

Newsletter

Spring 2012



Editorial

The new season is now with us and we have seen a healthy number of existing members and new members enrolled for the 2012 season. Whilst we are in desperate need of some rain to keep our river levels up and the rivers healthy let's hope we soon get some nice warm and sunny Wednesday evenings.

The club is now collecting Sainsbury's and Tesco's school vouchers to hopefully get some new kit, put the vouchers in the boxes in the kitchen area at the club."

We aim to produce the club newsletter on a quarterly basis. It aims to be both informative but also fun – how long will it be before you get a mention!! Contributions are accepted from all members so why not spend an hour or two one evening writing up a tale on your favourite paddling adventure, kit or anything else paddle related. I accept articles in any format – please email them to me at mquadling@btinternet.com

See you on the water or at a pool session soon

Mark Quadling
Editor

Chairman's Chat - Welcome to Summer 2012

I would like to welcome all our new members to Eagle Canoe Club. I hope that you have an enjoyable summer and that paddling with the club is everything you hoped it would be. For returning members, I'm very pleased that you're still enjoying everything we do and hope that you'll find something in this summer's programme to challenge you and develop your paddling.

At the end of last summer we sought feedback from members as to what had worked well and what needed some refining. At the coaches meetings we have also been reflecting on what we offer and how we deliver it. The 2012 summer programme is the result of a lot of

input from many people and hopefully provides a wide variety of opportunities for members to get involved.

This year we have sought to provide a “progressive” programme which allows members to develop their skills and for trips to be at a level which is appropriate to test your new skills (be that beginner or advanced paddler). You will note from the programme that there are a number of Progressive White Water paddling weekends and these are being championed by Pete. More details of this can be found in the club room, but it is hoped that these will be available for both kayakers and canoeists.

There are also a number of social events in addition to the monthly BBQ fun nights (which are sure to be as mad as ever!). These include a family fun day at the club, a beach day and an evening BBQ at The Eagle pub.

It is also the year of the Olympics! We will try and incorporate this into our programme and may add activities around the canoeing events, but the predicted interest in paddle sports which will be generated by the Olympics will give us all a new challenge towards the end of the summer.

There is going to be a For Sale pin board in the corridor by the changing rooms, so if you have any kit for sale please do put up a notice here.

So what am I looking forward to this year? Personally I am excited about putting into practice what I learnt last winter on my Level 2 coaching training and running a 2 star group. I am counting down the days to our trip to the French Alps for a week of paddling and in researching a possible trip to France / Belgium for 2013. To camping weekends away, I always find these relaxing and a complete escape from the week before (together with a good fire if Mark is there!)

My hope for 2012 is that the programme runs smoothly and that more members become actively involved in the running of the club; helping with bank side duties, maintenance days, towing the club trailer for trips and suggesting programme ideas for the future and getting involved in their planning and delivery.

Stuart Pontin

Grants for Kayak Replacements

You'll no doubt be aware that in the last few years we've been lucky enough to secure some sizeable grants that have allowed us to buy brand new tandem and solo canoes, and kayaks at the top and bottom of the size range. The club is thriving thanks to these acquisitions, and we're keen to continue. We know that there is a bit of a gap when it comes to new mid-range kayaks, and so we're looking to undertake a rolling replacement programme for these boats.

To do this we need to find as much money from external sources as we possibly can, mostly likely new grants that we can apply for. Do you know of any potentials that we can apply to? Does your company give grants as part of it's Corporate Social Responsibility initiative? All leads and ideas would be gratefully received.

We can supply loads of supporting text and previous examples of applications if you're happy to give it a go; alternatively we could give it a go if you don't feel confident or able to do this yourself.

Simon Allen

Eagle in the news

Thanks to the efforts of Gwen, a longstanding Eagle member our club has received quite a bit of good publicity recently. For those with internet access the link below takes you to an article from the evening news.

http://www.eveningnews24.co.uk/news/calls_to_clean_up_norwich_s_river_1_1144094

A similar article also appeared in this month's edition of 'Canoe Focus' which is the magazine of our sport's governing body which gives national coverage.

In summary for those without access to the articles, Gwen has been out in her canoe collecting rubbish found on the river Wensum near where the club operated. Gwen's managed to collect 15 wheelie bin size bags of rubbish, two bins, a large tarpaulin and a shopping trolley!! The club has done similar events in the past and it is astounding how much rubbish finds its way into the waterways.

Whilst we would always encourage members to pick up any litter that they see we would advise a little bit of caution. Always wear gloves, beware of sharp items and make sure that you wash your hands afterwards.

Mark Quadling

Intermediate open boat white water canoeing trip - up North

We all made our way on Friday afternoon, Jez, Pete, Stuart, Jaz, Spencer, Emma, Colin and myself, in three separate cars to the Bunkhouse at Hownsgill Farm, Consett, County, Durham. Emma excelled herself with the poshest bunkhouse I think any of us have been in - central heating, washing machine and supplied with continental breakfast!

After long discussions and research looking to find enough water to paddle on, Saturday took us to the river Tees with a put in at Barnard Castle. After a warm up in grade 3 we

reached the Abbey falls. We all got out to take a look. Colin, Emma and myself felt apprehensive at the grade 4 water, and we were proved right to be concerned when Jaz and Jez went swimming. Things didn't improve when Spencer and Stuart went swimming too. Pete was the only one to get first time success but he had already been swimming after live baiting earlier helping Jaz and Jez.. Once all the boats arrived at the bottom of the falls we all set off again and the fun wasn't finished yet. As we arrived at Whorlton Bridge we were hit by a tremendous snow squall and a whiteout. As luck would have it we were close to where we were getting out as I was losing my fight with the trees. The evening was finished off with a nice meal at The Old Mill, Knitsley. Well done Emma again.



Sunday was a quieter day chasing water again, this time heading for Rippon area and the river Ure. Putting in at Mickley Wood it was a gentle paddle on grade 2 water down to Sleningford, Water Mill. Spencer did seem to spend more time in the water than paddling and Jez gave us an interesting self rescue stood on a rock in the middle of the river.

So a great weekend, with great company. For anyone thinking about going on an intermediate white water weekend I can recommend going on a trip like the River Wye first. I'm glad of the skills learnt on my 3 star course that gave me confidence, cheers Chris.

Ian Kirkham

Web Site

Over the winter we have been looking to review the Club's web site with the aim being to update the content and look of the site to reflect what the club is currently doing and to try to answer the majority of questions Tom & Emma receive from potential members through the web site rather than through lots of repeat e mails.

We have also sought to increase its use for current members to provide more "on going" information to encourage use of the web site as an information source for club activities and other resources such as club documentation and useful links etc.

I'm pleased to say that the Eagle Canoe Club website review is nearing completion and will soon be going live after feedback from coaches and the Club's committee.

The new site includes a wide range of photos which hopefully give a feel for what we do, together with updated information and easier links to photos and videos from recent events. We have also included a “live” calendar which we can update with details about trips and hopefully include a map of the meeting point etc.

There are also now pages which include details of the committee and coaches and club documentation which you may find useful.

As with all our activities, we would really welcome your feedback on how useful you find the site and any suggestions you have on how we could improve it in the future for new and existing members.

Stuart Pontin

Lee Valley

Sunday 1 April saw 9 paddlers headed off for a day at Lee Valley White Water centre to experience paddling at the Olympic course before it closes in mid April for training to commence for the Olympics. I should have known by the date that it was going to be an eventful day!

Several of those attending had already completed their assessment and so headed straight to the Legacy Course (with Spencer on the Olympic Course), for their mornings fun.

Darren, Tony, Elena and myself had to undertake an assessment on the Legacy Course before we were allowed free! It cruelly started with having to roll, followed by a run down the course with a roll at the assessors command! Our second run was to see if we could be let loose on the Olympic course, and we had to get around 6 slalom poles.

At the end we had a short break while Darren, Daniel & a stranger attempted to recover a capsized boat and kit before it got fed through the pumps! With most kit recovered the assessor said that the main problem was throw lines and paddles going into the pumps – oops says Darren – I dropped my sling while getting the boat!

A mass panic followed and resulted in the pumps for the course being turned off for 10 minutes while the offending sling was found!.

Meanwhile Tony & I had the opportunity to run the Olympic course. I think we should have been assessed, but the assessor was otherwise engaged and said it was OK for us, so we went off with Spencer. It is very different to the Legacy Course and I was relieved to get to the bottom the right way up.

We had a few more hours playing on the Legacy course and then headed home (after 20 minutes being tempted to spend money in Brookbanks). This is where the events really began to unfold!

For some reason the kayaks REALLY didn't want to stay on the trailer. Within the first mile the first boat had escaped from its straps. That resolved, the lights then decided to stop working on the M11 and after a short stop on the hard shoulder we head off again.

5 miles on, and the two boats on the top row decided to swing out sideways! A quick trip to the hard shoulder again saw them both drop off onto the hard shoulder just as we stopped moving. This really was going to be my last stop! Everything was strapped, and double strapped and checked by all.

We made it home without further incident, but I've learnt a lot about slippery boats for the trailer training day!

Thanks to Spencer for a fun day out. I look forward to watching the Olympics and knowing I've paddled that!

Stuart Pontin

Volunteers

Over the last few years we've been trying to increase member's involvement in running the club. We always welcome feedback and suggestions for programme ideas and look for help with our ongoing maintenance of the site and equipment.

This year we are looking for help with:

- Maintenance days on 1 Monday evening per month during the summer, including a cleaning rota
- Bank side helpers on a Wednesday
- BBQ chefs on enrolment nights
- Trailer drivers – we are having an induction day on 22 April

There will be sheets on the notice board by the fire exit if you would like to put your name down to help with any of these activities.

Stuart Pontin

Shirt designs

Last year's AGM saw the great T shirt raffle which cleared the last of our old stock of club shirts. This year we have a range of clothing items and designs which are available.

Simon introduced a range of hoodies and T shirts last year with "Eagle Canoe Club" printed on them and this year to add to this range, Spencer has sourced a range of clothing with the Eagle Logo embroidered onto them.

Both designs are available to order on enrolment nights and we will look to submit a monthly order.

If you are interested in either please see Simon, Spencer or Emma on club nights.

Operation 'clubhouse'

We sat round the tables in the club house holding a club meeting back in January when Colin suddenly made a statement.. Gasps of amazement, stunned open mouths and looks of bewilderment came from around the table. Colin sat their beaming – his statement was 'I'm going to get this club house redecorated for the new season!!!'

Conversations quickly turned to 'any idea what you just said', thats gonna be nearly impossible' and 'how on earth are you going to do that!'

Colin enthusiastically told us that it just needed a bit of quick work, a lick of paint and it would look as good as new. Best of all, he thought he could get it all done for about £50!!

Before long an email had gone round, Colin had assembled his decorating kit and the operation was underway. The first phase (and seen by most as the easiest!) was to simply empty out the club house of the piles of furniture, posters, appliances, shoes, socks, spiders and who knows what else that had accumulated since the last revamp. With a large number of people assisting it wasn't long before we had an empty shell and we could see the scale of what we had started.

We spent a chilly Wednesday evening doing the preparation work in anticipation of lots of volunteers to help with the painting on the following Saturday so we got on with with lots of sanding, filling, cleaning, washing down and repairing missing pieces of wood.

The first Saturday we managed to give the ceiling a good coat of paint and managed to utilise all the people that volunteered well. I was quickly given a roller as I had explained how I am never allowed near the edges at home, Paul (who works as an aircraft engineer) was quickly given edging to do on the basis that he would be great at attention to detail. With Colin supplying tea and biscuits and lots of encouragement the ceiling was fairly quickly done and already the club house was feeling brighter.

With further preparation done on the next Wednesday evening we were back the following weekend to do the major job of painting the walls. Colin had sourced several tins of paint but we had little say in the colour. The first tin really was the colour of custard so we quickly set about mixing the tins up to get a colour that we thought would be ok. A small team of us quickly and efficiently started to paint round the club house with our dedicated roles.. As usual I was on the roller!! Before we knew it the club house was seriously glowing.. this colour we had mixed up was really not good!!

A determined effort saw the walls completed and the skirting undercoated. Colin's dream was quickly turning to reality!!

Glossing was done in another evening and after just a few weeks we were ready to refurbish the room. With myself and Damon trying our hand at tiling with some adhesive that had seen better days, lots of club members turned up to help put everything back. Special thanks should go to Jez who came in and steam cleaned the floor for us.

In a little over a few weeks, Colin had achieved the impossible and we are now the proud owners of a nice bright and refurbished club house. It just shows that with enough enthusiasm and help just about anything is possible.

Special thanks must go to Colin for having the inspiration to start the project and also to all the willing volunteers that turned up to support him

Mark Quadling

A Silly Trip Around Handa Island, Scotland

After three weeks exploring the Outer Hebrides in summer 2011 I returned to the Scottish mainland at the quaint little white town of Ullapool intending to head north to mix-and-match walking the Cape Wrath Trail with canoeing/canoe camping. It soon became evident that backpacking with my tent was totally impossible due to midge inflicted hell, so canoeing it was.

This area north of Ullapool in the county of Sutherland is truly stunning – one of earth's great glories, and completely unlike any other part of Highland Scotland. The rocks here (the Lewisian gneiss) comprise the ancient roots of great mountains and, at 3 billion years old are some of the oldest in the world. These tactile rocks push through the thin vegetation like the old bones of a thinly clad skeleton, and in parts form great swathes of solid rock landscape. Scattered around are isolated pinnacles formed from the overlying Torridonian sandstones, making a landscape more dramatic than any continuous mountain range. And in every dip lies a dark peaty lochan (small loch), thousands of them; from one viewpoint I counted 20.

After several weeks of exploring the lochs and wild wild coastline in my Wenona Wilderness kevlar canoe, camping on isolated rocks and beaches, being trailed by seals, dolphins, porpoise, and, on one momentous occasion watching and photographing a little pine marten darting among the rocks, I headed down the tiny meandering lanes of pink rocks leading to the little settlements of Fanagmore (3 houses) and Tarbet (one pub and 4 houses).

Tarbet was immediately opposite the island of Handa, an uninhabited nature reserve. Having explored up and down this section of coast, I decided to have a go at going round the

island. I don't know exactly it's circumference but I would estimate about 6 or 7 miles. But though the east and south sides of the island are sheltered, and the island slopes gently to the sea, with a couple of idyllic sandy beaches for easy landing, the west and north coasts are (as I was to find) a different matter entirely. There the cliffs are exposed to the battering seas coming unhindered all the way from Canada, with plenty of time to build up to a brisk swell.

I therefore decided to abandon my canoe for the safer option of my dinky little 10 ft Stearn's white-water inflatable kayak. Although this is open decked and thus liable to fill with water the row of parallel holes running along the hull made it self-bailing, so that any water coming in the top would go out again through these holes, leaving only a continuous equilibrium of water in the bottom of the boat (this level being determined by the weight of the paddler). I had only used it once in relatively rough seas in Mallorca and it bobbed like a cork, so I had reasonable faith in its stability.

The sea across to Handa was calm and I judged that surely it couldn't be much worse around the other exposed side. Around this NW coast of Scotland there are thousands of charming little skerries (small rocky islands) and I meandered contentedly through some of these before crossing the 2km to the island. The tranquil waters continued along the east and south coasts but as I began to turn around the south west the coast got rockier and the seas more choppy. I should have turned round at this point, because by the time I had got round to the north the cliffs had risen to black bulwarks of over 300 feet plummeting with a sheer drop to the dark blue seas which crashed against its base. I was faced with a wild maelstrom of white crests and dark green troughs, waves breaking over me as I surmounted every wave.

Again I should have turned back but as I looked back along the distance I'd come I thought I'd reached the point of no return and that the headland I could see in the distance was the turning into the northeast stretch and was not far from the last leg. I thought I was at least two thirds of the way round, when in fact I was not even half.

With riding the peaks and troughs my progress was very slow, and I was going twice the distance. As well as this, the waves rushing into the cliffs were rebounding and bouncing back out to sea. I was caught in a pincer between the incoming and outgoing waves and the only way to avoid this was to paddle further out to sea beyond their range. But heading further out to sea in my little craft was scary and required serious effort to keep my position.

After paddling hard for what seemed forever I finally rounded the headland. But rather than be greeted by the welcome sight of the nearby mainland, there was just a continuation of the terrifying cliffs disappearing into the far distance to yet another headland. I was actually not even half way along the northern section of coast.

It was at this point that I began to be really frightened and when I really knew that I'd bitten off more than I could chew. My little boat is slow and inefficient at the best of times and being so light is easily swept this way and that by winds, currents and waves. But if I'd been slow before, as I came round the corner and embarked on this next epic stretch I realised that if I'd been slow before, I now wasn't even moving. I compared my position to the cliff and even though I'd now been paddling as though my life depended on it (which it did) for over 2 hours and had been creeping slowly, slowly along, I was now paddling just to stay still.

I felt real fear as I realised the reality of my position. I was paddling as hard as I could and not moving; I was getting tired but couldn't stop to rest or I'd be thrown onto the sheer rocks; if the tide changed I'd be taken out to sea – these are fierce tides; and if the wind got up or the weather changed (which it did quickly here) I'd certainly be done for. Yet I had to find extra strength from somewhere and the absolute horror of ending up on the way to Canada or smashed to a pulp on these dark brooding cliffs made me summon everything I had in the effort of reaching that far misty headland.

So up over the crests of the waves, plunging back down into the troughs, water crashing over my head, ploughing onwards for all I was worth. And gradually, bit by tiny bit I crept towards the headland - inch by inch, foot by foot. After an eternity I finally reached the end of that endless cliff, and as I turned that corner, not only did I know that I was on the final stretch but the cliffs lowered and the waves – free from the island blocking their progress to the mainland - now aided rather than hindered my paddling. Coming round the jagged north east of the island I knew I'd done it, I was safe.

So, five nerve racking hours after setting off I turned back into the sheltered waters of Tarbet and paddled slowly back through the tiny skerries and up onto the pebbly beach of the tiny harbour.

For five minutes I just sat there. My arms were not just aching, they were painful, but I didn't care, my relief was overwhelming. I knew I'd been lucky; I also knew I'd been, well – stupid I suppose, and the remainder of my time in Sutherland I stayed well and truly within my comfort zone!

Later, when I had access to a computer I looked on You Tube and found one video of a Handa circuit by a man in a sea kayak – not a piddling little 10 ft inflatable – and guess what? Yes, where I had crashing waves and dived with death, he had the proverbial millpond all the way round; so calm that not only could he calmly explore the caves and cracks of the great northern cliff face, but he could even make a video of his trip around. But, what the heck, I'd probably win the award for the luckiest (and most foolhardy) circuit of Handa. After all, he'd kayaked Handa, I'd survived it!!

Gwen Maka

Parking at Eagle

You will have probably noticed by now that parking is quite restricted at the Eagle Site. Please can you ensure that you park sensibly so we can get as many cars as possible into our car park. The part in front of the scout hut (which has signs on the fence saying 'Scout Parking') is not for use by Eagle Members.

Please avoid parking on Helford Street as we need to maintain good relations with the local residents who park there. We do have use of the parking at the Caravan Site at the top of Helford Street on Wednesday nights so would ask members to use this facility where possible.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Mark Quadling

Canoeing goes large

KFC, Burger King & MD all do it, so why not canoeing !

It is generally held that you can paddle "bigger" water in kayaks than canoes, but the week end of 18/19 February saw 8 fool hardy paddlers head off oop north for a week end of cano



ing, with the aim of paddling something a bit "chunkier" than normal!

Now its fair to say that there were a number of paddlers there who you'd normally see in a kayak and there were definitely more dry suits than you'd generally see in a canoe group, but this was February and (even though I say so myself) kayakers are not so worried about getting wet (or

cold) !

The water levels had been pretty poor for the week before and we'd all been busy watching the Environment Agency's web sites and weather forecasts, willing the rivers to rise, but it was not working!

Saturday saw us do a final trawl of web sites and finally we decided that the River Tees was our best bet to find a river which we could paddle in low water. On arrival, we were pleasantly surprised to see that the water was not as low as we expected. We split into two groups to give us all space to practice breaking in/out and ferry glide. It wasn't long before we had our first swimmer (Jez !). The mornings paddling progressed well and each drop we came to became gradually more "interesting" until we reached Abbey falls. This is a couple of hundred metres of big grade 3, and we decided to have a good look at it first. After a bit of discussion, it was agreed that Jas would run it first to show us the line, we could then decide whether we wanted to do it and then, as it was 12 ish, we'd have some lunch – shouldn't take long!

So we set up some throw lines (not that they were going to be needed !), got the cameras ready for an impressive run and all stood back waiting to be amazed. We were – Jas capsized before she even got to the big stuff – some rubbish



about having her eyes shut and "visualising her route down the rapid" (I've heard it all now!). This was not the start we'd envisaged – Jas swimming, me and Pete doing some "live baiting" to rescue boats and kit and throw lines in full use!

Jas had a second go and this time made it but sank the boat in the process. Jez, Spencer & I all followed and all ended up in the water one way or another. At this point several sensible people (and those without dry suits) decided that the odds of surviving this run dry were not good. Jez raised the stakes and found a new line which dramatically reduced water intake, followed by Pete (he is one jammy paddler – I refuse to accept that its skill!) and then me until I hit a big wave which took me out (see photo). I was rescuing myself quite well, had hold of my painter and paddle when Jas came to help. "I've got the boat" she said, so I let go – oops – half a mile downstream, Jas and Jez finally "had the boat", mainly due to a helpful rock which caught it.

A little while later we all regrouped for a spot of lunch and a warm in the sun (now 3.30).

So the morals of this – don't follow Jas's line, ignore her when she says she's got your boat, and never believe lunch is 10 minutes away! It was all a good laugh though and the biggest stuff I've paddled in a canoe.

On Sunday we travelled to my old stomping ground and paddled the River Ure. This was mainly grade 2 with some bits of interest. It was an easier day's paddle which was good as we all ached from the previous day. We still have a few swimmers and Jez decided to have a closer inspection of a fine looking rock at Sleningford – I was interested to see how he was going to get back in after his visit to his own island. What can we say – SWIMMER!!!!

We all had a great week end and everyone did really well. In particular I think Ian and Colin did splendidly in avoiding a swim all week end, although I'm sure not being in a dry suit focused the mind! I'd also really like to thank Jas for her guidance and entertainment over the weekend.



We are looking to do a range of trips this year, so hopefully this will inspire you to what can be done in a canoe (you don't have to be in a kayak to play on white water!)

Stuart Pontin

