tied up outside the pier against the pontoon for the night. The usual fun was then had as we lifted and lowered and turned naomhog after naomhog and got them into the water, leaving only the part I hate most - getting the oars sorted out for what seemed like a new armada. Those of us who had listened to Rob rowed off into the dusk towards Sherkin where we were staying while the others went back to the main event of the weekend, the drinking and talking on the terrace outside the bars.

To be fair, Rob had said that it was quite a long walk to the other side of the island where our accommodation was. All I can say is that while he wasn't wrong, the walk was pleasant even with the luggage, and the darkness only made it more atmospheric.

Some of our number stayed in the farmhouse itself while the hardcore divided up into two groups - lads in the converted outbuilding on one side of the yard, girls on the other. The real hardcore set up tents and washed in the open Atlantic at the nearby beach. Having sorted ourselves out, a couple of us went back for a last drink to the pub and an after-midnight walk back under the stars.

Saturday:

Waking up from my comfortable floorspace under the table, we could hear the wind getting up. We left the slip at Sherkin and had what might be called an energetic row across to Baltimore. It's only about 1.5km but we had to work hard into a strong easterly breeze.

As soon as we made land I went up to the terrace for coffee and settled in as others gradually came to the same realisation of basic needs. The view from the terrace is one of the best things about Baltimore. Sitting at our seats completely sheltered from the east we could see the effects of the strong gusty winds on the big sails of the traditional boats out in the bay.

As the morning went on the wind increased and eventually the sailing events had to be cancelled. Accepting reality, the crews of the two longboats Fionnbarra and Unité decided to stick with oars and went for a row ending up on the other side of the bay at the private marina on Sherkin. Docking a ten-oared thirty eight foot long rowing boat in the strong winds was a new experience for me, there is no time to think out your manoeuvres - try and you'll end up blown onto the rocks. Those of us new to the longboat culture might have wondered how we were going to get back to Baltimore but in the meantime there were pints to be drunk sitting in the sun with an occasional enlivening chase to catch a blown away hat or pair of sunglasses.

By the time we got back to the dock, Diarmuid had radio-ed over and two ribs arrived to tow us back to Baltimore in time for the Munster - Toulouse Heineken cup final on television. The only mishap was that Claire's phone found its way under the floorboards of the longboat and couldn't be retrieved because the boards had swollen and were stuck fast.

After some food and a few pints, we rowed back to Sherkin. The east wind was blowing strongly onshore. We managed to disembark a couple of people at one of the ladders on the pier, well out from the slip and then by using a rope looped around a bollard, we controlled the boat's drift back onto the slip where the lads already ashore caught it and the rest of the crew disembarked. We warned the other boats coming in round the end of the pier of what we'd done and one way or another everybody got safely ashore. I think I forgot to mention that Munster apparently won the match, which could be why some of our number weren't as quick-thinking as usual...

There must have been another long walk back to our accommodation in the far north-west of the island in the dark, but my memory is faint. I think we went to the pub first. And did Vincent really buy a tray of lager and carry it all the way back? Did I leave the pub earlier than the others so I wouldn't have to sleep under the table again?

Sunday:

All I know is that I woke up, in bed, to an even breezier bright sunny morning. The drink was still in my system - it must have been because I went for a bracing swim in the Atlantic instead of waiting my turn for the shower. The best thing about it wasn't the near-heart attack from the shock of the water, or the exhilaration that followed, it was the sense of moral superiority over others who obviously hadn't had the same amount to drink the night before, and who didn't go for a swim.

After the tidy-up we walked back to the slip, a lovely walk but when we got there we realised just how strong the onshore winds had become. Rowing across would have been extremely difficult but launching the naomhogs would have been almost impossible. We reluctantly decided to take the ferry and have the boats towed back. Diarmuid Murphy again organised two ribs to tow the three boats while we waited for the ferry which brought us into Baltimore just in time for the home made boat competition. Because of the cancellation of the sailing events, this turned out to be the highlight of the weekend for the spectators on shore.

A good atmosphere was created around the harbour with warm sunny weather, sheltered from the winds which caused so much trouble for the sailing boats. There was little for us to do except eat ice-cream, buy T-shirts and posters and watch Unité's crew practice the sack transfer against the quay wall, one of the events they were going to have to do in Finland. Those of us who went to Quebec with Fionnbarra should have paid more attention at the time.

The late afternoon consisted of the inevitable slow recovery of the longboats and the packing away of the naomhogs with all their bits and pieces before we all split up and made our separate ways back to Cork.

Ocean to City 2008 : the experience second time round

By Jim O'Donovan

Early Morning the Royal Cork Yacht Club Crosshaven ; the boats are being readied for the water: The crews are getting their gear together: Its cool but there is a heavy fog.

The organisers hold a briefing and advise that certain boats will cover the full course out to Roches Point while the main group will complete the shorter course via Cobh.

There is plenty of help for the launching of the boats and after last minute toilet stops we embark and try to be at the start line at the right time.

We set off amid some mild confusion and nerves and settle down to complete the course. It starts to get very sunny, fortunately our two redheads James and Jim have applied the sun-cream liberally and Mags O'Sullivan has assisted with her supplies.

Despite having food and water we don't actually stop on the course and drinks are taken in turn as we continue to row away in beautiful calm conditions. The only fly in the ointment is the occasional safety boat or sightseer passing at speed and creating a swell. After a while we seem to be on our own and encourage each other with sea shanties and poetry recitations dredged from long forgotten schooldays. Jim Newman our captain applies a rope end from time to time to Jim O Donovan and Peadar Cox at 2 and 3 but finds it hard to reach his son James at stroke.

Arriving at Blackrock Castle we remind ourselves there is still a lot of rowing to be done to reach the Finish line at the Clarion and carry on steadily through the crowds lining the banks of the Lee shouting encouragement.

We give it holly for the last stretch and pass the line in fine fettle to the commentary of the excellent Pdraig O Duinnin. There is a brief pause to acknowledge our many supporters and admirers and we proceed to the area where the boats are being lifted.

Its been a marvelous achievement for us and we enjoy a pint and burger in the glorious sunshine before proceeding to the prizegiving ceremonies in the Clarion

Falke has laid on a magnificent soundtrack to accompany the presentation which is well attended by the teams .

Race Director Donagh mac Artain, Event Manager Siobhan Mac Carthy and the many helpers and volunteers can bask in the feeling of another fantastic event for rowers and spectator .

Deputy Lord Mayor Terry Shannon has a red head from his trip out the Harbour to view the Race but he gives a very supportive and informed speech.

The platform party is slightly put out by the backward fall off the stage by yours truly but it helps to lighten the solemnity of the proceedings.

The remainder of the evening included a visit to the Trinity House ship whose crew is extremely hospitable, finishing at the Idle Hour some time later.

All in all a day to remember

Beir Bua agus Beannacht

Jim O Donovan

Ahakista Regatta, August Bank Holiday Weekend 2008

By Jim Malone

On what was one of the better summer like days of 2008 we travelled to Ahakista Regatta on Sheepshead on Sunday 3rd August with our two hander currach Eala Dubh (also know as Maol ‘s Broduil if you happen to ask anyone but the Captain!). It's a picturesque village with a few houses, a small pier, a slipway, and the ubiquitous pub. In the crew we had Siobhan, Dani, Ciara Lee a friend of Dani's from Limerick and me as well as Rob O'Leary who travelled over the mountain from Kenmare for a respite from his recent adventures into fatherhood!

Arriving mid-morning we unloaded the bád at the pier and parked up. There was a lot of interest in the two-hander from locals and visitors alike but unfortunately as it was the only currach present no opportunity to go racing. Maybe that was a blessing. There was a series of coastal rowing races in a stiff southwesterly breeze followed by a raft race, with one of the craft not unlike a currach in appearance. We later discovered it was made from torch on felt over a wooden frame – novel and it won!

The 2FM road show was present together with a marquee with refreshments for sale as well as produce from local artisans. There was a big crowd in attendance with even the odd celebrity like Graham Norton who has quite a nice house in the village

In the afternoon we adjourned to a nearby beach for a barbecue which coincided with a light shower (I did say it was one of our better summer days). With nobody poisoned we went for a few rows around the bay before loading up the boat again and heading for home and Rob made the short journey back over the mountains to the nightfeeds.

All in all a good day and a regatta well worth putting on the schedule for a club outing in 2009.

Hare Island and Ballydehob: Part 1

By Pat Ruane

Thanks Rob for the impetus to go to Hare. The trip was brilliant. We put the boats in at Oldcourt (where we saw Oisín's rakish blue-hulled boat on the hard - Oisín, that is too nice a boat to leave out of the water and I know what you're going to say to me... :() and rowed away in the misty evening almost at high water, down river between Inishbeg and Rinngarogy, under a lovely little stone bridge. By the time we got to sea the weather had turned really wet and the wind was up. We went to Cunnamore, left one boat there and four of us then rowed back into the wind and rain to Hare to what we were afraid was going to be an uncertain future...

Long story made short: mad mad landlord (Aldi Croatian brandy involved) eventually turned up and brought us to a surprisingly nice house which we hadn't actually booked but who's complaining?! He eventually gave us a lift to the no-choice island cottage restaurant only after we finished the brandy. I think we just got evidence that globalisation has killed the moonshine business.

Anyway, awake at nine thirty to a bright blustery day, said landlord appeared suddenly at the back door as perky as ever as if hanging round the house till we got up, gave us three just caught mackerel which were cut up and cooked. We finally escaped after agreeing to let him drive us around the island in his car to see all areas of known touristic interest and only then met up with the other two boats which had come out to Hare wondering where we were / rescue us.

We rowed off into a north-west wind up to under Mount Gabriel and then turned east to go up to Ballydehob with all the other timber boats which were starting to appear around us from Schull, Baltimore and Hare Island. The wind was probably force 5, quite strong but exhilarating to row in. We felt like we were standing still but the tide was bringing us sideways towards where we wanted to go so we just gritted our teeth and enjoyed it. The sun was shining so who were we to complain even if skin was being pulled from the fingers on the right hand?

The last pull up the river was against a strengthening side wind which was not nice but the scene in Ballydehob was great – full tide in such a little mud-hole harbour with barbecue, music, wine and about fifteen or twenty interesting boats, the three currachs having pride of place nearest the road. We met loads of people and because everyone could only stay there two or three hours it was quite intense and sociable, like going to a party and working the room. At about six thirty or so all the boats had gone because the tide was falling. We loaded the currachs and some of us came back to Cork while others pitched their tents (Rob, Colin, Vince?)

Friday's crews were Rob, Vincent and Clare in one boat and Kevin, Colin, Mary Mooney and myself in the other. Saturday's included Brendan Hennessy with three friends whose names I'm not sure of (Brendan??), Rob, Colin, Vincent, Kevin, Jim Malone and Dani, Mary Mooney and myself. Among the attendance in Ballydehob were Ann Barry in her yellow boat, Donal Lynch, Mary McCarthy, Diarmuid Murphy (Bantry boat fella), Darina Tully (trad. boat researcher and former Meitheal Mara person), Ray Heffernan in his green hulled Naomh Brighid from Crosshaven, Cormac Levis and all the west Cork boys with the traditional boats.

Hare Island and Ballydehob: Part 2

By Rob O'Leary

Well, the Father Ted weekend continued in Ballydehob that evening. Over a pint in Rosie's bar, Vince told us (me and Colin) that he had heard of a turnip throwing competition at the crossroads, so we took our drinks out to see that. Outside, there was already a crowd eagerly awaiting the event. A flatbed truck pulled up, obviously intended for use by a band. It dawned on us that since it was parked on a hill, the band members would be standing on a tilt. But we weren't up to the Ballydehobians, who produced a plank of wood and a couple of bricks for the truck to drive up on, and level the stage, sorted. Soon the MC was set up, announcing the availability of a couple of bags of turnips, with the under sixes to get the ball, or turnip, rolling. The rules were, at the gun, the contestants were to throw their respective turnip up the hill, and run after it, and then throw the (preferably your own) turnip again. You can't carry the turnip, but you had to cross the line with it (!?!). We stuck around for the under eights, but we missed the wheelbarrow competition, where two-person teams would travel from pub to pub (there are 8 pubs), with the lad in the wheelbarrow downing a Guinness at each pub.

After pitching a tent, we came back to see the end of the dog races. A teddy, tied to the end of a line, which was on an electric winch, acted as the hare, with dogs in various categories (under 15", over 15") racing up the same hill the turnip competition had been run on earlier. The excitement was too much, so we went for some grub. The sun went down, ending the street races, and the street band started up. We went to the Sandboat, which was renamed the Stage Coach for the night, in compliance with the Cowboy and Indian fancy dress theme running for the evening. Here we were joined by Mary and Kevin, and the pints began to flow. In the corner, a small traditional music group piped up. Later, as the crowds began to thin, Cormac Levis bought us a round, and later again, we got locked in. Some locals told us how they had watched us cross Roaringwater bay, impressed at our progress against the wind. We, short on songs, regaled them with stories of our previous-nights landlord, a character they obviously were acquainted with.

We retired to the tent and car (Chez Colin!), and awoke to a dreary old day, so we made our way back to Cork....

Hare Island and Ballydehob: Part 3

By Brendan Hennessy

Club members once again showed great warmth and interest with some new rowers and a friend from Ghana. Susan, my sister, who worked with Charles in the very north of Ghana, assured me he was comfortable on the water. As we approached Cunnaghmore I asked him was he nervous he responded in the positive. That's fair enough I thought and we drove on. On embarkation I asked Charles what he thought of the boat? "It's lovely" he replied, "I've never been in a boat before!" What??? SUSAN!!!! It turned out she meant Charles could swim. Let's hope he didn't need to!

Charles managed the short row to Heir Island and was amazed to hear of the small population. He quickly set out to meet all 25 of them. While he did not succeed he met one local who had the good sense to nominate him the Ghanaian consulate for Heir Island. Charles was satisfied.

On the big row and in to bigger seas we all fared well, and in fairness to Charles he rowed well, well like his life depended on it. Funny that! And as we approached the pier in Ballydehob anyone listening would have heard the currach oars dipping and pulling to the count of 1-20 in the Gruné language of the FraFra tribe of the Upper East region of the Republic of Ghana.

A post-script: Later in his visit when I asked Charles what he thought of Ireland I expected an answer to do with wealth, riches, houses and cars, and maybe rain. Charles response however was: "It's not true what they say at home of people of Europe. You do talk to each other and you are friendly". Maybe there's a lesson in that.

Brendan

The Ilen River & Sherkin to Horse Island

By Rob O'Leary

We had a couple of lovely outings on the Ilen river in West Cork this year. The Ilen runs from Skibbereen, through to Oldcourt, and surrounds a number of Islands, including Inisbeg and Rinn Ghearoga (Rinnarogy), before arriving in Roaringwater bay by Turk Head, close to Sherkin and Hare Islands.

Liam Hegarty, from Hegarties boatyard, in Oldcourt, kindly allowed us to launch two Naomhóga on a mild Friday evening in July. Among the intrepid were Clare Hayden, Vince, Mary Mooney, Kevin Guerin, Colin O'Donnell, Pat Ruane and myself.

We were told by a local that it was possible to navigate to the sea on the inside of Inisbeg at the high tide, and this we did. We passed by some beautiful castles, and ruins, and much wildlife including seals and cormorants. Overall the journey, in this case to Hare Island (see account by Pat Ruane), was about six miles. We saw many smaller islands where it would be possible to camp overnight. It was a very peaceful and scenic trip, at least until the weather turned, and definitely a good candidate for the future.

A few weeks later, the boats having been left in Hegarty's after the Ballydehob festival, we returned with a single crew (Clare, Mary, Kevin, me), and repeated the row, this time passing Inisbeg to the outside. We came through the Sound at Sherkin at the end of the journey, where we spotted Nigel Towes, just about to set sail in his Lobsterboat, the Hanora. He offered us a mooring to leave the boat for a while, which we accepted. After a brief trip to Baltimore, under sail, to drop off a crew member, we returned with a local to Sherkin, tied the boat to the Mooring, were ferried to Sherkin by another passing local, and walked the length of the Island to the ferry.

Returning yet another couple of weeks later, a single crew, Vince, me, Colin and his brother traveled back to the Island, managed to get a free lift on the Sherkin's new taxi back to the dock, where we met Nigel, freshly returned from harvesting a shrimp pot for his lunch. He brought us out to the boat, which he explained he had bailed out on a couple of occasions as it had rained considerably in the last few days.

He joined us for a row towards Spanish Island, to visit a seal colony. We were initially disappointed not to see many seals, but as we left the area, suddenly at least a score of gray and harbour seals surfaced not far off, and followed us for a while.

We dropped Nigel back to Sherkin so he could cook up the shrimp, and then rowed out past Hare Island, the Skeams, and across Roaringwater bay, on a route similar to the Ballydebob row, although this time with no wind to contend with. Horse has a great, golden beach, perfect for landing on. We had a chat with some other visitors to the Island, which although private, has a Famine road built on it, which the public may use. The others had arrived also on traditional boats. Crossing to the north side, we found what we had come for, some old abandoned coppermines, cut into the cliff. The cut was about 5 feet high, clearly the miners were shorter back then, and had a foot of icy cold water on the ground, cold because it is never exposed to the sunlight. Although I chickened out after 30 yards or so, I was persuaded by the calls from within to follow the others, to where the mine reached a downward shaft, full with rainwater to the level of the cut. Might be worth a look by someone with some scuba gear. The cut was full of stalagmites of various colours too, well worth a look.

Leaving the mine, we bumped into Rui and his family, in their own 18' wooden Yette sailboat. They build the Yettes for a living in Rosbrin, closeby to Horse, and that day they were out for a jaunt, and a bit of fishing. We trailed a line on the way back towards Sherkin, but didn't get a bite. After a brief visit to the Catalogues near Sherkin, we took the boat out in Baltimore, and wrapped up a very enjoyable West Cork season.

Kilkenny sprint races, 5th October 2008

By Vincent Foley

Niall McCormack, Myself and Colin O'Donnell participated in a race on the river Nore in Kilkenny, named the “Saint Francis Abbey Brewery National Currach Races”. The races were in knock-out form, with 2 teams racing each other in each heat. The 2 boats were brought by the West Clare currach club. Six teams participated in all, from clare / limerick / connemara, and ourselves from Cork.

The actual races were 1 mile in length, upstream from next to Kilkenny castle as far as the Smithwicks brewery, around a buoy and back. We were in the first race at 3pm, against the mighty Coonagh crew. In fairness we gave them a good race, and we were catching them in the last quarter of the race. When they crossed the line though we were about 50 feet behind them.

There was a good crowd of spectators out, and a good buzz about the place, but we were only on the water for 10 minutes. So from that point of view it was a fair distance to travel for such a short time in the boats. The sprint style of rowing was also very tough on all of us! Definitely a world away from the usual Naomhoga Chorcaí style rowing. After our performance this year though, I think that just a little sprint training would see us beat them easily in 2009!

All in all it was a good day out. Worth going to alright, but a long trek for just one short row.