

# CANOE FOCUS

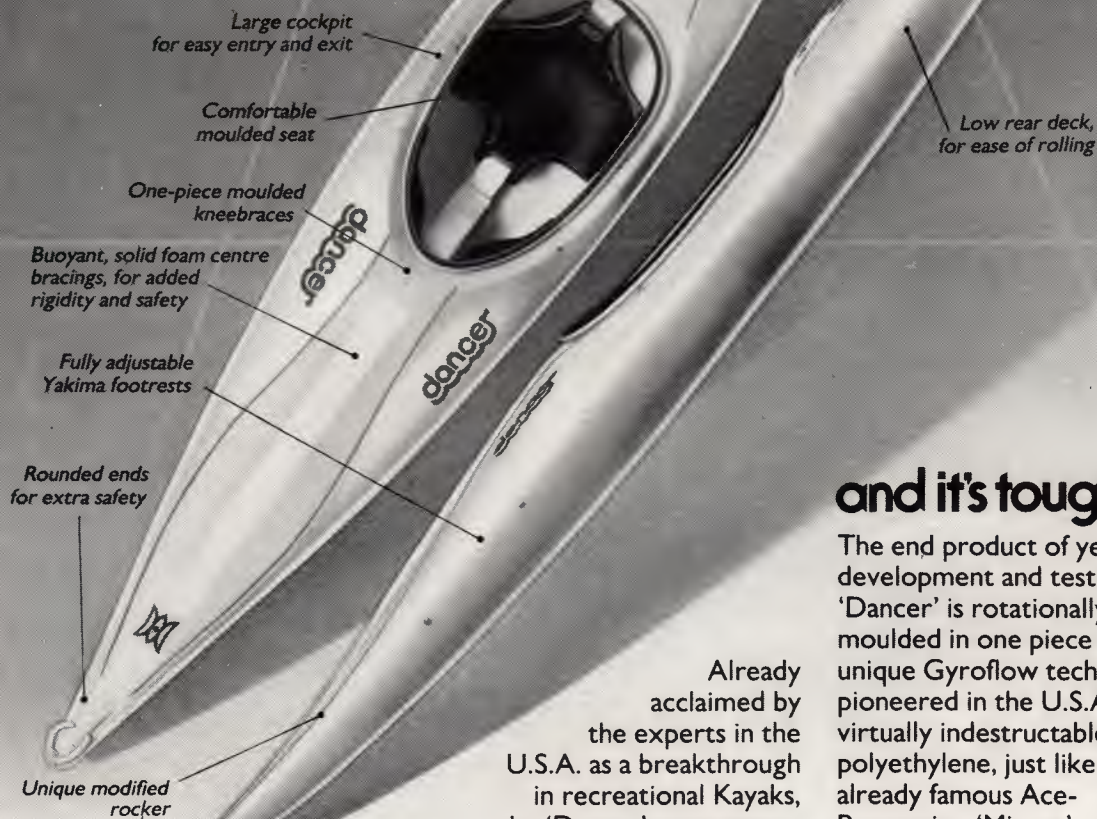
No.33 WINTER 1983·PRICE 60p

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## FRONT COVER

Colin Brown, World Cup Winner, racing his International Canoe, Rainbow on Sleinhudervyeer  
Photo by Sue Frain.

## BACK COVER

'From Killer Whales to Castles' — exploring caves on Skye.

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DESIGNED & PRINTED BY DDMA  
15 Great St Thomas Apostle London, E.C.4

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Flexel House, 45-47 High Street  
Aldershot, Weybridge KT15 1JV

Published quarterly by the British Canoe Union

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## WORLD CHAMPIONS

On the 50th anniversary of the first World Racing Championships "God Save the Queen" drifts out across the lake at Tampere in Finland. Alan Williams (left) & Steven Jackson 1983 World Champions. (Photo J. Fowler).

On 31 July two Britons achieved one of the most difficult feats in any discipline in canoeing.

Alan Williams and Steven Jackson of Royal Canoe Club at Teddington paddled a devastating K2 10,000 meters to win the World Championship in Tampere, Finland.

Alan Williams's (29) and Steven Jackson's (27) successes have gone hand in hand since Steve started to devote much of his time and a considerable amount of application to the sport in 1980. Before that time Alan had spent much of his canoeing career as a little ray of sunshine in the otherwise fairly gloomy scene of British sprint racing.

Subsequent achievements include 3rd (1980) and 2nd (1981) places in World Championship K4 10's but with the demise of Chris Canham from the crew, for a rest, it was left to Steve and Alan (Willy) to carry the flag. A task which they took on with relish. They have won every major event this year with wins in Mechelin, Amsterdam, Moscow and our own International at Nottingham. However, the exercise of classic 'divide and rule' tactics at the World Championships, resulted in a most emphatic win.

The British National Anthem was heard for the first time in fifty years of competition. We have never won an event since the Championships were started in 1933.

(At a party three weeks after the race, asked what a World Championship medal looked like, Steve put his hand inside his shirt collar and pulled out a gilt-edged disc. With a broad smile he said 'Like this!')





# FROM KILLER WHALES TO CASTLES

(Sea Kayak Expedition circumnavigating North Scotland-1983)

Jonathan Iles — David Taylor — Jochen Leppert

After idly thumbing through a road atlas a few months ago, as most sea canoeists are wont to do, a tortuous route materialised under my pencil which happened to circumnavigate the northern part of Scotland. The route seemed to provide a comprehensive introduction to Scottish waters, including excursions to the outer Hebrides and the Orkney Islands. By good fortune I managed to find two other paddlers who were attracted to the venture, making up a party of three. There was Jochen Leppert aged 48 from Germany who could paddle half way, David Taylor, aged 21, an Engineering graduate who had enough time for the whole trip, and myself, 23, in the Army studying for an in-service degree at York University. After careful preparation and the final selective pack we pushed off from Loch Eil Outward Bound Centre (just north of Fort William) on the 29th June 1983 with over 700 miles of canoeing and 144 yorkies ahead of us.

The first three days saw our small group of kayaks nearly seventy miles further on, making Sanna bay in our first taste of rough water as a Force 7 brewed up. We were to be weather bound on the sweeping white sands of Sanna for the next three days, becoming increasingly frustrated and not a little concerned about our schedule. Finally a break in the strong winds enabled us to make a crossing to the Point of Sleat on Skye in calm seas and swirling mist. It was at this point in our journey that the weather to be remembered as the 'Summer of '83' found the North-West coast of Scotland. Our paddle up the West of Skye was a seemingly endless sequence of natural wonders. Speed was of no concern as we explored deep into caves, marvelled at the stark beauty of the Cuillins and laughed at the antics of playful seals. Magnificent cliffs rose sheer above us as we wound our way past arches and stacks towards Glendale village

where our first supply parcel lay waiting.

From the moment we landed we met kindness and help in that enchanting hamlet which spreads out along the valley of Milovaig. Mr Ian Stirling, the Postmaster, delivered our supplies and then came along to our campsite with some beer and shortbread to chat with us for a while. As we sat contented on the soft grass with the skirling of a crofters' bagpipes on the breeze and the sun slowly sinking over the cliffs it seemed that life could hardly be better.

### Black & White Polaris

Fifteen hours later on July 9th our two Nordkapps and Ice Flow were four miles from the Hebridean Isle of Ronay. The Little Minch was ridiculously calm and the heat haze was starting to make us hallucinate. There was no horizon, nothing but other kayaks to focus upon and the water seemed like treacle, parting grudgingly and closing quickly behind us. It was with some surprise therefore that I saw David urgently beckoning us to be quiet. Our

paddling stopped and the kayaks eased their way through the water on their own. For a while there was a heavy silence ... then quite suddenly and very eerily a hoarse, gasping whoomph! was heard in the distance how far and from what we couldn't tell. Soon we realised these sounds were coming from a wide arc of about two miles, but we still couldn't identify the creatures. Then fins, tall and pointed began to emerge from the vague horizon, fins so large that they could only belong to killer whales. A quick decision and we turned our boats around and paddled quickly and breathlessly towards the centre of the pack. The killer whales moved across our path and as we closed in we tried desperately to remember just what Derek Hutchinson had said about *Orcinus Orca*...

Having decided that if one goes we all go, we swiftly rafted up. I made sure that I was in the middle so at least I would be the second bite ... There were about thirty whales visible, the nearest about 100 m from our raft. We



The Little Minch was ridiculously calm. (Back cover: exploring caves on Skye)



One seadog meets another... Jonathan Isles with unexpected friend



Evening campsite on Skye... Jochen Leppert

watched in nervous fascination as their fins broke the oily surface, slowly rising to a terrifying height, then sinking again with the menacing flash of a white cheek. A huge bull suddenly turned towards us, its six foot fin surging through the water and its bow wave boiling madly. Transfixed we sat and stared in disbelief, hearts pounding, hands tightly clenched to our paddles as it rapidly approached. Then without warning it dived underneath our raft. What little courage remained instantly evaporated. Galvanised into action we broke up and paddled furiously for Ronay at each stroke expecting a black and white Polaris missile to hit us from underneath. It was then that we realised that we had been encircled by the pack, and the sight of calves with protective parents did nothing to calm our nerves. A group of large whales made repeated runs behind our fleeing kayaks, seemingly pushing us out of the pack. We needed little encouragement and managed a fairly creditable 1000 m before slowing down. Although it is entirely speculative we believe that we were escorted all the way to Renay. For again just short of that island we saw the now familiar fin half a mile away heading in our direction, yet the pack was no longer in sight. As we watched the whale dived, swam underneath us, surfaced with a parting woomph! and then made off towards its fellow creatures, leaving us quite amazed.

#### Outer Hebrides or Greece

We were limited to four days in the Outer Hebrides so we cut through the archipelago between Beubecula and North Uist meandering past the myriad of delightful islets towards the Atlantic Ocean. The west coast of North Uist was host to our first display of diving gannets. These angular birds in their awkward flight would stall in mid air, spiral down towards their prey and suddenly fold back their wings hurtling into the sea to rise seconds later with a wriggling fish held firmly in their beak. We watched the gannets for a while and then pressed on to our campsite on a long white beach on the Isle of Vallay. That evening we swam in the turquoise waters of the Atlantic, basking in the sun and gazing at sands more reminiscent of the Greek Islands than the Outer Hebrides.

We made our way through the Sound of Harris the next morning at low tide, heading for Lingarabay some twenty miles away. Visibility was poor so we took bearings from buoy to buoy, accompanied all the way by the haunting moans of seals, echoing in the fog. I moaned back at them for a while, attracting bemused seals towards our boats, until Jochen threatened to do something drastic to stop the noise ...

All too soon we were heading back to Skye on a crossing from Lingarabay to Kilmaluag bay on the Point of Aird, a distance of twenty six miles. With poor tidal direction it was a slow crossing taking us ten hours, eight of which were out of sight of land as visibility was down to thirty metres. It was a rigorous test for our navigational skills and we were grateful to crawl up the inhospitable shore to perch our tents on the small patch of grass that was our intended campsite.

After a second supply drop at Gairloch and a welcome day's rest we paddled through the Summer Isles and on to the bird sanctuary Isle of Handa where the RSPB had kindly given us permission to stay. Here, by remarkable coincidence, we met Robert MacLoughlin who was on his way around Britain, and we were to paddle together for four days. The next day, 20th July, saw us providing great entertainment to a couple of walkers at Sandwood Bay. Huge dumping surf made Jochen swim for ten minutes and made the rest of us laugh for hours ... somehow Jochen always managed to find the biggest waves!

#### Sunglasses & Suntan

Although we set off early the following morning for Cape Wrath, nine miles north, the weather deteriorated quickly making Cape Wrath impossible and a return to Sandwood rather undesirable. Instead we pushed our way back to Kinlochberrie in an increasing Force 6/7 wind and 15 to 20 ft breaking waves, eventually making that sheltered haven some five hours later. Our second attempt on Cape Wrath proved more successful and, such are the vagaries of Scottish weather we paddled round stripped to the waist wearing sunglasses and glistening with coconut oil. Jochen and Robbie left the expedition the next day on their respective

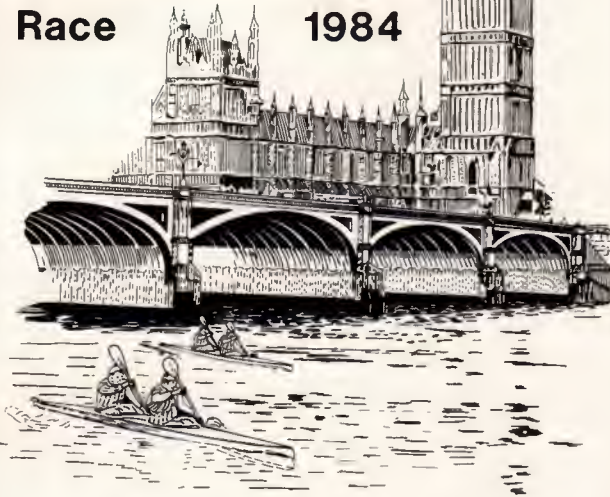
journeys whilst Dave and I sorted out our third supply drop. Our system of supply drops every eight or ten days seemed to be working. We had posted parcels of essentials to various Post Offices on or near our route, which proved far cheaper than anticipated. Each parcel had the maps, charts pilot and tidal tables for the next leg as well as such delicacies as Dri-Lite 'Scrambled Egg and Baco Bits' or 'Gorp' and one of the six boxes of Yorkies! Dried food therefore was our staple diet, with occasional 'protein binges' when we got hold of any unsuspecting fish. We were pleasantly surprised with the edibility of the food we chose, so much so that I lived off the expedition left-overs for five days after we finished whilst moving into a new flat. Medical ailments so far had mostly been limited to sunburn and headaches from glaring water. We did have a chance, however, to open our comprehensive medical kit when Dave developed a strained left wrist after the first three days. This affliction nearly caused major problems on the trip, with doubts cast on the crossings of the Minch and Pentland Firth. However, with a daily bandaging ceremony, tubs of Algipan and the dexterous use of left handed padding for many, many miles Dave managed to complete the course even though in pain until the final day. We had by now paddled over three hundred miles to our half-way point and were now looking forward to yet another excursion, this time to the Orkneys, which would liven up the second half of our round trip.

We crossed the Pentland Firth from Thurso to South Walls, paddling fast as a westerly wind steadily increased. We battled our way into Kirk Hope Bay against what was now a gusting Force 7 and landed at Osmondwalls, a viking base for launching raids to Ireland. By the next day it seemed that the bad weather had finally caught up with us. After an exhausting eight mile struggle in Force 8 winds we ran for cover just north of Lyness where we sheltered for a day from gale Force 9 winds and driving rain. Just managing to push up through Scapa Flow we made the twelve miles to Stromness, paddling round west Mainland the following day with a large Atlantic swell and a gale Force 8 chasing us! This



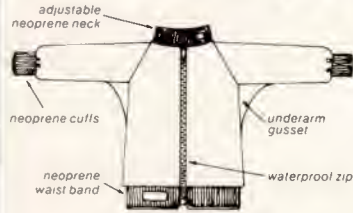


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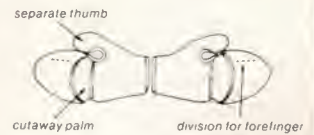
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Sunrise over the Cuillins, Skye

provided an excellent incentive to complete the 31 miles at an admirable pace, having little time to notice the formidable overfalls in Eynhallow sound as we shot through towards our campsite.

#### Coastguards

During the rest of our travels in the Orkneys we found a superb mixture of exciting water with fast tidal streams, friendly farmers ready with whisky and shortbread, a wealth of neolithic ruins, Norse history and old war defences, and the overwhelming beauty of surprisingly cultivated islands looking, as a local poet puts it, like "sleeping whales" in a dark sea. Though much of our time was engaged in finding out what Viking legends lay around the corner we managed to make time to visit Pentland Coastguard at Kirkwall who were 'watching' over us in a huge area from Cape Wrath to Wick. Bearing offerings of Westray shortbread we were ushered into a cavernous operations room with every manner of wallchart and sophisticated control console. For the next hour the new philosophy of the Coastguard was explained

to us. Gone is the antiquated and expensive idea of a 'lookout' at every station so don't expect to be followed by diligent officers perched on high cliffs all the way round Scotland we were told. The philosophy of the Coastguard is to look inward towards communication equipment and planning charts, relying on public vigilance and powerful transmitters and receivers to pick up distress signals. The officers were particularly keen to educate the general public about this philosophy and dispel the 'Long John Silver' image. In return we explained that sea canoeists weren't quite such a liability as they thought, and of those 23 occasions during 1982 where the RNLI were called out most incidents were due to inadequate equipment, skill or poor supervision in relatively calm conditions. One can understand the Coastguard's mistrust of canoeists however when, ten days previously, a tragic accident in the Orkneys caused the death of a young man who borrowed a canoe for a half mile crossing on a calm day. Although he had never paddled before it was recorded in the log as "canoeist drowned".

#### Nearing Loch Ness

Our crossing back to the mainland took us past John O'Groats to Ackergill Tower, where we were to be the guests of Lady Dunbar and Mr Blake. It was quite a culture shock to crawl out of our kayaks dripping wet and steaming, to find ourselves standing in the hallway of a magnificent castle gazing at the rich decorative splendour with a pool of water slowly gathering at our feet.

After cleansing ourselves in a large cast iron bath dinner was announced by the booming of a gong wielded by an ancient housekeeper who would have put Arthur Rank to shame. Somehow we missed the 6 am tide the next morning so we decided instead to explore the many passage-ways and rooms. Under the guidance of Mr Glen Dash we found old diaries, antique insect collections and the faded grandeur of William Morrison wallpaper

dating back to the 1790s. However we had a journey to complete so the next early tide saw us heading towards Inverness, 100 miles away. By now we were keen to finish the trip quickly, so we seldom paused and made Inverness in three days. At last we had arrived at the Great Glen — a long and dramatic valley of lochs, linked by short canals spanning Scotland from Inverness to Fort William. To prevent a feeling of anti-climax after our forty one days at sea we decided to finish off the Great Glen in one day. So on 10th August at 4.15 am our sleek craft were speeding across Loch Ness heading for home. The Glen opened up in front of us, slowly taking shape as dawn broke and the sun began to warm our backs. The best way of describing that day's journey is to liken it to a marathon with weight lifting sessions at irregular intervals. At each loch our boats (weighing around 200 lbs each) had to be lifted up the steep banks and carried to the far end. The total vertical climb was 32 metres and the horizontal stagger about 2½ km. Thus it was that our last photographs were taken in darkness just before midnight as we arrived at the Loch Eil Centre. After 19½ hours, 52 miles and the last five Yorkies we were home.

*Our thanks go to our sponsors and all those who made this trip possible.*

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Michael Megarry, Gillian Megarry, Leeds UOTC TA.

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The programme is led by Jeff Gill, BCU Coach and with guest appearances from some of the leading whitewater paddlers.

For details contact: Jeff Gill, Outdoor Adventure, Forge Cottage, Clubworthy, North Petherwin, Cornwall, PL15 8NZ. 028885 312 or 056685 303.

Edge Hill College of Higher Education are running a day seminar on 'Canoeing in Education'. The venue is the New Theatre at Edge Hill College in Ormskirk, Lancashire. Applications for the seminar on 3 December 1983 should be made immediately to The Administrator Assistant, Division of In Service

Training, Edge Hill College of Further Education, St. Helens Road, Ormskirk, Lancs, L39 1QR.

### COACH EDUCATION PROGRAMME ENTERS 2ND YEAR

The Sports Council (Southern Region) arranged an experimental coach education scheme in 1983 designed to attract coaches and sports leaders from a wide variety of sports and background.

The programme has proved to be an outstanding success with over 400 coaches attending 21 sessions during 1983.

As a consequence the Sports Council (Southern Region) has improved and extended the programme in 1984, and topics include "The Human Body and Fitness", "Medical Aspects of Coaching and Failure to Perform", "Testing the Athlete", "Psychology and Skill", "Looking after the Individual and Team" and "Passing on Information".

The extended programme of 28 two hour sessions will start in January 1984 at Bulmershe College of Higher Education in Reading, and each session costs £2.50. For further information contact: The Sports Council (Southern Region) Watlington House, Watlington Street, Reading, RG1 4RJ (Tel: Reading 595616).

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# The Silent Majority...

During recent years the Union have often been accused of foresaking the original objectives which their founding fathers sought to achieve when creating a Governing Body for the sport and recreation of canoeing back in the mid thirties. In particular, it is submitted that the Union has developed into an organisation which only represents the interests of competitors and coaches, and that the vast body of recreationalists, those who tour, potter, mess about, or enjoy a day on the water with the family, have no stake in the British Canoe Union of the eighties. That the Union's membership is primarily composed of competitors and coaches is beyond dispute, last year for example 94% of all Full members indicated that they were involved in either competition or coaching.

Those who govern and manage the Union's affairs would, however, indignantly reject the suggestion that the hopes and aspirations of the recreationalists do not receive a fair measure of their attention, and that they are not vigorously and actively seeking to redress the imbalance of interest that quite obviously exists. Indeed many would argue that there has been during the past two years, a policy of "positive discrimination" exercised by the Union in favour of the recreationalist, that is just now beginning to provide tangible benefits. The reality of the situation is of course, as is almost always true, somewhere between the two propositions. There has been a gradual movement that has accelerated in the last decade, away from the roots of Union activity in the 30's, 40's, and 50's; the last Union Easter Meet for example took place in 1963, the "Guide to the Waterways of the British Isles", first published in 1936, has never been completely revised since 1951, and the Touring Committee, whose business it was to stimulate interest in recreational activity became increasingly pre-occupied with the problems of access to water, and less and less able to encourage and provide touring canoeing, and to organise meets, rallies, and fun events, in the traditional pattern of earlier years.

Conversely, the Union's interest and involvement in Competition and Coaching has escalated remarkably during the same period of time. Whether this involvement has preceeded or succeeded that interest, in other words whether the interest developed as a consequence of the intervention of the Union, or whether demand obliged their involvement, is obviously a question which is of fundamental importance, for the answer thereto would certainly confirm or reject the proposition that the

Union is responsible for the existing situation. Whatever the explanation is for this enigma, it cannot be denied that the Union are now making strenuous efforts to rectify their past omissions, irrespective of whether these were by design or chance. Hopefully, in the next issue of *Canoe Focus*, it will be possible to lift the veils on the final, unabridged, fully approved 10 year development plan for canoeing, "A Programme for Expansion", which is presently receiving the careful consideration of those agencies whose co-operation will be required if the programme is to be fully implemented.

Identified within the plan, as one of the most important of the Union's priorities, is the need to encourage greater participation, "Canoeing for All" that is, and several initiatives have been proposed to achieve this end. The organisation of Tours Rallies, Displays, Exhibitions, events for charity, inner city adventure activities, opportunities for participation by the young unemployed; the provision of camp sites, and better access to water; encouragement for family canoeing, the availability of cheap canal and river navigation licences, the establishment of 'canoe trails', are but a few of the ideas to be developed during the next ten years, and all of these will directly benefit the recreational canoeist.

In addition the Union have already initiated a number of practical measures that have been specifically designed to help the recreationalist. A full-time National Access Officer has been appointed; the "Guide to the Waterways" has been completely revised and will be published together with a brand new canoeing map, in time for the 1984 International Canoe Exhibition; the revitalised Touring Committee, led by its dynamic new Chairman Bryan Ward, is enthusiastically committed to the cause of family and recreational canoeing, and 5% of all membership subscriptions, that is £4,000 in 1983/84, are allocated specifically and exclusively for Access projects. Finally, it must be said, that the Union regard "Canoeing for All" and membership of the Governing Body for the sport and recreation of canoeing as being one and the same thing. Without a governing body to represent the needs and aspirations of canoeists, to defend their interests, to speak with authority, strength and conviction when the occasion arises, there will be no "Canoeing for All". Without "Canoeing for All" there will ultimately be no canoeing, for regrettably the numbers game is a reality of the 80's.

Those interests competing for scarce resources, and that means water, will inevitably come into conflict from time to

time, and 12,000 canoeists will cut little ice with 3½ million anglers or 70,000 sailors, when an important and attractive water facility is being argued about. Water Authorities are hardly likely to be impressed by an organisation that can only boast of 1 in 10 practitioners of their activity in membership. To quote from the "Programme for Expansion" —

*"Fundamental to the development of the Union, and of supreme importance to every single aspect of the Union's activity, is membership. Without sufficient members, the Union cannot influence public opinion, cannot finance the development of projects, cannot promote the sport and recreation of canoeing, and cannot provide the services that are increasingly demanded."*

Membership for the recreational canoeist has therefore been the pre-occupation of the Union for as many years as it has existed, and it is readily admitted that until now, no real progress has been achieved in attracting the non-competitor or non-coaching scheme member into the Union. Perhaps a major factor has been value for money, why should someone who enjoys the occasional potter pay £12.50 per year for the dubious privilege of being a member of the Union.

Well there are many reasons of course, some of which have been referred to in this Editorial, but it would be foolish to believe that these would find favour with the 40 odd thousand canoeists in Clubs up and down the country, who are non-members of the Union. It is therefore the value for money hypothesis that has finally persuaded the Union to introduce a low cost class of membership (£4.00 per annum or the average cost of 3½ packets of cigarettes, 2.17 gallons of petrol, or 5 pints of beer), which has been designated, BASIC Full Membership, and which will give all the benefits of Full Membership other than the right to participate in Union competitive events, to be a member of the Coaching Scheme, or to receive fully comprehensive personal insurance. Voting rights for Basic members have been recommended by the Council of Management, but will require the approval of the 1984 Annual General Meeting.

Hopefully, with adequate promotion, the measures already undertaken by the Union and their plans for the future, will provide encouragement to those who have remained without the confines of the Union to at last come inside, and will finally silence those critics who have, with some justification, complained that the Union has not fulfilled its obligations to a very large and important section of the canoeing community.

## CANOEING HANDBOOK



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# BOOKS

## EXPEDITIONS & EXPLORATION

Nigel Gifford



Foreword by  
John Hemming

Director, Royal Geographical Society

The essential guide to planning and mounting an expedition from conception through to travel to food, equipment, logistics and leadership

### EXPEDITIONS & EXPLORATIONS by Nigel Gifford

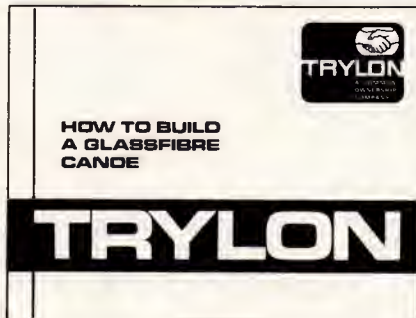
Published by Macmillan London  
Hardback Price £12.95

Nigel Gifford's book deals very thoroughly with the component parts of planning and executing an expedition, with much use made of advice and anecdotes from fellow explorers. Problem areas are also discussed, especially the problem of fund-raising and food, possibly the two major bugbears of any expedition leader. Sound points are also made about communication, decision-making, leadership and even a potentially controversial chapter on 'Women on Expeditions' which he tends to deal with fairly well.

Over 1,000 expeditions both large and small leave Britain each year, although whether many will want to use this source book is another matter. Experienced leaders may feel well versed enough already, especially as the book deals with a sketch plan of action, as it can be expected to, whereas a group may be looking for a more specific guide to the area they are about to visit, or techniques needed to cross the terrain involved. Perhaps the part most will find useful is the sections at the end on food, cooking and equipment, these seemed the most practically pertinent of the whole of the book, with very good advice on menu planning.

The book is too full of quotes and interjections to make it easily readable, making it look as if the quoted passages are there to lend more credence than is necessary, as what the author says is good enough. If he has wide experience himself, as one should have to write such a book, then surely it should suffice to support arguments or stress points now and again, not every few lines. This tended to make the work rather staccato in its overall effect, which is a pity.

To summarise, the book is comprehensive and detailed, yet without the 'je ne sais quoi' that turns this sort of book into a major seller to a wider public.



Trylon announce the publication of the latest version of their ever popular booklet "How to Build a Glassfibre Canoe". Now in its sixth edition having sold many thousands of copies all over the world, it is widely regarded as the standard work on the subject.

This latest edition has been fully revised and re-written with up-dated illustrations in a new format.

To order your copy at the special introductory price of 75p which includes postage (no V.A.T. applies), send a cheque or Postal Order with your name and address to:- Trylon Ltd, Thrift Street, Wollaston, Northants, NN9 7QJ Tel: Wellingborough (0933) 664275.



### FIELD & TREK — ON THE MOVE

Field & Trek the specialist equipment retailers, have moved their mail order and administration department to a new 7,000 sq. ft. warehouse and office complex. The move is good news for mail order customers who can look forward to faster and smoother execution of orders whilst the space created in the retail shop will greatly improve facilities there.

A twenty-four-hour answering service is to be introduced for mail order enquiries so that credit card customers will be able to place orders at any time of the day or night.

The shop address will remain the same as before at 23-25 Kings Road, Brentwood, whilst all mail order correspondence should

now be addressed to: Field & Trek (Equipment) Ltd 3 Wates Way, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9TB. (0277) 221259 or 219418.



### EVEREST REPRINT IN PAPERBACK

'Canoeing Down Everest' by Mike Jones has been published in a paperback edition - £2.95 + p&p. Stockists include the BCU and Pyranha.

The film Dudh Kosi — Relentless River of Everest is available in video cassette form. VHS or Beta Max versions can be bought or hired from Mike Jones Films. 1 Birchwood Drive Utley, Keighley, West Yorkshire (Telephone 053 604119).

### AUGUST 1983 LOTTERY

The results of the August lottery are as follows

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 1. Michael Jolland. Leicester Midlands | £100 |
| 2. Mr. M.E. Kandall West Midlands      | £25  |
| 3. Christina Wallace W. Lothian        | £10  |

### Slalom's NEW magazine

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# Action on access



## LONG DISTANCE CANOE TRAILS

The British Canoe Union Touring and Access Committees are developing a number of long distance canoe trails.

A canoe trail has been defined as 50 miles of canoeable water with no access problems, or where access problems have been eliminated and an agreement exists to allow members to paddle.

So far five trails have been designated:

<b>R. Trent</b>	Burton to Trent Falls	116½ mls.
<b>R. Severn</b>	Welshpool to Gloucester	128 mls.
<b>R. Wye</b>	Hay to Chepstow	94½ mls.
<b>R. Thames</b>	Lechlade to Putney	137½ mls.
<b>R. Nene</b>	Northampton to Peterborough	60½ mls.
<b>R. Ouse</b>	Felmersham Reach to Kings Lynn	106 mls.

You might say, what's the Union doing now? Telling us we can paddle on rivers that are well known navigations! And you'd be right. But, it's a START.

These Trails will be extended once we feel we can prove a right of navigation, or establish an access agreement. This is where YOU come in. Have you paddled any of these rivers further upstream, without being told you can't?

If you have, then please tell either the Access Committee or the Touring Committee, IN WRITING, when you did so, and from where you started. It doesn't matter if you only paddled it once, or how many years ago. If we can prove canoeing has taken place for a period of twenty years we can exert pressure for the establishment of agreements to canoe, and provide suitable access and egress points. We would like to develop additional trails. Where do YOU want THEM?

A trail does not need to be on one river, as indeed the proposals for extending the Trent Trail. We hope to be able to declare that this TRAIL starts on the Penk, then down the Sow and onto the Trent, giving us a trail of 156 miles. We suspect that this trip has often been made. Remember if its worth padding its worth negotiating for. Long distance canoe trails can help us gain further access agreements as we can enlist the support of National and Local Government Departments to assist us in our efforts to improve access for all canoeists.

We feel that the idea of Long Distance Canoe Trails will take-off, we want to extend them, and to develop them into regular touring waters. So TELL US where YOU want them, and we will fight for them.

Write your report, feelings thoughts and trip details and send it to: Roger F. Irwin, National Access Officer, British Canoe Union, 45/47 High Street, Addlestone, Surrey.

## Your Comments

### Ref Focus 32 'William Webb Ellis Are You Mad?'

Dear Sir,

#### Brathay Access — Skelwith Bridge

No doubt the owners of the land adjacent to the river have a problem with belligerent canoeists. I feel we should not accept the closure of an access point.

The Brathay has had a navigation for generations transporting material for the gunpowder works and the slate quarry in the area, no doubt, Skelwith Bridge was a loading and unloading point for these operations and has been used by many for at least 20 years to my knowledge as access to the water. 20 years use, I believe gives a prescriptive right. The BCU should not accept the new situation as others along the bank will be persuaded to take the same action eg the Old Mill site on the Leven has been lost to access as nobody would complain when a new owner took over.

Fred Barlow, Brade Street, Broughton in Furness, Cumbria.

#### The NAO Replies

*Whereas we can all agree with Fred's concern over the closure of access points, I cannot subscribe to his proposed philosophy of continuing our activities 'as of right'. The right he refers to of course being the 20 year unchallenged prescriptive use right. This in real terms is still a very grey area in law and could in the final analysis, hinge on whether the owner had intended to dedicate the river or path for such use.*

*The main point which Fred appears to have missed completely, is that there is no question of restrictions on the use of the river only a request from David Rushfirth and Kirkstone Slate for sanity to prevail. I wonder if Fred has ever had the annoyance of being unable to get out of his driveway due to inconsiderate parking. If we just gave the other man's point of view a consideration, I'm sure that the majority of confrontations could be avoided.*  
Roger Irwin, National Access Officer

## "THE PIERCEBRIDGE FORMULA"

Though deceptively simple the Piercebridge Formula will revolutionise our view of Roman Britain. Its implications are destined to influence Archaeologists for many years to come. For what freelance pilot turned amateur archaeologist Raymond Selkirk has discovered is that the Roman Conquest of Britain was carried out by "water transport and not by road as had been commonly supposed. His theory was proved at Piercebridge, on the River Tees where, by a combination of brilliant aerial surveys and detective work on

the ground, he found the achetypal water-supplied Roman site. For some time he had strongly suspected that waterways must be the answer, for how could ox carts have travelled on Roman roads which often climbed gradients which would daunt a modern saloon car? Also, how could oxen have carried any load at all when they would have needed all their strength merely to pull carts laden with fodder for themselves?

At Piercebridge it became clear that where a Roman road crosses a river there is an excellent chance of finding a Roman site. This formula was then applied to other areas.... and it worked! At one time the finding of an unknown site was a rarity but Selkirk and

## SEA TOURING

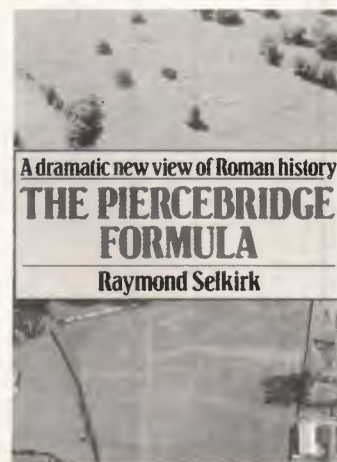
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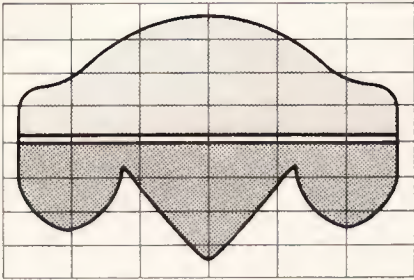


his team of enthusiasts produced remarkable results in a very short time. Yet the full effects of the Piercebridge Formula are only just starting to be felt, for what is true of Britain must logically apply to the whole Roman Empire. The prospects for further exploration are therefore tremendous and the author goes to great lengths to enlist the aid of his readers,

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built-in grab handles and deck lines that make it even safer. Also, the moulded seat and backrest bring comfort to canoeing, and the cockpit floor has a non-slip surface with heel locations for short or long legs.

All this makes the Bellway Beaver an extremely well-mannered canoe, capable of providing fun for the whole family, novice and expert alike. So well mannered in fact, that the British Canoe Union have endorsed the Beaver.

It has already been sold in

substantial quantities for hire purposes in the UK and Europe, but don't just take our word for it, paddle one yourself – and you too will be an eager beaver!

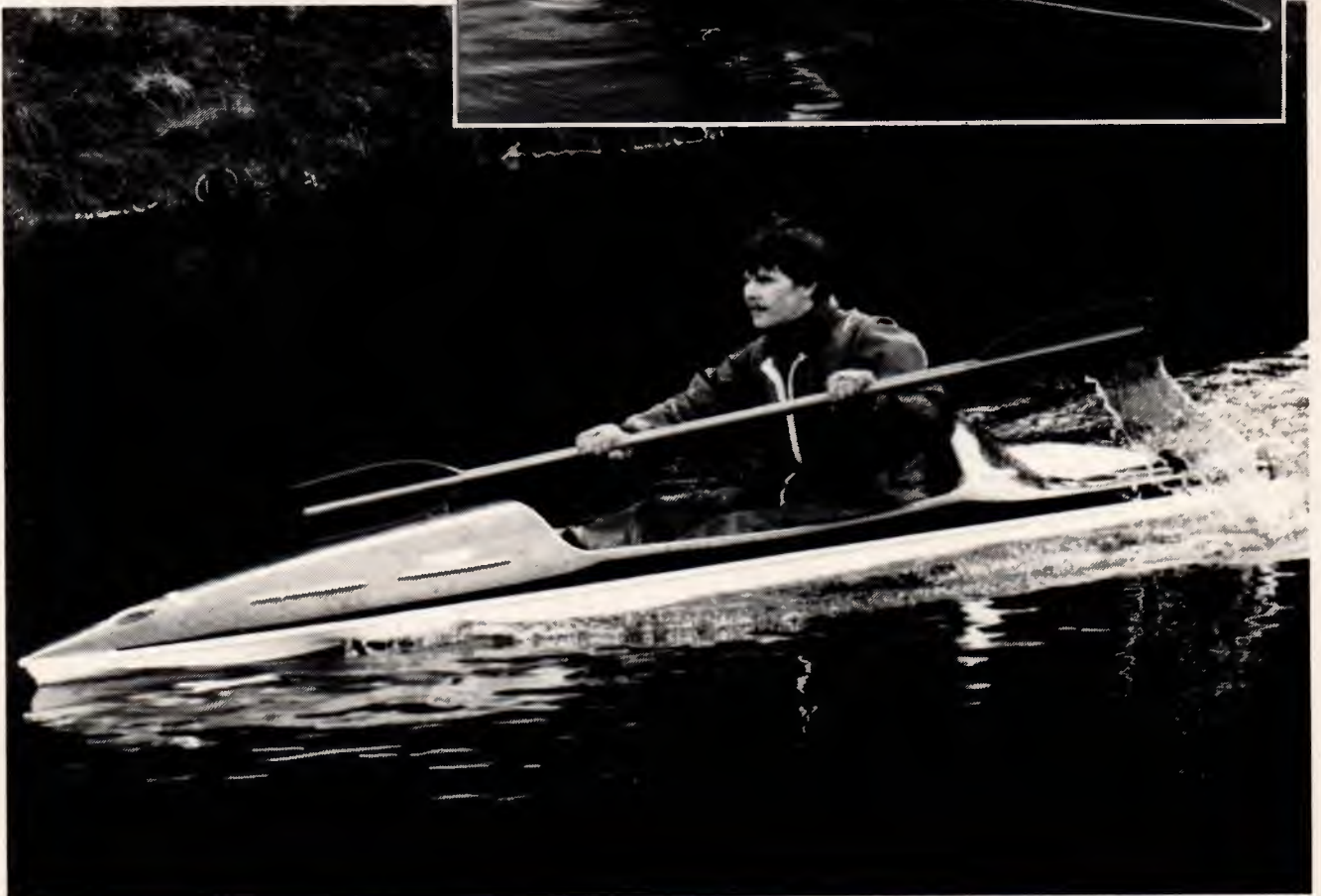
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both at home and abroad, in following up leads which will help to uncover further remains. Suspected sites are all named with exact location and map references so that those with sufficient enthusiasm may continue this fascinating quest. The storm which this book will cause in archaeological circles has barely started, the search has only just begun.

Published by Patrick Stephens Limited  
Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8EL.

*Our grateful thanks to David Ellis for drawing our attention to this rather unusual source of access evidence! If we work on the basis of once a highway always a highway, there should within the pages of this new book, be plenty of new evidence for our local access "ferrets" to get their teeth into. I eagerly await the first communications claiming the discovery of a likely new navigation.*

### BRITISH WATERWAYS BOARD BCU CONCESSIONARY RATES COMMENCING OCTOBER 1983

Continuing the present concession to BCU Members and reflecting the new charges, the licence fee payable to the BCU for licences taken out BEFORE 1 April 1984, expiring on 31 September 1984, will be £15.60 for adults and £8.30 for youths and youth leaders.

Arrangements are being made for six monthly licences for BCU members to be issued starting on 1 April 1984 and expiring on 31 September 1984 — the charges for these will be £12.30 for adults and £6.70 for youths.

Applications must be made on the appropriate form available from BCU Headquarters, and forwarded to the Union at 45/47 High Street, Addlestone, Surrey.



The centre is on a 135 acre site at Thorpe Meadows just outside Peterborough adjacent to the River Nene.

Our photograph shows the 1,000 metre long course nearing completion.

## Peterborough Regatta Course

On 1 October the Minister of Sport Neil Macfarlan opened the newest of the artificial water courses at Peterborough in the Eastern Region.

Under the watchful eye of Peterborough City Rowing Club a flood prevention scheme for

the surface water on the ring road, which could have ended up as a duck pond, has been turned into a regional regatta course with facilities which include the club house, parking for 400 cars, a small camp site and picnicking and viewing areas for 2,000 people.

## RIVER UBAYE—FRANCE

Those of you who travel abroad to canoe may be interested in a proposed canoeist's camp site to be established on the banks of the River Ubaye in the Southern French Alps.

The Ubaye can give paddling of up to Grade V standard from the town of Barcelonnette to 'Roche Russe Ubaye' where there is a slalom course permanently set up and often used by the French National team of training. The river then joins the large reservoir 'Lac Du Serre Pontcon' formed by damming the River Durance, also canoeable Grade III-IV for many miles and very popular.

The camp site will be beside a hotel about 15 Km from Barcelonnette. The river at this point has tricky access, but offers a stretch of Grade III-IV used for competition as shown in the photo. The name is 'La Fresquiere'. Further information may be obtained from: M.M. Verney, Camping Les Tourelles Quarter St Marthe, Embrun, France.  
Dave Whitelaw.



### 12th Century Technology

Does this carved panel on the wall of the Monks lavatory at Much Wenlock Priory represent the earliest record of a C2 team event?

The panel dates from the 12th century but Robin Powell, who took the photograph, is anxious to know if anyone recognises the judge or can identify the competitors who don't appear to be wearing their number bibs.

In actual fact Robin found this panel was a fibreglass replica of the original stonework!

## CANOE RESCUE AT CROYDE NO.2

On 24th September, Mike Butcher of Kingfisher Canoe Club, Abingdon was successful in going to the assistance of a windsurfer caught by a strong offshore breeze. The gentleman on the windsurfer was asked if he needed help earlier on in the day, being quite a distance from the shore and finding the conditions a little difficult. He felt at the time he could cope. Mike had returned to the beach when he noticed the surfer, this time a lot further out, making no headway back to shore. He set off after the 'unfortunate', and by the time he reached him they were some 1½ miles offshore. The sail rig and surfer were stowed on the board and towed back to shore. (Cleats do come in useful!) A rescue helicopter had been called from Chivenor and returned after ascertaining from Mike that all was OK. The return tow took some 40 minutes

## Spirit of the Vikings

This Canadian Canoe is used at Loic Bourdon's outdoor pursuit centre at Glemans Centre as a culmination to one week's canoeing course. The craft is used for expeditions in estuaries and on the sea for which it is specially prepared with bilge pumps and two water-tight chambers.

The 'Loch Ness monster' figurehead was added by a visiting art student as a joke. Ironically, the addition improved the handling of the canoe especially in winds.



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# Foster's Draught-Llangollen Int

PHOTO STORY K



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3



6



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5





# International Slalom & Water Race

DIETH WILLIAMS



7



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9



10

1. David Hearn — 2nd for the second year running.
2. Jane Roderick, World Silver Medal but didn't figure in the final placings in Llangollen.
3. Cooper & Terry, England, going hard right.
4. Phil Boyd, CANI.
5. Nick Dallimore, Wales.
6. Fox — steely determination! Winner International Slalom.
7. Martin Hedges — popular winner in the canoe event.
8. Kenny Fraser, SCA.
9. Jamieson & Williams, winners of the slalom and river race C2.
10. Kay & Peerton on the river race.

# FOSTER'S DRAUGHT



**The Australian for lager**

# Trade News

The claims made for performance standards of items of equipment described on this page are entirely those of the manufacturer concerned unless the item is prefixed by the BCU logo.

In these instances an assessment of the item has been made by a panel of independent canoeists and the report reflects their consensus view.



Tow away a complete trailer or simply D.I.Y. 'Indespension' stockists can supply you with a wide range of trailers or the parts to build one yourself. The national company publishes a particularly good trailer manual which gives details of how many trailers, for a variety of uses, can be assembled from D.I.Y. parts. Boat and canoe trailers are included.

## SPEEDSKIN

Newgate Simms Limited have announced a new surface treatment Speedskin, which significantly increases your speed in the water and is suitable for canoes, dinghies, powerboats, and surfboards. It also improves the life and performance of sails.

As its name suggests the speed of the craft is increased by reducing friction with a very thin coat which is applied to the surface of the craft. The Teflon based formulation in 'Speedskin' produces a super smooth water repellent surface coat with the best possible friction reducing properties.

'Speedskin' is available in 12 oz or 24 oz aerosol cans making it simple to apply. Preparation is minimal — just clean the surface of the craft and spray on.

Two coats are advisable when applying for the first time, and a light polishing with a soft cloth will improve the surface finish.

If you would like further information please write or phone Newgate Simms Ltd., P.O. Box 32, Chester, CH4 0EJ.

## J & R FOOTREST

Having introduced a brand new concept in footrests, Tim Ward Canoes are now pleased to announce the availability of a modified version. It was widely known and joked about that the original was an adaptation of a shelf bracket. The new style however, is made using extrusions manufactured by a well-known aluminium company, which have been designed specifically for the job. The footrest is now much stronger (the original conformed to BSI standards) and has been made easier to fit by cutting a thread through the track itself so there are no nuts to come loose. This all British product is fitted to the kayak with bolts, locks by friction, and is therefore infinitely adjustable. All parts are captive. This footrest is the answer for all those who turn pale at the thought of grovelling inside a boat to glass in a fixed bar or fiddle endlessly with loose bolts and wing nuts.

J & R Footrests are available through many canoe retailers or direct from Tim Ward Canoes, Unit 2, The Common, Stokenchurch, High Wycombe, Bucks. Tel: 024.026.2959.

## TO LIGHTEN UP YOUR DARKNESS

Superswitch has introduced a Long-lite torch which recharges itself from the mains when fitted on to its convenient wall bracket, or from a car or other 12V standard cigarette lighter outlet. In the home it is always to be found in one place on its wall bracket and it is always ready for use. The bracket provides a permanent trickle charge to the batteries, so the torch is always ready to use. Additional conveniences

are a swivelling head, the ability to stand by itself in almost any position, leaving you with both hands free, two beam intensities, variable beam width and a red indicator which enables the torch to be found in the dark.

The low voltage charging facility of Long-lite can also be used in the car, with an optional accessory allowing the torch to be plugged in to a standard car cigarette lighter. Another option is a halogen bulb, giving up to six times the life and twice the intensity of the standard bulb.

Further information from Superswitch Electric appliances Limited 7 Station Trading Estate, Camberley, Surrey, GU17 9AH. Telephone: Camberley (0276) 34556.



## TEST & REPAIR OF B.S.I. LIFEJACKETS

Ottersports Limited and Vacuum Reflex Limited have agreed to establish a single Depot for the testing and repair of their BSI Lifejackets.

BSI Lifejackets of either manufacturer, for test and repair, should now be sent to:- Vacuum Reflex Limited, Barrack Square, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP5 7RF. Telephone Ipswich (0473) 624080



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The Infraphil HP 2001 will retail at about £19.95, and will be available through sports outlets throughout the United Kingdom, as well as major Department stores and electrical outlets.

The Jenny Jones in Abbey Road, Llangollen, has changed ownership. The new owners Maureen and Tony Kay are keen to encourage canoeists to sample their hospitality and to make use of the bar and restaurant facilities. Table D'Hote meals at £3.50 are complemented by the a la Carte menu and a comprehensive range of bar meals for £1.25.

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## WILD WATER-YOUTH TOUR '83

A selection for the Youth Wild Water Racing Team took place at Bala during the Welsh Open, whereupon a group of fourteen paddlers were named for a summer tour which was taking in the European Youth Championships at Spital, the open German Championships at Landeck, the Saalach River Race at Lofer, and the open Austrian Youth Championships at Wildarprn on the river Salsa.

The date of the European Youth Championships were brought forward at the last minute and as a consequence only a small group of paddlers was sent out to compete. Marshal, Slaney and Febvey of Gateshead, Sheffield and Herts Canoe Clubs achieved some good results in the individual event finishing third, fourth and second then went on to take the team title in a time which was 17 seconds faster than any of their individual efforts.

The whole team came together at the German Championships at Ischgol. The course on the Trisanna ran through shallow turbulent waves. While training on these waters both John Slater and Tim Clark suffered serious boat damage compelling them to borrow boats for the races. The phenomenon of these waters was that they rose, sometimes up to a foot or so, during the late afternoon as a result of the melting glaciers and it came somewhat as a new experience to half the group who had never paddled rivers in the Tirol before.

A notable achievement at this event was the result of the under 16 team, narrowly defeated by a Dusseldorf trio into second place.

The group also had the opportunity to train on other local rivers such as the Sanna and the Inn, providing the boys with a variety of

water which they would not normally encounter in Britain.

The best results in the individual events included a fifth place for Andrew Curtis in the under 16 event and the 12th for Paul Slaney in the under 18 event.

The journey from Ischol to Wildalpen, more or less the full length of Austria, was conveniently split up by a two-day spell at Lofer. Near Salzburg, the river Saalach provides an enjoyable change in that the depth of the water means that no boat damage occurs. As a result, coach Duncan Eglin was able to produce a training schedule to which the boys could adhere.

The contrasting venue of Wildalpen, near Vienna, the site for the Austrian Youth Championships on the river Salza boasted a clear shallow river with no route problems and little prospect of any boat damage. The highly successful results at Wildalpen served as a suitable climax to an excellent tour complimented by the hospitality shown to us by the event organisers.

### Open Austrian Championships

1st	Steven Marshal	GB	25.28	.4
2nd	Paul Stoney	GB	25.29	.9
4th	Mike Lang	GB	25.51	.2
5th	Vaughan Sherrah-Davies	GB	25.59	.0
6th	Andrew Curtis	GB (Under 16)	26.10	.7

### C1

1st	Sheridan Campbell	GB	34.17	.4
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### Team Event

1st	GB1	25.16	.4
2nd	GB2		
3rd	GB3		

# FOSTER'S

The Foster's Sports Foundation intend to sponsor British Canoeing to the tune of £11,000 during the 1984 season.

The events to be covered are the Canoe Exhibition and Canoe Polo, the International Round London Marathon and the International Slalom & Wild Water Race.

A new range of leisurewear has been designed by Foster's to take account of the changing attitudes of today's no-nonsense sports men and women.

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Small	to fit chest 40" - 42"
Medium	to fit chest 40" - 42"
Large	to fit chest 44" - 46"

The anorak is priced at £35. and is available in navy and silver-grey two-tone design.

**LEISURE SHIRT** — Foster's have created this light, roomy and easy to wear leisure shirt, in a new cross-tuck cotton/polyester fabric. Made in white or blue, the shirt features a reverse blue or grey trim on the round neck collar, which can be stud fastened or left casually open. Available in 3 sizes as follows:

Small	to fit chest 34" - 36"
Medium	to fit chest 38" - 40"
Large	to fit chest 42" - 44"

All prices include postage, packing and VAT, within the UK.

The full range will be available by small order to those sports benefitting from the support of the Foster's Sports Foundation. In-

dividuals purchasing any item of the leisurewear will become members of the Foster's Sports Club, and will receive:

1. A quarterly newsletter, with full information on all Foster's Sports activities.
2. Special offer with each newsletter of £50 of discounts on a range of holidays and sports goods.
3. News features on forthcoming events.

For further information, please contact Roger Shackleton, Foster's Sports Foundation, 16 Adam & Eve mews, London W8. Tel: 01.937.7118.



### Think Olympic — Think Budget

Budget rent-a-car recently presented Olympic Canoe Racing Coach, Brian Greenaway, with an Ambassador car for use in connection with the teams preparation for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Budget hope to raise £20,000 for the British Olympic Team by donating 20p for every car or van hired in the UK.

Joining Brian at the presentation were Ron Emes, Director of the Union (background) and World Champion Steve Jackson of the Army Canoe Union.

# SIONASCAIG

## Loch in a hidden wilderness

A freshwater loch may not sound like a challenge, but Loch Sionascaig in Ross-shire is both challenging and a place of supreme wild grandeur. It lies 12 miles north of Ullapool, but there is only one place on any road from which it is visible, and then only a small segment, so many tourists unknowingly miss it. Its very name (pronounced with an initial "Sh-") is attractive (despite the unhappy practice of Victorian English anglers who called it "Skinaskink!").

Sionascaig's appeal lies in its extraordinary shape and its setting. It is of medium length (3 miles), fairly wide (1 mile), but its shoreline is

so complex (there are at least 30 bays) that it totals 17 miles. Sionascaig is set in a panorama of spectacular detached mountains standing in a semi-circle: Suilven, Cul Mor, Cul Beag and Stac Pollaidh, all built of sandstone heavily eroded into weird pinnacles and massive sculptured buttresses. The loch has 15 sizeable islands, especially Eilean Mor in the middle, which retains the dense birch and rowan scrub which used to cover the now barren mainland (overgrazing by sheep destroyed it). The footmarks of deer can sometimes be seen on the shores of Eilean Mor. Sionascaig lies in the Inverpolly Nature

Reserve, administered by the Nature Conservancy, who aim to conserve wildlife habitats and renew the natural woodland.

The toughest part of a Sionascaig expedition is getting to the lochside in the first place. The hikers' route from Linneraineach cottage is no use with canoes, so the way in is by the path from the tortuous Lochinver-Achiltibuie road, which is less than ½ mile from Boat Bay (where anglers' boats are kept) ("BB" on map). This short track however combines liquid bogs, rocks in the middle of the path and steep hills to such an extent that portaging along it requires strength, wit, and half-an-hour each way! The easily-missed track between Loch Call nan Uidhean (LCU on map) and Loch Buine Moire (LBM), at a point (Grid reference 093151) marked by a red wooden post lettered "Royal" (for anglers from Ullapool's Royal Hotel).

Boat Bay is almost a separate loch, and you may have difficulty finding the real exit from it! Once through the narrow channel, you are dramatically out into the big loch, with the astonishing toothed ridge of Suilven spread full-length to your left, and the wooded islands ahead. See if you can find the ruined croft of Shinasgaig (136150), near the north-



The bristly ridge of Stac Pollaidh (and author's BDH bottle!).



Loch Sionascaig and Lochan Gainmheach from the slopes of Cul Mor.



Looking over Eilean Mor to Suilven's ridge.

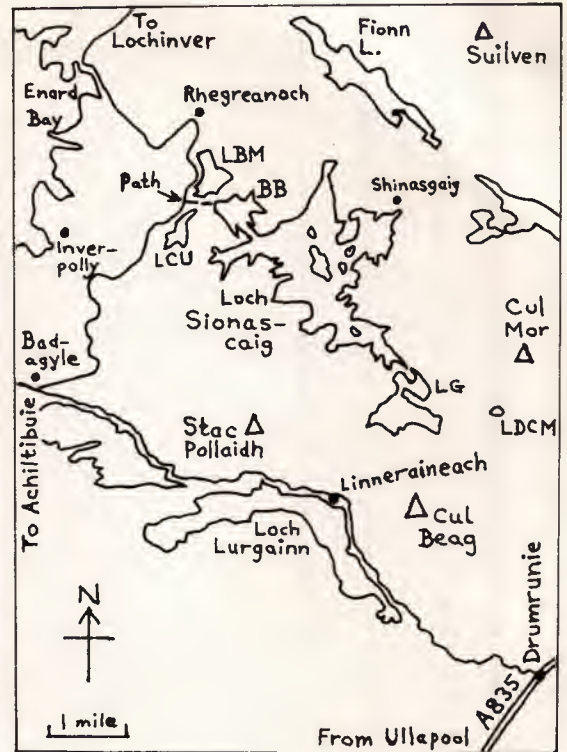


Enforced rest on the track back to the road.

east bay: the route can include an easily-crossed isthmus on the north shore (at 126148). The head of the loch is reached at a plank footbridge at the mouth of the burn from Gleann Laoigh: from here it is worth a brief walk to Lochan Gainmheach (LG on map), with its large sandy beach. The big bays on Sionascaig's south shore are very attrac-



Cul Mor from Shinasgaig croft one chilly May.



tive, and those who fancy a warm swim can readily find a suitable small lochan! Lochan Gainmeach is an ideal starting point to climb Cul Mor, most obviously via the beautiful Lochan Dearg a'Chuil Mhoir (LDCM), though there are even more spectacular routes up the SW face.

The Inverpolly wardens invite intending

visitors to get in touch with them whenever possible beforehand. Parties of 6 or more wishing to visit the Drumrunie section of the Reserve (which includes the shoreline below Cul Mor) need to seek permission, and this applies to any party in that section during the deer-stalking season. The Conservancy have erected fences on the islands to protect the

vegetation, and their experimental sites should obviously be respected.

In safety terms, a wild place like Shinasgaig is not to be underestimated! Because of its shape it's not for shore-huggers, and it seems very exposed to sudden winds. And don't forget that half-hour of strenuous portaging back to the road!

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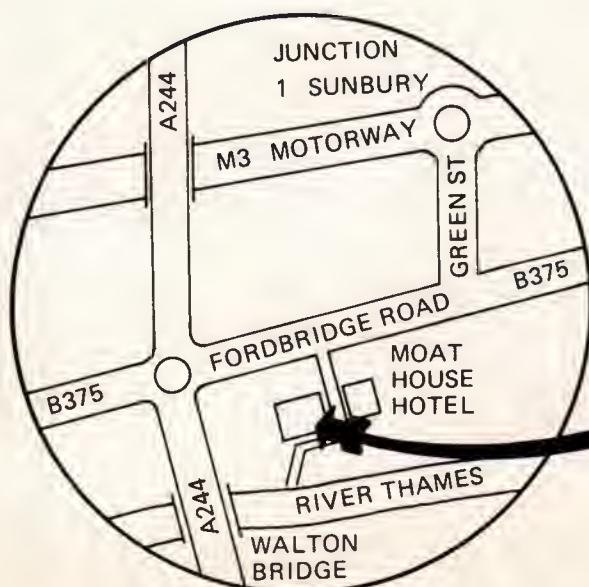
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# Dear Focus...

Dear Sir,

I read Stan Haltorp's letter with interest. I too find that the present divisional system is unsatisfactory, and often discourages young paddlers who cannot afford K1's, and have no hope of promotion beyond about division 8 in slalom boats, if indeed they get that far. This causes a bottleneck and overcrowding in the lower classes, and also affects the K1 paddler in higher divisions, who is often unable to gain promotion because of the small number of starters in his division.

A possible solution would be to separate all kayaks into two distinct groups, defined by boat length — eg. under 14' (Slalom and G.P. boats) and 14' -17' (WWR and K1) and to allow the under 14' boats to have their own division up to, say, division 3 with a divisional transfer system for anyone changing type of boat, ie. a paddler of an under 14' boat buying a K1 could drop back two divisions. All boats in a division would start and race together, but results for under 14' and over 14' boats would be separately recorded, and promotions made accordingly.

This still does not immediately solve the problem of the K1 paddler who gets stuck at about Division 7 because of lack of entries, although in time I feel it would, as more youngsters would be encouraged to go on paddling, and as they get older and earning power increases, to perhaps transfer to K1's.

Perhaps in the short term, the problem of small fields in the upper divisions could be solved by promotion on a points system. Instead of having to have at least five starters for promotion, points could be awarded for the number of starters, ie —

Up to 3 starters — 1 point for 1st place

Up to 3-7 starters — 2 points for 1st, 1 point for 2nd

Up to 7-13 starters — 3 points for 1st, 2 for 2nd and 1 for 3rd.

Promotion would occur when a paddler had gained five points, which could either come from one race in a large field or several races with small fields. This system would be more complex than the present one to administer, but it would assure a degree of upward mobility which is lacking at present.

Another possibility, certainly in the lower divisions, would be to award a point to each person completing an event with correspondingly higher points for winner and places, and a higher target of points to gain promotion.

I am a relative newcomer to the Marathon field, and the present rules and constitution have obviously been formulated by paddlers and officials with far more experience, but it does appear to me that the current system of K1's competing against slalom boats, and the promotion system which exists at present, are discouraging to many young paddlers, and need revising.

**Malcolm Smith. North Yorkshire.**

Dear Sir,

As I help with novice Scout instruction I feel I am very safety conscious. Therefore may I express my concern about the present ruling over 'rescue' in slaloms; particularly in the light of an incident which occurred this weekend at Bingley Castlefields 4/N event.

Having completed the course I was waiting, exhausted, below the finish line out of the current — my view of the final gates, however, obstructed by a fallen tree. The paddler following capsized on the unusual wave at Gate 20.

Her spraydeck apparently proved awkward to remove, and so the spectators on the bank naturally started shouting to me to rescue, urging me to hurry, as she appeared to be stuck in her boat. Obviously having only just finished the course myself I was in no condition to "zoom" the thirty yards to effect a quick rescue. Fortunately a spectating competitor rushed in and was able to haul the girl upright and support her.

It strikes me that it would be more sensible to make the "rescuer" *next but one* to the person in difficulties, to allow time to recover completely on termination of your run. Staying on the water a few extra minutes even in cold conditions would not be unreasonable and could be crucial in a rescue situation.

**J.W. Dobson (Miss) Manchester University CC.**

Dear Sir,

I was thrilled to read the penultimate paragraph of your Editorial in the autumn Focus that you will "accommodate the whole of the sport and recreation of canoeing with its diversity of interests and activities on one campus".

But why no mention of the plans for the wave-making machine, bank reinforcement and beaches and reefs for the surfers.

Will the sea tourists be provided with fresh or salt water? Off-shore islands? Rock cliffs and nesting sea birds? Your plans are beyond the scope of my imagination.

I look forward eagerly to the winter Focus when no doubt you will be giving details of the plans and their cost.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

*Doug has identified the Achilles heel of the Holme Pierrepont Project. It will be unable to accommodate Sea Tours in their natural environment. Surf however may not be out of the question in the long term. Doug quite rightly reports that there are such things as wave making machines, and when the project has progressed a little further their use could be investigated. Any comments from Sea Tourers and Surfers? Interestingly enough one of our most respected sea kayakers, Frank Goodman, has been a key figure in the development of the Holme Pierrepont Canoe Slalom Course, and was one of those who conceived the original idea.*

Dear Sir,

In recent months it will have been apparent to any active canoeist that there is a great controversy regarding buoyancy aids. I feel it is time to put a stop to this wild goose chase as the number of accidents due to inadequate buoyancy are minimal compared to the number of injuries occurring due to inadequate head protection. I have been canoeing for many years and have never been involved in, or heard of, any incidents where a paddler's buoyancy was at fault but I do know of many circumstances where paddlers have

had abrasions to the skull or more seriously concussion, while using a popular type of crash hat.

Most canoeists use a crash hat which retails around £7-£10 which apparently meet BCU guidelines. In particular I would like to draw your attention to the statement in the Slalom Year Book '....so designed as to prevent all but the rim of the outer shell touching the head'. In reality none of the popular crash hats achieve this, in the accidental situation the shell of these hats, when worn by a 9-10 stone paddler, deforms easily to only a 1 or 2 MPH impact resulting in the blow being transferred directly onto the skull.

The slalom or wildwater paddler ought to be educated to realise that suitable head protection for rivers such as the Trywernyn is not cheap but essential for reasonable safety. Head protection of this type is available although, as far as I know, not of British manufacture can cost £40. £40 I hear you say! Think about it, what's £40 compared to a hole in your head! Continental paddlers seem much more aware of this problem and on the whole use head protection of a far higher standard than here in the UK. Don't think to yourselves that the alpine rivers are much wider, and the waves larger than our rivers, so we don't need such protection, as those points are completely irrelevant. What does matter is the speed of the paddler relative to the rocks, which are extremely stationary! The shallower and more confined the river so the probability of receiving a head injury is greatly increased.

To all slalomists using the cheapest lightest crash hats beware that the hat you are using will only offer you a degree of protection on still water. These crash helmets are only suited to the 'hobbyist' and not the rough water paddler.

The brain is a very delicate organ, damage of which can lead to serious repercussions. A broken rib due to poor all round protection from a buoyancy aid we can recover from, a blow to the head at speeds many paddlers achieve on rapid rivers could put you in a wheelchair — permanently.

In competitive slalom the rules give some guidelines as to the type of crash hat suitable but no British Standard or similar is quoted. A variety of standards should be decided upon which define the minimum requirements for each grade of river. There are many engineering institutes who would be only too pleased to advise the BCU on design and method of testing for this purpose.

'Use your head — protect it!'

**Norman Liley, Derby.**

#### Director of Coaching comments

*The buoyancy aid controversy has arisen out of an ICF rules revision affecting slalom and wild water racing paddlers. As these constitute some 60% of the membership, obviously some attention has had to be given to the matter.*

*Further, we have amended our recommendation to education authorities and other organisations. In consequence buoyancy aids are now being permitted where life jackets were insisted upon previously. No sensible Standard totally applicable to canoeing existed, and so one has had to be forged. See separate statement in this issue.*

*Norman Liley has highlighted another matter of concern, although surprisingly enough very few written complaints have been received concerning helmets. I have documentation on only two serious injuries, and about fourteen less serious. This was in response to an*



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appeal for information — not from paddlers spontaneously writing in to draw attention to a problem.

However, discussions have taken place with British Standards Institution, and a series of objective impact absorption tests will shortly take place on a variety of helmets currently available. The results of those tests will be published, so that members can make up their own minds concerning the degree of protection they are prepared to pay for.

The main reason that a BSI standard for canoe helmets has not been pursued, is that the cost of the ensuing helmet would make it prohibitive. The exercise would thus be self defeating.

Education — in the best sense — is required. If all those with similar experience to Normal Liley would write in, giving details of their accidents, and indicating the type of helmet worn, this would be of value. Members could at least be alerted to the degree of risk they are running. The information would also help designers to improve the protection offered.

Recently I saw a supplier offering helmets at £2.00 each. He was one of those who had previously indicated that he felt BCU Officers lacked integrity over the Pyranha Boat Approval Scheme! I wondered how much integrity was involved in allowing a client to paddle white water believing that £2 worth of crash helmet was going to protect him in some way!

Dear Sir,

#### Points prevent spraydeck safety

I read with great interest the letter from Mr D Simpson in the Autumn edition of Canoe Focus. I too have had similar experience with spray decks fitted with too short tabs, seriously delaying my escape. As you correctly stated

below, a good modification can be made using cord between the two.

However, I would like to point out the difference which a canoe cockpit can make. Having capsized both Commanche and Everest canoes I have realised serious differences in escape ability. The rim of the Commanche cockpit is noticeably pointed at the front, causing the spray deck to become hooked firmly onto it, making normal escape procedure quite difficult. However, the more rounded, almost oval, cockpit of the Everest is a much easier cockpit to escape from, not only for spray deck release, but also entry/exit. As you can probably imagine, my first escape from the Commanche, as a novice, was not a pleasant experience.

I hope that manufacturers and other paddlers will take note of such difficulties and avert a serious accident.

**Paul Hoskins, Bristol.**

#### Director of Coaching comments

A near drowning occurred on a local canal when a complete beginner capsized and the cockpit rim pulled away at the front of a poorly constructed kayak. The rim moved up and down, and the spraydeck, in consequence, did not come off.

It has also recently been reported that some manufacturers of decks do not stitch the release beackets sufficiently securely, and these have been known to pull off in an emergency, leaving the deck attached.

Whilst paddlers should take note, and check their gear, perhaps manufacturers will take steps to improve matters also.

A well known paddler and leading manufacturer of accessories has long advocated a more standard cockpit design to avoid the necessity for over-specialisation in the production of decks. This would also

perhaps improve the design, away from the pointed types which tend to make spray deck release more difficult.

He also asks why a flat section cannot be incorporated to make portaging more comfortable — after all, most paddlers have to carry kayaks on their shoulders for some distance, quite frequently.

Dear Sir,

#### Open Marathon Racing Scheme

In reply to Stan Moltorp's letter about Marathon Racing, Focus 32. I am delighted to hear that so many people once again took part in the event at Fleet and I am sure that sentiment will be shared by the other members of the Marathon Committee.

The current divisional system was brought in when there was a declining interest in marathon and has been a good success for those who wish to race. However, I have always believed that there is a need for the type of Westel Tourist Trial and I hope that many more clubs will follow the example.

I think that is starting to happen with the marathons at Medway, the Stratford-Fladbury Twynning Stage Marathon and at our own race each year when we include a tourist trial in the weekend of events.

I passionately believe that there is enormous potential in the use of placid water for touring time trials, fun racing, marathon and sprint. I see no conflict between the divisional system and tourist trials, — our aim should be to present to the public, who know little about it, the fact that placid water canoeing is a varied and enjoyable, low cost activity.

Anything myself and the Marathon Committee can do to help tourist trials — we will, and do. Paddling together.

**David Train.**



## TOP LINE

### CANOE SAILING WORLD CUP

Top left — Colin Brown (34) of Yarm in Cleveland, has at last, returned some respectability to Britains impoverished canoe sailors.

After achieving only eighth place in the 1981 World Championships, Colin put his mark on International canoe sailing by winning the World Cup competed for in Germany during July. Never finishing below second in the seven races, Colin won four races outright destroying the myth of the

invincible Swedish team in the space of one week. The next big event is the 1984 World Championship which the Swedes sail on their home waters at Angelholm. So close to top class honours, Colin Brown could be the next World Champion but he has an uphill struggle from here on in.

Bottom Left — Gail Allen — Britain's starlet in the ladies K1 class. (Photo Tony Tickle)

Bottom Right — Gary Adcock receiving the 'Just Juice' cup from John Hermes at The Bluff Hotel, after winning the Men's British National Surf Championship at Marazion Bay.



# AT ALL COSTS LET THERE BE SAFETY FIRST

## Jennifer Fox

"How many people will know, as they gasp in the water and drown, in their last conscious moments, that it was not necessary and that someone said some time ago how it would happen and now it has? To die uselessly and to know it must be a very bitter experience."

This has been written by Alan Byde in a paper which is for general use and information as well as for the white water safety conference to be held at Plas y Brenin, January 1984. It arrived on my desk the same day as the copy of an article, "Paddling for Britain the Fladbury Way" by George Low and published in Education on 30 September 1983.

Alan Byde, concerned for the safety factors in canoeing, writes: "Freedom means freedom to choose. Choice depends upon knowledge and provision.... Full knowledge of the consequences of making one choice rather than another is necessary in making a wise (safe) choice."

"What is the Fladbury philosophy? It is quite simple. With open boats and placid water there is no need to get wet; it is a safe sport for the whole of the family..." "Not surprisingly, perhaps," George Low writes, "David Train is something of an heretic in canoeing circles. His first training manual, for example, pours cold water on a lot of the received wisdom of the British Canoe Union. Their safety rules for instance, he sees as being largely inappropriate to placid water canoeing. "Why should everybody have to swim 50 metres in light clothing before they can canoe? Why do they have to roll under water? For our type of canoeing we think it is much better if people are confident in the water without stressing it. We have examples of people who have canoed for many years, have never capsized and would hate putting their heads under water. We don't think this need stop them canoeing - quite the reverse, providing that they always wear a buoyancy aid.... Similarly he does not see why trained paddlers on placid water should always stay in threes."

My memories of the dangers of placid water paddling have been revived. Because of personal experience, and wishing to help others avoid our mistakes, we helped to found the St. Albans and District Canoe Club. My family had a DIY experience. We built our own canoes and then taught ourselves to paddle them on canal, river and lake. After a year's experience and nearly a year too late, when the waters we had thought so placid were in reality so different, we took lessons - in rules, capsize drill and rolling.

We experienced the wickedness of wind-whipped waves in the wilderness of the once tranquil Scottish loch. We learnt how the killer cold lurks in water on even the hottest of

hot summer days. On a day which began like a pleasant dream I saw a freshening wind and an incoming tide transform the once peaceful haven of an estuary into a mother's nightmare.

St. Albans Canoe Club caters for all, it is true that some members have taken to slalom, polo and racing but there are members, like me who are placid water paddlers.

I have a great deal of sympathy with much of what David Train does and thinks. Rough water paddling is not for me. I had to give up rolling lessons because I could not bear being upside down in my canoe! While members of my family seek the rough stuff I yearn for the tranquility of placid water.

I prefer to paddle in an enclosed canoe - or wear a spray deck - because it prevents water from my paddles dripping onto my legs. I like to keep dry in every sense of the word. I like to feel that neither cold nor rain will prevent my enjoying a paddle any more than it does a good walk.

On April Fool's Day I capsized! I had been paddling for ten years - it had to happen sooner or later. I had allowed myself to be caught by an unexpected current and swept onto a fallen tree - the typical situation. As my canoe went over, not only the freezing water but gratitude engulfed me. Gratitude because I knew instinctively what to do. I had been taught the British Canoe Union's capsize drill. There was no panic in that icy, cold water.

PANIC IS A CONTRIBUTORY CAUSE OF MANY DEATHS FROM DROWNING. Capsize drills and safety rules are designed to prevent panic. David Train does not see why paddlers should have to be able to swim 50 metres in light clothing, or why trained paddlers on placid water should always stay in threes. When the weather looks good this does seem unnecessary. But a paddler, alone, who gets into difficulties, can at the worst panic and drown or, at the best, have an unpleasant experience which will mark him for life, and will almost certainly mean that he will never be persuaded to paddle again.

Those of us responsible for canoeing in clubs, youth groups and national teams should not say publicly that any BCU safety rule is unnecessary, unless the democratically elected committee members of the Union, in a full meeting, have agreed the decision. Otherwise the individual is carrying an awesome responsibility - the possible death of a fellow human being.

Mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers let us unite to ensure that sensible safety rules are made for our sport and are kept by those in positions of responsibility.

PLACID WATER PADDLER AND MOTHER OF FOUR.

## A TRUE OLYMPIAN

Sir Denis Follows, Chairman of the British Olympic Association, and a great personal friend of canoeing and canoeists, died in September at his Chiswick, London home. Sir Denis became a regular visitor to the International Canoe Exhibition in recent years, and was also a keen and enthusiastic spectator at the Union's International Regatta. He will be remembered for his courage and integrity when defending the impartiality of British Sport against politicians who sought to embroil the National Olympic Committee in the political battle that arose in 1980 following the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. An outstanding Sports Administrator, his leadership of the British Olympic movement will be sadly missed.

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# THE ASSESSMENT OF THE 'FREESTYLE'

The new white water kayak, the 'Freestyle', is designed and produced in polyethylene by Pyranha Mouldings. It was put through its paces in a series of tests worked out at Plas-y-Brenin, the National Centre for Mountain Activities.

The proposed BCU endorsement of this boat had been negotiated in the belief that unique features built into the construction, would improve the safety of polyethylene kayaks. It was 'crunch day' to determine whether the enlarged cockpit, the shock absorbing bulkhead footrest, and the bow strengthener, would perform to the required standards.

It was important to attempt to establish in advance the likely forces to which a white water kayak may be subjected, and devise some objective tests to measure various boats' performance.

Some work is still required in this respect. The devising of the tests, and the performance of the 'Freestyle' when subjected to them, has led to the instigation of further research. The threads of all this will begin to come together at the white water safety conference (14-15 January at Plas-y-Brenin).

The 'Freestyle's' performance is described and shown below.

1. Metal weights to the equivalent of 30lb+ were attached to each end of the kayak, which was then swamped. It floated well in accordance with the requirements of the test as described in BS MA 91.

*Recommendation.* A permanent label should be attached in all white water canoes, stating that the inherent buoyancy is to the minimum requirement and that for white water use it is strongly recommended that air bags, or some other form of additional buoyancy, be fitted.



2. A rope was passed through one end loop and the kayak was hoisted aloft. Another rope was passed through the other end loop, and attached to a strain gauge. A load of 200 kg was then applied. Neither end fitting showed any sign of breaking or parting from the boat.

The load was then applied to the front end loop in the vertical plane. The knot inside the toggle came undone. The toggle was then re-tied and the strain applied. No sign of breaking or parting from the kayak was visible.

*Recommendation.* Figure of eight knots should always be used inside toggles on canoes, and a reasonable margin of rope left protruding from the knot.



3. The boat was then suspended directly above the ground at a height of 1.56m and a load of 24kg placed on the bulkhead footrest by means of round multi-gym weights — 12kg each side. The kayak was then released onto concrete, the impact speed being 20 kph.

The shock-absorbing, easily adjustable bulkhead foot rest is held in place by a 6mm rope which locks into a plastic jamming cleat. The cleat broke, but the bulkhead was able to travel forward only a short distance to jam in the bow.

The test was then repeated, with the footrest securing line tied round the upright strengthening bulkhead. The kayak was raised until the bow was 3.5 from the ground, attaining an impact speed of 30 kph.

The footrest securing line cut into the bulkhead, but again the footrest itself failed safe into a jammed position in the bow.

*Recommendation.* Instruction should be given that the footrest securing line should be tied around the bulkhead as well as jamming into the cleat. (Investigation following the test has shown that the cleat was under tension, as the bulkhead where it was fitted did not provide a completely flat surface. This has now been modified. The cleats in use should now be capable of withstanding the 'snatch' strain involved).

Further tests the same day showed that terylene line tended to stretch under strain, which narrows its gauge, and it can then slip through the cleat. For white water boats kevlar line only should be used.



4. The kayak was then placed horizontally so that it was supported only at points 12" from each end. A weight of 90kg was stood on the seat. Only slight flexing from the horizontal in the cockpit area was evident.

The kayak was then placed upside down, suspended as before, and a 9" plank placed across the hull. The kayak folded behind the cockpit, in accordance with its design feature, when a load of 140kg was applied. There was no displacement of either bulkhead.



5. A single, narrow pole was then erected and the kayak placed across it so that the pole (a weight-lifting bar) was directly across the hull beneath the cockpit. Ropes were then attached to each end and linked to a strain gauge which was attached to the transit van. The kayak again folded behind the seat at a strain of approx 140kg. Observation was made with a kayaker in the canoe, which established that it was possible to exit from the cockpit at all stages of stretch.

The bar was then held forward of the seat, and the ropes attached to the bow, and at the rear of the cockpit, to test the strain necessary to bend the bow section. (It was agreed that this was vital to establish for a polyethylene boat, as once the foredeck does collapse there is no known method by which a paddler might extricate himself).

The forward bulkhead collapsed, and escape would have been impossible, when a strain of 325kg was applied. (So far as is known, this is in excess of the pressure likely to be applied on a kayak by the force of water in rapids up to grade five).

6. The kayak was then taken to the swimming pool, and a series of capsizes performed to assess whether or not there was any likelihood of entanglement with the fixtures and fittings, which might interfere with a paddler's ability to exit from the canoe in an emergency. The only feature appeared to be that a big toe could enter the channel at the top of the front bulkhead in which the footrest runs. Attempts to get the toe to jam in the channel were, however, unsuccessful. The boat did not empty completely very easily, but there does not appear to be a simple solution to this problem.

7. Contact with users has since indicated that the design of the kayak gives a good performance in white water. Snags concerning the ability of very large people to obtain sufficient footrest extension have been overcome through a re-design and strengthening even further of the forward bulkhead. Neoprene knee pads are now fitted as standard on both centre and white water models to overcome the problem of nylon clothing slipping against the polyethylene decks. The biggest drawback appears to be the fact that the rear bulkhead, which consists of a wide polyethylene foam block, can become dislodged after extended use, and can be sawn through where it fits in under the seat.

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