

THE CANOE SPORT MAGAZINE FOR THE NINETIES

Canoe focus

No 92. DECEMBER 1994

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Congratulations to Paul Currant of Great Britain and Sandra Schmidt of Germany. Both taking 1st place at the Pre-Worlds Rodeo Championships at Augsburg, paddling Avengers.

Congratulations also to Shaun Baker, Paul Fletcher, Paul Currant, Richard Chamberlain, Trevor Straffon, Anthony Perkins, Chris Lowe, Bridget Thomas and Louise Wigmore who all made the British Team paddling Avengers. Well Done!

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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 26th OCT 1994. Material arriving at FOCUS after this date cannot be included in the DECEMBER issue.



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Comment



Simply the best

'Simply the best' is a term I have heard recently to describe the exploits of the GB Canoe Slalom team and I for one can't think of a more fitting phrase. Shaun Pearce, Lynn Simpson and Garreth Marriott all won their respective classes in the season long World Cup Competition culminating in the finals held during September in Japan. In the cases of Shaun and Lynn they were closely followed by Ian Raspin and Rachel Crosbee who both took Silver Medals - Well done, brilliant!

SHAMBLES IN MEXICO

The 25th ICF Congress was held in Acapulco, Mexico and followed closely on the heels of the Sprint Racing World Championships also in Mexico. Personally, I doubt the wisdom of

holding such important meetings in countries and places which are totally inaccessible. However, largely due to the generosity of the Sports Council the BCU was represented by Alan Laws, Chairman of the BCU Sports Management Committee and yours truly. Our President Albert Woods attended in his own right as a member of the ICF Board.

The first debate of the Congress centred on a British motion which suggested that a decision made at the 1992 Congress in Spain concerning 10,000 metre racing had been unconstitutional (How Could we!) simply, all the delegates at the Madrid Congress had been under the impression that the Congress was to debate the possibility of reducing the length of the long distance races to 5,000 meters. A brainstorm at the meeting of the Chairman (President of the ICF Sergio Orsi) changed the debate entirely and the ensuing confusion saw the demise all together of 10,000 metre racing - we were not amused.

However, at the ICF Congress there appear to be three types of delegate; those that haven't a clue what's going on and are grateful for the free trip, those that can't be bothered, and the BCU - well it feels like that! Seriously, though, we do have a few friends but not many. Our attempts to re-debate the 10,000 metre issue on a constitutional basis were largely ignored by the President, and although we forced the matter it became clear that most of the nations weren't interested. Most probably had never attended a sprint regatta in their lives! If we are to return long distance racing to the programme of ICF Sprint Regattas then we will need to undertake some intensive lobbying. Regrettably, I fear that we must set our sights on 5,000 metres, not 10,000.

The next debate centred on the President's Report, which certainly lacked substance, and said very little concerning the development programmes where US\$ 316,624 had been spent!

The Treasurer report was fairly standard and an improvement on past efforts. However, it is difficult to understand how we can justify the travel expenses of the President, US \$51,501 when compared to the expenses of the Technical Committees - Racing US\$7,805, Slalom and Wild Water US\$4,619, Marathon US\$8,885

The other motions have not exactly changed life as we know it! We did manage to change the role of the Technical Committees from advisory organs to Management Committees. The significance of this can not be overstated, however, I suspect that most of the present Executive don't understand it. In the elections our President Albert Woods stood against Sergio Orsi and lost by 42 votes to 24. This was a very respectable result and we are all very proud of Albert's stand. The working programme proposed for the next two years was rejected and referred back. Although given in the name of the Board of Directors this was clearly the work of the executive committee and lacked any detail.

PETER WELLS: ICF AWARD OF MERIT

A pleasant aspect of the ICF Congress was the unanimous agreement that Peter Wells should be awarded the ICF Award of Merit. Peter's contribution to the BCU and in particular the world of Canoe Sailing is extraordinary.

On a personal note the un-sung hero of the congress was Alan Laws, who fought hard for both democracy and common sense. The next Congress will be held during 1996 in Paris

NW BROWN CANOE INSURANCE

Three years ago we moved the canoe insurance scheme to NW Brown's. As there have been a number of changes to both the cover and charges during this time I thought that this would be an appropriate moment for explanation.

During the latter period of the previous scheme the insurers were paying out some £2 for every £1 of premium received. As a result our insurers were not keen to renew the cover. This eventually resulted in the transfer to NW Brown, in November, 1991. The new policy allowed the option to purchase new for old cover for both paddles and boats, and the theft of boats from roof-racks and trailers was covered. Unfortunately the new charges were substantially higher than those of its predecessor and the loss ratio (premium in, claims out) remained high. This resulted in further increases to the premium and restrictions in the cover during 1992 and 1993.

That was the bad news! However, if these preventative measures had not taken place I am sure that we would not have been in a position to offer insurance cover for 1994. The good news is that we are nearly at the end of the tunnel and the scheme has now reached break even point. Hopefully this will mean that we should be able to improve the competitiveness of the product and services in the years to come!

BCU-TYNE RALLY

The Tyne Tour is the largest white water tour in the BCU Touring Calendar, with over 800 paddlers attending this year's event! With good water levels on the Tyne and its tributaries, and the usual Northern hospitality, a good weekend was had by all. The social scene and ceilidh were reported to be as boisterous as ever!

Paul Owen, DIRECTOR

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of the British Canoe Union will be held on Saturday 11 March 1995 at Westminster Boating Base, Dinorwic Wharf, 136 Grosvenor Road, London, SW1V 3JY.

Members are reminded that under the Unions Articles of Association (Article 18(b)) any motion for discussion not originating from the BCU Council shall be:

Signed by two full members entitled to vote and to be lodged with the Secretary (Chief Executive) before 1 January 1994. Any nomination for candidates for election to Council should be put forward in the form of a motion. These nominations should be accompanied by a pen portrait of the candidate, up to a maximum of 100 words in length. This year with some existing members retiring and available for re-election, there are five vacancies for Council.

To save embarrassment it is worth reminding everyone that the membership categories entitled to vote are: Adult Comprehensive, Life Comprehensive and Adult Basic (also full and life members under the old system). Only members in the above categories are eligible to stand for election to Council.

CHRISTMAS

On behalf of myself and all of the staff at the British Canoe Union We would like to wish all our members a very Merry Christmas and a Happy Paddling New Year!



Notice board

Ventalin Users

Please Note. If you are using a Venatlin inhaler and compete at a level which might render you liable to a drugs test, please send to BCU Office for a 'form of declaration.' This will be registered, and provided you declare that you are using a Ventalin inhaler if called for a test: this should avoid any subsequent query concerning the presence of Salbutamol in your sample.

1994

The Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Sports Club of the Year Awards Salisbury Canoe Club have been judged as the 1994 Foundation for Sport and the Arts, Sports Club of the Year. A presentation took place on 25 November at the CCPR Annual Conference, in Market Bosworth, Warwickshire, where a cheque for 10,000 was awarded.

A fuller report and photographs will be supplied in the next issue. Congratulations to all involved with Salisbury Canoe Club.

Paddle-Ability

Following are the results of this years Paddle-Ability (previously called Handy-Kayak) Sprint Racing National Championships:

Mens 500 metres Class A

1st Tony White,
2nd Colin Kerridge

Mens 500 metres Class B

1st Brian Bennett,
2nd Richard Taylor,
3rd Robert Mahoney

Womens 500 metres Class A

1st Kay Strutt,
2nd Maggie Taylor

Womens 500 metres Class B

1st Terry Farrar

Futafund

The Futaleufu River, born in the Los Alerces National Park in Argentina near the Chile-Argentina border, curves west into Chile traversing spectacular mountains.

While in Chile it flows with unparalleled clarity through several deep canyons, whose many rapids are world famous. The Futaleufu ends at the ocean near the coastal town of Chaiten.

The Futaleufu River and town are in the X region, Region de Los Lagos, Provincia de Palena. Until 1985 this mountainous region was fairly isolated from the rest of Chile, and was only accessible from Argentina. Because of this many Chileans are only vaguely aware of the river and the natural beauty of the area. The river is now threatened by a hydro-electric dam project. The goal

is to preserve this river and land by empowering the Chileans of the Futaleufu to champion this cause. FUTAFUND, a not-for-profit group, has been created in the US to facilitate and support the efforts of the CODDERFU in Chile. The Futaleufu community is adamantly opposed to the dam, but they lack the experience needed to reach their goal.

FUTAFUND exists to advise and support their efforts and in doing so promote awareness and education of environmental matters in Chile. The Futaleufu needs your help. Contributions, even very small ones, will make a big difference in this effort to save one of the world's great whitewater rivers. Send to: FUTAFUND PO Box 4536 Modesto California 95351 (704) 488 9873, enclosing cheque

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust - Chance of a Lifetime

As a continuing and living memorial to Sir Winston Churchill, the Memorial Trust has awarded every year since his death in 1965, some 100 Travelling Fellowships allowing British Citizens the opportunity to pursue projects overseas.

In accordance with Sir Winston's wishes, these awards are intended for applicants from every corner of the United Kingdom, and from all walks of life without regard for particular educational or professional qualifications. For those whose interests fall within the scope of the designated categories, which include a canoeing category, this offers the chance of a lifetime:

Following Sir Winston's deep concern that this Country should be the beneficiary of the knowledge gained, applicants must indicate how they propose to utilize their experience overseas to the benefit of their own trade, profession and/or community.

Those interested in this unique opportunity should send a stamped, addressed envelope to: The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 15 Queen's Gate Terrace, London, SW7 5PR

The Trust will then send an explanatory leaflet and application form. The closing date for completed applications is 24 October 1994, and final selection will be by interview in January 1995.

Canoeing Small World

BCU Coach and ex-Olympic Slalomist Vic Brown has reported from the recent sailing expedition to South Georgia, along with Robert Eglestaff and Trevor Potts. Whilst on South Georgia the team met up with the British Antarctic Survey Team, one of whom was on secondment from Robert's Centre in North Wales and had just received his August Focus. Stranger still, it was the issue containing an article by Robert, a news photo of Trevor, and an account of the Coquet Canoe Club Race, which is organised by Vic! Stranger still, Trevor recognised a T shirt worn by one of the Norwegian scientists on the same base. It transpires that they had both been at the Arctic Canoe Race party, 18 months previously. In canoeing circles, the world is just a small village.

WHITEWATER

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Shepperton Marina,
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January Sale

Canoeists Takover Television?

A series of 8 x 45 minutes shows are coming to Channel Four in which the People of this great nation finally have a chance to express themselves in any and every way possible, as long as it involves a Camcorder. This must include canoeists as most of us are not camera shy! Each show will contain 30 odd clips covering everything from politics to sport, cartoons, comedy, spoofs, the weird and wonderful, the serious and the sad. What's more, every week a different member of the public will get the chance to present the show, where and how they like.

Get hold of a Camcorder and start filming, this is your chance of fame, either to produce a clip or to present the show. You don't have to be a Spielberg, you don't have to be Cindy Crawford, show the world who you are, what you believe, what makes you laugh.

Send your tapes (Hi-8, VHS, S-VHS) to:

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Iain Newman

Obituary

Iain died tragically on 4th June 1994 on Scafell in a climbing accident. A famous 'chockstone', which had been used by climbers for 80 years was dislodged and hit Iain's leg, severing the main artery. Despite the efforts of his friend Rob Cobbold, he bled to death before the Mountain Rescue Team could get to him.

Iain (aged 20) was a student at John Moores University (I.M.Marsh) studying for a B.Ed in outdoor pursuits and science, and he was proficient in climbing, canoeing, skiing, snowboarding and potholing.

He started canoeing with Burnley Kayak Club at age 10 and in 1989 went on a canoe expedition to France with Whitehough Outdoor Education Centre. He has paddled with

Accrington canoeists and Blackburn College, and more recently with colleagues from I.M.Marsh, and friends in Scotland.

In his spare time he taught canoeing at Rivington First O.E centre and climbing for Preston Borough Council, and had worked in climbing shops in Burnley, Blackburn and Keswick.

He was a great motivator amongst the students on his course and was always happy. He will be remembered for his character, his skill, his endless energy and enthusiasm, his laughter, his genuineness - his happiness.

He was a very special person and his death is a great loss to all who knew him.

M. Newman (Mrs)



Iain Newman

Women's Polo in the North West!

Women - have you ever considered playing canoe polo at an international event? Have you ever turned up to play polo only to find that yours is the only novice womens team there? Well, its about to change.

We have the commitment from Friends of Allonby Canoe Club to run a pitch for novice/intermediate standard teams at the tournament next June.

Teams from all over the country and from other countries are welcome to enter. Whether or not you play as a regular team or are interested

in getting a team together purely for a one-off weekend event we will be pleased to see you.

Remember, the closing date for entries into the National league is February 1995 for tournaments running between June 1995 and February 1996. The closing date for the June International at Liverpool is May 1995. So start planning, and look forward to a really good weekend away. If you are thinking of entering and want to talk to somebody first, then ring Marianne Yates on 061 969 0181.

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What's On? *Diary Pages*

International Canoe Exhibition, Crystal Palace 1995

Yet again the exhibition returns to 'Palace' and promises to be bigger than ever with exhibitors spreading over six halls. Entry on the day costs £6.00 adults and £3.00 if under 16 yrs. If booked in advance this goes down to £5.40 and £2.75 respectively. This reduces further if you are a member of a party : 10 or more costs £4.90 and £2.50 respectively, and 20 or more costs £4.40 and £2.25 respectively. Car Parking is free! Keep the weekend of the 17/18 February free!

Waterside Series 1995

The dates for the 1995 Waterside Series of races run by Newbury Canoe Club are:

Race A:

19th February: Great Bedwyn to Newbury, 13.5 miles including 21 portages.

Race B:

5th March: Newbury to Aldermaston & back, 17.5 miles including 19 portages.

Race C:

19th March: Pewsey to Newbury, 23 miles including 26 portages.

Race D:

2nd April: Devizes to Newbury, 34 miles including 28 portages.

The series of races is the traditional preparation for the Devizes to Westminster race held at Easter. However, Newbury Canoe Club aims to provide enjoyable races for all classes of paddlers. To promote this 1995 will see the introduction of a new class - Junior/Veteran. The junior member of the crew must be under 19, and the Veteran member must be aged 35 or over on 1st January 1995. The class is open to K2, C2 and mixed crews.

The changes to the team event have proved such a success that the format will remain unchanged for 1995. There will be senior and junior team events. In each, any combination of 3 or 4 boats can make up a team (K1, K2, C1, C2, Mixed) provided all competitors in the junior event are under 19 on January 1st 1995. Juniors can enter the senior team event. Junior/Veteran crews must enter the senior event. (Can anyone beat Bradford - On - Avon?)

For details send an sae to:

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

Doggy Paddle Advance Notice

Next years Doggy Paddle charity event will be held on Sunday 23 April, 1995 from Edmundsgate Sports Ground, Lemington, to Stratford, a distance of 19 miles. Details from Doggy Paddle John, 13, Regency Drive, Kenilworth, Warwickshire.

Wild Water Racing

The following are the provisional dates for Wild Water races in 1995. Races are open to all competitors although A races are not suit-

able for novices. Please check the yearbook for race entry fees and other details concerning the race. For paddlers who competed in 1994 the yearbook will be available in the New year, for those who did not race in 1994 yearbooks can be obtained from the secretary of the WWR Executive.

A Wavehopper class will run at all division B series events in 1995.

Abbreviations:

A -	Division A series race for the National Championship
B -	Division B series race
T -	Team event
U14/16 -	Under 14 and under 16 race series event
BCY -	British Canoe Youth
IRC -	Inter Regional Championships
SC -	Scottish Championships
BO -	British Open
C/NW -	Cheshire and N Wales Youth Championships

Date	Race	Division/Event	Organiser
Sun 15 Jan	Clyde	1B T	1
Sun 22 Jan	Dee	1B	2
Sat 4 Feb	Teme	1B T	3
Sat 4 Feb	Derwent Dash	BT	13
Sun 5 Feb	Teme	2B U14/16	3
Sun 12 Feb	Thistlebrigg	1B T U14/16	4
Sun 12 Feb	Taff	1B	5
Sun 19 Feb	Teith	B T U14/16	6
Sat 25 Feb	Washburn	1B + BCY indiv + IRC	7
Sun 26 Feb	Wharfe	1B + BCY team	7
Sat 4 Mar	Grandtully	A + SC	8
Sat/Sun 11/12	Mar Tryweryn	1B	see yearbook
Sat 18 Mar	Wear	1B T U14/16	9
Sun 19 Mar	Tees 1	B	10
Sun 26 Mar	Chester Dee	B U14/16 C/NW	11
Sat 1 Apr	Washburn	2A T	10
Sun 2 Apr	Washburn Cruise		
Sat/Sun			
22/23 Apr	Tryweryn	2A	see yearbook
Sat/Sun			
20/21 May	Tryweryn	3A + BO	see yearbook
Sun 28 May	Trent 1	B U14/16	12

Organisers

- Glasgow Univ Canoe Club,**
The Stevenson Building, 77 Oakfield Ave, Glasgow, G12 8LT
- Army Canoe Union,**
69 Canterbury Road, Farnborough, Hants, GU14 6QW
- Birmingham Canoe Club,**
122 Ulverley Green Rd., Olton, W Midlands, B92 8AA
- Edinburgh Univ Canoe Club,**
Competition Sec, 48 The Pleasance, Edinburgh, EH8 9TJ
- Cardiff Canoe Club,**
1 Windsor Ave., Radyr, Cardiff, CF4 8BW
- Glasgow K C,**
41 Cameron St., Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 8DP
- WWR Exec,**
3 Beechmount Cottages, High Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7LB
- SCA,**
16 Bruntsfield Gardens, Edinburgh, EH10 4EA
- Durham Kayak Club,**
28 Canterbury Rd., Newton Hall, Durham
- West Yorkshire CC,**
Wexford, Barton Lane, Armthorpe, Doncaster, DN3 3AB
- Chester Sailing and Canoe Club,**
13 Parkgate Rd., Chester, CH1 4AG
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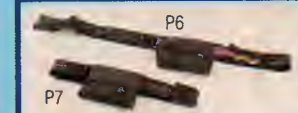
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Access officers

Dear Focus

My wife and I purchased an open canoe earlier this year. This being the first canoe we have owned we decided we would join the BCU. One of the primary reasons for joining the BCU was to gain information regarding access to waterways, particularly as we are aware that unrestricted access is not available.

We wrote to five access officers in April this year, enclosing the necessary stamped addressed envelopes, but to date we are disappointed to have only received replies from two. We sought advice on the means of access to various local rivers.

We recognise that the access officers are volunteers but feel that if the BCU lay claims to being able to advise on access then those officers need to be reliable. We have since purchased the various local river guides to gain the information we require. We are unlikely to seek further advice from access officers.

On a separate issue, we are having difficulty finding suitable launching placed for our canoe, particularly in the vicinity of locks. We have paid relatively large sums of money to the river authorities for licences and feel they could do more to assist the canoeist. After all, the amount of disturbance caused to river banks by canoeists is minimal compared to the wash from powered vessels. We find that landing stages for powered vessels are too high from the water to be able to be easily used. Our needs are simple - 10 yards of low river bank or beach cleared of vegetation on each side of the lock and on both sides of the river. We have taken this up with the NRA on a response to a recent questionnaire they sent to licence holders but perhaps representations could be made from the BCU on behalf of all canoeists.

Gary Stockbridge (Beds)

Response from Colin Kempson: Voluntary Officer, Elected Member of Council, Chairman of the Touring and Recreation Committee.

Dear Mr Stockbridge

I have been shown your letter to Focus dated 12 September 1994. We have about 135 Access Officers covering rivers in England alone. They are all volunteers and as such should be keen to do the job to their best ability. In reality many are pressed men as volunteers are becoming increasingly rare these days. The Access Committee is currently running a training programme for Access Officers and I hope that this will raise the level of activity generally.

The BCU runs with a slim full time office

staff and hundreds of volunteers running everything from local tours to international competition. Overall they do this very well but inevitably some will be thinkers, some doers and some administrators etc. Many are trying to do too much to make up for shortfalls. We are almost always short of competent people to take on specific tasks either to fill vacant posts or to replace less effective volunteers.

I note your comments regarding launching facilities. Most of the water authorities are now well aware of the needs of canoeists and are slowly improving facilities. This is the result of voluntary officers work in the making our needs known and attending the necessary representative meetings. Whilst you may feel that the sum you pay for your licence is substantial the total income produced by canoeists is actually very small and does not go anywhere towards meeting the cost of the facilities that we seek. However they are slowly providing better facilities across the country.

I do hope that your experience with Access Officers will not prevent your using them when you wish to visit unknown waters. In many cases they are very helpful and can keep you within the bonds of any agreements which have been negotiated for members.

If you might be interested in offering to help in some way which suits your particular skills and interests I would be happy to meet you to discuss the possibilities.

PRINCE KAYAK (To amuse you on the way to work!)

Prince Kayak rolls everytime
I wish that he were mine,
He's a hero in the waves,
He rescues and he saves,
Lives, of damsels in distress
(of course we're helpless! - yes!!)
He lets the men folk sink;
He looks so cool in pink.
Prince Kayak must be mine,
Until the end of time.
When rivers are all CLOSED
No Access Beyond This Point
And Plastic's decomposed
Prince Kayak he can spin
And turn and bob and grin,
Whilst standing on back deck,
A tree wrapped round his neck.
Oh how I'd love to be
with Prince Kayak in the sea,
He'd surf me in to shore,
Now girls need I say much more!
He cooks on open fires
His waist has no spare tyres,
And underneath the stars,
He's like a man from Mars,
Dressed in a black rubber suit
(Oh God he really turns me on!)
With skirt of neoprene
He rules the kayak scene,
Oh how he can preen himself.
Colour - co-ordinated.
Often hated (by men of course)
Not by us lusting, cooing,
adoring, helpless Sex,
We love him, Prince Kayak - my
hero, be mine.

Girlies Anon

Dart Access Response

Dear Focus

Response to the letter on Dart Access from IWH Davidson that was published in August Focus.

The writer does not appear to realise that Wild Water Racing paddlers fast cruising, a bunch of playboaters playing, a group of trainee instructors under tuition or two bird-watchers drifting in a open canadian are all touring paddlers on a river. Each has an equally good reason to be using the river, but their interests are very different. Each river user has to understand and respect the interests of his fellow paddlers and clearly threats and abuse play no part in this at all.

A paddler in a WWR boat is making a big commitment when lining up for shooting a major drop; the playboater in a stopper beneath the drop is another unexpected obstacle and with only limited manouverability may not always be avoided. (Of course it is always possible for one of the playboating group to find a place to observe the river above the drop and signal to river users below that the boats are coming.)

The suggestion in the letter likening the needs of Wild Water Racing paddlers to speed skaters misses one important point. Speed skaters (and sometimes slalom paddlers) use purpose built sporting facilities where public access can easily be managed; unfortunately this does not exist anywhere for Wild Water Racing. (Although we still dream of such a dedicated 4 mile stretch of suitable water).

Access is a difficult enough problem for Local Access Officers with landowners and anglers to establish agreements with. As canoeists let's stick together and share our rivers.

**Matthew Caunt
Chairman BCU WWR Committee**

More letters on page 16

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DOLPHIN

friendly

Below:

Funghie the
dolphin who
inhabits Dingle
Bay, Ireland



Kayaking around the coast of Britain offers a variety of close up experiences with our marine wildlife. Inquisitive seals follow kayaks (paddle backward for the best views) and surf alongside on a tide race; puffins bob peacefully on the swell as you pass by within a paddle length; thousands of small fry suddenly leap out of the sea on a calm sunny day, landing like a shower of rain drops around the boat, desperately attempting to escape an underwater predator all of these are experiences I've had on the sea, but none compare with the joy of playing with wild dolphins in their element.

I was lucky enough to encounter two dolphins in Church Bay, Anglesey, back in March 1993. I had been the evening before to a lecture and film show given by Dr Horace Dobbs, world authority on dolphins. His tales of dolphins around the world and their remarkable healing powers had me enthralled and by the end of the evening I was obsessed - I had to meet a wild dolphin. The very next day I dragged my husband out in a force four wind onto the waves of Church Bay where, rumour had it, two friendly dolphins were to be found.

There was no sign of them when we launched but with their powerful sonar it took just seconds for them to find us. I could hardly believe my eyes. They swam around the kayak and underneath, rubbing against the hulls and popped up between our boats taking a good look at us (these strange creatures with heads in the middle their bodies and funny flippers on sticks).

Gentlest of creatures

I found myself laughing with joy. Although huge, at least 12 feet long and immensely powerful, they were the gentlest of creatures. Softly passing between us they rose up



Left and above: The sociable Dunghie entertains many visitors.

and dived in a graceful ballet, never once upsetting or bumping the boat. Surfing the waves with us, leaping up in front of the bows and peering up at us from below - they played us out. After two hours, with a gentle 'pew' from their blowholes they said goodbye and weaved their way out of the Bay to check on the 'play-ability' of a passing fishing boat.

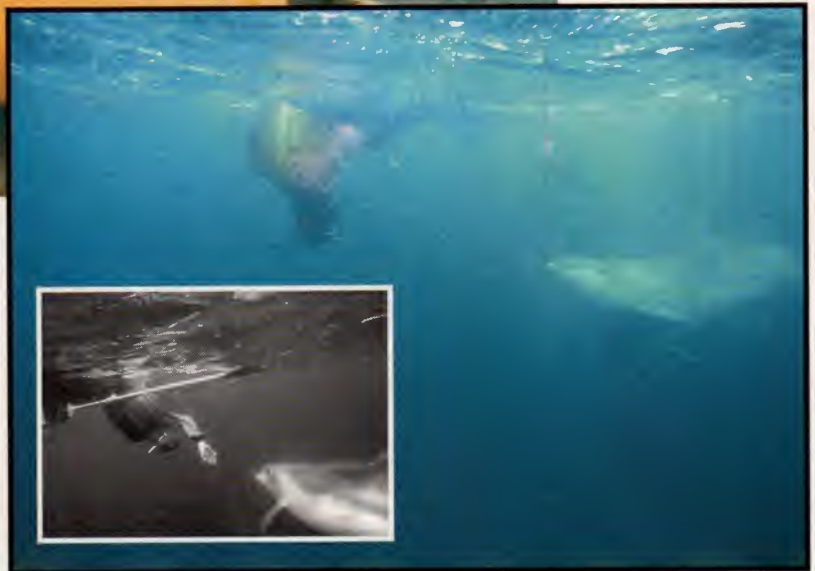
These two ambassadors of the sea stayed around Church Bay for about three months then moved on, as dolphins do. We are fortunate in Britain to have had several friendly dolphins around our coast over the last twenty years. Horace Dobb's books tell of Simo at Solva, Dyfed; Donald who appeared at the coastal resorts from the Isle of Mann to Cornwall; Freddy at Amble, north of Newcastle; and Percy in Cornwall. Donald would have his own fun in sailing dingy and yacht races. Suddenly the lead boat would take off at a tangent - its rudder having been adjusted by Donald and the last boat in the line would find itself sprinting forwards into the lead - dolphin propelled!

Funghie

Our most accessible friendly solitary dolphin today is Funghie in Ireland. Funghie is a sociable chap who has entertained the crowds in Dingle Bay for ten years. He has always frolicked around kayakers. Indeed, some say they are his favourite source of entertainment. He has his favourite kayakers, and will spend ages swirling around them - sometimes rubbing himself against the paddles.

Even now there are lots of gaps in our knowledge of the numbers and behaviour of dolphins around the coast of Britain. Researchers are keen to record sightings. So if you spot one, your report is valued and appreciated.

Kayakers are in a unique position to help with marine conservation. When we get close to a dolphin



or whale, we know about it! Not for us the distant observation from the deck of a yacht - often we feel more like the object of curiosity (and undoubtedly are) under their scrutiny.

Work is currently developing on the remarkable healing powers that dolphins appear to have. Experiences of clinically depressed people who have had the opportunity to swim with dolphins show that a profound change occurs and that the dolphins appear to help the healing process where modern medicines have failed. Some Australian aboriginals hold the dolphin as their sacred totem. In a bold research project, Operation Sunflower, Dr Horace Dobbs the founder of International Dolphin Watch is developing programmes to bring the dolphin's healing powers to a wider human audience.

If you are interested in paddling with dolphins or just want to know more about them, contact International Dolphin Watch. Their regular newsletter will keep you informed on dolphin activity around the world.



Above and inset: Jean Louis (dolphin) with kayaker off Brittany. Picture from 'Classic Dives of the World' by H. Dobbs.

Safety

Dear Focus

I was totally amazed last weekend to see canoe surf star tests being carried out at a location that is well known to be very UNSAFE.

The beach is Freshwater West in Pembrokeshire, and is probably the best, or one of the best surfing beaches in Wales. But it does come with its problems i.e various rip currents at various locations, which work at different states of the tides, Quicksands which are well known about and have caught out the unexpected at times, and of course the reef or rocky bottom. Surfers, Wave Skiers, Windsurfers and Canoeists flock in their numbers to use this beach because of the excellent surfing conditions, but I would suggest that those people who are running courses at this beach reassess their ideas, if it is an advanced course, where ALL those on the course are well competent to cope with the conditions on the day, well then press ahead, but if your level of course is not that high, how about picking another beach, perhaps a SAFE one?

I recall an incident I saw last year where a course was being run on the same lines as last weekend, and the 'examiner' told the Canoeists to swim their kayaks ashore i.e by towing them, not too much of a problem until you take in to account that he failed to notice a rip current building right in front of him, the result was obvious, the Canoeists failed to swim ashore! I found out at a later date, one of the Canoeists was put off canoeing by this one incident and has not ventured afloat again.

I hope Pembrokeshire doesn't suffer a canoeing tragedy but after seeing courses run as I have at Freshwater West, I think that the possibility of one occurring is very high.

I would appreciate any sensible views your readers may have on this matter.

N P Crick - British Surfing Association Level 1 coach. Royal Yachting Association Windsurfing Institution.

Response to Mr N P Crick from Dennis Ball Honorary National Surf Coach

Mr Crick makes a number of very valuable points in his letter. They are highly relevant in general, although are less so in the specific. He is absolutely right to point out that Freshwater West in Pembrokeshire can be (and often is) a very unsafe venue, particularly for inexperienced or unaware surfers, especially when wind or swell are moderate or above.

In spite of its benign appearance to the uninitiated, when the surf is much above 3', powerful and hazardous recirculating rips are the norm, and

can make getting oneself and one's equipment ashore very difficult. At such times Freshwater West is no place for the inexperienced or those who are ill-equipped and unpractised in surf rescue techniques.

So, heed Mr Cricks words of caution, they are well placed. Not a year has passed in the last 10 where I, my staff or experienced members of groups in my charge have not had to go to the rescue of other surfers in distress (canoeists and board-riders).

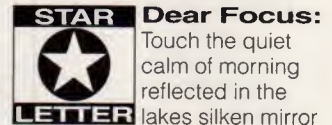
So far as quicksand is concerned, in 20 years of surfing Freshwater West, I have yet to experience this phenomena, neither have my enquiries to the local Council, the National Trust, or locals uncovered any actual evidence of this. However, I'm well aware of the signs and my mind is open. His comments about the reef and rocks are always relevant.

Having made these valid points, Mr Crick goes on to cite some specific incidents which I will respond to as best I may. He criticises the conduct of a recent "canoe-surf Star Tests weekend". I own up: I was in charge of this event! At the time in question, the surf was around 4' and it was blowing force 4-5 Westerly (on-shore). The rips were running strongly. Potentially hazardous conditions. However, what may not have been apparent to Mr Crick is that those being tested at Freshwater West were all proficient paddle surfers - being assessed for their Grade 4 or 5 Surf Test (advanced level). All were known to me to be competent to handle the (difficult) conditions in safety. The rest of the group, including some novices to surf had been taken to a more sheltered beach by another instructor, where ironically the conditions were almost too small for some. It has always been our practice to direct groups to safer alternative surfing venues when conditions at Freshwater West have either been too hazardous or too challenging for the level of the group.

I do not know if the other incident which Mr Crick mentions refers to a person who attended one of my courses or not, he is not very specific. Certainly, we have had a small number of individuals sign up for courses which have been above their ability level, and in spite of checking with them, we have not discovered this until they are out there swimming! I can say that we have never compromised the safety of members of our groups - whatever their ability, although I am aware that the 'fact' of safety or rescue being on hand does not make a swim for some novices 'feel' less frightening.

I welcome Mr Cricks' useful service in raising awareness of the potential hazards of surfing in general and Freshwater West in particular.

Touch



Dear Focus:

Touch the quiet calm of morning reflected in the lakes silken mirror

Touch the sky, the mountains and the sun, absorbing all these elements in your soul,

Touch the strong winds and the racing tides

The salt spray on your lips the crying gulls, the seals talk, Touch the sunset so deep you can melt into it.

Touch the rivers current, let your fingers run through it let your boat run with it,

Touch the seering pain, December days when water so cold

knives you to the core, When your duvets memory seems an age away,

Touch all these things Let them touch you.

Girlies Anon

If Girlies Anon could be brave and let Focus know who they are, 'yakkity yak' prizes could soon be on the way: will the poets step forward please.

Editor.

BCU ID

Dear Focus:

While on a 'cycling' holiday in Ireland, I needed some more money so I went to the bank with my Visa card.

Teller: "That's fine sir. Have you some form of ID... a passport?"

Graham: "No, I didn't think I needed one"

Teller: "What about a driving licence?"

Graham: "No, I left it at home - I'm on a cycling holiday" (Graham started fumbling through his almost empty wallet wondering if his family would end up having him for dinner)

Graham: "I've got my BCU membership card" (He said hopelessly)

Teller: "Oh, that's fine Sir. Thank you. Here is your money - enjoy your stay."

It just goes to prove that BCU Membership offers you more!

Graham Purse, of Bridport, Dorset

Conwy Falls Fish Pass

Thumbing through my Daily Telegraph of 20 October I observed with a wry smile that the infamous Conwy Falls fish pass has won the small project category of the (Telegraph-sponsored) British Construction Industry Awards. My smile soon disappeared when I discovered that value for money was the major factor in its success, since it 'only' cost £506,000. Of course, they meant that it was an innovative design which enabled the cost to be brought within the Welsh Office/NRA grant available.

Naturally I have written to the Editor of the Telegraph pointing out that means many people benefiting from a near £0.5 million public investment in leisure (not just a few dozen anglers); that the NRA has a moral duty to support all forms of river-based recreation (not just angling); and that sensible management of the Upper Conwy will allow anglers to begin - and others to continue - enjoying the river without conflict. My letter wasn't published and I don't suppose it will be. But these things need to be said in public. River management means using public money (if necessary) to reduce conflict between

interests, not create it. £0.5 million for a fish pass- how much for river-users' car park? But now I'm forgetting that rivers are, of course, business premises and not part of our national heritage.

Andy Reynolds



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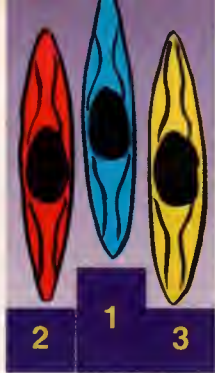
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Competition *focus*

SLALOM

World Cup 94 - *Kings and Queens of the Rapids*

Remarkable success bringing Britain's best year yet - three World Cup Champions form four possibles at the end of a gruelling five event World Cup series was more that we could dream of, but, their commitment and form brought gold for Lynn Simpson and Shaun Pearce in men's and women's individual kayak, together with gold again for Gareth Marriott.

We didn't finish there, as team mates, Rachel Crosbee and Ian Raspin followed Lynn and Shaun, winning silver overall.

Surely setting the tone for next year's World Championships to be held on "home" water at Nottingham at the end of August, this group, who have trained harder than ever before, had begun their travels in Nottingham in early June and then stopped at races,

2,3 and 4 in Germany, France and Spain before a brief respite and then on to the final at the Yahagi river in Japan in early September. Competitors from more than 30 nations provided the opposition.

It would be so easy to misunderstand the sparkle and talent of the group, seen training almost daily at Holme Pierrepont. Hard work and total professionalism has to be the norm, not always easy when money is a sore point, although grant aid from FSA, SAF and Sports Council does help, together with a dedicated support team!

SENSATIONAL RESULTS - CONGRATULATIONS - YOU ARE THE BEST!

K1 Men/Women

1. Shaun Pearce GBR
1. Lynn Simpson GBR
2. Ian Raspin GBR
2. Rachel Crosbee GBR
3. Scott Shipley USA
3. Kordula Striepecke GER

C1

1. Gareth Marriott GBR
2. Lukas Pollert CZE
3. Danko Herceg CRO

C2

1. Simek/Rohan CZE
2. Saidi/Delray FRA
3. Haller/Haller USA



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British Open Championships & Premier Division Ranking Slalom

River Dee, Llangollen 22 October 1994

"In its own way, there is nowhere in the world more beautiful than the Vale of Clwyd" quoted Gerard Manley Hopkins, but if you were watching from the bridge in Llangollen, in the heart of this Welsh valley you would have needed convincing.

The Dee was at its lowest level providing National Team Coach, Alan Edge, Course Designer for the race with a headache - How to design and interesting course to ensure that the canoeists negotiated the fascinating outcrop of rock known as the "Town Falls" to avoid damage to their specialist kevlar carbon canoes - they need not have worried as right on cue, it rained - the type of rain that only this valley knows and the level of this wonderful river crept up slowly. Some spectacular sights were to be seen with canoeist and spray hard to differentiate, all against a backcloth of mist, rain and weakened glorious autumn colours!

The 21st Anniversary of these British Open Championships also gave competitors their last chance to win points in the last event of the Premier division series. This annual event attracted more than two hundred competitors and a great deal of support from the locals this time! Two titles from the four categories contested were already decided - brothers Philip and Stephen Green representing Olney Slalom Paddlers had taken gold in the Canadian Doubles category with Shaun Pearce, 1994 World Cup men's individual kayak Champion, gold in the men's kayak

class. Number 1 position next year, World Championship year will be their prize!

Understandably, two from three of this year's British World Cup champions, chose not to compete this weekend after a long exhausting racing season, but Rachel Crosbee, physiotherapist from Nottingham and silver medalist in the World Cup won the double (both Premier division and British Championships) by taking the women's individual kayak event by some two seconds. Junior 16, Helen Cardy from Kingston Kayak Club won best Junior prize.

Mark Delaney, the Canadian singles expert from West Lothian managed to stay upright by paddling furiously over the Town Falls finishing in first place, and also becoming a double winner of both Open and Premier Division Championship. Yet another Junior 16, Robert Turner of Tees KC finished in first place in the Junior event.

Teessider Ian Raspin stole gold from Shaun Pearce in the men's kayak event by a mere tenth of a second, with younger brother Andrew in third place and local canoe club member Paul Ratcliffe, from Tyldesley, pushed out of the medals by three tenths of a second into fourth place! Neil Buckley from Shrewsbury and a member of this year's Junior World Championship won "gold" in the Junior category.

Mike Millar and Stuart Pitt turned the tables on rivals Phil and Steve Green, winning the Canadian doubles category by 8 seconds!



BRITISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

K1 Men

1. Ian Raspin, Teesside, 147.21
2. Shaun Pearce, PEAK, 147.35
3. Andrew Raspin, Teesside, 147.80

K1 Women

1. Rachel Crosbee, Nottingham Kayak, 175.67
2. Claire Daniels, Nomad, 178.09
3. Heather Corrie, Manchester, 178.59

C1

1. Mark Delaney, West Lothian, 165.25
2. Nick Smith, PEAK, 167.30
3. Craig Brown, C.R.C.A.T.S., 170.15

C2

1. Mike Millar/Stuart Pitt, Olympus Cameras, 176.18
2. Philip Green/Stephen Green, Olney Slalom, 184.46
3. Andrew Mantle/Nick Smith, Birmingham, 191.69

PREMIER DIVISION (Final Placings)

K1 Men

1. Shaun Pearce, PEAK Performance
2. Paul Ratcliffe, Llangollen
3. Ian Raspin, Teesside
4. David Crosbee, Forth Canoe Club
5. Kevin Campbell, Arrowcraft
6. Andrew Raspin, Teesside

K1 Women

1. Rachel Crosbee, Nottingham KC
2. Heather Corrie, Manchester
3. Helen Barnes, Citroen UK
4. Emma Player, Shepperton
5. Claire Daniels, Nomad
6. Kathryn Pigdon, Llandysul Paddlers

C1

1. Mark Delaney, West Lothian
2. Richard Domoney, Llangollen
3. Stuart McIntosh, Arrowcraft
4. Stuart Bowman, PEAK Performance

C2

1. P Green/S Green, Olney Slalom
2. M Millar/S Pitt, Olympus Cameras
3. A Mantle/N Smith, Birmingham Uni
4. C Rouch/A Ambridge, Hemel Hempstead



Slalom Yearbook

Slalom Yearbook 1995 edition will be circulated in late January - if you are ranked in Div 4 and above and you would like your free copy, remember to make sure that your divisional Ranking compiler has your correct current address. In div 5 this year - you'll find your name in there and if you would like a copy, send sae to Slalom Development Officer, The Old Bothie, Broadgate Lane, Kelham, Newark, NG23 5RZ (Postage for 200 grammes please), enclosing full name and address and we'll send you a copy free of charge!

Plastic slalom - let's hope we have more success in 95 - our planned Giant Slalom had to be cancelled as Yorkshire Water Authority couldn't release at Washburn in early September - watch out for new dates!

MARATHON

The Second Upper Thames

15th October 1994

You can always tell the standard of a canoe race by who they get in to do the catering. So, when it was that Paul Owen, Director of the BCU, was found brewing Chili con Cami to a subtle recipe of his own devising the night before the race, it was clear that things were going to go really well.

Apart that is from arriving at 6.15am on race day to find Riverside Park, Lechlade covered in damp fog and already with a crowd of canoeists with questions like, "Where is the river?" - they could not see it! and "Which way is it going?" - there was so little flow that it was difficult to tell!

Undoubtedly the biggest showing this year were the K2 Relays, with 6 entries, each with up to three boats. However, the straight through K2's - 13 in total, 6 veteran were also strong. A couple of K1s, a blind pad-

dlar, and a lone C2 were a triumph of the spirit over the more sensible option of joining the race marshalls for a hot breakfast after the starts - which were all finished by 9.10.

Nottingham were the first crew to reach Iffley Rollers in Oxford and the approximate half way point in 4 hours and 3 minutes. The rest of the boats came through in various states of freshness over the next couple of hours before the cut off time of 2.30. By now, mercifully, the fog had burnt off and it was a glorious sunny autumn day. However, this did not take away from basic lack of flow - a completely different situation from the fast currents of last year. This led to another problem - some of the portages, such as Abingdon, were much higher than usual.

It must have been the sheer lack of flow that delayed the boats reaching Reading and Leighton Park Canoe Club house. However, among the first in were the

Nottingham relay team in 8.36 hrs, and had to hold their breaths until the Reading team only arrived in 8.40 - thus coming first and second respectively.

The RAF were the fastest straight through K2 in 10.38, but way behind the record set the previous year of 8.53. But, but this time, the boats were also running into troubles and the emergency phone number was constantly going to report retirements. Meanwhile, down on the landing stage, special cheers went up for the arrival of the two straight through K1s - G MacDonald of the RAF and P Venus of Richmond.

By 9pm, virtually all the boats were in and the crews gathered round the chili to complain about flow, and the support crews to complain about mental exhaustion - why? what had they done? K Bryce and J Curran then set off to drive to Scotland that night to compete there on the Sunday morning! All that was left to do after such a successful day was to buy a beer and pour it in libation on the

statue of Old Father Thames at Lechlade. But, Reading is a long way from Lechlade, so most people had to make do with just drinking it.

Alan Holmes

RESULTS

K1

1. Straight Through RAF, G MacDonald, 11.25
2. Straight Through Richmond Canoe Club P Venus, 12.09

K2

1. Straight Through RAF, D Tranter & G Hooley, 10.38
2. Straight Through Cambridge Canoe Club, R Stagg & I Newman, 11.06

K2 Relay

1. Notts Kayak Club, J Butler & A Richardson, D Enoch, B Newbutt, J Block & R Murray, 8.36
2. Reading CC, M Starkey, P Tomlins, N Martin, D Coulsin, Neil Lewis & Glynn Wallis, 8.40

K2 veterans

1. Greyfriars CC & Cumbernauld & Kilsyth CC, K Bryce & J Curran 10.53
2. Reading CC, D Knowles & S Carter, 11.10

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Club scene

Who is the Chairman?

How do you become the Chairman of a Canoe club when you're not that good at canoeing. It's easy. . . you fall in love with the sport. Most of us can remember where we were when John Kennedy was shot and when man first walked on the Moon. I can remember my first canoe paddle as if it was only yesterday.

I had been a school governor for several years and heard a great deal about the activity holidays the school arranged for the junior pupils to help build their confidence and interpersonal skills before they moved onto high school. The opportunity came for a member of the governing body to have a weekend sample of these activities (paid for by the school governor!) along with a member of his family. Without more ado, I set off with my son dreaming of conquering tall mountains, scrambling up river beds and winning the orienteering competition.

The whole weekend was enjoyable even if the mountains weren't quite so high and the river beds seemed to be more like gentle streams; and coming fifth wasn't so bad either. However I can remember that first sensation of getting afloat in a kayak (I thought it was a canoe) on a lake and feeling that sense of freedom and adventure which I still get today. After a quick mastery of the

basics we were off around the lake with that frustration which only kayakers can fully understand, when the world keeps going around and around as you try desperately to get a straight course. My first sample of a seal launch came that day off what seemed to be the side of a house but on reflection was a low jetty. My ceaseless chattering to my son for the rest of the weekend about this new found sport and recreation was sufficient to give him the opportunity to convince me that without sufficient funding there were many things he couldn't enjoy and so a deal was struck. I could chatter about kayaking - he could purchase more computer games!

Youth Services Course

After this weekend I managed to get on a Youth Services Course with my other son and not only found that I enjoyed kayaking but also that I could go straight and do some of the

more fancy strokes like a draw stroke, as well as a pawlatta roll. During this course my son and I made many friends and it was decided to rekindle the glowing embers of the Wigan Canoe Club which had been in existence for 15 years but recently the emphasis on more difficult whitewater had driven the more sane members to go elsewhere.

Our first meeting proved the starting point for lasting friendships. However these were sorely tested as the younger members had to put up with the nervous hesitation of the newly elected chairman every time he came to faster stretches of the river or the rougher bits of the sea. Whilst this tested them sufficiently the greatest test came when he organised a canal cruise which was to terminate at his home early one Saturday evening where hot pot would be provided allowing them to enjoy the rest of the evening in the usual Saturday night haunts. Unfortunately the 9 mile cruise took 2 hours longer than anticipated and talk of making the chairman 'walk the plank' for expecting them all to complete the distance became the sole subject of conversation as the distant horizon seemed to remain in the distance.

Without Disgrace

All this is in the past as the clubs and the chairman's expertise has grown. Having achieved T.I status along with 6 others in the last year and completed our first slalom without disgrace

the club has established itself once again as the basis for kayaking in the Wigan area.

Our participation in the Anglesey Sea Classic when we all had a good showing and the club coach won the slalom 5 mile race was the crowning glory on 2 years hard work to create a family club with sufficient diversity for everyone.

As I stayed up late completing the preparation for my second AGM my wife asked if I still enjoyed kayaking which now seemed to involve me in many phone calls, writing newsletters, arranging trips and organising bath sessions. As soon as she had said it I could picture that moment on the lake when I felt the sense of independence and freedom which is for me what kayaking is all about. Whilst I enjoy the challenge of a river or the pleasure of a canal cruise those initial feelings remain. So if you like kayaking and want to be part of a club which enjoys all aspects of the sport and whose chairman would like to hear from similarly motivated people then make contact on the below number. Whatever section of the sport or recreational aspect of kayaking suits you there are plenty of members who will want to share your enthusiasm as they share mine.

Further details can be obtained by contacting Frank Smith, Chairman, Wigan Canoe Club Tel: 0942 607726 or the Clubs Development Officer, Phil Hughes on 0942 496597-

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5 Golds at Augsburg

17-18 September Rodeo Pre-World Championships, Augsburg

The team arrived somewhat travel weary, and from most corners of Europe. Many people took time out to paddle the Alps, get lost or just cruise around Europe before the event.

Saturday's events began in earnest with the slalom trial followed by preliminary heats in the Washing Machine.

The rodeo/slalom section tests river running skills with paddlers having to perform tight breakouts, attainments, surfs and stopper moves to tough number boards with either paddles or hands, and being timed too! Most people were not happy with this event but at least everyone was in the same boat, so to speak! After the slalom some of the squirt boaters ran the course for a laugh! Bob Campbell was first off and ran the course with style until out of range of the TV camera view and then proceeded to miss all the remaining gates whilst being vertical!

TV crew

Chris Taudevin was next up, making some gates that the K1's had missed! Simon Turton was last down and proceeded to do the opposite of Bob! He fluffed all the gates in view of the TV crew and stormed down the remaining part of the course with ease! The crowd appeared impressed with this non-competitive end to the slalom. It was with sad regret that Andy (The Snake) Whiting had to sit this one out as he had dislocated his right shoulder earlier in the week after 'subbing-out' of the Washing Machine and the proceeding to hit the side of the course and roll twice with it dislocated... ouch! After a night in the local hospital he was back with us. This was a great loss to the squirt team as Andy had been paddling like a River God at the last couple of rodeo's and had trained hard for this event. Get well soon Snaky!

The hole riding heats were in the Washing Machine and of a much more familiar part of the competition to most GB paddlers even if the hole was a bit bigger than most over here! All the GB paddlers performed well with notable performances from Paul Currant, Richard Chamberlain and Paul Fletcher. Fletch's move of the day was a perfect cart wheel during his run.

Shaun Baker provided his usual high standard of paddling but lost out with a bad result in the slalom as did Jason Buxton and Anthony Perkins. The ladies paddled well too with Louise Wigmore performing

some impressive inverted back-loops. Bridget Thomas and Vicky Young provided some good consistent runs which put them in a good position overall. At the end of the day all the scores were added together and the line up for the finals on Sunday announced.

Saturday night's party and BBQ was as well organised as ever. The usual Augsburg night demo by Jan Kellner and the locals, had some stunning effects. The TV crew provided some amazing computer graphics on a screen on the opposite side of the course to the watching crowd, whilst Jan and the gang paddled in the middle with strobe light and dry ice on the water. This was amazing to say the least.

Sunday dawned and was to see the heats and finals in OC1, C1, Squirt and the final of the K1M and K1L. The UK was well represented with a strong field in all classes.

Squirt Boaters

The squirt boaters were first off with the action taking part on the Sugarloaf which is a rather unfriendly pour-over, and on the rest of the upper section of the course. Locals Arndt SchNfflein and Erich Mayer were going well but the Brits were putting on the style with Simon Turton and Chris Taudevin boofing the pour-over (a gutsy move!) and Paul Currant and Jason Buxton putting some good sequences together. The final was held in the washing machine stopper and the small hole above it with Paul Currant, Arndt and Erich battling it out. Arndt earlier in the week had been cart-wheeling in the hole and was doing well but both he and Erich could not hold off Paul who was in the groove and pulled smooth move after move, came out on top and the result was justified 1st Paul, 2nd Arndt, 3rd Erich.

Next up were the OC1 with Pete Orton, Dave Luke and Steve Block representing the UK going well and pulling some impressive big air. It is amazing how narrow the course looks with 10-12 feet of open boat flying through the air and doing 360 pirouettes...impressive!

After five runs in the hole and some strenuous carrying of boats back up, the strong paddlers from, Claude Stahe! (Switzerland) and Uwe Fischer from Germany were finally being beaten into 3rd and 4th respectively by Pete's impressive 2nd place in the slalom and joint 1st in the hole. This gave him the no 1 place at the end, narrowly beating Steve Block who was joint first in the

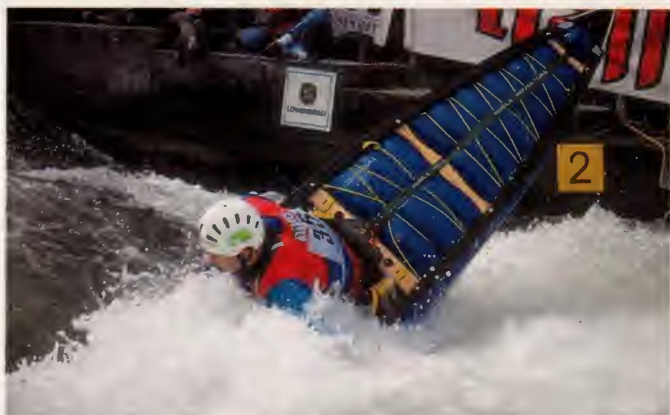


Photo: Pete Astles

hole with Pete, but one place down in the slalom. An excellent result from paddlers just into open Canadians. Dave Luke did well in the hole but lost a lot of points in the slalom after swimming in the hole after a cool ride: if only he had been in the hole riding section at the time he might well have come out on top!

C1's revved up

By now the C1's were revved up and ready to go on the extreme slalom which had been changed to make it harder and with the time limit removed, Joel Scott had a blistering run to put him in joint 1st with Thomas Karas, Steve Block not far behind in 3rd and George Woods putting in a credible performance with 4th. Onto the hole riding with not a lot in it and the UK in good position Steve and Joel fought it out with some cool blasting, flat 360 spins, and plenty of 'verticality' as the Americans put it!

Joel impressed all with some cool cross-bow moves but Steve took the honours at the end of the day so with a win each, once the scores were added up they came out joint 1st place. George Woods gained a consistent 4th place in the slalom and hole riding which gave him 4th over all, just out of the medal points, and unlucky.

K1L and K1M

The finals of the K1L and K1M got under way with the extreme slalom runs which were to provide a few surprises! In the Ladies, Sandra Schmidt was beaten by Becky Weis and Nancy Wiley whilst Vicky Young ended up 4th with a good run. Bridget Thomas just behind her in 5th place. In the K1M, Paul Currant with a bold plan, took joint 1st with Bernd Sommer which left Jan Kellner of Augsburg trailing in 8th after a missed couple of gates above the Zoom Flume. Richard Chamberlain ended up 5th and Paul Fletcher 15th with a bad run, so it was all down

to the Washing Machine hole to fight it out. Jan Kellner was proving why he is the God of Augsburg with some impressive sequences of moves on both sides. Paul Currant just seemed to be having a fun day on the river! Smiling and putting up a good first run he produces lots of vertical moves with some stylish paddling. His second run was not as good but it was enough to earn him 4th in the hole. Richard Chamberlain only managing 12th place after some good training runs. The Ladies performed well too, Vicky Young was calm and collected and came in 4th place, with Bridget a disappointing 6th, but that's Rodeo.... it's either your day or it's not!

The event went well overall with no major hiccups thanks to Jan Kellner and all the people who have helped run the event with usual German precision. A few changes will be made for the World Championships next year.

Well done to everyone who competed and thanks to all the supporters who travelled out.

Bob Campbell



UK RESULTS	
K1 Men	
1st Paul Currant	8th Richard Chamberlain
11th Paul Fletcher	
K1 Women	
4th Vicky Young	6th Bridget Thomas
C1	
1st Steve Block/Joel Scott	4th George Woods
C1 Junior	
1st Pete Orton	2nd Steve Block
Squirt	
1st Paul Currant	
Squirt Junior	
4th Chris Taudevin/Simon Turton	7th Jason Buxton

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“Would you mind taking your foot from under the kayak, Sir”. This question come order flowed with a polite expertise from the gentleman in charge of supervising Aeroflot passengers at Heathrow w. “And if you wouldn’t mind letting go of the fishing line holding up the end of the boat then we can sort out the weight”.

I had experienced problems like these before but had always managed to persuade the check-in staff of the virtues of kayaking expeditions. I had hoped that this joint medical kayaking venture would soften even the stone hearts of the Aeroflot people. However, things were not going according to plan. Three of our boats were 8 Kg over but Fred’s soared to 33 Kg excess.

“Now I’ll weigh the hand baggage, Sir” my heart sank as the scales rocketed upwards. By this stage Mr Aeroflot had his calculator out and was frantically hitting buttons. David presented his credit card before matters got worse.

After all this arguing we were the last people on board. The cabin crew shut the doors and the pilot took off. A little while later we stripped down to only four layers and bulging pockets were re-packed into hidden dry-sacks. After changing planes in Moscow and a further 9 hours in the hands of the Gods, we landed in the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar.

Limited information

Our information of the country was rather limited. we knew of a mountainous rugged country of some 2 million inhabitants who once ruled half of the globe under Genghis Khan, and who had developed a strong taste for

Vodka. It was a relief to be greeted by the usual enthusiasm from the taxi drivers keen to make that initial killing before the foreigner became familiar with the going rate.

Base was established in the \$8 per night Altai hotel. The Lonely Planet guide book, published some three months previously, said that it wasn’t a bad place. Apparently the man on the door with the big stick was to keep out the riff-raff

Two-fold purpose

The purpose of the expedition was basically two-fold. We would travel to the Altai Mountains in search of big white water and, secondly, I was planning research into the incidence of ear disease in the nomadic population. The first week, as with most expeditions, was spent in trying to organise the most effective way of succeeding in the above objectives.

Ulaanbaatar, or UB., as the ex-pats call it, was a typical-looking communist city. High-rise Soviet-style apartment blocks dominated the centre of town around which wide boulevards criss-crossed in a well-organised pattern. One could imagine regiments of Russian tanks rumbling their way back and forth with ease. A third of the population lived

GHIS KHAN

There is a great taxi service in Ulaanbaatar. Every car is a taxi, you simply put out a hand and anyone will pick you up and take you to your destination. Set rate was 100 Togrogs per km. As we rolled out of the Embassy, a lorry stopped to pick us up, the ride to Ulaabaatarbar would normally have cost 200 Togs but even this hard-up Mongolian refused to take money from us. His enjoyment of having David ride on top of his lorry, Ben Hur-style was obvious.

American lady

Word soon got around that we were looking for information on possible canoeing rivers. It was certainly a surprise to us to be introduced to an American lady by the name of Tiu.

We had imagined we would be the first paddlers in Mongolia and yet here was a middle aged American woman strolling around in U B complete with a Dancer kayak and a global positioning system. Her story was surprising



here, in this sprawling mass stretching for some 70km along the banks of the Taul River.

The ex-pats were a tightly-knit community. The British Embassy held a Friday night bash to which we were invited. The ambassador even broke a strict rule to allow Fred, with his Austrian passport, to attend. It was an excellent place to meet people and get plans moving for our trip into the West. It also had by far the best supply of alcohol in town. Acting Ambassador Neil Hart, a giant of a man, was on exceptionally good form and refused to let me buy any drinks. David Reid seemed to do even better and had found a twenty-year old bottle of Scottish Whisky and a man who would liberally pour it out. We left in good spirits. David - having raided the Embassy garden, was stuffing lettuce leaves into his mouth as fast as possible.

and tragic. She had only been boating for a short period of time and, as we were to find out, very much new to the sport. She had arrived in U B about one month previously and, using a Mongolian transport company, had parted with a sizeable amount of cash before departing with a Mongolian rafting team to run a river called the Orchon.

One of the rafters was a doctor who, on arriving at the river, had felled two saplings to make the oars. Tiu decided wisely not to shoot the four-foot fall at the start of the run. The raft had gone over, capsized in the stopper where the doctor, who was wearing waders and jeans, had sadly drowned. They had found his body two miles down stream. The group had returned to the capital without Tiu ever getting wet.

We agreed to do a 35-mile section of the local Taul River with her. Transport was arranged and, complete with Tiu's stars-and-stripes waving on her kayak, we set off for the flat water paddle into U B. The above tragedy was probably somewhat explained by the state of the Mongolian raft that accompanied us, which had to be repeatedly pumped-up on the voyage. None of the Mongolians could swim or possessed a buoyancy aid.

German ambassador

Arriving in U B before the others, David and myself were greeted by an excited grey haired gentleman waving out of the window of a Mercedes four wheel drive vehicle. This turned out to be Reindhalt, the German Ambassador, who was aged 62 and had taken up paddling 2 years earlier. Though new to the sport, Reindhalt was amazingly enthusiastic and knew of many of the world's great rivers, he even had a copy of Ray Rowe's book on the shelf!

The plot thickened but things began to happen. We had met a chap by the name of Sean Hinton who had come to Mongolia from Cambridge in relation to his PhD. Speaking



the language fluently, he was running a company called Nomads specialising in seeing Mongolian jaunts to various rich individuals. After much hard bargaining, we secured a deal which included guide, driver, cook, transport and food for 6 weeks. Seanobabes, as he became known to the team, had pulled hidden strings to get the kayaks onto the next flight to the Altai mountains. Arriving at the airport, things were still not straightforward. The 'plane going to Hovd was a funeral flight taking the bodies of those who had departed in U B back to their homeland in the West. The small turbo props stored the caskets in the rear of the 'plane. There was no room for kayaks. The answer in the end was very simple, as the Manager of the airport simply diverted another 'plane to land in Hovd! The boats were loaded into the dark converted troop carrier with its bench seats and one window. Fred, who was for once the slowest, ended up staying on board whilst we quickly scampered to the relative luxury of the other 'plane. As our little 'plane made its final approach into Hovd a couple of hours later, I could see Fred fast asleep on the four kayaks by the side of the runway.

Gers

Residence was set up in the very basic Bouyant hotel in the centre of Hovd. Semi-circling the city red rock mountains glowed in the sunset. Though Seanobabes had arranged things the was still a great deal of ground work to be completed. I spent 4 hours bargaining for the hire of a Russian 66 troop-carrying vehicle from the local Army barracks. this would have been straightforward apart from the necessity to consume large quantities of neat Vodka with the commanding Officer. The next day and our motley team of 4 kayakers, Ahad, the guide, Erka the driver, and Biemba the cook set off in search of white water. As we rattled along I tried to make myself comfortable between a large bag of potatoes and an enormous hessian sack full of bread. We moved from the valley plains into more hilly terrain, passing occasional single, and groups of, nomadic dwellings, known as Gers. The Mongolian way is that when you tire of journeying then one stop at the nearest Ger and they feed you with butter, cheese and fermented mare's milk (Arghi) - plus plenty of salted tea. There is no charge.

When they go travelling, the whole process is repeated and so, all in all, things equal out in the end. As we visited more Gers, always greeted by lovely smiling faces, we gradually picked up the correct etiquette of Ger habitation. Both the Arghi or the weaker Airas is received in the right hand and at least the first bowl should be drained before being returned to the host.

Soon we heard about a mighty torrent known as the Blue river and set off to find this river of rivers. After a veritable buffeting in the back of the truck a small stream, the Blue River, was reached. we set up camp. The upper river was only a 2 km grade III run, but full of fish. I learned how to catch a fish with 5 Mongolians grappling with my rod (if

you see what I mean, Clare). We opted for a gentle paddle downstream with the truck in close accompaniment. When the road gave out, Erka the driver simply drove back and forth across the river. After 8 km we reached a huge landslide blocking the steep banks. Erka was keen to simply drive down the middle of the rapid, but being 600 km from the nearest town we decided against and, instead, loaded up the kayaks for a wild ride back to camp. We stayed for some days in the delightful valley getting to know the family who lived there and providing them with no little entertainment as we 'helped' with the gathering of the goat stock at night.

The Olgi Valley was our next destination. Apparently there was little wood and passing a shepherd dwelling, Ahad and Erka started demolishing the poor chap's fence until we managed to drag the axe out of harm's way! The rivers encountered were still disappointing as we ventured into various mountains and valleys.

The research into ears disease at least was in full swing with Andrew, Fred and myself setting up a good system of team work. Fred, enthusiastic as ever, could often be seen chasing a Mongolian over the plains, trying to shove an audiometer into their ears. The journey carried on over incredible terrain, every so often stopping at groups of Gers for Tsai. and to look at ears.

alcohol

The Mongolian male population have a big problem with alcohol. They drink even more than the worst Cardiff docker on a Friday night! We had been warned by Seanobabes to keep the trip 'dry'. Apart from the traditional greetings in the gers we had managed this apart from 1 or 2 mishaps. One of these occurred whilst we were surveying ears in a small village. Ahad, himself a doctor, or so he said, managed very, very craftily to get inebriated right in front of our eyes. He then proceeded to steal a horse and gallop for miles before returning to the village where he passed out in a field. Erka would not agree to leaving him and pulled his unconscious form into the vehicle. Erka then aid he wanted to have a quick word with his mate behind the truck. Son he was also badly drunk. We had been well and truly outmanoeuvred. The journey back became outrageous with Erka missing various corners until, heavy banging on the roof of the truck, he stopped to allow 3 out of 4 of us to walk back to camp. Only the Welshman stayed on board. On our arrival back, Erka was also unconscious and slumped over the wheel of the truck with Biemba, our cook, hitting him on the head with a stick.

The paddling was still disappointing, with only one major rapid found. This was about 1 km long and had previously been rafted. Apparently a Japanese businessman had turned up with an open Canadian boat, according to Erka, had been 'too chicken to paddle'. Considering the km long grade IV-V rumbling mass, I felt this was probably a bit harsh. Despite the team paddling various grade II-III, the above rapid in the Hovd was the only decent rapid found.

Bubonic Plague

Ear disease wasn't the only medical problem prevalent in Mongolia. Every year there are outbreaks of Bubonic Plague, better known as the Black Death. Yersinia Pestis is carried around in fleas which live on the backs of Marmots. As the Mongolians eat Marmots there are always the occasional outbreaks of disease with areas being quarantined off. If a local gets the disease, he is kicked out of the village and has to wave a white flag to warn people away. At 10,000ft on one cold day, we saw one poor fellow miserably waving a small white flag on a hillside as we passed him. I had the drugs to treat one person with the disease but could not risk stopping and putting the team in danger - it was a hard decision to make.

After visiting many other areas, the team returned to U B. Fred and Andrew were off to China in search of dinosaur eggs whilst David and myself were returning to Britain. before flying out, Fred and myself climbed Tsetegun, a 2256 m peak overlooking the ruins of an ancient monastery, a sad testimony to the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. But for us the air was sweet, the sun hot and we had the mountain to ourselves. it was good to be there.

**Chris Sladden
paddled with
Andrew Jones,
David Reid and
Fred Wondre.
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**PHOTOS
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NEW



Access news

New Agreements for the Upper Conway and Wye

Upper Conway

An access agreement is in place again for the Upper Conway.

Numbers are limited due to the sensitive nature of some stretches along the banks (SSSIs etc.) In order to keep the agreement, paddlers need to sign in, on the day, at Cotswold Outdoor Shop on the A5 in Betws Y Coed, where they will find further information on access, parking etc. If the book is already full, then paddlers should remember that there are other rivers in the area which usually have water in at about the same time.

The agreement was nearly lost last year through thoughtless parking around Penmachno Bridge next to the Conway Falls Cafe. Use of the cafe and car park was lost earlier through paddlers 'mooning' customers and being extremely abusive to the owner, who had gone out of his way previously to be helpful to canoeists.

In an attempt to alleviate the situation the WCA is paying for limited parking spaces in the cafe car park from Monday to Saturday (NOT SUNDAYS). For us to keep reasonable access to the river, all paddlers must:

- read the notices;
- change discreetly;
- park with consideration for other road users (including buses).

(Have you heard this before somewhere? Don't forget to pass the word on to people you see trashing your negotiated access).

There is at present no access agreement for the Fairy Glen section, but some promising noises have been heard. Anyone paddling this stretch (without permission) could minimise disruption by getting in at least 100 metres below Conway Falls Fish Pass and getting out just after the last drop in the true "Fairy Glen" where some steps lead up to a track on the right.

Finally, the get out before Penmachno Bridge, above Conway Falls, can be difficult to recognise and extremely dangerous to miss. Getting out early because you are uncertain or cautious is not an option, because of the rare plants you would trample. If you are at all unsure then check the get out point before you paddle.

For any further information write to me at:

Paul Wilson, Hillcrest, Brynford Road,
Holywell, Clwyd, CH8 7RP.

Upper Wye Agreement Upper Wye from Newbridge to Glasbury

The agreement has been made between the Welsh Canoeing Association (WCA) for and on behalf of the members and affiliated clubs of the Welsh Canoeing Association, the British Canoe Union, the Canoeing Association of Northern Ireland and the Scottish Canoeing Association, and the Fishery Owners between Newbridge and Glasbury.

The agreement relates to the River Wye from Newbridge Bridge N.G Ref. 014583 to Glasbury Bridge N.G Ref. 180392 excluding all tributaries which join the river between these points but including, and for the avoidance of doubt that part of the River Edw referred to below.

There is at present no agreement between the parties as to whether there is or is not a public right of navigation on the part of the River Wye. Without prejudice to the legal position this agreement is made so that canoeing by canoeists as specified above can take place peacefully and without objection by the Fishery Owners within the provisions set out below.

This agreement will run for a period of 12 months from the 1st October 1993 to the 30th September 1994 and thereafter from year to year until deter-

mined by with either side giving the other six months' written notice.

The WCA/BCU undertake to make clear to their members that in recognition of the existence of a private nature reserve on the River Edw, canoeing on that river at any time is expressly forbidden between Hendre Bridge above the village of Aberedw and the Edw's confluence with the River Wye.

Sparte

Outside the 18th October - 31st March canoeing can take place on this section of the Wye when the river is running in spate and unsuitable for fishing, defined as 1.6 metres or above the National Rivers Authority gauge situated at Erwood, N.G Ref. 076444 as at present calibrated. These details will be available from the Welsh Canoeing Association.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the WCA by the Chairman Sandy Buttle, and on behalf of The Fishery Owners on the River Wye between Newbridge and Glasbury by Charles Woosnam, in the presence of Ron Edwards, National Rivers Authority

A full copy of the agreement may be obtained from the BCU Office, on receipt of an SAE.

Not only for the beer **LIFFEY**



I am too old, too fat and too unfit to take this international event seriously. I will never be a star paddler or race for my country, but none of this will preclude me from joining in. For myself and some of my friends our annual trip to Ireland is our annual holiday. The real spirit of the trip lies in friendship, having fun and having a good tale to tell. . .

'Guinness is good for you', runs the slogan, and no-one can endorse this more fully than the large contingent of Northern Paddlers who once again crossed the Irish Sea for this year's Liffey Descent, an 18 mile race which takes in 10 weirs, a 'jungle', rapids and a lake. Our particular gang, 22 of us from Tyne and Wear Outdoor Workers Network were mostly open-boaters with the exception of two kayakers. Most of us made the trip with the sole intention of running the race for fun except Tom and Robbie who believed that with their combined weight of 33 stone and an open boat with holes in, they could win.

The ferry left Holyhead in the middle of the night but we were not to sleep; we needed the Guinness to build up strength. The black liquid, tranquil in its cool glass provoked tales of previous Liffey Descents as the veterans amongst us impressed first timers with dramatic tales of long heroic swims and dramatic rescues.

"Here is a safety announcement", the recorded message struggled for attention amidst the chink of glasses. "Don't lean upstream" shouted Ken, who promptly fell asleep.

The ship lolled slightly and with each list high braces were mimed by our crew who giggled and drank as the night wore on.

Dun Laoghaire, 6.00am. The ship released its cargo of canoes like a fish giving birth to hundreds of live young.

We slept off the effects of our journey. Some of us rested up in the minibus, one or two on the grass, and



the rest tackled the complexity of erecting a tent. The campsite slowly began to waken and chatter as more paddlers arrived. Boats from all over the world decorated the field. It was happening. We were back!

Test the Guinness

The day before the race its obligatory to play the tourist in Dublin and test the Guinness in as many hostelrys as possible. In these, the talk is of surviving the Liffey's tumultuous weirs and who is going to buy the first round at the finish.

Saturday morning, 7.00am. It is necessary to purvey an outer calm, looking cool in front of the first-timers. Be organised. The air is thick with other paddlers

LIFFEY DESCENT '94

thoughts. Anticipation silences. Only sensible words are heard. No-one laughs. Cars and minibuses are loaded, paddlers are loaded with isotonic drinks and canoe repair kits and head for the start.

Viking head dress

In a large green field line with 'Porta-loos' perched precariously on the uneven turf we look around and nervously survey the competition. When this event started back in the 60's it was only for serious competitive paddlers, K1s and K2s. Now there are lots of classes, you can paddle a slalom boat, a wild water boat, or a white water boat, but the most exciting way of tackling this gruelling race is in an open canoe and it is these craft that the spectators most enjoy watching. You are guaranteed a cheer and applause if you shoot the weirs successfully, but the reception you get from a spectacular capsize is more resounding. Open canoeists also make the most of a chance to dress up, this year there were some in Viking head dress, some with Red Indian head dress and an odd couple who decided to cross-dress. Our gang, having sized up the opposition, don race bibs which make us feel professional, then join the queue for the loo.

Boats are examined, deemed safe and given an orange sticker. Ken and I carry the heaviest open canoe in the world 27 miles to the start. I suggested Ken did not look at the first weir as we walked past but curiosity won. "That's alright" said Ken as he stared at the foaming noisy cauldron below, "no problem". I wondered if he was lying. I was sure he was lying.

Just over a thousand boats crowded at the start, the excitement was almost palpable. A last chance to gen up on the right lines. No one admits they are scared. No one dare admit they are scared. Dry mouths are moistened, helmets fastened. It's time to go.

We shot the first weir, scraping the bow then hit the water, using the high braces we had practiced on the ferry: we survived. Cheering ourselves on we went for it. Ken and I were lucky, same weight, me right handed, him left handed. The major problem was my age and Ken's lack of it. Ken's super fitness and my lack of that. But he was a gentleman and let me rest my withering limbs when I was tired. We shot weirs one after the other with amazing dexterity and skill and still kept upright taking on only a few drops of water (This is a total lie, I spent a great deal of time bailing the torrid waters of the Liffey



from our hull). We passed broken boats, pinned boats, abandoned boats, people having picnics in their boats and Tom and Robbie standing on the bank wondering just how far a roll of canoe tape could go. We passed other Northern Paddlers. Other Northern Paddlers passed us. We laughed, grimaced, we paddled hard. The serious racers were well ahead of us now and some would complete the race in less than two hours. We would be providing class entertainment for the crowds for another hour and a half at least.

Canoe on my head

Palmerston weir, one of the biggies, got us, it gobbled us up and spat us out, as if we tasted bad. It was like being in a witch's dish washer, full of 'Eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog'. With the canoe on my head and my helmet scraping the weir face I wondered why my prince hadn't come, there was no handsome knight in a white canoe to rescue me. I surfaced, still holding onto the boat and came face to face with a lady in a red kayak who with the calmness of a motherly nurse politely asked me if I was alright. "I've lost my paddle" I shouted. I didn't ask about Ken all I could think of was my beautiful Grey Owl wooden paddle romantically given as a Christmas present. The lady in the red kayak found Ken and he was holding my paddle. We emptied the boat, then laughed, watched Tom and Robbie pass and got back on the water. The remaining weirs were a cinch but we were tired. The marquee at the finish appeared on the horizon. With every tortured and laboured stroke it got farther away, so did the Guinness.

As we levered ourselves out of the damp hull our friends greeted us, so did the press but we didn't want to talk to them we wanted to know how everyone else got on. We had come as a group of friends and been separated for a few hours. We had stories to tell.

Ken and I shook hands, we were pleased with ourselves. At one point we had thought we were going to run the race without swimming but we were glad we had. You can't tell the tale of the Liffey Descent with real feeling unless you have tasted the water!

Thanks to Pete Button and Rory Corder of TOWN for organising the trip and beating Heath Robinson with sheer innovation and style in designing a gravity defying roof rack that carried four open boats and two kayaks, and to Tom Thomas for services rendered.

Sarah Shrimpton





Paddling The Cut

I am a self-confessed Cut-Nut. I grew up near the Kennet and Avon Canal. I have walked every yard of every canal within a thirty mile radius of Birmingham and have almost twenty albums of photographs devoted to the Cut. Having acquired a Coleman 15' I have started to explore the canals all over again and finding it a lot easier on the feet. I am sixty and consider I have reached the season of maturity and wisdom; some may regard me as a silly old fart who has entered his second childhood when they see me load buoyancy aids and paddles into the car and hooking the canoe trailer onto the back.

Pick up a canoe magazine and the front cover invariably display a heroic figure battling wild water in an aura of spray. Per se, Canoeing is the province of rugged action man types involved in death defying 'daring does'. This character is moulded into a kayak, performing like over-animated toothpaste in a cagoule. Obviously Canoe magazine editors feel a strong macho statement has to be made on behalf of the suicidally brain-dead. (That should guarantee this going straight into the waste bin!) (oh really? Ed) What never appears is the picture of a relatively sane individual paddling sedately in a Canadian Canoe on calm water. Perhaps if one seated a stuffed bear in the canoe and the paddler carried an elephant gun the editor might be marginally impressed by the masculine image of a backwoodsman; buckskin and beaver cap mandatory, of course. (You send it, I'll print it. Ed) At my age I feel I am excused the need to prove my virility and send the adrenalin pumping.

Mention Open Canoes and the assumption is of paddling one way with the flow, down the river and then sorting out the problems of recovery. On a one-

My favourite paddle



way trip you need the cooperation of a tolerant non-paddler to follow up with the car, or someone happy to sit with the canoe while a self-sacrificing person trudges back to the starting point to recover the car. This assumes the river bank is walkable and unobstructed; fences; briars, stinging nettles, hawthorn hedges, barbed wire, old rusty bicycles and the odd notice. 'Private'. No Entry. Trespassers will be persecuted'. The worse barrier of all, 'MOD Keep Out'. It is the sort of notice which conveys a hidden menace and the threat of sudden death, or permanent incarceration.

Rivers are not be trusted!

Rivers have their quota of hidden dangers; rocks, shallows, whirlpools, weirs, floods and nameless floating horrors. Every canoe magazine contains an article by an access officer reciting the usual litany of the woes of access to some desirable stretch of river water. Forget rivers. Canoeists have been known to die in rivers. Rivers are not to be trusted. There are hundreds of miles of canals across the country, running through some of the best countryside, although I would hesitate to recommend the 'Filthy Fazeley' running from Birmingham out to Minworth. This is a depressing area of industrial dereliction, but beyond Curworth The Birmingham and Fazeley Canal is a very pleasant canal, with few locks to impede paddling. Locks are a minor irritation and my big Canada seemed to take on the proportions of a lifeboat from the QEII when portaging past a lock. I solved the problem with a set of pram wheels

and an elastic snap strap. My wife's Kiwi and the children's kayaks were no problem. So why doesn't the old twit use a kayak instead of a Canadian? Nature has been generous in endowing the nether regions, my bum won't fit into a kayak. I find a single bladed paddle more comfortable to live with; the two-ended job seem to bring water cascading inboard by the gallon, something to do with sloppy technique and not having the advantage of a spray deck.

Canoeist saved Canals

Canoeists are not allowed to use locks. As a result of fatal accidents canoes are barred from all but the shorter tunnels. Having accepted these minor restrictions, canals have a lot to offer the canoeist. There is no real hassle over access and very few stretches of canal are without towpath. A very short section of the Stratford canal on the Birmingham boundary had lost its towpath, but this is under restoration. It is a fact of note that a canoeist saved the Stratford Canal from closure by some evil, machiavellian, road planning bureaucrat. The passage of one canoe proved the canal to be navigable and not derelict and so frustrated an order for abandonment.

BCU members have free access to canals under the control of British Waterways; non BCU members are charged a heavy tariff of £30 per canoe. The one big advantage of canal paddling is that it is no problem to return to the starting point; this allows for more independence, no back up recovery team required.

No child should be allowed in

a canoe without proper capsized drill, but when this has been sorted canals provide an ideal playground.

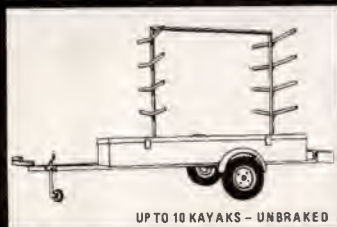
No sensible adult would think of paddling the canal without first acquiring the appropriate copy of Nicholson's Ordnance Survey Guide to the Waterways. The guide comes in three volumes; Central, South and North. These guides, at £9.99 each, are absolutely essential, because in addition to mundane information like the location of locks, tunnels and bridges, they contain very vital information, the location of all canal-side pubs. The Staffs and Worcester canal offers some very good canal-side watering holes providing first class pub grub.

Autumn

It is an aesthetic pleasure to paddle a canal in autumn, when there is no wind and the sun illuminates the multifarious tints of the changing leaves reflected in the water. When we can escape from the children my wife and I like to paddle the canal cut through red sandstone country and drop into one of the pubs for lunch. Canals offer the kind of relaxation and exploration we enjoy.

The canal is a friendly place, it seems to expand the sociable nature of people. Even anglers, who are notoriously morose breed bent over their rods is dark contemplation, have been known to exchange a friendly word and beg the recovery of a float they have hung up in a branch across the cut. Perhaps, being on, or beside the cut is an escape from the rat race, a place to wind down and not be involved in the frenetic activity of life. Of course

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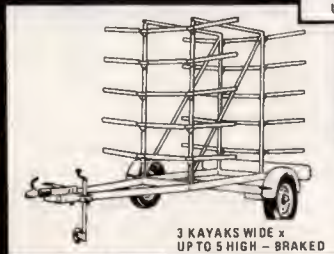
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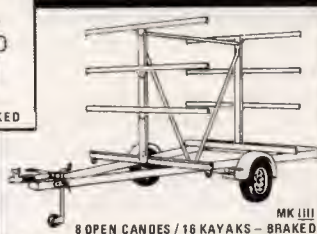


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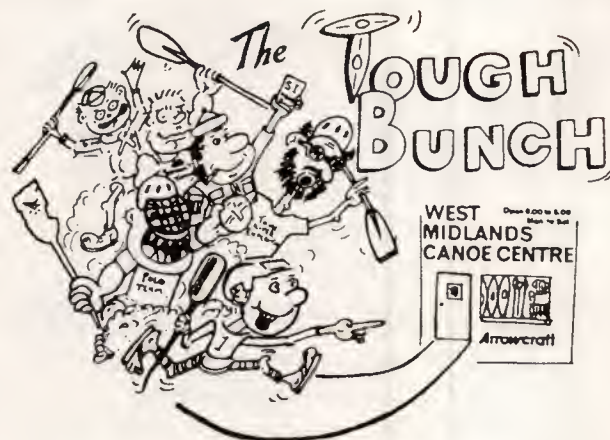
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there has to be the neurotic, activity-craving lunatics who occasionally invade this area of tranquillity, furiously pumping at the pedals of their mountain bikes. There seems to be a certain antipathy between bikers and fishermen, but this does not worry the canoeist.

With the Nicholson Guide the enthusiast for leisurely canal paddling can plan a trip which minimises the number of locks to be portaged and maximises the places of refreshment. Experience has shown it best to plan the trip and then leave the guide at home; the Nicholson does not behave well when dunked into the cut. It takes a great deal of patience and determination to unstuck the pages and dry them out.

Helmsmen are not to be trusted!

Even at the height of the cruising season the canals only experience traffic jams at the locks, otherwise boats seem reasonably well spaced apart. The worse time for meeting novice narrow boat dri-

vers is Saturday afternoons, just after they have escaped from the hire-boat marina and steering is still erratic. They have tenuous control of seventy feet of heavy metal, no brakes and a glassy-eyed look of intense concentration, bordering on panic. Canals are saucer-shaped, deep in the middle and very shallow at the edges. The golden rule for canoeists 'Assume narrow boat helmsmen can not be trusted with a supermarket trolley and stay out of their way' safe water is very shallow water, close in to the bank. If it's bigger than you and moving, it has the right of way. By Sunday lunchtime the new captains feel they have the hang of it and are cruising with a pint jug of ale on the cabin top in front of them, an air of panache and a rash bonhomie. Some of them even remember to drive on the Right. One soon learns to spot the hire boats in the livery. It is worth keeping in mind that the hire boat owners hire out to novices in the certain knowledge that expensive narrow boats are idiot proof and almost inde-



structible. A bump from a narrow boat is not very hazardous and unlikely to result in a capsize, but it can trigger a panic reaction in a novice helmsperson. The bows ground on one side of the Cut; the stern swings across to find bottom on the other side. There is a great deal of tiller thrashing and engine revving, churning the water into a

rich muddy soup. Great entertainment for the idle spectator. Canoeists simply make a short portage past the obstacle and paddle on their way blissfully.

If you prefer the unhurried, laid-back approach to canoeing then the canal has a lot to offer.

Jon R. Axe 



book & video review

All Books & Videos reviewed here are available from BCU Supplies at members prices. Ring 0533 830659 and ask for a brochure if you have not received one in your Focus Mailing

How to Canoe & How to Kayak

by Szanto

Published by the Indian Kayaking and Canoeing Association

It is always interesting to see how other National Bodies approach the thorny problem of producing supporting literature for teaching the basics of canoeing. These two booklets cover getting started in sprint racing in both craft. Although very prescriptive in style, the photographs and diagrams are clear, and for absolute beginners there is enough here for them to get afloat. The modern canoe coach would possibly find narrowness in the technical scope; but it is difficult to write a simple guide to anything, let alone a subject as diverse, and as prone to over complication as canoeing. The language in places is a little odd, I suspect because

of the English translation, but the meaning is clear enough. Approved and recommended by the International Canoe Federation, as a first effort these booklets fill a niche for the aspirant flatwater racer. Youngsters will find them especially useful.

Price £5.99 each

Never Turn Back

The Life of Whitewater Pioneer, Walt Blackadder

By Ron Watters

Published by Great Rift Press

As our sport grows, and paddlers with real background move on to the big surf wave in the sky, the body of quality literature grows as their lives are recalled in biography.

I found this book very moving and a testament of what the spirit of whitewater sport should be about. Walt Blackadder was a pioneer, a river dweller. At the age of 49 he shocked the outdoor world when he made a solo kayak journey down Turnback Canyon on the remote Alsek River in Canada and Alaska.

Walt was an unusual and remarkable man, a doctor from a small town in Idaho, who started kayaking at the age of 45!


Blackadder's descent of Turnback Canyon was in some ways a metaphor for his own life. He felt the need to challenge human existence and whitewater gave a vehicle for a fight: a chance for a positive life.

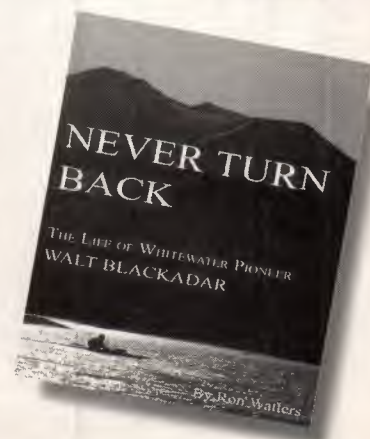
At a time when so much of twentieth century existence is shrouded in comfort, ease and diminishing risks, here was a man who understood a

valid need for personal evaluation and survival.

This book is the best I have read in ages. It should be compulsory reading for those who don't understand why we paddle whitewater. It is written well, with frankness, yet sensitivity. This book is a 'must read'.

Five stars

Price £10.95 



The Irish Sea by Open Canoe

By Ray Goodwin and Dave Howle



Right: The venture 17 sailing in easier conditions with a different crew.
Photo: Ray Goodwin

Marine Call, Manchester Weather Centre and the Shipping Forecast were all agreed; winds force 4/5 westerly backing southerly before veering west again; gales on the way soon after. I had always reckoned force 3/4 was ideal, then at least there would be some spare as we could handle a stronger wind. 4/5 was on the limit.

We drove across the moors to join the A5 up through the Ogwen Valley and on to Anglesey. A heavy squall rocked the car. It's cold blast out of a pitch black night was the excuse I craved but it passed. The Coastguard at Holyhead took it all in his stride, 'I presume you have done this sort of thing before?' Winds still forecast at 4/5 for the Irish Sea but the Inshore Waters Forecast was steady at force 3/4.

Slightly stronger winds and it was off but I had a driving wish to get it done; the dream had been there too long. We would make the final decision in Ireland.

In the ferry terminal a drunk fell on top of the canoe collapsing the spraydeck - he had not ripped it; there was no excuse to abandon the trip. I found it hard to relax although I put a brave face on it. Reclining seats, restlessness until I eventually fell asleep; the idea had been to view the sea state on the crossing, to help in the final assessment of the conditions, why then had we fallen asleep?

We were the last off the ferry at Dun Laoghaire, no one so much as glanced at us as we wheeled the canoe past customs. We found a quiet slipway.

Stomach churning but feeling good. Without having spoken to each other, I realised that we were going to try it.

Impatiently I waited for Dave, the sail rigged and everything tied in, it did not matter that he was phoning Holyhead coastguard; fear began to gnaw at reason.

Dave arrived back along with extra food, something we would both be glad of. We bundled ourselves into the canoe and set out paddling at 7.08am, weaving our way through the moored sailing boats and exited the harbour mouth. Sail up and we were underway heading towards the lighthouse on the northern end of the Kish Bank.

Nervousness

The canoe lurched from side to side as it reacted to the sail. I spoke openly to Ray about my nervousness, how vulnerable I felt, not because of our own competence and experience, but for me the unknown environment of the open sea. I thrust those fears aside. I talked out loud of my experiences of other expeditions, started to sing. Ray settled into the helming and with his occasional one liners focused my attention.

A fishing trawler hauled close to check on us as the westerly wind drove us on towards Wales and away from the shelter of the land. By the time we reached the banks, some six miles out, the flood tide was setting strongly across them. Suddenly we were in a series of much steeper waves. I yelled for Dave's attention as the first of the breakers climbed above the stern spilling water down on to us. Each wave a threat as I worked to keep the stern to the worst. With no time for niceties I barked my commands to Dave. I grabbed the ropes controlling the sail whilst Dave bailed. Careful not to move excessively Dave got us dry; nervous

minutes. The lighthouse passed on our right side and we clear of the banks and out into the open sea.

I started telling stories, trying to keep my mind away from external thoughts, Karen and the children. I feel a greater responsibility to them, am I irresponsible putting myself here in potential danger for my own challenge and ego? Trying to control these thought processes I knew I had to overcome them, put them to one side, focus on our strengths. I started to feel the sail more, constantly reacting to the wind. The compass bearing was 114 degrees and I could tell with the position of the waves and sail movement whether Ray was holding our heading.

Ireland slowly disappeared behind us; it was not as lonely as I expected as frequent ferries and other ships passed back and forth. The wind dropped and backed into the south as forecast; with the lee board over the side we were making steady, if slow, progress. We hoped that none of the Sea-cats would come close to investigate; their wake was awesome in its height and violence.

Mountains of Snowdonia

A line of clouds ahead of us had to be the mountains of Snowdonia with the lower bank out to the right of the Llyn Peninsula with its characteristic low clouds. Eventually after hours of straining eyes the distinct shape of Holyhead Mountain was recognisable. The first sight enabled me to confirm that the navigational plan was working, it was tremendous relief. Now I could start working on the problem of the landing on Anglesey. At the outset I could only guess at our speed so there was no point in having a set plan. At that speed we would reach Anglesey during the flood tide and in the early hours of the morning. Going through South and North Stack races during the flood, on a spring tide and in this wind was not an option, it would result in a sure fire swim whose consequences were only too obvious. I warned Dave that we would have to face the canoe into the flood and that eventually we would be travelling backward, probably for a few hours until we could turn for Anglesey as the tide eased.

Concentration lapses scared me as the sea roughened again. Tide turning to flood for the second time during the crossing. South Stack light became visible, the Skerries double flash. The Llyn Peninsula died away into the haze and approaching darkness. The sensation of speed was heightened with the night as was the anxiety. Thankfully the wind dropped again and the sea quietened.

Dave was steering and I was half asleep in the exposure bag; even my chilling flesh could not keep me fully conscious. For some reason I looked over my shoulder. A ship was bearing down on us, its lights clearly visible. Seventeen feet of open canoe is too small to show up on any radar and we were running without lights so as not to ruin our



night vision. Quickly Dave shone his torch onto the sail and I held mine steadily at the approaching lights. Would they even notice if they ran us down? Suddenly we were bathed in the glare of a search light. A man visible against deck lights. They appeared to wait for a signal from us; I kept the torch steady. We were back in darkness and out last ship disappeared into the distance. We were now truly on our own.

Bearings on South Stack light showed us travelling backwards and even though I had planned it that way it demoralised me to realise we were getting further away from a landing. I knew we could not afford a lapse of concentration. A capsize or swamping with both of us chilled and near the end of our reserves was unthinkable. We could only wait until 2am when we could turn towards Anglesey again.

We kept awake with glucose sweets and an isostar drink. By now street lights gleaming orange lit up the shore with the towering chimney of the aluminium works picked out behind but the distance was hard to judge. Then the wind veered west and picked up again. We were running with the wind, the leeboard floating away from the hull. Much more unstable and again a rush of adrenaline to establish control of the canoe.

Desperation

With the wind directly behind us and strengthening there was no safe way to reef the sail down; in desperation I let the sail swing ahead of the mast, the only way I could spill enough wind. Just as we began to think it was in the bag we had to pull out all the stops. Dave stayed with the paddle but steering was a combination of my manoeuvring of the sail and his efforts in the stern. We saw the Skerries light disappear behind South Stack. I made the decision, we were going into Treaddur. Even with its reefs and cliffs we could find a way ashore. To get shore quickly was more important than an easier landing.

We had, for the first time since leaving Ireland, land on three sides of us. The sea state eased and without talking we cranked the sail back in and started to scream shorewards, the speed of the boat mirroring the need in us to be back on land. Water broke in front of us and with me first killing the speed and then piling it back on as Dave put us into a gap. Back in the clear I frantically rushed the sail down and grabbed a paddle. Through another set of rocks. Then I spotted the break in the cliff to our right. I shouted for the turn. A dozen strokes and we were in calm water weaving once more through gently bobbing sailing dinghies.

We both pushed our paddles deeper and deeper and then bottom! We pulled harder, a few muttered words and then scraping of sand on the hull. Relief. I think we both kissed the beach, then shook hands, then a hug.

4.20am No coherent thoughts. An embrace. Much confused talk. Both swaying on land that was so still. We had just sailed an open canoe from Ireland to Wales and exhaustion had set in. There was no exhilaration. Grateful for survival we pulled everything above the tide line and fell asleep.



Notes:

The trip was done in a Dagger Venture 17 using a Solway Dory lateen rig and lee board. Ray and Dave would particularly like to thank Mobile Adventure for loaning them the boat and rig and the staff at Plas yr Antur for their support.





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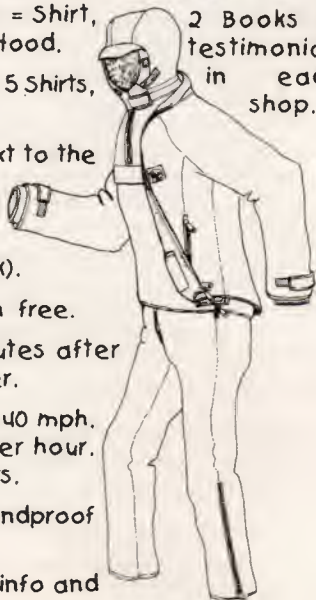
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Paddlers gear

Head to Head

Pyranha Mountain 300 versus Prijon Gambler

With the recent release of the Mountain 300, and the popularity in Europe of the Gambler, it seemed opportune to place the two kayaks head to head as they fill the same market niche. Both kayaks are uncompromisingly river running tools and reflect the nature and severity of European steep river paddling. Given the same job spec, it is surprising how different in character two short stubby kayaks can be. As ever in these reviews the comments reflect the subjective feel of the craft and the test paddlers preferences. For this reason a number of views on each craft were canvassed and taken into account.

Both Craft were strong on predictability with a

tendency to 'look after' the paddler and both were more suited to the larger heavier kayaker.

Summary:

Two capable river tools for the larger/heavier paddler. The Gambler is the less agile but does float enormous paddlers in heavy conditions. On Surfing and plunge pools the Mountain 300 had bow lift as opposed to the Gambler's sheer mass, whilst in the basic form there was little to choose in cockpit comfort between the two. Both were very predictable with few quirks and rock steady on the rough. Performance wise the Mountain 300 has the edge: Prijon plan a new kayak early in the new year in the same 'big float' category.

The Gambler, front and stern views



The Mountain 300, front and stern views



	Mountain 300	Gambler
Size		
Length	300cm	280cm
Beam	59cm	62cm
Volume	252 Litres	290 Litres
Weight	17kg	17kg
Price	£429	£512
Colours	Standard Colour and Artline mixed from: Pink, Aqua, Yellow, Purple, Lilac, Red, Blue, Black, Red, Jade, Cerise, Violet.	
Build		
Material	Linear	Linear
Process	Roto Moulded	Blow Moulded
Finish	****	***
Performance		
Paddler weight	50-85kg	50-85kg
Speed	***	***
Flat Stability	****	****
Edge Stability	*****	***
Surf	***	**
Rodeo	***	**
River Run	****	****
Roll	*****	***
Safety	****	****
Special Features		
Mountain 300:	Chined hull, integral deck release, drain plug, Foam comfort system available Jan.	
Gambler:	Ribbed Deck, drain plug. Typical robust build quality.	
Star Grading	* Poor ** Average *** Good **** excellent ***** Exceptional	



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Tel: 0732 741742 Fax: 0732 741141

Tour de Gudena

The marathon team to the Gudena race in Denmark this year was joined by five paddlers from Reading and ex-British International Robin Belcher (now of Australia). All stayed at the superb Silkeborg youth hostel right on the river bank at the end of the first day's racing.



The Gudena is a two day race with the senior and junior K1 and K2s racing 5 stages totalling 120km, and the ladies, canoes and youths 3 stages being 57km. The long race includes the notorious Mosse and Tange lakes where many a K2 crew have been swamped and sunk over the years. Conditions this year were far from easy. There were violent squalls, heavy rain and thunderstorms throughout the weekend. This meant that the river sections were flowing well but the open lakes caused many problems. The start lake at Skandeborg was particularly bad and Paul Ralph from Reading and World Marathon Champion, Lars Koch of Denmark, were among those who retired in the first stage.



Simon Dark in senior K1 seemed to be having no problems though. He was in the leading group of three throughout the first two stages with the Norwegian Einar Rasmussen and Robbie Herevald of South Africa. These three finished the first day together, with Rasmussen taking the sprint, nearly ten minutes clear of the rest of the K1s with Neal Coleman in 14th place.

Richard Golder was in 3rd place in junior K1, about 7 minutes off the lead, with David Smith having a bad time and another 5 minutes down in 7th place. In the 'Old Boys' race Robin Belcher in his first Gudena race since he won the senior race in 1985 was holding 2nd just 33 seconds off the lead whilst Brian Greenham of

Reading was ploughing along in 9th place in the same boat that he used to win the senior race back in 1979. Paul Hobrough and Dave Pickett in senior K2 came into Silkeborg in 9th place, about 14 minutes down with Neal Lewis and Glyn Wallace of Reading another 11 minutes back in 13th place.

The short course paddlers only had the one stage on Saturday. The U16 K2 of Chris Cheyne and Scott Wilson had a comfortable one minute lead, the ladies K2 of Sue Keating and Bernie Pagon were just beaten into 2nd place in the sprint and the C2 of Dave Sackman and Derek Hall were also in 2nd place about four minutes down on the Danish leaders but 2 minutes clear of the Germans in 3rd place.

As there was not junior ladies class this year, Abby Andrews had to race the senior ladies. Margaret Chapman was suffering from a wasp sting on the hand but still managed to finish the day in 5th place with Heather Brough of Reading 6th and Abby 10th.

Sunday was a long, hard day. Three stages for the big boys and two for everyone else and a 7.30am start for everyone which meant a 5.30am breakfast. The most dramatic change of fortune on Sunday was for Dave Smith. Returning to his more normal form he established himself in the second group of senior K1s with Neal Coleman to take over 12 minutes out of the junior leader, win the overall race by just 5 seconds and force Richard Golder into 4th place.


Simon Dark stayed in the leading three to within a few miles of the finish to end in an excellent 3rd place and well inside Thor Nielsen's 1992 course record of 8:22:27. Neal Coleman had the 5th fastest time of the day to pull up to 8th overall. Hoborough and Pickett moved up to 7th overall and Lewis and Wallace to 12th. Robin Belcher stayed with the 'Old Boy' leader but could do nothing about the 30



second deficit from Saturday and finished 2nd overall with Brian Greenham moving up to 8th.

Cheyne and Wilson cruised the lead group and used their 1 minute advantage from Saturday to take the U16 K2 win. Keating and Pagon also stayed with the leaders to the finish but again were out-sprinted to take 2nd place overall. Margaret Chapman moved up one place in the ladies K1 to 5th overall with Heather Brough 6th and Abby Andrews a very creditable 9th. The C2 of Sackman and Hall could not hold the Danish winners but once they had got past the German boat they dropped them comprehensively by 6 minutes to finish in a clear 2nd place.

So a very successful trip. 2 gold, 3 silver and a bronze medal and more importantly, a lot of valuable international experience. Particular thanks to Nick Pagon and Paul Ralph who helped so much with the supporting and to the entire team who all paddled well and stayed cheerful throughout this gruelling race. Jimmy Butler and Matthew Enoch gratefully acknowledge grant aid support from East Midlands Sports Aid Foundation and Notts County Council.

David Enoch 

NOTTINGHAM KAYAK CLUB

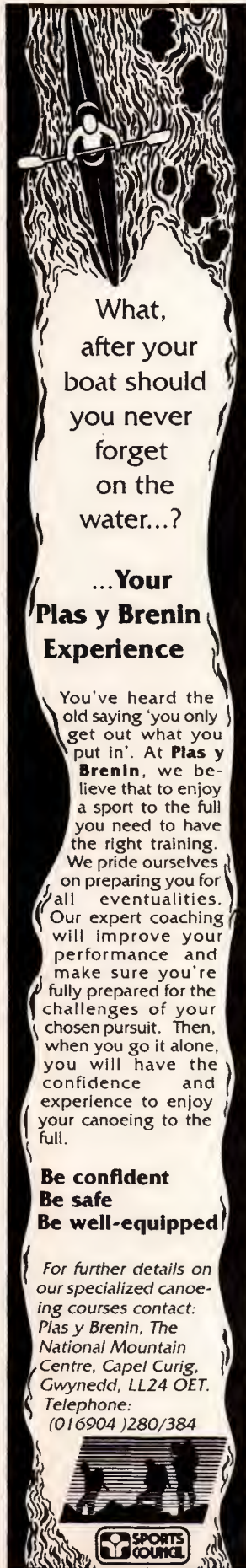
Nottingham Kayak Club had a double success at the recent Liffey Descent on 11th September. Jimmy Butler won the K1 Senior race for the second time and junior Matthew Enoch teamed up with senior Lonk Huyzen of Ireland to win the junior K2 in a new record time and beaten by only four senior boats.

Twelve other Nottingham paddlers took part this year with the other medal winners being the veteran/junior combination of George Oliver and Ian Clark who were second in C2.

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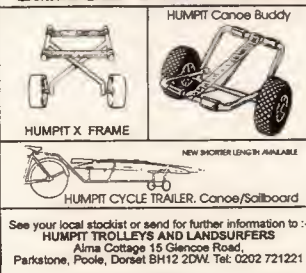
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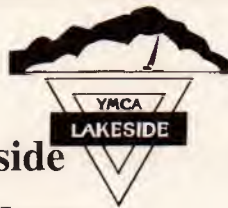
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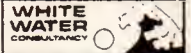
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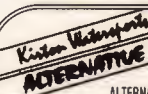


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K1 Marathon boat, similar to Jaguar, u/s rudder, never raced, sale due to ill health, excellent condition £125 Tel: 021 608 5480 (B/Ham)

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Pyranha Rotbat, full ww spec, with backrest, decklines, etc. good fun boat in excellent condition £250 ono. Spraydeck, paddle and helmet also available Tel: John 0602 816523 (Notts)

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Yellow Dancer white water spec, VGC, back strap and rear airbags £195 Tel: Seb or Luke 0235 521243 (Oxon)

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Stunt Bat, VGC, green with red logo, full plate footrest, hip pads, airbags, knee braces and Bush neoprene spraydeck £290 Tel: Chris 021 444 2681 (B/Ham) can deliver.

White Water Racer C1, French manufacture, Girdon, fair condition, blue, spraydeck included, suit beginner £100 Tel: Chris 021 444 2681 (B/Ham)

Gaybo King WWR K1, full kevlar construction, excellent condition, never raced, used only on flat water, £450, Tel: 0760 338210

Dagger Legend 16ft open canoe, excellent condition, includes two Dagger airbags and seat covers. £850 Tel: 021 4221 2956 (B/Ham)

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K2 Makker o/s rudder, Handles, Footrests, 2 new wooden seats, 2 almost new spraydecks with zipz and V bar, whole lot £200. Paddle ski Palm "lightning" immaculate condition, 3 skegs and footleash only £50 Tel: 0580 850381 (Kent)

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Kirton kayaks saga touring fibreglass kayak, good condition £90 Tel: Richard 0372 468423 (Surrey)

Sceptre K1, white, good condition, £150. Saunders 2 man tent £50. GRP Slalom kayak (Scruffy) £35 Tel: Chris 0932 785896

Rotobat, white, ww spec, VGC, £175 ono. 2 Stuntbats, yellow, ww spec, VGC, £220 each or £400 for the pair, ono. Tel Julie: 0928 701937 (Runcorn) can deliver.

Perception Dancer, Magenta, full ww spec (backstrap and air bags) with full plate footrest £300. Excellent condition, little use Tel: 0865 483863 (Oxford) ask for Mandy

Coleman Scano and paddles, little used on placid water, good condition. Offers around £250. Tel: Northwich 01606 781183 (eves).

Haze Shadow 2000 fibreglass canoe, VGC complete with neoprene spraydeck £115 ono. Tel: 0793 722853 (Swindon)

Revenge RS2, full carbon kevlar, italian seat, 7 months old. £400 ono Tel: 081 303 7450

Complete windsurfing outfit; Pacific board, 2 sails, brand new 2 piece mast and mast foot, 2 booms, buoyancy aid with harness hook, all good condition. For sale £300 or exchange for Prijon Invador in good condition Tel: 081 769 0351

Cougar K1 glass sandwich, good condition £200ono. Eclipse Panther KL excellent condition, kevlar hull, glass deck £250 ono

Perception Sabre ww spec. Red, good condition £100 ono Tel: 0602 372105 (Notts)

Pyranha Master, yellow full ww spec, full plate footrest, some marks as would be expected on a ww kayak £175 no offers Tel: 01276-33021 (Surrey) anytime.

WANTED
K1 X Lancer, must be in good condition Tel: 0373 865944 Eves (Wilts)

Prijon Gattino, Tel: Dave Hart, Shrewsbury 0743 709 680

Magic Bat in good condition, full ww spec, Tel: D Wattass (Willenhall) 0902 630999, or 0585 206312

Racing K2, also stable K1 suitable for a beginner eg, Fladbury Tel: (Staines) 0784 460841

K1 Ranger. Must be in sound condition, glass or veneer, u/stern rudder and correct seat. Will collect within London and South East Region. Split the distance if further. if you have a good example of this boat call Paul on Littlehampton 0903 723413

Cleaver X K1 and Regina or similar K2. Any condition and any construction, will collect. Tel: 0224 891239 (Aberdeen)

Iona Sea Kayak, turquoise deck, white hull, fore and aft hatches, retractable skeg, pristine condition, only used three times £550 Tel: 0259 769 730 (Stirling)

Pyranha Rotobat, ww spec, new-never been used £330 ono Tel: 0292 261908

Old Town 158 Canadian Canoe, purchased 2 years ago, used 5 times. Very good family boat with double skinned foam construction; almost indestructible, inherently buoyant and looks good £400 Tel: Richard on 0225 480983 (Bath)

Any racing marathon/sprint K1s or K2s, paddles, lifejackets, spraydecks for small canoe club Tel: Mark 0784 460841 (Staines)

Dagger Freefall LT must be in good condition Tel: Keith 01276 33021 (Surrey) anytime.

STOLEN

Stolen during a break-in at Stourbridge Canoe Centre, September 3/4th 1 yellow T Canyon marked Steve Bradley inside cockpit. 2 Natural Swings marked SACC on top deck. 2 Natural Europas marked SACC the other APAC on top deck. 1 Red Powermaster paddle. 3 ABS paddles, 1 black, 1 green, 1 red. Wetsuit Red/Blue. Spraydecks, Buoyancy aids all marked SACC. Suzy throw bag and Tow line. Any information to Nigel Gibbs 0384 374171 or Brierley Hill Police 021 626 8020

Stolen from car roof in Luton 17.10.94. Gaybo King WWR and set of racing paddles. Kevlar build, clear gel deck, grey gel hull. Heavy rear end damage repaired, RH wing slightly damaged. 'SORT' printed on rear deck. Battered but much loved. Contact Jeremy Kahn on 0582 458850 if seen. FOUND River Spey 9 August 1994. 2 films (slide) AGFA Chrome CT100i excel 135 36DX. In plastic cannisters with blank white label. Found on our minibus windscreen by Cromdale Church. Contact Mike Hodgson 091 487 9356 for return.

SITUATIONS VACANT

Raft Guides required at Canolfan Tryweryn for 1995 summer season. Also required are casual staff for weekends. Some experience of rafting would be an advantage but not essential as full training can be given. Please write to Canolfan Tryweryn, National White Water Centre, Ffronoch, Bala, Gwynedd, LL23 7NU for an application form.



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top tips

and handy hints

Safe paddling on w

Dave Manby continues where he left off last issue. This feature concentrates on safe river running techniques and principles.

Running the Rapid

RIVER TECHNIQUE:

Slowing it down

Give yourself time to do what's needed. Watch anyone good at any sport, football, rugby, rock climbing and they seem to have an unbelievable amount of time to do everything. Good people make hard things look easy, this is because they create themselves more time to do the task. For example Glen Hoddle in the football: it's a pity England management did not agree at the time!

Pacing yourself and knowing when you're tired.

It is the easiest thing in the world to carry on paddling when you should have stopped. Many of the accidents in the "Best of the AWA Whitewater Safety Task Force News Letter" cite exhaustion as a possible cause of the accident as does Jim Snyder in his squirt book over the death of his friend Allen Connelly. Mick Hopkinson's "It was the end of a long day: we had paddled for three or four hours" voice-over on the Everest film is an example of the experienced paddler sizing up the reason why things went wrong. We had paddled for three or four hours!. Only!

Using the river.

Learn to make the river do the work. If you have to cross the river; surf the wave if you have to turn round; shove the

bow or stern of your boat into the stopper or eddy and get it to turn you round or make sure you try turning on the top of the wave not in the trough. Also stoppers can be good eddies for a rest or an emergency stopping place whilst you re-orientate yourself.

Running rivers sideways.

Placement. Like all other sports being in the right place and getting the timing right is the secret. Like a good cover drive in cricket; having read the ball correctly and got your foot to the bounce and timing it perfectly, the rest is easy!!!

Passive/active rapid running

Traffic studies have shown that there are four types of drivers (broadly speaking)

Dissociated active/passive associated active/passive. Paddlers probably fall into the same categories. We all know or have been the paddler who has got down the rapid not knowing what is going in around him and not done a thing. The dissociated passive paddler (The granny on the road to Brighton who has driven for forty years but has never had an accident but is also unaware how close she has been to having one). There is a worse state of affairs; the dissociated active paddler, the paddler who, unaware of what is going on around him, knows he should do something and so does something. Whether

it will improve the situation or not, he does not know (though he will have justifying theories) and whether it does or not is just a matter of random selection. Racing drivers are associated/active drivers: safe to an extent but with very small margins and can be compared to squirt boaters to a degree. The skill levels are higher the consequences of screwing up being greater. The best drivers in normal road use, are considered to be the associated passive driver the driver who is conservative in his demands of his car and his skills keeping them in reserve; the driver who could drive 10% faster without any significant loss of control or passenger comfort. This is also the safest paddler the paddler who could paddle a harder rapid/route but has the 10% for the hole he did not see/expected to miss, the driving equivalent of the child on the road around the corner.

PADDLING TECHNIQUE:

Energy

Conservation.

Change of style to a more 'relaxed' way of paddling, paddling that is maintaining your balance, not disturbing it. Low paddle action equals good balance; the paddle is for restoring your balance not for holding you up. Try and keep paddle strokes to a minimum.

"Paddling on support strokes".

Keep the paddling to a minimum when you are running a rapid keep the paddle strokes for when you need them, "This lean forward and paddle hard" was dreamt up by instructors to get you through

the capsize zone quickly so reducing the chance of their having to perform a rescue. You don't learn anything.

All that happens is;

- a) gets you into the trouble quicker
- b) tires you out so that when you need that extra bit you have used it!!

This is not to say that there are not times when you need to/ want to/ absolutely must paddle as hard as you can. With luck and judgement these occasions can be kept to the minimum, usually when they arise they are as the result of previous errors; either misreading the rapid, missing an eddy, or missing a "move". There are times when you are going to have to paddle like crazy but these occasions are rare and should have been foreseen. Remember it only takes five or six strokes to get a kayak up to its top speed so there is no reason in paddling flat out from 50 meters upstream at a hole!

Back paddle you way down a rapid!

Not only does this give you more time to think about and pick your line etc but also back paddling is a positive support stroke, when you back paddle you push the boat up every time; forward strokes do the opposite they pull the paddler towards the paddle/water. Squirt boaters ignore this!

Timing your paddle strokes.

Wait until you are on top of the wave to straighten the boat, wait until you are/the water is settled before trying to roll up. (You can always tell surf paddlers on

a river by the size of their lungs and the way they drift to the bottom of a rapid before rolling up! There is a limit to waiting. Surf paddlers seem to exceed it by around 50 metres!).

- **Anticipation.** Of the next bit of the rapid, the wave, the eddy, the stopper.

- **Where you should be going?**
- **What's going on around you?**

Rolling.

I'll include this as safe paddling despite some people calling it "self rescue". Leaning forward when you come up protects your head coming up, leaning back wards

heightening that feeling for the balance of your boat and makes you more aware of where to and when to lean. The paddle is for moving you to where you want to be and restoring your balance when you have lost it, also it is for spinning, twirling and showing off with. it is not for holding you upright. Practice rolling.

Playing.

Surfing waves, riding holes, making "impossible" eddies are all good fun and also practice for that time when you have to make the eddy or cross the river or stop where there is no eddy.

Slalom?

Now slalom is just white water paddling with discipline! Eric Evans coined the phrase "Recreational competitor" when he returned to slalom several years after his retirement and there are many benefits to be had from slalom paddling in that it improves your control, exercises your lazy side, it also helps you imagine how you would be able to manoeuvre on a rapid when you are scouting a rapid. Originally slalom was an attempt to copy real life river situations. It then developed and became artificial, created specialised slalom techniques which are now being adopted by river runners eg pivot turns, boof moves, turning by leaning to keep the power on.

"Pushing the envelope".

This phrase coined by Tom Wolfe when describing the Test pilots who preceded the Mercury Astronauts as a description of what their job entailed "pushing the limit". My description has always been "playing the line". There is a line above which you are out of control and below which you are in control. The game is to balance on this line or if you transgress and step over it and make it back down, find out how or why. there is hours of fun to be had with the game "what happens if I put my nose in there". But remember the effect curiosity had on the cat! The thing is the "limit of control" if the rapid is at the limit of your control then you have to live with that. If the rapid is below your limit you can play and reduce that margin between the control you can exercise and the limit of your control. Count yourself as a grade IV paddler when you can play on grade III? (Grade VI paddler when you can play on grade V!?)

Dave Manby

Dave is running white water trips in Turkey again next season: for details write to him at Equator Expeditions, 104 Warriner Gardens, London SW11 4DU 071 622 3891



White water

- **High brace and low brace.** American/NOC definition of high brace! Nowhere is this more relevant than when stuck or playing in stoppers.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR PADDLING/RIVER TECHNIQUE

Awareness of your limitations, your boat's limitations. There are boats which have design advantages over other boats for certain rapids. Much of this is coloured by your own prejudices but that is still relevant as that will affect your confidence, which will affect your paddling, which will in turn affect your safety margins which is what this is all about. A roto-bat is better than a Dancer for Corsican rivers because of its design but if you have the skill, experience and knowledge you can paddle a Dancer quite happily there. The same applies in reverse that a Dancer may be a better boat for the big volume river in the American south west but you can still have a ball in a bat or squirt boat.

Being aware of where you are in terms of your control is important to your safety. How much in control are you? Lars Holbeck a veteran of the first Stikine trip and other "hair trips" said once that people who think he is crazy aren't looking properly. When he looks at a rapid he makes up his mind if he can do it with the degree of control that he wants and if that control is not there then he carries.

- **Where are you on the rapid?**

by Dave Manby: Part Two

is easier for that hip flip, lowers the centre of gravity etc. Be aware of the differences but develop a Robert the Bruce attitude if at first you don't succeed try again, like the spider. William Nealy has the concept of Combat rolling in his book "Kayak". Develop that absolutely 100% bomb proof roll not just in the swimming bath but also in the river with the gear on and that lovely numb feeling when your head hits the water.

Practice.

Learning any athletic skill is a matter of repetition. Paddle games, balance games, paddling rapids without paddling or without paddles is good for



Photo by Graham Makereth



eⁿder

Editor's page

IN YOUR FEB ISSUE

Rafting in
Peru

BCU
Expedition to
the Waghi

Open Boating
in Scotland

Crystal Palace
Preview

Injuries and
prevention

and all the
usual
features,
letters, new
and views

Questionnaire

Thanks to all those many members who took the time & trouble to return the Focus Questionnaire. Sorting through the mass of replies and the wealth of information will take some time, but the full findings will be published in Focus.

At present there are few surprises but it will be a while before a full picture is seen. There have already been some predicable

outcomes: the majority of members would like a monthly glossy magazine, but hardly anyone wants to pay for it! No surprises and no change there then.

There has also been a generally positive response to the changes and development of the magazine over the last few years, as well as some feedback on which articles and features are most and least popular!

British Canoe Youth Roll of Honour

This space is reserved for recording achievements accomplished by young people aged 18 and under. The brief is wide - e.g. the group of 15 year olds who paddled the Colorado, a 10 year old achieving a win in a domestic slalom, a group of disabled young people undertaking a demanding tour. In fact, anything which has canoeing merit.

Information from any source will be considered for inclusion - clubs, coaches, parents, the young person him or herself. Reckless or irresponsible acts will not be included.

It's that time of year again!

This is the season of goodwill and....yearbooks. If you have ever had to put one together you will understand the enormity of gathering all the information and putting it together in a form which everyone can understand. The BCU yearbook was highlighted by almost everyone in the questionnaire as a 'five star item' and indispensable....thank you for your support: I

will endeavour, between now and January, to assemble the best yet! It is already planned to be bigger (128 pages) and I am sure that it will continue to be the paddler's 'Hitch hikers guide to the water'...

Lyme Bay Tragedy

As we go to press, the owner and manager of the Outdoor Centre involved are appearing at Winchester Crown Court on charges of manslaughter. It is too early to report on those proceedings, but a full appraisal of the case and the implications for canoeing in Britain will be covered fully in the February issue of Focus.

Apologies

Due to a technical problem Focus is unable to bring you the promised report on the Racing World Championships from Mexico. Hopefully this can be addressed in the next edition in February.

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