

ISAC Newsletter



Committee News

BOAT OFFICER.



Rab Stevens, the club's boat officer is very concerned that boat handlers and club members are not advising him IMMEDIATELY, of problems that occur regarding the boat. **Regardless of how small, trivial or insignificant YOU might think the problem or damage is PLEASE, PLEASE still inform Rab. HE IS THE BOAT OFFICER, HE NEEDS TO KNOW.** Do not just fill in the boat reporting book, advise Rab by telephone.

Club House

Glen, is still looking for people to donate paint for the re decorating that he has planned for the club. Come on you 'lot', you must have lots of half filled tins of paint

lying around in the garage. (As publications officer and a hard and fast Celtic supporter green colours will do nicely.)

There is also a need for some Tools to be donated to the club for all works that need doing. So again if any of you have any spare along with tool boxes please hand them in.



Secretary.

Trevor has mentioned that a big thank you must go to 'Beechams' for donating the "new" chairs for the lecture room.

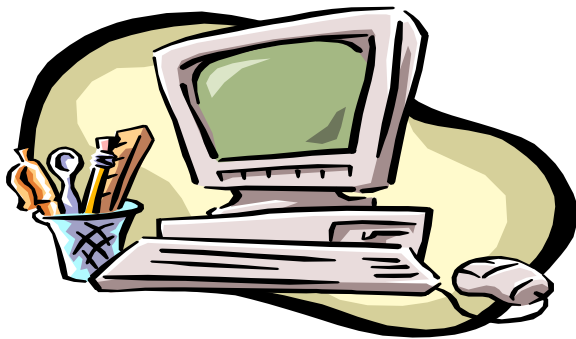
Trevor, along with Hugh, Glen and Willie are looking into the possibility of leasing the neighbouring building from the council for the benefit of the club.

COMPRESSOR

Martin Brown, the clubs compressor officer, requests that all cylinders **must be paid for in advance of being filled**. There are small plastic pouches by the compressor for to put your money in if leaving your cylinder for someone to fill later on. If no money is handed to the 'filler' or left with your cylinder then your cylinder will not be filled.

Website

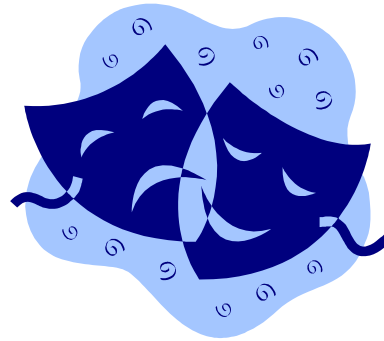
Gordon McNab is reviewing ISAC website. He is considering upgrading the format and the homesite addresses, and would be very interested in people's views and comments. After the next week or so he will be giving a 'demo' at the club. This date will be put up on the notice board. So not a chance to be missed.



ENTERTAINMENTS

Thelma has a magnificent calendar of events lined up for the club over the coming year.

So be prepared for some good diving , excursions, excellent venues for dining out, pubs, clubs and wild nights.



They are listed as;

Friday Night Dives 2002

- 10th May - Ahdeek followed by fish supper.
- 7th June - Off Largs and then meal.
- 5th July - wreck dive and then pub/meal.
- 9th August - Glen Shiel and supper.

Other suggested activities;

Biking / karting / paint balling / clay pigeon shooting.

Anyone to assist Thelma in organizing a BBQ!!

All activities will be up on the notice board in plenty of time.

WHO'S THE IRISH ONE !

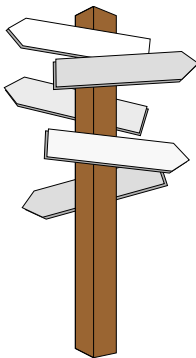
By Frank Long
(The Irishman)

It was only very recently that I gave a lecture on ' Safety and Emergency' and whilst I enjoyed giving the lecture I could not help feeling a little uneasy and hypocritical.....allow me to explain.

The lecture ' Safety and Emergency ' is as the title suggests, about safety and emergency with the emphasis on the safety. For if you get the safety aspect correct then you will find that you never get into the situation of the emergency bit.... Get my drift.

Well the Safety bit is all about planning!!!

Ooooooooh be jes's. That means thinking ahead, for all you non 'paddys', and planning everything from, the weather conditions to deciding where to go,



to having the right equipment.

HAAAAAAA!! Now this is where the Irish bit comes into it. However all the 'eejits' concerned on a recent dive excursion, were not Irish, but Scottish and for all you trainees out there have a laugh or two as all the culprits were 3rd class plus, in their qualifications.

GLEN, trip organiser, forgot his computer and Lorna's cylinder. LORNA forgot her undersuit so was wearing only boxer shorts under her dry suit..... did some one mention dry suit!! HUGH, the clubs treasurer and boat tower for the day forgot his dry suit. He missed the first dive as he had to travel back to Irvine and pick up his suit and Lorna's cylinder too. So Lorna used his cylinder whilst he travelled back. Glen had to rely on his 'buddys' computer, who happened to be Lorna with Hughs' name written on her back. Confused yet!!



But it was a good day nevertheless!.

Late Newsflash

SEPTEMBER DIVE TRIP

Harry Brawley has taken it upon himself to organise a 4 day trip to dive around the Sound of Mull, Coll and Tiree leaving on Thursday 19th September and staying at the Post Office @ Lochaline Dive Centre. Hurry because the 10 available places are being filled as you read this. Get your name on the list on the club board by calling Harry as soon as possible to book your place.

Rattlin' Rathlin

A report on a rather extraordinary expedition abroad by some intrepid I SAC members

Oor bold Rab, organiser and weather forecaster extraordinaire, decided to arrange an expedition to the wee isle of Rathlin just off the Northern Irish coast. The notice giving invitation saw the 8 berths available filled almost before the drawing pin was pushed home on the club notice-board. Two hopeful individuals added their names as reserves in anticipation and began plotting how to nobble the most vulnerable dive buddies already on the list.

The meticulous planning was almost military like with charts plotted, liaison with master seamen for course advice and our contact at Ballycastle marina where refuelling would take place and gathering data on the potential dives. Jerry cans begged, stolen or borrowed as reserve precaution and filled ready for business. The orders for the day were presented to successful participants on the normal club night before the Saturday expedition date and funnily enough the two reserves did manage to secure places as a result of call offs from "natural causes" and without requiring to resort to skulduggery.

Captain Rab confirmed the final "go" on the Thursday evening and prayers were offered for maintaining the unusually calm weather of the previous couple of weeks.



It all seemed to work as the final 7 (one more fell by the wayside) assembled at the clubhouse at the unearthly hour of 6 am on Saturday 13th April in the cold still dark morning and launched the boat into mirror-like, low tide conditions off the harbour slip.

All kitted up in drysuits and warm gloves and hoods, we set off through the bar mouth on the great adventure.

The tide was so low that the previously alerted Clyde Coastguard could not make out our radio check and announcement of departure by WestCoast Willie. We had to wait until we were in clearer water out passed the bar mouth for a successful message to be imparted with instructions received to contact Belfast Coastguard upon our arrival at Ballycastle with an ETA 3 hours and 63 miles later.



Rab & "Clink,Clank,Clunk"

The first leg had been carefully plotted on Captain Rab's own GPS that he had cunningly attached to the console of the club boat. This gave us added redundancy of devices in case of failure and it was suspected that Rab was a also bit more confident with his own equipment.

Rab took the helm or this first leg as we zoomed along in almost flat calm as dawn was breaking over the two or three who had stretched out on the floor and were attempting a few extra winks of sleep.



It was interesting to see the dexterous manipulations of Rab in taking photographs and steering all at the same time. Unfortunately the beauty of the sights of dawn breaking and the sun rising over Ailsa Craig will forever rest in our memories only as he discovered later that his camera was not winding on - nae luck Rab!

An uneventful first leg saw the handover of the helm to Brian "Fireman Sam" Nisbet as we rounded Pladda Isle off the tip of Arran. A few seals and seabirds managed to duck out of the way as we continued to make 25 - 27 miles and hour over the relatively calm seas. The second leg to Sanda Isle off the Mull of Galloway uncovered a hidden talent in "Davie the Dormouse" who seems to be able to sleep anywhere. He perched on the side of the rib head muffled under his balaklava, asleep with unfaltering balance and he must have an internal set of gimbals to keep him in place with the movement of the boat.



"Davie the Doremouse" in slumber mode

The third and final leg saw the helm handed over to Shug H₂O and we quickly reached the turbulent waters off the Mull of Galloway where the Atlantic currents made their presence know with the huge swirls of angry water. This knocked a bit of speed off and we encountered similar amazing turbulence off the Fair Head point at Ballycastle with rip tides causing spray splashes to crash into the boat and annoy the previously bone dry occupants. However, maybe it was Shug's heavy hand on the helm that was to blame.

As we reached Ballycastle and the tranquil calm of the harbour marina we contacted Belfast Coastguard as instructed and shuffled some feeling back into our rather freezing cold tootsies. An excellent passage saw us there in advance of our anticipated eta as it had only taken us two and a half hours without the need to refuel in transit that Rab had provided for.

At 9am, when Jim Craig is usually just turning over in bed and only starting about thinking of getting up, a beautiful sunny morning flowed over us as we lounged on the dockside. We unloaded the boat, while "Good on yer" Malcolm and Glen "Clink, clank, clunk" Wallace filled the tank with the fuel from the jerry cans.

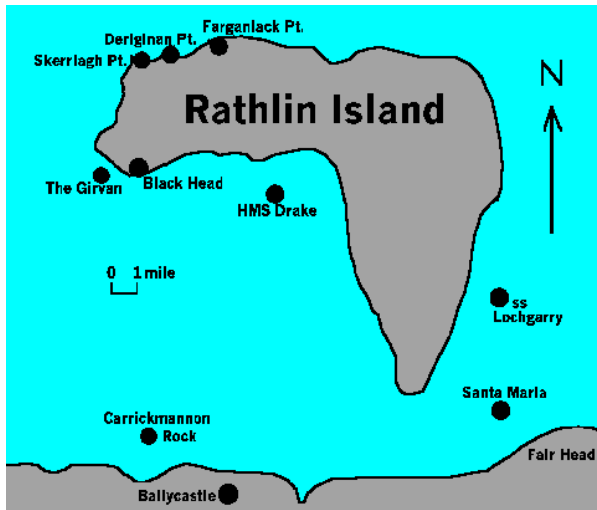


We all grabbed a bite to eat or did a bit of sunbathing whilst we waited for our contact from the marina to arrive to take us for more fuel.

Since we were well ahead of the planned time of diving the SS Lochgarry at slack water about 12.30hrs, there was ample opportunity to wander about the wee quiet town, read a paper and have an ice cream in the sun.

Impatient at the slow passage of time and maybe just keen to get out there diving, Captain Rab marshalled the troops and we set off for the first deep dive site of the SS Lochgarry located approximately half a mile off Doon Bay on the East side of Rathlin island.

Rathlin Island lies just 10km off the pretty seaside resort of Ballycastle and 22km from the Mull of Kintyre, Scotland. The island is L-shaped; one side 6.5km long, the other 4.8km, and nowhere more than 1.6km across. It is almost treeless and most of the coastline is cliff, much of it 60m high. There is a lighthouse placed at the northeast corner.



SS Lochgarry was originally built in 1898 by A & J. Inglis as the "*Vulture*" for Burns & Laird's Ardrossan to Belfast run. She was propelled by triple expansion machinery, 3 single ended oil fired boilers. Length - 265.0ft x 33.5ft x draft 15.5ft; 1,670 gross tons. In 1929 she was re-named as "*Lairdstock*" and later in 1937 she was finally re-named "*Lochgarry*" after purchase by David McBrayne Ltd.

She was converted to a Government Transport ship and had previously been involved in Dunkirk evacuation. But while on a trip from Glasgow to Oban to collect a group of soldiers bound for the Faroes she struck rocks off the Mull of Kintyre. Drifting and crippled, she finally went down off the East coast of Rathlin Island with the loss of twenty-three men who were drowned when their life-boat was dashed against the rocks north of Doon Bay. According to the dive descriptions, the wreck is sitting upright but is starting to collapse and is usually buoyed. (It turned out not to be as the local guy who used to maintain the buoys on all the wrecks had passed away)

When we arrived on site at about 11.00hrs and located the wreck without much difficulty from the GPS and transits gleaned previously, we had a look for the buoy that may have been submerged with the tidal effect without luck and waited for slack water. Westcoast Willie even did a bit of business on the mobile as we tried to locate the Lochgarry and seemed to take great pleasure in telling the potential customer who called that he was not at the shop just now but over a wreck of Northern Ireland at the moment. Ever keen to turn a profit he nonchalantly agreed a time to meet them the next day.

The considered opinion as we kitted up was that the water was going slack about an hour before the advised time as the anchor rope was almost straight down without any appreciable current evident.



Decision made, Captain Rab, "Good on yer" Malcolm and Shug H₂O went down first and Rab returned to the surface after 20 minutes to let the last team in and ensure everyone have a dive in the excellent visibility. Each party went to a different part of the wreck and looked for china with McBraynes monogram that has been found in and around the wreck. Some swam through the superstructure and visited the area of the hold which is filled over with massive chains half a metre long for each link. The Navy placed them to dissuade inquisitive divers and attempted salvagers as she was carrying rifles and there is still live ammunition around. There seemed to be plenty of sealife and fish around and "Good on yer" & Rab had an

unsuccessful tussle with a lobster that decided it was not for the pot. There were plenty of the black and white ceramic tiles lying around that originally plated the deck and gave evidence to the luxury of the original design.

Whilst the first team awaited the last divers to surface we could appreciate and identify the main features of the north Antrim coast, with Fair Head towering above the sea, marking the topmost corner of Ulster. Slough na Morra, "swallow of the sea", is a phenomena of a whirlpool in the sea, South of Rue Point, the Southern tip of Rathlin, which arises when two tides flowing in opposite directions meet and form pyramid like standing waves. We could also see the amazing sight of similar standing waves of the MacDonald Race glistening in the sunlight to the north beyond the lighthouse.

Exuberant and elated by the great first dive we made our way round into Church Bay for a shallow second dive on the wreck of HMS Drake. The Drake sank on the 20th October 1917 after being torpedoed by U79. The 14,000 ton warship was subsequently salvaged and blown apart several times by the navy. Dive records show that the wreck lies in 18-20m of water and with little in the way of tidal streams makes it an excellent but not too demanding a dive. The wreck is very broken up although some large pieces remain and it is possible to grub around underneath some pieces.

We realised that we were having some difficulty locating the wreck when the GPS marks we had been given tried to put us into the middle of the Island. After stopping a passing rib for directions, one of the 10 year old passengers pointed to a flaming great marker buoy in the middle of the bay with "The Drake" painted on it which we had all dutifully ignored in a "we know better" fashion. (that is all except Brian "I told you so" Nisbet.)

The wreck proved even harder to locate and after quite a few trawls up and down with the echo sounder we decided to go in with a couple of teams and locate it by sight. It was

eventually discovered half way to towards the cliffs from the buoy and proved a very good second dive with the tidal current sweeping round the bay keeping the stirred up sandy silt moving away. Viz was excellent with the reflected sunlight and there was many bits of tangled wreckage to puzzle over.

All good things eventually come to an end and as we made the ascent there was much handshaking and congratulations to "Oor Rab" as organiser.



"Good on yer" & Rab

After a quick & quiet bite of lunch with photographs in the bright sunshine on the pier area at Rathlin Island we made our departure arrangements and bid farewell to the tourists and locals lounging about and awaiting the return ferry. Malcolm was at the helm to enjoy the riptide tussles of the 4th leg and first stage of the return journey with some tired but happy faces behind him. Davie the Dormouse took over at Sanda Isle for the 5th leg and "Clink, clank, clunk" Wallace completed the slow final leg amidst rougher seas off Arran to Irvine.

12 hours after we set out, we arrived back at Irvine thoroughly elated and delighted with the success of the adventure. It was certainly an experience to be savoured, a great accolade to Rab for the organisation of a rattlin' good show and a great opportunity to say to folk:-

"I was there".