

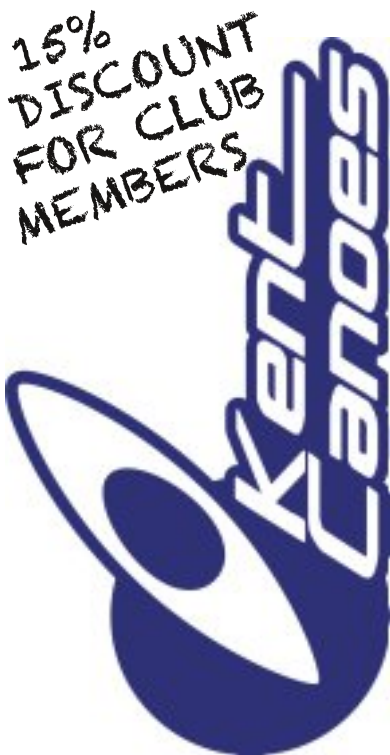
NEWS LETT ER

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The success of this newsletter relies on contributions from **YOU!** If you've been on a trip, in a race, or just have an opinion or some news you want to share, please send it to newsletter@maidstonecanoeclub.net. Articles can be long or short (between 250 and 1500 words) and will ideally be accompanied by some pictures. The deadline for submissions for the next issue is 10th November, 2020.



Mark Corti, Editor
newsletter@maidstonecanoeclub.net



New House Farm, Kemsing Road
Wrotham, TN15 7BU
Tel: 01732 886688
Open 10am - 5pm Tues - Sat
Late Night Opening Thursday
www.kentcanoes.co.uk



The Maunsell Sea Forts are famous for the variety of friendly sea life that can be found nearby.

Letter from the Editor

Lockdown is, finally, easing. The kids are back at school, shops and workplaces are opening, and those people lucky enough to have been furloughed are trying to remember how to tie a tie and, in some cases, their shoelaces.

The Club has been gradually opening up over the summer, in large part led by the efforts of the group known as the Monday Paddlers. They, and several others, have in a very important way become the beating heart of the MCC community during this summer - pro-actively organising paddles, ensuring new members are welcomed and integrated into the Club, and generally keeping the boats wet and the calendar full. In fact, I think that this summer the Club has seen more local paddling - more paddle

locations and a greater range of people offering to lead paddles - than in any year since I joined.

Many others have also been instrumental in keeping the Club going, from the coaches running our beginner courses through to Rob looking after the Clubhouse, and many others whose efforts have been key to maintaining continuity. We - the paddling community of Maidstone Canoe Club - owe them all a great debt of gratitude.

Looking forward, the whitewater season is beginning, with a Ropework & Rescue Refresher, Lee Valley opening, as well as our fabulously-entertaining Intro to Whitewater. The weather is still warm enough to camp, but with bunkhouses being out of action for the foreseeable, it's unclear how the rest of the season will play out. Still, we're kayakers - we'll find a way to make it work! See you on the river!

Mark Corti
newsletter@maidstonecanoeclub.net

A New Perspective

After doing my Beginners/Discovery Award with Geoff and Mike at the beginning of August, I'm super pleased to have gone on to join the club and begin regular paddles.

The beginners' course was great fun and I was surprised by the amount that was included and how confident I started to feel during the course.

It's lovely to be on the water now. I've enjoyed seeing kingfishers and cormorants and even a swimming grass snake during my recent paddles and splashing through thunder and lightning

recently was (surprisingly) a highlight.

Before starting kayaking and joining the club I anticipated I'd be nervous, unsure and awkward but, I've found MCC to be really welcoming and as such I've not felt any of those emotions. Everyone has been so accommodating and helpful (despite me pathetically saying 'I usually have the green boat' and having my paddle upside down on more than one occasion so far) and I've been really surprised by the number of sessions which have been arranged for us newbies. It's great.

It's nice to also link my work to my new interest. I survey for and control invasive non-native aquatic and riverbank plants for the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and one of my reasons for starting to kayak was that I think it'll be a much better (and fun) way to survey and

control certain species. Indeed, I've now been liaising with British Canoeing about upcoming invasive plant events which I hope to do by canoe and invite club members to. Whilst I've always known the importance of my work, it's nice to see it from a river users' perspective and to get up close and personal from the water.

I'm looking forward to more paddles, branching out in time to new locations and even possibly going further regards the awards.

Many thanks to MCC and those who have arranged paddles for newbies. Thanks for your super welcoming and inclusive attitude. I wish I'd got involved in this years ago!

By Andi Griffiths

Andrea.Griffiths@kent.gov.uk



Andi's beginner course during the heady summer days of lockdown. If only the pubs had been open, they could have gone to the Malta ...



Lockdown day paddle

I was grateful that on Monday 23rd March two of us met for a river paddle.

From memory, we were only allowed out in twos at that time and needed to ensure we were a minimum of 2 metres apart. This was an enjoyable trip with the safety and pleasure of company and the usual reasonably hazardous area of reeds and mud for our break.

When I was back home, I watched Boris's briefing. That was the day he told us not to go out, other than in emergencies, especially for people of my age group (those of us with too much to reflect on!). It was Wednesday 13th May before Boris allowed us out for socially distant exercise in small groups. Friday was the soonest I could make it on to the water with the same friend from Maidstone Canoe Club as on my last outing. This time we used our river boats from the Club up to East Farleigh and back. Very refreshing!

I can identify three things that enabled me into a return to part of my old normal:

1. Learning to use a kayak with Maidstone Canoe Club in August 2013, following my retirement.
2. Making friends to paddle with and becoming one of a group who are able to paddle during the week. This was particularly useful after lockdown. I felt far safer doing things in the week, keeping away from potential crowds at weekends. Our group title is now known as The Monday Paddlers.
3. Buying a kayak for sea use to complement my river boat (prior to that, there had always been a Club boat for me to use, it just makes life easier having one I can keep in my back garden!)



Submarine wreck in the Medway Estuary

Life again after lock down and Monday Paddling: a personal perspective

I have also been encouraged back on to my pedal cycle as an alternative to exercise on the water.

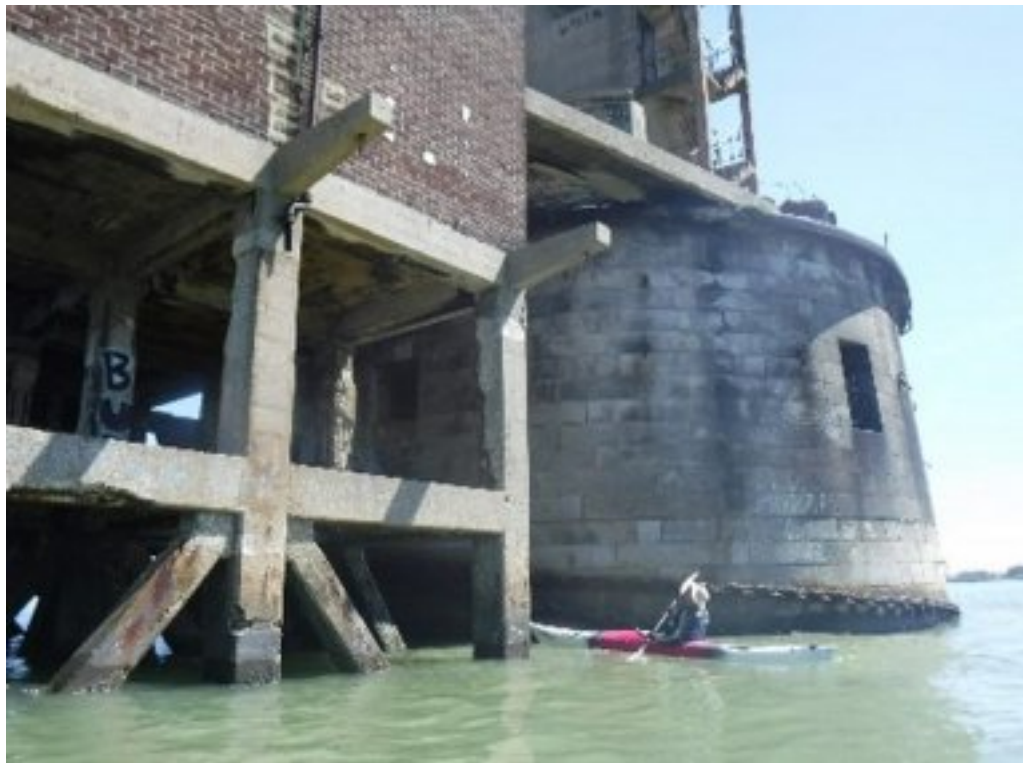
Following our trip from the Club, on 15th May two of us met up at Queenborough for a trip which took in looking at an oil rig brought to Sheerness for renovation, paddling round No.1, The Thames (the abandoned Grain Tower Battery) which I believe is still for sale, now listed at £1.5 million, then to Burntwick Island for lunch and a walk. Unfortunately the walk was too interesting and when we came back to our boats we were faced with what felt like ½ mile walk knee deep in mud to get back afloat.

The good thing over the next few

into the Medway estuary amongst what felt like hundreds of oyster catchers, geese, jumping fish and seals.

Then I was asked to arrange a "commute" paddle from Gillingham Strand into Chatham with a go pro camera on board and a shore-based photographer keeping up with us on a bike. This was a Medway Public Health concept which may be used in the future. I was pleased that others from our Club supported me with this and that we had pleasant sunshine coupled with calm water. I have an excellent collection of still photos and some video clips if people are interested.

The next few weeks included group paddles in Herne Bay, on the Stour from



Burntwick Island, separated from Upchurch by the sea's erosion during the mid 18th century soon became a base for smuggling and part of a quarantine base for ships with disease infected crews. Dead Man's Island, situated nearby, became the main burial ground for deceased sailors from these ships.

weeks was that our group of Monday Paddlers was generally free from usual commitments enabling us to do much more than what had, prior to lock down, become a fortnightly trip. Initially we were restricted to only two being allowed together in spite of our BC instruction to go in a minimum of three for safety, but finally we were able to take advantage going in groups of up to six.

Our trips included Yalding to Sluice Weir and return (a gentle trip, very calm and sunny with wildlife on display), an afternoon paddle from Queenborough

Kings Ferry towards Sandwich, from Pett Level to Hastings, Minster to the wreck of the SS Richard Montgomery x 2 – we were careful not to disturb the water, being aware she still has at least 1,400 tonnes of explosives aboard) - and on to Yantlet Creek.

We also had a fun trip to the WW1 German submarine off the marshes by the former Kingsnorth Power Station

In between our trips in June, we paddled to Fort Darnet for a clamber around, having missed our annual Club barbecue trip there to

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Sheppey is still there, so they must have avoided disturbing the SS Richard Montgomery.

Life again after lock down and Monday Paddling: a personal perspective

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celebrate the longest day.

Our last paddle at the time of writing was from Gravesend to Egypt Bay for lunch knee-deep in mud once more. Beautiful sunshine and a lovely strong tidal stream to help us in both directions, as the stop had been planned for low tide - hence the extra mud!

On a personal perspective, I'm very pleased my wife was keen for me to give up windsurfing after our move to Kent in 2010 and to take up kayaking from a club, which she felt would be much safer in my advancing years (!). An interesting concept at the time, but with the help of those friends I've made in Maidstone Canoe Club I've experienced some fantastic views of our country from water level, have enjoyed a new style of camping and seen an incredible selection

of wildlife.

Thanks to Geoff Orford, Mike Lambourne, Jeff Skipper, Catherine and Keith Dacey, Alan Roffe, Norman Brooks and Geoff Licence for sharing some exciting and satisfying trips.

Special thanks for all the help and instruction I've received from so many in the Club. With regard to the Monday Paddlers, please make contact if you are able to join us in the week, bearing in mind most of our trips are on the sea.

My last comment is concerning safety. We should never go out alone or without planning the trip. Many of the trips that I've undertaken with Club members would not have been feasible without the experience and training of others.

*By David Alexander
alexanderdrm@gmail.com*



Commuting by kayak. It could catch on!

Welcome To Our New Members

I would just like to mention our new members this year who have joined us either via one of our beginner courses or via an assessment from one of our coaches.

You have joined us during difficult times when the normal club facilities and paddling session have not been available, but I have heard no complaints or moans.



So here is a list of those new members who have joined since lockdown:

Peter B, Matt C, Jon & Resha R, Rob M, Patsy C, Jon P, Emma N, Nicola, Dave, Molly & Thomas B, Connor F, Lizzie W, Peter P, Joanne, Tim & Samuel W, Angela & Samuel H, Jim B, Sam G, Steve F, Mylee D, Kathy S, Sally & Erin H, Tam M and Trixie K, plus those who have joined us since publication. Well done to all of you and we hope that this lockdown ends soon, and we can all get together again for club paddles and a cup of tea. Also, a big thank you to all those regular club members and coaches who have given of their time and effort to help our new members get a foot hold.

*By Geoff Orford, Membership Secretary
memsec@maidstonecanoeclub.net*

Ropes & Rescue Refresher

Our soon-to-be-annual refresher session for all those who are hoping someone will chuck them a throwbag during the upcoming whitewater season! We'll look at mechanical advantage, pig rigs, foot entrapments and the always-humbling Throwbag Olympics. Dry session, no wet kit needed.

September 11th, 6:30pm.



On the way out to the sea forts. One of the finest images to have graced these pages for a long time. Days like this are why we kayak.

Trip To Maunsell Sea Forts - Thames Estuary

Maunsell sea forts are sea defences constructed during WW2 to help protect London from Luftwaffe bombing raids. Red Sands Fort is roughly at the intersection, 8 miles north of Whitstable and 9 miles east of Sheerness.

Jon, Richard, Jerry and I had set aside a number of suitable dates during the summer where the tide times (preferably neap) would suit a weekend paddle. As the first date drew nearer, the predicted wind conditions fluctuated keeping us on a knife-edge. As the week developed the forecast improved, so it was decided that Saturday was a goer. In fact the predicted forecast was so good that Jon suggested trying for Shivering Tower's Fort, a further 3 miles from Red sands, to which we all agreed.

We set out at 6.40am from Minster Beach, with the perfectly calm sea providing a canvas for a wonderful reflective sunrise. We made good progress on the flat water. The heat wave of the preceding days showed no signs of abating, with temperatures in the mid 30s predicted. We were blessed with a certain amount of cloud cover and were even afforded us a shower of rain, which kept the conditions comfortable. An unexpected bonus was a porpoise sighting!

The revised plan was to bypass Red Sands and continue onwards to Shivering Towers. Jon informed us of our compass heading, compensating for tidal drift, all the time advancing towards the eerie sight of the first fort, which slowly became

clearer in the dissipating sea mist. The quad pod supports beneath the square structures gave the towers a look similar to Martian Invaders from the H.G. Wells book 'The War of the Worlds' (albeit with an extra leg). We passed the forts at the two-hour mark and began crossing the shipping lane, onwards to Shivering Towers. We paused as a fast moving freighter crossed our path, which provided our first turbulence of the trip as

we rode its large bow waves. We pushed on to our first objective; we needed to arrive for the low tide. Here we encountered windy conditions, but the cloud and mist continued to keep the sun at bay. The sister fort loomed in the foreground; this only had six towers, one lost in a ship collision.

We arrived with plenty of time to spare. Amongst the towers the sheer

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Arrival at the forts.

Trip To Maunsell Sea Forts - Thames Estuary

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scale of these massive two-storey structures became apparent. Though the connecting gangways were long gone, the towers still had a foreboding presence. We tied a safety line and rafted up to enjoy a late breakfast. As we waited for the tide to turn, the sun broke through and the temperature soared. It was then decided a cooling swim was required. Jerry provided safety cover as the remaining three of us enjoyed the most refreshing of swims in near perfect conditions.

The tide had turned and we decided to make a detour to visit the now moving wind farm, the majority having been motionless in the morning doldrums. After arriving at the nearest turbine, we then got back on track and continued heading towards Red Sands (with curious seals checking our progress along the way). We now had the benefit of a stronger tide directly behind us. We arrived at the more intact fort, the relentless heat draining our energy reserves. A good drink and refuel was required as we then carried on with the long haul back to Minster, with the following tide growing stronger still. The last leg of trip is often the hardest. With the objective achieved, the aches and pains become more apparent. It was still



early afternoon though as we landed back on a busy Minster beach. With our equipment secured, we enjoyed another refreshing swim - with Jerry being the first one in this time. After a paddle of 27.5

miles, the swim was most welcome. The perfect end to a truly epic sea kayak trip.

Barry Wilkie
barry.wilkie@sky.com



Finally ...

Well this may not seem a big thing but today Steve Rowe and Roy Rayner have cemented in the wobbly K boat stands. Apparently they've needed to be done for the last 5 years. Whoo hoo....just a little cajoling from me lol.

By Catherine Ayling
catherine.ayling@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Intro to WW

A last-minute space has opened up for our Intro to Whitewater Weekend in North Wales on 19th/20th September. This is a coached weekend suitable for paddlers of Explore Award standard (old 2*) and above who want to take the next step up to moving water. Please see website for details.