



Editorial

Welcome to the Winter 2019 Newsletter! In this edition you'll find a great range of articles, as usual. Chairman Stu has put pen to paper on the Canoe Skills weekend in the autumn, Hannah has given us a piece on Jedi paddling, and we have an account of Tim's recent South Walsham exploration. Mike has written about his trip to the Alps in the summer, TC has included a piece on kayak surfing, and Pete S has provided 12 years worth of R&D on optimal Horstead levels. Revelatory stuff! Drawing things to a close, we have a guide to some of the bunkhouse around the country that we've used over the years, a piece that started out with the best of intentions but very quickly became slightly tongue in cheek. I'm sure it'll be useful all the same.

Whilst I've not done much in the way of paddling recently, I'm putting the final touches to this edition having just completed two days of Core Coach training, a foray into the new British Canoeing coach training system. It was a brilliant couple of days, and now I'm feeling really enthused and switched on to this upcoming season. Looking forward to getting on the water, and making the most of the amazing rivers and broads on our doorstep with as many of you as possible.

Looking forward to this season, the coaching team is putting together a fantastic programme of club sessions, local trips, and weekend trips further afield, which is shaping up to be even better than last year. It's not too late to put in some suggestions or requests, feel free to get involved. As we do every time, we're aiming provide variety as well as depth, the opportunity for paddlers to really develop and push themselves, as well as have a lot of fun.

Enjoy!

Si

Canoe Skills Weekend

This article relates to a recent week end organised by John and Trevor, but it also links to the new British Canoeing personal paddlesport awards and the change in emphasis to how these awards are run.

Skills weekends run by the club have traditionally focused on teaching people paddling strokes which are appropriate to the environment that we are paddling in, and there's nothing wrong with that. The Progressive Paddling weekend series (Symonds Yat, Dee, Tryweryn) has been a really successful example of how this approach has enabled members to really progress as paddlers, but has it given them the skills to go off and paddle with a bunch of friends? Not really.

Many decisions are made by the coaches on such week ends, such as which section of river are we doing, what are the water levels like, what are the weather conditions, what safety kit are we taking, how do we split the groups etc, but the reasons for those decisions are rarely shared with the





members on the trip. Now, this isn't to be secretive or a power thing, its' just we kind of do this stuff without thinking and don't want to overload people with information, when they are probably anxious already. The consequence of this, is that these are important decisions which those attending should be aware of, and should be able to get involved with, if they want to.

The recent canoe weekend took a very different approach to the skills we taught and how we ran the weekend. On the Friday night, we had guide books available, talked about online guides, river level information and involved those on the trip in discussions about which section of the river we were going to paddle. This also involved a discussion about the road route we were taking as we were in a remote bunkhouse served by small roads, many of which were not suitable for the trailer.

Once on the river, we had a quick warm up session and split into groups. Some of the more experienced paddlers took the opportunity to lead a group, with the coaches providing guidance rather than running the trip. It wasn't long before someone capsized, and Trevor John and Pia took chase to rescue them. Jas & I looked at each other, looked at the next section of river and realised nobody was going to come to any harm, so left the rescue to proceed. All involved gained some valuable insight into rescuing canoes on moving water and led to a session later in the day about how to rescue boats and swimmers.

The weekend progressed in a similar theme with some paddling skills being taught, but mostly, the coaches stood back, explained what needed to be done and why, and then got others to do what we normally do! On the Sunday we did more rescue skills and ran a session relating to a canoe stuck on a rock and how to get it off. The coaches explained the options, gave a demonstration, and then let the groups set up their own rescue systems.

I had a great weekend and it was really empowering to share our knowledge to help the group make informed decisions. This is now the main focus of the new British Canoeing awards, so it's now up to you to ask your coach, "why are we going there", "why did you make that decision", "can I rescue the next person who capsizes" etc. These, as well as paddling strokes, are skills that you really need to know to enable you to progress your paddling, and to be able to paddle with people, other than the club.

Stu



The Last Jedis

It was with confusion and fear that we all learnt of the change to the BCU assessments. Luckily for Sam and I, Ann offered to coach us to within an inch of our lightsabers to get us through the Two Star assessment before the syllabus changes in January. With rescues completed in the pool, a Saturday trip, followed by a Sunday morning session, we successfully completed all the elements across the weekend.

A huge thank you to all the coaches that have helped me since joining the club, and especially to Trevor for teaching me how to brace in a canoe (by trying to tip me out) and of course to Jedi Master Ann for giving up so much extra time to expertly coach us. May the Force be with you all.

Hannah Parry

French Alps

Two years ago Eagle wetted my appetite for paddling in the French Alps so much so a bunch of us Norfolk folk embarked on a return trip. Our aim was to have fun in the sun, push our paddling and have a holiday. Easy!

The plans started in the middle of a snow stricken Norfolk winter where sunshine, like bread and milk, was limited. Accommodation was booked, chunnel organised and time off work agreed. Fast forward 6 months and after a few preparation paddles we were on our way, (after gaining a last minute addition to the gang).



Car and van loaded, we headed off with the plan to meet at the slalom course for a cheeky post-drive paddle. This was a swift introduction to French waters to loosen us up and cool us off! Very quickly we found out that the rivers were high due to all the snow, some rivers with typical high markers of 20 were running at 60! So we chatted to the UK Uni guides on the conditions and went for a blast down the Onde. Only after we removed the trees! Hero tick 1.

I won't bore you with a blow by blow of every river (11 in the week) but needless to say they were a step on from the club trip in terms of volume of water, complexity and number of rivers squeezed in. We planned to do a harder day followed by easier through the week, this worked out well giving our bodies and minds a rest day to float and relax. Due to the high water levels the big days did indeed feel big. The first of which was day 2, 3 river day building from grade 3 to 3/4 to solid 4. Mentally drained and felt like every stroke was a 'must make' stroke, this was certainly an experience. Other big days typically ended with 'must make get outs' which really kept you switched on.





Highlights? Briancon gorge, which we ran twice, did not fail to leave me smiling. A nice section of pushy water through a gorge, as the name suggests, with a boat launching slide part way down. Although quite short it meant we could squeeze it in on the way past.

Stunning scenery is also high up on highlights, every river had its own postcard views, whether this was the get in or lunch stop. Some rivers were less co-operative in allowing us to enjoy the scenery and forced us to watch the river, every square inch of it! However, when you did get a chance to look up the gorge you were rewarded by cliffs and ancient bridges.

The final day we headed for a run down the Romanche, this had been on many peoples list for while, as it does not run very often and looking at the large pipe construction may not again. We were again fortunate to run into some fellow UK paddlers who had run it before and would paddle it with us. Other than a long carry in, it was a beautiful river, nice scenery, grade 3 with a long section of 4 to keep everyone including the guide on their toes. Going into a section last and coming out first was not in the plan, especially with another must make get out. It was smiles all round when we got off the water with an 800+ mile journey home to reflect and plot the next adventure.



Big thanks to those that helped organise this and of course for everyone that went and made it an incredible week.

For a better article see <https://leannekayaks.com/2018/07/16/the-alps-2018-a-summary/>

And for an awesome movie of the week, see <https://youtu.be/8NR8AulUJLc>

Mike R

Paddling Fitness

If you own a boat, you own a gym. My weights bench →

For any strength-based training you want to do for paddling use the things you own. A boat can be used for bicep curls, weighted squats, lunges, bench press, dead lift to name but a few. The majority of the time the weight of your boat and kit is the best thing to train with. It also allows you to figure out the best way to awkwardly handle a big lump of plastic, which is handy at the side of a river or rescue. It also teaches you the best way to carry your boat and strengthens the right muscles.

Generally kayaking is less about raw strength but more about repetition, keep using the same muscles all day. So when training you should mimic this by going for amount of reps rather than max weight. You also don't want to build up Arnie-style muscles as this hinders flexibility (a whole different article)

So save your pennies on a gym membership, make use of the sunshine and walk around your garden with your boat, practice picking it up. Practice squatting down with it on your shoulder picking up a paddle. Do some lunges with it, imagine crashing through the foliage to get to river. Mimic lifting it on a roof of a car, carry it on both shoulders. With a bit of imagination many of the things you do getting to and from the river can be built into a training session, so next time you turn up to the river after a long portage your fresh and good to go rather than ready to take a nap. It also allows you to figure out if you really need all that stuff in your boat. If you can't lift your boat in the garden you will struggle to lift it off the water at the end of a day paddling, although this is where paddling friends come in handy.

So next time you have a spare few minutes go and work out with your favourite kayak, just try not to drop it too many times.

Disclaimer - if you are not sure how to lift ask someone who is qualified for advice, also if things start to hurt, especially your back, STOP!

Mike R

South Walsham Circuit

A cold February morning & seven intrepid paddlers set out on a 'Tim Trip' to waters (& paths) new... what could possibly go wrong? Well, as soon as we arrived at South Walsham staithe the locals were up in arms, well one of them was.

Complaining that we cannot park at the slipway & demanding we move. Tim was very diplomatic until we realised there was no reasoning, so, confident we were doing nothing to bring the good name of Eagle into disrepute & after pointing out the sign that offered a 'welcome to small craft users', we politely ignored the haranguing, parked in the provided car park, launched & left.

A blustery crossing of South Walsham broad past the Fairhaven Trust found us making our way into the channel leading to who knows what. Turns out it was clear of trees, no dangerous wildlife, no barbed wire or electrified fences - in fact plain sailing (paddling) to the get out at the road, where lo & behold, no-one fell in! We successfully loaded boated onto trolleys then portaged along tracks & quiet roads to Ranworth Broad (thanks to Terry for his Car Patrol duties keeping us safe along the way).

A quick coffee & snack then a successful launch. We paddled across the Broad, out to the river, turned right & were mostly blown along to St Benet's Abbey where we had a second land based break. Once again no-one fell in... is this really a 'Tim Trip'? Possibly we stayed a bit too long, it was a fairly exposed site with a keen wind & we were starting to feel a bit chill as we left. Fortunately, it was only a quarter hour straight into South Walsham Broad & we were back at the staithe.





Fully expecting more haranguing from the native we landed to an empty site & loaded up with no further incident.

All in all a great little trip, don't think we saw another boat apart from two kayakers who arrived back at the staithe as we were setting out. Plenty of Marsh Harriers that looked like they were playing on the strong breeze, a few herons & something I've never seen before- a rook hovering & scooping something from the surface of the river as it flew across.

Mark W

Surf Kayaking

"The ultimate in extreme expression... combining skill with the power of the ocean to perform dynamic, high performance moves". That's how surf kayaking has been described at the top level but you can also have fun at any level of ability.

I've been surf kayaking for about twenty years now and always find it exciting and challenging. Riding a wave at speed, carving and turning is exhilarating and sometimes being at the edge of a great ride or a trashing can be testing. I also find it to be a bit sort of spiritual, causing me to wonder at the beauty of the natural world and how lucky we are to be in the moment, at one with nature. But before I get too waffly, here's what it's all about.





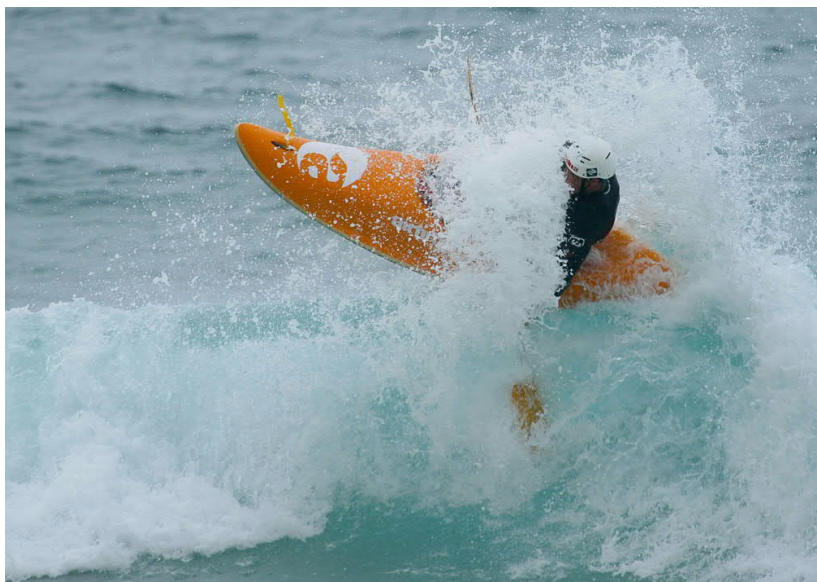
There are two approaches to surfing in a kayak. Firstly, and usually the way to get started, is to ride straight in towards the beach on a wave. You can do this in any type of kayak or sit-on-top and it is possible to do playboating moves in the whitewater of a broken wave... spins, turns and cartwheels. A proper surf kayak looks like a surf board underneath - a flat bottom to allow planing across the surface of the water and fins which prevent the boat sliding outward in a turn. There are a range of surf kayaks which enable you to ride along an unbroken wave and perform various moves including aerials. Mega is one such manufacturer. There are plenty of videos on the internet illustrating the moves, the best being surfkayakskills.com.

Norfolk doesn't have the best surfing conditions but about ten times a year we get a decent swell coming down the North Sea, giving good rideable waves at places like East Runton, and Sea Palling. The rest of the time, we tend to get wind-driven slop! There are a couple of good surf forecast websites; magicseaweed.com and surf-forecast.com and we usually need a prediction of at least 1.5m of swell to get a rideable wave at the coast. The figures are based on wave meters on buoys or radar instruments on offshore platforms in the North Sea.

World class success. Although it is great fun to do for yourself and with friends, surf kayaking is also a competitive sport. British paddlers have taken first places in events at the World Championships. We have various competitions in this country each year which usually run during the spring and summer, the main venues being Devon, Cornwall and the west coast of Ireland.

Would you like to try kayak surfing? Generally I think you will need some moving water experience, 2 star skills and it's helpful to be able to roll. However, it is difficult to organize club surfing sessions for Eagle members because we do not have a qualified surf coach and it is almost impossible to plan a date without knowing if there will be any surf. So, given that it is best to start in summer when the sea is warmer, I will be organising a trip to the Devon coast and get help from a qualified coach. If you are interested, look out for it in the Eagle programme.

Tony Carter



The Perfect Wave

As you all know, Horstead Mill is the UK's premiere whitewater venue, however we all have probably experienced the irritation of turning up and finding that the wave is nonexistent due to the Mill pool being too high. The best infinity surf waves form when the Mill pool is low but you still have a good volume of water coming under the bridge.

Horstead Mill is situated on the Bure and is the last river obstruction before the water flows out to sea and as such is affected by the height of the tides. For the pool to be at its lowest you need to find out when low tide is at Lowestoft (click here: https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/coast_and_sea/tide_tables/1/141#tide-details) and then add on five to six hours. This will be the time to turn up at the Mill and get a quality couple of hours' worth of surfing in.

If you are looking for there to be no wave and more of a fast jet that flows into the pool, then reverse it. Five to six hours after high tide. Obviously when you start adding boards to shape the flow into the mix then all bets are off, and you can calibrate that yourself :P

Anyway, have fun and hopefully this helps – only took 12 years to get around to working this out.

Pete Sykes





A Very Eagle Guide to Bunkhouses

We've both been at the club for a good few years now, and so we've been on plenty of trips around the country. There are so many parts of a successful trip – the river, the weather, the levels are the obvious ones, but the secondary factors like the transport, the journey and the accommodation all play a big part in determining how cool the trip is. With more and more people now doing the same, organising trips for the club or for groups of mates, we thought we'd do our bit to grease the wheels, and offer some of our experiences in bunkhouses that you might like to book. Or to avoid, depending on your appetite for masochism...

Tyddyn Bychan. (Also known as Jumping Dog Bunkhouse) (Photo below).

Where is it? Just off the A5 at Cefn Bryth, just past Corwen, North Wales

What sort of bunkhouse is it? Converted farm buildings.

Good for: The Hobbit Hole

Bad for: Peaceful weekends, if the students are in too.

Other thoughts: Decent location between the Tryweryn and Snowdonia, so you can get to either fairly easily. Used to have a pen full of border collies that spent their entire existence jumping and barking and jumping and barking. Their entire existence. Woof. But now, the dogs are gone (or just trained?) and the place has been refurbished. It has recently become a favorite with university paddling club trips. The rooms are fine, the kitchen's pretty well stocked, if a little on the bijou side, but I don't remember it being the warmest place in the world. Unless of course you can book a night in the hobbit hole BBQ shed fire pit man cave thing. A small, octagonal wooden building with a fire pit for cooking over, this is the perfect place for four or five of you to sit and chill (cook) for the evening, with meat and beer. Lovely. (Non-animal based BBQ options are available).

Rating: 3 out of 5.



The Eagles Public House	
Where is it? Penmachno, near Betws y Coed, North Wales.	What sort of bunkhouse is it? Pub, with rooms.
Good for: Location, on the edge of Snowdonia. A post-paddle pint or three, cheap wholesome food.	Bad for: Homophobes.
Other thoughts: Great location, great rooms with two or three sets of bunkbeds in most rooms. A shared kitchen, so you'll meet other people as you dance round them to get to the toaster. Book a table in the restaurant early for evening food, to avoid disappointment. There's no Michelin stars, that's for sure, but what you lack in fanciness you more than make up for in terms of convenience (no one has to drive!) and quantity. A really friendly, inclusive place – the first time we stayed, we got roped into a whole-pub quiz by a <i>very</i> persuasive Liverpoollian bear, which turned out to be the most fun ever!	
Rating: 4 out of 5.	

Brompton on Swale Bunk Barn. (Also known as That One We're Never Going Back To).

Where is it? Brompton on Swale, near Richmond, Yorkshire Dales.	What sort of bunkhouse is it? A (barely) converted barn.
Good for: Hypothermia and terrible karaoke.	Bad for: Those with a sensitive olfactory system.
Other thoughts: In serious contention for the worst bunkhouse ever, this place is one I'll have to be paid to go back to. We visited in the depths of winter, with snow on the ground, which did a fair job of temporarily obscuring the yard absolutely swamped with cow poo. With thick, Yorkshire stone walls that radiated cold as we tried in vain to sleep, and a really lame kitchen and terrible bathroom, we retreated to the local pub, only to have to sit through a terrifying karaoke session, which was marginally less painful than the frostbite that would have been inevitable had we stayed in the barn. To add insult to injury, the river levels when we visited we very low, we destroyed a (loaned) kayak and had all manner of injuries and incidents. Never again...	
Rating: Can we have minus numbers?	



Denton House Hostel.	
Where is it? Keswick, the Lake District.	What sort of bunkhouse is it? A large-ish hostel.
Good for: A central Lakes location. Value for money.	Bad for: Sharing with all and sundry.
Other thoughts: This place is pretty big, and to be fair is well kitted out and run, given the costs to stay here. It has lots of bunk dorms of various sizes, a couple of well kitted out kitchens, good warm showers and all sorts. It's easy to find on the main road into Keswick, and is slap bang in the middle of the Lakes, so you have plenty of choices when it rains. And the Lune isn't too far away, if it doesn't. The hostel experience (everywhere, not just here) is always coloured by those other residents with whom you share the place, and our first visit here coincided with a stay for the South Shields Youth Offending team, who swarmed the place like rats and got into everything, everywhere, all the time.	
Rating: 3 out of 5	

Tees Bunkhouse. (Also known as "Oh my god we better not be staying there again!")

Where is it? Up Norf – Blanked the actual location out of my head.

What sort of bunkhouse is it? Converted farm buildings.

Good for: Malteser Target Practice

Bad for: Warmth, Showers, Road in, Road out, Space,

Other thoughts: Very rustic bunkhouse close to the River Tees. You have to drive down an unpaved, very steep farm track to get to the bunkhouse. If it is slightly icy you will have to have a running start to get up the hill. Showers had a maximum power setting of "cold dribble" which wasn't a problem as it was only -3 degrees C all weekend. External door to the dorm rooms had panel gaps so big snow made it 5 feet into the room during the night, think this was a design feature so the rooms would never feel too stuffy. Pia had a night practicing throwline skills while trying to keep the rats in the kitchen away from our food. Choose this bunkhouse if you want to feel better about the state of your own home, or are a glutton for punishment.

Rating: 0 out of 5.



Dacre's Stable, the Lake District (also known as Hilary's Place). (Photo above).

Where is it? A fifteen-minute drive into the fells, from Kendal, the Lakes.

What sort of bunkhouse is it? Converted barn.

Good for: An off-grid experience, a warm log burner and a very warm welcome.

Bad for: Nothing, aside from an inevitable sense of melancholy.

Other thoughts: This place is on a farm in the fells, run by a lady called Hilary, who lives here on her own having set up the bunkhouse with her late husband. It's over two floors, with a great, open plan downstairs with kitchen, double bed behind some stable doors, and a communal area with comfy seats and a fantastic log-burning stove. There's a big wet room with underfloor heating (I know!), and more beds upstairs, a sofa, another fire, and a few board games to while away the dark Lake District evenings with your paddling buddies.

It's hard to separate the place from the person; Hilary is threaded through this place, she'll always come over for a chat, sometimes for quite a while and it's always a slightly peculiar feeling when she disappears through the dark, back to the lonely farmhouse over the road that she lives in, while we sit and chat a drink with mates. We love Hilary, and we love this place.

Rating: 5 out of 5.

Pen Isa'R Llan Farm. (Also known as "Owl on a stick bunkhouse")

Where is it? 5min from Bala, North Wales.

What sort of bunkhouse is it? Converted farm buildings.

Good for: Dog poop and winged predators.

Bad for: Kitchen size and any kind of communal space.

Other thoughts: Pretty rustic bunkhouse with a bed to amenities ratio that didn't abide to any of the known laws of physics. It has off-road parking, and we were allowed to hang up kit to dry in the barns as all other available space was occupied by bunkbeds. Farm dogs had the run of the back courtyard and clearly mistook it for a latrine, which meant you had to stay frosty to keep from stepping on organic landmines.

The owners at the time had a pet owl that lived on a stick in the living room of their adjoining cottage – a fact that they delighted in showing all travelers from the East of England. Choose this bunkhouse if you are all about "Location, Location, Location" and the Tryweryn is running.

Rating: 2 out of 5.



Plas Curig, Capel Curig. (Photo above)

Where is it? Snowdonia.

What sort of bunkhouse is it? A grand, converted farmhouse.

Good for: Everything. Absolutely everything.

Bad for: Being way too popular!

Other thoughts: As close to bunkhouse heaven as you'll ever find. Or Elysium, or Vaikuntha, or indeed Tir Na Nog. The rooms are amazing, with built in bunks (none of that free-standing, swaying-in-the-breeze rubbish here!) that each have individual curtains. INDIVIDUAL CURTAINS!!!! There are power sockets at the end of each bed to charge your mobile, wifi, several lounges and chilling areas, an open fire, warm showers, a drying room, a massive well-equipped kitchen, a lovely big dining area all divided up into sections, so this place outclasses even decent hotels. Heck, it's even nicer than my house. The couple running the place are essentially deities, who move about on their own individual clouds, accompanied by Ralph the dog, who will happily wee on you in exchange for a hearty rub on the chest. The view from the place is life-enhancing, and you're so close to a massive range of sexy rivers that life genuinely doesn't get any better...

Rating: 10 out of 5.

Paddler Safety – Online Resources

Last Autumn, Pia arranged a Whitewater Safety and Rescue course, with paddlesport coach Chris Brain. Not only does Chris have the best complexion in the business, but he's a damn good coach and a great guy. So great, in fact that we're dragging him all the way to Norfolk in April to spend the weekend working with the Eagle Coaching Team. (So, by June, we'll all be paddling and coaching like gurus, with glowing skin to boot).

Chris is passionate about the sport, and passionate about passing on his knowledge; so much so that he's uploaded to his website his Coaching Safety Series of articles, first published in The Paddler magazine. They're great reads, and include subjects like Being Prepared, Working as Team on the Water, Chest Harnesses, Steep Ground and Sticky Situations to name but a few. I'd heartily recommend giving them a read. Take a look here: <http://www.chrisbraincoaching.com/the-paddler-safety-series>