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WELCOME

TO THE SPRING ISSUE OF CANOE FOCUS

Welcome to the first edition of *Canoe Focus* in 2016. I hope this year is a great one for British Canoeing and everyone connected with the sport.

The warmer weather can't be too far away now, as this is the Spring edition and within it we catch up on some of the news and activities from clubs around the UK, we journey once more to Canada hearing from explorer Ray Mears about his trip through the Temagami Provincial Forest and also from 11-year old Lily about her two week adventure in Quetico Park. We have also included some great features on women in canoeing, which invites us all to think about people's different motivations and how we can best present our sport in ways which meet the needs of participants and potential new participants.

The 2016 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of British Canoeing will take place on the 2nd April 2016 and the AGM Notice and full details are provided on page 14. The 2014/15 Annual Report will be presented at the AGM and will include some of the highlights and successes of the year. There is much to celebrate, but of course we still have much to do. On page 14 of this issue, I have outlined some of the progress we plan to make during 2016.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Canoe Focus*. The next issue in June will provide a spotlight for those athletes who will be on their Road to Rio. Olympic and Paralympic medals won't be the target for many of us in 2016, but I'm sure many of us have our own personal goals for the year. Good luck and enjoy!

David

David Joy
Chief Executive

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. 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.

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 British Canoeing endorse the company, items or services advertised. All material in *Canoe Focus* is strictly copyright and all rights are reserved. Reproduction without prior permission from the editor is forbidden.

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PHOTO BY JASON SMITH – WWW.WILDCHILDPHOTOGRAPHY.CO.UK





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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



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





NEW SEASON AT LEE VALLEY WHITE WATER CENTRE

As an exciting new season of paddling opens on Friday 4th March at Lee Valley White Water Centre, there are some great special deals for watersports enthusiasts to ride the rapids where British Canoeing's Olympic heroes scooped gold and silver.

Kicking off the new season and for the whole of March, anyone wishing to follow in the trail of some of Britain's top Olympians, can try their hand at rafting on the thrilling 300m long white water descent at a special offer price of just £35 per person (standard price £50).

Anyone over 14-years of age can go rafting at Lee Valley White Water Centre, in Waitham Cross, Hertfordshire, riding on the same waters that saw British athletes and athletes from all over the world compete for the title of World Champion in September last year. "White water rafting is an adrenaline-fuelled activity," explained Pas Blackwell, the centre's recently appointed General Manager. "This exciting Olympic course is open to anyone to try, whether they are keen rafters or just eager to trial a new thrilling activity."

As well as the Olympic run, there is plenty to do for all the family, with a whole host of water activities including Family Rafting, this will open later (28th March) on the prestigious 160m Legacy Loop which has a 1.6m descent. It's open to children aged 10 upwards. Simply get friends and family together and take on the rapids as a team with a raft charter package for just £100 for five people.

The centre is also home to Lee Valley Paddlesports Club whose members, along with Lee Valley White Water Centre staff, recently

represented Great Britain in the IRF World Rafting Championships in Indonesia. Pas captained the Great Britain Men's team and Great Britain's Under 19 Men's team scooped gold and silver.

The centre offers a range of canoeing and kayaking courses, suitable for all abilities – from one off sessions for complete beginners to paddlesport development programmes. To paddle the Legacy Loop

or Olympic Course in a canoe or kayak, paddlers will need to have successfully completed one, or both of the centre's Paddlesport Competency Assessments.

"Whether you want to paddle on our lake or master the drops and eddies of our white water course, you won't find white water quite like it so close to London!" added Pas. "For those

interested in taking up paddling at Lee Valley White Water Centre there are many opportunities for beginners to get involved."

Besides rafting and kayaking, other activities to keep visitors entertained include holiday fun, Hydrospeeding - which is similar to bodyboarding, Hot Dog sessions in an inflatable kayak, the water wipeout challenge – an inflatable obstacle course and from Easter, Go Sup - stand up paddle boarding, which children as young as eight can try. The venue will also be introducing tubing on the Legacy Loop.

And after all the action, visitors can relax with a drink in the licensed café with views over the Olympic course, enjoy live music and watch Britain's new Olympic hopefuls preparing for the next Games in Rio.

To find out more about Lee Valley White Water Centre and courses visit: www.govhitewater.co.uk or call 03000 030 615.

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DEVIZES WESTMINSTER WHAT'S IN STORE FOR DW16?

It's nearly Easter so hundreds of paddlers and support crews are building up for the 2016 Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Marathon; paddlesport's annual 125-mile endurance test of mind and body.

A winter of rain, wind and stormy extremes provided perfect preparation for paddlers. Crews, clubs and school groups will be anxious to see how their early morning starts and long weekend sessions help their performance on the water. Over 630 paddlers of all abilities are expected to enter the race, pitting their skills and technique against reliably unpredictable Easter conditions.

One of the top crews in the Senior Doubles will be Danny Beazley and James Smythe, pairing up again after their 2014 second place finish. James says they're fitter than in 2014, with Danny putting in great K1 performances over the winter. With a handful of 2nd and 3rd place finishes between them, they'll be hungry for top spot.

In DW2015 Lizzie Broughton and Keith Moule were the first mixed crew to win Senior Doubles in a time of 16 hours 40 minutes, the third fastest time this century. Broughton and Moule – both in the British Marathon squad – took planning and preparation to a new level. It paid off.

This year Moule is entering in K1 with his ambition looking for good conditions to break records. DW2015 had a phenomenal Senior Singles race between Tom Sharpe and Sam Plummer, with just one minute between them after four days of intense racing.

Schools started preparation of their teams at the annual National Schools Kayak Championships in November 2015, with 31 crews competing in a day of close, tactical racing packed with sporting conduct despite the tough conditions. Schools work hard to develop their crews. Lord Wandsworth have 18 paddlers with 12 girls in their DW2016 team, while Dauntsey's has four of their seven crews with girls; great news for DW Organisers in the push to increase female participation!

Before the race Olympic Silver Medallist Guin Batten commented: "It was an amazing experience to race in 2004 and to have the privilege to present the DW2015 awards when Lizzie and Keith were the first mixed crew to win. It's brilliant that schools are actively encouraging more girls to take part, and I know that Lizzie and Keith will be great role models to all the young women who race this year."

Good luck to all paddlers in the boats, support crews along the course and volunteers giving their time.

Race dates: 25 to 28 March 2016.
Place: Starts at Devizes Wharf, travels Kennet & Avon Canal eastward to Reading, then down the River Thames to Westminster Bridge.
More details: www.dwrace.org.uk. Live tracking of Senior Doubles from Saturday 27th.

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From Tennie Lee Valley - Image: P



YORKSHIRE FLOODS

Major flooding in the Yorkshire area at the start of the year, has thrown up some major challenges for a number of the region's canoe clubs, in particular those in West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire whose clubhouses are based on the banks of the rivers, most affected by the extreme weather conditions. At the time of going to press York Canoe Club have yet to properly assess the extent of the damage as the water has only just receded enough to allow them access to their boat store for the first time in weeks.

Halifax Canoe Club had only just had their facilities refurbished with brand new changing facilities thanks to Sport England funding only to have the good work spoiled when they were hit by the flooding.

For many clubs it has been the damage to river features and bank side installations that has been the problem. Slalom courses and launching platforms have been washed away or damaged beyond repair. River features have been changed completely and for some clubs, such as Bradford & Bingley, where they once had a reasonably narrow stretch of water for their slalom course they now have a wide shallow water course, the banks of which will need to be backfilled to make it usable again.

Some clubs have also been affected in areas where flooding had initially been seen to have been avoided. This was the situation in South Yorkshire where the River Dearne was prevented from flooding by diverting water into the lake at Manvers. This resulted in the water level in the lake rising by several meters and causing damage to the canoe polo pitch, sprint courses and launching platforms.

Challenging times for all involved but you can rest assured that the Yorkshire paddling community will not let the floods affect their activities for long!

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PROTECTING HISTORIC FOOTPATHS

‘Once a highway, always a highway’ is a phrase often used in reference to all kinds of rights of way in England, Wales and Scotland. It’s been used to defend ancient footpaths from closure to hikers, keep roads connecting communities open – and to protect rights of navigation on our rivers too. The basic premise of the rule is that, once the public can be demonstrated to have gained rights to use a route, that route will exist forever more. The only way to close such routes is by either Acts of Parliament, or through other complicated statutory means. It was due to this legal principle that British Canoeing was recently able to successfully defend in court an historic ford in Brighouse, Yorkshire from closure.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (commonly known as the CRoW 2000 Act) legislation had many benefits for those who enjoy the great outdoors, but was seen as a missed opportunity by paddlers. The wider ranging land reform legislation in Scotland established a new statutory right of navigation on all rivers for paddlers, whereas this was left out of CRoW 2000. Another consequence of the act was that the important legal principle of ‘once a highway, always a highway’ was changed for the first time.

Rights of Way on land (such as footpaths) are created where it can be shown that the public has used it as a route ‘as of right’ (essentially meaning neither with permission nor without being told they can’t) for at least 20 years. Currently this 20 year period could have been at any point in legal history – if a route was used, for example by workers accessing a mine 200 years ago, so long as there is documentary evidence of this use, and that it was ‘as of right’, it doesn’t matter if it hasn’t since been used for 1, 10 or 100 years – once a highway!

The CRoW 2000 act has now, for the first time in legal history, set a deadline for registering historic routes, which haven’t been used since 1949. Any that are not listed in local council’s records of Rights of Way (known as the ‘Definitive Map’) by 2026 will be no longer be eligible for inclusion. The Ramblers and other walking organisations have active

campaigns to research and submit such routes, saving them from being lost forever. This isn’t just an issue for those who access the outdoors on foot however, and could have important implications for paddlers.

Along with the well-known issues relating to access along our rivers, many also have issues in gaining access to the water. Public Rights of Way can be one means of paddlers accessing water knowing that they are not trespassing on land in doing so. As such, British Canoeing is launching a new project to locate and record all those historic routes which travel up to the water’s edge. Examples include old fords, riverside paths and even the routes of long disused river ferries. We’ll be working together with the Ramblers and others to investigate and highlighting these ancient routes before they are lost forever.

We’ll be keeping Canoe Focus updated with news about this project, but in the meantime you can find out more on our website.

We’d also love to hear from any paddlers out there who would like to be involved in the project. The research will involve several stages, from examination of old mapping and prioritising the routes needed by the paddling community the most, and accessing the sites of the routes to judge their viability – there’s no point in a Right of Way at a river bank 10 feet off the river level for example! If you’d like more information on how you can get involved, please see the details below.

More Information On This Project

www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/guidance-resources/waterways-environment/projects/historic-footpaths

Contact us if you would like to be involved –

access@britishcanoeing.org.uk

The Ramblers ‘Don’t Lose Your Way’ campaign -

www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/dont-lose-your-way.aspx

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We are pleased to announce that we have now partnered with Perkins Slade to develop an exclusive BC Club House Insurance Scheme that will offer clubs and activity centres comprehensive cover and competitive premiums, the product is underwritten by Hiscox and launched in February.

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**WERNER
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DENNIS WALLS

CANOEIST, COACH, VOLUNTEER AND SERIAL EVENT ORGANISER, 1945 – 2016



Dennis Walls who has passed away aged 70, was passionate about all aspects of canoeing and kayaking; introducing thousands of people to the sport at Exeter Canoe Club and Haven Banks OEC and organising countless tours, activities and events across the whole range of paddlesport.

Born on 6/2/1945 in Tiverton, he found his way to Exeter Canoe Club, via Westhill College Birmingham in the 1970's. He quickly got involved at the Club and has been a permanent fixture ever since. In the early days he got involved as club secretary, but later became chair and was posting emails to the last.

At the club he saw through two changes of venue, and took the lead for the Canoe Club that forged a joint facility share with Exeter Rowing Club and Exeter BSAC in the 1980's.

Alongside committee work, Dennis was always the first to get involved. He introduced countless people to the sport through beginner programmes or 'come and try it' sessions. Indeed, for many a 'BCU one star' from Dennis was the gateway to canoeing in Exeter!

He was also at the heart of every event run by ECC – slaloms, wild water races, marathons, regattas and tours in the westcountry and beyond. By far the biggest event Dennis ran was the world famous Exe Descent; for many years the biggest race in the country, regularly attracting over 600 paddlers from far and wide.

If it wasn't enough to be at the centre of Exeter CC, Dennis played a massive role on the British Canoeing South West Development Team as secretary; most notably when the RDT bought access to the River Dart and when canoeing got 'Focus Sport' status with Sport England SW. He also chaired the Exeter Council for Sport and Recreation providing grants to many of the City's sports clubs.

More recently when he stopped paddling through ill health his contribution as a volunteer was recognised by British Canoeing and Active Devon for his 'Outstanding Contribution to Sport' in 2008 and 2009 respectively. Both came as a surprise, Dennis was normally the one writing the nomination!

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With extreme slalom and freestyle competitions running alongside coaching clinics from world and Olympic champions there will be

something for everyone. All abilities are welcome to take part in this white water extravaganza; from newcomers to the sport to experienced paddlers.

If you are interested in learning more about Paddle in the Park visit the website <http://www.paddleinthepark.co.uk> email nwscwhitewater@serco.com or telephone 0115 9821212.



COLD WEATHER PADDLING

Although the spring is nearly (officially) here, in the UK it isn't uncommon to have the threat of snow still lingering into the month of March and we can definitely still expect some chilly weather. During those colder spells, the temptation for the fair-weather paddler is to stay indoors and maybe just participate in the occasional session in a nice warm swimming pool. Paddling outside can be left to the hardy white water enthusiasts.

However there is some fantastic paddling to be had in even these slightly colder conditions and the rewards in terms of the wonderful scenery and quality of experience can be spectacular. Bob Finch gives us his account of a Manvers Waterfront Boat Club trip to the Tees back in January, which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone involved and produced some fantastic photos captured by Sean Quinn. Bob also gives us some useful tips on paddling in freezing conditions.

The Tees trip had been planned for some time – we had a great trip on this section in 2015 when it was running at 1.2m (Middleton gauge), big and bouncy Grade 3 and great fun!

This year it was a bit different. Having had to cancel several recent club trips due to too much water, we nearly had to cancel this time for too little – the river had been dropping all week and by the morning of the trip, it was down to 0.56m, a bit of a scrape but still runnable.

The journey up to Middleton took longer than usual – although the roads were clear of snow we were driving through freezing fog most of the way up the A1. Approaching the put-in at Middleton the external temperature gauge in the car registered -6 degrees. By the time we were ready to launch the mist was clearing and the sun was starting to break through.

The first stretch down to Eggleston Bridge was fairly straightforward – the main problem being the low water level on some of the rapids. We did have one swimmer – Murray getting stuck on a rock and capsizing into about six inches of water! From Eggleston down on the 'racecourse' stretch the rapids were a bit harder but fortunately the water was a bit deeper as well. Murray chalked up two more swims, with one for Ryan C.

It was bitterly cold and a bit more water would have been a welcome addition to the trip. Despite this everyone enjoyed themselves (even Murray!) and there was a real buzz amongst the group when we reached the take out at Cotherstone. The scenery on the way down had been truly spectacular, and the snow covered trees and mist hovering above the river made it feel a bit 'other worldly' if that makes sense.

With the right kit (drysuits recommended) and the right planning and preparation there is no reason why you can't paddle even on the coldest days and enjoy it.

Some tips about paddling in freezing temperatures:

- Account for low temperature and the effect this will have on paddler's performance – don't be too ambitious!
- Be aware of effect on kit – chest harnesses & quick releases can freeze up and not release, spray deck release tags can also freeze and be difficult to hold on to.
- Be aware that any swimmers are going to get cold very quickly and need to be prepared to deal with the situation.
- Make sure you have contingency plans in place if you need to shorten the trip.

DAVID JOY JOINS BRITISH CANOEING AS CEO

British Canoeing welcomed David Joy as its new CEO in January of this year. David, who will be based at Holme PierrePont, is an experienced sports professional, having held a number of high profile roles in national sports organisations and operated for many years as CEO within Scottish Athletics, Derbyshire Sport and latterly England Golf.

Mohamed Elsarky, Chairman of British Canoeing said of David's arrival, "We are delighted to have David join us at British Canoeing. David brings significant and relevant experience across various facets of sport and recreational activity that will enable him to advance the British Canoeing agenda."

David said of his first three weeks, "The last few weeks have flown by, as I have spent some really valuable time gathering information and views about the history, the culture, the programmes and the plans of British Canoeing. Over the next few weeks I will continue to meet with our staff, committee members and partners and I am excited to have the chance to spend some time with our athletes, coaches and support staff at HPP, Lee Valley and Bisham Abbey.

I am looking forward to consulting widely and playing my part in shaping our new plans for 2017-2021, so that we can take the right steps together to build an even brighter future for the whole sport. It is too early in the process to be putting shape to our plans but I hope these will bring about stronger partnerships between British Canoeing and the National Associations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, more paddlers and more members, improved services to members and much stronger

links to clubs and other delivery centres. Talent pathways, coaching and international success in all of our disciplines will always be important and we are likely to see an increasing importance placed on good governance, our commercial strategy and excellent communications. We will continue our strategy for securing and improving access to waterways alongside promoting sustainable canoeing to ensure the natural environment is both enjoyed and protected.

Whilst it is right that we look ahead and plan for the next four years it is also important that we focus on delivery in 2016. Of course the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games are fast approaching and they will provide a real spotlight for the whole of our sport. We of course wish our athletes well in their final preparations and we ourselves must be ready to take advantage of this shop window and to promote the huge variety of opportunities to paddle within any one of the disciplines that make this sport so diverse and exciting.

There are lots of great things happening throughout British Canoeing and a huge number of talented and committed people working together to organise, develop and improve the sport at local, regional, national and international level. I really am looking forward to playing my small part in helping to build an even brighter future for the sport over the next few years."



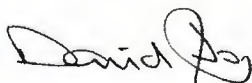
BRITISH CANOEING 2016 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Notice is hereby given that the 36th Annual General Meeting of British Canoeing will be held at the British Olympic Association, 60 Charlotte Street, London, W1T 2NU, on Saturday 2nd April 2016 at 2pm. All members are welcome to attend.

The business to be dealt with will be as follows:

- Minutes of the last AGM.
- To receive from the Board a report of activities of the company since the previous AGM.
- To receive from the Board a full statement of accounts.
- To elect Vice Presidents.
- To appoint the company auditors.
- To approve the changes to the Articles of Association.

David Joy
Chief Executive



Further details of the business of the AGM, including the Agenda, and Voting by Proxy form, will be posted on British Canoeing's website here - <http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/about/governance/AGM-2016> - on Monday 7th March 2016.

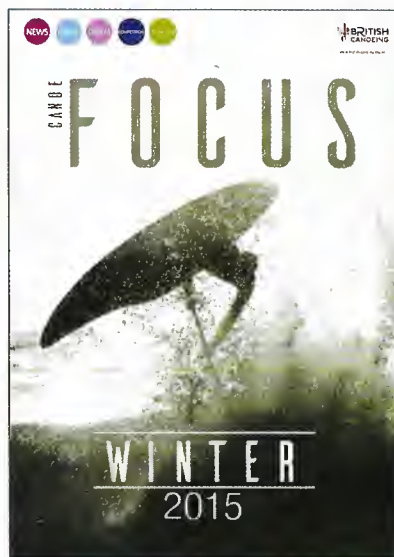
Note: Any person being a Full Individual Member of the Company shall be entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote at the above mentioned Annual General Meeting in their place. Such proxy must be a Full Individual Member of the Company.

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WHAT'S NEXT FOR CANOE FOCUS?

What is next for Canoe Focus? In December you hopefully will have seen that we sent out our first ever digital magazine, including a lot of your favourite features and articles normally found in your printed version of Canoe Focus, along with a lot of new content and media. On reading this, you will have also received the second edition of our digital magazine to enjoy for Spring, jam-packed with exciting travel features, stories of local paddlers going on to great things and photos and videos of our athletes as they train for Rio around the world.

So, if we're sending you the digital version anyway, why are we talking about it in this separate edition of Canoe Focus? Well, because this is going to be the last print edition of Canoe Focus, before we move over to the exciting new digital platform!

We want to make sure every one of our valued members continues to enjoy all that Canoe Focus has offered for many years, as well as all the new content coming your way, because of this we need to make sure we have your email address. This way we can send you an email when the latest edition of the magazine goes live, along with your password to access it as a British Canoeing member.

To ensure your details are up to date, please log on to your membership profile via www.britishcanoeing.org.uk and check that you have given us your correct email address. Please check you have selected to receive emails from us via communication preferences and then you should see the latest edition of the magazine in your inbox soon! Alternatively, look out for the membership page in this edition and return your up to date contact details to us via the form provided.

WHY ARE WE GOING DIGITAL?

Over the last few months and beyond, we have been studying how people in general enjoy content, the content that gets the most interaction throughout social channels and our website, and looked at the feedback from you, our members, on what you find the most engaging. We found that some of the most enjoyable content, from your perspective, was only achievable online, this means videos, great images and direct links to more in-depth articles.

We are excited about all of the different opportunities now available through Canoe Focus being online. We can make sure you're seeing all of the coolest videos from social media, demonstrate examples of

techniques discussed in articles, link you directly to resources and external sites as well as gradually developing more of the content you love. With the digital magazine we can analyse each article, meaning we can produce more of what you love and cut the stuff you don't want to see, resulting in great content on every page!

We also listened when you let us know some of the news featured in the print edition of Canoe Focus is sometimes a little out of date when it hits your doormat. Well, by eliminating print times, we can make sure all of the latest news is included and any events to be promoted have more time and relevance too.

As well as all of this, it's better for the environment and as a group of people whose sport is all about exploring the amazing landscapes, environments and nature of the world, we want to contribute to this in anyway possible.

HOW OFTEN WILL I GET CANOE FOCUS?

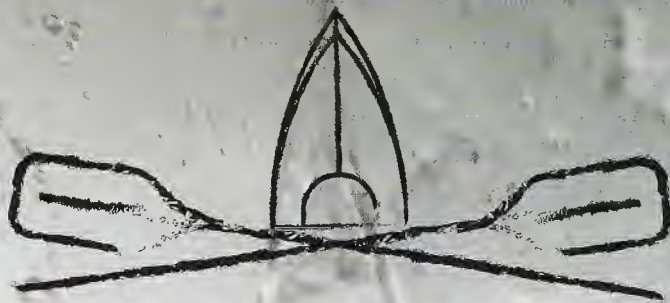
The schedule will remain the same as you are used to. There will be four editions a year, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, bringing you all the news throughout the seasons and highlighting the best tips for different times of the year.

IS IT STILL A MEMBER BENEFIT?

Definitely, we only distribute via emails given to us by our members, we have also password protected the magazine, so only members who receive this can enter, even if the link is found. Of course, people could share this link or password, but that is up to the members and as far as we're concerned, Canoe Focus is still all about the members.

We hope you are looking forward to this new chapter for Canoe Focus as much as we are, and are enjoying all of the new features available now it has moved online. We will be keeping a close eye on exactly what you're loving and what you're not, so keep an eye out for the next edition as it will hopefully include even more of what you enjoy reading!

If you have any questions about how to access the magazine, or how to make sure you will receive it, please don't hesitate to contact us via: mediaenquiries@britishcanoeing.org.uk



PADDLE IN THE PARK

**23RD & 24TH APRIL
AT HOLME PIERREPONT**



PADDLEINTHEPARK.CO.UK

**JOIN OLYMPIC & WORLD CHAMPIONS ON THE WATER FOR A WEEKEND
OF FREE PADDLING, COMPETITIONS, CLINICS AND WORKSHOPS**



GET SET FOR

NATIONAL GO CANOEING WEEK

Join the Journey

National Go Canoeing Week is an annual highlight in the British Canoeing calendar. Now running for its third year we want it to be bigger and better yet again. For that to happen we need YOU to take part!

This year's theme is Join the Journey. With the excitement of the Olympics taking place just around the corner we wanted to celebrate and get into the spirit of the games. So this year we'll be setting off MacGregor, the British Canoeing mascot, on a virtual journey around the country carrying a British Canoeing flame.

We have set MacGregor a target of 30,000 miles and we need you to power his miles by getting in your boat and

paddling yourselves. As you register your miles with us MacGregor will move from place to place, improving his paddling talents as he goes.

The week will celebrate all paddlers, from complete beginners to Olympic stars! It doesn't matter what type of paddler you are this is all about celebrating the diversity of our sport. Why not use the week to try out a different discipline? We want to get slalom paddlers trying canoe surfing, sprinters giving white water a go and tourers out in sea kayaks!

The participation of experienced paddlers is just as important to us as complete beginners and there are lots of great ways in which you can get involved with NGCW this year:

Go the extra mile! – We know that some of you get out on the water every week. Our challenge for you during National Go Canoeing Week is to do that bit more. If you are part of a group or club you could plan a trip during the week – explore some new territory and really push your mileage up. Miles can be racked up on any type of water; long paddles on the river, multiple runs of the white water course and even race training can all count. You just need to measure your miles and then head to our website to log them in!

Take on a Challenge Route or a Canoe Trail – Our three challenge routes are set on the three longest lakes in England, Scotland and Wales. Last year we had two groups of people



who completed the Three Lakes Challenge during the week.

We have had a handful of people who have completed the Three Lakes Challenge in less than 24 hours and records are waiting to be broken! Our fastest recorded time so far was set by Nick and Dave Watt. They finished the challenge, in a K2, in 19 hours-44 minutes with 8 hrs 11 minutes of paddling time. This year it could be your challenge!

Canoe Trails are free resources which you can download from our website. We have trails all around the country of varying lengths and difficulties. All you have to do is choose a route, grab your paddle and go!

Take a friend – You know that mate who used to be out on the water all

the time but gradually got busier with other things and now you never see them at all? Well give them a call, tell them it is National Go Canoeing Week and there are no excuses! Let's get all those lapsed paddlers to remember the joys of being in a boat.

Take on a 1, 3 or 6 Mile Challenge

- Great for those who want an independent challenge. A number of stunning locations have been handpicked across England where you can complete a one or three mile canoeing challenge.

Join a Guided Tour – Ideal for both beginners and those with a little experience, guided tours offer you the chance to go on an adventure with family or friends in some really

wonderful locations across England. Guided tours are a great way for you to learn more about the wildlife and sights on local waterways.

Take part in a Starter Session or an Event – Our Starter Sessions are designed to get newcomers on the water for the first time as well as encouraging previous paddlers back into the sport. They give a great introduction to the basics of paddling as well as the opportunity to paddle a mile. Go Canoeing will also be holding a variety of events to help people to get involved. →

Details of all activities can be found on our website: gocanoeingweek.org.uk

However you decide to take part in National Go Canoeing Week make sure you register your miles on our website to be in with a chance of winning some fantastic prizes. There will be rewards for the most miles paddled by a club/group and for the top miles by an individual paddler. Can you beat Matthew Allen's top

individual mileage of 125 miles from 2015 or the Canoe Camping Clubs group mileage of 2789 miles?!

Whether you paddle one mile or really rack them up everyone has the chance to be a winner as there will be some random prizes too!

We can't wait for you to All Join The Journey! [CF](#)



Clubs and Centres – How You Can Get Involved

National Go Canoeing Week is getting bigger every year and we rely on the involvement of clubs and centres to help us to keep it growing. The week is the perfect opportunity to get people participating in paddlesport and encourage new members to your club.

We would love for as many of you as possible to put on a Starter Session or organise an event to take place during the week. All events and starter sessions you register with us will be advertised through the Go Canoeing Week website and we can send you out promotional materials to help you to advertise locally.

If you are a club or centre and would like to organise a Starter Session or event please contact Craig Duff at craig.duff@britishcanoeing.org.uk



NATIONAL GO CANOEING WEEK

Join the Journey



MAY 28TH
— TO —
JUNE 5TH
2016



GET INVOLVED!

National Go Canoeing Week is our annual celebration of all things paddlesport!


Whether you have never picked up a paddle before or you are a seasoned pro there is something for everyone.

With hundreds of events and challenges on offer across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. You will find adventure on the water whatever your level!

Discover more:

www.gocanoeingweek.org.uk





WITH 600 MILES OF SHORELINE AND 1,200 ISLANDS, LAKE TEMAGAMI IS ONE OF THE LARGEST OF OVER TWO THOUSAND LAKES IN THE REGION, AMID AN INTRICATE NETWORK OF LAKES, RIVERS AND CHANNELS, RAPIDS AND SHALLOWS, CREATING A 'PROMISED LAND' FOR OPEN CANOEISTS.

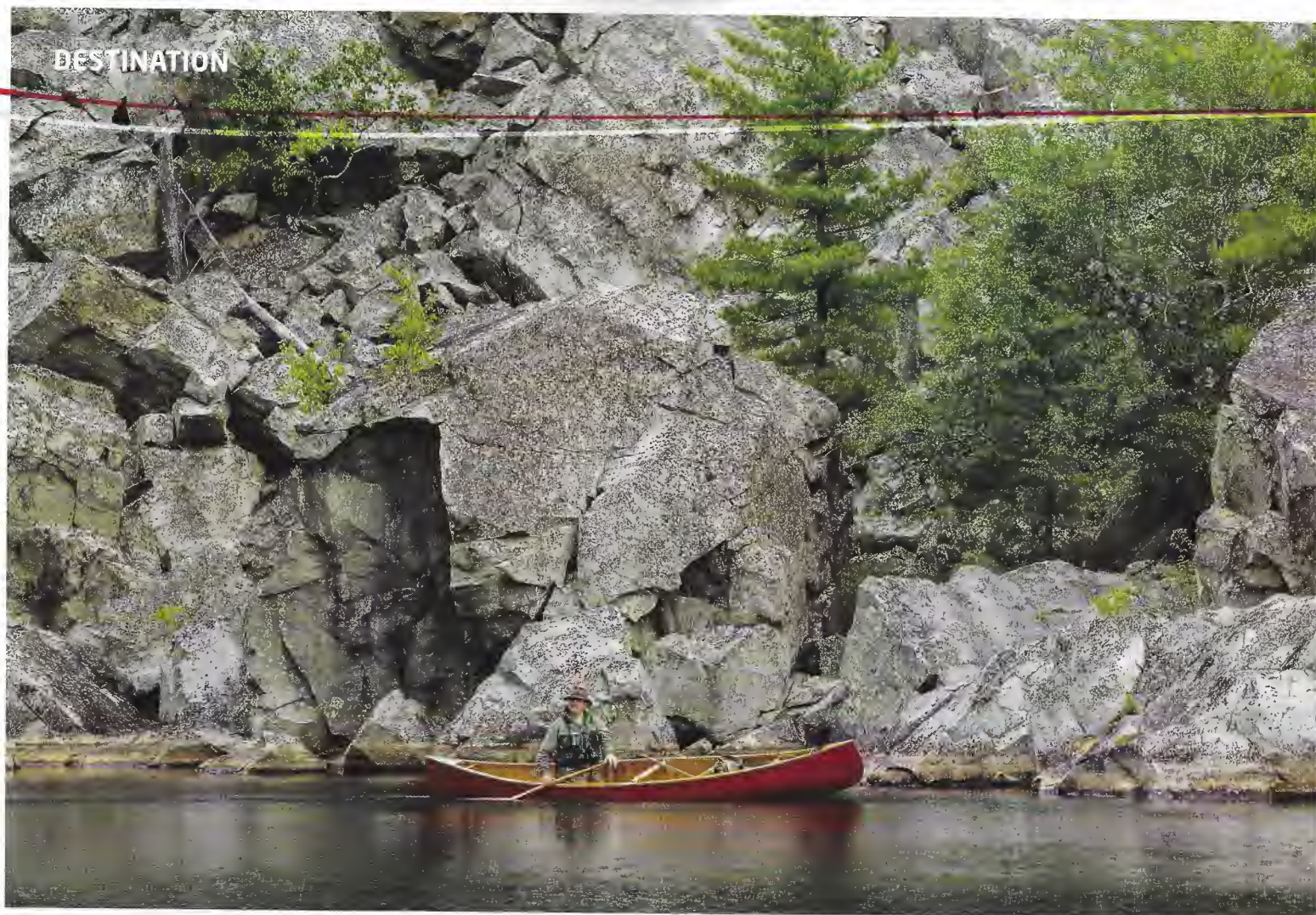


THE

UNTAMED WATERS

**OF NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO,
CANADA**

**PADDLING IN THE WAKE OF
THE YOUNG 'GREY OWL'**



Moving from coastal East Sussex to the untamed wilderness of Northeastern Ontario would be challenging at the best of times, but imagine doing it on your own before your eighteenth birthday. In the summer of 1906, young Archie Belaney from Hastings journeyed north from Toronto, to a region then known as the Temagami Provincial Forest. He settled in Northern Ontario, and was soon adopted by an Ojibwa community, the Tem-Augama Anishnabai, whose name translates as 'the deep water people'.

Tiny Bear Island in the middle of Lake Temagami would prove the ideal place for the English teenager to begin assuming the identity of Grey Owl, as he learned from the native people how to live off the land.

It's amazing to think that the Temagami region is largely unchanged and can be visited now in much the same way as in Grey Owl's time. With 600 miles of shoreline and 1,200 islands, Lake Temagami is one of the largest of over two thousand lakes in the region, amid an intricate network of lakes, rivers and channels, rapids and shallows, creating a 'promised land' for open canoeists.

To the west of the Temagami Forest, 'Grey Owl Country' continues. Once Archie became a skilled woodsman and canoeist, he became a forest ranger, searching for poachers and keeping an eye out for smoke and the dreaded forest fire. His stomping grounds were then known as the Mississagi Provincial Forest, and the Spanish River was one of his byways. This river provides excellent intermediate whitewater canoeing, over seemingly endless rapids and swifts, through towering pine forests.

TO THE WILD

The rugged and often roadless wilds of the Temagami canoe route network and the Spanish River beckon some, while the gentler but enchantingly scenic French River further south appeals to a broader clientele. Here, long sections of flatwater are punctuated by easy portages that bypass the fast water sections.

The French River is a young river flowing east-west from Lake Nipissing across the Canadian Shield, some of the oldest bedrock on Earth. This was the first river to be designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1986 - in recognition of its natural, historic and recreational value. Some say that without this river, and the canoe, Canada might not exist. Two years later, the Mattawa River was also listed. Flowing into Lake Nipissing from the Ottawa River in the east, this very scenic river is also popular for short canoe-camping trips. Travelling by open boat along these historic trading routes and camping on the rock platforms smoothed off by glaciers is the only way to explore. The fishing is superb for Ontario's key sports fish: walleye, muskie and crappie all taste a lot better than they sound.



Challenging portages allow you to reach pristine, motor-free lakes, though it is also possible to find solitude along the more accessible waterways. In the unforgiving north, sign-posted portage tracks can be swallowed by vegetation, blocked by fallen trees or turned into quagmires after rain. The reward comes when you slide your canoe back into the water or perhaps enter a current that rushes your canoe along, an experience as exhilarating as free-wheeling downhill on a bicycle. →

**"TRAVELLING BY
OPEN BOAT ALONG
THESE HISTORIC
TRADING ROUTES
AND CAMPING
ON THE ROCK
PLATFORMS
SMOOTHED OFF
BY GLACIERS IS
THE ONLY WAY
TO EXPLORE."**



UNDER CANVAS

Hundreds of numbered camping spots along canoe routes are big enough for only one or two tents, with backcountry sites allowing nine people per site. Once you've purchased a camping permit (about \$12 per person per night) from the relevant visitor centre, marina or supply post, you're free to camp at a designated campsite, on a first-come first-served basis in many backcountry parks. Note that advance reservations may be necessary in very popular provincial parks that also offer excellent canoeing, such as Killarney on Georgian Bay (ontarioparks.com/park/killarney).

Outfitters make everything easy. Hartley Bay Marina (hartleybaymarina.com) offers backcountry camping packages (food excluded) for \$60 (£30) a day including hire of canoe, paddling gear, camping and cooking equipment and route information. Three-day guided and catered trips are also available for £200. Further north, Lady Evelyn-Smoothwater Provincial Park is a gem, in the Temagami group

of parks. Smoothwater Ecolodge and Outfitters (smoothwater.com) has devised an inclusive 'Grey Owl Paddling Adventure' comprising five days of paddling and camping in this unique, unspoilt ecosystem, bookended by two nights in the comfortable lakeside lodge renowned for its cuisine, from £322. Paddle the Spanish River

(paddlethespanishriver.com) also offer canoe packages, including a 145km, five-to-seven day trip from East Branch, Duke Lake to Agnew Lake Lodge.

Alternatively, contact specialist Tour Operator Windows on the Wild who will custom make your perfect canoe package so all you have to do is turn up! **CF**



THIS RIVER PROVIDES EXCELLENT INTERMEDIATE WHITEWATER CANOEING, OVER SEEMINGLY ENDLESS RAPIDS AND SWIFTS, THROUGH TOWERING PINE FORESTS.



Specialist Tour Operator; Windows on the Wild are offering British Canoeing members who book before 15th April 2016 a free night in a downtown Toronto Hotel for bookings of 7 nights or more. Conditions apply. Subject to availability. Hotel will be guaranteed 3 star accommodation. To find out more call Windows on the Wild on: **020 8742 1556**


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For more travel information and to enter the contest, visit www.ontariotravel.net/ukadventure



WIN

AN EPIC ADVENTURE
IN ONTARIO WITH

RAY MEARS

**PLUS £300
OF MOUNTAIN WAREHOUSE GEAR**

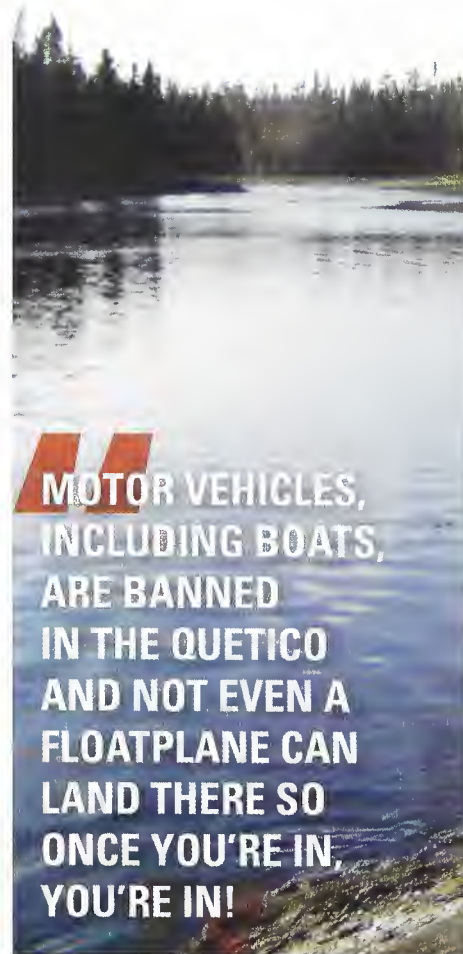
GUIDED BY RAY MEARS, YOU'LL JOURNEY DEEP INTO THE SPECTACULAR BACKCOUNTRY OF NORTHERN ONTARIO WHERE YOU'LL BE IMMERSSED IN CANADA'S CANOE CULTURE AND THE LEGEND OF GREY OWL. LEARN BUSHCRAFT SKILLS FROM THE MASTER HIMSELF. THIS IS AN ADVENTURE LIKE NO OTHER.

**ENTER AT:
WWW.ONTARIOTRAVEL.NET/UKADVENTURE**

 **MOUNTAIN
WAREHOUSE**

ONTARIO
CANADA

AIR CANADA 
rouge



CANOEING IN QUETICO

MOTOR VEHICLES, INCLUDING BOATS, ARE BANNED IN THE QUETICO AND NOT EVEN A FLOATPLANE CAN LAND THERE SO ONCE YOU'RE IN, YOU'RE IN!



BY LILY COUSINS (11 YEARS OLD)

Going on an expedition can mean anything from a trip to the shops to crossing a polar ice cap, but my most recent adventure took place in Quetico Park, Northwest Ontario and was a thirteen day, 200km wilderness journey with my wonderful, unordinary parents, John and Gill and my brilliant five-year-old sister, Nellie. Wilderness canoe trips can sound highly demanding and nearly impossible, but with my family we've

done thirteen previous multi-day trips in Canada and Scotland, so I'm lucky enough to see that it is simply about building up the courage to 'just do it'.

Quetico Wilderness Park covers almost five thousand square kilometers with more than six hundred lakes and over two thousand unofficial, unimproved spots where people have camped in the past (I don't think you could call them campsites). Motor vehicles, including boats, are banned in the Quetico and

not even a floatplane can land there so once you're in, you're in!

Canoeists need permit reservations and can only enter Quetico via one of six Ranger Stations. The name of the park is a mystery but my favourite explanation is that it may be from an ancient Ojibwe name for 'a benevolent spirit who resides in places of great beauty'. The Ojibwe are the local native American tribe historically known for their skills in making birch bark canoes. Our canoe was made of carbon Kevlar!



SPRINGBOARD TO ADVENTURE

This trip was more complicated, than our previous canoe adventures; we got off one jet in Toronto and boarded a propeller plane to the incredible-sounding Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay is the most northern part of America's Great Lakes and the springboard to our destination. We arrived at 3:00 in the morning and were greeted by our brilliant, enthusiastic outfitter, Doug Chapman, who instantly announced

that we were, "awesome". Fourteen hours later, after a hotel bed, a supermarket trolley dash, hours of driving, checking in at a Ranger Station and some frantic re-packing by Mum and Dad we were on the water, waving goodbye to Doug and beginning our two week adventure. All we had to do was make sure we joined up the lakes and rivers that would get us to our rendezvous with him at French Lake in a couple of weeks. Simple!

Setting off on Nym Lake, it felt so familiar in the boat and Nellie soon got into playing with our most vital equipment (a strange Barbie doll, a plastic lion, a felt policeman and a Scooby Doo toy). After a couple of hours paddling and one portage we found a brilliant place to camp and following a quick game of ninjas with Nellie, it was time for dinner. Waking up the next day to the sound of birds and the feel of sunlight prepared me for the day of paddling and portaging ahead. →



PERFECT PORTAGING

Portaging is more unusual in the UK but we've got it all worked out. Mum, Nellie and I start, carrying a rucksack each and Dad carrying the canoe. When Dad reaches the end, he drops the canoe and goes back for his rucksack. At the start of the trip, this was quite funny as we staggered under the weight of our massive packs.

One of the reasons I enjoy wilderness canoeing so much is because of the tranquility. It is incredibly relaxing, floating in a canoe hearing nothing but the sound the paddle, staring at the beautiful scenery, glancing at the mystic, unfathomable waters.

When we aren't paddling, Nellie and I play in the middle of the canoe, munching and debating on whether Scooby Doo or the postman should be eaten by the lion (choices, choices). We also have Dad retelling the scripts of epic movies and Mum making up tales of pirate adventures. At the same time, Mum and Dad decide on which way to go, where the next portage is or where to camp (I try and help when I can). One of the portages on day 2 was particularly beautiful and wild. With a small, barely visible path and trees crowding round it, it was just beautiful with lots of twists and turns and a welcoming beach at the end. It was round about this time that I started to feel so confident about the portages that I volunteered to go first and for the rest of the trip I was always first out of the boat and on my way.

After a hard day of paddling and portaging, it was bliss to stop and set up camp. Sometimes we had the luxury of sitting down with the three of us reading and feeling content. Following a delicious dinner and sitting round the fire toasting marshmallows, it was time to go to bed and hear about Paddington Bear (a bit different to the Quetico bears which we only saw hints of).

OFF THE BEATEN PATH!

After several days of imagination, canoeing, portaging and swimming we finally entered the middle point of our marvelous trip. We saw very few people on the entire journey having seen a boat in the distance on day four and then meeting some people on a portage on day twelve. While passing a waterfall with an abandoned tent perched near by, it finally hit us that we were about as far from civilization as we could get on this trip. If we decided to wimp out (not a chance!) it would take seven days at least to get back!

REALLY WILD

The views you would expect to be perfect and it usually is - except for the fact that you cannot see beyond the lakeshore. Besides the large lakes like Sturgeon, you just cannot see too far into the distance, which makes the navigation difficult (for Dad).

On about day five, as we were paddling along, Mum gasped and pointed to something in the distance. Walking slowly but purposefully through the water was a fully-grown, male moose. We have seen moose before but that time it was a bit close for comfort. One of my other memories of the wildlife was the spectacular bald eagle, taking off powerfully but majestically in front of us.

On day ten we decided to go for an evening paddle. After a few minutes of drifting silently, we spotted something in the water. It was a lovable beaver, frolicking near his carefully crafted den. As we continued we spotted another beaver with a baby. Trying my hardest not to squeal at the adorableness of the baby, I stared at them and soaked up a part of these amazing creatures world.

"ONE OF MY SPECIAL MEMORIES OF THE WILDLIFE WAS A SPECTACULAR BALD EAGLE, TAKING OFF POWERFULLY BUT MAJESTICALLY IN FRONT OF US."

CARPET PADDLING & THE PORTAGE OF DEATH!

Near the end of the trip, as we woke, we were startled and disappointed to see that it was raining like crazy. Apart from a couple of days we had had mostly good weather and were hoping for better conditions for our last full day. We emptied the contents of our waterproofs bag (less for me to carry on the portage). After battled along to our last portage. Portage des Morts (portage of death, no pressure then) was famous for the very many travellers that had died on it. Feeling wet through (please note: no children were permanently damaged in the making of this adventure). As we walked on, the clouds began to part but it continued to rain, dampening our spirits but driving us to find a campsite quickly. We then had a hard fight against the wind, which Dad described as like trying to paddle our canoe across a carpet. As we finally arrived on what seemed the perfect campsite, the clouds cleared instantly and the sun shone on us. Wonderful. We spent the rest of the afternoon on the beach, swimming and playing. I think it was the best night of our trip. →

ONE OF THE REASONS I ENJOY WILDERNESS CANOEING SO MUCH IS BECAUSE OF THE TRANQUILITY. IT IS INCREDIBLY RELAXING, FLOATING IN A CANOE HEARING NOTHING BUT THE SOUND THE PADDLE, STARING AT THE BEAUTIFUL SCENERY, GLANCING AT THE MYSTIC, UNFATHOMABLE WATERS.



BITTER SWEET BOATING

It was our last day. As we paddled along Pickerel Lake for the final time, a lump began to grow in my throat. By the time we were paddling through the river that leads from Pickerel to French lake, it was more of a basketball than a lump. Our plan was to go to French Lake and meet Doug there. We glided along the French River, everyone telling the odd joke and Nellie and I

playing with the little toys. I must admit I had become quite fond of them. When we entered French Lake we all grasped that the trip was over and the bittersweet feeling took over. All of a sudden we were in civilization and staring at a man waving at us from a beach. Doug. We paddled towards him, smiling and waving, Nellie especially. "Hi guys! It's so great to see you again" Doug chuckled.

We walked up to his van, calm and delighted that we had finished the trip. "I've got a little surprise for you! Beer for mommy and daddy" - Mum and Dad grinned at each other - "and some Sprite for you two". Doug looked very pleased as Nellie and I lunged for the bottle.

So.... another brilliant open boating adventure was in the bag. Bring on the next one! **CF**



DAD'S FACTS

- Fees:** Quetico Provincial Park fees per day: under 6 – free, 6-17 year's old Can\$ 5.65, Adults Can\$12.43
- Kit:** Flew from the UK with all our expedition kit, which included paddles, buoyancy aids (loaded with survival kit), dry packs (monster 115 bags for the adults, 30/20 litre bags for the kids), bug suits, UV sterilizer pen, wellies/crocs, 2 pans (plus greaseproof paper for baking), 1 MSR stove with repair kit, karrimat for kids to lie on in the boat etc.
- Food:** Bought thirteen days food from one of several Thunder Bay supermarkets.
- Satellite phone:** Took an Iridium satellite phone, which we never switched on.
- Fishing:** There is good fishing in Quetico but you need a separate license and someone would need to stop paddling to have a chance (not a chance).
- Outfitters:** Several outfitters around village of Atikokan but we strongly recommend Doug Chapman. He provided a shuttle bus service and we rented 18'6" carbon Kevlar canoe (Souris Quetico) with padded shoulder blocks for portaging and a American gallon of white gas fuel. He also made the transfers terrific fun.
- Civillisation:** Plenty of motels in Thunder Bay and Doug arranged a luxurious log cabin for our final night in Canada on the edge of Quetico.
- Map:** The Adventure Map of Quetico (1:125,000) has just enough detail and is waterproof though the Canadian national topographic maps are very accurate.
- Season:** We went early in late May/June only a month after the ice had starting breaking up (bugs were surprisingly few). September sounds good since autumn colours are beginning and animals are stocking up for winter so more visible.
- Journey:** There are almost infinite permutations, particularly if you ink Quetico with the Boundary Waters Canoe Area of the USA, but we went from Nym to French Lake going west to Quetico lake and Your Lake, south as far as Camel, Beard and Heronshaw and east as far as Kawnipi. Mostly flat water touring on lakes and rivers with three or four grade 1 rapids.



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FOCUS ON FREESTYLE

ARTICLE BY ALAN WARD

WHITE WATER FREESTYLE IS AN EXCITING DISCIPLINE THAT CAN INVOLVE ANY LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION, FROM DOING SQUIRT TURNS AT YOUR LOCAL WEIR, CARTWHEELS ON FLAT WATER OR GOING DOWN TO YOUR LOCAL PLAYSPOT OR WHITE WATER COURSE AND SURFING WAVES AND HOLES.

Freestyle paddling came from humble beginnings and has always been linked with having fun and enjoying time on the water messing around with friends. It has a holistic base of skills that can be transferred from many other types of paddlesport, from boat and edge control, fitness to varying levels of athletic movement.

It has progressed very quickly over the years and there are now many athletes within the discipline who are pushing the boundaries of what seemed impossible only a few years ago. The best examples of this are the guys and girls competing in events like the Ottawa XL and the White water Grand Prix.

COMPETITIVE FREESTYLE

The competitive side of the discipline is also accelerating at an impressive

rate, and to win now at the highest level of the sport you not only have to complete all of the hardest moves on the score sheet, but you now have to link moves together in anything up to six moves in one sequence.

Things may be reaching mind-blowing levels at the top level, but at its heart freestyle is about fun and there are many competitions around the country where you can get involved in freestyle at a grass-roots level and enjoy the company of like-minded freestyle paddlers, at the same level of participation.

TOTAL CLASSIC

One of the most popular competitions in the UK, that attracts participants from all over the world and is growing every year, is the SAS Hurley Classic, which takes place on the feature created by Hurley Weir on the River

FREESTYLE PADDLING CAME FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN LINKED WITH HAVING FUN AND ENJOYING TIME ON THE WATER MESSING AROUND WITH FRIENDS.



Thames. The competition involves loads of different activities that should appeal to anyone interested in white water paddle sports, such as; SUP, boater X, freestyle jam style sessions, workshops, coaching, paddle with the stars, a banquet and much more.

The SAS Hurley Classic is dwarfed by only one competition though and that is the leviathan that is known as NSR, or the National Student Rodeo. Hundreds of university students gather for one weekend in Nottingham, in March, every year for not only the biggest freestyle competition in the world-but the biggest party of the year! Historically created and organised by Leeds University it is a right of passage for any white water loving university student, whether an experienced freestyle warrior or a keen beginner shoe-horned into the mini bus and thrown down Holme Pierrepont for

extra university points! Go and check out all the action this year from the fourth to the sixth of March!

TAKING ON THE WORLD

My fellow British Freestyle Team-mates and I took part in the ICF Canoe Freestyle World Championships last year. In the last edition of Canoe Focus, there was a full run down of the event hosted by Wilderness Tours.

As ever the British athletes did their country proud and returned with many medals, including Claire O'Hara claiming another gold in the squirt boat category and a bronze in ladies float, as well as the young and very talented Sophie McPeak also taking a bronze place in the junior float ladies.

We also had our most successful Junior Men's Team ever after having all three members make it into the final, Charlie Brackpool missed the podium by

a matter of only a few points, while Hugo Scott and Hugo Anthony took the bronze and gold medals home. Bren Orton deserves some serious recognition as well after making it into the final of one of the toughest international competitions I have ever seen.

TAKING IT FORWARD

If you'd like to get involved with white water freestyle, at whatever level head to www.gbfreestylekayak.com

THINGS MAY BE REACHING MIND-BLOWING LEVELS AT THE TOP LEVEL, BUT AT ITS HEART FREESTYLE IS ABOUT FUN AND THERE ARE MANY COMPETITIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY WHERE YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN FREESTYLE AT A GRASS-ROOTS LEVEL!

MAKING IT MOVE

STEALING TECHNIQUE FROM THE COMPETITIVE DISCIPLINES TO IMPROVE RECREATIONAL PADDLING PERFORMANCE!



ARTICLE BY
KARL MIDLANE

So who would like increased acceleration, a faster top speed or just more energy efficient cruising for longer trips? Being able to generate efficient forward power is crucial to all forms of kayaking, competitive sprint and marathon paddlers do almost nothing else, but recreational paddlers tend to neglect

it, but who would not benefit from being able to go further, faster, longer or just more efficiently.

Once a novice has discovered how to make the boat move forwards this skill is then often neglected and thought is put into dozens of ways to make a boat turn, move sideways, prevent or rectify a capsize. Not enough people return to generating forward momentum, sticking

to that crude and inefficient effort that they concocted for themselves in the first three minutes of their paddling career, and although they may have become more practiced at holding a straight line, their power generation may still benefit from some attention. All kayakers need to go forward well to reach their maximum potential and it is not that hard, just slightly counter intuitive.

WHICH MUSCLES ARE WE USING TO GENERATE THE POWER?

Instinctively most people will bend their arms to move the paddle, this seems reasonable as we are used to moving things we hold in our hands by moving our arms, but we are not trying to move the paddle, we are trying to move the boat! The powerful muscles of the core and torso are the key to success.

Hold your paddle out in front of you with comfortably straight arms, don't bend the arms, but rotate your shoulders and body to move the paddle. Where this movement comes from will depend a little on what sort of boat you are paddling in. Let us consider the highly practiced technique of competitive paddlers and see which one is most similar to the recreational discipline of your choice. If you were a sprint paddler then your knees would not be locked in under thigh braces as they need to be free to move, leg muscles generate powerful amounts of force that drive a boat forward, hips will be rotating, and your buttocks will be sliding on the seat. You may even have a seat on a pivot that allows for maximum rotation all the way up to your shoulders. This allows for as much forward speed as possible to be generated in a part of the sport where forward power is everything and three strokes a second is the rate to aim for if you want to play with the big boys.

At a different point on the spectrum a slalom paddler will still need to generate as much speed as they can, but will have to compromise the style achieved by the sprint paddler, this is because slalom is a moving water discipline and the dynamic environment needs hips to be solidly locked into the boat so that edge control can be used for three dimensional control in the chaos of a rapid. This means that rotation will come more from the shoulders and to a lesser extent further down the body. (It still will not come from biceps bending elbows.)

If you are a whitewater paddler then clearly the slalom version will be your ideal target, likewise surf kayakers, play boaters and polo competitors will see similarities. If you paddle a sit on top then you may be surprised to realise that you have more in common with the sprint and marathon paddlers as you can adopt a higher knee position and let your hips rotate to generate as much body rotation as possible. Sea kayakers will fall somewhere in between. If you are

out in rough conditions or playing in your favourite tidal race then clearly things are going to seem similar to white water, but if you are eating up the miles in calm, friendly conditions then moving that point of rotation a little further down your body may help the miles to fly by a little faster or more efficiently. Some sea kayakers will even unhook their knees from the thigh braces for a high knee position when they are not feeling too challenged by the rugosity of the swell. →



ALL KAYAKERS NEED TO GO FORWARD WELL TO REACH THEIR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL AND IT IS NOT THAT HARD, JUST SLIGHTLY COUNTER INTUITIVE.



NOTE THE A SHAPE MADE BY BODY, PADDLE SHAFT AND LOWER ARM AT THE CATCH PHASE





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: A HIGH ANGLE BLADE, A LOW ANGLE BLADE, A WIDE PROFILE AND A STRAIGHT SHAFT.



LOWER HAND COMES UP TO EYE LEVEL BEFORE THE TOP HAND DROPS.

RIGHT: IN HIGH ANGLE PADDLING THE TOP HAND CROSSES AT EYE LEVEL ALL THE WAY OVER THE BOAT TO BE ABOVE THE WATER ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE.

WHERE TO STICK IT IN

To get the paddle into the water in the optimum start position will require you to sit up tall, no slouching, with a slight 5-10 degree forward lean from the hips. Add plenty of rotation to get the shoulder forward.

Stab the blade into the water close to the boat approximately as far forward as your toes. Keeping your arms straight unwind that pre-rotation and try to think about using your legs to push the boat forward. Your top hand will pass across the boat horizontally at eye level. Don't let the hand drop as it comes across, it is going to finish above

the water on the opposite side of the boat to where it started.

Once the boat has moved far enough forward that your knees are level with the paddle the power phase is finished. Your hips should now be level with



the blade and you should have sliced it out of the water ready for the next power strike.

Remember we are trying to move the boat forward past the paddle, not pull the paddle backwards past the boat. Once the blade is clear of the water it needs to be lifted up so that the paddle is held horizontally at eye level before the other end is lowered and stabbed into the water to fully immerse the blade.

Now underway you may notice that you get a small wave generated at the bow of the boat that creates a wake running from the bow at an angle of thirty degrees. The blade should follow the line of this wake during the power phase rather than running completely parallel to the boat. You may also notice two small whirlpools being generated off the back of your blade

as you pull on it, these whirlpools are a sign the stroke may not be right.

In a fast boat once you have taken the first few strokes to get you up to speed the blade should bite in the water and not slip backwards as you power yourself past it. This will mean that the whirlpools disappear or at least become smaller. If you are paddling a wide stable boat like most white water designs, playboats or sit on tops then the maximum hull speed that you can get from the boat may mean that you can never go fast enough to stop the slippage. In a fast boat then the blade is going to need more pressure to slip if you have a larger blade surface area. Competitive paddlers may choose a big blade to maximise the surface area and train to pull with a force that does not exceed the maximum the blade can handle.

“CONSIDER THE HIGHLY PRACTICED TECHNIQUE OF COMPETITIVE PADDLERS AND SEE WHICH ONE IS MOST SIMILAR TO THE RECREATIONAL DISCIPLINE OF YOUR CHOICE.”

A WHITE WATER PADDLER HAS THEIR TOP HAND ABOVE HEAD LEVEL FOR MAXIMUM ACCELERATION.



CHANGING GEAR

Changing the height of the top hand as it crosses the boat during the power phase is a bit like changing gear in a car. Modifying the stroke to have the top hand just above the head and keeping the blade close to the boat during the power phase produces aggressive acceleration and is ideal for a sudden increase in speed like when trying to catch a surf wave, accelerate towards

the flow in a small eddy or bring the boat rapidly back up to cruising speed after a tight turn. Usually only a small number of these strokes are needed before the top hand can be lowered to eye level for a more sustainable level of energy expenditure once the maximum hull speed has been reached.

Top level slalom paddlers do a lot of this as the nature of the event means that they are constantly sacrificing a

little speed as they manoeuvre before accelerating to try to get back up to maximum speed before the next manoeuvre. White water paddlers will have more opportunities to relax and rest but will still frequently be faced with situation where a burst of acceleration is vital, even sea kayakers will come across situations where catching or avoiding a wave will need a burst of extra power. →

ABOVE: IN HIGH ANGLE PADDLING THE TOP HAND STAYS AT EYE LEVEL DURING STROKE.

TECHNIQUE

"REMEMBER WE ARE TRYING TO MOVE THE BOAT FORWARD PAST THE PADDLE, NOT PULL THE PADDLE BACKWARDS PAST THE BOAT."

SEA KAYAK GETTING IN A WELL-TIMED POWER STROKE.



WILD WATER RACER USING A WING PADDLE. LOWER HAND COMES UP BEFORE THE TOP HAND DROPS.



LOWERING THE TOP HAND

Producing turning momentum may require a much lower top hand, sweep strokes being the most common example, but having a paddling style where the top hand crosses lower than eye level whilst producing forward power is common, though I am going to suggest not that desirable.

A low top hand gives a low top speed that some people will argue is perfect for the gentle days when you are meandering along not wanting to put too much energy into moving the boat. Unfortunately a low top hand means that a large proportion of the effort you are putting in can be wasted having a sweep stroke like turning effect on the boat that has to be cancelled out by the next stroke. Try putting efforts into strokes at an angle that will see most of your forward power converted into forward movement not unwanted turning. Although some may argue the before stroke works better in strong wind, if I am exposed to areas of strong wind snatching at my paddle I prefer to paddle powerfully and efficiently out of that area as soon as possible rather than struggling with a stroke that can waste a significant portion of energy and taking a lot longer to get out of that awkward wind.

If you use asymmetric paddles (and I would recommend everybody should) then the surface area has been carefully balanced to match the angle that the blade is designed to go into the water. Some manufacturers produce blades especially designed for low angle paddling where the user anticipates they will hardly ever need to

generate power to cross an eddy line; battle a headwind or get somewhere in a hurry. If you never need to paddle far or fast or risk wind or currents and never aspire to reach your maximum potential then these paddles are aimed at you, but this article was not, sorry to have made you read this far before I explained that. For everybody else keep your top hand high and get your blade out of the water by the time your hips have got level with it. The blade only goes behind you if you are performing some kind of steering manoeuvre, at which time you have paused in your forward power generation. **CF**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karl started his paddling career as a slalom K1 and C2 competitor. Since then he has gone on to paddle almost every recreational discipline. He is now a level 5 coach working for Plas y Brenin on their paddling and mountaineering programs.



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SEVEN SUPER PADDLE TRAILS

TO TRY THIS SPRING



As the fairer weather is nearly here, it can be hard to decide where to go first to get back on the water following a couple months off. Although, many waterways remain beautiful, serene and accessible all year round, we have picked out some of our favourite springtime canoe trails to inspire you to get out on the water and smiling in the spring sunshine...

Many of these waterways require paddlers to hold a valid unpowered craft licence. You can find more details on this on our website under Waterways & Environment. If you are a British Canoeing member, just take your membership card with you – you are covered for these licences as a benefit of membership. Non-members can get the relevant licences direct from the waterways, or by joining British Canoeing.

ASHBY CANAL

Also known as the Ashby de la Zouch Canal, this tranquil waterway weaves its way mostly through a backdrop of agricultural land. Starting at the Lime Kilns Pub the first part of this journey takes you through the outskirts of Hinckley heading into the Leicestershire countryside, after half a mile there is a branch in the canal where you need to keep left under the bridge.

After a mile you will come across Trinity Marina on your right, where you will also see a modern Brewers Fayre Pub. Further down, and under a bridge, you will see the imposing Triumph Motorcycle factory on the right (one and a half miles into the paddle). The trail then opens up into

lovely countryside, where the canal straightens for approximately one mile, taking full advantage of the picturesque setting.

Basin Bridge (no. 22) marks the halfway point of this trip and past this you will find, on the left the Ashby Canal Centre, with a high bridge over the well-presented entrance before passing under a more modern bridge (no.31) constructed from blue brick and steel. As you go under Sutton Wharf Bridge (no 34), Sutton Cheney Wharf comes into view and this marks the end of the six-mile paddle.

Sutton Cheney Wharf has good facilities and there is an area of lawn as you get out of the canal along with a cafe/restaurant with seating inside and out.



GLOUCESTER AND SHARPNESS

This canal was built and opened in 1827 and the lovely trail is ideal for an easy canoe or kayak trip. It has little traffic. Purton is usually very quiet and has a landing stage next to a car park, which costs £1 for four hours. Otherwise, access can be made from banks next to the swing bridges.

From Purton, northwards, there are fields on both sides and in the distance the stunning Forest of Dean can be seen on the west side, with the Cotswolds on the east. It is two

and a half miles up to Slimbridge, which has a café (and toilets) next to the canal. The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Reserve is half a mile up the road towards the River Severn, making it the busiest on your route, with much traffic going up the road to see the birds, as well as moored boats along the canal.

Slimbridge is your turn point back to Purton. You could look to combine this trail with a visit to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Reserve although this would involve a car shuttle and drop off at Purton or Slimbridge. →



THE STUNNING FOREST OF DEAN CAN BE SEEN ON THE WEST SIDE, WITH THE COTSWOLDS ON THE EAST.





KENNET AND AVON

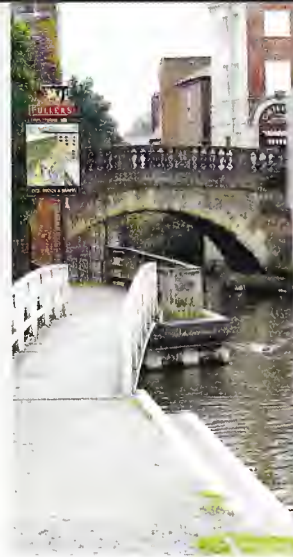
This calm water trail begins just off Canal Walk in Hungerford and heads towards Newbury. Not long into the paddle you will reach the lock at Dunn Mill that will require a portage. Once past this you will now head off into the picturesque countryside. As a lot of this area is an SSI you should be on the lookout Red Kite's as they have been occasionally seen searching for food here.

About three miles in you will come into Kintbury. On the right hand side is a pub, portage on the left and cross

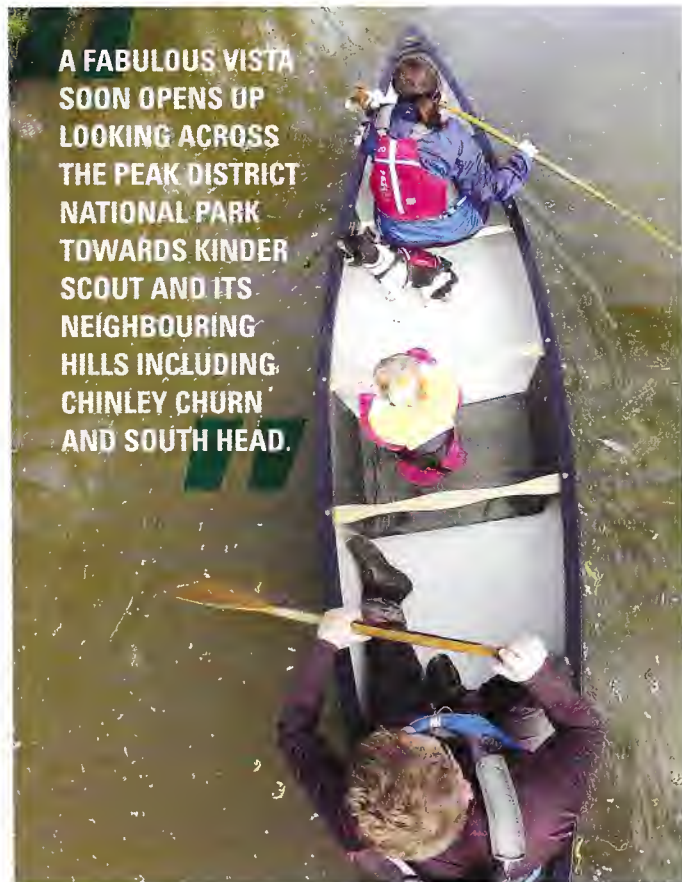
the road before putting back in. During the summer months you may catch sight of a horse drawn narrow boat, which offers day-trippers a traditional journey down the canal. The canal here continues to be very rural, despite one of the main railway lines to Paddington following nearby. It's a very peaceful trip, often through a tunnel of trees which; when the sun is out produce a wonderful light pattern on the water, and some lovely shade.

Just before Newbury is a low swing bridge, some may like to limbo it but you may wish to portage, which

can be done on the right hand side. The next lock is actually Newbury Lock, as you portage on the left hand side you will find a lovely picnic area with easy access to another pub. The finish of the trail is only 500-metres away so you can always walk back! As you portage here look around and spot some old heritage signs. Just beyond the park is a small tributary of the Kennet and as you put back in after the lock do be aware of the current coming from the left. A short paddle further and you will reach your destination of Newbury.



A FABULOUS VISTA SOON OPENS UP LOOKING ACROSS THE PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK TOWARDS KINDER SCOUT AND ITS NEIGHBOURING HILLS INCLUDING CHINLEY CHURN AND SOUTH HEAD.



PEAK FOREST CANAL

The area surrounding this trail is really beautiful; there is a lovely crossover bridge at the junction with the Macclesfield Canal and the interesting Posset Bridge. Legend has it that the bridge got it's name following Samuel Oldknow's promise that the workmen would get a posset of ale if they completed the construction by a certain date. They did so and earned their reward.

As you start the trail and head out leaving the village of Marple there is an eclectic mix of industrial and rural scenes as the navigation clings to the side of Goyt Valley. As you reach Disley there is a simple timber swing bridge crossing the canal, which can be squeezed under, but most paddlers opt to portage. Nearly two miles further, the smell of sweets is in the air as you approach New Mills, the home of Swizzels Matlow. Heading towards Furness Vale past a large marina

and boat builders the canal winds its way across the county boundary into Derbyshire towards Whaley Bridge. A fabulous vista soon opens up looking across the Peak District National Park towards Kinder Scout and its neighbouring hills including Chinley Churn and South Head.

Beyond Bridgemont the canal forks left towards Bugsworth Basin, which for anyone interested in industrial archaeology is a must visit. It consists of three large basins that formed part of a large inland port built to bring the canal as close as possible to the limestone from the quarries at Doveholes. Imagine how busy this place once was before the days of road transport and enjoy a drink at the Navigation Inn as you ruminate on the glories of the past. As you reach the end of your trail, there are a number of picnic benches in the pretty area between the canal and River Goyt, ideal for post paddle picnicking.



RIVER BURE

Launch into the mill pool from the canoe launch platform. Keep away from the strong flow from the old millrace and when clear, cross to the left bank and paddle downstream. In less than half a mile take the old canal cut on the left and paddle back up to the small slipway and portage. Carry your canoe along the boardwalk and re-enter the river at the upstream slipway. Do not attempt to launch into the Bure upstream of the mill structure from the car park. Alternatively (particularly if you have a canoe trolley) transport your canoe across the mill structure from the car park and go left along the boardwalk at the far side of the mill structure to the canoe launch ramp.

The Bure winds prettily through open country, past Hautbois Hall, a Girl

Guide training centre and woodland towards Buxton Mill. It is possible to land on the left hand bank, looking upstream at Buxton and portage the mill via the public footpath, which goes to the left of the mill building, but it does mean crossing a busy road by a blind corner. It is best to turn around here, after enjoying a break for your lunch of course, and head back downstream to Horstead.

Do not attempt to land above the mill structure at Horstead. There is a significant 'draw' to the mill sluice and the millrace is not shootable as there are underwater obstructions. Land at the portage point on the river left and either carry back to the car park across the mill structure, or portage past the old lock into the canal and paddle back round to the mill pool to be safe.



**BE AMUSED
BY THE
ANTICS OF
THOSE WHO
HAVE HIRED
PUNTS; YOUR
GOOD DEED
OF THE DAY
MAY BE TO
RETURN A
LOST POLE
TO AN INEPT
PUNTER.**

RIVER CAM

Start at the small car park beside the river in Water Lane, Chesterton, just beside the now defunct 'Penny Ferry Pub' and paddle upstream, keep to the right hand bank and look out for rowing eights. Just before the footbridge there is a small slipway, which leads to the 'Green Dragon', the oldest pub in Cambridge. If 400 yards is too soon to stop, then remember it for the way back!

Continue along Riverside past the Technology Museum, an old pumping station with a tall chimney,

to Elizabeth Way Bridge and Midsummer Common. At 1.5 miles, you pass under Victoria Bridge (Originally built to allow the residents of Chesterton, then a separate village, to have easy access to the city) and past the last of the boathouses and on up to Jesus Lock. Land on the left and carry round the lock, but stop for an ice cream before you get back on the water!

Now you are on 'the Backs'. Enjoy a leisurely paddle on past the famous colleges, but unfortunately you can't land at any. Be amused by the antics

of those who have hired punts; your good deed of the day may be to return a lost pole to an inept punter. There is a public landing place at Quayside on your left, just before Magdalene Bridge but you cannot leave a canoe there securely.

At three miles, pass under Silver St Bridge into the

pool. Keep right and clear of the old millstream. You can land on the left grassy bank and walk across to 'The Mill' pub, or land at the Granta, which has a landing stage. Then, suitably refreshed, paddle round to the sluice, land on the right bank and portage up the punt rollers onto the upper river, which winds leisurely towards Grantchester. Watch out for swimmers in the river; the clipped lawns and hedges of the Newnham riverside club are on the right bank, but do not land here.

A small landing on the right at five miles leads to 'The Orchard'; a teasop and garden made famous by Rupert Brooke. Walk across the field and enjoy a pot of tea and cake whilst precariously seated on ancient green canvas deckchairs, all very period and very Cambridge!

For a shorter paddle, you can use the free car park at Barton Road, Newnham (CB3 9HX – TL 447573), which is open from 10.00 – 22.00 and has a 2.0m barrier. Launch onto the small cut that leads (right) to the river. Turn left to proceed to the punt rollers at Silver St and thus to 'The Backs' or right to canoe to Grantchester and Byron's Pool. →



RIVER TRENT, HOLME PIERREPONT

This trail begins in the city centre near to Wilford Bridge, but as parking is not always to be found, using the National Water Sports Centre is recommended where parking is almost always plentiful. The trip can go as far upriver as you wish merely turning around when wanting to drift back to the start point.


Most paddlers will be familiar with the Holme Pierrepont set-up, even if not competition paddlers.

It is about a mile and a half upstream to Trent Bridge, and it can be busy, especially at weekends. There is both a Sea Cadet centre on the right bank, and a sailing club on the left. The Trent from Nottingham down is also a major commercial conduit, and carries traffic down to the Humber, so keep a look out for large craft. After a large culvert on the right bank is the canal depot, a large dock you can paddle into.

The first bridge is Ladybay Bridge, and on the left bank are both a rowing club and Nottingham Kayak Club, which means being in the presence of long racing kayaks, which can move

very fast. You can now see both the Nottingham Forest Football Ground and Trent Bridge Cricket Ground on the left side, with Notts County on the right bank- the reason for so little car parking on some weekends!

Now on the right, the Nottingham Canal leaves, bound for a major canal junction to the west of the city, with connecting routes to the West Midlands, Merseyside, and London, a relic of the times when this was a very major water-borne route centre. On the left, behind you, are the remains of the former (now closed) Grantham Canal. New road building severed the Nottingham end, and the canal was closed in 1936. There are currently plans (as in many parts of England), for a re-opening, but both the Grantham and Nottingham ends would require totally new routes.

After Trent Bridge itself, a very busy arterial road for Nottingham, the river opens out into a very pleasant stretch, with a stepped embankment all along the north (right) side, giving access on to the water, and a tree-lined riverside road. There can be many fishermen on this bank as well, as access is so easy. 



USEFUL INFO

For the full details on these trails and for safety head to www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/go-canoeing/places-routes/trails

3 LAKES CHALLENGE

43 PADDLING MILES | 3 COUNTRIES



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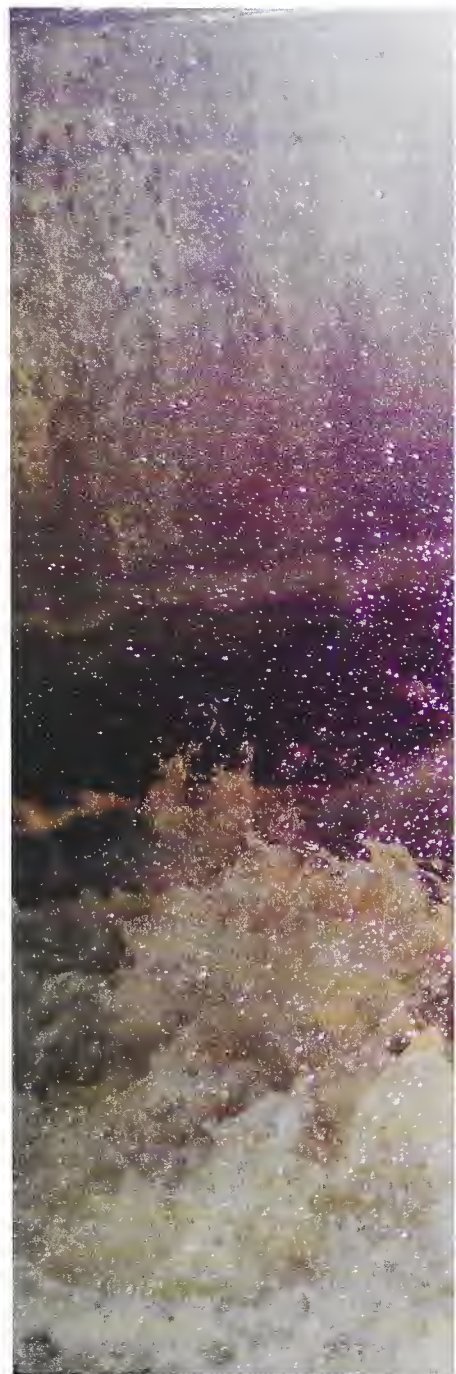
PHOTO COMPETITION

CHECK OUT THE VERY BEST CANOEING & KAYAKING
IMAGES FROM THE NOVEMBER, DECEMBER AND
JANUARY ENTRIES TO OUR POPULAR REGULAR
PHOTO-COMPETITION...



RIGHT: Tom Clarke.
Full action as Jack Gunter
bangs out a big one at
HPP white water course
in Nottingham.

LEFT: Charlie Bil.
An artistic rendering of
some freestyle fun.





LEFT: Robert Nurse. Canoes and furry friends, a combination just made for adventure and fun.

W

e're constantly amazed at the amazing photos that you submit each month, from the inspiring

images that flood into the FOCUS office and inbox it's pretty clear that, not only are you paddling in some fantastic locations, but you have a great eye for capturing the spirit of our brilliant sport.

Have you captured a perfect paddling picture that might be a winner?

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WOMEN WHO CANOE

#THISGIRLCAN

We have many amazing women who excel in many different areas of canoeing, and today we want to shout about a couple of pretty awesome ladies who have taken very different approaches to paddling. We hope to see many more stories of ladies overcoming challenges, pushing themselves and excelling in paddlesports in the months and years to come!

SONJA JONES: AN INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY

Sonja Jones first came to our attention back in April 2015 when we were running a 'This Girl Can' photo competition on our Facebook page, this was just a month before she completed an impressive coast to coast paddle in just three days. The circumstances that lead up to Sonja's first big kayaking challenge are definitely unique, but more than that, inspirational...

At the age of 27, Sonja suddenly found out that she has Multiple Sclerosis. As quoted from her blog, "It made me realise that I haven't been living life the way I have always dreamed of". After this realisation, and following advice from doctors on her diagnosis that exercise may help, Sonja was on the search for a fun, engaging way to get active and that's where kayaking came in.

Looking to, not only get active but also to start living

a fuller, more adventurous life Sonja decided to set herself a challenge. It was just months after finding out that she has MS that her training programme began, this plan of kayaking was designed build strength and confidence, with the goal of eventually carrying out an impressive feat proving to herself and everyone around she could do it, MS or not.

Chris Brain, a British Canoeing Level 4 qualified coach, among many other qualifications was the man for the job, and put together a plan to get Sonja, from someone who had kayaked only a few times throughout her life, to someone who could take on the challenge of crossing Scotland from coast to coast. Six months was the time scale set, as in May 2015 Sonja, Chris and a team of others were going to be embarking on the adventure of a lifetime and raising money for charity. ☒





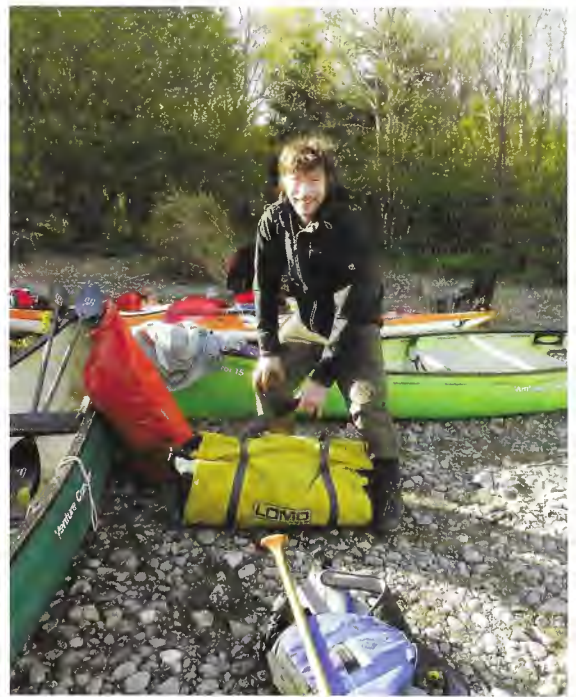
The programme began with, small paddle trips, just Sonja and Chris figuring out strengths and weaknesses and how they could be improved. It wasn't long before Sonja's muscles, and confidence were growing along with figuring out the best equipment and style to get the most out of every paddle. A few months in and the progression was impressive, with the fast approaching 'coast to coast' challenge, Chris took the training sessions to big open water to prepare more like for like how the challenge paddle would play out.

After six months, fun, trying and emotional training paid off with a successful 'coast to coast' paddle, completed in just three days rather than the recommended five. The three days saw Sonja, Chris and the team camp loch side, complete eight hours days of paddling and portages and raise £1500 for charity in the process. Pretty amazing! Sonja promises this is just the beginning for her life in kayaking and says: "This Girl Can" and will be pursuing a lifetime of adventure."

Last autumn Sonja was recognised for her inspirational journey into paddlesport, at the 'British Canoeing Volunteer and Athlete Recognition Awards', being awarded the 'John MacGregor Challenge Award'. Along with the award Sonja and coach Chris Brain, took to the British Canoeing Coaching Conference to present a talk called 'Journey to Freedom' outlining the path to recovery through kayaking. One audience member's feedback on the talk was as follows, 'The second keynote speech by Sonja Jones and Chris Brain

was an inspiration. It made me think of my motives for being a coach, my reasons for paddling and my desire to pass on my knowledge for others, while really thinking about their needs and their decisions for starting their paddling journey. It was thought provoking and wonderfully presented.'

Although Sonja's story is definitely unique, we hope it inspires you to really enjoy life to the full and embrace the adventures that can be had on the water. If you have a story about how canoeing has helped you overcome a challenge, please get in touch, we would love to hear about it. →





All of the details of Sonja's journey can be found in detail on her blog (www.paddlehigh5.wordpress.com). This article can't fully do justice to the full picture, so please go and check out her blog and search 'kayaking'.

TERESA YONGE: PADDLING SOLO INTO UNKNOWN BEAUTY



My idea was to paddle down the River Thames, from its source near Cirencester to Teddington Tidal lock in London, a 135-mile journey. As there is no water visible at the official source of the Thames, but only a large granite stone marker next to an old fig tree in a Cotswold meadow near Kemble, I decided to do a recce and walk the first 10-miles towards Cricklade to find where the water started to appear and flow...

At first it was a few puddles about a mile away from the stone marker and then I came across a deep spring like pool. It was after this spot that the river started moving; it was so exciting. I felt like an early explorer! Cricklade is the official start of the navigable Thames. There is a perfect place to start the journey on the edge of town at the end of Thames Lane, depending on the water level, where there is a weir and drop off point.

I have a Coleman 13ft open canoe and packed it with what I needed to camp wild and rough along the way. I took a small pop up tent, a ground sheet, a basher/tarp for my accommodation and shelter. For luxury I took a camp bed, mattress, pillow and bedding as well as an old plastic chair.

I didn't know where I was going to spend each night, and travelled around five to ten miles a day, which suited me well.

There is nothing better than canoeing slowly down a river, going with the flow and taking time to absorb it all; it was a feast for the senses. The young Thames is stunningly beautiful.

I started out in under a foot of water at Cricklade. Occasionally I paddled through rough trees and branches and weed, but still the river flowed and was picking up momentum by the hour! I came across two wild bees hives in trees high up above me. Swans and water birds chatted away and made for good company while red kites and swallows soared above. The water was clear and several times I cruised over large trout that hadn't seen or heard me coming and at the last minute would make a startled splash as they sped away. Just before Lechlade I made my first camp, which was so lovely I decided to stay for a few nights.

The bigger river boats and barges started appearing at the first lock on the Thames called 'St John's Lock' where a stone statue of Old Father Thames rests and watches the boats going by. I had a word with him and asked him to guide me and keep me safe! ☒





"THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN CANOEING SLOWLY DOWN A RIVER, GOING WITH THE FLOW AND TAKING TIME TO ABSORB IT ALL; IT WAS A FEAST FOR THE SENSES. THE YOUNG THAMES IS STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL."

My journey took twenty-six days and I camped at seventeen places. It was interesting and fun to meet people along the way either on the water or walking the Thames path. I made my own fire in an old stainless steel colander, which was perfect for cooking and boiling water for tea, soup and washing. I took a cut off plastic milk bottle for washing. Rice, couscous, muesli and oat cakes were a good staple as well as carrots cheese and apples. I picked blackberries and some plums along the way.

There are many places to camp if you look. Be discreet, respectful and leave no trace or rubbish behind, and if you do not want to camp wild then there are official campsites.

My favourite camps were on the islands for if you canoe under the leafy branches that go down to the water, no one can see you are even there! The weather was wonderfully hot and if I got wet it was nothing that a campfire couldn't dry out!

I watched the stunning Gloriana travel up river. She is a 94-foot-long British Royal barge. She was privately commissioned as a tribute to Queen Elizabeth II for her Diamond Jubilee; it seemed surreal watching her go by from my little island camp. I also witnessed the Royal Swan upping boats going by at Runnymede, where I had moored to look around the Magna Carta Memorial and site, which was agreed in 1215, well worth stopping for.

It didn't take long to get the hang of using the locks on my own once the lock keeper had gone off duty, a clear sign saying 'Self Service' was self

explanatory. No lock key was needed as either a wheel or the press of a button would empty and fill the lock quite easily. Most of the locks had toilet facilities and some even a shower. I preferred to wash with my milk jug!

Friends and family came to visit me at different places, to share my wonderful adventure. There are many riverside pubs for recharging phones and camera batteries while enjoying a refreshing pint.

My most favourite part of the Thames was the upper river,

which is still wild, less busy and uninhabited and is very much like the unspoilt River Stour near to where I live. Although further down river, Cookham Lock to Boulters Lock is also stunningly beautiful.

The map that I used, and found most helpful for this trip, is the Waterways Series 'River Thames and the Thames Path' Heron Maps.

I can highly recommend exploring this beautiful and diverse river that is both friendly and welcoming. Take plenty of time; you will not be disappointed! **CF**





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"THE ABILITY TO SMOOTHLY TURN ON THE POWER WHEN YOU NEED IT IS A KEY SKILL THAT REALLY SEPARATES GREAT WHITE WATER PADDLERS FROM THOSE LESS ABLE."

ARTICLE BY ROSS MONTANDON,
IMAGES ROSS MONTANDON,
NEW WAVE COACHING

HARD DRIVIN'

FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR FORWARD PADDLING ON WHITE WATER

Forward paddling, is the bread and butter of all disciplines of paddlesport. It's your engine, your gas tank, your four-wheel-drive; it's the means of getting from one place to another on the water. The better, and more efficient, our engine the less work we have to do.

The less work we have to do generally means we more fun on the river, and the easier it feels to become more skilful on the river! In this article we're going to have a look at five top tips to get you drivin' hard and smooth and improving your forward paddling stroke for use in the white stuff!

A high-angle photograph of a kayaker navigating a turbulent section of a river. The kayaker is wearing a bright yellow jacket, a blue helmet, and a red life vest with '76' on it. They are seated in a vibrant green kayak, which has the word 'VELOS' written on its side. The kayaker is holding a black paddle and is in the middle of a stroke. The water is churning with white foam, and the surrounding rocks are dark and jagged. The overall scene is dynamic and captures the intensity of white water kayaking.

A GOOD KEY STROKE CAN BE APPLIED
TO ALL LEVELS OF WHITE WATER.

FUNDAMENTALS

A good forward stroke is the bedrock on which all possibilities, and future skills are based when paddling on white water. The ability to smoothly turn on the power when you need it is a key skill that really separates great white water paddlers from those less able. To move the boat forwards is a skill that paddlers learn right at the start, but in reality spend many years refining. In fact I'd go as far as to say that you should always be reassessing and developing your forward stroke. The technique can alter slightly based on the type of white water boat, your paddling, your personal paddling style and of course your general physicality, but there are some specifics that are required to really optimise your forward paddling stroke in white water.

SO WHAT MAKES GOOD FORWARD PADDLING TECHNIQUE?

Before we start we need to take a look at what you are actually trying to improve. OK, you know it's the forward paddling stroke, but what will that stroke look like when you've developed and honed it? Have you ever watched a paddler on the river that has a really nice style? Perhaps they seem to time everything perfectly, minimise the amount of strokes they use, and still effortlessly catch that micro eddy, or drive over the crashing diagonal wave without getting their spray-deck wet? Perhaps you've watched a kayaking video, or two, online that's caught your attention? Maybe it was a slalom racer, or extreme big water white water paddler making a difficult line look so easy?

Right, now hold that vision in your mind and imagine you were to take a pen and paper and scribble down some words about such a paddler. How would you describe them?

What we are trying to do here is to create a model! So, if you could make the best white water kayaker ever what would they look like paddling forwards? When we want to improve we often use very loose terms, such as, 'I would like to get better at forward paddling.' But what actually does that mean? Get better in what way? When you are better what will that look like? How you may feel on the water? Developing great paddling skills is as much a mental game as it is a physical one! So, before you launch out on the water spend a little time thinking about it. →

WHITE WATER



BIG VOLUME: KEEPING THE BOAT WHILST LOOKING FOR THE NEXT MOVE.



GENERATING MOMENTUM TO PUNCH A HOLE USING FORWARD DRIVE.

DRIVE TIME!

OK, at the start of this article I said I'd share 5 simple steps to help improve your forward paddling, so let's give this a go!

1 - GET COMFORTABLE

Let's get it right from the start! Begin with the boat set up and your gear. It's important that you are comfortable with your kit, but also that it's right for what we want to do and for our body type. We humans come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and have a varied amount of flexibility and strength, so it's very easy when we are outfitting boats or picking paddles that we just go along with what we're told by our peers, or the trade, without really understanding why.

THE BOAT

Regardless of what style, or brand of whitewater kayak you go for, how it fits you is essential! If you are too loose in it then when you move the boat will not respond. If you are too tight you can become uncomfortable and this can hinder both physical movement and concentration and focus. And an overly snug boat means that when you do make small mistakes they will get instantly transferred into the boat. So a balance is needed to allow us to get the most from our boat and gear! Making sure that we are properly outfitted is key. We need the balls of our feet on the footrest. Our knees and thighs should be engaged with the kayak. If not then don't be afraid to add extra padding to make that contact and this along with

some carefully fitted hip pads should provide a nice, snug fit. Your boat should feel very much like a good pair of running trainers, snug, supportive but comfy. With backrests it's important not to get too trigger-happy and over-tighten. This can put pressure on the lower back that is unnecessary and cause long-term problems. If your posture and technique are correct then you shouldn't really need to rely unduly on your backrest.

THE PADDLE

There are now even more things to think about when selecting a paddle: straight shaft or modified, length, shaft thickness, blade shape etc. Along with potentially causing injury over time picking a paddle that isn't right for you can cause all sorts of problems; so take some time, do your research and don't just buy the same size and model that all your paddling mates use. As a guideline for length hold your paddle across your head. Your arms should fit at right angles creating a clean box with your elbows. Anything off that and the paddle grip will be either too narrow or too wide. Visit your nearest canoe shop, don't just order online. Take the time to test out paddles, get a feel for them and work out whether your personal preference for grip is a straight shaft or modified crank. With regards to feather most modern white water paddles tend to be between 30 and 45-degrees, again try and actually try a few pairs in the shop to get a feel for what will work best for you.

2 - GET IT UP!

Time to go back to that model star kayaker that we imagined paddling down a rapid earlier! A common error with forward paddling on white water is taking the stroke out far to wide. This creates more of a turning sweep stroke than a driving stroke. A great way to simplify this is to imagine that when you're paddling the top hand, which is the hand nearest your forehead is like a dial. The more you lower that hand towards the water the more of a sweeping stroke you create. Imagine you are checking your wristwatch. The more towards your forehead the top hand is, the more of a driving forward stroke you create.

This may seem like a no-brainer and you are probably thinking that this is not a new concept by any means. But I bet the next time you hit the water you will see some lazy paddling going around you, where the top hand doesn't even come close to being vertical.

As you progress you will become familiar that you actually can still drive the boat forwards with sweeping strokes, but it is far less efficient. However it can be useful for combination stroke moves such as sweeping-boofs. Good for when the entry angle to a drop isn't square on. Get your pure forward stroke dialled in first then you can adjust, develop and play with other driving strokes.

3 - BLADE PRESSURE

There's a lot going on when you are paddling in white water, and you cannot physically look at every tiny detail whilst in the thick of it, so we have to use other skills to pick up on things and allow for feedback. Blade pressure is a really useful tool in this regard. It can take a little while to master, and sharpen the skill so it's effective, but it's well worth taking the time and effort for the benefit it will bring to you on the water.

Blade pressure is exactly that. The feeling we get on the blade from the water, which provides us information to act on. For example feeling a lip of the drop such as ledge or rock tells you that you need to apply your power into the blade for a boof. As you become more advanced and tuned in you can respond not just to static objects in the water but when you feel strong flows of water, and currents that you can get purchase on with your blade.

HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP BLADE PRESSURE?

Start off on little ledge drops developing the biting point that you can then power off. Use the ledge as a purchase point. Or you can develop this further by breaking in and out of an eddy reaching for the hard solid water, and using the pressure it provides to gain momentum and then to drive off. You'll soon develop a feel for it; it's kind of like allowing the blade to lock up in order for you to fire the power trigger. →



LANDING POSTURE IS KEY TO ALLOW THE BODY TO FOLLOW INTO THE NEXT MOVE.



LETTING IT FLOW IN READ AND RUN.

4 - ROTATE THE PELVIS

Rotation has been a bit of a fashionable thing when it comes to forward paddling. But actually how much torso rotation do we actually see when looking at proficient paddlers? It's certainly an element of efficient forward paddling but I bet it's not as exaggerated as is the often-stated need. There is also a little something extra that can be added to a forward stroke, which can add a little flair and give you a subtle edge. I call this 'Pelvic Rotation', purely because I can't think of anything else that explains it as well. This is not as simple as just rotating your chest as you forward paddle. We're going to use a smaller range of muscle groups to open up your body when paddling.

The reason why this useful is that as a white water paddler when you're paddling forwards you are also, usually, doing lots of other things too. Perhaps you are holding your boat on edge? Perhaps you are altering your trim? So you need a forward paddling style that doesn't just work when your boat is flat.

Ok so to get this ball rolling sit in your boat. Hold a stroke in the forward position as if you're going to pull through. Then push the opposite bum cheek into your backrest. So if you have the right blade in the water ready to pull, push the left butt cheek into the backrest. Imagine you have strings attached just above your hip, which are pulling your hip back. Have a practise on the flat. Then start alternating. As you get into a rhythm your pelvis will start opening up to rotate.

WHAT DOES THIS DO?

The movement is subtle that's for sure. However it opens up your chest without you just swinging your torso around. This allows you to load up your blade as you pull through. On top of this it can also be combined with changes in posture or edging, or all three at once, so it's a technique that really fits into the multidimensional world of white water kayaking!

5 - KEEP THE BOAT DRY

Alrighty then, nearly time to finish off! Tip number five... Keep the boat dry when you paddle. OK this is certainly



more of a tactic than a technique. What I really mean is try and paddle rapids with the aim of keeping your boat on the surface, not plunging and diving over every wave, hole and drop. This tactic keeps your boat moving and allows you to think about your paddle placement, timing and position on the river. It lets you to think about the descent as it unfolds. I promise you that the 'stay dry' approach will have a positive knock on effect on your forward paddling. You will become more efficient at using the strokes that you have in your repertoire, save energy and get power boosts from the river itself.

When you start getting confident have a go with taking off your spray-deck and running an easy rapid or two. It'll really sharpen up your focus on keeping your boat on the surface and is a lot more fun than it sounds. Perhaps loosen off your

backrest right off to engage your core and lower back muscles more. Having a plan, such as running a dry line, when out on the water really links to your technique; you need both cogs to be working in unison to really optimise your time on the water. **CF**

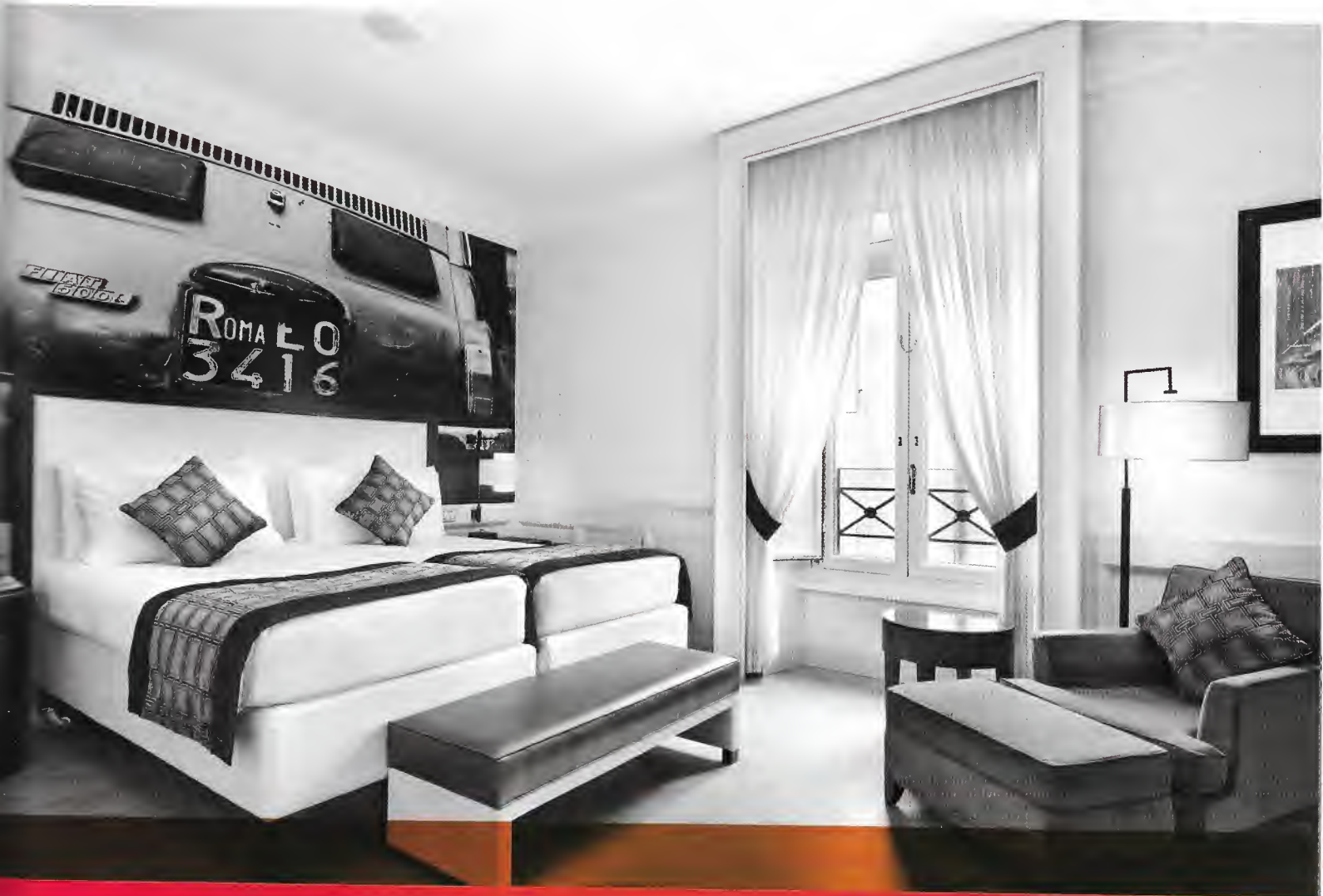


ROSS MONTANDON

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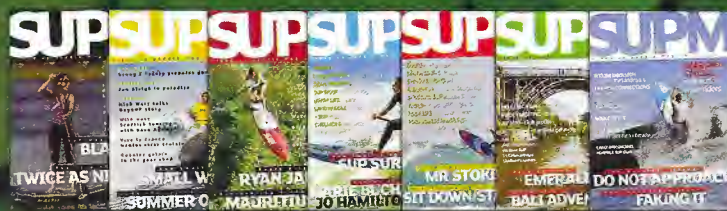
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