

BCU FLATWATER NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 04/JANUARY 05

This is the last newsletter of 2004 and the first of 2005. It is a relatively quiet time of the year, even the Annual Consultative Meetings for both the disciplines went by without most people even noticing. You were aware it wasn't that important or there was not going to be any fireworks as Stuart Fisher was not there.

One good thing was the announcement that the BCU Board has agreed that with the new regulations the annual meeting can be held in the middle of the year. Accordingly the Marathon ACM will be held in conjunction with the National Championships and there will be only one main meeting each year.

Whilst wittering on about the ACM or AGM or whatever they are now called the regular question is what purpose do they serve?

Apart from the business aspect of complying with the rules to elect committees and Chairman and other such items, they used to be regarded as a forum for all the malcontents to sling mud and ashes at the committee for having done it all wrong. Or of course not having done anything at all.

Now it seems that as long as most of the work gets done only occasionally is someone prepared to put his or her head above the parapet and say "I can do it better". There are comments of course but most seem to be very constructive.

Where has all the fun gone?

The Sprint committee is looking again at the organisation of Regional Sprint Regattas. How they can be organised and supported by the committee.

Contact Alan Williams with your plethora of ideas.

Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

You will see that there are readers' letters in this issue. At last! Well done them and more please.

When the Christmas pudding lies heavily this year, give some thought to putting pen to paper or finger to keyboard. I doubt that we have the perfect system running these disciplines of canoeing and there must be several Einsteins out there with brains the size of Marvin [Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy] able to solve all the problems. £10 book token for the best letter published next issue. Any takers?

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

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READERS COMMENTS

Having just read the October newsletter on the Reading website I would like to offer my suggestion as to why the numbers of divisions 1 and 2 are dwindling. I feel that unlike the lower divisions the top three divisions do seem stagnant. By this I mean that it seems that over the last 2 years or so, only on very rare occasions do people get demoted or promoted. I feel that this doesn't provide incentive for division 2 & 3 paddlers to get better and it certainly doesn't push the standard in division 1 either. (This has the additional effect of creating a build up of paddlers in division 3 with a wide range of ability).

In sprint racing the promotion/demotions are much quicker. This has created a much clearer definition between the standard of different paddlers which is up to date and with only a minimal overlap between the times of the paddlers in different divisions. Unlike in Marathon where I feel that between division 1-3 there are often large discrepancies in times. This was very noticeable in the Hasler final where the first and second K1 juniors in division 2 beat all of the division 1 K1 and K2 times!

I would like to thank you for all the work that has gone in to running the marathon section in the last year, and I hope the above does not sound too critical.

Dave Pedler
(a frustrated Div 3 paddler from Worcester CC)

Thank you for another interesting and informative newsletter, which I have forwarded to all Banbury club members. As for where are all the new Div 1 paddlers...doing sprint. A situation I cannot see changing under the present system of funding.

Dom Murphy
Banbury CC

Hasler Finals

Firstly I would like to say that the Hasler Final was run very efficiently and our paddlers thought it was a good day. Booking in was made easy as there was none of the usual re-checking of BCU cards, which is usually a duplication as entries have already been checked by the regional marathon officers. Well done to the organisers.

Lack of top paddlers.

I wonder if one of the causes of the lack of top paddlers is the lack of level 3 race coaches at clubs. Our club has been trying to get coaches through the level 3 race coach course for the last few years but the organisers seem to be disorganised and unhelpful. We are all volunteers and could do with the help not hindrance from the paid officers.

Regards and thanks for the newsletters
Charles Fleeson Anker Valley CC

Just a brief note for the next newsletter regarding requests for those looking for some rougher marathon courses. Scotland still has four marathon races each year which cover the entire length of the Tay from Loch Tay to Perth which has considerable rough sections which include Grandtully, Campsie Linn, Stanley Weir and Thistlebrig. The four races are as follows.

Leukaemia Tay Marathon: Loch Tay to Aberfeldy (Div 4-6) and Loch Tay to Grandtully Div 1-3). The entries from this event are donated each year to Leukaemia Research Charities, in years gone by there was also a big touring event which took place at the same time but this stopped a few years ago when an organiser could not be found.

Grand Dunk – Bridge of Isla to Perth (Div1-3), Ballinluig to Denkeld (Div 4-6) and circuit race at Dunkeld for division 7-9 and Lightnings.

KCC Tay – Bridge of Isla to Perth (Div 1-3), Stanley to Perth (Div 4-6) and Thistlebrig to Perth (Div 7-9)

Long Tay – Dunkeld to Perth (Div 1-3), Bridge of Isla to Perth (Div 4-6), and Thistlebrig to Perth (Div 7-9)

Details of organisers and dates along with all other Scottish Events will be published on the SCA Web Site www.scot-canoe.org

Whilst it is a long way to come to Scotland, we have the same journey when we travel to Nottingham Regattas, the Nationals and Hasler. The Grand Dunk Race is now included as part of Scottish Racing Week, held at the end of May along with 3 10K and 2 other Marathon events.

Regards

Jonathan Hutt
Cumbernauld & Kilsyt CC

WHERE HAVE THE TOP PADDLERS GONE

Each year when the statistics of paddlers come flowing from the computer it seems that some fact hits us with a surprise that says "why haven't we noticed that before" Then of course some bright spark says "I knew that all along".

The issue at the moment seems to be the movement [or lack of it] inside the divisions especially at the top end.

As for the last 20 years, the issue seems to be having a system that relies on both fact, as in where you finish in a race, and your performance relative to others around you.

There have been suggestions of a fixed comparative system on the same lines as Sprint but the general consensus still is with the current "mix and match"

In most instances it works very well, especially in the lower divisions but lately there seems to be some comment especially as to the numbers in Div 1. Some are surprised that there are so few and others that there are still as many as there are.

At the Hasler this year the first three places in Div. 2 were taken by juniors who beat the leading Div. 1 paddlers by a good margin. Was this an exception or a by-product of the system? With both Paul Wycherley and Ben Brown around the quality is certainly high.

Have these top end juniors been held back this season so as not to over tax them?

The converse is that there are a number of Div 1 paddlers who would love to be demoted to 2 but never seem to get D notices.

At the heart of these comments is the suggestion that began this article and that was the request to have system that has clear guidelines so that everyone knows where they are without a personal opinion.

Quote from a recent letter "It isn't just Div 1 and 2 but people getting out of 4 into 3 and are becoming despondent about promotion. They have won a number of Div 4 events, beaten a number of leading Div 3 paddlers at home and abroad and wonder what they have to do to be promoted in their own right. Anyone can race up. Being promoted is what's important to a Junior!"

The rules governing the way the changes are made has been honed over the years by dint of experience but times change and perhaps a re think is needed.

On the other hand is the current situation a one off? There have been countless times when a system has been altered to suit a certain situation only for the knock on effect to be worse than the original problem.

The comments continue, asking whether the "holding back of some paddlers" has distorted the Hasler points? If the season were re calculated and then the finals who would the top 3 be?

Food for thought amongst many!

Paul Ralph Wokingham CC

The Gudena event has always been popular over the years both by the national team and by individuals. I put forward a proposal to the MRC to send a GB team to Gudena subbed by private entries in return for use of the MRC's bus and trailer. This arrangement worked very well. It meant that the MRC were able to send developing athletes to a major international quality competition.

It also meant that private individuals could compete in an event that otherwise they might only read about, or struggle to complete, because of lack of knowledge or support. This trip could only have taken place with the flexibility of the MRC, team athletes, individuals (including staff) willing to sub the trip to do the event.

GB TEAM ENTRY

Sonia Bapty	K1	Ladies	87K
Nicky Taylor	K1	Ladies	87K
Catherine Hall	K1	U16 girls	50K
Mark Slight	K2	Junior	120K
Alan Sharpe	K2	Junior	120K

PRIVATE ENTRY

Rob Lines (Norwich)	K1	Senior men	120K
James Treadgold (Reading)	K2	Vets	120K
Paul Fielding (Taunton)	K2	Vets	120K
John Ince (Tonbridge)	K2	Vets	120k
Simon Ganet (Tonbridge)	K2	Vets	120K
Richard Barkway (Norwich)	K2	Senior men	120K
Dean Grady (Norwich)	K2	Senior men	120K
Wicky Daniels (Reading)	K2	Mixed	120K
Derek Hall (Wokingham)	K2	Mixed	120K
Leane Brown (Barking & Dagenham)	K1	U16 girls	50K
Paul Wycherly (Wey)	K1	Junior	120K
Richard Crookes (Leighton Buzzard)	C1	Junior	50K

Wed 8/9/04

We travelled by ferry from Harwich, which was the meeting place for all trip participants.

Thursday 9/9/04

Arrived Denmark at 11am.

At 3pm paddled from Ry to Silkeborg which is stage 2 on the first day of racing for those competing over the longer distances and is the only stage for the junior girls and C1. We decided to put the girls (Catherine and Leanne) in a K2 for this paddle so the 12 miles didn't take too much out of them before the race. After the paddle we drove to Skandeborg, which is the start on the first day of racing for the full course. We had arranged to stay at the youth hostel which was on the banks of the start lake for the Thursday and Friday nights.

Friday 10/9/04

I made an assessment of the course and paddled up to the Mosso by K2 (10 miles).

We drew up a plan for the race for all athletes and afterwards briefed the group in detail.

We also took some of the team to see the portage and view the Mosso from a hill.

Saturday 11/9/04

The 120K course started at midday just around the corner from the hostel.

The 50K course for the junior girls and C1's started at Ry at 1.30. In the ladies race Nicky Taylor was the first GB paddler through the portage, followed closely by Sonia Bapty. Mark and Allan were next through in the senior men's event, followed by James and Paul. Both crews were in the top 10 at this stage. Paul Wycherly came in with the leading K1's but fell behind after a bad portage.

Ry

This was the race start for Catherine, Leane and Richard. Shortly after their start, the first athletes competing over the longer courses were starting to arrive at Ry for the first 20 min stage stop. Nicky came in on the wash of the leading boat, Sonia, shortly afterwards in fourth place. Mark and Allan had established themselves in the 2nd group of K2's and James and Paul in the 3rd group.

Paul Wycherly had caught the lead K1's and was comfortable in a group of 4 (Michel & Mads Konsgard Den and Eric Verduct Bel.

The others were bearing up well apart from Dean who had been ill leading up to the event. We decided he should pull out then which was a disappointment for both Dean and his K2 partner Richard.

The finish of the days racing was at Silkeborg and all paddlers maintained their positions on this stage and were in fair shape considering the distances covered and inexperience of this type of racing.

Leanne and Catherine had an excellent first day of racing finishing 1st and 3rd respectively.

Best results Day 1

Paul Wycherly	4 th	+ 1.30
Mark/Allan	7 th	+ 10min
James/Paul	10 th	+ 12min
Nicky	2 nd	+ 2sec
Sonia	4 th	+ 9min
Leane	1 st	
Catherine	3 rd	+ 40sec

Sunday

Having stayed overnight at Silkeborg, the men had a short paddle down to their starts.

7.30 mass start for senior men, vets, juniors & mixed.

7.30 ladies start at Tanga (30min drive from Silkeborg)

8.15 C1 start at Tanga

9.30 U16 girls K2 start at Tanga

Supporting these starts takes some organising even with 2 cars!

Stage 3 (Silkeborg to Tanga)

First GB athletes in were Mark and Allan, along with James and Paul comfortable in a group of 6 K2's. Next was Paul having had an exciting stage. After getting away with the other 3 leading boats he had fallen in half way down the river section, had recovered well and comfortable in the second group 2mins behind the leaders. All our other trip Athletes were in good shape and determined to finish the course.

Stage 4 (Tanga to Langa)

Nicky and Sonia had fallen behind the leading lady but were comfortable in 2nd and 4th positions respectively and working together to maintain Nicky's 2nd place.

Leanne and Catherine had both got away from the group and were both going well.

Richard in his C1 was pleased to have reached the last stage and was definitely going to finish.

The rest of the party came through the stage as at Tanga. The most amazing pair of John and Simon having a good time and enjoying the race the harder it got! (Old DW diehards!)

10 metres of gaffa tape was used on Allan's feet and hands because his blisters had got so bad.

Finish

Finish was at Randers from about 11am onwards. The prize giving this year was at the river side in a marquee, with Danish TV recording the ceremony. Everybody was present for the prizegiving.

Final Positions

Ladies K1

1 st	GER _r
2 nd	Nicky Taylor
4 th	Sonia Bapty

U16 Girls K1

1 st	Leane Brown
2 nd	Catherine Hall
3 rd	GER

Junior men K1

1 st	Paul Wycherly (and 4 th overall in K1)
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Vet K2

3 rd	James Treadgold/Paul Fielding
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Senior men K2

8 th	Mark Slight/Allan Sharpe
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FIVE MEDALS IN TOTAL

Highlights

Leanne brown B&D & Catherine Hall (GB)

During the girls K1 race a group of 4 were away together on the first stage on day 1. Cathy fell in on one of the lakes. Leanne slowed the group down so that Cathy was able to catch the group again giving her the chance to finish in the medals. A good team performance by both girls.

Mark/Allan (GB)

They raced well throughout the whole course. This was because of good race tactics around the groups and at times paddling with top paddlers like Stefen Burkhart (Ger) and Rennie Larsen (Den.) a very good performance.

Rob Lines (NOR)

Rob is a relative newcomer to racing. Although not the most stable in his K1, he struggled on the big lakes, but kept his head and got down the course.

Paul Wycherly (WEY)

Finished 4th overall senior/junior men K1's and recorded the fastest time ever for a British athlete.

TOUR DE GUDENA – A PADDLERS VIEW

Ever since the early 80's I have wanted to paddle the Tour de Gudena. The descriptions of this race in "Canoeing" magazine and the British success planted a seed. This year I was fortunate enough to go thanks to some long suffering paddling friends and the BCU trip under the stewardship of Dyson and Ali Pendle.

On paper it is a long race but the times of the leading crews indicate very high speeds – 75 miles in 8 hours is 9.375 mph. So there must be something else happening. And there is. Most of the second day is down the Gudena river and this is flowing quickly. The second factor is that you paddle in groups and take turns working. This keeps the overall speed up as well.

The trip takes a week, depending on the exact ferry timetable, as the normal route is the Harwich to Esberg ferry and then drive across to Silkeborg (which takes about 2 hours). We arrived on Thursday which enabled a gentle paddle on one of the race sections to learn the route through the lakes. This proved to be invaluable. Friday was an easy day finishing off boat set ups and a chance to have a gentle paddle as required. There was also an opportunity to see the one raced portage and view the large Mosso lake. The Mosso is big – about 6 miles long and over a mile wide at the widest point. The day we saw it, it was pretty flat. The race day had somewhat more wind and made it quite choppy. Provided you have a good spraydeck and a pump there are no problems. You just have to take your chance with the weather and wind direction. 2004 was roughly a headwind.

Saturday is the first race day. As Veteran paddlers we were doing the full 120 km course. The start was quite low key. There were only a few boats on the water until just before start time when loads appeared. There were lots of "touring" doubles – not touring as we know it in the UK but a specific class with strict requirements. These boats are more stable than a normal racing K2 but seem just as quick. The stability is a big factor when paddling on the lakes and rivers in Denmark. The start line formed and the gun went. Then it was into the melee and sprint. This lasted a good 1000 m before it settled out. Very quickly you reach the only raced portage. Good UK portage technique can gain lots of places. Then it is only 200 m before you enter onto the Mosso. After slogging down this it is onto a short river section before a couple of small lakes that lead to the stage stop at Ry, 30 km done. Having been dropped in the chop on the Mosso we worked hard to catch some crews coming into Ry so that we had a wash on the next stage.

You leave the stage stop exactly 30 minutes after you arrive. So you need to be aware of the crews you finish near as all the instructions are in Danish otherwise it is easy to miss your time. The 30 minutes is just enough to put on dry kit, refill drink bags, eat a bit of food and go.

Ry to Silkeborg is 17 km across the lakes practised on Thursday. This was very handy as you know where you are and can think about working in your group and know when you are getting close to the finish and that final extra effort. This section certainly went faster than I expected and was a bit of a battle in the sidewind. The touring K2 we were with was not affected so we sat on their wash most of the way, only taking it up when it flattened out near the finish.

Day Two, Sunday, begins way too early as the mass start is at 7:30 am. The sprint goes off just as hard as people aim for the fastest possible group for the river stages. You start on the lake, blast down the river and then emerge onto the Tange See, another big lake. This curves for ages until you finally cross for the stage finish. It is 33 Km and your bum certainly knows it! This year it was a strong tailwind on the lake and it was quite fun surfing down the waves. At the stage stop you get 40 minutes. This flies by and very soon you are on the water again on the river.

The next stage is Tange to Lange, a 24 Km run down the river. Keeping in your group is essential here, doing your piece and then resting. Tactics are required to keep a good place in the group and not end up on the bad washes. If you have time you can enjoy the great scenery and clean water. With only 20 minutes rest all you can do is eat food and be ready to go.

The final 16 Km sprint into the finish at Randers is less than an hour. I did not believe the Danish chap when he said this but he was right. Again, stay in the group and work. The river widens out as Randers approaches. The finish is less than 100 m after the blue railway bridge so the sprint begins there.

Well, that's a brief description on my race so how did our paddlers get on. Wiki Daniels had a late crew change in Mixed K2 and bravely did the first day, dragging Derek Hall along. This included the Mosso, thus she has slayed that dragon. Derek is better known as a C1 paddler: he found having a double ended paddle quite strange.

My long time friends and fellow DW paddlers John Ince and Simon Damant had a storming race in Veteran K2. They did, however, finish just 19 seconds behind the crew in front. Should have cut off those handles chaps, all that drag !

Richard Barkway and Dean Grady were unlucky as Dean had been ill leading up to the race and had to pull out after the first stage. I am sure they'll be back to try again. Rob Lines had a sound paddle and gains my respect for doing K1 across those lakes.

Paul Fielden and I managed to blag a 3rd place in veteran K2 using the winners of the Senior Touring K2 and veteran touring K2 as fellow members of our group. Thanks to them for helping us.

Oh and there were some other GB paddlers in the team but Dyson has reported on them elsewhere.

Thanks go to Dyson and Ali for all their help throughout the trip. It is simply not possible to do this race without support and you probably need 3 vehicles to do the last day properly if supporting crews from all the starts. We also managed to use the accommodation and catering organised by Dyson. The hostels and cabins used were very good and the hostel food excellent. Using these facilities makes the trip enjoyable with hot showers, even if you do not get to use them until everybody else has had theirs.

Overall the trip was incredibly enjoyable. I learnt a lot about paddling and racing. In fact it was so good I know I'm going back to have another go. In some respects every British marathon paddler should do this race. It does not paddle like a 75 mile race so anybody can do it. And the ladies and junior distances are shorter.

James Treadgold

DRAFT ICF MARATHON RACING CALENDAR 2005

January	20-22	Hansa Powerade Dusi Marathon Pietermaritzburg/RSA	sen/jun/mas
February	12-13	Hansa Umkomaas Marathon Richmond/RSA	sen/jun/mas
March	25-28	Devizes to Westminster Devizes/GBR	sen/jun/mas
April	9-10	National New Zealand Marathon Championships Tauranga/NZW – pelex@xtra.co.nz	sen/jun
	16	Waterland Marathon K1 Amsterdam/NED	sen/jun/mas
	23	International Danube Marathon Bratislava/SVK	sen/jun
May	8	Blauwe Wimpel Marathon K1 ? /NED	sen/jun/mas
	14-15	Alois Dallmayn Int. competition Tolna/HUN	sen/jun/mas
June	24-26	L'Orofero Challenge Toulon/FRA	sen/jun
	25-26	ICF WORLD CUP Dinant/BEL - www.wc2005.tk	sen/jun
July	3	Open Dutch K1 Championships ? /NED	sen/jun/mas
	13-16	Isuzu Berg Marathon CapeTown/RSA	sen/jun/mas
	23-24	EUROPEAN MARATHON CHAMPIONSHIPS Tyn nad Vlatou/CZE	sen/jun
	30	La Porquerollaise Toulon-Mourrillon-Porquerolles/FRA	sen/jun
August	27/28	BCU Open and National Championships Worcester/GBR	sen/jun/mas
September	3-4	Breede SA K2 Robertson/RSA	sen/jun/mas
	10-11	Tour de Gudenaas Skanderborg-Randers/DEN - www.tourdegudenaas.dk	sen/jun/mas
	15	Marathon int.de la Loire Genes-Bouchemaine/FRA – paysdeloire@ffcanoe.asso.fr	sen/jun
	31-1	Hansa Powerade Fish Marathon Craddock/RSA	sen/jun/mas
October	8	Dutch Championships K4 de Rijk/NED	sen/jun/mas
	15-16	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS Perth/AUS – www.canoemarathon.com.au	sen/jun/mas
November	12	Marathon int. des Gorges de l'Ardèche Gorges de l'Ardeche-Vallon Pont d'Arc/FRA – www.marathon-ardeche.com	sen
	26-27	LandRover Vaal Marathon Johannesburg/RSA	sen/jun/mas