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IMAGE BY PETER MORTON

# WELCOME

## TO THE WINTER ISSUE OF CANOE FOCUS

In this Winter edition of Canoe Focus and the last edition of 2015, we reflect on the past year of canoeing & kayaking achievements across various disciplines of our sport including Canoe Marathon, Canoe Slalom and Canoe Freestyle, as well as the achievements of many individual paddlers taking part in great challenges such as the Three Lakes Challenge.

We also get a front row seat to the fantastic expedition undertaken by the injured service men group 'Pilgrim Bandits' as they explore the Yukon and face one of the most ambitious routes for even the most experienced canoeists, a fantastic piece highlighting the options canoeing offers for both rehabilitation and adventure.

World Rivers Day took place at the end of September and was a great success. It was great to hear of so many people, both paddlers and local residents taking part in the 'River Clean Ups' organised by Canal and River Trust and British Canoeing, as well as enjoying the many miles of waterways we have in the UK it is important, as paddlers we also look after them so we can keep enjoying them for years to come.

Finally, congratulations to all those who were awarded at this year's Volunteer Awards in November and thanks to all the volunteers and coaches that make it possible for so many people to enjoy and grow in canoeing every year.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Albert*

Albert Woods OBE

Your contributions make Canoe Focus happen. The quality and variety of news, articles, reports and photographs depend on the submission of material from you. Very few contributors are professional writers and photographers, so don't be put off writing because you have no experience! Canoe Focus is all about canoeists to canoeist dialogue, a paddler's magazine written by paddlers. Technical information: Contributions preferably as a Microsoft Word file, which can be emailed to [mel.brooks@britishcanoeing.org.uk](mailto:mel.brooks@britishcanoeing.org.uk). All material is accepted on the understanding that British Canoeing and its agents cannot be held liable or responsible for loss or damage, although every care and effort is taken to safeguard material. Next copy date is 3/2/15. Material arriving after this date cannot be included in the Spring 2016 issue.

Canoe Focus encourages contributions of any nature but reserve the right to edit and condense to fill the space available and unless otherwise stated unfortunately cannot reply to submissions or return any articles or images that are submitted to the magazine. Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the British Canoeing, its committees or members. The printing and advertisements in Canoe Focus does not necessarily mean that the BC endorse the company, items or services advertised. All material in Canoe Focus is strictly copyright and all rights are reserved. Reproduction without prior permission from the editor is forbidden.

### THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF BRITISH CANOEING

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**PUBLISHERS:**

WARNERS GROUP PUBLICATIONS PLC

The Maltings, West Street, Bourne,

Lincolnshire, PE10 9PH



### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

UK Inland: £20 inc p&p.

Free to British Canoeing members.

Overseas subscriptions £30 inquiries

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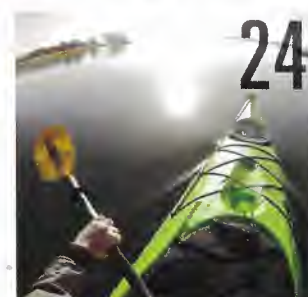
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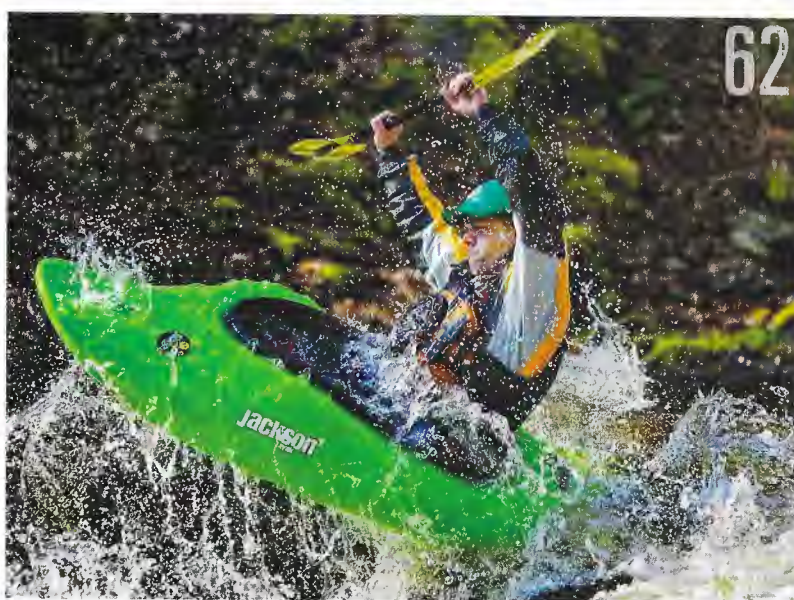
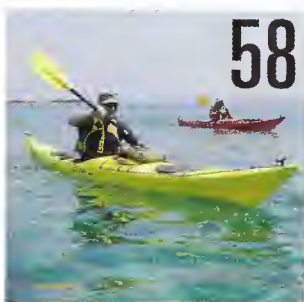
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FRONT COVER: THE UK'S MOST SUCCESSFUL FREESTYLER PADDLER EVER, CLAIRE O'HARA FLYING THE FLAG HIGH ON HER WAY TO A LADIES' K1 BRONZE MEDAL TO ADD TO HER LADIES' SQUIRTBOATING GOLD AT THE 2015 ICF WORLD FREESTYLE KAYAKING CHAMPIONSHIPS ON THE OTTAWA RIVER, CANADA. PHOTO BY: DAVE WORTLEY

### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We are really committed to reflecting the views of our members, so we welcome all of your comments. You can also use the British Canoeing Facebook page - [www.facebook.com/britishcanoeing](http://www.facebook.com/britishcanoeing)



### 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 [media@britishcanoeing.org.uk](mailto:media@britishcanoeing.org.uk)  
Even if it's just an idea – drop us a line and we'll give you some advice.







# THE GREAT NORTH PADDLE

## FUNDRAISING ON THE TYNE

This autumn a group of paddlers completed the first Great North Paddle. They made their way 13.5 Miles down the tidal stretch of the River Tyne allowing them to raise money for a range of good causes. This event was a pilot event to help build relationships with the authorities to allow a larger number of paddlers to take part in an open event in 2016.

The paddle was a complete success satisfying the Port of Tyne that it can be run safely and the organisers now have the option to allow 100 paddlers to enter next year! The 2016 event will be held on the 24th of September.

Event founder Simon Osborne, began with Kayaking for Cancer in 2002 where he successfully raised £30'000 for Leukaemia Research, in memory of his brother Mark. It was during this circumnavigation of





Britain that Simon came up with the idea for the London Kayakathon. He wanted to give people, without the resources to take part in large-scale expeditions, the chance to use kayaking as a means to raise money for causes that are close to their hearts by creating a headlining event in the paddling calendar. After many years of thought, planning and struggling to gain the necessary permission, the inaugural London Kayakathon took place on 25 April 2010.

The London Kayakathon has grown from strength to strength and raised in excess of £80'000 for good causes since its inception. Simon has now founded Paddlesports Events C.I.C. to help develop more events like the London Kayakathon. They wish to take what they have learnt from the London event and apply the working formula to the Great North Paddle and other future charity paddling events.

For more information and to register visit [www.kayakathons.com](http://www.kayakathons.com)





# WOODEN CRAFT TAKE TO THE WATER IN A MACGREGOR MEMORIAL RACE

BY ANGELA DOWDEN

September's National Canoe Sprint Regatta, the last one of 2015, saw wooden racing craft built as early as 1870 take to the water in a throwback 1000m paddle.

There are five weekend National Sprint Regattas held at Nottingham's National Water Sports Centre, Holme Pierrepont every year, and one of the five is always designated as the MacGregor Paddle in honour of John 'Rob Roy' MacGregor, the intrepid explorer who is regarded as the father of the modern sport of canoeing and kayaking.

This year is 150 years since MacGregor had his first 'Rob Roy' wooden canoe constructed, and undertook his first journey so it was felt something special should be done during the MacGregor paddle regatta to mark it.

British Canoeing Development Director Sue Hornby, who came up with the idea of the wooden craft race, said to us, "We were keen for clubs and disciplines to take the opportunity of celebrating this anniversary and the September regatta seemed an ideal opportunity to hold the event. The response was amazing and we were delighted to see so many clubs and individuals participate in their wooden kayaks and canoes."

In total, twenty-two old wooden racing K1s, K2s, C1s and touring boats took to the course on the day. Interesting boats included a Struer Hunter taken to the Mexico 1968 Olympics by Laurence Olivier of Lincoln CC, a 1965 Kayel NCC (National Chine Canadian), made from panels of plywood held together with strips of fibreglass (almost certainly the only one left), and a home-built cedar strip open canoe. The oldest craft racing on the water was a Rob Roy canoe built circa 1870, which was kept at the Canoe Club, before it became the Royal Canoe Club.

After the event Craig Duff commented, "I hope everyone that took part and spectated felt this was an appropriate way of paying homage to the early roots of canoeing. John MacGregor wrote that canoeing was 'a new mode of travelling ... by which new people and things are met with, while healthy exercise is enjoyed and an interest ever varied with excitement keeps fully alert the energies of the mind.' I hope what we did with the wooden craft was in keeping with that sentiment!"

The winning time was 5:39:07 by Nottingham K2 crew Thomas Butt and Mark Blatchley.



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## TEAM GB SLALOM TEAM SELECTED FOR RIO 2016

The British Olympic Association (BOA) has now confirmed the four Canoe Slalom athletes officially selected to compete for Team GB at next summer's Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

The athletes selected to Team GB across the four events are:

- David Florence – Men's C1 & C2 (Lloyds Register)
- Richard Hounslow – Men's C2 (Independent)
- Fiona Pennie – Women's K1 (CR Cats)
- Joe Clarke – Men's K1 (Stafford & Stone)

With nine months to go until the start of Rio 2016, canoeing becomes the second sport to announce athletes for the Games following the eight sailors named in September.

David Florence and Richard Hounslow, a who are paired together in the Men's C2 event, return to the Olympic Games after achieving silver medals in the London 2012 Olympic with Rio 2016 being Florence's third time at the Games after also competing in C1 at Beijing 2008 securing another silver medal.

The second Scot on the team, Fiona Pennie who will take the seat in the Women's K1 in Rio, has also represented Team GB before at the Olympic Games before in Beijing 2008. Completing the Canoe Slalom Team GB is Staffordshire's Joe Clarke, 23 who will compete in the Men's K1 and make his Olympic debut in Rio. Joe, an exciting young talent, has been the British team's most consistent paddler in this highly competitive event over the last three years and won World Cup silver in 2014.

Team GB's slalom canoeists have claimed seven medals over the last six Olympic Games – one gold, five silver and one bronze – since the sport was introduced consistently on the Olympic Programme at Barcelona 1992.

Team GB Canoeing Team Leader John Anderson told Focus, "Our athletes have been tested throughout a long and challenging season and I am confident we have selected one of our strongest teams ever, with a huge depth of experience of competing and winning medals at the highest level."

David Florence said, "I've thought a lot about Rio in the years since the London 2012 Games and I've been desperate to get the chance to compete there. To finally know that I have my place at the 2016 Olympics is so exciting. I can't wait to get out there for the first time and I'm looking forward to giving my all over the next 10 months."

Joe Clarke said, "Since starting canoeing I have always dreamt about

going to the Olympics and now I can finally say I'm going. It really is a dream come true! But the hard work certainly doesn't stop here, this is only stage one of the journey ticked off."

David Florence, Richard Hounslow, Fiona Pennie and Joe Clarke will make up 4 of the expected, 350 athletes to make up Team GB at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

**SINCE STARTING  
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# SURF COMPETITION RETURNS TO THE NORTH EAST

A group of local surf enthusiasts from regional clubs approached the Regional Development Team with a plan to revive surf kayaking in the North East region, which consisted of developing Four Star leaders who could run surfing courses to get more people on the waves. The whole experience was a steep learning curve as none of the group had actually run a competition before and only three had ever been to a surf kayak competition, so experience wise it would be fair to say they were limited. However what they lacked in experience was more than made up with drive, enthusiasm and determination to push this through.

From the outset the aim of the day was to have a fun competition with a mix of both beginners and experienced surf kayakers with a fair level of competition that would allow all-comers to enjoy the day. A key part of the programme was to encourage new participants to surf kayaking through a six week program to give people confidence and experience in the surf.

## OPEN COMPETITION

For many at the event this was their first surf competition mixing it with World Champions, with three rounds of hard fought heats. With some challenging surf conditions competitors had 20 minutes to perform the best scoring moves. After the heats the positions were totalled and handicaps added, leaving the top eight to fight it out in two semi-finals. Husband and wife British team paddlers Dan and Tamsin Green battled it out in the finals with Dan eventually winning the final with Tamsin 2nd. Marcus Jackson from the local Tynemouth club was a close third and Rachel Hudspith fourth.

## BEGINNERS' COMPETITION

The beginners' competition offered coaching throughout their heats to improve the paddlers and get the most out of their heats. In the main final newcomer Aiden Nolan gave a great performance to win

him first place. Junior paddler Sam Wilson won the 'Plate Final' and Veronica Edwards won the 'Shield Final'. All paddlers gave a fantastic performance and it was great to see everyone helping out and pitching in to make the day a great success.

## TOOTEGA EXPRESSION SESSION

From a spectators point of view one of the highlights of the day was the Tootega Expression Session. This event was open to all, with a mass start using Tootega sit-on-tops with the sole goal to score the best wave. This event summarised the ethos of the day of good humour and great surfing. Chris Hobson showing us what can be done in the waves on a sit-on-top won best wave.

A huge thank you to our sponsors, volunteers and competitors, thanks guys you made this day a success:

- Ainsworth Paddles UK
- Tootega
- Ride Surf Kayaks
- Tynemouth Volunteer Lifeguards
- Hadaway & Hadaway Solicitors
- Members of Tynemouth Canoe and Waveski Club and Durham Kayak Club
- Volunteers from North Tyneside Council
- MC for the day Nick Graham
- British Canoeing and North East Region RDT
- Stuart Proud Photographer

And a thanks to co-organiser Cullercoats Bike & Kayak who gave their time and free equipment loan to support the surf development program in the lead up to the event.

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# CANOE POLO

## EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

BY JILL HODGSHON AND DAVID MCBAY

The 2015 European Canoe Polo Championships took place in Essen, Germany and four British teams (Men's, Women's, U21 Men and U21 Women) travelled with a group of very passionate supporters, who were given plenty to cheer about!

A year of intense training involving countless gym sessions, speed and endurance work in boats and perfecting manoeuvrability and ball handling, culminated in some very confident performances against the best teams in Europe, including the world champions in each category.

After the excitement of the opening ceremony, at which U21 player Shivan McCutcheon was flag bearer the teams took to the water for four days of solid competition. There was drama on and off the water with torrential rain and scorching sun, tick bites, coaches swimming and even a case of repetitive strain injury for one eager flag-waving supporter.

The Men's Team flew through the first two group games, one with a 24:0 win! Before losing two very tight games dropping them into the lower pool. From then on it was wins all round until a final 9:0 victory over Sweden to claim 9th place overall.

The Ladies' Team also had a great start, topping their group before a double round robin with the Dutch and Swiss teams. A win, a draw and two losses were unfortunately not enough to see them through but they fought off the Czech Republic twice to secure a 5th place finish.

Both U21s teams worked their way to the semi-finals with some exceptional performances. They also both led at halftime in their respective semi-finals but couldn't quite hold on to secure victory. After two more nail biting games for all, both teams were forced to settle for 4th.

With a raft of players and coaches taking part in their first major British tournament all of the teams showed great promise for the months and year ahead! The supporters were amazing and cheered throughout as Aimee Robson secured 1st in the Ladies League with 18 and Gallin Montgomery placed 2nd in the Men's with 20.

The focus of the British squads now turns to preparing for the World Championships 29th August to 4th September 2016 in Syracuse, Italy!

A big thanks goes to all the coaching staff, support staff and technical staff who worked so hard on the behalf of the athletes. Thank you for all the support home and abroad.

**...ALL OF  
THE TEAMS  
SHOWED  
GREAT  
PROMISE  
FOR THE  
MONTHS  
AND YEAR  
AHEAD!**



To keep up to date with the British Polo Team, follow them on social media and visit the website at [www.canoe polo.org.uk](http://www.canoe polo.org.uk)





# SUMMER CHALLENGE RESULTS

This summer East Midlands clubs took part in British Canoeing's Summer Club Challenge. The challenge was to get as many 14-25 year olds along to sessions at the clubs, whether it was creating a new and exciting idea, or pitching how the club's existing sessions can be tailored to meet these young people's needs. The aim was then to encourage as many of these participants to join the club following the session! It was really great to see local community clubs reaching out to young adults who are typically found to be the most disengaged at their age.

## THE WINNERS OF THE CHALLENGE WERE THE FOLLOWING CLUBS:

**1st Place:** Nottingham Kayak Club. NKC did some fantastic work linking up to the Coca Cola Parklives project in the city, attracting young people through social media and via a great local campaign. They managed to get 30 new members over the summer months, with 11 of those in the 14-25 age group.

**Prize:** £150 Desperate Measures Voucher

**2nd Place:** Newark Canoe Club. NCC facilitated a great link with Grantham College for sessions to begin at the end of the summer months. Ten Grantham students were able to attend the club every Friday morning and explore different crafts, techniques and learn by playing and having fun. They are now setting up a permanent link to the college where they can access eight to ten club memberships for pupils to use.

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Please keep an eye out for the Winter Club Challenge coming soon, with even better prizes up for grabs.

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# CANALS & RIVERS TRUST WILD LIFE WATCH

**As the last of the brightly coloured leaves, clinging to almost empty branches, fall to the ground and we take to the water in extra layers, our minds turn to how we can help our feathered, furry and scaly friends get through the tough winter months ahead.**

Winter is a great time to see our largest terrestrial mammals, deer. As their hiding places in dense woodland become sparse, they can often be seen leaping between the tree trunks trying their best to stay hidden, or sometimes grazing in open fields as the sun rises and the eerie mist hovers over the ground.

Badgers (*Meles meles*) and foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) are also easier to spot in the winter, particularly as the bright red fur of the fox stands out against the dull, wintry background and if it snows you might be lucky enough to spot their footprints. Badgers have long, oval shaped pads with five toe prints; it's unusual to have five toes touch the ground in this way. Fox footprints are much harder to discern, as you will find that the foot is very similar to a dog footprint. An easy way to tell is to draw a horizontal line between the two forward toe pads and the back two toe pads, if you can draw a line straight through, you have a fox track!

Birds too become more noticeable throughout the winter and although some of our familiar summertime species disappear to find warmer climes, a whole host of species think that the UK is bliss and make a beeline for our shores. Many of our rural canals and rivers twist their way through arable farmland; these fields are the best place to spot some of our winter tourists such as the redwings (*Turdus iliacus*) and the fieldfares (*Turdus pilaris*). These two species of bird look similar to the song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and sometimes you will see redwings and fieldfares flocking together. It's tricky to tell them apart but the eagle eyed will spot the red flash on the underwing, which gives the redwing its name.

Bewick's (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) and whooper (*Cygnus cygnus*) swans are also winter visitors and will gather in large impressive flocks over the cold months at well-known sites such as the Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, right next to the Gloucester & Sharpness canal. Long term studies on these birds have identified individuals by the markings on their beaks.

Recent research has discovered that some of our smallest mammals, bats, also migrate. Tiny Nathusius's pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus nathusii*) are particular fans of the wide, open waters of canals and lakes but very occasionally, they have been known to turn up on oil rigs out in the North Sea, to the surprise of all on duty. The appearance of these little animals on oil rigs suggested that they were flying across the sea, and in the last couple of years it's been confirmed that two of these pipistrelles have migrated over from the continent; one from as far away as Latvia! There is still a lot to learn about these fascinating creatures!

Back from your brisk winter paddle and snuggled up in the warm, why not bring the wildlife to you and set up a feeding station in your garden so that you can watch them from the comfort of your sofa? The birds and mammals, who find the winter months such a struggle to find enough food, will certainly thank you for it. Of course, there are

many things that you can buy for the wild birds from your local garden centre but it's much more fun to have a go at making your own delights for them! Try filling empty yoghurt pots with a lard and seed mix- don't forget to add some string so that you can tie it up in the trees once it's set! Scatter some on the ground too for the small mammals, like mice and voles, who will also be feeling the cold!

A great way to keep warm in the winter is to do something active. Along with taking to the water and enjoying the changing landscapes from your canoe, you could have a go at building your very own hibernaculum! A hibernaculum is a place where small animals such as mice, voles, hedgehogs and more will tuck themselves away to try and keep warm when the temperatures drop. A simple stack of logs is heaven to these vulnerable creatures or if you're feeling really adventurous you could dig a hole (0.5m square as a minimum), fill it with big rocks and smaller stones, add a pile of logs and sticks on top of this at ground level and then cover the whole structure back over with the soil and re-seed it with a wildflower mix. Don't pack the soil too tightly as the animals need to be able to squeeze their way into the safe haven.

Do you recall learning about food chains in school? If we don't look after the insects, the larger animals will struggle too from a lack of food. There are some really simple things that you can do to help insects get through the winter. Bumblebees find hollows underground and rest there, buried in the soil until spring. You can replicate these hollows by burying an old teapot and leaving the opening of the spout level with the ground or simply bundle some short lengths of bamboo canes together, tie them with twine and place them securely in trees. Solitary bees will then fill the hollow canes with their eggs and pollen for the newly hatched larvae to eat. If you have the space, you could build an insect tower from old wooden pallets or wood scraps to provide a home for a wide variety of insects from beetles to lacewings and butterflies to spiders.

Now that you have built it, they will surely come in their thousands! If each of us can make our gardens just a little bit more wildlife friendly, our diverse ecosystems can continue to flourish. But don't forget to tell the Canal & River Trust what you have enticed into your garden and what you have seen out on the canals and rivers as you enjoy your time out on the water!

The Canal & River Trust have developed a handy mobile phone app that is really easy to use, as it uses GPS to locate your exact position, so you can log wildlife as you spot it. The app also has a spotter's guide, with photos, to help with your identification skills. The mobile app is free to download from your smart-phone's app store (search Canal & River Trust eNatureWatch) or you can record the animals you've seen on the website ([www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)). Your help, in mapping the precious wildlife of the waterways, ensures that we maintain and look after the natural beauty of our historic waterways.



'Paddling it feels like cheating' Aniol

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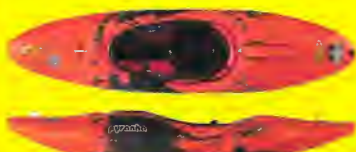


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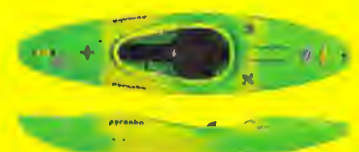
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# BRITISH CANOEING BACKS WORLD RIVERS DAY



**F**or the second year running, British Canoeing has supported World Rivers Day, which seeks to encourage people to show their passion for their local waterways. The initiative, which took place on September 27th this year, urges people from across the globe to get involved in everything from special environmental events to just spending time on their local river and celebrating the role waterways play in our lives.

British Canoeing helped put together a number of events across the country, which were all a huge success.

In Bootle, Merseyside our partners at Canal & River Trust used the day to engage young people into their ongoing project to develop a coast to coast canoe trail. Inspiring people from communities along the Liverpool to Goole route is a key aim of the project and World Rivers Day gave people in Bootle a chance to take to the water in a range of canoes and kayaks for the first time.

In Preston, members of Ribble Canoe Club got on to the Lancaster Canal to help clear a stretch starting from the town's basin. Pat Green, one of British Canoeing's voluntary Local Waterways Advisers told Focus, "All the club members had a great day clearing the canal, I'm pleased to say the Canal & River Trust's wagon was rather full after we had finished. We had to tear one club member away from the water, as he wanted to keep going even after

being out in his open canoe for over five hours! Canoe clean ups are a great way for paddlers to contribute to their local waterway – and are a lot of fun too."

In Yalding, our Regional Waterways Adviser for South East England, Noel Humphrey, another of our vital volunteers, set up a great day to celebrate our partnership with the Environment Agency on the River Medway. Noel helped visitors familiarise themselves with the new facilities for paddlers on the water, including new showers and a toilet block and also led a canoe clean up on the river.

Kevin East, our Waterways and Environment Manager for Southern England was also on-hand in Yalding to publicise the Check, Clean, Dry message, ensuring paddlers are doing their bit to prevent the spread of non-native invasive species. Many of the paddlers on the day went away with Check, Clean, Dry

**AFTER A SUCCESSFUL WORLD RIVERS DAY IN 2015, WE'LL BE LOOKING TO PUT TOGETHER MORE EVENTS IN 2016, SO SEND US YOUR IDEAS FOR WAYS WE CAN CELEBRATE OUR RIVERS!**



**THESE EVENTS REALLY HELP US SHOWCASE THE WORK OUR VOLUNTEERS, CLUBS AND MANY OTHER PADDLERS ARE DOING ALL YEAR ROUND TO HELP PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR RIVERS, CANALS AND LAKES.**



stickers for their boats, so they can help spread the message further!

St Austell Canoe club along with some local residents collected rubbish that had been washed up around the St Austell Bay area. They embarked on a trip around the coves of the bay collecting as much rubbish as possible. Using canoes to collect the rubbish made it easier to transport back to Porthpean Beach where the local council was ready to take it away. There were some surprises in what had been collected especially a very large buoy! In all 70kgs of rubbish was collected on the day and disposed of by Cornwall Council.

These events really help us showcase the work our volunteers, clubs and many other paddlers are doing all year round to help protect and enhance our rivers, canals and lakes. British Canoeing would like to

thank all the volunteers who helped make these events a success, with thanks also for their efforts throughout the whole year. The events also show the range of partnerships British Canoeing and our volunteers have developed to bring benefits for both canoeists and our rivers.

After a successful World Rivers Day in 2015, we'll be looking to put together more events in 2016, so send us your ideas for ways we can celebrate our rivers!

Following the success of the day itself, events have continued to be held on our rivers since World Rivers Day. Wychavon Canoe Club on the River Aon held an event on the 10th October, clearing rubbish from a stretch of the river close to their base, including 3 shopping trolleys and an oven! Caroline Attwood Reusser, chair of WKCC said, "The club has always



cared deeply about the river but this initiative has really made us focus on how we can improve it. On our club nights we're starting to pick up rubbish, it's just what we do now." **CF**



WHAT

ARTICLE & PHOTO BY DAVID MCBAY

# GEAR

## CANOE POLO

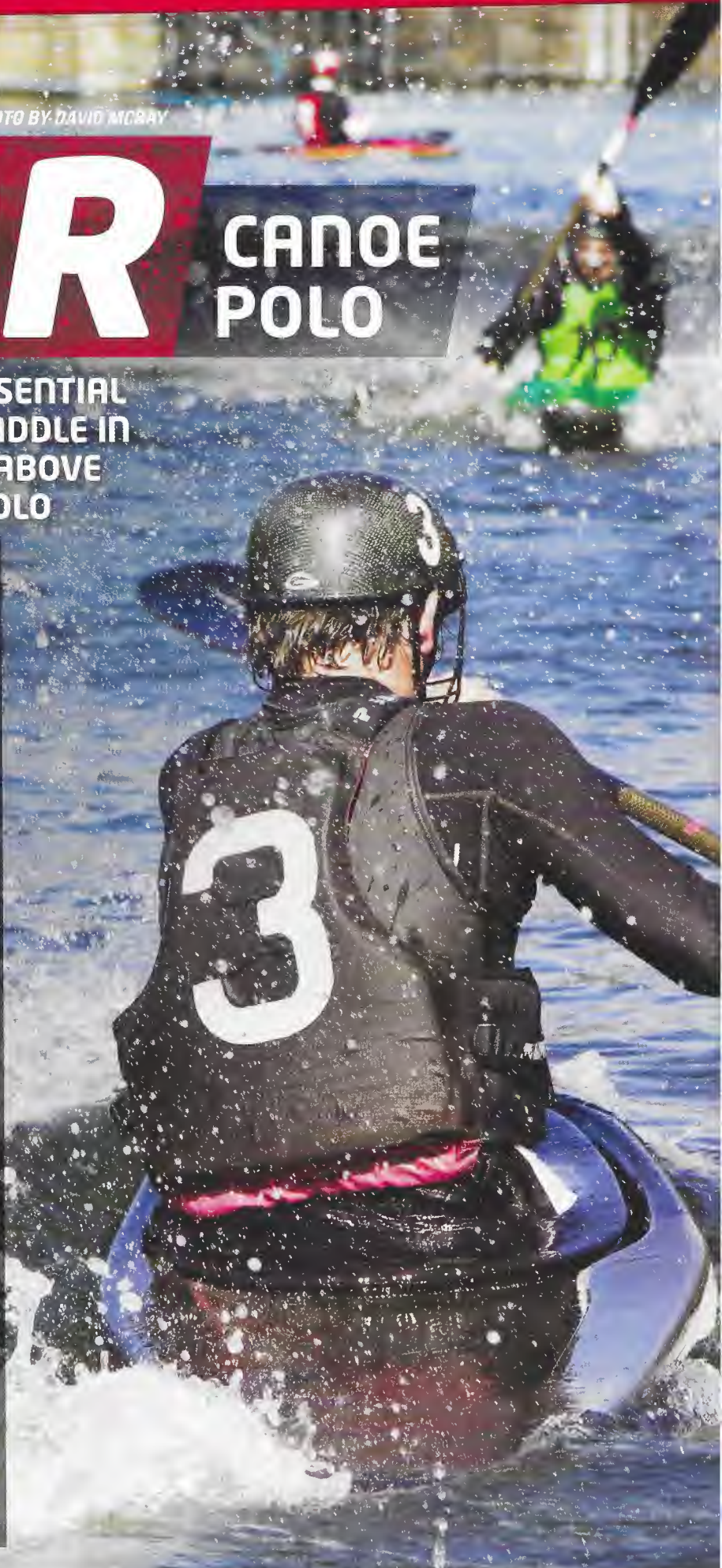
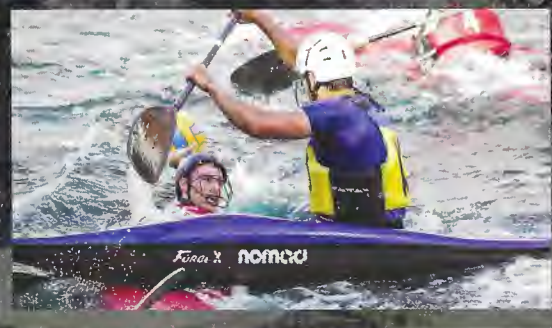
THE FOCUS GUIDE TO THE ESSENTIAL KIT YOU'LL NEED TO DIP A PADDLE IN TO THE FAST, FURIOUS AND ABOVE ALL FUN SPORT OF CANOE POLO

**C**anoe polo is a five a side paddling sport with regular contact and scrapping for possession and its equipment has become increasingly distinct and technical over the years, as the sport grows and players look to gain the smallest advantages. Most of the international rules that govern the designs suitable for polo use are designed for safety to protect players. In the UK we are lucky enough to have some of the leading manufactures of canoe polo equipment in the world right here.

The main equipment used in canoe polo consists of a regulation kayak, paddles and body protection. Body protection is both, a buoyancy aid and a helmet with faceguard.

### KAYAK

Kayaks are designed to balance both agility and front line speed. Canoe polo kayaks are similar in many aspects to those used in canoe slalom. They are typically 3m long with foam bumpers on the nose and tail, to soften any potential impact. These bumpers are most commonly integrated into modern designs to decrease drag and they must follow regulations on minimum height and thickness to ensure they fully protect from the hard material underneath. Depending on the position a player regularly holds; they will often select a boat more suited to that position. Chasers will choose a kayak that is better with speed, whereas zoners will prioritise bulk and manoeuvrability.





### PADDLES

Paddles are typically 2m long, with rounded edges and a minimum thickness to ensure that the edges are not dangerously sharp. These can be set at a variety of angles depending on the player's preference: 45° - 60° for speed and up to almost 90° for goalkeeping. This is to facilitate power behind the blade when being held vertically. In the past asymmetric blades were the most popular, but now spoon/teardrop shaped blades dominate player's choice due to their increased speed and release from the water.



### BUOYANCY AID (BODY PROTECTION)

For body protection, the buoyancy aid must also, like the padding around the kayak, be a minimum thickness to protect against impact from other players' equipment during games. Unlike other areas of paddling, canoe polo aids generally do not have any zips, pockets or anything else that could potentially snag or injure anyone upon contact in a game. They also have numbers on them to help identify team members and are reversible so teams have a choice of two contrasting colours to play in to prevent clashes.

### HELMET AND FACEGUARD

Another part of body protection is the helmet with faceguard. This serves as protection of the player's head and face against impact from the ball and other player's equipment during a game. This may seem obvious, but it isn't too long ago that faceguards were not a requirement of the sport. Nowadays the gaps in the faceguard grill must be small enough to prevent the edge of a paddle from touching a player's face.



### SPRAYDECK

Most neoprene kayaking keyhole decks are appropriate for Polo, but most players go for decks with stronger reinforcement such as kevlar fibres in order to prevent wear and tear.

The kayak, paddles and helmet can be made out of a range of suitable materials balancing cost, durability and lightness. At entry level, plastic is the most popular material as it is cheap and durable, but is much heavier than composite materials such as diolen, Kevlar or carbon. The composite materials are positively much lighter, however they are more expensive and can damage more easily from impact.

As canoe polo is a team sport, players go to large lengths in order to look the same, especially within the highest divisions. This generally involves ensuring all equipment is the same colour, fablon is a common option to alter the boat colour. Team individuality is increasingly represented in avant-garde buoyancy aid and boat designs!

In addition to the players equipment there are two more vital components: goals and a ball. Canoe polo goals are raised 2m above the water and are 1m high by 1.5m wide. The goals used in the sport today have developed largely since the days of a raised board target.

A full pitch size is 35m by 23m, but clubs regularly train and compete in narrower and shorter pitches when indoors. A water polo ball, size five for open, size four for ladies and development, is the final and most crucial component.

In reality if you are part of a club interested in getting involved in canoe polo the best way to start is to get a ball and have pass around and play some sensible possession based games in whatever boats you have! Once some interest has been developed potentially enter a development league. We are fortunate in the UK to have a highly supportive polo community always looking to encourage new clubs to participate through sharing equipment in the early stages of development.

To find out more and discover how you can get involved with canoe polo head to [www.canoe polo.org.uk](http://www.canoe polo.org.uk)





IMAGES: OLLIE HARDING

# A YEAR IN MARATHON

## A LOOK BACK AT THE BRITISH MARATHON TEAM 2015

LUKE HARDING AND  
MAGNUS GREGORY,  
LONGRIDGE CANOE CLUB,  
MARATHON WORLD  
CHAMPIONSHIPS, GYOR

**I**t's been a busy year for the British Marathon Team, with a full schedule of domestic and international events.

The focus for the main team was the European and World Championships, with the development team racing at the Waterlands Marathon and World Cup. There have been some excellent results this season, and some new faces featuring on the team as well as plenty of fierce competition for places, especially at U23 level. Now that the warm weather of the summer is a distant memory we took a look back on what the team got up to in 2015.

### WATERLANDS MARATHON, AMSTERDAM - APRIL

Following an early season assessment race at Thameside 2,

Britain took a big development team of 14 boats to Waterlands Marathon in Amsterdam. The Senior Men's race produced a start line of over 70 boats, including several of last season's top performers from the European and World Championships.

The course features open stretches of canal interspersed with 'ditch' like sections only a few metres wide. The team raced well on the tricky course and against top class opposition to finish from 15th onwards. Aside from this the top four positions were claimed out by our top marathon paddlers, in a fantastic display of teamwork from the British Team. Our small junior boys team also raced well, despite a mix up with the course markings, they took 2nd and 3rd places and all finished inside the top ten.

- SMK1:** Tim Pendle 1st, Andy Daniels 2nd, Tom Daniels 3rd, Keith Moule 4th (all private entries). Peter Wilkes 15th, Tom Lusty 16th, Dan Johnson 17th, Robert Poole 21st, Jack Childerstone 23rd, Billy Butler 24th, Ross McMullen 25th, Lewis Duffield 26th, Matt Johnson 41st
- JMK1:** Declan Strong 2nd, Josh Westwood 3rd, Will Smithson 6th, David Hatton 7th, Tim Morris 9th
- SWK1:** Lizzie Broughton 1st, Jenny Illidge 2nd (private entries)





the front four. This enabled them to lead into the final portage and finish ahead of the rest of the field.

Completing the medals for Britain was Lizzie Broughton who matched last season's performance with a silver medal in the Senior Women's K1 race. Unable to live with the pace of the eventual winner, Lizzie paddled a well thought out second half of the race to stay well clear of the rest of the field with an Italian paddler, while also leaving enough in reserve to take the silver medal.

Other notable performances were 6th and 8th for Sam Plummer and Nick Romain in the U23 Men's class, a big step up for both from last year. There were close 4th places for Zygyg/James Russell and Lizzie/Fay Lamph in the K2 events.

**JMK1:** Magnus Gregory 1st,  
Zygyg Chmiel 2nd

**JMK2:** Zygyg Chmiel/  
James Russell 4th,  
Magnus Gregory/  
Luke Harding 8th

**U23MK1:** Sam Plummer 6th,  
Nick Romain 8th

**SMK1:** Keith Moule 11th,  
Jon Simmons 13th

**SMK2:** Tim Pendle/  
Andy Daniels 7th

**U23WK1:** Jenny Illidge 7th

**SWK1:** Lizzie Broughton 2nd,  
Fay Lamph 5th

**SWK2:** Lizzie Broughton/  
Fay Lamph 4th

### SANABRIA - JULY

The K4 event, held over two days in Spain, was contested by a crew of Tom Daniels, Billy Butler, Mike Goodall and Ross McMullen. Against strong competition from both the

host country and from national teams featuring paddlers from the European Championships, the team took 5th place overall.

### WORLD CUP, GERMANY - AUGUST

The only World Cup of the year was hosted in early August in Brandenburg, Germany, the location for next year's World Championships. This was a K1 only event, with short course racing (3.8km and 2 portages) on the Saturday and conventional marathon distance racing on Sunday. The standout performance of the team came from newcomer Billy Butler, who secured a 4th place on the long race, behind some quality South African and European paddlers.

Most of the remaining senior men placed well in the top half of the field. Dan Johnson was the top British senior men's racer in the short course races, taking 7th place after himself and Billy were the only Brits to qualify for the final. Melissa Johnson had to race up as a senior due to low entries, but this did not stop her from taking a great 6th place on the short course race in her first major international. Our junior boys also raced well, both making the final of the short course race.

**JMK1:** Luke Bowyer 5th (S) & 6th (L),  
Tim Morris 8th (S) & 8th (L)

**SMK1:** Billy Butler 4th (L) & 9th (S),  
Tom Sharpe 7th (L),  
Mike Goodall 8th (L),  
Ross McMullen 10th (L),  
Dan Johnson 11th (L) & 7th (S),  
Albert Hicks 16th (L)

**SWK1:** Jenny Swallow 6th (L) & 9th (S),  
Melissa Johnson 9th (L)  
& 6th (S) →

### EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS, SLOVENIA - JULY

Lake Bohinj was the destination for this year's European Championships, and was perhaps the most picturesque location most of the team had ever paddled at. Nestled in the Slovenian mountains the heat was intense and unrelenting leading to tough racing conditions for all. The British Team picked up three medals in this event. First of all two fantastic performances from our Junior Boys K1's led to British 1st and 2nd positions. Magnus Gregory took 1st, overhauling Zygyg Chmiel in the final 200-metres after composed and mature performances from both. Having made it straight to the business end of the race they whittled down the lead group, and controlled

"THE STANDOUT PERFORMANCE OF THE TEAM CAME FROM NEWCOMER BILLY BUTLER, WHO SECURED A 4TH PLACE ON THE LONG RACE, BEHIND SOME QUALITY SOUTH AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN PADDLERS."



## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS, HUNGARY - SEPTEMBER

The team headed to Győr for the final and most important race of the season. They were greeted by an extremely low river, with high flow and shallow sections stretching the whole width of the river in some places. This meant the races would be a technical and tactical affair.

Our star performers were the Junior Boys Team, who took on the challenge and came away with medals in the K1 and K2 race. In the K1 race Zygy Chmiel had a hard first couple of laps to get on terms with the leaders, but once safely in the front group he didn't make a single mistake, sticking like glue to the standout Hungarian who looked strongest throughout. This enabled them to break clear to secure 1st and 2nd place. Although Zygy was unable to maintain contact over

the final lap he ran through the last portage with a huge grin on his face. He crossed the line after the final short lap to take a brilliant silver medal, much to the delight of his watching friends and family. Magnus Gregory was in contention for 3rd place the whole race but was unlucky to lose out over the final short lap, taking a still impressive 4th place.

The following day both boys raced again, with Magnus and Luke Harding leaving nothing to chance this time and negotiating the first few laps safely before managing to break clear with a Hungarian crew, with one Hungarian boat already further up the river. This meant a medal was secure, and the boys took a well-deserved bronze after a very well planned out race.

Zygy and James Russell took 7th place. The remaining juniors, Melissa

Johnson and Elise Piercy, took a good 8th place in the Junior Girls race against strong opposition. This was their first international together after only a short amount of time paddling as a K2, so a promising sign for future seasons.

In the U23 and Senior Women's races hopes were high for Sam Rees Clark and Lizzie Broughton after their silver medal performances last year but it wasn't quite to be this time. In the U23 race Sam was with the leading group for a couple of laps but the pace took its toll and she dropped back to finish 7th. Lizzie was 5th in a tough senior race after making the front group but being unable to find the pace to cope with the early breaks. Sam also raced up in the senior class the following day and finished 8th, both ladies will come back next year keen to make the podium again.







ZYGGY CHMIEL, NOTTINGHAM KAYAK CLUB 2ND AT MARATHON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS, GYOR



Jenny Illidge rounded off a good season by making the top 10 in the U23 race. In the Women's K2 Lizzie/ Fay Lamph were again facing the full complement of top female crews from around the world, and did well to make the front group. They ended up in a group contesting 2nd-6th and after struggling into a strong headwind unfortunately came in at the wrong end of this group to take 6th. Jenny Illidge/ Jenny Swallow took 11th in the first outing at this level.

Our U23 men had a real race on their hands. Lewis Duffield had a fantastic start to be right in contention early on, however the pace was unrelenting and Lewis dropped back a little as Sam Plummer came through, both men racing in the third group for the majority of the race. They both worked their way round the group well, with Lewis finishing 14th and Sam just behind in 15th.

In the Senior Men's race, there was another bumper field, with 40 boats squeezing onto a start line that only comfortably held 30 at most. As expected, the pace was relentless and in the early part of the race Keith Moule found himself chasing down the second group. Once safe in this group he set about picking off those who had dropped

from the front of the race. After a long seven laps he took 9th place on a sprint finish- his second top ten finish in two years, against a stellar field. Billy Butler has improved at an astounding rate this season and finished his year on a high by taking a top 20 position, crossing the line in 19th place in this race.

In the Men's K2 race Tim Pendle/ Andy Daniels had a great start and were sitting within a big lead group for a couple of laps when disaster struck. Their rudder took a heavy hit on a shallow part of the river leading to a loss of steering and no option but a complete rudder change. They did go onto finish their race, taking 19th place. Keith Moule/ Tom Sharpe were looking good in the third group before a swim at the portage led to a lonely final few laps. They finished in 16th place.

**JMK1:** Zygy Chmiel 2nd, Magnus Gregory 4th

**JMK2:** Magnus Gregory/ Luke Harding 3rd, Zygy Chmiel/ James Russell 7th,

**U23MK1:** Lewis Duffield 14th, Sam Plummer 15th

**JWK2:** Elise Piercy/ Melissa Johnson 8th

**SMK1:** Keith Moule 9th, Billy Butler 19th

**SMK2:** Keith Moule/ Tom Sharpe 16th, Tim Pendle/ Andy Daniels 19th

**U23WK1:** Sam Rees-Clark 7th, Jenny Illidge 10th

**SWK1:** Lizzie Broughton 5th, Sam Rees Clark 8th

**SWK2:** Lizzie Broughton/ Fay Lamph 6th, Jenny Illidge/ Jenny Swallow 11th

It's also been a busy year for the development paddlers. The formation of the national training group last winter allowed a much larger group of athletes to gain access to high quality intense training this winter at the squad training days.

In 2015 across all classes over 150 athletes competed in assessment races for the chance to get a GB vest, or simply to measure their progress against the best in the country.

Thank you to all the volunteers, supporters, family, friends and brands who all made this possible this year. **GF**

## USEFUL INFO



To find out how you can get started in marathon racing go to [www.canoeracing.org.uk/marathon/](http://www.canoeracing.org.uk/marathon/)



# THREE LAKES CHALLENGE FILM



**I**t's here! This year's blockbuster film, starring Olympic canoeing star Tim Baillie, has been released and is available to watch now on YouTube. Now you'll need to imagine that the next paragraph is said in the deep and dramatic voice of the voiceover man at the cinema: 'One man. One boat. Three lakes. Now you can follow Tim's quest to conquer Go Canoeing's epic Three Lake Challenge... Will you dare to follow in his wake?'

The Three Lakes Challenge film sees Tim take on the three largest lakes in England, Scotland and Wales in a bid to inspire and encourage other paddlers, of all ages and abilities, to train up and take on the task themselves.

We also see Tim discovering a different side to paddling. Having won an Olympic gold medal in the Canoe Slalom in 2012, Tim is well used to rapid bursts of energy in fast running water. The Three Lakes Challenge, however, is a feat of endurance and so calls for a whole different skill set.

Starting with a seven mile paddle on Llyn Tegid (Lake Bala), in Wales, we then follow Tim on to Lake Windermere in England. Windermere is eleven miles long and Tim shows us

the importance of studying the route maps correctly before setting out!

Loch Awe, in Scotland, is the longest and toughest of the lakes in the challenge. At twenty-five miles long and with regular changes in the weather conditions; not to mention the remote feel, Loch Awe requires good planning and preparation.

The strain of the challenge becomes clear in the film, as Tim, despite his makeshift map, struggles to judge how

far along the lake he is. With the rain and midges descending the Three Lakes Challenge becomes a test for even the toughest Olympian.

In the last few months we have heard from a variety of paddlers who have taken on one or all three of our challenge routes. With Joseph Rosenfeld becoming the youngest Three Lakes completion at the age of fourteen and

a team from Shropshire Paddlesport taking on the Three Lakes and Three Peaks challenges simultaneously!

If you are interested in taking on one of Go Canoeing's challenge routes you can find all the information you need (including detailed route maps), as well as a link to the film at [www.britishcanoeing.org.uk](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk) Grab your popcorn and a paddle and enjoy!

WITH THE  
RAIN AND  
MIDGES  
DESCENDING  
THE THREE  
LAKES  
CHALLENGE  
BECOMES  
A TEST FOR  
EVEN THE  
TOUGHEST  
OLYMPIAN.





# FESTIVE FUN!

FESTIVE FANCY DRESS WILL REALLY MAXIMISE THE FUN! THINK PADDLING PLUM PUDDINGS, WE THREE KAYAKING KINGS AND CANOEING CHERUBS... WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE PICTURES!

**W**ith the feasts and excesses of the Christmas season almost upon us what better way to earn some mince pie credits than to head out on a festive paddle?

Winter can be the prettiest time of year with glistening frost and glowing sunsets, so here at Go Canoeing we have been gathering some lovely 'Guided Tours' for you to enjoy.

From mince pie tours in the West Midlands to Christmas canoe paddles in the New Forest, there will be an event for everyone to get involved in.

And, of course, festive fancy dress will really maximise the fun! Think Paddling Plum Puddings, We Three Kayaking Kings and Canoeing Cherubs...we can't wait to see the pictures!

We are excited to be holding our inaugural Santa Paddle in partnership with the National Water Sports Centre! Staff members, local clubs, friends and family will be heading onto the water on 12th/13th of December for a range of activities – all participants will be required to don a Santa hat of course! If you are in the area we would be delighted if you could join us.



## USEFUL INFO

For more information and to book, please visit the National Water Sports Centre website.

The National Water Sports Centre will also be offering free paddling on the White Water course on both the 12th and 13th of December (time restrictions will apply).

If your club doesn't have an event organised yet why not get one planned and let us know all about it? How about canoeing carols or Wise Men (and Women!) on the water?



# NATIONAL GO CANOEING WEEK 2016

**M**any of you will have taken part in our National Go Canoeing Week in 2015 and helped us to register over 42,841 miles paddled on our Road To Rio!



National Go Canoeing week will run from May 28th to June 5th in 2016 and we want you to take part. This year we will be going even bigger and better with our targets so now is the time to plan how you're going to rack up your miles.

Last year we had people contribute everything from 1-mile to 125-miles

to help us reach our target! You can paddle solo or with a group. Get out on your favourite stretch of water or find a whole new adventure. Why not get your non-canoeing friends to give paddling a go too? Watch out for updates on this year's theme and target. We can't wait to see you out on the water!

## CLUBS AND CENTRES - HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

- Inspire new paddlers by organising and registering Starter Sessions
- Run fun packed activities for existing staff, customers and members
- Set a mileage target for your organisation

Last year our top eight organisations contributed over 1000 miles each to our total mileage. And our top mileage, from one club, was 2789 miles! Can your club beat that this year?





# ENJOY THE FESTIVE SEASON WITH OUR WINTER ACTIVITIES



FIND AN ACTIVITY NEAR YOU  
VISIT [BRITISHCANOEING.ORG.UK](http://BRITISHCANOEING.ORG.UK)



# John MacGregor Exhibition Exceeds Expectations

BY CRAIG DUFF



"IT WAS AMAZING TO SEE ONE OF THE ORIGINAL ROB ROY'S AND READ ABOUT JOHN MACGREGOR'S EXPLOITS WHICH GAVE BIRTH TO THE SPORT WE ALL LOVE TODAY, HATS OFF TO JOHN MACGREGOR!"

**T**hroughout this year we have run a number of articles in Focus about John MacGregor in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of his first journey in his Rob Roy canoe. The Canoe Slalom World Championships at Lee Valley provided the ideal opportunity for British Canoeing to showcase both the exploits of John MacGregor and a history of canoeing in the Great Britain since that time. The exhibit displayed variety of boats from open canoe sailing, canoe slalom, kayak racing, and white water to name a few, for people to learn the many exciting types of canoeing available.

The exhibition was also used to inspire and educate hundreds of school children that attended the World Championships throughout the week. The children were able to view the boats and information and then put their new knowledge to the test by taking part in a quiz on all things about John MacGregor, the Pioneer of British Canoeing, along with other questions all about our sport and its history.

## TOUCHING THE PAST

As this year celebrates 150 years since John MacGregor set out on his epic journey of 'A Thousand Miles in a Rob Roy Canoe', it was a great opportunity to show off MacGregor's legacy by putting his original Rob Roy boat on display. It was wonderful to see the reactions of those passionate about canoeing enjoying this tangible

link to the beginnings of our sport and learning a bit more about it, with information on display along with John MacGregor's original diaries and lots of other unique memorabilia.

"It was a major success and the exhibition saw many different people come and learn about our sport. From members of the public watching the slalom, to ICF staff, national athletes and coaches. It was great to see so many people have such a keen interest and know that people were leaving having learnt more about canoeing and the major success it has had at home and abroad" Recalled Go Canoeing Officer, Craig Duff.

Sue Hornby, Director of Development at British Canoeing added. "We are absolutely delighted with the success of the John MacGregor Exhibition at the 2015 Canoe Slalom World Championships. We wanted this year to be not only a





**IT WAS WONDERFUL TO SEE THE REACTIONS OF THOSE PASSIONATE ABOUT CANOEING ENJOYING THIS TANGIBLE LINK TO THE BEGINNINGS OF OUR SPORT.**

celebration of MacGregor's amazing journeys and philanthropic work but also to recognise 1865 as the start of modern day canoeing. The splendid display of boats and equipment from an original Rob Roy to modern day carbon fibre boats was popular with old and young, with many stories being told and retold in the marquee. The event provided the ideal opportunity to showcase our amazing heritage and a unique individual - John MacGregor.

Howard Blackman, Head of Participation & Development at British Canoeing commented, "The John MacGregor Exhibition provided a wonderful historic display of canoeing over the last 150 years, which attracted great interest from the spectators, volunteers and athletes at the Canoe Slalom World Championships. It was amazing to see one of the original


Rob Roy's and read about John MacGregor's exploits, which gave birth to the sport we all love today, hats off to John MacGregor!"

### A BEAUTIFUL HERITAGE

Also on display were the 'Open Canoe Sail' and 'Open Canoe Chestnut', which were kindly provided by Nick Dennis. Nick is part of the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association and visitors to the exhibition were amazed at how wonderful the boats looked and the way they had been built.

The exhibition also hosted a top class display about the Cockleshell Heroes, with many items on display illustrating this daring raid during the Second World War. Operation Frankton was a commando raid by kayak on shipping in German occupied French port of Bordeaux in 1942. Many

visitors reported that they left knowing so much more about the operation including Olympic Gold Medalist Etienne Stott who came along to learn a few things about the operation.

Another special visitor to the exhibition was five times world K1M canoe slalom champion Richard Fox. Richard popped in and tried to steal back his winning K1 slalom kayak from the 1985 World Championships but decided it was better to leave it where it was! 

Special thanks go to Pyranha Kayak's Graham Mackereth for providing many boats for the exhibition and to Royal Canoe Club for loaning a number of amazing artifacts including two of John MacGregor's original diaries from 1865. Also to Nick Dennis, Alan Morrison and Ian Brumby, Ross Pearton and many others who helped make this exhibition such a top class event.



WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES ACROSS THE BOARD FROM OUR YOUNGEST PADDLERS IT'S CLEAR THAT MOVING FORWARDS TEAM GB WILL CONTINUE TO GROW AS A FORCE TO BE RENOWNED WITH ON THE INTERNATIONAL FREESTYLE ARENA.



# FLYING FOR

## 2015 ICF WORLD FREESTYLE KAYAKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

ARTICLE BY ALAN WARD,  
IMAGES BY DAVE WORTLEY

**E**very two years a host nation organises the World Freestyle Kayaking Championships and this year that prestigious task fell on the shoulders of Joe Kowalski and his team at Wilderness Tours in Ottawa, Canada.

The Ottawa River is no stranger to hosting world-class freestyle events. The World Championships





# THE FLAG

were held at 'McCoy's Chute' in 1997, the 'Buseater' in 2007 and now the dynamic wave, 'Garberator' in 2015.

The Ottawa Valley is a veritable playground for outdoor enthusiasts and whitewater adrenaline junkies in particular, so when the visiting athletes weren't training, competing or enjoying some downtime at Wilderness Tours they could be

found at another of the great play waves or holes on the river, such as 'Baby Face' or 'Corner Wave', situated just downstream of the 'Big Smoothie' eddy where the squirt competition was to be held.

Garberator is another name for a waste disposal unit. It's a fitting, if somewhat intimidating moniker, because if you didn't have quick

reactions on this fast and furious river feature you could definitely end up getting some good beater time! Adding a whole extra level of excitement to the already feisty wave was 'Garb Rock', which when you didn't get your clean blunt technique quite right could easily end in a split composite boat or an inverted bow. →



## GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

The championships kicked off with the denizens of the deep, the squirt boaters, at the world famous Big Smoothie eddy line. It's situated towards the top of a section of grade three and four water, so if you got your 'sink on' and your mystery move was too good you ran the risk of running the rest of the section. This didn't worry the assembled flotilla of world-class squirtists though, with some of the best mysteries clocking in at around 20+ seconds, followed by some ever-graceful flat-water routines.

Squirt boating is all about precision, control and creativity and the top paddlers did not disappoint. After a furious battle for the top spot between Stephen Wright and Clay Wright, Clay was elevated to the coveted gold



medal spot. The ladies also impressed with some truly astounding mysteries and once again, very smooth and stylish routines. Britain's own Claire O'Hara was defending her World Champion status and put together some beautiful flow to retain her crown and claimed yet another gold medal for her collection. The icing on the cake came from her partner, and event commentator, Jez getting down on one knee in the eddy to propose and when she said yes the cheer was deafening!

## HALF THE PADDLE...

The competition then moved back to Garb' for the OC1 class, which just like all the other categories was incredible viewing, mainly due to the top paddlers managing to pull awesome moves like pistol flips. Although they had to be quick before their boats filled up

which then made them very difficult to manoeuvre. The C1 class followed shortly after with a sterling effort from Britain's James Ibbotson, George Heyworth-Hill and Adam Ramadan, who despite putting in some great rides unfortunately missed the podium.

## YOUNG GUNS

Next up on the wave were the, ever-competitive, junior classes. As the spray cleared it was clear that the British Team had enjoyed our most successful junior men's team performance ever after having all three members make it into the finals. The standard is incredibly high in that class and after some exhilarating and explosive rides Charlie Brackpool missed the podium by just a few points, and my two protégés Hugo Scott and Hugo Anthony took home the bronze and gold medals respectively. The young, and very talented, Sophie McPeak also achieved bronze place in the junior ladies class. This was Sophie's first international competition, and she has two more years to keep pushing upwards before the seniors.

With outstanding performances across the board from our youngest paddlers it's clear that moving forwards the British Team will continue to grow as a force to be renowned with on the international freestyle arena.

## WORLD CLASS

In the senior ladies class it was an emotional final for Britain's Emily Ward who had lead the field in semi finals but just missed out on the podium. By contrast Claire O'Hara did it again for Great Britain and despite scoring lower rides going in to the final claimed yet another world champs medal. This time it was the bronze. Claire is the most successful and decorated British athlete ever at World Championship level and the fact that she continues to maintain an amazing level of skill consistency at the very top of competitive freestyle is testament to her dedication, hard work, ability to stay calm under pressure and competitive spirit. She really is an amazing role model for young freestylers and a brilliant ambassador for both the discipline as a whole and the British Team.







## BIG GUNS

The men's final was a truly incredible sight to behold, with not many points separating the golden five. Britain's Bren Orton deserves some serious recognition for leading the senior Great British men's charge for the podium and showing off his unique style, which included enormous 'panams' and 'cross-bow airscrews'!

The main battle though for the top spot came down to just three, who had led the competition from the start, France's Mathieu Dumoulin, Canada's Nick Troutman and America's Dane Jackson. They all had very similar styles on the wave and were all in the same type of boat, so when it came down to it, the strongest mental composure seemed to clinch the day and Dane Jackson took another men's gold, Nick took silver and the ever stylish Frenchie Matt took the bronze home.

## REFLECTIONS

The Ottawa once again proved while it is such a special venue for the international freestyle family to really show it's spectacular and dynamic nature to the world. All the athletes competing gave it their absolute all and displayed, not only amazing skills and breathtaking aerial moves, but also truly great camaraderie and friendship throughout the event to make this a celebration of global freestyle, and white water kayaking. The organizing team kept things slick, but always fun and the visiting supporters and teams were shown the very best of Canadian hospitality and warmth. To sun up, a great British performance from all our team paddlers at a truly wonderful event! →

## USEFUL INFO



If you want the chance to be involved in the Great British Freestyle Team and represent your country visit [www.gbfreestylekayak.com](http://www.gbfreestylekayak.com) for details on the selection events in January and how to get involved.

You can watch some of the amazing runs in the finals at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu8LP8B9c84](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu8LP8B9c84)



"WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES ACROSS THE BOARD FROM OUR YOUNGEST PADDLERS IT'S CLEAR THAT MOVING FORWARDS THE BRITISH TEAM WILL CONTINUE TO GROW AS A FORCE TO BE RENOWNED WITH ON THE INTERNATIONAL FREESTYLE ARENA."



### MY WORLDS - CLAIRE O'HARA

My worlds this year was absolutely amazing. I could not have asked for a more incredible event. Not only did I win gold in my squirt boat class and a bronze in the senior women, but I also won a diamond in life when my partner Jez proposed to me on the water during the finals in front of the cameras and a massive crowd!

It all started with a day of squirt boating at Smoothie, one of the best squirt boat mystery seams in the world. From the start, the day was special, as massive crowds of people caught a raft boat over to the island specifically to watch us and cheer us on. The banks were lined and the music was pumping, it was the perfect setting for World Class squirt boating comp. The event kicked off early and as the day went on things just kept getting better and better. In the semis I smashed my previous world record high score of 1,280+ points with a massive 1,860-point ride! Followed by a 13-second and then a 23-second mystery move during one ride, it was insane. Then in the finals I got three more awesome rides, which put me solidly into first place and I won my fourth consecutive Squirt Boat World Champion title bringing my World Champion tally to eight!

That wasn't it though, because as I won I got asked to go to the top of the eddy for an interview. My partner Jez was

### MY WORLDS - BREN ORTON

The Freestyle Kayaking World Championships occur just once every two years. And out of every single competition in the world this event is the main focus for almost all freestyle kayakers. The Ottawa has been one of the most influential rivers in the world in regards to developing freestyle kayaking and as such we have seen two previous world championships held on this river. Wilderness tours did an incredible job of putting in the infrastructure needed for an event of this calibre, building grandstands, judges tents, media platforms and even putting in a dedicated wifi network for the event, all in a location that whilst not quite being in the middle of nowhere, is pretty damn close!

I arrived almost sixty days in advance to the event and my summer was a blur of endless days spent on Garb and Corner Wave and before I knew it we were coming into the final countdown before the worlds. I felt the familiar pangs of nervous anticipation before a big event as we marched through the opening ceremony. Those feelings of nervousness carried with me right up until I caught the wave for the first time during the competition and then all the time that I'd spent surfing over the summer took over and I hit an almost perfect competition ride. The first cut was brutal, dropping from over 100 men down to just 20! The next cuts were not quite as dramatic, but far tougher as separating the athletes got harder and harder and many phenomenal kayakers missed out on their chance to take home a title due to the tiniest of mistakes. The men's finals was by far the most watched stage of the event, five

kayakers from five different countries all competing for the title of Freestyle Kayaking World Champion. Everyone in the crowd had their personal favourite whether it was Nick Troutman the local hero, Dane Jackson the most dominant competitive kayaker in history, Matt Dumoulin the flying French man, Quim Fontanne Messo the fiery Spaniard or Bren Orton that short, ginger bloke from Warrington. The support from the crowd was truly amazing and I can't thank everyone that took the time to cheer us on enough - You guys rock! However not a single one of us received close to the cheers that the Ugandan Team had received when they first took to the water, they had a harder time than most getting to this world champs and it was an absolute honour to be able to share time on the water with such talented, hard working and humble people.

In the end Dane walked away with another title, closely followed by Matt Dumoulin and Nick Troutman. My usual tactic of 'Go big or Go home' didn't pay off for me in the finals and I finished in 5th place. I don't think I will ever care about rankings, titles or shiny pieces of metal strung around my neck. I will however always want to lay down the best ride that I possibly can and I am sorry to disappoint all of the awesome people that took the time to watch and cheer me on throughout the event. I did not even get close to the ride I wanted in the finals and while I am far from content with my performance, I am happy that I surfed really well in the earlier rounds of the competition and got to show the world a brief glimpse of what I am capable of... See you on the water soon! 🇮🇪







# THE **NOMAD** REBORN

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NOMAD M 8.6

announcing the event and asked me a few questions about how I felt about my rides and congratulated me on the win. Then, he got down in the water up to his knees and asked me to be his wife! He proposed to me right there and then on the water during the finals, live in front of everyone. A complete surprise! It was amazing. I couldn't believe it. I was so happy. The answer was a definite 'Yes'. Before he had even finished asking me the question the crowd was already going wild. It was incredible. The atmosphere, the energy, the timing, the whole day was perfect. I had my mum, my dad and all my friends from around the world there with me. It was such an incredible moment.

After that everything was a bit of a blur. I kept competing in freestyle as did Jez for the rest of the week and although I couldn't retain my freestyle world title I did make it through to the finals and onto the podium in third place. Winning my first World Championships wave boating medal, my first World Champs bronze. I've been working very hard on my wave boating for the last 18-months, so it felt like a massive achievement for me, and one that I'm very proud of.

After the finals the event finished with a massive fireworks display and a fantastic closing ceremony and celebration back at Wilderness Tours. The perfect end to a perfect event! A truly incredible Worlds! It was an amazing week that I will never forget!



IMAGE BY HAYLEY MCKEE



**"GB'S BREN ORTON DESERVES SOME SERIOUS RECOGNITION FOR LEADING THE SENIOR GREAT BRITISH MEN'S CHARGE FOR THE PODIUM AND SHOWING OFF HIS UNIQUE STYLE, WHICH INCLUDED ENORMOUS 'PAN AMS' AND 'CROSS-BOW AIRSCREWS'!"**





# CHALLENGE SEA KAYAKING

**I**t's human nature to want to challenge and take things that little bit further, go a little bit faster! Planning and executing challenging journeys has always been an integral part of sea kayaking for some paddlers, but with the advent of new boat designs, technology and equipment more and more sea paddlers are taking on the personal challenges of completing demanding crossings or circumnavigations, some just to say they've done it, others to try and beat the clock in an effort to set a record breaking time....

## BEYOND THE PHYSICAL

It goes without saying that you will need a certain level of fitness to be successful on a sea kayak challenge, especially if you're looking to bag a good time, but you'll need to put the effort in on the planning front to stand any chance of achieving your goal. Weather, tides, route all will be crucial. And then there's the mental aspect, you'll need to be able to be flexible, adapt to changing circumstance and make sound decisions quickly. Being able to dig deep mentally and keep positive, and paddling, when the going gets tough is also essential.

## TYPES OF CHALLENGE

### Land's End - John O'Groats (or vice versa)

Cyclists, runners and walkers have been taking on the LEJOG for many, many years but it's a great, all be it tough, challenge in a sea kayak. It's over 600 nautical miles, as the gull flies, from one end to the other, but if you take into account all the ins and outs of our diverse and stunning coastline its going to add up to considerably further. The course you choose is up to you but the accepted rules are that you start at either Sennen Cove, or John O' Groats and paddles a continuous route between the two!

## CROSSINGS

The rugged nature of much of the UK's coastline combined with the fact that it's basically a collection of Islands means that there's a plethora of exciting crossings to undertake. To relatively simple jaunts to islands lying within sight of shore, to more serious undertakings such as some of the outer Scottish Islands or even pointing your bow

across the Irish Sea or English Channel! Crossings of this nature require top-notch planning, solid stamina and commitment. A long crossing, especially if undertaken solo, can really be very tough on the mind. The loneliness of the long distance paddler and all that as one coastline disappears behind you and you face a Vista of open water ahead! You'll need to bring all your determination to bear as you complete your challenge. The fact that a big crossings demand so much is what makes them so rewarding and entices more and more paddlers to take them on.

## CIRCUMNAVIGATIONS

There's something rather special about going all the way around something, maybe it appeals to the completeist within us? Taking those last few strokes as you see the spot you started your journey from hove into view will have awash with emotions. As with crossings the UK has a wealth of opportunities for paddlers looking to circumnavigate, from small outcrops of rock to taking on a journey

IMAGE BY PETE WOOD



around the whole of the UK itself. A circumnavigation not only allows you to challenge yourself but it will let you do that against the backdrop of our beautiful coastline. As with all sea kayak challenges your planning and knowledge gathering are going to be just as important as your paddling skills and fitness. You're going to need to take maximum advantage of tides and weather to maximize the amount of miles you're going to be able to tick off each day. The longer the circumnavigation the more logistics you're going to need to have in place.

### RECORD BREAKING

For most of us taking on a sea kayaking challenge is about proving to ourselves that we can do it, but for some it's about pushing the envelope and completing that challenge faster than anyone else. Just as it's human nature to challenge it is also human nature to race!

Beating the clock will require the full package of perfect conditions, physical prowess, mental strength and military like precision in your planning. The UK has some brilliant challenges for those looking to complete a challenge in a day with Anglesey, Isle of Wight and the Isle of Man being popular, and challenging, choices.

### SAFETY FIRST

Safety should always be the primary concern in any sea kayaking challenge. No matter how close you may be to 'smashing' the record if conditions and circumstances dictate it's simply not worth it if the risks become too high. The sea doesn't care if you're on track to take several seconds out of an existing time! A successful challenge is always a safe one! Yes it's about challenging yourself and pushing yourself but understanding your personal limits, manageable conditions and knowing when to call it a day is paramount. Risk is an inherent part of any challenge and the sea is an ever-changing dynamic environment in which to face it, and that's part of the appeal. Knowledge and experience essential and building these upon smaller challenges will help you to make good judgements stay the right side safe. A successful performance sea kayaker knows when to go for it, they also know when to head to the nearest tea shop and wait for another day.

### CATEGORIES

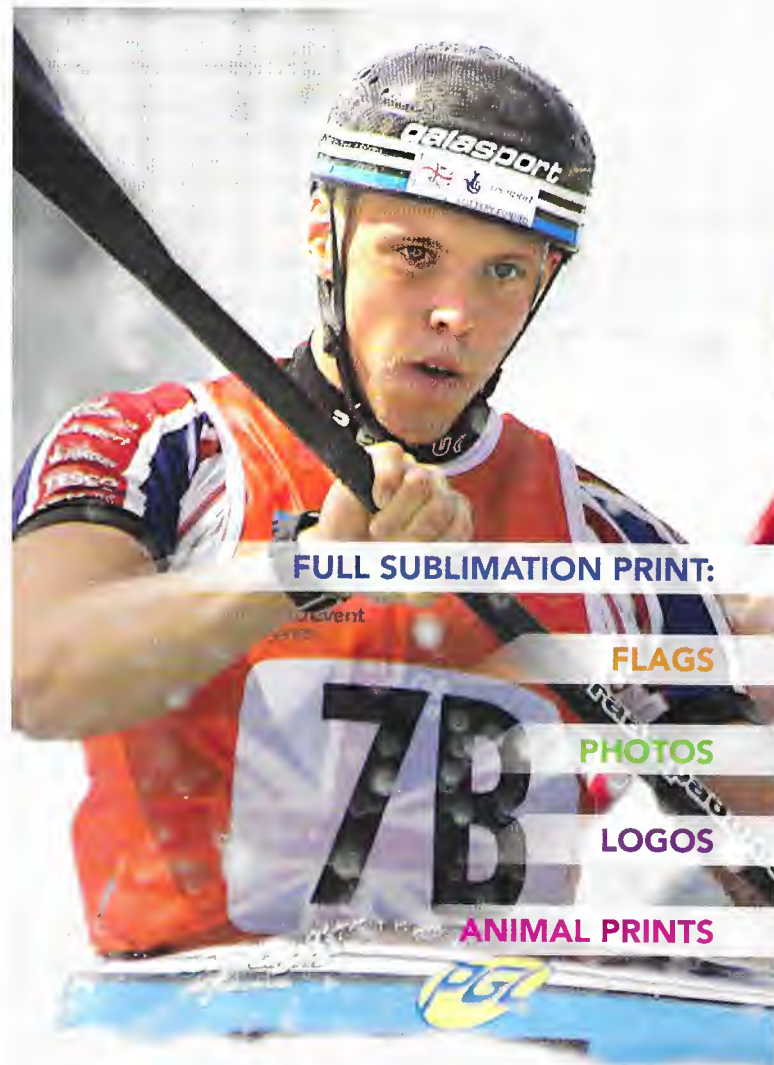
- K1M** - Solo paddlers (Male)
- K1W** - Solo paddler (Female)
- K2** - Two paddlers in a double kayak
- Team** - Two or more paddlers, each in a single kayak
- Ski 1** - single paddler on an ocean going ski
- Ski 2** - two paddlers on an ocean going double ski.

### RESOURCES

[www.performance-seakayaking.co.uk](http://www.performance-seakayaking.co.uk) is an excellent website dedicated to sea kayak challenges. You can log any journeys that you've undertaken, see current records and share information and knowledge with fellow paddlers.

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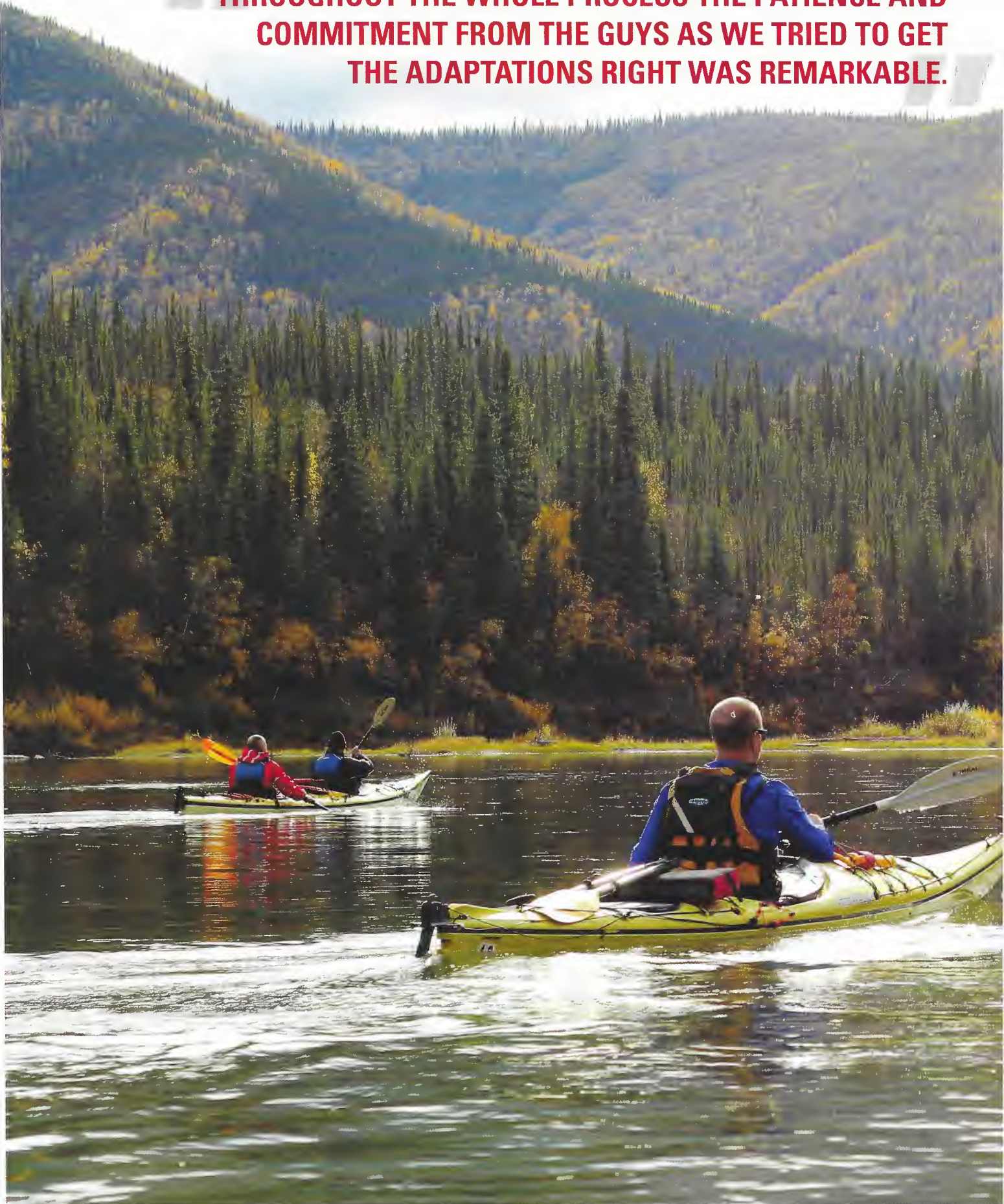
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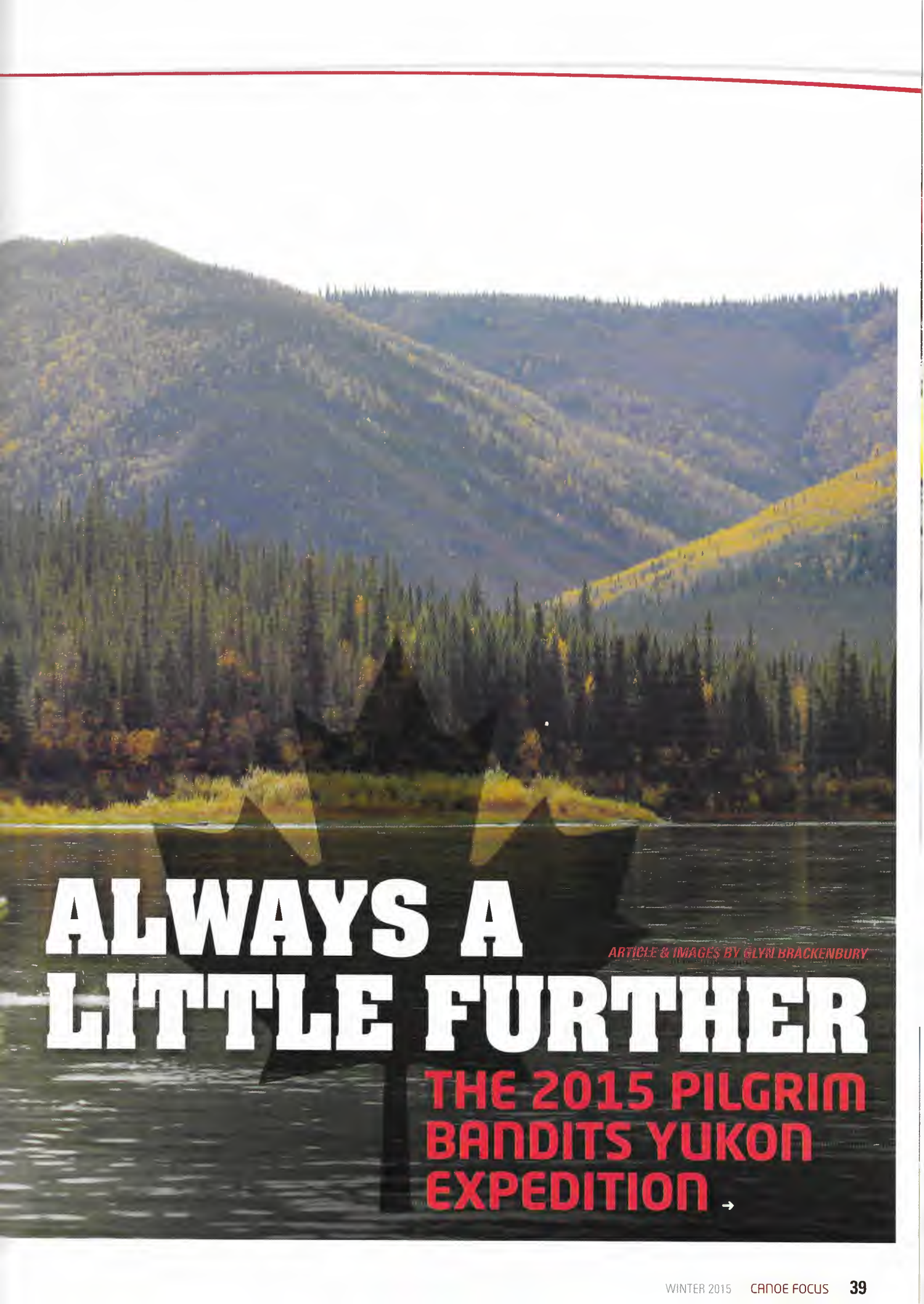
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“**THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE PROCESS THE PATIENCE AND COMMITMENT FROM THE GUYS AS WE TRIED TO GET THE ADAPTATIONS RIGHT WAS REMARKABLE.**”







# ALWAYS A LITTLE FURTHER

ARTICLE & IMAGES BY [@LYN BRACKENBURY](#)

**THE 2015 PILGRIM  
BANDITS YUKON  
EXPEDITION →**





**"I WAS ONCE TOLD THAT WATER IS THE ULTIMATE EQUALISER, AND THIS STATEMENT REALLY BECAME APPARENT AS WE WERE OUT ON THE TRIP!"**

**A**t the beginning of this Autumn I had the pleasure of leading an expedition with a truly inspirational group of individuals through the Yukon Territories in Canada. It had been the culmination of a year's work with an innovative charity called the Pilgrim Bandits.

The charity was founded by a group of Special Forces veterans to provide extreme physical challenges for severely injured men and women, from all of the services, to enable them to rebuild personal confidence, and allow them to access expeditions that would normally be unavailable to them because of their injuries. The mantra 'Always a Little Further' is core to the charity's attitude, whether working with amputee men and women from the services directly or by utilising their experiences to inspire and encourage young people and children. Pilgrim Bandits 'don't do sympathy', but offer the rewards of belonging to a team, encouragement, belief and the power of humour over pain. Their primary aim is to help those in need directly, with no compromise. Soon, those who

needed help become those that give it. By pushing injured men and women into physically and mentally demanding situations that they would not have dreamed possible; kayaking extraordinary distances, climbing mountains, jumping from aircraft, running races, trekking across inhospitable terrain, self confidence is restored and self-belief instilled. Pilgrim Bandits pushes those that have already endured so much to go beyond endurance to embrace life again and in so doing inspire others.

### THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

Previous expeditions have included; an 80-mile trek across the Haranguer Plateau, retracing the steps of a famous allied mission in Norway during WW2 – The Heroes of Telemark. During 2014 the charity undertook their first kayaking expedition by paddling 90-miles of the Gironde Estuary from the Bay of Biscay to Bordeaux, retracing the remarkable Cockleshell Heroes mission also from WW2.

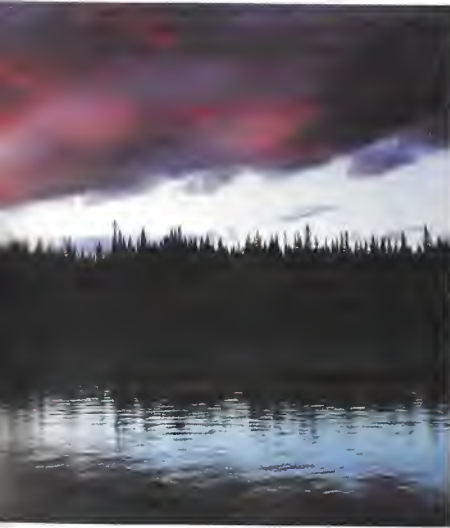
That trip inspired the CEO of the charity to investigate the potential of more kayaking expeditions, as the

use of kayaks with the amputees had worked exceptionally well. The decision was made to try something a little more extreme. The decision was made to go the Yukon in Canada. We started by listing the difficulties:

- The cold - sub zero temperatures at night and only just above freezing during the day
- Freezing fog - causing difficulties with navigation and line choice
- Wildlife - bears, moose, cougars and wolves
- Rented boats - that would mean having to adapt them for the injured guys
- River speed – slow in places and rapid in others
- Remoteness – at times 100-miles away from the nearest habitation
- Distance – just short of 500-miles would be tough for anyone
- Wild camping – getting the amputees up steep river banks

As the list grew longer we knew it was the perfect trip, as the difficulties were starting to outweigh the positives, which meant it was going to provide a fantastic challenge. The team was put together consisting of five injured





servicemen, four of which were double amputees, conservation officers and swift water rescue technicians from Canada, survival and bushcraft experts from Norway, nine employees from corporate business specialists EY (Ernst and Young), who were raising money for the trip, and a BBC film crew who were making a documentary about one of the amputees, Ben Parkinson MBE.

The training began in the UK and over four intensive weekends the team went from being non-kayakers starting in the swimming pool at Skern Lodge in North Devon, to a well oiled expedition unit completing a multi-day descent on the Wye, and making the crossing to the Isle of Wight.

Over the course of the training we learned everything we could about how each of the boats would be best setup for the injured guys. We tried to find the best options for each individual, which meant throwing the rulebook out and just concentrating on what worked well.

We ended up paddling an open canoe with kayak paddles, using bottles of water as a trimming tool to compensate for the weight that

legs would normally provide, had kit designed that would allow the guys to put on their prosthetic legs without taking off the whole dry suit, created seats using sit-on-top backrests, airbags and paddle floats.

Throughout the whole process the patience and commitment from the guys as we tried to get the adaptations right was remarkable!

### THE ULTIMATE EQUALISER

The 496-miles over 11 days on the Teslin and Yukon Rivers was everything we had hoped for. A singularly beautiful environment, from steep basalt gorges to rolling moorland, with the leaves turning through the autumnal colours as we travelled further north. An abundance of wildlife with bald eagles, bears, beavers, moose, salmon, grayling and all of the migratory birds flying in their V's heading south for the winter. The river is littered in history with the wrecks of paddle steamers, trappers' huts and leftover remnants of the Klondike gold rush spanning the length of the river. We had really varied paddling involving bouncy rapids

through to slow moving meanders, head winds, tailwinds, fog, rain, sunshine, and in the evenings we were even graced with stunning northern lights displays. It made for an amazing experience.

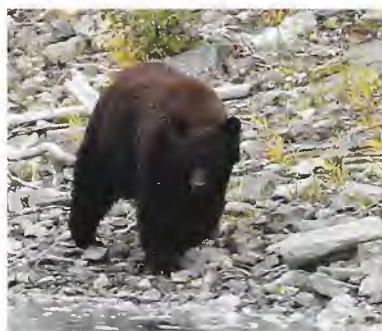
Normal days were between six to eight hours on the water, we varied our mileages from three miles (this was a really short day!) to 56-miles, and for much of that time we would stay in our boats as landings were a little challenging to find, as they needed to be suitable for the guys to use with their prosthetics. The wild camps varied from gravel islands in the middle of the river through to more structured campgrounds at old pioneer settlements, but the commonality across all of them would be a campfire in the evening to re-live the day's events and to warm up everything before the temperatures went sub zero. The wilderness experts with us would take people out in the evenings foraging and fishing, to supplement the rather bland expedition food diet, cooking freshly caught fish with foraged herbs over a campfire as the sun set made for some pretty memorable experiences. →

**"THE INJURED GUYS WERE AN INSPIRATION, THEIR ABILITY TO DEAL WITH EVERYTHING THAT EXPEDITION PADDLING THROWS AT YOU, MADE YOU RE-EVALUATE WHAT DIFFICULT REALLY IS..."**



I was once told that water is the ultimate equaliser, and this statement really became apparent as we were out on the trip. The injured guys were an inspiration, their ability to deal with everything that expedition paddling throws at you, made you re-evaluate what difficult really is, as they just got on with everything they needed to do with consummate ease. Once in the boats it was impossible to tell we had injured guys in the group, and we covered mileages that hardened expedition paddlers would be happy with. Despite the team coming from very different backgrounds, from city high finance to highly trained and skilled veterans, the ethos of the trip was all about achieving the one common goal of a safe completion, and it seemed everyone was prepared to go a little further than they would ordinarily have, mostly because of the inspiration they were able to draw from the injured guys, even the BBC crew were lifting and carrying and getting as stuck in as they could.

This expedition highlighted the amazing opportunities paddlesports can offer, for both able bodied and those with disabilities to access remote wilderness that would ordinarily be unobtainable by any other means. From the training in the UK through to the final miles into Dawson City everyone had really been absorbed into kayaking, having gone from non-paddlers through to living out of their boats for two weeks, in a wild and rugged environment, it was a truly impressive transformation to see.



## USEFUL INFO



More information about the charity, and its work can be found at [www.pilgrimbandits.org](http://www.pilgrimbandits.org) and the BBC2 documentary about Ben Parkinson MBE is due to be aired later this year. It chronicles his journey from being blown up in Afghanistan, through to kayaking the Yukon wilderness.

## AN HONOUR AND A PRIVILEGE

BY PETER HOLGATE – MEGA KAYAKS

Having already been part of a Pilgrim Bandits adventure when I took part in the 'Operation Frankton' trip, on the Gironde, I knew that they are all about pushing the envelope of personal challenge, so right from the start I knew this was going to be a wilderness trip that none of us would ever forget. Whilst there was a main road that links the start, middle and finish, the river runs right through true wilderness, and as we'd be

paddling, and camping, deep in bear country with a group of reasonable size, and especially as we had guys with us with limited mobility, we needed a team of armed Canadian Conservation Officers along for the ride. Apparently you can't just use one gun to stop a grizzly bear attack, it needs a minimum of two 12-gauge shotguns, one with shot and one with 'bullets'!

Nobody wanted to test this out, so bear safety drills were a strict part of our daily routine!

The Teslin River is glacial fed and fast flowing and carves its way through beautiful ravines and a range of huge vistas. The whole Yukon Territory is just vast and once the Teslin joins the Yukon River it rapidly grown in stature and gravitas. There are some major rapids on the river but these are generally easy to skirt and the main issues are the speed of the water, the distinct lack of eddies and the water temperature. Any mishap involving swimmers would need to be dealt with very quickly indeed.

Due to this speed we were averaging about eight to nine miles an hour on the main section and covering around fifty miles a day. Our group size made exceeding this difficult alongside making finding suitable campsites tricky. There are a couple of 'proper' campsites on the Yukon, the best of which was Fort Selkirk, which was set up in 1852 by the Hudson Bay Trading Company and still has the original buildings preserved. Most nights however were spent either hunkered down on the tree line or sleeping on island beaches as we were serenaded by the howl of wolves and entertained by the Northern Lights.

It's difficult to convey in words the feeling of being way out there in the wild, outside of the frenetic modern world with only yourself and your companions to rely on. The Yukon flows so fast that it feels like a conveyor belt taking you away from civilization. The trip brought many memorable experiences for us all, seeing moose, bears and bald eagles. Catching and cooking grayling and finding flakes of gold in our water bucket! Everyone worked tirelessly as a team inspired by our wild surroundings and also the courage, humour and sheer strength of spirit flowing from the Pilgrim Bandits who pushed through any hardships without complaint, surpassing their injuries, looking after their fellow companions and always striving to go a little but further. The Yukon is a beautiful, powerful place, one that will stay with me forever but sharing it with these amazing individuals was even more special, it was a true honour and privilege. **CF**



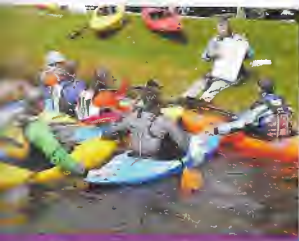


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# WAVE RIDERS

## WHY IS KAYAK SURFING SO GOOD?

ARTICLE BY SIMON HAMMOND

**S**o why is kayak surfing so fantastic? Well it's thrilling, energetic and graceful and takes place in some amazing and beautiful locations. But the real reason that surf kayaking is so good is that on the same day on the same beach there's something for everyone. And I mean everyone! From the non-rolling beginner right up to the seasoned surf expert. No matter what your background or preferred discipline or even choice of boat there is always a good reason to head down the beach and out into the surf.

Ok, so there are places where the surfing is for experts only but head down a sandy beach to where the surf is rolling onto the shore and you'll be in the perfect location. Close in the white water waves may only be a few centimetres in height, rolling through knee to shin depth water. Further out the white water waves are bigger, but still confined to chest depth water. And further out you'll find the green-faced waves rearing up into sweet, surfable faces that break and peel as they head towards the shore. The trick is to recognise these different areas and choose the best one for you and your stage of surf kayak development.

### THE WHITE WATER SHALLOWS

This has got to be the best area of all to start. White water waves of between 20 to 40cm rolling through water shallow enough to easily stand up in. It's the perfect place to start out, warm up or tighten up your skills.

Being strong in your kayak is the basis for good surfing. A great exercise to help you understand this is by taking side-on hits from the waves. Just paddle out far enough so that the white water waves will give your kayak a slap (its important that you stay in a comfortable depth) and





DIAGONAL TAKE OFF ON A PEELING WAVE



WHITE WATER CUT BACK



KAYAKERS ABOUT TO TAKE A SIDE-ON HIT FROM A MEDIUM SIZED WHITE WATER WAVE

then turn side on and stop. Then wait for the next wave to roll in and let it hit you fully side on. If you're gripping your kayak firmly with your lower body, tensing your core abdominal muscles and keeping your upper body upright you should be able to take the hit! You might get pushed sideways but you shouldn't need to use a support stroke on either side. Practice this until you can take a hit on both sides with your paddles above your head and then see if you can take it when a slightly more powerful wave hits you.

You can develop this practice so that you are being hit sideways whilst

paddling. You can develop your wave reading skills so that you're in the best place at the right time for a good solid side-on hit. You can then start to think about the hull of your boat and how you can create the optimum hull shape to allow you and your kayak to skim sideways towards the shore

(this is often described as the least amount of edge required to stop you from flipping over).

You can stay in this zone to practice your take offs, diagonal runs, bottom turns and top turns or you could gently move out to where the white water waves have a bit more energy. →

**BOTTOM TURNS, TOP TURNS AND DIAGONAL RUNS ALL LEAD NATURALLY TO YOU SURFING ACROSS THE WAVE WHICH IS DO-ABLE ON A WHITE WATER WAVE, BUT DEFINITELY MORE ENJOYABLE ON A GREEN FACE.**



## THE ENERGETIC WHITE WATER ZONE

A great zone to develop your top turns via paddle out take-off's, your defensive rolling using the natural turbulence of the waves as well as your bottom turn, white water cut backs and the set up for the diagonal run. The waves here are between 40 to 80 cm and rolling through water that will range from chest depth back to waist depth. Your rolling may be far from perfect but if you come out you should be able to stand and drag your kit back to shore.

But before you start surfing in this zone spend a bit of time developing your paddling out strategies. Paddling straight out through white water can drain you of all your energy. A few energetic white water waves hitting you head on and landing on your lap can push you right back to be beach or worse collapse your spray deck. You don't have to paddle out in a straight line, choose a line of least resistance.

Sprint for gaps, change direction, hold position and sprint again. Compete with a friend for who can get further out using only 10 strokes, 20 strokes, 30 strokes etc.

Staying with paddling-out there's also your defensive rolling to practice. Best set up at an angle to the on-coming wave with a roll that is aided by the natural turbulence of the wave rather than fighting it. Leave the roll late and play with different angles of approach. But best of all is the Butt-and-Sweep technique for paddling out and over white water waves, a real energy saver that requires a positive angled approach to the on-coming

**ONE RIDER PER WAVE IS THE RULE AND SIMPLY PUT THE CLOSEST RIDER TO THE PEEL HAS PRIORITY, IF IN DOUBT DON'T PUSH IT, HAVE A CHAT WITH OTHERS IN THE WATER, BETTER TO MAKE FRIENDS THAN ENEMIES.**

wave. Bounce your kayaks nose, edge your hull away from the wave and put in a massive sweep stroke to straighten you up and, hey presto, you'll find yourself skimming up and over with such speed that it'll almost give you whip-lash!

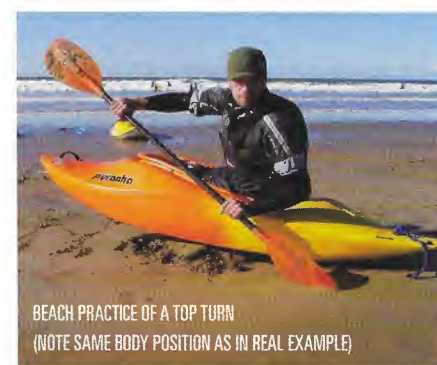
The thing to remember here is that white water waves have a sloping leading edge. I know they look like walls of water hurtling towards you but that's because you're generally looking at them from in front, have a look at a white water wave side on and you'll see what I mean. Anyway because they have a sloping face you can practice all the techniques you'll later use on a green face. You can fall down this white water slope and practice your hard-edged bottom turns with lots of speed, lots of edge and lots of leaning. Finish your bottom turn by coming off the back of the wave or if you flatten your edge, rotate your body to face the shore and add a well timed sweep you will start to develop your top turns enabling you to continue your ride.

Bottom turns, top turns and diagonal runs all lead naturally to you surfing across the wave which is do-able on a white water wave, but definitely more enjoyable on a green face.

## THE PEELING WAVE

Deep water, lots of energy, the need to know where to be in relation to the breaking wave (and other surfers), but this is also where all your hard work in the white water will start to pay off. This is the place to perfect your take offs, to test your bottom turns and get the timing right for your top turns. A chance to fine tune your diagonal runs and keep the ride going with necessary cut backs. Flat bottomed, sharp edged river boats can certainly ride peeling faces but a basic surf kayak starts to give you more speed and hence more space to perform.

Unless you are surfing completely alone I'd always recommend spending some time watching other surfers and kayakers riding these green, peeling waves. You'll learn a lot about positioning, the speed of the face, the manoeuvres being performed, as well as some tips on where to pull off and where not to pull off a ride! You'll also



BEACH PRACTICE OF A TOP TURN  
(NOTE SAME BODY POSITION AS IN REAL EXAMPLE)

realise that you don't have to be the furthest one out to catch these waves. Quite often surfers will pull off a peeling face before it finishes, leaving it free for someone else to catch, but beware, if someone else is riding this sort of wave stay well away or you'll find yourself guilty of surfings biggest crime that of DROPPING IN! One rider per wave is the rule and simply put the closest rider to the peel has priority, if in doubt don't push it, have a chat with others in the water, better to make friends than enemies. →





BEACH DEMONSTRATION OF A BOTTOM TURN



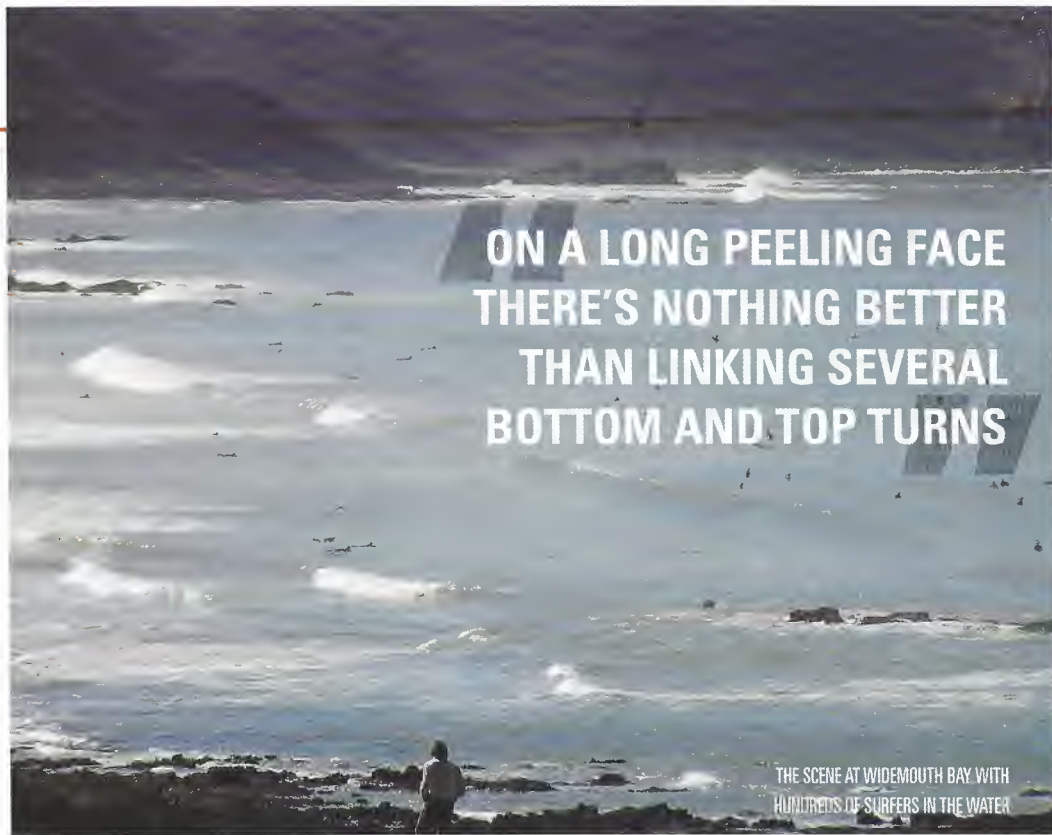
### LINKING RIDES

On a long peeling face there's nothing better than linking several bottom and top turns. These turns compliment each other perfectly; the bottom turn directs you back up the wave face where as the top turn directs you back down. The bottom turn is all about high speed and carving whilst the top turn is performed as you are slowing down and is then a fast flat spin, often with preparatory pre-rotation in your upper body. Bottom turns are always at the bottom of the wave but leave your top turn until you're at the top and it'll be too late. Think of the top turn as a mid wave turn and you'll have much more early success!

### KEEP THE RIDE GOING

Of course there is much more to do than the techniques we've discussed here but at least it's a start. We're surrounded by some fantastic surfing coastlines, there good breaks not very far from even the most inland of paddlers. The summer months are great, but can be busy, especially down in Cornwall and Devon, but

the water stays warm right through September and October when some of the best surf of the year often hits our shores. There are events and competitions and development opportunities for those who'd like some coaching, there are even books on the subject so you can do your homework before putting your skills into practice. But don't hold back, surfing might not be your main discipline but give it a go I know you'll love it. **CF**



ON A LONG PEELING FACE  
THERE'S NOTHING BETTER  
THAN LINKING SEVERAL  
BOTTOM AND TOP TURNS

THE SCENE AT WIDEMOUTH BAY WITH  
HUNDREDS OF SURFERS IN THE WATER



BUSY DAY IN THE WHITE WATER ZONE



CUT BACK

### THE AUTHOR

Simon Hammond is a British Canoeing level 5 Surf Coach, Former World Kayak Surf Champion and author of Surf Kayaking The Essential Guide. He lives with his family at Crooklets Beach in Bude, Cornwall overlooking the sea and works as a professional outdoor coach. Contact him for all things Surfing.



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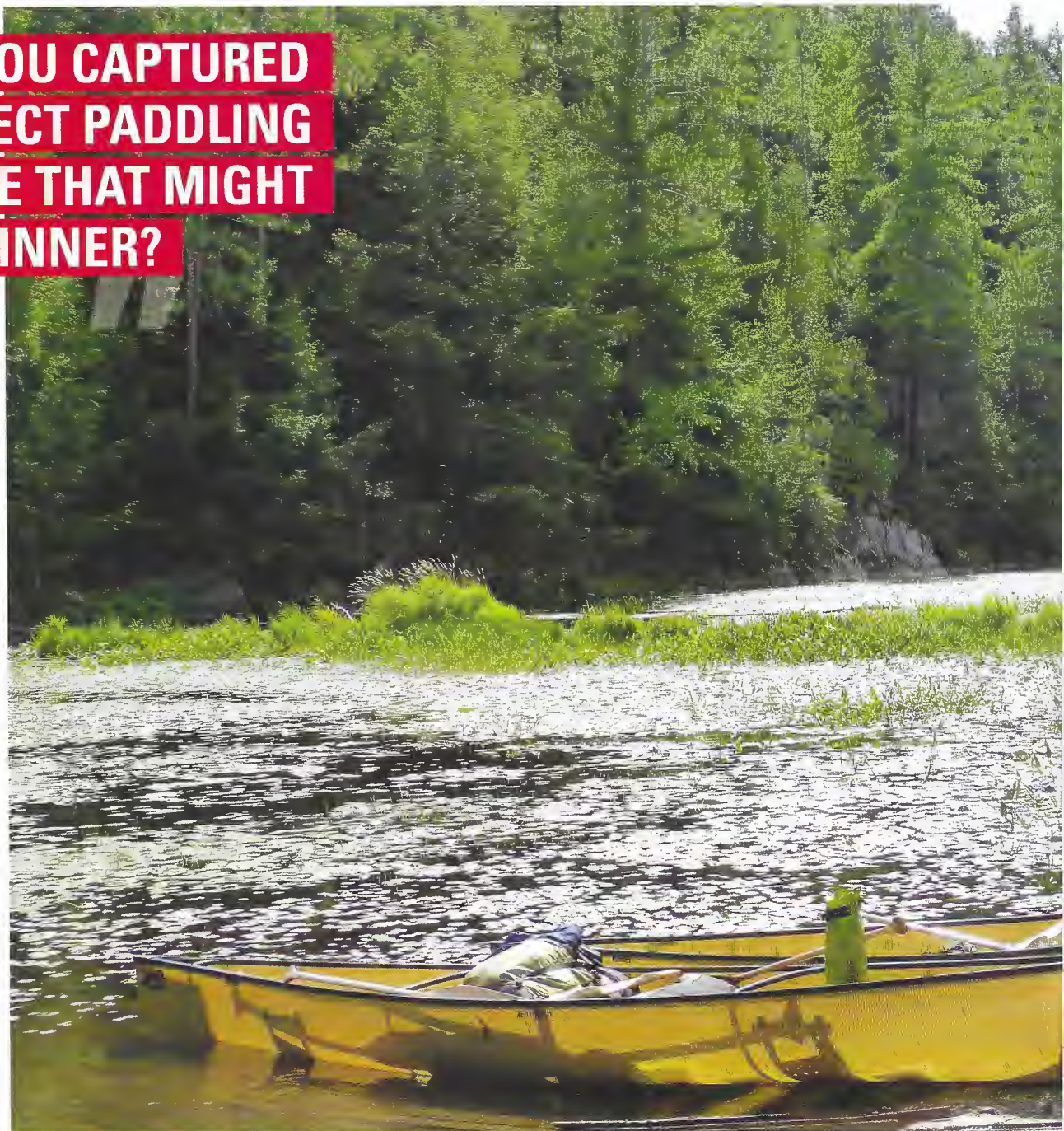


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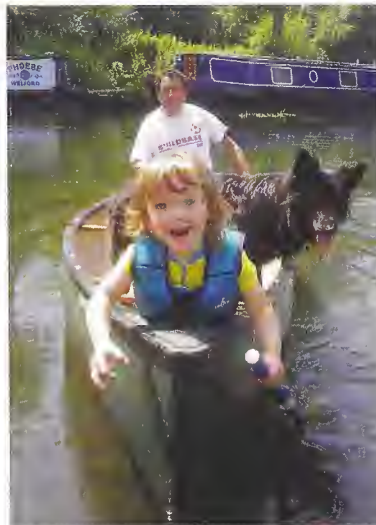


# HAVE YOU CAPTURED A PERFECT PADDLING PICTURE THAT MIGHT BE A WINNER?

TOP: PETER MORTON  
PETER TOOK THIS  
ATMOSPHERIC SHOT  
IN THE KILLARNEY  
PROVINCIAL PARK,  
ONTARIO



BOTTOM LEFT: DIANA WADE  
DIANA COULDN'T BELIEVE  
HER LUCK GRABBING THIS  
SHOT WHEN SAM WILSON  
GOT SOME INCREDIBLE  
AIR ON FLAT WATER. SAM  
RECENTLY REPRESENTED  
GB IN CANADA, AT THE  
ICF FREESTYLE  
CHAMPIONSHIPS.



LEFT: MELANIE BENNETT  
GRANDDAD KEN DUNCAN,  
ZYLA THE DOG AND TWO-  
YEAR OLD ECHO HAVING A  
RELAXED PADDLE ON THE  
RIVER STORT.

RIGHT: CHRIS BANKS  
GLIDING ACROSS DERWENT  
WATER, IN THE LAKE  
DISTRICT AN 'ORCA  
LAKELANDER' THAT CHRIS  
AND HIS GIRLFRIEND BUILT.





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## HOW TO ENTER



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Keep up with the latest entries and monthly winners by visiting [www.facebook.com/canoeengland](http://www.facebook.com/canoeengland)





# WINTER PADDLING

## HOW TO STAY WARM AND KEEP PADDLING IN WINTER WEATHER

**J**ust because the days are now painfully short and the average temperatures are plummeting to somewhere south of Baltic, doesn't mean that you have to hang up your paddle until the spring, here's some useful tips to help you stay warm, dry and most importantly, still paddling in all but the severest of conditions...

On first examination taking your canoe out in winter can seem like an uninviting, even daunting prospect. Certainly they'll be days when it's wisest to stay indoors, put the kettle on and settle down with a copy of your favourite guidebook and set to planning future adventures, but with the right gear and a little planning winter really can be the most wonderful time of the year for getting out in a canoe or kayak. Just imagine quietly gliding along the surface on a perfect, crisp winter's day, with no cloud in the sky and the landscape shimmering silver under a dusting of frost or snow in the soft winter sun.

Paddling in the winter also means that you're more likely to have the stretch of river, lake or loch to yourself, and there's definitely an extra feeling of satisfaction in knowing that you've braved the elements to squeeze a little more time with Mother

Nature out of the year, while the rest of the country sits huddled a round their radiators!

### WINTER PRECAUTIONS

There's probably no need to point out that the consequences of getting wet and cold in winter can escalate very quickly. Wearing kit that's appropriate to the conditions is a must, as is carrying a little extra gear to deal with conditions if they deteriorate. You'll also need to do a little extra planning and forecasting to make sure you get the best out of your winter voyages. This is all common sense stuff, and provided you take all necessary precautions there is no need for the cold to put you off paddling in winter conditions. Here's a few basic safety precautions to help minimise the risks of taking to the water when it's cold.

### WHAT TO WEAR

As the old adage goes, there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing. Open canoeing in the winter can be breathtaking. Early morning snowy days and blustery winds can make for a stunning and challenging day out. And being suitably protected from the elements with the right gear means you can really enjoy your

winter paddling experiences without frozen or soggy limbs. We're going to look at some top tips for choosing the right kit to keep you warm whilst open canoeing this winter...

### LAYERING UP!

It's all about getting your layers right. It's all too easy to put the biggest jacket and fleece on and off you go. The problem with having big chunky layers is that that you can't change your temperature easily. So you range from hot to cold really quickly. The trick to staying comfortable whilst paddling, and at rest in cold conditions is adding layers that you can put on and take off as you go.

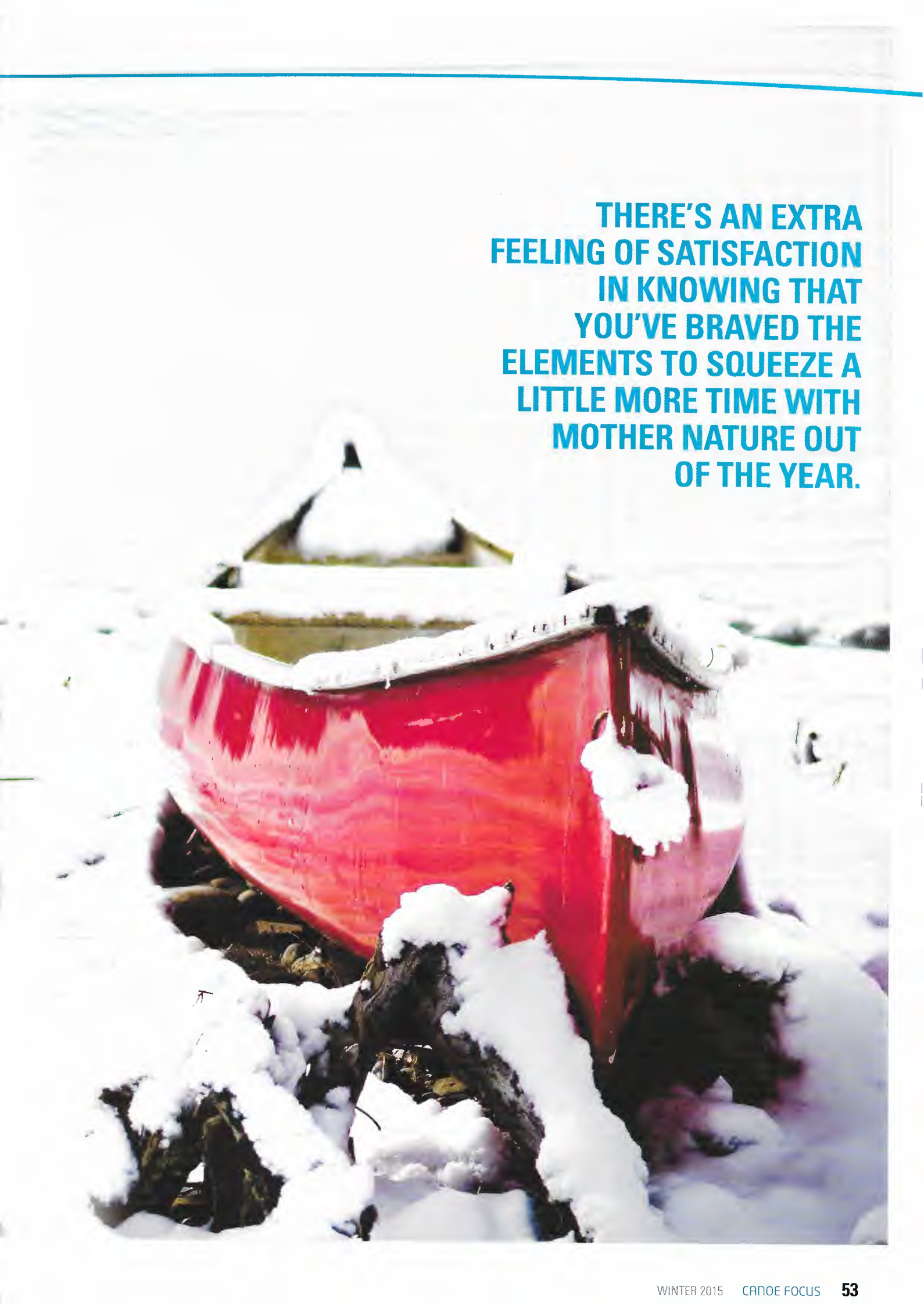
### BASE LAYERS

As its name suggests the base layer goes next to the skin and for winter conditions having a thicker skinned thermal can work really well. Your base layer needs to wick moisture away from your skin and out through your other layers. Avoid cotton as it won't do this and will stay damp, which means that as soon as you stop working you'll cool and get cold very quickly. Manmade materials and natural materials like merino wool are ideal for base layers. →





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OF THE YEAR.**







## MID LAYERS

When it's cold adding an extra layer on top of your base layer is a must. Having an extra mid layer, or even two, in your dry bag is always advisable during the winter. These are usually of the fleece or wool variety. Mid layers need to be quick draining and able to still work thermally when wet. Things like Buffalo and Paramo jackets are brilliant at this. A popular choice is a fleece, or lightweight down gilet, as this is ideal at keeping your core snug whilst giving you plenty of freedom to move.

## BOTTOMS UP!

The trick with thermal leggings is to get them long enough in the body to go up your back, or hunt out a pair of fleecy saloppes, or similar. We've even seen people use an old pair of braces to keep their leggings up. You tend to move around a lot while canoeing and you want to avoid them sliding down and exposing your lower back and kidney area, which can be really uncomfortable over a period of time. Make sure whatever you choose will keep you covered in that area and avoid the cold spots.

## ONE-PIECE THERMAL SUITS

There are some fantastic all-in-one fleece suits, which can be great as they eliminate any cold spots and are very warm. Make sure you can get access for any toilet breaks though, as stripping off by the side of the water in winter is not a pleasurable experience!

## JACKETS

The trick with any bit of kit is to have something that's adaptable for anything the odds may throw at you. The outer is key to keeping out the elements. Some touring paddlers like to wear stuff like Mardale, or Paramo, which are lined with fleece inside with a waterproof outer layer to keep the elements out. These tops are great if you are not getting that wet. They're great for days when the weather is changing quickly, showers etc, but aren't so good in high periods of rain. A good



all-round combination is to have a waterproof outer, such as a dedicated paddling top, and leave the warmth to the base and mid layers. There are many different paddling tops, some with hoods and some with latex seals. Here are a few top tips for choosing a waterproof touring top...

## CHOOSING A WINTER CANOEING JACKET

### Get a Hood

When the weather picks up the chance to batten down the hatches is important. Having one that packs away along with a stiff wire peak is very useful in high winds.

### A Good Neck Seal

Paddling with latex all the time can be uncomfortable, and most touring style paddling tops have a neoprene, or similar, option. This allows you to get a good seal when things pick up without being suffocated.

### Useful Pockets

Having handy pockets for gear and the odd snacks can be really useful on longer paddles. Make sure that that you can get at your pockets with your buoyancy aid on.

## DRY TROUSERS

Dry trousers don't only need to be comfortable but also heavy wearing. Look for reinforcement in the high wear spots (generally on the knees and backside). In terms of warmth and keeping dry, having built in dry-socks can help keep your feet warm and dry. However socks do take a fair amount of hammering from general wear and tear. They tend to be the first part of the garment to deteriorate, so take care of them (and keep those toenails trimmed!) It's also worth having a bit more in your bottoms room for extra layers underneath. This is important especially on the socks, as adding a pair of socks underneath your trousers can help keep your feet warm on the coldest days! Having a bib on your trousers is a must for both comfort and practicality; again it also helps keep the trousers sitting high eliminating any cold spots. →



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### EXTREMITIES<sup>®</sup>

There is nothing worse than cold hands and feet!

Suffering from frozen fingers and toes is no fun! They can feel the cold most with circulation being poor at the very ends. A good option for the feet can be products such as Seal Skinz socks. These are great for keeping your toes warm but not sweaty. Unlike neoprene socks, which don't breathe Seal Skinz are more like regular socks but with a breathable waterproof membrane inside, so ideal for going close to your skin to keep the heat in, under your dry trousers, or dry-socks.

### GLOVES

There are a bewildering variety of different neoprene gloves and mitts on the market and many of them are excellent for maintaining a good feel on the paddle but also at keeping your pinkies warm. A good, cheap alternative is a pair of rubber gloves, the kind you use for washing the dishes. Ok they don't look cool but they keep the heat in whilst still giving you good movement and feel in your fingers, making tying knots, using karabiners and unclipping dry bags, and so on, nice and easy. Mitts are also good for this and can allow quick access for any rope work, whilst keeping your hands warm whilst paddling.

### HEADS UP!

We all know how much heat you lose out of our heads, carrying a hat makes sense. Woolly hats, or fleece beanies are winter favourites but things like Buffs can be great for a range of uses. Keep your neck warm under your cag or worn on your head as a make shift hat, or even as a headband to keep your ears warm under a helmet.

### STAY WARM, HAVE FUN

Nothing beats being out and about in wild weather, so dress well and you can have some great winter days out on the water! Take the time to research what gear is going to work for you and your paddling needs. Keep in mind that it needs to fit with your all your thermals on. Being comfortable on the water can make boating so much more enjoyable. So wrap up warm and get out there!







PETER MORTON

## TOP TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE ON THE WATER IN WINTER

- Hypothermia can kill, so learn the danger signs and how to deal with it.
- Have a quick exit route in place for if somebody in your group is getting too cold as a result of an accidental dunking or otherwise.
- Carry spares of dry warm clothing.
- Carry an exposure/survival bag as well as your usual safety kit
- Take proper provisions, including food and thermos flasks with a hot drink.
- Avoid paddling alone and tell somebody where you're going.
- Keep a keen eye on the forecast beforehand; be aware of incoming weather patterns and look out for any sign of deteriorating conditions while you're out on the water.
- Days are shorter so a head torch is a valuable addition to your kit bag, just in case.
- Lightweight emergency 'bothy' shelters are a useful addition. They provide respite from the elements in emergencies and for impromptu tea stops! **CF**

### USEFUL INFO



For some great ideas for winter paddling trips check out:  
[www.gocanoeing.org.uk/go/index.cfm/things-to-do/trails/](http://www.gocanoeing.org.uk/go/index.cfm/things-to-do/trails/)



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ARTICLE & IMAGES BY CAPTAIN PAUL ISITT

# SEA KAYAKING IN CYPRUS

## A MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

**A**dventurous training (AT) has long been used by the military to develop the leadership, courage and teamwork of armed forces personnel by exposing them to controlled risk. Done correctly this enhances their ability to respond and react to the dangerous, unexpected and risky situations encountered on military operations. Sea kayaking is one such AT activity, recognised by the services, which can facilitate this controlled exposure to risk.

As a keen sea kayaker and member of the British Army, this seemed like an appropriate way for me to challenge, inspire and develop the troops from my regiment while getting out from behind my desk!

Having a UK military presence in Cyprus makes this a relatively easy destination for planning a sea kayaking exercise. As an island, Cyprus provides a wealth of options for sea kayaking and enables the wind and weather conditions to be exploited depending on the type of

sea conditions you are looking for. Being in the Mediterranean there is also little to worry about in the way of tides (so no long walks back to the shore after returning to find the tide has gone out) and the warmer water temperatures provide an excellent environment in which to introduce novices to sea kayaking. The military units in Cyprus include an AT centre equipped with an extensive sea kayak expedition store, which would be our base for the ten day exercise.

ABOVE: CALM WATERS  
OFF PROTARAS ON THE  
EASTERN COAST



**THE WARMER WATER TEMPERATURES PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO INTRODUCE NOVICES TO SEA KAYAKING.**

APHRODITE'S ROCK NEAR PAPHOS ON THE WESTERN COAST



The Cyprus AT centre had recently taken delivery of a new fleet of Valley Etain boats, Werner paddles and Palm clothing so we were quite spoiled by the kit and equipment on offer. The Etains, while seeming a little heavy on the carries, were a pleasure to paddle, providing sufficiently easy handling for the novices while keeping the interest of the more experienced paddlers.

With a relatively novice group we started gently. Following some skills training in the local bay on day one, we ventured round the south eastern tip of the island on days two and three for two relatively short journeys. The coast from Paralimni to Protaras is reasonably well developed, allowing regular and easy access to the water, but is much quieter than the more tourist centric areas near Ayia Napa. The coast here is also fairly well sheltered from the

prevailing south westerly winds so provided an excellent introduction to sea journeys for the novice group members. The coast between Protaras and Cape Greko contains some fantastic little beaches, not least Konnos Beach where we stopped for lunch and an ice cream before making the return journey.

After a slightly later start on day four (it was a Sunday after all!) we opted for a more challenging paddle from the small estuary at Potamas around the more exposed Cape Pyla. This was an enjoyable but more testing paddle against the wind, which had picked up to force 3 to 4 due to our later start. Navigating to the take out also gave the shore crew some challenges and we quickly discovered that maps and road signs in Cyprus are not always as accurate as we were accustomed to in the UK! →

ABOVE: THE UNSPOILT COASTLINE BETWEEN PISSOURI BAY AND APHRODITE'S ROCK

## WARM WELCOME

After a four and a half hour flight from the UK we arrived in Cyprus to a welcome from temperatures of 27C. Considering the mercury had struggled to crawl much above 15C in the UK, this was fantastic news to all concerned. The wind in Cyprus tends to be fairly predictable with prevailing winds from the south/south west that pick up around midday after the sun has had chance to heat up the air and drop off again into the evening as the temperature cools down.



## ADVENTURE PADDLING

The next two days were spent on the western side of Cyprus with an overnight camp at Happy Valley in the Sovereign Base Area near Episokpi. The first day we paddled between Petra tou Romiou (more commonly known as Aphrodite's rock) and Pissouri Bay in idyllic conditions that allowed us to take in the full splendour of this unspoilt stretch of coast. We awoke the next day to find a change from the forecast weather and decided to revise our plans to exploit the opportunity for some rougher water training. Using a small bay on the Akrotiri peninsula, the group

keenly displayed their newly found sea legs in some lumpier water while some of us had a play with the Valley Etains in the surf (which was great fun I might add!).

Returning to the eastern side of the island for the last few days, we began with a trip around Cape Greko at the south eastern tip of the island. This provided another enjoyable paddle, where we experienced more testing sea conditions as we rounded the cape and had an encounter with a pirate ship (unoriginally named the 'Black Pearl') carrying tourists from Ayia Napa. The trip ended with what were probably the best ice creams

of the exercise (of which there were a few), topped off by Pete – our instructor – managing to get us a discount from the local ice cream seller who appeared to be his long lost best friend!

The wind had picked up significantly on the penultimate day so we took the opportunity to have a play in a few of the different kayaks and canoes they have at the AT centre in the shelter of the local bay at Dhekelia. The day was also used to develop, practice or perfect our rolls as well as ticking off some of the British Canoeing 3 star syllabus.

On the final day we opted to paddle across Larnaca bay back to

BELOW: KONNOS BAY, EASTERN COAST BETWEEN CAPE GREKO AND PROTARAS



THE COASTLINE AROUND CAPE GREKO NATIONAL PARK ON THE SOUTH EAST CORNER OF THE ISLAND



MCKENZIE BEACH, LARNACA



Dhekelia where the rest of the team would be waiting to help wash the boats and equipment. We launched from McKenzie Beach by Larnaca International airport and paddled a couple of kilometres along the shore taking in the sights until we reached the marina at the far end of the city centre. From there we headed out across the bay on a direct transit to Dhekelia using the red and white towers of Dhekelia power station, conveniently located just next to our destination, as navigation aids. Paddling across Larnaca bay with a following sea and reasonable swell really brought home how much the group had progressed throughout the exercise. This was a committing trip with no easy escape and required a reasonable amount of concentration in handling the boats. The group performed superbly well and, with the exception of one impromptu capsize drill (after Neil discovered that his hands weren't the most effective tools for a low brace!), made light work of the 12km crossing arriving in Dhekelia with a clear sense of achievement and ready for a one final ice cream!

### FIRST CLASS

Our exercise to Cyprus was a thoroughly enjoyable experience and a welcome change both from normal military duties and from paddling in the much colder waters of the UK. The facilities and staff at the AT centre were first class and it was clear to see how the courage, teamwork, robustness and resilience of the group and individuals had progressed during the exercise. Cyprus is a fantastic paddling destination with warm waters and varied coastline all within easy reach. The exercise also served to encourage the young soldiers to take up paddling with everyone keen to take part in another sea kayaking exercise to Cyprus next year.

We hired a civilian instructor to help with the exercise who was an excellent coach and I would highly recommend to any groups, military or civilian, looking for a sea kayak coach/leader. Pete Jones can be contacted via [Peter\\_L\\_Jones@hotmail.com](mailto:Peter_L_Jones@hotmail.com). **CF**



REMY RE-ENACTS NEIL'S IMPROMPTU CAPSIZE AT THE END OF THE CROSSING FROM LARNACA TO DHEKELIA. I WASN'T QUICK ENOUGH WITH THE CAMERA TO CATCH THE ORIGINAL, WHICH NEIL CLAIMS HE THREW IN TO TEST US OUT!

**"THIS WAS A COMMITTING TRIP WITH NO EASY ESCAPE AND REQUIRED A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF CONCENTRATION IN HANDLING THE BOATS."**

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Captain Paul Isitt has been keenly involved with adventurous training since joining the Army eight years ago and is a kayak coach and mountain leader. He has run offshore sailing exercises in the Baltic, Mediterranean and English Channel, skiing exercises in the Alps, and other AT exercises in Germany, Austria and the UK.

### THE ARMY RESERVE

Looking for a new challenge? Want to do something different but keep your day job? As a member of the Army reserve, you get to travel, learn new skills and get paid for it. You also have access to all the adventurous training facilities and opportunities open to the regular Army (such as those described in this article). Reservists meet in the evenings and at weekends so you can fit training around your civilian job or studies. You'll serve with either your local detachment or a national unit. For more information visit: [www.army.mod.uk/join/The-Army-Reserve.aspx](http://www.army.mod.uk/join/The-Army-Reserve.aspx).

### THE BRITISH MILITARY IN CYPRUS

Britain has long recognised the importance of Cyprus as a strategic outpost in the Middle East first signing an agreement with Turkey over the control of Cyprus in 1878. With the outbreak of WWI Britain found itself on opposing sides to Turkey and assumed outright control of the island. In 1925 Cyprus became a Crown Colony governed by the British High Commissioner. In 1960 a treaty was agreed with Greece and Turkey granting independence to the Republic of Cyprus. Under this treaty Britain retained 98 square miles of real estate at Akrotiri and Dhekelia, which would remain as British sovereign territory, known as Sovereign Base Areas. These two base areas on Cyprus enable the UK to maintain a permanent military presence at a strategic point in the Eastern Mediterranean.



# MAKING THE GRADE

## SIX OF THE BEST UK'S MID-GRADE WHITE WATER RIVERS

**S**itting in the middle of the current grading system it's probably fair to say that many white water kayakers spend more time enjoying the fun and challenge of running grade three sections and rapids than everything else. Grade 3 is a fantastic environment to learn and to hone skills on, making it perfect for club trips and coaching, and for those that like to play grade 3 can usually offer up lots of scope for downriver paddling fun...

Here in the UK we have no shortage of fantastic grade 3 destinations and, in fact, it was a real struggle to narrow this guide down to just six! Despite our relatively diminutive size, when the rain falls and the rivers rise we are blessed with a bountiful supply of rivers that deliver some rather fine grade 3 white water. To give you a few ideas for your next paddling adventure here, in no particular order, is our choice of six of the best runs that provide all the attributes of a great grade 3 paddling experience.





## THE RIVER TEES

(Middle Section - Barnard Castle to Winston Bridge)

**Location:** England (North)

**Info:** This section of the Tees begins in the scenic town of Barnard Castle. The put on is visible at the road bridge, where there is ample parking. The get out is again easy at Winston Bridge.

### The Run

This section of the Tees is carved through the limestone valley and creates some dramatic scenery and, most importantly, some really fun grade 3 white water. Just below Barnard Castle you'll pass a mill, which marks a river-wide reef style drop. Further down you will arrive at Abbey Rapids, a good grade three rapid, ideal to run and to play on multiple times.

The white water continues through the limestone gorge with some 'on-the-fly' waves and stoppers to keep you entertained. Once out of the gorge you'll come to Whorlton Falls, which can be easily portaged if necessary. After this drop the Tees offers one of its most playful sections. Although relatively short, the paddle between Whorlton and Winston offers superb sport for the grade 3 connoisseur. Bends, rapids, weirs and playful spots litter the river every few hundred meters. In lower water levels this section is a brilliant training ground for those wanting to develop their playboating skills. When it has rained for a bit it becomes a challenging lead with several tough decisions to be made. The get-out at Winston Bridge is really easy too, what more could you ask for?

### If you like this, you'll love:

The Swale / The Washburn / The Wharf

## THE RIVER DEE

(Chain Bridge to Town Falls)

**Location:** Wales (North)

**Info:** To get to the put in just above the Chain Bridge Hotel, and below the Horse Shoe Weir, many paddlers use the car park just above the weir.

The take out is river right at the Mile End Mill (car parking fee) site or carry on down Town Falls and take out river left just after Town Weir

### The Run

This section of the River Dee is steeped in canoeing and kayaking history and can rightly lay claim to being one the birthplaces of white water kayaking in Britain. In the early years keen white water paddlers would compete to prove their river skills at slalom races and the Dee is still home to some big slalom and wild water racing competitions. For many years it was linked with the famous Dr Mike Jones Memorial Rally. It is on the rapids if the Dee paddlers have had their first taste of white water and, occasionally, swimming!

The usual seal launch to get in will splash away any cobwebs and the run starts off with some easy warm-up rapids, but get in the swing of things quickly because not far downstream lies the famous Serpent's Tail rapid. This is great fun and pretty easy really, but it has unseated many a paddler in its time. You can easily inspect and set safety cover easily from the left hand bank. The usual line is to start right and then move diagonally across to the middle-center to punch the wave hole at the bottom.

After the excitement of the Tail things get mellower with lots of great eddy lines and river features to practice your skills on. The site at Mile End Mill has some fun stoppers and waves for those that like to play. If you've parked your shuttle here it's time to take out and enjoy a butty and a brew in the café or maybe pay a visit to the onsite canoe shop.

If you choose to continue downstream you'll negotiate a few fun little rapids until the river makes a turn to the left. This signals the approach of Town Falls and you'll see the vista of Llangollen and the bridge below before you. These can be inspected from Town Bridge on your way to the put in. As you approach the falls there are two weirs that guard the run in. Take the first in the middle at the obvious V and then head right for the second. This will lead you in to the right hand channel of the falls and you can then choose your preferred line down. The left channel can be run in high water but hides a few powerful holes.

Whatever channel you take as soon as you pass under the Town Bridge you must head left to avoid the dangerous Town Weir. Head left for the last small drop to the side of the weir and then take out on the left and carry up to the car park near the Sarah Ponsonby pub.

### If you like this, you'll love:

Afon Conwy (Ysbyty Ifan to Rhydlanfair Bridge) →



PHOTO BY ROBIN EDWARDS



### THE MIDDLE DART - THE LOOP

Newbridge to River Dart Country Park

**Location:** England (South West)

**Info:** Put-in at New Bridge where there is a large car park. Please don't use the section of the car park reserved for non-paddlers. Carry your boat down the steps and put in from the ledge. The take out is on river right, just past the pump house, complete with Archimedes screw, at the River Dart Country Park.

#### The Run

You'd be hard-pressed to improve upon the Middle, or as it's far more commonly known, the Loop section of the River Dart in Devon as perfect example of a grade 3 run. It is ideal for beginner and club river trips, yet still holds plenty of sport for the expert. Set to a backdrop of stunning Dartmoor scenery, the Loop starts of gently and continues to delight for it's six and a half kilometres to the take out, throwing up plenty of boulder gardens, play waves and 'pool drop' style rapids that you are able to get out and look at, walk if necessary, or run multiple times if desired!

Notable highlights include drops such as 'The Washing Machine,' 'Lovers' Leap,' 'Triple Drop,' and 'Spin Dryer.' All of these present an option to walk if you don't feel ready, and all provide an excellent introduction to the types of rapid and skills you'll meet and require on other white water rivers. Not merely a terrific day out on a beautiful river with excellent white water, the Loop is a training ground for UK-style kayaking that you will surely find yourself returning to again and again during your paddling career.

And the Loop is by no means a one-hit wonder in the Dartmoor area, either, with the likes of the Tavy, Walkham and the Lower Dart there's plenty to keep the beginner white water kayaker occupied all weekend without having to paddle the same river twice.

#### If you like this, you'll love:

River Tavy / River Teign / River Exe / River Walkham

### THE RIVER SPEAN

The Spean Gorge – Spean Bridge to Power Station)

**Location:** Scotland (Western Highlands)

**Info:** Start at Spean Bridge, where there's a public car park and the river can easily be accessed. The usual takeout is near Mucomir Power Station on the right, or you can continue a little further and take out just before you reach Gairloch.

#### The Run

The Spean Gorge is an absolute classic, and an absolute cracker of a river trip. It can also be combined with the easier section of the Spean above, you could even add on the Lower Roy, which flows in to the Spean, too if you were feeling very energetic! A word of caution though, although at the levels that the Spean is normally run (low) it's solid grade 3 it does have a couple of tricky rapids that the less experienced may wish to portage. At higher water levels the water constricts to produce some very strange boils and eddy lines and it's probably best avoided. But if you are happy with all of that then you're in for a highland paddling grade 3 treat!

The first set of rapids you'll arrive at is called the Fairy Steps and it has some stoppers that you'll want to pick a line to avoid. It sets you up in to the rivers rhythm nicely and prepares you for what is to follow. The two main rapids of concern are the aptly named Head Banger and the Witches Cauldron. Both have undercut and pin potential so extreme care needs to be taken. Scouting is recommended and portaging advised. The rest of the gorge offers some fun, challenging drops in an amazing setting. The, again, aptly named Constriction comes close to the end of the gorge. It can be tricky and a bit of a squeeze at low water but once negotiated you'll be grinning. Two more fun rapids await and then you're out of the gorge and the action drops, all that's left now is to excitedly share stories of your Spean Gorge adventure as you enjoy the relatively flat paddle out to the take out.

#### If you like this, you'll love:

River Roy / River Garry / River Orchy (Lower)



PHOTO BY GAVIN HART





PHOTO BY TANIA BROOKES

PHOTO BY KEVIN LONG

## RIVER GRETA

(Thirlmere to Keswick)

**Location:** England (Lake District)

**Info:** Get on the Greta at the old A66 road bridge; near the turning with the B5322 at Thirlmere from here a footpath will take you down to the river. The take out is on the left just past the Level Steps and a small weir. This will bring you out at the car park by the climbing wall where it is easy to leave your shuttle vehicle.

### The Run

The Greta's easy access and location in the outdoor Mecca that is the town of Keswick make it probably the most popular, and must run, in all of Lakeland. And those aren't the only reasons for its paddling popularity. At its grade the Greta provides excellent sport for expert and intermediate paddlers alike. Its character is mainly boulder garden in nature, but it does have the odd bedrock slab drop up it's sleeve, just to keep your scouting skills and paddle strokes sharp, and keep things interesting. It's also a great run for honing river skills and really playing the river as you hop from eddy to eddy.

The Greta starts off in a fairly gentle fashion, but be patient, this is your warm up, and a straightforward boulder garden begins the fun. Soon the Gleneraterra beck joins the Greta on the right and you pass under a bridge. Here comes a tricky boulder rapid before you hit the first real grade 3 section known as Magnetic Rock due to a boulder laying in wait, just covered, to catch the unaware. Once this is negotiated the Greta really comes into its own with waves, breakouts and fun rapids a plenty. Next up are a couple of broken weirs. The first is best taken on the right, if the level is high be ready for some fun waves at the bottom. The next is hiding behind an island, which is itself guarded by big boulders. Pick a line through and keep driving right ready to take the awaiting drop hard right against the bank. This is exciting and fun paddling and you'll be grinning all the way down.

After you've passed under the A66 a great play spot awaits below an old bridge. In the right levels this is a lot of fun. When you finally tire of playing turn your bow once more downstream and head on through a few more fun boulder garden rapids before you find yourself in the heart of Keswick and the 'Level'. The final bit of fun is a small weir where those with excess energy can have a final play session in its friendly, at most levels, stopper wave. Then it's just a matter of choosing your preferred take out, sorting the shuttle and heading to one of Keswick's great Cafés or pubs for post-paddle refreshment.

### If you like this, you'll love:

River Brathay / River Derwent / River Lune / River Calder

## THE AFON TRYWERYN

(Canolfan Tryweryn - National White water Centre)

**Location:** Wales (North)

**Info:** The run starts just below the dam, park in one of the centres ample car parks and carry your boat to the top.

Take out at any point you fancy on the top section, the centre building is always close at hand. If you continue in the lower section then take out at the main road bridge in Bala on river right just under the bridge. The public car park is right there.

### The Run

Unlike the rest of the runs in this article the Afon Tryweryn is dam controlled and this means that it can be a lifeline for grade 3 paddling in the dryer months when many other rivers cease to run. Canolfan Tryweryn, the National White water Centre, and home to the Welsh Canoe Association, is a fun and reliable source for good grade two and three white water all year round. It's ideal as a training ground for sharpening your river running skills and is also a brilliant venue for training courses and competitive events. If you park at the Canolfan Tryweryn top site and then walk up alongside the river you'll get an extra boost to your trip!

After the main rafting site you'll soon find yourself paddling through narrow rapids and choosing lines around islands. Top Hole is great for some freestyle fun, and the Grave Yard offers some good technical paddling, especially if you try and hit as many eddies as possible. The Ski Slope is easy to run and offers some good wave and hole play for the skilled and the brave. There's a nice play wave below this, but be quick to roll or break out as a sharp drop follows under a stone bridge. This is 'Miss Davies's' and it the hole at the bottom looks far stickier than it actually is. This section has also hosted slalom and wild water racing competitions of the highest calibre.

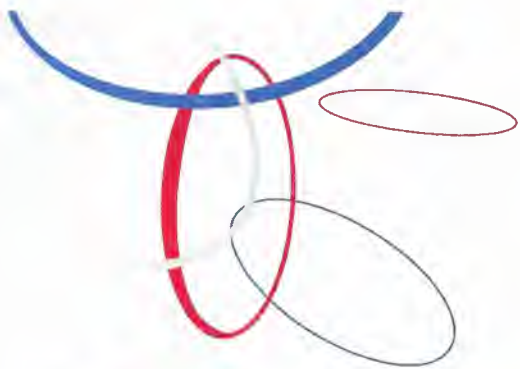
The Dog Leg/Cafe Wave is next where you can practice your playboating skills in front of a coffee sipping audience. The next corner after the Dog Leg and down towards 'The Fingers' is a little sporty and can catch the unwary out, so be on your guard. Going upside down here is not recommended without a very good helmet! Next comes the NRA Bridge and another fun spot to try your hand at playboating moves. The river flattens out for a short distance before Chapel Falls; this is the sting in the tail. It is very sticky on river right and can give you a good rinsing if you end up in the hole. Run it left of centre and carry good momentum and you'll be fine though.

This is the end of the main run, but carrying on until Bala Mill Falls is highly recommended. There are no major rapids, but the Afon Tryweryn keeps up the fun with loads of great rock spin/splat and eddy hopping action. Be ready for the approach of Bala Mill Falls, It's just after a right hand bend in the river and once above it's time to get out and inspect on river right. There is a sign located for the portage and inspection on the right please use this facility. Just after the falls the river flattens out until you come to the road bridge the get out is on river right and it's a short carry to the large public car park.

### If you like this, you'll love:

Cardiff International White water Centre / Holme Pierrepont White Water Centre / Tees Barrage International White water Centre / Lee Valley White Water Centre





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