

June

1996

THE CANOE SPORT MAGAZINE FOR THE NINETIES

# Canoe

F O C U S

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Lake Kariba

**River Shannon**  
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**Devizes to  
Westminster**  
A view from the bank



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Issue 101  
June 1996

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**Canoe Focus**  
The official magazine  
of the British Canoe Union  
John Dudderidge House,  
Adbolton Lane,  
West Bridgford,  
Notts NG2 5AS  
Tel: (0115) 9821100  
Fax: (0115) 9821797  
ISBN 0953-010X

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**Advertising Sales**  
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**Printed by**  
Southern Print, Poole, Dorset.

**Colour Repro by**  
Spectrum  
New Road, St. Ives, Cambs

**Magazine Designer**  
Peter Tranter

**Typesetting and  
Page Make-up by**  
2b Graphic Design

**Annual Subscription Rate**  
UK inland: £13.50.  
Overseas: £18.  
Supplied free to BCU members -  
adults: £16 basic,  
£26.25 comprehensive;  
under 18's: £9.50 basic  
£15.50 comprehensive.

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of any nature but reserves the right to  
edit and condense to fill the space  
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# The Olympic Games

**T**he Olympic Games are upon us and we take great pride in wishing our competitors well as both the Sprint Racing and Slalom teams depart for Atlanta and Tennessee respectively. I am sure both teams will compete with distinction, as will all the teams representing GB this summer. We wish you all every success.

## BCU - appoints Youth Development Officer

Junior Sports development is a subject that occupies a considerable amount of our time at the moment. The new and exciting post of Youth Development Officer has been created to develop policy and plans to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to achieve their full canoeing potential. Of particular importance will be Canoe Club/School links and there will be special incentives for clubs who can contribute to the BCU's own top club initiatives.

## AGM Results

Congratulations to Franco Ferrero, Graham Wardle, Simon Dawson and Mike Devlin all of which were elected as new members to the BCU Council and Alan Williams who was reelected following the postal elections which were announced at the BCU AGM in Teesside.

Sadly, this influx of new blood meant that Mike Twigg, Colin Kempson, Ralph Tyas and Ron Rymer were not re-appointed as elected members. Mike, Colin and Ralph will continue to be involved with Councils work through their work on various committees and working parties.

Whilst I am sure that our new councillors will each make their own unique stamp on the management of the organisation it is perhaps fitting that we pay tribute at this time to the work of Ron Rymer. Ron joined Council initially to bring about the building of the Canoe Slalom Course in Nottingham.

Ron is known throughout the country not least of all by the number of Ex Leeds Polytechnic paddlers who paddle in all disciplines. Following successful lobbying from Ron and his associates the Canoe Slalom Course was built and the BCU moved to Nottingham. In latter years Ron represented the elected members on the International Canoe Exhibition committee and stayed on Council representing the independent members of the BCU in a strong and forceful manner.

Ron's contribution to the sport will continue in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region where he is Deputy Chairman.

## Information Technology

You will soon be able to contact the BCU office by email and review new information pages on the Internet. As I write the BCU is implementing its new IT policy that will ensure that the organisation is able to bring you news and information as quickly as possible

## Paddlework

Paddlework is the name that has been chosen for the BCU's adaptation - of the Sports Council running Sport Programme. Targeted at the sports administrators the programme intends to

provide training in the various skills required for voluntary administrators. Courses will initially be organised for BCU Councillors and committee members. It is hoped to offer the service to club officers and other appropriate members in the near future.

## Devizes to Westminster

The Devizes to Westminster race was one for a third time by Mark Phillips accompanied by Richard Lewis his 1994 partner. Royal Marines Phillips and Lewis left it to the final tidal section of the race before taking the lead from their Belgium rivals. This years Securicor sponsored Devizes to Westminster heralds the commencement of the races fiftieth year celebrations. Which will culminate in next years anniversary race.

## Race Dates - Sella Descent - Spain 1996

The 60th Sella Descent will be held this year on the 10th August and not the 3rd as stated in the BCU Marathon and Sprint yearbook. The dates of the other races that form part of the Asturian and the other regions of Spain are detailed below:

### Asturian Region

- 10 Aug 60th Sella Descent Arriondas to Ribadesella 20km
- 11 Aug Sedes K4 Ribadesella circuit 9km
- 13 Aug Nalon Ascent-Descent from Pravia 18km
- 14 Aug Villaviciosa Circuit Race 12km
- 15 Aug Toso Muniz K4 Aviles 12km
- 16 Aug Gijon Harbour Circuit Race 10km
- 17 Aug Ribadesella Circuit Race 12km
- 18 Aug R Cares Mier-Panes descent 12km

### Other Areas

- 04 Aug Ason Descent Ramales-Ampuero
  - 14 Aug Carrion Circuit Velilla del Rio Carrion 8km
  - 15 Aug Alar Del Rey Pisuegra Descent 17.5km
  - 15 Aug Pontevedra Estuary K4 race
  - 16 Aug Pontevedra La Guardia -Tuy K4 race *New event*
  - 16 Aug Torquemada Circuit Race 9km
  - 17 Aug Rio Mino Descent Tuy (Nr Pontevedra)
  - 17Aug Upper Esla Riano-Valdore Descent 10km
  - 18 Aug Sanabria Regatta Sanabria 6 and 9kms
  - 18 Aug Esla Descent Valencia de Don Juan 12km
  - 24 Aug Deva Descent Panes-Unquera
  - 25 Aug Unquera K4 Unquera Estuary Circuit
- A booklet entitled 'Spanish Marathon

Canoe Races' can be obtained from BCU supplies that provides information regarding entries, and further details of the above vents. Entries for the Sella Descent are to be sent to Alan Laws, 17 Main Ridge West, Boston, Lincs PE21 6SS Tel: 01205 365505, together with a cheque for £3.00 per person and a copy of a current BCU card by the 5 July 1996. A letter of authority to compete is also required by the Spanish Canoe Federation officials, and this can be provided by your canoeing governing body. Thanks to Mike Smith for compiling this information.

## Activity Centres (Safety of Young Persons) Act 1995

Your attention is drawn to the article written by Geoff Good which gives details of the Regulations to the Act which came into force on the 16 April. It is now a requirement that anyone who provides facilities for the prescribed activities, for those under the age of 18, and where instruction or leadership is involved, in return for payment, must register with the Licensing Authority before 1 August 1996.

## New Chairman Of Drugs Advisory Panel

At a recent meeting of the BCU Medical advisory Committee Dr Mike Irani was nominated as the new Chair of the BCU Drugs Advisory Panel. Mike has been team Doctor to the Sprint Racing team for several years and takes over this very important role from Dr David Hunter. Thank you David for all your hard work and welcome aboard Mike.

## New Structure For The BCU In England

With agreement in principle reached, regarding the structure of the new BCU Board, attention has been diverted to the management of the English organisation. Still a part of the overall BCU company it is proposed that the new English Council will combine the roles of the current BCU Council and Executive Committee. It is likely to be smaller than the existing Council but still representing all interests in the organisation.

It is anticipated that the discipline committees will concentrate on Performance and Excellence whilst local structures will deal with Foundation and Participation. In the reorganisation the BCU will take account of the new position taken by Sports Council who will tend to concentrate on young people together with Performance and Excellence issues.

Local Authority and catchment planning matters will become more important and the new Foundation and Participation structures will attempt to work closely with local bodies and BCU Clubs.

Council is continuing to deliberate on the issues surrounding the reorganisation and an AGM will decide the eventual outcome.

So please if you have a view write to your elected members or your specialist / regional committee secretary and get yourself heard.

## Sports Council Changes

Congratulations to the BCU's Sports Council liaison Officer Sheila Morrow who has become the Deputy Head (excellence) of the Sports Councils Development Unit. Sheila has made a great contribution to the management of the BCU in recent years.



**Paul Owen**  
Chief Executive

**SPARKS**

Low birthweight babies, premature babies and babies with breathing problems will be among those who benefit when blind canoeist Steve Macdonald, 23, attempts to become the first registered blind man to canoe right around the coast of Britain. Steve aims to raise £50,000 for the charity. The canoe challenge is being backed by the high street food retailer Somerfield who will be staging all kinds of fundraising events at many of their stores. Many celebrities are supporting Steve along the way including Lisa Clayton, Anika Rice and Chay Blyth. Steve and his team will be appearing at many of the Somerfield stores along the way accompanied by a top showbiz celebrity or sporting hero. A full itinerary is available from *Angela Dudley or Steve Macdonald at Sparks*  
Tel: 0171 931 8899

**Foundation for Sport and The Arts**

**F**oundation for Sport and The Arts, Grants released for February 1996 were; Bromley Canoe Club £3,850 towards purchase of white water kayaks. Elmbridge Canoe Club £5,750 towards purchase of double kayaks. Royal Canoe Club £5,850 to contribute to the development of canoe paddling and school club links in the Richmond area. BCU Racing Committee £9,385 contribution to assist with the costs involved in preparing the Racing Squad for the Olympic Games. BCU Slalom Committee £18,775

contribution towards the costs of preparing the squad for the Olympic Games. Grants for March are as follows: Margaret Chapman £1,000 for the purchase of a new racing canoe. Ribble Canoe Club £3,240 towards purchase of canoes and paddles. Dallam Community Education Centre £3,770 to develop the provision of canoeing activities in the Cumbria area. Devizes to Westminster £1,500 contribution to the costs of holding the annual canoe race.

**New SCA Club**

Strathclyde East Area, Eastwood Kayak Club which is affiliated to the SCA was established in December 1995 following a meeting of interested local paddlers. The Club covers the East Renfrewshire and East Kilbride areas where there are no established canoe clubs. Recent local water sports developments have given the club an ideal summer base and facilities to introduce beginners to the sport and develop members skills.

In January, the club in association with Eastwood District Libraries staged a fortnights exhibition to promote the sport of canoeing and the Club. The exhibition featured a display of equipment, information on awards and coaching, the various disciplines of canoeing and photographs. During February, Eastwood Recreation Centre sponsored two 'Come and Try Canoeing' sessions open to members of the public. This, like the Library Exhibition attracted a great deal of local interest and again was featured in the local newspaper. In order to develop, introduce beginners to canoeing and establish coaching and instruction, the Club greatly requires canoeing equipment.

**East Midlands Touring Event  
Derwent Rally**

The East Midlands Region have held an annual paddle on the river Derwent since an unsuccessful attempt to repeal the Act of Parliament which provided the Derwent Navigation. The numbers vary from about 40-70 and in reality it does little to merit its grandiose title of 'rally'. However it is a thoroughly good paddle with lots of alternative loops allowing independent minded paddlers to make their own choices. We paddled from the centre of Derby for 12 miles until the confluence with the Trent and then a short section on the Trent and Mersey Canal finishing at a convenient car park in Shardlow. This tour is the origin of the Telephone Tours' a calendar of events run by the Region taking place on the first weekend of each month alternating Saturdays and Sundays. They are so named because detailed information is available before each trip on the information line 0115 9614426. Paddlers of all ability and age are welcomed whether they come on their own or in club groups.

*Ann Hart, East Midlands Chair*

**Harley Masters**

As stated briefly in the April issue of Canoe Focus, Harley Masters, the fifteen year old rodeo paddler from Weston Super Mare has won the sport category in ITV's Champion children programme. The awards were sponsored by Iceland supermarket chain, and were broadcast on Easter Monday evening attracting an audience of 9.2 million viewers. The award was presented by HRH The Duchess of Kent.

**Beyond The Alps  
Symposium**

This was held in March at the Llangollen Royal International Pavilion and JJ Coaching on the River Dee, and proved an active, friendly and highly successful weekend. The main emphasis of the weekend was small specialist workshop sessions to introduce people to the challenges and delights of paddling overseas. Organised by the BCU Expeditions Committee, River Rats International, and supported by the Expeditions Advisory Centre at the Royal Geographical Society, there were a lot of experts and top paddlers on hand to give advice, but the weekend was notable for its friendly informality. Sponsors Perception and Eurocraft brought up a selection of different boats to try out and there was a fair amount of swimming fun involving rubber and plastic. This is likely to become a regular and popular event so if you're looking for ideas on where to paddle next year, keep your eyes on the canoeing calendar.

**PaddleSport & Waveform**

PaddleSport claim to be the first UK canoe/kayak business to have their own presence on the Internet. In addition to E-Mail facilities ([infor@paddlesport.co.uk](mailto:infor@paddlesport.co.uk)) they have also registered their own web site which they plan to develop into a general canoeing site of interest at <http://www.paddlesport.co.uk>. They also have a new fax number +44(0) 1926 641932 and another new E.mail number at [peter@paddlesport.co.uk](mailto:peter@paddlesport.co.uk).

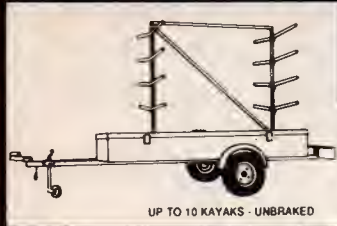
**Wild Water Racing Internet**

WWR now have an information page on the internet the address is <http://www.u-net.com/~haverton/wwr>. If you wish to send information to this site, send it to [marshal@haverton.u-net.com](mailto:marshal@haverton.u-net.com) or Peter Marshall, 14 Shrubbery Avenue, Worcester WR1 1QH.

**Coruh River Youth Expedition**

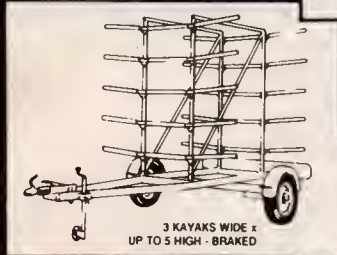
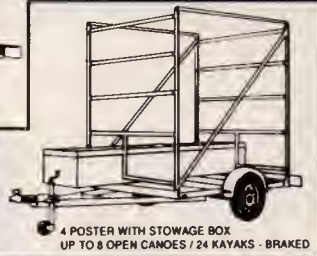
A report of this expedition featured in the last issue of Canoe Focus. If you are wondering who actually went on this expedition it was Exeter School Canoe Club. The expedition was organised with the help of Current Trends and Adrift Rafting. Exeter School would especially like to thank Mike Devlin and Cam MacLeay for their expert help in setting up the trip.

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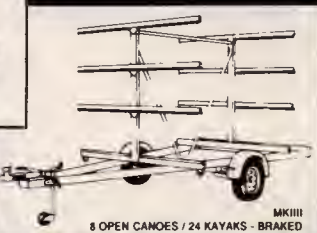


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**Canoeing into the Premier League**

I am pleased to announce that canoeing is amongst the twenty two sports that will receive enhanced Sports Council support following the reorganisation of the Sports Council.

**Dave Crooks has left Mobile Adventure**

Following Dave's recent redundancy from Mobile Adventure, he has had two new changes in his life - firstly, in Mexico during May, he married Carolyn and secondly he has now set up a new company called ENDLESS RIVER CANOE ADVENTURE. Now based in Worcestershire, Endless River Canoe Adventure offers a wide range of open canoe and kayak courses whilst also specialising in management development courses and corporate entertainment events, linking a variety of outdoor activities for the ultimate day out. All courses that are advertised in the BCU year book under organiser 064 will be running, but from a new location. Additional dates will also be offered including a range of new kayak courses and personal tuition. If you need any further details regarding courses please contact Dave at the address below. Endless River will also be operating a retail outlet with products from most major suppliers. It is also anticipated that a range of Endless River canoeing products will be available in the near future. For a new course brochure and further information contact *Dave at: Endless River Canoe Adventure, PO Box 69, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY10 4YG Tel/Fax 01562 827065 Mobile 0585 109061*. We wish Dave every success with his new ventures.

**Parking at Grandtully**

At busy times the residents of Grandtully are being inconvenienced by inconsiderate parking of cars, vans and trailers outside their homes. Please only park in the Station Yard or in designated parking areas. The good relations which we enjoy with the residents of Grandtully are being jeopardised by the thoughtless few. Please help us to retain Grandtully for canoeing on the best natural whitewater in Britain.

**Sports Lottery Fund**

The Sports Lottery Fund will soon revenue funding in the following areas: Coaching and Leadership - Major Events - Talented Performers - Talent Identification. At the time of writing a consultation process is underway to agree the precise criteria. Applications are likely to be invited from October with the first awards in January 1997

**Snippets**

**Scottish Sports Council**

Have given grant aid to three of our Olympic Slalom hopefuls, Mark Delaney C1 and Craig Brown and Stewart Pitt C2. Mark receives £5,000 whilst Brown/Pitt receive £3,000 each.

**Affinity Watersports**

New Shop in Chester. The new shop is in Chester Enterprise Centre, opposite the station *Tel: 01244 342660*.

**Stafford and Stone Canoe Club**

Stafford and Stone Canoe Club ran a successful div 4/5 ranking slalom race over the weekend of 23/24 March with over 60 competitors each day. Congratulations to the organisers and all those that took part.

**CANI**

Canoe Association of Northern Ireland CANI now have a new Chairman, Malcolm Kerry, with Mary Doyle as Vice Chair, Michael Murray as Secretary, Stephen Craig as Treasurer and Mike McClure as the RCO, we wish them well in their new posts.

**BCU Yearbook Updates**

**Bridgwater YMCA Canoe Club**  
New Club Secretary is Jenny Hayden, *1 Crestfield Avenue, Blakes Lea, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 3TN.*

**Hereford County Canoe Club**  
Secretary Mr J G Calderbank, *10 Woodmeadow Rd, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5QQ Tel: 01989 563740*

**Bromley Canoe Club**  
New Secretary, Howard Flynn, *125 Old Lodge Lane, Purley, Surrey CR8 4AU Tel: 0802 883048 (Mobile)*

**Canoe Polo**

The 1996 Canoe Polo Inter Regional Championships will be hosted by BCU Yorkshire and Humberside Region at Hatfield Marina, near Doncaster, over the weekend of 27/28th July. All facilities including camping and caravanning are adjacent to the site. Please contact Regional Representatives for further details.

**Adventure Development**

Any enquiries regarding Adventure Development courses advertised in the BCU yearbook under course organiser 130 should now be referred to *Debdale Centre Tel: 0161 223 5182*

**Reebok Ergo Competition - Apologies**

Please note that there was an error in the published results of the Ergo competition held over the weekend of the Canoe Exhibition: Under 18s third position went to Lea Pilgrim with a distance of 1012 and Under 14s winner was Dean O'Connor with a distance of 945, many congratulations.

**40 years of Tony Tickle revealed**



Friday 22nd March began as a normal day for Tony, as he set off for an appointment on his last day at the office before going to Florida to celebrate his birthday...

*A stunner, even then!*

*The family man*

But this was to be no ordinary day. Guests began to arrive and wait patiently for Tony to return. When he did he was astonished to find his office transformed into a party for his friends, colleagues and family - what was going on?

Then all became clear, as the video camera was brought out, he was made to sit on the chair. The big red book appeared and after weeks of gathering stories, embarrassing photos and various other 'evidence', the presentation by his staff started.

The story was told how Tony started in canoeing, gaining his slupper badge with the scouts.

Sue Wharton writes "Tony was a leading light in Bolton Canoe Club until approximately the end of 1989, when he was one of the gang which formed Bury Canoe & Kayak Club."

He then went on to paddle many slalom events (racing through the ranks until emerging in division 2 with bib number 26 in 1986. His interest in photography took over and enabled Tony to travel the world photographing & supporting canoeing. A sport very dear to his heart.

*What a rocker...*

Many other stories were told that did not concern canoeing, like when he made "plastic snaf" in his bedroom and sold it at school for pocket money & the time he offered to be the lead singer in a 70s band.

Tony is seen at the Olympic games, world championships & other large events with camera, loads of film & always a loud voice!

His love for canoeing and his gift for photography has enriched his life so far & the lives of many who have met this crazy guy!

People know Tony throughout the world and many have sent sincere greetings & thanks for this 40th celebration.

*Cross dressing has become an art*

**...here's to the next 40 years!**



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What's On ● What's On ● What's On ● What's On

**Wild Water Racing Coaching Courses**

Would your club or region like to hold a Wild Water Racing Coaching weekend. If yes please contact the National Wild Water Racing Development Coach Andy Parry who would be happy to attend. Wavehoppers can be provided. He has the following dates free in his diary. 20/21 July, 27/28 July, 10/11 Aug, 17/18 Aug, 24/25 Aug, 14/15 Sept, 21/22 Sept. Introductory Junior Wild Water Racing courses. These courses will be designed to meet the requirements of Junior paddlers who are interested in taking part in Wild Water Racing. The courses will be held at the Teesside White Water course July 23-July 25 and July 30-Aug 1. Washburn race and Coaching weekend, depending on water availability there will be a race on the Washburn on the 3 Aug followed by a coaching day on the 4 Aug. For more details on all of the above events contact Andy Parry, National Development Coach 015242 62680

**Croesyceiliog Canoe Club**

River Usk Canoe Race, Sunday 21st July. Start: Newbridge on Usk, finish: Hanbury Arms Hotel, Caerleon. Distance: 7 miles Start: 1200 hr. Contact: *Martin Beer, 15 Firbank Crescent, Newport, Gwent Tel: 01633 257612*

**Westel Tourist Trail Sunday 30 June:**

Starts from Basingstoke Canal Centre at Mytchett, Surrey with a choice of distances from 6 to 30 miles. Entry fees are £4 for BCU members plus £1.50 extra for non BCU. For an entry form or further details ring Jeff Simmons on 01784 255085

**Last Chance to Paddle the Yangtze.**

The Chinese Canoeing Association will hold an international canoe rally from September 15 to 25 at the Three Gorges, Yangtze River, China. The Yangtze is the world's third largest river 6700km long. The 192 km Three Gorges lies in the border between Sichuan Province and Hubei Province, it is a world famous spot with spectacular views of green mountains and the beautiful river. The rally provides participants with their last chance to paddle the Three Gorges before the dam submerges the natural landscape in 1997. More detail will be available from *Chinese Canoe Association 9 Tiyugan Road, Beijing 100763 China Tel: 86-1 751313 Fax: 86-1 7015858*

**Touch The Water with Perception.**

Touch the water days are both for paddlers and non-paddlers. Newcomers can get a feel for the sport in the easy going Kiwis or using the multi purpose sit on kayaks. More experienced paddlers can try out the latest boats from the Perception range. All paddlers can take part in a number of fun events including the 'Super Slalom' and Bungee. For information on location and booking detail contact the dealer listed. **9 June AS Watersports - Exeter 01392 42183, June 22 Whitewater the Canoe Centre, Shepperton 01932 247978. July 7th West Midlands Canoe Centre, Bloxwich 01922 479279. 21 July Whitewater The Canoe Centre, Shepperton 01932 247978**

**Celtic Watersports Festival 17-24 August.**

The Milford Haven Waterway will provide a focus for the '96 Celtic Watersports Festival. The festival includes surfing, yachting, white water canoeing, power boating, coracle racing and much more. Alongside the watersports demonstrations, classes and competitions there will be numerous cultural events many of which are unique to the Celtic nations. For more detail contact: *Celtic Watersports Festival, PO Box 14, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire SA73 3ER Tel: 01646 697967.*

**The Preseli Challenge Trophy.**

The Preseli Challenge is the crossing, in sea kayaks, with no boat cover from Whitesands Beach in Pembrokeshire to Rosslare in southern Ireland against the clock. The journey must be undertaken in twos or threes, and there is an annual prize trophy and £500 worth of sea kayaking kit to the winning group. The trophy is to be awarded annually to the pair or group of three paddlers who complete the crossing in the fastest time that year. It is the decision of the competitors when to make their crossing as the weather is obviously of crucial importance. The crossing is to be made at the competitors own risk, and without boat cover, and subject to the rules laid down by Preseli Venture. There are separate

categories for males and females. For more detail contact *Preseli Venture Parcynole Fach, Mathry, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA62 SHN Tel: 01 348 837709*

**Water and Beach Sports for All in Pembrokeshire**

A major campaign of free water and beach based activities to help attract tourists in the aftermath of the Sea Empress oil spill, is being organised for Pembrokeshire this summer. For more information contact: *John Deason at Pembrokeshire Watersports, Cleddau Reach, Pembroke Dock Tel: 01646 622013 or 01437 775574*

**Wanted 50 Paddlers**

Fifty paddlers are required to provide safety/rescue cover for the Long Distance Swimming Championships to be held on Saturday 29 June at the National Water Sports Centre, Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham. Please contact *John Handyside, Lakeside Adventure Base, National Water Sports Centre, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Notts, stating your qualifications and experience.*

**1996 Cheshire Ring Race**

Will be held on the weekend of 6th and 7th July. The race starts on the Macclesfield Canal and runs anti-clockwise around the ring of canals through Manchester and Cheshire to finish 95 miles and 97 locks later back where you started. For more information on this small and friendly challenging race contact: *Chris Cleaver, 39 Cavendish Rd, Hazel Grove, Stockport, Cheshire SK7 6HX*

**Yorkshire Ouse Tour Diamond Jubilee**

Tour June 15th. Contact *Colin Stegman, 17 Quarry Road, Richmond, N Yorkshire DL10 4BP*

**Soar Marathon Event June 16th**

There will be a race and the centre will be holding an open day whereby families and friends of competitors and the competitors themselves will be able to take part in other activities, such as abseiling, archery, mountain biking, air rifles, child orienteering and quadbiking. For race details contact *Keith Tonks 0116 289 8004 for open day details contact Andy O'Conner at Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre 0116 2681426*

**Soar Valley Open Canoe Rally 8/9th June**

Entry fee £10 per person including campsite fee. Sat 8th June start at water side Soar Valley Canoe Club from 0830hrs, Sunday 9th June at water side Cotes Mill Camp Site 0830hrs, finish at Trent Lock were all completing rally will receive a certificate. For further information contact *Carey 01509 412899*

**Regional Slalom Event for London and South East, Southern and South West Regions July 27th**

The regional events for all three regions will take place this year on July 27th at Shepperton. Combined with this there will be a new competition to be known as the 'Wessex Cup'. Points will be awarded to competitors from each class and division to determine the winning region. At the same time all the regions will be selecting the clubs to represent them at the Inter Club Competition at Cardington in September.

Southern and South West Regions will be selecting their teams to represent them at the Inter-regional event at Llangollen in October. Southern and London and South East Region will be presenting its annual trophies to the winning paddlers in their

regions. Camping (tents only) will be available and BYO (bring your own) food barbecue is planned for Saturday evening.

If there is sufficient support it is planned to hold an open/fun event on the Sunday. Contact your regional canoe slalom representative for further details.

**Surf Competition Macrihanish, Scotland August 17-18.**

For more detail contact *John Inglis, Archnagraig, Tarbert, Argyll, PA29 6YF Tel: 01880 820255*

**Surf Youth Development**

Are you aged under 18 and keen to try your hand at surf kayaking? Well now is your opportunity. During the summer there will be a number of special coaching weekends designed to encourage and assist Junior Surf Stars. It doesn't matter if your a boy or a girl, if you have no competition experience or even if you've had no surfing experience. If you think you'd like to have a go please contact the representative that is nearest to you:

**England:** Steve Kerswell, 1 Briarleigh Close, Plymouth PL6 8RT Tel: 01752 785243.

**Jersey:** Stuart McGlinchey, 3 Fairfield Ave, La Pouquelaye, St Helier, Jersey Tel: 01534 59555.

**Scotland:** John Inglis, Archnagraig, Tarbert, Argyll, PA29 6YF Tel: 01880 820255

**Wales:** Richard Berry, 49 Myrdd Newydd Rd, Penlan, Swansea SA5 SAE Tel: 01792 416941

**South West Regional Paddling Weekend at lake 12, South Cerney, Glos, Saturday and Sunday 24/25 August.**

Thamesway Canoe Club are hosting on behalf of the BCU South West Region the annual summer regional paddling get together. There will be tours on local rivers, a barbecue at the lake on Saturday evening, come and try it events, trade stands, free form paddling on the lake, free coaching and demonstrations. On Sunday there will be a Giant Canoe Slalom with prizes donated by A/S Watersports, Cotswold Camping, Mobile Adventure and Palm Products. Camping facilities are available at very reasonable prices. For further details send a large SAE to *Terry Cripps at 9 Grindal Drive, Grange Park, Swindon, Wiltshire.*

**Equipment for Disabled Paddlers**

The South West Region are looking for host clubs/organisations in Devon and Cornwall to manage and operate units of equipment for use by people with disabilities. volunteers please contact *David Cooke, Disabilities Officer for the BCUSW at 61 Acacia Gardens, Bathpool, Taunton, Somerset TA2 8TA Tel: 01823 413262*

**Conwy Ascent Saturday 20th July.**

This event is popular with both touring and racing paddlers as the increasing number of participants demonstrates.

The Conwy Ascent consists of a touring event where paddlers chose their own start time to cruise up the scenic Conwy valley to arrive at the finish at Dolgarrog at high water, and a race with its spectacular Le Mans beach start, challenging tidal currents and demanding 10 mile course. All paddlers are treated to a reception at the Lord Newborough and no one goes home empty handed. If you don't want to miss out on one of the best paddling events in Wales make sure you send a SAE to *Jude Foulger at Tan y Rhiwian, Iolyn Park, Conwy, Gwynedd LL32 8UX*

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Three Star	3rd March	12th May	21st July
Four Star	25th Feb.	13th Oct.	-
Canoe Safety/Rescue Test	14th April	28th July	-
Coach 2 Training (TI)	16/17 Mar.	14/15 Sept.	-
Coach 2 Assessment (IA)	5th May	6th Oct.	-
Coach 3 Training (TSI)	23/24 Mar.	28/29 Sept.	-
Coach 3 Assessment (SIA)	20/21 April	26/27 Oct.	-



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Since the report in the February edition of Canoe Focus work has continued and the March Council meeting approved the arrangements for the "federal" BCU organisation. These have now gone to CANI, SCA and WCA for their approval.

The formal agreements to delegate responsibility for managing canoeing within the national territories have been updated and have gone to the national associations for their approval. Work is under way to prepare the necessary changes to the BCU Ltd legal documents for approval at the Council meeting in September.

# "Federal" BCU organisation

## The English Organisation.

The English representatives have now had two meetings, in addition to the March Council meeting, to discuss developing proposals and substantial progress has been achieved.

Whilst most of the earlier proposals have been carried forward with only minor changes the main area of debate has been the regional structure.

The regions have been working hard to co-ordinate canoeing at a local level, encouraging participation and membership, and providing a single point of reference when dealing with government and quasi government structures.

All this has been achieved during a period of severe underfunding.

There is strong feeling that the BCU has not effectively addressed the need for the members and clubs to be more involved in the organisation. Most BCU members belong to clubs and almost all canoeing activity is initiated by the clubs.

There have been changes in the authorities with whom we need to liaise at local level. A number of regions have experienced difficulties with their geographical areas being very diverse and dispersed. Some regions have local collections of clubs that lend themselves to more local grouping. There is a very clear

desire to more directly involve the clubs and strengthen the "from the bottom" influence whilst producing an efficient and effective local organisation.

The existing English Regional Management Committee is to carry out a review of their operation (in consultation with the major clubs, SMC and ACRMC committees) and to report on the best way to improve the links between the clubs, the BCU and its committees. Members are invited to send in comments on this part of the BCU organisation to:

Ron Hodgson, Chairman ERMIC,  
6 Paddock Road, Buntingford, Herts.  
SG9 9EY.



# 12 Ways You Can Help Us to Help You

**A**s many of you who have tried to telephone us will know the lines are extremely busy at all times. This is stressful for both you the members and the BCU staff, to assist we would ask you to consider the following helpful advice:

- 1 Look in your Yearbook, Coaching Directory, or Canoe Focus for any information you require before ringing the BCU office, many of your questions are easily answered in these publications.
- 2 If you wish to renew membership please send it by post or fax, as renewal over the telephone is time consuming and ties up the telephone for other enquiries. We will continue to take membership over the phone if it is urgent.
- 3 Please allow 10 days for your membership to be processed. If you have not received anything in 15 days time please contact us.
- 4 Try to have your BCU membership number to hand, this helps to search our computer records more easily and this in turn cuts down the cost of your phone bill.

- 5 Please give your full name e.g the name which you use on your membership card, with 19,000+ members on the data base there are an awful lot of people with the same name.

- 6 If you have requested more than one item, e.g you have paid for membership, ordered a handbook and sent in your star test entry form all at the same time, please be patient. These will be dealt with in different departments and therefore may arrive separately, due to stock levels and work levels within the office. Please allow at least 21 days for delivery of all your items, if you haven't heard anything by then please give us a call. With all your information to hand, e.g what you ordered, when, and has your cheque, credit card etc been cashed by your bank.

- 7 Please quote your membership number on any literature you send to the BCU office.

- 8 If you are awaiting a reply from the Coaching Department please allow 28 days for a response, as many queries are very involved and require some research. This includes all registrations of qualifications.

- 9 If you are enquiring about an

item that someone else has sent in on your behalf please make sure that you know the exact date that they sent it in to us.

- 10 Copy deadlines for future issues of Canoe Focus are as follows:  
20 June for August issue  
20 August for October issue  
21 October for December issue  
20 December for February 1997 issue

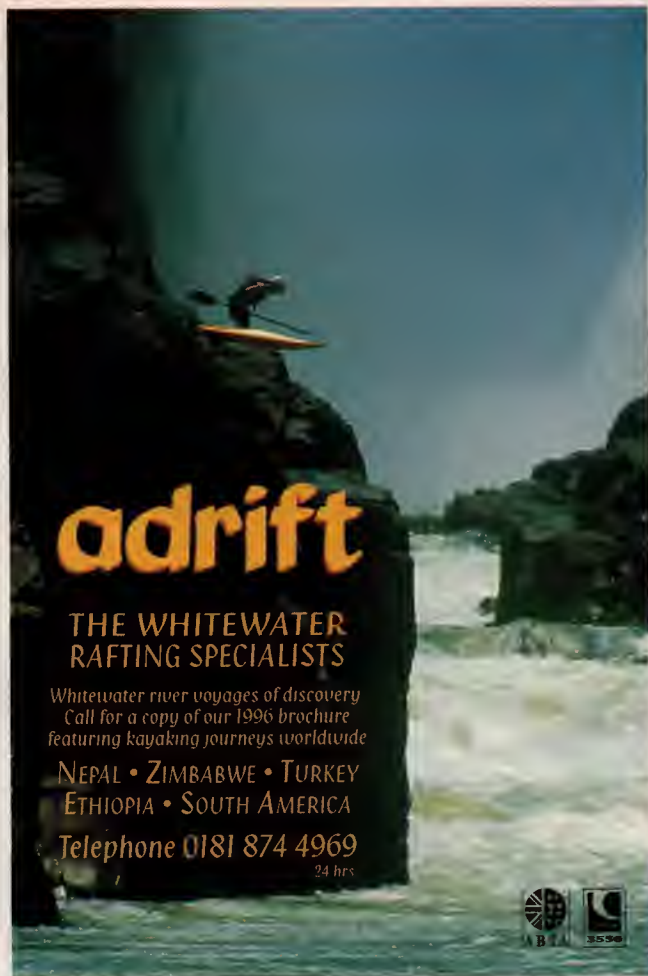
If you have an event that takes place on or just after this deadline please let the editor know and she may be able to extend a deadline to meet your needs.

- 11 If you wish to place a members classified advertisement in Canoe Focus, please be aware that it may be 2 months before it is published. Therefore please ensure that you leave a contact telephone number that you will be available on, many people have placed advertisements, then moved and not told us. This obviously doesn't help you or potential buyers.

- 12 Copy deadlines for CoDe are one week after those of Canoe Focus e.g 27 June for August issue.

We hope that with your help we will be able to provide you with a more efficient service.






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**“What shall we do next?” A sensible question to ask of your paddling partner unless, of course, you’ve just dragged yourself across the finishing line of the ‘Devizes to Westminster’ marathon.**

**N**ot surprisingly Lee’s answer had more to do with sleep than yet another long distance canoeing event! Still the question floated about in our heads throughout the following summer. We’d already had some fun racing down the Liffey and the Exe but had really enjoyed our longer treks down the Tamar and then the Thames. A trip down the river Severn seemed like a good idea at first but its enormous tidal estuary would be no place to be in an 18 foot open canoe. So where could we go, Europe? A bit expensive and difficult to organise, not to mention the fact that for two Cornish boys visiting Devon was still an adventure! The final answer came by way of an old and tatty school book that still referred to this part of the world as the British Isles and there it was, looking straight at us ‘The Shannon, longest river in the British Isles, flowing south through the West of Ireland to the city of Limerick where it meets the sea’. That was it then, the hard bit over, now we had a river we could start to organise our trip.

Its funny how things grow. At first we were going to head off quietly on our own sometime in the following winter but in no time at all we’d decided we’d better use this paddle to do someone some good and so teamed up with the Cancer Research Campaign. Now in order to raise some money for the Campaign we had to sell ourselves a bit more. The ‘trip’ soon became an ‘expedition’ and after the Guinness Book of Records gave us the OK we became involved in the setting of a New World Record, that was fine I told Lee, it just meant we’d have to paddle a little harder!

**Additional help**

With a worthwhile charity and a specific aim in mind we found companies offering us additional help, Seacat ferries supplied us with a return crossing to Ireland, YAK canoe products supplied us with waterproof clothing, Our local Surf Shop ‘Zuma Jays’ supplied us with warm clothing, Maybridge Chemicals bought us a new set of paddles and the Bude Health Store supplied us with high energy food, all of which we are extremely grateful for. By the time the BBC had filmed us training on the River Dart we were getting quite carried away with ourselves, it was time to look at the map, or rather get a map of the river and see exactly what we had taken on.

**Story and photos by**

**Simon Hammond and Lee Sampson**

I had no idea that the river Shannon opened up into a series of massive lakes as it meandered along for 200 miles

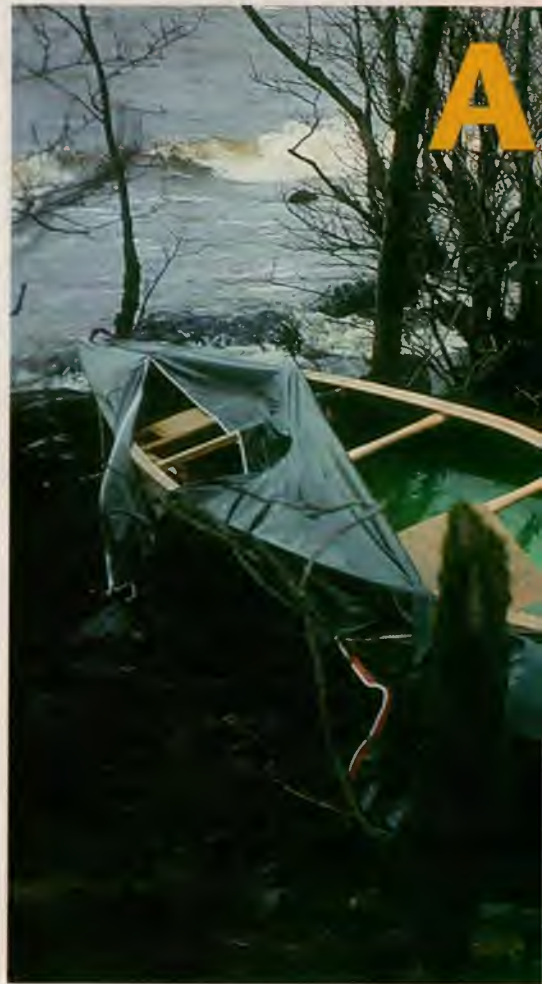
on its way to Limerick, it turned out that nor did Lee. These lakes didn’t seem too bad at first but then we saw the scale of the map and realised that in fact they were massive! Three lakes in particular, Lough Allen, Lough Ree and Lough Derg were over 20 km long and 10 km wide, “a bit like the sea” we joked and then wish we hadn’t.

Of course the ideal time for this trip would be in the summer when the days would be long and the weather might be calm. With this in mind we choose to leave for Ireland in the middle of February! Me, My dad and Shane travelled in one car whilst Lee, his dad and John were in a second. Once we were on the river it would be up to these two teams of observers to keep an eye on our situation and cajole as many Locals as possible to verify our progress. We planned to be completely self-sufficient, carrying all our food and camping equipment with us. Our observers had the hardship of finding warm B&B accommodation and the chore of drinking large amounts of Guinness every night, we were confident however that they would survive.

**More bars than houses**

The expedition, proper, began from the extremely small but extremely busy market town of Dowra, a place that seemed to have more bars than houses. The night before the start we had stayed in the local Hotel come Restaurant come Bar come Petrol station, it was a very pleasant experience but thank God Ireland lost to France in the rugby or we’d have been up all night! Councillor Eddy Feely saw us off at 10 am on the morning of Sunday 1 8th February, “it’ll be rough on Lough Allen” they said and we found out just how rough when at mid-day we were literally shipwrecked half way down its length. Not a good start, as disaster struck we were simply pleased to be alive, after twenty frantic minutes in the ice cold water our thoughts had turned to our equipment and canoe all of which we managed to save and then we realised that unless we warmed up soon hypothermia was a very real possibility.

By the time we’d carried everything to a nearby road and contacted our anxious observers we were beginning to thaw but could see no way



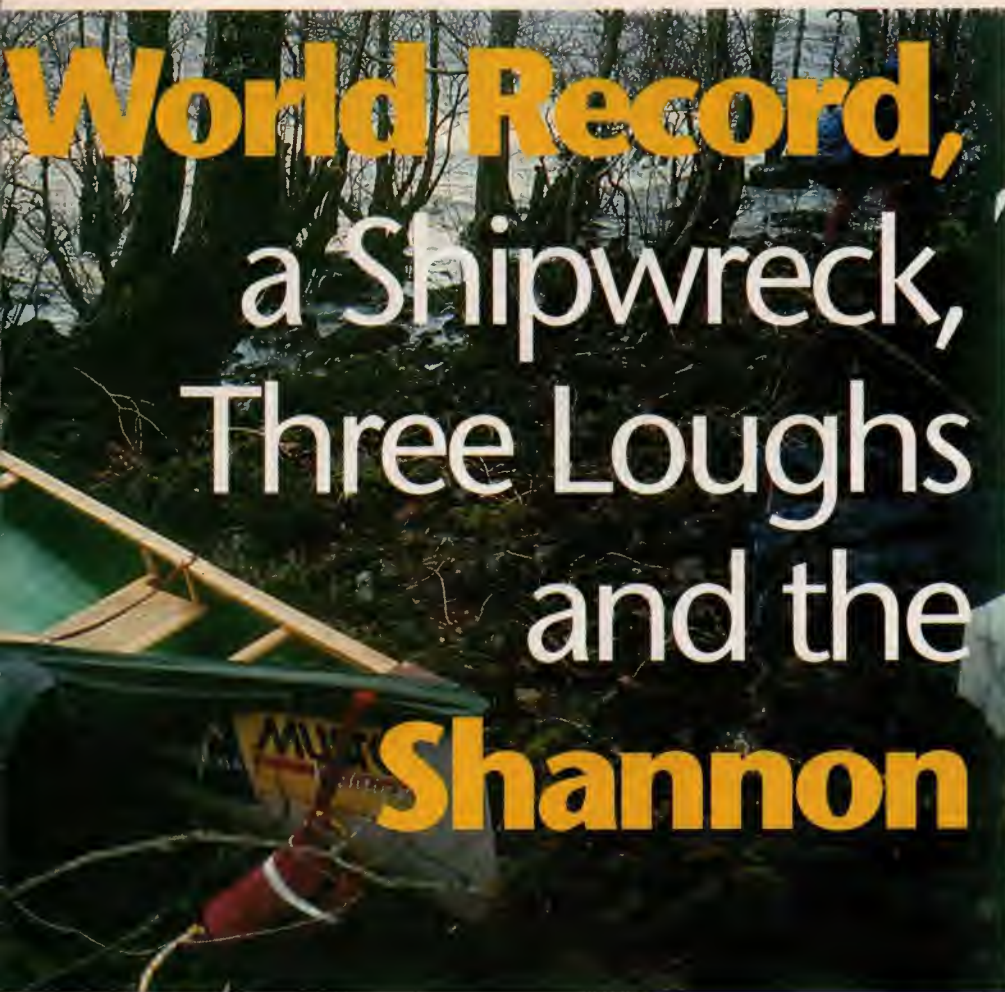
*Above: Shipwrecked! The scene after we’d salvaged the canoe and equipment from Lough Allen with Lee in the background. We’d been driven onto this headland by the north westerly wind and swell.*

of continuing. We’d have to portage the rest of the Lough, not a pleasant thought but with a Gale force north westerly wind blowing-up a three foot swell, there was no way that we could get back on the water. After 7 miles of man-handling our canoe and equipment to the end of the Lough hypothermia seemed a very distant memory.

The North westerly continued all week and made the canoeing more like surfing at times. The Loughs filled us all with dread and as we drew

*Below: Checking the map and our position whilst on Lough Ree.*





# World Record, a Shipwreck, Three Loughs and the Shannon

nearer to those that followed, all our thoughts became focused on the near disaster back on Lough Allen. Lee struggled to finish his dinner one night of 100 cwt of Beanfeast, Noodles, Custard and Chocolate buns, an event so rare that I worried he was ill, no, just the thought of crossing Lough Ree the next day. Still it did take our mind off the fact that the temperature had dropped to a steady minus five.

And our observers were ever vigilant. Every morning they would force themselves to leave behind the warmth and hospitality of their Irish hosts, shake themselves out of their Guinness induced slumber and depart in search of a couple of frost bitten specks in the vast reaches of another Lough. The two way radio helped us all to keep in touch, though I must admit to thinking that the main reason for bringing the radio was for us to relay our situation to our observers, which is why I was forced to ask Lee why he always began a radio conversation with the line "Hello Bob, where are you lot then?".

## Mini-ocean

By the fourth day we were crossing our final Lough and the biggest of them all, Lough Derg. It was going to take all day to cross this mini-ocean, with a fearful 6 km open crossing right at its end. The day went well, after we'd fried our socks on the stove to thaw them out, only to have them re-freeze on our feet inside a pair of ice cold boots. The Lough was enormous, so long in fact that you couldn't see land at the horizon. With the canoe covered in a waterproof canopy and with Lee braced at the front of the boat we proceeded cautiously. The bays we crossed down the length of the Lough got bigger and bigger but all we knew was that the final crossing would be the worst and that once that was over it would be straight forward paddling all the way to Limerick.

We both wanted to reach the end of Lough Derg that day but our friend the wind had other plans! With time in hand we rounded the final point with just 6 km of open water ahead but then, as if they'd been waiting for us all day, the wind howled and the swell appeared. We'd have to wait, what an awful night, one barrier from our goal but this could prove impassable. As the light faded the wind appeared to drop and we were very tempted to pack up camp and go for a night crossing but thankfully we still had a few brain cells operating normally and decided to wait until early morning. At 4am we woke, no wind, brilliant! Still we couldn't paddle until we had daylight and that was 3 hours off. By 6.30am we could wait no more, the wind seemed to be

*Below: Lee relaxing for a moment as we approach the top of Lough Allen.*



gaining again and we were getting more and more anxious. When at last we got underway we immediately had to stop and calm ourselves down as we'd got so tense we could hardly keep the canoe upright.

## Two frustrated canoeists

The crossing was a relief, a small swell and a westerly wind kept us on our toes but once across we knew we'd be in Limerick that same day. It was as two very happy canoeists that we passed through the town of Killaloe, at the foot of the lough, it was as two frustrated canoeists that we finally reached the outskirts of Limerick. Why frustrated you might ask? Well, anyone who has merely lifted a geography book will tell you that as you go down a river it will tend to get bigger, the Shannon had obviously failed its geography exam because, with its end in sight, it decides to speed up, get shallow and have some fun with a few miles of rapids! We spent the last four hours of this trip up to our armpits in water carefully lifting our precious canoe over rocks, weirs and waterfalls, but then, what else should we have expected!

Our observers had excelled themselves for at the end of this epic journey they had not only sobered up but had haised with the council, press and national TV for a welcome into Limerick that was quite overwhelming. What a trip and what a team we had behind us we certainly couldn't have done this without the efforts of Michael Hammond, Bob Sampson, Shane White and John Stedwell, who as our observers seemed to take Ireland in their stride. Thank you also to the people of Bude for your contributions to Cancer Research we hope to have raised around £1000 when all is in, and as I said to Lee as we pulled into Limerick, "What shall we do next?".

He didn't even bother to answer this time but if there's anyone out there with a vacuum bagged Wee noh nah they fancy lending us I'll persuade him that the '97 DW is the race for us!

As for the Shannon record we actually took 4 days, 5 hours and 46 minutes to canoe from Dowra Bridge to the Kings Island steps, Baals Bridge, Limerick. This record is for the fastest self-sufficient descent of the Shannon waterway by open canoe. We found that in places there can be a choice of which channel to follow but this should be left up to the discretion of the individual canoeists. With weirs and locks along the course of this river some amount of 'portaging' will be necessary but to start and finish the paddlers and canoe must be on the water and they should receive no assistance in the carrying of canoe or equipment along the descent.



**If you fancy having a go you'll find both Councillor Eddie Feeley (tel 072 53125), in Dowra and Alderman John Gilligan (tel 061 415799), in Limerick may be able to help with verifying your time. The Shannon is a wonderful river and we both hope that as many open canoeists as possible head over there and smash this record to pieces, Good Luck.**

# Polzeath 1996

With team places for this year's Home Internationals, and next year's World Surf Kayak Championships up for grabs 1996 looks set to be a fiercely contested season. This was reflected in a record number of advanced entries for the opening competition of the year at Polzeath.

**8** am Saturday 30th March and Tristam Cliff Campsite in Polzeath was alive with kayakers eagerly awaiting the start of 1996 Competitive Surf Season.

Following the sign-on procedure and boat scrutineering the first heat of the first round of the Open was on the water and under way by 9.30am.

The surf was clean and consistent throughout the weekend. Unfortunately it was small, and at best only reached 2ft. But it was sunny, it didn't rain and only a southerly wind prevented it being warm.

The reportage followed on from the first round. This is where the

An even earlier (courtesy of the change to BST) and colder start on the Sunday and the first heat of the Open Quarter finals was on the water at 8.45am. Little change in the surfing conditions made the heats difficult for the competitors and even harder for the judges to distinguish between rides. Thanks go to Ann's Cottage for opening, so that we could buy warm food and hot drinks.

With conditions dwindling at the end of the quarter finals a decision had to be made as to whether to continue with the remaining heats. A quick conclusion was reached and the Novice Semis went out on the water.

Running the heats with a minimum of delays saw a rapid progression through Novice, Ladies, Juniors, Masters and Open Semi finals, and soon the first of finals was on the water.

First up was the Juniors final and Ben Thomas had to make a quick bib change from his Open Semi final that was immediately before. He was joined by Graham Brooks, Mark Williams and James Hawker. The juniors have always provided friendly competitive finals, this was no exception. At the end the results were 1st Graham Brooks, 2nd Ben Thomas, 3rd Mark Williams and 4th James Hawker.

This time it was Mark's turn to stay on the water for two consecutive finals. This time between the Junior and Novice final. Trying to out surf him were Pete Mugford, Gary Harden, Clare Sharp and Paul Turner. By the end of the Novice final Clare and Paul had tied in 4th, Gary took 3rd, Pete took 2nd and Mark 1 st.

The third final was the Ladies, and almost a re-run of the Final of last years Worlds. Only this time it was Teressa Moss in her first ever competition going up against Penny Allen, Lesley Harker and Sue Davey. Teressa tried valiantly, but had to settle with a respectable fourth. Penny Allen, again competing with child, this time 5 months pregnant, finished 3rd. Lesley Harker 2nd but taking the first place was Sue Davey with some very purposeful surfing.

The Masters event gives the over 35's an opportunity to display their grace and experience without having to contend with the energy and strength of the younger paddlers. Their final was up next. Three of the paddlers had also competed in the Open event. It was only Taddy Williams that had saved himself just for the Masters event that took 1st place. 2nd was taken by Kevin Trudgeon, 3rd by Robin Clark leaving Mike Jenkins to pick up 4th.

The third paddler to stay on for two consecutive finals was Mike Jenkins, as he awaited his opportunity to upset the Mega team of Malcolm Pearcey, Ben Thomas and Tim Thomas fresh from their trip to California in the final.

By this stage a number of board surfers and body board surfers had taken to the water inside the competition zone. Rather than upsetting the competitors, it seemed to encourage the paddlers to demonstrate their prowess, refinement and boat control. The board surfers soon found themselves acting as makers for an elaborate slalom course.

## Cheekiest more consistent rides

It was Ben Thomas at the end of the final who had performed the cheekiest more consistent rides that earned him 1st place. Big brother Tim's ploy of waiting for the larger waves, earned him 2nd. Mike Jenkins, who had clearly been saving himself during the Masters final finished 3rd leaving Malcolm Pearcey to pick up the pieces in 4th.

Thanks go to the organiser Steve Kerswell, his wife for all the hard work and questions she answered, Clive Kerswell for all his assistance, Mr Martin Taylor for the use of his caravans and his lounge. Very special thanks go to Rob Harris for his generous support of the event and for the use of his shop Ann's Cottage, and his campsite Tristam Cliff Campsite.

Article by  
Robbie Lines



## Results

### Entries

- 61 in open
- 10 in masters
- 10 in ladies
- 11 in juniors
- 14 in novice

### Open

1. Ben Thomas
2. Tim Thomas
3. Mike Jenkins
4. Malcolm Pearcey

### Ladies

1. Sue Davey
2. Lesley Harker
3. Penny Allen
4. Teressa Moss

### Juniors

1. Graham Brooks
2. Ben Thomas
3. Mark Williams
4. James Hawker

### Novice

1. Mark Williams
2. Pete Mugford
3. Gary Harden
4. Clare Sharp
4. Paul Turner

### Masters

1. Taddy Williams
2. Kevin Trudgeon
3. Robin Clark
4. Mike Jenkins

runner's up in the first round heats get a second chance to qualify for the second round of the competition. The winners of the reportage then joined the winners of the first round and the top 16 seeded paddlers who qualified on merit for the second round.

## Noticeable upsets

By the time we retired to the lounge of Valley Caravan Park at the end of the second round after a full day's surfing a number of noticeable upsets had occurred.

Two regular finalists of two years ago were eliminated in the reportage and a number of seeded surfers were eliminated in the second. The excuses rang of the tones "I hate small surf", etc.

Another reason for the untimely demise of certain paddlers was due to alterations in the Drop-In rule. Surf kayaking has now adopted the same rule as board surfers. The nearest to the shoulder has the right of way. A number of paddlers were still following the old "first planning" rule. They'll only make that mistake once.

For some, the evening was a time to commiserate, for others a time to celebrate. Congratulations go to Steve Kerswell in his appointment as English Surf Team Manager.





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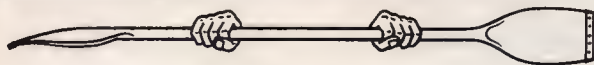
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# The Activity Centres (Safety Of Young Persons) Act 1995

Article by  
**Geoff Good**  
Director of  
Coaching

The above Act was passed in 1995. On 16 April 1996 the Regulations to the Act became effective. It is now a requirement that anyone who provides facilities for the prescribed activities, for those under the age of 18, and where instruction or leadership is involved, in return for payment, must register with the Licensing Authority before 1 August 1996. By October 1997 all providers must have been inspected and licensed. From that time on providers will not be able to start operating until they hold a licence.

**L**icences may be valid for up to three years, and the cost is now based on a fee of £200 being payable on each application, and £100 for each variation applied for. The inspection fee is £200 plus £30 per hour for the inspector's time up to a maximum of £1,200.

The prescribed activities are caving (excluding visits to caves open to the public); climbing (involving use of hands and feet, and including variants such as gorge walking, ghyll scrambling and sea level traversing); trekking (on foot, pony or mountain bike, on moorland or above 600m where it is more than 30 minutes travelling time to a road or refuge - and including off-piste ski-ing in remote country, but not on-piste ski-ing); watersports (most activities involving unpowered craft except rowing boats on any water where it is possible to be more than 50m from the nearest perimeter bank, or which is affected by tides, or is turbulent).

## Exempt

Voluntary associations (which includes private members clubs,

such as canoe clubs) are exempt from the licensing requirement, even when they are making a charge for an introductory course or 'taster' event, provided the course is for the purposes of recruitment, and does not involve any one individual on more than three days in a 12 month period. Although not an actual regulation, the guidance notes indicate that 'temporary membership' is not counted as membership for the purposes of avoiding the issue.


The BCU had made representations concerning the need for voluntary clubs to be exempt in order not to affect recruitment, and the draft wording of this regulation was satisfactory. Unfortunately it has been changed during the consultation process, and as now stated could be restrictive to canoe clubs. The Central Council of Physical Recreation has been asked to seek a liberal interpretation of the '3 days' maximum allowance, to accommodate the normal system of perhaps 6-12 evening sessions of about 2 hours duration each for introductory courses for recruitment to the sport.

There is no immediate problem as it is not necessary to register until August anyway. Also, it may be that the exemption from the requirement for a Licence for those teaching on simple water where a bank is always within 50m, is sufficient for most introductory courses run by clubs. This matter is being followed up and further information will be provided when available.

The military - including cadet forces - are exempt from the Act because of crown immunity. Schools are exempt - insofar as canoeing with their own pupils is concerned. Local authority owned centres are not exempt, except in cases where the provision is free. Individuals who offer their services for payment are regarded as a 'Centre' for the purposes of the scheme, as well as any enterprise up to and including full blown centres providing accommodation.

An individual would only need to register if they were being paid by their clients, direct, for other than modest 'out of pocket' expenses as a volunteer. If the 'freelancing' individual only worked for payment for another 'centre', or centres, it is those centres which would need to be registered, not the individual instructor.

The Act does not apply in Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands, or anywhere else outside of Great Britain.



Copies of the Regulations (SI 1996/772) are available at £2.60. The document Regulations to the Licensing Authority on The Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 costs £9. Both are available from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6FS (01787 881165; fax 01787 131995).

Details concerning the procedure for registration are available from Tourism Quality Services (TQS) 24 Lambourne Terrace, Llanishen, Cardiff CF4 5ZJ.

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## New Home?

Dear Canoe Focus

Can You Find Bridget A New Home? Our Scout Group has an old K1 type canoe that we no longer use and would like to find a 'good home' for. It might date back to the 1950s and has a timber planked hull (clinker-built) and fabric deck. I have not measured it but think of it as slightly shorter than our more up to date K1s. I think the planking is in good condition, the frames probably need re pinning and gluing and the original fabric has been replaced with polythene, which is not properly fixed. It needs a lot of care to put it back into seaworthy condition.

Please could you advise if there are any museums or collectors that would be interested in restoring or displaying Bridget. We would not necessarily ask for any payment - but would not wish to incur any expenses with it. We would prefer that she brought some pleasure or benefit to someone - rather than collecting dust on our rafters.

Write to:

Chris Codling,  
8 Cintra Road,  
Norwich NR1 4AE

# Barrage of Criticism

Dear Canoe Focus

I write in response to the barrage of criticism aimed at students who attended one of last season's Dee Tours. Firstly, I would like to take the write to task on his totally inaccurate assumptions. The campsite was not full of students. My group consisted of about thirty people none of whom is a student. We are police officers, teachers, accountants, officers of various armed forces, engineers, doctors and research chemists. Yes, we were there. Yes it was rowdy. Yes, we contributed a great deal to the rowdiness. We don't apologise for our behaviour because we didn't do anyone any harm. At the end of the weekend we left our area exactly as we found it.

The campsite does not advertise itself as a quiet family retreat and the owner has always been pleased to see us, welcoming us back year after year. The Dee Tour is a much looked forward to event as a weekend when professionals like myself get away from the stress of the working weeks to meet old friends and

enjoy a good night out and some first class paddling. If you think our behaviour is so appalling, don't join us; there are plenty of quieter little spots in Llangollen.

As for the comment that people who needed rescuing only did so because they were too hung over to paddle properly, what an excuse for "I'm all right Jack" canoeing! This whole argument smacks very much to me as one of a person who has a serious sense of humour failure, is evidently unable to tolerate other people having fun if it's too noisy for him, and who can't really be bothered with new entrants to the sport of canoeing unless they conform to the stereotyped beard, half a bitter and woolly hat image.

These people you have denigrated also keep the sport alive. If it weren't for the university clubs, the time they put in and the money they spend, canoeing would not be the expanding sport it is. Frankly, if you can't stand the heat . . .

Barbara Scott

## 'Open Forum'

Dear S Graham, P Jackson  
(Canoe Ethics, Feb 96)

I am writing to reply to your offer of 'open forum'. Firstly I would like to state my position. I am presently President/Safety Officer for a University Canoe Club, (which one I feel is of no real relevance). On the weekend of 17-19 November a minibus full of canoeists with varying experience and skills attended the Dee tour in Llangollen.

You chose to refer to University paddlers as student and not canoeists. On the weekend I saw plenty of talented paddlers (many of whom also happened to be students) I am a qualified instructor and have, in the past, worked doing what I love . . . instructing. I pride myself on not only teaching skills but also trying to pass on these 'wider ethics' you refer to.

You claim ethics 'did not filter through that weekend', and are ready to make students the scapegoats for this problem. If I may be so bold, I believe that the problems on the water are due to all canoeists behaviour and not one group. This general lack of care and assistance to fellow paddlers seems to be spreading throughout the canoeing fraternity and can only be stopped by an effort from everyone.

With regard to the evenings activities, I do not dispute the apparent problem at the campsite, I can only respond for my own club who were all in bed by midnight. This is not stated to shift the blame, simply a fact. So please have some consideration for people on the water. As for extra-curriculum activities I can offer no explanation for the behaviour, but what I do know is

## Damaged Blades

Dear Canoe Focus

I have noticed on several occasions, canoeists of differing levels of ability using paddles with damaged blades.

Although it is not possible for everybody to replace paddles each time they chip a corner or snap the tip off a blade, it is their responsibility to ensure the equipment they own is not only safe for them to use, but also does not put other paddlers at risk of injury.

It is particularly important to consider the condition of your paddles if you are a coaching member, or someone who frequents sites such as Holme Pierrepont or the Tees Barrage, where eddies are often fast moving and frequently crowded.

If you have a damaged paddle, be responsible, and modify the blade so that it is less likely to cause injury. Modification does not have to be complicated, rounding sharp edges with a file, or wrapping tape over broken ends may be all that's needed.

Enjoy your paddling and be safe.

Nigel (Wilf) Wilford.

that it was not only students who caused the late night to become such a problem.

P.S Thank you for an excellently well organised Dee Tour (yet again).

**A very annoyed student/canoist\***  
(\*delete as applicable)

**Eds Note:** Thank you for all the correspondence on the above subject. We all need to work together to raise the profile of paddlers as considerate human beings on and off the water. This subject is now closed.

## We The Minority?

Dear Canoe Focus

The main intent of my journey to the International Canoe Exhibition at the NEC (a round trip for me of some 300 miles) was to buy a new paddle. Now there were many great bargains to be had, savings of up to 50% what could possibly stop me from going home with a lovely new addition to my kit?

One thing, I'm left handed, not you may think much of a handicap in life, well no, unless you wish to buy a paddle that it.

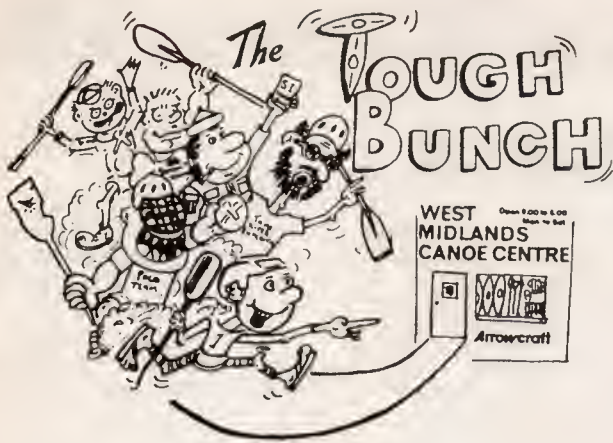
I tried stall after stall and the reply was disappointingly similar at each one "Yes Sir, left handed paddles, I brought one to the show, but I've sold it."

Of course, you've sold it 1 in 10 people are left handed and 4 out of 10 in the professional sporting world are.

Come on you stall holders how about catering for us leftys, to bring to a two day exhibitions scores or right handed paddles and only one or two lefts is not really listening to the market is it?

Hopefully this will strike a cord with you and next year there won't be as many long faced left handed people at the exhibition.

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**Dear Canoe Focus**

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Initially I was informed it was an advanced first aid course. After the first day I realised that this was a extremely comprehensive and well structured medical course for non-medical personnel.

The course events are programmed over a five day period whereby you are given valid advice and role-acting excellent real life event situations. The instructional methods were first class

and at no time did you feel intimidated or unable to seek further clarification on any points or issues raised.

Over the last twelve years whilst serving with the armed forces I have attended many military and civilian first aid courses. Whilst I have learned many skills and been able to adopt many practices I feel this course has much to offer the outdoor world. It has given me the knowledge and more importantly the confidence to deal with more serious real life emergencies.

In today's society where you are often frightened to act when an injury

occurs I feel that I could now be calm and rational and be able to later justify any action I have taken (even in a court of law).

I cannot recommend highly enough to anyone considering taking a First Aid Course in future to put this one at the top of the list.

The contact name I have for this course is: Mr Irvine Gibson, c/o Remote Region Survival Research Centre, Ye Old Barn, The Riverside Inn, Aymesbury, Herefordshire.

**Paul Cooper.**



## Focus News, Information & Events: Access

### BCU Access Committee Snippets

At its April meeting the BCU Access Committee welcomed Rodney Coldron, the Press Media and Sponsorship Manager of the National Federation of Anglers. Mr Coldron gave an overview of his work and that of the NFA in general. There is no individual membership to the NFA but there is a total of between 200,000 and 250,000 anglers in their 500 affiliated clubs. The clubs organise angling matches and protect and provide for the sport of coarse angling. An amicable and worthwhile exchange of views followed and all expressed the hope that closer contacts between our two sports would develop.

### Rivers Wye and Lugg

The Wye Navigation Order 1996 - As expected the Environment Agency has applied for this Order to be made. If it is confirmed by the Secretary of State it will make them the Navigation Authority for the Wye from Bigsweir upstream to Hay. Also for the Lugg from its confluence with the Wye upstream to Presteigne. It will also give them Byelaw making powers upstream of Hay and Presteigne including all the tributaries upstream of Bigsweir.

The period for making legal representations and objections has passed. However, when you read this - written in mid April - the BCU response will have been made. Also my 'contacts' will have been filled in on areas of concern to Canoeists in the Order and they will also have responded.

There will now be a period whilst the Environment Agency try to deal with the objections. If they cannot achieve this there will be a Public Inquiry.

Obviously the BCU together with those 'contacts' and others who made representations or objections will be the subjects for negotiations with the Agency.

I have been pleased with the response to my requests for those who are prepared to help with the work for access on the Wye. There will be a lot more water going under the bridge and your continuing help will be needed. For more information or if you feel you can assist contact: John Westlake, Local Access Officer for the River Wye, England, 33 Golden Vale, Churchdown, Gloucester GL3 2LU John Westlake has attended his first meeting as BCU Representative to the Wye Preservation Trust.

### Update on the River Cam

From the confluence with the River Ouse up the Cam to Bottisham Lock (MR 509657) is managed by the Environment Agency (NRA) and therefore it is covered by the BCU Licence. However, above Bottisham Lock the Cam Conservators are the navigation authority therefore this section is not covered by the BCU Licence.

### Eastern Region Access

Please, please, please will Local Access Officers in the Eastern Region contact me. I am trying to update Eastern Region contacts and river information and I need your help. Please phone write or e-mail me soon. RAO Lesley Quinlan, 108 Fleetwood Avenue, Holland on Sea, Essex CO15 5RF Tel: 01255 815093 e-mail: quinlan@essex.ac.uk

### River Dart Access

Please note that Mr Icarus Edmonds has taken over from Kevin Chamberlain as Local Access Officer for the Dart. Icarus can be contacted at the address shown in the Access section of the Yearbook. Also the Regional Committee will be holding a discussion forum on the River Dart to consider the difficult issues surrounding the access agreement. Clubs, affiliated organisations and BCU members will be invited when a date and venue had been decided.

### Access Team Get-Together

Together with two Regional Access Officers 16 members of the South West Region team and three from the West Midlands Region took part. This was a good day for exchanging views

and problems and discussing subjects of common interest. Mike Williams from the EA(NRA) gave an invaluable insight into how the Environment Agency structure looks at the moment with some important contacts.

### Tyne Representative

Simon Banbury has accepted an invitation to represent the BCU at the Tyne Riparian Owners and Occupiers Association.

### Glen Tilt Closure

The Scottish Canoe Association has been officially informed of the decision taken by Atholl Estates to close the Glen Tilt road to vehicular traffic as from 1 April 1996.

The road has been closed to protect the fragile nature of the glen, to maintain a sense of wilderness, and to prevent further damage and erosion to the estate.

Access to the river was not an issue in the decision to close the road, but all vehicular access is now curtailed. A car park has been provided at the foot of the Glen Tilt road for those seeking access to the glen, including canoeists willing to carry their canoes into the glen.

The SCA asks all paddlers to respect the estate's decision; the gate at the foot of the road may be left open at times, but canoeists could find their vehicles locked in if they drive up the glen. We have established a good dialogue with Atholl Estates, which will be jeopardised by canoeists ignoring the vehicle ban. If we can maintain good relations with the estate staff they may look favourably on our activities in future; please observe the prominent estate signs controlling access.

# Lynn Simpson - Going For Gold

**I**t's the ultimate sporting dream - You're standing on the rostrum receiving your Olympic Gold Medal... For Reebok sponsored Lynn Simpson - current ladies Kayak slalom world champion and Sunday Times Sportswoman of the Year - the dream may turn into a reality this summer at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. However its not a prize that is easily earned. A glance at Lynn's training schedule leaves no doubt that she is putting 100% into her Atlanta preparations.

## Training

Lynn trains six days a week - twice a day. Far from just paddling down a river - this includes weight training, aerobic endurance, lactic tolerance work with heart rate monitors, competitive simulation and technique work with video analysis. A typical day involves a couple of hours on the river, then home to sort out travel arrangements for her next training session or competition abroad - followed by an afternoon session either on water or in the gym. To be an Olympic canoeist requires a combination of high intensity endurance and good upper body strength.

So - are there any secrets to her success? If there is - it's hard work and dedication. Lynn says: 'Success

is 100% physical, 100% technical and 100% mental. It's all about self belief on the big day - if you sit at the start line and don't think you can win, you're wasting your time. You also need to be focused and mentally aware because white water is unpredictable, so I visualise the course beforehand.'

## The Olympics

Lynn has probably seen more of the world than most. She is recently back from a six week training stint in Chile - and will soon jet off again for world cup races in Spain and an Olympic training camp at Bourg St.Maurice in France. Lynn believes that warm weather training will be a crucial factor in the Atlanta preparations. With temperature and humidity in the 90's - only the toughest will come out on top. She has already had a taste of what's to come. At a World cup race last season down the Ocoee River - she destroyed her opposition by a remarkable four seconds - confirming that she is one of Britain's brightest medal hopes.

During her Olympic preparations on the Ocoee River - Lynn will be wearing Reebok's Amazone HXL sports sandal - in addition to Reebok apparel. And with the hot temperatures - she is bound to appreciate the movement and coolness that Reebok's premium performance sandals allow.

Shane Duffy, Reebok Outdoor's



Lynn Simpson wears the Reebok Amazone HXL sandal.



Brand Manager, comments, "Lynn is a great ambassador for the sport and we wish her all the best for the rest of the season's World Cup races - and of course the Olympics."

## The Amazone HXL

From white water rafting to Summer Trekking, the Reebok Amazone HXL is the sports sandal you need.

The Amazone HXL has adjustable straps that provide a customised fit holding your heel and toes in place. The sandals also feature a radial sidewall to fight off rocks, coral and any debris.

Used by holiday-makers, sports people and leading British Canoe Union members, the Amazone HXL is extremely comfortable. Its midsole is moulded EVA footbed with lightweight Hexalite cushioning in the heel for extra shock absorption in this area of peak pressure. A durable hydrophobic - water repelling - rubber outsole provides excellent traction.



**The Reebok Amazone HXL is available from leading sports stores and specialist outdoor retailers, price £39.99.**



All books and videos reviewed here are available from BCU Supplies unless otherwise stated. Ring 0116 283 0659 and ask for a brochure if you have not received one in your Focus mailing.

Please note that all books and videos reviewed in this magazine are the personal opinion of the reviewer, not necessarily that of the BCU.

**Knots for Paddlers**

Written by Charlie Walbridge. Published by Menasha Ridge Press. Price £4.25. ISBN 0-89732-147-2

The book is a continuation to the series of books by the American Canoe Association, called 'A Nuts 'n' Bolts guide'. It contains details of how to use knots effectively in almost any canoeing situation that needs the use of a rope or knots.

It is very well set-out with illustrations (which are very easily understandable) at the top of the page and written instructions underneath. It is laid out in two main sections, firstly how to tie the knots and then secondly how, and when to use them, which I found particularly interesting as I now know how to tie a boat to the car when left just with rope, after strapping paddles down.

The illustrations and instructions were so good, that as I followed them myself, I am pleased to say, after a few practice goes and many entanglements later I am a professional rope handler!

I enjoyed the read and welcomed the valuable information which added to my rope skill's. This book would be useful for any instructor, Group or individual planning to embark on any serious river trip, or any trip that may need the use of rope or knots. Every boy scout should have one!

*Reviewed by Sean Bennett -BCU Member Aged 14*

**Elvepadling, White Water Canoeing.**

Written by Nils Flakstad and Leif Ongastad. Published by the Norwegian Canoe Federation. Price £11.95. ISBN 82-90674-00-7 Having visited Norway on four occasions, three of which were Canoeing trips, I was pleased to be given the opportunity to review this book.

Elvepadling, is written in Bi-lingual text i.e. the page is separated into two columns which are Norwegian and English. The book was written as a

guide to southern Norway and is the follow up to the first book written about those parts published in 1983. There is a

comprehensive introduction which covers the criteria for Grading and an explanation of how to determine the water conditions in relation to the time of year. (ie low, high, dangerous!).

The book is then divided into seven main sections each of which covers a geographical region of Southern Norway. As an example, in the Oppland area in the centre of Southern Norway

18 rivers are described, the description of each river has an adjoining sketch map with towns and roads marked as well being broken down into graded sections.

From personal experience, the section on the mighty Sjoa is extremely accurate and although it does not get down into minute detail, there is sufficient information to allow for informed decisions about which section to paddle and when to stay on the bank.

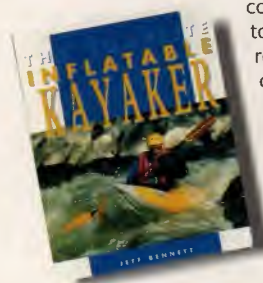
The Section on the Telemark region brought back many fond memories of a two week tour there in the mid 70's and in particular the river Otra with its excellent surfing waves at Syrtveit above Evje. I also recall paddling the gorge section on the Otra above Sarvsfossen just before the 'river ends up in a very dangerous tunnel'; a guide book would have been extremely useful that day!

Overall, I would strongly recommend the book as an essential guide for the planning of white water tours in Southern Norway.

*Reviewed by John D Anderson E2 Instructor - Inland*

**The Complete Inflatable Kayaker**

Don't be mislead by the reference to Inflatable Kayaks, which are a great idea but somewhat lost on our low volume rivers. This book has a huge amount of good information on canoeing technique, rescue, and dynamics. The author, Jeff Bennett



covers each topic from repairs to camping essentials in well laid out text with

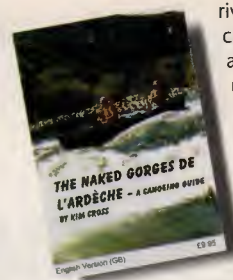
complementing diagrams or photos. I recommend it as good background reading for SI Training. I nearly disregarded this book because of the title, don't you make the same mistake, besides, a pump and canoe in the boat is a great deal more convenient than roof racks and trailers.

*Reviewed by Martin Streeter, Level 2 Kayak Coach, Level 2 Slalom Coach, Level 3 WWR Coach.*

**The Naked Gorges de L'Ardeche**

by Kim Cross. Price £9.95. ISBN 0-9527694-09

This guide introduces the reader to the Ardeche Gorge, with a brief description about its location and how to get there. The author also gives advice on safety equipment which in the Ardeche is often sadly lacking. The Gorge is a major tourists river, with many 'Adventure Schools' and holiday sites along its way. The author describes many of these areas in a clear and simple manner. Later in the guide she goes on to describe practically every twist and turn, rock and rapid in the



river. This guide is clear and concise and could be useful for those of us who like to know exactly what to expect around the next corner, but for those of us who like

a bit of adventure it takes away the excitement, but then maybe the Ardeche isn't the place for the adrenaline freaks out there!

*Reviewed by Wendy Blackman*

**Environmental Responsibility for Expeditions**

An excellent publication produced as a joint project between the Young Explorer's Trust (YET) and the British Ecological Society. The booklet contains



advice on minimising environmental impact and helpful checklists to use during planning expeditions. It is essential reading for all leaders of

expeditions especially those seeking grant aid and approval from YET. These can be obtained from the Expedition Advisory Centre, The Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR at £2.00 inc postage.

*Reviewed by Wendy Blackman*

**World Championship Videos - Slalom and Wild Water Racing**

The ICF Slalom and Wild Water Racing World Championships 1995 videos are now available from BCU Supplies priced at £29.99 each.



Both videos consist of 2 videos per pack. Showing some of the hottest action from the 1995 World Championships held in the UK. An excellent opportunity to watch the worlds best in the



comfort of your own armchair. A useful tool for the aspirant world champions to suss out the lines on the Tryweryn or to crack that move on the upstream gate on Holme Pierrepont. Get

out and buy it now. *Reviewed by Wendy Blackman.*





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**We paddled our way slowly through the scorching sun and the barricade of dead trees, rising from the water like gnarly limbs, into a deep bay of breathtaking beauty. "There, only yards from our bow, were buffalo and elephant, and impala by the thousand."**

**N**oiselessly drifting in as close as we dared, we tied up to a tree and watched in wonder as a dozen elephants munched the long grasses of the lakeside, undisturbed by the patter of cattle-egret alighting on their backs. The buffalo, morose and silent, eyed us with suspicion. Here, in their own time and place, they were leading a life unchanged for thousands of years.

The idea for a trip to Africa had been nurtured since my first conversation with Richard 'Bod' Boddington, erstwhile Casanova and long-time travelling companion. Our aim, among others, was to canoe the length of Lake Kariba in Zimbabwe. By the time we left England we'd had time to think of everything: from torches to throwlines; from secret pockets to citronella. Armed to the roots of our short-cropped hair with enough gimmicks, gadgets and gear to impress a Berghaus salesman, we arrived in Zimbabwe.

### **Infamous Zambezi River**

An eighteen foot Grumman was at our disposal, but still we were beset with delays. Based in Harare, we bought maps, provisions for a month and other odds and ends, in preparation for our water-borne venture. Packing and lashing everything into our canoe we added two tractor-tyre inner tubes and four empty petrol drums for buoyancy. All told, the canoe weighed 95 kg, which presented us with a slight transport

problem: firstly, Harare is 1000 km from Victoria Falls; and secondly, between the Falls and Lake Kariba flows the infamous Zambezi river, its grade V rapids perhaps not the ideal introduction to open-boating. After considerable haggling, the canoe was sent on its way for \$180 (£16) and a small goat. Once at Victoria falls, one of the rafting companies offered to sell us paddles and arranged for the canoe to be taken to Dekka Drum, the first available access point after Armageddon. Reluctant to embark on our journey half-way along the river, we booked a five day rafting trip that would take us from the Falls to Dekka. Hearts pounding faster than a duracel drummer, we were ready at last.

Our first day rafting was the standard fare of big, gnarly white-water. The water was fast and exciting, the drops daunting. The day was marred only by two charming raft companions, who showed little respect for the river or for others. As if from heaven, the midday heat and lunch time meat beat upon their bellies without mercy, leaving them green and grouchy, whereupon they were gentle as lambs. For five days we were treated to the glories of the river: rapids and waterfalls; standing waves that curled and crested twenty feet into the air; clip-springers, baboons, wallowing hippo, and the ubiquitous crocodile, basking motionless on the warm, flat rocks of the river bank; and the magnificent Zambezi Gorge itself, effortlessly sculpted by the river. As the five days neared their end, however, we wanted to be on our way.

Swapping one craft for another, we found all our equipment had been unloaded, our paddles stolen and our inner tubes deflated. Armed with galvanised rubber, we searched our tool-kit for a pneumatic pump, but to no avail. Carefully repacking our gear, we secured it with strips of inner tube, under the watchful eyes of three cow-herds, each one wiser than the last, and bearing gold, frankincense and mirth to encourage us on our way. Asking if we might like to part with all



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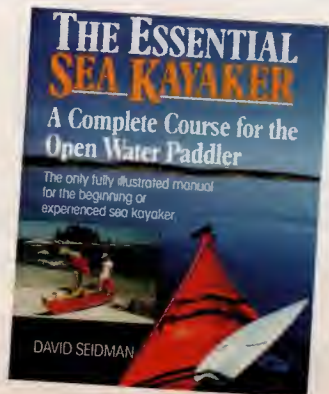
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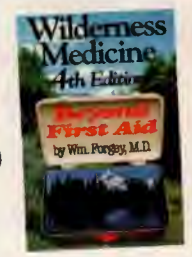
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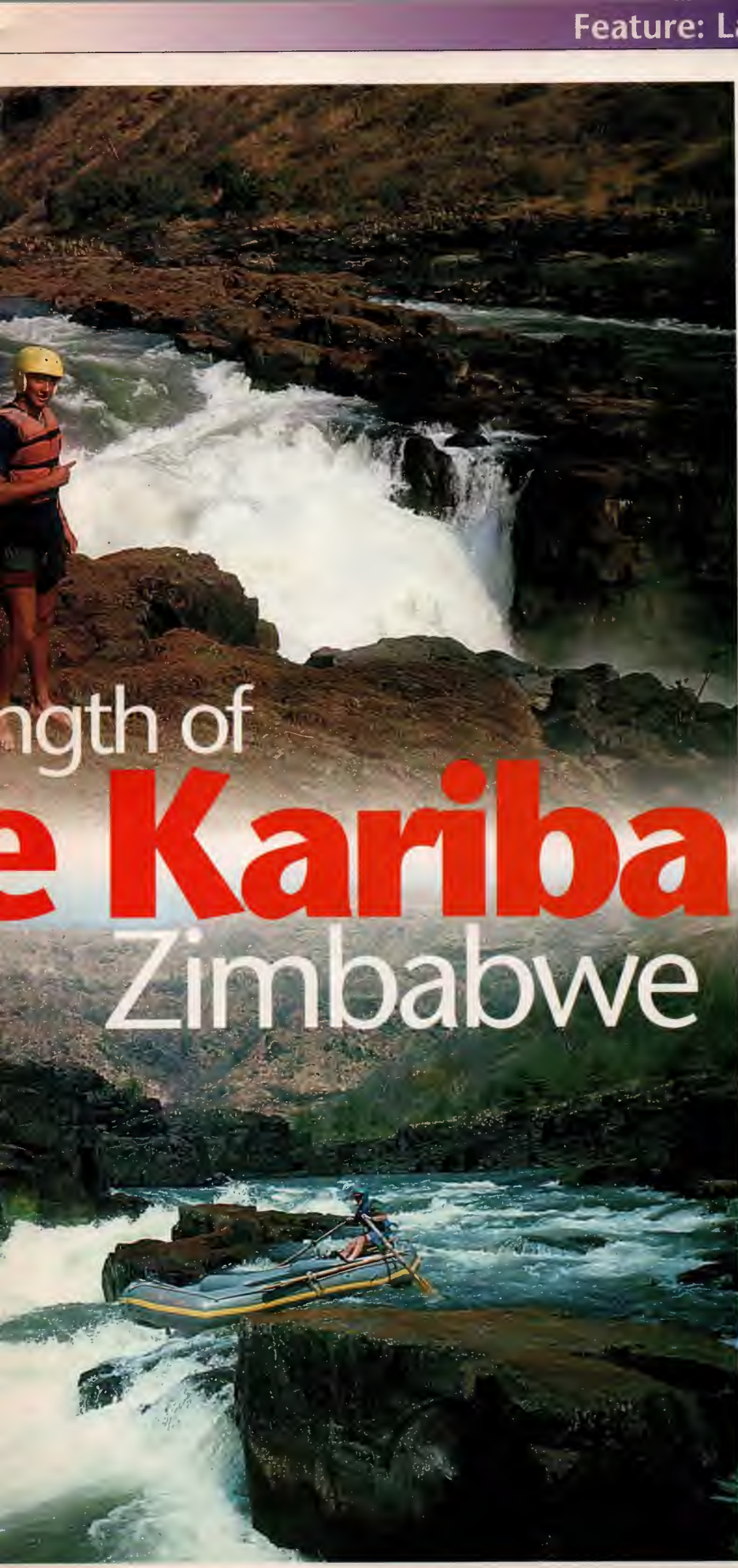
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our food and equipment, they were remarkably understanding when we gave them the bad news.

### Ominous Roar of White-water

After an hour on the river, the ominous roar of white-water could be heard some way ahead. Frankly, we were rather banking on the river being flat beyond Dekka Drum... Inspecting the rapids from the right bank, our view was restricted and we could only guess at the size of the drop. Capsizing in crocodile-infested waters was hardly the George. It was fast, dangerous and deadly, but somebody had to do it. After a quick decision we pushed off from the bank and plied towards the centre of the channel. As luck would have it, a fast, glassy V guided us through the worst of it, as we battled our bucking bath-tub into submission. Each wave was an inch or more bigger than the last and we felt certain our lives were in mortal danger. Finally we emerged, triumphant and delighted, looking nervously back on the two foot drop we had just negotiated Providence was with us and somehow, we had overcome the odds...

Each morning we rose before first light to a chorus of hippos chuckling, making the most of the morning calm. The sunrise was always spectacular, a giant orange orb burning the horizon above the dark silhouette of the lake shore. On the water before the sun broke the horizon of our first day, we followed the southern channel, avoiding the turbulent waters to the north of the island and suffering instead the shallow swamps and thick reeds that necessitated more pushing than paddling. Help from the current was dramatically short-lived as the river widened, and the current soon became imperceptible. The bellowing of the hippos became more frequent, while fish-eagles and snake-eagles watched lazily from branches as they swooped from one to another. Our first day had been hot and tiring, paddling only twenty-five kilometres before making camp on the steep banks of Devil's gorge, which once echoed to the sound of roaring rapids. The site we had chosen, in fact the only one suitable, was in the path of an old elephant run, or so we deduced with our own particular brand of mindless optimism. That night we dined on Soya mince and sadza - a delicacy made from maize-meal with the consistency of cement and all the taste of powdered water - washed down with a delightful little chateau d'eau from the Kariba vineyards.

### Breath-taking

On the second day we were on the water before sun-rise once more, carving through the glassy-smooth, early morning waters with barely a paddle-splash. The sun rose through the valley directly in front of us and the silhouette was breath-taking. Paddling out into the open water of the lake as the wind picked up, we were able to drift every few hours to rest and eat. Crossing from the mouth of the gorge to the South shore, we had to contend with a grave-yard of dead trees and the growing swell, but the weather was warmer than toast. By mid-afternoon we would have been content to pull in and set up camp, but when the wind died we decided to make the most of a mirror-perfect surface, heading across open water through the Sengwe Narrows. Once through, we were unable to see the opposite shore and in the silent stillness that prevailed we could hear the slow, sweeping wing beats of the fisheagles as they passed low overhead. As we made camp that night a terrific gust of wind broke the stillness and within seconds our tent was buffeted and thrown sideways. Secure inside, we slept well, but the

gusts continued unabated throughout the night.

The wind had been kind for the last time. Paddling against a headwind or battling to maintain direction in the cross wind became the norm. The next day we continued round the shoreline, passing a small local village. We paddled through persistent wind across a wide and exposed inlet, using a small island in the bay as a stepping-stone. We managed some twenty kilometres in the morning but by midday the wind had got the better of us, and we pretended that if we waited, we could continue in the calm of early evening. We pulled up on a beautiful sheltered beach and spent the afternoon reading, writing and sewing.

## Lake-cooled Beer

Like most of our campsites along the lake-shore it was isolated and we saw no-one. Bod sometimes tried hooking the other fish in the lake, assuring me they were plentiful but for once the prey had the upper hand, invariably snapping the line and leaving us without hook, line or sinker. The routine for eating and bedding down was quickly established. Soon after four we would wander off to collect wood, kindling and grasses to light the fire. In the dry season, wood was plentiful provided by the limbs of dead trees drowned by decades of flooding. Unloading our gear from the canoe, we would light the fire and brew some sugary tea or hot-chocolate, before cooking the Soya mince, sadza and dehydrated vegetables. The result was always a feast and one of the day's highlights. Up until the last few days we also had the luxury of a lake-cooled beer with each meal profiting from the fact that the canoe performed like a super-tanker regardless of its contents. The meal was followed by two more hot, sweet drinks, and chocolate or peanut-butter white it lasted. The pots and pans washed, we would lie out our mats and sleeping-bags with heads to the fire, stoke it with logs and settle down to read or sleep.

Rising on the fourth day before dawn, we ate and packed in the strange silence of the equatorial darkness, but by first light the wind was already strong and against us. The shoreline was steep and rocky, offering no shelter from the wind and few opportunities to rest. We paddled across the narrow opening of the Binga Estuary, bracing against the conflicting swells that met at its mouth. The water was occasionally breaking over the bow

of the canoe and any sort of steady rhythm was impossible. Conditions remained similar for the next two weeks and only rarely were we afforded freedom to carve through calmer waters. Once we reached Binga we had to wait out a headwind that made forward paddling a geostatic endeavour. Desperate for a cold drink we ventured into Binga in search of refreshment. After two hours of forcing our way through the bush, we finally emerged into a local village, angry, hot and very lost. One of the villagers kindly

showed us the way to the rest camp, where we drank greedily. Such is the legacy of coca-cola. Our sadza and mince that night were delicious, and as we lay dozing a hippo plodded past with a curious glance.

## Intrigued by Our Presence

On the fifth day we paddled the canoe to Binga and spent the afternoon lounging in hot springs. Each day we edged our way round the shoreline, cutting from peninsula to island to peninsula, trying to profit from the early morning calms. Usually we would paddle from dawn to early afternoon to avoid the afternoon winds. The flies were sometimes intolerable, and if the weather allowed we would continue, after gorging heartily on vita-thins and corned-beef. If not, we would spend the afternoon reading, writing our diaries and making minor repairs to clothing and equipment. Occasionally we met local villagers, some indifferent, others warmly welcoming. Moses, a fisher of men, was intrigued by our presence, asking "Whence do you come? Who are you? Whither do you go?" (for he was a religious fellow). We replied "We come from Dekka Drum, we are paddlers proud, and we venture forth to Kariba Town." Moses looked at each of us in turn. He looked at our canoe. He looked out across the lake. And then, he laughed, deep and loud and long. Proudly showing us round his camp, he offered us drinks as if they were our last, before sending us on our way.

Finally at Chete gorge, we were behind schedule and looked for a lift closer to the game parks. The gorge itself was a magnificent, steep-sided cataract watched over by fish-eagles and bateleur. For two days we waited on Chete Island, camped on a beach cut off from a watering pool by a small ridge, from which we were able to watch the game come down to drink only yards away. The mice and monitor lizards were timid but plentiful, and in the midday heat there were always dozens of birds feeding and preening - plovers, grey herons, great white egrets, hornbills, caribou stork and pied kingfishers diving for fish. A large herd of impala and two magnificent kudu with impressive spiral horns came down to drink at dusk each night and again at dawn the next morning. Our sense of untouched paradise was spoiled only by a passing fisherman, warning us to be careful of poachers who had recently killed two elephants nearby. That night a strobe light from a fishing boat manifested itself in my imagination as a gun-boat spotlight, trained along with a dozen assault rifles on our young and tender flesh.

Somehow, the National Parks shoot-to-kill policy looked less environmentally friendly from the cold comfort of my bullet-proof hollofill.

Eventually a small ferry chugged past and we loaded the canoe onto its deck and made ourselves comfortable for the two day journey that was to take us less than a hundred kilometres. Surrounded by children crying, chickens cock-a-doodle-dooing and the rank smell of tonnes of drying kapenta fish, sleep and comfort were medium rare. Restocking with 2 kg of sugar, some rice, and some bread and biscuits from a village store, we resumed our journey three days later. That night we were surrounded by dozens of hippos chomping noisily on the grass and bellowing with deep resonant guffaws. Needless to say, giant incisors were no more appealing than giant gunshot wounds.

For two days we paddled deep into the inlets and around the islands of Boomi East Bay, drifting silently into the shore to view the animals that had come down to drink. The elephants were breath-taking the huge buffalo safely threatening. The pods of hippos wallowing in the cool water were curious but unconcerned, although on more than one occasion we were forced to paddle some way out to avoid cutting off an irritable mother. In keeping with all great Tarzan movies, we both saw a huge log whipping into the water with a frenzied splash. We never saw it again, but it was a timely reminder of the marvellously symbiotic hippo-crocodile relationship: I'll rock the boat if you eat the canoeists.

## Protective Elephant

Free from the noise of a motor we were able to drift in as close as we dared. On the thirteenth day we were obliged to construct a small fortress of fallen trees to keep out a herd of buffalo, once again playing the mindless optimism card with aplomb. On day fourteen, after seven hours paddling, we decided to take advantage of the calm conditions and made the eight kilometres dash across open water to Long Island. A protective elephant was less than welcoming, ripping small trees from the ground as if to say "thank you, no". Taking the hint we were forced to move on, paddling a further seven kilometres to Rhino Island, a small mound of rocks in the middle of the lake with a large, flat slab of rock in the centre. This was to be our last, and most spectacular camp on Lake Kariba. No longer on the lake, our one night in Kariba town was enough to persuade us that our lake-side heaven had provided the perfect existence.



**If you would like more information about the preparation and organisation of this trip please write to**  
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# Twilight slalom - ear to ear grin

Below:  
Mark Delaney  
Photo: All Action  
Photos



## British Junior Teams

Two selection events for both Junior Worlds and Junior Under 17's team resulted in selection for the following:

### Junior Worlds Team K1W

Helen Reeves,  
Helen Cardy,  
Laura Blakeman

### K1M

Tim Baillie,  
James Hounslow,  
Daniel Cook

### C1

Dugald Tavener,  
Robert Turner,

Alistair Campbell

The Team will take part in the sixth Junior Worlds event which will take place at Lipno in the Czech Republic from July 10-14th. Our thanks to Arrowcraft who have kindly agreed to the loan of their trailer once again - we are grateful for your support!

### Junior Under 17 Team K1W

Amy Casson,  
Kimberley Walsh,  
Rachel Snutch

### K1M

Tom Paterson,  
Barry Paton,  
Ian Davison

### C1

Simon Cooper,  
Joel Crossland

This team is to take part in the first ever unofficial Junior World Cup with events in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

**W**ell, it proved to be some initiative! A double celebration of both the BCU's Diamond Jubilee and would you believe, the tenth operating year of the Slalom Course itself, set us thinking, and as a result, an open canadian demo, parallel slalom, rodeo and a laser light show was the entertainment for the evening of the 16th March at the Slalom Course, National Water Sports Centre, Nottingham. Sandwiched between the first ranking double Premier event of the season at the end of a cold wet day, the circumstances could have been much better, but nevertheless it was fun!

Who would have thought that five open canadian boats and their crews all

provided by Mobile Adventure, would negotiate the ten gate course, designed specially for the occasion? Yes, a few chose to test the temperature of the water and also, there seemed to be some unconventional testing of paddle blades, but the principle of parallel slalom on a shortened slalom course has given us food for thought.

Perception brought a trailer load of their new "Fox" boats to enable all kayak paddlers to start as equals and put the new polyethylene boat through its paces. OK to paddle right up to and including Division 1, this must be the way forward and there was animated feedback from all.

Floodlights gave a dramatic backcloth to the twenty or so rodeo exponents who showed us why they choose their sport and it was pleasing to be a part of a joint venture which included three canoe disciplines and much co-operation from Manufacturers and Retailers alike.

The laser light show attracted numerous spectators who squashed on to the spectator grandstand situated mid-course and surely, next time, it will be this show which provides the finale on a much warmer evening!

Rachel Crosbee, Ian Wiley and Stuart Bowman finished winners of the "pure" slalom and all received training grants as prizes.

## Brut Aquatonic Canoe Slalom Olympic Trials

People in sport have to dream, but it was more a case of keeping one's nerve at the Trials when men's and women's kayak Olympic places were up for grabs as well as slots in the World Cup Series team and future places in the 1997 Intermediate Team.

Around 40 or so paddlers had qualified to participate in the double event which was held on the River Tay at Grandtully on 30/31 March, chosen as it was felt that it had similar characteristics to the Ocoee, slalom's natural river race site at the Olympic Games.

The challenge was simple with a harsh "first past the post" policy used by British Selectors for some years now. World Champions past and present knew what they had to do and it was the concentration, stamina and skill of these paddlers which lead to the following selections:

**K1W:** Rachel Crosbee, Lynn Simpson

**K1M:** Paul Ratcliffe, Shaun Pearce

Heather Corrie and Ian Raspin both took third place and will now need to wait until the beginning of July to see if we qualify a third boat in women's and men's kayak. It's not cut and dried yet!

Competitors in the Olympic Canadian classes had yet more agony to bear as their selection was to be finalised at the first event of the World Cup series on the Ocoee itself, some three weeks later. First four past the post at the

double selection event resulted in Delaney, Marriott, Bowman and Morgan achieving World Cup team selection with Delaney and Marriott finally winning those coveted Olympic places - time to go one better Gareth!

The new crew of Craig Brown and Stewart Bowman accompanied brothers Phil and Steve Green to the World Cup and it was the sheer aggression and flair which won the Scots crew the Olympic place, which they in fact earned for GBR.

Tied into the Grandtully event was the World Cup team selection and surprise of the weekend was tiny 16 year old Laura Blakeman, a member of the Stafford and Stone Club who snatched fourth place in the women's event with an inspired performance in the second day's event. The experienced Andy Raspin took fourth place in the men's event.

The Brut Aquatonic Trials formed part of Elidas Faberge's global sponsorship programme of watersports which includes the 1996 Aquatonic Skiff Sailing Grand Prix and an international series of matchracing events including the Brut Royal Lymington Cup. Elida Faberge are also supporting Steve Macdonald, the blind canoeist who is to paddle round the UK in May to raise money for SPARKS.

Diggi Thomson, Brand Manager, Brut Aquatonic said "We are delighted to

## SLALOM SNIPPETS Tryweryn

Still no news on the Tryweryn, although by the time you receive this issue, NRA will have provided WCA with an update on water availability. Level of water in the dam is rising slowly but is it enough?

We have news of a 16 year old Belgium student who is looking for an exchange in July/August. Living between Mons and Brussels, he is a member of the Seneffe Canoe Club and, amongst others, he is looking to establish canoeing contacts in the Nottingham area. Name of the contact is Samuel Vanbutsele and he can be reached on 68 45 47 47 - over to you.

The British Embassy in Atlanta is proving more than helpful to our team out in Atlanta. With Special Attache Phil Sinkinson (Oldham born) on a special posting to act as liaison between US Organisers and the British Olympic Team, nothing has been too much trouble for Phil - we send you our thanks and see you soon!

## Reranking

A simple procedure designed to make sure that you and your fellow competitors get the challenge you seek - if you have been ranked in any division previously and have chosen to return to Slalom - Welcome back and just write to Rodney Stallworthy, our Ranking Status officer at 42 Christchurch Road, Birkenhead L43 5SF. Keep it brief and give relevant information - when, where and if you have canoed since - oops - do please remember to enclose sae for his reply!

## The Working Party

Hundreds of questionnaires have been circulated and hundreds of responses are already back - do please join in and remember that you can influence the future

## Reminder

A reminder to those of you moving house or changing address - if you are ranked in slalom, please, please, remember to inform your Ranking Compiler of the change - just informing membership at BCU will not resolve your slalom enquiries and sort out your Slalom Yearbook TELL YOUR RANKING COMPILER TOO!

## Results

Last minute results just in from World Cup 1 USA - 8 boats qualified for the finals and best British results were Paul Ratcliffe 5th, Rachel Crosbee 5th, Mark Delaney 8th, Pitt/Brown 12th

## And finally...

Go with the flow - try slalom this summer - "Starter" packs are still available free of charge from your Slalom Office - just ring the Information line and speak to Sue Wharton 01636 705363 and we'll put you on the right track. Do, please let us know how you get on and which was your favourite event!

have been able to widen our watersports sponsorship with this canoe slalom. The excitement and exhilarating qualities of Brut Aquatonic were strongly demonstrated in this highly successful and competitive Olympic Trials".

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	IR53	20-26/10	260.00
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	IR62	17-24/8	284.00
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5 day	MW51	23-29/6	260.00
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	MW53	25-31/8	260.00
	MW54	22-28/9	260.00
6 day	MW61	13-20/7	284.00
	MW62	12-19/10	284.00
<b>Advanced White Water</b> (Minimum age 15. Experience & competence on Grade III water with the ability to roll on moving water)			
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	R052	7-13/4	260.00
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5 day	SR51	19-25/5	260.00
	SR52	20-26/10	260.00
6 day	SR61	26/10-2/11	284.00
<b>Open Canoe Lochs &amp; Mountains</b> (Minimum age 15 years with a good standard of fitness)			
6 day	LM61	31/8-7/9	278.00
<b>Open Canoe Spey Descent</b> *IDEAL FOR FAMILIES AND GROUPS* (Minimum age 14)			
6 day	SD51	13-20/7	278.00

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(Age 18 or over)

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(As above)

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(Age 18 or over)

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Simon Sims completed this essay as part of the Diploma in Teaching the Visually Impaired.

# Working Under a practical study

**A**s a teacher of Outdoor Activities at Temple Bank School for the Visually Impaired in Bradford I ask pupils on a daily basis to undertake what to them may seem to be hazardous or challenging activities. Although these activities are carefully controlled and safety is obviously paramount, it occurred to me that my perceptions of what the activity involves, or the feelings I experience from such activities may be completely different from those of my visually impaired students.

Setting aside the fact that I obviously choose to undertake activities such as climbing or canoeing because I enjoy them, which may not be the case with every pupil, I decided that I could only come close to understanding what it feels like to take part in outdoor activities without vision if I was to attempt the activities blindfold. To do this I enlisted the help of my climbing and canoeing friends.

As soon as I tried this exercise I realised that even blindfolded I had a definite advantage over my visually impaired pupils in that I possessed greater skill and confidence at each activity. There was no way around this except that as I was performing each task at a greater degree of difficulty than I ask my pupils to do I hoped that this might in some way

compensate for this. I also had the secure knowledge that at any moment I could choose to remove the blindfold if I wished. I was pleased to find that I could resist this urge even when I felt extremely anxious. I chose a number of activities including canoeing, climbing and cycling.

At all times I made sure I was safe by having a competent person guide me and always being able to remove the blindfold quickly if necessary.

In order to gain a more realistic impression of kayaking without vision I decided to paddle blindfold on the river Teiffi in South Wales. This is a much harder river than I would contemplate taking any of my students on, but again I felt that I needed to challenge myself at a greater level of difficulty in order to recreate the same emotions that my students might experience.

I asked some experienced canoeists to assist me as guides and we set off down a reasonably quiet stretch of river. I followed the guide and received instructions on which side to paddle and how hard. I found this extremely difficult, and quickly became totally disorientated, so that I was even unsure which way was downstream. I found that I could work this out on the faster flowing sections by the resistance I felt on the paddle, but on the slower parts I was completely confused. I also found it

impossible to paddle straight. I became dizzy and assumed that I was spinning around, when in fact I was merely swinging from side to side.

My guide was unused to working with a non-sighted person, and quite often gave me ambiguous instructions, which were sometimes difficult to hear. Also he never explained why I should move to one side or the other, or paddle faster, so that when I brushed into the overhanging tree he was trying to guide me past, or hit the rock in mid-stream, it came as a sudden and unpleasant surprise. On the calmer sections when I was making better progress my guide stopped talking to me, with the result that I thought he had disappeared.

I had no trouble balancing, as I thought I would have, but again kayaking and canoeing is my main sport and so I realise this cannot be an accurate reflection of what it is like for a partially-sighted student.

After about half an hour of this my guides must have become bored of this new game. When I accidentally wandered into an eddy at the side of the river they quietly slipped away, leaving me stranded on the bank. Because I had become used to periods of silence it took a few moments for me to realise that I had been abandoned.

The next few moments were filled with a curious mixture of irritation and impatience that they were messing around with my important experiment, followed by a horrible feeling of being completely alone. I could of course have removed the blindfold, which I considered, but that would have defeated the object of the exercise.

Instead I felt around for a tree root protruding from the bank and used that to turn myself around to face what I thought was the downstream direction, and pushed off into the current. I actually had no idea where I intended to go, but was aware that I couldn't stay on the bank forever. I was floating down the river into I knew not what, and was beginning to wonder if I was doing the right thing when I was relieved to hear voices calling me towards them.

As I drew closer I realised that the voices did not in fact belong to my





# Blindfold -

friends, but to another group of canoeists. Expecting to be met with total derision I decided to carry on the blindfold exercise and taking a deep breath demanded to be pointed in the right direction.

To my surprise the canoeists (who I never actually saw!) acted as if it was the most natural thing in the world to find a lone paddler drifting aimlessly down the river wearing a blindfold, and cheerfully guided me down the next section of river and delivered me back to my shamefaced 'friends' who were expecting me to have taken off the blindfold.

This reminded me of John Hull's accounts of the many encounters he has with total strangers whilst walking the streets of Birmingham. After this I decided that enough was enough and continued down the river with the benefit of vision.

## Practical- Application of these experiences

Gaining some insight into the way my pupils experience the activities of

my subject will hopefully make me a more empathetic teacher, and allow me to appreciate more the difficulties and challenges which my lessons present. I have realised even more the importance of close contact so that the pupil is aware of what is happening, feels safe and has all the information he or she needs to complete the task.

In an article in the British Journal of Visual Impairment John Hull talks of blind people as being 'whole body seers' (BJVI 1990). He relates how a blind person uses the other senses to such a degree that he or she is able to develop an awareness of their surroundings which a sighted person would lack. Working with the blind a teacher must therefore have some awareness of how blindness leads to a state of 'knowing'.

Blind people must not be viewed by members of the sighted world as lacking or ignorant, but rather as persons who sense their surroundings in a different way. There is a tendency to underestimate the ability

of a non-sighted person. As a converse to this when talking to our Mobility Officer he expressed grave concerns about the ability of our pupils being overestimated when they are outside their familiar surroundings.

I will try to bear both points of view in mind in my future work. I feel that there are real consequences for the pupils mobility and general environmental awareness which arise from these activities. Activities such as climbing and canoeing rely heavily on body and spatial awareness for success, and must develop such skills so as to give the visually impaired pupil greater confidence and success in mobility.

I have read several articles by Anne Kilcoyne on the work of the Touchdown Dance Co. using 'contact improvisation' dance forms to extend mobility and improve posture in visually impaired adults.

I felt that this work was on similar lines to what I hope to achieve with my pupils through Outdoor Activities. In summary I believe that I have learnt a great deal from these experiences, and hopefully will be able to develop my ideas and techniques further in the near future.

# Paddle Philately Or - Stamp Collecting for Paddlers!

**T**he most common canoe stamp must be the Canadian 10 cent with an Eskimo in his kayak; another Canadian stamp has two men in an open canoe on a lake with one of them fishing, not surprising you may say as Canada has Indians and Eskimos to show them on their stamps. What is surprising is just how many different stamps there are with canoes on them, and how many countries have issued them.

Some are shown as working boats while others commemorate world

championships or the Olympics; most are pictorial, but some are stylised, usually these are the Olympic ones sold in sets depicting a number of sports and you have to buy the set whether you are interested in the other sports or not just to get the one you want, but usually they come singly or in pairs so collecting them is not too expensive.

My collection includes stamps from thirty five different countries and one hundred and eighty in total.

The islands of the Pacific show a lot of working or war canoes mostly the Gilbert and Ellice and the Solomon Islands, while Hungary and Bulgaria have issued a commemorative set for most of the Olympics. Slalom and White Water Racing have been covered by the



French and the German Democratic Republic. Most European countries have produced a canoeing stamp of some sort, to commemorate a world championship or just canoeing.

Great Britain's Post Office has not produced a canoeing stamp yet, although we have had world championship events and world championships to commemorate. Maybe one day.

Article by  
**Jim Bright**



Article by  
 Andrew Turner,  
 Andy Squirrel  
 and Steve  
 Holmes.

# Lifeguard Convention

**T**he National Convention of Canoe Lifeguards held at Atlantic College, Cardiff, South Wales, took place over the weekend of the 13th and 14th April.

The convention was attended by Lifeguards from the BCU, RLSS and the SLSA. All corners of the globe were represented, especially as Atlantic College is an International College, with students coming from such places as Pakistan, America and even the Falklands.

Amongst the English Lifeguards there were representatives from Leeds, Bradford, Hertfordshire, Weymouth, Shoreham, Sherborne, London and even a domiciled Scotsman!

Wales was represented by two of their lifeguard units, Wye Bother and Llanelli with some friendly rivalry between Weymouth and Wye Bother. The winners of the Welsh and British Championships last year.

A variety of workshops ran throughout the weekend some had the benefit of preplanning, always the key to an ideal weekend, whilst others were a success due to the available instructors and examiners finding reserves of extraordinary enthusiasm to cater for the re-arranged teaching schedules which were necessary due in the main to a rush of candidates booking in at the last minute.

## New Friendships

As usual at these occasions there were many strangers from all walks of life and from the full range of the age spectrum, all looking around at each other and wondering if they 'fitted in', at the end of the weekend many friendships had been forged.

## Ages

There were instructors aged sweet 18 and so called 'old codgers' of 63 all with something to learn from each other. An eighteen year old having specialised knowledge can happily impart this knowledge to someone in their fifties just as much as vice versa - it's the willingness to learn that counts. There were many examples of 'you are as young, or as old, as you feel!'

## Workshops

Saturday saw an Aquatic first aid certificate, Lifeguard resuscitation, and an introduction to the skills and training of the BCU Lifeguards.

Sunday was more water oriented with a Canoe Safety Test training and assessment, Canoe Lifeguard Trainer and a full Lifeguard

assessment. The hardest time of the weekend was had by the candidates for the Lifeguard assessment. On Saturday morning they had to train people for the Lifeguard Resuscitation. They then lead the water borne activities in the afternoon under the watchful eye of one of the countries leading examiners, the Welsh National Training Officer and a strange Scots Man with a duck fetish.

## Food

After the hectic first day most of the people socialised in the small village of Llantwit Major. A source of hot food was discovered and the management interrogated as to the quality and quantity of same. After assurance as to both quality and quantity we rested our weary bodies at numerous small tables that had morphed themselves into one huge table and let battle commence. We were not at all disappointed by quality or quantity. The entertainment was of a high order, including musical glasses, the burning face scream, Doomful laugh, tickly knees, and the vanishing garlic bread - only the crust was left.

## Disco

Once people had had enough of the noisy, smoky atmosphere of a small country pub they retired to the college social club. The college have their own disco which was put to good use as the Lifeguards joined in with the students both with dancing and some very strange party games. All those poor, tired, little creatures from the day seemed to find a reserve battery, we remembered how they had claimed that they were too tired at the end of the working day to put kit away, however the disco floor surely suffered right up to midnight.

## Time for Bed

Just after midnight 'sensible' lifeguards went to their beds after some southern compassion, ready for a busy second day. The rest of the Lifeguards went down to the beach to "check the surf out". On finding that the sea was still cold as was the wind they returned to their nests and competed with the seniors at the nocturnal snoring contest.

## Snoring

There was no contest as the seniors won hands down. It was a close thing between 'Short & Round' and the "Boom of the Doom".

The juniors however had their own champion in Oliver the Brayve.

We all awoke the next morning to the tranquil sound of birds singing and a much appreciated wood pecker!

## Reveille

Detaching ourselves from magnetic bunks and extracting ourselves from cozy sleeping bags Sunday morning was finally greeted with almost convincing enthusiasm, it was raining hard, it was cold and the sea looked very gray and inviting - NOT.

Some of the wiser Lifeguards had left kit out to dry, some had had a crafty chat with the students the night before and had acquired a drying room, others had not.

## Assessments

By the time the morning briefings had ended it had stopped raining and it stayed that way for the rest of the day. The Lifeguards were first out as they went through throw bag rescues, pool rescues and a first aid assessment. After lunch the two main incidents for the candidates to deal with. The first was a climbing accident and cliff fall which resulted in a head wound and subsequent unconsciousness. After two minutes loss of a clear airway, but not a loss of natural breathing, the situation would have suddenly deteriorated. There was also a young girl with a very obvious broken wrist, simulated by make up. The real problem however was our old friend "shock and hypothermia". A distressed father did not help matters and had to be reassured.

The examinations then moved on to the water where each individual had his or her own skill level tested. This meant a danger of becoming wet, cold and tired when faced with a final 'testing' incident. The final incident being a capsized canoe manned by an inexperienced crew way out of their depth, a non swimmer and a young panicky person. A very unhelpful rescuer trying to be helpful and an epileptic fit suffered by another canoeist made for a hard assessment which the teams had to deal with in a cross shore force 3/4 wind, a shore dump at the landing site and a carry up a long steep slipway to a point of safety.

## Conclusion

Atlantic College is an ideal venue for the BCU Convention, there are superb facilities. A warm welcome from a most marvellous staff, enthusiastic and caring students with some excellent coast line from which to work.





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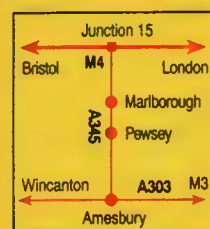
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# Zona de Bomba!

## Chile 1996

**New Year's Day on the north Esk, Aberdeenshire and two not-so-hardy women from Scotland are chittering uncontrollably and dreaming of paddling in a hotter climate.**

**E**ight weeks later we are on an aeroplane en route to Chile and not sure what to expect. Within days of arriving in Santiago our canoes were loaded onto the hired Chevrolet and we were heading for the Pan-American highway to take us south. Fortunately our river reading skills are better than our map reading abilities, after two hours of U-turns we found the single carriageway which is the main (and only) road South.

We soon realised that Chile is every paddler's paradise. Rivers in almost every direction; big volume, low volume, technical, grade 2, grade 5 and all of the above together. Our first stop was Pucon where we spent the next few days warming up on the Trancura river. To our surprise Pucon is the Aviemore of Chile; thousands of wealthy tourists from all over South America all sporting the latest designer swimwear.

February is almost the end of summer but four days of heavy rainfall helped to boast the already exciting rivers.

### Much interest

Our shiny new Eskimo Diablos were the subject of much interest and before we even took them on the water the offers were coming in.

A couple of hours further south is the river Fuy, the whole area is as beautiful as the west highlands of Scotland but with the added bonus of sunshine. Although the Fuy is not very big volume, it is technical in places and has the interesting falls that provide the backdrop for an ever increasing number of canoeing posters. The biggest drop which probably measures around 30 feet caused a few technical hitches that day. Roberto (from Italy) was over first and swam. A self rescue was required because Karen and I were still 30 feet up on the rocks discussing the finer points of will we, won't we? I was quick to realise that if I wanted Karen to run a rapid first I should offer to take the photographs. Besides a popped deck and a boat full of water our Diablos did the

### Article by

**Morva McKenzie  
and Karen  
McGraw**

job. They seemed to suit the Chilean rivers - coping well on both big volume rivers and technical rivers alike.



### Rio Bio Bio

Our particular wish in paddling in Chile was to paddle on the Bio Bio river before the controversial dam is completed (in 1997) and the valley is flooded. As always the names given to rapids (particularly by Americans) kept us amused as we negotiated our way from Jug Buster through the Milky Way, Cyclops and many more. The Bio Bio is a classic grade 4+ paddle. Although the rapids are pool-drop many are exceptionally long. Lost yak, named for obvious reasons, didn't manage to prise our boats away from us but it did get a few people back looping. Lara south is nearly a kilometre long but don't ask me for a line. This rapid is still the subject of much debate as to which one of us rolled the most and whether either of us caught any daylight on the way down. Occasionally our Diablos wanted to play when we would have happily thundered down a particular rapid.

One of the most exciting rivers we ran towards the end of our trip was the Rio Claro. Most people have heard of the Siete Tazas (seven teacups) but did you know there are in fact sixty teacups? Having got an appetite after the first seven we pushed our Chevy to the limit and drove up to the source of the Claro. Way up in the mountains where the streams join forces and the roads don't go we put in for an adventure into the unknown.

### Nightmare portage

In a twisty, narrow gorge nearly 50 feet deep and 5' 10" wide we dropped and

dropped and dropped, with one nightmare portage involving a kilometre walk through dense undergrowth, an encounter with a large, hairy, evil looking spider, to say nothing of the put in, we paddled in excess of 60 saltos (falls). Completely different from the big volume on the Bio Bio but nonetheless a great paddle. We may have bounced off a few rocks and even paddled a few drops backwards but our Diablos took the punishment and we paddled on having a great time. Suddenly though, there it was, the mother of all falls, a vertical drop of about 40 feet. Zona de Bomba was named by Hugo who paddled with us that day. Without any real meaning it sounded appropriate. Our signalling system of woops has never been the same as we uncontrollably wooped our way down the last remaining stretch of the Rio Claro.

We paddled other rivers in Chile and will happily advise anyone thinking of heading out for an adventure of their own.





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# A 'Wee Paddle' round Mull

I have to confess that I am more of a hill walker than a canoeist, but I was intrigued to find out what sea canoeing was all about, so I joined the sea canoeing section of the Royal West of Scotland Boat Club.

**T**here, I was assured by the canoe convenor that paddling round the islands and rocky coastlines of the West coast was an experience not to be missed. I was told that a proper appreciation of sea kayaking could only be gained from a summer expedition and it just so happened that the club was running a week long expedition round Mull which would fit the bill. He called it a nice 'wee paddle'. I nodded sagely, signed up for the trip, then rushed home to dig out an atlas. To my dismay, I discovered that this 'wee paddle' was all of 100 miles, and when I looked more closely, I was struck by the fact that the southern coastline of Mull is one long series of cliffs. Visions of south westerly storms pounding me against the rocks sprung easily to mind, but there was no way out. When July came, I found myself standing outside the Boat Club along with a dozen other souls ready for the off. The leader of the expedition (George) oozed confidence and assured us that the trip would be one big 'Bimble'. I smiled weakly, not sure whether that was good or not.

Our starting point for the expedition was Lochaline - a small community on the mainland opposite Mull - and we camped there ready for an early start the next morning. I was still hoping for an honourable way out and when the weather forecast predicted strong southerlies for the next day, I felt confident that the fates had been kind and that we would spend a pleasant week watching the waves from a hotel window.

Next morning, the weather was dull and overcast and I was starting to plan my day of leisure when, to my dismay, I realised that boats were being packed.

"Isn't it a bit rough?" I asked timidly.

George looked out to sea as if noticing it for the first time and dismissed it out of hand. "Och,



it's not bad." He paused then added with a wicked grin, 'yet.'

## Stronger and Stronger

Nobody protested (curse them) and we set off into the Sound of Mull heading south into a wind which grew stronger and stronger. By midday, it had reached force 5 and we had to abandon the day and head into shore. Great rejoicing on my part! However, nobody else seemed too happy. Only five miles of the planned twenty had been covered and we had not even reached Craignure. It was a bad start.

Overnight, the storm died away nicely and we rose to calm waters and only the slightest of breezes. George looked determined and declared that we were in for a hard 30 mile paddle. From Duart point onwards, we paddled along a spectacular rocky coastline, exposed to any strong south westerly which might spring up.

*Top right: The southern coastline of Mull on day 2.*

*Above: Lunga nest sites*

However, despite thundery looking clouds over the mainland, the weather remained fine and we could admire rather than fear the sea cliffs which towered over us. Still, it was a slightly eerie experience listening to the hollow booming explosions of waves trapped and squeezed in rocky cracks and channels. The occasional eruption of spray from these trapped waves made us wonder what it was like here on a stormy day.

## Crawling with Sheep Ticks

We finally reached safe shelter in the form of Loch Buie and spirits were high, especially after a wash in the local burn. Admittedly, we were still 10 miles behind schedule, but at least we had made up some of the deficit. We had a pleasant

campsite on a deserted bit of coastline and the world was 'braw'. At least it was until we discovered that the place was crawling with sheep ticks. If there is anything more loathsome than the Highland midge it must be the tick, so much so that I will refrain from mentioning it again. The thunder that had been threatening all day broke on us overnight. I listened to the torrential rain pounding on the tent fabric and wondered with some apprehension what the morrow would bring.

Fortunately, by next morning, the rains had stopped but the river by our campsite was in spate. What a pity we had camped on one side and left our canoes sitting on the other! Ah well. After several refreshing paddles we set off on another long day. George was hoping that we could put in another 30 miles and reach Iona. Conditions were dry and calm, although there was an eerie sea mist which concealed the tops of the sea cliffs. The morning's paddle was an eerie experience with half seen cliffs, the sound of muffled paddles, and the vivid horror stories narrated by George. The most spectacular part of the coastline was at Malcolm's point and here the mist cleared sufficiently to reveal the spectacular rock arches which have been carved there.

**Crowd Around George's Boat**

From there on, the fog became thicker, and by midday it was so thick that visibility was cut to a few yards. We were now paddling on George's compass bearings, unable to use the coastline as a guide. This resulted in quite a crowd around George's boat which in turn allowed George to claim that he had a magnetic personality.

The mist finally dispersed that afternoon and we successfully reached Iona having completed 60 miles in 2 days. It was with some relief that we heard George declare that the next day would be a rest day.

**Sea Crossing to Staffa**

Rest and the special Iona atmosphere worked wonders on tired minds and muscles and the following day we were ready for the next part of the expedition - the sea crossing to Staffa. We paddled round the west coast of Iona, then set off to cross the 6 miles of open sea which separated Iona from Staffa. It was choppy and the sky was cold and dull, but an hour and a half of paddling found us approaching the strange basalt blocks which make up Staffa and which have attracted so many visitors. We paddled into Fingal's cave to admire the rocky cathedral within, then we moved round to the north side of the island and set off for the Treshnish Isles. There was a brisk wind behind us and occasionally we would be overtaken by sudden squalls whipping across the water. Although this following wind pushed us along, it had the alarming effect of slewing my canoe. Some canoeists appear not to notice this phenomenon. They call it skill. I call it exasperating.

Once we had passed round to the sheltered western coast of Lunga, I was able to relax and fully appreciate the island and its birdlife. Cormorants stood aloof on rocky headlines while gannets dive bombed the fish, competing with surface raiders such as razorbills. Puffins flapped their wings furiously in a splendid demonstration of how not to fly while guillemots put on an equally

impressive display of how not to take off. Fulmars skimmed the waves with their wings almost touching the water while seagulls circled lazily until they found themselves harried by skuas.

From Lunga, we wound our way through a myriad of small islets to another of the Treshnish Isles called Fladda, where we set up camp. There wasn't a great deal of room for the tents and as we helped each other up the beach with the canoes, you could see everyone furtively spying out the land trying to identify a good camping spot without making it too obvious. In situations like this, you have to be careful not to grab a campsite too quickly or you're immediately condemned as a self centred, egotistical swine. On the other hand, if you move to slow, you end up camping on the rocks.

**Fiery Glow**

That evening, we lay silently at the highest point on Fladda watching the sun set in a fiery glow over the Atlantic, while all around us we could hear the squawking of birds and the strange mournful howls of seal colonies situated on the small islets between Lunga and Fladda.

Next day, the sun came out and we returned to Lunga. The seals stared quizzically at us from their rocky islets, wondering what sort of sea creatures we were, before they finally slithered off and dived under the waves. For most of the morning, we tracked the seals while they tracked us. A few of us beached our canoes to climb to the summit of Lunga. There we were greeted by views of Coll and Tiree to the west, the Dutchman's hat and Iona to the south, Staffa and Mull to the East, while to the north we could see Rhum, Egg, Muck, Fladda and the

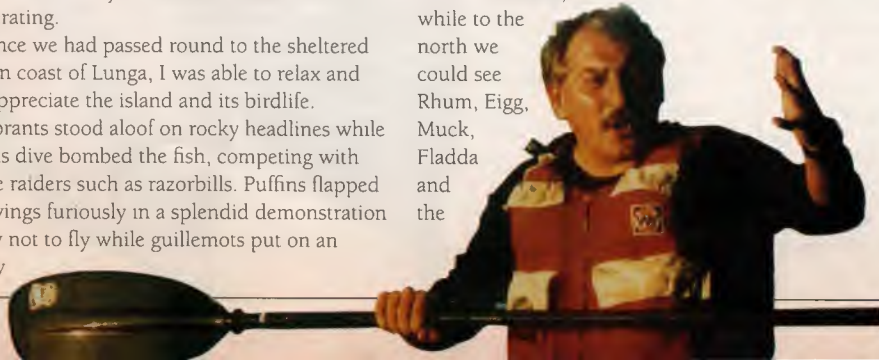


Top: Boat carrying.  
Above: Dutchman's Cap from Lunga

remainder of the Treshnish Isles. For lunch, we paddled to the northernmost island of the Treshnish group - Cairn na Burgh More. Here we explored the fortress from where the Lord of the Isles kept guard over the sea lanes between Scotland and Ireland. The island is a natural fortress with a circle of cliffs defending an upper plateau. Cracks in the cliffs were filled with stone walls and these can still be seen today. After the Treshnish Isles, the rest of the trip was almost an anticlimax. We returned to the western coastline of Mull that day and continued round to the northern coast. The next day, we paddled to Tobermory, then continued down the Sound of Mull to camp for the last time on Mull. When we returned to Lochaline, there was satisfaction in completing the expedition, sadness that it was over and a reluctance to break the spell that had hung over us during the week. Next day, we clung to our memories and rolls of photographic film as we returned to the 'real' world of impatient traffic and frantic commuters.

I might just take to this sport!

**Story by and photos by Graham Patrick**



**Sunbeam:**

**Dimensions:**  
277cm x 56cm  
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**Sunburst:**

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# Junior Kayaks

**T**he Sunbeam and Sunburst are two of the junior kayaks launched by Outdoor Leisure

Supplies. The Sunbeam is designed for 9 to 12 year olds, featuring a round bow and stern, with a keel line to aid directional stability, with rear pillar foam and slot footrest.

The Sunburst is designed for 7 to 9 year olds, and has the advantage of two seat sizes with rear pillar foam and slot footrest.

Our gear test was carried out at Lakeside Adventure Base Youth Club by Craig Spencer and Thomas Brown both aged 10.



**Sunbeam**

...The kayak (the Sunbeam) is very comfortable and easy to paddle and the seat is the right size for me and I don't slip around in the kayak. It is very easy to roll than the other kayak I have paddled. It turns well in a swimming pool, it paddles well in a straight line and I like the design of the boat and it is easy to stern dip and the weight means I can get it on and off the trailer easily. It is a very good boat to learn in....Craig Spencer

Both craft stand up well to the many different shapes and sizes that are regularly put in to them by the youth club.

**Sunburst**

...I think the red boat (the Sunburst) is very good because it is the only boat that I don't slide about in when I am paddling it and when I lean over. I can keep it straight when I want to and it doesn't turn over very easily. It rubs the tops of my toes sometimes when I paddle it in the swimming pool, but I really like it and it is my favourite boat....Thomas Brown.



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Fax: 353 1 626 4876.

**Review by**

Neil Blackman - Level  
2 Kayak Coach, Level  
3 Competition Coach  
WW

# Rough Stuff Paddles

The Radical Super Continental is the latest offering from Irish paddle makers Rough Stuff. This new blade was originally developed for extreme use in hot countries where conventional foam blades could fail under extremes of heat. It is a very hard wearing expedition type paddle with carbon blades and shaft, incorporating complete alloy edges and tips for ultimate protection, strength and long life. The tube insert is alloy and forms the spine of the blade making these, dare I say it, virtually unbreakable.

At first the paddle felt a little heavy, but I am used to using lightweight racing wings and Canadian blades. When the blade construction is taken into account the weight is no penalty and certainly no heavier than other types of expedition paddle on the market. If anything, they are lighter.

The blade performance is superb, they behave like classic slalom paddles, the blade slicing well and giving good grip on breakouts. I gave the blades a real good trashing on a rocky weir and only put slight abrasions on the tips.

The paddler that likes wild water trips as well as a bit of slalom would do well to consider these paddles as a good combination for both, although I think aimed at the expedition/extreme water end of the market the blade performance was excellent and with all carbon construction look dead sexy too!





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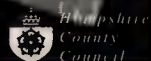
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 Reviewed by  
**Kevin Danforth**

# Pyranha Stunt 300

**T**he Stunt 300 is a development from a playboat which started life as a composite prototype prior to the 1993 world rodeo championships, on the Ocoee river, Tennessee. The original was Pyranha's first stab at producing a short performance

playboat which would cope with hole riding and surfing, and unlock the door to radical 'new' moves, wingovers, mactwist, cartwheels and the like. As a result of this original boat, future playboats became ever more radical, ever shorter, culminating with the Acro 270, an out

and out playboat.

The Stunt 300 is simply another branch of evolution from the Ocoee gene pool. Where as the Acro 270 became a playful chimp, agile and gymnastic, the Stunt 300 equates to modern man, agile enough but with the strength and versatility needed for modern river running.

First impression; the familiar Pyranha styling is there, and the now standard safety features: full plate footrest, keyhole cockpit, chunky end grabs and emergency spray deck release. The plastic is a new stiffer

blend which offers far greater rigidity and abrasion resistance than previously. The foam pillar buoyancy in this version had been beefed up in a sandwich construction of different foams, adding to the structural integrity of the craft. Overall the boat looked and felt like it would take a good hammering, which is just as well considering the paddlers who would use it. The eye catching graphics on the demo boat demonstrate that cosmetics have not been forgotten.

The shape is pretty close to the original Ocoee, with some refinements on the deck and some hull reshape, although the designer has gone for a conventional hull without bi-concave refinements found on the Acro. Forward paddling speed is acceptable for a 3 metre boat.

The three test pilots were as follows: mature (!) substantially built paddler (above the weight the boat was designed for); average height, average build female paddler: and inevitably a rodeo paddler (average weight, testosterone based life form). The test water was Holme Pierrepont Slalom course.

All three paddlers enjoyed the kayak, but interestingly for different reasons. The mature paddler (me) sat the boat low in the water, almost to the point of looking and handling like a cruising squirt boat. Surfing was rock steady and predictable with good feedback from the rails and very little twitch. The kayak was well behaved in most situations, even on boily eddy lines and for the heavier paddler, tail squirts are there for the asking. As a river runner the kayak is more than a feasible option for a fun day out, although a lighter paddler would get

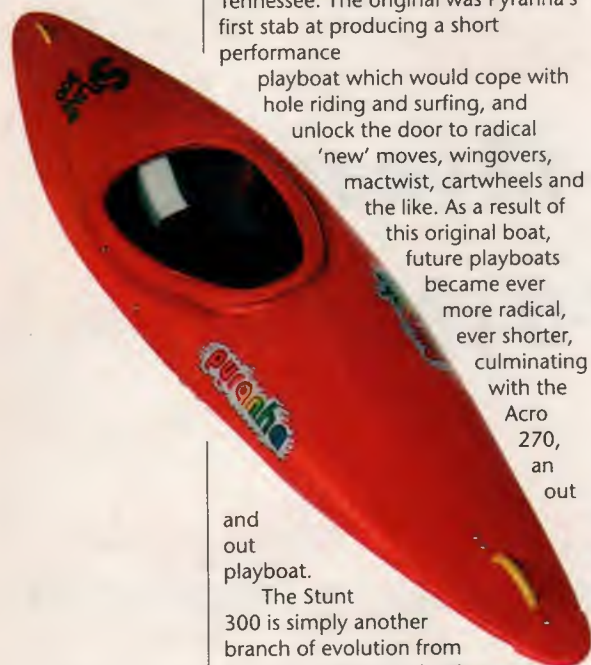
more speed and performance from it on volume water.

The female test pilot particularly liked the predictability and welcomed the positive edge control. Even though the boat has considerable volume for it's length, she wasn't swamped by it's size. The midsection was narrow enough for good forward paddling, yet wide enough for stability. No problems were found in rolling or edging and our tester found that boat control with hips and knees was much easier than the shorter fun boat she had previously paddled.

Our rodeo star usually paddled a 270, and initially complained that the kayak was too long and too big! After a tune up period the same paddler was performing most of his tricks repertoire to an acceptable standard, including a cartwheel entry to Muncher! Accepting that he would never trade in his 270 and use a Stunt for competition he was however, very interested in using a Stunt for his winter trip to Nepal.

One minor moan is that the seat bolts needed some retightening after the first paddle (and a little leakage). This is easily put right if you fiddle about initially with seat position and fixings. It can be solved permanently with some bath sealant or the factory could drill an undersize hole in the first place and thread the other wise good quality stainless steel fixings into the plastic. A small point, and irritation, and easily fixed.

The lasting impression is that the Pyranha Stunt 300 is an excellent all rounder, a river runner with pedigree. Better than that it is a performance playboat for those who eat Big Macs, drink beer, and still expect to pull a passable tail when it matters. From my personal perspective, (which is all a boat review could ever be)... I like it and I'm keeping it.



**KC Kayak Cradles and Trolleys are available from Scottish Paddler Supplies, 3 Whiterigg, Dunning Glen, Dollar, Clackmannan FK14 7LB**  
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Reviewed by  
**Wendy Blackman**

## KC Kayak Cradles and Trolleys

The KC Kayak Cradles are designed with sea kayakers in mind but are suitable for other types of kayak. It is quick and easy to secure by the two straps through the slots in the bar, additional bow and stern lines only being necessary in strong winds. The cradles are 5 inches wide and made from 12mm thick Proplex plastic. This material is corrosion and UV proof and lined with 15mm thick closed cell non slip foam which will recover fully from boat impression. The cradles provide excellent grip and because they are so much

wider than the traditional J bar gel coat and stress fractures do not occur even when tightly strapped down. The cradles have a slight flex to them which enables them to mould to the boat rather than the other way round. Valley Canoe Products strapped their Aleut Sea II double sea kayak to the cradles and felt that the boat was "Rock solid and not likely to go anywhere"

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KC Trolleys are designed once again with the sea kayaker in mind, but alternative wheels are available which would make the trolley suitable for the open canoe. Made from Proplex plastic, the trolley is manufactured in 7 main parts including the wheels. It can be fitted into a 7.5" VCP hatch taking up the minimum of space (with standard wheels only). The trolley has a minimum of 175kg carrying capacity which will easily take a loaded double sea kayak. The design ensures that the more weight it carries the tighter the uprights clamp onto the wheel shaft. With standard wheels the total weight is 3kgs. I found the trolley easier to assemble than an MFI bookcase, but I must admit I did find the R clips a bit stiff, although with more use I would imagine they would become easier to handle. £79.80 inc vat or £89.80 with optional 95mm wide wheels or pneumatic wheels.



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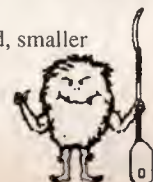
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# Devizes to a view from the bank

*“Don’t just stand there laughing, get me out of here!”*



Well, that was the gist of it; the full version was a little more colourful. It was a portage with limited space at the bottom of steep steps.

I had run down the bank just nearby to pour the remains of a water bottle down Sarah’s throat. She caught me round the head with a paddle (my fault), I ducked to miss another boat coming through - the rudder whistling past my nose. When I looked back my paddler was in the drink. I grabbed an arm and heaved. “Mantle shelf,” I called, over the corrugated steel bank, hoping to be helpful and remind Sarah of our climbing days. “I know!” “Oh.”

We empty the boat, drop it in, and off she goes, more cross with herself than with me. Maybe only 30 seconds lost, but 30 seconds gone forever. This was day two of a four day education. Four days watching people carving through the Kennet and the Thames; falling in, getting out, cheering, crying, freezing, eating, sleeping. This was Devizes to Westminster, as seen from the bank.

Plans to do DW were long in the execution, and the winter had been spent flogging about the rivers of southern England in an effort to be as well prepared as possible. Originally, Sarah had planned to do it in a K2, but a small succession of partners dropped out. This left K1 the only possibility, since I had spent a grand total of two days in a boat - and a white water boat at that. So, as a member of the support team, and hoping to get some running in along the Kennet, I found myself hurtling down the M4 in a van full of people, canoes, tents, and food - most notably several tons of bananas and Mars bars. There was also a heaving mass of canoeing paraphernalia, in the uses and abuses of which I was about to

receive a crash course.

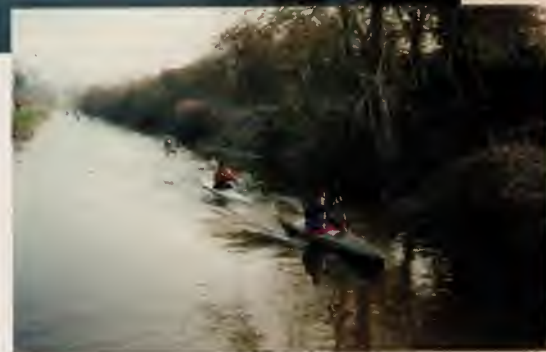
On the first night, after a swift pint (me,



that is, not Sarah) in a local watering hole, we slept in a scout hut. I say slept, I really mean rolled about, sighed, fidgeted and half dozed: it was dusty, noisy, and full of canoeists and excited teenagers. I would have preferred to pitch tent. Sarah was nervous, but she is also a teacher and deployed familiar discipline skills to good effect, eventually achieving a degree of quietude. The greater part of the support team were young and, shall we say, exuberant. Most would prefer to be paddling and may well be next year. For the record, the full team, which gave great support to Sarah throughout, was Bob, Barry, Ann, Stuart, Nicky, Big Lea, Little Lee, Russell, Gary, Dean, Philip and, last but not most definitely not least, Sharon. I know it sounds like a lot for one paddler, but there is not a lot else to do in Barking and Dagenham (Whoops, its out of the bag.)

### Breakfast of porridge

In the morning, Sarah is tense but fit and ready after a breakfast of porridge (which Bob swears by) and coffee. At the start, the boat and her kit is checked, re-checked and fussed about indefinitely. Throngs of people gather round their paddlers, discussing tactics, fiddling with things, and having those once a year conversations with people they only ever see at the DW. Bob is one such, and appears to hold the record for knowing everybody



Top left:  
Newbury and of day 1

Above left:  
Approaching the start at Devizes

Above:  
Wash-hanging at the Kennet

that ever went within two miles of the race over the last million years. There is a colourful, expectant hum to the place and the atmosphere is catching. Anxious looking juniors rub shoulders with the top paddlers, lean and determined. Here and there veterans prowl about with weathered faces, leather palms, and scraggy bits of equipment which look like they were made in the first year of the race 49 years ago. For the first time I wish I was actually going to be in one of those flimsy boats.

Article by  
John Green



# Westminster:

## No way back

For Sarah, there is now no way back. After the official kit check, a bit more mithering and milling about, a deep breath, and away she goes. I start my stop watch, take a picture, and we all hop off to the van. Getting in and out of vans is an essential skill for the support team. You can say what you like about understanding the needs of the paddlers, experience with the race, reading the map, knowing where to park, and dismembering bananas. Unless you can get ten people in and out of a packed Transit in under 7 seconds, forget it. If you can do this while reading a map, pulling out a Mars bar, speaking to an old mate and remembering exactly where in the already dishevelled mountain of equipment the spare tri-pack is, you are probably called Bob.

The first day goes well. Sarah is within 15 minutes of the lead for the ladies, and arrives at the end in fine fettle. Yes, she is tired, but so what. Yes, she already has blisters the size of Easter eggs, but then that is de rigueur. The great string of portages around Crofton have taken their toll, but now they are gone; the Kennet has widened, the weeds have faded, and she is on the way. The Kennet is good for running, with a consistent tow-path, and Nicky and I manage to give Sarah some company for more than 20 of the day's 34 miles.

At Newbury, camped just by the river on a small patch of distinctly municipal greenery, upturned boats lie between tents and bustling people like giant cigars. The junior K2s are across the water, emitting alternating waves of excitement and tiredness as they pull out the contents of their food boxes (a significant proportion of which, I have it on good authority, end up being propelled through the air at rival crews).

I cook up pasta, smash, and vegetarian sausages currently marketed by the wife of a rather well known pop star. The others, being carnivorous, eat a spaghetti/mince thing. We are finished first: it is easy to organise for two and our tent had been erected for us as I ran in to Newbury, tracking Sarah and shouting words of encouragement. Words of encouragement are important, but should be chosen with care. "It's only another 93 miles," for example, or "stop dithering and get on with it" tend not to go down very well. Even apparently helpful, innocent phrases like "looking great, Sarah," and "keep it steady, the time is good" tend to become hackneyed by the second morning. Sometimes unrelated subjects are best, but keep it simple. Debating Descartes' Discourse a la Methode can be a distraction when shooting a low bridge, for example. "Duck!" is more appropriate.

Overnight in Newbury is relaxed. Sarah goes

*Top right:*

*Easter eggs amid the chaos at Newbury*

*Above right:*

*End of day 2. "Shivering blue mess"*

*Right:*

*Portaging at Crofton*

to sleep about 3 nano-seconds after being fed. The early evening is pock-marked by the cheers for the stragglers coming in late and for the senior K2s going straight through. Gliding through the water like sharks, the top crews are impressive. I start to wonder. Bob, Ann and I slope off for a quick pint. (Yes, another one: I'm not racing, OK?) I sleep like a log.

Day two is not so good. Sarah paddles well, despite a second successive breakfast of porridge, but portages badly. This is largely through too much haste and she goes in five times. Five of us take it in turns to run and cover the first 15 miles with her on the tow path; she is looking grim but determined. For the second day running, she has one of those hard, lonely, gut hollow low points at around the 30 mile mark. She pulls through, but within minutes of sitting in the tent is a shivering blue mess. Soup and tortellini appear to help, and she drops off to sleep. But privately I wonder whether she is well enough. The swims and exhaustion have left her with the early stages of





Above:  
Star of day 3.  
"A little tape, no problem"

hypothermia, and it may be touch and go in the morning. I am a little concerned, having seen her in this condition walking in Scotland. Can she recover, after a 36 mile paddle, and do another 38 miles on the next day?

While Sarah is asleep there is nothing we can do. Barry has stubbed his toe badly. He has it resting between two frozen plastic boxes containing tomorrow night's food and, wisely, this information is not conveyed to the rest of the team. We pass around a hip-flask. Most of the team eat in a local burger bar. Being vegetarian and in no small measure pious about such things, I eschew this and content myself with a quiet can of beer.

## Day three.

You bet your sweet thingummy she can. I have seen her like this before, also: a huge dollop of macaroni cheese for breakfast, and she is capable of anything.

Sarah is not particularly fast today, and the girl in front is pulling away (well done Sarah Mackintosh, by the way), but she is solid and steady. There are some anxious moments at Henley, where motor cruiser drivers appear to have a vocabulary which lacks words like "canoe", "consideration", and "sorry". (Much the same appears to apply to rowers, who spend their lives going backwards. To the neophyte this is a curious phenomenon, and in any other walk of life would be considered somewhat eccentric, but I digress.)

I run the last five miles with her, taking advantage of the towpath from Hampton Court. It is clear and cool: perfect weather for any sport. It is also slightly surreal running along between Sarah, slaving away on the Thames, and Sunday afternoon crowds ambling by in their own, rather more sedate world. There is a little flow on the river, and I nearly lose touch with Sarah crossing Kingston bridge. It is difficult for the paddlers, negotiating the wash of larger boats in canoes with about as much stability as an elephant on a pogo stick. Sarah gives some encouragement to a struggling Junior K2.

She finishes at Teddington lock in fine style, with almost the whole support team jogging along the last half mile, cheering and hooting (we're good at that, down our way). After three gruelling days there is an air of having cracked it. Although she looked good, she said later that after half of

the second day the entire event was spent in some other-worldly state: "Is this really me getting back into this boat?" sort of thing. Well, it was!

## Sarah is buzzing

In the evening, Sarah is buzzing and simply will not lie in her tent and sleep like any sensible paddler. This is good, in fact, because despite needing to be up early the next morning, it proves she is in good form. Her hands may look like the dark side of the moon, she may have bruises like squashed plums, and her back and shoulders, despite a massage, may be like three dogs caught in a chest expander, but she is clearly better than the previous night. Some adjustments are made to the boat: a lower seat is put in for extra stability, and the rudder is realigned.

Bob, confidently, announces that we are all to be up at 4 for the 17 mile dash to Westminster bridge. This is met with a chorus of groans and, yes, let's be honest, one or two muttered obscenities. We eat noodles, veggie burgers, and West Indian fruit bread with cheese. This bread, by the way, is ideal for camping. It takes ages to go off (I think the loaf we bought came back with Drake); it is full of nourishment, and you can sit on it, kick it down the road, or use it as an offensive weapon, all without it going out of shape.

## 0345:

I wake up just before I need to in that way that one's body sometimes does. There is a thin film of ice on the tent. Sarah is still nervous, this time about the cruisers on the Thames and the trials and tribulations of a mass start. With my small head start, by the time she is back from the loo block I have cooked breakfast, the tent is down, and everything is just hunky dory. Then the first load of porridge is dropped all over the inside of the van. No matter, I make another lot. We get Sarah all dressed up, and the tri-pack leaks. The reserve tri-pack also leaks, and between four bags there is only one that is sound (probably due to the cold morning). Temporarily, we lose the paddling mitts. This is all rather in-auspicious.

Support teams need to be out of the way by 0545 in order to load the boats for the mass start, so I take up a position on the bank. Sarah goes to the loo again!

By 0615 the dawn Thames is awash: K1s, K2s, rescue boats, launches, and a lone swan. Yelping parents cheer for the junior K2s from the bank; I wait, and fail, to find the right shot with a borrowed camera. 0630 approaches and the

paddlers are led towards the start by the rescue boats, which then clear to the side. Not for the first time, one of the hot-rods in a K1 jumps the gun. Despite constant pleas from the starter to "stop your boats", the race is, de facto, on. A mad thrashing sea of paddles descends on an unsuspecting London. Two boats go over in the start, but both crews get back in and are underway: nothing short of an act of god will deter them now. Sarah goes past, close to the bank and away from the melee. We rush off to the van.

We get a fleeting glimpse of her from Richmond, and a good view of most of the race from Kew bridge. Canoes are stretched out like a convoy over three miles by this stage, doggedly ploughing down the Thames to the holy grail of Westminster; over a 100 miles and a thousand blisters now behind them. Again, Sarah is steady and solid. Making straight for the finish, we park behind County Hall and for the last time strain our eyes to see her coming round the final bend. A paddler goes in - under the Houses of Parliament and only yards from the finish - but is hauled back into the canoe by the rescue boats with seconds to spare, crossing the line to cheers and much relief.

Sarah appears, looking for all the world as if she had just set out. The support team bellow from the bridge, dangling a Barking and Dagenham banner. She slides under the bridge in a time of 23 hours and 20 minutes.

## Wry smiles and jokes

I take pictures of the finish, feeling proud, before running down to the Festival Pier with a bag of clothes. A shower and a cup of tea in Army tents are accompanied by wry smiles and jokes with other paddlers. Soon enough, we are back in the van heading for East London.

Back at the club, the kids are impressive and the van is emptied and cleaned, boats stowed, tents hung out and fees paid (I know it sounds mad, to pay for this sort of thing) in not much more than half an hour. We are driven home and deposited on the front door step. Its all over.

Sarah vows she will never do it again. This, probably, is an eminently sensible attitude. But my mind goes back to the sight of the K2s going straight through Newbury, into the night and beyond: sleek, smooth, swaying gently from side to side with the stroke, eating up the miles. The romance is irresistible. The reality, of course, is harsher: full of water, weeds and waning muscles. But since when did reality have anything to do with it? Anyway, I've done the support team bit; time I learned to paddle.

But I'll be damned if I'm spending another night in that scout hut.

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