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WELCOME

TO THE SPRING ISSUE OF CANOE FOCUS

Spring is in the air! And I'm sure you're all looking forward to lighter nights and lots more paddling time on the water, I know I am!

With that in mind then, this issue features a collection of some of our favourite paddling destinations in southern England, tips on what gear to use and how to plan an Alpine adventure and how to master some essential sea kayaking skills.

This edition also features some information on the BCU's new brand, which we're looking to introduce throughout this month. The project involves a new look and feel for the organisation, including some fantastic new lifestyle images – we hope you like them as much as we do!

Looking ahead then, we have an exciting couple of months to look forward to with National Go Canoeing Week from the 24th May to the 1st June and the Canoe Slalom World Cup at the Lee Valley White Water Centre, from the 6th to the 8th June. Tickets are on sale at www.canoeLondon2014.com and I hope to see many of you there, cheering on our Team GB paddlers.

“Looking ahead then, we have an exciting couple of months to look forward to with National Go Canoeing Week from the 24th May to the 1st June & the Canoe Slalom World Cup at the Lee Valley White Water Centre, from the 6th to the 8th June.”

Before I sign off, I'd just like to thank those of you that attended the BCU's AGM on the 8th March. Some special business was addressed to review our governance structures, and create a new BCU Board, which will combine representative members from

England and the Home Nations, with some independent members who will bring new skills to the organisation. I am pleased to say that this was agreed at the AGM, and we can now take it

forward. Minutes from the meeting will be available on the BCU's website as soon as they have been finalised.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue of Canoe Focus. Thank you for your continued support.

Happy paddling

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.

Even if it's just an idea – drop us a line and we'll give you some advice.



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/canoeengland



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REGULARS

- 06 In-Focus**
News and events from your region
-
- 18 What Gear?**
All the gear you'll need for an Alpine kayaking adventure
- 
-
- 20 GO Canoeing**
Get out and get paddling more in 2014
-
- 34 FOCUS On**
Kayak Touring
-
- 48 Kit Testing**
The Great Outdoors Fleece
-
- 50 Into FOCUS Photo Competition**
The latest entries in our popular photo-competition
-
- 54 Your BCU**
Interviews, news and info from inside your governing body
-

FEATURES

- 22 Essential Sea Kayaking Skills**
-
- 28 Super South East Touring Trip Destinations**
South Eastern England touring paddling gems, just waiting for you to discover and explore...
-
- 36 Oh La La!**
Planning your trip to the French Alps
-
- 42 My Favourite Cumbrian Sea Paddling Trip**
Sea kayaker Kate Duffus shares a special sea paddling trip
-
- 44 Women of the Sea**
A Team of UK women take on the awesome Na Wahine O Kei Kai outrigger canoe race
-
- 60 Cometh the Race Cometh the Lady C1 Paddler**
Taking on the Devizes to Westminster single bladed
-
- 62 Bigger & Better for 2014**
Exciting developments at Lee Valley White Water Centre
-



Front cover: Sea kayaking can unlock the door to some truly memorable adventures.
Image: J Smith



50



61



PADDLING PARTICIPATION AT ALL-TIME HIGH

Participation rates in core boating and water sports activities surged in 2013 according to research released recently by a consortium of marine organisations ahead of National Water Sports Month in May.

A total of 3.5 million adults (7.1% of the population) took to the water across a number of activities including canoeing, kayaking, power boating, sailing, canal boating and rowing. This reflects an increase of 23% in the number of participants from 2012 when 2.8 million adults (5.8% of the population) took part in at least one of the activities. Within this total, canoeing and kayaking in particular proved very popular, recording an all-time high of 1.5 million adults (3% of the population).

The number of participants in the wider group of boating, water sports and coastal related activities, which includes cliff climbing, spending time at the beach and outdoor swimming, also increased to a six year high of 14.1 million adults (28.8% of the population compared to 22.7% in 2012).

The rise in participation rates for 2013 could be attributed to the following factors:

- The warmest summer recorded for six years in 2013 encouraged people to take part in outdoor activities
- An improving economic picture
- An Olympic 'legacy effect' from London 2012 and GB successes inspired more people to try boating and water sports

The rise in participation rates for core boating and water sport activities has been fuelled by a growth in 'casual participants', those who take to the water one to five times a year (the majority trialling different sports once or twice a year). Casual participants make up more than 82% of those who got involved, the highest figure since the research began in 2002. This is great news for the sports, giving an opportunity to welcome these newcomers.

In particular, female participation in core boating activities has continued to increase. The number of women involved has steadily risen since 2010 by 40% to 1.4 million. Older age groups (55+) have also swelled numbers, growing by over 50% since 2002 to 650,000.

Howard Pridding, CEO of the British Marine Federation, commented to FOCUS on the figures, "This valuable research undertaken by the consortium proves how popular and vital the UK leisure marine industry remains, with 3.5 million adults taking to the water across the country in a wide variety of activities.

"With initiatives such as National Water Sports Month taking place in May this year, we are confident that participation will continue to rise through the promotion of enjoyable and safe boating and water sports."

FLOOD RELIEF

Sport England's Flood Relief Fund will invest £5 million of National Lottery funding into sports facilities that have been damaged as a result of the floods and storms. This dedicated fund will help safeguard community sport and get sports facilities back up and running as quickly as possible. Early indicators suggest that the biggest impact of the bad weather has been on sports such as hockey, rugby and football because of flooded and waterlogged pitches, and water sports where many clubs are on riverbanks or in coastal areas.

To help us to assess the full extent of the damage and consult with the worst affected areas Sport England would like clubs, charities and similar organisations to register their interest. Those needing funding to clean up and get up and running quickly can request up to £2,000 of emergency funding, which could be awarded very quickly. Those with more extensive damage, which will take longer to repair are invited to apply to the fund. Organisations that do not qualify for the Flood Relief Fund will be given advice about other sources of funding that could help.

The new £5 million National Lottery fund has been created specifically to help with the damage caused by the exceptional weather, and is in addition to Sport England's other grant programmes which will continue to operate as normal. The fund will remain open until the autumn to ensure that those who are currently unable to assess the damage will not lose out.

WINTER WONDERS

Over 40,000 miles and 200 places were paddled throughout October, November & December as part of our Winter Club Challenge. Congratulations to Chelmsford Canoe Club for the 'Most Miles Paddled' and to Ribble Canoe Club for 'Most Places Paddled'. Each club wins £250!

All the results, including individual winners, are available at <http://bit.ly/1hFaFbP>


SCOTLAND'S FESTIVAL OF PADDLESport

This year the Scottish Canoe Association event 'An Fhèis Mhòr', Scotland's Festival of Paddlesport, is opening its doors to every paddle discipline you can think of, and maybe even a few you haven't! The annual canoe and kayak show is moving to the Perth Dewars Centre, where you'll find plenty of shiny paddling-related items to shop for, or simply dream about taking home with you. There will also be improved spaces for talks and workshops from eminent paddlers of all disciplines, as well as the annual ceilidh on the Saturday evening.

But paddling is about doing, not just watching. So for the first time, the festival will include water! The Perth Leisure Pool, adjacent to the Dewars Centre, will see canoe polo matches, demo sessions, and the opportunity to come and try paddling in lots of different craft, so remember to bring your swimsuit!

And of course, if the pool isn't enough, the excellent Tay Descent will be running for the fifth time, with the usual long and short courses and mix of categories. Last year craft ranged from sea kayaks to Stand Up Paddleboards and from slalom boats to racing K2s. Whatever you paddle, if you're up for some magnificent 'Big Tree Country' scenery and have the skills and equipment to master the Grade 2 and 3 rapids, it will be well worth the trip. So if you paddle for adrenaline or relaxation, with one blade or two, sitting, kneeling or standing, for journeys or to display physical prowess, come and join the SCA at 'An Fhèis Mhòr' – Scotland's Festival of Paddlesport on Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th October. The Tay Descent will take place on Saturday 25th October.


Keep an eye out on www.canoescotland.org and on the Scottish Canoe Association Facebook and Twitter pages for more information.



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WATCH THE WORLD CUP

Don't miss out on your chance to cheer on Team GB as they take on the rest of the world's best paddlers at the 2014 ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup.

The first race of the 2014 World Cup Series will be held from the 6th till the 8th of June at Lee Valley White Water Centre and tickets are on sale now.

The race is the first major international competition to be held at the venue since the London 2012 Olympic Games, when Team GB clinched a stunning double-medal haul in the men's C2 competition. Spectators will be hoping for more of the same as the athletes battle it out for medals and glory on Lee Valley's technically demanding 300m world-class competition course. All of the adrenaline pumped action is set in the fabulous green space of Lee Valley Regional Park.

There will also be lots of activities for the whole family to enjoy, on the Lee Valley White Water Centre site, making it a full, fun day out for everyone.

Prices start from £8 for adults and £4 for children. Family tickets, multi-day tickets and group discounts are also available. Buy your tickets now at www.canoeLondon2014.com

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The Paracanoe Paralympic disciplines are currently restricted to physical disabilities only, but please note you don't have to be a current athlete to be considered.

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- Step 2 - They will send you an Athlete Enquiry Form for you to fill in and send back
- Step 3 - Once short-listed you will be invited to attend a 'Talent Confirmation Camp' in Nottingham.
- Step 4 - Post Confirmation Camp you will be short-listed to join the 'Talent Confirmation Programme' (full time coaching support)
- Step 5 - Graduation to the full programme with a full support system e.g. elite coaching, performance psychology, physiotherapy, lifestyle advice and strength and conditioning.

For further info or to get registered email Paralympic-talent@gbcanoeing.org.uk

PERCY BLANDFORD
By Chris Pease

Percy Blandford has passed away aged 101. A family man he remained active until his death and lived to meet his great, great grandchild. Percy had a significant impact on the growth and development of UK canoe-sport to what it is today.

His kayaks and books were two of the main channels into the sport through the nineteen fifties, and sixties, and he was a well regarded coach. An important link between the BCU, the Scout movement and the Canoe Camping Club, he helped to move the sport from the fringes to mainstream.

Born in Bristol in 1912; as a Boy Scout he was an enthusiastic sailor and became a keen canoeist. Trained as an engineer he had a real flair for building things and concise explanation; in the wartime RAF he produced maintenance manuals for most of the aircraft in use at that time. If it could be made by an amateur, Percy was likely to have written a book or magazine article about how to do it!

Narrowly missing selection as an Olympic kayaker he was chosen as a time keeper (and radio/TV commentator) for the canoeing and rowing events of the 1948 games at Henley, and was also a competitor in the second Devizes to Westminster race.

His canoe and kayak plans are still in demand, and available. A member of the Institute of Naval Architects he was probably better known for his boat designs - being one of the first to design small boats or yachts of plywood, such as the Lysander, that could be built at home. It was fitting that the Olympic torch was specially routed past his house in 2012 in recognition of his contribution to society.

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OLYMPIC HERO RETIRES

Tim Baillie, who together with C2 partner Etienne Stott made history at the London 2012 Olympics by winning the first-ever gold medal for GB in the sport of canoe slalom, has decided to hang up his competitive paddle and retire from the sport.

Best friends since they were teenagers and a highly popular team on the international circuit, the pair enjoyed one of sport's longest running partnerships, which spanned nine seasons. Winning gold in London was the pinnacle made more impressive after the pair made a remarkable comeback following injury to Stott's shoulder a year earlier.

Tim spoke to FOCUS about his decision, "Retiring from international canoe slalom racing has been a difficult decision, which I've agonised over for a long time. I still love canoeing but I've realised that I no longer have the underlying desire required to commit all of my time to the singular pursuit of canoe slalom excellence.

"Looking back, the London Olympic cycle took a lot of energy, particularly fighting back from so many setbacks, and I think that burned through my passion for the sport."

In 2013 Baillie and Stott reached good form with a return to the World Cup podium. But during the third leg of the World Cup at Le Seu D'Urgell in the Spanish Pyrenees, Etienne dislocated his shoulder and their season ended. A lengthy spell away from competition gave Tim the opportunity to evaluate his future.

"Whilst my decision to retire is tinged with sadness I feel that Etienne and I have both had an incredible journey to look back on and a lot of exciting things to look forward to, so overall I'm feeling positive.

"I'd like to thank Etienne for all the adventures; it's truly a testament to our friendship that it's survived nine years of being strapped into the same canoe!

"A big thank you also goes to my wife, family and friends for all their support and understanding over the years. My parents in particular put my interests far beyond their own in providing me with incredible opportunities growing up and, most importantly, did it without putting any pressure on me to achieve results."

Etienne, whose 2013 injury proved more serious than his pre Olympics shoulder dislocation, is now back on the road to recovery and began paddling again recently with plans to continue in the sport of C2 and compete in the Rio 2016 Olympics. He shared his feelings on Tim's retirement, "It's sad because it's the end of a chapter, but I respect Tim's decision and it is the right thing for him.

"I'm so proud and happy with the career that Tim and I had together, and very thankful for the good times, the hard times and the challenges that we've been through as a crew. It taught me so much and developed me so far as an athlete, far beyond anything I would have dreamed of. I don't think that would have happened with another person and Tim has helped me so much. He has made a huge contribution to the sport and to me, personally, as an athlete."

Since winning gold in London, Tim and Etienne have been perfect ambassadors for canoe slalom and the canoing 7 kayaking as a whole, embarking on an endless run of appearances, ceremonies,



Pic by Pete Astles - www.peakuk.com

dinners, media opportunities and school visits, whilst supporting GB Canoeing's legacy projects. Last year they were recognised by both being awarded MBEs.

Finding themselves regularly in the spotlight, the pair discovered a talent for motivating others through public speaking, an activity which Tim now plans to pursue.

"Having an incredibly up and down career with lots of interesting challenges and powerful lessons makes it a great story. Since the Olympics I've really enjoyed public speaking as an opportunity to share what I've learnt about performing in a high-pressure environment, so it is something I'm looking forward to continuing."

Whilst Tim decides where to go next he plans to take on some outdoor adventures and continue contributing to the London Games legacy, an area he finds rewarding and sees as a great way to repay the nation for its support. Having been an athlete long before lottery funding, he can appreciate the support available now to today's top competitors.

"The opportunity to train full-time in a well supported team environment means that you truly can become as good as you possibly could be. Without the support of the National Lottery there's no way this would be possible in a minority Olympic sport. GB Canoe Slalom is in a very healthy place and I look forward to watching my current team mates racing in years to come as well as hopefully helping the younger athletes to realise their potential."

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YOUR NECK OF THE WOODS

News From Your Region

SOUTH

NEW BOATHOUSE FOR GLOUCESTER

Gloucester Canoe Club has been working closely with Gloucester Rowing Club creating plans for a new multi- water sports boathouse. Gloucester Boathouse is set to receive £500,000 towards an environmentally sustainable new facility for rowing and canoeing at Hempsted thanks to National Lottery funding from Sport England's Improvement Fund.

The new facility is one of 23 projects across England to share in £7.3 million of Lottery investment from the latest round of funding, which focused on minimising the environmental impact of sports facilities by investing in sustainable projects with a clear local need.

Gloucester Boathouse will be a new purpose built boathouse to provide facilities for water sports, particularly rowing & canoeing, meeting the needs of participants of all ages & backgrounds from across Gloucestershire. It will replace existing facilities, which are limiting any further growth in participation in these sports. It will become a centre of excellence in rowing and canoeing, the regional adaptive rowing centre & support regional growth in recreational paddle sports. The boathouse

will be built using best practice in design & energy efficiency, on land owned by Gloucester Boathouse Ltd adjacent to the Gloucester-Sharpness Canal at Hempsted.



SHOWTIME!

Go Canoeing will be attending the Royal Bath and West Show 2014. For the last seven years canoeing and kayaking have been offered for free at the Royal Bath and West Show, and this year is no different. The Go Canoeing Village will have a range of canoes, kayaks and stand up paddle boards for anyone to test their boating skills. Local retailers and clubs will be on hand to advise and welcome people to the world of paddlesports.

The Royal Bath and West show will be running from May 28th until May 31st and Canoe England are recruiting volunteers to assist at this event. Please contact Michael Sims Canoeing Development Officer michael.sims@canoe-england.org.uk if you are interested in helping out.

CENTRAL

SHROPSHIRE PADDLESport GO WILD!

Shropshire Paddlesport is no ordinary club and the members of its newest section, Paddle 2 Nature, have been applying their natural enthusiasm to the study of the Montgomery Canal. The section's first outing was last summer, assisting Shropshire Wildlife Trust on a waterborne survey of the canal and a local river to assess Water vole habitat. Open boats proved to be just the thing to explore the vegetated banks to look for holes and signs of foraging.

Inspired by this the group have spent the winter planning regular monthly sessions for 2014 and beyond. The family orientated group have a moth night, bat hunt, paddle out bug hunt and field-craft sessions already planned, alongside local experts and the support of the Rivers team of Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

To start the year the youngest members of the group made stacks of bird nesting boxes and bat roost, which have been hung on or near the clubhouse, with the support of the Canal and Rivers Trust. In time, the Paddle 2 Nature group aim to assist CRT in undertaking practical conservation actions to look after the habitats vital to the canals wild inhabitants.

The Montgomery Canal is not only a delightfully quiet navigation but a major biodiversity corridor across the North Shropshire landscape area known as the Meres and Mosses (a nationally recognised Nature Improvement Area or NIA). Nature Improvement Areas were established to help make special landscapes bigger, better and more connected. The Paddle 2 Nature team have already identified the long degraded canal-side hedge as their big natural connections project. The youngest members have their eye on something much more up to date- a web camera mounted in a nesting box for post paddle viewing in the clubroom, one for the fair weather naturalists!

GIRLGUIDE LAYS DOWN INDOOR KAYAK CHALLENGE!

This winter, Wychavon Canoe and Kayak Club paddler Emma Witherford spiced up the club's annual social event with an ergo challenge. She used the occasion to help her raise funds towards an exciting Girlguiding adventure later this year. Along with eleven other girls and leaders from across the county, Emma will be paddling approximately 80km of the Vltava River in the Czech Republic in July. It is Girlguiding UK's first trip of this style, where they will carry all their equipment, clothing and food in Canadian canoes and camp on route. The girls will be paddling with up to 30 Czech Sea Scouts and as well as the canoeing, they will also be visiting churches and tourist attractions along the river.

About the evening's entertainment, Emma told FOCUS, "The night's fundraising started off slow with many members apprehensive for setting a bench mark, but soon young and old were fighting it out for the top spots in the three categories!

"Although it was challenging, it was also a great opportunity for some coaching in sprint kayaking with many of the onlookers shouting encouragement and offering ways of improving techniques. The event ran smoothly with all levels of paddlers (and non-paddlers) trying the ergo. Overall, it was a great event, as everyone got involved with some having two or three goes each, in the hope of reaching the top of the leader board."

Congratulations go to Matt Mandrell, Emma Johnstone and Oli Moore who paddled the greatest distance in 45 seconds in each of their categories.

Canoe England wishes Emma and all her fellow Girlguides good luck with their venture and hopefully we will hear more on the journey later in the year!

LINCOLN FLYING THE FLAG FOR PADDLE-ABILITY

Lincoln CC is the latest club to be recognised for its efforts in making our sport accessible to all. By adding Paddle-Ability Top Club to their already 'Gold' standard of Club Mark accreditation, they are setting a fine example of high standards of canoeing provision. Lincoln now has a dedicated team of volunteers who look after the Paddle-Ability agenda, establishing links with local groups, providing representation on the committee and also ensuring the whole club is as welcoming and accommodating to people with disabilities.

Paddle-Ability representatives Mark Griffin and Lisa Sumner were really pleased to gain the standard. Mark told FOCUS "We are really proud to have been awarded Paddle-Ability status, we have lots of things planned for 2014. Paddle-Ability is now just part of what the club does and everyone is right behind it".

If your club is interested in striving for Paddle-Ability Top Club status, contact your local Development Officer for more information.

INSPIRATION TO ALL PADDLERS *By Livvy Rowe*

Bridget Holden used to be an active PE teacher, so losing her leg was a life-changing event. She found an escape in kayaking and joined Norwich Canoe Club after hearing Paddle-Ability coordinator Martin Matthews calling for anyone with a disability to take up kayaking on Radio Norfolk. Bridget said, "When I'm paddling I feel as good as anyone else; you forget your disability and concentrate on the sport". With the help of expert coaching from the Paddle-Ability team, of Julie Hicks, Tim Scott and Martin Matthews, along with the fantastic facilities, location and friendly atmosphere of Norwich Canoe Club, Bridget has been able to excel at kayaking. She is even hoping to be selected for the GB Canoeing Paralympic programme and she's at the right club to do it, as Norwich Canoe Club are current National Champions in sprint and marathon.

Bridget is a true inspiration for those who suffer from physical disabilities. From her experience, she observes that, "You can go one of two ways; give up and think you can't do things anymore, or you make it happen, but you need help".

Norwich Canoe Club offers fundamental support to all disabled paddlers, with its fantastic Paddle-Ability scheme. The club welcomes paddlers of all ages and ability, whether they want to compete for GB or go for a gentle paddle along the scenic River Yare. As well as being one of only a handful of clubs in the country to have achieved Clubmark and Top Club Gold status, Norwich Canoe Club have recently been awarded Paddle-Ability Top Club accreditation too.



"When I'm paddling I feel as good as anyone else; you forget your disability and concentrate on the sport"

BOBBY TIMPERLEY MEMORIAL RACE

The Bobby Timperley Memorial Wavehopper and Regional Wild Water Racing event was once again held on the South Tyne from Warden to Tyne Green in Hexham. The event set up in memory of Bobby who was the Canoe England North East Paddlesport Development Officer, awards the trophy in recognition to the best performing youngster on the day, which was at the heart of Bobby's work with youth.

Chloe Glendenning event organiser, said, "This year seemed to be the hardest year to make a decision to find a winner for the trophy as they were all outstanding" Little separated the excellent performances but 17-year old Jonathan Edwards was awarded the trophy.

The plan is now to move the race from the traditional dates in January to coincide with the Tyne Tour weekend in November, to help raise its profile even further.



U CANOE COMES NORTH

Congratulations to members from Teesside University Canoe Club and Callum Anderson (University's Sports Development Officer) who attended the first U Canoe tutor training sessions in the north east region. The club is excited about the delivery of two Weba kayak machines that will assist them to inspire other students and staff to get involved in regular sessions and challenges. Adventure in Middlesbrough staff also attended and will be rolling out delivery in Middlesbrough in the Autumn. Biddick Sports Academy has also received delivery of two Weba machines and will be rolling out delivery at the end of February within the school.

PADDLES UP AT PRUDHOE

Tyne Valley Canoe Club recently ran another successful Krazy Kayak event at Prudhoe Waterworld Leisure Pool. The event has been running for over 20-years and evolved into one of the most fun events in canoeing, one that challenges boat handling, speed, stamina for all levels and abilities. Paddles Up first came on the TV screens around 1987 and was the inspiration of this event organised by the Prudhoe based Tyne Valley Canoe Club.

The timed obstacle course required the paddlers to negotiate a series of gates, chicanes, limbos, paddle through the hoop, and even a whistle hidden in the waterfall with the time stopping by scoring a netball shot. A new obstacle involved hitting a moving target of plastic ducks hanging in the water cannon. The event was supported by North East Kayaks and Paddles who generously donated £30 gift tokens as prizes.

"The chance to 'have a go' at an activity such as kayaking is what can inspire the young people to take up activity."



Canoe Foundation in Action

MYTHOLMROYD SCOUT GROUP

Over the past decade the Canoe Foundation has had the opportunity to engage and assist nearly 200 projects throughout the UK. This amazing result means that we have helped over 53,000 individuals to get out on the water and enjoy our fantastic sport. This assistance can only come from the generous support that we receive. Over the next couple of issues we will be bringing you some exciting feedback from the projects that we've helped out and the benefits that funding can bring.

Mytholmroyd Scout Group is an example of one of the projects that was funded by the charity during 2013. They received a grant of £1,000, which was put towards purchasing five new sit on top kayaks and paddles as well as replacing some of their existing ageing equipment.

Assistant Leader, Paul Streets told us, "We are continually striving to give the Scouts the opportunity to try a range of different activities in a safe environment. The chance to 'have a go' at an activity such as kayaking is what can inspire the young people take up that activity and continue outside of Scouting. The first time I personally got into a kayak was at a Scout event and now I am teaching young people about paddlesport. Without the opportunity to 'have a go' I would not have learnt how much I enjoy paddlesport. Mytholmroyd Scout Group is extremely grateful to the Canoe Foundation for their support and funding to help promote paddlesport within our Scout group. We would like to thank everyone involved for their kind and valued support."

The equipment has already been used on several trips and benefited numerous youngsters who have been able to learn the basic strokes and gain confidence out on the water. From here, they will be able to progress by further developing their paddlesport skills and have the chance to be involved in expeditions and undertake qualifications such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Paul continued, "By continuing to promote paddlesport within the Scouts we hope that when youngsters leave us they will remain within the sport and help to promote paddlesport further amongst young people."

Further details about the charity as well as all the latest news and a range of project work can be found at: www.canoefoundation.org.uk

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

We would love for each and every one of you to get involved and support the charity. One such method of doing this is simply by helping spread the word about the Canoe Foundation by interacting through our social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter.

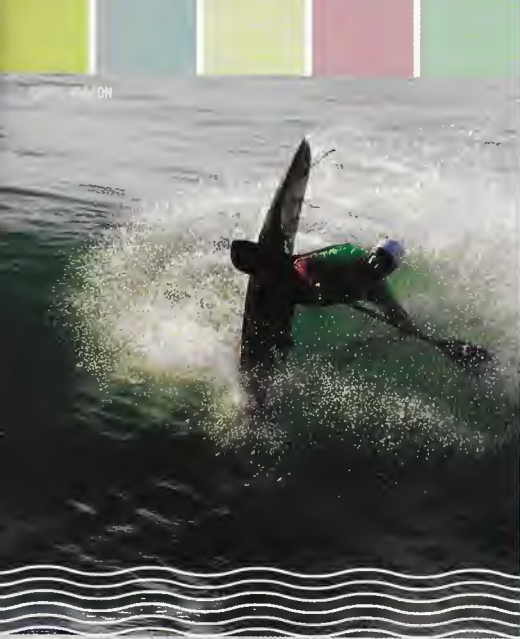
The charity's work is reliant upon the generous support we receive. By setting up a regular donation of £2 a month through the charity's Just Giving page, you would donate enough in a year to fund the purchase of a paddle which could be used to benefit hundreds of youngsters! Your money would also be used to help and support our many projects that we assist in order to get people paddling.

Further details about the charity and how to donate can be found on our Just Giving page: www.justgiving.com/canoefoundation

Until next time happy paddling!

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions or comments then please do not hesitate to contact us, either by e-mail: (info@canoefoundation.org.uk) by phone (0845 370 9547) or by post: Canoe Foundation, National Water Sports Centre, Adbolton Lane, Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham, NG12 2LU.



A new look for canoeing

It's a challenge it's a breath of fresh air and being on the water is a feeling that you don't get anywhere else.'

I love canoeing, it's so versatile there are so many different types of people who you wouldn't necessarily stop and talk to in street - brings lots of different people together "



ANDY BIGGS

We asked, you've told us and we've listened.

The BCU is launching a new look and feel for canoeing - which goes right to the heart of what our sport is about. The BCU want to help and inspire people to go canoeing! It's more than a superficial rebrand, it's all about making sure the BCU is relevant to you and to new paddlers.

Our research has got us under the skin of canoeists and by knowing what makes you tick, we can represent you better and attract more people into our fantastic sport

As a result of talking with paddlers up and down the country, we've developed a look that is fundamentally about a positive attitude. It's about people who do.

The imagery will be inspiring and enabling. Those shown here are for illustration purposes only.

canDo

Canoe means 'can do'. It's a state of mind.

Can do it by myself. Can make it. Can do anything.

Canoeing is a way of life, it's liberating, it's an adventure and it's fun.

It is about succeeding and winning, it's about helping others to succeed and develop.

On the water you are part and parcel of nature, it's a feeling. It's soul enhancing, it's calm.

It's your time, it's family time, it's challenge time.

Most importantly, it provides a feel good factor that you don't find anywhere else.



NICK HERBERT

“ Canoeing feels like it’s for everyone, it isn’t aggressive, as serious or as threatening as other competitive sports, it’s just social, encouraging and fun.”

“ I started canoeing when I took my daughter to the local canoe club. I didn’t think I’d like it, but now I’m at the club four times a week or more. I didn’t think I’d be this competitive, but I am!”

Behind the new look

BCU volunteers and staff have been spending time talking and listening to existing paddlers, talking with non paddlers, hosting focus groups, looking at existing research, drilling down on research and getting to the heart of what it is that makes you so fanatical about our sport. As a people-centred organisation it’s important the BCU knows what makes you want to go paddling time and time again. The whole purpose of the BCU is about making it easier and more enjoyable for you to go paddling and get others involved in the sport.

It’s about supporting and providing opportunities for everyone to enjoy and realise their potential within all aspects of canoeing. Knowing what’s important to canoeists will help the BCU to increase participation, keep people canoeing and enhance performance – everything that underpins our mission ‘to help and inspire people to go canoeing’.

Inspiring you

Existing paddlers deserve the best service. Both BCU volunteers and staff want to ensure that what we offer you helps and inspires you to continue to paddle and paddle more often. Whether you’re a casual or serious paddler the BCU is developing products, programmes and structures that enable and motivate you to get out on the water more often.

As an example, for those looking for a self guided route, we’ve developed Canoe Trails, for those looking to meet new like-minded people and explore a new waterway, we’ve developed Guided Tours and for those looking to improve skills we have Star Awards. We also want to share our wonderful sport with new people.

Inspiring new people

To ensure the long term success and growth of the sport, the BCU must continue to attract new people. So as well as looking after your needs as an existing paddler, the BCU wants to understand how we can get more people enjoying our incredible sport and what better way to do this than reach out to the eight million people that are already enjoying an active outdoors lifestyle?

Of these eight million ‘outdoorsy’ type people, 100,000 are regular paddlers and this suggests that, if positioned correctly, there’s a fantastic opportunity for more people to combine paddling into their active outdoors lifestyle.

The BCU is already working in partnership with key stakeholders (like Sport England, Outdoor Industry Association, National Trust, Canals and Rivers Trust and the RSPB) and we’re in the process of understanding the type of person who is active in the outdoors; how frequently they paddle and where they like to go to pursue their passions.

We’ll also gain an understanding of what activities these people would like to try in the future and how they’d like to begin. We’ll use this to help shape offers that are relevant and very appealing to both existing and potential paddlers!

To ensure we’re completely relevant to current and new paddlers, our fresh ‘look and feel’ reflects this wider market understanding.

In numbers

- 8 million ‘outdoorsy’ type people
- 1.6 million (once or twice a year) paddlers
- 100,000 (10 times a year or more) paddlers
- 36,000 affiliated paddlers in the BCU
- 9,000 affiliated paddlers competing

Oh and we're changing our name



JONATHAN DEMPSEY

To go with the new look the BCU will get a new name. The year 2014 will be truly memorable for canoeing as the British Canoe Union has been synonymous with canoeing since 1936.

In 2000 the BCU federalised with the three legally separate home nations associations; Canoe Wales, Scottish Canoe Association and Canoe Association of Northern Ireland, plus two 'divisions' of the BCU; Canoe England and GB Canoeing. The structure remains in place, but the two divisions, Canoe England and GB Canoeing, will now come together to be known as British Canoeing.

As a people-focused organisation it's important to make sure we resonate, connect and are relevant to members. We've listened to feedback about our rather complicated structure and we've responded.

British Canoeing is simple and clear, we exist to 'help and inspire canoeists'.

It's modern and unifying - we are here to help and inspire all canoeists, whatever their background, ability and however they want to enjoy our incredible sport!

What does this mean for you?

You'll be pleased to hear that we won't be spending thousands of pounds on a re-brand!

We'll continue to use resources where they matter - in helping people enjoy canoeing and getting the most from canoeing. For the next six to twelve months you'll see both the old and the new look, but this does mean we'll be saving money on redesigns and reprints.

We'd love to know what you think.

David Gent
Chair, English Council and BCU Board member



ANTHONY EDMONDS

Join in the conversations

Email canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk
Twitter [#canoeinginspired](https://twitter.com/canoeinginspired)



PADDLING IN THE ALPS

WHAT GEAR?

The FOCUS guide to the kit needed to for an enjoyable and safe trip to paddle the rivers of the Alps

Image courtesy of
Seth Townley

WHAT KAYAK

Boats are a personal choice, but the rivers of the Alps are generally fast and powerful in nature so we'd certainly look towards a general river runner, with some volume, or a full on creek boat. Of course if you have the roof-rack space then taking a freestyle kayak or playboat along too is great for those play sessions on Alpine play spots. But if one boat does all then you'll have a much more enjoyable, and safer, time in a river in a river running or creek kayak. Give your boat the once over before and after you arrive to make sure all the seat bolts etc are nice and tight (long journeys on a roof-rack can loosen them). Goes without saying that whatever boat you choose it should be fitted with a full plate footrest.

HOT AIR

Chasing a swamped kayak down a section of Alpine white water is no fun at all, so your kayak should be fitted with airbags in the bow and stern. It's a good idea to make sure you've fastened them in too. Airbags can greatly improve the chances of recovering your boat, especially in a pin situation and they can also help to prevent damage to your kayak if you and it part company on the river!

PADDLES

Your poor old blades can expect to take a fair amount of abuse on an Alpine adventure, so need to be robust and up to the job. You'll benefit from a reasonably powerful blade, for all those must make eddies and big ferry glide moves. It's certainly worth considering taking a spare set, just in case, and you should definitely be carrying at least a couple of sets of split-paddles, on the water, amongst your group.

BUOYANCY AID

One or more pockets are useful for carrying gear that you may want to access in a hurry on the river (whistle/knife/camera/energy bar). 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 Alpine 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 Alpine 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).

PADDLE-TOPS

The air temperature is generally warm, and the sun shines often in the Alps so it's very tempting to just pack a shortie-cag and go in search of that elusive 'paddler's tan' (red face and arms, milk white torso). But while it can certainly be refreshing to sport short sleeves the water can be anything but warm, it is snowmelt after all, and it can get very chilly in some of the deeper gorges. If space allows by all means stick in a shortie, but a slightly heavier, long-sleeved semi-dry style cag with a good double waist is a better choice.

SUIT UP

Paddlesport-specific surface immersion suits, or as they are more commonly known dry-suits are an understandably popular choice for Alpine river runners, as they represent the ultimate in protection and comfort and eliminate any nasty cold spots around the waist and kidney areas. On the water a dry-suit is fine, but you may find yourself getting a little hot under the collar on any portages.

YOUR BOTTOM HALF

As with your top half, the warmer clime can make whacking on a pair of simple board shorts very appealing. But as you should always, you should be dressing for immersion. They won't seem so cool if you end up swimming, or up to your bits in icy water on a rescue etc. A nice compromise is to wear board shorts but in combination with a pair of neoprene leggings, or long neo shorts. This will give you protection against the cold but also give you a little more padding against rocks in the event of a swim. Alternatively a good thermal base layer combined with some lighter weight padding bottoms is also a great choice.

LAYERING UP

A good base layer will help keep you warm when it gets nippy, but also cool when it's hot, as 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 damp. If it's extra chilly then a fleece middle layer over the base one will seal the deal, or alternatively stick it in a dry bag in the back of your boat, just in case.

SPRAY-DECK

Any neoprene white water deck will be fine, but give it a once over before you leave. Standing on the bank of your first Alpine river is no place to discover the shock-cord on your deck is about to snap! Consider sticking a spare in the 'group' kit bag to cover any deck mishaps on your trip.

GET SOME SOLE

Good river shoes are a must if you're paddling in an Alpine 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 obstacles 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 real bonus.



YOU'VE ONLY GOT ONE BRAIN

Alpine rivers are fast and the rocks hard, so a well-fitted quality helmet, which covers the temples and the back of the head, is essential. It should be well padded and comfortable to wear for long periods of time.

SAFETY FIRST

Throwlines - 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.

River Knife - Ropes and moving water are a very bad combination. If you carry a rope you should always carry a knife, so you can cut it free if it becomes entangled during a rescue. Folding and locking varieties, which can be opened one handed if necessary, are a good option

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.

Slings & Nylon Tape - A taped sling can be used for all manner of rescue purposes. To quickly anchor off to a rock or tree when setting up a rescue, or as a makeshift climbing harness are just a few of the examples where it can be invaluable. They can be carried in your buoyancy aid pocket or maybe carry a couple in your 'pin kit'. You can actually buy purpose made tapes for paddling now, complete with a large snap-gate krab on the end and we like to keep one of these handy in our buoyancy aid front pocket.

Whistle - A good waterproof whistle is still one of the simplest ways to attract attention and communicate in an emergency on the river.

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.

REPAIR KIT

You'd be amazed at how many times a potentially disastrous Alpine mishap can be saved by a simple roll of duck tape. It can be used to patch up holed or split boats, shore up ripped cags, combined with a karabiner to construct a makeshift paddle-hook, even to immobilise a dislocated shoulder. The other thing that's handy to carry is a needle and thread. You'd be surprised what you can fix riverside if you really need to.

MOBILE PHONE/WATERPROOF CASE

A mobile phone should in no way be relied upon in a rescue/emergency situation, but they have proved to be useful in many circumstances, so it makes sense to carry one.

SUN CREAM

All that Alpine sunshine can have us pasty Brits looking a stunning shade of puce in no time. Slap on some good waterproof sun cream before you get on. It's well worth carrying a small tube of the stuff in your buoyancy aid too, so you can re-apply between runs.

WATERPROOF CAMERA

You're going to want to share your Alpine adventure with your mates when you get home, so a good waterproof compact tucked in your buoyancy aid pocket is great for capturing the on the water action. Or you can go down the route of strapping one of the ever-popular brands of 'waterproof-action-cameras' to yourself and recording all your Alpine action for posterity!

INFO

GUIDEBOOKS

There are some really great guidebooks around for the modern Alpine river runner and it's well worth having a group copy sat on the dashboard of one of your vehicles, they can make accessing the rivers really easy, and are full of other useful info. **CF**



ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF... National Go Canoeing Week?

Go Canoeing's annual festival of paddling fun, National Go Canoeing Week, is now just a couple of months away, and in a bid to make this year's week bigger and better than ever before, there are now even more ways to get involved.

As well as Starter Sessions, Guided Tours and the opportunity to clock up your own miles, National Go Canoeing Week 2014 will also feature Every Mile Counts Challenge Routes, which will give participants the chance to complete a one or three-mile course in a scenic location.

Last year's National Go Canoeing Week was a great success with activities happening across the country, but we wanted to offer people a wider variety of ways to get involved and make the week relevant to the entire canoeing community, whatever their age or ability. Paddling is a hugely varied sport with people taking to the water for many different reasons and our brand new Every Mile Counts Challenge Routes meet two very common motivations for picking up a paddle; the chance to challenge yourself and the chance to explore some truly stunning locations.

We've hand-picked two amazing sites to host the Challenge Routes – Lake Windermere and Rutland Water – and we're close to confirming another great location in the south of England. In Windermere the Challenge Routes will be one of a whole host of great activities taking place during the week.

Official Go Canoeing Guided Tour Provider Windermere Canoe and Kayak will be delivering activities, including Challenge Routes and Guided Tours, from their base on the east coast of the lake and also from Fell Foot Park, a magnificent National Trust property on the southern tip of the lake, which boasts sweeping lawns and stunning mountain views.

Set in 3,100 acres of peaceful countryside, Rutland Water reservoir is a perfect setting for a relaxing paddle, but is also home to a number of great attractions, including nature reserves, an outdoor adventure centre offering rock climbing and a high ropes course, as well as great cycling and walking routes – an ideal location for a family day out.

Equipment hire will be available at both locations, or you can bring along your own kit.

FOUR GREAT WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Every Mile Counts

Starter Sessions:

A great introduction to the sport and the chance to complete a mile to add to our overall total

Every Mile Counts

Guided Tours: Great for beginners and experienced paddlers – head out on an adventure and clock up some miles.

Every Mile Counts

Challenge Routes: One or three-mile challenge courses available at three locations.

Or Simply Clock up Your Own Miles: It doesn't matter where, how or who with, just let National Go Canoeing Week be your excuse to get out on the water and help us reach our mileage target.

This year National Go Canoeing Week will form part of National Watersports Month – a joint collaboration between the British Marine Federation, Royal Yachting Association, Canoe England and British Rowing aimed at encouraging the nation to get on the water with a month-long schedule of activities.

Whether you're looking to try something new or re-establish a hobby, there'll be something for the whole family to enjoy, including canoeing, sailing, rowing, windsurfing, powerboating and much more. For more information visit www.watersportsmonth.co.uk

GET INVOLVED & GO CANOEING

The Go Canoeing team are really excited to be offering these brand new Challenge Routes in two such stunning locations and, along with our many Starter Sessions and Guided Tours, there are bound to be activities happening near you. But, as always with National Go Canoeing Week, you don't have to come along to one of our activities to get involved. Our aim is simply to encourage as many people as possible out onto the water, so why not let the week be an excuse to make some time for yourself and do what you love – paddling!

You could push yourself to try something new during the week, like heading out to a new stretch of river, having a go in a different type of canoe or kayak or, if you're already a regular paddler, why not increase your weekly mileage.

Whatever you do during National Go Canoeing Week, all we ask is that you log onto the website and register your miles because, after all, every mile counts!

After every National Go Canoeing Week activity, participants will be informed how many miles they have completed and they can then log onto the brand new website, www.gocanoeingweek.org.uk, and register their mileage, helping us to reach our overall target of 11,073 miles – the entire distance around the UK coastline.

The new website features a list of all National Go Canoeing Week activities, as well as an interactive map, which will give a running total of the mileage completed throughout the week. Visitors to the site will also be able to keep up to date with all the latest Go Canoeing Week news and read interesting facts about the UK's coastline. And by registering your miles, you'll also be in with a chance of winning some great prizes. **CF**

USEFUL INFO

To find activities near you and for more information about the week, visit www.gocanoeingweek.org.uk

GO Canoeing!

NATIONAL GO CANOEING WEEK

24TH MAY - 1ST JUNE

EVERY MILE COUNTS

Lots of fun activities across the country for everyone from complete beginners to seasoned pros...

4 GREAT WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

- Starter Sessions
- Guided Tours
- Challenges
- Clock up your own miles

Help us reach our target of

11,073 MILES



➤ **FIND ACTIVITIES NEAR YOU**



WWW.GOCANOEINGWEEK.ORG.UK

Essential Sea Kayaking Skills

The sea kayak is the key to a lifetime of amazing journeys and experiences. Whether you want to paddle on sheltered or exposed coastlines there are a few basic skill that, once mastered, will allow you to take your kayak and really enjoy the freedom of the sea in a safe and fun way. The skills to start sea kayaking are surprisingly easy to learn and you can, with a little practice, get to a level where you can start to explore places that only a sea kayak could take you fairly quickly. Sea kayaking is amazing, pure and simple, so here's a FOCUS guide to some essential sea kayaking skills that'll have you paddling like a true salt encrusted sea dog in no time ...

FORWARD PADDLING

Sea kayaking is all about moving forward and covering the miles, so a good, efficient forward paddling stroke is just about the most important skill that you'll ever learn. As a sea kayaker the majority of your time in your kayak will be spent paddling forwards, so you'll get lots of practice, but if you can develop a good stroke right at the start it will stand you in good stead in your sea kayaking career to come. Even if you're moving over from other paddling disciplines it's always a great idea to take afresh look and take some time to sharpen up that stroke.

For sea kayaking you'll need to develop two different styles of forward paddling, a powerful, high angled stroke for acceleration and a gentler, low angled stroke for cruising all day long. You'll be able to work on these and practice as your skills progress but to start with lets take a look at a basic forward stroke and the things you need to consider: ►



“For sea kayaking you’ll need to develop two different styles of forward paddling, a powerful, high angled stroke for acceleration and a gentler, low angled stroke for cruising all day long.”

SIT UP STRAIGHT

Posture is really important. If you're leaning back then you won't be able to use the larger muscles in your torso, and you'll be more unstable. Sit up right, or even slightly forward this will give you good reach and allow you to rotate your torso during the stroke and engage those core muscles.

You should really feel part of your boat, so adjust your footrests, back rest and seat so you have a snug, but comfortable fit.

Always look at where you're going, try not to fixate on your paddle blades or bow. If you look at where you're going you'll find your body, and so your boat, will naturally follow your head.

Finally make sure you're holding the paddle evenly, with the same space between each hand and the blades. Cranked paddles make this easier as they naturally place your hands.

HOW IT WORKS

- Reach forward and plant the paddle blade as far forward as is comfortable.
- Try and rotate your whole torso to do this (engaging those big muscles).
- As you pull the paddle through the water unwind this rotation to help pull the paddle.
- Take the blade out as it reaches you at the hips.
- Repeat.
- Try and do this whole sequence as smoothly as possible with out making too much splashing.



Be prepared for the weather to change, five minutes earlier than when this pic was taken it was still and sunny



GOING FORWARD

Once you get going you'll begin to get a rhythm and develop a feel for the stroke, as you do this try and incorporate the following to really hit your stride.

- Maintain equal pressure on right and left blade.
- Don't snatch at the water and then fade, try and keep a progressive pressure all through the paddle stroke.
- Push with your right foot through the footrest as right blade pulls and vice versa.
- Keep those core muscles working with good torso rotation throughout the stroke.
- Try to maintain a smooth, flowing action.

STRAIGHT AHEAD

Because of the length of their hulls sea kayaks have good directional stability, which means they're fairly easy to keep in a straight line. On top of this many designs also have drop-down skegs, to help anchor the stern in the water and keep them running straight.

REVERSING & BRAKING

You stop your kayak by paddling backwards and backwards paddling is similar to the forward stroke except, of course, that you pushing the blades through the water the opposite direction! The same rules for a good paddle strokes apply; keep the whole blade under the water during the paddle stroke but you're going to use the back of the blade rather than the blade face, use your whole upper body to move the paddle through the water. Start the stroke by placing the paddle in the water just behind your hips and finish by taking it out when it reaches the point between your knees and feet. The key skill to remember when paddling backwards is to keep looking where you are going. Look over your shoulder on your paddling side when you plant the paddle into the water. ▶



A smooth forward stroke will save energy so you can paddle for longer



“Knowing what the prevailing weather conditions are is an important part of staying safe. Things can change quickly and experience sea kayakers spend a lot of time studying long-range forecasts and isobars, so they know what to expect.”

Initiating the start of a forward sweep stroke to turn the kayak



TURN ABOUT

Once you've got going forwards down it's useful to know how to turn your sea kayak if the need arises. A sea kayak is a long craft to turn and as you progress in your skills you'll begin to really use the technique of putting your sea kayak on edge to aid your turns, especially when on the move but to start with we'll keep things simple. The forward sweep stroke is the most basic turning stroke. You can use it in static position or on the move to turn your kayak. It's basically a variation of the forward stroke, but instead of pulling the blade through the water as close to you as possible you sweep it out in a wide arc. This will have the effect of turning the kayak and when combined with a reverse sweep can be used to complete a full 360 spin.

KNOW YOUR WEATHER

Knowing what the prevailing weather conditions are is an important part of staying safe. Things can change quickly and experience sea kayakers spend a lot of time studying long-range forecasts and isobars, so they know what to expect. For your first early forays on to the ocean though make sure you're aware of what the predictions are, by watching weather reports on TV, or by checking out some of the great resources now available online means you can be prepared and make safe decisions on where, and even if, to paddle.

TIDAL PLANNING

The UK has some fairly phenomenal tidal flows and ranges, which as your experience grows you'll come to appreciate makes it such a magnificent and challenging place to sea kayak, but when you start out you'll be avoiding anywhere with too much exposure, so you won't need to go to in-depth. But knowing when high and low tides are can certainly prevent long carries over mud-flats or worse still finding that you cannot get to your chosen destination because the sea has gone out. Get hold of a



local tide table for the area you're planning to paddle, or again go online. Knowing how long your proposed trip should take, and your estimated finish time, so you can make sure that someone onshore has this info, is also a very good idea.

YOUR FIRST SEA KAYAK TRIP

For your first foray out on to the briny, even if you have lots of paddling experience from another discipline, you don't want to bite off more than you can chew and an appropriate venue for your trip is essential. You really don't want an environment that is too committing, or too exposed to the conditions, instead you want a location that is going to give you a safe, controlled and most of all fun experience. Here's what to look for:

- Easy access to the water, carrying a sea kayak too far is no fun
- Easy launching/landing
- Plenty of escape route options if you become tired or suffer a mishap
- Suitable spots to stop for a brew, lunch, a rest on route.
- Sheltered from swell and rough sea states
- Relatively sheltered from strong winds
- No strong tides
- Good in wildlife and scenery
- A great café, teashop or pub at the end!

There are plenty such places around our coastline, here in the UK, so you should have plenty to choose from wherever you live. **CF**

USEFUL INFO

GET ON A COURSE

Taking part in an organised sea kayaking skills course is a fantastic way of fast tracking your learning. There are courses that take place all over the country.

Sea kayaking best practice and the environment go to <http://bit.ly/1i4hC3D>



Dagger



STRATOS
14.5

THE PERFECT STORM

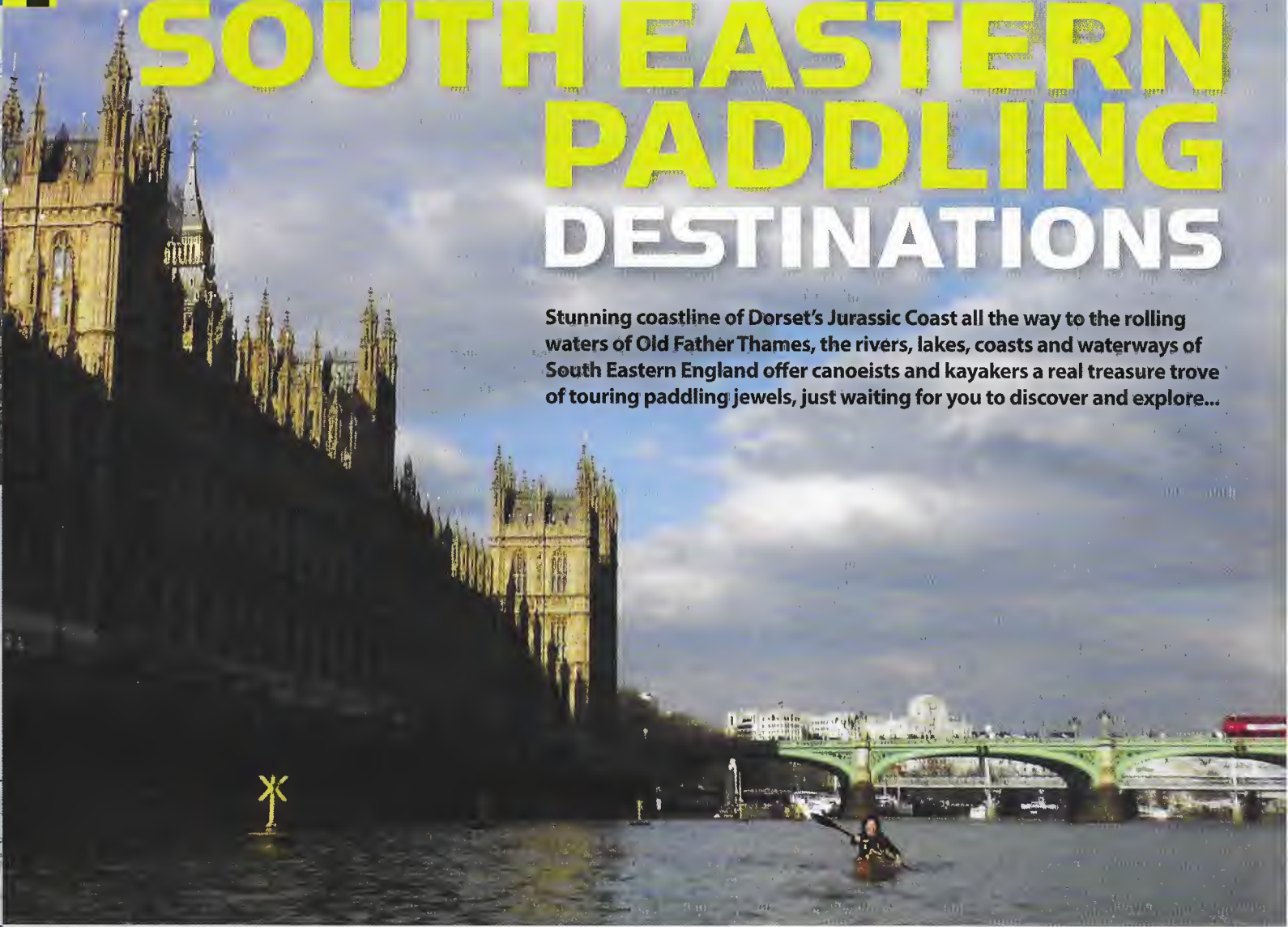
A high performance tourer. Smooth and forgiving for beginners, with performance that experts will relish, the Stratos is stable and predictable in calm or stormy water. Fast and efficient on flat water, playful in currents and waves. Available in two sizes, 14.5S and 14.5L to suit you. The Stratos changes the rules.



STRATOS 14.5L

SUPER SOUTH EASTERN PADDLING DESTINATIONS

Stunning coastline of Dorset's Jurassic Coast all the way to the rolling waters of Old Father Thames, the rivers, lakes, coasts and waterways of South Eastern England offer canoeists and kayakers a real treasure trove of touring paddling jewels, just waiting for you to discover and explore...



RIVER THAMES

The River Thames starts its journey as a trickle of water called Thames head, flowing through a field in the Cotswolds, just north of the village of Kemble. About 30-miles later, beyond the town of Cricklade, it becomes a small wild stream and by the time it reaches the pretty town of Lechlade the river widens to accommodate small craft and this upper stretch offers some really nice paddling in a canoe. Using your Canoe England membership card or an Environment Agency licence an open canoe trip on the Thames from Oxford to Windsor is the perfect way to view grand old houses, churches, colleges and even a castle! It may be the 'Capital's River' but it's a far cry from urban sprawl downstream in this section. There are abundant green riverbanks and wildlife a plenty, as the river winds its way through the picturesque countryside of the Thames Valley. As you move downstream you'll encounter a lock, every now and again, but these are easily portaged and a good excuse to stop for a cup of tea. Once the Thames reaches Teddington it becomes tidal, and special navigation rules apply down to Putney. For further information about paddling on the Tideway and navigation notices check the web site www.boatingonthames.co.uk.



Padding on Ol' Father Thames. Pic John Weinstock



Canoe tripping on the River Medway. Pic Paul Rainbow

For continuing beyond Putney to see the sights and landmarks of Central London the river should be treated as a waterway for the more competent user with experience and equipment for tidal waters and windy conditions" but confident canoeists may still wish to paddle on, past the landmarks and sights of London itself!

DISCOVER LONDON'S CANAL NETWORK

Away from the hubbub of the River Thames can be found the canals of London. The once bustling canals of the capital are now much more peaceful backwaters with a rich variety of wildlife.

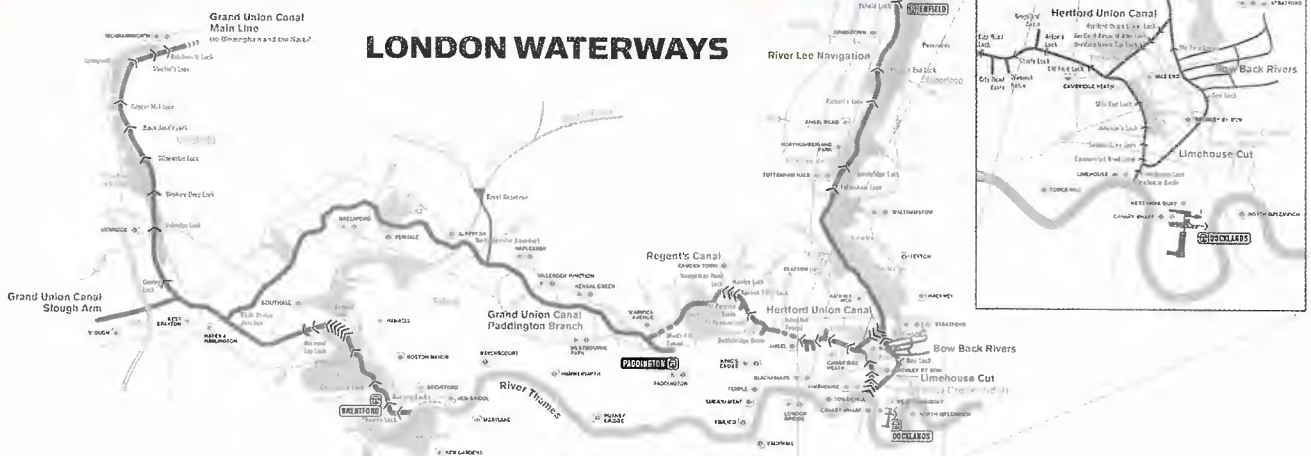
There are opportunities to paddle along the Limehouse Cut, The Regents Canal, the Hertfordshire Union Canal and the Lee Navigation. There are a number of locks and tunnels at Maida Hill and Islington to be portaged, but the work is worthwhile to be able to see the sites from a very different perspective. With a variety of places to stop for refreshments, you can make your trip last as long as you wish. The distance is up to you and with a wide variety of canals it's possible to plan routes that can take you out and back again, or maybe a circular route taking in the Limehouse Cut, Hertfordshire Union and Regents Canal.

Your Canoe England membership card or Canal & River Trust licence is required to paddle London's canals. If you want a bit of extra help and knowledge you can go to one of London's local tour companies to arrange a tour. ▶



"Away from the hubbub of the River Thames can be found the canals of London. The once bustling canals of the capital are now much more peaceful backwaters with a rich variety of wildlife."

LONDON WATERWAYS



RIVER LEA

Despite its proximity to some pretty urban areas the River Lea in Hertfordshire provides some delightfully green and leafy stretches for paddle touring. It can be fairly narrow in places, with overgrowing trees and duckweed, but this just adds to the Lea's personality and gives the river a wild, adventurous feel. Its waters are clear and fish can be seen darting underneath and Kingfishers flashing amongst the riverside foliage. The Lea also has man-made weirs and locks to negotiate (one has been built specially to provide fun for paddlers looking for a little moving water action) but these are all easily portaged.

KENNET AND AVON CANAL

The Kennet and Avon Canal is one of the most famous waterways in Britain, and a perfect place to go canoeing or kayaking. Crossing the southern half of the country from the Avon at Bristol, to the Thames at Reading, the Kennet and Avon is 87 miles long, and all of this length is open to canoeing and kayaking, making it a great waterway for a touring trip.

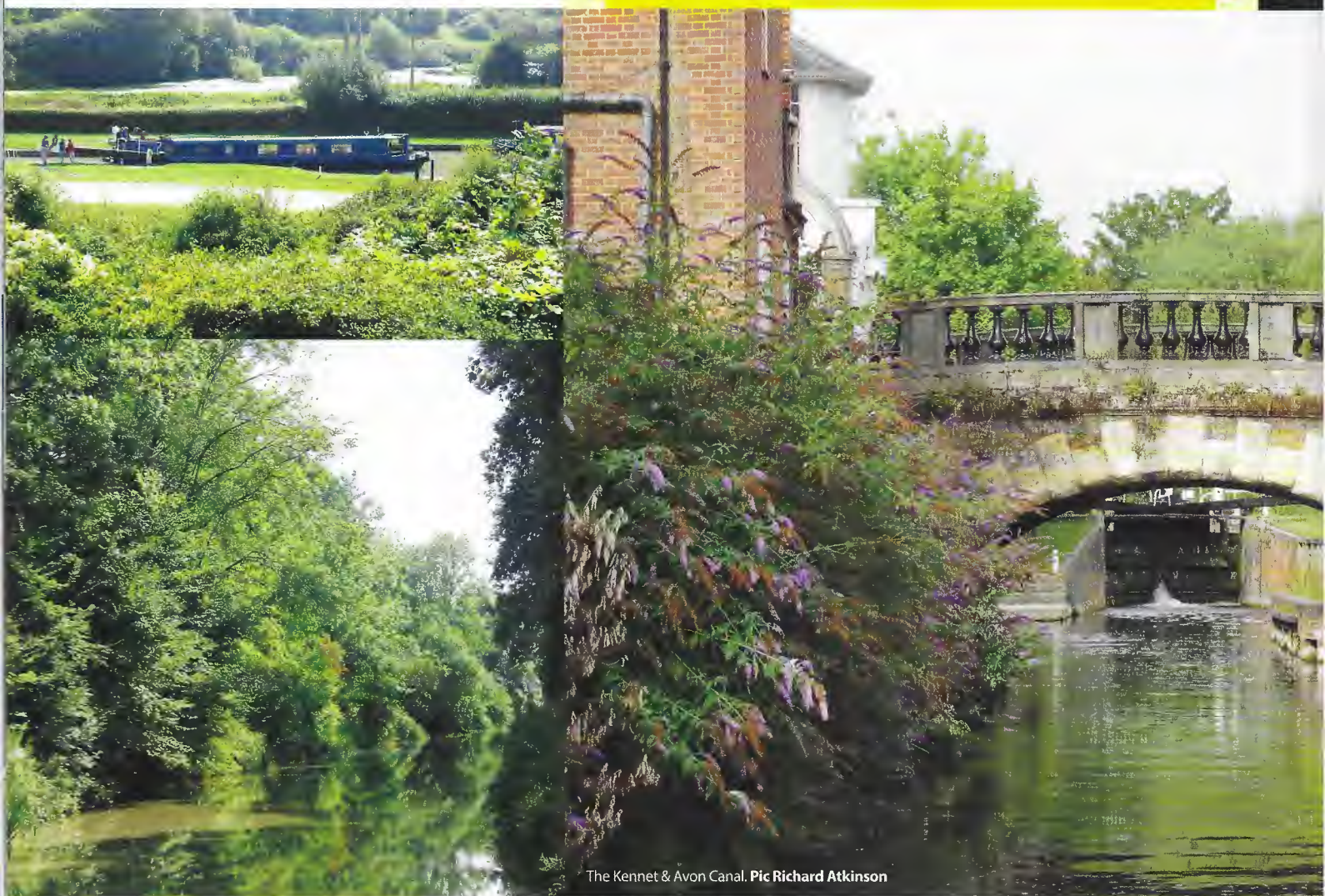
There are long flat sections, with little, or no locks, and the one between Pewsey and Devizes is a particularly nice place for a paddle. The Kennet and Avon Canal is like most established canals, dotted with picturesque waterside cafes and locally run pubs ideal for halfway refreshments. Just west of Devizes is the famous flight of 16 locks at Caen Hill, a site to see for any water user.

The Kennet and Avon canal forms a major part of the famous Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Marathon, which takes part every Easter weekend, and is a very difficult endurance event of 125 miles. The record for the distance is an amazing 15-hours 34-minutes, set in 1979.

To explore this beautiful canal you can launch at many of the public slipways or hire a canoe or kayak from Pedals and Paddles in Devizes Marina Village.



“The orange and blue flash of the kingfisher and, if you are very lucky, a glimpse of an otter are just some of the wonders awaiting you along the River Medway. The trail meanders past woods, meadows, villages and towns with a wealth of interest.”



The Kennet & Avon Canal. Pic Richard Atkinson



Family fun on the Wey. Pic Phil Miller



River Wey in all its verdant glory. Pic Debbie Lambert



RIVER MEDWAY

Rising in the Ashdown Forest, the River Medway flows through west and east Sussex and into Kent before reaching the Thames Estuary some 120-kilometres downstream. Many tributaries flow into the Medway as it passes through the High Weald and Vale of Kent with its characteristic orchards and meadows. You can enjoy 29-kilometres of this majestic river starting from Tonbridge and finishing at Allington Lock, its tidal point just north of Maidstone. Graded easy, it can be canoed in a couple of

days, or longer for a more relaxed trip. There are a number of campsites and launch points along the route. Paddling along the river you will see a wide variety of riverside plants, from the colourful purple loosertrife to the blue of the water forget-me-not. The orange and blue flash of the kingfisher and, if you are very lucky, a glimpse of an otter are just some of the wonders awaiting you along the River Medway. The trail meanders past woods, meadows, villages and towns with a wealth of interest.

People have lived in the Medway Valley since the Neolithic times on the fertile soils alongside the river. The Medway has been a hive of activity as a transport route taking ragstone up to London, and iron and timber from the Weald to the docks. This industry was made possible in the 1740's with the extension of the navigation up to Tonbridge. In Tonbridge the river provided power to run the Leigh gunpowder works in the 1800s. Agriculture was a prime industry in the early 20th Century with two thirds of England's hops produced in Kent. Hop gardens can still be seen alongside the river at Golden Green, although they are far fewer in number today.

Also keep an eye out for pillboxes along the length of the river, built to defend the county in World War II. Today you can enjoy the river's wildlife, tranquillity and excitement from the water or from its banks.

RIVER WEY

The River Wey in Surrey is a lovely place to go canoeing. The Wey, which was one of the first British rivers to be made navigable and opened to barge traffic in 1653, is quite an unusual waterway. It has two separate sources in two different counties. The two River Weys unite near the historic Tilford Oak in Surrey. The Wey, and its two navigations, flow across 87-miles (140 km) of countryside yet drop a mere 98-feet (30 m) by the time the waterway joins the Thames at Weybridge. We'll be bringing you some exciting news about paddling the River Wey from the National trust in next CF.

In the late 17th century a navigation was made from the Thames at Weybridge up to Guildford. Later this was extended to Godalming. The Wey today is therefore made up of 'canalised' sections, the River Wey and Godalming Navigation, interspersed with sections of natural river.

The Wey offers canoeists and kayakers gentle trips on still waters in a lovely tranquil setting, and also miniature adventures on some of the natural river loops that wind their way down around the locks of the navigation. These backwaters have a modest flow and are lovely places to paddle, though they can occasionally have fallen trees blocking them, so care needs to be exercised.

There are many places to launch your canoe on the Wey, and whilst the total length of the navigation is only 20-miles, there are a large number of possible day trips that can be enjoyed. It's even possible to make circular paddling trip routes by going up parts of the navigation, portaging a weir, and returning down the natural river.

For motor enthusiasts, if you paddle in towards London you will get to see the Brooklands site, which rests next to the River Wey between Byfleet and Weybridge, and today there is little here to indicate that this was once where much of the early innovations in motor racing and the aeronautical industry took place. Please see next issue for some exciting news from the National Trust about paddling on the River Wey.

RIVER HAMBLE

Known as the home of British yachting Hampshire's River Hamble can also be a very busy and exciting place to paddle, or it can be a very restful glide through beautiful countryside. It's a river with a split personality. Although designated as a Harbour Canoe England negotiated with the Harbour Authority around six-years ago to exempt canoes and kayaks from the Harbour dues.

The paddleable section of the river extends for around eight miles and can be neatly divided into two halves, above the A27 the river meanders through the rural semi



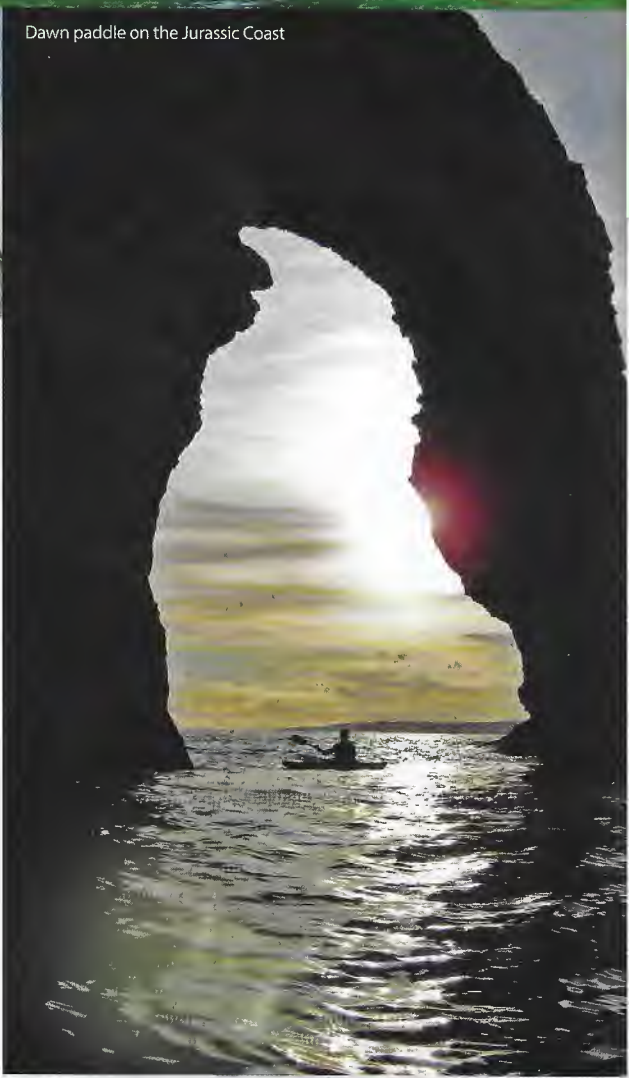
Crusing past the lines of yachts on the River Hamble. Pic Roger Burlinson



All smiles on the Hamble. Pic Rachel Grace



Canoeing fun on the Medway. Pic Adam Holbrook



Dawn paddle on the Jurassic Coast

forested parkland of Manor Farm Country Park, past the site where the wreck of one of Henry V's warships, HMS Grade Dieu, was found and onwards up through the slots in the bank where the D-Day Landing craft were hidden during the preparations for the invasion. From there you can progress through Spinsters Lake and either on to Botley Mill, or up to the Horse and Jockey pub.

If you choose to go downstream from the A27, past the convenient launch in Swanwick, the sailing heritage is immediately visible with row after row of yachts on display. You will pass the site of HMS Mercury, which became a shore based camp for young people, and on past the Maritime college with its life raft launching facilities and out into the Southampton Water and the Solent.

THE JURASSIC COAST

The Jurassic coast is the picture postcard setting for some truly memorable sea touring trips. The Jurassic Coast stretches from Exmouth in East Devon to Old Harry Rock at Studland Bay on the Dorset Coast. Paddle from secluded coves to stacks over 40ft tall. This stretch has many launching points and refreshment sites.

The Jurassic Coast was awarded England's first Natural World Heritage site for its outstanding geology, which represents 185 million years of earth history in just 95-miles! On your paddle you might be lucky enough to spot seals, dolphins and basking sharks in the deeper water. Not to mention the hundreds of different species of birds that have made this their beautiful home.

If you fancy making a weekend out of it then there are many types of holiday accommodation in the area, ranging from top quality hotels to touring parks and holiday flats. You will find it hard to draw yourself away from this historical, and stunning stretch of coastline. No matter rain or shine, you will not be disappointed! And don't forget to bring your fossil hammer and discover the world famous fossils that can be discovered all along the coastline.

To discover this coastline why not book a Go Canoeing Tour or hire kayaks from Studland Sea School or Jurassic Tours? ☺



Pic Roger Burlinson

DID YOU KNOW?

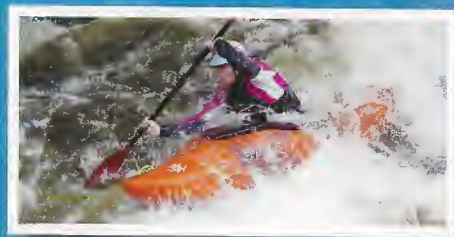
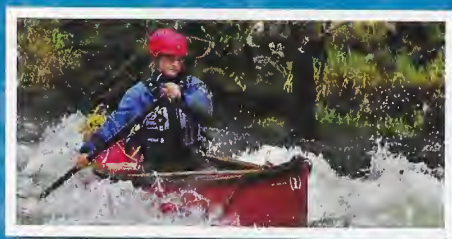
For a lot of these rivers, you'll need to have a waterways licence before you can go paddling. If you're a Canoe England member, you'll already have a licence as part of your membership. Please remember to take your membership card with you, whenever you go paddling, as this also represents your licence. If you're not a member, join today for this & many other great benefits. Visit www.canoe-england.org.uk

USEFUL INFO

For more fantastic paddling trips and canoe trails head to www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/places-to-paddle/



QUALIFICATIONS & AWARDS



Just a selection of the many BCU-UKCC Courses on offer at Plas y Brenin in 2014

BCU-UKCC Performance & Leadership Award Courses

• 2 Star (5 days - £460)

Complete Training & Assessment 12-16 May, 16-20 Jun, 14-18 Jul, 18-22 Aug, 15-19 Sep

• 3 Star Complete Training & Assessment (5 days - £460)

White Water Kayak 10-14 Mar 14-18 Apr, 2-6 Jun, 18-22 Aug, 29 Sep-3 Oct, 10-14 Nov

Sea Kayak 7-11 Jul, 8-12 Sep

Canoe 5-9 May, 30 Jun-4 Jul, 11-15 Aug

• 4 Star Training (2 days - £240 / 3 days - £360)

White Water Kayak 4-5 Oct, 15-16 Nov

Sea Kayak (inc. Nav & Tidal) 4-6 Jul, 5-7 Sep

Canoe 5-6 Apr, 30-31 Aug, 20-21 Sep

• 4 Star Assessment (2 days - £240)

White Water Kayak 6-7 Sep

Sea Kayak 6-7 Sep, 25-26 Oct

Canoe 16-17 Aug, 25-26 Oct

Why not consider a complete package for your four star or five star. Over five days complete your training plus any other mandatory elements such as BCU White Water Safety & Rescue or BCU Coastal Navigation & Tidal Planning Module plus you'll get to consolidate your skills, gain further feedback from our experienced instructors so you'll leave with an action plan towards assessment. These preparation packages are £515 including accommodation, meals, boat and equipment hire.

BCU-UKCC Paddlesport Coach Courses

• Level 1 Training & Assessment (5 days - £510)

Inc. Foundation Safety & Rescue 10-14 Mar, 26-30 May, 30 Jun-4 Jul, 18-22 Aug, 22-26 Sep

• Level 2 (1 day - £105 / 5 days - £510)

Training 3-7 Mar, 21-25 Apr, 12-16 May, 7-11 Jul, 15-19 Sep, 3-7 Nov

Assessment 2 May, 26 Sep

• Level 3 Training (2 days - £325 / 5 days - £450)

Generic Core (inc. Intermediate Modules) . 24-28 Feb, 17-21 Mar, 8-12 Sep

White Water Kayak 8-9 May, 14-15 Jun

Sea Kayak 26-27 Apr, 23-24 Aug, 29-30 Sep

Canoe 15-16 Feb, 5-6 May, 9-10 Aug

• Level 3 Assessment (1 day - £250)

White Water Kayak 8 May, 27 Oct, 8 Nov

Sea Kayak 10 May

Canoe 9 May, 8 Nov

We also offer Intermediate Coaching Modules, Level 2 Moderate Water plus a full range of safety courses including Rescue 3.

We can arrange any of these courses or design a bespoke course for your club or group on a date of your choice, please email or call.

All prices include all accommodation, meals, boat and equipment hire. Non-residential options are available.

For more information please visit our website, drop us an email or give us a call



PLAS Y BRENNIN
www.pyb.co.uk/bcu

FOCUS ON Kayak Touring

The term 'kayak touring' covers just about any trip made in a kayak. It could be a gentle float round your local lake, or a week long trip down the Great Glen and everything in-between. That's the beauty of it, and one thing all kayak touring adventures share is that they are fun, relaxing and take you on a bit of a journey. Touring in a kayak is just like touring by any other means of transport, in that you are purely there to enjoy the scenery and experience, what type of kayak you choose to tour in or on is partly irrelevant because it is the journey itself that's the really important bit. Kayak touring presents you with a unique perspective on your surroundings, and allows you to go at a sedate pace take it all in and enjoy every moment. A rare thing in our frenetic modern world!

Touring is perfect for a paddling holiday, either solo or with friends and family. You can stick in a packed lunch and a flask and head off with no particular destination in mind, or pack your camping gear and head out on a multi-day kayak touring adventure

To get started you really only need basic paddling skills, but the possibilities for enjoyment and adventure

are really endless. Kayak touring is an area of our sport that appeals to paddlers of every age and level of fitness as it's all about finding enjoyment in the natural environments of our waterways.

The relaxed pace of touring in a kayak and the ability to reach places that you'd never reach by foot or road make it ideal to combine with other activities such as bird watching or angling. It's also a very popular addition to things like camping, caravanning or motor-home style holidays. Touring boats come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and there are plenty that will fit snugly on the roof rack ready for waterborne adventures once you reach your chosen destination.

TOURING KAYAKS

The modern kayak tourist is really spoilt for choice. Long, short, wide narrow touring kayaks come in a plethora of designs. Generally a touring kayak will have a wider, flatter hull and larger, more open cockpit. This gives it more stability on flatter water making them at home on lakes, rivers, lochs and estuaries. Touring kayaks are great for beginner to intermediate paddlers looking to venture a bit further, whilst carrying more gear. Many designs have built in bulkheads, and storage hatches to help with the stowing of kit, and come fitted with drop-down skegs to aid tracking.

BOATS IN BAGS

Inflatable kayaks have really come on in design and can be a fantastic solution for those that lack storage space or want to travel by other modes of transport on their way to, from or even in-between paddle touring trips.





“The relaxed pace of touring in a kayak and the ability to reach places that you’d never reach by foot or road make it ideal to combine with other activities such as bird watching or angling.”



TOURING AWARDS

If you fancy a challenge then the Annual BCU Strand Touring Awards are available for completing 100, 250 and 500 miles in any one year and BCU Touring awards for completing 1000, 2500, and 5000 miles over any period! **CF**

USEFUL INFO

www.bcu.org.uk/our-sport/touring-and-recreation/
Full details in the Touring Logbook or from the Awards Administration Officer, Adrian Barclay, 64 Ambleside Gardens, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8SF. The Touring Logbook is also obtainable from www.bcushop.org.uk



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Ultra-stable and quick through the water, nimble on edge and fun to paddle. Offered with Venture's innovative new under-stern Skudder® system.



Length: 491cm | Width: 59cm | Volume: 296lts | Weight: 28.7kgs | Paddler Weight Range: <124kgs



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Ooh La La!

PLANNING YOUR TRIP TO THE FRENCH ALPS

Images courtesy of
Seth Townley &
Jason Smith

For many years a visit to the French Alps has been a firm fixture on many a white water paddler's, and canoe club's, paddling calendars; and with good reason. Warm weather, a wealth of easily accessible white water rivers and a relaxed and supportive attitude towards outdoor adventure make for a fantastic paddling holiday destination. Here's a FOCUS guide on planning your own Alpine adventure this summer.

WHY THE FRENCH ALPS?

Pound for pound, or Euro for Euro, the French Alps offers a lot of boating bang for your buck. It's a fantastic location with so many great sections of white water to suit most abilities that you could easily spend a week there and barely scratch the surface. It's also a great place to go with non-paddling family or friends and the region is a veritable Meca for outdoor sports of all types, so there's plenty to see and do off the water to keep everybody happy.

WHEN TO GO

If you're a seasoned alpine paddler, or are looking for pushier water then May and early June can offer big flows, but the rivers should be treated with respect at that time, and you'll find that the hazards on even the lower grade runs increase in seriousness. You can usually expect big spring melt water levels early in the season, but by mid-June things will have settled down a bit, the high flows will have started to run off and the area will provide you and your group an incredible amount of varied rivers to explore. By the end of June, and into July, there are generally more manageable levels and this is the time that many clubs favour to make their trips.

Of course rivers can change on almost a daily basis and the above is not set in stone. Factors that can affect the water levels and the length of the alpine season are the amount of snowfall that the region receives during the winter months, and any unseasonable rainfall.

HOW TO GET THERE

The fact that you can simply load up and drive there with a roof rack full of boats is a rather brilliant factor in choosing to visit the French Alps. There are numerous ferry companies that run regular channel crossing services, from Dover and Folkestone. Driving to the Alps from a French Channel Port normally takes about twelve-hours (using the motorways/toll roads), so add on an hour and a bit for the ferry crossing and any distance you may have to cover in the UK and you're looking at a journey time of anything from 14 to 20 plus hours. The best way to tackle this is by having two or more drivers share the driving, so you can take shifts at driving and sleeping every couple of hours and do the journey in one push. Food, fuel, loo and coffee stops are also recommended every three to four hours to keep you alert! Catching a late night-time ferry and then driving through the night can help you avoid any traffic problems and can save a couple of hours off the trip. Alternatively you may want to break it down and stop overnight. There are plenty of cheap roadside motels along the way, or a cheaper alternative is to catch a few hours shut eye in one of the pleasant rest-stop areas, or aires as they are called. We'd highly recommend taking a route that avoids driving through Paris and we usually opt for the motorway route from Calais down through eastern France passing Reims, Dijon and Lyon along the way. Freestylers may want to take a stop at the latter to check if the famous Hawaii Sur La Rhone play wave is working.

This route utilises the motorway system, which in France is paid for by tolls. This can add a reasonable amount to the total cost of your trip and if you have the time you may wish to use main roads, as these are usually free. It goes without saying that a good European atlas is a must, and make sure that all your vehicles have the necessary equipment/spares that are required by law, such as emergency triangle, spare bulbs, first aid kit etc. A quick search of the larger motoring websites will tell you what you'll need.

CHOOSING YOUR BASE

The main centres to stay at revolve around the bigger and more popular rivers. Briançon offers camping possibilities and has some nice apartments. It's close to the Durance and Guisane. L'Argentiere la Bessee is a small town, but has a very popular campsite, which sits on the banks of the Durance, right next to the slalom course section. This means that there's plenty of scope for paddling straight from your tent door, and you can enjoy the classic runs of the Durance Gorge, and the Gyronde and take out just a few yards from your camp. It also sports a nice lake, so it's good for family fun. It's fairly central location between the larger centres of Briançon and Embrum makes most of the classic runs fairly accessible. On the downside it is a popular spot and can get a little noisy at times, and, while it makes heading out to the rivers easy, the main road runs directly past it, on the opposite side of the river, so it somewhat distracts from the alpine ambience.

Guillestre and Embrum are also popular places to stay, as they offer a little more if your looking for après paddling eateries or nightlife, and the campsite next to the famous Rabioux Wave was always another popular choice for paddlers. ▶

FAST & FURIOUS

No matter how many times you visit the French Alps, the speed and power of the water can often be a bit of a shock when you hop on the first run of the trip. Even on easier runs the water is fast and eddies can be few and far between. The rivers are generally higher in the afternoons due to the day's sun melting the snow up high. Take your time. Warm up on a lower grade river than you would normally attempt and get yourself in to the Alpine mind-set. If you're going to try something that's a little pushier than normal. Give yourself plenty of time to get the job done safely; be realistic in your estimations on how long a run will take you. Factor in extra scouting/portaging; allow time to deal with any mishaps. The curfew on the water is six and it's considered bad practice to break it. And, curfew aside, no paddler wants to find themselves still in the bottom of an alpine gorge with the sun starting to set.

GROUP MANAGEMENT

As we've already said Alpine runs are fast and eddies can be sparse. This means that they are best suited to smaller groups and three up to about five paddlers works best. With this in mind if you are part of a larger club group then consider splitting in to smaller more manageable groups.

Eddy hopping works great on alpine rivers and most runs are predominantly of the read and run, boat scouting variety. Having said that there are occasions where bank scouting, setting safety and portaging are advisable. Be aware of your group and if you're the lead paddler make sure you always leave plenty of time to grab that eddy a long way before any hazard. Clear river signals are also a must, and five-minutes before you get on to make sure everyone is clear on what signals you'll use and what they all mean can prove invaluable.

THE CLASSICS

The following descriptions should give you a flavour of what to expect from French Alpine rivers. The Internet

is also always a great source of information and having a copy of the excellent Southern Alps Guidebook published by River Publishing tucked in your travel bag is highly recommended.

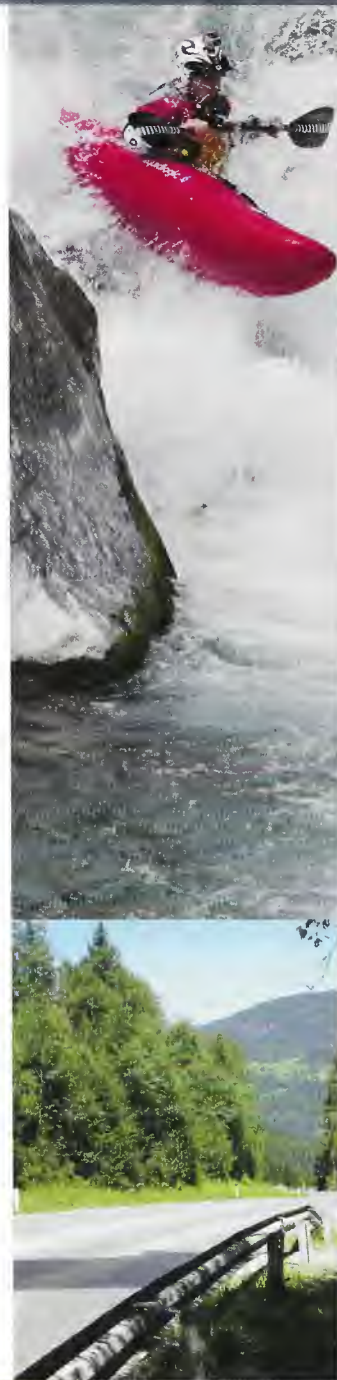
THE DURANCE

Briançon Gorge Grade 3/4

This section has some fantastic scenery as you paddle around the lower part of Briançon old town. It's an excellent paddle in high-water and quite solid grade four, but we'd give it a miss in lower water. Get in by turning right down into the valley off the N94 just outside Briançon on the way to Montgenèvre to le Fontenil. The bridge here signifies the get in. The river is rocky and technical with a couple of nice gorges and the guidebook describes it as 'nice introduction to technical paddling – steep yet forgiving'.

The Durance Gorge Prelles to L'Argentière Grade 4/5

The get in for this alpine test-piece is on river left just below the Prelles Bridge. Once you're afloat you can expect some good solid action, including some reasonably difficult grade four in higher flows, and three to four in lower. Next comes the infamous portage. Keep your eyes peeled for the railway tunnel, which marks the portage. Both the tunnel and the portage trail are on the right but it is fairly overgrown, and you really, really don't want to miss the eddy. The portage on the right bank goes high and may seem scarier than the rapid below, it isn't! But soon enough the trail leads you back to a good get in. After the excitement of the portage is over the water is a good heavy grade four to four plus depending on level. There are some great 'named rapids' such as 'Slot and Drop' and 'Chicane' to keep you on your toes, and care should be taken in high water as a portage could be advisable. As you exit the gorge feeling satisfied the river joins the Gyronde on the right and then continues down to L'Argentière where we'd recommend taking out on the right at the slalom course/campsite.





“Take your time. Warm up on a lower grade river than you would normally attempt and get yourself in to the Alpine mind-set.”

L'Argentière to St Cléments Grade 2

A great section for a warm up, or for paddlers of less experience, although it can become a bit of a drag in low water. Lots of bouncy water, small waves and holes to practice your skills on before you get to the take out, complete with ice cream and a canoe shop at the take out for St Clément.

St Cléments to Embrum Grade 2/3

A larger volume section of river, which is really popular as a first section on a new trip to the Alps, or as a fun run in playboats. It starts with some grade two for a bit; before the river becomes bouncier grade three. Soon enough you'll reach the famous Rabioux Wave, it is a favourite play spot and you'll probably be greeted with a small crowd of spectators on the bank and an eddy full of eager playboaters waiting their turn to surf. This is a great lunch stop, and you can certainly while a few hours away playing on the wave. After the high action of the Rabioux the river continues with a mix of grade two and three, but with plenty of great eddy lines for tail squirting and cartwheeling, and lots of splat, rock-spin style moves if you're quick. There's even the odd tasty play-hole or two to catch as you go. Soon enough you'll reach the town of Embrum and the take out is on the right at the raft take out.

The Onde Grade 3/4

Many groups choose this as their first alpine run but get caught out by its speed. The main tricky rapid (4) lies right at the start, and it's possible to put in below. But even then, at its grade, the Onde packs a speedy punch. It's a fast and shallow run and can suffer from the odd downed tree, especially in early season. Small groups are best and despite its grade it's not ideal for novices until they have had a chance to warm up on a few of the more forgiving runs, as an extended capsized or swim could be unpleasant.

To get to the put in drive up through Valloise towards Les Grésourières, following the road on the left bank. You can park at a wide area by a road bridge over the river leading to a campsite. You can choose to walk over the bridge and carry up a little to put in on river right and get a short warm up down to the bridge. On river

left, just after the bridge, just above the first trick drop, or again on river left just below the drop.

Once the first drop is over the rest of the river is fast moving grade three all the way down to the confluence with the Gyr. Get out on river right, just before below a large road bridge. Don't try to go down further as there is a nasty barrage lying in wait.

The Gyronde - Grade 3/4 (6)

The river is grade three and four for about three kilometres before it passes under a footbridge. Get out on the right after this as soon as you see the next stone bridge and portage the ugly, dangerous and generally unrunnable drop. Follow the small road on the right bank until you see a worn path back down to the river. If you want to push things you can get on straight away, but the drops are nasty and many paddlers choose to portage on and put in a bit lower when things have calmed down a bit. Once this is negotiated the river drops down to grade three again. All the way down to L'Argentière. Be careful of a nasty man-made weir about two kilometres downstream. It has a lot of debris in the base and at higher flows it forms a very nasty tow-back. There's a very short portage on the river left bank to avoid it. From here it's a simple run down to the confluence with the Durance. Continue down and take out at the slalom course/campsite on river right.

The Gyr - Grade 4/5

This is a run for seasoned paddlers and offers fast furious action from start to finish. It is both incredibly fun or incredibly scary depending on your outlook. The later in the day that you decide to get on the Gyr, the bigger its water will be. If you get on while it's running well then expect a very fast and furious non-stop grade five run with hardly any eddies. Be aware though that the nature of the Gyr can change rapidly and hazards can appear and disappear quickly. Walking up and inspecting the run before you get on (via the river left path) is easy and is highly recommended. If it's your first descent it will certainly help to decrease the fear and increase the fun. The get in is at the bridge by the holiday complex at Pelvoux, and the get out is immediately above the bridge in Vallouise. ▶



THE GUIL

Of all the brilliant rivers in the region the Guil has it all. From gentle floating on its very lowest stretch, to the drama, challenge and excitement of the Château Queyras and Gorge de L'Ange Gardien sections, through to the paddler-pleasing quality of its rapid laden middle section and its rarely run main gorge, a veritable mini-expedition.

The Château Queyras Gorge - Grade 4 +

This, and the Gorge de L'Ange Gardien, which lies below are real test-piece sections. Paddle this without incident or mishap and you can rightly consider yourself an Alpine paddler. It can be inspected from river left, from a minor road, with a little bush-wacking. We warn you now that the gorge looks horrible from above, because, as we know it is always difficult to judge scale from above. You definitely need to be on form in there, and hit your lines, but it is actually easier than it looks. It's very tight, fast and thrilling. There's an undercut corner halfway down and care should be exercised there, as it's very hard to protect.

The get in is just past Château Queyras in the shadow of its impressive fortress, and the get out is where the river passes under a minor road bridge.

The Gorge de L'Ange Gardien (Guardian Angel Gorge) Grade 4+/5

This section has a reputation and for good reason and has many shoots and slides around, and over, high boulders. It also hides some dangerous siphons and undercuts. Goes without saying that it should be treated with care and respect. If in doubt... Scout. Inspection, and if needed portaging, are usually fairly easy, but with one exception.

The get-in is at the road bridge at the end of the Château Queyras gorge. You then get a short warm up to stir before the remains of an old road bridge signal the beginning of the assault. It's challenging water throughout and there are some serious drops to consider. Take your time, break it down, use good judgement and take care, and it'll reward you with a real white water adventure. The section finishes where you meet the main road again, close to the L'Ange Gardien Bridge.

The Guil - L'Ange Gardien Bridge to Maison du Roy Grade 4 (5)

This is a real classic it starts with a bang at an impressive series of drops known as 'Triple Step'. But you can choose to get in above or below this depending on your mood. It's trickier than it looks as each drop slows you and pushes you to the right and more than one paddler has taken a trashing in the bottom hole under the infamous 'Curtain'. From there the section down to the road bridge at La Chapelue is usually fairly solid grade 4 and from then on carries on at the same grade providing some good chunky water, with a few drops that call for inspection, and possibly safety cover. Eventually you'll come to a large road tunnel on river right. Flooding changed the river features here considerably some years ago. From this point on, the Guil can be paddled without bank inspection by solid groups and it's all excellent read and run fun with some good punchy holes to keep you on your toes until you get to the take out at Maison Du Roy, where the river becomes a lake above the barrage.

**Mont Dauphin - Durance Grade 3**

A beautiful and picturesque section of the Guil that flows around the back of the Mt. Dauphin rock in a large, open gorge. The get in is at the Pont d'Eygliers and it's a great section to float, especially with beginners, until you finally meet the confluence with the Durance. From there we'd recommend a bingle down the Durance until you get to St Clements and then take out there.

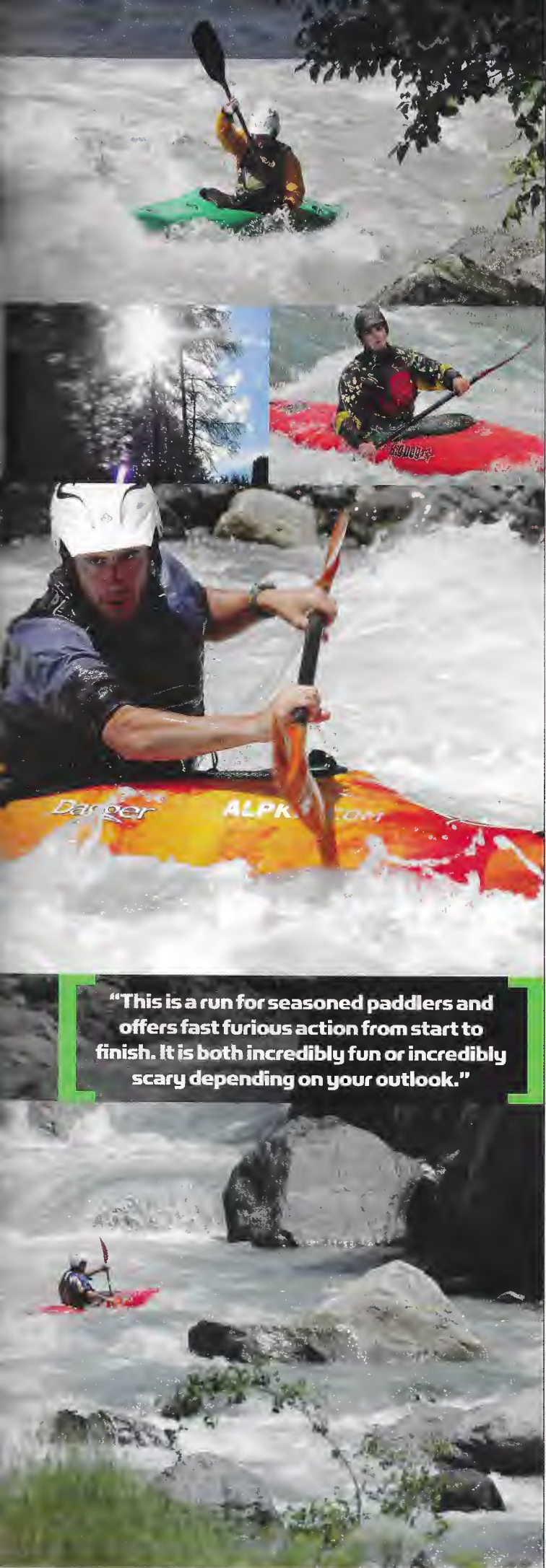
THE GUISANE**The Upper - La Casset to Chantemerle Grade 3/4**

The get in for the upper is in the village of La Casset, and it begins with some nice rapids around grade three to four mark. If you want you can choose to get on next to some small man-made lakes on the way into La Casset from Briançon. From La Casset there's about a mile of grade two to three gravel bed type rapids, before the river rounds a noticeable right-hand bend and drops into a grade fairly long grade four section at Guibertes, popularly known as 'S-Bends'. This is easily inspected, protected, or even portaged. But it is relatively easy apart from the initial lead in to the rapid. From here the paddling continues at grade three down to the get out on river left at Chantemerle by the roadside car park. It's a rafting put in, so easy to spot.

The Lower - Chantemerle to Briançon 8km Grade 4 (5)

The get in is the same car park as you tackle out at for the upper. You almost immediately come across a broad bridge with a nasty looking weir at its far end. This is Shelob's Weir. It can be sneaked on both the left and right sides, but it is a fairly nasty drop and has debris at its base, so care should be taken. To inspect, or portage, get out above the bridge on river right. A few bouncy rapids follow until you reach the next hazard, a clearly marked large weir, which is usually portaged on the right. This weir has been shot, but it is a bit of a boat breaker at lower water, and has a powerful hole at higher flows. Below the weir the action starts in earnest. The Guisane is now much more continuous and you need to be sharp. It's certainly possible to boat scout all the way down, but be mindful of tree hazards, especially in early season, or after any rain. In high levels it's a brilliant high-action run all the way to the take out, which is at a road bridge on the way into Briançon. **CF**





"This is a run for seasoned paddlers and offers fast furious action from start to finish. It is both incredibly fun or incredibly scary depending on your outlook."

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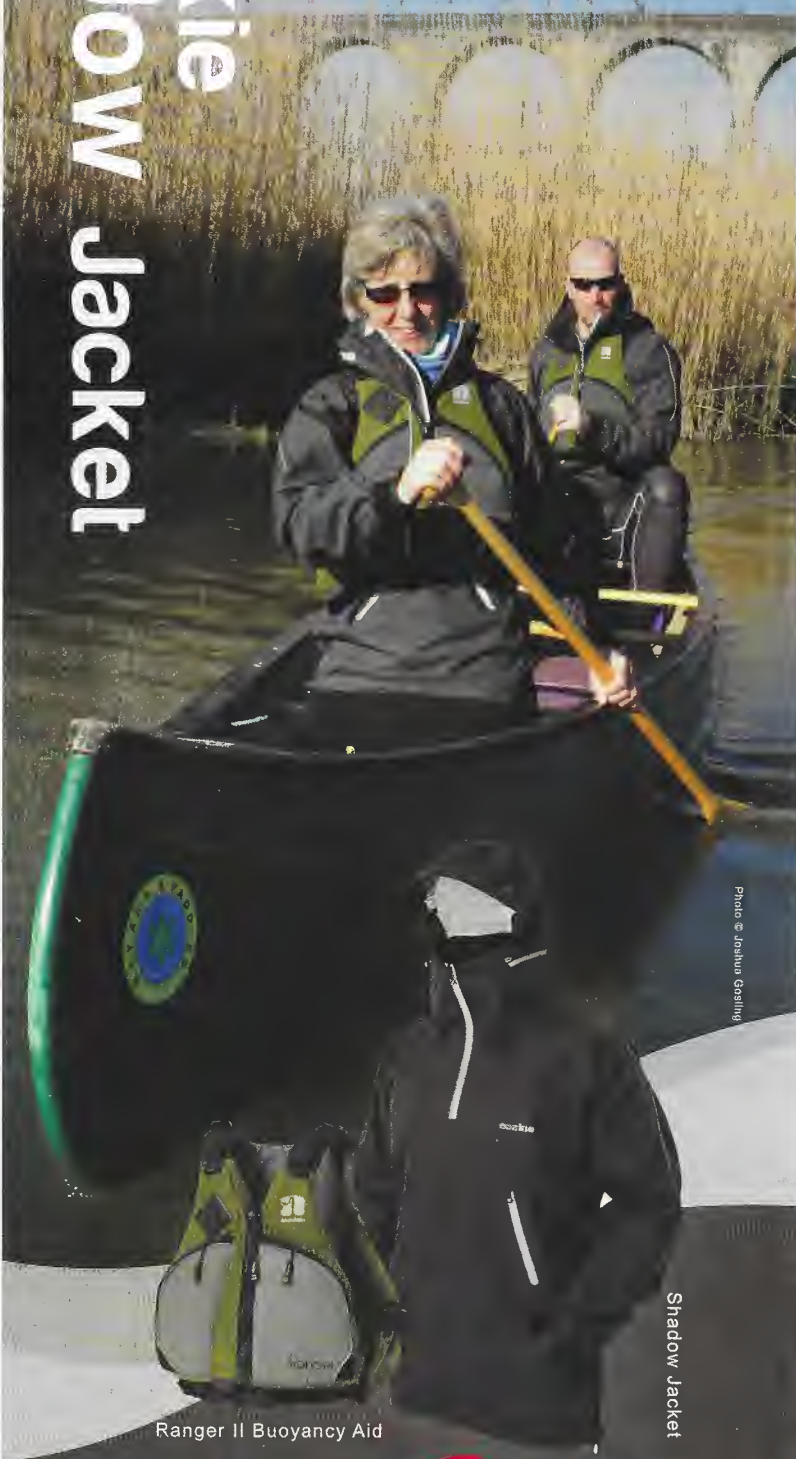


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My Favourite Cumbrian Sea Paddling Trip

Kate Duffus is a self confessed sea kayaking addict and when not coaching or guiding in the outdoors can usually be found afloat exploring the coast and seas. FOCUS asked Kate to share one of her favourite sea kayaking trips with us, so climb aboard as we head to the wild Cumbrian coast...

My favourite section of Cumbrian coastline is sandwiched between the Duddon Estuary and Morecambe Bay, and comprises the area around Barrow-in-Furness and Walney Island. Launching at Roa Island (rhymes with toe) gives easy access to the nature reserve on Walney, Piel Island, complete with castle and pub and the fast moving water of the Piel Channel. The nature reserve is renowned for its gull colony in addition to huge numbers of oystercatchers and eider ducks. There is also a resident seal population. Piel Channel is a busy, well marked shipping lane and one can often see some strange vessels being towed in and out of Barrow docks whilst construction of an offshore wind farm is underway.

A STAR FILLED DAWN

A very memorable visit was at dawn, just before low water, on the autumn equinoctial spring tide last year. The plan was to go and visit a seldom-seen island called St. Helena, which as the crow flies is about 3.5km from Roa. I have often used this as a target for navigation exercises when I am coaching but had never actually stood on the island.



We launched into the final hour of ebb in Piel Channel and had a little tidal assistance as we passed the remains of Piel Castle, on an island of the same name. The water was so low that navigational marks stood high and dry on shingle banks. St Helena was barely above the water and we didn't see it until we were nearly there. On arrival we were greeted by the most amazing view; a veritable carpet of starfish! All shades of orange, most with five arms, some with four or three. It was difficult to walk for fear of treading on them.

Once the flood began we made our way back into the shipping channel and were soon being pushed towards Roa and a very welcome breakfast in the café. Fed and watered, we went back for a look at the sea and found it flowing like a river, with standing waves forming behind the jetty. What a fantastic trip. **CF**

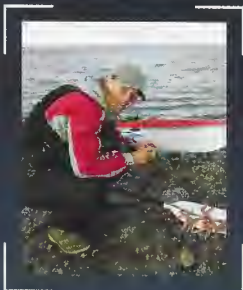
“On arrival we were greeted by the most amazing view; a veritable carpet of starfish! All shades of orange, most with five arms, some with four or three. It was difficult to walk for fear of treading on them.”



USEFUL INFO

TIDAL INFORMATION

- HW Barrow is 20 minutes after HW Liverpool
- At Roa Island slack water and HW/LW coincide
- Between Jubilee Bridge and Walney Meetings the north going flow continues until 1.5-2 hrs after HW Barrow, at this point Walney Meetings dries and south-going flow begins
- Piel Channel spring rate is 3kn on flood and ebb
- Flow rates at Walney Channel, just south of Jubilee Bridge may reach 6kn at springs



KATE DUFFUS

Kate is a BCU Level 5 aspirant sea kayak coach who works freelance leading and coaching paddling, caving, mountain walking and climbing, mainly in the Lake District and Yorkshire but with frequent forays

north of the border. She has a great specialist expertise in coaching forward paddling performance. To follow Kate on her sea going adventures check out <http://katespaddlingblog.blogspot.com/>



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Women of


Only two female crews from the UK have ever taken on the 'world championships' of outrigger canoe racing and last year, 19 years after the first crew completed the race, Royal Canoe Club Outrigger returned to the home of outrigger canoeing to take on the challenge again and compete in the Na Wahine O Ke Kai race.

Na Wahine O Ke Kai means Women of the Sea, and to have competed in the race confers the title to all who take on the challenge. The race stretches the 41 miles between the Hawaiian islands of Molokai

and Oahu across the notorious Ka'iwi channel. Also known as the 'channel of bones' it is renowned for the size of waves formed by the Pacific swells and trade winds that funnel between the islands. The Molokai Hoe Kane (men's race) follows two weeks after the women's race.

TRAINING HARD

The mission to compete included a training camp in Dubai and bi-weekly visits to Exmouth to develop the



the Sea

team and get valued training outside of the Thames! But nothing matched the challenging conditions the crew faced on the race.

The team trained from the famous Waikiki Beach the week prior to the race, with daily runs to Diamond Head, in canoes kindly provided by outrigger legend Nappy Napoleon. Paddling with turtles and dolphins on aqua marine seas of 25c alongside the famous Waikiki surf break certainly was an experience not to be missed and inspired the whole crew.

“Paddling with turtles and dolphins on aqua marine seas alongside the famous Waikiki surf break certainly was an experience not to be missed and inspired the whole crew.”



WIND & WAVES

A total of 68 crews, an impressive 680 women, gathered at Hale O Lano harbour the morning of the race. And all were grateful not to be faced with the huge waves that had closed out the harbour the previous year. At 7.50am the race was on! We avoided an early collision of canoes and seemed in a good position in the first third of the fleet. Though with the canoes spread over a kilometre across it was hard to tell. We arrived at Lau Point where we were allowed our first change but no sign of our support boat! As the minutes went

past we all began to worry that we might be doing the race on our own, as finding us now would be a challenge. Finally though we heard an engine and known voices shouting to us, what a wave of relief! But we were now over an hour into the race, so already our change schedule was way out. As we paddled away from the shelter of the island we began to experience the full strength of the wind and waves. Certainly the largest any of us had experienced before. However the prevailing winds were on the right aft side of the canoe, which at least made it less likely to capsize!





“As we paddled away from the shelter of the island we began to experience the full strength of the wind and waves. Certainly the largest any of us had experienced before.”

ABOUT OUTRIGGER CANOE RACING

Outrigger canoes, or Va'a, have been travelling the Pacific Ocean for more than 4,000 years. In around 2,000 BC a wave of seafaring people emerged from Asia and ventured out into the Eastern Pacific Ocean, for the first time in Human history. The earliest Va'a are thought to have originated at this time and we now know that ancient Polynesians and their ancestors settled the most remote islands of the Pacific in single and double hull Va'a. These Canoes were often sailing vessels and could be much larger than today's racing V6. When the first Europeans arrived in Polynesia, they recorded sailing Va'as of up to 30m in length, which were designed for long ocean voyages.

Va'a as the sport we see today was developed in Tahiti and Hawaii. At the beginning of the 19th Century, Va'a races became a regular feature during the traditional cultural 'Heiva' festival in Tahiti. In Hawaii, Va'a racing began to emerge at the turn of the 20th Century. Clubs like Hui Nalu and the Outrigger Canoe Club were both founded in 1908 and both still thrive today.

The modern Va'a sport spread around most of the Polynesian, Micronesian and Melanesian Islands, but it also moved to Australia, USA, Canada, South America and Asia and finally to Europe. The sport is more than a canoe; it is steeped in tradition and focused on the promotion of the paddling family, the Ohana.

ALL CHANGE

The Na Wahine O Ke Kai is a change race, which means a crew of ten rotating in and out of the six person canoe every 20-minutes. All changes have to be done from the water and involve hauling yourself from the sea into the canoe whilst a very relieved paddler jumps out the other side. We had practiced our water changes to improve speed of entry, but the added challenge of locating the paddlers in the water, keeping on course and for the relief paddlers to get in was far more challenging than any of us had experienced.

STORMING THE LINE

As the minutes and hours past Molokai became a distant image and Diamond Head remained a tantalizing image that failed to get any closer. But eventually we were closing in on Diamond Head and the finish. Overtaking some crews in the final two miles we stormed across the finish line in a time of 7-hours 30-minutes to place 40th.

It is an epic race for any crew to take on, let alone one from the UK! Just to complete the race is a challenge and we celebrated our success with pride. We were now all 'women of the sea!' **CF**

Thanks go to the wonderful Aloha spirit we received from the paddling community of the Hawaiian Islands to whom we owe so much. Thanks also to our amazing support crew Griff, Marc, Mike, John and Andy.

The Crew: Guin Batten, Trisha Corless, Sharon Wilkins, Shirine Voller, Suzy Hornby, Maggie Noke, Lisa Trunk, Ali Martineau, Siobhan Thomas, Anne Bellany.



The Great Outdoors Fleece

STAYING WARM ON OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT MEN'S DARK DAYS HOODED JACKET

RRP: £90

A fantastic fleece hoody in a great looking stripe, the Dark Days Hooded Jacket from Mountain Equipment has a classic knit effect face but inside, it's all about the soft pile fleece.

An essential for the dark days of winter as well as the cool evenings of summer, this amazingly warm hoody is perfect for early starts and elated, exhausted evenings.

TESTED BY JON SCHOFIELD

"This is a great bit of kit and I would definitely consider buying one, despite it being more than I would usually pay for a fleece. It's very warm and, unlike other fleeces I've had, it does a good job at blocking out the wind. I really liked the design and it feels extremely well made and durable. It's also very comfortable with a relaxed fit and large zipped pockets. The high neckline doubles as a scarf when zipped to the top and the clever low-profile hood adjusters are routed internally, keeping them out of the way inside the jacket. It's a great looking, warm, functional and hardwearing garment."



MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT WOMEN'S MICRO FLEECE JACKET

RRP: £50

The 100-weight fleece Micro Jacket is the perfect mid-layer. It can be warm under hard-shells in a classic layering system or under a soft shell in really cold conditions. Zipped fleece jackets are also easier than pull-on tops to get on and off and allow for venting through the front zip on those long ascents.

TESTED BY CHLOE NELSON

"This fleece was amazing, soft to touch, warm and fitted. This would soon become a favourite item in my wardrobe. Really like the warm red colour too. It's something I could wear outdoors or to the gym and is really multipurpose."

Whether its hanging about on the riverbank, shoreline, or taking a stroll through the hills, a good fleece layer is an absolute must for lovers of the great outdoors. For many of us the 'trusty' fleece becomes our go to piece of kit for keeping toasty when temperatures dip. Fleece has evolved tremendously since Patagonia introduced the first fleece back in 1985, and modern fleeces are very warm for the weight highly compressible and supremely comfortable. There are a mind-boggling array of styles and types available these days, so we've teamed up with Cotswold Outdoor to highlight and test some of the best.

BERGHAUS MEN'S PRISM JACKET IA

RRP: £50

The Prism Jacket IA is a quality, warm and durable fleece. With refined details and styling this fleece not only functions but also looks great. The InterActive zip means it can easily be zipped into any of the Berghaus IA jackets, offering a good level of thermal insulation and comfort.

TESTED BY GABRIEL OBOH

"This fleece fitted well, I could wear it to training and it's not too warm or too light, it provides just the right temperature. The pockets are deep and useful for carrying keys and it's plain enough to wear with pretty much anything. Really liked this one."



"Modern fleeces are very warm for the weight highly compressible and supremely comfortable."



THE NORTH FACE MEN'S POLARTEC 100 GLACIER DELTA FLEECE

RRP: £50

The North Face Men's Polartec 100 Glacier Delta 1/4 zip is a quick drying, thermally efficient top for cool weather wear and layering. Polartec Classic Micro polyester fleece offers a supreme balance between weight and insulation. This classic fleece pullover is ideal for exploration and travel. Contrasting sleeve colours and a sleeve mounted zipped pocket make this a practical and stylish layer. Elasticated cuffs keep heat in and stop the sleeves riding up.

TESTED BY RUSS SMITH

"The first thing you notice when putting on this top is how light it feels when on. This is helped, not only through the excellent Polartec fleece material, but also the cut of the fabric to make it easy to move around in. I particularly liked the amount of movement at the shoulder and elbow. It did, however, allow a fair amount of wind through and is therefore better as a layer under a windproof top on a breezy day. It wicks moisture away from the body really well and would suit those who are very active and require a top that helps regulate their temperature." All these fleeces are available from www.cotswoldoutdoor.com

CHECK OUT THE BEST CANOEING & KAYAKING IMAGES FROM OUR REGULAR PHOTO-COMPETITION...

Photo Competition

We're constantly amazed at the amazing 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 that might be a winner?

Send us your best canoeing or kayaking photo and Senior entrants could win a Cotswold Outdoor Voucher while Junior winners receive a WHSmith Gift Card. There is a prize for the winner of the year selected from all the winning monthly entries.

And don't forget, as a BCU member, you get 15% off* all year round at Cotswold Outdoor on production of your membership card in store or by entering your affiliate code online. Find your nearest store at www.cotswoldoutdoor.com/stores

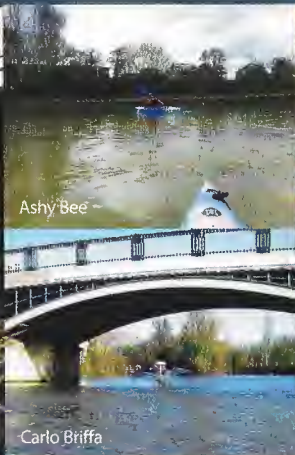
To enter simply send a large photo (at least 5 megapixels) on a CD along with your contact details and a few words about the photo to Coral Jackson, British Canoe Union, National Water Sports Centre, Adbolton Lane, Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham NG12 2LU or you can email your entry coral.jackson@bcu.org.uk

Please note we can only allow one entry per person per month.

**Not to be used in conjunction with any other offers or discounts. Valid only on production of a BCU membership card at the till point or discount code online.*



Andy Pagett



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Briony Martin



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Chris Moore



Colin Delph



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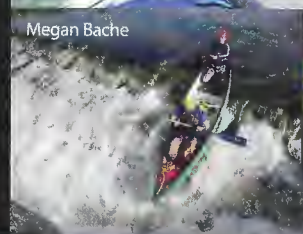
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MAIL BAG

LETTERS, MAILS POSTS & TWEETS OF THE MONTH!



MountBattencntr: Great times @MountBattencntr with the centre's 1st @U_Canoe session! Thanks @Canoe_England @plymouthssp @G0Canoeing

228sqnATC: Another Thursday night... Another kayaking session with @2158SqNATC progressing skills for @Canoe_England BCU performance awards #whatwedo

Callumswift: Looking forward to some @Canoe_England BCU 4* white water training at the weekend. Hope the water levels pick up.

Andy Padgett: Roses are red, violets are blue, please would you join me, in my canoe?

Sam Derrick: Spelthorne Club have a pool session tomorrow, I'll be working on learning to roll!

Dan Abel Very disappointed in Canoe Focus. Ads are fine, and expected, but a 3 page advert masquerading as a review of sports nutrition? Really bad show. Do I now have to check every article for the small print? Please don't do it again.

Yakman72: Excellent indoor kayaking competition today at @sotoncc well done to all the winners @Canoe_EnglandECSportmaker: Applying the final touches to #UCanoeUnleashed Sportivate project. Should be out and paddling this time next month! @Canoe_England



Young_Bristol: Looking forward to taking the Ergo Challenge from @Canoe_England around to our youth clubs! #EngagementTools #YBCLubs

Thissourceteam: @Canoe_England 8 friends will canoe from the source of the Thames to London, unsupported in aid of @macmillancancer

GO CANOEING TOUR GUIDE OF THE MONTH INTERVIEW WITH CHELSEA CLARKSON



What Go Canoeing provider do you work for?
Windermere Canoe Kayak

How long have you been a tour guide?

I have been a Go Canoeing tour guide for a year now, however I've been running similar trips from the shop for just over three years.

What is your favourite Go Canoeing guided tour?

Our 'Tour of the Islands' on Windermere. We head out to explore all the islands in the central part of the lake. We normally stop off on one of the smaller islands, break out the Kelly Kettle and have a hot chocolate before journeying back again.

What can people see on the tour?

Our tour takes paddlers around the islands in the central part of Windermere. There are stunning views of the fells at the north end of the lake and during the spring and summer months the area is laden with wildlife. Paddlers can enjoy watching the many different varieties of birds, and their young. Occasionally, if you're lucky, you'll catch a glimpse of the mink and otters occupying the surrounding areas.

What does being a Go Canoeing Tour Guide involve on a day-to-day basis?

Safety is a number one priority, so we need to make sure all the kit and boats are properly maintained so they are fit for purpose. Regular safety checks are completed to ensure our equipment is of a high standard.

Organisation for me is a biggie. I like to have the boats and kit ready before our participants arrive. I also like to have all of my kit ready, so we can get on the water straight away.

On the water, being a tour guide involves me taking people paddling, there's not much more to it really. A simple brief on how to use boats and paddles is given before we set off, along with a safety brief and kitting up. I like to offer people a bit of tuition on the water to make paddling a bit easier, but my aim is to get people out paddling, not to be perfect paddlers.

On the journey I have to keep an eye out for potential risks/hazards, and I'm there if people capsize (This only tends to happen on a hot summers day). But I'm also there to have a good chat and show people the local area.

I'm also designated brew maker. We like to stop off on Thompsons Holme to have stretch of the legs and a quick snack. I have taken to making hot chocolate using a Kelly Kettle. It's the best way to boil water in my opinion! From here we journey back to the shop, hang all the kit back up and get warm and dry. Then it's time for me to prepare for the next tour.



PADDLE-ABILITY

PADDLE-ABILITY MODULE TUTORS NEEDED

Canoe England is currently looking for new tutors for the Foundation and Intermediate Paddle-Ability Modules. We are hoping to deliver a programme of these modules across the country over the next year and to support this hope to train up a team of new tutors.

Whilst experience and understanding of working with paddlers with a broad range of disabilities is ideal Canoe England is able to provide training, information or support to those who may have a lot of experience tutoring other modules or coach education.

Typically applicants would be expected to fulfil the following criteria:

- Evidence of degree level knowledge, or equivalent, in physical education, a subject related to special education needs and/or disability.
- A Level 3 Coach
- Experience of working with disabled participants in a paddlesport setting and will have an understanding of the varying needs of paddlers with a range of intellectual, sensory and physical impairments.



- A wide knowledge of the current equipment available for disabled paddlers and how a range of other pieces of equipment can be adapted to suit the needs of different individuals.
- Coach update status is valid.

Anyone interested should contact clarisse.smith@canoe-england.org.uk for further information

Images by Paul Taylor



Why is a Go Canoeing Guided Tour a good option?

The guided tour gives people the option to try out a number of different craft. We have open canoes, sit-on-top-kayaks, closed cockpit kayaks, sea kayaks and many more all for people to have a go in.

A tour is a really enjoyable, and affordable, way for people to explore the area with an experienced coach or guide. It is a more relaxed way of learning a new skill. There is no pressure to get it 'right', as long as your boat is heading in the right direction, I'm happy.

What do you love about being a Go Canoeing tour guide?

Meeting people from all over the country and introducing everyone to a sport I enjoy very much. Hopefully we can inspire others to take up the hobby! It's really nice to be able to take people out for nothing more than a relaxing paddle around the islands in a fantastic environment.

And are there any bits you don't like?

No way! What's not to like? Occasionally the weather gets in the way, but this just adds a bit more excitement to our trips!

What motivates you?

The people. The people make our trips what they are. It is the best feeling when you get back and everybody seems so inspired to get out and do more. I love being the one to give them that inspiration.

What do you when you're not guiding?

I love to paddle. But I'm also a keen cyclist. Road cycling mainly, but I'm slowly trying to brave mountain biking.

I also love the snow! I generally just like being outdoors, walking, biking, climbing or paddling, But I have to admit, I do become a bit of a wimp when it rains.

When, where and how did you first get into paddling?

The first time I went paddling was at school in New Zealand where I grew up. I was at college and as part of my fifth form PE lessons, we learnt to kayak in our school pool. I didn't paddle again for another three years, until I moved to the UK. I was on a gap year, volunteering

at YMCA – Lakeside. Here I learnt everything I know now from a great bunch of instructors working there at the time.

Why do you love paddling so much?

It is an exciting way to explore different areas. You can get to so many more remote corners of the world by boat. It's a great way to escape from all the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

What's your favourite type of paddling?

Canoeing! No questions asked.

What have been your best paddling moments?

My all time favourite was a trip to Scotland I did a couple of years ago with some very good friends of mine. We were out on the West Coast, after battling with the wind on a sea loch for a couple of hours, we came around a small peninsula to a bit of shelter and discovered we were being followed by a pair of seals. We camped nearby and canoed around the surrounding area for the next few days. The water was crystal clear, the sea floor laden with sea life, and the curious seals followed us around for the time we were there. You can't beat that!

And any paddling-related ambitions that you're still hoping to realise?

I am a current UKCC Level 2 Coach. I've thought about potentially aiming for Level 3, and maybe one day I will, but for now I just want to get out paddling, whether it be for work, or in my free time.

Thanks Chelsea



PADDLE-ABILITY CLUB AND CENTRE ACCREDITATION

Following the successful launch of the Paddle-Ability Top Club accreditation Canoe England is in the process of developing a Paddle-Ability Bolt on to the Centre Approval process.

Canoe England regularly receives enquiries from disabled people, their carers or family, looking for clubs and centres that can provide quality activity to suit their needs. To fulfil this demand Canoe England has developed a Paddle-Ability bolt on to the Top Centre Accreditation the idea of this to identify clubs that provide high quality activity for disabled people. This year 11 clubs have completed this accreditation.

Following the launch of the Paddle-Ability Top Club accreditation there has been a demand for a similar accreditation for centres.

To cater for this Canoe England will also be offering a Paddle-Ability bolt on to the BCU Centre Approval process. This bolt on is designed to help disabled people wanting to experience paddlesport through a centre setting easily identify where they can find activity that suits them.

Similar to the Paddle-Ability Top Club bolt on the Paddle-Ability Approved Centre accreditation is designed to allow a centre to gain recognition for their disability provision without having to go through a lengthy paperwork process, whilst still achieving tangible and appropriate bench.

Canoe England are currently seeking a broad range of centres from all over the country to pilot this accreditation, if you are interested please contact clarisse.smith@canoe-england.org.uk

FEMALE FOCUS



YOU ARE NEVER TOO OLD TO GO CANOEING!

When Ivy Darbon handed in her log book to her club, Hampton Canoe Club, for the annual BCU Club Competition she was not aware that the club had also entered the Canoe England Winter Club Challenge and, not being in 'The Bloom of Youth' (using Ivy's own words), at the age of 74 she managed to log a fantastic 198-miles from the beginning of October 2013 through to the 1st January 2014.

THIS IS IVY'S FANTASTIC STORY:

I started paddling in 2002 after visiting my son in America. Whilst there I saw 'canoe rental' signs and thought I'd have a go. After getting tipped out a few times on the fast flowing River Beaver in Missouri, I decided to find out how to canoe properly when I returned home. I joined Ealing Canoe Club and learned how to paddle correctly, which was wonderful, but I became bored with just paddling around at the club and knew I wanted to explore other places. I joined Westel Canoe Club (now renamed Hampton Canoe Club) because they had a touring section. It was wonderful, I learned of so many fantastic places to paddle and the ingress and egress of each tour. For the first few years I paddled a kayak, I did The Silly Hat paddle on the River Medway organised by Maidstone Canoe Club, I paddled The Doggy Paddle on the River Avon organised by Leamington Spa Canoe Club and I followed the Bath Tub Race down the River Adur and so many other fun events. I just love it.

As I have grown older, I found getting in and out of a kayak quite interesting so tried an open canoe and wow...since then retirement

has become such fun! My husband and I paddle a We-no-Nah, Jenson, which is an 18ft canoe that goes everywhere with us on the roof of our car and we still use our kayaks occasionally too.

Early in 2013, my husband and I spent a week base camping in Oxford and each day paddled part of the Upper Thames and the River Cherwell, it was most enjoyable. We really enjoy touring and paddle each week throughout the year on various rivers and canals, enjoying the tranquillity and wildlife seen along the way. Our most regular tours are on the River Thames, the River Wey, the Basingstoke Canal and the Grand Union Canal; wherever there is water we are drawn to it for a paddle. We usually cover between ten and thirty-miles each trip. Other places we have paddled are on a lake in USA in June, The Lake District, Lake Maligne in Canada, The River Wye from Glasbury to Monmouth twice and too many others to name. It's such fun, we meet many folk along the way always eager to have a chat to find out how far we have paddled, where we started and our destination. We encourage lots of interested people to join a club and enjoy canoeing too.

We like to spend the whole day on the water and usually stop at lunchtime for a brew up with the 'Kelly Kettle', it's just wonderful to be outdoors and canoeing is magical.

We have paddled for some years with a couple ten years older than us! As a passer-by on the towpath called out one day, "you're not exactly girl guides and boy scouts are you"? So it's a fun sport for everyone.

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A beautiful trip along Derwent taking in the stunning views. This river is seldom paddled and home to a variety of wildlife - a great chance to practice your canoe handling skills.



Explore Derwent

Experienced canoeing instructors will help you learn a few strokes and guide you on an exploration of some of Derwentwater's hidden bays and isolated islands.



Catamaran Sailing

Have a go sailing on Derwentwater in this fantastic catamaran. A great way for the family to experience sailing in the beautiful setting of the Lake District.

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CANOE FOCUS IS GOING QUARTERLY!

From June, Canoe FOCUS will be published quarterly. The increasing popularity of digital communications, as well as feedback from you, our members, has shown that you want to receive news more regularly & in a digital format that you can access quickly and easily.

We've listened to your feedback and so, as a result, we'll be sending out our e-newsletters monthly, from now on! Canoe Focus will be published in April, June, September and December and for 2015 and beyond, the magazine will be published in February, May, August and October.

We want our publications to be better than ever and to do this it's really important that we're providing the kind of content that you want to read, so let us know what you want to see in Canoe FOCUS and our E-Newsletters – Get in touch at canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk

Not received our E-Newsletter? Make sure we have a correct email on our files, contact info@bcu.org.uk to check your details.



WATERWAYS & ENVIRONMENT

VISITING AND CANOEING THE BROADS

We've recently been working with our friends at the Broads Authority on some exciting stuff.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Broads are the UK's premier wetlands, a globally important landscape shaped and nurtured by its inhabitants since at least Roman times. Encompassing an area of 303km², the Broads is a low-lying, mainly open and undeveloped landscape, an interconnected mosaic of rivers, broads, fens, marshes and woodland rich in rare habitats and species, some of which are unique to the area. The importance of the Broads is borne out by a range of international, national and local designations in recognition of its landscape, nature conservation and cultural features and its status as a member of the UK family of National Parks in 1989.

Exploring the 200km of meandering, lock-free rivers and open water bodies of this 'magical water land' is a wonderful way to experience its distinctive charm and special qualities. Paddling provides opportunities to access the quieter, more hidden reaches of the system inaccessible to larger craft, bringing you closer to nature and enhancing the sense of seclusion, tranquillity and wildness.

Canoeing and kayaking are great ways to discover the delights of this fragile wetland. Paddling is quiet, so you'll be able to get closer to the wildlife, including water voles, great crested grebes and, if you're lucky, otters. The Broads Authority have worked with the hire centres to develop four new canoe trails, with lots of snippets of information about what you'll see along the way, plus ideas for places to visit and safety advice. Detailed maps also show where you can get in and out of canoes.

There are two trails in the southern Broads exploring the tranquil River Waveney, one on the Bungay loop and one going from Geldeston to Beccles. In the north, you can explore Salhouse Broad and the River Bure going towards Ranworth, or discover the River Ant and Barton Broad, starting from Sutton Staithe or Wayford Bridge. There is one hour, three hour and six hour return routes, so you can choose a route, which is suitable for you and each trail includes various options.

The trails are all available here: www.enjoythebroads.com/info/maps-publications

Canoe England also has a number of trails on their website: www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/places-to-paddle/

Canoeing and kayaking allows exploration of all but the smallest Broads waterways, so they're ideal for exploring the headwaters (less tidal waters). We don't recommend paddling in the lower reaches. If you do, you need to be extremely experienced, fit and able. Canoeing in the Broads is suitable for all the family, including young children. There are a number of canoe hire centres throughout the Broads. Most hire centres below are open from Easter/April to October; some are open longer periods. All Broads Canoe Hire Association centres are inspected and monitored for safety by the Broads Authority as part of the licensing agreement.

And while you're there why not combine your trip with another great outdoor activity? Cycling and canoeing are both lovely ways to explore this magical water land.

For further information on canoe hire please visit the Broads Canoe Hire Association at www.canoethebroads.co.uk

For lots more info, including electric day boat hire, go to www.enjoythebroads.com

NORWICH FRINGE TO ROCKLAND CANOE TRAIL

www.enjoythebroads.com

Caution: this is a popular area for rowing all year round. Norwich Frostbites Club sails in this area in the winter.

Key:

- Places to get in and out
- No access beyond this point
- P Parking

5 hour paddle (approx. 21km/13 miles) Whittingham to Rockland St Mary

Approximate distances – please allow enough time to explore and get back before dark

Norwich to Water's Edge PH 10.5 km	Surlingham to Brundall 1.5 km	Surlingham to Rockland 7 km
Water's Edge PH to Surlingham 3 km	Brundall to Rockland 6 km	

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2014. Map artwork by Ruth Murray.

- The Broads is an ideal place to enjoy paddling, with little or no experience required.
- Please park sensibly and only use the indicated launch points.
- We advise you to wear a life jacket, and to check weather and tide information prior to starting your trip.
- The waterways in the Broads are open to all forms of navigation so please be aware of other craft and also anglers fishing from the riverbanks.

If you have any problems please contact Broads Control on 01603 756056, staffed daily 9am-6pm from April to October and 9am-5pm during the winter. If the incident is more serious please call 999 or 112 and ask for the appropriate emergency service, which may be the coastguard. These maps are for illustrative purposes and are not drawn to scale. Please do not try to use them for accurate navigation.

the Broads
Waveney to Great Ouse
Wetland

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› Club of the Year

› Centre of the Year

› Young Volunteer

› Event Volunteer



› Community Volunteer

› Waterways & Environment
Volunteer

› Impact on Disability Canoeing



› Volunteer Coach of the Year

› Safety Award

› Outstanding Contribution

› Performance Coach





Cometh the Race Cometh the Lady C1 Paddler!

TAKING ON THE DEVIZES TO WESTMINSTER SINGLE BLADED

Since the world famous Devizes to Westminster, 125-mile, international canoe race (DW) opened up to single boats in 1985, over one thousand paddlers have completed the four day stage race and all of them in a K1 kayak. The exception being, fifteen athletes who finished at Westminster Bridge in a C1 canoe, to date all men. In its sixty six year history, there is no record of a female paddler ever having completed the DW in a C1. The same can be said of the Waterside Canoe series, the four fortnightly races leading up to the main event, run on the Kennet and Avon canal section of the DW course in which only nine C1 paddlers have ever finished the series, once again all male. This year though two young women have taken up the challenge to be the first to conquer both. Megan Middleton from Fowey Canoe Club, and Isobel Smith from Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club, will take on paddling a C1, the most difficult of classes, in both the events.

They both responded to a 'wanted' notice on a web forum for the opportunity to tackle the race in a new design of carbon fibre canoe and set a precedence for ladies C1 participation. The very first time they stepped into a canoe, and used a single bladed paddle, was when they were assessed as candidates for the two available boats. Canoe racing in the UK does not enjoy the same popularity as in the USA where long distance races are often dominated by more canoes than kayaks. On this side of the pond very few athletes choose to paddle on the 'dark side', where they either have to master the narrow and highly unstable high-kneeling canoe, or use a traditional recreational touring craft, which is heavy and cumbersome.

NEXT STEP

Over the last three years Darkside Canoes have developed a boat that provides a stepping-stone, or link, between traditional single canoes and the high kneeler, usually raced at sprint events. The Darkness is slim but stable, fast and lightweight. It provides a speedy C1 experience for traditional canoeists and a migration path for kayakers. It is the boat, which will hopefully carry the first lady paddlers over the DW finish line at Westminster on Easter Monday.

RACE RECORDS

Isobel and Megan both have considerable DW experience having dominated the junior ladies and mixed junior classes in the last few years. Isobel took the DW Junior ladies title three times and holds more current Waterside records than anyone. Megan has a hat trick of mixed junior 'Oliver Brown Trophy' wins, and is the current holder of the DW record at 16 hours 24 minutes. Coincidentally they both won the junior ladies title last year as they were paddling the same K2.





But they won't have it all their own way because Samantha Rippington is also targeting DW this year. Sam has been paddling a high kneeling C1 for nearly seven years. She is also a DW veteran winning the ladies K1 event in 2006 and was runner-up in 2007. It will be a phenomenal achievement if she manages to finish, being only the third person to do so in a high kneeling C1 and of course, the first women.

CROSSING OVER

The 'sit & switch' position is significantly easier to adopt for kayak paddlers than high kneeling. It is more stable and certainly more comfortable to sustain. But without the high kneeling leverage position, speed is delivered through a higher cadence, which is something familiar to kayak racing and this approach essentially uses the same muscle set.

However, neither Megan nor Isobel have paddled the race solo, or considered using a single blade before, but they quickly transitioned to the 'dark side' after a brief trial in the boat. Since last November they have been practising canoe paddling and training to develop an efficient sit & switch technique favoured by long distant canoeists.

SO WHAT MOTIVATED THEM TO CONSIDER SUCH A BIG STEP FROM K2 TO C1?

Isobel: One of the main reasons I decided to do DW in a canoe this year was the challenge. During DW I tend to be recognised as one half of the 'ginger twins' who race fast. Simply finishing DW was taken for granted, and speed, winning and record breaking became the priority. The pressure to beat personal records and to stay near the top essentially took the fun away from the race. This year the main challenge is to finish. There is no pressure to go fast to beat previous times because previous times don't exist. This year is for fun! The fact I am paddling a new boat adds to the excitement. It is comfortable and an easy changeover from my K1 to a more stable canoe. The technique and portaging is coming with practise.

I've always wanted to do DW in a canoe and this boat allows me to do it.

Megan: DW is an addiction and I've always said that I want to race in every category possible. Now that I've competed in junior/vet, junior mixed and junior ladies I started to look towards the senior options. Originally K1 was the choice for Easter 2014 but when the opportunity came up to take part in making DW history by joining Izzy and Samantha Rippington in becoming one of the first women ever to race DW in a C1 it was a chance too good to miss. Izzy and I both have a racing



mind-set and a need for speed so 'The Darkness' is the perfect boat for a long distance racing canoeist who is after a quick time.

Megan and Isobel will have to get used to a somewhat more sedate pace, being overtaken and spending longer on the water, and as a solo boat, they will not have the companionship they have enjoyed in previous years.

Megan: The main concern I have is for the tideway. This has always been the toughest day for me as every muscle is exhausted from the previous stages; you forget there is still over a tenth of the course to go. There is a late start this year for the tideway, which could mean the water is quite rough due to pleasure boat washes, this will be quite challenging but a challenge we will take head on.

Isobel: Obviously the tideway for one. High tide at Teddington on Easter Monday is at seven thirty five so it will be mid-morning as we approach the finish. The wash from the river traffic is something we need to watch out for. Megan and I plan to tackle the tideway together.

SO WHAT ARE THE GIRLS LOOKING FORWARD TO THE MOST?

Isobel: Definitely the start. I get very nervous up to the race but once I've crossed the line I'm on familiar territory and I know it's up to me. I can concentrate on the race and start thinking about the next portage. Recovery between each day will be so different this year, back home in my own bed. I'll have to make sure I set the alarm for the next day!

Megan: I love the whole race experience and although I'm always glad to see Westminster Bridge it's almost a shame it has to finish. This year is special, my first solo attempt and in a unique boat.

It will be interesting to see people's reaction to seeing female C1 paddlers racing DW for the first time and it promises to be quite a start to the 2014 season for ladies long distance canoeing. Hopefully it will inspire and motivate more female athletes to consider taking up canoeing and progressing to a high kneeling C1.

So, if you see Megan, Isobel or Samantha on the water over the Easter weekend somewhere between Devizes and Westminster, please give them your support. **CF**





BIGGER & better for 2014

EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS AT LEE VALLEY WHITE WATER CENTRE

Lee Valley White Water Centre officially opened for the 2014 season at the start of March following the completion of £6.3 million development and expansion work at the London 2012 Olympic Canoe Slalom venue. 2014 promises to be a massive year for the adrenalin pumping attraction with new activities to enjoy on the white water rapids as well as the return of the world's best athletes as they compete in the ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup from 6 to 8 June – the first international competition to take place at the venue since the Games.

Report by
Rob Eyton-Jones
& Nick Boothroyd,
images by
Rapid Focus
Photography Ltd

The bigger and better centre includes the creation of GB Canoeing's Slalom National Performance Centre, for the athletes and coaching team, complete with a state of the art gym and physiotherapy suite.

There are also improved facilities for the thousands of visitors who enjoy the popular rafting and paddling activities including more changing rooms, an expanded café with a bigger outdoor terracing area and a new pavilion.

And what is now arguably the world's best paddlesports centre is developing its legacy programme in other directions too, with a coaching academy, talent identification (ID) programme and a new paddlesports club all now progressing well.

JOIN THE CLUB

An enthusiastic group of volunteers has formed the Lee Valley Paddlesports Club, with the support of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, Lee Valley White Water Centre and the BCU. The club's vision is promoting participation for all ages across the range of sports hosted at the centre. Every element of the sport is represented on its recently elected committee and will allow the group to develop and offer all types of paddlesport. Now officially affiliated to Canoe England the focus is on what the club can offer its members and all involved have been working quickly so that membership forms are now all ready to go.

YOUNG TALENT

Alongside the Lee Valley Paddlesports Club, GB Canoeing began its legacy programme over a year ago and the first aim was to find paddlers aged nine to 16 years for a slalom-coaching programme from which it hopes future champions will emerge. Shaun Pearce, three times World Champion, Olympian and GB Canoeing's Lead Performance Pathway Coach, oversees the programme, which in its first year drew in talented juniors from as far as Northampton and Brighton for weekly coaching. Today, 11 youngsters are part of his Southern Region Talent Academy and a further nine make up the Southern Super Regional Squad.

In a rigorous screening process designed to find youngsters with the potential to become slalom champions, Pearce and his team of four tested 1400 children aged 11 to 13 in the catchment's secondary schools.

Thirteen of the children selected have for the past seven months committed to the programme – a weekly total of two pool sessions, up to three water sessions, plus land-based training - designed to fast track them into the canoe slalom competition structure. All newcomers to paddling, their transformation has been rapid and they competed for the first time last autumn. As a result six of the group were promoted up to Division 3. "All of them are progressing so quickly week on week" said Pearce. "These talent ID kids will be our next Academy



group and by the time we have revisited schools next summer and selected the second intake there will be 40 or 50 kids based at Lee Valley on the legacy programme." Integrating the Talent ID youngsters with the academy and squad training groups is a logical next step, which will both improve training and enhance the community feel, which is becoming evident amongst the youngsters.

EXCITING EVENTS

In addition to the Paddlesports Club and the Talent ID programme, the Lee Valley White Water Centre has secured legacy of a different kind. It was the first new Olympic venue to open its doors to the public and it was the first to announce securing a major international event – the ICF 2015 Canoe Slalom World Championships. In addition to the event next year, the BCU are also hosting the 2014 ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup. By securing major events in the UK, the BCU can continue to raise the profile of the sport and encourage new people to take to the water with a paddle.

DIFFERENT STROKES

Visitors to Lee Valley WWC can also now experience exciting, new activities for 2014: Hydro-speeding, swimming the rapids on specially designed river-boards and Hot Dog sessions, which involves navigating down the white water in an inflatable kayak. Not to mention the usual white water fun for rafting, canoeing & kayaking. **CF**

Since opening, the centre has attracted around 330,000 visitors with 60,000 people having rafted and over 30,000 participants having tried canoeing or kayaking. Find out more about Lee Valley Paddlesports Club at www.leevalleypaddlesportsclub.org



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YOUNGUNS FREESTYLE

2014 TOUR DATES

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North Wales (freestyle)	13th April
Nene	24th May
Cardiff	21st June
Boulton	12th July
Nottingham (floodlit final)	20th Sept

The Younguns Freestyle Tour is back in 2014 with 6 events across the UK for young paddlers to get involved with freestyle kayaking. NEW for this year we have the first Younguns Sickline event to be held in Wales on Saturday April 12th!

The North Wales events will be on either the Dee at Mile End Mill or the Tryweryn depending on water levels

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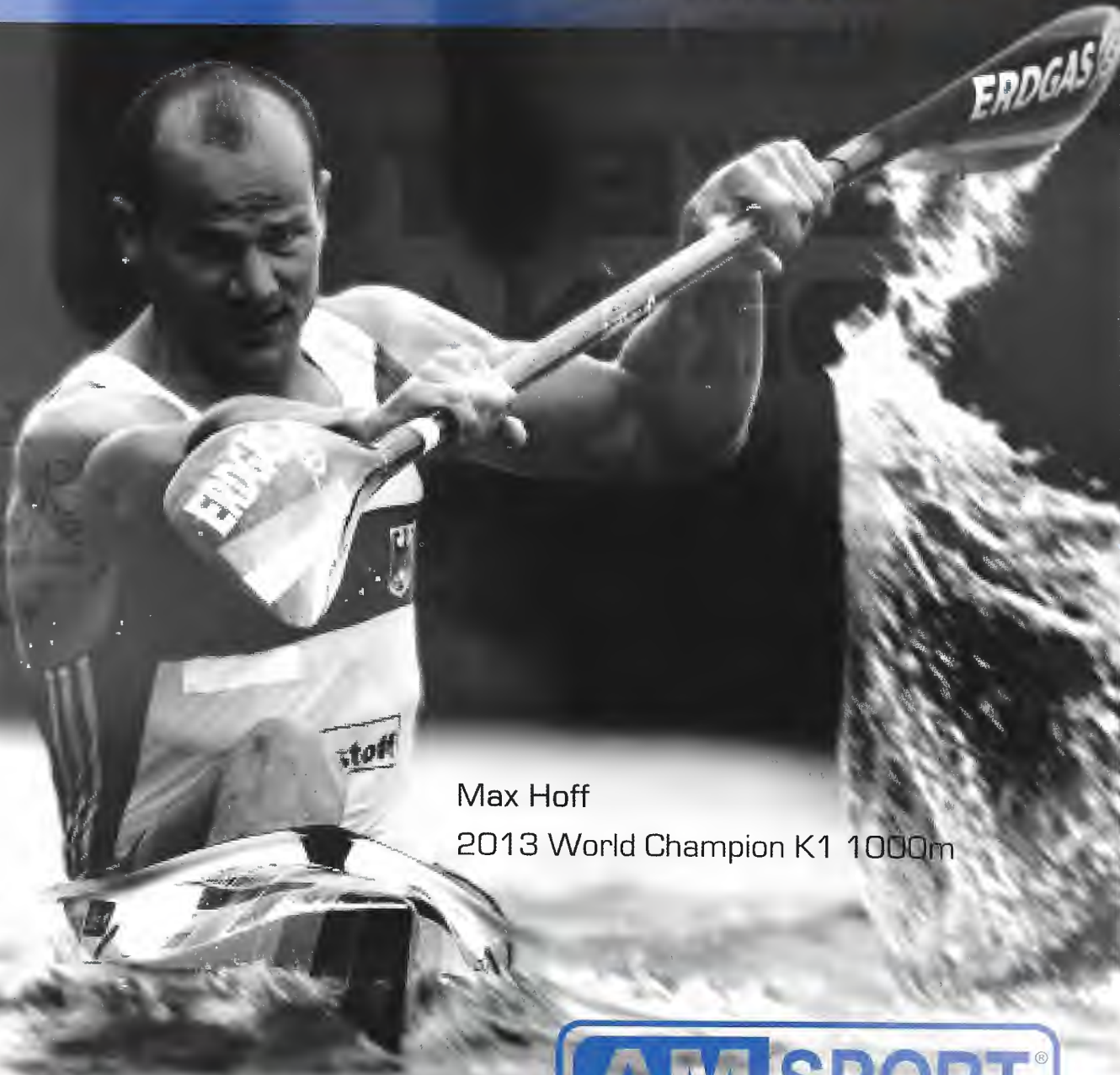
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