

Cellbridge paddlers of Kildare hosted their annual marathon race on the Grand Canal between Cellbridge and Sallins on Sunday. A large group from the Thomastown Paddlers Canoe Club attended the race. The race was held over courses of various distances to suit all abilities. The long course was 18km, medium course 10km and the short course was 6km. There was also a 2km race for novices.

There were two representatives from the club racing on the 18km long course, Mickie Brennan and Tony Forristal. Both paddlers competed in division one, which is the top division in the country. Mickie, who has been selected to represent Ireland this year in the discipline of Wild-water racing, had a fantastic race. He lead for much of the course but was just beaten in a sprint finish for first place. This was another fine performance in what has been a very successful season for Mickie, and it is certainly the most prestigious result any Thomastown Paddler has achieved on the domestic racing scene. Tony also had a very good race. Fresh from being promoted from division two, he put in a fine performance to take seventh place and he was also the fastest junior paddler. Tony is hoping to be selected to race for Ireland this year and on the back of this performance he can be fairly confident of achieving that goal.

Moving next to the 10km medium course, where there were a large number of paddlers from the club racing in division 4. All paddlers in this division use the fastest of the single person kayaks; the K1s. These are the long, narrow, fast and unstable boats. In what was the largest class on the day, Kieran Varley took a creditable sixth place. Also paddling in this division were Alex Broderick, Cait Broderick, Eamon Forristal and David McCormack. All five paddled well and showed they are improving all the time. In the K2 class, Martin Walsh and Paul Forristal took home a silver medal for the club. In the women's general purpose category, Jackie Walsh did great to take third place. Dermot Forristal paddled in the men's general purpose class and put in a good performance.

On the 6km short course, Callum Taylor competed in the boys under fifteen general purpose category. He paddled a great race to finish in third position. This was a great result from Callum in this competitive class.

Two members from the club, Aaron Varley and Senan Forristal raced in the 2km novice race. Paddling 'lightening' k1s, Aaron came second to a strong Kilcullen paddler with Senan taking 6<sup>th</sup>. Both Aaron and Senan are improving with every race and will be forces to be reckoned with in the future.

Eight juniors from the Thomastown club also travelled to Lucan to compete in a junior series race of on Saturday last. The race, which was held on the Liffey, starting just below Lucan weir and finishing at wild water kayak club in Chapelizod. The long course for under eighteen competitors was ten kilometres long, while the short course was six kilometres long with both courses taking in two weirs including the challenging Wrens Nest weir.

Starting with the long course, Tony Forristal put in another fine performance to win the under eighteen K1 class. Also racing on the long course were Ritchie Kelly and Liam Deevy in the under eighteen K2 class. Unfortunately Ritchie injured his shoulder during this race. We wish him a speedy recovery and hopefully he will be back on the water soon. Cait Broderick competed in the under eighteen girls K1 class and took first place with a fine performance.

On the short course Callum Taylor and Eamon Forristal both raced in the under 15 K1 class. Both raced well and finished in a respectable time. Alex Broderick raced in the under 18 GP class and took another gold for Thomastown with a powerful performance.

It was a successful day for the paddlers with some good results. This race will provide valuable experience for the upcoming junior Liffey Descent which will be held on the same course later in the month.

It has been a busy two weeks for the Paddlers and this trend continues when Thomastown Paddlers host their own junior series race next Saturday May 14<sup>th</sup> in Graiguenamanagh. Next on the marathon racing calendar is the Kilcullen race in two weeks time. Anyone interested in joining the club should go to [www.thomastownpaddlers.com](http://www.thomastownpaddlers.com) where information about beginner courses etc. can be found.