

The North East

Lough Foyle to Carlingford Lough

The writing of this section of the guide was greatly assisted by referring to 'A Sea Kayaker's Guide to the Causeway Coast', by Robin G. Ruddock. It was an excellent publication and worth reading are visiting the area from Lough Foyle in the W to Torr Head and Cushendun in the E. You can obtain a copy from Robin. The text of it though, insofar as it may not be entirely subsumed into this work, is certainly subsumed into Robin's North Coast Sea Kayak Trail guide now published. Robin has basically included the same information using map, symbols and historical and environmental information. This is also available online through the Northern Ireland Countryside Access and Advisory Network. It is really well produced and is in the same format as the "Strangford Trail".

County Derry

Lough Foyle

C660-390 Sheet 3/4

Embarkation

The logical embarkation point for the outer regions of Lough Foyle is Magilligan Point, by the Martello Tower. Access is by the B202 past the prison and rifle range. Do not block roads. Park by the hotel. The whole region is a security area, frequently patrolled. Especially beware of the military zone on the beach immediately to the E of the point, Benone Beach, on which it's better not to land (certainly not while firing is going on). Accurate information for those passing the firing range can now be obtained from CANI.

Further to the E, beyond the military zone, there is public access at about C716-363. There is a concrete slip across the beach. However, the beach surfs and there is a strong tidal drift.

This may have relevance for launching. Expect caravans, lifeguards, and beach casting anglers.

Military installations on both sides show the importance of the lough in such terms.

The whole lough is less interesting inwards to the SW. There are large areas of mudflats on the E side. That said, it is a busy, well marked and well lit area. It is excellent for night navigation, sheltered but with strong tides. If paddling up into the city, it is possible to take out at Prehen Boat Club upstream of the Craigavon Bridge on the E bank.

Road access is better on the Donegal side and there are nice secluded beaches. Greencastle at C648-400 lies directly across from Magilligan Point. The Donegal shore gets the more interesting up towards Inishowen Head at C685-438. The sea is much more exposed beyond the head.

Tides

Fierce tides push through the narrows. Rates of 3.5kn should not be treated lightly. Eddies on the Donegal side run from Warren Point to Moville and are usable on both flood and ebb.

Moville HW is about 4.00 before Belfast, more in springs and less in neaps.

The Narrows		
Direction	Time	Speed

In	3:00 after Belfast HW	3.5kn
Out	3:00 before Belfast HW	3.5kn

The ebb begins an hour earlier at Magilligan Point.

The Spanish Armada

The *Trinidad Valencera* hit a reef of Inishowen and came ashore East of Lough Foyle. Its crew of 450 mostly got off safely. Surrounded by English soldiers they eventually surrendered. 36 were ransomed and the rest were put to death.

Downhill

C753-362 Sheet 4

There is public access at the extreme E end of Benone Beach at a point called Downhill Strand. The Downhill Hotel was closed and demolished. An apartment block now fills the gap. Parking and toilets are beside the apartments and access is by a stream through an archway under the railway. This spot is popular with anglers. The rocky area to the E of the prominent Mussenden Temple at C758-363 is loose basalt, eroded to provide caves and arches. Fulmar and Kittiwake thrive on the sewerage outfall.

There is good access and parking at Castlerock village itself at C766-365, where there is parking and toilets at the beach access point.

County Antrim

Tidal overview

On the north coast, the tide generally turns west at Belfast HW and east at Belfast LW. The tides are complex, particularly around Rathlin and should be studied carefully.

Tides flow strongly at the headlands but there are usable eddies between.

River Bann

C783-367 Sheet 4

To the E of Castlerock village is the Bar Mouth, where the River Bann flows into the sea. Turbulent water can be experienced quite a distance offshore. The flood at the mouth is weak by comparison to the ebb. Especially when the river is up, the ebb and the flow of the river combine to produce mighty standing waves. The flow of the river is controlled by floodgates well upstream. Powerful rip currents either side of the mouth are dangerous enough. The mouth artificially narrows the stream and this projects the fresh water out with great force. The fresh water is easily distinguished in the sea water and gives a good guide as to tide direction and strength off the beaches. The river is marked as far up as Coleraine. The area is a noted birding spot in winter.

Portstewart

C815-386 Sheet 4

The area behind Portstewart Strand to the W of the town is part golf course and part National Trust. There is fee-paying access to the NT section, where there are toilets and parking. There is a powerful rip each end of the strand. When the strand is dumping, it is better to launch off a slip at Portnahapple at C813-376, which is usable in most conditions, but be aware that access is difficult from car parks in the area..

The harbour at C815-386 can be difficult to enter or exit in heavy seas, with multi-directional reflected waves. The slip is exposed to surge. There is good parking and this is the access of choice in calm conditions.

There is some interesting rock hopping locally, clapotis almost always and some small caves and a blowhole that performs well in good swell. The tide can run fast around Portstewart Point.

Portstewart to Portrush

C815-386 to C856-407 Sheet 4

The coastline here is basalt and reasonably interesting, low lying at first. Rinagree Point at C833-397 is the halfway point. To its W is Black Rock and just off it lies Lawson's Rock, which breaks even in a moderate swell. It is possible to shelter in the lee of Black Rock.

There is a tiny storm beach accessible from landward just E of Rinagree Point. Boomers may be expected hereabouts. Rock hopping and narrow channels are best enjoyed in calmer conditions and at about HW.

Tides

An eddy runs west on the flood tide between Ramore Head to the Bann Barmouth from 2 hours before Belfast HW.

Portrush

C856-407 Sheet 4

Portrush West Bay is easily accessed under the railway line. The slipway in the harbour is awkward in swell, being quite close to the entrance and is quite busy. Consider using Portandoo Harbour at C857-412 instead, though the parking is a little more remote. There is also good parking at the W end of Curran Strand with parking at C863-406.

Ramore Head is interesting exploring in calm conditions. Skerries Sound often kicks up and is best avoided by the inexperienced. The ebb sets up powerful standing waves.

The Skerries - Portrush

C875-427 Sheet 4

These rocky islands lie about 2km NE of Portrush. The islands are basalt and the N side is 'steep to' and usually has unsettled sea conditions as the tide and swell often work in opposition. They are mostly grassy and low on the S side. Strong tide races set between the islands and associated rocks to their N. The sheltered S side is usually settled, and the best landing on the large skerry is towards the E end where there is almost a gap in the island. The Skerries are privately owned so get permission to land from Mr Metson in Portrush at 028 70857412, especially if intending to camp. There is a small brackish lake on the large skerry. Large numbers of birds nest and some rabbits survive. The best embarkation point is at Portandoo Harbour at C857-412 on the NE part of the headland, which is well sheltered. The rocks S of the harbour are a nature reserve and of interest to the geologist for its ammonite exposures. There are Grey Seal and a small colony of Common Seal.

The Storks at C897-425 are rocks lying 2km ESE of the Skerries, and 1km NNW of Dunluce Castle. They are marked by a tall, unlit red beacon. Fishing is good hereabouts.

Tides

Skerries Sound

Direction	Time
E	6:00 before Belfast HW
W	1:00 after Belfast HW

On the east-going flood, there is an eddy between Curran Point at C875-411 to Reviggerly at C855-415.

HW Portrush is 4:40 before Belfast HW.

Portrush to Portballintrae

C856-407 - C930-424 Sheet 4

White Rocks Beach at C899-411 is accessible from the road and there are good toilet and day time parking facilities. Calm conditions are necessary as the surf can be quite powerful with large dumping waves in heavy seas. The rips are strong and the tide flows strongly just beyond the break line. The rips are easily read from above on the road.

It is mainly cliffs eastwards to Portballintrae. There are a number of interesting caves in the first section along under prominent Dunluce Castle at C905-415. One such cave is directly under the castle. Exploration of some of the other caves hereabouts requires a torch. There is good rock hopping eastwards to Portballintrae, with at least one good sheltered deep water landing in a channel about the halfway mark. Another cave just W of Binbane Cove is 40 to 50m long. Beware of a choke point halfway in, where the surge can catch the unwary.

In Portballintrae Harbour, there is a public slipway at C926-423. There are toilets and a car park which can become quite congested in summer. Local surfers prefer the larger car park at C930-424 overlooking Bushfoot Strand to the E of the town. Access to the beach is just W of the car park. Kayakers always prefer the harbour.

Portballintrae to Dunseverick

C930-424 to C999-447 Sheet 5

The rocks between the harbour and Bushfoot Strand can be fun at HW. On passage however, give them plenty of clearance. Stay at least 200m clear of the E harbour entrance to avoid a boomer called the Blind Rock. Bushfoot is named for the River Bush which flows in here at the SW corner. Upriver 2km is the town of Bushmills, famed globally for its Black Bush whiskey. The beach tends to surf and should be used with caution. After rain, a brown tongue of water enters the sea and what happens to it is a good guide to what the tide is doing just then. The E part of the beach is irregularly rocky and not a good place for small boats. There is a small slip below Runkerry House at C934-435.

The coastline eastwards is the Giant's Causeway section. It is committing and there are no easy landing places. It is also one of the most beautiful sections of the entire Northern Ireland coastline.

Just SE of the off-lying rock, the Mile Stone at C934-440, is the massive and beautiful Runkerry Cave at C935-439, complete with boulder beach and long dry passage. There are other caves hereabouts, most notably in a small cove 0.5km E of Runkerry called locally Portcoon, with a dry side entrance.

There is a slip in Portnaboe, the last cove before the Causeway proper. Visitors once walked from this point, before the access from above was organised.

The Causeway section itself is 5km around Benbane Head (C965-461). There are many exposures of geological features; dykes, sills and the various layers of volcanic activity are

easily seen. The Causeway itself and all the related geology are far better seen from seaward. In strong offshore winds there are vicious down draughts and each of the bays can funnel the wind to strong gusts.

Formidable tides run off Benbane Head and great seas can build up off it and off Bengore Head 1km E.

The Spanish Armada

The tragedy of the *Girona*, wrecked at Lacada Point C952-455, was that it was the most seaworthy of several ships that sailed on 16th October 1588 from Killybegs for Scotland. 1300 were drowned, including members of most of the noblest families in Spain. The remains of the wreck were discovered c1967 by a team of divers and a great number of artifacts including many many trinkets and jewellery did survive in the cracks and crevices off the Point, as well as cannons, cannonballs and other memorabilia which are now in The Ulster Museum in Belfast.

Port Moon

Port Moon at C979-451 on the E side of Contham Head C978-4456 is a natural small boat harbour among low rocks at the base of a 60m cliff. A bothy with a rusty roof marks the spot to the passerby, as do the salmon net poles around it, when close in. The bothy is presently the subject of a renovation programme which should be finished by summer 2011. The gut is 100m by 8m and there are rings on either side for shorelines. The port enjoys 1.5m LWS at the outer end. Landing is possible onto a sheltered but rough and stony shore/slip. Camping is nearby on grass, and there is even a stream. It has the remote feel of an island, despite a steep zig-zag path up the cliff to the public Causeway Coast Path.

The coastline eastwards towards Dunseverick Castle falls away, but is bouldery. There is a small, well-sheltered harbour near Dunseverick at C999-447, about 1km E of the castle ruin, with a small maritime museum and good enough parking. Camping is possible here but forbidden, except in emergency. There are some lovely rock pools just W of the harbour, suitable for swimming and diving. This carpark has saved many a kayaker a long trip (E/W) if the weather breaks. Leaving a car at Dunserevick on a coastal passage is recommended.

Dunseverick to Ballintoy

C999-447 - D039-456 Sheet 5

The rocky area immediately E of Dunseverick is cliffy with caves hidden from view by raised beaches. White Park Bay to the E is particularly beautiful. Portbraddan is a small harbour at the W end of the beach at D008-444. It boasts the smallest church in Ireland. Access and parking are poor. It is possible to launch off a boulder beach. Very pretty. The salmon fishery, as with all those on the N coast, is closed. Wild salmon numbers in the Atlantic generally dropped alarmingly in the late twentieth century. Great controversy still persists as to the causation. Over fishing, global warming, diseases affecting the wild stock caused by sea lice endemic with farmed stock, all are blamed. Stocks of similarly depleted wild Sea Trout have shown some signs of recovery recently, and perhaps wild salmon may someday be plentiful again?

There is a youth hostel set high above the beach itself, behind the official car park. It is a long carry to the beach and not in any way normally suitable for kayak launching. The beach gives good surf though. Boulders and a dyke called the Long Causeway obstruct the E end. The

rocky islets E of the beach towards Islandoo at D038-457 are NT and give good sport in the right conditions.

Ballintoy - Ballycastle

D039-456 - D121-415 Sheet 5

Inside Islandoo lies the wonderful Ballintoy harbour at D039-456, a splendid embarkation place for this area generally, or for just a lunch stop. The tides are really powerful through the channels, even right outside the harbour mouth. The harbour has a strand for landing, two slips, toilets and even a coffee shop, but be aware that the owner has a great dislike of kayakers who use the public carpark near the cafe. It gets congested in summer. Take care towing a trailer down to the harbour, as the road is steep and twisty. Good facilities, great views. Lovely.

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Sheep Island

D048-458 Sheet 5

Sheep Island lies ENE of Ballintoy Harbour and was bought by the National Trust in 1967. The rats on the island were exterminated by 1970 and it again became an important nesting site for Puffin and Cormorant. The large numbers of the latter indicate healthy fish stocks in the rivers of the NE coast. The island is flat topped with steep cliffs on all sides, essentially a large sea stack.

There is a strong eddy between the island and Larry Bane Head at D049-452. The power of the eddy gives only a hint of the strength of the tide races in the main current on the N side.

Landing

Landing can be made at two points. On the N of the island is an obvious bay. A boulder beach at the head of the bay gives access to a corrie-shaped area whose southern side is a narrow ridge linking the higher points of the SW and NE sides. The climb from the boulder beach is firstly on easy grassy slopes but then onto steeper rock. An exposed climb leads onto high grassy slopes. The climb should not be underestimated as the rock is loose and the slope steep.

A second landing, with easier access and support holds, is located on the SE corner.

SPA

Cormorant

Carrickarede Island

D062-449 Sheet 5

Carrickarede Island is about 2km E of Ballintoy Harbour and anyone visiting the area will be directed here. It is owned by the National Trust. It can be visited by land across its famous rope bridge, in place throughout the year, once used to serve salmon fishermen. Great bravery is required. Far easier sometimes to visit by sea. The tide race off the NW corner is powerful, but can often be avoided by going under the rope bridge. The sand bar here is covered on the

top two thirds of the tide. The rock strata is interesting, giving good nest sites for Kittiwake, Razorbill and Guillemot. There is a wonderful cave on the outside, visible only from the sea.

Carrickarede to Ballycastle

The cliff scenery now becomes quite majestic. The small wooded area at Port More is very unusual. Buzzards are common hereabouts. Landing may be had by an old winch on the W side of a forest. It is possible to escape here, but it is a long scramble to the nearest road.

Watch for the splendid through-cave in Kinbane Head at D088-438. Tides set strongly at the head, and a very defined line separates the eddy from the flow. This is an excellent teaching area. Landing is possible on the W side of the head. A long steep path leads up the cliff to a car park on the E side.

Nice cliffs join Kinbane Head to Ballycastle, with dramatic caves. The cliff structure hereabouts is liable to rock fall, the slips evident by lack of vegetation. One such is directly above an inviting cave entrance, so do take care.

Ballycastle has a number of options for landing. The large breakwater has a concrete slip. The old pier has a slipway beside it. Car parking abounds, except in summer congestion. There is also a car park at the E end of the beach at D132-416 by Pans Rocks.

Rathlin Island

Chart 2798 covers the general area, as does OSNI Sheet 5. The information in the Pilot and the Sailing Directions is essential on this challenging section of coastline.

Rathlin lies just over 10km N of Ballycastle, where there is a good embarkation place at the pier at D122-415. The island is served by regular ferry, and boasts a stable population. Most of the habitation and services are at Church Bay. Camping with water and toilets is possible amongst old caravans at D148-506, just S of the harbour. There is a hostel in the Old Manor House at the harbour, and some guest houses, the most convenient of which is just beside the large pier at D147-510. More remote camping spots can be had along the shore by Rue Point at D151-473 and along the E coast in the many secluded bays. Camping is convenient at Portawillin at D161-512 where there is a small pier with steps. The rest of the island is generally steep with cliffs towering above boulder beaches and landing is impossible or uninviting except in an emergency.

The island, steeped in history, has a distinct character all its own. Wallace Clark's book 'Rathlin - Disputed Island' gives a lot of information about its history from the earliest settlers to modern times. In earliest times porcellanite, or flint (as in stone age axes) was mined here and exported. The island was successively conquered and reconquered by the Vikings, Scots, Normans and the English. Most famously, it was litigated over between Ireland and Scotland, and found to be Irish because there were no snakes (Saint Patrick is said to have banished all snakes from Ireland in the 5th Century).

Circumnavigation

For the sea canoeist, this is one of the most committing of paddles, which is best done clockwise as the shape of the island sets up eddies to one's advantage. The E side is the only part where progress could be made against the tide. The island is 'L' shaped and at each of the headlands there are major tide races, which are always active except at slack water, though it is generally possible to stay inshore and avoid their full force. The MacDonnell Race at the NE corner is particularly fearsome.

The cliffs on the N side are high and dark and the feeling of exposure is greatest here. There are caves in the NE corner near the E lighthouse, the most famous of which is said to have been used by Robert the Bruce, where he met his spider. The S facing cliffs W of Church Bay are chalk overlaid with basalt, and very picturesque. There are some interesting shapes and stacks as one nears the W end of the island. There is an old pier at D102-509 in Cooraghy Bay, which gives a chance of a rest before tackling the committing part of the paddle.

SPA

Peregrine, Guillemot, Razorbill.

The island, and the NE corner of Ireland generally, is splendidly situated for passage migrants in spring and autumn. Puffin, Buzzard and Eider are amongst the birds abounding in summer. A large colony of Common Seal may be found in Mill Bay, just S of the main harbour.

Rathlin mice are the biggest in Ireland.

Tides and embarkation

The most obvious embarkation place is from Ballycastle. The tides in Rathlin Sound reach 6kns so the only time to make the crossing is on slack water (HW/LW Belfast). Start half an hour to an hour beforehand. Read the Irish Coast Pilot and study the hour-by-hour tidal chartlets the Sailing Directions of the Irish Cruising Club, North and East Coasts volume. Refer also to the Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlas for the Firth of Clyde and Approaches, NP222.

Southwest of Rue Point at D152-473, the overfall *Slough-na-more* is most dangerous for an hour from 1:30 after Belfast HW.

The flow on the north side of the island is always easterly due to an eddy on the ebb.

An alternative is to embark from Dunseverick Harbour at D000-445 or Ballintoy Harbour at D038-456 on the last couple of hours of the flood and to come back six hours later on the last of the ebb.

Rathlin Sound		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	5:30 before Belfast HW	6kn
W	0:30 before Belfast HW	6kn

HW Rathlin and Ballycastle is 4:45 before Belfast in springs and 2 hours before in neaps.

This large variation is due to the proximity of an amphidromic point at Port Ellen, Islay.

Eddies

On a coastal trip, the eddies from Fair Head at D280-438 to Kilbane Head at D088-438 can be used as follows:

Fair Head to Kinbane Head eddy				
Main Flow	Eddy Direction	Start Time	End Time	Strongest at...
E	W	5:00 before Belfast HW	1:00 before Belfast HW	3:00 before
W	E	1:00 after Belfast HW	5:00 after Belfast HW	3:00 after

Rathlin is a challenging paddle even for the experienced, and careful planning is required.

Ballycastle - Cushendall

D121-415 - D263-256 Sheet 5

There is a good view of Ballycastle Bay and Fair Head from the car park at the harbour. The strand all along Ballycastle Bay shelves steeply, and any swell produces powerful dumping waves onto the coarse sandy beach. The tides are powerful close inshore, and with rain, the outflow from the river by the harbour gives a good indication of what is happening.

The shore from Pans Rock at D133-417 to Murlough Bay 6km E is unrepentant. Initially there are large boulders after a cable or so. There is but the one landing, at Carrickmore at D164-427, the most secluded campsite in Northern Ireland. Around Fair Head, the tide races, off big boulders without shelter, backed by enormous climbing cliffs. There can be vicious downdraughts from winds from the S. Fierce tide races may be expected, and even the eddies close inshore are vicious.

These cliffs were discovered for climbers by a sea kayaker on passage, Keith Britton. In 1964, Geoff Earnshaw and Calvert Moore put up the first climb - Earnshaw's Chimney. By 2003, there were 363 routes at Fair Head cliffs, the finest in the land, bar none. This was the first recorded of many such interactions between these symbiotic outdoor pursuits, kayaking and climbing.

Murlough Bay requires landing onto the rocks, but is sheltered, near the bottom of the NT car park. At LW a beach appears E of the cottages. The road here is private, but there is a natural 'slipway' at the cottages which allows easier access or egress, capable of being used without any bother from the cottage.

Eastwards, the shoreline changes to steep and unstable grass slopes, intermingled with loose cliff and scree. There is a small landing E of Torr Head at D234-408. Have a look at the interesting stone shelter in the mouth of the cave. The local fishermen are particularly informative. Have a fair tide hereabouts, or suffer.

The coastline S is much the same, steep grass eroded to provide exposed rock on the shore. The lack of distinct features makes judging progress difficult. There are some pleasant shingle beaches N of Cushendun.

At Cushendun, land at the S end where a lane gives access to a car park, near the outflow of the Glendun River at D251-334. There is a paying campsite up in the village, too far away to be convenient.

The coastline S to Cushendall is similar. There is a car park in Cushendall at the N end of the beach, with easy access at D263-256.

Tides

Off Cushendun		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	Belfast HW	4kn
S	Belfast LW	4kn

An eddy works both ways between Cushendun and Garron Point at D303-243.

Cushendun to Garron Point eddy			
Main	Eddy	Start Time	End Time
Flow	Direction		

S	N	2:00 before Belfast HW	1:00 before Belfast HW
N	S	3:00 after Belfast HW	5:00 after Belfast HW

Garron Point to Ballygalley Head

Tides

An eddy works both on the flood and the ebb between Garron Point at D303-243 and Ballygalley Head at D384-081.

The Maidens

The Maidens or Hulin Rocks are two small lighthouse islands located 9km ENE of Ballygalley. The West Maiden is also known as the Northern Rock, its lighthouse is called the West Tower. The East Maiden is known as the Southern Rock and holds the East Tower. Both were active lighthouses until the West Maiden was abandoned in 1903. The East Tower was modernised, automated and went electric in 1977.

Embarkation

The nearest is from a large car park with a slipway and access to a small shingle beach at D378-080 between Ballygalley and Ballygalley Head.

There is also embarkation at Portmuck D460-024 on Island Magee which has good launching, good carpark and toilets. From here though there is the need to exercise great caution as it will be necessary to cross the Larne shipping channel which is used by a "fast" ferry in summer months and conventional ferries throughout the year.

Local paddlers tend to prefer the Port Muck embarkation and normally try to go out about one and half hours before LW Belfast and return after the tide has turned.

Shipping:

The safest route to the island means staying N of Ballygalley Head. The port of Larne just S is busy with very fast cross channel ferries and shipping. Most take a line from Larne to Scotland that passes S of the Maidens, but some do pass N and then inside the Maidens when awaiting berthing space in Larne.

West Maiden

D450-115 Sheet 9

The West Tower Lighthouse and its attendant three storey cut-stone buildings dominate the island. The lighthouse tower is now gated to prevent access but with a bit of effort can be circumvented and can still be climbed internally, as the old stairway steps are still in reasonable condition. Access to the flat unprotected roof is through a narrow opening in the top floor. The view is worth the effort. An interesting iron walkway bridge links the tower to the accommodation block. The keepers' quarters are now quite ruined and their layout compares interestingly with those on the more modern East Maiden.

Landing

Landing on the West Maiden is more difficult than on the East Maiden. The most suitable area for deep water landing onto rock shelves is located on the W side, N of the old pier under some large rocky outcrops. No beach was found but several cuts may be usable at HW.

There is an old pathway that leads NW from the main building to NW corner but no steps or obvious landing was located. The old pier at the SW corner is not suitable for kayak landings.

East Maiden

D457-114 Sheet 9

This is a small but attractive low-lying rocky island dominated by the East Tower Lighthouse and its attendant buildings. Space is at a premium but the lighthouse buildings are well maintained and their layout invites one to explore.

Landing

Landing is at either the NW or SE corner onto steps or onto rock shelves at lower tides.

Landing should not be underestimated as tides run strongly around the island and through the sounds and channels that separate the lighthouse islands from a series of outlying skerries. An older disused pier is located at the S end.

Muck Island

D465-025 Sheet 9

A medium sized island, about 1km N/S, located 300m off the mainland near the beautiful little harbour of Portmuck at D460-024. The island is interesting and has a nice mixture of wilderness habitats. Coastal grasses dominate the central part and the island rises steeply from W to E. There is a beach of mixed sand and shingle on its western side and a rocky bar extends shorewards off its southern point. This dries and is a problem for kayakers attempting to pass inside, especially at LW, when it is possible to walk out to the island. The island increases in height on its eastern flank to give quite attractive steep basalt sea cliffs and holds breeding populations of Puffin, Kittiwake, Razorbill, Black Guillemot and Guillemot. Three small rocky stacks lie off the northern end. The Ulster Wildlife Trust owns the island and information signs on the mainland do not encourage visitors. A strong tide race runs off the southern end of Muck at about 5/6 knots and can produce some great standing waves and broken water.

Muck Island is off Island Magee which, despite its name, is not an island. However, it does have some excellent paddling, particularly in the section known locally as 'The Gobbins'.

The best part starts after Heddles Port at D479-991 and continues to Hills Port at D485-972.

It boasted a great Victorian walkway, the remains of which are still visible from the sea.

Unfortunately it was closed years ago due to disrepair. There are also seven caves in this section.

County Down

Cockle Island

J536-837 Sheet 15

Rumoured to be either privately owned or National Trust property, Cockle is quite extensive at LW but tiny at HW. It shelters the harbour at Groomsport, enabling a couple of dozen moorings in its lee. A remarkable reef, it is submerged by the highest tides, and there is no grass or greenery of any kind. It is always separated from the shore by deep water. Black Headed Gulls and Herring Gulls occupy different sections of it for roosting. There are reports of Terns nesting. Its claim to fame includes a Sooty Tern (called locally "Wideawake Tern" in Ascension Island where they spend the rest of the year) in summer 2005.

Launch from the slipway at Cockle Island Sailing Club on the pier just SE (the pier is not shown on the OS).

Groomsport is an unsatisfactory embarkation point for the Copelands because the tides are never right. The ebb from Belfast Lough pushes E towards the islands while the ebb outside is pushing N away from them. The flood in the Lough pushes away when outside it is pushing towards. A slingshot from Donaghadee is far preferable, if it can be arranged.

Copeland Islands

Sheet 15

Embarkation

Donaghadee is the logical embarkation point for a day trip to the Copeland Islands. There is access via ferry which allows time for wandering about Copeland Island itself. It seems to run in summer months only from the harbour. For kayaks, there is a small car park and slipway just W of the harbour at J588-803.

Copeland Island is the innermost of the group, with Lighthouse Island next and Mew Island on the outside. Donaghadee Sound lies inside Copeland Island. Copeland Sound lies between Copeland Island and Light House Island. Given the strong tides, this is an excellent proficiency training and testing ground. Any trip around the group can be challenging, as the tides do run hard in the sounds. Grey and Common Seals are both found, the latter on Copeland itself and the former favouring the more exposed channels between Mew and Lighthouse.

Tides

There are strong tide races throughout the sounds.

Donaghadee & Copeland Sounds			
Direction	Time	Speed	
		Donaghadee	Copeland
SE	5:00 after Belfast HW	4.5kn	2.5kn
NW	1:00 before Belfast HW	4.5kn	2.5kn

Eddy south and east of Copelands

This eddy runs N on the flood and starts off Ballyferris Point where it is narrow. It widens out to meet the main stream off Mew Island where it forms the Ram Race.

Direction	Time	Duration
SE	5:40 after Belfast HW	3½ hours
NW	3:00 before Belfast HW	9 hours

The Ram Race occurs east of Mew Island at the following times.

Ram Race	
Start	2:15 before Belfast HW
Finish	0:30 after Belfast HW

The Northern Race occurs N from Mew Island at the following times.

Northern Race	
Start	3:45 after Belfast HW

Finish	6:10 before Belfast HW
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Bangor Marina produces an excellent tidal chart which is essential to understand the complex tides here. SPA

Arctic Tern, Brent Goose, Ringed & Golden Plover, Turnstone.

Fauna

The islands are internationally important sites for breeding populations of Manx Shearwater and Arctic Tern and nationally important sites for breeding Mediterranean Gull, Common Gull and Eider Duck. The Manx Shearwater colony on Copeland Islands holds more than 1.7% of the world population. The colony is in excess of four thousand pairs. The rabbit populations on the islands play an important role in the breeding success of the Manx Shearwater as the latter mainly nest in the rabbit burrows that honeycomb the islands.

Grazing by rabbits maintains a short sward, which is desirable for the fledglings.

Copeland Island has an internationally important Arctic Tern colony, with some 550 pairs.

The site now represents the largest colony for this species in Ireland.

Mew Island has been an important tern colony in the past and it is hoped that positive management will encourage terns to become re-established. The islands are the most important breeding sites in Northern Ireland for Common Gull with over 250 pairs present.

Copeland has recently held Northern Ireland's first successful breeding pair of Mediterranean Gull.

The islands are home to a nationally important population of breeding Eider Duck. In total the three islands account for 14% of the Irish population. Non-breeding Eider form part of the nationally important population that occurs along the Outer Ards coast and Belfast Lough areas.

Other breeding colonies of note include Black Guillemot, Water Rail and Stock Dove. The latter species has suffered a dramatic decline in Northern Ireland, but numbers have increased on Copeland with some 100 pairs now breeding.

Breeding waders such as Lapwing and Snipe may be found further inland. Here the taller vegetation, interspersed with open areas, provides an ideal breeding habitat.

Birds of prey favour the islands when the breeding season is over. Hen Harrier, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Kestrel, Merlin and Peregrine are all seen regularly.

Grey Seal and Common Seal can be found off the Copeland Islands in significant numbers.

They utilise the off-shore islands and reefs as haul-outs and as pupping and mating sites.

Copeland Island

J590-834 Sheet 15

The very beautiful Copeland Island is the largest island of the group at 2km by 1km. It is also closest to the shore, lying 3km N of Donaghadee. There are seven holiday/summer homes on Copeland, and the island seems deserted all winter. The island never had fuel of any kind, neither wood nor peat, all having to be imported. Bleak enough in winter, grassy, and bracken covered in parts. It rises to 31m

History

Historically called Aran Island, the gaelic name was lost in early mediaeval times, when the Norse used the island as a trading base. The modern *koopman* or older *kaupmann* means "merchant", and *Kaupmannaeyjar* means "Merchants Isle". Both names were in use side by side until the 17th century when the Norse version won out. Anglicised as Copman, this

corrupted in time to the present Copeland. A theory that the islands were named for William Coupeland, a Norman settler, has been debunked by distinguished local historian Peter Carr. The graveyard 200m from the landing at Chapel Bay is very old, the inscribed headstones dating back to at least 1742, pointing to a once thriving community. Cleggs, Emersons and Wrights are popular names. A 1930s newspaper reporter wrote that the island was neat as a new pin, the hedges cut and shaped, the garden walls whitewashed. Careful of their property the islanders were said to have been neglectful of their perception of their culture. Neither could the aging population explain island placenames, nor did they show interest. The population was mostly evacuated in 1946. The very last to go, Frederick and Aise Clegg, moved to the mainland in 1953. They died in 1964 and 1965 and were the last burials in the island graveyard.

Landing

Sandy beach landings are possible in Chapel Bay at J591-834 on the SW and the even more beautiful Deer Bay on the NE side at J596-838. In fact there are other perfectly adequate landing points, either side of the S tip, and elsewhere. Port Dandy at J585-836 has a beach, and its sheltered water is a popular gin palace anchorage of a sunny summer afternoon. Best altogether keep away from the main settlement areas, as island folk value privacy. Ask on the island for permission to camp.

Flora and Fauna

Grazed mainly by rabbits and sheep, the island is short grassed and pleasant to walk. Two immature Golden Eagle were seen in April 2006, some Pheasant, and a Short Eared Owl.

Lighthouse Island

J597-856 Sheet 15

Lighthouse Island (sometimes referred to as John's Island) lies 2km N of Copeland Island, is owned by the British Trust For Ornithology, and has a bird observatory on top, used by the NT. Landing is at the SE corner at J597-856 onto sand at LW but stones on higher tides. Originally the lighthouse was here, but a later light was lit on the better placed Mew Island. Apparently, many wrecks were caused by the light on Lighthouse Island being clearly seen but the low lying Mew being totally overlooked. Hence the lighthouse was moved to the more logical position. Landing is discouraged (especially in season) as there are sensitivities around the nesting sites here.

Mew Island

J602-861 Sheet 15

Mew Island is owned by the Commissioners of Irish Lights, and has a number of small associated islands on its SW side, all linked and walkable. The lighthouse (built in 1884) is reminiscent of an airport control tower. Apparently, this lighthouse was only automated in 1996, and until then the keepers even maintained a golf course for their entertainment! Landing is possible at the lighthouse jetty tucked into the channel, or into a cut in the NW, both deep-water landings.

Before the lighthouse was built on Mew, a spectacular wreck was that of the 'Enterprise' in 1801. Then, in 1833, Alexander Graham Bell used a new fangled invention called a diving apparatus to retrieve its valuable cargo.

A great tragedy was played out here on 31st January 1953 when the ferry 'Princess Victoria' got into trouble en route from Stranraer to Belfast in a severe NW gale. Heavy seas stove in

the car deck doors, just after leaving the Scottish port. As the ferry slowly listed and began to sink, it drifted. The 'Princess Victoria' thought it was drifting down the Scottish coast, so the rescue services were sent to the wrong place. Only when the Copeland lighthouse was sighted was their correct position transmitted. The order was eventually given to abandon ship, and the life rafts were launched. The women and children were all in the first two rafts, both of which capsized. All drowned in sight of the men still on board.

When the rescue services finally came on the scene, the seas were truly mountainous. Great heroism later merited several gallantry awards of the highest level available to non-military personnel. Captain Ferguson (brother of Harry Ferguson, inventor of the modern tractor) and his radio operator David Broadfoot stayed at their posts to the end and went down with the ship. 121 died. There were 44 survivors, all adult males.

The same storm peaked in the North Sea that night. A combination of low pressure, a spring tide surge, and sustained NW winds raised the sea level more than 3m, flooding Holland over its dykes, and 1,600 were drowned.

There have been issues with canoeists having BBQs on the island and leaving scorch marks on the grass areas. This is a bird breeding island, and the grass is their home. So it is important when landing on these islands to show respect and follow "leave no trace" principles.

Bangor to Strangford Lough

Sheet 21 / Sheet 15

The paddling from Donaghadee at J691-802 to Ballyquintin Point at J624-454 at the mouth of Strangford Narrows - a distance of about 40km - is a straightforward but interesting enough piece of coastline. The Ards Peninsula has almost an island feel to it because of its remoteness by road and the ferry service which operates at the southern end at Portaferry. The coastline from Donaghadee to Ballyhalbert Point at J664-630 is less interesting than further S, being of shingle and sand beaches.

Next comes Portavogie at J663-595, a busy fishing harbour often congested with trawlers.

North Rocks

Sheet 21 J674-561

North Rocks at J674-561 with its breeding Grey Seals, lies 3km SSE of Portavogie.

Consisting of two islets that stand no more than 1m above HW, this is Ireland's most easterly landfall. Landing at rocky coves to the NW and E is easy at LW and when conditions are calm. At LW a decent ramble can be had among the deep rock pools and Cormorant nests. Many ships have been lost here and the North Rocks beacon (an unlit 12m high tower 250m to the NW) gives a sense of maritime history.

South Rock at J677-531 lies 2km offshore and 3km N of Kearney Point, and boasts the oldest standing wave swept lighthouse in Ireland (1797), Kilwarlin. The rocky shoreline of Kearney Point at J645-511 is owned by the National Trust and is a good place to go 'rock pool peering' for marine invertebrates such as Dog Whelks, Mussels, and Starfish. It is a very enjoyable day trip to catch the ebb tide from Strangford out to the mouth, then N to the Rocks, and back on the flood. There is a spit of land between the North Rocks and Ringboy Point at J650-574 to the WNW. Occasionally the sea can become steep and untidy here, particularly when the swell is against the tide.

Tides

Off Skullmartin Rock at J649-687		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	0:35 before Belfast HW	2.5kn
S	6:00 after Belfast HW	2.5kn

Further south, from Ballyhalbert Point at J664-630 to Ballyquintin Point at J624-454, the tides run along the coast and reach 1.5kn in springs.

Strangford Lough

Sheet 21

Strangford Lough is one of the largest sea loughs in Britain and Ireland. In ecological terms it is unique and the jewel in Northern Ireland's coastline. It has a great deal to offer sea canoeists at every level, from sheltered backwaters for introducing novices, to powerful tide races, overfalls and whirlpools for the more experienced at the narrow entrance, called the Narrows. The old name for Strangford was 'Cuan' (meaning safe harbour) but the Vikings renamed it Strangford or 'The Violent Fjord'.

SPA

Arctic, Common and Sandwich Tern, Bar-tailed Godwit, Golden Plover, *kn*, Brent Goose, Redshank, Shelduck.

Strangford is the premier autumn arrival site for the Brent Goose. Some remain on for the winter but most disperse to other sites throughout Ireland.

There are 2 species of seal to be found around our coasts. They are the Common (or Harbour) Seal and the Grey Seal. They are quite distinctly different. The Common has a spaniel dog type of head and is considerably smaller than the Grey, which has a flat head with a large obvious nose. There are about 400 Common Seals and 80 Grey Seals in the lough.

The Common Seal give birth in June and it is most entertaining to watch the antics of the pups from the quiet position of a sea kayak. The greys give birth in October and it is a rare and beautiful sight to see the white furry pups of these much larger seals.

Chart 2156 and OS sheet 21 each covers the lough in detail.

Angus Rock

Sheet 21

J610-453

Angus Rock is the first point of note entering the Narrows, near the mouth. It is just a rock, virtually covered at HW, but on it stands a small lighthouse, white with an unusual red top band. At HW, there is just a concrete ramp proud of the water which can take a few kayaks at picnic time. At lower water, quite an extensive area of rock gets exposed. This is an important waystop, a most useful journey breaker on local day trips.

There are overfalls and broken water around Angus Rock, both on the flood and ebb tide. See the tidal stream atlas for details. On spring tides, from the 1st to 3rd hour of the ebb, an interesting grade 2 rapid occurs on the N side of the Angus Rock. This can get up to about a grade 3 with a diagonal stopper during very big equinoctial springs. There is a drop in sea level across the rocks of about 3 feet and it is possible to get good surfing on the stopper wave.

On the last hour of the ebb, an enjoyable set of waves often form, again on the N side of the Angus Rock, where you can join the seals for some surfing. On the flood tide, again just N of

the Rock, another small set of overfalls is formed. There is an obvious drop in the sea level followed by small boils and whirlpools.

The Narrows

Sheet 21

Strangford Lough covers 150km^2 of sea and contains 1650 million m^3 of sea water at high tide. HW at Portaferry is at least 2 hours later than at the mouth of the Narrows. It takes approximately 350 million m^3 (or tonnes) of water to fill the lough from LW to HW. All this water can only get into the lough by passing through the Narrows which is 9km long and at its narrowest point, only 600m wide. Hence a vast river of water rushes through at speeds of up to 7.5kn .

Embarkation Points

Where to put in and out depends entirely on the tidal flow at the time, and the main attraction of the expedition. For the deep water surfing at the mouth, there are a number of choices along the W side from Ballyhornan as far up as Kilclief, to taste. For the Routen Wheel approach so as to go home downstream, and for small groups that means just about anywhere, as the roads each side are favourable.

Tides

The tide begins almost simultaneously throughout the Narrows at the following times.

Strangford Narrows		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	3:30 before Belfast HW	7.5kn
Out	2:30 after Belfast HW	7.5kn

Passage is straightforward and fairly safe on the flood. However, during the ebb, a heavy breaking sea can be encountered. This is particularly dangerous with any form of wind from the south/southeast/east creating a swell. Huge breaking seas are generated. For the more experienced and confident only, excellent deep-water surf waves are formed at the entrance, where it is advisable to play only on the last hour or two of the ebb.

Routen Wheel

The next point of interest is the Routen Wheel, just SW of Rue Point. The Wheel is on the E side of the channel. It is quite easy to avoid by closely hugging the coast along the E side. A good viewing point is from the wee island called Isle O'Valla at J593-488.

The Wheel is characterised by short-lived but heavy and violent boils, whirlpools and stoppers. It is caused by an underwater ridge of rock only 4.6m below the surface, rising suddenly either side from 18m below, sticking diagonally out from the shallower E side of the main channel into the main flow. The NE/SW ridge that creates the Wheel is situated along a line 200m SW of Rue Point at J597-487 to J599-489. This is no ordinary rapid. A boil forms, then another beside it swivelling the other way, and soon a whirlpool forms on the boundary. Admire it as pretty, but then you are in it, sinking ever lower, pointing upstream, to the side, down again, then the whirlpool stops and away you go again. Paddling back up through the Wheel is an experience too as you try to read the water, the way boils are pushing and so on. A good eddy exists S of Rue Point on the E side, as far as Gowland Rock at J603-485, so that a number of runs of the Wheel can be enjoyed.

The Wheel occurs during both the flood and ebb tide although it tends to be more violent during the ebb. The turbulence lasts for about 400m and any capsizes can easily be dealt with beyond the turbulence. Rescues need to be swift as the speed of the current reaches 7.5kn. It is safer to play during the flood.

Tidal Electricity

A first for Ireland and the biggest by far in Europe, just 1km NNW of the Routen Wheel lies SeaGen at J599-494, the world's only commercially viable underwater electricity generator. SeaGen is a prototype wind farm for tidal races. With twin huge blades of 16m either side of a central pillar, the propellers catch a massive 400m.sq of passing water. 300m.sq is required for profitability, and most other designs are well short of the mark. The blades about turn every slack water so as not to lose a minutes effort, and they can be raised for easy maintenance. Boats including kayaks may pass by with impunity as the blades are well below the surface, and no seals are as yet known to have suffered any trauma. The pillar supporting the generator is round, which is a bad shape for downstream turbulence and consequent environmental worries, but the whole project including the impact of its water turbulence is being closely monitored, and the whole project will be reviewed after a few years.

There is a rapid beside a beacon to one side, Gowland Rock at J603-485, where a surf wave forms, just like on a river. The area around here is used a lot by seals to haul out on the rocks. Care should be taken not to disturb them from their haul outs as it can cause injury.

One of the greatest dangers on the Narrows is the potential for being run down by the ferry which runs between Strangford and Portaferry. This ferry has to contend with a 6kn tide and does a remarkably efficient 'ferry glide' across the flow. The Captain does not appreciate having to contend with dodging canoeists as well. The ferry departs Strangford on the hour and half hour and departs Portaferry every quarter past and quarter to the hour. The crossing time is about 5 minutes.

'Exploris', an excellent aquarium, is situated within a minute's walk from the main slip at Portaferry and is well worth a visit as it has displays of the marine wildlife of the lough and the Irish Sea.

Another place well worth a visit is the Barn at Castleward, owned by the National Trust, in Castleward Bay at J575-497. Access from the water is best gained during HW as there are extensive mud flats in the bay. The Barn has excellent audio visual displays of the marine wildlife, particularly the bird and mammal life found in the lough. They also have a number of very good videos on the wildlife of the lough. Entry is free.

Audley's Castle, built in the 16th Century, lies on the W side of the Narrows about 1km N of Strangford and is worth a visit. It is possible to land at the little beach and jetty beside it at J589-501 and climb to the top where there is an excellent view of the Narrows and the towns of Portaferry and Strangford.

Inner Strangford Lough

Sheet 21

Embarkation Points

For such a large area, embarkation points are few enough. There are few on the E side the main ones being a public Kircubbin J598-630 and in the Narrows at Portaferry itself at J594-

507 - the slip N of the marina with reasonably good car parking the main towns in the Narrows. . The options include :

- Portaferry J594-507 - the slip N of the marina with reasonably good car parking,
- Strangford J589-497 - the slip at to the S of the ferry terminal with good car parking,
- Killyleagh J528-520 – the slip at the sailing club, in small discreet numbers. If access difficulties, there are other places along the shore, closer to town.
- Ringhaddy J526-585 – limited parking.
- Ballydorn Lightship J526-624 – a little quay on the S side of Hen Island, to one side of the ship, and which apparently belongs to the yacht club. The use of this should be discreet and in small numbers. The yacht club may also be a possibility at J524-627. There is also a splendid off-season campsite in a parking lot with toilets at J523-625, but beware extensive drying mudflats out front.

Tides

Inside the lough, the tidal strength decreases from 6kn between Strangford and Portaferry to 4kn at Ballyhenry Island at J575-520, 2km northwest, as the water disperses into the lough. It further reduces to about 1.5kn at Dunnyneill Islands at J547-539, a further 3km northwest. The E coast of the lough has a lot less of interest to the canoeist than the W due to the lack of islands etc. However, at ‘The Dorn’ at J593-568, there is a reasonable tidal flow from an enclosed bay of up to 2.5kn, especially on the ebb and a spectacular marine waterfall about an hour to two after high water.

Chapel Island at J562-513 and Jackdaw Island at J557-510 are the first to be reached when paddling W out of the Narrows. In the spring, Jackdaw is an important nesting site for terns and should be avoided. Many of the islands have large colonies of Irish Hares which can often be seen running along the beach.

In the SW corner, Salt Island at J532-500 lies within the Quoile Estuary, and is one of the many islands owned by the National Trust. The Trust has redeveloped a bothy on the SE side of Salt which is an absolutely superb facility for the canoeist looking for a bit more comfort than a tent. The Bothy sleeps 12, has a woodburning stove, running water and a couple of WCs. Book through the NT. Camping is also permitted on Salt Island, both at the bothy and at the bay on the west side of the island.

To the SW of Salt Island lies the Slaney River where St. Patrick landed in 432 A.D. He must have landed here during HW or he would have had to slog through the stinking mud to reach the shore. He went to Salt and was confronted by the local Chieftain who became Patrick’s first convert to Christianity in Ireland.

Heading N from the barrage which protects Downpatrick from tidal flooding, lies Gibbs Island at J509-496 which is one of the few islands within the lough to have trees. There are some mature Scots Pines on Gibbs. Further N, the first major island outside the Quoile estuary is Island Taggart at J533-545. This is one of the largest islands in the lough and used to support two small farms. These belong to the National Trust and are well worth a visit as they show what life on the island was like. Look out for the coffin in the barn! They were also used for the film ‘December Bride’, a story of life in the area in the early 1900s, written by Sam Hanna Bell and there was even a film starring Ciaran Hinds. Foxes, badgers and

otters are all resident on Taggart, meriting an overnight camp and exploration. Camping is permitted and most suitable on the north east corner at J536-554.

The W side of the lough is a fascinating maze of submerged drumlin hills forming over 100 islands and rock pladdies. Between Taggart and Mahee Island at J530-636, almost 10km N, lie the 'basket of eggs' - dozens of little islands which are excellent for night navigation as they are sheltered and safe. Tides can run at about 1-2kn during springs in a N/S direction between some of the islands and particularly through Ringhaddy Sound at J537-582.

Tides

Tides can run at about 1-2kn during springs in a north/south direction between some of the islands and particularly through Ringhaddy Sound at J537-582.

Pawle Island at J543-571 is a lovely spot for lunch. There is an old house in the SW tip with the remains of a slip built through the rocks on the beach. From the top of the hill behind the house there is a lovely panoramic view of the S half of Strangford.

Islandmore is now inhabited all the year round. The 'Blue Cabin' on the W side of Islandmore at J538-584 is owned and lived in by Michael Faulkner (son of the last prime minister of Northern Ireland – Brian Faulkner) and his wife, the artist, Lynn McGreggor. The house was always in the Faulkner family but got sold. Then in the last years of his life, Brian met its then owner when on holidays in the W of Ireland, and bought it back. It became the family holiday home. Michael and Lynn moved there after their business went bust, and they fancied starting over in "the good life". The house is a former prisoner of war hut from the Isle of Man, that housed German soldiers in the Great War. It was shipped to Northern Ireland in 1921 after all the huts were auctioned off. The Blue Cabin is thought to be the only one still intact, no water, no electricity, "period". Their remote house and its owners are the subject of books, television programs, and endless internet activity. Nothing is reliably known about their tolerance for visitors, if any.

Between Islandmore and Ringhaddy lies the interesting wreck of the "*Alastor*" in 10 – 15m maximum depth. She went down in 1946 as a result of an accidental fire on board, but is still good for diving. She was at the time wrongly identified as the "*Alisdair*" and forgotten.

Then in April 2004 QUBSAC adopted her as the subject of an experiment to test the efficiency of a new underwater measuring tape. The results were all over the place, to the extent they had to conclude there was some mistake. The *Alastor* was eventually correctly identified. Until commandeered in WW2 by the Royal Navy for active service, it had been the pleasure yacht of Sir Thomas Sopwith who designed the Sopwith Camel bi-plane of the Great War and the Hawker Hurricane of WW2 (that actually won the Battle of Briton, and not its iconic cousin the Spitfire – the Hurricane being faster than the Messerschmitt 109, speed then as now being everything). Later the *Alastor* belonged to the Shelley family (as in Percy Bysshe, composer of *Ozymandias*, and Mary Shelley inventor of *Frankenstein*). Now the wreck belongs to the Faulkeners of Islandmore.

Green Island Rock at J545-602 is a haul out for Common Seal and is very accessible to allow a group of novices to experience the observation of seals in their habitat. Care should be however be taken to avoid any disturbance.

To the W and N of Rainey Island at J527-630, there are two channels where the tide runs either side of the island at up to 5kn in its rush to fill or empty Reagh Bay to the NW. Again,

this is an excellent area for introducing novices to moving water. HW in the area is at approximately HW Dover +0220.

Mahee Island has an early Celtic Monastery on the W side, and the island is definitely worth a visit to walk round the monastic ruins. The monks are believed to have occupied the area from the 5th to the 10th Centuries. There is a great view from the top of the monastery hill. Recently there was a discovery of early Celtic fish traps in the N facing cove on the W side J525-637 (where easiest to land), but these are only visible at LW.

The area NW of Mahee Island holds little of interest to the canoeist, unless you're into mud wrestling in a big way, as large expanses of mudflats cover the area. The NW mudflats do support vast numbers of waders. During the winter, the statistics of birds using the lough demonstrates the international importance of Strangford as a wildlife sanctuary:

Swans	290+
Geese	13,500+ (including 1,300 Pale-bellied Brent Geese, more than 75% of the world population)
Ducks	9,000+
Waders	50,000+

Chapel Island - J555-675. There are ruins of an old church in this island and it is a bird sanctuary. It is accessible at all tides and has a remote feel although close to the E shore. It is owned by the NT and shouldn't be visited in the breeding season.

The lough has areas renowned for their beauty or scientific importance and legislation protects this valuable and unique area. Access is unrestricted in the lough and conservationists rely heavily on the goodwill of recreational users. The National Trust has produced 'The Castaways Code' and map for those using the lough for recreational boating. This should be consulted before paddling in the lough during the nesting season (April-June) and the islands marked 'Birds Welcome' should be avoided.

Guns Island

J596-415 Sheet 21

Guns Island lies 2km S of the entrance to Strangford Lough. At extreme LW springs, it is possible to walk or wade across to the island from the beach at Ballyhornan. What looks suspiciously like an active sewage outlet pours into the sea just S of the village.

Most of the time, a reasonably strong tide runs between Guns Island and the mainland – up to 2kn. Landing is always possible on one side or the other of the sandy spit stretching NW of the island. At LW, or in search of shelter, landings may be had elsewhere in small coves, particularly halfway down the W side.

There is a lovely old stone navigation marker painted white on the SE tip. Beside it lies the remains of an old ruined church. Thick grass covers the island. Very attractive spot.

Fauna

The SE side of Guns Island is a mass of nesting Kittiwake, Guillemot and Cormorant on the cliff ledges and paddlers should keep a reasonable distance offshore to avoid disturbance during the nesting season (April-June). The N side is favoured by a large colony of gulls that nest on the tussock grass just above the shore.

Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough

Sheet 21/Sheet 29

Killard Point at J613-435, a National Nature Reserve, is well worth a visit, especially in June to see the abundance of butterflies and wild flowers growing on the sand dunes. Among these

can be found the beautiful Bee Orchid, Spotted Orchid, Wild Thyme and Yellow Rattle.

Butterflies include the Common Blue, Small Heath and Meadow Brown.

The 14km from the entrance of Strangford Lough to St. John's Point is a lovely paddle along small cliffs and a rocky shore of siltstones and shales believed to be formed during the Silurian period, 435 million years ago. This area is known as the Lecale and shortly after the last ice age would have been a large island with the sea connecting Dundrum inner bay with Strangford Lough.

Banderg Bay at J605-432 followed by Ballyhornan Bay at J594-420, are pleasant sandy beaches with clay cliffs behind, where there are nesting Fulmar. Never disturb these birds at their nest as they have the ability to douse you with an extremely evil smelling mucus from their nostrils which sticks better than any glue known to man! Portnacoo at J589-406, 200m SW of the southern tip of Guns Island, has a 2m wide gap in the rocks which opens out into a cove with a 15m wide pebbly beach, an ideal lunch stop.

At Legnaboe, on the mainland about 600m S of the southern tip of Guns Island, there is a narrow sea cave which appears safe to enter at all states of the tide, provided there is little swell.

Along this piece of coast lie the villages of Ardglass at J563-373 and Killough at J540-363. Although Killough was an important fishing port, the harbour is now derelict, whilst Ardglass has taken over as a principal fishing port, famous for its herrings, pronounced locally as 'hearns'. A new marina has been built at Ardglass and there is easy access to the sea from both Killough and Ardglass with a good slip and carparking on the harbour at Ardglass.

SPA

Brent Goose (Killough Harbour)

From St. John's Point at J526-333 to Newcastle (a distance of 15km as the crow flies or as the canoeist paddles), the scenery is dominated by the beach and sand dune systems of Murlough National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Within the inner bay at Dundrum, there is a causeway and bridge at J402-356. This connects the farms and houses within Murlough NNR to the main Dundrum to Newcastle road. The tide flows through this bridge at up to 6kn on springs in its rush to fill or empty the southern half of the inner bay. Good eddies are created by the bridge stanchion and this is used almost constantly at HW by local paddlers to teach and practise moving water techniques. HW at the bridge is +0030 HW Dover. The best fun is to be had during springs. This occurs every second weekend when the tide is usable from approx. 1000hrs until 1500hrs, HW being around midday.

During the ebb from Dundrum inner bay, tremendous deep water surfing waves can be formed at the entrance if there is even a little swell from the S or E. However, once the tide has finished ebbing, the only practical course of action is to paddle to Newcastle 5km away as the inner bay will be dry.

For 2km to the S and 3km to the N of the entrance to Dundrum inner bay, care must be taken due to the rifle range at the army camp at Ballykinler. There are 3 yellow marker buoys marked DZ and the paddler should keep to the seaward side of these when the red flag (day) or red lights (night) are visible over the base just N of the entrance to the inner bay. However, tracers have been sighted by local canoeists doing a night paddle from St. John's Point to

Newcastle that would indicate that they could travel more than *2km* beyond these buoys. The Coastguard should be contacted before paddling this section of coast.

The tides along this section of coast to St.John's Point are weak. A trip from St.John's Point to Newcastle is a very popular paddle on a good moonlit night as you have the lighthouse flashing behind you, the twinkling lights of Newcastle to aim for and the foreboding outline of the Mourne dominating the paddle.

Newcastle is very much the seaside holiday tourist town and is usually thronged between Easter and September, especially at weekends. However, good access to the beach exists from various car parks in the town. Access is also available from the harbour where there is very limited parking. It should be noted that this dries out at low water. Access may still be gained over the wall to the stony beach to the S of the harbour at J382-296.

A sewage outfall pipe lies about 1 cable offshore to the S of the harbour and, although Newcastle's sewage works are meant to be one of the most sophisticated in the UK, the area surrounding the pipe should be well avoided! During S or E winds, good surfing can be had at the beach and a good break exists at the mouth of the harbour at lower water. During particularly strong winds, i.e. above Force 6, the surf is very broken and you can find yourself 500m offshore still looking for a way out through the soup. Having said that, this must be one of the most picturesque places to surf - 'Where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea'.

The scenery of the Mourne Mountains dominates the *25km* from Newcastle to Cranfield Point at J270-099 on the northern side of the entrance of Carlingford Lough. It is made up of rocky beaches and small cliffs, a relic from the ice age that shaped the panorama of the Mourne scenery more than 10,000 years ago.

From Newcastle to Bloody Bridge at J389-269, the coastline is interesting. The small cliff scenery provides enjoyable rock dodging, particularly at high water, when many of the caves and channels become more accessible. The National Trust owns the section of coast between Bloody Bridge and the mouth of the Crock Horn Stream below Ballagh Bridge, *2km* S at J388-249. After that, there is good access to the sea at Glassdrumman Port at J381-222, famous with geographers for the obvious series of easily identified raised beaches and a very pleasant little sandy beach from which to launch or enjoy your lunch.

There are a number of small but enjoyable caves in the area, one of which has a blowhole at the top. There are also two bigger caves, one of which involves a *50m* squeeze, where hands are needed to get through. This cave is not obvious from the sea but it can be found with careful exploring and it's worth going through, especially in a plastic boat! The other large cave has a small rocky beach at the back and if there isn't much swell, it's good fun landing and exploring on up the cave. A short trip from Newcastle to Bloody Bridge and back is ideal for introducing novices to spectacular sea canoeing.

The next principal port is Annalong which has a small harbour at J378-197, used mainly by small craft engaged in creeling (laying lobster pots). Further along the coast is a small rock called Selk Island at J359-176, which appropriately enough has a small colony of Common Seal.

Then, passing Lee Stone Point at J334-144, the large granite boulder (another relic of the ice age known as an erratic) is an obvious feature. The fishing port of Kilkeel lies *6km* short of

Cranfield Point. This is one of Northern Ireland's busiest fishing ports with up to 70 boats using the harbour at J317-140.

County Louth

Carlingford Lough

Carlingford Lough is the most dramatic sea lough on the E coast of Ireland, almost a fiord, with the Mourne Mountains to the N and the craggy Carlingford Mountains to the S. It has great variation, from pleasant, sheltered paddling within the lough to big races and overfalls at its mouth.

The S side of the lough is in the Republic of Ireland while the N side is in Northern Ireland. Up until (reputedly) the 1950's, a lucrative smuggling trade ran between Greencastle and Carlingford harbours.

The tidal streams within the lough are weak and a pleasant and undemanding crossing can be made from Killowen or Rostrevor Quays to Carlingford village. However, during strong WNW winds, squalls funnel down from the hills around Rostrevor and cause little cyclones and mini tornadoes on the surface. These are known locally as 'Kettles' as the water appears to boil and steam to rise.

The Newry Canal can be accessed on the S side of the lough beyond Warrenpoint at J108-207. This is really only practicable during HW as the area surrounding the access to the canal dries to extensive mudflats. There are reports that the canal is going to be reopened. The canal goes to Lough Neagh but a passage, even by canoe, is exceptionally difficult, as it is heavily overgrown and silted.

SPA

Common and Sandwich Tern, Brent Goose

Green Island

J245-110 Sheet 29

Green Island is located c 800m south west of the village of Greencastle Co Down. The island is long and elongated in shape and consists mainly of raised banks of shingle lying on a bedrock of limestone. There are some rocky outcrops visible on the island's southern edge. The island is owned by the National Trust and the birdlife is managed by the RSPB.

The island is an important breeding site for Sandwich Terns and is a colony of international significance for that species. Other tern species occasionally breed amongst the Sandwich Terns including, occasionally, the rare Roseate Tern. In winter, the island is frequented by both Common and Grey Seals and by roosting waders from the surrounding Carlingford Lough shorelines.

Tides run strongly especially in springs off all points of the island. Kayakers should only consider landing outside of the bird breeding season. No water and strictly no camping. The island is an important waypoint in any tour of Carlingford Lough by sea kayakers.

Blockhouse Island

J255-096 Sheet 29

Blockhouse Island (a guano pile in springtime) lies between Sheep Rock and Haulbowline Lighthouse, is bigger than either but is not named on the OS map. The Island is the southernmost offshore part of Northern Ireland This small rocky islet guards the entrance to Carlingford Lough. A military building was erected here in 1602, now entirely ruined, and was known as Carlingford Fort. It was gifted in 1968 to the National Trust). Blockhouse and

its companion islands became a sanctuary for bird life, but this is less true today than it was 40 years ago, with bird populations having largely moved off the island due to the progressive and ongoing impacts of erosion. The island is small and worthwhile mainly as a waypoint on tour, as landing may always be had onto stormbeaches on the W or slabby limestone on the E side.

The lighthouse just to the E at J260-096 is 20m high with a white light flashing three times every ten seconds and an ancillary red light lower down continuously flashing. Landing at the lighthouse is not permitted and anyway can only be achieved in calm conditions. The main channel into the lough passes to the N of the island, where one must avoid commercial shipping. Navigation in the lough is very buoyage orientated so consider using Chart 2800. Embark on the S side of the lough from Greenore or from the pretty Carlingford Harbour. The best launching in Greenore is from behind the pier at J225-107, and in Carlingford launch just outside the E pier at J194-118, as the silted harbour exposes black mud at the bottom of the tide.

On the Northern Ireland side, launch from Greencastle Point at J242-117, or a small car park and beach at J263-107, between Soldiers Point and Cranfield Point.

Tides

Tides run strongly in the lough entrance near the island, where the ebb and flow start with local HW and LW, which are much the same as Dublin, especially in the dredged channels E & N of the island, where 5kn can be experienced. On the other hand, on-shore winds on the ebb throw up a fearsome sea state. The ebb tide runs at 3.5kn in springs in the dredged channels. The flow follows the main dredged channels except for an eddy on the flood on the E side of Blockhouse Island.

Good overfalls and races occur during both the flood and the ebb around the Haulbowline Lighthouse. The most pleasant and relatively safe playing in these overfalls is on the flood tide. The area is regularly used by local clubs and centres for rough water training.

The East Coast

Greenore Point to Carnsore Point

County Dublin

Islands off Skerries

A group of three low-lying islands lie just off the coast at Skerries, with 'The Rock' further off. Taken together they form an interesting day trip with good wildlife interest. They are listed as areas of Scientific Interest by Duchás with SPA status. Camping is possible, but no water is available. The presence of a healthy population of rats on the inner islands may discourage an overnight. Rugged Rockabill further out is a lighthouse island rock.

SPA

Short-eared Owl (up to 7 in winter), Golden Plover, and Common, Sandwich and Roseate Tern.

Embarkation

The most convenient embarkation place is at the slipway beside the RNLI building at the pier in Skerries, where parking is generally convenient at O255-612, but not for larger groups

especially in summer. Otherwise its Pay&Display or search. Do not, under any circumstances, block the access to or interfere with the operation of the lifeboat station, or of the working pier. Launching may also be had less conveniently from the E facing South Strand, but only at HW to avoid a long carry.

The main catch at Skerries is prawn and shrimp. Accordingly, the local fishermen are benignly disposed to seals, which do not catch either. Seals are plentiful hereabouts.

Tides

The flows flood generally north and ebb south. Tides flow strongly in the sounds.

Among Inner Islands		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	4:30 after Dublin HW	2kn
S	1:30 before Dublin HW	2kn

The cycle starts and finishes about 10 minutes later at neaps at -1:20 and +4:20. The speed does not take into account local anomalies. Certainly the speed of the ebb tide on the northeastern side of St. Patrick's Island are greater than stated due to some of the ebb flow being deflected eastwards from the inner bay. The speed and sea state are also increased by a rock shelf of the northeastern corner.

The speed over Dithaun spit which runs west from St. Patrick's Island is similarly higher but only for 1-1:30 hours after HW.

Between St. Patrick's & Rockabill		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	5:30 after Dublin HW	2kn
S	0:30 before Dublin HW	2kn

The cycle starts and finishes about 10 minutes later at neaps at 0:20 before and 5:20 after Dublin HW.

Shallow areas to the east of St. Patrick's and Shenick can speed up the flow locally.

Local HW/LW is 20 minutes before Dublin.

Colt Island

O267-611 Sheet 43

A small, low-lying island lying just off the point at Skerries. Land easily on sand/shingle on SW side. The E side has reefs and breakers that should be avoided in strong NE - SE winds in spring ebb tides.

Saint Patrick's Island

O276-613 Sheet 43

A small island, outside Colt, known locally as Church Island. The accuracy as to whether St. Patrick ever landed here is a source of some debate. This is the jumping off point for Rockabill. Land easily at a sheltered storm beach, just W of the S tip, in almost any conditions. Landing is also possible at higher tides at a shingle cove just further E. There is a further landing place on the N facing shore near a ruined house and marked by two metal poles - a small beachlet among the rocks, for when southerlies prevail.

There is the ruin of an Early Christian Church and a small monastery, which dates back to Viking times. It was important enough to merit a synod being held in 1148 in which fifteen

bishops, two hundred priests, and several other clergy assisted. The church towards the E tip is still very much worth the visit.

St Patrick's Island has an internationally important breeding population of Cormorants (2001 Census) of 550 pairs. There are breeding gulls, Shags and Fulmars in summer, while geese, ducks and waders provide winter interest. There is a colony of 70-80 Grey Seals, especially during winter.

The NE and eastern sides of the island catch the full ebb tide over a rocky underwater reef. Overfalls can develop, especially in S/SE winds against a spring ebb tide. In the sound between St. Patrick's and Colt Islands, a lesser overfall can develop over a small bar that extends westwards off the corner of St. Patrick's.

Shenick Island

O267-598 Sheet 43

Shenick is the most southerly of the inshore group and is dominated by a Martello tower at its northern end. This is a Birdwatch Ireland reserve since May 1987. Kayakers landing should be sensitive to the effects of disturbance in the breeding season (April / June). The island has both a geological and natural history interest. There are breeding Fulmar, gulls, Oystercatcher and Shelduck, while in winter the numbers of Brent Goose, Curlew, Purple Sandpiper, Ringed Plover and Short-eared Owl make the island a nationally important site.

Land easily at the NW side onto a beach under the Martello tower. This beach is on the N side of a spit reaching out W towards the mainland, and is usually sheltered. The passage between Shenick Island and the mainland virtually dries out at LW.

Rockabill

O323-626 Sheet 43

Rockabill is the larger of two granite rocky islets, strictly called Lighthouse Island. The smaller islet is the Bill and they are connected at LWS. They have a total area of 0.9ha above the high water mark. The lighthouse was first constructed in 1860, and was rebuilt in 1900. It was automated in April 1989. The island was designated as a Special Protection Area in 1988 and as a Statutory Refuge for Fauna under the Wildlife Act 1976. The Roseate Tern Conservation Project began in May 1989 and prevents landing in spring and early summer. Ask Birdwatch Ireland at (01) 2819878 if in doubt. Resident wardens enforce the restrictions. The Roseate Tern is an endangered species so do respect the rules. Ireland takes seriously its duty to Roseate Tern and Brent Goose, its two biggest contributions to international conservation. This conservation programme is one of the huge successes for Birdwatch Ireland. 90% of Ireland's Roseates breed here, which represents 35% of Europe's population, so it really is off limits in season.

Landing

Landing on Lighthouse Island is in the sound between the two islands onto a small pier with steps or onto rocks to the side, depending on circumstances. There is another pier with steps just further E, but which is usually more exposed. A narrow cut immediately right of this pier opens to give a convenient pool at low to half tide for landings. Beware of all landings at HWS when considerable lift can occur.

The Bill

O323-628 Sheet 43

Landing is possible on the Bill at low water in calm conditions onto rock shelves on the western corner. At LWS, it is possible to clamber across kelp-covered rocks between the two islands. The Bill is quite an enjoyable rock scramble, and holds breeding Arctic Tern, Common Tern and a small Kittiwake colony in season.

Lambay Island

O315-500 Sheet 43

Embarkation

The closest approach is from Donabate Martello Tower at O263-505 but this would only be suitable if travelling out and back on the flood. Rush Harbour at O274-543 is almost as near, and in calm conditions is handiest on the ebbing tide. Parking though is tight at the pier but there is a convenient carpark and a cary down steps under an arch at the W end of the beac. In NE winds or a strong ebb tide, launch in Loughshinny Harbour at O273-568.

Loughshinny is always dependable, sheltered, has good parking, and is the best choice with bigger groups. The best plan for a day trip is a slingshot from Loughshinny (excellent parking), lunching at the island during the LW slack.

Landing

The island is privately owned by the Revelstoke family and no landing should take place. This is particularly true of the W side of the island where the main harbour and housing is situated. The owners value their privacy, the welfare of the nesting wild bird population, and the health of their most unusual domesticated animal population, marsupials included. If in distress, at least stay below the HW line and out of sight. There are also some useful waystops on the circumnavigation of Lambay.

There are two satisfactory beaches on the N side, just E of the NW point, one tucked into the point itself facing E at O310-515, and the other is just further E, below an unsightly rubbish dump, facing N at O312-514. The next option is Carrickdorrish O330-515, an islet 200m WNW of the Nose, being the extreme NE point of the island, barely offlying the main island. There are no beaches or landing sites anywhere on the E side of the island, but there are three excellent, small, sandy or stony beaches on the S side, in sheltered coves. One is in the middle in Bishops Bay at O315-500, one W of the middle O312-503 somewhat out of harm's way, and one tucked into the SW corner O307-505.

Tides

Tidal races run strongly on all four corners. Local HW is the same as Dublin HW.

Between Lambay & the mainland		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	4:30 after Dublin HW	2kn
S	1:30 before Dublin HW	2kn

There is a north-going eddy up the eastern side of the island on the spring ebb from Sunk Island in the south to the Nose.

Flora & fauna

The island is a significant wild bird habitat and holds internationally important numbers of breeding Cormorant, Shag, Razorbill and Guillemot. 59,000 breeding pairs of Guillemot were

counted in 1995/1999, which makes it the second most important colony in Ireland after Rathlin Island (c.96,000 pairs). It is the most important colony for Herring Gull and Shag in the country. The 675 pairs (1999 census) of Cormorant qualify this as the largest colony in Ireland. The new Gannet colony started only 2008 is thriving summer 2010 at Harp Ear, the most NE point of the island O320-517. In winter, there are up to 1,000 Greylag, and several other species of geese. The Sunfish on display in the Natural History Museum was found in a rockpool at LW on Lambay.

In the 1980s a herd of Red Necked Wallabies were donated by Dublin zoo, and began breeding in 1995. They thrive to this day. The colony is now 40+ strong, and hangs out at or near the summit, fenced off from the cattle.

The last surviving substantial elm tree forest in Ireland is on Lambay.

SPA

Barnacle Goose, Peregrine

History

Porphyry flint tools of such a high quality as were probably ornamental were manufactured here from about 5,000 BC to 500 BC. The Romans never got to the Irish mainland that we know of for certain, but they did get to Lambay, traded with it, and called it *Limnios*. In 795, the first ever raid by the Vikings on Ireland happened here. Lambay is a Viking word, the *ay* meaning *island*. After the Battle of the Boyne in 1691, a 15th Century castle was used as a concentration camp for the defeated Jacobite troops. This was converted / extended into a fine mansion around 1900 under the guidance of the renowned Lutyens. So well is the development designed and carried out, only a trained eye can tell the new from the old. All gates were constructed from timber carved to resemble salvaged shipwreck detritus.

The sea area to the N and NE were for centuries an important anchorage for shipping awaiting entering or leaving Dublin port. A harbour was constructed in the 1820s designed by *Nimmo*, larger than an island surely needs, proof of its then importance in the scheme of things.

Seabirds eggs have been harvested here on the grand scale in times of crisis, most recently during WW2 or *The Emergency* as that débacle was known locally at the time, even being exported to England. Apparently the birds all feed on municipal dumps across on the mainland and the eggs do no taste fishy at all at all.

Lambay boasts one of Ireland's only two *Real Tennis* or *Royal Tennis* courts, built in 1922/23 during the Civil War. The court is the size and shape of a large tennis court but surrounded by low buildings with inward sloping roofs, where the ball may be whacked and retrieved. The rules do not easily suggest themselves. The other court survives in the grounds of the National Concert Hall in Dublin City.

Praeger

In 1905/6 Robert Lloyd Praeger, Ireland's greatest ever naturalist, led a team of 20 professional naturalists to examine this isolated 2.5km^2 island, with the intensity of a forensic police "finger tip" search. It was in part a post Darwinian experiment, in testing an offshore island as a focus point for development in the nature of species caused by lengthy estrangement from the mass. They didn't find any, but they did find 5 species new to science (3 worms, 1 mite and 1 bristletail), 17 species new to the British Isles, and 90 new to Ireland.

They reported 60+ hectares of heath at the summit, now sadly reduced to two plants widely separated. One pyramid orchid is conserved inside a wire cage against lawnmowers.

Shipwreck

The White Star Line lost the largest merchantman ever built in Britain, its biggest, best, and most modern passenger ship, on its maiden voyage, in a major tragedy with huge loss of life, trying to set a new record for the shortest ever sea passage to the new world for the British and Irish emigrants aboard. Sounds familiar ? Sounds like the *Titanic*? Wrong.

Long before the Titanic in 1912, it had all happened before.

The '*Tayleur*' left Liverpool in January 1854. It was about the first ever ironclad clipper, huge at 1979 tons, with masts 45m high, and at least 650 passengers, maybe a lot more. There were five different classifications of passengers, yet there was no mention of vegetables or fruit on any of its menus. Scurvy was just about then becoming understood. Clippers were square-riggers, built for forward speed, not for manoeuvring. It had little in the way of sea trials.

The ship was undermanned. The crew was inexperienced. No one on board had yet worked out how to use a compass aboard a metal craft. "Magnetic deviation" was less understood at the time than magnetic variation. In thick weather, land was sighted ahead. It was misidentified, at terrible cost.

Too late, remedial action failed. The passengers, knowing disaster was at hand, crowded the decks and got in the way of the crew. Worse, communication among the crew became impossible in the bedlam on deck. The ship struck the E point of Lambay. In shallow water, the ship died slowly against the rocks. Escape from the ship at this critical point favoured the able bodied, requiring climbing across a mesh of ropes to the shore. While 200 of the 300 adult men made it, only 3 of the 200 others on board, women and children, survived. Many of the mainly Lascar and Chinese crew saved themselves and disappeared. Bodies littered the shore for weeks after. More than half of all aboard drowned. A lot of the figures are estimates. 100 are buried on Lambay. It is guessed that 345 survived and did eventually make Australia. Three Chinese among the survivors gave the tribunal of enquiry the best accounts of the disaster, in which the captain was praised for his crisis management in all the circumstances.

Carrickdorrish

Sheet 43 O330-515

Barely offlying the main island, Carrickdorrish is a small low lying rocky islet, 300m NW of the NE corner ("the Nose") of Lambay Island. The islet is an important roost site for many of Lambay Island's gulls, waders, cormorants and shags. Grey Seals are regularly found hauled out on the numerous rocks and reefs. The narrow channel that separates Carrickdorrish from Lambay is shallow through which tides run strongly as well as outside S to the Nose of Lambay O332-512.

Landing is possible from many points but probably easiest onto a sloping rock ledge in a nook on the SW side. The island is ideally positioned for a way stop / lunch point for anyone circumnavigating Lambay. No water.

Sunk Island

O323-398 Sheet 50

A small rocky island located on the SE corner of Lambay Island. The island marks the NE corner of a small attractive bay called Sunk Island Bay. The bay's cliff edges hold good numbers of breeding seabirds, and the island has 40-50 pairs of Guillemots and Razorbills and c.10 pairs of Shags.

Landing at times of HW is onto a very convenient flat rock platform at SW corner. No water. No camping. Climb to small grass covered top overlooking narrow cut on its W side. This very narrow cut with steep walls on both sides separates the island from Lambay Island. The cut is just about navigable by kayak in good conditions at HW. The passage is atmospheric but is committing as there is no room for paddle strokes so good judgement is necessary.

Dublin North - Camping

For camping kayakers on passage, getting past Dublin is a challenge. On the N side, possibilities are few. Skerries town is perfectly possible and particularly along the beach S of the town, but it is a quite public promenade. The inner islands off Skerries offer an alternative choice, but all harbour rat populations for company, as does Ireland's Eye further S. There are two possibilities that are well secluded, or at least unobtrusive.

O198-660 - Balbriggan

2km NNW of the town. Known locally as Bell's Field, Bremore this headland area has some good sandy beaches located along its northern side with grassy areas for camping. No water available. The area is of archaeological interest and several burial mounds are present.

O272-584 – Shenick's Point

Midway Skerries / Loughshinny, camping is available on grassland above an E-facing storm beach. It is best approached at local HW as landings at the lower waters leave a difficult carry. The site is attractive and relatively quiet and secluded. No water available.

O270-545 - Rush North Beach

Camping and caravan park, tel. 01-8437131. A short carry from HW mark. Land onto a safe sandy beach. Pub grub at 400m walk. Coming from Dublin by car, turn left in Rush along R128 for Skerries, then right after 150m, down to the beach and campsite.

Malahide Arches

O225-469 Sheet 50

The Dublin to Belfast railway line runs across the middle of the Malahide Estuary supported on a 12 arch bridge built on top of a man-made weir. Malahide at 180m is the longest tidal railway viaduct in Ireland. Built in 1844 in timber, that didn't work. Re-built in 1860 in stone with a wrought iron superstructure, it needed to be strengthened in 1932, for diesel locomotives. The stone sub-works were always under pressure and despite re-pointing, the lot was replaced with pre-stressed concrete in 1966-1968. Then in 1998 the timber sleepers in use all over Ireland for 150 years on railway lines were replaced with concrete, to allow continuous welding (impacting on garden design countrywide).

The Malahide Sea Scouts knew for generations that good conditions existed for surfing on an incoming tide of HW 4.0m upwards, and sometimes even at lower levels. This information hit the general canoeing community in the early 1990s and the spot became very popular. It was these local scouts that spotted an impending disaster in August 2009. They reported severe scouring, but no-one listened, at least not attentively enough.

A single pier collapsed, slightly on the S side of the middle, so that two spans then collapsed. This was minutes after the passing of the inter-city express. Minutes later, thankfully in

daylight, the next train driver saw what needed to be seen, and no lives were lost. It happened at a big 4.5m (local average 4.1m) spring tide, just before LW.

The tide floods inwards over most of the weir for a couple of hours coming up to HW, and outwards for the rest. Because most of the face of the weir is studded with anti-scouring boulders, the weir is often mostly impassable, even to kayaks.

However, when the weir was being re-built in 2010, the railway company incorporated a very special feature. The canoeing community credits the Malahide scouts with Ireland's only purpose built leisure facility exploiting tidal energy, designed by humans for humans to play in. Under the 5th arch from the N, a slide 4m wide, 0.3m deep and 28m long has been constructed on the E sea-facing side, its head at the lip of the weir and its foot at LW. This is known as "Macker's Slide", after Paul McEvoy, the scout master who made it possible. Scout leader Ivan Barrett was the first to shoot the slide, and the McKernan sisters the first females.

Playtime

Before 2009 the play conditions had existed on the W landward face of the weir, allowing play for about 3 hours of the 12, on immaculate standing waves and stoppers. The post 2010 arrangement does not allow that, but instead the incoming tide creates the neatest flows and eddies imaginable, on fast flat water, the finest teaching environment possible, particularly ideal for progressing intermediates. The slide has walls either side 0.3m deep. This allows preferential flow at the slide, incoming as well as outgoing, permitting such conditions on quite small tides at this particular arch.

Post 2010 also allows playtime at the foot of the slide on the E seaward face, for maybe 10 hours of the cycle, pretty much the whole time except when the weir is covered, say from +0030 HW Dublin until -0130, varying a bit between neaps and springs. The slide works above a tide height of about 3.8m. The higher it gets the more powerful the hydraulics, but it never "grips" unsafely, nor does it ever "wash out", there being something in it always for someone.

The wave is certainly more powerful on larger tides, is progressively more retentive as the water level outside drops, and at all times the side walls need care exiting the stopper wave. LW on regular tides is a very suitable time for teaching beginners because an instructor can stand on the flat foundations just beyond the wave and extract a learner caught in the wave. Throw ropes are very useful for all parties at all times on the wave.

Launch

The put in point O227-463 is about 1km SE at a slipway just SE of the Marina Village. Follow the one-way road system around clockwise from the village centre and park where you can. The slip is on the left just before the road heads right and inland again. Keep the marina on your left paddling out. The railway is not at first in sight.

SPA

Bar-tailed Godwit, Golden Plover, Little Egret, Ruff, Kingfisher.

Ireland's Eye

O284-414 Sheet 50

Ireland's Eye is an interesting, small, uninhabited island off Howth Harbour.

Circumnavigation is recommended as the cliff scenery is excellent. The island is most

attractive and most popular in early summer. There is a regular ferry in season, from Howth East Pier.

The island is noted for its rock climbing on the tor at the NE corner, on the sea stack just off it, and also on the big cliff centred on the N side. Do please though exercise caution as regards bird life, and climb later in the season.

The church dates back to 700 AD, and is called Cill MacNessan. A manuscript similar to the more famous Book of Kells was penned here by three monks, and it is also preserved in Trinity College Dublin.

SPA

Peregrine. The island is a breeding ground for various auks, Fulmar, Kittiwake, Shag, Cormorant, gulls, and others. In particular, a Gannet colony started to breed here in 1989, and is now the only significant such colony between the Saltees to the S and Ailsa Craig in Scotland.

Embarkation and Landing

There is convenient access at a public slipway beside the Lifeboat Station at O285-394 in Howth Harbour. Landings can be had at various points, the best of which is at the sandy beach just SE of the Martello Tower. No water. The lush parts of the island are rat infested, making camping unattractive.

The Round of Howth Head

The round of Howth Head is a popular trip for Dublin sea paddlers. Ireland's Eye is also attractive to take in as part of the excursion. Attractive for its scenery, and its handy shuttle, the only downside to this trip used always be a sewerage outlet operating just off the Nose of Howth at O301389 on the NE corner of the Head. However, the situation is much improved in 2010 as most of the sewage now goes to the modern treatment works in Sutton and Ringsend.

The put-in point to the N is at the public slipway at the RNLI station in Howth Harbour. There is plentiful parking. To the S of the Head, the launching point is the sandy beach at Sutton Sailing Club at O265-377, just NW of the Martello Tower. The Club is welcoming to small competent and considerate parties. Parking is limited so it is not suitable for large groups. Also, at LW, the tide goes a long way out. A shingle beach at O296-373, 1km N of the Bailey Lighthouse O297-363 offers a welcome break, and there is even a track upwards to the commonage above. Stopping is also possible in several places on the S-facing side of the head.

The round of Howth is usually done anti-clockwise, on a rising tide, best in calm or gentle southerlies. An 'out and back' trip from Howth Harbour is also quite feasible and avoids the shuttle.

SPA

Fulmar, Cormorant, Shag, Herring Gull, Kittiwake, Guillemot, Razorbill, Black Guillemot.

Tides

The main east coast streams run north and south off the Bailey and the Nose and on both sides of Ireland's Eye, where 2kn can be achieved. There can be very bumpy water anywhere on the seaward side, especially with wind over tide. It can be quite nasty in particular at the Bailey where the tidal stream coming out of Dublin Bay meets the main stream. The Nose at

the northeastern side of the head is often very bumpy, easing as one approaches Howth Harbour.

Howth Sound		
Direction	Time	Speed
NW	4:45 after Dublin HW	2kn
SE	1:45 before Dublin HW	2kn

Eastern side of Howth Head		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	4:30 after Dublin HW	2kn
S	1:30 before Dublin HW	2kn

The main east coast flood enters the south side of Dublin Bay heading northeast and circles around the inner bay to exit east along the southern side of Howth Head. The main east coast ebb, except when flowing at its strongest, which means the middle three hours, eddies behind the Bailey around the northern part of the bay. Therefore, an outgoing stream runs east along the southern shore of the Head for 9.5 hours out of the cycle.

Southern side of Howth Head		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	3:00 after Dublin HW	
W	00:30 after the following Dublin HW	weak

Paddlers have found that the east-going stream exiting Dublin Bay at the Bailey can be stronger than the north-going main coastal flood from about 6 hours before Dublin HW to 4 hours before. Thus the stream at the Bailey is a nasty east going race and then a huge circular eddy for about 2km to the north.

Dublin Bay

Outside part

All up along the S part of the E coast of Ireland lies an offshore bank, on average less than 15km off, called by different names as it progresses N. Off Arklow it is called - the Arklow Bank, off Greystones - the Codling Bank, off Bray - the Bray Bank, off Dublin South - the Kish Bank, and then off Dublin North - the Bennet Bank. Tides flow differently inside and outside this offshore feature.

From the Dublin perspective, inside the Kish Bank off Dublin South lies the smaller Burford Bank, a shallow area across almost the whole of the entrance to the bay. Then, further E and dominating the outside of the bay, a major lighthouse lies at the N end of the outer Kish Bank (known locally and simply as “the Kish”), and prominent lights flash at the N and S ends of the Burford Bank.

Outside the Kish the waters are deep, say 25m, at the Kish they are, say 15m, then inside the Kish they are relatively shallow, say 25m. Waters are then deep to the W (with the exception of the Burford Bank outside the bay itself, which goes down to 5m.), to a line between Howth Head and Dalkey, when the bay gets shallow and stays shallow.

The Kish

O390-311 No Sheet (50)

The Kish is located 12km E of Bullock Harbour. The Kish sits on a man-made base. The height of the tower is 29m. Kish flashes twice every 30 seconds, as does its horn, its range is 28nm. Kish has a 10 metre helicopter landing platform. There are strong currents off the Beaufort Bank and the Kish.

Tides

Plan to reach the Kish at slack. HW slack is best so as to avoid the encrusted bottoms of the two ladders, one on the eastern side and one on the western side, which are then the more handily accessed and easily climbed.

Off the Kish lighthouse		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	5:00 after Dublin HW	3kn
S	1:00 before Dublin HW	3kn

Planning:

One should depart in order to reach the Kish at slack, better HW slack. There are two ladders, one on the E side and one on the W side. These are easily climbed and can be easily accessed at slack water. If the lighthouse keeper is there, normally when maintenance is being carried out, he will more than likely come out to greet you. If work permits, he will give you a tour of the light house. Don't forget to sign the visitors book as there are very few kayakers in it. In fog keep an eye out for the South Burford mark.

Ferries and fishing vessels pose a danger, so know the times of the ferries before departing. Remember that the ferry must go north of the Kish bank and south of the Burford bank

Special interest: Storm petrels and porpoises.

History

A light ship was first used in 1811. In foggy weather a gong was sounded but when the Holyhead Packet ship was expected an 18 pounder gun was fired. In 1954 the first of the all electric light vessels - Gannet - was placed on the station. In November 1965 the Kish Light-vessel was withdrawn and replaced by the Kish lighthouse.

Round Trip for a kayak - 3.5 to 4 hours

Inner part

The inner part of the bay, with its city and industrial surrounds, holds little interest for sea kayakers, and is dealt with briefly. All the practical embarkation points are considered. The outer parts of the inner part of the bay, from Dun Laoghaire to Dalkey Island on the S side, and from Sutton to Howth on the N side, are justifiably popular.

popular.

Tidal Overview

The tide floods north and ebbs south off the entrance to the bay. Inside the bay, the situation is more complex. Tides in the middle of the bay are almost stationary. The streams circulate

around the edges. The effect of this is to constantly renew the waters of the bay which dissipates the worst polluting effects of the nearby population. Timings and strengths are very different on the two sides of the bay.

The flood enters the Bay through Muglins and Dalkey Sounds, past Dun Laoghaire Harbour, around the bay and out past the Bailey. The ebb flows past the Bailey towards Dun Laoghaire Harbour and out southeast along the shore to Dalkey Island and it also eddies around the northern part of the bay.

Tides in the north

In the northern part of Dublin Bay, the tides are as per the southern side of Howth Head.

Tides in Dublin Harbour

The streams inside the harbour, under ordinary conditions, go with the rising and falling tide. Beware however heavy rainfall causing the river to flood. The overlying fresh water conditions favour short weak floods and long strong ebbs and the outgoing stream can thus be very strong at the mouth, reaching 3.5kn. This is typical of heavily freshwater-fed enclosed places.

Tides in the south

See Dalkey Island below.

Coastline

North Bull Island forms the entire inner, N side of the Bay, involving a substantial LW carry. Landing, but without road access, is occasionally possible along the S shore of Howth Head. Landing is possible all the way from the mouth of the Liffey to Sandycove, except for regulated areas inside the busy ferry port of Dun Laoghaire Harbour where some parts must be totally avoided. In particular, keep well away from the SE of the harbour. The closer to Dublin though, the less conducive it becomes to land. From Dun Laoghaire Harbour inwards, the shore is mostly sandy beach, with the tide receding long distances at LW. In addition, the railway runs all the way along here making road access only occasionally available.

From Sandycove at O257-281 to Sorrento Point at the S end of Dalkey Sound at O273-261, the ground is almost entirely small granite cliffs fronting impressive private property. Pretty, but landing is practical only at the three public harbours, Sandycove, Bullock and Coliemore.

Dublin Bay Embarkation Points

Sutton Sailing Club

O265-377 Sheet 50

This is an embarkation point for the round of Howth Head. Even here at LW, there is something of a carry, and the parking is very tight. So, if doing a shuttle, leave vehicles at Howth Harbour, irrespective of the direction of the kayak journey. The Club is welcoming, but realistically, the parking is inadequate. The Sailing Club is easily found by car, being well signposted. From Sutton Cross take the road to the Hill of Howth and, after 1km, turn right into Strand Road. Follow the signposts along the shoreline to the club.

Bull Island

O227-374 Sheet 50

N of Dublin Port is the North Bull Island, in the NW corner of the bay. It is connected to the shore by an ancient wooden bridge at O213-359 at its SW end, and a road/causeway at O225-374, midway along the island, built 1962. Much silting of the inner stretch of water has occurred since then, especially close to the causeway, which is now recognised to have been an environmental nightmare, and studies are underway to find a solution. The North Bull Wall which bounds the island on the S also delimits the N side of Dublin Port, and was built in 1825 on the advice of the famous cartographer and harbour builder, Captain Bligh, of *Bounty* fame.

SPA

Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Great Northern Diver, Little Egret, Peregrine, Merlin, Short-eared Owl.

The significance of the Bull for bird watchers is in the huge numbers and the variety of species. It is popular because the birds may be easily watched. Living close to buses, cars, golfers, joggers and even dogs, the birds do not startle easily. In the channels, the rising tide concentrates the birds as it pushes them up the shore, and they can be watched from very close range. The Bull features prominently in the early stages of the education of all Dublin birders. It holds its interest for even the very advanced, because it is always throwing up surprises - rare migrants, and the odd mega-vagrant.

The Bull has internationally important numbers of Brent Goose,*kn*, and many other winter species. Most of the centre of the island is taken up with two golf courses, which are fenced off from the outer rim. Birders are found mostly on the mainland side, and swimmers favour the open beach on the outer side. Hares abound on the golf courses and are tolerated with equanimity by the golfers. There is an Interpretive Centre near the causeway. It probably owes its existence to its timing, as it was built shortly before planning permission became necessary.

Dollymount Strand

O223-353 Sheet 50

Dollymount Strand runs the entire length of the outside of North Bull Island. The embarkation point is at the SW end of the beach. By car, cross the wooden bridge at O213-359 at Clontarf onto the island, and continue past the golf clubhouse into the dunes. There can be a modest carry.

Not a logical embarkation point for anywhere in particular, this put• in point is nonetheless popular for the surf. As well as getting small play-surf, in gentle westerlies in particular, this is where surfers embark to surf the wake of the incoming car ferries. If the ferry is late and hasn't slowed down to enter harbour (a regular occurrence), especially on lower tide levels, the second or third bow wave of the ferry can be large enough to run you all the way to the beach 1km away. Catch it just outside the North Bull Lighthouse. Not for novices.

Poolbeg

O214-336 Sheet 50

Should there be a reason to do so, embarkation is possible, with convenient parking, from the very end of the road leading to the South Pier wall of Dublin Harbour, known as Poolbeg. Launch E of the two red and white towers. It is recommended to launch at HW on the seaward side of the road. The tide recedes a considerable distance here. Circumstances may

not allow this, as surf builds up in a sustained SE blow. The harbour side is available at all tide levels, but a sewerage plant discharges at this point and it's very close to the shipping.

Merrion Gates

O197-311 Sheet 50

One would have to be desperate. Launching and landing is only possible at HW. If so, this is the most convenient spot in terms of parking and launching on the entire S city area. Park and access where the Strand Road meets the Merrion Road and the railway, hence the name, Merrion Gates.

Seapoint

O227-290 Sheet 50

A popular swimming spot and parking is under extreme pressure. Go down a little cul-de-sac called Brighton Vale, off Seapoint Avenue. This spot is convenient for both Seapoint and Salthill Dart stations. From here inwards to Dublin, the LW 'carry' becomes increasingly prohibitive. Launch from the beach out of season. Lifeguards will probably ask you to use the eastern slipway during the summer, to protect swimmers.

Salthill

O233-287 Sheet 50

There is a pleasant beach giving access directly to the open water. It is situated just outside the West Pier of Dun Laoghaire Harbour, reachable by road via the harbour. By car, cross the railway bridge closest to the West Pier at O240-290. Turn immediately left, leaving the railway to the left and the water to the right. Follow the twisting road to its end, 200m further along, under a barrier, at a spacious car park.

This sheltered beach never inflicts too long a carry. Windsurfers and beginner boaters of all kinds use it. Swimmers prefer Seapoint, 600m further E. For kayakers, it is favoured as the embarkation point for starting and ending longer journeys, as parking here never comes under pressure and the length of absence is of no matter. Furthermore, it is just outside the Salthill/Monkstown Dart station.

Coal Harbour

O239-290 Sheet 50

Tucked into the SW corner of Dun Laoghaire Harbour are two inner harbours, collectively known as the Coal Harbour. There are public slipways in both, suitable for those windy days when straying outside would not be sensible. By car, cross the railway bridge as described above. The public car park and slipway are immediately obvious, and signposted.

D.M.Y.C.

O236-289 Sheet 50

Alternatively, also inside the Coal Harbour, but avoiding late night hours, the slipway of the Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club is generally available to visiting boat people. The parking is safer, and the club is welcoming to small competent groups. The club is located at the base of the West Pier close by the railway footbridge.

Forty Foot • Front Harbour

O257-282 Sheet 50

At Scotsman's Bay, this WNW facing little harbour was once much used for the launching of rubber boats by scuba divers, but they ran into trouble with the authorities for their excessive enthusiasm. Now all speed craft are banned from using the slipway there, to the benefit of swimmers and others using the little cove. Kayakers should not attract attention to themselves

as the rule may well be applied to all small boats. Be respectful of other water users, don't do a lot of shouting, and don't strap a big knife to your ankle.

Otherwise, this is a splendid, sheltered little harbour, mostly sand filled, with no boat carry at any stage of the tide. Parking is feasible except in heat waves or holiday times. The Forty Foot is at hand for a swim afterwards. Divers are barred there too, even on foot. This cove needs sustained N or NW winds before the sea gets lumpy.

Bullock Harbour

O263-278 Sheet 50

Bullock has ample parking and easy launching at all stages of the tide, although it is mucky on lower waters. It is the favoured put-in spot on all Dublin's S side. Bullock is a crowded harbour, with boat hiring facilities for the mackerel in season. Of interest is Western Marine, a chandlery that is as well appointed as any in Dublin. The sea just S of the harbour is often lumpy, due to tidal movement and cliffs. In a north-easterly, this can be the most challenging part of the outing. Bullock is the best embarkation place for Dalkey Island.

Maiden Rock

O273-269 Sheet 50

An important Roseate Tern colony has been established on the rock, 500m NW of Dalkey Island. Please give a wide berth during the breeding season from April to July. If in doubt ring Birdwatch Ireland 2819878.

Coliemore Harbour

O273-265 Sheet 50

Parking is very restricted at this attractive little harbour on the Coliemore Road. Small pedestrian ferries ply to Dalkey Island on day trips. Much coarse bottom fishing goes on from the harbour walls. The harbour is very congested, and in swell, launching from the rather steep unsheltered slip can be tricky. It is best on the bottom third of the tide when sand is exposed. Water and toilet are available. A pretty place.

Dalkey Island

O277-263 Sheet 50

An interesting small grassy island, it has a Martello Tower, a fort, black rabbits, goats and other furry creatures. No reliable water has been found but a well W of the church, just above the shore, is kept whitewashed. The views of Dublin Bay from both the Martello Tower and the ruined fort are well worth the trouble. Until a generation ago, the King of Dalkey Island was elected locally and crowned on the island, but the practice died out in the 1980s.

History

Roman coinage was found here dated to 352AD, so the Romans may have traded from a base here. Vikings named it *Dalk Eyja* ("Thorn Island") and the Irish name means the same "*Deilg Inis*". Archaeological excavations have revealed Mesolithic Bann flakes, Neolithic hollow scrapers and Bronze Age arrowheads on the island. In the early medieval period, the island was a base for sea-going traders, importing goods from the Mediterranean and western France.

The medieval church is dedicated to St. Begnet. The lintelled doorway is a feature of the period prior to the 12th Century. The bellcote high on the gable above is likely to have been added later, possibly in the 15th Century. The high side walls might also have been raised

about then. The fireplace at the E end was added when the church was used as a residence by soldiers and masons in the early 19th Century.

The Martello Tower and the gun battery were built in response to the threat of invasion from French forces around 1804 and 1805. The tower is exceptionally large. The original entrance is high up and was reached by a ladder. The present entrance (recently closed, unfortunately) is an insertion and leads directly into the magazine. The gun platform on the roof mounted two 24-pounder guns.

The gun battery is built into the granite cliffs on the southern tip of the island. While it is unimposing from the mainland, ships sailing into Dublin Bay would have had three large guns trained on them.

Embarkation

Embark from Bullock Harbour at O263-277, 3km NW, rather than the nearer Coliemore Harbour. Launching and parking is easier.

Landing

Landing is best at a little beach on the landward side of the NW corner, W of the church. There is also a little cove just inside the nearby pier. The beach here is usable except on the bottom third of the tide. A regular ferry runs from Coliemore Harbour opposite to the pier.

Tides

The tide runs strongly on both sides of Dalkey Island.

Dalkey Sound		
Direction	Time	Speed
NNW	4:00 after Dublin HW	2.5kn
SSE	2:00 before Dublin HW	2.5kn

The tide changes half an hour later in neaps, the flood starting at 4:30 after Dublin HW and the ebb at 1:30 before Dublin HW.

One stream of the flood tide swings around Killiney Bay and divides, one part moving NNW through Dalkey Sound, the other sweeping east out to sea past the southern tip of Dalkey Island and on past Muglins.

Expect overfalls on the flood at the southern tip of the island. These are particularly big with a south or southeasterly swell. If in doubt about the conditions, have a look from a safe distance at Sorrento Point. Otherwise, following the coast of the island will ensure you are in the full flow before you see the overfalls. A decision to turn back at this stage will mean paddling against a 2-3kn flow.

The Muglins

O284-268 Sheet 50

Often visited in tandem with Dalkey Island, Muglins is a rock with a light beacon, 500m NE of Dalkey Island. Tides are the same as for the outside of Dalkey Island, i.e. the flow changes with Dublin HW and LW. Landing is forbidden, and the tide flows strongly. Beloved of divers and anglers.

Killiney Bay

O260-246 Sheet 50

Between Dublin and Bray is a green belt which professional planners are determined to keep that way, and we wish their efforts well. Killiney Bay is where this green belt enters the sea.

One of the prettiest bays around Dublin, road and place names fancifully reflect supposed Italian counterparts S of Rome. White Rock at O266-257 is 600m past Sorrento Point and has rocky outcrops with popular bathing places. A gravel beach runs the next 6.5km to Bray. The railway runs just inland of the northern part, the station being where the footbridge is visible at O260-242.

2km offshore at this N end of the bay is the shallow Frazer Bank, which has an enormous effect upon the flood tide. One branch of the tide flows in a curve close along inshore and veers eastwards to meet the main tide flooding northwards in the direction of Dalkey Island and the Muglins. The two streams collide just SE of Dalkey Island. A severe dose of bumpy water is thus set up. The spot is infamous, with wild but somewhat controlled conditions.

County Wicklow

Bray

O276-179 Sheet 56

Bray is a large town and was once a satellite of Dublin from where people came on holidays. Now it is virtually a suburb of the metropolis. As a legacy, a wide promenade runs the entire 1.5km length of the town front, from Bray Harbour at O270-193 in the N to Bray Head at O276-179 in the S. The entire promenade is given over to tourism, amusement arcades in the S with pubs and B&Bs at the other end.

The River Dargle enters the sea through the harbour. It dries out at LW when it is not a particularly attractive embarkation point, being very silted. There is a slipway and beach in the harbour, which is usable on the top two-thirds of the tide. There is another slipway on the outside of the N pier. A Martello Tower stands at the base of the S pier.

Bray Head

O286-170 Sheet 56

Bray Head is a mountain with twin peaks. The more northerly, 206m high peak has a prominent cross on top. The higher, 240m peak is to the S. At shore level, there are two roughly equivalent headlands, Bray Head at O286-170 and Cable Rock at O290-156. Cable Rock is a pronounced headland with an off-lying rock. There are large seabird colonies on the head in the breeding season.

Swell develops if there are sustained or strong winds from N, E or S, and gives difficult conditions all along the headland from the promenade in Bray to Cable Rock. The sea frequently breaks over Cable Rock, 80m off the headland. The tide flows strongly through the gap. Beware of a deeper rock, about 50m off the shore, which breaks the lower half of the tide in bad conditions. The sea state off Bray Head is almost always more severe than on the adjoining coast. Rogue waves are not unusual. This is not a place to go swimming, as the escape routes are tricky, the few storm beaches having dumping surf.

This whole 3km section is a fine paddle, very scenic, the slopes of Bray Head rising above, and the cliffs at the water's edge a modest rock-climbing haven. Look for the climbing cliffs just N of the Cable Rock headland. They are identified by the metal spikes in the steep ground in the first 20m above HW where the railway tunnel opens.

There are three landable storm beaches on the head, but they are exposed and steep, or even missing, at HW. Above them runs the railway line, which was engineered out of the cliff with

great difficulty in the mid 19th Century. The most convenient embarkation point in Bray is at the extreme S end of the promenade at O276-179, closest to the head.

Tides

Dalkey Island to Wicklow Head		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	5:15 after Dublin HW	3.5kn
S	0:45 before Dublin HW	3kn

North of Greystones, it is mostly possible to keep inshore, out of the way of an unfavourable tide. South of Greystones, one is unsheltered from ebb or flood and this stretch is a sustained hard battle if against the tide.

Greystones

O296-128 Sheet 56

Greystones Harbour lies almost 3km S of Cable Rock. Greystones North Beach is mostly shingle, backed by quickly eroding mud cliffs.

The beach inside the harbour is the easiest embarkation point for kayaks, at any point of the tide. Close nearby is a chip shop, ice cream, pub, and all small modern town facilities. The walk on the shore above the cliffs along here up Bray Head is lovely, as is the walking southwards along the shore.

The harbour environment has been the subject of massive development since about 2006. It is not clear whether the apartment complex / marina that were to accompany the harbour walls reconstruction will ever be finished. It is a work in progress, or as the case may be.

Greystones to Wicklow

O296-128 - T317-942 Sheet 56

For 20km S of Greystones, all the way to Wicklow town, the immediate coastline is uniformly flat and boring when seen from the sea. The backdrop however is the Wicklow Hills, known as the Garden of Ireland, always lovely. Landing can be achieved at any point but the shingle beach is mostly steep with dumping surf. On land, the going is anything but boring. The railway runs the entire length of the stretch, right on top of the beach, with pleasant perambulating pathways beside it. Four roads come down to the sea from the coastal highway, so the section may be broken into smaller bits for more leisurely-minded strollers. The more determined can walk from Bray or Greystones to Wicklow and get the train back.

SPA
Bewick and Whooper Swan, Little Tern, Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit.

1km of rocky coastline S from the harbour, the town ends and the long beach begins at O299-121. The hinterland along the entire stretch attracts rare bird species, especially waders, and particularly in winter. 6km S along the sandy beach, the Kilcoole wetland system flows under a bridge at O315-061, called locally “The Breaches”, and into the sea. This wetland system is unique in being so low-lying that it has been scantily mapped by the OS.

More to the naturalist’s taste, there are two eco-systems in one, fresh water and salt water, side by side. The two are wonderfully different, barely separated, and the subject of much study as to their comparable flora and fauna. Barry O’Flynn of nearby Kilcoole carried out the first study in 1973. The more northerly is fresh water and includes a Birdwatch Ireland reserve, 1.5km N of the Breaches.

In summer, there is a colony of Little Tern maybe 200m N of the Breaches, the largest in Ireland, also a Birdwatch Ireland reserve, between the bridge and a major stand of Sea Buckthorn. The terns nest in the gravel of the beach, and are so splendidly camouflaged that it is truly inconsiderate to walk on the beach hereabouts at all in season. The colony area is well marked from landward. Please therefore be careful if landing.

Birdwatch Ireland are rumoured to have had a major crisis of conscience some years back about this colony. It was preyed upon by a Kestrel, who could scope the area wonderfully from a perch on the electricity wires where they crossed the bridge. The kestrel was so successful that it became necessary to employ wardens on a permanent 24/7 rota. Even the permanent wardening wasn't enough and there were rumblings of a strategic alliance with a local gun club. The kestrel became famous under the stage name "Kevin the Killer Kestrel from Kilcoole". It is said the Irish Minister for the Environment somehow persuaded his governmental colleague the Minister for Energy to put all electricity wires in the area underground, even at the bridge, and apparently it worked. Kevin lost his easy number, got bored, and went away, as bored kestrels do.

About 3km further S is Six Mile Point at O318-038, the most easterly point on the route. The km S of Six mile Point is the most intensive of all Irish bird reserves, managed by Birdwatch from their nearby HQ.

Camping.

Pleasantly camp just about anywhere S of Greystones. Indeed this is probably the first grassy camping S of Dublin.

Tides

From Dalkey Island to Wicklow Head, the N going flood runs from Dublin HW +0515 to -0045, achieving 3.5kn in places, in springs. The S going ebb achieves 3kn. This stretch is unsheltered from ebb or flood, and is a sustained hard battle if against the tide.

Wicklow Town

T317-942 Sheet 56

Wicklow is a major town, where just about everything may be acquired.

Embarkation

Wicklow Harbour is by far the easiest access hereabouts for day trips to Wicklow Head, or journeys N. Use a sheltered gravel beach just inside the W pier where there is plenty of parking, reached by crossing the bridge in the town. Alternatively, use a slipway beside the Lifeboat Station just inside the East Pier T322-941, where parking is more restricted, reached by turning hard right before the bridge.

Broad Lough

The Leitrim River, only 1km long, connects the Broad Lough to Wicklow Harbour. The Broad Lough is an expanse of fresh water, running N for 4 to 5km, just inside the shoreline. The Lough is bounded on its E by a thin spit of low-lying land down which runs the main Dublin to Rosslare railway line. On the W is Tinakilly House, and some of the finest reed beds a Thatcher ever saw. This is a summer breeding place of Reed Warbler. It is a wild place, home to Greylag Geese and myriad other wintering species in the cold months. It can be shallow and muddy at anything except HW, which is sometime later than at Wicklow town itself. The Leitrim River is tidal with a significant flow on the narrower stretches when the

water level in the harbour is lower than that in the lough. Broad Lough is good to paddle when conditions are bad elsewhere.

SPA

Little Egret, Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Merlin, Ruff, Bar-tailed Godwit, Kingfisher.

Wicklow Head

T235-924 Sheet 56

Wicklow Head is a serious attraction to E coast paddlers in search of truly powerful sea forces in a full-blooded open water environment, yet with sanctuary nearby. On the head is a huge lighthouse, amongst the most powerful on the E coast. There are cliffs and caves on both sides. There is a pronounced eddy system either side of the head itself, and guaranteed playtime except for the shortest of slacks. On passage, err with caution to get past efficiently, as this is undoubtedly one of the most significant headlands of the S part of the E coast.

Tides

At Wicklow Head, the north-going flood starts earlier than on the Dublin/North Wicklow coast further north.

Wicklow Head		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	3:45 after Dublin HW	5kn
S	1:15 before Dublin HW	6kn

Off Wicklow Head where big boats go, the flood is up to 4kn and the ebb 3kn, but close by the rocks where kayaks go, the current gets seriously fast. Local paddlers say 6kn.

On the flood, the tide race is 600m to the south of the lighthouse.

On the ebb, there is a small race at Bride's Head between Wicklow Harbour and Wicklow Head. The main race is under the lighthouse.

It is always possible to rest in eddies except when the wind is from the eastern quadrant. From Wicklow Harbour to Wicklow Head, the tide close inshore always runs southeast. On the ebb, it runs strongly at up to 3kn. On the flood, a major eddy system operates. Local paddlers report considerable struggles close inshore in springs. Going north, keep in the bumpy main flow for 1km at least and then keep at least 1km offshore until Wicklow Harbour.

Going south, on the other side of Wicklow Head, keep in the main flow as long as you can. A weaker eddy system operates, almost as far as Long Rock at Silver Strand at T338-910.

Inshore tides all along the Wicklow and Wexford coasts generally follow the direction of the coast and information on timing is unreliable. From Wicklow Head to Arklow, the flood is thought to run up to 3kn in springs and the ebb at 1kn and the best estimate for times is the same as Wicklow Head.

Embarkation

Access to the Head is usually from Wicklow town as described above, but if a launching from S is preferred, there are several awkward choices. Public access is always available from Brittas Bay, but this is 10km to the S. Closer access points involve an awkward carry down steep steps to a beach. Magheramore beach at T330-884 is loved by surfers, especially on a low tide with a sustained wind from the S/SSE. Surfers leave their cars out on the road at T324-886 and carry their equipment to the beach, on foot. The access at Silver Strand at

T337-911 is the most reliable, at least in summer, and closest. The road access at T336-914 is through the more N of two paying caravan parks above the beach. It involves a cruelly steep carry down long steps and a (seemingly) much longer carry back up later. Camping is possible and the surroundings are pleasant. This is a famous fishing spot, and there is friendly surf on the beach for playing in. It may be closed in wintertime.

SPA

Peregrine, Merlin.

Arklow to Wexford

Tides

The tides between Arklow and Wexford Harbour follow the line of the coast and begin and end as follows:

Arklow – Wexford Harbour		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	4:00 after Dublin HW	2kn
S	2:30 before Dublin HW	2kn

The amphidromic point near Cahore reduces the tidal range and ensures the times change rapidly over a relatively short distance.

County Wexford

Wexford Harbour

“The entrance to Wexford Harbour is a real archipelago of sand spits, sand bars and sand islands that grow, shrink and disappear with the ebb and flow of the tide.” Jasper Winn (surely the most entertaining ever “round Ireland kayaker”?) has it absolutely right. Things do change by the minute, but more slowly, more profoundly too. The larger picture is that huge changes occurred throughout the 20th century. Rosslare Point lies nowadays 4.5km SSW of Raven Point but was always historically about 1km to its SE ! Storms broke through the narrow Rosslare peninsula in the winter of 1924/1925, making an island out of the tip, leaving its mediaeval fort and 47 coastguard houses stranded, which have since almost disappeared, as the island sank into the sand. Tern Island, inside the newly widened mouth, was sold by a local to Birdwatch Ireland in the early 1970s but disappeared in a storm shortly after. What is now Horseshoe Island (SE of the entrance) was once part of the burrow of Rosslare, reachable by Honda 50 until the late 1970s.

Because of the shallows, beware almost constant rough water the width of the harbour entrance and for a ways outside. The safest passage inwards or outwards these days seems to be hard by The Raven Point or N side, but it is poorly marked. Rough water occurs on rising and falling tides. On passage past, best perhaps keep somewhat off the direct line.

Rosslare Fort Island

T121-218 Sheet 77

The island is nowadays merely two (it was one in October 2011, two on 24 January 2015) of the many sandbanks hereabouts except that firstly, it is very extensive and “tall” enough that it even pokes its head above HW sufficiently consistently that it has marram grass on its

“summit” at T121-218 on the NE part. The NE part of the island, having marram grass, may be “growing” again? Secondly, to say it is redolent of history is an extraordinary understatement. The “fort” on the SW part T114-213 is on the “other” SW half of the “island”.

The island is huge. It probably covers 100 hectares at LWS. It runs SW/NE. The fort is near the SW tip. The summit is far to the NE. Across the channel dividing the two parts. The actual NE tip is somewhere way further north again, out of sight of the summit, appearing to stretch away and away maybe almost towards Curracloe. The main channel once entered on the north side of the island between the island and Ravens Point, but no more. The main channel now enters south of the island, the channel now halfway between Ravens Point and Rosslare Point.

Tides

Tides run strong. Trawlers can be seen on the ebb, with their engines growling, barely making progress up the main channel south of the island. The tides pour out of the harbour 9 / 12, supposedly weakly, and inwards 3 / 12, supposedly strongly. HW at the quayside in Wexford town is Dublin -0430. The tidal streams inside the harbour turn with HW and LW at the Wexford quayside. Further out, HW/LW at our island / the harbour mouth, is about 75 minutes earlier.

Embarkation

Embarkation isn't easy. The launching spot can be hard to decide, and depends on conditions.

- Simplest is Ardavan beach at T066-238, where there is an acceptable carry, and good parking. The problem here is the return, which inevitably involves very low water, given that the visit to the island will be for its LW which is an hour before Ardavan's LW. Much of the return journey is in 20cm of water, and hard on the system.
- Do not make the mistake of trying to get closer, up by the bird reserve, 1km east. Anyone getting up on the tidal restraining wall will cause 10,000 geese to put to wing, and a tribunal of enquiry will follow locally, immediately, with lynching a strong possible outcome. Birders are highly motivated folk and are not to be underestimated.
- Other possibilities apparent on the OS, further east, are dead ends. Unless perhaps one works for Coillte.
- Curracloe to the north T115-266 in W wind might be on.
- Confident paddlers might consider Rosslare Point T110-187, but be sure to have made your will before departing. See what Jasper Wynne has to say about the matter. I have seen the tides thereabouts with wind over and would not wish them on ordinary folks.

The fort for which the island is named was built in 1642 as part of the great struggle then overwhelming Ireland as part of the greater UK conflict. “Royalists” stuck by their king, while “Parliamentarians” wanted democracy. The Irish “Confederates” just wanted to be left out of it. Problem was that after Irish Ireland was so badly beaten at Kinsale in 1601, a lot of UK commercial interests followed. These then expanded in Ireland, as such things have

always developed, mostly agricultural on this particular occasion, at the time termed “planting”. The 1600s was a cruel century and the 1640s a cruellest of decades (it had competition, later). In 1641 all hell broke loose when the Confederates saw their opportunity, and in due course, one Oliver Cromwell was despatched by the Parliamentarians in the UK to subdue and punish the Irish pretenders. He was a man in a hurry. Custom of the time gave mercy to towns surrendering without the attackers having to waste bullets and even lives in an attack, and surrender was well rewarded, as it were. Dublin did, Drogheda didn’t, and were treated accordingly. The Wexford defenders agreed to surrender, then broke the deal, tried to renegotiate. This really irritated the great man and Wexford paid the price.

The defence of Wexford included our Rosslare Fort. Cromwell’s navy arrived off Wexford Harbour and the small garrison fought heroically until their supply of ammunition was exhausted. They did escape, except perhaps they didn’t understand all the rules and they left their wives and children behind, 89 of them. Cromwell rounded-up the wives and children left behind and forced them to trudge along to just outside the walls of Wexford. Despite their pleas and their heart-rending shrieks they were all massacred without mercy. One by one. Wexford eventually got the message and surrendered.

Locals say the remains of the fort and houses appear and disappear at times, but in late 2011 there was only a remnant breakwater to remind anyone where the fort once stood, nowadays marked by a N mark on a pole (in 2011 it should have been an east mark, in 2015 it should have been a south mark).

Horseshoe Island

T091-199 Sheet 77

The island is long, narrow and flat, lying N/S, about 1.5km x 0.5km maximum width at its higher N end. It is located about 1km NW of Rosslare Point T099-188, off the area known locally as the Burrow or Rosslare Back Strand. Its LW footprint is huge, and has only in recent years become completely detached from the mainland. Wexford Harbour is a complex area of shifting and drying sandbanks, and considerable areas dry out at LW. Mussel farming is very big in the area.

The island has been formed since the early 1980s when neighbouring Tern Island was washed away in winter storms. The neighbour, Tern Island, was known to hold some 2000+ breeding Irish Roseate Terns. The species’ last refuge was Rockabill, Co. Dublin, where a dedicated wardening and conservation scheme began in 1989, which has been successful in restoring the breeding numbers.

Horseshoe Island is larger than one would expect when viewed from the mainland and is a pleasant combination of sandy beaches mixed with dune complex and intertidal salt marsh areas. The island’s central ridge is covered in Phragmites reeds and the sheltered N end has huge quantities of Glasswort. Camping is attractive but no water found.

The island is a very important roosting and feeding area for terns and waders on migration, while Ringed Plover and Little Tern breed in significant numbers.

Access

Launch from the end of the rough track leading to the Point on the W side. Landing is best on the E beach facing the Point. This island may just be accessible on foot at LWS.

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Tuskar Rock

T227-072 Sheet 77

Ireland's most SE island, this austere, 5m high rock is 9km off the coast across strong currents. The passage is 11km from the beach, and deserves respect. There is a very remote and exposed feel to this place, which is famous for its lighthouse.

Landing

The steps at the small quay on the ENE side are probably the best landing. There is a narrow channel behind the quay but it surges. There are steps on the WNW side, should sea conditions allow. There are possible exposed landings at the S, and some shelving slabs on the N side, either of which might work.

Fauna

The island has an impressive list of recorded bird species, largely documented by R. M. Barrington (1900). Successive light keepers assembled the records from detailed recording in the 1800s. The island is a magnet for migrant birds due to its strategic position as the main entry and exit point from Ireland to mainland Europe. Barrington records several occasions when over 3,000 birds were killed at the light in one night during poor weather conditions. Seal, Common Porpoise and Dolphin are frequently reported.

Tides and Trip Planning

The trip planning requires thought. The tides run at over 3kn in the main channel on springs. A straight out-and-back ferry glide is impractical for slow boats - a slingshot approach is recommended from the northwest. There is no suitable launching place to the southwest and worse, the tide sets over a dangerous shallow area halfway out called The Bailies at T177-060. This long, thin, north/south strip should be avoided.

The option of coming from the north avoids The Bailies and means catching the last of the south-going ebb.

Between Tuskar and the mainland		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	4:30 after Dublin HW	2.5kn
S	2:30 before Dublin HW	3kn

Aim to be on the rock at slack water. Launch 90 minutes beforehand at 3 hours after Dublin HW from the beach at T140-123 at the back (i.e. southeast) of Rosslare Harbour pier. The entrance is just off the roundabout at the entrance to the ferry terminal. Here there is room for large groups with a manageable carry to the water, but beware of a 2m height barrier.

The harbour is the major ferry terminal of the southeast of Ireland. Make no mistake – on the way out, get well out from the land and come down onto the rock. The return journey is simpler but more energetic. Make for the mainland and then creep round Greenore Point. Be

careful not to be swept past the harbour and into the shipping lane. Contrary ENE flood streams speed up and overfalls occur at The Bailies and off Greenore Point. Paddle hard. An alternative embarkation point or emergency landing spot is St. Helens Pier at T146-099. Sheltered from east/south except in heavy swell, when it may close out, a slipway inside a pier gives much less fussy and plentiful parking, no height barriers, rough camping and even a picnic table with a street light. The tides need closer watching though. On the way out creep up to Greenore to provide a more manageable ferry angle and on the return be that touch more motivated.

Dangers

(a) Local paddlers report that the tide running past Greenore Point (as the tired paddler returns to land from the sea) can be the strongest encountered in the area. There is a report of a party seeing a lobster pot in this area, in mist, 1 or 2km out. Having decided to check the direction and speed of the current, they could not make it upstream to the pot! Consider that any slippage here shovels the paddler into the busiest part of the main shipping channel, and the need for care cannot be exaggerated.

(b) It is important to note that the shipping channel to France approaches Rosslare W of (i.e. *inside*) the Tuskar. The shipping channel to Wales, which includes the Lynx fast ferry, as well as all merchant shipping, lies *outside* to its N, and therefore should not concern this excursion. An enquiry as to French ferry times might be sensible.

Shipping Channels	Shipping Company	Route
North of Tuskar Rock	Stena Line	Rosslare Fishguard
	Irish Ferries	Rosslare - Pembroke
West of Tuskar Rock	Irish Ferries	Rosslare – Cherbourg
		Rosslare - Roscoff
	Celtic Link Ferries	Rosslare - Cherbourg
	LD Lines	Rosslare – St Nazaire/Gijon
Contact with Port Authority.	Call ROSSLARE HARBOUR on VHF Channel 12	
	T +353 (0)53 9157929	
	M +353 (0)87 2320251	

History

The lighthouse was constructed in 1815 with 11 men losing their lives during construction. 10 were drowned when an October storm swept them away, leaving a further 14 hanging onto the rock for 3 days, one of whom died of his injuries later. It was also a dangerous place to be during World War 2, a light-keeper lost his life and a second was injured when a drifting mine exploded against the rock.

The South Coast

Carnsore Point to Baltimore

The Saltees

Sheet 77

Embarkation

Mainland launching is from the convenient, sheltered, pebbly beach immediately behind the W pier at Kilmore Quay. The beach is tucked in between the pier and Crossfarnoge (or Forlorn) Point at S965-032. Free parking is plentiful, but there is a height barrier at the more convenient end, and the carry is across boulders. Toilets and water.

Parking is more limited at or near the harbour itself. Launching is possible off the slipway, but there is a per boat charge, rigorously policed.

The beach on the E side of the harbour extends out a long way, so is inadvisable at LW. At HW the parking is free and the carry is easy. This beach is also sheltered in W winds.

Dangers

The main local trouble spot is an underwater bridge, very shallow, called Saint Patrick's Bridge. It starts 500m E of Kilmore Quay pier, and reaches out, in a crescent shape, all the way to Little Saltee. It is particularly troublesome on the E going tide. Boats not travelling fast enough, or not laying off enough, will be pulled down onto the bridge, where rough and accelerated water is hard to escape. This happens almost immediately after leaving the harbour. If caught, it is best to ferry glide in behind Little Saltee. 3.5kn is achieved in springs. Saltee Sound, between the two islands, is another trouble spot. Sebber Bridge at X956-978 is a shallow reef, which extends northwards from the NE tip of Great Saltee. The tide sets more or less E/W through the Sound, over the shallows. On the W making tide, especially with a wind from the W, the water becomes very rough indeed N of Great Saltee.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough.

Tides

Trip planning requires care for the strong tidal streams, the timings of which do tend to catch out the unwary. Local kayakers strongly disagree with officially published timings, saying they are up to 2 hours out. It may well be that timings vary considerably with wind conditions, and whether there are springs or neaps occurring. One thing all local kayakers agree on is that on leaving the harbour area, you always look at a lobster pot buoy to check your calculations are right.

Local HW is 20 minutes after Cobh.

Saltees – St. Patrick's Bridge		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	2:50 before Cobh HW	4.5kn
W	3:30 after Cobh HW	4.5kn

The official published information is that the E making flood tide in the two sounds flows for 6 hours, beginning at about Cobh HW -0035 and ebbs W in reverse for 6 hours from Cobh +0535. This is the same as saying the E flood about an hour before local HW and the W ebb begins about an hour before local LW.

Local paddlers insist this cycle begins an hour or even two hours ahead of that. If so, the E making flood tide begins at Cobh HW -0230 or so and the W ebb begins at Cobh +0330. They say that slacks occur when the tide is halfway up or down the harbour wall. If it is halfway up and rising, the E making flood is about to start. If it is half way down and falling, the W making ebb is underway.

Be cautious of making the crossing on the strongest of the E making tide (local HW or thereabouts), especially if there are any slow-boats in the party, for fear of Saint Patrick's Bridge. Avoid also the strongest of the W making tide (local LW or thereabouts) to avoid the run off over Sebbert Bridge. If needs must, cross either race as high as possible, as the water really kicks up downstream of the gaps.

Little Saltee Island

X966-996 Sheet 77

This island is less frequented than its better-known and more interesting neighbour.

Historically, 3 people or so lived on Little Saltee until the mid-19th Century, when rumour insists it was connected to the mainland. Little Saltee was farmed until World War 2. The farm speciality was early-season new potatoes, but corn and other vegetables were also grown. 12 people were needed at harvest time. A thresher was brought over, in parts, in small boats. The island was abandoned and overgrown until recently.

Since 1999, the owners now farm pedigree Kerry cows, fallow deer, and since 2003 Soay sheep, from the Scottish island of same name, just S of Skye, well known to climbers.

The main house and some of its outbuildings have been made habitable. The courtyard has been tidied. There is a fine ruin of a two-storey barn and interesting remains of corn stands in the yard immediately W of the main building. There are the remains of an old well within the courtyard but it did not hold water in April 2003 and appeared long disused.

Landing

A flagpole above the main landing on the NW side at X966-996 presumably indicates when the family is in residence. Landing is possible among boulders below the house, normally reasonably sheltered by offshore boulders and rocks. One may also land elsewhere less dependably. Try the SW side on any of three storm beaches facing the Great Saltee. These are very much easier on lower tide levels.

Camping

The most suitable level ground for camping is in the area just W of the main house. Bracken and bluebells dominate the island and there are few grassy areas along the flatter western side. The vegetation is broken, lumpy and heavily grazed. The most pleasant areas are on the southern edge overlooking the storm beaches and the sound to Great Saltee. Do ask permission if the owners are in residence.

Great Saltee Island

X952-974 Sheet 77

This is a beautiful island. Grazed and easily walked or camped on, this island is lovely and deservedly popular with Irish paddlers.

The island is a famed bird-watching spot, and is often inhabited by birding visitors in season, mainly spring and autumn. Once inhabited by 20 people, the island became uninhabited relatively early by Irish island standards. There are monuments and references to Prince

Michael of Saltee on the island. He bought the island in 1943, crowned himself Prince in 1972, and died in 1998.

Renewed interest in the island by his extended family has resulted in some of the scrub being removed around the remains of the old rick yard and the corn stands are more clearly visible.

Landing

Land at X952-974 on the N side, E of the middle. The main landing area has recently been improved with a channel having been cleared through the boulder beach, which in June 2003 gave a welcome sandy strip even at the lower stages of the tide. There are steps above to a house in trees. This landing is sheltered in most conditions.

Privacy

Predictably, members of the family are almost certainly in residence in August, long weekends, or periods of settled good weather. The tradition of flying the Prince of Saltee flag from the flagpole above the landing when the family are in residence has been renewed.

During such periods, day-trippers must arrive later than 1100 and vacate the island by 1630.

Camping is not permitted.

Circumnavigation

Circumnavigation gives good fun in tidal races off the appropriate points, but beware that there is much eddying. There is excellent cliff scenery, and a particularly pretty channel just E of the S tip. Sea conditions at the southern tip become fearsome in strong winds or with wind against tide.

Keeragh Islands

S866-059 Sheet 77

These two islets lie in Ballyteige Bay, 12km W of the Saltees, relatively close inshore. They are small low-lying Birdwatch Ireland bird reserves. There are two distinct islands, but they are always regarded as the one.

Landing is awkwardly practical at the N tip of each island, on either side of a projecting spit. On the bigger, northern island, there is an easy beachlet in a cut at the SW, facing the smaller island. Approach from the beach at Cullenstown at S869-077, 2km to the NNE.

Stay away in spring and early summer, as nests are too numerous to avoid. The ruin on the larger island was built in 1800 for survivors of shipwrecks, but is now dilapidated. There is still a sealed box inside with what looks like electricity going into it, suggesting a phone?

SPA

Arctic Tern.

Hook Peninsula

X733-973 Sheet 76

Hook Head is a popular kayaking and scuba diving area based on the main town Fethard. A very attractive area, there is almost always sheltered sea-going hereabouts, almost regardless of wind direction. Beloved of divers, there is always calm water somewhere for the training of beginners. Out at the Head there are arches and blowholes, caves and wrecks, and clear shallow water mostly. The extensive sand beaches at Duncannon and Fethard contrast with the rocky cliffs by the Head itself. Across Waterford Harbour lies the beautiful fishing and tourist village of Dunmore East, to which excursions may be made, landing at the pier, which was the first ever built by Nimmo.

Early History

The early history of the Hook mirrors the early history of Ireland generally. The rocks locally are all sedimentary, limestones from 510,000,000 BP at the tip, then sandstones mudstones and siltstones progressively northwards. Below Wood Village one can see the four post-ice age strata, a wave cut platform of former shoreline cut in folded siltstones, fossil raised beach, overlying mass of earth called “head”, and on top material called “till”, debris deposited by melting ice sheets 10,000 BP. Ptolemy’s map of Ireland 100+AD recognised the Barrow River (called “*Birgos*”) and appears to recognise Baginbun Head as a promontory fort known to the locals as *Dún Domhnaill*. There were 45 ring forts once, built 600 – 900 AD, with 13 surviving. These are now accepted as “one off” farmsteads and not specifically military. Almost all placenames are Viking. Bannow Island is where the Normans landed in 1169, invited in by Dermot McMurrough, the ultimate traitor. In quick time they captured Wexford town. In 1170 Richard leGros with +100 men landed at Baginbun Head, on its sheltered beach, with its defendable promontory, which he then defended successfully in battle against the men of Waterford. Shortly after, Richard deClare (Strongbow) landed at Passage East and together they beat the depleted Waterford defences and took the town. All this is considered good news by modern interpretation, but then the English followed in 1172 (not so good). The lighthouse on the Head itself was the first ever in Ireland, possibly in these islands, and it is the only Irish secular mediaeval building still serving its original function. Guided tours are available all summer. In 1,400+ Slade Castle was constructed.

Modern History

The story of Duncannon Fort reflects more recent Irish history. When Irish Ireland was soundly defeated at Kinsale in 1603, the island of Ireland was severely under-populated at about 750,000. The “settlement” of Ireland then began, and the island became subject to immigration from England and Scotland. Protestant / Catholic tensions across Europe were thus imported onto the island of Ireland. In 1641 there was civil war in England between Parliament and King, and revolution and slaughter was everywhere, including in Ireland, including the Hook. Scots and Northern Irish Protestants (“Royalists”) backed the king, while the indigenous Irish, as well as those Normans and *ye olde Englishe* who had gone native over the centuries they had been here (“Confederates”) saw the chance for independence. Duncannon Fort played a huge role locally, and its Royalists were besieged time and again. In 1644 it even changed sides - in English terms - to Parliamentarian, but this meant nothing from the local perspective. In 1645 it was forced to surrender to the Confederates. But then Cromwell arrived in Ireland in 1649 and put manners on them all. The “Plantation of Ireland”, as Irish history terms the settlement of its land by these outsiders, then began in earnest. The Planters were received with the affection and enthusiasm with which aboriginals worldwide traditionally always have and always will greet similar expansionary ambitions. After the battle of the Boyne in 1691, both combatant kings departed Ireland from Duncannon. James skulked, but William went in style. The Hook wasn’t centrally involved in 1798, but nevertheless the worst anti-Protestant atrocity of the entire affair was perpetrated at Scullabulogue near Tintern Abbey when 100 elderly prisoners were burned in a barn. Fethard Dock was the scene of the only naval action of that rebellion, suffering the sinking of its ships and the destruction of its one warehouse. Duncannon Fort became less relevant by the century, and became finally and formally non-military in 1986. It is now a museum, art gallery, and restaurant, all well repaying a visit.

Tides locally are complicated

Local HW / LW at Dunmore East and Slade and the outer parts of the estuary are at Cobh +0015, though obviously this is progressively later the further up. In fact HW is Cobh +0100 at Waterford itself, is Cobh +0040 at New Ross, and Cobh +0110 at St. Mullins S724-385,

which is about as far up as the salt water goes and the limit of navigability in the river Barrow for sea-going craft.

The E side of the immediate Hook area has no significant tidal movement, though there seems always to be clapotis off Baginbun Head S803-030.

In the wide S parts of the estuary of Waterford Harbour on the W side of the Hook:

- The flood in the main channel of the wide part of the Harbour runs from Cobh -0425 to +0045 and ebbs from Cobh +0045 to -0425. It generally achieves 0.75 on the ingoing flood and 1.5kn on the outgoing ebb. The ebb in southerlies therefore gives highly sporting deep water surfing, particularly from Credaun Head S718-036 up to Duncannon, but mind the shipping. These are busy waters.
- The ingoing flood, as far as Credaun Head, is strong along the W side, during which there may be slack or even a weak outgoing flow on the E side.
- Squeezing past Credaun Head itself, the flood reaches 2.5kn or 3.0kn.
- The outgoing ebb, between Duncannon and Hook Head, sets mainly along the E side, and gets very strong along the W shore of the Hook.
- The tail end of the outgoing ebb eddies at Credaun Head, as far as Portally Head 6km SW.

Further up the rivers, the flood and ebb start a little later. At St. Mullins the ebb starts at Cobh +0200. For trip planning it is important to gain every last advantage of the tidal flow, especially in wintertime when daylight is limited.

Outside, beyond the mouth of the estuary, the main E going stream floods from Cobh -0120 to +0450. Close inshore the E going flood and W going ebb start an hour or so earlier at about HW Cobh -0200 and +0400.

At Hook Head itself, the “Tower Race” sets up on the ebb. It starts at the point of the headland and extends seaward for 2 / 3km. Its workings are very complicated, perhaps especially when the estuary is emptying into an oncoming ebb, with wind over. The combined tides set up a rotary eddy system, so the resulting direction of the run off at the Head varies enormously. These very powerful hydraulics should be avoided by small boats in adverse conditions.

Oileáin 2013 sets it out in tabular format :

Waterford Harbour

Off Waterford Harbour entrance		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	1:20 before Cobh HW	1kn
W	4:50 after Cobh HW	1kn

At the Head itself, the west-going stream starts an hour earlier at 3:50 after Cobh HW.

The Tower Race

The Tower Race starts just south of the headland and extends westward for 2 / 3km on the ebb. Its workings are very complicated, perhaps especially when the estuary is emptying into an oncoming ebb, with wind over. The combined tides set up a rotary eddy system, so the resulting direction of the run off at the Head varies enormously. These very powerful hydraulics should be avoided by small boats in adverse conditions.

Tower Race (probable times)	
Start	4:20 after Cobh HW
Finish	4:55 before next Cobh HW

In the wide southern parts of the estuary of Waterford Harbour on the western side of the Hook:

Off Creadan Head		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	4:25 before Cobh HW	0.75kn
Out	0:45 after Cobh HW	1.5kn

Camping

There is an official legal campsite at Ocean Island Caravan & Camping S790-058, about 400m N of Fethard village. It welcomes visitors, but is primarily family based.

Campervanning is popular down by the Hook itself, and *camping sauvage* is possible on the E and W sides of the Head, discreetly. There are also quiet but exposed spots above Baginbun Beach S800-033 and above Petit's Bay S795-031.

Hook Embarkation Points

Grange Beach

S802-058 Sheet 76

A popular extensive beach 1km off the main street of Fethard, the local beach. Exposed to easterlies. Parking is on the roadside above the beach and is at a premium on hot days. Especially at LW the carry down the steep path and beach to the water can be gruelling. There are houses all along the roadway so do park considerately.

Fethard Quay

S807-052 Sheet 76

Sheltered by Ingard Point, this slipway is the logical local put in point for any group of kayakers heading to sea. The parking is tight here but manageable and with care the locals will not be inconvenienced. Sheltered from all wind directions save the N.

Baginbun Beach

S802-034 Sheet 76

The Normans chose wisely. This very sheltered sandy beach just NNW under Baginbun Head supports half a dozen cars and imposes only a short but steep carry to the water. Exposed only to the NE, unheard of hereabouts. Launch in almost all conditions.

Petit's Bay

S796-032 Sheet 76

Called Carnivan Bay locally, just W of and sheltered by Baginbun Head, this beach requires a long steep carry down a short path. The parking above the beach is plentiful. Beware though the beach surfs in southerlies.

Sandeel Bay

S766-016 Sheet 76

Halfway between Baginbun Head and Slade village, an obvious rest spot. Parking is tolerable. Surfs in SE winds.

Slade Harbour

X747-985 Sheet 76

This pretty village is the start or finish of surely one of the best one hour loop walks in Ireland, the round of the Hook. Low cliffs on the E side, fields in between, the lighthouse with all its touristic attractions halfway, then the road back. Mackerel are sold in season on the quayside.

The parking is easy and launching is from the slipway, but the inner harbour dries at LW. Toilets adjacent to the harbour through hole in the wall on the South Side.

Doornogue Point

X732-981 Sheet 76

1km N of Hook Head the parking is easy. Launch from a small gravel beach, but swell may dictate otherwise. Spectacular blowholes hereabouts at HW.

Loftus Hall

X738-994 Sheet 76

2km NNE of Hook Head on the W (estuary) side, a sandy beach, locally called "Boyces Bay", well sheltered, with no public access, under the impressive Loftus Hall, once a nunnery, one huge square old building dominating the view as one drives the Hook.

Lumsdins Bay

S754-010 Sheet 76

4km NNE of Hook Head, a sandy beach. It has a large seawall protecting the farm / houses above and a rough track with public access from the main Hook Road. Parking is limited along the track with turning possible in the farm entrance. Well sheltered in almost all conditions including Southerlies, although rocky reefs at either end to be avoided. Lugworm are in abundance here at LW for those keen on some fishing.

Templetown Beach

S754-030 Sheet 76

Just W of the popular Templetown Inn, a pub-grub establishment, there is no access from the roadside but there is a good sandy beach.

Dollar / Booley Bays

S750-055 Sheet 76

Actually both beaches are one beach at LW.

The passing of Broomhill Point S744-049 is a pleasure. The cliffs to southward are high and cut with fissures worthy of the west coast. This is probably the most impressive part of the entire round of the Hook.

There is limited parking at either beach. Dollar is a bit the easier. Both are beautiful.

There can be excellent and very regular mid-sized surf waves when conditions are right - Southerly F6 or above in preceeding days, according to locals.

Duncannon Beach

S730-080 Sheet 76

This magnificent beach is over *1km* long, and flat, a favourite for kite surfing and such activities. Park above the beach, or for the lazy, drive onto the beach and unload. In guaranteed daylight, going and coming, this is by far the better option. Nevertheless, no matter how lazy, do not leave a car here. The tide does return. Launching / landing at LW is best on the N end of the beach for the shortest carry.

Beware also that the shipping lanes in the estuary hereabouts are tight into this side. They run strongest immediately off the headland just NW the beach, on which is perched Duncannon Fort. This means the really big boats pass very close by, and the flow is strongest just offshore. With wind over, it can fairly kick up.

Duncannon Harbour

S727-083 Sheet 76

Launch from the public boat slip. Parking is convenient, but please do not block access to the pier. If finishing a trip late in the day, there is better lighting and landing than at the beach.

Arthurstown Quay

S716-103 Sheet 76

Not recommended. Small harbour that dries out to leave a barrier of glutinous river mud.

Ballyhack Quay

S705-109 Sheet 76

Beware the ferry, and also the other large ships. This is this narrowest part of the estuary. Launch from the shingle beach S of the pier for better shelter. The parking is better too.

County Waterford

Hook / Waterford Harbour Embarkation Points

Cheek Point

S690-137 Sheet 76

A rocky landing at the best of times, conveniently placed for a pitstop on a trip up or down the Barrow, the Nore, or the Suir. Situated river right at the tight bend where the Suir almost

becomes the sea. At LW keep away from the little harbour, the whole area round which is very silted. There is a rocky section 200m E right on the bend itself.

Passage East

S704-102 Sheet 76

Passage is a beautiful village, well worth a waystop any time one passes. Admire the architecture and the surroundings, and the peace, between arriving ferries. A severe one way system governs the town traffic in that context. The pubs and restaurants are absolutely lovely. Kayaks will land on the S side of the harbour on a sheltered gravel beach. Recommended stop for any visitor to the area.

Across Waterford Harbour lies the beautiful fishing and tourist village of Dunmore
Credaun Head

S718-036 Sheet 76

A prominent high headland jutting out into Waterford Harbour, thereby dividing the S wide part of Waterford Harbour into the inner N side and the outer S side. Small craft may land on the sheltered N side. Excellent waystop.

Dunmore East

S691-000 Sheet 76

Dunmore East is now a major town centred around the first ever fishing pier built by Nimmo, in the late 1810s, as a nixer. It is now the prettiest of Irish villages, made famous by the best known work of Irish novelist Maeve Binchy – “Echoes”. The seafood is excellent in all the restaurants, and all facilities are available in this modern town, but which becomes busy in the holiday season.

The working pier is always on the go, and is mostly to be avoided by passing boats. The only reliable landing spot for leisure craft is at the leisure slipway deep in the inner harbour beside the yacht club and outdoor centre. Good parking.

River Barrow

S724-386 Sheets 68 / 76

Put in at St. Mullins (gridref) about Cobh +0100 which is maybe 60 minutes before the beginning of the ebbing tide, which is Cobh +0200. That way you get the entire of the ebb all the way, and the upper parts of the river are in deepwater mode, which is way more attractive to the average passing small boatman. If the river is in flood there is always an ebb flow in an estuary, so start even earlier to gain even more tidal advantage. A trip of this kind requires a shuttle, so maybe plan to leave even more time, say 90 minutes, against human weakness.

The river changes subtly as you move along - starting in a forested river valley with steep sides. It is necessary to keep up at least 10km over the ground, and the get out spots are few and far between (mud, ooze, goo), so the party needs to be of unified purpose. The river begins to flatten out into a meandering flow around where the Nore joins in, about 4km above New Ross. The first obvious stop is at New Ross Boat Club S717-278, just NNW of the bridge, on river right, where normally the gate is locked, but for access for genuine club trips,

e-mail in advance marina@newrosstc.ie Marina Manager, New Ross Town Council. Lunch. Then inspect the MV Dunbrody on river left, still in New Ross, a replica “famine ship” built in the 1990s to commemorate the ships of the 1840s in which so many Irish travelled to the new world when things collapsed locally.

The Suir joins in a further 17km downriver and the bigger commercial shipping picks up, necessitating greater concentration. Something may appear at speed from in front or behind, or from the side at Passage East, but then Duncannon lies ahead.

Finish. 43km overall.

Tramore Bay

S583-012 Sheet 76

Tramore is a lovely tourist town and Tramore Bay is a “beach break” surfing paradise. Parking is at the beach. The beach surfs well in SWs, which makes it one of the more dependable locations in the country. The “*trá mór*” itself is the long beach E of the town under the high sandhills of the Burrow, beautiful to walk, and very popular.

Reminiscent of a *machaire* system, which it isn’t, technically, Tramore inner bay has all the attractions of such inner bays everywhere, strictly for the purist. Parking for the inner bay is at S628-006 on its E side, many miles E by road from Tramore itself.

Tramore to Dungarvan

S060-007 to W265-930 Sheet 76/82

Tramore town, beach and dune system is rightly known widely for many reasons. The dune system with its back strand is a wonderful natural area, the beach is a surfer’s paradise, and the town has every amusement known to the holiday maker. Use the pier in Tramore S576-004 for exploring the islands and coast west of Tramore. There is parking for a few cars on the pier and a good slipway. More parking is available a bit up the road. West of Tramore to at least Stradbally lies a particularly interesting stretch of coast that is very varied and interesting, comprising sea cliffs, groups of stacks, caves, arches and storm beaches that provide much visual interest. There is much to explore, and the geology is notable. The rock is mostly red sandstone or conglomerate, and the coast has a history of mining for copper in the 1800’s, the “Copper Coast”. Some of the ventilation shafts are visible from the sea. The islands for the most part are steep and precipitous sea stacks with landings only onto rock shelves. The challenge is to summit and many require a party with some rock climbing experience. The shore as far as Dungarvan is dealt with here cove by cove and island by island, always heading westwards. The term “sheltered” may not always include for southerlies straight onshore, and common sense should be employed.

Caher Beach X548-983 Sheet 76

A truly stunning place with magnificent views, particularly westwards to Sheep Island. The beach is stony, there is good parking and sheltered enough launching.

The Beach here is more commonly known locally as Garrarus. Access to the beach has been blocked recently due to subsidence and is unlikely to be re-opened in the short term.

Sheep Island

X536-979 Sheet 76

A magnificent twin peaked island reminiscent of North Mayo at its best.. It is detached from the mainland only at HW. Both halves of Sheep bear more arches and through caves per square metre than any other Irish island. The view of any of its offlying stacks through one of its arches is second to none. The island is prominent for long distances E and W. Summiting is probably very difficult everywhere and very dangerous, the more so the inner half.

Several soft landings.

Kilfarassy Beach X526-983 Sheet 76

Fine stony beach with reasonable shelter and good parking.

Burke's Island

X525-997 Sheet 76

A beautiful steep island among many reefs and offlyers. It is climbable with care on the NW or SE sides. A lovely slot / cave twists through the SW corner. Cormorant and gulls roost and breed on the flat summit.

Annestown X500-987 Sheet82

Lovely sheltered part sandy beach just inside Brown's Island, the beach is below and E of the town. A height barrier at the road preventing driving into the carpark for vehicles with roof loads will cause a 150m and offputting carry for some wishinh access.

Boat Strand Pier X477-985 Sheet 82

A busy working pier with a delightful beach and leisure area combined. Very sheltered. The parking deficit suggests small parties only.

Killmurrin Cove X466-987 Sheet 82

A sheltered sandy beach with plenty of parking and a reasonable carry.

Bunmahon X432-987 Sheet 82

A fine sheltered pebble beach. Parking for a dozen cars with concrete slip at W end of town, just as the main street turns sharply up and N.

Gull Island

X428-980 Sheet 82

Land in a small cut in the NE corner. Imposing "Buachal" type steep, rocky sea stack with narrow grassy ridge to attractive summit. Best climbed from seaward side by contouring around from landing or direct from seaward side if conditions allow. Not climbed in April 2005 but may have been previously. This is one of a number of stacks in close proximity separated by narrow channels. Attractive storm beaches and cliff scenery close by.

Breeding Cormorant, Herring and Great Black backed Gull in April 2005.

Templebrick

X420-975 Sheet 82

Another fine imposing unsummitable stack, the largest hereabouts, with landing *pro forma* only, midway to Ballydowane, at the most prominent part of this cliff.

Ballydowane Beach

St John's Island

X413-975 Sheet 82

Another imposing steep rocky sea-stack amongst a network of the like. A lovely sea-arch cuts through its centre, passable by sea kayak at most stages of the tide. A landing is possible on the landward N side of a reef jutting E from the NE corner. Its summit awaits rock climbers of merit. It dominates the view E from Ballydowane.

Ballydowane West Beach X407-977 Sheet 82

A lovely pebble beach with ample parking and good shelter, surrounded by steep cliffs. One part looks like good (but very hard) rock climbing on clean sandstone. The views left and right of needles, stacks and islands are lovely. Local enquiry suggests

Ballyvoony X383-974 Sheet 82

The coast road swings right past this sheltered stormbeach with its orderly picnic tables and fine views. The steamship "Cirilo Amores" foundered here on 15th February 1925 with no loss of life. All aboard were taken ashore by Breeches Buoy.

Gull Island

X380-967 Sheet 82

Noticeably different to the other such islands along this coast, this Gull has a nearly flat-topped or at least more rounded appearance. The sides are steep but not of any serious gradient. Landing is in a small cut on the NE corner onto slippery kelp covered rocks at LW. Progress to the summit lies along an obvious fault line. Grassy on top with lots of evidence of breeding Gulls. A Cormorant colony of c.40 pairs on SW and W sides. The S / SW / W are steep and rocky. Several Sheet 82 smaller sea stacks and rocky outliers lying off the S side allow for playful passage through the channels. Purely a way-stop for the curious as the beaches hereabouts are much easier of landing. No water. Good panorama of the coast from the summit.

Stradbally Cove X371-970 Sheet 82

Lying below the town, there is good parking and very sheltered launching, though a long carry at LW. Local paddlers suggest this is only an escape option in the event of big surf.

Ballyvoyle Head X347-947 Sheet 82

Has a "very" small rocky island at the tip of the headland. Of particular interest is the multiple arches and caves under the headland itself.

Ballinacourty X294-926 Sheet 82

The pier and slip (water and good parking) at Ballinacourty Gold Coast Bar and Hotel is the local launch spot of choice of Waterford sea kayakers. Two rocky islands off Ballinacourty Point / Lighthouse - Carricknamoan X316-919 *Carrig na mBan* and the lesser Carricknagaddy X314-920 *Carrig na Gadaí* covers at HW. Carrickapane X319-908 *An Carraig Dubh* way out in the middle of the bay is by far the most important and is valued as a pitstop on touring the bay. At lower water a sheltered lagoon is formed at the E end where there is a dependable landing onto slabs. A WW2 mine exploded near Carrickapane after the war.

Helvick Head - *Ceann Heilbhic*

Helvick Head is a lovely spot, a noted holiday area. There is the 'new' pier at Helvick at X313-892 - *Cé Heilbhic*, just inside the head. Parking and launching is easy beside the RNLI station. Toilets and water are available. This is a busy working trawler harbour. The 'old' pier at Ballynagaul at X299-888- *Baile na nGall*, is now somewhat silted. This is a noted small Gaeltacht area. The Clancy Brothers are very much associated with this area. This Carrick-on-Suir ballad singing family group emerged in the early 1960s with their *báinín* jerseys in the USA to inject pride in English speaking Irish Ireland. As was then popular in south Tipperary they holidayed in Helvick. Later, they settled here. The area as a whole is called Ring or *An Rinn*. The name probably derives from the mighty dune system guarding the inner bay called locally the Cunnigar - *An Coinigéar*.

Rock climbing

Helvick is a noted rock climbing spot. The cliff is about 1.5km SW of the gap between Helvick Head and Goat Island. The crag is immediately underneath and is accessed from the noted viewpoint and car park at X307-882. The rock is an isolated pocket of purple mudstone with some sandstone. This is said to be much better than pure red sandstone. It is solid, and takes good gear. The rock nearer to the head looks good from below, but is awkward to access from above, and may not be as good, being sandstone. Enquiries to Gerry Moss germoss@eircom.net.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough.

Helvick Island

X319-893 Sheet 82

Shown on the OS as "The Gainers" which is actually an offshore underwater feature to WNW, this unpretentious group of fragmented rocks is really an extension of Helvick Head itself. It is known locally as "The Island" or even to some as "Goat Island". The grass-topped inner island is the largest and is reachable on foot at LW springs. The outer rocks are pleasant to explore for their gaps, passages and small cliffs. The inner gap is a welcome escape route on passage and is usually navigable. Land in or about the gap itself onto sheltered rocks.

Landing and Embarkation

Land in or about the gap itself onto sheltered rocks.

Embark from the 'new' pier at Helvick at X313-892 - *Cé Heilbhic* where there is easy parking and launching beside the RNLI station inside the harbour. Toilets and water are available.

Round of Mine Head

Helvick is also the popular launching or landing spot at the E end of the round of Mine Head - *Mionn Árd*. Launch at the W end of this trip at a sheltered beach, either at Ardmore itself or nearer at X205-798. The journey may be broken at any of the many sandy beaches and coves, subject to conditions on the day.

At a small rock Carrignanean X290-834, there is an interesting expedition for anyone who wants to land on the rocks on the S facing side of the small headland. You can scramble up a small gully and grass slope and visit an important megalithic court cairn tomb. The scrambling takes a bit of effort but is worth the effort.

The tomb at Ballynamona is a court cairn and is the only example of its kind in the SE. This type is usually found N of a line between Clew Bay in the W and Dundalk in the E. It would have been constructed by a tribal group and an immense amount of social organisation was required in its building. There would have been many burials in the grave. The bodies were burnt and the cremated bones were placed in the burial chambers, sometimes with pottery, beads, stone, bone, and tools for use in the next life.

Ballynamona was excavated in May 1938 by a team lead by T.G.E. Powell, as part of relief of unemployment programme of excavations administered by the OPW in collaboration with the National Museum. Because it had been plundered for fencing material it proved impossible for the excavators to estimate its original size. The chamber deposits had been destroyed by treasure seekers. However, some small fragments of highly decorated pottery were found, as were numerous natural flint flakes, some of which showed traces of human working. A small stone disc was also found. It is made of a fine-grained piece of Old Red sandstone. Similar larger discs are known from gallery graves in Brittany, Scotland, Wales and Co. Wicklow. We do not know the beliefs of the builders of the tomb but there is evidence that they were sun worshippers, at least in some parts of Ireland. But whatever their beliefs they were compelling, as similar structures are found all over Europe and in part of Africa and Asia.

Although the Ballynamona Court Cairn is neither spectacular nor large its importance cannot be overlooked. It is known to date from 2000 B.C. during the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age. It is clear evidence of the early settlement of Old Parish by a developed, agricultural society. Other evidence of settlement in Co. Waterford from this period are the nearest known megalithic tombs at Gaulstown, Mattewstown and Ballynageeragh in or around the Tramore area, and an important find of an uncommonly fine, polished stone implement at AGLISH, Co. Waterford, presently in the National Museum.

While this grave was still in use the Late Stone Age was drawing to a close. The Early Bronze Age, in which implements of bronze and copper were manufactured, saw the arrival in Ireland of prospectors and metal workers, who found Co. Waterford rich in the necessary metal deposits. At Bonmahon, copper was mined and there is some evidence that a foundry or factory of bronze implements existed on the edge of Knockmon bog, west of Dungarvan. Mine Head is the highest lighthouse in Ireland, but the kayak on passage will not see it from immediately below because it is set back from the cliff edge. The only escape on the 15km passage is at Ballymacart Cove at X253-810, perhaps too close to the Ardmore end to be practical. Too close maybe to the other end is a beautiful beach known locally as *Faill na Staicín* at X298-877.

County Cork

Tidal Overview - Cork SE

Tides are generally weak between Cork Harbour in the W and Knockadoon Head, 30km to the ENE. However, there are significant races off the headlands and in the sounds between the islands (Ballycotton Sound and Capel Sound), where 2kn is achieved. Slack water is thought by local paddlers to be at much the same time as LW/HW Cork. In Youghal Bay, southerly winds raise a heavy sea, and the tidal streams are rotary and very complex, running strongly over the bar, which is in mid-bay directly S of the river entrance, so caution should be exercised.

River Blackwater

X096-988 – X106-807 Sheet 81

23km of the river from Cappoquin to Youghal is navigable to small boats. HW Cappoquin is about +0100 Youghal, which is +0000 Cork. Start or finish to suit wind and tide on the day. At Cappoquin the put in is at a small car park (height restrictions) with a small slip X096-988, about 1km SSW of the town (river right). Landing in Youghal is at the County Council stone depot on the main N25 road (river left) X106-807. Interesting scenery, including some castles.

Capel Island

X100-700 Sheet 81

This attractive, 37m high island is just off Knockadoon Head, which separates Ballycotton Bay from Youghal Bay. It is privately owned but became (mostly) a Birdwatch Ireland nature reserve in 1994. The stub of an unfinished lighthouse on its highest point dominates the island. Stone walls surround the building, and a small, square out-house is worth investigating to see the dramatic drop from the hole in its floor. The seaward side of the island is most attractive and there is a colony of breeding Cormorant (60 pairs in 1995) at the SW corner. Otter are also present. There is no water, and a possible deterrent to camping is a herd of goats. There were 30 or so in 1995, only 12 in 2002.

In 2010, the lighthouse now has a locked gate.

Embarkation

There is a pier and slipway at X092-703 for embarkation at Knockadoon Head where there are two well-sheltered beaches. The only water hereabouts is at houses and the local Dominican summer school camp, and the nearest shops and facilities are at Ballymacoda, 5km to the W.

Given the proximity of the island to Knockadoon Head local kayakers usually paddle across from Youghal. There is excellent parking and short carry at Ferrypoint X116-778 on the Waterford side of the Blackwater River opposite Youghal. It makes for a nice paddle to Capel Island. About 8km each way.

Landing

A low headland projects NW from mid-NW side of the island. There are beaches at either side of the base of this headland. The beach to the SW side (on a direct line between Knockadoon Pier and the tower on the island) does not exist at HW and is more exposed, but access to the interior is easier. The beach to the NE side does not exist at HW and access to the interior is scrambler. At HW, a deep-water landing may be had onto rocks on the sheltered cove E of this headland.

Tides

Local HW/LW are as Cork. So is slack, according to local paddlers. A fierce tide runs through Capel Island Sound. In Youghal Bay, southerly winds raise a heavy sea.

The coastline westward to the beach at Ballymakeagh at X050-688 is very pleasant, and there are great views eastwards to Ardmore and Helvick.

Knockadoon Head was the fastest developing rock climbing crag in Ireland in 2003. It remains a popular low season target of opportunity for its sunny south facing aspect.

Ballycotton Islands

There are two contrasting islands lying just off the coast from Ballycotton village in E Cork. Embarkation

Embarkation is best from a small slipway at the village where there is a small field in which to park, and a very easy gradient yielding a short carry of 50-100m maximum. This is about 1km WNW of the harbour, opposite the Garda barracks. It is reached by a laneway beside a shop at W989-643. There is water available here and also at the harbour from public taps.

Ballycotton has good facilities, B&Bs, pubs and restaurants. The harbour itself is slightly further E at W999-637. Launching is difficult, but is possible from either of two slipways reached by narrow, steep alleyways. Descent to the beach is also possible behind the toilets on the main pier. In addition, there are steep, narrow steps halfway down the outside (E) of the pier which gives awkward access to a small beach. The W pier of the harbour is little more than a breakwater.

Tides

In Ballycotton Sound and between the inner island and the coast, 2kn is achieved,. Slack water is thought by local paddlers to be much as for LW/HW Cork.

Guided Tours

The tours depart daily from 1000 onwards. www.ballycottonislandlighthouse.com/.

The tours take approximately 90 minutes round trip. Meeting point is at the Ballycotton Island Lighthouse Tours Information and booking kiosk at Ballycotton Pier between 10am-5pm. Visitors are advised to arrive 15 minutes prior to scheduled departure. Enquiries +353 21 2375371

Small Island

X004-637 Sheet 81

Known locally (quite logically) as the Inner Island, it is low and grassy, with extensive reefs and rocky shorelines at low water. It is just accessible on foot at LW, though not easily, and it involves getting your feet wet. Landing is best on the eastern side, facing the outer island, where there is a small beach, just where the island is waisted. There is no water. In 2002, three full-blooded male goats proved quite a deterrent to would-be landers or campers.

Blowholes.

Ballycotton Island

X011-637 Sheet 81

Known locally as the Outer Island, and also as the Lighthouse Island, it is 50m high, steep and rocky. The lighthouse and associated buildings dominate the high part of the island.

There are two landings, each difficult, each consisting of a flight of steps to a pier, located on the N and E flanks respectively, that on the E usually being a shade more friendly. There is a

small sea-arch on the SE tip. There are breeding Shag, Great Black-backed Gulls, and Herring Gulls.

Cork Harbour

SPA

(Parts only) Bewick & Whooper Swan, Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Tern.

Cobh is a standard port for tidal information for most of the south/southwest of Ireland.

Mouth of Cork Harbour		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	5:40 before Cobh HW	1.5kn
Out	Cobh HW	1.5kn

The West Passage of Great Island, particularly where narrowest at Verolme Dockyards, can achieve 3kn.

The tidal streams in the harbour generally flood north and west, following the channels, strongest in the middle, circling islands both sides, notably Great Island. They generally ebb in reverse.

There are exceptions:

- The current is always weak at about the Spit Bank just 1km off Cobh itself,
- At the harbour mouth, the ebb runs SE from Ram's Head W811-619 towards Roches Point W824-601 and then SW, so that even the largest vessels are swept towards White Bay and then crabbed across the mouth of the harbour towards Ringabella Bay W795-580,
- In reverse, much the same, the stream sets into White Bay then NW,
- The strength of the tide is raised by S wind and especially SE wind (for a longer stronger flood). An increase of up to 1m has been known in Cork in gales.
- The strength of the tide is cut by N winds (for a weaker shorter flood), and by fresh water in the rivers in quantity (for a longer stronger ebb).

At or about LW and the beginning of the flood

- At the harbour mouth, the main flood stream makes into the harbour at first on the W side past Camden Fort at Ram's Head W811-619, -0020 before mid-channel.
- The stream in White Bay is weak.

- If there is fresh water flowing in the Owenboy River from the direction of Carrigaline, the stream there sets on its S side and around Ram's Head W811-619 for some time after the flood has otherwise begun.
- From Ram's Head W811-619 the ingoing salt water stream branches – part goes up the Owenboy River in the direction of Carrigaline W740-625, - and the main stream goes N, almost immediately dividing into two streams, one W of Cobh towards Cork and the other towards the E channel of Great Island.
- Because at this stage fresh water is still flowing outwards from the E channel of Great Island, when the two streams meet, a remarkable eddy forms around the area of the Spit Lighthouse W812-658. An inshore current is forced across Cuskinny Bay W820-670 and along the shore as far as Morloag Point W853-672.
- The flood is felt at Paddy's Point W795-647 fully -0030 anywhere else in the harbour. For a considerable time before any change in midstream, the flood sets close inshore past this point, Ringaskiddy W777-648 and as far as Monkstown W771-661 and sometimes further. This is apparently because in mid-channel, an undercurrent sets before the surface current makes.
- The ingoing W flood stream does not make at Cobh until a full hour at least after it has begun at the harbour mouth.
- The length and strength of the tide from Cobh up to Cork depends a lot on the amount of fresh water in the river.

At or about HW at the beginning of the ebb

- The outgoing stream E of Great Island begins -0100, and continues along the E side of the harbour past Corkbeg Island W827-637
- The stream out of the Owenboy river begins -0100
- If there is much freshwater in the river Lee, there is a strong E ebb close inshore past Cobh. The ebb stream past White Point W786-657 strikes Haulbowline Island and then runs towards Deepwater Quay at Cobh.

Great Island

W805-665 Sheet 87 / Sheet 81

This island is unique amongst Irish islands in having a large town, Cobh. The island is located in the centre of Cork Harbour and is dominated on its southern flank by the town of

Cobh. It is joined to Fota Island in the NE by a short bridge at Belvelly at W791-708. Access has improved in recent years with the introduction of a passenger and vehicle ferry between Carrigaloe and Passage West at W772-675, thereby shortening road travel time to Cork City. The island has a long history of human settlement dating back to the Phoenicians, but owes much of its development to its fine natural harbour. Its naval importance and its use as a port for transatlantic liners has left the town with a long nautical association. Much of the town's fine architecture dates from the early 1800's.

Historic attractions include a fine cathedral, Cobh Heritage Centre and Old Church Graveyard, where many of the victims of the Lusitania are buried. The town's long association with the White Star Line's Titanic and Mauritania has been re-kindled recently with the opening of the Titanic Rooms bar and restaurant in what was the old White Star Line Shipping Offices.

Great Island is 7km long by 4km wide. The geology is Old Red Sandstone overlaid with Limestone in the valleys. The northern shorelines are estuarine, and the island is separated from the mainland at its western and eastern flanks by two river gorges. A full circumnavigation is an interesting day's paddling, bringing the kayaker through urban, industrial, estuarine, agricultural and scenic landscapes.

Circumnavigation

Embarkation for a circumnavigation is recommended from White Point at W786-658 or alternatively at any of several slipways in Cobh, perhaps the best of which is under the town clock directly opposite Eddie English's Sail Training Centre at W805-665. It is recommended to follow a clockwise route around. The entire distance is about 27km, or 5 hours paddling, but allow for stops.

Tides

Tidal flows in the river gorges (W and E sides) run to 3kn in springs but these can be utilised to advantage in the timing of one's passage. The critical factors in a circumnavigation are (a) to pass close enough to HW where the tides meet, which is under Belvelly Bridge W791-707, and (b) to clear Rosslague Point at W800-703 just to its E before the ebb exposes the mudflats.

A trip in spring/autumn/winter is best from a natural history point of view as both Lough Mahon to the NW and the North Channel have large numbers of ducks and waders to provide interest.

The western river passage is a busy shipping lane to Ringaskiddy Port and Cork City. Care is required passing the old dockyard at Rushbrooke and IFI fertiliser jetties at Marino Point at W772-694. The Ro/Ro ferry service at Carrigaloe-Passage West also moves surprisingly quickly.

Camping

Camping is possible and quite pleasant from Ashgrove at W860-696 at the NE point, to East Ferry, to Morlogue Point at W852-672 at the SE point. Water is not available but the area is pleasantly wooded and there are several grassy fields that are quite remote.

The eastern river passage down to East Ferry is quite scenic and one has a choice of two hostelrys for lunch. The Morlogue Inn at W853-683 is situated on the Great Island side about halfway down and Murphy's Bar is on the mainland opposite.

Once around Morlogue Point at W852-672, passage is westward towards Cobh. A Birdwatch Ireland nature reserve is located at Cuskinny Bay at W818-673. The Spit Bank Lighthouse at W812-658 marks the edge of the Spit Bank and is worth a detour. The tidal flow is weaker on the Spit Bank and gives better views of Cobh than the main channel, being that bit out and thereby gaining perspective. Spike Island at W805-645 and Haulbowline Island at W789-655 dominate the views to the S.

Haulbowline Island

W789-655 Sheet 87

A small island located just S of Cobh town in Cork Harbour. As the name suggests the island has naval associations and the island is totally dominated by buildings of the Naval Service on its western side, the National Maritime College and University College Cork Marine Research Centre. . Many of these buildings date from the 1700-1800's when Cork Harbour was a significant port of the British Navy. The oldest buildings face Great Island and a Martello Tower at W789-655 dominates the island's highest point. The E end is spoilt by the decaying remains of Irish Steel, a major steel manufacturing company which for many years ran its operation here, but became bankrupt a few years ago, and operations ceased 2001. The extreme E side is reclaimed polder on which the slag and spoil from this industrial site was dumped. The Naval Basin is also on the E side of the island and kayakers can enter to view the ships of the Irish Naval Service.

Landing

Landing is not encouraged but is possible at several slipways on the southern side and in the Naval Basin. Ferries run from Cobh to piers on the northern side for Naval personnel. Small boats should be wary of these when passing along the northern edge. The NW corner of the island juts out into the main shipping channel between Cork city docks and the ferry port at Ringaskiddy, so kayakers rounding this point should be careful at all times.

Tides

The main river channel from Cork City and the ferry port at Ringaskiddy flows through a narrow passage between Haulbowline and White Point on Great Island just NW. The tidal flow achieves *2kn* at this point. The main tidal flow splits at Haulbowline with the much lesser flow running along the southern side of the island.

Future

Ambitious plans for cleaning up and developing the whole island to a standard to rival Dublin's Irish Financial Services Centre were announced 2006. If these come to pass, the island will have apartments, hotels, offices, marinas, everything the well appointed Irish island really needs.

Rocky Island

W793-650 Sheet 87

Haulbowline Island is joined to the mainland near Ringaskiddy on its S side by a road bridge. The bridge spans to and from Rocky Island. The road bisects the island. Rocky received planning permission for use as a crematorium in late 2006. The crematorium will be W of the road and parking E.

High rocky and fortified, the summit is a big tent shaped rock in the middle. Its triple ramparts and central citadel were a gunpowder store from 1808. The outer trenches were lit

by candles recessed into hollows in the wall for safety. Unoccupied 1920s to 1964, Irish Steel built the bridge when it took over, and it was storage until 2001. Rocky is always landable because the bridge supports give shelter, especially on the landward Ringaskiddy side where the rocks are shelving.

Spike Island

W805-645 Sheet 87 / Sheet 81

This island is located very close to the centre of Cork Harbour and the distinctive flat-topped fort dominating the island was until recently a civilian prison. The island is a good rest/lunch area for kayakers touring the harbour area. Most of the rest of the island apart from the extensive fort is grassland with some copses of Scots Pine along the N and W sides. The E and S sides are steeper with scrub and furze dominating the vegetation. Landings are possible at most points of the island but probably best at the NE corner at W807-649 near a very large limestone warehouse. A ferry service for Military and Prison staff runs from Cobh to the island pier at the NW corner at W800-648.

The island’s history is largely military because of its strategic position and the importance of Cork Harbour in British Naval history. The island commands the approaches to the outer and inner harbour and formed a triangle of defence with the twin forts of Camden at W809-618 and Carlisle at W819-624, located on either side of the narrowest part of the entrance to the harbour. Spike Island has a distinctive flat-topped appearance due to the presence of its large sunken fort. The fort has witnessed various uses by both the British and Irish governments ranging from Internment Centres to Military Prisons and Military Training Areas. The island was also used occasionally as a Quarantine Zone for imported livestock. Current plans for the intensified use of the island include a prison, but with a land bridge, as the ferry cost was a major factor shutting the prison in the past.

On the N side facing Cobh, there are many old military style houses and storage areas. Most of these buildings are now in an advanced state of disrepair. The foreshore is predominantly shingle and stony beaches and the area between Ringaskiddy Point at W794-647 and the western shore dries out to expose large areas of muddy estuary. However, the route is navigable by kayak at all stages of the tide.

Tides

The Spit Bank lies off the island’s northern shore and is marked at its NE edge by the Spit Bank lighthouse at W812-658. Tidal flow on the bank is less than in the main harbour channels and may be useful to kayakers travelling up or down river against the flow.

Landing

Traditionally, landings have not been encouraged. The military had sentries posted at all points to deny access. However, this practice has been relaxed in recent years and kayakers remaining away from the main fort area have not been challenged.

Cork SW

Tidal Overview

Off the coast from Cork Harbour to the Fastnet, the tidal streams achieve 1.0 - 1.5kn in springs and eddy strongly at the headlands.

Cork to Fastnet		
Direction	Time	Speed

E	4:20 before Cobh HW	1-1.5kn
W	1:50 after Cobh HW	1-1.5kn

Be aware that the tide inshore, particularly at headlands is often seen to change an hour or more earlier than the times above.

Access

Heading west from Cork Harbour the coastline is dominated by cliffs of sediments with the only real shelter provided by the river mouths of The Slick at Oysterhaven, the Bandon at Kinsale and the Argideen at Coolmain Bay. Otherwise landings are few enough and road access to a landing a rarity. As a result of this limited access to the coast, there is inevitably a small settlement at each of these coves. Islands too are few, so coves and bays and islands are presented here in the order in which they appear to the westbound traveller.

Robert's Cove W785-547 is a very sheltered cove approx 350m long and orientated NNW/SSE. It is backed by a sandy beach with car access almost to the beach. There is limited parking on the "street" near the pub, but 200m N of the beach there is further parking in a rough grassy car park (height barrier). Discrete camping may be possible in this car park at off peak times, but in summer this is a very popular destination with Corkonians.

Carrigadda Bay W773-535, 1.5km SW, is signposted locally as Rocky Cove. Landing is possible on a sandy beach at the NW side of the bay. At HW the beach is all but covered. Best landing is at the W end of the beach. A chart is a lot more suitable than an OS map to delineate the approach reefs and skerries. Long Rock W773-528 is very prominent, with good breakers. There is parking just above the beach.

Nohoval Cove W733-513, 4km WSW provides some interesting paddling and rock hopping. There is a rudimentary slip at the back of the bay with a surge across it at HW, though usually well sheltered by off lying rocks. There some caves and stacks with spectacular cliffs. There are no camping signs on the ruins to the W side of the slip, though camping may be possible in the cliffs high up on the E side of the landing. Parking is along the side of the access road.

Oyster Haven - Ballinlashnet Creek. 4.5km WSW, embark from a beach and pier W 694-490 at the end of the road on the E side of the E branch of Oyster Haven, outside the coastguard station. Alternatively launch from a sheltered beach W697-501 beside an Oyster Haven Adventure Centre. Both spots are inside obvious mooring buoys. There is adequate parking at both spots. Further N, the road runs parallel to Ballinlashnet Creek and landing is possible on some of the shingle bars that stretch out perpendicular to the road. It is possible to navigate to within 300m of Ballinlashnet village at HW. There are no landings or access to the shore from the W side of Ballinlashnet Creek.

Oyster Haven – Murray's Creek. It is possible to navigate Murray's Creek, the W branch of Oyster Haven, to Belgooley, though there is no easy access until you are N of the road bridge at W663-522. The best worst access may be had opposite Belgooley GAA pitch. The E bank will provide the most direct and quickest access, but there is some vegetation.

Sovereign Islands

W689-470 Sheet 87

Basically, these are two green topped rocky outcrops of islands only accessible during the most benign of weather and have "interesting" scrambling potential. There is the remains of a structure on top the lower half, and in 2012 a fixed rope to aid in descent. The two parts are

separated by a fine creek, in width about the length of a small boat. In places the ascent requires pure rock climbing up attractive corner features. Lovely when accessible, definitely a place to tarry a while.

The landings on both islands are onto rocky platforms and on the larger and more precipitous W islet are best at either the SE or SW corner if wanting to gain direct access to the summit. Other areas are easier, such as a small inlet on the NE, but require very good rock climbing skills to progress further. The E islet is best landed on its NE corner in a small cove. The shelving rocks are slippery and covered in green algae so care required especially on the descent.

Breeding colonies of Cormorants, Herring and Greater-black backed Gulls.

Sovereign Island (East)

W698-478 Sheet 87

The island is located 1.0km NE of the Sovereign Islands but shares the same name. It is not quite as high or precipitous as its bigger neighbours, nor is it green on top. In fact the summit is a large area of smooth rock shaped like a buckled deck of an aircraft carrier, every square inch painted white. Landings are possible on most sides of the island but the easiest may be in a baylet on the N side. Access to the summit is via the SE corner. Good views all round especially towards the Old Head of Kinsale.

No breeding bird species in April 2012. Huge roosting spot September 2012.

Bullaun Rock

W707-489 Sheet 87

The island is located just off the Big Doon and separated from it by a narrow channel. The island is low and rocky but bigger in area than one would suspect. The best landing place is onto rock platforms on the SW corner, for vertical progress. Land elsewhere depending on conditions. No water, no camping, but a good place to stop if on passage to view the very attractive coastline in Newfoundland Bay.

Kinsale Harbour – Lower Cove W661-480, 4.5km WSW is the most seaward publicly accessible launching place in Kinsale Harbour. This is easily recognised from the sea by the cluster of houses and off lying moorings. Parking is roadside, on a hill, and camping is not an option here. This is where the Pilots for Kinsale Harbour traditionally lived, so the locals here always enjoyed “procurement for the exemption from impressments” into the Royal Navy, conscription by any other name. Sally Port 0.5km N W660 486 is possible but is privately owned by Kinsale Yachts. There is no difficulty recognising this harbour with its forest of masts. Summer Cove W655-498, 1.5km NNW, is a rather exclusive neighbourhood. There is a slipway, but parking is extremely limited in the village.

Sandy Cove Island

W640-472 Sheet 87

Sandy Cove Island is an unremarkable lump that shelters the entrance to Sandy Cove, a small deep inlet just W of the mouth of Kinsale Harbour. The island is grassy and almost lush. Surprisingly perhaps it is grazed only by goats. There are many large holiday homes opposite on the mainland. Therefore, camping would most likely be discouraged. No water was found. Embark from a slip 200m to the NW of the island. Landing is directly opposite at the W end of the island onto sand or shingle.

Herring Gull breed here. There is a suspicion that rodents do too.

Sandy Cove W637-473. A slip 200m to the NW of Sandy Cove Island. Good parking. Landing is directly opposite at the W end of the island onto sand or shingle. The sound will always be sheltered but may have nice clean surf waves as the swells from one side meet the tide from the other.

Old Head of Kinsale

W625-406 Sheet 87

This mighty headland extends 7km out to sea, W of Cork Harbour. Magnificent and rocky, it boasts a golf course over almost the entirety of its outer parts. This is said to be among the finest golf courses in the world. Public access through the golf course and the lighthouse at the tip was disputed. It was claimed, unsuccessfully, that a traditional right of way existed historically. There was a rock-climbing crag at the head itself, now therefore disused.

The grid reference given is for a narrow neck halfway out, to the E and W of which are Holeopen Bay, E and W respectively. Through this narrow section, S of which lies the golf course, run three caves. One (narrow but deep) is kayak friendly and should in most conditions allow passing kayaks to avoid the rounding of the headland itself. One (broad but bouldery) might also do so at HW. A third allowed researchers a glimpse of light and might require cool nerves. The caves are immediately inside a prominent sea stack on the W side, and under the golf course flagpoles on the E side.

Cliffy and gorgeous, do not readily pass by without a visit.

Embarkation

Put in on the E side at either the muddy beach just NW of a pier close to the Speckled Door pub at W619-434, or, which may offer a quieter alternative, at a small beach W620-438 about 400m W of Blackrock point. The beach is well protected by offlying skerries and has a shallow slope. On the W side, Whitestrand may offer a slightly calmer launching / landing place than Garretstown beach. It is a sandy beach backed by an hotel at W610-430. From any such option, the shuttle is only about 2km, easily walkable.

Tides

Expect clapotis on the windward/uptide side. Major eddies set up at the head - the flow is always to the south on both sides close in. These collide with the mainstream at the head, so expect a race off the head itself and up to 2km downstream. It is reported that when winds are calm enough or from other than the southern quadrant, the mainstream race stays off the tip itself, somewhat out to sea, so that kayaks may scrape past on the inside.

Old Head of Kinsale		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	4:20 before Cobh HW	2.5kn
W	2:05 after Cobh HW	2.5kn

The flows may change earlier.

There is a strong rip close to the rocks at the western side of Garrettstown beach.

Garrettstown Surf School and is a good source of local information.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough.

Glandore Harbour

Tides are very weak inside this S Cork inlet. There are two islands inside the harbour itself.

Adam's Island

W237-326 Sheet 89

This 28m high island lies in the mouth of Glandore Harbour. The high profiled island has very steep cliffs on the SW and E sides. Landing is possible with difficulty on the reef on the rocky N side, where it is possible to paddle through the reef. Also on the SE should conditions allow. Summitting is safe from either landing spot. Never inhabited. No water. Tides are weak inside the harbour.

"Avoid Adam, hug Eve" has always been the saying for craft entering Glandore Harbour in deference to the shallows hereabouts. Trawler *Tit Bonhomme* collided with Adam entering the harbour and home on 15th January 2012 with the loss of 5 of the part Irish and part Egyptian 6 man crew. The two communities were drawn together in grief for the 26 days it took hundreds of volunteer and professional searchers to locate all the bodies.

Eve's Island

W230-335 Sheet 89

An 8m high, waterless, grassy rock inside Glandore Harbour, with landing easiest on the N side.

Stack of Beans

W228-314 Sheet 89

1km WSW of the headland on the W side of Glandore Harbour, and 1km E of Squince Harbour lies a group of islands the smallest of which is this stack. Named for its parabolic appearance viewed from the N, it looks like $y=x^2$ inverted. Landing is usually easy on the N side and climbing to the top is safe and handy. The views W take the breath away.

Rabbit Island East

W227-314 Sheet 89

Really a pair of giant stacks detached from Rabbit Island. It is possible to get through the channels except at LW. The stack nearer Rabbit is climbable on the E side with care. The larger taller steeper stack farther from Rabbit will be too dangerous a grassy scramble for most tastes.

Rabbit Island

W223-315 Sheet 89

This pleasant, formerly inhabited island is the mainstay of this group and very much worthy of a camping stopover. The best landing place is halfway along the N coast, on a sheltered pebble beach under a ruined house. There is sheltered camping beside the house, but no water was found.

The island is waisted N/S at this point, and camping may also be had on the other, S side of the waist, also from a pebble beach, for that 'oceanic feel'. Land also at any number of other pebble beaches on this much-fragmented, attractive island, which is well worth pottering around, on foot or afloat.

This island is privately owned (1997) by an owner who would prefer exclusive use of the S facing beach referred to above at W222-314 for picnics and boat, but otherwise would allow well behaved visitors to use the rest of the island in passing.

There are wild horses, burrows, Chough and Linnet on the island. Otter were seen on the W side and at the Stack of Beans on the E side.

Lamb Islands

W216-311 Sheet 89

Fragme3nted group of islets off the headland 0.5km SE of Squince Harbour. Lovely architecture includes several arches and caves. Reputedly and authoritively there is here a stunning cave the author could not find. The summit of the largest islet is gorse and ling covered to test the hardest bare legs. Land easiest perhaps in the E facing cut below the only apparent ascent onto sloping shelves. The climb is then possible, trust me.

High Island

W220-297 Sheet 89

2.5km SSW of the headland on the W side of Glandore Harbour, this splendid steep, craggy, rugged, grass topped island is not for the faint-hearted. Any landing is from deep water onto rock, but there are two very sheltered coves on the N side, one facing E and the other W towards Low Island. The easier scramble to the summit is from the E cove, in proof of which I point to the blood on the rocks at the foot of the W cove, which is mine. The main nesting birds are Lesser Black-backed Gulls, and Shag. The main interest for the kayaker is the varied host of creeks and rocky passages on the Low Island side, and the sporting, surfing reefs and bumpy water generally on the outside, especially with a tide running.

Low Island

W217-298 Sheet 89

Low Island lies close by to the NW of, and is dominated by, High Island, its impressive neighbour. Landings may be had on the SE side facing High Island, or also on the NW side. In each case, land easily onto a sheltered pebble beach. The big goat reported in earlier editions seems to be gone and no longer makes camping insecure. However, camping is insecure in that the ground is very sandy, reluctant to hold tent pegs, and this type of topsoil is thought to be rodent friendly, and there are lots of them! The island is not dramatic.

Skiddy Island

W187-297 Sheet 89

Ungrazed low lying grassy roost for gulls and Oystercatcher 350m SE of Reen Point at the E side of the entrance to Castlehaven W186-312. Launch from Cat Island Quay W190-317 named and signposted locally as Reen Pier W191-313 or from Castletownshend itself. Provides a good view of famous urban architecture "Cow in a Tree" now residing very non-urbanely and enjoying this very remote locatiobn.

Castle Haven

W190-317 Sheet 89

Castle Haven boasts two beautiful things at least, the village of Castletownshend W197-314, and more importantly Reen Pier W190-317, base for Ireland's premier professional sea kayaking services supplier, sea guide Jim Kennedy of Atlantic Sea Kayaking. A sheltered anchorage, the pier is a natural gravel spit and as fine a campervan spot as will be found anywhere.

Horse Island

W178-290 Sheet 89

Located S of Castle Haven and Castletownshend and tucked in against the shore, the island is nowadays ungrazed. Camping would therefore be very difficult as it has become very overgrown. It has a tower, and splendid views. The landing is in Flea Sound on the N side of the island, where Basking Shark have been spotted.

The arch / cave on the S side is dangerous, having access issues at each entrance, trapping the unwary in bad conditions.

Black Rock W183-286 boasts an “almost” tunnel on its S side, open to the sky but not to the kayak at its closed W end.

The Stags of Toe Head

W150-246 Sheet 89

These rocks are 1.5km or so directly off Toe Head. They present one amorphous blob from the N, but from the E or W side they present their true character, which is three tall parallel reefs separated by creeks. The centre creek dries at low tides, giving the better chance of a landing as there are baylets on either side, to be chosen according to wind direction. There is no water; this is just a very exposed waystop. Nesting auks and gulls. Note especially the flag marker SW of the rocks, marking the ‘other end’ of the wreck of the ‘Kowloon Bridge’, reputedly the largest shipwreck in the world. Marvel at its size as the distance to the flag is considerable.

Tides

Tides run strongly in Stag Sound, between the Stags and Toe Head. A sustained westerly wind will extend the flood and weaken the ebb. Expect confused seas with wind over tide.

Stag Sound		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	4:35 before Cobh HW	2.5kn
W	1:50 after Cobh HW	2.5kn

Local HW/LW are about half an hour before Cork.

Lough Hyne

Lough Hyne, almost an inland salt-water lake, is Ireland’s first Marine Reserve. The lough is a pretty place, surrounded by hills covered by deciduous forests. Launch at a slipway on the northern shore. Commercial kayak businesses need a permit to operate on it. The Heritage centre in Skibbereen has a great video and touch tank to do with the lough and well worth a visit to learn about it.

Good car parking. No camping allowed.

The interest of the lough to scientists lies in its deep, tidal, salt water in a controlled environment. Academics from universities all over Europe come to research the marine life to be found in the lough and its rapids. For instance, the lough boasts the biggest scallops found anywhere.

It is much loved by divers, as depths of 45m can be had with good visibility close to the shore in a sheltered environment, although any disturbance of the silty bottom soon puts an end to the visibility. The necessary authorisation/permit may be had locally.

The lough is famous for its night paddles, as there is excellent phosphorescence in the sheltered water.

Tides

The narrow entrance is known as The Rapids. The Lough fills for 4 hours and empties for the remaining 8 hours. Typical of such a formation, the outgoing stream continues long after the tide outside has started to rise; the same happens in reverse although it is less pronounced.

Lough Hyne Rapids		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	3:20 before Cobh HW	6kn
Out	1:15 after Cobh HW	6kn

Local HW is about 20 minutes before Cobh.

The inward flow is deeper and over a longer area than the outgoing. Therefore though the speed is similar the outgoing is much the more turbulent. Beware playing on the outgoing flow because the bottom and walls are covered in mussels which are very sharp and downright dangerous. Standing waves worthy of the interest of surfers form on outgoing spring tides near LW. The ingoing stream also makes for a good (deeper, safer) rush of water, also worthy of play.

Castle Island

W097-284 Sheet 89

Castle Island is in the middle of the lough. On the island stand the ruins of O'Driscoll's Castle, from which the name comes.

Bullock Island

W103-276 Sheet 89

Just downstream and E of the rapids of the famous Lough Hyne, this steep wooded island is joined to the mainland to the N by a spit, which is only covered at the highest tides, and on either side of which one may land. There is no camping and a steep track leads up into the dense woods where marine scientists have a shack for their observations of the special marine world locally. There are caves in the SW of the island.

Kedge Island

W066-243 Sheet 88

A rugged island lying about 3km E of the southern entrance to Baltimore Harbour, there is no easy landing, but there is a sheltered (from westerlies) inlet in the NW with reported rich flora and fauna (seals). The arch at the SE doesn't go. Roost for many seagulls and seabirds. Mighty cliffs all round.

The arch in the mainland headland immediately N does go for the brave in good conditions. The narrow sound between island and mainland has a couple of rocks mid-channel and the flow speeds up through the gaps, cutting rough with wind over, so is worth watching. Launch from nearest point Trafraska W054-254, a sheltered inlet E of Baltimore and 1.5km NW.

West Cork

Roaringwater Bay to the Beara Peninsula County Cork

Roaringwater Bay

Roaringwater Bay, in the extreme SW of Ireland, is excessively named. In fact, its many islands guarantee sheltered water in almost all conditions. Its user• friendly aspect makes it a most popular area for watersports and boating. The area generally tends to be very popular in summer, because there is always somewhere to hide in Roaringwater Bay.

From Sherkin and Cape Clear Islands in the S to Mizen Head in the W, it is more accurately called Long Island Bay. Roaringwater Bay proper is tucked into the sheltered NE corner. A feature of virtually all the islands, caused by their sandstone geology, is 'waisting'. Waists are narrow points where the islands are almost cut in two, and sometimes three, by the sea. Indeed, they may soon be. These waists are heavily relied on in the text for locational descriptions. -Beaches or landing points, and other places, are often located by reference to the waist. This waisting is not always obvious from a casual glance at the half• inch OS map, but the modern OS 1:50,000, sheet 88 does much better.

Embarkation

The many islands of the bay are reached from the pretty towns of Baltimore to the SE or Schull to the NW. Each town boasts every possible convenience to the holidaymaker. Here, as elsewhere in the region, the standard of pub and restaurant food is superb. Hostels and accommodation of all kind abound. Vehicles may conveniently be left in either location. Both towns are famous for their sailing schools, Baltimore having the edge perhaps. Baltimore has a regular year-round ferry to Sherkin and Cape Clear Islands. There is a ferry to Cape Clear Island in summer from Schull. Technically the nearest launch for Cape Clear is Colla Pier V917-293, a pleasant spot, a refuge in campervannable terms from Schull.

Tides

The big picture is that the flood flows E from Mizen Head through the islands of the bay, and outside Cape Clear Island. Among the islands of the bay, the flood generally turns S and then E where circumstances suggest. In this way, the flood runs E along both the N and S sides of the islands, and generally S through sounds that run N/S. The reverse is also true, the ebb flowing generally W and N through the sounds.

This is particularly true of Gascanane Sound, between Sherkin and Cape Clear.

Important and predictable exceptions occur. The flood streams N through the sound between Long Island and Castle Island and ebbs S. This allows the large enclosed water area of Schull Harbour to the N to be filled and emptied. In the same way, the large enclosed water area of Baltimore Harbour fills from both sides, N and S. In the sound between Sherkin and the mainland, the flood is N and the ebb is S.

Piratical Baltimore

W028-257 Sheet 88

The ancient native Irish were comprehensively crushed in the military sense in 1601 with the battle of Kinsale. The pacification of the countryside meant the land was ripe for settlement by the victors. Farming would follow the fighting, in a common pattern, here as elsewhere. Pretty seaside Baltimore was among the [\[R1\]\[R1\]](#) earliest of villages 'planted' with residents of English, Irish and Danish origins. Mostly they fished. On 20th June 1631, the village had 26 huts in concentric circles, stone fireplaces, but the rest was made of straw. In a pirate raid unequalled before or after, Baltimore had 235 less residents at sundown than at dawn. The 235 were taken by Barbary corsairs out of Algiers in a dawn raid. With a local pilot and a fair skinned Dutch commander, these oriental pillagers came ashore, burnt out the entire village and took away the villagers.

There were two ships and 280 fighting men among the corsairs, of whom 230 went ashore. They set the roofs afire with tar torches and created lots of noise to confuse – 17th century ‘shock & awe’. They took everyone, from the elderly to the youngest babies, who would become maids and then ‘whatever’. Two elderly and therefore uneconomic adults were sent back from the ships before they sailed. 23 men were taken and the rest were women and children. Fair skinned Celtic women were then as now greatly prized in North Africa (as they are in Ireland) and commanded high prices. The slaves were treated well on the whole and only the wealthy were abused so that their entreaties home for ransom might be the more urgent. Such piracy was then commonplace, even commonly carried out by the British and other European states. One William Gunther ran a populist campaign that managed to shock Westminster with the scale of the Baltimore raid and keep the candle burning. Only one captive ever made it home, Joan Broadbrook, not entirely a happy occurrence. Male “liberated” captives in such circumstances have typically fared well enough, while “returned” females have always been shunned, throughout history, worldwide. Statistically, 10% of all Algerians are fair skinned..

Sherkin Island

W028-257 Sheet 88

Population 90.

Embarkation and Landing

The pier in Baltimore Harbour is the embarkation place for the island. During busy periods the strand 0.5km southwest on the edge of town W043-260 can be less fussy, and the parking is fine. The main pier on Sherkin is on the E side of the island just below the abbey, all clearly visible from Baltimore. There is a water tap on the pier. The strand on the S side of the pier is a very sheltered, stony beach.

Camping

Prominent, ivy-clad O’Driscoll Castle stands 300m N of the pier. Below the castle is a very steep slipway, and above the castle is the hotel. The best camping is above the slipway. It is best to ask in the hotel. There is another water tap just outside the hotel and below ‘The Jolly Roger’ pub.

Circumnavigation

The Globe Rocks, awash at LW, are just N of the pier. The sound at the NW of the island between it and Spanish Island is called ‘The Sound’.

Dock Pier is just W of the N entrance to The Sound, in a safe, well-sheltered ENE-facing cove at W023-273. Along the whole N side of the island, beware of the Cape Clear Island ferry, as the depth is shallow and the boats are very frequent in summer. Many yachts will also be encountered, many of which are being driven by beginners, and further care is needed in that regard.

The very sheltered Kinish Harbour on the NW side, which mostly dries, has a mighty current, perhaps 2kn, at the entrance at W017-259. Beware of Carrogoona Rocks just E of the entrance. It is only a 150m carry to Cow Strand at W014-253 from the quay at the SW side of the harbour.

W of the entrance to Kinish Harbour is the Sherkin Island Marine Station. The landing point at W010-259 involves a lot of weaving in between offshore rocks but the landing itself is quite sheltered. The Marine Station, in addition to its research activities, privately publishes

works on bird life and natural sciences, particularly aquatic flora and fauna. Especially recommended is their 'Ireland's Marine Life, A World of Beauty', a stunning collection of underwater pictures taken locally in Roaringwater Bay. The price at time of writing was €20.00, plus postage. Contact them on 028 20187 or by e-mail at SherkinMarine@eircom.net. Cow Strand is the more southerly and smaller of two strands in the large curved bay on the W part of the N side of the island. It is a bit public in summer but a great spot nonetheless. Silver Strand at W012-255 is just to the N of Cow Strand. It is probably the best beach on the island and camping is to be had in the cliffs at the S end. Above both beaches, an islander collects modest camping fees. Both beaches slope gently and attract big swells, getting dangerous when the wind is SW to NW.

3-400m S of Cow Strand is Priest's Bay at W012-247, which is very secluded. SW of Priest's Bay is the nice, crescent-shaped, sheltered Trabaun Strand at W010-245.

On an anticlockwise trip around, the coast from here to the well-named Horseshoe Harbour at W027-254 is more or less inaccessible all the way. An exception may be Tracrua at W003-240, a narrow inlet just S of Sherkin Point. Horseshoe Harbour lies just W of the sound to the E of the island, very near everything and very secluded. The rocky landing is in at the back.

Tides

Baltimore Harbour fills from both the northwest and from the south. These flood streams meet near Lousy Rocks in the middle of the harbour. The tidal stream floods east on both the northern and southern sides of Sherkin Island. After that, the combined stream heads east and then northeast into Church Strand Bay, northeast of the town. The ebb is the reverse.

Entrances to Baltimore Harbour	
Direction	Time
In	5:45 after Cobh HW
Out	0:25 before Cobh HW

Gascanane Sound		
Direction	Time	Speed
SE	5:20 after Cobh HW	3kn
NW	0:55 before Cobh HW	3kn

The stretch of water around Cape Clear and Sherkin is not to be underestimated. In many places, especially Gascanane Sound, the tide runs fiercely, causing dangerous eddies and overfalls, especially near Carrimore Rocks in the middle. The steep-to rock on the Sherkin side of the sound is Illaunbrock.

Illlaunbrock

V998-232 Sheet 88

Illlaunbrock is located in the Gascanane Sound south west of Sherkin Island. The island and its associated reefs are substantial in extent and the south west extremities of the island are dramatic. There is an attractive almost rectangular shaped bay along the island's western edge. The walls rise steeply but landing is possible onto a boulder strewn storm beach of Atlantic dimensions in good conditions. However access to the summit is only possible for those with good rock climbing skills. The narrow channels between the main island and its outliers merit exploration. Landings are also possible along the northern and north eastern

edges onto slanting rock shelves. From here the walk to the summit is worth the effort as the views back to Sherkin and westwards to Cape Clear are cracking. Breeding Shags, Herring and Greater-black backed Gulls.

Cape Clear Island - *Oileán Cléire*

V954-218 Sheet 88

This Gaeltacht island is truly the Land's End of SW Ireland. Cape Clear is actually the most SW point of Cape Clear Island, called Pointabullaun at V943-197. Mountainous, steep, and imposing, the island is home in winter to about 135 people or 110 voters and many more in summer. A ferry runs all year from Baltimore - twice daily in winter, more often in summer. In summer, there is also a ferry from Schull. The island has pubs, B&Bs, restaurants, two hostels, a well-appointed campsite at V954-212, windmills, very basic shops and provisions, and the most famous bird observatory in the country at V954-219.

The island is extremely waisted, the waist being known as 'The Waist', with the North Harbour to landward, and South Harbour on the seaward side. The waist itself is high and narrow, and the roads in the vicinity of the waist are extremely steep, that giving access to the E end of the island being called the A1 and having a gradient of about 1:4.

The co-operative club serves excellent meals and drink on the harbour, and Cotter's Bar is also located here. There is a third wee pub up at the waist. A fourth, modern pub, Danny Mike's, has been built just S of the waist, and excellent food may be had from breakfast to dinner time.

"*Dún an Óir*" (Gold Fort) is the mediaeval castle on the projecting headland just WSW of the North Harbour. On private land, it was once an influential affair under the O'Driscolls, who ruled locally. The Spanish came in 1601 under Don Juan del Aquila. After the defeat of Gaelic Ireland in Kinsale that year, the castle, and Ireland generally, not to mention the Spanish, fell into decline.

There is the ruin of a lighthouse on the middle summit, which was the main landfall light for ships arriving from America during most of the 19th Century. Its light was too high up, and therefore too often obscured by fog. It was decided, after 100 lives were lost in a shipwreck in 1847, to build a lighthouse on the Fastnet Rock.

Incoming liners long ago passed by the island, and the passengers would toss messages overboard in sealed containers. These were forwarded from the signal station and arrived in London hours before the ship. The islanders were first in Europe to hear of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

The island would repay a fortnight's visit, and the walking repays fitness.

Landing

The main landing is at the beach in the well-sheltered pier in North Harbour, where the ferry comes in. For a fleeting visit, land on the sandy beach, dead ahead of the harbour entrance.

For longer visits, consider the remoter mud/shingle beach under the bird observatory in the inner harbour, hard right just inside the harbour entrance.

Should conditions allow, landing is also very sheltered in South Harbour. Land here easiest at the stony beach on the E side, inside the lovely old quay and under the youth hostel at V958-213.

Circumnavigation

A circumnavigation is a committing 15km and requires good conditions and planning. Note particularly that the tidal timings vary at each end of the island. The crux of the trip will always be off Cape Clear itself, W of South Harbour, but Gascanane Sound may provide technical interest also.

Begin and end at North or South Harbour. Landings, as waystops only, may be had on the N side, where roads are shown going down to the sea, near the little rocky island Illauneana (V970-235). Both are stony landings, that to the E being steep also. The landing apparent on the map at V984-230 on the E side is very difficult. It is an exposed, steep slipway, impossible without good conditions and best avoided. There are no landings on the SE side, nor W of South Harbour round to North Harbour.

There is a mighty sea arch at Pointanbullig on the E side of the South Harbour entrance.

Camping

The main camping is a well-appointed campsite at V954-212. For kayakers, this is inconvenient to the North Harbour, involving a long carry past the waist. Better by far is to land in South Harbour, on the W side, under the campsite.

The only possible camping 'sauvage' may be had inconveniently, on the N side where roads are shown going down to the sea, near the little rocky island Illauneana (V970-235). Nothing is known as to availability of water.

Hostels

B&B and a hostel may be had at Cotter's Bar, just above the main pier.

There is an 'An Oige' youth hostel at the South Harbour at V958-213. Those landing here will be well rewarded for their extra effort in terms of the welcome, as an outdoor pursuits centre runs from the hostel called 'Cleire Lasmuigh' or in the English, 'Cape Clear Island Outdoors Activity'. Calm conditions are needed to paddle around to this spot.

Birding

At the pier in North Harbour is the Bird Observatory building, like a youth hostel. This (in season) is strictly for birders. The birding season locally is the autumn months of August through to November, so paddlers may be welcome at other times. Even in season, especially for those possessing binoculars and who know a covert from a supercilium, it may be worth asking.

When a new "first" (such as Yellow Bellied Sapsucker or Red Eyed Vireo, to name recent samples) gets reported on the bird grapevine, the island becomes suddenly thronged with highly motivated, intensely competitive individuals. They have all abandoned faraway families and jobs with zero notice, here to see, "tick" and "twitch" on the avian wonder that has dropped in. These people are not dangerous when approached, even when they occur in numbers. However, as they have no interest in those outside their own kind, they will mostly ignore you, so there is little point, and anyway they speak a language all their own.

Because of its extreme SW position, Cape Clear Island is directly in the path of long distance birds and cetaceans gaining and regaining the North Atlantic from all points E and S.

Accordingly, Cape Clear is internationally famous for its migrants and vagrants, and virtually nowhere else in the country has as many rarities, and mega-rarities.

Most bird observation is done near the waist and on the W end of the island. Dawn and dusk sea-watching of both birds and cetaceans is done mostly from Blananarragaun at V947-197, which juts out at the extreme S tip of the island. Get there by following a path along the top

of the cliffs on the W side of South Harbour. When approaching, it appears inaccessible, but keep your nerve, it is easy enough to scramble out. Morning or evening, this is one spot you will never have to yourself.

The area just behind the Youth Hostel is also a renowned birding spot, especially for the smaller passerines, and much ringing and counting takes place hereabouts. Good birds are seen further E on the island as well, especially on the N side, among the sheltered wooded spots.

Climbing

There is excellent rock climbing on the Bill of Clear, thin, well-protected slabs, and some steeper work, with plenty of scope remaining. These are reported in the 'New Climbs' bulletins of the late '80s.

Tides

The flood tide arrives at the western end of Cape Clear and runs along the northern and south coasts at the following times:

North & south coast of Cape Clear	
Direction	Time
NE	4:20 before Cobh HW
SW	1:50 after Cobh HW

The situation is more complex on the eastern and western sides.

In the east in Gascanane Sound, the times are as follows:

Gascanane Sound		
Direction	Time	Speed
SE	5:20 after Cobh HW	3kn
NW	0:55 before Cobh HW	3kn

In the west, the flood separates at the Bill of Clear (V937-204), which juts out from the northern tip of the western side. The northern branch is uncomplicated. The southern branch sets up heavy confused seas as it continues to Blananarragaun, the point 1.5km to the southeast, which juts out from the southern tip. After Blananarragaun, it makes a big eddy anticlockwise around the outer part of South Harbour.

On the ebb, there is a big eddy set up by Blananarragaun, clockwise to the Bill of Clear and back along the cliffs under Cape Clear. Thus, there is always a race off Blananarragaun when the tide is running and usually a heavy, confused sea state between Blananarragaun and the Bill of Clear. It is all very confused and uncertain.

Offshore to the mighty Fastnet, the tides run east/west.

Fastnet Rock - Carraig Aonair

V886-163 Sheet 88

Fastnet is remote. It lies about 20km from Baltimore or Schull. It is easiest reached from Cape Clear Island at about half that distance. The rock itself is 24m high and the lighthouse projects way beyond. It is a bleak, desolate place, its buildings all shuttered, its stairs and pathways steep and narrow and unprotected by maintained railings for the mostpart.

A first attempt to build the lighthouse was in cast iron, completed in 1853. It wasn't a success. In 1899, they began a granite replacement. This was first constructed in Cornwall of

numbered blocks, 2,074 of them, weighing 3 - 5 tons each. These were then dismantled, taken to Rock Island, off Crookhaven, and reassembled. Then they were dismantled again, and reassembled again on the Fastnet. This was achieved without fatality, unusually in the Irish experience. The whole task was completed in 1904.

Launch

Schull and Baltimore are each the bones of 20km. Nearest mainland launch as the crow flies is 13km at Galley Cove V788-247 at Crookhaven, or 14km from Colla Pier V916-293 outside Schull. If possible, maybe break the journey in or out or both in Cape Clear Island at 9km. Trip planning is a tension between getting the tidal flow right and not arriving at LW, if wanting to go ashore.

Landing

This is one of the more exposed lighthouse island landings, always subject to surge and scend. Certainly, few enough kayakers get here, because it is remote, but far fewer still go ashore, because to do so is so difficult. Fastnet is on a shallow shelf, always kicking up in the 200m or so around the rock. The landing platform is at the SE corner. Consider sending half the party ashore at a time, for safety. The steps for landing are approximately 01m proud of the water at LW. This has not been accurately measured, but a substantial height differential has been absolutely verified, so it complicates a slingshot approach to trip planning, where one would leave Cape Clear on the ebb, arrive at the Fastnet at LW and return on the start of the flood.

Tides

In prevailing westerlies, local kayakers agree it is perhaps best to do the whole thing on the flood. This allows one to arrive in plenty of time to land, take photos and rest before coming 'home' on the last of the flood.

Between Fastnet and Cape Clear		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	4:20 before Cobh HW	2.5kn
W	1:50 after Cobh HW	2.5kn

However, near the rock itself, it swerves more north / south as follows:

Within 2km of the Fastnet		
Direction	Time	Speed
SSE	4:05 before Cobh HW	2.25kn
NNW	2:00 after Cobh HW	2.25kn

With westerly winds, the flood starts earlier and runs harder and the ebb starts earlier and runs harder in easterlies.

Beware also of the shallow areas northeast and southwest of the Rock which can throw up confused seas.

Spanish Island

W031-274 Sheet 88

The island is overgrown with difficult vegetation. The main landing spot is on the E side, under the ruined house. This island was obviously once a valued asset, but has now gone to ruin.

On the E side, there is a mangrove swamp type of environment, Aghillaun Pool. It dries out at springs, is isolated, and possesses a primitive feeling. It might be a campsite for refuge in bad

westerly weather. There is a sheltered landing in a shallow bay on the E side of the N entrance to Baltimore Harbour.

Aghillaun

W036-283 Sheet 88

A small, interesting satellite of Spanish Island to its NE. Its 3 tors make interesting scrambling. No water or camping.

Sandy Island

W024-276 Sheet 88

Off the N side of Sherkin Island, this 5ha island has no sand. There is an old effort at a slipway on the E side near the old 1960's style holiday home. The house collects its own rainwater, but has mains electricity. Goat, heather, gorse. Would benefit from more grazing.

The Catalogues

W018-275 Sheet 88

Smaller offshoot of Sandy Island, to its W. Heather and gorse mainly. Many goats.

Land on a small sandy beach on the E side.

Hare Island

W007-277 Sheet 88

This inhabited low-lying island is the biggest in central Roaringwater Bay. It is 'T' shaped, with waists both W and S of the junction. The main residential area and fishing port, noted for its quaint bridge, is on the N side of the W waist. The ferry comes in at the extreme E point from Cunnamore Pier at W012-288 on the mainland opposite. Note the steps cut into the solid rock long before the modern pier was constructed.

There is a famous restaurant on the island, the waiting list for which is legendary. Noted for its food being obtained on the island, the restaurant is known as 'Island Cottage', phone 028 38102.

Locals say "Heir Island" and O'Driscoll's Island is also used, after a powerful local clan.

Landing

There are landing points at either side of each waist, the best being on either side of the S waist. Of these, the E side probably just wins out, as the island is generally more attractive at its E end. Generally, the W end is more rugged where landings to camp may perhaps be forced for privacy.

The W side of the S waist is a good waystop, as there is fine shelter for picnicking behind a stone wall.

There are two islets on the N side, but the sounds are narrow, and the more easterly dries at springs.

Tides

Tides run strongly around both sides of the island, flooding southeast and ebbing northwest, and achieving 2kn in springs off the western side, downstream of Anima Rock, halfway across to Calf Island. There are two islets on the northern side, but the sounds are narrow and the more easterly dries at springs.

Skeam East

V996-290 Sheet 88

A most attractive, tall, conifer-topped island. Goats and cows graze, and there are ruined stone farmhouses. The island is interesting, varied, and attractive. There is a sea• arch in the SW. Generally a lovely island.

Landing and camping

There are landing places either side of the central E• W waist, on sheltered beaches, (sandy W and pebbly E). There are idyllic campsites just above both. There is a small, remote pebble beach on the SW with good camping. No water found, anywhere.

Tides flood generally E and S around the island, the ebb reversing the process.

Skeam West

V985-287 Sheet 88

This E• W lying island, NW of Hare, is also waisted E• W. Coming from the NW (Schull) direction, there is a prominent wall, a slab, and some deep cuts, seen along the N side. The W end of the waist is not at all obvious, but is to be found at about the position of the wall. Here a sheltered pebble beach leads onto a rough long• grass campsite.

A landing may be had also at the slab, in a deep cut, typical of this island.

On the E side of the waist, opposite Skeam East, is another sheltered pebble beach, below refurbished, stone holiday houses. Here water perhaps may be had in summer.

The island is ungrazed and so is unattractive to most passing campers.

Tides flood generally E and S around the island, the ebb reversing the process. There is the ruin of a church.

Calf Island (East)

V970-269 Sheet 88

The low-lying Calf Islands occupy the most central position in the whole bay. Hares are said to roam free on all three islands. Calf Island East is the most attractive of the three Calf islands.

There is a holiday house by the deep cut into the S side. Residents may therefore appear, but unlikely perhaps. Behind the cut is a brackish lake, where grazing cows congregate. Camp at the cut.

Camp elsewhere, particularly on the E side where there are many attractive little beaches backed by dunes. The most attractive of these is in the N. There is also a splendid, similar campsite on the W end of the N side.

Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Calf Island (Middle)

V954-258 Sheet 88

The central Calf Island is grazed by cows, and is a most attractive island with abandoned houses in the middle. There are pebble beaches for landing in the middle/W sound. A noted feature of the island is the wall building between the fields, very toothy, very dramatic.

Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Calf Island (West)

V949-256 Sheet 88

The W island is overgrown. It has no real beach, and perhaps there is a connection with Calf Island Middle. There are abandoned houses in the middle. Landing is in the sheltered part of the sound. Local paddlers prefer this of the three Calf islands for single overnight trips.

Carthy's Islands

V954-280 Sheet 88

A scattered group of little islands. Only the largest, westerly island has easy, all-weather landing, onto stony beaches in cuts on the E side. These should be chosen according to tide height. These islands make a pretty group. They also make a strategically placed waystop for any tour of Roaringwater Bay, particularly one based out of Schull.

Both Common and Grey Seal are present. Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Mannin Beg

W019-328 Sheet 88

The smallest of the four small islands tucked into the far NE corner of Roaringwater Bay proper, Mannin Beg is nevertheless known worldwide for its Norman castle restored for modern living at great expense by actors Jeremy Irons and Sinead Cusack. Such buildings were always built of stone, which is not necessarily a weathertight arrangement. The owners plastered the external walls top to bottom. Whatever interaction took place between the old stone and the modern plaster, and there are many theories to be had on the subject, it is really not known how it all ended up the colour it did. Certainly it cannot have been intentional. At first a violent pinkish red, it has now faded in 2006 after a few years to a rusty orange.

The parts of the island not covered by the castle and its ramparts have been planted with mixed forestry, and the conifers are faring better.

There is road access to the island on the NE side, but kayakers will manage passage under it at all stages of the tide. There is a pontoon arrangement by the bridge, on the island side.

There is no obvious access point to this corner of the bay and certainly a quay up towards Ballydehob at W005-341 is awkward even for one car and not recommended.

Mannin Island

W015-324 Sheet 88

Largest and most central of this group, Mannin is given over to the wild. Grass, heather, furze and gorse make progress difficult. A small herd of goat in 2006 may make a difference. Beachlet landings in SW and SE.

Illaunahnee

W014-325 Sheet 88

Illaunahnee is also given over to the wild, again with grass, heather, furze and gorse, but also briars. Unattractive. Land S side.

Ardillaun

W013-323 Sheet 88

As small as Mannin Beg, yet the most attractive island of the group. Grass and heather. Sausage shaped and flat on top. Land at E tip in tiny cove. Wonder at the mussel fisheries all around and admire the open and beautiful views.

Horse Island

V976-303 Sheet 88

This E - W lying island, just E of Castle Island, is waisted N/S near its W end. A landing may be had N (by a pier) or S (on a beach) of the waist. The island is not grazed by domestic animals of any description. Accordingly, the grass is universally long and unsuitable for camping. Experimental forestation is being conducted, with both deciduous and coniferous trees, even on the highest ground. There are magnificent refurbished stone - built houses, one very substantial. They have generated electricity, and their own water supply.

Privately owned and not welcoming to passing recreational users.

Castle Island

V959-297 Sheet 88

A most attractive island, reached easily from Schull. Sheep graze so the camping and walking is easy. The island is very attractive to explore, being formerly sparsely populated. The boreens are nicely laid out, and the views are excellent. Good value all round. Chough nest, and Peregrine hunt.

Tides

Long Island, Castle Island Channel		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	Cobh LW	1.5kn
W	Cobh HW	1.5kn

Landing and Camping

The obvious landing point is at the beach at the pier under the castle at V959-297. In settled weather, more private and attractive camping may be had at a landing place on the S side of the waist on a beach at V959-296. Best camping of all perhaps, sheltered and with short grass, is by a group of abandoned houses at the extreme NE tip at V965-300. Here a landing may be had either side of a pebble spit. This site may be best for a stay of any duration, being remote from the normal access at the pier. No water found – anywhere, but a plentiful supply has been reported.

Long Island

V920-285 Sheet 88

The island is best known for its lighthouse (white tower) at its E end, marking the entrance to Schull Harbour and known locally as Copper Point Lighthouse, with landing steps, a place to stop and picnic and poother. As the name suggests, this attractive island is long, *5kmx500m*.

Cattle are towed out to the island. One boat tows another, and the towed boat has the cow attached to its stern, held fast. In more leisurely days, the cows swam the channel. Two persons live permanently on the island.

Landing and camping

The main landing on this inhabited island is midway along its N (sheltered, landward) side opposite the mainland, on a beach inside the pier.

The main habitation is in this area. There is more holiday habitation further W. Further W again, the island is waisted N/S. On both sides of the waist, there are beaches and attractive camping sites. That on the S is less obvious as it is in a hidden and sheltered cove. Just further W of the waist, on the sheltered N side, is the wildest camping site in a cove near the W tip of the island. Water is in the houses, and may be elsewhere.

Coney Island

V908-288 Sheet 88

On the E side of the mouth of Croagh Bay, a small, ungrazed, privately owned island with a refurbished holiday home. Beaches on NE and SE tips and on the W side.

Goat Island (Beg)

V888-269 Sheet 88

The smaller Goat Island is extremely difficult to land on. It has a white conical marker on its seaward, southerly tip. A deep-water landing may be had in the channel with a most exposed

scramble up a ramp on a slab of rock. Alternatively, perhaps on a very good day, landing may be made elsewhere.

Beware the West side of the channel between the two Goats in any sort of bounce.

Goat Island (Mór)

V893-274 Sheet 88

The main Goat Island is 'L' shaped and has a ruined cottage and lazy beds on the eastern leg. Fences suggest recent grazing. Certainly, despite the lack of obvious grazing, in the summer of 95 the island was not overgrown. It was really quite inviting, a most attractive island. A deep-water landing may be had onto a natural but steep-sloping ramp at the E tip, just S of a prominent sea arch.

At the join of the 'L', there is a sea arch where, except at the highest tides, there is a sand bank in the middle, but no reasonable access to the interior. For a couple of hours either side of HW this makes for a lovely passage, highly recommended.

Crookhaven / Galley Cove

Galley Cove V788-246 is laid out as a picnic spot, but however it is mostly used as a wild camping site, and locals advise there is no problem with camping there. There are four individual slightly raised hardstand BBQ sites which are thereby dryer for tent pitching, and beside them is plenty of grass in good conditions. The site is between Galley Cove and (local name) Cockleshell Beach or White Strand (per the OS) V785-247 just across the road. Have a look at <http://www.coastalhelicopterview.ie> where the area is clearly visible from a few of the photos. It is a good mile walk along the road to Crookhaven, which has no footpath for most of it, and with a few blind corners, so it is nearly as easy to paddle down for provisions and a pint. Call into O'Sullivan's on the pier in Crookhaven for local information. There is a small shop attached to O'Sullivan's bar for basic provisions.

Galley Cove is just about the closest accessible departure point to the Fastnet, and very suitable for aiming to get to Fastnet at HW (which would solve the LW "steps out of the water" issue).

There are some lovely deep caves a short paddle around the corner West from Galley Cove, to the inside of Reen Point V790-242, the caves facing West.

A nice short trip is a lap of Crookhaven starting and finishing on Cockleshell beach. The cars can be parked at Galley Cove and only require a short carry. Be sure to do it clockwise as there is a fantastic tunnel V817-255 through the waisting immediately inside Streek Head V819-255. The entry is spectacular, and the exit is relatively sheltered, however if in any doubt, first go around the point to check it out.

Mizen Head

A place of strong tides, big seas and a real feeling of exposure.

There is a super cave just below Mizen Head, on the South side, below the car park for the visitors centre at V740-235. The cave faces West so can only be entered on very calm days. Very deep (150m perhaps) with loads of colours throughout, there is a beach at the very back which can have many seals resting on it. Voted by locals to be a truly most spectacular cave.

Day Tripping

Launch nearest from Barley Cove on the East side, but the put in spot will vary with conditions. More dependable is Galley Cove V792-246. On the North side the position is far more uncertain. The nearest haul out is at the infamous Dunlough Bay V739-265, which is exposed. This was the scene of Ireland's and Europe's largest ever illegal drug smuggling seizure in 2012 when a RIB foundered in the bay, the petrol engine having been filled with diesel. The slip is steep, there is an old windlass, a pier with steps, and seemingly always a surge. Quite exposed and a good distance in from a straight line crossing from Mizen to Three Castle Head, this only of use in exceptionally calm days, and not worth investigating in passing speculatively.

From the carpark above the slip there is a lovely walk (20 odd minutes each way) to Three Caste Head. The three castles are in a spectacular setting, well worth the trip. Access is across private lands, with a donation box for the upkeep.

Toor Pier V749-283 is 3km beyond Three Castle Head and is only slightly the better option. It too needs very gentle conditions, as otherwise the slip is very steep and overgrown. It has a reputation as a boat eater, but seal launching plastic boats is quite possible. Steps nearby are also smothered in weed, and it isn't easy. The pier is popular with divers, who can manage better. Vehicular approach is a bit tedious. There is no other safe option short of Dunmanus Harbour V848-333 at fully 10km ENE.

Beware of a race between Mizen and Three Castle Head, especially with wind against tide.
Tides

Mizen Head		
Direction	Time	Speed
SSE	5:05 before Cobh HW	4kn
NNW	1:20 after Cobh HW	4kn

Dunmanus Bay

Carbery Island

V845-357 Sheet 88

The largest of the group of islands nestling in against the S shore of the bay, about halfway down. This island is the only one of the group with a dwelling. It was privately owned by an Englishman in 2001, who reputedly used it for a fortnight or so in August each year. The house is beautiful, built to a very high specification, in local stone and aged pitch pine. It has its own generator, deep well, and septic tank. The island suffers for being ungrazed and is thus given over universally to long grass, gorse, and heather. Otter and Grey Seal.

Landing

Land at a beach below the house midway on the E side. Here a pontoon has been thoughtfully provided. No water is available to casual passers-by. Camping is not easy because of long grass. Respect the privacy of the owner at all times.

Furze Island

V853-354 Sheet 88

An inappropriately named island in the middle of the group, this pleasant grassy island would benefit enormously from the grazing of just a couple of cows. Though it has not as of 2012 been recently grazed, walking is still good for much of island. Perhaps it is named for an area of gorse along the NE side, that makes for tough going. Almost as large as Carbery, one may camp almost anywhere. The craggy and indented southern coast is attractive kayaking. Land at the NE tip onto shingle and boulder. Cows need water so water there must be, but none has been found, yet. Many seals off the NE.

In 2012 there was a small colony of Shags along S crags, 1 pair Chough, Otter, Grey Seals.

Horse Island

V856-352 Sheet 88

A small member of the group closest to the mainland on the Mizen side, it boasts a large Sally tree (*Salix Caprea*), most unexpectedly, in the NE corner. Land just below the tree onto a gravel spit that, at LW, separates the island from an off-lying rock. Alternatively, land at the head of a deep inlet at the same point. Ungrazed. No water. No camping. Otter holt under Sally tree in April 2012.

Cold Island

V852-359 Sheet 88

The remotest and smallest of the group, to the ENE of Carbery, an ungrazed lump of remote grass and rock. Known locally for its seal population, there is also a strong roosting colony of Sandwich Tern. No water. No camping. Land at a sandy beachlet at the E end of a cut, which almost severs the island from an area of rock to its N. Otter and Grey Seal.

Mannion's Island (Large)

V923-407 Sheet 88

Mannion's Island (Large) is located in the sheltered NE corner of Dunmanus Bay. It is quite a big island and dominates the approaches to Durrus at the head of the bay. Extensive mussel and possibly oyster farms are located SE of the island. The island is thickly vegetated at its E end but walking is possible along the coastal edges and much easier on its W end. There was an attractive display of early spring flowers in April 2012 and much evidence of Otters. The views all round are good and merit a landing.

Landing is onto small rocky beach on the E end. Camping is possible but not very attractive. No water found.

Mannion's Island (Small)

V924-409 Sheet 88

Mannion's Island (small) is a tiny islet that trebles in extent at times of LW allowing landings on all sides. There is little of interest to attract a passing kayaker although the present of Otter may allow for a rare encounter. No camping and no water.

Owen's Island

V870-391 Sheet 88

Owen's Island is located about 1km SW of the pier at Ahakista. The island's main interest is a small arch on the N side and good numbers of seabirds. There is a colony of Cormorants. Herring, Lesser Black-backed and Greater Black-backed Gulls all breed.

Landing is on to rock shelves along the more sheltered N / E sides. Camping possible but is not very attractive. No water found.

Pointabulloge Island

V848-377 Sheet 88

Pointabulloge Island is a pleasant long narrow island that is separated from the mainland by a narrow channel. Passage through the channel is only possible at times close to HW as the area dries quickly. The island is grazed and walking is attractive.

Camping is good, although water was not found. Landing is best at E end of the channel onto a small stony beach at times of HW, otherwise onto rocky foreshore.

Ringed Plover, Oystercatcher and Otter present.

Illaunglass (East)

V824-367 Sheet 88

A small elongated shaped island separated from the mainland by narrow channel. The channel is navigable at most stages of the tide but suspicion that it may be problematic at times of LWS.

The island is ungrazed but is still quite a pleasant way stop for kayakers as the views both east and west are attractive. Camping is possible but no water found. Landing is onto rock ledges at the eastern end of the narrow channel. Launch from the nearby quay and slipway at Kilcrohane V825-371

Otter present.

Illaunglass (West)

V802-358 Sheet 88

Small craggy island located just off beautiful newly refurbished Dooneen Pier. There is no slipway at the pier but launching is possible off either of two sets of steps. An easier launching site is at the nearby quay and slipway at Kilcrohane V825-371.

The island is best accessed at the NW corner onto steep rocky foreshore. The island is heavily vegetated and quite sheer on all sides and holds little interest for kayakers. A narrow passage separates the island from the mainland. The coastal scenery is quite attractive in the locality. No camping and no water.

Bantry Bay

It is a feature of many of the smaller inner-Bantry Bay islands that surround Whiddy is that landing often isn't difficult, but further progress inland can be very much so, mostly because of wraparound raised mud cliffs, but also for sheer overgrowth, and often for both.

Embarkation

The handiest put in point for Whiddy and its satellites is undoubtedly at the slipway V983-482, on the road W out of Bantry town, just by the graveyard. There is good parking and easy launching at a slipway and gravel beach. Note in particular that the ferry pier in Bantry 1km E can be very busy, though it does have toilets and water.

History of the area

A major pilchard fishery flourished until late in the 1700s. It is estimated that over 3,000 were engaged in that industry at its height. Just as when the Donegal herring fishery collapsed suddenly at much the same time, the devastation to the local economy was horrendous.

Unlike pilchards, most other fishing is seasonal, and relatively small time.

The major modern historical event in the history of Bantry was the arrival in the bay in 1798 of a French invasion fleet of 15,000 men organised by Wolfe Tone. However, like a previous French effort a century earlier, this invasion took place in December, which was bad timing.

The weather turned into a full blown storm from the NE. Some of the French vessels

managed to enter the bay and anchor but the weather deteriorated further. The French cut their anchor cables and headed to sea. Had their invasion succeeded, maybe Corkmen might be speaking French to this day?

The redoubt at Reenavanny on Whiddy Island was built 1806/1807 for 100 - 150 men and 8 - 12 guns, to oppose a Napoleonic threat. That Napoleon's naval capabilities had been utterly destroyed at Trafalgar in 1805 didn't stop the work. No gun was ever fired in anger from any Irish Martello tower or battery of this kind built at that time for that purpose.

From then on Bantry Bay was the main western base for the British Royal Navy, never more so than during the years leading up to the First World War. During the war it was not unusual to see up to forty British warships at anchor in the Bay. No wonder there are fifty two pubs in Bantry.

In September 1918 the US Navy Air Wing established a seaplane base here, at the WSW end of Whiddy Island and it patrolled the area around Fastnet. Five planes were based in Whiddy. The first sinking of a German submarine by an aircraft happened off the mouth of Bantry Bay. With the end of the war the station closed in January 1919.

In 1938 the ports of Ireland including Swilly, Cobh, Berehaven and Bantry Bay were handed back to the State. The sight of dozens of warships in the bay ceased and the economy of the towns and villages around the bay spiralled downwards.

The Whiddy Island Disaster

Whiddy is the site of a large oil terminal constructed in the WSW in 1967 by [Gulf Oil](#). On Monday, [January 8, 1979](#) a French oil tanker, the *Betelgeuse*, was unloading a cargo of [crude oil](#) at the oil terminal when it exploded. The blast and subsequent fire killed 50 people. The facility was subsequently transferred to the Irish government in 1986 after which it has since been used to hold the Irish strategic oil reserve.

During the 1960s, developments in the pattern of oil transportation indicated that it would soon become most economic to move oil between the Middle East and Europe using ultra large crude carrier vessels (ULCCVs). These vessels were so large that they would not be able to enter most of the older ports on the Atlantic Ocean, North Sea or English Channel coasts. Accordingly, it was judged appropriate to build a new oil terminal in Europe capable of handling the largest vessels that were planned.

The intention was that oil coming from the Middle East would be off-loaded at this terminal and then stored for transshipment to European refineries using smaller vessels. The closure of the Suez Canal in 1967 as a result of the Six-Day War reinforced the economic viability of this scheme. Oil shipments had to come round the Cape of Good Hope, thus making redundant the vessel size constraints previously imposed by the canal.

In 1966, Gulf Oil identified Whiddy Island as being the most suitable site in Europe for the new terminal, because it offered a long, sheltered deep-water anchorage, well away from any major population centres and shipping lanes. The terminal was operational by 1969.

The offshore facility was comprised of an island type berth (known colloquially as "the jetty") 488m in length, approximately 396m from the shore of the island. The jetty was capable of accommodating vessels of up to 500,000 metric tons of deadweight (DWT), although no such vessels existed at that time.

The terminal was very successful for the first five years of operation, but then events began to move against it. The Suez Canal reopened and the economics of ULCCVs began to appear

less satisfactory. The late 1970s saw a levelling-off in demand for oil as the result of both economic recession and a rise in the price of oil. All these circumstances caused a fall in the utilisation of the terminal to a level below that which had been planned for. Thus, by the late 1970s, Gulf Oil was struggling to maintain the viability of the terminal. The company had been forced to undertake a number of cost saving measures.

Late on 6 January 1979, the *Betelgeuse* commenced discharging its 114,000 tonnes of crude oil, which was expected to take about 36 hours. Early on Monday, 8 January, a rumbling or cracking noise was heard from the vessel, followed shortly by a huge explosion within its hull. The force of the explosion was seen to blow men from the jetty into the sea. Local residents reported seeing the *Betelgeuse* engulfed in a ball of fire a few moments later. A series of further explosions followed, breaking the vessel in half. Much of the oil cargo still on board ignited and this generated temperatures estimated to exceed 1,000 °C. The concrete jetty crumbled and firefighters were unable to get near the vessel. The firefighters concentrated their efforts on preventing the fire from spreading to the tanks of the storage farm and on containing the oil spillage. Local families living on the island fled for their lives. The *Betelgeuse* sank at her moorings in 30m of water, which largely extinguished the main body of the fire. In spite of this, rescue workers were not able to approach the wreck (some of which was still above water) for two weeks due to clouds of toxic and inflammable gas surrounding it. After two weeks, it was possible to start recovering bodies from the wreck and pumping off the remains of the oil cargo that was still on board.

The Irish government appointed a tribunal to investigate the incident, which took a year to hear evidence and prepare a 480 page report. That seemed extravagant at the time, but more recent Irish legal experiences make it seem a model of efficiency. The report indicated three main factors that had contributed to the incident:

- The poor condition of the *Betelgeuse* which had been worked hard and was at the end of its service life,
- Incorrect unloading sequences and ballasting, and
- Inadequate and poorly maintained fire fighting and rescue systems both on the vessel and on the jetty.

All the crew on board the ship at the time of the incident (41 in total) are believed to have died, although not all the bodies were found. In addition, one visitor to the ship (an officer's wife) and eight terminal workers were killed. During the salvage operation, the life of a diver was lost.

In 1986, Gulf surrendered its lease on the site to the Irish government. The government used the terminal to hold its strategic oil reserve. Initially, oil movement to and from the terminal was carried out by road. In 1990, at the time of the first Gulf War, an improvised repair was carried out to the jetty to allow an oil tanker to offload at the terminal on a one-off basis. In 1996 an unloading buoy was installed and this has been used since that time.

A memorial sculpture, incorporating the ship's bell which was recovered from the wreck, has been erected in the hillside graveyard close by the embarkation point, overlooking the harbour. The bodies of two unidentified casualties from the incident are interred nearby.

Whiddy Island

Step back in time when you land. Whiddy exists in 1920s style, except for the oil storage facility in the WSW end. With the otherwise exception of a lovely pub (with tennis court) the Bank House at the ferry quayside, the roads and fields are straight from a period film. There is only one really nice swimming place, on a beach to the NE at V968-507, but no road goes there. The scale of the mussel fishing on the E side has to be seen to be believed. There seems to be a couple of batteries and forts, redoubts even, also up the NE, but any access seems private. Even the public roads have occasional gates, presumably for convenience driving cattle. There is the impression that if one got to know its ways, Whiddy would open up to the tourist, but all in all the day-tripper isn't accommodated the way he might be used to on similar sized islands elsewhere.

A bicycle is a worthwhile asset exploring the island on a day-trip. All the roads are cul-de-sacs so walking would be wearisome eventually. The oil storage is a "must see" with more than a dozen big containers housing the nation's strategic oil reserves, that constantly vent and groan. The big ships don't come ashore anymore, so the jetty 300m off the WSW point is redundant and looks like a scene from a post apocalypse movie. The S shore is prettiest, especially around the Kilmore Lakes. Goats.

The island is about 6km long and 2.5km wide. As late as 1880 it had a resident population of around 450, mainly engaged in fishing and small-scale farming. It currently has a permanent resident population of around 20 people, although there are many visitors in the tourist season.

The island is linked to the mainland by the Ocean Star ferry, which runs return trips several times a day, and in summer, cruises around the island are also available.

Landing

Three main landing spots are at the ferry quayside at Trawnahaha V969-495, on beaches either side. In 2008 there was an artificial beach on the E side, courtesy of Conoco Oil, where a new slipway was put in to take the car ferry that services the oil storage facility. Chance the mussels or chowder at the Bank House, splendid each.

Circumnavigation

Tides flow strongly between the island and Bantry. Going clockwise probably utilises the prevailing conditions best. Much of the exploring en-route will be on the off shore satellites. Going ashore is possible pretty much at will except for some parts of the long NW facing side. Cusroe V966-485 is a nice sheltered spit. There is a slip at V945-488 opposite the industrial scale pier V943-487, below a quick launch building similar to an RNLI station, only bigger, that probably houses an emergency fire fighting ship. The jetty at V942-494 is to be looked at but kept away from, for fear it would fall on you. The oil demesne extends over a third the way up the outward shore, and the first realistic stop might be at the stony cove V957-499 or V962-505. However these coves, like any W facing cove hereabouts, catch the oil spillages, and are dirty underfoot. Much nicer is the clean NE facing gravel beach at V968-507. Rounding the corner brings the mariner into surely the greatest raft of mussel farms in the country. These appear at first to be an obstacle but it is heartening to see the local yachts sail at breakneck speed through the gaps and channels between them.

Altogether the expedition is about 14km.

Rabbit Island

V968-490 Sheet 85

Small agricultural island 500m S for Trawnahaha quay, divided into two fields, each with cattle. There are alder and hawthorn trees sparsely on the NW side. Land on a stony beach at the SW point where a roadway has been broken into the interior, or onto a more benign gravel beach at the W point. Except for this roadway, access to the interior is otherwise entirely and even remarkably impossible.

Lousy Castle Island

V955-484 Sheet 85

Tiny islet, midway along S side of Whiddy, home to Tree Mallow, and breeding Cormorant and Herring Gull. A stone wall on the S and N sides intrigue, but it seems unlikely there was ever a castle here, unless the builders really were pretty awful. Land on the E side onto sloping shelves.

Gerane East

V935-485 Sheet 85

The highest and largest of three rocks 500+m off the aptly named Whiddy Point West. Geranes West and Middle also boast Grey Seal, but given their heights above HW, all breeding is probably done on Gerane East. In July 2008 there were several pups, so care is needed not to distress or disrupt. Shag also breed. Pleasant. Great viewpoint for “the jetty” to the NE. Land easily onto shelves on the SE side.

The man-built now-redundant concrete offshore oil-landing facility (known colloquially as “the jetty”) 488m in length, looks like a scene from a post-Holocaust movie, having been destroyed by fire and explosion in 1979. In the 1960s it was built to very future-proof specifications, being capable of accommodating vessels of up to 500,000 metric tons of deadweight (DWT), although no such vessels existed anywhere in the world when it was built.

Horse Island

V985-507 Sheet 85

Small grassless islet among the mussel farms, 1km ESE of Whiddy Point East. The summit is of round boulders that must be awash at times. Land almost anywhere onto rocks, to choice.

Hog Island

V979-503 Sheet 85

1km S of Whiddy Point East. The interior is entirely inaccessible to ordinary mortals, being one hundred percent surrounded by unscaleable cliffs composed of rubble and sub-soil. Land at SE or anywhere. A candidate for Ireland’s least inviting island ?

Chapel Island

V980-497 Sheet 85

1.5km N of the embarkation point. A large twin island, the interior of the smaller W half is accessible. There are the remains of a cottage in the dip between the two halves, on the W side. There are that many rabbits about the W end that tripping in a burrow is a potential danger. The whole W half is overrun with ragweeds. There is also slight evidence of ancient lazybeds. Two horses grazed in 2008. Very pleasant.

The bigger E half is inaccessible. A pedestrian access was forced at one time at the narrow prow leading from the dip, but it has eroded so much that it is now dangerous. Consequently, the interior has gone back to the wild, and holds no apparent interest for the recreational user. Land easily either side of the dip onto gravely beaches. No water found.

Glengarriff Harbour

A pleasant, sheltered spot for an excursion on a short or windy day. It is interesting to dodge in and out among the smaller rocks and islands of the bay, trying not to disturb seals and other wildlife, admiring the posh houses and boats, goats, and generally luxuriant landscape. Some of the islets are individually mentioned. Note the warnings on visiting Garinish. Do not disturb the seals. Local boats bring tourists to view the seals so any messing about is less than appreciated. The local boats can phut-phut up to within a few feet of the seals and be ignored. Familiarity breeds contempt. Kayaks, being unfamiliar, are held in high esteem by the seals, who panic on sight. Otter are reported, and terns. Camping is neither appropriate nor welcomed, nor was it found.

Embarkation

Probably easiest from a sheltered pier and slip about 1km S of Glengarriff where the Castletown Bearhaven road meets the sea at a spot called locally 'Ellen's Rock' at V925-552. Smaller ferries than those from Glengarriff ply from here, and the landing spot on Garinish can be seen 1km to the E.

Garinish Island - *Innacullin*

V934-550 Sheet 85

The island is much visited for its Italian, Japanese and Robinsonian gardens, developed by the family Bryce in the early days of the 1900s, especially perhaps Violet Bryce. Her son Roland continued the work and bequeathed the island to the Irish people, so that it is State since about 1950. The gardens are open in summer from about 11.00 to 5.30. There is a Martello Tower on the summit almost obscured by the trees of the plantation, a leftover from an earlier era. Unusually, its sides are vertical. It boasts of being the first such tower on the Irish coast, which, if so, was by a whisker. Superb to visit by kayak or ferry. Expect a race at the SW tip, where the sea is shallow.

Landing

To avoid serious upset, land only at the official landing point, midway on the N side, in a shallow cove. There is a stony beach at LW, and otherwise a slip. There is also a pier, a cafe, and a turnstile through which pay to enter. There is a boathouse in a cut in the NE side and a slip nearby at V936-550, servicing the restricted (private residence) part of the island. There are shingle beaches either side of the Yellow Rocks off the S side.

Bark Island

V937-560 Sheet 85

Rhododendron and fern saturated, a small, humpy island, ESE of Glengarriff town. Land either side of prominent waist. The island has nothing to recommend it to kayakers though it is a significant navigational marker for visiting yachts.

Murphy's Island - Garranboy Island

V943-557 Sheet 85

Fern and Scots Pine covered rocky lump, hard in by the NE shore, inside a prominent mussel farm. Otherwise inconspicuous up against the shore. Of little interest other than it is owned by Maureen O'Hara. Land by the S tip onto rocks.

Garvillaun

V940-551 Sheet 85

Prominent if small island, off the NE side of Garinish, fern and pine covered. It is best not to land at the cut halfway along NW side, as seals inhabit the island. Even more are on its sister rock, Ship Island, just SE. They are a tourist attraction, so please, *do not disturb*.

Garinish West

V898-503 Sheet 85

Privately owned, small, attractive and well wooded island, lying 200 m off the coast, midway between Glengarriff and Adrigole. It has two formal landings in the SW and NW corners. Both have small pier and steps, but there is also a small stony beach just S of the NW pier, for which kayaks will make. The SW landing is closer to the mainland and would appear to be the more frequently used. Notices are placed at both landings that landing should only be made with permission, so ask locally. The island has a holiday home on its E side which is well screened from view by well planned and maintained gardens and groves of pines. The island has been tastefully planned and laid out with walkways, shrubs, trees and heathers. There is even an irrigation system, fed by gravity tanks centred on the highest part of the island. It appears that the system is linked into the mainland mains-water scheme.

The island and the small quay on the adjacent mainland at V896-504 give good shelter for those on passage, or a useful lunch spot for touring inner Bantry Bay. The quay itself is a well known beauty spot to which many make of a sunny afternoon, signposted Zetland Pier, a lovely place. Parking is plentiful and it is important not to block the pier which is at the hub of a small but busy shrimp fishery.

Sheelane Island

V900-498 Sheet 85

Small rocky island 1km S of Garinish West. Grass, nettles, gorse and a stand of Tree Mallow dominate the vegetation. Its summit has an interesting old stone built navigation mark, one of several on prominent points to be seen on the approaches to Glengarriff Harbour. Landing is onto rocky shelves which are difficult in any swell.

Orthan's Island

V810-490 Sheet 84

Central to the beautiful and well sheltered Adrigole Harbour and lying under Hungry Hill, this is a small grass and ferns covered rock, ideal for picnicking of a summer's afternoon. On rocks all about may be found seals. Access is easiest from the West Cork Sailing Centre based at the small slip and pier just E at V814-492. The centre welcomes smaller parties as the parking is limited. "Sit on Top" kayaks and Canadian style canoes may be hired, suitable for exploring the bay – www.westcorksailing.com.

Roancarrigmore

V792-459 Sheet 84

This is a low-lying lighthouse island, located 2km E of Lonehort Point on Bear Island, dominated by its large and impressive lighthouse buildings complex. Views all round are superb because of the island's position. It is well worth the visit.

Embarkation

Set out from a very private little pier with a gravel beach beside, 2km to the N at V793-477. The pier is itself a lovely place. It is poorly signposted off the main road and care is needed, to avoid frustrating to-ing and fro-ing. The road from the N is a cul-de-sac, despite Sheet 84.

Landing

The traditional landing is onto a pier with steps on its N flank, which can be difficult for kayakers in that the steps are narrow and very prone to Atlantic swell. In calm conditions a landing is also possible onto rock shelves either side of the main pier, but at about HW, it is probably best into a narrow cut just NE. Here a narrow gap allows access into a small pool and a relatively easy landing.

Lighthouse Complex

The exposure of the lighthouse compound to the elements becomes apparent almost immediately as one takes in the height of the protective wall running along the S and SW flank. Within the SW orientated enclosure, there is the feel of a walled garden, there are stands of Tree Mallow and other marine plants, and remnants of some old gardens can be seen. A walkway leads to the helipad and beyond that the SW wall.

Fauna

The island has a good breeding population of gulls, while small numbers of Curlew, Oystercatcher, Turnstone and Common Seal can be found during the winter months.

Camping

Camping is possible in the main enclosure, although perhaps not in the breeding season - March through July, as this is the main area. No water found.

Film

Roancarrig More and Beg are included in the film set for the Neal Jordan's latest spectacular film "*Ondine*", about a mermaid who falls in love with Colin Farrell, filmed in late summer 2008.

Roancarrigbeg

V788-465 Sheet 84

This small low-lying rocky islet is surrounded by outlying reefs and shoals. It lies 0.5km NNW of Roancarrigmore and, as of July 2008, was dominated by the remains of a wreck, which, when viewed from a distance, gives this otherwise flat rock an interesting perspective.

Ghost Ship

Stranger than any Neal Jordan film about any mermaid on a rock is the true story of the 27 year old Spanish fishing vessel *Nuestra Senora de Gardotza*, the wreck that now deteriorates year by year on this rock. Having died in heavy seas on 30th January 1990, the wreck was at first nothing more than an eyesore, until it became famous 10 years later in December 2000. Another Spanish fishing vessel, called the *Zorro Zaurre*, got into difficulties after the vessel sprang a leak with 13 crew on board, 140 miles S of Mizen Head on November 30th 2000. All the crew were airlifted by the RAF to Cornwall. The crew described the ship as being swamped and said they believed it was within an hour of going under. The vessel was abandoned to sink. It didn't, at least not immediately.

Over a week later, on December 8th the Irish naval ship *L.E. Orla* was asked to follow up a report that a slight diesel slick and fish boxes had been seen in Bantry Bay, to the E of Castletownbere. A Naval Service diving team identified the sunken wreck as the *Zorro Zaurre*, which which had ended up underwater, a mere 400 metres from the *Nuestra Senora de Gardotza*.

Imagine the shock when it transpired the two were sister ships, same owner, same manufacturer, same hometown in Spain a thousand miles away. The *Zorro Zaurre* had travelled 160 unguided and unplanned miles, barely floating and in her death throes, to lie forever in a foreign land immediately beside her sister the *Nuestra Senora de Gardotza*.

Neal Jordan – follow that !

Landing

Land fairly dependably in the NE onto a sheltered stony beach in a lagoon. This is accessed through an obvious break in the shoals but this may not be possible if swell is running high. Timing of a landing into this lagoon is probably best at or about HW. The lagoon is a pleasant surprise, and on a good day, a great place for a swim.

Loughure Island

V789-474 Sheet 84

This medium sized island is located just off the mainland. Landing is onto a stony beach in a well protected and attractive little bay at the NE end of the island. The bay has a hideaway setting, and at HW makes a good picnic/swimming spot for those on passage. Camping is possible just above the beach. However the rest of the island is rough, ungrazed, and quite difficult to explore. The terrain and vegetation cover is not welcoming and the walker is forced to explore the edges only. No water found and no evidence of any previous habitation.

Bear Island - *An tOileán Mór*

V686-446 Sheet 84

17.2 sq.km. Bear Haven, a natural harbour of naval importance for centuries, separates this massive island from the mainland. The permanent population is about 200. The distinctly mountainous W end of the island, opposite Castletown Bearhaven, is the most convenient to reach. There are many 'Private' signs about the W end, but the Beara Way gives access to the interior. Walking on the high ground is lovely, along little-used waymarked trails and the scenery is wonderful. Ardnakinna Lighthouse at V672-423, marking the W entrance to Bear Haven, is very recent, lit in 1965. The only village is towards the E end at Rerrin, where the island is narrowest.

The many guns and fortifications on the island were mostly built as recently as 1910, and some held IRA prisoners during the War of Independence. There are two Martello Towers where there were once four, two having being knocked down for later military building works. The island and its fortifications were held by the British, even after Irish independence, until 1938. They were handed over to the Irish, with other so called 'Treaty Ports', Swilly, Cobh and Bantry Bay, after a trade war. This was soon much regretted, when Britain went to immediate and terrible war with Germany. Two 6 inch guns can still be seen at Lonehort Fort, the biggest fort on the island.

Two ferries ply between the mainland and the island. The western ferry is from downtown Castletown Bearhaven. The eastern ferry is from Beal Lough at V717-463, 3km E of the town.

Embarkation and Landing

The harbour of the major fishing town of Castletown Bearhaven is the logical embarkation place. Launch at the slipway at V680-461. The western ferry sets out from here. The pier is one of Nimmo's. The slip is just opposite the SuperValu supermarket, which is seriously well stocked. Good parking. The grid reference marks the nearest ferry landing point in a small sheltered bay inside the W end, where kayaks may also land.

Tides

Bear Haven is a natural harbour varying from narrow and mountainous at its western entrance, to low and shallow at its eastern end. Tides flow in and out at both ends simultaneously, meeting in the middle. The stronger tides flow at 2kn through the western entrance and turbulence may be expected. Tides are not strong otherwise in the sound. At the eastern entrance, they reach 0.5kn.

Entrances to Bere Haven		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	5:50 after Cobh HW	2kn (west)
Out	0:25 before Cobh HW	2kn (west)

Tides enter and leave much as with local HW and LW.

Circumnavigation

There are many interesting spots in the 21km around the island, some of which are listed here, clockwise from the W end.

V674-433 Just inside the narrowest point of the western entrance to Bear Haven, it is reachable by backpacking or paddling. The landing is onto sheltered steps, easily identified inside a large yellow buoy and below a zigzag track. A seriously idyllic camping spot, midge free. Shore fishing. Water nearby.

V677-440 Gun forts (private) at Fort Point, and also just S at V677-435.

V696-447 There are a number of choices for more private camping away from ferries, but for those constrained to use the inside channel, perhaps the nicest would be about 1km E of the western ferry arrival point. Keep away from either ferry as the water is churned up and the swimming unattractive.

V741-443 There is a handy stony beach at a slip just inside Rerrin Bay, on the E side. Rerrin is in the E and the only village on the island. Hereabouts the island is waisted which is most convenient to inspect the conditions outside. The village has restaurants, pubs and other facilities. The eastern ferry leaves from Beal Lough at V717-463 about 3km E of Castletown Bearhaven. The eastern end of the island is by far the prettier, welcoming, and more civilised.

V748-447 E of the eastern ferry is low lying, but there is a super campsite in the shallow bay near two houses, and also elsewhere E of there towards Lonehort Point.

V755-443 Lonehort Harbour lies SW of Lonehort Point. Though storm beaches separate the two, the harbour is the more dependable resting point on a circumnavigation. A bump may be expected at several points along the outside, including Leahern's Point.

V755-435 Leahern's Point, sheltering Lonehort harbour.

V739-434 Storm beach at Coosavaud (means 'Boat Harbour'), E facing, by a slipway.

V721-427 Splendid little cove with a very narrow, S facing entrance, just NE of prominent Greenane Rock, gives great respite. It is better than the nearby and more obvious SW facing cove below houses at V724-428.

V672-423 There is no respite from the above cove until the lighthouse at Ardnakinna Point, but watch for the waterfall at about V712-424, and there are others.

V671-424 Illaundoonagaul, almost an island, has sea arches of the finest variety, which, being inside the entrance, are very inspectable.

Dinish Island

V688-457 Sheet 84

In Bear Haven, sheltering the town, this island is now connected to the mainland by a bridge, and consists entirely of an industrial park, mainly of the heavy marine variety. It is worth the walk around to see the big boats and big machinery. Land anywhere except in the NW sector (facing Castletown Bearhaven) where the main quay is. Sea kayakers might want to camp by the boathouse in the NE corner so as to walk into town, but otherwise of zero interest to small boats.

Minane Island

V695-457 Sheet 84

In Bear Haven, 1km E of Dinish. Small, rough, unmeritorious, flat little island with coniferous plantation hiding old ruins. Land most anywhere that is sheltered.

Turk Island

V742-445 Sheet 84

Located at the eastern entrance to Laurence's Cove on Bere Island, this is a small, low lying, narrow island. A navigable channel along its SSE flank divides it from Bere Island. Landing is on to a small stony beach in an obvious cut on the N side. The vegetation is ungrazed and is a mixture of rough grasses, furze, heather and bramble. Camping is possible at SW corner on a cushion of deep maritime grasses. No water. Good periwinkle density.

Dursey Island

V506-414 Sheet 84

Huge but sparsely populated island (permanent population of 9) of Great Blasket proportions. It is connected to the mainland by cable car at Dursey Sound. This is the only cable car in Ireland and the only cable car in Europe that crosses salt water. The Beara Way runs the length of the island - along the main roadway outwards and over the hilltops back. It goes past the signal tower on the summit, and makes for a splendid day's walk. The main area of habitation is about one third along the island but there is no village as such. There is no beach.

Embarkation

In calm conditions, launching is practical (if a bit awkward) at Dursey Sound, from the pier at V507-418. Certainly, no exploration of the outer parts of the island or the off-lying rocks would be sensible if conditions made launching impossible here. More dependably, there is a magnificent, sheltered strand at the pier and slip at White Strand Quay, in the extreme SW of Allihies Bay, at V523-428.

Landing and Camping

The pier and steep slip at V506-414 are well sheltered, just outside the S entrance to the sound. No water was found nearby but there must be. Camping is possible just SW of the slipway towards an old churchyard. There is no easy landing other than at the slipway. Rock pools just S of the slipway, which form and un-form with the tide, may provide a landing.

Historic

O'Sullivan Bere ruled here until 1601. When gaelic Ireland and its Spanish allies were defeated in the Battle of Kinsale 1601, he famously marched with 1,000 soldiers to Leitrim, to join the remnants of the rebellion, rather than give in. They set out on New Year's Eve 1601. The hardship endured over 20 days and the courage of the men, live on in folklore to this day. Only a few dozen made it all the way to join O'Rourke of Breffni and Red Hugh

O'Donnell of Donegal. It was all in vain, and the rebellion fizzled out in 1607, with the Flight of the Earls. The English destroyed his Dursey castle in 1602 in his absence. He might never have been so well known to posterity but that the great scholar and historian Don Philip O'Sullivan, his nephew and great admirer, was a Dursey man, born in 1590. Don Philip recorded the great feats of his defeated uncle, in Latin. His best known work was *Ireland under Elizabeth* published in Lisbon 1621.

Tides

The 14km circumnavigation is a challenging experience and races may be expected off the twin outermost points and elsewhere as tides and wind dictate. Tides flow up to 4kn in Dursey Sound and constantly boil, especially over a rock in mid-channel, under the cable-car wires. There is usually clapotis at the northeastern corner of the sound, which kayakers have found to extend 1.5km to Garinish Point to the northeast. Beware flukey winds at the northern entrance. The flood eddies on both sides of the southern entrance.

Off the outer tip of Dursey lie the Calf, the Heifer, the Cow and the Bull, mighty, remote and challenging rocks. Until recently, no kayaks had landed. The Bull has a huge lighthouse complex. The Cow has nothing. The Calf has an abandoned stump of a lighthouse.

Off these, the main tidal streams around Ireland split. One stream heads south through Dursey Sound and on to Cork, Wexford and Dublin. The other heads north to Kerry, Mayo, Donegal and Antrim. The two streams meet again at Carlingford, the Isle of Man and the England/Scotland border.

Dursey Island	Dursey Sound		Time
Direction	Direction	Speed	
E (flood)	S	4kn	5:00 before Cobh HW
W (ebb)	N	4kn	1:30 after Cobh HW

On the flood, there is extensive eddying in the bay between the southern entrance to Dursey Sound and Crow Head to the south.

Illanebeg

V504-410 Sheet 84

A small, sheep-grazed island just SSW of the slipway on Dursey, attached to Dursey except at higher waters and deeply cut from the E, W and S. Despite casual appearances, there are no easy landings possible at any stage of the tide.

The Bull Rock

V406-402 Sheet 84

The Bull lies 4km WNW of Dursey Head, the headland at the outer tip of Dursey Island, itself 6km in length. This remote rock appears from Dursey direction as a mighty pyramid with a lighthouse complex on top. A landing on it by kayak is one of the top dozen or so obvious Irish challenges.

A huge tunnel running E/W splits the Bull. The sides of the tunnel are even and smooth as glass. Navigation of the tunnel is undemanding. A landing may be forced on the S side of the W entrance, though it leads nowhere. A number of offlying rocks, Gull Rock being the main one 100m W, form pleasant channels outside the W entrance, with wonderful scenery all round.

The Bull is a significant breeding Gannetry, bigger than Saltee, second only to Little Skellig.

Landing

Landing is difficult. There is the standard platform with steps on the S side, at the foot of prominent steps leading vertically up to the lighthouse. However, at LW, the bottom step is a bit high off the water, and rock ledges on either side are subject to much movement of surge and scend. Unless very calm, the platform is wet, and boats should be tethered higher up, where there is generous space. Worst of all though, the spot is vulnerable to a strong sideways current, being entirely exposed. Any mistake will be severely punished. The SE corner of the rock is but a few seconds away, after which a swimmer will be in a full-blooded tide race.

There is a severe landing spot on the S side of the E entrance to the tunnel, just tucked inside the SE corner. This is a gloomy spot, and there is nowhere easy to park a boat once off the water. Conditions on the day may demand this landing be used, if subject less water movement. The vertical band of 18 or so brass rungs up the sheer wall looks very off-putting, but in fact, there is a platform at the top with a path leading up to the lighthouse complex. Another set of vertical brass rungs set into the NE face, formerly reported as leading to a set of steps where one could continue towards the buildings, have in 2011 been cut away. Access can be gained to the area by shimmying up a grass ramp and climbing up the retaining wall on which the buildings are built. The manoeuvre is for people with climbing experience and a steady head, as one is forced out close to the drop over the tunnel. The only paddler known to have managed this move made it a tad safer by carrying a towrope by which she protected herself. Kayakers landing on these “big rocks” are mostly cross-pollinated climbers, know they are taking risks, and most will consider taking a few slings and a bit of rope with them.

Tides

Tides flow strongly past Dursey Head. On the ebb, a distinct line of smooth/rough water stretches unbroken all the way to the Calf, with the run off extending well out towards the Cow. Lea Rock lies just a cable or so off Dursey Head and considerable turbulence may be expected here. The ebb seems to run from the Head towards the Cow, or a bit north. The flood is the reverse. The flows are very strong off the corners of the outer islands.

Between Dursey Head and The Bull		
Direction	Time	Speed
S	3:50 before Cobh HW	3kn
N	2:35 after Cobh HW	3kn

Embarkation

Launch from Dursey Sound or White Strand Quay, as described previously in the Dursey Island section.

SPA

Storm Petrel.

The Cow

V425-397 Sheet 84

The 66m high Cow, lying halfway between Dursey Head and the Bull, is an inhospitable place. Sheer walls surround it. Landing by kayak has always seemed impossible for all practical purposes and was never attempted, though some did look, until achieved in 2011.

Lesser Black-backed Gull abound. A mighty sea arch lies off its SE side, and the passage through is challenging. All along the S side lies a thin offshore rock called Gull Rock, which provides shelter for a rest on passage.

A difficult landing was forced on the N side of the NE tip. Securing the boats was awkward. The climb above is manageable. Remember to mark your route up and in particular the point where cliff meets flat top, as getting this wrong on the way back down could make things tricky.

Irish Seak Kayaking in the 1980s

Canoeing in general and sea kayaking in particular was in existence in the 1970s and even before that. On 4th January 1977 the ICU acknowledged sea kayaking as a distinct discipline within the sport of canoeing, and they hosted the first ever dedicated sea kayaking weekend course that May, led by Colin Mortlock of Nordkapp fame. The Irish Sea was crossed that July by Joe Halpin, Pat Blount and Aidan Kelly. Ireland was “rounded” the following summer by Franco Ferrero et al, then “solo” in 1979 by Tom Daly.

Nevertheless it was only with the new decade that the first semblance of a sport emerged with sufficient numbers that people started getting together to do their thing, however informally. The Nordkapp was “the” boat, and hard times generated many locally constructed clones. The legends are endless but they weren’t all hard as nails, poorly equipped or untrained, but it is true that they couldn’t read the rulebook until after they had first written it, and the gear was nowhere near as posh as it is today.

North Mon and UCC in Cork fed the first viable stream of paddlers into the system. Tiglin first, but later other outdoor centres, led the way. “Fleets” of kayaks started appearing. Formal instruction for the masses accelerated at the end of the decade with Stephen Hannon and Humphrey Murphy. A glance at “First Known Kayak Landings” shows they were getting out to and landing many remote rocky places like Tuskar, Fastnet and the Hull. Some of them are still at it. Timmy Flavin et al landed and summited the Cow in 2012, a First Known Kayak Landing.

Jamie Young et al rounded Cape Horn in 1989. Karen Weekes and Suzanne Kennedy rounded Ireland in 1990, unsupported. 1989 saw Ireland’s first symposium, camping on Clare Island, organised by word of mouth. Everyone was amazed when so many turned up because noone knew there were 17 boats in the country. Symposiums became regular annual events after that and Ursula McPherson kickstarted the Irish Sea Kayaking Association at one in Gartan in 1991. The rest is history.

The Calf

V442-377 Sheet 84

The Calf, 21m high, lies 1.5km SW of Dursey Head, with its off-lying rock, the Heifer, about half its size and height. This prime piece of property was once owned by Her Majesty Queen Victoria. There is a red iron pillar on the Calf, the stub of a lighthouse destroyed in 1881. A very difficult landing has been forced on the N side. Securing the boats is awkward. The effort is justified. Marvel at the many sets of steps cut into the rock. Enter and climb (with difficulty) the stub of the lighthouse. Note the sheds/workshops fully roofed and set into natural breaks in the rock ridges. This must be the finest example of using natural contours and gaps to avoid exposure to wave action and blending in to the point of having the structures almost invisible. Spending an overnight here will stay in the memory for all the right reasons.

The Heifer has also been landed on. Two paddlers swam ashore (with difficulty) while a third stood-by with the boats.

Allihies Bay

A truly beautiful place. Stony mountains of remote and rugged appearance back the bay. The village has little more than basic facilities. The main strand and pier at V573-443 below the town is backed by grass, and has a paying campsite. There is a magnificent, sheltered strand at the pier and slip at White Strand Quay in the extreme SW of the bay, at V523-428, where campervans are discouraged.

Long Island

V524-429 Sheet 84

Small grassy sheep-grazed island immediately opposite the popular quay at White Strand Quay in Garinish Bay, in the SW of Allihies Bay. There is a quay opposite the mainland quay and matching sheltered strands. Shore angling is popular off its outer rocks. No water. Nice camping. Obvious put in point for Dursey Island.

Garinish Island

V523-432 Sheet 84

Almost split in two at HW, this island is separated from the mainland except at LW and lies just NW of Long Island, which together form absolute shelter for White Strand Quay. Grazed by sheep. Cliffy on its N side. Possible rock climbing here and on the mainland on Garinish Point at V520-430 to the W.

Blue Islands

V572-462 Sheet 84

The first of four island stops on a beautiful passage around Cod's Head V544-477 from Allihies V573-443 to Travaud to the NE at V605-486.

A group of (at least) two very low lying rocky islands, with outlying reefs and islets, about 3km ESE of Cod's Head. Despite their attractive name, the islands barely manage to get their heads above water. They are not nearly as attractive as the Black Rock Islands further WNW, although they do enjoy a similar beautiful location and scenic backdrop. Landing is onto rocky shelves at their NE ends. There are fine rock pools to explore on a good day.

No camping and no water. Turnstone are present, and Oystercatcher may also breed.

Black Rock Islands

V557-470 Sheet 84

An attractive chain of 12-13 rocky islands in a beautiful setting under 2km ESE of Cod's Head. The islands are small, some little more than islets but taken together merit exploration.

All the islands are separated by channels or cuts and provide good kayaking interest. All landings are onto rock shelves. Four of the larger islands are further offshore than the more numerous inshore clusters. The central rocky spines of all four offshore islands run NE/SW, and all support dense colonies of lichens. The most W island, from which the group gets their name, has a large rock pool midway down the island, into which one can kayak at HW. The narrow cut which divides the two central islands of this outer group, is just about navigable, but probably only so at HW. It is barely the width a kayak, and one can easily access both islands by stepping across the gap.

Camping

Camping is just about possible on the most SE island of the larger offshore group. Two of the larger inshore group also have limited camping. Lovely setting, no water. The scenery, backdrop and geology of the area combine to make the area most interesting.

Reenmore Island

V569-487 Sheet 84

A small un-named island located in a cove tucked inside Reenmore Point. The island is narrow, grassy topped, and is in a lovely location, with good views along a beautiful stretch of coast. The deep water landing is onto easy rock shelves. The S side rock architecture is attractive.

Gulls do not breed, despite that the habitat is very suitable, but the island is certainly an occasional roost. A possible holt for a four footed creature the puzzle. Certainly there is enough brackish water for the like.

No drinking water was found, but camping is available, attractive even.

Those paddling between Allihies and Eyeries Bays will notice that there is a hidden valley between the two. Unnamed, it is accessible by road, though private. This valley is famous as the set for the film "Falling for a Dancer", chosen by Neal Jordan not only for its splendid scenery, but its complete lack of electricity or telephone poles. The film gave the actor Colin Farrell his first great exposure.

Carrigdangin

V591-491 Sheet 84

A small rocky island over 5km ENE of Cod's Head, separated from the mainland by a narrow but attractive channel that closes at the E end at LW. The S side is a series of slanted rock slabs.

Landing at the base of these slabs is from deep water. Easy access to the summit is available via a ramp from the SW corner, but landing at this point is very subject to surge and scend. It is far easier to force a landing, perhaps by swimming, further E, but from this point it is far more challenging to summit. Certainly, a pair of rock boots, a rope and a few *karabiners* would be useful. The slabs hereabouts may not be technically difficult, but they are not safe in wet kayaking gear.

There is a Herring Gull breeding colony c.35 pairs on the top and along the N side.

Coulagh (Eyeries) Bay

A beautiful bay of superb scenery that is all the better for being somewhat off the tourism track. Sheltered from all but strong NW winds. There are only basics available in Eyeries village. There is a choice of embarkation points. The most central is the pier 1km NW of the village off a sheltered storm beach at V642-514. Alternatively, there is better parking at a number of sheltered piers, the beautiful Travera Strand V617-490, Travaud V605-487, or the main pier, tucked into the NE of the bay at V654-530, one of Nimmo's, recently modernised.

Illaunnameanla

V646-528 Sheet 84

Small, ungrazed island, hard in against the N shore of the bay. Many seals. A navigation marker on the We tip is powered by mains electricity delivered above ground. Locally called "Bird Island". Land on the E side. Nice.

Interestingly, it seems to be a maritime horticultural experimental area. There are many different types of young trees planted.

Eyeries Island

V635-519 Sheet 84

Small, flat, sheep-grazed island with spots of sand on the SE side for landing. Camping maybe, water no. Unattractive.

Inishfarnard

V600-527 Sheet 84

Splendid big lump of a formerly inhabited island, with a fish farm off its SE side. The whole island is attractive to visit, with a distinct ridge, sheep, and abandoned houses and fields. There are many nice cliffs on the N side.

The cave/arch in the small bay at V599-526 is worth a visit especially in good evening light, as sunshine lights up the WNW orientated entrance. The entrance arch at HW is a lovely feature, but a committing passage, being very prone to swell. It leads into a long narrow cavern, which then opens into a blow hole. There is just about enough room to turn a kayak at HW. This feature when viewed from above seems nearly to bisect the SW facing tip of Inishfarnard from the main body of the island, - "Inishfarnard Beg" in the making ?

Landing and Camping

- The main landing for boats is not so convenient for kayaks, as it is a deep-water landing. It is in a cove inside the fish farm on the SE side, at V609-529.
- Better altogether for kayaks is onto a choice of storm beaches, the best of which is at V600-527, in a WSW facing cut on the N side, looking onto Bridaun. There is splendid camping 100m from the beach. Good fishing hereabouts also.
- Landing is possible at various tide levels on the ENE facing side of the waist at V602-526. This is however less convenient, as large blocks make life awkward, though not at HW.
- Another recommended spot for landing is near the E end of the N side in a NW facing cut, onto a storm beach at V607-531, where excellent camping is available after a small scramble.

Water

There must have been a good supply of water at one time. The population was once 24. A search for water on Inishfarnard found quite a bit of seepage water accumulating at the cliff

edge directly S of the second most W ruined house. Certainly there is enough for determined campers prepared to dig out a pool.

A newly constructed altar, at least that is what its purpose seems, is now in place amongst the houses in the W village. It is small and discrete. It may be Islamic. It may be linked to a ceremonial plaque outlining the family history of some of the previous islanders and their links to faraway Butte, Montana. The plaque is fixed to large boulder close to most E houses on way up from main landing.

Shags, Raven, Chough and Snipe all breed.

Bridaun Beg

V596-526 Sheet 84

Bridaun Beg is the inner and smaller of two islets off the W tip of Inishfarnard. A smaller version of and separated from Bridaun and Inishfarnard by narrow cuts which are attractive and interesting. Landing is onto rock shelves easiest on S side, from where an easy ascent to the summit. Marvellous views from this and other islands in this group.

Camping is quite possible although a bit of a scramble with gear, and there are better sites available on Inishfarnard. No water found.

In March 2008 there were 60 Turnstone, 45 Oystercatcher, 5 Curlew, and 2 Red Throated Diver. Shags breed in some of the cuts/caves on both islands. A heavy suspicion of rodent on both islands.

Bridaun

V595-524 Sheet 84

Bridaun is the outer and larger of two islets off the W tip of Inishfarnard, separated from Inishfarnard by Bridaun Beg, which is separated from both by narrow cuts on each side.

Grass covered but ungrazed.

Bridaun and Bridaun Beg are of interest for their rock scenery, narrow channels and slots. The best feature is located at the southern end of the cut which separates it from Bridaun Beg. Here another cut leads away W under at least three rock arches. The cut is narrow and prone to swell, but is well worth the look. It has not been yet established if one can complete this challenging and committing passage.

Illauwbweeheen

V665-564 Sheet 84

Meaning "Little Yellow Island", this is the outermost and largest and most pleasant of three long thin offerings in remote Cleanderry Harbour on the NW side of the Beara. The seaward N half is a strip of pleasant grass, grazed by sheep, perfectly suitable for camping. The landward S side is covered in ferns for the most part, but maybe the sheep will make a difference. No soft landings were found but shelves on the landward side are perfectly adequate. The inner two islets are not so inviting and are un-named on the OS.

Access

Embarkation is best from Cuas Quay 2.5km ENE at V686-572 named for the beautiful cave system Coosmore 200m NW. Road access to Cleanderry Harbour is awesomely steep and there is little or no parking at the rugged working area below, and a mussel fishery dominates Cleanderry. Cuas on the other hand is much more easy of road access, the working quay is much less stressed by use, and parking is fine.

Illauacuiree

V674-567 Sheet 84

Land softly onto a stony beach on either side of a spit jutting out S from the E tip towards an offlying rock. Detached at all stages of the tide. Long and thin, and grassy, yet uninspiring. Access from Cuas Quay ENE.

Kerry

Kenmare River to the Dingle Peninsula County Kerry

Ardgoom Harbour

This pretty and well sheltered harbour, wooded all along its inner parts, straddles the Cork / Kerry border, about halfway down the N side of the Beara. It is somewhat divided into an inner and outer section by a long spit of land jutting out from its W side called "Cus". Cus shelters the main embarkation point for the whole bay at the busy working Pallas Pier V703-576. Here there is ample parking for larger groups. The inner bay is much given to mussel fishery. More convenient to the main road is a small slip at V704-563 in the inner SW reaches of the bay, but parking is very limited. Very small parties may prefer Dog's Point on the outside bay on the W side V702-582, but even a second car would be a challenge. Ardgoom village has most facilities including a wonderful restaurant. There are no put in points on the E or Kerry side at all.

Pig Island

V718-573 Sheet 84

Close by the land at the SE (inner) bay. A raised clump of heather of zero merit. Land at a spit projecting E.

Bird Island

V721-575 Sheet 84

Close by the land at the SE (inner) bay. Heather, grass, gorse, briars, sally trees, reedbeds. Unmeritorious. Land perhaps on landward S side in middle, under the only clear grassy patch.

Illauneeragh

V717-586 Sheet 84

Unnamed on the OS but named Illauneeragh on the chart, this is a most pleasant island. Sheep grazed, the grass is short, and there is room for half a dozen tents in a sheltered wee hollow in the centre. Reefs jut out westwards in a manner that is highly efficient in catching driftwood. Land at a beach / cove on the S side. Attached on the E side to the mainland at LW via another unnamed islet.

Spanish Island

V744-592 Sheet 84

Spanish Island, consisting of large boulders, is little more than a crescent shaped grass topped stormbeach. It is used as a roosting spot for local bird life and apart from its beautiful backdrop of Caha Mountains has little to attract passers-by. It is surrounded by extensive rafts of Mussel farms, which dominate much of the SE inner area of Kilmakilloge Harbour.

Access from Bunaw Pier at V753-599 at which there is an attractive pub / restaurant, ample parking, and water for those on passage in the Kenmare River. Also perhaps from a beauty spot 1km WNW from a pretty beach at V743-605

Ormond's Island

V795-652 Sheet 84

Very pleasant waisted drumlin like island, lying close to the shore. Launch at Coornagillagh Quay V801649 or at LW by a causeway at SE corner. The island consists of two small hills with large meadows edged with furze. Rocky foreshore on N/W sides, but less so on S edge. Small boulder clay cliffs at NW and SW corners add interest for the walker. The more W meadow is much wetter underfoot and contains a mixture of wild semi-natural areas of marsh, blackthorn and gorse. Landings are possible around much of the island but probably the most attractive area is at mid S side under the ruined farmhouse, where also camping is best. Two ruins exist. One is in the waisted area in the middle, and is shown on OS map. It is set in an attractive copse of silver birch, and was once a fine two storied farmhouse. The second marks a landing spot at the E end. The island is grazed and although no spring was found, a piped water supply exists at gate at SE corner.

Kenmare River Islands

The Dunkerron Islands and the Greenane Islands are a double group situated about 6km W of the lovely Kenmare, on the N side of the main navigational channel up the bay, called the Kenmare River.

Both sets of islands are overgrown, almost to the point of impenetrability, and certainly they are largely ungrazed and unmanaged. That said, the Greenanes are much the more attractive to the passing recreational user for three reasons,

- that the interiors have at least some grass or open spaces, for camping or anything else,
- the foreshores are stonier and definitely the less muddy, and especially at HW,
- the Greenanes have nice narrow creeks and inlets to explore by boat.

In combination, arriving and loitering on the Dunkerrons can cause a heavy penalty escaping again through the extensive glutinous mudflats that appear.

Further, the more SW of the Greenanes are the more open and attractive.

Embarkation

The whole area is best accessed from a lovely stone built pier just off the main Kenmare Sneem road at V858-698, called locally Templenoe Pier, shown on the OS as Assroe or "Eas Rua" in Irish. This translates as "red waterfall", the name being apt. The water in the stream flowing in here is very rusty, flowing down from red sandstone hills. Oddly, the rock hereabouts is limestone, but the hills above are sandstone. This is a popular pier, always on the go with swimmers, holiday makers, anglers and dinghy sailors. There are other piers locally, but public access is less viable. Both island groups are described here anti-clockwise from Templenoe pier.

Fox Island

V865-692 Sheet 85

A small outlier on the NW of the largest island of all locally, Dunkerron West, fully but barely separated, and unremarkable.

Illaunreanageah at V861-697, passed on the way out, is much the more interesting, small, flat, and salt marsh to its tip. Camping should only occur at neaps, as seaweed litters even the highest point.

Dunkerron Island West

V872-691 Sheet 85

Wooded and mostly impenetrable, grazed by horses that are mainly found around the E facing bay on the NW corner at V866-690. Camping is possible where the horses graze, and also at the most attractive part of the whole island, the W end of the narrow isthmus that joins the E/W islands.

Illaunakilla

V874-689 Sheet 85

A small outlier on the SW of Dunkerron East, fully but barely separated, and unremarkable.

Dunkerron Island East

V878-693 Sheet 85

Land at the E point where goats graze and camping is possible if the goats are agreeable. Sheep graze in the SE but the approaches are glutinously as unappealing as is found hereabouts. Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Beech.

Illaunakilla

V853-691 Sheet 85

Most N of the main Greenanes, there is no easily found sign of the house that once was here on the W side. Land in channel on S side.

Cappanacush

V853-688 Sheet 85

Largest of the group, slightly SE of centre, very wooded and overgrown. Brave would be the man that would go looking to find the house marked on the OS map. The SW end is somewhat open, grassy, and certainly attractive. Land either side of W tip.

Greenane

V852-689 Sheet 85

Most central of the group, very wooded and overgrown, but inhabited by goats. The garden around the house in the S has a retaining wall to keep out the tide. Land at house.

Illaungowla

V854-686 Sheet 85

Most S of the Greenane group, and with the most open feeling. Land just NE of WSW tip.

Sneem Harbour Islands

V693-638 Sheet 84

For most of this cluster of islands, launch from a slip at the mouth of the Sneem River. The entire bay between the Iveragh and Beara Peninsulas is called the Kenmare River. The slip is accessed down a 1.5km cul-de-sac off the main Ring of Kerry road. The turn off is about halfway between Sneem and the Parknasilla Hotel. The islands are described in a clockwise tour from the slipway.

The islands listed here and westwards are sandstone.

Illaunsla

V700-637 Sheet 84

Illaunsla dominates the view immediately to the SE of the slipway. A wooded, coniferous, inhabited, somewhat tamed and private island with rhododendrons and seals. Of no apparent interest to the passer-by.

Rossdohan Island

V716-636 Sheet 84

1.5km SE of the slip, Rossdohan is a private, very wooded island, joined to the mainland by a beautiful stonework at the grid-reference in the NE. Launch from nearby Rossdohan Pier V718-637, which is the nearest to which most mortals will approach this haven. Although in multiple ownership, these are powerful and private persons. One might land and camp at the lovely sandy spit opposite the pier, with great views, but for the need for permission.

Under the access bridge runs a beautiful tidal creek, accessible by kayak at even very LW.

The area to the S is the more remote, with seals galore. There is a boathouse at V714-629, and a ruined mansion at V714-627.

Brown Island

V716-631 Sheet 84

A small islet on the NE side of Rossdohan, Brown is distinguished for its sandy beach on its N side that is available for bathing above mid-tide, where land. Wooded entirely, it has been planted for effect with fuschia, whitebeam, palm and beech. A narrow channel on the E side separates it from a large area of drying rocks where seals are a-plenty.

Rossmore Island

V756-657 Sheet 84

Joined to the mainland by road, this is a very private island in the sense that, notwithstanding the OS, the road never accesses the seashore anywhere around the island, and the landowners do not encourage visitors. Those who drive onto the island must drive back off. Do not easily stir off the public road.

Those who wish to explore its shoreline can embark from a beautiful quay just off the Ring of Kerry road at V744-656 in the middle of Coongar Harbour.

Inishkeragh

V696-623 Sheet 84

The most NE and most attractive of the three outer islands. Storm beaches, almost joined up, run most of the SE side. There are multiple single tent places. A group could camp on the W side very nicely, which would mean a 100m walk.

Illaunanadan

V694-619 Sheet 84

Middle and least attractive of the three outer islands. Land on NE side. There are places for small tents.

Sherky Island

V690-616 Sheet 84

This is the second largest of all this group, and specifically is the most SW and largest of the group of three outermost islands, Sherky, Illaunanadan and Inishkeragh. Some decrepit houses are being overrun by sheep. No roads. Land at the NE under a prominent house inside

the remains of a pier, which was clearly built by Ozymandias, and not by Nimmo. *"I am Ozymandias, king of kings. Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair."* Percy Bysshe Shelley

There are storm beaches midway along the NE side and at the NE end of the SE side. In 2006 there had been recent planting of native trees around the ruined houses. The island is worth a walk especially down to SW end where rocky cliffs and geos are attractive. The island is not grazed and is tough going without good footwear.

Inishkeelaghmore

V685-623 Sheet 84

Grass-covered rock, but nice. Deep-water landing onto rocks in a vaguely defined cove towards the W end of the N side. There is an oceanic feel to the island, more than with any of the others in the group. There is a miniature rock climber's cliff on the S side.

Inishkeelaghbeg at V687-624 is really just a grass-covered rock off its N side.

Illauhleagh

V662-622 Sheet 84

About 500m off the shore. Land onto boulders in the NE-facing cove on the N side. Long grass and even longer ferns mar this once-grazed island. Camping just about possible, but no water. Panoramic. The most westerly of the group. Nice enough.

Carrigavunig at V676-625 is a useful waymark en route to the island. Just a rock.

Garinish Island

V693633 Sheet 84

Lovely wooded, coniferous island with rhododendrons, huge ferns, seals and mussels. It is inhabited, somewhat tamed, and private. The channel to the N is impassable at LW. Many boats anchor in its quiet NE harbour. There are paths winding all over the island, ending at lovely little seating spots, where perhaps to sit and read? The only remote place to land is at an E-facing stone beach on the SE side, midway along the island.

Einaun Island

V690-636 Sheet 84

Wooded, coniferous, rhododendrons, mussels, uninhabited, wild, impassable either side at LW.

Lamb's Head Group

V525-566 Sheet 84

This group of islands on the SW tip of the Iveragh Peninsula extends over a wide area. It ranges from sheltered islands close inshore in the SE, to Ballinskelligs Bay to the NW.

Lamb's Head itself is central, and is usually visible. The islands may be accessed from a range of points.

The central islands include the biggest and remotest of the whole area, and perhaps may be most easily reached from a working harbour at the end of the road to Lamb's Head. For campers, this spot is the business - panoramic, sheltered, calm water for swimming, fishing, and a noted rock climbing spot.

Islets off/near Castle Cove

Most of this group of islets off the E side of Castle Cove Bay is reached most easily from the beautiful White Strand at V606-597, 50m off the main Ring of Kerry road, though it could be argued that the easternmost two might be accessed more easily more easterly at V626-610,

but which is awkward to drive to, park at, and launch from (the mouth of the little harbour dries), besides the welcome being uncertain.

Illaundrane

V630-606 Sheet 84

1km long and surprisingly chunky island lying less than 300m off the coast.

Landing is best at several small shingle beaches along N side. Grazed by cattle in 2008 and several wet flashes midway along N edge near an old ruined building suggested water available although not confirmed, and similarly a small lake in the SW. Attractive island of heather, furze and bracken, whose hidden hollows and little valleys provide interest for the walker. Camping at any of the landings. Otters and Common Seals are present on all the islands hereabouts. The channel separating Carrigdrane from Illaundrane at the latter's NE corner narrows to kayak-width at times of spring LW.

Leahcarrig

V626-603 Sheet 84

Small outlying miniature version of its bigger neighbour Illaundrane. Leahcarrig is primarily a waystop island of mixed vegetation principally of heathers and furze, quite pretty in season. Landing on rock shelves at NE end. Camping possible but better available on neighbouring Illaundrane. Ungrazed and no water found. Roosting spot for Great Black backed Gull.

Illaunsillagh

V620-599 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Almost a double island, being more or less cut in the middle, and certainly cut at HW. The cut provides a shingle beach on its landward-facing, N side. Long grass and gorse, ungrazed, uninhabited. Very close in by the Iveragh shore, the channel is very narrow and seals and mullet play tag in the shallow lagoon. Its merit is in its privacy so close to so much.

No water, no camping.

Illaunacummig

V609-594 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

This is the largest of the group, and centre of its universe. Land at a small beachlet at the NE corner, closest to the mainland. Long grass and gorse. No water. No camping. Few redeeming features.

Illaunakesha

V611-594 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Satellite to the ENE of Illaunacummig. Heather and gorse. Land in a cut to the NE.

Daniels Island

V611-592 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Satellite to the SE of Illaunacummig. Heather and gorse. Land in a cut to the NE.

Impenetrable interior.

Illaunnaon

V607-593 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Satellite to the WSW of Illaunacummig. By far the nicest of all the White Strand islands. Only partially given to brambles and gorse. Although the rest is long grass, the camping would definitely attract. There is the distinct feel of island and of remoteness. Angling would be attractive off the S side. Purple Loose Strife abound, as well as sallies. Land in a cut at NE.

Cammarna

V605-595 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Outermost of a fragmented group of islets immediately off the launching place at White Strand. Land at cut in NE. Ring Plover and Turnstone.

The inner fragments of the group may be accessed on foot at most stages of the tide.

Paradoxically, these are among the nicest of the islets hereabouts, for a few hours quiet sunbathing, if nothing else. No water, no camping.

Burnt Island

V597-597 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Barely detached from the mainland at the very middle point of Castle Cove, this is a lovely chunky island. It bears the signs of pedestrian traffic accessing all LWs. The summit is at the S end. A navigation marker at the NW side that lines up with another to the NE to clear offshore reef Carriganglee. Attractive. Sallies.

Illaunleagh

V587595 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

This island is located in the sheltered NE corner of W Cove Harbour. At HW the island forms an attractive backwater with a sheltered bay on its landward side. The island is probably accessible at LWN and certainly so at LWS from the mainland close to its N side. Landings are easiest along the N shoreline onto gently sloping seaweed and shingle foreshore. The vegetation is composed of rough grasses, bracken and gorse. The island can be explored easily enough in winter but would probably be heavy going during the summer months.

There are a number of old stone walls surrounding a cut at the W end the purpose of which is now long lost as the island has not been grazed in many years.

Water was not found and camping is not attractive. The inner bay area held Mallard, Curlew, Greenshank and Redshank in January 2012. Common Seals frequent the outer harbour area and evidence of Otter was found.

2m Island

V578-592 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

This island is located SW of the quay at W Cove Harbour (V582-595)

Curiously, although the OS Map Sheet 83/84 gives a spot height of 2m in a drying area, no island is marked. This island only becomes obvious to kayakers intent on exploring the inner/W harbour area. The footprint of the island is however substantial enough. The island is long and narrow and has a wild and unkempt nature. The main island has several small satellite islets lying W of the main island that dry out at LW and complicate the geography for those curious enough to explore. All have typical inshore muddy and seaweed rich landings areas

The main island is heavily vegetated with banks of furze, marshes, bramble and bracken.

Landings are possible at many points. Camping is not attractive and water was not found.

The whole area is quite good for birdlife especially for wading species like Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Turnstone and Little Egret. Evidence of Otter also found.

Leaghillaun

V584-586 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Lovely but ungrazed and overgrown islet just off a beautiful strand in W Castle Cove. The channel on the W side is deep at all stages of the tide. Rabbits. Land at the beach on the NW side, directly off the beach. Launch from the beach in front of the Derrynane Rowing Club.

Ill aunroe

V576-582 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

A large rock frequented by Herring Gull, the views to the W to Caherdaniel are stunning. Deep water landing in the channel on the NE side.

Ill aunleama

V577-583 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

A large rock barely off the mainland but circumnavigable at all stages. Some grass on top gives it something of an island feel. Great Black backed Gulls roost.

Ill aun naweelaun

V550-571 Sheet 84

An unexpected wee jewel of a grass and heather covered, ungrazed hump. It is separated from Lamb's Head to its N by a 50m wide sound, and then by Burned Island at V549-570. Burned Island is barely detached from the land, and is meritless. There will always be a sheltered landing point somewhere along the length of the sound, almost regardless of conditions, onto sloping rocks.

The rock architecture along the S side will, some day, provide magnificent rock climbing. This will be of high calibre on good red sandstone, 'clean as a whistle', and of all grades. The hardest and best route would be under the summit itself at 27m. This is the best 'secret crag' this writer has seen in many years.

Launch from Rath Strand to its N at V549-578, or more dependably from the huge Wavecrest Caravan Park at V554-581.

Lamb's Island

V533-561 Sheet 84

This very steep, conical islet is detached from Lamb's Head to its N by a 50m wide sound. A deep-water landing is possible on the E side of the sound. Here it is just possible, with great care, to scramble to the summit. Perhaps only a frustrated ex-climber would bother. There are lovely views from the top.

Two Headed Island

V514-561 Sheet 84

Grass-covered lump of rock, almost cut in half at a midway waist. On the NW-facing side of the waist is a deep sheltered pool, where a deep-water landing is possible. Beware - the entrance to the pool is narrow and beset by turbulence during big sets. Get your timing right entering and leaving. No water, and no camping. Marvel at the raised storm beach in the middle.

Moylaun Island

V500-563 Sheet 84

Grass covered lump of rock. Sheep were reportedly landed on the eastern side of the NE point, at a ramp inside an almost broken away rock. All of this is uninviting to kayakers. Much commitment would be required. Kayakers might prefer a deep-water landing in the cove on the W side. No water and no camping.

Deenish Island

V469-561 Sheet 84

Lovely 144m high island, well out to sea. There is a fish farm in the bay on the NE side. 17 Chough were counted in one flock on 28th August 1995. Overall, superb.

Landing

There is an easy landing in a cove in the S extremity of the E-facing Deenish Harbour. This is under the prominent house onto a sandy beach. At HW however, the beach is stony. The strand can be hard to see behind boulders at LW.

Tides

Tides run in the sound inside Deenish, reaching 1kn in springs. The flood reunites off the N tip of Deenish causing turbulence locally. They run N with the flood and S with the ebb, to and from HW Cobh -0100.

Camping

Good camping abounds. Water was found in a good well up behind the house.

Scariff Island

V454-560 Sheet 84

This is a huge, 252m high, exposed, mountainous lump of a truly offshore island; it was once inhabited by monks. There is an old oratory, very high up, roughly in the middle. There are the remains of a more recent inhabitation lower down, all on the SE side. Local lore says that the children of the settlement got measles and died, ending the human colonisation of the island.

The undergrowth is mostly quite long, and despite there being no obvious grazing, gorse has not conquered all. Wellingtons are suitable for general exploration of the long grass and ferns of the island, even on the finest days. Reports of good spring water could not be confirmed even though old wells were found.

There is the appearance of a path down along sloping ground to a cove midway along the S side of the island, called Lamb's Cove. There is a wall down to the head of the cove. This may perhaps have been to facilitate fishing. The Farbregagh (literally - imitation man) at the N tip is a huge sea arch.

Landing

Access is by a relatively sheltered, deep-water landing in a small cove in the NE corner, called Coosaneeve. Here, the monks cut a stairs of splendid steps in the solid rock (as monks did). These are wondrous to behold. They go all the way down to LW, and are hard to see until very close in, so perseverance is recommended. Local information suggests that the water in the cove is calmer on a dropping tide, but the logic for this is obscure.

Tides

Tides run more strongly in the sound between Scariff and Deenish than they do inside Deenish. On the flood, the tides reunite off the northern tip of Deenish causing turbulence locally. They run north with the flood and south with the ebb into and out of Kenmare Bay.

Between Scariff and Deenish		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	5:05 after Cobh HW	1.5kn
S	1:20 before Cobh HW	1.5kn

Abbey Island

V522-583 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Abbey Island (8ha) is named for the early Christian abbey – Derrynane Abbey - in the NE corner, said to have been founded by Finan. The current ruins though date from the 13th century. This overgrown island is attached to the mainland to the NE by a spit of sand, except at the highest of spring tides or the wickedest of storms. The graveyard attached to the abbey is still in use. Where the island abuts the mainland, there are sandy beaches on each side. To the NW lies the sheltered Derrynane Harbour. To the NE lies Derrynane Bay, with its famous surf beach reaching towards the beautiful Lamb’s Head peninsula. ENE lies the popular holidaymaking village of Caherdaniel. The S and W coasts of Abbey Island are cliffy and give a good bounce most of the time. The W side is indented and interesting.

No water and no camping.

Lamb’s Island

V516-585 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Lamb’s Island lies NNW of Abbey Island and is separated from it by the narrowest of deep channels. The channel may dry at the lowest of spring tides. This island combines with Abbey Island to shelter Derrynane Harbour at V517-287. The harbour is used equally by working and pleasure boats, including in summer, a sailing and canoeing school at V520-584. There is a working pier at V514-592 and an abandoned fish processing plant at V508-588. Choose your launching spot beforehand with care, as all the approach roads are twisty and narrow.

Camping is possible at the outside end of the narrow channel at V516-585, with some privacy despite so many holidaymakers. The beaches are gravel and therefore uninteresting to most tourists. There is a decrepit fish-holding tank at the N end. The SW side is indented and interesting.

Illunathowe

V511-589 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Triple headed grassy knoll in WNW Derrynane Harbour, an important roost as the only local isolated island grass. All other depicted islets locally are rocks. Attractive views of a splendid beauty spot. Land on shelves NE side or to taste. Launch from lovely beach at abandoned processing plant immediately to its W.

Hog’s Head

V465-613 Sheet 83 / Sheet 84

Fine handsome lump of a big rugged chunky 37m high island, barely separated from the mainland to its E by a narrow channel which is boulder choked, and thereby impassable to boats of all descriptions. Reports exist of individuals having scrambled across the gap, but by far the easier option is to float up to the sheltered NE corner where a landing is very feasible onto shelves / boulders. Scramble up to where stakes are embedded in the turf, suggesting occasional grazing use. Lovely grass throughout. Highly identifying boulder on summit looks erratic but is actually sandstone. Stunning views of awesome climbing cliffs nearby, and islands big and small further off, to S & W. Offlying Pig’s Rocks V461-615 would be a challenging landing? Seals. Definitely a place to while away some time.

Launch from a slipway 2.5km E at V493-616. Note the boatshed *en route* at Coosawaud V475-610 which is nearer but doesn’t appear so easy a launch at all at all, and anyway the approach “road” to it would be frighteningly tricky, even judged by the standards of the local metalled thoroughfares, which are hair raising enough for most folks.

Horse Island

V437-644 Sheet 83

A most attractive, formerly-inhabited island just E of Ballinaskelligs Pier (one of Nimmo's) at V433-644. There are two former dwellings, the lower of which is being restored. The island is high to its SW. The W and S sides of the island are cliffy and give a bouncy circumnavigation under most circumstances. The E side has some intertidal beaches in coves. At least one of these is so obscured as to give a smuggler or piratical feeling. Sea urchins.

Landing and Camping

Land at a mud beach on N side. Behind the upper dwelling, there is a well with good water beside a wall. Camping at beach.

Valencia (or Valentia) Group

V373-730 Sheet 83

Portmagee Bridge is the epicentre of this varied group of islands, ranging from the Skelligs in the SW, to Beginish in the NE and including the mother of the group, Valencia Island itself. Also included is a guide to the coastline from Puffin Island in the SW to Rossbeigh in the NE.

Embarkation

The embarkation place for the south-westerly islands of the group is at Portmagee. Launching is difficult enough, being over weedy flats. This is achieved from the car park at the bridge, from the pier, or further down Portmagee village. The village is a cul-de-sac, which incorporates pubs, restaurants, and a simple grocery shop. The 'Skellig Experience Interpretive Centre' (reputedly well worth the visit) is on the island side of the bridge.

Ferries go from Portmagee to Skellig.

Great Skellig

V250-608 Sheet 83

Nothing that the visitor has read or been told about this island, nor even the sight of it from near or far, at dawn or dusk, will prepare one for the reality when one lands.

Monks

Monks inhabited the island from at least the 6th Century. A monastic settlement thrived here through Europe's Dark Ages. Inhabitation may be much older, as monks were most practical individuals, well capable of adopting, adapting and improving on the practices of those who went before them. Vikings raided here in 823 but got poor return for their efforts. These monks were true ascetics, and there was nothing to rob. The settlement consists of beehive-type huts, built on the very summit. Actually, they are built on the secondary of two such summits, but only a pedant would say so.

Keep clear of the actual summit of the island, which requires climbing. Many have climbed up and been unable to climb back down. Climbing down is harder than climbing up.

The visitor will be left incredulous at the system of roads and pathways accessing the different parts of the island. Those who conceived and built what is to be seen here wouldn't remove their caps in the presence of those who built the pyramids.

Marvel at the pathways and walls, the stone staircases, the dwellings, the churches, the sheer drops everywhere. Some parts of the Skellig are very dangerous, and for the avoidance of doubt, there are no shops, facilities of any kind, or toilets. There is definitively no drinking water, despite some literature saying otherwise. The many wells are disused and unclean.

Embarkation

For the kayaker, the Skelligs are a major challenge. They are further out from a landing than any other island dealt with in this guide. Further, there is a serious risk that on arrival, conditions will not be suitable to land. Therefore, the trip should only be undertaken in settled weather. Ideally, choose dead calm conditions. In any event, do *not* choose wind from the E/NE. Alternatively, those fit enough to turn round and go home again without breaking their journey could try. The journey out is about 20km from Portmagee, or about 3 hours for an average, competent group. Therefore, the level of fitness required across the party should not be underestimated. The Skelligs are thought to be, from certain perspectives, the single most committing paddle in Ireland.

Three launching options present themselves:

1. • Portmagee is the normal departure point. The journey is a bit longer, but the put-in or take-out is always dependable. Launching is a bit awkward, being over weedy flats, but manageable.
2. • A return journey in only 5 hours is possible from a small beach called Keel in Saint Finan's Bay at V390-685. This though, is less dependable, as it surfs. It saves half an hour's paddle, each way, not inconsiderable if the journey has to be done both ways.
3. □ Also in Saint Finan's Bay, and 2km closer again, is Boat Cove at V376-686, reached from the road by a 500m track down to a pier and slipway in a small harbour, known locally as Glen Pier. Ferries go from Glen Pier to Skellig.

The problem with launching from anywhere but Portmagee is that, in anything but calm conditions, Saint Finan's Bay is an inherently hazardous place. There are cliffs for many kilometres either side of the beach and harbour, and the beach is liable to surf. Portmagee offers a calm put-in or take-out at all times, on a main road. Saint Finan's Bay must therefore be of interest only to those on passage, on holiday in the immediate area, or in exceptionally calm weather. The difference in the journey for those fit enough for the task does not outweigh the logistics involved in finding the right conditions. This applies to going and, particularly, coming back hours later.

Breaking the journey

There is the possibility of reducing the overall commitment level in terms of non-stop kilometres to be travelled. At V345-679, Puffin Island may be landed on, leaving a 13km journey 'only'. Puffin may be reached from Portmagee at about 7/8km to the NE, or at 4.5km from Keel to the E. Routing via Puffin has the further advantage that it, then Lemon Rocks, then Little Skellig, then Great Skellig, all form one long straight line. Beware, the line is not dead straight, but is very usable. Also, this route crosses the tidal flow at right angles making navigation simpler.

Tides

Between Skellig and the coast		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	5:00 after Cobh HW	1.5kn
S	1:10 before Cobh HW	1.5kn

Local HW is an hour before Cobh HW.

Landing

The landing is on the NE tip of the island, looking across to the Little Skellig. It is a small pier with narrow, steep steps, up which the kayak must awkwardly be carried. These steps are extremely steep and narrow, but nowadays they do at least have a handrail. Rope work and teamwork may be necessary, especially at LW. The bottom step gets just covered at LWN. So, landing is the more difficult or even impossible around LWS.

Arriving while the tour boats are present (1030 to 1500 hrs. approximately) may greatly increase these problems. They block access to the landing steps when they're alongside the quay. They are though in and out fairly quickly - collecting/delivering, but even so one might have to wait 20 mins or more to land

Two other landings may be possible should conditions dictate, though the universal opinion is that the main quay at the NE is really the only practical landing, except in emergency.

There is a sheltered bay in the SW, where a landing may be forced under the new lighthouse at V246-604, onto a steeply shelving ramp, but which goes nowhere.

There is a much better landing onto disused steps at V247-607 in a deep bay, called Blue Cove, on the NW side. It seems these steps are usable only at HW, so some planning is required. This does though entail a very long and awkward carry with full kayaks up steep and uneven steps to find anywhere to leave them. There are carved steps and a disused pathway up onto the main parts of the island. The present condition of the path is unknown. It is reported that Dúchas intend to improve this path to provide some flexibility. In any event, a waystop is fairly dependable here at HW (HW Cobh • 0100).

Camping

Parties day-tripping should leave the mainland early to maximise their day. Overnighting is strongly discouraged in the high season, April - October. The island is under the joint control of Dúchas and the Commissioners of Irish Lights, from whom permission may be sought to overnight. Apply well in advance. Dúchas are refurbishing the Skellig environment generally, as well as excavating archaeologically.

There is nowhere for a tent, and no question of a bivouac anywhere but on the NE pier (the landing spot) itself. The whole question of access policy with regard to the island is very fluid, and nothing should be taken for granted. Arrive well equipped and well victualled, just in case. The reaction of the authorities to your arrival may be influenced by how you, your gear, your attitude and your competence come across. The island is "open" only between about 1000 and 1600. Outside of these hours you won't be allowed off the quay, even if you're tolerated there.

Lighthouse

The lighthouse was commissioned in 1826 and automated in 1987. The light character is 3 white flashes every 10 seconds.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough, Storm Petrel, Leach's Petrel.

Birds

In the darkest hours of night, the Kittiwake finally go quiet in time for the Manx Shearwater to set up their incomparable cacophony, their hysterical shrieking, their blood curdling

Aag aah *mem* non

Aag aah *mem* non

Aag *aah* mem non

Aag *aah* mem non

The birds come ashore only for a couple of hours each night during the breeding season. They even spend their winter out in mid-ocean. They call (to use the most neutral term possible) so that their young can identify them and answer back. Where they breed, they breed in huge colonies.

To say there are Puffin on the Great Skellig is an understatement. Nowhere else may the tourist see these crazy birds in Halloween masks in such numbers. They can be seen at close quarters and are easily photographed. Much film is wasted until the visitor slowly realises how really close one may get to these wee creatures. There are also large numbers of Kittiwake and many Storm Petrel.

Washer Woman Rock

V243-600 Sheet 83

Actually a chain of 4 large rocks located about 0.5km SW of Great Skellig, the most W rocks in the Skelligs chain. The "summit" measures about the area of the feet of two average adults. Landing may be forced only in very benign conditions, as the name probably suggests only to older kayakers. Landing here is about as meaningful or as pointless as such landings get. One either gets the point or one doesn't. This rock is nothing and nowhere on the way to nothing and nowhere, and it is miles from anywhere. Landing surely typifies a certain spirit.

Little Skellig

V270-618 Sheet 83

Very much the support act for its famous neighbour, Little Skellig nevertheless has a character all its own. It is home to seriously vast numbers of Gannet, which inhabit every non-vertical inch of its mighty whitewashed cliffs. Best wear a wide brimmed hat and don't look up! The island has its own awe-inspiring shape that may have inspired Disney. It is possible, though difficult, and certainly pointless, to effect a landing there. Nobody is going anywhere in this vertical world. There are sea arches also, most of which go nowhere.

Lemon Rocks

V309-637 Sheet 83

Truly an excellent waystop when going to or from the Skelligs, if conditions are really calm. Tides run strongly in the shallows so otherwise keep away.

Puffin Island

V345-682 Sheet 83

A big, high, chunky island at the NW tip of Saint Finan's Bay, about 5km S of the entrance to Portmagee Channel. The cliffs on all sides are huge, except on the E, but where it is difficult to find a flat grassy bit to camp on. The island is almost split N/S midway along. Deep inlets N&S appear to cut the island, at least from some angles, but actually it is possible to descend easily enough to where a wide but steep grassy ramp gives a connection between the two.

The summit portions of the W end require scrambling and a cool head. Puffin, rabbits and sea-pink abound. This is a lovely, wild, pleasant, 'must' of an island.

Landing

Deep-water landings may be had in a number of places but nowhere better than in a sheltered, SE-facing, bouldery cove just S of the narrowest part of Puffin Sound. Tether to ropes left there by local scuba divers and fishermen for lunch stops. There is also an iron ring or similar evidence of other larger vessels having landed in the same spot at some time in the past.

There is good clear water at all times in a well-filtered pool to one side, under a waterfall. An easy ramp gives access to the interior.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough, Storm Petrel.

Oats Island

V 346-679 Sheet 83

This is a small rocky islet lying very close to Puffin Island just S of its NE corner. Landing is onto sloping rock platforms on the W side. Scramble to top over large boulders onto grass and sea pinks covered ridge on steep E side. The summit had a single pair of breeding Oystercatcher and Great Black-backed Gulls in June 2008. Good views all round and especially of the boulder strewn landing area on Puffin Island. No water or camping. The narrow cut that separates Oats Island from Puffin Island is not navigable at lower waters.

Flax Island

V346-675 Sheet 83

This is a small rugged island lying just off the SE point of Puffin Island. Landing is onto rock platforms on the E flank. At periods close to half tide a narrow “kayak width” cut leads into a pool that helps landing onto seaweed covered rocks. This pool has reasonable sized mussels in season. The gap that separates Flax Island from Puffin Island is navigable at all stages of the tide but is narrow and both it and the landing area are very prone to surge and swell. A large boomer exits off the E point of Flax Island and is impressive in SW or W seas.

No water or camping but the quick scramble to the summit is worth the views. There were breeding Oystercatcher, Herring Gull and Great Black-backed Gulls present in June 2008.

Coastal Section -

Saint Finan's Bay to Portmagee

V376-686 to V373-730, Sheet 83

This 9km coastal paddle can be twice that if pottering, especially if one includes a circuit of Puffin Island. Not to do so is to miss out on ‘a magnificent piece of savage marine architecture, with dizzy cliffs carved and eroded by the Atlantic breakers and set at crazy angles by the mighty forces of past geological movements’ – ‘In the Kingdom of Kerry’ by R.Hayward, 1945. Ideally, calm conditions should prevail, to allow paddlers inside the many rocks and islands dotting this stretch. Vertical cliffs in excess of 100m contribute to the sense of exposure and commitment.

Embark at the pier 3km inside Puffin Sound, known locally as Glen Pier at V376-686, where there are some fishing boats and scuba-diver traffic. This has two slipways and lots of parking space, but is exposed to the W. It is also the nearest access point for a paddle to the Skelligs. Before landing, look for a long narrow inlet almost opposite the slipway, which leads to a long low arch with a few openings to the sky - though this wee adventure needs HW.

From Puffin northwards, there is only the ‘savage grandeur of the rock-bound, storm besculptured coast’. The islands - Horse, Long, Short and Black Rocks, guard the entrance to the main Portmagee Channel. Opposite them are a number of deep inlets where landings can be made onto gravel or stones. Much easier landings are to be had onto gravel beaches just inside the headland delimiting the channel proper. Approaching the Portmagee Channel,

avoid the fishing boats, and in summer, the numerous Skellig ferries. Land at Portmagee at V373-730.

Long Island

V347-725 Sheet 83

This much-fragmented island lies to the SE (mainland) of the western entrance to Portmagee Channel. The highest part of the island is rocky, and this is the only one of the group which is grazed. No water is evident. An earthen, circular mound is apparent, showing an early Christian site, and an associated killeen, or children's graveyard. Prominent Bull Rock stands off the W tip. Long channels separate the various parts of the island.

Short Island is separated from Long Island by a cliff-lined, long, narrow channel, and Black Rock is the substantial rock just off Short Island.

Landing

Deep-water landings are easy. One is onto sheltered rocks facing the mainland. If there is no swell, another is possible onto a slab about one third the way down the adjoining narrow channel. This has the more difficult access to the top.

Horse Island

V347-727 Sheet 83

Grazed by sheep, this small grassy island lies just NE of Long Island. The easiest landings face the mainland and Long Island. For the passer-by, this island marks a convenient landing and camping beach on the mainland directly inside it.

Approaching the mainland, look for an obvious cave, which dries, with a small blowhole. After landing, note the warning signs, which restrict access to a major blowhole. The old maps show a tunnel linking the cave to the major blowhole, but which is no longer evident. Deaf Rocks are a string of substantial rocks running alongside and separated from Horse Island.

Valencia (or Valentia) Island

Oileán Dairbhre

V370-730 Sheet 83

Population 700. A large and varied island lying ENE to WSW on the NW tip of the Iveragh Peninsula. Valencia marks the southern tip of the entrance to Dingle Bay. Inside the island is the flat and sheltered Portmagee Channel, joining Knightstown in the NE to Portmagee in the SW. The piers at Knightstown and nearby Cahirciveen are by Nimmo.

Knightstown is the only town on the island. A ferry runs from here to the mainland opposite at Reenard. Portmagee is a town on the mainland to which the island is connected by a bridge. The bridge opens to allow larger vessels through. The outer parts of the island are 9km or so of committing cliffs, by far the most dramatic of which are at the W end at Bray Head at V327-725. There is only one waystop on the outside section, about halfway along.

History

Footsteps in the rocks belonging to a tiny tetrapod dinosaur were found some years ago and date back to about 360 million years ago. Overhead the NE entrance is Valentia Radio, one of the main coastal radio stations of Ireland. The first transatlantic cable was laid from here to Trinity Bay in Newfoundland, a process that began in 1855. In 1857, the 'Agamemnon' was nearly lost in a great storm when the cable snapped, at the edge of the continental shelf, 560km out to sea. Later, in 1859, the 'Great Eastern' completed the whole of the task solo.

Adjacent to the radio station is an abandoned slate quarry. The slate quarry opened in 1816 and its produce was used in the British House of Commons.

Tides

The tide flooding northeast past the island to fill Dingle Bay enters Portmagee Channel from both ends simultaneously, meeting 2km east of Portmagee.

Portmagee Channel		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	4:50 after Cobh HW	2kn
Out	1:35 before Cobh HW	2kn

Local HW is about an hour before Cobh.

Streams reach 2kn at Portmagee itself and 1.5kn at Knightstown and Fort Point Lighthouse.

Circumnavigation

A circumnavigation is an obvious challenge, being logistics free, but is quite long at 25km or so. Many interesting stops might be made, and there are committing stretches on the outside. To save effort, these tides should be carefully planned. A suggestion perhaps, presuming ever-present SW winds, is to embark from Portmagee on the last of the ebb. Utilise the slack/early flood up the exposed part of the coast. Then enjoy the full-blooded flood in, to, and past Knightstown, almost home.

Bray Head has a watchtower and huge overhanging cliffs, with fragmented rocks lying off the base with channels between them. NNE from here, reflected waves and strong tides, especially at the protruding points, make for an interesting passage.

The only waystop on the outside part of the island is onto a storm beach at V358-762, tucked inside Shrone Point in an E-facing cove. This is about halfway between Bray Head and Reenadrolaun Point, at the lowest part of this section of the island. It is reachable by boren if necessary. There is good camping and water may be had in the nearby river. If the journey is broken on Horse or Long Island, just 8km of paddling will reach this point. Nevertheless, the steepest cliffs and strongest tides are in this section so expect to be challenged to some degree.

The cliffs on the E part of the outside are higher, but not as steep, and get a little shelter.

Expect a bounce again at Reenadrolaun Point at V384-786, after which the going should ease considerably.

There is a good, sheltered beach just inside Fort Point lighthouse at V404-783, with camping in the grounds, for use in distress only. There is also a less convenient slip outside and W of the point, with better camping but a more awkward landing. Really, those looking to camp in isolation hereabouts would be better to go to nearby Beginish.

Knightstown is a pretty spot, worth visiting. All the island's facilities are here - pubs, restaurants, dive schools, lifeboat, ferry, harbour, sailing. The channel back to Portmagee has fine views, but should be avoided at LW or with contrary tides.

Illaunloughan

V366-731 Sheet 83

Illaunloughan is a small, low-lying island, about 400m from Portmagee. Deep water separates the island from the nearby mainland near Portmagee on its S side at even the lowest spring tides.

This is an early church site, and the burial place of “children and adult strangers”. There have been comprehensive “digs” and some re-building by overseas research groups. A church and other monuments have been lovingly restored and the whole is well kept and regularly maintained.

There is a stone-lined, spring-fed, holy well on the S side. A few steps lead down to it, and it has a large stone lintel for a roof. Water quality is questionable, due to lack of use.

Launch from a choice of spots. There is a carpark at Portmagee bridge. Parking is difficult at the W end of Portmagee and not recommended. There are a choice of slipways on the Valencia side, the best option really if a group is involved. Land at a shingle beach on the E side. Seals.

Beginish

V424-786 Sheet 83

Inappropriately named, (*Beginish* translates as ‘Small Island’), this quite large and lovely inhabited island sits in the middle of the ENE entrance to Portmagee Channel. There is a prominent watchtower on top. The residential section is entirely on the western side of the island. The views are idyllic, but are perhaps just a tad too near civilisation.

Archaeological excavations have revealed early field systems. Also revealed is a reasonably preserved semi-submerged dwelling. This has a ramp leading down to the doorway. The ramp is now sand covered. This construction is unique for its time and is accepted as a Viking settlement. It was probably used as a stopping place during sea voyages between Cork and Limerick. Further digs are planned to reveal an expected burial ground. It is thought-provoking to note that, at the end of the 19th Century, there was sand to a depth of seven feet on this side of the island. Erosion, and especially the introduction of rabbits, led to huge loss of sand in about 50 years. This led to the exposure of the Viking settlement. On the southern side, W of the waist, are the remains of an early Church site. Also nearby is a killeen, and a small standing stone with crosses inscribed on both sides.

Camping

The best camping is on the southern side of the E end. Here the island is waisted and the land is machair-like, backed by little hillocks. These have pleasant beaches both sides, sandy on the N and pebbled on the S.

Church Island

V430-786 Sheet 83

Church Island lies just E of Beginish. One may walk to it from Beginish at very LW. Otherwise, land at sheltered rocks on S side. Named for its rectangular church, of which two walls are in ruins. There is also a good circular dwelling. The two buildings are quite obvious. Dúchas attempts at preservation were not very successful. Look for the wall system around the island, which marked all ground inside as consecrated. Only ‘Holy Men’ could sleep inside. A small gap, still visible, on the E side, allowed ‘lay’ people day visits to the Church. There are the remains of a ‘special’ grave on the S side. There is also a water collection hole at the back of the circular building, of suspect quality.

Embark from the N end of a beautiful, sheltered, beach, White Strand at V435-794. Good car park at northern end.

Lambs Island

V420-791 Sheet 83

An ungrazed, small, dull lump of an island, NE of Beginish. No water was found. No camping. Land at a spit in the SE, facing the N beach on Beginish.

Launch from White Strand.

Foughil Island

V454-794 Sheet 83

A small island is deceptive, appearing smaller than it actually is on first glance from the shoreline, located in the Valencia River estuary just 1km west of Cahersiveen, opposite Mannix Point (campsite) V457-792. The island is low lying but contains an attractive mix of grazed fields and areas of gorse and bracken. There is some salt marsh along its northern edge which together with the inter-tidal sand and mud flats provides good feeding zones for duck and wader species in winter. The island is a roosting site for the estuarine birds using the estuary. Chough 2, Merlin 1 and Hare 5 were present in January 2015.

The island is accessible from the stony beaches which flank the campsite at Mannix Point or from a small narrow lane V452-786 that opens onto the estuary just west of the campsite boundary. The parking here however is limited to a single vehicle and groups should perhaps ask at the campsite if for additional parking.

Mannix Point is a good embarkation point for kayakers who may find themselves in the area in heavy weather when more offshore objectives are not achievable. The area allows access to the northern side of Valentia Harbour or Beginish and makes for a good day trip option. Landings can be made along all sides of the island but care should be taken at times of low water as the northern and western sides dry out. Camping is available along the western side. No water outside of that provided for cattle was found.

Coastal Section

Reenard Point to Rossbeigh

V434-776 to V645-910, Sheets 83 / 70 / 78

This trip describes the S side of Dingle Bay, from Reenard Point at V434-776, outside Cahersiveen, to Rossbeigh Beach at V645-910, a distance of about 32km. It is a trip of two distinct sections. The first is more remote, with a mountain ridge separating road from sea, with the mountain dropping to the sea in sheer cliff faces. There are two deep inlets on this part, both with sheltered piers.

The second section has numerous stopoff places, and where steep earth and rock banks rise to the main road which parallels the shore, high overhead.

Reenard Point at V433-776 is the easiest embarkation place for car access, being close to the main road. A summer ferry runs from here to Valencia. There is a superb seafood pub on the pier. Alternatively, the beach at White Strand (NE of Church Island at V436-793) can be used. Admire in passing, the extensive beach on NE Beginish.

Rounding Douulus Head at V404-804, next along are Cooncrome (pronounced Coosecrown) Harbour at V444-816 and Coonanna Harbour at V480-842. Both are wide, deep harbours with pier and beach but no other facilities.

The onward trip is just as committing with the next landing about 10km away at Kells Bay at V555-880. Kells Bay is a wide, deep inlet, with a sheltered pier - a noted beach and holiday spot. On the way, look for a stream falling clear to the water, where the cliffs form a bottleneck into which you must go to get under the waterfall. Also on the way, you come to

Gull Rocks at V520-873, which are really little islands - sheer, high and close to the cliff-lined land. There is a sense of isolation around them.

Finish at Rossbeigh (or Rossbehy) beach and sand dunes. This is a noted family beach, in parts like a typical machair, with hotel and holiday village. There is even a small sweet shop and chip shop, open during summer. The council maintain public toilets, water, and rubbish collection. They charged €7 per tent per night in 2002. Pitch where you like, except in the football field or tennis courts. Rossbeigh can have decent surf, and the dunes have been mapped for orienteering events. This area has been and remains *the* meeting ground for all Irish paddlers and surfers for the Christmas/New Year break.

The long sand spit of Rossbeigh Point that extends N from Glenbeigh was breached at its N end by coastal erosion c.2009 leaving a substantial island lying offshore. The island consisted of extensive intertidal sandy beaches and sand dunes covered in Marram grass. Tides flowed strongly off both the N/S ends entering and leaving Glenbeigh and Cromane Harbours. The breach made between the point and the island was considerably eroded since Jan 2011 and the shape of the island was changing from year to year. The breach is now more or less closed as of January 2013 and Rossbeigh Island as it was known for a few years has been once again subsumed into the mainland.

There is ample parking at the S end of Rossbeigh Beach. However, there is a height barrier restriction that will not allow access for vans or campers which will have to park on roadside or at the local pub across the road. The carry at times of HW is reasonable. Rossbeigh beach surfs frequently so an approach from within Glenbeigh or Cromane Harbours may be considered.

The Dingle Peninsula

Corca Dhuibhne

Coastal Section

Dingle Town to Sleah Head

Baile an Daingin go Ceann Sléibhe

Q445-010 to V317-967 Sheet 70

Dingle town is a major fishing and tourist town, at the head of a sheltered bay. Embark at the harbour (the pier is by Nimmo) V441-009 where there is good parking. Parking and launching are “paying”. There is also a small car park at V453-997, halfway out the harbour on the E side, more suitable for small groups or dolphin watching. ‘Fungie’, the local friendly dolphin, is an experience not to be missed. However, you must also work your way around the many tour boats trying to spot him. Parking is very restricted. Camping may be possible here or near the old tower. There is a path into town along the shoreline.

Only the mouth of Dingle Harbour is narrow, and once inside the bay opens wide. The beach SE of the mouth dumps, unfortunately.

The trip to Sleah Head is 16km. Hug the cliff line, and in calm water explore the many arches, caves, coves, and stacks. This stretch is without landings, unless a detour is made into Ventry Harbour - *Cuan Fionntrá*, halfway along. There is good parking and easy access at the pier on the SW side, 1.5km in, at the S end of a sandy beach. It may get congested in summer.

Fish cages.

Tides

Entrance to Dingle Harbour	
Direction	Time
In	1:00 before Cobh LW (local LW)
Out	1:00 before Cobh HW (local HW)

Blasket Islands - *Na Blascaodaí*

Sheet 70

This group of islands, the most westerly, not only in Ireland but in continental Europe, is surely the finest in the country. There is a regular ferry to the Great Blasket only. There is little in the way of anchorages for bigger boats at the outliers, which are also rugged and exposed. Therefore, sea kayakers are privileged to have the finest way to explore the group as a whole. The Blaskets are a showpiece of Irish sea kayaking. That said, among the outliers, only Beiginish and Inishvickillane have landings that are in any way dependable. Good conditions are needed elsewhere to avoid having to swim ashore, or worse. Expect to have to work for any landing. The commitment of the group should be consistent.

The islands are uninhabited. Great Blasket was abandoned in 1954. Earlier in the century, 176 people lived there. There was a community here in 1588 when the Armada was about the place. Between 1800 and Irish political independence from Great Britain in 1921, there was always about 150, including on Inis Mhicileain into the 20th century. Inis Tuaisceart, Beiginis and Inis Mhicileain (up to 8) were occupied from time to time, and even Inisnabro had 4 in 1851 after the famine.

The islands did not thrive with independence. There was never the money for a pier. The breakwater erected by charity money on the main island in earlier times never really gave enough shelter, so that except in very fair weather, only very small boats could land. That meant that the island was cut off for long periods when other such islands would not have been. Lack of access to mainland schools, hospitals, churches and shops wore the people down. Then the turf ran out in the 1930s and even keeping warm in winter wasn't guaranteed.

There was always a single house on Inishvickillane. The Great Blasket now only has summer homes and there is one on Inishvickillane. There is an interpretive centre for the islands on the mainland at Dún Chaoin.

Embarkation

There are several places from which to embark, none of which are easy.

Q314-002 Dún Chaoin Pier, from which the ferry operates, is the logical embarkation place, being sheltered. It has good parking, less than private camping, no water, but the pier is reached by a most unpleasant, steep carry. Launching is off a very steep slipway, or to one side in calm conditions. Group co-operation is often necessary.

Q312-005 There is a small bouldery beach at the end of the laneway past the interpretive centre, which may be suitable for small groups in settled conditions.

Q316-033 Clogher beach has a car park above but can surf with any swell from the W.

V313-981 Coumeenoole or Sleah Head beach lies almost 1.5km N of Sleah Head itself, tucked inside Dunmore Head (V302-980). It gives a shorter trip. It often surfs, yet has merit

for embarkation. With N winds, or when calm, it is very much the preferred option. The carry is better than the pier at Dún Chaoin, and the parking is excellent.

Tides

Tides in the Blasket Sound - *An Bealach* and elsewhere through the islands, flood north and ebb south, twisting with the channels. An exception is the channel between Inishnabro and Inishvickillane, in which the flow is always west. The tide races in the sounds, including Blasket Sound, have a fierce reputation.

Blaskets		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	4:30 after Cobh HW	2-3kn
S	1:50 before Cobh HW	1-3kn

Local HW is about an hour before Cobh. The stream timings are affected by strong winds. In particular, in sustained southerlies the flood runs longer and stronger.

The speed of the tidal streams in the main channels varies, but is generally 1 - 3kn. In the narrower channels, in springs, the stream can reach up to 4kn, except between Inishnabro and Inishvickillane, where it is always weak.

In Blasket Sound, the north-making flood rushes past Dunmore Head - *An Dún Mór* and eddies clockwise around *Dún Chaoin* Bay. Outward bound, small boats could do worse than follow the example of the ferry, which follows the coast southwest almost to Dunmore Head before crossing. In wind, this may get your boat above the bumpier parts of the tidal race, for a much smoother passage. On the south-making ebb tide, try a more northerly route, taking shelter from Beginish.

Beware of reported local magnetic anomalies.

Bibliography

Recommended reading must start with 'Twenty Years A-Growing' by Maurice O'Sullivan, translated from the Irish (*Fiche Bláin ag Fás*),

For a more complete list, add the following:

- 'The Islandman' (*An tOileánach*) by Tomás O'Criomhtháin
- 'Peig' by Peig Sayers
- 'An Old Woman's Reflections' by Peig Sayers
- 'The Western Island - The Great Blasket' by Robin Flower
- 'The Blaskets, People and Literature' by Muiris Mac Conghail
- 'Méini - The Blasket Nurse' by Leslie Matson
- 'Letters from the Great Blasket' by Eibhlís ní Shúilleabháin
- 'Island Cross Talk' by Tomás Ó'Crohán
- 'A Pity Youth does not Last' by Micheál O'Guiheen
- 'The Blasket Islands - Next Parish America' by Joan Stagles
- 'Island Home - The Blasket Heritage' by George Thomson
- 'Blasket Memories' edited by Pádraig Tyers
- 'Hungry for Home' by Cole Morton
- 'Blaskets - a Kerry Island Library' by Muiris MacConghail

SPA

Peregrine, Chough, Storm Petrel, Leach's Petrel, Barnacle Goose, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Common & Arctic Tern.

The 'outer four' Blaskets, Tearaght, Inishtooskert, Inishnabro and Inishvickillane, boast internationally important numbers of breeding Storm Petrel and Manx Shearwater.

The Spanish Armada

The long awaited Spanish Armada sailed through the English Channel in August 1588, but no really decisive battle was fought. The Spanish knew they couldn't achieve their main aims, and decided to sail home anti-clockwise around Scotland and Ireland. The English left them to it. The weather and the Atlantic would surely do what they had failed to ? They turned left at Fair Isle and left again near Rockall. Sailing South from so far North very few of the sailors had ever experienced, the great fleet broke up and it was each ship for itself. Some ran for land out of hunger and thirst, some got home, and some tried and failed.

It is thought that 26 Spanish Armada ships were wrecked on the Irish coasts in 1588, from the Blaskets in the SW around to Dunluce Head in the NE. The Blaskets is a tale of good and bad fortune.

Vice Admiral Recalde knew the tiny gap between Great Blasket and the reefs / islands to the NE. He had seen this coast before in an expedition in 1580 to put Italian soldiers ashore in Smerwick. He went through first on 14.9.1588 in *San Juan* followed immediately behind by the frightened but trusting Captain Aramburu in the *San Juan Bautista*. This has long been regarded as an act of truly superb seamanship, proving the failure of the armada was related to many factors including maybe the quality of its ships, but distinctly not the men who sailed them. The two ships swapped anchors, sent men ashore for water, and then they waited.

On 21.9.1588, a big storm came up, in the middle of which appeared the *Santa Maria de la Rosa* from the NE. Her anchor held only as long as the tide was flooding N (the wind was from the N, and helped to hold her), but once the tide changed, the wind and tide had her, so she slipped away, and was lost with all hands in less than 2 hours.

Then yet another *San Juan Bautista* appeared and another small ship. Both were considered spent, were scuttled, and their crews taken aboard the two *San Juans*. All made it safely back to Spain.

A major contributory factor for the number of ships of the armada wrecked off the Irish coast was the loss to most of them of their main anchors off Calais the month before. The English drifted fire-ships down onto the fleet as it lay anchored, a tried and trusted attack offensive strategy of the day, devastating in the right circumstances. The Spanish were ready for this well known ploy, and slipped anchors to dodge them. Standard operating procedure intended they sail a *km* or so to one side, and then slip back to retrieve their previous anchorage.

However, they all got in each other's way, and the tides were strong. In their clumsy manoeuvring, a lot of them lost ground they couldn't make back up. Very few made it back to their main anchor again. The English thought the (expensive) ploy had failed badly, but in fact, it accounted for dozens of Spanish ships, only it took time. Embayed off Scotland or Ireland with only reserve anchors, many ships were lost that would otherwise have made it, as with the *Santa Maria de la Rosa*.

There were other factors. The ships themselves were mostly too weak for the rigours they experienced. They just weren't up to the North Atlantic in late Autumn. Battle damage added to the problem, as did the stress on their timbers from firing huge cannons they were never designed for. There was no easy way to calculate longitude in those days, only dead reckoning really, and sometimes going over a week without a sun fix, many were caught out. The maps of the day were inadequate and the sailors mostly just didn't know Scotland or Ireland. The new Wagenhaer's Chart was too small a scale, and the older Ortelius showed

western Ireland as a straight line coast. Many a ship at dawn was delighted to spy land, but later found itself embayed. Unable to sail to windward, the end was nigh. Usually they anchored at that point but many were short on anchors.

In Scotland if they got ashore they were looked after. Many got safe passage home. Even if the ship returning them had to put into an English port for repairs or for any reason, the English gave them safe passage. The Armada threat was past, and the English were chivalrous. Things were different in Ireland. All of Recalde's sailors who went ashore for various reasons were put to death. Worse, far worse, would happen elsewhere.

Irish peasants had never seen anything as wealthy as the miserable Spanish sailors they came across on beaches and headlands up and down the west coast. Their natural instincts guided their reactions. Typically they stripped the sailors naked and robbed them of everything. Then by all accounts, other peasants were quite hospitable to them, once they were equally miserable looking.

The English on the other hand had a game plan. Ireland had a new Governor, Lord Fitzwilliam, just three weeks into the job when the first Armada sailors swam ashore in September 1588. He feared that they would make alliances of convenience with local rebel clansmen. That never happened but he never stopped fearing it might. Typically the sailors were challenged and surrendered. Once in captivity they were rigorously interrogated. The wealthy few whose families might ransom them were saved but the rest were put to death, mostly by hanging.

The Great Blasket - *An Blascaod Mór*

V280-977 Sheet 70

Landing and Camping

Also known as *An tOilean Tiar*. The main slip/pier is at V280-977 below the village, difficult to make out until close. The pier is somewhat sheltered, but some surge is always present. Water is from a tap high up at the SE end of the village, convenient to the pier, but a longer walk from the beach White Strand – *An Trá Bán* at V277-980. The island is a National Park. Camping is banned and landing even for day trips is barely tolerated. Certainly it is unwise to land in high season at the main pier, and worse to camp in its vicinity. On a day trip, the *An Trá Bán* at V277-980 beach is much the easier, near a ramp, and small groups might chance camping above.

There is a splendid cafe for daytime snacking. Rock climbing has been opened up on the island, with a cliff just SW of Gurraun Point at V283-977 (the most E point of the island). Splendid walking tracks run high along both sides of the ridge of the island, like a necklace, giving an excellent circuit. On circumnavigation, tides run strongly at the three corners. The lee side of the island is often subject to fierce downblasts of katabatic wind. Tides run strongly in Black Sound between Inishnabro and Great Blasket, where the wind can be funnelled and strengthened.

The narrow gap off the northern tip is subject to sudden unexpected surges or boomers as big sets pass. Through this gap go circumnavigators or venturers to the outlying islands. The passage is between a rock off the main island and a small islet at V272-985, being the innermost in a string of such rocks. In an autumn gale in 1588, one of the largest ships of the escaping Spanish Armada entered Blasket Sound and ran safely through this gap. Thus they

performed one of history's most remarkable pieces of seamanship. Two other Armada ships were wrecked locally.

Mice

Great Blasket offers mice with long legs and big mouths. Local lore puts this down to the mice arriving with the Vikings 1,100 years ago, in bales of hay, and what with the sides of the island being steep. Others like to think of Darwinian adaptability, the island being relatively inaccessible to their predators. Either way, they do weigh more and have larger hind-feet.

Seals

Ireland's second largest haul out of atlantic grey seal occurs here each autumn on *An Trá Bán*. Several hundred seal come here to pup between September and December. The only bigger colony is on Inishkea North in County Mayo.

Inishnabro - *Inis na Bró*

V212-925 Sheet 70

Landing

Landing is midway on the south-eastern side, in a tiny cove. The entrance to the cove is under a tall narrow arch, into a sheltered pool, open to the sky. The landing is onto boulders, and very much subject to surge and scend, especially in SW winds. The cove runs SW/NE and is unmissable when travelling from the SW, but is hard to see going the other way. The cove is distinctly the tallest along this side, opposite Inishvickillane - *Inis Mhicileáin*. It is situated just E of the only shallow bay along. Here there are the remains of a stone wall overhead, just visible when close. Scramble up the gully behind. The tall arched entrance is narrow but the pool is wider.

Kayakers with laden boats have found this landing very difficult with any swell running. Inishvickillane - *Inis Mhicileáin*, is more reliable altogether for those in the outer regions of the Blaskets.

The island looks like it is covered with heather, but this is actually solid Sea Pink on the S side. There are magnificent cliffs on the N. The island is distinctly saddled when seen from N or S. There is a fantastic array of buttresses on the E end. The cliffs of the N side are huge and impressive.

There was always a small community living here and four people are recorded as having lived here in 1851 after the great famine. Certainly there are the remains of a promontory fort at the W end, a clochan, and evidence of cultivation. One version is that the island was intensively cultivated with corn, which was even ground on the island. Another is that Inishnabro was known for its booleying, the summer grazing of cattle from the Great Island. Booleying certainly was a common practice at the time.

Tides

A tide race ebbs southeast at the northeastern corner. Tides run strongly in the sound between Inishnabro and Great Blasket and the wind can be funnelled. The flow in the sound between Inishnabro and Inishvickillane always flows weakly westwards, being an eddy of the main flow north/south in either direction. Therefore, there is often a lump in the narrow western end of the sound where tides collide.

Inishvickillane - *Inis Mhicileáin*

V207-916 Sheet 70

The most southerly of the group, this is a very attractive island. On a high plateau lie a holiday home, outhouses, a herd of purebred native Irish Red Deer, and a helipad. The island was owned until June 2006 by a colourful, cultured, popular yet controversial Dublin character. He merited police protection as a retired public figure and valued his privacy. It remains to be seen what access issues will arise in his wake. The house is designed to fit discreetly into the hillside, and is built of local stone and timber. The whole is an example of how these things might be done right. When the owner is present, presumably mostly in August, kayakers should keep below the HW mark.

Below the house lies a cove at the NE corner of the island. Once there was a teleferique system here for uploading material. It is no longer operational, and has been left as an unsightly mess.

Landing

The landing is on the western end of the N side, opposite Inishnabro, just inside the narrows, onto a sheltered semicircular stony beach. This is the most dependable of all outlying landings. The always W-making current in the channel is weak, so the landing is only out of bounds in the severest of relatively rare easterlies. There is a retractable pontoon-landing device at steps on the point just N of the landing beach. The now disused path up from the beach is getting overgrown since the pontoon was installed at the nearby point, but is still manageable.

The island is much talked of in 'Twenty Years A-Growing' as a place inhabited by fairies. The outhouse is where O'Sullivan had his rabbits stolen in the dead of night in November 1914 by passing sailors, who left a tin of tobacco in payment. Paddlers may find 'Mickey the Pillar' at the western end of the S side at V207-908, and Mickey can also be seen below the 'Hollow of the Eagles', the flat stretch of the plateau to the SW. Mickey is a pillar of rock, the top of which looks like a man sitting wearing a wide brimmed hat. Moon Cave is nearby. Circumnavigation is recommended for the spectacular rock scenery.

There was a small community always throughout the 19th century, of up to eight persons.

Tearaght - An Tiaracht

V177-947 Sheet 70

Tearaght is the most westerly and remote of all the Blasket islands. Up to its prominent lighthouse are steps and a funicular railway that appears as a vertical band. From any distance, this looks like an escalator up the face of the conical rock. The island appears as a single pinnacle from E and W, but from N or S it seems to be almost divided into two. A mighty tunnel pierces the col between the two parts.

Landing

There are standard landing platforms, with steps up, in the coves N and S of the arch, both on the E-facing side. There is no current flowing at either steps because the arch is shallow and non-navigable, certainly at LW. Though the swell is continuous, be prepared for a quite manageable, if very wet landing.

The western side, with the lighthouse, is 116m high and the eastern end is 200m high. The eastern side consists of jumbled blocks, which mean that a trip to the summit might be very difficult. Rock fall has damaged some of the paths and great care should be exercised exploring. There are breeding Puffin and Manx -Shearwater.

The Tearaght is among the most committing paddles in Ireland.

Foze Rock Great - An Feo

V152-892 Sheet 70

Even more committing to get to are the Foze Rocks, 6km SSE of the Tearaght, and 5km SW of the gap between Inishvickillane and Inishnabro. It is anecdotally accepted that Kerry paddlers have been out at Great Foze Rock, but it is not known whether they landed. ISKA paddlers landed in 2006. This is probably the most committing paddle in Ireland. It is the most westerly landfall in Europe.

Foze Rock Small

V164-904 Sheet 70

Even more committing to land on is Small Foze Rock, 1km NNE of the Great Foze Rock. A lone paddler landed in 2006 by swimming ashore while her companion minded her kayak nearby. Reportedly, there is always surge and scend here and getting “ashore” conventionally is never an option.

Beginish - Beiginis

V282-988 Sheet 70

Beginish means ‘Small Island’. It is indeed a small island, NE of the Great Blasket, with a ruined house. This was last occupied by Richard O’Carroll, a cattle herdsman who tended cattle on the islands, where the grass was good. The only problem was there was no water. He shipped in the water in barrels every day, in fair weather or foul. He only had to be unlucky once and eventually his luck ran out.

Viking longships used to hide out in the bay between the island and *Oileán na nOg* Young’s Island to the NNE, where newly weaned lambs were put to grass.

The landing place is onto a relatively sheltered, stony beach on the NW side, but also in shelter in bays on the NE and SE.

Significant numbers of tern - Common, Arctic and a few Roseate.

Inishtooskert - Inis Tuaisceart

Q236-002 Sheet 70

Inishtooskert means ‘Northern Island’. It is a dramatic island with major cliffs on the NW side and a distinct cockscomb shape at NE end.

Landing

Landing is not easy, being onto a severely sloping slab, with little shelter, on the SE side. A handrail up from the top of the slab is visible when close in. There is a sheep pen on the grass above. From further out there is a large obvious dorsal-fin shaped slab, and the landing is just SW of this. Landings may be forced elsewhere in the lee of the island, but beware of steep scrambles. Unloaded, borrowed, plastic boats are an advantage.

The island features a minor monastic ruin at Q234-004, marked St. Brendan’s Oratory, on the only flat section of the island in the SW. In more recent times, it was used as a domestic dwelling. There are fields around it. It is a low-lying, drystone hovel with a smoke hole on top, and a very narrow, low entrance. There is the horrendous story of how Peig and Tomas O’Catahin became stormbound sometime after 1838. Tomas died and Peig could not remove his body, which putrefied. She resorted to hacking bits off it and throwing them out the smoke hole. When islanders relieved her weeks later, she had become demented, but she later recovered.

The island well repays the effort of landing.

Coastal Section -

Sybil Point to Brandon Point

Ceann Sibéal go Ceann Bhréanain

Q309-060 to Q528-173 Sheet 70

28km of stunning cliffs, broken only by the 2km width of Smerwick Harbour, the waystop at Brandon Creek, and the 1km width of Sauce Creek. It is impossible and pointless to try to land elsewhere. Paddle close to the cliff line to appreciate the waterfalls, caves, arches, and many 'islands' of cliff, which merge with the background. The cliffs of the Three Sisters (*Triúr Deirfiúir*) and Sybil Point at the SW part of the section is a must.

Tides

Sybil Point to Brandon Point		
Direction	Time	Speed
NE	4:50 after Galway HW	3kn
SW	1:30 before Galway HW	3kn

Smerwick Harbour

Cuan Árd na Caithe

Q378-102 Sheet 70

Smerwick has a 2km wide mouth with Dunacapple Island at Q378-102 on the E side. The harbour holds this width for almost 4 southerly km, and is open to the N. Shelter, depending on the wind, can be had by tucking inside either of the 'arms'. This is very much a tourist area with villages and sandy beaches.

A landing can be forced onto boulders immediately at the W end of the Sisters (about 4km NE of Sybil Point), but cliffs bar any ideas of making it a land escape route.

Brandon Creek - *Cuas Bhréanain*

Q422-120 Sheet 70

Locally known as *Cuas*, Brandon Creek is the more westerly of two similar inlets when viewed from the sea. There is safe landing in all weather onto a double slipway. It is the anchorage for the small, local fishing boats. Camping on the pier, or on the small, green area nearby. A river runs alongside but is litter strewn. Limited car parking - be tidy as this is a working pier, and the fishermen load and unload. The pub is 1.5km to the S with phone, food, and shower.

Walking NE to the cliff edge brings spectacular views and eventually joins a recognised track to Brandon Mountain. This creek was the launching point for the leather boat 'Brendan', whose epic voyage was led by Tim Severin. They set out to show that, as with the legend, early Irish monks could have sailed to America via Scotland, the Faeroes, and Iceland. Their trip is detailed in the book 'The Brendan Voyage' by Tim Severin, an excellent read.

Sauce Creek

Q488-157 Sheet 70

Land onto gravel, or boulder at HW, and sometimes through dumping surf, the SW corner being best. No landward escape route, as there is a very steep scramble through loose, shale gullies onto the mountainside.

Magharee Islands

Oileáin an Mhachaire

Also known in English as the Seven Hogs - *Na Seacht gCeanna*, this is a scattered group of (actually about ten) small low islands. Nearby Lough Gill is well known as the stronghold in Ireland of the Natterjack Toad. Named for being a frog that “walks” and doesn’t hop, it comes out mostly at night and has a yellow line down its back. The islands lie on the northern side of the Dingle Peninsula, off Rough Point at the end of the isthmus that divides Brandon Bay from Tralee Bay. The underlying rock is limestone. Basking Shark and Blue Shark are reputed to be common in these waters in the summer months. The area teems with bird and other wildlife.

In Irish, the islands are called *Oileáin an Mhachaire*. Machair is a coastal feature inside an exposed sandy beach consisting of a raised dune system that has been flattened by grazing. Grazing and wind combine to create and maintain a flat grassy area. There are no raised dunes or the dunes are relatively insignificant to the overall feature. Machair is much loved by birds, (who call it a ‘roost’), by sheep (who call it a ‘meal’), by golfers (who call it a ‘links’), and by tourists (who call it a ‘campsite’). Certainly, its well-drained, short grass is excellent for camping. Once heavily grazed, nowadays its features are orientated more towards leisure pursuits, caravan parks and football pitches. Machairs are most common in the NW of Ireland between about Galway Bay and Malin Head.

Embarkation

Embarkation is from Scraggane Pier (by Nimmo) at Q613-196 just inside the W point of Scraggane Bay. There is a wide, gradually sloping slipway, with good parking, water, and toilets. A new slipway to accommodate recreational use has been constructed nearby, and increased parking has been provided between the two slips. There are also ample paying campsites generally in the area. A pub and shops can be found at Fahamore, 1km to the SW. The whole Castlegregory peninsula is a thriving mix of varied holiday making. There are endless campsites, houses, schools for diving, windsurfing and all forms of watersport. The area has undergone massive development this millennium. Wild camping is discouraged in high season.

Tides

The sound is not deep and can cut up rough, usually when a westerly wind or big swells are against the ebb tide.

Magharees		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	5:05 after Galway HW	2-3kn
W	1:20 before Galway HW	2-3kn

The tide also sweeps strongly through and to the north of the islands.

SPA

Common, Little & Arctic Tern, Chough, Barnacle Goose, and Great Northern Diver (Loon).

Illauntannig

Illauntannig is the largest and most hospitable of all these islands. It boasts a summer home with outhouses, just in from the beach. It has plastic windows, double glazing, and its own private water collection system. Landing is easy at the steep, sandy beach on the E side, or

elsewhere for those who like to scratch and scrape. Camping is most convenient at the landing beach, where shelter can be had behind walls. It is possible to camp almost anywhere else that a landing is made. The W side is the most exposed.

The 6c monastic site reputedly founded by Senach just S of the beach has stone huts and oratories (note, no cement, just corballing at its best) surrounded by a protective stone wall. The complex includes a well-preserved *souterrain* about 10m in length, leading from a central hut to beyond the outside wall.

The most notable feature of the monastery is the sandstone cross which undoubtedly once stood upon the roof of the main oratory. The *bullau*n or prayer stone at its foot is in very good condition.

The island is generally quite flat.

In April 2010 there were Purple Sandpiper 40, Oystercatcher 50, Curlew 60, Turnstone 60, Sanderling 50, Merlin 1. At other times there were numerous Oyster Catcher and Tern (mostly Arctic) nest. Ringed Plover.

Reenafardarrig

Q625-217 Sheet 71

Nice grassy islet, just NE of Illauntannig, with landing possible on the sandy S shore opposite Illauntannig. The other sides are rocky. The island is connected to Illauntannig by a bar/reef, crossable on foot at LW. Between tides there are breakers coming through the gap, so that underwater obstructions are a real danger. No water. There is a 3-sided, 1m high sheep shelter on top. Also in 2009 there is some sort of nest-box experimentation, possibly for terns. Ringed Plover and Dunlin.

Illaunboe

Q619-218 Sheet 71

Illaunboe is joined to Illauntannig by a difficult but just about walkable reef at LW. Landing is possible on the E side of this reef into a storm beach in a shallow narrow cut. Possible under all but HW / difficult conditions. The other sides have a rocky foreshore. A stony, flattish grassy islet, uninviting.

Illaunturlogh

Q627-213 Sheet 71

Rocky islet 0.5km E of the beach on Illauntannig. Appearing unapproachable from afar, there are in fact numerous landing opportunities, the ease or difficulty of which varies hugely with tide height and conditions. More difficult at higher water levels, landings are not impossible at HWS, but certainly very difficult with any swell and probably not worth the effort. At LW the easiest by far of the landings is onto the beach just NW and under the summit, formed when the gap with the islet Minnaun closes out to make a NW facing horseshoe. Even at HW when this whole configuration disappears, there is a little cut at the back of the beach onto a narrow stormbeach, just below the summit. There are a thousand cuts or narrow slots yielding landings to N & S at almost any time onto this most fragmented islet. The ground is very sharp and abrasive limestone rock, so the nearer to the summit the easier. Shag and Great Black-backed Gull.

Mucklaghbeg

Q637-214 Sheet 71

A rocky knoll, 1.5km E of Illauntannig, with plenty of guano and birds. The technical difficulties would make landing 'interesting', even in calm weather.

Doonagaun Island

Q615-201 Sheet 71

A grassy knoll with a sandy SE side where a landing is possible, though even here a spring tide wave swell can set from both sides on the spring flood. The result is a challenging landing and launching as both wave sets collide and run hard across each other. Landing elsewhere is rocky. Doonagaun is passed on the way out to Illauntannig. No water.

A reef that stretches to the WSW, to Illaunoon and onwards to the shore, commends respect, a trap for the unwary kayaker just out from the pier and heading westwards, to explore the group or otherwise. The shallow ground to the S near the mainland shore is actually walkable at LW. Navigate with care.

Illaunnaon

Q605-198 Sheet 71

Just off the mainland coast, W of Scraggane Pier, this is a rocky outcrop with grass growing on top. A reef extends SW which is exposed at LW, and landing is possible on the S and SE sides. There is no water and this is not a place to go camping. There is interesting life in the exposed rock pools. Birds, grass, and rock. The shallow ground to the S near the mainland shore is actually walkable at LW. Navigate with care.

Illaunimmil

Q605-221 Sheet 71

Second largest member of the group, 1.5km WNW of Illauntannig. The island is large and quite attractive and has a number of interesting features to explore. The island is flat and grassy on top and is grazed by sheep periodically. There are cliffs all around. A holding pen is located at the E end. There are great views all round both of the island group and the mountains of the Dingle peninsula.

There are two fine examples of caves with blow holes on the S side, whose exit points on the island top may catch the unwary walker. The cave foot is a long way down in both examples. Landings onto their attendant storm beaches were not possible in April 2010 but would merit exploration when conditions allow.

There are two sea arches located at the E end of the island. The more N one, just on the sheltered (E facing) side of the NE tip, hosts a storm beach, at a cave, which is really a huge collapsed blowhole. Many Rock Dove nest in the arch overhead. A stake with tethered rope for landings (from larger boats) is located here. The more SE one leads into an inner lagoon and cave area that is not accessible at LWS, but may be so at other stages of the tide. It is very picturesque.

Landing

There is a good landing available on the N side of the SW corner of Illaunimmil where a small NE facing bay forms at times of LWS between the island and an outlying islet - Listooskert Q602-221. The landing is onto a storm beach. The outlying islet itself has an attractive layered geology. The passage that separates the islet from Illaunimmil is not navigable at LWS but almost certainly so at other stages of the tide, and the landing is always somewhat protected given reasonable weather conditions. The island summit can be reached by a number of gullies or rock shelves that back the storm beach.

The island is grazed by Brent Geese and possibly Barnacle Geese over the winter months. Peregrine, Raven, Rock Dove, Shag and Black Guillemot were present in April 2010.

Inishtooskert

Q601-225 Sheet 71

Just NW off Illaunimmil, the island is surrounded by cliffs and shallow water. The swell builds all round on even the calmest days, breaking on the exposed reefs. Assisted landings only, even then always very challenging. 50 Black Guillemot April 2010.

Casement

Casement

On Good Friday 1916 Roger Casement, the great human rights activist turned patriot, arrived at this spot by submarine. So did the Aud, the Easter Rebellion arms ship, loaded with rifles and ammunition, a gift from Germany. The two boats did not manage to link up and it all went wrong. The Aud was scuppered and Casement was captured, and executed. Casement has remained a controversial figure ever since. Branded as homosexual to alienate American Irish public opinion at the time. To the puzzlement of modern students of the subject, it appears actually that he was. The British were truthfully more upset by his exposition of third world abuses in the Congo and South America and elsewhere, but were happy to seize upon his treason in support of the Irish cause of the time.

Samphire Island

Q729-147 Sheet 71

Situated just off Fenit, a beautiful fishing village 12km W of Tralee. Fenit lies outside the mouth of where the harbour at Blennerville gives way to Tralee Bay outside. Launch from the town beach Q727-154 - Sheet 71, just at the beginning of the bridge to the island.

Parking, water and toilets are available at the beach, as is a lovely cafe. All the usual small town facilities are available in Fenit. A major local attraction is Fenit Island (local name) or Fenit Within (OSI name), a beautiful walk N of the town, very popular. The underlying rock is limestone.

Samphire Island has been developed beyond all recognition. Originally a small high rock, it is now joined to the mainland to the N at Fenit village by an 800m bridge. A modern working fishing and manufacturing facility has been built on the island. There is also a marina for pleasure yachts, the RNLi station which launches from the marina, the fishing club and much else. The Sailing Club is on the mainland end of the bridge.

Hazard

Beware paddling under the bridge. Tides run strongly. The worst bit though is that an integral part of the structure of the bridge is a horizontal spar running between all the uprights above LW but at less than HW. No more dangerous a contraption may be imagined. At two thirds tide height it works as a classic sieve, a concept feared by kayakers the world over.

Even at other stages of the tide, it is still dangerous, being festooned with nets, fishing hooks, and detritus of all kinds. Keep away.

Approaching the island at road level on foot, one is struck by the statue on the top of the rock. This is Saint Brendan the Navigator 484 – 578, who features at various points around the coast, but who was a native of Fenit. He is best known for being the first European to go to and return from America.

His parents were in an early wave of newly converted Christians in Ireland and he was ordained as a priest in 512 at age 28. He became a bishop and was hyperactive in setting up abbeys and monasteries in Ireland and abroad. His missioning was mainly but not exclusively to the N, such as St. Kilda and the Orkneys, but he also worked in Brittany and Normandy. In his travels he also visited the Faroes, Iceland, and Newfoundland. Fenit is still proud of its local boy made good.

The rock that is the original Samphire Island is a theme park on a small scale, with imitation wedge tombs and beehive huts. Well worth the visit. The modern working port area impresses for the scale of what is being manufactured.

Samphire Island Little

Q717-149 Sheet 71

Much the prettier but also much the smaller brother of the two islands, Samphire Island Little is surrounded by open water at all tides, and it has a lighthouse. Very photogenic against the backdrop of the Dingle hills, but first get the right lighting conditions.

Launch from the town beach Q727-154 and pass the swimming club to the right on the way out. Land easily onto seaweed covered slabs anywhere around the NE corner.

The island is sausage shaped and the lighthouse fills almost the entire, but it is possible to walk round the edge. The agile may perhaps manage to trespass but the walls containing the lighthouse gardens are for the most part quite high.

The Mid-West

Shannon Estuary to Galway City -including the Aran Islands County Kerry

Carrig Island

Q977-486 Sheet 63

The S/SW side of the island is joined to the mainland by a small bridge and a spit of marshy, grassy land, covered only by high spring tides. Carrig also has an inhabited farm and a Napoleonic battery at Q977-486 on the NW. The population is 13.

The major attraction is the well-preserved Carrigafoyle Castle on the SE. The castle is more accessible from the water. Land at HW to avoid mud flats. The castle is a most interesting waystop, not to be missed by the passer-by. Thought to have been impregnable by 16th Century standards, and in 1580 Lord Pelham wasn't convinced, and he was proved right. Military design quickly moved towards curved walls as a result.

County Limerick

Foynes Island

R250-521 Sheet 64

Foynes is the Anglicisation of *Oileán Fáinghe* in Irish, meaning "circular island". It is well named, the island being very round. The island is situated 100m off Foynes village on the main coast road Limerick to Listowel.

Historic

In the days of amphibious planes, Foynes was the centre of the aviation world hereabouts. Being just about as far west in Europe as it is possible to be, that was important in those days. Planes from all over Europe stopped here to begin or end the Atlantic jump. Shannon Airport just across the estuary now fills the role of international airport to the west of Ireland, but with modern aircraft able to fly much longer distances, its role isn't quite as critical. Its very long runway will always deserve it a role as a hub for certain long-haul airflights. Commercial foresters will find Foynes Island interesting, but others won't be so turned on. It is a lumpy square kilometre of deciduous and coniferous trees. The interior is essentially impenetrable and holds little of interest to passing leisure craft.

Land

The main landing is at a pontoon at the S tip called Barneen Point, opposite the public harbour in the village. This gives access to the few houses on the island and should be considered private. The entire of the rest of the shoreline is accessible at HW but a sea of mud at lower waters. The mud is fine glutinous silt, most unpleasant. Whether extending a handful of metres or one hundred, landing onto it isn't an option. Access can be conveniently achieved at only one other spot, halfway along the SW side at R245-523. Here, rocks come down to the water that are both accessible and mud free.

Otter and Greenshank.

County Clare

Islands of the Fergus Estuary

The Fergus Estuary is the branch of the Shannon Estuary that juts N up towards Ennis, the county town of Clare. It is choked with islands big and small. The boating hereabouts is similar in some ways to Clew Bay and inner Strangford Lough. The big distinguishing factor here though is that this entire system is the upper reaches of an estuary, whereas the others are simply drowned landscape areas.

Mud

Accordingly, while Clew Bay to a large extent and Strangford Lough very much so, may be muddy, very muddy, especially in their inner reaches and in their nooks and crannies, every tiny part of this area is affected by mud. The mud is a fine glutinous silt, quite unpleasant. The silt permeates the water everywhere, and swimming isn't on. The only parts that suffer less mud are the parts of islands scoured by the main flow, being – logically enough - the E side of the many islands on its W side and the W side of the few islands on its E side.

Mudflats

As with all such places, vast areas become extensive mudflats at LW, and a heedless moment on a falling tide can carry a heavy penalty. Tides run strongly through the channels, and indeed the tidal range is huge. Nevertheless, even in Springs, the speed of the lateral flow equates to mere neaps in Strangford, despite that the vertical range is much greater.

There is no commercial fishing of any kind done, but there must be flat fish and mullet who love such conditions.

Clew Bay and Strangford are each end of Ireland's drumlin belt, but the islands here have solid limestone bases, not boulders and clay. The land is therefore very rich and fertile. The bigger islands are farmed, mainly cattle and sheep, with some horses and goats. There is no tillage. Nowadays the farmers all live on the mainland nearby. The last full-time island

resident (Deer Island) died in August 2004. She was the only female sole inhabitant of an Irish island in the 2002 census, there being three other sole male inhabitants. Farmers hereabouts commute to work on flat bottomed or shallow draft boats, of a kind used in estuaries the world over. They are among the very few Irish farmers that carry tide tables on their persons at all times.

Embarkation

There is really no convenient embarkation point on the E side at all. There are two only on the W side.

Most central is Crovraghan Pier R278-601, a small working pier, busy at commuting times. This means mid-tide on the up and mid-tide again on the down, when there will be many cars arriving and departing the pier, and left there between times. It is well sheltered by Illaunbeg 100m offshore, fast deep water filling the channel. A pleasant spot for campervanning. The slipway being steep, the amount of mud to struggle past at LW is limited. Certainly it is always open at neaps, and possibly springs. The channel is then always open to N/S. The flow is very fast. The pier is reached from a signposted crossroads 2km N of Killadysert on the main Ennis road.

To the S, Cahiracon Pier R248-563 may be the more convenient, depending on the excursion plan, especially for the more S islands, or an excursion S across the Shannon Estuary. It is reached from just S of Killadysert. Any excursion in the Fergus Estuary is best carried out around HW, and Cahiracon may be preferred for allowing a more comprehensive exploration in the one go. Cahiracon though is however a dumping ground and a ships' breakers' yard. Most unpleasant.

Tides

HW in the estuary is an hour after Galway, slightly ahead of Limerick Docks, which is 1:30 after Galway. The main channel is on the eastern side, but on the top half of the flood, locals prefer a channel that hugs the coast on the western side, inside Illaunbeg and Illaunmore (Deer Island). The ebb and flood occur with the rise and fall of the water. The direction of the flow is basically north/northeast for the flood and south/southwest for the ebb, but it tends to twist and turn with the channels and the results are peculiar on occasion (e.g. in the channel northeast of Crovraghan Pier). The flow can be very fast and strong at times, but never really all that violent, despite the range being enormous by Irish standards, easily over 6m.

The islands are given here more or less from the SW. Inishloe is unapproachable except at HW, difficult to fit in with a planned excursion, so only cursory information is available.

Inishmurry

R252-561 Sheet 64

A bitter acid-boggy island, a place of reeds and rushes and Yellow Flag. There are some Hawthorn. Outside on the SE shore, oysters and mussels grow wild. Its main merit is to serve as a shelter for Cahiracon Pier inside it on the mainland, now much abused.

Inishtubbrid

R279-577 Sheet 64

Smallest of the five larger islands at less than half a square kilometre, it is farmed with cattle. The summit has exposed limestone *karst*, Burrenesque in an untidy ragged way. Good views N from its lofty summit. Land at the SE for that mud/rock compromise common locally.

Canon Island

R286-581 Sheet 64

Fourth largest island hereabouts, Canon is cattle farmed. It is nearly split in two, being joined by an area of marshy reeds at its narrow waist. The interior of each sector is very wooded, and would need local knowledge to explore. There is an abandoned farmhouse by the landing spot which is at the usual mud / rock compromise at the S end of the W "beach". There is a square tower at the NE end, with an Augustinian friary ruined beside it.

Inishloe

R313-592 Sheet 64

Low lying, small fields, overgrown woods, cattle, extremely muddy all round.

Blackthorn Islands

R323-590 Sheet 64

Very attractive very low lying small triangular islet being a single field of about 3ha. The most significant feature is the 19c dyke built of limestone blocks with no cement all round, to stave off the flooding. The cost benefit analysis at the time must have been interesting. Because it is in the path, almost, of the main flow, the shingle beaches on the N side are relatively mud free.

Doon Island

R281-600 Sheet 64

Tiny pleasant place, the grass under control courtesy of a herd of goats. Flat and unpretentious, land beside the goat pen under the Elder tree at the NE

Inishmacowney

R291-600 Sheets 57/64

Third largest of the big five locally, it is more than one square kilometre of cattle farm and woodland. The slip at the landing spot midway on the NW side is quite pretty, sheltered by a stone jetty and makeshift projection.

Illobeg or O'Donnell's Island

R280-602 Sheet 57

A well husbanded hayfield 100m of fast deep water off Crovraghan Pier. Its main purpose in life is to shelter the pier. A notable Curlew roost, land easiest at the N end.

Shore Island

R286-607 Sheet 57

Substantial unkempt uncared for island, distinguished by a stand of Ash trees on the summit. Also Elder. Land easiest at N end. No water.

Feenish

R340-617 Sheet 58

To the recreational user, this is the most attractive of all the Fergus Estuary islands. Two rolling hills of grass and ragwort give a nice open feeling. Two lonely hawthorns are the only trees. Herds of cattle are confined to their section by electric fences (that do sting !). Lingerers or campers will ensure they are in a quarter different to the grazing livestock. There is an attractive stone cottage on the SE side. Agricultural access is from the NE. The best landing is on a lovely shingle beach on the SW side.

Deenish Island

R346-633 Sheet 58

One high hillock at the W side and reeds / marsh to the E, in 2009 this island was in transition from overgrown grassy to planned woodland. A major dyke to the E helps protect a large field from flooding, or rather, used to. The hillock is planted with alternating vertical rows of deciduous (oak) and coniferous (Contorted Pine) forestry, at 2m intervals, an interesting combination, presumably akin to intercropping in a vegetable garden. Some older Alder and other broadleaf varieties suggest this was all well planned.

The beach on the W side of the island is scoured by the main flow and mudfree to at least half height.

Inishmore or Deer Island

R296-630 Sheet 57

Largest of the islands locally at about two square kilometres, Deer Island is the preferred local name. The farmhouse is midway on the S side. Paddling round it is reminiscent of what paddling through Counties Cavan or Monaghan may be like if and when water levels rise sufficiently. The hedgerows may be lush though. Its steep fields are stocked with cattle and sheep.

The point of embarkation dedicated to this island is at Rosscliff to the W at R288-633. From Ennis take the first left as you enter Ballynacally. The road appears to lead into an estate but follow the rural road to the river. Rosscliff is a long narrow slip that allows launching at all states of the tide. The channel is always open to the S, but the channel going N after Deer Island dries out. It is possible to make way NE around Deer Island and into a channel.

Beware many mud flats and shallows. Parking here is limited as it is a working slip for farmers moving stock in and out to the islands.

Deer Island was until 2004 unique among Irish islands for having a sole resident who was female. Nowadays the island is farmed from the mainland as an out-farm, as with all the islands hereabouts now.

The passage between Coney and Inishmore dries out at just under half tide height.

Coney Island

R326-626 Sheets 57/58

Second largest at about one and a quarter square kilometres of the larger islands locally, and perhaps most attractive, Coney is by far the tallest at 59m. On the summit are a trigonometrical station and a more attractive monument. The latter is said to have been erected by the then landowner to his son who was killed in the Boer War at the turn of the 19th century, probably fighting for the British. The monument is slightly squawky. Local lore has it that in 2004 when President Bush of the U.S.A. visited Ireland, there was a massive security operation around Shannon Airport, about 4km away. Irish soldiers making security checks interfered with it, in case it was hollow or the like, but didn't do a good job putting it back together. Pity.

The main landing spot is a jetty and slip at the W side. The slip reaches out as far as all but the lowest LWS. There are several houses all now boarded up. Farmers commute here by day on the tide from Crovraghan Pier. Cattle, sheep and horses are stocked. There are two old churches, both at the SE, and one graveyard is still in limited use. A network of boreens criss-cross the island.

From the summit, the very best views of the estuary hereabouts are achieved, up to Ennis, down to Aughinish aluminium plant on the limerick side, and of course Shannon Airport to the E, planes taking off every few minutes. It seems out of place in so rural a setting. The passage between Coney and Inishmore dries out at just under half tide height.

Inishdadroum

R308-618 Sheet 57

This tiny islet is really the end of a spit of land projecting SW from Coney and not really separate. Sheep and horses grazing there will have migrated from Coney and get cut off by the rising water. It is low but has two distinct high points at either end, hence the name. Midway between the island and the islet, at the lower half of the tide, it is said there is a tidal lake, a rockpool really. Locals are amazed that it never silts up nor gets filled with stones, even though fierce storms wash over it. It contains the clearest water hereabouts.

Trummer

R303-621 Sheets 57

This is a genuine islet identifiable at all angles for its pronounced hump at the WSW end. This transpires as a jumble of limestone rocks. Essentially from mother nature's kitchen, these rocks have been re-organised by man to pen sheep. Ungrazed. Elder tree.

Islands off Kilrush

The two low-lying islands off Kilrush make for an interesting day out. The area is particularly good for people teaching maritime skills, the tides being strong and even turbulent, yet enclosed and with a 'safe' feeling. The best embarkation place is at Cappagh Pier at Q985-540. There is access at all states of the tide, easy parking and toilets.

Tides

The ebb race between Hog Island and Cappagh Pier extends over 500m, extending northeast from the eastern point of Hog to just off the pier itself. This is a splendid play area, fast and steep, yet enclosed and therefore safe enough, even having distinct eddy lines. A swim, even a long one, deposits the swimmer close to a friendly shore, outside the gates of Kilrush Creek. Certainly comparable in power to the race at New Quay in the north of the county, the extra enclosed feeling is a safety factor that makes it preferable.

Scattery Island

Q976-526 Sheet 63

The island seems to have been named for a dragon (*Cathach* in Irish, giving *Inis Cathach*). It has a long and varied history and its origins are mostly associated with St. Senan, born in 488 A.D. He founded the Christian settlement there in the 6th Century. It was a holy island until the Vikings took over for a century or so before being recaptured by Brian Boru in 975. The Vikings must have been pleasantly surprised when they first arrived, to find the access door to the round tower at ground level. This makes it the most easily accessible round tower in Ireland.

The island was inhabited until 1978. No artificial fertiliser was ever used on these fields so the island is of ecological interest as a semi-wild grassland. The south, west and north of the island away from the main buildings is wild and rugged but has good wildlife interest especially at the lagoon areas near the lighthouse and at the north end. Widgeon, Teal,

Curlew, and Redshank were seen in good numbers in January 2012. 1 Hen Harrier was at the small pond in the centre of the island.

There is an abandoned village on the northern end of the E side. Many of the cottages have fallen into disrepair and access is now denied with security fencing in place. The lighthouse and battery are at the southern point. The battery is in good condition but access to the roof through the hole in the ceiling is now impossible. Metal grids prevent entry to the inside of the battery. The lighthouse was first established in 1872. The old lighthouse cottage is in poor condition but there is evidence of some repair work being planned.

By January 2012 the island has become much more managed with a small visitor centre, toilets and OPW staff quarters located in newly refurbished cottages above the main landing pier. There is a well managed and maintained way marked trail that guides the visitor around the main monastic remains, round tower and churches.

There is what looks like a peat marina cut into the sod at the southern end of the E side. This is just N of the lighthouse. It could hardly have been a commercial success.

The island has plentiful rabbit and in 1999, Golden Plover and a Short-eared Owl.

Tides

The tidal streams between the mainland and the islands tend to be stronger than between the islands. In each case they flow southeast with the flood and northwest with the ebb.

Landing and Camping

Land on Scatterry at a muddy-sandy beach at a pier towards the northern end of the E side. Also, less conveniently further over S towards the battery/lighthouse. Camping is possible anywhere, but permission is needed from Dúchas. The water in the well behind the monastery is fresh and good to drink.

Hog Island

Q986-533 Sheet 63

Little neighbour of Scatterry Island and less interesting. A drumlinesque few acres, there are horses, Shelduck and goats. The island is privately owned and camping is not permitted. Rumours of a wind farm in January 2012 lack planning permission for corroboration. All bushes and gorse on the island have been removed and a small breakwater wall is now located on the N side at the entrance to a salt marsh and lagoon that is navigable to kayaks at HW.

Wildlife was good at the lagoon with 250+ Teal, 100 Widgeon, Snipe 30 and good numbers of Oystercatcher, Curlew, and Redshank roosting there at high water. Common Seals seen (4).

Local HW is generally:

From	To	Galway HW
Mizen Head	Loop Head	-0100
Loop Head	Slyne Head	0000
Slyne Head	Erris Head	+0015

Erris Head Tory Island +0040

Tory Island Malin Head +0100

Offshore tidal streams

Tidal information inshore along the west coast of Ireland is only occasionally reliable or available. There just aren't enough boaters sending in information.

Offshore - Loop Head to Aranmore Donegal	
Direction	Time
N	3:20 before Galway HW
S	3:05 after Galway HW

It is also very little different - half an hour earlier - the rest of the way north and east around the corner to at least as far as Malin Head.

The offshore mainstream makes itself felt where the land projects to meet it.

For example:

- Loop Head to Kilkee
- Outside of the Aran Islands
- Slyne Head
- Outside Inishshark, Inishbofin and Inishturk
- Achill Head
- Outside the Inishkeas
- Erris Head
- Rathlin O'Birne to Aranmore
- Tory Sound
- Downies to Melmore Head.

Inshore tides

Inshore, where paddlers operate, it is a little more complicated. It is widely accepted that tidal streams inshore in the shallows turn before tidal streams offshore. The islands and the much-fragmented coastline sets up eddies. The bays and inshore channels, from the Shannon Estuary in the southwest to Lough Swilly in the far north, fill and empty almost simultaneously. The variation between them is twenty minutes or less.

This inshore cycle of bay filling and emptying is associated with the offshore main stream. As soon as the offshore stream begins to slacken off, the inshore streams start to flow in the opposite direction. Here is how it works.

The offshore mainstream floods north until 3:05 after Galway HW, but inshore, the bays start to empty that bit earlier, at 1:00 after Galway HW. The inshore bays start to empty as soon as the offshore flood starts to slacken.

The offshore mainstream ebbs south until 3:20 before Galway HW, but inshore, the bays start to fill that bit earlier, at 5:00 before Galway HW. The inshore bays start to fill as soon as the offshore ebb starts to slacken.

To summarise, the bays mostly fill on the offshore flood and they mostly empty on the offshore ebb. It is just that the inshore cycle starts 1.5 - 2.0 hours earlier than offshore. As soon as the offshore flood or ebb slackens to about half pace, the process is exhausted and the inshore cycle the other way is triggered.

Thus, all the bays and channels on the west coast fill from about 5:00 before Galway HW and empty from about 1:00 after Galway HW.

Water movement in bays

It has to be stressed that these timings relate to the entrances to bays. Up near the head of a bay, or even halfway up, the timing tends to be that bit later. Further, in bays where a large expanse of water is filled through a narrow or constricted entrance, it can be very much later. Bays with restricted entrances, into which large rivers flow, operate to rules that are more extreme again.

The information that is commercially available about west coast tides relates to entrances of bays. The people who draw charts and write pilot books concentrate their efforts here. The reason is that mariners are always anxious to come and go with a favourable tide. Given that the west coast of Ireland consists almost entirely of such bays, this is very useful. The conscientious route planner is remarkably well informed for large sections of the coast.

Care should be exercised in using information from the table on the facing page.

- Rates of flow are spring rates, mostly if not exclusively.
- They are not necessarily consistent throughout the bay.
- The value given may not be for the mouth of the bay itself, but for some other spot inside the bay which has been deemed more important. The reasons for this may not be readily apparent.
- Similar arguments apply for start and finish times, though less vigorously so.

Common sense should be used or better again, consult the Irish Coast Pilot for more detailed information.

All times are given relative to Galway HW.

Bay and place	Max. Rate	Starts to fill	Starts to empty
Shannon Estuary (off Carrigaholt)	Strong	-0520	+0050
Galway Bay - South Sound	1kn	-0520	+0105
Galway Bay - Foul Sound	1.5kn	-0520	+0105
Galway Bay - Gregory Sound	1.5kn	-0520	+0105
Galway Bay - North Sound	0.5kn	-0520	+0105
Kilkieran Bay	1.5kn	-0520	+0105
Bertraghboy Bay	1.75kn	-0520	+0105

Clifden	1.5kn	-0500	+0100
Streamstown	Very strong	-0500	+0100
Cleggan Bay	Weak	-0500	+0100
Ballynakill Harbour	Weak	-0500	+0100
Killary	0.5kn	-0500	+0100
Westport Bay	2kn	-0505	+0040
Clew Bay (weaker flow)	0.5kn	-0530	+0040
Clew Bay (stronger flow)	1.5kn	-0530	+0040
Achill Sound South (off Achillbeg)	2.5kn	-0450	+0135
Achill Sound South inner	5kn	-0450	+0135
Achill Sound North (Bull's Mouth)	9kn	-0450	+0120
Blacksod Bay Outer (Achill/Duvillauns)	1.25kn	-0515	+0050
Blacksod Bay inner (N+E of Blacksod Pt.)		-0450	+0120
		-0515	+0050
Frenchport			
	2.5kn	-0450	+0100
Broadhaven			
	1kn	-0515	+0050
Broadhaven Bay			
	Weak	-0450	+0115
Killala Bay			
	1kn	-0450	+0115
Ballysadare Bay			
	1kn	-0450	+0115
Sligo Bay outer			
	3kn	-0505	+0115
Sligo Harbour			
	2kn	-0415	-0015
Ballyshannon (bar to the town)			
		-0530	+0045
Donegal Harbour			
	0.25kn	-0450	+0015

Killybegs Harbour	9.5kn	-0500	+0015
Gweebarra Harbour		-0520	+0050
Rosses Bay inner		-0520	+0050
Aran Sound, north & south		-0520	+0050
Rutland Channels, north & south		-0520	+0050
Cruit Bay inner	Strong	-0500	+0105
Sheephaven (+ Ards Bay entrance)	1.5kn	-0520	+0105
Mulroy Bay (entrance)	1.5kn	-0505	+0055

Lough Swilly (at Buncrana)

All of these carry a warning. No one in a small boat should ever pass a lobster pot without checking which direction the tide is flowing. It's like going out in the rain without a coat because the weather forecast is good.

The Coast of West Clare

This varied coastline changes greatly in character. The SW Clare coastline is synonymous with vertical slate cliffs. These begin at Kilbaha in the Shannon Estuary, just E of Loop Head and run NE for 60km or so, uninterrupted except for the occasional small boulder beach or long sweep of sand. The cliffs go all the way to the limestone Burren hills in the N of the county. There are few enough landings among the limestone escarpments between Doolin and Ballyvaughan. Steep cliffs then give way to the deeply indented bays in low-lying farmland on the NE edge of the Burren.

Those who have set themselves to paddle all the way around Ireland, a mighty crew, properly fear the southern section of this county, from Loop Head to Doolin. It is one of the significantly exposed parts of the entire trip.

West Clare is here divided into small day excursions, which allow one to intensively explore.

Kilrush area to Carrigaholt

Q985-540 to Q849-511 Sheet 63

14km of stony shore with strong tides.

Embarkation is at Cappagh Pier at Q985-540 which is also the embarkation for Scatterry Island. The rocky shoreline E of here goes all the way to Aylevarroo Point at Q997-529, the low-lying point on the horizon to the E. To the W lies the entrance to Kilrush Creek Marina. Access through the lock• gates at Q984-544 is easy in season when the gates are normally manned. Call on VHF Channel 80 to be certain.

From the Creek, a stony shoreline extends to Querrin, past the mouth of Poulnasherry (Oyster□Hole) Bay. Poulnasherry is a tidal inlet, so don't explore on an ebbing tide. Querrin Spit encloses an interesting, marshy area, accessible only above LW, 3km W of the mouth of the Poulnasherry marsh. At Querrin, there is a handy embarkation point with good road

access at the pier and slipway in front of the handball alley at Querrin Quay at Q925-541. Best avoid the lower tides for fear of slime.

Corlis Point is at Q915-530, followed by rocky reefs. Next is stony Doonaha Beach at Q883-527, where a caravan park and gun battery can be seen. Just E of Carrigaholt is Haughs Bay, secluded in that access is easier from the sea than from the land. Beware of LW at Carrigaholt, which leaves a mudflat inside the old quay (one of Nimmo's). Better to land at the stony beach outside the pier.

Carrigaholt to Kilbaha

Q849-511 to Q738-480 Sheet 63

15km of varied coastline.

The bay S of Carrigaholt is Kilcredaun and has an isolated stone beach below the Irish College visible above. The well-preserved Carrigaholt Castle is prominent on the point SE of Carrigaholt.

There is a battery on top of Kilcredaun Point at Q850-494. Six such batteries were built towards the end of the Napoleonic Wars to guard the estuary against a French invasion. They were built in matching pairs. This one is matched by a similar construction on the Kerry side at the Cliffs of Dooneen at Q885-478. Upstream, the next two are at Scattery Island and Carrig Island. The last two are at Kilkerin Point and Tarbert Island, where the estuary is at its narrowest and most tortuous.

Batteries were a more formidable proposition than Martello Towers. Martello Towers are a common feature on the E coast, but there are only two on the W coast. Both of these are in N Clare. Batteries were D• shaped or semicircular, and had much bigger armaments. These normally included 2 howitzers on the roof of the blockhouse and 6 guns along the outer perimeter.

Typically, a battery also had a dry moat and a drawbridge. Scattery Island battery is in good condition although access to the roof is no longer possible. Kilkerin Point has been renovated in recent years.

A school of porpoise and Bottlenose Dolphin are resident between this point and the Kerry coast for a number of years. They make full use of the sweeping tides to feed and frolic. A credible eco-tourism industry has set up around these pods.

Rinevella Bay has a pebble beach with a sunken bog and forest at its western extremity at Q817-493. Next, Rehy Hill at Q801-484 slopes gently into the water. Kilcloher Head at Q773-474 has a cave and marks the end of an impressive section of cliffs, including some long narrow caves and 'The Opera House' - undercut layers of rock sloping into the water. Land at the pier, Nimmo's prettiest according to some.

Tides

Tidal streams are strong at Kilcredaun Head at Q851-493 where the estuary suddenly narrows and turns southwest after its long westerly progression to the Atlantic. Locals say the ebbing spring tide reaches 4kn.

Kilcredaun Head		
Direction	Time	Speed
NE	5:20 before Galway HW	4kn

SW	0:50 after Galway HW	4kn
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Kilbaha to Loop Head

Q738-480 to Q686-471 Sheet 63

6km of unremitting cliffs.

Kilbaha is a wild place, pretty, and remote. Best to approach by road from the N, the Bridges of Ross side. The coastal road along the estuary from Carrigaholt is often blocked at Rinevella Bay (Q823-497) by storm damage. The bay is closed out in stormy conditions, so the road is sometimes blocked with shingle or bigger.

Note how Kilbaha Pier is constructed without any mortar at all. There are two pubs and basic facilities. The Lighthouse pub does excellent bar food. A paddle to Ross Bay or the Bridges means a short road walk back, allowing a mighty paddle with no logistics or shuttle. Kilbaha has slipway access with shelter from off-lying reefs sloping into the bay. A little hut with caves underneath marks the SW extent of Kilbaha Bay.

The outermost 6km of the Shannon Estuary has the character of the coast outside it. Tides now play a significant role as wind from the S can cause unpleasant sea states. Along the striking cliffs towards the head are many narrow caves, including one cavern whose narrow entrance causes light to refract upwards through the water. Halfway between Loop Head and Kilbaha is Dunmore Head at Q718-466 where a sheltered break may be had inside. Dunmore Head is almost cut off, and is locally called Horse Island. There is a wonderful cave running N/S through the headland. There is a very steep storm beach just E of Loop Head where landing is possible in good conditions.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough.

Loop Head to Bridges of Ross

Q686-471 to Q735-504 Sheet 63

7km of cliffs lie between Loop Head and the Bridges of Ross.

Tides

Tides hereabouts, even in close, are the main west coast offshore stream

Loop Head to the Bridges of Ross		
Direction	Time	Speed
NE	3:20 before Galway HW	1kn
SW	3:05 after Galway HW	1kn

Loop Head

Loop Head is a big square-cut, jutting headland. It consists of vertical black cliffs over 30m high. There is a detached section right at the head itself. This is called Diarmuid and Gráinne's Rock. It is a vertical tower 100m by 20m, separated from the mainland by a deep, narrow gorge. In very calm conditions, it is possible to paddle through this gap.

Diarmuid and Gráinne fled from Fionn and the Fianna, a long time ago. Their near capture is recorded widely all over Ireland in places named after them, such as this. From the mainland, marvel at the cairn on top of the rock and wonder how it got there. It wasn't Diarmuid or Gráinne. Mick Fowler and Steve Sustad, two English climbers, put it there in 1990. They have specialised in climbs such as this. They abseiled down, swam out, climbed up, and then

tyroleaned back (shinnied along a rope suspended between rock and mainland) to the mainland, leaving their mark behind. The feat has not been repeated.

Around the Head, there is always a swell, which booms on the off-lying reefs. There is a huge lighthouse which is rarely visible from below, except from way out.

The cliffs relent after Black Rock at Q703-490. The view southwards from here looks bleak as rising black cliffs stretch out to sea. The detached rock, 2km NE of the head, is Gull Island at Q701-482. The prominent point by it is Bullaunaleama, with its significant arch, with hundreds of birds occupying its ledges. 3km ENE of the Head lie two shallow bays with storm beaches where landing is possible, Fodry Bay and Ross Bay at Q733-500, handy to the road.

The Bridges of Ross is a N facing, natural harbour. Once there were two bridges, but one fell into the sea. The remaining one is on the western side of the mouth of the inlet, just E of the Point of Ross. There are two inlets within the harbour. Access is normally easier from the wider one, being the more E of the two. There is a track down to a boulder beach. The bay is not completely cut off in rough conditions, as the mouth is wide enough. Care should be exercised though.

Bridges of Ross to Goleen Bay

Q735-504 to Q825-560 Sheet 63

This is 11km of beautiful committed paddling with no real landings between the two points. Worse, the mouth of Goleen Bay is closed out in swell. Goleen Bay is otherwise an excellent waystop and possible embarkation point. It has though, an awkward, mucky carry in. If heading N, and if Goleen is closed, then Kilkee is next stop. This makes for a trip of over 18km in total.

Between Ross and Toorkeal at Q762-513 are continuous cliffs with one sea stack. The N-facing, V-shaped baylet at Toorkeal has, in the cliff to its W, a remarkable T-shaped cave. This leads in over boulders to a sheltered steep-sided cove.

Gowleen at Q785-535 (no road access) is rarely accessible due to rocks at the mouth of the bay. Croan Rock marks its northern edge.

Gowleen Bay is a further 5km to the NE. The hill with radio masts, SW of Goleen Bay, is Knocknagarhoon at Q814-551. There are impressive caves and inlets along this section.

Tides

Tides in this section are as mentioned previously - the main W coast offshore stream runs along the coast from Loop Head to Kilkee at up to 1kn in springs, with the flood running from HW Galway • 0320 to +0305.

Goleen Bay to Kilkee

Q825-560 - Q886-604 Sheet 63

About 8km of vertical cliffs and steep slabs.

Goleen Bay is an excellent waystop and possible embarkation point, well sheltered, but beware of rough seas closing out its narrow entrance during big sets.

The castle at Castle Point (Q835-577) cannot now be seen. The deeply undercut cliff here is popular with mackerel fishermen. From Goleen Bay to here are steeply sloped rock layers dipping straight into the sea. Offshore lies the distinctively shaped Illaunonearaun at Q827-570. There is no landing but it boasts fine arches and caves at its NE tip.

SPA

Storm Petrel, Barnacle Goose.

There is a lovely arch at Fohagh Point at Q853-590, but watch for the submerged rock on its northern side. There is a most beautiful stack to its S called Green Pillar Rock, also called 'The Candle' by divers. A large hole has eroded through the centre, and there is a splendid jump off the landward side of the hole.

The bay just N of Bishop's Island at Q856-595 has the remains of some huts. There is a straight, 200m long cave in the SW corner. The island itself is visible only from the land opposite, and no landing is possible to kayaks. There are caves in the cliff wall opposite Bishop's Island and a mighty sea stack on the corner. Clapotis often occurs in the sound, especially in the shallower, inside part.

Approaching Kilkee Bay, just outside Duggerna Rocks, are a couple of nice caves, with the innermost having two entrances. The second is almost hidden by the big rock sticking up in the corner, or at HW. Waves tend to rear up between here and Knockroe Point to the S. The bay just to its S is Intrinsic Bay, where Goat Island is the tiny sloping rocklet heavily populated with birds. Avoid the tiny inlet behind the island.

On Duggerna Rocks, at the southern side of the bay, are the famous Pollock Holes. These are famous for their natural swimming and snorkelling pools of all sizes. Covered at HW, they are refreshed twice daily. The Pollock Holes are deservedly a most popular attraction. The offshore rocks at this point are busy dive• sites.

The inner bay has a beautiful, horseshoe strand, which is very well sheltered. As the town is right behind, the best landing is at the pier at the northern end of the beach. Scuba divers, both CFT and PADI (Comhairle Fo-Thuinn (Irish Underwater Council), Professional Association of Diving Instructors), organise themselves from this pier. Kilkee is a serious player as a tourist town.

At the northern end of Kilkee Bay, a number of underwater reefs run S from George's Head. These are known by frightened kayakers to boom on even the calmest days. The sheltered Byrne's Cove at Q883-614 on the N side of the bay is popular with male naturists. The prevailing south-westerly swells, coupled with reflection off the cliffs, makes for turbulent water in this corner of the bay.

Kilkee to Doonbeg

Q886-604 to Q962-663 Sheet 63

This section is around 14km.

Kilkee to Farrow Bay is about 5km and is a pleasant trip with rock layers, sloping steeply into the sea.

George's Head protects Kilkee Bay. The head has a cave opening to the S. The bay just to the N is Chimney Bay. Offshore are two rocky outcrops. That nearer Kilkee is known as Biraghty More at Q883-633, which is a popular scuba dive• site. It boasts a good jump into the sea on the landward side. Facing Biraghty More on Corbally Point is a small cave. Further N is Biraghty Beg.

Farrow Bay has a reef at the mouth. On the southern side of the bay is Corbally village where landing is possible, but there is a long carry to the road. Corbally village is mostly holiday cottages now, but the native villagers were noted Irish speakers up to 1950 or so. Clerical and lay 'Gaelgeoir' were common visitors in summer months. There is a rocky beach at the NE

corner of the bay with good road access, but sharp reefs force a long carry at LW. This is not a rough weather landing spot by any means.

Donegal Point at Q896-654 is turbulent at most times. It separates Farihy Bay from a small, sheltered inlet to its N, called Bealnalicka. There is a rock beach here with steep access above the inlet to an in-fill quarry, which has road access. There are splendid caves at the inner, southern side of the inlet. One cave is a gem. It goes all the way S, through the headland into Farihy Bay. The roof of the cave has collapsed halfway along, and being open to the sky, there are curious lighting effects even in poor ambient light conditions. Expect rough conditions at the southern entrance to the cave, and in the middle. Two reefs run outwards from the N entrance to the caves.

Ballard Bay is noted for its sheer spectacular cliffs. Visit the caves inside a distinctive notch called the Horse Shoe at Q905-658. The caves are in the southern side of the bay, just W of the Napoleonic signal tower at Q910-656. A rocky shoreline leads around the headland to Carrickfadda known locally as the Blue Pool, a rock ledge at the outer NW end of the headland. Carrickfadda is popular with fishermen, despite some being tragically swept out to sea by boomers over the years.

On the W side of Doonbeg Bay, there is the remains of a castle at Killard Point. There is good road access to a sheltered slipway at Q953-673. Access is also possible at HW, right up into Doonbeg itself, at a slipway N of the bridge, at Doonbeg Castle. The Doonbeg area is also shown on Sheet 57. Doonbeg pier is by Nimmo.

Doonbeg to Spanish Point

Q962-663 to R034-777 Sheet 57

The character of the coast all the way from Loop Head to Spanish Point is mostly steep, rugged, slate cliffs interspersed with sheltered bays, large and small. S of Doonbeg, the terrain is mostly suited to those who like to potter and explore in detail. This now gives way to exposed surf beaches.

The coast 9km N of Doonbeg is mostly surf beach, including the famous Doughmore (White Strand on the OS 1:50,000 map). Doughmore is famous with surfers for its reliable surf and mean rip-tides. Do not lightly decide to land hereabouts. Rock has been placed at the toe of the dunes.

Doughmore is famous with others for the golf played in the dune system behind the beach. Doonbeg Golf Course was developed controversially in the last few years. Golfers won out against conservationists. More recently, the golfers have applied to Clare County Council for permission to deposit 80,000 tons of rock and boulders at various points on Doughmore beach, to halt coastal erosion. Did they not realise that dunes are by definition impermanent? Was this not on the cards from the outset? This is one of the most beautiful remote and natural beaches in Ireland. While the land belongs to the golf course, the beach belongs to everyone. It is not the public's fault if some of the greens were badly situated.

The pier (by Nimmo) at Lurga Point, 2km WSW of the village of Quilty, has a NE facing slipway at Q996-742, sheltered by a reef. There is access at all stages of the tide and parking is plentiful. Lurga is a most convenient embarkation point for off-lying Mutton Island. There is a somewhat sheltered storm beach R020-761 just 1km S of Caherrush Point R020-768.

Here are farms and generally a welcoming environment, with water and camping on request. In 2010 the local farmer is as pleasant and helpful as ever and has no difficulty with visitors

as long as it is small numbers and they ask permission to access or use the land. There is a great story about his father RIP who accommodated a fellow in a "skinny boat" many years ago.

The curved beach immediately S of Spanish Point is a famed surf spot, absolutely to be avoided except in calm conditions. One can expect waves that often are higher than Lahinch itself, with the break line closer to the shore.

Mattle Island

Q972-721 Sheet 57

Mattle is 2km S of Mutton Island and will always play a secondary role to the larger and more attractive Mutton. Cormorant and Shag roost on the grass top. Cormorant colonise the summit while Shag have their home perched over a deep cut that penetrates the NE point.

Landing

Land in a cut at the southern point, or in various points along the SE side, depending on tide and conditions. A reef runs well out to the ENE, and landing may often be had in its shelter.

Mutton Island

Q983-747 Sheet 57

Mutton Island lies 1.5km off Lurga Point. There are three modest houses, nicely sheltered under a low hill, at the narrow, eastern end on the SE facing side. The middle one is still roofed. The houses are just NE of a lake which is just E of the narrow middle of the island. There is a significant signal tower midway along the exposed western side. The northern and western sides are high and craggy.

Landing and Embarkation

The landing place is onto a stony beach at a projecting spit at the narrow, north-eastern point. There are also landing points nearer the houses. If circumstances dictate, there is also a useful landing in a W-facing cut at Q982-747. Camping is equally convenient to all these landings. Embark from a sheltered and conveniently reached beach and slipway at Q996-743 at Seafield Harbour, tucked inside Lurga Point just 3km WSW of the village of Quilty. With tide running, a most fearsome sea state is said to kick up S of Mutton Island. Beware also the reefs off the W of the island, beloved of wilder surfers.

SPA

Barnacle Goose, Great Northern Diver.

Gadwall, Shoveler, Wigeon, Teal and Mallard were seen on the lake in March 2004. Also seen were Barnacle Goose, Snow Bunting, Twite, Snipe and a herd of goats.

Carrickaneelwar

Q984-758 Sheet 57

A great slab of rock with minimal grass lies at 1km N of Mutton Island. Various slabs on the S side usually provide an easy landing. This rock has a fine feel to it. Seal, Barnacle Goose, Mallard and Teal were seen in March 2004.

Spanish Point to Liscannor

R034-777 to R068-884 Sheet 57

This is a committing stretch of coast, consisting of low cliffs and surf beaches. The main concern will be the sea swell. Unless conditions are very benign, there will be many hidden reefs below the surface and almost any swell will produce boomers. Keep 2/2.5km off Spanish Point itself. Until well with Liscannor Bay, one must be on the lookout at all times and in every direction.

Once around the point, head back in towards the bay at Cleadagh Bridge R037 797. There are one or two small unremarkable caves along the low cliffs. A stony beach is inaccessible in larger swell. White Strand (“Travaun”) is a very sheltered bay and accessible at any time R038-806. You can expect a breaking wave off Freagh Point R032-816 and another boomer 300m out from this on a low reef. Paddling between these two waves is unpredictable. The options are to head well off shore, save however that on the upper half of any tide, there is a very narrow gap right in at the beach between Freagh Island and the mainland. A few small caves on the far side of Green Island R047-832 are worth a look.

The bay to the S of Liscannor is Lehinch and a famed surf spot, absolutely to be avoided by sea kayaks. That said, fun is to be had there, and, at HW one may enter the Inagh River R083-886, and then all the way up to Ennistymon. The practical thing is to head for Liscannor Harbour (Nimmo) R068-884.

Liscannor to Doolin

The Cliffs of Moher

R068-884 to R058-971 Sheet 51/Sheet 57

To the N of Liscannor are the famous Cliffs of Moher, running NNE for 16km or more from Hag’s Head at R011-897. Hag’s Head lies 3km W of Furreera (R042-880 Sheet 57) in Liscannor Bay, or about 6km W of Liscannor Harbour (one of Nimmo’s). Small parties will start or finish this classic excursion at Furreera. Larger parties may prefer Liscannor, as it has the better parking, easy access at the harbour, and in the village itself, facilities including restaurants, pubs, hotel and hostel. The Cliffs of Moher are the highest vertical cliffs in Ireland. Except for one stack off O’Brien’s Tower, and a few storm beaches, landings are few. Even then, these are only accessible in very settled conditions. These cliffs provide the most dramatic and committing day paddle in Ireland. If doing the Cliffs of Moher, choose light winds, or south-easterlies, which will wash over the top.

Supreme Surfing Wave

Aill na Searrach (a.k.a. *Aileens*) is Ireland’s biggest and best surfing wave, at over 10m, thought to be among the top five waves in the world. The wave is close inshore, just N of Branaunmore. It was known for years but never surfed until recently. Efforts began October 2004 but standard techniques were found wanting. Surfers came from Australia, USA and the UK to try their luck. Eventually on 15th October 2005, surfers were brought out to the site from Doolin. Getting onto the wave involves being towed a by jet-ski, which then makes a hasty retreat, tactics not then necessary anywhere else in Ireland. Conditions only get suitable a few times every year. The wave spills into the base of the cliffs themselves, so its danger is not just its size. Keep away, unless you are one of a very small handful of experts. Doolin claims, with some validity, to be the secret capital of Irish music. It is Mecca to every hitch• hiker and cycling tourist under the age of sixty to visit Ireland. Doolin boasts excellent music, hostels, camping (in a paying site conveniently at the harbour), seafood restaurants, chippers, as well as everything touristy. Doolin Pier at R057-970, Sheet 51 is the obvious embarkation place for the Aran Islands. Inisheer lies 8km to the WNW, or 10km to the main beach.

The slipway at Doolin pier is steep, less than well sheltered, and busy. Parking in summer is easier just 100m N, in front of the campsite. The launching is no more difficult off the rocky

beach, despite a small, awkward carry. There is no other embarkation for many a cliff-bound mainland mile on either side.

Day excursions either side of Doolin are committing and amongst the best in the country.

Going S the first get out is approx 15km at Liscannor and even this is weather dependant.

Going N the next get out is approx 16km at Fanore and this is very weather dependant also.

After this the certain get out is at Gleninagh Pier another 8km further on, inside Galway Bay.

Doolin has a coast and cliff rescue service. Contact Mattie Shanahan at 065 – 7074415, the leader of the local Coastguard (Doolin) Unit. Local information may be had from any of the local ferrymen, there being a number of busy, small ferry routes to the islands.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough.

Branauamore - An Branán Mór

R037-924

Sheet 51

Branauamore is the sea stack prominently visible below O'Brien's Tower at the main public viewing point on the Cliffs of Moher. For this reason, it is more often referred to among kayakers as O'Brien's Stack. Its importance lies in its strategic position, mid-trip along the Cliffs. Very occasionally, a trip along the Cliffs may here be broken, lunch taken, and legs stretched. Tall and thin at 61m high, this is a mighty stack, and although unreliable, do not discount the possibility of a landing. A shelf of rock extends out from the base of the stack on the seaward side, the Doolin side of which is peculiarly sheltered. Even when the gap with the mainland is closed out by booming surf, the N outer side is often quite free of surge and scend. Manageable groups will find it worth a look.

Crab Island

R053-971

Sheet 51

Crab Island is a small, rocky islet just off the pier at Doolin. It is best known these days for the reliable right-hand reef break off its SW side. Surfers ignore the nearby break on the mainland off Ballaghaline Point at R057-969, because it dumps. There is a stone building of indeterminate purpose on top of Crab, which looks like it might have been a wine cellar. Land onto a sheltered inlet on the NE side, which can be difficult, particularly in swell or at HW.

History

The German submarine *Aud* landed Dowing, servant of Roger Casement, on Crab, in 1916. He couldn't make the mainland and was arrested. This was the first in a long line of mishaps and misunderstandings that undermined the 1916 Rebellion and essentially confined it to Dublin. Casement has remained a controversial figure ever since. Branded as homosexual to alienate American Irish public opinion at the time, to the puzzlement of students of the subject since, it appears actually that he was. The British were truthfully more upset by his exposition of third world abuses in the Congo and South America and elsewhere, but were happy to seize upon his treason in support of the Irish cause of the time.

Doolin to Ballyvaughan

R057-970 to M228-083 Sheet 51

The famous Burren area is a geological phenomenon, being 1,000km² of 'karst'. This comprises exposed limestone rock pavements, crags, escarpments, sea cliffs, caves, and above all, flowers.

Flora - the Burren is profuse with rare wild flowers. Some of these are not otherwise found N of southern latitudes, while others are not found S of northern latitudes – here, they are side by side. The Burren shelves or drops vertically into the sea from Doolin to Ballyvaughan, with landings few and far between.

Climbing cliffs - halfway between Doolin and Fanore is the famous climbing sea-cliff of Ailladie at R092-034, developed since 1972. It is probably second only in popularity in Ireland to Dalkey Quarry in Dublin. The tallest smooth section is Mirror Wall, with the only apparent weakness being The Ramp [E1 5b] winding up from bottom left to top right, pioneered by Dermot Somers. The cleanest of the series of square-cut corners just S of Mirror Wall is *Pis Fliuch* [HVS 4C], a committing layback. It is very much amongst the best of Jimmy McKenzie's many fine legacies to Irish climbing. Further S by about 100m or more, look for the prominent Great Balls of Fire [E1 5b], said to be Brian Walker's best. It is the obvious fist-sized crack rising to two-thirds height from a ledge just above sea level; the escape is left and up.

There are other cliffs, large and small, between Doolin and Ailladie, and there has been some climbing development on the more prominent sections. All other Clare climbing will always be second rate to Ailladie.

Landings - there is a possible landing at a storm beach just a *km* N of Doolin, but it is of little logistical interest as there is no road access.

There is a shallow bay with a steep slip about *4km* S of Fanore beach, just where the road is closest to the high tide mark, but landing even here is troublesome under the best of conditions. A dolphin, *Fáinne*, arrived here in 1997 or so and has remained ever since, though nowadays intermittently.

13.5km NE of Doolin and *4km* or so S of Black Head, is the splendidly picturesque, dune-backed beach of Fanore at M137-085. The beach may dump even on a good day, but it is the nearest to a dependable landing on this stretch, so do not pass by without thought. Fanore has a public car park (height barrier) at the S end of the beach with water and excellent camping in a paying site at the N end of the beach. There is a lifeguard on duty most of the summer. The coast for kilometres on either side of Black Head is scenic, and of special interest to shore anglers. Lines of them grace the low but sheer black cliffs all summer long. At the head, with its huge automated lighthouse, there will always be swell, especially when the tide ebbs into the regular westerlies. Under normal summer conditions, full-blooded Atlantic conditions suddenly yield to the protected waters of Galway Bay. Travelling northwards, the views of the hills of North Clare from hereabouts are at their most stunning.

3km around Black Head, the tiny pier (marked Coolsiva Quay at M181-108) at Gleninagh, gives a landing onto a small sandy beach. This is a pleasant spot for swimming, and is usually a reliable landing. There is camping and water in nearby houses. Car access is awkward, especially for larger groups. Many of the 'Wild Geese' are said to have left from this pier in Sarsfield's time, after the Treaty of Limerick in 1691.

4km WNW of Ballyvaughan is Gleninagh Castle. Landing is difficult hereabouts, but it is worth the trouble as the castle is well preserved and home to breeding Chough.

Illunloo

Shown on the OS half-inch Sheet 14, but missing from the 1:50,000 Sheet 51. A rocky islet which makes a good waystop on a day paddle in S Galway Bay. Land on the downwind side, mostly easily. Neither water nor camping.

Ballyvaughan Harbour

M230-090 Sheet 51

The sea inside Ballyvaughan Harbour is very shallow and care is needed not to ground at LW, even in kayaks. In particular, spits of land enclose the Harbour, keeping it distinguished from Ballyvaughan Bay immediately outside to the North. The Harbour is enclosed from NW by 'The Rine', an attractive grassy spit that juts out NE from the shore W of the village, the tip of which is at M222-097, and from NE by Green Island M236-093, a breeding spot for mute Swan, the end of a rough marshy area jutting out from Bishops Quarter to the NE of the village. The Rine is an attractive tourist walk and families often get cut off at HW. Green Island is less attractive and generates less problems, if any.

Gall Island M234-086 lies inside Rine and Green, a mere 200m off the new pier in Ballyvaughan M232-085 and shelters it. With a huge LW footprint it was formerly a noted seaweed provider. The harvest was formed into rafts and floated towards the collection point, beside the shed to its E. The shed is just off the main road at M238-084 and was the commercial hub of the enterprise. It is now unused. Seaweed lost its commercial value in the early 1980s when an iodine factory at Maam Cross in Connemara closed.

Camping at the village is very public, on grass in front of the Rent an Irish Cottages, or just W of the old quay M028-085. It may be possible elsewhere with permission. A better choice by far, is Bishop's Quarter beach 1.5km NE at M245-095. It is possible except at lowest waters to paddle inside Green Island all the way to Bishop's Quarter.

Ballyvaughan is a very pretty village, with all supplies. It is probably best known with tourists for the seafood in Monks Bar at the (old) W pier, and cakes and delicacies in the Tea Rooms nearby. There is also the commercial Aillwee Cave, 3km to the S inland.

Poulnaclogh Bay

M272-114 Sheet 51

Poulnaclogh Bay itself is a most useful training area for beginners, being totally enclosed. It is shallow and therefore only really suitable on the top half of the tide. The tidal cycle is later than outside, about HW Galway +0040 in neaps, +0100 in springs. The bay is much used by the outdoor pursuits centre at Turlough, near Bell Harbour at the head of the bay, for beginner windsurfing, canoeing, and sailing.

Entry is easiest at M272-114 at a small pier beside a hexagonal monument on the roadside.

Reasonable parking. The SW side of the bay has a large seal colony, and some otters.

Scanlan's Island

M253-104 Sheet 51

Scanlan's Island is a low, cultivated, agricultural island set out in large fields, lying 3.5km NE of Ballyvaughan. It is barely an island, being cut off only at HW, and being circumnavigable only on the very highest tides. The rest of the time it is accessible by land from the N at M258-115, near Finavarra village.

Scanlan's is noted here for the tidal race that sets up on the ebb at the narrows at its southern tip at M252-103. This is between the island and the mainland where Poulnaclogh Bay flows

into Ballyvaughan Bay. The race runs due W. A significant height difference is discernible over as little as 50m, and the run• off in springs, with wind over, can go for over 500m.

Tide Race

Paddlers prefer playing in this race to the more powerful Aughinish Point race nearby, because of its ease of access and relative safety of escape. This race flows into the enclosed Ballyvaughan Bay, whereas Aughinish flows into the more open water of Galway Bay. It is shallow and bumpy with even a hint of westerlies - good fun to be in. Access is from Bishop's Quarter beach at M245-095, 1km SW and 2km NE of Ballyvaughan. The beach is easily accessible to vehicles, with a good car park and camping. Ballyvaughan has all facilities.

Slack water immediately outside the narrows is as Galway HW and LW. The stream at the narrows and inside Poulnaclogh Bay can be up to +0100 flooding and ebbing. The most powerful flow at the narrows is the first part of the ebb. This is normal for such configurations, especially after heavy rain, as some fresh water fills Poulnaclogh Bay. Indeed the surface water downstream of the narrows can taste quite fresh. The lower half of the ebb usually yields longer flatter waves, a bit less confused, that bit more amenable. However, the situation is very variable.

The whole area teems with bird life in winter. On land is found Snow Bunting, on Loch Murree Whooper mute and even Whistling Swan in 2010, beside regular winter Widgeon, Pochard and Teal. On the sea there are Brent Goose, many Merganser, Long-tailed Duck, and especially Divers. More than 130 Great Northern Diver have been counted in recent times. The area is particularly noted for the rarer Black Throated Diver. Clive Hutchinson's 'Birds in Ireland' records a flock of 18 in 1985. Singles and small groups are regular visitors. Grey Phalarope were seen here in significant numbers in October 2001.

Aughinish Island

M274-132 Sheet 51

Uniquely in Ireland, Aughinish Island is separated by sea from the rest of its own county [Clare], while being joined by road to a different county [Galway].

Apparently, Aughinish was only ever completely cut off from the mainland for about 50 years. Of old, it was joined to County Clare at New Quay to the S. Then a destructive tidal wave, caused by an earthquake off Lisbon, Portugal on 1st November 1755, swept into the area with such force it broke that connection. The Lisbon earthquake is said to have been the most focussed destructive seismic event in recorded history, measured at 9.0 on the Richter scale and lasting seven full minutes (San Francisco 1906 was 7.8 and lasted 30 seconds). For a time Aughinish remained an unattached island. But then the military constructed the Martello Tower (1804 - 1810) in fear of Napoleonic invasion. For access, they built a road across a causeway at M295-133 from the E, in County Galway.

That *tsunami* also flattened Correnroe Castle to the SE at the head of Correnroe Bay. Thus is explained the puzzling position of an ancient ruined church on the SW, opposite the Clare coast. The same event caused major destruction at Barley Cove in west Cork, leaving the extensive dune system behind now apparent.

Circumnavigation

This provides kayakers with an opportunity for a short but interesting circumnavigation without logistical problems. Aughinish Point at M274-132 is at the W tip of the island. For

best conditions, the circuit is best done clockwise if launching on the ebb, or anticlockwise on the flood.

Tides

New Quay	
Direction	Time
E	5:00 before Galway HW
W	1:00 after Galway HW

Avoid the southern side for the main part of the ebb, especially in a westerly as a truly awesome tide race is set up here in such conditions. It extends over the entire mouth of the bay and stretches from New Quay Pier to Aughinish Point and beyond. On the northern side of the island, the tides are not generally strong. However, a shallow bar extends from Deer Island ESE to a point northeast of Aughinish Island Martello Tower, where some rough water may be encountered.

Until 1992, there was an old cannon, with emplacements, on top of the Martello Tower, but these are now gone. The top used to be reached with difficulty by climbing, but the tower is now a private residence. This is one of only three such towers built on the W coast. The others are at M241-117 Finavarra Point a few *kms* to the WSW, commanding the entrance to Ballyvaughan Bay, which still sports its gun, and at Rossaveal L956-238.

The S side of the island was the scene of a tragic drowning on 29th June 1969, when 9 children, all from New Quay (except one from Kinvara), died when a boat overturned on its maiden sea trials.

At the pier at New Quay, which was built by Nimmo, is Linnane's Bar, renowned seafood bar and restaurant.

County Galway

The coast of S Galway consists of low-lying, deeply indented farmland on the N edge of the Burren area.

Deer Island

M283-153 Sheet 51

This is a small but lovely and worthwhile islet in open water, 2*km* N of Aughinish in County Clare. It is 5*km* W of Eddy Island, and 4*km* SSW of Tawin. Several dozen seals will typically be lounging about in summer. Multitudinous Cormorants. Absolutely no water.

Land on a beautiful, sheltered, curved, sandy beach on the SE side.

A shallow bar extends from Deer Island ESE to a point NE of Aughinish Island Martello Tower (M287-136). Although the tides are not generally strong except between New Quay and Aughinish Point, the shallow water at this bar, as well as that off Aughinish Point, can be rough in wind.

Embarkation

Embark from around New Quay, County Clare. The easiest launch is from Church Point Beach at M274-124, or from the back of New Quay itself at M281-123. The quay was built in 1837, and is a working quay, so please respect it. At the quay is Linnane's Bar where there is pub• grub, with the best seafood in Ireland. The nearest launch for Deer Island is from the causeway joining Aughinish Island to mainland County Galway at M295-133. Also, the

island can be taken in as part of a circuit of Aughinish, as launching or landing can be easily had either side of the causeway.

Mulroney's Island

M367-119 Sheet 52

A tidal island in Kinvara Bay, on the western shore. Worth a visit, if only to view a huge oyster shell midden which occupies almost the entire NW end of the island. Landing is at its most practical at HW, when one may land at the NE side. No water. Good secluded camping spot if attending *Crinniú na mBád*, the authentic festival of traditional Irish W coast boats. These are principally the Hooker (*Bád Mór*), and the smaller *Gleoitheóg* and *Néamhóg*. The *Crinniú* is held annually on the middle weekend in August.

Tides in parts of the bay reach 1.5kn in springs.

Fiddaun Island

M355-159 Sheet 52

An undistinguished small low-lying islet N of the entrance to Kinvara bay. Essentially a grassy raised gravel bank beloved only of nesting gulls in spring. Best landing in SE onto stony beach.

The tidal stream emptying Kinvara Bay turns W just S of Fiddaun.

Island Eddy

M351-164 Sheet 52

Eddy is a large and pretty island, low-lying, 2km NW of the mouth of Kinvara Bay. Formerly inhabited by seven families, Eddy was abandoned in 1947. The islanders settled on the mainland nearby, mostly at Doorus and Clarinbridge. The village is in a line set back from the beach at the northern side of the E end. It is now mostly in ruins and overgrown, though one house has been restored as a holiday home. Deciduous trees behind the village gave good shelter. The island is grazed in summer.

The bigger part of the island lies W of the village and is reached by a narrow causeway.

There are enormous lagoons on the northern and south-western sides.

A coral sandbank projects from the eastern end of the island. This dries out all the way to the mainland at the bottom of very low spring tides, when Razorfish can be dug on the lowest parts.

Embarkation

Put in at a choice of launchings. All three piers mentioned are by Nimmo.

- The nearest embarkation point is from a quay 2km NE of the island at M360-181, called locally Lynch's Quay [Nimmo], 6km WSW of Clarinbridge.
- Killeenaran at M372-167, 2km E, is more popular.
- Most conveniently accessed (but height barrier) is the N facing beach (locally called *Trácht*) at M341-138, (by road) 2km S and 5km NW of Kinvara, where there is plenty of parking, and toilets.
- Parkmore Pier [Nimmo] at M354-138 has parking and easy access.

Landing

Land at the beach on the E end of N side, at the abandoned village.

Camping

Good camping can be had almost anywhere. No water was found.

Tawin Island

Kilcolgan Point at M300-193 at the W tip of the island is a useful waystop for a tour in inner Galway Bay. Land onto boulders and slabs, on whichever side is sheltered. The island is accessible by road, and is flat but interesting.

Tawin is used here to describe a large area, being a long narrow peninsula with the island at its extremity. Accessed from Clarinbridge or easier from Oranmore, both on the Galway Limerick road, the area includes the main island Tawin West and for two other islands (Inishcorra and Tawin East), besides a part of the mainland called Mweenish Island, which is actually attached at all stages of the tide. The area is in the Galway commuter belt, and there is a lot of one off housing. The whole thing is lovely and includes two Nimmo piers.

Best known feature of the region is the Oranmore Sailing Club at the small Rinville pier (one of Nimmo's) at M355-219 on sheet 46, well signposted. Inside Rinville Point, the peninsula encloses a marine institute, an hotel, and a golf course. There is a lovely walk along the shore to the point, and for the energetic, a walk along the N shore to beyond the golf course, where it is possible to access the woodland in the interior and thereby, back to the starting point. Well recommended.

Mweenish in the extreme S is actually the remotest part of the entire. Except for two raised areas, one at each end WNW and ESE, it is largely salt marsh, only occasionally below the waterline. One could camp here and be undisturbed for a week. Short grass and clean seas make the prospect attractive. The OS 1:50,000 shows the area as detached, but the old half inch shows it correctly as definitely mainland. The views southward to the Burren are stunning. Land access is strictly from the WNW, which is a long way by breen from the nearest road. It may be possible to arrive on foot from the NE at LW springs. Oyster farming is carried out intensively in the sheltered bay to the NE. Access from the Nimmo quay at 360-181, called locally Lynch's Quay.

Inishcorra is a working farm area, not to be disturbed unnecessarily. Access on foot is from Tawin East to the NW at HW. Signs hereabouts refuse permission for the hunting of hares, and trespassing generally.

The strip of land projecting W on the S side that with the Tawins on the N side encloses the Inishcorra Bay area is called Glasheen Island. It is best known for the wreck of the *Pamela* that came ashore here without loss of life.

Tawin East is really a part of the road to Tawin West that happens to have a bridge at each end. It is otherwise undistinguishable from mainland. Tides flow extremely forcefully under the bridge on the E side. This area is popular for kayak training.

The school and houses on Tawin West are close to the Tawin East bridge. Further west the land is barer, and sheep graze, some cattle too. There is a swimming beach on the N side at M305-195. Periwinkles grow in industrial quantities around the W end

History

Eamon deValera met his wife Sinead here in 1911 when he was running an Irish summer college in the local national school. Jack B. Yeats painted here, and photography opportunities abound. It is a noted birding spot.

Circumnavigation

The island is at the head of a useful round trip with a simple shuttle between put in and out points. Start or finish on the N side at Oranmore Sailing Club at the small Rinville pier (one

of Nimmo's) at M355-219 on sheet 46, well signposted from Oranmore village. On the S side, on Sheet 52, try the pier called locally Lynch's Quay, 6km WSW of Clarinbridge at M360-181 where there is good parking, or at HW, and for the easier shuttle, try a quay at M407-197 just W outside of Clarinbridge.

This provides a trip of 18km or so. Sheets 45,46 and 51 are needed. There are nice west-going races on the lower ebb off Mweenish Point at M354-175, Sheet 52 (the E point of Mweenish Island) in the S. There are also races off St. Brendan's Island at M326-213, sheet 46 in the N. Under normal winds, the trip is probably best done S to N. There are plenty of convenient escape points.

There are splendid views of the nearby Galway City from the island. Visit Island Eddy village en route.

Rabbit Island

M327-242 Sheet 46

Understudy to the nearby Hare Island (the pair are called the Leverets), Rabbit is cut off from the mainland at all points of the tide. It is a small low-lying overgrown unattractive lump, given over to cormorant, Sea Radish, and nettles. It commands quite a large footprint at LW. Land on the W side of the NE tip onto stones as the rest of the shore is boulders.

Hare Island

M317-237 Sheet 45

A popular and attractive island about 1.5km SE of the entrance to Galway City docks and harbour. A causeway to the NE dries out for about 90 minutes either side of LW, joining the island to the mainland at Ballyloughan Point in the suburb of Renmore, beside a camping and caravan park. There, a municipal sign warns that access to the island is prohibited in the interests of public safety. Apparently the unwary get trapped there overnight from time to time, frightened by the strength of the flow crossing the causeway when the water levels rise more quickly than expected. The sign seems to attract more traffic than it prevents, and certainly, groups can routinely be seen waiting on the dropping tide for the causeway to appear, then smartly setting out. The discerning kayaker will visit at HW.

The island is a raised green field on the W side, rising from the middle, with steep mud and grass cliffs around the higher parts. The field features mainly ragweed and elder, with some brambles. Rabbits abound. No stock was seen August 2008 but a small construction suggests there must be at times.

A lagoon flanked by a grass covered raised stoney perimeter comprises the E side. The lagoon drains NE on the E side of the causeway. It never empties much really, but it is renewed at each HW and is fresh looking and clear. There is a small wreck on the ENE shore. Herring Gull roost and appear to breed.

Embarkation

The suburb of Renmore boasts a paying camping and caravan park at M324-247, a nice beach, and some parking on the very limits of Galway city. East of the point is green fields. Launch from immediately outside the campsite M323-247. Land on a sheltered stony beach on the N said just W of the causeway, where the swimming is better on lower tide levels.

Tides

The beach on the western or city side of the point dries for quite a long way so do time your excursion well. HW as Galway.

Causeway to Hare Island		
Direction	Start Time	End Time
E	4:00 before Galway HW	Galway HW
W	Galway HW	4:00 after Galway HW

The causeway may be portaged in between times.

Leveret Light in the shallow water of the SW tip is a significant navigation marker marking the E side of the approaches to Galway port. Mutton Island marks the W side.

Mutton Island

M297-233 Sheet 45

Situated 1km immediately S of the entrance to Galway City docks and harbour at the Claddagh. The main pier at Galway is the only one to be named after its designer – Alexander Nimmo, the great maritime engineer of the early 19th Century. No other one man changed the face of the west of Ireland more than he, ever. In the aftermath of the famine of 1821, the official response was to build up the infrastructure of western Ireland, which then lagged behind the rest of the United Kingdom, of which it was then part. He is responsible for 40 piers altogether between Waterford and Sligo, besides all the roadways we now call the national primary roads in the entire area from Clare to Mayo. A practical visionary, he forced the official hand to keep building after the immediate effects of the famine had dissipated. The results of his efforts made similar efforts in the great famine of the 1840s the more effective.

A non-portageable causeway has joined Mutton to the mainland since 2000. The causeway facilitates a new sewerage treatment plant for the city, the location chosen in controversial circumstances in spite of protests from conservationists. Mutton is useful more as a pitstop than as a waystop. The whole island is taken over by the sewerage works, except for a small swampy portion on the eastern side. Land anywhere on the eastern side. Camping is forbidden... it would be very unattractive anyway.

All Galway bound traffic keeps E of the island, and be careful at night. The low tower on the southern side is no longer a lighthouse.

Aran Islands

Sheet 51

The Aran Islands are an experience unlike anything else in Ireland, the maritime Burren, ruggedly beautiful. Inisheer on the Clare side is the smallest, the prettiest, and the most accessible. Inishmaan in the middle is the most traditional and remote, yet very progressive. Inishmore is the largest, the most dramatic, almost mainlandlike, such is its popularity, at least by day. The vast majority of tourism to the Aran Islands is day-tripping, overnights the minority. Inishmore can be accessed by air or ferry from Galway City, but most people head out by smaller craft from villages on the Clare or Galway coasts, Doolin or Rossaveal.

Embarkation - Clare side

Doolin in County Clare is the obvious embarkation place on the Clare side. Keep N of Crab Island at the harbour mouth, as the S side enjoys a world renowned reef surfwave. Inisheer is 8km WNW. There is no other embarkation point hereabouts, with cliffs for many kilometres either side.

Embarkation - Galway side

Passenger ferries go from Rossaveal. There is no one obvious embarkation point for kayaks on the Galway side for Inishmore. Set out from anywhere convenient on the Connemara coast, probably around Lettermullan or Carraroe. Departure from the island N to the mainland requires care in identifying the landing spot, as the mainland coast is low-lying and rocky. The islands off the Connemara coast tend to merge with the mainland background. The best navigational markers are the obvious open Greatman's Bay to the east and the signal tower on Golam Head and the small, automated lighthouse on Croaghnaकेela more westerly.

Tides

Local HW/LW is the same as Galway. The flooding tide fills Galway Bay through the four sounds around the Aran Islands.

Aran Islands		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	5:20 before Galway HW	Various
Out	1:05 after Galway HW	Various

The direction of the flood is northeast through the sounds either side of Inishmaan, NNE on the Clare side and east on the Galway side. Ebb tide timings and directions are the reverse in all cases.

Western (Dun Aengus) cliffs of Aranmore		
Direction	Time	Speed
NW	3:20 before Galway HW	1kn
SE	3:05 after Galway HW	1kn

Tidal streams northwest and southeast of the group, off the Galway and Clare coasts, are weak. South Sound between Inisheer and the County Clare mainland achieves only 1kn in springs and North Sound between Inishmore and the mainland even less, 0.5kn.

Streams in the middle two sounds east and west of Inishmaan are much stronger. Be careful of both central sounds with wind against tide, which occurs mostly on the ebb as prevailing winds are from the southwest. The stream between Inishmaan and Inishmore, called Gregory's Sound, reaches 1.5kn in springs. Also, being surrounded by cliffs, quite a sea state rises in Gregory's Sound. In westerly winds, a sea state occurs when the swell claps against the cliffs on the southwest of Inishmaan. The stream between Inishmaan and Inisheer, called Foul Sound, also reaches 1.5kn in springs, but lacks the reputation of Gregory's Sound, there being no cliffs.

Inisheer - *Inis Oírr*

L982-028 Sheet 51

Population 300. On Inisheer there are provisions, pubs, music, hostel, airport, ferry, B&Bs, castles, ring forts, pretty scenery, nice walks, and has antiquities by the score. Saint Caban's Church is now practically engulfed in sand. On 14 June each year the sand is cleared away and the islanders pray through the night by candle-light. Altogether a most attractive island. Irish (and English) speaking.

Landings

The main landing place is at a NNE facing beach, midway on the NNE side, which may dump. Otherwise, try at the pier at the W end of the beach, where the ferry comes in. There is a paying campsite behind the beach.

L992-016 Trá Caorach, just W of the eastern point of the island, is a sandy beach.

Nearby is the landmark wreck, the Plassey, rusting away above the HW mark since 1960.

L978-007 There is a quay, just NW of the lighthouse, by a slipway.

Inishmaan - *Inis Meáin*

L946-046 Sheet 51

Population 200. The island has an airport, ferry, provisions, B&B, pub, chipper and general facilities. An attractive island, almost exclusively Irish speaking. Note Dun Connor (*Dún Chonchúir*), which is one of the finest, complete ring forts in existence, oval in shape. The church was built in 1939 has an altar made by stonemason James Pearse, father of Patrick Pearse, 1916 Rising leader. Rock climbing on Inishmaan has developed since about 2001.

Landings and Camping

L946-046 The main landing spot is at Cora (*An Córa*), at the pier, or the beach nearby just NE for camping.

L954-060 At the NE corner, along the beautiful beach called Sandhead (*Ceann Gainimh*), but which dumps. Be careful not to disturb nesting Terns in spring and early summer. No water.

L943-067 Pier at E end of bay on N called *An Caladh Mór*, but there is a long carry at LW. No water. Findable in darkness.

L934-067 Better for the NW end of the island, there is a small pier and slipway, called *Port na Cora*. The carry is manageable at LW, there is convenient camping, and there is good water in a well nearby, up the boreen. This is also the best jumping off point for Inishmore. Difficult to find in darkness.

Inishmore - *Inis Mór*

L885-088 Sheet 51

Population 900. Inishmore is the largest and most westerly of the three main islands. It has several small off-liers, dealt with here as a group. With its airport and all-weather ferry from Galway City, Inishmore, especially around the town Kilronan, has a very 'mainland' feel to it.

Landings

L883-088 Kilronan pier (*Cill Rónáin*), for all mainland type facilities.

L888-073 Killeany (*Cill Éinne*) pier, by Nimmo, near the airport. Remote.

L828-105 Kilmurvey (*Cill Mhuirbhigh*), W of centre on the northern side, has a sheltered sandy beach. The best campsite is on a grassy area on the western side of the bay, just N of the beach. This is just the other side of a pier, where there is an easy rocky landing, and good water in a well. This is the obvious departure point on passage NW.

L777-116 Bungowla (*Bun Gabhla*), a sheltered pier and slip, facing across the sound to the Brannock Islands at the W end of the island. Sheltered slipway, manageable camping, water. This is the jumping off point for the navigation of the Dun Aengus cliffs, the unbroken 15km line of cliffs of the SSW side of Inishmore.

Dun Aengus cliffs

This passage is a major challenge for kayakers. What makes it different is that it is never ever done with an empty kayak in a “day trip”, as are all other big trips, even the biggest. It takes an excursion to get into position at one end or the other, for most people anyway, and a day at the other end to get home again. Both ends are austere places, so that means camping and that means heavy boats. The excursion is not to be rushed, but enjoyed, in flat calm or NE winds. There aren't the usual caves or much in the way of reefs, but the scenery is stunning every inch of the way. The highest cliffs are under Dun Aengus itself, suggesting a E/W traverse, but it seems it is mostly done the other way. Rounding the tip from Bungowla is an instantaneous thrill, the speed of the change unequalled elsewhere.

L831-092 In exceptionally calm conditions, in someone else's empty plastic boat, or in extreme distress, there is the possibility of a landing just west of the mid• point on the SSW coast. This is near Kilmurvey under Gortnagapple (*Gort na gCapall*), 1.5km E of Dun Aengus. A sloping natural slipway lies at *Port Bhéal an Dúin* on the right hand side of the easterly of two bays, where the cliffs are lowest of all. Rumour has it that this place is very occasionally used by currachs. This is the slipway made famous in the classic film ‘Man of Aran’. Otherwise, these cliffs are 14km of lee shore.

L824-093 **Worm Hole.** *Poll na bPéist* is an extraordinary feature, being a rectangular hole in the suspended sea-level platform below the cliff, so straight and true it might have been machine tooled. Reachable on foot along the shelf from the Gort na gCapaill side. The cliffs above it are about 15m at this point, and the World High Diving Championships were held here in 2013. Brendan Walsh the father of your author dived the hole from the cliff top in 1935.

L904-067 **Portdeha.** A fine sandy beach protected by high dunes on S/W side. Exposed to SE winds which may cause it to surf. An attractive spot and well positioned for any run down the Dun Aengus cliffs from E or W.

No water found. Camping would be a struggle, having to carry gear up the beach and over high dunes behind, besides then finding spots amongst tough marram grass. Certainly possible but areas of much easier camping abound.

L882-104 **Mooltia.** *Trá na mBualtie.* Well sheltered sandy beach on the north coast, very private yet a handy stroll into Kilronan. Camping but no water. Probably the best option for camping on the north side.

Mega-Clasts

Clasts are any particles of solid rock broken down by erosion and deposited in a new setting. Mega-clasts are huge such clasts. Recorded in numerous other localities along the W Scottish and Irish seaboard, nowhere are mega-clasts as obvious as on the barren karst of Inismore. What could be powerful enough to lift huge angular / isolated sections of wave-cut platform weighing up to 2.5 tonnes and catapult them 50m upwards and leave them stranded in linear heaps 50m inboard of the cliff top? Recent research has produced two theories. These mega-clasts may be the result of “recent” tsunamis in the North Atlantic, say the last 1,000 years, estimated from the degree of weathering. These tsunamis are often set off by submarine landslides in Volcanic archipelagos such as the Azores. Alternatively, or maybe as well, a recent theory, developed in nearby Galway University, suggests mega-clasts have been brought about by “freak” storm waves. Conventional ideas on the size of storm waves are shifting due to reams of data gathered by worldwide tsunami alert buoy systems, as well as data from offshore rigs, in ultra deepwater 1500m+. If huge freak waves are actually high

frequency events, this would have significant implications for ship design and maritime insurance. Freak waves are finding growing acceptance amongst the scientific community.

Rock Island/Eeragh Island

An t-Oileán Iatharach

L759-122 Sheet 51

The more W of the two Brannock Islands. Landing is very difficult at the quay at the SE as it is subject to W / SW swells. Indeed it is marked on Tim Robinson's map as hardly deserving of the name of 'quay'. Robinson hopped off a curragh here, but landing a kayak would be ambitious. In calm seas, landing is possible on some rocky ledges further up the E side of the island. At the N end of the E side, there is a very small rocky beach, with some boulders, where there is another landing at LW to mid-tide. Camping is OK; there is no soil, but there is plenty of flat rock on the path to the lighthouse.

The lighthouse sequence is FL 15s, 35m, 23M (one flash every 15 seconds, the light is 35 metres high and is visible for 23 miles). It was first established in December 1857 and was automated 1978. No water was found but a herd of goats survive, so there must be somewhere. In an emergency the Irish Lights tanks might be accessible. Lots of limestone, but very little else aside from the lighthouse and a wreck.

Brannock Island

Oileán Dá Bhranóg

L767-118 Sheet 51

The more E of the Brannock Islands. Minutes from Bungowla on Inishmore, this is a much more pleasant camping place, very private. There is room for many tents, on reasonably good camping ground. Lots of driftwood for campfires. Fair Pollack fishing in the landing bay.

The landing is easy onto a stony beach in a bay (*An Caladh*) on the S side, sheltered by two large flat offliers. No houses and no water supply.

Donkies, seals, gulls, goats.

Note that the following information is received second-hand, and may not be relied upon as fully as elsewhere. It was researched from Tim Robinson's 'Stones of Aran'. He says the 'most magnificent piece of Aran's cliff-architecture' - a sea cave with pillars and holes in the roof - is on the E side. Not yet found by modern kayakers.

Straw Island - *Oileán na Tuí*

L909-085 Sheet 51

Straw Island, at the mouth of Killeany Bay (*Cuan Cill Éinne*), is a good resting stop. Good easy landing onto shingle beaches all round except NW. No great merit. Major lighthouse (11 m. high) which flashes twice every 5 seconds.

Connemara South

Conamara Theas

Galway City to Slyne Head

Cathair na Gaillimhe go Ceann Léime

County Galway

Co. na Gaillimhe

This section deals with the coastline from Rossaveel to Slyne Head. There are no islands, and no information available as to the coastline W of Galway City to Rossaveel. For convenience, the section is divided into its eastern and western halves. The eastern section is centred around Gorumna Island (Kilkieran Bay/Greatman's Bay - *Cuan Chill Chiaráin/Cuan an Fhir Mhóir*), and Bertraghboy Bay - *Cuan na Beirtrí Buí* is in the W.

The E section is further divided into three sections: Greatman's Bay, the islands around Lettermullan Island between the entrances to Greatman's Bay and Kilkieran Bay, and Kilkieran Bay itself.

Historical Context

The very first roads, bridges and piers among the bays and waters of Connemara – *Conamara* were constructed under the engineer Nimmo after the 1821 famine. There was no fully functioning road transport system until the late 1800s. Well into the early 1900s, wooden sailing boats, Connemara Hookers, were the workhorses of these waterways. Hookers were a dominant feature of the Conamara landscape. They ferried goods - tea, sugar, flour and tobacco to small shops in outlying communities on the many inshore islands, and even transported turf to the Aran Islands.

Before 1900, the region was among the poorest in Ireland. It was a harsh landscape. With hard labour, people were reasonably self-sufficient. They provided food and support for their families from farming, kelp gathering, fishing and trades. But there were groups who were very poor. Old people, widows with young children, or men with families and no land, all were vulnerable. Some years there was a poor harvest in fishing or potato.

The Congested Districts Board was set up in the 1880s to develop infrastructural schemes, which helped to alleviate such poverty. A huge number of men were employed in building roads, causeways and bridges. The Board achieved more under British administration than would be achieved in the years immediately after Irish independence. The causeways and bridges which joined the islands to the mainland, and between the islands of Lettermullan - *Leitir Mealláin*, Gorumna - *Oileán Gharmana* and Annaghvaan - *Eanach Mheáin*, were built in the years between 1886 and 1891. Many roads in the Carna area were built then also. Men earned one shilling (about 6 cent) a day. 900 were working on these schemes from *Ceantar na n-Oileáin*, (*Leitir Móir* and *Leitir Mealláin*) which shows a huge reliance on these relief works to help families survive famine and high rents. About 1900, lace-making industries were set up to create income opportunities for women. It became a way for women to earn the price of a fare to America to escape from a life of poverty and hardship.

The population were tenants on the land. It was a struggle to keep their holdings and to survive. Landlords and their agents charged exorbitant rents. Those who could not pay their rent were evicted. It drove many people to emigrate. There were many schemes in America and Australia around 1900 looking for 'white healthy people' to occupy and inhabit the 'new countries'. It was the beginning of emigration on such a scale that it scourged the west of Ireland until about the 1970s. The emigrants' destination changed in the 1950s to England

where work was plentiful, due to the efforts to rebuild after World War 2. In 2013 emigration is again the scourge of all Ireland.

In the 1900s, all the islands in South Conamara were ravaged by poverty, emigration, and the hardships of making a living. This contrasted with how these same islands had previously provided people with food when many other parts of the country were starving. From the 1950s onwards, the final death knell for life on these islands came as people chose an easier lifestyle on the mainland. They preferred easier access to housing, electricity, health services, education for their children, and opportunities to work and earn money.

Who were the people who came to live on these offshore rocky islands? We are privileged to know mainly because of the Griffith's Valuation Survey. This was, ironically, a property tax survey that was carried out between the years 1847 and 1864. It involved a detailed valuation of every taxable piece of agricultural land or built property, to get an accurate estimate of the annual income it should produce. It listed names of occupiers, landlords, area and type of tenement. The names of the occupiers then and landowners today on *Inis Oirc* have not changed significantly, though there is the addition of one family. The survey was used as a basis for local taxation for 100 years up to the late 1970s, when residential property tax was abolished, but now in 2013 it is back.

Inis Oirc is one of six islands that form an archipelago of small islands on the outer western landmass of *Ceantar na n-Oilean, Conamara*. It is tucked away, a welcome haven, safe from the tides and turmoil of Golam Head. Five families lived on *Inis Oirc*. It is now abandoned. There were two families of Folans, two of Flahertys and one of McDonaghs. There were 40 children born to these families. They endured tragedy and loss with the deaths of some 11 children in infancy. Children went to school on the mainland at *Leitir Meallain*. They lived by farming and fishing. Everything the families needed for the houses was brought ashore in currachs and was made use of. As they grew older the children moved away and many settled on the mainland, while others emigrated to England and the USA. The last person left the island about 1984. Though the island is abandoned, the descendents of the people who left it still farm cattle there.

In 2013, the Down Survey of 1656-1658 was digitised by TCD and published on the *www*, another valuable insight into the past and the ultimate land grab of Irish history, between 1641 and 1670. This survey, the first of its kind in the world, was carried out after the Cromwellian Wars. It sought to measure all the land that the native Irish Clans would forfeit, to be redistributed to the mercenaries who fought for Cromwell. It was a survey which recorded townland boundaries and measured areas with great precision at a scale of 1:40 perches, almost equivalent to 1:50,000 today. It even put a value on remote islands that were difficult to land on, never mind remote mainland.

In 2004, Oileáin was reporting that the government was making substantial improvements to the infrastructure of islands, extending and deepening harbours, and especially installing mains water / electricity on small inhabited islands. Increasingly, many islands gained holiday homes. For a time the tide seemed to be turning, but maybe it is ebbing again. The current hard economic times will surely discourage continuing investment, and the return of the taxation of residential property is hardly incentivising.

These days, islands are a very attractive destination for paddlers and other tourists. Kayakers, whose goal whenever the opportunity arises, is to visit offshore islands and in particular

lesser visited islands, are in a unique position to explore the winds of change. Their questioning and awareness starts the moment they get out of their boats. Usually, their interest centres on how people have lived, - buildings, fields, field boundaries, paths, piers/landings, all the trails of their existence. Many of these inshore islands were inhabited until the not too distant past. When we shelter alongside the old walls of the people who have travelled these same bays before us, we should reflect on their lives and the drastic causes behind these settlement changes.

Greatman's Bay

Cuan an Fhir Mhóir

Greatman's Bay is the smallest of the three island strewn bays on the S-facing Galway coast. Greatman's is bounded by the Carraroe - *An Ceathrú Rua* peninsula to the E and Gorumna Island and Lettermore Island to the W. Bealadangan - *Béal an Daingin* at the N connects Greatman's Bay to Kilkieran Bay, for even quite large but unmasted vessels. Only the island free Cashla Bay - *Cuan Casla* just to the E is smaller among the great bays hereabouts. At this E end of the S *Conamara* coast, information is comparatively scant for the kayaker. This is so even though Carraroe is a famous tourist resort, and that Gorumna is Ireland's fifth biggest offshore island. Let the knowledgeable reader accept the challenge, and furnish information to put matters right.

Tides

Local HW in the furthest regions of the bay such as Bealadangan is about 1:00 after Galway HW, all much as one expects.

Greatman's Bay		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	5:00 before Galway HW	Various
Out	1:00 after Galway HW	Various

The tide floods north and east through the narrows, ebbing south and west. Greatman's Bay is much more open at its northern parts than is Kilkieran Bay, so the tide runs very strongly indeed through the remoter gaps. A flow of 4 - 5kn is reported at Bealadangan, but following this logic, much less may be expected at Kiggaul Bay - *Cuan Choigéil* where Gorumna meets Lettermullan to the west.

As with other bays hereabouts, beware when navigating in the narrow places on a falling tide. One mistake and the kayak can be grounded, necessitating a long wait, or a muddy session dragging the boat over seaweed covered rocks in search of open water.

Camus Bay - *Cuan Chamuis*

Camus Bay - *Cuan Chamuis* is the innermost bay among the myriad of islands at the head of Greatman's Bay and Kilkieran Bay. The two bays are joined in places between the islands. Camus Bay is distinctive in that one can meet the tide ebbing from Camus Bay into Kilkieran Bay even as it floods into Camus Bay from Greatman's Bay. This is due to the narrows that occur at L947-340 E of *Cladhnach* - Clynagh Island (off *Rosmuc*) further up the bay.

Embarkation

Two embarkation points face each other across the narrowest point of the bay

- at *Rosmuc* L933-358 on the W side, newly reconstructed in concrete, and

- at *Camus Uachtar* L935-358 on the E side, unreconstructed.

Parking is non-existent on the E side and tolerable on the W side.

Tides

- Tides ebb and flow strongly through the bay.
- Overfalls occur NE of Clynagh at L947-340
- Tides flow strongly through the narrows between the two embarkation points around Dunmanus Island.
- Tides ebb W/E between Inisheltia / Clynagh and flood E/W.

Dunmanus Island

L934-358 Sheet 45

This small island lies between the two embarkation points in this part of the bay. Indeed it is part of their story. A road was planned from one side of the bay to the other across the narrows hereabouts, and there remains visible evidence on the island. The remains of a strong wall / road is to be seen on this pleasant island, otherwise unremarkable except for sheep and mallard.

Local lore insists that building this bridge will mean the end of the world.

Inisheltia - *Inis Aillte*

L934-347 Sheet 45

A large islet, formerly farmed from what is now a pretty ruined farmhouse at the landing place on the W side. Land below the ruined cottage. Now much given over to furze and bog, there is still camping near the cottage. Rowan and Sallies.

Clynagh Island – *An Cladhnach*

L941-342 Sheet 45

Large islet, formerly farmed, no farmhouse found. Land as wished.

Bog. Furze. Deep turf. Water was found in a boggy stream flowing into the deep cut on the N side L940-340. Camping is possible on the E side of the cut.

A path dissects the island E/W midway N/S. It is roughest at the E end, to the point of impassibility.

There are a couple of areas to be careful of in Camus Bay.

Upper Camus Bay fills and empties through a very narrow neck at *Snámh Bó*, where there is a very strong fall on springs. This is at L935-360, near Dunmanus Island where roads come down to the shore on both sides. Local HW at the top of Camus Bay can be up to 3 hours after that on the mouth. Pillars mark the channel *Snámh Bó* down to *Béal an Daingean*.

The fastest flow is between Clynagh Island – *Oileáin Cladhnach* and Camus Eighter – *Camus Iochtair* to the east.

Turas kayak i gConamara

Lá deas gan mórán gaoithe a bhí ann, i Meitheamh, chuaigh muid amach siar ó thuaidh do Cheann Gholaim go dtí Carraig Iolra. Chuaigh muid i dtír ag spaisteoireacht. Bhí sé lán le faoileáin agus guillemots, neadracha agus éanacha óga.

Dúleac na Foiriúin. Chuaigh muid uaidh sin siar go Carraig na Meacain, áit a bhí lán le cailleachaí dubha agus éanachaí óga agus neadracha. Bhí Dún Gudail agus Scéird Mhór le feiceáil siar uainn ach ní shin é ár dtreo inniu. Tréis greim le n-ithe, thug muid cuairt ar na Foiriúin agus ár n-aghaidh soir aríst i dtreo Ceann Gholaim. Ar an mbealach ar ais dúinn

dhúin sé isteach ina cheo ach bhí mapa agus compás againn agus bhí muid gar do Cheann Golaim nuair a ghlan sé arís.

Chuaigh muid i dtír ar Cheann Gólaim agus fuair muid buideál plaisteach a raibh nóta agus broisiúr ann , gasúir scoile a chur i bhfarraige éi Roddington, Newfoundland, (Talamh an Éisc). Chuir muid litir chucu ach ní bhfuair muid aon fhreagra. Chuaigh muid suas thar Fraochoileán Mór ar a raibh caiple, idir Crapach agus Fraochoileán Beag chomh fada le Inis Eirc. Champáil muid ar an taobh shiar theas don oileán. Oileán shuimiúil é seo. Tá an t-oileán tréigthe óna seascaidí ach tá bail mhaith ar na tithe fós agus díon ar roinnt acu.

Larna mháireach bhí an la deas tirim ach bhí gaoithe láidir aniar aduath ann. Chuaigh muid suas ó thuaidhtaobh thoir do Inis Eirc agus idir Daighinis agus Foirinis. Bhí foscadh deas anseo againn agus Daighinis ag breathnú go hálainn. Ach bhí se ró luath le stopadh arís agus choinnigh muid orainn chomh fada leis an Oileán Iartharach áit a ndeacha muid i dtír le haghaidh an áit a fheiceál. Tá an t-oileán seo tréigthe óna caogaidí. Tá ballaí na dtithe fós ann. Bhí tobar ann ach tá sé fásta thimpeall air.

Chuaigh muid uaidh seo siar idir Bior Beag agus Bior Mór go dtí Inis Muscraí, nó Spike mar a thugtar air freisin agus as seo go hOileán na Lachan an áit a ndeacha an St Oiliver ar na carraigreacha droch thrathnóna le báisteach agus gála. Cailleadh an criú. Is beagnach carraig uilig an t-oileán seo agus tá poll uisce istigh ina lár agus chonaic mé cupla uair san samhradh é agus dath bándearg a bhí ar an uisce. Chuaigh muid uaidh seo go Maisean, ceann des na hoileáin is deise ar fud an chósta. Bhí scoil ar an oileán seo agus roinnt mhaith tithe agus talamh níos saibhre ná ar an mórthír. Bhí clocha maith ann le haghaidh tógál agus ceardaithe maith lena n-úsáid mar atá le feiceál sna tithe agus san gcéibh. Sé an trua go dtriomaíonn sé. Tá sean iarsmaí ann agus cill bheag.

Champáil muid anseo le haghaidh na hoíche agus tréis dinnéir bhí tine againn gar don trá, deoch fíon 7rl le n-ól agus cainnt agus comhrá agus ag baint sult as an saol go ndeachaigh muid a chodladh, thart ar meán oíche mar bhí lá eile romhainn amáireach. Tá sé mar cheann de rialacha ISKA gan do lorg a bheith fagtha i do dhiaidh agus sul a ndeachaigh muid chun farraige ar maidin ghlan muid suas áit na tine agus marach go raibh pictiúir againn di, ní bheadh fhios agat go raibh tine ariamh ann.

Thug muid a n-aghaidh siar go hOileán Mhic Dara. Ní fhéadfadh muid dhul abhaile gan é a fheiceál. Oileán deas a bhfuil stair ag baint leis, seipéal cloch agus iarsmaí eile. Shiúil muid timpeall an oileáin siar go dtí an taobh thiar don oileán áit ar a dtugtar maidhm (spout) an tairbh. Nuair a bhíonn an fharraige suaite agus an taoille ag an aoirde ceart briseann sé in airde san aer. Ar an mbealach ar ais dúinn chonaic muid húicéara ag teacht anoir agus in omós don nós atá ann leis na cianta, chrom sé na seolta ag dul thar an oileán.

Ag an am seo bhí sé in am againn na seolta a chrochadh mar bhí píosa maith le dhul againn. Ag an am seo bhí an ghaoithe aniar aneas agus thug muid a n-aghaidh soir le cóir na gaoithe. Nuair a bhí muid imithe thar pointe na hÁirde Móire níor airigh muid go raibh muid soir ó dheas do Inis Treabhair áit a ndeachaigh muid i dtír. Bhí greim le nithe againn agus comhrá le Patsy Lydon, fear a bhfuil fáilte i gcónaí aige romhainn agus am aige labhairt linn. D'fhág muid slán ag Patsy agus choinnigh muid orainn suas Dún Manus, go ceann scríbe Camus na Foirnéise.

Gorumna Island - Oileán Gharmna

The grid reference is for Maimin Quay - *Céibh an Mháimín* (one of Nimmo's) in the NE, just left of the road as one drives onto the island from Lettermore. This quay does not dry out as much as other local quays that are convenient for exploring the bay. Much of the island is referred to locally as *Máimín* or Maumeen, and parts as *Tír an Fhia*. The island is very much in the heart of the Irish speaking *Gaeltacht* area.

There is a roadway along much of the NW side. The quays and bays of the S and E are more isolated from each other. A most attractive pub, *Tí Antaine Laoi*, in the SW at the Lettermullan Bridge serves excellent seafood. Tides flood N round both sides of the island meeting in a lagoon trapped between it and Lettermore.

Illaunnownim - *Oileán an Anama*

L870-206 Sheet 44

Means literally "Island of the Soul", or figuratively Live Island, as it would best be known locally. Lying off the S side of Gorumna, Illaunnownim, with its cairn, is a prominent navigation marker for passing boats.

It is sheep grazed and a pleasant island to visit or camp on, though no water was found.

Embarkation

Set out from a wonderfully remote but busy enough quay called *Cé Pholl UíMhuirinn* L868-210, found at the end of a long boreen, and this area generally feels about as remote as it gets. From the level modern hardstand, a small staircase (easily missed) leads down to a creek that dries for about 100m at LW, before it gives onto the open water. The sound inside the island is sandy, giving nice swimming.

Loughcarrick (means "Flat Stone") at L868-203 is really just a low lying rocky projection to the SW. One may walk between the two save at the highest HW.

Lettermore Island - *Leitir Móir*

L902-283 Sheet 44

Lettermore is a large, hilly island. The grid reference is for a quay in the SE, opposite Inishlay, just left of the road as one drives towards Gorumna. This quay does dry out at the bottom of a low tide but is otherwise very usable for exploring the bay. Good facilities may be had in shops by the Gorumna bridge at the SE. Tides meet in the lagoon W of the Gorumna bridge, which is navigable to kayaks at all times. Less navigable is the passage immediately NE of the island, as there are extensive drying areas.

Annaghvaan - *Eanach Mheáin*

L912-299 Sheet 44

Essentially the road bridge to Lettermore and Gorumna, the road passing along its SE side, Annaghvaan has its own community of its own people on its low lying terrain.

Tides

The passage immediately S of the island (SW to Lettermore) has extensive drying areas at LW. Bealadangan pass to the SE may be a better bet, but watch the strength of the current.

Inishlay - *Inis Léith*

L906-276 Sheet 44

A small, low, wet island, with cows, sheep, larks, mergansers, ferns, gorse, rushes, bog pools and an indented, inconvenient, rocky shore everywhere. Camp is possible but unattractive just about anywhere.

Eragh Island

An tOileán Iarthach Theas

L913-264 Sheet 44

Drier than Inishlay, with a more open feel, and good views N to the mountains. Goats. Camp on grass at NW.

Inchamakinna

Inis Mhic Cionaith

L921-263 Sheet 44/Sheet 45

This is the largest and most attractively varied of the islands hereabouts. There are both deciduous and coniferous trees. Houses, some of which are being restored are on the eastern side. Of these, the most southerly is the nicest in a lovely open spot. Tidal peat, bog oak and cows. Landing anywhere requires a carry except at HW. Camp by the houses if they're unoccupied.

Lettermullan Island Group

The next ten or so islands are centred on, and are mostly accessed from, Lettermullan Island - *Leitir Mealláin*, on the E side of and somewhat outside the entrance to Kilkieran Bay.

Tides

Lettermullan		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	5:20 before Galway HW	Various
Out	1:05 after Galway HW	Various

The flow achieves 1.5kn at the entrance between Ardmore Point at L818-283 and Illauneeragh - *An tOileán Iatharach* at L838-273. 2kn is achieved inside the bay between North Island - *An tOileán O Thuaidh* and the mainland, just ENE of Kilkieran. In either location when the wind is against the ebb, quite a race forms.

Lettermullan Island - *Leitir Mealláin*

L826-215 Sheet 44

A sprawling 'mainland', island on the eastern side of the entrance to the main part of the bay. Lettermullan Island is central to more than half a dozen off-lyers on its W, NW and N. To the W, Golam - *Gólam*, Freaghillaun More - *Fraochoileán Mór* and Freaghillaun Beg - *Fraochoileán Beag* surround Crappagh - *An Chnapach*, which is itself attached to Lettermullan by an unmarked causeway/bridge of recent construction. Beware of the passage inside Crappagh at very LW.

To the NW and N, Inisherik - *Inis Eirc*, Dinish - *Daighinis* and Illauncosheen (Illauncasheen locally) - *Oileán Chaisín* surround Furnace - *Fornais*, which is similarly attached to - Lettermullan.

Lettermullan is joined on the E to Gorumna Island (and eventually to the mainland) by road bridges to the NE. The bridge between Lettermullan and Gorumna is passable with ease only at very HW but circumnavigators can get through all these gaps with effort at all stages. The gap between Crappagh and Lettermullan has extensive shallows and may be more difficult. Beware when navigating hereabouts on lower or dropping tides. Tides flow strongly, ebbing S or W through the narrows. Beside the Lettermullan/Gorumna bridge, on the Gorumna side, is a pub that serves good seafood.

The northern shore has nothing interesting. The eastern shore has a number of working quays. The southern shore has a beautiful bay E of centre at L843-216, inside Dog Island - *Oileán an Mhadra*, and a wild, westerly section off which clapotis will always be present.

Camping

Camping for the tourer may be conveniently had at L826-215 on the remote commonage at the SW tip. This is just inside and opposite the signal tower at Golam Head on Golam Island, at the eastern side of a sheltered N-facing bay. The bay is created by Golam Island, which is not totally cut off.

Dog Island - *Oileán an Mhadra*

L846-212 Sheet 44

A small island, about 500m off Lettermullan, Dog Island marks the whereabouts (on circumnavigation) of a beautiful, small beach on the southern side of Lettermullan. Smooth and rounded glacier-scoured, grass-topped rock, which could just about be camped on. Land on the sheltered, rocky, inter-tidal area on the N side at the storm beach.

Golam Island - *Gólam*

L819-214 Sheet 44

Wonderful cattle-grazed, remote, and somewhat short-grassed island, SW of Lettermullan. Camp at the shingle beach by the landing, midway along the E side, facing the WW2 watch-house and main camping site on Lettermullan. Huge 19th Century signal tower forms the major landmark hereabouts. Very much recommended. Marked 95' on half inch OS map. There is a race on ebb on northern side into a westerly wind.

In fact, Golam Island is accessible on foot from Lettermullan, certainly in wellingtons, for some at least of the lower part of the tide. Golam Head - *Ceann Gólaim* at L817-214 is on Golam Island. Its elevated signal tower is a most prominent feature, which may be used as a visual navigational aid for many kilometres. The land hereabouts in South *Conamara* is otherwise low, confusing and difficult to identify, especially from seaward. This is the spot from which to embark for Inishmore on the Aran Islands, especially if heading for Bungowla at the western tip. More importantly though, coming from Aran, Golam Head is one of the few easily identifiable spots on the coast hereabouts (but in this context see also Croaghnaकेela Island).

Eagle Rock - *Carraig Iolar*

L802-218 Sheet 44

Eagle Rock is an attractive low lying rocky island of granite slabs, glaciated boulders and boulder strewn hollows. The island is difficult in places to walk around but nevertheless good to explore. Camping is possible but level areas not easy to find and may be best on a sandy beach at the NE corner. Landing is easiest at HW into an attractive small bay at the NE side, otherwise onto rock slabs and a boulder beach at same location. The bay is shallow, has a sandy bottom in places, and big kelp beds. Views are excellent all round and the island makes for a good lunch spot or place for a swim. A Salmon Fish farm is located N of Eagle Rock. No water found.

Breeding GBB Gull, Herring Gull & Oystercatcher. Turnstone 20, Dunlin 1 and Grey Seal 2 (August 2009).

Redflag Island - *Leac Dearg*

L801-224 Sheet 44

Redflag Island, as its name suggests, consists of low lying rounded and shelving granite slabs, which are punctuated by interesting rock pools and small patches of vegetation on the higher slabs. Distinctive shaped granite boulder on southern side. It is worth a stopover to explore and landing is easiest onto obvious sloping slabs on E side in a sheltered bay area. No camping and no water found. Oystercatcher 40 seen August 2009 and both GBB Gull & Herring Gull breed.

Fish Rock - *Maol an Eisc*

Grid Reference: 796-220 Sheet 44

A low lying rocky outlier to both Eagle Rock and Redflag Island. Land in a narrow cut on NE corner, probably best at HW. Fine collection of rock pools adds interest and swimming possibilities. Good fishing.

Freaghillaunmore - *Fraochoileán Mór*

L823-225 Sheet 44

Granite 'roches moutonnées', and boulders. 'Roches moutonnées' means 'scoured or scraped rocks'. Geologists can tell which way glaciers moved from the scrapes. Horses grazing. There is a very remote feel to this island. Pleasant. Marked 60' on half-inch OS map. There is a race on the ebb on the southern side into W wind. It can be camped on, just. Land easiest onto sand at sheltered north-eastern tip.

Freaghillaun Beg - *Fraochoileán Beag*

L825-227 Sheet 44

Granite 'roches moutonnées', and boulders. Horses grazing. Very pleasant. Land easiest onto sand at sheltered E side between it and Crappagh, where beaches form to either side of the almost drying gap. Marked 51' on half-inch OS map. In 2007 there was limited grazing which meant a beautiful profusion of wild flowers in August.

Crappagh - *An Chnapach*

L831-227 Sheet 44

The summit is marked as 62' on the half-inch OS map and 16m on the 1:50,000. The 'almost an island' is actually attached to Lettermullan by an unmarked causeway/bridge of recent construction on its E side, built across an extensive area of flats. The tide ebbs S. Be wary at LW. Cattle and an unusual house at E side.

Inisherik - *Inis Eirc*

L832-233 Sheet 44

Inisherik possesses a truly eye-catching feature. A small abandoned cluster of houses is built at the SE corner. These are built right down to the HW mark onto scoured and rounded 'roches moutonnées', with a natural 'pier'. The 'village' is reminiscent of similar developments much, much further N in Norway and Greenland where they also build right down to or over the HW mark.

Land onto slabs at the pier by the houses.

Camp between these houses and the narrows to the S. Alternatively, for the oceanic feel, try

- the sandy beach on the S side of the western tip at L826-234 or
- the corresponding storm beach N of this tip at L826-234 if conditions insist, or
- a good sandy beach on N side L827-237.

In 2007 there was limited grazing which meant a beautiful profusion of wild flowers in August.

Furnace - *Fornais*

L834-234 Sheet 44

Furnace is attached to Lettermullan by a bridge, the water underneath which is passable at the higher stages of the tide (which ebbs W). A pier at L834-234 at the SW of the island forms a good base for paddling hereabouts. A flat grassy area at the N tip would provide good camping but the welcome is most uncertain, especially if accessed by road, as all the 'Private' signs face this way. The E side has several working piers of little interest save as waystops. The gap inside Illauncosheen is barely passable, even to a kayak, at LW.

Dinish - *Daighinis*

L830-254 Sheet 44

Mains electricity is connected to the few inhabited, probably holiday houses on the eastern and northern sides of this beautiful island. Two lovely sandy bays open onto the narrows opposite Furnace. The best beach of all is the E-facing, crescent-shaped beach at L830-254, tucked inside the northern tip of the island. It is backed by machair for camping in comfort, and the single house thereabouts even boasts its own pontoon-landing device. There appears to be mains water at the house.

Illaucasheen - *Oileán an Chaisín*

L841-243 Sheet 44

Known as Illaucasheen locally, but Illauncosheen on the OS map, this little island is situated in Casheen Bay - *Cuan Chaisín*. Ungrazed save by a single donkey, this is a small, unattractive island off the eastern side of Furnace. It provides shelter for the fleet of working boats operating from the pier opposite. Camping is theoretically possible at southern end.

Kilkieran Bay

Cuan Chill Chiaráin

The bay N of Lettermore Island is mostly very shallow, giving paddling which varies greatly with the level of the tide. At HW, there are quite a few small islands, some inhabited, some not, and all with reasonably straightforward landings. As the tide falls, the flow between the islands increases and the channels all narrow. Some of the streams reach 3kn, and then the channels dry up, so that the whole area is seaweed-covered rocks and islets. Many of the islets then become linked at lower tides. The area is heavily dredged by fishermen for oysters and bladder-wrack seaweed. The seaweed is collected and taken away in trucks to be processed into iodine and fertiliser. There is also salmon farming.

The local wildlife is spectacular with large numbers of seals, some of which are inquisitive, and otters, which quite definitely are not. Also, there are birds, Common, Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gull, and large numbers of Red Breasted Merganser. Worth visiting in its own right, the area is particularly attractive as a fallback in time of windy weather. Its combination of races and shelter can combine to give more fun than open ocean water.

Embarkation

From the W side, suitable for the middle section of the bay, put in is easiest at the harbour at Kilkieran L846-315 itself, where there is good parking. Kilkieran also boasts good provisions and a pub. Smaller groups may prefer pretty Ardmore Quay L817-293 for the S end of the bay, where there is limited parking requiring courtesy. Further N, the inner bay is easiest accessed from a smaller working quay at Flannery's bridge in a deep inlet at L867-354.

Opportunities to put in on the E side of the bay are far too numerous to list and the choice will depend on the group and its itinerary.

Tides

Kilkieran Bay		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	5:20 before Galway HW	Various
Out	1:05 after Galway HW	Various

The tide flows at 1.5kn at the entrance between Ardmore Point at L818-283 and Illauneeragh at L838-273. It gets up to 2kn between North Island and the mainland, just northeast of Kilkieran. With wind over tide (usually on the ebb), a race forms.

llaunmaan – *Oileán Meana*

L827-276 Sheet 44

Small, low-lying rocky island with grassy top lying mid-way between Ardmore Point and Illauneeragh. Landing at HW at NW into cove, and at lower waters in stony cove to N. Grazed by sheep. Tides run strongly around the island. Small cairn on its highest point. Evidence of breeding Common and Lesser and Great Black backed Gull and roosting spot for Cormorant and Shags. Useful way-stop (even lunch point) for kayakers touring outer Kilkieran Bay. No water.

Illaneeragh - *An tOileán Iatharach*

L840-267 Sheet 44

Attractive heather and rock covered island at the eastern side of the mouth of Kilkieran Bay. The main landing is on a beautiful sandy beach on the SW side among rocks, just NW of S tip. Good camping on grass behind beach, near conspicuous ruined houses. Beaches also E of S tip. There is an interesting, narrow gorge which is passable at HW, between this and a small island to the E. Note the former ford/bridge. No water found, except in surface water pools.

Inishbarra - *Inis Bearacháin*

L860-268 Sheet 44

An attractive, high, rocky and heather covered island, E of the mouth of Kilkieran Bay. One householder lives there, who is a noted builder and sailor of traditional craft. The main landing place is at the newly improved but very untidy pier in bay on the northern side. It is also easy to land elsewhere. There is an interesting, very low water, artificial causeway to the mainland via several islets to the SE, but do not regard this as a tidal island. Worth a visit.

The western part of the passage between Gorumna and Lettermore is easily passable at HW only, but sets up an interesting marine waterfall on the ebb, and then dries.

There are beaches all along the S curve of the island, with camping by ruins on the W side of the S tip. A lovely harbour at the WNW is accessible at the top half of the tide.

A network of boreens makes exploration easy, and the ground is manageable. Admire the flat topped national school, 1934, most unusual.

Cow Island

L865-259 Sheet 44

Almost attached to SE Inishbarra, grazed with donkies, but flat and uninteresting to the casual passerby. Cow was cared for once but has been let go. The pass inside Barra is “The Pass” to the N and “Bóthar na nOileán” or the Island Road to the S.

Big Island

L869-263 Sheet 44

Big is a low lying island fringed at low water by a dense network of confusing outlying reefs and islets, demanding attention to map or chart. The island is a series of rough knolls, hollows, glacial erratics, and wet marshes some with several fresh water ponds. It been seriously let go, barely grazed by cattle, and it is rough, with ferns, heather and gorse, especially gorse.

Landings are possible all around the island but beware very soft mud in the obvious bays at LW. The reefs and islets dry sufficiently to link up with Na Rua Oileain to the S, and the suspicion is that this is the route way by which cattle are driven on to graze the island.

A large glacial erratic on the N side marks what would appear to be a good HW landing and a good camping spot on a sheltered ledge.

Evidence of Otter. Common Seal. Teal, Mallard, Snipe and Black Guillemot noted in March 2008.

Puck Island

L866-266 Sheet 44

Puck has been totally let go altogether, gorse, ferns, heather. Little in the way of redeeming features.

The island is rock strewn with glacial erratics interspersed with small knolls, hollows and marshes. Several deep fresh water pools were located. A HW landing marked by distinctive stone bollard and iron stacks along the N side. Landing is onto obvious cut along the N edge, but is also possible at several other places along the S side. The “Pass” between it and Inishbarra almost dries and in particular, a rock ledge runs diagonally SW from Puck to almost close the gap. A series of small broken fields in the NW corner is the best camping.

Otter. There was some evidence of recent grazing by cattle in March 2008.

Illaunroe

L860-276 Sheet 44

Illaunroe has been totally let go altogether, gorse, ferns, heather. Few redeeming features.

Nice views from reasonable camping spot in NW corner. No water found. Otter and Common Seal.

Inchagaun *Inis an Ghainimh*

L855-285 Sheet 44

A large interesting island, in 2008 in the hands of an industrious farmer. A single modern house stands at the harbour in the mid-E side. Substantial stone walls modernly guard the shore and local tracks. A pontoon and electricity / water pump and heavy machinery suggest industry. A lovely slipway welcomes the kayaker. Goats, dogs, rabbits, ducks and geese suggest effort. Ask permission to linger here.

The N of the island is almost waisted. Nice beach in W cut of waist. A collection of ruined houses and associated pathways show this was always an island in which the occupiers took pride.

The island is manifestly a working farm and should be approached as such.

Redshank, Greenshank, Turnstone.

Kinnelly Islands

L860-314 Sheet 44

Very low lying, immediately off Kilkieran. Fragmented at HW, these islets are lightly grazed by insufficient sheep to do the job of keeping them clean enough to be attractive to the passerby. Nevertheless, camping is very possible.

Illaunakirka

L870-309 Sheet 44

Given by neglect to ferns and long grass. Fragmented at HW.

Inishtravin - *Inis Treabhair*

L893-312 Sheet 44

Waisted into almost two halves, there is a prominent water tower (disused) on W side summit. A fine pier is found on the N side of the waist, where there is also the remains of the schoolhouse. Houses are being done up, perhaps as holiday homes. A fine network of boreens make the island interesting to wander around.

This is an attractive, non-intensively farmed, sheltered, low, inhabited island in E-mid-Kilkieran Bay. Hay is cut by scythe and saved in haycocks.

There is a landing place with camping at a pier on the NE end, the more northerly of the two piers on the E side. There is excellent water in a well 100m up the breen behind the house at the pier. Otters.

An unusual feature is the ancient square bay cut into the old NE pier, intentionally, to house "cattle rafts". These flat square rafts can take a dozen cows, to be transported to another part of the island, or death, or whatever. They are still in use.

Only one voter inhabits this island permanently, a gentleman, of whom ask advice about camping or anything else, locally or internationally.

Inishlusk

L899-303 Sheet 44

Very large footprint of very rough grazing for cattle and horses, that makes camping unreasonable as well as unattractive, or at least barely good enough for purpose. Land to choice, perhaps easiest in SE.

Illaungurraig

L894-306 Sheet 44

Launch from Eanach Mheain pier to E at L901-306. Very small footprint especially at HW. Nice camping but no water. Nice feel.

Beaghy Islands - *Na Beitheacha*

L893-320 Sheet 44

These two small islands lie to the N of Inishtravin and are linked to it and to each other at LW, however slimily. Easily approached at HW, at LW both islands become surrounded by huge expanses of mud and weed-covered rocks. These islands are a favourite haunt of otters.

Illaunard - *An tOileán Garbh*

L877-322 Sheet 44

A small island to the NW of Inishtravin. Land anywhere on rocks, easily at HW, but with more difficulty at LW. Formerly perhaps used for grazing. Uninhabited. The only vaguely possible camping is on the northern side. There is a considerable tidal drop and access is

probably best at HW. The higher parts of the island are dominated by furze, heather and bracken and sections can be difficult to walk.

North Island - *An tOileán ó Thuaidh*

L873-324 Sheet 44

A small, uninhabited, ungrazed or undergrazed rocky island to the NW of Illaunard. Land in a small cove on the N coast.

Greeve Islands

Oileáin na Craoibhe

L884-332 Sheet 44

Greeve possesses an open and pleasant feeling. No water but camping just might be had. Land easiest on the NW. This island and its outlying rocks give interesting paddling on an ebbing tide. The entire area is almost surreal at LW. It is very easy to get lost and stranded by a dropping tide, with islands emerging all around.

Illauneeragh West

An tOileán Iatharach Thiar

L888-349 Sheet 44

A low island connected to Illaunmore at LW, uninhabited in 2006. There are interesting old ruins and narrow paths through the island, which is quite marshy on the northern half and, seemingly ungrazed, the unchecked vegetation has gone wild, making exploration difficult. Land easily at an old slipway on the NE corner at HW, or anytime at the E end of the Crow sound. At LW, the mud between the weed-covered rocks is black, smelly, and gets everywhere. This has been a popular island with tourists in summer. July can be 'hectic'.

Illaunmore - *An tOileán Mór*

L896-350 Sheet 44

An attractive, low island connected at its eastern point to the mainland at LW. In 2006, one house was inhabited full time, and another mostly. There are many abandoned ruins and deserted houses. Being grazed to some extent, there isn't the same feel of neglect as elsewhere. It is a popular venue with summer tourists for 'camping sauvage' in the fields.

Crow Island - *An Cró*

L887-353 Sheet 44

A small island linked to Illauneeragh West at LW. Land easily at HW on the eastern side at some old walls. Formerly used for grazing but now let go altogether, and covered in briars. An island of zero merit to the passerby. A strong flow can develop on the ebb to the S of the island.

Illaunnagappul - *Oileán na gCapall*

L897-357 Sheet 44

A small island N of Illaunmore. Uninhabited but there are signs of former fields. Neglected, it has lost the charm it undoubtedly once possessed. A flow of about 1.5kn can develop just S of the island. Land anywhere, easily on higher tides, with more difficulty onto weed-covered rocks on lower tides.

Illaunrossalough

L904-376 Sheet 44

Large footprint of mud and weedy rocks at LW, low and rough but substantial at HW. This islet is unattractive for the leisure seeker and remote of access. The only easily accessible

access pier is 5km to the SW at Flannery Pier L868-354. A pier at L899-383 is private and awkward of approach. A pier at L909-378 is public but down a lengthy twisting boreen. Ungrazed and rough, a place of otters and seals.

Birmore Island - *Bior Mór*

L804-263 Sheet 44

A low, grassy island, SW of the mouth of Kilkieran Bay. Land on a sandy/rocky shore at the N end, where there are the ruins of a house. There are also several ruins along W side. Sheep. Pleasant.

Good numbers of Barnacle Geese c. 500 in all in winter which graze all the outer islands off this coast. Birds move from island to island when disturbed. Biggest concentration normally on Saint MacDara's Island.

Birbeg Island – *Bior Beag*

L806-272 Sheet 44

Attractive low-lying island with lovely sandy beach on N side. Has extensive areas that partially dry at low water and an E facing sickle shaped bay.

The passage between Birbeg and Birmore dries completely at times of LWS.

Inishmuskerry - *Oileán Múscraí*

L783-266 Sheet 44

Known locally as Spike Island, this is a low-lying, long-grassed island, WSW of the entrance to Kilkieran Bay. It was never inhabited, and there is no water. There is a sandy beach on its N side at which one can land easily. It is surrounded on all sides by off-lying rocks and reefs, of which take care. There is a well-sheltered, pleasant, sandy cove on the NW side, lovely for children.

Good birdlife. About 300 Barnacle Goose frequent this and other South Connemara islands in the winter. Snipe, Sanderling, Twite were also present in March 2005. Centre of island dominated by large stand of Phragmites reed. Very distinctive marker on highest point.

Finish Island - *Oileán Finis*

L790-288 Sheet 44

A large attractive island, W of the entrance to the bay. It can just about be accessed on foot at very low springs at its NE end.

There are beautiful beaches along both sides. Long and narrow in shape, the island has extensive machair areas and wetter marshes in low-lying hollows. The original harbour is still in good condition and is located on the NW side. There are many ruined farmhouses, and in 2008 one holiday home and a mobile home nearby the harbour. The island has the distinctive atmosphere of being slowly reclaimed by drifting sands, especially along the original road that runs NE to SW through the central part.

A wide variety of wildlife is on the island, including ducks, terns, waders and otters. Grazed (possibly overgrazed) by cattle and horses during the summer months.

Camping

Good camping all over but probably best on the north-western side, in a little bay at L790-288, a couple of hundred metres SW of the quay. No water found.

Bertraghboy Bay Area

Cuan na Beirtrí Buí

The following half dozen or so islands are in or outside Bertraghboy Bay. Tides of 2kn are reported at the entrance to the bay itself between Inishtreh and the southern tip of Inishnee.

Tides

The bay fills from HW Galway • 0520 to +0100.

Duck Island - *Oileán Lachan*

L768-271 Sheet 44

Low-lying and barely grassed islet, with little shelter, and camping only for the truly desperate, immediately S of Mweenish Island. There is a landing that is vaguely sheltered on the NE side in an inlet that is better formed at the lower part of the tide. The highest point on the island is near the landing and has a low cairn, which is generally topped off with a marker to be readily visible for local boats over a wide area. The islet dries to expose quite a large area of boulder beach.

A drowning tragedy of October 2004 claimed 5 lives and the trawler wreck now dominates the SW corner and makes a sad sight. Debris all across SW corner. Another 100 metres to seaward and they would cleared the reef.

Mweenish Island

Oileán Mhuighinse

L764-294 Sheet 44

A large, well-populated Gaeltacht island, 9km SE of the entrance to Bertraghboy Bay and attached to the mainland by a road bridge to the NE. The passage under the bridge is passable at the higher parts of the tide.

One Corncrake was heard singing here in 2003.

Mweenish is the home place of the Galway Hooker, the traditional wooden, gaff-rigged, tumble-homed sailing boat of the W coast of Ireland. Hookers very nearly went extinct as a working boat a century ago, but have enjoyed a considerable revival since about 1970 as a leisure craft. There are now 15 or 16 of them on the water.

One such hooker, the Saint Patrick, built on Mweenish in 1906 and skippered by Paddy Barry, crossed the Atlantic in 1986, and has since gone to Greenland. She also sailed to other Arctic destinations including beyond the 80° latitude parallel off Spitzbergen in 1990. Saint Patrick slipped her mooring and sunk at Glandore in 2003... *may she rest in peace.*

Paddy Barry went on to achieve even more fame by negotiating Canada's North West Passage in 2003 and in 2004/2005 Siberia's North East Passage, in each case in 'Northabout', the sailing craft specially designed and built for such purposes by Jarlath Cunnane of Dublin.

Landing and Camping

There are several working piers and quays, but the points of greatest interest to kayakers are the three beaches. The nicest is at L764-294 in the SW-facing elbow of the island, with good camping on machair in the dunes behind the beach, and good parking. This beach would be the best embarkation point for Mason - *Oileán Máisean* or MacDara's Island - *Oileán Mhic Dara*. More reliably sheltered is the E-facing, smaller beach at L774-284, on the eastern side of the southern tip. Here, there is limited parking but excellent camping beside the ruin of a house at the southern end of the beach. Otherwise camping is impractical as the fields are

stocked. There is a tide-dependent beach and a good flat grass area at the NE side opposite the bridge at L768-299.

Inishtroghenmore – *Inis Srathair*

L769-312 Sheet 44

Grass and gorse. A horse grazed this island in May 2008. Nice views towards Carna and the mountains to the N. A fine bundle of boulders graces the centre point, nowadays a shelter for four footed creatures. Large mudflats surround, and the island is best enjoyed of a fine evening at HW.

Mason Island - *Oileán Máisean*

L745-295 Sheet 44

Mason is 8km SE of the entrance to Bertraghboy Bay. It is an attractive, semi-inhabited island. The pier at the W end is uninviting to passing kayaks, as it dries out, but it is in active use in 2009 with new cattle pens. There is an unusual degree of organisation to the layout of housing and roadways relative to other islands hereabouts. This may be related to the fact that the men of Mason were regarded locally as being fine builders and had much inter-connection with Finish islanders who had a strong music tradition. Mains water is available but only in the houses, 2009.

Landing and Camping

Land virtually anywhere on N / NE / E sides. The best camping is probably in the NE. Camping is possible at other locations, but as cattle graze the island, be sensible. In particular, on any day the cattle of the island are being gathered for slaughter on the mainland, de-camp early.

Embarkation

The best known launching points for Mason or MacDara's or any of the islands hereabouts are

the beach in the SW-facing elbow of Mweenish Island at L764-294, where poor-ish parking

Mace Pier L742-316, where good parking, or

Ard East pier, at the disused fish processing plant at L757-312, where endless parking.

Ardnacross Island

L746-293 Sheet 44

A wee gem, Masons in miniature, white sandy beaches all round the NW side, splendid isolated camping on short cropped grass. One word of caution is that cattle can cross from Masons at LW.

Colony of 45+ Little Tern, Ring Plover, Shell Duck.

The E/S sides are rocky/boulder. The gap with Masons to the NW is just passable at mid-tide and the gap to Coarse Rock L750-293 to the E needs watching on passage.

Avery Island – *Oileán Aimhréidh*

L738-298 Sheet 44

Lovely grassy islet. Excellent camping. Land at lovely sandy beach in NW spit. There is an exposed beach on the SW. The passage with Mason Island is reef strewn and requires care. Little Tern were probably breeding in 2008, as were Storm Petrel.

Wherroon Island – *Na Fioriúin*

L732-302 Sheet 44

This islet has a huge LW footprint, but largely disappears at HW. It may even be awash at higher HWSs, notwithstanding which it supports a colony of mixed Arctic and Common Tern. It has two high points, rocky in the SW and a peculiar conical stormbeach in the NE, the only 360° stormbeach in Ireland that I know of. All else is awash above HWN. Land easiest at the foot of the stormbeach in the NE.

Saint MacDara's Island - *Oileán Mhic Dara*

L723-299 Sheet 44

A most attractive island, 7km S of the entrance to Bertraghboy Bay.

Named *Cruach na Cara* on the OS 1:50,000 map, but nobody calls it that.

It is uninhabited. 300 Barnacle Goose were found here in April 1994, but whether they were waystopping or wintering is not known. It is a place of annual pilgrimage on the 16th July every year. Saint MacDara is the patron saint of Galway Hookers, traditional sailing boats, which always dip their sails when passing the island. The church is of 12th Century construction. The roof fell in during the 19th Century and was restored in 1977. An old graveyard became exposed in the big storms of January 2014.

Landing and Camping

Land at an attractive, sheltered, sandy beach on the eastern side below the church. There is excellent camping by the beach. There is another landing on the SE, S of the spit, on a pebble beach, necessary perhaps in easterly or north-easterly wind.

Embarkation

The best known launching point for Mason or MacDara's is the beach in the SW-facing elbow of Mweenish Island at L764-294.

Consider also Ard East pier, at the disused fish processing plant at L757-312, where endless parking.

The Skerd Group - *Na Sceirde*

An impressive collection of rugged islets, lying 14km SSW of the entrance to Bertraghboy Bay. The whole is a network of rocks, bays, narrow channels, cuts, rocky reefs and small outlying rocks, though very much dominated by Skerdmore, which is bigger in area than one would at first expect, and is also highest at nearly 20m. Well worth the journey on a good day, these islets are said to have the greatest feeling of remoteness of all Irish offshore islands.

As one approaches from the N, the combined mass appears to be one. In fact, the group consists of a cluster of high, rocky islands, separated by narrow channels. The channels divide the mass into blocks, mainly Skerdmore and Skerdbeg, each with outliers. Skerdmore is by far the largest and highest block, to the SW of the middle channel, and Skerdbeg next biggest, to its NE. The OS sheet is less than accurate in this regard.

The layout of the group is quite complicated. Skerdmore is rather horseshoe-shaped and faces E. Skerdbeg lies off the mouth made by its prongs, creating a reasonably sheltered interior embayment. There are rocks and hummocks lying off both islets, including a set that runs E/W from Skerdbeg towards the middle of Skerdmore, thereby dividing the interior embayment into two parts, N/ S of these rocks. The N part is accessible from the N, and the S part is much more easily entered from the S.

The two parts of the embayment are joined by narrow channels through the rocks, the most navigable of which is towards the E side, but even this may not be passable from N to S at

extreme LW, but some are easily so at other levels. Kayaking through the channels is quite possible in calm conditions but the entire area has an aura of danger, and is probably quite hazardous in swell.

Embarkation

The nearest launching point is 11km NW at the beach in the elbow of Mweenish Island at L764-294. It is also practical to set out from anywhere around Roundstone or the Bertraghboy Bay area generally, and perhaps break the journey at CroaghnaKeela at L690-324.

Breeding Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Shag, Black Guillemot and possibly Oystercatcher. Grey Seals.

Skerdmore - *Sceirde Mór*

L660-248 Sheet 44

Landing

The S part of the embayment affords the best landing in a long narrow geo or cut that runs deep into the heart of the island, under the highest point. Landing is also possible in a similar cut into the N part of the embayment.

Skerdbeg - *Sceirde Beg*

L663-248 Sheet 44

Skerdbeg is split into at least three separate blocks by narrow channels, the widest and most navigable of which lies between the two most W blocks. Landing is possible, and probably best at lower water, in the extreme NE corner in a narrow cut, although considerable surge has been experienced. This island is a rugged, rocky mass that gains height towards the SW. It is separated from the next islet to the W by an extremely narrow channel that may just be passable by kayak in calm conditions.

Doonguddle – *Dún Godail*

L673-244 Sheet 44

Doonguddle is an outlier of the main Skerd group, located 1km ESE. The island is bigger than one would expect, rising to 12m. When approached from the N the smaller Doonguddlebeg is not obvious against its bigger neighbour. The channel between the two is narrow but looks passable at all stages of the tide. Landing is onto rock shelves in the channel between the two. This N side, although subject to surge and scend, is quite accessible at HW and may be even more so at LW, as large areas of reef dry out. Landings are also possible onto reefs on the E side but these are a little more exposed. The island has twin summits of rounded but easily climbed rock, and there is a really inviting deep water rock pool on its E side.

A Spanish trawler, the 'Arosa', went aground and was shipwrecked here on 3rd October 2000 in a storm. Of the crew of 13, only one was saved. 2 others were taken off alive but died en route to hospital. Of the 10 that drowned, only 4 bodies were recovered, 6 being lost altogether.

Evidence of breeding Shags, GBB Gull and Herring Gull. Other species recorded in August 2008 were Grey Seal, Turnstone, Oystercatcher, Kittiwake, Curlew, Whimbrel. Gannet, Manx Shearwater, Auks and Storm Petrel. Good fishing.

Doonmane - *Dún Mánas*

L661-264 Sheet 44

Doonmane and its sister rock Doonmanebeg lie 1.5km N of Skerdmore. They are smaller in height than either Skerdmore, Skerdbeg or Doonguddle, rising to 9m and 8m respectively.

Like all the islands in this group the same exposed Atlantic feeling pervades. Both islets may best be landed at times before or after local HW as rock shelves become more exposed. The best landing found on Doonmane was along the N side onto steep shelving rock ramps in a small cut. Good rock pools and super views of main the Skerd islands. No camping and no water.

Landing on Doonmanebeg L659-263 is onto rock platforms on its NE side, facing Doonmane. It rises to a rounded summit and has several large rock pools to explore. No camping. No water. Views all round superb.

Shags. GBB and Herring Gull breed and Grey Seal plentiful on both islands.

Doolick - *Dúleac*

L679-269 Sheet 44

Located just over 2km NE of the main Skerd Group, this outlier is the first of the group encountered as one makes towards the Skerds from the mainland. Doolick just about gets its head above water and rises only to 1.5 m. It is an attractive waystop on a good day and has high numbers of Grey Seal, Turstone and Oystercatcher. It is totally different to the rest of the group in that it is low lying and made up of enormous flat platforms of weathered granite. A very attractive and sizeable rock pool forms along its W side as the tide falls.

Landing is onto rock platforms along the N edge. No camping. No water.

Croaghnaekeela - *Cruach na Caoile*

L690-324 Sheet 44

Croaghnaekeela is also called locally Deer Island. An overgrown heather island, located 7km SW of the entrance to Bertraghboy Bay. It boasts bird life and an 'oceanic feel'. The island is uninhabited but was once stocked with deer, and hence the name. There is a ruined church, named after St. Brendan.

A small, automated lighthouse near the southern point is a useful distinguishing feature from seaward. It provides the only readily distinguishable feature W of Golam Head signal tower for those on passage from the Aran Islands.

Landing

The landing, onto large boulders on the eastern side of a shallow bay by a bothy, is unattractive. It is better sheltered on lower tides. On higher tides, there is a possible alternative landing in a small rocky cut, midway along the northern side.

Illaunacroagh More - *Oileán na Cruaiche Mor*

L694-347 Sheet 44

This island is located about 2km N of Croaghnaekeela Island and about 3km S of the launching point at world famous Gorteen Bay near Roundstone. Alternatively, it can be approached from several other mainland departure points in the Mace Head area. Illaunacroagh More is low lying overall and the rounded Connemara granite, boulder like erratics and rocky outcrops provide interest. The island is grazed by sheep and attractive to walk. The W side has extensive areas of rock slabs that, combined with the great views all round, give an exposed Atlantic experience to the walker. Landing is at an obvious cut along the E side onto rock slabs. There are the remains of a sheep pen just above the landing. A second possible landing point is onto a storm beach just S of the cut but this only possible at times of local HW. It makes for an excellent days kayaking.

No water found but camping is good.

Breeding Herring and GBB Gulls and Oystercatcher.

Illaunacroagh Beg - Oileán na Cruiche Beag

L696-339 Sheet 44

A narrow sound called Bealach an Dá Oileáin separates this from its bigger sister island Illaunacroagh More. This smaller island is quite attractive. It was not grazed in August 2009 but traces of an old sheep pen were found near the obvious landing on the E side. This landing is onto rock shelves. There is a storm beach above this landing that may also become available at times of HWS. The island's natural vegetation is more interesting than that on Illaunacroagh More and both its geography and birdlife are more varied.

Good camping available and although pools of seepage water were found in pools above the landing, the quality was doubtful.

Shags, Herring & GBB Gulls breed and both Meadow Pipit and Skylark are much more numerous than on the bigger (grazed) island.

Colt Island

L732-237 Sheet 44

A barely detached part of Mace Head, at highest HWS only. From the shore, approach with permission through the grounds of the Mace Head Atmospheric Research Station grounds. From the sea, land at the NE or SW cut between shore and island, both sheltered, that to the NE easier of access.

It is an island of two halves, the more shoreward being rough pasture, slightly grazed by cattle and the camping is not great.

The unexpected treat in this island is the seaward half, which contains a tidal lagoon that makes for a splendid swimming and sunbathing area. Approachable by sea at all stages of the tide from the NW, the lagoon is partly surrounded by scraped rocks, ideal for recreational purposes. The water never drops below at least 1m.

Inishbigger - Inis Bigir

L741-347 Sheet 44

This unremarkable little island lies off a beautiful beach, 5km WNW of Carna village, on the outer, eastern side of the entrance to Bertraghboy Bay. It is barely circumnavigable at LW. Cattle only occasionally graze it, so the undergrowth is lush. Nevertheless, Willow Herb, Ragged Robin and Self Heal abound.

Embarkation and Landing

It is not really possible to camp and no water was found. The softest landing is on the landward, E side. Embark from a large car park in the centre of a beautiful beach locally called Moyrus, at L746-339, beside a graveyard and abandoned church. An alternative launching spot for this and Freaghillaun is from a pier at L746-348 where there is sufficient parking for small groups.

Freaghillaun - Fraochoileán

L735-352 Sheet 44

A surprisingly attractive, small, sheep-grazed island, lying on the outer, eastern side of the entrance to Bertraghboy Bay, SW of Inishlackan. Very pleasant feel and aspect to this island. The western side of the island is short cropped grass and very pleasant. The name *Fraoch Oileán* in Gaelic means 'Heather Island', probably the single most common name for an Irish offshore island. Uniquely among such islands, in this case the name is inappropriate, as no

heather was found. The dominant vegetation is maritime variety of gorse that blooms in July/August.

Plenty of sheep and 20 Snipe were flushed on short walkabout in January 2008. Waders included Ringed Plover, Turnstone, Oystercatcher, Purple Sandpiper, Curlew and Redshank at lovely beaches. The small islet to SE held 50 Cormorant as a roost spot. Common Gull were seen in summer 2006.

No water either.

Embarkation and Landing

As for Inishbigger, embark from the car park in the centre of the beach at L746-339. Land onto lovely sandy beaches on both sides of a sheltered spit at the eastern point of the island. Camping is immediately above the beach.

Inishtreh - *Inis Troighe*

L739-371 Sheet 44

This is an unattractive, flat, ungrazed lump of heather, gorse and reeds, in a beautiful setting. It guards the eastern side of the entrance to Bertraghboy Bay. Very extensive areas dry out on E & S sides. The holy well shown on the OS sheet on the NE side has not been found. In winter 2008, Sanderling, Turnstone, Snipe, Rock Pipit, Starling, and Chaffinch feeding on extensive amounts of seaweed thrown up at NE corner.

Land on the eastern side or walk out at LW from a beautiful quay at L742-367. Periwinkles.

Inishlackan - *Inis Leacan*

L722-377 Sheet 44

An attractive, low island in the mouth of Bertraghboy Bay.

Inishlackan is distinguished from the land by a conspicuous, rectangular, water-tank structure on the highest point of the N side of the island. There is water in rain barrels outside most houses. Water used to be pumped by a windmill (now ruined) from a walled pond up to the nearby water storage tank.

Formerly inhabited, it is now occasionally so in summer. The first summer dwelling was a restored schoolhouse in the NE corner above the harbour / beach. By 2005 there were up to half a dozen holiday homes, for that niche market. At least one of them was seriously well appointed, at the W end, complete with solar panels and well laid out grounds.

There is a large, shell-midden in sand hills at the NE corner of the island, by the schoolhouse. Inishlackan is a good stopover with easy access to the extremely pretty Roundstone village. Roundstone is a posh tourist centre, with pubs, restaurants, and some shops, but is poorly provisioned. It is the centre for intense tourist use of this stretch of mainland coast. The island is worth the visit.

Landing and Embarkation

Land in many places but it is best at a very sheltered pier with a sandy beach by the NE corner. There are rocky shores on almost all sides, with reefs offlying. Circumnavigation is iffiest at the SW corner.

There is camping near the pier and elsewhere.

The mainland embarkation is from a pier at Erlough at L717-386, in a bay about 1km to the N of the island, reached by taking the first left turn after the Garda Station as one leaves Roundstone for Ballyconneely. Roundstone Pier and most of Roundstone were developed by

Nimmo as a piece of private enterprise, one of a number of controversies that attached to the great man.

Inishnee - *Inis Ní*

L735-383 Sheet 44

The island has a population of 30. It almost fills the western part of Bertraghboy Bay. The grid reference is for the highest point, which is to the S of the figure-eight-shaped island. The island lies E of Roundstone. Nowadays, it is connected to the mainland by a modern, new bridge, replacing the picturesque relic built by the Congested Districts Board around 1890. Going from the modern and popular holiday village of Roundstone to the island is stepping back a generation or two in time.

The island has a rocky shore all around. There are no sandy beaches. The eastern side is quite interesting in that there are a large number of small, hand-built little harbours and jetties. These are now all disused, and at times, may only be identified at close quarters. One may land on the E coast almost anywhere. The S/SW coast is steeper and landing is not so easy. The northern and western shores may be used to land, but involve carries over uneven ground. Water may be obtained from houses on the island. There are no shops.

Tides

Bertraghboy Bay		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	5:20 before Galway HW	2kn
Out	1:00 after Galway HW	2kn

Flows of 2kn are reported at the entrance to the bay between Inishtreh and Inishnee and on the western side may be up to 1.5kn just at and south of the bridge, where there are some shallows.

Oghly Island - *Oileán an Chlaí*

L748-391 Sheet 44

This medium sized island, remote despite nestling just off the E side of Inishnee, was reported when this *Oileáin* project began in 1991 as showing no evidence of previous habitation or of water, but there were two wooden huts on the island.

Now in 2008 there is a house and various outbuildings, probably including the two huts. Solar panels on the boathouse beside the pontoon landing at the NE at L748-391 provide power, as does the wind generator up by the house to the SE, in the shelter of a mature stand of conifers. With all the appearances of a summer-house only, there are modern additions, such as a sunroom.

And land maintenance. Paths have been cleared around the island for walking. Planting has been aggressive, with well mature conifers around the house in the NE, and experimental trees such as eucalyptus, contorted pine, alder, sally, and even rhododendron (no kidding), *Rhododendron Ponticum*, a native to the Pontiac mountains. *Ponticum* is unusual among *Rhododendrons* in that it is lime tolerant. Almost all others prefer lower pH levels.

Finest development of all is the tidal swimming pool in the SE, created by a simple garage, over which broods an ornamental elephant. Full marks, daddy.

The coast is rocky all around, but totally weed covered, so landings may be effected quite easily, downwind.

Cashel Bay Islands

A group of quite diverse islands are located in that part of the inner parts of Bertraghboy Bay, in or about the entrance to Cashel Bay. There is an inner Cashel bay and an outer Cashel bay. The whole area is attractive especially if paddling from S/N, as there are great views of Cashel Hill and Twelve Bens, as well as a feeling of kayaking in close proximity to the mountains.

Cashel Bay - Outer Islands

The group of eight islands at outer Cashel Bay, in ENE Bertaghboy Bay, is dominated by the distinctive height of Croghnut Island. Most of these islands are flat and low lying, which seems to exaggerate the 30m summit of Croghnut. The island's summit is a very useful navigation aid. All these islands have extensive areas inter-tidal zones that dry at LW, thus giving good circumstances for a variety of bird species, and Otter.

Croghnut Island and Illauncroghnut to its N become joined at LW, as do Illaungorm North and South, so kayakers need to plan ahead to avoid embarrassment.

Illaungorm North

L786-398 Sheet 44

A low-lying yet interesting island that marks the entrance from Bertraghboy Bay to Cashel Bay. The island is very attractive and has a number of interesting features.

Landing

Approached from the S the best landing is onto a lovely coral beach at a small spit in the extreme SW corner. This beach may well be best for landing as the tide drops but a narrow cut just north of spit also allows access. The cut is interesting in that it has remains of an old landing place, one of three found around the island. The unsightly wreck of gantries, pontoons and galvanised walkways from a ruined fish farm operation unfortunately mars the S shoreline.

The second landing is at the site of the original village located in the NW of the island. The village has super views looking N to Cashel Hill and beyond into the Glencaghan Horseshoe of the Twelve Bens. The houses are set close to the HW mark, reminiscent of those at Inishsherk. The remains of a small quay/landing place are located here also. Just south of the largest ruined house the remains of an old boulder choked well was found. It contained water in January 2008 but it was not certain if it is gravity or spring fed, so its reliability is not known. In May 2008 it was judged unusable.

A third landing area with three distinctive small jetties is located further E of the village along the N shore in small bay with a small ruin just S of the landing. The island's only tree is an atmospheric wind shaped Hawthorn dominating the NE corner. On the S shore there are outcrops of old peat, which the sea has eroded to expose some very interesting examples of bog deal. The intertidal areas almost double the island's size at LW and provide good feeding areas for duck and wading species and the presence of Otter was noted. There was no sign of recent grazing in January or May 2008 so the diversity of flora was rich. About LW, it is possible to walk to Illaungorm South. Best camping near village and at NW corner.

Illaundoon

L783-401 Sheet 44

Small grassy topped islet lying just NW of Illaungorm North. Notable for its views towards the village on Illaungorm North, as well as views N. The narrow cut between it and

Illaungorm North allows passage by sea kayak at LW. Landing onto rocky seaweed covered foreshore. Cormorant, Shags, Turnstone and Golden Plover.

Camping is possible but hardly in preference to better sites on Illaungorm North

Illaunnamrogue – *oileán na mBróg*

L784-403

Very small footprint at HW, at which time land better S side, but N side possible too. Oyster Catcher.

Illaungorm South

L789-395 Sheet 44

A smaller version of its bigger neighbour. Illaungorm South is also low lying, dominated by heather and rank grasses. The vegetation length in January 2008 would suggest it has not been grazed for some time. Best camping is on the W side but not as attractive as Illaungorm North. No water and no evidence of former habitation were found. Large areas of inter tidal zone become exposed at LW.

Good numbers of Mallard, Teal and Red-Breasted Merganser were present in January 2008. In May 2008 snipe 2, Mallard 2, Great Black backed Gull 2.

Croghnut

L795-395 Sheet 44

The distinctive name and shape of this island draws the eye and invites the kayaker to explore. The island is different from the rest in the group due to its height difference. A mini “Sugarloaf” like hill dominates the centre of the island. Its 30m summit contrasts with the other islands in the area. Croghnut is craggier than its immediate neighbours and is an attractive mixture of heather, scrub and grassland.

There are remains of an old cottage or booley on a ledge above the E landing, tucked under the summit. The island has extensive areas of foreshore that become somewhat exposed at LW, and would appear to dry completely at its N point where it joins with Illaunacroghnut, its low lying but bigger sister. The summit has good views over the entire area, the island group and of the Twelve Bens.

In winter, Curlew, Ringed Plover, Red-breasted Merganser, Mallard & Teal.

Landing

Landings can be found onto stony beaches on all sides of island but are best at the S / E sides at obvious cuts.

Camping and water

Camping is available at a number of sites, particularly at the S end. No water was found, but the presence of a small herd of cattle in January 2008 would indicate its presence.

Illaunacroghnut

L796-397 Sheet 44

This island is larger than its near neighbour and namesake Croghnut Island. It is low lying and full of knolls, hollows, wet marshes and stands of willow. The vegetation although grazed periodically is rough and wild. Exploration is for the determined only. The island is very nearly joined to Croghnut Island at its SW corner where there is just a very narrow channel dividing the two, and then only at times of HW. There is also a good landing at this

SW corner onto a stone beach, but numerous other landings are also possible. A stone wall, its purpose rather a mystery, exists above the landing at the SW corner.

Red-breasted Merganser, Teal, Mallard, Grey Heron, Turnstone and Snipe.

Illauknock – *Oileán an Cnoich*

L797-390 Sheet 44

Small island S of Croghnut, near the shore in the SE corner of outer Cashel Bay, but with a very maritime feel, especially in the SW point, where the camping is excellent. Land anywhere downwind but easiest in the S part. Grazed by sheep and therefore pleasant to explore. No water found.

Inishfadda Islands

L803-390 Sheet 44

Appropriately named, this is a long finger of an islet(s) just off the shore. Detached from the mainland at all stages of the tide in the SE of outer Cashel Bay, a strong current flows through the gap on its S side. Land to choice but especially under the old ruined cottage in the ESE. Marvel at the stone lintels above the windows. Mussels everywhere. Ungrazed. Difficult to explore.

Cashel Bay - Inner Islands

The very sheltered inner Cashel Bay is very pretty and a most pleasant spot. A road runs close along its N side. Often bypassed, a mistake.

Near the W end is a prominent boathouse L794-423 on the shoreline. Beside and around the boathouse is

- a leisure facility consisting of a child swimming pool gouged out of the foreshore, prettily surrounded by large blocks,
- a diving board arrangement for adult attention,
- a “three-and-in” type football pitch, and
- the boathouse itself, altogether a marvellous community facility.

This is private land. The boathouse is reached by a closed gate, opposite which is parking L794-424 for a handful of cars. The 150m carry to the watertline is acceptable.

At the E end is a public pier L805-423, very handy, room for a couple of cars at least, but it dries at the bottom half of the tide, so that at LW the mudflats reach out 100m. Timing is important.

Common Seal may breed, as several are to be seen in the locality and the habitat is suitable. Good numbers 45+ of Red-breasted Merganser and a single Goosander were seen in the area in March 2008. The male Goosander was seen again in May 2008.

Green Islands - *Glasoileáin*

L793-418 Sheet 44

The main event is a very small islet with some green vegetation on top, which suggests it remains above water all year. Extensive areas of seaweeds and rocks surround Green Island. The many tiny outliers become progressively exposed as the tide drops.

Fox Island

L796-422 Sheet 44

Grass and furze, available on foot except the top one third of the tide.

Inishdawros – *Inis Damhraí*

L643-411 Sheet 44

Accessible on foot at LW, the inside channel on the E side provides great shelter to its N/S for smaller working boats. Nice beaches at S end and also at various stages of the tide elsewhere. Mallard. Rabbit. White cockles. Unspectacular. Nice outlook.

Illaunurra - *Oileán Ura*

L587-403 Sheet 44

Illaunurra is 15km W of the entrance to Bertraghboy Bay and lies beyond even Ballyconneely. It is about 7km E of Slyne Head and lies near Bunowen Bay and Aillebrack, a pretty holiday spot for the relatively wealthy. A number of attractive islets lie off the shore, largest of which is Illaunurra. Beware the notorious shallows hereabouts, which may leave you stranded on a falling tide. Also, boomers abound in conditions of even a little swell. Read Brian Wilson's experience, as told in 'Dances With Waves', and be chastened.

Embarkation and Landing

Embark from the E-facing beach, sheltered by Bunowen Bay pier at L593-416, or just W of that from a pretty, W-facing strand at L585-417. The pier is probably the most logical embarkation place for rounding Slyne Head.

There is a sandy beach with camping on the northern tip of the island, and several storm beaches. The landing place of choice must be a sheltered sand/storm beach at the SE. Immediately above it is manageable camping, greater privacy, and abundant firewood. There are sheep, Dunlin and Mallard.

Strawbeach Island

Oileán na Muiríleach

L578-413 Sheet 44

NW of Illaunurra, Strawbeach is easiest reached from a pretty, W-facing strand at L585-417, less than 1km to the NE. This is a wee gem of a pleasant, sheep-grazed islet, giving unexpected privacy just off a crowded beach. There is a dependable sandy beach landing in a lagoon on the eastern side. Camp anywhere. No water. Ringed Plover.

Horse Island *Oileán na gCapaill*

L576-408 Sheet 44

SW of Strawbeach, Horse appears as pleasantly grassy, but isn't. It is an unexpectedly large expanse of rock, with very sparse vegetation. Surprisingly, rabbits are living here, but must be the hungriest of their kind in Ireland. No camping. No water. A spit of stormbeach at the NE gives a soft enough landing.

Connemara West

Conamara Thiar

Slyne Head to Killary Harbour

Ceann Léime go dtí an Chaol Sháile Rua

County Galway

Slyne Head - *Ceann Léime*

Slyne Head is a major headland and divides the west coast of Galway and Mayo from Galway Bay. It is an island headland. Slyne Head is actually the W tip of Illaunamid, the

outermost of a fragmented group of islands lying off the SW tip of Connemara. There are three main groups of these islands: Illaunamid, Chapel/Duck Island, and nearest the coast, Illaunaleama - *Oileán Léime* and Doonawaul - *Dún na bhFál*. The innermost and outermost sounds are unnamed. The much-fragmented gaps on the inside of Duck Island are Cromwell's Sound, Blind Sound and Joyce's Sound. Tim Robinson's map of Connemara and/or Admiralty chart 2708 are recommended for the detailed navigation required in this area. The area consists of shallow reefs and islets surrounded by deep water and is exposed to Atlantic swell from all sides.

The more interesting route W towards Illaunamid passes through the chain of islands. These are divided by sounds where strong tidal currents and overfalls occur, and are formidable in wind over tide conditions. The area between Chapel Island at L529-409 and Illaunamid at L514-412 is also dotted by reefs, and should be treated with caution, even in small swell. If there are frequent breakers on these reefs, landing at Illaunamid is likely to be difficult, if not impossible. However, if conditions permit, there is scope for exploring and playing in the tidal races outside Illaunaleama - *Oileán Léime* and Doonawaul - *Dún na bhFál*.

Embarkation

The nearest departure point is approximately 3km E on the Galway Bay side, in the bay opposite Connemara Golf Club, at the NW end of a long beach (*Trá Mhóir*) at L570-432. Parking may dictate a start further E at the totally dependable Bunowen Bay at L590-417. A trip N around the headland adds a certain interest and variation to the trip. The nearest alternative landing to the NE is at Stackport at L556-434, 1km NE of the coastal headland inside Slyne Head. This landing is a 1.5km road walk W from the *Trá Mhóir* put-in. Irish Lights used this quay for ferrying goods to the island, but the road is now through a series of gates, and may be private, so please ask for permission before taking your car down to the pier. The landing is difficult to see from seaward, but is close to two small houses. More dependable is Doonloughan at L569-453, but there is limited parking. Easiest perhaps on this side is at the head of Mannin Bay at L630-460, where the main road skirts the sea and there is plentiful parking.

Tides

HW and LW are as for Galway.

Slyne Head		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	3:20 before Galway HW	3kn
S	3:05 after Galway HW	3kn

However, locals say that the north-going stream is stronger and runs for longer in each tidal cycle.

SPA

Storm Petrel, Sandwich, Arctic, Common & Little Tern, Barnacle Goose.

Illauamid - *Oileán Imill*

L514-412 Sheet 44

This island is best known for its western headland, Slyne Head or *Ceann Léime*, and its lighthouse at L514-412. Illaunamid means 'Wood Island', because of the amount of flotsam

washed up here. Robinson also terms it *Oileán Imill* (Edge/Margin Island), which Anglicises as Illaunimil.

The most obvious feature of the island is the two lighthouses. Both were built in 1836. One is unused. The other flashes twice, every 15 seconds. For the story of these lighthouses and their people, read Bill Long's excellent 'Bright Light, White Water'. Tales include drowning tragedies during the building of the lighthouses, drowning of keepers, alleged murder of Irish Lights' personnel on the island, shipwrecked sailors stealing boats and dismissal of keepers for drunkenness. Three big sets of solar panels are now connected into the lighthouse complex, along the southern wall.

However, other features not mentioned in the book show that the keepers' lives were not all misery. For instance, in the mid-90s, the remnants of a mini-golf course were to be seen, just to the S of the lighthouse. Alas, this is no longer evident. There is also an unusual model of a lighthouse, complete with crane, on a rock in a brackish pond. The elaborate model is the strangest sight here. It is N of the path between the lighthouse complex and the quay. It was refurbished in 2005. The model also has a small extra and easily missed feature - an outlying channel buoy in the extreme E end of the large pond. The effect of the relatively small model within the large pond/rock pool is quite realistic.

The rock of the island is metamorphic (gneiss).

The island is attractive with a remote feel to it. However, the impression of neglect and decay is strong around the unused lighthouse complex. The functioning lighthouse received a general clean up and was looking well in 2005. The quality of the building work in the network of houses and workrooms around the older lighthouse is impressive. Some of the fireplace mantles and capping stones are of beautifully worked granite. The assortment of debris and flotsam and jetsam, both around the lighthouse and on the storm beaches, does provide diversion for avid beachcombers. The island merits an overnight.

Fauna

Wildlife includes seals and rabbits. Breeding birds include Cormorant, Shag, Arctic Tern, Wheatear, Meadow & Rock Pipit, Raven, Skylark, Oystercatcher and Ringed Plover. It is the best seabird and cetacean watching point in Galway. Some excellent work was done here by Davenport in 1979-1981 on spring Skua passage migration, but none appears to have been done on other species since. Pomarine Skua were spotted in nearby Ballyconneely Bay on the southern approaches in May 2003.

Landing

There are two landing areas, both of which are only dependable in low swell conditions.

The first, and more reliable, is at a quay on the E end of the island at L518-410. It is easily spotted by a small pump-house and crane, formerly used to transfer fuel oil to the lighthouse. If the waves are too much at the quay, there is a small gully a few yards S. It leads to a small coral strand, more accessible on the top half of the tide. It is accessible at lower water, but only onto boulders. The gully is very narrow, admitting one kayak at a time. A less attractive alternative is a larger boulder beach on the N side of the quay.

The second landing area is on the N side of the island, close to the W end and the lighthouse itself in a cove at L515-412. This small cove has the attractive name of *Fuaigh na gCaccanai* (Cove of the (Cormorant) Shite)! This landing is only reliable in calm conditions when all weather is coming from the S. There are steps cut in the stone towards the centre of the cove.

On the W side there is a rock-choked passage topped by a concrete bridge leading to other steps. In both landing spots care must be taken to lift boats well clear of rogue waves and rising tide.

Camping

There are sheltered flat areas suitable for camping near the outbuildings of the older, disused lighthouse. The walk from the E landing to the lighthouse requires quite a bit of ferrying of gear. Camping is also available S of the E landing over the first hummock. Although not as protected as by the lighthouse, it is fine for reasonable weather conditions.

Chapel Island - *Oileán an Teampaill*

L531-410 Sheet 44

Chapel is a lovely island with pleasant camping and a hint of fresh water in slightly brackish pools. The 12th Century chapel founded by Saint Caillin at L531-410 itself is interesting, and boasts a collection teapot. In early 2003 there were no Euro coins yet evident, but in 2005 there were a few, probably indicating that not many pass this way. There is a lovely attractive bothy at a tidal lagoon on the S side, found in 2005 to have been done up.

Chapel Island and Duck Island are separated by a narrow channel, open at all stages of the tide. The channel is easier found from the N. It passes immediately under the chapel.

Landing

The main landing on Chapel Island is on the south-western side at L528-408, almost facing Illaunamid. A landing may sometimes be had under the chapel, probably better at LW.

Birds

In March 2003, the following species were seen. An asterisk after the name indicates that they were probably breeding. There were seen 50+ Purple Sandpiper which is a nationally important number. There were also 40+ Oystercatcher*, 30+ Ringed Plover*, 10 Redshank, 1 Merlin, 6 Shelduck*, Raven, Skylark, Black Guillemot, Shag, and 20+ Swallow*.

In March 2003, there were 40+ Grey Seal.

At the same time on Chapel, 3 male and 1 female Eider were seen, and on nearby Horse Island another male, suggesting breeding. This would, if proven, be the southernmost outpost of breeding Eider on Ireland's W coast as of summer 2003. The official such record is Inishkeeragh, Mayo. Eider are expanding southwards year by year, and it is thought that Mink disturbance is the cause.

Ferroon Rocks

L527-407 Sheet 44

Ferroon Rocks is bigger than the name suggests and is a pleasant mixture of craggy outcrops and grassy hollows with steeper cliffs on its E and S flanks. Landing is at a small boulder beach at NW corner that faces the landing on Chapel Island nearby. No water. Camping possible but better available on nearby Chapel Island. Breeding Shag and Gulls. Good numbers of Oystercatcher, Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper in March 2005.

Mallgarve

L 533-413 Sheet 44

Rocky and steep with grassy summit. Land onto rock shelves on E / NE corners. The OS map differs from Robinson's as to which island of the three in this locality is mall Garve (*Meall Garve*). Landing took place onto the middle island separated by a narrow channel from smaller narrower islet immediately to its E. Breeding Shag, Herring and Great Black

backed Gulls. Good views of the geography of the bigger Chapel and Duck Islands to the SE and SW and towards Illaunamid.

Duck Island - *Oileán Lachan*

L536-415 Sheet 44

The eastern island of the middle group of islands. It deserves exploration.

Duck is higher and craggier than its immediate neighbours. Tides flow strongly through its many thin channels, which would confuse any navigator.

There are breeding Shag and Black Guillemot on the steep eastern side. 40 pairs of Shag nest in the eastern gully at the waist.

Landing and Camping

Landing may generally be possible onto boulders / shelves in a sheltered cut on the NE corner. Camping might be bearable, just. No water found.

Doonawaul - *Dún na bhFál*

L543-420 Sheet 44

Unattractive uninteresting little brother of Illaunaleama. Deep water landing only onto shelves to suit. Boulder strewn. Not really worth the effort.

Summit dominated by what appears from OS map as an old Dun but now appears as a broken summit cairn. A pleasant location from which to view the complex of islands that makes up the Slyne Head group. Separated from Illaunleama the innermost of the group by Elbow Sound.

Illaunaleama - *Oileán na Léime*

L548-419 Sheet 44

Closest of all the group to the mainland, this is a beautiful island, only a narrow passage separating it from the mainland to the E. Sheep grazed and short grassed, even the rocks are scoured smooth, and no other Irish coastal island deems shoes more redundant. There is a very pleasant sandy beach facing E to the mainland, onto which land. There is also a storm beach landing on the W side, with a sheep pen above, a working environment. Camp pleasantly, but water was not found.

Doonloughan Group

Doonloughan is a beautiful mainland area of machair and beach, with a sprinkling of houses, about 7km NE of Slyne Head. The four islands described here are important as they create a sheltered inside channel. This is useful to know of in the context of a passage from Slyne Head to Mannin Bay to the NE, especially in any kind of wind conditions. The whole area outside the islands is strewn with dangerous booming reefs, and shallows of every kind. Here be dragons! Frightening waves tube, for a long way off, to great height and power, in almost any conditions. The middle channels entering this inner area on either side of Illaunamenara should also be avoided for the same reasons.

The inside channel is impassable at lower water, when its two mainland piers are separated by 1km of sandflats. Enter the channel from the SW Slyne Head side via the open bay inside Inishkeeragh, to a little quay at L569-453. Enter from the NE Mannin Bay side via the sheltered deep-water channel inside Inishdugga, to a substantial and sheltered pier at L569-457. Camping by either pier is excellent, but better at the latter. No water found at either location, but ask at the houses.

It is important if arriving at evening time to choose the campsite with open water available in the direction of travel the following morning. If necessary, wait to camp until the channels connect.

Inishkeeragh - *Inis Caorach*

L557-449 Sheet 44

Lovely grassy, sausage-shaped island that demarcates the entrance to the inside Doonloughan channel from the SW. There is a beautiful little beach at L557-449 with a lovely campsite in a prominent little bay near the north-eastern tip, on the landward side. This is a more private camping option than the mainland at Doonloughan itself.

Illaunamenara

Oileán na Meannán

L555-453 Sheet 44

The most remote and western of the four, this island is pleasant to walk around. It gives awesome views of the crashing waves working the reefs outside in the open ocean. It may be reached on the lower half of the tide on foot across the Calf Islands. Otherwise, this island and its approaches on all sides are best avoided altogether. A large conical cairn on its low summit is very visible.

Calf Islands

L565-453 Sheet 44

A group of fragmented grassy mounds grazed by cattle. Accessible on foot at the lower half of the tide, and via these islands to either outer island. A sandbar stretches through these islets and divides the navigable inside channel.

Inishdugga - *Inis Duga*

L567-458 Sheet 44

Pleasant grazed island that shelters the NE channel described above, opposite the pier. Landings are numerous all along eastern and north-eastern flanks, some well protected from Atlantic swell, onto sand and gravel beaches. There is some evidence of habitation, now in ruins, at the north-eastern end. There are traces of a small circular building and a few low walls. There were 250+ Golden Plover in March 2003.

Ardillaun

L630-473 Sheet 44

Ardillaun is a prominent drumlin-like island, more suited perhaps to Clew Bay, very visible all along the Clifden / Ballyconneely road, just off the coast. The clay cliffs all round are especially dangerous at the W/SW sides. Lazybeds. Land at a low grassy area on the E side. Here there is a low grassy area with its own small salt-lake. Sheep, all with long curly horns. The closest launching spot has almost no parking at all, down a breen, at L633-471, where there is barely room for one car. Launch more reliably at any of the beautiful beaches where the Clifden / Ballyconneely road touches along Mannin Bay 1km S.

Galway West Coast

The Inner Islands

Turbot Island - *Tairbeart*

L580-524 Sheet 37

Evacuated in 1978. Nowadays the increasing number of houses are summer homes. Land on a sandy beach, just E of the sheltered slip, in a bay on the E end of the N side. There is

attractive and convenient camping on machair in the dunes behind the beach. There is water in a well.

A road running E to W bisects the island.

Two Corncrake sang in 2003. At least 3 were heard in 2007, but there was a rumour of a 4th. 5 birds were calling in 2010, when a mink was causing concern to conservators. At least one was calling 2014.

Eeshal Island - *An tOileán Íseal*

L562-529 Sheet 37

A small low, grassy island grazed by sheep, just WSW of Inishturk. Landing is possible onto boulders on the south-eastern side in a shallow bay. The water source that runs down the narrow cut from middle of the island held a good bit of freshwater of dubious quality. There are several reed fringed pools along the small waterway and other freshwater pools located in various hollows around the island. Otter tracks, spraints are present in abundance. Breeding Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Oystercatcher and Ringed Plover. 26 Mallard and 4 Common Scoter were seen on 12th September 1999. 25 Mallard also seen in August 2010.

Inishturk - *Inis Toirc*

L573-531 Sheet 37

An attractive island, identified by a small hill with a disused RT mast on the top. It is just NW of the mouth of Clifden Bay. Cattle graze on fertile grassland on East side of the island. The landing place is at a sheltered, sandy beach and harbour just N of the SE tip. There is water in a well nearby.

In 1991, there was a single holiday home. In 2010, there were 12. Camping is available, but the welcome may dwindle if too many visit. There is an alternative landing place on the NE side. It is secluded, on a sandy beach at the foot of an attractive, formerly cultivated valley. There is limited camping, which is sheltered from the SW.

Formerly a Corncrake island, they were gone in 2003, but 1 was heard in 2010.

Hog Island

L584-543 Sheet 37

Joined to the mainland except at HW, this island is bigger than expected and worth exploring as it has an interesting mixture of small walled fields, a varied foreshore and a lovely Connemara botanical mix in August. The views are good in all directions. The island is well divided into grassy fields by high stone walls. Hog is grazed by cattle, which are landed at the E side near the highest point of the inner channel. Land along the NE side or in an E-facing cut at the SW.

Streamstown Bay

L584-545 Sheet 37

Streamstown Bay empties S of Omev Island via a narrow mouth, giving a clean bouncy race in sheltered circumstances, well worth a play in springs, especially against W winds. This tidal race at the mouth is almost entirely avoidable by those travelling in small boats, so access in or out of the bay is always possible. Spring tides converge with convenient, midday low tides, giving a good flow for a tour out of the bay and into Clifden Bay to the S, or Cleggan or Ballynakill Bays to the N.

The most convenient put in point in upper Streamstown Bay is L636-532 near the head of the bay on the N side, over 1km from the main road, sheltered by a tiny spit of land that is almost an island, near a graveyard. There is ample parking for all but very large groups.

It is also possible to put in on the S side. This is beside the bridge at L640-525, 1km from the fork off the main road from Clifden to Letterfrack. The road is being widened hereabouts but it is still necessary to be considerate with the parking.

Best feature of all in the bay is the paying campsite entered from the road on the N side of the bay at L588-548. Long may it remain unsophisticated and welcoming, with its private beach at L587-547, safe for all, short cropped grass, and adequate if minimalist services. A truly beautiful spot, even by sea kayaking standards.

Boolard Island

L632-530 Sheet 37

Small, grass and fern covered island in the middle of inner Streamstown Bay, with camping possible at the E tip.

Omeý Island - *Oileán Iomaí*

L564-554 Sheet 37

This island is accessible to vehicles on all but the highest parts of the tide. A lake dominates the interior of the island. Many houses. There is a ruined church and graveyard all smothered in sand, on the N side at L565-563. Human remains are visible which are being archeologically investigated by Dúchas. A lovely, worthwhile island not to be missed.

Perhaps launch from Aughrusmore Pier to the NW of the island at L557-566. Newly improved as of 2004, the pier now boasts a water tap, is much larger than before, and the parking is much better. A beautiful spot in and of itself.

Landing and Camping

The inside passage at L575-562 dries mid-tide in the NE corner. Landings are possible along much of shore on the N and E sides on either side of the dry area.

Also, at L573-551, there is an attractive small beach in a small cove just W of the SE corner. However, it is a bit exposed, and not very suitable for overnighing. No water.

At L564-554 on the W side of the island, there is a sheltered beach in a deep bay, which is much better. There is excellent, remote, machair-type camping. There is water in a streamlet 500m NW of the beach, out of a pipe.

4 Corncrake were heard in 2003, 1 in 2010.

Dog Island

L566-597 Sheet 37

Isolated as inner islands go, low lying and entirely separated from other islands in this group by a deep water channel to the ENE. Big footprint especially at LW. Rough grass covers the top, which supports half a dozen shhep, besides Shellduck, Great Black backed Gull, Herring Gull and Atlantic Seal.

A little rough for camping, and no water. Great views.

Landing is soft enough in a dogleg inlet in the ESE corner.

Roeillaun

L572-598 Sheet 37

Low lying island in the middle of this group. Land at the SE point onto sand. Lovely. Very campable. No water. Grazed by cattle. Most of the S side is sandy. Oyster Catcher. Mostly turf and boggy. Much turf has been taken away from the island.

The island is barely separated from Gooreen to its ESE by stormbeach and rocks.

Gooreen Island

L573-597 Sheet 37

Land S side of NW point onto sand. This low lying island is the nicest by far of these three islands, grassy, grazed by cattle, camping at its most attractive. Attached to the mainland except at HWN. Sea Holly grows in profusion.

Glassillaun

L642-603 Sheet 37

A small islet just SW of Freaghillaun South. Land onto a rocky/pebbly beach on S side. Some steep and awkward climbing from landing onto a rough heather/grass top. No water. No camping. The only interesting feature is the very craggy S side and the nice views into Ballinakill Harbour and out to Inisbofin. Two types of sally trees are trying to get a foothold.

Freaghillaun South *Fraochoileán Theas*

L647-604 Sheet 37

An attractive, small island at the mouth of Ballynakill Harbour, just SW of Tully Mountain. Once inhabited but the houses are now in ruins. Land on a stony beach on the southern side. There is drinking water at a drip feed from an artificial pool under the cliff by the landing. Camping is available on the bluff above the landing.

Other landings are possible, including in a lagoon between the main island and a detached 14m high satellite smaller island on the W side, where one may step out onto tidal peat, best at cove midway along NE side. The channel between the two probably dries at LWS. Both parts of the island are grazed by sheep and both therefore campable. Freaghillaun South and its separated little brother are worth a visit.

There are fish cages to the E of the island. There is a significant tide race off Ross Point, 3km ESE. Ballynakill Bay fills from Galway HW -0500. The tides are generally weak, except at the narrows.

Braadillaun

L651-617 Sheet 37

Lovely grassy island that is barely separated except HWS from the mainland to the E, which is a working farm covering the whole south side of Tully Mountain, so there is realistically no foot access from thereabouts. Well grazed by sheep, there are also lazybeds. The whole thing is very attractive and campable. Land just W of the gap, on its S side, onto a stony beach.

Roeillaun

L677-593 Sheet 37

An island in the inner reaches of Ballynakill Harbour disconnected from the mainland except at LW, when foot access is possible across a seaweed-covered remains of a causeway marked by two large white quartz boulders below the village of Letterfrack. Cattle are grazed on the island, which means functioning fences and gates, so camping cannot be recommended, except perhaps at the remote W extremities, where anyway lie the leisure seekers' attractions.

Attractive sand/coral beach at the W end, with flowery meadows, shelter from wind and fine views. Good for a lunch stop. Excellent views in to Diamond Hill and out to Bofin and Shark.

There are the ruins at the E end of a small village of half a dozen houses or so, now roofless and overgrown, deserted in the mid 20th century.

Surrounded by trees. Lazybeds in places. Remnants of a small roadway. No water found. Access from the quay [Nimmo] at L688-598, near which small museum and at which good parking.

Inisbroon Inis Brún

L635-640 Sheet 37

Lovely grassy island, the shape and gimp of which strongly suggests inner Clew Bay, with its high clay cliff to seaward and grassy slopes to leeward. It lies 1km off Renvyle Point. Many sheep and lazybeds, between which grow thistles. Firewood abounds, and to the N is a lovely horseshoe bay, sheltered at all times, but it is stony and rocky. Better swimming in shallow bay to SW.

Rock Pipit breeding.

Illaunnamweelim

L643-642 Sheet 37

Essentially an extension of Renvyle Point, accessible at LW. A good waystop between bays, and very good views.

Illaunananima - Oileán an Anama

L642-657 Sheet 37

The name means 'Live Island', in the sense of the soul or the living spirit. A tiny islet, 1km NNW of Renvyle Point, to be avoided in any kind of W swell. The waters inshore of this islet can become one seething mass of foam when swell runs, so do not be caught off guard.

Otherwise, this island is a superb waystop. Land by a very secluded channel like entrance on the N-facing shore. This channel invites a swim at HW. The soil and grass on top the island are barely hanging in.

Freaghillaun North - Fraochoileán Thuaidh

L665-649 Sheet 37

Low lying and with storm beaches in every cove at every 100m on N side and all along the S side. Camping everywhere.

Breeding rabbits, Shellduck, sheep.

Crump Island - Oileán Dá Chruinne

L679-654 Sheet 37

Crump means 'Island of the Sea Inlet'. Landing at HW is best on a shingle beach on the NE side. This landing becomes awkward at LW so otherwise land at cove on SE side below ruined house L678-653. Sand below half tide. There is camping near the old, ruined, two-story house in which some shelter can be had for cooking. No water found.

Farmed, cows and sheep, but lumpy, the island is attractive to explore.

The story goes that when deciding where to draw the county boundary between County Mayo and County Galway, the ancient local Councillors threw a sack of oats into the ebbing tide as it spilled out of Killary Harbour. The islands that lay to the N of the oats as they floated out

would be in Mayo, those to the S, in Galway. To the surprise of many, the oats floated down S of Crump and then headed out to sea. Hence, Crump is in Mayo.

Editor's Note: Crump is included with the W-facing Galway islands for convenience.

No Name Island

L683-653 Sheet 37

Much larger than indicated on the OS map, this wee islet is large even at HW, and has substantial sounds on both sides to Crump and Shanvallybeg. Note its strange reed bed.

Land SE side

Shanvally Beg

L684-650 Sheet 37

Smaller than Crump and intensively farmed (sheep) the island is smooth and uninteresting to explore

Illanmore - *Oileán Mór*

L751-647 Sheet 37

A tidal island, just S of the entrance to Little Killary Bay. Though shown on the OS map as well off the shore, it is joined for half the tide by a sand bar to the mainland, at a beautiful crescent shaped, N-facing beach, known locally as Glassilawn. The island actually forms the outer part of this beach, appearing merely as a headland from most angles. Nice views. It has a holding tank for fish. A PADI scuba-diving school and rescue possibilities are all at the head of Little Killary, the bay opening to the E of this islet.

Inishbearna

L759-659 Sheet 37

Bearna means 'gap'. Unnamed on the OS map, this craggy island is well named locally, as it is jammed in the very mouth of Killary Harbour. It has a hillock running WNW/ESE. There are great views from the summit. The main channel passes through on its N side, the narrower channel on its S side being called Smuggler's Gap. There is a tower on the summit, tiled white to seaward. With a similar tower on Doonee Island, also unmarked on the OS map, at L748-662, it forms a transit for safe passage for larger craft through the reefs S of Inishdegil. Land easily onto a small stony beach at L762-658 on the E side, just under and NE of a ruined bothy.

Tides

The tide runs in for 6 hours from 5 hours before Galway HW at up to 0.5kn until Bundorragha, when it increases to 1.5kn approaching the Erriff River, northeast of Leenane. Tides in the inner half flow stronger and start and finish later.

Inside Killary Harbour, there are several new leading lights associated with visitors' moorings just west of Leenane. Also there are new lights marking most of the mussel farms.

Donee

L748-662 Sheet 37

Donee (or Doonee) is located W of Inishbearna and is easily recognised by its tower on the summit, tiled white to seaward. With a similar tower on Inishbearna Island, also unmarked on the OS map, at L759-659, it forms a transit for safe passage for larger craft through the reefs S of Inishdegil. Landing is possible on the NE side and is best in mid to HW as there is a gap through which one can paddle / surf. Hummocky Sea Thrift.

Illanballa

L824-627 Sheet 37

Killary Harbour is 15km long, straight and narrow, canyon-like. Halfway in, at an elbow, on its N side, lies tiny Illanballa, probably the only near-obstruction, discounting the fish cages, which are mainly on the S side, most of the way. It is only a small rock, but grass covered, and with a prominent warning light. Most easily reached from stunningly beautiful Bundorragha L8421-633 on the Mayo side, or more conveniently for many on the Galway side from the new catamaran pier at Nancy's Point L856-626. There are other nearer slips on the Galway side, but with little parking. Land into a cleft on the SE side. Mussels galore. Well inside Killary Harbour, there are several new leading lights associated with visitors' moorings just W of Leenane. Also there are new lights marking all mussel farms. In the outer half, tides flood from HW Galway -0500 and ebb from +0100, and reach 0.5kn. Tides in the inner half flow stronger, up to 1.5kn, start later and finish later.

Galway West Coast

The Outer Islands

Cruagh Island - *An Chruach*

L535-551 Sheet 37

The name means 'The Stack'. Cruagh appears from the mainland as a large, exposed haystack-shaped lump of a heathery fern and grass island, out west of Omey. In fact, on close inspection, Cruagh is a hugely attractive island with superb walking. At over 63m, it is almost as high as High Island. It has magnificent cliff scenery on the northern side, and spectacular spires in the NW. The island from a distance gives no hint to its variety of hidden valleys within the rocky outcrops and hillocks.

There is a Manx Shearwater colony of some importance on the island besides Breeding Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock & Meadow Pipit, Skylark. A single Peregrine was seen on NW side.

Deep-water landings only are available, in sheltered creeklets on the eastern side. The three modern wooden hut structures just above the most sheltered landing spot are in good order.

Friar Island - *Oileán na mBráthar*

L524-578 Sheet 37

This island is split into three or four sections, providing interesting exploration. On the north-eastern side, at the centre of the fragmentation, there is a sheltered storm beach. It is dependably easy to land on, and from which the interior may be explored. A beautiful place. The drying area shown on the 1:50,000 OS map to the E is actually a pronounced heathery/grassy knoll and gives shelter at all times. Well worth the visit.

High Island - *Ard Oileán*

L507-576 Sheet 37

High Island is the jewel in the crown of W of Ireland wild islands. Only Inishtrahull to the N and Inishvickillaun to the SW rival its massive grandeur. Surrounded by high cliffs virtually all around, its overall geography, variety of magnificent and inspiring views, fauna, and other points of interest mark it out as being special.

Circumnavigation and exploration in the occasional benign conditions is a spectacular experience.

Landing

The difficulty of landing sets High Island as a prize for all who aspire to come here.

Midway along the SE side is a prominent cove, backed by huge cliffs under the highest part of the island. Landing is best about 200m E of this in a boulder choked cove. The back of the cove is shown on the OS sheet as having a 'Cross Slab'. The landing cove is where the lower ground to the eastern end of the island begins to rise towards the centre, and where the island is narrowest and most waisted. Kayaks may well land in calm conditions onto the boulders and scramble airily to the plateau above.

On the E side of the cove is a hard-rock landing for boats, at which surge is limited and the scramble to the plateau above is much easier. There is a ring for a shoreline, much improved as of 2010, and an out-haul anchor is recommended. Kayakers might consider landing even one boat at this spot, in case conditions deteriorate while ashore.

Above the landings beware the opening to an old mineshaft – quite apparent in good conditions, but dangerous for the unwary.

There is a second landing point reported, just E of the SW tip of the island at L503-571.

Clinker boats might manage better here, but it is a bit exposed for kayaks. If manageable, it is closer to the monastic ruins on the island and might thus be preferred by some. It is directly underneath the smaller of the two island lakes.

Camp at will. Water in the lakes appears stagnant but looks better in the streamlets E of centre.

High Island is uninhabited. It was once owned by Brian Boru, and more recently by Richard Murphy, the poet. There is a (Murphy) stone hut, and a more recent timber Dúchas building. Rumours abound of a ruined copper mine on the eastern slopes near the high point of the island, and of an awesome cavern-like cave on the north-western side.

There are the ancient 7th Century ruins of an early Christian beehive hut, monastery and chapel, said to have been founded by Saint Feichin of Omey Island fame. The ruins are beside the larger of two lakes above the western end. In 2003, these are being refurbished by Dúchas. Raised platforms and planks protect the excavations from workers' muddy boots. There are three impressive inscribed slabs at the back of the chapel, worth finding.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough, Storm & Leach's Petrel, Barnacle Goose.

In 2003, there were Raven, Twite, Black Guillemot, Skylark and Meadow Pipit.

Inishshark • *Inis Airc*

L501-640 Sheet 37

The name means 'Sea Monster Island'. A splendid, formerly-inhabited island. There is an abandoned school, but no modern church. The pier was built in 1937 by Michael O'Sullivan of Ballycastlebeg in Cork, according to a commemorative stone nearby. The islanders in living memory went to Inishbofin of a Sunday for mass. Expert natural meteorologists, on 28th October 1927 they saw the front coming that caused devastation to fishermen up and down the west coast, depopulating the Inishkeas. They had no way to warn anyone and Shark, alone of ALL THE ISLANDS, lost not a single man. There were 26 families in 1893, but the population dwindled, and the last left in October 1960, mainly for the mainland nearby. The island is rugged yet pretty.

Birds

The island is home to 70 or 80 Barnacle Goose each winter. Bonxie also breed here.

There is an interesting, small burial ground at the harbour and a small derelict 19th Century chapel, which is called St. Leo's, after the patron saint of the island. The church had a bell, which broke and fragmented, and it was believed that to bring any part of it on a journey would bring good luck. Emigration being what it was in the middle part of the 20th Century, North America is thought to be littered with carefully kept and much honoured little bits of the bell.

Inishshark lies WSW of and is separated from Inishbofin by Ship Sound. The island has large cliffs and sea stacks on the western side. Big breakers and reflecting waves are the norm out the back of the island, providing an interesting and committing circumnavigation. The crossing of Ship Sound can be treacherous with contrary winds and many shallows, which may boom.

Landing and Camping

The traditional landing is inside a protective but otherwise unusable pier below the abandoned village on the E end of the S coast. The landing is onto a steep slipway or stony storm beach beside the slipway. Alternatively, use a very narrow cut providing a dependable soft landing about 100m E of the pier. The camping is excellent. The water in the well looks a little dodgy.

There is also a fine landing located at the SE tip of the island L503-643 that can be missed quite easily by kayakers making direct to the old pier and slipway. A distinctive square shaped hummock on the shoreline is a useful marker to guide in those looking for this landing. There are two narrow cuts leading to a lovely hidden sandy beach. The most northerly of the two cuts is the better for landings as a boulder partially blocks the more southern one.

The camping above this landing is very good and water can be found in the obvious little valley than runs away uphill. This may require a pool to be dug below the boulder area on the beach but the water quality was good in August 2010.

A pair of territorial Great Skuas was actively defending two well fledged young on the NW side in August 2010

Inishskinnymore - *Inis Scine Mór*

L513-641 Sheet 37

This is the larger of two islands, midway across the south-eastern entrance to Ship Sound. Inishskinnymore is low, sheep-grazed, short-grassed, and altogether quite a pleasant 3/4 hectares. There is a lovely sandy beach on the northern side. A pebble beach in the SE has the best camping potential.

Inishskinnybeg - *Inis Scine Beag*

L512-645 Sheet 37

A small, isolated satellite of Inishskinnymore, Inishskinnybeg lies just to its N. A sandy beach faces SE and other storm beaches lie to the N and W. Long grass testifies that no animals graze, but camping is just possible between the storm beaches.

Inishgort • *Inis Goirt*

L503-629 Sheet 37

The name means 'Bitter' or 'Salty' island. Inishgort is a farmed, grassy island of 10 hectares or so, SE of Inishshark. There are landing places at stony beaches in bays on either side of a waist just N of the southern point.

Sheep grazed. Uninhabited. Good camping. No water.

An Buachal - The Boy

L478-645 Sheet 37

An Buachal is a huge vertical stack, lying about halfway along the western side of Inishshark. It is said to have been a target for the young turks of Inishshark, who would come of age climbing it. Certainly, there is a cairn on top. It is nationally renowned as a scuba-diving spot because its walls drop 45m straight to the bottom. Climbers may enjoy the vertical 65m above the high water mark.

Landing and climbing

In the right conditions, one may land easily onto shelves on the southern side. The stack is well sheltered by the cliffs of Inishshark from anywhere E, really from SSE round to NE. To climb, strike out for the south-eastern ridge. Once gained, immediately follow horizontal ledges all the way to the south-western ridge. Scramble with caution and patience up the south-western side of the summit pinnacle. A more elegant line, but somewhat delicate, is to follow the south-eastern ridge directly to the summit pinnacle.

Inishbofin - Inis Bo Finne

L540-648 Sheet 37

The name means 'White Cow Island'. A regular ferry serves this lovely island, out from Cleggan in County Galway at L602-584 (pier by Nimmo). The population is 150. There are pubs, hotels, hostel, shops, chipper and restaurant.

Inishbofin is a large attractive English-speaking island, popular with tourists. The grid reference is for the new main pier. The village area is well spread out, ribbon fashion, along the shore of the S-facing harbour and bay area.

Tides

Ship Sound		
Direction	Time	Speed
NW	3:35 before Galway HW	2.5kn
SE	2:50 after Galway HW	2.5kn

Landing

The sea state at the entrance to the main harbour and bay can be very rough for tidal reasons. Two white towers on the island face the entrance to the main harbour, on a bearing of 032° (true), and lead in through the safest entry point. The entrance can boom in heavy swell to either side of the best route. The best landing for small craft is on a slipway beside the old pier further into the bay than the new pier, or a shingle beach behind it.

In emergency or on circumnavigation, there are landings on every side of the island, but fewest in the N.

Circumnavigation

Watch for *Dun Na hInine* (Daughter's Fort), an almost detached stack at the NW point. Otherwise, the circumnavigation is interesting if undramatic by local standards. The most turbulence may be expected at Ship Sound and around the Stags of Bofin in the NW at L505-670.

Camping

There is good camping with easy landing and privacy at L537-644. This is by the ruined fort at the harbour mouth, opposite the village. Access to the village area is then easiest by sea.

The pleasant 10 minutes walk around is also entirely manageable, certainly worth it for the quality of the camp spot. Any campsite on the (convenient) village side of the main harbour will lack privacy. Minor warnings are that noise late at night from outside the pubs across the water may bother, and camping too near the fort means you could be cut off by the tide.

Caveat campitor.

For a longer stay, camping is undoubtedly best made around at the eastern end of the island, in the horseshoe shaped bay, which has a very pretty beach for a nice soft landing, very sheltered, but a bit public. The end of the beach where Inishlyon meets Inishbofin used to be popular but is no longer allowed. Coastal erosion defence measures are being put in place in the form of newly planted Marram grass. This landing spot necessitates a long walk to camp or stay at Day's Hostel at L543-653 (095 45855), not to mention the pub and the good shop. Corncrake

Inishbofin was always a Corncrake stronghold, but there were only 14 recorded in 1988. By 1994, there were none. The good news is that 5 were serenading in 2003, and 3 in 2010.

Inishlyon - *Inis Laighean*

L560-647 Sheet 37

The name means 'Strip of Land'. A small island, just SE of and separated from Inishbofin at HW. The best landing is onto the beach at the western end of the N side (facing the beautiful E beach of Inishbofin). There is an automatic, small, white lighthouse at Lyon Head on the eastern end, where there is a fierce tidal race on the ebb.

Davillaun - *Damhoileán*

L586-663 Sheet 37

Called locally Ox or Stag Island. Land in small cove on the southern side, about at the middle. The cove is SE facing and not obvious until close. Alternatively, there is a difficult landing onto rocks on the E side at half to full tide.

Overgrazed by sheep to the point of barren-ness. Good camping spots everywhere but some sheltered spots are marshy. No drinking water. Uninhabited.

The island is exposed to any swell that is going and often throws up huge waves and breakers off the E and W sides. Interesting paddling, at the W end where a small channel separates the island from Ox Island. There are channels and inlets and arches and blowholes and caves on both sides of the W end, especially the N-facing side.

Offlying Lecky Rocks L597-601 1km to the SE are an interesting pitstop, being halfway between Cleggan and Inishturk. The easiest to land on will usually be the more W rock, which has a large footprint and is well fractured, providing a calm option under many conditions. The highest rock is small and has a smooth periphery, landing being hard.

Ox Island

L581-663 Sheet 37

Just W of Davillaun and separated by a narrow channel, which may dry at LWS but is worth a look at HW for a series of low sea arches on the Davillaun side. The island is bigger than it appears from the sea and consists of a series of low ridges and hollows. Sheep grazed, making camping attractive. Landing is easiest onto low rock ledges at the SE corner near the channel.

Mayo

Killary Harbour to Killala County Mayo

Inishdegil More

L735-672 Sheet 37

A tiny gem of a formerly inhabited island. Grassy and rocky, with outliers. Incredibly, people lived here until the 1940s. It lies a couple of kilometres directly outside the mouth of Killary Harbour. The island is privately owned and particular care should be taken to leave absolutely no litter, to ensure continued use for all. Sheep, Peregrine, Terns. Well worth a stopover, and a good waystop on an inner coastal tour to avoid the exposed beaches under Mweelrea Mountain.

Landing

The main landing place is onto a gravelly beach in a cove on the NE side, under ruined houses. Camping is at the houses, with water in a well behind the middle ruin, which may or may not be drinkable. Approach this landing via the main channel through the group.

There is also a storm beach just SW of the northern tip. Because this spot is joined by a half-tide reef to outlier Cooneenfadda, landing is always possible. The camping hereabouts is more openly attractive, and certainly the unlimited driftwood is an attraction to those who would be sociable round their bonfires in the night.

There are other landings, onto boulders on the W side in a creek, and more easily on the S side but the camping isn't great.

Inishdegil Beg / Carrignaglamph

L740-674 Sheet 37

Two small grassy islands just NE of Inishdegil More, joined at all but the highest waters. Landing place on sheltered gravel beach on SE facing side of Carrignaglamph. Sheep, Purple Sandpiper, Arctic Tern. Carrignaglamph has the ruin of a bothan as well as lazybeds, and views.

Govern Island

L718-690 Sheet 37

Govern Island 2km NW of Inishdegil More, and 1km SE of Frehill Island, is ungrazed and inhospitable. Far preferable for waystop or emergency is Inishdegil to the SE. There are plenty of seals but little else.

Landing

Landing is on the NE side where a sheltered channel is closed midway most of the time, so that the SE end is mostly flat calm. Landing on the NW end of the channel can be on to separated rocks, so be careful.

SW of Govern Island are the Carrickgaddy Rocks (Carraig Gadai - Thieves Rocks). These were named when *Gráinne Mhaol* allegedly chained some thieves to the rocks and spread mackerel on their stomachs for the gannets to dive onto. The ebb tide is often felt here where it turns SW towards Crump after spilling out of Killary.

Frehill Island

L708-698 Sheet 37

Lying 6km NW of the mouth of Killary Harbour, Frehill is a steep, narrow, grassy island running WNW/ESE. It is about 500m long, with an extensive area of drying rocks to the SE. The island was sheep grazed up to the 1980s, but no more. The island is privately owned and particular care should be taken to leave absolutely no litter, to ensure continued use for all.

Landing

The forced deep water landing, in moderate conditions, is at the ESE tip. What is a channel at HW becomes a narrow lagoon sheltered by higher drying rocks on the bottom half of the tide. Entrance to the lagoon from either side is via a narrow gap. The N opening is always there but is not visible until very close. The S opening more or less disappears at LW, leaving the lagoon often very calm. Access up the rocks is easy and direct.

Frehill would be acceptable as a waystop in calm conditions, or an emergency stop in less favourable conditions, but only on the lower half of the tide.

Far preferable for waystop or emergency is Inishdegil. The ground to the N and NW outside Frehill towards Caher Island is shallow and breaks in wind. This inshore passage between Killary and Roonah is strictly for good weather only. In any kind of W swell, there are many breakers around the island. If paddling past, it's best to keep close to the N-facing shore. Particular attention should be paid to Carrick McHugh, a rock 3 cables N of the island.

Inishdalla

L634-720 Sheet 37

Inishdalla is a small very attractive grassy island, lying just 2km SE of Inishturk, with superb scenic views all round. The most remarkably wonderful aspect of the view is that despite that there is no other land hard nearby, solid land provides the horizon over 340 degrees of the available 360.

Landing is onto a beach in a long narrow cut (called Boat Cove on the admiralty chart) at the N side of the E tip, marked by iron stakes and some new stone mooring points. The cut is wide enough to take small boats but narrows considerably towards the beach. At some points of the tide, the landing can be awkwardly onto boulders. Uninhabited.

There is a large colony of grey seals.

No water found, but there is super camping available on flat grassy terraces. This is probably best above the beach on N side. The island was being grazed by Sheep in August 2008.

Several inter-tidal pools provide wildlife and a possible swim in moderate circumstances. Breeding gulls, Wheatear, and possibly Storm Petrel.

Inishturk

L619-749 Sheet 37

This is one of the most rugged and remote of all the inhabited west coast islands. Inhabited in modern times since 1700 or so, there has since been up to 577 people resident - before the famine, 174 after - and now there are 53. The local national school has only 3 pupils in 2001/2012. The island children have always gone away to secondary school as teenagers. Until recently, there was no regular ferry, but long overdue perhaps, Inishturk got a new ferry on September 16th 1997. This is probably the most significant 'Irish offshore island development' for many years, and it's hoped that the needs of islands and islanders are at last being taken seriously.

Operating out of Cleggan and Roonah Quay, mainly Roonagh Quay, this ferry also has a real significance for kayakers, as the homeward trip becomes possible even if the weather kicks up overnight. Those who sail small boats off the W coast of Ireland must occasionally expect to fail to be behind their desks of a Monday morning. Inishturk is now a marginally more dependable objective. We wish the islanders well and hope that all this won't change things for them, other than as they would wish.

There are fantastic high cliffs at the back of the island. The western side of the island can cut up very rough and care should be taken to avoid breakers up to 100m W of the cliffs. In mirror-calm conditions or offshore easterly winds, the back of the island has huge cliffs to explore. Care should also be taken at the N of the island where fierce downdraughts can be experienced beneath the two high points.

There are B&Bs, pubs, and basic shops. There is a splendid circular roadway to walk. This goes inland, up the valley from the harbour, and back anti-clockwise by the southern side. Generally, the walking on the island is very good. The N and W are dramatically cliffy. Near the NE tip is a blowhole, the seaward end of which emerges through a penetrable boulder-choke, giving a scuba dive of great quality.

Corncrake

Formerly a Corncrake stronghold, there were 26 pairs counted in 1988. Paddlers heard at least one in 1992, but they were all gone by 1994.

Landing

The landing place is in the main village and harbour (by Nimmo) on the E side, which has recently been extended and is very sheltered. Also, landing is possible at beaches just S of the main harbour, if necessary. Off the mouth of the harbour is a bar, which can give a sporting arrival or departure. But the water inside or outside the bar is well sheltered. In the Great War, the Royal Navy favoured this as an anchorage.

Portdoon L607-737

A narrow cut in rocks yields a superbly sheltered natural harbour, halfway along the southern coast. Camping is easy, but it is a good walk to the pub. This is where the ancient inhabitants lived, and the archeological evidence is plentiful.

Carrickboorla

L587-737 Sheet 37

This is a small low lying island lying just at the SW corner of Inishturk. A narrow channel separates the island from Inishturk, but is navigable by kayak. Landing is easiest onto rock shelves along its N edge. The island has little to hold ones interest save the super views in all directions.

Breeding Bonxie recorded on adjacent slopes of Inishturk in August 2008.

Carrickavea

L587-737 Sheet 37

A small island located just north of the SW corner of Inishturk. The west facing slopes are low lying, but the E side rises sharply to form a narrow attractive channel between it and Inishturk. The passage is dramatic with good rock scenery. The cut is prone to considerable swell at either entrance.

Landing is easiest onto rock shelves on the W or SW corners, but would require a very calm day. Landings onto the sheltered E flank are possible, but require good rock climbing skills with rope protection to reach the grassy summit.

There is good climbing available on both sides of this channel. Breeding Greater black-backed and Herring Gulls. No water and not suitable for camping.

Ballybeg

L650-755 Sheet 37

A small island lying SW of Caher. No sheep were present in August 2008, and consequently there is a nice wild flower mix. An interesting enough place, the main interest is in the twin narrow cuts on the W side, where there is nice cliff scenery especially from kayak level. The S cut nearly bisects the island.

Shag colony in this cut and breeding Greater and Lesser Black backed Gulls, and Herring Gulls. Oystercatcher, Curlew, Whimbrel, Knot, Redshank, Turnstone all noted in August 2008. Resident Grey Seal colony.

Deep water landing is possible through an inlet on the NE side.

Caher Island - *Oileán na Cathrach*

L665-759 Sheet 37

A lovely island, and a must for the passage maker, Caher is 8km out from the shore and 11km SW of Roonah Quay. On the SE of the island is a brackish lake and on the NW high point is a well - St. Patrick's Well. The island is uninhabited and 'belongs' to Inishturk, the people of which have the commonage grazing here. There is a fine 5th Century monastic ruin and crosses, close to the landing, which are used for the annual pilgrimage to and 'pattern' on the island. A pattern is an ancient rural Irish Catholic prayer tradition.

A circular wall 1.5m high and 20m in diameter, now broken in places, forms a "cashel". Inside is a wee oratory. The island is the alleged resting place of Saint Patrick. His bed is outside the oratory, a flat stone half covered in mud and grass. The 'floating' stone is still there in the oratory, and will always return to the island, even if stolen. There is also an ancient prayer/wishing bowl. Unfortunately, some holy stones seem to have gone missing in recent years. The altar stone depicted in Oileáin behind the monies offerings platter was not there in 2008. And beware the thief, whose boat will sink. Some work has been done to re-create the Stations of the Cross and a new "old" one is now visible on the ground behind the E wall of church.

The monks lived in terror of the Vikings from 800 or so to about 1,000. By 1,500 they had Algerine slavers to worry about. All the while they starved in winter. Their faith must have been enduring.

Landing and Camping

Land on the SE, or at Port Temple in a shallow bay below the ruins of the church, just NW of the eastern tip. There is another, in some ways better, landing on the SW side. It is difficult to find until very close, and consists of a narrow inlet, which turns to the right after a few metres. The land just opposite is probably the best for camping. The holy well is unsuitable for drinking water.

Bird life

Bonxie breeding.

Lovely island.

Roonah Quay

L744-808 Sheet 30

Situated where Clew Bay turns S, this recently modernised pier is in an exposed cove. There are almost continuous breaking swells over a long rock ledge running out W from the pier. This is the embarkation place for the ferry to Clare Island, with waiting room, public phone, and toilets nearby. Roonah is a corncrake stronghold. Launching is difficult, from the steps or a boulder beach adjacent. In northerlies, a better spot for small groups is the N end of sandy White Strand beach just S of Emlagh Point at L747-797, about 1km to the S, reachable easily by road from Roonah. Larger groups will prefer the S end of the beach at L748-788. More dependable, but less convenient, on the Clew Bay side is the sand-silted Carrowmore Pier at L794-817. It is just NW of Louisburgh, within walking distance, and has toilets.. Another launching point is Old Head Pier (one of Nimmo's), about 4km further E at L834-824 where there is a hotel but is otherwise remote from facilities.

Clare Island

L715-852 Sheet 30

14.1 sq.km. A beautiful, large, high, dramatic, inhabited island, dominating the mouth of Clew Bay. There is a regular ferry service www.clareislandferry.com from Roonah Quay at L744-808. Hire bikes or bring your own. The population of the island is about 150 in winter, and double that in summer. There are several B&Bs. Basic provisions are available and there are limited facilities - a pub, hotel, public phone and even a nurse. There is a new hostel www.goexplorehostel.ie, with bar and fish restaurant, the fish caught daily by the manager. There is a "no booze inwards" policy here as elsewhere, and any drinking must be done at the bar. The island is well worth a special visit. It is the highest of the truly offshore islands of Ireland. Knockmore at 462m gives spectacular views of the Mayo coast and falls almost sheer to the sea. Corncrake have not been heard since 1988 except for a single calling bird in 2002.

Landing and Camping

Land by the recently much extended and improved pier at L715-852 by the main harbour near the SE tip. The pier is just by an old, square castle, being one-time HQ of pirate-queen Granuaile who ruled the western seaboard. Camping is in the campsite in the field behind the beach. There is a small charge for this facility and it includes access to the toilets in the community centre just across the road. If utilising the camp site it makes more sense to land on the beach rather than the pier.

L693-843 This is a significant landing on a gravel beach beside a broken pier. It is about halfway along the S coast at Portnakilly. It is not apparent until close and is situated below a conspicuous church and ruined 12th Century Abbey. This has been recently restored. It is early Cistercian, pre-Norman, pre-English and pre-Granuaile. There is a well-stocked Co• op shop, but it is a long way to the pub at the harbour.

L703-877 Near the northern tip of the island, landing is also possible on the north-eastern side, about 1km SE of the tip, in a well-sheltered cove. Unfortunately this cove is not dependable as swell can make landing very difficult, but it is worth a look. The cove is about halfway between a prominent boulder beach and the disused but conspicuous lighthouse on the northern point of the island. Landing is onto a steep slip, or onto a sheltered breakwater. This landing is of interest on circumnavigation, or for its green road giving convenient access

to the interior. Space for boats at the landing is limited. Larger groups should consider leaving tethered boats floating on the water.

Circumnavigation

A circumnavigation is a memorable experience, but a serious undertaking. There are long sections without reliable landings, particularly from Portnakilly on the southern side, all the way through the SW and N to the landing spot on the NE. There is an inlet on the southern side of the island, 1km E of the south-western tip. Locally called Lackwee, it is exposed to the SW but otherwise sheltered. There is always strong tidal effects at the N, E & SW points.

Rock Climbing

The first rock climbing on the island was pioneered by Gerry Moss in 2013 at L665-843 about 5km from the pier along the south shore.

Tides

Tides flooding into Clew Bay flow east on the northern side of the island and northeast on the southern side.

North of Clare Island		
Direction	Time	Speed
E	5:30 before Galway HW	0.5kn
W	0:40 after Galway HW	1.5kn

South of Clare Island		
Direction	Time	Speed
NE	5:30 before Galway HW	1.5kn
SW	0:40 after Galway HW	0.5kn

The ground on the southern side is shallow.

Both passages, particularly the northern side, kick up when the ebb is against the prevailing westerlies. If on passage north, catching the flood combines well with the tides into and through Achill Sound, but care is needed on passage south.

Flora and Fauna

Robert Lloyd Praeger the greatest ever Irish naturalist, organised probably the greatest ever survey of a particular area ever conducted in Ireland. From 1909 to 1911, 100 scientists from all over Europe put Clare Island under the microscope. Once again (Praeger had gone this way on the less remote Lambay Island off Dublin a few years before), they found no new Galapagos, where species change and adapt in a remote environment over time. They did though recognise 9,000 organisms overall, including 109 animals and 11 plants new to science.

Granuaile

In the 16th century, Grace O'Malley – *Gránúaile* – sea-queen of western Ireland, was based here at Clare. Her castle dominates the landing at the pier in the quiet bay on the E side. The O'Malley motto was "invincible on land and on sea". *Gránúaile* took that seriously. She tolled every ship that came her way, Irish or not.

Famously, she sailed to London to visit the queen, Elizabeth. She was well received. She offered her "tolling" services to the British, in what sounds like a somewhat mercenary

arrangement. She used and abused her femininity and particularly her husbands – she had three – to gain territory and advantage generally.

The Islands of Clew Bay

L935-863 Sheet 31

The islands of Clew Bay are very accessible, and provide an highly attractive option for visiting paddlers, whether or not suffering bad weather.

Essentially, these islands are the most W tip of Ireland's 'drumlin belt', the other end being at Strangford Lough, S of Belfast. Drumlins are the remnants of lateral moraines left behind by the last ice age, boulder clay and gravel covered with soil and grass. The belt wanders through Down, Armagh, and Cavan, and then meanders ever westwards, disappearing into the sea at Clew Bay. The islands, just as in Strangford, tend to be grazed, grassy hummocks. These islands are pretty and in the prettiest of locations. They are sandwiched between the mighty cone shaped Croagh Patrick to the S and the Nephins to the N. Croagh Patrick is a holy mountain with a chapel on the summit. Known all over as 'the Reek', a reek is a haycock, or also a stack of turf. The Nephins are probably the remotest and wildest mainland hills in Ireland.

It is widely believed in Ireland that there are 365 islands in inner Clew Bay, 'one for every day of the year'. Pilgrims climbing Croagh Patrick get their chance to count them, but must be distracted, as in reality there are slightly less than 100. About 55 are dealt with in this text as of 2012. The barefoot walk to the summit, on the last Sunday of July, is an annual test for the hardier of local Christians. In kayaking terms there are half a dozen islands that stand out, a dozen highly attractive, another dozen nice, and the rest, well they are grand altogether. Quality, in terms of the visiting recreationalist with a day or days to spend, peaks along the W outer rim, and even at that is better in the S half. Inishoo midway is generally regarded as the jewel in the crown, while Innishcannon just to its N is the pretty unattractive.

In June 2012, only some of the islands were inhabited, and no water was found on any uninhabited ones. There is probably a connection. Collan More, and Island More / Knocky Cahillaun are the largest. All inhabited islands had been given piers and/or pontoons about 10 years ago, and most had mains water and electricity even before that. Inishlyre had the largest population at 6. Collan More, with a permanent population of 2, has the famous Glenans Sailing Centre, capable of over 50 students at a time. Inishgowla South had 2. Inishgort with 1 has a lighthouse. John Lennon bought Dorinish in 1969 and a commune thrived there for a while. It is said locally that he preferred the hotels of Westport and Mularanny, accessing the commune by day by helicopter. The commune survived in tents. Many of the islands are interconnected by reefs at lower tides, and many others are almost so, making seagoing journeys amongst them less trouble on the top half of the tide. Reefs / gravel bars sometimes differ from OS (understandably). For instance Inishgort to Islandmore dries at mid tide, while Islandmore, Rabbit Island, Derrinish and Inishbee are more or less permanently connected. The big worry is being caught on a falling tide, unable to float out of trouble. Realistically, the *portage* is a necessary part of the sea kayaker's skills hereabouts, so factor it into the trip planning.

A different island may be chosen each night. Beware that navigation needs careful map reading and getting lost is more than possible, necessitating landing and a stroll to the nearest summit to reorientate. There are a few derelict crofts. The local mudwall division of fields

will interest the many for its labour intensive character. Marvel at the lazybeds, the term used to describe famine time potato growing activity. There was nothing lazy about those who grew potatoes this way or subsisted on potatoes any way. On some islands lazybeds cover every green inch.

Regrettably, the islands are divided W/E between sheets 30 / 31, truly a pity.

Categorisation

The islands of the bay may loosely be divided into three categories for the visitor. The outer islands, particularly in the middle/S, are remote and wonderful and invite camping overnight. Inside these the islands tend to be farmed, but the more remote tend to be absentee farmed. That means sheep but not cattle, so these are also a joy to walk, mostly unfenced, the views are stunning, and camping is normally perfectly possible. Nearer the shore the islands may be inhabited or farmed as though on the mainland, so greater respect for the privacy of the owner is required, especially where there is one house only on an island. While walking is a pleasure, on occasions strictly with permission, camping would normally be out.

Flora & Fauna

Black Guillemot, waders, Grey Wagtails, and all the usual bird and plant life abound. A single Corncrake was heard in 2001. There are no rabbits. Several islands in the NE were rat infested in 2012. Seals are few and localised. Some signs of otter. Foxes reside. Damson trees are frequent in the NE, so roll on September.

Tides

There is no committed or exposed paddling. Beachcombing on low tides is a must, especially where a stormbeach joins two islands in a natural catchment setup. Slack water corresponds closely to HW and LW Westport, which is about Galway +0030.

Beware of the tidal race on the ebb at the Inishgort lighthouse at L900-876. There are 3kn+ races through gaps between Bartra, Inishdaugh and Dorinish, and similar but weaker (approx 1.5kn) N & S of Inishoo. Flows are also significant in Newport Channel and S of Inishbearna. Beware of localised wind -v- tide. Care should be taken in the N side of bay, especially off the Rosturk strand area, for risk of stranding on sandflats as the tide recedes.

Access

Access is from anywhere near Westport or Newport, but for the middle section of the bay perhaps nowhere more central or convenient than the pier at Rosmoney Quay L935-873. From Westport, head N on the N59, and when barely out of the town, turn left at a sign for rugby, golf and Glenans Sailing Club. Follow the small road to the the sailing club and park at the pier. There is a stand-pipe for fresh water and easy slipway access. Roscahill Pier L942-885 on Castlelaffey strand is also convenient and is more sheltered in N winds, but to be avoided at LW springs. It is adjacent to a castle associated with Graineuaile's most famous seafaring son *Tibod Na Long*. There are significant tidal streams on both ebb and flood through entrance channel. The road crossing this channel on the OS doesn't exist. The Carraholly area may also be considered for the very S/SE area near Westport, called Westport Bay. The best put-in is Pigeon Point L953-850 - park sensitively as the shellfish factory is operational, and remember that trucks need room to turn. There is a huge harbour seal colony just off here. This is also the site of the Achill islanders tragedy when 34 migrant workers from Achill waiting to go on board the Elm, a steamship bound for Scotland.

Access is poorer towards the N, and certainly there is nothing readily suggestive for the NW outer islands. Even Mulranny pier L833-957 may be considered in this regard. Elsewhere along this N side of the bay, the carry to LW may be offputting. For small parties there is a feasible option at L868-958 Rosturk Strand, just down a short boreen from the main road. Here the rising tide reaches earlier than elsewhere, but the parking is limited, very much so at spring tides.

To the N inner islands, in Newport Bay, access is best from Newport Marina [Gridref] (at the apartments themselves, formerly a seaweed factory) – or – the newly renovated and extended pier at Carrigahowley / Rockfleet L923-952, well sheltered and adjacent to the excellently restored Rockfleet castle. This is associated with Grainneuaile's second husband, Richard "Iron Dick" Burke, who acquired his name from his habit of always wearing armour, from which he made his fortune. At HWS it is possible to paddle right up to the castle door. Access sadly has been prohibited in 2010 by the OPW in fear of litigious entrants.

Pedalling / Paddling Planning

The Westport - Achill Sound railway, closed in 1937, has now been converted to an excellent 42km cycle route, making a great option for a combined paddle / cycle trip. Opening spring 2011 all the way.

Main Channel into inner Westport

The main channel from seaward into Westport passes immediately S of Inishgort lighthouse, and swings S, passing SW of Inishlyre, continuing between Inishlaghan and Inishimmel. Now head ESE (actually 127°, SW edge Inishlyre on Inishgort lighthouse), pass between Inishraher and Inishgowla South, then keep Finaun and Green Islands to left, the little Corillan and Carricknamore to right. Once into inner Westport Bay the channel towards Westport is called Westport Channel, which passes S of Monkellys Rocks, and is a excellently buoyed all the way in to L973-847. Follow the channel along the old quay, until a handy slipway at the gates of Westport House L981-846, where parking is reasonable in the area, and all modern facilities nearby. Best approached at mid-tide or above. Do explore the fine old boathouse of Westport House, opposite the quay. Do not under any circumstances deviate towards Westport Quay to the ESE L978-843.

From Close inshore the S part of Clew bay, a passage is perfectly possible just off Bartraw, inside Inishdaugh.

Inisheeny

L923-846 Sheets 30/31

Remnants of 3 houses above beach at NE. Mudwalls with prominent channels each side, meaning they were built by one landowner separating stock, and not neighbours separating land holdings. Extensive mussel cages to SE, April 2006.

According the *Annals of the Four Masters*, a large gatheroing of ships assembled here in 1239, the greatest galley fleet ever assembled on the west coast at that time.

Inishdaugh

L915-850 Sheet 30

Flat walled garden but no remnant of house at N end. Camping in field provided. Some lazybeds. High clay cliffs to S. See how close it is to Bartraw Strand spit to the SW. The main channel for boats passing from the S part of Clew bay comes through this gap, the boats passing being a mighty sight.

Inishleague

L910-854 Sheet 30

Flat land at N end with house remnants provides excellent camping. Land just E of N tip. Flotsam galore. S side vies for highest boulder clay cliff hereabouts. Lazybeds.

December 2008 Otter and Red-breasted Merganser 15 seen, Brent Geese 20 and evidence of grazing by geese all over. Golden Plover 15

Inishraher

L924-850 Sheet 31

Outfarmed, perhaps best landed upon away from the one summer dwelling at NE point above a lovely swimmable beach. Land perhaps therefore in the SW, below a man-made cut through the cliff above. Poor camping. Sheep. Flagpost and bunting on summit.

Inishraher is unfortunately a victim of the 2008+ Irish recession. It suffers the hideous eyesore of an abandoned building site, that boasts the grand name of the “Clew Bay Centre for World Peace”. This consists of 8 unfinished buildings and associated crud which sadly make the nice beach on the E side somewhat less attractive.

Dorinish Mor

L901-859 Sheet 30

Every inch of this magnificent island was tilled at one time. Approaching from the sea to eastward, the ridges of the lazybeds are so prominent that this one factor bears in strongly. Landing on the extreme SW corner at LW one is struck immediately by the distinctive “drumlineseque” twin summits and the cropped off W sides eroded glacial till slopes. These two islands are separated by a raised storm beach that catches all the flotsam that passes nearby. Extensive spit to NE. Land at a beautiful sandy beach in the SE of the N island Mor. Larger in every way than Beg, Dorinish Mor has possibly the highest boulder clay cliff in the world.

Here boasted the famous Beatles commune of the late 60s, post Woodstock era. Promoted by John Lennon, he and Yoko Ono occasionally came 1970 – 1972, and there was even a visit from Princess Grace and Prince Ranier. The commune was directed by the “King of the Hippies” Sid Rawle, who retains that title to today. It all began with a summer camp in July August, but an overwinter was tried. Banks surrounded every construction, anti-wind. Mostly they lived in teepees but the king had a wooden structure. At the height of its experience, tomatoes were growing under plastic, but the wind won out in the end. There are also the remnants of three crofts just NE of the beach, with kitchen gardens still obvious. Lennon’s music came under various regional influences during his lifetime, mostly from the far east. Why not from the west? Imagine Matt Molloy on the zitar and John on the uilleann pipes. Maybe both would have benefitted?

Fauna

Sheep, no cattle, Merganser, Lapwing, lots of breeding Cormorant.

Dorinish Beg

L903-856 Sheet 30

Small version of Mor, 100% lazybeds, extensive spit to SE. Separated by long raised storm beach. 200+ Barnacle Geese feeding on southern slopes of hill and 10+ Divers offshore December 2008. Attractive.

Inishimmel

L908-857 Sheet 30

Collared all round by mud cliffs save for a single breach at N, n.b. not at beach at NE, above which sheep pen. Sheep and lazybeds.

Inishlaghan

L909-861 Sheet 30

Little brother of Immel, but across the main Westport channel from it. Beach at E side. E half not collared. Lazy beds and sheep.

Inishgowla South

L927-858 Sheet 31

The impossibly pretty whitewashed cottage midway on NE side is actually a very modern comfortable self catering cottage for letting. The island is farmed with cattle as well as sheep, which means fences, and therefore unattractive to wild camping.

Shallow water on inside is always passable but needs care in navigation.

Finnaun Island

L933-854 Sheet 31

One of two prominent lumps of rock and grass that waymark the main Westport channel, like huge natural buoys. Possible otter set.

The other lump is Corillaun at L935-847.

Crovinish

L923-865 Sheet 30/31

Absentee farmed, but with the farmhouse still well there at the E end. Very nice to walk, it enjoys mains water and electricity. Nice views all round. Pleasant. Sheep.

There is also a sometimes little beach at just E of NW tip. Otter. 30 Red-breasted Merganser December 2008.

Illanataggart

L932-867 Sheet 31

Land SW and opposite the enormous former Customs Building on the mainland. There is a track across at LW from the SE, gated, which looks peculiar at HW. Very pretty holiday home at E end. Absentee farmed, sheep, very pleasant, mains water and electricity. The cottage this sleeps 6 and is basic, but makes an excellent budget base for those wanting to launch from the front door to explore the bay.

Inishlyre

L914-873 Sheet 30

A large exterior island, there are two permanent and two holiday homes in the sheltered bay on the E facing side. Six people permanently reside. Here there is an excellent new pier and pontoon. All is farmed, cattle and sheep. Ask about camping.

The *Inishlyre* (formerly the *Newfyne* registered out of San Lorenzo in Honduras 1965, also formerly the *Glenfyne*, also formerly serving the Aran Islands out of Galway in the 1990s, sadly lay for a long time nearly derelict against the new pier on the E side, but has now been cut up and scrapped in pieces. A great pity. Much older boats are still at it. A mystery ship, as they say.

25 Brent Geese + 4 Divers.

Inishgort

L902-877 Sheet 30

To the visitor, the more interesting part of this lovely island is the SW tip, complete with the only lighthouse hereabouts. Land and/or camp near the lighthouse on short flat grass, to be out of the way. There is a single house at the main landing pier at the inhabited NE tip. The island is farmed – sheep and cattle. A good track passes between the NE and the SW lighthouse area.

Land by the lighthouse on the SE facing side in the lee of a windlass ramp, or on the NW facing side as conditions dictate.

Lovely place although the new gabion type pier, protective gabion type walls and ruined landing on W side give feeling of decay and disorder not typical of lighthouse islands. 2 Divers.

Collan Beg

L913-883 Sheet 30

Lovely small neighbour of Collan More, barely detached at LW. Inhabited with one very private summer home, it is lovely to walk. Grazed by sheep. Camping to the S of the dwelling at the end of the sound, where land onto sand.

Collan More

L927-877 Sheet30/31

A huge island, possibly the biggest hereabouts.

Land at the gravel beach at the Glenans Sailing Centre in the sheltered E facing bay in the SE opposite the access point Rosmoney Pier. The centre was built in 1979, and though originally a French outfit, it is now entirely Irish run. Parties of 50+ can stay at Glenans. Two people live permanently in the centre. The summit is just above the centre to its N. About 3 other houses are not permanently occupied, including a renovated schoolhouse to the NE. Absentee farmed. Little attractive camping found. Sadly. “No Camping” signs appeared in 2010.

Island More

L907-896 Sheet 30/31

This is a conglomeration of a number of islands very connected, including Rabbit Island to the NW, Knocky Cahillaun and Freaghillaun to the NE, and mighty Clynish to the E. The centre is at the gap with Knocky Cahillaun where there are half a dozen houses. A laneway though the gap is an important thoroughfare hereabouts, certainly a significant *portage* in an area where these things matter. The houses are well appointed, money no object. The ridge walking either side of the gap is gorgeous. Rabbit L902-897 is also joined to Inishbee / Derinish, and nowadays is an absentee cattle ranch. There is also a posh quay / pontoon on the spit joining to Quinnsheen Island at about L909-891.

Most remarkable is the fine path created from the pontoon to the nearest house, across unstable storm beach. The house is old, with old vegetation, there a long time.

Even more so, view the Steamship wrecked in Island More Harbour, called the *Charles Stewart Parnell*. She caught fire while at anchor there, and was lost with no casualties. She is famous for the enormous lobster living in her boiler, who has been trapped there the last 30+ years, as it grew too big to escape!

Clynish

L930-896

Large intensively farmed mainland type island. The main habitation is in a bay on the SE. No real attraction to the passing recreational user.

Inishbee

L904-904 Sheet 30

With a flat area at its N end, and 2/3 remnants of houses, camping is possible. Land at the E facing beach at the NE. Very pleasant, good walking, sheep, locally typical mudwalls between fields.

Divided into two parts by a massive linking storm beach spit, the S end is vintage Clew Bay walking on a sausage shaped ridge, the views changing all the time. Very beautiful.

Derinish

L915-902 Sheet 30

Connected to Inishbee by spit L907-900, which is another significant local *portage*, land at the old quay at the centre SE facing side of the island. There is one remnant of a house here. Typical local sausage shaped ridge. Lovely to walk.

Calf Island

L915-905 Sheet 30

Unremarkable small island. Land on sand at E tip. The only camping would be on top where flat. Damsons in sheltered watery valley mid-N side. Tide flows strongly N side. Sheep. Lovely walking.

Illannaconney

L932-907 Sheet 31

Lovely small island. Sheep grazed. Mud wall ditches. Lazybeds. Land onto sand at E tip.

Inishturkbeg

L943-906 Sheet 30

Very privately owned and recently developed as a commercial enterprise involving rental holidays and the production whiskey and Irish traditional music. This island is possibly Ireland's poshest island? Land, with permission only, at the original habitation in the SE, which is conserved. The modern housing is above the SW. Everything is of the highest standard, even the tennis court, horses, and long-horned cattle. Developed and modernised by unorthodox millionaire Nadim Sadek, it was sold on in 2013. Views from the summit are stunning. The nearest access is from a sheltered N facing pontoon and slip in Ross Channel due E at L957-904.

Inishoo

L903-911 Sheet 30

By far the most beautiful of all the Clew Bay islands, period.

A sandy swimming beach on the E side greets the visitor. The camping is dry, sheltered and on short grass. The foraging on the shore for flotsam and bonfire material is about the best there is. A dune system to the NE adds interest. The remnants of a couple of houses do too. The NW end of the island is very high and sheer, and the island has a distinctive shape seen from N or S. The cliff is among the highest hereabouts.

Inishgowla

L914-911 Sheet 30

A fine substantial island. It has a classic horsehoe shaped topography, beloved of the hill walker. In the coum is a valley and even a lake. By the lake are the remnants of 2/3 houses.

Sheep, Shelduck, ash and beech trees around the remnants. Camping and swimming on E facing beach centre E side.

Inishlaughil

L928-914 Sheet 31

Wonderful pretty island, and campable at the NE above the shingle beach, were it not for the nearby rat infestation at the (defensive?) ramparts at the E tip.

Inishbollog

L936-914 Sheet 31

Small island, unkempt in 2012, but someone loves it. Ungrazed and going to seed, there is a stairway from the sandy landing at the E tip to the summit plateau, and even plantings of New Zealand flax and some struggling alders.. Must have been grazed until recently and hopefully will be again.

Inishdaff

L951-912 Sheet 31

Land in the sandy beach in the bay at the ESE. Lovely sheep grazed island. Church at E tip L953-913. One full wall remains and other partials. Some local recent burials within. Note especially the wall around the enclosure at HW level and also the stepping stones into the enclosure.

Inishmolt

L934-918 Sheet 31

Let run to nature as of 2012 but it possesses a fine sandy beach at the NE. A shed at the beach is noticeable but look for a shack in behind hedges above. All very basic, all very beautiful. The interior is let go, which is a pity. Why no sheep?

Illanmaw

L912-920 Sheet 30

Unmeritorious. One sheep, but needed more in 2006. Bluebells.

Inishfesh

L927-921 Sheet 31

Christened by its inhabitants "Inishfox", there is a sandy beach below an old house painted to Rastafarian nightmare standards. Old ruins nearby. This island reeks of money spent in good times and then abandoned. The decking out front of the hose is impressive, but the Velux in the roof is broken. A double door is boarded up. The interior of the island would be an access challenge.

Inishcuill

L935-924 Sheet 31

Rough shore, land anywhere downwind, onto rocks. Long skinny tall island, a delight to walk with its almost detached satellite to the W, its mudwall ditches, it is let go a bit, but not gone 2012.

Rabbit Island

L953-934 Sheet 31

Medium sized island with a long ridge running roughly east –west. Landing is easiest onto shingle beaches at the lower lying eastern end where the main island is connected to a small outlying islet. Good camping is possible here but no water found. Good walking on well grazed sheep sward especially along the summit ridge line.

Inishdaweel

L939-938 Sheet 31

Large high topped island that competes with Muckinish L933-934 to dominate the view westward as one approaches from the Newport Channel. Landing is most convenient at the eastern end onto shingle beaches. The area just above the landing is low and flat and very suitable for camping. The walk to the summit is worth the effort as the views west and south west are stunning.

The island has a long narrow spit of land that extends southwestwards on its western side. It adds considerable interest to the walking as one drops rapidly off the summit. Grazed by sheep in January 2016.

Roslynagh

L935-944 Sheet 31

Roslynagh is very different to the neighbouring islands in this sector as it is obviously more intensively managed. The grass sward has witnessed considerable improvement and its proximity to the mainland at Ardagh allows vehicular access at times of low tide. There are cattle pens, fencing and silage bales which suggest that the island is grazed by cattle in season. Sheep only were present in January 2016.

Muckinish

L933-934 Sheet 31

Lying further west than Inishdaweel L939-938, Muckinish is a great big lump of an island that seems higher in altitude than its neighbours. However there is only a metre in the difference between it and Inishdaweel. The most convenient landing is on its western side onto a shingle beach located midway between two storm beaches. The summit views are worth the effort.

Freaghillaunluggagh

L928-931 Sheet 31

A small narrow island that is quite different in aspect to most of its immediate neighbours. The island is obviously much less grazed and consequently has a more natural vegetation. The easiest landing is located mid way along its northern edge where curiously an old wooden handrail was still present in January 2016 to help ascent to the central ridge. The ground underfoot here is quite wet and running water noted. Significantly, obvious evidence of Otter presence on the island especially around the freshwater run-off areas.

Freaghillaun East

L923-927 Sheet 31

Land onto shingle at E end. Grazed. Nice.

Freaghillaun West

L913-928 Sheet 30

Rough. Ungrazed. Bluebell, mallard, primrose, flags, vetches. Land anywhere downwind.

Inishkee

L919-929 Sheet 30/31

Beautiful. Land at NE onto shingle. Hawthorn. Lovely to walk. Lazybeds. Grazed.

Inishdoonver

L915-932 Sheet 30

Beautiful. Land at E onto rocky area. Lovely to walk. Lazybeds. Grazed.

Inishcoragh

L917-937 Sheet 30

Dominated by a house the planning permission for which seems extraordinary? A steep slipway defies landing with onshores. Lovely stand of broadleaves to E of house. Grazed. Land elsewhere and enjoy.

Inishdasky

L914-939 Sheet 30

Lovely island, lovely house nestled into the topography, fitting nicely into the landscape. Lovely gentle road up from slipway. Easy to land.

Illannabraher

L922-942 Sheet 30/31

Lovely island, waisted near the W end, the smaller further W end being the more intensively farmed, and even fenced. There is a shingle beach for landing either side of the waist. Portaging ? Both ends are grazed and both are pleasant. Damsons grow in profusion. The shingle bar that connects the eastern and western segments of the island may be very occasionally flooded over . The height of tide line debris in January 2016 was very close to beach-head.

Inishquirk

L907-944 Sheet 30

Fine agricultural unit separated from the mainland at all tides. Land in a sheltered sandy cove in the NE.

Inishcannon

L900-928 Sheet 30

An unpleasant ungrazed lump in 2006, grazed by sheep in 2012, and though formerly severely rat infested, the rats have departed. It has the remnants of a recent shack and a septic tank/well/holding tank, with a dangerously flimsy fibre glass top.

Inishcarrick

L900-935 Sheet 30

Land onto stony beach at NE side. Lovely to walk. Clifty S side.

Inishilra

L893-938 Sheet 30

Land on rocky shore under ruined house in NW. Nice to walk. Damsons.

Inishcorky

L892-932 Sheet 30

Unmeritorious ungrazed lump, but not at all unpleasant. Land on NW side. Remains of bothies.

Inishdeashbeg

L889-937 Sheet 30

Rough. Nothing much. Land in NE.

Inishnacross

L892-941 Sheet 30

Large and tall almost mainland type sheep farm. Well husbanded. Land at NE onto gravel spit. Lovely to walk. Boundary erosion issues.

Inishdeashmore

L886-936 Sheet 30

Undoubtedly once nice. Rough. Rat infested 2012. A short boreen gives tractor access from the sheltered landing beach in the NE corner inside a spit.

Roeillaun

L878-931 Sheet 30

Attractive short grassed sheep grazed remote island. Land at the E end of the N side in a sheltered sandy (LW) bay. Very nice camping by the sandy beach. High cliffs on S side.

Inishcooa

L878-937 Sheet 30

Intensively farmed. Modern fencing divides into several bands. Land at the gate at the E end. Lovely to walk.

Inisherkin

L882-944 Sheet 30

A cattle and sheep outfarm. Shallow water to N. Attractive.

Its finest features are at the E tip. Here are found a nice landing spot onto gravel either side of the NE spit, swimming in summer at HW, nice camping, a broadleaf copse of beech, ash, sycamore and hawthorn, an old ruin of a fine house, and a strange rampart. No money was spared building the house, and one wonders at the importance it possessed maybe hundreds of years ago. A rampart can safely be said to be older, and its importance years ago only guessed at.

Moynish More

L866-947 Sheet 30

An outfarm with cattle and sheep, this is a large double headed island, with boreens and tracks.

There is a sandy LW beach at the NNE in a small bay. Good camping is on short grass on the E side of the bay.

Achill Island Area

Achill (14,672ha) is the biggest and most populous Irish island with 2,500 full-time residents.

It is connected to the mainland by a swivel bridge at Achill Sound, built 1888.

‘L’ shaped, high mountains mark the scenery all along the SW side. Only in the far NE corner is there flat land.

At Keel, there is a substantial machair, and behind it is the most populated part of the island where there are pubs, restaurants, and all amenities. Two-thirds of the way down the W side is Dooega, a sheltered harbour, and at the S tip lies Achill’s little sister Achillbeg, a wonderful island.

The E shore on the edge of Achill Sound is low and boggy. Near the S end of the sound is a Granuaile castle worth visiting. The RNLI station is close by. Midway up the sound is the bridge at the village of Achill Sound, where there are all facilities.

On the N coast is the hamlet of Doogort, under Slievemore Mountain, with its beautiful beach and pier, backed by machair. During the famine era of the mid 19th Century, Edward Nangle ran the most energetic Protestant ministry ever experienced in Ireland. Generally, the various Christian churches in Ireland do not proactively proselytise (convert) each other’s members. Nangle went in hard and succeeded to a degree, but at a price. He opened schools and even a hotel. He stands critically judged by history in that he only offered food to the hungry who

would become Protestant. Those accepting this bribe were called 'souters', a pejorative term all over Ireland to this day. He also operated on Inishbiggle.

Paul Henry (1876 – 1958) the noted Belfast landscape artist spent years on Achill and some of his best works were painted here – Launching the Currach, Potato Diggers, and Granuaile's Castle.

Achillbeg Island

L720-924 Sheet 30

Thought by many to be among the finest of formerly inhabited islands off Ireland, a worthy rival to the Blaskets and the Inishkeas. Attractive. A fertile valley links two ice rounded hills to N and S, schist to the N and sandstone to the S. There is a row of cottages on the N slope of the valley and a disused schoolhouse on the S side. Of the 326 total acreage, there are 80 arable acres and 200 acres grazing.

Geological evidence suggests the island was once joined to the mainland to the NE.

Sociological evidence suggests it was joined to Achill to the NW until much more recent times. Ancient maps show similar townland and other place names shared with Achill and the mainland. More intriguingly, an old fort *Dún na gCurrach* (Dun Gurrough) L708-931 (with nearby *Dún Beag*) at the NW tip surely guarded the SE end of what must have been a narrow strip of land providing a NW passage between the two islands before the sea broke through.

In the mid 1800s there was said to have been 200 people on the island, but the population was never more than 117 in the 1900s. There were 104 in 1900, and this was down to 67 in 1936 when the remaining people resisted evacuation and resettlement on Achill. Specifically in 1959, there were 8 pupils in the school, all brothers and sisters. The last 38 people all left during the 1960s.

The island missed the worst of the blight that gave the Great famine of 1847. Edward Nangle the missionary visited but did not proselytise here. There was once poor turf in the NW but by 1880 or so all turf was brought in from Saula through Achill Sound, back breaking and dangerous work. Formerly Irish speaking, the island was entirely bilingual by 1900.

The crossing of Achill Sound to the E of the island and Blind Sound to the N are often treacherous as both are exposed. Rabbits, plentiful on the mainland nearby, never made it here, though hares and foxes were plentiful. Rats invaded twice in living memory but the islanders trapped them and prevented a colony forming. Badgers established themselves just before the islanders left. Stoats and hedgehogs were very occasionally seen, and mice only towards the very end.

Dún Chill Mór a forked headland on the W side, is a triple fort with the outer, E, section at L709-926. The two inner citadels are on the two branches at L707-926 and L707-927. *Dún Chill Mór* (Dun Kilmore) is said to be the most elaborate promontory fort of the W Coast. It was started in the early Iron Age, and was inhabited by many cultures over a long period up to early Christian times. It is somewhat dilapidated through incessant Atlantic assault. Find it by walking W along the N side of the waist, past a storm beach and under a cliff, until the forked headland is identified.

There are some remarkably attractive (70m) rock climbing cliffs at L714-922, though N-facing. Note also the early summer Mediterranean Heath (*Erica*).

Landing

The best landing is at a lovely sheltered sandy beach midway on the E side L720-924 called locally *Trabóderig* (the strand of the red cow). Landing is also possible on the NE side, but less easily. There is a new pier and steps 500m to the S of the main landing beach at L722-920 which provides deep water access to Achillbeg always, but is of little interest to very small craft.

Camping.

A “No camping” sign appeared at the main E facing beach in 2010. It is understood though that kayakers in small numbers who enquire locally will be facilitated.

There are also some storm beaches on the outside (W) of the island for those who favour the oceanic feel to their camping.

Tides

See below for tidal information for the southern entrance to Achill Sound.

When there is sufficient depth of water in springs, Blind Sound between Achillbeg and Achill fills east when Achill Sound is flooding north and empties west.

Bills Rocks

L551-938 Sheet 30

The Bills Rocks lie 11km due S of Keem Strand (F562-043) on Achill Island. Keem is pronounced ‘Kim’ locally. This is the nearest launching point for a trip to the Bills. Larger groups might prefer Gubalennaun Beg quay at F623-036 (locally “Purteen”) where there is easy parking and no surf. This option adds 1km to each leg of the trip.

The Bills comprise three large, steep-sided, grass-covered rocks. The largest rock has a grass covering of approximately half a soccer pitch. The ground is relatively level and could be camped upon, but it is completely exposed and it would probably be foolhardy unless you were sure of settled weather.

Landing

It is possible to land on the largest rock, which is the most northerly. On the southern side is a long, sloping cliff to the top. The gradient here is approximately 50° and while it might be easy for a rock climber, it could be quite challenging in canoeing gear or wet weather. The landing should only be attempted in calm weather and is best at LW, when there is an obvious ledge approximately 2m above water level, which can be accessed by a large, ‘easy to climb’ crack. It would be prudent to have a light kayak for this endeavour.

There is probably only enough room for three kayaks on the ledge, which limits the size of the landing party. Kayaks can be left on the ledge and tied to the rock face using rock-climbing chocks.

From the ledge, a large fissure runs diagonally from bottom left to top right and the top of the rock face. There are obvious handholds along the crack and it would probably be graded a ‘diff’ in old rock climbing parlance.

If you have the skills, the climb is worth it. At the top, you really feel exposed, miles from anywhere on a rock in the sea. It is an airy feeling. There are great views back up to Achill while to the SE, the exposed western coasts of Clare Island, Inishturk and Inishbofin are visible. The trip is a brilliant day paddle. It is worth circumnavigating the rocks. There is a beautiful arch to the W.

Inishgalloon

F623-035 Sheet 30

Impressive large island lying 500m S of Gubalennaun Beg quay (by Nimmo) (locally “Purteen”). The island is high and whale backed, grassy on top, and of sufficient steepness to make camping sites a premium. The island is grazed by sheep. Views in all quarters are spectacular.

Landing and Water

Landing onto sloping rock shelves at obvious cut in NE corner. Given any swell it could be tricky enough, onto rock shelves. Swimming may be necessary if seas are lifting. No information re low water situation, which may allow more kelp and softer cuts to become available. Scramble to top. Water not found.

The island has 3 sea caves on its E flank and a gem of a sea cave at its W end. This cave cuts right through the island N/S but also has a W exit. The N entrance is accessible at higher stages of the tide but is decidedly narrow at the lower end of the tidal cycle. All entrances are narrow and kayakers entering need to be wary of swell conditions. The run through is “interesting”. Tides run hard on the ebb off the S/SE corners of the island.

Breeding Shags, Herring and Greater Black backed Gulls.

Achill Island (Outer) - the Round of Achill Head

The round of Achill Head may be done from either side, depending on conditions. The wind direction is everything, but beware of katabatics (downdraughts) on the lee side of the final ridge out to the head, a notorious local feature. The round trip from Doogort to Keem is about 26km. If going to Keel, it is even longer at over 33km.

The round of Achill Island as a whole is about 80km, especially if the beautiful Achillbeg is taken in, and it is worth taking at least three days. This expedition round Achill Head will always be the crux of that trip, and has to be one of the foremost Irish sea paddling trips, to be grabbed when conditions allow, and with caution.

Those on expedition along the coast will find it considerably easier to stick to the inner route through Achill Sound, but the round of Achill Head will be an integral part of the outer route. A trip around Achill and the Mullet Peninsula to the N is a week’s unrivalled expedition. This trip involves a challenging open crossing to Duvillaun Mór from Achill Head itself or Saddle Head to its NE.

The Round of Achill Head is described here from the northern side, starting at Doogort.

Doogort

F672-089 Sheet 22/Sheet 30

This is an important launching or finishing point for the route outside the Mullet peninsula or Achill Head. There is a good beach – it is best to land on at the western end under the hotel. There are also a campsite with facilities and water. It is a bit of a carry from the campsite to the beach. The quay just NW has a landing and water, but no camping. Beware of overfalls to the E of the beach on the ebb. They are just W of Ridge Point at F704-109.

Annagh Strand

F602-077 Sheet 22/Sheet 30

The outer, western part of Achill is dominated by the two summits of Slievemore (671m) at F650-087 and Croaghaun (664m) at F554-058. Between these two, on the northern side, cut off from civilisation altogether, lies the utterly beautiful N-facing Annagh Strand. It is 9.5km or more into the anticlockwise round of Achill Head. The beach is backed by Lough na

Keerogue (Lake of the Beatles). From Doogort, the coast follows the cliffs around, with at least one memorable arch, until a truly remarkable pap (teat) shaped hill (269m) at F607-076 lies just SE of the beach. This is a worthwhile trip in itself, either by hillwalk or paddle, and a must on the circumnavigation, as 16km lies ahead. The megalithic tomb at F602-076 is easily found as it has a 'modern' *bothán* (hut) built in its middle, anything but a normal sight, probably of Inishkea islander construction.

The beach is backed by fairly steep boulders which are covered by the tide a couple of hours before and after HW. Launching/landing is not recommended during this time, particularly in surf, which tends to dump. Timing is critical. Best to come and go between LW and mid tide on the sand.

Achill Head

F517-052 Sheet 22/Sheet 30

From Annagh Strand it is necessary first to travel NW to Saddle Head at F564-094 where a considerable lump may be expected. A reef just offshore adds both technical interest and fear. Then it is SW to the head itself. A few storm beaches litter these impressive cliffs under Croaghaun. At least one is well enough sheltered, and in the right conditions, lunch has been enjoyed at Gubfoheratawy F567-077. Conditions do need to be calm indeed to land. The head itself has broken islets off it and the innermost passage is passable under the right conditions. Moyteoge Head at F565-035 lies 5km ESE, behind which is Keem Strand.

Keem Strand

F562-043 Sheet 22/Sheet 30

A beautiful, horseshoe beach at the end of the road on the southern side of the island, Keem Strand is known to photographers the world over. Sheltered in most conditions, it surfs in southerlies. There are parking spots and viewpoints here, and many walks for Croaghaun and Achill Head. Extensive and excellent rock climbing has recently been developed on the E side of the valley. This bay was the killing ground for the Achill Basking Shark fishery. Toilets (by day) are up from the beach a bit. Camping is inhibited by this being a favourite courting spot, winter and summer, after dark.

Gubalennaun Beg Quay

F623-036 Sheet 30

Locally "Purteen". In trouble, this is the only dependable landing spot for dozens of kilometres in either direction. Keem Strand to the W may dump and Keel to the E is a famous surfing beach. This is a quay with no facilities except water and camping, and the certainty of a landing in any conditions. In nearby Keel can be had most anything - nice restaurants, pubs, provisions. The famous Achill Basking Shark fishery was based here until the mid-20th Century.

Keel Strand

F636-046 Sheet 22/Sheet 30

This is a famous surfing beach to be used by sea kayakers only in calm conditions. There is a camping and caravan site just in from the beach, with a convenient road and water near the village at the NW end of the beach. There is a golf links in the middle. The most remote part is in the SE where the Minnaun (or Menawn) Cliffs begin. Camping is excellent just behind the beach just about anywhere, though watch for golfers in the middle.

Achill Island (Inner) - Achill Sound

Sheet 30

The kayaker on passage can easily manage Achill's inside route. The tide governs entirely only in its narrower places, and the wind mostly prevails.

Achill Sound Bridge at F738-998 and Bull's Mouth at F737-068 are major challenges to larger craft, but kayaks can always manage. Under most conditions, one may paddle under the bridge, even against the flow. This may involve a short sprint, or at worst, a portage. Avoid the very bottom of the tide because drying mudflats S of the bridge inhibit the process. All facilities are available here, as Achill Sound is the main town of the island. The spectacular new swing bridge at Achill Sound was opened in October 2008, replacing the 1947 structure whose pivotal mechanism had become stuck and corroded. From the kayakers' perspective, the channel is clear and navigable, but do be aware that the direction of buoyage changes N of the bridge

At Bull's Mouth, at the northern entrance to the sound at F737-068, the eddies allow one to avoid problems. Wind against tide generates its fearsome reputation.

Tides

The tide flows simultaneously in from both ends to meet on the extensive mudflats just south of Achill Sound Bridge. Accordingly, the flood flows south under the bridge until local HW, which is 2:00 after Galway HW.

The tide floods north through the southern entrance of the sound at Achillbeg

Southern entrance to Achill Sound		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	4:50 before Galway HW	4-5kn
Out	1:35 after Galway HW	4-5kn

The fastest flow is at Darby's Point, just inside the entrance. On the flood, a major eddy circulates just inside the Point at F723-935 on the Achill Island side, reaching as far as *Gránúaile's* castle at F721-941.

The tide floods south through the northern entrance called Bull's Mouth F737-068 at up to 5kn.

Bull's Mouth		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	4:50 before Galway HW	5kn
Out	1:20 after Galway HW	5kn

With wind over tide, quite a race is set up to the SSE. On the flood, a major eddy circulates just inside the entrance on the Achill side. On the ebb, the sound empties to the north, which is often benign.

In summary, going either way through the sound, slow boats should start a couple of hours before Galway HW and enjoy the flood to the mudflats just south of the bridge. Then perhaps break the journey, provision up and have a meal, in time to enjoy the ebb out the other side.

Inishbiggle

F746-067 Sheet 30

The population is 26, mainly adults. Inishbiggle is a large, attractive, low, hummocky island with a dozen or so inhabited houses, perfect for a half day expedition on foot or much longer. Traffic is sparing, the local boat is the curragh, Irish is spoken and hay is saved by scythe. The post office is at F746-067. The abandoned school F753-067 (shown as a church on the

OS sheet) thrived from 1948 to 1998. Electricity arrived in 1978 and reliable water in 1990 (from Ballycroy side). Previously water was local until piped in after 1981 from Achill side across the infamous Bulls Mouth, but the strength of the flow there defeated the engineers. The church at F758-066 is a “must see”, built in the 1870s with the best of quarried sandstone from Achill. No nails were used in the timberwork, only dowels, all still deemed perfect in the 2000s when a local team of craftsmen set about to refurbish the lot. The red pine timber was entirely free of worm. Originally Protestant, the church was rededicated to interdenominational Christian use in 2003.

Access was traditionally from Achill. The islanders campaigned for generations for a cable car on the Achill side across Bulls Mouth and finally they lost that war in 2004. The decision was instead to build waterborn ferry pier facilities, but on the mainland Ballycroy side, where the tidal flows are not quite as harsh. Essentially Inishbiggle now looks E to the mainland instead of W to Achill. The mainland road eastwards was much improved and is well signposted off the main road near Ballycroy.

Embarkation and Landing

The main access to Inishbiggle is nowadays from the mainland at Dorans Point F775-078 where there is a substantial pontoon and pier. The ferry is run by Michael Leneghan 00 353 (87) 126 9618. Landing is then at a similarly modern gabion reinforced pontoon and pier at Gbnadoogha F764-077 in the NE of the island. It seems that Eamon O’Cuiv, the Minister for Arts, Heritage, the Gaeltacht, and the Islands, is serious about and has shown more genuine interest in the islands, even the English speaking ones, than any other minister, ever. Inishbiggle is at the northern end of the Achill Sound “inside route” and is separated from Achill Island by the Bull’s Mouth at F737-068. One may land on a beach of small stones, and at a modest slipway F739-069, just E of the Bull’s Mouth. One may launch from the slipway opposite, on Achill, at F735-071, where there is some parking. Another handy embarkation point on the Achill side is at Bunacurry Harbour at F718-044 which is 2.5km SW of the Bulls Mouth. This is a stone and mud flat area, with a manageable carry even at LW, but plenty of parking.

Vehicular Access

All vehicles such as there are on Inishbiggle were driven there via Annagh Island that lies to the SE. It is possible to drive from the mainland across the inner sound at a spot called locally Claggan F786--046 to F783-046 on Annagh, for a couple of hours when the sound dries at LW. There is a fine breen across Annagh S of centre to about F773-053, from where the strand to Inishbiggle can be driven for the bottom half of the tide. 6 hours dry and 6 wet is the rule, springs or neaps. The inishbiggle drive-in point is just below the church. Anecdotally, this complex access becomes famous virtually every nationwide election or referendum held in Ireland. Policy dictates that all the islands off the coast are balloted a few days before the actual polling day, for fear it might be necessary to try again and again. Anytime there is a blow and the ferry can’t go to Inishbiggle, the local sergeant of the Gardai sets off from Claggan to Annagh and then to Inishbiggle. Mostly he gets the business done quickly enough but not always. All too often he has been caught unable to drive home that day, and in the line of duty, he has famously been photographed, up to his waist, carrying the ballots shoulder high, a beacon of civic duty. Inishbiggle votes have therefore been dubbed “floating votes”.

Ballycroy was the scene of the filming of the iconic “Ballroom of Romance” in 1981

Inishaghoo

F766-078 Sheet 22

The main function of Inishaghoo and inside (E of) it the Illanamona Islands F770-080 is to shelter most of the ferry crossing from Dorans Point on the mainland to Gobnadoogha on Inishbiggle from northwesterlies. They do this very well. A good old race sets up between Inishaghoo and Inishbiggle, and a lesser one between Inishaghoo and the mainland, but neither race compares in the least to Bulls Mouth at the NW of Inishbiggle. It is feasible to walk to Illanamona for periods at either side of LW and to wade across to Inishaghoo from the larger Illanamona at LWS. The electricity powerlines run overhead the larger Illanamona island and Inishaghoo towards inishbiggle.

Inishaghoo is surprisingly grassy given it isn't grazed, or grazed enough nowadays, and could be attractive to the recreational user if it were. Suspicion of foxes.

The islands and particularly Inishaghoo are interesting for being a blanket peat bog resting on underlying sand/silt, which is quite the educational sight. Bog oak protrudes aplenty from the very base of the peat and the peat itself runs under the tide in places. The coastal erosion is as inexorable and as fearsome as one might imagine, especially on the exposed sides.

Annagh Island

F784-046 Sheet 22/30

This huge island is almost $3km^2$. It is flat as a pancake and mostly ungrazed bog. There are some stands of forestry in the SW.

The landing spot is anywhere but essentially where the Inishbiggle vehicular access penetrates at a boathouse at F784-046. There is a house and shed at the mid-S and similar at the NE. Neither is occupied regularly.

It is possible to drive from the mainland across the inner sound at a spot called locally Claggan F786--046 to F783-046 on Annagh, for a couple of hours when the sound dries at LW. There is a fine boreen across Annagh S of centre to about F773-053, from where the strand to Inishbiggle can be driven for the bottom half of the tide. 6 hours dry and 6 wet is the rule, springs or neaps.

Illancroagh and Heath Island

F786-030 Sheet 30

These two small islands jointly and effectively guard the entrance to the SE corner of Achill Sound North, a water system called Bellacragher Bay. The bay penetrates between the Corraun Peninsula and the mainland almost to Mallaranny, a narrow twisting inlet of great interest and a splendid option for a foul weather day.

The embarkation point at F784-025 is just below the post office at Tonreege, halfway between Mallaranny and Achill Sound Bridge. Limited parking but with a handy stony landing.

Illancroagh at F786-030 is the more interesting of the two islands. It can be landed on anywhere. There is splendid, huge, exposed bog oak on the western side, and a significant Common Gull colony in season. There are tide races all around. The tide runs E and W on either side. Wind over tide in these gaps normally happens on the ebb. These conditions provide a fun race just off the put-in point, and elsewhere at times. The tide also fills and empties round the duller Heath Island.

The passage inwards from this point features strong tides at all the projecting points, and a varying landscape best savoured on the journey SE and inwards. Rhododendrons are followed by conifers, by grasslands suitable for remote yet convenient camping, then by ubiquitous peat-hags, sometimes close to the road and sometimes away from it. At the head of the bay are salmon farm tanks, always worth a visit to see these brutes leaping and displaying.

The trick is to catch the tide inwards, lunch, and then catch it again outwards. Otherwise eddy-hop. Local HW is about Galway + 0230 in the furthest recesses of the bay, which is perhaps an hour later than local HW at the Bull's Mouth.

Tidal races are to be found at most of the twists and turns. The most playful ones are on either side of Illancroagh, and these are best enjoyed on the top half of the ebb. Being shallow, they do not particularly need a spring tide.

Inishkeas/Duvillauns Group

F614-183 Sheet 22

This remarkable group of islands is well worth visiting.

Embarkation

Embarkation is from Portmore, a sheltered sandy S-facing beach about 3.5km W of Blacksod Point, and 1km S of a prominent tower on a low hill, known as Glash. The surf is much smaller at W end at a small slip called Port F614-183. Camping is best on machair at Fallmore F619-184, the E end of the beach. Surf can be an issue off the tip of the stormbeach off Portmore, and also 1.5km NNW at Surgeview Point. To compound things, the tide runs hard in this area, especially on the ebb. Alternatively, the most dependable launch of all is from Blacksod Pier itself, 4km E at F653-186, where the camping is less private but still wonderful. This pier is by Nimmo, as is Saleen Pier 12km to the North at F670-290.

The southern part of the Mullet peninsula is a stronghold for Corncrake.

Tides

The main west coast flood runs north from Achill Head, past Black Rock, then NNE past the outside of the group, from 3:20 before Galway HW until 3:05 after. The flood and ebb pour into and out of what is almost a sheltered 'lake' confined between the group of islands and the Mullet. The flows through the gaps seem to start a couple of hours earlier, at 5:15 before Galway HW until 1:00 after. They flood generally northeast/north through the channels between the Duvillauns, the Inishkeas and the Mullet. Certainly, in Blacksod Bay south of the Duvillauns, the ENE flood runs at about these times. The streams are weak inside the lake but achieve 2.5kn in springs off salient points and flow strongly through the gaps in the inner islands. From inside the islands, the ebb pours out of the 'lake' the same way and the timings are the reverse of the flood.

The Spanish Armada

Ships driven into the Blacksod area north of Achill could turn left or right. On 21st September 1588 two Armada ships sailed in. The *Duquesa Santa Ana* turned left into Elly Bay and safety, the *Rata Encoranada* turned right towards Achill. It put down its anchor off Doona point. It dragged and the ship went aground. All the crew got off safely. They then force marched around to Elly Bay and joined the *Duquesa Santa Ana*. They all got going again but were shipwrecked in Loughros More Bay in Donegal. The survivors of all this walked

overland to Killybegs where they were lucky to find the *Girona*, and joined it on its way to Scotland and safety, they hoped.

Black Rock

F483-156 Sheet 22

The rock is known to locals as *Tór Mór*, and to Irish Lights as Black Rock. Like Eagle Island, Black Rock is a prominent lighthouse rock on which landing is impossible in most conditions. This, along with the fact that it is over 11km offshore and steep-sided, makes it essential that any visit is undertaken in (very) settled weather. Black Rock rates as one of the classic sea kayaking destinations in Ireland. It is a most dramatic and beautiful place to visit if kayakers get the right conditions, especially in late April-May.

Kayakers attempting to land on Black Rock (and similar remote lighthouse islands) should be aware that many of the guard rails and steps on the islands have deteriorated since the automation of the lighthouses.

On Black Rock the eastern landing is always difficult to access as it is very prone to big swell and tidal surges. The southern landing is somewhat more protected. However, the access steps from the southern landing to the summit are steep and the upper sections have fallen away. Kayakers landing need to be aware that some degree of rock climbing is involved and a safety rope is highly recommended.

A traverse from the southern landing to the steps above the eastern landing is possible and may be safer than a direct summit approach from the southern landing. Again some rock climbing experience is a distinct advantage and a safety rope highly recommended.

Landing

A landing is possible near the steep, carved steps on the SE side of the rock, with very low swell conditions and an unladen (or someone else's, plastic) boat.

There are 3/4 options from mid to high tide but only one at lower tides, about 20m from the sea-arch.

There is a jetty at the E end, but there is often too much movement there.

In the right conditions (very settled!) the easiest landing is by the jetty, where convenient rock platforms, especially at LW allow "seal" type landings in addition to the jetty itself.

The jetty is only place where kayaks can be easily managed. All other landings are very "physical" in terms of making boats secure and require a fit crew to lift and haul kayaks clear. All steps and approaches from all 4 possible landing points are steep and in some cases in poor condition. All landings are very steep, in deep water, with any waves giving a lot of vertical movement. This gives a real risk of a bad bang if the boat hits any rocky outcrops while dropping with the waves. So, even in the calmest conditions, landing cannot be assumed and it is recommended to keep lunch handy to eat on the water before the long, open disappointed crossing home.

After a successful landing, the boats must be hauled up the steep rock and tied to the iron stakes near the steps, which were probably chiselled into the rocks in the 19th Century. The walk to the top is steep. Launching is, as always, much easier. Always ask Irish Lights for permission for landing at a lighthouse.

There is rough camping, but this is not advised, as lighthouse keepers have been known to wait months to be taken off after their stint of duty here. Bill Long states that it is reputed to

be the 'most difficult of the lighthouse rocks on which to land; totally inaccessible at times, either by boat or by helicopter'.

No water.

On a day trip, embark from Fallmore at F614-183 or Portglash beach at F612-202, for a 12km journey on a bearing of about 250°. If based on the Inishkeas, the distance is 8.5km at 235° from the western end of the sound between the N and S Islands at F556-218.

Tides

Departing from the Inishkeas, the only relevant tide is the main west coast tidal stream, which floods north from 3:20 before Galway HW until 3:05 after and the ebb in reverse. For a departure from the Inishkeas, a good strategy might be to leave at or after local LW, taking advantage of the last of the south-going stream, to arrive at slack and allowing a return after the start of the north-going stream. At least close in to the rock, tides run strongly, possibly 2kn. Paddlers report having to ferry glide to avoid being swept past.

On Black Rock itself, the light character is FL WR 12s 86m 22/16M, i.e. flashing, white & red sectors, every 12 seconds, height 86 metres, visibility 22 nautical miles in the white sector and 16 nautical miles in the red sector. It was, until recently, an acetylene gas light, one of the very few in Ireland or Britain. It was converted to acetylene from incandescent paraffin vapour in 1974 when it was automated. The acetylene system was decommissioned to a museum in Wexford in 1999 and replaced by solar power.

In 1940, the S.S. Macville was attacked by a German bomber close to the Rock, shattering the lighthouse panes and damaging the roof.

There are impressive, recently renovated dwellings of cut stone which was quarried from the rock. Amazingly, lighthouse keepers and their families lived here for 29 years until 1893.

Then, dwellings for the families were built at Blacksod and the keepers would stay in shifts on the Rock in the years until the light was automated.

Duvillaun Mór

F579-157 Sheet 22

Landing

The current owner discourages landing. There is an unreliable landing place on a somewhat sheltered sandy beach (bouldery at LW) on the southern shore at a point marked Gubnageeragh. The scramble up is awkward, but tired paddlers from Achill Head may take advantage. There is camping above the beach. Water is available in small lakes at the top of the island. Otherwise the much more reliable landing point in calm conditions is in a shallow bay on the NE side, almost facing Duvillaun Beg. Land onto flat rocks, in a sheltered cut, best just NW of a ruined dwelling.

The construction of the house on Duvillaun has suffered some setbacks and recent storms have taken their toll on the building. The main doorway and windows on the southern side have weathered badly and the building is open to the elements as at May 2016. The scars of the building process on the landscape have thankfully healed. There is a rudimentary rough slipway in a small cove on the north eastern side of the island that allows access to the monastery site along the obvious path resulting from the house building process.

The island was abandoned in the early 20th Century. In the 1821 census, there were 19 people living on the island, and a community existed here up to at least 1917. The ecclesiastical

remains on the brow of the hill at the western end are of a small Anchorite settlement being an eremitic establishment from the 6th to 10th Centuries.

The square ruin is a killeen, a children's' graveyard. A carved flat stone on the summit depicts a Greek crucifixion on one side and a pre-Celtic cross (with a circle surrounding the cross) on the other. Well worth the visit.

Unfortunately the most prominent feature of the top of the island these days, begun in 2007, is the "work in progress" of a modern house, unsightly in 2010, unless and until it is finished. There is also a covered shed, and a forty-foot container. Overall, it is a mess. This epitomises the tragic mismanagement of our wild islands. The application for this development was granted planning permission to build on an SPA, so the Parks & Wildlife service now have the massive headache of trying to limit the damage done.

The N/W end is wild and dramatic, with small sea stacks and islets lying off the shore. The whole N and W sides are worthy of a slow passage. Good cuts and stacks, and in particular two fine sea arches, merit exploration. One horseshoe shaped sea arch near Drumacappul Island F570-160 has a very distinctive quartzite keystone at its apex. The other one cuts through Turduvillaun F566-160 and is a challenging passage.

SPA

Storm & Leach's Petrel, Barnacle Goose, Peregrine, Chough, Arctic & Little Tern.

Lapwing and Greater Black-backed Gull breed and there is a colony of black rabbits.

Duvillaun Beg

F588-164 Sheet 22

The landing point is on a storm beach just NE of south-western tip. Otherwise, land on rocks just N of a long spit at the eastern tip. Pleasant enough place. Sward grazed by sheep in season. Inhabited by a single family called Gamble in the mid-19th century

Gaghta Island

F600-174 Sheet 22

Land onto stony beaches, midway along the north-eastern side in a cut.

Leamareha

F608-175 Sheet 22

Land at shingle or rocks on the northern side. Greater Black-backed Gull breed.

Inishkeas

These islands are not named for Inis Gé (the 'islands of geese' in Gaelic), despite their ornithological significance. Instead, they are named for 'Insulam Gedig' in Latin, or Naomh Géidh or Saint Gé in Irish. The first written reference to the islands was in a letter from Pope Innocent III appointing a local Bishop in 1198.

There was a thriving and stable Irish speaking population here from the late 18th to the early 20th Century. Nevertheless, no native writer ever emerged to record their lives from their own perspective, as happened elsewhere. Their story is pieced together from outside records. The population was stable at about 300 between the two islands for much of the time, though the South Island nearly always held more people than the North Island.

They ran out of turf by the 1830s, importing it thereafter. They survived the 1840's famine better than the nearby mainland, partly through fishing and piracy. Circumstances suited piracy because calm weather conditions in April and May becalmed many a sailing boat

hereabouts. This all got out of hand so the coastguard placed a presence on the island to stop the practice.

Ravaged always by storms, the islanders were almost beaten by a big one in 1857, and were finally defeated in 1927. As protection against the wind, they developed a special style of lazy bed for the potatoes, 2m across and 30cm higher on the windward side, to protect the fragile young plants. The climate being milder than the mainland, potatoes could be sown in February or even January, giving the islanders a huge competitive advantage at the market in Belmullet.

They kept cows for milk, pigs for meat, and sheep for sale and for wool. They even kept horses to work the land, but more so on the N island where the widespread machair is more equine friendly. They also grew barley and their *poitín* was well known over a wide area, being favoured by the Boycotts, a well-known but not particularly popular local landed family. Their *poitín* was despised by the artist Paul Henry who visited in 1909. The boat crew got sozzled and gave him a trying journey back to Westport.

A pier was built on the North Island in 1863 but it was blown away within the year. A sturdier model was built on the South Island beginning in 1888, which is there to this day and looking well, sheltering the strand in front of the village. Schools were established on both islands about 1899. Three policemen were stationed on the North Island about the same time to try to stop the worst of the illegal distillery industry. Relations between the islands were never good, except when absolutely necessary. Burials took place only on the North Island. The North Island also took in the Coastguard in 1849 and a police barracks fifty years later. Perhaps all this influenced things so that the North Island took the pro-Treaty side in the Irish Civil War of 1922/23, and the South Island the Republican side. On one occasion, they all drew up on their own side of the narrow channel between the islands and pegged stones at each other.

In 1927, the two islands were united in grief when, on the 26th October, their young men were cruelly taken, ten of them lost in one storm. A big low came in and they were fooled by the lull at its centre. The fishermen were yards off the North Island when the westerly winds struck suddenly and strongly. Many couldn't retreat, and the last to drown were almost on the mainland well to the E. Each of the five currachs contained two brothers, mostly in their late teens. The community spirit was broken and another drowning a couple of years later emptied the islands by 1939.

SPA

Peregrine, Barnacle Goose, Golden Plover, Common, Arctic & Little Tern. Corncrake numbers have dwindled to nothing, and the last bird heard singing was in 2000. One of the most important machair breeding sites for waders in Ireland. Lapwing, Dunlin, Redshank, Ringed Plover and Snipe. Grey Seal colony is the biggest in Ireland.

Inishkea (Inis Gé) South

F558-210 Sheet 22

The S island is perhaps the more attractive. The landing place is at the ruined village onto a sandy beach beside a stone pier. The beach is sheltered between the pier and Rusheen Island, which is accessible at LW. The pier has been extended and strengthened in recent years and many boats may be able to lay alongside for at least the top half of the tide.

It is an outstandingly beautiful and pleasant island, not to be missed if in the area.

Approached from the SE, the island is seen as low lying, with a white tower on the summit of a low hill, which, when aligned with another on the shoreline, gives a bearing of 120°. The two towers transit to the gap between Duvillaun Beg and Gaghta Island, useful to yachts. The ruined building on the skyline is the village school at the northern end of the village.

Redevelopment

The standard and scale of refurbishment of village cottages has varied through the years. In the early 1990s there was one vaguely “kept” dwelling (on the main street), and a second was noted as locked and secured some years later (above and slightly south of the pier). As of 2007 there were up to six holiday homes finished or heading that way, up from really that one only for the generation before that. There was a lot of activity/people and boats tied up at pier over the May Bank Holiday 2010 and a minimum of 6 and possibly 8 houses then re-developed. In October 2012 seven refurbished holiday houses were counted. There are as of May 2016 up to six houses renovated in the village and people are now regularly present on the island especially during periods of good settled weather.

Water

Good reliable water can usually be had in a small well, 100m S of the pier, just above the first beach, Porteenbeg, where sand meets grass.

Camping

Good camping may be had at the village behind the houses.

Beaches in rounded bays to the S of the village give good landings and camping, but not water. On circumnavigation, escape is possible on the Atlantic side at the head of at least three deep channels almost dissecting the island towards the southern end.

Climbing

There is what appears to be unlimited and excellent rock climbing on steep gneiss at the south-eastern end. Stan Pearson and Ian Stevens have been working here since 2002. There is a clean crag at the southern tip, and other crags on the outside as one moves N. Grades vary between severe and E1, 10m to 25m. Routes can look improbable, but the rock is fantastic with hidden finger jugs. On balance, the crags here are not as comprehensive as Gola, but it is quiet, for now anyway.

Fauna

It is renowned for its winter population of Barnacle Goose and Snipe. In 2009 5 geese were electronically tagged by Doctor Cabot and friends, and tracked to NE Greenland, the first successful such scientific effort. There is also a large population of seals.

Rusheen Island

F561-212 Sheet 22

Rusheen is a small tidal islet off the strand in front of the South Island village. One may walk out at HW. It appears as an undistinguished islet, and one may land anywhere. Rusheen might not even have achieved individual mention here, save for its extraordinary history. It was a major centre of the whaling industry in Ireland in the first years of the 20th Century.

Then as now, the Norwegian whaling industry wanted to do things its own way. Seasonally controlled at home, they established out-stations in other countries to bridge the gaps. They set up one such station in 1908 at Rusheen. They rented the island from the Congested Districts Board who had bought out the whole of Inishkea. It appears they also paid rent to the islanders, who liked to think they owned the place, and wouldn't be persuaded otherwise.

This may have been a Norwegian solution to a Norwegian problem, but was more likely an Inishkea solution to an Inishkea problem.

Within months there was a thriving industry, with modern buildings, piers and slips, though made of wood, Norwegian style. Three whaling boats killed an average of 60 whales per annum, of all main types but mostly Fin. The Norwegians kept themselves to themselves, living on their boats, but some learnt Irish to deal with the workers. Steam power helped with the hauling and boiling of the whales to reduce them to oil and fertiliser, but water was in short supply. Hence the dam to be seen behind the houses on the South Island.

The S islanders coveted all the employment for themselves, and wouldn't let N islanders work for the Norwegians. This actually suited everyone in a roundabout way. The southerners could afford to employ mainlanders to till their fields and harvest their crops for them. North Island fishermen thrived because less fishermen meant better fishing. Also, lobsters seemed to thrive on the discarded whale offal. So did the pigs of the South Island which all went feral. Cray and lobster were plentiful and valuable, and were transported live. The cray went to Paris and the lobsters to faraway London.

The whaling only lasted until 1911 when a combination of events ended it. There was a major strike. Further, the stench was unbearable. Even the mainlanders many kilometres away to the E complained. Finally, a fall off in demand for whale products ended the enterprise. The rusting and rotted remains of this endeavour are still to be seen as litter all over Rusheen. No drinking water was found.

Inishkea North

F565-223 Sheet 22

The North Island is separated from the South Island by a narrow sound. The most visible feature is a huge prominent burial mound just E of the village at the SE tip, known as the Baily Mór. Its humpbacked shape is dominant from most angles, and it boasts carved stone slabs said to relate to St. Colmcille. Baily Beg is the smaller conical mound nearby. The dead of both islands were buried on the North Island.

Landings

Land at sheltered sandy beaches in the rounded bay in the SE, underneath the abandoned village. There are landing points also in many other spots. These include the N side of the SE tip, and a beach on the NE side, just short of the N tip. Escape is also possible on the Atlantic side, at the head of a deep cut behind the village, and probably other spots.

There are two of the original island buildings renovated as of May 2016 - the old school house and one in the northwest corner of the village. A timber style building has also been built amongst the houses on the northern side of the village (since 2012/13).

Water

Water has been found in a well that may need a little tidying, at the N end of the houses, in from the N end of the larger beach.

Camping

Camping in the bay in good weather is best at the Baily Mór mound, which is open but scenic, and otherwise attractive. In bad weather, some shelter may be had at the village.

Birds

One of the most important machair breeding sites for waders in Ireland. Lapwing, Dunlin, Redshank, Ringed Plover and Snipe. The breeding waders on the island's main machair were

splendid in May 2009. Redshank, Snipe, Dunlin, Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Oystercatcher, all present in good numbers. Also breeding Arctic Terns (c.100 pairs) (at least 3 colonies) and Little Terns (c.20 pairs) the latter also on the other machair NW west of village.. The islands N of Inishkea have over recent years a growing breeding Greylag Goose population of a semi resident/feral nature.

Little Tern were seen acting territorially in 2004 (fighting), which may indicate that they are starting to breed.

Birdwatch Ireland (since 2014) has been active in the provision of enclosures to help in the productivity of the breeding waders and terns on the island. Kayakers should not enter these enclosures, some of which are electrified. The enclosures are designed to deter heavy grazing by sheep and to allow some of the machair plants to grow during the breeding season late March to mid-June thereby providing nesting sites and cover for ground nesting birds.

Inishkea North is a nationally important breeding location for waders, Arctic and Little Terns so visiting kayakers should avoid causing undue disturbance during the sensitive months of the breeding season - late March to mid June.

Fauna

There is a seal colony at the NE. David Cabot, noted naturalist, with an interest hereabouts, counted 1,000 grey seal here, the largest ever such count in Ireland. Seals do migrate and the local population was 693 in 1995 according to Oliver O'Cadhla.

Tides

A shallow spit Gubnacusha-Pluddany Rocks extends well E of the E point of the island. With wind over, it surfs dangerously for up to 2km off.

Carricknaweelion

F565-240 Sheet 22

A large, flat, grassy, sheep-grazed companion to Inishkea North, just off its northern side. In fact, the camping is the more attractive on the main island opposite, on machair, for those seeking the truly remote experience. The two islands are connected at the bottom of the lowest tides. Land easiest at any of several small sandy beaches on the south-eastern side. Almost 40 Greylags were found on Carrigaport and Carrigaweelion in mid August 2007. The observer was tempted to say some of these were breeders as some seemed quite ungainly in flight and were missing many primary feathers, indicating recent moult.

Carrickawilt

F568-249 Sheet 22

The southernmost of three remote rocky islets separated from Carricknaweelion and Inishkea North by a modest sound. The three are collectively perhaps more interesting to paddle round than to land on. Carrickawilt is a small, low-lying, flat, grass-topped rocky islet, with a large concentration of Atlantic Grey Seals. Land at a sheltered boulder beach in a cut on the south-eastern side.

Carrigee

F567-254 Sheet 22

The middle of the three separated islets. Barren, with some patches of grass and thrift. Many seals. Easy landing on the ESE side with shelter from swell by offshore rocks. It is easiest to land at LW. One deep inlet is best. Many gulls' nests.

Carrickmoylenacurhoga

F572-257 Sheet 22

This is thought to be the longest place name in Ireland, and the locals call it simply “Carrick”. Carrickmoylenacurhoga is a large, low-lying and very rocky island, the northernmost of the three separated islets. Rather inhospitable, especially at the northern end. A series of deep cuts along its eastern side provide landing onto rock shelves or into rock pools at LW. The best-protected landing is in a narrow gap in the south-eastern corner. More than 80 Grey Seal were present in May 2002.

Erris Head Area

F701-418 Sheet 22

The ‘head’ of Erris Head is on a high grassy island Illandavuck separated from the Mullet peninsula by a narrow, dramatic channel at F699-416, which for kayaks is a useful escape from the Atlantic side. The channel is shallow and various outlying reefs and islets cause much turbulence and clapotis even on relatively good days. The outside passage is also prone to swell and turbulence as it too has outlying islets and reefs on its northern and western side. The inner passage undoubtedly closes with conditions, and certainly for larger boats, is safest at HW. Such boats may find the channel does not behave itself as it should. Yachtspersons feel there may have been a rockfall or boulders thrown into the gap by W gales, choking and changing things. Outside that keep to the centre, then the N side near the E end. On the Broad Haven side, about 2km to the SE, is a good little harbour called the Danish Cellar at F706-397, useful on passage, with water in the house and camping.

Tides

The main west coast stream touches land hereabouts, so the flood runs northeast/east from 3:20 before Galway HW until 3:05 after. Races occur on the Broad Haven side where returning eddies meet the mainstream. On the flood, a clockwise eddy comes back north along the Broad Haven coast from about 2.5km SSE of the head.

On the ebb, anticlockwise eddies happen in two places. One eddy comes back north along the eastern side of Broad Haven bay and rejoins the mainstream west of Kid Island. The ebb also sets up anticlockwise eddies on the Atlantic side, southwest of the head. Local paddlers report that the tide always seems to be going north inside Eagle Island, on both flood and ebb.

Embarkation

Embark from either of three locations, the first for kayaks and the other two, safe anchorages both, are important to yachts on passage:

1. Best near HW, a sheltered S facing stony beach F628-345 on the S side of Annagh Head, well sheltered by offlying Annagh Island. It lies just below a new surfaced road and a new parking spot for Annagh Head, from which it is a convenient short carry to the shoreline, longer at LW. This launching spot is especially useful for a quick daytrip for smaller groups to Inishglora, Inishkeeragh, or Eagle.
2. A working pier at F644-344 with good parking, on the northern side of Annagh Head, in a good big bay known as French Port, *Port na Francagh*.
3. A wonderfully sheltered, isolated storm beach just further N, called Scotch Port at 647-361. The Commissioners of Irish Lights have a building at Scotch Port, for servicing the lighthouse on Eagle Rock and Black Rock. Here is a Corncrake reserve (one bird in 2003, 3

in 2010), and where Quail are not unknown. The last Corn Bunting in Ireland was in nearby Termoncarragh in 1992. 12 – 15 pairs of Twite breed locally.

These are also excellent embarkation places for a round of Erris Head, linking with Belmullet for a manageable walk• back of about 8km. The paddle is about 32km. For a shorter trip, shuttle to the Danish Cellar at F706-397 for about 16km paddling. Either trip enjoys the Atlantic side of the Head, which is as scenic and committing as any. The “Erris Head Walk” starts and finishes at Danish Cellar, as good as any of its kind.

Passage

On passage, there is camping manageable opposite the French Port pier, but no water. For water, ask in the house nearest the pier. This is the house once owned by Danny Gilboy, the late warden of the nearby Birdwatch Ireland reserve. Do not go onto the reserve without permission, or unless accompanied by a member of the Gilboy family. Do not camp at the head of the bay unless intending to depart near HW, because of the extensive flats which severely dry out. Camping at Scotch Port is convenient and uncomplicated.

The islands off the NW of the Mullet peninsula share common access and tidal information. They vary from low and grassy to huge and rocky, with a significant lighthouse.

SPA

Storm Petrel, Arctic & Little Tern, Barnacle Goose, Corncrake, Quail.

Inishkeeragh

F607-303 Sheet 22

A low, uninteresting island just S of Inishglora, where a landing is possible on a beach of small boulders on either side of the eastern tip. Note that small half-tide reefs between Inishkeeragh and Inishglora are unduly prominent on the OS 1:50,000 map. They show as small islands, which confuses the navigator.

Storm Petrel.

The island is almost cut in two by a ravine. Land at the head on either side.

Inishkeeragh is a beautiful if remote camping location with a machair like sward. The island is grazed by sheep and no doubt Barnacle Geese in winter. No water found. Breeding species in June 2016 include Lapwing, Fulmar, Arctic Tern, Eider and Greylag Geese in addition to the usual gull species.

Inishglora

F616-308 Sheet 22

Inishglora is a long and narrow low-lying island. It is interesting for its monastic ruins at the eastern end, and for its beehive stone formations. The church roof collapsed in 2003 after standing for centuries (millennia?).

The Children of Lir

The cairns on the island are said to be the resting places of the children of Lir. The children, Finola and her brothers Aedh, Conn and Fiachra were changed into swans by a jealous stepmother, Eva. She was jealous of the love of the children for their mother Eve, her eldest sister, who had died. The swans would keep the wit, the nature, and the speech of humans, as well as the power of music. This would continue until a prince from the N married a princess from the S, and they heard the voice of the Christian bell bringing the light of the new faith over the land.

In all, they spent 300 happy years on Lough Derryvaragh in County Westmeath, 300 desperate and stormy years around Rathlin Island off the NE of Ireland (the "Sea of Moyle"), and finally 300 years at peace around Inishglora. Then, Saint Kemoc changed them back into humans. Alas, they were elderly crones. Here on Inishglora, as Christians, they ended their days at last. This is the saddest tale of ancient pre-Christian Ireland, well worth reading up on.

Saint Brendan established the monastery here in the 6th century. He later became famous for being the first European to travel to America (Newfoundland), in a leather rowing boat, a large version of the *currach* still common today on the W coast of Ireland.

Storm Petrel extensively colonise the E end of the island. Breeding waders Snipe, Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover.

In the 1821 census, 7 people were living on the island.

Landing and water

The easiest landing places change with the passage of time. There can be landing places opposite Inishkeeragh on sandy beaches on the southern side, one just inside the eastern tip and otherwise sometimes midway. Both can be inaccessible at HW or near it. Landing might also be possible on a storm beach in a shallow bay, midway along the northern side. There is a disused well at the eastern end, but the water is not good. Wells need use.

Annagh Island

F626-345 Sheet 22

Small rocky outlier lying just S of Annagh Head. Land in obvious cut at E corner. No water found and camping very unattractive. Really a big blocky detachment from the head, a deep narrow cut separates it (wadable only at LWS) sufficiently to provide sufficient isolation to give comfort for nesting seabirds.

The island rises E to W in gradient and W side has similar attractive cliff line as Annagh Head. The narrow cut is mostly navigable to kayaks but would be quite challenging in any W/NW blow. Narrow as this channel may be, it is deep, and protects colonies of >60 pairs of Arctic Tern and >30 pairs of Common Gull that bred here 2009 and 2010.

The island serves as a useful breakwater to a bay just to its NE, where there is a new surfaced road and a new parking spot for Annagh Head, from which it is a convenient short carry to the shoreline, especially at HW. This launching spot is especially useful for a quick daytrip to Inishglora, Inishkeeragh, or Eagle.

Eagle Island

F641-392 Sheet 22

A prominent, rocky lighthouse island, on which landing without swimming is almost impossible in nearly all conditions. The sound immediately inside the island to its SE is always lumpy and best avoided in difficult conditions. Local paddlers report that the tide in the sound always runs NE, and that it is usually best to pass by further inside altogether, along the coast.

As with all lighthouses, always ask Irish Lights for permission to land. There were two lighthouses, which form a transit, clearing obstacles nearby. The eastern light was discontinued in 1895, and the western light was automated in 1988. Its character is 3 white flashes every 10 seconds.

The lights have a troublesome history. Storms wrecked the towers during construction and again afterwards. The keepers' accommodation was washed away. A wave 68m high washed over the island in 1861. The tower filled with water and the keepers had to drill holes to open the door.

The grassy top of the island feels sheltered, and appears to have once sustained the lighthouse personnel well enough. There is a substantial walled garden just above the northern landing steps. The lighthouse is powered by solar panels. Great Black-backed Gull abound in the long grass.

Landing

There are two landing spots. Each is at or alongside a small landing stage, each either side of the SE sound. Each is just outside the sound, one at the eastern tip, and the other at the southern tip, behind a stack. Steps are cut in the rock either side of these landing stages, where it is probably best to drag up heavy boats.

Camping

There is no water, but there is plenty of camping on the grassy plateau. However, an overnight stay runs a huge risk of stranding, should swell height increase, even a little. See Bill Long's 'Bright Light, White Water' for descriptions of the huge seas which give this island its bad reputation. A short visit is recommended.

Illandavuck

F702-416 Sheet 22

A medium sized island that is rather whale backed in appearance, 56m on its eastern side. The island has quite an extensive area of marine grasses, sea campion, sea pinks and sorrel that cover the summit plateau and extend down its southern and eastern flanks.

There is an attractive sea cave and arch located on the southern side. The large rocky islet off the island's north eastern side is named as Erris Head on the old OS 6 inch maps but curiously they don't show the islet as separate from Illandavuck.

The island held breeding Greater black-backed Gulls 60+, Fulmar 80+ and a pair of Bonxies in June 2014. There was a suspicion that Manx Shearwater may also breed but not confirmed. No water found and camping would involve a difficult carry to the summit plateau.

The views are well worth the effort of landing.

Cone Island South

F723-388

A double island 2km SE of Danish Cellar and separated from Ooghran Point by a narrow channel that in itself merits a trip for those exploring the coast on the W side of Broadhaven Bay. Both islands are steep and precipitous and separated by an attractive channel. The larger more NE island has a small sea arch on its E side. Landing is possible on the larger more NE island on to rock shelves both at the SW corner and in the channel between the islands. No water and no camping. Breeding Fulmars, GBB & Herring Gulls.

Belmullet

F703-325 Sheet 22

Sheltered and easy access from Mayo's western and northern coasts may be had through Belmullet. A lock-free canal is navigable to kayaks on at least the 2 hours either side of local

HW. This gives easy passage from Blacksod Bay into Broad Haven. The canal has recently been made over. Belmullet is a most useful town on passage. A market town, all facilities are available.

Tides

The tide flows simultaneously into Blacksod Bay and Broad Haven, meeting on the drying mudflats on the Broad Haven (eastern) side of the town. The flow in the canal is usually from Blacksod towards Broad Haven, and reaches 4kn in springs. The mudflats on the Broad Haven side are severe, so don't miss the tide. Approach and leave Belmullet near HW.

Local HW is Galway HW +0040.

An excellent evening meal is available in the hotel, and a handy B&B is with Eileen Gaughan, Mill House, American Street, Belmullet, tel. 097• 81181. Her garden backs onto the canal just on the Broad Haven side. Kayaks can be left here conveniently and securely, which is otherwise a problem.

Camping near the town is unattractive. On passage, the first attractive waystop/camping to the N is at Ballyglass by the lifeboat station F765-353, or even better, Rinroe Point pier - *Barr na Rinne* at about F802-406. To the S, do not approach closer than Ardmore Point F687-277, and the better choices are at Elly Bay or best of all Blacksod Point pier F651-187.

Kid Island - Oileán Mionnán

F787-438 Sheet 22

Kid Island is a massive lump, 86m high, more than matching the local mainland cliff-top, 250m to its SE. Kid Island guards the north-eastern approaches to Broad Haven - *Cuan an Inbhir Mhóir*. To pass NE inside the island is to be transported instantly into the surreal world of the N Mayo coastline. High and sheer cliffs dotted with huge caves vie with jagged stacks everywhere. Transcending everything are the Stags of Broad Haven. This is scenery worthy of any James Bond boat chase.

Embarkation, Camping and Water

Launch from the beach inside Rinroe Point pier - *Barr na Rinne* at about F802-406. There is no water or camping on the island but there is excellent camping on machair at the launch point, on either side of the road approaching the pier. Excellent water is available from a pipe exiting the cliff at the northern end of the beach, N of the pier. This area is known locally as Carrowteigue - *Ceathrú Thaidhg*.

Landings

There are two. Land more easily in a dramatic cove in the NE, below some metal stanchions placed there long ago to aid getting sheep onto and off the island. However, the scramble from here is long and needs care, up rock slabs and then grass. Marvel at the thought of yapping dogs industriously herding sheep on such terrain. Many of both species must have had an unexpected swim or worse. The landing at the western tip is more exposed, but there is an easier scramble to the summit.

The grass top is extensive and sheep-grazed. It was the sight of sheep in 2003 that tempted an ISKA party to try to find a landing. A long, interesting ridge runs out N, worth the scramble for the view. A cave appears to run right through this ridge, 20m above the water line. Light can be seen. Rumour has it that scuba divers climb up there and scramble all the way through.

Breeding sheep, Puffin, Guillemot, and Great Black-backed Gull. Two pairs of Bonxies present in May 2009, and Manx Shearwater and Storm Petrel remains found. LBB Gull also breed. Cough, Raven, Skylark, Meadow & Rock Pipit and Rock Dove present in May 2009.

Stags of Broad Haven - *Na Stacaí*

F838-479 Sheet 22

No amount of forewarning prepares the visitor for the reality. Only a few places truly merit this assertion. One thinks of Skellig, Moher, Aran, but these Stags are worthy of inclusion on any such list. Unlike the others, these Stags are little known, greatly enhancing their fame among the few fortunate enough to have visited.

There are five stags in all - huge, dramatic, pointy topped rocks usually circled in foam. They lie 4km from the beach and 2.5km from nearest land. They are best seen from the SW. All but one have arches, and one is entirely bisected by a long narrow dramatic cave. The passage through and around the Stags is one of the significant Irish sea kayaking experiences.

Embarkation

The embarkation place is at Portacloy - *Port a'Chlóidh* at F840-440, a sheltered, sandy beach, attractive and N-facing. There is good camping just behind the beach on commonage, but ask for permission. Water is available in local houses. Launching and landing is easier at the pier NW of the beach under most conditions, but when there is any swell, this sweeps across the slip and can deposit small boats several feet lower down, which can be painful. Also, the camping there is less satisfactory. There are no provisions available locally - this is a very remote spot. A watchtower on the headland marks the western side of the entrance to the bay.

The whole coastline hereabouts, particularly from Portacloy W, has arches, caves, channels and passages second to none anywhere. These are easily enjoyed in plastic boats. Bring good head-torches for the caves, which are very deep.

Local HW is Galway +0040.

SPA

Puffin, Storm & Leach's Petrel. Storm Petrel also present.

Huge Leatherback Turtle 2009.

Landing

Landing on any of the Stags without swimming is not normally possible.

The central Stag (*Teach Dónal Ó'Cléirigh*) is highest at 97m. Land at the south-western tip at F840-478.

To its S is *An Teach Mór*, second highest at 94m, on which the landing is easiest on the northern tip at F839-479, but the climb to the top is harder. Or, land at the more exposed southern tip at F839-476, which has the easier looking climb. Bonxie May 2009 "loitering with intent"

E of centre is *An Teach Beag* at about 85m, which boasts the tunnel, running E/W. Land at the south-eastern tip at F840-478, or at an equally sheltered spot just outside and NE of the tunnel at F840-479. A little rock to the E of *An Teach Beag* is *An Bád Bréige*, which is often mistaken for a boat when seen from a distance.

The Stags NW of centre, *Carraig na Faola* and just further out, *an t-Oighean* (78m) were first landed on in 2013.

Pig Island - *Oileán na Muice*

F880-440 Sheet 23

Named for its amazing porcine appearance when seen from E or W, the island is splendidly bisected by a sea arch at the centre. The landward side of the roof of the arch is the jowl of the pig. The view of the arch in itself warrants a visit. The island, when viewed from the sea, appears to be attached to the land behind.

Embarkation and Landing

The embarkation place is Porturlin - *Port Durlainne* at F885-425, which is a small fishing village. At the harbour in Porturlin, the camping is unattractive, but there is water out of a pipe on the roadside. Launching and landing is easy. No provisions. Beware that the lights on the quayside are not a transit for entry. The mouth of the harbour is narrow, and the ground outside is steep, blocking sight of most land features. If however, the features can be seen, entry is looking good. While there is obvious evidence of sheep grazing, no landing was found on the island. A deep-water landing can be made on the landward, southern side.

Scramble up at the SW.

Local HW is Galway +0040.

Illanmaster - Oileán Maigheastar

F935-432 Sheet 23

High, square, block-shaped island located very close to the mainland but separated from it by a dramatic rock canyon. The channel is easily navigable by kayak and perhaps by other small, seaworthy boats, in good weather conditions. The passage is shallow and kayakers need to exercise good judgement in conditions when swell is running from in from W/NW direction. When entered from the W side, the passage through the high, steep, rock walls is impressive. The passage opens on the E side into an attractive bay, at the head of which (F936-426) lies a fine storm beach. The area provides an ideal lunch spot for kayakers en route from Portacloy to Belderg - *Béal Dearg*.

Landing

The island is steep and precipitous. Landing is difficult but possible on the sheltered ESE side onto shelving rock platforms. Easiest ascent is to traverse left to start and then to follow an obvious fault line that runs diagonally up to a grassy right hand slope. The ground is steep but the Puffin burrows give good holds on the grassy sward until one gains the ridge that sweeps in from island's NE side. Follow this ridge line to the summit.

Views are worthwhile on all sides. Camping is not a real option. Some seepage water found on rock slaps above the landing. Island is ungrazed and has a rich flora.

SPA

Puffin and Storm Petrel.

Puffin, Guillemot, Manx Shearwater, Storm Petrel, and Shag all breed.

Chough, Oystercatcher and Rock Pipit, GBB, LBB and Herring Gull all present in small numbers May 2009.

Horse Island

F984-425 Sheet 23

Horse Island is located just west of the entrance to Belderg Harbour. The OS Discovery 1:50,000 sheet shows it as being attached to the mainland along its SSW flank, but in fact, the island is connected to the mainland only by a narrow steep sided storm beach. The impressive

rock debris suggests that Atlantic storms surge occasionally through the gap. Landing is possible on either side but is most protected and practical on SE side. Here a narrow and attractive channel leads to the beach flanked on its N side by a narrow sea cave that is worth the look.

The island yields easily to a short scramble from the storm beach. It is flat and low lying and has the remains of a promontory fort. The island has several geological features of interest, from attractive outcrops, a dyke, and layered bedrock. The channel that separates the island from a sea stack on its W side is worth paddling through.

Camping is good on closely grazed sea turf but requires a short steep carry above the landing. No water found. There is a ruin S of the landing on the mainland whose purpose was not identified.

Dún Briste

G123-430 Sheet 23

Meaning "Broken Fort", *Dún Briste* is well named. It consists of a sea stack broken away from the massive cliffs at Downpatrick Head. It is said there were people in residence when in 1393 it broke away. The rescue operation must have been something, though the gap will not have been as intimidating as now. The stack measures about 20m by 60m, and about 100m separates it from the mainland. Dún Briste rises absolutely vertically on all sides, and though it appears very sharp from the headland, it is more squat when seen from the side. The general area is well worth the visit. Parking may be had 1km from the headland. A pleasant walk leads up to the headland past the infamous *Poll na Seantóine*, a blow hole of huge proportions, dropping down into a cave system that opens up under the main cliff just inside *Dún Briste*. A plaque commemorates those locals who sided with the French when they landed nearby at Kilcummin just outside Killala in the invasion of 1798. The invasion force was at first successful, and took all before it, including Castlebar, capital of Mayo. Heading eastwards, it ran out of steam and was finally defeated in Roscommon a few weeks later. The French soldiers were treated as prisoners of war and sent home, but the local civilian insurgents were dealt with as unsuccessful civilian insurgents have typically been dealt with down the ages. Special enthusiasm was shown in dealing with the locals at the epicentre of the whole business who were thought to have sided with the enemy. Herded towards Downpatrick Head, they were forced over the edge into the blowhole and a gruesome death in the waves far below.

A scientific party visited the summit by helicopter for a few short hours in 1980, the first human intrusion in almost 600 years. At first they felt the buildings much older than 1393 and probably of mixed monastic / agricultural type. After some study they thought they were in fact mediaeval, a longhouse of sorts, with some odd bolt-ons. They would love to go back to make sure. A quernstone was found on top of a perimeter wall. Also of interest was a colony of wood lice which would have grown independently of the wood lice on the mainland for 600+ years.

Fishing

Locals fish from these cliffs in a special way, especially in the horseshoe bay just E of the headland. A long line is uncoiled and arranged to run free on the ground. A baited hook, a weight, and a big slab of timber several metres up the line is swung by hand in ever

increasing arcs above the head. Finally the throw is made, and the business end finishes up floating way below. Huge Pollack are caught this way, and hauling them up is very hard work.

Kayaking

In calm conditions a launch may be had on rock shelves below the parking space at G125-424. Otherwise, the beach below (just N of) Ballycastle is fairly dependable G104-394. Dooclough Pier G096-401 is the most dependable. The paddling is thruly fantastic. A cave system links the W facing shore of Downpatrick Head, entering near the parking area, through the blowhole *Poll na Seantoin,e* and onwards to exit hard by *Dún Briste*. Narrow in places and shelved in others, the trip is a must, but timing is the key to the trickier passages.

Bartragh Island

G218-311 Sheet 24

In all respects save one, Bartragh Island is a standard rivermouth dune system. The system stretches across the bay, is broken in the middle (through which the River Moy drains), shows standard surfing beaches to seaward, dunes all the way, and more sheltered backwaters to landward. On the E lies the town of Enniscrone, and on the W lies Killala. In between is Bartragh Island. The one non-standard item is that the sea has broken through at Killala as well as at Enniscrone.

Both piers, at Killala and at Enniscrone, are by Nimmo.

The island itself is unremarkable. It runs 4km ESE/WNW. The backwaters are clean and pleasant because unusually they wash through, and sea-trout are apparent. There is always a channel between the island and the mainland. Stands of Sycamore try to survive in the dunes. Sheep abound. The highest area is at the W end. Two wrecks punctuate the view of unbroken sand and surf to seaward.

Greenshank.

Embarkation

The easiest approach may be from Killala itself, at the pier down by the Coastguard Station. From here has been dredged a permanent channel, quite shallow at LWS but always navigable. It is muddy and unpleasant, a reminder of what the whole backwater would be like were the island not washed through twice a day. The widest part of the backwaters of the island, just outside the Killala channel, is called Killala Pool. The slip at Killala does not reach all the way down to the lowest LWS, and a carry over gooey mud to one side is sometimes called for. Hard by the launching spot is the local fishing co-operative fish shop, very good value and quality fresh and frozen seafood.

The W side of the island may also be conveniently reached from a popular strand to the N at Ross G219-320, by the Killala Bar.

The North-West

Sligo to Malin County Sligo

Sligo Bay

Sheet 16

Sligo town has commercial and fishing boats trading from its harbour. Sligo Bay is really in two parts, an outer bay called Sligo Bay and an inner bay called Sligo Harbour. The two are separated by a narrow entrance, between Coney Island and Rosses Point, about 7km WNW of Sligo Town. The islands next described lie in the general area of this narrow entrance separating Sligo Bay from Sligo Harbour.

SPA

SPA designation attaches to nearby Ballysadare Bay to the S, (Whooper Swan, Golden Plover, and Bar-tailed Godwit), Sligo Harbour (Great Northern Diver, Whooper Swan, Golden Plover, and Bar-tailed Godwit), and Lissadell Strand in Drumcliff Bay to the N (Barnacle Goose, Whooper Swan, Golden Plover, and Bar-tailed Godwit).

Tides

Outer Sligo Bay		
Direction	Time	Speed
In (east)	4:50 before Galway HW	1kn
Out(west)	1:15 after Galway HW	1kn

A part of the flood branches off into Drumcliff Bay to the northeast and the main flood continues ESE all the way to Sligo Town.

Closer to Sligo Harbour the flow rate increases, peaking about 1km inside Sligo Harbour, north of Oyster Island, at up to 6kn in springs. The flood divides at the Metal Man, mid-harbour entrance. The main flood flows east through the shipping channel north of Oyster Island and on towards Sligo. A strong secondary flow passes between Oyster and Coney and circulates anti-clockwise around the deep pit just south of the western point of Oyster. The ebb reverses all this.

There are significant danger areas hereabouts. With wind over tide, which usually means the ebb, quite a sea state is generated in the main channel north of Oyster Island and also between Oyster and Coney Islands, in the region of the Metal Man. There is a submerged spit curving out from the northern end of Coney Island at about G615-399 to Black Rock at G598-401. This is partially exposed at LW. In any sort of sea, there are big breaks here and on the sandbanks on its northern side.

Embarkation

For all the islands, launch from the slipway just W of the RNLI station at G631-397. There is good parking above the RNLI Station. The pier and slipway are used by local fishermen and for boats accessing the cruiser yachts moored in the bay in summer.

Black Rock

G598-401 Sheet 16

2.5km W of Deadman’s Point, this is a major lighthouse on a minor piece of rock. While there has been a beacon on Black Rock since the 18th Century, the current lighthouse was designed by George Halpin Senior and was established in 1835. The light is 24m above sea level and flashes once every 5 seconds. It was automated in 1934.

Intriguingly, the stairs to half height are up the outside, a feature unique among Irish lighthouses. The reason is that the initial design was for a beacon. Later they built upwards, but the first 12m was solid, and they couldn’t cure that. So the door is at half height and the stairs outside.

Land E of the lighthouse, N or S sides, conditions dependent. In either case the landing is onto boulders in rocky but sheltered harbourlets. That on the S side is bounded by very visible raised walls.

Coney Island

G613-388 Sheet 16

0.5km SW of Deadman's Point, this is an attractive, low-lying and varied island with a truly remote feel. It is reachable by car with difficulty from the mainland to the SE. If driving, leave the mainland 1km off the Sligo/Strandhill Road at G641-369. Posts mark the roadway across 3km of sand. Do not attempt to drive closer than +/- 0230HW locally, which is Galway +0040.

If circumnavigating by kayak (strictly top of the tide) the passage is between the 3rd and 4th posts from the island.

Landing

Land easiest at a pier in a small bay at G623-394 facing the mainland and Oyster Island, just N of Wards Pub at G623-391. For kayakers, the nicest aspect of the island is the W-facing beach mid-W side. Camping is possible at the N end of this beach in a lay-by at the end of the island road. Dunes cover the S end of the island. Beware of the seas off this beach which can be dangerous.

Fauna

Coney badgers have white noses. Many rabbit. Mink. Rock Pipit. Dunlin.

Of the four islands called Coney Island in Ireland, this is the one that gave its name to Coney Island in New York. Sligoman captain Peter O'Connor plied the Atlantic aboard the *Arethusa* 240 years ago, and named the now better known American version after his homeplace.

Maguins Island

G605-387 Sheet 16

A piece of sand and dune separated equally from the Strandhill side to the S (beyond Sligo Airport) and Coney (the beautiful W beach on) to the N. Lacking any obvious merit, Maguins may be waded to from either side at LW. A rocky reef runs NE and S from the W tip, barring entrance except at higher waters. Nettles, no camping found.

Oyster Island

G631-394 Sheet 16

0.5km SE of Deadman's Point, this is a privately owned residential farmland, semi-grazed by horses, and by hares. Oyster is nationally important as a supplier of wild hares to the Irish greyhound industry. Sold in 2013, we hope there are no unforeseen changes to a lovely island. It is possible to land just about anywhere. Limekiln on S side. No suitable camping found.

The small lighthouse is a rear leading light which, in combination with the Metal Man light, guides ships into the channel. 2 Corncrake were calling in 2010.

Metal Man

G626-396 Sheet 16

0.3km S of Deadman's Point, the Metal Man was originally destined for the unlit tower that stood on Black Rock. However, once it was decided to build a proper lighthouse there, the Metal Man was established where it now stands on Perch Rock in 1821. Four metal men were cast by Thomas Kirke in London in 1819. One of the others stands on a headland near

Tramore in Waterford but the whereabouts of the remaining two is unknown. The Metal Man is dressed in the uniform of a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy and, with right arm outstretched, he points to the safe channel to Sligo.

Horse Island

G560-440 Sheet 16

7km WNW of Deadman's Point, this is a small island just off Yellow Strand (no easy vehicular access) to the NW of Raghly Point, at the N side of outermost Sligo Bay. The pier at Raghly Point is recently extended and developed, the original being the northernmost pier built by Alexander Nimmo.

The island is low-lying, ungrazed, and there is a suspicion of rodents present. Such merit as the island possesses lies in its position, especially in its feasibility as a waystop on passage, for instance to or from Inishmurray out of nearby Rosses Point. Camping would be unattractive.

SPA

Internationally important numbers of Barnacle Goose in season.

Landing and Embarkation

Landing is quite manageable onto storm beaches along its S side, either side of a sheltering off-lying rock, or in a cut at the E point. Embarkation is easiest from the N side of the horseshoe bay, 1.5km to the NE at G564-456, called locally Ballyconnell West.

Nearby, lovely Dooneragh Point at G557-447 boasts an ancient promontory fort with multiple rampart defence systems in good condition. Knocklane Hill 1km to the ESE provides fine views of these islands, a World War 2 lookout recently knocked down, and an older military building with musket firing slots, of uncertain age.

Ardboline Island

G550-444 Sheet 16

A small island 1km outside and to the W of Horse Island, taller, with steep sides, and altogether more substantial. The central plateau has steep sides, is ungrazed and is given over to nettles. Camping would ordinarily be entirely out of the question. Around the edges are sloping limestone pavements, wider on the seaward side.

Marvel at the remains of part (mostly propeller shaft and housing) of a 248 ton iron steamer lodged near the SSW tip, said locally to have been driven deliberately on shore, successfully saving the crew. Local lore is that the captain was from Sligo, knew the ground, and in a rising gale, drove the ship up on the island, because he knew he could. Objectively, it is known that the 'Sligo' sank here on 5th February 1912, carrying coal inward to Sligo from Garston. Public records show that Captain Devaney and his crew of 13 escaped ashore from a ladder at the bow at LW.

Worms up to half a metre long are fossilised in the rocks around the island, some quite raised by erosion.

SPA

Internationally important numbers of Barnacle Goose in season.

Landing and Embarkation

Landing is quite challenging, especially at HW. The island is sausage shaped lying NNE/SSW. Landing will always be entirely unappealing on the outside due to permanent swell. A deep water landing may be had at a choice of spots along the inside. At lower water there may be available storm beaches, simplifying things. Embarkation is easiest from the N

side of the horseshoe bay, 1.5km to the NE at G564-456, called locally Ballyconnell West. Yellow Strand to the E has no easy vehicular access.

Inishmurray

G580-539 Sheet 16

About 6km WNW of Streedagh Point G632-514, this is a lovely, remote, low-lying, formerly inhabited island, with a most interesting history both ancient and recent. Its monastic ruins are excellent and worth the visit in themselves. A row of fairly recently abandoned houses lines the SE side above the unsatisfactory pier/slip. Fields, bog, lake and scrub comprise the rest. The NW point has interesting small cliffs and passages.

Tides

Local HW Galway +0040. Tidal movements are not strong.

Embarkation

Inishmurray lies about 6km WNW out from the nearest and most common embarkation points, either side of Streedagh Point G632-514. Choose depending on conditions between the NNW-facing beach at G637-510, and a smaller SW-facing beach at G631-502. Otherwise the position is a bit more complex. By far the most convenient embarkation place for bigger boats or larger groups of kayakers is the harbour at the village of Mullaghmore at G709-576, about 15km ENE from the island. Here there is parking and dependable shelter. There are several other possibilities, first amongst which is 7km S of the island, at Ballyconnell North, a N-facing beach at G566-462, where reasonable parking for a handful of cars.

Landing

From the S/SE direction, there is a roofed building prominently visible at the E end of the island. This is the schoolhouse, which lies just above the pier wall. The shoreline generally is slippery boulders and slab. Landing with kayaks can be difficult, even at the pier wall, which is not very sheltered and distinctly open to the SE. The village is a single line of houses just above the shore just W of the schoolhouse. Landing can also be had further W on the S side in the often more sheltered deeply indented coves at G571-537, W of the village, onto rocks. This spot, though sheltered, is more suited to boats that can be tied or anchored, such as dinghies or ribs where one can hop or step onto rock. For those overnighing, a landing here leaves a good distance to carry gear to the better campsites near the schoolhouse.

Camping and Water

No drinking water was found though there is a lake in the centre. Camping is perhaps best at the schoolhouse.

Wildlife

The Eider and Common Scoter ducks are sometimes found here in summer. This was until recently considered almost the most southerly breeding area of the Eider.

Local History

Of special interest on the island is the monastic ruined settlement, founded by Columba in 550 AD. It is inside a Bronze Age fortification, the walls of which were once about 4.5m high. They are now half that, having been restored in 1880. The enclosure of cells, beehives, churches, altars, and carved stones, which in themselves make the island a must for a visit, are in better condition after 1400 years than the village houses after 100. The men-folk of the island were buried inside the enclosure and the women outside, at Teampalnamban about 150m distant. There are cursing stones here, five *Clocha Breacha*, capable of cursing ones enemies. The cursing stones have recently been removed by the OPW and are kept in the old

school house. You may be lucky and be on the island when the OPW are working there and get to see the stones.

The island was pagan until Columba built a new monastery inside the fort and installed St. Molaise as Abbot. The monastery obtained fame almost immediately. Columba, back on a visit, borrowed a book from the library. Without telling Molaise, he copied it. A furious Molaise demanded the return of the copy. Denied, he appealed all the way to the High King, Diarmuid, who was then like the Supreme Court is today. His judgement was 'to every cow its calf, to every book its copy', probably the first ever recorded copyright decision in Western Europe.

Worse was to come. Columba still wouldn't return the copy. Diarmuid, feeling he was being challenged, set out westwards with an army of 3,000 to punish Columba and his followers. Columba resoundingly beat the army of the high king near Culdrennan outside Sligo, with the loss of all his men.

Columba was upset by all these unanticipated downstream consequences of his thievery. He relented, and presented himself on Inishmurray to Molaise in confession. As penance, Molaise banished Columba to Scotland, never to return until he had converted to Christianity as many pagans as the 3,000 killed in the battle. Columba sailed, and didn't settle until he could no longer see Ireland. He landed at Iona, and there founded his greatest ever monastery. He never returned to Ireland.

The Vikings raided Inishmurray in 795 and 802, and the Black and Tans in 1921. In 1915, a British warship, mistaking the island for a submarine, torpedoed it. It is thought the fort was mistaken for a conning tower. The islanders were shaken but not stirred.

The island was infamous for *poitín* making. There being no natural embarkation point for access to the island, and no easy landing, visits by the authorities were few. This enabled the undisturbed islanders to distil the best illicit whiskey in the country, marketed as 'Old Inishmurray'. When the Revenue officials did come, they had to hire boats locally and word would escape. Then, in the absence of any one truly sheltered landing spot, it seems it was always necessary for the local boatmen to circle the island looking for the easiest landing place. The illicit brew was normally well hidden by the time anyone got ashore.

The school was built in 1889 when there were 102 people living here in 15 houses. There were only 46 in 1948 when the last people left.

The islanders were renowned for a combined rowing/sailing technique unique in Ireland which made them the safest, fastest and bravest sailors around.

Black Rock

G657-526 Sheet 16

A tiny island barely separated at HW from the mainland to its SE at the extreme ENE end of Streedagh Strand. Besides providing some privacy for the stroller, there is a small 10m sandstone steep but well protected rock-climbing escarpment on the NE, and in 2008 breeding Eider, besides a good roost of Great Black backed Gulls.

Streedagh Strand is the number one local beach N of Sligo town, with surfing lessons, a beautiful walk, horse riding, and all that is best in an unspoilt tourist beach.

The Spanish Armada

The *Lavia* and two other ships came ashore 1588 when they became embayed and their anchors didn't hold. The survivors who got ashore were few, but those who did were stripped

naked by the Irish and robbed of all they possessed. Then the English arrived. They killed the ordinary sailors and ransomed the wealthier officers.

Dernish Island

G677-524 Sheet 16

A medium-sized island located close to the coastline 5km ENE of Streedagh Point G632-514. The island is a pleasant mixture of stone-walled fields, patches of scrub and small copses. A green road cuts across the centre of the island connecting several ruined farmhouses with the only inhabited house at the southern landing place mentioned.

The island is separated from the mainland by a narrow channel of 100/200m on its NE and SE sides. On the W side, an extensive boulder beach at LW connects the island to a spit of land known as Conors Island, at the extreme ENE end of Streedagh Strand. The gap is entirely impracticable to cross.

Landing / Embarkation

The island's main landing is (easily onto mud/shale) at the S tip. The closest launch is from a small pier just opposite at G677-519. At LW, landing elsewhere is made difficult by extensive boulder and rocky foreshores on both the N/W sides. Landing is easier along the E inside channel though there is a good tidal flow from the inner bay area. Good camping on the NW peninsula on flat grass, for which land on the N side of the spit of the peninsula. No water found.

County Donegal

Inishduff

G648-724 Sheet 10

Also called locally 'Shalwy Island', this small islet is very visible from the south Donegal coast road just 3km ESE of Muckros Head, about 2km out from land. Inishduff forms a useful leg-stretching waystop on passage, perhaps the island's greatest contribution to the scheme of things. The island was once grazed but nowadays has gone wild and is given over to nettles, brambles and seabirds.

SPA

Storm Petrel, Barnacle Goose.

Embarkation Points

Inishduff is 3km from the nearest beach on the E side of Muckros Head, where there is poor parking at G627-742. Closest is a small pier just opposite Inishduff on the mainland, but down an uncomfortably steep roadway at G640-747. Not recommended is Fintragh Beach to the NE at G685-764, as many cars will not cope with the steep descent here either, and the road boasts a height barrier.

For those on passage, the island lies in a straight line along the coast, 6km from St. John's Point. There is a sheltered slipway just S of and under the lighthouse at G703-689, but cattle graze here so camping can be a problem. Also available is a beautiful sheltered beach 2km NE of St. John's Point at G717-702 where there is excellent camping, but be discreet as this land belongs to the Commissioners of Irish Lights.

Landing

Land at either of two well-sheltered east-facing storm beaches on the very indented E side.

Slieve League Cliffs

G523-785 Sheet 10

This is one of the truly mighty excursions of Irish sea paddling, yet is quite manageable. It consists of 13km of majestic cliff scenery from Malinbeg at G494-799 to Teelin at G593-753. There are numerous waterfalls coming off the cliffs to shower under, some up to 100m high. The shuttle is tedious so consider doing the expedition there and back. There are several beaches well spread out along the base, for breaking the journey should conditions allow, none of which is attainable from the land. One stony beach is reasonably sheltered at G523-785 and is important, being one third of the way from Malinbeg. It is just E and somewhat in the lee of a vaguely prominent headland, the other beaches being nearer Teelin, at Bunglass and just W of it. Sail Rock, for hard climbers only, is just E of Carrigan Head. Deep caves along the way add excitement for those who like their adrenaline pumped.

Tides

Local HW is Galway +0040. Nothing is reliably known about tidal movements along the north coast of Donegal Bay, or when they start, but they are considered to be weak, except off salient points.

Malinbeg

G494-799 Sheet 10

A most important embarkation place for kayaking. Landing, while safe at the sheltered pier and steep slipway, is a little awkward and involves a steep carry. There is excellent camping on commonage immediately above the pier, by a white house with three chimneys and a garage. The nearby beach is splendid. Drinking water is available at a tap external to an outhouse beside a dwelling, near the crossroads in the village on the road to the beach. The beach is a huge carry.

The rock climbing hereabouts, mostly under the prominent signal tower, is nationally important. Malinbeg's situation makes it a most attractive venue for paddling to Rathlin O' Birne Island, E along the Slieve League cliffs, or N to Glen Head. Basic provisions may be had in the village, as may B+B, and the hotel at Malinmore (3km) is excellent for eating and drinking.

Local HW Galway +0040.

Finding the harbour from the sea needs care. Once close, the white house with three chimneys in a line is prominent atop a low cliff and is just above the pier, which can then be made out. At night, the pier is lit. From out to sea to the SE, aim between the beach and the prominent square signal tower. Coming from the E, pass the prominent white strand, well to the E of the tower until the white house appears. Coming from the N, the spread out village disappears as one paddles past the promontory with the obvious signal tower, off which are two prominently visible (actually there are more) rocks. Turn in left (E) after the rocks.

Follow around until the white house appears.

Malinmore

G493-827 Sheet 10

A modern, well maintained and protected slipway is located near Malinmore, named Oughig. There is camping available above the slipway with parking available for small groups. The area is quiet and undisturbed, being well away from local houses. No water found. The area is within easy walking distance of the excellent nearby Malinmore Hotel.

Rathlin O' Birne Island

G467-801 Sheet 10

2km W of Malinbeg, this is a low-lying, grassy island indented all round with channels, bounded by cliffs and even bisected by a sea arch. It has a major lighthouse, now automated. While the building was completed in 1846, the light was not fitted for another 10 years. The light is 35m above sea level on an all white tower. It flashes white and red every 15 seconds. Lighthouse keepers and their families lived here from 1856 to 1912, when the families moved to shore dwellings in Glencolumbkille. Ireland's first nuclear powered light (and thought to have been the world's most powerful) was switched on here on 15th August 1974. This was replaced with wind power in 1987 when the nuclear battery became worn down. Wind power was replaced with solar energy in 1993, and that is the position to this day. Two parallel cut stone walls, 2m high and 4m apart, enclose a roadway, once used by the lighthouse keepers as protection against the Atlantic winds on their journey from the beach to the lighthouse. N of the walls lies the kayak landing, and beyond it across the 'moraine', lies the remains of lazybeds, a house, and what looks like the evidence of monks' dwellings. South of the landing there is a monastic settlement that has some cross inscribed crosses, altar stones, and offering bowls. The site is now very ruined but still interesting. There is a covered well built stone well located northwest down the slope from the monastic complex. The water in July 2013 needed to be cleaned out but should provide good water after a few days.

Several other small seepage streams are to be found around the main landing beach and at the old Lighthouse landing steps on the north side.

The island has good camping on the ledges just west of the main boulder beach landing on the north side.

There were large numbers of breeding Herring and Greater Black-backed Gulls, a flock of Greylag Geese, 1 Corncrake calling and 1-2 pairs of Great Skua in July 2013.

SPA

Storm Petrel, Leach's Petrel, Barnacle Goose, Terns.

Landing and Embarkation

Best landing is at a stony beach visible from the mainland in the NE in a somewhat sheltered bay, where the island appears to be almost dissected. The pier at the SE is unsuited to kayaks. Out of Malinbeg, the crossing is only about thirty minutes.

Tides

Tides in the Sound run north strongly for 9.15 out of the 12 hours.

Rathlin O'Birne Sound		
Direction	Time	Max Rate Sp.
N	2:30 before Galway HW	1.5kn
S	Galway LW	Weak

The spring rate of the north-going stream is about 1.5kn and the south-going stream is very weak. The main west coast tidal stream runs along the coast from Rathlin O'Birne to Aran.

Rathlin O'Birne to Aran Island		
Direction	Time	Speed
N	3:20 before Galway HW	<1kn
S	3:05 after Galway HW	<1kn

The flows are stronger inshore off the salient points and the flows probably change 1-2 hours earlier.

The Evelyn Marie fishing boat went down here in 1975 and then the Carrig Una in 1976, tragedies that rocked west Donegal.

South West Donegal

The stretch of coastline from Rathlin O' Birne G467-801 to Loughros Point G645-934 is dominated by huge stretches of awesome cliffs, hundreds of metres high, accessible from land only in Malinmore, Glencolumbkille and Port. Along the entire length lie mighty sea stacks, all close in to the shore. These are almost unknown to the general body of sea going folk, certainly outside the ranks of a new breed of adventurers that specialise in the challenge of climbing them.

Climbing sea stacks is not entirely new. The televised ascent by legendary Joe Brown and Chris Bonnington of the Old Man of Hoy in the Scottish Orkneys many years ago is well renowned. It is thought that the first ever organised and recorded rock climbing in Ireland was in the NE corner of Ireland's Eye in County Dublin. Anyone who visits Loop Head will look with awe across the 100m high gap to the prominent cairn atop its huge sea stack, Diarmuid and Gráinne's Rock. British climbers Mick Fowler and Steve Sustad placed it there in 1990. But there has been an explosion of this kind of activity this century, mostly by Donegal based climbers, led by Iain Miller. Their passionate pursuit of this new adventure model is much to be admired.

One may only marvel at the level of commitment necessary to flourish at this new sport, access often requiring difficult and obscure manoeuvres. Typically the approach requires the climber to descend a frightening grass or scree cliff, often probably never previously descended, maybe needing an abseil and a fixed rope for the retreat. The right place is then achieved horizontally, either by "coastaleering" or by floating, necessarily in the flimsiest of inflated "boat", it not being practical to carry anything remotely seaworthy on such an approach. Incredibly, even the outside face of Sturrall headland has been climbed, accessed by scrambling down the N face to a sea level slab, facing the collection of off-lying stacks. Scramble around the corner S to the foot,

Mullaghtan

G517-870 Sheet 10

Directly under the signal tower on the headland immediately N of Glencolumbkille, and prominently visible from the road N from Malin More, this stack gives 90m of high grade extreme climbing. Access is only by sea, from Glen Bay. Land on a large platform on S side.

Port Group South

G544-887 Sheet 10

Three stacks are visible about 600m WSW from the road end at Port. The nearest has two prominent V grooves. The biggest, the best, and the hardest climbing is on the seaward face of the farthest and largest stack. Access is tidal, from the cliff path, the best descent being opposite the V grooves.

Port Group North

G545-893 Sheet 10

NW of the road end lies a cluster of six stacks, those to the S & W accessed exclusively by water. At LW and calm conditions, it is possible to access the NE part of the group by land

on foot, boulder hopping from a stormbeach 500m NW of the road end, after a scramble down the cliff above.

Prominent among the group is an L shaped wedge, with twin sea arches. The climbing on it and elsewhere hereabouts is characterised as a combination of immaculate rock, primary jungle comprising mud/scree/grass, and considerable exposure up top.

Toralaydan

G544-897 Sheet 10

Located about 750m N of Port at G547-890 this is an impressive, square, precipitous island block. Land easily on E side. The passage between the island and headland is navigable in good conditions. The island is a reliable navigation aid as it stands out well from the coast especially when approached from the S. The island marks a useful escape point on this wild and beautiful section of the SW Donegal coast.

Breeding colonies of Fulmar, Kittiwake and Guillemot.

Land Access

A gully runs the full cliff height on the headland facing Toralaydan. The gully is the only way down the surrounding cliffs, and is a very serious undertaking. Climb from sea level in long pitches of 20, 45, 45, 50, 20m to the cliff top, using excavated boulders as belays. The location and atmosphere are considerable! The gully is marked with a very discrete summit cairn.

Summiting

Ignore the very inviting direct route which is grassy at first but runs into a scree filled tricky section, that might be OK for climbers but not for wet booted people! Instead better to bear away to the N, taking the second grassy slope. The exposure is reportedly tolerable.

An Bhuidéal

G549-903 Sheet 10

Twin headed stack midway between Toralaydan and Tormore. A S-facing stormbeach 200m E is accessible by scrambling down the headland. It is necessary to float the rest of the way.

Land on the E side.

Superb middle grade climbing up both towers.

Tormore Group

G555-908 Sheet 10

2km NE of Port, the Tormore Group is a cluster located just off a headland. Tormore is high and precipitous, the largest and most seaward of this broken triangle of islands. The sea has breached this group of islets in several places and one can enter a narrow stretch of water through a sea arch in the most southern islet of the group. High cliffs all round make it a dramatic place, as all entrances are narrow and a tricky place to be in heavy swell. The N-facing breach is too narrow and dangerous for kayaks at LW.

Breeding colonies of Kittiwake, Guillemot, Razorbill and Fulmar.

For land access to the lovely shark's fin stack to the S, descend the 200m grass slope on the headland to the lonely pebble beach facing the stacks. Keep to the grassy slopes, directly above the beach and avoid the scree to your right. The landward arête of this southernmost stack yields a magnificent middle grade climbing route. Its smaller neighbour is also climbed.

Land access to Tormore itself is much more complex, by coastaleering from the beach well to the E (its own access an enormous challenge), but finally by water surface, a full 3.5 hours for the 2km from a car at Port. Climbers term the stack inside Tormore as The Hidden Stack. At 150m high Tormore is considered the Daddy of Donegal's Sea stacks. It can be seen from Dungloe, approximately 40km to the NE! The climbing route on Tormore is by its landward arête, which as a feature can clearly be seen from any position along this coast.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough, Grey Seal.

Glenlough Bay Group

G568-908 Sheet 10

Firstly, there is a group of three stacks in the E part of the 1km wide bay. Access by land to the beach is not easy. From Port follow the cliff top path N for approx 3km. Once you pass the Tormore viewpoint G557-906, continue to follow the cliff tops as they descend along Glenlough Bay. At G567-904, descend to the wide gully immediately to the SW of the large ominous looking buttress. Follow the stream down this gully until approx 70m above the sea, traverse NE for 50m and descend the scree slope to the beach, directly below the ominous buttress.

The largest middle stack is the easiest to climb in the technical sense. The WSW stack is technically difficult, but the small 30m ENE quartz tower is magnificent, extremely serious, technically hard, and it is reported that a fall from the last 12 metres, consisting of the summit ridge, would be fatal.

Secondly, at G573-916 about 1km NE, just 250m past the headland 500m N of the Glenlough River, lying one third of the way from Tormore to Gull, there is a fine 60m twin headed stack. A very atmospheric gothic sea channel separates the stack to landward. Land on its SW side and climb easily to the W summit. The E summit is much more difficult of access. Much loose rock and certain death await those who fall from here.

In between, there is also a land seacliff crag at G569-911, a hanging slab of immaculate quartz, that sits at the tip of the headland at the ENE end of Glenlough Bay, about 300m W of the Glenlough River. Access is a short exposed scramble down to the top of the crag.

Gull Island

G613-924 Sheet 10

Situated about 4km W of the slip at Loughros Point at G653-928 and 2km NNW of the summit of Slievetooley, this is a massive big 95m lump of rock, with cliffs all round, barely separated from the main Slievetooley cliffs at only the highest spring tides, and easily missed as it merges with the cliffs behind. Land on a sheltered storm beach at SE. The cliffs E of the island are less exposed to the WSW swells and are thereby the more comfortably explored for their dramatic arches, canyons, gaps, caves and waterfalls, giving a most worthwhile excursion in this beautiful and little explored area.

Land access to the base of the stack is via a 100m steep grass/mixed ground scramble beneath Slievetooley.

Gull has been climbed by its outrageous, soaring landward arête, which has to be seen to be believed, but is technically manageable.

The stack immediately NW is technically more difficult to climb.

Inishbarnog

G640-963 Sheet 10

1km south of Dawros Head, this is a small, low-lying island in Loughros More Bay. There are rocky cliffs on the western side and an attractive sandy beach on eastern side named as Bealanillan Port on 1:50,000 OS map. There is good camping at the landing and a possibility of water at a wet marshy area about 200m west of the landing area, if sufficiently desperate. The island is grazed heavily by sheep and by Barnacle Geese in winter and spring. When approached from the S a small cairn marks the highest point. On the northern side, rocky platforms are exposed at low tide. Bird life includes breeding Herring Gulls and Common Gulls. The following species were seen in April 1999: Eider, Barnacle Geese, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover and Snow Bunting.

Inishkeel

B711-002 Sheet 10

An attractive island lying just N of Portnoo, half joined to the land at its SE. There are the remains of a farmhouse, a collection of early Christian churches (in ruins), and a walled graveyard, just above the beach on the E side. Some of the land appears private. Cows graze. The island is heavily grazed in winter by a flock of 300+ Barnacle Geese. There are some small wet marshy areas containing stands of Yellow Iris. No definite source of water was found. There is good camping at the landing. Large glacial erratics are found on the higher ground west of the landing. Breeding bird species include Herring Gull and Common Gull, Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Oystercatcher, Meadow Pipit and Skylark. 1 Corncrake was heard calling in 2010.

SPA

Barnacle Goose, Tern, Chough, formerly Corncrake.

Landing

Land at a fine beach on E side.

Roaninish

G658-027 Sheet 10

A lovely, remote, low-lying, short-grassed island, 6km WNW out from Portnoo. Land and camp at a sheltered sandy beach in an E-facing little bay called Portnatra on the E side. There is also an attractive landing at the W end of Roaninish in an embayment called Portnagall formed by its satellite islands. At times of HW this area is an attractive bay full of channels that allow passage by kayak and small craft between Nee Beg, Nee More, and Roaninish itself. There is evidence of some settlement at Tonavally just above the W landing where there are the remains of four small buildings. Interestingly, there is a named entrance to access Tonavally from the S called Portnageeragh, which suggests that this channel was used in former times.

The main island has at least three satellite islands Nee Mór, Nee Beg and one unnamed on its W/ NW sides and one on its E flank also unnamed. All are similar in topography to the main island, low lying and grassy with many humps and hollows, except the unnamed Emost island which has predominantly large areas of storm beach.

All entrances to the various channels, including Portnatra, are subject to swells and boomers can catch the unwary.

A small lake by the campsite should be treated with caution as sheep graze the island. No other water spotted.

The Greenhaven was wrecked on the W side in 1956. She sat on the island until a storm in the late eighties, and since then is submerged just off the shore. The wreck and the island featured in a BBC feature film in the 90s entitled "The Secret of Roaninish". In 2001 kayakers found no sign of the remains of the wreck even at LW.

The birdlife is interesting with Widgeon, Teal, Greylag, Barnacle Geese, Purple Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Ringed Plover, and Turnstone all present in April 2012. Breeding species include Gulls, Eider, and Storm Petrel.

SPA

Storm Petrel, Tern.

Aranmore Group

This group extends from Illancrone in the south to Aranmore itself in the north.

Embarkation

The normal embarkation place for the Aranmore group is from Burtonport at B717-152 which has good facilities in terms of pubs, restaurants and shops. Launch from the main wide slipway, but it can be busy. Be sure though to park 150m away in front of the pub. This will keep the slipway and pier free. Otherwise there is a smaller slipway 200m to the S of the main slip, where also good parking and even toilets. Also, be aware that the sea in the immediate vicinity of Burtonport is very protected and is no indication of what may be happening outside. The North Rutland Channel runs SE to NW and is the narrow sound between Eighter and Rutland which gives access from Burtonport out to Aran. The SE entrance to the Channel is difficult to identify from Burtonport. Aim for the two-story house on the Rutland skyline WSW of Burtonport pier. Navigation locally is far more challenging in windy conditions than any casual glance at the OS 1:50,000 map might suggest.

Accordingly, some considerable nautical detail is given for this area, and a proper nautical chart is recommended to any visiting group.

Maps and Charts

Chart 1883, Crohy Head to Bloody Foreland (1:30,000) covers the area. The details of the seabed give a good indication of what to expect on the surface in bad weather and in this respect it is much better than the OS 1:50,000, sheet 1. However, many of the beacons on the approaches to Burtonport are not marked on the chart but can be worked out from the Pilot or Sailing Directions. This is a complicated area. The Sailing Directions (South and West Coasts of Ireland) give a good sketch map of Aran Sound, shows most of the beacons and all of the shoals. The Pilot gives detailed information but needs to be used with a map or chart. The older half-inch, (1:126,720) sheet 1 OS map is virtually useless (unusually perhaps) for bad weather navigation in this area.

Tides

Tidal streams in the locality flow strongly and can cut up rough in contrary winds. Local HW and LW are an hour after Galway HW.

The tide floods from both ends of Aran Sound simultaneously, meeting near the Carrickbealatroha Upper beacon at B695-147, midway between Rutland and southeast Aran. This is also sometimes known as Stream Rock and the beacon is a wide square tower, 5m

high. On the eastern side of Rutland, the tides meet halfway up, at Teige Rock, a large white beacon, at B713-145.

Aran Sound	
Direction	Time
In	5:20 before Galway HW
Out	0:50 after Galway HW

The tide floods southeast through the North Rutland Channel, strongly, up to 2-3kn in springs, but one may eddie-hop going against. This is one of the very few channels on the west coast of Ireland where the tide floods south. Other examples are mainly north-facing bays such as at Achill Sound and Valentia Harbour. Similarly, the tide floods logically into Dungloe Bay around both sides of the more south islands in the group.

Illancrone

B695-103 Sheet 1

3.5km SSE of Aranmore. Unremarkable twin grassy tufts atop drumlinesque stony mounds, separated by the sea except at LW. Breeding Eider. The grid reference is for SE top. Land just NW of SE top.

There is a beacon light on the SE. The ruin on the NW top was the holiday home of Saint Crona Beg, who summered here.

SPA

Barnacle Goose, Tern.

Inishkeeragh

B685-125 Sheet 1

1.5km S of Aranmore. This is a fine island, not to be lightly missed. The main street is immediately along the beach on the N side. There is now a substantial pier. Several houses are being rebuilt, some already have and there are even some brand new log houses.

View the remarkably located schoolhouse to W. Apparently none of the islanders wanted it closer to the village as the land was too valuable to them. Winter storm waves rolled across much of the W side. Thus the better land in the middle and E was too valuable to sell for a school. That was a standard way of looking at things since Adam and Eve were children.

One wonders what they would make of EU "set aside"? Peadar O'Donnell taught here.

The island was abandoned by its 10 families in March 1955, when their numbers suddenly dipped below a tipping point and there weren't enough hands to share the harder work of hauling boats to safety, cutting turf etc. "*Inniscaorac – My Account*" privately published 2008 by former resident Susan O'Donnell tells the story in detail.

Landing and Camping

Land easily at E end of the N side onto a gravel beach, or on the ESE side of the island, on N side of the projecting Portnamweela, where there is a sandy beach, and once the island well.

There is good camping by the ruined houses on short sheep-grazed grass. Good water is to be had in a well, found behind 'main street' along the north side. N.B. Wells need use, so you may need to clean it out and let the sediment settle before you take water from it. The islands used this well for all purposes other than drinking as the water contained too much iron, and they preferred a number of wells on the E side, or even trapped rainwater.

SPA

Barnacle Goose, Tern. Also, Brent Goose, Eider, Greylag, Shelduck and Lapwing seen in May 1999.

3 Corncrake were heard calling in 2010.

Inishal

B726-113 Sheet 1

In Dungloe Bay 5km SE of Aranmore. Overshadowed perhaps by Inishfree, this turf and boggy island with ruins has no particularly attractive camping spot. Land anywhere sheltered. There are the remains of a small village at the bay on S side. Tides flow strongly on the Inishfree side.

Wintertime gives good birdlife :Red Breasted Merganser, Mallard, Teal, Short Eared Owl.

Inishfree Upper

B715-126 Sheet 1

2km SE of Aranmore, at the mouth of Dungloe Bay. Large interesting island worth exploring. Homes on the NW apparently result from recent settlement by English and Welsh families, one permanently occupied by a saxophonist from 1991 to 2013. The island was electrified August 2000. The island is developing a tradition in art that yet may rival Tory. The shipwreck of the 'Mallrin' is to the W. There is tidal peat with bog oak (some say giant cedar?) in the baylet W of the S point at B714-114. The old schoolhouse is at the E end of the island.

Landing and Camping

Land easily on sheltered sandy beach just SW of N point of island, where there is a slipway, if preferred. The landing point is backed by machair that is friendly to camping. Cows grazing. No water found. You may land and camp also at a beach to the SW at B711-114. 2 Corncrake were heard in 2010.

Tides

Tides flood strongly E past the N point.

Peadar O'Donnell

Peadar O'Donnell (1893 - 1986) taught for many years. Born and bred in nearby Dungloe, he wrote of island life - 'Islanders' 1927 and 'Proud Island' 1975. He also dealt with his political phase in 'The Gates Flew Open', a reference to his escape from internment as a Republican during the Irish Civil War in 1923. He was the leader of IRA militant agitation for land reform in the 1930s. This led to the withholding from Britain of land annuities by the fledgling Irish government of the new state. These annuities were due as the repayment (mortgage fashion) of the capital investment in agricultural land made by the Congested Districts Board pre-independence in 1921. The economic war with the UK that followed brought Ireland to its knees. Strangely, when the dispute was settled in 1938, as part of the deal, the UK handed back to Ireland its maritime ports. After independence, Britain had continued to occupy and utilise deep harbour naval facilities at Cobh, Bearhaven and Lough Swilly (Rathmullen). The UK would regret its folly almost immediately, as they could have well done with these ports during the Battle of the Atlantic that followed during World War 2. Ireland could hardly have remained neutral in such a conflict were these ports in British use. One side or the other would surely have invaded. The association of such a remote place with such momentous events is amazing!

Notwithstanding his nationalistic background, he was essentially a man of the people.

“Adrigoole” in the late 1920s was about a remote crofting family starving to death, that he felt especially appalling in the context of the new Irish state. He felt it would never have happened under foreign / British rule.

He spoke of what he called “human rights” in 1932, fully 16 years (and a World War) before Eleanor Roosevelt addressed the United Nations in that regard in 1948.

He started the idea that became “The Bell”, an independent and truly important outlet for Irish writers in a time of strict censorship.

Inisheane

B747-110 Sheet 1

Despite a large footprint, there being no obvious ruin, Inisheane may never have been inhabited. The remnants of wall systems, and the absence of gorse suggest it hasn't been so neglected all that long. Nowadays it is entirely given over to Ragged Robin, orchids, long grass, Shelduck, Mullet, and Mussels. Low lying and unattractive.

Embarkation

2km W of Dungloe, the main town hereabouts, Inisheane can be reached at higher waters quite easily from the new pier and attractively upgraded slipway below the town at B767-116. The slipway now reaches the LW channel out through the mudflats, but there isn't always enough water to float a kayak in its shallower places, especially where it fragments into a pronounced delta as it makes the sea. Absolutely avoid the hour and a half either side of LW. Land to choice at HW.

Alternatively there is an untidy disused factory complex at 4km WNW of the town B740-126 down a breen. There is far less mud, but the carry to the beach is awkward.

Inishmeal

B722-138 Sheet 1

Less than 1km off the coast, 1.5km S of Burtonport, a large island, low lying with a mixture of rough grazing, heather clad hillocks and wetland areas. There are remains of at least two old ruins along the E side. No sandy beaches found but there are plentiful landings available onto stony muddy creeks. The island is regularly grazed by cattle. This is a pleasant enough island with some interesting nooks to explore at the S end through islands and channels.

Good variety of camping sites but no water found.

Black Guillemot, Red -throated Diver Shag, Curlew, Oystercatcher.

Illanarva

B721-143 Sheet 1

Off the N tip of Inishmeal, a small low lying rocky hummocky type island with rough grazing and patches of heather. Kayak landings are possible onto small bays along both W and E sides. The island is periodically grazed. Tides flow strongly particularly at spring tides periods on both sides of the island and through the narrow channels. Camping is possible but not attractive. No water found.

Tullavane

B717-146 Sheet 1

Just 100+m off the mainland and 0.5km S of Burtonport, the most N of the three inner islands inside Rutland. Land in several shallow rocky bays. Well grazed, camping is more attractive here than the other inner islands, especially at the N end. No water. Strong currents flow either side, E on the flood. Dominated by the wind energy windmill to the N.

Rutland Island

B704-151 Sheet 1

Very much the largest of the outer islands immediately inside Aran, SW of the North Rutland Channel. There are a fast-growing number of newly built holiday homes on the NE quadrant of the island facing Burtonport. In late 2009 the pace seemed if anything to be accelerating, bucking the national trend. There is even a RoRo slipway, which is only one step short of a crane.

West of a line from the NW tip to the SE tip, the entire island is a desert of prickly sand dunes. This is a most attractive island, accessible yet quiet, whose main tourist feature must be its magnificent beach running the length of its W side and where few others would ever be met. Absolutely worth a visit.

Landing and Camping

Landing on the main beach would involve a lengthy and difficult carry, easily avoided by accessing a small, hidden, sandy cove through a short, narrow channel just inside the mouth of the North Rutland Channel (beside a sign warning of a Power Cable). A 100m carry then accesses splendid machair short-grass camping in the shelter of the dunes and near the north end of the beach.

Alternatively, land 150m further SE into the North Rutland Channel, onto a steep, sandy beachlet at B705-150, just seaward of a new house with new steps to the sea and just inside a green navigation marker. This gives a shorter carry to the same camping, but the beach, although sheltered, is steep at most points of the tide.

The island has long been electrified, but there is no mains water.

Tides

Beware strong tides all around, and foul ground off the SW tip. There are many landings possible all around the island.

History

Rutland Island has a remarkable history, having been the commercial capital of NW Ireland 200+ years ago. The herring industry thrived so strongly in the 18th Century that the local landlord Lord Burton Conyngham invested heavily in providing access via Burtonport to a major new town on Rutland Island. By about 1785, the island had a Post Office, hotel, harbours, fish handling facilities and a population of hundreds. Then the herring shoals declined and disappeared altogether in 1793. The town degraded somewhat but was still occupied in September 1798 when the second wave of French invaders to Ireland that year landed on Rutland. Napper Tandy, commander of the United Irishmen on board, raided the post office. He found out that the first wave of the invasion of the previous month under General Humbert, which had landed at Killala and had some early successes, had been beaten. The 1798 Revolution was as good as over. Tandy retreated towards France, was caught, but not executed. Wolfe Tone would accompany a third wave of invaders a couple of months later but they were beaten by the Royal Navy in a battle just off the back of Aranmore.

When Ireland became independent in 1921, the country was awash with licenced public houses. "Pub" numbers were growing and out of control. To slow things down, a law was passed that to be allowed to open a new pub anywhere, even in an area of huge population growth which therefore might need the like, it was necessary to close down two other pubs. The two other pubs closed didn't have to be nearby pubs, they could be anywhere. A market

in pub licences flourished for a time. The absurdity of the rule was forced home when a Dublin pub was opened, one of the two pubs it had closed elsewhere being that of the Rutland Island pub, hundreds of miles away, and which anyway hadn't served drink for eighty years. The law has since been changed.

The island remained the administrative capital of the region for a century. A channel to the nearby mainland was dredged out, so that Burtonport became eventually more important and took over the marine industry hereabouts. The island was inhabited until the 1960s.

Nowadays there are holiday homes on all these inner islands. In 2003 a marina for pleasure yachts has been planned, but lack of funds has frustrated progress. The main fishing hereabouts is now out of half-deckers, for crabs and lobsters. Trawling is very much in decline. This area may thus become principally a tourist destination, but that is the way of things.

Rutland badger are much smaller than normal, so that they were once commonly mistaken for Mink. They also have distinctive white noses.

Oileán na Lachan

B704-154 Sheet 1

Means "Duck Island". A small yet interesting island that is located on the S side of North Rutland Channel at its NW extremity. The vegetation is a mix of rough grassland, machair and marram grass. Pleasant walking and camping but no water found. A small ruin is to be found in the NE corner. Best landings are onto lovely beaches on NE, through to the SE sides that dry to allow access to small outlying islets. However the narrow channel between it and Rutland Island is always navigable. Sheep.

In January 2009 Red-breasted Merganser and Mallard were present in small numbers.

Edernish

B710-150 Sheet 1

Edernish is the smallest of the outer islands that are inside Aranmore and NE of North Rutland Channel, barely detached from Inishcoo to its NW. Seen from Burtonport, it is dominated by a large house with a boathouse to its S. The house has a tidal swimming pool beside. The entire island has a perimeter fence. Most such fences are to keep stock in; some keep people out. This fence is unique in keeping stock out. Cattle graze the extremities of the island. Every little projection or headland boasts short grass and cow manure. The inner core of the island is utterly ungrazed, wild as can be. It does have contorted pines and other tough bushes and trees, for shelter. This approach is unique among Irish offshore islands.

Inishcoo

B706-153 Sheet 1

Inishcoo is the largest of the outer islands that are inside Aranmore and NE of North Rutland Channel, the second largest overall of the outer islands inside Aran. A huge granite wall zigzags across the island. The biggest of the holiday homes is the former coastguard station at the SW. There are nice sandy beaches midway on the SW side and even a small lake in the interior. There is a highly attractive, secluded, family type, swimming sandy beach in the NW channel at B703-158.

This attractive island lies just SE of Oileán Eighter and is joined to it by a footbridge at B703-157. The dividing channel is passable by kayak at HW.

There is also a passage between Inishcoo and the smaller Edernish just SE of it. Land at a small quay at the SW corner at B706-153.

Eighter Island

B703-157 Sheet 1

1km E of Aranmore, NW of Inishcoo. The most northerly of the larger outer islands inside Aranmore, Eighter is the small rocky low-lying island at the NW end of the North Rutland Channel. The North Rutland Channel runs SE to NW and is the narrow sound between Eighter and Rutland which gives access from Burtonport out to Aran. There are a number of holiday homes clustered in the SE quadrant. These have the distinction of appearing very unchanged from the original construction. Landing is most convenient at the southern tip of the island onto a sheltered SE-facing beach in the North Rutland Channel. Camping is all around. The houses collect water, not all of them in sealed tanks. There is a rumour of a pitch and putt course on the island, unauthenticated. There is at least one highly secluded, beautiful sandy beach, facing NE at the N exit from the cut with Inishcoo.

Tramore Point

B696-161 Sheet 1

Tramore Point, despite its name is an island, even at the lowest of LWs, located at the N side of the Rutland Channel and just SW of Eighter Island. An extensive and attractive sandy bay and beach becomes exposed at LW between the two islands and is a lovely place to swim at full tide. The island has great views all round and is worth a stopover for lunch or the aforementioned swim. Evidence of Otter and Mink. No water found and camping options are much better on nearby Eighter Island. Land onto a beach on the S side.

Illanagall

B698165 Sheet 1

Illanagall is located at the N side of, and is very similar to, its much bigger neighbour Eighter Island. The passage between it and Eighter may dry totally at periods of LWS. The island has very pleasant walking as the sward is heavily grazed. The W end has small cliffs and rocky outcrops to explore. No water found. Camping is magnificent, as on nearby Eighter Island.

Islands N of Rinn Raithi

B705-165 Sheet 1

Half a dozen islands lie north of Rinn Raithi, the first bay N of North Rutland Channel, close by the shore for 3km N of Burtonport, up as far as beautiful Cloch Ghlas. They tend to differ to those outside in having a much wilder, craggier feel and are much more heavily vegetated. Most have extensive sandy shallow areas on their E fringes that dry and form a beautiful beach system. Some even allow vehicular access to holiday homes at LW. At periods of HW, many channels and islets provide more than enough interest to merit a days inshore kayaking.

Eadarinis Fraoigh

B717-157 Sheet 1

Edernishfree on the Admiralty sea chart of the area number 2792. This large craggy island provides a substantial and very sheltered harbour on its inside NE side for local smaller fishing boats. The S end of the island is heavily overgrown by heather, ferns, Honeysuckle, grass, rabbits and Sallies. The NW end is much more attractive to recreational use, being

grazed by sheep and therefore attractive to camping. Carrigeen Moss is laid to dry on the shelving slabs inside the NW tip.

Tulaigh Oileain

B709-165 Sheet 1

Rinrainy Island on the Admiralty sea chart of the area number 2792. SE of An tOileán Leathan, a medium sized island that is a combination of rocky knolls, hidden storm beaches, and a lovely beach area along its E side. A holiday house is located on its NE corner. The island, though grazed, is mixture of heather, gorse and rough pasture, and contains some nice stands of low lying Juniper.

Camping is possible especially above a storm beach along its S side. Attractive outcrops of pink hued granite. No water found. Otter and Mink. Burnet Rose and Sallies.

An tOileán Leathan

B708-169 Sheet 1

This is the most northerly of the larger inner islands inside Aranmore, and by far the most attractive. Anglicised as 'Lahan', the term means 'broad' as opposed to 'caol' meaning 'narrow'.

A beautiful stone cottage dignifies the SE side of this island. There is a slip below the cottage, but it is quite steep. The easiest landing for a kayak is 100m just ENE below the stone outbuilding, also pretty. Here on a storm beach there is also a sunken bog, at a cut. There is a ruin centre-island. The top is 20m high. The views from the summit are the best of any hereabouts, N to Owey, W to Aran, S to Glencolumbkille.

Illananaff

B7041-681 Sheet 1

Illananaff is a small yet attractive island. It has a rocky hummocky geology and has a dense yet walk able vegetation of heather, dwarf Juniper and rough grasses. The best landing is in the SE corner onto a small stony/sand beach at the obvious narrow cut that separates Illananaff from An tOilean Leathan. This cut is almost always navigable by sea kayak except perhaps at the lowest of spring tides. Camping is possible above the landing but more attractive options are available locally. No water fund. Otter and Mink. Juniper.

Fall Island

B710-176 Sheet 1

Immediately off, cut off for two hours either side of HW, Fall is small, steep, rough and high. There is a holiday home on its outside NW end, accessed across the beach by a rough roadway. At LW it is surrounded on three sides by sand. Very beautiful. No camping.

Here where the mainland roadway joins the access beach at Cloch Ghlas B712-174 lies the monument to the Skifjord tragedy of 30th October 1981. 6 men were lost when it struck a reef in a storm. 4 of the crew made it ashore in mountainous seas onto Inishinny 1km N. This all came hard for the people of west Donegal after the recent tragedies on Rathlin O'Birne a handful of years before.

Inishinny

B712-182 Sheet 1

1km N of Cloch Ghlas, this medium sized island is reachable on foot from mid-tide, and is well grazed by sheep and even a donkey, especially at its E end. Short cropped grass gives excellent camping. Lazybeds. Little bays and big bays yield lots of exploration. That N

facing inside Bent Island at the NE is a natural sheltered harbour for smaller boats. The W facing harbour in the W is less sheltered altogether. Common Sandpiper. Ringed Plover. Ruin in mid-island.

Aran Sound South

The South Sound of Aran on the E side of Aran is a fearsome place with a high swell, particularly if the swell is from the N. The safest N/S passage goes approximately 200m east of Aileen Reef. Aileen Reef extends SE for 1km from Cloghcor Point at the SE corner of Aran. Boomers may be experienced over the shallows on the E side of the sound at a point E of Cloghcor Pt., off the beach on Rutland. You may also encounter boomers immediately west of the Carrickbealatroha Upper rocks beacon B695-147, which is shown but not named on the 1:50,000 OS map.

If you plan to paddle from the village (Leabgarrow) on Aranmore to Burtonport via the S end of Rutland, with swell about, it is best to follow the channel S to Clutch beacon, marking the S end of Aileen Reef and then turn E, aiming for the beacon on the S end of Rutland. This should avoid any of the breaks on the E side of the Sound.

Aran Sound North

A large swell runs through the Sound of Aran in strong north-westerlies. At the N end, Blind Rocks at B686-166 and Ballagh Rocks at B693-170 are places to be avoided. Blind Rocks are just E of Calf Island and Ballagh Rocks (marked on the 1:50,000 OS map) are 0.6km NW of Eighter Island. In these conditions, the North Sound is virtually closed. Waves frequently break *over* the Ballagh rock light (10m high). This lighthouse was built in the autumn of 1875 and was originally known as Black Rock. It was converted to electric batteries in 1983. Waves also break over the Black Rock beacon (red) just off Leabgarrow pier. If in doubt, follow the ferry route around the N end of the beacon and then down to the beach and the landing described in the Aranmore section.

Aranmore Island

B685-156 Sheet 1

Mostly known more simply as 'Aran'. The island is mountainous at 227m high and about 6.5km square, the largest island off Ireland not connected by bridge. Day trippers can enjoy a circular walk called Siúlóid Aran Mhóir, almost entirely on roads and good bog tracks and rivals the necklace walk on Great Blasket. The island has a stable and prosperous population of about 650, considerable by island standards.

Landing and Camping

The main landing is onto a sheltered sandy beach in front of the main village, midway up the E coast. The strand is bounded on the N side by two piers and on the S by a gentle point, where there is excellent camping near the new school, beside a football pitch. The more northerly pier is the busy ferry pier. In normal conditions, land at the extreme S end of the beach at B685-156, from which there is a very short carry. The best landing in N winds is at the N end, in the shelter of the smaller, S pier. This avoids the surf farther down the beach but carrying to camp is then a problem. Water in the village. The S end of the beach is the best semi-private camping convenient to everything. Remoter camping exists elsewhere as described.

Accommodation and Services

A many-times-a-day ferry services the island with a sheltered run from the mainland at Burtonport. The ferry runs punctually during peak (usually summer) times but less so in the off-peak. The car ferry can take up to 8 cars, is regular and well run. Information can be had from Annie Bonner at 074 9520532 who also runs a restaurant and B&B on Aran at the pier. There is a hostel by the beach which also appears well run, 074 9520515. Glen Hotel is just above the beach for those seeking comfort at 074 9520505.

Circumnavigation

From the paddler's point of view, the entire W side is challenging. Great cliffs reflect huge waves, especially at the steeper cliffs and mighty headlands. There would often be no real stopping point between the two waystops midway on the S and N coasts next described. That involves 14km of committed paddling on the outside stretch. With 'pottering', allow almost 20km around the whole of the island altogether. Factor in the foul ground off the SE corner and this adds up to an achievable yet demanding circumnavigation. Some say it yields some of the finest seakayaking in Donegal, where the competition is plentiful. Certainly it contains a real wealth of riches – with a tremendous variety of caves, arches and stacks to explore. It deserves two days if the weather is favourable.

Rannagh Point B666-136. This is the spit of land jutting S from midway along the S coast. On the E side, there is a lovely sandy beach, a pier with water on tap, a football pitch and short grass camping which is much more private than at the main strand on the E side. This is a working pier with associated advantages and disadvantages. Camping here is perhaps the most attractive on the island, with about a 4km walk to the main village, though there is a pub locally, which does excellent grub. Sheltered in almost all conditions.

Storm beach B643-154. There is a substantial storm beach just N of the SW point of the island, which in calm conditions might give a landing, being somewhat protected by the off-lying islet Illanaran. It is feasible to scramble to the moorland above by a watercourse in a gully at the S end of the beach, if really necessary.

Lighthouse B642-186. In very good weather, a landing might be had at the foot of the concrete steps. These were constructed down the cliff to service the lighthouse at the far NW of the island at Rinrawros Point. A tiny landing spot has been cut into the rocks at sea level in a deep narrow SE-NW cleft. This might serve as a lunch spot or a base to explore locally. A lighthouse was first constructed here in 1798 and functioned until 1832, when Tory light was established. George Halpin Jr. designed the 'new' lighthouse, which was rebuilt in 1865. It is now automated. The steps are due S of the lighthouse, near where the straight wall reaches the cliff edge and inside a number of small off-lying stacks.

Look for the Big Giant and the intriguingly named Small Giant, two stacks on the N side of the lighthouse, to its E.

Torneady Point B654-197 marks the end of the most committing section going clockwise. Hectares of unbroken yellow tide foam, with bubbles as big as Ostrich eggs, are commonly encountered here.

Ballachreesh Bay B674-176. A deep bay near the E side of the north coast. Attractive looking on the map, this is a sheltered (NB - not from N swells) storm beach with possible camping. There is water in nearby houses and this beach will appeal to some for its sense of remoteness. Its importance is its status as a jumping off point, providing conditions are suitable, for the round trip.

Natural harbour B683-171. A small extremely sheltered natural harbour near the N end of the east coast, where there is a quay and the former lifeboat station. The lifeboat is now moored inside Calf Island 0.5km to the south. Camping is inadequate. Worthy of waystop mention only.

8 Corncrake were heard calling in 2010.

Calf Island

B685-166 Sheet 1

On the Aran side of Aran Sound North, this small island gives shelter to the mooring place for Aran’s modern lifeboat. This is a truly magnificent beast, too large for the lifeboat station that previously served the community here from the land station just NNW. The island is campable, for those for whom privacy is everything. It is grazed by sheep and quite unexpectedly attractive. No water. The landing is at the E end, onto north or south-facing beaches to taste, where an off-lying islet is barely disconnected.

Rinrawros Group

B643-188 Sheet 1

For generations Irish climbers have looked hungrily at the expanse of virgin rock in the wild and scenic bay on the NE of Aranmore lighthouse at Rinrawros Point. No one until recently has possessed the appetite. Access is of itself committing, whether by floating past Torneady Point to the N, or, for the climbs immediately at the lighthouse only, by abseil. The showpiece of the whole group of stacks and faces and ridges is the very visible landward ridge of the sea stack found immediately below the lighthouse. The climbing and situations are superb. The technical climbing grade is quite manageable on all the climbing routes in this immediate area.

1km to the E at B653190, routes climb the 120m monster stack sitting in the middle of the amphitheatre of huge cliffs. Access is by Torneady Point. The climbing is hard and committing, varying from sound quartzite to grass and mud. The better route is the steep seaward W ridge, and the landward face has its own virtues.

300m N lies a ridge climb of elegant simplicity at Grid Reference B654193. This truly monstrous 150m+ ridge rises from sea level to the summit. The ridge can be very easily seen from anywhere on this coast, immediately identifying itself on a quick glance at OS sheet 1. Access to sea level is via Torneady Point. Simply follow the very exposed crest of the ridge from sea to summit!

400m further N, just on the lighthouse side of Torneady Point, a stack at B654-196 gives good quality easier climbs, the N face route being the better.

North West Donegal - Tidal Overview

For Aran Island to Bloody Foreland, Horn Head, Tory Sound and the Inishbofin Group, local HW and LW are 40 minutes after Galway HW. The main northeast tidal stream in the area generally starts, half an hour ahead of the main west coast tidal stream as follows:

Aran Island to Bloody Foreland		
Direction	Time	Speed
NE	3:50 before Galway HW	1kn
SW	2:35 after Galway HW	1kn

However, it is important to note that this general statement does not hold good close in to Tory or amongst the inshore islands of the Cruit, Gola and Inishbofin Groups, where the details are given individually. The streams here tend to turn an hour or more earlier. In Tory Sound, the maximum spring rate is 2kn. At Bloody Foreland itself, as might be expected, usable eddies form inshore downstream. Further east, inshore past Horn Head, Melmore Head and on towards Malin Head, the stream runs ENE as follows:

Bloody Foreland to Malin Head		
Direction	Time	Speed
NE	3:50 before Galway HW	2kn
SW	2:35 after Galway HW	2kn

The bays tend to start to fill an hour or more earlier, from 5:0 before Galway HW to about 1:00 after.

Owey Group

Admiralty Chart 1883 covers Crohy Head to Bloody Foreland and is well worth having for a visit to this area. The main offshore tidal stream from Aran to Bloody Foreland starts and finishes half an hour earlier than the main west coast tidal stream further S. The NE flood starts at HW Galway • 0350 and the ebb at +0235. In this region however, it merely brushes off the outside of the islands, eddying. The streams in the channels tend to be from HW Galway +0130. These tidal streams are not said to be significant throughout the whole group except in Owey Sound.

Cruit Island

B734-205 Sheet 1

An attractive inhabited island, inside Owey, joined to the mainland by road. The island runs N/S, is narrow, being 4km long and 1km wide, and achieves a modest 26m in height in the middle. A golf links is spread out over most of the N end of the island. The clubhouse is just above a sheltered beach and slipway at B724-224. In the middle of the island, just SE of the highest point, is a most pleasant caravan/campsite at B734-205 on commonage, with water on tap. Rock climbing has been developed nearby, mostly on the W side, in the elbow just W of the high point. Although on good granite, it is small and a poor relation of the climbing on Owey.

Landing and Camping

The sand flats on the E side of the island dry out and extend to just beyond the campsite so arrive and depart at HW. Circumnavigation is possible only on the very top of the tide as the S/SE parts dry. No shopping or similar facilities were found on the island but the mainland is accessible on foot.

Local HW and LW are Galway +0100. Tidal streams in Owey Sound coincide with local ebb and flood, or half an hour later, flowing very strongly indeed and can cut up very rough in contrary winds.

The best boating is at the NE corner, where one may explore attractive narrow channels and caves. A distinctive cave called locally “*An Chat*” (the cat) is worth finding.

Owey Island

B719-229 Sheet 1

There is neither mains electricity nor mains water. A pleasant island, square shaped, tilted a bit anticlockwise, with granite sea cliffs all along its N half. Well worth a visit. A distinctive

type of curragh was found in this region which was sculled over the bow and was used by islanders for access to and from the small pier on Cruit.

Owey is uninhabited since about 1980, with a deserted village. Some refurbishment seems to be in progress, and in 1991 it was thought that some of the houses might be summer occupied by former islanders, or by persons wanting solitude more than comfort. In 2009 up to 8 houses had been restored in some ways.

In 2015 two log cabin type holiday houses had also been newly built. There had been a steady rebuild and refurbishment of many of the houses on the island in recent years. In October 2015 up to 25 houses were being occupied on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. Most of the work seems focused on many of the original houses but new Scandinavian style timber cottages have also been built - 5 such structures as of October 2015. There were obvious improvements made to both piers and landing zones to accommodate the rebuild and increased levels of occupancy of the island. Some of the old roadways had been partially gritted and allowed the use of quad bikes to haul materials from the landing areas, There was even a sign offering B&B in the village centre and some of the old field networks located there were being worked as vegetable and flower gardens.

The island seems to be visited far more frequently than before.

Embarkation

The nearest launching place for Owey is at the N end of Cruit, opposite Owey. Launch from a sheltered beach and slipway at B724-224, just below a golf clubhouse. Park in the clubhouse car park. Beware of flying golf balls when crossing to the slip as you're on the 18th fairway and the golfers are unsighted at that point.

From a car, the more convenient embarkation point is from a harbour B742-210, about 1km NW of Kincaslough, which is sheltered, where the parking is convenient, and is free of aerial bombardment.

Landing and Camping

The traditional landing place is at a slipway on the E point, in a small sheltered cove at the N end of the narrows opposite Cruit Island. The slipway in the cove is easily found coming from the N but can be missed coming from the S, as the cove opens ENE and is low lying. The markers are a large rock in the Sound, the cove itself and a prominent schoolhouse on the island all in line. There are lights on Cruit at 070° leading into the Sound from the S.

In 2009 a new pier had been built on the S side but it is ugly and unattractive and poorly constructed. Any boat activity observed was into the original landing.

Water and Camping

There is water in the stream through the village. Camping at slip.

10 Corncrake were heard calling in 2010.

Rock Climbing

There is excellent rock climbing on good granite, relatively undeveloped. It started in 1991, began in earnest in 1993 and there are now a few dozen routes. Some routes just 300m north of the landing place at the S end of 'the Canyon' do not need an abseil for access. With an abseil there are more in the Canyon itself at its N end, in the first cove N of the Canyon, and on slabs at the NE point. The NNW coast of the island has not yet begun to yield its unlimited climbing potential, though it will, well into the future, especially to access from the water.

Cladagharoan (Seal Shore) B715-237, a small bay immediately S of the NE corner, is famous in sea stack circles. It contains what must be the most spectacular small needle stack in the country called locally *Tor a'Mhadaidh Uisce* (Sea Dog Tor) but is shown on larger OS land maps as *Stackaniller* (presumably from *Stacán an Iolair*), wonderfully metamorphosed by climbers to *Stackamillion*. First noticed by climbers in 1991, it was climbed in 2003 by a Polish party led by Andrzej Smialy, featured in a photographic competition in 2004, and was strongly reported to have collapsed shortly after that. I am certain that only Ozymandias would have approved. Rumours of its collapse proved incorrect. It is still there.

Circumnavigation

Circumnavigation gives good caves, canyons, channels and stacks. Owey in Irish - 'Uigh', means 'Caves'. There is a through cave with a right angle turn going through the NE tip. There is a passage on the NW side of the island which is entered from the land, leading to a large underground cavern. There are deep sea caves along the ENE side, including one with connecting chambers. These are easily accessible when the wind is from the S/SW. A through cave system also located in SW corner, where in a bay with 3 caves take the right hand one, to exit next bay E.

Tides

Local HW and LW are Galway +0100. Tidal streams in the sound with Owey turn with the tide by the shore, or half an hour later, flowing very strongly indeed and can cut up very rough in contrary winds.

Torglass

B707-225 Sheet 1

There is good quality delightfully easy climbing on the excellent granite of the tower Torglass itself, and its satellites to the N. Spectacular and superb rock is the norm.

Inishillintry

B737-218 Sheet 1

Off the E side of Cruit, this island consists of high heathery separated mounds. Never inhabited. See the fish-holding tanks in offshore rocks off the SE side. A nice sea cave on the N side deserves a look. The grass is a bit long for camping. No grazing. No water.

Embarkation and Landing

Land in a sandy cove in a cut on the SE side. There is a good embarkation point from a harbour about 1km NW of Kincaslough, where the parking is convenient, and which is sheltered.

The island is unusual in that it is "waisted" and is more reminiscent of islands in Roaringwater Bay, Co. Cork rather than its close Donegal neighbours. The deep cut on its western side is worth exploring should conditions be suitable. There is access to a long, but narrow navigable sea cave fit only for sea kayaks at times close to local high water.

Gola Section

This section stretches from Inishfree Lower in the S to Inishsirrer in the N.

The generally most convenient embarkation point for all the islands of the Gola Group and certainly for Gola Island is from a pier at B793-266 just N of the entrance to Gweedore Bay. It is the more northerly of the two such piers locally. By road from Derrybeg, go past the football pitch, then the graveyard and then fork right. There is good camping beyond the

graveyard along the access road but no water. There is good parking by the pier, and a beautiful beach.

Ferry

An all-year-round ferry to Gola is run by Jimmy Sweeney 087 6607003. It leaves from Bunbeg Pier B802-235. The Tory ferry is based here, as the harbour is very sheltered. Nearest provisions are to be had in a shop at the main road, 2km or more from the pier. Full provisions are available in Bunbeg, just S of Derrybeg. Bunbeg harbour is accessible to kayaks at all stages of the tide. There is a hostel 1km up the road from Derrybeg in Magheragallon, 07495 32244. Ensure the tide is with you in the estuary, local HW being Galway +0100.

For the N part of the group there is also an excellent pier right opposite Inishmeane at B799-284 known locally as Carrick Pier. Here there is an extensive sandy beach, good camping on machair grassland or in dunes behind the pier, but no water. By road, drive 3km N out of Derrybeg, then (1km N of a significant junction), follow signs left for 'Beach', and continue past an enclosed soccer pitch.

Inishfree Lower

B759-240 Sheet 1

2km SSW of Gola. An unexpectedly pleasant island. There are the remains of a house on the island, which was occupied until the 1960s. The island is generally low-lying and now (probably only occasionally) grazed by sheep. Marram Grass abounds. A reef extends SE of the SE point.

Landing is possible on the E side of the island in a wee bay, onto sheltered boulders. Landing also possible in a narrow cut onto on to a storm beach on the S side.

Inishinny

B787-255 Sheet 1

1km SE of Gola. This island, with Bo, together shelter the W side of the entrance to Gweedore Bay, which is the estuary leading to the town of Bunbeg. There are many good safe beach landings on Inishinny on the S and E (Gridref is at NE), but it is rocky elsewhere along the W/N sides. The gap between Inishinny and Bo is navigable at all stages of the tide. A very attractive cottage is sited on the almost separated adjoining and equally attractive island to the SW, separated by a narrow deep water channel, but the whole area to the E/SE dries at LW. The owner values privacy. Camping.

Illancarragh

B782-252 Sheet 1

Magnificent small 20m high island with that definite honeymoon feeling. Outside to the W of and attached to Inishinny except at HW by a sandy spit, it at once remote and accessible. Camp here for a week and meet no one. The spit that joins the two islands creates beautiful sandy bays either side facing N and S. Both catch driftwood. Camping is excellent, sheltered on short grass. A hidden gem.

Inishcoole

B800-244 Sheet 1

Island of history and mystery, known locally as Skull Island, with good reason. Cut off from Derrybeg Beach in Magheraclogher Bay on the E side of Gweedore Bay, in front of the big

hotel for only for a couple of hours either side of HW, it is a lovely spot. Land onto a beach on the N side. Otter. Well worth the effort for the peace at HW.

Spanish Armada

In 1901 a group of Dublin archaeologists found a mass grave of Formorians, ancestors of the modern Gael, which had become disturbed by rabbits, exposing the remains of the long dead. The bones were carbon dated to 3,000 years before present but the real mystery was the great assortment of bones of young men buried nearby with vastly different bone structure, and of a much later vintage altogether, late 16th century.

They had accidentally stumbled upon the burial site of most of the soldiers and sailors of *La Juliana*, an 860 ton Spanish grain carrying merchantman pressed into service for the great invasion of England 1588. Italian, it was impounded into the Levantine Squadron of the Spanish Armada and given large poopdecks for the comfort of the officers, besides 32 cannon and 1,600 cannonball as ballast. Sailing was difficult under benign conditions, treacherous otherwise. It was one of four such vessels that went down on 28th September 1588. *La Juliana* foundered SW of Gola with great loss. Two utility boats were launched. Two soldier captains and a troop of soldiers made Maghernagallon Bay on Gola in one, and six of the original unknown complement of the other (with the ship's treasure chest) made Inishcoole. 20 or so was all of the 70 Italian crew and 325 Catalan solidiers to survive. Three other boats perished similarly, only one reliably named, the *Santiago*. Rumours of buried treasure on Inishcoole, Gola and the mainland are not uncommon.

This was but one of many such tragedies. In retreat homewards that autumn, many ships of the great Armada sank, 39 off Ireland, 10 off Scotland (4 in the E, 6 in the W), and 2 up in Shetland.

The tale received value added when Robert Louis Stevenson came to honeymoon in Bunbeg in late 1880. An autumnal gale shifted a lot of sand about the place, revealing some valuable commodities. Captivated by the tales he was told of *La Juliana* and her colourful crew, and other research on the Armada he undertook, he wrote a great work of fiction around them.

The captain had a peg-leg, an eye patch, a crutch, and a parrot sat on his shoulder. Long John Silver is a composite of two sailors marooned from *El Gran Griffon* on Fair Isle. Treasure Island is Gold Island ("Gola"), which prior to 1588 was call McGee Island.

Bo Island

B785-258 Sheet 1

A small attractive island off the N tip of Inishinny. Land either side of a spit projecting S from the S tip. Lazybeds. Ungrazed. Long grass. Purple Sandpiper.

Go and Allagh Islands

B765-258 Sheet 1

Just off the south side of Gola. Of little interest, landing is possible on both. Useful shelter on passage on E side.

Gola Island

B773-271 Sheet 1

This is a truly beautiful island, a must to visit. The island is now uninhabited, though the houses show signs of being kept up, and an increasing number of summer homes have been built. Against the national trend, the population grew during the 19th century, rising from 70 in 1841 to 200 in 1930. Numbers dwindled after that and it was finally empty by the mid-70s.

Unusually, there was never a church on the island. Mains water and electricity were supplied to the island in 2005, and there is a public tap 10m from the pier on the E side. In a remarkable feat of co-operation, the water and the electricity were placed in the same trench. A book 'Gola, the Life and Last Days of an Island Community' by Aalen and Brody was written in 1969 and a film 'Terminus' was made by RTE at the same time. Gola is famed also in song, 'Báidín Fheidhlimí, d'imigh go Gabhla...' was about a drowning tragedy involving a Gola boat on passage to Tory. It was written by Felim's brother, the renowned seanchai of Rannefast in the nearby Rosses. Two Gola men Patrick McGinley and Charles Duggan are commemorated at Mullach an Aird for having been in the crew of the *Asgard*, the gun running yacht that armed the Irish Volunteers in 1914. They sailed into Howth in Dublin under Erskine Childers. The episode made the Easter Rising 1916 possible.

Landing and Camping

Land at the modern concrete pier and sheltered beach on the E side, the main landing point for the island. The main village, called Portacrín, is on the S side and is exposed to south-westerlies. A number of sandy beaches exist at the SE corner of the island, which provide soft landings in any conditions. There are a number of other landing places available which are sheltered from different sea and weather conditions. A south-facing beach, near the E tip, has good camping on grass by its W end. A storm beach landing is possible at all stages of the tide in Magheranagall Bay at B764-269, the deep indented bay on the W. Camping is possible here but departure may be difficult if the sea gets up. Mains water at houses.

3 Corncrake were heard calling in 2010.

Circumnavigation

Circumnavigation offers spectacular views of cliffs, arches and caves. Tororraun Sound on the N side, between Gola and Umfin, can be lumpy at times, being shallow, and a lot of clapotis can be expected on the W side. A tunnel penetrates through the tip of the N side of Magheranagall Bay at its seaward end, which is worth looking out for if there is not too much swell. The entrance is not obvious from either end.

Rock climbing

Gola has excellent climbing on good granite, more developed than Owey and very popular. Climbs have been put up on the N side of Magheranagall Bay and on the sea cliffs of Mweelmore, the hill S of Magheranagall Bay, facing S towards Owey. There are hundreds of climbs there as of 2010. The 2002 Donegal climbing guide book edited by Alan Tees and published by the Mountaineering Council of Ireland www.mountaineering.ie in 2002 has all the Gola climbs. Look it up also on www.climbing.ie.

Umfin Island

B767-284 Sheet 1

Umfin is 1km N of Gola and although much smaller, Umfin has superb granite coastal features of caves, cliffs and shoals, in particular a double arched cave on the S side. There is a dependable landing point onto a very sheltered storm beach in a channel on NE side, which can be entered on most states of tide, but which dries to the SE at LWS. A small ruin of a bothy remains tucked away in the hollow by the landing

Camping and water

The most possible camping is at the landing storm beach. Water is to be found in several spots. The most convenient for campers is runoff from steep ground at the right hand side of landing storm beach (as viewed from sea).

Umfin was found to be heavily grazed by geese in April 2009. Only 2 Greylag Geese were spotted, but the strong suspicion is that Barnacle also occur. Shag, Black Guillemot, Common, Herring, GBB and LBB Gulls breed, and a hint of Storm Petrel occurring? Umphin Arch.

There is a classic square cut sea arch located at the island's North West corner. It is rarely navigable due to the exposure to west and north western swell and winds but passage is possible when conditions allow.

On the island's southern side is a sea cave that is well worth exploring. The entrance is east of the small bay that holds the well known double sea arches of Umphin. The entrance is narrow but surprisingly the cave extends all the way through from the south east corner of the island and has an exit onto the main storm beach on Umphin at times of LWS. The passage is not fully navigable by kayak but can be explored fully on foot at extreme LWS although some of the remaining pools can be chest high!

There is secondary exit point on the eastern side of the cave as one progresses south to north. The whole experience is well worth the effort.

Tornacolpach Island

B768-286 Sheet 1

Tornacolpach Island lies just off Umphin island to its NE. It is accessible on foot from the main landing beach on Umphin Island at times of very LWS. The island is larger, bigger than one would expect. It deserves a visit, not least for the views it gives over the main landing beach on Umphin Island. Landing is onto a tiny beach at its SW corner at LW, otherwise onto rock shelves at other times. The island guards the entrance to Umphin and together they form an attractive bay and landing zone for the main island.

Grazed by Geese in April 2009. No water found.

Torbane

B770-271 Sheet 1

Small rocky island lying southeast of Umphin Island. The island is composed of the attractive red granite typical of the region. Landing is onto rocky platforms and is possible on most corners but easiest on the western side.

The views are worth the easy scramble to the summit. There is a small cut located mid way along the western side that has a small sea arch. It can be kayaked through at the higher end of tidal cycle. Several narrow channels running west-east can also be explored by kayak at high water. Worth a detour if exploring the Gola-Umphin Island group.

No water and no camping.

Inishmeane

B786-283 Sheet 1

1.5km NE of Gola, Inishmeane is a dependably accessible island. Landing is always possible at a slipway under a cluster of old houses at the SE corner, or on the beach just E. There is a new pier and some houses are occupied in summer. The houses by the slipway are still used in summer by fishermen, and are well kept. Permanent inhabitation was abandoned in 1974.

There is neither mains electricity nor water. The houses form a distinctive tight group. A Corncrake was heard singing at the beach in 2001. There is good camping in a hollow in the dunes behind the beach, just W of the E point, known as Gobacurrane.

SPA

Barnacle Goose, Tern, Chough, 8 Corncrake in 2010.

Inishsirrer

B785-300 Sheet 1

3km N of Gola, Inishsirrer is the most northerly of the chain. Inishsirrer is a most attractive island, formerly inhabited (abandoned 1943), but now only occasionally. The village is SE of the middle of the island. No drinking water found, the lake E of the village is brackish, but contains good cockles. Many deserted houses, old fields, paths and walls. A walk to the automated lighthouse in the NW is worth the effort, as this end of the island has quite an 'oceanic feel' to it.

SPA

Barnacle Goose, Tern, Chough, Corncrake.

Landing

From the SE end of the island a boulder-strewn spit juts out E, ending at a prominent rock, Damph More. On passage from the S, at LW it is necessary to keep close to the mainland, E of Damph More. Only cross the Damph More spit at HW, with care. There is a landing point by a pier/slipway at B791-297, just N of the spit. At LW when the slip is too high to use, the landing is onto boulders/sand.

A more secluded landing point can be found in a bay at B782-306 on the SW- facing side, the first bay SE of the NW tip. This is near the highest point of the island and onto a storm beach, and drying shoals at the entrance can be a problem in south-westerlies. Also, at HW, a landing may be had just further SW at B784-304 in a sheltered inlet just NW of halfway along the SW side, at a place called locally Slodanawaud. Here there is a rusty windlass and a ruined boathouse, but beware that Slodanawaud is a tidal pond which forms on the lower half of the tide and may trap your escape.

Torhonadoogha

B802-304 Sheet 1

This 20m stack is situated just off the Glashagh Lower headland. Access is by a short sea passage. The stack's S face is a 20m vertical wall of excellent "Gola" type sea battered granite.

Land Directions

From Jacks Hotel, as you leave Gweedore, take the sharp left and follow the B class road to the small beach car park. On foot, follow the coastal path N over several new wooden bridges to the headland overlooking the stack.

Many easy / middle grade high quality rocks climbs await the visitor.

North Donegal

Rockall

No Irish Grid Reference No Irish OS Sheet (British Grid Reference NF 68694-70525)

Rockall is the most disputed, the most infamous, the most unique, the most isolated, the most desolate and the most far-flung island off the Irish coast. It is located at [57°35'48"N](#), [13°41'19"W](#), just 424km NW of Bloody Foreland in County Donegal. Rockall is an extinct volcano, disputed by Ireland, the UK, Iceland and Denmark (on behalf of the Faeroes). The

islet is located approximately 430km SE of Iceland, 461.5km NW of Ardnamurchan point (though much closer is St. Kilda Island at 301.4km)

Embarkation

There is no immediately obvious embarkation point for this island, by kayak or otherwise.

Landing

Neither is there an easy landing spot. A sustained settled spell is required. The depth of the waters generally surrounding the rock is over 1000m, but this rapidly shallows to 150m within 2km of the rock itself, which looms up out of the depths. There are some off-lying reefs, so caution is needed against rogue swells, and even boomers. There are very strong surges and scends around the base of the rock.

Summiting

The island itself is solid rock rising to a height of approximately 20m. While the surface is all rock, it has a soft, malodorous, slimy guano coating which is rather pungent, thus making the island very slippery, apart from the areas regularly stripped by the swell. The S side of the islet is almost vertical. The other sides are steep and cracked. The rock is granitic in texture and has unusual pock marks, which makes climbing the initial section relative easy (if you survive the swell). It is strongly recommended that both landers have at least limited rock climbing experience.

Low down on the W side there is a “thread belay” which is invaluable in fixing both the climbers and the boat to a secure belay point. From there, it is easy but exposed scrambling along sloping ledges to the summit. The exposure to noise and waves below can be a bit unnerving. Upon achieving the summit one is rewarded by a magnificent vista of nothing but open sea, thus giving an interesting sense of vulnerability.

Current Position

On the summit in 2007 all that remained was part of the base of a navigation beacon which had been removed by the swell at some stage. Within the base of this, some Fulmars clung to the inner margins for shelter, and were not in the least perturbed by human presence.

Camping / Water / Hall's Ledge

There is a ledge near the summit with some modern “bolts”. The ledge is named after the leader of the first landing party in 1810, Lieutenant Basil Hall. It would be possible to spend a night here, but probably not to be recommended. Obviously due to the barren nature of the rock there is no freshwater available.

History

The first known landing was on 8th July 1810 by a party from HMS *Endymion* led by Lieutenant Basil Hall, all of whom summited.

A member of a landing party from HMS *Porcupine*, the famous survey ship after whom the whole Porcupine Bank is named, a Mr Johns, gained a foothold, but did not summit, in 1862. Near the edge of Hall's Ledge is a plaque claiming the rock as part of the British Empire. This was laid in 1955 by a landing party from HMS *Vidal* (coincidentally named after the man who first charted the island), that formally claimed the island for the UK. This claim was motivated by a fear that the Soviets would occupy Rockall to use it as a spying base. The context was that Britain was about to launch the “Corporal”, its first ever guided nuclear missile, from Uist, so they were nervous. The Irish, the Danes and the Icelanders sniggered. However in 1972 the UK Government passed the Isle of Rockall Act, formalising the claim, declaring it part of Inverness-shire. They even put an 80km exclusion zone around the rock.

In 1975 Willie Dick summited, and measured its height with a climbing rope. His navigator Michael d'Alton measured the circumference at sea level by paddling around it trailing a long length of red twine. They found their measurements and the Rock generally "very close indeed to the description in St Brendan's *Navigatio*". They were left with no doubt that the Irish monks were well aware of it. D'Alton also landed nearby Hasselwood Rock by partly swimming. Hasselwood only shows in the troughs at LW, and he said it was like straddling a horse. He took one rock sample. Conceivably this was the only landing ever on Hasselwood? Still Ireland and the rest laughed, denying the claim on the grounds that no one could live on the rock. Ireland, Iceland, and Denmark argued (successfully in the end) that barren rocks which cannot sustain life are part of the environment, and their "ownership" depends on other factors like "continental shelves", that may create rights but barren rocks are not self-proclaiming merely for being visible above the surface.

So the British sent the SAS to reinforce their claim and left Tom McClean to live on the rock for 39 days in 1985 from 26th May to 4th July, explaining the present day bolts to hold down the module which housed his sleeping quarters.

The manoeuvring continued. Our own Sean "Dublin Bay" Loftus legally changed his name by Deed Poll to Sean Dublin Bay "*Rockall*" Loftus, to promote Ireland's claim and denounce Albion's perfidy. The Wolfe Tones released a song "Rock on Rockall" to highlight Ireland's interest. A 1986 party including the renowned arctic explorers John Gore-Grimes and Pat Colleran landed and summited, fuelling Irish populist ambitions. Irish British diplomacy had suffered a set-back in 1982 over different attitudes to events in the South Atlantic, and feelings were still stirred at the time.

In 1997 the environmentalist organisation Greenpeace occupied the islet for a short time, calling it Waveland, to protest against oil exploration under the authority of the British. They asserted their claim by renaming the rock "Waveland". Greenpeace declared the island to be a "new Global State", and offered citizenship to anyone willing to take their pledge of allegiance. The British Government's response was simply to give them permission to be there, and otherwise ignore them.

Kevin O'Callaghan (a.k.a. GEO), first President of the Irish Sea Kayaking Association, summited in 2007.

Departing

The most difficult operation on Rockall is to vacate the place in one piece. It is easiest to launch the boat and get it beyond the wave-breaking zone, then swim out after it, very reminiscent of Fastnet.

Shipwreck

Despite its lonely position, a major shipwreck took place here on 28th June 1904. The passenger steamer Norge *en route* Oslo to New York struck an off-lying reef and went down quite quickly. There were insufficient lifeboats for all aboard. Two of the lifeboats were lost while being put out, and the rest were quickly filled. Everyone else had to swim for Rockall itself or perish. The full lifeboats deliberately left the scene rather than be swamped by the despairing swimmers. A trawler happened upon the scene within hours, but it was too little too late. 600+ drowned.

International Law

The relevant law is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982. Everyone except USA and Uzbekistan has signed up. This agreement provides for “extended continental shelf” claims in certain circumstances beyond the “normal” limit of the “exclusive economic zones” projecting seaward from sovereign states for 200nm from their coastline, the usual limit that everyone agrees in principle that everyone else may enjoy. These rules work well in most circumstances. There are less than 20 disputes worldwide to go to the scientific committee of the UNCLOS, the final arbiter in these things. Most disputes involve competing neighbours disagreeing benchmarks or angles.

Russia did plant a flag on the seabed of the North Pole, but no one takes that seriously. On the other hand, when for instance the UK ratified the Convention, it gave up its (previously claimed) right to a 200nm zone around Rockall, and effectively rowed in with the opposition views in the matter.

Ireland has a huge undisputed wedge of the NE Atlantic. In acreage terms we box well above our weight. The undisputed part of our 200nm EEZ extends over large parts of the Hatton Basin in addition to the Rockall Trough/Bank

The Irish undisputed area does not however include the position where the rock of Rockall lies. Ireland is in dispute with Iceland, Denmark and the UK for seabed type rights of the 200nm+ type with regard to a huge area of seabed that (inconsequentially) does include Rockall, so the issue is “live”. The Danes have recently clarified their claim, so the adjudication process should begin soon enough.

Rockall isn't urgent. The main current national economic benefit of the Rockall area is in its fishery, and the management of EU fisheries were in any event ceded to the EU many years ago. It is overstating it that sovereignty has also thus been ceded, but realistically, if Iceland were to join the EU, the whole position would be moot entirely.

Tory Group

Inishbeg, Inishdooney and Inishbofin together form a worthwhile group for a day trip or for an overnight camp, or just for shelter on passage out to Tory. Embarkation for all the islands is from the sheltered strand E of pier at Magheraroarty at B889-333.

SPA

Storm Petrel, Greenland White-Fronted Goose, Barnacle Goose, Tern, Chough, Corncrake, Peregrine.

Tides

Local HW and LW are about 40 minutes after Galway. Tides flow strongly through the sounds and off the points, nowhere more so than over the shallow bar off the southeastern point of Inishbofin. The causeway here dries in LWS and there is often a fair race. Tides in the channels amongst the islands and in Tory Sound close in to Inishbeg turn about an hour after HW/LW by the shore.

Tory Sound, close by both Tory and Inishbeg	
Direction	Time
E	4:50 before Galway HW
W	1:35 after Galway HW

Tory Sound, middle	
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Direction	Time	Max rate Sp
E	3:50 before Galway HW	2kn
W	2:35 after Galway HW	2kn

As the exposed part of the passage between Tory and Inishbeg takes an hour or so and as another hour is needed for the passage between Inishbeg and Magheraroarty, it is impossible to organise slack water all the way across. Local advice is to emphasise the later 'middle of Tory Sound' tide for planning purposes, accepting some wind over tide as necessary in the first or last part of the trip, to taste.

Inishbofin

B896-360 Sheet 1

2km N of Magheraroarty, an attractive island, the innermost of the three inner islands.

Mains water and electricity were supplied in 2002. Now there is even a hostel to welcome the visitor, tel 074 9162070 or visit www.teachjohnny.com. The island is very pleasant and every summer the former residents come back to live and work so that a vibrant community thrives for half each year.

Landing

There are many landing points and two landing places. One landing place is at the pier B896-360 at the inhabited village in the SE where it is important to ask for water and campsite. The second is at the lovely beach in remote Toberglassan Bay B 890-367 to the N.

Corncrake

Inishbofin represents a unique part of the success story for the frustrating efforts of Birdwatch Ireland to halt the Corncrake decline in Ireland. Here there was a huge increase in numbers and the first such in the country. There were 12 calling males in 1994 and more than double that in 1995. This was the first return for their policy of grant-aiding eco-friendly harvesting methods. 18 birds were calling in 2010.

Inishdooley

B895-385 Sheet 1

1km N of Inishbofin, this small uninhabited island, the centre of the three inner islands, has the ruins of a church (Saint Dubhthach, or Dooley) and is especially noted for its magnificent arches and caves on its E side. Landing is perhaps best at the sheltered storm beach in the SW where there is good camping but no water. The three masted 'Loch Ryan' was shipwrecked here in 1942. Landing is also possible in a sheltered but messy narrow zawn to the NE, or onto any of several tiny storm beaches in cuts on the E/SE. 1 Corncrake in 2010.

Inishbeg Island

B896-396 Sheet 1

1km N of Inishdooley, the outermost of the inner group, this is a pleasant small sheep• grazed uninhabited island. It has a well sheltered but concealed landing onto a storm beach at the head of a dog-legged cut at the SSW tip. This is in the sound to the S of the island and the landing is onto the low-lying rocks just E of the SSW tip. It must be searched for, though it's worth it.

Tory Island

B856-464 Sheet 1

12km NNE of Bloody Foreland, Tory is named for the dramatic appearance of the high tors at its E end as seen from the mainland; this is the most remote inhabited Irish island and holds a special place in history.

SPA

Tory is the only inhabited island the entire of which is so designated. Storm Petrel, Tern, Chough, Corncrake, of which 10 males were calling in 2010.

Facilities

The main pier on the island is at Camusmore Bay serving West Town at B855-465. In the village there is water available, two shops, a new hotel, hostel, cafe, pub and post-office.

Camping

Camping is possible at West Town, but a bit public. A more remote landing can be had onto a storm beach at Port an Dúin on the E end of the island at B877-454. This is the dramatic square-shaped indent in the skyline, just E of the last house on the island. Camping may be dramatically had on the flat ground just above the cliffs. The disadvantage of camping here is that all visitors walking to the Anvil and Tormore pass directly by. For larger groups, or those requiring privacy or greater security, perhaps in high season, a well sheltered landing may also be had hereabouts at a small storm beach (HW) / sand beach (LW) just 500m W of Port an Dúin. There is good camping at the shore directly SW of the last dwelling on this side of the island at B874-453. In either case, there is good water at a spring beside this house, where asking would be respectful.

Tides

Tory is a challenging trip, at almost 13km out from Magheraroarty Pier at B889-333. However, the Inishbofin Group shelters half of this, and the trip out can be broken. Local HW is Galway +0040. In the middle of Tory Sound, the ENE flood runs from HW Galway • 0350 to +0235. Close in to Tory and to the islands of the Inishbofin Group, (as well as in and around and through the Inishbofin Group), the tidal streams turn one hour earlier. The E making flood runs from HW Galway • 0450 to +0135. Slack occurs about one hour after local HW/LW. As the exposed part of the passage between Tory and Inishbeg takes an hour or so, and as another hour is needed for the passage between Inishbeg and Magheraroarty, it is impossible to organise slack water all the way across. Local advice is to emphasise the later 'middle of Tory Sound' tide for planning purposes, accepting some wind over tide as necessary in the first or last part of the trip, to taste.

Circumnavigation

The N and E sides of the island are sheer for their entire length and offer no rest other than as mentioned below. A landing may be had at three places on the north side.

- Immediately behind Port an Dúin at B876-456 onto a sheltered storm beach.
- A very sheltered landing onto a sandy beach 300m N of West Town at B855-468, at the head of a deep cut, but regrettably, under grassy cliffs.
- Onto a slipway near the W end of the N side at B849-471, just south of a prominent house.

The scenery on the N/NE sides is magnificent. The whole E end from Port an Dúin outwards is a prehistoric promontory fort known as Dún Balair, once the stronghold of Balor of the Evil Eye, the baddest of Fomorian bad guys. He ended up being killed by his own grandson, Lewey, who penetrated his one good eye with a huge wooden stake. Lewey hailed from

Dunlewy at the foot of Errigal mountain on the mainland to the south. Lewey was mean and was nicknamed 'Lewey Lamh Fhada' meaning 'long arms', a reference to his habit, when he came to visit, of having one arm as long as the other i.e., empty handed.

The remains of Balor's four outer defensive ramparts may still be seen. His citadel is the mighty Tormore, an unapproachable pinnacle at the end of an alpine rocky ridge, called The Anvil, sticking N out to sea. Note the cairn on its summit put there by local kids for a dare. The Anvil may be bypassed on circumnavigation by going through a majestic arch at B878-460.

The cliffs change from quartzite in the E to granite in the W. The cliffs at the E end of the N side are unsurpassed anywhere for unyielding verticality. Arches and offshore reefs abound for the more daring paddlers. Clapotis may be always expected on the W side, by the lighthouse and S of it. A shallow reef sticks far out to sea at the SW corner, which must be given a very wide berth.

The S side is less dramatic, being flat, but the ground inshore at the W end is shallow for some way out and boomers may catch the unwary. Best to keep well off.

Climbing

The development of climbing on Tory, all on its N face, is in its infancy. Some routes were made in 2004 by the ubiquitous Alan Tees NNW of West Town. P. Stevens and others climbed 4 prominent 50m sea stacks that sit either side of the huge natural tower at B869-462 N of East Town. This tower is attached to the main island of Tory by a knife edge ridge and can be clearly seen from mainland Donegal as the high pillar bisecting the island. To the NW of the tower sits a trio of conical spires and to the SE sits an excellent twin summited "V" stack.

Art

Derek Hill first came to Tory in 1957 or so, and rented as his studio the former Lloyds signalling station above the slip at B849-471. Locals came and watched. Some learned as they watched and in particular James Dixon felt he could do better and said so. Hill encouraged him and in time there was a flourishing school of local artists with a distinctive naturalistic style, capturing what they knew best – cliffs, boats, wild sea and sky, the island villages and people. The Tory art tradition still flourishes.

Local History

Tory's most famous shipwreck is that of HMS Wasp in 1884 when the ship struck in daylight just near the lighthouse. 51 men died and only six survived. The incident is hard to explain, as the visibility was good so the lighthouse must have been visible for hours and the ship struck just after dawn. It has been attributed to a curse having been put on the ship with the aid of local cursing stones. There were also personality problems in the ranks of the officers and men of the ship, whose attitude to their work of carrying out forcible evictions up and down the west coast varied greatly. At the time of the wreck, Wasp was carrying policemen to evict the inhabitants of Inishtrahull.

Much has been written about the myth, legend and history in which the island is steeped, especially 'Stories from Tory Island' by Dorothy Harrison Therman, Wallace Clark's 'Sailing Round Ireland', and more recently "The Waves of Tory" by Jim Hunter. There are remains of a Columban church and of a round tower in West Town. Beside the tower is a very unusual

tall cross, 'T' shaped, called a 'Tau', almost unique in Ireland. The cross is 3,000 years old and was adopted into Christianity. Colmcille himself founded the monastery here in the 560s. There are three types of curragh associated with Tory, the smallest of which was the smallest in Ireland, at eight feet, handled by one oarsman, kneeling at the bow. Nowadays there is only one type, the two-man curragh found all over North Donegal. Of note locally also is the more modern type of double-ended (i.e. transomless) clinker boats somewhat peculiar to Tory, usually white, said to be livelier handlers than transomed boats and with a mast that is purely for the radio. They are the subject of a book by Dónal MacPolin, entitled 'The Drontheim, Forgotten Sailing Boat of the North Irish Coast'.

There are no trees or rats on Tory. The wind prevents the former and the soil the latter. A handful of Tory clay brought home and stored in your house will keep it forever rat free, but only if the clay is properly acquired. It must be asked for in the traditional manner "in the name of God and Colmcille" from the eldest member of the Duggan family living on Tory. Rare birds turn up frequently on Tory and those breeding include Corncrake, Storm Petrel and Little Tern.

Legal affairs are carried out most informally on the island, with land being transferred without anything at all being put down in writing by the parties to the deal. Instead, land ownership and inheritance is settled by the island king. They let the resident priest know his decision and he keeps a track of who owns what.

Tory was once renowned for its Poitín making and it was the turf burned in its illicit stills that accounts for the barren look Tory now presents. Its huge tracts of bog, once rich, are now barren desert, home mostly to rabbits.

There is now a modern hotel in West Town and some modern housing beginning to appear, but most streets and roadways on the islands present a somewhat 19th century appearance. A salvaged World War 2 torpedo marks the high point of the road between the two villages, East Town and West Town.

The island has its own king, Patsy Dan Rogers. The king is voted in for life. Nowadays his duties have a lot to do with promoting and managing tourism.

The permanent population is approximately 120, swelling to 190 in summer.

Horn Head

C012-423 Sheet 2

The mainland coastline from Bloody Foreland to Horn Head (Sheets 1/2) is mostly sandy beaches. Horn Head is a local 'big' paddle, well worth the shuttle for its magnificent coastal features on a grand scale.

Other than as mentioned below, the paddle is a non• stop 15km. Pollaguill Bay at B990-388 is the obvious rest-stop enroute, midway between Horn Head and the Back Beach, about 4.5km from each. Also, less obvious, though dependable in all but bad W/NW winds, is a well sheltered storm beach in a deep west-facing cut, 1km SW of Horn Head itself at C006-413. From here, there is at least the theoretical possibility of human escape (in dire emergency) up the tall cliffs of Coastguard Hill, which lean back slightly in the gully. This storm beach probably represents a more convenient way stop for those on more serious passages.

Shuttle

Put in or out on the W side at a beach unnamed on the map but known locally as the ‘Back Beach’ at B948-350 (Sheet 1). Turn N off the main coast road 1.5km E of Falcarragh, following signs for ‘Trá’, eventually to a good car park where the River Ray flows into the sea. This beach involves a carry and may surf. Better perhaps to start on this side, to be disappointed before, rather than after, a long paddle. If it is surfing badly, try Magheraroarty Pier further W at B889-333. A last resort option might be Ballyness on the E side of Ballyness Bay at B923-336, NW of Falcarragh, but watch the bar on the way out. On the E side, there is a good, sheltered, dependable ‘in all conditions’ pier C047-372 near Portnablagh, 3km E of Dunfanaghy, just off the main road.

Tides

A sustained lump may be expected, as this is a significant headland, so avoid any wind over tide. The Round of Horn Head is thus perhaps best done W to E on the flood in calm or light westerlies. Tides are as Tory Sound, ENE from HW Galway • 0350 to +0235. This is half an hour ahead of the main west coast tidal stream, or a couple of hours behind the rise and fall by the shore.

SPA

Peregrine, Chough.

Melmore Head

C136-457 Sheet 2

The 19km round of Melmore Head is one of the classic paddles of Donegal sea kayaking, principally because of the splendid rock scenery along the W side of the Rosguill Peninsula, yet less committing. Also, the shuttle between Downies at C101-382 in the W and Fanny’s Bay pier at C118-390 to the E is very convenient, being only about 2km. Parking is freely available at both, but please be considerate as both are working piers.

There are many escape points even on the west side, but the beautiful Tranarossan Beach at C117-424 is a bit far in except for the hungry or the incontinent. Many of the other more NW projections boast convenient deep cuts en route, with storm beaches or better.

Tides

Both Sheep Haven and Mulroy Bay fill and empty much with the high and low water on the shore.

Mulroy Bay & Sheep Haven	
Direction	Time
In	5:20 before Galway HW
Out	1:00 after Galway HW

The inner sections of Mulroy Bay behave differently and are dealt with later. The main west coast tidal stream affects the outer parts of the journey as follows:

Main west coast stream	
Direction	Time
ENE	3:50 before Galway HW
WSW	3:35 after Galway HW

From Rinnafaghla Point at C086-426, 3km west of Tranarossan Beach and Melmore Head, the stream works as above, about an hour and a half behind the bays filling. The round is probably therefore better paddled clockwise. A suggestion is to start before or at local LW to

achieve a favourable LW slack (an hour or two later) at the exposed outer parts of the journey and enjoy the filling tide into Mulroy Bay.

Mulroy Bay

Island Reagh

C129-390 Sheet 2

This low, grassy island is the furthest to seaward in Mulroy Bay and was surrounded by a barbed wire fence in 1999. The flooding tide flows strongly E past the N side. Tides flow into and out of this outer part of Mulroy Bay consistently with the rise and fall of the tides by the shore, from about HW Galway -0520 to +0100.

Island Roy - *Oilean Ruaidhe*

C129-379 Sheet 2

Island Roy is a lovely retreat. It is secluded even though access is possible by road, except at very HW, by a short causeway, from the W towards Downings, which still floods, but only very occasionally. Situated off the Carrickart / Downies road, the island is largely undeveloped, except for the new half dozen holiday homes, all similar. The walking of the shores is rocky. The views of Fanad and all around are majestic, especially of the new bridge across Mulroy Bay.

Before the roadway / causeway was built, island children had to make their way to school in Downies by boat, or wading at LW, or using stilts if the tide was in between. Once called Oileán Bhráidhe (reputedly Island of Prisoners).

Population used to be 36 once, now 7. Official Gaeltacht.

Mulroy Bay, Inner

Inner Mulroy Bay is a lovely place and a splendid paddle on blown out days.

Tides

The tides run strongly at the various narrows. As is normal with such configurations, the flood and ebb start later as one penetrates further into the bay. 7km southeast of Island Reagh at C184-357 is the most significant narrows of the bay, opening south into the inner bay proper, called Broad Water.

Third Narrows		
Direction	Time	Speed
In	2:20 before Galway HW	8kn
Out	3:35 after Galway HW	8kn

The times are likely to be earlier in springs and later in neaps. So constricted is the rush of water that the height difference can be as much as 0.5m, producing huge turbulence with the current up to 8kn.

There is also a strong flow at Moross Channel at C183-393 which gives access from Broad Water to North Water. Here the flood and ebb start up to an hour later still.

Within Broad Water and North Water, the tidal flows are not significant. For a day trip, there are good shuttle points. To the south, there is a car park / picnic site in a wood at C190-305 on the main Milford / Carrickart road. To the north there are multiple choices, including Fanny's Bay pier at C118-390, a working pier east of Downies.

Inishowen Peninsula

Inishowen Peninsula lies between Lough Swilly to its W and Lough Foyle to its E, and is almost totally in the Republic of Ireland.

Inch (*Inis*) Island

C310-265 Sheet 2/6

Situated at the head of Lough Swilly, Inch is now attached to the mainland due to extensive drainage and reclamation works on the SE side. Inch can be accessed by two-lane roads, and lacks all island feeling. There are even small housing estates. The population is about 350 but there is no village, pub or shop. The whole SE of the island is an extensive farm that featured infamously some years ago in a major legal battle during the 1980s depression. Its owners were evicted by a bank for failure to meet mortgage repayments. The channels along the S and NE sides dry at lower tide levels to reveal extensive 'glár', a local term for unpleasant grey knee-deep silt. Only enter these channels on a rising tide! The SE 'channel' contained within a barrage at each end is actually a fresh water lake, constantly pumped out to keep the salt water at bay. Circumnavigation is therefore impossible. Only the W side has any real interest to small boats. The highest point on the island is Inch Top in the NW at 222m high, a pleasant walk.

At the extreme S tip of the island lies Inch Castle, now in ruins. Built about 1430 by Neachtain O'Donnell for his father-in-law, Cahir O'Doherty, who jailed a rival chieftain Dónal O'Donnell in it. O'Donnell managed to escape and take over the castle, but in 1454 his enemy Rúairí O'Donnell laid siege to the castle and tried to burn him alive in it. The remains of Inch Fort, a later fortification, are at the extreme N tip.

Embarkation

By road, a left turn off the R238 from Letterkenny towards Buncrana, after the village of Burnfoot, C358-248.

From the E side of Swilly at a small pier near Fahan C334-267 near the sailing club.

From the W side of Swilly at Rathmullan pier C299-277 or the beach beside it.

Landing and Camping

Land at the island pier, C310-265 at the NW of the island. Some occupied houses make the limited camping above the small beach at the pier a bit public. Inch Fort is nearby.

Whooper

In winter there are Whooper Swans on the lake area a-plenty, this being the Irish landfall in autumn for the entire wintering Irish population. Counts of 2,000 occur. Greenland White-fronted Geese also occur in numbers. Sandwich Tern breed in summer. Otter may be found on the island.

Glashedy Island

C383-526 Sheet 3

3km W of the mouth of Trawbreaga Bay, into and out of which washes a strong tide, this is a squat tower of a rocky island with access to the top limited to an airy scramble on the west side. It is said that sheep once grazed here, but certainly not now. Land easily on a gravel spit to the SE. Eider breed. Beware the skerries to E and NW. This island fits nicely into a round of Malin Head. Mind the tide flowing in or out of Trawbreaga Bay, which operates about 3 hours behind Lough Swilly and which can affect navigation approaching from north or south. Famed for its wintering geese, and its poitín-linked history.

Round of Malin Head

C381-590 Sheet 3

Malin Head is popularly but incorrectly known as the most northerly point of Ireland. In fact nearby (2km ENE) Dunaldragh Head at C398-598 is the most northerly point. Malin Head faces west and is small, low-lying and thoroughly undistinguished, except for the seas off it. Dunaldragh Head faces north and is a high rocky headland, complete with a Lloyds Signalling Station since 1805, an Eire sign from 1939, and lookout sheds from the same period. There is a nice non-waymarked trail around the immediate area.

Tides

The tidal streams in the area are complex and require careful study, after which passage close inshore is perfectly feasible. The diagrammatic hour-by-hour sketches in the Sailing Directions are highly recommended. Paddlers have studied these for days at a time and found them remarkably accurate. Remember:

- Local HW is approximately 1 hour after Galway HW.
- Belfast HW is approximately Galway LW.
- Belfast HW is 15 minutes before Dover HW.

Beware that HW at Malin village can be as much as 3 hours behind HW in Lough Swilly outside.

At about an hour before local HW, which is HW Dover -0600, the flood stream starts hammering eastwards and is split by its collision with Malin Head. This gives associated turbulence, initially off Dunaldragh Head, followed (after about an hour or so) by Malin Head itself, until about HW Dover -0400. Then there is slack for about an hour until HW Dover -0300. Then until about HW Dover the inshore flow around the Head favours a passage S to N, but beware wind over tide. From about HW Dover +0100 until about +0400 the stream is hammering west, so that eddies are set up inshore and these turbulently collide with the main flow, mostly at Dunaldragh Head and to the E of it, making things difficult indeed. Therefore the only reliable window of opportunity is at about Dover -0400 or -0300, an hour or two after local HW. If travelling anticlockwise, aim to pass the danger zone closer to HW Dover -0400 than -0300, and if going clockwise, there is slack at HW Dover -0400, followed by several hours of mostly favourable flow until HW Dover.

The really troublesome times are as follows:

- Dover HW -0600 to -0500, which is local HW -0100 to local HW and
- Dover HW +0100 to +0400, which is local LW to local LW +3000

In calm conditions, paddlers will succeed anytime, but do respect that there is significant turbulence hereabouts at other times.

Short Option

A worthwhile half-day trip around the head is between Malin Pier at C423-586 in Slievebane Bay and the small pier in a sheltered bay locally named as Port Ronan (or West Town on the OS 1:50,000 at C406-573). A 2km walk saves a shuttle. One and a half hours in all, quite leisurely. There are regular escape points along the route, so the only committed section is the 2km section between Malin Head and Dunaldragh Head, where you also have the best cliffs, scenery, caves and waves. There is a 400m long passage, only a boat width in places, at Dunaldragh, which is thought might be passable at higher water.

The nearest escape point on the N side is at C404-595 where a stream falls onto the beach and on the S at C387-589 in Breasty Bay, or more leisurely in Ineuran Bay at C390-584. There is a newly upgraded pier facility at Port Ronan, which is hard enough to spot, but there are now half a dozen or so holiday homes clustered above. It is almost at the E end of the high ground. There is a useful hostel in a prime position just at Port Ronan, for a kayaking meet or for the weary passer-by.

Longer Option

A longer trip at 35km with a short shuttle is from the bridge in Malin village at C470-498 (or from Port Ronan, a longer shuttle, paddling distance 23km) to Portaleen Pier at C525-528 or a small pier near Culdaff at C538-507. Departing Malin village has the disadvantage of a long trip through Trawbreaga Bay, which needs an appropriate tide. Beware that HW at Malin village can be as much as 3 hours behind HW in Lough Swilly outside. Any of these longer options include the committing 11km section of escape-proof cliffs from the Garvan Isles to Glengad Head, which are quite stunning and highly recommended.

The stretch from Malin Pier to Culdaff is unremitting with high and brooding cliffs. An early morning paddle perhaps! The stacks add interest along the route but caves and arches are very few and far between. There are good numbers of breeding Fulmars along the high cliffs and the stacks hold Kittiwakes and Auks.

A flood tide on this section is noticeable between the stacks at Reaghillan at C459-580 and Glengad Head at C526-547. Interesting tidal races set up quite unexpectedly at times. There are beaches of shingle and small pebbles under these cliffs but these may be exposed to a northerly swell. There is a small, well sheltered, east-facing shingle beach at C526-541 just S of Glengad Head near Burren, but at that stage it would probably make more sense to go on to the pier at Portaleen.

Culdaff itself is an attractive place. There is a fine landing at Portaleen pier. You could also try a small picnic site up the Culdaff River at C537-499. There is a track from the picnic site to the river but at low tide getting up the narrow channel may sometimes be a problem.

Alternatively, there is a gap in the sand dunes on the beach C540-500 with access to a car park behind. The coast from Glengad Head to Culdaff gets progressively lower in height and for the paddler the pier and river channel stay hidden from view until you are very close.

On the S side, the extra journey has almost continuous escape potential.

SPA

Trawbreaga Bay is an SPA. Whooper Swan, Barnacle Goose, Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit.

Garvan Isles

C436-602 Sheet 3

About 2km NE of Malin Pier, which is 4km E of Malin Head, the Garvan Isles are widely reputed to be no more than inhospitable, weathered quartzite rocks, named from the Irish 'Na Garbh Oileáin' meaning 'Islands of the Rough Sea'.

There are three small islands, White Isle, Middle Isle, and Green Isle, all three names logical, as one has grass atop. Middle Isle does too actually, and is the easiest to land on. The landing is on the N side through a tiny keyhole slot onto stones, strictly one at a time. Local

fishermen say that to land sheep to graze Middle Isle, they used to manoeuvre a boat right up to the mouth of the slot and throw the sheep overboard. The sheep did the rest.

Tides do run awfully fast through the Isles, setting up mighty races that must be fun to play in under the right circumstances and should be very much avoided otherwise.

Inishtrahull

C482-652 Sheet 3

About 9km NE of Malin Pier, Inishtrahull is the most northerly 'big' island of Ireland. The passage by kayak takes about one and a half hours.

Inishtrahull is a mighty island, about 1.5 km in length E/W and somewhat hourglass shaped. Hills form the E and W ends, joined by a low flat piece of ground where the abandoned village and farmland lie. It is thought monks were here in the early Christian era, but there is no sign now. Uninhabited since 1928, except for visiting lighthouse personnel, there are ruined cottages and lazy beds, and some rabbits. Beside the old schoolhouse there was until recently a huge flat rock with a Maltese cross inscribed, probably a Mass Rock, and which was stolen in 2009. There is at least one grave evident.

Geology

Ireland's oldest rocks are to be found on Inishtrahull and the off-lying Tor Rocks. The rocks hereabouts were formed 1780 *ma* (billion years ago, during the Palaeoproterozoic Age), which is old, apparently. Consider that modern man has walked the earth for only 200,000 years and the last Ice Age occurred only 13,000 years ago. On Inishtrahull and the Tor Rocks, the rocks are known together as the Rhinn Complex and are made up of types of gneiss (pronounced "nice"), a coarse crystalline metamorphic rock type, whose most identifiable characteristic is the tortured banded textures that bear witness to the enormous forces of burial or shearing to which the rocks have been subjected. Locally the gneiss is termed Augen (german for eye) where lozenge shaped crystals of pale-pink feldspar dominate the rocks fabric. Apparently it attracts a lovely blue-grey luminous lichen. Syenitic orthogneiss basically means the rock was originally an igneous (magmatic) rock but has been severely buggered up by the subsequent continental barn-dancing

The exact same rock types as the Rhinn Complex of Inishtrahull also crop out in the Hebrides, Greenland and Scandinavia. Paradoxically the rocks show no similarity to the deep basement rocks of the nearby Irish mainland. This observation was first noted in 1900 and published in 1930 by W. J. McCalliom, a graduate of Glasgow University. McCalliom grew to doubt his work probably because he could not explain the geographical separation between the apparently related rocks. It wasn't until the 1960's that the explanation for the dislocation became available, with the concept of "seafloor spreading", that provided the mechanism that underpinned the theory of continental drift. Yet the question remained unresolved until 1989 when two geologists researching the gneiss's of Islay and Colonsay in the Scottish Hebrides stumbled on the McCalliom report and created a paleogeographic reconstruction that proposed a link between Greenland, Islay, Colonsay and Inishtrahull in Palaeoproterozoic times.

So now it is accepted that Inishtrahull, Colonsay and Islay broke free of the southern tip of Greenland, all those zillions of years ago. The other two anchored off Scotland, but Inishtrahull drifted that bit further south to the Donegal coastline. Only two Irish kayakers are

known to have visited any two of these locations, but both are working on completing the *meitheal*.

Lighthouse

A massive automated lighthouse stands at the west end, 23m high, reinforced concrete, novel in design. It flashes white 3 times every 20 seconds, built in 1958. There is a white accommodation block attached. A disused stub of a lighthouse stands at the east end, built in 1810/1813. It has a very visible base surrounded by large cogs, bits of machinery and derelict living quarters which could provide shelter if stranded. Because of its pivotal position, Inishtrahull Sound is a major route of passage for all sorts of living creatures and Basking Shark and Sunfish have been seen. Perhaps because of the strong tides, no debris is found on Inishtrahull, most unusual for such an island.

Fauna

In 1994, a herd of 5 Sika deer was brought onto the island, and 4 now remain as of May 2010, all does. They are very shy, and very efficient at keeping out of the way. It is more than possible for a small party never to find them on a visit. In summer 2001, a huge party of 200 or so visited the island for a commemoration. The deer could not evade so many forever, took flight, jumped into the sea, and swam for it. Fortunately, they were spotted leaving by some scuba divers walking about the island. A rescue mission was mounted. By the time they were found, they were two thirds the way to Malin Head. In the rescue efforts, unfortunately one drowned, the only stag. The remaining four were saved, and were returned at very high speed to the Hull. A good news story emanating from Ireland's scuba people!

In 2009 it became apparent to Ireland's conservators of whales and dolphins that this whole Malin area was a hot-spot for Basking Shark (which actually are fish), and many of the 100+ tagged to try and find out where they go in winter were encountered near the island. Then in 2010 there was an explosion of population and in a calm weather week in May, 104 were tagged in a frenzy of activity. This shy and elusive species may yet yield up, to technology, a ton of knowledge of its darkest secrets. Simon Berrow became a household name overnight.

SPA

Barnacle Goose, Peregrine, Arctic Tern, and a significant breeding Eider population.

General Area

Malin Head, pier, and the very pretty village are all on the well signposted coast road tour around the headland, the Inishowen 100. Malin Head Radio Station (VHF channel 23) has a very positive attitude to interaction with canoeists and a visit is very educational.

Embarkation

Embarkation is from Malin Pier C423-585 in the small harbour in Slievebane Bay, 4km E of Malin Head. The pier faces the Garvan Isles C436-602 at 2km out to the NE across Garvan Sound and Inishtrahull is 7km further out beyond them across Inishtrahull Sound in the same direction, 9km in all. Park so as not to obstruct fishermen. This recently improved pier supports the fishermen's co-op for the whole area and is quite busy.

Inishtrahull Sound

The tides in Inishtrahull Sound itself, reaching about 4kn in Springs, are notorious with wind over tide and are said to get steeper more quickly than in Tory Sound, but are otherwise quite manageable. It tends to cut up rougher just W of the Garvan Isles than to their E. It is strongly advised to keep east of the Garvan Isles, bound inwards or out, in any wind.

Landing

The most convenient landing on the island is in the waist at the W end of the S side of the island just under the W lighthouse, where a narrow SW-facing cut leads to a jetty and steps, called Portachurry. The landing is said to be a problem as it can be exposed to swell. A much more sheltered landing is also possible in the waist of the island midway along the N side at Portmore. There is a jetty and an impressive 15m raised shingle beach. There is less of a carry at Portachurry. The well at Portmore seems well maintained.

Tides

- Local HW is approximately HW Galway +0100.
- Belfast HW is approximately Galway LW.
- Belfast HW is Dover HW -0015.

Tides run strongly, are very complicated, and deserve respect. With wind over tide, the sea sets up steep waves more quickly in Inishtrahull Sound than even in Tory Sound or Rathlin Sound.

Tides

The tides in Inishtrahull Sound reach about 4kn in springs and are notorious with wind over. They are said to get steeper more quickly than in Tory Sound but are otherwise quite manageable. It tends to cut up rougher to the west of the Garvan Isles than to the east. It is strongly advised to keep east of the Garvan Isles, bound inwards or out, in any wind.

At Inishtrahull itself, there is shallow foul ground at the southwest, tidal races flood and ebb at the northwest and the island even boasts a whirlpool off the northeastern corner, a circular eddy that gets ferocious in springs, from an hour after Belfast HW until about 4:30 after. Fortunately, this whirlpool seems always avoidable, as Gull Island at the northeast is navigable inside by very small craft. The stream through Inishtrahull Sound on its southern side runs at full strength to within 3m of the shore off Portachurry and a 300m wide race guards the entrance to Portachurry during all the ebb.

The main ESE flood stream passes outside the Garvan Isles, in Inishtrahull Sound itself, for 8 hours as follows:

Inishtrahull Sound		
Direction	Start Time	End Time
ESE	3:00 after Belfast HW	1:30 before Belfast HW
WNW	Belfast HW	3:00 after Belfast HW

There is virtually no slack at the start of the flood. There is an hour and a quarter of slack at the start of the ebb, although much less in springs, half an hour.

At the Garvan Isles and in Garvan Sound to landward, the position is somewhat more complicated. The mainstream of the flood tide passes further out, through Inishtrahull Sound. Therefore, in Garvan Sound and through the Garvan Isles, the tide never runs with much strength ESE at any time, because of the eddying effect of being bypassed. In for the last couple of hours or so of the flood, the stream eddies back around and runs weakly WNW, from about 3:15 before Belfast HW to approximately Belfast HW.

So the inshore ebb stream runs continuously WNW from 3:15 before Belfast HW until 2:45 after. It is stressed though that while it runs relatively weakly while an eddy (say 3:15 before Belfast HW to 0:15 before Belfast HW), it runs very strongly indeed on the main ebb for the rest of the time.

The Garvan Isles must (please believe their reputation in this particular regard) be avoided during that period as the streams set strongly through its shallower channels and outlying rocks. To look is enough and do not go there. Best keep well east of them altogether on passage in or out and choose the timing carefully.

It might seem soundest to leave the mainland at 1:45 before Belfast HW or so and ferry eastwards for a while against the weakly eddying flood inside the Garvans, until slack water outside the Garvans permits an untroubled trip across Inishtrahull Sound. Returning after multiples of twelve (not six) hours later, depart the island at 0:45 before Belfast HW or so, as soon as it looks right. Then bear up eastwards a little while, traversing the Inishtrahull Sound to be carried westwards home across the Garvan Sound, once close to land.

There is also the 'non-slack' at about 2:45 before Belfast HW, when the direction of flow changes, they say instantaneously. In calm conditions, bite it. It really must be stressed that in calm conditions, both sounds are quite manageable and timing becomes more a matter of navigation and convenience than safety or necessity.

For advance planning of trips, be aware that in neaps, Belfast HW falls during hours of darkness, which can mean usable slack waters force a choice between a return 12 hours later in the dark or 24 hours later, increasing the commitment levels somewhat.

Realistically though, it is better to go spontaneously, when conditions invite.

Tor More

C474-668 Sheet 3

Tor More is the biggest of a group of isolated rocky islets, skerries and sea stacks called the Tor Rocks, 1.5km NW of Inishtrahull, all consisting of the same rock type. Tides run very strongly in the sound between the Tor Rocks and Inishtrahull and indeed through the gaps and channels amongst the smaller rocks and skerries -hereabouts.

Tor More, as the name suggests, is the highest in elevation of the group, rising to 35m. Tor More is high and craggy, especially so on its S flanks. Narrow channels divide it from three smaller outlying stacks.

The angle of slope on its northern side is less, and landing is possible onto rock shelves in calm conditions. The summit can be reached easily enough from the northern side, the reward being a fine view of Inishtrahull from almost the most northerly points of Ireland.

Evidence of breeding Shags and c.30 Grey Seal present in August 2003. Oystercatcher, Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone and Eider.

Tor Beg

C479-673 Sheet 3

Tor Beg is the most northerly possible landing in Ireland, save Rockall. Land on the more sheltered S side, where the rock is less steep. Seals abound.
