

# Eagle Canoe Club Newsletter

## Winter Spring 2016



## EDITORIAL



Hello and welcome to another long awaited (partly my fault – maybe even all my fault) edition of the Eagle newsletter.

This one is a bit of a monster and I think the biggest to date so I apologise for gobbling up all your internet band width, if you incur any charges from your internet service provider Stuey said Eagle will cover the fees.

We have loads of great articles and I have a few ideas for some more in the future which will need your help. More of that at the end of the document.

SO this has been an eventful year judging by the scope of the different articles we have had over the year.

As always this newsletter is total populated by your stories and experiences so please send any articles to me. It doesn't have to be an epic trip or adventure so no article will be turned away. Any experiences you have enjoyed, any tips for new members, any trips you have loved or any lasting memories you can share to make everyone's lives better while paddling.

Judging by my increasing procrastination while creating these newsletters by the next time you see one of these we will have been in the new club house (for about a decade) and will living the life of luxury as probably the best kitted out canoe club in the Milky Way galaxy.

Anyway enough of my rambling – here are some stories to keep you entertained while reading in the smallest room in the house ☺ Pete



## THE NEWBIES

So here's the thing, I paddled probably about 30 years ago and was looking to find a club where I could continue something that I loved, so I came on a taster evening with a friend who was also interested in starting paddling, but He'd never done any before, you all know him as Terry.

The very night we came down Mike Liggins from the BBC was at the club doing a promotion for sport and had a little chat with Darren the coach Who was directing the taster evening. The evening went well and if I remember correctly I think we even had one second of fame on the telly.

The taster evening was good so we both joined the club and I like to think that we integrated quite well, both of us being of outgoing personality.

The first thing that struck me was how diverse the club is with touring , white water kayaking and canoeing, and in the background, play boating mainly at Horstead mill, and sea kayaking trips that Anne organises.



I also like how the club promotes interaction with the young and old (like myself) showing that everyone has something to offer. Kayaking has always been something I relished, that is until I joined eagle who have a veritable flotilla of different canoes as well as kayaks, I tried a canoe one evening and thought this is so much harder than kayaking because you only paddle mainly on one side using a certain paddle stroke which at the time seemed to me to be like some sort of wizardry out of Harry Potter.

Terry and myself have been at Eagle for over a season and have made friends with many nice people and taken part in loads of kayaking and canoe trips which vary from local day trips to over nighters camping in parts of the country I haven't been to before.

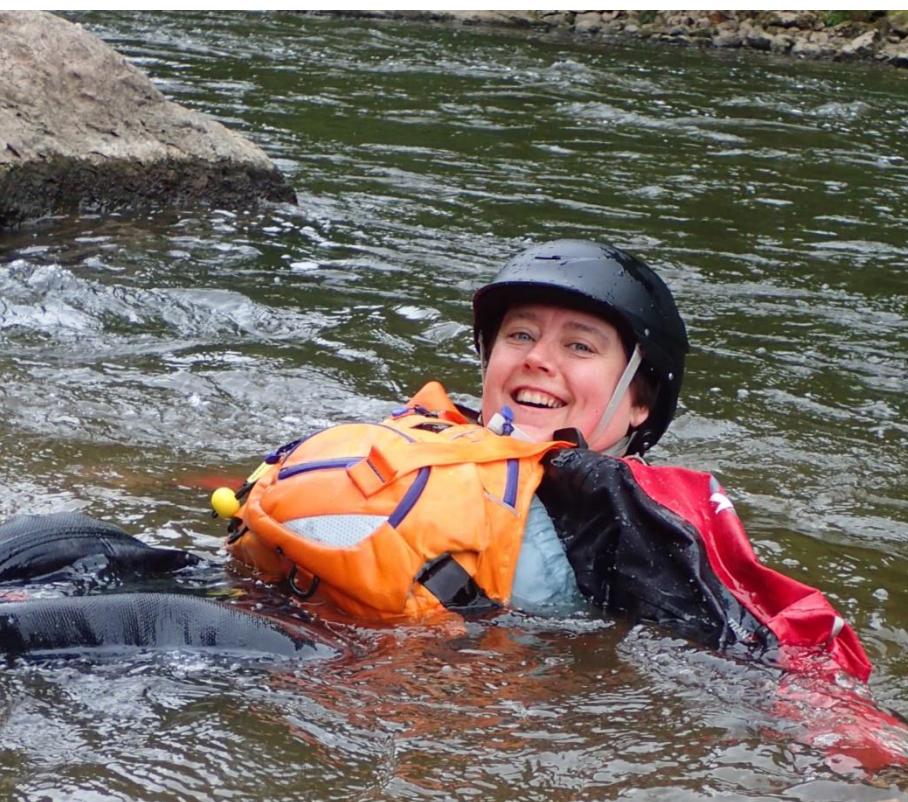
The thing I've found with the club trips is firstly there is always a laugh to be had and I learn something new about a skill, or maybe about someone on the trip, and sometimes about myself so, in conclusion I would say to anyone who's new to the club, get on the trips that you can, put yourself out there, and see what you can learn, do something different to what you normally would do like canoeing, if you embrace what you do, you will get better at it and under the umbrella of the club you will be safe.

John

## SHORT THOUGHTS ON SNACKS

Paddling snacks Unlike canoes, kayakers generally have to rely on their buoyancy aids to carry snacks to eat on the river, however this poses the great question what snack to take. Well there are some simple rules to follow 1, it has to be self contained and water tight to keep it dry and fresh. 2 it has to fit in the buoyancy aid. 3 once open has to be eaten in one go, ideally with one hand. So this rules out several things such as foil wrapped bars, multi packs or a full packet of biscuits, other things to consider, if it is warm avoid chocolate as it gets messy, any thing too crumbly will get squashed and fall apart in your Pfd. So what do you take, well it's got to be tasty and give you energy. Cereal bars are the obvious choice with plenty of different flavours, on cooler days chocolate bars are nice energy boosts. But there are also new bars on the market protein bars, multi seeds, high energy endurance bars. My suggestion take a selection and see what works and tastes nice.  
(I was quite impressed I managed to write it without naming any particular brands)

Mike R



## NENE WHITEWATER CENTER – JUNE 2015

Being fairly new to white water kayaking, I thought I would give a go at writing an account of my experience at the Nene. So if you are thinking about going to the Nene or have never been to a white-water centre then read on and I hope to inspire you to the step up to the plate and give it a go. This was not a fully-fledged club trip and being a novice in white water I was very excited about being welcomed to go along.

I would like to think that it was my skill at handling a kayak that made me a natural choice for inclusion, but in fairness I think maybe it was more down to my somewhat kamikaze attitude of just jumping in and giving things a go rather than any great skill!

The journey to the Nene from Norwich was a breeze with no traffic problems, the satnav guided us there with ease.

The postcode will get you just about there and there are signs which say this way to the white water centre when you get within a mile or so. The trip was around two hours long on main roads all the way, so as long as there are no accidents it is an easy straightforward ride.

On arrival you are free to walk around and have a good look at the course, which means anyone wishing to go along to watch could do so free of charge.

My first impression was that we need something like this in Norfolk, I mean don't get me wrong Horstead mill is okay but this is moving up to the next level. When it came to the paperwork and signing in, it couldn't have been simpler.

We saved time by downloading the forms and filling them in before we left, we just handed them in at reception along with requisite fees and no questions asked. The changing rooms were warm, had plenty of room, nice showers and loos with doors that shut and had locks on them. So although they were fairly basic and had no facilities for locking up valuables, compared to the changing room at the club they were 5\* (*Until we get the new club house ☺- Pete*).

After changing we then gave the course a more detailed inspection, with my own experience being limited only having been to Horstead a couple of times and once to Symonds Yat I was thinking with the exception of one drop that this course didn't look too daunting. However, when starting to listen to other people's experiences of doing this course before, I began to feel some apprehension! After getting in, within 2 min the apprehension left me and I was like a dog with a bone wanting to go from the top. The experience of my travelling companion was a bit different. With him being somewhat more nervous around water and not in any way sharing my kamikaze instincts, he felt that it didn't look too bad from that bank. When he got in he rapidly came to the conclusion that water flows faster when you are in it and, not being a man of a confident nature when exposed to water, found that the little knowledge he did have about moving around on water in a kayak suddenly became unavailable and he was at the mercy of the flow. The result of this was the use of language of a profane nature which I can't type here (but you can all use your imagination) and a rethink of the decision of taking up white water in the first place and that maybe a course of basket weaving would be more to his liking! I will let you know of what he decided later on. So if you are fairly new to whitewater and have never been to the Nene before, take my advice and go with some good coaches. Just get in and give it a go then make your own decision. The course has a number of different sections of varying difficulty going down, the good thing here is that depending on your level and abilities you can start at any point on the course. Each section has a pool at the start and end so you can get in where you feel comfortable, missing out some of the bigger drops if you wish.

One of the first things I realise about a man-made white-water course was there are no calm areas of water in which you can just sit and relax you have to constantly paddle just to stay still, so be prepared to work hard and be somewhat sore the next day. I certainly was and this in no way helped my canoeing on the Two Star course the following night!

Running the course from top to bottom was somewhat easier than I had imagined although admittedly I was following somebody else's line down. The first time went without a hitch, the second time however I experienced my first capsiz and having just learned to roll on the Friday evening I could hear nothing but the voices of my fellow paddlers telling me to roll.



It was here that I experienced one of the first characteristics of this course which is the shallowness at some points along its length. I was lying there half capsized with my shoulder hitting the concrete wondering how on earth am supposed to roll from this position and after mulling this over for what appeared to be an eternity, but was actually a few seconds, I decided to ignore the voices around me and bailed out. Although later on watching some of the more experience kayakers it is possible to roll you need to allow yourself to drift into the middle of the flow, although I'm still not sure that this would have helped me on this particular Sunday as later on I failed to roll and swam twice more.

After running the course several times we went on to surfing some of the waves. There are lots of different levels of waves to try this on, being my first time trying to do this we were practising on a fairly tame one. I found wave surfing is a great way to practice all those skills we learn on Wednesday night, support strokes, edging, rotation, look and leaning skills. I now have a better understanding as to how they work and when to use them in this environment. Dare I say that I even started to get a feel for when and how to use the strokes as on white water you either use them or swim - which I did do twice.

I do remember my last swim, my legs got stuck in the boat when I finally managed to get free I found myself fighting against the quite considerable flow to get out while my kayak went merrily down the course on its own without me, my shoes came off one of which was never to be seen again. I was somewhat exhausted by this point and disappointed that my kayak went down the biggest drop without me and I had to get back in on the pool after this and miss it.

Despite being somewhat knackered by this point I wanted to make the most of the day and ploughed on, we were at the part of the course where it was good to practice breaking in and out of the eddies. This was good fun but like many other things when demonstrated by proficient kayaker it's "harder than it looks"! I was by no means perfect but I certainly started to get a feel and some degree of control over where I want to go rather than just going with the flow. I found myself concentrating so much on where I want to go I suddenly realised as we got near to the next pool that I was going down course backwards. This didn't bother me until we got near the drop into the next pool and there was no way I was going to do this backwards and found myself having to turn 180 very sharply, remembering the words that had been drummed into me over the previous few weeks look, lean, commit and power over the eddy. I just went for it and all was fine.

After this my physical reserves were gone, I was cold and tired but very happy with my day's work. I was on a high wishing I had more energy to get back in, but was struggling to get my kayak back up the hill and with exhaustion getting the better of me I settled for watching some of the more experienced kayakers making it look extremely easy which in itself was really good to watch.

I would just like to say that we had an extremely good bunch of people on the trip which made it even more enjoyable, everyone was extremely supportive of everybody else and I would like to thank the coaches especially Gunny and Adam who gave up a lot of their paddling time to look after the likes of me, my other half and other members of our group making the day a great experience, good fun and one that I would certainly like to repeat.

There was a pub two min down the road which we gathered for in for food, drink and good chat about the day. The food was ok from what I remember but we were all so hungry at this point I don't think anyone much cared too much about the quality.

Before I finish I will just say that my travelling companion has, thanks to some very patient coaching by Adam, and swimming and getting back in three times, decided to postpone taking up basket weaving for the time being and is persevering with kayaking and to try and embody the words look, lean, commit and power over the eddy! **Vicky**

## THE FAFF FACTOR

On many club trips you will hear reference to "faff". We aim for zero faff on our trips, but it doesn't ever happen ! Faff leads to trips taking longer than they really need to, to people getting frustrated and in some extreme cases, people not being able to come on the trip because they are missing a key piece of equipment, like a helmet on a white water trip, or in the case of the 2015 Symonds Yat trip, a BOAT !

So what are the main causes of faff, what are the common types of faff and how do we avoid them ?

Causes of faff - People not knowing what is expected of them. This is the biggest challenge for coaches on many of our trips as we have a mixed range of experience attending the trips and it is sometimes "assumed" that the information we have given is clear.





However, we do know from experience that what we think is clear, is frequently confusing for newer members.

Please ask, no question is a stupid question, it just means we didn't make ourselves clear.

People not knowing what is happening, not knowing where you need to be or not knowing when you need to be there. If you can not answer any of these questions in advance of the trip starting, you are going to generate faff.

People not being organised. This means you have left key equipment behind or that you are late in arriving. Lay out your kit before you pack it, make sure you have everything you need. Don't assume that someone else is going to pick up a paddle / boat for you or put on a trailer / roof.

People not paying attention. Coaches will

normally run through key information before getting on the water and will ask you to confirm you have everything you need and will run through a quick checklist before we move vehicles to the end of the trip. If you are busy chatting to someone else while this is happening or don't take that opportunity to check for yourself that you have the kit, then you could be contributing to faff.

The shuttle. This is when cars get moved from the beginning of the trip to the end of the trip, so they are there ready for when you get out and one car brings all the drivers back to the beginning of the trip. Dry clothes go in the cars that have been moved to the end and all drivers keep their keys with them on the trip so they all have them with them for the end of the trip (*Cough..... Pia..... Cough – Pete*)

And finally, do not underestimate the impact of "stress". If you are apprehensive about the trip and your ability to it then this will mean you are more likely to forget things. Be aware of this and make an effort to be ready earlier than you would normally and double check everything. I couldn't believe how disorganised I became the first time I ran a Grade 4 white water river which was beyond my normal comfort zone.

### Common types of faff

- Being late
- Missing Kit (happened twice on the Alps trip with experienced paddlers [including a coach !])
- No lunch
- People not doing what they have been asked to do
- Shuttles ! take ages to organise, kit ends up in the wrong cars, drivers don't know where they are going and get split up and lost, keys get left in cars (most commonly the drivers who left their cars at the end of the trip, leave their keys in the car at the beginning of the trip so they stay dry. Which means when you get to the end of the trip, where are the keys that you need – in the car which you left at the beginning of the trip !

### Conclusion

**Clear communication.** This relates to everyone. Coaches should communicate clearly, you should be clear in your communication to the coach and if you still don't really know what is happening or what is expected of you ASK. We would rather explain something again, rather than discover that after everyone else is ready to get on the water, you have just found discovered that a key piece of equipment has just been taken to the other end of the trip in a vehicle !

**Good organisation.** This relates to the organisation of the trip so that everything that is needed is there, you know where you are getting on and off, that you have enough vehicles to move people and boats etc.

In relation to you, it means that you check that you have all the equipment you need and that it is all with you before you leave for the trip AND that you have it with you at the beginning of the trip before the vehicles do the shuttle. I always check off items of clothing from my feet up (shoes, paddling trousers, spraydeck, cag, BA, helmet)

**Be responsible for yourself.** While on many trips we do take spare bits of equipment as we recognise that for many members who are new to paddling, its all a bit of a mystery, you should make every effort to get involved in making sure you have the kit you need. Do not stand at the side of the trailer watching it being loaded. If you haven't got your boat, paddle etc out of the boat shed and helped put it on the trailer, there really is only 1 person who is responsible for you not having a boat for the trip, and that is YOU ! **Stu**



## SYMONDS YAT 3-5 JUNE 2016, AN EAGLE ADVENTURE

Symonds Yat is a village in the Forest of Dean and a popular tourist destination, straddling the river Wye and on the borders of the English counties of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, within a few miles of Monmouthshire and the Welsh border. The name is said to come from Robert Symonds, a 17th century sheriff of Herefordshire, and "Yat", an old word for gate or pass.

224 miles from Norwich to Symonds Yat were covered and people travelled at different times, starting journeys from 7 am to 4 pm, with cars, vans and the 17-strong minibus with Stuart as our captain, steering us. We all had a pit-stop on route, and then on to Symonds Yat.

Friday night was all about settling down and sitting down around the fire, catching up with friends, getting to know new ones, staring at the fire fairies, and anticipating what was to come.

Saturday started early, and I mean early. The scent of bacon permeated every corner of the bunkhouse by 6am (and yes we all know who were cooking, and a damn good job they did... ;). In fact, thanks to the early start, we had the river pretty much to ourselves for a good part of the morning.

Back at the bunkhouse and after freshening up, we went up a hill, came down a mountain... and after soaking in the amazing views of the meandering river, we devoured a very comforting Bolognese and one by one retired to what became a much longer night, and what felt like a lazy Sunday morning tempo, bit by bit packing and getting ready for the second day of paddling.

The river was much busier on Sunday. Other clubs were there and there seemed to be a trend of people (and dogs) shooting down on out of control aluminium canoes (not us!), not infrequently canoes one way and living creatures (many without helmets) the other, and also kayakers from another club determined to practice eskimo rescues in moving water.

As a result (not really, it was just a warm day) the temperature rose and the afternoon was the perfect opportunity to throw ourselves on to the water, just for the heck of it, and also to practice rescues throwing a line. Really, this was a "take two" of a very competitive game of very dubious refereeing (yes, you know who you were ;) from the evening before.

All, and I mean all, well, maybe except a close underwater encounter of the writer with a rock whilst rolling on the last descent, are memories that will prompt all of us to go back next year and maybe, just maybe, to attract some new faces.

Xavier





## BUTE, ARRAN AND THE MULL OF KINTYRE – A SEA KAYAKING JOURNEY

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May saw a few club members getting up early, packing cars and driving northwards on a trip up to the small Scottish town of Weymss Bay to get the ferry across to the Isle of Bute. 10 in our party, all heading to Ettrick bay on the west coast of Bute. Our meeting place a small café just above the high tide mark.

While some got to Bute early most people started arriving at the Café in the late evening. We were met by our guide for the week's paddling, Roddy McDowell, who had made arrangements with the café's owners for us to camp at the back of the café and to use their loos. He gave us a quick briefing before leaving us to it. Maps of the area spread out on the grass held down with pebbles. Because most people liked the idea of an expedition and the weather wasn't looking too bad for the week ahead he decided on a journey around the Isle of Arran. We'd be setting off after lunch tomorrow.

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup>: At about 9 am Phil Keetley of Kayak Argyll, our other guide for the week, turned up with a trailer full of Tiderace sea kayaks. Various sizes from the highly manoeuvrable Xcites, to the slightly larger Xplores. We each selected one and working in teams of 4 we carried them down to the beach. Packing. Oh dear, most of us bought far too much stuff with us, and ended up leaving a lot of surplus bits in the cars. By late morning everything was finally packed. We had a slap up brunch in the café as a way of thanking them for the overnight stay. A quick shuffle of cars to leave them all at Port Ballantyne on the east coast where they were less likely to get the attention of any young opportunists.

Finally on the water in the early afternoon, heading out to the small island of Inchmarnock which was about 5 km from Ettrick Bay. While no one currently lives on there it does support a herd of pedigree highland cattle. The water was flat calm and very clear, being able to see the rocky sea bed a few metres down. Ann led the way across with Roddy and Phil taking a look at our paddling skills and offering quick pointers on forward paddling, especially important with the long distances we were going to be doing over the coming days.

One of the questions that was asked by the one of the group was about the likelihood of seeing dolphins or whales. The reply was that they were very rare around here and that you'd only see them once or twice a year. A few minutes later a small porpoise was seen surfacing a few hundred metres away, I guess that this was one of those rare occasions.

We stopped on Inchmarnock to have a quick break before the more demanding 11 km open crossing to Arran. Roddy gave us a quick briefing on the crossing and where we were heading after that, though his briefing was somewhat drowned out by a large red and white helicopter that flew over quite low, the throb of the engines vibrating our insides.

We started out on what was to be the longest crossing of the expedition, at first all seemed well the sea was calm and the wind didn't seem too bad. A few seals bobbed up near us as we headed out further into the Firth of Clyde. Moving from the lee of the shore we became more exposed to the wind and its effects on the sea surface, a small chop began to appear making paddling a little more interesting. The wind was coming from the north so the waves were coming either from the side or to the front quarter, fortunately all the kayaks had skegs and deploying these helped with keeping in the right direction.

The trouble with open crossings is that it seems to take forever and you never seem to be getting anywhere. Even though we were maintaining a steady 5 km an hour or so, the Arran coastline never really appeared to get any closer! Though looking back to where we had come from made us realise just how far we had actually travelled, the coastline of Bute was just a very thin line on the horizon.



Eventually we could begin to make out more details of Arran, a small white house that we were supposed to be aiming for gradually came into view, and closer still we began to make out details of its features. After about 2 hours of paddling we finally arrived in the lee of Arran's cliffs. These are quite high, with a few rocky beaches which would be quite difficult to land on. We turned south and started the last few kilometres to our first campsite at North Sannox.

It was late evening when we finally arrived, and with the tide being fairly low we had a bit of a walk across a rather wide boulder strewn, sea-weed covered beach. Our first taste of things to come. Carrying the boats in teams of four made it easier, especially on the slippery sea weed, but obviously took longer. Finally by around 9 pm we had our tents up and getting a brew on and something warm to eat. The campsite was very basic but at least it had toilets and it was free, a small burn (small river for those not familiar with the Scottish vernacular) ran down one side. We were all standing around chatting about the day's paddle when a large red deer stag came out of the forest next to the burn and started feeding on the grass and bushes. It didn't worry about us at all and was there for a good 20 minutes or more before ambling off into the forest again. We spotted kites flying overhead and of course the ubiquitous Scottish midge made its presence known!

Total distance for the day: 23 km.

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup>. It was early start on the Monday morning, Roddy woke us up at about 6 am, as we had to be up and ready to make the most of the early high tide. After high tide the flow is southwards and that helps push us along. We had to carry the kayaks along a small spit of sandy beach to near the high tide mark, which was easier than walking across the sea-weed covered boulders. We were still working out how best to pack the kayaks, a lot of us needed more experience or were rusty at packing. We got on the water by about 8 am or so.

We were lucky with light winds again and it was a gentle paddle with little in the way of waves. Mark spotted a peregrine and someone pointed out a golden eagle soaring high in the sky its massive outstretched wings making it unmistakeable. Later in the paddle Matt pointed out a small seal only to realise a moment later that it was actually an otter on the rocks. We never expected to see otters in daylight but we would go on to see several over the next few days.

On the way south we passed the small "Holy Island", our plan to land on a small beach on its north shore was thwarted by dozens of nesting seabirds. Holy Island has a long tradition of monastic living dating back to at least the 6<sup>th</sup> century. This tradition is now upheld by a Buddhist monastery which has owned the island since 1992. The walk from the island's small jetty to the Buddhist's Centre are lined with Stupas, or prayer flags. Visitors, both religious and non-religious are welcome on the island, so are dripping wet kayakers. A really lovely lady showed us where the toilets were which certainly beat trying to find suitable bushes! We also made good use of the café and gift shop too.

After a break we got back in the kayaks and continued the journey south passing the lighthouse on the south end of Holy Island. It soon became apparent though that we would need to make an "ice cream" stop and fortunately Roddy knew just the place, Whiting Bay. Easy landing on a sandy beach for a change we stocked up on a few consumables and of course, ice cream. Back in the kayaks and a few kilometres further paddling we started to turn westwards around the southern tip of Arran.

Coming into view was the small rocky outcrop of Ailsa Craig, a volcanic plug, all that remains of an ancient volcano. Its rock is a type of granite that cooled very quickly creating very fine crystals which make it ideal for the manufacture of curling stones. One of only two places in the world where this has occurred.



We journeyed on to our next campsite at Kildonan. This time a commercial site with hot showers! But first we had to land at low tide and carry our kayaks over another long stretch of seaweed covered rocks and boulders. It was the end of a long day of paddling and we were beginning to feel it. We were all discovering muscles that we never knew we had and had lots of aches and pains.

While enjoying the sunset over the distant hills of Ireland, we were able to watch otters swimming amongst the rocks near to the campsite and a few gannets diving into the sea after their supper. Low tide reveals long fingers, or dykes of rock stretching from the shoreline out into the sea. These are basalt intrusions where volcanic larva has been forced into cracks in the surrounding rock. A few hundred metres off shore is a small island with a light house and out in the distance lies Ailsa Craig.

Total distance for the day: 29 km

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup>. We got a lay-in! We were waiting for the tide to rise (less distance to carry the boats down the beach) so had a while to rest and recuperate and the chance of breakfast in the hotel next door. A welcome treat and a nice way to start the day.

We were on the water around midday, another lovely day with little in the way of wind and clear blue skies. We were now heading northwards up the west coast of Arran. This part of the coast seems to feature a few sandy beaches, this is due to the numerous basalt dykes trapping sand in the same way that the groynes do on the Norfolk beaches.

On most days of our journey we saw a few seals, bobbing up nearby but never getting that close to us, and today was no exception as they would dive under as we tried to close the distance with them. We also saw quite a few guillemots, razor bills, little auks among other seabirds. We'd also hear the occasional loud "splat" as gannets rocket into the sea after their prey.

The small village of "Blackwaterfoot" provided a chance to stock up on essentials – chocolate, ice cream, sweets and biscuits. From there it was a short hop to our next campsite and our first true wild camp. Drumadoon Point. But first we had to land! The coastline here was very rocky, formed after the last ice age as the ice retreated so the land began to lift up causing what is now known as a raised shoreline. The only way to get to ashore was a tiny gully just wide enough for one or two kayaks at a time. But it wasn't going to be easy, it was low water and the gully was filled with the most stinking, foul-smelling, rotting and very slippery seaweed you could get. Knee deep in places and covering numerous large pebbles and boulders. It took a major effort by everyone to get all the kayaks up onto the grassy ledge above the rocks. I think we were all shattered at this point.

The campsite was just a little strip of grass on the headland. A few grassy patches in amongst small pools of stagnant water gave us enough area to pitch the tents. I had thought to pitch my tent on the very flat grass of the golf course behind the headland but did reason that might be frowned upon, especially as its one of only two 12 hole golf courses in Europe. At the edge of the grass and on the rocks were quite a few nesting seabirds and going too close risked getting dive-bombed by them.

Another important job, especially when paddling in mixed company is to work out the ablutionary arrangements. It was Ann's job upon landing to select where the toilets were going to be! As is only right and proper the ladies got the largest bush or the best cover. But at this site it was going to be somewhat difficult as the very popular golf course overlooked the campsite!

One thing that made this particular campsite quite special was the backdrop: Drumadoon Point. A giant basalt cliff that stood a couple of hundred feet high, it looked like massive columns reminiscent of Fingal's cave or the Giant's Causeway.



The small beach above the gully provided enough space to make a campfire. So we spent some time gathering firewood and with so many outdoor experts on hand it didn't take long to get the fire roaring away. The smoke helped to keep the midges away which were out in force.

We spent the evening swapping stories, watching gannets diving and seeing the stars coming out as the sky darkened. Jupiter quite prominent above us. Across the loch the Mull of Kintyre looked ominous in the gloom.

Total distance for the day: 20 Km

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>. Another late start waiting for high tide. Today was going to be a shorter paddle so there was no need to rush and leaving later at the higher tide meant we didn't need to brave the seaweed again! As we are all hardy sea kayakers being able to live off the land and gather what food we required from shoreline, our natural hunter-gatherer instincts took over as we scoured the coast for food. Quickly discovering the nearby golf club house we descended on there for another big breakfast! Also made use of their sockets to charge up sorely-depleted phone batteries.

On the water around midday, a gentle paddle to start with hugging the coastline. The wind had shifted so it was blowing from the north but close in we were able to avoid most of it. We passed a series of caves in the sandstone cliffs that form part of the coastline along this stretch of Arran. One of the larger caves is called "King's Cave" after the tradition that Robert the Bruce had that famous encounter with the spider in there. Clever chap, that Bruce, it seems he was in quite a few caves all around Scotland at the same time!

The winds proved quite unpredictable shifting from one direction to another quite quickly. One minute we'd be punching into the waves, a short time later we were surfing on a following sea. The more experienced members of the group enjoying the short surfing runs that the waves were providing while the less experienced paddlers were struggling a little. After a quick break at Dougie we continued northwards towards our next wild camp.

This part of Arran's coastline is made up of low lying hills, with beaches made up of large pebbles and stones which, of course, are covered with lots and lots of seaweed. Fortunately Roddy knew of a place that made landing a little easier. One enterprising farmer has cut a gully through the stones which meant we could land relatively easily and carry the kayaks above the high tide mark without breaking our necks slipping over all the time. Our campsite itself was on a narrow strip of grass next to the fields. One thing we noticed straight away, plenty of drift wood for a decent camp fire.





Once all the tents were up and dinners scoffed down, we all gathered around the campfire and watched the sun setting over the Mull of Kintyre. Quite a few gannets were diving just offshore, the “smacks” of the impact easily heard from the beach. When the wind dropped the midges came out in force and everyone had their midge nets over their heads, looking something like a “haz-mat” team from a zombie plague film.

Total distance for the day: 14 km.

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>. The sky dawned grey and overcast. Gone was the blue skies of the last few days. Though it did seem that the wind had dropped somewhat. We were packed and on the water by 9 am. This was going to be our second crossing of the trip heading across to the Mull of Kintyre. The paddle across was largely uneventful, we were arranged in a “square” with the stronger paddlers on the corners and edges while the less experienced paddlers in the middle. This worked well as it kept the group together and we were all able to keep an eye on each other. As we neared the Kintyre coast so we angled northwards to follow the coastline.

The wind soon began to pick up and was quite variable again, swinging from the north to the east and then back again. We would be paddling into the oncoming sea for quite a while and it was hard going and very wet. We made steady progress, keeping in close as possible to the shoreline to gain as much shelter as possible, but it was very tiring and most of us were beginning to feel the effects of all the miles we’d done and now the heavy slog into the weather. The conditions were taking its toll.

Most paddlers will be familiar with the Beaufort Scale as a way of classifying sea conditions, but Phil came out with a completely new one. The “Colin Scale”. Phil had noticed that when the water was flat calm, Colin would do what comes naturally to him - talk. But as the waves got a little bigger so Colin was less inclined to talk and the chatter dies down a little. Bigger waves and Colin was more subdued. Larger waves and Colin would keep very quiet and only occasionally utter a yell as a wave caught him by surprise! We were now paddling in a 4 on the “Colin Scale”!

We stopped off at a small ferry port at Claonaig. The large jetty wall offering us some shelter from the northerly wind. Topping up with more calories: chocolate, nuts and raisins, etc anything to give us energy to do the next leg across to Skipness, our last campsite of the trip.

Launching we quickly realised how much shelter the jetty had given us for as we rounded it the full force of the wind hit us. It was now a last long slog into the sloppy sea conditions to the headland in the distance. No shelter, it was just head down and one stroke after another to make headway. Slowly but surely we made progress.

Across the sound Arran looked more like Mordor out of Lord of the Rings, very foreboding, draped in grey clouds. Northwards, in the distance we could make out Skipness Castle and gradually the beach of the headland came into view. Took quite a while but we eventually made it and landed. A sandy beach for a change, with few pebbles.

The headland itself was very exposed with no shelter for the tents. It was a bit of a struggle to get the tents up and the gear inside. The wind never letting up and we got a few showers of rain. After a break we went exploring around the area and headed to the castle.

Skipness Castle was originally built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century but has been modified, knocked down and re-built a few times in its long history. Open to the public and never seeming to close we were able to get to the top of the Keep which gave some great views over Arran and Kintyre.



Just around the corner from the Castle is a fish restaurant and we were hoping to get a dinner there. But as luck would have it they would be opening for the season "tomorrow" and couldn't help us! So it was back to the tents and heating up whatever we had left!

Total distance for the day: 23 km.

Friday 27<sup>th</sup>. Our last day's paddle, our plan was to continue up the coast until we reach the mouth of Loch Fyne and make the crossing to the Ardlamont Point before heading across to Bute. We kept close in shore to gain as much shelter from the wind as possible. The rocky shoreline gave very few places to land so it was a case of just keep going. Crossing Loch Fyne was interesting, there were a lot of yachts out, and more than a few racing each other in the stiff breeze. Would they see us in time? We kept together as a tight group so that we were easier to spot and avoid. Apart from the yachts the crossing to Ardlamont Point was uneventful. We landed on a steep pebble beach and had a break.

A wall ran the length of the beach just above the high tide mark. It had a single small gate in it. Beyond was a dense wood. Quite magical in some respects, the trees closest to the beach were bent right over, the force of the constant wind making them grow at a very slanting angle. You could almost touch the tops of the trees because of the angle.

Once rested we were back on the water and heading for the final 5 or so kilometres to Ettrick Bay on Bute. Coming full circle. We were all very tired and sore, but while we were pushing hard to get back to the café (mugs of tea and cake beckoned) we were also feeling a little sad as our kayaking adventure was coming to an end.

We landed about 4 pm and the café were just shutting up shop, but having seen us coming across the bay had remained open for us. 12 dripping wet kayakers sitting in the café drinking hot tea and eating cake. Must confess that the tea was really appreciated. I'm not sure that the young girl mopping the floor was too happy to see all her efforts ruined by us though!

Total distance paddled: 20 km.

That evening we heading into Port Ballantyne. Roddy had booked a table at the Anchor Tavern and we had a slap up meal to celebrate. A good end to a brilliant trip. Well an end to my trip, as I headed off to the warm comfort of a B&B. But much braver and hardy souls camped another night and then were on the water once again on the Sunday morning and did some skills training and assessment!

It was a fantastic week's paddling in an area that is to be highly recommended for its scenery, wildlife and places to go sea kayaking. All together we paddled nearly 130 Km (or about 80 miles in old money).

Thanks to Ann for organising the trip. So, where are we going next? **Mark H**





## SOUTHERN FRENCH ALPS 2016 – EAGLE WW WEEK

Never have my post-holiday blues lingered so long. Every morning, I wake up and long for that view of the crystal clear lake, enveloped by snow-capped mountains and topped by a dazzling blue sky. For a morning where I can just sit and wait for the sun to emerge over the summits and shower me with warm rays...how on earth can I continue to trudge into the office everyday knowing that there's another world out there? I think I may actually need therapy.

If you haven't gathered from my opening paragraph, I absolutely loved our trip to the Alps. Our days were filled with amazing food (no nation makes pain au chocolats and croissants better than the French! Oh, and our camp cooks were pretty great too), good company, stunning scenery and just a hint of paddling...

We managed to hit at least two stretches of river each day, with some of us finishing up at the local slalom course at the end of two of the six days. It was exhausting, but it was worth it.

The rivers in the Alps are incredibly fast flowing. I can only compare the flow to that of the Tryweryn, or the manmade course at Lee Valley (thank goodness I'd spent some time there). But neither the Tryweryn or Lee Valley feature wave trains as magnificent as the ones we paddled in the Alps. It was great fun riding the waves up and down, all of us in one big line, occasionally disappearing from sight as we each dropped behind another massive wave.

I loved every stretch of the rivers we paddled, which included the aptly named Sunshine run, the upper Guisane, and a fair few others. My favourite day had to be Wednesday though. Quite a few people took the day off on Wednesday to relax or explore, but we were all given the opportunity to paddle two grade 3+ rivers. I decided to give it a go, knowing full well I was one of the weaker paddlers on this trip...

The first one on the agenda was the river Onde. This is a really speedy, boulder garden of a river. And we were all warned that we would have to have our wits about us, keeping an eye on what was directly in front of us, and what was coming up after all at the same time. There would be no big eddies for us all to recollect, and there was a chance your boat could end up miles down the river if you took a swim.

I felt sick with nerves and asked myself why I couldn't have chosen to relax. Having the hit, "There she goes, there she goes again," wasn't helping matters either. My worst nightmare was accidentally overtaking everyone else and shooting off down the river alone...





We set off, one behind the other, in one long line. I was fourth in position. Fifty metres into the paddle, Mike S (who was directly in front of me), became overturned by a rock and ended up swimming. I was fast approaching him, I wanted to avoid hitting him, but also didn't want to end up in the river with him. I dodged, I stayed upright, and looked up to find Klinger (paddler one) had eddied out and got his throw line ready. Sykes (paddler two) had gone boat chasing. You've never seen two paddlers get prepped for a rescue so quickly. I HAD to find a way to eddie out. Miraculously (this is me we're talking about!), I did, and so did everyone else, all dotted about the river. Mike S was fine, we (er, Sykes and Klinger) recovered his boat, and later his paddles, and we all set off again. This time with me in second position.

It was all plain sailing after that. We all made it down in our one long line. We actually all managed to eddie out twice, just not all in the same place! The stretch was over in 45 minutes, and I was both relieved and disappointed to reach the finish line.

The next river was the Gyronde, a very similar stretch to the Onde, but longer and it ended with a nice, gentle bimble. There were no swims and no rolls on this run. After some more boulder-dodging, and challenging fast-flowing water, the river gently calmed down and about an hour and a half in, we found ourselves at the get out and ready to head back. It was amazing to run two beautiful rivers in a morning, and these were definitely my two favourite stretches. Not only were they a challenge, they were again set in stunning scenery, and they really made me realise how good the people I was paddling with really were; we all pulled together as a team, everyone kept their distance, there were no epics, and I really have never seen a faster or better executed rescue than Mike S's on the river Onde.

My evenings were consumed by food, drink and swims in the lake. I've concluded that there's nothing better than a relaxing swim in a transparent lake after a full day of paddling in a warm country. You heard me, transparent. Don't ever think that statement is a good excuse to throw me in the Wensum, or any other waters in the UK.

All in all, I had the most amazing week, and I cannot thank all those involved enough, especially; the drivers, the coaches and the river leaders (I'm only just starting to realise the weight of the responsibility to wear in this role), the cooks, Pia for the yoga sessions and last but not least, the person who organised it all.

And if you're reading this and you like the sound of a week paddling in white water: no matter your skill level now, you've got no excuse for not getting yourself paddle-ready on the next foreign trip. **Leanne**





## CANOE WHITE WATER WEEKEND – WALES

The usual and not so usual suspects assembled with canoes and kit for a beautifully crisp and chilly weekend in Wales to paddle the Usk and maybe the Wye river levels dependent as ever.

Day 1 the Usk beckoned at the get in there was a large fallen tree across several bridge piers leaving a less than ideal line under the bridge – submerged but destabilising rocks to the left and over hanging trees and the same types of rocks to the right. All successfully navigated these obstacles with some friendly help from a few intrepid coaches stationed in the river to give wayward canoeists a push back in to the right line. Playing around below the bridge was great fun and helped all to remember their edge when ferry gliding and negotiating eddie lines. A few swims at this point which set the tone for the day with many of the more experienced members of the group taking a dip (including me, more about that later)

As we paddled on we encountered some small rapids and good spots to stay and play for a while – one such spot hosted a play wave, something I was struggling to get on to until a friendly tip from a coach helped me with my line. I was on the wave and having a great time when the thought came to mind – how do you get off the wave? As I edged the wrong way the flow tipped me in and onlookers confirmed that I had time to hold my nose before I capsized - Obviously not trying hard enough with my support stroke ! My swim was fun with all my white water safety and rescue skills coming back to the fore and with no chipper to worry about and a few coaches helping it was a positive experience.

Day 2 was a different stretch with 3 ledge drops ( I had no idea what this meant until I saw the first one) which looked quite a big drop from the bank. As I was muttering to myself that I was never doing that some wise words were heard from Pete – don’t make a decision until you’ve seen someone else run it which as it turned out was excellent advice. Mark picked a line for most of the group and made it look oh so easy. Having watched all and sundry take the leap I decided to have a go and made it over safely and loved it. The second and third drops were bigger still and fun was had by all - the only pair to stay dry being Martin and Jagoda who had the perfect boat, excellent surface area to volume ratio and skilful river reading.

As ever Pia did the perfect shop and everyone one mucked in at the hostel to make it another fun weekend away. **Kate P**



## A chat with... Pete Sykes

*Q1 - Do you remember your first time in a canoe or kayak?*

Yes – had brought a boat having never sat in one off the back of a mate at work saying he would like to start going again. The two of us set off to Horstead Mill and paddled about (I swam 3 times if I recall)

*Q2 - Any memorable experiences from when you first joined Eagle?*

I joined Eagle to meet other boaters and get on the fledgling WW trips that they were running with Activ-8 at the time having caught the WW bug at Horstead and a week at PYB. The best thing I found was that there was a ready-made group of people there who all wanted to dabble in the moving water stuff as well. Luckily we all got on and they are still mates now.

*Q3 - Any tips for new people to the club?*

Throw yourself into the trips the club does – Symonds Yat and the other weekends away are great ice breakers and the club fosters a great gang vibe when away with everyone pitching in.

*Q4 - What is the best bit of paddling kit you've bought, and why?*

A wise old coach said to me (Tony Carter) when I joined Eagle that the most important piece of kit you own is your paddle. You will move it thousands upon thousands of times over the course of the year and if it doesn't feel right or is the wrong length or too heavy or too light then it will annoy you.

*Q5 - If you could re-paddle any river that you've done before, which would it be, and why?*

The Koritnica, in Slovenia. Crystal clear water in Mini Gorges with great scenery. Never get tired of that river.

*Q6 - And where would you most like to paddle, given that time, money and skills were no obstacle?*

Ecuador looks kind of cool.

*Q7 - What has been your most memorable experience or sighting whilst paddling?*

The Camp Toni girl having racy glamour shots taken by a man in speedos at the get out for the Korinica from Slovenia number one is a memory that will probably stay with me for a while.



## A chat with... Adam Hunt

*Q1 - Do you remember your first time in a canoe or kayak?*

Yep, it was a scout water weekend (can't remember the real name) I loved it, although remember swimming.....nothing has changed there then.

*Q2 - Any memorable experiences from when you first joined Eagle?*

At my taster session we were playing some kind of game involving a tennis ball were we had to throw it and the other person had to catch it or receive some forfeit. The ball was thrown too me although it was going to land out of my reach, so I proceeded to jump out of the boat and catch the ball (and a good catch at that too) before then realising how stupid I had been by how wet I was. I was eventually rescued after everyone had stopped laughing. So two times in a boat two swims and I still did not get the hint.

*Q3 - Any tips for new people to the club?*

Try as many different boats as possible and try and spot some differences between them, sticking to the same boat all the time initially limits your progression. Experiment with all the boats available (even the one's that you don't always see out of the shed) at the club. It also allows you to find a boat that really works for you over one that you feel just comfortable in, trust me there is such a difference.



It will also allow you to get an idea of how different boats are good at different things. This is something I did not do and I regretted it when I was forced to paddle different boats as I got progressed through the star groups.

*Q4 - What is the best bit of paddling kit you've bought, and why?*

Pogies without a doubt (neoprene or fabric socks for your hands which attach to your paddle blade)!! Keep your hands super warm, can quickly and easily be shared around the group and warm up in no time at all. Although I don't recommend the Palm ones, I find them hard to get my hands in. My personal favourite are the immersion research one's. Although I have lost one of my ones if anyone knows where it is I would be very grateful to see that again.

*Q5 - If you could re-paddle any river that you've done before, which would it be, and why?*

The Arkaig in Scotland, it's just super fun short grade 4 run. Why would I paddle it again? Because I am never going to be able to run it as it was due to the building of a new hydroelectric plant on the river.

*Q6 - And where would you most like to paddle, given that time, money and skills were no obstacle?*

I would like to think if time money and skill was no obstacle there would not be many places I had not paddled, I dream of falling off some big waterfalls quite often so doing some of them would be cool.

*Q7 - What has been your most memorable experience or sighting whilst paddling?*

I should probably say Katie's and my first date....however I have done some really cool rivers which have left me with lots of happy memories Slovenia in 2014 has to close if not top of the list. Seeing 3 otters in one day was very cool as well, I think that was on my 3\* canoe assessment day. Now off to run and hide from Katie.

*Q8 - Tell us a canoe or kayak-related fact about you, that not many people know?*

I actually get scared a fair amount on white water, I have just got better at hiding it. I don't really want to lose that fear because I feel it makes me paddle better.

### A chat with... Trevor Goodbun

*Q1 - Do you remember your first time in a canoe or kayak?*

I have a dim recollection of falling out a kayak at scouts over 40 years ago, but the first real memory was canoeing down the Ardeche on a school trip at the age of 14

*Q2 - Any memorable experiences from when you first joined Eagle?*

The induction course and first year doing level 1 was particularly enjoyable, it was real fun.

My first Eagle trip was on a scalding hot day, in a white water boat, it was hard work, but great fun. What I didn't realise that the club membership didn't guarantee sunshine every trip!

*Q3 - Any tips for new people to the club?*

Don't rush through the awards, especially in your first year, take time to enjoy just being out on the water with others in a similar position.

Also get out on a trip, that way you really get to meet others. Don't be afraid you can't do it, if you canoe I would suggest tandem, if you see a trip you fancy just email back to say you would like to go and is there anyone who you could tandem with. It's a bit harder to tandem in a kayak but we haven't left anyone behind yet, not least on any of the trips I have been on, and it was usually me at the back!. If you are worried ask if there is a spare canoe you could climb into in the unlikely event of the going getting too tough.

*Q4 - What is the best bit of paddling kit you've bought, and why?*

A decent quality flask, there is nothing worse on a cold day than lukewarm cupasoup.



*Q5 - If you could re-paddle any river that you've done before, which would it be, and why?*

Probably the Ardeche, in parts it can be over-crowded and chaotic, but I like the fact you are going from A to B, there are some easy rapids and fun slides along the way, the sun usually shines and the water is warm. Also the food and wine aint' bad!

*Q6 - And where would you most like to paddle, given that time, money and skills were no obstacle?*

So many choices and even more I don't know about. My favourite type of trip would be an A to B trip with not too difficult rapids to play about in along the way.

One day I would also like to go on the club white water trips in Europe, but I still need to learn to roll, and build up my white water confidence.

*Q7 - What has been your most memorable experience or sighting whilst paddling?*

A very simple one, I am not a bird watcher but seeing a Kingfisher for the first time on the Thetford trip really sticks in my mind. It is hard to believe that such a colourful bird is British. Based on my experiences in Indian restaurants , I thought it was a native of much warmer places!

*Q8 - Tell us a canoe or kayak-related fact about you, that not many people know?*

I am not as confident as I may appear. Turning up to even join the club took me a year to pluck up the courage and I was terrified before going on my first trip that I wouldn't be able to make it and hold everyone up.

#### **A chat with... Leanne Baker**

So, firstly, a little info about yourself?

"Rather a bad day on the river than a good day in the office", used to be my favourite saying. I now work 9-5 in an editing role.

I've been with Eagle since July 2014 but I've been paddling for longer. You can usually find me in a tiny (but beautiful), red playboat, but I also enjoy canoeing. Kayaking is definitely my favourite though...

*Q1 - Do you remember your first time in a canoe or kayak?*

It was at Eaton Vale with my guiding group, I was about 13. I refused help when it was time to get out at the end and I fell straight in (still haven't learned).

*Q2 - Any memorable experiences from when you first joined Eagle?*

Everyone was really friendly. Despite already being a paddler, I was asked to take part in the intro sessions. In my first ever one, we played a game with a ball: if your boat got hit by the ball, you were out. I hid behind Pete L's canoe and asked him to cover my boat. He completely ignored me and paddled off, leaving me out in the open (definitely wasn't love at first sight).

*Q3 - Any tips for new people to the club?*

Don't get discouraged if you can't paddle in a straight line right away (it took me forever), and always dress like you're going to swim; the day you don't, you're guaranteed to take a dunk.

*Q4 - What is the best bit of paddling kit you've bought, and why?*

My sweet cheeks! They mould to your bum so I can practically guarantee that I'm one of the most comfortable paddlers on the water.

*Q5 - If you could re-paddle any river that you've done before, which would it be, and why?*

The Tees. I would like to get down Abbey Rapids nice and gracefully, without any unintended moves (back flips for example).

*Q6 - And where would you most like to paddle, given that time, money and skills were no obstacle?*

Uganda. I got invited on a trip when I was studying but I couldn't afford to go :(

*Q7 - What has been your most memorable experience or sighting whilst paddling?*

I've got so many great memories; I genuinely don't think I have a single negative one about paddling. My first ever swim on whitewater – I was paddling at HPP and I came out fairly near the top. I swam the entire course. Luckily, a team of firemen were waiting at the bottom to hoist me out (OK, it was a coincidence, they were doing some training). It was a lovely experience!

Symonds Yat last year. I was just sat on a rock, minding my own business, munching on a roll when someone on the water took a swim. Shaun came and jumped onto a rock next to the one I was sitting on and chucked out a throw line, only to misjudge how slippery the rocks were and get dragged into the water too. It was hilarious and a great lesson on how not to rescue someone...

*Q8 - Tell us a canoe or kayak-related fact about you, that not many people know?*

So, according to my great grandfather, William Carrie (he was a journalist), I am distantly related to Rob Roy MacGregor, creator of the Rob Roy canoe. I have yet to fact check this...

#### **A chat with... Kate Pontin**

*So, firstly, a little info about yourself? What you do?*

Drink champagne whenever I can.

*How long you've been with eagle?*

Since 2006.

Do you usually paddle canoe, kayak, or both?

Canoe and of late a little bit of sit on top.

*Q1 - Do you remember your first time in a canoe or kayak?*

Camp Windermere in 1992 – I was a voluntary instructor learning the basics so that I could help out more experienced coaches – got 2 star in both canoe and kayak. It was a beautiful place to learn with the Langdales in the distance. First capsized drill with spray deck on in the middle of the lake on a quiet calm summer's day – it really was perfect. (The setting not my capsized!)

*Q2 - Any memorable experiences from when you first joined Eagle?*

People – Chris Wright making canoeing look graceful and effortless.

Trips – going to the Wye Valley, a place I'd not been to before and being bowled over by how beautiful it was and paddling the Wye and seeing sand martins flying in and out of the sand banks.

*Q3 - Any tips for new people to the club?*

Don't be afraid to ask any question no matter how small – don't give up after week one if you can't go in a straight line – you will get there ! The sausages are lovely on BBQ night, bought from a great butcher.

*Q4 - What is the best bit of paddling kit you've bought, and why?*

A bit dull but I adore my boat, my paddle is the best thing since Dom Perignon discovered that adding sugar to already fermented wine creates bubbles and for winter paddling a dry suit is what makes me get out there in the cold and have the best fun this side of the lake district.

*Q5 - If you could re-paddle any river that you've done before, which would it be?*

A section of the Usk that I did in January this year, because there were three drops, I did one and would go back and definitely do the second and maybe even the third.

*Q6 - And where would you most like to paddle, given that time, money and skills were no obstacle?*

The Spey in Scotland – heard so much about it and its Scotland, so beautiful scenery a given.



*Q7 - What has been your most memorable experience or sighting whilst paddling?*

A family of Otters on Barton broad playing in the sunshine – and kingfishers on the Wensum, that flash of turquoise is magical.

*Q8 - Tell us a canoe or kayak-related fact about you, that not many people know?*

I failed my three star canoe the first time of taking, and in hindsight it was the best thing that could have happened because when I retook it I was a much better paddler and felt that I had really earned my pass.



#### **A chat with... Pia Shell**

*So, firstly, a little info about yourself? What you do? How long you've been with eagle? Do you usually paddle canoe, kayak, or both?*

I've been with Eagle for two years now and I usually paddle a kayak, however that's because I discovered very early on that canoes are big, heavy boats that I wouldn't be able to manage myself, thus rendering me dependant on others to go out for a paddle. Kayaks are do-able as an independent paddle. Saying all that I love the canoe and this season I'm determined to get the better of them and become a competent canoeist.

*Q1 - Do you remember your first time in a canoe or kayak?*

My first time in a kayak was some 35 years ago in the Brecon Beacons on a school trip, I got stuck in the shallows and refused to get out of the boat. The rest of group carried on and left me there, tearful and sulking. I don't remember any more.....I think I was traumatised!

*Q2 - Any memorable experiences from when you first joined Eagle?*

My introduction to the Eagles was to get on the minibus and head for Symonds Yat. I didn't know anyone and 5 hours on the bus was a little out of my comfort zone. Once on the water I was looked after by Fred, who was cool, laid back and very capable. I felt humbled to have such a lovely young fella looking out for me.

*Q3 - Any tips for new people to the club?*

Get stuck in, don't be shy, the coaches are grand. They give up so much time to bring us all on I think it's important to give something back to the club in any way we can. Eagle is run entirely on the good will of many.

*Q4 - What is the best bit of paddling kit you've bought, and why?*

Once I had got to grips with the sit on top kayak that someone lent me and constantly fell off riding the waves...my first purchase were thigh straps which meant I could stay on and surf.

*Q5 - If you could re-paddle any river that you've done before, which would it be?*

I would love to re-visit the Dart, it is a most beautiful river but more than that it was my third trip with the Eagles and I felt more at ease with everyone and I really started to enjoy my paddling, the weather was barmy for November and we ate alfresco in November!

*Q6 - And where would you most like to paddle, given that time, money and skills were no obstacle?*

I'm looking forward to the Alps in June. A friendly bunch of kayakers and sunshine, I can't think of a better holiday.

*Q7 - What has been your most memorable experience or sighting whilst paddling?*

I enjoyed paddling the Tees whilst the hills were covered in snow, and seeing my first tree creeper when paddling the Usk.

*Q8 - Tell us a canoe or kayak-related fact about you, that not many people know?*

Being quite vocal, I think so most people know all there is to know about my paddling career so far!



In the last newsletter, I set out the background to Eagle Canoe Club's project to replace the portacabins which provide the classroom, changing rooms and storage, with a purpose built steel framed building which will provide a clubroom / training facilities, changing rooms, disabled persons changing room and kit storage, together with the various options which had been considered and the funding which was available at that time.

Since then we have successfully raised £210,000 of the total build cost of £232,153, with support from Sport England (£75,000), Norwich Town Close Trust (£75,000), Paul Bassham Trust (£10,000), Geoffrey Watling Trust (£15,000) and Alderman Norman Foundation (£5000), together with club reserves of £30,000.

We have now signed a contract with PJ Spillings, with works due to commence on 8 August 2016. This will provide the building and a basic internal fit out, with the remaining works being undertaken through further fund raising and members volunteer days.

The new building will help to secure the long term future of the club providing modern facilities which are purpose built to meet the needs of water sports run from the site. In addition to providing facilities for club members a significant part of our grant applications has been to increase participation in paddlesport for the wider community.

To enable the club to do this we are developing links with other organisations such as the scouts, sea cadets etc who we will look to affiliate to the

club, so that they can join in with club activities or use the facilities to run their own activities.

We are also looking to further develop the training opportunities which can be delivered from the site by linking our Coach Development Programme with other neighbouring clubs (plus the scouts and cadets), together with working with course providers to run additional training from the site.

As the facilities become more established, we will need to consider how we provide further opportunities for the wider community. The club is reviewing its long term development plan and the Committee and Coaches would welcome members input into how you would like to see the club develop in the future, what opportunities you would like to be given and how we can increase paddling participation in the wider community.

If you have any suggestions, reservations, comments, please let me know. **Stuart**

So that is the end of this edition of the newsletter. Keep all your lovely articles flowing, maybe if you want to go somewhere the club hasn't been before write an article extolling the virtues of said venue and maybe a club trip will magically appear if it tickles others fancy. Maybe you have eaten a fantastic meal on a club trip (or created something you were very proud of. How about sending in the recipe (and quantities) so we can enjoy awesome food on every trip. Anyway cheerio and happy paddling.