

NEWS LETT ER

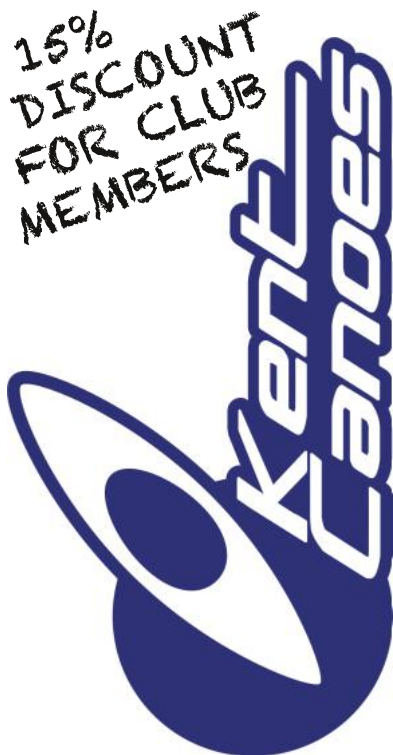
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The success of this newsletter relies on contributions from **YOU!** If you've been on a trip, in a race, or just have an opinion or some news you want to share, please send it to newsletter@maidstonecanoeclub.net

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 February, 2020.



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Throwback Thursday - or should that be throwBAG Thursday! John digs deep into the archives to relive the Club's last whitewater trip to Scotland in the early 90s.

Letter from the Editor

One of the many things to fall by the wayside during lockdown was the Spring Edition of the newsletter, but we're back and better than ever!

A huge "thank-you" to our contributors, who have racked their brains and come up with some amazing and fascinating articles despite not having been able to get out paddling.

Thankfully, we're now allowed back out on the water, albeit with some restrictions. The racers are out training, the Monday paddlers are out exploring more local waterways, there's sea kayaking going on, and there's a constant trickle of people on and off the landing stage. I've even heard that a couple of the whitewater paddlers have been practicing their rolls, with varying degrees of

success

...
The river, like so much of the natural world, seems to have benefitted from the quiet period, with plenty of cygnets and ducklings around, and more fish jumping than I've seen for a long time. As paddlers, we're lucky to be able to access the riverbank in a way that few others can, with the wildlife more tolerant of our human-powered watercraft than they are of land-based intrusion.

We're slowly ramping up the activities that the Club can offer - in line with guidance from British Canoeing - with a return to coaching on the cards and tentative plans being made for trips later on in the year. Do keep an eye on the website for more, and please support the Club as far as you're able to during this tricky time!

See you on the river!

Mark Corti
newsletter@maidstonecanoeclub.net

River Medway Lockdown Quiz

You won't be surprised to learn that there are no prizes for the quiz!
Just try to do it without Google ...

1. How long is The Medway Navigation (non-tidal)?

- a) 17 miles
- b) 19 miles
- c) 21 miles

2. How many locks are there in use on the River Medway?

- a) 9
- b) 10
- c) 11

3. When was Allington Lock built ?

- a) 1752
- b) 1792
- c) 1801

4. When were the electrically opened sluice gates first built at Allington?

- a) 1927
- b) 1931
- c) 1937

5. Where is Bow Bridge?

- a) Teston
- b) Watlingtonbury
- c) East Farleigh

6. The remains of an old railway bridge can still be seen near Maidstone at:

- a) Tovil
- b) East Farleigh
- c) Allington

7. Where is Kettle Bridge?

- a) Tonbridge
- b) Yalding
- c) Barming



(Archive image) Is this a clue? Probably not ...

8. The deepest lock is:

- a) Sluice Weir Lock
- b) Teston Lock
- c) Town Lock

9. There is an aggregate conveyor over the river at :

- a) Yalding
- b) East Peckham
- c) Branbridges

10. The source of the river is in Butchers Wood, In which county is it?

- a) East Sussex
- b) Kent
- c) West Sussex

Tidal River

11. Fort Darnet was completed in which year?

- a) 1862
- b) 1872
- c) 1882

12. The Russian submarine moored off of Strood was previously at which Kent harbour?

- a) Dover
- b) Ramsgate
- c) Folkestone

13. Upnor Castle is at:

- a) Upper Upnor
- b) Lower Upnor
- c) Between the two Upnors

14. Sun Pier is in which town?

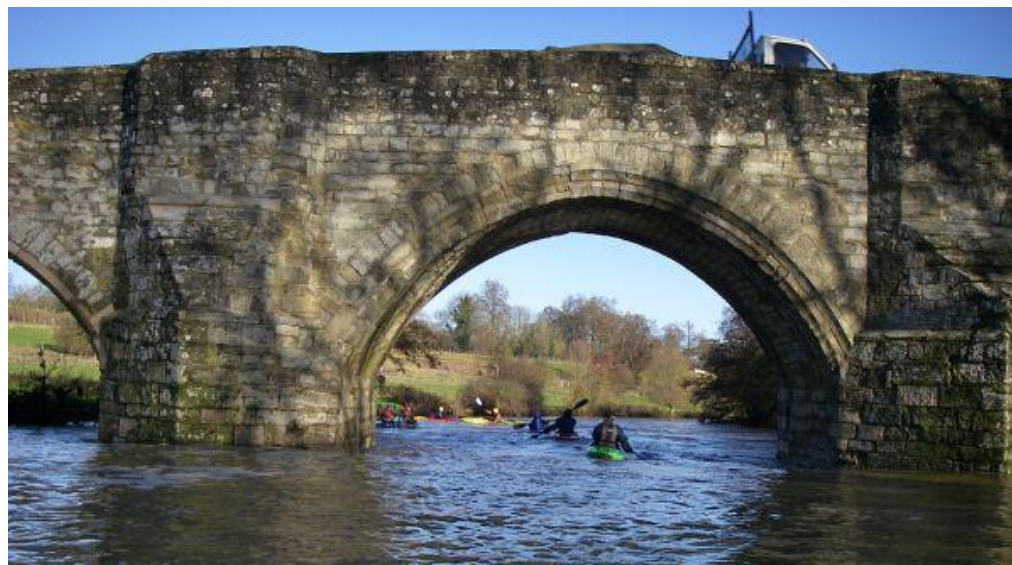
- a) Rochester
- b) Chatham
- c) Gillingham

15. Chatham Dockyard closed in which year?

- a) 1973
- b) 1980
- c) 1983

Answers on the back page.

By Geoff License
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(Archive image) Another hint? Or just a red herring ...

Devizes to Westminster - Virtual Race

When my long-suffering wife asked “What are your plans for Easter, now that the DW is cancelled?” I had to try and think of something, before a new plan got shoved onto the calendar without me having a choice.

The original plan was detailed to each of the hours, with very little room for error.

Thursday was the day to pick up the K2 for the two Benenden Tigers and take it from the club to the scrutineer’s area at Devizes, ready for them to register and book it in. As their coach, this was going to be my last real duty before they were on their own, with only 125 miles and 77 portages until I picked up the boat from them at Westminster Bridge. Izzy and Zara had done all the hard work of getting ready for the race, including a 36-mile paddle in bitterly cold conditions with a creditable time of 8:34. This was nearly an hour faster than the time required to qualify as a Junior Team and it was 2 miles extra. Their confidence was high and nothing was going to stop them.

I then had to do a session volunteering in the Registration office.

Dinner was planned to be a pasta-packing affair with the Tigers and their support team and then get some shut-

eye. Good Friday was another day of volunteering, stopping only when Paul and Emz arrived, to see them through registration and scrutineering, followed by a meal.

Easter Saturday to Easter Sunday morning was blocked out with only one heading! “Keep Paul & Emz Fed, Focussed and Fit”. I had supported them on a few warm-up races already and felt sure that they were as ready as they could be, so, like the Tigers they should be OK!

Sunday afternoon: hopefully get home for some sleep!

Easter Monday was “Get Up Early and see the Tigers finish”

As I have already said, both teams had done all the work and barring something major happening, they should be DW Finishers!

Little did I know that the “something major” was microscopic, named after a bottle of beer and a date. Leaving out the swearwords there is not much more to say.

So how do I get something else on the calendar to keep myself busy, and satisfy my long-suffering wife that I am gainfully employed.

A quick check on the DW Facebook

site and I notice that I am not alone. All over the land there are paddlers and supporters facing the same predicament. Then someone says that we could do a Virtual DW (V-DW) on ergos. Replies start flying in: We can do it but we only have a rowing machine; we can do it but not straight through, can we do the 4-day challenge as we will be paddling a single ergo? Is there anyone who can lend us an ergo or rower?

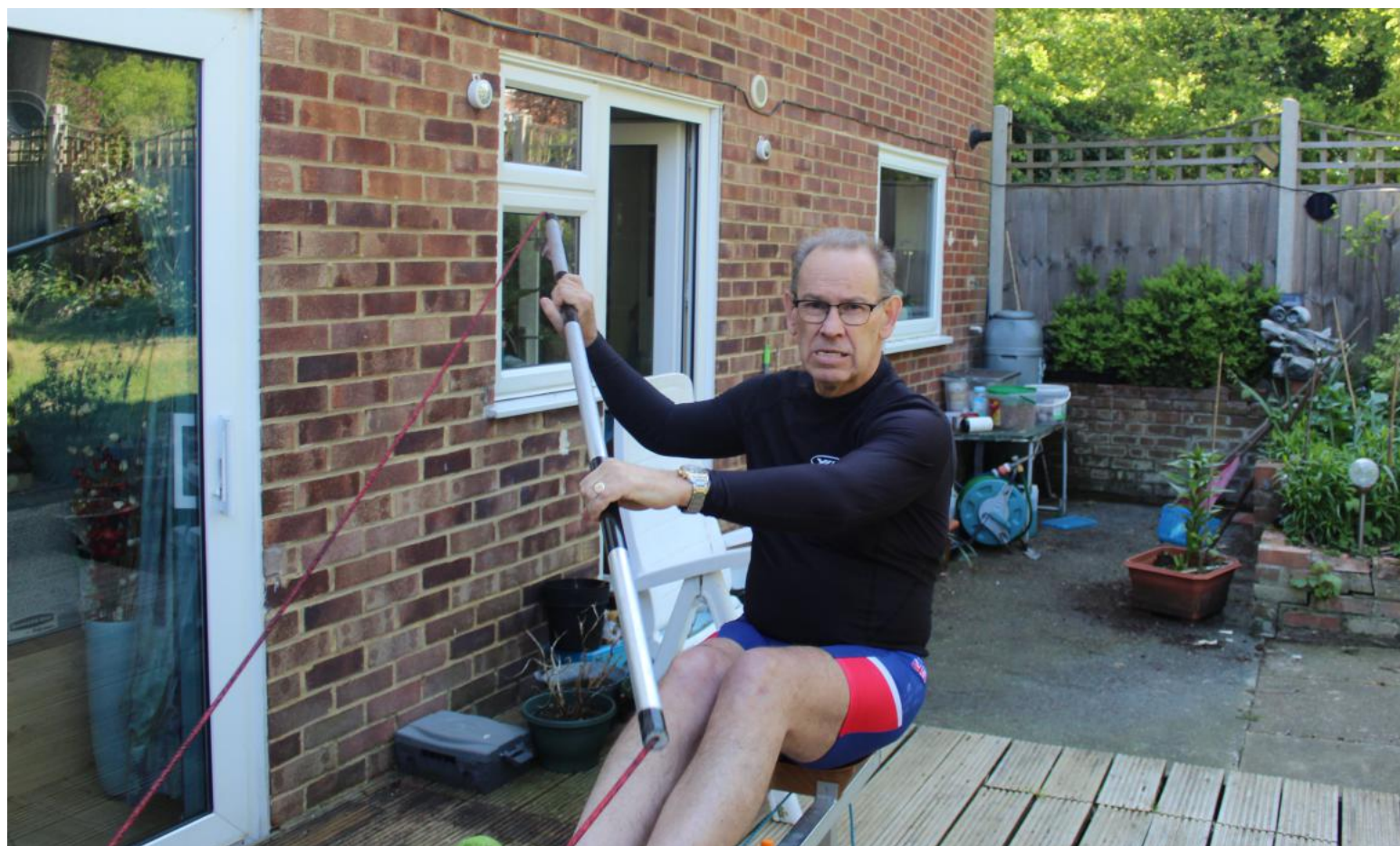
My, how mad can the paddle community be! They are almost as mad as I am. A quick call to the Chairman: Can I borrow an ergo from the club? No problem. There goes my excuse.

Wife says that she will support with the food and water for every Virtual Portage, after all Paul and Emz won’t be needing it.

So along with 8 teams, in the back gardens of England the V-DW starts on Good Friday, apart from the husband-and-wife team who are doing the non-stop V-DW as a relay on a rowing machine in their garage, with everyone connected by digital media.

Day 1 is tough as the first three hours have no portages so, in true DW tradition water-bottles are carried with you. Then comes the Bruce Tunnel, blindfolded to ensure reality triumphs over virtual. Count your strokes out loud until you are OK to take the blindfold off.

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Near the beginning of the V-DW, Bryn still looking fit and well

Devizes to Westminster - Virtual Race



Damn, it's dark in the tunnel ...

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Then the portages come thick and fast. Each one means get off, run 3 laps of the garden and try to drink and eat before getting back on to the ergo that has been getting warm in the Easter sunshine. After 200 laps of the garden and 36 virtual miles you stop, check on how everyone else is doing and try to calm down.

Saturday is more of the same, with most of the V-Paddlers booking on and raring to go. Our youngest paddler, Katie, shows the photo of her tent, where she has slept overnight. She insists that as a Junior Paddler this is the correct accommodation for all juniors on DW so therefore she must abide by the rules. We are joined by our husband-and-wife team on the rower, who are starting their Non-Stop V-DW Relay on Saturday as per the rules. Everything must be done by the rules so you don't get a DSQ next to your name!

Fundraising Challenges are now getting serious, with 2 paddlers offering to have a bucket full of ice-water thrown over them for every £10.00 donation to the nominated charity.

Day 3 starts with aching muscles and tales of woe from us older paddlers and a round of applause for the Non-Stop Relay team who have managed to do it 40 minutes on and 40 minutes off all through the night to manage a sub 26-hour finish. We 4-Dayers set off and soon find that the long paddles between portages

around the garden is not fun. The mind-numbing boredom of sitting on an ergo, looking at the garden fence is taking its toll. The only thing to watch is the stoke counter on your watch and the list of strokes needed between each portage has dampened all the enthusiasm we started with on Friday.

Monday means we have to time our mass start to the High Tide at Teddington to ensure Virtual is synchronised to Reality. Jumping the tide means DSQ and having come this far that would be suicide.

Competition is now serious with the front runners going for their target times. Stoke rates are being shouted to the mobile phones and support teams are bombarding the social media with bridges passed, as the photos of each bridge flashes up on the control FaceBook Site. By now the support crews, with no feeding and bottle changes allowed are keeping the chatter going like old friends.

As the armada gets close to Westminster Bridge, we link up on Facebook to St Thomas' Hospital and give the staff a virtual round of applause. After all the staff there know more about

exhaustion than DW paddlers this year.

Total times are quickly calculated and congratulations are shared, to all, in the true spirit of endurance sports. I am accorded the honour of being the record holder for the Oldest V-DW Finisher with 17h27m and Katie gets a special mention as the winner of the Junior Race, including the Happy Camper Award.

The only teams who are still in their respective gardens are now the 2 hour per day paddlers. They have to keep going until the Saturday after Easter, when we all join them, at High Tide for a celebration paddle down the tideway. Our numbers have been swelled by many paddlers who have been watching the progress on Social Media. My MCC teammates join with homemade ergos or just broom handles with ropes going around garden umbrella stands.

As any DW paddler will tell you, the hardest job is that being done by the support crew. My crew Sandra managed to keep me going for all 4 days despite my numerous changes of mind from Liquorice to Jaffa Cakes.

Well what else would a Paddler do over Easter anyway?

By Bryn Price

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At the end of day 4. Is it just me, or does Bryn look a little less sprightly than he did at the beginning?

West Coast of Scotland Whitewater Trip



During these last few months of lockdown and with serious whitewater withdrawal symptoms I have been reminiscing about trips from the past in true “Match of the Day” revisited style.

Among the many trips was a week in the Scottish Highlands which to my knowledge as a club we haven’t run since. Back in the day planning a whitewater trip tended to be a group of mates deciding over a drink, during the previous trip, to find something bigger, better or requiring more nerves! And so, the whitewater contingent of Maidstone Canoe Club consisting of myself, Paul Highams, Rob Hart, Ed Lamb and Dan Pryor moved away from the historical stomping grounds of Welsh valleys to the distant Glens of Scotland ...

It made a change from the usual Friday evening dash from work to Wales by actually leaving in the morning. The choice of cars for the journey couldn’t be further apart, Rob in his Ford Sierra

Cosworth RS4x4 (possibly the fastest kayaking shuttles I have ever achieved happened in this beast) and Dan in his Citroen BX (the most basic and scariest car with Dan driving). Allocated on a first come first served basis I end up with Dan and spent the next 8 hours agreeing with him that Rob was driving too fast. We arrived in Glasgow in under 8 hours with the feeling that as there was only an inch left on the map we will be at our destination of Fort William within the hour and supping our first pint of 80 Shillings. Having never been to Scotland before I had never experienced a Scottish A road and realised after the first 15 minutes that I would have to wait for my first pint. Nearly 3 hours later we pulled into our campsite, about 5 miles out of Fort William, as the sun was setting. Met by the proprietor we were given a quick tour of facilities and shown to our chalet that would be our base for the next 5 days. Offering us a free dram of whisky from the on-site bar he beckoned us to join him that evening, how could we refuse. After a mad dash to

have first dibs on the bunks we took up his offer and headed to the dimly lit snug with the roaring open fire. Greeted by the landlord we knew we had chosen well, on the shelves around the bar was the entire collection of Scottish Malts proudly displayed in there 100’s. That evening, with the help of the best Scottish hospitality, battle plans were formulated for the days to come.

Day 1: The Lower Roy/Middle Spean. A good nights sleep was had (partly thanks to the hospitality), breakfast cooked, flasks and packed lunches made, we eagerly wanted to experience our first taste of Scottish water so an easy river was the answer. Gear loaded and armed with Terry Storry’s guidebook we headed off to our start point in the middle of nowhere on the tiniest of roads. The crisp cold air hit you as soon as the car door was opened and your only witnesses were the highland sheep that seem to take priority on these roads. Boats off roofs, gear stowed and the painfully cold battle with wetsuits starts (at least they were dry). Drivers were ushered off on car shuttles and we quickly started devising ways of keeping warm whilst waiting. We shouldn’t have bothered with the star jumps as the get in was a 200m descent down a narrow track, 2 or 3 journeys later and we could barely breath with sweat running down our backs.

Described as a classic grade 3 this was our warm up river, we had high

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West Coast Whitewater Trip

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expectations for the week to come and we weren't disappointed. Paul led and the rest followed with Rob sweeping up if required, straight away the river felt different. Instead of classic Welsh valley's you had wide glacial descents with light everywhere and a scarcity of trees except for gnarly Scot's pines standing tall or wind stunted oak. Hard granite rocks and ledge drops confronted us with technical root finding amongst the boulders, and water, lots of water, the volume was definitely greater than I had experienced before at this grade. We finished the day without any swims and buzzing for harder water. We stocked up with supplies on the way back in Fort William whilst thinking of tomorrow, the first pint of 80 shillings at the bar along with the inevitable search for bigger and better water. We had arrived!

Day 2: The Upper and Middle Roy. The previous night was spent pouring over the guidebook to find a more challenging river, our necks were definitely getting longer. The Gloy and the Loy were pondered over but the higher 2 sections of the Roy looked our best bet. It hadn't rained yet and the Gloy benefits from more water, whereas the Upper Roy runs when the lower section is emptying. The upper and middle Roy are great grade 4 sections of river and we wanted to push ourselves. An early start and even colder wait for the car shuttle in damp wetsuits. This time the star jumps were appreciated by most except Ed who for the life of him couldn't manage leg and arm actions at the same time.

We were high up in a remote glen and as became common on this trip had the river to ourselves. To me, this section of river typifies Scottish whitewater, Constant, big, technical and our first taste of gorge sections. A true gem of a river at times pushing all of us, even Paul who was a gifted natural paddler and leader. Our general style of leading was on-sighting everything mainly from the boat, we just knew when someone was concerned and felt confident following down, trusting each persons ability. So, when Paul is out of his boat you know it's getting hairy.

"Roosters Tail" followed later by "Wish You Were Here" gave good opportunities to route find and put in protection. The Roy gorge appeared with plenty of challenging decisions including our first portage above "S bend" (with a collapsed undercut none of us fancied it). We

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Dan Pryor on the Upper Roy



Dan Pryor in the Roy Gorge



Ed and John inspecting Twist and Shout on the Etive

West Coast Whitewater Trip

... cont'd from page 6

carried on down to yesterdays get in, only to realise we had to drag our boats up the monstrously steep track. We had earnt our evening meal and Scottish hospitality.

Day 3: The Spean Gorge. Having a taste of gorge paddling the day before the obvious choice in the guidebook was the Spean Gorge. The classic Grade 4 Scottish gorge also had the advantage of becoming harder in lower water levels and the rain dances were still not working. Starting with a grade 2 section the gorge soon appears marked by a tall bridge and then the fun begins. Winding high walled channels carved through the rock lead you round blind corners and into a world only visible by boat. Ed, our resident geologist, was having a field day jumping out of his boat to explore sumps and crevices, explaining how sumps form as harder stones fall into niches and carve holes using the hydraulic action of the whirlpools. Disappearing into one for a picture made us realise this isn't the best river for a swim. Gradually the gorge became harder and our first feature to look out for loomed, aptly named "Headbanger". The river takes a bend to the right and drops over a ledge only to hit a wall and turn back left. Over the years the left hand edge of the drop had become completely undercut and with a chunky stopper on the drop naturally feeding its captives to the left, paddlers are inevitably sucked under to a slot behind the wall. Paul goes first with the rest of us putting in protection and as usual makes a text book descent. Rob follows and I prepare for my turn. When the river hits the far wall it produces a phenomenal mushroom wave and I plan a route to avoid this, unfortunately my line means I hit the stopper at an angle and it sucks me into the green room. The boat is a distant memory as I find myself going deeper and the infamous noise of plastic helmet hitting rock follows. After what seems an eternity I surface in a white froth in the slot behind the wall and I am quickly grabbed by the BA. A quick regroup sees Ed make a successful run whilst Dan walks it.

With my pride dented we carry on down, our concentration is now at a peak with one more feature "The Constriction" to follow, the gorge tightens at a bolder choke to only a 2-3ft gap. Paul leads with the rest of us navigating this tricky S bend. Ed, who was just in front of me catches the edge of the gap, his stern quickly whips round and before you could blink the boat starts to get sucked down



Boat retrieved from the Constriction in the Spean Gorge.

with a stern/bow broach. Realising he has a slight upstream lean, Ed pops his deck and using his climbing experience manages to jump up and simply walks up the stern to the awaiting rock face. We all scramble to the bank and start heaving ourselves out whilst retrieving pin kits. Remarkably Ed hasn't even got a wet foot (a lucky habit that follows him to the Alps, a story for another newsletter). This is the only occasion in over 30 years of paddling with MCC that I have ever had to use a pulley in anger but without it the boat would probably still be there.

A fantastic paddle testing all of us both on and off the water. Paul, Rob and myself decided to have a second run and this time I successfully ran Headbanger to restore some confidence. We headed back to the chalet for celebratory family sized Fray Bentos pies each (the size of a dinner plate). That evenings hospitality found us diving into the guidebook with even longer necks with the search for our first Scottish Grade 5.

Day 4: The Arkraig and The Etive Scouting mission. The only trouble with moving up to grade 4+/5 paddling is the jump is considerable, moving from technically hard to dangerously hard. Most of the rivers we had shot to date, wherever they were, had been off of our own back without other river leaders. We would just read a book and rock up, which in turn gives you a healthy respect for the grading system (or lack of it). Paul, Rob and myself had paddled grade 5 in the past, as well as walking it and with that in mind when reading the write up for the "River Etive" (a 2.5km waterfall fest) it was decided a scouting mission maybe required to give it justice. We looked for an easy section to paddle to give us the afternoon to check out the Etive. The

Arkraig seemed a good river to tick off, nice and easy with a grade 4 in the middle. The Arkraig was a small river in a beautiful glen joining 2 lochs. We quickly arrived and started the car shuttle, with a



Second time lucky for John. Headbanger, Spean Gorge.

relaxed day ahead and time on our hands new games were invented such as how many rocks can you fit in a Topolino "Spud". Quite a few is the answer, much to the annoyance of Rob and the satisfaction of Paul, Ed and myself.

A beautiful little paddle ensued passing the most idyllic castle on the edge of the grade 4 rapid with it's own helicopter and pad. The only hole on the river was found by Rob who managed a

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John shooting Letterbox on the Etive.

West Coast Whitewater Trip

... cont'd from page 7

complete back loop in his Topo followed by a swim (must have left some rocks in the back). Still with plenty of time we headed back up for more runs before heading off to Glen Etive.

On arriving at the Etive we parked up only to find Brighton University CC about to shoot the river. What a perfect opportunity to check out the lines for tomorrow, it also helped that I knew most of them as my brother was a member and I had paddled with them in the past. We offered our services as bank support and kitted up with rescue gear at the ready.

University clubs are fascinating to watch on the river, on one hand there organisation and speed at running features is truly amazing, on the other there blind trust for someone in their third year who is perceived as some sort of God like figure who surely couldn't be wrong, ever, is questionable. And so we had plenty of practise with the throw lines but not one of them walked any of the drops (except Crack of Dawn). Even the guy in the plastic slalom boat who shot the 20+ footer "Right Angle Falls" with a complete vertical descent, needless to say he disappeared into the plunge pool only to resurface 6ft clear of the water and flush into the boil under the drop. This in turn fed him down again and behind the waterfall into the massive cavern behind it, luckily finding the 1ft ledge to scramble onto. This led to one of the best self rescues I have ever seen.

As he was in a bowl with 20ft sides all round, assisted rescues were a bit thin on the ground. Instead we dangled a throw rope on the outside of the falls in the gap to the side seducing him into a daring leap (not that he had many other options). The good news is that he made it, the not so good news was that so did the 2 dead deer that had been behind the falls for who knows how long. Like a scene from a horror movie, these two bloated balls with attached antlers and hoofs followed him to the exit point. We noted that a slight boof was a better descent strategy.

Day 5: The Etive - Triple Falls to the Allt A'Chaorainn. The day of reckoning had arrived. We prepared all our gear the day before and analysed our lines with the aid of the Scottish hospitality, a day of waterfalls beckoned. The rain arrived that night and so rivers had been topped up and we were keen to head out and face the Glen Etive. The road runs up the side of the river and so a quick reekie as we arrive confirms our plans. The river is a constant set of drops over 2.5km and so every 2-300m you are in for a surprise. On arriving we meet 2 paddlers scouting the river much as we did the day before and they were eager to follow us down. We pointed out that shooting this river as a pair tomorrow may not be the wisest of decisions and invited them to join us. It didn't take much persuasion and we could do with as much support as we could. The seven of us set off to the start just above the first drop (or 3 drops)"Triple Falls".

Triple falls - 2 drops followed shortly by a 3rd around a corner. My deck pops on the last drop but I stay upright.

Letterbox - A rocky 3m drop renowned

for breaking ankles (one of our new paddlers said a friend of his broke both his ankles on this drop which apparently made for an interesting rescue). I decided to change from my pointy Stunt Bat and used Rob's Topo for this one.

Ski Jump Falls - A perfect drop into a lovely walled amphitheatre, plenty of film being used on this photogenic adventure.

Crack of Doom - A narrow slot guarded by a 5ft sideways drop. If that wasn't enough just round the corner was its 8ft drop. Plenty of protection on this feature.

Crack of Dawn - A gnarly 10ft diagonal drop that fed into a wall, this in turn formed an impressive stopper. Along with the group yesterday, we decided best option was to walk this one for fear of getting eaten.

Rockslide - An easy slide drop into a pool, then prepare for the big drop!

Right Angle Falls - A 20+ footer (twice as big as anything else we had shot). A tight S bend lead in and then the precipice! We were adamant we were not going to end up behind this fall and so we carried a boat round for safety cover and the long throw ropes came out (and cameras). We sent the probe down first (Paul) and then we all followed, swiftly rotated the safety cover. We were all grinning like Cheshire cats!

Twist and Shout - The last drop on this section of river and film was running low. We made it, this river will take some beating tomorrow!

Day 6: The Orchy - Above Bridge of Orchy to Falls of Orchy. The last day of paddling and nothing less than grade 5 rapids would do, the guidebook was

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West Coast Whitewater Trip

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opened and the Orchy (grade 3 - 5) was plucked out. We headed up as far as we dare from the Bridge of Orchy until the road lost its tarmac. We dragged our gear over whilst the car shuttle happened; after yesterday anything was possible. Straight away the river felt different, this was a powerful fast river and everything felt bigger. Large slabs and boulders filled the features and it had the effect of making you appear smaller. When rapids started to have names in the guidebook you know you are on a bigger river. "Big Rock", "Chicken Chute" and "Sheep Trolley Gorge" were run and eventually we arrive at our first grade 5 "Easan Dubha".

The tell tale sign of Paul getting out of his boat warned of our approach, this was a serious drop with little room for error. Not only was it big volume the lead out was a 2-300m grade 4 rapid called "Sore Tooth" an upstream pointing ridged rock bed rapid, not a good swim. This was the site of a multiple drowning a few years before and so it required respect. I was the probe this time with Paul setting up safety, I chose my 1m gap and went for it with a surprising mystery move at the bottom. A quick rotation of safety cover saw us all down safely and then on to the next.

"Roller Coaster" followed by "End of Civilisation" and then Paul exits his boat, we are at the next grade 5 "Eas a' Chathaidh". This is a very impressive fall and at first sight looks impossible. We looked at the right hand channel and quickly came to the decision this was not



Big boulder fields on the Orchy

a survivable route, so onto the left hand channel. A kind of double drop with a snaking route down the second drop. After 20mins of deliberation no one was prepared to commit. Dan had already walked his boat round and we followed. One for another day. We carry on down through "Witches Step" and arrive at our egress just above The Falls of Orchy. A very impressive grade 6 which apparently can be snuck at 5+ in spate.

The week was over and looking back on the trip nearly 30 years later you realise what a fantastic time we had. Memories to last a lifetime and friendships formed that even when not seeing each other for years you know

would be rekindled at first sight. These were times when you had to rely on each other to get out and paddle this type of water rather than waiting for organised trips and so if you take anything from this write up, get out there and paddle!

That evening whilst recounting the days events the guide books came back out and the next adventure was starting to take shape, what could beat this trip you wonder? Paul starts thumbing through the Alpine guide ...

By John Simmonds

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The Story Of A Paddler - How It All Started

My first sighting of a kayak was when I was 11 years old.

There was an unfinished one in our woodwork room at school. Later some boys finished it and had to be rescued from the Medway near Strood, but that's another story. When I was 12 we had a youth club weekend in Dymchurch and the Army Youth Team came and took us out in kayaks, old wooden and canvas ones. It was great fun in the waves and I managed to stay upright, although I didn't join up when I left school! On the same weekend we played football against a young offenders' team. I was in goal and managed to knock myself out! I think I dived for the ball and banged my head on the dry ground.

Back to kayaking now, on another



youth club trip we camped in the garden of a large house near the upper Avon.

The river was at the bottom of the garden. Good fun, we were in GRP boats this time. Lots of people fishing there in waders not too sure whether we should have been on that stretch, I was about 15 then and did not get too wet. Well there was a lot of splashing each other.

Far forward a few more years I was camping with friends again in Crackington Haven North Cornwall and saw two guys kayaking in the surf. Calm water this time, also went abseiling. They asked us if we wanted to try it. Their only instructions were to turn round between waves, lean forward if we capsized, pull off the spray deck and not to let go of the paddle. I was also told to paddle fast when a wave came from behind, then steer with the paddle on to the sandy beach. An

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Tom Mason GB Paddler Gold Medal Winner

Congratulations to Tom Mason for his Gold Medal in the 2020 Ocean Racing World Cup held in Lanzarote in February. Tom's win was in the 40 km 60-64 category and was one of two GB paddlers to win Gold. Tom has been a club member for more than 10 years and has recently re-joined the club. During the lockdown he has been keeping fit on one of the club's ergos. Well done!

By Geoff Orford

The Story Of A Paddler - How It All Started

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incredible but scary experience! Fibreglass boats again, one was home made from a hired mould. It was very exciting for a while then everything went upside down and I got out still holding the paddle! We got to know the two guys quite well who were students at Liverpool Uni. We arranged another trip to meet them on the North Wales coast for another try. In those days Wales was 'dry' on Sundays so we had to drive for 40 minutes to a rugby club disco night to get a drink. I did not sit in a boat again for about 15 years. In the 1990s, I joined MCC with my family and had some lessons in a white Europa boat with a hole in the front. At the end of the morning session I was sitting in a few inches of water. The upstairs of the club was not finished, and I met Geoff Orford, Paul Newman,

Norman, plus lots of other members whose names escape me. After a few weeks I managed to go up and down the river in a straight line. It was then that I realised how scenic the Medway is and how it changes in the seasons. I have paddled on and off ever since, mostly on flat water. The Medway is such a great river, every time I go out, I see something different, as I am sure that we all do. I miss the smells from the sweet factory, which was in St. Peters Street, and the noise from the paper mill. I hope to have many more years paddling to come with all of you and try out new skills too. We have a wonderful club, full of great people, and everyone is always ready to help. Enjoy your Summer!

By Geoff License



Kentish Rivers to Paddle

With club members getting about more for their paddling I thought just a little prompting on the rivers close to home might be apposite.

We caught sight of club members coming downstream at Teston during the flooding, when the river was over the lock and banks and through the trees, and thought of the low (Cromwellian) bridge with restricted width due to hooked up trees at East Farleigh, and the heightened heart rates and adrenaline it would produce when the group got there. A good trip on moving water. The paddle trips below will all bring your heart rate and adrenaline levels up.

The suggested paddles I list below have all been paddled by me in a 13'6" composite GRP homebuilt "Streamlyte" KW7 – but certainly not recently. 1972/73 possibly the last time for ALL of them during one year. All are "sporting" streams which in moving water can test manoeuvrability and reading of the river. All require caution, some scouting (particularly the low bridges), and have hazards to be aware of, such as barbed wire strung across the river to limit the movement of livestock. None of the rivers have passage approval from the riparian owners or Canoe England. Hey, ho! Hence, they have all been paddled during the quieter winter months. as what are euphemistically called "bandit runs". Arrange the car shuttle, turn up ready changed at the put-in, get on the water

fast before being challenged by a bailiff, landowner or angler, and quietly paddle off downstream. An added excitement, which has only occurred on the Teise in winter is getting shots fired over our heads – at game birds, not us, but still nerve tingling. All 1330 starts.

October

River Medway (OS 136 and 148)
Hartlake Bridge MR629474 to Teston
MR 708531 8ml

November

River Beult (OS 136 and 137)
Smarden MR879424 to Staplehurst
MR789445 6.5ml

January

River Teise (OS 136) Horsmonden
MR717398 to Hunton MR706496 7ml

February

River Teise (OS 136) Claygate
MR714439 to Yalding MR698484 4ml

March

River Beult (OS 137) Headcorn
MR826444 to Hunton MR706496 10ml

March

River Eden (OS147) Hasted Mill
MR418454 to Chiddingstone
MR495463 6.5ml

Note: there is a left and right Teise. Also, if conditions are good with wind directions suitable (eg. N or NE), surfing is on at Joss Bay or Camber Sand. Another worth considering, but needs good conditions, and is a short exhilarating white water run, is the Hammer Stream, finishing where it joins the Beult at Horsmonden (not an easy

exit!).

Note that these are only suggestions and need lots of care. You take responsibility for your own safety and that of any accompanying paddlers. Things may have changed in the intervening years, for better or worse, so be prepared. Boat designs are now more forgiving polyethylene shorter boats, and paddle clothing more efficient and warm - at that time we paddled with aluminium shaft flat plywood blades, wearing cotton fleece tracksuit bottoms, a woolly jumper which was probably the best bit of kit, cags from Millets and plimsolls from Woolworths, sometimes with football socks inside if really cold. Helmets were optional, only because they were scarce. It was a good idea if you had one to wear it under the bridges, in particular. Pogies and mitts – no, just suck your fingers and thumbs to get the feeling back in them. We were usually really cold at the get outs. Hypothermia a real risk during REAL winters with snow and ice.

Mobile phones did not exist then. Remember yours may not get a signal in the sticks, down low on the river. Carry a First Aid kit and know how to use it.

If you run one of these, let us know. A guide to hazards etc will make life so much easier for followers.

Paul Newman

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River Medway Lockdown Quiz - Answers

1. b) 19 miles
2. a) 10 locks
3. b) 1792
4. c) 1937
5. b) Watlingtonbury
6. a) Tovil (Branch line for paper mills)
7. c) Barming
8. a) Sluice Wier Lock
9. c) Branbridges
10. c) West Sussex (near Turners Hill)
11. b) 1872
12. c) Folkestone (was open to visitors for a time)
13. a) Upper Upnor
14. b) Chatham
15. c) 1983

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Allington in the Autumn.