

An Introduction to Sea Scouting

SSWA Info 002 (Jan 04)

Amended (Aug 05)

Sea Scouting is a branch of Scouting which provides Scout training with and through water-borne activities, using river, lake and sea, as well as forest and mountain, as bases for outdoor and adventurous activities. Sea Scouting is not a form of Sea Cadet Organisation, or a junior section of the Navy or Merchant Navy. It is Scouting, but with practical boating and a marine atmosphere as essential parts of the programme, and not just optional extras. We are fortunate in Ireland in having a long coastline with many sheltered bays, inlets and harbours, and a large number of inland lakes, rivers and canals which are very suitable for Sea Scout activities.

The Sea Scout Training Scheme provides an **integrated programme** of land and boating activities. No Sea Scout Troop worth the name can remain for long without owning or having the use of a boat, as the programme requires early exposure to water activity. Unfortunately this means that Sea Scouting is more expensive than ordinary Scouting because of the extra equipment required - boats, oars, lifejackets, paint, varnish, etc. But, all this equipment is not required immediately and can be built up slowly. However, even in a new troop some simple boating should start as soon as possible - this will usually mean borrowing a boat occasionally or finding some friend or supporter, or a nearby Sea Scout Group, who will take the Scouts for boating experience.

RUNNING A SEA SCOUT TROOP

The basic plan of running a Sea Scout Troop does not differ from that of running any other Scout Troop. Proper planning of meetings and programme is of paramount importance. The outdoor activities are even more important to plan well - hikes, boating sessions and expeditions, camps, visits to places of interest, Watch projects, etc. The **Patrol System** is as essential to a Sea Scout Troop as to any other Troop. The use of nautical terms and titles, correct flag etiquette, etc., also helps to develop a maritime atmosphere

There are a few other things that should be borne in mind in running a Sea Scout Troop. Sea Scouting requires special attention and often extra involvement and commitment from Leaders if it is to be successful, due to the fact that the Sea Scout programmes include boating and water activities as well as camping and hiking. This means extra training for Leaders, extra finance for suitable craft and equipment and very specific attention to boating safety rules. When a new Sea Scout troop is being formed, very serious consideration should be given to these factors so that all concerned - Leaders, parents, Scout County and Sea Scout Committee - are satisfied that the troop can become a genuine Sea Scout troop in the near future.

BRIEF HISTORY OF SEA SCOUTING IN IRELAND

The 1st Dublin Troop, Boy Scouts, founded in February 1908, included boating in its programme, attending regularly at the Coastguard Station in Ringsend for instruction. But Sea Scouting did not start officially in Ireland until July 1912, when 1st Bray Troop, Sea Scouts, was registered. In early September, 1st Dublin Boy Scouts divided in two, and 1st Dublin Sea Scouts was registered, based in Ringsend. 2nd Dublin Sea Scouts was formed 2 weeks later, based in Clontarf, and a Sea Scout Sub-committee was established. 3rd Dublin was formed in 1914 in Ballsbridge.

An annual rowing race for the Wood-Latimer trophy, presented in 1914, soon became the annual Sea Scout Regatta, which is still held. The Sea Scout Sub-committee became the Port of Dublin Sea Scouts Local Association in 1915, and the Sea Scout Troops were renamed 1st, 2nd and 3rd Port of Dublin Troops, a custom which is still in use. Between 1916 and 1920, 4th, 5th and 6th Port of Dublin Troops were formed. A contingent of 31 Dublin Sea Scouts attended the First Scout Jamboree, held in 1920 at Olympia, London. They won a prize for the best Sea Scout display at Olympia, and won the whaler rowing race from Westminster Bridge to Blackfriars Bridge.

The Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland started Sea Scouting in 1927, using the American model - a senior branch, taking boys from 15 to 19 years. There were up to 10 ships (units) in the Dublin area, and also in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford, a total of 14. They operated very successfully during the 1930s and early 1940s. During the same period, the Port of Dublin Sea Scout Association had a maximum of 5 Troops. The 1st Bray Troop continued in the Wicklow Local Association and there was a Sea Scout Patrol in 1st Cork from 1934 to 1939.

Unfortunately, the late 1940s was a catastrophic time for Sea Scouting in Ireland. By 1948 only 2 Troops remained in the Boy Scouts of Ireland, most of the CBSI units had closed, and the remainder closed in the early 1950s.

But then, very slowly at first, the tide turned for Sea Scouting within BSI (later SAI) - from two troops in 1948 to four in 1958, twelve in 1968, thirty-eight in 1978. In CBSI a Sea Scout Troop was active in Wicklow for some years in the 70s. In the 1980s CBSI decided not to re-establish Sea Scouting, but introduced a new water activities programme which could be used within any Scout Troop.

The rapid growth of Sea Scouting in SAI in the 60s and 70s was a mixed blessing and a number of newly formed Groups did not survive for long, mainly due to difficulties in finding suitable Leaders and maintaining continuity of leadership. In the 1980s new Training Schemes for Scouts and Leaders were developed, and a former lightship was acquired as a Sea Training Centre. Unfortunately, after about 12 years excellent work, it became too expensive to maintain the vessel to a reasonable standard and she was withdrawn from service and later sold. Other developments at that time were the design and production of a specific Sea Scout Standard Boat, the BP18, and also publication of Sea Training Handbooks.

In the meantime, CBSI established a Water Activities Centre at Killaloe, Lough Derg on the River Shannon. This developed as the result of an idea, and a lot of hard work, by interested Leaders in Limerick. The centre now has hostel accommodation as well as camping space, a jetty and its own craft. It is the only Scout Water Activities Centre in Ireland at present, and is recognised as a teaching centre for sailing and for power boating by the Irish Sailing Association.

A new Sea Scout Training Scheme was introduced in 2002, after nearly four years of investigation, discussion and planning, using the procedures and system of “Renewed Approach to Programme” (“RAP”) from the World Bureau,. This was accompanied by new Handbooks for Sea Scouts, Watch Leaders and Sea Scout Leaders, and a technical Sea Training Manual.

The 2005 Census records 20 Groups (24 Troops) - 686 Sea Scouts and 137 Leaders. North East Province has 4 Groups (242 Sea Scouts), Dublin Province has 6 Groups (237 Sea Scouts), Southeast has 8 Groups (158 Sea Scouts), Southern has 2 Groups (38 Sea Scouts), Western has one Group (11 Sea Scouts).

RESOURCE MATERIAL

There is a good range of publications dealing with Sea Scouting, providing all the details of the Training Scheme, and further helpful background information.

The **Sea Scout Leaders’ Handbook** contains information about Troop administration and programme planning, advice about the training scheme and the creation of a nautical atmosphere, with syllabus of requirements for the Progress Badges and the Attainment Badges. It also includes the full Boating Safety Rules and special rules for canoeing and for wind-surfing. A new Edition is in preparation.

The **Sea Scout Book** is the basic guide book for all Sea Scouts and covers the requirements for the sea and land aspects of the Progress Badges up to Boatman Badge and some of Coxswain Badge.

“**So Now You Are a Watch Leader**” is a small handbook for Watch Leaders, intended to be an adjunct to Watch Leader Training Courses.

The **Sea Training Manual** is a more detailed source of information on seamanship and maritime subjects and is a general reference book for Sea Scout Leaders, Instructors, Venture Sea Scouts and senior Scouts. It has sections on Boatswain’s Work, Boat Handling, Navigation and Pilotage, Collision Regulations and Distress Signals, Meteorology, Communications, Inland Waterways.

Nautical Games is an English translation of a book from the Sea Scout Department of Scouting Nederland, covering a large number of water-based games with a strong training content. The games are indexed for Shore, Canoeing, Rowing, Sailing, Swimming, etc., and cross-indexed for age range, training requirements and place.

LEADER TRAINING

Training for Sea Scout Leaders is largely the same as training for all other Scout Leaders, namely Wood Badge training, but with additional maritime background knowledge as well as technical water activity training. Woodbadge Training is delivered by the Training Team. The new SI Leader Training scheme was introduced in Oct 2004, and details can be found on the SI web-site - www.scouts.ie/training. Sea Scout Leaders attend the Woodbadge Training for Troop Scouters, with an additional module for Sea Scouters, dealing with the Sea Scout Award Scheme, the Boating Guidelines and the creation of a nautical atmosphere in the Sea Scout Troop.

“What is Sea Scouting” Presentation There may be some Scout Troops in waterside communities, sea, lake, river or canal, that would like to find out more about Sea Scouting. A special “What is Sea Scouting” Presentation has been designed by the Sea Scout Team for Leaders who might like to think about introducing Sea Scouting into their Troops, or at least to get some information. The presentation lasts about two and half hours. See Information leaflet No 9.

Scouting Skills, such as camping and hiking, are as important to a Sea Scout Troop as boating skills.

Boating skills require leadership ability, experience and also technical knowledge. Unlike other adult Leader Training this includes practical assessment of a Leader’s ability to take charge of a craft and crew in order to obtain a Charge Certificate. Much of the practical training is done through Scouting Ireland, but we also use the qualifications of outside bodies - e.g. Irish Sailing Association, Irish Canoe Union.

CHARGE CERTIFICATES

The Charge Certificate Scheme is a system of qualifications for various types of boating. The function of the scheme is to assess practical competence in boat handling and leadership ability afloat, and to licence the Leader or Scout concerned to take Scouts boating. Charge Certificates are available for rowing, sailing and powered craft.

Basic Boathandling Certificates are temporary certificates to enable leaders to get waterborne and to improve skills. Confined to enclosed safe waters, in good weather.

Intermediate Certificates signify competence to take charge of a boat and crew in restricted waters.

Advanced Certificates signify competence to take charge of a boat and crew in Day Cruising Waters.

Cruising Certificates require the possession of ISA Coastal or Offshore Yachtmaster

For more details of the Charge Certificate Scheme, see Information Leaflet No 6.

For details of Boating Limits (Water Classification) see Information Leaflet No 5.

SEA SCOUT TRAINING SCHEME

The Sea Scout Training Scheme introduced in 2002 is an integrated programme of land and sea activities, divided into 5 stages

The **Membership Badge** is the first stage, followed by four **Progress Badges** –

The **Sea Scout Badge** is aimed at 11-12 year olds, the **Boatman Badge** is suitable for 13 year olds, the **Coxswain Badge** for 14/15 year olds and the **Mariner Badge** for Watch Leaders and Venture Sea Scouts. The outline of the scheme is as follows.

Membership Badge –“ Introduction”

|

Sea Scout Badge - "Finding Your Way"

|

Boatman Badge - "Guided to Self Reliance"

|

Coxswain Badge - "Supporting the Team"

|

Mariner Badge - "Leading the Team"

Sea Scout Badge indicates a basic general level of competence of a Sea Scout – simple First Aid, use of a map and compass, knowledge of the Country Code and of Water Safety, some practical experience of hiking, camping and water activities (rafting, canoeing, boating – oars, sail, or power), and general seamanship.

Boatman Badge indicates a growing experience in general scoutcraft, hiking and camping, more advanced First Aid, increasing competence in crewing and boat handling, including progressing to acting as coxswain. Also, at this stage the Scout should be able to demonstrate or explain some of the basic Scouting skills to new Scouts. This Badge is aimed at 13 /14 year olds.

Coxswain Badge is intended for 14/15 year olds, and requires a good level of Scouting experience, proficiency in hiking and camping and competence in boat handling. The Scout will be expected to show leadership in the Watch and in the Troop, to help to plan and take charge of some activities and have a reasonable ability to teach and demonstrate to younger Scouts.

Mariner Badge is intended for 15/16 year olds and for Venture Sea Scouts. It indicates leadership ability, as well as technical competence to Charge Certificate level. Its requirements include organising and leading a waterborne expedition.

Chief Scout's Award is shared with the Scout Section, and is awarded on completion of a number of Challenges.

CHOICE OF BOATS

A new Troop should start to think and plan for a boat as early as possible after its formation. If a boat is offered as a gift or on loan, it should be examined by an experienced person to make sure that it is basically sound. If a lot of work is required on the craft, the Group should seek advice that repairs can be done and that sufficient expertise is available from inside or outside the Group to complete them. Sometimes it is better to decline, with thanks, an offer of an unsuitable boat, or one that requires too much work to make it seaworthy.

The Sea Scout Programme provides the full training syllabus for a Sea Scout Troop including water activities. The first activity that a Sea Scout learns (after swimming) is rowing. He should learn to row a small boat on his own with two oars, and also to pull an oar as a crew member in a multi-oared boat.

When considering choice of boat careful thought must be given to the proposed usage and economics. If the Troop wishes to follow the full Sea Training Scheme and include sailing training and expeditions in its programme, it will make more sense to look for one boat which can be both rowed and sailed, and also used for expeditions. It was this line of thought which led to the development of the Sea Scout Standard Boat ("BP 18"). This boat is well established in Sea Scouting in Ireland, and about 22 are in use for general training in rowing and sailing, for competitions and for waterborne expeditions and journeys.

A small sailing dinghy, which can also be rowed satisfactorily, would be a good choice for many Troops. Such a dinghy would be used for basic rowing and sailing instruction, and also to teach sculling over the stern.

If in doubt about the choice of boat or about the suitability of a boat offered as a gift or on loan, **always seek advice** from an experienced person locally, or from the Provincial Water Activities Committee.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND COMPETITIONS

There are many events, both land-based and water-based, available to Sea Scout Troops. Sea Scouts take part in all the various National Scout events and camps. There are also special Sea Scout events - rowing and sailing races, canoe long distance, sprint and slalom events, swimming gala, competitions in seamanship, and various area camps and events.

For further information on Sea Scouting, contact –

Sea Scout and Water Activities Team,
Scouting Ireland, Larch Hill, Dublin 16