

# Canoe *focus*

No 81. FEBRUARY 1993

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the Welsh Coast



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Your contributions make Focus happen. The quality and variety of news, articles, reports and photographs depend on the submission of material from you. Very few contributors are professional writers and photographers. Please don't be put off writing because you have no experiential Canoe Focus is an annual canoeist to competitor dialogue: a paddler's magazine written by paddlers.

**Technical Information:**

Contributions are acceptable in clear handwriting or typed (double spaced). PC disks (3.5 or 5.25) can be read from most Word Processing programmes especially if saved as an ASCII file. Macintosh files saved as DOS or ASCII can also be scanned. Photographic images are preferred on transparencies (colour slide). Artwork and line drawings should be clear and large. All material is accepted on the understanding that the BCU and it's agents cannot be held liable or responsible for loss or damage, although every care and effort is taken to safeguard material. A help sheet is available for potential contributors. Please send a SAE to the Editor.

The next Copy date is the 28 February 1993. Material arriving at FOCUS after this date cannot be included in the April issue.



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# Comment

## DIRECTORS COMMENT


### Welcome to the new look Canoe Focus.

This edition marks an important step forward for the magazine, it includes more pages and more colour. With a guaranteed minimum number of editorial pages we believe that we can address many of the problems that have been encountered during the past year.

The introduction of this improved Focus coincides with the 1993 International Canoe Exhibition in Sheffield later this month. I am pleased to reveal that all of the available stand space has been booked and this indicates that it will be a bumper show. All we need to complete the package is for you to attend.


The Exhibition is an ideal opportunity – To examine the multitude of products from numerous suppliers – Meet officers and officials of the BCU – Take in a lecture – Above all to meet your friends and have a good time.

#### HERITAGE CANOES




The British Canoe Union owns several "Heritage Canoes" which form a very important part of the sports history. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find one home for the whole collection. If anyone knows of a suitable museum for the craft please let me know at John Dudderidge House.

#### COACH OF THE YEAR



Perhaps one of the most memorable occasions in 1992 was the British Institute of Sports Coaches "Coach of the Year" awards. Presided over by HRH The Princess Royal the event was a celebration of some of the outstanding coaching achievements of last year. I was particularly pleased to attend as Hugh Mantle was to receive the award for one of the seven categories. In canoeing we are often very poor at acknowledging the contributions and achievements of our many voluntary officers and officials. Coaches in particular work behind the scenes helping to provide the excellent results which we are often very proud to read about. Hugh is no exception and the achievement Coach of the Year for the second time was outstanding and demonstrates the high regard that the world outside canoeing has for him.

#### FUNDING



We are currently completing the BCU's Four Year Development Plan for the period November 1993 to October 1997. Entitled "Accelerating Expansion" the plan will form a major part of our bid for Sports Council funding. The Sports Council provides considerable support for organisations ranging from clubs through to Governing Bodies, but they are not the only source of money. Several


schemes are currently being revealed and we will attempt to keep you abreast of the situation.

The National Lottery has been widely advertised and will be an important source of funding for sport. Whilst we have several concerns connected with ensuring sport "gets its share" the importance of the lottery should not be overlooked. Please take every opportunity to voice your support.

A new government sponsored incentive scheme for sport "Sports Match" has been launched and it is the intention to match a sponsors pound (£) with a Sports Match Award pound (£). Full details are available from The Institute of Sports Sponsorship, Francis House, Francis Street, London, SW1P 1DE.

AGM With this issue of Canoe Focus you will have received the Annual Report of the Union, plus the agenda for the AGM to be held on 13 March, Lakeside, Ulverston, Cumbria, and voting ballot forms to elect members to Council. Please take this opportunity to vote for the people you wish to represent you on BCU Council.

#### ACCESS



The BCU continues to beaver away on the access front and 1993 will see some positive progress on behalf of all canoeists, whether or not they happen to be BCU Members. What our local access officers are often faced with are landowners and bailiffs who will deal only and exclusively with the National Body because they feel that they can talk to canoeists as a body rather than individuals. Basic membership at £13.50 is affordable and belonging to an ever-growing body of paddlers is the way forward both for access and canoeing. The bigger the body, the louder the voice !

**Paul Owen**  
Director



# Notice board

## News in brief

### Alpine canoe rally

There will be another French Alps canoe in 1993. Based again in Briancon the Rally is aimed at intermediate & above paddlers who wish to meet liked minded paddlers for the best of the spring melt. Mike Bruce has more details and information on studios and apartments on the banks of the Guisane. Contact Michael Bruce, Alpine Options, Mont de Lans, 38860 LES 2 Alps France. Tel 010 33 76801995

### Sea kayak races

Penzance and Hayle Canoe Clubs are combining to inaugurate the West Cornwall Sea Kayak Experience. To be held on August the 28 (Bank Holiday Saturday) it will be a twelve mile circular navigation of Mounts Bay from Albert Pier, Penzance around St. Michaels Mount, four mile open sea crossing to St. Clements Island, Mousehole and then back close to the shore to Penzance prom. Rescue boats will be in attendance and further details can be had from: Richard Uren, Trescrown Farm, Bone Valley, Heamoor, Penzance Cornwall TR20 8VJ or tel 0736 51082

Coquet Canoe Club will again hold their annual 'Round The Island' race and meet. This year it is on the 27th June with a 10.30 start. As usual the race is well sponsored with prizes. On the Saturday there will be Farne Island paddles organised with local guides and details with a sae can be obtained from: Vic Brown, 27 the Turn, Loansdean, Morpeth NE61 2DU or tel 0670 513544

### BCU coach

Plas y Brenin appoints BCU Coach. The National Centre for Mountain activities has appointed Franco Ferrero as Instructor i/c Canoeing activities. A respected Coach and active paddler on river and sea Franco is better known to Focus as a regular correspondent (Outraged, Mlynedd Llandgai). He is also the Local Access Officer for the River Ogwen.

## Leicester Kiwi Grant



In November 1992 a group of disabled and able bodied canoeists undertook an arduous canoe trip and together raised £250 towards the cost of a Kiwi Two, for the exclusive use of disabled canoeists in Leicester. A further £280 in the form of a grant from Leicester City Council has meant that a second Kiwi Two with buoyancy aid and paddles has also been purchased. (Thanks to Mobile Adventure for a good deal).

Paddlers meet at the Leicester Outdoor Pursuit Centre every thursday, anyone is welcome. for further information contact Keith Hampton on 0533 674428.



Sanje Vazlabeta canoeing at Leicester

## Atlantic Crossing

The first British crossing by canoe is currently being undertaken by Chris and Stuart Newman from Middlesboro, paddling a modified version of the Chris Hare Marine 'Trapper Classic', from Lisbon to Cape Canaveral. The Trapper Classic was extended to 19ft with fore and aft blips for accommodation and gear storage. The pair plan to live off the sea, use

solar batteries for power and navigate by sextant. The plan is to take the great circle route going as far south as 20deg N passing the Cape Verde Islands and then swing north towards the Caribbean Islands. From there they hitch a ride on the Gulf Stream making lanfall at Cape Canaveral in January. On Christmas Day a message was received from a French Cargoe

vessel saying the brothers were 200 miles north east of Martinque in the Windward Islands. despite a prolonged period of bad weather and and shortage of food, they were hoping to land before the end of January. Details of the trip and the Canoe used will be on display with Chris Hare Marine at the Sheffield International Canoe Exhibition.



## Cat has Epic Open Boat Journey

Mike Dooley of West Cumbria CC picked up an open boat from Doug Hardie's mother in law, unaware that the boat was occupied. Zippy the cat covered a few miles and reached speeds of up to 60 mph before making his prescence felt through the sunroof! The cartoon shows the resulting catastrophe (sorry).

Cartoon by Steve Penrice.



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# MINI OLYMPICS

National Championships for people with learning difficulties

HULL, 5-12 SEPT 1992

## RESULTS

### Ladies

1. Claire Traynor, Chelmsford
2. Amanda Pickering, Beck Meadow Canoe Club
3. Katie Whalley, Chelmsford

### Men

1. Eddie Byrne, Beck Meadow Canoe Club
2. Curtis Dennis, Beck Meadow Canoe Club
3. Stephen Manley, Chelmsford

### Open canoe

1. Warren Olds & Stephen Manley, Chelmsford
2. Dave McReady & Amanda Pickering, Beck Meadow Canoe Club
3. Claire Traynor & Adrian Hobbs, Chelmsford

### Team results

1. Chelmsford
2. Beverley
3. Walter Boyce
4. Beck Meadow Canoe Club
5. Ellesmere Port
6. Shire Lodge
7. Link Leisure
8. Nason Water Sports Club
9. Hull & Holderness

For the first time canoeing was included as an event in the week long games. The venue was the Albert Avenue outdoor pool, hosted by the Kingston Kayak Club and the Yorkshire and Humberside Region.

As this was the first time the event was held

the level of ability was largely unknown so, the first day was either a practice for those already proficient or a 'Come and Try It' for some first timers.

The second day continued with the good weather but an increasing wind made the slalom rather interesting.

Each competitor competed in the sprints and slalom and their results were totalled to produce the individual winners and overall team placings. The open canoe was a separate event.

We are now hoping that this demonstration event will be included in the next Olympics 1994.

The success of the event was such that there are now tentative plans to run a national event each year, along similar lines. The first will be next summer at the Albert Avenue Pool.

**John Swallow – Disabilities Co-ordinator Yorkshire & Humberside.**



**Above:**  
Katie Whalley who finished third in the ladies event.

**Right:**  
Eddie Byrne who finished first in the men's event.



#### The events:

- 1 Length sprint – Canoe – Men & Women
- 1 Length sprint – Kayak – Men & Women
- 2 Lengths sprint – Canoe & Kayak – Men & Women
- 1 Length slalom – Canoe or Kayak – Men & Women
- 2 Length Open Canoe – 2 people

## 600 tons of rubbish in the Coventry Canal

**British Waterways Manager, Roger Herrington reports that the following: 6 Safes, 2 1/2 cars, 23 bikes, 6 car engines, 24 shopping trolleys, 48 road cones, 8 45 gallon drums, 29 tyres, 6 motore cycles and 580 tonnes of rubble were removed from only five miles of the Coventry canal near Nuneaton at a cost of £20,000.**

**BW have spent over seven months dredging the full length of the canal**

**from Fradley Junction to Coventry and the work will be completed in the new year. 'Quite apart from the serious risks to Canal users it's so utterly mindless' says Roger. People pay in their taxes for local authority rubbish tips which they don't use and then they pay for BW to get the rubbish out of the Canal! The money would be better spent on Britain's Canal Heritage and, dare I say access ?**

## NRA: Thames Weirs

The Thames region of the National Rivers Authority have published a report on Canoeing on The Thames weirs. In their words 'A report to consider projects that may enhance canoeing opportunities on the River Thames' it is a response to the BCU Lobby. The report is very positive and looks at ways in which paddling access and opportunities may be improved. There is mention of consulting and working with the BCU further to improve the Urban paddlers lot. Nice one.

## Itchen Pollution?

Canoeists in Southampton are being asked to report any illnesses they've experienced after capsizing in the River Itchen to the City Council to help in a survey to find out how dirty the river is. A survey already published shows some evidence of people who have fallen in the Itchen becoming ill. Council officers will use the information in their campaign to get central government to tighten up dumping procedures. BCU members are encouraged to help with information on the understanding that the statistics will be used to get the Itchen cleaned up and not restrict access in any way.





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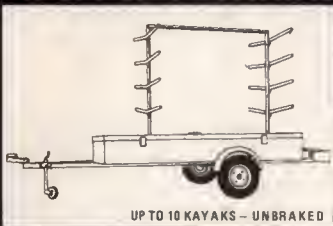
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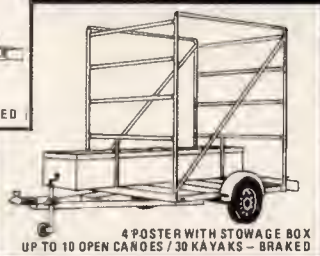
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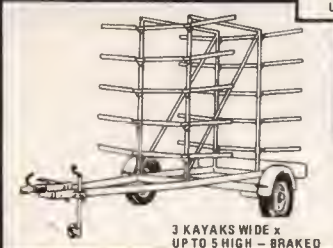
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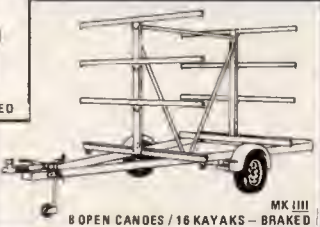


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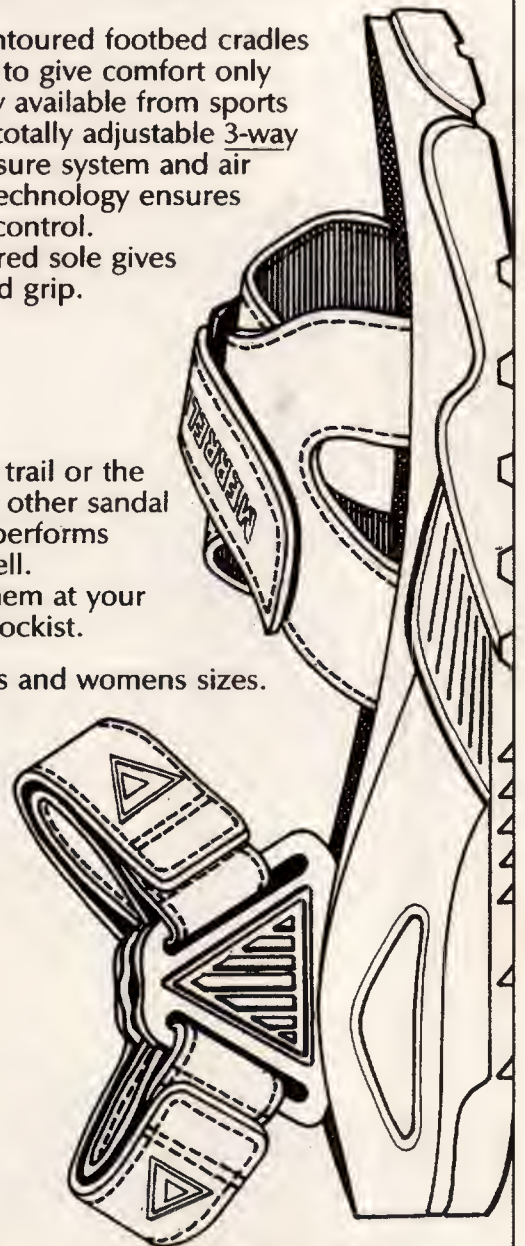
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## Dragon Boaters Join Extravaganza at New Look Canoe Show



The next International Canoe Exhibition (February 20 – 21 1993) seems set to be the most exciting yet with many new events and over 100 stands already booked at Ponds Forge International Sports Centre in Sheffield. This is a new venue for the Canoe Exhibition, previously held in London. The move North being prompted by the superb facilities and greater accessibility offered by this fabulous new complex.

Highlights of the show are to include Dragonboat racing in the main pool, with a Dragonboat Festival alongside to illustrate the history and characters associated with this colourful sport. Also new is a wild water racing event in the Leisure Pool, where visitors to the Exhibition will have the opportunity to race champion paddlers Neil Stamps and Alan Tordoff along the "Lazy River Rapids". Many more champions will be on show at the other pool events over the weekend – the British Canoe Polo and Pool Slalom Championships – including Gareth Marriott, Britain's Olympic silver medallist in slalom canoeing.

As always, the exhibition offers the opportunity for experienced and aspirant canoeists alike to see at first hand and discuss with the experts the many aspects of the sport and the wide range of canoeing and kayaking equipment now available. With longer opening hours, the exhibition is now open until 7pm on the Saturday

and 5pm on Sunday. A bargain, the new twilight ticket, from 4 – 7pm on Saturday, costs only £3 and provides the opportunity to shop in Sheffield as well as visiting the canoe exhibition!



Above and right:  
Ponds Forge  
Sports Centre

## BCU Lifeguards

The Lifeguards Annual Convention will be held at Calshot Activity Centre on April 17-18, 1993. Activities will include all aspects of lifeguarding and lifesaving, including resuscitation, first aid and kayak/canoe rescue techniques. Instruction will be in line with the recently published 6th edition of the First Aid Manual. Assessment for awards ranging from the Canoe Safety Test to the Canoe

Lifeguard award will be available, including Lifeguard Resuscitation (RLSS Advanced Resuscitation). The new pool endorsement will be available on Sunday for the first time. Be amongst the first in the country to hold it! Accommodation options range from Camping to full board. Details from Ian Taylor, 4 Oak Road, Woolmer Green, Knebworth, Herts SG3 6LS

### Pangebourne Riverside Centre Raise £1000



On Friday 20 November a group of Marathon Canoeists from County Riverside Centre, Pangbourne had a relay race from Pangbourne to London, A distance of 80 miles. Nigel Starmer Smith was at the start to wish the group luck and pass the appeals mascot, Pudsey Bear to the first crew to leave Pangbourne. Jim Lemin, marathon leader, said that as well as good training for the Devises to Westminster race it was a wonderful fast paddle and a good feeling to raise £1000 for the Charity.

Well done to all those who took part.

### Foundation for Sports and the Arts



The Foundation, set up last year by members of the Pools Promoters Association, has generously supported canoeing activities with a selection of grants over the year. The December press release details the following recent grants over the last two months, directly helping canoeing : Royal Sutton

Coldfield Canoe Club Starman's Hall/Canolfan Canford Frome Youth and Community Centre Abbots Bromley Canoeists Adur Centre Canoe Metropolitan Borough of Sefton Youth Service

Over the last 15 months the Foundation has awarded over £75 million in grants to a wide range of sports projects.

## Photo of the Month

Burton Canoe Club have a very nice sign...a very nice sign indeed. Makes a change from those Angling Club 'No Canoeing' eyesores.



## Ogwen Tragedy

Lieutenant Robert Morris aged 26 was drowned on the River Ogwen at Bethesda, Gwynedd in high spate conditions. The local police report of the incident stated that Robert was well equipped but that conditions were dreadful. Robert, a serving Sea King Helicopter pilot based at Culdrose Naval Station, was at one time a BCU member. Our condolences to his friends and family.

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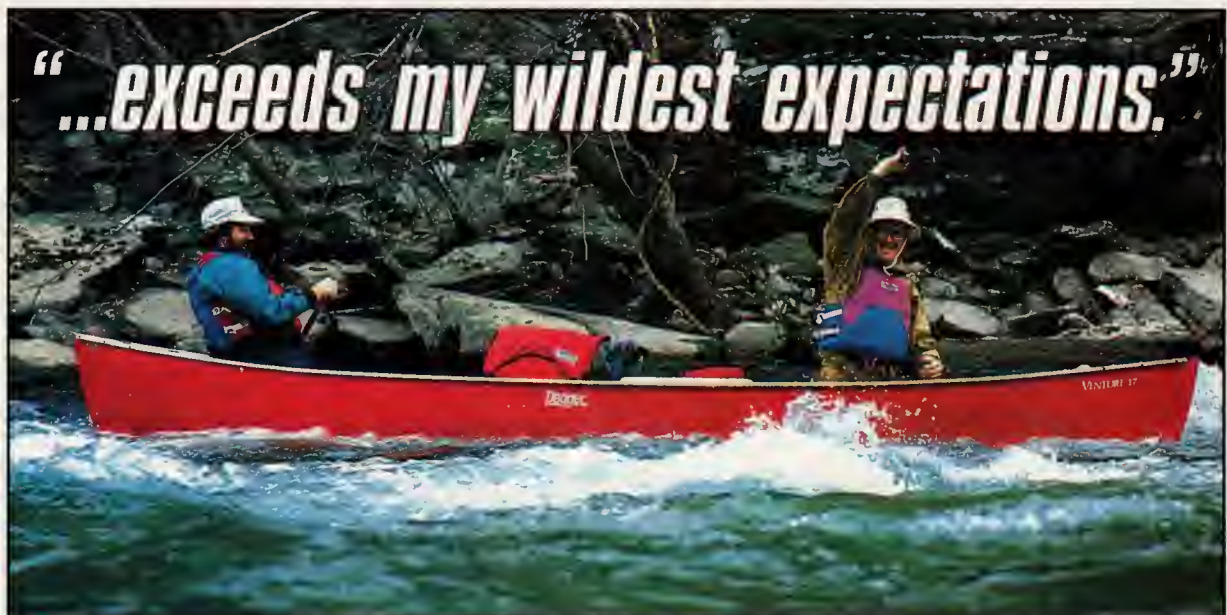
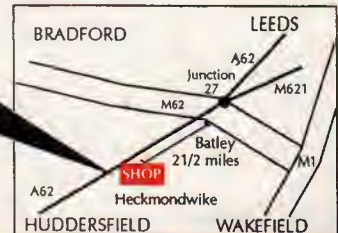
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## The Kayaker's Edge

Dynamic White Water Instruction Written & Produced by Kent Ford

 Kent is ex-Nantahala Outdoor Centre, the American version of our National Centres, and is a talented paddler as well as instructor, having been a C1 World Team Champion in the company of the likes of the legendary Jon Lugbill. This instructional video aims at the individual paddler seeking a tune up or 'Top tips and Handy Hints' rather than a guide book for instructors. A good cross section of white water paddlers demonstrate priority skills to learn in a logical order. The house style is both enthusiastic and mellow at the same time. The footage is excellent quality. Good water and good paddlers showing good technique, and both well filmed by a cameraman with understanding of the sport and tight direction. The Video is fast moving and packed with, for the most part, useful content. Most aspirant white water kayakers would find some little gems here. The commentary is a little verbose in some places for Brit ears although some of their terminology is worth considering as an alternative way of describing the very same actions we teach over here. If the teaching falls down at all it is where a stroke or manoeuvre is described verbally: but isn't this always the case? As soon as you give something a name the wicket gets stickier? Does it matter that they call a bow rudder a Duffek: not a jot. Turn off the sound now

and then because the action and demos are clear enough, particularly the rolling sequences. Two practical methods are shown, lots of emphasis on body actions, and a body roll thrown in for good measure. Get practising! I liked the overall style and presentation of the video and, with the exception of the Duffek stroke, the content is great. Surfing and stopper blasting are presented as smiling activities and there is a little bit of 'thrash' footage showing kayakers with much to learn. Warm ups and stretches are a must...and the advice on avoiding self-damage through poor technique is sound. Overall, a step forward and entertaining. Kent does not forget that this stuff is meant to be fun and not difficult.




Dynamic Whitewater Instruction

Kevin Danforth

## THE BIG MUDDY

A Canoe Journey Down the Mississippi - Sylvie Nickels

 The Big Muddy is an account of Sylvie and George Nickels journey by open canoe all 2340 miles of the Mississippi, or "Big Muddy" as it is known locally.

Though no spring chickens, the need to fulfil Georges' ambition saw Sylvie somewhat reluctantly joining her husband to achieve his dream.

In an 18ft We-no-Wah canoe and four months to complete the journey, breaking records was not priority; finishing was.

From wilderness to city, tomadoes to tranquility, the book gives a rare insight into river life. Its Geography and more importantly the history documented in detail will appeal to readers who enjoy canoeing but don't want to hear about the technical bits and bobs that fill other books, mentioning no names!

Media coverage on television and radio meant

that river folk were watching out for Sylvie and George and seemed only too happy to offer hospitality when it was needed most.

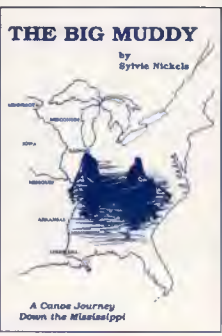
Initially a reluctant adventurer, it soon became apparent that this was an experience of a lifetime for Sylvie.

From Minnesota to New Orleans the journey was a remarkable feat.

Sitting on the banks of The Big Muddy watching the sunset, bad times forgotten, enjoying Cajun cooking, listening to the blues....Dream on.


Illustrations by Tom Price Oriole Press c/o Jane Geddes. 18, Summerfield, Oxford, OX1 4RU. £3.95.

Jane Danforth



## France Canoe/Kayak et Sports D'Eau Vive

Cordee Books & Maps Leicester £5.95

 Sports D'Eau Vive: Live Water Sports and at last a map designed specifically for aqua-addicts and one you should not cross the channel without. It is based on a basic French road map on which the routes are the background to a bold overprint of rivers. Lots of them. Lovely, lovely rivers...and all colour graded too. Look there's that easy gentle green bit. Further over is that squiggly purple bit, you remember, where we all fell in and Joey's boat went for miles? Fond memories of Alpine France. Now if I had owned this map three years ago I would not have sat at the ferry terminal for five hours on the way home but ticked off that interesting bit of III/IV, just off the euro-route on the way to Calais.

The flip side is a mass of information, listing 490 of the best rivers for kayak/canoe/raft, the best 42 surfing sites and the most beautiful 120 sites for canyoning. Lowland touring grades are not neglected either.

All this in five euro-languages, although bits of the English verge on 'Franglais'. No matter: we know what they mean. The safety guidelines and river gradings will cause thought before immersion and most usefully there is a list of local Canoe Clubs. Corsica is included, but a possible improvement may have been the inclusion of the colour grades on the border rivers, particularly as the small parts of Switzerland and Italy included have good alpine rivers. There are no grade V's near Maastricht, which just sneaks in at the top of the sheet! At least you will know where it is. The Map is good, simple, affordable and indispensable. Pack with the suntan lotion. Waterproof paper would have made it magnifique!!

Editors note: work continues on the British Canoe Union canoeing Map of the British Isles....it is not forgotten and will be produced, eventually.

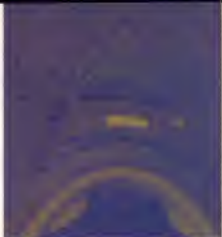


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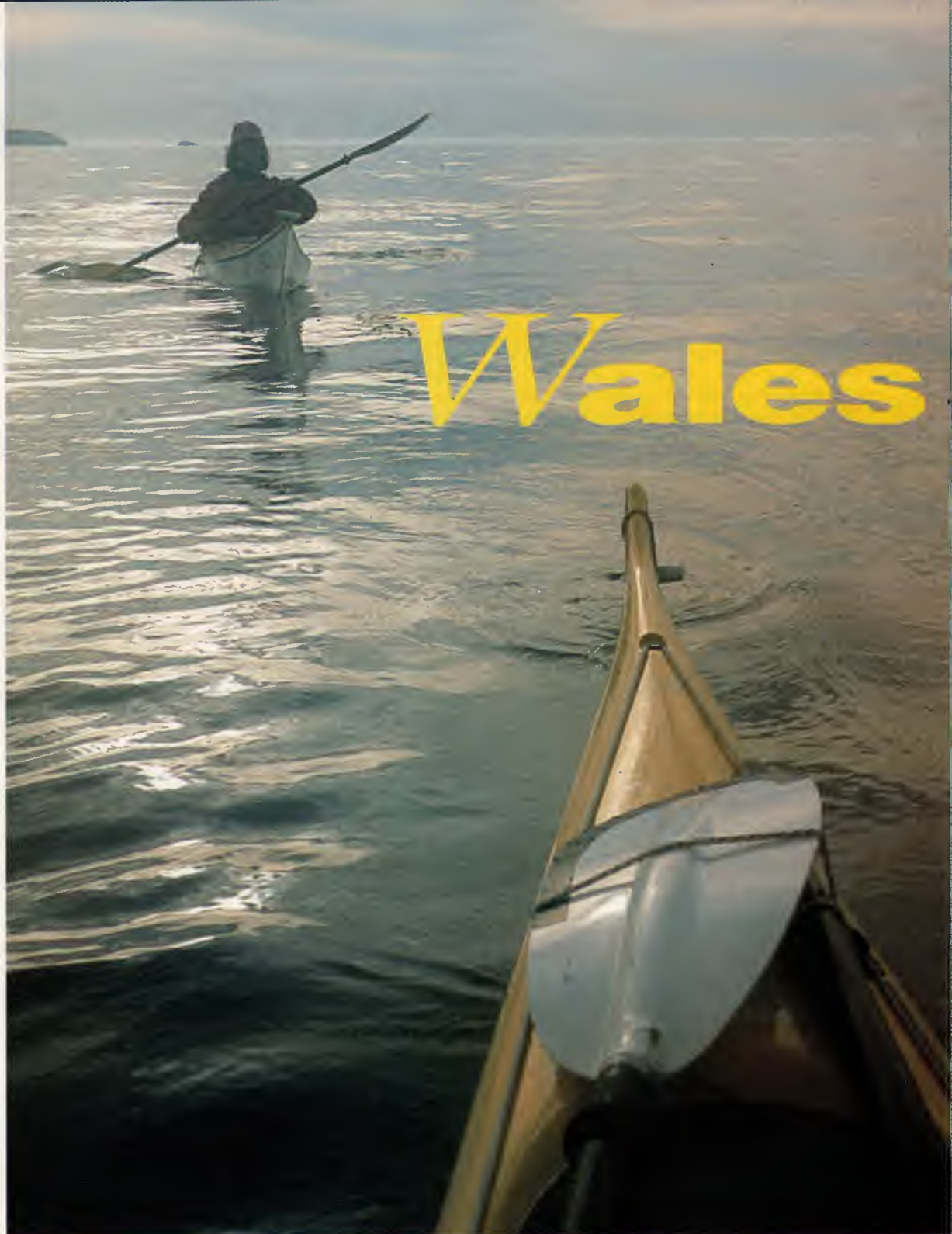


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**Rob Stratton gives us an account of his paddle around the Welsh coastline.**



**T**he slipway underneath the Severn Bridge was starting to resemble a jumble sale. Clothes, sleeping bags, pots and pans, books, maps, bags and food were piled up in ill assorted heaps. Rob and I viewed the increasing chaos in dismay. How were we ever going to fit all that gear into two slender sea kayaks? At the present rate we would be needing an ocean going liner not a Nordkapp and an Anas Acuta!

In the end we had to be ruthless, luxuries were thrown out, the reading matter was chucked back into the boot of the car and I had to sacrifice the extra jumper I had planned on taking as a safeguard against Arctic conditions.

By the skin of our teeth we were ready to go at slack water. A quick smile for the cameraman from the local paper and a wave at the assembled well-wishers and we were off.

### **Watery Relief**

The relief at being on the water at last was immense. The final week of preparations had been hectic and it had seemed that we would never get everything done in time. We were doing the trip in order to gain publicity and cash for Dyfed Wildlife Trust, who are desperately in need of a marine conservation officer to monitor Cardigan Bay's threatened wildlife.

As a result we had spent the last week making an appearance on TV, Radio and the local press. Our original intention had been to find a sponsor to fund us and give a sizeable donation to the Dyfed Wildlife Trust. As it turned out we did find a major sponsor in a not-so-well-known oil company keen on presenting a more acceptable environmental face to the world. But, they pulled out three weeks before we were due to leave, citing a "change in management" as the reason.

Other smaller sponsors made up for this with uncalled for generosity. Thanks to Pains Wessex Schermuly we were armed with enough flares to start

# by sea kayak

our own Bastille Day celebrations, Fuji had donated film and BT a mobile phone.

## Polite Waves

As every canoeist knows too well the weather is the crucial factor in any sea-going voyage. The gods must have been viewing our venture favourably because the elements were exceptionally kind to us. The first couple of weeks were superb, the sun shone constantly and the sea was meek and mild. Worm's Head and Oxwich Point on the Gower which have deservedly fearsome reputations showed only the benign sides of their respective characters. Nothing more than a few small waves washed politely over the decks of our canoes.

As I had been canoeing for only a year when I set off on the trip I was quite glad to be initiated gently. Rob, although he was enjoying the glorious weather was also champing at the bit for something a bit more demanding. He needn't have worried, when the weather broke, as it was bound to do, he got the excitement he craved!

## Skomer Island

One of the highlights of the journey was spending three days on Skomer Island in Pembrokeshire. This nature reserve is owned by the Dyfed Wildlife Trust and is a haven for Puffins, the unique Skomer Vole and is home to the world's largest colony of Manx Shearwaters. Like Puffins they nest in burrows, but they don't dig their own homes, they simply evict the unfortunate rabbits and settle in instead! Even though they are brave when it comes to facing bunnies the Greater and Lesser Black Backed Gulls are more than a match for them. To avoid attack from these voracious predators they fly into there burrows to feed their young under cover of darkness, choosing only black, moonless nights to do so.



All  
photographs  
by Rob  
Stratton

The cacophonous clamour of thousands of these birds heading through the darkness to their burrows is unforgettable.

The Puffins were memorable too. With their jaunty striped beaks and ludicrous clockwork bird movements they could probably be dubbed as the comedians of the bird world. They seemed to be quite accustomed to gawking humans pointing cameras in their direction and just got on with their lives, disregarding our presence completely. They patrolled around the mouths of their burrows awaiting the return of their mate with a beak brimming with sand eels to feed the young.

## Jack The Lad

Rob got his dose of excitement as we were leaving Skomer. The mild weather changed abruptly and we set off on murky, gusty morning. Skomer is separated from the mainland by the notorious Jack Sound. Jack the Lad is well known for working up to a foaming frenzy at the least provocation and this morning we caught him in the first throws of a fury.

The kayaks pitched and tossed in the clutch of massive waves, blank walls of menacing grey water shut out the view, plunged into a chasm of brine, separated from Rob and safety by an uncompromising sheet of stormy water was an intimidating experience, especially as the good weather had temporarily lulled me into thinking that the sea was a pussycat! Now it was flexing its muscles with a vengeance.

The wind was not about to let up either. The sea had become a seething mass of spume capped waves. As the forecast was for a deterioration in conditions we abandoned plans to cross St Brides Bay and headed for shore. With a fierce headwind working against us our progress was painfully slow and we had to fight hard to make headway. Our eventual arrival on the beach was



hard won and we felt that we had earned a kingsize chocolate bar and mug of tea.

### Canary Cage Barbecue

One of the great successes of our trip was the barbecue grill. We had customised a canary cage found in a Cardiff scrapyard and it suited our needs perfectly. Small enough to fit in the large oval hatch in Rob's Nordkapp then packed flat against the bulkhead. It was also just about big enough to hold four lamb chops and a few sausages. Cooked over the embers of a driftwood fire the meat tasted exquisite. Another success story was the hand-held fishing line. With this simple contraption we caught our supper on a number of occasions, cooked on the converted canary cage the super-fresh mackerel had a spectacular flavour.

### Dolphin Alert

All the way up Cardigan Bay we had been keeping our eyes open for dolphins. Sightings of them are frequent and they have been known to bow-ride boats and investigate canoes. Even though we were on a perpetual dolphin alert we didn't see any. Once we'd left their territory we knew that there was little chance of seeing them. We were disappointed but we shrugged it off. By the time we reached Anglesey we had put thoughts of cetaceans behind us. However, one oily calm evening as we were paddling idly in the sunshine we caught sight of a fin and a rounded back dipping in and out of the water, then another, and another...

We had chanced upon seven or eight feeding porpoises. Unlike dolphins they are not remotely inquisitive and they kept a discreet distance away from us. They seemed to be keeping a careful eye on our movements, we manoeuvred ourselves as close as possible, but if we came too close the entire group would vanish under the surface and reappear a few yards away. They tolerated our presence and were not unduly perturbed by it or they would have vanished completely. We stayed with them for three quarters of an hour, watching them surface and sink, surface and sink, the deep gasp of air being inhaled through the blow-hole magnified by the still-

ness of the evening. Occasionally one would breach, lifting its smooth, gleaming body out of the water in an effortless arc before slicing surprisingly quietly back into the glassy sea.

Spending time with them was a great privilege, one which will always stand out as a highlight of our voyage.

The trip took six weeks because we had allowed plenty of time to stop and explore along the way. We visited fascinating places like Skomer; crossed the notorious Sound to spend a few days on Bardsey, paddled up to the Teifi Marshes, where we had a go in a coracle. We also stayed in The Skerries lighthouse, the Italian style village at Portmeirion and the Welsh cultural centre on the Llyn Peninsula, Nantgwrtheyrn. Without the time to stop and look properly we would have missed so much.

We were also given so much kindness and hospitality by so many people who had nothing to gain from giving refuge to a pair of infrequently washed sea canoeists. There was Geoff and Susie, who we met by chance on the Towy River, who took us in for the night, fed us and did our washing – a brave act indeed! Then there was Phillip Horwood from Llanbedrog who happened to read the DWT logo on the canoes while he was out with his pupils from Basic Board

Sailing. He gave us £50 towards the Trust. Then there was Kevin Brown from The Ship in Llangranog who gave us a bed, a bath and a boozy evening.

Inevitably the weeks flew by. In no time at all we seemed to be making our way up the river Dee to the border. We suffered a mixed bag of emotions on the final leg. On the one hand we wanted to finish, to know the trip had been a success, yet we knew that with its triumphant conclusion would come normality and routine, the end to discovering something new every day – the end of freedom!

All misgivings were brushed aside when we were greeted by a reception committee made up of various family members waving brandishing two bottles of champagne. What else could we do but celebrate in style.

**Nerys Lloyd-Pierce paddled with Rob Stratton**







M Severn?

# Motoring focus

## The Canoeist Guide to Car Maintenance

For most paddlers, whatever their persuasion, a car is an essential, unless they live next to the water. The ultimate test for a vehicle must be to loan it to a canoeist for a year. Remember that Alps trip?: That weekend motorway burn to Scotland or the frantic thrash to catch the Severn Bore. The dirt tracks, the camping kit, the breakdowns, the shuttles.

**Anne Lineen gives hard won advice;** Many people, on seeing our sporty Renault 19, ask us how we manage to keep it in such tip-top shape. Well the mysteries of canoeist car-maintenance, like the cross-bow rudder, are many years in the learning. However these mysteries can now be revealed.

The first step in ensuring top canoe-car performance from your vehicle is to fit a cumbersome, silly-looking roof rack which at a stroke negates the aerodynamic principles of the cars design. You can further enhance the drag factor by strapping four mountain bats to the top of the car; just watch the fuel consumption rocket!

Another good way to increase petrol consumption and general wear and tear is to drive at least 150 miles every weekend; anything less is a complete wimp out. In no time at all you will have mileage figures akin to the salaries of British Telecom directors.

The interior of the car is particularly enhanced by using it to store wet kit, muddy boots, autumn leaves, small

animals, etc. The most effective way to accumulate mud in your car is to attend slaloms on wet weekends, Middleton-in-Teesdale is particularly recommended. Use of the car as a changing room and wet kit store will guarantee that .....mmm very special odour so familiar to canoeists and so incomprehensible to anyone else.

Finally, for that classic canoe-car finish nothing can beat the scratched paint work effect achieved only by hitting the car with strap buckles and driving down narrow country lanes looking for access points. Remember, this much sought after patina is not available in the shops.

Handy hints from the Assassin's corner - to improve the long term performance of your canoe-car try totally neglecting your vehicle, oil, tyre pressures, battery, ignore them all for that total state of unreliability that non-canoeists can only read about. Yes, says the Assassin, go for the car neglect option and why not add an extra frisson to your journey by not being a member of any motorist organisation. Give your friends a night to remember!

So remember readers, if you want a shiny, clean, top performance car.....er, give up canoeing.

Anne Lineen



## A FATAL ATTRACTION ?

The Police made contact with the BCU Office recently following an incident when some paddlers seal-launched from the M25 motorway bridge into the Thames at Egham.

We know that out there are a great number of paddlers who enjoy the rush of adrenalin, and the strange feeling in tender parts of the anatomy, which occurs when undertaking high drops.

However, we have been asked to point out that where Motorways are concerned this really is a 'no-no'. 80% of all fatalities on motorways occur to

people on the hard shoulder. The loss of attention, and slowing down, which ensues when drivers passing at 70 mph plus, see something happening on the roadside, creates the havoc of traffic queues at the very least, and at worst a serious accident.

It should be noted that the Police will prosecute pedestrians, or anyone causing a disturbance on a motorway, and rightly so.

The M25 was designed to take 70,000 vehicles per day, and is currently having to cope with 135,000 !



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# dear focus

## SPARE KIT?

**Dear Readers:**

Are there any members out there can offer us assistance?

I would like to appeal to any members who may have canoeing, or any other Outdoor Education, equipment they no longer use and would like to sell or donate it to a very worthy cause.

I am writing on behalf of Handsworth Alternative School in Birmingham which is an education project aimed at trying to bring disaffected final year pupils back into society.

When one first considers pupils who have truanted for a long period of time it is easy to dismiss them as juvenile delinquents that have decided to shun the education system in favour of an easy dossy life, but after working at the school I have found

that in most cases this is just not true. To take for example, one case from this years intake of pupils. After being accepted at the Alternative I had to attend a meeting to discuss her case. It was revealed that she was rejected by her mother three years ago. This situation has created great emotional trauma for the girl and led to her long term absence from school. She was referred to the Alternative as her last hope of gaining an Education before venturing into the world, probably alone, along with many others who have just as distressing histories.

At our school we offer this girl and her peers an education which along with high staff pupil ratios and a very caring attitude, a programme based around

Outdoor Education. The curriculum offers fun and excitement but there is also a very serious academic element to give the pupils the best possible start in life considering their turbulent pasts. Unfortunately as a charity, funds are always limited and outdoor equipment is an expensive commodity.

I do not wish to discuss the politics of this situation : I would just like to appeal to the generous nature of BCU members and ask for your assistance, please, if you can, help these kids, they deserve a second chance in life.

**Salty John Burn –  
Outdoor Education  
Teacher  
Handsworth  
Alternative**



## ICF Wrong Decision?

**Dear Focus:**

I know it is too late now... but I think the ICF has made the wrong decision about the events at future World and presumably Olympic Regattas.

As I read it, the programme will now be as follows: K1Men, 1km, K1Men, 500m; K1Men, 200m; K2Men, 1km; K2Men, 500m; K2Men, 200m; C1Men, 1km; C1Men, 500m; C1Men, 200m; C2Men, 1km; C2Men, 500m;; C2Men, 200m; K4Men, 1km; K4Men, 500m; K4Men, 200m; K1Women, 500m; K1Women, 200m; K2Women, 500m; K2Women, 200m; K4Women, 500m; K4Women, 200m.

Twenty-one events. Each event needs 4 heats, 2 repechages, 2 or 3 semifinals and 1 final.

That is a total of 210 races. In 1981, in the Canoe '81 regatta there were 127 races. Each race will to the spectators and the TV cameraman appear out of the mist and finish in exactly the

same place as the last. It will be terribly boring to anyone but those who know about racing and can recognise the various competitors.

My selection of events to test paddling ability, power, preparation, watermanship and also team cooperation would be to have 200m races which are going to be fast and fun, keep the 1km races which are the ultimate test of preparation, pace judgement and paddling ability, and introduce a new event from the cycling programme which would be good to watch, long enough to merit expert commentary and an excellent test of boat handling, paddling in other people's water, team cooperation and watermanship.

Namely a 3000m, 4 crew, team pursuit race. Six times round an oval 500m course, or possibly three times round an oval 1km course; two teams going clockwise, two teams going anti-clockwise, starting in single file. The winning team is the team

who get their third crew across the line before the third crews of the other teams. In a World Championship, supposing 32 entries, there would be eight heats, two semifinals, a final and a petit final to determine the bronze medal. That is 12 races each taking between 20 and 25 minutes from start to start.

Two more points, why shouldn't women paddle 1km and why should they not paddle C1 and C2?

I think that these three events would make a far more interesting and varied regatta. There remain two questions for consideration.

1. In which races would women compete with the single bladed paddle?

2. Which classes would contest the team pursuit races?

Both of these questions depend on how long you want the race to last.

**David R. Cook**



## Snippets

**Dear Focus:**

And on, And on, and on.....

In reply to the lifejackets for all lobby : as a 'flat'water paddler I'll wear a buoyancy aid when the rowers do, but I'd rather see them use rear view mirrors first !

**Trevor Melham,  
Surbiton  
PS I hate long  
letters**

*Do you or don't you?  
Personally speaking, sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. Can we please have a year or two's rest on the buoyancy aid debate ?*

## AT LAST

**Dear Focus:**

At Last an article that might be of interest to the ordinary member, (Canoeing with Wildlife) as all members can study the natural things as they travel. The 'Little Gem' series of nature books take very little room and settle questions there and then.

**Zippy Ashmore,  
Leicester**

## ODE

*I'm writing this ditty to say  
IT'S a pity That FOCUS,  
that fine leading light,  
(though IT'S articles cheer,  
and ITS not very dear)  
can't get ITS apostrophes  
right!*

**anon**

*Sory, knobiddies perfact,  
Edditer*

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# Paddlers gear

New equipment is reviewed and tested by paddlers for paddlers. The informed views are collected from a variety of canoeists but are subjective and not an official BCU recommendation of any kind, nor is any BCU approval implied.

## THE EUROKAYAKS PROBE

The Probe is a second generation Bubble, re-fitted and uprated to make it a very serious contender in the short boat market.

There are three sizes of seat, and two thigh brace and full-plate footrest, allowing for an extremely comfortable fit: something which can only aid performance. The footrest itself is 'ergonomically' designed to slope rearwards towards the seat in order to prevent shock-loading to the ankles in the event of a crash: something I have first hand experience of with more conventional full-plate designs. Another innovation is the bolt-on, or off, plastic nose-cone. Wear one out, and simply employ a socket set to fit a new one. However, the solid lump at the front of the boat does make it unwieldy and heavy to carry. The small compartment at the front can accommodate an air-bag, and this is highly recommended in case your boat solos a section you decided against.

The construction is of High Tec Polyethylene, affording a slippery surface, and a high degree of rigidity. I've had my Probe since June and it appears quite a tough and durable beastie: Eurokayaks believe in their product to the extent of giving it a 24 month guarantee. Standard kit includes a rear air-bag, though not of the heavy duty type, good end-grabs, tested to 2000kg, and a functional backrest allowing easy access to the rear compartment. If you're the type who carries an inflatable field hospital in your boat, you might have to re-assess your kit requirements.

Performance-wise, the short boat is something you either like or don't: grey areas of indecision seem not to exist. As a playboat and river runner, the style has legions of adherents. For agility and edge-only turns it is unparalleled, and I found it good fun on both river and sea surf. If you're new to the short boat design, re-assessment of your skills might be necessary, and also to your river running strategy. When you're trying to punch through a particularly ferocious eddy-line or stopper, if you don't commit yourself and PLF, you could come unstuck. I found myself developing a heightened awareness for holes too, and ballet dancing around them when others chose the linebacker head to head option. But if you find yourself in a hole or a known friendly stopper? I found the boat bouncy, but stable and responsive due to the high degree of relative buoyancy (230 litres over 225cm). The Probe needs only the slightest weak point to effect escape. Similarly, enders, both forwards and backwards are easy too. I have 'test driven' at Holme Pierrepont, Scotland and France. Originally, I thought the rear deck might prove high for rolling, but this hasn't been the case either.

In conclusion, the Probe is quite a specialised boat, reflective of a good deal of thought and innovation, and designed for a particular job. It does have limitations, but these are common to short boats, and not unique to the Probe. As a play boat, I think its great, but my skills have still to catch up with it. Similar on rivers if you adapt your paddling strategy accordingly. I'm a convert but accept the limitations of short designs per-se. **Going back to a larger boat will definitely require a mind stretch.**

**Two more pages of Paddler's Gear starting on page 48**



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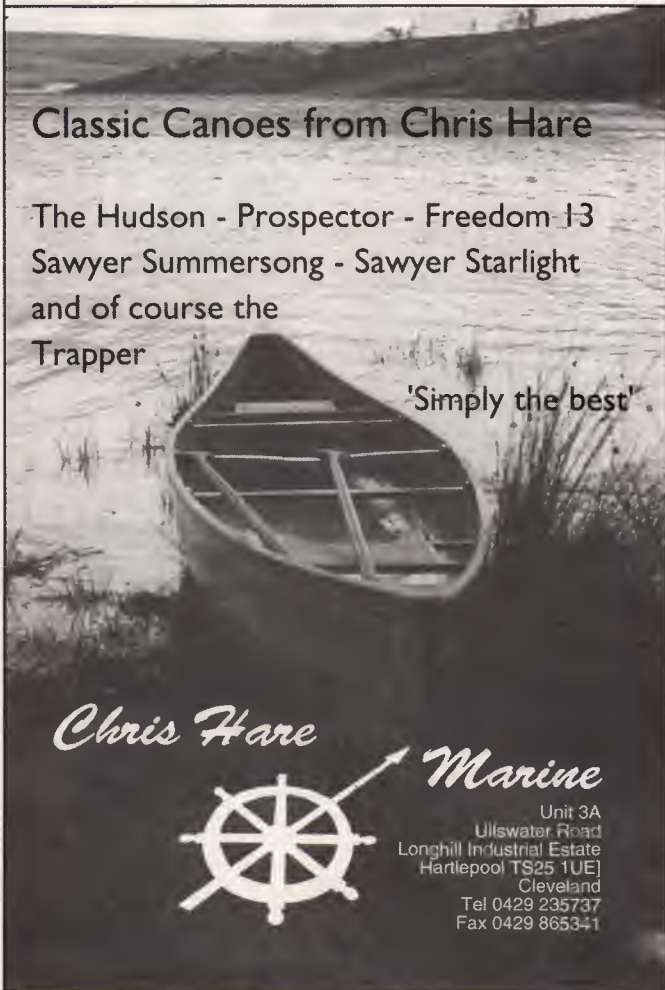


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# Competition *focus*

## RAF CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

### Mens K1

1. M Streeter-15:07
  2. N Blackman-15.15
  3. D Fogg-15.16
- 1st Vet:*
4. J Anderson-15.40
- Most Improved:*
5. G Baker-16.32
- Best Newcomer:*
18. D Bareham-18.08

### Ladies K1

1. S. Ockwell-Page-18.15
2. B. Stowell-19.07
3. H. Johnson-21.14

### C1

1. J Willacy-17.34
2. A Parry-18.22
3. A Davey-19.00

### K1 Plastic

1. T Leckie-19.53
2. M Jones-20.03
3. J Morning-20.27

## Marathon

### NEWBURY CANOE CLUB 25th Waterside Series 1993

In February and March 1993 Newbury Canoe club will be running the 25th Waterside Series.

The series comprises of 4 marathon canoe races held at fortnightly intervals over increasing distances. The 1992 series attracted an entry of over 1250 paddlers over the 4 weekends and we are hoping that next year's series proves as popular.

The 4 races are an ideal buildup to the famous Devides to Westminster race, held over the Easter weekend.

Newbury Canoe club medals are awarded after each race, but those paddlers who have completed all 4 races of the series also qualify for the highly prestigious end of series trophies and shields.

Details of the race dates and distances are as follows:

**Race A:** Sunday 14th February Great Bedwyn to Newbury 13.5 miles.

**Race B:** Sunday 28th February Newbury Circuit 17.5 miles.

**Race C:** Sunday 14th March Pewsey to Newbury 23 miles.

**Race D:** Sunday 28th March Devides to Newbury 34 miles.

If you would like further details and an entry form please write enclosing a stamped addressed envelope to:

Lyn McLaren, Hillside House, Hungerford Hill, Lambourn, Berks, RG16 7NN

## WILD WATER RACING RAF NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The River Nith was running at a good height for this years RAF Wild Water Racing Championships; the 15th annual to be held at this venue. The Championships attracted over 90 paddlers from various RAF stations and the competition was undoubtedly the keenest ever. The success of the RAF Wild Water Racing Team at National level in recent years has greatly encouraged the growth of the sport at grass roots level within the RAF and there are certainly few British river races with more

competitors than this event. Perhaps the key to the success is the encouragement and development of paddlers up through the 'plastic class' and the opportunity to try a Wild Water Racer at regular coaching courses.

In the event itself, Martin Streeter managed to make it 2 years in a row by beating Neil Blackman, by 8 seconds in the Mens K1. An on form Dave Fogg, going faster than ever after becoming a father for the first time in September, finished 1 second

down on Neil in 3rd place. These three paddlers, assisted by John Anderson completed a very successful season for the RAF when they won the Wild Water Racing National Team Championships for the first time, narrowly beating a strong Chester Team. John Willacy, once again, won the C1 event at the RAF Championships and finished the season as the C1 National Champion. This was John's first full season in Wild Water Racing, although he has competed for the RAF for several years at the Inter-Services. Winning the National Championship was an outstanding result for John who is an accomplished slalom paddler and we wish him all the best for the World Championships in Italy next summer. Seeing John's success this year makes one wonder just how much natural talent for Wild Water Racing there is within other canoeing disciplines!

The next event on the service canoeing calendar is the Inter-Service Wild Water Racing Championships when the RAF Team will be aiming for a 12th consecutive victory at this level.

John Anderson 



RAF NATIONAL CHAMPIONS 1992  
Left to Right: John Dave, John Neil, Martin Anderson, Fogg Willacy, Blackman Streeter.

## Clough Brothers do the double!

Some people hold the view that mixing slalom and downriver racing is not good; others say one can complement the other. The Clough brothers of Normanton on Soar, Loughborough, have managed to combine both disciplines very successfully. Last year they represented Great Britain in the Canadian Doubles class in slalom at the Olympic games in Barcelona, finishing a creditable 12th. They also won the British Slalom Championships and then went on to win the British Wild Water Racing Championships title, regaining the title they won in 1990-91. This is possible a unique achievement in the sport of canoeing.

They started paddling C2 slalom in 1985. River Racing came later, in 1987, after Iain had returned from the World Championships in France, having competed with another partner. Apart from writing off the front of one C2 on the Pot Rock, Town Falls, Llangollen, they managed to transfer to the discipline successfully. Since the spring of 1990 they have been unde-

feated in Wild Water Racing, in Britain.

After training solely for the Olympics Andy and Iain are hoping to compete in the forthcoming Mezzana World Championships in both disciplines.

The ability they have to paddle a river boat on the rough is generally better than the other crews around at the moment. This they put down to being able to control the boat precisely - a skill gained from slalom. A lack of good British rivers and training freedom is possibly all that stops them racing on a level par with the very best in the World.

The fitness required to race in Wild Water Racing transfers to slalom well. It enables high intensity training to be performed for longer, with no drop-off in times. When they are paddling C2 Andy and Iain have a smooth stroke coupled with excellent timing - a skill gained from Wild Water Racing.

What of the future? This years World Championships in Mezzana, Italy are an obvious target. A good result in either event here might make people sit up and take note of C2 paddling

a bit more. This could only be good with the Worlds coming to Britain in 1995. Confirmation that slalom will be in the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996 is possible a challenge they will not be able to pass up - other things in life might just have to be put aside for a few more years yet!

Numerous people have helped the brothers get to the position they are currently in. They would like to thank their parents, ICI for allowing Iain time off to train for the Olympics, and their sponsors Lowe Alpine Rucksacks and Clothing (Europa Sport), Animal Wild Accessories, P&H for their boats and Delapre Blades.



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The kayak's traditional profile provides the perfect balance with the state of the art materials and features incorporated into its design.

For full details and prices of the Sirius sea kayak including a copy of the "Sirius design story" please contact us at the address shown below.

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Width 52cm (20.5in)



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# top tips

and handy hints

## THE NEBULOUS TOPIC OF GRADING RIVERS

**T**he topic of grading rivers has been the subject of much debate over the years. A number of alternatives have been put forward, most notable Terry Storry's dual grading system. Despite the introduction of these new systems the standard International Grading System still predominates. The reason for the continued predominance of this system could be because whitewater paddling is very much a multi country activity. As a result of which other forms of grading have not received recognition in these other countries.

Before comparing the different systems the question of why do we need a system at all needs to be asked. There are a number of reasons. The most obvious is that it gives an indication of the difficulty of the section of river to be attempted, though it has been argued that this is the very reason why some systems fail. The idea behind river guides is that they give the paddler a feel for the river, this enables them to establish a mental picture of what the river is going to be like. Another reason, which is more of a by product than an inten-

tion, is that the grade of river is used by a paddler to assess their progress. Quite often this is used in comparison with other paddlers e.g "I paddle grade IV. What do you paddle?" How true an assessment of paddling ability this can actually give is debateable. Surviving a grade V rapid does not a grade V paddler make. This macho competitiveness to paddle as high a grade as possible demonstrates that an important aspect of paddling is missing. That certain factor which transcends all canoeing disciplines is fun. While paddling can give an adrenalin kick, a boost for the ego and provide a competitive environment this is not unique to paddling but can be found in many other activities e.g power boat racing, parachuting and climbing. What is unique to paddling is the thrill of being on the water in a craft which has to be propelled by you. A lot of people are missing this.

But that really is another subject for another paper.

What follows now is a brief synopsis of the different types of grading systems with some comment as to their practicality and suitability.

### The International Grading System

There are six grades. One being the easiest and six being the hardest. These are given the descriptions not difficult, moderately difficult, difficult, very difficult, extremely difficult and limit of practicability. There are other descriptions which are used for the route and obstacles e.g heavy continuous rapids, inspection mostly necessary, boulders obstructing stream. Each grade has its own set of descriptions of a similar nature.

#### Benefits

This system is widely used throughout the world. Most guide books use this system. It is numerically simple in its application.

#### Criticisms

While the system describes obstacles en route it fails to take into account the volume of the water. This can cause problems for those used to North Wales grade IV when they paddle an Austrian grade IV. As such its use on an international scale is somewhat limited. It is because of this that regional variations will occur. Another point to bear in mind is the difference that fluctuations in the water level make. Grades given to river sections quite often fail to take this into account.

### Dual Grading System

This system was developed by Terry Storry about seven years ago. It differs from the International system in its division of technical difficulty from commitment. Numerical grades indicate the technical difficulty of the canoeing while alphabetical grades indicate the degree of commitment. Storry describes it in a more useful way he says that the number indicates what the river is like to paddle while the latter suggests what it would be like to swim. He basically uses the International system and adds his levels of commitment to them. The levels of commitment roughly correspond to appropriate grades i.e IIIc and Vc. However there can be variations for example a river may be grade IV but have a commitment grade of e. It would also be possible to get lower commitment levels e.g IVc.

#### Benefits

This system is particularly useful for the more technical rivers i.e those of North Wales from whence this system originated. It serves to give the paddler more of a feeling for the river.

#### Criticisms

Once again this system fails to make any allowances for the bigger volume of foreign paddling. It is really specific to a certain type of paddling, that of rivers which are steep, technical and shallow.

### The Deseret Scale

This is a system mainly designed with rafters in mind. It originated from the Mid-West of the United States, more specifically for the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. It is on a scale of 1 – 10 (from small to big). It is basically an indication of the size of the waves that will be encountered and the difficulty that rafts would have running that rapid.

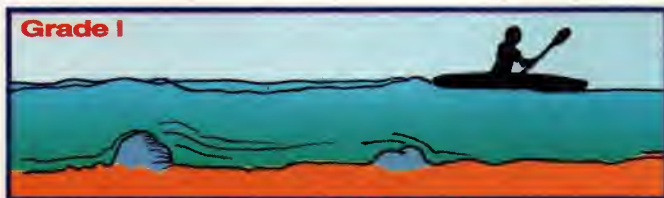
#### Benefits

It is very useful for big water rafting. It is also of use to the paddler in that it can give a feel or indication of what the rapid is like, especially if used in conjunction with the International grading system.

#### Criticisms

This is even more of a specific grading system than the previous one. It has limited use on any rivers other than those big volume rivers in the US Mid-West. The information given with the grade does little to indicate its technical severity.

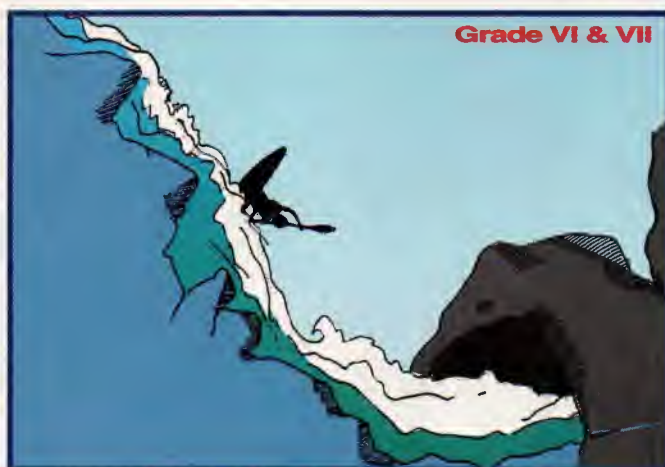




## Dr D's Comparitive Liquid Grading System An alternative view of the International River Grading System.

- I. **Pure Water:** Perhaps a nice mineral water with the odd bubble here & there. Harmless and pleasant.
- II. **Shandy :** A little more froth, more taste, refreshing and predictable.
- III. **Beer:** Stronger flavour, enjoyable. Harmless in moderation. This is bouncier stuff and easy enough to cope with. For some it may be an acquired taste.
- IV. **Real Ale or Stout.** Heady with plenty of body. Large continuous doses can cause problems with balance. Macho appearance but appeals to all those well practised in I-III, regardless of sex, age or creed. Not recommended as first taste.
- V. **Spirits with mixers :** whisky with ginger for example. Strong stuff. Look out for unexpected gravity storms. Over indulgence has nasty after effects.
- VI. **Neat Spirit.** A small nip now and then for medicinal purposes will probably do little harm. Be prepared for serious operator failure and 'the mother of all hangovers' for a relatively small dose. Fatal doses are an ever present possibility.
- VII. Who in their right mind would touch this stuff ?

Kevin Danforth



## Alpine Raft Company Grading System

This system once again uses the International grades as its basis. However, it serves to give more information by indicating whether the river is technical, steep, big volume or all three. In addition to this it also states whether it is continuous in any of the above forms. The symbols used are simple; T for Technical, S for Steep, B for Big Volume and C for Continuous. It would be possible to have a river with all four symbols e.g the Upper Oetz IV(BTSC).

### Benefits

This system is of use to both the British and Continental paddler. It is relatively easy to use and gives the paddler a lot of information about the feel of the river without having to read lots. There are fewer grades to remember when compared to the Dual grading system.

### Criticisms

Are there any big volume rivers in the British Isles? When compared to the river of Austria one could say no. However anyone who has seen the Lagan dam blowing on five pipes will know that the Upper Spean can provide big water sport. The problem with this system as with the others is that it does not take into account varying river levels.

## The Yes or No System

Phil Blain was an advocate of this system. It is delightfully simple; the paddler looks at the rapid and decides whether or not they will get to the bottom in a state with which they are happy. If they are happy with the rapid then the answer is yes they will paddle it, if not the no they do not paddle it.

### Benefits

It is the simplest of all systems and allows for you to make a decision without the encumbrance of anyone else's biased judgements. If used properly it also takes out the macho element associated with the other systems. It becomes a very personal grading system.

### Criticisms

The biggest problem with this system is that it assumes that the paddler is capable of making the decision as to whether or not they can paddle the rapid. While this may be the case with experienced paddlers it is often not the case with those new to the sport. Another problem with this system is that it is orientated more towards particular rapids than sections of river. This could cause problems if you paddled a section of river and came to a rapid which you decide no but find that you are committed and cannot get out.

## Conclusions

Many people claim that by grading a river you are taking away the pioneering spirit of discovery. This is quite true. There is nothing more exhilarating than paddling a section of river which you know nothing about. For all you know you could be the first one to paddle it. However this attitude towards paddling does require a certain amount of experience and confidence in your ability.

It is eddy to eddy guidebooks, as found on some continental rivers, which arguably go too far. Before paddling a river the average paddler tries to find out the minimum information needed for them to make a decision as to whether they are capable or not ( a form of the Yes or No system.) The above systems give varying amounts of different information which would help the paddler. What would seem sensible would be to amalgamate the different systems, maybe with the exception of the Deseret Scale, thereby maximising the information available.

With the International system as the basis the ARC system could be easily combined with the Dual Grade System. For example a river could be graded IV(TCe). Add to this the Yes or No system for particular rapids and we have a grading system which allows the paddler to make their own decisions both before and during the trip whether it be in the British Isles or abroad.

Of course the big problem with any grading system is that it is of no use to anyone if it is not widely used le worldwide, now there's the rub!

Dave Grant



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# ZAMBEZI

## White Water



### BCU RAFT

On February 13, 1993 at its first official AGM the white water rafting committee will become the 14th specialist committee of the British Canoe Union. After a year of meetings and discussions and a seemingly low profile existence we now have our own clear constitution and an exciting and extensive action plan for 1993. Our Central aim is to address the overall development of our sport for the benefit of all concerned – dealing with issues of safety, access and conservation. More specifically our 93 agenda requires us to concentrate on a Nationally recognised raft guides award, develop participation and establish a round of official National Competitions

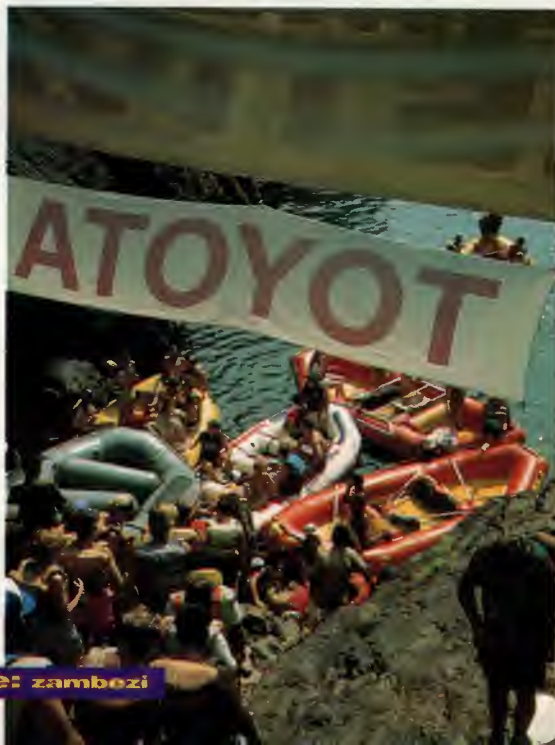
**O**ur “British Lions” team had assembled in Victoria Falls to take part in the spectacular Zambezi White Water Festival, set amidst a stunning array of wildlife and breath taking river scenery. At first wide, flat and meandering the Zambezi River is abruptly interrupted by one of the world greatest natural wonders, Victoria Falls, known to the locals as “musi oa tunya”, the smoke that thunders. Below the falls the river runs tumbling and turbulent through gorges created over the millennia by its own pent up forces.

Our programme for the week provided us with the opportunity to experience the Zambezi in all its glory with a sprint race above Victoria Falls punctuated by grade 2/3 rapids, hippo’s and crocodiles marshalled by professional hunters. Below the falls an “open” kayak race down through the wild gorge provides adrenaline pumping action on high volume grade 5 rapids. The main event of the week, a raft race on this same stretch of water providing a team challenge unequalled anywhere in the world of white water rafting...

### MORNING GLORY

“Three – Two – One – Go!” A 300 yd sprint leads to our first glimpse of Morning Glory, rapid No 4 on the spectacular Zambezi River. Our first team run had just begun and the haze of uncertainty surrounding our journey down the ‘wildest white water in the world’ was about to be lifted and the experience certainly wasn’t going to be calming...

The first raft to enter the head of Morning Glory would have the cleanest run. Eight rafts all vying for that privilege equalled intense concentration and action. Amidst screams and cheering from the bank and the cries from the crews, we found ourselves in that most coveted of positions. Mouths dry and muscles pumping, we were steaming towards the rapid. Paddling hard and listening intently for the calls of the guide we knew we had to make a tight left turn. “LEFT TURN, LEFT TURN, TOO SLOW, PADDLE HARD, PADDLE HARD!” Digging deep we continue. “BIG HOLD ON”...” Bodies drop fast and hit the bottom of the raft with hands fumbling for the safety line. The raft hits the huge hole hard and we are airborne, returning to the river upside down and swimming. Perhaps those sceptical of our chances were right...





**DOWN TIME WITH NYAMI, NYAMI**

The boiling and turbulent waves quickly engulf us as outstretched arms grasp for the raft. Those fortunate enough to have short swims quickly regain control of the raft – long swims slow the process down. Stuff the “All for one and one for all” ethos, its everyone for themselves at this point! Whilst some are bale to keep a strained grip on the raft, for others the fumbling was in vain and the river had them in its grip and I found myself doing some serious ‘down time’. Turbulent and disorienting, this is unlike any other swim – a sinking feeling, (literally), with ears buzzing and mind working overtime. The light, aerated water gives way to darker, greener hues and thoughts turn to the myth of Nyami Nyami, the local rivergod who resides at the bottom of the Zambezi – am I in for a visit? You tell yourself to keep calm, relax and go with the flow. The water around begins to lighten and a quiet, almost serene feeling is disturbed by a violent need for air. Stretching upwards all attempts to break the surface seem in vain and relief from the torment distance. When at last rejected by the river, how good it is to breathe again. Then sudden thoughts of where’s the raft, where’s my paddle, where’s the rest of the team, are we still in front? Trying to focus on these questions is not easy, but the raft is located and the rest of the team are with it.

With our initial nerves forgotten and a huge surge of adrenaline providing us with much needed physical and mental stimulus, we are quickly underway and running a close second. Our hearts were in our mouths as we continued to chase for the lead and rapid No 5, ‘Stairway to Heaven’ the biggest rapid on the river.

**OBLIVION**

As enormous waves led us down the stairway, we managed to maintain our line and stay on the raft speeding through to the front. There seems no stopping us now, through Devils Toilet Bowl, Gullivers Travels, Commercial Suicide, Gnashing Jaws of Death, Creamy



**Above left (main pic):**  
The smoke that thunders  
**Above left and above:**  
Rafting the Zambezi  
**Far right:**  
The start line  
**Below:**  
Brit boys soak up the sun



to determine National Team status for the growing number of International events taking place. '93 will see our committee raise its profile to one which exemplifies the energetic, exciting sport of white water rafting. We hope you will want to know more about rafting and join us on the river or maybe even put together a team to take part in one the competitions. For further details contact: Paul Reed, 39 Dale Road, Spondon, Derby DE2 7DG 0332 668696

## WHINGEING POMS LINE UP

The 'Whingeing Poms' team consisted of Mike Devlin, Graham Wardle, Keith Hampton, Martin Boggan, Peter Gordon and Chris Burrows, who would all like to express their sincere thanks to their sponsors, Tempo Travel, British Airways and Eurocraft. We would also like to thank Liz and Addy Read of Westwood Game Lodge for accommodating all our gear and comings and goings while in Victoria Falls. Should anyone be interested in knowing more about the event or seeing video footage of the river and the race then please feel free to call in at Current Trends, Nottingham.

White Buttocks. WE held our position as we approached 'OBLIVION' the infamous rapid No 18 responsible for more raft flips than possibly any other rapid in the world. Far from ending it all in Oblivion we steamed on towards the 'Last Straw' and the finish. Two hours five minutes and six seconds after starting we crossed the finish line in the fastest heat time of the event heading straight for the final amidst a growing tide of controversy.

### PROTESTS

Before our raft was off the water the protests had started about our raft. Built for us by Eurocraft, it was designed to win this toughest of raft races and, despite the approval of the race organisers, our right to use the raft was being challenged by teams who had chosen the option of using a raft provided by the organisers. Our initial attempts to reconcile the situation resulted in our being branded 'whingeing poms' by the other competitors. As the only international team outside of Southern Africa, for us, this was a clear indication that local honour outweighed the 'International' status the organisers were seeking for the event.

Despite the protests, we continued to enjoy ourselves on this most amazing river. Paddling in the gorge is everything and more than you expect, equal in every way to the reputation the river has gained over the years as one of the worlds greatest white water runs, whilst the river upstream of the falls arguably offers the best of the Zambezi – unspoilt, scenic, remote, and abundant in wildlife.

Taking part in the other events allowed us to contemplate our position in respect of the raft race – We had proven ourselves and our raft with an impressive win in our heat, despite having to remove our centre thwart and the tie down footstraps. The 'whingeing' wasn't about to stop, so in anticipation of this and with the full backing of our sponsors (for they stood to lose advertising potential) we approached the organisers

and offered to race the final in a different raft, one supplied by them on the proviso that they allowed a women's team to use our raft in the final. This we felt was more in the 'International spirit' of the event. Our compromise accepted we set about preparing ourselves for the final. With no time to practice in a raft with different outfittings we aimed to just give it our best shot.

### THE FINAL

The final proved to be as exciting an event as the heat with lots of hard graft and nail biting tactics. At the end of the day, the outcome of a race such as this is determined as much by good fortune as it is by skill and fitness. Even the best prepared teams cannot assume that they will not get flipped in the monster rapids that they will encounter on the way. For our part we survived Morning Glory steaming through from the back of the pack to second place to put the 'favourites' under extreme pressure. Before we reached rapid No 5 'Stairway to Heaven', we were in front and things were going great. Unfortunately in rapid 7, 'Gullivers Travels', the longest and most technical rapid on the river, a moments lost concentration put us on the wrong line to drop over a huge pour over. We remained upright, but our guide was thrown out by the force of the 'hit' and took a long and very deep swim. Reconciling him with the raft was a long and difficult task and put us way back in the race. However we were determined not to give in and whilst our chances of winning had diminished, there was still opportunity to influence the outcome.

We finished the race in fifth place, but this did not detract from our enjoyment of the race itself. We all knew that the outcome could have been different had we used our own raft but to coin a phrase "its the taking part, not the winning that counts."

*There seems no stopping us now, through Devils Toilet Bowl, Gullivers Travels, Commercial Suicide, Gnashing Jaws of Death, Creamy White Buttocks. WE held our position as we approached 'OBLIVION'...*

Mike Devlin



Keita Hampton in the kayak race.



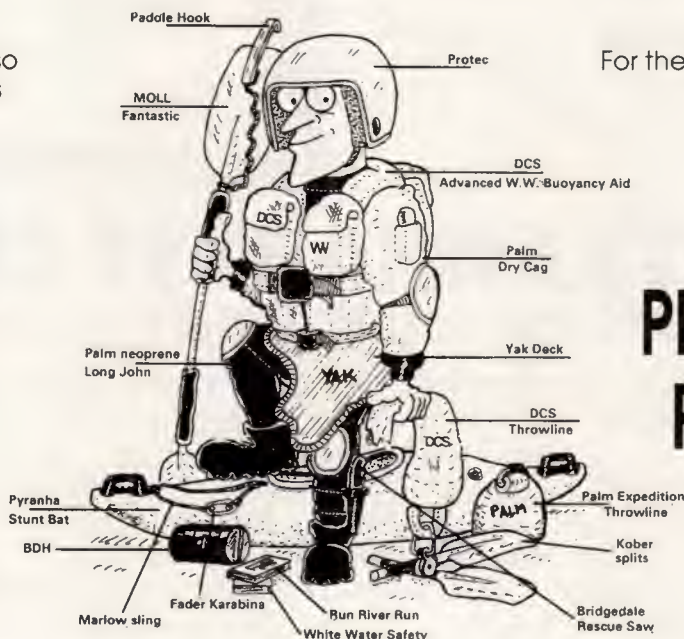
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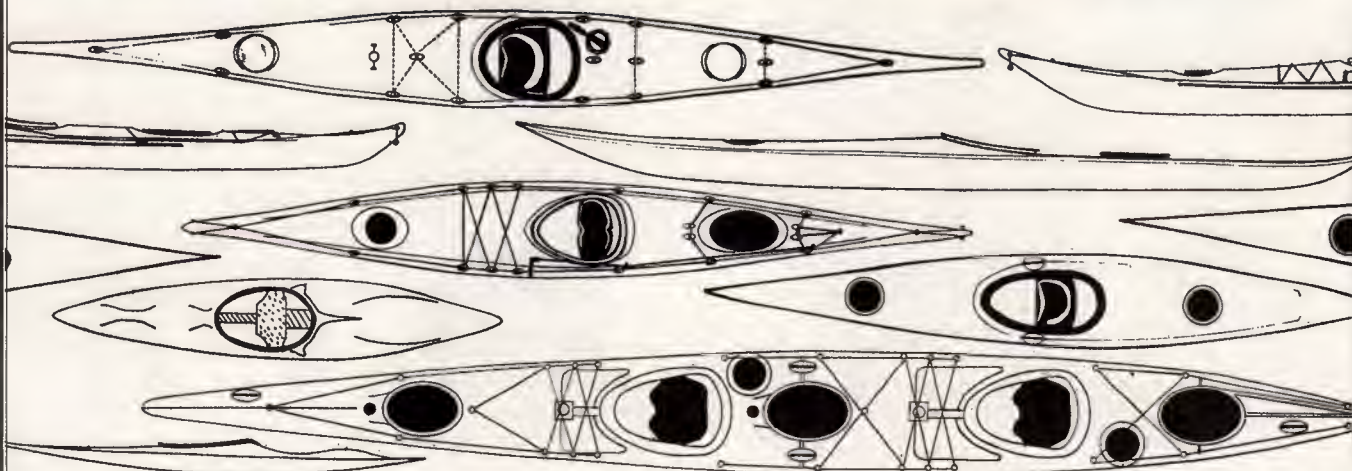
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# Regional round up

## eastern

The November AGM was well attended. For committee representatives see ER Newsletter. We still have a need for representatives for Sea and Touring. The latter being critical if we are to serve the growing needs of the recreational paddler – a volunteer willing to promote tours in the Region please contact the committee.

The 1993 Regional Yearbook will be available at the Canoe Exhibition. Club secretaries please arrange for your free copy to be collected from the Regions stand. Other copies can be purchased for £1 at the Exhibition or through the committee.

Events in the Region: Duckmill Div 4/5 Slalom 7/8 March, Great Ouse Marathon 21 March, Batchworth Weir Div 4/5 Slalom 27/28 March.

Judith Coffin

## east midlands

You have a new regional committee; your chairman is Mrs Ann Hart and for further details of your committee and a copy of the first newsletter of 1993 please send a stamped addressed envelope to Pearl Mulholland, 23 Riddings, Allestree, Derby. We wish Ann success in 1993. We would like to thank Reg and Janet Robinson the retiring Chairman and Treasurer for their untiring work within the East Midlands, and we wish them well in their new region. We are continuing with the telephone tours in 1993 – ring 0602 850930 for details. If you have an event which you wish to publicise please send details to the address above for inclusion in the newsletter.

Pearl Mulholland

## london and south east

November's Regional AGM was well attended despite the severe storms forecast for the evening. The new Committee is now busy planning for 1993. If you or your club are thinking of running an event please let your regional officers know and they will try and give you support and publicity.

A Regional Development plan is currently being prepared. If you wish to make any suggestions, please send them to the secretary.

The Regional Whitewater Training weekend at Holme Pierrepont will be held on 14/15 August 1993. For details contact Paul Newman at Maidstone Canoe Club.

BCU members will have free use of the River Wey next year thanks to negotiations by the BCU and Wey Kayak Club.

Chris Childs

## northern

All BCU members in the region should have received a copy of Northern Paddler, the regional newsletter, by now. It will clarify that BCU members are welcome to regional executive meetings, the first of which is on 25 March at Hemlington Lake, Middlesborough at 7.30pm. There will be three other executives this year, which will be at different venues around the region. There is a full programme this year, including the regional slalom championships in July plus the National Transplant Games at Newcastle on 24 July, a celebration for the 900th anniversary of Durham Cathedral, and the first Tyne Descent on the first week-end in November. Send SAE to Dave Pope for your copy of the regional calendar.

Mary Armstrong

## north west

Gary Charlton has taken over as Chairman of NW Region; good luck to him for a fruitful term. Best wishes and thanks go to retiring chairman Chris Bolton who has dedicated much time and effort over recent years. Gary's address is Flat 7, 11-15 Portland Crescent, Longsight, Manchester M13 0BU. He will be pleased to hear anybody's views and ideas. 1993 will see good deeds from the development plan; so let's make it a year when all those people who "Always fancied a go at canoeing" will do so, and when all those people who "Always fancied joining a canoe club but never know how" will find out. Best wishes to all paddlers and their families for 1993.

Mike Weaver

## southern

At the AGM on 17 November the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (Charles Hicks and Ian Davey) were re-elected.

Those new in post are Secretary Tamsin Phipps (0734 668140), Regional Access Officer Steve Finch (0628 483252) and Development and Conservation Officer Jerry Rogers (0344 775946). Many thanks to the retiring members for their work in 1992 and previous years.

Details of the new Committee, the January '93 series of Regional Training Races and the Regional Training Races and the Regional Programme of Touring and Recreational Events have been circulated to clubs in Regional Newsletter 17 (December '92).

Please support this Programme – the events are not only fun in themselves, they also raise money for coaching and access.

Our 1993 Directory is due out (price £1) in February at the Exhibition.

Charles Hicks

## south west

At the AGM Terry Cripps, Thamesway CC, was elected Chairman with Nick Robinson, Cheltenham CC, Treasurer. Terry becomes our representative to Council and can be contacted at 9 Grindal Drive, Grange Park, Swindon.

The Regional Development Plan, prepared with the Sports Council was released at the AGM. Affiliated Clubs etc should have received their copy. Anyone else wanting a copy should contact the Secretary.

The Region has a very full programme of events both competitive and recreational listed in the Year Book, but we badly need more non-ranking low key starter type events. Dates for diaries: 21 March – Marathon Racing on the Somerset Levels from Langport, Exeter CC. 28 August – Sea Marathon around Mounts Bay, Cornwall, Penzance CC.

Dennis Walls

## west midlands

Have you seen the West Midlands newsletter? If not ask your club secretary or look on your notice board. To receive copies of this newsletter send four SAEs to Mike Nicholls, 25 Dunbar Grove, Great Barr, Birmingham, B43 7PT. 1993 Year Book from the same address £1 post free. West Midlands Sea/Surf weekend at Anglesey Sea and Surf centre on 10/11 July, accommodation available (B&B, S/C, Caravan, Camping), book early. Details from L Mathews, 63 Highfield Road, Dudley, West Midlands.

Forthcoming tours – Feb 6/13 or 27 Welsh White Water: March 20/21 Dove Tour: March 27 Teme Toddle: April 24/25 Sea Tour: A few places remain on the West Midlands committee, contact Mike Nicholls for details on 021 360 2136.

Rosemary Preece

## yorkshire & humberside

After 5 years hard work, David Gent has stood down as Chairman of the Region and handed over to Mike Twiggs. David stays on the Committee as co-Vice Chairman with Norman Taylor, concentrating on recreational paddling and polo, whilst Norman is in charge of publicity and communication. Although Mike Twiggs will remain active with access, there is now a committee vacancy for someone to front the Access Committee. The Regional Information Line number has been changed, and the new number to ring for information on paddling in the Region is 0426 978654. If anyone has an event they would like to publicise on the line, they should get in touch with me 0422 882908.

Marianne Spender

## Chair's Chat

Welcome to a new year's canoeing. The regions are all trying to develop new opportunities for both participation and access around the country. No matter what your particular interest is I hope you will find the answer close to home. If your region isn't satisfying your needs perhaps you will volunteer to help. Many of the regional volunteers will be at Ponds Forge, Sheffield on 20/21 February eager to meet you and discuss opportunities. Join them up on the balcony above the entrance foyer.

Ron Hodgson





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## ACTION ON ACCESS

### ACCESS OFFICERS AT WORK

At the end of each year Access Officers produce reports on their work. There are successes and there are difficulties, but always there are hours of dedicated work behind the scenes often unseen by the membership at large. The Access Committee reviewed these reports at their recent meeting on 21 November, so here are a few examples of what has been going on.

### Eastern Region

In the Eastern Region Roger Hardman has been concentrating on setting the background and gaining influence in the right places. He sits on the Water Recreation Committee of the Eastern Sports Council and was a main speaker at their "Countryside for Sport" conference. He was able to educate his audience to what canoeing needs, why access is a problem and the importance of access agreements. "Relationships are good", says Roger "but, in practice, the Sports Council has so far proved unable to persuade angling clubs towards making access agreements; this applies especially to the Great Ouse above Bedford. As a member of NRA Anglian Regional Rivers Advisory Committee he is building a strong relationship with NRA Officers. "Last year's NRA court case", reports Roger "which appeared to open the backwaters of the Great Ouse system to canoeing has, in general, been accepted by angling clubs, with Offord being the one trouble spot".

### East Midlands

Simon Dawson in the East Midlands Region reports that he is reviewing the policy for appointing Local Access Officers based on rivers, because most of the canoeing in his region takes place on proven navigations or on long established canoeing waters. The task of his LAOs is in co-ordinating shared use with a multitude of other users, rather than arranging access through an access agreement. This involves attending a multiplicity of liaison and user committees set up by statutory authorities, which are geographically rather than river based.

### Cumbria

In Cumbria Mike Mills is back in full swing following moving house and changing his job. He has a full team of 13 LAOs, all of whom are active paddlers. A new agreement for a very short stretch of the River Kent brings the total to six, upon which his team is building and strengthening their relationships and reputation with other riparian interests. On the down side the recent appearance of some independent guide books, which do not make the access situation clear enough, have "blown the lid off" on a few rivers, notably the

Lune, which is currently closed. His article in Canoe Focus in April 1992 "Fish, Falcons, Crags - Access and the Moving Goalposts" has been well received by the NRA, but says Mike: "our worst fears over the spawning fish issue being used against canoeing have now been confirmed".

### Northumbria

The new Regional Access Officer for Northumbria, Simon Banbury, has three vacancies in his team of LAOs. On his patch there are access agreements covering 107 miles of river. The River Coquet is a problem with one landowner threatening force against canoeists. The landowner on the Blyth considers the river unsuitable for canoeing and has withheld permission accordingly. There have been 15-20 cases of harassment or assault on the River Wear, but a meeting is being set up. Simon has ambitious plans for 1993 including seeking more agreements, promoting use of the tidal stretches of the Tyne and Wear, compiling access guides and setting up an "Access Roadshow" to take to clubs and youth groups.

### Wessex

John Cockram, Regional Access Officer for Wessex, also has a full team of LAOs following recent additions. He is working on a South West Regional Guide with Adam Box, RAO for Devon and Cornwall. He also worked with Adam to mount an Access Stand at the Pewsey Canoe Exhibition in May 1992. In 1993 he plans to enlarge his team of LAOs to cover canals, gravel pits and clay pits in the area; this will provide a valuable service to newcomers to canoeing who want to start on easy water.

### West Midlands

The River Teme has proved to be the main area for action by Chris Charters and the Teme LAO in the West Midlands. This is due to the impossibility of setting up an access agreement for the section through the Downton Castle estate above Ludlow. It is now a shooting estate and they do not want to accidentally shoot canoeists; unfortunately permission is not forthcoming for Sundays when shooting does not take place. A separate problem is over use of the section through Ludlow, caused mainly by canoeists paddling the one and a half miles from Castle Weir repeatedly on the same day. Fortunately Chris says: "apart from the Teme his region has had no other problems of which he is aware". He has had four get-togethers this year with his LAOs over a pint, which he finds a good way to communicate.

*Space does not permit mentions for all access officers, but it is hoped to cover the missing territories in future issues of Canoe Focus.*

### BCU LICENCE INCLUDES THE RIVER WEY

As from 1 January 1993 BCU members displaying their identification stickers on their canoes and carrying their membership cards can paddle the Wey and Godalming Navigation in Surrey without obtaining a licence from the National Trust. The scheme also covers club owned canoes for which stickers have been purchased. All paddlers must adhere to the National Trust Bye-Laws, copies of which can be obtained from the Trust or the BCU Office.

### LOBBY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

If you want more advice on contacting your MP please speak to your Regional Access Officer or come along to the Access Stand at the International Canoe Exhibition at Ponds Forge, Sheffield, on 20/21 February. The aim is to make MPs aware of our access problems so that when legislation is proposed they will be well educated and hopefully supportive. As important as contacting your MP is to report the outcome to your Regional Access Officer, including copies of any correspondence. In this way we can make the best use of the efforts of members and will be able to gauge how important access really is to them. Further publicity for our Access Campaign is to be achieved by a series of access rallies on undisputed waters during 1993. Watch Canoe Focus for details.

### 100 PADDLES IN ENGLAND

This new BCU guide, aimed at the beginner and the independent paddler, will be ready for the Canoe Exhibition. Get your copy at Ponds Forge on 20/21 February. This is the culmination of much hard work by Colin Kempson and his team, ably supported by the Regional Touring Officers.

### NRA ANGLIAN NAVIGATIONS - NEW CHARGES

The NRA have reviewed their navigation charges and the new scale comes into operation on 1 April 1993. For many years cruisers have borne the cost of increases in charges, but now the NRA have decided that they must introduce annual charges for canoes, roughly in line with other navigations. There is to be a one off £2 registration fee plus an annual licence fee of £10 (discount for clubs).

BCU representatives had a meeting with the NRA in December to try to bring these waterways within the BCU Licence scheme. Unfortunately at this time our figures are a long way apart. We have agreed to meet again later in 1993 to try to bring about a block cover for BCU members from April 1994. However we need to know from you if you use these waters after 1 April 1993. Please fill in the slip below or write to the NDO at the BCU office to give us the hard facts we need to pursue the negotiations. Please send the slip in straight away if you know the answer now; alternatively please return it before the end of August 1993.

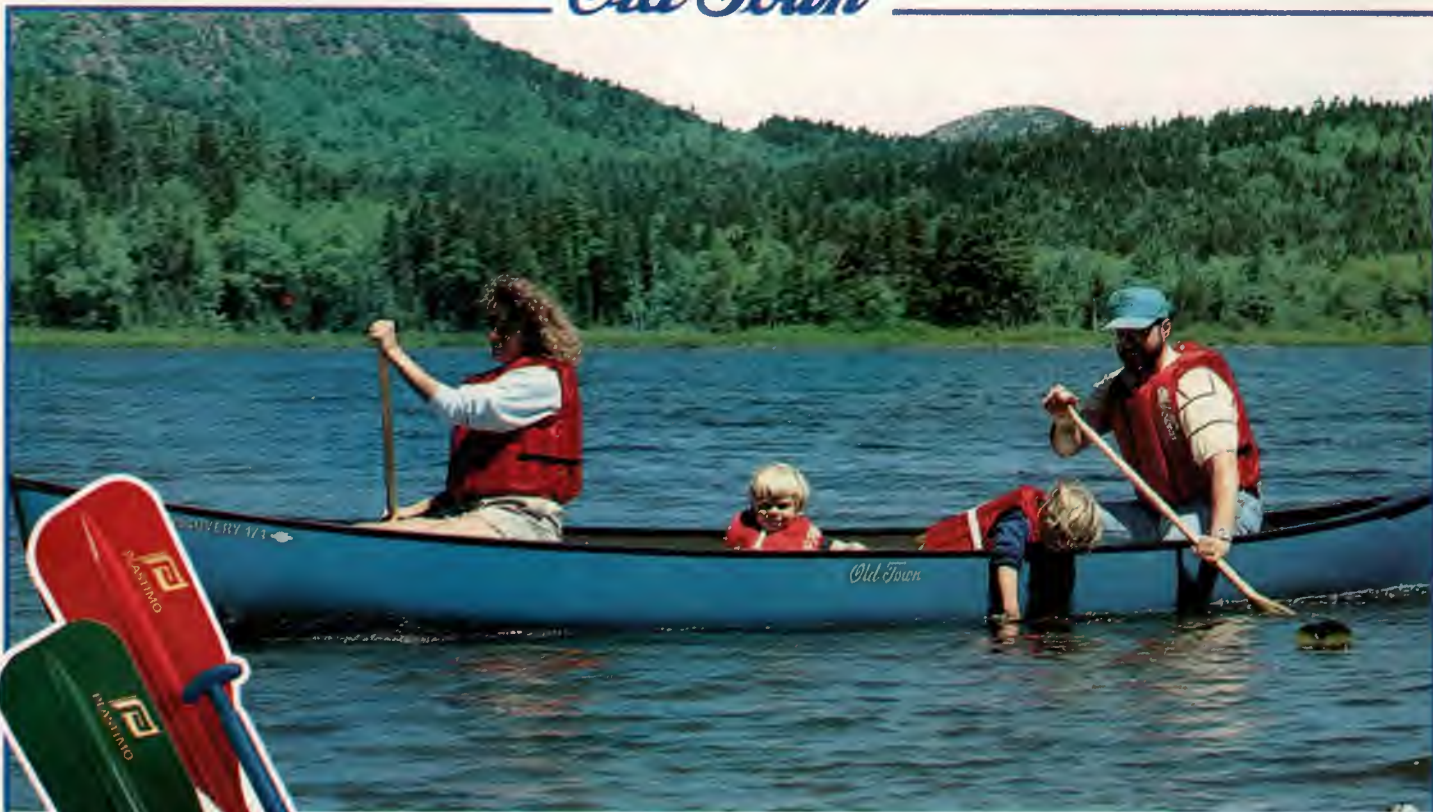
To: National Development Officer, BCU, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5AS.

I confirm that I will canoe/have canoed the NRA Anglian navigations after 1 April 1993.

Name: .....

Membership Number: .....

Date: .....



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## The views of a long suffering wife.

**I** have just returned from the most exciting race I have ever attended (in this country): I was exhausted when it was all over, and I was only the back up crew!

The Exe Descent, what a classic race! This is the second year I have gone along as back up crew to my husband Neil and his long suffering K2 partner John. This year there were over 600 entrants.

The weather was just how we liked it, wet and getting wetter. We spent all day Saturday travelling from Tiverton to Exeter stopping off en route to inspect every possible route down each of the weirs the lads were to encounter on this arduous event, and it was still raining!

After a very good meal and a cosy chat in the local pub it was off to bed for an early night, after all

Sunday, and guess what, it was still raining, we set off for the start. The car park was chock-a-bloc with boats and paddlers of all ages, shapes and sizes. The word on the circuit was that the river had risen by 2 feet, 3 feet, 6 feet (depending on how much you were trying to psyche the other paddlers out).

My boys were eager to get on the water, this was just how they liked it; loads of water. They usually compete as wild water racers but enjoy the challenge of the Exe Descent in one of those long thin wobbly boats with two seats in, a K2 I think they call it.

I had decided not to watch the start, not because I was worried about them but because I wanted to battle my way out of the car park before the big rush. I decided to wait for them at the second weir in

Tiverton Town, I waited for what seemed an eternity, with my stomach churning, wondering whether they had managed to battle their way to a good start position. My worries were over, as the first group appeared, my lads were lying in fifth

out to watch the race, despite the weather, and yes, it was still raining. Once again my heart leapt into my mouth as I heard someone shout that the first crews were in sight. The first crew came down and shot the weir, no problem, then the second crew, and then to my surprise my lads arrived and shot through in third place, no worries. Unfortunately as I was racing back to the car, the next three crews through all capsized, and as I drove over the bridge towards the next meeting point I could see quite a number of people swimming around.

### THORVERTON WEIR

I arrived at Thorverton weir in plenty of time as I was very anxious about them shooting this one. This is a biggy, and last year they did some serious damage to the boat on this section. I stood and waited, just me, my toolkit, a pair of paddles, and about half a dozen spectators. The first crew came through approximately a minute ahead of the second placed team which to my delight turned out to be my boys! I shouted out some encouragement, something like, 'come on move it you slugs', and off they went. I raced back to the car, which I had parked some distance away, I was beginning to get a bit tired with all this running about and healthy fresh air.

were not gaining, but they were not losing much either, they got under the bridge and paddled off to Four Pines (which they tell me was even bigger and much more frightening than the year before).

### COWLEY STEPS.

This is the most frightening thing I have ever seen, a largish weir, with 3 long steps down the middle of it, and another drop at the bottom of it, horrible! To my utter dismay as I arrived the crew that were lying in fourth place were just coming through, where were my boys? I made a hasty decision and decided that me, my tool kit and my paddles, should run back to the car and drive to the finish, I had missed them shoot the most exciting bit on the river!

I got to the finish with a few minutes to spare, the first crew had just come through, I hoped and prayed that Neil and John had made the right decision not to shoot the last weir, Flowerpots, as this was massive, with a large tree lying in the middle of it (last year they had come to grief after shooting this weir and destroyed the boat, having to run home to the finish, still coming third). My legs were shaking, I don't know whether it was from the running or just nerves, was that them coming under the bridge? Yes, thank goodness.

I shouted as loud as I could to encourage them and they paddled home to second place, 19 miles and 10 weirs in 1 hour and 51 minutes, I was so very proud of them both. Maybe first place next year?

**Wendy Blackman,  
Toolkit and Paddle.**

### TOP TIPS AND HANDY HINTS FOR SUPPORT CREWS

1. Be prepared to get muddy!
2. Take a toolkit of spares and a spare pair of paddles to each meeting point, they never need them, but it makes you feel important while you stand around waiting for them to turn up.
3. Shout loud and look enthusiastic at all times, even if you'd rather be at home tucked up with the Chippindales.
4. Always support a crew that you know are going to get a fast time, then you don't have to worry about where to park.
5. If you really want to see all the action, and spectacle of the race, support a slower crew.
6. Put in some training yourself before the race, you need to be fit to keep up with them.
7. And finally, enjoy it!



**Above:**  
Action on the start line

**Right:**  
K2 capsizes

**Below:**  
Open boat survives



position and they shot through the town with not too many problems. I ran alongside the river bank screaming at them to get a move on, and hopped into my car to beat them to the next liaison point, Bickleigh Weir.

On arrival at the Weir I jumped out the car carrying my

mini toolkit, spare nuts and bolts and rudder pieces, and a pair of paddles, just in case!

A lot of spectators had come

### FOUR PINES

The next stop was to be Four Pines, this is an awesomely large weir which is some distance from the road, over a railway track. During our team tactic talk the day before, we had decided that it would be best if I waited up stream from the railway bridge to let the lads know whether or not there was room for them to paddle underneath it. Thankfully the first crew came round the corner, so I watched them paddle under the bridge lying flat against the deck of their boat, they made it with about three inches to spare, so I ran back upstream to let the lads know the best place to get under, they were still in second place, they

they were taking it seriously, even the support crew have to be in bed by 9.30.

A bright and early start on





# BAKER, SPONSORSHIP *and the media*

With the final whitewater rodeo of 1992 out of the way and the National Championship title safely tucked under his belt, Shaun Baker can now look forward to 1993. But there will be no putting his feet up!

With the World Rodeo Championships taking place towards the end of the year in America, Shaun will be practising hard and hoping to snatch the title from Jan Kellner of Germany who is the current World Champion. And it's going to be tough for Shaun to find enough time in his busy schedule to put in the hours he needs.

His thriving kayaking equipment company, Playboater, which he co-directs with Nick Mallabar, leaves him very little free time. In the time he does have away from his business, he is in demand from film companies and magazines all over the world. He has recently taken on a sponsorship contract with the Italian watch company, Sector, who flew him and two co-paddlers to the Italian Alps in September for ten days of filming for an "extreme sports" series to be shown on European TV. The film features Shaun paddling some of the highest and most extreme Alpine waterfalls ever run, many of them never before attempted. Sector hope to use the photographs taken by French sports photographer, Philippe Fragnol in their magazine advertising for the UK.

Prior to this filming, Pepsi Cola sponsored a series of 13 sports films in which Shaun had his own 15 minute mini-film on extreme kayaking. Pepsi Rock Sport, as the series is known, has been shown in 32 countries around the world, including New Zealand, China, Zimbabwe, Canada and all the European countries.

As Shaun makes more appearances, rodeo and extreme kayaking become well known worldwide, reaching even the tiniest corners of the globe. The French magazine, Paris Match, have recently caught on to waterfall kayaking and are intending to cover one of Shaun's waterfall attempts within the next few months. The latest media contact for Shaun is the BBC with whom he is involved in discussions regarding forthcoming filming contracts involving amongst other things, kayaking filmed from helicopters.

Fitting all that around the rest of his life is a tall order, but with Shaun's determination to reinforce media interest in our sport he will no doubt manage and still find time to represent the UK at the World Rodeo Championships. Let's wish him luck!

Helen Gunn of Sportfolio





# Leading on Alpine Water

## A Course which Addresses the Challenge

“THE ALPS” – Amazing rivers, exciting water, sunny skies and picture postcard scenery. An experience which is so attractive and understandably becoming evermore popular. Commercial courses, clubs, colleges, outdoor centres and many other groups, we’re all out there! For how many of us though is it going to be an out of our world experience? One where we struggle ineffectually with our new adversary? There is no doubt that we can transfer our hard earned kayaking skills from home to the rivers of Europe. Equally though, we should recognise that there are a whole host of further skills and knowledge which we must take on board if we are to give ourselves the best chance of taming these hairy continental beasts.

Illustration  
Below:  
‘Brits at home’

Further, as a group leader we have the responsibility to those with us; not just to bring them home alive but to provide the kind of positive learning experience which we create so well on our home turf.

### SO WHAT REALLY IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Let us consider our typical British rivers and groups. We paddle rivers who’s nature is usually to provide us with stretches of water we find quite straightforward, interspersed with more exciting rapids or falls. These rivers appear designed with our typical mixed ability group in mind. There is water appropriate for everyone to play on. Rapids which hold challenges enough for all and usually with a variety of options: easy inspection; easy portaging for those who want; easy rescue in the slack water at the bottom; possibilities for throw-lines; running the rapid one at a time ... get the picture? Our leader has so many options, it is not difficult to keep in control.

On rivers of continuous nature, where rapids can last



for several kilometres, our mixed ability group is an epic waiting to happen. Rivers where, if we are to reach the van by sundown we will often have to inspect the river from our boat; keep portaging and bank inspection to a minimum; and anyone who cannot roll reliably risks taking a long swim. From a leader’s point of view this can become a runaway nightmare with that “easy” water we need to pick up the pieces, just never appearing. Surely a Super-Instructor is needed here? Not at all! True, greater personal skills will raise our performance, but we can do much to improve our control in other ways:

▲ By preparing our group in terms of the skills required to function confidently on this medium.

▲ By changing the way we and our group read the water; and our approach to paddling it.





Photos: Kevin Danforth

well they did, having survived another close shave with the alpine bogey-man!

#### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

One answer to this problem is to provide courses which specifically deal with training paddlers to prepare and lead groups in the alpine environment. To get the ball rolling, Glenmore Lodge, the Scottish National Sports Centre, is hosting the first Training Course as part of their Alpine programme. The course will be run, hopefully, in conjunction with representatives of BCU Headquarters and Plas Y Brenin. It will be based in the Dauphine Alps for 3 days (14,15 and 16 July) and will be aimed at those wishing to lead groups on Alpine grade 2/3 and above. Further details available from Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore, Inverness-shire, PH22 1QU.

Ian Sherrington



Illustration left: 'Brits abroad' both illustrations by Nikki.

▲ By changing our group's and our own attitudes to paddling so that we operate as a team. I know this sounds glib but it's true, and it's something which cannot be achieved with a two minute pep talk prior to running the river.

▲ By practising the rescue techniques appropriate to this situation, which we rarely have to cope with at home.

▲ Additionally, by having prior knowledge of regions, glacial-fed water, hydro-electric barrages, weather forecasting, guide books ...

With no real training and experience all we can do is to stiffen our ever-so-British upper lip, and shout something very encouraging to help maintain the illusion that we are in control. Then later maybe tell everyone how



#### EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

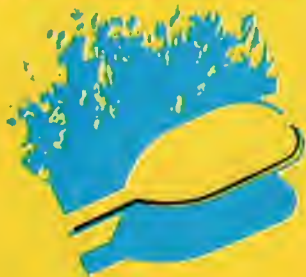
Worthy of consideration, is that if kayaking goes down the same legislative path in Europe as Mountaineering and Skiing, we will all have to be Qualified European or Alpine River Leaders. Some time off, maybe, but non-the-less, hopefully we can avoid a *fait accompli* from Brussels and take a leading role in evolving a certificate if such proves necessary. With this in mind, and with the recognition that Alpine water requires such a different approach, then perhaps the time is right to create an appropriate Award, an Award which would give greater credibility to those leading or working in Europe. I welcome your views!

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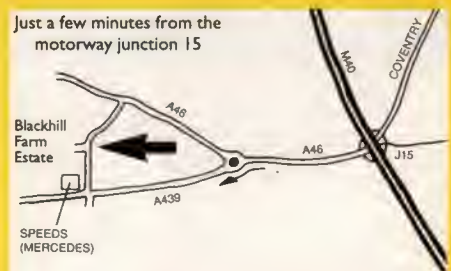
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**Please contact Melvyn Jones**

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**Please contact Tim Houghton**



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## situations vacant

**Canoeing Instructor** required for 93 season, end March to September. Must be qualified and experienced with working with school children, able to drive (over 21) and prepared to travel. Additional qualifications in other activities, particularly sailing and mountain craft (ML) or climbing will be a great advantage. Contact Marlin Leisure on (0306) 730025.

**Qualified watersports instructors** required for May to October 1993 in busy lakeside location. Applications to P. Hodgson, Reivers of Tarsel, The Comb, Greenhaugh, Hexham, Northumberland, NE48 1RU. Telephone (0434) 240 245.

**Activity Instructors required** For a busy Girl Guide activity centre during May to September 1993. Candidates (preferably over 18 years) should be enthusiastic and enjoy working with young people. Ideally the candidate should have a Guide or Scout background although not essential. Activities include canoeing, climbing, abseiling, archery and skiing. Candidates should hold B.C.U., T.I. or supervisors award together with canoe safety award as a minimum. Experience in the other activities is an advantage although full training is given. Application forms available from: Blackland Farm, Grinstead Lane, East Grinstead, Sussex RH19 4HP. Tel: 0342 810493.

**Canoeing Instructors.** Residential & non-residential vacancies at children's watersports centre in Surrey. 4-9 weeks in July and August. Excellent salaries and enjoyable working environment. Further details: Freetime Leisure Limited, Tel: 0483 740242.

**Wanted Canoe Instructors.** Challenging and rewarding jobs working with British schoolgroups available from March to October. B.C.U. qualified instructors required at our residential centres in Dorset, East Anglia and the Isle of Wight. Activity Instructors required to teach outdoor adventure based activities at 12 residential centres throughout the UK. Experience of working with children preferred but not essential as full training given. Enthusiasm, stamina and a sense of humour are a must. Call Superchoice now on 0273 670047 (24hrs) for an application form.

**Instructors required.** Canoeing, climbing, water skiing, surfing and others. Vacancies from April to August at outdoor centre in North Devon. Phone 0237 477637 for details.

**Volunteer Canoe Instructor** required from mid-March - September 1993 by Venture Associates a small Christian adventure centre for youth and schools in Tonbridge, Kent. Other activities to be instructed include shooting, archery, karting, abseiling and Mountain Biking - experience in instructing these is not essential. Accommodation plus allowance provided. Phone Richard on 0732 354690.

## CANOEISTS WANTED

PGL requires B.C.U., S.I.'s and other canoeists with considerable experience to instruct children or families for long or short periods between March and October. Minimum age is 18 for the U.K. and 20 for France. Applications for France should have Canadian experience. All posts are residential.

Application Department,  
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**Do you want to work on the Isle of Skye?** Instructor required for 1993 season at small but busy centre. For further details contact John or Anne at Whitewave Activities, Idrigill, Uig, Isle of Skye, Tel 047 042 414.



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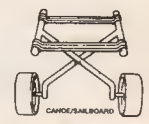
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**Pyranha Mountain Bat Extreme**, full white water spec. including 'cage', vgc £280 ono Tel P Diamond 0502 512756 or Work 0603 222832

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**Prijon T-Slalom** with neoprene spraydeck, Good condition £250. Blades & other gear available Tel: 081 464 3512.

**Mountain Bat**, full white water spec, buoyancy and back rest etc, and neoprene spraydeck. £220 ono Tel: 0434 632901 (Hexham)

**Ace Valetta** white water spec £120 ono. Tel: Barnsley 0226 386530 evenings.

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**Calshot Activities Centre** have the following eqpt for sale: Sea Kayaks, McNulty Huntsman £225. Sea Hunter £275. Sea Tiger £175. Unnak Icefloe £275. Unnak £250. Vyneck (Kevlar Hull) £295. Nordkapp £225. Master £100. General Purpose Kayaks - Telstar GP (rear bulk-

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## LOST

**Liangollen** - Sunday 15th November: Wetsuit, dry cag, Wetsuit Boots, Ace Helmet, Spraydeck, All in Grey postal Bag : Tel 021 233 3887 (work) or 021 351 1492

## WANTED

**K1 Racing kayak** to suit junior paddler. Also wet suit for junior 5ft tall. Tel: 0544 318821

**Perception Dancer**, Dancer XT or Mirage plus all associated kit, ie Paddles, buoyancy, any deck, roof rack, etc. whole package or parts of, bought for sensible price. Giles Westaway 0769 80431

**Klepper, Aerius I** or similar folding canoe. Tel: 071 622 5167.

**Old Town Pathfinder**. Aslo Valetta for sale £175 (mint) or exchange for sea kayak, double touner or open canoe of similar value Tel: 0742 (Sheffield) 468463

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**French Alps Canoe Rally:** Late May/June details from Michael Bruce, Alpine Options, Mont de Lans, 38860 les 2 Alpes, FRANCE

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# Paddlers gear

New equipment is reviewed and tested by paddlers for paddlers. The informed views are collected from a variety of canoeists but are subjective and not an official BCU recommendation of any kind, nor is any BCU approval implied.

## Sirius

P & H kayaks have long been famous for the successful range of Derek Hutchinson designed Sea Kayaks. The Sirius is a departure from this as much of the design work has been done in-house although sharp eyes will detect Hutch's involvement in the hull design.

Sea Kayaking is an individualistic sport where personal preference is all. What else could it be when a person may spend weeks in the same kayak, often all day long. It has to be a home from home and every sea paddler I have ever met has their own strong opinions on what a kayak should be and where things on that boat should be, what they need, what works, and so on. Historically man would build his own, to his own specification, but given the absence of quality sealskin at B&Q we now buy 'off the shelf'.

Julian Patrick canvassed the opinions of over eighty Sea paddlers to find out what they wanted from a boat: this could have backfired but he seems to have made sense of the survey and identified a gap in the P&H range. My personal preference is for narrow beamed, straight running, performance kayaks with enough space to pack kit for a week. The Sirius fits my criteria on first inspection and after several paddles has not disappointed. I have spent enough time on salt water to feel that the boat will hold no unpleasant surprises in bad weather survival situations. The low freeboard discouraged weather cocking when I had it out in wind (4-5 gusting) and behaved predictably with the retractable skeg dropped. Aimed at intermediate/advanced paddlers some parts reflect the competition experience at the company. There are some interesting innovations: The Seat. High mileage often results in sub-waist humour failure and much work has been put into a moveable rigid seat pan which can also be tilted. Current work in lower back/pelvis problems in kayaking would suggest that this is the way forward and the deep pan, slalom style seat will help many. It has foam inserts and does not need a backrest. The other option (my choice) is a foam seat and lots of minicell. Thigh grips are unusual on a sea boat. The Sirius braces help wearability and feel positive in the rough and rolling. The deck layout causes most interest when the boat is left amongst its peers: Standard VCP round hatch on the foredeck and large VCP oval on the rear is a good arrangement. The innovation is the moulded recesses which accommodate split paddles on the rear deck. Although catering for those who like long skinny blades, they will accommodate other split paddles in a way which stops them washing around under deck elastics when dumping surf prevails. For a limited period a free set of splits is on offer for UK purchasers. I prefer one of my splits on the front deck and future developments may well cater for the likes of me. Lots of options on deck layout: the test model has front deck hand pump and knee tube. Rear deck has a handy recessed drinks bottle. Recessed Deck fittings are neat tidy and are available where you want them, as are deck lines & chafe elastics. Other options include extra hatches, compass fitting and electric pumps.

### THE HULL.

The speed is there and the manoeuvrability is more than acceptable for a 17 footer. There was no discernable twitch whilst edging to



### SPECIFICATIONS

Length : 518 cm (17.0")  
Width : 53 cm (21")  
Expedition : £770  
Expedition with skeg £844  
Expedition with Skeg and Spare  
paddle £912 (Pumps extra)  
P & H COMPANY, STATION  
ROAD, WEST HALLAM,  
DERBYS DE7 6HB  
0602 320155

assist turning and is fairly friendly when heeled right over. Behaves in the rough too. The hull is quick and the kayak relatively stable: a difficult design compromise. The skeg does help but I would only miss it in the wind, which is a complement to the hull shape. It is P&H standard retractable and I haven't managed to break it yet, which is surprising as it is mechanical, and my track record is poor in this area. Cosmetically the boat has nice lines, but not at the expense of function.

Overall the Sirius has some new ideas, is well put together and will appeal to expedition paddlers as well as summer salties. I liked it: other individuals will too.





## PELICAN MITY LITE

The same guarantee extends to all Pelican torches and the first impression of the Mity-Lite is of a small pen torch, very well made in a trendy gift box. I gave it to my four year old test scientist and within five minutes she had the whole lot in bits. Good start. She failed to break any of it however and when she lost interest and returned to my PC I got a chance to re-assemble the bits and see how it works.

It is a powerful beam for such a minute bit of kit: easily packed and stowed it is fully submersible to 2000 feet (I was unable to test this, but it worked in the bath) and has some innovative features. It is simple in operation and my model came with spare bulb and replacement 'o' ring. The case has a chunky feel, a handy magnet on the end and even a pellet inside the case to absorb hydrogen gas should your naughty batteries carelessly leak any! The torch claims to be impervious to most chemicals too. what impressed me



spot' on maps and charts. Easy to use, hard to break, well designed and manufactured. Prices : Mity Lite £11.88 to £17.16

Pelican Case from £24.08 to £48.88 Larger cases are available.

Distributed by Livesystem Ltd of Sorrel Bank House, 25 Bolton Road, Salford M6 7HL tel 061 745 8810

The April FOCUS will carry details of special BCU Members discounts on Pelican Equipment, in Paddlers Gear.

most of all was the thought that had gone into how this torch would be used and abused by outdoor people. The kit came with a red bulb cover, brilliant for night vision and a marker for sea paddling and also a cute little glass optic lens cover. This directed a spot beam into nooks and crannies (in the car engine) and focused a 'hot

## PELICAN PROTECTOR CASE

The quest for the indestructible waterproof case is over. Simply, this is it. Ordinarily I am reluctant to trust camera equipment to plastic cases on dry land : the thought of paddling a boat with a grands worth of SLR rattling around in box and getting wet, would make my insurance man flinch. The Pelican boxes are well known in the USA and should prove equally popular here. The suggested test for the case was to put something breakable in it, fling in the water, and then drive my car over it. I was not brave enough to leave the camera in the plush padded foam and seal the rubber ring, clamp the fasteners and tighten the neat pressure purge screw. I did thrash it around a bit (see photo). The box stayed intact, kept shape and was dry inside. What more can you ask ? Crush tested to 500lbs and submersible to 1 atmosphere the cases come in a wide variety of nine sizes and have a 'You break it - we replace it guarantee' This guarantee extends for life but excludes shark bite, bear attack and children under five. My camera now lives in the box, and my first aid kit now lives in the smallest version.



## PLAYBOATER shock deck

Another quality deck from messrs Baker and Mallabar. The classic shockcord design works well on all kayaks, not something that can always be said for the contemporary 'rubber band' vogue. Classic usually means 'old fashioned' and slightly unserviceable (remember your first car?). Not so here. An old idea, but a good one is the wide extension of the skirt around the deck edge, a 'Dry Lip'. Ten years ago slalom C1 paddlers used to ask for decks left untrimmed: it fills in gaps and improves adhesion. The Dry works the same way. The two new innovations in the test model (pictured) are the 'Knee off' Release Strap and the Velcro Tube. The Release is simple and functional: so simple it should have been thought of before. The Velcro tube is a coating on the body tube of the deck which mates with velcro on the cag. Your own cag can be converted by playboater or a kit supplied. Again wonderfully simple and keeps more water out for less penalties in restricted movement.

Playboater, Haymill Centre, Burnham Lane, Slough SL1 6LZ Tel 0628 667507 £49.95, Velcro extra

## Perception Pirouette

The aptly named pirouette is the latest American playboat offering, designed over there and manufactured over here. The review boat was an import but the UK production specifications will be comparable. The ever increasing demand from playboaters for more performance is tweaking designers in healthy way and the Pirouette is a product of this and a bit of departure for the company. I was pleased to see that most of my criticisms of Perception boats have been corrected in this

boat; more later. It is short and well rockered as you would expect, and appears a little like a cut-down Corsica 'S' with a flattened rear deck. The designers are probably now howling with anguish but that is what it looks like. Much thought has gone into this one and good features come out. Broach loops are fitted on front and rear decks, and the cockpit is the first Perception kayak I can raise knees and step out of; the cockpit clearance length is 32", akin to the British Mountain/Magic bat (33"). A full plate footrest is fitted. These three features mean that there is awareness of a great Brit tradition, the rapid strategic dismount. My one criticism is the foam support between the legs. Despite being strengthened with an innovative plastic core and securely fastened, I am still uneasy about it, and in its current form does not adhere strictly to BCU safety guidelines. The rest of the construction is safe and sound: excellent replaceable end grabs, and a comfortable seat with bomber thigh braces. Rigidity is achieved with a substantial seat moulding. A handy bottle/throwbag strap is included. Finished UK models will include backstrap and drain-plug as standard

Visually it is a short pretty boat which has the sort of lines which suggest that glass prototypes have been around a while and a certain amount of tuning and refining have gone on ahead of the final mould. The usual pretty cosmetic lines are there and the deck moulding includes a stiffening rib.

Paddling the kayak confirmed that performance was the prime design consideration : it was both fast and responsive. A good playboat reacts to subtle movements and the boat carved easily and was controlled quickly by using body and edge. Surf and ender performance were top notch, even an old duffer like me could produce consistent predicable enders and a, yes, it does live up to it's name. Tail enders are no problem either. The 24" beam provides a steady platform when side surfing holes and the short hull allowed scope for moving around in the hole without too much effort. A fast turner on the flat, stopper spins were brisk. The kayak has an unexpected turn of speed, or to be more correct acceleration and is worthy of consideration as your regular river running tool. The seat and thigh braces have found a good balance between comfort and fit.

Overall the Pirouette is a good design, well made, and will find legions of admirers. Is it a Dancer for the nineties?



Length : 340cm (11.2")  
width : 61cm (24")  
Price : £ 410  
Perception UK, Bellbrook Industrial Estate, Bell Lane, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 1QL Tel 0825 765891/2



The Playboater Shock Deck

## Rhino paddle

Pyranha are producing a simple no-nonsense white water/general purpose paddle at under £50. A standard blade shape, durable alloy shaft, ordinary injection molded material. Sounds almost boring; but unless you race or pose, what else do you need ? I've abused one of these cheap and cheerful for a couple of months. It bounces, scrapes off boulders and splashes around in the water without any visible signs of distress. Creature comfort is served by the foam grips; civilised in cold weather and very positive when wet. Pyranha have kept the weight down too. A servicable and durable paddle at a sensible price, ideal for clubs, centres and beginners, and low budgets.

Pyranha, Marina Village, Preston Brook, Runcorn, Cheshire. Tel: 0928 716666



# Ender

Editor's page

## GOSSIP

### PAN

### GALACTIC ?

Is the Pan Galactic Rally in Cumbria deceased, or will it rise Phoenix like from the ashes. Insider info tells me that it may well be on in February 1994...

## IN YOUR APRIL ISSUE

### NEW FEATURE

### The Agony Column

### Dr D's

### Canoesport surgery -

### Do you have a problem ?

### NEW FEATURE

### My favourite paddle...

### NEW

### FEATURE

### A paddle with... on the

### water

### interview.

### NEW

### FEATURE

### The Photo Contest

## Canoe focus... the future

## Canoe focus... the facts

**B**y the time you have reached this page you will already have noticed a few changes to the magazine. There are more planned for 1993 as well as some surprises...

Over the short time I have been Editor I have discovered much about the British Canoe Union, the paddlers, the people, the volunteers, the committees, the members and inevitably the whiners and complainers.

The good part of my job is hearing from, talking to and meeting like-minded souls who are canoesport addicts: paddle junkies. Paddlers of all ages, persuasions and abilities who enjoy their sport and want it to move forward. Canoeists who keep things in perspective and remember that this is a sport and is meant to be fun.

The boring part of the job is listening to and putting up with, the gripes and moans of the BCU/Canoe Focus knockers. These people are the sort who usually do not deal in hard facts but mouth off anyway, in much the same way that commuters moan about British Rail. The big easy target of the National Institution. It is easy to forget all the times your train was on time and remember the time it was late. Has your car ever broken down ?

Our BCU car does occasionally break down, not surprisingly given the number of people using it daily. It is not a perfect world, and there are things the BCU does not always get right. Unfortunately one of these is telling people about the things we do well (which are taken for granted), or telling people more directly why things are the way they are, or what the problems really are.

## MYTHS AND FACTS DEPARTMENT

**A**n instance: in my first week at the BCU on my way into the office I was accosted by a paddler who knew me; 'why is CANOE FOCUS printed on toilet paper, is it because it's \*\*\*\* ?' Was he simply a paddler voting with his feet? a member seeking satisfaction from an Officer of the Union? An amicable discussion followed (some years previously I had awarded this kayaker a BCU 3 star award on a canoeing course.) It followed that the paddler in question was not a member and has seen only one recent copy of Focus in the last two years (borrowed from a friend) and had never written for or contributed to the magazine. He had not even read one.

### FACT

He simply did not realise that the only way six issues per year of FOCUS can be mailed out, along with the Yearbook (and all the other benefits of Basic Membership: Insurance, Waterways Licence, Members Discounts etc) for only £13.50 is to cut the major expense, postage, by reducing weight.

£13.50...for a years membership? That is roughly the cost of a night down the pub.

Of course we would all like a thick glossy magazine: financially at the moment it is not possible. The Canoe trade is in recession, like the rest of us, and it is the trade which buys the advertising which supports the magazine. Look at all those computer magazines; look at the cash turnover of the PC market. When the canoe trade is as profitable as computers then 180 page magazines are possible.

Over 'the next year the paper quality will improve as will issue size and layout. The magazine will also be available in retail outlets; with more members we may even go monthly...

'What about the content', he moaned, 'There is never anything in it I want to read'. By this time I was doubting his ability to read.

### FACT

The editorial content of the magazine is governed by three factors

1 The space available, this is directly affected by the advertising sold.

2. The need to represent all aspects of activity in our sport. At the last count this covers seven competitive disciplines (eight counting Rodeo), a dozen types of recreational boating, three Federal Bodies, nine English regions and a myriad of committees, working parties, the Coaching scheme and every variety of the sport at some point during the year:

mission impossible!

3. What paddlers send in for publication. It is a Members magazine after all, and I have to receive material to print it. Canoe Focus, not Canoe Clairvoyant ! One letter of complaint asked why I had not printed POLO news... it was simple. I had not received it. If the person had time to write and complain why did they not write a report instead ? Answer: it is easier to complain than produce something that other paddlers would want to read.

### MYTH

Contrary to popular opinion I do not have a roving brief, a fast car with a phone and a battery of telephoto lenses. If you see me out and about I am probably paddling, having a day off! It is your magazine: write the sort of stuff you want to read.

Contributions to the magazine are more than welcome; a feature of the sport is the friendliness and willingness of participants to chat, share knowledge and experience.

Fortunately the Moaners And Gripers In Canoeing Club is in reality quite a small section of the paddling community: most paddlers are helpful and supportive.

### FACT

The last BCU questionnaire highlighted several complaints about the magazine, but the vast majority of comments were favourable and this was before recent improvements in production, layout and content.

In future issues this page will de-bunk myth and replace it with hard fact. Our paddling friend in the car park was entitled to his opinions. They would carry considerably more clout if he had paid his membership and was better informed.

There are those who enjoy knocking for the sake of it, it is after all a great British national trait: whingeing Poms. I am afraid I tend to give negative feedback only half an ear. I much prefer the approach of 'Here is an article on Dugout Canoe Jousting: you haven't featured it yet and I think the magazine could do with it'.....

Are you a moaner or a doer ?

How do you contribute ? See the contents page.

Thank you to all those who have already positively contributed and continue to do so... without you it would not happen.

Good Paddling

Kevin Danforth  
Editor

*Join us*

**HAVE FUN**



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"under test"



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