

The TRASHER

Tetley Times - February Edition

Paddling with the bigger boys

Friday

It was Friday evening, I was watching Hollyoaks and looking forward to a nice quiet weekend when my mobile rang. It was McDoom with a cunning plan to head up to North Wales for the weekend for a 'quiet' one. I was told there would be McDoom, Me and Chris. I was told there wasn't much rain forecast so the rivers would be low and we'd probably do the Mawddach and some others if they were running. I was told that McDoom and Chris would take it easy for me. For some reason, I briefly lost sanity and accepted the invitation. After hanging up, I recalled my Scottish experience with McDoom so I checked out the trusty Welsh rivers guidebook (thanks Simon!). The book described 3 sections on the Mawddach - upper (grade 5), middle (grade 3-4) and lower (2-3) - alarm bells start ringing, does he mean the upper? I then started recalling that this was Dave Surman's nemesis river. Immediately I was back on the phone to McDoom to check which section he was talking about doing. He assured me that it would be the middle (grade 3-4) and not Dave S's nemesis - the upper, so with that in mind I calmed down and got my kit ready for the next day.

Saturday

At 7am I arrived at McDoom's and was told we would be waiting for Steve and Dave S (so that's 5 of us). I headed up with Steve who let slip that there was actually going to be 9 of us and chuckled when I told him that Andy had said we would be doing the middle section. Time for a reality check! As a welcome distraction, Steve and I had the now regular sight of the boats on McDoom's roof flapping about in the wind at 90 mph on the M6. We stopped off at Telford services for McDoom to tie the



boats on properly, for what now felt like my last ever breakfast and to let Dave Surman have his first hot chocolate of the day. After coming across the second road in



North Wales that was closed because of flooding and seeing the rivers swollen and resembling oxtail soup, I was starting to wonder just how low the rivers we were planning to do were going to be...

Finally we arrive at the get-out alongside the Mawddach. It was looking more like an alpine river! The plan was rapidly being formed on the riverbank - The Gain followed by the Upper Mawddach. On checking both in the trusty guidebook I found them both to be

grade 5! As I had my brand new H:3 which I hadn't paddled before, I was given a reprieve to do the Eden (grade 3-4) with Dave S and Andy Levick whilst the others did the Gain on condition I would do the Upper Mawddach later.

Eden

The Eden get-in was through a gateway with a friendly 'no canoeing' sign - whatever. The river was a really nice grade 3-4 run. It started with gentle rapids and boulder gardens before becoming slightly steeper. There was a small gorge section in the middle with a tree to avoid. Finally there were more rapids and a broken weir before joining the much larger volume Mawddach. The section of the Mawddach we paddled down to the get-out was good with the legendary "Public Toilet Falls" (nice name) and a few other rapids. Then it was time to wait for the guys who were on the Gain. As time went on, Andy Levick and I agreed that it was getting too late to do the Upper Mawddach, but I knew deep inside that we would be eating our words as soon as the others turned up.

Eventually the others turned up after Chris had a mini epic at the end of the Gain. As predicted, Andy Levick and I

caved in and agreed to do the Upper Mawddach as 2 hours of light would be more than long enough (*déjà vu*).

Upper Mawddach

Quicker than a shake of a lamb's tail I found myself at the Upper Mawddach get-in, putting my spray deck on whilst watching most of the group paddle out of view. The chase was on. Within a minute or two I had done what is now known as 'Dave's fall' where Dave S had his epic. It wasn't a big as I was expecting although it was a tricky slot which pushed you into a rock face. I left the skin off a couple of my knuckles on the rocks as a memorial to Dave's shoulder. It was a good reminder that it's not only the mega falls that can cause serious injuries.

The first section was essentially pool drop. Eventually McDoom and I caught the others up at the first inspection/portage. Needless to say I portaged it and I'm pretty sure it is this one that McDoom ran, although that may have been the second... The river then became more gorge like until the second inspection/portage. There were more rapids/drops until the 3rd portage that can only be described as a monster! The falls are probably around 150 ft high onto a slab of rock. A get out you don't want to miss, although legend has it that they have been run.

At this point the Gain joins the Mawddach and the river becomes more gorge like again. At this point Chris tells me that he is impressed with my paddling - a cue for me to mess up, which I did going over a really small drop. Before I knew it I was upside down! A few attempts at rolling and I was back upright - my first roll in my H:3, assisted by the knowledge that Chris was watching me! One notable drop in the gorge was around 5ft high which pushed you towards an overhanging

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Continued

“After ‘see no evil’, the paddle to the get-out at beaver pool seemed a walk in the park.”

cliff. Miraculously I was the only one to get a good line on this drop with everyone else hitting the rocks or capsizing, especially so as they had all run it earlier when they did the Gain.

Within no time I could see we were approaching the Eden confluence and the end of the Upper Mawddach. One last 6ft drop remained. We did this one by one like lemmings and amusingly most



of us ended up trapped in a circulating eddy. After 10 attempts I managed to free myself and it was the familiar territory down to the get out and a sigh of relief. We even got off in daylight! Only one issue remained - foolishly my dry kit was in Steve's car at the get-in, so I had to hang around for what seemed forever waiting for my dry kit to arrive. Luckily the toilets had hand dryers that I used regularly to warm myself up.

The journey to Betws Y Coed was made more exciting by the fact that Steve had virtually no petrol left. We drove through countless towns and villages and didn't find a single petrol station. Luckily we made it to BYC and 'civilisation' where we stayed in a bunkhouse with the smallest 'non-drying' room but excellent lamb and leek pie, beer and hospitality. After the excitement of the day, we were in bed before 11pm - that's even before last orders!

Sunday

There is no better way to start a paddling day than with a 'full english', except when in Wales when it is apparently a 'full welsh'. For some unknown reason, the full welsh doesn't include beans, so we instead we all ordered 'full welsh with beans' to the hotel owner's disgust.

Fairy Glen

Having previously heard the stories of epics on the Fairy Glen I decided to not read the description in the guidebook (what you don't know...). On the way up to the get-in, we stopped for a quick inspection of the falls halfway down Fairy Glen. This is where the reality of what I was about to do sank in. This was HUGE stuff. A quick dash up to the get in and a change into cold wet kit in the freezing cold, being bombarded by giant hailstones - one of those 'why the hell am I doing this' moments. A quick thought of being sat at home watching the Eastenders omnibus soon made me realise why I was doing this.

The river started with a brief paddle to the first inspection of the drop that claimed a victory over Chris at New Year. Before McDoom had spoken I had spotted the chicken chute on river left and my mind was made. A quick check of the next drop (left) and the next (boof over rock in the middle) was made. The river then went into a narrow gorge and the unknown. The chicken chute went well, I managed to get the 'wrong' left on the next drop ('vicious stopper' in the guidebook) having misread the towback as a friendly eddy (Doh!). Luckily a quick switch to 'effective' forward paddling with proper body rotation got me out of my mess. The situation and possibly my face provided much amusement to everyone else. I did a perfect boof over the rock ('big stopper', 'siphons' and 'fatalities' in the guidebook) and then it was into the unknown...

The gorge contained a long continuous rapid, one part of which managed to capsize me. A few rolls later and I was upright but slammed into the rocks. At some point I managed to scratch my shiny helmet whilst upside-down (battle scars). A quick breather and on I went. The gorge opened out just above the falls (grade 5+/6) we had inspected on the way up. Needless to say everyone except McDoom portaged this.

On getting back in just below the grade 6 fall, McDoom gave me detailed instructions on how to do the next rapid (right-middle-left-breakout left) and told me to follow him. Luckily Mark, the only other person left, went on so I followed him instead with Andy following behind. Thanks to Andy's instructions I did the line perfectly, only to

turn around at the end to spot Andy running most of it backwards on the right hand side (no-go zone). He survived.

The gorge closed in again, starting with the 'pipeline' rapid leading on to the inspection of the 's-bend' (right-middle-right, not left). The s-bend went well. The gorge then flattens out and leads to a



huge horizon line with no way of inspecting it ('see no evil'). I watched the others do this with the helpful commentary from McDoom 'a bit further left than that', 'a bit further right', 'spot on' as each person seemed to take the same line. Finally there was only Andy and me left so it was my turn. Unfortunately I took the line a little too left and goofed my boof, managing to land sideways in the stopper to the left. I took a deep breath and assessed the situation. Looking downstream I could see the others beyond another fall and upstream was a wall of water. I tried moving forwards, backwards and prising myself out of the hole with no luck. I had to resort to plan B so I tried spinning the boat and before I knew it, I was upside down. A very quick roll and I found myself heading towards the side of the gorge but out of the hole! Out of nowhere Andy arrived, just missed me and off we went and joined the others.

After 'see no evil', the paddle to the get-out at beaver pool seemed a walk in the park. Luckily, as it was so cold, everyone had had enough. We headed to the internet café in 'cotswolds' for a warm up, debrief, update ukr gb and to let Dave S have a hot chocolate. Thanks to the 'bigger boys' for giving me such a great experience and looking out for me: Andy McDoom, Chris, Swindon Steve, Kev F, Mark, Andy Levick and Dave S.

“ We did this one by one like lemmings and amusingly most of us ended up trapped in a circulating eddy.”

RODEO GRANDUDE NEWS



Yup its another rushed edition packed with important news of whatsa a comin up.

POSSIBLE WEEKEND TRIP TO The DRANSE, ALPS Sat/Sun May7/8

Manu has invited us to join the Argentan club for this weekend

0700 Easyjet flight to Geneva arr 9.40. Get picked up by Manu and taken to the river about 25 mins. Paddle and stay in mobile homes on campsite. Paddle Sunday morning good grade 3+ alpine dam release river get taken to airport for 17.35 flight.

I do not have time to coordinate this but Vicky Rolls has kindly volunteered. If you may be interested you must contact her NOW as the cheap flights must be booked very soon to get the price of £60 RETURN.. Other spending should be minimal as the French can get a twinning subsidy. Its a great opportunity we've done it a couple of times before but YOU will have to act NOW if you want it to happen.

Contact vicky-rolls@hotmail.com or on 01235 769675 who will coordinate. I can also give more info if you want.

DRAGON BOAT DAY Sun May 15

We usually have a stand Kingfisher/Pathfinders to do some p.r. work also a B.Y.O. BBQ. Volunteers needed to help out. Speak to me

ALPS TRIP ONE OR TWO WEEKS SAT JULY 23/30/ AUG 7

Probably French Alps. If you think you may be interested let me know NOW and come to a preliminary meeting at the Fox on Wed March 16 to throw around ideas. There are possibilities for one week or two. It would be helpful to know who is willing to drive and whether they are willing to take passengers.

PATHFINDERS STARTS MON APRIL 18

Anybody interested in coming along to help would be very welcome 6.30

ANY FURTHER DETAILS ON ANY OF THE ABOVE PHONE DAVE SURMAN

01865 373115 OR davidsurman@hotmail.com

TRIP REPORT TRASHINGS ON THE BIG D OR THE "Day of two halves"

Hmmmm. Now howabout this for a scenario? Our heroes Dave S. Lee, Ian, and Andy N turn up at the Dart and decide that it may be a little high so go off to do the Tavy. The rain doesn't appear to have kicked in over that side and it appears to be a pleasant but not particularly challenging run. On the way back after another few hours of rain we decide perhaps we will run the Upper Dart which we had decided might be too high before the rain Hmmmm.

After establishing that the ledge level looked good we jumped on, As we pro-

ceeded the water appeared to be getting pushier and we realized that it was going uuuuupppp. Hmmmmmm. After a degree of faffing when a debate occurred as to whether some of us might walk out, Lee had just taken a spectacular swim, we all decided to continue.

Unfortunately Lee practiced the breast stroke again and that was the last he saw of his Werners, ensuring an enforced walk out. By the time we got to Euthanasia it was honking big time so we ran it blind as you do. Unfortunately we forgot that Phil had only run it once before and didnt remember the line. This ended up with a cruising for a bruising swim at the bottom. Boat and body recovered we carried on to Surprise Surprise which was a lot better in high water!

Just when the end was in sight I managed to get broached upside down upstream on a rock which seemed like not a nice place to be so I baled out! A long walk followed as the others boat chased and found it just above Newbridge!

The Dart Centre was not doing accommodation that night so we hit another BnB and then Phil and myself did another run on the Sunday when the level was down.

All this potential carnage was injury free so it was ironic that after arriving home we were unloading our boats when I tripped over a strap and nose butted the ground. This ensured a trip to the J.R. and a 3 hour wait in casualty! So much for risk assessments.

Dagger G-force 6:1 for sale(Middle size).

Almost brand new, light scratches, used only a handful of times, mainly in a pool. Still with outfitting kit, footblocks etc. Brand new IR Flex Capacitor backrest fitted. Fantastic out and out playboat, lots of fun. Orange Manufacturers details @ <http://www.dagger.com/product.asp?BoatType=WWKayak&BoatStatus=DC&BoatID=97> £400
Leamington Spa area, can't travel much, no transport. Oliver

Dagger id 7.0 (the largest size) For Sale.

Pretty good condition, usual scratches. Excellent river/playboat. Flex Capacitor backrest. Blue/Black mix. £350 Ono Boat Details from manufacturer @ <http://www.dagger.com/product.asp?BoatType=WWKayak&BoatStatus=DC&BoatID=210> It's in Oxford at the moment, owner in Leamington :-)
Demo welcome. Oliver or Lizolrenison@hotmail.com; tizer_eyes@yahoo.com
Leamington Spa area, can't travel much, no transport.



PLEASE SEND ANY ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT TRASHER (MAY/JUNE 2005) to simon.knox@gmail.com BY THE END OF APRIL

New Secretary

It is with regret that I have to inform you all that I have to stand down from the position of club secretary. This is due to me accepting a job near Liverpool which will give me back my weekends, but not enable me to continue with the running of the club and weekday activities. I will continue to stay a member of the club and can now paddle with you on weekend trips. Dave Hodgkinson has kindly agreed to take up the position once I have moved.

Coach required.

I was due to start an improvers course (2star level) in July/August to continue on from the beginners course. I already have one candidate.

If anyone is interested in taking over either of these roles please can you contact either Martyn or myself.

I am sorry to be leaving but it is an opportunity I cannot turn down, and even though I won't be able to see you during the week I will now be able to paddle with you at the weekends.

KCC Goes To The Dog's

Tuesday 12th April 7pm - KCC go to the dogs

Some people have suspected it for a while, but it's true, KCC is going to the dogs - Oxford Stadium to be exact.

The grand plan is to go for the 'six pack party deal' which costs £11. For this you get:

- * Admission
- * Racecard
- * Fast food voucher
- * 2 Drinks vouchers
- * 2 £1 tote vouchers
- * Reserved Seating

More details are available at www.oxfordstadium.co.uk/Offers/SixPack.htm including directions and a guide to the tote system. The first race is at 7-30 and the last around 10-30. The fast food is far from 'a la carte' (e.g. chicken nuggets and chips), but for the money you can't complain. Don't forget you are also getting 2 pints for your money!

If you want to come, email me with the subject 'dogs' and let me know how many tickets you want and I'll book all of the tickets together. If you don't have email or have any questions, give me a call or speak to me in the pub or on the water. Can you let me know by Tuesday 29th March.

The ultimate CD to shuttle rivers to - Tetley

You are a secret agent on the ultimate mission: bandit run AND survive a tree choked ditch in Devon before the evil land owners foil your plans.

The mission is on. You're driving your stinky steamed up car to the get in, wearing damp kit and no one is going to stop you. All you need now is the ultimate soundtrack. Look no further than 'Shaken and Stirred'.

Putting this CD on instantly transforms your trip into a bond style adventure. With covers of John Barry bond classics by top artists such as Iggy Pop, Chrissie Hynde, Pulp and Propellerheads, this CD exists to put you in the right frame of mind.



If you are not feeling too confident, why not have Aimee Man tell you that 'you're the best'. Just before arriving to the get in, pump yourself up with Propellerheads thumping take on 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service'. If you are feeling a little anxious on the river, just recall Iggy Pop reminding you that 'we have all the time in the world'. Finally there is no better way to wind down after your adventure than to pop on Pulp's take on 'All Time High'. Humanity is saved.

Listen to the CD and why not buy it for 5.99 including P&P at:

<http://www.101cd.com/music/info.asp?id=1548509>

Diary

Wednesday Evenings

During the last committee meeting, it was decided to only cater for non-members on the 3rd and 4th Wednesday of each month.

To support this, we need volunteers that are at least trainee L2 coach for these Wednesdays. We also need volunteers to open up the hut on the other Wednesdays. Can you let me know if you would be available for either. I will be creating a rota shortly.

As the first official Wednesday evening is the 20th April, I need volunteers for the 20th and 27th to start with — Dave Hodgkinson

Upcoming Events...

Hurley Classic April 9/10th

See www.thamesweirproject.co.uk

KCC Goes to the Dogs — 12th April

See opposite

Pathfinders Starts April 18th

All help welcome give Dave Surman a call.

Wednesday Paddling starts — April 20th

See above

Surfing at Woolocombe 23/24th April

Contact Glynn and Helen Carter

Dranse, Alps — 7/8th May

Weekend Trip. See Rodeo Grandude News

Dragon Boat Day — Sun 15th May.

See Rodeo Grandude News

Beginners Course Starts — 17th May.

See elsewhere in this issue or contact Ellie

Alps Trip — One or Two weeks July 23/30 Aug 7th.

See Rodeo Grandude News.

TRASHER ONLINE!

Current and back issues are available at:

<http://www.kingfishercanooclub.co.uk>

You'll need to login to access the download links, the current username and passwords are:

Username: kingfisher

Password: hurley

This will direct you to a download page. I've converted all the editions to PDF format so you'll need Adobe Acrobat Reader or a similar program to read them.

IF YOU WOULD PREFER TO SAVE SOME TREES AND ACCESS THE ELECTONIC COPY ONLY LET ME KNOW AND I WILL STOP SENDING YOU A PAPER COPY.



Wednesday Evenings Paddling Starts April 20th

Dart Experiences

Glynn Carter

A great weekend. The sun was shining (blindingly). Water just lapping the slab on Saturday gave us a good start. I (Glynn) was in a group with Helen, Lucile, Francis and Kevin. Roger, Alastair and Co. went to the upper whilst we and Elly's group were set for the loop. Elly set off in front and we followed shortly behind.



Kevin on the seal launch

My aim was to stabilise the group in their kayaks so we took every opportunity to play eddies and waves before we entered the bigger stuff. It was also a good excuse to play in what was available myself. Elly was even concerned that we had an incident because we took so long to catch her group. Kevin took the opportunity to practise his rolling quite a few times. Good rolls Kevin. Going on down stream we all worked very hard with no spills.



Lucile on the seal launch

I was beginning to get the impression that Lucile was game for some fun kayaking as I had already heard in a previous Trasher that she was now happy to get

her hair wet and even took the plunge in reverse off the Symonds Yat rock. When we arrived at the famous Dart seal launch I thought that I would ask her if she wanted to launch. Without second thought and no hesitation it was a definite YES!! Then there was someone else, before I removed myself from my boat Kevin was out and climbing the rock. He decided to go from about half way up whilst Lucile was already heading for the trees at the top. Wow!! I thought she's brave, as I was also thinking, "this is getting high and slippery". Still she climbed until at last she reached a tree to rest behind. I eventually caught up and secured the boat to a tree. Off went Kevin with quite a splash surviving perfectly. Lucile popped into her boat and we set up for the launch not flinching. Are you ready? I shouted with everybody down below and eh! well clear we thought. What speed she accelerated down the slope, perfect line slightly to the right, took off and took loads of air, landed at a slight skew on the water, did the normal under water curve, came up bow high and landed across Elly's deck. Wow! that was fast I thought, probably due to the ground being so wet. She was also still upright and beaming a smile bigger than ear to ear. What a star!!! I think that Kevin deserves recognition for the longest swim of the weekend. The last rapid just before the bridge where you turn off to go into the centre, Kevin decided to take a broadside on the magnet rock top

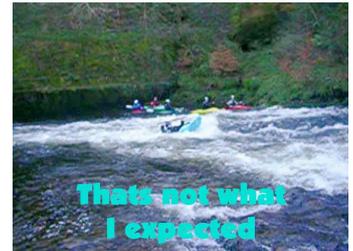
centre of the rapid. Out he came, grabbed Helens boat took loads of high volume verbal advice and then realised that there were a few rocks in the river, Ow! Sh*!# Ow! Oh damn, Ow! Deary me and some such other phrases kayakers know only too well. I think he was quite brave to stay in the rapid all that way. He seemed to be more concerned about where his boat was and how we were going to get it back across the river. I assured him that we rescued his boat and paddles first though so he was quite happy. Roger then caught us up after paddling the upper Dart as well and persuaded Kevin to float the rest of the way and after a duly earned rest did so.



Alastair meeting another group

Helen, Lucile and I carried on down to the Little Chef to pick the car up. There were some really bouncy wave trains on the way until finally Helen wanted to go around to the ?SMALL? weir at the end of the field. This is nice she said and in she went. IN being the operative word. If Helens boat wasn't as big (Pyranha i3 22l) think she would have still been there. I've never heard the words "I'M STUCK" shouted so loud from under water. Ejecting myself from my boat to go to the rescue, I fell in and was totally soaked after staying dry all the way down. Helen then somehow

performed a classic stern squirt and was spat out of the wave with a big smile (so did the wave have) taking the Mick as I had fallen in. No gratitude sometimes you know.



That's not what I expected

On Sunday the water was down slightly but still a good level. Having a lot of fun on the way down again we arrived at the third of the Triple Drop. With sun blinding us we could hardly see anything. We paddled through with me taking a roll right in the middle of the jet. Rolling back up I found that I was heading for the left eddy where there was a group resting ready to play in the wave so I thought that I would join them. Gliding into the eddy I saw that Helen was hot on my tail and therefore told a tail. I suggested that I had told Helen to follow me down and do as I do. Strange thing is, she did, rolling in exactly the same wave with a perfect roll up then gliding into the eddy right along side me for a hug. What a result!

Helen and I really enjoyed the weekend with great company, Thanks everybody and also thanks to Vicky for organising a great trip that she couldn't attend.

Glynn

To all KCC members ,

I have enclosed a poster for this years novice course, and I would be grateful to anyone who could advertise it. This includes your place of work,Gym, Sports Centre,and of course your friends and anywhere else that comes to mind. Thank you all for your help.

Regards Ellie



KINGFISHER CANOE CLUB

**INTRODUCTION TO KAYAKING WITH KCC.
(For those over 18yrs. old only)**

STARTING TUESDAY 17TH MAY 2005

LASTING FOR SEVEN WEEKS

6.30PM TO 9.00PM

COST WILL BE £50 FOR 7 WEEKS &

INCLUDES MEMBERSHIP OF KCC UNTIL DEC 2005

**THE VENUE IS THE RIVER BANK AT ABINGDON ROWING
CLUB**

WILSHAM ROAD ABINGDON

ALL KAYAKING (CANOEING) EQUIPMENT WILL BE SUPPLIED

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND TO BOOK

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Usk trip 14-02-2005

"Looking back there was Dave, the water playing him rather than him playing the water."

We set out from Oxford and the sky was grey. As we travelled towards Wales the sky changed to sunshine. Good old sunny Wales here we come. Over the hill and far away we were siding the River Wye. Helen had her hand up shielding herself from the sun, bright and rising to the left. Or was it the sight of the Wye in flood, due to the rain the previous day - it was a scary sight. What will the Usk be like we thought.

We met the group at the Oasis as usual and I suggested that maybe we should run the Wye instead! Not a popular suggestion though. Off we went to inspect the Usk on the way to Talybont. The river was at a good paddling level as we drove through the Blizzard. A wonderful sight was to emerge as the mountains were scattered with snow at the top with sunlight bright and glistening on the peaks.

We arrived at the Talybont access point and I (Glynn) was introduced to a group of paddling friends from

the Birmingham area. The Snow was falling as we waited for the shuttle to return.

Off we paddled and started playing. The first island we came to Geof headed right and we followed. To our dismay, just around the corner, there's a tree right across the river. After the ensuing rescue, brilliantly executed with not much choice, of Dave by Chris then Chris by Dave, the rest of us veered left and safely passed under the tree. Mill House Falls were inspected and ran confidently with everybody going their own way down. The next falls we rode straight over (I believe they are known as Spuhler's Folly). Looking back there was Dave, the water playing him rather than him playing the water. That was exciting he exclaimed. Dave wanted to have another go so I suggested that he might like to inspect the falls and chose a route on the way up. Down he came again, straight through no problem, plop plop plop dead easy. I asked which run he liked best, the first one he said.

The moral to that story is "you don't always have to take the easy route".

We made a fairly fast headway down the rest of the river as we had played quite a lot until now. We caught Roger up, who was running the four star assessment, where he was launching back onto the river after some rope exercises.

Trip finished we all changed in near freezing conditions. The next stop being the pub and a nice hot chocolate, as usual. Complete with Whiskey installed. Here we found Lucile warming her toes etc. etc. almost on top of the open fire while an unnamed participant was outside awaiting his dry clothing as the shuttle didn't quite work the way he thought.

Thanks to Margaret, Geoffrey, Chris, Dave & Richard for making the trip memorable

- Glynn Carter

A Day of Two Halves

Friday night, 10 o'clock in the evening, and I realised that I had missed call from Lee Gill a few hours earlier. Nothing to lose, so I rang him back and learnt that "a posse" was on its way to Devon the next morning. A short discussion with my wife later and I was sorting my kit for an early start the next day.

Saturday dawned and I set off bright and early, calling Lee to let him know I was on my way. Lee was with Andy Newall and I met up with them, Dave Surman and Phil at McD's on the M5. The breakfast lived up (or rather down) to expectations - the day could only get better.

We arrived at the Dart Centre a little while later where we met up with the other KCC group (Andy Mac, Chris W, et al.) and discussions ensued. General consensus was that rivers other than the Dart might be good. While the other group decided to check out the Plym with a fallback to the Erme, we opted to try out the Tavy.

A short while later, we found the

get-in for the Tavy. It was, apparently, a lot lower than when Dave had paddled it previously and according to the guidebook it was bordering on too low. Nevertheless, we decided to paddle.

It was, to be fair, a perfectly pleasant paddle, but not much to write home about. Somewhat rocky in parts, mostly grade 2/3 on the day, with one grade drop perhaps being grade 4. I certainly wouldn't want to paddle it with less water. The overhanging trees, however, made it very clear that with only another couple of feet of water it could get very nasty indeed.

Anyway, we got to the bottom and the group's mood was little downhearted. Perhaps we should have tried the Erme after all? Still, we had time to get to the Dart and maybe that would be more interesting. We weren't going to be disappointed.

We dropped the boats at Dartmeet and drove to Newbridge to drop off 2 cars, where we met up with the other group. They had paddled the Erme but been disappointed. A

quick check of the ledge told me it was a similar height to the Saturday two weeks earlier, when the paddling had been excellent, so we drove back in anticipation, especially since the light rain had strengthened.

Back at Dartmeet, we were quickly sorted and on the river. The hard core launched at the same time, but quickly left us behind. No problem. Anyway, the river was an excellent level, plenty of water and enough challenge to keep us on our toes. Indeed, a few minutes into the run and I realised the river was a little higher than two weeks earlier and slowly rising.

Everything was going fine until we reached the big boulder garden. Unfortunately, at that point Lee came a cropper and had to swim. He got back in his boat, but his usual ebullience was missing; I hoped it wasn't a bad sign.

Shortly after that, we reached Lucky Tor. After a short debate about the left and right channels, we went right. This route actually cuts back to the left about half way

down through a gap below the island. As I lead the way, I found the power of the water wanting to push me onto the rocks in the gap, but I was quickly through and dropped down to the bottom of Lucky Tor. Dave and Phil followed fairly soon and found the same rocks, but Andy and Lee decided they didn't like the look of that and decided to paddle across to the island where they could launch into the left channel further up, thus avoiding the rocks.

Once we were all together again, it was very clear that some of the group were in two minds about continuing. Confidence was lacking, the water level was not for the faint-hearted and the river was still slowly rising. Since the river was now as high as I had paddled it (although I am assured it was still technically only a medium level), I was keen to push on before it rose much more, but it is important that everyone makes their own decision in these situations. In the end, we all decided to continue, so we set off once more.

By this time, the river was at a wonderful level and I was enjoying every drop and every wave. Then our first real disaster struck. Lee swam for a second time, but this time his paddles decided to try the river on their own. Lee and his boat were OK, so I decided to chase the paddles and set off. I believe I was on the stretch known

as the Mad Mile; it was certainly a continuous series of waves and stoppers that went on for some time. I remember thinking I hadn't planned to run the river solo, but there I was effectively doing so.

After a few minutes, the paddles disappeared from sight. I've no idea where they went but there was little I could do but keep going until the river calmed down a little. When it did, I looked around but there was no sign of paddles. Most of the river went off to the right at this point and I paddled along, looking for the paddles. Suddenly, the river disappeared in front of me and I wondered for second where I was. I recognised Euthanasia Falls just as I started to drop over them; I hadn't recognised the run-in at that water level!

Below the drop, I got out the boat and set off back up-river to find everyone else. Unsurprisingly, they were wondering where I had got to. Unfortunately, we had no splits so Lee had no choice but to walk out.

The rest of the group then ran Euthanasia. Andy and Dave had no problems, but Phil swam and the net result was that his boat set off on its own. So then there were three.

Surprise, Surprise was next and that caused no problems. Better still, Phil's boat was waiting at the

bottom. So all the "named" drops were done and we could relax. Not. On the very next drop, Dave (who had had an excellent day until then) got caught on a rock and had to bail out. He got out and his paddles were in reach, so Andy and I chased the boat until it landed on a rock in the middle(-ish) of the river. It was going to take some retrieving if it was jammed, so we got out, at which point it set off on its own with no-one in a boat to chase it. So we were back to three.

A little further on we met up with Lee, who had found someone else's lost splits and re-joined us for the final run to Newbridge. As we arrived, we spotted Dave's boat. Andy and I caught up with it a bit below the bridge. We decided to walk back through the field carrying three boats between us. A bit muddy but that was OK. At least, it was until we suddenly found ourselves knee-deep in slurry. Oh joy. So after all that, the only two of to stay in our boats had no choice but to walk into the river to clean up.

Still, apart from losing Lee's paddle it could have been worse and we had had a day to remember. It was a bit of an epic but speaking personally I thoroughly enjoyed the paddling that afternoon.

Ian Domville

"Lee swam for a second time, but this time his paddles decided to try the river on their own."

More from the Big Boys...



Scotland Feb 2005

Kayakojacko - Advanced

Coaches - Dennis, Chris

Mark, Chris, Pete, Wendy

After speaking to Jacko he told me he'd changed the Advanced course to an intermediate so that I would be able to attend it. I arrived in Scotland to find it was still an advanced course and I was the least experienced (I haven't paddled a river since I went to the French Alps with Jacko and Dennis last June) and again had the lowest volume boat (even though it was my largest).

The journey to Scotland was a long but enjoyable one. Chris and I went via Liverpool so that I could attend an interview. I found out on the journey that I've got the job and proceeded to get very drunk that night. It turned out that I was up for 24 hours that day.

Sunday

Upper Roy - just below rooster falls (low water) to Roy Bridge.

Young Chris came off the first drop backwards but managed to get through the headbanger ok, Chris followed went through upside down and couldn't roll his new boat and swam and Pete had to roll up as well. I walked around the headbanger and sealed launched in just after it to do my first boof off the next drop.

Further down I went over a drop, hit the wall and rolled up. After that I followed Mark and saw him hug a rock rather painfully so I

took a slightly different line that ended up knocking me over and going over the drop upside down and hitting my left cheek bone, my first injury of the week. We practised how to use a cushion wave, the closest I could get was arms length, this proved to my advantage on a river later in the week.

Arkaigh - loch to bridge

Mark and Chris decided not to paddle, when asked what the river was like it ranged from grade 2 to 4 and then 5. Dennis went over the drop first to take pictures, young Chris wasn't the most forthcoming with information as to what was coming up or which line to take. It turned out I took the wrong line over the last drop but I did manage to roll back up just in time to have Pete shoot straight past me and nearly knock me over again.

At the end of it they all jumped off the bridge which I was not entirely keen on. I stood there to jump and it's not as high as the Blue lagoon in Wales, but I didn't want to do it.

Monday

Middle Etive - triple falls to rapids after big man falls (low water)

I was in awe for the entire river. I don't think I could believe that I was actually paddling this on my 2nd day and not working up to it for the end of the week. I went over every drop and survived. On the slot and drop I did a sort of pinball route and decided I don't want to go over the main drop backwards so turning

round lined me up on the right hand side, wrong line but I survived to the amusement of the others. We portaged letterbox and crack of doom, I remember seeing this on the Scotland slideshow the other week. It wasn't until we got to Big Man falls that I realised this was the dog leg where Hodgy had to roll and went over backwards. Just looking down at young Chris made my knees shake. We decided I wouldn't do the dog leg, as I'd never been over a waterfall before, and I'd go straight off the rock. Dennis went through what I had to do to 3 strokes and a power stroke then head down. On the video it looks like he's dancing as he imitates what I have to do. He suggested dropping me off the rock so I could prepare myself to go over the fall, I said that wouldn't be a good idea as it would take me ages to build up the courage to go over. He said he forgot it was me he was pushing off and thought it was Jacko as I hit the water on my boof so hard I can be heard on the video shouting 'ouch!!'. I think I totally forgot to do the strokes and just lent forward, I may even had had my eyes shut as I don't remember seeing anything. I wasn't expecting the force of the water to hit my buoyancy jacket into my chest and push me right onto the back deck of my boat. I think I was just stunned after that, I couldn't believe I'd done it. I ended up having to roll up after going over a 1'-2' drop, just proves again don't relax on the easy bits.

Dennis and Pete went off and paddled the Alt Co.....

"Young Chris came off the first drop backwards but managed to get through the headbanger ok"

Whilst the rest of us got changed.

Tuesday

Alt King Glass to Orchy

After some discussion whilst on the water that the 2nd drop was paddleable we went into the Orchy where we practised various moves. On the bottom play-wave, where we got out, we tried to get across into the tiny eddy. The only time I managed it Dennis filmed it, realised he hadn't formatted the card and had to erase it. I did get close to getting in and my last attempt got me to the rock where I lent the wrong way and went over hitting my nose with my paddles, 2nd injury of the week.

Alt Maughan

A little burn an hours walk from the lower Etive

Dennis and Pete ran this first whilst the rest of us did safety. The river was split into 3 sections: the first boof drop over the 3' drop into the eddy; the dog leg which was like a bobsleigh run; and the final shoot to the waterfall making it a 30'-40' fall but the actual drop was only about 20'. Eventually it was my turn to decide whether to do my first grade 5 burn, I went for it. Aim for the right hand side of the pile on the first drop, young Chris went right, I followed, got spun in the eddy, realised I didn't have time to turn round and went over it backwards, got stuck between the rocks after the little drop and Pete had to pull me out, made it to the first eddy. Phew!! Now for the dog leg. So far everyone had hit their el-

bow on the rocks, I lent in towards it like I was told to but didn't touch it at all, the advantage of my small boat. Pete reckoned I had the best line of everyone but who knows. Now for the bit I was more concerned about. Only just managed to stay upright on the shoot, but unlike the others I didn't smash my paddles on the rocks, realised I was at the drop and lent forward, came up hit the rock and had to roll back up. Best river I've done!!

Wednesday - day off went hiking in the rain.

Thursday

Spean Gorge - 6 pipes and over the top of the dam.

It was windy, rainy and boily. I found it hard work from the beginning and I hate the boils. There were no distinguishing features at all. The boils spun me, showed me the sky and flipped me over, I rolled up about 4/5 times. I hated the entire river, Mark said he wasn't happy either and young Chris asked if I wanted to get off, for the first time in my life I said yes. I had to go round the next bit, this was where I ended up in a stopper upside down and spun round fast, I'm not sure if I managed an attempt at rolling but I know I couldn't get my paddle to the surface and I bailed. I shouted at Chris so he knew I was swimming let go of my boat as instructed and promptly went under. I came up at one point to find my paddle between my legs. My boat got out before I did. It turned out that Mark had a swim just after me, his swim was shorter but he

was recirculated against a rock and brought up water once he was on the side. We walked out and Dennis and Chris chased Mark's kit. Apparently the end of the river was around the corner but I didn't know it at the time.

Middle Spean - Roy Bridge to Spean Bridge

I preferred this to the morning paddle but it still had a few boils and I was on edge. As soon as we started paddling I realised my left wrist hurt, not a good sign as I'd been paddling with tennis elbow in the right arm for weeks. The 3rd injury of the week. (This has turned out to be carpeltunnel and has now stopped me paddling for awhile.) I managed to clip the edge of the Big Wave but luckily rolled up. Pete and young Chris paddled down to the bottom of the gorge as they'd missed out first time round whilst the rest got off. Apparently the eddy where I got out didn't exist anymore it was just one huge boil.

Friday

The Garry

I enjoyed this, my wrist hurt like mad but it was good fun trying to get on the play waves. We ran this twice and within 10 minutes of us getting off they closed the dam, very lucky.

All in all a great week. Paddled more than I expected and finished with 3 injuries.

- Wendy Williamson

"All in all a great week. Paddled more than I expected and finished with 3 injuries. "

MAGIC KNEES NEWS



Chris 'Magic Knees' Wheeler

“The local advice will be essential- one region we were thinking of travelling to is, we are told, far too dangerous for 'gringos'.”

As I write this, sat at my desk here at work in Oxford, it's snowing outside, and Hurley is down to a rather sad, forlorn looking one gate. However, since I last wrote on 5 January there has been plenty to report.

8/9 Jan

The last time I wrote that it was 'looking promising'. Well, I was right. We knew it was 'game on' when flooding at Llanwrst, which straddles the Conwy downstream of Betws y Coed, made it onto the BBC News. The Capel to Bethesda road was closed due to landslides and flooding but we intrepidly (or foolishly) braved the water, rocks and potholes to make it to the Ogwen for two big spate runs. The Fisherman's gorge was awash with pour overs and as for the Gun Barrel, it was huge! We took one look at the hole that had formed at the bottom and put in downstream, but on our second run, with the river dropping but still high, we took it on-very exciting!

On the Sunday we paddled the Upper and Middle Conwy, from the A5 bridge and then the Fairy Glen. The Glen was pretty high. My 'written off' M3, complete with new crumple zone, returned to the scene of its premature demise, and lived again!

22/23 January

We've done remarkably little creek boating in Devon this year. The lows seem to have been tracking further north this year, but, this was an exception. Levels were good on the Saturday, if not quite the terrifying spate levels to which we seem to have become accustomed. We ran the Erme at a low medium- the top half was, as usual, a bump and scrape but the lower half and gorge was, as usual, good value. We wound down with two quick descents of the Upper Dart 'Home Run' with the ledge just covered and half covered (5.5 & 5.0?). I broke my

personal best, making it to Newbridge in 35 minutes, with a split time at 'Surprise Surprise' of 20 minutes. Who needs computer games when you've got the Upper Dart? Our other group had, I believe, a more 'eventful' trip.

On the Sunday, we dashed up to the Lyn. It was surprisingly low, so we just bashed down it from Watersmeet. The gorge was tree infested and still offered good sport.

12/13 February

North Wales again! Again, we encountered closed roads as we made two enforced diversions en route to the Mawddach. The rivers in the area were not in big spate but they do hold their water well, giving us time to paddle the Gain/ Mawddach and Upper Mawddach- 4-5 hours of solid 4/5. On the Gain, we ran the drops immediately upstream of the big portage. I suffered an involuntary exit on the last drop- very exciting!

On the Sunday, with no rain overnight, we returned to our nemesis, the Fairy Glen. The run was reasonably note worthy. For a start, our group included Fairy Glen 'virgins' web site guru Rainsley and Dave Hodge. Dave did very well, rolling against the odds twice after long drawn our battles with the gorge walls and the hole at the base of 'See No Evil'. A fine effort. Andy Mac deserves a mention in dispatches for paddling everything, including Fairy Falls (I muttered something about how I'd have joined him if I hadn't suffered two write offs and 2 swims with the last 6 months). Mark muttered a lot too. There's always next year.

Bitches

Check out the Tide Tables on www.ukriversguidebook.co.uk. Big 7m tide weekends are due on the following weekends:

12/13 March

26/27 March (Easter)

09/10 April (Hurley Classic)

25/26 June

23/24 July

20/21 August

17/18 September

Bolivia

The KCC contingent (Marcus, McDoom and I) will be away from 24 March (Maundy Thursday) returning to the UK on Saturday 9 April, just in time to call in to see the Hurley Classic and show off our newly acquired sun tans, and cuts and bruises. Our Costa Rican friend Ferdinand has now arranged transport with a local rafting company, including 4WDs and drivers. The local advice will be essential- one region we were thinking of travelling to is, we are told, far too dangerous for 'gringos'.

Tajikistan

A British owned travel company has now quoted for logistics including vehicles, drivers/ translators, a cook and administration. That's the level of support we enjoyed on our India trip in 1995, and it's what you need. I think it's pretty good value, but the question is- can we assemble a team who have the time and money to take part? If we do get the trip off the ground, it'll be the 3 weeks from 10-30 August.

Chris Magic Knees 22 February 2005