

Martyn Hedges (aka Bushy)

born in 1956.

As a teenager, Martyn joined Windsor and District Canoe Club along with his older brother, David. He initially started paddling K1 in the early 1970s whilst dabbling in C1s. From the onlookers' perspective Martyn appeared to be a natural C1 paddler, but his ambition was to paddle K1 to the best of his ability and achieved 55th position in Division 1 in 1973 as a youth paddler.

However, in 1974 Malcolm Pearcey (a prominent paddler who became the British C1 Champion later that year), finally persuaded Martyn to take paddling C1 seriously, after having observed him paddling a C1 in 1972/3. From the moment Martyn switched classes he was to lead the way in the C1 class becoming a canoe legend in his own lifetime.

Prior to 1974 Martyn had also competed in the C2 class with his long-term friend, Pat Thorn and therefore paddling a C1 competitively was not going to prove to be a technical issue for Martyn; more a case of adapting his current skill set.

Martyn's first Division 2 event was at Llandysul, where he beat Peter Keane (later to become his close friend and rival) to take 1st position. In the same year he competed at two other events in Division 2: Marsh Lock and Old Windsor, which saw gain automatic promotion to Division 1 before the end of June 1974. During the summer period, Martyn went on to gain 4th place in the 1974 Tryweryn Open, followed by 2nd in the Serpent's Tail Division 1 event and 1st at Llangollen Town. This tally of results in the C1 Class placed Martyn 3rd overall in the end of year Div. 1 result's table, qualifying him for automatic selection to the Llangollen International and the GB Winter Training Squad.

In 1975 Martyn was selected for the Skopje World Championships, where he achieved 13th position; the highest ranked World Championship placement for a British C1 paddler to that date. He would finish the year as British Champion, a position he would continue to hold for the majority of time between 1975 – 1989, only missing out on the title in 1978 and 1986; winning an incredible 13 British Championships.

It is likely that Martyn competed at more internationals than any other British paddler before or after his canoeing career, medaling in many of those competitions. Throughout his time as a C1 paddler, Martyn was coached by Jim Sibley and supported by Graham Goldsmith of Gaybo Canoes. Martyn himself was the founder and owner of Bushsport Designs, developing and pioneering the use of neoprene spraydecks.

Martyn's most memorable achievements:

- Obtaining a Sports Scholarship to Bath University (virtually unheard of in the 1970s)
- British Champion: a position held 13 times between 1975 -1989
- Winning the 1980 Europa Cup Series; beating world rivals, Jon Lugbill and Davey Hearn
- Securing a Bronze Medal in the 1983 Merano World Championships C1 Team event with Peter Keane and Jeremy Taylor
- C1 Bronze Medalist in 1985 Augsburg World Championships
- Selection for the 1992 Barcelona Olympics C1 Class

In addition to his achievements as a remarkable C1 canoeist, Martyn also paddled a C2 in 1980 with Peter Keane, at Grandtully, Serpent's Tail and Llangollen Town in the Judges' Events, with impressive results.

Sadly, Martyn died in a tragic car accident shortly before he was due to compete in the Barcelona Olympic Games. Much has been written about him since that time, but possibly none so moving and poignant as John Gregory's article, ['Trail Blazer: Martyn Hedges'](#).