

Birmingham Canoe Club Magazine

September 2007

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Next Issue

The Closing date for the next issue is **end of December 2007**. The preferred method for me to receive magazine articles is via email,

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This magazine is available electronically via the Birmingham Canoe Club Web site
<http://www.birminghamcanoeclub.co.uk/>

Happy Paddling – and writing about it afterwards of course for your favourite mag!

Editorial.

Once again the time has come around for me to compile the latest edition of our club magazine. The 3 months really have flown by, and many of us have been paddling lots over the summer. We have been spoilt by unseasonably wet weather and have managed to 'bag' some elusive rivers that are normally only available during the cold months.

The club is going from strength to strength and we are having an increasing number of people coming to our baths sessions. Many of you will have experienced a fair amount of congestion during the sessions, and we have introduced 2, three quarter hour sessions to try and give everyone a fairer chance to have time in the baths. This plan is very much in the trial period, but initial feedback is good. It will be reviewed after 4 sessions, to see if it is the way forward for us. If numbers attending the baths session start to fall, we will revert to the one session as before.

With the increased popularity, we are keen to get more people out paddling on club trips. To this end we are increasing our coaching base, but we do want other club paddlers to lend a hand in both the organisation and the running of future trips. What we are proposing is training for non-coaches to give them certain rescue skills and river leadership skills to run trips (within their competence remit). These

trips will be included in the club mag together with the current trip list run by the regular trip leaders. I have spoken to a few 'potential' trip leaders, but if anyone else is interested in this concept, please let me know.

Congratulations to the numerous club members stepping onto the coaching ladder this year, and to those progressing that ladder. We have a record number of coaches, who are all working hard to improve the skill level across the club. Several other members have gained various 'star awards' - brilliant, well done! There has been a big change to the structure of the star awards (1st Sept), and it will mean sweeping changes in the way we deliver and assess these awards from now on.

Finally—The AGM has been set for 18 January 2008. This is your chance to have a say in how our club is run. We really need more volunteers to join the committee next year and be involved with helping to run the club.

Here's looking forward to a good winters season of more paddling, more prosperity for the club, an even greater variety of trips and more people to paddle with!

Ian Dallaway

Chairman's Chat

A lot of thanks are due this issue. Ian for putting this magazine together again, and for organising the forthcoming Scotland trip. Pat and Lisa for the excellent surfing weekend in Cornwall, even if Pat didn't get wet. And to all the coaches who helped out over the summer sessions at the reservoir, which was a huge success.

The club continues to get stronger, and now has a membership and participates in a range of activities that we could only dream of just 5 years ago. However, the committee is no bigger than then, and we want more of you still! Even if its not for you, you could use the magazine as a forum for an idea, or ask to come along to the next committee meeting to propose or question something.

We're back at the old pool, which is a relief. But so many people come along we are always in danger of exceeding our 25 boat limit. Please remember its members 1st come 1st serve, and then a little into the session non-members can fill up any spaces (with first timers prioritised). We are always discussing this problem as a committee, and would welcome any good ideas and solutions to overcrowding.

John Woodall takes over the website for the foreseeable future. We all like photos so pass them to him. I really hope to see those surfing photos again soon - so hopefully Nigel and Anna will stop playing guitar and singing peace songs long enough to get them over to John!

Brilliant Joke.....

A Frenchman, an Englishman, and a New Yorker were captured by a fierce Indian tribe. The chief comes to them and says, "The bad news is that now that we've caught you, we're going to kill you, and then use your skins to build a kayak. The good news is that you get to choose how you die."

The Frenchman says, "I take ze poison." The chief gives him some poison, the Frenchman says, "Vive la France!" and drinks it down.

The Englishman says, "A pistol for me, please." The chief gives him a pistol, he points it at his head, says, "God save the queen!" and blows his brains out.

The New Yorker says "Gimme a fork." The chief is puzzled, but he shrugs and gives him a fork. The New Yorker takes the fork and starts jabbing himself all over. There's blood everywhere, it's horrible. The chief is appalled, and screams, "What are you doing???" The New Yorker looks at the chief and says, "So much for your stinking kayak!"

Dave

(If someone can help Dave out on the joke front, we'd all be eternally grateful—Ian)

We had to start this issue with a musical composition from Rod.....

Rollin' Rollin' Rollin' (4x) Rawhide

1. R[Am]ollin' Rollin' Rollin', [C]though the streams are swollen

keep them kayaks rollin', Rawhide!

R[Am]ain and wind and weather, he[G]ll bent for le[Am]ather,
w[G]ishin' my car[F]was by my si[E]de.
[Am]All the things I'm missin', good ch[G]ippies, bread and [Am]drippin',
are wa[G]itin' at the [Am]end [G]of my [Am]ride.

CHORUS

Move 'em[Am] on, head 'em up, head 'em up, move 'em on,
move 'em on, head 'em up, Ra[E]whide!
Cut 'em o[Am]ut, ride 'em in, ride 'em in, cut 'em out,
cut 'em out, ride 'e[F]m in[E], R[Am]awhide!

2. keep m[Am]ovin' movin' movin', tho[C]ugh anglers disapprovin'

keep them kayaks movin', Rawhide!

Don't t[Am]ry to understand them, just paddl[G]e, tow and lan[Am]d 'em,
s[G]oon we'll be [F]livin' high and [E]wide.
[Am]My heart's calculatin', my tr[G]ue love will be w[Am]aitin',
be wa[G]itin' at the [Am]end [G]of my [Am]ride.

CHORUS

[Am] [Dm] [Am] [Dm] [Am] [G] [Am]
CHORUS

[Am]Rollin' Rollin' Rollin' (4x) Rawhide

Rod Shelton

Summer in France

I had been looking forward to this trip ever since the last foray into the French Alpsall of 7 weeks previously!! It was great to be back, but at 8am it was far too early to feel anything, except tired. We had been on the road since 1pm the previous day!

The rest of the group (John, Bec, Paul and Becca) had driven out a few days earlier and had already done some warming up and in John's case, denting of boats!

Ian and I arrived just in time to wish John and Paul good luck on day one of their 5* assessment, on the Romanche. After pitching the tent and imbibing lots of coffee there was plenty of time, (but not necessarily the requisite energy), to go paddling with Bec and Becca. We decided to have a pleasant trip down the Middle Guil and the Chateau Queyras Gorge; topped off by a swim and sunbathe by the lake. A good day was had by all, even those on assessment, but it was nothing compared to the great night's sleep I had that night.

Day 2 of the assessment was to be on the Ubaye Gorge. Ian, Bec, Becca and myself decided to run this

gem just in front of the assessment group, but far enough ahead that they didn't feel any pressure to follow our sweet lines! We then had a swim in the lake at the end, and waited for John and Paul.. and waited and sunbathed and waited and

Despite walking more of the gorge than us, John and Paul passed with flying colours and there was plenty of wine and beer drunk in celebration that evening.

The Chateau Queyras and the Guardian Angel Gorges were duly ticked off in the following days, before it was time to have a break from paddling and introduce Bec and John to sport climbing! John was hooked and now just needed to acquire finesse and kit. The latter was easy to find in the many sports shops!! Bec was less hooked (at first) but just needed the kit. It was to be the start of an expensive spending spree for the Woodhalls!

It was soon time for Paul and Becca to return home, but not before the Chateau Queyras via ferrata was conquered, more climbing at Alfroide (the climbing mecca of the area), a paddle down the Lower Guisane and plenty of sun bathing and swimming in the pretty lake at La Roche de Ram.

The weather had been scorching and even I had not had to unpack any of my fleeces! Now where would be the worst place to be in the first thunderstorm of the holiday? On top of a mountain, climbing metal rungs and attached to a metal cable must rank pretty highly?? We had embarked on the via ferrata at Fressinaires in good weather, however, about 30 minutes in, we noted that clouds were coming down the valley. There is no going back on a via ferrata, once started the only way left is upwards. *'Don't worry, it will probably miss us'*, said a confident John. This confidence building gem was uttered just before we found it prudent to hastily detach ourselves from the massive lightning conductor we were climbing and shelter in a cave. The spectacular thunder and lightening display was soon replaced by heavy rain, and it is through this that we rapidly scrambled for the descent route. Drenched but still alive, we were relieved to reach the safety of the car. Much wine and beer was drunk that evening in celebration of our escape!

The following gorgeous days saw us paddling our favourite rivers again - Chateau Queyras, Guardian Angel, Middle Guil and the Ubaye Gorge. Ian took the opportunity of this return to the Ubaye to show us all how to run the infamous 'Lion's Den' in style. John, on the other hand, took the opportunity of returning to the Guardian Angel Gorge, to demonstrate how a 5* paddler should never become complacent. He was mightily relieved for an eskimo rescue from Ian at the bottom of a grade 2 rapid! We also made the journey to the Romanche and were rewarded with a superb paddle in high water. John was quite the expert on this river as it was his third descent of the holiday.

The second storm of the trip broke but luckily we were safely in our tents ... or so we thought! The hail stones were enormous and whilst John and Ian were worried about the cars, I was more worried about the tent! With both cars and tents surviving, we found that every cloud does indeed have a silver lining ... our beer box was well and truly stocked in ice! John's washing on the other hand, was dirtier than when he had hung it out.

Sure of good weather after the storm, more via ferratas were completed - Le Tournaux, Brussinard and the exhilarating Durance Gorge. We also did another four days of climbing, with everyone taking their turn to lead and the Woodhalls buying yet more gear!!! Bec had really conquered her fear of heights.

It was nearing the end of the holiday ... all too quickly. More paddling had to be done, and there was only the Durance and the Gyr left to do. Having gone the Gyr a few times in previous years, I had been dreading repeating this run. John did not understand my apprehension beforehand, but by the time we had completed the 3km, grade 5 paddle, taking only 12 minutes and making only 1 eddy, he totally understood and empathised with me!! We were all euphoric to have survived and decided that one descent per holiday was plenty.

The Durance was an easier paddle, but the surf wave at 'pont neuf' was amazing. It was intimidating, but once on it was one of the best waves I have ever surfed.

The final day of the holiday arrived far too quickly. We decided that the via ferrata at Fressinaires had to be fully completed ...in good weather this time. We made excellent progress and so we also managed to squeeze in some more climbing before returning for a well earned dinner at our favourite pizza restaurant.

This was a great holiday as always. It is my favourite trip of the year and is appropriate to all levels of paddler. There is lots to do for everyone including walking, climbing, via ferrata, sightseeing, sun bathing, swimming and of course paddling. The rivers are low but there is something for everyone - grade 2 to grade 5. It is only 50 weeks till the next Summer Alps week, so put it in your diary!!

Ce Dallaway

River Severn (Jackfields)

It all started on brisk Sunday morning. My dad was half a sleep as he took us to Bridgnorth to where he thought we were all going to meet, he had wondered why we had seen John going the other way..... Finally we arrived in a car park half a mile away from Ironbridge, where the rest of the gang were, some in kayaks and some in canoes,

In open boats there was Joyce, Nigel, Anna, and John. The kayakers there were Granville, Andy, Rob, Jayne, and Lee in his new pea coloured boat and painted green helmet, and me. We set off about 11:30 after we had gone up stream for about 15 minutes to make a day of it. We then set and drifted downstream. Granville and I started to slow down to wait for the others who were not that far behind. We heard a fisherman in the hedge/tree shouting abuse at us, who we struggled to see as he was so far in to the bush wearing camouflage, and he had an invisible line across the river. After about 10 minutes of a little argument WHICH I THINK Granville won.

We carried on down river, lunch came and went, and we carried on down river. Just before Ironbridge, we saw a man in a brightly green boat, and helmet paddling upstream coming to meet us, it was Lee! I had not seen his new boat before and he asked me would I like to have a go in it when we reached Jackfields. I thought it would be a great laugh not expecting it to be any good so I'd have a go to be sure...! We progressed back down towards Ironbridge and Jackfields and eddied out just before the rapids.

The first people down would be the rescuers for the opens and the less experienced paddlers. Andy (the great rope thrower) and I went down first. Joyce came down next in her open boat and had no problems, she probably took the best line out of everybody that day, followed by Nigel who went a little wider but had no problems, then Anna and then.... Then it was the kayakers turn with Lee and, after a bit of persuading, Rob and Jayne - who did it excellently. Time then for some play now, I was doing some pop outs on a wave before swapping into Lee's boat Andy started to play, and on his second attempt of playing he rolled, but it failed and ended up swimming. In Lee's boat finally, I found it very easy to roll (had to try it first as I didn't want to play in it if I couldn't roll it). I then took it on to the wave and it changed my thoughts about the boat - I thought it was excellent!

We all got on the bank for a bit of throwline practice. We were all diabolical, apart from Lee and superman Andy. We continued downstream and met my uncle and dad on the bridge at the end. After about 5 minutes chatting, my uncle saw something under the water, it was a brand-new mountain bike, so after fishing it out, and I quote "looking like something out of The Last Of The Summer Wine" they fished it out on to the side, and Granville and Andy started to ride the bike, only when Granville did this he went towards the river pulled a wheelie and then the bike with no brakes nearly went back to where it had come from. So after some laughs with the bike, Andy went back to get his car, and Granville and the rest of us had an idea of swapping Andy's proud Mitchell paddles for a long stick and rhubarb leaves tied to the end, with Mitchell blades wrote on with a red marker pen, the ruse failed!

Time then to go to the pub or home.

Christopher Booth

Surfing in Bude

Set off at 7.30am on the Saturday morning, tying on yellow kayak very tightly, and aim for Bude and the campsite. Spend two hours admiring the traffic around the Bristol Portway on the M5 and arrive at the campsite at about 1.30pm. Slightly puzzled by the 'no groups' sign at the campsite, and then realise that the only directions I have for the campsite are 'you can't miss it'. Ring Dave, who directs me to the real campsite. After another call from another wrong campsite, Dave very kindly waits outside the real one so I can't miss it.

Get to real campsite and put up tent (well, Dave and John do it really) and put random items from the house in the tent. Sadly, I have forgotten the electric fridge, which I am assured by Dave Hughes that every camper needs, as well as all the chocolate and carbs and muesli bars specially bought for kayak surfing. Everyone else slowly arrives, having also been stuck in traffic on the M5 and we are off to the beach. I am secretly relieved by the size of the waves (ie. not that big).

We all have a good time, powering through the waves out to sea and attempting to catch waves and surf in. Needless to say, there is rather a lot of emptying water out of kayaks and going upside down, although myself and Rod do manage to execute a perfect swim, rescue and roll. Wonder briefly if my 3 star might have been for more than just effort, before my boat tips upside down again.....

Despite the beautiful sunshine of the morning, its foggy and drizzly in the afternoon and evening. As Jol promised to lend me his stove, and Jol is in Birmingham, am forced to scrounge hot food from other BCC members, who are very generous with their offers – great burger, sausages and a fab spread from the Deli – and hospitality. Thanks all.

Dave demonstrates a million and one things to do with a buff (scarf/hat thingy) and Rod and I are almost convinced that we must have one, when this display of urban cool is disrupted by Pat's son saying 'Dave, why have you got your underpants on your head'. Suddenly, I don't want one for Christmas after all.

Sunday dawns with beautiful weather, and everyone from every city in Britain has come to the beach at Bude, which means you can't park anywhere. This doesn't stop me, Rod, Lee, Dave, Anna and Nigel, and friends and family, all eventually meeting up in a large field with kayaks and Nigel and Anna's wonderful new inflatable canoe. Waves were much bigger, but with the confidence of yesterday, we all paddle out and catch waves and surf in. Try not to hit surfers or body boarders and seem to succeed, fall out at least twice and even manage to roll once or twice, before getting hit sideways on by another wave and ending up with a face full of sand.

Anna and Nigel's inflatable is great – rides over the waves and is fabulous for surfing in on. Not sure what its called – a S-something Colorado, but it costs £375 and we all have to get one! Anna loves the boat (almost as much as Nigel) and everyone gets in and has a great time. Anna and I try not to scream all the time as the boat disappears over enormous waves and into huge plumes of surf. Dave and I manage the last, and best, run, surfing in on a wave almost to the shore, by some fluke paddling almost as a team. Nigel's friend Jimmy takes some great pictures of us all, which are admired greatly over cans of cider and red wine. I almost persuade him that Photoshop will be able to change the fabulous picture of a green kayak surfing the waves into a fabulous picture of a yellow kayak surfing the waves, but then realise that Lee might never forgive me.

Get up at some unholy hour on Monday to drive back to Brum. Get back in three and a half hours, thus realising that I could have spent another morning on the beach paddling in the waves, rather than looking at a pile of paperwork. A great weekend, exhilarating and exhausting, but great fun.

Oh, and Pat swam, well, he would have, if he hadn't forgotten his spray deck.....

Nette

Leading on white water-“Is line of sight the only consideration?”

When river running, it is desirable that the leader keeps sight of the group all of the time.

Is this the only consideration in deciding where he or she should be?

At the recent Level 3 training course, the trainer, Leo Hoare, stressed that the other things that need to be taken into consideration are the capabilities of the group, and being in the best place to protect against hazards (or perform rapid rescues if things go wrong).

The need to make decisions, rather than blindly follow rules, was brought home when we ran a rapid on the lower Tryweryn. Pete was put in charge of leading a section with a blind bend. After some agonising, he placed himself half way down the rapid, in a small eddy (one boat size) from where he could keep line of sight and signal for the next paddler to come down when the previous one was safe in the eddy.

We all successfully ran the rapid.

Leo said that it was an OK decision, and that he would have passed Pete on this decision, but that he, personally, had never run the rapid in this way.

He said the only place people were likely to capsize was at a large rock at the bottom of the rapid. He normally placed himself downstream of the rock, at a place where people's heads would reappear when they took a swim. We spent the best part of an hour practising rescuing, and then being rescued at this spot.

Pete's choice had the advantage that he could keep line of sight and could stop anyone else paddling the rapid if someone took a swim. The downside was that he was not in a good position to rescue anyone and would have had to pursue them down the river, 150 metres behind.

Leo's choice meant that he was in a good position to rescue someone, but not in a position to stop other paddlers running the rapid (and possibly also taking a swim), while he was doing the rescue, although with a capable group this was unlikely. Potentially a whistle blast could have been used as a prearranged signal for paddlers to stop at the top of the rapid until they heard a further two blasts (this was not discussed on the day). Equally, if there was a second coach, both eventualities could have been covered.

Assuming that you knew the river, where would you place yourself-to keep line of sight or to be able to perform a rapid rescue?

Bob Willis

As a further to the article from Bob (previously), the 'art' of river running is very subjective and there are many ways of achieving the same goal. As a club we have many people who are very good river leaders, who individually, may choose to lead a group using different styles on a particular rapid. There are lots of correct and lots of incorrect ways of achieving a positive outcome, and the rules we follow form the acronym CLAP.

C—Communication. You must have a set of agreed river signals that you use within the group. Don't overcomplicate them and don't use any that you haven't agreed with the other team members. When you are paddling with a group of paddlers that you know very well, you can hold quite a conversation across a very noisy rapid.

L—Line of Sight. There are two parts to this, firstly being able to see and be seen by other members of your paddling team all the time you are on the trip. It isn't necessary for the leader to see you, so long as other members can—there is *line of sight* within the group. The second part of the line of sight rule is that you shouldn't paddle a blind rapid where there isn't a clear line of site to a safe eddy (and possibly a back-up eddy too). If you come to a blind bend and you can't see an eddy, get out and inspect before continuing. The rapid you paddled here last week could have a tree in it this week!

A— Avoidance. It is far better to prevent something happening than have to put something right after it has happened! So, with this in mind, avoid small eddies above tree strainers or nasty stoppers....! This point is really about thinking before you act on the river and what will the result be to your action. Do a risk assessment.

P—Position of maximum effectiveness. This is where the leader places himself (or herself) in the best place to deal with the most likely incident on a rapid or river section. It also may be the best place to manage the *line of sight* rule, or deal with communication through the group.

If you think of rapids that you know well, be it Symonds Yat, or even the Serpents Tail, there are many 'good' ways of maintaining all the above. Some ways may be better than others, but then it's all down to judgement, experience and possibly knowledge of the group.

Anyone wanting to know more on this subject, the book to get hold of is WHITEWATER SAFETY & RESCUE by Franco Ferraro—it is THE bible for whitewater river paddlers

Ian Dallaway

Forthcoming River Trips

Date	Venue	Difficulty	Meet Leader	
20-23 Oct	Scotland whitewater	hard	Ian Dallaway	01922 410424
3 Nov	Lower Dee (below Llangollen)	mod	Bec Woodhall Pete Czajkowski	07886 791367
18 Nov	TBA Coaching	Mod	Bec Woodhall Dave H	07886 791367 07780 697337
25 Nov	TBA	easy	Granville	07817 655990
1-2 Dec	river skills weekend	mod/med	John Woodhall Ian Dallaway	07727 104862 07715 005153
9 Dec	Usk (canoe & kayak)	mod	Phil Hadley	07771 620745
23 Dec	xmas avoidance	med	Ian Dallaway Andy Simmonds & Lee Wherton	07715 005153
6 Jan	new year trip	easy	Granville Jolyon Hoare & Steve Rogers	07817 655990
13 Jan	mid Wales Coaching trip	med	Dave H Pete Czajkowski	07780 697337
27 Jan	N Wales	Mod+	Bec Woodhall Pat Corish	07886 791367 07976 919269
3 Feb	TBA	easy	Ian Booth Andy Simmonds Lee Wherton	07966 448338 07722 484567
23 Feb	TBA	med	John Woodhall	07727 104862
2 Mar	Wye	easy	Granville Joyce	07817 655990
16 Mar	TBA	mod	Pat Corish Jolyon Hoare & Steve Rogers	07976 919269
30 Mar	Scotland	med/hard	Ian Dallaway	07715 005153

Note - Trips marked as coaching will have an emphasis towards coaching on moving water rather than purely journeying

River grading -

As a rule of thumb, rivers marked “easy” will be predominantly flat water and up to up to grade 1, but may contain isolated grade 2 rapids, such as the Derwent, lower Wye or sections of the Severn below Shrewsbury.

Rivers marked as ‘moderate’ (mod) will have more continuous sections of grade 2 rapids. The aim of moderate trips is to paddle simple whitewater, and will tend to be used on coaching trips.

Rivers marked “medium” will be up to class III. Any trip marked “hard” will be above class III.

Please note that river grading can be open to mis-interpretation. The venue’s will be decided upon by the meet leader nearer the date. This allows for water level fluctuations and gives more flexibility to tailor the trip to suit the needs of who wants to attend. You need to tell the meet leader that you wish to

paddle on a particular trip, so that provision can be made for you.

I have left some weekends free for some adjustment as necessary, and to allow other trips to take place on an ad-hoc basis. These trips will be organised at short notice and will tend to be rain dependant. They will be advertised on the noticeboard at the pool whenever possible.

Anyone wishing to put ideas for future trips forward, please contact Ce, Ian or myself.

See you on the river,

Pat Corish / Ian Dallaway

Club equipment hire

If people need to hire club equipment for a trip, please contact the trip organiser in the first instance. If they can't sort the kit out for you then contact Pat Corish and make arrangements with him. Club boats are normally collected on Friday evenings AFTER the baths session, and returned BEFORE the following baths session. Hire charges are £5 per club member for a kayak and the necessary kit to go with it. The cost to hire a 2 man kayak (duo) or a canoe is £10 per trip.

Sea Kayak Group Report

After a string of get togethers, and practice runs on the reservoir, the SKG launched for real off Bull Bay beach in Anglesey. This cuts a long story very short because we drove almost right round the island to get the right conditions. Sea kayaking involves turning a kaleidoscope of factors until wind, tide, streams, rain, sun, wave heights, escape routes, and skill levels are all right. If you get it right you can have something like a cruise down a river experience, and if not its more like an up river experience. The wind was about force four but the kayaks have skegs to make crossings easier and we did fine until we passed an island covered in seagulls and guano, the smell of which alone increased our speed by a knot or two.

We, by the way, were Phil, Andy, and Rod from BCC, with Kevin Wright and Rob from Leamington way, and Ian, from North West Sea kayakers, who were in coach roles. We learned as we went along- just watching their style was an education, paddles and arms kept mostly lower than river kayaking, and leaning forward for the sweep stroke and edging the kayak hard to get maximum turn against the wind.

We had told the coastguard where we were going and carried VHF radios and GPS just in case. This coast can seem disarmingly peaceful but there are some stormy bits when the tides run through gaps and round headlands such as North and South Stack, that can make big, eight foot waves. But the island is shaped cunningly so that you can often find the right conditions for what you want to do, just round the corner.

Kevin and Rob fished with a line and a green feather on it on the way back to Bull Bay through the choppy inshore water and against the strong wind. The catch included a rope and it didn't take more than a minute or two to untangle the line.

As we fought our way along, Ian and Andy accelerated away to shouts of 'Dolphin!' which they claimed to have seen, on a tidal stream doing what looked like 6 knots against our 3. Andy described it later as being in the flow, of wonderful, effortless speed.

Having done about 7 miles on day one, we wanted a shorter day on the Sunday so we headed for Moelfre, again to be out of the forecast showers and force 4-7 winds and sometimes rough seas. It had rained heavily all night, so we feared the worst on the Sunday morning- but the weather turned and we had sunshine, slight seas, and a breeze. We could relax and practice more skills. Kevin showed us the bit with the hanging draw where you pull forward from a stern rudder and into the draw-much easier than the normal way.

His tip with the roll was watch the blade all the way through. Andy made his roll to his great delight. I had a first go at the Pawlata roll, which Kevin reckons is a good bet in rough water sea kayaking. This involves holding the end of one blade in one hand and gripping the middle of the paddle shaft with the other, giving greater leveraging as you arc the blade across the surface of the water. As the sea kayak is so long, it can be a help to have this extra oomph. One for the swimming pool maybe.

We then practiced our rescues. This included the rescue kayak being towed away from approaching rocks by a third kayak, and using the outside of the kayak to enter so as not to get squeezed between the rescuer and the over turned kayak. Good to be told you have to vent a dry suit when in the water by holding the neck open a second-otherwise you turn upside down.

Time to head back down the A41 to Brum (3 hours from Moelfre) came far too soon, and washing out the kit to get the salt off afterwards felt all too real after the freedom of the sea. Do you think they could make a disposable kayaking suit? Or is that skin?

We were all very grateful to have the advice of Kevin, Rob and Ian on trip. They have been on some inspiring trips such as circum-navigating the Isle of Wight, (and Anglesey) and their yarns put the text books in perspective. Rob swears by his foot pump, his GPS and his VHF for safety, and they have rigged up some ingenious contraptions linking rudder and foot pedals.

We met another intrepid in the camp site at Holyhead who had converted a perfectly good VW van into a mobile kayaking centre. The sea kayak went on top(where else).he had fitted out the walls with Thinsulate, and put a bed in it. Amazingly, when I commented that his partner would not let him park that next to her Volvo she admitted it was true.

Rod Shelton

Terror on the Tryweryn (Lower) – 19th August 2007

Horror – why am I here? What had ever made me think this would be fun? Just follow my line, Ian had said. What line? There he was right in front of me: no – too close – have to break – there he went – looked easy enough – so how come I am a ball in a pin ball machine being bumped about by boulders left and right? Ian looks relaxed, plays lazily in the water, lets the river take him downstream backwards, watches whether I am following his line.

“Smile” they shout, but have they got any idea about the fear gripping me? “Let’s just take this eddy”, Ian suggests. OK, look at where I want to go, edge, paddle – missed it. Drifting downstream backwards, what is going to hit me next? “Change of plan” Ian reassures, “we just go on, right away”. Of course – I don’t have a choice now, the next eddy is gone, too, and there comes the rippling water which would have been better entered the right way ‘round. I paddle – after all that’s what they say: paddling movement gives you control – and I stay upright.

The water is calm ahead of me. Where are all those boulders and why don’t I see them even when I am heading straight for them? Bec explains: “See the V-shape in the water?” Yes, I did back then when I was standing on the bridge watching all the young men having fun in the hole, returning to the exciting place time and time again, tumbling as in a washing machine – but here at water’s level I see no Vs. Never mind, just follow Ian’s line.

There comes the next lot of ripples, there is the V-shape, the boulder must be just beyond that, better go a bit left: well that’s interesting, I am sitting right on top of the big stone in the water. Ian gestures to stay put and not move. Bec comes back to me, pushes me off the rock and I am free again.

“Keep your hips loose” Bec suggests, and indeed by not fighting the water but just letting it carry me around where the flow is, there is less tension in me. Still get hit by the stones left and right, but hey, it’s a tough boat. Hang on, where is the sky gone? Under water. Should I roll? Are you kidding? All those boulders, I am not going to roll up in this moving water with all those stones around me. Out! That was OK, the water is moving, boat and paddle gone, Ian beside me. “Just climb onto my boat –

and keep those fingers on top of the plastic not under the waterline.” So he ferries me ashore, someone else has brought the boat and paddle, there they are emptying the boat for me while Lee offers me chocolate like Professor Lupin to Harry Potter after a dementor attack. So this is what happens when I swim.

Off we go again, there is still a long way to go. “See where there is the island in the river? We’ll take the left hand side. Avoid those trees.” I am still wondering whether I should have avoided this river. This is not like the Severn, flowing calmly, letting me appreciate the grasses and flowers on the riverbank, where the only cry of danger is to watch that fisherman with his rod. This is not like my previous trip, with a break for human comfort, re-fuelling and re-charging the batteries in the sunshine, with some people even getting out the gas cooker to have a fried breakfast.

Here we go again, into the branches, into the leaves, duck – got through, did not go down. There is no end to this river, more water ahead of me, sometimes just flowing, sometimes rippling when I hold my breath, try to relax those hips, be ready with the paddles and smile. Of course I go swimming again, still don’t know why or how it happened, but it will be OK – Ian, Ce and Bec are looking after me.

At the end I am shattered. Never mind that the rest of the group played in waves and holes, did the upper Tryweryn as well, mastered Bala Mill falls and are still laughing and joking. For me this was the wars. I am grateful to all those supporting me, Nette driving me, Kevin stowing the boats back onto the car. What an experience! But the worst thing which could happen did happen – I swam twice and it wasn’t bad at all. Have to try that one again!

Delia Sexton

Colorado River, Grand Canyon, Utah – Arizona. May 2007.

Ever fancied paddling one of the most famous white water rivers in the world?

Ever fancied paddling in one of the most beautiful and fascinating places in the world?

Ever fancied visiting the Entertainment Capital of the world?

You can do all three by combining a paddling trip down the Grand Canyon with a few days in Las Vegas – that’s just what I did last May.

There’s a few things that you may be thinking may make such a trip difficult, the first is the logistics, that’s easy – Google Stan Marks Grand Canyon Kayak, and let him do the rest, then there’s the cost of the venture, with the pound so strong against the dollar, it isn’t as expensive as you may think, then you may be thinking that you aren’t a good enough paddler to undertake one of the most serious white water trips in the world, well according to Stan’s website it’s big water class three, and anyone who can roll (most of the time) can paddle it. It was Stan’s website that convinced me that perhaps this was the trip for me, he promised to show me the best lines, pick me up if I got it wrong, feed me well each day, carry all my gear, tent, sleeping bag etc on a support raft, and provide cold beer each day – that’s it, I was sold on the idea!

The next problem was completely out of my hands, the fact that I was the only one booked on the trip, and Stan was saying that unless there was more take-up, the trip would be cancelled, well perhaps not completely out of my hands! I was running a course the next day at Upton Warren, with a guy called Chris Fawcett from Rugby CC, and I mentioned the trip to him, he was immediately interested and the conversation was overheard by our esteemed RCO, Phil Ascough, who also said he was ‘up for it!’.

Two days later, I fired off an email to Stan, saying that Phil Ascough, Chris Fawcett and 5 others from Rugby CC and me were coming. Kev Roberts from Rugby took on the role of banker and he had soon booked flights, hotels and organised bank transfers to Stan - it really looked as though we were off!

That was back in November and our trip in May seemed a long way off. We emailed kit lists back and forth, we chose to hire boats, so that was discussed by email, we discussed everything from sunscreen to airbags, but still May seemed a long way off, then suddenly we were all at Birmingham Airport with kitbags and paddlebags loaded!

Soon we were in Las Vegas – that’s an experience in itself, after being awake for 26 hours we decided to hit the town, so went to see Aerosmith at the Mandalay Bay Hotel. We weren’t really here for the Vegas bright lights, gambling and stretch limos (we travelled in these because it was cheaper than two taxis), we were here to go boating!

Stan arrived, we bundled into various minivans with kit and kayaks on trailers and on the roofs, and

headed off on the four hour drive to Lee's Ferry – the get in.

We spent the night under the stars at Lee's Ferry then in the morning loaded all our kit onto our 38 foot long, 10 ton support raft - yep you read that right, the raft was huge! And set off with kayaks down the Colorado – we were at last on the river.

Having the support raft was superb, it meant that we could paddle light boats – no kit in them at all, and we could take all kind of luxuries – folding arm chairs, thick comfy bed rolls, enough food to feed a small army, ice for the margaritas and so much beer!

The river was awesome, big volume rapids, but not technical just point and go mainly. There were huge watreains which seemed to go on forever, but once you had got over the initial shock of the enormity of them you quickly realised that it was pretty easy paddling really, but so intimidating at first – more akin to being at sea than on a river.

As good as the river itself was, that was just part of the experience, we did hikes up the side canyons most days and those were absolutely stunning, so diverse. One minute you were in the Arizona desert feeling as though you were being fried alive, next you would turn a corner into a beautiful woody glade with birds singing, treefrogs hopping around and fantastic waterfalls and cool, clear pools to swim in.

The Colorado in the Grand Canyon is only 10% white water so there were some pretty long flatwater paddles to be done, again the raft was so useful as we would all climb aboard, lash our kayaks to the side and chill out while our guide motored us to the next rapid. This was my downfall I'm afraid, I got so chilled out that when we arrived at the next rapid I often elected to stay on the raft, this may have had something to do with the amount of cold beer consumed on the flat bits! Being on the raft through the rapids was awesome though, and I thoroughly enjoyed that part of the trip too – it was all part of the whole Canyon experience.

The guides were great, finding us spectacular campsites and providing food which was out of this world, no roughing it with freeze dried rations for us! Some lunchtimes I was so full I couldn't paddle, so again a good excuse to laze on the raft and drink beer! The final night party was a sight to behold with everyone dressing up for the occasion – Ken from Rugby CC, somehow managed to turn up in a sparkling gold cocktail dress, and we still had ice for the margaritas!

Arriving back in Vegas after 12 days on the river, camping each night in some truly spectacular wilderness locations, was a real culture shock and I was a little dazed by the bright lights and madness – worlds apart from the breathtaking sunsets of the Canyon. Next day we flew home and the trip so long in the planning was over!

The quality of the white water, combined with the truly awesome scenery of the Grand Canyon and the whole experience make this trip, in my mind probably the best white water paddling trip on the planet! Whetted your appetite? check out Stan's website www.grandcanyonkayak.com.

You can check out our trip photos at <http://picasaweb.google.com/2007.Canyon>

Phil Hadley

Pete's birthday weekend

What an amazing weekend! I love the Eden, it could have done with a little more water, but still a fun boulder garden run. Then we hit the confluence of the Mawddach, the last drop of the upper section is a 10ft water fall and was great fun (never thought I'd put waterfall and fun in the same sentence! If you had seen me by the Etive in Scotland, you will understand- I am a big girl and proud of it!) The naming ceremony of my new Burn began, it earned the name 'Bob' as that's what it does, it bobs up when you throw it down rapids! (Even when I am in it and not upside down I might add). Well Done Cat who successfully passed her 4 star she paddled so well within the new group, she soon began to understand the true nature of the team by calling Nige and John "condescending and immature" Luckily she didn't stop the foam fight between myself, Nige and Ce (who I think became the official ref, as not a bit of the white stuff touched her, you have to let me know your trick!).

The Wnion (pronounced Onion) was the fastest river that I had ever been on, at one point I was looking for a little reassurance and happened to say to Ian, "I can't see any eddies", expecting him to point a few out so I could slow down. Instead his response was "that's because there aren't any!" I managed to get down most things (I think more by look more than judgement) when we got out to inspect one of the rapids, at this point my nerves got the better of me, a little convincing from Nigel and the rest of the group and I found myself bombing towards a huge wave (a female modest 4ft, but male 15ft!), down the hole the other side and back up to see Ian (who I was suppose to be following) had disappeared. I found him tucked behind a huge rock. Eventually the river got the better of me, after hitting a number of stoppers, one finally munched me and over I went, A failed/ crap roll later and I was swimming (luckily right next to an eddy, of which I got in, grabbed my boat, and then saw my paddles pop from underneath). Ian was below and came to my aid once again. I checked myself to find, I had no injuries (amazingly) and turned to look at the rapid that beat me. Luckily I had a fully illustrated demonstration, courtesy of the infamous Paul Smith. As he swam past, I saw the smile of which my husband seemed to wear for the rest of the day.

Paul, as always, got himself into an eddy and luckily for me, decided to bring me my paddle. I was in the middle of deciding whether to risk the rest of the river or admit defeat and face my worse nightmare by climbing out the gorge. John thankfully (I think) took the decision from me and even though we had never discussed the signal, the signs of 'it gets harder, get out and walk' were clear from the other side of the river. This time it was Paul to the rescue. A few magic knots with a rope and my boat was out, I was following nervously (and just for the record, that is the most you will ever see me climb!).

Walking along the road, I had a few strange looks, but I was so happy. I was on solid ground and alive. The only problem was I knew things were getting harder for the rest of the group. I ought to know better really. A few minutes later and I had a companion, Paul, having had enough of the river, particularly after seeing Ian getting back looped, and then having a disagreement with a landowner! . We sat on his boat in the middle of no-where waiting for the rest of the group. Within minutes the Cheshire cats arrived, with a general grade consensus of 4+, but not quite 5!. What an excellent day to spend a Saturday and it wasn't over yet!

I would like to point out that changing on the side of the road does sometimes incur a loss of dignity. This appeared to be one of those times. You know when you think 'I'll be quick' it's a fallacy. Just at the critical moment, the men in the group (Ian, Paul, Nigel and John) decided it would be fun to come and talk to me. I have 2 hands; note I'm not an octopus! Both hands were placed over my chest, unfortunately lacking a third meant I couldn't pick up a top and put it on all at the same time. Even a yell to Ce didn't save me!

Saturday night was Pete's Birthday bash. A fantastic evening out with a close group of friends that you can honestly trust your life with, what more can I say?

Sunday morning at stupid O Clock we set out again. Pete sadly couldn't join us, but Im sure given even half a chance would have risked his back too. We met up at the services to be robbed by Little Chef. Still desperate times! Alcohol of a night= sausage sandwich in a morning.

The Lledr awaits. I always know something is up when the group refuses to let me read the guidebook prior to paddling. I heard a few mutters, grade 4 with a few sections of 5/6!!!! Luckily I couldn't ask for a better group to paddle with. As we are driving up we inspected a rapid at the bridge, and there it was a nice technical grade 4 followed by one definite NO.

Changing for some reason didn't seem as much as an issue today. On the river, John and Paul were leading in preparation for small assessment that they have coming up whilst I stayed back with Ce, Dave, Ian, and Nige. We seemed to find a lot of NO's. It was one of those rivers that demonstrated the power of the water, and gave me a real chance to see the nature of the rapids, at one point, there was a drop which didn't seem to much until you saw the closed ended stopper with the recirculation lasting well over 3/4 meters and the height difference being at least a foot.

The portages were long, but the next event certainly took our minds away from walking! John lead the rapid (the one we saw on the drive up!) I successfully (upright) made it down, and as I am sat in the eddy waiting for the last couple, I see Paul make a treacherous mistake. Over he went and then time

began to slllloooowwww. You saw his head pop up next to his boat, the swim (Olympic style) towards a micro eddy, Nigel's throwline missed him by a good metre and a half. Paul began to turn towards the line. He managed to get hold, then too late! He disappeared down a grade 5 slot. Ian and Nige are on the side, John is in his boat, Ce jumps out hers and I'm chasing her! (For all those who don't know Ce- she is your definition of Super woman, no fear, fast, agile and ready for anything) It seems like an eternity. We are sprinting over rocks that are so slippery, next we're jumping a barbed wire fence, diving across the split in the river and we are on the island. You know that moment in time where it all stands still? This was one. The adrenalin wasn't doing its job. I was rooted to the spot, just for a split second, but enough to have 100's of thoughts go through my head, The 'What if's took hold' Then real time kicked back in and I was climbing to the top to see the horror that was waiting. Paul however in this time, had managed to self rescue (I'm sure this blokes a cat). He was sat on a rock on the opposite side of the bank above another nasty looking drop. How lucky can one person get? I'd like to tell you about the rest of the river but to be honest it's all a bit of a blur.

In true kayak style a chocolate bar later and we headed for the Seiont. The concept that we were supposed to make the car look like a non paddling car was left to Ian and Ce. Then it was left to Me, Paul and Ce, to find the get out, whilst the others hid the boats. Like bandits we started out! Then within minutes a huge bang, a car had successfully had the loudest crash I had ever heard (somehow it didn't end up in the river, and had disappeared by the time we had got out, so we will never really know the true story behind the screeches).

Absolutely and totally knackered doesn't really give you a true idea of how I was feeling. I got out to inspect a rapid, has a severe case of chickenitis and made the decision to portage (believe me, after looking at it later, I had ran harder rapids blind, and it would have been easier to run the rapid than track through the dense undergrowth) Still decision made. Paul caught the same bug. A few minutes in and Bob is living upto his name. The Seiont is and was a fantastic river. I would recommend it to anyone. It is a continuous Grade 3 bimble, and I do mean continuous! The weirs are simple but so much fun. All the people we saw (except one- miserable fisherman) were so friendly and seemed genuinely excited to see us.

What a way to wind down a phenomenal paddling weekend.

Its not often that you get a weekend in July that allows you to paddle 5 (6 if you include 200 metres of the Conwy) rivers in Wales. I like to say that I'm sure the group are plotting on ways to kill me, but I know that I really can trust them with my life so that's not the case! What a way to really push your friendship groups! How many other people can say they share the same bond?

Bec Woodhall

River Skills Weekend (1-2 December 2007)

Hi Guys,

This is an advanced warning that we are running another river skills weekend in N Wales. We will be staying at the Goat this time and we have booked 2 bunk rooms so we can cater for 20 people. We hope to do similar sessions to the last 2 day workshop, but hopefully use different rivers—assuming we get some rain this time!

We don't know what courses will be running yet, and it will depend largely on what people want to do. We'll try and keep this flexible until much nearer to the date.

As part of the weekend, we hope to organise a group (Christmas) meal on the Saturday evening.

Spaces for the workshop and meal will be limited, so book early to avoid disappointment. I need £20 to confirm your place on the weekend. This covers the cost of the accommodation.

Ian

BCC Annual General Meeting

Hi folks,

The BCC AGM is scheduled for Friday January 18, before the scheduled baths session that evening. Don't forget that this is your big chance to have a say in how the club is run. We are always short of committee members, so if you fancy standing on next years committee to help those who are working hard to keep our club one of the best clubs out there—speak to a committee member.

Ian