

ceufad

CYLCHGRAWN CANW CYMRU
JOURNAL OF CANOE WALES

kayak



CROATIA EXPEDITION 2015

SEAL RIVER – 600KM OF PADDLING & PORTAGING

WELSH SLALOM CHAMPIONS 2015



GB Womens Raft Team (and current European Champions) nailing another practice run at the World Champs in Indonesia



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10 Crossing Scotland the hard way ...

editorial

As I write this the GB Raft Teams are ripping it up at the World Rafting Championships in Indonesia. GB has teams in five categories; Open Men, Open Women, Masters Men, U19 Men and U19 Women. Although all of these teams are capable of winning, one team has a distinct advantage as they are the current European Rafting Champions. That is the Open Women's Team – Fieke Reijntjes, Nerys Ann Blue, Suzie Jackson, Naomi James, Bryony Devoy and Frannie Kohn-Hollins

I have dedicated a few editorials to this team, not only because of their success and steely determination, but also because there are a few Welsh paddlers on the team. The plan was to go to print on the last day of the competition, so we could publish the results, however, the festive season has thrown a bauble in the works so it will have to wait till the next issue.

However, I'm cheering on all the teams from the behind the keyboard – hopefully they'll receive a medal or two as an early Christmas present!

Merry Christmas
Vicky Barlow
Editor

ceufad

Ceufad is the official magazine of Canoe Wales. It is produced by members & the views expressed are not necessarily those of Canoe Wales or the magazine's editor. Ceufad is free to members of Canoe Wales.

SUBSCRIPTIONS are available to non-members for £10 for 4 issues from Canoe Wales.

ADVERTISING

For advertising rates contact Vicky on:
ceufad@canoewales.com

SUBMISSIONS

Articles are always welcomed & should be submitted as Word files, however, typed articles are also accepted. Images can be prints or tiff/jpeg/RAW files (preferably 300ppi). These will be returned.

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600km along the Seal River

Front cover:

Dropping into a rapid on the Seal River, Canada
Photo: Karl Midlane



Foundation Module Provider Workshops

Canoe Wales and British Canoeing are holding a selection of Foundation module CPD Provider workshops and the new Generic Assessor Provider Training (replacing the old 4* generic training day). All of these modules are a great addition to your coach educator or coaching qualifications.

Date: 10th January 2016
 AM: Foundation Coaching the Mind or Generic Assessor Training
 PM: Foundation Fitness for Paddlesport or Foundation Fundamentals of Movement
 Venue: Plas y Brenin – www.pyb.co.uk
 Time: AM workshop: 0900 – 1200 PM workshop: 1300 – 1600

The workshops are indoor based so you'll only need a notebook and pen (and lots of enthusiasm). Lunch is available from the bar or you can bring your own.

If you would like to become a provider of one of these foundation modules please contact Marianne Davies to request an application form as soon as possible.

Bookings will not open until the 17th December and only for application forms approved.

To book on to these provider training workshops contact Plas y Brenin on 01690 720214 or via www.pyb.co.uk.

Please contact Marianne Davies at Marianne.davies@canoewales.com if you need any further information.

Coaching Matters 19–20 March

The next Coaching Matters event will be held on the 19-20 March 2016.

It will be based in Llandysul and will cover inland canoe and kayak skills / coaching / safety and rescue updates.

This follows on from the very successful Coaching Matters event that was run in Aberiddi in October (see p5).

If there are any aspects of inland canoe and kayak you'd like to see included or if you'd like more information, contact Jethro Moore: Fun@adventurebeyond.co.uk / 0778 712 3761 / 01239 851 028

Canoe Wales Survey

As Ceufad is going to press the results of the Canoe Wales survey are being collated and analysed. The survey was open to all members (hopefully you saw the notice in the last issue and took the opportunity to register your opinion...). The results will be used to help shape the future of what Canoe Wales' membership offers, and will provide an understanding of what support your venues need in order to help you achieve your goals.

The findings will be published in the March issue of Ceufad.

Coach Educator Moderation

Canoe Wales and British Canoeing are holding a joint Coach Educator Moderation event at Plas y Brenin on Saturday the 9th January 2016. To remain current as a director you need to attend at least one moderation every three years. If you are a tutor this is recommended but not compulsory.

If you are a director or tutor and a license holder the moderation event is free. If you do not hold a license for this year (2015) or have not purchased one for 2016, you will need to pay £70 to attend.

Date: 9 January 2016
 Venue: Plas y Brenin – www.pyb.co.uk
 Start time: 0900 meet for tea/coffee and session start at 0930
 Finish time: 1600

The moderation is indoor based so you'll only need a notebook and pen (and lots of enthusiasm). Lunch is available from the bar or you can bring your own.

You can book onto this moderation via the Plas y Brenin website at www.pyb.co.uk.

If you do not have a license for 2015, you will need to phone the Canoe Wales office on 01678 521199 and pay £70 before booking onto the course.

Please contact Marianne Davies at Marianne.davies@canoewales.com if you need any further information.

Coaching Matters Event Aberiddi

I attended the Coaching Matters Event held at Aberiddi over the weekend 17–18 October. The purpose of the weekend was for coach updating.

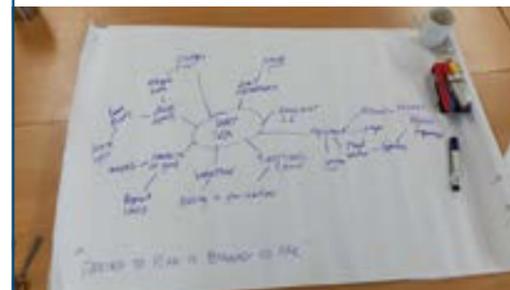
Both wet and dry sessions were provided, aimed at sea kayaking and surfing, however, due to lack of surf the focus was on sea kayaking. On the Saturday the event commenced with a positive update regarding Canoe Wales by RCO Jethro, with the message – 'don't complain get stuck in!' Sessions continued on weather, tides and surf prediction, and safety kit. We then took to the water at Whitesands Bay and paddled around St David's Head, learning inter alia about the marine environment.

On Sunday we split into smaller groups and planned a trip around Ramsay Island – which we then followed. Of course, a trip around Ramsay playing at the Bitches twice, was the high point of the weekend. Not to mention the putting our plan into practice, the coaching tips and information on the marine environment.

As a L3 coach (inland-kayak) who needed to update this was an informative weekend. The workshop format worked well – with exchange of ideas from the participants as well as coaches running the course.

Many thanks to Jethro and his team of coaches, Lou, Martin & Bramble, for putting covering a wide range of subjects in a fun way.

Ray Hind



COACHES' CALENDAR

Coach Educator Moderation	9/01/16	Plas y Brenin	Marianne Davies (info) Plas y Brenin (bookings)
Foundation Modules Provider Workshops	10/01/16	Plas y Brenin	Marianne Davies (info) Plas y Brenin (bookings)
FSRT Provider Moderation	12/03/16	South Wales	Marianne Davies
WWSR Provider Moderation	13/03/16	South Wales	Marianne Davies
WWSR Provider Moderation	16/03/16	North Wales	Marianne Davies
Coaching Matters (inland canoe & kayak)	19–20/03/16	Llandysul	Jethro Moore

For more details contact: Marianne Davies – marianne.canoewales@gmail.com
 Jethro Moore – fun@adventurebeyond.co.uk – 0778 712 3761 – 01239 851 028
 Plas y Brenin – www.pyb.co.uk – 01690 720214

IN THE FLOW

STORM GATHERING SYMPOSIUM

When is it? The 8th UK Storm Gathering will run from February 20 to 22, 2016 on Anglesey, Wales. The event will be held at Anglesey Outdoors.

What's it all about? The idea is to bring together like-minded people wanting to develop their skills and to network with others looking to take their sea kayaking to the next level. There will be challenge, adventures and fun.

What's on offer? The intention is to run a number of practical workshops and journeys covering the following themes of Skill, Safety and Seamanship. Each day will begin with the option of Yoga For Paddlers. Evening sessions will include social events with presentations from guest speakers. A number of retailers and manufacturers have been invited to allow for Q & A opportunities and demo boats.

Who is it for? Attendance is open to anyone with intermediate sea

kayaking skills or above looking for fresh challenges. The ability to wrestle a walrus, paddle around a continent and eat seagulls is not necessary.

What will it cost? There will be three ticket options:

£150 – this provides admission to all event classes and social activities from Friday evening to Monday afternoon. It does not include accommodation, meals or symposium t-shirt.

£125 – this provides admission to all event activities from Friday evening till Sunday afternoon. It does not include accommodation, meals or symposium t-shirt.

£75 – this allows admission to a single day class. It does not include accommodation, meals or symposium t-shirt.

Updates will appear on this website, via Twitter and the UK SGS Facebook Group.



To book a place or for more information contact:
<https://ukstormgatheringsymposiums.wordpress.com>

READ THE WATER

As paddlers you may have noticed that some days a familiar piece of water looks different. As coaches we often ask students if anything has changed, referring to the weather, wind, swell, tide, current or sea conditions.

This ability to observe and understand/read the change in conditions is imperative to a good leader/guide or competent paddler. Often referred to as good seamanship, defined here as:

'The ability to predict how the combination of wind, current, sea state and swell will affect the kayak, together with a constant awareness of change and movement in the marine environment.'

(BCU Coastal Nav and Tidal planning)

The trick is not to try initially to understand what the changes indicate but what you are actually observing.

This may be as simple as noting if the water is choppy, take notice of a smoother spot. If the water is smooth, be aware of choppy spots.

So when we observe we need to look for what is different to help we may look at Shapes and textures in the water or the sky.

So how do we get this insight and the ability to read the telltale signs that the sea/sky is giving us, and recognise that something is different and understand what the difference means.

A novice and expert both have the ability to recognise something is different. The 'sea person' understands the subtleties and the significance of this difference and can adapt accordingly.

The aim of this book is to develop your tools and skill of observation, thus helping you to read the sea and become a barometer to the changes that occur. It is not a substitute for getting out there and experiencing and observing the sea.

The book includes the following chapters:

- The fundamentals – wind and waves, tide and current
- Planning for and navigating by change/pilotage
- How to observe
- The surf environment
- Moving water, current and around the rocks
- Wind and weather



Read the Water is available from:
www.seakayakguides.co.uk
 RRP: £10 plus p&p.

Live for White Water?

Coaching at NWWC



2016 Courses

BCU WHITE WATER SAFETY & RESCUE

27–28 February 2016	£160 pp
23–24 April 2016	£160 pp
25–26 June 2016	£160 pp
27–28 August 2016	£160 pp
22–23 October 2015	£160 pp
17–18 December 2015	£160 pp

BCU ADVANCED WHITE WATER SAFETY & RESCUE

26–27 March 2016	£160 pp
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RESCUE 3 – WHITEWATER RESCUE TECHNICIAN

dates tbc	£290 pp
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RESCUE 3 – ADVANCED WHITEWATER RESCUE TECHNICIAN

dates tbc	£390 pp
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OUTDOOR-SPECIFIC FIRST AID AT WORK

11–13 April 2016	£185 pp
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LEVEL 1 RAFT GUIDE TRAINING

4–6 March 2016	£185 pp
6–8 May 2016	£185 pp
1–3 July 2016	£185 pp
2–4 September 2016	£185 pp

If you can't see a suitable date then give us a call.

OTHER COURSES

We run other courses in both Kayak and Canoe, including BCU 3 Star, 4 Star and 5 Star Training and Assessment. We also offer Moderate Water Endorsement and Advanced Water Endorsement both Training and Assessment.

PRIVATE COACHING COURSES

If you've got something in mind which you'd like to learn or you'd like a day's guiding on the river, we can organise a day for you, whether on the Tryweryn or further afield. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

1 to 1 coaching:	£180 per person, per day
1 coach to 2 participants:	£90 per person, per day
1 coach to 3 participants:	£70 per person, per day
1 coach to 4 participants:	£60 per person, per day

Typhoon Multisport 4 Drysuits available for hire on all our courses only £25 per course.

Booking office: 01678 521083

Email: info@ukrafting.co.uk

Website: www.ukrafting.co.uk/coaching-and-courses



WELSH SLALOM CHAMPIONS 2015

Article: Gareth Bryant

The village of Llandysul in West Wales hosted this year's Welsh Junior Slalom Championships, organised by Llandysul Paddlers who have their clubhouse next to the river Teifi. As well as the Welsh Championships the club also ran a division 1, 2 and 4 UK ranking event that attracted over 250 competitors each day, with paddlers traveling from all parts of the UK.

Saturday was the Welsh Championships and a very technical course was set on the rapids at the quarry section of the river Teifi. 19 gates had to be negotiated and the fastest time counted, with a 2 second penalty added with every touch of the poles. The local paddlers at Llandysul gained some home water advantage – Sam Bryant, Lili Bryant and Fin Yates Jones all put in fast times with no penalties on their first runs. Each competitor had two timed runs with the fastest run counting. Ruth Bramley and Dion Davies took a couple of touches each but with a fast core time each became Welsh Champions in their own age category. Sam Bryant and Fin Yates Jones teamed up and took the doubles prize. Etienne Chappel was the only paddler to take away a Welsh Championship award that did not paddle for the Llandysul Paddlers Slalom team. Etienne, from Seren Dwr Canoe Club in Cardiff, took the kayak Under 14's trophy with the fastest time for a Welsh paddler of the day – 102.09 seconds. Lili Bryant was the fastest of the ladies in a class that saw some fierce competition with less than a second between 1st and 3rd place. Jess Rayner from Brecon Canoe Club and Carys Grey Thompson from Tees Tigers took second and third place respectively.

Alongside the Welsh Championships the final UK division 1 ranking events took place over the weekend. Llandysul Paddlers again secured the top spot in the Men's Kayak with Layton Palmer taking first place and gaining promotion to the premier division next season. Close to Layton in second place was Huw Butterworth, who came in less than a second behind giving him a PB for the season. Other local paddlers who competed and gained PB's over the weekend where: Sioned Bryant, Ifan Bryant, Evie Merritt, Maddy Merritt, Catrin Schrouder and Mari Watkins.

For further information on this race and future events please contact the Canoe Centre in Llandysul on 01559363209 or Canoe Wales on 01678521199

WELSH CHAMPIONS 2015

J14 Mens Kayak:	Etienne Chappell	(Seren Dwr Cardiff)
J14 Ladies Kayak:	Lili Bryant	(Llandysul Paddlers)
J13 Mens Kayak:	Fin Yates Jones	(Llandysul Paddlers)
J13 Ladies Kayak:	Lili Bryant	(Llandysul Paddlers)
J12 Mens Kayak :	Sam Bryant	(Llandysul Paddlers)
J12 Ladies Kayak:	Ruth Bramley	(Llandysul Paddlers)
J11 Mens Kayak :	Sam Bryant	(Llandysul Paddlers)
J11 Ladies Kayak:	Ruth Bramley	(Llandysul Paddlers)
J12 – J14 Ladies C1:	Lili Bryant	(Llandysul Paddlers)
J12 – J14 Mens C1:	Dion Davies	(Llandysul Paddlers)
J12 – J14 C2 :	Sam Bryant & Fin Yates Jones	(Llandysul Paddlers)



Welsh Champions (back, left to right) Sam Bryant, Dion Davies, Fin Yates Jones (front, left to right) Lili Bryant, Ruth Bramley

PADDLE LIKE A GIRL



Why Paddle like a Girl?

Words: Fathom

In support of the '#thisgirlcan' program – I've put a couple of thoughts together.

There are two hemispheres in the brain; left and right. The left half is analytical and problem solving, it processes words and literature, this half is usually associated with the male persona. The right half of the brain is creative and utilises pattern recognition; it processes emotion and images and is usually associated with the female persona.

The male side of the brain, let's call him 'Lefty', conducts mental processes almost exclusively from previously known information, verified from accepted (but not always accurate) mental biases. The female side of the brain (let's call her 'Righty') utilises her pattern recognition abilities to piece together many and disparate pieces of information to make sense of complex systems.

Lefty wants facts and figures, however, he has difficulty in extracting these from the images of the river that his eyes present to him, so he needs to utilise massive amounts of higher brain function to try and turn the information he see's into facts and figures which he can then process. Righty avoids this two-stage process by processing the images she see's directly. She also does this without attempting to reduce the information to facts and figures and processes images directly, of the flowing water that she sees before her, in order to choose the right line to paddle. This means she does not generate information based on (potentially) false mental biases.

Put these two pieces of information together and it becomes clear why we should all 'Paddle like a Girl', or at the very least try and think like one. Everyone can, you just need to open your mind to patterns, think about the shapes you see and avoid thinking about the 'names' of water features. Try it next time you are on the river.

If we all do this then may be the term 'Paddle like a Girl' would be understood as the compliment it should be!

Crossing Scotland with a Canoe

(occasionally on water ...)

Article: Malcolm Durnan

When a plan for a Scottish canoe expedition comes up sometimes you just have to jump at it, so I did with both feet.

What started off with planning a small Spey expedition, with several distillery stops to make sure the home country was still doing its best, changed to 'Let's do the Rannoch moor crossing.' Even with the addition of 'Oh, by the way, we need to be back on Thursday to pick my son up from his first day at school,' giving four and a bit days to do the trip, it still seemed like a good idea.

DAY ONE 1130 – 2000

Fast-forward three weeks (with not a lot of planning) and we arrive at Kinloch Leven on the west coast of Scotland (from the start you can put your feet in the sea if you want to).

Standing looking up the hill for the first day's efforts of dragging two canoes on our C Tug Trolleys up the track, we started to get an idea of what we were going to have to do, and got our heads into a 'crack on' mode.

The very first attempt at this showed what the canoes thought of the trip – we dragged one canoe up an initial steep section, and were in the process of dragging the second canoe up the same slope, when canoe #1 decided to slide back down the hill again.

You know it is steep when your six foot plus friend is struggling to drag the canoe and I can't move mine, leaving the only option to drag one as far as you can and then go back for the other thus trebling the distance. A few choice words were muttered as we moved on up.

For the next 3 hours we progressed this way up the hill with the walkers of the West Highland Way going in the opposite direction giving us some funny looks and surprised comments. Couldn't understand why myself.

Finally a stroke of luck happened as a bloke from the most isolated cottage you could find beckoned us to follow him through his garden. This led us onto a smooth concrete path about 5 feet wide that carried water from the Blackwater reservoir down to the power station at Kinlochleven.

This proved to be a Godsend as we could now simply tow our own canoes at a nice walking pace with minimal effort for the next few hours until we reached Blackwater reservoir. Definitely a stroke of luck!

Onto Blackwater reservoir where a gentle force two allowed a nice sail down the reservoir, giving us a chance to take in the surrounding hills with patches of snow still in evidence (pretty mad considering it was the longest day of the year).

We reached camp about 20.00 and had our much awaited grub stop with a little dram to relax and keep the midges away.

DAY 2 0800 – 2315

Disaster! The cork of the whisky had come undone without my knowledge and emptied almost all of its contents into the large dry bag. Fortunately there was a little bit left and everything was in Exped mini dry bags so didn't get soaked. It turned out there wouldn't be much time to drink it anyway the way the following days went on.

Thinking that day one was a long day we were in for a surprise as we left camp at 08.00 ready for our crossing of the Rannoch Moor.

Very quickly we discovered that the only way to do this was to carry the bags for about half a kilometre, walk back, harness ourselves up and drag the canoes to the bags, as the combined weight was crushing. Now we knew what the Arctic explorers felt like.

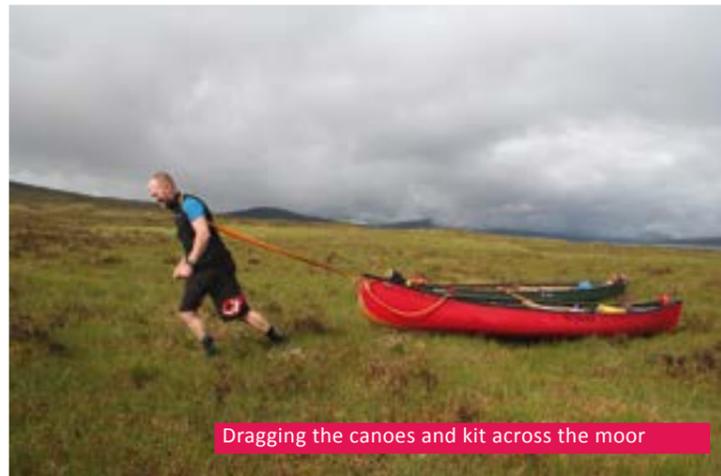
There was no water in the little streams so there was no option to utilise them, so on we dragged.



Dragging uphill – not the best start to a trip!



Sailing down Blackwater reservoir



Dragging the canoes and kit across the moor



Paddling past a watchtower on Loch Rannoch



Negotiating the rapids and rocks of the River Tummel

After four hours of this the disused train track (so one of us claimed) appeared in sight, which meant that we might possibly have an easier time of it.

Whilst having a speedy snack these dreams were shattered as a five-carriage train (moving rather quickly) travelled across our line of sight, leaving any hopes dashed on the rocks we sat on.

Our dreams were furthered scuppered when Lochan a Chlaidheimhon, the moor we hoped would give us some respite, was over within 10 minutes. This left us with the fun task of throwing kit and canoes over a deer fence (which we probably shouldn't have). However, the fact of an extra half hour dragging was definitely not appealing.

The next few hours were spent on a long uphill drag, which featured exhaustion and collapsing on your knees, before going to get the next bit of kit. Good job we were as stubborn as each other!

Never have I had as much joy of finding a forestry track as when we came out of the moors to put our C Tug's back on and wander down the hill to Rannoch train station for some grub.

After some food we asked a kind biker about the direction to Rannoch Loch, as some sign posts had been turned around (we were easily confused at this stage of the day), to which he replied with 'Are you walking to there then?' We laughed and said we would be paddling/sailing the lochs and paddling the rivers all the way down. His reply in the Scottish twang was 'It's rather rocky.' We thought we'd be OK, so off we went and canoed down Loch Eigheach

before portaging the dam and getting ready (with some excitement) to paddle the River Gaur.

This was short-lived as the river was too low even with the desperate talk of 'We can paddle that 200m to the bend,' which would have then be followed by portaging the next rock strewn mile.

So, back on with the Tugs. For four miles we followed what would have been a fantastic run, and then scurried through a garden (whilst being eaten alive by midges) to launch onto Loch Rannoch.

After an hour's paddle in the still quiet waters we landed at 23.15 on the Loch-side to put up the tents and get some much needed sleep.

DAY 3 0715 – 2315

'You can't be camping here,' were the opening words from a local resident, as we packed up our tents at 6.45 in the morning. All the more incentive to get onto Loch Rannoch and have breakfast later!

The morning paddle was lovely – passing a watchtower defended by a flock of screeching and poo dropping seagulls (so that was the breakfast spot ruined) until the wind switched and began to pick up.

Mental note, when the wind turns head to the shore for shelter, otherwise when you are stuck in the middle of a massive loch with force 4 plus gusts hitting you, 40 minutes of flat out paddling into the wind gets pretty tiring as you fight to the side.

This led to another forced two mile walk along the road until the wind dropped and we could get on to finish the loch. There was definitely a theme building here.



Fuelled and ready to carry on it was amazing to be on moving water, and we covered vast amounts of ground as we glided down the last section of the River Tummel until we met up with the River Tae, downstream Grandtully."



Loch Tummel

Moving water had never felt so good, even if it was only grade one and a half. This was the first section River Tummel, which seemed to come to an end all too quickly as we arrived at Dunalastair Reservoir. This passed with little wind and a smooth paddle, leading us to the next section of the River Tummel.

There were then several sections of the River Tummel, which on this occasion varied from scrape to that's-too-big-and-rocky-to-paddle-in-a-fully-laden-canoe. Some bits we could have paddled down but quite often there was no eddy to stop in before we would have been dashed on the rocks.

This led to much lining, paddling, the odd long portage and definitely a few moments of having a word with yourself. At least we could say we did almost all the traditional skills on the trip.

We made it down to Loch Tummel for a nice late evening sunny dinner stop – amazingly the wind stayed in our favour along the Loch. It even picked up to a nice force three, so we got our sails out again and got a bit of a rush as we shot along the water on our solo rigs.

Another long day was finished up with the traditional set up of the tent and collapse until the 6.30 alarm woke us up again.

DAY 4 0715 – 2100

A beautiful day – we woke up to with the sun already in a blue sky.

The day began with the traditional morning ritual of loading the boats and kit on to the C Tugs, as we had to walk the 4 miles up and down the road by the side of the River Tummel. Another note for the unplanned – try to arrive on days that the River Tummel releases, in case there is not enough water to paddle due to low rainfall. You can imagine the joy we felt of another walk.

Paddling the last section of Loch Faskally to Pitlochry was all smooth and pleasant before we got the chance to destroy some undergrowth as we dragged the boats to the edge of the dam.

A large crowd watched, with some confusion by the looks on their faces, as we lowered the canoes and kit down the dam into the river below.

The gathered throng couldn't even raise a cheer to our gallant efforts in achieving this task. Maybe they could smell the 3 days of sweat and exhaustion from our tired bodies and felt it would tip us over the edge.

River Tae, downstream of Grandtully



Even the fishermen gave us the odd wave or that's what the hand gestures looked like (most were extremely amiable)."

Two hundred metres down, the river side café obviously had big windows as our lunch left us £30 lighter. We decided it was best to sit outside for the sake of the other patrons.

Fuelled and ready to carry on it was amazing to be on moving water, and we covered vast amounts of ground as we glided down the last section of the River Tummel until we met up with the River Tae downstream Grandtully.

Even the fishermen gave us the odd wave or that's what the hand gestures looked like (most were extremely amiable). You could definitely see where the income came from, with the amount of tenders tied up on the banks (late in the day fortunately for us) that the local giles took the well paying guests out in to fish.



The Tae turned out to be a nice cruise along, with the odd windy patch reminding us of sections of the lower Wye.

Reaching Campsite Lyn just up from Stanley at about 20.00, we then had some nice grade 2 sections for the next hour. I seemed to keep forgetting I wasn't in a raft and that tiny waves do actually fill your boat up, requiring a bit of bailing but good fun.

It was nice to have a short day and actually land at 21.00 for food, which enabled us to finish the last dribbles from the ill fated whisky. This felt like the only downtime we had had for the previous few days.

DAY 5 0800 – 1000

The last morning paddle was beautiful – no wind and a bit of drizzle to finish in Perth where the tide makes its way inland from the sea.

We even managed to find a greasy spoon and have the long-awaited fry up as we waited for our shuttle back to the van.

After 50 hours on the go we decided that that had been the most 'brutal' but 'amazing' experience we have had and definitely has inspired us for next year's trip. A huge thanks to Escape Watersorts for the C Tugs and my work CIWW for other bits and bobs I needed.

If you are planning this trip and want any further info or require some guided trips feel free to contact info@CIWW.com to see if we can help. Onto the next adventure we go.

Canoe Wales Awards 2016



- Young Volunteer
- Community Volunteer Award
- Event Volunteer
- Waterways & Environment Volunteer
- Local Authority of the Year
- Disability Paddle Sport Award
- Volunteer Coach of the Year
- Outstanding Contribution

The qualifying time period will be between 1st October 2015 to September 30th 2016.

Entries will open on 1st July 2016 and close on September 30th 2016 and no entries after this time will be considered.

Canoe Wales Premier and Division 1 Slalom Report

Words: Richard Lee

The Canoe Wales slalom groups returned to racing for the autumn calendar, with Division 1 paddlers making the most of some late summer rain in Scotland to paddle on the River Tay at Grandtully. Jonathan Davies and Adam Johnstone ran a mid-week training camp to prepare the paddlers for two races at the weekend. In K1 Women, Bethany Carol (Bala CC) placed 2nd, Bethan Palmer (Bala/Llandysul) 4th and 6th, Mari Watkins (Seren Dwr) 8th and Lili Bryant (Llandysul) 9th. In Kayak Men, Huw Butterworth (Llandysul) posted a PB in 8th place, while Etienne Chappell gained a 3rd place to secure promotion to Premier.

The paddlers then made their way to Holme Pierrepont for another training camp with the Premier paddlers, in preparation for the HPP September race. Ciaran Lee Edwards (Llandysul) took a 6th place in K1 Men, while Tom Abbott (Mold) took 5th in C1 Men in the Premier race. Many of the 30 Welsh paddlers attending the multi-divisional race took good points to set up a final push for personal bests in the October domestic races.

As part of this preparation 14 of the Premier paddlers attended a 'heads-up' race camp at Klagenfurt. At this event the Welsh athletes joined paddlers from Austria (the host country), Slovenia, Slovakia, Italy, Bosnia and Croatia to race in the Alpe Adria Cup. Prior to the main event was strength and conditioning training, water work and individual meetings. The Welsh paddlers all placed in the top 10 in their respective classes, with podium places in C1 Women for Non Dingle (Seren Dwr – 2nd) and Emily Davies (Bala / Mold / Hydrasport – 3rd).

A double Premier at Bala on the technical 'Graveyard' section saw the Welsh paddlers putting their best ever group performances in UK races to-date, with Ciaran Lee Edwards placing 2nd on both days, and Steffan Walker taking 3rd on both days, in K1 Men. James Cooper (Seren Dwr) put down a PB in 7th place, while Rhys Davies (Bala CC) and Matt Lister (White Rose, Yorkshire) took a double win in C2 to confirm their ranking list position as 2015 UK winners. A 3rd and a 4th for Tom Abbott confirmed his ranking position of 3rd overall in C1 Men, while Emily Davies (6th) and Non Dingle (7th) posted PBs in C1 Women. In the K1 Women Gabi Ridge (Seren Dwr), Cara Lee (Bala/QUB) and Megan Hamer Evans (Seren Dwr) all recorded top 10s over both days, as the Senior and Under 18 Welsh Championships were also decided. Cara Lee took the K1 Women Senior title, with Megan Hamer Evans taking the J18 and J16 trophies. In K1 Men, Ciaran Lee Edwards took the Senior title, with James Cooper taking the J18 and Elliot Goddard (Seren Dwr) the J16 age groups. The C1 Championship went to Tom Abbott (Senior) and Raoul Chappell (Junior) in the Men, while

Emily Davies took Senior and J18 titles, with Non Dingle taking 1st in J16. The C2 Senior and Junior titles were secured by Raoul Chappell and Steele Jones (Seren Dwr).

Division 1 paddlers were also in action on Welsh water a week later, at Llandysul. The final Division 1 race saw a promotion to Premier for Layton Palmer (Llandysul) on his home site, with Huw Butterworth putting a late season PB down on the River Teifi. The Women's kayak event saw some excellent performances from all the boats, with Mari Watkins (3rd on Sunday) Emily Davies (3rd on Saturday), Lili Bryant (4th), Jessica Rayner (Brecon, 5th), Bethan Palmer (6th on Sunday), Carys Grey Thompson (6th on Sunday), all racing out PBs in the last races of the season, improving their overall UK ranking, with 16 Welsh women now ranked in the UK top 100.

The Junior 14 and Junior 12 Welsh Championships were also held alongside the Saturday race with the titles being decided as follows:

J14 Mens Kayak: Etienne Chappell

J14 Ladies Kayak: Lili Bryant

J13 Mens Kayak: Fin Yates Jones

J13 Ladies Kayak: Lili Bryant

J12 Mens Kayak : Sam Bryant

J12 Ladies Kayak: Ruth Bramley

J11 Mens Kayak : Sam Bryant

J11 Ladies Kayak: Ruth Bramley

J12 – J14 Ladies C1: Lili Bryant

J12 – J14 Mens C1: Dion Davies

J12 – J14 C2 : Sam Bryant & Fin Yates Jones

More success followed in the Women's classes at the Tees Premier race, with 4 Welsh paddlers in the top 7 in the K1 Women class. 3rd place went to Gabi Ridge, with Megan Hamer Evans in 4th, Cara Lee in 6th and Lottie Cooper (Castle CC) in 7th. In the Men's kayak event Ciaran Lee Edwards put a storming first run down to claim his first Premier win and secure 3rd place on the UK ranking list. James Cooper took a 7th place – another PB, while the C1s also had a good day with 3 boats in the top 10.

The season then moved to Lee Valley, with one of the highlights of the year's calendar – 2016 Olympic and GB Senior Team selection. Three days of tough racing on the UK's best course featured four Welsh representatives. Ciaran Lee Edwards (K1 Men), warmed into the series, and took a 5th place in the final race, narrowly missing out on a Senior World Cup place. However, the autumn results will place him in good stead as he prepares for the Under 23 selection next year. Like Ciaran, Will Coney (Seren

Dwr), saved his best performance for the last race, and while racing as a Junior, can be confident of the improvements he has made over the last two years that will see him racing competitively in the Senior classes next year. Tom Abbott narrowly missed out on a Senior World Cup place, placing 6th overall. Again Tom will race as an Under 23 next year and look for selection to the Under 23 team, while good performances in this, might see Senior World Cup places available to any paddler who performs well in the spring 2016 selection races. Rhys Davies, paddling with Matt Lister in C2, put down a great series of races – being fastest over the water on 5 out of the 6 race runs. A final run from Etienne Stott and Mark Proctor, took the Olympic reserve place away from them, although a place on the Senior Team for 2016 will see them looking to repeat this world class pace on the world scene next year. The Great Britain Olympic places went to Fiona Pennie (K1 Women), Joe Clarke (K1 Men), Richard Hounslow and David Florence (C2) and David Florence (C1 Men). Canoe Wales wishes them all the best in the 2016 Olympic Games at Rio de Janeiro next August.

Following a busy training camp, with 31 boats on the water, where Wales were joined by Northern Ireland paddlers at Lee Valley, the UK Premier racing season came to a close on the last day of October on the Olympic course. Ciaran Lee Edwards completed a run of top 5 placings in K1 Men. Peter Lake (Bala), Etienne Chappell and Layton Palmer put down season-ending PBs. Andy Kettlewell (Llandysul) and James Coney (Seren Dwr) joined Tom Abbott, Will Coney and Rhys Davies in the top 10, to demonstrate a strength in depth amongst the Welsh C1s. Gabi Ridge and Megan Hamer Evans echoed the top 10 placings in K1 Women, while Grace Scaplehorn (Seren Dwr) and Izzy Bushrod (Seren Dwr) put down solid runs to round off the season, which ended on the Sunday with the British Open, where UK paddlers were joined by international paddlers to complete the racing year.

Well done to all the paddlers on their hard work, commitment and enthusiasm. Thanks to all coaches, parents, supporters and volunteers who make it all possible. Canoe slalom is a great sport but without great people it is nothing. Work hard, expect nothing. Take responsibility, enjoy yourself.



Trevor Rocks?

Article: Fathom
Photos: as credited

The Canoe Show has recently shown an article describing the very first Canoe Slalom race in the UK; presenting footage of the 1939 Dee Slalom race. This is the event that effectively began competitive slalom in the UK. It is an excellent if short piece, but rather bizarrely, they claim that no one really knows where the actually event actually took place.

The Canoe Show, Episode 4, shows footage of the Trevor Rocks section of the Dee and also a chalk outline of the 1939 course clearly and undeniably showing three river channels that are simply not present at Trevor Rocks. It is clear, from what little they show, that the river section paddlers now call Trevor Rocks cannot be the site of the original event; at least not unless the site has changed very dramatically.

So the question remains – where is the original site to be found?

The river from Llangollen to Chester is paddled regularly and should the site be obvious, it would surely be well known to many paddlers. As this is not the case, this article will offer a possible solution.

The relevant OS map, downstream from Llangollen and beyond Trevor Rocks, shows that the river takes a wide swing north up to Newbridge and then south again – at this large meander there are a couple of sections with islands in the river that might prove worthy of further investigation.

Paddling down this section does not present a vast number of potential candidates for the 1939 site. There are very few river splits, side channels and/or sandbanks that might have once have been islands, but there is almost nothing that might be reminiscent of the chalk outline map shown by the original footage. A prolonged inspection of the shallows at the center of the Trevor Rocks rapid is convincing evidence enough that (short of something as catastrophic as a major landslide) this could simply not be the site. The final clincher, that the Trevor Rocks rapid is not the site for the event, is the width of the river itself. Although there are dryer areas in the center of the river, the film footage aired on The Canoe Show clearly shows a wide channel (at least 20 feet) to the river-left side of the river, with the main channel to the river-right being, if anything, even wider. However, regardless of how the river might have moved, silted over or collapsed in on itself, there is simply not enough width of river at the Trevor Rocks rapid for this to be the site depicted in the archive footage.

The islands upstream of Newbridge may not seem like a very likely spot either, but they do seem to be the only option left. If the 1939 site is not at Newbridge then there simply is nowhere else that, at least from looking at the map, can be the right place.

The island before Newbridge is clearly present. However, it splits the river into two with the main flow

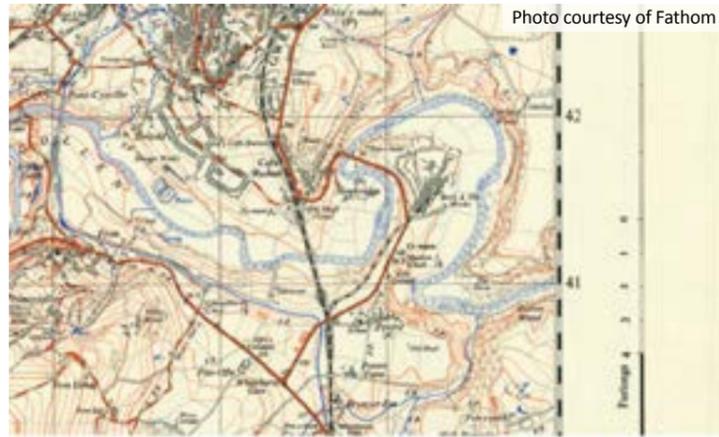


Photo courtesy of Fathom



The islands below Trevor Rocks

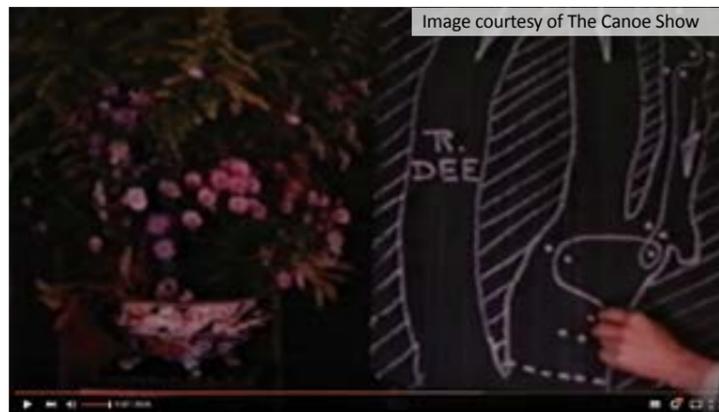


Image courtesy of The Canoe Show



Map of the course showing the split in the river



Image courtesy of The Canoe Show



The first canoe slalom in the UK – reportedly at 'Trevor Rocks', on the Dee

heading to the river-left channel and the river-right channel, although wider, being impassably shallow in summer conditions. Hardly reminiscent of the archive footage at all.

There is a wall in the background of the event footage and the earth bank on the island is, indeed, supported by a manmade wall. The large stone slabs being clearly visible from the island side view. What is also clearly visible is that there are only two channels – two, not three. The top of the island has a run through, that joins the river-right channel further down, but it is only four feet wide, barely wide enough to paddle down let alone enough to permit any sort of major event requiring the maneuvering of 16 foot-long open kayaks.

Viewing the Newbridge island site on Google Maps* does show three channels, however, Google Earth does not appear to show the right channel. The reality of the site suggests Google Earth appears to be right.

The Newbridge island site does not initially appear to be like that of the site presented in the archive footage, but sometimes all that is required is a different perspective. In this case a trip to the opposite (river-right) bank is all that is needed. There, for all the world to miss, is the third river channel. Shallow and near dry, it is completely screened by what appears, from the river-left bank, to be the river-right bank.

No remnants of the event are present, or should be expected – a few tell tale pieces of string tided round trees, to support the poles, is simply too much to ask for. 76 years is too long a time. However, from this new perspective, somehow, it feels right.

Although so much time has passed since the event, re-watching the original footage shows nothing that conflicts with the likelihood of the Newbridge site being the location of the original 1939 event. The chalk drawn map on The Canoe Show shows the outline is almost exactly the same shape as the islands are now. An OS map dating from the late 30's and 40's clearly shows the same islands were present at that time, and roughly the same shape.

Also the reason that this 'lost' channel is not instantly recognisable on Google Earth is that it is mostly hidden under the words 'River Dee'. Is it possible to presume that the reason that this channel is labeled as such, is because it is the original route of the river?

In conclusion, this may not be a discovery of anything new, this 'discovery' may even be completely wrong, or this site may be common knowledge amongst those in the know. However, sufficient evidence exists to be fairly confident that this is, in fact, the site of that inaugural event. What's more a trip to the site can mean gently meandering, slowly and surely, back 76 years to the birth of competitive Canoe Slalom in the UK.

Who knew you could time-travel in a kayak?

To watch The Canoe Show check out British Canoeing TV on www.youtube.com

* Other ways to waste your time at work are available.



Photo courtesy of Fathom

Rocky, shallow and no sign on the elusive third channel



Photo courtesy of Fathom

Looking upstream the third channel is revealed!



Image courtesy of The Canoe Show



Bare chests were not compulsory ...

2016

	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	
SAT										1			SAT
SUN					1					2			SUN
MON		1			2 ^{BH}	ASKS		1		3			MON
TUES		2	1		3	ASKS		2		4	1		TUES
WED		3	2		4	ASKS	1	3		5	2		WED
THURS		4	3		5	ASKS	2	4	LRF	1	3	1	THURS
FRI	1 ^{BH}	5	4	1	6	ASKS	3	5	LRF	2	4	2	FRI
SAT	2	6	5	2	7	MT ASKS	4	6	LRF	3	5	3	SAT
SUN	3	7	6	3	8	ASKS	5	7	LRF	4	6	4	SUN
MON	4	8	7	4	9		6	8		5	7	5	MON
TUES	5	9	8	5	10		7	9		6	8	6	TUES
WED	6	10	9	6	11		8	10		7	9	7	WED
THURS	7	11	10	7	12		9	11		8	10	8	THURS
FRI	8	12	11	8	13		10	12		9	11	9	FRI
SAT	9	13	12	9	14		11	13		10	12	10	SAT
SUN	10	14	13	10	15		12	14	YPS	11	13	11	SUN
MON	11	15	14	11	16		13	15		12	14	12	MON
TUES	12	16	15	12	17		14	16		13	15	13	TUES
WED	13	17	16	13	18		15	17		14	16	14	WED
THURS	14	18	17	14	19		16	18		15	17	15	THURS
FRI	15	19	18	15	20		17	19		16	18	16	FRI
SAT	16	20	SG	16	21		18	20		17	19	17	SAT
SUN	17	21	SG	17	22		19	21		18	20	18	SUN
MON	18	22	SG	18	23		20	22		19	21	19	MON
TUES	19	23		19	24		21	23		20	22	20	TUES
WED	20	24		20	25		22	24		21	23	21	WED
THURS	21	25		21	26		23	25		22	24	22	THURS
FRI	22	26	25 ^{BH}	YPS	22		24	26		23	25	23	FRI
SAT	23	27	26	YPS	23		25	27		24	26	24	SAT
SUN	24	28	27	YPS	24		26	28		25	27	25	SUN
MON	25	29	28 ^{BH}		25	30 ^{BH}	27	29 ^{BH}		26	28	26 ^{BH}	MON
TUES	26		29		26	31	28	30		27	29	27 ^{BH}	TUES
WED	27		30		27		29	31		28	30	28	WED
THURS	28		21		28		30			29		29	THURS
FRI	29				29					30		30	FRI
SAT	30				30							31	SAT
SUN	31												SUN

2016 EVENTS:

- ASKS ANGLESEY SEA SYMPOSIUM
- GC GEMAU CYMRU
- LRF LLANDYSUL RIVER FESTIVAL
- MF MAWDDACH PADDLESPORT FESTIVAL
- MT MONTGOMERY CANAL TRIATHLON
- SG STORM GATHERING
- YPS YOUTH PADDLING SYMPOSIUM / SYMPOSIWM PADLO POBOL IFANC
- TT TEIFI TOUR
- TF TRYWERYN FESTIVAL



LOCATION: CANADA DAY CREEK, NORWAY
PHOTO: ADRIAN KIERNAN

LOCATION: GREY DOG, SCOTLAND
PHOTO: CHRIS RUSSELL

LOCATION: SEAL RIVER, CANADA
PHOTO: KARL MIDLANE

It's all about the Timing ...

behind the scenes at the Cardiff World Cup

With the slalom season finished for another year we thought it would be good to look back at one of the highlights of canoe slalom in Wales – when the World Cup came to Cardiff. This prestigious event required the services of 193 volunteers, who worked in seven areas: administration, welfare, course construction, timing, equipment, control, victory ceremonies and judging. One of those volunteers was Julian Tyler and this is his World Cup story.

When I heard the Canoe Slalom World Cup was returning to Cardiff, I booked time off work and put my name forward to volunteer. I'd helped with course construction and on the start line the previous year, so was up for more! Being a key member of the Welsh slalom timing team, I hoped I'd be involved with the technical side of running the races and thus gain a useful insight to how top level racing is organised and run. I wasn't disappointed! Officially I was allocated the role of 'Assistant Chief of Scoring', which meant understudying Andy Grudzinski, a lead member of the British Canoeing timing crew.

With racing scheduled for 3 days starting Friday morning, I spent Wednesday and Thursday mostly listening, learning and running errands as the technical team set up. The electronic timing system was managed by the Swiss company, Siwidata, whose technicians set up and ran their kit the whole weekend. They use a slightly more complex version of the system used for UK races, so I was familiar with their processes, although it was fascinating to watch them at work. The scoring system was based around 3 computers, which took timing feeds from the timing system, with penalties being captured from judging positions around the course and relayed to the office through headsets and entered there. Judges also recorded penalties on sheets which were collected regularly by a team of runners. These sheets were manually checked against the penalties on the computer system before the results were posted for all to see.

In addition, every run was videoed, with the feed being used for TV transmission, after being combined with paddler information, timing and penalty input. These video feeds were also recorded and viewed by 2 specially assigned judges who were looking for penalties not seen by on-course judges, and for enquiries (of which, more later).

The main role of the Chief of Scoring was to oversee all these processes, ensuring the race was running properly, all the technical links were working, and that the scores allocated to paddlers were correct, before being issued. With the results being streamed live on the web, there was little margin for error, nor for any slippages in the processes!



The Timing Team: Julian Tyler third from the left



Olympic silver medallist Dave Florence racing at Cardiff



The World Cup race course

Article: Julian Tyler
Photos: Welsh Slalom or as credited

During racing, my primary role was to take 'enquiries' from team managers and to see they were processed. 'Enquiries', in ICF terms, are requests to review any aspect of the result of a paddler's run. Although they could enquire about the recorded time, in practice, they were all about penalties. In most cases, team managers asked whether a penalty given to one of their paddlers was accurate or not, although I dealt with several cases where a team manager thought a paddler from a different country should have had a penalty which wasn't shown on the provisional results. The process of taking enquiries is quite bureaucratic and subject to strict time limits. The enquiries desk was public facing, so we needed to be available throughout racing and remain polite yet clear about the rules.

Once I ensured enquiry forms had been completed correctly and within the time limit, I collected the relevant judging sheets and took them with the enquiry to the Chief Judge, while also notifying the video judges of the bib and gate number so they could call up the relevant video section for review. On completion of the review, I needed to ensure feedback had been given to the relevant team manager, recording the time. Over the course of the 3 days I think there were about 50 enquiries. Some of these led to decisions about who progressed to semi-finals/finals, so they were crucial to paddlers.

As there were 2 of us on the enquiries desk, I used any spare time to watch quietly in the control room – asking questions about procedures as they happened, and making sure the team was okay. Although I saw very little of the action 'live', I managed to watch a considerable amount of the video feed as well as how the whole system ticked over, and what was needed to ensure smooth running. I also had a spell shadowing one of the judges on the course, watching, learning and contributing a little during C2 heats. I was amazed at how fast the boats passed through the section of gates we were watching, and how easy it would be to miss something if concentration wavered!

Before the racing started, I also took the opportunity to sit the International Judging exam, and happily, passed. This qualifies me not only to judge at International races, but to also undertake some of the technical roles within control; such as Chief of Scoring.

The professionalism shown by all I worked alongside was amazing. We were nearly all volunteers, giving our time for free and doing the best we could to ensure successful racing. The whole process was very slick and although pressured, didn't feel stressful. In fact, I had a lot of fun – so I'll definitely be back for more!



Rhys Davies and Matt Lister providing a demo run



The timing nerve centre!



K1M Steffan Walker of Llandysul Paddlers who was selected to paddle the demonstration runs and forerunners for the World Cup

CROATIA EXPEDITION 2015

Words: Matt Cooke
Photos: Matt Cooke, Ivan Šafradin



Gez sending it on the Mreznica

For over 30 years, Peninsula Canoe Club has been one of the most efficient canoe clubs in the UK, winning multiple British Canoeing awards for Top Club status. I have been a member of the club since my first year of kayaking in 1986.

The club has supported all disciplines of the sport and seen some of their members reach National and International status through competition and exploration. The one thing that the club was missing was a whitewater expedition outside the UK. Throughout my travels, I strive to find locations that would suit all abilities of paddlesport. During my two visits to Croatia over the past three years, I realised that this would be a perfect place to organise a mission for our club's whitewater enthusiasts.

All it took was a phone call to our agent on the ground, Ivan Šafradin. Ivan runs Croatia Kayak Safra tours in Split, Southern Croatia. David Bain and myself met Ivan during the 2014 Pyranha Team Tour and he was more than helpful during our visit, showing us around the areas we had previously been unable to visit. Ivan was delighted to be part of what I had hoped to be a thriving kayaking location for a large percentage of the world's paddlesport community.

For this specific mission, it was time to select some additional crew members. A good friend to Ivan and myself, conveniently living in my street and an obvious choice if available, was Geraint Rowlands. I gave Gezza a call – it didn't take too much persuading before Gezza was sold on the idea. Gezza currently

works as a paramedic in North Wales and has reached global recognition from a long line of whitewater and academic achievements. We now had a solid crew, joined also by Helen Flint and Pyranha Pro Coach Dave Kohn-Hollins.

Our plan was almost too simple. The variables for me were my van and the reliability of Ryan Air. I have driven a Mercedes Vito since my return from Australia in 2005. My first van died in 2013 after 15 trips to Europe, and I luckily scored a peachy deal for my new one from the insurance money. A newer version with nice extras but I did not yet know how it would fair up on a trip to Croatia.

The club had donated a trailer for us to tow down to Europe with the kayaks whilst the team took a short flight to Zadar from Manchester, just two hours from our first proposed camp in Omis, Southern Croatia. We set off to Slovenia for our first stop on the journey south. I couldn't resist an opportunity to visit our friend Blaž Lužnik, who works in Kobarid on the banks of the Soča River in Slovenia. The Soča is the closest paddling location to Croatia, just a few hours between and is well worth a detour to paddle in the Bombay Gin coloured waters and world class whitewater. It was here that myself, Gezza and Helen joined up with Dave Kohn-Hollins. We spent a couple of wonderful days on the Soča before we tackled the last leg of the journey.

Croatia has some of the world's prettiest coastline and the drive down to Split is truly breathtaking. We



Happy paddlers at the Cetina takeout



Exploring the caves on the Cetina



Gez and Helen trying out a duckie



Richard on the Cetina



Zrmanja campfire



Andy on the last rapid of the Mreznica



Lunch at Krupa

experienced some extreme weather conditions in the first few days that we had certainly not accounted for. After setting up our tents at Autocamp Sirena, I bombed back up to Zadar to pick up the guys from the airport. We got back to camp around 1am and got our heads down. I was sleeping in my van and got rudely awoken by my dad calling me out to help with the tent. What I saw when I opened my van door, was a sight that made me move faster than I usually do at 6am after 4 days of travelling. Croatia has something called a Bora. News to me but I had the chance to experience it first hand. The weather during my last two visits to Croatia had been nothing but perfect sunshine and no wind. I stepped out of the van into 100mph winds, permanently bending the trees to 45 degrees and making light work of blowing all our stuff away, including the 12-man tent I had borrowed for the mission from a friend in Bala. The whole team was spread out around the tent, holding on for dear life. If anyone had let go it would have been lost to the ocean. We swiftly collapsed the tent and took all our equipment into the camp's restaurant. The Bora was a windstorm that hits the Croatia coastline in the early stages of the summer. It is something special to experience but not really when you're camping.

So a successful but entertaining start to the trip. Everyone was safe and it did not take us all long working together to have a superb first day paddling and return to camp for a fresh tuna party hosted by

the camp owner. The local lads caught a tuna that filled the back of a Vito van. Four large guys held up the beast for all to see. I have never tasted anything like it. I was in eating heaven. With Ivan living just down the road in Split with his family, he was quickly on hand to offer support for directions and logistics for our first river, the Cetina. The Cetina is split into 3 sections with a large dam and waterfall separating the sections, the waterfall David Bain and Barnaby Prees abseiled into just months before, the same waterfall Ivan had showed up the previous year and paddled first himself a few years previous.

The Cetina flows into the bay of Omis. Omis is an old pirate town in a stunning location just south of Split. The river winds its way through steep canyons and lush green rocky remote landscapes. The river ranges around class 3 but mostly chilled class 2, a great river to feel comfortable as a class 2 paddler, with optional drops to run if you're feeling brave. The Cetina truly feels like a whitewater safari. Glorious sunshine, tropical wildlife with crystal clear waters await you. Some of the put-ins are roadside, with one exception of a cliff climb out of the canyon and 10 min walk out from the top. Well worth the slog. I recommend you stash cold beers at the car for when you finally reach it, and watch out for snakes. Yes, really.

Our time in Omis and the Cetina had been a sublime start to the trip. Exciting weather, mouthwatering cuisine, powerful local motoroil shots



Roger at Robinson camp



Roger on the Zrmanja

and idyllic kayaking. My plan was to spend two days on the Cetina, two days on the Zrmanja and three days on the Mreznica. It was time to say our goodbyes to Autocamp Sirena and head northeast to Kastel Zegarski, the home of the Zrmanja River and Raftrek Adventure. Raftrek Raft Base is the put-in for the river that David Bain and myself had stumbled upon in 2013. This was now my third visit to Raftek and it was a great to see the company thriving. On our first visit, it was quite different. Some of my favourite people I have met in Europe over the years are from Croatia. The whitewater community is small but extremely welcoming and supportive. We have always had no issues making our way around the country, being helped by shop owners, policemen, farmers, raft guides and local kayakers. I actually love Croatia and it is my new favourite place to visit in Europe with still so much to discover.

Our camp on the Zrmanja was tranquil, sunny and calm, alongside the riverbank at the put-in. It was a perfect location for our second basecamp. The Zrmanja was our first river three years ago and the



Taking a shower on the Cetina



Matt on the Mreznica



Richard on the Cetina



Group enjoying the Zrmanja

water levels were good. The Zrmanja is home to a cluster of beautiful waterfalls and canyons. The safari was on. Crystal clear spring water, more exotic wildlife and Wild West canyon walls. Every feature of the river bed clear to see from your kayak, the water was warm and we enjoyed a fantastic time on the river. You do actually just have to go there and experience it for yourself.

After rafting, kayaking, swimming and drinking our fill of the Zrmanja, we drove north for the Mreznica, just a short drive once you have reached Slunj. Slunj is a large town with ATM's and supermarkets, a nice place to stop, recharge and get supplies for the river. Within 20 minutes you are at the Robinson Campground. The most beautiful camp spot in Croatia, perhaps in the whole world. Right at the take out, you can exit your boat and jump straight into the hammock. The river has some spectacular rapids and drops. A pushy section at higher flows but with the low levels due to lack of rain in the north allowed our team to be comfortable and learn how to tackle smaller waterfalls and slides. The team lapped the river a bunch of times over the last days, with some epic culinary creations from the crew and some lovely nights by the fire. We had the luxury of having the campground all to ourselves. We had been booked in by our old friend, our first point of contact in 2013, Matija Link. A guide from Raftrek, now running his own rafting operation on the Mreznica. Matija has always gone above and beyond the call of duty making sure we left wanting for nothing. A big thanks goes out to Matija and all of the Raftrek guides for all their support.

Time had eluded us all and to our surprise, it was almost time to run the team back to Zadar to catch their flight home, and for Gezza and myself it was time to make the long journey north back to the homeland. For me the trip had been an opportunity to test running commercial trips to Croatia with a group of close family and friends. It was the first time I had travelled abroad with my father, Roger, and was a well needed break for the both of us outside of work. It had all worked out without a hitch, if you're not including my exhaust falling off but I didn't really want to let that spoil an almost perfect trip. We left a very happy bunch of paddlers and went our separate ways. With no time to waste we set our nav to Calais. The distance it calculated made me chuckle at first, however, the smile was wiped the smile off my face as we hit Austria, driving for 12hrs with another 20 to go. To be honest, we smashed it, arriving home safe and sound in Bala a few days later. A fantastic trip that I will be pushing for the future. If you're recently starting to paddle white water, this is a perfect first destination and perfect for club trips. #endless Summers #croatia kayaksafra #winning.

For all enquires about kayaking in Croatia we will all be happy to help. Matt Cooke – Endless Summers (FB) – endless Summers@hotmail.co.uk
Ivan Šafradin – Croatia Kayak Safra (FB) – safrakayak@gmail.com



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Photo: Neil Proctor



Arian Edwards
Photo: Alan Chappell



Bethany Carol
Photo: Carl Palmer



Cara Lee
Photo: Pete Atkinson



Bethan Palmer
Photo: Carl Palmer



Carwyn Lavis
Photo: Alan Chappell



Ciaran Lee Edwards
Photo: Russ Scaplehorn



Dion Davies
Photo: Abigail Davies



Elliot Goddard
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Rhys Davies
Photo: Tim Houghton



Emily Davies
Photo: Malcolm Cook



Etienne Chappell
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Finlay Yates Jones
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Gabi Ridge
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Grace Scaplehorn
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Huw Butterworth
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Izzy Bushrod
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James Cooper
Photo: Gavin Cooper



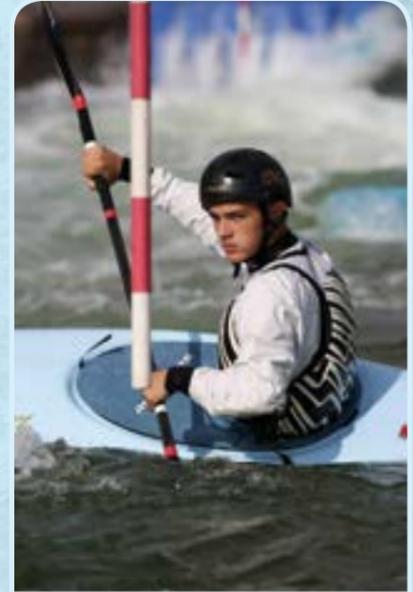
Jessica Rayner
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Layton Palmer
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Lili Bryant
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Steele Jones
Photo: Steele Jones



Lottie Cooper
Photo: Pete Atkinson



Mari Watkins
Photo: Carl Palmer



Megan Hamer Evans
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Non Dingle
Photo: Rob Dingle



Y Rhys Davies & Matt Lister
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Peter Lake
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Raoul Chappell
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Sioned Bryant
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Steffan Walker
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Tom Abbott
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Will Abbott
Photo: Garry Abbott



Will Coney
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BUG INFESTED SUFFERING

A SUMMER PADDLING 600 KILOMETRES ON THE SEAL RIVER

Article: Karl Midlane

The Seal River is inundated with harbour seals. We were still 200 kilometres from the sea and had only just left the vast Tadoule Lake, which marks the confluence of the North and South Forks of the Seal River, and we were already surrounded by the marine mammals. Spectacular wildlife is what the longest undammed river in Northern Manitoba is all about, and the best was yet to come. But getting to it had not been easy.



First there were the trans-Atlantic flights – all the usual complications of delays, nearly missed connections and having to blag a ridiculously large pile of luggage onto the plane. Getting three seventeen-foot canoes onto a train in Winnipeg was the next challenge. That went surprisingly easily as Canada is a canoe friendly country. Trying to do the same on a British train would be madness. Due to a mix up with the pick-up location, the boats had arrived at the station just minutes before we were due to board. As the train only runs twice a week we were fortunate not to miss it. Tediously it took twenty-nine hours for the train to get us to the next leg of the journey. It arrived a mere five hours late, however, it seemed that as long as it arrived on the right day, it was considered to be on time.

Disembarking we found ourselves in Thompson, notorious for having Canada's highest murder rate. Half the team jumped in a taxi and headed off with most of the luggage to find a hotel, promising to send more taxis to collect us and the boats. After several nervous hours of trying-not-to-be-the-next-murder-statistic, a taxi finally turned up, took one look at the boats, refused to take them and left without us. With no alternatives left we picked up a boat each and started the long walk in the direction we hoped the town was – towards a hotel that might be the one the others were already relaxing at.

Two days later the boats were prepped with air bags and spraydecks, and the vegetarians had been dispatched to acquire a month's worth of food. I looked at the enormous heap of rations and wondered if the menu would match my appetite. Our meat seemed to consist entirely of mechanically recovered mush from an unidentifiable beast, extruded into what looked like dry dog treats, but which smelled less appealing. Perhaps I would be going vegetarian for the trip, but without the delights of the soft cheese selection that was reserved for the real vegetarians, as they wouldn't be partaking in our meat/dog food.

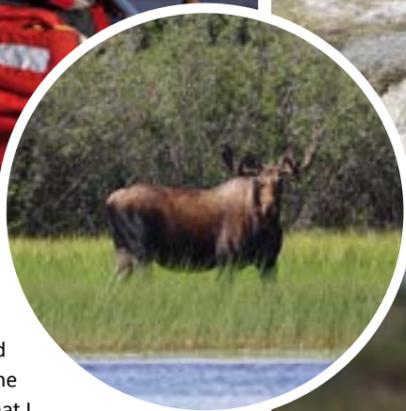
Rummaging deeper into the food supply revealed 150 paper coffee filters for those caffeine addicts that are snobby about the way they placate their addiction. Also 2 litres of soya sauce and a litre of hot sauce for those that have bland food phobias. Delving all the way to the bottom of the supplies and still no form of pudding emerged. Apparently with all the hot sauce and coffee filters we just did not have the space for desserts. Sneaking in a personal supply of chocolate would not work due to the risk of attracting bears – all the food would have to be stored communally, well away from camp. Any sniff of a Cadburys Dairy Milk in the tent may well result in the unwanted attention of a polar bear in the night. I predicted that the bears and I would both be feeling hungry.



With provisions procured we had another whole day of travel ahead of us before we would see the water. This time with seven of us squeezed in a truck designed for six, driven by reality TV star 'The King of Obsolete' from Ice Road Truckers. Just in case we did not recognise our illustrious driver he made sure that it was the first thing he told us, and the only thing he talked about for the entire ride. That included the time spent sitting by the dusty gravel roadside after each of the many mechanical breakdowns.

Finally we had arrived at South Indian Lake – we could go paddling just six days after leaving the UK. Disappointingly it was for just 600m and in completely the wrong direction, but it did get us away from the road and on to a potential campsite for the night. The next day we would be back on the water and heading in the right direction, but not by canoe. South Indian Lake is 120km long and we would need at least 4 days to paddle it, so we cheated and arranged a lift in some powerboats with the local native tribe.

Towards the top of the lake we spotted a moose on the bank. Suddenly our locals abandoned the idea of transporting us north and decided a moose hunt is far more valuable, as it will feed numerous families in the local community. The boats were suddenly careering towards the moose and somebody is already shooting at it. A high calibre rifle is thrust towards me and I am ordered to shoot.



I had never shot a rifle before, but had some experience with an airgun whilst in the Scouts. How hard could it be? It looks easy on the telly. It also occurred to me that I had never seen a moose before and here I was about to shoot my first rifle, kill my first moose and eat. Well it did look tastier than the dog treats we had packed. Fortunately for the moose, hitting a moving target from a moving boat is tricky, and everybody missed. No moose for tea that day. We landed to confirm we had not wounded it, and also received a bonus lesson on moose tracking from the experts. Apparently the rows of deep and obvious holes in the moss give the experienced eye clues as to where it walked. Moose tracking did not seem as hard as I had expected.

Belatedly arriving at the top of the lake we were deposited. The mosquitoes were pleased to see us and invited thousands of their friends and relatives to join us for the rest of the trip.

Day eight of the expedition and we eventually got to do some substantial paddling, Dr Collins took charge and set off with the map. Ten minutes later he returned. This time we tried again and went the right way. It was not entirely his fault, when we had

arrived the previous night we had made a point of asking our local boatmen which of the many streams coming in to the top of the lake was the one we needed to follow to start our journey. Despite all their tales of exploration and expertise in their local waters they only gesticulated vaguely. Trying again we got them to narrow things down to one particular stream that did not entirely correspond with our interpretation of the map. We later discovered that a more trusting group they had dropped off earlier in the season had taken the word of the local experts and followed what had turned out to be the wrong stream for a full day. They only realising that evening when they looked at their GPS, discovered they were in completely the wrong place and had to waste a second day just to get back to the start.

For us, on the correct line, two days of paddling, wading and portaging took us upstream against dwindling flows in overgrown ditches, until a long portage uphill and over the watershed allowed us to start going downhill. This was initially in small overgrown channels, that gradually increased to form more substantial rivers and lakes as part of the Seal River catchment. We were eighteen days into the trip,

the last three of which had been spent negotiating the enormous Tadoule Lake, navigating between camp sights on small islands, narrow peninsulas or anywhere where it looked windy enough to keep our mosquito entourage subdued. The South Fork of the Seal had been completed and we were onto the Seal River itself, surrounded by harbour seals. A further 200 kilometres of paddling grade 2-3 rapids remained. The days were busy with exotic wildlife, including wolves, otters, beavers and bald eagles, and the nights were illuminated by the aurora borealis. All of this led us to Hudson Bay where it was mating season for thousands of Beluga whales, and where the polar bears were starting to gather, in anticipation of the sea ice forming which would allow them to spend the Arctic winter hunting.

Once the water became salty and the polar bear encounters became a little more worrying, we took another sneaky lift in a powerboat down the coast to the town of Churchill, where a 48 hour train ride would start the return journey to civilisation and a return to work.

Karl would like to thank Wenonah for lending the group two very fine boats, and Loel, Andy, Chris, Ali and especially his tandem partner Simon, for putting up with him.

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