

Editorial

OK, so here we are. We've put the final polish on the winter programme, we're planning the AGM, we're waterproofing our drysuits, digging out our fleecy thermals, and planning some winter paddling adventures – not to mention next year's highlights already. This can mean only one thing another summer season is all but over! But don't panic (what do you mean, you weren't?!), there's still plenty of paddling to be done in the coming weeks and months!

So, this season I've not spent anywhere near enough time at Eagle. (Is there such as this as 'enough' when it comes to paddling? I'll ask my wife). Work seems to be doing a good job of torpedoing most Wednesday night sessions for me, but those that I have made it to have been great. Walking through the gate, getting on the water, the familiar buzz of Eagle doing what it does best is unmistakable. For me, arriving at the club and spending time among like-minded people is a great way to de-stress and unwind. It's like group therapy, but with added neoprene and latex. You don't need to be a psychology graduate to understand the calming nature of time in... umm... nature.

Autumn on the river is amazing. Paddling on a cold, crisp day is exhilarating, so keep your eyes peeled for trips through the winter programme. Use them to keep practicing those skills you've learnt over summer, you'll love the new context, new locations. Enjoy the sights, the sense of achievement, and the camaraderie. Wednesday night trips over winter are ace too. Much like summer, but darker. And hey, maybe get along to those pool sessions too, for some warm water fun.

Regardless of where you are in your paddling career, there's always plenty to look forward to. For those newer to the sport, the number of opportunities is limited only by your imagination. But even for those of us with a few more years of padding under our belts, the list of adventures to have is still way longer than the list of adventures already had.

So, now we're back on track, what do we have lined up in this edition of the newsletter? Well, plenty... Read all about Belle's first weekend trip with the club, Mrs Chairman's 'How To...' guide to Eagle (supplemented by a fantastic cake recipe for noshing on the river), Mike has prepared a piece on how to get the best of photography on the river, and we have some ideas from Ann on getting the best from your coach and a swimming event next year to give a go. Stu has written about never letting the weather put you off getting outdoors, Penny has put pen to paper on the Thames trip. Also, you'll find an introduction to the new paddling awards that British Canoeing are launching. Oh and make sure you read all the way to the end, for something of a new feature – a trip report in poem form!





Where did the Blue Skies go?! My First Trip with the Club, Beccles to Geldeston Lock.

With day after day of blue skies and sun, I congratulated myself for choosing the right year to start canoeing and joining the club. After 5 years of looking after my small boy and not doing much for myself, I decided this year was going to be the one where I was going to do something about my crazy plan of paddling up the Broads with him and a tent.

I set myself the goal of achieving the one star award in canoeing by the end of this year. With the juggle of childcare, I was managing to attend most Wednesday and some Tuesday This Girl Can sessions but the elusive straight line paddle was still some way off. So I decided to get some decent time on the water to practice my stroke and to wrench my thumb from naturally going up to going down. I signed up to Beccles to Geldeston Locks trip, bought a dry bag from Aldi and was ready to go.

This year is one of the hottest and driest on record. There had been no rain for weeks. But that all changed the weekend of my first trip. The forecast for Beccles was 40mph gusts and rain. Despite my husband calling me crazy, I was still going.

Fortunately, I had been paired up to canoe with Pete. This meant I couldn't practice my stroke so much but at least it meant we'd be going in a straight line which in that day's conditions, was a good thing. I was a little apprehensive about going in the gleaming yellow boat but Pete seemed to have confidence, well he didn't say anything to the contrary.

We set off and despite it blowing a hooley and the rain pelting down our spirits were high. Being in the safe hands of Pete meant I was on the path of least resistance. I got to see the banks of bullrushes and meadowsweet up close as we hugged the bank to shelter from the wind. He also showed me how to read the river to tell us the best path by heading towards the blacker, calmer looking areas. I was thankful for that as it sometimes felt we were going backwards.



The pub soon came into view and all hail to their menu offering sticky toffee pudding. Holly went for that and I think we were all envious of her choice. But Anne's research over lunch gave us the news that the race was on to get back to Beccles before the Duck Race started. If we were late it was going to be another hour floating on the water, in the rain, until the plastic blighters had floated off on their merry way. So fueled by pudding, burgers, chips and sandwiches, we set off and powered our way back. I had thought the wind would be on our backs but no such luck. As

the river was so winding and twisting we continued to be blasted round every corner.

But somehow we made it back quicker than the outward journey. And we were even lucky enough to see a glimpse of a kingfisher (I felt bad about this as our driver, Michael, despite a whole year with the club and many, many trips had never seen one. But I heard last week that on his 2* assessment he finally saw one which made me feel better).

It was a super splendid day. Did it help the finesse of my stroke and steering in a straight line? Not really, but paddling for that length of time did give me much more of a feel on how to hold the paddle correctly to get the best power output and your arms not feeling like they're going to fall off. I must confess I did wake up that night with them screaming for mercy and it took a couple of days for them to recover. But it hasn't put me off. I've just now got to nail that straight line.

Belle Jones

How to...

...Be happy when you arrive in the South of France expecting wall to wall sunshine, packed only your skimpy, teeny weeny kit AND it's wall to wall rain and 9 degrees.... Put on EVERY layer and go paddling of course (rain is our friend, not our enemy – it's a Jedi mind trick) and what is the perfect pairing of food after paddling (apart from pie)? Pizza and beer - Hurrah!

...Make new members feel welcome... Be friendly, tell them the important things, (how to get in and out of

boat, what to do if you fall out, how to hold a paddle etc...) learn their names....Dara, Teddy, Jude, Duncan, Sam.... (I won't go through them all), get them on the water in a boat that fits (thanks to all my kayaking friends for helping me to fit new members to the best kayaks), get them paddling in a straight line, you do get there if you practice, have fun, feed them jelly babies to keep their energy and brain glucose high (its tiring learning stuff), keep having more fun. Repeat every four weeks.

...Bake two really easy cakes for paddling. To make a Booster Bar (flapjack to you and me) google River Cottage Booster Bar and follow the recipe (tip – add half a tbsp. plain flour – makes the mixture less crumbly)

Or go for a super-easy One Pan Fruit Cake:

325g dried fruit, 175g butter, 225g soft brown sugar, 200g self-raising flour, 2 teasp mixed spice, 2 eggs, 100g Ground almonds, 1 teasp almond essence, 1tbsp Treacle

Preheat Oven 180 c

Grease and line an 8" cake tin with baking parchment

Put fruit in a large heavy based saucepan – add either half the depth of water or Brandy and boil- simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the butter in to hot mixture until melted, add sugar stir until dissolved.

Add flour, ground almonds, eggs, treacle, and spice.

Stir well until well mixed.

Pour mixture in to prepared tin.

Bake for about 1 – 1 ½ hours – insert skewer and if it comes out clean the cake is cooked.

...Make the landlady at the Gibraltar Gardens smile... hmmm, still working on that one!

Kate P



Snap Decisions on the Riverbank – the Good, the Bad and... Of Course, the Thoughtful Reporting of Lost Boats to the Police!!!

So, following a rather epic egress to a river bank in Scotland recently, we were faced with a 'predicament'! After a half kilometre walk in, one of the party (to remain nameless) on getting to the riverbank first, took a little tumble with his boat and launched his poor unsuspecting kayak at full pelt from a height into the main flow of a rather fast flowing river. The poor beast of a boat was whipped down the river at a rate of knots. Looking downstream there was soon a corner where the river went out of sight... Decision 1 - to jump in after the boat or not? Your paddling partner is still making their way along the portage trail, you have no backup, you don't know the river or what's around that corner, the banks are steep and inaccessible... what do you do?

Decision 1) was DO NOT GO AFTER IT - which in my opinion was the 'Good' of this batch of decisions. The 'bad' was definitely throwing your boat into the river in the first place!!!

When your paddling buddy turns up as the boat disappears around the corner, it really is too late to launch your buddy and send them blind and lonesome into the jaws of whatever the river has to throw at them around that bend. Boats can be replaced; paddling buddies are less disposable! Now to work out plan B!

However, onto the 'reporting of lost boats' - here is the real reason for putting this article in the newsletter and not just to poke just a smidgeon of fun at a certain person. As we then planned our boat rescue mission (involving driving some miles to get an open boat to take chase down stream) we were aware that there was a loose and unoccupied boat making its way down a river and, should it be found, could be a cause for some concern. So we decided to make a quick 101 call to inform the police. We were not sure if it was really necessary, but they were immensely grateful of the call and this was the response we received the following day....



"Hello Mark

Many thanks for reporting the loss of your kayak in the Roy Bridge area. I am one of the local police Sergeants in Fort William, covering the Lochaber region and I have been here for 10 years. I would like to add thanks for providing your e-mail address which helps if we need to contact you in the future. Can you send me a picture of the kayak to assist with ID if it is handed in?

I thought I would take the opportunity to ask you to put the word out amongst your sports fraternity and canoe clubs etc. to encourage the reporting of lost kayaks in our area, (by phoning 101) and doing exactly as you have done. Via newsletters, social media, websites etc. If we can encourage more kayak users/owners to report them lost/missing after an incident it will have a twofold effect:

1 - Over the last few years I have certainly noted between 5 and 10 Kayaks being recovered/handed in as found property in the Lochaber area and we probably re-unite less than 50% of them with the user/owner. The reasons for this are varied I expect, but probably will be because people think - it will never be found, the police are too busy, or any other reason that causes doubt about calling/reporting. However, the exact opposite is the case. We encourage reporting of this info to help us - so please don't hesitate.

2. Increased reporting will help us save time and resources when we receive reports of a FOUND kayak. Often when empty kayaks are found there is a certain amount of police enquiry to establish if a user/person has come to some harm - by way of an accident. I am aware that most white-water kayakers paddle in groups and any concern for a fellow kayaker who has had an accident would be reported by another group member, however, un-informed members of the public become quite concerned if they find and report an empty kayak.

It is very rare that a found kayak is linked to such a concern to life, but we do conduct reasonable lines of enquiry to establish there is no concern depending on the nature of the report. If a kayak has been transported to coastal or open water (or if found on coastal or open beaches), the 'reasonable lines of enquiry' can sometimes involve the expense of a HMC SAR Helicopter and other resources to ascertain there is no emergency. This can also be the case depending on where/when a kayak is found on river courses.

Of course, if we have a record (like your one) of a lost kayak report, we can quickly match up the two incidents and be satisfied that no emergency response is required. Also, if we KNOW about the loss and have a contact we have a good chance of re-uniting the property with the owner.

Apologies for the lengthy e-mail (out of the blue), however, I think it would be great to spread the word a bit about reporting lost kayaks.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch or respond if you have any questions. We will of course contact you if your kayak is handed in.

Kind regards,

PC Morse"

Mill 2 Mill Swim, Dedham to Flatford Mill, River Stour

You all know how much time I like to spend out of my boat, in the water, on the boat or any combination in between, (which is odd considering the lengths I'll go to not to fall out accidentally!) Well, the logical progression is just to go swimming down a river without the boat. Turns out there's hundreds of people who also think this is a good idea.

We signed up to do a 2.3 km swim along the river Stour in Essex from Dedham mill to Flatford mill. It's a beautiful stretch of river, and you finish in a Constable painting.

It's very much sold as 'not a race' and there are several waves, so you can pick how much of a challenge you want.

The waves were described as Wave 1 (Seriously need more cake), wave 2 (Relaxed because we know where the cake is hidden (Can you see why I was so keen now?)), wave 3 (Enjoying the journey) and wave 4 (Pooh sticks- Floating on a lilo, or other inflatable, I saw a flamingo, pizza slice, lobster and unicorn).



We camped about 10 miles down the road, so we didn't need to get up too early before the swim. Registration was as simple as dropping our forms into the box, then after the customary seven last weeks we walked along the river to the start line. We might have grabbed a bacon roll to fuel us along the walk. Tasty!

We had a while to wait at the start for our wave to set off, so we had time to watch the serious swimmers warming up. Even in the wave one, there was quite a range of swimming abilities. When it was time for us to get in to the water I was in for a bit of a shock. I'd been scoffing at all the people wearing wetsuits, but the water was actually pretty chilly! Probably around 17°C. It caused a bit of swearing and some squealing, but once we were in and swimming it was ok, (well for those of us with plenty of 'bioprene' anyway). Even though 2.3 km is a bit more than I usually swim, it went pretty quickly. It was always possible to stand up near the edges of the river, and there were a few spots where we had to walk as it was so shallow. It was a bit weedy in places, but never as weedy as at Eagle.

At the finish we were cheered by some supporters who had planned to be there, and by some bemused looking people who had just come for a quiet day out, not expecting to see 500 swimmers while they were enjoying a cream tea in the national trust cafe! It was the friendliest swim event I have ever done! Plenty of time for chatting as well as swimming. There is a footpath along the river for the whole of that stretch so spectators can walk and follow you back, or you can stop for a breather if you want.

At the end there is an open field for a big picnic, and a bring and share cake table. I think it would be great if we can get a group of us to go next year, it's on 11th August and bookings are open! Who's in?

Ann



British Canoeing Proficiency Awards Revamp

British Canoeing have very recently revamped the paddling proficiency awards, so the Star Awards will soon be a thing of the past. The Coaches at Eagle are working really hard to get their heads around the new awards and how to incorporate them into our way of working, and initial thoughts are generally very positive – we're looking forward to it. We'll provide a bit more detail in the New Year as more information comes through from British Canoeing, but in the meantime, here are some morsels to keep you going, pilfered straight from the British Canoeing website:



Paddle Awards: Designed to develop enjoyment, safety and skills for those new to Paddlesport

The three Paddle Awards below are for those getting into a boat for the first time, enabling them to feel confident in their chosen craft in a sheltered water environment. The awards help empower the paddler, enabling them to start their lifelong journey into paddlesport.

Paddle Start – Encouragement Award aimed at someone new to paddlesport.

Paddle Discover – Enables the paddler to develop decision-making and fundamental skills.

Paddle Explore – An award that empowers and supports the individual paddler.

These can be done in any craft – canoe, kayak, SUP, bathtub, whatever, and loosely mimic our intro course, and the one star and two star qualifications.



Personal Performance Awards: Discipline Specific Pathway Award

After these come the Personal Performance Awards. These are discipline-specific, and each of the 12 disciplines has three levels of ability.

All of the awards are direct entry. Paddlers can choose which award they would like to work towards, developing their skills and decision making. The awards provide appropriate milestones and acknowledgement of personal skills, setting up the paddler appropriately for British Canoeing Coaching and Leadership qualifications.

There are no age restrictions for any of the awards. Providers should check paddlers' suitability, as well as having appropriate mechanisms for anyone under 18. All of the awards have been created and written with the paddler at the heart of the content and creating self-directed learning, empowerment and ownership.

Discipline	Awards
White Water	White Water Award Progressive White Water Award Advanced White Water Award
Canoeing	Canoe Award Progressive Canoe Award Advanced Canoe Award
Surf Kayak	Surf Kayak Award Progressive Surf Kayak Award Advanced Surf Kayak Award
Sea Kayak	Sea Kayak Award Coastal Sea Kayak Award Advanced Sea Kayak Award
Touring	Touring Award Open Water Touring Award Multi Day Touring Award
Stand up Paddleboard	SUP Sheltered Water Award SUP White Water Award SUP Paddle Surf Award
Freestyle	Flat Water Freestyle Award Freestyle Award Advanced Freestyle Award
Rafting	Flat Water Racing Award Stadium Racing Award River Racing Award
Polo	Polo Explore Award Polo Perform Award Polo Excel Award
Racing	Racing Explore Award Racing Perform Award Racing Excel Award
Slalom	Slalom Explore Award Slalom Perform Award Slalom Excel Award
Wild Water Racing	Wild Water Racing Explore Award Wild Water Racing Perform Award Wild Water Racing Excel Award

Kayak Photography

Before I begin, this is not an article about the ins and outs of camera settings and which aperture size and shutter speed you need to get that perfect shot (if anyone knows please tell me). This is an article from the point of view of a kayaker getting that all important new profile pic, or nomination for paddling face of the year.

There are a few things I have to impart on this subject.

1. Know where the camera is. Pick a line that is close to the camera – make it easy for them to get a good shot of you. (This links to Point 2). Sometimes this is the worst, most horrible line on the river but if the camera person is on that side of the river or in the eddy you have to try and stay close to them, because if you nail the line it will look awesome. However, most paddling camera holders will have just come down the same rapid so they will know what line you are taking and should position themselves usefully, unless you have prior knowledge they have an awesome zoom. (These are dangerous – see Point 4) These typically are bank-based team members.

2. Line of sight. If you can't see the camera it can't see you. This links heavily with Point 1 but includes things like rocks, trees and other paddlers being between you and the lens. Make sure the camera person is ready for you and people are out of the way. If natural obstacles are in the way or the amount of capture time is limited you need to make sure you are ready for it and know when you need to look your best, anything after the camera stops is only pub talk and hearsay.

3. Paddle position - this advice goes against all coaching advice. Your paddle must not be in front of your face! It may be the best picture but it could be anyone behind that paddle so you can't take any credit.



Ways to achieve this:

- Don't paddle, keep it out the way. This solves one problem but may create other issues depending on the situation and ability.
- Keep your paddle low. Again, this keeps it out of view but makes your paddling look lazy.
- Paddle high in the water, but watch out where your arm is crossing your body not face, making it look like the stroke means everything. Think boof stroke at the top of a waterfall.
- Facial expression - the best picture, nice scenery, good paddle position etc can be ruined if your face tells a different story; suddenly the whole focus is on how silly your face is.

There are two trains of thought about where to focus, look straight at the camera with the 'yeah i got this' face or focus on the paddling, trying to look natural like this is an everyday occurrence. If you go for the looking at camera, pulling funny faces is now acceptable as they are intentional.



If you are going for the 'natural' look, this takes a lot more effort as you need to run the rapid, not look at the camera and be aware that your concentration face should not look stupid, make you look like you need the toilet or be screwed up so tight that people are unsure where your face is. Eyes shut and mouth wide open screaming in fear, way before being close to a rapid, is another classic error.

In conclusion, knowing if and where cameras are is vital. Avoid things being in front of your face and try to make your face look either normal or intentionally funny.

DISCLAIMER – if any of the above advice will put you or others in harm's way or potential injury it is better to go home safe with a bad photo or no photo and the memory of a good trip.

Mike R



How to Get the Best from your Coaches!!!

By now you will have met most of the fabulous bunch of volunteer coaches we have at Eagle, even if you haven't been coached by them all yet. Between us we have a huge range of paddling backgrounds and many, many years of coaching experience under our belts (or buoyancy aids maybe). And yes, there are some who have been coaching longer than some of the younger (and not so young) members have been alive. That means that whatever your paddling fetish is, one of us will have had a go, and will be able to give you some hints and tips on how to get started.

With all this variety it means, hopefully, although our individual strengths might not cover every eventuality (we are only human after all) collectively you should be able to find the right coach for the right moment. Whether you're feeling brave and want to push to the next step, or you're not feeling super confident and you need someone to support you. And, most of us have been both of those people at some point in our paddling careers!

So, talk to the coaches, you'll soon discover which coaching style and personality works best for you in different situations. Sometimes you might need to be a bit proactive to get what you want, and probably you won't always get what you want every time, but let us know if we are not meeting your requirements, and we'll try our hardest to rectify that. We don't often specifically ask for feedback on our coaching, but if something especially works or doesn't work for you please let us know. There is a suggestion box in the classroom if you would prefer to do this anonymously.

Over the winter when we are paddling less on a Wednesday evening it is a good time to reflect on your achievements of the summer and think about what you might want to target next summer. For example, if there's a trip that you have always fancied doing, if you speak to the right coach, it might magically appear in the programme next (especially if you offer to help with the logistics).

Happy paddling!

Ann

Tail End Charlie – High Risk, High Reward



Several years ago I wrote an article on Leading the charge, but if you know me or have paddled with me, my preferred role is at the back, AKA Tail end Charlie.

Why? You may ask. Well the rewards of being at the back is you get to see everyone else paddle, which always looks like a huge multi-coloured snake winding its way down the river.

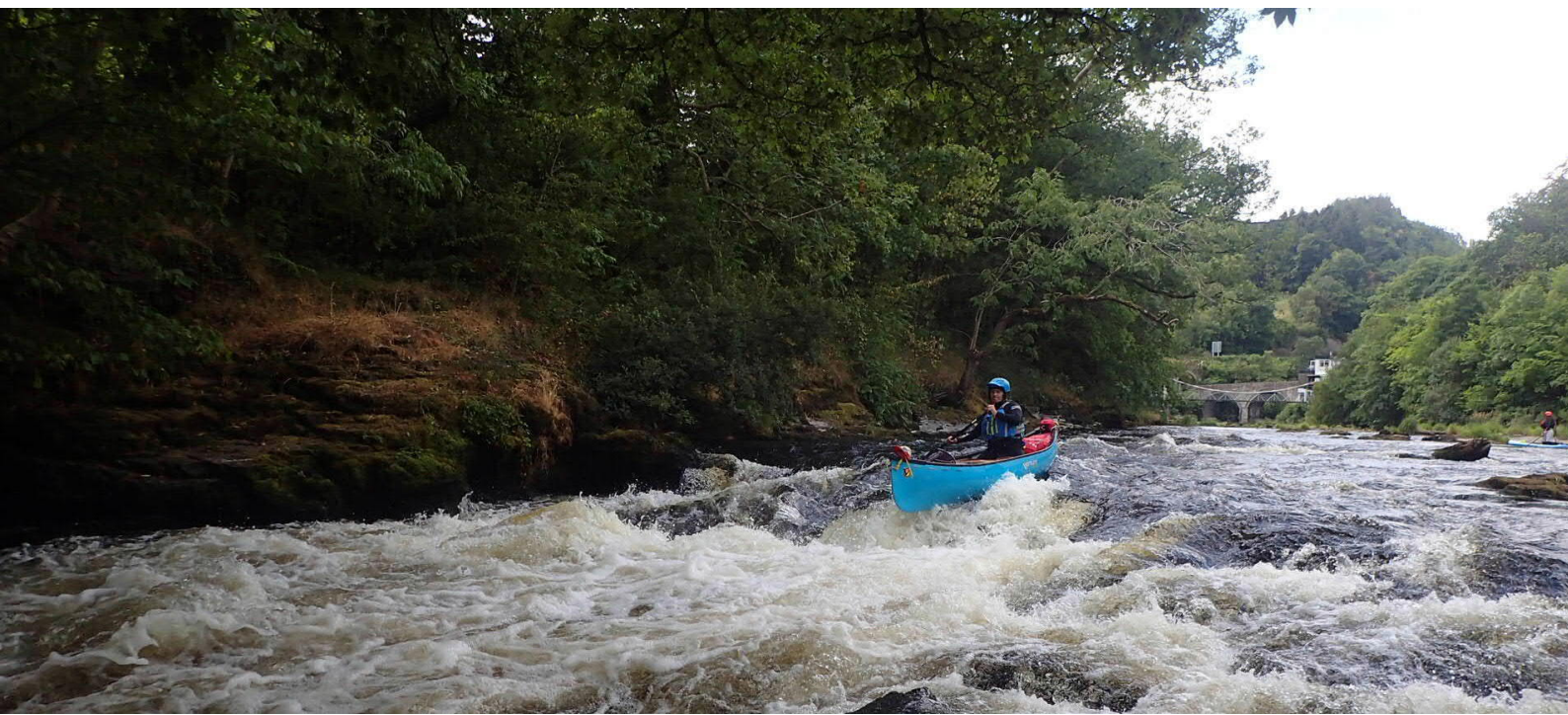
Also you get to see which line they took, and in the white-water world this is very useful. Where is the hidden rock that might trip you up, which side of the river is best, is that stopper sticky? You are also the person acting as safety for the group, as you can usually see everyone, you are able to call out and help when someone swims. Also if people get stuck on rocks you can pull them off. So generally be quite useful and look after the welfare of the group making sure everyone gets off safely.

As the title suggests there are risks with being at the back. As mentioned above if some one gets stuck on a rock you can pull them off as you float past, but there is no one else to float past you. Also if you get slowed down or stuck in a stopper, again it is very tricky for the rest of the group to paddle upstream to help. So making sure the person at the back is quite competent and can look after themselves is key. Communicating with the rest of the team can be tricky as hand signals only work if people see them, and shouting on rivers can easily be lost. On fast flowing, windy rivers or rivers with few eddies getting left behind can be quite a regular occurrence. This is not generally

on purpose but the nature of rivers and being at the back there is not always space or time to let you know, river signals are very handy in these situations as you can see the people in front easily signal.

I tend to find the benefits and rewards of being at the back make it an enjoyable place to be, over the years I have learnt so much from observing others paddle and following routes. This is not for everyone but worth having a go at once you feel comfortable (unless you paddle with me, then it's my spot).

Mike R



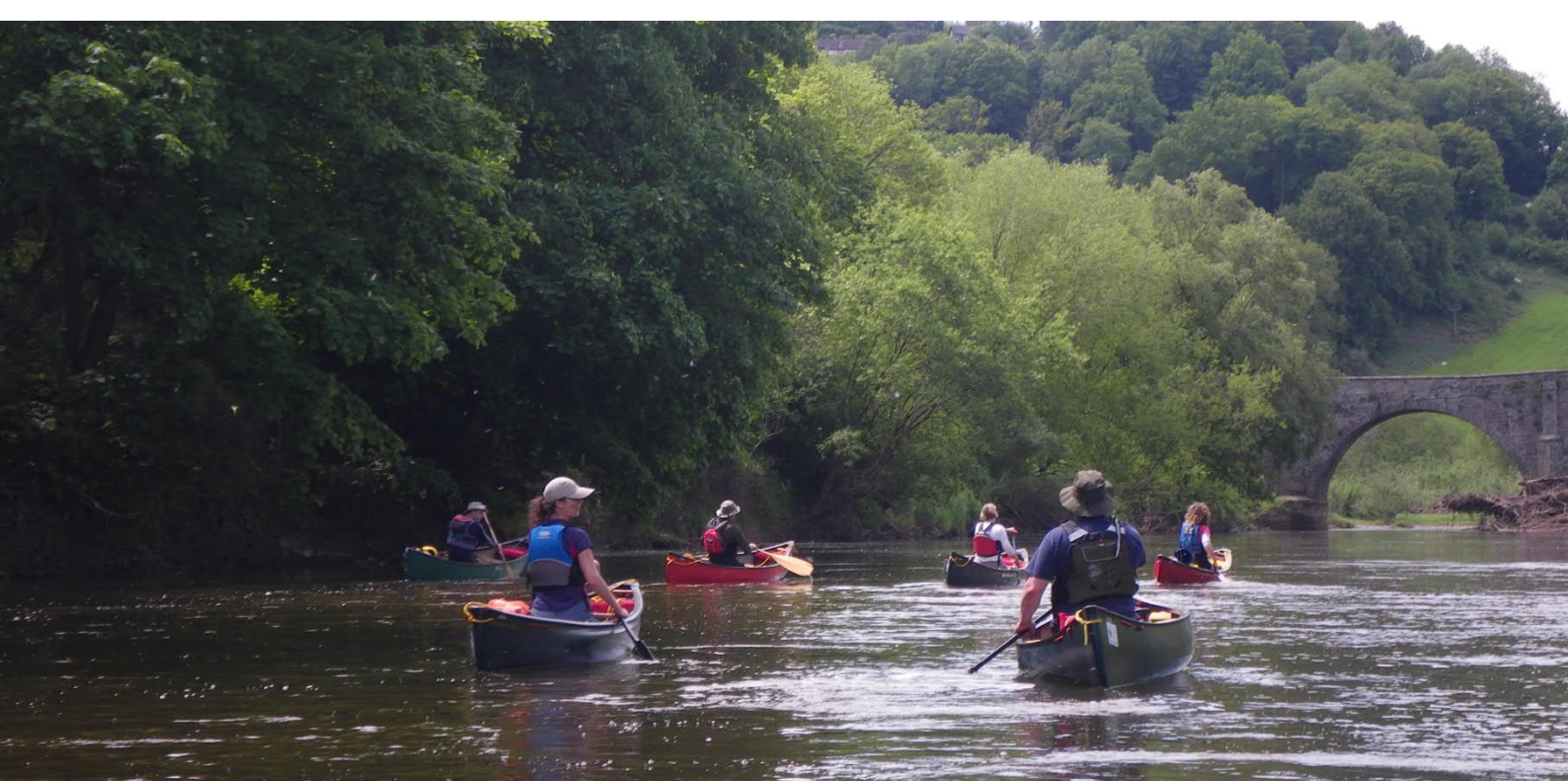
Canoe Camping on the Wye

One of the events that led to my joining the club years ago was an off-the-cuff trip with my (now) wife, a colleague from work Sim, and his girlfriend Lynette, canoe camping down the River Wye. They were both over from Australia for a couple of years, and had done the east of England, so we offered to show them some new parts of the country, from the water.

We headed across to the campsite next to the Saracen's Head at Symonds Yat one evening after work, had a couple of pints, had a couple more, then headed to bed, lulled to sleep by the owls hooting all around us. It was shaping up to be a really peaceful few days. Until, that is, at half past two Lynette went into full-on night terror mode, screaming and shouting swearing and generally waking up everyone in the campsite. Except for herself. We genuinely thought, in that moment of adrenaline that accompanies a quick awakening, that she was being attacked, until through the noise we heard Sim chortling and trying to calm her down. Breakfast came around and Lynette was fresh as a daisy, with no recollection anything.

Once we were fed and packed up, we were taken upstream for an hour or so, by the canoe hire guys. Yep, we were one of those gangs in the silver metal canoes we regularly see plopping through the rapids at Symonds Yat, with varying degrees of skill and balance.

We had four days on the river in front of us, with campsites of various sorts lined up, from great sites with everything you need, a field with a portaloo, and a pub garden. We had tents, sleeping bags and food and a stove trussed up in waterproof barrels, with plenty of opportunities as we meandered through villages and towns to stock up with more. I have strong memories of everything tasting of curry though – we'd pre-prepared some before we left, frozen it and packed it in with everything else, but didn't realise how soon it would defrost and escape its tub. Curry-flavoured bacon for breakfast was a novelty, but not in a good way. Anyway, learning curve, and all that.



The river was beautiful, of course. We paddled through some picture postcard scenery, never rushing, plenty of time for exploring the river and its surrounds as we wanted. The first lunchtime I remember well - sandwiches and squash in thick lush grass, followed by an inadvertent snooze - all four of us – under a cloudless sky, no doubt catching up from the previous night's interruptions. The rapids were gentle – just enough to entertain, but with no danger of a swim. Swims were generally taken in the evenings, once we were settled in the campsite for the day.

It was such a long time ago that I can't remember massive amounts of detail. The self-sufficiency of it all was a real novelty, carrying everything (ok most stuff) that we needed along the way. I remember seeing an otter one day, which was ace, plenty of kingfishers and herons, loads of fish under the glassy surface of course, and hearing the peregrines at Symonds Yat itself, as we were looking up at the massive cliff face in wonder.

Must do it again some time...



What Happens to my Feedback?

Every year we ask for members feedback, but why and what happens to it?

As part of the induction group we try to set out from the first few weeks of your membership that we value members feedback and it helps us to change what we do or to understand what members really enjoy, so we don't change it!

The annual feedback survey is a chance for you to tell us what you really think, because its anonymous, but this also helps us to compare feedback from previous years to see if changes we are making have changed people's enjoyment of the club.

I'm pleased to say that this year's survey is the most positive that we've had for many years and therefore hopefully we're doing what you'd like.

As with all surveys, we not only look at the positive comments but try to learn from some of the suggestions for things we could do better. Some of the things which have come out of the surveys over recent years are:

The Induction Group – this was a suggestion from a member about 4 years ago and allows new members to get to know each other, have a go in different sorts of boats, learn the basics before joining the other skill groups and allows us to tell you more about the club over a 4 week period. It was such a success that we've continued to do it



Coaching styles and how we organise groups, especially on week end trips – We are very fortunate to have a lot of coaches in the club with lots of experience and different coaching styles. All members, including the coaches, have their own learning style and It became apparent a few years ago that we weren't making the most of this. We now think much more carefully about how different people learn and try to match them with a coach who's style is more likely to suit the individuals.

This Girl Can (TGC) – taking the above point a step further, there was a lot of evidence being produced by Sport England and a national campaign to encourage more participation in sport by women and Ann pioneered this for Eagle. The TGC group has gone from being a summer fortnightly session to now include social evenings, trips and this year will run over the winter.

Practice night – building off the TGC nights and feedback from them, last year members suggested a "quieter" night where they could come along and just practice what they'd learnt recently. While attendance at these this year has been relatively low, the survey has confirmed that they have been valued and members would like them to continue.

Organisation of week end trips – from discussions with parents of youth members, for next year we are going to try and organise more youth specific activities. We will also look to include more detail in the online programme so people can see what level of experience is needed for the trip, accommodation etc. so you can put them in your diary if they interest you.

Food on trips – We try to cook as a group to make week ends more sociable and to keep costs down. For a few years we cooked spaghetti bolognese on every trip, which was good provided you didn't go on every trip ! Following the last Alps trip we had some great evening meals cooked by the group and started getting bolder with our meal choices. Trying to cater for 30+ can be a challenge, especially finding 1 dish which suits everyone, but next year we might ask for volunteers to cook the main meal and seek input into what dish people would like on the trip. Or we could go back to spaghetti bolognese on every trip – your input would be welcomed.

From feedback we also know that most members join to learn new skills, to have fun and meet other people. Gaining awards is ranked the lowest reason in the survey. Next year British Canoeing are changing all their awards and over the winter a group of coaches are going to look at how we deliver these at the club. If you'd like to be involved in that discussion, please let us know.

Hopefully you can see that your feedback is important and does influence what we do, so don't be shy, tell us what you think of us and what we do.

Stu



Thames Tidefest

I signed up to this trip as soon as it was advertised as I was intrigued by the idea of paddling along the Thames in a kayak. I'd been on touristy boat trips and swam in the Royal Albert Dock in the London Triathlon, but had never propelled myself in a vessel.

Sunday morning's weather forecast was dire, but at least the wind had died down and I knew that rain alone wouldn't cause such an event to be cancelled.



Tower Hamlets Canoe Club is in Docklands not far from Wapping. I travelled from Herts, having spent the previous night with relatives there, and arrived at about the same time as the Eagle crowd from Norwich. Ann (and maybe Mark as well?) hadn't even had breakfast before leaving at some unearthly hour.

Our hosts were welcoming and friendly, and after the briefing, we walked down their impressive new launching ramp (built as part of the new 'Super sewer' project.) which was extremely non-slip, much to my relief.

By the time we got onto the water at about 8.40am, it had been raining heavily for some time and so we were definitely not dry to start with. There were 23 boats in

total, including one belonging to a Shadwell club member which came apart in three pieces and fitted into the boot of a small car. As I am relatively new to the world of kayak design I found this quite impressive.

We proceeded westwards on a flat Thames, brought about by the closure of the Flood Barrier. I never did find out whether this was a scheduled closure specifically for the event.

I know the City pretty well, having grown up in a North London suburb, but I was fascinated to view it from such a different perspective. Going under Tower Bridge, the Millennium Bridge and all the subsequent ones to Westminster, one got a real sense of history and could imagine all the trading boats and sailing vessels, in place of the tourist Clippers, the Thames Rib Experience and Police speedboats. Our paddling trip was part of the Foreshore Festival, 'Celebrating the Life and Times of the River Thames' and although not much of this was evident at 8am on Sunday morning, we did spot a number of paddleboarders out in force, together with an accompanying safety boat.

Our turnaround point was Westminster, where we spent a few minutes admiring the Houses of Parliament from the water. Once we turned around, we had the wind against us but still made quite rapid progress back to Shadwell Basin where we disembarked onto a nearby beach and got changed out of our wet gear as quickly as possible.

Penny Edwards

Haddiscoe to Beccles, 29th September

In complete contrast to our London paddle the week before, we enjoyed blue skies and perhaps the last warm day of the year. What was initially planned as a paddle with the main aim to get some miles in while it was still warm, turned out to be one of my favourite paddles of the year.

We started at Haddiscoe (under the road bridge), launching in to the New Cut. The only house on that road had been empty for several years, so it was nice to see it is now occupied. But, you can't launch from the garden anymore! We planned to paddle upstream towards Beccles, as that stretch of the river is tidal, and high water was about 4 pm. It seemed silly not to make use of that free ride. And boy did we make use of it. It took just 1 hour and 10 minutes to do the first 10 km and our maximum speed was over 12 km/h!

We had a chilled lunch in the sunshine at the Waveney River Centre, then we got on our way again. We were enjoying just cruising along in the sunshine when we spotted an otter drifting down the river. We followed it for about 10 minutes. If we stopped paddling we were just floating along at the same speed, so we got to watch it diving and popping up again in the reeds at the edge of the river. It really felt like a very special thing. About 10 minutes later, we saw another otter! We had to stop paddling and drift along to follow this one too. It's not the first time I've seen otters on our rivers, but it is always amazing. Our otter watching had quite a significant effect on our overall speed, and in the end we took around 3.5 hours to paddle 21km. Our average speed was still 6 km/h, which is pretty good, although I definitely wasn't putting in that much effort.



Definitely a day to remember!

Ann

Just Get Out There and Do It!

Last week end was a classic example of a week end where after looking at the weather forecast on Wednesday night I could easily have found a reason to stay at home in bed!

I was due to go on the Peak District walking week end and all week the forecast had been getting worse and on Wednesday night had 6 raindrops and the word "torrential" written over the whole day. Lovely I thought!

But we went. Saturday was a bit cloudy but we had a beautiful walk up Mam Tor and along the ridge. A very tasty meal was had in the pub on Saturday night along with a lot of fun and laughter. Sunday was clear blue skies, not a breath of wind and a view as far as the eye could see. It was so nice we added an hour's diversion onto the walk. Glad I went – I think so.

In contrast, Ann ran a trip along the Thames which involved getting up at 2am to be in London and to then paddle for the day into central London. The people on that trip got the weather that was due in the Peak District, however, from the comments on Facebook and talking to people who went, they had an amazing day, seeing all of London's sights from the river, paddling under Tower Bridge etc.

So, next time you're looking for an excuse not to come on the trip because it might be raining, or a bit cold, look at what you could be missing out on.

Stu



A Letter to Members, From Your Coaches...

So, 'Us Coaches' – I think you can safely say across the board why all us coaches are 'in this'and that's because we all LOVE the sport. The beauty of this sport is that there are many different elements which suit different people. Some of us love touring; some sea kayaking; some white water; polo or surfing. Some of us like to be in canoes, some kayaks, some even like sit on tops and SUP's (yes really!) and many of us love a combination of these. The one common denominator is that we love the sport enough to want to introduce other people to the joys we've found.

Oh and there is one other thing which is true for all the club coaches – we are all volunteers. We all give up our time for free to do what we do for the club – now don't get us wrong, none of us resent this as.... see above.... we do it because we love the sport! Whilst that may not surprise many of you, what may surprise some of you is that in all the activities in which the coaches partake with the club, we all pay the same as the members. So, if you're away for a weekend, a week-long trip or a day outing, we pay the same as you!

Now again you may ask: why do we do this? Especially if a coach is on a trip which they have done many times before or when the coach could be having fun on something more challenging? Why would we still pay to come on a trip where we just have to look after people or teach? Well, it is because not only do we love the sport and enjoy imparting our knowledge, we also gain immense personal joy in helping others progress their skills and in seeing others getting enjoyment out of doing what we enjoy. When many of us started in the sport, we were coached by volunteers who helped and inspired us. We are immensely grateful to those coaches and so this is one way for each of us to give something back to the sport that has given us so much.





We are not hoping for martyr status here, that's not the aim of this article, this is purely to raise awareness of who we are, why we become coaches and why we are all so keen to give our time to the club. We are all still learning and feedback is an invaluable element of that, this is the stuff we thrive on as we would all love to be better coaches, so if there are ever elements of coaching which you found especially valuable – please tell your coach. If there are little 'epiphany' moments where something finally clicked due to something a coach points out – tell us. Also, if there are things we've done which don't 'float your boat' (literally or figuratively) – also tell us – this is still really valuable feedback to us. The coaching team pride ourselves on being able to take the negative feedback (so long as it's delivered in a nice and constructive manner) as well as the positive. All of our coaches develop their own personal coaching styles, you may find some of these work for you and others don't but if it doesn't work for you it may work for other people so don't judge us harshly – we're not professionals and we're all doing our best and learning 'on the job'.

Shock News: 'We're not perfect' (although admittedly some of us think we might be). Our coaching styles might not suit everyone and sometimes our blunt e-mails may be more curt than intended. Some of us may also like to 'let our hair down' at the end of a day's paddling, but our aim is never to offend. We all very much value the club's open and inclusive nature and if any member ever feels uncomfortable with any situation, please say so or speak to a member of the coaching team or committee to raise awareness so that issues can be discussed and ironed out.

Finally, thank you to all you club members from all of us. At the end of the day, we all get lots of enjoyment and a 'warm gooey feeling' from all of you guys. Whether you're appreciating our efforts on a trip or passing your next star award, getting on the water for the first time or overcoming your fears to do your first ever capsize drill, you can be sure we are getting as much out of it as we hope you do. Obviously without a coaching team there is no doubt that there would be no club but equally a club without fun and committed members is no club regardless of how many coaches it has! We all love seeing such a thriving club with a great bunch of people and we all look forward to seeing you out on the water some more. So, THANK YOU all!

Love, Us Coaches



The Peaks

On a cold and wet day we set off for the peaks
We all hoped our waterproofs wouldn't develop leaks
Lucky for us, after Friday, there wasn't a raindrop in sight
And none of the forecasters predictions were right!

Saturday arrived and the smell of cooked breakfast filled the air
As everyone decided what to take, pack or wear.
It might not be wet but it was still rather cold,
An old phone booth could provide warmth we were told
Our journey began - our trek up Mam Tor
We hoped at the end our legs wouldn't be sore

Out came the maps to keep us on track,
Navigators were not something we lacked.
The only time there was a battle of will
was a discussion of eating at the bottom or top of the next hill

The end of that day we were happy but tired,
After a lovely dinner at a nearby pub we retired-
to talk about dwile flonking among many things
we would have tried it out, if there had been floor mops to fling.

Sunday arrived but before we could start
there was an unusual lesson on how to fart.
With this information on hand,
It was up to Curbar Edge where the views were definitely grand.

Thanks to everyone who made this trip great
You all were so lovely - we just have to state.
We hope that many more people will join us next time,
as we have to admit this trip was sublime!

Leigh Wilson and Amy Hunter

