

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, 2023.



Mark Corti, Editor
newsletter@maidstonecanoeclub.net

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Frosty night paddling! Gorgeous photo courtesy of Rowan.

Letter from the Editor

I'm writing this on a snow day, kids off school, trains not running, our rural lane silent except for the occasional tractor off to rescue some over-ambitious driver from a ditch.

It is, in short, a perfect day to go kayaking! Hopefully some of you will be on the river as I write, making the most of it. I'm

stranded by the snow, or I'd see you there!

Still, I don't feel too bad - I've just got back from Dartmoor with the club, where we did a fabulous early paddle down the atmospheric Upper Dart, sunrise shining through the mist, gnarled trees shimmering with hoarfrost, and Sam "Otter Spotter" Heaton chasing otters down the rapids. Stay warm!

Mark Corti
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International Racing Roundup

European Masters Canoe Marathon Championships 2022

It started with Bryn Price & Steve Hayward being part of the staff team for the European Canoe Marathon Championships.

Not an important or exciting role as apart from being there to help our Senior & junior paddlers be ready for their races, it involved 3 days driving to Denmark and 3 days coming home again with the Bus and trailer full of boats. The regatta venue at Silkeborg was unusual as it was a manmade lake, which meant that there was always the possibility of strong winds, and being a lake there is never anywhere to hide. As usual in the Championships the Masters paddlers have their races on the Monday and Tuesday. Monday is K1 day and the wind was not too bad, but the thunderstorm interrupted paddling at one stage. Bryn admits he was still trying to recover from only arriving late the previous day and he found the conditions were taking too much out of him, so he retired, electing to try to rest a bit before his main event on the Tuesday. Tuesday arrived with 60kmh winds and fortunately Bryn had done some research and elected



Podium success for the whole British Masters Team

to take a more stable K2 than his usual race K2. Paddling with Ian Bainbridge for the 1st time they managed to get into the lead pack made up with paddlers from 3 different age groups. (Masters Paddlers compete in 5-year Age-groups, but often many age-groups start together). The conditions soon started to sort out the field, with the Safety Boats doing a lot of rescue work. By Lap 4 of the 5 lap race the lead group had diminished from 10 teams to only 4. The Bulgarian team was made up of paddlers who had both paddled as seniors many years ago, and

they showed their class on the longer down-wind and up-wind sides of the course. However, they had real difficulty navigating the 2 sections with the wind coming from the side. This gave Bryn & Ian the chance to stay in contact with them. The Swedish team put in a strong charge towards the end of the lap, but soon found that they could not manage to steer into the increasing wind. The Serb team were having the same issues and had already had to make a stop at the jetty to empty their boat before continuing. On the top corner of the last lap there was little to choose between the Bulgarians and the British boat, with them rounding the buoy together. However, they managed to find a bit more speed and managed to get the gold medal ahead of Bryn & Ian who won the Silver medal in the 65-69 year race. All 4 member of the British Masters team managed to win medals, quite an achievement

By Bryn Price

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World Masters Canoe Marathon Championships Portugal

Having been to Denmark with the British Team in July the next task was to plan and get the 34 British Masters Team to Portugal in September.

Thankfully Covid restrictions had been reduced and all the team managed to get there without any major issues. Unlike the European's, we had 5 Maidstone Canoe Club Paddlers in the team. As at Denmark Monday was the K1 day with Catherine Ayling and Bryn Price competing in their age-groups. The fields at the World

Masters are very big with often over 25 paddlers starting together. However both Bryn and Catherine managed to get good starts and soon were enjoying the racing. Catherine had a really good race and showed that all the training was worth it.

Tuesday was again the K2 day and all the Maidstone paddlers were involved. Our 75+ team of Paul Newman and Keith Derham had a very easy win in their race and were rightfully proud to climb the rostrum.

Not to be outdone Catherine, paddling

with Kirstin Queeney from Bishop Stortford managed to get their medals in the Woman's K2. Bryn & Mick Wibrew managed to get a 5th place in the Men's K2 65+.

In the afternoon it was the Mixed K2 race. Due to a change in the planning all the Mixed Crews over 50 had to race together. This made an interesting, if challenging race. Bryn was paddling with Jane Miller from Nottingham as they are both over 65. Catherine was paddling with Chris Czi from Bishop Stortford in the 55+

Cont'd on page 3 ...

CHRISTMAS PARTY!

DECEMBER 17th, 7:30pm

The Christmas Party Returns for another year!

Christmas cheer, Christmas music, Christmas decorations ... you get the idea!

Please bring a plate of food to share, plus whatever booze you want to drink (soft drinks provided)

Please book online so we have an idea of numbers.

World Masters Canoe Marathon Championships Portugal

... cont'd from page 2

age-group.

In what was for all the 4 paddlers, their 3rd marathon in 2 days, they were soon doing well in their age-group's and had there been the usual awards for each age-group Bryn & Jane would have earned the Silver medal and Catherine and Chris the Bronze Medal.

I can't finish this report without thanking all the members of the club who have helped us get MCC where it should be, right up with the best Masters in the World Marathon Ranking. Things are looking promising for 2023, with a host of new racers starting on their Marathon Careers.

By Bryn Price

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A challenging start for the mens K2 in Portugal.



Sunny days on the water. Tough racing in the men's K1 race in Portugal.



Bryn and Mick on the final push in the men's K2

Racing Stores & Me!

This year has been a massive achievement for my paddling career. It has seen me accumulate medals and trophies and new paddling partners from other canoe clubs (to enable me to race in the correct age and gender races).

In the British Masters Marathon Kayaking Nationals I achieved a 3rd in K1 in my age category and a 2nd with Kerstin Queeney from Bishop Stortford in the ladies K2. In September we went to Portugal for the Masters World Championship where in the K1 I achieved 7th of 14, in K2 ladies a 3rd of 3, for which we were awarded a medal and in the mixed K2 with Chris Sze, a 10th of 20 for the over 50s and the 1st of 4 GB crews.

In June I tried out Sprint kayaking racing at Nottingham (where they train the GB Olympians) and achieved 2 1st places in K2 (1000m and 500m) with Sally Alexander from Addlestone along with a 3rd in K4 and a 2nd in K1.

All this took a lot of training on my behalf, often on my own on the river Medway. I have never been so disciplined!

Cont'd on page 4 ...



Catherine & Chris Czi (Bishop Stortford) in the mixed K2.



Technique training on the ergos while the river conditions aren't suitable.

Racing Stores & Me!

... cont'd from page 3

However I did manage to make time to take out some paddlers who wanted to try out the K boats and this has led to my setting up a group of Racing Improvers who I take out twice a month for technical sessions and I am really proud of their progression. As yet I have no photos as we are paddling in the dark.

However it did highlight what a mess the racing store had become so I decided, with the approval of the committee, to go about sorting this out. I had some help from racers and non-racers alike to do this and at times just had to get on with it myself. But the results have been worth it and it is an ongoing process. I would like to say a big thank you to all that help – you know who you are!

Let's hope that this summer I can get more of you interested. I have so much fun from my racing and seeing others progress too.

By Catherine Ayling aka Racing Catherine
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Racing Boat Improvers

My K-boat journey started out of curiosity earlier this year a few months after I joined the club.

How on earth could I remain upright while paddling forward on these lollypop sticks on water? Would my experience on the yoga mat have any bearing? Centre of gravity, centre of direction, alignment, extension, lift – might they help me along? At first it was simply a case of fighting to stay upright. I was very grateful to my long-suffering fellow K-boat paddlers [Mick, Brian, Bryn, Steve, Roy] for all their tips ["Keep paddling!!! Head upright!!!] as I paddled to and fro Allington with trembling knees, a fixed stare and avoided a swim.

As the months rolled by the fixed stare and trembling knees reduced and I started to be able to look sideways, notice the odd kingfisher and learn more from my K-boat peers as they whooshed past me shouting more tips about rotation, alignment etc over their shoulders. I began to transfer more of my experience from the yoga mat onto the water, finding a semblance of rotation and better alignment. Overdone arms and shoulders started seeking out more assistance from the legs, pelvis and backbody at last. Paddling a more stable K2 was excellent for working more on technique. Roy, my patient oppo behind me in the K2, kept me posted when I defaulted out of alignment and paddled from arms and

shoulders only.

As time went on, the more I knew the less I knew and the more I became addicted to the K-boat. Such a technically complex branch of kayaking and so exhilarating! As luck would have it, one of the more experienced K-boat racers, Catherine, aka Racing Catherine (club of many Catherine's) formed the Racing Boat Improvers' Group in October, focusing on K-boat technical skills.

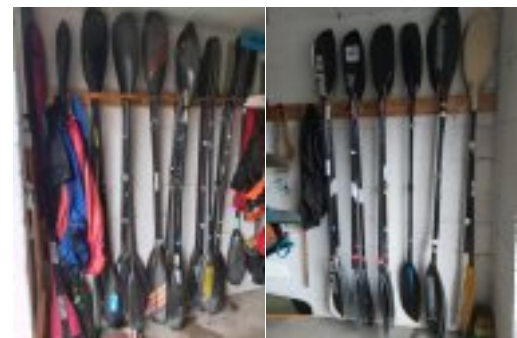
We began with a short, timed, sprint between the Millenium Park bridges which gave Catherine a clearer picture of where we needed more help with technique. On land we looked at the theory of economical power transfer, pairing up and comparing power transfer from arm/shoulder with that from leg/hip rotation/back body.

On the water we deconstructed and reconstructed our paddling techniques: sometimes a pause at 'Set-up' between 5 strokes; sometimes 3 rotations at 'Set-up' between 7 or 8 strokes; sometimes exaggerated, low, wide paddling strokes to learn more rotation. For me this deconstruction was eye-opening in revealing my poor paddling habits (ie mostly arms/shoulders) so I could find a new baseline to work from (ie bringing into play legs, hip rotation, back body!)

With evenings drawing in our Tuesday sessions soon became benighted.



Volunteers for boat shed tidying, part 1!



Cont'd on page 5 ... Now shipshape and Bristol fashion

Racing Boat Improvers

... cont'd from page 4

Paddling in the dark, often with arc lights stealing our night vision has been brilliant for improving river orientation, confidence and stability.

After our sessions on the water, debriefs have been very constructive and helpful, sometimes leading to opportunities to consolidate learning via the Ergos and also swiss ball, broomstick, wobble cushion K-boat simulator! Apart from my own direct learning on and off the water, I have learnt a great deal from observing my K-boat peers and comparing notes as we go along.

Outside of the sessions, I have found Catherine's RBI WhatsApp group posts, illustrating best technique etc, very helpful in connecting our practice on/off the water with the theory. Also I've benefitted from putting into practice my learning with the other K-boat paddling sessions I have continued with, comparing notes with my original K-boat paddling group.

Sadly I have had to step away from the RBI sessions for a while due to a shoulder injury from a bicycle accident. However, I am keeping myself ticking over, taking a great interest in the progress of the RBI sessions and that of all my racing boat peers. I look forward to being back on the water asap!

By Tom Payne



Kathy as a snuggly pumpkin. We vote she always dresses like this while paddling.

Halloween Paddle

We had a huge turnout for our Halloween Paddle and it was certainly full of interesting costumes.

Great to see the younger members joining in with a club event - we definitely need to do more of this as there are some great paddlers emerging. Well done to everyone and thank you for joining in with the fun of the day and supporting a charity very close to one of our members hearts: Matt Carapiet Charitable Trust

Some great cakes and creations were brought along by parents and paddlers and we raised a staggering £200.00 through the sale of cakes and drinks after the paddle.

You were all wonderful so a huge thank you to everyone involved.

By Kathy Syplywczak

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Horsemen are so last-century. I present one half of the Four Paddlers of the Apocalypse



James getting splashed on the Legacy course, Lee Valley Whitewater Centre

Olympic or Bust!

I stumbled across Maidstone Canoe Club on the internet and started paddling at the Sunday morning sessions in May this year, with a simple plan to try and get fit.

I'd not been in a kayak for 30+ years, but I soon found myself attracted to the idea of paddling on some whitewater again and got excited when somebody mentioned the Lee Valley Whitewater Centre, just an hour's drive from the club house!

Soon after joining the club, I realised that Maidstone has a really serious group of whitewater paddlers who not only regularly go to the Lee Valley, but who have also done trips on rivers across the UK, Europe and even Siberia! Soon after joining the 'Legacy Visit ?' group on WhatsApp, I came across a comment from one member, Wally Shave, who remarked that he was unable to paddle that week, because he'd be 'climbing Kilimanjaro' instead.

Cont'd on page 6 ...

Olympic or Bust!

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Now that is what I call hardcore. But when telling Mark Corti about a Netflix series that I'd recently watched, called *The River Runner*, about somebody who'd paddled the four rivers flowing off the Tibetan plateau, he remarked that he'd been down three of them in a raft. And in a conversation with another random individual at a 'throw bag olympics' night, the guy told me that he was training as a freestyle paddler in Team GB. Crikey!

The centre has two man-made courses connected via a lake at the bottom, one called the 'Legacy' and the other, the 'Olympic' (harder/longer), which hosted the London 2012 Olympic Games and which will host the Slalom World Championship next year. Apart from 'fast moving water', there is a canoe shop, a really nice restaurant and a cafe, making it a 'heaven on earth' for whitewater enthusiasts and a pleasant place to relax for non-paddling partners/parents/friends.

Before paddling on either course, participants need to undertake an 'assessment'. I was told that those with some experience on whitewater usually have no problem passing and that you'd be 'ok' if you can break into/out of an eddy, self-recover from a capsize and generally demonstrate competent and safe paddling skills. My assessment began with a safety brief and soon after, I navigated my boat onto the escalator, only to find myself sliding down backwards, wiping out two unfortunate

paddlers behind me, seemingly due to a slippery hull and not leaning forwards. Whoops... As you might expect, things are much harder on the Olympic course and that is still some way off, at least for me. And passing the assessment on either is just the start of the journey.

In the few months since being attracted back onto whitewater, there has been a steady stream of activities allowing me to 'warm up', including pool sessions where you can learn to eskimo roll, a weekend trip to the Dart Loop, the most popular section of whitewater in the country (originally planned as a trip to the Exe and Barle rivers, but changed due to a lack of water), many practise sessions at the Lee Valley and ongoing, informal coaching by Mark Corti and others. Several club members have recently passed their legacy assessment, including Phil Barbouti, Barry Wilkie, Mike Lamborne and myself, while Alex Corti passed his assessment on the Olympic course. And Ian Dann has just completed an Introduction to Advanced Whitewater.

Over the coming year, I expect there will be a lot more paddling at the Lee Valley, with many targeting to move onto the Olympic course. In the meantime, everybody is polishing their technique in preparation for the Dartmoor Adventure Paddler's weekend on 10-11 December.

I have been impressed by the technical skills and achievements of many people in this club and amazed by their generosity to provide coaching and encouragement to other members. I can hardly wait to get back on the water.

By James Battle



The top of an empty Legacy, showing the plastic rocks



Ian about to launch above "Boom" on the Olympic course



Matt & Melissa looking down to the end of the Legacy

SUP LEASHES

QUICK RELEASE BELT SYSTEM
For use on any moving or flowing water where there is a risk of snag/entanglement.
COILED

CALF LEASH
For use on lakes/canals/sea/coastal bays/surf where there is NO risk of snag or entrapment.
COILED = General SUP
STRAIGHT = Surf

ANKLE LEASH
For use on lakes/canals/sea/coastal bays/surf where there is NO risk of snag or entrapment.
COILED = General SUP
STRAIGHT = Surf

BRITISH CANOEING

Your Environment...
Where are you paddling? What are the conditions? Depending on where you're paddling and the conditions you face, you might need to wear your leash in a different place for safety and security. Take a look at the diagram to see which leash system suits the environment you paddle.

Coiled or Straight?
Leashes can be coiled/curly or straight. The type of leash is important depending on the environment you paddle.

SUP Leash Safety

Many of you will have seen the reports of the Haverfordwest tragedy, in which 4 SUPers lost their lives.

If you haven't read it, I urge you to do so. At the least I hope it will highlight the incredible work done by trip organisers and river leaders at Maidstone Canoe Club, and perhaps throw into context the always-dull topic of risk assessments, leader competence, and so on.

I'm no authority on SUPing but wanted to highlight British Canoeing's infographic on leashes. It is relevant to the Medway with even a moderate flow. This guidance was prepared after an accident on a tidal estuary where a SUPer fell off his board. The board was washed to one side of a buoy and he went the other, and was unable to free himself from his ankle leash.

By Mark Corti

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Intro to White Water September 2022



Smiles of happiness - or possibly relief - all around at the bottom of the Dee!

So the mantra for the weekend was to push yourself beyond your comfort zone.

I think we pretty much did that from the moment we arrived at our accommodation.

Not the easiest house to find in the dark. A cattle gate off the side road and then down a 200 metre farm track to find a lovely bunk house ready for us. The unisex accommodation was rather a shock! Especially the washing facilities - some got more than an eyeful if you were not quick enough!! But we all rubbed along nicely, we did some maths and realised that the average age of our group of 10 was 63 with our great leader being the youngest of all of us!!!!

Day 1 - Skills day. First things first - a fabulous cooked breakfast courtesy of our host. Then we divided into three small groups each with a leader. Unfortunately the first run across the fast water resulted in one of us having a quick dip. Watch and Learn: first person you watch, the second person you learn from and the third person (you) should theoretically have a perfect crossing!!

Following that rule enabled a few to stay dry!!!! But not many!

It was a lovely controlled stretch of water that we practised on and it was a lot of fun but surprisingly tiring. I think the mental fatigue got to us all after about 5 hours and rather than make more errors and get wet we called it a day.

During lunch one of us managed to bite a wasp which luckily didn't result in an A & E visit but a quick run into the local Boots did the job.

We had a fabulous evening meal in one of the local pubs - despite it being Pizza night he did us some mean local lamb burgers - they were lush! We all put the world to rights and made some fabulous club event ideas for next year. We were all very glad to climb into our bunks.

Day 2 - Dee day! This is where you realise why you spent all day playing in a small pool of water the day before as you look hysterically at the River Dee in all its glory! And absolutely question one's sanity - why did you ever think you could do this!??

A short paddle up the canal and then a 25 degree launch ably assisted by our great leader - giving you no time to reconsider - found us officially in the River Dee.

What happened next - well if you have done this trip you will know exactly what happens next - you just keep paddling and don't stop!!!!

Stepping out onto dryland to climb over the Serpents Tail is the moment that you could possibly have escaped but once again our leader was on hand whipping our boats out of the water and literally running over the rocks for us to relaunch (that man!!). Clearly the thinking with a bunch of old geysers is he who hesitates will get absolutely no sympathy - you can all do this and by golly you will!!!!

Getting to the bottom of the river was possibly the most momentous achievement for us all. We actually did it!!! It was thrilling, terrifying, exhilarating and above all absolutely fantastic!!!

A huge thank you to Mark Corti for

giving us such a great experience.

Would I do it again - hell ya!! (but in another life!!)

By Kathy Syplywczak

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Kathy styling it on Chainbridge rapids, with Greg looking surprised in the background.



A successful descent of the Dee by the team - well done everyone!

Back Page Adverts

Free listings for local clubs, centres and coaches. Maidstone Canoe Club is proud to support our local paddlesport community.



Grahame Moss, Professional Coach

Dates and info at

www.escapeoutdoors.co.uk



South East Kayaking

Rob Davis, Professional Coach

Selected Upcoming Dates

11th February: White Cliffs of Dover

18th February: Sandgate to Samphire Hoe!

25th February: Seldom-paddled Margate Sands

One-to-one coaching available. Lots more dates & info at

www.southeastkayaking.co.uk



Seapoint Canoe Centre

Dates and info at:

www.seapointcanoecentre.co.uk



SUP community and coaching centre

www.paddlecabin.co.uk



Your local canoe, kayak, SUP and sit-on-top shop

www.kentcanoes.co.uk



Pirates Canoe Club

Ashford

www.piratescanoeclub.com



Bewl Canoe Club

Bewl Water Reservoir

www.bewlcanoeclub.co.uk



Tonbridge Canoe Club

Tonbridge

www.tonbridgecanoeclub.org.uk

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