KCC NEWS

TRASHER CONTACT DETAILS
If you have anything for the Trasher, please email to kcc.trasher@gmail.com, or post to KCC Trasher, 34 Elder Way, Oxford OX4 7GB. All contributions greatly appreciated!

KCC ONLINE
Don't forget the numerous online resources to keep in touch with KCC:
Web Site www.kingfishercanoeclub.co.uk
Diary www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=kcc.secretary@gmail.com
Twitter KingfisherCC
Facebook facebook.com/group.php?gid=2351138693

Simon Knox, kcc.secretary@gmail.com

FRED'S SCOTLAND TRIP
Fred's Scotland trip is 22 - 29 October. Contact Fred if interested (F.Wondre1@physics.ox.ac.uk)

TONY'S DART TRIP
Confirmed for weekend of 15-16 October. Contact Tony Wilkins, sign-up form later in this issue. Please complete this sign-up form and send it back to Tony by 24th Sept at the latest.

POOL SESSIONS
Dates confirmed up to Christmas as follows: 6th, 20th Oct; 10th, 24th Nov; 8th Dec. 20:00 to 21:30 at the Convent as usual

CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS
The summer is well and truly here, the sun is shining and unfortunately Abingdon weir is shut. But at least it stayed open for the blastathon, which was great fun and well attended (see report elsewhere). Sutton has managed to keep open so we have been able to have some fun sessions with this year's new folk introducing them to some moving water. The beginner's courses were well attended with 16 completing and gaining their 1 star with a BBQ to finish. The improvers' course is well underway with 10 people progressing well and many keen to continue. Thanks to everyone who coached or helped out on these courses, especially all those now working towards their coaching qualifications. It is very encouraging to see so many people enjoying passing on skills as well as learning how to improve their own paddling skills at the same time. The taster sessions on the last Wednesday of the month have been working well and we have had a few new members who are already experienced paddlers. Lots of courses have been running with several people gaining their 2 star, foundation safety and rescue, and working towards 3 and 4 star. We had a fun trip to the Nene and hopefully we will have another soon. Trips to the Cardiff course have been great fun as the next step up and then there is the new Olympic course….I am looking forward to my first visit at the end of August.

A number of trips being planned for the autumn with opportunities for every level of paddler (Tonys weekend 15/16 Nov at the Dart, Scotland week 22-30 Oct etc) – so come along on Wednesday nights to find out what is happening, or even organise something new. Our French twin club from Argentan is visiting in November (10th to 13th) to paddle the Dart. There is also talk of a trip to the Austrian Alps next summer…

The swimming pool is booked for Thursday evenings over the winter 8pm till 9.30 at Our Ladies Convent, Abingdon. Dates for KCC are: Oct 6th, Oct 20th, Nov 10th, Nov 24th and Dec 8th. Come along and practice your rolling (or help out coaching others).

The Vale Watersports users (KCC, PYCC, Abingdon Rowing club, Abbey Sailing club and Army rowing club) are having a social get together, try it session and bring your own BBQ on Friday 9th Sept, 6pm at Hut. The Sailing club bar will be open. This is instead of the planned Saturday 10th activities originally planned. Please come along and meet the neighbours and have a go at a different sport. We also need kayakers/canoeists to take out our friends in our boats. Should be good fun.

Now I am off to paddle the Grand Canyon, looking forward to some exciting water and some chilled (but very hot) days….. Louise

KCC/PYCC/Abbey Sailing Club/Abingdon Rowing Club TRY-IT & BBQ
Friday 9th September, 6pm.
Try each others' activities and BYOBBQ night at the sailing club (next door to the KCC hut). Bar open too! Please come along and support.
Contact Dave Surman or Louise Royle for details.

COVER PHOTOS
Top: Annabelle Buckland at Polzeath, Aug 2011
Picture credit: Kate Howell.
ARGENTAN VISIT

11th-14th November

Our twin kayak club wants to renew our link and do a joint trip to the Dart like we used to. Arrangements are still up in the air at present. You’re welcome to come down on the Thursday if you can otherwise for the Fri and Sat night at the Dart Centre. Please support this venture as it will take a lot of work to organise.

I really would appreciate offers of help in organising this. Please contact me now if you can help.

davidsurman@hotmail.com 01865 373115

ABINGDON IN CKUK MAG

Yeah our man in the media is makin’ waves and increasing our profile. Following on from the Alps article and Mr. Townley’s guide to Cardiff in last month’s mag. This month features our very own Fred Wondre as the River Jabber and Mr. Townley’s guide to the Washburn as well as his guide to inflatables (hmmmmmm). Next month we are promised Chyavan’s 150 word mini report and pix on PYCC Slovenia trip!

Our very own Mt T. spent a few days away from his editorial desk when he was whisked into hospital a few days after getting back from Slovenia with what was an infection to his metal ankle. After a heavy dose of antibiotics he was released back to CKUK Towers. It appeared he had been bitten by some particularly vicious Slovenian insect and that the infection had been by chance in his repaired leg!

So go buy Canoe Kayak UK. Keep the dude in a job or he might have to take up selling the Big Issue. huh.

PATHFINDERS YOUTH CANOE CLUB ANNUAL PRESENTATION EVENING

Tuesday September 27th, Abbey Sailing Club Wilsham Rd.

Come and see what PYCC members have been doing. Presentations on the year’s activities including PYCC Slovenia 2011 and Youth Zanskar Expedition

Bar open. Entrance free but donations to PYCC welcome Details davidsurman@hotmail.com (see poster elsewhere in this issue)

KCC DIARY

September
7 Wed Monthly meeting, Fox Inn, 20:30.
9 Fri Vale Watersports Interclub BBQ & Try-it evening.

Please support. 18:00, Wilsham Road.

18 Sun Todd Morris Memorial Triathlon. 10:00, Wilsham Rd.
26 Mon PYCC Presentation evening, Sailing Club, 20:00

October
5 Wed Monthly meeting, Fox Inn, 20:30
6 Thu Pool session, Our Lady’s School, 20:00.
14-16 Fri-Sun Tony’s Dart Trip
20 Thu Pool session, Our Lady’s School, 20:00.
22-29 Sat-Sat Fred’s Scotland Trip

November
2 Wed Monthly meeting, Fox Inn, 20:30
10 Thu Pool session, Our Lady’s School, 20:00
11-14 Fri-Sun Argentan Visit, Dartmoor.
24 Thu Pool session, Our Lady’s School, 20:00

TODD MORRIS MEMORIAL TRIATHLON

Well, doesn’t time fly by. I’m sure that unlike me, your training schedules are well on target. The format will essentially be the same as the last few years. For those new to the club, this is a short fun event open to all abilities so please join in. Last year there was 7 taking part and I hope there will be even more this year. For those not taking part, please come along to help organise the race and provide support and encouragement to those taking part.

The race will consist of Kayaking · Cycling · Running

The course for each event is highlighted on the map: http://kingfisherc.cc.wordpress.com/files/2007/07/triathlon_route_poster.doc

Again the only restriction is that you use a ‘dancer’ or similar kayak (no wavehoppers!). KCC and PYCC have quite a few of these, but if you have your own, bring it along. Don’t forget to bring your own BA, paddles, bike and spare legs.

For competitors, marshals and spectators, there will be a bring your own BBQ after the race. Charcoal will be provided by the club, just bring along you food, drink and plate. Friends and family are also welcome to come along. As this is a memorial event, entrants and spectators will be asked to pay a voluntary entry fee which will be given to a cancer charity (MacMillan Cancer Support).

Please can you let me know if you plan to enter so I can get an idea of how many there are likely to be. Also let me know if you are available to help run the event and light the BBQ. That’s about it. If you have any questions, give me a call.

Let’s hope for good weather.

 Dave Hodgkinson
ABINGDON HYDRO SCHEME

Following the update in the last Trasher, KCC and PYCC have written to the hydro scheme to ensure that the proposed scheme takes into account the recreational usage of the weir. Text of the letter reproduced below:

We are writing on behalf of Pathfinders Youth Canoe Club (PYCC) and Kingfisher Canoe Club (KCC) with regard to the proposed hydro scheme at Abingdon Weir.

We applaud the principle of harnessing natural resources to provide power in a sustainable way. We are concerned though, that such schemes give due consideration to maintaining recreational and sporting activity, both of which are important in encouraging a healthy quality of life.

For at least 35 years white water kayakers have used Abingdon Weir as a training facility, as PYCC and KCC do today. It is an ideal environment to introduce kayakers to white water techniques. Other organisations in the area also use the weir regularly including Oxford and Swindon Clubs, the Oxfordshire County Council Riverside Centre and Thames Valley Freestylers.

One of your team members on the website talks about the head of water being wasted. We would dispute this. The weir is a low impact wholly sustainable facility for white water and freestyle training. Unlike the pumped courses such as the new Olympic facility in the Lea Valley Park or the Nene White Water Centre in Northampton it takes no energy to run.

The structure of the waves formed at Abingdon are particularly unique, forming small hydraulic features which are safe but allow very specific training moves to be performed. There are very few other locations that allow this, especially during the dry summer months when prevailing water levels mean most other weirs are too dry to paddle. This was noted in the “English White Water” guidebook (ISBN 0-9531956-7-8) which was commissioned by the British Canoe Union (BCU). At these times any water flowing through the hydro scheme would take water away from the 10 radial gates used for kayaking. Any water flowing through the two large radials nearer to the lock is of no use as it forms a dangerous hydraulic.

At other Thames weirs where hydro schemes have been considered, such as Hurley, the recreational interests have been recognised. In line with our national governing body, the BCU, we firmly believe that there is a future for hydro schemes where the water flow is unsuitable for recreational use or where both can co-exist.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of such recreational opportunities for future generations. The weir has been a valuable starting point for many kayakers and we are eager to ensure that if your proposals were to go ahead that this perspective is given due consideration. If you would like to discuss our concerns further please do not hesitate to contact us.

David Surman, PYCC, Louise Royle, KCC

SOCA IN DANGER

The march of the Hydro Electric Schemes continues. Not only is Abingdon Weir under potential threat but also is the classic Slovenian River the Soca.

As many of you will know I have tonight come back from taking a Pathfinder trip there. It was a superb 5 days and all have come back thoroughly enthused.

Below is the text of a protest letter I have sent to the email address of the relevant department of the Slovenian government.

The consultation period has apparently been extended until the 1st October. I would urge ALL to respond NOW either in the suggested form below or with your own response, to ez.mg@gov.si:

“On your web page http://www.mg.gov.si/si/zakonodaja_in_dokumenti/energetika/predlogi_predpisov/energetika/ the proposal for a new Energy Act (EZ-1) is published for public consultation. In the Article 565. this draft proposes the cancellation of the protection status of the Soča river, as a value of natural heritage and cancellation of the protection regime, provided by the Act establishing the protected area of the river Soča and its tributaries (the Official Gazette. 7 / 76) and the Nature Conservation Act (Official Gazette. 56/99, 31/00, 119/02, 22/03, 41/04, 96/04 - UPB).

I, the undersigned, protest against the Article 565 of the draft Energy Act and am requesting that you delete the Article 565 fully from the new Energy Act proposal (EZ-1).

Name:
Surname Name:
Address:

David Surman

Seth on the Soča
The news so far…

Loads been a happenin’ at PYCC this summer. We’ve had regular high attendances on Monday nights despite the curse of exams precluding attendances from most of the older members til about the second half of June. We’ve run two evening Beginner’s Courses and two Easter holiday courses as well as two star training, a Foundation Safety and Rescue Course. We’ve hit the Ock, the Ditch and Sutton Courtney as well as a great try a boat session and BYOO BBQ. Lenny, Joe and Chyavan strutted their stuff at the Blastathon.

Tripswise we’ve done Symond’s Yat, the Nene as a club trip, the Nene, Youth Freestyle Event, the Tryweryn and we have just come back from a terrific trip out to Slovenia with eight members for some alpine whitewater.

During the last week of the school term we’ve had some taster sessions for a couple of schools and during the summer holidays we have beginner’s courses run for the Vale and South Oxon District Councils.

We’re hoping to be able to run Monday nights through the summer holidays and then for the first three Mondays in September. Summer holiday attendance is often variable due to holiday commitments with a big surge the first week of September when they go back to school.

It’s been great to have Tom Wolstenholme along on Monday nights and on the Tryweryn and Nene trips. Tom also coaches some of the GB freestyle paddlers and is a fantastic addition to the club. He’s going to be out of the country as a volunteer on a charity project in Mozambique but will be back with us again, sometime early in the new year.

Chyavanator Fashions did a superb job in Pathfinder merchandizing with the PYCC T-shirts he got together. If you didn’t get one and want one, speak to Chyavan to see what he can do.

Go into W.H.Smith’s and get yourself a copy of CanoeKayakUK. There should be a 150 word report on the recent PYCC Slovenia trip. Myself and Chyavan got to paddle the newly opened Olympic Slalom facility at the Lee Valley in North London. It’s BIIIG, but we survived!! Harry is out in India at the moment paddling the Zanskar Gorge with Debs Pinniger’s Youth Expedition. Hope to get some footage at the Presentation Evening.

Dave Surman
SATURDAY JUNE 18th
Abingdon Weir

Yeah, it’s that time of year again. Mid June meanz Blastathon on Abingdon Bladadrome!!

This year there was a degree of concern as to whether we would get shut down before Blast Off! The weir was down to one very shallow gate two weeks before and prospective blasters were biting their nails until they were down to their fingers! But as is the way with the typical English summer, just as it was looking as if all was lost, in came the summer monsoons and the event was saved!!

This year saw the biggest entry ever. There were blasting novices as well as Kings of the Blast.

For those of you unfamiliar with this unique event, points are awarded for blasts on the wave. Abingdon after all, is the spiritual home of blasting! There are also points for old school moves as well as style, pose and creativity.

A novel move this year was having a team of judges who actually knew the rules, Andy MacMahon the gnarly expedition boater and local boy and newly appointed Assistant Editor at Canoe KayakUK Seth Townley.

Veteran Master Blaster Matt Attree just beat Richard Morley to take the Chris Wheeler Memorial Trophy. Chris was a regular supporter of the Blastathon and a consistent winner despite our changing the rules every year!

Kate Howell won the Ladies, despite a shoulder injury, and Louis Frost won the Under 18. This year we even had four entries in the Open Canadian and Jen Clough romped home with a determination never before witnessed in the “dog bone move”

The whole event was rounded off with a BYO BBQ and a trip to the pub.

This year the event coincided with Abingdon Mayor Making, the traditional Abingdon Morris Dancing event in Ock Street.

Next year The Blastathon an Olympic demonstration event?
THOSE RESULTS IN FULL...

**Men’s Kayak**
1. Matt Attree .................. 83
2. Richard Morley .............. 74
3. Andy Newell .................. 67
4. Lee Royle ..................... 64
5. James Metcalfe ............... 63
6. Simon Knox ................... 58
7. Ash Mead ....................... 54
8. Nick Smailes .................. 43
9. James Dixon ................... 41
10. Garry Miller ................. 40
11. Lee Gill ....................... 40
12. Andy Wicks ................... 39
13. Dave Gibson .................. 37
14. Guy Davies .................... 37
15. Dave Surman .................. 33
16. Doug Johnson ................ 31
17. Rick Fielder .................. 30
18. Chris Bloomer ............... 28
19. Duncan Sneddon .............. 25
20. Martyn Read ................... 24
21. Nathan Lenehan .............. 22
22. Ol Renison .................... 15
23. Rich Steptoe ................... 13

**Chris Wheeler Memorial Trophy Winner**
1. Matt Attree .................. 83

**Under 18s Kayak**
1. Louis Frost ..................... 64
2. Ciarran Miller ................. 52
3. Connor Cox ..................... 41
4. Tom Leonard ................... 40
5. Chyavan Rees ................... 39
6. Joe Callard ..................... 32
7. Dan Stein ....................... 29
8. Aiden Ratnage ................... 5

**Ladies’ Kayak**
1. Kate Howell .................... 38
2. Louise Royle .................... 37
3. Vicky Rolls ..................... 29
4. Liz Garnett ..................... 25

**Open Canadian**
1. Jen Clough ..................... 24
2. Alistair ......................... 12
3. Mark .......................... 6

Judges Andy MacMahon, Seth Townley.
We were heading down to the South West Sea Kayak Meet at Corfe Castle. Vicky, Seth, Dave, Paul and I fitted comfortably into Seth’s van with borrowed sea boats on the roof.

After a pretty hectic week at work the promised weekend of sun and sea down in Dorset was getting off to a pretty unpromising start. It had started by taking an hour and fifteen minutes to load the van, it was raining and we’d had to drive into the centre of Oxford to pick up a missing member of the team. To cap it all Seth, our driver, had managed to get into an altercation with a taxi driver over who got to the only working diesel pump in the petrol station first. I think Seth might of been expecting me to be watching his back. I couldn’t be bothered and ducked into the petrol station shop to buy a Cornetto.

The ruins of Corfe Castle date back to the eleventh century, but it was blown up following its fall in the Civil War by Parliamentarian forces in 1646 to prevent it becoming a Royalist stronghold again. It made a stunning back drop to our camp site. This however was something I may not have appreciated fully at the time, having decided to cheer myself up on the journey by sharing a couple of bottles of wine with Dave and Paul. I’m not sure our driver was impressed.

Things were looking up though. The skies had cleared, we were at our destination and there was a weekend of sea kayaking ahead. Only two problems lay ahead; making sure I didn’t drink too much in the pub that evening so that I was fit to paddle next day, and the fact I’d never been sea kayaking before in my life!

As it turns out neither of these turned out to be a problem. After a splendid evening in the local pub catching up with old friends and meeting new ones; we woke and after breakfasting, gathered for the days briefing. Mark explained the purpose of the weekend (have fun, socialise and paddle) and outlined the plans for the day.

There were around eighty of us attending and we split up into groups of eight, each led by someone with some experience of sea paddling and headed off to Knoll Beach before heading off for a paddle around Poole Harbour.

Despite the force 4/5 wind which, it turns out, makes things a little hard going, it appears that sea paddling isn’t that hard at all. Certainly with a bit of white water experience behind me it seems it’s a case of pointing the boat in a straight line and paddling. Learning to turn the beast of a kayak took a while but I never once felt unstable and even managed to catch a few surf waves on.

The wind did make things a little slow though and it took us just under six hours (including first and second lunch) to complete our 18km tour of the harbour.

Poole harbour is a place of surprising contrast; ferries, millionaires row and oil wells didn’t seem to spoil what
seemed to me to be a tranquil and quiet place.

I surprised myself with how much I enjoyed the day. I was expecting it to be a long slog, hard work and plain dull. I was wrong.

Unfortunately I had forgotten one crucial thing; sun-cream. I was now sporting possibly the worst case of sunburn I’ve ever encountered.

The evening was spent with a BBQ on the beach before once again ending up in the Greyhound. Later that evening I slipped into a satisfied sleep looking forward to the next days paddling.

The next morning we had an early rise for the days briefing. The wind had dropped a little and Mark had a surprise, putting me and Andy in charge of a group for the day. Strange sense of humour that one. The days plan was to head up the Jurassic coast from Kimmeridge to Durdle Door via Lulworth Cove.

Jim had kindly lent me a composite kayak, which was a revelation compared to the plastic one I’d paddled the previous day. So much lighter and more responsive. So we headed out admiring the stunning coast line as we went, whilst Andy gave us the benefit of his professional knowledge as a geologist describing the different layers of rock (or clay) that make up the cliffs.

Unfortunately we didn’t make it further than Lulworth; we made a fairly slow pace and stupidly I didn’t drink enough and became somewhat dehydrated. We decided to call it a day and turned back shortly after lunch.

Despite this I enjoyed myself, some of the chop became quite sporty at times especially when the wind picked up.

So, my first sea kayaking experience. Fantastic, certainly far better than I expected. Of course being surrounded by such friendly and encouraging people helped and I’m extremely grateful to them for looking after a numpty like me. Especially Liz and Mark G for looking after us on the Saturday and Jim for not only lending me his boat but making sure we didn’t do anything too stupid on the Sunday.

Finally a special thanks to Heather and Mark for organising such a fantastic weekend and allowing me to take part.
Yeah man. For the second time in two years the Pathfinders Posse went off in search of Bear Goulash. Oh yeah, some white water as well!!

The Soca is a superb emerald green river with a variety of sections of varying grade.

With the main posse flying to Ljubljana (close your eyes and spell it!!) we hired a minibus and a car.

Bearing in mind the dodgy geezers that run car hire companies we didn’t even try to hire roof racks.

Instead we used our own dodgy geezers, Seth Townley and James Crask, to drive the epic 24 hour journey across Europe in the SethVito with camping gear, tables, chairs, gazebos. Oh yes and a few boats as well!

Seth and James met us at the airport, recognizable by their limited edition bright yellow Surman Logistics Corp T shirts which they had commissioned in Ljubljana.

It turns out the day before we arrived there had been torrential rain in Ljubljana and our two vanguard heroes, so to speak, were itching for a first descent.

Having found a blue line up a steep hill just outside the city they reckoned it could be a raging torrent creek and could be a first descent. Our heroes walked and walked to discover.........a concrete channel drainage ditch!!

The journey to the Soca Valley is about 90 miles. You actually cross into Italy for half an hour before climbing over the Predell Pass back into Slovenia. Stopping for a meal en route we reached Trnovo Ob Soci, put up tents n crashed for the night.

Day 1

It started at 7am when we sent the breakfast boys to get the stalest croissants in the Universe. We then got to the kayak shop by 9 to hire the remaining boats. 11 boats in or on Seth’s van and two on the inflatable rack on the car. All topped off by a
Cappucino in the bar next door. To avoid the recurrence of the previous trip’s exploding roof rack issue, we remembered to deflate said racks in the heat of the midday sun, thus avoiding a security alert for the whole of Eastern Slovenia!

Grabbing snacks for lunch, we set off for the Cezsoca section near Bovec. Miles of wide grade 1 and 2 as a warm up. Several km on it picks up a bit at Srpenica 1, with some 2/3, and then at Srpenica 2 it turns into a great technical run amongst big boulders at 2/3+. All were paddling really well and making eddies (well mostly!!)

There was some great rolling and the odd OBE.

The get out for this section is conveniently located at the campsite.

Myself James, Seth, Chyavan and Joe then continued on for a half mile or so down the powerful slalom site making the get out before the canyon which is a no go zone.

Then came the hard work, walking back to the campsite along the rocky path!

Our plan for a first night of bear goulash was foiled by the goulasherie being shut. No probs, we returned to another of our previous restaurants.

Day 2

Good news. The Koritnica is running! This is a small scenic tributary that needs some water to go. It starts off with a little boulder field leading into a tight but easy short gorge. The river then joins the Soca and we follow it down via Melson Meatgrinder to the bridge at Cezsoca.

Skipping the grade 1 and 2, we load up and drive to Srpenica 1 and run both sections down to the campsite again.

We return to our local goulasherie, it’s open and bear is on the menu tonight as well as the ever present and more reasonably placed pizza.

Day 3

The final day of paddling. We drive up to the higher reach of the Soca where we put on just below the village of the same name. We start off with a couple of interesting little drops followed by a long section of grade 2, an interesting little channel and then a more difficult short gorge.

The decision is made for most people to portage, as it looked like a roll was pretty well mandatory at that point. As it happened Tom and Ben got superb lines and the rest of us all had upside down experiences at some stage of the descent, Chyavan produced a most “unusual” move which had elements of mountaineering incorporated into it!

And then? Goulash or pizza of course!

Day 4

Time to head outta town! The journey back to Ljublja-
na, involves crossing the border into Italy, the site of our vehicle breakdown two years ago. Having passed the point, there was a feeling of relief, we were gonna make it!!

We stopped in a great locals bar for coffee in Tarvisio before we parted company with the Sethwagen as it headed over the border into Austria and the long haul back home. We headed back into Slovenia for the airport.

All went smoothly as we returned the vehicle. The car hire company then claimed that we had put a minute mark on the bumper, which we denied. No matter, the car hire mafia did me the honour of relieving me of £230 from my credit card. I have spent the last week or so pulling together documentation to claim it back from the agent through their zero excess scheme. Fingers crossed!!

A fantastic trip both from a paddling and social perspective. First timers and old stagers alike thoroughly enjoyed it and all progressed really well. PYCC members and staff really worked together well and I’d like to thank them all for being such a great team. A special mention has to go to Seth and James for two epic drives and help with all the logistics as well as for use of the Sethvan.

Go grab a copy of the September issue of Canoe KayakUK. Chyavan has written a 150 word report and picture(s) on the Slovenia trip which will be featured in the short report section.

Paddlers

Dave Surman · Seth Townley · Paul Moore · James Crask
Ben Williams · Joe Callard · Chyavan Rees
George Middleton · Tom Mathews · Josh Wright
Charlie Melson · Isaac Jordan · Henry Batten
"Anyone up for a trip to the Tryweryn?" was the question in The Fox a couple of weeks after I joined KCC. Now the last time I paddled it was maybe 8 or more years ago, and the last 5 years had seen me doing only sporadic forays out with a paddle on pretty flat water but I figured that I'd joined KCC to get back on the bouncy stuff so why not? A few e-mails from Simon and Louise and I was arriving in Bala on a Friday night loaded up with camping and paddling gear. Alas postcodes must cover a pretty wide area near Bala so it was some 40 minutes and several phone calls later before I actually reached the campsite but hey ho, at least Alan's paddlewagon made finding our pitch easy!

Joined by Rick, Nick, Louise, Simon, Duncan, Ludo and the rest camp was quickly set up and the pub located. I think it was here that I was first told they had changed the course. "Ah. A bit bouncier you say? Some extra obstacles you say? Hmm. Yes, another pint does sound a good idea..."

Saturday morning came with a bright and sunny start, accompanied by various interpretations of breakfast and the spectacle of watching someone boil water with a mini jet engine and another produce a cafetiére. Classy lot the KCC folk.

A little while later I'm togged up and following Louise to take a look at Chapel Falls to see where we want to start the morning's paddle. Erm, that's not quite how I remembered it, all spitting, boiling and sticky, and my roll is a long way off reliable so I'm very glad Louise suggests we start from just below it. Supported by Louise, Nick would be leading Alan, Ludo, Duncan and myself down the lower section to Bala, while the others paddle the top section.

Inspired by Nick and Louise's coaching we all get busy practising breaking in and out, eddy hopping down the river and trying to avoid the rocks and trees offering the chance to test our dry cags. Duncan however had plenty of bravado and happily practised his increasingly impressive

* Rocks and rolls! (if the Welsh internet translator is correct...)

words: Tim Wilkes
pics: Alan Webb
rolling in the sunshine on the way down – though that may have just been a way to avoid the Welsh midges!

Perhaps a third of the way down we found a reasonable river width wave to practise some surfing and ferrygliding on so lined up for a bash at it. “Go on Alan, you are doing really well” someone said. You can probably guess that directly after this comment the laws of nature meant Alan was gliding downstream some distance from his kayak. Not to be phased though he was back in pretty quickly and we were off again.

Heading down stream Ludo and myself jumped into a small eddy with Alan close behind. Unfortunately he just missed the break out and started heading for some gnarly low branches with a fast current beneath them. Strained through the branches and unable to get free he was tipped over and pinned in by the current. Creating a tense moment until it was clear Alan’s head was well above the waterline, Nick jumped into action and helped him out of the boat, which the rest of us then helped free from the branches. A sobering moment and a reminder why it’s good to paddle with people who know their stuff. Alas Alan’s carbon Werner’s had decided to carry on without us and were never found, but he was admirably pragmatic about that and Louise’s splits enabled us to press onwards to Bala Mill Falls.

Having inspected ahead and checked the route thoroughly, Alan and I decided that yes, we would run the narrow, twisty far right route that includes “The Tunnel”. The rest of the group opted out of this and instead took the wider, meandering route to the left. (Ok, we admit it, the route taken by Alan and I actually finished at the steps just above the falls, but this did mean we were able to climb down them ready to watch the braver souls take the falls and plunge into the foaming mayhem below!). First came Nick, handling it like a pro, followed by Duncan close behind. Would he need that roll he had been practising? Not at all.

Next came Louise, blazing a path for Ludo to follow. There are rumours that Louise rinsed her helmet last time she took the falls but no one is worried as despite the grade IV turmoil there are by now plenty of advanced KCC paddlers around with throwlines (and cameras) just in case.

As expected though, Louise makes it down without issue and Ludo, who wrote about his first trip to “The Big T” in the last Trasher, is ready to make his descent. Past the eddy that caught him out on his previous trip, up to the lip and over into the churning water below. A bounce, a tip and a test of his support strokes but he’s through! Nice work Ludo.

The remainder of the bottom section was spent unsuccessfully looking for Alan’s elusive paddle before disembarking at the bridge in Bala. A quick sandwich and shuttle later and in something of a daze I’m sliding down the ramp by the “chipper” at the top of the course. With Alan on photo duty and Nick once again coaching we’re off into the rocks practicing our eddy hopping before heading into the Graveyard. I’m sure it’s even bouncier and rockier than in the past, but most of us make it through unscathed. Then comes the Ski Jump, which Louise and Nick give us some guidance on. Would we go left or right of the hole? Would any of us try and hit the eddy halfway down? In reality Louise and Nick both catch the eddy successfully while Duncan, Ludo and I concentrate on lining ourselves up properly to miss the hole. Personally I aim to cut across from the left, through the “V” and pass to the right of the
hole – alas, and with no reflection on the guidance, this goes somewhat awry. As I hit the “V” the back of my boat tucks neatly in and I’m pointing straight down. Thankfully it seems that Alan’s camera did not have audio to pick up my comments at this point but needless to say the generic advice from onlookers in this situation – “PADDLE!” – worked and I came through the hole the right way up.

Just round the corner was another challenge that needed a bit of speed and commitment, Miss Davies’s Bridge. Running diagonally across the river there was a meaty wave at the bottom of the drop offering plenty of opportunity for swimming. Having managed to dig the back of my boat out of the wave I was again smiling, and one of my fellow paddlers chose to give us a little rest by taking a swim. (Thanks Ludo.)

Round the corner lay Cafe Wave, a playspot for those with enough energy to strut their stuff, but I was more bothered about the rapids that followed. I remember on several occasions being unbalanced by being swept into the green wall on the far side and then going for a swim in the white stuff that followed. We headed off to Cafe Wave and all managed the break out without incident before peeling off to take on the last rapids section (and the green monster lurking on the far side of the river). Eventually it reached my turn so with some trepidation and a lot of frantic paddling I headed in. Miss that wall and the boulder sticking out. Keep paddling through the bumpy stuff. Avoid the unnamed swimmer. And their green boat. Duck under the throwline across the river. And we’re clear!

Thanks to the coaching of Nick and Louise, and the cameraderie of Ludo, Duncan and Alan amongst others I’d made it through the day in one piece. Perhaps next time I’ll have enough confidence to try Bala Mill Falls too but for now this was more than enough – time to find some food and a beer to celebrate!
“Hey Grandpa, what were you doing the day King Willy and Queen Kiki got hitched way back in 2011” How are you going to answer that question when the time comes?

The end of April and beginning of May this year was positively oozing with national holidays. So many in fact, that it would have been criminal not to use them for just that purpose. We had worked out that for just three days off work you could get eleven days away from the “means of production”.

Okay so it would have been better if Willy and Kiki had timed their nuptials to be exactly in sync with the alpine snowmelt. Perhaps the May and Easter holidays could be moveable feasts, initiated when some mystic holy man spots that the gauge levels in the Durance or Sesia Valleys are perfect for the most awe inspiring satisfying boof of your earthly existence. But hey, I’m not complaining. The end of April is a good time to drive around Europe looking for water!

No Water!

And so it was that we set off for the Cevennes in Southern France. Now I must admit that I didn’t know exactly where the Cevennes was. I had the French guide book, with interesting translations. It seemed like we should explore this area as there was great stuff, if there was rain! There wasn’t.

Having spent the morning driving around looking at empty river beds even the most optimistic amongst us had to concede that a week spent here would probably result in the lowest river mile to café au lait ratio ever known to human kayakdom. After one night, or in one car’s case, one afternoon’s stopover we headed off for...
the Durance Valley.

Still a little early in the season we struggled to find a campsite. The first night was spent on the, not officially open, La Clapiere site at Embrun. A free night’s camping yes, but the downside was a lack of flushing toilets, running water and rock hard ground. There was water in the Guil, so we kicked off into the jaws of Chateau Queyras and then the middle Guil. Easter Sunday saw us move to a much more pleasant site in the village of Roche du Rame and then over to run the Fresquiere and Racecourse sections of the Ubaye.

**Bouncy Castle..on a river?**

Having decided that levels in other rivers were low, we headed for the border into Val d’Aosta and the Dora Baltea. I had not been there for many years and had always understood it to be a later run, at it’s best at the end of July into August. Simon had however discovered through the technological morasse, that things were running, albeit at low levels. We ran the section from La Salle down to the dam which was pleasant, but considerably less powerful than I remembered it. We then ran the harder section down from Pre St. Didier to La Salle and that was an excellent run at that level.

The following day was time for the classic gorge section of the Dora Baltea. It was low but very scenic. In the middle of the gorge we came across what for me was a definite first. Stretching the entire width of the river, was a giant inflatable tube. It was in fact an inflatable dam!

Climbing over this weird structure was like walking and sliding down the weirdest bouncy castle I have ever encountered!!

Now the problem with a river wide bouncy castle is, as you may have guessed, that it turns a low scenic river into a bump and scrape frustrathon! After a recuperative cappuccino in Villeneuve, the roadtrip reassembled in search of that elusive wet stuff!!

**Italia! Si manga bene! Si bufa bene!***

Returning to Val Sesia is always an awe inspiring experience. At least it would have been if we’d taken the weather with us. From roasting days on the Dora Baltea we were back to that Welsh feeling of cold drizzleyness (una piogggerellina fredda!). Somehow it sounds much better in Italian than Welsh, even if the effect on the body is much the same. For the first night we were the sole campers at Il Gatto e La Volpe at Campertogno, but there WAS water in the rivers! We ran the Egua, at least the others did as I had left my helmet back at the campsite and of all the rivers in the world that may be run helmetless, the Egua is not one! I was resigned to photography!

The following day was Royal Wedding Day. We thought
about having a street party but considering some of the driving we had witnessed considered that it could be a high risk strategy. Instead we ran the Sesia from Piode down to just above the gorge and then the gorge itself. A much more satisfying experience than drinking lots of fizzy drinks and eating cream cakes in the street. We did however finish the day with some complimentary Colomba di Pasqua, an Italian Easter Panettone style cake, outside in a café.

The final day we ran the Lower Sermenza Gorge. It was the first time I had run this and I was amazed at what a tremendous run it is. A veritable boofarama with a long feisty rapid at the entrance!

Italy would not be Italy without spending a considerable time eating and we steeled ourselves for the five courses we were going for at Ristorante Gianoli in Campertogno. No one flinched! We all managed as we flared our way though the antipasta, took the big volume of the pasta in our stride and boofed the challenges of the meat course to wind down slowly on the ice cream and sorbet. Bravissimo!! In Italia si mangia bene!!

So let’s do it again. Now let me see, I hear the Queen’s getting jubileed up soon. Hmmm, I hope she thinks of her loyal subjects and arranges it at the peak of the snow-melt.

Dave Surman paddled with Doug Johnson, Simon Knox, Dave Hodgkinson, Rob Perry, Martyn Read, Louise Royle, Nick Smailes, Seth Townley, Fred Wondre.

* One eats well! One boofs well!
Kingfisher Canoe Club and Canoe Camping Club River Dart Trip 14-16 October 2011

Canoeing
The River Dart is a very attractive river. The grading is dependent on the water level.
Newbridge to Holne Bridge is normally a grade 2/3 bump and scrape with plenty of opportunity for rock and tree dodging. In high water it is claimed that this can go up to a grade 5. The section from Holne down to Totnes is generally a grade 2 with a number of weirs which can become killers when the river is in spate.
Please note the new access arrangements. These have changed: the access/egress point at Holne Bridge will be congested, so please avoid this location. Instead, the Dart Country Park is available to access and parking at a charge per car (£5 last year). A better access point is also available in Buckfastleigh.
There is also an opportunity for those wishing to paddle the tidal river between Totnes and Dartmeet, or to surf.

Equipment
Full equipment for a winter trip. Wet/dry suits, helmets, throw lines, buoyancy (both personal, and in the boat), end grabs, a hot drink and food for lunch time.

Transport
I will try and coordinate this so please let me know what your transport arrangements are.

Accommodation and Costs
I have booked caravans at Parkers Farm Holiday Park, Higher Mead Farm, Near Ashburton, TQ13 7LJ.
MR 202/780710. Tel 01364 654869.
The costs will depend on numbers, but are likely to be approximately £21 a head to include breakfasts.

Food
I will cater for breakfasts. We can eat out in the evenings. Please bring your own food and a flask for lunch time.

Directions for Caravaners
To get to Higher Mead Farm from Abingdon, travel down the A34, M4, M5 and A38. The distance is 180 miles. When you are on the A38, look out for a sign post (26 miles to Plymouth). Take the second turn left signposted for Woodland and Denbury. Go down this narrow road, after approx. 500 yards, the farm is on the left. If you are early, call at the reception for keys. I plan to get down early and will mark the caravans that we have been allocated. I will try to place people travelling together in the same van. If arriving late, try Miss Piggy’s bar first.

Directions for “Day Trippers”
To get to Newbridge, travel down as above, but do not turn off the A38 until the second Ashburton turn. This is signposted for Princetown and Two Bridges. At the top of the slip road, turn right and cross over the A38. Continue on the B3357 up the hill, pass the Dart Country Park and down the hill to Holne Bridge. Up and down the hill again to Newbridge. Cross the bridge and turn left into the car park. Please park in the area at the back of the main car park which has been extended for canoeists. You are asked to change “discreetly”. This is the start of the loop section of the River Dart. “Day Trippers” should aim to be at Newbridge by 10am to meet up with the “Weekenders”.

River Licences are no longer required.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ADVANCE BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL AS I NEED TO BOOK THE CARAVANS.

Please reserve me place(s) on the Dart weekend. I will need places in the caravans at £21 a head. This will include breakfasts. (The final cost will depend on the numbers attending.)

I enclose to cover the above costs. Please make cheques payable to H.A.E. Wilkins, and send to: 16 Ashmole Road, Abingdon, OX14 5LH. Tel 01235 522489.

I will require a space in a car for myself and others. I require roof rack spaces for kayaks.

I have space for people in the car and have roof rack spaces available.

Name: Address: Telephone:

Please return this form ASAP (24th September at the latest)
PATHFINDERS YOUTH CANOE CLUB ABINGDON

Presentation Evening

DATE CHANGED!
NOW TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 27TH

Abbey Sailing Clubhouse Wilsham Rd.
(next door to canoe club site)

All members, parents and friends are welcome to come along and see what`s been happening over the past year. We will be featuring slide presentations of some of the activities and trips as well as Joe`s updated film “Pathfinder`s –The Movie!!” There will also be some wacky awards, light refreshments and the bar will be open!

See you there!!

Further details davidsurman@hotmail.com 01865 373115