

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 May, 2023.



Mark Corti, Editor
newsletter@maidstonecanoeclub.net

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Sunny days in Scotland

Final Letter from the Editor

I've had the privilege of editing the Club newsletter since 2012.

For over a decade, each quarter has seen my inbox fill up with wonderful articles and evocative photographs from Club members. They - you! - have shared memories of trips great and small; of personal triumphs (and occasion disasters); thoughts on paddling, rivers, and equipment; poems, artwork and quizzes; and much more besides. Each has been a generous contribution of time to the Club, and each has been treasured.

After 11 years, it's time to hang up my red pencil. An injection of fresh blood and fresh

ideas is needed - perhaps a new format more suited to the current media landscape. The AGM is next Friday (17th March), when we'll hear about the new building, the new website, and the likely shape of British Canoeing's new legal frameworks in the light of the Haverfordwest report. As well as a new editor for the newsletter, the Club needs a Secretary, and additional dynamic committee members who can help drive the Club through the changes over the next 12 months. Put your hand up - mail the Secretary and say "I can help".

See you on the river.

Mark Corti
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Canoe Trip Twixmas 2022

We decided to do an open boat trip between Christmas and New Year, Mark H and Jacob were paddling solo but I had tried keeping up with them before so thought I would enlist support and paddle tandem.

Martin was keen to join us and was happy to share his canoe.

We considered putting in at Wateringbury and paddling to Yalding and back or maybe Yalding to the club.

On the day the water was flowing rather too much to go uphill so we decided to put in at Hampton Lock and get swept back to the club. Kathy S in a crossover and Larry in a seabat were looking to paddle and joined us which was good.

As it was the festive season it seemed rude not to call in at Wateringbury café for coffee and snacks, with the flow as strong as it was we did get there a bit quick for a break but the height of the water made it a perfect get out. Duty done we made easy work of the trip to Teston.

I had not paddled in the bow of a canoe since my training course and had to relearn a bow rudder to steer the boat. All seemed good. We dropped anchor at the jetty before the Lock so we could get out and explore our best onwards route. We dragged the boats out and walked the whole lock to see what was the best way forwards. Mark must have eaten

Frosties for breakfast as he thought he could duck down enough to get under the bridge and bob up quick enough to get a turn in before the first weir and heading through the pass to rejoin the main river. Kathy portaged and took up safety at the base of the second weir. Jacob took up safety half way along the pass with his throw line at the ready while Martin and I were ready just down river of the bridge.

Mark made it look easy clearing the bridge with at least a millimetre to spare and navigated the rest of the pass in brilliant style getting out at the bottom to stand ready with his safety lines. Jacob launched down river of the bridge and also made safe passage along the pass where he got out and resumed safety cover along the pass again.

Larry in his seabat went next and also did brilliantly in making it safely through.

That just left myself and Martin also launching just downriver of the bridge, we were over the first weir in no time, a wonderful feeling being swept along. Since the others went down someone had planted tree whose branches spread halfway across the pass. Having been previously practising my bow rudder I realised it was needed and urgently however as the water was flowing faster than we were it had little effect and before I could think of a plan B the branch

caught me square across the chest changing my position from kneeling in front of the seat to flat on my back in the middle of the canoe. I surprised myself by bouncing back up and getting the paddle back in the water but just then Martin hit the tree and we were tipped out into the refreshing Medway.

The first time I breached the surface I was momentarily confused as I was under the canoe. The second time I popped up, there was Jacob, on the bank with his throw line which he threw with perfect timing allowing me to catch it first go. The back of the boat decided it wanted to be the front which left me with the canoe in one hand and the rope in the other. Jacob stood firm and I am not sure who joined him but I was slowly pulled ashore still holding firm to the canoe.

Martin meanwhile fancied riding the second weir and was picked up by Mark's throwline.

Neither Martin nor I have drysuits so the rest of the trip was a tad soggy.

Our run through the pass was not copybook but the safety was perfect, thanks to all.

This is how it happened in my waterlogged mind, Martin may have a slightly different take on it.

There were probably lots of photos but these would have been taken by the onlookers and not passed on to us.

By Jeff Skipper

Scotland Sea Trip 2022

The trip this year was with nine of us, Geoff O and Mike travelling together, Barry and Jerry, Keith and Catherine playing host to Carolyn and I went with Mark H.

It didn't start well because the M2 was closed in both directions so both myself heading to Marks, and Barry heading for Jerry turned a half hour journey into 2 hours. After that however the rest of the journey was not bad.

This year we all chose to travel during the day and had booked accommodation at a Premiere Inn, Lenny Henry was not there because as we reached the Scottish borders the rain started and by Glasgow it was blowing a gale and precipitating profusely.

We all enjoyed a good evening meal and decided that it made sense to get breakfast (an endless breakfast) before



heading to the ferry to Bute in the morning.

The conversation over dinner was about the planning Mike and Geoff had made for the trip. There was Plan A, and Plan B, with a 'you never know' Plan C. With the weather outside and the forecast even Plan C looked ambitious. Better to sleep on it.

Over breakfast designed to provide enough calories for the week the outlook was not encouraging.

While waiting for the ferry from the mainland to Rothesay it was felt that the first day would probably be finding somewhere to set up camp and not attempt to paddle at all.

As the ferry approached the Isle of Bute it became more sheltered and the water calmed considerably so it was decided to head to a put in on the sheltered side of the island and see if we could get on the water.

There is another ferry at Rhubodach across to Colintrave which made a suitable launching spot. Instead of taking half our supplies as usual with the plan of staying away from the cars until halfway through the trip, because of the weather reports it was decided to take just a couple of days supplies and return to the cars sooner.

After such a worrying start the day looked to be going well. We were heading for Buttocks point which had the advantage of being not too far should the weather turn against us, and it also had a wooden structure that would provide a shelter from the storm if required. There was also a combustible toilet (compostable) which is the height of luxury on a wild camping trip.

Not far into the first dash to the campsite we had our first wild life spot. A basking seal. I am not sure if a basking seal is a thing but this seal was basking, laying on the edge of the shore hardly visible with its camouflage.

Rain was threatening so when we arrived at our chosen site it was a mad dash to get the tents erected before the rain set in. As we planted the last tent peg and tightened the last guy rope the weather began to improve so we settled for a quick cup of tea and then most of us felt we should make the most of it and have a paddle round a couple of the closest islands. The weather was so improved we went without cags and for the only time on the trip set out in tee shirts and shorts. The islands had so many birds of many different makes, too many to mention even if I knew them. In the lee of the second island there were many seals showing as much interest in us as we were in them. Often they were only a couple of boat lengths away. Brilliant. As we rounded the island we



wondered if leaving the cags was a good idea so we headed back to shore.

Mark H had been playing at woodsman preparing our camp fire. I don't know if he is on a watch list but I am not sure he would be welcome in Brazil. He came with an axe and a couple of self made saws that he was making good use of.

Later that afternoon a group of us went for a trek across the island. I was surprised that with the island being surrounded by water that the higher we climbed the wetter it got til my dry land shoes were wetter than the ones I had waded ashore in.

In the evening we made use of the shelter and congregated there to cook and chat and reduce Mark's stock of fire wood. A great evening was had by all. There may have been some Whiskey involved but I am not sure about that.

The following morning dawned good but the forecast was not brilliant so it was decided to stay another night on the same camping spot to make use of the shelter. After breakfast we headed back to the cars to reprovision. That part of the island was quite protected so we had a great if short trip back to the cars and after loading our boats with supplies some of use languished on the shore while the car drivers positioned vehicles at various points around the island giving us several options for camping during the coming week.

When the cars had been organised we set off heading in the direction of Rothesay. It started off quite calm and while we had time to enjoy them a pod of porpoises appeared, that was such an amazing site.

As we began to circumnavigate the island the wind began to make life much

more fun. Heading into the waves is harder work but safer because you can see what's coming. As we paddled on, the wind picked up making it much more choppy so when we changed course the waves started hitting from the side so that one minute you were on top of the world the next you were hidden from view being in a trough. That was very exciting but we could see our lunch stop in the distance which we all made it to, still right side up.

After our lunch stop we decided to paddle round the bay keeping quite close to the shoreline then begin the return journey, the wind was again approaching from the side causing us to rise on the crest then fall into the troughs. Once we had made it across the bay and my heart rate returned to something like normal we had the wind behind us allowing us to surf, a brilliant experience but one I find quite alarming as you are never sure when a wave is going to pick you up and charge forward

with you.

The return trip was much quicker and easier than the outward leg. The forecast had been anything but good but the day turned out to be brilliant fun for all.

The next morning dawned without sun but quite a strong breeze. It was decided to paddle across the bay to the mainland shore and head with the wind. It was fairly choppy but fun. We stopped paddling and Jerry checked his GPS and saw that we were traveling at 3 knots without paddling meaning the return we would need to paddle at more than 3 knots to make any headway at all. That proved to be a little alarming as a leisurely stroke did nothing to hasten our journey back to the camp site.

Back at the site we gathered more wood for the fire, Mark having as much fun with his homemade saw as he had on the paddle. When we had built the store to a satisfactory level we set out to trek overland to the ferry crossing where we had put in and take the ferry across

to the mainland in search of a glass of something in the local hostelry. It is essential on these goodwill trips overseas to negotiate trade deals, in this instance our English pennies for their Scottish ale.

It was quite a hard squishy walk and one that worked up an appetite for our evening meal. For our journey North we had downloaded a tracking app called "360" so that we knew where each car was. This proved very useful when over dinner Geoff realised he no longer had his phone. It was located using the app and was found to be going back and to the mainland on the ferry.

While eating dinner we were treated to a beautiful vista, watching diving gannets, catching more fish than Keith and loads of other amazing birds.

The following morning we took brave pills and packed up our tents and left the comfort of the shelter and set off to Ettrick Bay. It was a long paddle, not in distance but against the wind most of the way Mr Harris was charged with leading the group and was rewarded by being the only one to spot an otter playing on the shoreline. We had a couple of stops for second breakfast and later for another second breakfast. Ettrick bay is a fairly deep inlet and the tide was coming in allowing us to surf the last mile or so. On the one hand it makes for easier paddling but on the other you can be swept around trying to keep relatively straight. It was brilliant.

We made camp on the edge of the beach and had arrived in time for a sneaky lunch at the Ettrick Bay Tearoom. A very civilised place to lunch.

The following morning dawned with a gale force wind pinning us in the bay so we found a local leisure centre with a swimming pool. They said we could swim provided we showered first, not sure what they meant but it had been a few days. That was really fun and made a change from swimming intentionally rather than after falling out of a kayak.

We found a bit of shelter to cook our evening meal on the front of the closed up Ettrick Bay café. The weather was Scottish. We turned in for the night with two plans. Head out to the island of Inchmarnock at 7 am to catch the tide or if the weather reflected the weather app, head for home.

Sadly at 5 the next morning the wind was so strong pinning us in the bay it was decided to beat a retreat to the calmer conditions of our native Kent.

Shame we had to cut the trip short but it really was necessary and the time spent in Scotland was superb.

By Jeff Skipper



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