

A thrilling moment for C. Owens of St. Michael's Canoe Club, Enniskillen, as he shoots the Wren's Nest Weir in the Liffey Descent.

The Sport Offers Spectacle and Excitement

CANOE CLUB

FOR LIMERICK

LIMERICK will have a canoe club. The decision was taken on Sunday last following the very successful rally and demonstration by the Irish Canoe Union of Dublin at the Worrall's Inn, Castleconnell. The club will open a new sphere of activity for young—and not so young—sportsmen, and will provide tourists with an opportunity of exploring the waterways in Limerick and vicinity.

Sunday's demonstration was given by Irish international canoeists and it included such breathtaking exercises as the Eskimo roll—capsizing the canvas-covered craft and righting it without shipping water.

Limerick participants included Michael Barker, Kieran O'Sullivan, Frank O'Mahony, Charlie Quinn, Richard Hoffer, Peter Ferguson, Willae Greene, Seamus Walsh and Charlie McCoy.

Afterwards a steering committee for the local club, made up of Gerald McCoy, chairman; Charlie McCoy, hon. secretary; and Declan Walsh, hon. treasurer, was formed, and some thirty members were enrolled. The club will get fully under way in the New Year.

The idea originated with 17-year-old Crescent College student Charlie McCoy, and full support and encouragement was given by the Irish Canoe Union. The club will be affiliated to the union, and it will probably be the first of its kind in the South of Ireland.

the Liffey Descent.

The members hope, eventually, to provide a clubhouse on the Corbally or Plassy banks of the Shannon.

Secretary Charlie McCoy is son of Gerald and Mrs. McCoy, North Circular Road. He has been canoeing for the past three years, and with his father and 16-year-old brother, Michael, built a two-seater boat some time ago.

Canoes can be home-built from £10 to £15. Professionally built fibre-glass models for fully-experienced canoeists would, of course, cost considerably in excess of these figures.

There is no upper or lower age limit for membership to the new club. But one provision will be strictly enforced—all members must be able to swim.

LIFFEY DESCENT

One of the biggest events in the canoeing world this year was the Liffey Descent. For the first time the race was an international long-distance competition, with entries from Spain, Denmark, Great Britain, and Ireland. Afterwards a meeting was held at which representatives from Spain, Denmark, Great Britain and Mr. Derek Martin for Ireland agreed that a proposal to form an International Long Distance Racing Committee should be put before the I.C.F. and pledged their support for such a proposal.

Long-distance canoe racing was born in Britain—the first record race, in which six canoes competed over a 12-mile course from Teddington Lock to Putney, was held just a century ago—in the December of 1867. Yet it is only in the last fifteen years that the sport has really grown.

"CANOEING IN IRELAND"

The following article by Derek Martin, "Canoeing in Ireland," captures the spirit of the sport and will be of particular interest to canoeists and potential canoeists:—

Recently, you may have seen the increasing numbers of canoes on car tops and trailers heading in various directions throughout the country—even in mid-winter. Who are they, you may ask? Where are they off to? What do they do?

Well, these are the canoeists, the touring canoeists, the racing paddlers, the rough water men and those who are just pottering about—the beginners and the experts. They are all interested in what is becoming the most popular sport and pastime for young and old who like the water.

They are off to some stream, river or lake or to the coast, possibly for just a few hours paddling or even an extended holiday, touring hundreds of miles of Irish rivers that are open to them, or again bringing their canoe for their holidays at the seaside.

The racing canoeists may also be seen in convoy heading towards a regatta venue, a long distance race or a sprint event, travelling to and from Dublin, Belfast, Letchip, Kilmullen, Carrick-on-Shannon, to the Liffey, Shannon and all the princely rivers and to the Wicklow Mountains in winter and the areas where the main clubs are placed and where the events are held.

The rough water and slalom men; are off to the Wicklow mountain streams—Avonbeg, Avonmore and Aughrim in the

winter season. They may also go in the summer to the Atlantic coast to practise kayak surfing at Achill, Lahinch and Strand Hill, Sligo, to challenge big 10 ft. breakers in their specialized craft.

Canoe touring in Ireland, with its free access to our unlimited, ungestoned, uncontaminated rivers, is beginning to attract many British and Continental enthusiasts; several hundred have visited us already this year and this includes a large party who travelled all the way from Berlin to spend five weeks on our rivers.

These canoes can be seen at the car ferry ports; Should the Irish Canoe Union receive the co-operation of the Irish Tourist Board these paddlers will flock to the quiet parts of the country where no other tourist attraction exists. Continental rivers are not now as attractive to the British and Continental people, due to damming and contamination. In Ireland, many rivers have not yet seen the glint of a paddle. Indeed, it is true to say, that only by canoe can one travel the unexplored, unspoiled, uncrowded parts of not only Ireland, but the whole world. These canoes, light, slim, fast and easily transportable, can go anywhere.

For those taking up canoeing they could start by building a single touring canoe for as little as £15—for both young and old want to get afloat these days and the canoe is obviously a big attraction.

Following the introduction and instructional courses organised by the Irish Canoe Union, canoe building and canoe handling has been introduced to youth organisations and schools. Canoeing is naturally an ideal activity to be included in any educational programme. This year there has been a breakthrough in Irish education by a Dublin technical school, which has included class time for canoeing as part of physical education. Through the medium of the Catholic Youth Council, the National Youth Council, the Boy Scouts, Sea Scouts, Boys Brigade and other youth groups and also the Secondary School Teachers Association, there are now approximately 200 canoes being used by young people, the Olympic champions of the future.

The Irish Canoe Union, the national governing body for the four provinces in Ireland, represents Ireland at home and abroad and on the Irish Olympic Council and the International Canoe Federation. It is seldom realised that canoeing is an Olympic sport and one of the strongest water sport events in the Games.

An aim of the I.C.U. is to send a paddler to the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972.

The rough water canoeists who head for the wild rapid rivers of Wicklow and other parts and to the Atlantic surf also compete in their respective classes in the international "Liffey Descent." These men, in their fibre glass kayaks, wet suits, crash helmets and "Botherchoc" life jackets are all set for the toughest aspect of canoeing and one of the toughest sports in the world. They learn all the techniques of advanced canoe handling, including Telemark Turns, Colorado Hooks, a skilled Eskimo Roll—without getting out by the "Put Across," "Pawlatas," "Screw" and "Styer" methods; they learn the Eskimo and deep sea rescues, all part of their strict training. After some months stiff practice they can then head for the rapids, weirs and falls of our winter rivers and our summer Atlantic surf. Where they not only roll in the 10 ft. green waves but also "loop" their specialised kayaks—that is the technique of standing "on" the kayaks vertically on the face of a wave and crashing down stern over bow in a complete mid-air

"loop," rolling up and facing out to sea again. Yes, these are Ireland's finest water experts, nerves of steel, split second timing and great skill and strength. As a mere spectator, the international Liffey descent was the most exciting sporting event I have witnessed in a very long time.

I first came into contact with this event when I wangled an invitation to the Press conference out of Brian Keogh, the Public Relations Officer for Peter Owens Ltd., who handled the publicity for Coca-Cola, the sponsors. After a very short time in Jury's Hotel I realised that this was no small club affair but a very real and serious international event. I met team members from countries such as Denmark, Spain, England and Scotland. Very fit and healthy young men they were, too. The sponsors, Coca-Cola, had provided a very generous sum of money to each visiting team to make it possible for them to compete. And as the competitors could not all bring their own canoes, the Craft Centre Ltd., of Pearsa St., Dublin, supplied canoes free of charge.

Saturday, the 9th of September, found me at Castletown House. This beautiful Georgian mansion bustled with activity in the late summer sunshine. In the great hall I found Derek Martin and Ernest Lawrence briefing the competitors for their 16 1/2 miles trip from the town of Colbridge to Boy's Bridge, in the heart of Dublin. This was no ordinary River Liffey to-day, of all days, as the Electricity Supply Board released 30 million tons of water to flood the weirs at the request of the Irish Canoe Union. The local pipe band in swishing kilts and playing martial airs led the festive parade of 93 canoes with 121 paddlers down to the starting point.

At 2.45 p.m. the gun was fired and the first canoes shot off for the eighth international descent. It would take more than this short article to tell of all the thrills and spills in those fast-moving 16 1/2 miles.

The organisers had thought of everything, for just as the question arose in my mind of what would happen should the competitors capsize, I met Sean Foley. Sean was fully dressed in skin-diving gear and he introduced me to Donal Douglas, who was leading the party of 12 skin-divers from the Irish Sub-Aqua Club. The I.S.A.C. had offered their services free of charge—of course—and were stationed at all the danger points. I must say these boys put up a most magnificent performance that day. They were a pleasure to watch as they plunged into even the most treacherous water and would emerge towing canoe, canoeist and paddles to safety.

The British team sauntered home to a good win, knocking ten minutes off their own last year's record of 1 hour 44 minutes. The day was topped off with a gala dance in the Spa Hotel, Lucan, where the prizes were presented. As I left the hotel at midnight I could hear the music and sounds of revelry drift after me on the night air, and I wondered where these young people got the energy from. I had only been a spectator, yet I was fit to sleep for a week.

E. M.

Trains from Cork and Limerick

ON Sunday next, 19th instant, the 09.15 Cork-Dublin and 10.05 Limerick-Dublin Passenger Trains will be subject to a slight delay because of engineering work on the line.

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held at Worrall's Inn, Castleconnell, last Sunday.