

Birmingham Canoe Club Magazine

January 2008

Index.

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| Index | Page 1 |
| Next Issue | Page 1 |
| Editorial | Page 1 |
| Chairman's chat | Page 2 |
| The Banwy—Nige | Page 3 |
| The Banwy—Anna | Page 6 |
| River Trips | Page 7 |
| Club equipment hire | Page 8 |
| River skills weekend | Page 8 |
| River Lugg | Page 9 |
| River Conwy | Page 11 |
| Canoeing or skiing? | Page 12 |
| River Dulas | Page 12 |
| Severn rally | Page 12 |

Next Issue

The Closing date for the next issue is **end of April 2008**. The preferred method for me to receive magazine articles is via email,

Ian.dallaway@bt.com

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.

Christmas came and went in a blur this time, mainly because Ce and I spent much of the time in sunny Spain climbing. We didn't miss that cold weather very much! We are now in the midst of a wet weather season, that has given us lots of rivers to paddle. In fact several trips lately we've been trying to find rivers that are low enough to be safe for the group.

Many of the trips lately have been very well attended. We have gained paddlers from other local clubs, attracted to us by how active we are. We have also had several new members joining our ranks and our numbers have reached well into triple figures, 118 at the last count.

We even have had a variety of cakes on the latest trips. The Booth's have certainly contributed a few tasty treats, Helen's been there too, John's iced number was memorable too. If there was an award for 'Master-Baker', it would surely have to go to Richard Stubley, who apparently gets up really early on a paddling day and starts baking....! In case there is a little exaggeration in his claim, many thanks to his mother too!

The AGM took place on Friday. With it comes a few changes. We have a new committee who have been charged with taking the club forward and making it even better and greater than it currently is. Davina has taken over the Treasurers post from Jerry . I'm sure everyone will join me in saying many thanks for looking after the money for all those years Jerry.

The committee for 2008 are:

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Dave Hughes | Chairman |
| Davina Goodchild | Treasurer |
| Ian Dallaway | Secretary, Newsletter editor |
| Ce Dallaway | Child Protection officer, coaching co-ord. |
| John Woodhall | Website Editor |
| Pat Corish | Quartermaster, Trip co-ordinator |
| Richard Stublely | Junior rep. |
| Steve Rogers | Committee member |
| Nette Carder | Committee member |
| Rod Shelton | Committee member |
| Jerry Crouch | Committee member |
| John Powell | Committee member |

From the AGM, the awards this year were voted on and.....

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Canoeist of the year..... | Andy Simmonds |
| Club person of the year..... | Ian Dallaway |
| Boat Breaker of the year..... | John Woodhall |
| Swimmer of the year..... | Lee Wherton |
| Junior Canoeist of the year..... | Richard Stublely |

We have a few ideas on where to take the club this year, discussed at the AGM. If anyone has any burning ideas for the club, contact any of the committee and we'll see what we can do.

Finally—This mag is as varied as always. We have 2 reports for the Banwy, but they are very different! Enjoy!!!!

Ian Dallaway

Chairman's Chat

Hope the New Year finds everybody in the club well, and that Christmas bought in lots of goodwill from partners when it came to buying new kit!

I've been working hard on the BCU Club Mark. Typically there is a lot of paperwork and bureaucracy to plough through, but it should mean that we have a much more corporate approach to how we run things in the club.

Those who browse our website will have noticed the menu list on the home page getting a lot longer these days. New policies, codes of conduct, and risk assessments are appearing. Please take the time to run through these - especially if you are a coach or club 'official'. I welcome any feedback and am happy to consider amending anything following discussions. Without dissent it will be assumed you agree with what's written!

All members should be aware that Ce Dallaway has been appointed Club Welfare Officer, and she will be responsible for Child Protection issues and completing Criminal Record checks for any coaches or volunteers working with children. Me, Dave Hughes, am the club official responsible for equality issues and incident reporting.

Ian has been working hard on the membership list. We need to have quite a bit of information on everybody these days. I apologise for this, but please be aware that we are not a Government quango, so will not be sending disks of information to random people in other countries! We really do need peoples emergency contacts, medical details, BCU membership numbers, coaching and first aid qualifications (and dates), and your CRB numbers. Coaches will get some of this information for when they run trips, for health and safety reasons. Please help Ian keep the membership list as current and

comprehensive as possible.

A big thanks to everybody who helped the club in 2007, especially those who ran trips - that is after all what we exist for (somebody should tell the BCU Club Mark people!).

Here's to an even more successful 2008!

Now follows are Dave's Jokes (as traditionally bad as ever—ed.)

A lovesick kayaker wrote to a dating service explaining that he had specific criteria for a potential mate and would not accept anyone that doesn't meet his standards. He went on to explain the young lady must be cute, short, enjoys cold water and paddling.

He received a reply the following week. It contained a picture of a penguin.

The following question and answer was collected from last year's Geography GCSE exam results in Swindon, Wiltshire.

Q: Explain one of the processes by which water can be made safe to drink.

A: Flirtation makes water safe to drink because it removes large pollutants like grit, sand, dead sheep and canoeists.

Dave

Sunday the 9th December, 2007.

The Banwy. It was my first river trip with the club.

Around this time two years ago, as it happens. I had what Ian euphemistically refers to as an "out of boat moment" on that trip, but hey – I've got around 750 miles more river time under my hull now, so things should be ok - right? Well ...

Big flooded rivers.

They're all up, the Severn out of its banks, so our planned visit to the Usk - which would have been a new one for me – is on hold. Instead we find ourselves in a car park at Meole Brace, 9am, to formulate plan B....

The Tanat is a popular idea, but there are problems with where to leave cars – and this is a big group. Oh to the joys of my personal river odyssey; Llanfair Caereinion it is. Except it isn't ... This isn't where we get on, this is just the staging post to implement plan 'b' – we rearrange the logistical equation and transfer 6 miles up stream. Past a rather enthusiastic looking weir; interesting enough, from the road, at 40 miles per hour ...

The get in is busy, with lots of people, boats and kit, about the business of preparation. I love to watch people in an environment such as this; it reminds me of the back stage arranging, and gathering of ones possibles. The stuff I used to do before a gig. Everyone getting into pre-flight mode, all the little idiosyncrasies on show as people attempt, unconsciously, to calm the adrenaline that is starting to swirl through their systems.

Flow like the river ...

Now this is quite big water, lots of it, with a fast current – and with a few well delivered instructions on how to cope from Phil, off we set, giving each other plenty of space.

The day had blossomed from squally and unpleasant into a calm late morning, very little wind, plenty of blue sky – which conspired to allow our surroundings to display their true December beauty. Just as well such a scene was easy to see, because we were bouncing along at a cracking pace. Looking back at a long line of boaters, 18 on the water, and my heart smiles inside, like mid-piece, guitar responding beautifully – just before that tricky phrase ...

Jo was the first to swim.

A low branch stole her attention while a curling wave lapped over one rail and, like a ball on a conveyor, her boat turns 180 degrees in the horizontal plane. Remember, there is upwards of a two foot swell on parts of this river, so any swim is going to be a rude and disorientating affair. Dave Clift – who's authentic heroism shone like the Baba yaga's light throughout this trip – was the first to get a rope to Jo, while Phil and Keiron sorted the boat between them. A consummate display of river skill,

no fuss, no drama – just quiet professionalism at work between generous spirited souls about the task at hand. Jo and her boat were both made safe to the river bank, all in just about a minute or two. Impressive, to be sure – it would put us in good practice for later...

Phil, leading, eddies out, gets out, and gets involved with a personal relief matter. I immediately start to wonder what lies ahead ...

“Eeeii ...”, goes Phil, having finished adding to the volume of the river. “There’s a tricky little weir coming up, so I’ll go first, follow me down – one at a time – and give everyone plenty of room. Everyone ok with that?” Queue nervous acknowledgements from the rest of us. Sure thing Phil. We’re all ok with that. Yup. No worries. None at all. “Above all, dig in and pull”. Much nodding of heads...

Off he leads, “Eeeii ...!”, straight over, safely through a fair sized recirculation wave, and almost immediately spins the boat to face upstream – so to keep a good eye on the group. I’m next, carrying as much speed as I can muster, and I get it right enough to stay right side up. Anna comes next, battling with a determination that I can actually feel, from twenty yards downstream. I’ve seen her like this before, and I marvel, yet again, at the single-mindedness of purpose she displays.

Then we have a swimmer, and Phil gets business like. “Carry on down – slowly – and make the first eddy you can ...”, he shouts over to me, as Anna and I drift past. There are things to tend to here, and Phil is intent on doing what he can for the rest of the group.

Because of the sheer speed of the river, we’ve both quickly left the scene – and I’m concerned to soon find that elusive eddy. I make the first one I can, but it’s a micro eddy and it’s my mistake to realise there is no room for two boats with Anna heading in strongly. To her credit, she makes it in, stops momentarily, gives me a wan smile as the current grabs her bows – and immediately gets on with it because there is nothing else she could do. Unfortunately, she’s very soon amongst the trees, very soon to be snatched out of her boat, and very soon in real danger – because the river is crowded with strainers and it all looks thoroughly unpleasant.

Now, dear reader, for those of you who don’t know, Anna and I were recently married, and the thought of her getting hurt – or worse – turned my blood cold, just as well, because that made it about the same temperature as the river.

The chase was on, but not for long, because the tree she bobbed under gracefully (considering she was still holding on to an inverted canoe), wasn’t quite as forgiving with me. I was swept under broadside without even having had time to fall out of my boat. Such is the effect of absolute focus and concentration – you’re into tunnel vision here – that I would defy any man to act rationally while the woman he’s in love with drifts away on a current of such immense power. Still, irrationality aside, you cannot paddle a canoe while being simultaneously upside down and underneath a tree. This I know.....from experience!

It’s very strange; as the current turns you over, you know – you almost feel – where the surface is because even with your eyes closed, you can sense where the light is. Just like you can sense where the dark is.

Did I truly know what I’d done?

Have any concept of the meaning of real fear?

It seems a long time under water - I was actually wondering how long I could resist the urge to open my mouth – but I’m sure it was no more than a few seconds. Unpleasant seconds, but seconds none the less.

Say about eight.

Maybe ten.

A second can be a long time when the one thing you do know for sure is :- you are on your own.

When the surface came down to hit me I thought I was going to choke on the relief. Then I realised I’d been drinking the river ...

I’d still got the boat, lying oddly across my right arm, and I could see Anna still drifting with her boat about ten yards downstream. She was looking directly at me with a kind of searching intensity. But I

was ok, and she was ok, and the hazards further down – while still very real - didn't look quite so menacing.

I let go the boat and grabbed a tracking line as the deck floated past. Made the shallows without the encumbrance of the fifteen foot canoe, and reeled it back in as soon as I could stand safely.

I knew the drill – we'd practiced this – lift the near rail, dip your head into the air space, lift the boat off the water and flip it back upright.

Just then, Keiron turns up, concern etched into his face, but he's dry, and obviously firing on all cylinders. "You ok?" he solicits, in the way of one who knows what has just gone down. "Yeah, but Anna's still down there somewhere", I splutter, and Keiron is gone like a bat out of hell.

Hot in Kieron's wake is Ian D., equally concerned, equally tuned in, and equally hot on Anna's trail after a quick Pro-appraisal of my safety.

Some of the kayak paddlers in our group drift past while I do a fast stock check. Amazingly, all I seem to have lost is a little of my sanity and a paddle. On climbing back in and setting off after them, I realise I've just passed a kayak completely pinned to a tree, like some giant entity had flung it there, dart fashion.

The scene was somehow relentlessly desolate.

There was no sign of the paddler.

Was that one of our group, I wondered? It looked as though it had been there for a week. Then I see big Andy forcing his boat upstream, like Thor, hammering at the clouds, and I'm suddenly aware of the fact that it's not only the open boaters that are struggling with this stretch of the river.

There's enough here to concentrate everyone's mind.

Then, in what must be a full quarter mile from where we upset, I spot Anna, Ian and Keiron – with three boats – in a nice safe eddy.

A nice, big, fat, safe beautiful eddy.

I am trembling, actually shaking, with gratitude. See Anna's piece for a description of how they plucked firstly her, and then her boat, from the river.

"Did you save the hat?" quips Ian; a man entirely content with his lot. It's not the first time Ian Dallaway has come up with droll one liners as I stand soaking, sopping wet on a river bank ...

Anna's eyes burn with adrenaline, as she stands next to Keiron's rock steady glow of an easy grin and calm assurance. I don't believe this man has ever let anybody down in his life, and I'm real proud, to call him a friend.

"How do you feel?", I ask her. "I'm wonderful!" she explodes, adding, "I like a challenge. That's why I'm with you ..."

Well thanks, I think.

Ian suggests we go for a jog up river to "see how the others are getting on". He'll wait here with the boats. He's too much of a gentleman to say, "go burn some calories, before you freeze to death ..."

But that's probably what he means. So we run along the river path, getting to where the pinned kayak is to see Dave Clift and Phil Hadley making Herculean efforts to free that boat. All for one, and one for all here, yet again.

They not only reclaim the boat, which did belong to one of our group (it was Chris Booth's), but managed to grab the paddles Anna and I had lost back from the river too.

Time out on a big muddy river. Time spent with the best people a person could wish for. The sort of people who think nothing of putting themselves in harms way in order to help someone already in harms way.

How often do we see this? Answer : as often as we need to with this group.

Oh yes.

I learned later that Phil more than had his hands full at the weir, because it claimed two boats and three swimmers, that I know to, from our group.

This caused Jo to throw her hands up in despair, and take to a pop-up shelter for some contemplative chanting ...

Thank you, to everyone who made this trip. You all helped to make it a memorable one, but special thanks are due to Kieron, Ian, Dave, and Phil.

You four should share 'Canoeist of the Year' for this day alone.

You've sure got my vote. And Anna's.

And yes, I did save the hat ...

Nigel Green,

Hugely Enjoyable, Total Elation, Lessons Learnt Well Banwy write-up

December 9, my birthday and a BCC trip. I'd been worried all week about the amount of rain we'd had and the severe weather warnings; floods, gales etc etc. Paddling the Usk was planned, a river I hadn't done before, but I'd read the UK Rivers Guide book on it, and I don't know why, but the bit about the guys boat getting stuck in a stopper for a whole hour before re-surfacing was somehow sticking in my mind (no pun intended!). I was quite pleased therefore, when Ian phoned the night before the trip to say the Usk was off; we'd all meet at Dobbies car park, bring maps – and we'll decide where to paddle in the morning. Hurray, a magical mystery tour!

Maps in hand we met about 18 boaters, mainly open boaters, in Dobbies car park, and we decided to go paddle the Banwy. I started to feel dubious again; mainly because Nigel had got pinned on a tree on the Banwy two years ago.

The river was wonderfully bumpy – fantastically fun waves, bobbing and splashing the boats – great grade 1 stuff. So far, so good, so fun (apart from hazardous overhanging trees, that caught Jo a cropper).

Then came the weir - Phil said it might be a *bit tricky*. Nige and I followed his line down – no probs, until my boat started getting sucked back into the stopper (poor little Pack). So I did as Phil had advised and *dug in* and *got out*. Phew wee. I took a look around and Jo's taking the weir sideways – and she swims. Major incidents ensue – including multiple rescues of swimmers, bits of kit (*thank you Dave and Phil*), and a pinned kayak, of which I saw nothing. Mainly because I had tried to eddy out in the *wrong* place (oh, what a lesson learnt).

The current pulled me out, under a tree – swam; half a mile with my boat until we (me and my Pack) got to a bridge stanchion.

I was one side, my arm holding the boat was the other. It was me or the boat. Guess which won? I pushed the boat one side of the stanchion, I swam the other – my boat was gone and I was heading for a whole heap of strainers!

I managed to climb a half submerged tree in order to give myself time to think – then, like a knight in shining armour (well a big green canoe) along comes Keiron – bombing after me. He demanded that I “get in the boat”. I climbed down in my watery haven and said “Right– let's get my Pack”.

We paddled like there was no tomorrow – we were flying, we were like the proverbial off a shovel, closely followed by Ian – spotted my beautiful canoe, upside down and bobbing dejectedly down river. The three of us pushed it into an Eddy. Safe.

My husband, meanwhile, had spent some time beneath a fallen tree. Unfortunately, he was upside down and still in his boat at the time. I was beside myself with worry – when, having self rescued, he turns up, eddys out with me, Ian and Keiron. I throw my arms round him – he was safe, wet through and muddy (like me) but safe.

The trip ended early, due to the many exciting incidents, and the pair of paddlers holed up in a survival shelter.

All's well that ends well, and we lived and learned (fortunately).

As we stood in the car park, reminiscing on an eventful day, Richard brings out his famous chocolate,

coffee and walnut cake, with candles in for my birthday. What a wonderful day, people who will endeavour to look out for one, for all.

Thank you BCC. Let's do it again soon.

Anna

Forthcoming River Trips

| Date | Venue | Difficulty | Meet Leader | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 3 Feb | TBA | easy | Ian Booth Andy Simmonds Lee Wherton | 07966 448338 07722 484567 |
| 17 Feb | TBA | med | John Woodhall | 07727 104862 |
| 23-24 Feb | River skills weekend | mod/med+ | Ian Dallaway John Woodhall | 07715 005153 07727 104862 |
| 2 Mar | Wye | easy | Granville Andy Simmonds | 07817 655990 07966 448338 |
| 16 Mar | TBA | mod | Steve Rogers Jolyon Hoare | 07855 323240 07855 484359 |
| 21-25 Mar | Scotland | med/hard | Ian Dallaway Ce Dallaway | 07715 005153 |
| 6 Apr | Severn coaching | mod | Dave Hughes | 07780 697337 |
| 13 April | first aid course | | John Woodhall | 07727 104862 |
| 19 April | Matlock | easy | Andy Simmonds Lee Wherton | 07966 448338 07722 484567 |
| 26-27 April | paddling weekend | mod/med | Ian Dallaway John Woodhall | 07715 005153 07727 104862 |
| 3-5 May | Scotland open boat Camping trip | easy | Ian Dallaway Pat Corish | 07715 005153 07976 919269 |
| 21-1 June | Austria | hard | Ian Dallaway | 07715 005153 |
| 13-15 June | Severn Weekend | easy | Joyce Swainston | 07817 655990 |
| 26 July - 17 Aug | France | mod/ hard | Ian Dallaway Ce Dallaway | 07715 005153 |
| 23-25Aug | Bude surfing | mod | Pat Corish | 07976 919269 |

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.

River Skills Weekend – December 2007

Its very early, and I realise that – in an unexpected fit of altruism – I have agreed to collect Davina from her house, which is miles in the opposite direction to Wales. Even worse, I have only obtained instructions about being on the corner with a white garage door, which isn’t entirely helpful when whizzing up and down the A38.

We are both surprisingly cheerful for 7.15am and manage to tie both boats on top the car (very tightly) without major incident. Off to Wales as the sun rises, looking forward to a weekend of paddling and socialising with our mates at the Goat. Davina gently breaks it to me that The Goat has one en-suite bathroom for 20 people.....

Driving along the A5, we see a car with kayaks clearly broken down by the side of the road and – both being secretly trained car mechanics and very handy in motoring emergencies – we decide to stop and help. It turns out to be Andy and Rich and Rich’s mum, stranded as the turbo has blown up on the car, filling the car with smoke and bringing it to a rapid halt. John Woodall soon pulls up behind, as he is a person that can really help in emergencies, and soon takes charge. We transfer the boats, paddles, gear and people to our cars and set off for Llangollen. We get Rich – and the cakes!

We all meet at Mill End Mill and split into groups to go paddling. Davina, me, Toby and Kate go with Pat Corish. We decide (well, Pat tells us) to do the Llugwy down from Plas y Brenin to Pont Cyfyng, missing out the really difficult bits (Cobden Falls and Pont Cyfyng) It’s a nice easy run, although Pat made me swim by giving me conflicting instructions in the middle of the river, thus causing a collision with a large rock. My embryonic moving water roll is stalled by hitting another rock, the coldness of the water and fear of dying.

We get back in under Pont Cyfyng, which is clearly paddleable only by the insane, and go down a further section to the Ugly House. Great fun (always more fun when you’ve swum once) with a few more scratches and scrapes on the bottom of the boat gained going through the boulder garden. Pat is an excellent coach as usual and we all promise him that his reward will be in the bar later – we get to

The Goat tired but elated after a great days paddling.

Due to a terrible failure of the nervous system, Davina and I decide to go to bed at 10.30pm – even after consuming a nasty mixture of red wine, cider, dry martini and brandy. Everyone else is happily drinking away and telling tall tales by the open fire, but we need to keep our strength up for the next day (and it may be better to be deeply asleep whilst sharing your bedroom with 20 other people). Pat has turned down most of the offers of drinks from the grateful fan club of his group, which was probably wise.

Sunday dawns, wet and raining, very wet and raining. Dave Hughes from the ‘You are shit, Nette’ school of coaching joins at breakfast to lead our group with Pat. I am secretly pleased as Dave is delightful really – you always know where you stand and I’ve learnt loads from him. The water is high and we decide to do the Glaslyn. I breathe a sigh of relief as I’ve done it before and it was fine.

As I’m doing the shuttle I get to see the Glaslyn as I drive past. I don’t remember it being quite so high, moving quite so fast and with quite so many waves – or with a particularly nasty tree and stopper at the end. Still, it is clearly too late now to say anything. We get back. It’s blowing a gale and hailing and the first rapid looks a little bouncy. Never mind, off we all go.....Dave and Pat are calming influences on us all, as the wind and hail are very cold and a bit spooky.

The river is quite bouncy in places and Davina manages to lose her paddles (and her boat) for a short while. Having just run a bit of a tricky bit of water near the bridge, watched by Pat, I see the paddles floating past. Momentarily debate which would be worse – being told off by Pat for not going straight to the eddy when instructed, or being told off by Davina for letting her paddles go floating past – No contest. I grab the paddles from the water. It is not easy paddling with two paddles, which I must have read in some book somewhere as being what you do, and I have visions of being swept down some evil rapid backwards, before putting one set on my spraydeck and paddling rapidly to the nearest eddy.

Hi! Davina here – just feel I ought to comment on the above as I’m not sure Nette has painted an entirely accurate picture of what happened with my swim...

When we entered the river from the Lake the hail was hitting our faces like mini leather whips and the wind was doing its best to tip us over or at least blow our paddles out of our hands. It looked scary and, well, for the first time ever I was actually close to tears.. I was crapping myself! (Such a lady! – Ian.) Luckily Nette could see how scared I was and, well, just ignored it really. Very sensible. I was just looking for attention! Just like a child the fear made me need a wee! I told Pat and Dave but, well, they ignored me too. All the way down the river I reminded them I needed to go - ‘soon’ they kept saying. Well, in the end I decided only thing for it was to fake a swim. So, I pretended to accidentally hit a rock and bailed out. The river was fast; let go of my paddle and clung desperately to a tree! But – got that wee stop! As if I’d swim by accident. As if.

We are all getting the hang of the faster water now and continue on past Gelert’s grave. Its stopped hailing and we just have to run past the tree and eddy out fast to the right where Pat is waiting to grab us (failure means going down the Aberglaslyn gorge, which we all know is not wise). Toby takes a swim and then Davina rolls in the stopper – Kate and I are in complete awe at the rolling – but Pat and Dave take the sensible view that anyone else swimming and/or sending their boat down the Aberglaslyn Gorge is not a good idea. We ferry glide over the other side, with Pat, Dave, Ian and Ce ready to make sure that we get out safely.

We had a brilliant weekend – can’t wait for the next one. Special thanks to Pat and Dave who were fabulous coaches and always make for a great trip. Thanks also to Kate and Toby for a fabulous time.

Nette (and Davina)

River Lugg

Jol and I were asked to run the first trip in the New Year, at the time of being asked I’d forgotten that an easy trip at the start of January was likely to enthuse me. At the best of times I have trouble

convincing friends why I enjoy the paddle sport. "I realise I have to emerge from my pit earlier than I would normally get up for work. I know I'll drive for over an hour when I'm often found complaining about the cost of running a car. Yes, it will be cold (and likely to be raining)". It's also going to be a pain to put on numerous layers in a vain attempt to stay at my normal body temperature. It's also true that I'm about to get wet; and as a consequence even colder, to paddle to a point where we get out and reverse the whole lot, killing an entire day off in the process and ending up back home shattered, with wet kit...and all this for fun!?!?

The trip looked quite popular on the forum with many people suggesting they would come along, but with no river named until the last minute we were unsure who would actually attend. The paddle would have to be something different, we had to go to the warmest part of the country (my stipulation) and we had to have cake at the end (Andy was ensuring Rich's cake was in his car). We decided the Lugg on Friday afternoon and waited for the response, "we have at least 5" I'd told Jol and by the end of Saturday I was expecting upwards of 20 people; a massive turn out. I remember Ian telling me "I'll believe it when I see it!" so I hope he now eats his words, we ended up with 21 on the river, split into 2 groups paddling from Lugg Green to Leominster.

The main topic of the day was about how many weirs there were? I'd counted 7 in the guides. This seemed to be a popular choice, but there were offers of 6 and 8 also on the table. We set off and within about 60 seconds, and round the first bend, we had to portage to scout our first weir. It wasn't a friendly portage either; the river was up (at a perfect level). A farmer's gate was submerged blocking access to the slack water beyond. Rich and Steve D were to hand helping and I'm afraid I didn't want to get my feet wet and cold so I volunteered, as river leader, to pass judgement on the first weir. Based on my thumbs up from the bank Andy ran the drop and having seen Andy at the bottom, so did Ian and Ce (their group had caught up already).

A short paddle later we approached our second weir, this one had me wondering; it wasn't pretty. Jol had already said 'no' but then he has new boots and likes to prove they're great for walking in. The weir itself looked fine, but it was boily and towing back and had two concrete walls either side, so no escape. All the experienced paddlers decided it wasn't for them, and walked round, everyone else was ready to continue the trip below the weir, so we pressed on.

I was determined not to portage all the weirs, it felt like we'd spend more time out the boats than in them. Fortunately the next weir was done by most, a little 12 inch drop, although I can't recall if Jol actually paddled or walked it. He was out his boat and on the bank at some point.

The next few weirs were good play spots for those who wished to have some fun, and looked perfect for the canoes to run too. We were able to watch Joel lead the other group down these weirs, he was the lead down them and all seemed faultless and fearless from where I was positioned. Everyone did them well, they may have seemed a little daunting to those who haven't had much experience with river waves, but you all did really well even if some of you were pulling the most funny 'rabbit in headlights' faces; Kate's water gargling scream had me laughing for a long time after!!

We all ended up portaging the eighth weir; unrunnable due to the slots and vertical plinths munching the water that passed through. We then proceeded to race to the end of the run, the afternoon was chilling down for the evening and people were getting tired and cold.

Off the water was somewhat different, in addition to what is now seen as 'the norm' from 'little' Rich's cake baking we also were able to enjoy a slice of Baklava from Helen and a glass of Bucks Fizz to see in the first paddle of 2008!

In summary: I was tired, it was cold (but above freezing, even if the roads were treacherous). The water was most definitely wet; there are arguably 9 weirs in total. I returned home expectantly shattered, but it was a beautiful little river and fun, great fun, and I'd do it again and again!

Steve Rogers (Steve_Blaze)

Conwy – 13/1/08

This was to be my trip. Medium. With coaching. But it was raining so hard all week, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to find a grade 3 river that wasn't in spate or out of its banks. Our lack

of experience in mid-Wales meant we couldn't be sure of finding a safe river, and north Wales had flood alerts all over.

Luckily 'MadYaker' from the forum gave us an early morning call saying all the rain was west and south of Betws-y-Coed, and the Conwy was '6' on the gauge. Perfect. Fourteen of us headed up the A5 to the familiar get-in, several out with the club for the first time.

We split into two groups to do the first section. Steve looked nervous and carefully nursed his injured shoulder (from the Ogwen several weeks before). It was soon obvious that all were comfortable at the grade of water we were on and we soon relaxed to play and surf (and roll – me and Steve).

Bryn-Bras falls is the rapid of note on this section, a tricky and intimidating grade 3 with a boily stopper at the bottom. Scouting from the river we saw it was clear and all ran it without incident. Feeling smug (because another group ran it after scouting from the bank on foot) we bimbled down to the get-out to meet the other half of our group.

A decision needed to be made here – who was going to run the next section, or should we move on to an easier river? This next section is rarely run by Birmingham Canoe Club as it requires water and has two probable portages (grade 5 in the guides). All but one voted to continue, and we moved off as one group.

This section of the river definitely has more to keep you challenged, alert and interested, especially with fore-knowledge that the first grade 5/portage is difficult to spot. Luckily no-one blundered into it. Inspection meant only 5 people considered running the rapid. Ian went first and snatched a perfect line. Even so he had to wait quite a while to roll at the bottom as he scraped along a wall. Me, John and Ce were encouraged by his performance and relaxed as Paul Steels went next. He had run this rapid successfully before.

It was horrible to watch. Paul got the wrong line at the top and fought the first stopper for a good 60 seconds. We could all see him getting tired. A line was thrown in but not used. In the end, exhausted, he put himself over in the hope that the under-tow would drag him out, but it didn't. He swam and missed the second line thrown to him. Already out of breath he was pulled under water twice more before floating past another line unaware that one was available. He was uninjured but it took quite a while before he had recovered enough to continue. Having watched Paul I'm quite sure I will never run this particular rapid.

Then Lee swam. Twice. On the second time his boat sneaked into the next grade 5/portage before it could be stopped. Nobody was running this blind, so Lee ran off down the bank in the hope it fell into a re-circulating eddy before the big falls (grade 6).

The next grade 5/portage definitely looked friendlier than the previous one, and the consequences of a mistake appeared less dramatic. A drop and tight turn into an eddy, followed by a high line over a corkscrew wave and push left to avoid a wall before going over a drop. Ian and Ce ran it first. Happy with the line me and John raced up to our boats and got in. John was fine too. I didn't quite make the corkscrew properly and tipped over. I knew I would be ok – Andy Dray did this rapid upside down before so I knew it was deep, so I set up for a roll.

However, I wasn't prepared for the power of the water at the bottom of the drop and was pulled out of my seat. This in turn pulled my spray deck half off so I had little choice but to swim. No doubt some will give a different version of this story – but John himself says me and my boat completely disappeared from view for a few seconds. Anyway, no harm done, not even to my pride – I was in good company with my swimming today – and at least it wasn't grade 1 or 2 this time.

Watch the original 'Italian Job'. Those Minis bouncing down the cliff at the end reminds me of Steve 'MadYaker's boat falling down the steep bank getting in to the river again. Except on the Italian Job there weren't people below. And then to the get out, where Lee was waiting with a big grin – his boat had been found. The big green jelly bean lives on (the boat, not Lee).

Dave

Canoeing or skiing you decide ?!!!!

So unfortunately or fortunately I've not made it out with the club since November but its for a very good reason - I'm in Canada. At present I have no river trips to report but will keep you undated as the snow melts in March and the rivers come into flow!! At the moment I haven't lost touch all together - my hands still get cold in the -15 degree temperatures we have here - my cheeks are still bright red from the sting of the wind / snow and the hot chocolate and cake or alternatively the cold beer at the end of the day are still fantastic :)

Best wishes to every-one for a happy and enjoyable season.

Liz Fridlington

Dulas 20/1/2008

Well it was raining, infact it was raining a lot. Infact it was raining so much we were seeing animals walking around in pairs! We met in Shrewsbury and spent some time deciding on a river we could paddle (safely). We opted for mid Wales (Snowdonia, we'd heard, was flooded!)

We chose a river called the Dulas. Now there is a river called the Dulas that runs through a pretty village called Corris. This is a real gem with nice rapids, pretty scenery—it's got it all really!

Unfortunately we chose the other one—Tree strewn, heavy spate and multiple portages. There were thirteen of us in what can only be described as a ditch, fighting undergrowth in the river and up to our knees in mud on the bank. It wasn't a hard river (grade 2-3 at best), but adrenaline was high. The only good point was that the locals were very very friendly. It was a relief when we finally got to the end. Then it was post haste to the nearest pub! I don't see us repeating this one in the immediate future!

Ian

THE SEVERN RALLY 2007

The Severn Rally is nearly here
We've all been waiting since last year
Kit is checked, tent packed up
Bouyancy aid packed for the pup

Lee's being chef and taking the order
To drive from England over the border
To sizzle his sausage and batter his bun
Its going to add to all the fun

Rain is forecast for the whole event
We don't mind we've packed the tent
The windy days will be a pain
I'd rather have just the rain

But we know what we'll do on the rally
Plenty of paddling and being all pally
Meeting with friends old and new
Eating food and sharing a brew

But at the end we take away
Memories of what we did each day
Photos's to view, stories to share
Paddling buddies who show they care

The rally is over done and dusted
Muscles aching, pain barriers busted
What awful weather we have had
Rain by the boatload, how sad

We paddled on what a steadfast crew
Choccie bars, fags and a brew
Kept us smiling as we paddled on
And on, and on, and on,

The barbeque's all smokey and hot
We rub our bellies, what have we got
Burgers and baps, sausages too
Plenty of time to nip to the loo

Beer and ale, and pop a plenty
Waited on like we were gentry
Lee's cooking has to be the best
A mile above all the rest

Were fed and watered, it's of to the pub
Reminders of the song 'the subub
Jokes and renditions some a bit 'naff'
Help to give us all a good laugh

But soon we dwindle down to a few
Some of us suffering from too much brew
Leaving behind the rest of the crew
Looking back and holding a revue

Our little adventure came to an end
So this poem to you I send
To put in the mag about our little trip
Hopefully catchy - a little hip

To share my thoughts on our little paddle!
To encourage others who refuse to dabble
To join us in our little events
It's time you joined us with your presence

Joyce