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# Welcome to the December Canoe Focus

**December is often a time of reflection, but this issue is really looking forward!** It's a double welcome for this issue.

Welcome not only to our December edition but welcome also to our new editorial team from Warners Group Publications. Not only are they all keen paddlers, but they have also been hard at work developing a new direction for FOCUS. The team, full of energy and ideas, is keen to develop FOCUS in to a member's magazine that is truly a showcase for our sport and inclusive of all aspects of paddlesport.

We really want to inspire our members. We want you to get out there on the water and get involved.

With the help of the new team we are reinventing your magazine with the aim of truly reflecting the interests and passions of all; from slalom racers to river runners, sea kayakers to open canoeists and everyone in between!

Having said there was no looking back on the year, how could we not? There have been so many great things going on. The Go Canoeing programme continues to expand; providing pathways and opportunities to enjoy our sport at all levels. There were five GB gold medals and a bronze at the Paracanoe World Championships. The Diamond Jubilee Pageant welcomed over 1000 vessels of all sizes, including many participants from our canoe clubs. The highly successful Canoe Slalom World Cup took place in Cardiff, not to mention the excitement of the Olympic trials and finally our resounding medal successes at the Games themselves.

**"We really want to inspire our members. We want you to get out there on the water and get involved."**

The achievements of our sport are not all confined to the water either. Many of our clubs have been successful in attaining the highest quality standards of Clubmark and Top Club, as well as providing safe, supportive and fun places for people to participate. Many individuals give up their time and provide expertise to allow others to take part in canoeing & kayaking at all levels. A number of these clubs and individuals can be found in the section about our annual volunteer and recognition awards. I want to say hearty

congratulations to all the winners and nominees and a huge thank you to the rest of our volunteer workforce for another fantastic year of hard work and support.

I really hope you enjoy your new look magazine and I'm sure that you will find something to excite or inspire you. I really look forward to hearing what you think.

All that's left now is for me to take the opportunity to thank you for your continued support and to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Paul*

**Paul Owen, Chief Executive.**

## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

We are very keen to receive contributions from our readers. We'd love to see articles and ideas flooding in and these should be submitted via [canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk](mailto:canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk).

Even if it's just an idea – drop us a line and we'll give you some advice. There are some tips on how to write great articles and take fantastic photos at the back of this issue.

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Please also use this e-mail address as a way to submit feedback on how we're doing. We are really committed to reflecting the views of our members, so we welcome all of your comments. You can also use the Canoe England Facebook page - [www.facebook.com/canoengland](http://www.facebook.com/canoengland)

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH CANOE UNION

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ISBN: 0953 010X

**canoe  
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**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** UK inland: £21.00, Overseas: £24.50. Free to BCU members. For Subscriptions, please contact the BCU on the above contact details

Your contributions make Canoe Focus happen. The quality and variety of news, articles, reports and photographs depend on the submission of material from you. Very few contributors are professional writers and photographers, so don't be put off writing because you have no experience! Canoe Focus is all about canoeists to canoeist dialogue, a paddler's magazine written by paddlers. Technical information: Contributions preferably as a Microsoft Word file, which can be emailed to [donna\\_marshall@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:donna_marshall@canoe-england.org.uk). All material is accepted on the understanding that the BCU and its agents cannot be held liable or responsible for loss or damage, although every care and effort is taken to safeguard material. Next copy date is 11/01/13. Material arriving after this date cannot be included in the February 2013 issue. Canoe Focus encourages contributions of any nature but reserve the right to edit and condense to fill the space available and unless otherwise stated unfortunately cannot reply to submissions or return any articles or images that are submitted to the magazine. Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the BCU, its committees or members. The printing and advertisements in Canoe Focus does not necessarily mean that the BCU endorse the company, items or services advertised. All material in Canoe Focus is strictly copyright and all rights are reserved. Reproduction without prior permission from the editor is forbidden.

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Austin Davies

## TOP MARK FOR BRADFORD

Bradford on Avon Kayak club have achieved the club mark this year. Ed McKeever, Team GB's Sprint kayaking star and new Olympic Champion presented the club mark certificate to proud members of Bradford on Avon KC at a BBQ evening to mark his triumphant return to his home town.



## RICE WITHOUT THE PEAS!

On average, a person regularly taking part in sport will pick up 1.65 injuries a year. Most are relatively minor and can be self-treated. RICE - Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation - has long been recognised as standard first aid treatment for such sports injuries. But there is increasing evidence that applying ice (even wrapped in a towel), or the traditional bag of frozen peas, can potentially lead to frostbite!

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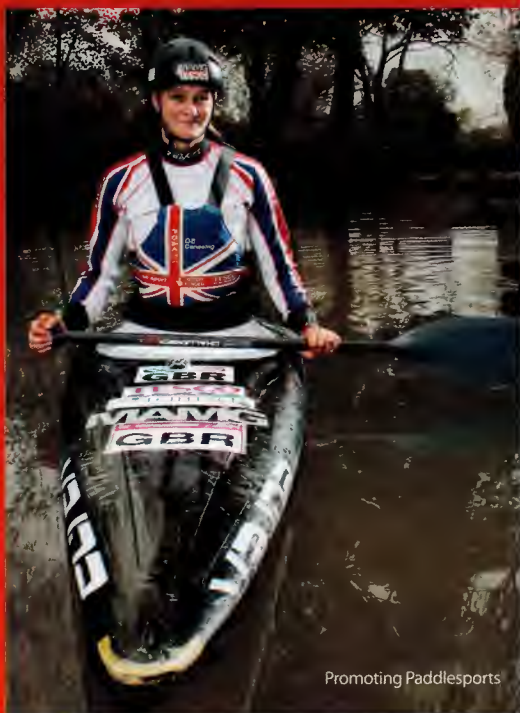
## PROMOTING PADDLE-SPORTS

To help with the promotion of paddle-sports throughout Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, The CanRow initiative, a scheme to attract people into the sports of canoeing and rowing in the area, was created as part of the Olympic legacy, has announced that Team GB slalom racer, and silver medalist at the 2012 Junior European Championships, Mallory Franklin will help them to raise awareness of the initiative. Tom Amos, organiser at CanRow told FOCUS, "We're delighted that Mallory has agreed to help out, it's great that someone of her stature within the sport has taken some time out from her busy schedule to promote the CanRow initiative."

We caught up with Mallory at a recent training session at Windsor. She said, "CanRow is a really good idea, I visit schools and many pupils are not aware of canoeing and when I tell that what I do they're like 'Cool!' and so an initiative such as CanRow can really help them take those first steps into paddle-sports."

Watersports centres across Berkshire and Buckinghamshire have signed up to this initiative and as Amanda Foister, CEO of the Longridge Activity Centre at Marlow, points out "By searching the CanRow website for your nearest participating watersports centre, you can be sure that you'll receive excellent tuition, have access to the relevant equipment and enjoy your time on the water. It's all about having fun, in a safe environment."

For more information visit [www.canrow.org.uk](http://www.canrow.org.uk)



Promoting Paddlesports



## PASSPORT TO SUCCESS

Young kayak paddler Florence Cooke recently completed her Paddlepower Passport at the tender age of just six! Florence started kayaking last summer after a brief taster on holiday and now absolutely loves it. She has her own little hot pink kayak and has worked really hard to get her Paddlepower Passport completed. Florence is the youngest ever paddler to complete the Paddle Power Passport at her canoe club, Astbury Sailsports in Congleton, Cheshire, where everyone is very proud of her achievement. A big 'well done Florence' from all at Canoe FOCUS.

For more information on the Paddlepower Passport go to the Paddlepower section at [www.canoe-england.org.uk](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk)

## WE WANT YOUR NEWS

Is your club organising an event? Are you planning a big paddling challenge for charity? Do you know someone who's done something really inspiring? Then let us know and we'll do our best to share your news with fellow paddlers In-Focus. Email your news to [canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk](mailto:canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk)



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## TOP TIPS FROM OLYMPIC ACES

Team GB's first Olympic Gold Medal winner canoeist Etienne Stott and Olympic slalom ace Lizzie Neave gave paddle tips to young Jack Petchey Foundation Achievement Award Scheme (JPFAAS) winners during November at Hackney's premier watersports facility, the Stoke Newington West Reservoir Centre.

Keen paddler Helena Stone, aged 15, masterminded the visits from the Olympians by writing them a personal email after seeing them compete in the Olympics this summer. Helena invited them to come and visit her youth club at West Reservoir Centre. Helena has been canoeing at the Stoke Newington West Reservoir Centre Youth Club for four years, always helps out at the centre turning up in all weathers.

Young paddlers from Laburnum, Leaside and Islington Boat Clubs were invited to take part in coaching, fun races and a Q&A session with the Olympic stars. Six young canoeists from the West Reservoir Youth Club were also presented with a certificate and £200 to spend on much needed boating equipment to benefit the club. Award winners had gained personal achievements in the sport and included Jack Cutler who has just gained his BCU 2 Star certificate, Oscar Warr who finished second in his class for Hackney in the London Youth Games, Roy Killoran, Beatrix DenDulk, Alice Lindsey and Harry Pollard.

Helena told FOCUS, "Etienne got back to me straight away and said he'd love to come down after the competitive season was over, I contacted Lizzie via Twitter, and she said she would come too. They were both so friendly and helpful, I think they were impressed that it was a youth club member that contacted them, not an instructor or manager, and they were intrigued to see the water and the range of activities we have here in the middle of Hackney. The whole day was amazing and I think it's really inspired me to keep getting out on the water and keep practising and to continue to try and improve my skills and I'm really pleased all the rest of the youth club have enjoyed the day so much."

Gold medal winner Etienne added, "The day was really good, I enjoyed it. Helena was very proactive; she wanted something good for her club. We received lots of emails after the Olympics, but not many like hers, I got the feeling it was really important to her that we visited, she was very informative about what was going on here and so keen for all the other kids to get something positive from the Olympics and the experience of the day."

Hackney is a host borough and the idea of legacy is laudable, but there is only so much that the athletes can do themselves, then it comes down to the volunteers and staff at centres like it to convert that inspiration into action, and that's what they do every day, all year round, so this visit was our way of showing our appreciation for that."

The JPFAAS operates in over 2,000 schools and youth clubs throughout London and Essex to recognise and reward young people for personal achievements.

Stoke Newington West Reservoir offer canoeing and sailing instruction for those aged 8 years and over of all abilities, including multi-activity weeks during every school holiday.

**For more information and bookings please visit [www.better.org](http://www.better.org) or ring the centre on 020 8442 8116**



## IN THE WAKE OF A WAKE

BY PHIL ECCLES

Keith Clark: 1952 - 2011

As time ebbs by the painful memories of the death of a friend fade, but only ever so slightly. I last spoke to Keith last summer to plan our latest mountain bike adventure. We were arranging to head to mid Wales for a couple of days of fun exploring some of the quieter hills of Powys. Two weeks after this phone call he was gone. He was approaching sixty years young, a vegetarian and keen cyclist both on the road and on the mountains.

I helped Keith learn how to paddle a sea kayak on the many courses he had attended at the outdoor centre where I used to work. Together, we had been on many little expeditions to the far-flung quarters of the British Isles. I can envisage him now with a grin from ear to ear, sipping a selection of malt whiskeys as we hid from the wind at our camp on the north coast of Rona. On the beach at Porth Ceiriad we once lit a fire and stayed up very late transfixed by the glow-worms on the dunes behind us. I can see the awe in his eyes as we sailed away from St. Kilda. The sun had just dipped just below the horizon and the soft, evening cloud - purple, red and pink - drew across the island like a veil. I will remember forever the magic of that moment, as will the other friends who were with us at the time. It's that vision that I think of most, now, as I remember the passing of such a friend.

A couple of months ago, Keith's wake took place here in North Wales. His love for the sea made it an obvious place to cast some ashes. The place of choice was Sarn Badrig. Sarn in Welsh translates as 'causeway' and Badrig as 'Patrick'. Patrick's Causeway is steeped in all sorts of myths and legends and it's said that Saint Patrick once walked across it from Ireland. It's also claimed that there was once land there on which communities lived and that the sea was held back by dykes, of which Sarn Badrig was one. Geologists, though, believe that this long, rock and gravel embankment is a result of glacial action that has created similar causeways along the western coasts of Wales.

Sarn Badrig extends 10-miles out from the Meirionnydd coastline in roughly a south west direction. At low water on spring tides this causeway becomes uncovered and it's possible to land and walk around. I have been there a few times and it's such an unusual experience because there is a feeling of being well offshore on land that allows a couple of hours of access before the rising tide comes to reclaim it.

On the day of Keith's wake around eight of us assembled at the beach near Plas Bennar, just north of Barmouth, late in the morning. The spring tide was ebbing swiftly south and soon Sarn Badrig would uncover her secrets. The journey out would be a little under two-miles. On this wonderfully calm day the sea was flat and silky, the views went on forever and it altogether felt just right for the occasion.

Soon this team of middle-aged paddlers was under way and heading out on a course towards the distant Llyn Peninsula. Some paddled along in quiet conversation. Others moved in isolation, enveloped in personal thought and contemplation. From time to time, I glanced back at the slowly receding mountains and remembered the day Keith and I had zipped down from Bwlch y Rhiwgyr on our bikes in the late afternoon sunshine, laughing at the thrills and spills we'd taken in the past.

All too soon I could see some 200 yards away that the water was swelling and rippling. Small wavelets occasionally broke. We were at the reef that was Sarn Badrig. The draining tide was coursing over the embankment and making the sea speed up like a tiny overfall. The clear water revealed the rocks below. We paddled further out to sea and waited for the tide to drop. Soon, as if by magic, land appeared and we could step ashore. Birds appeared from nowhere to feed on the unsuspecting life forms of the seabed. Gulls and waders feasted. It was a truly bizarre and magnificent place. We had brought a splendid picnic and some stoves to brew teas and coffee. We ate well and Keith would have approved wholeheartedly.

As afternoon tarried into early evening and as the hues on the slopes of the Rhinog Mountains changed subtly from bright greens to textures tinted with greys and blues we noticed that the tide had turned. The land on which we walked would soon be covered. In a touching ceremony we stood as a circle of friends on the ancient pebbles. Keith's ashes were cast to the winds. We drank some malt and toasted absent friends. A few poignant words were spoken. Memories flooded, tears flowed.

In the eerie stillness of the evening the water crept quickly across Sarn Badrig. We floated as if in a dream and watched the land disappear. The symbolism of the ashes being taken back into the sea in the inexorable flooding of the spring tide was a powerful metaphor. There were many reflections that evening and not just in the calm waters of the Irish Sea.

In the wake of that wake Keith's friends still meet regularly and get out on small adventures. We remember him well, as true friends do. His life touched us all and we are all the better for knowing him.





# YOUR NECK OF THE WOODS

News From Your Region

**NATIONAL**

## HUB SITES WORKING

A project that has national significance sees the formation of the first partnership steering group consisting of National Governing Bodies, Local Authorities and key partners with a priority to establish 'Hub Sites'. These will be places where people can access a number of sports in one place from cycling and rowing to running, canoeing and kayaking and thereby increasing participation in sport and physical activity, an objective Canoe England (CE) are funded for from Sport England.

The ethos behind the project is to increase participation, in its pilot phase specifically in Birmingham, designed to engage local communities. From a CE perspective, providing places to paddle, giving people confidence in a new sport such as canoeing or kayaking, providing opportunities for potential paddlers to hire equipment at 'Hub Sites' and utilise their own are all visions for this programme, already recognised for its good practice by Sport England.

It's hoped that the project will receive backing from major funding sources so that additional sessions and opportunities can be provided for people to Go Canoeing at the hub sites, the first of which is hoped to be launched in February 2013.

A pilot event ran at potential hub Edgbaston Reservoir this autumn, engaged approximately 40 people, who took the opportunity to try out canoeing, kayaking and rowing in a free taster session hosted jointly between Edgbaston Watersports and Birmingham Rowing Club. Participants enjoyed the chance to try kayaks, sit on tops, open canoes and individual rowing boats,

as well as members of the public using their bikes or taking a leisurely walk in the beautiful surroundings of Edgbaston Park, minutes away from the city centre.

In the example of Birmingham, the steering group is aiming for additional canoeing opportunities to be a part of their award winning 'Be Active' initiative, whereby each resident of Birmingham can access free provision of sport and physical activity in their local area through a Leisure Card. These are often people new to sport and may at first be apprehensive about using a leisure centre or gym, but paddling is a new offer that could engage these participants.

Debbie Groom, Senior Development Officer for Team Central told FOCUS, "It is really exciting working with so many key partners in a project that shouts about our local waterways and that if successful could roll out nationally, helping and inspiring more people to Go Canoeing."

Debbie, and Ben Seal, Paddlesport Development Officer for the East and West Midlands, recently visited potential partner The Centre of the Earth, an environmental education centre on the Birmingham Canal. In order to find out more about what to expect on the canal, they were able to paddle from the centre down to the National Indoor Arena, Sea Life Centre and The Mailbox in a major city, gaining a lot of positive attention from members of the public, who were surprised to see the kayaks on the water in such an industrial area and proving the need for more opportunities such as Go Canoeing Tours, Trails and Starter Sessions in built up areas. Watch this space for details of when the first pilot site is up and running.

## THE NORTH

### LOWER WHARFE GO CANOEING EVENT

On the 29th September Lower Wharfe Canoe Club were due to host annual fundraising and recruitment event on the River Wharfe running through Tadcaster. The club traditionally assist with the running of a Duck Race and run a 'Go Canoeing Taster Session' for anyone to have a go at canoeing or kayaking.

However, in the days leading up to the event it became very clear that this year things were not going to run to plan. The region was hit by serious flooding and the normally placid section of river due to be used for the event had become a raging torrent. It even got to the extent that locals couldn't even cross the bridge over the river within the town due to the serious risk of the bridge collapsing from the force of water.

Not to be easily put off though the club simply changed their plans to offer the opportunity for anyone who wanted to have a go at canoeing the chance to try their hand at racing on a kayak ergo machine instead.

The machines proved to be extremely popular with people from all sections of the community trying their hand at posting the fastest time over 100m. Even the local mayor and members of the local theatre group in full costume were all keen to have a try.

Certificates and information about paddlesports were issued to everyone who took part and the names of everyone who had a go were put into a draw with the lucky winner receiving a free canoeing session at Lower Wharfe Canoe Club.

### TYNEMOUTH CANOE & WAVESKI CLUB POOL SLALOM

This was Tynemouth's first official 'Canoe 2012' pool slalom, and was attended by 27 entrants of all ages and abilities. The event was all about giving people the opportunity to try something different, give them a bit of confidence and have fun at the same time.

We mustn't forget to thank all the volunteers who make these occasions happen. They sometimes get forgotten along the way. Canoe 2012 Certificates were awarded to all competitors and also a special one to Jack Henderson who has contributed so much time and effort over the years to the club.

### CUMBRIA CANOEISTS SKILLS DAY

Enthusiasts from Cumbria Canoeists visited the Tees Valley for a Kayak Skills Coaching day using sections of the River Tees. One of the day's main focuses was to be edging and using the hull to carve, so the paddlers were set the challenge of pushing their comfort of being 'on edge' to the limit with a range of activities and tasks set throughout the day. As they worked their way down a beautiful stretch of river they were encouraged to use all of the river's features to develop their breaking in, breaking out, eddy hopping, rock dodging, ferry gliding, surfing waves and river leadership skills.

The Abbey Rapids provided opportunity to practise their newly found confidence of edging and carving in a more powerful flow. All had a fantastic day, and the participants were left with lots of positive memories and handy tips from the day.



## CENTRAL

### PADDLERS IN THE DARK

A group of lucky paddlers from the West Midlands recently obtained special permission to embark on an unusual canoe journey underground! 18 people joined trip leader Phil Hadley on a specially organised tour through the Dudley Tunnel and on through the Netherton Tunnel.

The Dudley Tunnel completed in 1791 is the second longest



in the country at 2900m long and was built to transport limestone, extracted locally, from the mines inside Castle Hill. The tunnel fell into disuse by the end of the 1960's and there were plans to seal it off. Following local protests the

tunnel was reopened in 1973 and is now only open to non-diesel powered craft.

Canoes and kayaks are not normally allowed in the tunnels, but having secured special permission from the Dudley Canal Trust and Canal & Rivers Trust, Phil Hadley told FOCUS, "We are really lucky to get this opportunity, it's only the third time it's ever been done".

After a short tea stop at Bumble Hole, the Netherton Tunnel proved to be equally as special for the paddlers; at 2700m long it is perfectly straight and took around 50 minutes to reach the light at the end.

The journey finished up back where it started at the Black Country Museum and the group agreed it had been a very special experience. Paddlesport Development Officer Ben Seal said, "We feel very privileged to have been allowed to do this trip, it is an area rich with history and beautiful quiet waterways".

## THE SOUTH

### READING BIG HIT AT FRESHERS FAYRE!

Reading University Knights Canoe Club were loaned an ergo machine from the Paddlesport Development Team to have on their university campus during the two days of fresher fayre. This generated a lot of interest with quite a few people wanting to have a go including some of the rowers, who'd brought their



own machines! The RUCC team had a successful two days of chatting to people and handing out cans of custard or rice pudding, which had their labels covered with their own design explaining who they were, what they did and where they met.

This proved to be very successful and they were hopeful for a good turnout for the first session in October. A good crew of the committee and friends headed up to campus to meet the freshers and bring them down to the clubhouse on the River Thames. They were surprised to discover that 100 people coming down for a paddle!

The RUCC are never ones for turning down a challenge and upon arrival they were sorted into groups kitted up and then slowly taken out on the river in groups. The final number of people on the river that day was 126 with around 110 freshers of mixed ability enjoying a paddle. Compared to around 50 in 2011, this was definitely a huge boost to the club, and paddling in general. RUCC are looking forward to paddling in South Wales, Dartmoor, taking part in some of the BUCS polo competitions as well as developing their marathon racing over the coming year.

### MEETING LIZZIE AT SOUTHAMPTON BOAT SHOW BY HANNAH HARWOOD

Fifteen year old Hannah began to paddle last year, through a school programme based at Winchester Canoe Club, and went along to her first ever beginners' slalom competition at The Hampshire Games in June 2011. Now a regular paddler she was lucky enough to get the day off school to go and meet Olympic Canoe Slalom racer Lizzie Neeve at Southampton Boat Show in September. Hannah picks up the story. On Ladies Day at Southampton Boat Show, I was lucky to visit the show with my mum. I had been to Southampton many times in the past, and I have had my photo taken with sailing star Ben Ainslie, but this year I knew that Olympic slalom racer Lizzie Neeve would be there.

I really wanted to meet Lizzie, as like her I too compete at slalom kayaking. I started last year thanks to my PE teach Mr Wylie, in my first race I was promoted from Div4 to Div3, and won three medals over two days. I go twice a week to my local club, but this year I have only been to a couple of competitions, but I'm currently 6th out of 54 in K1 Div3. It was fantastic to meet Lizzie, as she represented GB at the London Olympics and an inspiration to young paddlers like me



### IT WAS A FANTASTIC AUTUMN FOR GO CANOEING IN PLYMOUTH

During September Plymouth celebrated its maritime links through the annual Marine City Festival. The Ecover Blue Mile was the centrepiece of the opening festival weekend, as thousands of visitors raised funds for environmental conservation by completing a 'Blue Mile', by canoe, kayak stand up-paddle board or swimming, along Plymouth's fabulous waterfront. For the less intrepid festival visitors there was the opportunity to try on-land canoeing as Canoe England and the Mount Batten Centre provided taster sessions with Kayak ergo simulators. The highlight for many was seeing Olympic canoe slalom gold medallists Tim Baillie and Etienne Stott completing the Blue Mile before signing autographs. In addition to the Marine City Festival the Canoe England Team and the Mount Batten Centre have been busy promoting Go Canoeing initiatives to thousands of new university students in Plymouth producing lots of interest from students who now want to take up paddling!

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## THE FOCUS GUIDE TO WHITE WATER RIVER RUNNING EQUIPMENT...

# White Water River Running

Whether you're just off for a few hours with your canoe club on a run down your favourite river, pushing your limits on steeper, more difficult white water or leading an extended trip on challenging rapids in the back of beyond. There's always some essential kit that you should be using and carrying with you on the river. White water is an ever changing and dynamic environment, so situations can arise, and things can go wrong very quickly. As white water kayakers we have a responsibility, to ourselves and to our fellow paddlers, to make sure that we carry, and know how to use, the correct equipment that will allow us deal with any situation or scenario on the water. So to help you make sure that you've got all the essentials for a fun, and most importantly safe trip, here is the Canoe FOCUS guide to essential white water river trip, so you can paddle hard, in the knowledge that you're prepared for whatever the river throws at you.

### KAYAK

There's a vast range of river kayaks on the market, and they come in a range of different styles and shapes. Some of the designs are very specific in their intended use, playboating or for running steep white water for example, but there is a fantastic choice of fun, easy to paddle 'all-purpose' river running kayaks available to choose from, so you'll be able to find a boat that suits your style and the kind of water you like to paddle on.

- **Outfitting:** Most modern boats come with excellent padding kits, hip pads and back rests to allow you to get a snug, positive fit. But we're all different shapes and sizes, so you may need to spend a little time adding, or removing foam to get it just right.
- **Footrest:** For white water river running your kayak needs to be fitted with a correctly fitted and secured bulkhead footrest.
- **Airbags** - These are a must, both front and rear. They can greatly improve the chances of recovering the boat, especially in a pin situation and they can also help to prevent damage to your kayak if you and it part company due to a failed roll.



### BUOYANCY AID

The features on the buoyancy aid you choose will depend on your experience and the grade of water on which you paddle. A basic white water river running buoyancy aid should fit snugly but still allow you plenty of freedom of movement. One or more pockets are useful for carrying gear that you may want to access in a hurry (whistle/knife/camera). It should be secure when worn and with adjustable straps, so you can get the fit just right. Shoulder straps need to be robust, are you happy that, if needed, you could be hauled out of a fast moving river without them breaking or the buoyancy aid moving, or worse coming off? Quick release rescue harnesses and cow-tails etc can be very useful in rescue scenarios but need to be stowed cleanly when not in use. (Make sure you know, and understand, their use properly if you opt for a BA with these kinds of features). It's also worth noting that BAs don't last forever, especially with heavy use, so they should be checked and replaced regularly.

### PADDLE-BOTTOMS

Made from the same material as cags, often with reinforcing on the knees and backsides to prevent wear they will usually have a neoprene waist and neoprene, or latex cuffs on the ankles, or even full built in dry socks to keep the river out!

### THERMALS

(BASE & MIDDLE LAYERS)

A good base layer will help keep you toasty, it wicks moisture away from your skin through its material. These are usually made from manmade fibres or natural materials like wool. Avoid cotton as it stays wet, doesn't wick and will keep you cold if it gets wet. If it's extra chilly then a fleece middle layer over the base one will seal the deal.

### KARABINERS

A couple of both snap-gate and screw-gate karabiners, or krabs as they are commonly called are useful. Snap-gates are great for clipping on to things quickly and cleanly, such as on to broach loops or end grabs in boat recovery/pin situations. Screw-gate krabs should be used for attaching to a chest harnesses, in a live-bait rescue for instance, as there is no danger of them accidentally coming undone.



### DRY-SUITS

(SURFACE IMMERSION SUITS)

Paddle sport-specific surface immersion suits, or as they are more commonly known dry-suits, are understandably popular, as they represent the ultimate in protection and comfort and eliminate any nasty cold spots around the waist and kidney areas.

### PADDLE-TOP

(CAG)

A cag for white water paddling will have latex, or neoprene, neck and wrist seals and a double waist system, to combine with a spray deck, to keep the water out even if you capsize and roll! Good modern river running cags utilise breathable laminate materials to make them even more comfortable, and dynamic design to maximise flexibility and paddler performance.

### HELMET

If you're paddling on moving water then a CE approved helmet will keep your head safe from knocks and bumps. It should cover your temple area and down of the nape of the neck. It should fit you snugly and, obvious as this sounds, the strap should always be done up securely.

### WHISTLE

You'd be surprised how many paddlers omit this simple, but essential piece of kit from their gear. A good waterproof whistle is still one of the simplest ways to attract attention and communicate in an emergency on the river.





### PADDLES

These also come in various sizes, designs and materials. Generally river kayaking paddles fall in to various lengths from as little as 190 cm to over 200 cm. As a general rule the taller you are the longer the paddle you need.

- Blades size/shape: The blades can vary in size and shape. The rule of thumb here is the less strength you have the less blade size. Blade shapes vary too and a symmetrical curved blade is fine to begin with but an asymmetric curved performs better.

### SPRAY-DECK

River running spray-decks are made from neoprene and seal on to the cockpit of the kayak using either a shock-cord or rubber rand. Many river running spray decks have additional reinforcing using materials like Kevlar in high wear areas to aid longevity.

### THROW-LINES

Everyone in your group should be carrying a personal throw-bag for the rescue of swimmers, and you should have at least a couple of longer 'bank-rescue' bags amongst your team in case of more serious rescue/boat equipment recovery scenarios.

### FIRST AID KIT

How complex this is will depend on your level of first aid training, but it should contain the basics of waterproof plasters, rubber gloves, a few dressings, cotton wool and tape and triangular bandages. Keep it in a well-marked dry bag (clear bags work well for this), so it's easily spotted.



### RIVER SHOES

Good footwear is a must for those paddling in a white water environment. Your river shoes should allow you to get in and out of your kayak easily, but just as importantly they should allow you to be able to move about over rugged riverside environments quickly and safely (for scouting, portaging or rescue and safety purposes), so a good sole with the ability to grip wet rock is pretty essential. They should stay on your feet even in the event of a swim and some degree of toe protection and ankle support is also a bonus.

### WATERPROOF CONTAINERS

There are many different waterproof containers all with their own pros and cons. Dry-bags are probably most paddlers' preference, as they can be made smaller or squished in to small spaces.

### SPLIT PADDLES

Not every member of your group needs to carry splits, as a rough guide maybe two out of five. If you're running harder rapids in difficult to access areas, that are difficult to walk out from a descent set of splits is a must.

# Hit the Trail

**Go Canoeing Starter Sessions have been running for a number of years and have already introduced thousands of people to the wonderful sports of canoeing and kayaking.**

In 2008 we had just 29 locations offering starter sessions – today that figure is up to a staggering 107 and so far more than 800 Go Canoeing Starter Sessions have been organised in 2012. Having proven to be such a hit with new paddlers, Go Canoeing received additional funding from Sport England to become even bigger and better and the initiative was rolled out with a range of new activities to encourage those with some canoeing or kayaking experience to get out on the water more regularly.

## TOWN & COUNTRY PADDLING

Go Canoeing Guided Tours are a great way to meet like-minded people and learn about all the local historical sites and wildlife from our informative and passionate Go Tour Guides. But if there aren't any tour dates that suit your schedule, or if you just fancy heading out for a paddle with family or friends, following a Go Canoeing Canoe Trail is an exciting way of exploring Britain's wonderful waterways.

Our trails offer a huge amount of variety, from urban trails in city centres to rural routes through stunning scenery, and from inland waters to wildlife abundant estuaries.

As well as helping you find new and exciting places to paddle, the trails also include all the practical information you need, such as where to park and the location of the nearest public toilet. There's

even information about the history of the waterway you're travelling on and some background about the local sites of interest.

Go Canoeing Development Officer Jenny Spencer explains why the trails are such a great idea: "Canoeing and kayaking are such varied activities, but there really is something quite magical about just getting out in your canoe or kayak and exploring your environment.

"But once you've become bored of your local lake or you no longer find your nearest river riveting, it's time to find new places to paddle and our Go Canoe Trails are the perfect way to broaden your horizons and reinvigorate your passion for paddling.

"We're really proud of the Canoe Trails that we've put together so far and there are some real highlights to be seen as you paddle along some of the country's most pleasant waterways. Our trails can offer you some breathtaking sights, from the majestic towers of Hampton Court Palace to the amazing sweeping vistas of Lake Windermere and even hidden gems like the amazing collection of decaying and wrecked ships abandoned on Sunderland's River Wear.

"There are trail types for all abilities and experience, from short two-mile paddles to 30-mile treks meaning there really is something for everyone. But if you can't find something to suit you, don't worry, we'll be constantly updating the website with new trails so watch this space!" **CF**





**“Go Canoe Trails are the perfect way to broaden your horizons and reinvigorate your passion for paddling.”**

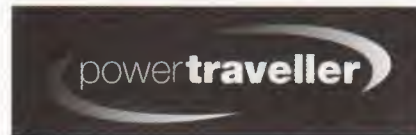


## USEFUL INFO

For more information about Canoe Trails near you, visit [www.gocanoeing.org.uk](http://www.gocanoeing.org.uk) and enter your details into the Activity Search.

If you have been on one of our Canoe Trails, send us your pictures and we'll upload them to our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/GoCanoeing](http://www.facebook.com/GoCanoeing)

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By John Handyside

# Fast Forward

## THE ART OF ATTAINING EFFECTIVE FORWARD PADDLING TECHNIQUE

**National Competition Development Coach John Handyside explains why an efficient forward stroke is your biggest asset in becoming a better paddler, and how to achieve it...**

Now matter what discipline of paddlesport we're in to or what stage of proficiency we are at there's one stroke that's the key to unlocking the door on becoming a better paddler. It's probably the first stroke that we'll learn when we sit in a canoe or kayak and it's probably the last one we'll truly master. From Olympic Champions, to white water weekend warriors to those just dipping their first blade in to paddlesports it's our means of propulsion and a stroke that we should never stop trying to improve and perfect because the better our forward strokes then the better the paddlers we will be!

It's a tough job, explaining how to do a good forward stroke. On the surface it seems simple, but scratch a little deeper and to perfect a stroke that will be both powerful and sustainable is a complex thing. So, having been asked to do an article on forward

paddling in 800 words and announcing I couldn't do it justice in 8000, here is a start with the basics

### FUNDAMENTALS

The first thing to understand, as for all techniques in paddlesport, is the concept of the 'Fundamentals'. These are: Posture; Connection, Transfer of Power and Feel; with these in place everything else comes together a lot more easily.

Posture is all about getting into a position where the body can work efficiently and the right muscles activate to perform a given task. When seated or kneeling, the position to attain is that of 'being tall'; imagine there is a helium balloon attached to the crown of your head and lifting your head and body through the spine so it has a



Photo: AEphotos.



**“Efficient forward paddling is the process of moving the boat forward while minimising all forces and movements that are not positively producing forward movement.”**

long, rather than slumped position. In this position, now draw your navel in towards the spine and then up. This is the 'core connectivity', which is the start of the next fundamental, which is: Connection

Good connection is the mainstay of efficiency in the boat. The more effectively the paddle blade in the water can be 'joined' to the key part of the boat for that action, then the more efficient the stroke will become, in the case of the kayak, this key part of the boat is the footrest, in a canoe, it will be the knee block, straps or the saddle seat fittings. Try paddling without any of these in the boat and you'll see how vital a good connection is for control and propulsion.

Once the connection has been made then effective 'Transfer of Power' can be achieved. For forward paddling in a kayak, power is generated by each foot, in turn, pushing hard on the footrest on the paddling side, depending on the other fittings in the boat, this power will be transmitted effectively to the blade through the pelvis, with the core now connected, the shoulders and arms move as a frame with the pelvis, the arms are maintained in position throughout the stroke so any movement of the legs immediately connects with the paddle shaft and thus the blade. ▶



It is important though for maximum efficiency that a reverse cycle of movement happens at the same time. The blade has to be placed in the water effectively and efficiently so there is no waste of energy, it has to be 'locked' in position as quickly as possible and not move rearwards through the water at any stage of the action.

Blade entry must be clean and fast. The aim is to make a hole on the water with the tip of the blade and have the remainder of the blade go into the water through that hole. This will result in minimal or no splash off the face of the blade. An image to use is that of spearing a fish, with little disturbance of water on entry. Once the blade is fully covered, then and only then is a force exerted on the paddle-shaft to move the boat forward past the blade.

**“The better your forward stroke is the faster you’ll be and a more efficient forward stroke means less wasted energy so you can paddle for longer, handy if you’re touring, sea kayaking or racing!”**

**There are two components of power for moving a boat forward with a paddle blade.**

- One is using the water as a resistance.
- The other is pulling against a 'lift' force that is created by the lateral movement of the blade.

#### GETTING THE MEASURE

The measure of an effective forward paddling stroke is the distance the boat moves per stroke. If the blade is not 'locking' in the water, or is slipping rearwards towards the back of the boat, then the less far forward per stroke the boat will move. The best paddlers can lock their blades so no movement occurs, or even have the blade is moving fractionally forwards in the direction of travel

This is achieved by creating a 'lift force' with lateral movement of the paddle on entry rather than only a direct pull against the blade. The 'Wing' racing blade enables this to be done very effectively, which is why all serious racing kayakers, and some long distance sea kayakers, use them.

If you want to cover the miles in your sea kayak, going back to basics and working on your forward stroke can pay dividends.



To judge how effectively your blade is locking in the water, try to observe from time to time if there are small eddies or whirlpools around the back of the blade when the load comes on, if there is this disturbance behind the blade then there will be movement of the blade through the water that is creating this effect. Try standing on the bank and move a blade through the water and see the effect.

When a boat is accelerated from a stationary position, these water movements can be seen, but as the boat picks up speed and the initial resistance has been overcome, they will disappear. The longer and therefore faster the boat, the smaller these cavitations behind the blade will be as there is less resistance in the boat to overcome.

The 'Feel' is the feedback the paddler gets when all the components of the stroke come together, the paddler knows when the boat is running well and the stroke is effective.

The initial important areas to consider therefore when developing your paddling technique are the 'fundamentals' and the 'lock'. ▶



A good, efficient, forward paddling stroke is just as important on moving water. Photo: Tania Brookes.



**MOVING & GROOVING**

For paddlers that are boating on dynamic moving water, such as river running white water kayakers and slalom racers, the forward stroke is just as important, but used in a slightly different way. It tends to be used in shorter more powerful bursts, to really drive the boat in the direction you want to go, often across, or even against, the current; and to accelerate up to the speed of the water to punch through, over and over obstacles such as holes and eddy lines. It's a stroke that often gets overlooked but work on getting the fundamentals right on your forward stroke and it will carry over in to all aspects of your paddling, and for the better!



On moving water a forward stroke is used to drive the boat over obstacles and across the current. Photo: Chris Green.

**CONCLUSION**

When you're getting started, especially in recreational boats you'll just want to move the boat around. In that scenario any forward stroke that allows you to do that is a good one. But as you progress it's well worth taking the time to break it down and really think about your forward stroke using the principals above. The better your forward stroke is the faster you'll be and a more efficient forward stroke means less wasted energy so you can paddle for longer, handy if you're touring, sea kayaking or racing! **CF**

**USEFUL INFO**

For more basic information there is a 'Forward Paddling DVD on the BCU e-shop ([www.bcushop.org.uk](http://www.bcushop.org.uk)) with many images to ponder. For more information about the mechanics and coaching of forward paddling, particularly with Racing Boats in mind, then clubs or centres can book three-hour seminars.

Further details are available from John Handyside, National Competition Development Coach.

**FORWARD PADDLING KEY POINTS****Catch**

- Positive, upright body posture (try not to bob)
- Forward arm extended for maximum reach
- Keep your top hand relaxed
- Use good body rotation to gain maximum reach
- Paddle blade should enter the water at about 45 degrees to support the transfer of weight of the body onto the blade.
- Power comes on to blade straight away

**Power**

- Unwind your body rotation to produce power
- Push on to footrest on the same side as the stroke and use your core muscles to transfer the power through the boat
- The transfer of power is achieved by putting pressure on the footbar and pushing the hip back. The footrest has to be connected to the water, not possible if legs are relaxed!
- The paddle does not track alongside the boat in all disciplines, the 'lift' effect as defined earlier requires the blade to move away from the edge of the boat and not follow alongside it.
- Hold your paddle away from your body to help maximise your body rotation

**Recovery**

- Your top hand now guides and pushes the paddle, to get ready for the next catch, and should remain high (level with your eyes)
- The blade should exit just after the knees move past the hand, this will be before the blade gets to the hip. Exit by the hip is not a good blade angle for generating forward power and is in fact slowing the boat down.
- Your top hand is high and your body in position for the final rotation in preparation for the next catch

An efficient forward stroke will make you faster, able to go further with less effort, in short a better paddler. Photo: Glyn Reed



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# See in the New

## 12 NEW THINGS TO TRY IN 2013

It's easy to stick with what you know, but trying something new is a great way to keep everything fresh and have a lot of fun too. A change is as good as a rest as the saying goes. Dipping a paddle in to different areas of the sport can really revitalise you and even make you a better paddler. Paddle-sport is so diverse that there's always something new to try if you really want to, so go on give it a go...

### TRY CANOE POLO

Get stuck into a bit of team action. It could be just with a bunch of mates and a plastic football on your nearest bit of water, or take it a step further and pop along to your nearest canoe polo club and try it out for real. It's fast, it's furious and it's a whole lot of fun.

### PADDLE A DUCKIE

Duckies are excellent for introducing beginners or non-paddlers to the joys of moving water and they're an absolute hoot to paddle. Even if you're experienced, piloting one of these down a stretch of fast moving water can really improve your river reading skills and timing as you have to plan any moves much further ahead.

### TRY A NEW DISCIPLINE

Trying a new discipline from your usual type of paddling, such as marathon, sea kayaking, sprint or whitewater. It's always fun and you'll be amazed at how much you'll learn to take back with you to your usual style of paddling.



Photo by Beth Barren



### COME & TRY IT

These type of events usually run throughout the spring and summer at a wide range of venues. Designed to let people see what paddle sports are all about and to actually get on the water and give it a go. They're a great family day out and a brilliant opportunity to try out various styles of boat and get some top tips from coaches and sponsored paddlers.

### TRY YOUR HAND AT CANOE SLALOM

Negotiating a course of set up slalom poles is a fantastic way of improving your boat control and water reading skills, not to mention your fitness. Start with flat water and then progress to moving water.

### GET INVOLVED IN COACHING

Passing on the skills that you have already learned is very rewarding. Why not take time out from your usual paddling trips to help out at a session of your local canoe club.

### EXPLORE A NEW PADDLING LOCATION

Paddling a new river, lake or stretch of coastline can be a very special thing. After all you only ever get to paddle it for the first time once. The UK is blessed with some truly stunning locations and researching and planning a trip can sometimes be almost as much fun as the actual paddling. It could be day trip, or a weekend away, but exploring new paddling locations will always leave you feeling inspired to get out there and discover more. ▶

Learning new skills can be rewarding and fun.



A new destination adds extra adventure to a paddling trip.



**“You’ll be amazed at how much you’ll learn to take back with you to your usual style of paddling.”**



Photo by David Steen

Try Something New in 2013



**TAKE PART IN A COMPETITION**

Competition has always been a part of paddle-sports in the UK and can offer an opportunity for you to put your skills to the test. The ethos of many entry-level competitions is all about taking part and having fun. Whether it's slalom, freestyle, river racing, freestyle or surfing, there are many fun comps of different types that happen around the UK, so you can give it a go and see if it's something you want to take further.

**INTRODUCE A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER TO PADDLING**

Just like coaching, introducing someone to canoeing & kayaking and seeing them become as hooked as you are, is a very rewarding thing, be warned though, it won't be long before you find that your entire family has gone canoe & kayak crazy!

**GO CANOEING**

Taking part in one of the many Go Canoeing guided tours that happen all over the UK is a great way to get out on the water more. It's also ideal for introducing those non-paddling friends of family. For more info go to [www.gocanoeing.org.uk](http://www.gocanoeing.org.uk)





### LEARN A NEW SKILL

One of the best things about canoeing & kayaking is that no matter how good or experienced you are there is always something new to learn. One of the best ways to fast-track new skills is to book on a course. There are brilliant courses available on pretty much every type of paddling skill and type, all over the UK, from a plethora of qualified and passionate coaching providers. Whatever the skill set you want to learn, sea kayak navigation, river running skills, rescue & safety, canoe camping, first aid, trip planning, you name and they'll be a course out there to suit.

### GET PADDLE-FIT

Let's be honest we could all be a little bit fitter, especially in the winter. Try complementing your paddle trips with a spot of cross training. Swimming and running are good, and many paddlers enjoy cycling too. Or maybe your club has some paddling Ergo-machines that you can use.



**“Paddling a new river, lake or stretch of coastline can be a very special thing.”**

Paddling a new river is always an exciting adventure.



# A Canoe Adventure on the Rannoch Archipelago



Credits: Article by Owen Jenkins  
photos by Owen Jenkins & Nick Williams

**Two men in a boat set out on an epic canoeing & climbing adventure to scale some of Scotland's classic peaks and to canoe the length of Rannoch Moor enroute...**

It's early October, and I'm doing the first shift of a seven-hour drive from Northamptonshire to the Western Highlands. Our destination is The Bridge of Orchy train station, from here we will be met by our taxi driver Ali, who will then take myself, my friend Nick, two packs and our inflatable canoe some eight-miles

up the A82 and drop us off at the bridge crossing the River Ba. Everything is going to plan and the weather is on our side, the water looks high enough to take the canoe with us, rather than stash it under the bridge, which was a contingency plan.

This is it; this is where the adventure begins...





**“At an altitude of 945m, with clear skies to the east we have a fabulous view over Rannoch Moor. Tomorrow’s canoe route along the twisting River Ba is clearly visible, all the way to the mouth of Loch Ba and then on across to Loch Laidon. Nick jokingly describes the land in front of us as the Rannoch Archipelago, it seems very apt with so much water and seemingly endless islands.”**

## DAY 1

Nick and I have spent many years climbing and mountaineering together, all over the world. However, we have never tried to canoe between mountains. The majority of articles that you read on the subject of crossing Rannoch Moor in a canoe, suggest the starting point to be the Loch Ba bridge at the A82, however we wanted to get as high as we feasibly could to get nearer the Western mountains. The plan was to climb four mountains to the west and canoe across Rannoch Moor to climb two mountains in the North East.

8.30 am and we start walking east for 5km along a wet and boggy track, aiming to meet up with the West Highland Way, from there it's a further 1 km south to a small bridge over the River Ba. It's hard work, walking over this terrain with these loads. The packs combined are over 20kg, which as one load would not be too bad, but with one strapped to your back and the other your chest makes it an awkward mass. The canoe is equally awkward and probably heavier with the additional bits and bobs like pump and paddles.

Just over an hour, we reach the West Highland Way. A couple of hundred meters along, we spot a small knoll. This will make an ideal pitch site with dry ground, subtly hidden from the main path and with great views across the stunning Rannoch Moor. The tent is pitched quickly and without fuss; our kit and canoe is stashed inside. We gear up for a long day, where we will complete a 20km horseshoe circuit, taking in four Munros, starting with the impressive Stob a'Choire Odhair.

The tent is at a starting altitude of 350-meters, we have a lot to do to get to the summit of Stob a'Choire Odhair. After two hours of walking and climbing we sit on the summit. At an altitude of 945m, with clear skies to the east we have a fabulous view over Rannoch Moor. Tomorrow's canoe route along the twisting River Ba is clearly visible, all the way to the mouth of Loch Ba and then on across to Loch Laidon. Nick jokingly describes the land in front of us as the Rannoch Archipelago; it seems very apt with so much water and seemingly endless islands.

The weather is still holding up and we can't believe our luck, and hoping for it to remain stable for the next three days. We descend Stob a'Choire Odhair and proceed to climb Stob Ghabhar. Lunch is a handful of nuts and a couple of cereal bars, without too much hanging around, the skies may be relatively clear, but it's cold (it is October in the highlands).

We proceed to climb Creise and then on to Meall a' Bhuiridh. It turns into a longer than expected day and we arrive back at the tent as it turns dark. We are both tired and glad of the stoves warmth, as beef stew and dumplings bubble in the pan. It was a huge a day, we have climbed a total of 2220 metres, descended the same amount over a distance of 20km in 9 hours. ▶



**DAY 2**

After the best night's sleep I have ever experienced in a tent and a ridiculously long lie in we shamefacedly get ourselves organised. We break camp and head down to the river; the water looks low, but we feel confident that we can paddle the majority of it (thankfully as I don't particularly want to carry it back).

The forecast proves true, and with the sun shining and the wind barely a breeze we inflate the canoe and strap in our packs. With adventure in our heads and courage in our hearts we set off.

The first 100 feet go rather well, before we have to get out and have to walk the boat over a shallow bend with rocks. This does not bode well, but it doesn't last long and we are back in the canoe, and paddling again. The river widens a bit and we pick up pace, but just when we think we have this in the bag we hit a shallow spot and get our feet wet again, this pattern goes on for another hour, and after getting through another shallow spell, we pull up for a breakfast of bacon flavoured noodles.

A review of the map tells us we are not too far from the A82, which will then take us into Loch Ba.

Back in the water, and 20-minutes later, we approach the bridge, and after driving over it dozens of times, and in Nick's case probably hundreds, we go under it for the first time. This is truly a strange

feeling and despite travelling under one of the principle arteries of the highlands, you can't help but feel very isolated, as the desolate Rannoch Moor fills your vista.

Loch Ba, now this is a new ball game! The wind has picked up and the inflatable is becoming increasingly difficult to keep in a straight line (we're now regretting not taking the extra 10-mins to put the skeg on). Nick is up front paddling easy whilst for every one of his strokes I am pulling three. After another 5-mins we get a rhythm going, which leaves Nick practically redundant (a luxury I enjoyed the next day when Nick steered us down the back strait of the huge Loch Laidon). We passed sizeable islands, thick with trees. These islands, safe from deer provide hindsight and give us the imagination to see how this huge moor might once have looked before men and the extinction of the deer's natural predators.

We are an hour into Loch Ba and it's getting decidedly cold, hats, gloves and an extra layer are in place. Whilst I stay in rhythm, Nick consults the map looking for a suitable campsite. Over the last hour the wind has gained in strength, we are in the chop so to speak, and we decide that the best option is to look to the north bank where we may find a small beach with some protection from the wind. However a closer look at the map suggests there may be a beach on the North end of the loch, behind a small peninsula located close to the river system before entering Loch Laidon. We go for it, and are rewarded with a spectacular little beach completely protected from the wind, and frankly with a shard of sunlight hitting the white sand you could be forgiven for thinking we were somewhere tropical. The Vikings in us paddle to ramming speed and hit the beach at full tilt, for the next 14-hours or so this is our little piece of land and we are prepared to fight for it.

This is arguably the best campsite in the world. The canoe is pulled up, the tent pitched facing out to Loch Ba on a clear early evening. With a cuppa-soup in hand we soak in splendid views of the ranges all around, and our little bay, still without any wind mirrors the scenery with such beauty. This is what it's all about, this small moment cancels out thousands of emails, hundreds of deadlines, dozens of pointless meetings and the soul destroying daily commute.



### DAY 3

After a decent night's sleep we are ready to go. It doesn't take long to break camp, load the canoe and head off, like yesterday we decide to delay breakfast until we are a little way down the river and closer to Loch Laidon. It's a promising start, the weather is good and the water deep, and a couple of hundred meters later and we meet our first piece of fast water. It's incredible how innocuous a stretch of water looks from the bank compared to the experience when you are in the thick of it. It's tackled head on and with a couple of bumps and furious paddling we are through. The water is considerably faster than yesterday, and we can hear faster water ahead. Another turn in the river and we hit more rocks and fast water, which we now negotiate like seasoned pros. It would be an impossible task to remove the grins from our faces, this is great fun and turning out to be everything we hoped it would be. We decide to pull up for another breakfast, and while Nick sets up for hot chocolate and noodles I drain the boat of water we took on board from the last two runs. The wind is picking up and the tango adopts a new role as windbreaker.

The map suggests another kilometre to the mouth of Loch Laidon, which we expect to hit shortly; we paddle through a tranquil pool and approach a bend where the sound of fast water hits us. As we come through the bend we can see the opening to the loch. However, we will need to negotiate a 100-meter stretch of what looks like serious water. This feels different to the other pieces we have gone through, the rocks are bigger, the water a lot deeper, and obviously a much steeper gradient. We don't have much time pick a route through as we are picking up speed.

We go for it, masterfully avoiding the first series of obstacles, the boat is bouncing against rocks, and our shouts to each other are being lost over the noise. It's really fast now and to the untrained eye we must look like we know what we are doing as we swing between boulders, and hurtle through small channels with unerring accuracy, but it's really more luck than judgement, and determination over skill that carries us through. Two thirds of the way through and we must see it at the same time, without the need to confer we paddle with all our might to get the boat straight before we go over a three-foot drop into a foaming pool.

We nearly made it, but so focused on the drop were we that we missed the unmissable rock about the size of a mini, which bounced us to the right and we ungraciously fell over the edge, sideways only to be pinned against a huge rock with the full force of the river behind. There was a comical moment as Nick was paddling furiously and going nowhere (a bit like Wiley Coyote), he couldn't see what I could. The boat was now full of water and we were in serious danger of going over, one of the straps had loosened and my pack was out of the boat and under water, held on by a bungee. Nothing for it, we had to bail

out. We plunged into icy water, and with considerable effort heaved the boat around the rock and when she was free we walked her close to the bank. The torrent had calmed and

we walked the last 20-meters or so to the start of the loch stumbling on wet stones with numb toes. A small beach offered a suitable landing spot where we pulled up for draining, and after five minutes of wetting ourselves further with laughter we went on to damage assessment (boat and bodies).

Boat drained, damage assessed as minimal, we head into the huge Loch Laidon and start the 8km paddle to the end where we will land. It's hard work with the wind cutting across us. Nick is up front and as per yesterday on Loch Ba it takes some effort to keep us

**"It would be an impossible task to remove the grins from our faces, this is great fun and turning out to be everything we hoped it would be."**



going straight and again I am annoyed with myself for not putting on the skeg – stupid! The wind and overcast skies are chilling us. Half way down and we pull up on a small beach to stretch out and warm up. Ahead of us we can make out the railway bridge and

white coloured buildings that must be Rannoch Station.

We are surrounded by the most stunning scenery, with mountains all around us and deer on the banks, skipping away as we draw near.


It takes us the best part of three hours to travel the length of Loch Laidon, and originally our plan was to take the long way round to Rannoch by canoeing the Garbh Ghaioir into Loch Eigheach and face more challenging white water running under the railway line between Rannoch Station and Bridge of Orchy, but frankly we are tired and cold and decide to pull up at the end of the loch on a small launch ramp. We also know that we have a at least two hours of hard trekking ahead of us to get to a suitable campsite as a starting point for tomorrow's final two Munros. ■



We hit the launch ramp at Viking rammig speed (getting good at this), to minimise wet feet. That's it we've done it! It has taken us two days to successfully canoe across Rannoch Moor, and with relatively little mishap. Not bad for a pair of canoe novices! It takes us twenty minutes to deflate the boat and set up the load, and a further twenty to walk up to the Rannoch Hotel. The hotel is actually a grand word for what is in effect a guesthouse, albeit it a stunning one. We meet up with the proprietor who unfortunately informs us that there are no rooms available (we were secretly hoping for a beer, bed and dinner), which meant we were back to plan A, a walk out to camp. However, the owner kindly offered to stash the canoe, buoyancy aids, paddles and surplus kit in the garden. So with light loads we set off to make camp, some 7km North.

#### DAY 4

Aware of the title of this magazine and with the canoeing over, I won't dwell on the next day's mountaineering other than to say we completed our circuit taking in the summits of Car Dearg (941m) and Sgor Gaibhre (955m), and were rewarded with the sight of a golden eagle taking off just feet in front of us. The day took five hours before getting back to the tent. Then a further two hours to break camp and return to the Rannoch Hotel to pick up our stashed kit. A couple of hours waiting at the station for our train back to Bridge of Orchy where our journey started, gave us plenty of time to reflect on a fantastic trip canoeing and climbing across the great Rannoch Moor.

As I finish this last paragraph, I look around at my fellow commuters on the train to London Euston with pasty, scowling faces. Mine isn't, Nick and I poured over maps in the pub last night planning the next canoe trip in the mountains. North Scotland here we come. This trip will take in a circuit across the Sutherland area, canoeing between the classic Suilven and Stac Pollaidh mountains, both of which I cannot wait to climb, anyone fancy it? 



**"We are surrounded by the most stunning scenery, mountains all around us and deer on the banks, skipping away as we draw near."**





Paddlers: James 'Pringle' Bebbington, Paul 'Cheesy' Robertson  
Images © Dagger Europe

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# Southern Style Canoe Trips

Article & photos by Malcolm Grey

## BE ADVENTUROUS, EXPLORE THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND IN A CANOE!

Gliding over crystal clear waters, fighting clinging vegetation, watching fabulous wildlife and being in places rarely visited by people. When you think of adventurous open canoeing, you think of Canada, Sweden, South America and the like. In the UK, you probably think of the Highlands, the Wye, Scottish lochs and Cumbrian lakes. You probably don't think of the South of England. However, I would argue that it is perfectly possible to have an adventure of your own in the South, just minutes from some major towns, and barely see a soul...

Three years ago my eyes were opened to the wonders of canoeing when I purchased a humble inflatable after spending time on the River Thames with friends. Suddenly I could get out and explore the surrounding waterways near my home in Surrey, places I barely knew existed. Soon I upgraded to an open canoe and I was out enjoying paddling adventures every weekend and sometimes even

in the week too! Nor were these all simple 'there & back' trips on a canal. I was finding gently moving water, secluded picnic spots, portages, jungle like backwaters and seeing a completely different aspect of the countryside. Here is just a flavour of the some of the tasty back-yard adventures you can find if you just get out there and explore in your canoe. ►



**“In my canoe I feel part of this place. I am silent, and I am no threat, so I am ignored and life goes on around me. No other transport will get me so close to the wildlife of an English evening.”**



The locals were very friendly!  
Dues need to be paid in  
Chichester Harbour



### A STOLEN MOMENT

An evening in late spring, soft sunlight spilling through the trees as I lower the canoe gently onto the waters of the Basingstoke Canal. Whatever the time of year this rural gem of a waterway is perfect for a stress free paddle, with no locks on its top section beyond Aldershot. The further west you go, the more rural it gets. My favourite section lies between Winchfield Hurst and Odiham.

Aboard my canoe I have the makings of a simple meal as I head westwards, winding past cow filled meadows, and under the eaves of a woodland at a place I call the Hall of Trees, so perfect are the curving boughs above my head. I paddle silently, listening to the songs of nature, the calls of birds, the rustle of a lively squirrel and the knocking of a busy woodpecker.

I paddle to a canal-side bench, a few miles down the canal. Here I set up my firebox and cook myself a couple of tasty burgers, and brew myself a drink on the Kelly Kettle. As I wait for my meal to be ready, I just sit and watch the way the sunlight moves across tree trunks, perfectly content to leave the brain in neutral. As the sun dips below the unseen horizon, I pack up and slip once more onto the still waters, as quietly as I can. For I have come here for a reason, to see the badgers.

Slowly I slide the paddle through the surface, incredibly clear for a canal, as it is spring water fed, and move just a few hundred yards along from my bench. Here, where the canal passes through a wooded cutting, there is a badger sett I have visited numerous times. I pull a scarf up around my face a little, and don a dark hat, and sit down to wait, drifting in mid-stream.

Soon I am rewarded. Above me in the slope is the lip of the spoil heap caused by generations of digging brocks. And here a white striped face appears, sniffing the air. It seems to sense me, and disappears, but is soon back again. Apparently the looming shape of me afloat in my canoe poses no threat. Now he goes to work, moving up the slope above the sett, and then starting to drag bunches of leaves back to his home. What is he doing? He's making his bed of course. Another face appears, then another, as two slightly smaller shapes appear and tumble around together. By now, though, it is getting quite dark and I can see no more so turn for home without a sound.

As I glide towards the dark eye that is one of the canal's lovely old bridges, a tawny owl hoots on my right, to be answered immediately by one on my left. They nest here, and occasionally fluffy fledglings have watched me as I paddle underneath them.

As I leave the woods, the stars are appearing, wheeling above my head in endless slow circles. The sky isn't black, it's a dark pastel blue, and against it I see the first bats, dancing as they hunt. Soon they are all around me, as the water provides a perfect hunting ground for the insects that they love. They pay no attention to me, I am merely an obstacle to be avoided, and occasionally they fly close enough to feel the movement of the air from their beating wings.

In my canoe I feel part of this place. I am silent, and I am no threat, so I am ignored and life goes on around me. No other transport will get me so close to the wildlife of an English evening.

### JUNGLE BASHING THE SWIFT DITCH

"Ouch!" "Watch out for that branch!" "Clunk!" This is a noisier experience. A group of us have decided to brave the jungles of Swift Ditch, a 'backwater' of the Thames that short cuts a meander of the river east of Abingdon. This is an ancient waterway itself, once the main course of the Thames Navigation but now an overgrown stream. You can enter the Ditch from a weir at the top end. If you

There's no better way to get closer to nature than a few hours floating in a canoe.



know what you're doing, and conditions are good, you can shoot the sloping weir above, or drag your canoes around it. Warning – shooting it often leads to the need to bale out. . . Or worse!

Immediately we enter a different world. Straight away, you have to duck under branches, and the current pushes you through a narrow, steep-sided channel and over a tiny weir just a few inches tall. Soon, we are zigzagging between fallen trees, and dodging brambles and stinging nettles. The brunt of the effort goes to the front canoe in the group, who finds the best route and clears away some of the worst of the blockages. There is much laughter as we crawl into the bilges of our canoes, to squeeze under branches that grab at our hats.

A kingfisher darts past us, his piping call a warning that his patch is being invaded. We surprise a stalking heron, and he croaks his protest as he flaps his giant wings like some prehistoric pterosaur. We're the interlopers in this scene, the home to a diverse collection of birds and beasts.

**“So perfect are the curving boughs above my head. I paddle silently, listening to the songs of nature: the calls of birds, the rustle of a lively squirrel and the knocking of a busy woodpecker.”**

At one point, there is no way through, a log lies across the whole stream. We take it in turns to try to haul ourselves over without getting out of our canoes, filling our hulls with twigs, branches,

leaves and many spiders as we do so. Some make it, some have to climb into the tree and haul their craft through by hand.

Halfway down, the Ditch opens into a remote pool, surrounded by greenery, the only view the one above our heads. Here buzzards circle,

like vultures waiting for our imminent demise, making their distinctive, plaintive cries.

Reeds and nettles block the other side of this pool, but we find a narrow gap, the cries of the group marking the moments when the nettles score a point. Beyond, the undergrowth relents and we relax a little, chatting happily as we paddle the last half mile. Too soon, the sound of a road impinges on this natural world; we pass under a pair of bridges, new and old, and out onto the Thames once more. ▶



**SEAL WATCHING IN CHICHESTER HARBOUR**

We meet the slipway an hour or so before low tide, launching into the shallow water with the cries of gulls around us. The forecast is for moderately strong winds, and as I have only paddled a few estuaries before in my open canoe, I am a little nervous. The last of the falling tide carries us past a line of moored yachts, and we are soon out in the main channel. It's funny, but out here on a big expanse of water, it is not the water that is dominant, it is the vast expanse of sky above, as rays of sunshine try to find a way through the clouds.

With tide and wind behind us, it does not take us long to reach the side channel which will take us to the spot where the seals hang out. As we turn into this creek, the wind is suddenly against us, and we fight our way up it, watched by the bobbing head of a sentinel seal. It's worth it though, for as I round a bend, my companion just behind in his canoe, three seals lay basking on the mud flats. At first they just watch me fight the wind, before slipping gracefully into the water, one at a time. They're not scared by my presence though, as they come over to say hello, swimming around our canoes and coming up right next to us. There is something special about direct eye-to-eye contact with a large, wild mammal in its element. We pull into a little sheltered cove, and drink coffee from a flask as the seals swim nearby, checking us out.

With the tide turned it's time to leave. We have a battle on our hands as we regain the main channel, and it takes twice as long to zigzag our way back against the wind, with no apparent help from the tide. But no matter this merely adds to the adventure, and seeing the seals has left us with a sense of peace that won't be shaken off that easily. As we reach quieter waters before the quay, the calls of oystercatchers reach us, as they patrol the sands in their smart black and white outfits with bright legs and beaks. We wade the final yards to our cars as finally the sun breaks through, its edges tinged with the warmer glow on the oncoming evening.

**ANYBODY CAN DO THIS**

These are just a few of the adventures anyone can have, with a kayak or canoe, in this busy corner of our isles. I've camped under a tarp by the river, falling asleep to the gentle sounds of running water, battled wind and waves on the open expanses of the south coast's estuaries, fought my way down overgrown streams narrower than the length of my canoe, and paddled under the great bridges of our capital city. Whilst the estuaries and tidal rivers need some experience and ability to be safe, most of the South's rivers and canals are perfect for any level of paddler. The only thing restricting your adventures is your own imagination, so get out there and use it! **CF**

**GO CANOEING WITH NATURE**

If you're new to canoeing or want to take part in a nature trail paddle then why not check out the range of fantastic guided paddle trips? Go to [www.gocanoeing.org.uk](http://www.gocanoeing.org.uk) for more information or to book on to a trip. Harbour dues need to be paid.

**USEFUL INFO**

**Canoe England** have some great downloadable canoe trails on their website - [www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/where-to-paddle/canoe-trails/](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/where-to-paddle/canoe-trails/)

Ready to embark on another trip to enjoy some stolen moments of peace and tranquility in the canoe?



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# Take a Paddle in History!

Main image by  
Ash Greenwood

**FROM THE ROLLING ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE OF THE COUNTY OF WILTSHIRE, TO THE HEART OF LONDON, THE 125-MILE DEVIZES TO WESTMINSTER CANOE RACE IS AN ULTIMATE TEST OF ENDURANCE. WITH ENTRIES NOW OPEN FOR THE 2013 RACE, ARE YOU UP FOR THIS HISTORIC PADDLING CHALLENGE? ►**



**Origins of the world famous Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race, or DW as it is commonly known, begin way back in 1920 when regulars in the Greyhound Pub in the quiet village of Pewsey, spurred on by a national bus and rail strike were debating the possibilities of other methods of transport. A bet was made. Was it possible to travel the 70-miles from Pewsey, along the River Avon to the sea, in under three days? This gauntlet was taken up and a sculling skiff, loaded with four determined gentleman won the wager!**

**FACTS & FIGURES**

- 29th March – 1st April 2013
- 77 Portages
- 1 to 4 days to complete
- 5 Classes
- 125 Miles in total
- 52 Miles on the Kennet & Avon Canal
- 55 Miles On the River Thames
- 18 Miles on the Tidal Thames
- 65 years
- 15 hours 34 minutes Official K2 Record
- 18 hours 37 minutes Official Canoe Record

Many years later, after another lively debate in the Greyhound, the 'Avon to the sea' challenge was resurrected and a prize offered, which attracted the interest of a local Scoutmaster from nearby Devizes. He wanted his Scouts to take part in their canoes, but the prize was specifically for Skiffs and Pewsey residents, so he needed a different challenge. As luck would have it a former Avon racer had hatched a plan to try to reach London using the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Thames in less than 100-hours. His plan fell through but the Devizes Scouts gamely picked up the challenge. During Easter, 1948, Brian Smith, Brian Walters, Laurie Jones and Peter Brown launched on to the canal at Devizes. 89-hours and fifty minutes later arrived at Westminster to the cheers of the waiting crowds. The DW had been born!

**“Once the DW gets in your blood you’ll be coming back for more, year after year after year!”**

**TEAM EFFORTS**

In its early years the race was dominated by the armed services, as their physical fitness, discipline and organisational skills fitted well with the race’s challenge. A reliable support team is essential.

The modern DW can be attempted in any kind of kayak or canoe, but be warned; over the course of the race there are many, many portages so a racing kayak is still the preferred weapon of choice. Single kayaks and juniors now have to stop over night, but the hardy souls of the two-person K2 class are permitted to paddle non-stop, throughout the night! It’s mentally and physically demanding. As you grind away along the 54-miles of the Kennet & Avon Canal, with the current record of just over 15-hours on your mind, or for most of us, just reaching the finish line, Westminster will seem a long, long way away. At the town of Reading you finally join the River Thames and the race is on to reach Teddington Lock. After this the Thames is tidal, so it’s imperative to time your run to allow you to catch the outgoing or slack tide. Get it wrong and it can spell the end of your race.

**OLD FATHER**

From there it’s a tough slog on the wide rolling waters of Ol’ Father Thames, portaging its plethora of big weirs and locks until you finally pass the Houses of Parliament and the unmistakable tower of Big Ben. You then pass under Westminster Bridge and it’s all over. You’ve done it; you’ve scaled the heights of the paddler’s Everest. Your body will ache for weeks, but the sense of achievement is overwhelming. It’s addictive too. Once the DW gets in your blood you’ll be coming back for more, year after year after year! **CF**

**DW TIPS**

Whether you’re undertaking the DW over a few days or in one go there’s no getting away from the fact that it is a physical and mental challenge, so a good training plan is essential. Knowing that you’ve done all you can to prepare can really help when you’re having to dig deep mentally to keep going. Time in a boat is essential and preferably as much time in the boat you will be taking part in. Practice portaging a lot! Getting in and out of your boat seems simple but you have to do it again and again and what seems easy can be surprisingly hard when you’re exhausted and it’s dark. Fall in and it could spell the end of your DW. Work out a system that suits you and stick to it. Most importantly remember to enjoy it. It’s tough, really tough, but it’s an amazing event to take part in and the feeling that you’ll get when you cross the line will stay with you forever.

**USEFUL INFO**

The 2013 DW takes place from the 29th March to the 1st of April. For more details and to register head to [www.dwrace.org.uk](http://www.dwrace.org.uk)



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# PADDLE-ABILITY

## JONATHAN BROOME

Jono started canoeing at the age of 12, and was the founding member of the 4 A's club in Newark.

He took part in Scanex (an expedition by canoe to Sweden's Varmland) in 1990, aged 13, and a further adventure trip in Canada, where he took part in canoeing and white water rafting, in 1994.

Jono started competing in the Paddle-ability sprint regattas at Holme Pierrepont in 1999, and was a very consistent competitor in Men's Timeband C, winning the National Paddle-ability trophy in 2006 and 2010. His first taste of competition as part of the GB Paddle-ability team in Milan in 2005, but it was as part of the GB Paracanoe team, at the second World Championships in Poznan 2010 that he had his greatest canoeing success. He won GBs first ever Paracanoeing medal, a bronze, in the Mens K1 A category.

Later that year Jono was rewarded by being named Newark and Sherwood Disabled Sports person of the year, and was a finalist in the Nottinghamshire awards.

Jono dedicated over 20 years to his sport. He was a very private person, who never wanted any fuss made of him

and just got on with life. He was generous to his friends, and entertained them with an extremely dry sense of humour. His fellow club members and teammates will greatly miss his quiet steady presence.



## PADDLE-ABILITY SYMPOSIUM

The dates and venue for the first Paddle-ability Symposium have just been announced. The symposium take place in Birmingham, over the 16th and 17th of March 2013, and is being run in partnership with the Lake District Calvert Trust. The weekend of activities is for coaches who would like to develop their knowledge, experience and understanding for working with disabled paddlers. The event will provide an excellent forum for coaches to share ideas, experiences and their ideals.

Activities will be split over two days the first, primarily classroom based, will offer a range of workshops and networking opportunities and well as a 'Question Time' opportunity where delegates can put their queries to a Paddleability panel. The second day of the symposium offers delegates the opportunity to complete the Intermediate Paddleability Module.

**For further information visit:**

[www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/paddleability/paddleability-symposium/](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/paddleability/paddleability-symposium/)

## SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

At the beginning of autumn a group of adults with various disabilities set out on what was to be an amazing journey of discovery. Following a short trial expedition on Lake Windermere in the Lake District the group set their sights on a 60km stretch of the Dordogne River in France.

Accompanied by specialist staff from the Bendrigg Trust, the team embarked on the long hot journey to the Dordogne. It was decided that, unconventionally, it would be better to run the easier lower section of the river first before heading back upstream to the harder more technical section. The first day on the river proved to be an excellent introduction to moving water. For most of the participants this was their first experience of rapids and some chose to use rafted Canadian canoes to build their confidence. There were no capsizes but the day was rounded off with a swim in the river to cool down from the 25° heat!

The second day started with the excitement of a glissere - a water shoot thoughtfully provided to bypass an unpaddleable weir. A lovely section of small rapids and ripples followed punctuated by a picturesque picnic and a stop to ceremonially dunk Doug whose birthday it was. A short hard paddle through some localised rain and incredible gusts of wind followed. Eventually we dragged our tired bodies ashore at our next campsite to be met by the team's fantastic bank support team who had the kettle on and cake at the ready.

Having been told about a cave resurgence, which would be good to explore, on the third day the river became spectacular and the group headed into a huge limestone gorge. After paddling and dragging all the boats into the entrance the group set off to explore the cave taking one boat for those that did not fancy the waist deep wade involved and did some spectacular paddling in a large cave passage. Amazing!

The final day was tougher than the others with capsizes a definite possibility. Everyone chose to wear a wetsuit and those not used to them were a source of great amusement. This eased the tension so everyone was fairly relaxed to set off. Too relaxed as it turned out and two crews capsized before reaching the first rapid!

After a warm up on some easy rapids they arrived at the main event for the day, the Malpas - a lovely bouncy grade 2. Due to the disabilities and the fact that the able bodied paddlers were mostly novices Malpas was run one at a time with a rescue plan ready set up. Everyone did amazingly well. It was fantastic to watch Moray who paddles one handed, and at the start of the trip had been nervous on flat water in a raft, whooping and hollering down the rapid with waves breaking in his face. Only one crew fell in and the rescue system was like clockwork.

A couple more miles brought the finish point and a celebratory drink at a riverside cafe. For all concerned this was an amazing journey and an unforgettable experience. This trip was part of a pilot for Bendrigg Trust's new project 'Spirit of Adventure', which is a programme of affordable canoeing events and courses designed for people with disabilities. Subject to funding, this programme will be up and running for the 2013 season.

**For more information please go to [www.Bendrigg.org.uk](http://www.Bendrigg.org.uk)**



## PADDLE-ABILITY TOP CLUB

Does your club already have, or are you working towards, top club status? Are you providing quality provision for disabled paddlers, largely, in an inclusive setting, or would like to develop your clubs ability to do so? The paddle-ability top club award is a bolt on to the already existing Canoe England top club accreditation and can be used as a means for clubs to gain recognition for their work with disabled paddlers.

**For more information go to [www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/paddleability/paddleability-top-club/](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/paddleability/paddleability-top-club/)**

# GET SET, GO! 2013 SPRINT CALENDAR

In 2013 there will be four National Canoe Sprint Regattas all held at the National Water Sports Centre, Holme Pierrepont, Adbolton Lane, Nottingham NG12 2LU over the following weekends:

## 13TH - 14TH APRIL

Senior A, U23 (K1/C1) & Junior National Championships and International Selection Regatta will include Paddleability & Mini Sprint Series races. For the first time, the first 3 highest placed U23 competitors in the Senior A singles National Championship events will be awarded National Championship titles and medals. As the first international selection regatta of the season for all sections including Paracanoe, all the top paddlers will be here hoping to impress the selectors.

## 11TH - 12TH MAY

International Selection National Canoe Sprint Regatta will include Paddle-Ability & Mini Sprint Series races. This is the last home selection regatta before the European Senior Canoe Sprint Championships (14th-16th June), which also includes Paracanoe events. Plus the European Junior & U23 Championships (27th - 30th June)

## 22ND - 23RD JUNE

The MacGregor Inter-Club & Inter Services National Regatta will include Paddleability & Mini Sprint Series races. Reading Canoe Club have taken the MacGregor Paddle for the last three years, it was a close call in 2012; can they hold on for another year!

## 7TH - 8TH SEPTEMBER

Masters & Paracanoe National Championships Regatta will include Paddleability & Mini Sprint Series Finals. For the first time, National Championship medals will be awarded for the Paracanoe events. There will of course be all the usual races across the board for all classes at this regatta but the focus will be on the Masters and Paracanoe National Championship events and the annual awards for the Paddle-Ability and Mini Sprint Series



## YOUTH ACTION NETWORK - RECRUITING NOW!

Canoe England's Youth Action Network (YAN) is seeking new members to join its panel.

YAN represents the voice of young people in Paddlesport and discuss and feedback on a wide range of topics and issues. If you are 16-25 years old and are currently involved with volunteering in Paddlesport in England then you are eligible to join. The panel communicates through a safe and secure online forum and endeavours to meet at least once a year.

Becoming a member of the panel will not only prove to be a worthwhile experience but it will also look great on your CV and you will receive a free YAN t-shirt when you join!

**If you are interested in becoming a member or would like to find out more information then please contact the Volunteer Development Officer:**  
[volunteers@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@canoe-england.org.uk)

# FEMALE FOCUS



## FAST FEMALES

Royal Leamington Spa Canoe Club is offering two one off training day for novice female paddlers in the art of paddling C1, C2 and C4 sprint canoes on Saturday 5th of January. The plan is to meet at 9.30 and be off the water at around 4.00 pm. The cost is £7.00.

The session is for novice paddlers or anyone that has aspirations of competing in racing canoes. All equipment will be provided with experienced paddlers in to help out. Experience is not essential, only the commitment to compete.

For more information contact Tibor Herbert at [Tibor@herbent.co.uk](mailto:Tibor@herbent.co.uk) or call 02476

## NEW LEVEL

The BCU has achieved the Intermediate Level of the Sport Equality Standard. Building on work from the Preliminary Level award, the Equality Standard Advisor report on the BCU's Intermediate Level submission was recommended for approval by independent Equality Standard Verifiers.

The Equality Standard for sport is a framework, launched in 2004, for assisting sports organisations to widen access and reduce inequalities in sport for under-represented individuals, groups and communities especially women and girls, ethnic minority groups and disabled people. It is based around two broad themes - developing your organisation and developing

your services - and four levels of achievement: Foundation, Preliminary, Intermediate and Advanced.

The BCU is one of only a handful of organisations to be awarded the Intermediate Level Paul Owen, Chief Executive told FOCUS, "Being awarded the Intermediate Level of the Sport Equality Standard is a great achievement for our organisation and is testament to the work of everyone involved over the past two years. We are thrilled that the effort have been rewarded. Equality factors are firmly embedded in all of our policies and part of every business decision made throughout the organisation."



## RIVER DEEP, MOUNTAIN HIGH

Becky Burrige of Alphington, Exeter took part in not one but two expeditions to raise money for The Children's Trust. Becky kayaked around 250 miles from Bristol to Twickenham via the River Avon, Kennet and Avon Canal, the Kennet, and the Thames to complete a Channel to Channel kayaking challenge. Then just a week later she embarked on a trip to climb Mount Kilimanjaro!

As an asthma sufferer once Becky had decided that she was going to undertake these challenges she sought out professional guidance from Mark Wilson of MBW Fitness. The pair then worked for the next six months on fitness, stamina, and mental conditioning essential for undertaking the challenges. Mark also decided to join Becky on the kayak challenge.

Once the journey began circumstances meant Becky and Mark had to set off without a support vehicle, with essentials packed in their kayaks. The going was tough, paddling against the current of the Avon with the added weight of all their kit, but they reached Bath by the end of day one.

Day two began with some damp conditions soaking the kayakers even before getting into their kayaks. They reached the Kennet and Avon Canal to discover the canal was drained for the next mile, and met another storm. The pair progressed through these conditions to be greeted by some glorious 'calm after the storm' sunshine, reaching the Caen Hill Locks by the end of the day. The support vehicle and team then caught up which meant Becky and Mark had to unload their kit half way up the Caen Hill Locks. By the end of next day the group had reached Reading and yet another storm, but this quickly passed. The canal - a territory in which speed restrictions made them the quickest vessels on the water was soon left behind as they joined the dwarfing, meandering River Thames.

After a few minutes adjustment to wakes left by the sightseeing boats and pleasure yachts, they progressed to reach the picturesque Henley-on-Thames. The prestigious Henley Rowing Club allowed them to set up camp on their lawn. Day six saw Staines-Upon-Thames, taking in some of the historical sites including Windsor Castle. Day 7 was a comparatively easy and the group passed through Teddington Lock to enter the salt water of the English Channel. Having negotiated in the region of 125 locks without falling in the group celebrated the completion of the challenge by jumping into the Thames at Twickenham.

A few days later Becky flew out to Tanzania to begin her next challenge of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro!

Becky has worked incredibly hard to achieve her goals and no matter what has stood in her way she has persevered and beaten to raise awareness and money for her chosen charity.

**If you would like to show your support for Becky's achievements go to [www.justgiving.com/channel2channel](http://www.justgiving.com/channel2channel)**



## INVITE TO MEMBERS MEETING

The Waterways and Environment Team would cordially like to invite Canoe England members to a meeting at Manvers Waterfront Boat Club, The Boathouse, Station Road, Wath upon Dearne, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S63 7DG on the 26th January 2013 to help us with planning and promoting future actions as well as finding out about what we do.

The day will commence at 10.00hrs for coffee meeting starts at 10.30hrs and concludes at 15.30 hrs. The topics covered will include items such as the areas of our work including environmental work, plans for the future, and the Rivers Access Campaign. There will be plenty of

opportunity for questions and open discussions we want to meet you and hear your thoughts too.

Numbers are limited so you need to apply to [access@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:access@canoe-england.org.uk) to book your place. This is a members' only event and due to numbers only pre booked members will be able to attend.

The meeting is aimed at Canoe England Members situated in the North of England. However, we are also planning to host another meeting in the Central Regions around February/March 2013.

Once you have booked a place we will send you further joining instructions.

# RIVERS ACCESS CAMPAIGN



## GET INVOLVED

It's amazing where you hear access matters being discussed. Recently at a Parliamentary reception a prominent and well know MP, who is also a canoeist and supporter of the Rivers Access Campaign, was overheard challenging a group of well known guests as to the navigation laws of the land and challenged their thoughts around the restoration or recognition of historic navigation rights (as stated in Rev'd Douglas Caffyn's work - Boats on our Rivers Again)

The access issue is being heard and that is thanks to many of our supporters and staff who are helping to promote the issue by writing or visiting their MPs and through our staff who raise the matter in meetings and through their daily work. Please do help us to continue to keep the pressure up.

Take a look at this link to find out how you can help the River Access Campaign ([www.riversaccess.org/pages/pv.asp?p=rac31](http://www.riversaccess.org/pages/pv.asp?p=rac31)) You can search for your MP here ([www.findyourmp.parliament.uk/](http://www.findyourmp.parliament.uk/)) and e-mail them at ([www.writetothem.com/](http://www.writetothem.com/)) if you want to contact via electronic means. If you want help with a letter/support material then contact the Rivers Access Team [info@riversaccess.org](mailto:info@riversaccess.org) and they'll be happy to help,

Campaigning for Access to our inland waters is not just all about lobbying MPs or even standing up holding placards but at the moment its mainly concerned with subtly (and

sometimes not so subtly) getting the message across that canoeists & kayakers, along with members of the public, need clarity and certainty of access to inland waters.

To this end the team attend many, many meetings where they are able to help shape things in, for example, the world of sport, the environment and the waterways etc. The types of meetings regularly attended by BCU Access Team staff include river uses groups, regional development meetings, Rover Trusts, parliamentary groups, water recreation meetings etc.

In these times of austerity there is a need to concentrate minds and this makes for a much better discussion about return on investment and use of public money for public betterment. For example where public money is used to provide a facility, or make a facility better, then it should be used by the public. Rights and responsibilities!

Canoe England through the Rivers Access Campaign is continuing to call for clarity and certainty of access to and along all waterways whilst taking environmental matters into consideration. Rights are sought through the restoration/ recognition of historic rights or new primary legislation for non-powered craft, to include swimmer, whilst recognising that not all waterways are suitable for powered craft.

## THE CANAL AND RIVER TRUST (CRT)



Canal & River Trust

Since its vesting day in July things in the CRT are moving apace. Canoe England now has several staff and volunteers who are active on some of the Local Waterways Partnerships as well as staff members involved with the Navigation Advisory Group and on the CRT Council. The new website (<http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/>) now includes a separate canoeing & kayaking section and CE will be assisting in developing this paddling section further.

The CRT has some 2000 miles of rivers and canals to look after so CE are working with them to help promote canoeing on their waterways. Remember the CRT waters include rivers too, such as the River Trent and the River Severn. The CRT is also looking at other paddling opportunities, which may well include the opening up of some reservoirs to paddlesports.

In addition to that the CRT would like to know of areas where some adaptation to the structures would help with paddling. Lowering of a bank to help with portaging, removal of an obstacle for example. If you have any suggestions please do e mail them to us [access@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:access@canoe-england.org.uk) so that we can consolidate them all and take these to the CRT for consideration. It would be helpful if you are also able to send a photograph or drawing and grid reference to show us the exact location. Adaptations will happen over a period of time but we will let you know what is planned.

**We would also really like to receive any ideas for canoe trails on the CRT waterways from our members, as well as articles about your adventures on the waterways, again these can be e mailed to [access@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:access@canoe-england.org.uk)**





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# WATERWAYS & ENVIRONMENT

## YOUR CHANCE TO TALK

During October the Waterways and Environment Team hosted the first of three Canoe England (CE) Members Meetings at Reading Canoe Club. After a presentation on the work the Waterways and Environment Team did, the day included topics such as:

- Working with Others
- Development and promotion of canoe trails
- Working with our volunteer Waterway Advisors
- Update on our Rivers Access Campaign
- Canoe England's Access Policy and Position Statement



The day was about members and Canoe England exchanging information and views and an opportunity for members to ask questions at the end of each session. The afternoon consisted of a number of group break-out sessions, which focused on CE's access policy and position statements as well as how to improve communication with members and external partners. Kevin Dennis (Canoe England Vice Chairman) raised the following points: 'We need to review and challenge where we are checking our vision, strategy and resources are meeting the needs. Are our expectations of such a small team realistic? What is the budget? Should we have a separate campaign similar to the Ramblers Association, which generates funds?'

The importance of access and the development of places to paddle is a key area in the new Whole Sport Development Plan, which is being submitted.

We have now gained a national voice which is being heard in a number of Government and non Governmental organisations, which is giving our sport a credibility that we may not of have had before, examples have been cited with the Canal and River Trusts and the Environment Agency with opportunities being created by the Water Framework Directive.

The need for more places to paddle fits with the growth in the sport in recreational paddlers entering the sport, not initially belonging to a club, who need information for safe opportunities to paddle, thus the increase in Go Paddling tours and canoe trails fits well with this, as does the requirement for better facilities such as access to and from the rivers.

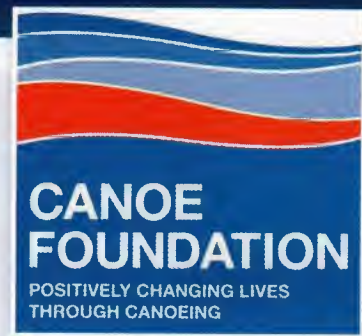
The need to not re invent the wheel and devise a way of linking to the resources and web sites already out there is welcomed by us all here today. We need to harness the wealth of expertise of the volunteers who are keen to assist.

Communication is a two way process and today was the first open members meeting of the Waterways and Environment Team - a National invitation went out on the CE website, Canoe Focus, Members E-Newsletter and external websites. The next members open meeting will be in the North, followed by the Midlands so we can gain a National perspective over time. The opportunities for time limited project work, which is to be encouraged, plus the ideas of signage not only of information but environmentally sensitive areas at embarkation points.'

The independent Chair, John Edmonds, also said he was impressed by the quality of the debate and by the depth of knowledge of the members who attended.

Members attending the conference were very frustrated that the needs of paddlers had not been adequately addressed by Government and that Ministers seemed to be relaxed about the restrictions imposed on canoeists and kayakers by some anglers and some landowners.

The consensus was that CE should state its view on the right to navigation more clearly on its website and in meetings with other interests. However members did not want these assertions of right to lead to a stalemate in discussions with other river users; members were very willing to take account of other interests providing the right to navigation was generally respected.



## ROBIN HOOD FUNDRAISING

Congratulations to Canoe Foundation Development Officer, Simon Hitchcox, who recently completed the Robin Hood Half Marathon to raise funds for the charity. Simon was aiming to finish in under two hours; and despite battling a cold in the run-up to the event he managed a very respectable time of 1:55:30! Simon said; "I was really pleased to finish in under two hours. After the race I felt fine, but having been out running since I now ache again, even so I am already planning my next race! Thanks for all those who have supported me in the build-up and to those who have donated both online and in person."

There is still time to donate, even a couple of pounds will make a difference, visit: [www.justgiving.com/simonhitchcox](http://www.justgiving.com/simonhitchcox)

Don't forget, the Canoe Foundation relies on your generous donations and fundraising efforts to continue their work, so they would love to hear from canoe clubs, centres or individuals about any ideas or upcoming events you are planning which they could get involved with.



## GRANTS NEW FIGURES AND FORMS

In the August edition of FOCUS we included figures for the number of projects and individuals who had benefited from Canoe Foundation grants over the past nine years. However, since the last edition the Canoe Foundation's Small Grants Panel has reviewed the next batch of applications, supporting a further eight projects to the tune of some £8,680. This takes the total number of projects supported in the past ten years to 187; with over 35,000 individuals benefiting from the distributions of excess of £192,000 of funding.

As part of an ongoing modernisation process new application forms, guidelines and procedures came into effect from September 2012.

**For more details about these changes, or to download a grant application form and Guidelines, visit: [www.canoe.foundation.org.uk](http://www.canoe.foundation.org.uk)**

## FIND OUT MORE

For further information about the Canoe Foundation Charity take a look at the informative website ([www.canoe.foundation.org.uk](http://www.canoe.foundation.org.uk)) where you will find case studies from some of the projects, which have previously been supported, all the latest news, and details of how you can support the work of the Canoe Foundation. Regular updates can also be found through social media, so why not 'like' the Charity's Facebook page [www.facebook.com/canoe.foundation](http://www.facebook.com/canoe.foundation) or follow them on Twitter by searching @CanoeFoundation

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# THE 2012 CE VOLUNTEER & RECOGNITION AWARDS

The Canoe England Volunteer and Recognition Awards 2012 took place at Eastwood Hall, Nottingham in October. Over 150 volunteers from across the country attended the event and celebrated their achievements together. The volunteers were treated to an extra special evening when Olympic heroes Etienne Stott, David Florence and Liam Heath brought along their medals and chatted about their Olympic experiences. The evening was made even more special with Paracanoe champions Jeanette Chippington and Pat Mahoney on hand to share their incredible stories with the volunteers. Throughout the meal there was plenty of time for volunteers to discover what was happening in their club and to share examples of the many wonderful projects and initiatives that are happening across the country, enabling canoeing and kayaking to be the number one watersports in the country, something which we would not be able to say if it wasn't for our volunteers.

Special guest host for the evening, Mark Shardlow from BBC East Midlands, kicked the awards off and did a wonderful job of interviewing the numerous guest presenters and award winners throughout the evening.

When all the plates and been scraped clean and coffee finished it was time for the much anticipated awards to start.



David Gent



William Weir



Club of the Year - Tandridge

Bronze medallist Liam Heath and British Canoe Union President Albert Woods OBE presented the first set of awards, with no one knowing who had won any of the awards, the anticipation continued to grow as each nominee was read out. The nominees had already won regional awards in their respective category and were shortlisted as the top three nominations in the country. Congratulations to all those nominated for the awards and to all award winners.

Half way through the awards guests were entertained by what are now known as the Ant and Dec of Canoe England, Jack and Simon, who hosted a special canoe fact based true or false quiz. The welcomed quiz break tested people's knowledge and was also very informative!

The Chair of the English Council and Vice President of the BCU David Gent bought matters to a close and afterwards volunteers were able to complete a magical evening by having their photos taken with the Olympians and Paracanoe champions. It is not every day you get to see a Gold, Silver and Bronze Olympic medal in the same room!

A big thank you from Canoe England to all those that attended the event, nominated people for the awards and contributed to making the night so special. ►



Centre - Leicester LOPC

Competition winner



Outstanding Ann Hounslow



Outstanding Jane Evans



Adam Williams

# THE 2012 CE VOLUNTEER & RECOGNITION AWARDS

## THE COMING YEAR

Please keep an eye out for next year's nominations, which will open in the New Year. More details of the 2013 Volunteer and Recognition Awards will be posted on the Canoe England website at a later date. Winners

### THE 2012 CANOE ENGLAND VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Design Note to go in a panel

### CANOE FOUNDATION YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Matthew Bishop (Herts Young Mariners)

Runners up: Mark Flynn (Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre) & Sophie Witherford (Wychavon Kayak & Canoe Club)

### CANOE FOUNDATION IMPACT ON DISABILITY

William Weir (Banbury and District Canoe Club)

Runners up: Martin Davies (Herts Young Mariners Base) & Jim Rossiter (Wey Kayak Club)

### RUTH HOLDWAY COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Simon Hensley (West Midlands)

Runners up: Ken Martin (Coquet Canoe Club) & Andrew Keegan (Redbridge)

### PADDLEPOWER AWARD

Karl O'Keefe (Brighton and Hove Sea Cadets)

Runners up: Sharman Jones (Kool Kayakers Club) & Clare Westall (Adventure Dolphin)

### PERFORMANCE COACH OF THE YEAR

Dennis Newton Junior (Yorkshire)

### WATERWAYS AND ENVIRONMENT VOLUNTEER

Jamie Austen (Kent)

Runners up: David Surman (Southern Region) & Craig Schofield (Cumbria)

### PERKINS SLADE INSURANCE COACH OF THE YEAR

Irene Hills (Banbury and District Canoe Club)

Runners up: Daniel Gusterson (Adur Canoe Club) & Adam Hall (Wychavon Kayak and Canoe Club)

### EDUCATION AWARD

Adam Williams (City College Norfolk)

Runners up: Tom Keogh (Southampton University) & Dave Bullock (Somerset Sport Partnership)

### EVENT VOLUNTEER

Alan Adams (Central)

Runners up: Martin Gammage (South) & Rob Evered (Globe 360)

### TOWERGATE INSURANCE CLUB OF THE YEAR

Tandridge Canoe Club

Runners up: Addlestone Canoe Club & Shropshire Paddlesport Club

### CENTRE OF THE YEAR

Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre

Runners up: Adventure Sunderland Marine Activity Centre & Westminster Boating Base

### OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION

Anne Hounslow (East Midlands)

Jane Evans (Exeter Canoe Club)

Andy Oughton (Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre)

Mark Campbell (Longridge Activity Centre)

John Dean (Tyne Valley Canoe Club)

Runners up: Diane Bates (Elmbridge Canoe Club),

Diana Fisher (Hastings Canoe Club), David Deacon

(Addlestone Canoe Club), Derek Cox (Midland Canoe Club),

Malcolm Clark (Adventure Dolphin), Tibor Herbert

(Royal Leamington Spa) and John May

(Truro Canoe Club) **CF**



Karl O'Keefe



Dennis Newton Matthew Bishop



Simon Hensley

Irene Hills

To read a full description of the 2012 winners please visit [www.canoe-england.org.uk/volunteers](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/volunteers)

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CHECK OUT THE BEST CANOEING & KAYAKING IMAGES FROM THE SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER ENTRIES IN TO OUR REGULAR PHOTO-COMPETITION...

# Photo Competition

We're constantly amazed at the beautiful photos that you submit each month, from the inspiring images that flood into the FOCUS office and inbox it's pretty clear that, not only are you paddling in some fantastic locations, but you have a great eye for capturing the spirit of our brilliant sport.



**Have You Got a Cracking Canoeing or Kayaking Shot?**

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CD along with your contact details and a few words about the photo to Donna Marshall, British Canoe Union, 18 Market Place, Bingham, Nottingham, NG1 8AP or you can email your entry to [donna.marshall@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:donna.marshall@canoe-england.org.uk)



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Chris Redwood



Brian Saxton



Debbie Stitt



Hannah Sherrida



Alice Walker



Caroline Iszard



JR Clay



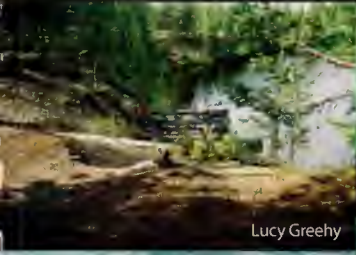
Hugh Jenkinson



Alan Beecroft - Garsun Gorge Austria - JOINT WINNER



Carl Wenczek - Canoes on the Dordogne, taken from high up on one of the castles. JOINT WINNER



Lucy Greehy



Victor Nichols



Matt Bishop



Neil Platten



Steph Weir

Phil Assheton



Lynda Whiston



Tim Harlow



Phil Sheardown



Nicole Prendeville



Sarah Scott



Chris Deller



Melanie Basset from Nigel Shuttleworth



Nick Carter



Matthew Smith



David Vickers

Alex Veness - K2 starts Div 4 Hasler Finals at Wokingham - JUNIOR WINNER



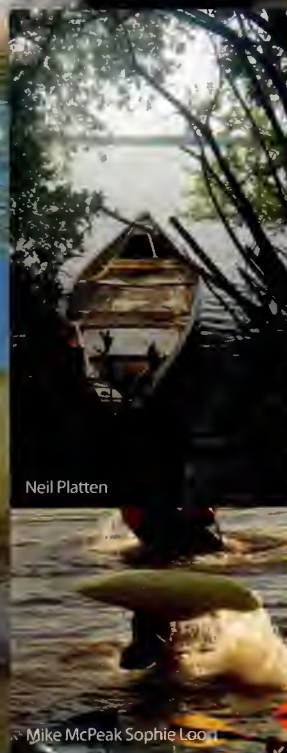
Andy Bond



Barry Curley



Brian Saxton



Neil Platten



Emrys Cook



Gayin Hart



Austin Davies



Justine Curgenven

Mike McPeak Sophie Leo



Tim Nicholson - Wedding day on Coniston in the Lake District this year - WINNER





# Three Girls and the English Channel

Article by Frankie Pink

**With its busy shipping lanes, changeable weather and currents paddling the English Channel in a kayak is a formidable challenge, but for three teenage paddlers from PACKERS Canoe Club it was a challenge they were prepared to face...**

Earlier this year I signed up to take part in an exciting trip to India, run by the organisation World Challenge. Part of the deal is that you have to raise money towards the trip yourself so with that in mind the idea was put to me, and my Dad, that a group of paddlers from our canoe club, the Peterborough Area Canoe & Kayakers (PACKERS) would attempt to paddle our kayaks across the English Channel.

I was excited at the idea but didn't expect something as big as that to happen quickly. When I was informed that the aim was to do it in September I gulped and started training! I started off in a very old fibreglass sea kayak that my Dad has owned for longer than I have been alive. The first time we trained I found it hard and quite painful. It was hard because the paddling style

was different to what I was used to in a 'normal boat'. I found it hard to adjust and I had to really think about what I was doing, especially when it came to turning the boat.

It was painful because it was the first time I had used this boat and, as well as it being old with none of the comfy modern features, like padded seats, that modern boats have, it was not fitted out for me; there was no backrest and the footrest was too close. Despite all of those obstacles though I managed to get through it and did about 15km. We also had to get used to using sea kayak paddles, which are longer and shaped differently to the ones we usually used. So After the first training session things were looking tough, but we were determined not to quit at the first hurdle!

## TRAINING PAINS

It was quite hard to find time to train because I had schoolwork and my Dad is a teacher so he had a lot of work to do. Eventually we managed to find an afternoon free and so we seized the opportunity. We went down to one of our friend's houses, he has five acres of land and he backs on to the drains at Ramsey Mereside; a perfect place to train. The drains, unlike rivers, are very straight and you can't always see the end or the next corner, so it would give us a better idea of what we would face on the Channel when we wouldn't be able to see where we were going or where we had come from.

We got on the water and then after dad had set the GPS we set off in the direction of Benwick, which is about 5km from the start. This took us about 45-minutes, which wasn't bad, but we could have gone faster. From there we just paddled, stopping occasionally to have a drink or eat something to keep our energy levels up. After 9km we stopped for about 5-minutes and then turned back. As we paddled back it started to hurt; ironically it wasn't my shoulders that hurt the most, even though they were doing the work it was my legs that were killing me. They weren't doing anything, which may have been part of the problem but also the footrest, as we discovered later, was too close for me so my feet were at odd angles; this didn't help my ankles or legs at all. When we got to the end I had to be helped out I crawled up the bank, and eased myself up gripping the paddle really tightly for support because I didn't trust my legs to hold me. They were still feeling wobbly when I got home about 25 minutes later. In total that day we paddled 18km in 3 1/2 hours. We were paddling about 3.5 miles per hour (6km/h).

## DOUBLE TROUBLE

When people think of the Channel crossing they think of the 21-mile distance from Dover to Calais, but we were not going to paddle this because it would have been too dangerous for us to be competing for water space with those huge ferries. We were planning on paddling from Dungeness to Boulogne, which is about 30-miles. It would be longer but safer!

As well as actually paddling on the water, I was also making good use of my PE lessons in the fitness suite; using the rowing machine and the weights to build up my shoulders and stamina.

The next step in all of this was to sort out the boats. We managed to put in a backrest and sorted out the footrest in my kayak. But we were still short on the boats, we didn't have enough sea kayaks between the six of us who were planning to do the crossing, so we had to share them around the group. At this point the group included myself (15), Molly (14), Lydia (15), Danny and Terry (Molly's Dad and Uncle respectively) and my Dad. In the end my Dad could not do it; his place was eventually taken by a good friend called Les.

Danny, our friend who had suggested the whole thing, was trying to find us three double sea kayaks to make the actual Channel paddle slightly easier on us, but he was getting no where. Then one day I was walking home from school and saw this van coming towards me with kayaks on top. I looked closer and realised that it was Terry's (Danny's brother) van. It pulled up beside me, it was Danny driving and he pointed to the roof, "Just bought these," he said. I looked up and realised that they were really long and then I realised that they were double sea kayaks! So we finally had the boats and once we had them everything just kept getting better.

## ALL SYSTEMS GO

Even after all of this we still hadn't had confirmation from the support boat company that we were actually going to do this. Dad and Danny went up to Dover to meet the support boat guys, who were going to be with us, and then that was it, it was confirmed! After that we knew we really had to start training.

Dad and I would go down at the weekend to Milton Ferry in Peterborough and paddle up stream to the lock and then down stream through the bridge to the Staunch and then back to the bridge again. This was a total of 11.3 km and therefore a good workout, but not too hard. I also did this route with Lydia a friend who wasn't originally going to do this with us but somebody pulled out and so she filled in their space.

When we had talked to the guys who would drive the support boat they had given us a week during the summer holidays when we could paddle across the channel, because it would be very unlikely we would not get a suitable day. Our booked week was from the 18th to the 26th of August.

As the week drew nearer we were getting more and more nervous and were just trying to get in as much training as possible. Then we got the call! We drove up on the afternoon of Sunday the 19th of August. We stayed in The George Hotel in Lydd. After going to our room we went down to Dungeness Beach and had a look around, it wasn't the 'happiest' place I have ever been to, but anyway after getting back to the pub and having something to eat we went to bed. It wasn't easy to get to sleep, it was a very warm muggy night and there were people across the street making lots of noise and of course the dog wanted to tell us about every thing she suspected that passed our window. We didn't get much sleep; about four hours at the most! When we woke up at 3am we were ready to go. We got up and changed quickly and met downstairs with everybody else, it was cold, dark and quite foggy, we were all full of adrenaline. The adrenaline was easy to see, Molly was shivering, Lydia was giggling and I was quiet. So yeah we were nervous!

We drove down to Dungeness lifeboat station and parked up. Then came the task of unloading the boats and getting all of the kit sorted. This took longer than we thought it would but we weren't too far behind schedule. We then faced probably the hardest part of the trip, we had to get the boats all the way down to the sea, the beach was long and there was also a big shingle bank, which we had to negotiate our way down. We said our goodbyes to my Mum and Poppy (our dog) and Lydia's family, then we got on the water and paddled out to sea in the dark!

## A TOUGH CALL

Within about two minutes a wave broke over mine and Dad's kayak and I got a lap full of very, very cold water, our spray decks were not waterproof! We started paddling with the compass bearing of 100°, we were going to meet the support boats out at sea. Dad set the GPS and then we just paddled.

After about an hour it was getting a lot lighter, but it was still foggy. We had not yet met the support boats and we were getting a little bit anxious, so we rafted up and called the support boats over the radio to find out where they were. The reception was awful but we eventually got our co-ordinates to them; this was after exchanging phone numbers and me using Dad's waterproof phone (smart phones do not work when your fingers are wet) to text them the co-ordinates. We had to wait quite a while but they eventually got to us, and we started paddling again. ▶

**"We were in really good spirits as we started to paddle, the sun was coming up and it was promising to be a beautiful day."**



The only problem was that we were all feeling a bit sick after being rafted up for so long, Lydia especially was having problems and actually being sick. We were not having the best time ever, but we kept going! Another thing that was starting to worry us was that we were coming up to the English shipping lane and it was still really quite foggy.

When we did get to the shipping lane we were five-miles out and the fog had not lifted. None of us wanted to turn back, we couldn't cross the shipping lane with such poor visibility. The ships using the shipping lane were reporting their visibility as two chains, (the length of two cricket fields) so it was not looking good. We decided to wait a while and see if the fog cleared but Lydia was still being ill and Molly was not feeling good at all, so after waiting for about an hour getting cold, the difficult decision was made that we would turn back. We were all gutted but we couldn't do anything about it so we turned around and paddled.

We got back to the beach with the support boats waiting until we were safely on land. We then had to drag the boats over about half-a-mile of sand to get back to the beach, it was torture! We drove the cars round on to the beach, got changed, and loaded the kayaks. We were really disappointed with how it had turned out, but we picked ourselves up and made sure that when the next chance came we would be ready.

**“When the French coastline came in to view it was the most amazing feeling, the end was in sight!”**

**SCHOOL'S OUT!**

Our next chance came on Tuesday the 4th of September. This happened to be the first day of the new autumn term at school, which meant that all of us girls got the day off! It didn't affect either Danny or Terry but because my Dad's a teacher and it was the first day back it meant that he would not be able to paddle it with us. Both Dad and I were really disappointed, but it couldn't be helped so I ended up paddling with a friend of ours from the canoe club called Les. Les was in training for a K2 race, so he had the fitness and he was up for it!

On the Monday evening before I was running around like a headless chicken trying to find all I needed, go shopping and be ready to go when Les arrived. We left around 7pm and drove down to Lydd. When we arrived Lydia and her Dad, who had been there for a few hours, met us. After dropping our stuff in our rooms we went back down and had a drink, waiting for the



others to arrive. It was nearly eleven o'clock when they arrived and we pretty much went straight to bed.

We got up at 4.45 am the following morning; it was torture. As well as getting ready while we were still half asleep we also had to eat some breakfast, which was really hard at that time in

the morning. But we were ready to go at 5:20 am. We then drove once again to Dungeness fire station and got ready. We waited for the support boat to come into sight, so we didn't have a repeat of the last time. Eventually we saw

them and then we were off, attempting the English Channel for a second time.

**THE CROSSING**

We were in really good spirits as we started to paddle, the sun was coming up and it was promising to be a beautiful day.

By the time we got to the English shipping lane (5-miles out) the sun was up, the seasickness pills were working and we were enjoying ourselves. What we did find worrying was the size of the ships; there were some really, really big ones, and they were moving fast! At one point we had to wait for 10-minutes because a ship was coming and we would not have had the time to get out of its way if we'd kept paddling. While we waited Danny took the opportunity to go for a wee; he jumped over board, did his business and then got back in! From then on we couldn't stop; we had to just keep paddling! We had to eat and drink often and just keep paddling. It was actually easier than I thought it would be, although the singing of the others got slightly annoying after a while. It was a really nice day, however about half way through the fog started to come down and we were all getting really worried; it passed, and we paddled on. The only other break we had was when Danny, Terry and Lydia all needed a wee so they jumped into the sea. The paddling did get a bit tedious nearer the end because we were just paddling and there was nothing much to see. But we were making progress and when the French coastline came in to view it was the most amazing feeling, the end was in sight! About a mile out from the coastline was the only time that Les and I had trouble paddling in sync, but that was my fault because I just really wanted to get to the end!

And then it was over, we'd done it, we'd paddled to France!

It was an incredible feeling as we pulled up on the French beach and got out of our boats. Being able to stretch and move was great. We were all in quite a bit of pain, but we were all so elated that it didn't matter. We all jumped out and there was lots of celebratory hugging and taking pictures. It was the best feeling ever... We had paddled the English Channel! **CF**

Lydia, Molly and myself could not have done this trip without the support of our friends and family, so we'd like to say many thanks to them all.

Part of my motivation for paddling trip was to raise funds towards a World Challenge Expedition to India. The purposes of the trip is twofold: trekking and community work. The trekking phase will take place in the Himalayan Mountains and last between 12 and 14 days. The community phase is when, as a group, we work in a local community. We may be helping to build a well, paint a school or teach English. We will be there to provide the community with the help they need and to do what they want; the exact details of what we do will be decided much nearer the time after the community has identified its needs. This is not an average school trip and is certainly not a holiday. It is a challenging expedition that will significantly benefit the local community and will teach my fellow team members and I valuable life skills such as leadership, communication and teamwork.

Part of the challenge of undertaking a World Challenge expedition is raising the money, in my case over £3500 is needed to fund the trip. In order to raise this money I have been running stalls at local fetes, house and pet sitting, ironing, and as a group we are going to be undertaking bag packing for local supermarkets and arranging events for the local community, and of course I paddled the English Channel!

If anyone would be interested in sponsoring me I can be contacted, via my Dad, by email. His email address is [jasonatpackers@btinternet.com](mailto:jasonatpackers@btinternet.com).

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# How to Get Articles Published in Canoe Focus

## A GUIDE TO PRODUCING GREAT CANOEING & KAYAKING STORIES

**It's easier than you may think to get published in Canoe FOCUS Magazine, here's our guide to producing interesting, inspirational and publishable articles...**

### WE'LL CONSIDER PUBLISHING YOUR CANOEING OR KAYAKING STORY IF:

- it is a good story/ it has a good angle
- if it comes with a decent set of images

### DECENT IMAGES

However good an article, we can't publish without photos, and poor quality images are about as much use as no photos at all. This is what we look for in a set of paddling photos submitted with any article:

**High Resolution:** When you're on the river, lake or sea with your camera make sure that the resolution is set to be as high as possible. You might have to sacrifice shutter speed and memory space, depending on your camera, but it's what's needed to make your images usable for publishing. For print we need images to be, at their physical size, at a minimum resolution of 300dpi. As a guide, usable images will be minimum 3MB and upwards in disc size.

**Variety:** In any collection of photos we look for a good mix of the following:

- On the water action – canoes, kayaks and you, doing what you do!
- Lifestyle – camping/ driving/ eating etc.
- Destination – landmarks/ wildlife/ culture/scenery etc.

It's important to have a good spread, but they're not all as important as one another – we can't publish without any canoeing or kayaking action shots whatsoever, but if you're short of lifestyle shots, you might get away with it. The very best paddling photographs will include elements of all three.

**Well Composed Shots:** A shot of a waterfall with a yellow or green spec that if you squint you can work out is a kayak paddler isn't a well-composed shot. It's pointless to send us 10 shots of the same drop from the same angle – we'll only use one maximum.

Experiment with different angles, try to crop in close on some shots, and pan out for context on others. Being able to read facial expressions on some shots really helps lift a collection of photos.

**Good Quality:** By this we mean we want sharp, bright images. We can't use shots that are too dark or out of focus and fuzzy.

### STORY/ ANGLE

It is essential to bear two things in mind when writing an article:

**Audience:** Literally everybody – young people, pensioners and everybody in between are members of the BCU, and read Canoe FOCUS, so articles have to appeal to them all in some way.

**Purpose:** This one is simple – it's to entertain and inform. As with all good stories, you have to think about the WHAT, WHERE, WHO & HOW.

**What:** What sort of article are you writing?

- Destination Feature?
- Instructional/ Technique Article?
- Novelty Idea?
- A philosophical/ political/ scientific article about a paddling issue?
- Paddling history?

Each of these will require a slightly different voice; make sure the one you are using is appropriate.

**Where:** If we receive a really, really dull article, with poor images chronicling an amazing mind-blowing trip we won't publish it. If we get an entertaining and interesting one with a good angle and great photos, about a day out on an average piece of water then we very probably will.

**Who:** If it's a destination feature about a trip, we don't want an arbitrary list of the names of the people on the trip – that means nothing to anyone who wasn't there. But we do want some human colour, and at the very least to be able to identify with the narrator. A dry list of events with no human element whatsoever becomes very boring after 2000 words!

**How:** The HOW is an excellent add on to an article – readers respond well to hearing about something that sounds as if it could be at least slightly attainable.

TOP TIP

Remember to rotate your camera 90 degrees occasionally. We always examine portrait shots as potential front covers, if you've bagged a good one with plenty of space around the subject you might just end up seeing it on the front of Canoe FOCUS Magazine!



## STRUCTURING YOUR ARTICLE

It's sometimes hard to know where to start when writing an article, so sometimes it's useful to plan out a rough structure beforehand.

**Introduction:** Every article has to have an introductory paragraph that sets the tone and gives a flavour of what is to come. People often assume that this introduction has to be the beginning of the story (if it is a destination article), but this isn't always the case. An introduction needs to grab the reader, so it might make sense to begin with the exciting crux of the story. You can always back track then to explain how you came to be there.

**Organising Into Sub-Headings:** All articles in Canoe FOCUS Magazine are organised into sub-headings. This is for a number of reasons, but largely because it looks better on the page and more attractive to a reader flicking through the magazine. There is more than one way to organise these headings, though:

- **Chronologically:** Sometimes the simplest way is the best. If you're telling a story about your trip somewhere, and think it works best-told start to finish, then you can do so.
- **By Theme:** Have a section on logistical adventures (getting boats to and around a foreign country), a paddling section or sections, a reflective section giving advice based on your experiences.
- **By Narrator:** We've had articles in the past that describe the same trip from the point of view of multiple narrators. If a few people want to collude in this way that is excellent – but make sure you plan it first to make sure you're not all going to say the same thing! You can use this structure comically to demonstrate any differences in opinion you may have had on your trip.

These are just a few examples – be imaginative, how you structure your article is crucial to how interesting a read it is.

## TITLE

Choose a straightforward and descriptive title that immediately signals what the article is about i.e. Whitewater Kayaking in The French Alps.

## PROOF READING

We have professional editors, so don't worry if you're not the best with a keyboard. We never reject an article because of misuse of commas or misspelling of easy words (see below). Just give it a quick once-over before sending to check it makes sense and we'll do the rest.

## GRAMMAR & SPELLING

You'd probably be surprised to hear that grammar & spelling are nowhere near the top of our list in terms of importance. All material that's published is edited and proof-read, so we're much more interested in the content and ideas in an article than the nuts and bolts of spelling & grammar, so please don't be put off having a go if these are not your strong points, just run it through a spell checker before you send it in and we'll do the rest. Again if we receive a perfectly spelt and punctuated feature that reads as dull as ditch water it's not going in, but something a little rougher with a solid gold nugget of an idea or story can be editorially polished until it shines.

## ENTERTAIN AND INFORM

Always remember the purpose of the article – it must primarily be entertaining and something that people want to read, but informative and accurate too. If you're writing an article about a trip you've been on, then take a bit of time researching details like town, river, tide races, islands names etc, and other background information to include.

## How to submit your paddling articles and ideas to Canoe Focus:

Email word documents containing articles of 1500 – 3000 words to: [canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk](mailto:canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk)

For photos we are happy to use an online file transfer website of your choosing such as DropBox, YouSendit or WeTransfer. Alternatively you can send a disc to Canoe FOCUS, British Canoe Union, 18 Market Place, Bingham, Nottingham, NG1 8AP **CF**

**TOP TIP**  
Although you are writing non-fiction, sometimes to be concise and entertaining there's room for embellishment of certain details, such as chronology. E.g. If writing an article about the Dart, you can make out that two separate anecdotes – which actually happened on different weekends – happened at the same time in order to help the story.

*We welcome submissions and following these guidelines will certainly improve the chances of having your article published, but FOCUS cannot guarantee publication of every item received*

# GB White Water Raft Racing

## NATIONAL SELECTION EVENT – LEA VALLEY 15TH / 16TH DECEMBER

Teams are invited to enter the Winter Madness event at Lea Valley. You'll need your thermals for this one, but as it is being hosted at the Olympic White Water Venue, we know there will be hot showers and a great café on-site!!

This event is also the National Selection event, so the top two teams will be selected to represent Great Britain for the next two years. With the next World Championships in New Zealand, teams are keen to get to that top spot and earn their place to go and race on some of the World's best white water against the World's best teams.

Entry fee - teams of up to seven paddlers are invited to enter. The entry fee is £300 per team, which includes all water fees, boat use and an evening meal after racing on Saturday.

### YOUTH WANTED!

There is now a Youth category for World Championship events, and we would like to invite any young paddlers (16 – 22) to Lea Valley for the weekend to have a go at raft racing, and take part in some workshops and

developmental races. You can either come as an individual, or if you have a team of you come along together.

For information about this event, as a senior team or a youth paddler please contact: [britishrafracing@rocketmail.com](mailto:britishrafracing@rocketmail.com)



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For full details of either post, please send your CV to the following address, indicating which centre you are interested in applying for:

INSTRUCTOR APPLICATIONS, NEWLANDS ADVENTURE CENTRE, STAIR, KESWICK, CUMBRIA, CA12 5UF  
Tel: 017687 78463 / info@activity-centre.com

www.activity-centre.com  
www.keswickclimbingwall.co.uk

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