

**FAST CRUISING RULES . . . . OK!**

**A COLLECTION OF RIVER GUIDES**

**FOR WILD WATER RACERS**

*Published by White Water News*

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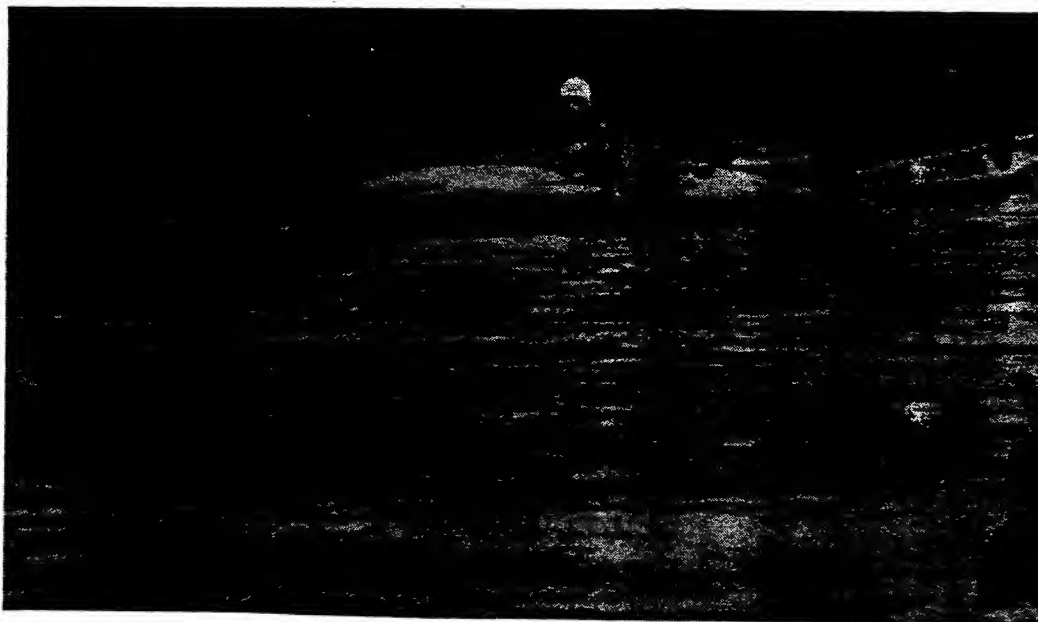
Thanks of course to John Anderson, Bill Fraser, John Graveling and Jerry Tracey for their contributions. Also to Leeds Canoe Club (Fast Cruising Section) for the inspiration to tour rivers in racing boats, and to the Fast Driving Section for making it possible (especially Don, Hazel & Mike).

Equally important let's not forget that someone has to pay for these things .... thanks sincerely to the major sponsors of this guide :

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Stuart Fisher's CANOEIST MAGAZINE

The Wild Water Racing (WWR) Executive has also helped considerably - trusting that readers will be encouraged to take up WWR boating as one of the best ways to enjoy the freedom of British rivers. For further information about WWR contact the Secretary (Sarah Swallow) at

7 Delves Walk, Deva Park, Huntington, Chester.



Dedicated to Luc Verger and our friends from Lyons who represent the spirit of wild water racing that this book aims to communicate

## CONTENTS

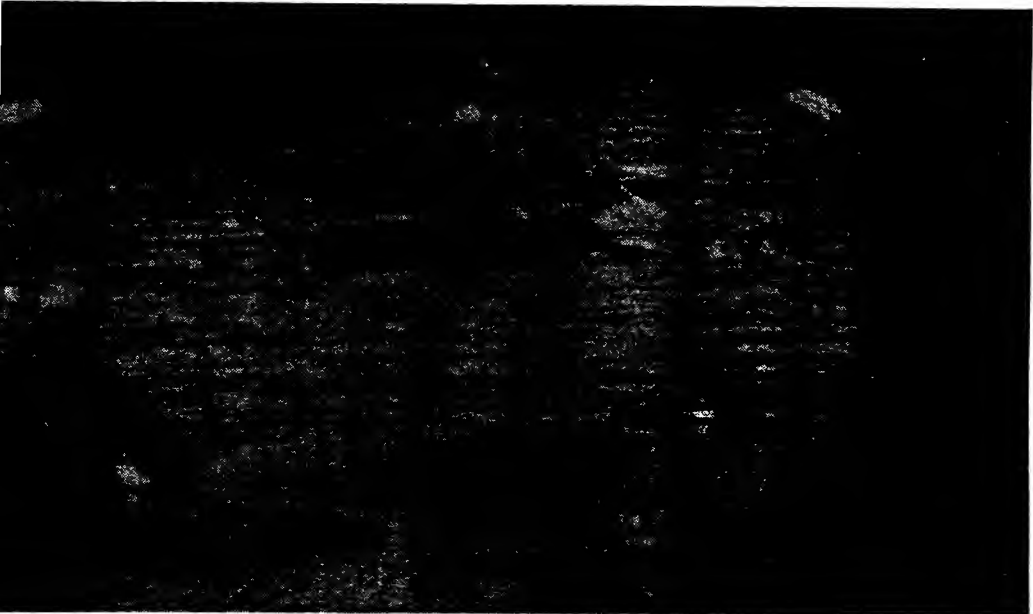
### Introduction

#### At Home

- |                              |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Aire, West Yorks          | Bill Fraser    |
| 2. Allen, North East         | Jerry Tracey   |
| 3. Awe, West Highlands       | John Graveling |
| 4. Calder, West Yorks        | Bill Fraser    |
| 5. Nith, South West Scotland | John Anderson  |
| 6. South Tyne, North East    | Jerry Tracey   |

#### Abroad

- |                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| 1. Isere, French Alps | Dave Kay |
|-----------------------|----------|



"After You, Bill" : 1st Spate Cruise of the Calder - New Years Day 1986  
Bill Fraser spots the left hand shoot on Sowerby Bridge weir -  
with not a lot of help from (L to R) Karen Porter, Julia Harling,  
Alan Tordoff, Dave Kay, Ian Tordoff & (hidden) Phill Player

**INTRODUCTION**

This booklet is a compilation of five guides previously printed in WHITE WATER NEWS in 1985-86. Two additional guides have been added - the South Tyne and the Isere (venue of the 1987 World Championships in Wild Water Racing).

Common to all these rivers is their suitability for cruising and training in WWR boats. To fulfill these ends, WWR paddlers are looking for a number of features to make a river worthwhile. For example :

- Free or negotiable access
- Start/Finish logistics (multiple runs)
- Summer and drought paddling
- Grade 2-3 conditions for training (not excessive)
- Low risk of boat damage
- Near home or cheap undercover accomodation

The rivers here all rate highly against many of these criteria. You can't have it all (even the Awe has its drawbacks) but these venues offer the aspiring British racer a variety of excellent opportunities - though sadly anyone living south of the Trent must note the northern predominance!

At one extreme, the Aire and Calder are essentially flat water broken by weirs and shallow rapids. At the other extreme the Allen, the Isere and the Nith will test white water skills throughout their length. Some offer long tours, whilst the classic northern wild water rivers are more suited to multiple runs. Most are passable virtually all year, with different training benefits dependent on level.

There are of course many other British rivers that are open to sensible groups of racers - even though some may never host races on account of variable conditions or formal access rulings.

Over the winter months this year Leeds Canoe Club has toured / trained in WWR boats (even C2s!) on the Wharfe above and below the race course, the Goyt (interesting above the race course), the Derbyshire Derwent (from the Dam), the Mersey and the Eden. Each of these deserves a place in this guide - and perhaps we will cover them one day. Indeed, if you would recommend your local ditch to WWR paddlers, why not write a guide .....

---

**DISCLAIMER**

The opinions etc expressed here etc are not those of the BCU or the WWR Executive or even Uncle Tom Cobley.

I accept responsibility - and anyone who knows me would say you'd be stupid to accept anything I say at face value. So, go to it - and take care out there!

Dave Kay, 14 Lake View, Furness Vale, Stockport SK12 7QD

---

**READ THIS BEFORE PASSING GO**

In the current climate we must pass comment on two issues - ACCESS and SAFETY.

With the exceptions of the Awe and the Nith, the practice amongst WWR paddlers familiar with these rivers is not to worry about access issues. There are clearly defined access and egress points for tours without trespassing, and (even if theoretically breaking the 'law') we have never encountered any harassment on the rivers.

With all due respect to the CRACK access campaigners, I for one would suggest that skilled paddlers in small groups of racing boats who pass quickly through sections do not need to kick up a big fuss about access. To be selfish, the evidence is that for WWR paddlers many British rivers are totally accessible!

Safety must be a consideration for any WWR paddler. These guides try to highlight threats to the competent paddler (eg the Awe stakes, the difficult Aire and Calder weirs). However, as with the issue of access, the information is directed to the racer - and therefore assumes a degree of competence, speed and boat volume.

To put it bluntly, cruisers in slalom boats stand both to upset other river users AND to get stuck in weirs. Please therefore use this guide as it is intended.

**QUICK REFERENCE SUMMARY**

At Home	Guide Section	Length	Grade	(Spate)	Passable Access
1. Aire	Bingley - Leeds	18m	2	(NB Weirs)	11 months Free
2. Allen	A686 - Haydon Brdg	4m	2-4	(Cont 3-4)	Needs rain Free
3. Awe	Awe Barrage - Loch Etive	3m	2-3	(3-4)	March-Nov Check
4. Calder	Mytholmroyd - M62	14m	2	(NB Weirs)	11 months Free
5. Nith	Eliock - Drumlanrig (A76)	5m	2-4	(3-5)	Needs rain Check
6. South Tyne	Alston - Hexham	20m	2-3	(2-4)	Needs rain Free
<b>Abroad</b>					
1. Isere	Bourg - Centron	15m	3-4	(3-5)	April-Oct Free

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MAP N° 104

# YORKSHIRE TELEVISION Aire Classic 85



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## SATURDAY AIRE I & II

### AIRE I

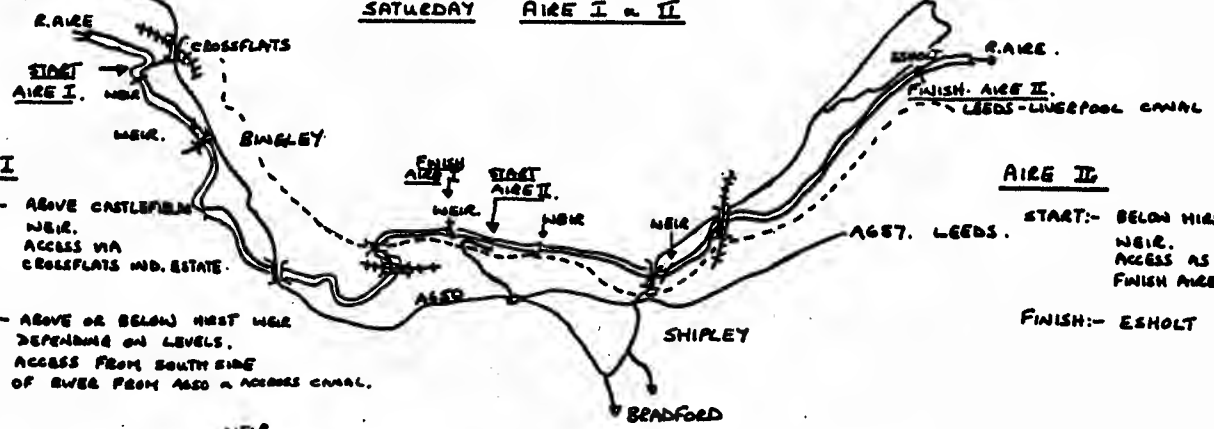
START:- ABOVE CASTLEFIELD WEIR.  
ACCESS VIA CROSSFLATS W.D. ESTATE.

FINISH:- ABOVE OR BELOW HIRST WEIR  
DEPENDENT ON LEVELS.  
ACCESS FROM SOUTH SIDE  
OF RIVER FROM AG50 & ACROSS CANAL.

### AIRE II

START:- BELOW HIRST WEIR.  
ACCESS AS FOR FINISH AIRE I.

FINISH:- ESHOLT



## SUNDAY AIRE III & IV

### AIRE III

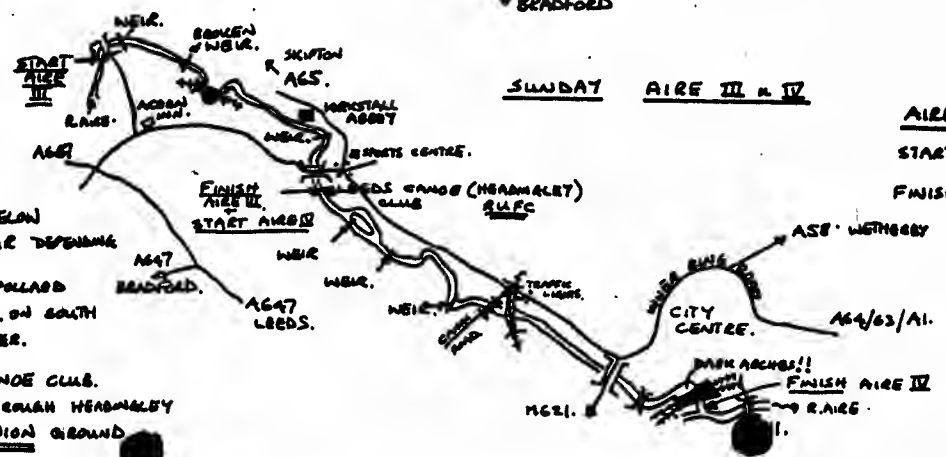
START:- ABOVE OR BELOW NEWLAT WEIR DEPENDENT ON LEVEL.  
ACCESS VIA PALLARD LANE ONLY, ON SOUTH SIDE OF RIVER.

FINISH:- LEEDS CANOE CLUB.  
ACCESS THROUGH HEADMALLEY RUBY UNION GROUND

### AIRE IV

START:- LEEDS C.C.

FINISH:- CANAL BASIN ACCESS VIA DARK ARCHES & PUBLIC CAR PARK (SOP), FROM NEVILLE STREET, (OFF CITY SQUARE UNDER RAILWAY BRIDGES).



Scale 1:50,000 (revised 1/81)

The River Aire has been used for many centuries as a source of power for the mills that line its banks. Its main features therefore are weirs although there are several quite long stretches of minor rapids.

As would be expected the nature of the weirs varies considerably with water level. They are all shootable and safe at low to moderate levels but at higher levels although still shootable by the experienced paddler require a much higher skill factor. At the lower levels the boat will slide down the weir faces with little danger of damage. Experience has shown that it pays to take them all slowly as this prevents the bow of the boat banging down onto the weir face.

The following are the main points of each weir but you are advised to inspect each one first. ( most are easily accesible from the roads)

AIRE I Castlefields Weir:- simple shoot down main tongue. beware of stakes in low water.

Bingley Weir:- shoot at angle in centre of river. goit down extreme left hand bank may be blocked. →

Hirst Weir:- (if used) shoot slowly on left hand side about 3 boat lengths from the bank (to the right of tree stump if it is still there)



AIRE II Saltaire Weir :- a big one centre or extreme right in low/mod levels. extreme right if high

Shipley Weir:- shoot diagonally in centre or down extreme right in low/moderate levels. extreme right if high.

AIRE III Newlay Lane Weir:- another big one. shoot in centre.

Kirkstall Forge Weir:- a broken weir best taken on the extreme right. centre is possible with a wiggle!

Kirkstall Weir:- anywhere right of centre. far right best in low/moderate levels.

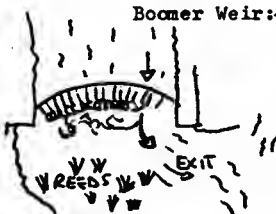


AIRE IV Take RIGHT HAND branch of river 300m after start

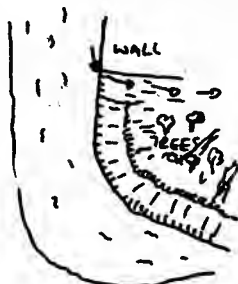
Island Weir:- a bumpy step. inspect for stakes in centre and right hand side. choose route between them.



Boomer Weir:- THE BIG ONE. shoot straight on left hand side about one boat length out from bank. This is the most dangerous weir as it is horseshoe shaped and has walls at each end. At high levels there is a powerful boiling stopper here. The weir is best taken slowly though as the back end does tend to catch on the concave face of the drop.

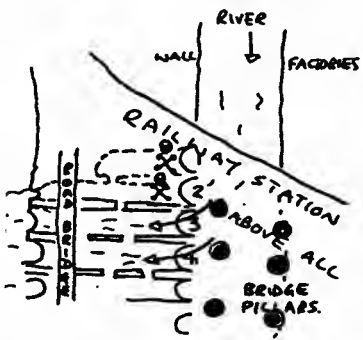


Museum Weir:- shoot in the extreme left hand corner at an angle to the right. This is a blind shoot when racing as you need to almost clip the wall on your left as you approach. It is probably best inspected from the water or from the canal towpath (access on foot from Industrial Museum car park -free- Canal Road (take Viaduct Road from traffic lights on Kirkstall Road)



DARK ARCHES Leeds' answer to The Black Hole at Alton Towers!

Take the THIRD or FOURTH arch from the RIGHT. The first and second are DEAD ENDS (literally) Depending on levels you may slide a bit as you go through. Its dark and noisy but quite safe. If its high you will meet some quite big waves and beware of the currents coming across from the other channels.





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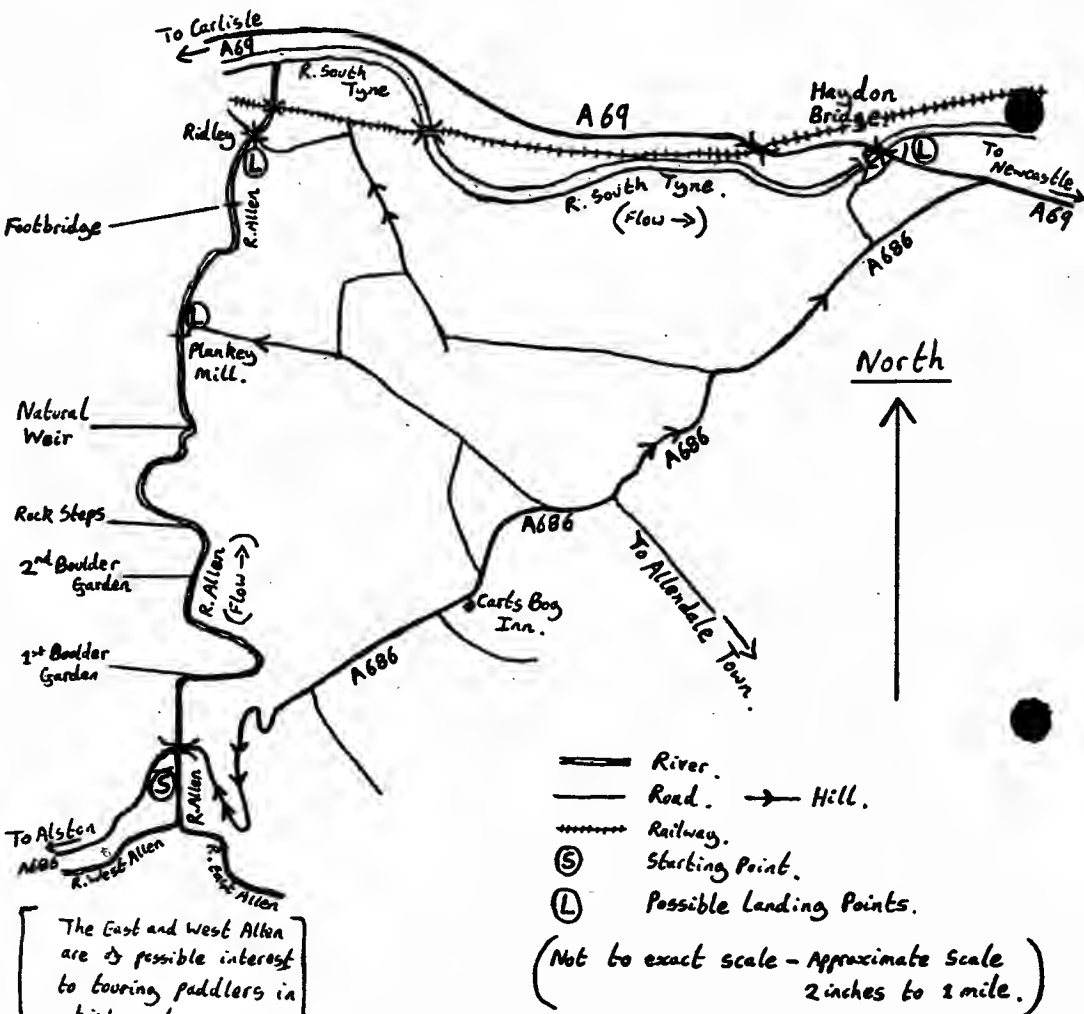
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# SET THE PACE

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**THE RIVER ALLEN**

Jerry Tracey (of the Haefen Adventure Centre) has compiled this thorough guide to the Allen - which is just over the hill from the Eden, or just over the valley from the North Tyne. It is a river with no real access problems (apart from its location) which provides ideal Grade 3/4 WWR training in spate conditions in an impressively eerie gorge. Further details from Jerry on Allendale (043483) 409.



## The River Allen.

The Allen is situated in South Northumberland and flows north to join the South Tyne between Haltwhistle and Haydon Bridge. The river drops steeply as it flows down out of the Pennines, providing continuous wild-water. The descent takes the paddler through a deep wooded gorge and well away from roads and even footpaths. The scenery is very impressive, but there is little chance to take it in on a straight run down as the water is technical and requires constant vigilance! The Allen offers an excellent run on testing and interesting water. It has great potential for use by WWR paddlers as a training river for improving boat control, water reading, and rough-water paddling skills.

### Location:-

The Allen can be found on O.S. Sheet 87 - Hexham and Haltwhistle (1:50 000 Series).

The best launching point is at the bridge where the A686 Haydon Bridge to Alston road crosses the river. There is a layby for parking on the west side of the river just beside the bridge and easy access to the water from the left-hand bank slightly upstream from the bridge. (GR. 800592).

Landing and vehicle access are possible on the right-hand bank at Plankey Mill (GR. 795622). Exit from the river is also possible further downstream at the minor road bridge at Ridley (GR. 799641). Another possibility for those who wish to combine a descent of the Allen with some distance training is to continue right down to the confluence with the South Tyne and then paddle this river down to Haydon Bridge, where landing is possible on the right-bank a little downstream of the A69 bridge at the car park used for the start of the South Tyne race (GR. 845645). This is the option which I usually choose. This part of the South Tyne is straightforward, but it is 'bouncy' in high water. The weir at Haydon Bridge (shootable at left side) adds a last touch of spice at the end!

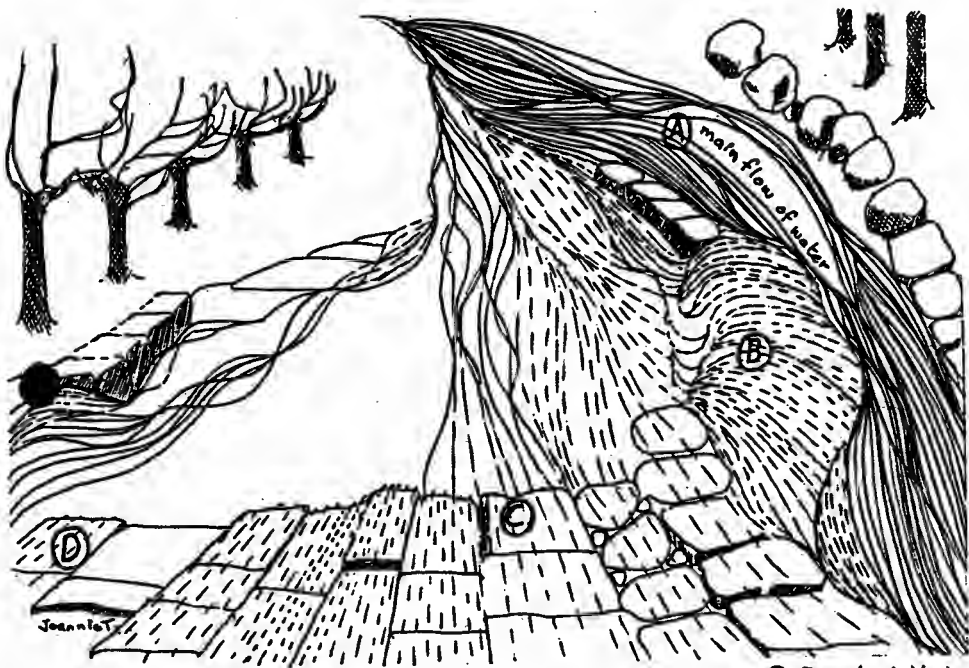
### Level:-

The Allen is a small river which is fed by run-off from the high Pennines. It rises and falls quickly and it is, unfortunately, not paddleable at low water. The river is at it's best soon after heavy rain (or snow-melt) in the hills. It can thus be up at any time of the year, but it tends to be in condition more often in winter than in summer. The level can be judged by looking downstream from the A686 bridge at the rock ledge immediately below (see sketch). If the level of the Allen is too low, worthwhile paddling in the same general area can usually be found on the North and South Tyne river race courses and on the upper South Tyne between Alston and Haltwhistle.

The Descent:-

Mileage  
from Start.

- 0 A686 Bridge:- Launch point is on the left bank slightly upstream from the bridge. A rock ledge immediately below can be used as a level indicator (see sketch). There is a route down the right of this ledge. Several more rock ledges follow to:-
- $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. First Boulder Garden:- This starts on a sharp right-hand bend and is a long rapid where the river drops steeply through a confused maze of boulders. There are several possible routes and also some 'blind-alleys'. I start in the centre, move over to the left, and then cut back to the extreme right. This route keeps to the main flow of water, but it involves some very tight turns! A series of turbulent rapids, including one where the river surges around the base of a high cliff on a sharp left-hand bend, lead on down to:-
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles. Second Boulder Garden:- This is similar to the first boulder garden, but it is not quite as long nor quite as tricky. I take a route which starts on the left, moves to the centre, then comes back to the left. Several fast rapids follow to:-
- $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles. Rock Steps:- These are met just after a left-hand curve. They are not particularly high, but two sudden vertical drops occur in quick succession. Below each is found a long low stopper, with a surprisingly strong suckback for it's size. If you have any slalomists on the river with you, watch out here for boats cutting across your bows; as this is the sort of place where they like to try pop-outs, etc!! I take the first step on the left and the second in the centre. This keeps to the greatest depth of water and thus minimizes damage to the stern. The river now widens slightly and fast shallow rapids follow until:-
- 2 miles. Natural Weir:- This is a band of hard rock, which forms a high drop with a 45 degree slope. I take a route on the extreme left. There is also a possible route just to the right of centre. Beware of going across to the right, where, from above, the main flow of water appears to be heading. This leads into a dangerous 'blind-alley', which is choked with boulders and (usually) fallen tree-trunks. The route on the extreme left involves a sharp turn to the right at the bottom just after the stopper, but it places the boat on a good line for the choppy rapid which follows just after the natural weir. A couple of fast rapids follow and a few buildings now come into view on the right.
- $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. Plankey Mill:- This is marked by a suspension footbridge. Landing and vehicle access are possible on the right bank, providing the first of the possible exit points from the river. Below Plankey Mill the river offers a constant succession of fast rapids, some of which tend towards being shallow. The speed and force of the water gradually tails off as the gradient levels out. Launching at Plankey Mill and paddling the lower half of the river only would be a suitable option for less experienced paddlers who are not as yet ready for the difficult upper section.
- $3\frac{1}{4}$  miles. Footbridge:- Below here, the river slows and widens as it emerges into the large open valley of the River South Tyne.
- $3\frac{3}{4}$  miles. Ridley Road Bridge:- This is another possible landing point with vehicle access. A railway bridge follows.
- $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles. Confluence with River South Tyne:- The small town of Haydon Bridge is reached after a further 3 miles down the South Tyne.



Level Indicator.

View Looking Downstream from  
A696 Bridge.

- Ⓐ If water is only flowing down here, the river is too low.
- Ⓑ If water is coming down here, but not further left, expect 'bump and scrape'.
- Ⓒ If water is flowing over the top of the ledge here, the river is at a good level.
- Ⓓ If whole ledge is covered, the river is in spate!

**Post Script**

- by Jerry Tracey

I am the B.C.U. access officer for the River Allen. There is at present a very good relationship between anglers/riparian owners and canoeists in this valley. Use of the river for paddling is un-restricted and it is my hope that this situation will continue as the popularity of the river grows.

Anglers are not usually met, since our requirements for water conditions are diametrically opposed to theirs. Though it is a trout river, fishing is relatively light in any case over the section of main interest to us owing to it's banks being inaccessible.

If you do meet anglers, please be polite and try to keep disturbance to a minimum. If you should be challenged, please be tactful and diplomatic and ask the objector to contact me. I would appreciate it if you would also tell me about the incident yourself, so that I have your side of the story.

Outbreaks of friction of the type encountered in certain other areas of the country are, however, most unlikely as things stand at the moment. Please help me to maintain the good reputation which canoeists have at present in Allendale!

You may, if you wish, contact me for further information about this river. I am also happy to advise on current state of water-level by telephone.

**THE RIVER AWE : A White Water Racing & Training Guide**

Ever since the very low water level of the 1979 Division A race on the Awe the river has not had the attention paid to it by paddlers south of the border that perhaps it really merits. Whilst other rivers offer more in the way of death defying thrills and spills, the Orchy for example, the Awe is not to be underestimated for the purposes of WWR practice and boat testing.

**SITUATION**

The river is in central-west Scotland about 75 miles from Stirling and Glasgow via Crianlarich. It flows from the Awe Barage at the end of Loch Awe to Loch Etive about 3.5 miles in a north-west direction. River levels vary according to the amount of water released but at the regular late spring & summer level the river is grade II almost continuously and has sections of III, notably the slalom site and about 400 yards below the barrage. At a high level it is Grade III virtually the full length and with some Grade IV at the slalom site and at the start.

**ACCESS & EGRESS**

Entry and exit points are convenient. A layby at the barage and a smaller one 100m below provide easy parking. The Hydro authorities own the land and are very friendly. Exit from the river is best obtained at one of two points. At the campsite (right bank) 200 yards above the stone road bridge, only a short distance from the barage but convenient if running the river in sections.

Secondly at the chain bridge 3 miles downstream of the barage, unmistakable from the river. Get out on the left bank and walk up the bank and about 200 yards across a field (a footpath) to a motor track (suitable for cars but not buses / trailers). Your transport drives along the A85 in the direction of Oban taking a right turn labelled Bonawe House. The paddlers should emerge at a gateway some 100 yards down the track. If this route is used and WWR boats paddled the whole turn-round time for a trip is in the region of 40 mins. Work out how many trips you could get in a weekend or better still how many miles on the rough water. One of our number did 12 trips (36 miles) on a Saturday and a Sunday morning!

**WARNING**

On reading the warning "No canoes beyond this point" (just after the chain bridge) on account of dangerous weirs, believe that it means what it says. Do not believe rumours that it is only the last of the weirs that is dangerous and that only slalom boats that dig deep could get into trouble.

We lost a Carbon-Kevlar racer in 10 seconds on a grade one ripple - it wrapped up on four stakes and ended up with its bottom completely shredded - potentially very dangerous for the paddler who emerged with a hole through his bouyancy aid made by the stakes.

If you want to paddle the full river get out on the right and walk round all the Weirs and get in again below the last weir (upstream of the power house). After this it is a flat water paddle into loch Etive and left round to the jetty. This extends the turn-round to over one hour per run.

### LEVELS

Even though the releases on this dam controlled river adhere to statutory limits and so it is canoeable almost without fail in the late Spring and the Summer, there are still a variety of levels.

Measurements in 'cumecs' or 'cufecs' may not mean a great deal so a convenient system is to look at the guage on the bridge. We do not know what units it measures, but at '20' it is a reasonable minimum level - the Hydro authorities seem to use that as the standard in May to September. At '25' it is quite a bit better and the waves through the slalom site start to get chunky. At '40' (flood level) it is very high with large waves in the slalom site and different fastest routes down both major sections of rapids.

During the summer months the minimum releases are available all day every day, this being topped up to about 25 on the guage with a 'full' release from 9pm Saturday to 9am Sunday. Extreme rainfall (not too rare!) can add to the release and also provide considerable in-fill from side streams.

Because of the large number of fisheries around the loch edge the water level is critical and cannot be allowed to rise or fall too much. Therefore unlike some English dam controlled rivers you cannot release water in quantity and recouperate later. Only after heavy rainfall do you get an especially big release but even at the usual 20 on the guage the river is worth paddling in racers.

### FISHING

The dam authorities are friendly, as are Mrs Douglas the campsite owner and Mrs Campbell-Preston at Inverawe House. Some of the fishermen are not. On Sundays they have no right to fish the river whatsoever. On any other day you have a right to be there also, so don't bother arguing with them. Politeness is worthwhile and do be careful of their lines. We had two 'snagging' incidents - they do concentrate hard on their fishing and probably just do not realise you are approaching from behind them, (they cast downstream), so some form of warning ought to be employed.

ACCOMMODATION

Logistically the Awe Valley is good for canoeing. Accommodation is available at the campsite located centrally on the river with its own access. The shower block offers good facilities and is kept in a clean condition. Petrol, diesel, groceries and a cafe are all available on site. If conditions do not encourage camping or it means carrying too much kit in an overloaded car, large six-berth caravans can be hired at the campsite (approx £13 per night - book in advance).

Alternatively Chalet and Cottage type accommodation is available at Inverawe House with units of varying sizes (4 to 12). Whilst Inverawe House is closely tied to the fishing interest, the owner is well disposed towards canoeists of the civilised variety! The property is located directly opposite the chain bridge - on the opposite bank from the main road.

Oban is a short drive away and there is also a hotel/pub just above the campsite. However with the standard full releases available before 9am Sunday too much late night revelry may not be a good idea!

Other rivers include Grandtully (Tay) - 75 minutes away, the Dochart (including the falls of Killin) - 45 minutes drive, (only for the crazy), and the Orchy which flows into Loch Awe - 20 minutes. En route from Stirling, the Lenny above Callander is good III/IV but really only a spate river. Apart from the Tay, each of those rivers requires care, specialist knowledge and a good water level.

Useful Contacts

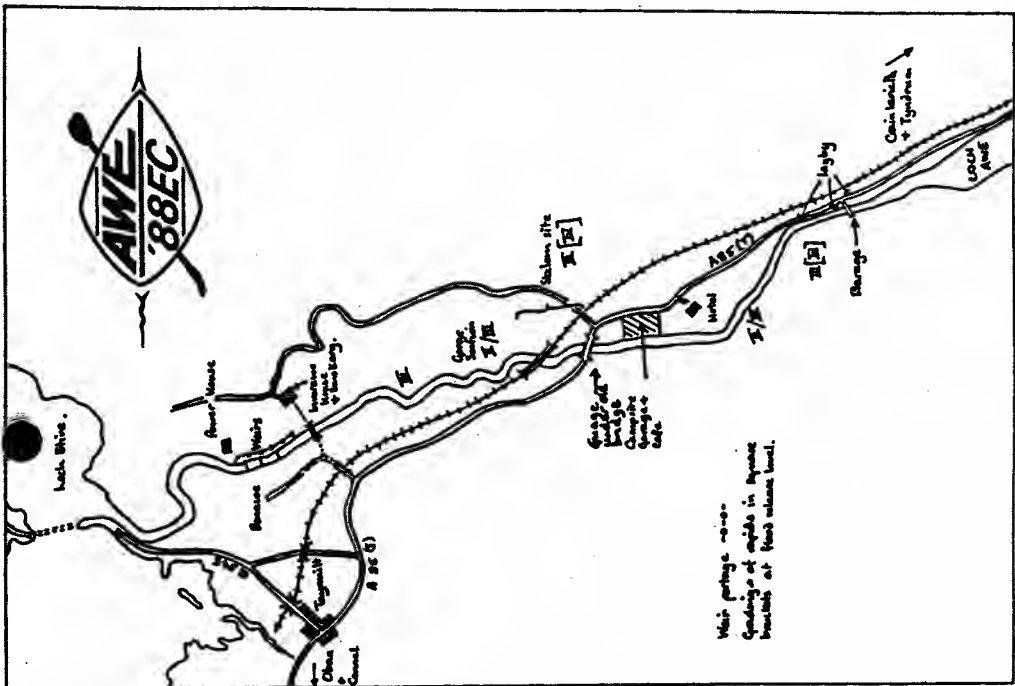
Mrs Douglas (Campsite & Caravans)

Mrs Campbell-Preston (Inverawe House - brochure available)

Suffice to say that on both of our Summer '85 trips the long journey north was well worth it. We find the Awe Valley contains good to very good water suitable for all levels of racers and is extremely convenient to paddle once you are there. One of the trips included 12 river runs each (16 in all - with thurns at driving) on a weekend leaving Manchester at about 6.30 pm Friday and returning at about 11.00 pm on Sunday. The Awe has also been chosen for the Men's K1 squad pre-Europa Cup Training Camp this year.

- John Graveling  
Leeds Canoe Club





#### AWE POSTSCRIPT

Subject to final confirmation at Bourg in July 87, the ICF has awarded the 1988 Europa Cup Final to the Awe. Clearly this is a great honour for the BCU, for the Scottish Canoe Association and to WWR paddlers nationwide. Hopefully the local community will also see it as a good thing - especially in terms of publicity and tourism.

On going to press, formal negotiations with the powers that be (Hydro Board, Inverawe Fishery Board, Police, etc) are still to come. Even though we are confident of a positive reception from these people who have long been very generous to the canoeing interest, all potential users of the Awe must tread especially carefully in the months before the big race. Please therefore bear these guidelines in mind:

- There are two full racing weekends planned before the Europa Cup on the first weekend in May each year.
- The river is free for paddling EVERY Sunday.
- Access to the river at all other times should be negotiated well in advance through the representatives of the Inverawe Fishery Board ( ).
- During the fishing season, the stretch immediately below the Barrage seems the most important to anglers (especially the start pool).

In May 1986 we caused some serious annoyance to anglers and therefore to the Board by using a stretch to which access was specifically denied - my own fault! Let's learn the lesson, and make sure we all keep to the generous access that is offered.

-Bill Fraser

THE RIVER CALDER

The River Calder at Sowerby Bridge (East Yorke) has become quite an important Regional site for slalom paddlers with the opening of the slalom course which you probably saw featured in the January Canoe Focus. The River though can also provide some quite interesting paddling in a WW boat, especially when it is high. In fact a combined Wild water and Slalom session would be quite feasible as the slalom course lies at the end of probably the most interesting piece of the river as far as WWR is concerned and a trip down to it could provide an enjoyable warm up.

On an 'industrial river' like this it is not surprising that most of the hazards are man made, ie weirs. In high water these can all be shot and the broken ones form some quite good bouncy rapids. It shouldn't need to be said that they all need inspecting before shooting as you never know what might be caught at the bottom, but this can be easily done without getting out of the boat for most of them.

These comments are written after a recent trip down when the river was high. The slalom course at Sowerby was completely washed out with the water covering all the rocks as well as the launching platforms. In these conditions the steep raised banks that line some lengthy stretches could make a capsized a tricky problem and therefore not be suitable for novices.

A suitable launching spot is Mytholmroyd, just opposite a garage/nightclub on the way to Hebden Bridge.

Weir 1:- approx 2km from start at Brearley, under a bridge. Straight shoot down left of centre. Big waves in middle and stopper.

Weir 2:- approaching Luddendenfoot. Broken weir which in high water creates a long bouncy rapid. This leads down to a low bridge which in high water has to be portaged up a steep bank on LES.

Weir 3:- 500m below bridge. Straight shoot down middle. No stopper.

Weir 4/5 200m below last weir. This is probably the biggest drop but can be shot down the extreme RHS along the wall. This line carries you through the second much smaller weir below. Easy to inspect from demolished mill on LHS

Weir 6:- 2½ km on as you enter top end of Sowerby Bridge. Shoot in LH corner, beware of the kick you can get in the boil below.

Weir 7:- Top of slalom course in Sowerby Bridge. Small drop, shoot in RH corner.

It is possible to continue well below Sowerby. Again weirs form the main hazards but they are not so close together now and so quite a long run on fast moving water is possible with the river in flood.

Weir 8:- 500m below slalom course. Shoot in extreme LH corner. This one should be inspected from the bank before you get on as it is surrounded on the upstream side by factory walls.

Weir 9:- Wire Works at Sterne Bridge. Very bumpy down LHS (take slowly). Steep drop into deep stopper on RHS.

Weir 10:- Broken weir at Copley. Bouncy waves.

Weir 11:- Broken weir below bridge in Elland. Bouncy rapid.

Weir 12:- Below Elland power station. There is a shoot in the extreme RH corner but it can be nasty in high water. Easy portage on RH bank.

Weir 12:- 1km above Brighouse. A big weir with 3 good straight shoots through big waves at bottom.

\* Weir 13:- Brighouse weir. Diagonal weir, quite big, with a long rapid running down a alongside a steep cliff in the RH corner. This can be hairy in high water but it is possible to take the main weir face. In high water this could be a suitable stopping place as below Brighouse the river becomes the canal and much slower moving.

Weir 14:- Under bridge below last weir. Small drop, RMS probably best.

\* Weir 15:- Big weir before M 62. Shoot is possible in extreme RH corner through some big waves at the bottom.

Below this point the weirs are all big and the river slow moving. There is a landing/pickup point about  $\frac{1}{2}$  km after the M62 on the LH bank.

The remaining six weirs down to the layby at Mirfield (just off map) have been shot at medium water by the FCC but no one has been past the M62 egress point in flood conditions. Like the Aire all 21 (!) weirs are shootable in Summer conditions.

Map References : OS Landranger Sheet 104  
(Also covers the Aire - See WVN 12)

(a) Access at Mytholmroyd on A646 : 012263

(b) Access / Egress at Sowerby

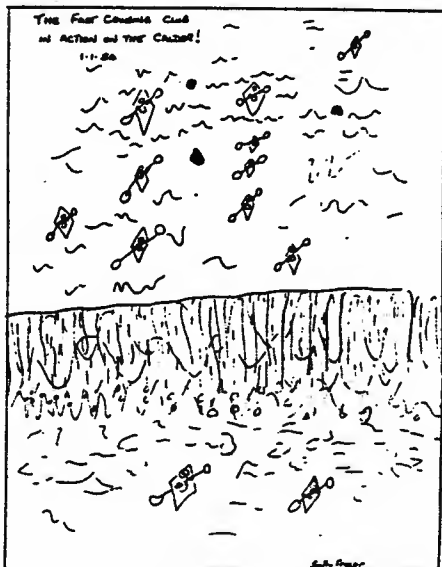
Bridge Slalom Site : 063237

(c) Egress after M62 on A644 : 167222

Important Notes :

\* = These are BIG weirs and to be respected!

All the routes described are possible at flood level : low water routes are clear to the paddler from the river



## THE RIVER NITH - A WHITE WATER RACING GUIDE

- by John Anderson

### GENERAL SITUATION

The River Nith flows East from the hills of South Ayrshire then South through the towns of New Cumnock, Sanquhar, Thornhill and Dumfries some 64km to the Solway Firth. Much of the river is of slack water with occasional falls of Grade I mainly in the lower section. However, for a stretch of about 12km the river runs through the Drumlanrig Gorge and here its fall is more pronounced. In this section alone the fall of the river is about 250 feet and the river flows over a series of rapids which can be as difficult as Grade V in high water. For its last few miles, after the town of Dumfries, the river flows into a tidal estuary. The Nith is a relatively short river with a small catchment area and hence it rises and falls fairly dramatically. The river is certainly at its best after heavy rain and it can be in condition at any time of year. For most of the length the river valley is used by the A76 which is the main Dumfries - Cumnock trunk road and allows easy access to the river at various locations. I would like to thank the Scottish Canoe Association for their permission to use information from their River Nith Guide in this article.

### WHITE WATER SECTIONS IN MORE DETAIL

1. Source - Sanquhar - Over this stretch the river flows through an upland valley at a fairly slow speed and with no great depth. The Crawick Water joins the Nith 1km upstream of Sanquhar and it is from here that the potential of the river for White Water canoeing really starts.
2. Sanquhar - Eliock Bridge - From the Nith Bridge in Sanquhar the river widens and the 4km section down to Eliock Bridge offers several stretches of Grade I water. This is a fairly useful section to use for a pre-race warm up in races where the start point is Eliock Bridge.
3. Eliock Bridge - Glen Airlie - This 5km stretch of river commences with some interesting rapids immediately below Eliock Bridge. These are normally Grade I/II but can rise to a good Grade III in high water. The most notable rapid is the 'Hotel Fall', Grade III (IV in high water) which is 1 km downstream from Eliock Bridge. Here the river takes a sharp left hand bend and is split in the centre by an island. (The Menckfoot Lodge Hotel is situated close to the river on the left hand bank.) Two routes are possible here the shortest line down the left hand side of the island is probably the easier in high water however, it narrows to a 2 foot slot in low water with several sharp edges. The line around the right of the island is immediately obvious in low water, just avoid the big boulder near the bottom. However, this boulder, suitably hidden in high water, has claimed many a 'front end' as the flow of the river pushes you straight towards it. After the 'Hotel Fall' the river runs mainly at Grade I/II all the way down to Glen Airlie. However, high water can produce some interesting standing waves throughout this section. Glen Airlie car park and picnic site is situated 100m upstream from Glen Airlie Bridge on the A76 side of the river. The most popular course for WWR events starts 500m upstream of the car park and there is a well established footpath direct to the start. Toilets are available at the picnic site - and they are open all year round.
4. Glen Airlie - Drumlanrig Bridge - This 7km section of the river offers the most continuous stretches of white water and will be used for the Nith Div B

WWR being held on Sunday 30th November 1986. The major rapids on this section are as follows:

- a. Start Rapid - At low to medium water levels immediately after the start is a 600m stretch of technical (Grade II) water, as the river is forced through a narrow rocky channel. At high water levels this presents a series of stoppers and large standing waves culminating in a good Grade IV steeper directly under Glen Airlie Bridge. The next 200m is flat and deep water, immediately followed by a tight 'S' bend then a 1km stretch of fairly continuous Grade II water, which leads on to:
- b. The Graveyard (Every good river has one) - This is a 100m stretch of Grade III water (Grade IV+ in high water) which offers a variety of routes depending on the water level. Particular care is needed at low water to avoid the possibility of getting jammed broadside across the river. In high water the stoppers and standing waves on this rapid are epic! From here the next 500m offers some good Grade II/III water before the river deepens and slows up over a 300m stretch of flat water which leads on to:
- c. Campbell's Island - This Grade II/III rapid is encountered after a sharp right hand turn from the flat stretch. The rapid is split in the centre by a large island, the best line being down the right hand bank. High above the river on the left hand bank is a railway embankment. In the early 1970's a Goods Train loaded with a well known brand of soup, popular in Scotland, shed its load from the embankment into the river. For those seeking excitement the line down the left of the island offers a good 4 foot drop and the possibility of something extra for supper. From here the river runs at Grade I/II for 500m down to:
- d. Dodd's Folley - This Grade II/III rapid is best tackled down the left hand bank with a sharp left hand turn at the bottom round a large boulder. This obstruction forms a really nasty hole and whirlpool in high water and has caught many an unwary racer. From here the river runs at Grade I/II for 1.5km with an interesting 'S' bend with high breakout potential below the white cottage at Enterkinfoot, followed by a large island with shallows which presents route finding problems in low water. After the island there are a couple of tight bends then the river deepens again and a fairly long flat stretch leads down to:
- e. Drumlanrig Gorge - Affectionately known as 'THE JAWS 'O' THE NITH'. This is certainly the most serious 'white water' undertaking on the river and normally runs at Grade III/IV in medium water although it probably reaches Grade V in spate. The Gorge appears in 3 definite stages. Initially there is a good Grade III drop then the river narrows and one is launched over a 4 foot fall (Grade IV) into a deep pool. Finally, there is another Grade IV fall which requires a fair amount of technical skill. The good news for the faint hearted is that from here it is flat

all the way to the finish. In fact this stretch of about 1.5km contains several shallows and in low water can cause the race course to be shortened. The race finish is normally on the right hand bank just upstream of the Drumlanrig Bridge.

5. Drumlanrig Bridge - Dumfries - This stretch is relatively easy Grade I water although the weir at the first railway bridge after Auldgrith requires care as it is made from steel shuttering. The weir in Dumfries can be negotiated by the salmon ladder on the left for slalom boats or alternatively a sideways slide over the main face if there is sufficient flow. From Dumfries the river is tidal and has little to offer the white water paddler.

#### ACCESS POINTS

- a. Source - Eliock Bridge:- From public roads and contact with local farmers.
- b. Eliock Bridge - Glen Airlie:- From the road on the opposite side of the river from the A76. (To launch at Eliock Bridge access is by arrangement with Mr J B Greenshields, Goosehill Farm, Banquhar).
- c. Glen Airlie - Drumlanrig Bridge:- From A76 car parks (frequent) although there are several stretches with high banks. (From Eliock Bridge to Drumlanrig Bridge the land is owned by the Buccleuch Estates and although access is permitted on any Sunday throughout the year and during the close fishing season from December - March canoeing is not encouraged at any other time during the fishing season. In any case clearance should be made by contacting the Factor, Mr Kennedy 08483 482).

Footnote: The Nith can provide excellent white water conditions at a variety of levels, unfortunately the river is not canoeable at really low water and before visiting the river it is advisable to check with the river adviser on the level. (John Beattie, 64 Auckenkeid Avenue, Enterkinfoot, Dumfries.)

Finally, it is only about an hours drive from Carlisle to the Nith WWR course which is well within its reach of paddlers living in the North of England so why not come along to this years race on Sunday 30th November (76)

-John Anderson-



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Telephone Allendale (04 3483) 409

Farmhouse Accommodation. River Guide Service.

## THE SOUTH TYNE.

Only the lower reaches of the South Tyne are at all well known. When in condition, it is, however, an extremely interesting river, offering great potential for white-water touring and WWR training.

The South Tyne has its source high in the North Pennines to the South of the small market town of Alston. The river falls steadily through the attractive valley of South Tynedale as it flows North out of the Pennines. It then swings East from Haltwhistle to join ultimately with the North Tyne just upstream from Hexham. It then continues East as the Tyne to reach Newcastle and the North Sea.

The South Tyne's steady fall means that, unlike the nearby River Allen, it has no individual spots which are especially spectacular. When it is running medium or high, it does, however, offer a long run of virtually continuous and highly enjoyable white-water paddling in its upper reaches. When in spate, Alston to Haltwhistle provides a fantastic descent with mile after mile of rapids, giving large and very powerful water of no great technical difficulty. The better known lower section provides 'classic' Grade 11 conditions, ideal for novices, training courses and Division C racing.

### Access:-

Access problems are minimal on the South Tyne, with paddling being permitted all of the year round. It is, however, an important Salmon and Trout fishing river. The situation on the rivers of the North Pennines is one of peaceful co-existence between anglers/riparian owners and canoeists, with give-and-take on both sides. If you are paddling here during the fishing season, please be polite to anglers and pass quietly. Being seen to be making an effort to keep disturbance to a minimum is a great help to the maintenance of good relations. Virtually all anglers here are friendly and quite happy to pass the time of day, etc. with canoeists. The help of visiting canoeists in furthering existing good relations by their behaviour and attitude would be greatly appreciated by all local paddlers.

The only problem area at present is at Hexham Weir. Canoeing down or playing below this can cause serious disturbance to fishing; therefore, please avoid using this particular site during the game fishing season.

In the unlikely event of your being challenged, please behave politely and diplomatically and refer the objector to the B.C.U. access officer for the South Tyne, who is:-  
Geoff Newcombe, 43, Kellsway, Leam Lane Estate, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE10 8NB. You should, in addition, report the incident to Geoff yourself. Geoff Newcombe is also the correct person to contact for further general information about the South Tyne. I am, however, happy to advise on prevailing river-levels by telephone. (Allendale (0434 83) 409.)

### Hazards:-

In addition to normal white-water hazards, there are two special problems to watch-out for on the South Tyne.

Firstly, the weirs do not always have a slack stretch above them when the river is running high; they could thus be a trap for the unwary. Some of the weirs can be shot, whilst others are dangerous. These are outlined in detail in the map notes.

Secondly, many parts of the South Tyne flow through un-managed deciduous woodland. Due to this, the river is prone to acquiring fallen trees, which topple into the stream whilst remaining attached to the bank by their roots. From Alston down the river is too wide to become blocked completely, but paddlers are advised to bear this hazard specially in mind when running this river and to exercise caution, especially when rounding bends.

### Level:-

The lower reaches from Haydon Bridge to Mexham can be run at any level outside of drought conditions, though this stretch is at it's best when the river is high.

The stretches further upstream are only worthwhile when the river is running medium or high, as they become very shallow and rocky at low-water.

The river rises quickly after rain or snow-melt in the high hills. Owing to it's longer length and larger catchment, the South Tyne holds it's level for somewhat longer than it's tributary the River Allen. If you find that you have 'just missed the water' for the Allen, the Upper South Tyne could well be worth looking at!

The river is visible in many places from the roads and the level is easily assessed by the degree to which shingle beds are exposed, especially at bends. If the whole river bed is covered at Alston Bridge and the river here appears full and 'bubbly', you have arrived at the right time and will find some 'big-water' further downstream as the river grows.

At times of spate, most of the best bits of rough-water are not visible from the roads. Be prepared for some excitement 'just around the corner'!!

### The Descent:-

Due to it's long steady fall and it's lack of a 'staircase' type of character, this river is best viewed in sections. Rather than being a step-by-step account, the following gives an outline of the general character of each stretch. Areas of special interest, land/launch points, and key hazards (eg. weirs) are highlighted in the map notes. The South Tyne can be found on O.S. sheet 87, Hexham and Haltwhistle. The upper reaches are also shown on sheet 86.

The following descriptions mainly apply to when the river is in good condition, ie. medium to high water levels.

#### Above Alston:-

This part is only passable at times of full-spate. It is then of great interest to serious white-water touring paddlers with plastic boats. The Grade here is III merging continuously with patches of IV. Anyone attempting this section should beware of encountering logs, branches, partially covered wire fences, and other sudden and unexpected hazards and obstructions. There are several narrow and committing gorge sections and a great deal of challenging and technical paddling which will be attractive to 'white-water tigers'! There are no major falls, but one particular danger point to be wary of is a pipe which spans the river just below the bridge at Garrigill. Depending on exact level it may be possible to pass over or under this, but there is obviously a danger point between these two states!

#### Alston to Slaggyford:-5 miles. Grade III.

This section has two long stretches of continuous rapids where the river narrows with an easier, though still fast, patch between them. The waves are relatively small, but a great deal of broken and breaking water will be met. There are no sudden drops, but there are some sharp corners with turbulent backlashes rolling off rock walls.

#### Slaggyford to Haltwhistle:- 10 miles. Grade III.

The river becomes gradually larger now, as streams and burns join from both sides during it's long and steady descent down this North Pennine dale. At medium levels many long and bouncy rapids will be met. In spate, expect some very exciting 'big-water' with long runs of exploding haystacks of impressive proportions. Apart from the weir at Featherstone (see map notes), which should be approached with caution, there are no sudden problems. At times, though, the river becomes constricted by high bluffs. At these places it becomes especially rough since flood-water is unable to spill out sideways.

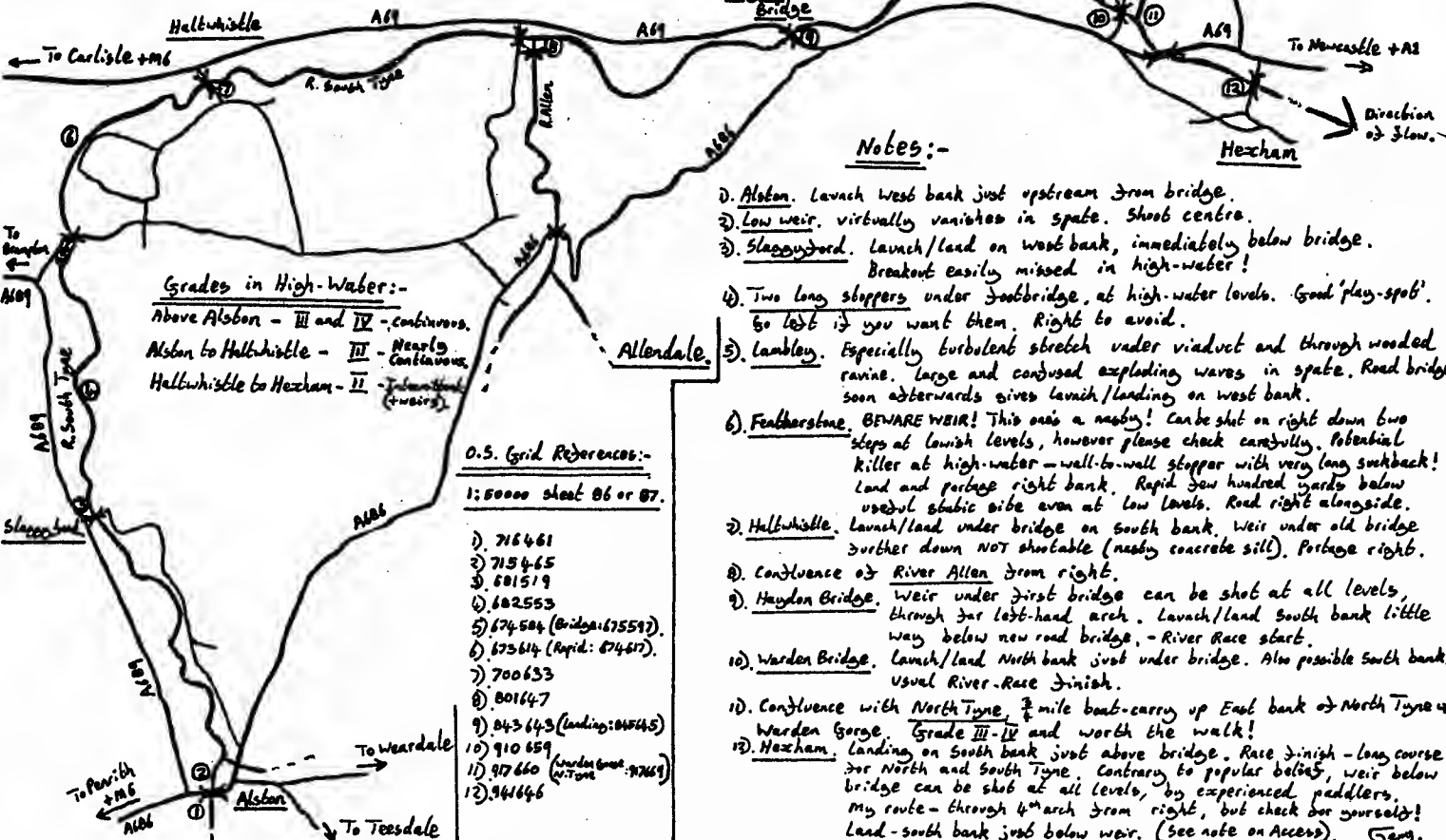


# River South Tyne.

Not to exact scale.  
Approx Scale = 2 miles:-



Foot Bridges and Railway Bridges are not shown.  
Minor Roads are only shown where they are useful for reaching different parts of the river.



## Grades in High-Water:-

- Above Alston - III and IV - continuous.
- Alston to Haltwhistle - III - Nearly Continuous.
- Haltwhistle to Hezham - II - (Lambley (weirs)).

## O.S. Grid References:-

- 1:50000 sheet 86 or 87.
- 1) 716461
  - 2) 715465
  - 3) 681519
  - 4) 682553
  - 5) 674584 (Bridge 675597)
  - 6) 673614 (Rapid: 674617)
  - 7) 700633
  - 8) 801647
  - 9) 843643 (landing: 845645)
  - 10) 910659
  - 11) 917660 (Landing near: 917659)
  - 12) 946646

## Notes:-

- 1) Alston. Lavach West bank just upstream from bridge.
- 2) Low weir. virtually vanished in spate. Shoot centre.
- 3) Slaggyford. Lavach/land on west bank, immediately below bridge. Breakout easily missed in high-water!
- 4) Two long stoppers under Footbridge, at high-water levels. Good 'play-spot'. Go left if you want them. Right to avoid.
- 5) Lambley. Especially turbulent stretch under viaduct and through wooded ravine. Large and confused exploding waves in spate. Road bridge soon afterwards gives lavach/landing on west bank.
- 6) Featherstone. **BEWARE WEIR!** This one's a nasty! Can be shot on right down two steps at lowish levels, however please check carefully. Potential killer at high-water - wall-to-wall stopper with very long suckback! Land and portage right bank. Rapid saw hundred yards below useful static oibe even at low levels. Road right alongside.
- 7) Haltwhistle. Lavach/land under bridge on south bank. Weir under old bridge further down NOT shutable (nasty concrete sill). Portage right.
- 8) Confluence of River Allen from right.
- 9) Haydon Bridge. Weir under first bridge can be shot at all levels, through far left-hand arch. Lavach/land south bank little way below new road bridge. - River Race start.
- 10) Warden Bridge. Lavach/land North bank just under bridge. Also possible South bank. Usual River-Race finish.
- 11) Confluence with North Tyne, 2 mile boat-carry up East bank of North Tyne to Warden Gorge. Grade III-IV and worth the walk!
- 12) Hezham. Landing on South bank just above bridge. Race finish - long course for North and South Tyne. Contrary to popular belief, weir below bridge can be shot at all levels, by experienced paddlers. My route - through 4th arch from right, but check for weirs! Land - south bank just below weir. (see note on Access). **See**

Haltwhistle to Haydon Bridge:- 8 miles. Grade 11.

At Haltwhistle, the river swings Eastwards and the gradient levels off. The river now consists of easy rapids with flat stretches between them. The rapids tend towards being shallow, as the river is now wide and open. Some good 'bouncy' water will, though, be found at high levels. The only problem is the weir at Haltwhistle. Haydon Bridge Weir can be shot (far left) and is of interest. (See map notes).

Haydon Bridge to Hexham:- 7 miles. Grade 11.

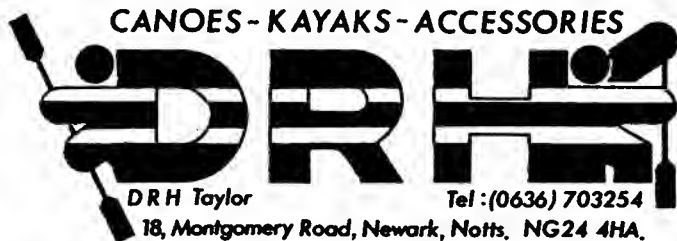
This is a Division C Wild-Water Racing course, a good training and teaching stretch, and a popular run for groups of novices. There are many easy rapids and one low weir, with no problem areas. This section offers interesting fast water with small waves at medium to high water levels. At low-water it becomes shallow, though it remains passable and retains some interest outside of drought conditions. A deep flat stretch running for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile upstream from Hexham bridge (known as Tyne Green) is of use for teaching beginners, endurance training (intervals, etc), and recreational canoeing. You may encounter rowing craft and windsurfers here during the Summer, but power-boats are absent. Hexham Weir, which lies under the bridge, is of interest. (See map notes and the note in the access section).

The South Tyne is an attractive river, which deserves more attention. It's problem is unreliability of water-level, but if you try the upper reaches in spate, you will not be disappointed!

I hope that you will have as much fun on the South Tyne as I've had!

*Gony*

Jerry Tracey. February 1987.



FOR  
*Wild Water Racing*

## BOURG ST MAURICE & THE RIVER ISERE

### **Situation & History**

Bourg is a small town situated at the foot of the famous ski resorts of the Isere valley (Val d'Isere, Les Arcs, La Plagne). It has a well served railway station and is just over 2 hours drive from Lyon via Chamberry and Albertville (host of the 1992 Winter Olympics). Allow 10 hours from the ferries in a car and you should have a comfortable journey.

The place is steeped in canoe history. Within living memory (or at least Graham Goldsmith's) Bourg hosted the Worlds in 1969. Since then it has staged the 1978 and 1984 Europ's Cup Finals as well as the 86 Pre-Worlds and numerous French Championships.. Additionally it has memories for the British as a popular Worlds Selection Race venue (1979, 1983 and 1987).

Its major asset (as well as summer sunshine) is the controlled releases of water. The Worlds will be raced at 35 cumecs, whilst the river is navigable to the brave as high as 70 cumecs.

Additionally there are the benefits of at least four well tried race courses on the 25 km section of river between the Bourg slalom site and the woodyard at Centron. The 87 Worlds course falls in the middle of the section which in its entirety makes a very enjoyable afternoon cruise!

For the slalom there is the advantage of a river bed massively reprofiled after the floods of 1981. The result is that diggers have access to large sections of the site and are able to relocate most rocks as well as to build walls for breakouts. Half way down the site is located the FFCK (French Canoe Federation) building from which information about events and releases is readily available.

### **The River**

The Isere offers several options for tours, training runs and races. If you need a simple guideline, view it this way (Gradings related to 25-40 cumecs release) :

- |                              |                                                    |     |         |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|
| (1) Bourg Slalom Site        | : Very demanding for WWR                           | 1km | Grade 4 |
| (2) Bourg to Bellentre       | : Introduction for all levels<br>(1979 Selection)  | 8km | Gr 2-3  |
| (3) Bellentre to Aime Bridge | : Most intense WWR course<br>(1987 Worlds)         | 6km | Gr 2-4  |
| (3) Aime Bridge to Centron   | : Testing but more relaxed<br>(1984 French Champs) | 8km | Gr 2-4  |

This guide concentrates on the 1987 Worlds racecourse (the middle section), concluding with brief introductions to the other sections. The river is approached from the viewpoint of the paddler looking to race at Bourg for British Team Selection and in the Worlds. However, do not let this create an unduly reverent impression of the Isere - a most important if recent realisation is that the river is not so difficult if paddled intelligently in good weather at a sensible level with modern equipment. As with so many great rivers, we must separate the myth from the reality!

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### **The Worlds Race Course : Bellentre Bridge to Aime Bridge**

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#### **Recognising the Problem**

You may hear academics speaking of "Perceived Geography" or "Mental Maps". You may even have had a teacher force all the members of the class to draw a map from memory to plot a journey through a well known area. The results will vary considerably from person to person and will no doubt be a good illustration of each person's "mental map" - their "perceived geography"!

Differences will include, for example :

- Scale & Proportions
- Known landmarks
- Places to avoid
- Short cuts

Our perception of rivers is very like this - especially those we know well. Try drawing a map of your favourite race course and then mark the following :

- Where is half way? (What do you mean by half way?)
- Where are the logical breaks in continuity?
- Distance and time for each section
- Your six most vivid landmarks
- Your six critical spots (Are they danger spots?)
- Where do you cut close to the bank? (Why?)
- The section which is the hardest
- The section about which you know the least
- The sections most changed with water level

If you've been there you can do the same for Bourg Worlds course. If you are struggling to remember, use the map on the next page as a starter (at least it is to scale!)

You've probably got the message by now ... one key to racing the Worlds course at Bourg is your perception of the race : distances, detail, places to gain, places to go steady, knowledge or assumption, fear or caution, aggression or control, etc.

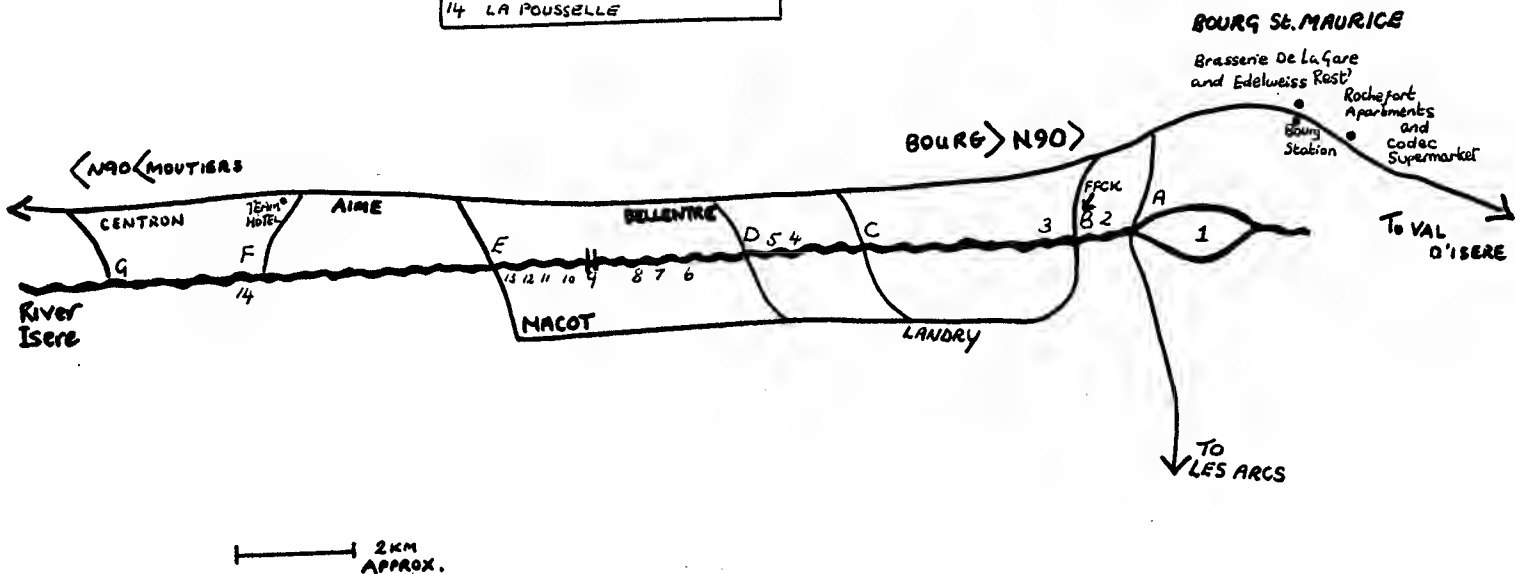
This is especially relevant for this racecourse on account of its length (a mere 14 minutes for the best men) and the predominance of the Aime Rapid (last five minutes - 2500 metres of continuous Grade 3/4) in people's minds.

### ACCESS/EGRESS POINTS

- A LAKE TRAINING
- B SLALOM BRIDGE
- C LANDRY BRIDGE
- D BELLENTRE BRIDGE
- E AIME BRIDGE
- F AIME WOODYARD
- G CENTRON WOODYARD

### RIVER FEATURES

- 1 LAKE
- 2 SLALOM START
- 3 SLALOM FINISH
- 4 GRAVEL PIT
- 5 WWR START
- 6 FLAT STRAIGHT
- 7 LA MACHINE
- 8 THE WATERING CAN (TOP OF AIME)
- 9 SANGOT (DEAD DOGS) FOOTBRIDGE.
- 10 LES MOUTONS
- 11 LA DOUBELLE (RUBBISH TIP BEND)
- 12 DESSERT (BANZAI DROP)
- 13 LWR FINISH
- 14 LA POUSSELLE



## Making a Plan

To do well on any river, let alone to win the worlds, you probably have to pass through the following familiarisation process :

### STAGE 1 : Reconnaissance

In the boat and from the bank :  
Racecourse perceived through experiences plus your general likes and dislikes

### STAGE 2 : Review

In your mind and on the bank with the help of reliable information (splits, maps, etc) :  
Time to distinguish between fact and feeling and establish what is really involved.

### STAGE 3 : Response

In your mind and then in the boat :  
Dealing with the problems and evolving a race strategy that fits the facts.

Stages 2 & 3 may take place perhaps over several months between visits - though beware of building up the bits you remember. This is where video, photographs and conversations can help. Given this timescale, these stages will probably involve adaptation of boat and paddle choice plus specific emphases in training.

It is certainly hard to go through stages 1 to 3 in the few days before a race with all the ups and downs and mental discipline it can involve (a breakout, perhaps a swim, the wrong boat, etc) - though the best can usually handle a crash course.

### STAGE 4 : Race Strategy

In your mind and then on the course and perhaps elsewhere :  
A firm plan is adopted and rehearsed mentally and on the course (and perhaps an imitation of the course back home).

WWR can be a rehearsal sport just like slalom - especially when a river level is virtually guaranteed as at Bourg or Bala. This is where you introduce a new "perceived Geography" - not perceived through circumstances as in Stage 1, but perceived to win. It will probably involve a distortion of the physical geography with certain key emphases, and will hopefully be significantly different from your view at Stage 1.

PS To help in all of this, copies of the video shot during the Pre-Worlds training and race are available from Dave Kay for £5 including postage.

My Personal Opinion

Currently at Stage 3 (I hope!), my "perception" of racing the Bourg Worlds racecourse is :

Section 1 : Start to seeing the long flat straight - 4 mins  
Gain your position (Pecking order established)

Section 2 : The flat (sort of!) carries on to the Slicer - 4 mins  
Exploit / consolidate your position (Gaps widen)

Section 3 : Top of Aime to the Rubbish Tip - 4 mins  
Stay cool and paddle methodically (Everyone is the same)

Section 4 : The Finish - 3 mins  
Find clean water and try to give a bit extra (101%!)

For the uninitiated, the course is best viewed in two halves with the start of the Aime Rapid as the obvious divide.

The split times at the Pre-Worlds suggested that, certainly for the Men's Kayaks and the top Canadians, it was a case of gain your place before Aime and hold it to the finish. The race might be lost on the Aime - but it is unlikely to be positively won there.

For the Ladies, however, ability (strength AND knowledge) on the roughest Aime Rapid section did seem to be the determining factor separating the winner, Dominique Gardette from reigning World Champion Karin Wahl. Perhaps Wahl also made a bad boat choice in the Loissach - volume in front of the paddler is critical for composed paddling in the Aime waves.

## 1986 Pre-Worlds

(Times DOWN on race winner in seconds unless +)

		Above Flat	Above Aime ?CRITICAL?	Rubbish Tip	Finish
MK1					
1st	Killian	0 (3:20)	0 (8:18)	0 (11:30)	0 (14:30)
2nd	Fishburn	2	5	4	1
3rd	Benezit	0	4	5	4
5th	Martin	2	8	9	8
12th	Fox	4	14	15	17
16th	Taylor DRH	6	17	19	20
C2					
1st	Ponchon/Durand	0	0	0	0
2nd	Wiedemann/Stelzer	7	6	8	10
3rd	Schoffel/Harzheim	6	14	10	12
15th	Jones/Hipscher	9	20	23	29
LK1					
1st	Gardette	0	0	0	0
2nd	Wahl	+2	+7	+1	2
11th	Allen	6	18	26	31
CI					
1st	Zok	0	0	0	0
2nd	Bataille	+1	7	11	9
6th	Libuda	5	20	29	28
11th	Hedges	5	21	30	39 (Roll)

## RACECOURSE PART ONE : Where the race is won

The race start area is on the left bank about 40 metres above Bellentre Bridge. After passing through the shallows under the bridge, the river passes through a series of bends and short straights for the first three minutes of the racecourse. As this section is not easily inspected from the bank and as the technical difficulty is not great, it is not well remembered by most paddlers - and so offers considerable advantage to the expert who has a clear route amongst a succession of unmemorable waves and stoppers.

Many would recommend a full frontal assault - simply down the middle all the way. There are however drier and perhaps faster options - if you know them well enough not to steer for them. The first bend moves from river right to left. Starting with a middle route between the stoppers you must then decide how close to the left hand bank to catch the fastest water. After a short straight there follows another very similar bend (right to left) with an interesting option to start close to the right bank (watching out for overhanging trees!) and to move just left of centre after the biggest waves.

Now, after about three minutes racing, the river opens into a long choppy rapid which is usually taken very gradually left to right before passing through a popular slalom play area (often with wires suspended) where there are again small waves to navigate.

Next comes the well-known long flat straight. The possible errors here are several! Keep away from the shallows on the left; do not paddle as if it were a canal (there is chop all the way); consider your angle to the wind and to the left bend at the end; and remember that the "flat" (ie easier water) does not end here. Careful observation shows that the same approach could take you all the way to "La Machine" - some two minutes further than the end of the straight.

After completing the straight the river heads for a sharp slow right bend where the extreme inside seems advantageous (aim to clip the bush on the corner). There follows a series of choppy tongues amidst fast moving water (which are often as ill-remembered as the race start) and then a gradual left bend which hides the approach to "La Machine" - translated the meat slicer because of the confused stoppers which lurk on an otherwise easy fall. No problem slightly left of centre.

After the meat slicer there is a brief respite through a flat pool with a number of awkward semi-submerged rocks that always seem to obstruct the obvious routes, starting close to the left bank. Perhaps this is a place to paddle accurately and get settled before the Aime Rapid - but without being negative for every second must count in such a short race.

To be on the pace to win the Worlds in Men's K1 you will have paddled around nine minutes so far with only five to follow in the roughest section of the course. With the most notable exception of Gardette in the Ladies event, the 1986 Pre-Worlds field - and especially the leaders - had taken their places before Aime.



The rest is not a cruise home - but it is very difficult to gain time hereafter except through your opponents' default.

### RACECOURSE PART TWO : Where the race may be lost

As you paddle through the pool above the Aime Rapid there is an unmistakable sensation that the river is suddenly going somewhere serious - the boils and surges make it difficult to steer a good course in apparently easy water.

The Aime is approached on a gradual left hand bend with an interesting choice in routes. Hugging the left bank provides a welcome visual marker, approaching the most confused waves in "Boom Alley" (1983 Falklands nickname for the first 200 metres) head on.

A faster and easier alternative is however available for the paddler who is dead sure of the features in the middle of the river. Slightly left of centre (with the spouting "watering can" to the right) is a long tongue that gradually rejoins the left hand route - it is drier but harder to spot under pressure and carries the risk of running out into the bank if boat angle is not adjusted in time.

Either way the rest of "Boom Alley" is usually negotiated close to the left bank - but taking great care to point slightly right to avoid the rocks lurking at the edge. A central route is possible but requires a precise awareness of some very large submerged boulders!

As the waves get less concentrated it is time for a "crux" move to the right around a reef that obstructs two-thirds of the river from the left bank. Two stoppers in the middle preface the move right and provide useful markers.

The river now feels much more open and it is easy to paddle without a clear plan between the reef and "Dead Dog" bridge (Sangot) - so named after it became a canine resting place for much of the 1978 Europa Cup! After the reef it is important to move back left, though how far and when is a matter for debate. After that it appears a route on the inside of the left hand bend above Dead Dog is fast and relatively dry.

Perhaps move right of centre as you round the bend with the bridge and the run into "Les Moutons" in view. Above the bridge through to les moutons is an awkwardly choppy straight with nothing and everything to avoid. It is always wet and yet the small waves are totally anonymous.

Pass well left of the prominent boulder above les Moutons - so called on account of the haystack waves at the bottom with look like sheep (according to the French!). In general keep straight ahead here - an angled boat may break out right.

There are now just two obstacles to go - though neither of them hard in itself - the left hand bends at "La Poubelle" (the rubbish tip) and "Dessert" (the end of the meal - called "Banzai Drop" by us Brits).

Accurate boat position and angle can save a lot of effort at the rubbish tip. The aim is to keep out of the big waves on the outside of the bend and yet not to cross too early to the left to do so! Not impossible so long as you have identified the overhanging bush above the bend on the right (stay close) and the wide tongue that follows it in the centre which you can then approach right to left.

There follows a very long and wavy straight before Dessert, the final drop. Killian raced 11 minutes 30 seconds to the Tip in '86 - so with less than three minutes to go you must have a very positive route from here. Starting left of centre and moving right may be best after the Tip, passing through the notable stopper 100 metres above Banzai on the right. However both here and on the next straight anything positive goes.

Take Banzai on the right just clipping the stopper at the bottom of the drop and angling carefully to avoid the beckoning cliff face on the right bank.

River right is a simple rule of thumb from here on - close to the bank is quite dry but perhaps too easy to get out of the main current. The finish (100 metres above Aime Bridge) has a sting in the tail for the tired paddler with some very large breaking waves. Stay one side or the other - and have a plan!

That is Bourg as far as the Worlds is concerned. It is a testing but largely open racecourse where keeping dry has to be played off against sticking with the flow. Perhaps most important is to know the easier sections well (where you can gain time) and to have planned efficient manoeuvres in the big rapids after la Machine .... all of it much more easily said than done!

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#### BEFORE & AFTER

#### BEFORE : Bourg to Bellentre Bridge

WNR paddlers are recommended to put in either at the road bridge half way down the slalom site or at the slalom finish. The short section between the barrage and the slalom start involves serious waves on a sweeping left hand bend, whilst the top half of the slalom site requires a strict line in steep waves to avoid a succession of vicious eddies and boulders. As a slalom venue it is excellent, but it is not an ideal place to start a river tour!

The series of large waves after the slalom finish are much easier and present the biggest challenge until the rapids above Landry Bridge some three miles later. The three miles between offer a very pleasant warm up paddle suitable for both intermediates and advanced WNR paddlers. There are no obstacles except for constant chop, so you can concentrate fully on boat handling and positioning on the river.

The river gets more interesting as it passes the shadowy section above Landry Bridge, itself a good access point for those who want to put in nearer the Aime rapids (still 3 miles away).

The mile or so between Landry and Bellentre gradually builds up to the best rapid so far, as the main current dives left round a large island and then turns into the open straight descending to a gravel pit. Throughout this section there are stoppers to avoid on both sides and a central course is prudent for the first run.

The gravel pit and subsequent shallows allow a break before the Worlds start area above Bellentre Bridge on the right bank.

Note that all three bridges in this section can be approached on good roads by travelling down either bank. Similarly vehicles (even with trailers) can get to the Worlds finish area (left bank above Aime Bridge) via roads on either bank. The ability to reverse a trailer is not essential at Bourg.

Whilst spectating is a problem above and below the Worlds course, the French have made excellent progress to date in opening the Aime rapids to spectators from the left bank - simply start at the Worlds finish and walk or drive up.

#### AFTER : Aime Bridge to Centron Woodyard

The trip below the Worlds course is much more challenging than that run-in from Bourg. Indeed, some would say that the Aime rapid itself is easier to race than Aime Bridge to Aime Woodyard (which was included in the 84 Europa Cup Final).

Below the Bridge the river is less steep and therefore kayakists particularly find it hard to avoid the many stoppers that lurk amidst continuous 2 foot chop. Nevertheless the best racing line is not essential - go anywhere, even if it is a slow route.

The river becomes much easier in the last mile to the Woodyard which is on a slow left hand bend soon after the main current has taken you left of a wooded island. The woodyard is a good finishing point (over 10 miles from Bourg) - or a start for the short trip down to the next woodyard at Centron.

This final section has two prominent rapids after you have passed through the eerie chasm ('La Pouselle') which follows a sharp left turn shortly after Aime Woodyard.

Finding racing routes on the major rapids between la Pouselle and Centron is marginally more important as boat damage is more of a possibility. Nevertheless there is nothing that cannot be read from the river.

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Dave Kay = Feb 87 —

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