

CoDe is the official organ of the BCU Coaching Scheme. Members are free to express their views within its pages. Articles and comments therefore reflect the thoughts of the author and do not necessarily state the policy of the National Coaching Committee. CoDe is programmed for publication with Focus. Contributions, including pictures, are welcome. Please send them to: BCU, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5AS.

THE AIM OF THE BCU COACHING SCHEME IS:

To promote the sport and recreation of canoeing and to ensure that newcomers are introduced to canoeing in a safe and enjoyable way and that they and those already in the sport are assisted to progress to whatever level and in whichever discipline within canoeing suits them best.

IN THIS ISSUE

2 Dear CoDe

3 Developments in canoeing for women in Wales

by JACKIE WYNNE-FREER

Women in Coaching - thoughts after the Conference

by VIC BROWN

4 The Open Cockpit Progression - by GEOFF GOOD

5 IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS for instructors

6 Assessments - a Consumer's story by TIM DAWSON

8 If what we do is Teach, why aren't we called Teachers?

by MARCUS BAILIE

NCF Courses / Courses update

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Dear CoDe

Dear/ CoDe,

I write to strongly disagree with the letter by Francis Angove in CoDe about the need for current first aid certificates to maintain Instructor status. Like most Instructors, I give my time freely to introduce young people to canoeing. To go through the process of becoming an instructor takes considerable time and effort already, and I am not complaining about that. To become an instructor you have to demonstrate a working knowledge of basic first aid anyway. It should be the responsibility of the individual instructors to ensure that they remain familiar with first aid situations; after all, they will have to answer for their actions if an accident should occur. If the BCU introduced a requirement to attend first aid courses and to take exams regularly to keep up instructor status, they would risk losing the goodwill of many of their voluntary instructors.

There seem to be a certain number of coaching scheme members who like collecting certificates for fun, and who rarely actually take groups out, who may call for more rules and regulations. May I make a plea on behalf of what may be a silent majority of instructors who spend a lot of time on the water with young paddlers promoting the sport, and the BCU, and who regard the imposition of more bureaucratic obstacles to continued validation as detrimental to the sport as a whole. You will end up with some more qualified professional instructors, and a rapidly diminishing number of voluntary enthusiasts. Is this the way you want things to go?

JIM LYTHGOE, Teignmouth

Dear CoDe,

I hope that this reaches you in time to be considered by the Coaching Scheme review. Living abroad my mail is sometimes delayed.

I read in CoDe the suggestion that current First Aid certification should be a requirement for an Instructor. That he should be First Aid qualified, I feel needs no discussion. However, the suggestion that it should necessarily be a current certificate does. And more so, that the instructor be required to maintain a current certification to maintain his canoeing qualification.

Many people, and especially those who work in the outdoor pursuits industry, either at home or abroad, would find this formal requalification, both difficult and costly. Many of these same people undertake 'informal' retraining, and unfortunately, have the practical first hand experience, that no training can replace. These are the people who need to be kept, and these are the people who are likely to lose their qualification, due to a lack of 'a piece of paper'.

The world is governed enough by 'pieces of paper', and where possible the requirement for more than necessary should be strongly resisted.

I must confess self interest in this case. However, in the last two years, for example, I have attended a 16 hour course specifically on first aid; twice I have practised EAR on dummies; twice I have taken other exams which required a knowledge of first aid, both practical and theoretical; I have taken a course which included the learning how to teach first aid to raft guides, which I have done any way for the last five years. Plus I have had discussions about incidents which happened to others, and have taken control in real incidents of varying degrees of seriousness.

I know others who are to a greater or lesser extent in the same situation. I hope that this plea will be heard, and yet another 'piece of paper' can be avoided. Britain has less of these than most countries. Let us try to keep it that way.

DAVID ROLAND, The Alpine Rafting Company

Dear CoDe,

With reference to Francis Angove's letter and D of C comments regarding first aid certificates in the December issue of CoDe, may I bring the Bangor First Aid in Mountaineering scheme to the attention of the Coaching Committee.

Without wishing to enter the debate as to the requirement of a first aid certificate to validate instructor awards, I would like the committee to look at this scheme when deciding upon acceptable first aid courses to be recommended. Indeed as you say that straw polls have been conducted among instructors it is very likely that this is the qualification that many already hold. It is nationally recognised as a practically based syllabus related to the outdoor environment. It is a course that deals with situations where you can't always just phone for an ambulance.

As a qualified instructor in the scheme I run courses for many people involved with instructing canoeing and can tailor the course to deal more specifically with their needs. The courses are usually run over a weekend which makes it easier for many people to attend rather than spread out over 12 weeks.

I should be happy to supply further details, either to the Coaching Committee, or if required, to members via the magazine.

GERRY LYNCH, 3 Bryniau Terrace, St Anne's Mynydd Llandegai, Gwynedd. LL57 4BJ

The first aid issue, and related matters. Director of Coaching comments: At the 1991 Conference in Devon, there was overwhelming support for the proposition that we should insist upon instructors holding a first aid certificate. Those present represented a wide cross section of members, both voluntary and professional instructors. Various straw poles have shown that most instructors hold a first aid certificate anyway.

On the other hand, we have no incident on record over the past twenty years of an instructor having failed to do the right thing in an emergency, in spite of our not demanding the formal holding of a first aid certificate.

The problem is that outside pressures are demanding not just a certificate, but that it is current. Within the NVQ requirements, it will almost certainly be necessary to include revalidation procedures for all our awards. Whether this means re-assessment or logged experience, remains to be determined.

Several letters recently have complained about the demands of the work place affecting the interests of the volunteer, and placing more and more requirements in the way. This has implications in terms of both time and expense.

Quite clearly, within the current discussions over the review of the tests and awards system, we need to address these issues fully, and seek to ensure that only common sense requirements are included.

Dear CoDe,

Having spent some time preparing candidates for the Inland Kayak Proficiency tests I often wonder why the knots which must be known were chosen.

The need for some basic rope work is quite understandable at proficiency level but I get the impression the actual knots were almost selected at random.

As all good Scouts know there are three basic types of knots, hitches (attachment to a solid object), bends (joining two ropes) and those which make loops. Some people may include a fourth group for stopper type knots.

At present the proficiency requires two hitches (Clove Hitch and Round Turn & Two Half Hitches), a stopper (Figure of Eight) which was probably intended to be a loop, and a loop (Bowline). There is no bend contained in this list which is an obvious anomaly.

I can see this is a minor point but if the proficiency test is reviewed in the future the rope work element could be more structured and more applicable to its use in canoeing. In the meantime there is no reason why a structured introduction to rope work cannot be taught to proficiency candidates even if it is not a major part of the course.

As a suggestion the section in the Inland Kayak Proficiency could read:

a - Demonstrate the following knots and know their use: Bowline, Round Turn & Two Half Hitches, Sheetbend.

b - Identify situations where a rescue would be most effective if a throw rope was to be used.

ADAM HALL, Pershore

DEVELOPMENTS IN CANOEING FOR WOMEN IN WALES

by JACKIE WYNNE-FREER

For many years I have believed that the low take-up of canoeing among women and girls had a lot to do with many of them being put off by the thought of capsizing drills, "turning upside down", and proving themselves in challenging waters and weather conditions.

During last summer I have been able, with the aid of a Sports Council for Wales grant, and a lot of help from the ladies of Snowdonia Canoe Club and Colwyn Canoe Club, to put this theory to the test, in the Conwy area of North Wales.

I advertised introductory courses in open canoes for women and girls only, with all female instructors, and emphasized the no capsizing drill, no swimming, stress-free nature of these courses. The resulting take-up was far more than I had anticipated - instead of the three courses I had planned I actually ran five courses (of four weekly sessions each) and all were over-subscribed from my estimated numbers. A total of 53 different women tried canoeing, and there was a great deal of enthusiasm among many to continue this.

We used open canoes, and the courses were run on placid water - ie the Conwy Estuary between Conwy and Dolgarrog, using judicious use of the tides, and with fingers crossed for suitable wind conditions - remember I had promised stress-free canoeing! In fact the gods were kind to us, and we only had to postpone two sessions due to weather conditions.

It was noticeable how the confidence of the participants improved during the four weeks of each course. Most had never done any canoeing before, but some had tried it at school or in youth groups, and had unpleasant memories from enforced capsizing drills.

I may seem to be labouring this point, but it is an absolute fact that no more than perhaps 2 or 3 would have come on these courses if it had involved using closed cockpit canoes with capsizing drills, and the associated unpleasant side effects. We actually had only one capsizing, and I found that the participants could cope with the idea of sliding

into the water sideways from an open cockpit canoe with reasonable equanimity.

At the end of the summer we had some "come and try it" sessions in open cockpit kayaks, such as fast touring kayaks like the Fladbury Discoveries, and racing K2's with a competent paddler in the front for stability. The confidence gained in the initial courses meant that there was a lot of interest in broadening their canoeing activities in this direction - but, please note, these were all open cockpit kayaks, involving no capsizing drills.

An element that was more important to begin with than I had anticipated was the all-female instructors and all-female groups, particularly the all-female instructors. Once participants had developed more confidence, and by the time we ran the extra "come and try it" sessions, they were not bothered by mixed groups and instructors.

The enthusiasm shown by many of the participants for continuing with canoeing was such that we decided to start a club in Conwy offering, principally, placid water canoeing, both touring and racing (not exclusively for women, I hasten to add!)

The club, called Dyffryn Conwy Paddlers, was formed in October. We already have 32 members, and 20 of these are women who came on the courses in the summer. Five of these women were sufficiently enthusiastic to attend the Race Training Weekend that Kevin Coleman organised for the WCA at Plas Menai in October.

All this canoeing activity over the past six months has involved a lot of hard work, but very worthwhile. It is gratifying that my feeling that women would be more attracted to canoeing if the approach was placid water / open cockpit based, has proved to be justified by the response.

53 participants from different backgrounds and with 20 of those going straight into an ongoing canoeing situation with the new club, is a success story far beyond my expectations.

WOMEN IN COACHING

- THOUGHTS AFTER THE CONFERENCE

by VIC BROWN

RECRUITMENT

- A Recruit more women and girls into the sport. Advertising in supermarkets, nursery schools etc. Female instructors, 'NO compulsory Capsizing', etc may induce more women to take the first steps.
- B Open Canoeing provide a 'dry' introduction to the sport, but can be used for more exciting canoeing at a later stage. Also promote teamwork, and lessens the fear of being the one that cannot keep up.
- C Enjoyment of each other's company, and shared experiences are a major factor in making people want to continue with a sport. Personal achievement and success may be less important for some people, although these may be the driving motives for Instructors - who fail to realise their significance for others.

BECOMING CANOEISTS

Instructors should be trained (and many of them already are) to consider each student as an individual, with varied needs; abilities; strengths and weaknesses; and differing rates of progress.

Canoeing history is a catalogue of innovation, invention and evolution in response to new challenges. If, for example, we need to add to our repertoire a modified deepwater rescue technique particularly

suitable for smaller people - then someone will evolve one (possibly several people in different places), and, if they have any sense, will publicise it for the benefit of others. It has happened before, it will continue to happen. Canoeing skills are open ended, and there is always a need for initiative.

If these points are not getting across to newly trained Instructors, then we need to bring it home to those running Courses.

Canoeing is an ideal medium for Problem-solving exercises - you cannot take everything with you, so your brain is your biggest asset.

No-one should be tagged a 'failure' at any stage of their canoeing career. After all, they are doing it for fun - it is their Sport and recreation. People progress at different speeds, and may not yet have reached a certain standard. This does not imply failure. However people may well reach a level at which they are happy to remain. It may be that they have reached their natural peak, or, perhaps more commonly with women, that they have too low an opinion of their potential. In this case, positive encouragement and guidance can do wonders to help them progress. Care must be taken not to attempt to push people too far beyond their natural potential. If they are encouraged to aim for a goal which is beyond their abilities, it can only lead to disillusionment, frustration and anger. If, for example, we make more women S.I.'s merely to increase numbers, when their abilities do not reach the required standards, we merely destroy their credibility as equals in the job.

BECOMING INSTRUCTORS

- A Instructors should not be seen as a job for 'God-like' creatures with supernatural powers and infinite knowledge, whose aim is to produce superb performers (and get paid). If you have been canoeing before, then you can help someone who has never canoed. Instructing is about helping others to get the most enjoyment out of the sport you both love. Women are often better than men at helping and supporting others. Logically, they should make better Instructors!
- B Your budding canoeists should be encouraged to help others from very early days onwards. They should be made aware of the enormous satisfaction to be had in seeing others improve as a result of their efforts. Matters of safety should be discussed; not left to the leader of the group. Mixed ability groups lend themselves to this approach.
- C As people are ready, they will take Star tests. A test for a large group may lead to 'failures'; 'pre-testing', or doing the tests without telling them they are doing it, may boost self-confidence. When they reach 3* it is time to talk Instructor Training. By this time, they should know it all anyway.

BECOMING SENIOR INSTRUCTORS

- A This is a big jump, for both men and women. There must be a commitment to improving personal performance and building up a depth and breadth of experience on moving water or sea. This will take time, particularly for those with family ties or those without the gift of natural ability. *It is much easier and quicker for young people to reach the required standard.*
- B It may well be that concentrating on encouraging girls into the coaching scheme may be the best way to increase the female ratio. Able girls are often directed into competition (where they can progress faster than boys), and miss out on the coaching awards that less able boys are perhaps channelled into. The two are not incompatible, and a coaching career can be a natural consequence of a competitive youth.

BECOMING COACHES

Coach courses for both sexes are something of a problem. Becoming a Coach is rather like being elected to the Royal Society. You are judged on your merits to join an exclusive club of the best practitioners of the sport involved in Coaching. My guess is that most Coaches are professional canoeing Instructors.

The new Modular approach to Coach, with its emphasis on training,

rather than assessment ('not yet attained target', rather than 'failed') can only be of benefit to both men and women who are at this high level of canoeing.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

CRITICAL MASS Not many people want to join a group where they feel they do not belong. If, by positive initiatives, you can increase, say, the number of girls or women in a club to a certain level, then it will take off. Their friends will come too, feel at home, and carry on. Activities will be arranged to cater for all tastes, rather than a couple of nervous people going on a river trip 'because most people want to do it'.

When there are more female Instructors, people will be used to the idea from the start, and have greater expectations for training up to that level (if she can, so can I). Again, Critical Mass. It is important that these instructors should not be seen to be 'Superwomen'.

INSTRUCTOR (AND OTHER) TRAINING COURSES

Courses should include a brief discussion of the practical problems of teaching women (equipment sizings).

There should be an emphasis on flexibility, sympathy with students, 'failure' problems, treating each student as an individual, etc.

Perhaps a discussion on 'helping your students to reach their full potential'.

An attempt to have a woman working on each training course might be of value (E2 or someone working for E2 status).

The good courses already do this, of course. Some aspects are more appropriate at SI level.

The aim should be to have all Instructors and SI's aware of the problems, and sympathetic towards them.

COACHING ORGANISERS

It should be the job of every LCO to monitor all his panel members and encourage them to reach their full potential. It is surprising how much can be achieved by a personal phone call, encouraging someone to attend a course. You must show people that their contribution is valued. There are not that many LCO's in the country. If you can get each one to positively encourage his Instructors to improve to SI level, you will be getting there. Talk round their objections; provide courses to fill in the gaps in their knowledge; provide low cost training/assessment in the region if necessary. Talk to people and solve their problems.

THE 'OPEN COCKPIT' PROGRESSION

Have we addressed the basic issue? - comment from Geoff Good

The intention of the 'Placid Water' progression is to provide an entry, and natural continuation in the sport, in activities centred around fast travelling.

There is often a difference between the traditional touring canoeist, in kayak or canoe, and the paddler orientated towards marathon and sprint racing. To fully understand this difference, it is necessary to be acquainted with a club of which racing is the basis.

For the past 30 years, the vast majority of Coaching Scheme members have pursued 'closed cockpit' adventure-based canoeing, leading logically to white water or sea play boating, competing, touring, and surfing. The outreach has been massive, and, allied to the media's need for 'excitement' in its presentations when featuring the sport, has led to the common public image of canoeing as being related to young males tackling 'hairy' rapids and performing eskimo rolls.

Placid Water Paddling

The old-established, and some new, racing based clubs have continued to operate during this period, with little or no reference by many of them to 'the Coaching Scheme', which seemed irrelevant to their activities.

Some of their members have, in fact, undertaken the Senior Instructor (white water kayak) award, but the general perception has been that the Coaching Scheme is something to do with white water canoeing, or slalom, and nothing to do with the form of canoeing which they practised.

Those in serious training for regular marathon or racing competition, often do not even readily identify with the tourer in the open canoe or kayak. They will paddle as a training run - clad in thermal vest and shorts, and without survival equipment - well in excess of distances

which the average touring paddler, complete with lunch, and laden with other gear, considers more than a good day's journey!

There are very different philosophies involved, and it is important to understand the attitude of the racing paddler, in order to comprehend the need for, and the difference of, the Placid Water Scheme.

The Original Concept

Its original intent and purpose was to provide an alternative progression into the sport to service the racing based clubs, and to lead to the establishment of many more such clubs based on travelling and racing, to utilise the hundreds of miles of undisputed, easily navigable water, which exists in Britain.

The concept was based upon a progression of boats, leading from the introductory stable tourer, to the fast touring kayak, the stable racer, and then the modern racing K1. A similar pattern was made available for canoe.

The Revised Emphasis

The ground has shifted, to a concept that there should be a general emphasis on introducing people to the sport only in directionally and laterally stable touring kayaks, so that sensible journeying can be undertaken by everyone at the initial stage.

Some believe that many more people will be attracted to try canoeing, and far greater numbers will subsequently stay in the sport, if the policy moves away from invariably introducing newcomers in closed cockpit kayaks, with the inherent fear of entrapment which is engendered, and the compulsory capsize drill, often in cold water, which is normally required.

From introduction into directionally and laterally stable touring kayaks, the theory is that newcomers are then free to develop as they choose - either staying with touring, or moving on into fast touring

and racing, or into rough water paddling or its competitive disciplines.

Both single- and double-bladed paddling can be taught from the same basic touring kayak, and the Placid Water Skills Tests have been rewritten to accommodate this.

Once this policy were established, the belief goes on, it would be possible to simplify the Coaching Scheme's tests and awards structure, with one basic generic award, followed by endorsements to cover the various disciplines only at the level where specialist ability becomes necessary.

Wishful Thinking ?

My fear is that this approach will not achieve the aim of encouraging the formation of more racing-based paddling and clubs. Once the tyro passes from the tourer to the gp kayak, my belief is that the 'adventure based' progression will reassert itself and all will merely continue as before.

The only way, in my view, to promote 'placid water canoeing' successfully, is to treat it as a 'different game'.

The original scheme, which concentrated on a progression of boats, leading to marathon and sprint racing, brought in about 500 new people as PW Teachers in 4 years, but failed to make a dramatic impact because we were not able to follow-up on those who expressed interest.

I believe we should concentrate on better promotion and support with resource material, and get-togethers in the regions, aimed at establishing racing-based clubs, rather than assuming that the use of a directionally stable boat at the base will necessarily achieve the desired end.

An emphasis on the original concept, allied to the proper, structured, on-going support and motivation of those recruited to it, will, I believe, achieve the significant development we are seeking.

SOME IMPORTANT NOTICES - SOME IMPORTANT NOTICES

FEES FOR 1992

Please remember: STAR TESTS, PW TESTS are £2.50.

CANOE SAFETY TEST: £2.00 certificate, £2.00 badge.

(for bulk rates see p91-92 of your BCU Members' Yearbook).

PROFICIENCY TESTS: Members £5; non-members £7.

RESCUE TEST / RESUSCITATION TEST: Members £3.50; non-members £5.

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING or ASSESSMENT, SI TRAINING - £7.00

SENIOR INSTRUCTOR ASSESSMENT - £10.

SUPERVISOR, PW TEACHER (non members): £6 (1 year); £18 (3 years).

Log Books: £1.50 members; £2.00 non-members.

Please remember - all prices are shown on p91-92 of your BCU Members' Yearbook.

FIRST AID REQUIREMENT FOR TESTING FOR CANOE SAFETY TEST

Several examiners have queried the requirements for assessing the Canoeing Safety Test. *Simulated* external chest compression (ECC) is now included, and the grade I Examiner must hold a current first aid certificate. Please contact Mark Carter (National Training Officer) in case of difficulty - 35 Boxalls Lane, Aldershot, Hants GU11 3QL (W - 0252 23362 ; H - 330400).

INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATION - TRANSFER OF STATUS

Please note that a motion will be put to the November 1992 meeting of the National Coaching Committee that with effect from 1 January 1993 those wishing to obtain an alternative Instructor award will have to undergo an assessment, rather than receive the award automatically upon obtaining the relevant 3-Star or Proficiency Test, as at present.

1992 PADDLERS CONFERENCE

Incorporating the BCU National Coaching Conference

Friday 30 October - Sunday 1 November

Based at Lakeside - on the shores of Windermere

FAMILY FRIENDLY - costing from £15 - choice of accommodation.

Whitewater tours (grades I-III) - Canoe Orienteering - Night paddling (overnight!) - Lake Tours - Open Canoe Workshops: sailing, catamarans, poling, slalom, kites; Mini-marathon / time trials; Sea trips; Voyageur 24' Canoe Racing; Illustrated talks; Conference dinner; Coaching Scheme agm.

Licensed bar; Family / children's non-Conference activities (obstacle course, zip wire, rock climbing, abseiling, archery).

Send sae to Keith Morris, Lakeside YMCA, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 8BD for full information.

REVISION OF THE TESTS AND AWARDS SCHEME

At its meeting on 7 March, the National Coaching Committee agreed with the general principles outlined by the tests and awards review working party in the last edition of CoDe. Further work was undertaken by the meeting, and this has been referred on to the working party, which will meet again at the end of the month. A report will be made in the next edition of CoDe.

SOUTHERN REGION COACHING SCHEME MEMBERS

A message from Les Porter, RCO

As you know, since last November, your LCOs and myself have been informing meetings of the forthcoming review and possible revision of some parts of the Coaching Scheme content. From the papers that were written from within our region, I was able to present a very valuable document to NCC when we met the first weekend in March. The contributions that you made were much valued and added a great deal to the discussion. Your LCO now holds a copy of the report that was made from the region. Should you like to see it please ask them.

ASSESSMENTS - A CONSUMER'S STORY

by TIM DAWSON

I have grown used to the short Aberdeenshire summer, so the autumn colours of a Lakeland November had a "born again" feeling about them as I slid onto the calm water. The same could have been said of my paddling, this being my first time out after persistent bout of 'flu, and it felt good, if a little stiff, to be in a kayak again. Perhaps it should be left to Alfred Wainwright, doyen of the fells, to credit the landscape with sympathy for one's own emotions. But it almost seems, in retrospect, that in the stillness of that glorious, mist-shrouded morning, the elements were awaiting, with baited breath, the result of my third attempt to become a Senior Instructor, Inland Kayak.

This day was a forerunner to yet another gruelling weekend of assessment. The strategy was simple enough - find a strange river, paddle it alone, blow the cobwebs away and my decisions on whether and how to run different rapids and weirs would be invaluable in terms of my river leadership skills, which, at the time, I felt, were open to criticism. And in case all this sounds a trifle clinical, yes, it was to be an adventure, and fun too. A bit of a paddler's stag night, you might say.

For the time being, the water was reed-fringed and passive, but soon a barely perceptible current began to help me past moored lake boats and on to altogether sterner stuff. I nervously negotiated a weir, but without any mishap, and then as my journey pacified once more, I fell to reminiscing about the previous grabs at rungs of the instructing ladder ...

.... Advie, Speyside on a grim cold drizzly October Saturday. Mini-buses, trailers, kayaks, canoes, candidates, assessors, guinea pigs and all associated paraphernalia everywhere. And there I was, expected to take charge of some unclear proportion of this chaos. I was paralysed by the mere thought of it! On the water, the superiority of all my fellow candidates became abundantly clear, my confidence nose-dived, and with it all ability to teach, motivate or even make safe decisions. A kid capsized whilst under my instruction, and that, on such a day, seemed like the end of the world. It probably did to him as well.

Later, as we rounded off the day with a sponge fight, I was able to relax a little. Maybe it hadn't gone so badly after all. But after our evening presentations, one of the assessors beckoned to me over other assembled heads. The message was clear - "A word in private please". It began with "How do you thin you did today?", unfortunately in this case they already had an opinion. It was not my place to disagree, I said, and they seemed impressed with that. It didn't make me feel any better, though, and I spent the rest of the weekend in state of tearful despair

A number of weirs and rather scrappy rapids made for an interesting journey as I scouted the various hazards and tried to assess one, whether I was prepared to paddle them, and two, what I would do if leading a group along this river. The first decision tended to be the easier one until I came to something rather more exciting. Big and noisy it was, but "grade 3 1/2" was the verdict and I went happily on my way. Portaging around the next, very steep and unrunnable weir, my thoughts slid backward again, this time to the previous May

.... the Peak District on a blistering hot weekend. Not the most obvious venue for an S.I. assessment, my second in line. The course director bemoaned the lack of water. "Normally we've lots of snow melt in May", he said. I wondered if he'd heard of global warming.

Our assessors were an odd pair. They didn't work well together, didn't seem to have much maturity or experience, and I didn't trust them. Perhaps that gave me a grain of confidence - I wasn't so bad after all, maybe I could show these wallies a thing or two. This state of mind held, but not long enough. On Sunday morning, my inadequacy began to reappear over the smokescreen of theirs. "You're a great guy", one of them said at the end, "but I'm going to have to defer you on two points, your teaching and your river leadership". "What does defer mean?" I asked. "Well", he said, "I don't like to use the word 'fail'. I was resigned. 'Use it', I barked at him, 'I'm not squeamish'

After a few more interesting rapids, and some suspicious weirs, I dragged my boat clear of the water in a pleasantly tied state. I had enjoyed the day, and it was the first time, on a strange river, that I'd had to inspect rapids and make decisions whilst on my own. But the ominous approach of yet another assessment weekend was gnawing at my all too temporary state of wellbeing.

I went for a bar meal and then appeared at the centre at the appointed time. Our course director (I'll call him CD for short) this time was a serious but benevolent looking chap, and we chatted away as he showed me to the accommodation and introduced me to Dave, the only other S.I. Kayak assessment candidate that weekend. A fellow ex Outward Bound Instructor, Dave came across as a rather earnest, diffident character. But my attitude and respect for him changed completely when I found out that he was a teacher of kids with severe emotional problems. He was worried that our other assessor was to be an ex-colleague of his, that they knew each other too well. I sympathised, but it wasn't my problem. I had plenty of hang-ups of my own.

We sat the theory paper that evening. It was the hardest one I've ever done, yet I've always found this aspect easy before. As we retired for the night, I developed a headache, which I'm convinced was due to tension. Throbbing unbearably, it kept me awake until 2am on Saturday morning.

I rose that morning still in severe pain. George, our CD, had to go away that day, so Pete, Dave's Outward Bound friend, was to be in charge. An affable character, he asked us to prepare our boats and kit for a day on flat water.

As we slid out onto the water, my headache disappeared unnoticed while we spent the morning discussing, demonstrating and teaching stroke progressions to three star level, and looking at ways of motivating groups and keeping them safe and happy in poor weather. Pete was incredibly relaxed and this state of mind was infectious; I was actually **enjoying** being assessed - could this be true? We were continually given feedback, nearly all of it positive. There was never any feeling of "Have I blown it???" Only one thing concerned me - it was all a bit too easy, too good to be true. Things surely had to get worse!

We were given a group to work with that afternoon, a bunch of students from Charlotte Mason College. Pete left the content of the session to us, but always wanted to be able to see which of us was in charge. The students were as keen as mustard, and although their ability varied tremendously, everyone seemed to have a good time, even us candidates! As we put the gear away at the end of the afternoon, I reflected on the fact that on assessments, one has to be seen to **teach** as well as give the group a good time. This means that, generally, one gets people to work with who are well motivated and wish to learn as well as to splash about. This afternoon was no exception.

Pete felt the afternoon had been a little disjointed, but that this was a product of the situation rather than any inadequacy on our part. He had no worries about us so far, he said, although he would be telling our CD that my teaching came across as a bit technical. How good it was to be cheered along in this way!

The evening round of lecturettes came along. Although I generally enjoy doing presentations, I was unusually nervous. I let slip an aside that came across as extremely arrogant and brought forth justified mutters of "pretentious" from the other assembled open canoe candidates and trainee instructors. Flustered, I somehow managed to save myself in the next sentence, and won the audience back.

Meanwhile our CD rejoined us, and afterwards briefed Dave and myself on the following day. He was concerned that some parts of the stretch of the River Leven that we would be doing, were more than Grade II, the benchmark for S.I. leadership. "Would we have, then, to decide for ourselves whether or not to run each rapid with the group?" I asked (in retrospect a silly question). "Definitely" he said. Knowing that river leadership was my weakest area, I was growing anxious again, and this must have shown on my face. "Is that OK Tim?" he asked.

It was - sort of. It was also time to adjourn to the local hostelry to let off steam.

Sunday morning brought another keen group from Charlotte Mason, plus a temporary instructor from the centre. A bit of an odd mixture again, but this went to the back of our minds as we busied ourselves with boats, gear, trailers and vehicles. I put the final lashings securing the boats to the trailer, and was somewhat heartened when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw George give them a testing tug, obviously finding them satisfactory. But this really was to be the big day. Dave and I understood each other well by now; he was relieved that he was to be assessed today by a totally impartial party, but like me he was up tight.

Soon we were at the water's edge. Bodies, equipment and boats were disorganised, and then the dreaded words came

"Tim, we'd like you to look after the group for the first part of the day".

For a moment or two I was paralysed. I knew well what this moment was like, but the *deja vu* didn't help any. I began wandering around amongst the group, trying to look purposeful, checking, advising, encouraging a few people to get a move on. At last they were all assembled, waiting intently for me to spout forth. I noted with relief that the assessors were not breathing down my neck, and began my briefing. Check their gear. A system of signals. The three essentials. Then finally, almost an afterthought, "You can all swim, I assume?" "Now he asks us", somebody joked. It wasn't malicious, but my confidence was on a knife edge at that moment. I steeled myself; soon enough, it would be over, it would be Dave's turn. "Right", I said, "let's go for it!"

The first bit of river was placid, and I found a very gentle eddy in which to get everyone acquainted with the skills of breaking into, and out of, the current. This I could handle; I was using a tried and tested method, I knew it worked, the eddy was the right size. I began to relax, just a little. I must have got a bit carried away, because after a while, George asked me to move on.

Further downstream was a weir. I didn't particularly like the look of it. That in itself was not overly important, but I could see, either side of an island a little further downstream, that there were two parallel rapids. I remembered some advice given to me by a more experienced paddling friend a long time previously. "If you're at all in doubt, get out and inspect, they won't fail you for that". I thought they might if I did it too often, but now I needed to. I got everyone out above the weir. We looked at it and at the rapids. I had to make a decision.

I was apologetic but firm. "I don't wish to spoil your fun folks, but as I haven't seen you paddling on white water yet, we're going to portage the weir. We'll run the right hand of the two rapids. Sorry to be so directive, but you'll get a free hand later on".

I positioned Dave in the eddy below the rapid. It was narrow and rocky with some overhanging branches. I pointed out a line to the students, then ran it myself, got out and stood on the rocks at the bottom with my throwline. I signalled them down one at a time. Everyone made it - phew!

There was a more forceful eddy line below the other rapid and we made good use of that for a while. But I was getting stressed up and wondered when Dave would be taking over. We carried on a little further downstream. I was looking for somewhere to practise ferry gliding, and made the major mistake of the day - I chose a place where the current was too slow.

I worked hard with the students for twenty minutes or so. But the more we went on, the more bemused became the expressions on their faces. What was I trying to get them to do? I knew that I'd bungled, but couldn't find a way out - I had to see it through. At last the call came. "Thanks, Tim. Take a break now".

George beckoned me over to his boat. "How do you think that went?" he asked me. "Ok, except for the last bit - I chose the wrong place for ferry gliding". There was just a hint of approval in his face, but he wasn't giving much away. Today's assessment style was definitely rather different. Dave took over for the time being, while Pete looked at my personal paddling. After my illness this was wobbly, but there were no major problems.

All too soon it was time for me to take over again. George made it clear that he had acknowledged my doubts. "Can you do some more work in ferry gliding with the group, and this time try to be a bit more dynamic?"

Bless the man, he was giving me a second chance. This time we had much faster water, and although some of the students seemed nervous of that, they did seem to grasp what was being asked of them. After what seemed like eternity, a halt was called for lunch. Dave came over and sat next to me. "Well done," he said, "I'm really glad I didn't have to start the group off". I'm just a bit concerned about that ferry gliding session", I said, "it was hopeless". "Yes, the water was too slow, but don't worry about that". There was no competition between us. Dave and I had reached a state where we each wanted the other to pass as much as we did ourselves, and would back each other to the hilt. That felt good, and now not very much of the weekend was left.

Dave led a longish stretch after lunch, over a number of bumpy weirs, then we came to a long, rocky rapid. Dave busied himself with the group, meanwhile George beckoned me to his side again. "What grade would you say this rapid was, Tim?" I thought for a second. "Two to three". He obviously wasn't impressed. "One or the other, please". I thought again. "I'll say three then". "So, you're nailing your colours to the mast", a pause, and then a barely perceptible softening; "...I'd agree with you!"

I paddled back over to Dave and listened to him briefing the group on the bank for their descent of the rapid. There was something he forgot and I whispered it to him hoarsely. Then we all assembled in the pool above.

"Tim, I'd like you to paddle the first part of the rapid to that big rock where the water's piling up. Then can you break out behind it, get out and stand on the rock ready with your throwline. Everybody else watch carefully the line Tim takes". What greater incentive to get it right! "After that, don't try to break out where he did, but carry on to the bottom of the rapid. Good Luck!"

They all came down, confidently now and with no problems. Pete, and then George, came last. It was nearing the end of the trip and I was expecting some nasty tricks. I was convinced that George was going deliberately to capsize as he came past my rock. But he just looked up at me as if to say "Hurry up and get back in your boat".

It was my last leg in the lead. A long, easy rock garden loomed up ahead. I told everyone to practise their reverse ferry gliding, to concentrate on not just getting down the rapid, but paddling it well. I took up the rear, and as we neared the bottom, George pointed to one of our students, pinned against a boulder and facing upstream. "Can you sort this out please". I presented the front end of my boat, told the lad to grab hold of it, then back-paddled sharply to avoid ramming him in the teeth. He, meanwhile, swung himself upright again. "Are you OK!" I asked unsurely. He was. "Did you feel I was going to ram you?" I was really seeking comfort and reassurance myself. "No, it was fine". And he paddles off downstream.

There was only one more small rapid before we took out, just above the village of Backbarrow. The students and assessors all grabbed their boats and gear and trudged off in search of vehicles and trailers. Dave and I were left standing on the bank. "Well, I don't think we did anything dangerous," I said, "do YOU?" "No, I don't think so", he replied.

There was an overwhelming feeling of warmth pervading the dark car park that evening as we all struggled with boats and roof racks. Dave and I patted each other on the back and exchanged addresses. Half a dozen other candidates and trainees congratulated us from different directions in the gloom. "Hell", said Pete as he walked past, "I'd have been unpopular if I'd failed you".

I'm not gloating, honest, but can you imagine how I felt?

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If what we do is teach, why aren't we called Teachers?

by **MARCUS BAILIE**

In 1987 only a handful of people gained the top qualification in Mountaineering, the Mountaineering Instructors Certificate. As a result the sport was suffering badly from a shortage of suitably trained and qualified instructors. Moreover the award itself, The Mountaineering Instructor's Certificate was in danger of disappearing. In 1991 the scheme was revised and nearly 100 people undertook the training. The changes were achieved without altering the standards but by the simple expedient of making the training more easily accessible to the people who would benefit from it. The new scheme is being heralded as a tremendous success, and once more the MIC is being recognised as the normal progression for those working at a higher level in the sport.

In 1991 similar changes were introduced for the BCU Coach Award and Plas y Brenin ran a trial course along these ideas. The plan was to extend the effectiveness and breadth of the trainee's existing expertise and to begin the preparation for their subsequent assessment. In effect almost anyone who considers themselves to be a reasonably experienced Senior Instructor would be able to attend. At the end of the course trainees were to be assigned to a Coach Tutor in their own areas with whom they were to work closely, develop further training programmes and discuss problems. Eventually the Tutor will be influential in agreeing the timing and content of the candidate's final assessment.

Before returning to the detail of the scheme I would like to outline why such a Senior Instructor should want to attend the course. This unavoidably brings us to the issue of "where does a Senior Instructor stop and Coach start" for which my initial premise is that there is no fundamental difference between a Senior Instructor and a Coach. An analogy which I often use is with school teachers. Teachers coming out of Training College will often have a number of strategies which help them to do the job. They will commonly teach all of the class the same thing at the same time. They will often have just one way of teaching each topic; they may not be able to answer all the "why" type questions to the satisfaction of their pupils. They will probably not be sure which parts of the syllabus commonly give problems and therefore require more attention. Their estimates of how long things take may also not be very accurate and as a result some classes will be rushed, or will over-run. And they won't have made all of the common blunders which all teachers eventually make. I could continue but I hope you get the point. Now some of these problems may be solved without any effort by the teacher just with years of experience. Others will require considerable effort, experimentation, discussion and an awful lot of "well, that idea didn't work" type classes.

Similarly we all have our image of 'good' teachers. They can usually cope with different activities going on in the same class at the same time and they will be in control of all of them. If one approach doesn't seem to be working with one or more pupils they will probably have an alternative which will, and they will know just when to abandon the initial approach and move onto the new. They will have been asked so many of the "why" type questions, and gone away to find the answers, that when they get a new one they are much better equipped to satisfy the pupil. They will know the common pitfalls and

be able to preempt them, or at least be able to stress where extra attention is needed; and they will be able to make their classes sufficiently interesting and enjoyable to keep the pupils' attention and to inspire the pupils with the desire to learn more. Often these teachers will appear to be more relaxed (commonly they shout less!) and more approachable. In many cases they will take an interest in the pupil's long term development. Their knowledge of the subject will have become broad and often they will have specialised a bit, either professionally or for their own interest.

It is all too sad to note that all teachers do not progress into our category of 'good' teachers. Twenty years on, their classes are still the same as they were when they left college. Experience is certainly a necessary requirement, but there seems to be more than that. Conversely there are some very young 'good teachers'. These are people who have identified the problems and discovered that the solutions are seldom far behind. Now if we relate this back to canoe and kayak instruction I would draw a parallel between a newly appointed Senior Instructor and our newly appointed novice teacher. Similarly I see the coach as fitting into our 'good' teacher category. So many of the characteristics which are supposed to define the difference between a Senior Instructor and a Coach are in fact attributes which the Coach picks up along the way.

In the revised Coach Scheme we try to emphasise the concept that you don't learn to be a coach but that you **progress**, building on strengths and successes achieved over the years of teaching the sport. More specifically we try to advise how past experience can be used more productively. The award is a token of recognition that the person has matured to the extent that, amongst other things, he or she should be influential in teaching the teachers of the sport, and to be involved in training and assessing within the higher levels of the sport. When teaching within the lower levels it should be apparent to all that they do it rather well, and should be good role models for their colleagues.

A second aspect which we stress is that the course should be broadly based, to include all major recreational disciplines of the sport. Thus sea and inland, kayak and canoe, flat and moving water would all be covered. Candidates would revert to their chosen discipline in the work they do with their Coach Tutors and for the assessment.

The strength of the revised course is that it will be of immediate benefit to all Senior Instructors, whether or not they intend to eventually gain the Coach Award. Many trainees will realise that they are closer to the Award than they thought, which in itself makes its attainment so much easier for them. At worst we will have made available to Senior Instructors the opportunity for them to improve the way they do their job.

If you are already a Senior Instructor with an Advanced Proficiency, and have observed the training or assessment processes in some of the mid range awards then I would encourage you to attend one of these revised courses and see for yourself. The next Plas y Brenin Coach Course is 23-28 August 1992. The next at Glenmore Lodge is 17-24 October 1992. To be considered for a place on this year's courses you should contact either BCU Headquarters of Plas y Brenin or Glenmore Lodge directly.

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COURSES UPDATE

June - Colchester. Proficiency/Instructor Training (Kayak)/Instructor Assessment (Kayak). N Poulton, 4 Bucklesberry Heath, South Woodham Ferres, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 5LU.

Derbyshire: April 24-26. SI Training (Inland kayak).

June 2-3. Instructor Training (Kayak).

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