

canoe

focus



Features

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White water on India's Alaknanda

Sea kayaking Donegal's coast

The Devon and Cornwall Sea Birds



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18 Market Place, Bingham NG13 8AP

Tel: 0845 370 9500

0300 011 9500

Fax: 0845 370 9501

E-mail: info@bcu.org.uk

www.bcu.org.uk

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President

Albert Woods

Chair

Brian Chapman

Chief Executive

Paul Owen

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BCU on the above contacts

Publisher

Peter Tranter

peter@canoefocus.co.uk

2b Graphic Design

49 Greenfields, St. Ives, PE27 5HB

Tel/Fax: (01480) 465081

www.canoefocus.co.uk

Advertising Sales

Anne Egan: (01480) 465081

advertising@canoefocus.co.uk

Contributors

We would like to thank the following:

Glenn Summerbell, Andy Goodsell,

Tamsin Phipps, Howard Blackman,

Kimberley Walsh, Coral Jackson,

Julia Robertson, Clarisse Smith,

Chris Hawkesworth, Kevin East

Jimmy Christie, Fiona Cooper,

Chris Hogarth and Steve Brooks.

Cover and centrefold photo:

by Antony Edmonds.

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Above: The Olympic canoeing programme will begin on the 29th July, with the canoe slalom racing. Photo of 2008 Olympic Silver medallist David Florence taken by Amber Owen.

Hello and welcome to the February Canoe Focus



I hope you've all enjoyed a happy New Year so far, and have managed to enjoy some time canoeing during what has, undoubtedly, been one of our mildest winters for some years.

It seems a long time since we celebrated London winning the bid to host the Olympics but, after much planning, 2012 is finally here! The coming months promise to be a hugely exciting time, as we show the world what canoeing and in particular canoeing in Britain, has to offer.

Information about the Olympics will be available in Canoe Focus, as well as on our websites, as and when it becomes available. Plans are in place to include detailed information within the June and August issues and, as such, you may experience slight delays in receiving these editions of the magazine. I'd like to thank you, in advance, for your patience and understanding with this matter.

Before the Olympics though, there's lots to look forward to.

Additional funding from Sport England has allowed Canoe England to expand their Go Canoeing programme and the new look initiative will be launching with National Go Canoeing Week on 6-15th April.

Just after that, on 13th April, GB's top slalom athletes will head to the Lee Valley White Water Centre for the GB Canoeing Selection Trials. Ticketing information is now available at: www.gbcanoeing.org.uk.

And in May, our Paracanoe World Champion, Pat Mahoney, will travel to Poznan with the rest of the GB Paracanoe team, looking to retain his title at the third Paracanoe World Championships.

Then, in June, we will join the country in celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee with the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant on the 3rd before heading to Cardiff International White Water for the Canoe Slalom World Cup on the 8th. Tickets for the Cup, which is the first in the ICF Series, will be available to buy within the next couple of months.

Preparations for the BCU's AGM, to be held on Saturday 3rd March, are also well underway.

The meeting will be held at the Scottish Canoe Association, Caledonia House, 1 Redheughs Rigg, South Gyle, Edinburgh EH12 9DQ from 2pm. Enclosed within this issue of Canoe Focus is a voting by proxy form, an agenda, directions to the venue and the abridged accounts.

Until then, I'd like to wish you a great year of canoeing and enjoyable volunteering, in whatever roles you do.

Paul Owen, BCU Chief Executive



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Competition



	Start	Finish	Discipline	Event
March	03 Mar		Prem - Tryweryn	Canoe Slalom
	17 Mar		Prem - Holme Pierrepont - Junior Selection	Canoe Slalom
	19 Mar	23 Mar	Olympic - Training - Lee Valley, GBR	Canoe Slalom
	24 Mar		Prem - Cardiff	Canoe Slalom
April	31 Mar	01 Apr	Prem - Grandtully	Canoe Slalom
	07 Apr	08 Apr	GB Senior Selection - River Tryweryn	Wildwater Canoeing
	13 Apr	15 Apr	Olympic GB Selection Trials - Lee Valley - Senior & U23	Canoe Slalom
	14 Apr	15 Apr	National Regatta - Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham	Canoe Sprint
May	16 Apr	27 Apr	Olympic - Training - Lee Valley, GBR	Canoe Slalom
	11 May	13 May	European Championships - Augsburg, GER	Canoe Slalom
	12 May	13 May	National Regatta - Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham	Canoe Sprint
	16 May	17 May	Olympic European Qualification - Poznan, POL	Canoe Sprint
	16 May	20 May	Olympic - Training - Lee Valley, GBR	Canoe Slalom
	18 May	20 May	World Cup 1 - Poznan, POL	Canoe Sprint
	18 May	20 May	Paracanoe World Championships - Poznan, POL	Canoe Sprint
	19 May	20 May	ECA Cup 1 - St Omer, FRA	Canoe Polo
	19 May		Prem - Tees	Canoe Slalom
	25 May	27 May	World Cup 2 - Duisburg, GER	Canoe Sprint
June	28 May	05 Jun	Olympic - Training - Lee Valley, GBR	Canoe Slalom
	01 Jun	03 Jun	World Cup 3 - Moscow, RUS	Canoe Sprint
	08 Jun	10 Jun	World Cup 1 - Cardiff Bay, GBR	Canoe Slalom
	09 Jun	10 Jun	National Regatta - Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham	Canoe Sprint
	09 Jun		Liverpool International	Canoe Polo
	15 Jun	17 Jun	World Cup 2 - Pau, FRA	Canoe Slalom
	22 Jun	24 Jun	European Championships - Zagreb, CRO	Canoe Sprint
	22 Jun	24 Jun	World Cup 3 - La Sue d'Urgell, ESP	Canoe Slalom
	23 Jun	02 Jul	World Championships - La Plagne, FRA	Wildwater Canoeing
	23 Jun	24 Jun	ECA Cup 2 - Mechelen, BEL	Canoe Polo
July	23 Jun	24 Jun	World Cup 1 - Copenhagen, DEN	Canoe Marathon
	25 Jun	30 Jun	European Championships - Lienz, AUT	Canoe Freestyle
	26 Jun	07 Jul	Olympic - Training - Lee Valley, GBR	Canoe Slalom
	11 Jul	15 Jul	World Championships - U23 & Junior - Wausau, USA	Canoe Slalom
	14 Jul		National Championships - Aberfan	Canoe Polo
	17 Jul	26 Jul	Olympic - Training - Lee Valley, GBR	Canoe Slalom
	21 Jul	22 Jul	National Regatta - Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham	Canoe Sprint
August	21 Jul	22 Jul	World Cup 2 - TBC	Canoe Marathon
	29 Jul	01 Aug	Olympic Games - Lee Valley, GBR	Canoe Slalom
	06 Aug	11 Aug	Olympic Games - Eton Dorney, GBR	Canoe Sprint
	24 Aug	26 Aug	World Cup 4 - Prague, CZE	Canoe Slalom
	24 Aug	26 Aug	World Cup 1 - Columbus, GE, USA	Canoe Freestyle
	25 Aug	26 Aug	National Championships	Canoe Marathon
	30 Aug	02 Sep	European Championships - Junior - Solkan, SLO	Wildwater Canoeing
September	31 Aug	02 Sep	World Cup 2 - Sparta, TN, USA	Canoe Freestyle
	31 Aug	02 Sep	World Cup Final - Bratislava, SVK	Canoe Slalom
	01 Sep	02 Sep	National Regatta - Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham	Canoe Sprint
	05 Sep	09 Sep	World Championships - Poznan, POL	Canoe Polo
	06 Sep	09 Sep	European Championships - Under 23 & Juniors - Solkan, SLO	Canoe Slalom
	07 Sep	09 Sep	World Cup 3 - Bryson City, NC, USA	Canoe Freestyle
	15 Sep		Prem - Holme Pierrepont	Canoe Slalom
	21 Sep	23 Sep	World Championships, Rome, ITA	Canoe Marathon
	29 Sep		Prem - Tryweryn	Canoe Slalom
30 Sep		Hasler Finals	Canoe Marathon	
Web	03 Nov	04 Nov	British Open - Lee Valley	Canoe Slalom
	Canoe polo : www.canoepolo.org.uk Canoe sailing: www.intcanoe.org.uk Sprint: www.bcu.org.uk/our-sport/sprint-racing Freestyle: www.gbfreestylekayak.com			Marathon racing: www.marathon-canoeing.co.uk Slalom: www.canoeslalom.co.uk Surf: www.bcusurf.org.uk Wild water racing: www.wildwater.org.uk



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For details of how to claim the discounts log in to the 'Members Area' of our website.

SCA Great Glen Paddlefest



The Great Glen Canoe Trail will be opened on Friday 23rd March. To celebrate the opening and the fantastic paddling destination of the Great Glen and the Caledonian Canal, British Waterways Scotland have teamed up with the Scottish Canoe Association to bring to you the first Great Glen Paddle Festival.

Based in Fort Augustus, this event will look to promote both canoe and sea kayak disciplines (crafts recommended for the canoe trail) by offering an extensive range of skill workshops for all level of paddler, delivered by top coaches.

You can attend half day, full day or the full weekend of workshops. There will also be an

evening of paddling presentations given by a number of our guest coaches on Friday, a paddling exhibition area throughout Saturday afternoon and all day Sunday with many exhibitor and trade stands to visit. Our event would not be complete however without a highland ceilidh on the Saturday evening!

Hire boats and kit can be available onsite for those who require, however you would need to book this at the same time as purchasing your workshop and ceilidh tickets.

For more information visit: www.greatglencanoetrail.info.



In brief

Tough protection for the iPhone

Case-Mate announced the addition of an ultra-protective tough case to their product portfolio. TANK offers paddlers who have an outdoor lifestyle or those who simply want extra protection a strong defence against extreme conditions.

TANK's retractable screen protector significantly shields the screen from impacts, cracking and condensation. The textured hard shell covers the dual layer case and like a motorcycle helmet, disperses the initial impact over a wide surface area. The interior layer absorbs the weakened impact; further safeguarding the phone against bumps and shocks. The interior is made of a soft silicone and features plugs over the phone's ports to keep the inside free of dust and dirt. TANK is available at all good phone retailers.



Photo competition winners

We are pleased to announce that the adult winner for November is Carl Sunderland. For December, the adult winner is Andrew Basing. There were no winners in the U18 category. The overall winner for 2011 is Michael Barnett. Turn to page 50 to see all the photos.

Mawddach Paddlesport Festival at Barmouth

26-27th May

Now in its second year – set on the magnificent Mawddach Estuary, as featured in Countryfile, amidst the mountains of southern Snowdonia. Main events include a 10km tidal ascent, 20km estuary challenge, 10km open canoe raft race and many Inner harbour events for all the family. Organised by Mawddach Rotary Club - in conjunction with Canoe Wales - in aid of Hope House Children's Hospice and local good causes. See www.paddlewales.com with updates on Twitter @paddlewales.



In brief

Canoe England sign Government Action Charter

Canoe England is proud to have signed the Government Action Charter 'Tackling Homophobia and Transphobia in Sport'. The Charter, which was launched at a Downing Street reception, aims to champion lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people within sport and allows organisations to pledge their support against all forms of discrimination.

For more information about the Charter visit: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/lgbt/.

Canoe England has also updated their Equality Policy, to include the Equality Act 2010. The new policy can be found at: www.canoe-england.org.uk/about/equality/.

Incorrect photo credit

In the October issue of Canoe Focus on Page 30, we printed an image of, what we thought, was Sue Hornby by Dave Manby. Since the issue was published we have since found out that the image was of Peter Montgomery and was taken by Peter Midwood. Please accept our apologies for any confusion caused.



2012 Dee River Festival

This year sees the very first Dee River Festival on March 24-25th. Based at Mile End Mill on North Wales' classic River Dee, it brings together top-level coaching workshops with a couple of evenings of off the water entertainment.

On the water, you can enjoy a range of coaching workshops from nationally recognised coaches including, Jules Bernard, Tom Parker, Nick Cunliffe and Andy Turton. As well as whitewater kayak and open canoe coaching at all levels, there are also workshops on stand up paddling from Anthony Ing from Stand Up Paddle board UK.

Friday night sees the UK premiere of Hanuman Airlines, the story of Nepalese paddler Sanu Babu Sunuwar's epic trip which involved climbing Everest, paragliding off the summit to the Sun Kosi, then paddling out to the Indian Ocean with an introduction by Peak UK's Pete Astles.

Saturday night features the first ever DRF talk battle. This fast-moving format gives eight paddlers ten minutes each to wow the audience with tales of adventures and derring-do. The winners – voted by the audience – will take away the trophy. Find out more details at www.deeriverfestival.co.uk.

Sharks bask in their winnings

The Sharks would like to say thank you to everybody from the canoeing world who voted for our project in the NatWest Community Force Award. The club applied for a chance to win £6,275 last summer and had to face a vote of the general public to see which project should win the cash.

NatWest launched CommunityForce in July last year, a new initiative to help support local charities, organisations and groups to raise publicity for their work and attract volunteers. The programme also provided the opportunity for three groups in each of the bank's 131 CommunityForce areas to win awards of £6,275 each. Organisations and charities applied for awards during the summer and an online public vote took place to decide which three organisations in each area would receive the awards.

The Sharks will use the money to buy competition canoes, to continue their development of youngsters enabling people to compete at the highest level without cost of equipment being a barrier. In recognition of the help and support from the canoeing world in general, these boats will be made available to other canoeist at appropriate events we attend.

Neal Underwood, the Shark's Chair, outlined plans for 2012, saying, "this money will help us to develop the sport locally, enabling more youngsters to compete at higher levels this year. We are hoping to start pool sessions for beginners at the William Byrd Pool, Harlington in the next few weeks, so they can learn the basics in a warm pool. From Easter we will be launching a series of sessions for newcomers. We will introduce people to the disciplines of slalom, marathon, sprint and wild water racing."



Jim Cranham



Jim Cranham, one of the great background figures of canoeing, sadly died in November after being diagnosed with prostate and spinal cancer. He will be sorely missed by the many hundreds of youngsters and adults who were introduced to paddling by him.

Best known as a founding member and first chairman of the original Longridge Canoe Club, his paddling started with the scouts in Streatham where he encouraged them to join the famous

Percy Blandford canoe trips and for many years led youngsters on trips down the Wye, Seven and Dart with the Somerset Scouts. At Longridge he encouraged a young Tim Cornish and even younger Ollie Harding to develop their canoeing. He would stand for hours up to his chest in the Thames wearing an early yellow latex dry suit that made him look like a deflated Michelin Man teaching rolling. In later years from his cabin cruiser IFFY, he would encourage the likes of Alan Ward and his godsons, Gareth Farrow and Piers Bucknell, to improve their slalom and freestyle paddling to international levels.

Jim was a friend to all and will be sorely missed. **Graham Bucknell**

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Annual Sea Symposium 14th & 15th July 2012

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In brief

Introducing the new Pulse 125 Tandem From Tooteg



Tootega Kayaks have announced their new Tandem sit-on-top kayak. Available late spring, this is the third boat in their popular Pulse range of kayaks. At twelve and a half feet long this kayak follows the same lines and styling as the other Pulse kayaks and is the first tandem kayak in their range.

Designed in house using the latest computer technology, Tootega have been able to fully develop the hull design to match the requirements of the craft and is suitable for all ages and abilities.

The Pulse 125 will be available in two models, a standard recreational specification and a fishing specific Huntsman edition.

More information can be found at www.tootega.com

Raising canoe polo awareness

Canoe polo was invited back to the Tullet Prebon London Boat Show at the London ExCel Exhibition Centre in the Docklands. A series of demonstration games were played from the 6-8th January to raise awareness of canoe polo and watersports in general.

A large variety of sports were exhibited in the pool this year, bringing together the best players from Great Britain and around the world. Six British, two Italian, two French, one German and one Irish made up the teams which were switched around for each session, to allow for even teams, fast and furious games with close score lines. The players found it to be more enjoyable in some respects because they could compete with others

of the highest calibre from around the world, and the level of play reflected the skill level of the players to overcome the language barrier while demonstrating the sport at the highest standard. The exhibition was a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of canoe polo as one of the fastest growing watersports in the country.

An enjoyable weekend was had by all with spectators taking an interest in finding a local club to try out canoe polo for themselves.

With thanks to Curly Barker for his organisation of the event and to the players for their huge commitment – some travelled hundreds of miles to show their sport in the most professional light.



Above: Polo at the London Boat Show. Photo by Glenn Summerbell.

Peter Norris Midwood 1954-2011



By Peter Montgomery. I know many will be saddened to learn of Peter's passing, he was a personality that inspired and reached out to so many people in the paddling world.

The following comments were made to me, from friends and family in describing him, "A big man, a big heart, a big personality, a consummate professional, a private person, a gentle giant, a solid friend and family man, a man I thought I knew, a man with alternative names – Fido (from his family), Doris and Driftwood (from his paddling friends), adventurous, thoughtful, generous, selfless, and cheeky."

As a young teenager at Shrewsbury School an enthusiastic teacher introduced him to paddling and he quickly rose through the rankings in slalom and in the coaching scheme.

His unmistakable relaxed paddling style saw him taking on many impressive adventures and first descents in far corners of the world during the 70s, 80s and 90s; the Verdon, the Grand Canyon, the Orinoco and K2 Braldu expeditions with Mike Jones and company, the Fraser River, the Ganges, a solo crossing of the Irish Sea from Anglesey to Dublin and countless other journeys in Europe and the UK.

In the late 70s he became a key member in helping to organise the Mike Jones Rally after the loss of Mike on the Braldu trip. It became the largest paddling event in the world and ploughed back all its proceeds into worthwhile canoeing projects, becoming a catalyst in helping to get them off the ground; the Holme Pierrepont slalom course was one such beneficiary.

In his coaching and professional life Peter was well qualified in many outdoor activities and will be remembered for his instructing at Plas-y-Brenin and more recently YMCA Lakeside. He

also managed The White Water Centre at Trywern in the 80s and worked for a good many years at Pyranha.

In his spare time he became well known for his long distance open water swims and was a very proficient bell ringer at cathedrals up and down the country.

In recent years when his health prevented him from taking part in his favoured pastimes, Peter took up gliding and quickly improved in his skills to where he flew solo in an impressively short period and went on to receive awards for his outstanding progress.

Peter lost his battle in recent weeks when his illness returned; he described this journey to me, as paddling a long and difficult rapid with a particular stopper to avoid during its negotiation. We will all remember him in different ways, I will remember the many hours of conversations intermixed with his impish humour and teasing comments.

Our thoughts go out to his family and friends in their loss at this time.

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£10,000 grants for clubs

For canoe clubs across the country, Sport England's Small Grants fund has proved particularly successful during 2011. A number of our clubs applied for this grant last year, with canoe clubs seeing a 70% success rate – above the national average of 56% for other sports – and being awarded between £300 and £10,000.



The Sport England Small Grants programme is available to all not-for-profit organisations to help deliver community projects, which will either grow or sustain participation in sport, or support talent development in your area. Sport England will consider funding equipment; taking canoeing to the community; or developing a new club or section of your existing canoe club.

One club who was successful in receiving a grant was Salford Canoe Polo Club who's club was growing so quickly that they didn't have enough equipment to cope with demand from the local community. "Our project was to satisfy demand for canoe polo in the local area and expand the club, through a youth and women initiative," explained Chris Smith who was involved in applying for the grant. "The application form is intimidating, but Sport England provide a lot of useful literature," said Chris, "Our club discussed the broad aims and then assigned a sub-committee to continue the application process."

Alternatively, has your club considered applying for a Sport England Inspired Facilities grant for up to £50,000? This grant focuses on making it easier for clubs to improve and refurbish existing facilities or transform non-sporting venues into modern grass roots sports facilities. This programme also enables clubs to apply for funding to purchase equipment, which will help improve the quality and quantity of canoeing opportunities (and not to replace worn-out existing equipment). If, by improving your current facilities and equipment, your club feels they will attract more members and help the local community then this grant may be for you.

To find out more about how Salford Polo Canoe Club were successful in their bid then visit www.canoe-england.org.uk/volunteers. If your club is planning a new activity, project or are improving your facilities this year, then why not apply for a grant! More information about the Sport England Small Grants Programme and Inspired Facilities programme can be found at www.sportengland.org/funding/small_grants and www.inspiredfacilities.sportengland.org respectively.

In brief

Volunteer resources

The volunteers section of the website will be continually updated to provide clubs and volunteers with new and updated templates and information. Don't forget, if you are a volunteer coordinator and haven't registered yet, then make sure you do to receive your coordinator resource pack to support you in your role.

Young volunteers

If you are under 21 and would like to be a part of the Youth Action Network then we would love to hear from you! You can also join YAN on Facebook – the page is a secure online forum allowing you to have your say, find out about new initiatives and help YAN provide the voice of young people. If you would like to join the group, please email Julia Robertson.

For more information visit www.canoe-england.org.uk/volunteers or contact Julia Robertson, Volunteer Development Officer julia.robertson@canoe-england.org.uk

Club Forums 2012

This year's Canoe England Club Forums are due to take place over Spring 2012 and will focus on two extremely important aspects of club organisation and protocol: good governance and safety management. Tutors from runningsports will lead sessions on these two areas and clubs will also have the opportunity to meet Canoe England staff and share ideas in the popular open forum.

Each club can bring up to four people with places costing £20 per person. For more information and to book your place see page 21 of this magazine, contact your Paddlesport Development Officer or visit: www.canoe-england.org.uk/volunteers.

Devizes to Westminster – volunteers

Devizes to Westminster (DW) is organised and run entirely by volunteers. One of the challenges is finding the several hundred people required each year to run the race. Here are some examples of what volunteers can do.

- Checkpoint crews: record the time and numbers of boats passing through checkpoints and report to race control.
- Campsite crew: assist with the organisation of the campsite for the four-day race.
- Marshals: control the movement of supporters at particular points along the course.
- Westminster: there is a big operation that feeds paddlers and looks after the safety crews operating on the tideway as well as marshalling spectators in the finish area.
- Organisational team members: people prepared to assist throughout the year with the race, whether in the context of publicity, finance, safety, communications or negotiating the necessary permissions to run the race.

Volunteering is a way of giving something back to the race for those who have done it in the past and also a way of familiarising yourself with it if you are thinking of doing it in the future. It can be great fun, very rewarding and many of the team come back year after year.

If you are interested in helping in some capacity over the Easter Weekend (6-9th April 2012) or want further information please contact Yvonne Riley on yvonne.riley2@btinternet.com

For more information about Devizes to Westminster visit www.dwrace.org.uk



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An inclusive pa

The Lake District Calvert Trust (LDCT) Outreach team and the Not Forgotten Association (NFA) have been working together for a number of years providing opportunities for injured service personnel to take part in canoe expeditions. A group of injured service men, supported by LDCT staff, recently undertook the challenge to paddle the River Spey starting at Loch Insh and finishing at Spey Bay. The group included individuals who were amputees, those with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and three serving Royal Marines.



Above: Swiftly, a member of the group.

Paracanoe assessment day

There will be a GB Paracanoe Assessment Day on Saturday 24th March 2012. The day is for those wishing to be considered for selection to the GB Paracanoe team for the 2012 Paracanoe World Championships in Poznan. Athletes will be invited to undergo two time trials from which their fastest time will be put forward. Following the day, successful candidates will be invited to compete in the GB Paracanoe selection races at the April Sprint Regatta at Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham.

Paddle-Ability Top Club

Look out for the new Paddle-Ability Top Club bolt-on that will be available to clubs from spring 2012. This accreditation will be for clubs that already hold Top Club accreditation. The aim of Paddle-Ability Top Club is to allow for disabled members of the public who are hoping to join a canoe club to easily identify a club near them that provides quality provision for disabled paddlers.

A number of avenues of accreditation for clubs providing access to paddlesport for disabled people were investigated. Following some research it was felt that clubs already running at Top Club standard only needed to fulfil a few more criteria to show they were providing a high standard of Paddle-Ability activity.

Thank you to Southampton Canoe Club who kindly agreed to pilot the project. On reviewing the accreditation process they felt that working through the criteria was not only helpful but also very achievable. To find out more email: Paddle-Ability@canoe-england.org.uk.

For more information visit www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/paddleability or contact Clarisse Smith, Disability Officer on 07702 954949 or email: clarisse.smith@canoe-england.org.uk



Above: The group stopping for lunch.

ddling trip on the Spey

Arriving at Loch Insh, the group spent their first morning refreshing canoe strokes and introducing some individuals to open canoeing. Armed with bits of soft foam, gaffa tape, tool kit, moulded seats and anti-slip matting, all were fully prepared to adapt the canoes to provide improved seating for those who needed extra support. A large consideration planning the trip was the suitability of access. Some research identified suitable access points along the river to ensure everyone maintained their independence.

First stop on the trip was Aviemore. Good water levels carried the canoes across the loch and downstream past stunning scenery and the Cairngorm Mountains. Arriving at Badaguish Outdoor Centre, the group's base for the week, the Royal Marines were notified that they were to be recalled early reducing the time that they had to complete their 66 miles to two days.

Agreeing to skip Aviemore to Grantown, the group moved to the more exciting Knockando rapids on the second day. During this day, it became apparent that the seat height was not appropriate for one of the double leg amputees, making it difficult to brace the canoe. Further adjustments were made to the seats before getting back on the river towards Aberlour.

The final day's target was the sea. With a huge sense of excitement, the group set off on the final stretch of river and enjoyed the ever-changing scenery and constant flow of water pushing them to the sea. A last few cheeky rapids kept everyone on their toes and under the road bridge at Fochabers signalling a few miles to go.



Above: On Knockando Rapids.

Excitement set the team racing to the finish. The timing was perfect, rounding the last bend to see the sea in wonderful sunshine.

Heavy showers, swimming and early departures failed to dampen the team's spirit. The whole team felt that the aims of developing confidence and self esteem had not only been met but also had far exceeded personal expectations. The group felt that with a few adaptations it was easy to make the expedition achievable for disabled people and wanted their experiences included in Canoe Focus to inspire others to take on the challenge of similar expeditions.

Are you planning or have you been on a similar expedition? Tell us more by emailing: Paddle-Ability@canoe-england.org.uk.



Above: At Spey Bay.

Paracanoe training team member receives Help for Heroes grant



Mark Harding, a member of the GB Paracanoe training squad, has been allocated £4,674 from Help the Heroes. Based in Cumbria, when not at Hedley Court or GB Paracanoe training camps, Mark joined the squad after taking part in a GB Paracanoe

Talent Identification event.

With his stature and strength, Mark has taken to the sport as a natural Va'a paddler and has taken to this style of craft with ease. Keen to progress his skills in the Va'a, Mark felt that it was important that he had access to as much equipment as possible including a canoe ergo and a Tevanui boat. To assist with paying for this equipment Mark applied to Help for Heroes for funding through their Quick Reaction Fund (QRF) and was successful in receiving a grant of £4,674.

The Help for Heroes QRF was launched to provide immediate support to wounded servicemen, women and their families; for urgent cases within 72 hours of the need being identified and is administered through the services own charities (ABF The Soldiers' Charity, RNRMC, Special Forces charities and Battle Back). If an individual is, or has been, a member of the military and has been injured in the line of duty, either in action or in training, then the QRF is available to support them to assist in making their life easier. To find out more about Help for Heroes visit www.helpforheroes.org.uk.

New River Wye access facilities

By Chris Hawkesworth

Every so often something happens in the recreational aspects of our sport to put us on notice of things to come. These are not, in reality, breakthroughs but more of a significant shift in the approach to an old issue.

On November 2nd last year two new landings and launch facilities were opened on the Wye: One at Ross-on-Wye and the other at Kerne Bridge. Installed by the Environment Agency (The Wye Navigation Authority) and the Wye Valley (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), these Andy Laird designed ramps have been installed to help both able bodied and assisted disabled paddlers to access the water's edge.

In order to fully comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, ramps cannot be steeper than 1:12. As a result, on steep river banks many yards

of river bank have to be used up to facilitate the gradient to the detriment of both the visual and the flora and fauna environment. These two Wye facilities feature a back and forth ramped approach and though steeper than 1:12, wheelchair users can be assisted up and down the ramps and the able bodied can use the ramps, at any water level. This means that wheelchair restricted paddlers can use the river putting in at Ross, knowing they can pull out at Kerne. The ramps are wide enough for kayaks to be carried and canoes can also be slowly fed one at a time down the centre of the ramps.

Canoe England, the EA and the Wye Valley AONB have been working for many years to try to bring more access points into use on the Wye. Though these two are replacements at existing sites they are a considerable step forward, of which I hope there will be more.

We all know that paddling is popular, particularly amongst disabled people and I would rate these new developments as a marker for the future.

Fryer's Wharf

Another very interesting discovery on the Wye has occurred down at and close to the tidal limit, just above Tintern Abbey on the right bank. Here, local historians and archaeologists have unearthed the top half of an ancient slipway, known locally as Fryer's Wharf. The cleverly cobbled slipway lies alongside the church and is thought to run not only down to the water's edge but also in Roman Times it was used as a ford.

This is of course is all good news since it could give us and other navigators another Ingress/Egress point. Even better news is that the Environment Agency have grant aided and given the Fryer's Wharf group permission for a further exploratory archaeological dig down at water level.

The bad news is that Welsh Water in the 1950s built the village sewage pumping station, on top of the slipway and Welsh Water are currently denying that the slipway is a public highway and being very obstructive to any investigations to move it, or re-build it underground nearby using modern engineering. Monmouth Canoe Club has already donated £100 and is helping with the work. Any cash and other contributions would be greatly received.



Above: Andy Laird the designer of the new Wye Access Facilities demonstrates the Kerne Bridge ramps to members of the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee.



Above: The professional team behind the new Wye Access facilities on the occasion of the Ross-on-Wye Access opening, last November.



Above: The partially uncovered Roman slipway at Fryer's Wharf Tintern, the River Wye is behind the pumping station.

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Safeguarding and Protecting Children important contacts

Canoe England 24-hour child protection:

Email: childprotection@bcu.org.uk

Mobile: 0777 570 7364

(For use by individuals wishing to report incidents outside of office hours).

BCU Child Protection, Vulnerable Adults and Harassment Lead Officer:

Mike Devlin: 0845 370 9514.

Canoe England Child Protection Support Officer:

Nigel Timmins: 07740 820 113

(For BCU individuals who have received an allegation against them with respect to child protection and require support).

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline

Tel: 0800 800 5000 (24 hour).

Childline: 0800 1111.

Recruiting new sport volunteers



The Sport Makers programme, funded by the National Lottery, will recruit tens of thousands of new sports volunteers

aged 16 years and over to organise and lead community sporting activities across the country.

Sport Makers are the people who directly make sport happen at a local level. Some Sport Makers will organise sport for themselves and their friends, colleagues and neighbours. Others won't be taking part themselves, but will be doing all those other things that make the sporting activity possible.

Everyone who chooses to become a Sport Maker will be invited by their county sports partnership (CSP) to an inspiring workshop near to where they live or work. They will then be supported to find local opportunities that suit them to increase participation in sport.

These Sport Makers will organise and support hundreds of thousands of new hours of grass roots sport across the country. While doing so, they will bring the Olympic and Paralympic values to life in every community.

Sport Makers will be fully inclusive and target participants including people who have a

disability, both males and females and participants from BME groups. The programme will run until September 2013.

Outcomes

Sport Makers will ensure that:

- 50,000 new Sport Makers are recruited and invited to an orientation workshop delivered locally through a CSP and by an inspirational trainer.
- 40,000 Sport Makers take up opportunities to increase participation for a minimum of 10 hours each, with support from their CSP. Of those deployed, it is anticipated that 20,000 will continue to volunteer in sport beyond these 10 hours.
- The Olympic and Paralympic values are brought to life for the Sport Makers through their orientation workshop so that they feel part of the Olympic movement and put these values into action in raising participation.
- As a result of Sport Makers, many thousands of new opportunities for people aged 16 and over to participate in sport will be created.

For more information visit www.sportmakers.co.uk

Canoeing Days are changing in 2012



Over the last few years, Canoe England's Go Canoeing Days have been very successful increasing in popularity and demand. Thanks to the help and support from clubs and centres nationwide, last year over 100 events

provided the opportunity for more than 5,500 people to be introduced to canoeing.

As a result of the successful increase in participation numbers Canoe England have received additional funding from Sport England to create a bigger and better 'Go Canoeing' programme, providing a simple pathway of opportunities for people to enjoy canoeing more regularly.

What will be new?

The new programme will have a range of captivating and inspiring opportunities and resources aimed at the adult and family leisure market. These include local starter sessions, guided tours and events as well as information on where to go and how to get started. A dedicated Go Canoeing website, to be launched by the early summer, will be the key resource for the programme.

The project will be developing in the first year and the full programme of resources and opportunities will be gradually phased in.

What will change for clubs and centres?

There will be only a few changes: Go Canoeing Days will now be called Go Canoeing Starter Sessions and will follow a similar outline as previous years. The main difference will be the need for a slight increase in the detail of information you provide at registration. This will allow your club or

centre more presence on the new website supporting you to have an even more successful day.

How can you help?

The aim of the starter session is to provide a positive and welcoming paddling experience for those new to, or returning to the sport. Clubs and centres are encouraged to provide a bite-size starter session allowing people to get on the water and enjoy canoeing in a managed environment. If you already run starter sessions we are not asking you to put on more, just that you let us know by registering your event, so we can help you promote it. If you do not already run starter sessions maybe it is something your club or centre would like to look into as it is a great way to introduce new people to canoeing.

How to register your Go Canoeing Starter Session?

In the first instance registration will be completed via an electronic registration form, which can be downloaded at: www.canoe-england.org.uk/clubs-i-centres/go-canoeing/.

What are the benefits of registering your event?

Once registered you will receive Canoe England support, including:

- Being part of a large nationwide programme, which will raise your club or centre profile.
- Being part of increasing the profile and participation numbers of canoeing.
- Promotion through Canoe England publications and newsletters.
- Promotion on a dedicated Go Canoeing website.
- Potential, new members.
- Resources, guidance and templates.

CLUB FORUMS

2012



To register your interest and request a booking form, please email the contact for your area, as listed below.

East Midlands & West Midlands 29th January

Venue: Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre, LE4 5PN

Contact: stuart.briggs@canoe-england.org.uk

Book your place by 19th January 2012

East 4th February

Venue: Lee Valley White Water Centre

Contact: jeff.toser@canoe-england.org.uk

Book your place by 25th January 2012

North East & Cumbria 5th February

Venue: Newburn Leisure Centre, NE15 8ND

Contact: ray.hudspith@canoe-england.org.uk

Book your place by 26th January 2012

North West 11th February

Venue: Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre, L22 1RR

Contact: gareth.field@canoe-england.org.uk

Book your place by 1st February 2012

South East 11th February

Venue: Runways End Outdoor Centre

Contact: chris.edge@canoe-england.org.uk

Book your place by 1st February 2012

Yorkshire 3rd March

Venue: Kellingley Social Centre, Knottingley (Knottingley CC)

Contact: phil.scowcroft@canoe-england.org.uk

Book your place by 22nd February 2012

Wessex 4th March

Venue: University of the West of England, Frenchay Campus, BS16 1QY

Contact: michael.sims@canoe-england.org.uk

Book your place by 23rd February 2012

London 17th March

Venue: West Reservoir Centre, Stoke Newington, N4 2HA

Contact: clive.whitton@canoe-england.org.uk

Book your place by 7th March 2012

Devon & Cornwall 18th March

Venue: Launceston

Contact: andy.davey@canoe-england.org.uk

Book your place by 8th March 2012

Background

Good Governance and Safety Management are key areas in the operational procedures of any Club. This year's Club Forums will focus on these two extremely important aspects of Club organisation and protocol with visiting Tutors from Running Sports and facilitated by Canoe England Staff.

Cost

£20 per person
Each club can bring up to 4 people

Programme

- 9.30 Arrival
- 9.45 Opening Remarks
- 10.00 Workshop 1
- 12.30 Lunch (will be provided)
- 13.00 Workshop 2
- 15.00 Open Forum
- 15.30 Summative Session
- 16.00 Depart

Workshops

1. Safety Management:

- Advice and guidance
- Risk management

2. Governance, Finance & Welcoming:

- Creating a welcoming club
- Different types of club
- Managing money

In brief

Duddon Canoe Club awards

Duddon Canoe Club have recently been awarded runner-up as Canoe England's Club of the Year. Following on, John Sherwen received Canoe England Cumbrian Coach of the Year award for his services to the club. Congratulations to John and the club for all its success.

Bishop Auckland Clubmark

Congratulations to Bishop Auckland Canoe and Kayak Club who have recently reached the standards of Clubmark. The club has only been in existence since May 2010 and registered for the scheme in April 2011. Affiliating in 10 months demonstrates that Clubmark is a process that helps a club to grow and support its members.

Student engagement

Canoe England attended the BUCS wild water race at Washburn at the end of November to improve communications between Canoe England and this valued target audience.

The event attracted many university teams and the paddlesport participation representatives gained invaluable feedback and left contact details for further follow up communications.

Students were able to find out about reduced affiliation fees and boat insurance as well as a chance to discuss various Sport England initiatives such as Sportivate.

Competitors were inspired by the chance to try out an ergo challenge for 200m sprints. Other students used this opportunity to gain invaluable coaching feedback on forward paddling technique.

If any other students would like to be included in future consultations please contact the Paddlesport Participation Programme at Canoe England.

Revamp for Tyne Tour 2012

The Tyne Tour began as a rally in memory of Mike Jones, an iconic figure in British canoeing. In 2005, Hexham Canoe Club took over the organisation of what is thought to be the largest mass participation paddling event in Europe.

As a result of a review by the organisers, changes are planned from 2012 that will emphasise the tour as a gathering of paddlers. They hope the improvements will succeed in attracting more club paddlers, families and smaller groups, as well as continuing the tour's appeal to large student clubs.

The plans include: re-branding the event as a paddling festival; extending the remit of the tour to include more touring sections of the Tyne; holding more talks, seminars and films during the weekend; working more closely with Canoe England and improving links with Northumberland Tourism and the Northumberland National Park.

Follow the tour's plans at www.tynetour.co.uk and please email ideas for the organisers to info@tynetour.co.uk

English Open Canoe Symposium



In the middle of November YMCA Lakeside on Windermere turned into an open canoe mecca, with over 300 open canoeists from around the country descending on Lakeside to be part of the biggest open canoe symposium in the UK.

On both Saturday and Sunday, sessions ran throughout the day, locally on the lake or away on the local rivers. With sessions being run by Lakeside's international coaches on canoe freestyle, poling or personal skills with Becky Mason. Alongside the coaches who all offered their time voluntarily, Ray Goodwin was on hand to promote and sign his new open canoe book as well as pass on his wisdom.

On the Saturday night sponsored by Brookbank and White Water Consultancy, the tri-annual Harry Rock Poling competition took place

followed by slides from Becky Mason and other speakers.

On the Sunday morning, Jonathon Burgess was awarded the Canoe England Cumbrian Region Event Volunteer of the Year award for all the hard work he puts into the symposium.

A huge thanks has to be given to the organising team, Real Adventure for co-ordinating the bookings and the retailers who brought masses of demo boats for people to try. If you have never been to a symposium before the next is in Scotland at Glenmore Lodge in September.



Twin Clubmark success

Both Kool Kayakers Canoe Club in Doncaster and Manvers Waterfront Boat Club in Rotherham have been working hard over recent months to meet the requirements for Clubmark accreditation and it was great to see their efforts finally rewarded.

Kool Kayakers have a particularly active club programme and are out on the rivers most weekends. Their members regularly feature at recreational tours and events with their fluorescent pink tops making them stand out from the crowd.



Manvers Waterfront Boat Club has been a great success since it was formed only three years ago. The club is now developing to include the competitive disciplines of canoe polo, sprint and slalom to compliment their established recreational canoeing sessions.

Their certificates were presented to them by the region's Paddlesport Development Officer, Phil Scowcroft. Kevin and Sharman Jones received the certificate for Kool Kayakers and Nigel Parkes and Trevor Couldron for Manvers.

A most successful season for Norwich

Norwich Canoe Club has had its most successful season ever, winning the National Marathon Team Championship against 65 other clubs, producing a host of international paddlers who have had huge success for GB, and widening its links with the local community.

At the end of October Norwich Canoe Club were shortlisted from hundreds of clubs in Norfolk for three Active Norfolk sports awards. Norwich Canoe Club became Norfolk Club of the Year and Dyson Pendle became Coach of the Year, Albert Hicks narrowly missed out on Young Sportsman Of The Year after selection to the final three.

As a result of these wins Norwich Canoe Club joined the other county winners of the Eastern region in December at the BBC East awards

evening. It was an amazing night of success for the club, not only was the Head Coach shortlisted to win Coach of the Year, Norwich Canoe Club won BBC East Club of the Year!

Winning BBC East Club Of the Year is a huge achievement for Norwich Canoe Club and not only reflects the inspirational success of the elite paddlers, senior and junior, at major races, but also, the huge achievement of the club paddlers, young and old, on winning the National Marathon Championships 2011. It is a recognition of the way the club tries so hard to include everyone no matter what their aspirations, to encourage families, and to have a fun atmosphere that contributes as much as it can to the local community.



Volunteers recognised

During 2011 all the English regions were requested to collect nominations for the Regional Volunteer Awards. The Regional Development Team whittled them down to select a winner in each category.

In some cases this proved to be a difficult task as the standard was very high. The eventual winners in Team Central East were:

Young Volunteer: Liam Healy (Dereham CG)

Event Volunteer: Maureen Bruce (HYMB)

Community Volunteer: Angela Aldam (Bishops Stortford CC)

Coach of the Year: David Barton (Cambridge CC)
Paddlepower Coach Award: Ian Whitehead (Clacton CC)

Performance Coach: Martin Davies (HYMB)

Education Award: Christopher Davies (Maldon & Dengie CC)

Impact on Disability Canoeing: Rachel Turner (Dereham CG)

Access & Environment Volunteer: Rob Bates (Viking KC)

Outstanding Contribution: Francis Turner (Colchester CC)

The awards were presented at the Regional ACM, on Saturday 26th November by Rob Bates (Chair) in front of a rather crowded room of paddlers from all over the East region.

The region also recognised those nominated for Long Service Awards: Christopher Davies, Martin Davies, Francis Turner, Catherine Croft and Jim Croft.

With so many volunteers working for the clubs and other organisations throughout the team, please take time in the summer of 2012, to nominate someone who you think deserves to be recognised for what they put into our wonderful sport.



Above: Angela Aldam



Above: Chris Davies

In brief

New Paddlesport Development Officer



Please welcome Ben Seal into the participation team in his new role as PDO to support paddlers, clubs, centres and other partners across Team Central. Ben comes from a club and Centre background. A graduate from Sheffield University, with a degree in Business Studies, he has spent six years instructing in the outdoors in Yorkshire and most recently at Darley Barn in Derby. He is an active member of Midland Canoe Club and can be found enjoying all aspects of paddlesport on his home stretch of the Derwent near Derby. Ben is looking forward to meeting paddlers, volunteers and coaches at a range of canoeing events, activities and clubs. Ben can be contacted on 07725 277842 or at Ben.seal@canoe-england.org.uk.

Children in Need

The Marriott Hotel group, led by Dhiren Varand, the Leisure Club Manager and working alongside the Participation team at Canoe England, decided to hold a fundraising event for the BBC Children in Need Appeal on Friday 18th November, across English regions.

The North West region picked up the challenge, ably supported by Phil Scowcroft, and it turned out to be a very close north/south competition. With Worsley Park, Manchester starting at 8am, and Waltham Abbey at 10am, the late starter had the advantage, as Worsley Park realised that the updates they were giving were just providing a target for the other hotel to aim at.

Twelve hours of continuously pounding away on the Kayakpro Ergos, even with the teams rotating every 10 minutes, took a heavy toll on the participants, and at 8pm, Worsley Park achieved a very creditable distance of 95km and 288.4m, but this was not enough to hold off the Waltham Abbey crew, who achieved 100km and 654.5m.

Well done to all that took part, especially as it was used to raise funds for a worthy cause.



In brief

WWR Youth Club Champions

Youth canoe clubs from all over the UK competed in the 2011 National Youth Club Championship on the River Irwell near Manchester. Wiltshire Youth Canoe Club were crowned champions ahead of second placed Duddon Canoe Club.

WYCC chairman, Andy Lloyd, said, "This is a fantastic result for the club, which highlights the dedication and commitment of our youngsters as this was a very young team that we sent to compete also not forgetting the coaches and parents who all play an important part in encouraging the children."

If you would like to have a go at recreational or competition paddling for yourself, contact Jon Finch on 07711 055784 or come along to Melksham Adventure Centre, King George V Playing Fields on a Wednesday from 16.30-18.00.

Surrey CC achieve Clubmark

Surrey CC was celebrated last month when they were awarded Clubmark. The most recent club in the south east to achieve Clubmark has only been in existence for 16 months and growing rapidly with now just under 200 members. Part of the club's success is their achievement in gaining funds in order to offer free pool sessions to members as well as up to four weekly run sessions at their current base in Shepperton Marina.

Supporting development

Procter & Gamble (P&G) have donated three slalom kayaks to support junior competition development at Shepperton Slalom Canoe Club.

The club has a strong heritage of developing top slalom athletes including Helen Reeves, who won a bronze medal at the Athens Olympics in 2004 and more recently Mallory Franklin, who represents Great Britain. Shepperton continues to nurture potential future champions such as England J14 squad paddlers Noah Hazelwood, Piers Oliphant and Hanna Oliphant.

Canoe England slalom coach Gordon Walling, who is based at the club commented, "Even at a young age the sport is highly competitive and the right equipment can make a big difference to performance. P&G's generous donation enables a wide range of young people to access top-level equipment during training and competing at events. This enables them to progress more quickly through the ranking system to a point that they are able to invest in their own equipment."



Photograph by Jason Gelver

Free guided paddle

The first of the new 'Discover Your Estuary' canoe trails, which aim to introduce the Medway Estuary, will be launched with a free guided paddle on 11th February.

The paddle, which is being organised by the art group 'Dilute To Taste', will begin at Riverside Country Park in Rainham, Kent at 1pm and will be led by River Medway enthusiast Dave Wise.

"The trail is suitable for complete beginners as well as being of interest to more experienced paddlers," explains Dave, Dilute To Taste spokesman and keen canoeist, "We'll head out at first to Nor Marsh and paddle halfway around that before crossing a creek to take a closer look at Darnet Island. After this we'll go back to Nor, by which time it'll be high tide and it'll be possible to paddle right across the top of the island, past Bronze Age burial sites, back to Riverside."

As well as pointing out the historical sites of Nor and Darnet, including the grand Victorian Fort and remnants of military piers, Dave will also reveal how to paddle the estuary safely, making use of the tides and winds to avoid the thick black mud, currents and wrecks that make the area potentially hazardous.

The trail is one of four canoe trails that will be unveiled this year, and films showing the routes



Above: Darnet Fort.

and what you can expect to see whilst you are out there can be seen on a website created by the art group, called 'www.DiscoverYourEstuary.com'.

The canoe trail is free. Anybody wanting to attend the event, or to be kept in touch about the Discover Your Estuary project, can register his or her interest by emailing info@discoveryourestuary.com.

The canoe trails and the website project itself are funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The Big Lottery Fund distributes half of the National Lottery good cause funding across the UK. The Fund is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need.

London Volunteer Awards

At the recent regional volunteer awards three people received awards for service to the paddling community of London.

Beth Ettinger deservedly received the Coach of the Year award and had the following to say, "I was greatly shocked to receive the London Volunteer & Recognition Award for Coach of the Year! I would like to thank the RDT, my employer (Laburnum Boat Club) and all the young people and coaches who I have worked with and have supported me over the year."

Mickey Gordon received an award for Outstanding Contribution for the many years he has given to the development at Leaside Centre and was extremely grateful. "It has been my sincere pleasure but mostly a deeply felt privilege to have helped introduce this fantastic sporting pastime to other people both young and the young

at heart. I have been passionate about paddlesports since it was first introduced to me some 50 years ago and the passion still remains."

Daniel Ellis received the award for Performance Coach which was accepted by Adam White, senior instructor at Westminster Boating Base, "Daniel has volunteered at Westminster Boating Base for several years in many capacities but notably forming a slalom squad and training them over a period of two years to a respectable set of results at both the London Youth Games and national divisions. Keen and enthusiastic he has developed a peer group and welcomed many new youngsters to the sport whilst pushing the more advanced on."

Congratulations to all the winners of this year's Volunteer Awards and thank you for the years of service and dedication to the development of our sport within the region.



Above: Beth Ettinger



Above: Mickey Gordon

BCU-UKCC Qualifications



Just a selection of the many BCU-UKCC Courses on offer at Plas y Brenin in 2012

BCU-UKCC Performance & Leadership Award Courses

Generic Paddlesport

- Two Star Training 10-11 May, 26-27 May, 23-24 Jun, 11-12 Aug £225
- Two Star Assessment 12 May, 26 May, 09 Jun £115

White Water Kayak

- 3 Star Training 09-10 Jun, 07-08 Jul, 21-22 Jul £235
- 3 Star Assessment 28 Apr, 25 Aug £115
- 4 Star Training 06-07 Oct, 17-18 Nov, 24-25 Nov £235
- 4 Star Assessment 28-29 Jan, 08-09 Sep £235

Sea Kayak

- 3 Star Training 19-20 May, 30 Jun-01 Jul £235
- 3 Star Assessment 21 Jul, 01 Sep £115
- 4 Star Training (inc. Nav & Tidal) 06-08 Jul, 07-09 Sep, 12-14 Oct £355
- 4 Star Assessment 08-09 Sep, 27-28 Oct £235

Canoe

- 3 Star Training 19-20 May, 07-08 Jul £235
- 3 Star Assessment 21 Jul, 8 Sep £115
- 4 Star Training 01-02 Sep, 22-23 Sep £235
- 4 Star Assessment 18-19 Aug, 27-28 Oct £235

Why not consider a complete package for your four star. Over five days complete your training plus any other mandatory elements such as BCU White Water Safety & Rescue Or BCU Coastal Navigation & Tidal Planning Module plus you'll get to consolidate your skills, gain further feedback from our experienced instructors so you'll leave with an action plan towards assessment. These courses are £505 including accommodation, meals, boat and equipment hire.

These packages are also available for five star again at £505 including accommodation, meals, boat and equipment hire.

BCU-UKCC Paddlesport Coach Courses

- Level 1 Coach 13-17 Feb, 12-16 Mar, 02-06 Apr, 16-20 Apr, 28 May-01 Jun £500
- Level 2 Coach Training 05-09 Mar, 23-27 Apr, 14-16 May £500
- Level 2 Coach Assessment 04 May, 15 Jun £105
- Level 3 Coach Generic Core 27 Feb-02 Mar, 19-23 Mar £440

Further dates are available on our website.

Also, Foundation Coaching Modules, Level 2 Transfer Training, Level 2 Moderate Water & Level 3 Discipline Specific Training & Assessments plus a full range of safety courses including Rescue 3.

For more information on any of these courses, drop us an email or give us a call



PLAS Y BRENNIN

www.pyb.co.uk/bcu

Donegal's coas

It was nearly ten o'clock when we left Burtonport in County Donegal for a campsite on Eighter Island, en-route to Aranmore Island or Aran. When we landed on a small beach off a narrow channel, it was almost dark and we quickly pitched our tents. There was only time for a small fire and a little chat as we were tired after, in some cases, a day's work and fairly long journey from Larne and Coleraine.

Feature by: Jimmy Christie. **We woke to a calm, clear day with little wind. Otter tracks crossed the beach. It was perfect weather for our weekend's goal, which was to kayak round Aran. This is not a paddle for a windy day as the full force of the Atlantic batters the cliffs on the west and huge swells and conflicting tides create confused water with boomers in the south east. Indeed, conditions were almost perfect so a couple of day's exploration were on the cards under the command of cave dweller John Vance of The Causeway Coast Kayak Association. The others were Franci, Raymond, Owen and Jimmy.**

Of course there are different mindsets in sea kayaking: the 'a to b as fast as you can' people and the explorers. We are definitely in the latter category and no cave or fissure is too small for Vance. Every so often that extra bit of exploration pays off as a startling sea arch or connecting cave is discovered. John did keep telling us that most of us would probably never get this opportunity again so we needed to make the best of it. And we did.

Pleasures of the Causeway coast

We were on the water at 09.00 and by way of the Ballagh Rock light we headed across the one kilometre channel for the North East of Aran. For over four hours, we paddled into caves and along 120 metre cliffs. Our knowledge of geology is almost non-existent but millennia had battered this coastline into a series of weird and wonderful shapes. I suppose sea arches are one of the most magnificent features borne of the immensity and force of the sea to be seen in rock. It makes you shudder to think of the



Above: One of the many hidden beaches.

sea's power in a winter storm building up over a 2,750-mile fetch from America.

There was one landing beach as we rounded Rinawros on the north west end of the island but we spurned that by choosing a more interesting shingle beach further on. It proved impossible to land there and so coffee addicts had to wait for relief. This came in the form of a sunny storm beach where we stripped off our sweaty gear and dried out.

We collected some wood for our fire that night, which saved Franci's Inuit paddle for another time. We set off for another four hours of great coastal scenery. At the south west corner opposite Bear Island (marked Illanarran on the 1960s map) as we emerged from a huge sea arch we saw a small kayak like craft in the distance so we approached. It belonged to three foreign lads who had scrambled down a gulley in the cliffs and were using the inflatable to paddle out to a magnificent sea stack. If we had been ten minutes earlier we could have seen them up this impressive vertical face.

Caves were numerous but not as interesting as other stretches of the Donegal coast. Perhaps the sea is just too ferocious here for the full range of cave dwellers. There were a couple of good blow holes, one of them the most impressive I have seen. John, ever curious, approached and by coincidence was met by the biggest blow out yet. It was explosive and a bit frightening but John whooped with pleasure, completely soaked!



tal rockery



Above: Sea battered rocks



I had been hoping for a few cetacean fins and a sighting of the elusive basking shark or maybe even a sunfish. Nothing. We sighted only one seal, which was surprising but there were lots of jellyfish. Birdlife was what I expected: fulmar, oyster catcher, black guillemot, one possible ring ouzel and four choughs – always a welcome sighting.

The southern section of the island was less spectacular and at around 6.30pm after skirting some reefs with large breaking waves (Raymond went through), we cruised into a sheltered harbour where the old lifeboat station offered us a decent camp site. The lifeboat station, still marked on my parents' 1960s map of the area, is now a wreck but there is an interesting plaque commemorating the many islanders who have lost their lives at sea. One particularly shocking one was the Aranmore Disaster where 19 islanders were drowned in the winter of 1935.

I felt it was imperative to plough some money back in to the local community so I persuaded the other four musketeers to go to the pub. On top of the hill, the pub commanded a great view south towards Slieve Tooley and Glen Head. A corncrake was calling as we went – one of three calling birds I heard. Indeed, during the night one didn't stop and I felt myself getting annoyed but did a great bit of positive thinking and went back to sleep quickly.

Next morning there was a more leisurely start at 10am and as we rounded the south east of the island we saw why this area could be so treacherous with islands exposed at low tide and covered at high tide. The tidal convergence from both sides of the island is a potent mix and an area to be careful of in bad weather.

“It makes you shudder to think of the sea's power in a winter storm building up over a 2,750-mile fetch from America”

The main town of Leabgarrow was lovely in sunlight and the south end of the beach offers some good camping and there are nearby pubs with traditional music. Signs encouraging you to be vigilant about drug smugglers were a harsh reminder of the real world.

Leaving the town, the wind was picking up and we had to be careful of the ferries plying their trade as we headed back towards the mainland across the channel towards Burtonport. Owen, the youngest member of the party, had not been feeling too well and decided to have an early finish leaving the four old boys with a combined age of 220 plus to investigate the islands and channels off Burtonport. This was a lovely experience with crystal clear greenish water, pleasant sandy coves and small islands covered in heather, juniper. The tide was dropping fast and so some of the channels had dried out but trial and error brought us back to the large landmark windmill at Burtonport and our friendly slipway.

We had big red faces despite our semi-troglodyte existence. It was a brilliant weekend. ♡

Canoe England coach conference round up

On the 3-4th December, the Canoe England annual coaching conference, the fourth of its kind, returned to Wyboston Lakes' Robinson Executive Centre. Luxury conference rooms and an abundance of food set the backdrop to this year's staggering line-up of 33 workshops and speeches. The programme, compiled and co-ordinated by former England Coaching Manager Lara Tipper, was delivered by a team of providers who volunteered their time and expertise to make an inspiring event.

Following an introduction by the conference organiser on Saturday morning, Plas-y-Brenin's Chief Instructor Martin Chester got the conference underway with the first Keynote speech of the day. 'Coaching Real People – Sporting pathway or multi-lane highway?' highlighted the diverse journeys that people take in and out of paddlesport and the importance of the coach in individual journeys: a concept which rang true with more than a few delegates.

After coffee, delegates dispersed for two rounds of 90-minute workshops. The choice of 17 workshops covered a range of subjects from the fields of sport science and coaching pedagogy. Also included were several topical workshops linked to 2012 Olympics and BCU/Canoe England developments. Each session allowed not only the fantastic speakers to communicate relevant content

but also provided delegates an opportunity for informative discussion and sharing of best practice.

Delegates regrouped at 16.30 for the Talent Identification keynote delivered by Dr Chris Cushions.

The senior lecturer at Loughborough University and pathway leader for the MSc in Sports Coaching provided a captivating perspective on Talent ID supported by his broad background in sports coaching.

Ashley Clare rounded off Saturday's schedule with the final keynote speech 'Battle Back: Anything is Possible'. This speech summarised the work of Battle Back programme, in using adventure sports to compliment the rehabilitation of wounded, injured and sick service

“Fantastic speakers, good location, food and rooms, learned loads this year”

“It was a real pleasure to be in on three really good key notes that made us walk away with lots of good bits to think on”



personnel, presenting celebrating success stories and stressing further potential.

The evening of socialising provided an informal occasion for delegates and providers from across all regions to network and put faces to names.

Paddlesport coaching, amongst other completely unrelated topics, was discussed until the early hours of Sunday.

On day two of the conference delegates attended their third workshop, chosen from eight half-day and five full-day sessions including several BCU Foundation and Intermediate modules. A series of practical workshops also allowed

participants to take advantage of this year's relatively mild weather and get out on the lake in an assortment of craft.

Feedback received commended the conference for its "outstanding venue and content" and labelled it "a successful conference, the best yet."

This year's event will take place on the 24-25th November 2012, so save the date to be part of this flourishing event, which 93% of delegates say they would recommend to other paddlesport coaches. More information can be found on the Canoe England website www.canoe-england.org.uk

Sincere thanks go to all of the volunteers and staff who worked hard to make this event the success that it was.

“An outstanding venue and content”



Photo: Paul Taylor



An interview with Fiona Pennie K1 Slalom Kayaker



Interview by Katriona Bush

With the final countdown to the London 2012 Olympic Games truly underway, we caught up with one of Great Britain's top women slalom kayakers to assess her prospects for 2012.

How did the 2011 season go for you and did you achieve your objectives?

I was fairly pleased with the summer as a whole. Although the results didn't always show it, I had some good bits of paddling in the lead up to the Worlds which was my main focus. Although I missed out on the final at the Euros, I showed that I was fast enough. I also made the finals at the Prague World Cup and the London Prepares Race. I was able to come away from those races with some small areas to work on before the Worlds and was pleased with how it turned out in the end. Although, I finished in fifth place in Bratislava, I was fractions of a second outside the medals and was pleased to be well up there the year before the Olympics.

With four strong contenders in the Women's K1 for the one berth in the GB team what do you need to do to earn selection?

Laura, Lizzie, Louise and I are still competing for the one spot at the Olympics but it isn't something we

really talk about. I have a really clear plan of what I want to achieve between now and selection and will make sure I cover everything so that I can sit on the start line at selection knowing I have done my best. That is all I can ask of myself as well as sticking to my own game plan.

How will slalom athletes be selected for the Olympic Games?

A selection event is being held on the Olympic course at Lee Valley on 13-15 April. It consists of three races and your best two count towards selection. I have some points from the World Championships already, coming fifth gave me 29 points which I can use as one of my "best two results". In the three race selection series we get 30 points for a win, 27 points for a second, 25 points for third, 23 points for fourth and so on. So you can see that 29 points puts me on my way, but certainly doesn't mean that all is done and dusted; there is still a lot of work to do.



What is your winter training programme?

I have just spent a month in Sydney, Australia training with the current World Champion, Corinna Kuhnle of Austria in the lead up to Christmas. The type of training I am doing at the moment is a mixture between long endurance training and short explosive efforts. When I am doing the short efforts, I require lots of rest; which isn't something I wanted to do on a cold river in London! I'm also in the gym four times a week throughout the winter. I have now returned to London, training continually on the Olympic course up until selection. Racing is far from my thoughts right now in such a heavy part of the winter training.

When will you start racing?

There are no major competitions before Olympic selection. However, I will be taking part in a few of the races that make up the National Ranking Series in March and April to get me ready for racing.

Has relocating to London to train on the Olympic course been a good move?

I bought my house in Waltham Abbey in April last year, deciding that fully relocating myself from Nottingham to London was the best thing for my training. The house is within walking distance but I often take my bike. It's a 20 minutes walk, five minutes on the bike and anything between two minutes and 25 minutes in the car depending on the traffic!

With one Olympics under your belt, how important is it for you to qualify for London 2012 and are you doing anything differently?

Beijing was a great experience although I was bitterly disappointed with the result. Competing at a home Olympics would definitely be a once in a lifetime experience. To be able to race in front of a home crowd would be a great honour and is something that inspires me to try that bit harder every day. I had some costly time errors at the Worlds which denied me a medal, and we have since looked closely at where there are gains to be made. On the whole I have the speed, it's just about keeping that sharpness going all the way to the bottom of the course. I'm working a lot on the endurance side of things and decreasing the amount of weight in the boat, be it in the equipment I'm using or getting rid of muscle in my legs!





Fiona Pennie

2011 World Championships K1 5th

2010 World Cup Medallist K1

2008 Olympian K1



Adventure Dolphin lad development project



Women and Girls in Paddlesport



International Women's Day: 8th March 2012

International Women's Day events honour and celebrate the achievements of women all around the world, ranging from small random informal gatherings to large highly organised events. Think about how your club or centre could celebrate International Women's Day on the 8th March. The theme for 2012 is Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures.

For more information or to register your event visit: www.internationalwomensday.com

Female only Level 1 courses for 2012

After a successful pilot in 2011, 42 females, many of whom would not have normally considered attaining a coaching award, achieved their BCU (UKCC) Level 1 Coaching Award through the female only courses. To develop this further we plan to run more courses in 2012 and will look into the possibility of running higher-level courses in the future. The courses will be subsidised as last year and more information will be published shortly. Keep an eye on the Canoe England website and newsletters for more information.

By Clare Westall

How it all started. I started paddling as a young person and often found myself paddling in groups, which were mostly made up of male paddlers. I was lucky at the time to have some inspirational coaches both male and female who kept me excited and engaged in the sport.

The Canoe England Women and Girls in Paddlesport programme was developed to increase the number of females participating in the sport; therefore it's great to see that Canoe England membership figures, coaching figures and Sport England Active People Survey results show growth across all target areas.

In 2005 I started working at Adventure Dolphin and was responsible for the development of paddling for club members. A number of the younger paddlers at the centre expressed an interest in coaching and quickly become involved with the Cadet Leader scheme. The group grew in size to 20 young people regularly attending training sessions and helping with courses but there was one striking characteristic about the group... they were all male.

In the summer of 2010 I spent time talking with coaches and participants and it quickly became apparent that the women and girls wanted opportunities on the water for females. Along

with another female coach we talked with women participants about how they would like these days to look.

Feedback

Feedback was interesting, you may assume that ladies and girls would only want female coaches on their paddling days but they want coaches who understand their needs. They wanted to try a range of paddling in different environments from white water to sea kayaking. The ladies and girls also indicated some of the reasons why they felt there was a drop in female paddlers from the sport. These things ranged from feeling intimidated at times on the water from 'boisterous behaviour' to not enjoying changing in a public car park.

Development plan

From talking with the female paddlers we were able to develop a programme, which fitted the

ies and girls

needs and ideas they had identified. With all the feedback in mind we put together a programme of days, which gave female paddlers the chance to try a range of paddling in different environments. We organised a year's programme with an event running every two to three months.

Lessons learned

The women and girls days have all had a more relaxed vibe. The aim has been focused on fun rather than competing with one another on the water. The coaches play a key role in making the day work. We have used coaches who are able to work to the best needs of the group.

Not all women and girls are keen on car park changing, so we have found a novel option to make this more comfortable, the use of a box trailer as a pop up changing room and boat transport.

Selecting the right start and finish location, the women and girls we paddled with preferred the selected venues where toilet facilities were in a building rather than behind a hedge!

We enjoy the social element of our days and making the events fun and social results in happy lady paddlers who want to come back and do more.

We have seen an increased number of female cadet leaders who are helping to inspire other females to stay involved in the sport.

The future

Looking to the future we are planning more events, which allow women and girls to be out on the water in groups. On our most recent trip, the girls have suggested a women and girls weekend.

I am working with the female cadet leaders and encouraging them to look at how we develop the programme for female paddlers. Time spent developing female coaches is also an investment in encouraging more females to progress into coaching.



The programme:

Girls Symonds Yat day: This was the first ladies paddle day, which we organised. We ran this trip in early September and advertised to female paddlers who were centre members and those who had joined us for courses during the summer period.

Windsor Christmas paddle: The paddle was an open canoe trip, which took in the sights in and around Windsor. As we knew this would be a cold day we organised for warm drinks to be available on route.

Valentines Oxford paddle: This was a local paddle taking in the backwaters of Oxford in canoes and sea kayaks, a lovely local trip for the club with great scenery.

Sea day: The sea day was based on and near the Beuliee River. This was an introduction to sea paddling.

Ladies Paddle and Climb day: A day which recognises the two activities we offered during the summer holiday period. We based the day in Symonds Yat taking advantage of the river and rock being so close together.

Advertising: We advertised the days to our club members via emails and personal letters and during the summer programme we had flyers to hand out to people. We find the personal touch works well; talking to people and giving them the chance to ask questions often meant they were encouraged to join in with the programme.

Attendance: On average we have had 15 paddlers at each event. The peak was the Christmas paddle where 35 female paddlers joined us on the water.

Equipment: The centre has provided the boats, paddles, buoyancy aids and climbing equipment. We have also run transport from the centre to the activity venue.

Coaches: We have had a mix of female and male coaches running the days. To help the group build relationships we have kept a consistent female coach on all the days.

Time of year: The attendance has varied during the year. We attract newer paddlers on the events, which have run at the end of the summer. In the winter months the group was made up of paddlers who have more experience in the sport.

The days: The days have focused on learning new skills in varied crafts, meeting other female paddlers and having fun on the water. Many of the days have included a social element like carol singing down the Thames, cake making on a stove at the end of the sea paddle and warm drinks made along paddling routes.

We have run a mixture of day lengths with some local paddles and some events taking place further a field.

The Devon and Corn



By Fiona Cooper, Saltash Sea Bird.

Female paddlers in the south west have set up a network open to all paddlers regardless of age, experience, skill level or type of craft. Whether it is sea kayaking, white water rivers, slalom, marathon boating or surfing – if it involves water then this group will give it a try.

The first organised weekend event was held at the beginning of December in Plymouth, with paddlers in the region being made aware of it via word of mouth, emails and the south west's numerous kayak and canoe clubs. The agenda was simple – time on the water and time discussing options for the network. The instructions too were simple – bring a boat (or hire one from the host club) and a cake!

The hospitality of the Mountbatten Watersports and Activities Centre made for an enjoyable weekend both on and off the water. A dedicated meeting room had been provided and this enabled the group to get to know each other and agree what was wanted from a female-focused network. Whilst a few of those present had been involved in organising this first event, they were keen to make it clear that the network has no leader but is managed by all who want to be part of it. Similarly, it will have no clubhouse or regular paddling venue but will instead use the web to coordinate and organise events in various south west locations and further afield.

The first decision of the weekend was what type of boat to paddle. Of those who had brought their own boat with them, most were sea kayaks and as

the Mountbatten Centre had a good selection of sea kayaks available, the decision was easy. The light winds and intermittent sunshine were a real bonus, contrary to the forecast of rain and Force 5. We started with a gentle paddle up the estuary and stopped for lunch on the beach at Saltram House. Then, fortified with several varieties of cake the group headed off to Drake's Island from where the fetch home provided an opportunity to try out a sail (AKA orange bag) rigged between a couple of the boats. It wasn't particularly successful at propelling the kayaks in the right direction but it was good for increasing visibility against what was, by now, a steely grey sea and sky.

Deciding a way forward

Back at the Mountbatten Centre, over tea and more cake, the group settled down to the important business of deciding a way forward for the network. Firstly, what could it achieve? Well, at the very least, it's a means by which paddlers in the south west can meet each other and go paddling, whether as an organised event such as this one or as ad hoc paddles arranged between individuals. It's also an opportunity to improve paddling skills and learn new ones in a supportive, fun and non-competitive environment. For example, the group this particular weekend comprised a wide range of experience in sea kayaks. At one end of the spectrum were those for whom this craft isn't their usual boat of choice, at



Devon and Cornwall Sea Birds

the other was a Level 3 coach who had undertaken a circumnavigation of the British Isles. Those with more experience in these boats were able to provide help and encouragement when it was needed. There are also plans to hold paddling days or weekends in disciplines that will be new to many of us.

A couple of the women (who are competitive surf kayakers) have volunteered to hold a training day near St Ives in 2012 and a coastering weekend is also planned.

Why female-focused?

Well, the emphasis here is on focus rather than exclusivity. It's envisaged that males will be welcome at many of the events organised through the network, but the focus of the events will be to meet the needs of female paddlers.

Clearly there's no shortage of female interest in paddlesport, with recent BCU figures showing that almost half of 2011's Go Canoeing Day participants were female. For now, however, the sport is male-dominated, with females accounting for only 24% of current BCU membership and 23% of BCU coaches and this can have a negative effect on female paddlers.

One of the women talked about her own experience of learning a new kayaking discipline and how, once the women decided to train separately from the men, their skill levels improved much more rapidly. For me, a relatively novice sea kayaker, it was the first time I'd paddled in a group where women outnumbered



men and I was surprised at how much more confident I felt and how much less self-imposed pressure I heaped on myself.

The next weekend paddling event being organised by the group is 4-5th February in Hayle where female paddlers in the south west will have another opportunity to get together.

The challenge now is to widen awareness of the network to female paddlers who don't belong to clubs.

For further details of forthcoming events join our Facebook Group; visit www.facebook.com and search for 'Devon and Cornwall Sea Birds.' ♡



NEW

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Canada too far

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There was a chill in the air and on the hillsides across the lake the birches had taken on a golden tinge. Mist hung over the lake, which was glassy calm, broken only by the ripples from the jetty as I collected water for the first brew of the day. The roar of the stove when I lit it came as a shock reminding me of the silence in these northern forests. This was our fourth day canoeing in the Koloveso National Park of eastern Finland.

Feature by: An email from Easyjet offering cheap flights to Helsinki had sown the idea and a bit of internet searching showed that it would be possible for Gaynor and I, two 40 somethings, to backpack around Finland using public transport. The plan emerged. Sight see in Helsinki then canoe the Ovarietti or Squirrel route, flowing into Lake Saimma, then travel to Oravi for a week's paddling on the Lake itself. The word lake doesn't really do Saimma justice, better to describe it as an inland archipelago where land and water mingle in differing proportions from intimate areas with islands, bays and inlets offering sheltered paddling to wide open expanses of water where good judgement of wind and the fetch of water it is acting upon is needed to paddle safely.

Chris Hogarth.

The first part of the plan had gone well, even though the Squirrel run had been a bit bony due to the dry hot summer. The trains and buses worked faultlessly and the bus at Oravi along with the local school children had deposited us.

National Park

The following day we were shuttled to the edge of the National Park by one of the fishing guides from Saimma Holiday who had arranged canoe hire. The Hilux pickup had seen better days and had lost the back seat somewhere in its career. A few miles from the ferry at Enonkoski we turned onto a dirt track, which finished at the put in at Kakovesi. Before us was a small sandy beach fringed with reed, an expanse of lake and beyond forested hills. No cabins or other signs of habitation. The sky was grey. As we unloaded the boat Gaynor started doing the same with the kit, a quick check to see that nothing was left in the pickup and our driver drove off.

We stood together looking out over the lake the excitement building in our stomachs. Our two backpacks and two drybags stowed easily in the 17 ft Old Town Penobscot. Final checks made we pushed off. Maps and compass in a zip lock bag in front of me we headed north. As we pulled away from shore the lake views expanded, a wind from the east putting a ripple on the surface.



We headed across the bay to a reedy headland then having got a feel for the boat cut directly across the lake to a rocky headland and the site of some rock paintings marked on the map.

Thought to have been painted between 2,000 and 5,000 years ago using natural ochre pigment mixed with fish oil or animal fat, the paintings take on a variety of forms from splodges of red to detailed figures of people, animals and weird creatures. Many were painted either from boats or from the ice when the lakes were frozen. Changes to lake levels following the ice age now mean that they are 10 or so metres above the current lake level. We paddled back and forth under the cliffs looking up for any sign of red staining on the rock. Finally, high up under an overhang we saw something. Mooring the boat we scrambled up the scree for a closer look. There on a slab beneath the overhang were the outlines of two people, one possibly holding a bow and below them two moose, one recognisable by its long heavy head and large rack of antlers. Looking out across the greys of the water and sky broken by the dark green of the forest you did feel that here was a scene that would have been familiar to the artists.

Our first night of camping was on a large island, which together with another formed the heart of the National Park. Within the park camping is restricted to official campsites marked on the maps. These free and un-manned sites generally have a jetty; a

Above:



Above:

? Try Finland...

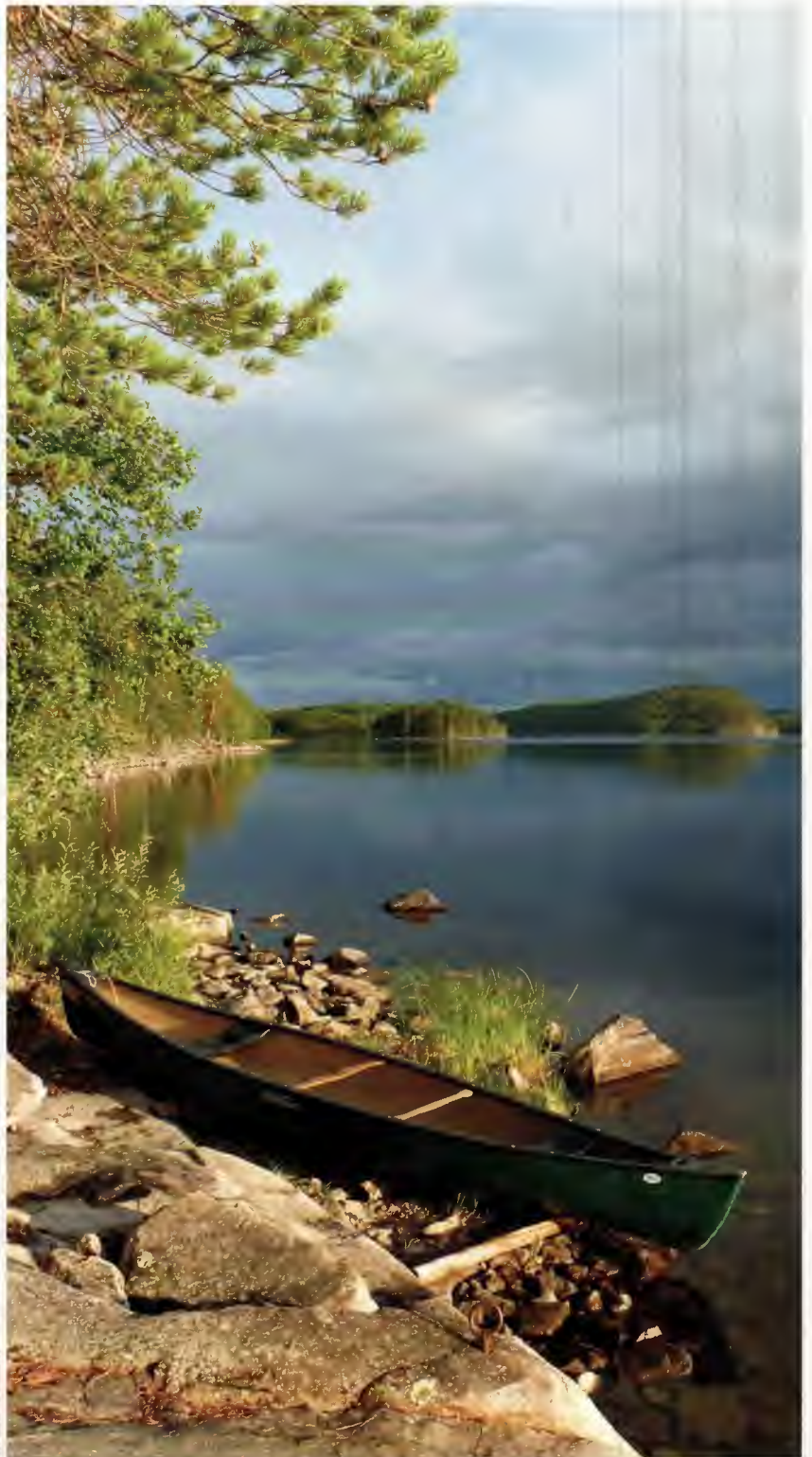
here...



View from the navigation pillar.



The navigation pillar.



Above: Sunset after the storm.

“These sub-species had been cut off from the sea when land and lake levels changed following the ice age”

number of wooden tent platforms, composting toilet, wood store with axe and saw, fire pit with griddle and pot hanger, picnic bench and benches around the fire pit. At some there are open-fronted sleeping shelters. At all sites there was a visitor's book so campers can record their thoughts. We visited in late August at the end of the main holiday period and had the sites to ourselves but in June/July it can be busy and hard to find a pitch.

We started the next day by paddling to the mainland and walking the forest trails provided by Metsähallus the Finnish Natural resources agency. The coniferous forests in the National Park have been actively managed in the past, providing timber and tar but now forestry is controlled and the aim is to let the forest develop a more diverse structure. Way-marked trails and boardwalks lead you through woodland carpeted with lichen and mosses, bilberry were ripe and fungi sprouting from the ground and tree trunks. The forest was eerily quiet; the migratory birds were already making their way south.

Continuing north we explored the lake, calling in at other campsites to view their facilities. The lake narrowed and shallowed meandering between tree-covered headlands. Rounding one bend a large beaver lodge came into view, mud and sticks forming a mound with grass and saplings growing out of it. This made us think the lodge was disused but willow branches freshly stripped of their bark showed that someone was at home. Scanning the water we spotted the beaver swimming away from us. Once he thought he had lured us far enough away from the lodge he gave a smack of the tail and disappeared.

Lake Saimma Ringed Seal

We were making for another pictograph site around a rocky headland when a storm that had been building to the south caught up with us, squally winds buffeted the canoe and the waves grew. We hugged the shore and paddled head down as the thunder rolled overhead. Gaynor shouted and looking up I saw a whaleback rock lying low in the water, just as I was about the alter course to avoid it the rock grew a head and I understood the shout, Seal! How lucky were we? First beaver and now we had seen a Lake Saimma Ringed Seal. These sub-species had been cut off from the sea when land and lake levels changed following the ice age. It is one of only a few freshwater seals and is endangered.

Day three was grey, drizzly and a steady wind ruffled the lake. Our next camp was to the north on an island, which meant we would have to make another open water crossing. As we passed another campsite we spotted a canoe down by the shore so we called in. Two Belgian chaps were just packing up. They had a fire going so we stood around getting warm and swapping tales. They told us of another campsite where there was a path leading through the forest to a hut with a wood sauna left open and with a wood supply for anyone to use. Not sure if we believed them we filed this snippet away for later. Continuing on the waves was manageable so we crossed, a good decision as at the narrows the wind funnelled through the hills and the swell was greater. A quick stop for lunch and on we paddled soon reaching our island camp at the northern end of the National Park.

Once the tent was up and the cooking fire made, we went exploring, which didn't take long as the island was only 200 metres long. This was better than we could have imagined, wild forest, water, and solitude. Pretending to be Ray Mears playing fire, chopping wood, whittling tent pegs and just being. Having settled into our trip rhythm the time didn't really matter, we were able to take our time, explore or spend lazy time in camp, drinking in the tea and the solitude.

“This was better than we could have imagined, wild forest, water, and solitude. Pretending to be Ray Mears playing fire, chopping wood, whittling tent pegs and just being”

Autumn crept up on us

The birches were turning yellow and there was a definite chill in the air. On day four we left camp standing whilst we went to find our final pictograph site. This one



Above: The beaver's lodge



Above: Autumn weather.



Above: Campsite sleeping shelter.



Above: Cave art site.



Above: National Park wood sauna.



Woodland trail boardwalk.

showed red ochre stick figures with bandy legs and some animals that could have been cows or reindeer. Returning to our island camp we packed up then paddled over to another island to explore the forest trails. By this time the sky was clearing and as we paddled to our final camp in the National Park the sun came out and we enjoyed its warmth.

This last camp happened to be the one the Belgian chaps had mentioned and sure enough there was a path leading off through the trees way-marked with blue paint splodges on the trees. We packed towels and fire-lighting gear and headed off through the trees. Twenty minutes later we emerged through a bilberry patch to two large huts and a wood store. In one hut there were two dormitory type rooms and in the other a dining room with benches around the edge and a table in the middle. And yes we shouldn't have doubted the Belgians. The last room was a large sauna, complete with wood stove. We quickly got a fire going, stoked it with birch logs and waited for the rocks to reach the right temperature.

The following morning we left the National Park and started the journey back to Oravi. Stopping for a soup lunch on a rock island an easterly wind started to pick up. We ate quickly then headed for the mainland. Rounding a headland the wind was at our backs and we surfed down swells. Needing to cross a channel we were lucky enough to gain some shelter where a road bridge crossed on a causeway allowing us to sneak across. Creeping around a rocky point, unbalanced by the reflected wave we were suddenly in calm water and could relax. Camp was a smooth slab of rock covered in lichen with the tent in a mossy clearing. This was our last night and we were sad to think our trip would soon be over.

“ We quickly got a fire going, stoked the fire with birch logs and waited for the rocks to reach the right temperature ”

Final day

The wind did keep up for our last day. We had to travel south and with the easterly wind the map showed two alternatives, hugging the eastern shore linking a number of bays or heading due south island hopping in the lee of the wind and making short forays across stretches of open water. Hugging the shore would have taken much longer, so we decided to island hop.

Breaking camp and leaving the lee shore to cross to an island we couldn't avoid some choppy water and just had to get our heads down. Reaching the island we headed into a reed fringe and gained some shelter before paddling along the windward shore until we could sneak through a small channel and into the lee of our second island. Gradually we made headway and by lunch we had the more open stretches behind us. The wind also lessened and with the sun warming us we pulled onto a whaleback shore for soup. As we set up the stove a seal surfaced just by the canoe then disappeared. We had probably taken over its favourite basking spot.

We now only had a few kilometres to paddle to Oravi and didn't want the trip to end so we paddled slow, thinking back over the trip. Up ahead was a small island a white-washed stone pillar on its top, a navigation marker for the lake traffic. We pulled to shore and climbed to the pillar, looking around we were surrounded with water, forest, big sky and no sign of habitation. Finally we dragged ourselves away and paddled on heading for the last channel that would take us to Oravi. As if on cue, a seal popped its head and shoulders out of the water as if saying goodbye then sank back into the waters. Half an hour later we pulled up to the dock at Oravi, our trip was over and the hotel sauna awaited but both of us would have happily stocked up with more food and headed back out again. We had only scratched the surface of Lake Saimma and Finland. 🐾



Canoe Foundation

'positively changing lives through canoeing'

Don't forget you can also keep up to date with all the latest news and developments at the Canoe Foundation through our social media accounts either via Twitter by searching and following @CanoeFoundation or by hitting the 'like' button on our Facebook page. So log on, spread the news, and help us in our mission 'positively changing lives through canoeing'.

Photos by:
Peter Hutchinson.

We are delighted to announce that the Canoe Foundation has been selected as the Official Charity Partner for the 2012 Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race.



Held annually over the Easter weekend since 1948, Devizes to Westminster (DW) is considered by many to be one of the ultimate tests of endurance. Starting on the Kennet and Avon Canal at Devizes in Wiltshire, it pushes competitors to their physical and mental limits, covering 125 miles (201 km) and including a gruelling 77 portages before finishing opposite the Houses of Parliament on the tidal section of the River Thames just downstream of Westminster Bridge.

Open to all, DW will test even the very best kayakers to their limits, living up to its reputation as one of the most physically demanding events around. However, with some careful planning and preparation, it could be one of the most satisfying and rewarding experiences of your life.

This year's event will be held from 6-9th April, with interest already stretching far beyond the UK with competitors from across the world. It is already expected that the start list will be in excess of 500 individuals taking part, split across five different classes and into either the 24-hour or the four-day version of the event.

Raising money

Many DW participants raise money for charity; something which is encouraged with the prestigious Pfeiffer Cup, awarded annually to the crew who raise the most money. Alongside the Evelina Children's Hospital, at St Thomas's Hospital where the DW finish marquees are located, the DW organising committee selects a different charity each year.

We are delighted to announce the Canoe Foundation has been chosen as the Official Charity Partner for DW 2012. Reliant solely on sponsorship and donations from events such as these means that we are able to continue our positive work supporting both young people and those with disabilities to get out on the water and enjoy our wonderful sport. Case studies of our work, details of the grant application process and information of how you can further support us can be found at: www.canoefoundation.org.uk.

On the website you will also find sections about fundraising and donating, which may be of specific use to you if you are thinking of taking on the challenge of DW or any other event for that matter. Here you can download copies of our sponsorship and Gift Aid form, as well as details for the charity's JustGiving page (www.justgiving.com/canoefoundation) where you can log in and join the DW event page or set-up your own sponsorship page(s) for other events you have planned.

Further details about the 2012 Devizes to Westminster can be found both on the Canoe Foundation website and at www.drace.org.uk while you can also follow the DW Chief Umpire on Twitter by searching @Dwcanoerace.

If you are taking part and looking to raise funds for the Canoe Foundation we would love to hear from you, so send us your stories to info@canoefoundation.org.uk



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Three women

Finally we were in Rishikesh, the yoga capital of the world and home to many creatures that were looking for direction or had found a new path. We had just completed an epic 14-hour journey taking all sorts of backroads, driving in and out of valleys, over ridges and pretty much all of it on dirt roads.

Feature and photos by: Steve Brooks. **We said our goodbyes to Chris; he was heading down to the Kali River and the annual Masheer Fishing Competition. For us it was another eight-hour jeep ride up to Nandaprayag. The monsoon had been kind to the Ganges River basin this year and so our journey was rather uneventful!**

The winding roads that hug the mountain sides were in relatively good condition and the landslides that usually wash away parts of the roads sometimes with vehicles and the occupants were totally under control.

The heat was now becoming manageable the higher up the valley we headed and the environment was also changing to high alpine meadows with Cypress Pines lining the side of the river. Finally we were at the put-in.

Our team consisted of two American girls from Colorado, Kim and Annie plus Ute, my wife and myself. Ute is an Austrian and I suppose you can call me that too, though I do hold a British Passport. I have known Annie for years, we had kayaked the amazing Cotahuasi Canyon in Peru together back in 2008 and when she said that India was her next mission then we just had to come along!

A sweet wave

Sorting out our equipment and packing it into our kayaks brought a small crowd of kids to the side of the river. With not much else to do for the rest of the day they decided to watch us and to see if any action was going to come. Well they were not disappointed! While we were packing we just could not keep our eyes off a sweet wave in the middle of the river.

After quite sometime surfing this big glassy green wave in our loaded boats we waved goodbye to Girish, our jeep driver, and the kids and set about heading down the river for an hour or so.

“The winding roads that hug the mountain sides were in relatively good condition and the landslides that usually wash away parts of the roads sometimes with vehicles and the occupants were totally under control”

It was mid-October and the Alaknanda was still taking a lot of water down from the mountains out to the Ganges, which for us was great. Big, warm water was in order after spending the beginning of October above 3,000 metres! The river was certainly big and we had some huge waves that just kept coming.



Above: Ute Heppke from Austria.



Above: Annie Quathamer from Colorado.



Above: Kim Grant from Colorado.

and a river



Above: The girls.



Above: Alaknanda camp.



Above: Shivanandi accommodation.



Above: Scouting the river and morning yoga.

A little further down brought us to our first main rapid. Full of holes it was a case of dodging a couple, riding the rooster tail and plugging the last one! Next came wave after wave, all read and run it was just a roller-coaster ride. Each time you looked back or out in front you saw a different team member as either you were in the trough and could only see a huge green tongue or as you reached the peak of the wave half the team were in different troughs, these were big waves!

Notorious for leopards

After a big set of waves the river started to bend and on the right hand side it looked as though there was a secluded sandy beach behind a bunch of rocks. Perfect, with a stream running down we could not have asked for a better place to camp. The only exceptions were the leopard footprints all over the beach!



This whole area is notorious for leopards, though we have never seen one ourselves, we had heard the stories and there is even a book about one that ate a lot of villagers! So with camp made we then turned our attention to the driftwood and making sure we had enough for the night!

There were certainly a few rumblings in the forest that night but we were all still there the next morning and it was time to pack up and head back down the river.

We were expecting a long day, we had camped just above Langasu and it was still quite a way to Karnaprayag. However, the river was still pumping and everything down to Karnaprayag was just read and run big volume. A couple of holes needed to be avoided but the lines were there and it took us just one hour to reach Karnaprayag! Just below the confluence of the Pindar River came our first scout of the day. We had seen this on the drive up and for once in a very long time it actually looked harder from high up on the road! A crowd grew and soon we had half the town watching us from the road bridge high above.

The scout was probably the hardest part; it was right where the locals held their funeral pyres! With hair, ashes, burnt pieces of wood and clothing we tip-toed alongside the river to check the line. A few more holes to be avoided which pretty much summed up this river! The girls dropped in while I positioned myself on a large rock, camera at the ready.

All went well and we continued down to where the river started to gorge up and were kayaking some great read and run class IV rapids. Gauchar came an hour later and we met up with Shalabh and his team. Another scout observed the river going into a huge hole in the middle, punching a strong diagonal wave was our only option so with my camera at the ready the girls dropped in.

Within an hour we reached Shivanandi, our base for the next ten days and it was time to kick back, relax and drink some tea!

What a river the Alaknanda is! ♡

“This whole area is notorious for leopards, though we have never seen one ourselves, we had heard the stories and there is even a book about one that ate a lot of villagers!”

Steve Brooks

Steve has been living in Austria for well over a decade and now runs a Kayak School from his home just outside of the city of Landeck in the western part of Austria (when the skiing has finished!). Offering kayak courses and guided trips the Kayak School's knowledge of the local rivers and area is second to none! Throughout the summer Steve is on the river, be it coaching, guiding, running different sections, looking for waves and play-spots or trying to get that killer shot. In the Autumn, Steve heads to India to run some of the best white water the Himalayas has to offer. It is all about having fun on the river!



For more information check out: www.gokayaking.at or www.stevebrooks.at

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Is there a canoe trail opportunity near you?

It is said that most of us live within five miles of an inland waterway and many of these are managed by British Waterways. We are keen to work with the current British Waterways (soon to be the Canal and River Trust) to develop canoe trails in urban areas so that we can promote canoeing and provide paddlers with information about where they can go to broaden their experiences and fun.

The vast majority of canoeists are recreational paddlers who canoe for the sheer pleasure of the sport and the opportunity it presents to pass quietly through urban and rural areas. Canoeing through an urban area puts a very different perspective on things. There is nothing quite like the view of a town from the water.

For many years the canals had been neglected, however, the value of them to communities and the general public for recreational use has been recognised. Cities such as Birmingham have taken a huge step forward and turned buildings around to face the waterfront and areas such as Gas Street Basin have been completely transformed and are now wonderful places to visit (even though the name might not inspire you to think that!)

Birmingham's canals add green space and vibrancy and could even be called the UK's canal capital.

Finding where to go canoeing in urban areas is often very difficult and many people are unable

to work out where they can paddle. So we are asking you to help us provide information that we can share with canoeists and inspire others to get on the water.

Members of Canoe England have a licence for some navigations and canals, which is fantastic but which bit of the river or canal makes a good paddle? Where can I park? What is there to see on route? Is it accessible for someone with ambulant problems? Is it suitable to paddling with children etc? These are many of the



questions we get asked and for most the answers would be held within a canoe trail.

These questions could be easily answered if we have canoe trails we could advise on.

We are looking for information for trails in urban areas. These could be in cities/towns such as Birmingham, London, Manchester, Reading, Banbury, Stoke, Skipton etc the list is almost endless!

Could you help us please?

If you are able to help, could you contact access@canoe-england.org.uk who can provide you with a template. Your help will be much appreciated.



Water for Life

DEFRA launched a White Paper, 'Water for Life' in early December 2011. It describes a vision for future water management in which the water sector is resilient, where water companies are more efficient and customer focused and in which water is valued as the precious and finite resource it is. In fact it explains that we all have a part to play in the realisation of their vision.

We all know that there have been water shortages in some areas and flooding in others. Getting the balance right and making sure there is enough water for everyone will be one of the major challenges in the coming years. In fact the problem has become a reality for those used to enjoying the Kennet and Avon Canal for example.



In November a 10-mile stretch of the Avon and Kennet Canal was shut due to the lowest water levels in 90 years. The section closed runs from Crofton Lock 61 near Wilton, Wiltshire, to Copse Lock 80 between Kintbury and Newbury, Berkshire. Lots of portaging opportunities for those Devizes to Westminster training!

However, on a serious note British Waterways has said that low ground water levels are a long-term problem and it will take some time to recover. The residential and leisure narrow boats in the area are unable to move so the lack of water is causing them significant problems too. The closed sections have been padlocked shut to prevent any further movement and help protect fish and other aquatic life.

Fish deaths

The problem has spread further afield too. Fish deaths in the River Kennet because of a drop in water levels have prompted a conservation campaign. The chalk stream, which runs through Berkshire and Wiltshire, is home to trout, otters and kingfishers and in some areas is virtually dry.

Richard Benyon MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Natural Environment and Fisheries) said in his speech to Parliament that the policy paper recognised water was essential for economic growth and "that we must protect the environment for future generations." The minister had been summoned to the despatch box to answer an urgent question by Labour on the Water White Paper, on 8th December 2011 – the day it was released.

The paper plans to modernise rules governing taking water from rivers and to encourage local organisations to improve water quality and extract water from the environment in the least harmful way. It also aims to reform the water industry and deregulate water markets to allow business and public sector customers to negotiate better services from suppliers.

With the dry spring, relatively dry summer and now the dry winter in the southern part of the country the water table levels are significantly lower than they should be. Current water shortages in the south east of the country

underline the fact that the UK, with its densely settled population, has less water per person than Spain or Portugal.

In the longer term, we must waste less if we are to enjoy water for personal and recreational reasons as well as the fact that water is vital for us all to live.

This means as well as campaigning for access and promoting all the related concerns an additional issue we may well have to add is one of water conservation and the rationalising of water abstraction.

More information on the 'Water for life' White Paper can be found at:
www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/legislation/whitepaper/

New Year's resolutions 2012

Have you made (and broken!) yours yet? How about making one to do with rivers access? You can start it now!

You can:

- Write to your MP about the access situation and how it affects you ...
- Write again/visit your MP and do not take any standard civil servants speak as an answer. For example, the usual standard letter which says:

We consider that voluntary agreements are the best way to deliver the greatest benefits for all within this policy. Surveys show that over one million people canoe or kayak each year. Many of these are less experienced, casual users who require easy rivers and like well managed trails with good information provision. We have shown that this can be best achieved through agreement.

Keep asking questions

- With this being Olympic year, one of the best legacies that we could be left with is clarity and certainty of access to and along our inland waterways. Write to your MP to ask them to pose the suggestion!
- Writing an article for your local newspaper about the access situation and giving examples of where locally and nationally you cannot go. Mention how it not only affects you but thousands of others including the youth clubs, scout groups etc.
- Produce a video of where you can't go and how it affects you and post it on the internet. Remember it also affects many others not just canoeists. We should all have a right to enjoy our natural heritage responsibly.
- Go green and paddle to work and let your local media know!
- Have fun! After all canoeing is a wonderful sport.

Local Waterway Advisor changes – River Wear

John Holmes from Bishop Auckland Canoe and Kayak has volunteered to take on the previously vacant post for the river from Wear Head to Sunderland Bridge, Durham.

John's contact details are email: g-holmes4@sky.com or mobile: 07986 742945

Jonathan Roberts, Local Waterway Advisor for the Durham area will add to his remit the river downstream of Finchale Abbey to the tidal reaches and the sea. Jonathan's email remains: J.Roberts@tees.ac.uk

Please check your navigation lights

If you are a tidal Thames paddler and use a flashing light, please ensure it has a regular frequency and cannot be mistaken for Morse code. Earlier in January there was a major search and rescue call out on the River Thames in London when an alert member of the public spotted a light flashing SOS in the river and called the coastguard. Fortunately it emerged that it was just a paddler who had chosen a light that flashed in that code. The Port of London Authority allows for a white flashing light to aid visibility as an addition to the normal white light. Further details on:

www.boatingonthethames.co.uk/Paddling.

The authority is firmly behind canoe and kayaks being lit on the river, but this is not quite how they would like to see it done.



Above: a torch, can be modified into an all-around light by fitting it with a diffuser.

Help to keep our waterways clean

Canoeing can take you to some of the most beautiful and historic locations around the British Isles. Whether you are looking for a secluded, picturesque rural trail, or one that takes you along an industrial, urban or historic route, we all want to be able to paddle uninhibited along a clear, clean river.

Today, the UK's river water quality has never been better, however there are exceptions in certain sections of river due to the irresponsible behaviour of individuals who feel it is acceptable to use our waterways as a dumping ground for their waste. This could be anything from a plastic bag to a bike or even a car!

It is the responsibility of everyone to keep our rivers clear of rubbish. We need to support

organisations that have a duty and role in keeping our waterways clean. A perfect example of how we can help is from Gwen Maka, a BCU and Eagle Canoe Club member based in Norwich who has recently carried out a river rubbish clean up which has led to a very positive article in the Norwich Eastern Evening News – read her full story in the April Canoe Focus.

We would like to hear from anyone else who has been involved in similar clean up projects whether you are working on your own, in a group with your local club or in a partnership with other water users or organisations. We can then feature and share your experiences in future editions of Canoe Focus.



Water access – looking at it in a different way

A view from BCU member Angus Munro.

For many years I flew gliders and motor gliders. A pilot has to pass a series of theory examinations, one of which is air law. The pass mark for air law is 90%, or above. As with a kayak, you have to know where you can go and where you cannot.

When I flew gliders across country I was supported within a fluid, that being air. I would quite legally cross the land of a landowner by crossing his boundary and leaving by the boundary on the other side of his estate and there was absolutely nothing that he could do about it. Nor would the landowner dream of complaining that I had not sought permission to cross his property.

In my opinion even if the landowner owns the riverbed he does not own the air or the water that flows freely above the riverbed. Did his neighbour own the molecule of water or air that crossed his land boundary previously? Does it become his while it is above his land? Of course not, the whole concept is nonsense. The fluid that supports us, either as pilots or as canoeists, flows above the land owned by the property owner, it is not held by mass within the boundary, as is the earth of the land. The fluid that supports us comes and goes regulated only by nature.

We simply must get our government to cut through all this permission gobbledygook and understand that a statutory right of access for unpowered craft to inland waterways for recreational purposes is the only rational system. If crossing within a fluid works for a glider then it works for a canoe.

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More information, along with the terms and conditions are available at www.canoe-england.org.uk/about/photo-competition. The winners are announced on page 9.



Above: Overall 2011 winner – Michael Barnett – Lee Valley White Water Centre.



Above: Deb Marshall – Caledonian Canal.



Above: November adult winner: Carl Sunderland – Holme Pierrepont.



Above: Jason Cole – River Ivel.



Above: Gareth Bryant – Llangennith Beach Gower.



Above: William Steedman – Mickley Bridge.



Above: Mark Rogers – Sleningford Watermill near Ripon.

tion



Above: Nick Wright – Cauldron's Snout.



Above: December adult winner, Andrew Basing – Holme Pierrepont.



Above: Jonathan Bingham – River Wey.



Above: Kate Henderson – South Cerney OEC.



Above: Kevin Littlehales – Sharpness Canal.

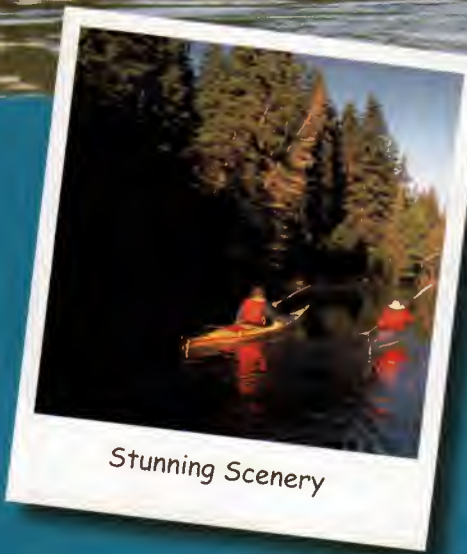


Above: Richard Meers – Lee Valley White Water Centre.



Above: Tony Payne – River Wissey.

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NATIONAL GO CANOEING WEEK

6TH - 15TH APRIL 2012



Canoe England has identified a 10 day week to promote the sport and encourage people to get out on the water. The week will be packed full of canoeing activities going on nationwide which will include local events for beginner's right through to Olympic canoeists taking to the water. The first day of National Go Canoeing Week 2012 will leave just 112 days until the Opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games - How exciting! The aim of the 2012 National Go Canoeing Week is to encourage 2012 new participants by date of the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony.

This week will also see the launch of a brand new project and website called Go Canoeing www.gocanoeing.org.uk which is a national campaign supported by Canoe England, to encourage and inspire more people to go canoeing more regularly. Go Canoeing will have a range of captivating and exciting activities and opportunities for people to enjoy. These will include local starter sessions, guided tours and events, as well as information on where to go and how to get started.

If you are keen to get out on the water or are interested helping us promote the sport by organising an activity near you visit our website for more information <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/clubs-i-centres/national-go-canoeing-week/> or contact us at info@gocanoeing.org.uk

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Andy Turton has been kayaking since 1983 and coaching since 1995. He set up Andy Turton.com in 2004 and then Paddleworks Courses in 2010. This has now become Ty Nant Outdoors.

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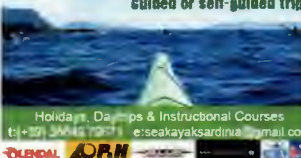
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2012 sees the introduction of a series of Go Canoeing Tours within England. Safe guided tours for individual or family groups of improver paddlers offered throughout England and accessed via a web based booking system.

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Applicants must be at least 18 years old and have over 6 years of canoeing experience. You will be currently active and as a minimum be a confident BCU 3 star ability paddler as well as a gold standard administrator providing accurate and timely web based and paper driven administration.

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Steve Harris, Paracanoe Programme Manager

Based at the Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre, at our GB Canoeing offices, Steve Harris was appointed Paracanoe Programme Manager in the summer, after a successful career as an athlete and coach.

My job involves... Identifying and developing Paracanoe athletes, with the aim of winning medals at World and Paralympic games.

The most challenging aspect of my role is... Changing the existing participation-led culture to one of a performance-led culture. The other challenge is changing the wider mindset and credibility of Paralympic sport.

But, my favourite part is... Having the opportunity to start with a near-blank canvas and creating something from the beginning. I also enjoy seeing our athletes develop and go on to reach their aims and aspirations.

The side that I didn't expect was the feeling of contentment I get from doing something I love and that is very worthwhile... it's more than a job.

I first got into canoeing... At about 12 when I was fostered by a family that were heavily involved in the Stubbers Outdoor Pursuit Centre. I was very boisterous with lots of energy and took part in slalom and canoe polo before going on to white water and then flat water. My interest in canoeing was further developed when I was in the army and fortunately I had a commanding officer that was keen on canoeing.

A typical day, for me, is... None existent, as my job varies so much! One day I might be in a meeting with UK Sport and then another I could be overseeing a Talent ID day. I could be

organising a training camp or a planning day in preparation for Rio 2016, or visiting the military rehabilitation centre at Headley Court... it really is so diverse!

My best canoeing moment ever... Was the day I became World Champion for the first time in Amsterdam in 1994.

When I'm not working... You can usually find me somewhere around the UK, covered in mud! I love mountain biking and wish I had pursued it years ago. On the odd occasion I'm not biking, I will be flat out on the sofa.

This year, I'm most looking forward to... The biggest sporting event that our country has ever seen! It's going to be fabulous; I can't wait and am really looking forward to a great show and some fantastic performances.

I'm sure there will be the usual ups and downs and not everything will work as expected...but show me something that does! It will be an amazing event and we'll remember it, and tell stories about it, for years to come.

Follow GB Paracanoeing's progress, during the 2012 season, at: www.gbcanoeing.org.uk.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/gbcanoeing.

Twitter: @GBCanoeing.



Hannah Brown, Wild Water Canoeing

Hannah Brown is one of wild water canoeing's most established female athletes. Currently studying marine biology, Hannah, who is from Bradford on Avon, has won a wealth of medals during her career so far, including silver at last year's World Championships in Augsburg.

I first got into canoeing... With a friend at Bradford on Avon Canoe Club summer beginner sessions.

A typical day, for me, is... To be on the water by seven, then off, showered, fed and cycle to lectures/labs by around nine, a couple of hours later I'll sneak in a cheeky gym session at the Southampton University Performance Centre and get back to my afternoon lectures to eat lunch. In the evening I pop over to the River Hamble and do my last paddle session with a group of grumpy men. Then eat, sleep and do the same again!

My best canoeing moment ever... Is hopefully yet to come! But winning an individual silver medal in my first senior World Championships was pretty amazing.

My real guilty pleasure is... Blue cheese and chocolate, however not at the same time!

I'm scared of... The things in the corner of your eye, which you just can't quite see.

My ultimate goal in life is... To be happy and content with what I have achieved.

An ideal night out is... At the moment it is to be in bed by nine! But laughing with friends over good food and drink would be ideal.

This year I'm most looking forward to... Seeing how the lessons I learnt last year and the progress of my winter trainings come together in my races.

Follow Hannah's progress, during the 2012 wild water canoeing season, at: www.wildwater.org.uk.



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