NEWS LETT ER VOLUME 11 ER ISSUE 3

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, 2021.

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



Letter from the Chair

What a fantastic summer of paddling we have had at the club! With many excursions slightly further afield than our standard club paddles as well as trips to far flung rivers.

A successful open day held the same weekend as many of our whitewater paddlers were in Wales on the River Tryweryn is testament to the breadth of paddlers we now have. A big thank you to all the organisers and all the new Paddlesport Activity Assistants (PAAs) and Paddlesport Instructors (PIs) who have enabled all of these events. Going forward I'm sure this will lead to even more than we are currently running and soon we are going to need a bigger calendar!

The Wednesday evening and Sunday morning open paddles are back after nearly 2 seasons, For regular paddlers at explore level there is no need to book, just turn up and go for a paddle. If you want a guided paddle sign up on the calendar. These paddles are being supported by experienced paddlers and our new PAAs and PIs so it really helps if you sign up.

The racing side has started competing again and it is good to hear the results being posted. Catherine Ayling has run an intro session and it would be nice to see new faces

taking up marathon paddling (it's a really good way to improve your paddling technique).

The Junior Paddle Club sessions that are currently running on Tuesday evenings have been a great success and have brought over a dozen young paddlers together. The emphasis in these sessions is fun (and getting wet) and we will be trying to carry on as long as we can, weather permitting.

Work has started in clearing out the new club building and we have an architect engaged to get the design stage completed. Watch this space for an update.

The days are starting to draw in and the weather is only going to get worse so please think about paddling within your ability. Although some members may think the season is coming to a close many of us are just starting as this is when the rivers start filling up. Whitewater trips are being added to the calendar and the classic Exe and Barle trip to Devon is booked for 16th - 17th Last year was the first time for October. decades that this trip didn't run and I know it has been sorely missed (and Keith is still running the Badgers Holt pub).

So, all in all, a successful summer followed hopefully by a busy autumn and winter! Don't forget to be safe and keep paddling.

John Simmonds - MCC Chair chairman@maidstonecanoeclub.net



Happy paddlers during Junior Paddle Club. A rare moment when they are all in their boats at the same time!



This is what paddling with MCC is all about - good times on the water with friends, and smiles all around

The River Great Ouse

out to paddle the Great Ouse, from Bedford in Bedfordshire to Denver Sluice in Norfolk.

Sounds like a long way? Well it was about 69 miles.

Mike Lambourne had planned the journey for 2020. Being rescheduled a year later and a slight change of group members, Mike, Geoff O, Jeff S, Alan R, Trish H, Barry W and Keith and Catherine set

From our base at St Neots we drove to Bedford for the paddle back to St Neots for the evening. Mike had chosen a camp site on the river, near a pub and a couple of good restaurants, always a bonus. The first days paddle was 15

Exe & Barle 16-17th October

An MCC institution for over 30 the Exe & Barle trip returns in 2021! A weekend of grade 1 & 2 paddling on two rivers, traditional Saturday night spent in the Badgers Holt pub across from the campsite. details. See calendar

n 6th August a party of 8 set miles with 7 locks. Mike had the forethought to hire a windlass and key the locks.

> As always on Mike's trips the sun shone and the wildlife came to see us.

> The second day's paddle from St Neots to Haughton Mill saw us pass through another 7 locks and cover 14 miles.

The river here is flanked by meadows and woods. We stopped for lunch at Godmanchester Lock, and had a stroll to see the Chinese bridge. We then made our way to Haughton Mill, a lovely National Trust property with a campsite on the river. We said goodbye to Barry at the end of the day, apparently some people have to work.

(Monday) took us from Day 3 Haughton Mill to a lock just past Earith.

On the way we passed through Holywell, which apparently is famous for its seals even though it is about 40 miles from the sea. Needless to say as we had been seal watching in the Medway all spring, we didn't see any. The weather was not so kind and we paddled along a wide flat landscape in a thunder storm, this was quite exciting and very wet. We were greeted shortly afterwards with bright sunshine at our last lock of the day, Hermitage Lock. We stopped here for a late lunch and a chat with Keith's brother who came out to see

us. This was a good stop as there were proper facilities, not too common on canoe club

We paddled another couple of miles to our get out point, and drove to a campsite in the middle of an orchard, with giant slugs. After dinner cooked on the site we retired to Alan's camper van for an evening of cards in another thunder storm. 15 Miles and 5 locks, the last of the locks

Day 4 saw us paddling from Hermitage Lock as it was an easier put in, to Ely. As we started from Hermitage

Cont'd on page 3 ...



No portaging on Mike's trips!

The President's **Trophy**

took over from Michael Passmore. our first club president, quite a few vears ago but only instituted the President's Trophy after mulling for some time at the lack of formal recognition our members received. despite the considerable contributions they made.

These contributions come in many forms; not just excellence in competition and recreational paddling but work on behalf of the club and members, loyalty to the club, or just being downright nice. The award is not decided by a the club executive or committee. popular accolade (although I hope the award recipients are popular among our club members), but, after much deliberation and soul searching and uncertainty, by me Paul Newman, your President. club

When originally conceived I wanted a trophy not in the vein of a "victor but something ludorum", more befitting egalitarian. recognition untrammelled by performance alone. "Inspiration" came after picking up several large, empty, shells of the edible snail (supposedly introduced to the UK by the Romans).

would be the Silver Snail. Alas, no recipient has yet got a 'silver snail'. Snails have, however, been a Some wooden, constant award. beautifully carved specimens were obtained in Oxford while walking the Thames Path, another from Croatia, two from Greece, and the latest from Malta. Some effort goes into collecting these trophies.

The recipient for 2021 has had to wait a bit as, at the time of the virtual AGM, the trophy engraver and the honours board signwriter were closed. I am pleased that with trophy and board ready, the award goes to a very long term member of our club. Distinguished by the variety of paddling disciplines and venues, but latterly by the provision of expert leadership for group paddles by newer members, always with good friendliness. humour and

As most of you will know, the club's first premises was a dumb barge on the river where our landing stage now sits, followed by a large pre-fabricated building bought from the construction site of the Thames Barrier at Woolwich. When that had to go, following Maidstone Borough Council allowing the Record Tennis Centre to rent our site, we decided to build clubhouse. Fortunately our latest award collector could help.

Help is an understatement - he designed our clubhouse. As a building lecturer he had all the skills and knowledge and we made the most of modest. them. quiet. Α undemonstrative, member of our club, has contributed. and is contributing.

I am very pleased to announce:

Michael Lambourne

Is awarded

Maidstone Canoe Club President's Trophy 2021

Paul Newman, Hon. President MCC president@maidstonecanoeclub.net





One of the notable things about the River Ouse is that at certain states of the tide the gradient - which normally runs from source to sea - actually runs from right to left. This makes it suitable for advanced paddlers only.

The River Great Ouse

... cont'd from page 2

Lock we didn't paddle to the original get out, but stopped in Ely. The river had been narrower and windy for most of the day, the landscape being very flat meant we could see for miles, so when we saw Ely cathedral on the sky line, we thought we were almost there, but the river twisted and turned and it seemed to take for ever to reach the slip way in the centre of town. It was another very warm day, no rain and lots of tourists watching us tiredly put the boats on the cars and head off for a well deserved dinner in Littleport.

We had paddled about 13.6 miles with locks no

Day 5 A longer day as we put in at Ely, 15.5 miles. The river meandered it's way out of Ely and under Queen Adelaide Bridge, named after a pub! The river is between high banks and straight, the stretch known as 10 mile bank.

Here Alan and Keith saw a purple heron, we saw lots of kingfishers and very few other craft. The river had been quiet for most of the journey.

As the day wore on the wind changed direction, or we went round a bend, either way for a while we had a head wind which we could have done without.

And then in the distance we could see the sluice 15.5 miles and the route completed.

Thanks to Mike for his brilliant planning, and finding some very diverse campsites, and finding good restaurants eat

After the final car shuffle we had farewell fish and chips in Ely. Where to next year?

By Catherine Dacey catherine.dacey@maidstonecanoeclub.net



The legendary "Scotland Trip" (as it's universally known) is a much-storied Club tradition, organised and led each year by the indefatigable Geoff.

Bute Trip

s I had finished school much earlier than expected (as I'd just done A Levels) my Dad invited me to join him on this year's Scotland trip to the Isle of Bute.

Despite his heavy warnings of the cold, the wet and - worst of all - the midges, I agreed to come. My dad, Jerry and I drove up on the Thursday, before staying the night in Glasgow, to avoid driving up at night (the old hands prefer that). I was glad we drove up in daylight as I got to see sights on the journey, like the Angel of the North, and how hilly Scotland

Unfortunately, on Friday morning, Jerry had to drop out of the trip and make his way home again. For the rest of us, after a quick ferry ride, our starting point was Ettrick bay on the west side of Bute. From there we headed to the Island of Inchmarnock. For the duration of our two night stay we were the only ones there, aside from herds of roaming wild cattle (so, in hindsight, admittedly my decision to wear red during our walk across the island wasn't the smartest idea). We also encountered Royal Navy patrol boats. Their patrol was on a circular course on the Saturday. It churned up so much backwash that I could have easily capsized during our paddle around the Island, so that encounter wasn't one of my favourite

parts of the trip! One thing I quickly learned from a trip like this is that you're in an environment that encourages you to do things outside of your usual comfort zones, such as attempting to swim in the sea in May. This isn't something I'd recommend to someone not masochistically inclined, even though I attempted this on two separate occasions.

On Sunday we travelled to the south of the Island, to the Rubh' an Eun lighthouse, for a night. The sea, during our paddle, was like a sheet of glass, allowing us to look down at the seabed and the hundreds of starfish upon it. The clearness of the water even made our boat's shadows stand out, to the extent that someone thought it was a shark beneath their boat! Unlike the past two nights, on a beach that had been undisturbed for two years and rife with firewood, the campfire this night was rather pitiful. During our time here I climbed some of the hills surrounding our campsite to take pictures and managed to get some lovely shots.

The next day, Monday, it was back the way we came, to the south side of Inchmarnock Island, though in less pleasant conditions than previously as the wind had picked up. We took a lot of breaks on the beaches we encountered (during which Katherine handed out cake - thank you, Katherine!) to avoid landing at low tide, and the exhausting boat drag

we experienced the previous day. However, this meant we were still on the water when the wind picked up, and I was again left exhausted. The campfire was much better on this night, made from driftwood found on the beach, and I enjoyed the stories shared by the older generations. What I didn't enjoy was the Jagermeister I was offered. Apparently spitting it out on the sand isn't the usual reaction to this drink. The highlight of the evening was my dad, with two others (all rather drunk), attempting to pick up a wooden telephone pole to put on the fire and discovering that it was actually a lot heavier than it looked.

Tuesday was stocking up day and we headed back to the cars at Ettrick Bay to replenish our supplies. The predictions of 7-11 mph winds had made me nervous about this trip but fortunately the only bad thing that happened was my skeg getting jammed, which happened to many of us, leading to a lot of wet arms. We arrived at low tide, the beach at Ettrick Bay is shallow so we decided to wait for the water to rise and then continue up to the campsite. At this point my Dad abandons me and drags his boat up the beach anyway! The sun was out, it became so hot it verged on unpleasant as we were setting up camp, so our visit to the beachside café, was a very welcome one. In the evening, a group of us drove to the main town of

Cont'd on page 5 ...



Intimidating locals on Inchmarnock.

Bute Trip

Rothesay and went to the pub. I mainly went to get phone reception and use an actual toilet, but it was nice to see more the island though. didn't have the best start on Wednesday, whilst waiting for the group to assemble I was caught up by the strong wind and receding tide, beneath a grey sky I drift out to sea. Though, like the rest of this trip, a bad time eventually turned into good time and the sun came out, allowing us to see the many jellyfish under our boats and a pod of porpoises swimming nearby. They looked so pretty in the water, as did the stream we sat by during our break. Then the wind picked up, and the last length of our paddle was a lot less relaxed. I ended up becoming so concentrated and determined on reaching our campsite I couldn't even appreciate us passing a place called Buttock point. The campsite was rather small, and it became a race for space, ending with me having to sleep on a slope. It was this night that I found out that, as lovely as they all were, I was stuck with a bunch of old nutters. Their tales that that night included revelations such as the Industrial Revolution was due to coffee and Shakespeare was an alien.

Thursday was the first day on this kayaking trip where we didn't paddle, and finally we weren't packing everything up, moving to another campsite like we'd been doing almost every morning previously. Instead, most of us walked across the Island back to

Ettrick bay (covering just over 7 miles) to move the cars. I found it to be a pleasant change of pace, seeing all the Pine trees and hills and sheep up close rather than across the water. What was an even more pleasant change of pace was our lunch at the cafe and eating the only hot meal I hadn't had to cook over a gas cooker for a week - cheese toasties, fries and a chocolate milkshake (with ice cream in it!). That evening we had our last campfire of the week.

It's hard to conclusively describe a trip such as this, as your perspective can

Sunday & Wednesday Paddles

Our regular members paddles have returned! We're running them slightly differently:

New paddlers: please book on using the calendar. A river leader will be waiting for you.

Experienced paddlers: please just turn up (And please volunteer to be a river leader - speak to Catherine Dacey!)

change so drastically, like the wind and waves, over the course of the week. To say I didn't enjoy certain aspects of this trip wouldn't be an understatement, but it gave me a hard shove out of my comfort zones, that's for sure. I spent a lot of the trip tired and dirty, wishing for food that did not come from cans or packets, eaten from plates washed in the sea, yet there was something truly eye opening about the experience, as that's what it really was - an experience. It certainly wasn't a relaxing holiday, my dad always savs these trips are an adventure not a holiday, but I don't regret going on it and am thankful for all the new opportunities it gave me. So, even though it may be a few years before I'm able to go on the trip, I'd make plans to come again in the future.

Jessica Wilkie



Passing Rubh' on Eun lighthouse

committee Meet a Paddler

Catherine Dacey is a familiar figure to everyone at the Club. A stalwart of the Sunday paddles, as well a regular on Club trips near and far, she's currently the Club Welfare Officer.

Mark: So how long have you been paddling?

Catherine: I've been paddling for about seventeen years. The Club used to do summer courses through the council and the kids thought it would be a good idea. One of them said "My Mum can do this!" and that was that.

Mark: And do your kids still paddle?
Catherine: No! Not very often.
Mark: What kind of paddling do you
mostly do?

Catherine: Now I mostly do river touring and a bit of whitewater.

Mark: Do you have a favourite trip or paddle that you've done?

Catherine: I like the Scotland trips. The paddle that we did in Croatia a couple of years ago was just unbelievable. Apart from the sharp rocks it was brilliant – clear blue sea, it was warm, it was Scotland with knobs on! Really good. *Mark*: Where would you like to be in five

years with your paddling?

Catherine: I don't know really! A bit more sea, I think. And a bit more Scotland. Maybe get out to do Shetland or something. Something really rugged – maybe New Zealand. Always assuming we can get on an aeroplane

assuming we can get on an aerop again!

Mark: Why do you paddle?

Catherine: I just really enjoy it. I enjoy being out in the open – you get a different perspective on life. I was coerced into going out very early on Saturday. It was a seven o'clock start and I thought "This is really daft". And we went up to Teston and it was brilliant, we had such a good day. There was nobody on the river, there were loads of birds, it was just quiet and peaceful. Getting out there and being at one with nature – just shut off and paddle.

By Mark Corti and Catherine Dacey <u>catherine.dacey@maidstonecanoeclub.net</u>



Scotland with knobs on.



Making the most of everything MCC has to offer. Trips, training, and camaraderie.

Much more than kayaking

or many years I had seen the kayaks and canoes from the club on the Medway and had contemplated finding out about how to join.

However I just presumed it would be too expensive and possibly not very inclusive.

Then at the end of April this year I was on holiday with my daughter in Scotland and she decided to treat us to two hours kayaking on Loch Morlich. I have to admit when we woke up on the day and the sleet was falling we were both really unsure about whether it was a good idea. But we went along, had a cold but really enjoyable 2 hours...I was hooked, so much so that when we got back to our holiday accommodation that evening I booked a week sea kayaking in the Outer Hebrides in July

I then thought it may be sensible to get a bit more practice beforehand if I was to get the most out of the trip. I remembered that there was a club in the Maidstone area and found the website for Maidstone Canoe Club. I managed to get places for me and my daughter on a beginners course in May so we turned up and got a great introduction to the club and kayaking with Mike and Geoff. It was so great to see other newbies like us and everyone was so friendly.

Since then I have completed the explore course with Lee, helped on beginners courses with Jacob, Melissa and Alan and completed PAA assessment with Jacob and have really enjoyed getting out on the river regularly and improving my skills.

So the club offers a great introduction to paddling, an opportunity to paddle on the Medway and other rivers, a chance to progress your skills which I suppose is what you would expect.

But for me it has been so much more than that. Those of you that have got to know me understand that it has been a particularly difficult year for me and my family. As a result I had taken some time

work which allowed me opportunity to get out paddling most days. What I have got out of the club is a real sense of belonging, I have seen the dedication and enthusiasm from the coaching team which is infectious and the camaraderie from fellow paddlers. Initially I wanted more practice to enjoy my Scotland trip, it was absolutely amazing by the way and I recommend everyone tries it, but I have got so much more out of it. During my relatively short time with the club I can't think of any negative experience and I have met so many wonderful, enthusiastic and caring people. From individuals that will give a smile and a bit of help in the boat shed to others that have genuinely helped me on a much higher level and I would now as friends.

My next steps were going to be taking part in the bushcraft weekend with Jacob, the whitewater intro with Mark and the First aid course with Lee. I had also intended to be leading paddles as a PAA. Unfortunately I have recently had to undergo eye surgery which is going to keep me off the water until early October so all, except for Lee's first aid course, will have to wait. But I hear that we still paddle throughout the winter so plenty of time to catch up. I will just need to get some more appropriate clothing. I look forward to seeing some friendly familiar faces when I return and hopefully some new

Maidstone Canoe Club, everyone of you involved from coaches through to new paddlers should be so proud of this club and what it represents. As a collective you have brought me so much joy at a time when I needed it most and I would like to thank every single one of you that I have come into contact with for making life just that little bit brighter. If you happen to be a non member reading this that is contemplating joining then just do vou will not regret

Jon Lock jon.lock70@icloud.com

Paddling the Inner Hebrides

A short piece written some years ago by Paul Newman for Pauline Halstead, a coach in Canada and the magazine of the Great Lakes Canoeing Association.

y chance, Pauline Halstead contacted me one day to say "hello!", after finding my address on the web.

Since then, there has been sporadic, on my part, communication, and the suggestion that I should write a piece for your mag. Our club is based in the South East of England, a flatwater area. Although our paddlers have been to the Alps and the high ground areas of the UK in search of white water, generally we involve ourselves in marathon (8 -15 miles) and sprint paddling in kayaks (single and double). The adrenaline rush from paddling unknown (to us) waters is still there, and the fitness gained from our style of paddling is used yearly for a visit to the islands off the West Coast of Scotland - the Hebrides. The Kent coast has its white cliffs and France just across the way, but is not too scenic compared with Scotland.

The month of May is, weather wise, a good time to visit the islands. The weather is starting to settle, not too warm for the midge, and historically the best month from our time commitments in the rest of the summer. It is a 600 mile drive north to some of our jumping off points on the mainland, so needs a bit of planning and co-operation among the paddlers. We aim to be self-sufficient for 1 week, carrying all our camping equipment (lightweight tents),

food and booze, but relying on water from springs/streams. Fuel for cooking generally comes from driftwood, we cook over open fires and use the fire for warmth, cosiness in the evenings, and as a focal point for the camp site. The only exception is one member of the group who is designated to make a brew as soon as we hit the beach, so carries a stove. The rest of the group erect tents and collect driftwood for the fire. Food has become more sophisticated over the years and now includes fresh meat for the first few days, but also we have developed our own systems for making, baking rising and fresh bread.

Occasionally, the islands we want to paddle are too remote to reach in our timescale, so we use the local ferries to get closer. Fortunately there is a good ferry system in the islands. The aim is wilderness paddling, and although not in the class of North America, the beaches and sea areas are remote for our small islands (GB).

One of the favourite areas for paddling is the west coast of the island It has sea caves, raised of Jura. beaches, wild deer, feral goats (smelly), sea eagles (rare in Britain) and the usual seals. On one of these raised beaches we once had the weird sensation of feeling warm on both sides while standing around the campfire having a "wee dram". It transpired that the fire had travelled under the beach pebbles, through storm tossed driftwood, and we had quite a good, Roman, system of heating. Fortunately it did not get out of hand. A feature noticed over 30 years of paddling what were once pristine areas, has been the amount of plastic now found on the beaches. Reading the print on the plastic gives a good idea where it originated, and it comes

everywhere in the world. A pity. The north of Jura has a passage between it and the island of Scarba, where a passage by kayak is hazardous if the tide is running. We carry charts and tide tables, so can predict when to get through, but if there is a sea running due to bad weather offshore, it can be hazardous at any time. The tide there runs phenomenally fast (especially on spring tides, the highest), and if outgoing, a whirlpool "The Hag", forms on the Scarba side.

It can be heard roaring on the mainland, 11 miles away, in bad weather, and small ships have been known to founder there. The tide race extends out to the Atlantic for over five miles, so is not a place to linger in the water with a capsize.

This year, our club are getting a little further away from it all by taking the ferry out to the Outer Hebridean island of Barra, and starting their week of paddling there.

With any luck, we may even be across to paddle your inland sea. Boats: Nordkapps, Anas Acuta, Icefloe, Baidarka and derivatives

Tents: various including Vango Force IV, Mountain Equipment, North Face, Terra Nova

Blades: Usually feathered Seamasters or similar assymetrics from Lendal Whisky: Only single malts! Buoyancy aids: Usually carried on the

boat, unless it looks really hairy.

Paul Newman <u>president@maidstonecanoeclub.net</u>

Club Contacts & Committee

John Simmonds (Chairman) chairman@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Geoff Orford (Treasurer, Membership Secretary)

memsec@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Catherine Dacey (Secretary) secretary@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Catherine Dacey (Welfare Officer) welfare@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Lee Horton (First Aid Officer, Bosun)
lee@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Geoff Licence

geoff.licence@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Jacob Baisley

jacob.baisley@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Leanne Jordan

leanne.jordan@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Reece Nelms

reece.nelms@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Paul Fife

paul.fife@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Richard Clarke

richard.clarke@maidstonecanoeclub.net

Charlotte Fife (Junior Representative) charlotte.fife@maidstonecanoeclub.net