

## **BRITISH CANOE UNION**

### **FLATWATER NEWSLETTER – MAY 2006**

#### **April Regattas.**

The season is now in full swing although you would have been hard pressed to know it at the April regatta at HPP. More like the Sea of Galilee was described in the bible when St. John nearly lost his confidence as well as potentially other things. Unlike the Sea of Galilee however on this occasion the temperature was rather chilly. So much so that there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth [to continue the biblical connection] and many considering whether the April regatta was worth having each year. When the uncomfortable memory is still strong there is a tendency to forget that all April regattas are not as bad and indeed there are many of the other months regattas that have been almost as bad. There have only been a very few times where racing has been stopped and although the affect on racing itself and the paddlers is not good, it is the same for everyone. Hence it is Sprint racing.

Therefor the decision of the Racing Committee at its meeting last Saturday was that to cancel all April regattas would be getting rid of the chance of a good one. Fewer regattas are not a recipe for progress. So the only alternative is to build a cover over the pond. Last estimate for the 500m course was £25M. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help."

#### **Ladies and Juniors Coaching.**

At the next regatta on the Saturday evening Dyson Pendle will be giving a short presentation on Ladies and Juniors coaching. Expected to be only about 20 minutes so expect the usual down-to-earth, pithy, good common sense.

#### **Singapore Team Arrives in England**

As part of their build up for the World Championships the Singapore marathon team are sending 6 paddlers to England to get some competition. As those of you who were in Perth last year will know they are not yet strong but are very enthusiastic. Their men K2 was over 25 minutes behind the winners in Perth.

Their federation has asked permission for them to take part in the Hasler final. The MRC discussed this at their meeting last Friday and agreed that it would not affect the overall result and the paddlers would be "divisionalised" suitably. John Handyside knows them all and will arrange this. We all hope you will welcome and help them as they work their way up the international marathon ranks.

#### **BCU Website**

Spies tell me that the BCU website currently does not link to Regional or Club websites. BCU HQ tells us that this was not something that they had fully appreciated but we are assured that all would be back in place by 1st June for information and marketing. The only computer link to clubs from the BCU presently is via a single email address of the secretary of each club.

## **Squad Boats for Sale**

Unless they have been sold at the last regatta there are three ex squad boats for sale. All NELO top line construction and little used. Two would be classed as for medium weights and one for very light weights. Offers to Jim Rossiter please.

## **Annual Consultative Meetings**

Both Marathon and Sprint committees are making plans for their meetings.

Marathon comes first on Saturday 12th August 2006 6.30pm at Reading Canoe Club. For anyone who has missed it from the Handbook, this will be the weekend of the National Championships.

Sprint hold theirs on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September, the Saturday evening of the September regatta at Holme Pierpont at 7.00pm

For both of them there will be elections to the committees and nominations should go to the respective secretary. Dave Enoch for Marathon and Cathy Wynne for Sprint. Nominations for the committee and motions should reach Cathy by 1<sup>st</sup> August and Dave by 30 days before the meeting

The meetings are intended as a forum for discussion and the committees would welcome motions for change.

Well, they probably will. Using editorial licence I would start off an old Marathon chestnut, that of the imposition of buoyancy aids for division 7 paddlers, especially those on the way down. There are many paddlers whose competence is not in question and to make them wear an unnecessary item is what seems like part of the current approach of the Nanny state.

Paddlers who have reached div 7 going up have obviously reached a state of competence or they would not be there.

For youngsters under 16, then there is an age requirement that is reflected in actual safety, especially from the organisers point of view.

Any other points of view?

## **Club Colours**

In an effort to enhance the appearance of Marathon Racing and to build even more club spirit the MRC have decided that to be awarded Hasler points the wearing of club vests/tops will be compulsory at the National Championships and the Hasler Final.

The discussion also ranged onto the requirement to be for all Hasler races but it stopped short on this deciding on a limited start with the two major events of the Marathon calendar.

No doubt there will be words of encouragement for the committee at the ACM.

## **HRM Marathon Race Computer System**

As you know Wikki Daniels has done an enormous amount of good work to develop the system to the point now where it seems to be providing race organisers with an efficient system. We owe Wikki a debt for this. She continues to work on it, as it seems to be rather like painting the Forth Bridge.

One of the changes is the automatic promotions and demotions, which was designed to make the divisional changes easier clearer and quicker. This also means that Mike

Head only has to correct the obvious mistakes where there has been a system glitch, which is now quite rare. Discretionary movements will not be needed. Using the system in this way over the next months we will be able to determine the flow of paddlers between divisions and see that they should arrive where their ability should take them. For the MRC to ensure that the system does work it has to be allowed to operate as it was intended.

At the end of the season the situation will be analysed and any changes needed put in place.

One of the issues for this is to ensure that all organisers do use the system *and in the way it was intended*. There is a tendency for some high tech organisers to try and alter the system in a way that they see as suits them. This generally means that when it gets to Christine & Mike it does not automatically operate and they have to manually enter all the results on the records. This is one of the jobs that the HRM was designed to eliminate. So the message is, PLEASE just let it work as it was supposed to.

### **Club Coaches**

Backbone of the competition paddlers, where do these people come from and how do they get their skills? There is a system of flatwater coaching courses, which is now being enhanced by the appointment of John Handyside. John needs no introduction to most of you but for those who do not know him. He has been in the GB Sprint, Marathon and WWR teams over the years. He has coached and managed the GB WWR team and coached all over the world.

He is now bringing his skills to bear for the flatwater and WWR fraternity and will be amongst you very soon. His intention is to help the club coaches and enhance the work they are already doing.

### **Marathon Hasler Final and National Championships 2007**

The committee is pleased to announce that the 2007 Nationals will be at Wokingham and the Hasler at Pangbourne. Thanks to these clubs taking on the responsibility of organising such large events.

The actual dates will be announced soon.

Alan Laws



## BRITISH CANOE UNION

### **Alan Williams**

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### Beijing Olympic Team Managers Recce April 2006.

John Anderson and I took part in the BOA team Managers RECCE to Beijing. The aim of the trip was to identify preparation and training venues for our teams prior to the Olympic Games in 2008.

#### **Travel:**

We both travelled out from the UK on Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> April, to the provincial town of Yangling. The town is very small by Chinese standards (around 50'000 people) but has a road structure that most European cities would be proud of. The temperature in Yangling was 22-25 C and will rise to about 38-40 during the Olympic Games period.

The time difference between the UK and China is 7 hours. The total travel time from Heathrow to Yangling was 18 hours and must add to the normal acclimatisation period for China (which is 7 hours = 7 days).

#### **Yangling Training Centre:**

The centre consists of an international class regatta course with a full range of supporting facilities. (Gym, Weights rooms, ergo (Rowing) Paddling tanks etc)

The Centre has around 175 full time athletes (125 Rowing) and (50 Canoeing) They stay at the centre for around 3 years and then have either made the Chinese National team or return home. They train at the centre all year with just one visit home. The centre is successful in providing around 2 athletes each year into the main Chinese team.

The centre also has alternative accommodation around 25 km. away at an altitude of plus 2000m. This means that the centre could offer a live high/train low option. Unfortunately we did not have time to check this out.

#### **Accommodation Options in Yangling:**

There are three options for accommodation in Yangling.

#### **Yangling High Performance Centre:**

Basic accommodation is in twin rooms, which are clean and have en-suite facilities. Food is provided at strict meal times in a dinning room. It could be possible to have our own menu. I would rate this as a 1 star option.

#### **Yangling Horizon Hotel.**

This is a big hotel (2500 beds plus around 20 big villas). The hotel situated about 500m. from the training centre is almost completely empty for a large part of the year. This makes you believe that it is much older than 6 years, which is the age of most of the buildings. The hotel has lots of facilities. Pool, Gym, Games etc but many are of questionable value. The pool in particular needed a lot of work before I could recommend its use by our Olympic team. Meals were provided in two main restaurants and although both operated Chinese menus the hotel said they could cater for European meals. We would not recommend drinking the water from the hotel. I would rate this as 2-3 star hotel, it was the main hotel for accommodation during the Asian Rowing Championships in 2001 but has seen little use since then.

### **Yangling International Conference and Exhibition Centre.**

This is a newly build luxury 4 star hotel situated about 5 minutes drive from the course. Again the hotel has two main restaurants and a wide range of facilities. One of the restaurants has some European options on the menu. The gym and the pool areas are of a much higher standard and I would have no problem with using these facilities. The hotel recommends boiling all water before drinking and provides kettles to do this. This hotel is rated as 4 star and easily justifies the rating.

### **Conclusion:**

All in all Yangling has some great facilities and the centre does provide great training opportunities. But there are also some serious drawbacks particularly related to Olympic preparation that is our current focus.

### **Beijing Olympic Preparations:**

After our visit to Yangling we joined the main B.O.A Recce in Beijing. As with all Olympic cities the scale of building work was immense. Beijing is a city of 14-17 million people (they can't count them all) and travel is incredibly difficult. All of our journeys were by road and there is only a limited underground system. Our average journey speed within the city was between 5-15 miles per hour depending on the time of day. During the Olympic Games all building work will be suspended and there will be dedicated traffic lanes for accredited vehicles. With the new motor way links they are predicting a journey time of just 30 minutes from the Olympic village out to the regatta centre. I think that 40 – 50 minutes is more realistic.

### **Accommodation Options in Beijing:**

There are 3 three possible options for accommodation during the Olympic Games for Canoeing and 2 of these could work well for Canoeing Racing. The first option is a hotel at the end of the regatta course just 5 minutes from the venue entrance. This could be shared by Rowing, Flat-water Racing, Slalom, and Modern Pentathlon. I saw the hotel last year and thought it suitable but it was already fully booked. Since then the hotel has closed for a total rebuild and should be available towards the end of 2007. As always there are pro's and con's for living outside the Olympic village but this hotel offers excellent accommodation very close to the Olympic venue.

If this hotel is not available Canoe Racing will use the Olympic village accommodation while Slalom are likely to use the Dragon villa complex about 15 minutes from the course.

### **Conclusion:**

The priority for any Olympic Games is get first class preparation for your Olympic team. None of the sites visited in Beijing are perfect although several do offer very good facilities.

I would recommend that the team trains on the Olympic course for the acclimatisation in China. It is quite unlikely that all of the team will be fully acclimatised within the 7 hours = 7 days rule. If we allow ten days to ensure full acclimatisation this takes us to the 7<sup>th</sup> Aug which means the team would arrive on the day of the opening ceremony. If the team wish to take part in the Opening Ceremony they should leave the UK one day earlier (Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> August.) This will allow the team to settle in with an official rest day on the 8<sup>th</sup> and start training again on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

I recommend that the team precede travel to China with a training camp in Europe. Possibly using the excellent facilities in Barcelona again. This was a winning formula in 2004 and offers superb training.

Alan Williams

## RIVERS ACCESS CAMPAIGN – LATEST

Lack of access to waterways actually affects us all. It would be great as a marathon paddler to have different places to train/race or even go for a recreational paddle. The campaign is for all types of canoeing and not just for white water.

In the last few months the fishing fraternity have tried to turn the access to water issue in to a canoeing v fishing problem. However, access to rivers IS NOT a canoeing v fishing issue. In fact the two sports/pastimes can easily co-exist as they do all over the world. Just recently DEFRA have actually recognised the fact that

*“Whilst all water-based activities can have a direct impact on the environment, research undertaken on behalf of the Environment Agency found that over all canoeing is not harmful to fish populations....”* *“The BCU’s Access strategy makes very clear that paddlers should undertake their sport in ways which do not have an adverse environmental impact. So I (**Geoff Collard, Central Communications Unit, DEFRA**) believe that with sensible management it should be possible to accommodate the needs of both anglers and canoeists.”*

*The Government is a firm believer in the benefits of outdoor recreation on land or water.....Visitors are good for the local economy and people who exercise regularly are healthier than those who do not. So we are keen to promote recreational opportunities as widely as we can and this includes canoeing. The only difference between us and those who advocate a statutory right of access to inland water is the means by which access should be secured.”*

If the Government is a firm believer in championing outdoor activities why then is it taking so long to move on the access issue?

The BCU will continue to push for a statutory right of access to rivers as we have extensive experience of voluntary access agreements and know that they are not sustainable, often in the short term, but most certainly in the long term. By opening up our natural resources it would also mean that the fishing fraternity would benefit too.

The British Canoe Union agreed with the Government that they would look at the voluntary agreements via 4 pilot studies the Environment Agency are undertaking. However, they have grave concerns over the effectiveness of them. There are concerns over the cost of the four pilots, not only in terms of time but in actual cost. Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent to potentially gain about 70kms of water out of over 66,000 kms of rivers where there is no access! (some of which was already accessible anyway ... ie on the River Waveney) Is this approach a feasible or practicable strategic solution? The rivers chosen for the feasibility study are not exactly attractive options for the canoeist and there is no huge demand to canoe on the River Mersey, for example. There has been real difficulty in trying to negotiate with hundreds of land owners, trying to find who they are is actually the first hurdle, and the whole project has taken an inordinate amount of time to achieve just 70kms. The projects are not due to be completed until summer 2007 at the earliest!!! Over three years since they begun.

We have also been informed through the presentation that Neil Ravenscroft (Brighton University who is undertaking the projects on behalf of the Environment Agency) gave at the Outdoors Show in March 06 that “negotiating voluntary access agreements is an expensive and resource rich exercise.” He also stated that the laws of navigation are unclear.

Successive governments have encouraged canoeists to seek to negotiate voluntary access agreements. From over 66,000kilometres of rivers in England and Wales without a public right of navigation, only 812 kilometres of highly restricted access has been negotiated. Some agreements are for just a few days each year adding very little (1.2%) to the 4% of inland waterways with a public right of navigation. Ultimately, access is in the hands of riparian owners. If they refuse to engage in negotiation, there is no way canoeists can make progress.

For more information and regular updates visit [www.riversaccess.org](http://www.riversaccess.org)

## GYRODACTYLUS SALARIS

The microscopic parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris* presents a serious threat to salmon stocks and to date it has not been detected in the UK. The BCU recognises this is a serious problem, and Canoe England, the Welsh Canoe Association, and Scottish Canoe Association have joined to gain a fuller understanding of the issue.

It has enabled the BCU to work from a common position and contribute to the Environment Agency notice produced below and posted on the BCU web site; and the Scottish Canoe Association to formulate these same measures as a member of a Scottish Executive working party for the prevention of G salaris. The Scottish information is to be issued in the near future.

Ensuring paddlers and the other water sport disciplines that travel to the listed European countries take the simple preventative measures described, will help protect salmon stocks.

May 2006

Salmon under threat



**Our native salmon are facing uncertain future – but recreational water users including anglers, canoeists, rowers and small boat users can help to protect them.**

**It is always thrilling to see wild salmon leaping up weirs and waterfalls as they return to their spawning grounds. But a parasite spreading through Europe could destroy the population here.**

The parasite (Latin name: *Gyrodactylus salaris*) is less than half a millimetre in size and barely visible to the naked eye, but it can cause severe damage to salmon, and often results in the death of affected fish. It is now widespread in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, and has also been found in France, Germany, Portugal and Spain.

Thankfully the parasite has not yet been found in the U.K – but experiments have shown that our salmon would be killed by it, so it is really important that it is not introduced from Europe. It is possible that even one parasite imported to an previously unaffected river could cause an epidemic in a very short time.

The main threat is from the importation of diseased fish and controls are now in place to minimise these risks. However, there is also a smaller risk that watersports enthusiasts returning from these European countries could inadvertently carry the parasite back to this country.

The parasite can survive in wet or damp conditions for 5 to 6 days on boats, equipment or clothing. Most affected are recreational water users returning with their equipment, or European competitors entering the UK for events, where they intend to re-use their equipment within a week.

If you are returning with equipment used in rivers in the European countries listed above you can help prevent importing the disease on equipment such as keep nets, reels, boats and canoes plus associated items, wetsuits, clothing and footwear by doing two simple things:

- **Thoroughly drying all equipment for at least 48 hours. Drying in sunlight in temperatures above 20°C**
- or
- **Disinfect by simply immersing equipment in seawater or a salt solution (sodium chloride concentration 3% or more) for a minimum of ten minutes can kill the parasite. All equipment should then be thoroughly rinsed in tap water.**

Marine vessels returning from abroad do not pose a risk as the parasite cannot survive in seawater but consideration should be given to tenders or other equipment used in rivers.

### Further information

Environment Agency web site [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/recreation](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/recreation).

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) web site [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)

web site : [www.efishbusiness.com](http://www.efishbusiness.com)

## **JUNIOR K4 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

Over the last several months the BCU has been looking at the feasibility of a Junior Development K4. Various options have been looked at and discussed via an open bulleting board on the web and at meetings.

There was some support for the development of junior boat and a decision has been made to offer to tender the construction of a working prototype, supported by a BCU grant, that can be tested on the water this year.

The agreed specification is that the boat is to be 8 to 9 foot longer than a Hody K2, with more depth and aimed at a similar age range. The fittings should be UK standard and the boat should have close cell foam block buoyancy and seat pins.

The Sprint committee discussed the proposal at their last meeting and considered that although there was some merit in the proposal it could be that money could be better spent on development of the Hody K2. If the intention is to foster crew boat paddling it might well be more effective to use K2's especially in a club environment.

Opinions on this would be welcomed to any Sprint committee member as well as Development K4, BCU, Adbolton Lane, Nottingham, NG2 5AS

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### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

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|-------------------------------|---|---|
| 3/4 <sup>TH</sup> June        | - | National Sprint regatta, Nottingham   |
| 30 <sup>th</sup> June         | - | <b>Last date for entries for Sella Descent to be sent to Christine Laws, further details from the same.</b> |
| 22/23 <sup>th</sup> July      | - | National Sprint Regatta, Nottingham   |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> August        | - | Sella Descent, Spain.   |
| 12/13 <sup>th</sup> August    | - | National Marathon Championships, Reading.   |
| 2 <sup>rd</sup> September     | - | Inter club National Regatta, Nottingham   |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> September    | - | Hasler Marathon Final   |
| 23/24 <sup>th</sup> September | - | World Marathon Championships, France (Masters events run the Wednesday and Thursday preceding the event)    |