

Irish Mariners in Aber 2007

On Friday 26 April 2007, a group of Irish mariners crossed the Irish Sea from Kinsale to Aberystwyth to raise money for the RNLI. Ron Barclay of Aberystwyth RNLI reports on their crossing.

"The fourth Kinsale to Aberystwyth Rib Run was hailed as a huge success this weekend after a record breaking journey in support of two charities.

Twenty-six Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIBS), ranging from six to nine metres in length, set off from Kinsale on the South coast of Ireland early on Thursday morning on the 180 mile voyage to Aberystwyth raising money for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the South Coast Trawler Tragedy Fund.

In January this year the Kinsale based Honeydew 2, and the Pere Charles from Dunmore East, both sank within a few hours of each other, in severe weather of the Irish coast with the loss of seven lives. The group, who have in the past three years made the voyage in aid of the RNLI, decided that this year they would divide the funds raised between the RNLI and the families of those that were lost.

After a re-fuelling stop in Dunmore East, the group headed out to the positions where the two trawlers went down, and laid wreaths in memoriam of the deceased sailors, before continuing their voyage across the Irish Sea to Strumble Head, south of Fishguard.

During this part of the passage, one RIB suffered a mechanical failure and had to be taken in tow by one of the other RIBS into Fishguard. After it was found that repairs could not be carried out in a reasonable time, it was decided that the ailing boat would be left in Fishguard and the group continued their journey to Aberystwyth.

The delay meant that the first group of boats did not arrive off Aberystwyth until 7.15pm where the lifeboat was waiting to escort them into the marina. Other members of the Aberystwyth lifeboat were on hand to welcome the crews to Wales and ferry them and their gear to their hotel.

Unfortunately, between Fishguard and Aberystwyth, another RIB suffered problems with fuel contamination and had to be taken under tow, and the last group entered the harbour shortly after mid-night.

With nearly twice as many boats taking part than in previous years, the chances of some sort of breakdown occurring increases. However the group are very experienced seamen, well equipped and very professionally organized and dealt with these problems admirably.

Friday morning was spent re-fuelling the boats, carrying out minor repairs, and resolving the fuel problem on the RIB that had to be towed in. On Friday evening the Aberystwyth lifeboat crew hosted a party for their Irish friends in the RAFA club, with a buffet, and music provided by local band Free Beer which gave those who were making the journey for the first time a chance to get to know the lifeboat crew, and for those who have made the trip before, to re-ignite old friendships.

On Saturday evening several members of the lifeboat crew were the guests of the Rib-runners at their dinner and awards evening where they were presented with a framed chart of the Aberystwyth area, made by a Kinsale artist, which will be hung in the crew room at the lifeboat station.

On Sunday morning the lifeboat crew were on hand again to transport the crews from their hotel to the marina where after saying their farewells the RIBS set off on their voyage home. Initial estimates are that this year's Rib-run will raise £70,000 for the two charities, and a party from the Aberystwyth lifeboat station will head over to Ireland for the presentation evening later in the year."

Written by Ron Barclay of Aberystwyth R.N.L.I.