

CONNON BROTHERS

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Weather doesn't dampen rafters' spirits

DESPITE the weather conditions the 17th annual Ythan Raft Race attracted over 170 rafts and brought hundreds of spectators to the riverbanks.

Although the event was highly successful and has, so far, raised around £14,000, the weather made conditions far from easy for crews and organisers.

"It was very difficult for competitors and the organising team. The weather conditions were not severe but they were uncomfortable and created tension - we wouldn't have wanted it to be any worse," said organiser Bill Smith.

Although there were no incidents a small number of people were removed from rafts because they were cold.

Mr Smith said he was very grateful to the spectators for turning up to support the race despite the weather - and special thanks went to those who stayed right to the end.

Even before the race started there was action on the river as local building consultant Mike Taylor (48) took his hovercraft onto the Ythan.

The yellow 500cc two-seater was available during the race as a medic carrier.

Mr Taylor, a member of the Scottish Hovercraft Club, will take part in a coast-to-coast hovercraft crossing of Scotland later this year.

He bought the craft last August after giving up on the

Rural policy

GORDON Councillors have been urged to take part in Government consultations on rural policy.

A white paper is due to be published in the autumn and Rural Forum have been asked to hold consultation seminars across Scotland.

Councillor Sheila Ritchie, convener of the Planning and Economic Development Sub-Committee told members at a recent meeting the seminars presented an opportunity to shape policy.

She added: "The proposed legislation could be critical. This is very important and we have a chance to influence

idea of making his own model through lack of time.

A partly completed hovercraft - which requires engines - is now being offered to any group which can make use of it.

Clean-up

The clearing of the riverbanks was a laborious task

by Kirsten Binnie

The whole point of having the boats, he says, is that they travel quickly up the river making sure all the raft crews are safe and removing people who are having problems.

Thanks

There were around 1,500 people on the Ythan during the race and Mr Smith said he was

Since 1986 they have won major prizes in the race for their ingenuity in creating highly unusual crafts.

This year they were masquerading under the guise of 'Monty Python's Flying Circus' and even managed to complete the much-hyped stunt of 'flying' under the Ellon bridge (although they were on

Dougie on board with us - he was great company and was unceremoniously removed from the raft with a paddle - but took it in great spirit!"

Mr Mackay described the day as "truly magnificent" and added that on behalf of everyone he wished to thank Mr Smith and his committee for their work.

On the night before the race the crew had taken their raft to RAF Buchan where Group Captain Mike Shields cast an expert eye over the craft.

The team won the Bill Stewart Memorial Trophy which was donated by Lodge St Olaf in memory of the fellow rafter who died tragically.

Titles won by the lodge team at the race include: 1986 'Special category for creative effort' - Mississippi paddle steamer; 1987 'The most sophisticated raft' - Peterhead fishing trawler; 1988 'The most attractive raft' - Chinese junk; 1989 'The most attractive raft' - Slains Castle.

They won the Bill Stewart Memorial Trophy in 1990 with Noah's Ark, 1991 with Thunderbirds, 1992 The Blues Brothers, 1993 The Cruden Bay City Glitter Band, 1994 A Man Called Horace and 1995 The Spirit of St Olaf (Monty Python's Flying Circus).

Awards

Fastest raft - Forfar contractors William Donald (28 minutes); Grampian Police (32 minutes).

Best mechanical means of propulsion - Aberdeen Haliburton's cycle-power raft.

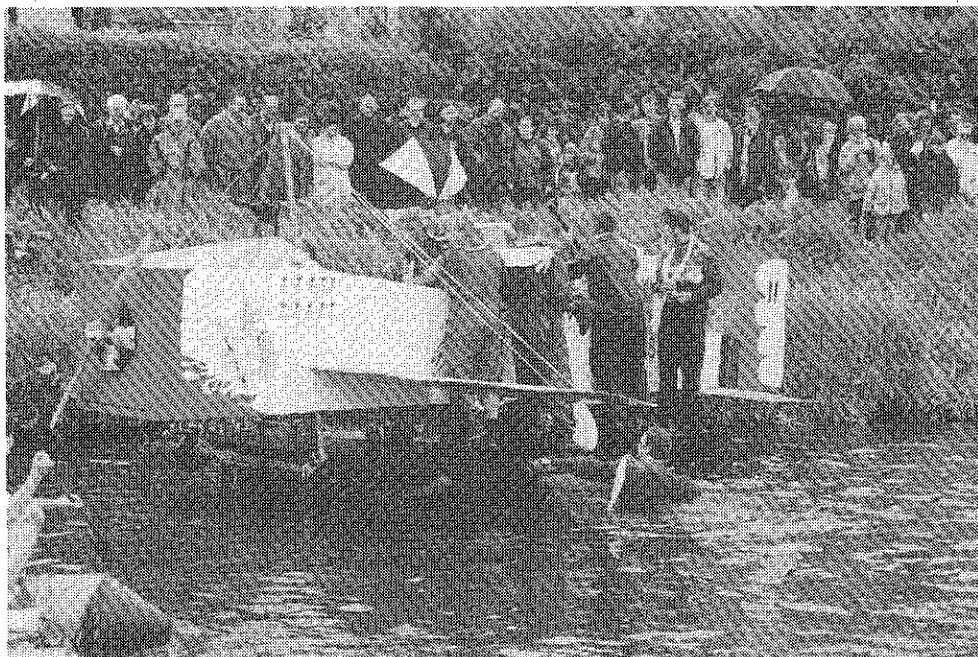
Best dressed award - Radtech Services as the Addams family.

Most sophisticated entry - Bluebird bus from Hatton.

Raft with the most people - Texaco Oil (50 people).

Most creative title - Lodge St Olaf, Cruden Bay, with floating vintage bi-plane.

More pictures on page 10.



The Lodge St Olaf raft on the River Ythan. (B26/17).

for organisers and volunteers as 24 large metal skips were filled with rubbish.

"I was pleased with the turnout on Sunday of those who helped with the clean-up. That was as rewarding as the race," said Mr Smith.

Rescue boats

However there was one disappointing moment for Mr Smith when he heard that Northsound Radio reported the rescue boats were travelling too fast.

very pleased that after 17 years the event is as popular as ever.

Members of the Grampian branch of the British Red Cross worked alongside local doctors administering first aid.

"The raft race committee would like to thank very much all those individuals and organisations who gave up their time to assist during the event," said Mr Smith.

Lodge St Olaf

Once again the Lodge St Olaf raft crew took the prize for the most creative raft.

the water at the time and not airborne).

A number of the crew were taking part in the race for the first time, including Alan Mackay (14), Greg Mackay (12) and Adam Moorhouse who travelled to the North East from Wakefield to take part.

An extra member was Dougie Vipond, a presenter of BBC Scotland's Big Country programme. The race was recorded and will be shown on June 9.

Spokesman for the team, Gordon Mackay, said: "We had

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