

beam would have given us much needed extra reserve buoyancy and storage space, and while two watches of rowers on a long pull are highly desirable, it is as we learned, even more desirable that for periods where special effort is required every man should be able to pull his weight, e.g. when in danger of being embayed as we were twice or when fighting up into shelter against an offshore wind. It would also have looked better for ceremonial purposes at the beginning and end of the voyage.

Next came the question of rig. St. Columba, according to St. Adamnan, sailed more often than he rowed. Present day Donegal currachs sail not at all. Those in Aran and Dingle set only a tiny lug sail right in the bow for running and reaching, so modern practice gave no guide.

Richard selected a small edition of the Shetlands sixarene rig—this is of Viking origin, possibly older, a local variant of the dipping lug and sets outside the shrouds. The sail made by McCready's of Belfast set beautifully, and with this in calm water we could make good a course eight points off the wind by pointing up five to six points off; leeway, in even a moderate beam sea was of the order of three points. When we were reaching across to Islay from Portballintrae in Force 3 to 4 a fishing line trolled from amidship made such an angle to windward that at first I thought it must have some sort of otter board on it, but it was just plain leeway! Apart from this the curragh stood up to her canvas remarkably well and ran 'like a sputnik'.