

It is with great sadness that we have learned of the passing of Raymond Calverley, during the night of the 9th / 10th August after a prolonged stay at Poole Hospital. The deterioration of his state of health was quite quick due to Alzheimer's and the contraction of several viruses whilst in hospital.

Ray, born in 1951 always played to win; a family ethic. It was always about winning with a quiet assertiveness; no drama and perhaps somewhat old-fashioned! Described as a discrete influencer, and acknowledged as having productively contributed to canoe slalom in the UK, in both development and coaching, Ray set the pace in sport and in business, ever creative and focused in thinking of the best way forward. He always asked relevant and enquiring questions, a true measure of intellect, and was active in MENSA. His thinking on a wide front was usually ahead of the game.

In the sixties, the slalom community affectionately named Ray as 'Racehorse', for the tender loving care from his parents Harry and Renee, a lovely couple. Ray rebranded from 1972 becoming 'Rocketman' and took to paddling a P&H Phazer. It was Ray that first trained at the Manchester Canoe Club's Marple site, with his father securing the farmer's goodwill and from then on permanent slalom gates became reality. Ray's sister, Lesley was also totally absorbed in competition and successful too.

Around 1966 the need for a competition buoyancy aid (BA) started off as empty shampoo sachets and soon developed into closed cell foam BA's with both design and production worked by Ray and his father Harry, trading as Harishok. By 1979 the revolutionary 'Big Boy' BA's were introduced by Harishok, an exciting advantage for the GBR Slalom team, enabling the paddlers to squeeze round poles at Jonquièrre World Championships but to be later outlawed as unsafe by the ICF. Thirty years later very similar designs, produced by other manufacturers surfaced and were eventually approved!

Ray was a key member of the winning Manchester Canoe Club 'A' Team racing with Ken Langford as first paddler, Ray as second and John MacLeod as third. A long period of success followed, only occasionally beaten by Chester 'A'. Manchester 'A' shared a strong mutually supportive team attitude and developed fine-tuned, cross-over manoeuvres equalled only by the standards of 2022 when International Canoe Federation set a World Championship course to capitalise on these very techniques for spectator enjoyment!

1969 saw Ray take 4th place in the K1M World Championships at Bourg St Maurice, arguably the best venue ever, even by today's standards. Then at the same competition, Ray, along with Ken Langford (Right) and John MacLeod (Left), took the silver medal in the Team K1M.



The Olympic Games 1972 arrived and he was again racing in K1M, the preparations for which, coincided with Ray's final year at Cambridge University; a tough call. A second 4th place at Muotathal World Championships in Switzerland in 1973 reaffirmed Ray's potential at World class level.*

From 1979-1981 Ray was volunteer Senior Team Coach leading up to the Bala World Championships. He built up, for the first time in the UK, a full coaching staff structure for the Senior Team. Funding limited squad activities to four training weekends in Bala and 3 or 4 international races with significant paddler contributions and yet the staff structures in place successfully held together for many years ahead. 1981 saw the first Richard Fox Gold and a Gold in the team event too. Interestingly, one of Richard's first slalom kayaks was an old boat of Ray's!

In 2012 Ray, as entrepreneurial as ever, set out to make the best of the plastic kayaks, introducing his 'Extreme Slalom' trademark. Following a few tester events, Ray organised (with virtually no funding), a successful extreme slalom race that took place in 2013 in Llangollen Town.**

*Details of Ray's racing career can be found at

<https://canoeingresults.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Raymond-Calverley.pdf>

**Video of 2013 Extreme Slalom <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR54cdFCQtw>

Ray's funeral will take place on August 31st at 10:30 am.
Harbour View Crematorium and Woodland Burial Ground
Dorset Harbour View
Randalls Hill
Lytchett Minster
Dorset
BH16 6AN

(tapperfuneralservice.co.uk)