

Article featured in *The Evening Telegraph* (28-6-22).

A group of 19 rowers from Dundee last week travelled to Arran to circumnavigate the island in a 22-foot rowing boat. They were following in the wake of an epic round Arran row accomplished by the Arran Coastal Rowing Club (ACRC) in 2018.

The group based themselves at the Arran Outdoor Education Centre in Lamlash and began and ended their row at the centre over 21 and 22 June.

The rowers formed into teams of six and rowed in relays round the island. The row was broken into six stages. Whereas the Arran club rowed clockwise round the island in a single day, the Dundee group rowed in the opposite direction over two days to make best use of the wind and tide conditions.

The distance covered was around 55 miles and the row took approximately 15 and a half hours, slightly exceeding the ACRC “world record” time of just under 15 hours.

The boat used was a St Ayles skiff commissioned and owned by Dundee Sailing Club. The club is a dinghy cruising club that sails on the River Tay between Perth, Arbroath and St Andrews. Club sailors have also sailed further afoot, including round Arran, Mull, the Small Isles and even to Lindisfarne, so it was only a matter of time before the club’s rowers also started to look beyond the Tay. Once they became aware of the Arran rowing club’s circumnavigation of Arran the challenge was afoot and the Dundee rowers became only the second club to take their St Ayles skiff around Arran. Probably.

Dundee Sailing Club only took delivery of their skiff and began a rowing section just over a year ago. Even more remarkable is that some of the rowers that took part in the round Arran row had been rowing for only a few months.

The 19 rowers prepared for Arran by attending focussed technical training sessions that took place on a weekly basis, often in rough and testing conditions, and doing longer recreational rows on the Tay. In the event, the weather for the Arran row was mostly benign and always warm.

The Arran Coastal Rowing Club was called upon for advice and guidance during preparation for the trip, which they gave generously. Master boat builder Rory Cowan, from Kildonan on Arran, was invaluable to the Dundee effort when he stepped up to help with some repairs and refurbishment the day before the trip began. He also just happened to be on hand to help at a tiny beach when the Dundee skiff, called Eider, was nosing her way through the rocks looking for a soft landing.

Whilst no two rows on the Tay are ever the same and our scenery is a delight, the Dundee rowers found much to thrill them during their circumnavigation of Arran including sightings of dolphins, porpoises and seals, the challenge of and slight unease at rowing in unfamiliar, sometimes choppy, waters, gliding along the shore of Holy Isle looking at the shrines and the Soay sheep and leaving their beloved skiff nestled on a beach overnight and returning to find it still there next morning!

During their stay on Arran the group was based at the Arran Outdoor Education Centre. A spokesperson said: "We were looked after beautifully and fed so very well after our strenuous days at the oars. The centre is a stunning base for Arran adventures and we hope to return with more rowers and perhaps some sailors in future."

Dundee Sailing Club, former RYA Club of the Year, is a community-based sailing and rowing club. The club is located at Grassy Beach, Broughty Ferry. More information can be found on the club website at www.dundeesailingclub.org.uk. The club can be contacted at dundee.sc@googlemail.com