

Last weekend thirteen members of the Thomastown Paddlers competed in the fifty second annual Liffey Descent. Normally the Liffey Descent is held on the first weekend in September but due to the exceptionally low rain levels this summer it was decided to postpone it until last weekend. The race begins at the K Club golf course in Straffan, Co. Kildare and finishes at the Trinity Boat Club in Islandbridge. The course is eighteen miles long and takes in ten major weirs and numerous sets of challenging rapids. It is an achievement in itself to complete the course but Thomastown Paddlers went one better and brought home five medals.

The results of the day came from the Broderick siblings who were competing in their first ever Liffey Descent. Cait competed in the Girl's General Purpose class and Alex competed in the Boy's General Purpose class. The brother and sister showed that their preparation during the year paid off when they both took gold in their respective classes. Sticking with the general purpose classes, Thomastown Paddlers cleaned up in the men's senior general purpose class with Paul Forristal taking gold and Martyn Walsh finishing second. Paul paddled a clean race to take gold by a decent margin. Martyn had a brief capsize at Lucan weir but thanks to a quick recovery he managed to maintain second position. Martyn had been performing very well all season and this result shows that all his training has paid off. This result also comes on the back of a fourth place finish in last year's descent. Gavin Whitehead also competed in this class and paddled a good race to finish in the middle of the field. In the master's class, Kieran Varley paddled a fine race to take the bronze medal.

In the junior K1 class, Tony Forristal had a disappointing day but still managed to finish in fourth position. On the first weir, he was unlucky to collide with a rock which caused the seat to become dislodged from his kayak. This damage meant that the following weirs became impossible to navigate without capsizing so it was a race to forget for Tony! In the senior K2 category, the Brennan brothers; Donnacha and Mickie also had a disappointing race. They were lying in fifth position after completing more than half the race but a technical issue forced them to retire.

In the touring doubles class, Dave MacCormack and Dermot Forristal teamed up. This was Dermot's first Liffey Descent but Dave's experience over the difficult Liffey weirs meant the team completed the race with only two brief capsizes and finished in ninth position. In the Canadian classes, Dave Comerford and Stuart MacMahon also teamed up. They had only one capsize; at Straffan weir but after this upset they had a good race with no further mishaps.

In all, it was a good day for the Thomastown Paddlers with five medals coming home to the south east. Next up is this Sunday's Robertstown race, while on October 29th the club will be involved with the running of the inaugural "Waterways Ireland, Barrow Descent". This is a new race on the canoeing calendar, which will see canoeists complete a 23KM course from Goresbridge-St. Mullin. This race will bring another successful season to close for the club. All club news can be found on www.thomastownpaddlers.com