

SCOTTISH SEA KAYAK SYMPOSIUM – May 2003

Over 150 delegates congregated at the Gaelic College on Skye to take part in the 6th Scottish Sea Kayak Symposium – three times that number had applied and were disappointed! The organisers: Gordon & Morag Brown, Duncan Winning and George Maskell had assembled an international team of over 20 contributors from as far away as New Zealand.

The weather was fairly cooperative too which allowed for plenty of time on the water for skill development sessions. Rolling kayaks under the guidance of Paul Mills and Stuart Wagstaff was popular (when the sun was out!) and Ray O'Brien was able to pass on some tips of Inuit style paddling and also had a good number of people tying themselves in knots as they tried their hands at rope gymnastics. Don't laugh until you have tried it.

Aspects of navigation appeared in many sessions: Andy Stamp dealt with Global Positioning systems whilst Kevin Mansell and James Hepburn handled practical navigation and Donald Thomson demonstrated Practical Navigation before he set loose a bunch of blindfolded paddlers at Armadale Pier to test whether or not it worked! (I think they all returned).

It would be difficult to pick out a dominant theme for the Symposium as just about every aspect of sea kayaking was covered. There were plenty of opportunities to learn the basic skills under expert guidance and for the more advanced there were sessions on expedition planning, night paddling, towing, incident management and rescues. Food was never far from our minds and Doug Cooper and Jim Weir gave a comprehensive presentation on Catering for Expeditions of which Delia Smith would have been proud!

The slide shows and lectures were also to the same high standard as the practical sessions: Doug Cooper shared his experiences of paddling in Greenland whilst Following Watkins and Mike McLure illustrated the delights of Ireland and Vancouver. Kevin Mansell gave a wide-ranging talk on Ireland, St Kilda, Denmark and Spitzbergen and all points in between and Down Under was left to John Kirk-Anderson, who as a photo-journalist knew how to portray the fantastic paddling opportunities in New Zealand. A full programme of seminars took place with a feast of opportunities to learn about many aspects of sea

kayaking but there were also highlights when everyone was together. The archive film of Nanook of the North was resurrected and Guest speaker from France, Christian Morel gave a stunning presentation of his 60 days paddling the east coast of Greenland. The second keynote speaker was Clare Jones who gave an account of her 1000 miles journey from Vancouver to Alaska which was inspiring to say the least. The Saturday evening ceilidh was a raring success despite the bar being drunk dry twice and there was a wealth of performing talent to give folks a breather between the energetic dancing.

The Organising team immediately booked the venue for 2005 so look out for the details and book early to avoid disappointment!

Alan Hardwick

CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF MULL 28 JUNE – 4 JULY 2003

The planned route was a clockwise circumnavigation of Mull with pre-selected campsites starting with Inninmore Bay on the Saturday evening followed by Carsaig Bay, Erraid Island, Inch Kenneth, Calgary Bay, Bloody Bay and back to Loch Aline.

Saturday afternoon 28 June saw the start of what was to be a week of enjoyable paddling, good company and fine weather, and this was achieved.

Bill Coppock, Bruce Bell, Ken McLeish and myself started from Loch Aline on the Saturday afternoon in basking sunshine and within fifteen minutes leaving the loch entrance we encountered an otter, small pod of harbour porpoise and a buzzard flying overhead. What a start to the trip! A lazy paddle down in Innenmore Bay for the first night where people who have camped there will know the magical experience of the Bothy and location.

Sunday we headed along the Ross of Mull with a fresh following sea, this made fairly easy and speedy paddling where we met Christine Baker, our fifth trip member at Carsaig Bay. Another day of following seas and we reached the far end of the Ross of Mull by lunchtime. This afternoon we met our sixth trip member Kester Wigram and we spent the night camping on the island of Erraid.

The next morning, another bright sunny day we paddled over to Iona, stocked up with provisions.