

NAVIGATING THE RIVER SLANEY PART II

by Brian Coulter



Heron and egrets on the Lower Slaney

Navigating the Slaney - Part I (IWN Winter 2013) dealt mainly with the problems caused by shallow water at the Patches and how the Slaney Branch was providing navigation aids to make it easy to find your way through this group of sandbanks and islands. Part II deals with other boating aspects of the Slaney between Wexford and Killurin.

The Slaney is a most beautiful river. In his Slaney Guide (slaney.iwai.ie/slaneyguide), the author Cecil Miller says 'The tidal section of the River Slaney has many beautiful views which are only seen from a boat. I have travelled many times from Wexford to Enniscorthy in my boat and would like to share my pleasure with others who have not done so'. The beauty is apparent because of the unspoilt, largely undeveloped nature of the river banks for most of the journey, and the high density of wildlife. In the Slaney Guide, Jim Hurley mentions dozens of seabird species he encountered along the banks including Kingfishers, but the most impressive today are the many Herons, the beautiful Egrets which have colonised the banks relatively recently and the bevy of Mute Swans which taking off noisily when one draws near. Red squirrels have been observed in the wooded section near to Killurin and otters have become quite common in all sections of the river.

The river between Wexford and Enniscorthy is quite tidal and water travellers may need to be mindful of the air-draft as well as the water draft of their boats. The eastern, full-arch of Ferrycarrig Bridge has a clearance of 3.3m at high tide and Killurin Bridge has about 0.6m less. The tidal range in Wexford Harbour and most of the Slaney is about 2m; the current tide level and/or one week's tide



Picnic area and slip at Killurin

tables for Wexford Harbour may be consulted online here www.wexfordharbour.info/tides.php
Tide times upriver lag behind the tides in Wexford but as far as Edermine, the range is much the same. The delays at Ferrycarrig and Edermine Bridges have been measured by the author as 10 and 45 minutes both for high and low tides. These are both somewhat less than the figures in the Slaney Guide. Tides times and levels in Enniscorthy are more complex. Because the riverbed falls between the two towns, the water level in Enniscorthy is about 2.7m higher than the level in Wexford. Since the range of tides in Wexford is only 2m, the consequence is that there is no low tide in Enniscorthy and high tides only occur during Springs, ie when the level in Wexford is above 1.8m. Levels are also raised after heavy rainfall in the Wicklow Mountains.

The delay between HW at Wexford and Enniscorthy was measured as 1h20; this agrees perfectly with Cecil Miller's estimate.

Navigation of the Slaney was greatly improved by the publication of Cecil Miller's Slaney Guide, and apart from The Patches, this is still the primary reference.

Consider the passage from the Boat Club to the first important waypoint at Point of Park. Cecil Miller's advice was to proceed at 28° to Crosstown Headland until the transit of Bride Street Church spire moves to the eastern end of the roof ridge of Rowe Street Church. Then head for Ardtramon Castle at 35° until abreast of Knottown Farm. Using GPS one might say: leaving the Boat Club head at 350° to Point of Park waypoint at 52° 20.783'N, 6° 28.310'W. While this is much simpler to read and to implement, does it not lose much of the magic of navigating the Slaney by observing the landmarks and features all around? Nevertheless, a set of waypoints is provided below to take account of changes to the river and indeed to facilitate those sailors who like to navigate using electronic aids. The traditional names of these waypoints were taken from *Place Names on the River Slaney* by Darina Tulley and John Starkie.

Near Ferrycarrig, the Wexford Harbourmaster has kindly provided a new isolated danger mark which shows the position of the sunken tree that has been there for many years. Steering from Point of Park and leaving this to port gives a convenient track to avoid nicely the Point of Park shallows. From here one can stick to mid channel and pass under the first or second full arch on the starboard side of Ferrycarrig Bridge in over 8m of water.



Ferrycarrig Round Tower

From here to Killurin Pier is fairly straightforward if one stays in mid-channel in the straight sections and keeps to the outside at bends. There are protruding banks on the eastern side, one just above the Heritage Park and the other a bit beyond the overhead power lines but by steering to the waypoints given, these are avoided. The river section from here until Killurin Bridge has the richest bird life on the Slaney. At this point one can take a pit stop at the picnic area at Killurin Pier.

The Slaney has several slips suitable for launching and retrieval. The County Council is currently refurbishing the public slip at Ferrybank, Wexford. There is another slip near to Ely Hospital but the best facilities are at Wexford Harbour Boat & Tennis Club which has a slip, pontoon and crane as well as a pavilion with showers, bar etc.

There is a private pontoon at the location of the former Oak Tavern in Ferrycarrig; the owner permits IWAI members to stop there, but one can go ashore only by arrangement as the site is under development. At Killurin, there are two slips and a jetty with deep water, although care is needed, as the newer slip is very steep, and at least one car was lost without trace when the brakes slipped after a launch.

WAYPOINT LIST FOR LOWER SLANEY					
Id	Name	Lat	Long	Depth	
SLA 1	Point of Park	52°	21.635'	-6°	28.539' 1.6
SLA 2	Ferrycarrig IDM	52°	21.42'	-6°	29.422' 2.2
SLA 3	Heritage Park	52°	21.017'	-6°	31.313' 2.5
SLA 5	Steps to Lady				
	Danes	52°	21.282'	-6°	32.516' 4
SLA 6	Polehore	52°	21.784'	-6°	32.789' 3.1
SLA 7	Alan's Point	52°	22.011'	-6°	33.261' 6.4
SLA 8	Carrigmannon	52°	22.513'	-6°	33.484' 3.3
SLA 9	The Mill Stream	52°	22.723'	-6°	33.877' 7.1
SLA 10	Killurin Bridge	52°	23.161'	-6°	34.102' 6.8

My thanks to Sylvester O' Brien who provided most of the waypoints here.

CORRECTION: In the last edition of IWN (Vol 40 No 4 P10) the first part of this feature was incorrectly credited to Catherine Malone instead of the Brian Corcoran. Apologies to both Brian and Catherine. — ed