

Steering was usually a problem — she was very hard mouthed and inclined to gripe — we used an eight foot steering oar in an iron crutch on the transom. (A recess in the transom, the usual sort of sculling notch, which we tried first, proved much too weak). It was generally necessary except on a dead run to have several oars going, sometimes to windward, usually to leeward, or at least the two after oars poised ready to backwater to assist the helmsman. This was inefficient and in addition it is very doubtful if there is any historical basis for a centre line steering oar, such as ours as early as the sixth century. The centre line rudder did not come in until mediæval times and was then hailed as the greatest single invention in maritime history. (After spending a week fighting a losing battle with a steering oar, I heartily endorse this view!). In a curragh the centre line steering oar is additionally objectionable in that it forces the helmsman to sit right in the stern just where she is weakest structurally, is unsupported by water and needs spare buoyancy. Another time we would try steering by means of quarter steering oars mounted on pins on stout outriggers ; the lee one would generally be the best to use. This would also have allowed us to build with a pointed stern which would have been historically and aesthetically much better. As it was, the smallness of the curragh forced us to place the helmsman and one or two other men with some of their gear right in the stern ; we even had to build stern sheets (seats running fore and aft inside the gunwales) to give the helmsman something to