

India 2008
Upper Wye
Across the border
news from Seth
TV freestylers
Happy Birthday



March/April 2008

Trashar

Cover photo: India 2008 (taken by Simon Knox)

U HEARD IT HERE...

Want to send info to the Trasher?

Send images and words to kcc.trasher@gmail.com or send a CD to: 3, Rose Avenue, Abingdon OX14 1XX

Membership fees are due. The Trasher will be available online to all members. If you require a paper copy you will now need to pay additional fees with your membership. See details on your membership form.

Time is running out

A trip to the paddle the White Nile

Last year Uganda began construction on the Bujagali Dam, a massive hydroelectric project hailed as the answer to Uganda's looming energy crisis.

Many of us will find ourselves in a difficult position wrestling the merits of hydroelectricity with the resultant destruction of the natural environment.

Whilst the construction of the Dam is nowhere near the end of the river it does mean that the top section featuring some classic white water will be lost. To find out what's going check out this excellent video

<http://www.loveitliveitnews.blogspot.com/2008/03/dam-shame.html>

How long it will take for the top section to disappear is unclear, a post on UKRGB suggests that what's left now will be there until after the summer.

So if you want to sample it, get out there quick.

The good news is that myself and Andy are heading out there for the first two weeks of September and are looking for people who'd like to join us.

The plan is get up to speed by booking onto the 3 day Introductory course at Kayak the Nile. They'll provide us with a couple of days guiding on the river and also sort out shuttles to and from the airport.

Key facts

Dates – first two weeks ish in Sept, exact dates will be determined by flights

Flights – Looking at circa £550

Kayak the Nile course – £170pp inc accom and food for 3 days

Accommodation – probably camping

Ability – We're talking skills to run Grade 3 / 4

The clock is ticking, if you're interested in coming then let me know.

Martyn Read

PYCC beginners course

P.Y.C.C. are running their usual beginner's course for u. 18's for 5 Tuesdays starting June 3rd. It is quite possible we will get enough to run 2 courses possibly in parallel on the Tuesday night. For this however, we would need another coach. Is there any coach out there who would be available if we get



Wednesday nights

We need volunteers to act as 'chaperone' through to the end of September every Wednesday night. Requirements are BCU level 2 or above coach, or club member with leadership experience & approval from level 3 coach. Contact Nick Middleton (Club Secretary) 08708742940 (Home) / 07017476240 (Mobile).

New boats

We have acquired an addition two open boats to bring our fleet up to three. These, together with the Pathfinder open boats will be kept in external frame storage beside the new hut. A suite of padlocks have been provided for the new shed and these will also provide access to the external storage frames when these are available. Roger Pass will be controlling the issuing of keys. The same key will open all the padlocks.

Welfare Officer

At a recent Canoe England Southern Region Club Forum it was announced that clubs would soon be required to appoint a Welfare Officer and that coaches would require a CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) form signed by the Welfare Officer. The motivation behind these changes is the protection of youngsters and vulnerable adults. Vicky Rolls had kindly agreed to take on the role of Welfare Officer for KCC in addition to filling this role for Pathfinders. More details will emerge in due course.

a big response? I would need to know now so that we can prepare for that eventuality. Please call me if you can help out.

Dave Surman davidsurman@hotmail.com 01865 373115

John O'Groats to Lands End

Neil Jordan is starting a journey from John O'Groats to Lands End on May 4th. Neil is raising funds for Cancer Research UK and the Sobell House Hospice in Oxford. Full details can be found on his website www.ridestrideglide.com. which includes a link to his Just Giving site. Neil will be cycling, canoeing, sea kayaking and walking on his way south. He plans to sea kayak from Inverness to Fort William down Loch Ness and the Caledonian Canal, canoe along the canals and River Severn from Llangollen to Gloucester and end the journey by sea kayaking from Lyme Regis to Lands End. Any support would be gratefully appreciated.

Beginners courses

2 beginners courses are starting Tuesday 13th and Thursday 15th May. Any helpers would be greatly appreciated. Contact Lucille if you are available for any night.

Wilsham Road site maintenance

Following a meeting back in February between the canoe clubs and Major Mike Schofield of the Army Rowing Club regarding the Wilsham Road site, the army has been sending in working parties to undertake site maintenance and alterations. One benefit of this has been the provision of a battery solar powered lighting supply in the toilet. It is planned that the boundary with the sailing club will be cleared of undergrowth to enable the rowing boats to be stored in this area, freeing up the opposite side for car parking. Also, there are to be repairs to the eroded bank. This work should be complete before our beginners' courses start in May.

Trash your diary!!!

May 2008	
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7	Monthly Meeting: 20:30 at The Fox Inn, 29 High Street, Steventon OX13 6RZ
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11	Dragon Boat Racing
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13	Beginners course

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15	Beginners course
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June 2008	
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“Want a mellow sociable trip to the Indian Himalayas? I am thinking of organising a ‘club’ style mini-expedition to India next Easter, touring around in a bus paddling non-heroic Grade 3 and 4 rivers.” Mark Rainsley

That was how Mark’s email began.

Club Class to

India

by
Simon
Knox



A few weeks later twelve of us were booked on various flights to Delhi at the end of March. Then the realization hit me, India was not only a lot further away than the Alps but would involve a different set of logistics and expectations.

Fortunately Mark has had a fair bit of experience of paddling in India and other ‘developing world’ countries so was able to guide (read: organise) us in our preparations. The plan was to paddle the masses of roadside G3/4 rivers that India promises, taking things easy and mixing in a few multi-day trips as well as maybe even a bit of tourism! So we could get to these rivers easily without having to use local transport we arranged two minibuses and drivers to provide transport via local tour operator Aquaterra.

Catching a jet plane

The multi-day stuff in particular had me a little nervous. The thought of having to carry all my camping kit in the back of my boat as well as all my paddling kit sounded like hard work and what would happen if (when) I swam? Additionally all this kit as well as our paddling gear plus spare kit would have to be flown out. Driving to the Alps suddenly seemed a lot simpler.

Fortunately Marks advice on minimalist packing wasn’t strictly necessary; well not for those who were flying with

Virgin Atlantic anyway. With sleeping bags, bivi bags (top tip: get a goretex one if you don’t want to wake up in a pool of water), tarps etc... all purchased and our paddling kit checked and packed we headed for Heathrow full of nervous anticipation.

Culture shock

Our team was split into two due to its size, four of us flew out with Virgin a day before the rest of the team. None of us had been to Delhi before and nothing had really prepared us for the experience.

Whilst finding the taxi we’d arranged to pick us up and take us to our hotel, we were mobbed by locals trying to



help carry our luggage, the word no didn't seem to be in their vocabulary. Our introduction to driving on the local roads was equally a shock; out of the airport and straight up the motorway slip road the wrong way!

Whilst we waited for the rest of the team to fly in the next day we explored Delhi with the aid of our friend Seth, who coincidentally happened to be there at the start of his gap year tour. Whistle stop tours of both New and Old Delhi commenced travelling by small three wheeled 'Tut Tut's' meant we had a speedy introduction to how different India is to life in the UK.

Over the next two weeks I think we experienced a cross section of India from the hustle and bustle of Delhi to the quietness and pristine forests of the Tons valley. From the heat and dirt of the city to freshness of the mountain passes, India is a full of contrast and contradictions. Nearly everyone seems to have a mobile phone yet only once did we find a town with a proper sewage system.

Taking it easy

After our day of acclimatisation the rest of our team arrived and we boarded our buses and drove north to Rishikesh. Despite the five hour drive and the jet lag everyone hopped on the Ganges for a quick blast of grade 3 water to wake ourselves up. Obviously the journey had tired us out as two of the group swam and it turns out that a short section of river in India is at least 14km. There is also some debate on whether the big bouncy wave trains and holes to avoid really constituted grade 3. As a compromise 3+ was settled on. Never the less it was a wonderful feeling to be on the water and out of the bus. What we didn't quite realise was how much more time we were going to spend in that bus over the next two weeks.

The following day was spent travelling further up the Ganges valley to Karanprayag and on the Monday we paddled the Pindar, a tributary of the Alaknanda (one of the two rivers that join to form the Ganges).

The Pindar turned out to be a lovely river full of grade 3 and 4 rapids made up of clear blue water. Only two things spoil it; I became the first of our group to succumb to the dreaded 'Delhi belly' and some of the team

where accosted by a group of park officials trying to extract money from us. This began a two day struggle, despite having prior permission (which technically we didn't require) we were followed back to our hotel where Ranger Smith as he came to be known held us up for several hours the following morning. Several phone

'...we were followed back to our hotel where Ranger Smith as he came to be known held us up for several hours...'

calls later we established that we were indeed allowed to paddle but despite this it took a small 'consideration' to allow us to get on our way in peace.

Once free of of the park officials clutches we headed to Chamoli, loaded up our boats and began a three day paddle of the Alaknanda. By this point it had become clear that we were a major attraction as an entire school appeared to watch us paddle off! It became obvious that the Alaknanda was going to be somewhat more exciting than we expected with several g4+ rapids that the group had to inspect before either running or portaging.

My first exposure to riverside camping was perhaps not the best as we were forced to camp on the edges of a town where we were again approached by local officials wanting payment, this time they were sent packing.

Days two and three on the Alaknanda became a little gentler although there was still a good mixture of rapids



'I found a two inch scorpion in my paddling shorts!'

to keep us on our toes. The second night of camping out was a much more pleasant experience. Sleeping on an isolated riverside beach we were

entertained by a troupe of Monkeys using the opposite bank as their own personal adventure playground. This was the also point of the trip at which I learnt that checking kit before putting it on in the morning was a good idea; I found a two inch scorpion in my paddling shorts!

We finished the Alaknanda at Rundraprayag where it joins the Mandakini river after a dramatic rapid full of waves and holes forced the entire river into a tiny gorge complete with Indiana Jones style rope bridges and temples, excellent stuff. Apparently a dam is being constructed further downstream, this will likely flood the river. We maybe amongst the last to paddle this river.

The Mandakini which was our next port of call. Most of the group paddled this as far as the gorged section that leads into Rundraprayag. About half of us paddled the main river which consisted of good grade 3/4 water. Those of us who continued down the gorge section found much harder rapids but fortunately the blue water, clear blue skies and stunning scenery cliffs managed to distract us from the difficulty of the river. One of the on river highlights of the trip.



In possibly the scariest moment of the entire trip these cliffs became slightly more memorable when Mark fell off them checking that the boats were fully strapped on. Fortunately he managed to grab a small shrub on the way down and we hauled him back up with a throwline. The following day was spent travelling to the Yamuna valley after an overnight stop in Barkot.

With three gorges at grades 4-5 the Upper Yamuna was probably the hardest 10 km of river that we paddled during the entire trip. Eight of us started the river but only three finished the last gorge, the exhausting continuous nature of the river took its toll on the group with four swims being clocked up (including one by yours truly). Enclosed boulder strewn rapids characterised this river and it certainly kept us on our toes. With the Yamuna bagged, we once again took to the vans and headed to the Tons valley.

Tree lined hills and blue water greeted us as we reached the Tons, after breakfast in the town of Mori we tackled the Upper Tons. What we were told was going to be a fairly easy river turned out to be a chunky grade four, which in our travel weary state and combined with the thunder and lightning that appeared unexpectedly proved to be a little too much, as myself and several others decided to get off early. Irritatingly I think that if the weather had been better and we hadn't been so tired this would have been a classic river.

As the weather cleared we set up camp slightly further down the river and relaxed with a fire and slept under tarps. Next morning the blues skies had returned and we hopped back on to the Tons.

The Tons from Mori to Tiuni was in my eyes the best river of the trip. It was also 30 km of grade 4 rather than the 'flat' and 'easy' that had been described to us and managed to claim eight swims from the group during the course of the day. The rapids were varied and frequent and absolutely excellent ranging from long boulder gardens to big technical rapids inter-spaced with

'The Tons from Mori to Tiuni was in my eyes the best river of the trip!'

slightly easier yet still fast moving sections. We even managed to take half an hour at lunch to walk up to a local temple to get a small fix of tourism. Unfortunately by the time we got off the thunder and lightning had returned. Thankfully our drivers had once again done a wonderful job of locating us allowing us to rest our weary bodies in the vans as we once again hit the road, this time to the Sutlej valley.

Paddling a mere 5 km of the Sutlej due to a late start, we camped on the river bank where the locals collected fire wood for us! The next day was our final day of paddling and we covered nearly 40 km of big water, masses of impressive wave trains and holes to avoid with plenty of sections inbetween to recover in. The rapids and the wave trains on this were probably some of the biggest water I've paddled and they tried their best to scare the group witless. Despite this or maybe because of it I'd put this along with the lower section of the Tons as the best we paddled during our trip. We finished the trip with a day in Shimla which is the old British summer capital – proper coffee (and beer) at last! After a day of driving back Delhi came as a shock, but not as much as arriving back in the UK to find it snowing!



we travelled weren't massive but India isn't like the western world, roads aren't necessarily complete, restaurants don't always have food and there is more bureaucracy in a hotel lobby than the entire of Brussels! On the other hand everyone is friendly and do their best to be helpful and it's such a spectacular country to view. This I think is what makes it such an interesting place despite spontaneously flooding hotel rooms and the dreaded form C.

This I think maybe contributed to the tiredness levels more than the actual paddling. In fact despite the fact that the some of the rivers may have been slightly harder than we were expecting everyone was capable of paddling them, there may have been a shocking twenty two swims during the two weeks, these were I think for the most part due to exhaustion rather than paddling ability.

You might think it sounds like we had a hard time but we took it easily, often we stayed in a hotel rather than set up camp and nobody complained when someone decided to sit a river out. I don't think anyone in the group would disagree if I said we had a wonderful time. Different from the normal alps trip? Yes and all the better for it. Recommended.



'Club' style mini-expedition.

I can't decide whether the trip was closer to expedition or club style. In reality I'm pretty sure we were taking it easy compared to the more hardcore expeditions that take place. Never the less the trip certainly differentiated itself from a normal club trip to the Alps.

The first thing we quickly realised is that this trip differed from previous ones in that the only guidebook we had was in Mark's memory and some suitable handwritten looking maps. Despite the excellent job he did in getting us to the rivers and guiding us on them it was obvious that shrink-a-vision occurs not just when looking down on a rapid from above but also when looking back at it through the mists of time! The gentle g2/3 and g3/4 rivers that Mark described often turned out to be either slightly harder and more often than not longer than we expected.

Secondly, where as normally we would base ourselves in a single location and make ourselves a nest to rest, between rivers we were continually on the move living out of the vans fending for ourselves as we travelled. The distances

Information

Water Levels: We visited during the last week of March and the first week of April, water levels suited us perfectly.

Costs: Flights to Delhi cost approximately £500 with Virgin or £400 with Gulf Air. The extra cost for Virgin gets you guaranteed boat carriage (an extra 32KG allowance) and a direct 8 hr flight. Gulf Air meant a lay-over in Bahrain and minimalist packing. Two minibuses and drivers for two weeks cost £260 each. The drivers excelled in driving wherever we wanted and sorting restaurants and hotels as and when we needed help. Living expenses were minimal and we could have spent less if we'd timed our journeys a bit better so

we could set up campsites rather than hosteling.

Living: You'd better like curry, our diet for the two weeks consisted almost exclusively of this and chocolate biscuits until we discovered noodles and even these were massala flavoured. Alcohol was hard to come by in a lot of areas and it was only when we reached Shimla that we managed to get beer in a restaurant. Only drink and clean your teeth with bottled water.

Vaccinations: Get all the jabs that are recommended by your GP or travel clinic. I'd also suggest the rabies vaccination unless your supremely confident about your ability with a monkey spanking stick!

Equipment: We took all our paddling kit though I didn't touch my dry trousers once. Spare paddles and decks were carried but in the event not needed, best to be safe though. For over-night trips a decent sleeping bag, tarp and bivi bag were carried. We soon discovered that if the bivi wasn't goretex you got wet through condensation and these got reduced to the role of ground sheets and the tarps were used for shelter. For cooking a number of multi-fuel stoves were taken and filled locally. Some

of the group took water bottles with built in filters that allowed them to drink river water, I was quite jealous.

Simon Knox, Mark Rainsley, Claire Cheong-Leen, Liz Garnett, Dave Hodgkinson, Andrew Levick, Heather Rainsley, Chas Couchman, Andrew Newell, Dave Surman, Ol Rennison and Graham Bland all travelled club class to India over Easter 2008.



pathfinder river trips

Over the winter months the rivers have, for the most part been running and the pathfinders have been grabbing their paddles and taking to the water!

During September four pathfinders donned their wet suits and traveled to Symonds Yat to have a few goes on the rapids and even the Symonds Yat rock. This was definitely a good beginners trip with no shortage of swims all round!

The next, possibly more eventful trip was in October where four pathfinders battled the three hour journey to experience what was called by Dave Surman "one of the best whitewater stretches in the country" and "a classic whitewater river". Needless to say the lower Dart did not live up to anyones expectations with boat scrapingly low water levels on both the river Dart and Exe. To add to the misery of low water levels we also discovered the smashed back window of Dave's car, missing kit and even the loss of Harry's homemade chocolate cake! Overall this weekend wasn't a triumph of kayaking but we were all glad of the



by Joe Callard

luxurious caravan accommodation at Parkers Farm site near Ashburton.

The next time we got out onto the river was on a chilly Sunday in early January when we took to the Usk to paddle as much as possible in the cold conditions, unfortunately by the time we had got to the first take out Chyavan was looking nearly hypothermic and we were all cold enough to consider it a day. I think we all enjoyed this trip except maybe those who managed to capsize and get the worst brain freeze ever, brrrr!

The next trip was Dave's time to prove his "classic whitewater river" theory when we returned to the Dart with much higher levels meaning we could run the loop section, with only a few swims from the odd back loop the day was considered a success. On the next day we ran the lower Walkham onto the lower Tavy, a good smaller river with different features and more rocks than the Dart meaning the capsize count went up quite dramatically! The last trip of the winter was the upper Wye where despite low levels the night before, it rained just enough to produce a nice level with good waves and features so it was enjoyed by all. This has definitely been an exciting winter season and with the long dry summer months ahead I don't think anyone can wait till next year!

Across the border

well, 27 sweaty hours on a hot, sweaty, sweaty bus and I'm here in Pokahra! I knew it took around 10 hours from Varanasi to the Nepalese border so I got on the early bus on Tuesday - along with half the population of Varanasi, I think. For the first three hours of the journey I occupied my one cubic centimeter of space which I was sharing with about three suit cases. Any available air space in the bus was soon filled with dust blown in through the windows from the dirt tracks the bus was bumping along. What was haunting me the entire time as I struggled to breathe submerged in the sea of people luggage and dust which was frothing around the bus with every enormous pothole was that had I waited one extra day - that's 24 hours - I could have got on a tourist bus with a reserved seat and air conditioning for 100rs/- extra. On the other hand an extra 24 hours in Varanasi at the time didn't seem worth it (the temperature was pushing 40 Celsius and due to power cuts the fans worked for about 1 hour per day). How wrong I was.

Salvation (or so I thought) came in when the bus pulled into a bus station in some little town and all but about 10 of us got off and disappeared. 'Great!' I thought - the rest of the way will be a pleasant ride with three seats to myself. It turned out that the mass exodus was due to a punctured tyre. The next three hours were spent sitting in the bus station as the bus - in the direct midday sunlight - slowly transformed into a slow-roast oven. When I finally could take no more me and a Nepalese guy - aptly named Summit - I met got off in search of water. We returned triumphantly some minutes later to see our bus pulling out of the bus station. I haven't run so fast since I had three minutes to make it to the Nepalese embassy, only this time I was running after my bag, instead of with it. Although the bus didn't stop or slow down as we legged it down the road in hot pursuit, the conductor did condescend to leave the door open for us, allowing us to daringly leap aboard.

Once on the bus we congratulated ourselves on our athletic chase that got us on board before - we thought - our bus disappeared into the distance never to be seen again. No. It stopped literally a hundred meters further down the road at the tyre shop for a further couple of hours. Oh well. We stayed on the bus while they fixed the tyre.

We were underway again by about half one, and reached Gharatapur (technically the halfway point, where we should have been around lunch time) just after four.

It was very late when we got to the border. I got a cycle rickshaw to take me across. It was a slightly



odd affair. The Indian immigration office was a shack by the side of the road. The immigration officer looked rather sleepy and bored. I filled in all the relevant forms and got my stamp, before continuing through an ornamental gate - the Nepal Gate - to the Nepalese side. The inhabitant of the shack that was the Nepalese immigration was actually asleep, so it took a bit of knocking and shouting to wake him up. This done there were more forms and stamps and I'd arrived! I had officially left India and gone to Nepal. It was somewhat of a momentous moment

'I was running after my bag, instead of with it!'

for me, stepping across a border into the next step of my journey. It was trivialised only slightly by the cycle rickshaws and adolescents on motor bikes zooming back and forth across the border at will. It reminded me of that Simpsons episode where Shelbyville nick the lemon tree.

I had agreed a fare with the driver, and once through the border I asked to be taken to an ATM. So he cycled me 20m up the road and doubled the fare. The ATM was only 12hrs so no money until the morning and when the driver refused to give me my change I was now in a new country with no money. In India this would have been somewhat of a problem as nowhere would have given me a room without cash upfront. Nepal is different though. At the first hotel I came to I was able to negotiate an extremely good price for what is possibly the nicest room I've stayed in since arriving here, and had the night's accommodation and a meal all on credit until I could use the ATM in the morning. The contrast of the episode - an Indian rickshaw driver ripping me

off and leaving me penniless, with a Nepalese hotel giving me a room and food for an IOU seems a pretty apt comparison of my experience of the two countries so far. That is only so far, I've been here less than 48 hours.

some of the most beautiful mountain scenery I've ever seen in my life.

I got another early bus yesterday to take me the rest

of the way to Pokhara. I had my own seat (wow!) next to the window and a breeze kept the bus cooled almost the whole way. About half an hour into the journey we got into the mountains and the views became absolutely spectacular, I can't describe the elation I was feeling at arriving in a cool (its still pretty hot here but compared to Varanasi...) hassle free country, driving through some of the most beautiful mountain scenery I've ever seen in my life. Not only are the physical features breathtaking - the steep, green interlocking mountains with

shiny rivers snaking around their bases, disappearing off in every direction as far as you can see, but the human influence -far from spoiling it - makes it even more beautiful: the terracing of the mountainsides for agriculture makes it look, from a distance, like giant steps up the mountain side, giving it a striped layered effect.

The bus was making pretty slow progress - not that I really cared this time - mainly due to the fact that, I think, the starter motor was broken, so every time the driver stalled, which was quite often on the steep roads with an overladen bus, the conductor had to get out with a big metal rod and start the engine manually from the front, then the driver had to get up some speed to keep the motor going, which meant the poor conductor having to leg it after the bus. I could strangely sympathise with him.

It was another late arrival, the first place I tried was full but I'm now staying in a lodge right on the Pewa Tal lake, with a balcony overlooking

it. As cheap lodges go it has the best location in the whole world as far as I'm concerned. Within minutes of arriving I got invited to join an English and an Australian guy who are both trekking the same route I was planning to do in a few days on their trek, which is great. Tonight I'm off, I think, to a Nepalese wedding in Pokhara (I made friends with the bride's brother on the bus yesterday and he invited me along. By all accounts people do wedding receptions properly in this country so it ought to be fun)

Whoa, sorry for the epic e-mail, it was sort of an epic 37 hours so I guess it fits. If you made it this far without giving up then congratulations!

I'll be in touch again before heading out to the mountains, but after that it may be several weeks before I have access to a computer (or pretty much anything else for that matter) again.

Hope everyone is good, speak soon, Seth. :)

NEWZFLASH FROM OUR MAN IN NEPAL *(reported by the surmanator)*
JUST RECEIVED – THE KID HAS RID THE KALI GANDAKI

Following on from his epic 37 hour bus journey Seth Townley has just come back from a raft supported 3 day trip on the Upper Kali Gandaki. He is now off trekking Annapurna so has not had time to file a full report. Full report +pictures promised for the next edition of your very own Trasher. Now he's done it the news can be officially released to everyone, including his mum!!





B & B (BATHING & BREAKFAST) ON THE UPPER WYE 2ND MARCH 2008

Neil Murton

The Landeck Gorge it ain't, but the Upper Wye at a reasonable level has nonetheless good ingredients for a grand day out - a pleasant 2/3 stretch of river wandering through beautiful countryside that's festooned with red kites. Aside from the undoubted lure of the river itself, this trip held an extra appeal in the shape of a promised breakfast stop discovered on a previous trip to the Wye (the middle bit) by Messrs Pass and Dix.

During the days leading up to Sunday 2nd March, this trip seemed to be on and off like a Belisha Beacon. Throughout the previous week there had seemed no chance at all of there being sufficient water for the venture. Rain then pushed the level up, but with no added top-up, the prospect of the level plummeting back down again appeared more than likely. By noon on Saturday the decision had been made to go for it, and a wise one it proved too.

Fired with a determination to seek out the aforementioned haven of quality full breakfast fare (and to avoid the repeat of forgone breakfasts

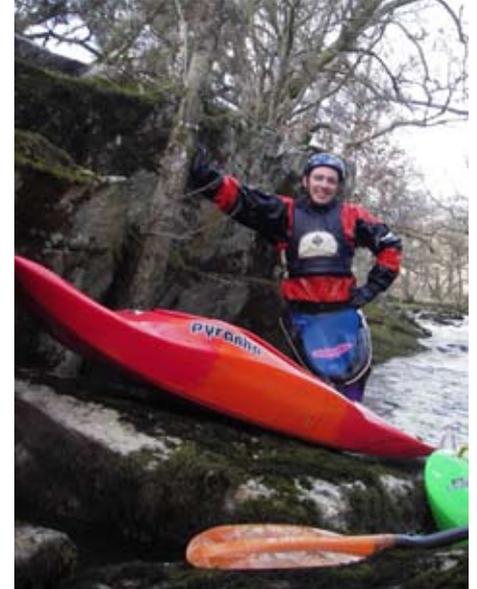
in the Abergavenny car park on previous trips due to tardiness on the part of the café operator), we set off early heading west (with Les' satellite navigation threatening a seizure every time we strayed from the recommended route). Fortunately for those who had recommended it, the breakfast proved both huge and satisfying (and if you speak nicely to Roger P he might tell you the location of said breakfast venue)

Having achieved the rendezvous at Rhayader, we travelled to Llangurig and divided as follows:

- First group - Ellie, Terry, Doug, Darryl, Roger P, Pete (Terry's friend) and Alastair (in his open canoe)
- Bringing up the rear - Louise, Ben, Neil, Liz, Ashley and Les

There was a further group on the river that day, paddling a foreshortened section of the river down to Rhayader (but nevertheless taking in the main features).

After all the concern that there might not be sufficient water, it



transpired that this was a great level at which to run the river. The weather too was favourable - there was a cool wind, but it felt mild on the water where we were more sheltered. The sun even managed to shine as we took on Town Falls.

The first third of the river is reasonably straightforward, so there was ample opportunity for simple break-in and break-out practice and to generally take in the surroundings. Not that you could afford to switch off - throughout the trip there was much branch dodging and the occasional intimate moment with a rock. Later on you make your acquaintance with the Catherine Wheel, Boulder Garden, the Coffin and finally Rhayader Town Falls.

Les had numerous inverted moments during the first part of the river, but showed great stoicism to 'hang on in there' and achieve a number of Pawlatta rolls (at least 4 and possibly as many as 6 - we all lost count) and receive a prolonged Eskimo rescue from a certain Hoss down one of the rapids. Tiredness kicked in later and unfortunately he went for a



couple of swims, one a little upstream from the Coffin and the other below the drop near the remains of the old railway bridge. However, all in all it was a great effort and fine tribute to the physical legacy of many years of rowing – that, plus the enormous benefit of having downed a colossal breakfast, obviously.

Amongst the other group, I understand that all but Terry, Darryl and Alastair failed to remain afloat. The tally was reported to me as follows:

Ellie two swims
 Doug one swim
 Pete two swims
 Roger four swims!

(apologies if you've been misrepresented!)

Roger managed the trickier sections of the Catherine Wheel and the old Coffin, but came to grief on numerous rocks (including the boulder garden) and ended up swimming on four occasions.

Alastair in his open boat kept out of trouble with no swims, although there was a rumour that boat and paddler may have had a moment of estrangement at Town Falls.

Town Falls itself proved to be a pleasant bounce, with a number of

souls - Liz and Ashley included - opting to take second runs.

All in all, a really enjoyable excursion and it's definitely a river to keep within the list of the Club's regular trips.



Neil Murton

BCU Insurance – the Cover Story

On 30th March, Louise, Vicky and I attended a Canoe England Club Forum in Newbury, and lurking amongst the various sessions on topical subjects covered that day was an immensely helpful talk in insurance by Robert Deakins, BCU Operations Manager - so helpful in fact, that we thought it merited a mention in the Trasher. Discussions regarding liability inevitably seem to crop up fairly frequently and having just secured insurance for the Club's hut and contents (with the same company used by the BCU), the topic was certainly at the forefront of my mind.

One note of caution (that Robert saved for the end of his talk): "There is no such thing as a black and white answer to a hypothetical question on

insurance." The other note of caution to strike is that these are my own notes of the session, although Louise and I are fairly confident as to their accuracy.

Who and what is covered?

Robert's talk on BCU liability cover encompassed the issue of negligence and the impact on clubs and on Coaches. He started with a potential pub quiz question 'what is the difference between insurance and assurance?' - assurance relating to things that will happen (most obviously death) and insurance relates to things that might happen.

BCU insurance covers the following:

- BCU volunteers and employees
- Individual BCU members
- BCU affiliated clubs
- Club members and volunteers

In the case of club members, this means individual members of an affiliated club (i.e. who have paid a subscription). The club needs to keep clear records of members and to ensure that the number of non BCU members amongst the club membership is recorded on its annual renewal application.

The insurance relates to 'any canoeing related activity approved by the BCU'. Some of the clubs attending the forum put on non-paddling activities (e.g. bowling) during the winter months and their reps wondered if these would be covered – Robert suspected that they wouldn't be.

In the light of the growing size of claims generally (in one case £5m has been paid for a sporting injury, and the highest being £8m – neither were paddling related) the BCU will be increasing its cover to £10m.

Negligent moments

Negligence is an act of omission. It is assessed with reference to consideration of what a reasonable person would do in the same circumstances and how the omission affected the output.

Paddling is an assumed risk sport, so participants should accept the likelihood of getting wet or sustaining minor injury. However, this does not exempt individuals or the club from claims of negligence.

For a claim of negligence to succeed, the claimant must

- prove that there was a duty of care
- prove that a breach of duty of care has happened
- prove that as a consequence, there has been clear loss or damage (you can't claim for hurt feelings!)
- successfully seek compensation for that loss or damage

Robert gave an example of a Slalom event held on a blustery day in Nottingham, when one of the boats left beside the course was lifted by the wind and hit a woman (who had been walking by the river) in the back. She successfully claimed £5000 for her back injury on the basis that event organisers had a duty of care to pedestrians in the vicinity and had been negligent in not taking steps to protect them (e.g. by warning of the risks, having someone by the parked boats or simply weighting them down).

Visitors and hangers-on

Canoe/Kayak clubs are 'entities' and therefore can potentially be sued, as can individual club members and officials. So long as the club has kept up its BCU membership, the BCU insurance will provide cover. Robert highlighted a potential vulnerability regarding visitors who turn up for 'Come and Try It' sessions. If they sustain a loss or injury due to the actions of a club member, the latter is covered. If the visitor ignores instructions and recklessly

causes an injury to another party, there is no cover. The solution to this is to make all such visitors temporary members. So long as the club can clearly prove to the insurer with evidence that the individual was a member at the time of the incident, then there is cover. As it happens, KCC has already developed a form for completion by participants on the beginners and improvers courses and for those turning up on Wednesday s and Sundays to give paddling a try. Only a minor change to this will be needed to ensure the club has the necessary cover.

So, club members have BCU insurance cover, regardless of whether they are participating on an 'official' club trip or some 'spur o the moment' caper. One problem is those frequent instances when club members are approached on trips by 'strangers' wishing to tag along with the group. Robert highlighted this as a vulnerable situation as you may have no knowledge of the individual's ability and be seen as negligent if an incident subsequently occurs. Also, as with the example of the 'Come and Try It' visitor, if she/he causes a loss or injury, the stranger may not have insurance cover.

Covered Coaches

Robert emphasised that there is no link between BCU coaching guidelines and insurance provisions (e.g. he described statements such as level 2 coaches only being covered for placid water as 'urban myths'). Coaches affiliated to the BCU are insured full stop. As regards those who earn money from coaching, they may earn up to £25k, a trading name is allowed, but they must be a sole trader (i.e. no employees). Also, there is no employers liability. Therefore if the club decided to pay a coach to run a course, that individual would need to have their own insurance and be sub-contracted for this work rather than employed directly.

Robert stressed the importance of prompt renewing of membership – no membership, no cover. It is important to note that this means that if individuals have not renewed their club membership promptly (typically within 30 days) then non-BCU members will have no insurance through the club.

Cover in the pipeline

Three areas of significant interest for many will be the BCU's plans for securing deals for members on:

- Boat insurance
- 'Club' insurance (including club houses, equipment stores and kit)
- Travel insurance (including transit cover and paddling on any grade of water)

Robert was hopeful that these benefits would be available this year

“Paddling is all about getting out on the water and having fun with your mates.” Gareth

TVFreestylers first Birthday

A couple of years ago Thamesweirproject was shut down and with it went a huge resource to Thames Valley paddling and the community spirit that such a site engendered in the paddlers that used it. Last weekend TVFreestylers celebrated the rebirth of that community with a debauched evening of fun and frolics on the island at Hurley. The king was dead- Long live the King!

When Thamesweirproject closed down no one was really willing to take on the onerous task of trying to keep one of the most active and fanatical paddling communities in the country going. Jacko grudgingly took on the levels pages and kept them stuttering along, but the forums and the community that was bonded through the site began to fall apart- a dark time for paddling in the valley.

I then met Gareth Harvey at Hurley about 14 months ago. We got talking in between rides and he enthusiastically relayed his plans to bring a site dedicated to the Thames Weirs back to life. He was full of ideas and was dragging as many people on board as he possibly could. How could we say no? His enthusiasm for paddling, for the site and for the community it was going to support was infectious and to this day has not diminished.

Since that first “board meeting” so much has happened it has been difficult to keep up. We now have a thriving forum that covers a wide range of topics. Gareth and Shaggy regularly contact and visit the Lock Keepers to keep them informed of events (the TVF users all chipped in to buy all the Lockies working the weirs that we use a bottle of

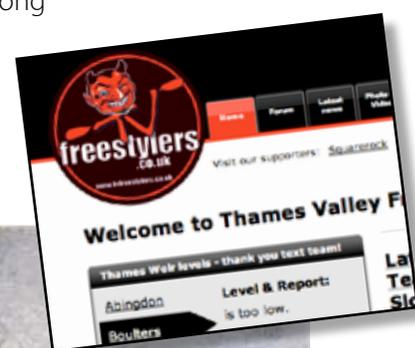
wine for Christmas), a texted level service that is incredibly accurate, a regular European Tour in the Summers and other trips through the year, informal coaching and competition sessions and a million and one other things that I haven’t given him credit for.

He does all this in his spare time using the good will of his friends and those in the paddling community, who in turn give their support for free (the web designer now lives in the US but still works on the site for Gareth due to his charm offensive). This simply means that we now have a community of paddlers like we have never had before, which translates to some great paddling sessions in a friendly atmosphere. A community, in my opinion, unrivalled in paddling in this country.

Not that Gareth has done enough he wants to do more. He is now in the process of forming another site for general paddling in the valley, including all disciplines and the clubs to contact that are relevant to each discipline. This along with TVF will hopefully provide us with more people who want to take part in this wonderful sport of ours and give them the means to access it.

In the words of Gareth- “Paddling is all about getting out on the water and having fun with your mates.” A sentiment shared between those who paddle in the valley and helped greatly by the effort and work put in by Gareth and his team. This is just my long winded way of saying thanks to them all!

Matt Attree



Read all about it, read all about it!!

Back from India (see report elsewhere from Memsaab Knox) and still alive. One of the nice things about coming back is enjoying UK toilets. We survived raging rivers, badass monkeys, suicidal driving, roads with a cliff on one side and a precipice on the other, gallons of Daal and curry, "hotels" that would send the Health and Safety Police into palpitations, bureaucracy that would an Olympic medal but IT WAS GREAT!! Loadza new rivers for the river raffle. Howzabout the Ganges, Pindar, Alecnanda, Mandikini then over the pass to the Yamuna (which init`s lower reaches flows through Delhi and on to the Taj Mahal city of Agra) and the Toms Valley. Then over an even higher pass to the Sutlej which Chris and Fred paddled as a first descent back in 1997, I believe.

A day of touring was allowed at the end at Shimla at 2500m the summer capital for the Raj. Most of team India returned to the U.K. and I hung out for a few days in Agra with Seth Townley who is on his Grand Asian Tour. See elsewhere for a report from Our Man in Nepal who is due to a grab a river or two out there. Looks like the Kali Gandaki`s in the bag for the river raffle.

DRAGON BOAT DAY SUNDAY MAY 11th

This year the event is to be held on Rye Meadow next to the lock. Pathfinders first became involved with this event as a good PR and Beginner`s Course recruitment exercise. The first one consisted of me, Stuart Jones and a very young Richard Morley sitting at a table with a few photos and leaflets. Things grew over the years and started to involve Kingfisher as there were often enquiries from adults. Athene made us a sign. Things took off with the arrival of the Pathfinders gazebo and first Martin`s then Simon`s display posters. Ray brought along his wife`s display stands and it was topped off by the arrival of the rolling BYO BBQ!! Over the years it has proved a great way of raising our profile and recruiting for the clubs. With the notable exception of last year the weather has always been beautiful.

A couple of month`s ago I offered to get a team together for the race, but it would cost individuals. Despite interest last year I received only one expression of interest. That option is therefore dead.

As usual however we will be running the stand and you are all welcome to come along and join in, bringing something to barby around about lunchtime. Myself and Ray with help from Pathfinder members usually do the setting up from about 8am as vehicles have to be offsite by 9.30. Any extra help would be appreciated.

This year due to the proximity of the weir blasting will be easy to do during the day.

Also due to the new venue there is a new opportunity. I propose to run a simple come and try it session by the bridge over the mill stream. Those of you with long memories will remember we used to do this as part of the old Abingdon Fun Days that we used to run. This would involve one or possibly two kayaks, a short 20m or so course, possibly involving a slalom gate or two suspended from the bridge. We would need a coach, someone on the bank and someone on the water.



Times would be recorded. We may only run it for a couple of hours or so in the afternoon. I emailed my proposal to the committee when I was in India but apparently there was no interest. It will therefore be run as a Pathfinder event providing I can have the assistance of one or two coaches and others to take turns as I will be in involved with the stand as well. If you are interested please contact me asap. Ideas welcome. I think this is a great way to promote the clubs and the various beginner`s courses that we are running.

BLASTATHON SATURDAY JUNE 7TH.

Abingdon Blastadrome.

Meet at club by 4pm to paddle up to weir to start at 5pm Blast Off!!

And after at club for BYO BBQ.

Camping over possible.

Breakfast Coffee and Croissants if booked in advance.

Spread the word, we want a good entry. Riversiders have expressed interest this year. I fear Team Essex have a prior engagement.

Unfortunately Seth "Hand of God" Townley will be unable to repeat his world shattering body part move that wowed the judges last year as he will still be on his Asian Tour but we look forward to more "new school" moves. Hungry!! Hungry!! Hungry!!

We look forward to the return of the Beakless Kingfisher Trophy from Mr W.

PATHFINDER TRIP TO THE TREWERYN (CAMPING) JUNE 28/29 June

If you're interested let me know. Also if willing to drive others.

OCK BOATERCROSS/ WAVEHOPPER EVENT.

I am running a pathfinder clubnight event on Monday July 14th and may extend it to kccers if there is interest. Let me know. At any rate I am discussing a date for a repeat of the event run last October with Rob Yates to which Riverside and KCC would be invited.

COMING SOON IN JULY AUNT SALLY NIGHT AT THE FOX

On a Friday. I canna wait!!

OTHER NEWS

Go check out Mark Rainsley's new book South west Sea Kayaking (Pesda Press)

Check out page 118 especially , on a RIVER!!

This month's competition. How many people in the photographs can you name?

Pete Knowles' Pub Paddles (Rivers Publishing) book featuring Swift Ditch should be out towards the end of the year. Perhaps in time for the Christmas raffle!!

Phew. I reckon thatz it. Probably forgotten loadz, but you'll have to ring me up if you want to know more. Time for bed!!

