

Newsletter

Summer 2012



Editorial

What a year 2012 is turning into – we started the summer with the Queens diamond jubilee celebrations where as a paddler you could only admire the planning, co-ordination and the logistics of getting that awesome flotilla together on the river Thames. Always one to look for new ideas I can't resist the idea of organising a similar flotilla on the river Wensum at a future date – I can see it now – a couple of hundred canoes and kayaks paddling through Norwich – might even invite the rowers! What a great way to promote paddling or water sports on the Wensum in Norwich.

From a paddling perspective we also saw record low water levels – that was until summer turned into the wettest drought in history – with many Wednesday nights being cold and wet which is not ideal – particularly for all of these in their first season of paddling.

We then had the Euro 2012 football competition and a fantastic result in the Tour de France. Now we are into what's proving to be a spectacular Olympics and I for one can only admire these people involved in organising such a massive and successful event. With gold and silver in the double canoes what great publicity for our sport although I'm guessing Chris would say they should have used a proper canoe!!.



I have to say am I the only one who is very surprised at the lack of flags and Olympic merchandise in our shops, towns and supermarkets.

Another major event for me was the birth of my daughter Ella. She has already been inspired by the Olympic aim of getting people into sport and cannot wait to get afloat.

Whilst I have not been at the club much this season I am planning to run a 'Tour de France' evening on the first Wednesday in September which I promise will be a lot of fun so if I don't see you before I will see you then. Can anyone grow sideburns ready for the event?

Many thanks as always to all of the contributors of articles for this edition of the newsletter including a new series on nature from Simon and some hints from Chris on how to perfect that J stroke. It's particularly good to read Edwards article and I look forward to more articles from new members. If you would like to submit an article for the next newsletter please email it to me at mquadling@btinternet.com

Mark Quadling

Editor

Alps Trip

This summer I achieved one of the aims that I set myself when I became chairman several years ago – to run a club trip to the French Alps. Many years ago, I went to Austria with a group of scouts and had 10 fantastic days paddling in Austria, Switzerland and Italy and since then have longed to go back.

I have had several failed attempts to get on a trip, but last year 5 club members went to the French Alps with a view to running a club trip this summer. Organisation and promotion soon started after our return in summer 2011 and we had a list of hopeful paddlers by late winter with a series of practice / training sessions and week ends pencilled into the programme.

Our last practice weekend was in Wales in May and it taught us all a lot about our skill levels, the logistics of the group and to read the guide book before setting off on a days paddle rather than relying on memories!!!!

Our departure to France soon approached and it was an exciting time packing Pete's van and sorting out the last logistics on the Wednesday before we left. Friday morning saw the last bit of packing and shopping (and two of our group climbing onto a plane!) and by 4 pm we were on the road for the beginning of our 18 hour trip to Briancon.

To cut a long journey short, we all made our tunnel crossing (although I forgot to pick Tony up at our agreed rendezvous!) and we stopped for some kip (sleep) at a rural service area just outside Reims at 1am. Back on the road by 6:30am, picked up the jet setters in Lyon at 1pm and arrived at the camp site at about 4:30pm in time to pitch tents, crack open the beers and eat a pre prepared spaghetti bolognese – boy did it taste good after lots of service station food !. It didn't take long for the guide books to come out and the planning of Sunday's paddle to start.

We had planned to do a variety of rivers throughout the week and due to numbers would split into two groups, although it was envisaged that we would all be on the same river as each other, each day. Our first river was nearby and was chosen as a warm up river for everyone to get used to the speed of alpine rivers and for the groups to settle in. Subsequent days saw us travelling all over the area to a variety of different character rivers, some of which were definitely more challenging than others.



I'm hoping that the others on the trip will do articles and tell their tales of the different rivers and their adventures, so I'm not going to outline what we did or where we went. For me, I had a great week of paddling and Pete & I gained a lot of experience at leading a

variety of rivers with Jas and Mark always in the wings keeping a watchful eye on events. During the week we invented some new river signals and these will definitely now be part of my future river signals.

Our evenings saw us relaxing by the lake next to the campsite, jumping out of trees, playing on children's play grounds (Jane & Jen!) and having boules contests, together with planning the next days paddling & having a few beers.

The trip went well and everyone got involved in making the week a success by helping to shop and cook as well as ensuring that all the days paddles were well run and fun. After 9 days of travelling, totalling 7500 miles between 4 vehicles, camping for 7 nights, cooking for 12 people for 8 days (with associated beer consumption !) and a small contribution for boat recovery, the trip came in at only £10 each over budget !

We have now started thinking about future trips, with the possibilities including a canoe trip to Belgium or a trip to Slovenia – anybody got any other suggestions?

Stuart

My First Impressions of Eagle Canoe Club

I came to ECC because my friend, Zach had been going for a while and he really enjoys it. I also know one of the leaders, Wayne, who had let me have a try before, and it was great fun.

I was really excited on my first night, which involved me being led by Jade and Emma, doing the "Paddle Power Start" course. That involved doing a capsized; I GOT VERY WET!

Since then, I have been on a trip to Costessey Mill, and kayaked past my Grandma and Grandad's house on the river in Norwich - they were really impressed!

The variety of Kayaks at ECC is phenomenal. From long, speedy unstable sea kayaks, to tiny Dynamos, there's something for everyone. Paddles are also very important, as they have to suit you. They also have to be comfortable to paddle with, so you don't get that tired on trips too easily!

Eagle Canoe Club is a great canoe club and I'm really glad I joined.

Edward Remer, Young Kayaker (aged 12)



My Favourite J-stroke

The J-stroke, one of the first strokes a canoeist has to learn well and one of the hardest strokes to get right. I recall an article I wrote for our newsletter several years ago and thought it might be time to look again at the subject, as there are now many more folks paddling open boats than in those days and paddling styles have changed over the years.

One thing which does seem to remain fairly constant is the choice of materials for both boats and paddles, most canoes for general use still being of lightweight Royalex, although



there are now a few more advanced composite materials being used. The better paddles are still generally of either wood, though now much lighter, or carbon fibre or a combination of these materials.

Now though, with some subtle differences in design, we are able to make canoes do lots more than we previously thought they were capable of and to help with this some of us have changed the way we use

the paddle, no longer are we coaching newcomers to grip the shaft 'one hand's width above the throat of the blade', which made for continuously wet and cold hands and squashed thumbs against the gunnels. Nowadays, we get more reach for supporting, sweeping, cross-decking and just powering forward by holding the shaft a lot higher up, around half way along. This is also good for those fancy Canoe Freestyle moves. I find that with my paddle blade just covered my shaft hand is just above the gunnel.

There must be as many variations of the J-stroke as there are Open Boaters, every paddler seems to have developed their own style, which is not a bad thing, but they all generally consist of the main elements of Plant, Power, Steer and Recovery phases. Some of these phases though could be looked at and tweaked a little to make them more efficient, especially when the going gets rough, such as against a strong headwind or even just at the end of a long day's paddle when you just want to throw the paddle overboard and stretch out in the bottom of the boat for the rest of the trip.

So this is the way my own J-stroke works, it won't be right for everyone but there may be some elements which you can incorporate into your own paddling to help your boat do what you want it to do.

When I **Plant** the paddle the blade goes straight down into the water with a vertical paddle

shaft, a little away from the boat, allowing for a slight bow-draw for initial steering if necessary. Not applying power at this stage prevents splashing and allows the paddle to stick.

When I apply **Power** the paddle shaft is still vertical allowing the blade to be close to or even slightly under the boat. To achieve this, the grip hand must be over the gunnel or even further out over the water. Turn your knees slightly to the water so you can reach further. As it passes the knees the blade starts to turn smoothly so the power face is away from the boat with the top thumb down, ready for steering

To **Steer (The J-stroke)** the grip hand is over or outside the gunnel so the paddle shaft is laying alongside the boat, parallel to the keel or centre line of the boat, power face away, so I can steer by pushing the blade outwards with my shaft hand.

On the **Recovery** my grip hand stays low at waist level, my shaft hand raises the blade from the water, and my shoulders swing to face forward with the paddle in a relaxed grip. The blade is feathered to reduce wind resistance. As I swing further towards my off-side my shaft hand reaches forward and my grip hand is raised allowing the paddle blade to drop into the water for the next stroke.

This Recovery method gives arms and shoulders a chance to relax with each stroke without the need for lifting the entire paddle high enough for the blade to clear the water, and using shoulder rotation in this way means more energy left for that terrible chore of loading up at the end of the trip.

Chris Wright



<http://public.fotki.com/eaglecc/>

Photos Online

Eagle's online photo album continues to be updated regularly, demonstrating the breadth of events that we lay on for club members. Recent trips to have been uploaded include the Symonds Yat weekend, the Alps trip, Tim's sea kayaking trip from Brancaster, the club beach day, and the recent canoe games night. More are sure to follow...

Planning for the Beach Day

Well before the Coach Meeting of 8th February I'd looked at my Tide Tables to see when we might get the tides we would need, ready to get a date on the programme at the meeting. We would need a day in probably June or July so it was warm, but before the start of the school summer holidays or the beach would be crowded. We would need tides coming in most of the time for safety, but not too far so we didn't have any beach left to sit on! And we would hope for some decent weather with only light winds and certainly not blowing off-shore!

I reckoned 1st July seemed almost ideal. I'd calculated that low water might be around mid-day which would give us a good extent of beach and mostly in-coming tide. At the meeting, events were getting slotted in to the calendar and it looked like this date was already booked for a trip, but I suggested that we didn't really need to do the trip on that particular date, and we had it in the bag. All we needed was the weather!

A week in advance the email was ready to go to let all the club members know what was happening, this I emailed to Tom to send out but Tom was away so he sent it to Stuart and it was out the next morning, what a system! How would we manage without smart phones? Stuart had given me names of 4 or 5 coaches who were willing to help out on that day. We agreed on the previous Wednesday that if the bad weekend which was forecast looked as though it might happen then we would talk by phone on the Saturday night before and make a decision.



The BBC forecast was for the Sunday to be the best day of the weekend with regard to sun and cloud cover with no rain, the maps showed the pressure rising and isobars slightly further apart but winds still from the west or south-west, blowing directly off-shore. Online forecasts gave a lovely sunny day but

winds of 16 to 18mph, gusting to 23mph, which is force 5 at least. Tim listened to the Shipping Forecast on the radio which said something similar but in a lot more detail and rang me straight after. We both agreed that as the forecasts were generally good and with tides and everything else in place we would let it run and look at wind conditions when we

were on the beach. We had good coach cover and if we were not happy we would keep paddlers well inshore and cut the day short if necessary.

When we got there we found that the dunes gave good protection from the worst of the wind, but we suggested that paddlers didn't venture any further out than the line of rock barriers. Those that did get out that far found out just how strong the wind was, certainly not easy to paddle back against if you were to go further than intended! I'm sure most of us there had a good time, not enough surf for a big run, but even staying fairly close to shore you could feel the swell coming in from the North Sea and experience the varying wind strengths and directions depending on where you were, all in a fairly safe environment. And the water was warm enough for some hardy ones to swim as well!

Trying to put names to faces afterwards I reckoned we had around 35 to 40 members and their families on the beach. Pulling off a day like this where folks can come and go as they please and still be safe needs a lot of coach support to make it work, so thanks to Tim, Si, Colin, Shaun and Alex for being on the water or just standing around on the beach and keeping an eye open. And to Tom, John and others for taking boats, paddles and a few other bits of gear to make sure we all had plenty of different stuff on the beach to try out.

See you there same time, same place next year? (Depending on tides, other events on the programme, weather forecasts, wind directions, etc.)

Chris Wright

Warning – High Fire Risk – One from the archives

The article below was first published last year following the club trip to Two Mile Bottom. Hopefully this will give you a taste of what to expect if you decide to go on this year's trip..

In September we set out for the annual club trip to the two mile bottom camp site. For anyone who has not been to two mile bottom it has a number of attractions. Its local, it has an interesting slide, the river we paddle flows along side the site and best of all each pitch comes with its own fire pit. Oh, I also forgot it's cheap! We arrived first on the site and quickly selected the flattest pitch in our designated area. A relaxed afternoon was spent walking around, gathering fire wood and chatting to people as they turned up. Before long we had a nice camp fire going, a take away curry (highly recommended camp food) and spent a nice evening catching up on news. In the morning we were going to be joined by a number of other paddlers and with about 25 people paddling it was proven to be a popular trip. Myself and Verity were unable to do the full paddle but gently made our way up to the weir on the 1st days paddle. The weir is an interesting one and changes every time you see it depending on the water levels. This time with water levels low it was an easy ride down and most people enjoyed having at least a couple of runs down. Always be careful with weirs and if you are not with people who are experienced paddlers they are best avoided.

We made our way down and got back to the campsite for a lunch break. Imagine my disappointment when I was told that signs had been placed in the firepits advising no fires

due to high fire risk. I had saved wood from the night before, it was September, the weather was not so bad. The site manager came over to see what the fuss was about – he explained the forestry commission had called him with the alert.. What a disaster, my favourite camp of the year ruined. I was then told that we might be able to have a fire, but we would need to do an independent risk assessment of at least 2 pages of A4.. Hmm.. this seems a bit suspicious. Turns out it was payback time for stitching Colin up in the last newsletter with



his new BCU award for story telling!!!! Everyone else in the group was fully aware I was being wound up. Nice one Colin!!! As it turned out no one had booked the huge firepit for that night, and as it was near end of season they had a lot of wood to burn up – result!!!!

A group BBQ and a cracking fire made for a really good evening. We had cabaret with a selection of jokes, magic(ish) tricks, singing (lads you need to practice for next time) and even a horse impressionist!!!

The fire was burning nicely with a side of a shed at a time and piles of old fence posts. No one was cold!!!

On the Sunday the group paddled off to Brandon whilst we reflected on a fab weekend.

A big thank you to Colin and Wayne for all their efforts in organising this weekend

Mark Quadling

Simon's Wildlife Corner!

This is the first in a new series of articles about the wildlife that we lucky enough to have, here in Norfolk. To kick things off, here's a little bit of information about something you'll see when you're on the water at dusk – bats!

We have 18 species of bats in the UK, 17 of which breed here. Bat species are in real decline because of disease, habitat loss etc, so all species of bats, and their roosts, are protected by both UK and European law. People have been put in jail for harming bats!

There are number of differences between the species, some of which are really obvious, like their size, their preferred habitats, flying styles and heights, light tolerance etc. But some differences between species are really hard to identify. For example some species can only be differentiated by the frequency at which their ultrasonic calls take place, and some only by the shape of their teeth and penises!

Bats use very high frequency sounds to navigate, communicate and hunt their insect prey, from 20kHz up to 120kHz depending on the species. These frequencies are higher than the human ear can hear although it's said that women and children can often hear the lower frequency species). Scientists use detectors and recorders that drop the frequencies down to a level that we can hear. We record these calls to interpret, using our own knowledge and experience, and specialist software too.



Different species call at different frequencies, and individuals will call differently depending on what they're doing. So a single bat will sound different throughout any given night, depending on whether it's emerging from its roost, commuting along hedgerows, hunting, or interacting socially with other bats. Any one bat call can tell you an enormous amount, if you speak the language!

Bats are active whenever it's warm enough for there to be insects to hunt. Although they're described as hibernating during winter, they're actually in topor. If during winter there is a mild spell for long enough for insects to come out, then bats will come out too, even as late as December.

Bats emerge from their roosts at very predictable times, although each species is different in this respect. For example pipistrelles will emerge from their roosts almost exactly twenty minutes after sunset, whereas Natterer's will be closer to one hour after sunset. This means that if you see a known species soon after sunset, you can work out how far away its roost is, by calculating the time since sunset, and hence the time available to travel from it. It's a really interesting, absorbing world, once you begin studying bats, and one that I'm only touching the surface of in my career.

If you're interested in learning more, see <http://www.bats.org.uk/index.php> or speak to me.

Simon Allen

Swimming the Alps...

Ten people, three cars, a van - two in a plane & off we go!

Long trip - 1600 Fri leave Naarich... 1600 Sat arrive Briancon (note to self - sleeping in a car was no fun thirty years ago, why did I think it would be any better now?)

Beautiful campsite by a lake - no, beautiful lake by a great campsite is better description. Think we decided on that first day we would be having a dip to finish each day before dinner.

Dinner - while all the meals were good, I have to tell you all - Stuart's Carbonara is 'to die for', I reckon we could do worse than talking him into cooking a potfull for a winter training session.

Training sessions - what better backdrop than the rivers we went on / in!
A different river each day, each river a different character - small & rocky, big & rocky, fast & rocky, wide with rocks - oh did I mention the rocks? I have to admit I had a bit of a thing for the rocks - back home it's the trees that seem magnetic, over there it was a definite attraction to rocks... as my legs & boat can vouch for.

This is what we did if you fancy a closer look-

Sunday 17/6/12 Upper Durance - Grade 2(3), 7km from Briancon to Prelles

Monday 18/6/12 Lower Claree - Grade 3, 12km from Plampinet to La Vachette

Tuesday 19/6/12 Upper Guisane (S bend) - Grade 3 (4-), 11km from Le Casset to Chantemerle

Wednesday 20/6/12 Lower Guil - Grade 3, 7km from Eygliers Bridge to St Clement on the Durance

Thursday 21/6/12 Upper Ubaye - Grade 3, 13km from La Lauziere to Jausiers

Friday 22/6/12 Lower Durance - Grade 3 (3+), 16km from St Clement to Embrun

I ended up with the record for the week of three swims & cannot thank the others enough for looking after me - don't believe them when they tell you the water is cold, by the third time I was starting to enjoy it too much (the rocks are hard though 😊)

Even managed to dent a plastic boat - when I was told we need to hang it in a tree & fill it with hot water I thought I was being taken for a ride, amazingly it was true... a kettle of boiling water & all was fine with the dented bow - my leg took a bit longer.

Hats off to all the coaches that looked after us - river choices, & on water leadership was exceptional (just be careful where you follow Pete. Oh, & Jen...).

The rivers really were the stars - stunning features to enjoy & deal with - wave trains, boils, drops, weirs, confusing eddies, hardly useable eddies, eddies with strategically placed rocks or that look great until you get there to find its about five centimeters shallow... & all of this surrounded by the stunning scenery of the Alps. & I mean stunning - high mountains, lush green wood's (that I saw very close up as I thrashed my way along the bank to get back to my boat), clear blue skies, eagles circling, the list goes on.

Off the water too - night sky so dark & full of actual twinkling stars, those mountain roads twisting up & down (careful of the cyclists), little country villages, glacier walking, climbing. So don't be put off if you don't paddle, you'd still enjoy it.

You may be able to tell I enjoyed the trip & I encourage each & every one of you to have a go too, at the end of the day it was the people that were the icing on the cake - club members make club trips work.

Where next?

Mark Watlow
June 2012.

Your Ideas Are Needed

Eagle Canoe Club is totally run by volunteers with the aim to promote fun and safe paddling and activities for its members. If you have any suggestions or ideas for how we can do things differently please speak to one of the instructors who will be able to feed your idea into the programme or to the committee. We are always looking out for people to organise club events for us so if you would like to have a go at organising an event again please speak to an instructor – we are more than happy to help you organise your first club event!!