

BCU FLATWATER RACING NEWS LETTER

JUNE/JULY 2003

Well, here we are with the June/July issue of your favourite newsletter. How did you like the April/May issue?

No letters, or even rank criticism.

A deafening silence in fact. It seems that Christine and I must assume that in the absence of a response, you like what you are getting. Do you?

Letters and emails are really welcome.

At this time of year when the season is in full swing and we have had many good marathons and two excellent regattas Christine and I would have expected you to have inundated us with topical information and articles. Not so, we need more. All those budding journalists out there please put finger to keyboard and send us those articles that the rest of you are desperate to read.

So to stimulate some thought, how about the current rule which requires a buoyancy aid to be worn by all paddlers in Div 7?

Is it right that paddlers that have been racing for many years and are obviously very competent should be required to use something that is needed for someone who is not competent?

To have achieved Div 7 means that more than a basic element of ability has been achieved, so why the need? It seems that political correctness rears its head once more to provide C.A.P. to the rule makers.

There is a sense of logic in making the rule apply to all 3 divisions that use the 4 mile course but is this really the right way to look at things?

Use of a buoyancy aid is there for safety. If it does not achieve this then it is effectively a penalty. We should be encouraging paddlers, not trying to equalise an artificial situation with effective penalties and handicaps.

Do we need a change or are we all complacent?

The half yearly meeting is soon, make your opinion on this and any other topic well before the meeting so they can go on the Agenda.

Are there any other burning issues?
Shout now!

Please note these views are not necessarily those of the Marathon Racing Committee.

Newsletter Editors.

Alan Laws alanlaws@nalonuk.org

Christine Laws christinelaws@lineone.net

CALENDAR ALTERATIONS

Due to unforeseen circumstances Banbury CC have had to cancel their 2002 Hasler Race which was rescheduled for the 8th June 2003.

In addition the 2003 race has been altered from the date in September to their historical date of the last weekend in October i.e. 26th October 2003.

THE SELLA DESCENT

The race this year is on the 9th August.

If any member of your club would like details of the race plus local information and details of the other events in the series these can be obtained from the web site. Hard copies are not being sent out by the Spanish Organisers this year so our information is from the web site also.

www.descensodelsella.com

Entries will be done as a group UK entry as in previous years and a Team Leader appointed from the group to act as liaison with the organisers if there are any problems, collect and distribute race numbers etc.

Details of any entries will need to be sent to Alan/Christine Laws, c/o WRL Ins. Brokers Ltd, 4 Red Lion Street, Boston, Lincs, PE21 6NY. **MUST be received by Monday 7th July 2003.**

The entry must include a photocopy of BCU membership card (current for race date), details of current Marathon Ranking and £4.00 per paddler to cover entry fee, (without food), postage and charge made for the Bank Transfer to Spain. Cheque made payable to A. L. Laws.

Letters of Authority to race at the Sella and the associated races, stamped by the BCU, will be sent for each paddler once entries have been confirmed.

PADDLE RACING in BRITAIN

This is the story of Sprint Racing in the UK, with particular regard to the development of canoes and kayaks.

The information is based on sections from archival information and comments from individuals.

All the information is provided and researched by the author of this ongoing item Graham Mackereth.

1865 to 1918

The beginnings of paddle racing are probably lost in the early to mid part of the 19th Century. When recorded racing began the canoes were too well developed for it to have developed within a year. Early paddlers give background information to the type of canoe that had predated John Macgregor, which is evident in the kayak below that was found by the author in Liverpool in 1996.

The history of this kayak is unknown, but its basic build quality, its extreme length and shallowness, and square low cockpit would indicate that it was built for speed at a time when boat washes were not common, and when paddling skills were not yet developed.

Start of Recorded Racing:

Whilst Canadians had been raced in the Lakefield area of Canada since the early 1850's, recorded racing came to Britain with the foundation of The Canoe Club (Royal C.C.) by John MacGregor in 1866.

John MacGregor popularised his Rob Roy kayak in his books, and soon many others were having similar kayaks made. These were flat in sheer, about 12 -14' in length, with a beam of 26 -28", and a large single cockpit. Usually, built of oak with cedar decks, and weighing about 80lbs.

Contrast this with today's racing kayaks!

1866 In Britain the Canoe Club (later Royal Canoe Club) was formed. From the clubs beginnings Canoe Chasing was very popular and Sailing Match's had started. Indeed the RCC motto was

“ Racing and chasing over land and water”
The realistic basis for Marathon today.

1867 The Royal Canoe Club had its first annual Meeting for Racing & Chasing on 27th April. 15 canoes took part, in a procession manoeuvred and lead by the Captain, there then followed a Paddle race and a Chase. The Canoeist 1886 says, *“There was a mixed race and a canoe-chase. The mixed race was a race in which only two styles of canoe competed: travelling canoes and racing canoes. The result of the race was that the travelling canoes, with 30-sec start beat the racing canoes. This would hardly be the result nowadays, when a racing canoe weighs at most 20lbs, and a travelling canoe at least 70lb. The length of the course is not given.”*

June 8th A Sailing Race took place at Erith, which was twice across the river and back, sailing one way and paddling the other.

August: There were races with the French? The item is not clear and the course undisclosed on 15th June 1867. Was this the first International?

The following is an extract.

“The Yawl Rob Roy”, by John MacGregor: Pg. 120

The canoe races, however, being more novel, have another claim on attention. One of these was for fast boats, and to be decided on by speed. The other was a "canoe chase," in which dexterity and pluck were required for success.

*For the canoe race three Englishmen had brought from the Thames three long boats with long paddles, and they were the three fastest canoes in England, so far as could be proved by previous trials. Against these, three French canoes were entered, all of them short, and with short paddles. One of these, propelled by an Englishman (resident in Paris), came in easily first, and the second prize was won by a Frenchman. Here, surely, was a good sound lesson to English canoe men who wish to paddle fast on still water, in a boat useless for any other purpose and slower at last than a skiff with two sculls. Accordingly we must accept the beating with thanks. Some further remarks on the matter are given in the **Appendix**, for those who desire to profit by the defeat.*

The canoe chase, first instituted at the Club races on the Thames (No claim for racing being first at the club!), was found to be an agreeable variety in nautical sport, and productive of a good deal of amusement. Therefore, two prizes were offered at the Paris Regatta for a canoe chase, open to all the "peoples." Five French canoes entered, but there was only one English canoeist ready in his Rob Roy to meet all comers.

The canoes were lined up alongside each other, and with their sterns touching the lower step of the "Tribune" or grand stand. It was curious to observe the various positions taken up by the different men, as each adopted what he thought was the best manner of starting. One was at his boat's stern; another, at the side, half carried his canoe, ready to be "off;" another grasped the bow; while the most knowing paddler held the end of his "painter" (or little rope) extended from the bow as far as it would reach.

All started, and ran with their boats to the water. The Frenchmen soon got entangled together by trying to get into their boats dry; but the Englishman had made up his mind for a wetting, and it might as well come now at once as in a few minutes

after, so he rushed straight into the river up to his waist, and therefore being free from the crowding of others, he got into his boat all dripping wet, but foremost of all, and then paddled swiftly away. The rest soon followed; and all of them were making to the flag boat anchored a little way off, round which the canoes must first make a turn. Here the Englishman, misled by the various voices on shore telling him the (wrong) side he was to take, lost all the advantage of his start; so that all six boats arrived at the flag-boat together, each struggling to get round it, but looked with some other opponent in a general scramble.

Next, their course was back to the shore, where they jumped out and ran along, each one dragging his boat around another flag on dry land, amid the cheers and laughter of the dense group of spectators, who had evidently not anticipated a contest so new in its kind, and so completely visible from beginning to end. Again, dashing into the water, the little struggling fleet paddled away to another flag-boat; but not now in such close array. Some stuck in the willows or rushes or were overturned and had swim; and the chance of who might win was still open to the man of strength and spirit, with reasonably good luck.

Once more the competing canoes came swiftly back to shore, and were dragged round the flag, and another time paddled round the flag-boat; and now he was to be winner who could first reach the shore and bring his canoe to the Tribune, a well earned victory, won by the Englishman, far ahead of the rest

The whole affair lasted not much longer than might be required to write its history; but the strain was severe on pluck and muscle, and called forth several qualities very useful in life at sea, but which mere rowing in a straight race does not require, and cannot therefore exhibit. Instantly after this exciting contest, a Frenchman challenged the winner to another chase

over the same course. But as the challenger had not thought fit to enter the lists and test his powers in the chase, which was open to him like the rest. It would of course, have been quite unfair to allow quite fresh, to have a special race with the hard-worked winner, though the Englishman was quite ready to accept the gage.

The struggle

“ For speed the English used the same form for a canoe which succeeds with a skiff –great length, and they could thus also use a long paddle, which it was thought could be of great advantage. This was to forget that the stroke of the canoe paddle was only on one side at a time, and if it be applied far from the side of the boat it tends to turn the boat round.

Thus the long paddle, while affording a long stroke, was also expending part of the power in causing the canoe to swerve alternately right and left; and though the effect was counteracted by the great length of the boat, it was counteraction gained only by neutralising some of the muscular effort.

This statement shows MacGregor’s design ability and understanding.

Kinnaird, of the London Canoe Club (?-Royal??) won a chase with a prize of £20

December 7th: The club had six entries of canoeists “eager to paddle even in a frosty air”. “The course was from Teddington Lock to Putney Bridge: the distance twelve miles, was accomplished in 1h 47m. In Dec the Club had 130 members.

From 1867,until 1875, the Royal Canoe Club held two annual meetings. One below the bridge at Erith, for sailing, for which the Nautilus class is usually triumphant; and another above the locks, either in Walton or Teddington Reaches, where races of all kinds go on for the whole day.

1868

Gareloch Regatta: The Ardencaple Canoe Race has a cup awarded.

1869

The *Rowing Almanac* details races at the Lynn Regatta, The Canoe Club (Cambridge Branch), The Canoe Club, Walton on Thames Regatta, Maidstone Regatta, Staines regatta, Tewkesbury Regatta, Chester Regatta, Bala Regatta, Burton on Trent Regatta, York (White Rose) B.C. & Bath R.C. Regatta,

A number of competitors competed in more than 1 regatta, inc F.D.Mort who won the Canoe Chase at Chester Regatta on Aug 5th. and G. Knowles.

In the Rowing Almanac 1869 James Inwards says ”It is not intended that canoes (except such as the “Sloth” and a few others) are available for racing purposes: in fact nine out of ten on the London river have been built for Cruising.

The history will be continued over the next issues of the newsletter. Any information which enhances what is already known will be much appreciated by the editors and the author.

THE HASLER RACE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

THE COMPLETE PICTURE

Approximately two thirds of race organisers used the HRM last year and judging by recent race results the proportion will be greater this year.

Three people are primarily involved with the running of HRM. Wikki Daniels who wrote the programme and keeps it up to date with promotions from each race. Mike Head the Divisions officer who scrutinises and confirms the results and Christine Laws who processes the results and sends out any letters of confirmation of promotions and notification of any demotions.

Christine Laws keeps the data base, used as the basis for the programme, up to date with each race result processed in order to show how many times a person has paddled in each category, division, club and region. E-mailed results using the HRM can now be imported on to the data base automatically, entering both promotions and 'D' notices. The success of this system does however depend on the accuracy of the paddler details from two more major cogs in the wheel, the team leaders and the race organisers.

Team Leaders can help when sending in their entries by using the format of the programme, the same as the listings sent to them every November for checking. The majority of the paddlers will be on the system but the race organiser needs four basic accurate facts to pull out the correct paddler, SURNAME, FIRST NAME, DIVISION and most importantly BCU NUMBER. A miss spelt name or BCU number not written in the correct format will require a time consuming manual entry. The correct format is 123456/F for comprehensive members and club

abbreviation/three digit number for junior section members ie LIN/045.

Race Organisers can help by updating their programme before their race by using Wikki's Web-site

(<http://web.onetel.net.uk/~wiktoriadaniels>).

They will need to email her first at wiktoriadaniels@onetel.net.uk for a password to get on to the web-site.

When manually entering paddlers be sure to use the standard format, particularly the BCU or Junior section number.

Emailing the results to Mike Head and Christine Laws in their original format to enable the updating to be as automatic as possible. After this has been done then they can alter the format to suit their own requirements for sending out the results to the competing clubs.

Please do not forget to send the levy to Christine Laws.

Finally if you do have a problem with the HRM programme do ask for help. Wikki will respond to an email very quickly and is willing to talk through a problem on the phone if necessary.

Any positive ideas on how to improve the programme will be taken on board and considered for the next major update at the end of the year as the Marathon Committee has undertaken to continuously maintain the programme.



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FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT:

www.worcestercanoecub.org.uk

**Jon Bird
Graham Campbell**

**jon-bird@supanet.com
grahamcampbell@btinternet.com**

OR TELEPHONE

WORC C.C 01905 429069