

# White Water



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EDITORIAL : "ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY"

WWR is 31 this year - it is 31 years since the first Worlds (1959 at Vezere, France). The international history of the sport upto 1979 is well documented in Bill Endicott's excellent 'River Masters' - let's hope he continues where he left off with the same diligence. The domestic history of WWR is however slipping out of our grasp. Source documents MAY still be accessible (eg Year Books, Results & Exec Minutes), personalities are still there to be interviewed & the reportage of White Water Magazine/Canoeist and also White Water News/Bulletin can be reviewed. However it would be no mean achievement even to collect together such an archive and to maintain it on an ongoing basis.

Should the Exec be addressing this issue before it is too late? We are still within reach of the very first generation of WWR paddlers (Hats off to NM!) - but in 10 years time record breaking names like Campbell & Helm (let alone Jackson) may be forgotten - and we will have lost a valuable source of tradition and inspiration.

As a case in point, it would be nice to believe (i) the following statements could be authenticated and (ii) that people would know who dun it ....

Who .... won 7 National Individual Championships in 2 classes, won 3 medals in 6 Worlds, was a director of a canoe supply company, retired from kayak paddling aged 24, raced boats without gelcoat (myth?), made 'Sub-9' an obsession for others, learned his trade from Nig Morley & Martin Boshier (who was Boshier?), inspired Smith (who?) & Kay & Tordoff (which one?) to waste a lot of their lives (waste?) .... Who was this person?

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY - NEARLY?

The Exec are currently chasing an outstanding debt associated with last years' worlds - one paddler alone did not pay his share in the trip (£400), much to the annoyance of the others. As a result of a team petition, the Exec voted to step up their action as a matter of principle - considering possibilities ranging from County Court action to a ban from WWR/BCU. Perhaps future generations will therefore be able to reflect on such action in some chapter or other in the history of WWR (see ab

## 1990 INTERNATIONAL TOUR - Part 1

The top international events of 1990 fall into two blocks. The races in June included 3 World Series legs (Spindle, Spittal & Bovec - Bovec was also the Pre-Worlds) and the first Europa Cup race (Merano). On account of heavy exam commitments (luckily falling in the pre-worlds year), a lack of prior white water practice and the number of new rivers, June was always going to be a warm up for the GB team with training focused on results in the July block. The main priority was to learn the river Soca (Bovec - Yugoslavia) for the 1991 Worlds.

There were some notable GB performances despite these objectives. Steve Wells improved with every race - eventually finding top form to come 3rd in the Pre-Worlds. Julie Ashton got top 10 placings in both her races whilst Karen Porter looked set for an outstanding Pre-Worlds result, placed 8th until she hit a rock less than 5 minutes from the finish. Twigger & Simpson were our only C2 representatives but were not daunted, visibly growing in confidence and cohesion and finishing with a good time at Bovec.

In Men's K1, 3 members only left the exam room days before the Bovec race. In the earlier races Robin Murray turned in a creditable 14th at both Spittal and Merano. At Bovec, Alan Tordoff made an emphatic international comeback in 13th place and in touch - very encouraging after the disappointments of 1989. World No 2, Neil Stamps, arrived 36 hours before the race and did well to achieve 19th. Most encouraging was the Team event where the 1986 Junior World champions (Tordoff, Tordoff & Stamps) were reunited. With merely 9 days river practice between them they raced magnificently to 5th place (out of 14 teams) - only 22 seconds off the winners and 12 seconds up on Ian's individual time on a falling river!

Noteworthy performances overall came from Philippe Graille (FRA - Winner of the Pre-Worlds), Yves Masson (FRA - most consistent MK1), Aurore Bringard (FRA - clear LK1 Pre-Worlds winner), Masle/Grobisa (YUG - winners at Merano but boycotted Bovec due to differences with their Federation), and the most impressive Andy Bridge (USA - winner of all C1 races who would certainly have given Jellenc a challenge had the Yugoslav world champion raced Bovec).

For the GB Team, this first series of 1990 offers a number of insights:

- \* Once at the top, there is a good chance of staying there - Steve Wells & Julie Ashton
- \* We have serious team medal chances in both Men's & Ladies kayak
- \* The Soca at Bovec may be more suited to British paddlers than any Worlds since Bala 81
- \* Long tours are debilitating - especially if they involve unfamiliar diet, travel between races and new rivers. The sickness that overtook a number of our C1s and Men's K1s can be traced to those catalysts.

## PRE-WORLDS REPORT

The river Soca at Bovec (close to the Italian & Austrian borders) is a volatile alpine river fed by spring snowmelt and local rainfall (flash flooding off steep mountains). Below 120 on the gauge is about 19 minutes for MK1 & something of a boulder dodge, whilst over 140 makes a 15 minute race with the final slalom site section positively dangerous - in such conditions the finish would have to be moved - leaving only 13 minutes).

There are three distinct sections :

Srpenica to Elbow Bend	Grade 2+	Flat, boily, small boulders	6.30
Gorge	Grade 2/4	More shutes, bigger boulders	8.00
Slalom Site	Grade 4+	Fast rock dodge, danger at end	2.30

After a tame start (long enough to get very exhausted at speed), the river enters a gorge which contains boulders vaying in size from houses to tower blocks. All routes are safe but only some are fast - such as the amazing 'hole in the wall' at House Rock where there are three distinct routes. The slalom site is the kick in the tail - 600 metres of challenging shutes and boulders followed by the threat that just one pool separates the finish line from a very definitely Grade 6 gorge.

Boils present the biggest challenge making paddle stability a key factor. A gently 'rolling' boat with rockered bow and fine stern may be an advantage in both shutes and boils. With the exception of the slalom site there are no continuous rapids with big waves like Bourg or Grandtully. What chains of waves there are, are notable for steep entries and short wavelength, making a water shedding front deck very desirable.

It appears that Goetschy's Obsession II is well suited for these conditions - scoring highly on the handling and water shedding requirements whilst being fast on the flat. The range of Prijon 89 derivatives on display - 4 versions - come close whilst lacking the overall concept .... and perhaps the results showed it with Obsession II gaining 3 out of the top 4 places in both Men's & Ladies events plus both winning teams.

The development of paddles for wild water is clearly a hot area at present. The Savage worlds having been won with Wings (after abortive Kiwi experiments in 86/87), it was no surprise to see a proliferation of shapes and sizes - though the winners of both kayak classes used Schlegels.

	Total MK1	Top 12	Total LK1	Top 12
'Traditional' Wings/Flites	13	3	-	-
Rasmussen 'Twisted' Wings	12	5	5	4

So 9 out of the top 24 men & ladies used Rasmussen's twisted wings (of one form or another). Meanwhile only the Italians (following after the master?) and German flat water ace Gickler used traditional wings. Most notably only the British of the leading nations showed no conversions.

What about it? Having tried nearly every variation on flat and rough(ish!) water, I firmly believe that the Rasmussen wing presents a feasible possibility for the wild water paddler (unlike traditional wings). It works in waves and is very effective in turbulent water. Furthermore, it is not difficult to swap to and from flat blades. However, it is very important to have the wild water variant - smaller area, less layback and less scoop with a tighter lip. The next issue of the Bulletin will feature a full report on the Rasmussen range!

#### NEW CALENDAR - OLD PROBLEM

John Moore writes on behalf of Bryanston School Canoe club to complain that we have once more scheduled the Dart race to clash with the Exe Descent - thus making the top events in the South West mutually exclusive. Coordinator Bill Fraser points out that any shift in our already crowded calendar typically repercussions across a number of other events thus a cycle of re-opening negotiations with organisers, clubs and landowners etc. Life is never simple. However, Bryanston's point is clear - especially if we want to encourage junior participation - and most important in a region short on events.

#### FOR SALE

Obsession II Kayak - well used but still a fine race boat - 10.5kg Midi BIP construction - all kevlar with significant carbon reinforcement - £250  
Contact Dave Kay on 0742 686090 (Day) or 0663 734730 (Evenings).

Winner C1 with Bushdeck & 2 paddles - a bargain - £100 ono from Mark Blower on 0203 348513.

Obsession Kayaks - Only for sale because the owner is concentrating on slalom this season and needs to buy other equipment :

\*\*\* (1) Epoxy Kevlar Carbon - MIDI BIP manufactured - Excellent weight & pristine condition - £500 ono \*\*\* (2) Epoxy Kevlar - Impulse manufactured - top class Nick Pink product virtually unused - £450 ono  
Contact Adrian Trickett on 0602 810023

Rocky III C1 - Kevlar construction in very good condition - take it if you want to use it - pay for it if you like it! Borrowers welcome.  
Contact Jenny or Phil on 0602 222118

WANTED - Kayak of modern design in good condition - King, Obsession, Superstar or Delphin - will pay upto £250.  
Contact Stuart Smith on 0623 795778

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