

Report on the Building of CSC's St Ayles Skiff "Chanonry Maid"

On a cold mid-December afternoon in 2013 a delivery of assorted 8' x 4' sheets of marine ply was made to the community centre in Avoch. This was the kit, which comprised the main elements for the construction of a St Ayles skiff, ordered from Jordon Boats, based in deepest Fife



IS THIS A BOAT?

The original idea of the club undertaking a skiff-build came from David Guthrie and was readily accepted by the committee as a worthy project. The committee agreed to underwrite the project on the understanding that the build group would raise at least 50 % of the funding. David's Gaelforce Marine connections have proved invaluable to us in our endeavours.

The first task was to arrange a build site; fortunately our friends the Sea Scouts agreed that we could use a portion of their hall at Avoch; we were very grateful for their cooperation in this matter as without this support the build would have been very difficult, if not impossible to undertake.

Funding was looked at. Our initial estimate was that the project would cost approximately £3,600; the build group pledged to find a minimum of £1,800. Initially, we received a considerable cheque from Gaelforce Marine which kick started the project and so the kit was duly ordered.

Thanks to the good offices of David Guthrie, Gaelforce continued to be very supportive of our project and we were able to negotiate substantial discounts through them for the provision of epoxy, tools and paint.

The build started in January 2014 and 2 @ 2 hour sessions were held weekly to begin the process. The main processes were:

- assemble the kit, cut out the frames, moulds and boards, purchase timber for the build frame,
- assemble the build frame, erect the frames and moulds
- source the additional timber (larch)
- purchase the larch
- cut and form the larch for the stems, hog, keel and gunwales
- forming boards and attaching boards to the frames
- oar and rowlock design and construction,
- Keel design and construction.



THE BUILD FRAME AND MOULDS

While the kit came with a basic drawing there were no instructions. Fortunately many communities have already build St Ayles skiffs and there are a lot of informative web sites to learn from.

Our main source was the Ullapool Skiff site, which proved useful and informative . The Ullapool skiffers were always very keen to help and advise as we went along.

Timber for the build frame was donated by Alan Hardie; once the frame was assembled and erected, the moulds were then established on the frame, and the build began. Larch proved difficult to find but fortunately Mike Wilson, Rosehaugh, came to the rescue and parts of the skiff is constructed from locally sourced larch wood.

Meantime fundraising successfully raised over £2,000, from club events, grant application, and individual donations so we were well over our target of £1,800.

The final costs up to year ending 2014 for the project is just over £2,700

As the build continued into spring and then summer, the frequency of build sessions increased. With a combination of headscratching and discussion, the builders also increased their knowledge of boatbuilding techniques which will be advantageous in the construction of the second skiff, hopefully next year.

Some discussion/ debate was had over her name, but eventually we were all in agreement that *Chanonry Maid* was a suitable and apt name for our very fine skiff. A naming ceremony, carried out in style by Penelope Keith on the club's Gala Day, was well attended and covered by the local press. This was the first occasion that the skiff saw the light of day; the builders were quite concerned about her being transported to and from Avoch but bless her, all went well!



I NAME THIS SHIP...

Considerable work still had to be carried out over the summer to fit her out. This involved the seemingly small, but all important details including, closing up any gaps, completing the gunwales, fitting the seats, rowlock positions and rubbing strakes as well as painting and rubbing down.

After extensive effort from all involved, Chanonry Maid was ready for the water.

A tentative group of skiff builders gathered at the club slip on Saturday 11th October 2014 to help launch and row our Chanonry Maid. The weather was very fair for the time of year; she slipped into the water without incident and the first five crew took to the oars and pulled away from the shore. She rowed beautifully, was very sea kindly and looked good.

THE FINAL PRODUCT



After more discussion and investigation it became obvious that a trailer/ launching trolley would be essential to transport and launch Chanonry Maid. A bid was made to Ross and Cromarty Sports Council and we were most grateful to receive a very generous grant of £850

towards the purchase of a trailer/ trolley. Richard Cherry very kindly undertook to collect and bring it north from Colchester; we really appreciate his long drive.

Particular thanks must go to the following for their support and input to ensuring a successful conclusion to this project.

- Steve Bramwell, particularly for his painting skills.
- Richard Cherry for his research into and making of the very fine set of oars and rowlocks.
- Mairi Macleod for the very attractive skiff name and general artistic input.
- Mike Wilson (Rosehaugh) for specialist tools, sourcing larch and building the rudder.
- Mike Wilson (Waterside) for specialist tools, hardwood supplies and general knackiness.
- Gaelforce Marine, for their financial contribution, additional discounts and 5 very fine lifejackets.

The other main contributors were David Cameron, David Guthrie, David Pocock, Helen Rowson and Donnie McLeod.

The building of Chanonry Maid was only possible due to a great team effort and was such fun to be involved in.

Now we need rowers; we ask you to consider giving it a go; it is a great opportunity to be out on the sea on a fine calm winter's day; after a few minutes you very quickly warm up. It is a pursuit for all ages – there are team opportunities in age groups from 16 to 60+ and for male/female/mixed groups.

There will be a formal launch of Chanonry Maid on Sunday 30 November 2014 and afterwards an opportunity, weather permitting, to have a go at rowing. Both Avoch and Ardersier have been invited to bring their skiffs along so it should be an interesting day.

Should you wish to get seriously involved in rowing or just to give it a try then contact Steve Bramwell (steve.bramwell2@hotmail.com) or Donnie McLeod (tighaneas@btinternet.com) who will advise as and when we will be having sessions through the year.

<http://ullcoastrow.wordpress.com/> is worth a look if you would like to find out how an established group operate.

Donnie Macleod