

The TRASHER



KINGFISHER CANOE CLUB

January | February 2006

Searching for Gauchos (sneaky paddle in Argentina)

If you go all the way to Argentina for a 'normal' holiday and a bit of kayaking is possible, you've to get your fix.

less, beer £1, meal £2. Bargain! But you must like your meat and a boyfriend that speaks Spanish is highly recommended. Although you

speaking to a travel agent I was booked onto a day on the Rio Mendoza (2 hours am, 2 hours pm), with the assertion that it was only grade 3 at the moment, with the summer melt increasing the volume over the summer months. So I reckoned it would be reasonably easy. Boy, would I eat my words!! It cost £50, pretty expensive but as I only has my nose plug with me, not too bad. And anyway, it had to be done.



After 36 hours, I eventually arrived in Mendoza, western Argentina; just a hop over the Andes from Santiago, Chile. It's the wine-making region, so plenty of opportunities there. The city is very cosmopolitan, with tree-lined streets to keep the hot sun away (November is spring and temperatures were already in the high twenties). To top this off, due to the currency crash in 2000, everything is very cheap; a nice hotel for 2 £20, hostel £10 or much

can get by without one word of the Queen's, it's not much fun as the Argentinians are very friendly and helpful (so much so that I was woken up 3 times in Buenos Aires airport to get my flight, even though I had hours more waiting – I think a sign 'My flight is at 8am, so please leave me to sleep' would be called for in future exploits).

Anyway, a lot of rafting takes place in Mendoza and they have the usual safety kayakers, so after

The river was about an hour's drive west of Mendoza. When I arrived I was met by a turgid brown river that made UK rivers look crystal clear. No pretty blue melt water here; the river was carrying a huge sand load. Apparently the blue rivers are further south and in Chile.

On arriving at Rios Andinos (www.riosandinos.com.ar) base camp, I was offered a S6 190 or a Prozone 200. I was trapped between a rock and a hard place; one boat that crippled me and another that would be very unstable. I chose the Prozone and the inevitable wobbles.

Happy New Year
To All Members
Of The King-
Fisher Canoe
Club - Lets hope
2006 Bring Plenty
Of Paddling For
Everyone.

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Searching for Gauchos (...cont)



“IT’S STRANGE TO BE ON SUCH A BIG VOLUME RIVER AND BE SURROUNDED BY A DESERT LANDSCAPE...”

In true Argentinean style we had to wait around for the bus to arrive and didn’t get on the river until 2pm. So much for 2 hours in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. I had a 24km slog ahead of me. Ah well.

We drove further up river and I chatted to Louis, the French safety kayaker, lamenting that he had the Alps. His response was that I had the Thames! He’d been to Hurley, hasn’t everyone? Apparently, apart from the Rio Mendoza, there are 4 tributaries that can be paddled in the area, but due to their inclination, they reach grade 5. Hmm, not for me then.

We got on the river near Uspallata (famed for the filming of Seven Years in Tibet – work that one out) with the raft guide, 4 customers and Louis. I was told that the river was grade 3 to low 4, and as I could roll, I would be fine. Once we were on the river there was a howling head wind. This river’s spectacular, with the desert foothills of the Andes rising from its banks. It’s strange to be on such a big volume river and be surrounded by a desert landscape. But it’s those hills that channel the wind along the river; it’s always windy. Roll on a bad case of windburn.

Sadly I was right about the Prozone; very wobbly. And I managed to drop straight

into the first hole (must have been having a Knox moment), but thankfully it spat me out. The first section of the river was continuous grade 3, but there were still plenty of holes and I was having big trouble spotting them all. At least the Prozone was long enough to go through them, well mostly.

The bizarre thing was that I could hear something knocking on my boat. Most strange. I eventually realised that it was rocks clack clacking along the riverbed. I guess there must have been a lot of water passing beneath me. Considering that there was still another 2 months of snowmelt before the river reaches its peak, this was pretty impressive. Apparently the grade of the river doesn’t really change, just the size and speed of the water. After my experience, however, I don’t quite believe this.

I soon capsized in an innocuous rapid; the boat’s narrow slicey ends were a nightmare in this volume water. Then I was got by a hole on the right when I was trying to avoid one on the left. Damn! Over again and eventually rolled 2nd time lucky. By this time I’d realised that Louis was aiming for every hole going. Well, as long as I didn’t follow him it should be OK! He was taking many opportunities for a quick play in his Necky Chronic. I was concentrating too hard on staying upright to even consider playing. We passed an evil pour

over called the ‘Terminator’ – a nasty piece of river, aptly named as usual. Glad I got nowhere near that one.

I was originally comparing the river to the Tossens section of the Inn, but it was becoming more like the Lower Oetz. And there was 24km of it (the Lower Oetz was 12km including the bit on the 1st Gorge). Oh god, what had I left myself in for? It was never ending rapids and it was HARD! And we were pegging it down the river; the raft wasn’t waiting for dawdling kayakers. The rapids were getting harder. This was supposed to be low 4????

We stopped for a bite to eat whilst shivering in the wind. Why had I said no to the offer of a wetsuit? I was dripping wet and very cold. I managed a bite to eat and tried not to think too much about what was to come. Off again.

We spotted a huemul, an Andean deer, on the bank, but I didn’t have more than a quick glance to spare; the river needed all my concentration. It didn’t last long though. Somehow I ended up sideways in a hole. Louis was shouting paddle forwards, but it was too late. Over I go. I somehow ended up capsized with my head of the water (much to the fright of the rafters). I tried to eskimo roll off Louis but it was no good, my knees were out of the braces. It was only a matter of time



Searching for Gauchos (...cont)

before my deck popped and I fell out. Swimmer ahoy! Ah, but I had a nice raft to pluck me out of the middle of the river. This is highly recommended. I'd broken my 13-month no swim record. It had to happen sometime, but at least it was on the Rio Mendoza, not the Nene!!

After a break for me to recover, we were off again. Another 2 rolls ensued; one where I was trying to ferry glide (damn stupid slicey boat) and another where I did a perfect pirouette, much to the amusement of those in the raft. It was around this time that a couple of rafters thought they'd have a go a swimming too.

By this time I'd got blisters (and I never get blisters – see? I was trying that hard), my arms were screaming and I'd hurt my shoulder during the swim. And there

was still another hour to go. Ahhhhh! I called it a day, 3 hours and 18km of continuous rapids was enough for little ole me. The evil Prozone and I hitched a lift in the raft. Now I had time to appreciate the scenery and the size of some of the holes. I also had a chance to watch Louis with awe. He looked positively bored unless he was playing in a hole. The only time he went over was when he got munched by a whirlpool. Wow! I was impressed. But he had been paddling in Argentina for 2 seasons and was off to Peru in April, so he should be good. Maybe I should have got his autograph?!

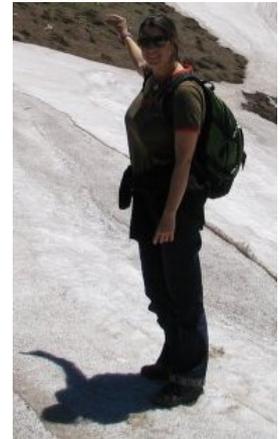
I was glad I'd copped out when we got to a rapid that actually deserved a name (the Confusion). The river channelled between two big rocks and became a turmoil of waves. I'm very glad I didn't attempt it. Even the raft guide lost his grip on

the oar.

Then it was all over. Back to the camp for a shower to warm up and get all the sand out of my ears (it was as bad as the sea). Louis reckoned that I'd done really well and if I'd been in my own boat that was paddled out, I'd have been fine. Ah, what a nice man! It'd been long and hard, I'd tried my best and felt I'd pushed myself and now I have tales of Argentina.

Well the moral of this tale is don't paddle that size river in a Prozone with no foot rests. And never trust the grading system of countries that have 'real' rivers. Grade 3, my arse!

Liz Garnett



Liz Garnett

“AH, WHAT A NICE MAN! IT'D BEEN LONG AND HARD, I'D TRIED MY BEST AND FELT I'D PUSHED MYSELF ...”

Other holiday highlights...

- Taking the boy rafting on the Rio Manso in Patagonia. Beautiful blue river on the border with Chile. The final rapid 'Relax' was the biggest wave I've ever seen on a river – the river was at mega high levels after a winter of heavy snow. See www.extremosur.com

- Payunia National Park has a truly spectacular landscape with highest concentration of volcanic cones anywhere in the world. This must be what it's like on the moon.

- Spotting the Rio Grande. Very scary looking section where a 100m wide river piles into a narrow gorge formed through a lava flow. Apparently it's 30m deep.

- Going to the top of the pass over the Andes that goes to Santiago. At 3500m you can breathlessly photo Aconcagua (highest mountain in the Andes), play in the snow and try to peer at the river way down at the bottom of the valley.



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Booknotes

Brook Street Backwater



Roger enjoying a pint at the Christmas meal.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE RIVER ACCESS CAMPAIGN PLEASE BROWSE TO [HTTP://WWW.RIVERSACCESS.ORG](http://WWW.RIVERSACCESS.ORG)



Tony Wilkins at he recent Christmas meal

As you may be aware, I have been campaigning over the past three years for our legal right of navigation on the Brook Street Backwater, which flows under Grandpont House, near to Folly Bridge in Oxford. Although I have had some correspondence with the Environment Agency Navigation Dept. and others about this obstruction to our legal rights of access, the matter does not seem to have progressed very far.

On Wednesday the 21st December I paddled with the Oxford East Member of Parliament, Andrew Smith, and I discussed this matter with him. I know that Andrew is keen to support the canoeing fraternity on the rights of access issues.

Andrew has taken this matter up on behalf of paddlers with the Environment Agency. I am in receipt of a copy of Andrew's letter to the Agency; I would be pleased to share this with anyone interested. If you would like a copy, please call in at Riverside and I will gladly share this with you.

Sincerely

Dave Homes

Wendy has passed me a couple of KCC branded womens tops (Medium) which

she doesn't want. Let me know if you are interested in buying them. - Dave H.

I have 15 loop passes for the weekend of 14 and 15 January. The plan is to go down on Friday evening and stay 2 nights which will cost £28 for bed and breakfast.

I will be booking accommodation at the Dart Centre on Thursday 5 January. If you are interested in coming along please email me or telephone 01235 769675 for more details.

Please send a cheque for £28 to 8 Winchester Way, Wantage, Oxon OX12 9EW, or bring it to the monthly meeting on Wednesday - I will need payment before I book.

People who have expressed an interest so far: Ben Williams, James Crask, Liz, Margaret,Tristan.

Happy New Year!

Vicky Rolls

I want to do the BCU aquatic first aid course and could do at longridge near hurley (<http://www.longridge.org.uk>) on the 25th Feb but it clashes with a something else I may

be doing so I have been ringing round to find out when and where else I can do it. I also want to get on and do it asap as I have been a bit slack on first aid and dont want to get caught out, so if I can get organised before the end of Feb so much the better.

The Nene white water centre would run the course (8 hours, around £50) with a minimum of 4 people and we could set the date. I am obviously keen, and I know Kent Dixon was too (I have cc him in too) would you know of two other people who might want to do it as well so I can try to organise a date?

many thanks

Iain (Shield)

10% discount on Helly Hansen

www.bigbluemountain.com are offering 10% discount and free delivery on Helly Hansen LIFA products. Simply quote promotional code 'SC105'. If you are not on the web, you can order a catalogue by phoning 01797 227300

Bits and Bobs

Pink, squeaky hippo alert

Anal retentive readers (ARRS) might recall the story of the plastic bath toys that made an incredible journey west to east through the north-west passage related in this learned journal some time ago. In the same vein (capillary?), a much shorter journey is being made by 60,000 pink, squeaky hippos washed off a boat in the English Channel. These are now coming ashore on our south coast. So when wading out to go surfing not all the pink blobs emitting weird sounds are jelly fish. Incidentally, any guesses what AARST stands for? More goodies at/from the sea

In a re-run of the saga of SS Cabinet Minster that inspired Compton Mackenzie to write *Whisky Galore* (later made into a film) some 92 tons (worth around a million pounds) of whisky has been swept off a German ship, *Endeavour*, while en route from Glasgow to Spain. The incident happened 36 miles of the west coast of Wales. How about a few surfing weekends to the Gower and Hell's Mouth?

The sport of Kings?

No, not horse racing or even kayaking: and not freshwater fishing – despite the Environment Agency support for women involvement in fishing (see www.fishingforeveryone.com), watch out for the publicity campaign. So back to the ancient sport restricted to the highest ranks – only Ali'i or high chiefs were entitled to ride an Olo. The sheer size and weight required a team of servants to lug it down to the beach and help with the preliminary prayers and beating the water surface with Pohuehue – a long stemmed seaweed

while reciting "Arise, arise you great surfs from Kahiki. The powerful, curling waves, arise with the Pohuehue, well up long raging surf"

Yes, we are talking about surfing in Hawaii. On his last voyage, Captain Cook saw natives surfing canoes off Tahiti in 1777 and described it as "the most supreme pleasure" guarantees to ease "perturbation of mind". When he reached Hawaii or, as he named it, the Sandwich Islands, in 1778 Captain Cook became the first European to witness board surfing.

The natives initially treated Captain Cook as an emissary of Lono, god of recreation and surfing – however, during an argument over a missing canoe, Cook was killed. His lieutenant, James King, described how the native Hawaiians lay themselves upon an oval plank of wood and waited for a great swell, pushing forward with their arms. The lower ranks of both sexes had smaller, lighter boards, but the Ali'i rode massive boards. To mark the 250th anniversary of Cook joining the Royal Navy (and 227 years after Cook witnessed surfing in Hawaii), probably the oldest, heaviest, biggest and most revered surfboard has been shipped from Hawaii for the first time and is on display at the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum in Marton near Middlesborough. It is made of dark red solid Koa wood, stands 14.5 feet tall and weighs in at 148 lbs. The finished board has a blunt rounded nose and squared-off tail. The dark lustre was achieved by polishing first with granulated coral and then with the root of the Ti plant and finally dressed with Kukui oil. The board is known to have been the

property of High Chief Abner Paki in 1830, but is thought to be much older – maybe dating back even to the visit of Captain Cook. A final thought. Today, the advent of thick neoprene wetsuits, allows us to enjoy the thrills of surfing off the coast of Britain, even if the sun and palm trees are missing: 6 to 8 feet swells are not uncommon at Saltburn – not far from Cook's birthplace. Based on a Daily Telegraph article, 24/10/05. Martyn Green

Beware Rolling in the Thames Tideway

A study by Italian scientists reveals that around 2 kg of cocaine is flushed into the Thames every day from London's sewage works. This equates to about £100,000 a day at current street prices and suggests that 4% of the six million Londoners regularly snort cocaine. No information is available about the concentrations in the upper Thames – but it makes sense to keep your mouth shut when rolling.

At long last, new KCC hoodies arrive

Most of the members have now received their new items of clothing emblazoned with the new embroidered club logo. Despite one or two early doubts, the design looks good and was well-received by members. Many thanks to Katie for the design – the Club has commissioned a hoodie and T shirt as a small token of thanks. It remains to be seen whether KCC clothing can reach the ultimate heights/depths of fashion enjoyed first by Burberry check last year and by Prada trainers this year – both are strict no-nos under

the printed dress codes used by doormen/bouncers for Manchester night clubs. Will KCC logos become the next forbidden item on the dress-codes for Fort William's night spots?

Missed the chance to order your own garment – see the secretary or myself to get your name on the list for the next order.

Wilder wilderness?

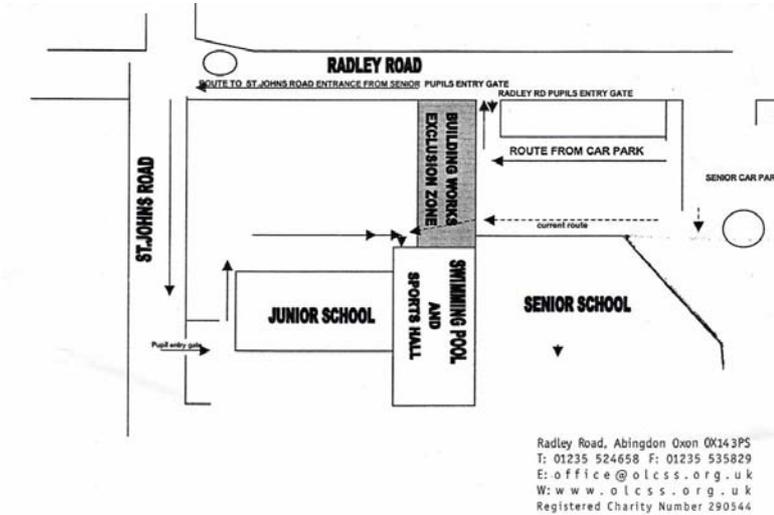
Ambitious animal arrivals arrayed
Bavarian beavers badly betrayed
Clever Cotswold compound confined
DEFRA disallowed detention demand
Excited echoes, existence extended
Former Findhorn frontier fissured
Grizzlies, great
.....

With apologies to Alaric A Watts - "An Austrian Army awfully Arrayed" see <http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/webstuff/poetry/Watts-AnAustrianArmy.html>
Surely someone can improve and complete my poor doggerel. It refers to the re-introduction of European Beavers into the Cotswolds and the proposals to reintroduce two wolf packs (each 12 to 15 strong), 30 bears and 6 lynx to the Highlands of Scotland. The Findhorn connection is that legend holds that the last wolf was hunted and killed in the upper reaches of the river in 1743 – having been cleared out of England and Wales by the end of the 13th century.

Martyn Green

The TRASHER

Diary



SWIMMING POOL HIRE 2005/2006

We have again been able to book the swimming pool at Our Lady's Convent Senior School, Radley Rd. Abingdon. We have a provisional arrangement for both the Autumn and the Spring Term excluding half term and Christmas Holidays.

JANUARY	05 XMAS	12 PF	19 KCC	26 SCOUTS
FEBRU- ARY	02 SCOUTS	09 SCOUTS	16 1/2 TERM	23 PF
MARCH	02 KCC	09 PF	16 KCC	23 PF

A MAJOR BUILDING PROJECT to construct a new Sports Hall across the internal roadway and the playing field at the end of the swimming pool has started at the Convent School.

As a consequence and with immediate effect our normal route from the Senior School car park along the internal road is no longer available to us. The fire exit double doors through which we normally take boats is also not available to use.

The route from the Senior School car park (normal one) will be as shown on the attached map. That is around the tennis courts out of the pupil entry gate into Radley Rd.; left to the round about; left into St. Johns Rd. and back into the school via the Junior School pupil entry; around the Junior School and into the normal single door entry for the swimming pool.

The building project is not a Junior Project and use of the Junior School entry and playground is by kind permission of the the Junior School Head. I am advised that any misuse of this route and the permission could be withdrawn and therefore use of the pool.

Be aware that there is next door to no parking available in St. Johns Rd during the evening (or at any time in my experience). SMALL KAYAKS can be taken into the pool by being carried along the route described above using great care, especially when entering the pool along the tiled corridor.

The hose used for cleaning kayaks will not be available so kayaks coming to the pool must be scrupulously clean paying particular attention to the areas under grotty airbags. Preferably take them out.

Emergency exit from the pool will be via the double white doors between the two changing rooms.

I am sure that over time the area around the pool entrance will become muddy. Please try not to cart it into the pool. If in doubt take your shoes off.

KCC EVENTS

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Organiser</u>
St. Patricks Stream	November 20th	Tony Wilkins
4 Star Training & Assessment Kayak, South Wales	10th - 11th December	Roger Wiltshire
River Cherwell	December 18th	Tony Wilkins
River Usk White Water Trips & BCU 4 Star	8th Jan 2006	Roger Wiltshire
River Usk White Water Trips & BCU 4 Star	19th Feb 2006	Roger Wiltshire
Dart	15th Jan 2006	Vicki Rolls
Upper Wye Trip - Llangurig to Rhayader	Sunday, March 26th 2006.	Pet/Ellie Collins

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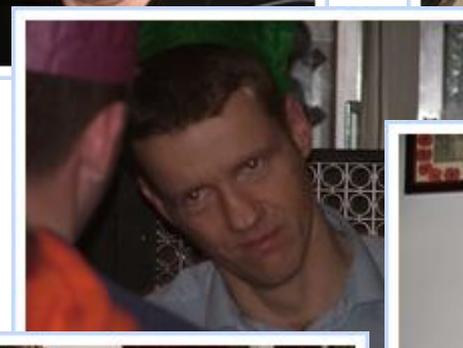
KCC 2005 Christmas Meal

The evening of Wednesday the 21st saw 49 KCCers and partners squeezed into the Lantern in Steventon. This was a great opportunity to catch up with the lesser spotted members and find out what they have been up to over the last 12 months. Dave Surman organised the now legendary raffle with a

variety of prizes. I have a few photos of the evening, although I made the mistake of putting it down at some stage, resulting in a random selection of photos (Thanks to Simon and Mike!). Apologies if your meal did not meet your expectations, hopefully the company made up for this. Also

apologies to those club members that I had to turn down - I'm sure those that were there would agree there was no more room. I'll make sure my successor knows that we need a bigger (and better) venue next year. Perhaps it's time for a curry again next year?

- Dave Hodgkinson



SURPRISE SURPRISE! – A WEEKEND ON THE DART

“IT WAS VERY WORRYING TO SEE ALL THE CREEK BOATS JUXTAPOSED AGAINST MY SMALL PIECE OF PLASTIC.”

After being stuck in a classroom, during the hours of daylight - all week, I was really looking forward to going away and paddling; fresh air and stress relief certainly sounded appealing. However, when Friday eventually arrived it was a different story. I would like to say that I was excited about the prospect of going away for the weekend, but I had a dark nagging doubt in the back of my mind, which cast a gloomy shadow over my whole outlook. In fact, it was wet, freezing cold and I was bloody tired – why would I want to trek down to Devon at 6.30pm on a Friday evening, when I could snuggle up on the sofa with a few cans of beer?

Luckily, Andy Newell and Louise arrived to pick me up, so I didn't have too long to dwell upon this cosy image. With the rain pounding down we picked up Lee and headed off to Devon.

The journey was full of the usual horror stories, which did nothing to improve my mood. Images of recirculating stoppers, strainers and vertical pins told me that I had every reason to be gloomy and worried. Just as well, I thought, that I'd remembered to pack my walking boots. However, before we'd gone too far the rain eased off

and had totally ceased by the time we crossed into Devon.

We arrived at the centre with only an hour to spare before the bar was to shut. We were greeted by lots of friendly faces including Andy Mac and Lisa, and we were soon joined by Simon, Helen, Dave S, Dave Hodge, Ben W and Marcus. The cloud of doom was lifted with the aid of a few glasses of the 'black stuff'. In fact, by the time I climbed into bed, I was feeling surprisingly confident, about my chances of paddling. Particularly, as I'd been **reliably** informed that it would be 'just the right level'.

Next morning, just as we were finishing breakfast, Andy Mac and Marcus arrived back from their 'before breakfast run'. This was a deliberate ploy to get one over on Chris W, who wasn't arriving until later. In the meantime, Louise, Dave Hodge and Simon had established that the river was indeed the perfect level to paddle – high and very bouncy. Just right for paddling an S6X – not!

After the usual faffing and a bit more, I found myself in the car heading for Dartmeet. My nerves had taken grip again, but Louise and Lee remained positive and by the time I

reached the get in I had psychologically committed myself. Once I had made the decision, I felt a wave of relief – I was going to paddle 'The Upper Dart'.

The get in was relatively gentle, not what I'd expected or imagined, but all the same, it was very worrying to see all the creek boats juxtaposed against my small piece of plastic. I needn't have worried - my little boat bounced over waves and manoeuvred around rocks brilliantly – well on Saturday anyway!!!

Rapids, rocks, boulder gardens and drops, one after the other; it was exhilarating. My nerves gave way to an adrenaline rush. Everything that I'd learnt in Austria was put into action. Although it was scary, it was the most thrilling paddle of my life, and to top it all off there was stunning scenery too. Two swims, a bump on the head and a scraped nose did not dampen my jubilation. I wasn't brave enough to tackle Euthanasia Falls because I could not see a route through. However, I did run Surprise Surprise with very little difficulty, unlike Andy N who had to purchase a new set of paddles. I wonder what Anna and Ben will think of their Christmas present?

I was disappointed to find that Surprise Surprise and

the following rapids were the last major spots, and in fact, the end of the run was a let down after all the excitement. I can't take all the credit for reaching the bottom in one piece – Dave Hodge and Louise were both rational inspirational leaders; infusing me with great confidence, and Lee, Simon and Andy N also helped to make the trip memorable.

As we got to the car park Andy Mac, Marcus and co were leaving to do their second Upper run of the day, after having run The Erme as well. Simon, Andy N and Lee decided to run the Loop. The rest of us decided to call it a day and find a tea shop; the onion and ale soup was absolutely delicious.

Just as well that we ate out as the centre was absolutely packed out by the time we sat down to drink. Food orders were taking up to two hours, which didn't go down well. Luckily, the bar was well stocked with beer – just a shame that they run out of glasses to serve it in! However, we had a fantastic evening listening to a variety of presentations from manufacturers, as well as groups about their expeditions. KCC did really well out of the raffle, particularly Dave S who now has a new outfit. Lisa also had the possibility of being coached by Olli Grau the following morning.

Morning arrived with accusations of snoring. Snoring that couldn't all be assigned to Lee, but the less said about that the better. Lisa booked her place with Olli, and the rest of us headed to Dartmeet for another great day of paddling.

Indeed, it was another absolutely fantastic paddle except for one blip, which involved a nasty surprise. The level was lower than Saturday's. It called for more technical skills as there were a lot more boulders to avoid, but this wasn't a problem - it was a challenge. In fact, I was really proud of myself. I ran Euthanasia Falls no trouble – well, there was a roll but no swim. I avoided a last minute collision with a wall of rock and had a thoroughly good time. My confidence was increasing and I thought that I would give 'Surprise Surprise' another go, despite the fact that I had been warned that the run in was trickier in lower water.

I should have thought twice when I saw Simon broached across the top, but at least he was in arms reach of the bank. I waited for him to be pushed free and then Dave S whizzed past. It was then time for me. I decided to stay as far left as possible, so it was a huge surprise to suddenly spin into the centre left. It was an even bigger surprise when I ended up in

the middle, and a bloody great big surprise when I ended up heading centre right – not the place to be upright let alone in a vertical stern pin – sinking fast. I quickly released my spray deck which posed a problem as water started to pile up on it. Luckily, I managed to manoeuvre my body and legs out of the boat and floated to the bottom of the drop, where I was rescued, which is more than can be said for my boat; I was very dismayed to look up the river and see it still vertically pinned, but I was extremely relieved to find myself in one piece and it was certainly a surprise in more than one way.

I need not have worried about my boat. Andy Mac, harnessed to a rope, waded in and with the help of Andy Newell, Simon and various other people liberated it from the grip of the rocks. I will certainly be investing in a creek boat in the not too long distant future!

All in all it was an absolutely fantastic weekend. We had good weather, excellent water, plenty of beer and most importantly, first rate-company. Thank you to everyone for making my first Upper Dart trip such a memorable one.

- Vicki Rolls

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IN ..."



Magic Knees News



Chris Wheeler

(Photo pinched from James Farquhar-son)

I forgot to write anything back in October. So, what's happened over the last four months? With Hurley down to one gate yet again and the predicted cold dry Winter upon us, we would appear to be experiencing our worst Thames Valley play boating season since the legendary drought of 1996/1997. It looks as if we might as well leave the creek boats at home over New Year and take the bikes (and sea kayaks?!). Still, the autumn's been pretty good.

SEA KAYAKING

Cornwall (27/28 Aug)

Julia and I paddled the south coast from Fowey eastwards to Looe, paddling into Polperro harbour for lunch. Very picturesque. On day 2, we paddled the north coast from Port Isaac eastwards to Boscastle, stopping off at Tintagel for lunch. Boscastle was a strange sight, with all the gaps where buildings used to be!

South Devon (10/11 Sep)

This time, we had a large group, including Any Mac and Lisa, who followed us on foot, and also went surfing. We paddled from the deserted village of Hallsands westwards

to Salcombe and the next day from Port Hope eastwards to Salcombe. It's a very nice stretch of coast.

Anglesey (15/16 Oct)

This was a training weekend, with Aled Williams of Rockpool Kayaks. We paddled half of Holy Island, taking in the Stacks and tidal races, and on the Sunday we paddled out to the Skerries. The latter was the first proper open crossing I'd done where we couldn't see the destination paddling out. We had to paddle back against wind and tide- maybe this sea kayaking malarkey isn't so boring after all.

Vietnam (Whitsun 2006)

I'm trying to sort out a trip to Ha Long Bay, which might happen if I ever manage to get in touch with local sea kayaking company Handspan (www.handspan.com).

UK CREEK BOATING

South Wales (29/30 Oct)

The usual gang, including Andy Mac, paddled the Melte in low water on the Saturday and then on 'Big Sunday', the Upper and Lower Tawe and Mellte. We knew it was going to be big when Andy had to wade barefoot from the B&B to get his car. We hiked up away from the road to put on the Tawe high up in the hills on what was nothing more than a mountain stream at over 500 metres. Portaging the tree infested gorge gave us time to pick off the Mellte too in the same day- fantastic! McDoom got a major working on the latter. Bizarrely, I slammed into a rock head on whilst on the Lower Tawe. I wish I'd had some padding on the footrest because I could barely walk or drive the next morning.

Devon (5/6 Nov)

The following weekend, we

had another 'Big Sunday'. After a warm up on the Upper Dart on the Saturday, on Sunday morning everything was too high, so it was off to the moors for some mountain stream boating. This entailed the Upper Upper Plym, the West Dart/ Upper Dart and East Dart/ Upper Dart. The Upper Dart was pretty terrifying- we all got a good working- I had my helmet ripped off in the process and had to finish the river off bare headed!

Devon (3/4 Dec)

The rain returned just in time to save the day at Westgarth's Adventure Paddlers weekend. With a big turnout from KCC and an evening of talk shows (including a fine effort from Mark on Bolivia), this was a hugely enjoyable weekend. No big spate days this time, but even so, we caught the Erme at a decent medium and the Upper Dart at 5, and on the Sunday the Upper Dart again. Paddling with KCC, I recorded my slowest time in years, of 2 hours 45 minutes, a very different experience from our previous 35 minute spate run!

INDIA (Easter 2006)

Andy Mac and I will be paddling in India during the first two weeks of April, with the usual suspects. I have paddled in India before- back in 1995- I must be a glutton for punishment. This time, we're going to be paddling west of the Ganges, finishing up in Manali.

Chris Magic Knees 23 Dec 2005