



Winter 2012

www.athlone.iwai.ie

Secretary Brian Corcoran
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Chairman's Address



2012 is almost over and while we are looking back at the past season on the inland waterways we are already planning for the coming year.

In this branch of IWAI we were involved in or contributed to doing some things differently in 2012. As a branch we made a conscious effort to organise more cruises in company and we have seen the benefits with up to fifty boats participating. This has presented us with an involved and more committed local branch membership and we are determined to improve on the programme of activities during these events in the coming year. We want to encourage more families with children so as to broaden the appeal for all and make these events more inclusive. I want to thank all who attended but most particularly those who organised and led these events. We will be looking out for new commodores to lead these events in the coming season.

Athlone branch members now proudly display our own burgee and the launch of this burgee by the Mayor of Athlone was a well attended event and coincided with a cruise in company. We have used the burgee to promote membership of the branch and this has helped us to grow our numbers when the trend has been downwards generally. An initiative by the branch to contact all lapsed members of the past few years was also helpful in this endeavour.

The most significant development within the Athlone branch area was the launch of the RNLI Life boat service on Lough Ree. While the preparatory work was done in the previous year the installation of the service in 2012 saw the volunteer crews involved in commencement of their service in earnest and many boaters have already come to know the benefits. We wish the boat crews and land based volunteers and management well and thank them for their dedication to safer boating activity on Lough Ree. We were involved in hosting the IWAI welcome for the lifeboat service on 13th. October last which was a wonderful event in brilliant sunshine.

The branch is proud to have secured in digital form the massive photo collection of Walter Borner which is a record of the landscape, infrastructure, boats and people of the inland waterways over a period of over thirty years. A portion of this photograph collection will be shown at our AGM on the 7th. December 2012 and is well worth seeing. We encourage members to attend the AGM and take this opportunity.

Athlone members participated in the first Shannon estuary rally this year which was a challenge due to high water levels but this made it all the more interesting and rewarding. It is anticipated that similar events will happen in the coming years. Those members with a desire for a bit more adventure should watch for such opportunities.

Once again the Shannon rally was a most successful event and the route including the first visit to Lough Derg was ambitious and well received. High water levels caused some difficulties here also but did not affect the participation in or the success of this wonderful event. The commodore Dave McCabe together with vice commodore Brendan Connolly and Athlone members of the Rally committee are to be congratulated.

The IWAI nationally made a decision to proceed onwards with the development of Dunrovin as a national headquarters for the IWAI and this is currently the subject consideration by the planning office of Westmeath County Council.

As a branch we have improved communications with member and as well as posting the Aerial to all members that we have e-mailed as many as we have e-mail addresses for and most particularly we have set up a text service to all members for whom we have mobile phone numbers.

As a branch we had ambitions to do other things in 2012 which are being carried over to 2013. We will be posting on the branch website the calendar of events as soon as it has worked through. We want you the members to come forward with your suggestions so that we have an opportunity to meet where possible the boating interests of the greatest number. This will assist us in once again in improving participation and assisting in promoting the IWAI for the benefit of all inland waterways users.

I thank sincerely all who took part in or assisted in the organisation of events in 2012 and I wish all members a very happy Christmas and very successful and happy boating year in 2013.

Kevin Clabby
Chairman.

AGM of Athlone Branch IWAI will be held in THE BOUNTY Dubarry Park,
Coosan on Friday 7th December at 8.30pm

New floating jetty for Rindoon Castle

Waterways Ireland this summer installed a floating jetty at Rindoon Bay in Lough Ree, just North of Marker 4. The jetty is anchored by one single pile and can swing around into the wind, should the weather change. This jetty is a welcome addition for all who would like to explore the ruins of pre-Norman settlement Rindoon Castle (the keep which was constructed by Geoffrey de Marisco in 1227) towards the end of the peninsula of St. John's Point. All you need is a dinghy to get to Safe Harbour, Rindoon's thriving port. (Naval and merchant vessels operated out of Rindoon as well as a ferry connecting Roscommon to Westmeath). You can then enjoy the looped walk of 3.43 km developed by St. John's Parish Heritage Group. This is a national treasure, just waiting to be explored!

Three German tourists rescued from Lough Ree

Three German Tourists were rescued from Lough Ree after their cruiser ran aground. Lough Ree RNLI launched the rescue mission after the alarm was raised north of Priests Island, close to Barley Harbour. The volunteer crew, based at Coosan Point, set to work at 8.45pm in very windy conditions.

Within 25 minutes, the Lifeboat arrived on scene and two of the tourists were taken safely to shore.

The third of the men had left the cruiser and boarded a dinghy in search of assistance earlier in the evening. He was reported missing but eventually located safe and well at about midnight on Cloone Skert. The RNLI were assisted by Lough Ree Rescue, Athlone Sub Aqua Club and the Sligo Coast Guard helicopter.

A Year in review

July 29th - Chinese Dragon Boat Race in aid of RNLI

This event was organised by Baysports in Hodson Bay with funds raised going to the RNLI. The local Athlone Sub Acqua team won the overall event. Despite the very wintery and blustery conditions Athlone and Carrick branches went head to head as ten very able rowers on both sides competed with all their skill and might. The Athlone Branch beat the Carrick branch by a long shot. Better luck next time!



Cruise in Company May 2012 - Ballinasloe and Shannonbridge



Official Launch of New Athlone Burgee by Athlone Town Mayor in June



PHOTO Roger onboard "Lily" moored in the Kolk, Sneek, Holland opposite the famous Watergate sporting their new Athlone Branch Burgee!



Alison Alderton who now lives in Copenhagen, Denmark

Over 60 members of the branch gathered at the Athlone Town Marina to the launch party of the new branch burgee. Athlone Town Mayor Alan Shaw in launching the burgee spoke about the very valuable economic impact boating has in Athlone and the huge tourism potential of private boat owners as well as overseas visitors have to the many small towns and villages along the Shannon. He congratulated the branch on its initiative and was presented with a framed burgee, his very first.

Membership Renewal Drive

The branch launched a membership renewal campaign with the view of renewing old memberships and attracting new members to the association. As part of the campaign the branch has written to many of our lapsed members, offering an incentive to all lapsed members – a special price on the new burgee of €10 for any previous member that rejoins (Normal price €17)

Lecarrow Pudding 'n Porter Cruise in Company 8th 9th & 10th September – Commodore Sam Herraghty Dunross By Brian Corcoran

Our September CIC to Lecarrow with the Pudding 'n Porter Weekend was an outstanding success. We had over forty boats camped up in Lecarrow, with initial arrivals from Wednesday onwards, a full house by Friday. Official start to the CIC was our Athlone Branch meeting in Kelly's Pub Lecarrow at 8pm followed by a few beers and even more music provided by members of the now infamous De band. Cracking weather (pre-ordered by enigmatic CIC Commodore Sam Herraghty) woke us on Saturday morning, in time for the Guided Tour of Rindoon at 2pm, kindly hosted by Richard Collins of St Johns House. Rindoon is in the Top10 Historical Sites in the country. On return from the highly informative tour we kicked off our traditional Wine & Cheese on the Quay, delivered by The Herraghty Family. This was followed by ralliers BBQ'ing harbourside. Then the real fun started in Coffeys Pub with a concoction of light refreshment and an outstanding variety of musicians....which ran into the mandatory early hours. It appears Sam hadn't booked the weather for Sunday 'cos our friends from The Yew Tree Restaurant had to borrow Oily's so they could serve their Gourmet 'Puddin 'n Porter' breakfast baps. This sustenance helped ease the strain of releasing lines and heading South in the miserable weather conditions....but remember, us ralliers don't let the weather get us down....we're already looking forward to next years adventures. Make sure you get a chance to volunteer your service's as these events can't happen without YOU.

End of Season Rally Cruise in Company and Welcome event for Lifeboat Station

- Commodore Oona and Niamh Herraghty Dunross



Dave McCabe and Sir Tim Laurence



Denis Naughton TD, Lord Boyce, Clr Gabrielle McFadden, Dorothy Furlong, Clr Mark Cooney, Nicky McFadden TD

Following the very successful welcome event for the new lifeboat station organised by the Athlone Branch and IWAI nationally the end of season rally was held in Coosan. The official party welcome for the lifeboat station was very well attended with over 200 members, guests, local businesses and the RNLI crew and fundraising team. The day was gloriously sunny and the Number 1 Army band entertained us. We had refreshments and libations and listened to short interesting speeches. And we chatted. The day set the scene for a great night of music singing dancing and BBQ in Lough Ree Inn. Thanks to all the hard work of the branch officers, the commodores the Herraghty sisters and the RNLI crew, the Army band and all those who served us throughout the day.



Louis Sleator, Billy Henshaw



Greg Whelhan President IWAI



Mick Barrett and Peter Quigley



Terry Rafter, Pat McMahon



Vincent Rafter, Clr Moran



Loretta Clabby Sarah Jane and Gerry Macken

Branch Notice Boards

AGM of Athlone Branch IWAI will be held in THE BOUNTY Dubarry Park, Coosan on Friday 7th December at 8.30pm

Agenda (Draft)

1. Apologies
2. Correspondence
3. Minutes of 2011 Annual General Meeting
4. Matters Arising
5. Chairperson's Report
6. Hon. Secretary Report
7. Hon. Treasurer Report
8. Election of Athlone Branch Officers
 - Chairperson
 - Vice Chairperson
 - Hon. Secretary
 - Hon Treasurer
 - PRO
 - Webmaster
 - Child Protection Officer
9. Shannon Boat Rally 2013 Committee and Athlone Branch Vice Commodore
10. Branch Calendar of Events 2013
12. AOB

Shannon Flooding, Man made or Natural effect

by Dave McCabe

This year gone by, has again demonstrated that the Shannon can generate large amounts of flood water as befits a major watercourse, that drains a large portion of the island. Again the issues, such as the flooding in the callows have generated heated debate as to their cause and what can be done to mitigate the effect. However in the media and newspapers, and through much loose talk, the finger is often pointed at the navigation or on the management of the levels by Waterways Ireland.

Currently there is a major study on flooding in the middle Shannon being undertaken, The CFRAMS (Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study) project is being carried out by Jacobs Engineering on behalf of the Office of Public Works. This study seeks to map flood plains, examine potential mitigation measures and provide recommendations for water management processes and procedures

It is unfortunate that some groups have advanced ill proven ideas that suggest the problems are caused by the navigation levels or control of such levels. In particular, focus has been drawn to suggesting that the levels in Lough Ree are too high and that the levels should be lowered. Yet the weir crest height at 123 feet OD Poolbeg was established long ago as the appropriate navigation level. Some public figures have suggested that lowering Lough Ree would have little effect on the navigation, or that the effect would be confined to "big boats", but that it would alleviate flooding downstream. Yet, for example, when the levels in Lough Ree were restored in the early 70s this allowed places like Lecarrow to be accessed as well

as other areas such as parts of the inner lakes and elsewhere. Lowering Ree would render such areas inaccessible and prevent access to marinas and other public waterside infrastructures that were built since the restoration of normal navigation levels. All this would waste much of the public monies spent on building public harbours and facilities. Such talk is ill informed and misleading and would cause severe damage to the navigation in Lough Ree. Large parts of Ree are shallow and the maintenance of the weir crest level is necessary to allow access to the superb bays and remote areas of Ree, today's visitors and tourists simply don't want to travel in a straight line as fast as possible from Lanesborough to Athlone, but to explore and sample the delights that such a lake has to offer.

The problem is of course that such solutions, advanced by certain sections, seem to offer a quick fix to a interminable problem. A fix that is seemingly easy to implement and its adherents suggest, would mitigate down stream flooding. Furthermore, many have sought to project WI and the ESB as incompetent or having a pro-flooding agenda, or that they put boats before people. It was stated on radio that WI was holding water levels 1 foot above the weir crest, a fact that is physically impossible for WI to do. Many sought to project the issues of winter flooding, where homes are often threatened onto the different issues associated with summer flooding, where primarily the problem is the flooding of riparian farmland. It is most unfortunate that certain groups see navigation as the issue rather than the clear scientific problems that exist.

The Borner Collection

We have now completed digitisation of the Walter & Ruth Borner Photographic Collection. Walter & Ruth visited Lough Ree from Switzerland two or three times a year between the 60's and 2003 before they were tragically lost on the lake. Their family have kindly given their Photographic Collection to the Wineport and IWAI for safe keeping.

Many thanks for the funding from the Athlone Branch, IWAI Council and Ray & Jane Byrne from the Wineport Restaurant. We now have an electronic archive of more than 6000 outstanding photographs from Lough Ree and its environs, detailing Flora, Fauna, Wildlife and also many of us boaters from the sixties to the naughties. We will be displaying selections of the photo's over the coming years at all branch events. Nora Sleator from Walkabout has kindly offered to 'categorise' the photo's so we can 'theme' the presentations, we also hope to make available individual photo's that interest you for a nominal contribution to the branch. Make sure you attend branch meetings and coming events so you can catch your favourite shots.

