

THE CANOE SPORT MAGAZINE FOR THE NINETIES

# Canoe focus

No 84. AUGUST 1993

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championships

wild water worlds

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**BCU Enquiries &  
Editorial to**  
above address

**Director**  
Paul Owen

**Editor**  
Kevin Danforth

(Regional Round Up edited by Carol Quaille)

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Cambs. PE17 4BG  
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**Group  
Advertisement  
Manager**  
Sandra Smart

**Advertising Sales  
Assistant**  
Clair Pearce

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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 experience! Canoe Focus is all about canoeist to canoeist 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 AUGUST 1993**. Material arriving at FOCUS after this date cannot be included in the April issue.

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# Comment



## DIRECTORS COMMENT

### BCU MEMBERSHIP TOPS 16,000

The good news is that membership of the BCU now exceeds 16,000 and when combined with the membership of the SCA, WCA and CANI the total comes to a magnificent 19,299. If you are one of the 10,000 members of affiliated clubs who have not yet joined the BCU then now is the time to come on board and enjoy the real benefits of membership.

Further good news is that at its June meeting Council agreed to keep the increase in membership fees within the overall inflation rate and the new fees are identified below.

#### Individual Membership

Life Comprehensive	£365.00
Adult Comprehensive	£24.50
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#### Clubs

Senior	£47.00
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## CONGRATULATIONS AND WELL DONE

Many of our teams have been competing both at home and abroad and of particular note the Slalom and Wild Water River Race teams have produced outstanding medal results from the World Championships at Val de Sole. As you will see from the cover of the magazine, Richard Fox achieved a magnificent 10th world championship medal, including five individual gold medals. The feature pages show that our canoeists are a whole lot better than our cricketers and footballers on the international stage. In addition, the whole Handykayak team returned with medals and first place overall at the International Regatta in Florence.

In the Round London Marathon Grand Prix, Greg Slater won the Mens K1. In the Wild Water Racing World Cup in Male, Italy, both the Men's and Ladies Teams gained a Bronze medal. At the first Polo European Championships held in Sheffield both British Teams won a Silver medal.

## MANCHESTER 2000 – NATIONAL CANOEING DAY

National Canoeing Day on September 4th 1993 will be dedicated to Manchester 2000 the British Olympic Bid. British sport will be staging a variety of events from September 4th to 11th and National Canoeing Day is one of the curtain raisers. We are informed that the media will help publicise any events associated with the Olympic Bid during the period. Hopefully this will help demonstrate that British sport is firmly the attempt to host the millennium games. The final decision will be made in Monte Carlo on September 23rd.

If your club is organising an event please keep the unions Press & Information Officer informed of your

plans for the day so that we can advise callers of where they can canoe in their locality.

## GOOD LUCK

Best wishes and good luck are sent to the Sprint Racing, Marathon, Sailing and Rodeo Teams for their up and coming international events.

## BCY YOUTH FORUM

Co-ordinated by the British Canoe Youth advisory panel the first youth forum will take place at Holme Pierrepont on October 17th and it will be an ideal opportunity for young paddlers to express their needs for the future.

## EUROPEAN CANOE POLO CHAMPIONSHIPS

The first European Canoe Polo Championships hosted by the BCU Canoe Polo Committee took place at Ponds Forge, Sheffield from 3rd to 5th July. The event proved to be a wonderful start to the whole series of BCU organised Championships which will culminate in the triple World Championships in Canoe Polo – 1994, Slalom and Wild Water Racing 1995.

## BCU AWARD OF MERIT

We are pleased to announce that Len Smith of Tees Kayak Club has been awarded the BCU Award of Merit for his services to canoeing. Len held the position of National Junior Team Slalom Coach from 1987-1992 and many of the competitors who have now reached Senior level owe a great deal to their early development under Len's guidance.

Paul Owen



# Notice board

## Churchill Fellowship

Travelling Fellowships for 1994  
offered by the  
Winston Churchill Memorial Trust



THE CHANCE  
OF A LIFETIME  
FOR 1994

'The Chance of a Lifetime' to travel overseas is again being offered to canoeists by the Churchill Memorial Trust. Places are available annually to enable UK citizens from all walks of life irrespective of age, educational background, or professional qualifications to undertake research projects related to canoeing, for the benefit of the community. Full details are available from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, on 071 564 9315.

## YEARBOOK UPDATES

### Calder Access

The new local Access officer for the Lower Calder (Elland Bridge to the Aire) is Kevin Johnson, 24 Chapel Close, Thornhill Lees, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF12 0DL

### Poole Harbour Race

There is a change of organiser: the race organiser is Moira Higgs, 58 Henbury Close, Poole, BH17 8AX or tel: 0202 600369

### Arundel to Pulborough for Arthritis and Rheumatism Council for Research.



Arthur Wells is again organising the Club competition and touring event in aid of this worthy charity. The event takes place on Sunday 3 October Contact him at 20 Dover Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 5NR

### London & South East Region at Holme Pierrepont

Michael Wynne is organising the weekend, including training sessions and fun for all the family. Book early, ring him on 0634 682041

## Sea kayak group UK

In conjunction with BCU Southern Region and the BCU Lifeguards are running a 'come & try it day' at Calshot Activities Centre for those who want to try Sea Kayaking for the first time in a supervised environment. As well as an opportunity to try salt water, it takes place on National Canoeing Day, September the 4th. Details from Nick Hamilton on 0252 875976

## Nordkapp meet

After receiving many requests for the old style Nordkapp meet to be resurrected, the Anglesey Sea and Surf Centre will again host the event. It takes place over the August Bank Holiday 27/30 and places can be booked by ringing Nigel Dennis on 0407 762525. A donation of £3.00 per head will be made to the Touring and recreation Committee.

## Foundation for sport and arts



The Foundation has again been generous to canoe clubs with over £8000 given in recent months. There has also been a pledge of £1.3 million towards all sports preparing for the Olympic games in Atlanta with Canoeing and Judo specifically mentioned.

## BCU lifeguard championships

The lifeguards will be holding the 1993 National Championships at Plas Menai on September the 18/19. Open to all BCU members, the event will also provide safety training for paddlers and clubs. Details from Chris Watkeys, 32 Stafford Street, Llanelli, Dyfed SA15 2HS. SAE please or tel: 0554 771210

## Instant memberships

Three more retailers are now offering instant membership: No Limits at Current Trends, Dirty Habits and Garstang Adventure.

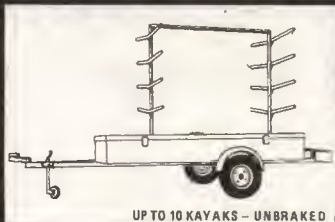


Junior Racing Trophy Through the generosity of Jane Rouse, Nottingham Kayak Club are now the proud owners of a handsome silver trophy to be presented annually to the most improved junior paddler. Jane was an Olympic paddler in the early seventies. The most improved Junior during 1992 was Martin Bull who is seen here receiving the trophy and a small memento from Ian Rawlings, the Club President.

## BCU Clubs Handbook

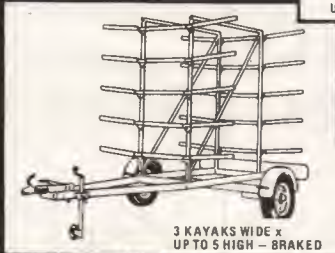
The handbook has been reprinted and amended in detail to bring it up to date. A copy is issued free to new clubs affiliating for the first time. Other clubs can obtain a copy from the BCU office for £3.50 (Affiliated clubs £2.50) including post & packing.

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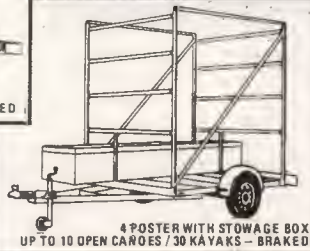
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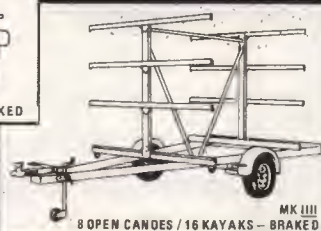
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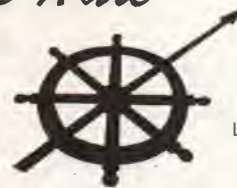
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**Please contact Melvyn Jones**

Information on all other requirements, Personal and Contract, including Ace, Prijon, Pyranha, Perception, MI, Coleman, Arrowcraft (new Aquabat) and accessories from Chang, Tornado, Helly-Hansen, Javlin, Lendal, Schlegal, Kober, New Wave etc.  
**Please contact Tim Houghton**



Telephone: 0902 634567

West Midlands Canoe Centre,  
 112 Newhall Street, Willenhall, West Midlands WV13 1LQ.

*What are you doing on September 4th?  
Had you planned to paddle around the world?*

## **National Canoeing Day**

**takes place on the 4th of  
September**

**Last year over 50,000 paddlers of all ages and types went paddling.**

**The theme this year is 'Paddling around the World': if each paddler covers 500 metres we will have collectively paddled the circumference of the earth. Pointless but fun !!**

**We all know that canoesport? in it's many forms, is international. From birch bark to baidarka from dugouts to squirts. From Alaska to Zimbabwe, each nation has some sort of paddle culture. Make National Canoeing Day a celebration of ours.**

**In common with last year's event, it doesn't matter where you paddle, or how, or in what: just get out there and get afloat. Again the event is all about participation.**

**In the BCU yearbook there are many events and meets already on the calendar and your local organisers will have information on all the activities happening near you.**

*If you paddle on one day only in 1993, make it  
September 4th: National Canoeing Day.*

**National Canoeing Day supports the  
Manchester 2000 Olympic Bid**





# Whitewater... the Canoe Centre...

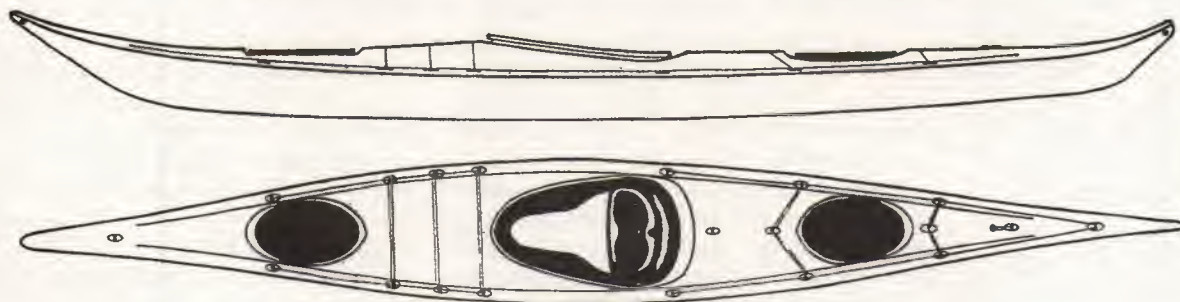
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# dear focus

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## SLALOM SAFETY

### Dear Canoe Focus

I am writing to raise the issue of paddlers towards safety at slalom events. I have recently competed at a division 2 event on the graveyard, run by Manchester CC, and was dismayed to see teams getting off before the next two teams had completed their runs, contravening rule 19.8 in the slalom rules. I mentioned this on the Saturday and paddlers were warned.

On the Sunday I was amazed to find nobody at all on the water when I crossed the finish line on my individual run. I immediately complained again, since a swim down the graveyard could be potentially fatal with no rescue boats.

Unfortunately one of the paddlers concerned had, had a very good run, and my complaints were viewed as simply 'sour grapes', but this is totally wrong!

The paddlers involved were a good standard, which made their disregard for the rules even more serious. If I had broken my paddle and swam on my run and injured myself, I hope the paddlers (and their parents) would have been proud themselves.

Please, can you reinforce the need to stick to the basic safety rules, since canoeing can do without the bad publicity that would result from a needless accident.

BENEDICT COLLINS



## SURF RATS

An open reply to Robin Howells criticisms

### Dear Robin:

I'm writing this 'open' letter to you so that I may clarify the intent of my 'Surf Rats' article and to redress your misrepresentation of my views about safety in surf and towards other water users in particular.

Over the years I have written a number of articles and letters for Canoe Focus (+CoDe) on this subject. By and large these have been 'conventional' pieces, which have generated underwhelming response in ensuing issues. This time I decided to do it differently: I wanted to provoke thought about a serious issue and I wanted the core message to be remembered. I chose humour as a means to convey the message and I also chose to parody

some of the worst behaviour I have seen and heard over the years.

It appears that parody and humour work, for I have been inundated with responses to the Surf Rats article. All of them positive so far... except yours. However, I'm thankful for your outraged response because you have done enormous good for your cause... and mine! (for we share the same cause). Your reply has doubled the 'mileage' if the article, and now my response to you triples it! Hopefully readers of both our letters will now refer back to the April issue to see what the fuss is all about. Thanks for reinforcing the message.

I have a number of good board-riding friends, including

a few beach lifeguards, past and present, and I have great regard for the difficult and sometimes dangerous work you do. As a ski and kayak paddler I have for too many years watched in impatient anger as a small number of (mainly) kayak paddlers have inflicted damage to the bodies of others in the surf, some very seriously. Equally, I have watched skilled and aware paddlers consistently manage to surf in the company of others without incident or threat. The Surf Rats article was a creative expression of that anger. Please read the piece again, I fear your anger may have blinded to you to my intentions.

DENNIS BALL



## Acting as ONE

### Dear Focus Re:

Adrian Moulds "Contentious whinging letter" . . . I have often heard and read this same sort of comment and what concerns me most is the universal . . . wouldn't be in the BCU . . . (another organisation being) . . . more suitable for my needs . . . (my emboldening).

If we can't support each other, whatever our chosen sector of the Canoeing world, then we shall fall, and Anglers for one will rejoice. I feel that all canoeists should be in the BCU for the same reason that all residents of the UK (who can afford to do so) should pay Tax. We are quite literally in the same boat!! people opting out fail us by not contributing their numbers, expertise, enthusiasm and commitment. The BCU is the National Body, and those who criticise should try and help, we should act as one.

Secondly, active SI's and Instructors

can "earn" their membership by the Star Test system, though I know we often don't charge for certain groups that we are "close" to.

The amount of our subscription is incredibly small! I know that many disagree (as they knock back their Pints at approximately a 20th of the subscription a go!), they say it's expensive, I ask "compared to what?" the BMC, RYA, BSAC, BASI or any other similar body? Often my assailants counter, "but look what we get for our money!" sometimes I'm too polite to tell them that this is their default and the default of those like them who don't help the BCU.

As for recognition from the BCU, personally speaking I am dead chuffed that people like Geoff Good recognise me.

Yours from the Hip,  
Lester Matthews.



More letters on page 37

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**Canoe focus**

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# top tips

and handy hints

## Improvised Sailing for Open

By Ray Goodwin

*There is little that is new. In the 1850's the artists George Catlin was travelling among the Sauk people of the upper Mississippi region and recorded their passion for canoe racing. The dugouts were extremely light and not only were there paddle races but sailing competitions as well. In one of his sketches men stand upright in the bows of their canoes, holding a blanket to catch the wind, whilst in the stern the women manage the steering.*



The means of utilising the breeze may be nothing more than a couple of paddles holding aloft the best available 'sail' whether it be coat, bivvybag or tent flysheet. It may be a full sailing rig with lee board. But in this article I am detailing the middle course; an efficient improvised rig to take advantage of a following wind; an event not quite so rare as you may think of on the wind swept lochs of Scotland.

The method described can be adapted easily to suit either a catamaran or trimaran.

Boats are lined up with a gap

of 12 to 18 inches between them at their midpoints. The danger of swamping comes from the wave that builds between the hulls as speed increases. Keeping the hulls apart lessens the risk and indeed it is worth experimenting with having the sterns slightly further apart than the bows.

### Timber

Two pieces of timber are placed across the canoes, one at the rear of the bow seats the other behind the stern seats. 5 or 6mm rope is used to lash the logs in securely in place. 11m ex-climbing rope,

used by so many, is excessive and a perishing nuisance on a trip. It is important that any log used is chosen with sensitivity. In some of our wilderness areas forests are at long last regenerating so on no account should we ever cut down a live sapling; fallen trees are a different matter and in taking them with you as part of your rig you have provided the materials for the next camp fire.

### Poles

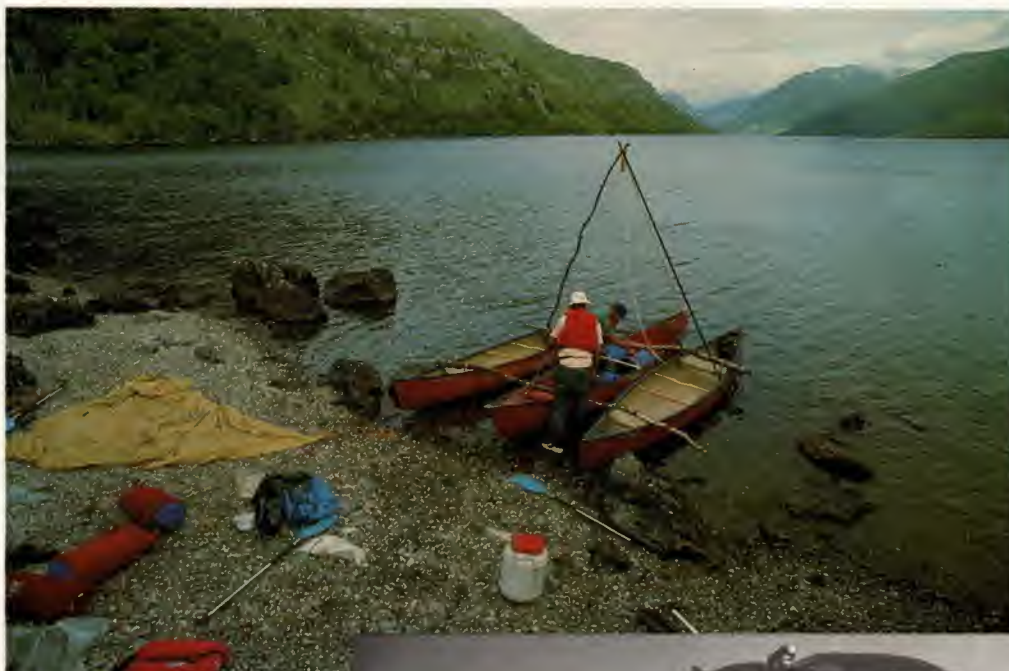
When tripping I normally take one pole (used for progress on shallow water) per canoe so I

can use two of these to make the 'A' frame. The poles are laid out side by side and a thin rope clove hitched to one of them. The rope is then bound around the end of both poles in a figure of eight pattern before being wrapped tightly several times around the cross over of the figure of eight so as to tighten everything. Finish with another clove hitch. If you are crafty you can leave enough spare that a karabiner can be attached to provide a pulley for hauling a sail up and down. The poles are then opened out to for the 'A'

shape. the base of poles stand just behind the forward log and are fastened to it with another square lashing. It is worth padding the foot of the poles to stop it abrading a plastic canoe. A rope runs from the top of the 'A' to both the bows and sterns; again a clove hitch attaches it easily to the poles.

### Tarp

I normally use my tarp (a 12x12 foot nylon sheet with numerous attachment points and used as



a shelter ashore) but imagination pays dividends and a judicious choice of sail size to suit conditions is wise. If your material has no suitably placed attachments then a smooth stone can be folded into the edge of the 'sail' and rope clove-hitched behind the bulge. Either haul the sail up via a karabiner or to gain an extra few inches run the haul rope through the 'V' at the top of the mast system. A rope from each bottom corner of the sail completes the system.

Beware the danger of drawing too many lessons from playing on small lakes where the waves have no chance to build. Contrast this to a Scottish loch where the wind has maybe ten miles to play with the water. Remember that you start sailing at the most sheltered point, generally the wind will get stronger and the waves bigger. The middle of a remote loch is not the place for an epic.

### Buoyancy

The maximum buoyancy is definitely needed when sailing cata-



marans or trimarans. I have once, in a race on the Mawddach Estuary, sailed a catamaran right under. We were sailing in a strong wind and to keep the opposition under pressure I was pushing it to the limit. The lashing and A frame were all standard but we had a proper spinnaker that a dinghy sailor had brought along. We were screaming along, the wave between the boats had lengthened and its crest was two thirds of the way back from the bow, just in front of my eyes. If the wave grew and lapped at the gunwale the key would be to lose power instantly to prevent a swamping. My attention did not wander from the wave. It lapped over! My shout of 'go!' was the signal to release the sail; disastrously the sailors controlling the sail attempted to bundle the spinnaker. Power stayed on for a second or two too long and we swamped! Six people in the water, all the gear floating at the end of leashes. In a wilderness situation we would have been in serious trouble; faced with cutting all the lashing before performing a

boat over boat rescue, in the conditions that caused the initial swamping this would be a desperate task. Other than in the very lightest of winds I make a point of lashing in all the kit to provide the maximum buoyancy.

### Steering

Trim the boats slightly stern heavy to make the steering easier. It is possible to gain a little way across the wind by shifting the sail to one side and also be levelling out one of the canoes to cause the other to skid around. At the end of the day it is only a downwind performance.

It is a great thrill on trips to get a free ride. Too often we battle against adverse winds so it would be a shame not to benefit when it blows our way. Good Sailing!

**Ray 'Tumblehome' Goodwin**  
Ray is a Director of Experience of Adventure and runs commercial trips messing about in open boats and getting up to the sort of fun described above. His telephone number is 0490 84348



# Canoes





**Right:**

**American  
paddler in Hell  
Hole, Ocoee  
River,  
Tennessee.  
Photo:  
Stormont  
Murray**



# Only In America

*"I'm sorry sir none of our cars have roofracks"*

*I had a nasty suspicion that getting a hire car with a roof rack was going to be difficult, in fact right from the first telephone enquiry when a company rep told me, "I'm afraid all our cars are degradable and cannot take roofracks." I thought that all cars were degradable. Isn't that what rusting is?*

**Below:**

**Cheat River  
take out, West  
Virginia.  
Photo: Paul O'  
Sullivan**

So there we were, 11pm, Atlanta airport, Georgia, USA and the station wagon with a roof rack that we had been promised did not exist. The situation improved somewhat when a roofrack was found, the problem being that it was attached to the roof of a 4x4 Chevy Blazer which cost an extra \$50 a day. Luckily for us the US Masters golf tournament was on in Augusta, Georgia and a

queue for hire was building up. We just stood still, occupied vital counter space and shook heads until \$50 a day became \$40, the \$20 and then, "\$10 but I could lose my job for this". It was worth seeing the attendants face when we replied "\$8 and you've got a deal", but it worked.

Dave had arranged with Dagger Canoes in Tennessee for us to use six of their kayaks for the trip. I must admit to being a little bit suspicious of a deal which appeared to be too good to be true - free boats to use and abuse! But never look a gift horse in the mouth! I even walked into the Dagger factory a little bit sheepishly but when Pete Jett greeted us with a big hello, showed us the coffee machine and shower and told us they were just finishing our boats it all became very real. To say they treated us well would be a gross understatement and a few hours later we drove away with six brand new boats, (three Responses and three Freefalls) strapped on the roof of the 4x4. I couldn't wait to get some kayaking done and try them out.

### **Talking Concrete**

Even when you live in the heart of Snowdonia you can end up wasting time driving around finding a river that is at the right level. No such hassle in the USA, you go to the phone not the car. Most river gauges send information via radio links to the water authorities



who provide recorded messages of that day's levels for the main rivers from which it is usually possible to get an idea of how well the smaller tributary 'creeks' are running. On the New River Gorge we even come across a gauge that you could phone up direct. It tells you the river level at the exact moment of your call via a series of pips which translate to the height of river in feet to two decimal places. One hour later and you paddle past a concrete block house with a gauge on the outside and an aerial on the roof and you think – that lump of concrete spoke to me only an hour ago – only in America!

The Upper Yough had to be the paddling highlight of the trip. Located across the Maryland state line it flows through the town of Friendsville where the take out is on the main street, the put in being nine miles upstream at the Sang Run bridge. Dam fed it runs all summer but unlike many controlled rivers the release levels and duration vary depending upon rainfall. This combined with the beautiful woodland the river flows through minimalises any sense of artificiality incurred as a result of the river being dam released. There is certainly nothing artificial about either the intensity or the difficulty of the kayaking, five miles of continuous grade four and five water. Powerful, technical rapids with a gradient of up to 100 feet per mile, which all seem to merge into one. However, the great majority of the rapids can be boat scouted, even those with affectionate names such as Meat Cleaver and Eddy of Death – mind you they do raft it commercially so it can't be too hard??

### Road Trip

Having two hire cars was a great advantage when it came to running remote shuttles, especially when one was four wheel drive, as many of the rivers in West Virginia are accessed by dirt roads. However it can be a nightmare trying to keep in contact on the long drives between the rivers, especially if the challenge of the trip is to navigate to all the rivers, with only a road atlas to the complete 50 states as a guide! On one occasion having become separated on the interstate as darkness was falling we pulled on to the hard shoulder of the next exit to wait for the other car to catch up. Sure enough a couple of minutes later I saw two headlights in the mirror as a car stopped behind us. A siren and flashing blue lights told us it was not our fellow yackers, as our car was lit by two searchlights mounted on the roof of the black and white. Phil, forgetting that he was not dealing with the village bobby in Betws – y – Coed, opened his door in an attempt to go to speak to the cops and explain the situation. Before the door was half open a forceful voice came across on a loud hailer, "Sir, get back



**Above:**  
American  
paddler, Jim  
Machaud on  
Wonder Falls,  
Big Sandy  
Creek, West  
Virginia.



**Right:**  
Loel Collins on  
State Line  
Falls, Wataga  
Falls, N.  
Carolina.  
Photos: Paul  
O' Sullivan



**Left:**  
Phil Blain falls  
in love at  
the Dagger  
factory,  
Tennessee.  
Photos: Paul  
O' Sullivan



in the car and shut the door". Phil was like a dazzled rabbit caught in a car's headlamps but soon realised that he had better do as told. The cops then approached our car but only as far as the rear door and told me to pass my licence to the person in the backseat and them in turn to pass it the police. As soon as they realised we were 'Brits' the situation mellowed out considerably and we were treated to a talk on the do's and dont's of being stopped by the police in the States. Then, just as we thought we were off the hook a new and even sterner voice from the rear of the car said, "Sir, could you tell me what the red blotches all over the trunk of the car are?". Well how do you tell two cops used to drugs, crime and blood that its nothing more sinister than spilt salsa dip from the tortilla chips we had for lunch, and most certainly not the blood of our last murder victim!

A two week trip splits nicely into a week exploring the rivers of North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia, and a week in West Virginia. It would be very easy to use lots of cliched kayaking adjectives to describe the rivers, go out and paddle them, you would'nt be disappointed – if only for the diversity. From the steep creeks of the Tellico and Wataga, to the remoteness of the Blackwater with its epic walk-in. The play holes of the Ocoee, the continuous rapids of the Upper Yough, the big water of the New River Gorge and the drops of Wonder Falls and Baby Falls. What more could you want. In eleven days paddling we did fourteen different rivers and hardly scratched the surface of what there is to offer in the Eastern USA.

PAUL O'SULLIVAN



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Photo: Frank Niesel





*Articles in Focus seem to be written for, and by, very, very, enthusiastic, committed paddlers. Here is an account of my introduction to canoeing. Like lots of beginners, I guess, I was unsure of myself, unfit, totally incapable of handling a paddle, let alone a boat.*

If it weren't for the patience commitment, and sheer sense of humour of the instructors that I met, I would have given up, once the going got tough. Instead, I have joined the BCU and am (almost!) contemplating buying a boat of my own.

I have not used the name of my club, or given the instructors their proper names. In the first place, they don't know that I have written this, in the second, the more I see of the BCU, the more I realise that there are many, many instructors up and down the country, all ready to give up their time to idiots like met.

This article may bring a reminiscent smile to somebody's face. Mostly I want it to be a big "Thank You" to the instructors, wherever they may be.

### **Beginners Luck**

"I'm not picking on you," says Kevin, our instructor, as he paddles towards me, the spray around him glittering in the sunlight. "I don't want you to think that I'm picking on you."

It is, I learn later, a favourite phrase of his. He says it to Janet, the other mother in our beginners group, one day when she has got an outside morning-after-the-night-before- headache.

"I'm not picking on you Janet, but would you like to tell the rest of the group why you don't feel up to doing those support strokes this morning?" Janet declines, sits there in silence. Maybe she doesn't want to admit it, maybe she's just feeling to ill to speak. He is not just doing it to make her squirm, however, he has a point, and he makes it. It's not sensible to go out paddling when you feel bad, you get

worse while you're out and maybe everybody has to go in, or what if a storm comes up suddenly? Disaster!

The occasion about which I am writing, happened some months previous to Janet's hangover. Kevin might always have a reason for whatever he says, but I, like Janet, don't always have to like it. He wants me to do that capsize drill again. He wants me, voluntarily, to roll my kayak over, pitch myself into the murky waters of the harbour. Not only this, but then to collect myself, bang three times on the sides of the kayak to alert others to my difficulties, not let go of the paddle, pull the strap of the spray-deck, roll forward, etc, etc.

### **Enthusiastic**

Maybe he has noticed that I am not one hundred percent enthusiastic about capsizing. I tend not to do the thing properly if I can get away with it, slip out sideways before the boat is completely upside down. He has told us, repeatedly, that you have to go completely over, in order to create an airlock, so that the kayak won't fill up with water when its occupant gets out. It will then give you something to hold on to while waiting for somebody to rescue you. Hmm. Mine is always full. My instincts, once I have over-balanced, are to kick the kayak away, to hell with the paddle, airlock, and everything else. Escape! Besides, I used to work for the Water Authority, I know what's in the water!

Beside me now, Kevin's face is impassive, unsmiling, but I could swear there is a glint in his eyes. Secret amusement. He can read my thoughts. I don't like to be beaten, so I summon up my

courage, smile placidly.

"Okay, I know. You're just picking on me." I put the paddle under my arm and rock the kayak quickly, before I can change my mind. Over it goes. cold, dark, instant upside-down- nausea and once again that almost overpowering urge to escape. Almost overpowering, but, for the first time, I stop upside down and think about it for a minute – well maybe two seconds. What do you know? This time its perfect! Bang three times, keep hold of the paddle, undo the spray deck, roll and come up still holding on to plastic. Success! Euphoria? Pretty close I can tell you.

So this is where you stop reading, right? All you macho paddlers who think nothing of grade six rapids, or seal launching off the top of the Niagara falls. Shrug your shoulders, put the magazine down, turn over to the next page. This was not only a capsize drill fer gossake. Forget it! Confidence is an odd thing however, and we've all got it in varying amounts, and over different things. I have a colleague who goes rock climbing in his spare time, and used to work as a bouncer for a rock band but he is terrified of mice, even the sweet little ones that children keep as pets are enough to turn his bones to water, he says. It doesn't worry me, therefore, that I find myself not liking being upside down in dirty water with my legs imprisoned in hard plastic. Compared to mice, it seem quite a reasonable thing to dislike.

So what am I doing here? Getting wet in our local harbour? I could be at home, achieving things, like a clean house or a weeded garden.

It was my daughter who start-

ed it. Good at school, she went to ballet and to Brownies and to all the other things that little girls go along to nowadays, and she never came alive until we were taken caving by a friend of my sister's when she visited New Zealand last year.

"When you get back home, you must do something really exciting with her". Said my sister severely, when we arrived back on the surface, wet but happy. "That child needs stimulating."

### **Bully**

My sister is a bully, and besides none of us like to be told that we are failing our children, so after we came back home I obediently started looking around for some exciting activity in our neighbourhood that was suitable for a ten year old.

It is in May that an acquaintance of mine happens to mention canoeing. She knows a good club locally. Canoeing? My daughter's ears prick up. That sounds as if it might be fun . . .

So, the next weekend, we set off for the harbour. Down on the beach there is a squat, unpretentious looking building, the watersports centre. There we met the club's two instructors. Anne is silver haired, calm and collected, and Kevin her husband, spare and wiry and formidably intelligent.

It is always best to strike while the iron is hot. Between now and next weekend we might think up a hundred reasons not to go canoeing, sorry, kayaking. Beside me Vicki is agog. She wants to go on the water very much.

By the end of the session everybody has made a fool of themselves in one way or another, and even Kevin has been tipped into the water by some boys who came last year and are intent on having some fun. I am impressed by the way he gets back into his kayak. It looks easy and I have just proved conclusively to myself that getting into a kayak, especially when

# beginners Luck

on the sea, is anything but easy. I am more than impressed by the way he comes shooting over the water towards us, leaving the boys shaking themselves dry, behind him.

He can place that kayak to an inch, despite the efforts of the swell, and the unruly lot of beginners in his way. I am envious. My boat seems to have a mind of it's own. It goes left when I want right, backwards when I want forward, every way but the way I want. I decide there and then that I want to be able to control a kayak like he can, to set it dancing and curvetting across the water like that. Very soon I have forgotten about the rest of the family, sit up, "No leaning back in a kayak!" and start enjoying myself. Even the capsize drill at the end of the session is no hassle.

## Bruises

Not everybody is having such a good time. My husband, having struggled to fit his long (34" inside) legs into even the biggest kayak, spent all his morning going round in circles and getting cramp. Monday morning he inspected his bruises and said firmly that if Vicki still wanted adventure she could go with her mother, or by herself, he added, taking stock of my bruises. No chance! Vicki has had a pretty good time but it is her mother who is hooked. You mean we have to wait all week before we can go again?

All the summer, Mondays would find me unseasonably dressed in black. Kath, on the photocopier used to look at me and nod wisely.

## Technical

"Ah! The black tights again, is it? How many bruises this time? Things some people do for pleasure!" Then she'd sniff, and tell me about her own weekend, warm and lazy. Totally unexciting. I think about the canoeing, hug myself inside. I almost managed to achieve a straight line yesterday, going from "our" beach, over to the shel-

ter of the wall. We have graduated from lectures about how to hold your paddle, and what to wear, to slightly more technical stuff such as drawstrokes, for moving sideways through the water, and stern rudders for directional control. Maybe that's why I achieved that straight line! I can get that kayak to turn on a sixpence, too. So long as nobody gets in the way and the wind and the waves don't muck things up, which they very frequently do . . . I am still cheating on the capsize drill, unobtrusively. Seems sensible to me, whatever Kevin says.

A couple of weeks later the weather has changed. There is some surf. Not much, not big, but white stuff nevertheless. Kevin spends a good while telling us how to handle our boats when we're out there. Then he demonstrates. Anne, still on the beach, is calmly giving instructions.

"And this is where you're glad you practised that capsize drill." She smiles. "Remember it. Use it."

I tell myself that it's not terror that I'm feeling. It is excitement. It is adrenalin. If I had a surfboard under me instead of a kayak tight around my legs I would be sneering at those waves. Not big enough, not big enough by half. It's true. How come they look so big from kayak? I soon find, however, that you don't have to bother too much with capsize drill in the surf. Once you start to go over, the wave just pulls the kayak off you, dumps it on the beach, leaving you a yard away, wet, surprised, but not trapped in plastic. Fun! Anne lifts an eyebrow.

It is not me who is lacking in confidence today, but the little ones. Vicki and Fiona, aged eleven, who blithely capsize their boats at the drop of a hat, who run along the raft instead of crawling gingerly, are sitting beyond the waveline today, looking white and wary. In fact most of the feminine contingent are out there, bobbing up and down gently and chatting. Blow that for a game of soldiers! I am sticking to the surf!

"Okay!" says Kevin, right beside me. "Paddle now, now! Harder! Yes, you've got it. Stern rudder, use

your stern rudder!" he shouts, "High brace and lean into the wave. Lean!" Miraculously I survived that one. He didn't. Got turned upside down, right on the beach. I noticed it particularly. Righted himself, humped himself around, and back out into the soup again before the next wave even broke. Pretty slick, I have to admit it.

Slowly, slowly, we improve. We take our BCU one star tests and start learning things towards the two star. We paddle around the harbour and learn about the marker buoys and the currents. We start listening to the shipping forecasts. Where on earth is North Utsire? When we capsize, instead of having to swim for the beach, we do X-rescues. We are picking up the jargon.

## Autumn

By the time the autumn comes, canoeing on a Sunday morning has become a fixture. All the strangers who started the course with us are starting to feel like friends, all the one's who have survived, that is. And no, we haven't had any casualties, some people just melted away. In September, it is only the keen one's who are left.

Jessica, only nine, asking, right in the middle of a demonstration, "Anne, why don't you give me my one star right now and then I would not have to come again. My mum says I can leave when I've got my one star . . . Do you ever get blue whales coming into this harbour? That would liven up these lessons . . . Anne, how old are you?" Anne answering with remarkable patience, and only privately expressing a desire to wring Jessica's neck. Gordon, always reserved, smiling with satisfaction when he gets the sculling draw right for the first time. Kevin, picking on him, saying it's about time he practised the eskimo rescue . . .

Now, I have been feeling uneasy about this self same thing for a number of weeks, and have been avoiding Kevin like the plague whenever I think he is likely to start thinking about eskimo rescues. I reckon I don't have any hangups about capsizing any longer, but, staying there, upside down in the

water, and waiting for a friend to come along and rescue you? I don't fancy it, my instincts start taking over again. Save yourself. Get out. Breathe, and then be rescued, not the other way round. No fear! So I watch Gordon closely. And guess what? Much to my amazement, he suddenly recollects, with a start of surprise, that he can't stay that long today, that he promised his girlfriend . . . that in fact, he's got to go right now . . . Gordon is as frightened as I am!

Kevin looks a bit bereft, with nobody else to pick on. I think back over all the Sundays we've had, the fair weather and the foul, the capsize drills and the capsize themselves, and I realise that if there is one thing the canoeing has taught me, it is to know myself. I am frightened of being turned upside down into the water with twenty kilograms of kayak on top of me. Frightened? I am terrified! But am I going to let it stop me? I look at Gordon's departing back, bite my lip, and paddle over to Kevin.

"The Eskimo rescue?" A sudden grin lights up his face. He knows. "You're ready to try it now, are you?"

I go into work on Monday, and Kath laughs expressively at my black tights.

"Oh, no!" How many bruises this week?" she asks, and I am surprised, the black tights are only because they go with what I am wearing. I haven't had any bruises for months.

"Nice weekend? Water warm was it?" she asks sarcastically, "Mad some people!" and she taps her head significantly. I look at the dirty blue photocopier, and beyond it, the clearer blue of the sky. I listen to Kath's account of her weekend, her shopping, her gardening and I feel like laughing. I am on air, because I managed that rescue in the end. Glory Hallelujah, I did it! I bounce down the corridor, with Kath's sarcastic voice still ringing in my ears.

"This is madness? . . . Eskimo rolling . . . insanity, here I come!"

P.M. Bell



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# Regional round up

## Chair's Chat

**REGIONAL NEWSLETTER!** Whats that? Most regions publish a newsletter on a fairly regular basis to keep members up to date on local happenings and these are usually distributed to clubs. So if you haven't seen one ask your club secretary, its probably been "filed"! Or contact your regional secretary to find out about your own personal copy. If your region hasn't yet got a newsletter, how about volunteering your services as editor?

"ENGLAND, NORTHERN IRELAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES". All including England will soon have their own sports council with Olympic and world championship standard excellence being the responsibility of a fifth sports council the "UK Sports Commission". Although in the short term this will not affect the funding of the BCU, CANI, SCA or WCA, in the longer term a clear identification of the British as opposed to the English roles of the BCU will need to be assessed, as each will be funded from a different source. A series of meetings are taking place between the four canoeing associations and with the Sports Councils in order to ensure everyone is fully informed. Any views on an English Canoe Association? Please jot them down on a piece of paper and let me have them or give me a ring.

Ron Hodgson



## Eastern

Photographs of your club, event, discipline or facility taken in the region are urgently needed to form part of the regional display, and for possible inclusion in the Regional Yearbook. Please start identifying dates for your events for 1994 now. Deadline for Yearbook information 1 December 1993. Please refer to the access page for details of the new agreement giving increased access at Dobbs Weir, Hoddesdon. The theme for National Canoeing Day events in the Region is Manchester 2000, with an emphasis on local events. The National Inter-Club Slalom Championships are at Cardington 11/12 September. Eastern Region Coaching Forum - Bedford on 25/26 September, with paddling opportunities, lectures and discussions. Details from Paul West (RCO).

Judith Coffin

## East Midlands

Our Regional weekend is 29/30 August, 1993 - Sunday will be at Holme Pierrepont - Monday will be at another venue within the region - please check the regional answer phone for further information nearer the time 0602 850930. The next open committee meeting will be at the Royal Oak, Tansley on Wednesday 15 September at 7.30pm. We are going to paddle at Matlock on our way to the meeting from about 5.30 to 6.45 ish. All paddlers from the Region are welcome, it is your chance to meet us and either encourage, moan or praise us, depending on how you feel. Tansley is 1.5 miles east of Matlock on the A615. We look forward to seeing you there.

Pearl Mulholland

## London & South East

The regional touring programme continues to operate successfully. In early June there were trips on the Grand Union and on the Cuckmere. The latter event attracted over 30 paddlers and proved to be very enjoyable. There is still a number of events to go on if you fancy a good day's paddling in convivial company. For details see the yearbook or contact the Regional Touring Officer. The new Regional Polo League has also got off to a good start. There are 2 divisions made up of 10 teams from across the region and already 2 tournaments have been held. This is the ideal competition for any club new to polo to become involved in the sport.

Chris Childs

## Northern

Please send me your National Canoeing Day plans for 4 September, as I am again the regional co-ordinator. Thanks to all who joined the Durham Cathedral Raft-Up; report in Northern Paddler. Contributions and photos for Northern Paddler must reach Sarah Shrimpton by 5 August. We have a £3000 Sports Council grant to help development. Details available in August for follow-up to Mike Jones Rally. Touring information from Ray Hudspeth, 2 Birch Court, Prudhoe NE42 6PZ. Ring Keith Morris for Cumbria coaching courses on 0539 658897; for the North East ring Dave Gray on 0661 836576. Committee members wishing to claim expenses are reminded to send details to Don Raspin, Treasurer, by September.

Mary Armstrong

## North West

Gary Charlton has got a new job based outside the region and has had to resign as Regional Chairman. Vice-Chairman Roy Sheriff has stepped into his shoes; you can contact him at 113 Stanhope Street, St Helens WA8 2BT - Tel: 0744 59514. Mike Weaver is unable to continue as NW Regional Round-Up Editor; this is why the information is a little sparse in this issue. Please contact Roy Sheriff urgently if anyone out there would be willing to undertake this important communication role.

Extract from NW Minutes

## Southern

Hearfelt thanks to the host clubs - RLP, Eyot BC and Longridge/Windsor for their help and hospitality on three very successful Southern Region Thames tours, which took in the backwaters wherever possible. They were fun to paddle and very sociable, with BBQ's (afternoon tea and home-made cakes at Windsor!) afterwards. They have raised over £100 in support of coaching, access and recreational canoeing in the Region. Two events still to go: 5 September, 'Introduction to Sea Canoeing' at Lepe, Hants. (John Kingsley - 06285 330951) and 25 September - 'Pool Slalom Fun Event' at Aldershot Lido (BVCC - 0252 330951). Please let me know on 0252 850657, what your club is doing for National Canoeing Day on 4 September.

Charles Hicks

## South West

I write on the longest day and it is incredible that the year is half over already. I've just returned from Canoe 93 at Pewsey. Congratulations to Keith Brigstock and Stonehenge CC for their effort and organisation. The

event was successful with a fair attendance, particularly on Sunday, one of the warmest days of the year so far! Three Regions Guide sales are starting to take off, to get your copy send me £4.50. Coming events include the Penzance Sea Race, August 28; Exe Estuary Paddlers Picnic, 30 August; British Surf Championships, Widemouth Bay, September 4/5; Dart Estuary Race and Tour, September 11; Giant Open Canadian Slalom at the Quay, Exeter, September 12.

Dennis Walls

## West Midlands

New date for PADLATHON 15 August. Contact 021 771 4448. WORCESTER DOGGY PADDLE 5 September - 16 miles on Severn. Contact 0905 773689. BLACK COUNTRY TOUR 19 September - Dudley area canals. Contact 021 520 7861. MID WALES WHITE WATER 2 or 9 October. Contact 021 356 7619. MARATHON RACES, IRONBRIDGE 15 August, HASLER FINAL FLADBURY 19 September, SUTTON COLDFIELD 26 September, FRANK LUZMORE CANOE half marathon 26 September, SOLIHULL 60km Circuit Time Trial 3 October, CANNOCK CHASE 24 October. Contact 021 745 3415. URGENTLY NEEDED Regional Secretary, Access Officer, Sea Representative, LCO for Hereford, Local Access Officer for Lower Teme. If interested contact M Nicholls 021 360 2136. If you would like to be kept up to date with regional tours send a SAE to D Bateman, Acker's Trust, Small Heath Birmingham B11 2PY.

Rosemary Preece

## Yorkshire & Humberside

Mike Twiggs has met officers of Yorkshire Water about the Washburn Development Plan. Karl Day is to be appointed as Development Officer/Clerk of Works. The new toilet block is a priority and a grant has been requested from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. The regional committee is planning a meeting with club-officers; please contact the Regional Secretary to register interest and make suggestions. The charity paddle organised by Bernard Chapman in aid of the Leeds General Infirmary Coronary Unit raised £1,500 in a 172 mile paddle on the Leeds - Liverpool Canal; many congratulations! Once again Norman Taylor will be producing the Regional Yearbook; suggestions, changes and articles for the 1994 edition to him before December, please.

Extracts from YHORKIE

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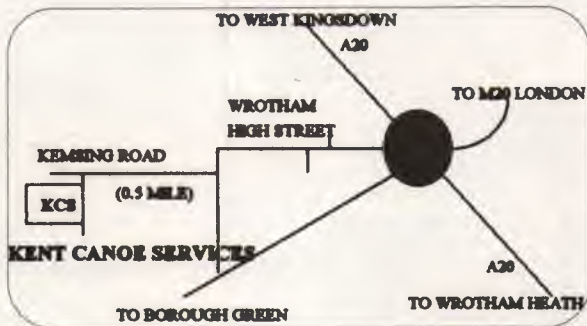
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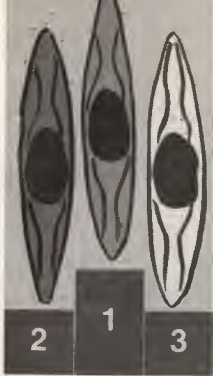
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# Competition *focus*

## TIDY HIRE INTERNATIONAL CANOE SLALOM May 22/23 93

Timing of the event meant that most of the other strong European nations teams were unable to compete at Holme Pierrepont this year, however, the quality of our own British Team alongside first class representation from the Home Countries meant that competitors and spectators alike were not disappointed.

A good course and fine weather, together with lots of good humour and an interested sponsor, resulted in a fine weekends competition and a booster for our World Championships team using the event as "start-line" practice.



**Above:**  
Ian Raspin  
**Far Left:**  
Paddles Up  
**Left:**  
Paul Ratcliffe

### RESULTS

#### K1 Men Senior

1. Richard Fox GBR, 130.98; 2. Ian Raspin GBR, 131.16; 3. Paul Ratcliffe Llangollen, 133.60

#### K1 Men Junior

1. Dejan Kralj SLO, 148.66; 2. Neil Buckley GBRJ, 154.13; 3. Chris Charter WAL, 157.15

#### K1 Women Senior

1. Lynn Simpson GBR, 153.55; 2. Rachel Crosbee GBR, 162.12; 3. Anne Boixel FRA, 163.41

#### K1 Women Junior

1. Kath Pidgon WAL/GBRJ, 186.17; 2. Diane Woods ENG/GBRJ, 189.51; 3. Anita Bennett ENG/GBRJ, 209.35

#### C1

1. Mark Delaney SCO/GBR, 153.84; 2. Stephen O'Flaherty IRL, 154.19; 3. Rob Moss Exch.Road, 161.17

#### C2

1. P Orton/P Shreeve ENG, 187.10; 2. T/GWALLING Shepperton, 191.27; 3. S Pitt/M Miller SCO/GBR, 194.85

Shaun Pearce won the international Slalom Sprint event with youngster Paul Ratcliffe just .8 of a second behind.

## Canoe Slalom News

### National Indoor Canoe Slalom

BCU Slalom Committee announce a New National Slalom Competition - open to all Divisions - knock-out competition - limited places - to be held at Ponds Forge International Centre, Sheffield on Sunday 12 December 1993. Teeside Development Corporation are to be the sponsors of the event, the biggest of its kind and a first in the UK!

More information in the next edition of Focus, but meanwhile, if you are a competitor in division

5, right through to Premier, this is for you - see for details from Slalom Development Officer, Sue Wharton, 177 Preston Road, Chorley, Lancs PR6 7AX.

Starter packs containing basic information for newcomers are still available and free of charge, write to Slalom Development Officer.

### Slalom Coach Course

The first of the new-style coach led courses for Slalom is to take place in Nottingham from 9-10 October. Attendance is by selection, but if you would like to be considered for this

course, please apply to the Olympic Team Coach at the BCU Offices.

The Slalom Coaching Development Group has been working hard in proposing revisions to the syllabus and procedures for courses, and the means of achieving a network of coaches able to deliver sufficient courses to both cater for, and promote demand.

Once the proposals are finally determined and agreed, an official 'launch' is planned probably at the 1994 Exhibition.

### Slalom Award Scheme

coming soon - watch for details

and the launch of the scheme at the National Inter-Clubs competition to be held at Cardington on Sept 11/12.

### Attention Div 3 Competitors

Halifax CC remind you that entries for the Sowerby Bridge Div 3 to be held on 16/17 October must now be sent to J Buckley, 1a Springfield Lane, Hursted, Rochdale, OL16 2RS

### Attention Clubs

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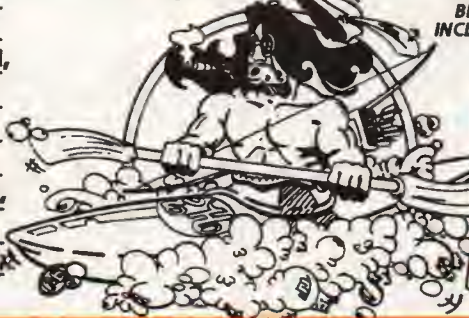
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# The ALPINE

## CANOE RALLY

From such places as the Highlands of Scotland and the further reaches of the West Country, parties of Brit paddlers trekked across France to arrive in Briançon during the weekend of May for the week-long Alpine Canoe Rally organised, for the second year by, Mr Mike Bruce of Alpine Options. The weather was brilliant; the air, as befits the town that claims to be the highest in Europe, was clear and everywhere was mercifully free of tourists particularly in the car parks, cafes and countryside.

This was small but ardent band of canoeists but at least this meant that we were not to be troubled by any mega-rally style eddy jams even at the Serpent's Tail of the Dauphine Alps, the Rabioux rapid. No queues, no hassle. Over forty people, in groups of varying size, emerged from motor cars shedding blankets of lager cans worn since the Sealink Terminal and blinked dazedly in the Hautes-Alpes sunlight while clutching their well-thumbed copies of Terry Storry (the book, that is). The early arrivals were paddling during Saturday whilst the laggards were trying to puzzle out how to cook a hastily purchased frozen pizza with four hotplates and no oven. The answer to this problem is to use a great deal of Scottish charm to foster the Auld alliance and deprive the concierge at the apartments of her microwave.

The accommodation was excellent and was studio apartments in a modern building immediately beside the River Guisane in Briançon itself. Initial reservations before arrival caused by a description of a bedroom as a 'cabine' (defined in one French dictionary as a telephone kiosk - would the beds be vertical or horizontal?) were soon dispelled. It came as part of a package (with Ferry fare and insurance) negotiated by Alpine Options. It was well equipped and furnished, and, indeed one group on the fourth floor found it to be sufficiently over-furnished to dispose of a chair at 1.30 in the morning. It was a pity that they only noticed their attached dry-cag just after it started its descent towards a balcony far below belonging to a party which had lost an identical cag to

the wind on the previous day. Truly, this was manna from Heaven.

### Paddling? Oh yes . . .

There was some paddling and quite a lot of it. Some groups were big enough to stand alone; others joined forces. The usual acclimatising 'stone me that water's fast and cold' runs from Briançon to Prelles and St.Clement to the Rabioux (both on the Durance) took place on the Sunday for many followed by, typically, a trip on the Upper Guisane. It is one of the fascinations of Alpine Canoeing that every-day French life and

whiter-than-white water often stand side by side and the battered boater can be battling it out sideways in a seemingly serious stopper whilst the flower of French femininity us pegging out the family washing in her back garden three metres away 'avec pas de concerne'. The villages flash by, a blur of wood, brick and geranium, while our dedicated photographers, sculling with one hand, snap picturesque hostelrys with the waterproof Instamatics.

### Spring Melt

Being the Spring melt, there was generally enough water everywhere and, occasionally, there was too much. Frequently, the shorter boats had a hard time of it on the bigger rivers. At one stage in the short gorge on the Ubaye before the 'Wall of Death' above Condamine (not THE gorge) your correspondent was trying to come to terms with the fact that his four immediate companions, all paddlers of experience, were simultaneously 'resting' in the upside-down mode. Rather than plan a possible rescue, he promptly joined them . . . how good it was to be out of the sun. The German submarine flotilla, all eventually (if only temporarily) upright for the sweep around the big bend of the 'Wall' itself. Meanwhile, somewhere at the back of this convoy the team fifteen year old had test-piloted his Corsica S in a massive airborne stopper-assisted backloop and was giving his very close attention to the succeeding holes. The rest of that story is, as they say, good video.

## loads of sunshine and water



**Above: Duggie Arnot at the looping spot in Embrum "Harbour".**  
**Photo: Milroy/Johnson**  
**Right: Neil of the "Red Helmets" display team, on the Gyr during the Alpine Canoe Rally.**  
**Photo: Rod Hill**

All the standard rivers of the Durance basin were tackled except, perhaps, for the Guil which was very full over most of its length. Some people reached less familiar rivers such as the Romanche and some groups from outside the rally were running things like the Reallon ("a rock-infested ditch" said our man on the spot) and the Bachelard. One group took an unscheduled trip, turning sharp right at the end of the Claree (at that point II/III) onto the Upper Durance (quickly turning to VVI) in a noble and successful and pursuit of a swimming German novice. In fact, the Claree from Nevaiche downwards very good value, especially the first section from the campsite at Salle which was running high. The Lower Guisane also achieved popularity, not only for its canoeing merits but also for the fact that the takeout was 100 metres both from the apartments and the local bar.

### Security

The security of boats was a concern although none were lost to theft. Paddlers were very canoe-lock conscious and for those taking

extreme measures it proved much more difficult to persuade a vigilant concierge that a Spud (being carried illegally upstairs to an apartment balcony) was in reality a shopping basket than it might be to convince British Airways that it could be a suitcase.

The rally was a considerable success. It brought together a broad spread of experience and background which allowed for mutual support on the river, good shuttle arrangements and excellent socials. The whole atmosphere was relaxed and amicable. There was no pressure; if you didn't like it, you didn't do it. The final barbecue, hosted by Mike Bruce, was high above the Guisane on the Friday evening. Seeing the last of the sun touch the snow on the peaks of the Ecrins mountains, watching the flower filled meadows fading into the twilight as the villages below formed a river of light on the valley floor made a memorable evening. It would be a very hardened canoeist who could turn away from the Alps and dismiss them with "Been there, done that".

IAN RILEY





**Richard Fox**  
Men's K1 Gold 1993



**River Noce, Mezzaana, Italy**  
More Gold for Fox and teammates, Medals all round!

**T**he River Noce, a silver ribbon slipping through the mountains of a fairy tale valley, the Val di Sole in Northern Italy, was the site of the 1993 Canoe Slalom World Championships. The emerald green of the forests combined with the strong powerful shapes of the Dolomites constantly lifted our spirits throughout the competition held for the first time over a five day period on one of the most unspoiled and challenging wild water courses in Europe.



**Right:**  
The World Championship Val Di Sole course, 1993.



450 metres long, the course at Mezzana – Marilleva had been specifically planned to provide a sufficient standard of stability of water flow whilst maintaining respect for the environment and landscape of the area. By varying the flow of water in the turbines upstream and constantly checking the flow using measuring instruments, a constant Grade III-IV level can be held. Preparation Four years ago, feverish preparation began by the Organising Committee to prepare the site and ensure that it was of World Championship standard. The two fundamental requirements were met – the site was superb and funding from the Province of Trentino to provide the various peripheral buildings and structures was guaranteed. Twenty thousand million lire has been spent and all on the basis that following the event, the buildings will be turned into a new Town Hall, Sports Centre and Canoeing Centre and will belong to the local community.

New facilities for timekeepers, judges, press, TV and radio, data transmission, meeting rooms and spectators were all provided and all carefully integrated into the environment.

Teams from 34 nations gathered at Mezzana-Marilleva, a mountain ski resort during the winter months, to com-



added challenge, was quite at ease and for much of the final, her first run time kept her in bronze medal position. She went 'clear' on her second run but was just edged out of the medals despite losing three seconds in the stopper at gate 21. Animated and confident as ever, at the end of the race, she bubbled and threw down the gauntlet to the World for the 1995 event. Still young and relatively inexperienced, she shared the joy at Myriam's magnificent win. The six times champion of France felt a happiness deep inside and her immaculate first run gave her gold by five seconds. Germany's Lisa Micheler was in fourth place and Lynn in fifth. All three medals were won by France, the first time ever that one nation had taken a 'clear' sweep in the women's event.

It was interesting to hear Jean Michel Prono, French women's coach explain that ten years of preparation had been necessary and that the women's category had employed a full time coach since 1975. Currently, a great deal of attention was being lavished on the younger canoeists and the next main objective was the 1995 World Championships. More work was necessary, particularly with critical analysis of the course, a remark which interested British supporters who had watched Myriam checking different sections of the course even when her own class was performing.

### Canadian doubles

The Canadian doubles final followed without particular British interest and the thrill of the Czech Republic pair Mitoslav Simek, and Jiri Rohan, competing at their fifth World Championships winning Gold after fifteen years of training together was experienced by us all. French crews provided second and third place.

Four in the Final And so to the final race, the men's individual kayak event. Torrential rain and overnight snow in the Dolomites caused chaos prior to the planned start time of 9.05am. Chief Official Albert Woods and Chief Judge Peter Hirster and the Course Commission designed a new course and two hours later with just one forerunner to watch, the 'Blue Riband' event began.

### Mens

The four British men, Fox, Jones, Pearce and Raspin had all qualified, Fox and Jones having achieved first and second fastest times. No pots were broken on the first run by either Raspin or Pearce, but Melvyn Jones, now living in Augsburg, stormed down the course without penalty and took the lead only to have it snatched away by Fox moments later. It was to be



Richard's first run which took Gold and he wrote himself into the history books having won both individual and world team titles five times. Richard Weiss of USA, 1989 silver medallist took silver but Melvyn's first run total gave him the bronze medal. Shaun Pearce, having collected fifty penalties on his first run is also to be congratulated, coming back with a superb second run to take fourth place. Ian Raspin improved on his first run position, but as a result of a five second penalty took eighteenth place and was understandably devastated.

And finally, the medal ceremony and the closing ceremony held together in the natural green bowl dug out over the years by the River Noce. A small delegation from Nottingham in addition to numerous British supporters and the British Team watched Richard Fox take his Gold medal and the Paul Farrant Trophy yet again. The President of the International Canoe Federation passed the flag to Albert Woods, President of the BCU in order to show the World that it would be Great Britain who would provide the venue for the next World Championships in 1995. No-one doubts the amount of work necessary to achieve the standard set by the Italian's - there's a great deal of work to be done.

And now the villages in the valley will return to peace and tranquillity, the river will once again be shared by fishermen, canoeists and tourists, all in search of peace on other days.

We must thank the people of Val di Sole for their enormous enthusiasm, for their warmth, generosity and hospitality, for their spirit, just the same as the athletes descending the water and the rocks of the Noce. Thanks are due to the Organising Committee who coordinated 1887 officials and journalists, 508 of whom were volunteers - they almost reached perfection running this event, but then again, none of us can control the weather.

**Sue Wharton**  
Slalom Development Officer  
All Photos by Tony Tickle



Below:  
K1 team 1993  
with fathers



## RESULTS

### K1 Men

1. Richard Fox GBR, 119.95;
2. Richard Weiss USA, 120.52;
3. Melvyn Jones GBR, 122.37;
4. Shaun Pearce GBR, 123.14;
18. Ian Raspin GBR, 127.93

### K1 Ladies

1. Myriam Jerusalemi FRA, 144.89;
2. Anne Boixel FRA, 149.41;
3. Marianne Agulhon FRA, 150.04

### C2

1. Simek/Rohan CZE, 155.66;
2. Addison/Forgues FRA, 156.67;
3. Saidi/Del Ray FRA, 156.72

### C1

1. Martin Lang GER, 140.44;
2. Herve Delamarie FRA, 140.92;
3. Sverren Kaufmann GER, 142.98;
10. Gareth Marriott GBR, 147.89

### K1 Men's Team

1. Fox/Jones/Pearce GBR, 153.91;
2. FRA, 156.20;
3. CZE, 157.61

### C1 Team

2. Marriott/Delaney/Horsman GBR

### K1 Ladies Team

3. Simpson/Crosbee/Lund GBR

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# WORLD WILD WATER RACING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

*River Noce, Val De Sole, Italy*



Blackman who upset the early seeding by claiming 42nd place out of 58 starters.

British K1 series leader Ian Tordoff, placed 20th in 13:21:97. "I was just not quick enough", he explained, and spoke for many when he added that home rivers, just don't supply the background on which to build world success.

Alan Tordoff, struck a boulder at the bottom of the Escalator around 1200m from home and aiming for the top 10 finished 6 seconds off target, in 15th position with his time of 13:20:41 "It's getting tougher at the top" he said.

Lower water on the day saw Neil Stamps revert to his longer paddles. It was a mistake which cost him dear. The gorge which should have proved his element cost him three places and buried his and Britain's hopes of a medal. He finished 9th in 13:14:52.

## Britain best individual

What was to prove Britain best individual run of the championships came on Friday. Then Andrea Clayton had turned in Britain's best women's result in something close to a decade.

World Cup winner Uschi Profanter of Austria produced the race of her life, found the perfect line and beat defending 2 times title holder Karin Wirz by a massive 15 seconds with her title taking 13:33:76.

Clayton, kept from the water by infection earlier in the week and with only her non-stop behind her finished 8th in 14:33:70.

Cynthia Berry, who made a late return to serious paddling to mount her successful team bid "hit a few things on the way down" but came away with her best individual performance in 3 championships when she finished 12th in 14:44:02.

Julie Ashton made a 'twitzy' descent under pressure to finish 14th in 14:52:40 but Karen Porter's Annus Horribilis took another cruel turn as she developed a chest infection just two days before the final. The British number 1 from last year, who recovered from a bad start to her season to squeeze into the championships line up "really struggled" all the way down to finish 1 8th in 15:03:48.

## Canadian singles

The Canadian singles title went to Italian Champion Vladi Panato who finished 10th in Yugoslavia last time around. On a course which had the Canadians fighting for survival in Italy, first timer Mark DeFreitas found his work cut out to finish 26th in 15:36:83, John Willacy survived near submersion to take 24th in 15:29:99, Rob Pumphrey finished 22nd in 15:05:65 while Mackon Singh, failed to make his hoped for break through finishing 18th in 14:54:05. But Panato knew he was home if not quite dry by the final split and crossed the line 3 seconds clear of the more fancied Andrej Jelenc in 14:12:63.

In the Canadian Doubles Andy and Iain Clough beat Dave Belbin and opening ceremony oath taker Phil Caunt by just over a second for 17th position, Scott Simpson and Simon Twigger snatched 23rd position from something close to disaster while French world rankings leaders Faysse and Roos finished 10 seconds ahead of the best in 13:31:91 to make the title their own.

## Last day rally

France on their way to topping the medal table with 4 Golds in the 7 medal haul dominated Sunday's team programme winning three out of the four events. On a morning of drama and spectacle the Brits staged a last day rally to prevent an empty handed return home.

France and Germany were in a class of their own in finishing 1st and 2nd in the women's race while Britain's trio of backstarter Andrea Clayton, Julie Ashton, and lead-off Cynthia Bery were equally clear winners of bronze, a repeat of Berry's team medal success of 1985.

Alan Tordoff led the men's kayak squad through a fast first kilometre designed to tempt and sink the opposition. Gickler's German squad faltered early and were never in the hunt for the medals. Masson, Graille and Calliet picked up the British gauntlet and charged through to give France victory. But it was only the home straight push by the Italians, carried along on a wave of frenetic applause, which decided the minor placings. Italy took silver, just 1 second clear of Britain who claimed a well earned bronze.

## Bill Melville



## RESULTS

### K1 Men Individual

1. Markus Gickler 12:58:61, Germany;
2. Roberto Pontarollo 13:02:66, Italy;
3. Cesare Mulazzi 13:06:39, Italy;
9. Neil Stamps 13:14:62, Great Britain;
15. Alan Tordoff 13:20:41, Great Britain;
20. Ian Tordoff 13:21:97, Great Britain;
42. Neil Blackman 13:53:43,

### K1 Ladies Individual

1. Uschi Profanter 13:33:76, Austria;
2. Karin Wirz 13:48:04, Germany;
3. Sabine Goetschy 13:48:66, France;
8. Andrea Clayton 14:33:70, Great Britain;
12. Cynthia Berry 14:44:02, Great Britain;
14. Julie Ashton 14:52:40, Great Britain;
18. Karen Porter 15:03:48, Great Britain.

### K1 Mens Team

1. Masson /Calliet /Graille 13:26:00, France;
2. Mulazzi /Pontarollo / Ceccato 13:34:27 Italy;
3. Stamps /Tordoff /Tordoff 13:35:27 Gt Britain.

### K1 Ladies Team

1. Goetschy /LeGallo /Castet 14:29:05, France;
2. Wirz /Wallpott /Hollereth 14:55:68, Germany;
3. Clayton /Berry /Ashton 15:22:36 Gt Britain.

### C1 Individual

1. Vladi Panato 14:12:63, Italy;
2. Andrej Jelenc 14:21:89, Slovenia;
3. Jean Luc Christin 14:22:46, France;
18. Mackon Singh 14:54:05, Great Britain;
22. Rob Pumphrey 15:15:65, Great Britain;
24. John Willacy 15:29:99, Great Britain;
26. Mark DeFreitas 15:36:83, Great Britain.

### C1 Team

1. Christin /Bonnardel /Rouvel 14:46:05, France;
2. Steinhauser /Schneider /Schwarz 14:58:12, Germany;
3. Jelenc /Kancler /Hocevar 14:58:80, Slovenia;
6. Singh /Pumphrey /Willacy, 15:45:77 Great Britain.

### C2 Individual

1. Damion Faysse /Pierre Roos 13:31:91, France;
2. Vladimir Vala /Jaroslav Slucik 13:41:53, Slovakia;
3. Gregor Simon /Stephan Eich 13:45:30, Germany;
17. Andy & Ian Clough 14:26:39, Great Britain;
18. Dave Belbin /Phil Caunt 14:27:79, Great Britain;
23. Scott Simpson /Simon Twigger 14:53:50, Great Britain.

### C2 Team

1. Simon + Eich /Dajek + Knittel /Kennel + Mueller 14:11:23, Germany;
2. Faysse + Roos /Baechler + Francois /Laurent + Gauthier 14:14:26, France;
3. Naldi + Viciani /Pozzo +Matteucci /Cambelli + Zanoni 14:30:59, Italy;
6. Clough + Clough /Belbin + Caunt /Twigger + Simpson 14:56:79, GBR.

**W**orld Champion Markus Gickler paddling in circles on the final bend of the Noce was the first hint that all was not as it should be. He finished the non-stop training run well down the results table to turn the new competitor order rule on its head, as with half a dozen other kayak paddlers who left the river early, he denied himself back of field advantage in the final.

It was, said the 6' 9" German, a protest against the two minute interval introduced to help live TV coverage - "Who watches TV on Saturday morning anyway?" he said. "Children watching clowns".

Suspecting that the artificially lengthened programme would leave late starters fighting a stiff late morning breeze in the final push for the line Gickler made his feelings known - and made sure that whoever was left with a home straight battle against the elements it would not be him.

On the day, Gickler's gamble failed to pay any real dividend but that made little difference to the outcome. Having set himself up with his early run, he soothed his jangling nerves taking pot shots at the opposition with his camera as one after another they tried and tried in vain to dislodge him from his throne.

Gickler retained his title in 12m 58.61s - 4 seconds clear of last starter Roberto Pontarollo of Italy.

## Disaster

But Saturday was a head in hands disaster day for Britain, despite a strong start from second off, Neil





# Dr D's agony column

DR D's Agony Column This page will become a regular feature depending on demand. If you have a question relating to any aspect of paddlesport, our distinguished panel of experts will be able to help. Send your queries to Agony Column, Canoe Focus, BCU HQ.

## SWAN HUNTER

As a serving Police Officer working in Birkenhead and having dealt with dozens of terrifying incidents I feel I must write to you and tell you the most horrendous occurrence in my life during a place canal kayak outing (or what should have been).

One Saturday morning in mid-May this year my wife dropped me off on the Shropshire Union Canal mid way between Chester and our house in Neston on the Wirral, and whilst she was shopping I set myself afloat in my Pyranha Tourer, for a planned three hours trip, when she would later return and pick me up at the same place.

I set off towards Ellesmere Port in glorious sunshine, and life couldn't have been sweeter. An hour later and in the middle of nowhere I saw a glorious vision of true rural England. On the left side of the canal amongst bull rushes and rye grass was a magnificent swan proudly perched on a large nest look-

ing elegant and severe. As I paddled past (giving it a wide berth) it suddenly dawned on me how lucky it was that Daddy Swan wasn't around. I always remembered my Dad telling me how an adult swan could break human limbs with their huge muscle bound wings and I gave a sigh of relief.

Turning the next bend in the meandering canal my worst nightmare was realised, because there steaming towards me was Daddy Swan not looking very happy! The beast's huge frame was fully puffed up and arched neck extended in my direction. It really looked the Norman Bates of the bird world.

My heart was beating like a scared rabbit and I tentatively steered my canoe to give the monster a wide berth. To my horror and with one sweep of its flipper like feet it blocked my path intending to meet me head on. In sheer panic I made for the bank, too steep to quickly exit to the relative safety of

the tow path. Thinking quickly, and ostrich like, I hid my head in the canal bank foliage and pathetically hoped the swan-from-hell would pass by totally oblivious to a multi coloured 13 stone quivering wimp in a 10 foot boat. Alas it didn't and suddenly with blood curdling shriek and a whoosh of wings he attacked pecking at my head and clubbing my torso. Screaming with fear I pushed off from the bank and elbowed the beast back into the water. Momentarily stunned I paddled like the Duracell Rabbit away from Mum and Dad. One hundred yards on and a fleeting glance over my shoulder should I have seen the swan on the horizon serenely paddling back to see how his missus was. Wrong, the size of a vulcan bomber flying two foot above the water it struck again, resting on the back of the spray deck and repeating its Mike Tyson tactics. In genuine fear for my life I conserved my energy and

side swiped the bird with my Rhino paddle again knocking it into the water. Several hundred yards further on and the deadly pursuit ceased and the filthy bird from Hades returned home.

The next hour was spent sat on the tow path practising deep breathing exercises and wondering whether I would ever see the family again. It was now time to turn around and go back.

Cautiously re-entering the water every stroke was undertaken with the stealth of a Royal Marines Commando in the Special Boat Squadron peering around every corner until eventually I saw the mugger on the horizon, I quickly alighted and walked along the towpath all the time being dead eyed by the expectant father.

Eventually reaching my start/finish point I was greeted by my wife who enquired whether I'd had a pleasant trip "Never mind the trip, get me home" came the reply.

IAN COUSINS

### One of many letters re psychotic swan attacks...read on.

Dear Dr D (whoever you may be) I was interested in your reply about the swan. I was chased around 5 miles down the River Danube by an irate swan (a few years ago now). The river was probably 1 mile wide and this majestic creature homed in from at least 200m away and seemed to enjoy the chase.

More recently 6 Charolais bulls and on a separate occasion 2 frisky horses showed a great deal of interest in me floating past their particular piece of water! At the time I felt all of these added at least a couple of numbers to the grade of the river and as I paddled like stink I was totally sympathetic to myself and not the wildlife.

I'm fairly clean, green and environmentally aware but appreciate it when animals don't go round "duffing" up canoeists.

**CHRIS SLADDEN**

*I think I know you Chris...rumour has it you are a proper Doctor (unlike me) and you like waterfalls but it seems you are afearred of wildlife. May I prescribe watching Wildlife on one and reading some books by David Attenborough, or Desmond Morris. In no time at all you'll learn about animal body language and territorial behaviour, or at least when to run or when to stand your ground. Our neighbours had a dog who would only bite people who tried to run away. We all knew this but the kids in the next street did not. Animals have a sense of humour too.*



## RODEO

Dear Dyer D I am a 14 year old canoe enthusiast and am also a member of the Bradford and Bingley Canoe Club. I do a lot of slalom but am very interested in taking up Rodeo and I was hoping you could give me some advice.

In the June Issue of Canoe Focus, there was an article on rodeos, I found it very interesting but it didn't answer all my queries:

1. What actually are all the moves, ie pirouettes, enders, etc. And basically, how do you do them? (I've consulted many books including the BCU handbook but only popouts are roughly described).
2. Do you have to have a high volume kayak, or would a low volume slalom boat do? (specifically a Nomad Extra) If you do, could you please tell me some good designs.
3. How big do weirs and stoppers have to be to practice stunts well on them?

**JAMES BOWSKILL**

*Well... Rodeo skills are just whitewater and river running skills applied to playing, a sort of freestyle messing about on waves and stoppers. Everyone does it to a certain degree but the Rodeo paddlers have given some moves names.*

*1. The best way to learn them is to go along to a rodeo and talk to the paddlers. They are an open and friendly bunch of riff raff and will happily show you the moves and how to do them. The Rodeo cal-*



endar is almost over for this year but you will see a good standard of playboating at Nottingham, The Bitches, and the Thames Weirs most weekends. Check your yearbook.

2. Most rodeo paddlers paddle a plastic whitewater boat. The whole idea is that you compete in the boat you usually paddle for river trips so its not too expensive to compete. Watch what the other folks paddle : most will let you have a go in their kayak !

3. Size isn't important. The shape of the wave or stopper is. Start small, big water doesn't give you time to learn. When you first play in stoppers especially on weirs make sure you are in good company. Get some tuition and safety cover from experienced paddlers who have BCU qualifications (Senior Instructor/Advanced Proficiency ideally) and don't do it alone. Good BCU coaching will save you loads of time and teach you easy ways of shredding about and sharpening your white-water skills.



## SURF

Dear Dr D I am completing a project concerned with many different aspects of kayak surfing. Unfortunately, I cannot find any information concerning new equipment, such as the 'surf shoe' and its affect on kayak surfing. Also I need information in respect to the conflicts that exist between kayak surfers and other sea users, and problems they experience with access to waterways.

If possible, could you send me any relevant information as it would be much appreciated.

### MATT HATCH

Try the BCU Canoeing Handbook which has an excellent section on surf. This covers craft and techniques. Most modern surfers regard Surf Shoe's much like dinosaurs ; you don't see many of them (*Surfus Extinctus*) and, whilst they played a big part in surf development, have now been ousted in the food chain by wave skis. If you read the last three copies of FOCUS you will pick up the Boardie v Kayaker access/agro situation. To find out more about surf contact Simon Discome, BCU Surf, 8 Wordsworth Close, Chelston, Torquay, Devon with an SAE.

Dear Dr D It was the night before my first trip to the Washburn, and I was so excited (afraid?) that I was unable to sleep. During the wee small hours I found my thoughts kept returning to all matters

of canoeing. One particular aspect occupied many waking moments: "What is the collective term for canoeists?" I dismissed suggestions such as "A Raft of Canoeists" and "A Brace" as being too obvious. Likewise neither "A Break in" nor "A Break Out" seemed acceptable as they were too reminiscent of Group 4 activities. Unable to come up with a satisfactory answer I eventually drifted off to sleep and was immersed in watery dreams.

It was only as I entered the weir on my first run that I found myself recalling the previous night's thoughts. "AH HA" I thought, "A swim of canoeists". Undeterred, I embarked upon my second trip down, and approached the weir, this time with gusto. Thoughts of "An attack" seemed to aggressive, even taking time the access situation into account. This time, I came up with my best possibility so far... "A Roll". Despite numerous pints and several hours spent in the pub, no alternatives to this latter have been offered by any of my colleagues, so I wondered if you or any of your readers could come up with a solution.

### KATH PADMORE

Looks like Dr. D's competition time ! What is the noun of congregation relating to an assembly of paddlers ? Answers on a postcard please to DR D, What are we called when we are Altogether, BCU, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Notts NG2 5AS. Prizes will include : BCU handbooks for Runners up and a day's coaching on White Water at Holme Pierrepont for the winner. Closing Date 28 August.



# Access news

*In the last edition I promised you some information on the Dart and the Lune, two rivers with access agreements under great pressure through extensive use. To set the scene here is an extract sent to me by one BCU member expressing his point of view. I must point out that this is only one part of a much longer letter which makes many useful points:*

"I have been meaning to write about access for some time, and your recent letters have prompted me to do so.

Firstly, an incident to report. Two Octobers ago, on a wet Saturday, having paddled the Wharfe in the morning, we wanted to do another river. We had paddled the upper stretch of the Wharfe, it had risen and fallen again in the space of three hours, was there any more water on the other side of the hills? We went over to the Lune - there was more than enough water, only two or three fishermen near the takeout - surely we could co-exist? No - unfortunately the bailiff was around and warned us off. So we paddled the Rawthey, also with plenty of water - a superb river. On this trip we met two fishermen only - there

were just two of us, four people sharing a river seems o.k to me! the first fisherman said hello as we passed, well clear of him. The second threatened us - "We'll be waiting for you." This made the trip more exciting as we paddled on without much inspection.

On the lower gorge we rescued a lamb that would otherwise never have escaped. Sure enough, three members of the green welly brigade were assembled on the first bridge in Sedburgh. Luckily the car was by the second bridge and we avoided confrontation.

I've written this in some detail because it illustrates a number of points about access. Firstly, my own feelings on access - we had every right to be there! There was plenty of water, we were a small

group and certainly didn't spoil the fishing, our friends high blood pressure was really his own problem. We paddled in October (outside agreed times) because that was the weekend we had free. I now have a family, canoeing time is precious. If there is enough water, then agreements of any value must ensure that rivers are available."

When looked at from the point of view of one group of paddlers this would seem reasonable. What harm could one small group do? Unfortunately the effect is cumulative. One group visiting for a day will only see one two incidents. It is only the local paddlers and especially the local access team that see the effect of repeated incidents day after day.

This is the view of Mike Mills, the Regional Access Officer. Those paddlers lucky enough to know Mike will agree that he is a sensible and reliable man, fully committed to obtaining access for paddlers. These are his views and they are worth studying carefully.

### CRISIS ON THE LUNE

"As the M6 heads North to Carlisle it follows the Lune Valley up the east side of the Lake District. When I first paddled the river, almost twenty years ago, it was a good challenge. I don't recall if I swam but I do remember that I was paddling a KW7 and that on a subsequent outing I had a few swims, adapting to an elite slalom boat! It remains a fabulous river, something of a classic, which is why the rest of my tale is so tragic and why we must move mountains to retain the use of this river - it is simply too important to lose.

Over the years there has been a materials revolution to

## REMINDER

### Do you paddle on NRA Anglian Waters?

We need to know how many BCU members paddle on navigations controlled by the Anglian Region of the National Rivers Authority, this is to provide a factual basis for our negotiations with the NRA to add these waters to the BCU Licence. We put an initial request in Focus 81 in February; many thanks to the fifty paddlers who have replied so far. However, there must be more than fifty members paddling these waters! If you have not replied so far already (either direct or through your club), please fill in the small form on this page and post it straight back to us.

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:

## RIVER WEY AND GODALMING NAVIGATIONS

The 1993 licence agreement which the BCU has with the National Trust is still on a trial basis. If it works well this benefit of membership will, we hope, be extended on a permanent basis. The Trust reports problems over canoes without stickers, though the paddlers may not, of course, be BCU members. Please always honour the BCU side of the bargain when canoeing these waters by:

a) Putting your sticker with your membership number in large numerals in waterproof felt pen on your canoe and

b) Carrying your membership card.

If you see anyone without a sticker (or an out of date yellow sticker) get them to join the BCU!.

plastic as well as in paddling standards. There has also been a tremendous demand for good middle grade (grade 3+) white water for touring. Information is now readily available, in guide book form, and the Lune ranks high on many paddlers list - certainly in the upper realms of the top 100! Which is where the problem starts.

Use of the river has evolved over the years. No agreement but a familiar story of co-existence with other interests. A brand of time zoning has developed whereby use during the fishing season created hassle but outside the season there have been no formal objections. Unfortunately things have changed - for the worse. Increased use over the last few seasons has created a crisis and a shut down of the river for canoeing. With the M6 running alongside, the Lune suddenly became accessible to vast numbers of paddlers with major problems following.

Most paddlers who have used the river would not see themselves as part of the problem, but we all are. We have been part of the use, which when aggravated by high speed shuttle runs, inconsiderate parking, damage, abuse, noise, etc has prompted the response by landowners, local residents, and angling clubs to refuse to have any more. What is more those of us paddlers, who are

involved, agree! We don't deserve to use the river if we behave like this. The problem is now one of convincing people that we can control our numbers and behaviour.

At present the river is closed with no agreement for canoe use. The riparian interests have met and refuse to consider future canal use and will use the law to enforce this. Where do we go from here? Somehow we have to get around this impasse and the Access team and local paddlers will be meeting and working towards this goal. Where do you come in - by recognising the situation and contacting Rob Gregory the LAO about the river. By realising that other rivers can go the same way through unreasonable use and by doing your bit for the BCU Access Campaign".

### So what are the lessons to learn?

Firstly, the problem of behaviour: abuse, dangerous driving, bad parking. It is heart breaking for an access officer to put in endless hours of work to negotiate an agreement, only to have it wrecked by a mindless minority of canoeists.

Secondly, the politics. We all agree that the way ahead is to change the law. In the last Canoe Focus I appealed for those who had not yet done so to write to their MP.

Of the 16,000 + readers of Canoe Focus, only 20 asked for a free lobbying pack. I know from the feedback on the lobbying exercise that it is those paddlers most vocal in their calls for action on access that are least likely to make any effort. What chance have we got with a response like that?

Finally, to end on a positive note. The Lune is almost certainly closed this year, although Mike is making great efforts to resolve the problem. Elsewhere however, there is progress. The egress point on the Dart at Holne Bridge has always been a problem. The SW Region tried to help by buying some land two years ago. Although the land was never used, that act showed some commitment to solving the problem, backed up with hard cash. This act transformed the relations between canoeists and the local population. There are now serious negotiations progressing towards buying a different plot of land for an egress car park, with extensive help from the authorities. Determined management of access, backed up with resources, must be the way ahead.

SIMON DAWSON  
Access Chairman



# ACCESS AT DOBBS WEIR

A new agreement has been made with Lee Valley Regional Park for canoe access at Dobbs Weir. While this still has to be ratified by their legal boffins there is no reason to suppose that it will not go ahead.

The LVRP water bailiff at the site will be fully briefed, it is his job to support all users of the site, not just the fishermen. Please cooperate fully with his requests, any problems should be reported to George Cherry or Ron Hodgson who will be holding regular meetings with LVRP to monitor the agreement.

The Agreement Will run from 1st August 1993 until 1st April 1994.

There will be NO canoeing until 1st August. From 1st August:-

A. Every Wednesday from 1pm to dusk. (Afternoons for educational use; evenings for club training)

B. Every Saturday during British summer time from 3pm to dusk.

C. Every Saturday during winter time from 1pm to dusk.

Weekends as per original agreement, 3 to 5

per annum by negotiation.

Keys for operating the sluices at Dobbs Weir will be obtainable from George Cherry or Herts Young Mariners Base. They will only be issued to BCU Senior Instructors, Instructors, Slalom Coaching and training, on production of a valid BCU membership card. (This is essential for insurance purposes, concerned with the operation of the sluices.) charges still £2 per group use but are liable to change in the near future.

This agreement has been negotiated on behalf of the BCU and HACC by George Cherry and Ron Hodgson.

Note This is a substantially improved access agreement, more than doubling the previous arrangements, (Wednesday afternoons and every other Sunday morning) please help to make it work. Usage of the site will be strictly monitored both to determine need and viable numbers. We realise the agreed times are not ideal for everyone and would welcome positive suggestions to take forward to our meetings.



# NATIONAL HANDYKAYAK *1993* championships

Some explanation of the term Handykayak is necessary. Last year readers may recall an article by Dave Bennett in which he related the experiences of the first group of physically disabled canoeists to travel to Italy for a Sprint Kayak Competition called, by the Italians "Handykayak".

The success of this event, in which we brought back the Competition Team Trophy, three Gold Medals and two Bronze Medals encouraged us to look to competing again.

Therefore, whilst we had been keen to use the term "Canoeability" to describe similar intentions in the UK the fact that the Italians had coined, and were using, the term Handykayak persuaded us that we might just as well go with them; it is the intention of both countries and their Governing Bodies, BCU and FICK to extend Handykayak to all canoeing nations. Furthermore, it is recognised that we have to start somewhere, in this case with physical disabilities and in sprint events. Eventually it is intended to expand the range of disabilities and in sprint events. Eventually it is intended to expand the range of disabilities and events, but when considering that even a single event of 500 metres sprint, with two classifications, and races for men and women, in both K1 and K2 means that there are eight groups of competitions. It is not difficult to understand why we wish to start gradually and build up.

When we received an invitation to return to Italy at the end of May this year, although the time scale was very short we decided that we would hold a National Championships that would also serve to select a national team. We were helped in the planning for this by Sports Council grant which followed on a successful programme we had run to encourage participation for people with disabilities at regional levels last year.

It was therefore with considerable support from the Sprint Committee, mostly in the person of David Train, with encouragement and advice from Richard Ward and Geoff Good that the first National Sprint Championships for paddlers with physical disabilities was arranged.

It was on a sunny, but windy, Sunday at the beginning of May that the first competitors met at Upton Warren in the Midlands to

The medal winners were as follows:

#### WOMEN CLASS A

1. Maggie Taylor

#### MEN CLASS A

1. David Cook; 2. Richard Taylor

#### MEN CLASS B

1. Richard Crawshaw; 2. David Cooke;  
3. Brian Bennett

compete in the first BCU National Handykayak Championships. After some discussion about the course across the reservoir that would not be too seriously affected by the gusty winds the racing started. Although the intention was to have a 500 metre race, measuring this distance was near impossible and so although all the races were timed the times are not printed here since they have only minimal value if the distances are uncertain.

There were not as many athletes as we would have wished for, however, what was missing in quantity was more than made up for in quality.

All six athletes were selected to represent the BCU at the International in Florence.

After people had had time to recover, the athletes joined the coaches and other supporters in the First National Bell Boat Championships. This proved to be most exciting with the race taking place with much enthusiasm, splashing and grunting.

Finally, Paul Owen, the Director, presented the trophies and medals to the victorious athletes.

It is a sincere hope that the example of these athletes will be the inspiration for many more people with disabilities to try competition and enter for next years event with once again we hope the opportunity to travel to international events representing their country.

A report of the International event in Florence will appear in the next edition of Focus.

GEOFF SMEDLEY



## Yet another Deaf Instructor – *but this one is Unique!*

Last year Simon Scandrett, Bristol Deaf Centre's Youth & Community Worker, received a number of letters from deaf and hard of hearing canoeists (one a Senior Instructor!) after the article about him in Canoe Focus and Canoeists. This year Simon went on to give a demonstration of teaching canoeing using only British Sign Language (BSL) at Sheffield. One of his 'pupils' at that event has now gone on to hold what may be a unique position in Canoeing, and Deaf History.

For on a chilly May weekend Wayne Ford became a Trainee Instructor with a difference – Wayne's first language is BSL and English is his second language. Simon speaks English (with a Welsh accent) and has only started to sing in the last few years. For the TI course this meant finding an Interpreter (which the Sports Council generous-

ly funded) willing to spend a weekend in a cold canoe shed and a fellow canoeists with some signing skills to assist on the water. These found, the course, led by Richard Scullard and Geoff Board, went well. Not only did people learn about how to teach at 1 and 2 star level, they had a course in Deaf Awareness thrown in for nothing.

Wayne's canoeing skills were never in question. His ability to communicate verbally was. How would he get on teaching strokes using English? Fellow members of Berwick Canoe Club were aware of his practical teaching abilities in pool sessions (including trying to teach Simon to hand roll . . . keep at it Simon). They weren't aware that he had a loud voice at his disposal, for up until then he had tended to communicate in BSL. Clear and confident communication is

fundamental to safety and teaching, and most of us communicate and control via our voices.

If English is your second language, you may not be aware that to canoeists worlds like stern, draw, support and bow, have meanings other than facial expressions, diagrams, surgical appliances or knots. Canoeing has its own language TI, COCLG and EAR, confusing for us all at first. How would we cope if asked to teach in French?

So what of the future? Wayne will need to develop specific spoken vocabulary in order to teach both hearing and deaf canoeists, which he wishes to. But his simplified English will make an interesting contrast to the sorts of language – "well er now I'm going to show you all the sweep stroke, the ultimate purpose of which is to enable you to break out of the eddies" which

can be heard being used with beginners on the water. He will continue to be supported by Berwick Canoe Club, but national fame beckons. 'See Hear', BBC's programme for the Deaf and hard of hearing are interested in filming Simon and Wayne teaching hearing people. This may be because it stands in stark contrast to Deaf education in this country, which is dominated by hearing people who often have little signing skills. A planned video of teaching canoeing using BSL may get Wayne to think of the Sing language he uses to teach Berwick's Deaf members, which can then be translated into English.

Hopefully Wayne will act as a role model to Deaf youth. He is already an example of the positive attitude taken by the BCU towards canoeists who are disabled.

KEITH RIPLEY



**THINK NEW FOR '93**

*Think small. Think quick! Think spinning & surfing.  
Think agile. Think steep ... **Total control!** Think  
**out on the edge!** Think **Prophet!***

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**Prophet!***

*Think  
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# Dear focus

Send your letters to: Dear Focus, BCU HQ, John Dudderidge House, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Notts NG2 5AS. Tel: (0602) 821100 Fax: (0602) 821797

## Change of Image

### Dear Focus

I write concerned at the image this magazine presents. At my S I Assessment one of the lectures was your image, more specifically whether that image had altered since your change of design.

In order to discover 'The Image' we were asked to swiftly thumb through copies of Focus and write words conjured up from the passing pictures and headlines. In groups we amalgamated impressions and presented our findings; the following words were most commonly used above all others:

**Dangerous Male Expensive Competitive Wild Water**


This image was the same for the magazine before and after its design change. Considering the great diversity of our sport I feel that your responsibility should lie in presenting a balanced view that should promote the less macho and photogenic aspects of our sport. Sadly one of the most influential contributors to your image are the advertisers whose photographs dominate with pictures of men in extreme situations.

I am white, male, enjoy white water and surf. I would like Focus to consider the effect its image has on encouraging the other members of our canoeing society to participate, and to

feel respected and represented.

**DAVE ALLAWAY**

*I find it interesting that the 'image' you refer to was a 'swift' and 'amalgamated' impression. Equally interesting is the fact that this exercise was conducted amongst folk who were at the time working towards the Senior Instructor Award, by definition a moving/whitewater award. Competition paddlers can scan the magazine this issue and probably say that it is a good one from their point of view. It is true to say that the magazine has a bent towards the exciting and photogenic. No one has written recently and said it is boring. I have worked very hard towards a balance of editorial material. Your snapshot survey does not agree with my percentage breakdown of types of activity covered by the magazine over a longer period of time. My job as editor is to Edit and select the material I receive and present it as attractively and interestingly as possible. I have said it before and I'll say it yet again: I can only work with the material I receive: why don't you send me some yourself Dave, which is not dangerous, macho, expensive, competitive, wild water? What do other readers think? Has the New look Focus changed?*

Editor: 



## ACCESS SITUATION

### Dear Focus

Copy of Letter Sent to Chester Canoe Club

In Scotland, as you must know, we have a very different access situation. One of the many reasons for this is that we are regarded as considerate towards others and safety conscious, while pursuing our sport.

On the 23rd May, one of your canoe club members was seen paddling the Grandtully White Water Course with out either a crash hat or buoyancy aid. When approached by one of our canoe coaches, who at that time was training some SIs, he told them to "get lost". Perhaps there is someone in your club is responsible enough to explain to this arrogant idiot the error of his ways. After all he is paddling in our home waters not his and therefore should show some consideration towards his hosts.

**MARY CONACHER**  
SCA Access Officer

Coaching Scheme, I have been fortunate enough to experience "Continental Canoeing" at its best. No, I don't solely refer to the big volume Alpine Rivers that we all rave about. Even at a lower level, canoeing is a far more pleasurable experience.

Firstly, access is not a problem in Germany, in fact at most access points, the local authority will build a car park and launching steps to make life more comfortable for the paddler. No angry anglers or landowners to tangle with out here. Furthermore, they have the attitude that canoeing is a recreational sport for all to enjoy. Therefore most artificial courses are free of charge and open to everyone most of the time. Yes priority is given to certain teams undergoing training and rightly so. But these courses are open almost all year round to anyone at no cost - unlike most British White Water Courses which a) are often reserved for competitions and training, and are rarely open to the general public b) if you can get on you need to pay £5 for the privilege.


More importantly than this is the honesty and camaraderie between paddlers. Almost every

edition of Canoe Focus contains a "Stolen" paragraph - a huge list of expensive equipment taken from vehicles or from river banks. On the slalom course at Hohenlimburg, Germany, I regularly leave all my equipment beside the river whilst I go for lunch, as does everyone else. The equipment is always there when I return. Taking this a stage further, recently whilst attending a canoe symposium in the Bavarian Alps, a German minibus flagged us down to tell us we had left one of our canoes behind on the river bank. If this situation had occurred in the UK, I wonder if the outcome would have been the

same, or would the canoe have been swiftly tied to a roof rack and whisked away never to be seen again.

This summer I return to the UK and I am looking forward to being part of the British paddling scene once more, but I will sorely miss the luxury of inexpensive, access problem free and honest paddling.

Maybe we can learn a thing or two from our continental friends! Perhaps entering Europe may not be so bad after all.

**STUART WILLIAMS** 

## Energy Source for Diabetics

**Dear Focus** Over the last two years I have taken part in many different sports. The subject of energy provision for sustained activity has always been of great interest to me. This became more so over the years, when several of my sporting colleagues were diagnosed as being diabetic.

I have a free report entitled "Energy Source for Diabetics". I would be happy to send a copy of this report to any of your readers - free of charge. If they would send me an SAE and indicate which sports they take part in, I can then send the report by return.

**JACK DRUMMOND:** The Old Leathershop, 17a Faringdon Road, Stanford in the Vale, Oxon. SN7 8NN.



# My favourite *paddle*

**Robert Eglestaff is a self confessed open boat addict.**

**He has a long record, mainly for working and running in outdoor centres around Britain, and holds the BCU Coach (Hon) in Open boat. He currently lives in North Wales, and is Director of the Oaklands Centre.**



**M**y favourite paddle arrived with a consignment of Colemans and has served me well for over ten years. It's a battered old, laminated, big-bladed Clement with a palm grip that has nestled in my hand like a pair of . . . Oh! THAT sort of PADDLE. Well, it's gotta be Kielder - the black pearl of Northumberland, England's highest lake and the biggest pond in Europe. Made to supply the industrial North East

with water into the twenty-first century, Kielder Reservoir was dammed from the upper North Tyne Valley and damned by the rock climbers who saw sunny, sandstone Belling sunk beneath the waves. there it was, ready for me when I arrived on its muddy beaches, an untouched canvas waiting for the cut of my keel, a virgin page longing for the stroke of my paddle. Ugly at first sight, a scar on the landscape with its concrete

structures and roots of trees - as gravestones on the sores, gravestones to the lost communities of Whickhope and Flastons - surrounded by forest and building sites. the whine of power saws and the rumble of heavy plant in the background - it was hardly a refuge from the city, merely a substitute - peat and pine for concrete and glass. It was the place names that first helped me to change my mind - Elf Kirk, Hunger Edge,

Haggering Hole and Turfy Knowe - quaint and quirky and typically Northumbrian (sic.); that and the weather. the sudden changes of mood, the wind-shifts and the shafts of sunlight picking out details on the distant shore. Kielder Water was growing on me . . . as the ugly duckling emerged a different creature, so Kielder changed in my minds eye. As the wounds of birth healed and my impatience settled the lake became my means of expression. All those who have worked any piece of water day-in and day-out must have felt something the same. Once I'd given myself and become as one with the water all was revealed. I arrived a kayaker and came away a canoeist. My work with groups became experimental, my own paddling became ornate and my understanding of water became fluid. More than anything else, I learned to work safely with open canoes an open water. I would think about the worst possible scenario - a 16 stone canoeist, unconscious, in the water - now get out of that. Two 20 stone unconscious canoeists, cap-sized boat, force - 8 off-shore . . . cover it, or avoid it. I served my canoeing apprenticeship on Kielder Water and learned the Law of the Yukon . . .





*"I am the land that listens, I am the land that broods; Steeped in eternal beauty, Crystalline waters and woods."*

The memory wouldn't be complete without the people who filled those days at Kielder with laughter. Many a caper was concocted on Kielder's shore including the legend of the escaped circus bear, who eventually became a reality on one course, courtesy of a theatrical costumer on Scotswood Road. Or the well-known poker-faced Coach who smiled just once - at Borke swimming for a drifting boat, really going for it in

true Weismuller-style and getting nowhere, then standing up all sheepish... in six inches of water. All the young people from Newcastle who learned to canoe (of sorts) with their "Beaver-wacking" and their church bells ringing on stormy days from the lost vil-

lage beneath the water. Kielder lent itself to flights of imagination and not content with smearing mud on their faces two trainees became so carried away that they swallowed the clue (literally) before tumbling overboard backwards to escape from the drunken boatman (me). Talking about drunkenness...

*I would think about the worst possible scenario - a 16 stone canoeist, unconscious, in the water - now get out of that.*

many was the night when foolish acts were piled on foolish acts, from testing the strength of watches by driving minibuses over them to swallowing raw eggs. Perhaps it was the local pub's rule not to serve halves except to certain disadvantaged groups that contributed to the most extreme example of foolishness under the influence when a harty (sic.) canoeist of no fixed abode couldn't find his tent after a 2am poetry recital

even though it was only ten yards away - and then in the morning claimed he was bivvying. How in the hell we rose regularly to paddle to Belling and back in the morning mist I'll never know.

I'm reluctant to return, and add to those memories, in case they fade. The learning is still with

me and had become part of my subconscious canoeing behaviour, that which comes out of us without thought, both in my paddling and in my coaching. That has been Kielder's gift to me, and why it remains my favourite PLACE to paddle.

**Robert Egelstaff**





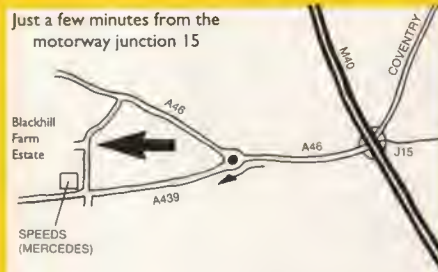
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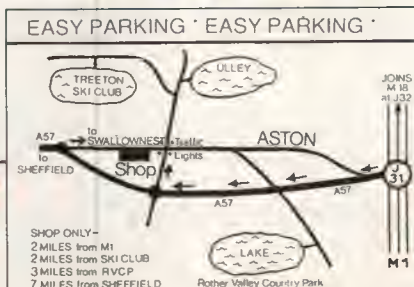
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# Paddlers gear

## Pyranha Traveller

*in Royalex*



The Traveller has been around for some years now and caters for the entry level and outdoor Centre end of the market. The hull design is symmetrical and simple, with stability and versatility the main priorities.

For the connoisseurs in coon-skin caps the traveller is probably too straightforward, but for the target market it serves well. The new departure for Pyranha is manufacturing in Royalex which keeps the weight down to 27kg, despite robust moulded seats and fittings. The Royalex is certainly stiffer than the previous material and much less prone to oil-canning, always a problem with large flat surfaces in plastic. As a work-horse the boat floats two adults, two kids and with tents, rucksacks and other bits and bobs along with sandwiches for a week. The standard thwarts are alloy and provide enough rigidity with the moulded gunwale. The interior is very user friendly with little risk of entrapment and good storage space. Future options will offer wooden yoke and cane seats. As a no frills, no fuss open boat the Traveller hits the mark and costs £699 as an introductory offer.

In September the first of several new open boats will be unveiled: as the first British manufacturer working in Royalex we should see competitively priced product in the open boat market.



### The Beach Bum Bag

Most paddlers have problems looking after keys, money and credit cards. The Beach bum bag offers an interesting solution in the form of a rigid watertight box, designed to be worn as a bum bag. It may just keep that car alarm dry!

Available by mail order only it costs £9.99 plus 50p post & packing from S&S products, PO Box 3040, London N1 7TZ



### Grotbag

Have you ever wondered where to store your wet canoeing gear in the car without cultivating that familiar musky pong? Or where to keep it so that it is all in one place, ready to go paddling at the first drop of rain?

The answer could be the Grotbag, a simple but effective storage bag with a 50mm webbing strap. A drawstring closure prevents the stuff escaping and it is very attractively priced at £9.99.

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Length: 485 cm  
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Tel 0928 716666



Coquet Canoe Club held its 4th race round Coquet Island on Sunday June 27th. There were almost twice as many entries as last year, as it was combined with a Sea Touring weekend organised by the BCU. Competition was stiff with 54 competitors entering the races. David Hewlings just failed to break the two hour barrier (by two seconds) for the 13 mile race and Graham James won the 5.5 miles race in 47 minutes.

## RESULTS

### CLASS 1

Amble to Boulmer and back via Coquet Island 13 miles Sea Kayaks

1. David Hewlings 2hrs 00.02 mins, Nottingham Kayak Club;
2. George Oliver 2hrs 02.47mins, Nottingham Kayak Club;
3. Neil Cranston 2hrs 02.53 mins, Tyne Valley Canoe Club.

### CLASS 2

Amble round Coquet Island and back 5.5 miles Sea kayaks/WW racers

#### Men

1. Graham James 54.35mins, Chester CC;
2. Darren Chapman 56.47 mins, Nottingham Kayak Club;
3. John Baylise 57.33 mins, Nottingham Kayak Club.

#### Ladies

1. Margaret Blakeborough 58.33min, Chester CC;
2. Catherine Baylise 1hr 00.20mins, Nottingham Kayak Club;
3. Mora Rolley 1hr 05.56 mins, Coquet CC.

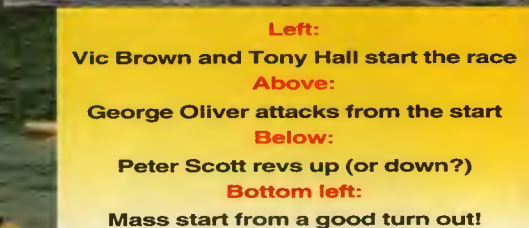
#### Slalom

1. James Robson 1hr 01.13mins, Coquet CC;
2. David Mills 1hr 04.20mins, Boys Brigade;
3. John Jervis 1hr 04.32mins, Coquet CC.

### CLASS 3

#### Juniors

1. Mark Waffell 33.23 mins, Blyth CC;
2. John Perolval 34.04mins, Coquet CC;
3. Neil Watt 35.53mins, Blyth CC.



**Left:** Vic Brown and Tony Hall start the race  
**Above:** George Oliver attacks from the start  
**Below:** Peter Scott revs up (or down?)  
**Bottom left:** Mass start from a good turn out!



## SEA TOURING AGM

The Agm of the BCU Sea Touring Committee will be held at Calshot on Saturday 2 August at 7.00pm The AGM will consider for approval amendments to the Constitution of the Sea Touring Committee. A full copy of the proposed changes can be obtained by sending an SAE to Tim Franklin, Sec., STC, 43 The Drummonds, Epping, Essex, CM16 4RT.

# Canoeists and COASTGUARDS

*Mike North is the District Controller for HM Coastguard Maritime Rescue Sub Centre at Liverpool. As a paddler, Mike understands the nature and problems of our sport, and the desire for independence and freedom to navigate on the sea, so dear to the heart of canoeists.*

## CANOEISTS AND COASTGUARDS

The tragic canoe trip in Lyme Bay recently focused attention on canoeists and coastguards; although other organisations and individuals are no doubt receiving similar scrutiny. Such unfortunate incidents occur from time to time and invariably cause everybody concerned to look carefully at procedures and guidelines. A consensus on the balance between exciting activity and safety is always difficult to achieve and as in most situations causes criticism from some quarter or another. Nobody likes to be criticised, but constructive criticism is healthy; it has the effect of keeping complacency in check. I have no idea what findings will come out of the Lyme Bay tragedy but inevitably there will be lessons to be learnt.

Few people can honestly say that they have never heard of the coastguard, but precious few can describe what 'HM Coastguard' is about. The readers of these pages are intelligent, and can give a fairly accurate guide to coastguard activities. In essence HM Coastguard is responsible for the co-ordination of civil maritime search and rescue, but I doubt if you know how they operate and what they think of canoeists . . . !

I will come clean, I am a coastguard who occasionally paddles and am the official link between HM Coastguard and the BCU Sea Touring Committee. The purpose of this article is to help you understand the coastguard; a similar article will be written to help coastguards understand canoeists – a challenge I know.

By the time you read this, Coastguard Headquarters will have moved from London to Southampton. Our training centre is located at Highcliffe

in Dorset. There are hundreds of coastguard facilities around the coasts of the UK. Most are the bases for our rescue teams. These teams of volunteers can be seen on patrol, and turn out to search for and recover people in difficulties along the coastline.

At only 21 locations will you find a 24 hour manned rescue centre. These centres are called Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centres (MRCC) or Maritime Rescue Sub Centres (MRSC). Both are responsible for the response to incidents within their area (known as Districts). All distress radio (VHF ch 16) and 999 telephone traffic is routed into one of these 21 district headquarters (MRCC or MRSC).

## Manning Level

The normal manning level at these stations is 3, though the busiest may have 5. Like the other emergency services most of our activity can be classed as routine; our specialist skills come to the fore when we have a drifting target where search areas have to be calculated, then searched by differing units, all having to achieve a similar quality of search. Lifeboats and SAR helicopters carry out the majority of our responses to seaward incidents. Radio communications are essential to our role as co-ordinators, consequently we have a very comprehensive VHF system using numerous remote radio sites.

All regular coastguards have a maritime background but most have gained their nautical skills on craft considerably larger than canoes. It can be difficult therefore for Coastguards to have a full understanding of canoeists, their equipment and capabilities without explanation by you.

The coastguard cannot cope

with every individual paddler, dinghy sailor, windsurfer, sea-angler, yachtsman and powerboater telephoning or radioing to tell us that they are going out for the day. We would like to hear from those operating as a group or those who are undertaking a passage; also individuals who may be operating in remote or dangerous locations.

## Intentions

If you tell your intentions, what do we do with this information? We log it. That information can be the difference between life and death should somebody ashore (acting as your Agent) contact us to express their concern for your non-arrival or failure to make contact. We then have information that will help us to make a prompt and effective response.

Let us be clear about this; even if you have told the coastguard that you should be back by a certain time, the coastguard DO NOT enquire about your safe return/arrival. You must have somebody ashore who knows your intentions who is responsible for raising the alarm if they become concerned for your safety.

If you think about it, during the summer weekends we simply could not cope with checking to see if everybody had returned or arrived at their destination safely. The person ashore acting as your Agent should have all relevant details; number in party, canoe type and colours, intentions and times, alternative arrangements, whether distress flares/VHF portable radio/distress beacon carried, life-jackets, protective clothing being worn, amount of experience, food and drink carried and if equipped with compass and chart. It is a heavy responsibility being your Agent, so select the best person, making sure they know how to contact the coastguard to raise the alarm.

From time to time you may be approached by a coastguard on patrol to ask what your intentions are. We are being friendly and showing an interest so please do not be defensive. We can usually offer local advice and the latest weather and tidal information. We may even be so bold as to advise you against putting to sea, something we cannot enforce. Please take such advice

or be prepared to explain your experience to cope with the anticipated conditions.

## Potential Friction

There is another area of potential friction between us. If you or a member/s of your party get into difficulty and rescue resources are despatched to investigate; if immersion or hypothermia is suspected then the chances are that the individuals will be taken to hospital – even if you and they think that they are OK. We do not take chances.

SAR units whether airborne facilities or surface vessels have great difficulty visually searching for persons in the water, the target being so small. Your chances of being located promptly, increase if you are 'high profile' by being able to draw attention to yourself by use of flares or a heliograph mirror for example. If you remain with your canoe then of course that will present a larger target, or if you remain together as a group we will find it easier to spot you. Do not give up if on the first search you are missed; conserve energy and wait for subsequent searches, we will be back!

If on your trip you feel things are not going well and it could turn into a dangerous situation, then raise the alarm earlier rather than later. It does not matter if having raised the alarm you all make shore safely after a 'hairy' experience. All the emergency services are used to 'false alarms with good intent'. Better than alerting the coastguard when the situation has already deteriorated beyond the point where we could reasonably hope for a totally successful rescue. Believe me, all of us in the SAR would prefer a happy outcome.

Statistically canoeists cause very few problems at sea, which I would like to think is basically because they are a responsible group with quality training and gear. I think that as small craft users, canoeists normally approach their sport with a higher degree of competence than other groups.

One final point. Get to know us. How about arranging for your club to visit the nearest coastguard rescue centre? We are in the telephone book.

MIKE NORTH



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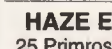
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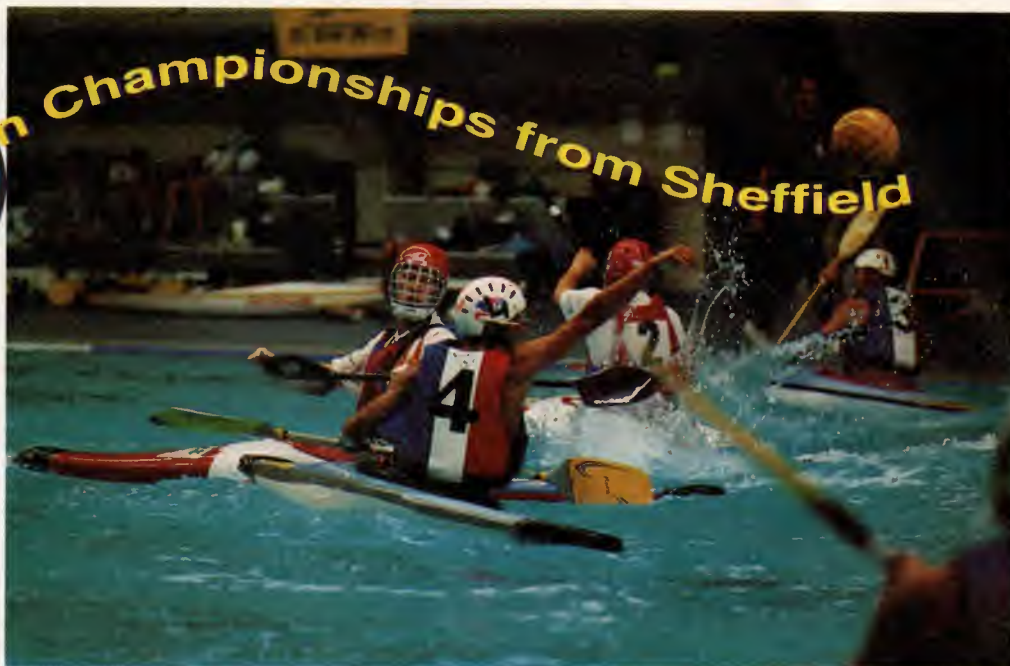
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# POLO

European Championships from Sheffield



**I**t was over two years ago that Ron Vessey, the Great Britain representative on the ICF Polo Committee, formulated the idea of Britain hosting the first World Championships in Canoe Polo. 1994 was the target year and the campaign was on to persuade the powers that be at BCU and the ICF that this was a realistic aim. Comprehensive plans and reports were circulated, Ponds Forge targeted as the venue and the decision made to hold a 'warm up' event, i.e the European Championships, in 1993.

Two years on, with ICF permission for the Worlds in 1994 granted, and after much hard work by the organising committee, Britain played host to the European nations at Ponds Forge in Sheffield. Entries, limited to one team per nation in each category, had been received for twelve men's teams and five women's. Unfortunately, even at this level of competition, official intention to participate does not equal actual arrival of the team - Latvia's and Lithuania's late withdrawal from the men's competition left a week to rearrange the men's draw from 3 poules of four to 2 poules of five. Then Italy's faxed withdrawal at 24 hours notice caused a further headache, resolved by putting a GB scratch team into that poule to play friendlies.

Once the poule matches had been played the first two teams in each one played crossover semis, whilst the rest played the remaining teams in the other poule to their

own, to decide the final placings.

In the Women's League all 5 teams played each other, then 1st played 4th and 2nd played 3rd for the places in the final.

### And so to the Competition Itself

After the opening ceremony on Saturday, with greetings from Rolf Thiede, ICF Polo Committee Chairman, and Dave Gent, Chairman of BCU Council, the first game on the water was GB and Hungary. Alan Vessey scored the first goal of the championships after 2 minutes but Hungary equalised 90 seconds later. That galvanised the GB team into action and it was one way traffic after that. Two more goals from Alan, Matthew Bennett and Sooty Harrison plus one apiece from Dave Brown and Dave Fancourt made the final score 9-1.

The men's Poule games continued throughout Saturday and part of Sunday. The standard of play varied tremendously and there were some very one sided results. Austria and Portugal, novice teams on the polo circuit, were well beaten by all other 3 teams in their Poule but it was encouraging to note the progress they made as the championships progressed. Netherlands and France both beat Belgium quite convincingly leaving their match against each other to decide who won their Poule. Portugal beat Austria 6-1 to take the penultimate place in Poule 1.

In Poule 2 the results after the GB/Hungary game were never quite so one sided and the matches were interspersed with the friendlies against the GB Scratch team. With Ireland and Hungary drawing but both beaten GB and Germany the last match in their Poule was the decider for the winners place.

In the event the game proved to be the first really high quality confrontation of the competition. Chances came for both sides to score but over 6 minutes had gone before Gregor Smale opened the scoring for GB, Niehusa, the German no 2 equalised just before half time. Two minutes into the second half Brian Moore put Britain ahead only for Kaulfuss to equalise 3 minutes later. Barely thirty seconds passed before Alan Vessey made the score 3-2 and then sealed the game with a second goal a minute from time.

The Netherlands/France game that followed was equally as exciting. A start infringement gave the Dutch the ball but it was the French captain Sayec who opened the scoring after 6 minutes. The Dutch no 6 gained a yellow card for dissent but despite the constant French pressure the score remained 1-0 at half time. In the second half the Dutch finally equalised through Van de Haven and then with a minute to go won the game with a Jan Webber goal.

The stage was now set for the two Monday semi-finals:

Netherlands v Germany and GB v France. In the meantime the matches to decide 5th and 9th places took place. Belgium made sure of coming 5th by beating both Ireland and Hungary from the other Poule and Ireland piped Hungary for 6th place on goal difference. Portugal and Austria were 8th and 9th respectively.

### Women's League

Meanwhile in the women's league Great Britain played France in the opening game and after 8 minutes seemed to have a comfortable 3-0 lead with a goal from Jackie Marlow and two from Ginny Coyles. Then just on half time Ha'Feuille pulled one back for France. A combination of lax marking and bad passing led to the French second goal by Boulnois and a minute later they had equalised through Ha'Feuille. The tension mounted but Ginny saved the game with her 3rd goal 90 seconds from time.

Germany then played Ireland and were 2-0 up at half time with goals from Schulz and Weingarten. Another goal from Schulz made the final score 3-0 but the game was much more closely fought than this scoreline suggests.

Britain's next match was against Hungary and after 3 minutes Ginny Coyles had put them ahead only for Hungary to equalise through Kleyer. Jackie Marlow made it 2-1 and then in the second half scored again to make the final

**Men's Poule 1**  
Netherlands, France,  
Belgium, Portugal, Austria.

**Men's Poule 2**  
Great Britain, Germany,  
Ireland, Hungary,  
GB Scratch.

**Women's league**  
Great Britain, France,  
Germany, Hungary, Ireland

# POLO

## European Championships

score 3-1.

The France/Germany game which ended in a 2-2 draw, was marred by niggles and paddle fouls. Two green cards apiece were shown to the teams and Bruneau for France received a yellow card for repeated illegal use of the paddles.

Ireland beat Hungary comprehensively 6-1 with 2 goals from Kitching and goals from Farrell, Scott, Vekins and Schofield. Hungary's one reply was from Sevecsek.

When Britain played Germany early Sunday morning, they showed far more confidence and notched up a resounding 8-0 win with 5 goals from Jackie Marlow, 2 from Ginny Coyles and 1 from Jan Badger. Two German players again received green cards.

France beat Hungary 2-1 in a lack lustre game that saw the ball constantly changing possession through bad passing. Germany also beat Hungary 3-1.

The Great Britain/Ireland game started well for GB who were 3 goals up, 4 minutes into the first half, from Jackie Marlow, Jan Badger and Hayley Watret. Schofield then scored for Ireland before half time and 3 minutes into the second half the scores were level with goals from Vekins and Nolan. The British game seemed to go to pieces and the excitement and tension mounted on the pitch and in the crowd. Finally with a minute left Jackie Marlow broke away from her marker and scored the winning goal. Ireland then went on to draw 3-3 with France to finish 4th in the League to play first placed GB in the semifinals. Germany who were second would play France who finished 4th.

Thus the stage was set for the Monday climax to the competition with some exciting, memorable games anticipated. I don't think at that stage anyone envisaged just how exciting the day would turn out



to be.

The first women's semifinal between Great Britain and Ireland was an anti-climax after Sunday's nailbiting drama. GB opened the scoring after 15 seconds and won comfortably 5-0 with a hat trick from Jackie Marlow and goals from Lynn Knowles and Ginny Coyles. The second semi-final between Germany and France was a fast end to end game with still far too many paddle fouls being committed and green cards waving about. Germany led 1-0 at half time, France equalised half way through the second half but a minute later Germany scored again to go into the final against GB.

The Netherlands/Germany men's semifinal was a close fought affair with noticeable paddle fouls and long Dutch shots just missing



the goal. Then with 10 seconds of the first half remaining Veltien scored for the Dutch. Four minutes into the second half Kaulfuss equalised and despite pressure from both teams neither could break the deadlock. In extra time

the Germans played a possession game during the first 3 minute half with just one shot at goal. The Dutch repeated this in the second half but their last gasp effort saw the ball go wide as it blasted the German goalkeeper's paddles out



# from Sheffield



All Photos by Tony Tickle

of his hand. In the 6 metre penalty shoot out all 10 players scored and the next stage, sudden death, was moved to 10 metres. The Dutch no 4 missed and everyone held his/her breath but the German no 7 made no mistake and they were through to the finals.

The next semifinal between France and Great Britain was a fraught affair with the French winning the ball and scoring inside 30 seconds through Le Bouedec. They then played a possession game for virtually the entire first half, with such excellent passing that the British seemed to have no answer. A French shot in the dying seconds was blocked. In the second half GB played 5 out, putting the French under far more pressure, when suddenly the French had 6 players on the pitch. The referee and the line judge seemed oblivious until a scrutineer made his point. With France down to 4 men GB fought for the equaliser but it wasn't until France were back to 5 again that it came from a Sooty Harrison goal. Less than a minute later France were ahead again through Le Bouedec but when Dave Fancourt was fouled under the French goal moments later, Sooty Harrison took the direct throw and scored. Extra time ensued and with the minutes ticking by the

excitement mounted. Then with 20 seconds remaining the French again had 6 players on the pitch. Once again this had to be pointed out to the referee and line judge. Play was held up, arguments took place but the French were down again to 4 men. The referee gave a drop ball, Dave Brown intercepted the French pass under the goal, Sooty Harrison came steaming in and scored his hat-trick, with 9 seconds left.

The women's third/fourth play off was quiet in comparison with the scores level at half time after Ireland went ahead with a super goal from Kitching and the French women went down to 4 after yet another illegal French substitution. France scored twice in the second half to win 3-1.

Meanwhile the French had put in a protest about their semifinal and until it was resolved the game between the Dutch and French for 3rd place couldn't start. Extra time and penalty shootouts had already caused delays in the schedule and this now was lengthened further. Eventually the jury rejected the French protest and the game started.

It was a fast and furious match with the French trying long shots and the Dutch shooting at paddles. It wasn't until well into the sec-

ond half that the Dutch player, Van de Haven, opened the scoring only for the Le Bouedec to equalise a minute later. Another game going to extra time seemed likely but with 20 seconds remaining a brilliant French interception led to their second goal by Loroy.

### The Women's final

Great Britain v Germany Having seen the League game between these two teams, it seems improbable that anyone in the crowd or among the players would have anticipated the actual outcome of this game and therein perhaps lies part of the problem.

If any of the early GB shots at goal had found the net then it

the spectators yet more excitement and proving a fitting climax to the European Championships, even if the final result wasn't what the British had hoped for.

The game was finely balanced when after 7 minutes a super save by Dave Fancourt led to a series of excellent moves by the GB attack and a Brian Moore goal. A minute later Alan Vessey and Sooty Harrison broke again, a quick one two and Sooty's shot hit the net.

The second half was only a minute old, when a German player under pressure managed to pass the ball to Schmidt. The crowd gasped, as unmarked over the half way line, his long shot reached the net. Ninety seconds on Brian Moore took a free throw quickly to Alan Vessey, who lost his marker and sprinted through to score at close range. Three minutes later the Germans won a 50/50 ball and with the goalkeeper on pitch, the defence was unable to stop the powerful shot from Kaulfuss. Then with just over 2 minutes to go the Germans raced for possession when the ball, passed under pressure, dropped short of it's GB target and Heidecke scored Germany's 3rd goal.

Once again extra time was played and neither teams' efforts were rewarded in the first half. A GB start infringement gave the Germans possession at the start of the second half. As the time ticked by the Germans gained a corner and Kaulfuss found a hole in the GB zone and scored the winning goal, with a minute to go. GB gained 2 corners in the dying seconds to no avail and the German men joined their women to celebrate the double victory.

At the closing ceremony the nations once again paraded with their flags, Rolf Thiede presented the medals and made the closing speeches and the cup, donated by the main sponsors Pyranha, was presented to the winning team.

A lot of hard work by the various people involved brought the original dream to this stage of fruition. Now for the World Championships next July. Thanks is due to all those who played their part, to Ponds Forge for their co-operation and to the players who came to compete and provided us with some memorable moments.

**VALERIE VESSEY**



### FINAL RESULTS

#### Mens

1. Germany
2. Great Britain
3. France

#### Womens

1. Germany
2. Great Britain
3. France

### Men's Final

Germany v Great Britain Starting an hour and a half late, this game lived up to all expectations, giving



# Ender

Editor's page

*Firstly, apologies for the lateness of your August Focus. About this time of the year it is customary for our competition paddlers to leave our shores in search of medals. As I had a hunch that the quest for gongs would be successful it was decided to hold back the print date of the magazine so that you could be told how succesful British paddlers are while the news is still fresh(ish). Thankfully results were forthcoming or the magazine would be late and empty.*

## JOBS FOR THE BOYS

Many members will have seen the BBC2 'On the Line' programme 'Jobs for the Boys' which set out to prove that the lives of 1 million children were at risk annually whilst undertaking an activity holiday. Donal MacIntyre, a journalist, passed himself off as an instructor qualified in a number of activities, and obtained employment, and offers of employment, with companies who did not appear to check his credentials with the governing bodies concerned. He omitted, however, to indicate that his personal competence was checked, by the company concerned, sufficient for the activities, before being let loose as a member of a team, under experienced leadership, conducting the set-piece, first-sessions involved. Donal has paddled marathon internationally for the Irish Canoe Union. He holds no formal qualification, but was claimed on the programme to be an 'experienced instructor'. His opinion that helmets should be worn in open canoes on flat rivers, was strongly stated as an example of the poor level of care which he perceived the Centre concerned to be applying. As an Irish marathon paddler he must have presented a unique sight when competing in most races! Presumably he became an 'experienced instructor' through being accepted as competent either within a club or centre, gradually building up his expertise under competent leadership. Is that not the very system which he spent the programme decrying? PGL has been operating for 30 years, and to the best of my knowledge have never had a serious accident, and certainly not a canoeing fatality, among the 2 million young people who have enjoyed a holiday with them. The filming of students falling off surf skis would have done justice to Alfred Hitchcock! It was presented as a sinister, life threatening occurrence, rather than the common place, fun activity, which it invariably is. The under water camera even captured a hand coming through the murky gloom to caress the skeg. There is no doubt some deeply meaningful explanation for this, but I am at a loss to suggest what it might be. Are the programme makers unaware of the fact that each year many millions of Britons repair to the sea-side, where they float

out on lilo's and other inflatable toys, and fall off with much enjoyment, jollity and laughter. The representation of falling off a surf ski, complete with helmet and buoyancy aid, as something dangerous, was laughable, if it were not for the potentially serious damage done to our sport by this nonsense. Dr Terry Stevens, of SaIL (Safety in Leisure Research Unit of Swansea Institute of Higher Education) appeared as 'the country's leading expert on safety'. His colleague referred to an incident in 1988 which he said had the same hallmark as the Lyme Bay tragedy, and asked why the information concerning this occurrence was not promulgated, so that Lyme Bay might have been averted. This seems a valid point, but presumes that the machinery is in place to achieve such dissemination of knowledge among the 2,000 centres involved. It also raises a question, however. His team had identified this incident during their research for the Welsh Tourist Board. If they felt so strongly that knowledge of its features should be publicised, why was it not drawn to our attention at the time - we were, after all, interviewed as part of the consultation process. We can all be wise and clever after the event! Some BCU qualified instructors had worked at St Albans, and others were concerned through their knowledge of the standards in place there. Had we publicised the features of the 1988 'near miss' it is probable that someone who was concerned would have been triggered to make an official complaint, and it is just possible that something could have been done about it. The BCU has no statutory powers, however, and is not funded to have available the manpower and the machinery to carry out a monitoring role, except in those instances where centres voluntarily apply for our endorsement. The BCU has not fared badly in the previous programmes based on the Lyme Bay tragedy. We did, on this occasion, however, come in for 'some stick'. The mitigating circumstances which led to the decision that no further action was necessary at the present time with regard to the Centre in North Wales involved in the 'surf ski' incident, were not read out from the report, only the fact that we concluded that no further action was necessary at this time. Our conclusion was based on the fact

that the Centre accepted the criticisms, and the recommendations, and took immediate steps to implement them. That they have done so, has since been checked. The level of supervision, and the fact that the company has a good safety record over a 10-year period, were also factors which were taken into account. We were castigated for not insisting that the Centre obtained Coastguard 'permission' before surfing, even though the District Controller concerned has entered into a written agreement with the Centres in the area that where 'static activities such as surfing' are concerned there is no need to inform the Coastguard. It is normal, however, where people or organisations are being criticised, or stand accused, for opportunity to be given to answer the allegations. This was not afforded by this programme, which seemed to start and end with the viewpoint that everyone was at considerable risk, and no facts were to be considered which might point to the contrary. A number of members have expressed disquiet concerning the thrust of the programme, and the lack of balance involved. It may be that members would like to discuss with Donal MacIntyre aspects of his involvement and opinions with regard to the safety of activity holidays. His number is 061 200 2216. If he is not to hand, a message on the answer phone will, I am sure, elicit a response.

## THE SAIL REPORT

In order to decide how best, and whether or not to set up an 'approval scheme' for activity holiday centres, the Welsh Tourist Board engaged the research unit of Swansea Institute to conduct a 2-year survey. The report (cost £20) seems to me to be flawed in a critical respect. It does not differentiate between 'activity holidays' and 'courses'. Consequently, the information concerning accident statistics is, in my view, misleading. There are few very serious accidents, although we obviously don't want any. However, there is a great deal of difference between someone being seriously injured, or killed, at beginner level - which is inexcusable - and a serious accident or fatality occurring to someone who has committed themselves to the activity, knows the risks, and accepts the fact that circumstances can arise, even under competent leadership, which can lead to their downfall. Being avalanched, some other aspects of mountaineering, white water canoeing, hang gliding, sub aqua, horse riding, even golf and ski-ing, are all cases in point. A much clearer analysis of the circumstances, and the level of performance of the activities involved, is surely required, before any serious conclusions should be drawn. The overall accident rate is quoted as 1:1,484. This includes the vast majority, which are the minor accidents involving 'sticking plaster'. The last figure I heard quoted for the population as a whole was 2 million children per year being injured in the home - and I believe that was related to visits to hospital casualty units. That means

about 1:15, unless I have misunderstood the statistics. One would expect a percentage of cuts and bruises on activity holidays, surely? The report states that the centres claimed the majority of injuries were sustained during 'free time', but disputes this - although the graphs appeared to me to show 'free time' as significant. The failure to recognise the difference between an activity holiday, involving one-off, introductory 'taster' sessions, and a progressive course of instruction, also leads, in my submission, to a further misleading conclusion, with regard to the need for qualifications. The report gives no indication of the research team having understood the situation. It quotes a case where one centre allowed staff with limited experience to take groups on sea canoe trips, resulting in a near tragedy (presumably the same 1988 incident). This, on the face of it, is clearly out of order, and does have echoes of the Lyme Bay disaster. However, the problem surely lies in the decision to let staff with insufficient experience operate on the sea, without sufficient training from a fully qualified senior instructor, or any back-up. The issue to be addressed is the apparent lack of competent training and supervision within that centre. It does not follow that every group which is put afloat for a one-off session on tidal water, necessarily needs a Senior Instructor in charge on the water. As stated, there can be no excuse for putting novices into situations of real danger. Also, no matter what level of canoeing is offered, where customers are paying good money, their introduction should be positive and informed - a 'quality' experience. This requires Senior Instructors in the system, responsible for the training, and for determining on a daily basis, what is and is not necessary with regard to which staff supervise which sessions. Where centres are offering specialist 'courses', with a learning progression, then clearly staff must be fully qualified all along the line for the type and level of canoeing involved. Where an introductory session only is provided, in very sheltered conditions, then ability to the level of Supervisor is usually sufficient. As stated many times, no-one has ever drowned from a kayak or canoe, whilst wearing a buoyancy aid, in that situation. Unfortunately, in this debate, the balance is always with the cautious. It could happen! Yes it could.

## THE 'WHAT IF' SCENARIO.

But if we are going to legislate for the freak, 1 in several million, occurrences, then we end up taking absolutely no risk, sat in front of the television and dying of heart failure. My own 14-year-old is not the world's most aggressive youngster. He came into the room while I was re-running the tape of the 'On the Line' programme. With no word from me he piped up: 'What are they on about, Dad - if it's not dangerous it's not worth doing!' I don't entirely agree with him, but 'them' was his sentiments'.

G C Good





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