

A SHORT SURVEY OF

**Water – Skiing
in
County Fermanagh**
1956 - 1977

Compiled by

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In memory of

Hubert I. Brown MBE and William Healy
founder members of Carrybridge Aqua Club

WATER-SKIING IN COUNTY FERMANAGH

1956-1977

In the following review of Water-Skiing in County Fermanagh over the past twenty years or so, the writer will confine himself primarily to the three centres where the vast majority of skiing was concentrated, together with three other areas where a much smaller amount of organized skiing was carried on.

These three major centres were:

- (1) Rosslare Bay at Killadeas on Lower Lough Erne close by the Manor House Hotel.
- (2) Carrybridge on Upper Lough Erne.
- (3) Killyhevlin on Upper Lough Erne from the jetties of the Killyhevlin Hotel.

The three minor centres were:

- (4) Corrard Bay on the east side of Bellisle on Upper Lough Erne.
- (5) Derryadd on Upper Lough Erne close by the Craigavon Bridge.
- (6) Rossigh Bay on Lower Lough Erne.

Little attention will be paid to the considerable amount of private skiing by many individuals from one end of the lakes to the other, who have gathered together in their twos and threes and enjoyed themselves on the three hundred square miles of water which is Upper and Lower Lough Erne.

The review is set out in six sections dealing with the six areas above, and it is hoped to record some names, dates and events in relation to the sport which might otherwise pass into oblivion.

Section 1 ROSSCLARE BAY

The first water-ski club to be formed on Lough Erne was due to the interest in water-skiing of Joseph B. Stevenson, a Letterkenny-born chemist shop proprietor in Enniskillen. Joe (as he is popularly known) was a well known "Falry" class yachts man at Goblusk Bay in the fifties and early sixties, and it was in about 1958 that he got together with his friend R. G. (Gerry) Dickie and they began to teach themselves the still very new sport.

The early skiing was centred on Goblusk Bay, the headquarters of the Lough Erne Yatch Club, and they also skied at the Weirs Bridge just outside Enniskillen.

The towing craft was a 16' x 5'9" beam clinker-built boat owned by Mr. Stevenson and constructed by Eddie Vaughan whose boat yard was situated in Queen Street, Enniskillen.

It soon became clear that a good number of people were interested, and on 26th November, 1959 at 8.00 p. m. in the Imperial Hotel, Enniskillen, a meeting was held to consider the formation of a water-ski club.

The following people were present:

The Earl of Erne
Lt. Norrie
James McCartney
Cecil McCartney
I. S. Cooper
R. E. Bracken
R. G. Dickie
J. B. Stevenson

The meeting was chaired by general consent by James McCartney, and it was decided to form a ski club to be known as the 'Lough Erne Water Ski Club' to promote water-skiing on the lake.

The following officers were elected:

President -	The Earl of Erne
Vice President -	Mr. R. Agnew (Belfast)
Chairman -	Mr. James McCartney
Vice Chairman -	Mr. J. B. Stevenson
Hon. Secretary -	Mr. S. C. Gillespie
Hon. Treasurer (Acting) -	Mr. S. C. Gillespie
Hon. Asst. Secretary & Treasurer -	Mr. R. G. Dickie

(At the first committee meeting on 11. 1. 60, D. R. Watson was appointed Hon. Treasurer.)

Committee: Mr. R. E. Bracken
Mr. I. S. Cooper
Mr. G. H. Hurst
Mr. J. Langham
Mr. J. C. Little
Mr. C. McCartney
Lt. Norrie
County Inspector - J. E. Reid

The chairman offered as headquarters the foreshore near the recently opened Manor House Hotel, and agreed to undertake the clearing of the foreshore.

Rossclare Bay had the advantage of being easily accessible and relatively close to Enniskillen but was never an ideal situation in that it was rather open to the prevailing wind. This meant that the slalom course and jump had eventually to be situated on the leeward eastern side of Hay Island several hundred yards from the mainland shore. The spectator appeal of these two disciplines was thereby considerably decreased.

On the 26th March, 1960, at a committee meeting it was agreed to purchase Mr. Stevenson's boat for the club use at a price of £220, this figure included the 35 H. P. Johnston engine.

A bank overdraft to pay for the boat and engine was negotiated with the Ulster Bank Ltd., Enniskillen, and was jointly guaranteed by the club president and chairman, plus Messrs. Dickie, Hurst and Little respectively.

And so the Lough Erne Water Ski Club was "in business" in the spring of 1960, and a grand opening day was held on 11th June to mark the occasion.

There appears, however, to have been a rather small nucleus of a ski club's most essential component - skiers; and it was at the first Annual General Meeting of the club on the 19th June, 1961, that the chairman expressed doubts at the future of the club although the minutes do not make clear the reason for his pessimism.

In the years 1961-2-3 and 4 a considerable influx of new members completely altered the complexion of the club. Amongst these new members were Oliver Keenan, Maurice McChesney, Billy Croke, Tommy McLaughlin and George Deane.

Tommy McLaughlin, a post office official in Enniskillen, was elected as club secretary at the Annual General Meeting in 1963 and there is little doubt that

during the five years which he held this post his drive, initiative and enthusiasm helped to make the club a well-equipped force of Irish skiing.

Tommy was well aware that a club house was a necessity, and he continued to pursue this matter relentlessly, and late in 1965 the foundations of a prefabricated building were laid, planning permission having been obtained in October, 1965.

The club house was completed in mid 1966 after Trojan work by a handful of stalwarts, and at the time of writing in 1978 is in use in connection with the Manor House Marine hire cruiser business.

A new ski-ramp was constructed in 1965 from specifications obtained from Mr. Kevin Murray Sligo - the father of Alan Murry who was arguably the top skier ever produced by Ireland in all three disciplines of slalom, figures and jump.

Although the club possessed all the requirements for competition skiing during the latter half of the sixties, they never did possess a satisfactory competition tow-boat. It was thought that this matter would be rectified in November, 1966, with the purchase of a second-hand Ford-powered Moonfleet ski craft from Kevin Murray for £400. The 1967 season had hardly got under way when on 1st June disaster struck. It appears that at the beginning of a ski session a stray spark ignited the fuel, and the engine compartment erupted into flames. Boat Driver George Deane escaped with singeing and minor burns but the Moonfleet was completely burnt out.

A fibre glass centre-control Scorpio with an ex-Joe McGarrity 50 H.P. Mercury outboard (bought for £235) was the replacement outfit, and continued in use for the remainder of the life of the club.

The club's chief boat driver for about ten years, after a short stint by Tommy Moran, was George Deane from Killadeas. George's expertise and patience helped to smooth the path for many a beginner, although it was in driving for experienced and competition skiers that George's talents became most obvious as boat positioning and speed must be accurate to a fraction, particularly in jump and slalom. His "feel" for the skiers' requirements was all the more remarkable when it is remembered that for the greater part of his boat driving period George himself was a non-skier.

Mention has been made of the club's lack of suitable competition tow-boats, but this difficulty was largely overcome by the willingness of a number of members to lend their privately owned craft for club skiing. Amongst those who helped out at various times in this respect were Oliver Keenan (Albatross), Maurice McChesney (Delta), Dr. James Dolan Jnr. (Delta) and Trelford Coates (Delta).

There were a number of club members who acquired a considerable degree of competition ability and in this respect Maurice McChesney was certainly the most eminent. Maurice, a native of Co. Monaghan, came to Enniskillen in 1962 after graduating as a civil engineer, and he took up skiing shortly afterwards. His particular forte was jumping and he rapidly improved to clearing around 100 feet, with a best ever of 104 feet. Maurice was three times Ulster Ski Jump Champion at both Junior and Senior Levels. Ski-Kiting was another of his activities and when the Lough Erne Water Skiing Club put on ski shows, as they did at such places as Crom, Cloone and Galloon, Maurice and his kite were a great attraction.

Another member who concentrated on jumping was Trelford Coates, a Belfast-born garage manager, who achieved a very respectable 70-80 feet distance on the ramp, while Dr. James Dolan, Sam Loughrey, Bill Crooke and Oliver Keenan also performed creditably. Messrs. Crooke and Keenan emphasised on figure skiing, while James Dolan was a good enough all-rounder to become West of Ireland Junior Champion in the late sixties.

As the years passed by the nucleus of active skiing members seems to have gradually diminished, and by the latter years of the sixties there were usually no more than seven or eight regular skiers, which number was of course considerably swelled during any spells of hot weather. When the sixties gave way to the seventies the problems continued and apathy increased, with much talk of winding up the club being aired. Then in 1971 the final nail in the Lough Erne Water Skiing Club coffin was driven when the brewing problems with the hotel proprietor over the club's lease came to a head. Skiing at the Manor House was no longer possible, and so came to an end an eventful eleven years.

The club, under the same name, was to have a short-lived resurrection based at Rossigh Bay. This is dealt with in Section 6.

As far as can be ascertained the first time that water-skiing had been seen in the vicinity of Carrybridge was at a garden party and fete organized by the late Mrs. Vida Lelgh and Mr. R. C. Hermon. The event was held on the lawns fronting Belleisle House in September, 1956, and was for the purpose of raising funds to build a new Orange Hall at Derryharney.

During the proceedings a young R. U. C. officer named David Corbett astounded the huge crowd of onlookers by skimming over the surface of Carrard Bay behind a boat provided by Irvines of Enniskillen.

At that time there were very few boats on the lake capable of attaining skiing speeds, and none at all in the Carrybridge area, but the seed of interest had been sown and it would not be many years before the first tentative steps would be taken to emulate Mr. Corbett's feat.

In the summer of 1960 Fred Moorhead from Maguiresbridge, a transport official with the Ministry of Education, had his first "water-ski baptism" at the Lough Erne Water Ski Club after attending a wedding at the Manor House Hotel, and the next year he got together with his friend, school-bus driver George Montgomery, to pursue his new found interest further.

Freddie at this time owned a 14' marine ply runabout powered by a Vauxhall Wyvern based inboard engine. Skis were borrowed by George Montgomery from a Mr. Stephenson - a hotel proprietor in Fivemiletown - and their rope was several pieces of clothes line knotted together.

It would be fair to say that neither George nor Freddie had a great deal of idea about what they were trying to do, but being the ingenious pair of chaps they are, they soon managed a fair degree of success.

It was not very long afterwards that another well known "character" from the area arrived on the scene. He was Fred Johnston, then living in Lisnaskea. Fred had already had one ski run behind Wesley Dawson's boat near Geaglum, but he could by no stretch of the imagination at this time be called an expert.

These three were joined in 1963 by Ernie Irvine, who had just acquired a new boat to be powered by his

two year old 18 H.P. Johnston outboard. Ernie had already been skiing on and off for a couple of years with Esmond Brown and Tommy Hall at Carrard (see Section 4).

During 1963 and 1964 a considerable number of individuals were becoming interested, amongst whom were James Eadie, Gordon Ramsey, Eddie Forster and Wilson Irvine, to name but a few.

George Montgomery, in the winter of 1963, got down to the task of building a marine ply runabout suitable for water-skiing, and when this was completed in 1964 he purchased from Robert Dickie & Sons Ltd., a new 35 H.P twin-cylinder Mercury outboard motor.

During the summer of 1964 both George Montgomery and Ernie Irvine placed their boats at the disposal of anyone who wished to learn to water ski. Fred Moorhead had by this stage "retired" from skiing due to an aural problem.

It was now obvious that a large number of people in the area were interested in skiing and boating and so, on the 18th September, 1964, at 8.30 p.m. a meeting was held in the old U.S.C. hut at Carrybridge (now demolished making way for a car park) with the object of forming a water sports club.

The meeting elected the following officers:

Chairman -	Mr. Hubert I. Brown
Secretary (provisional)	Dr. Edward M. H. Forster
Treasurer -	Mr. George Montgomery
Committee -	Mr. Wesley Dawson
	Mr. William Healy
	Mr. James Eadie
	Mr. Fredrick Johnston
	Mr. Ernest Irvine
	Mr. Wilson Irvine
	Mr. Gordon Ramsey
	Mr. David Clingen

(In June 1965 Ernie Campbell was co-opted in place of G. Ramsey.)

It was decided to call the club "Carrybridge Aqua Club".

And so organized water-skiing and other allied pastimes such as picnics and pleasure boating commenced at Carrybridge with a club which was to reach its greatest

heights around the late sixties and early seventies only to fade out of existence around 1975.

The club's first (and only) boat was purchased from George Montgomery for £75. This was a 16' marine-ply open runabout constructed most skilfully by Mr. Montgomery himself. A new 50 H.P. Penta 3 cylinder outboard motor was purchased from Brian Zebedee for £245, a figure which included remote controls. The chairman and secretary jointly guaranteed a bank overdraft to meet this expenditure.

The club really got going in the summer of 1965 and on each Sunday afternoon large crowds thronged the Bridge to witness the still relatively unknown sport. A major factor in the vast popularity which the club enjoyed was undoubtedly the "grandstand" viewpoint from the bridge commanding a view of the complete ski course from blast-off to splash-down.

The club operated on Tuesday and Thursday evening from about 7.00 p.m. until dark (and sometimes after) and on Sunday afternoons from about 2.30 p.m. until late on into the evening.

A "Ski-Run" at Carrybridge started at Willie Healy's jetty just downstream from Carrybridge itself, proceeding upstream under the bridge, turning in "Huberts Bay", back under the bridge past the jetty and on to turn in the "Cooey Loop", returning upstream to turn once more in "Huberts Bay" and ending back at the jetty. In 1965 the cost of a run was 2/- (10p).

The 50 H.P. manual-start Penta was purchased in the spring of 1965, but by the 1966 skiing season was already giving considerable trouble probably caused by water pump problems, and at a committee meeting held on August 13th, 1966, with the following members present:

- H. I. Brown, Chairman
- E. M. H. Forster, Secretary
- G. Montgomery, Treasurer
- F. Johnston
- J. Crawford
- W. Healy

It was decided to purchase a new 4 cylinder two-stroke 50 H.P. electrically-started Mercury outboard motor from Messrs. R. Dickle & Sons Ltd., Enniskillen for £340, and in consequence that the ski run fee would have to be increased by 25 per cent to half-a-crown (12½p).

This outboard gave sterling service throughout the rest of the life of the club. The Penta engine was later repaired at a cost of £96, and eventually sold to Mr. Brough Fenn for £150 in 1968. Mr. Fenn was later to become the proprietor of the Carrybridge Boat Company, in succession to Mr. Ian Eadie.

Those who are familiar with the present shoreline developments and throng of water traffic at Carrybridge with its caravan park, its private jetties, its two private marinas and one hire cruiser marina with many luxury cruisers and speed boats, would find it hard to visualize that in 1964 the Carrybridge Angling Centre had opened for business just the previous year, (Jack Bowen having commenced work in September, 1962, on the leasehold site purchased from David Johnston), there were no marinas or public jetties, and the east side of the channel was completely undeveloped except for the old U.S.C. nissen hut owned by Hubert Brown, and as far as cruising was concerned there was only one single motor cruiser within a several mile radius of Carry and that was Florrie Brown's little carvel-planked "Poppet".

The club's first membership list for the 1965 season shows a very creditable fifty-three members as under-noted. It should not be thought that all fifty-three were accomplished skiers, but undoubtedly many were.

- Mr. Wesley Dawson
- Mr. Malcolm Dawson
- Dr. Edward M. H. Forster
- Mr. Fred Johnston
- Mr. R. Johnston (Derryharney)
- Mr. Hubert I. Brown
- Mrs. Florrie Brown
- Mr. David Clingen
- Mr. William Healy
- Mr. George Montgomery
- Mr. Ernie Irvine
- Mr. Malcolm Irvine
- Mr. Colin Hutchinson
- Dr. Denis E. Packham
- Miss Sadie Beacom
- Mr. Thomas Forster
- Mr. Wilson Irvine
- Mr. Gordon Ramsey
- Dr. George Anderson
- Mr. Fredrick Pyne
- Miss Ruby Neely (Killarbran)

Mr. Winston Ramsey
Mr. James Eadie
Mr. Alber Phair
Mrs. Rosemary Forster
Mr. Stephen Forster
Mr. Julian Forster
Mr. David Robinson (Bunnahesco)
Mr. & Mrs. Eric Montgomery 249 Belmont Rd.
Belfast

Mr. Thomas B. Moore
Mr. Aubery Wilson
Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Ward Haslett
Mr. Michael Nugent
Mr. William Colin Beattie
Miss Mary J. Howe
Miss Stella Graham
Mr. Frank Graham
Mr. John Fawcett
Mrs. Meriel Fawcett
Mr. Brian Bennock
Mr. Alan Gillespie
Mr. Ken Rea
Mr. Alan Cathcart
Mr. Trevor Johnston
Mr. Ernest Campbell
Mr. Wesley Moore
Mr. Joseph Crawford
Mr. Robert Maher

The headquarters of the C. B. A. C. was situated in the home of Willie Healy, a commercial fisherman who made his living extracting eels and coarse fish from the Erne. Willie allowed skiers free access to his home both to change prior to skiing and to remove wet-suits after a run. Many a time after several dozen dripping skiers had left his living room the water could be seen running out over the door-step. These highly unusual and comfortable headquarters were often the scene of much hilarity as communal changing got under way with Willie doing his best to appear disinterested! However, practically everyone who ever skied at Carrybridge will be always grateful for Willie's big log and coal fires which helped them thaw out and dry out after a long and chilly session on the water.

Most clubs of whatever nature survive through the efforts of a handful of hard-working members and C. B. A. C. was no exception. Mention has already been

made of Willie Healy whose cheery home made skiing in adverse conditions a pleasure, but in addition to him, mention must be made of several others.

Fred Johnston was chief boat driver throughout the club's existence and over the years he spent many hundreds of hours, often in horrid conditions, at the controls. In all this time he never once lost his temper despite being often severely tested. The job had its consolations however, and many times a gleam was noticed in Fred's eyes at the sight of a young bikini-clad learner. Long delays were sometimes noticed when such a skier "accidentally" fell, away down in the seclusion of the Cooley Loop!!!

George Montgomery was second driver and a most able deputy for Fred, and it was he who attended to much of the mechanical work necessary to keep a high powered outfit functioning smoothly.

These three men, Messrs. Healy, Johnston and Montgomery, were more than any others instrumental in keeping the club operating efficiently, although the Dock Marshal, Eddie Forster, who ensured an orderly throughput of skiers on busy Sunday afternoons, should not be overlooked.

The high degree of success in imparting the rudiments of the sport to may hundreds of the young and not-so-young was due to the immense patience and understanding - not to mention expertise - of the boat drivers and instructors, and if there was one thing for which C. B. A. C. can justly claim credit, it was the teaching of the basics to a vast number of tyros from both locals and tourists. There must be people in every continent in the world who can look back to Carrybridge as the place where they were first initiated to the ranks of the water-skiing fraternity. Additionally many people from passing hire cruisers were initiated, and came back year after year.

While the success rate in teaching beginners was certainly well into the high nineties on the percentage scale, there were a few, notably Liz, Ned and Flo, who were markedly reluctant to assume an upstanding position. It is not proposed, however, that this matter should be dealt with in any detail!

The prize for the most unconventional skier was undoubtedly won by Mrs. Ramah Dunn. Ramah had been holidaying at Carrybridge for many years when she

eventually got the urge to "walk on the water" just like everyone else. Despite much detailed tuition she could not get going, yet she was positively determined to cover the course on skis, and she eventually achieved her ambition clinging to the bended back of Joe Crawford as he covered the course on his skis. Ramah was, however, no great burden as her slim figure makes 'Twiggy' look positively podgy.

Over the years a number of "personalities", some of them now well known, were amongst those who enjoyed the "crack" at Carry. Several names come to mind immediately, such as Sean Rafferty, presenter of news and current affairs programmes on B. B. C. (N. I.), and Mrs. McCoubry, wife of the late Larry McCoubry the popular radio and television presenter. In the late sixties Robin Gordon, now acknowledged as one of the top skiers in the country, skied at C. B. A. C., as also in the past year or two did Jackie Crawford, one of the top three or four barefoot skiers in the U. K.

Safety was always a prime consideration in view of the high speed nature of the pastime, and it is to the credit of the long experienced boatmen at Carrybridge that not one accident took place in the ten or eleven years of the club's existence, although "near shaves" were experienced by Mary Archdale, Adrian Coote, Roland Eadie, Robert Maher, Jim Armitage and a certain well-known local gentleman in the now famous "12th of July Incident"!

Due to the narrowness of the channel it was never possible to lay a slalom course or a ski-ramp at Carrybridge, but nonetheless the club engendered a camaraderie and enthusiasm which eluded many other clubs with full competition facilities. It must not be thought, however, that C. B. A. C. was peopled by middle-aged beginners pottering along at 20 m. p. h. on two skis. Such could not be further from the facts as the club's history was distinguished by a number of unique feats. These included a host of long distance runs, high-diving from the parapet of the bridge by Terry Moseley, the very first delta winged kite in Ireland (which sadly, never actually flew), and high speed acrobatics in the form of "three-ups" and even a "five-up". We shall look in detail at some of these happenings.

The club had been in existence for just over a year when George Montgomery skied from Carrybridge to Belturbet via Foleys Cutting on 3rd October, 1965, becoming the first man ever to cover this route, taking just 43 minutes. George's driver was Fred Moorhead, and the observer was none other than the one and only Cecil Magwood. A week later four other skiers repeated the achievement, but surely nothing can equal being first to do anything. Those who completed this run (in time order) are as undernoted:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Ski Run</u>	<u>Skiers</u>	<u>Boat Driver</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Engine Used</u>
10. 10. 65	Carrybridge to Belturbet	W. Irvine & E. Forster	F. Johnston	42 mins.	50 h. p.
3. 10. 65	Carrybridge to Belturbet	G. Montgomery	F. Moorhead	43 mins.	35 h. p.
10. 10. 65	Belturbet to Carrybridge	T. Johnston & J. Crawford	F. Johnston	45 mins.	50 h. p.

(During this run Crawford fell several times and F. Johnston almost lost his temper)

Another run which became very popular was round Inishmore and Killygowan islands. This run was performed by at least seven "single" skiers and four "pairs". These were as undernoted, again in time order:

(a) Trip round Inishmore and Killygowan by a single skier:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Skiers</u>	<u>Boat Driver</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Engine Used</u>
30. 10. 66	Stephen Forster	Fred Johnston	20 mins. 25 secs.	50 h. p. Mercury
30. 10. 66	Wilson Irvine	G. Montgomery	20 mins. 33 secs.	35 h. p. Mercury
23. 10. 66	Stephen Forster	Fred Johnston	20 mins. 36. 2 secs.	50 h. p. Mercury
23. 10. 66	Wilson Irvine	G. Montgomery	20 mins. 38. 2 secs.	35 h. p. Mercury
9. 10. 66	G. Montgomery	Wilson Irvine	21 mins. 00 secs.	35 h. p. Mercury
12. 10. 66	Joe Crawford	Fred Johnston	21 mins. 2. 3 secs.	50 h. p. Mercury
9. 10. 66	E. M. H. Forster	Fred Johnston	21 mins. 20 secs.	50 h. p. Mercury

(This last run included 3 passengers, Derek Johnston, Fiona Forster & Kim Forster.)

(b) Trip round Inishmore and Killygowan by "pairs" of skiers:

2. 10. 66	E. Forster & T. Johnston	F. Johnston	24 mins. 40 secs.	50 h. p. Mercury
3. 10. 65	D. Archdale & J. Crawford	F. Johnston	24 mins. 50 secs.	50 h. p. Penta
26. 9. 65	E. Forster & T. Johnston	F. Johnston	25 mins. 00 secs.	50 h. p. Penta
26. 9. 65	G. Montgomery & F. Johnston	W. Irvine	25 mins. 10 secs.	50 h. p. Penta

(Archdale & Crawford went on to complete two non-stop circuits of Inishmore and Killygowan in a total time of 50 mins. dead.)

Only one pair of skiers were recorded as circling Bellisle, and they were E. Forster and S. Forster on 16th October, 1966, with F. Johnston piloting, in a time of 11 mins. 54.7 secs.

On the 18th of October, 1965, a "twin" run by Alan Gillespie and Miss Mary Howe was undertaken behind the 50 H.P. Penta driven by Fred Johnston, the object being to ski from Carrybridge to Enniskillen and back non-stop. Miss Howe got as far as Enniskillen before calling it a day, while Alan Gillespie completed the return journey.

It will be noticed that all the aforementioned ski-runs were completed during the 1965-66 seasons, and it remains only to make mention of the longest run of this series.

This run was undertaken by Denis Archdale and Joe Crawford on 11th October, 1965, commencing at the Broadmeadow, Enniskillen and proceeding downstream to Belleek before returning to Enniskillen. This non-stop run covered a distance of approximately 50 miles, and took 1 hour and 45 minutes. The boat was a marine ply runabout owned and driven by Mr. George Kidney, now Managing Director of Ballycassidy Sawmills Ltd., powered by a 90 H.P. 6 cylinder Mercury motor. Navigator was 77 year old David Johnston from Killadeas.

It will also be evident that all the special events which took place in the '65 and '66 seasons were right at the end of the skiing year which meant that the normal pattern of ski runs was unaffected. It seems hardly correct, however, to speak of a "normal pattern" of skiing activities, as the proceedings were regularly enlivened by such things as "criss-cross" skiing carried out by two skiers on slightly different length ropes behind the same boat crossing each other's path only inches apart, and "three-ups" in which three skiers are towed along shoulder to shoulder, then the middle one discards his (or her) skis and climbs on to the shoulders of the other two. The first threesome to perform such a feat was: Paddy Brand, George Montgomery and Joe Crawford; but later many others including Fred Johnston, Terry Moseley, Willeen Gray, George Gray and Jim Carroll performed this trick. In addition to these activities there were occasional forays up the lake on skis after hotel closing time although it has been thought prudent to with-hold the names of the ladies and gentlemen involved.

Mention was made in the last paragraph of George Gray. Mr. Gray, an art lecturer in Belfast's Polytech, deserves a rather special mention in view of the long run he completed on 13th July, 1972. At this time George was a raw novice, having been upright on skis only a couple of times, when he was persuaded by his friends (????) George Montgomery and Joe Crawford to go for a short run behind Paddy Brand's speedboat. By the time George got back to terra firma he had circled Inishmore, Killygowan and Knocks Islands, a total distance of over a dozen miles in a time of less than thirty minutes. A quite remarkable achievement for a novice who, later, was to blossom into an excellent slalom skier and a qualified "barefooter".

Speaking of "barefooting" we must not forget that one of the club's leading lady skiers holds the unique distinction, achieved in 1975, of being the only qualified female barefooter in the United Kingdom. This young lady is Mrs. Willeen Gray, also an art lecturer in Belfast, and the wife of George Gray.

Before leaving the subject of special activities, allusion must be made to a "one-off" event performed on the water close by the recording station on West Island. This was a "five-up" with three skiers in the base of the pyramid and two skiers on their shoulders. 1971 was the date, and the 'base' skiers were Dr. E. Forster, Paddy Brand and George Montgomery, with Willeen Gray and Joe Crawford "on top". As far as can be ascertained this was the first "five-up" on Lough Erne.

To return to the formative years of the club it is noted that the first Annual General Meeting was held on 23rd November, 1965, and the following officers elected or re-elected as the case may be:

Chairman	Hubert I. Brown
Secretary	Dr. E. M. H. Forster
Treasurer	George Montgomery
Committee	Fred Johnston Joseph Crawford William Healy Ernest Campbell John Fawcett

While at the second Annual General Meeting held in the Old U.S.C. hut on 15th November, 1966, the only change in officials was that W. Irvine was elected in place of E. Campbell.

The third Annual General Meeting was held at Carrybridge Angling Centre on 30th November, 1967. The previous chairman, secretary and treasurer were re-elected, with the addition of an assistant secretary, Mrs. R. Montgomery, to lighten the hard wrought G. P.'s burden. As regard the committee, E. Campbell replaced W. Irvine, and D. Takier made the number up to half-a-dozen.

The club continued to flourish during 1967-8-9 and 70, although it began to be evident around the turn of the decade that there were going to be problems as other water activities such as commercial cruising began to expand. It must be noted, however, that the proprietor of the Carrybridge Boat Company was very tolerant towards skiing and relations between the club and Mr. Ian Eadie were always most cordial.

It was towards the end of the 1971 season that long distance water skiing again hit the headlines, when on the 29th August Joe Crawford became the first and only skier to ski the full length of both lakes both ways, non-stop. The run commenced at Carrybridge and proceeded downstream through Enniskillen and on to Belleek where a non-stop turn was made to return by the same route to Carrybridge and continue on to Belturbet and back to Carrybridge. The total distance covered was around 100 miles and took 4 hrs. 51 mins. The boat was a 17' Glastron powered by a 140 H.P. Mercruiser inboard with outdrive. The crew was Paddy Brand (boat owner), Fred Johnston, George Montgomery and Michael Curran. Willie Healy and his friend Bob Phair followed the ski-boat, but by road, and were seen encouraging the team at both Belleek and Belturbet as well as along the Shore Road.

On the 27th August of the following year, 1972, another marathon run was sponsored by C. B. A. C. This time a ten mile circuit centred on Carrybridge and circling Bellisle to the south and Knock Island to the north-west was used. Again the skier was Joe Crawford and Paddy Brand loaned his boat as the main towing craft, with a reserve boat being provided and driven by Tommy Hall from Enniskillen. Fred Johnston assisted by Margaret Brand and Paddy Brand were boat drivers, with George Montgomery and Willeen Gray from Lisburn assisting in boat "changeover". Alan Cathcart was dock marshal and timing clerk. Twenty circuits of the course were completed in approximately eight hours, and the

resulting distance of 200 miles was claimed as an Irish long distance record which still stands at the time of writing in 1978.

Both the long distance marathons in 1971 and 1972 were used as a means of fund raising for the Ulster Cancer Foundation, and thanks to the efforts of a host of sponsor card collectors a grand total of £755 was presented to U. C. F. chairman Mr. Peter Brand.

In the years following 1972 the pressure of cruiser traffic increased to an extent where the two pastimes were fast becoming incompatible. Furthermore, the original cluster of founder members were finding their time increasingly taken up with other interests. These two factors combined to gradually reduce the amount of club skiing to a trickle. The club was never formally wound-up, but ceased to operate about 1975 with a healthy credit bank balance, having remained solvent throughout its eleven year career.

Section 3

KILLYHEVLIN

In 1972 a member of staff of a local factory, Standard Telephone & Cables, at Raceview, had the idea which led to the setting up of the S. T. C. Water Ski Club. This man was David Major, who had already mastered the rudiments of the sport with David Allen of Irvinestown and who had also skied on a number of occasions at Carrybridge Aqua Club.

Shortly afterwards a water skiing sub-section of S. T. C. Sports and Social Club was formed, and the following committee elected:

Chairman	Winfield Walker
Treasurer	John Nolan
Secretary	Kathleen McGinn (replaced in 1976 by Mrs. Rosaleen Campbell)

Committee David Major
 William Fields
 William Fiddis (replaced in
175 by P. Hopkins)
 Joyce McVitty (replaced in
175 by R. Campbell)

Skiing commenced during the 1972 season from the Round "O" at Enniskillen, using a "With" runabout and 35 H.P. Mercury owned and driven by Tommy Hall.

A considerable amount of interest was generated and in 1973 a new Ford-powered fibre-glass Delta ski-boat was purchased at a cost of £1,600. By this time the club was soundly on its feet and a considerable number of skiers were fast approaching competition standard.

With competitors very much in mind a further boat was purchased in 1974. This was a third-hand Boesch, V8 powered, purpose built ski-boat bought from Omagh W.S.C. The price was £1,600, and both boats availed of a 33 per cent grant from the Sports Council.

In 1973 the club moved to its present headquarters at the jetties of Killyhevlin, leased to them by the then proprietor, Raymond McCartney.

As well as catering for the average "run of the mill" skier the club has always had a strong competitive spirit, and full competitive facilities are available at Killyhevlin for the past several years. The ski-jump is in fact the ramp which was originally built about 12 years ago by the members of the Lough Erne W.S.C. and which was also used by the Rossigh skiers.

1976 was the club's most successful competition year to date, when they were placed third in the Irish Inter-Club Championship and also third in the Ulster Irish-Club Championship held at the Omagh W.S.C. club headquarters in September 1976. The S.T.C. team comprised:

Eddie Fitzpatrick
Paul Hopkins
Graham Veitch and
Winfield Walker

while David Major won the Ulster Junior Tricks Championship and Paul Hopkins won the Irish Junior Tricks Championship at Annamacarrick in the Irish

Close Championship. Messrs. Major and Hopkins have been chosen to represent N. Ireland in 1977.

Any budding competition skiers are well catered for as the club now has three British Water-Ski Federation qualified Junior coaches in:

William Fiddis
Paul Hopkins and
Winfield Walker

and one senior B.W.S.F. coach in the person of David Major.

In 1975 the club produced three skiers who graduated to the most exclusive band of adherents in the sport - The Barefoot Club. To qualify for this status a skier must ski for one minute on his bare feet without any skis whatever under the observation of a B.W.S.F. approved examiner. The skiers who qualified were:

Derek Duncan
Paul Hopkins and
Joe Crawford

The club continue to operate from Killyhevlin and in 1977 purchased a new club headquarters in the form of a 20 feet x 10 feet wooden hut from L. E. Haslett & Co., of Clogher, for £600. This gives plenty of space for changing rooms, storage and making of soup and coffee.

The problems which occurred at Carrybridge in relation to overcrowding are now beginning to manifest themselves at Killyhevlin, and as the area from Lisgoole to Killyhevlin is also a speed restricted zone it is envisaged that the club will have to move its headquarters within the next few years, possibly to Tamlaght Bay, a few miles upstream, although this new venue is by no means finally decided.

In the late summer of 1961 Ernie Irvine from Gola purchased a new 18 H.P. Johnston outboard motor and fitted it on to a clinker built rowboat which he already owned, so making the very first outfit for the next four or five years skiing at Corrard Bay on the east side of Bellisle.

Ernie got together with Esmond Brown from Corrard and Tommy Hall from Enniskillen, with the intention of getting along on skis by hook or by crook. What all three knew about water-skiing could have been comfortably written on a postage stamp, but determination covers a lot of failings!

Just like Messrs. Moorhead and Montgomery, who were getting under way at Carrybridge at about the same time (see Section 2), the first tow rope was several pieces of clothes line, but unlike them, Messrs. Irvine, Brown and Hall chose a door as their first 'skis'. A door was chosen for several reasons:

- (i) They had no skis.
- (ii) They didn't know anyone who had.
- (iii) The door was easily obtainable - just unscrew the hinges!
- (iv) It floated.
- (v) It seemed a good idea at the time.

In no time at all - several months to be exact - the door had been "mastered" so successfully that it was cut in half, but our trio were now so good that the half door was also mastered in a short time.

Thoughts were now turned to obtaining a pair of skis, but such things were not so easily obtainable at that time, so the countryside was scoured looking for the next best things - a pair of "trap" mudguards which would have the necessary curve already built in. The search ended in failure and eventually it was decided to ask the carpenter of the three - Tommy Hall - to make a pair of skis. After the skis had been constructed bindings had to be obtained. This posed no problem at all for our creative skiers, as they simply cut the tops off a pair of wellingtons and nailed the wellington feet to the skis!

The first attempts to get going on their new skis were both hilarious and down-right dangerous, as in several instances the second boat which was used to assist the skier to keep his balance ran right over the top of the skier when he had fallen off! Mercifully no one was hurt, and the experience gave everyone a wealth of knowledge which was of great assistance in teaching other beginners in later years.

In 1963 Ernie Irvine travelled downstream to ski at Carrybridge, while Esmond Brown purchased a new 30 H.P. Penta engine to fit to his clinker constructed row boat, bought in 1962 for £48 from Lally's of Enniskillen. Messrs. Brown and Hall were by now accomplished skiers, as was Jack Shaw who had come along with Tommy Hall some time previously.

1963 and 1964 were the most flourishing years of skiing and a very considerable number of skiers got going for the very first time at Corrard. Amongst these were Esmond Brown, Ernie Irvine, Jack Shaw and Tommy Hall, as already mentioned, and in addition Mary Howe, Willie Woods, 'Paul' Woods, George Phair, Julian Brown, Audrey Brown, Joe Crawford and Alan Hall.

All the skiers at Corrard got plenty of verbal support and advice on the finer points from a regular visitor, Noel Hogg from Derrycallaghan. Noel really enjoyed the "skayin" but could never be persuaded to have a go himself. Willie Glenn was also a strong verbal supporter and on occasions he acted as boat driver.

In 1964 the 30 H.P. Penta was traded in and replaced by a 50 H.P. Penta, but like many other 50 H.P. Pentas it gave endless trouble almost right from the start.

The club petered out around about 1965 and 1966 as many of the more active members either became less interested or transferred their skiing activities elsewhere, although the Brown family circle continued to ski for a considerable number of years thereafter. Corrard Bay it must be pointed out, was an ideal safe, sheltered skiing area, and Pearl and Esmond Brown allowed unrestricted use of their comfortable home for changing and thawing-out facilities. Many an evening was spent apres-ski in front of their huge log fire drinking tea and consuming mountains of sandwiches.

Section 5 DERRYADD

The Derryadd Boat Club was founded in 1965 with the object of providing marina facilities for the still small but expanding number of cruisers on the upper reaches of the Upper Erne, and also to use as a base for water-skiing.

The founder members cum officers and committee members of the club were as undernoted:

Chairman	Patrick McGuinness
Secretary	William Colin Beattie
Treasurer	Leo McCaffrey

Committee	John Trotter
	Henry Moore
	Wesley Caldwell
	Alan Cathcart
	Albert Gallen

The club's first ski-boat was very much a "Heath Robinson" effort, with a huge Raymond Mays converted Ford Zephyr engine (ex Lord Erne) somehow squeezed into a 12'6" Hartley marine ply runabout. Although this boat was used as a club ski-boat it was in fact owned by Norman Hutchinson.

Quite an amount of skiing was carried on for five or six years, although it would be fair to say that the D. B. C. was considered first and foremost as a marina and too much skiing was frowned upon.

Over the past six or seven years there have been many private boat owners, some of them indeed D. B. C. members, who have used the club facilities to carry on a certain amount of skiing, but at the time of writing skiing has almost entirely disappeared.

Mention should be made of an endeavour by Ivan Scott and several of his friends in 1975 to resurrect skiing in the area by leasing a small area of land and building an additional club house with mooring facilities, but it seems that the remoteness of the area and the site's vulnerability to the prevailing winds served to kill the possibility of success in the venture. It is understood that a further effort is being made in 1978 to again get the Derryadd Boat Club back in business.

Section 6 ROSSIGH BAY

After the Lough Erne W.S.C. based at Rosslare Bay had ceased to operate in 1971 there was a one year hiatus while a suitable site to base further water-skiing activities was sought. Eventually it was decided to use the fairly sheltered waters of Rossigh Bay, a short distance to the north of the previous headquarters at Rosslare Bay.

The 1973 Annual General Meeting was called on 4th April, in the Enniskillen Rugby Club headquarters at Mullaghmeen, with the following members present:

John Robinson
David Stuart
Paddy McDonagh
Sam Loughrey
Alan Cooper
Maurice McChesney
Dennis Maguire
David Clarke

The following officers were elected:

Chairman	Maurice McChesney
Secretary	Dennis Maguire
Treasurer	David Stuart
Committee	not recorded

The Scorpio ski boat with 50 H.P. Mercury and equipment previously used at the Manor House was used by the "new" club. Right from the start it seems to have inherited the very same problems of lack of interest which so plagued the former club and eventually helped to bring about its downfall.

The 1973 season seems to have been the only year the club operated, and it just quietly passed into oblivion thereafter. The boat and engine lay unused at Rossigh for several years before eventually being rescued from possible vandalism by George Deane.

So ended another chapter in the story of the first water ski club in Fermanagh. We can only hope that there are further instalments to follow. New venues will certainly have to be found, as most of the ski centres mentioned in this review will be subject to speed restrictions after April, 1978.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing short survey was compiled with the help of a host of people involved in the ski history which this booklet represents. To each and every one of them - too numerous to name individually - I offer my sincere thanks.

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