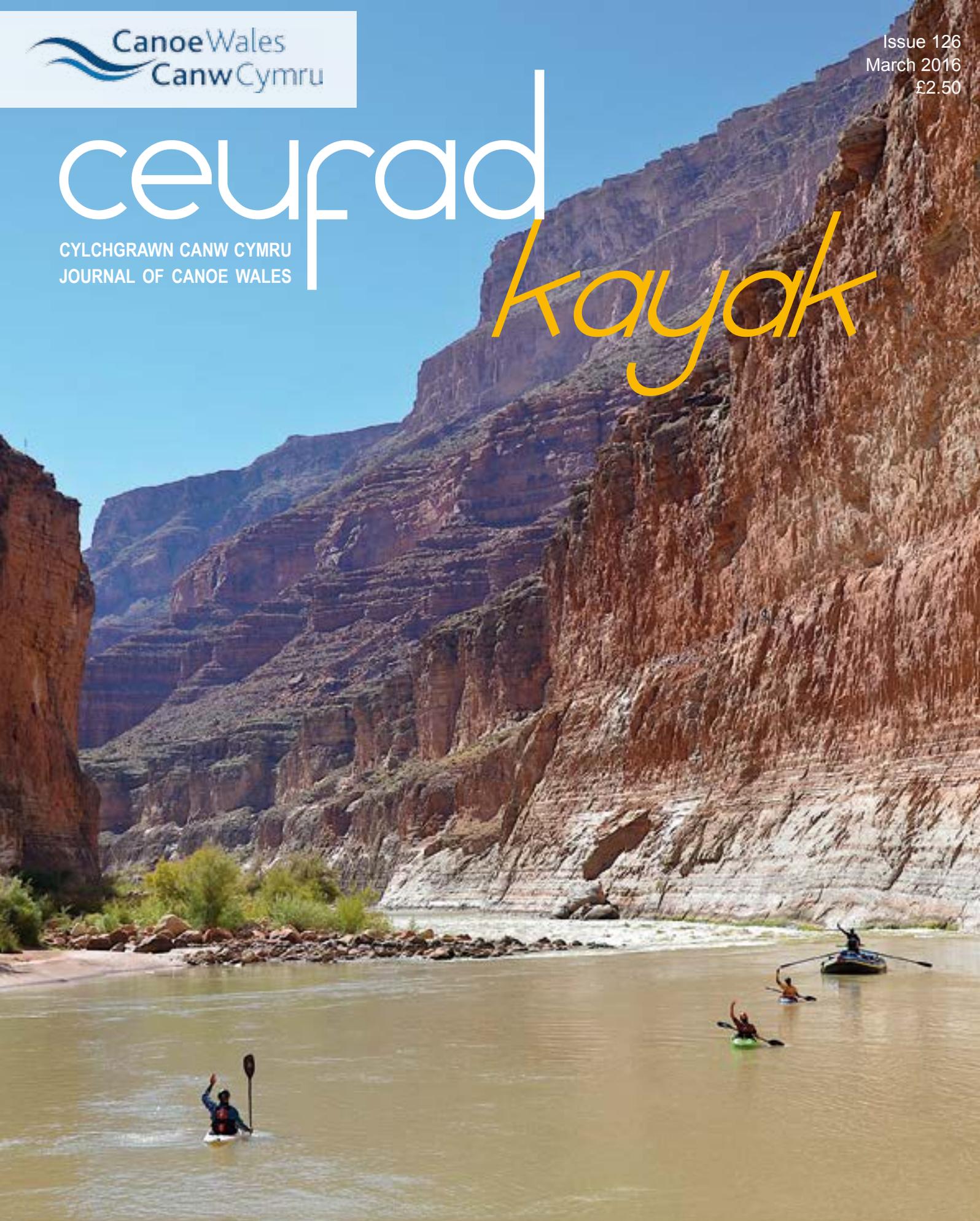


ceufad

CYLCHGRAWN CANW CYMRU
JOURNAL OF CANOE WALES

Kayak



PADDLING THE GRAND CANYON

SAVE THE RIVER CONWY

THE GORGES OF THE TYWI



Josh Bruer Smith running Pipeline on the Fairy Glen, Afon Conwy
Photo: Blue Bear Photography



20 Another day, another section fo coastline



28 Put some power into your paddling



14 Welsh classic - the Tywi



34 Paddling the Grand Canyon

editorial

I had two editorials prepped for this issue, because there were two possible outcomes on the planning application for the controversial and much-opposed Afon Conwy hydro-scheme. Fortunately this is the positive one, as this afternoon Snowdonia National park refused the application!

There's a more detailed report on page 9, however, I have to say a huge thank you to the Save the River Conwy team (made up of kayakers, anglers and environmentalists), who have been instrumental in raising awareness and drumming up opposition to this scheme. It's a great demonstration of what public pressure can do, and hopefully will make developers think twice about building in the National Park and endangering protected habitats.

There maybe an opportunity for the developers, RWE Innogy, to appeal but hopefully the National Park will uphold their decision. They'll definitely have the backing of the Save the River Conwy team!

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@canoe.wales

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.

CONTACT

ceufad@canoe.wales – 01678 521199 Ceufad, Canoe Wales, Bala, Gwynedd LL23 7NU

Ceufad is produced quarterly in March, June, September and December.

NEXT ISSUE: JUNE DEADLINE: 1ST MAY

Ceufad welcomes all contributions but reserves the right to edit & condense to fill the space available.

Design & layout: Vicky Barlow
www.victoriabarlow.co.uk

contents

4 CANOE WALES NEWS

Latest info and events from Canoe Wales

6 CANOE WALES SURVEY

The results of the CW membership survey

8 IN THE FLOW

Round up of the hottest products and news

9 RIVER CONWY SAVED

Controversial hydro-scheme is refused

11 COMPETITION

News from the podium!

13 DofE DIAMOND CHALLENGE

Find you challenge, raise money, help change a life

14 THE GORGES OF THE TYWI

Paddling a Welsh white water classic

20 GOING BACKWARDS

Going against the flow on a UK circumnavigation

28 POWER UP

Chris Brain puts some power into your paddling

34 THE GRAND CANYON

If Carlsberg did river trips ...

Front cover:

Thumbs up on the Grand Canyon
Photo: Pete Astles



Canoe Wales Road Shows 2016

Who are the Road Shows for?

All Canoe Clubs/Venues and key delivery partners are welcome. All paddlers are welcome whether you are a Canoe Wales member or not.

Why are we doing them?

Creating strong and thriving clubs is at the heart of growing and developing our fantastic sport. Building from feedback from the recent membership survey we will be running twice annual Club Road Shows. We aim to work in closer collaboration with you and your clubs to identify the key areas of support required in order to help you achieve your goals. From time to time, we will be bringing in experts in certain fields: Local Authority support, media & communications, specific discipline development etc and this will be based on your feedback.

11 th April	Plas Menai	6.30pm–8pm	10 th October	Plas Menai	6.30pm–8pm
13 th April	Brecon (venue tbc)	6.30pm–8pm	12 th October	Brecon (venue tbc)	6.30pm–8pm
18 th April	Llandysul Paddlers	6.30pm–8pm	17 th October	Llandysul Paddlers	6.30pm–8pm
19 th April	CIWW	6.30pm–8pm	18 th October	CIWW	6.30pm–8pm

Content for Spring Road Shows:

- Canoe Wales update – where are we and where are we going
- Who's who
- Survey feedback & results
- Membership database
- Insurance update
- DBS checks
- Activator award
- Grant aid
- Informal group discussion
- Feedback

Outcomes of the Road Shows:

- A better understanding of where Canoe Wales can help
- Know who in the Canoe Wales team looks after which area
- Understand the modernisation of the database and the benefits of it
- Know where to access certain grants and where to get assistance when applying for them
- Understand the volunteer orientated coaching qualifications
- Understand what level of insurance cover you have and where to go if there are any queries

We will be collating feedback at the end of each Road Show and this will inform us of the future direction and content of the Canoe Wales Road Shows.

For more information contact Canoe Wales: admin@canoewales.com | 01678 521199 or visit: www.canoewales.com

Canoe Wales Survey

The Canoe Wales survey has been collated and analysed, and the results are detailed on pages 6 & 7. 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. If you took part – thank you!

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.

For more information, contact Jethro Moore:
Fun@adventurebeyond.co.uk / 0778 712 3761 / 01239 851 028

Canoe Wales Waterways & Environment Officer

Canoe Wales is delighted to announce that it has appointed Steve Rayner as its part-time Waterways & Environment Officer, with responsibility for leading our activities to develop and promote access to the waterways of Wales whilst protecting and conserving the natural and urban environment.

Steve is a recreational paddler and coach who dabbles in slalom and polo; he is currently Chair of Brecon Canoe Club and the Canoe Wales Slalom Committee; and has extensive management experience as a self-employed consultant and formerly as a Senior Civil Servant.

Steve's appointment is nominally for one day per week and he will be concentrating initially on building working relationships with key stakeholders; developing strategies and approaches to access and environmental matters; and promoting these within and beyond the paddling community. He may not be able to get involved at this stage in individual access issues, but he would nevertheless be pleased to hear about them, so he can build a picture of the current situation in Wales.

You will be able to contact Steve soon at environment-officer@canoewales.com.



tahdah

discover • grow • connect

Tahdah and Canoe Wales working in Partnership

Introduction

The team at tahdah are delighted to announce our new partnership with Canoe Wales. Our goal is to provide cloud based software that makes life easier and more engaging for everyone involved in the sport. Canoe Wales are heavily involved in the development of the system and have contributed with ideas and features that they believe will prove to be indispensable for their members and affiliates. Look out in future communications for our launch date.

Members

For members, the tahdah system is a one stop shop where members can organise and manage not only their Canoe Wales membership but also their participation and affiliation to other sporting clubs and associations. The system allows candidates to pay their membership fees online; by direct debit if they wish. One of the most exciting features for members is the digital logbook (DLOG). Members can simply record and upload their activities directly to the system where it will be displayed as part of their profile, in addition users can share their highlights through linked social media accounts. Anyone undertaking continual professional development (CPD) can also use this feature to log their achievements. By combining all of these different functionalities in one online space it will provide a smooth and efficient experience for the user.



Clubs

For clubs, the tahdah system simplifies the process of managing your members and reduces your workload by giving you all the tools you need in one online platform. The system enables you to manage; memberships, renewals, reminders, direct debits, events, workshops and targeted communications. One feature that we believe will prove to be essential to clubs is our suite of live data and statistics. Tahdah utilises the latest analytics software to provide clubs with a plethora of live data giving you real-time insights into every aspect of your membership.

Training Providers

For training providers, the tahdah system makes it much easier for candidates to discover and book onto your courses. Users can search for courses based on various criteria and then with a few clicks they can book a place. Providers have the ability to create courses, have them authorised and then manage bookings all in one online space.

www.tahdah.me

CANOE WALES SURVEY 2015

CANOE WALES

1840 CANOE WALES MEMBERS*



1088 COACHES & LEADERS*



63 AFFILIATED CLUBS*



SURVEY RESULTS‡

? Are you aware of these basic membership benefits?



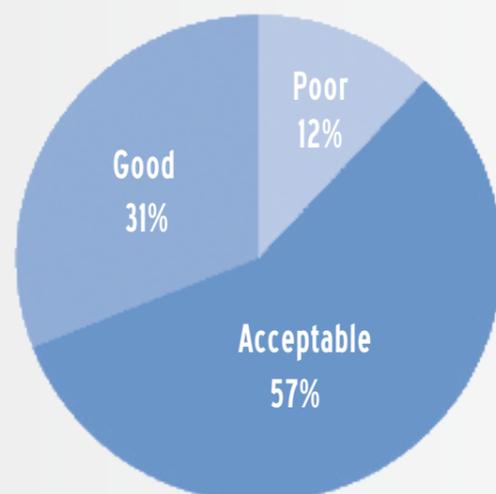
? Are you aware of these additional comprehensive member benefits?



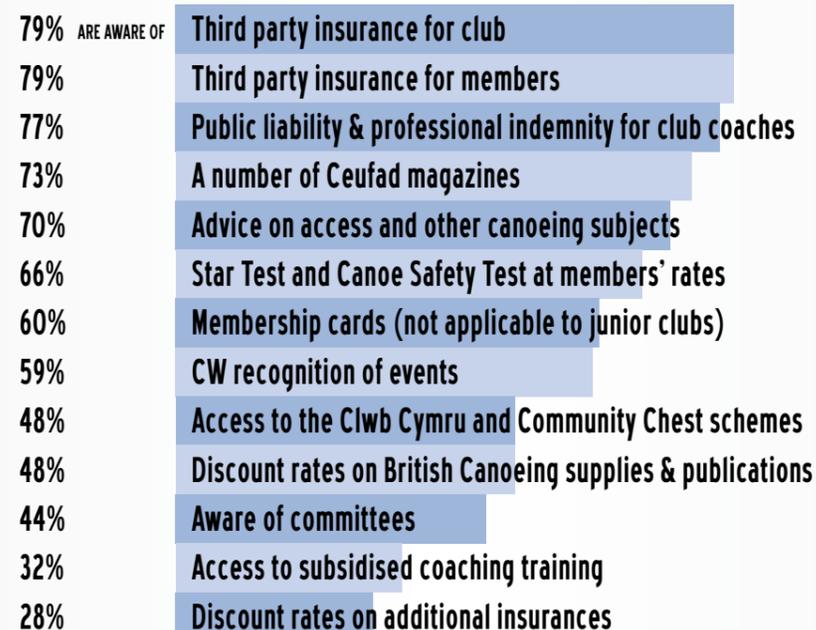
? Rank your Canoe Wales membership benefits in order of importance

1. Third party insurance
2. Coaching scheme
3. Navigation licence
4. Ceufad
5. Coaching information
6. Canoe Focus
7. Discount at selected shops
8. Competition

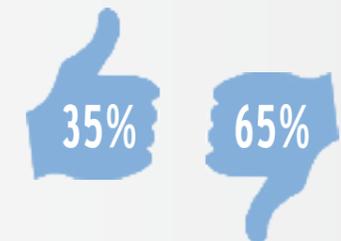
? Rate the current Canoe Wales membership cost in terms of value for money



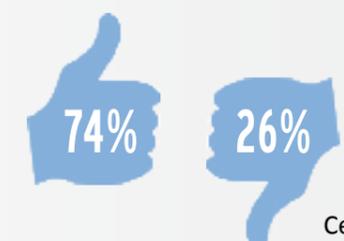
? If you are a member of an affiliated club or venue, are you aware of the following benefits of club or venue affiliation?



? Does Canoe Wales do enough to promote your club and your venue?



? If Canoe Wales was to hold Venue road shows twice a year - regionally across Wales - would they be of benefit to you and your members?



* Figures accurate January 2016

‡ Survey made available to all Canoe Wales members from 26.8.15 - 24.10.15, and promoted through the Canoe Wales website, AGM, Ceufad, email, social media and CW staff.

IN THE FLOW

LLANDYSUL PADDLERS KAYATHLON – JULY 9TH 2016

This summer Llandysul Paddlers are launching their first ever Kayathlon!

Run in conjunction with Llandysul Swimming pool the event will feature kayaking, running, and swimming, as well as some river crossings, plus the usual BBQ fun.

The event is open to everyone, with individual and team entries. There will be a main prize for the fastest Male and Female Adult and Junior, as well as participation prizes for all that take part.

The aim of the Kayathlon is to raise money for two excellent community businesses - Llandysul Paddlers and Llandysul Aquacentre, so all proceeds will be split between them. So by taking part you will not only be having a great day but also helping two great community resources.

For more details visit the Kayathlon website: <http://lpbookings.wix.com/kayathlon>



GO CANOEING WEEK – 28 MAY – 5 JUNE

National Go Canoeing Week gives everyone the opportunity to get out on the water and enjoy the wonderful world of paddlesports.

With hundreds of great activities suitable for everyone from complete beginners to pro-paddlers there is a way for everybody to take part. This includes Starter Sessions, Guided Tours, 1, 3 and 6 Mile Challenges, Events and Clock Up Your Own Miles

Join the Journey, log your miles & help us reach our target of 30,000 miles!

For more information visit: www.gocanoeingweek.org.uk



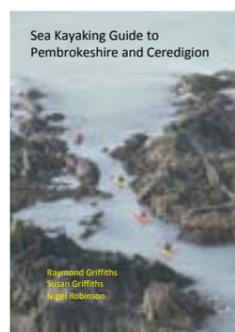
SEA KAYAKING GUIDE TO PEMBROKESHIRE AND CEREDIGION

Updated and now in colour, this guide gives you the essential information needed to paddle the coastline of West Wales.

The book distils the experience and knowledge of three local paddlers who between them have over 120 year's experience of paddling the local waters.

Access and tidal stream information, transport and camping details, together with background on wildlife, geology, legends and local history make this an essential guide for anyone planning day trips or longer expeditions along this coast.

Available from www.seakayaguides.co.uk



IN THE FLOW

RIVER CONWY SAVED

Two years ago Ceufad featured an article on the controversial plans for a hydro-electric scheme on the River Conwy. Since then a group of local kayakers, anglers and environmentalists have spearheaded the 'Save the River Conwy' campaign, and have worked tirelessly to raise awareness and gather support. During this time they have presented to community councils, spoken to local businesses, leafleted the local area and gathered over 6000 signatures in opposition to the scheme. Their campaign has put pressure on the developers, and has demanded that both Natural Resources Wales and Snowdonia National Park fulfil their duties in safeguarding protected areas.

The National Park deferred their decision till March, so that they could obtain more information on the proposal. That decision was made today (2 March), and the great news is that the planning committee has refused the application.

The scheme would have affected a 2km stretch of the Conwy, including the Fairy Glen, diverting up to 75% of the flow around that section. Not only would that have had a major impact on kayaking, it would also affected fishing, local businesses and put a Site of Special Scientific Interest at risk.

There is no doubt that the publicity the Save the River Conwy group has raised and the level of opposition they have presented has genuinely saved the River Conwy, and that this white water classic and unique environment will be protected for future generations to enjoy.

Thank you Save the River Conwy.



Handing over the petition with 6311 signatures
Photo: Blue Bear Photography

BURN SERIES ADVENTURE RACES

This year the Burn Series features the Margam Mini Burn and the Cardiff Burn. These races are suitable for adults and juniors and will test your endurance, determination, skill and teamwork as you run, bike and kayak around the Welsh countryside.

Cardiff Burn (date tbc) - 10km run, 30km mountain bike orienteering and 3km kayaking. Bring a bike, a compass along with some map reading skills, and some high energy snacks and take on the Burn in style! T-shirts for all finishers.

Margam Mini Burn – 8th October – an introduction to Adventure Racing for adults and children. No experience required. Approximately 3km of running, 1km of kayaking, 10km of mountain biking and 2km of orienteering. Kayaks provided for all - just bring a bike, a compass and a picnic, and experience Adventure Racing in a beautiful setting. Medals for all finishers and t-shirts available to buy.

For more info visit: www.burnseries.co.uk



Stuff we've been watching...

when we should have been working...

Croatia Kayak Expedition

If you're thinking about a 2016 paddling destination, then check out Matt Cooke's (Endless Summers) vid of Peninsula Canoe Club's trip to Croatia.

Great rivers in a stunning setting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9mc3QdSSJg>

Bren Orton 2015 Promo

Bren Orton is one of the UK's top white water paddlers, and 2015 was a great year for him. Huge air and big drops – watch this World Freestyle Championship Finalist send it on some of the best (and biggest) white water in his latest reel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBnoplWf4qo>

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

RESCUE 3 – WHITEWATER RESCUE TECHNICIAN

dates tbc £290 pp

RESCUE 3 – ADVANCED WHITEWATER RESCUE TECHNICIAN

dates tbc £390 pp

OUTDOOR-SPECIFIC FIRST AID AT WORK

11–13 April 2016 £180 pp

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

WORLD RAFTING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2015

December saw the World Rafting Championships arrive in Indonesia, for 10 days of racing on the Citarik River. GB had teams in 5 categories – men, women, masters men, U19 men and U19 women.

The GB women's team were favourites to take the title, having stormed to victory at the European Championships a few months earlier. And they made an impressive start, taking bronze in the sprint, gold in the head to head, and 5th place in the slalom. With just one race to go, the downriver, they shared first place with Slovakia and were looking good for the championship title. However, tough lines, a couple of pins and a false start meant they finished 8th in the downriver, which placed them 5th overall. The men's team finished 7th, men's masters 5th, U19 men 4th, and under 19 women 6th.

The GB women's raft team includes a number of Welsh athletes and we hope to see them defend their European title at the next Championships!



GB Womens Team, Indonesia

Female Athlete of the Year Award Nomination for Frances Bateman

World Championship silver medallist Frances Bateman has been nominated for the first ever Female Athlete of the Year Awards at the Disability Sport Wales Awards ceremony.

Frances has had an incredible year, becoming UK number 1 and world number 2, and has her sights set on Paralympic glory at Tokyo 2020, when her Va'a event will feature on the programme for the first time.

These achievements are even more impressive considering that in 2011 she suffered a life-changing rugby injury and thought she would never be able to paddle again.

Congratulations to Frances and good luck for the 2016 race season! To hear her story visit: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/wales/34196790>



Special Olympics Cardiff and Vale Kayaking Club Award Nomination

Special Olympics Cardiff and Vale Kayaking Club has been nominated for the Disability Sport Wales insport Club of the Year Award. Last year the club's athletes won 8 medals at the World Games in Los Angeles – 2 gold, 4 silver and 2 bronze, which is exceptional considering the club is new in terms of the Special Olympics. That year they also raised £10'000 to develop and improve the club and it's facilities.



To hear more about their success visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvAg-HxqHvk&feature=youtu.be>

UK Coaching Award Nomination for Richard Lee

Congratulations to Richard Lee for his recent UK Coaching Awards nomination. Richard is Canoe Wales' National Performance Manager, and works with around 50 athletes in slalom, sprint and paracanoe, preparing them to race at national and international races. Many of the paddlers race for Great Britain as well as the Welsh National team, and have been coached by Richard throughout their competitive career.

The UK Coaching Awards honour sports coaches and coaching organisations who have demonstrated outstanding success over the previous 12 months. Richard was one of three coaches to be nominated for the Performance Development Coach of the Year Award, which is testimony to his dedication and success as a coach.





Wave
goodbye to
humdrum

There's a Challenger in all of us – including you. We've been challenging young people for 60 years. Now it's your turn to shine.

Sign up at DofEDiamondChallenge.org

#DofEChallenge

DofE Diamond Challenge

Find your challenge, raise money, help change a life

To celebrate their Diamond Anniversary the DofE is inviting everyone to take part in their Diamond Challenge. The Challenge is inspired by the DofE Award, and dares you to take on your own adventure, personal or skill challenge.

Your challenge can be as big or as small as you like, from kayaking the Zambezi to learning to knit. If it's a challenge to you, it counts. And the best part is, it's open to anyone of any age, anywhere!

So if you never had the chance to get involved while growing up, if your kids are doing it now, if you're doing your own DofE or if you're just looking for a reason to get out of your comfort zone, seize the day!

CHOOSE YOUR CHALLENGE

CHOOSE ADVENTURE

Paddle the Wye, hike up Snowdon, camp under the stars. Leave your comfort zone at home and proudly say "been there, done that".

MAKE IT PERSONAL

Whether it's having the willpower of your dreams, or doing the sky dive of your nightmares. Only you can set this challenge. Because this time, it's personal.

CHOOSE SKILL

Have you got a burning ambition to learn something new? To paddle an SUP? Or even learn martial arts? There's never been a better time.



SIGN UP AND GET STARTED

When you sign up for your Challenge your £20 (£15 for under 18s) fee gets you an exclusive Challenger Kit – complete with t-shirt and Challenge Companion, a journal and keepsake to help you at each stage of your challenge; from choosing, to planning, taking part and remembering it forever.

To complete your Challenge, you need to raise a minimum of £60 – it is their 60th birthday, after all! Then you'll not only be rewarded with a limited edition DofE Diamond Challenge pin and a huge sense of achievement, you'll also help to transform lives.

CHOOSE A CHALLENGE, CHANGE A LIFE

Over the last 60 years millions of young people across the globe, from all backgrounds and circumstances, have given it their all through their DofE Award. The DofE leaves a footprint on their lives, as their Award opens doors to new jobs, cements life-long friendships, broadens interests and stretches horizons.

The funds raised by your Diamond Challenge will help the DofE continue to offer support and opportunities to young people around the world. If you raise £40 and you'll help fund the registration cost of a DofE programme for a young person from a disadvantaged community. Raise £100 and you'll help us train more inspiring DofE Leaders. Or reach £150 and you'll fund one of our specially-trained local operations team for a day.

To find your challenge, raise money and help change a life visit: <https://dofediamondchallenge.org/>



SIMON'S CHALLENGE

Canoe Wales' General Manager, Simon Clarke, has signed up for his own Challenge ...

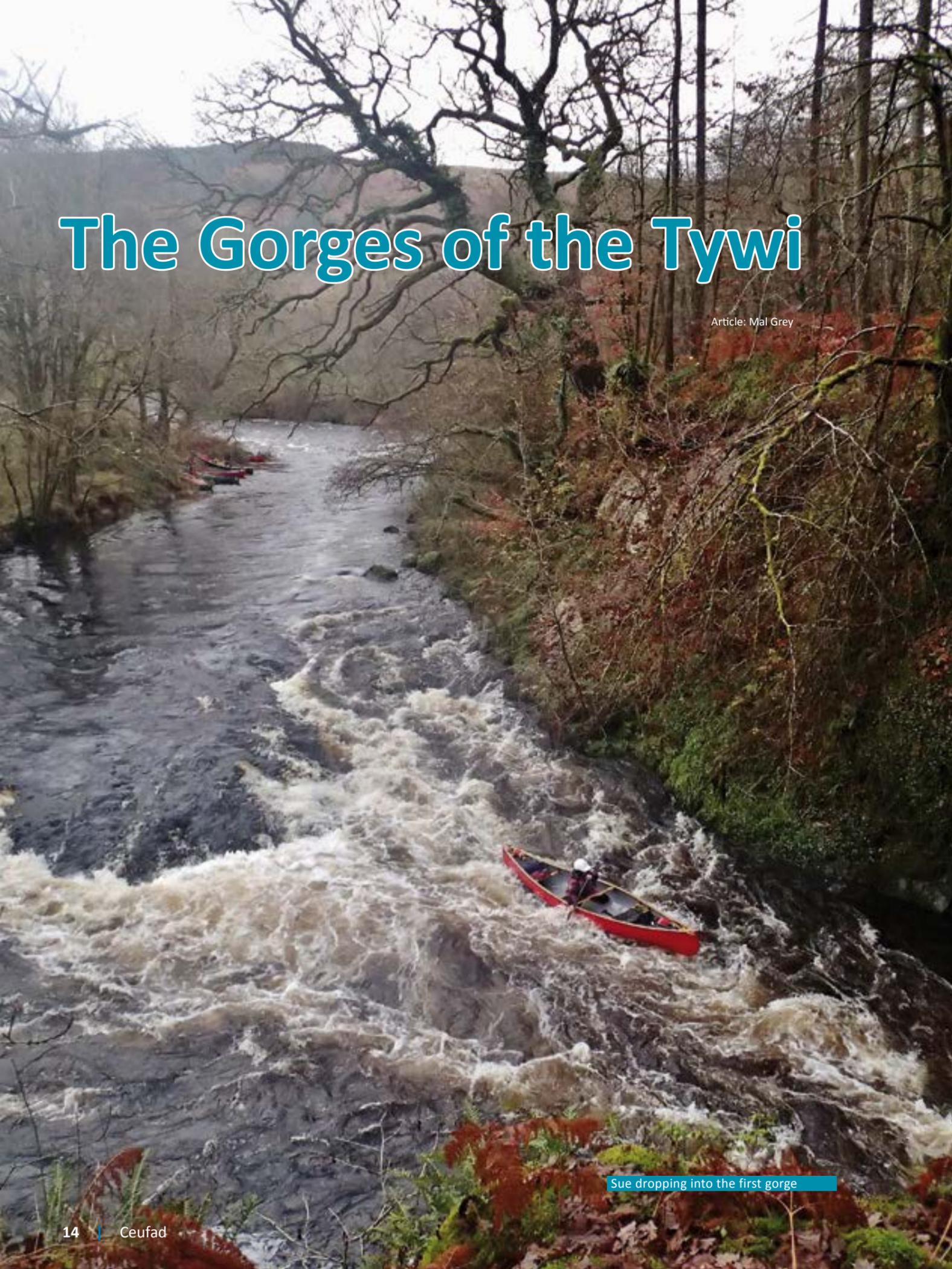
On Sunday 13th March he'll be running the Barcelona Marathon!

If you'd like to support Simon check out his funding page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/Runningonempty2016/>
Good luck Simon!

The Gorges of the Tywi

Article: Mal Grey



Sue dropping into the first gorge



Approaching the middle section

The Tywi is the second longest river wholly in Wales, after the Teifi, although at 75 miles it's somewhat shorter than the Severn or Wye, which cross the border into England on their way to the sea. Rising in the wild hills of mid-Wales, at the southern end of the Cambrian mountains, the upper reaches flow from high moorland, through the deep, dark waters of the Llyn Brianne reservoir, and into steep valleys dotted with hill farms, bracken and heather.

This is where we join the bubbling waters of this excellent river, as a few miles below the massive wall of the dam, and after some much harder whitewater, the Tywi becomes amenable to open canoeing at a reasonable grade.

The usual group of Gentlemen Paddlers and hangers-on had made the long journey to the nice little West End cafe in Llandovery, before the final drive up to the Burial Ground put-in beyond the village of Rhandirmwyn. At the bridge here, much work has been done, and it was a bit of a muddy put in.

After a brief warm up and chat about what was ahead, the 10 of us pushed out into the flow. The first few miles of this river run beneath steep bracken and heather clad hills, whilst a few easy riffles allow you to warm up before the first of the harder bits.

The Tywi is a river which rises and falls significantly, and as such its banks are ever shifting, and this is very evident as you pass steep loose slopes.

After a few miles of this, the trees start to close in on the riverbanks, as you approach the tighter confines of the middle section of the valley.



Enjoying the upper section



Ade above the first gorge



Garth styling the island drop



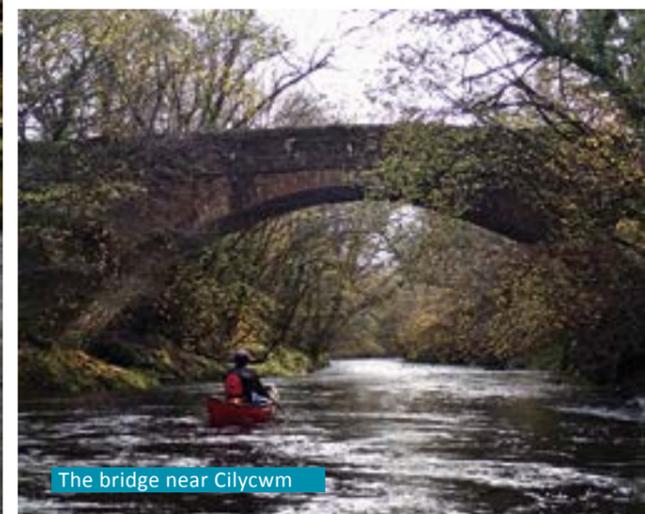
John heading out to retrieve his boat



Paddling towards the second gorge



On the look out for fallen trees



The bridge near Cilycwm

We were approaching the first of the Tywi's unique gorge sections. None of these are big, but each is a delightful place to be on the water and, with fast flowing water in tight confines and trees barely clinging to the steep sides, they are places to be a little wary of.

The first gorge is the deepest, but shortest, and has a guarding grade 3 rapid. Today the flow, at about 0.78 on the Dolau Hirion gauge, was higher than on my previous visit, but not too high - a nice middling level. We got out above the rapid to inspect both white water and to check the gorge below for the all-too-common blockages.

There was one tree in the bottom of the gorge, but it looked easy to avoid. We returned for a last check of the line, and took it in turns to descend. Most of us took a line on river left similar to that we'd used in low water, as the option on river right (which might have been easier) had a small tree to avoid.

Peter went first, followed by John who took a different line on the right, with the rest of us taking the left line.

Eventually I left the viewing gallery and joined the queue. Having not been on moving water since the summer, I felt a little rusty so there is always a little bit of apprehension, but I knew the line would go. Ade was just ahead of me.

Once he was clear, I moved out into the flow, and ferried over to river left, watching for the small markers of rock and curling wave that would guide me

to the point I wanted to hit. All went well, and I was soon in the eddy below watching Tim follow me down.

Now for one of my favourite bits, the all too brief descent of the gorge. Steep, damp, mossy walls rise up above you, and the great limbs of trees stretch out over your head, whilst you negotiate the fast flowing but non-technical little gorge. Bits of rubbish stuck in trees 15-20 feet above our heads paid testament to just how massive the flow must be in flood.

Suddenly we were out in the open again, and pulled over for a break and to watch the OC1 chaps descend hitting every eddy.

It was time for lunch, as we were about a third of our way down, with a third of our daylight gone. John's boat was perhaps concerned we'd run out of time, as it decided to head on ahead of us without a pilot ... leading to a remarkably casual chase by the owner.

A little below our lunch spot, an island splits the river in two, with small drops on either side.

We headed on, passing a rock which nearly caught out several of us. Matt in particular pulled off an excellent "save" with a brace off the riverbed as he nearly went over in his OC1. Too quick for the camera, but Garth also visited the same rock and survived.

We were approaching the second gorge, passing through a lovely autumnal landscape.

The second gorge is less deep, but much longer. The steep sides are dotted with waterfalls, where the streams run off the fields and drop vertically into the river. The paddling was straightforward, but we were



Adrian avoiding the tree in the third gorge



Quick lunch break

always on the look out for fallen trees, and the leader regularly signalling the rest to keep left or right.

This is a special place, only a canoe or kayak can get you there. As we paddled through the sides fell away, and a few nice little riffles kept us entertained, before the next ravine section approached.

The bridge near Cilycwm gave us a useful marker as to our progress - OK, but without much daylight to spare.

The 3rd proper gorge has a known tree near the end, which has been there for some years now. I was leading as we approached so signalled all to eddy out. Peter joined me (in a better eddy than mine, where I was stuck on a rock!), and having ascertained there was a clear line, promptly headed down ... and somehow fell out of his canoe. I debated my actions, but as I could see he was OK and recovering to the side, it seemed daft to just pile down myself without making sure the group was aware of the danger and the line. Instead we worked out the line a little more carefully, and then went down one by one.

These antics called for a little rest and we stopped for hot drinks from flasks and to take on a few snacks. We checked the map, and reckoned we weren't far above Dolau Hirion bridge, with the hardest rapid of the day, and only a mile above the finish. We only had an hour before sunset though.

A few minutes more paddling and we reached the bridge soon after. In low water, you can get out and inspect/line/portage on river left, but with a



Heading towards the final drop



Llandovery bridge



Centre line across the rugby field

higher flow this wasn't an option and we got out well above the bridge on river right and walked down for a look. Nigel and I had viewed the river that morning, but the water had dropped a bit, so more rocks were showing. From above, the "normal" line on river left, was looking quite nasty, as the hidden undercut was forming a big curling wave likely to flip or swamp you. So most of us chose a line on river right, with more rocks to dodge but less consequences.

I went down right, with cover below at the bridge, creeping down close to the bank then accelerating to try and get through the rocks which were no problem in the end. Crossing the bridge I went over to replace Peter as cover for the left line which some of the guys fancied.

Meanwhile, Garth managed to reverse the hardest bit in control ... but maybe not deliberately!

From my new stance, I could watch everyone going down the far side. Matt being braver than most of us, tried the river left line. Unfortunately, that curling wave did its job and he dunked right at my feet, handy for passing over a throwline hand to hand. A bit of a haul from us both and both Matt and canoe were ashore, ready to relaunch and complete the descent. Peter decided to stick with the other line!

That pretty much marked the end of the difficulties, and it was just a mile down to the awkward get out by the rugby fields below Llandovery's bridge, followed by the hauling or carrying of canoes across to where our cars waited.

With the rugby on the telly, Welshman Nigel was keen to get the shuttle done and was soon ensconced in the bar watching a very tight game. And for the rest of us ... it all ended in beers ...

The next day we would hit the Usk, but that's another story ...

THE YEAR OF ADVENTURE
BURNING SERIES
 SATURDAY 2ND APRIL

MARGAM PARK
 SOUTH WALES
 A CELEBRATION OF ADVENTURE
 SPORTS AND EVENTS
 SUITABLE FOR ALL
 BURNERIES.CO.UK

BLWYDDYN ANTUR
BURNING SERIES
 DYDD SADWRN 2IL EBRILL

PARC MARGAM DE CYMRU
 DATHLIAD O ANTUR
 CHWARAEON A
 DIGWYDDIADAU
 ADDAS I BAWB
 BURNERIES.CO.UK

**Symposiwm Padlo Pobl Ifanc
 Youth Paddling Symposium**

25-27 Mawrth / March
 Gwersyll yr Urdd, Glan-llyn, Y Bala
 Gweithdai ar wahân i bob gallu
 Separate workshops for all abilities

£100
 Dwy noson yn cynnwys offer,
 hyfforddiant, bwyd a llefy
 Two nights including equipment,
 coaching, food and accommodation

GWEITHDAI YN CYNNWYS / SESSIONS INCLUDE...

- Hyfforddiant canwio a cheufadu dŵr gwyn / White water canoeing and kayaking coaching
- Sgiliau sylffonol digogwch ac achub clir fillt a gwyn / Flat and white water safety and rescue skills
- Sgiliau traddodiadol canwio e.e. hwylio a polo / Traditional canoeing skills i.e. sailing and polo
- Sesiysbau rollo a dull rhydd yn ein pwll poŵl dan do / Freestyle and rolling sessions in our indoor swimming pool

AM FWY O WYBODAETH
 FOR MORE INFORMATION
 urdd.cymru/awragored
 awragored@urdd.org
 01678 541 017
 @awragored

**OGMORE
 CANOE SLALOM**

Bridgend Canoe Club presents
Double Division 3 and 4 plus Open
 11th and 12th June 2016

River Ogmore, beside Bridgend Recreation Centre, Bridgend
 Individual competitions each day
 Entries close 10:15am Saturday, 09:15am Sunday

For information and race entries contact:
 ja.tyler@btinternet.com

www.bridgendcanoeclub.co.uk/slalom

PORTHGAIN – 11TH AUG 2015

Today is going to be a long day.

It begins at Porthgain, a small harbour squeezed into the rocky cliffs east of St. David's Head. Miles lie ahead, so an early start is on the cards, oh well.

Soon after 7:00am the Taran slips quietly out of the narrow entrance to this peaceful sanctuary. The paddling day is underway. Overnight the wind has dropped to a breeze, but remnants of the swell linger.

Tide soon enters the equation and quickly picks the boat up; speedy progress is made westwards, towards the end.

Swell and tide compete as I round the saintly headland, but their argument soon drops behind. The boat glides smoothly into Ramsey Sound.

The island takes the energy from the wind and holds back the swell. It is now smooth and peaceful under the blue skies – a blissful start to the day. An indulgent surf is taken on the waves further down the sound, but soon the clock, and a desire not to tempt fate, urge things onwards.

Beyond St Bride's Bay lies the narrow gap of Jack Sound, separating Skomer Island from the mainland. The bay is oily smooth and the 7nm of flat tedium makes a welcome change.

Skomer comes and goes. A solid, that'll-learn-you-~~faceful~~ brings attention back from daydream land, as I paddle distractedly through the sound. The swell has not completely faded it seems.

The holy theme continues as St Anne's Head looms ahead. The rocky coastline causes no problems and soon it's time to cross the mouth of Milford Haven. No one wants to reply to my little radio; so I point the Taran across the channel and we head out. The pace lifts to 'let's-get-across-here-quickly'. Half-way, and right on cue, a large ferry appears out of nowhere. How do they hide things that big? Do they have sneaking-up lessons at boat driving school? It looks like it will fall behind. After 20 minutes there is relief as the buoy marking the edge of the Channel-of-Stress is passed.

Freshwater West joins the party and makes a welcome landing spot for early lunch, 26nm and 5hrs gone. It would be easy, so easy, to call it a day here, but there is more to do. The day is to finish around the corner(s) at Stackpole. So Linney Head is next, blissfully free from range flags today.

Right to the end someone wants to make the point that there is always a sting in the tail. Things grow progressively unpleasant along the cliffs; wind, tide, swell and rebound all combine to raise things steadily to let's-just-survive-this-bit state once again.

Eventually St Govan's Head is rounded and it's into a welcome haven, no more wind or swell. The boat glides towards the busy beach, dodging a possibly Somerset-bound inflatable kayak on the way.

Team Manager arrives and a bottle of bubbly rather ostentatiously brings the paddling day to a close. It is a fairly long way from Porthgain - 65km and 7hrs after all, but in a way, more so from this busy little beach of Broad Haven. It is now 83 days and 3400 km since the early May morning when I headed southwards towards the Isle of Lundy, and the start of my second UK Circumnavigation.



GOING BACKWARDS

Article: John Willacy

GETTING ON WITH IT

In 2012 I had completed a solo circumnavigation of the UK by kayak, arriving home after 72 days. But it hadn't all gone quite to plan, the return home brought a lingering somewhat-lost feeling. Closure was still needed. Hopefully the 2015 trip would remedy that. Questions were still to be answered too; some were technical – tides, tents, vans and things. Others were a little deeper – body and mind sort of stuff... Long days and adventures lay ahead...

THE LONG DAY

THURSDAY 16TH JULY – DAY 57 – SCOURIE TO GAIRLOCH – 46.4 NM – 10 HRS 31MINS – AVG SPEED 4.41KTS

The forecast has changed significantly overnight; the E wind has turned into a SW breeze. A gentle headwind for the day, but as the route heads 3 or 4nm offshore I'll take that over a stiff E wind. No significant swell either – life is fairly chipper. Getting Cape Wrath out of the way yesterday lowered the stress levels, another one behind

us. However there's no doubt in the van this morning that I got away with things. A small elephant sits rather appropriately in the corner of Nellie. An in-depth review can wait though, there's no point in breaking the spell.

Looking for long miles today means taking a hit on the tide, I set out a few hours early. Heading south there doesn't seem to be too much to push against. The breeze is actually from the N/NW – pleasant. Things tick along nicely.



After 10nm or so land returns, as the Point of Stoer arrives, along with a welcome and grudging appearance of the favourable tide.

Beyond the headland, I watch a moment of aerial combat as a skua worries a tern. The process is sad to watch, it takes a while to realise that the skua is after more than just dropped catch. The tern tries hard but the larger bird cynically drives the plucky fellow closer and closer to exhaustion, and the water's surface. Size does matter it seems, and eventually the tern doesn't rise again. The airborne pirate sits patiently and waits for the little white bird to expire, before finally moving in.

But life goes on.

The scenery is remote and beautiful. Further south the Summer Isles slide distantly, and peacefully, by. The breeze is strengthening a little now, a few easy runs move things along – there's not much more you could ask for.

27nm and 6hrs have gone by, but we are going to run out of tide before Rubha Rèidh. It looks like a déjà vue return to Slaggan Bay.

Then the disembodied sexy voice slipping out of the radio brings a jarring reality. The forecast contains words such as: "Rough-Very Rough - Severe Gale 9 - Soon." Aah...

Perhaps it's time to explain why the van was so



cramped this morning; there was another elephant sat in the other corner, this one slightly larger. In 2012 I had a bad day at Rubha Rèidh. The sort of bad day that messes with you for a long time. I don't want to get stuck on the wrong side of there today, not to go through anything like that again. No.

A heading change, right hand down a bit. It's going to be a monster day – time to lift the pace too.

The breeze drops closing on Rubha Rèidh. The smooth conditions highlight the changing flow around the headland, making choosing a line easier. Porpoises string along the eddy line and there is even time to look at the lighthouse this time. Life on the south side is smooth and I can avoid most of the flow close in.

There's a quick What's-The-Plan chat with Team Manager at Melvaig. She's had a long day of driving, though there are tales of pretty scenery and hidden gems – Kylesku gets the vote as the most beautiful setting on the trip so far (I point out that Rhyl is still to come).

But there's no real debate. Take the mile of course.

Rounding the corner into Loch Gairloch and the predications of the Coastguard lady come sharply true, the wind hits hard as it smudges across the water. The day is to end at the sprawling campsite at Big Sand – 46nm and 10hrs 30mins.

While the wind rattles down off the hills, we reflect that it was all timed perfectly. Second time lucky it seems.

DIFFERENCES – THE EBB

This second trip went anti-clockwise, the opposite direction to 2012. There were significant differences.

One of these was the fact that much of the paddling was now on the ebb. The ebb flow tended to work against the weather systems; the flow stacked up against the wind, but more significantly, against the swell. While the wind direction varied, the swell and ebb were nearly always in opposition (excluding the South Coast). Daily timings were planned with swell-over-tide in mind, rather than just straight go-with-the-flow timings.

Post High Water paddling also meant that features such as river mouths, estuaries and even large harbours, carried more significance. The water heading out could stack up the swell and chop heading in – significantly, and sometimes a surprising number of miles distant. Maps and charts were studied with an added perspective ...

THE NASTY DAY

DAY 56 – DURNESS TO SCOURIE – 15TH JULY – 30NM – 7HRS 34MINS – AVG SPEED 3.96KTS

The fourth corner; get around here and we are heading home, sort of.

Cape Wrath is a committing stretch, a remote area with sheer cliffs and a tidal corner. A military range is added to the mix; but the boys with the loud toys are on their summer hols, the range is empty today.



That's a relief.

The forecast isn't though. There's a strong wind from the SW. The forecast suggests a more desirable E wind tomorrow, but with the catch of a larger swell. The decision is hard to make, it's swings and scary roundabouts. There is no obvious consensus in van-land. Impatience joins the party for a laugh and I decide to go today.

The cliffs give shelter along the way to the end. A surprising tide race off Kervaig adds a few tense moments, but after two and half hours pink-boat takes centre stage for the tourists at the lighthouse – the 'corner' is here. Nervous and stressed would sum things up, eyes-on-stalks sort of thing.

Poking a tentative nose around the end shows a lumpy future, and for a while things are rather unpleasant. The eddy is extensive, it confuses matters as swell and chop debate ascendancy.

Hopefully things shouldn't get any worse as I head further south, I figure I can manage if it doesn't. Boisterous miles are earned.

In the distance lies a band of white, stretching across the mile wide gap to the rocky lump of Am Balg. Scale is hard to grasp, optimism suggests a quick tide race, and then through and onwards for tea and medals.

By the time realisation dawns of the true scale, it's too late. The world changes quickly and dramatically. Life becomes a narrow tunnel of Don't-Fluff-This-Now confusion – looking for gaps, and taking whatever

heading the waves allow – "Don't care where I go as long as it's square on... and not here." It's not nice.

After 45mins shelter arrives; conditions change so quickly, in minutes it all seems like a distant bad dream. Belatedly stomach can now be filled and bladder emptied. A warm sun comes out at Oldshore Beg.

Team Manger finally arrives on the sunny beach. More miles to go though, but now it's a pleasant paddle through Handa Sound. The shelter here feels like luxury, it's nice to eddy hop and dodge the tide, taking in the pleasant scenery – all without the feeling of impending doom. Scourie appears and the day ends on the pleasant campsite. The meal is accompanied by a cloud of nervous fatigue, accomplishment and sheepish reflection.

Impressive sunset, impressive midges.

VAN LIFE

The first trip was solo and unsupported. The daily man-handling of a loaded boat and pro-longed tent-life left a significant souvenir. It was three years before my back returned to a useable state.

So for 2015 a full exped-load and long-term tent living were not options. This one was to be a 'Glexped' – The Boss would move into a new role as Team Manager and a van was roped in too.

The van brought an opportunity to carry more kit: Dry-suit v Combinations, brand A v brand B, light boat v heavy boat etc.

Day-to-day living was more pleasant – warmer, drier and quieter. Sleep was much better.

It was also more secure – a more significant factor than may be anticipated in our green and pleasant land.

But the van had drawbacks too:

It brought expense – campsite and parking fees were considerable.

Van admin took precious time.

Another Team Member also meant that the single-minded selfishness had to be toned down, at times. Compromises were made.

You missed out on meeting people, on the daily 'character-injection'. Passers-by were less inclined to enquire just what was going on when you arrived and left in a van, in contrast to sticking your tent in their garden.

And sometimes you could just get too comfortable.

THE SHORT DAY

SUNDAY 12TH JULY – DAY 53 – HARROW TO BROUGH – 4.9NM – 1HR 31MINS – AVG SPEED 3.2KTS

"One thing about this trip, no achievement is cherished long; a new challenge always lies ahead."

Team Manager's Diary

The morning arrives to bring our first daylight view of the campsite. Surely, there's some mistake? We paid 20 quid to sleep in a car park?

Yesterday everything went well, good miles were



earned, another reputation was overcome. But today the wind is reasserting itself. We head up to Dunnet Head to take a look. It's the most northerly point on the mainland and I have a rather sceptical feeling that it may be arrogantly hiding something.

It is.

Never trust a headland.

Kayaks and the water to the west look mutually exclusive to me, for a while at least. We hang around all day waiting for things to mellow. It's entertaining to watch various birdlife using, or fighting, the updrafts – with varying levels of success. I just figured they all could fly...

Eventually impatience gains the upper hand and we head down to go for a suck-it-and-see paddle. We ignore the intimidating atmosphere of the seal watchers down at the harbour and I head out.

But soon I curse myself. You hope for better, but deep down you know what you will get – desire over reality – listen to the instincts.

It's a fight against the strong wind, it's hassle across the sneaky, angled tide race. Eventually the shelter of the headland is reached; but looking across to the end it is obvious that there is no way to get around there today.

Defeat is accepted. It's been a long day for an hour and a half on the water, less than 5nm added to the total.

Easy come, easy go.

SCRATCHING THE MILES

In 2012 the trip theme could have been – 'Chasing Headlands'. In 2015 it was more like - 'Scratching the Miles'. Ebb paddling meant that days were paddled in 'shifts'. An early start to catch the last of the ebb, followed by waiting around for it to return – to take a few more miles late in the day. These long days added up. Fatigue built, planning was often late and hurried, feeding was rushed.

To minimise ebb against swell also meant that plans were altered. It went against the grain, but paddling against the flow was a reluctantly part of the daily plan. Routes had to accommodate too. Rocky coastlines especially caused problems.

THE FAST DAY

FRIDAY 5TH JUNE -- DAY 16 – SWANAGE TO GOSPORT – 35NM – 6HRS 16MINS – AVG SPEED 5.6KTS

Another weather window today, the wind is coming in for 11:00am, so there is an urgency to make the shelter of the Solent by then. It's an early start, out of Swanage and towards the Isle of Wight. Grey skies and a following wind move things along.

The wind and tide mean progress is swift, a pleasing 6.0kts+ on the GPS, across Poole Bay.

The Isle of Wight slowly forms from the gloom and as the early wind arrives, the boat starts to take more and more rides. Closing on the island it becomes a



race against a French yacht into Hurst Narrows. The yacht wins, but I get the consolation prize of beating the worst of the wind. There is a squirrely bit of chop at the narrow entrance and then the welcome shelter of the Solent. Wind and flow still help, the chop and swell are now negated – bonus.

Progress is swift along this end of the channel, 7.0kts or so, yeehaa - straight up the middle. But by Cowes I'm exposed to the wind again and also seem to be gate-crashing regatta season. There are boats everywhere – warships, ferries, yachts, cargo vessels, pilot boats and more. The airwaves are congealed with race organising voices.

I wait to sneak behind a large container ship, heading out from Southampton, and then venture across to the shallows of Bramble Bank.

The theory is that the shallow water there will give me a sanctuary from the largest vessels, on the down side it will probably make for a bit of chop.

It does both; and for a while I surf speedily across towards Lee-on-the-Solent, somehow dodging through a just-started race. As the fetch lengthens, things start to become a bit boisterous; I begin to hang back on the waves.

It's time to head in anyway. The tide is against now and I sneak along the shore, looking for a little help, before finally hauling out on a steep bit of shingle at Gosport – 35nm in just over 6hrs.

That will do.

JOB DONE?

The numbers tell a tale.

This time it took 83 days, 11 days longer than in 2012. There were 11 weather days, compared to 10 in 2012. So the missing time wasn't lost in extra days off, it was more that paddling days were shorter. Paddling the ebb it seemed was significant, and possibly being three years older and softer was too.

Interestingly the average speed on the two trips was ridiculously similar – there was only 0.05 kts between the two figures. I guess I know what my daily exped speed is now.

I learnt more answers to technical matters – weather, tides, topography, kit and boats. I learnt more about myself too, about abilities and limits – mental and physical.

So...

I was supported, we took a van and I was still 11 days slower; but I couldn't have asked for much more – from either of us. Better weather would have been nice, but that doesn't happen, it's in the rules.

No. 83 days, 1860 nm, 434:43 hrs and a smile on the face will do.

Twice around, still alive and still friends, job done.

John Willacy Feb 2016
<http://anticlockwiseKayak.blogspot.co.uk/>
<http://clockwiseKayak.blogspot.co.uk/>



POWER UP

Article: Chris Brain

Rob Wilcox ready to drive through the oncoming wave



Matt "Paddy" Pritchard ready to boof his OC1 on the Etive in Scotland

As a paddlesports coach I often find myself working with paddlers who seem to have common elements of their performance that they would like to improve. Often they feel their issues revolve around one or more of the following:

- Not being able to punch through stoppers
- Not being able to hit the top of the eddy when breaking out
- Waves/features pushing their boat off course
- Bow dropping when trying to boof
- Struggling with boat control/direction when entering or exiting the flow

SIMPLE CHANGES CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Whilst many of the moves we do on the river have different technical components, they also have a lot in common too. When working with a paddler who has issues with the previously mentioned techniques I often start with the fundamentals.

Posture

I know it sounds simple, but sit up straight, don't slouch. In whitewater more often than not we get our weight forwards. When we are trying to clear a stopper/wave or make a boof, we get our weight forwards to keep our momentum going. Try pushing your bum back in your seat and rolling your hips forwards, this will allow you to engage your core muscles more and be more effective with you paddling.

Connectivity

Spend some time getting your boat set up so that you are connected effectively. This means; a well-positioned footrest that you are not straining to reach, thigh braces that touch your thighs and not just your knee cap, hip pads that don't let you slide from side to side, and a seat that is at the correct height and angle for your body. The seat height is the issue I see most commonly with paddlers who are having issues driving their boat. A reference point I use is to raise my seat so that the tops of my hips are level with my cockpit rim. This reference point might not work for all paddlers, but for me having a shorter body it allows me to effectively move my weight to where I need it. Some paddlers might find raising their seat causes the boat to be a bit unstable, but persevere with it as you might find that you can make more dynamic moves and that you can move your boat around with greater efficiency.

Power Transfer

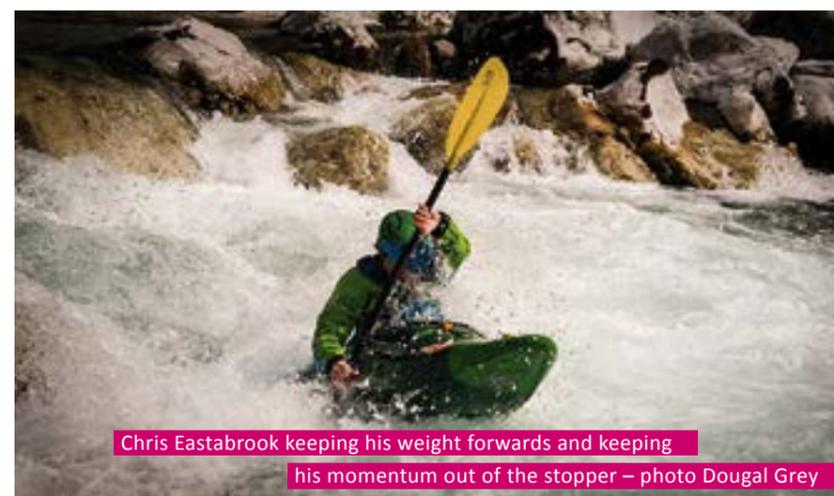
If we are more connected to our kayak we can potentially transfer our power more effectively. So much of our power is transferred to our boat by having a strong core and pushing with our feet, if we rotate our trunk too it only helps to make this more effective. When generating your power and pulling hard on your paddles, make sure you are pushing with your feet and transferring the power to the boat. I find that many paddlers know they should push with



Active posture keeping the boat moving forwards and carving – photo Rachel Burke



Chris Eastabrook planting his key stroke to pull him over the stopper – photo Dougal Grey



Chris Eastabrook keeping his weight forwards and keeping his momentum out of the stopper – photo Dougal Grey

their feet, but often many don't actually do it, the harder you paddle the harder you push.

Experiment with pushing with your feet when you generate your power with your forward strokes. There seems to be a range of opinions as to whether you push the foot on the same side as you are paddling on, or whether you push the opposite. Either way you are transferring power to your kayak and I personally push on the side of the boat that I have my weight on (which usually is the side I am paddling on).

Feel

A key component of our fundamentals is the 'feel' of our kayak. This is essentially feedback given by the boat and our environment, and allows us to effectively anticipate what the boat is going to do. This means we can more effectively predict our movements and often comes from our experience on the water and potentially a little trial and error. The feel of our boat is a recognition and understanding of components such as:

- Changes in speed of the water under our boat
- Effectiveness of edging on the boat
- Changes in angle, direction, height and momentum
- The relationship of body position on the effectiveness of the boat's movement

Through experience we can begin to understand what these changes to our boat's 'feel' mean, and it means we don't have to visually inspect our boat to see if it is doing what we want it to do. This ultimately allows us to focus on where we are going with our kayak rather than looking at where it is now. The idea of looking towards 'future water' is a key concept in paddle sport and helps us break in/out more effectively as well as be more dynamic on the water.

One thing I hear over and over again is that the paddler feels like they don't generate much speed and can't make their boat go fast.

Speed vs Momentum

With many modern kayaks/canoe becoming more focused on downriver speed, with directional performance being favoured over turning ability, you would be forgiven for thinking that you can jump in the latest boat and instantly be able to go 'fast'. Often I find paddlers confusing speed for momentum, assuming that putting more and more effort in will make their boat go faster and faster, when in fact it is the quality of our boat control and timing of our strokes and moves that help us to maintain our top end speed. Of course being able to sprint effectively (and maintain that performance level) will give us a higher top end speed but for most recreational paddlers 100% sustained effort will not increase their speed.

Most whitewater boats are up to top flatwater speed within 4 – 6 strokes. This means that once we have put the required effort in to get our boat up to its top end speed, we can often ease off our sprint and just focus on keeping our momentum with minimal loss of top end speed.

Try it out ...

Have a race with a friend on flatwater and both sprint as fast as you can for about 6 strokes from a standing start. Ask your friend to keep going as fast as they can to the finish line, but after your 6 strokes you ease off from 100% effort to about 75% and see what you find out. You might be surprised to see that there really won't be a dramatic difference in your finish times!



Sal Montgomery “feeling” the water, keeping her focus on where she wants her boat to go – photo Rachel Burke

So why are some paddlers consistently faster? Gerd Serrasolses? David Bain? Joe Morley? All these paddlers are consistently faster in whitewater races than their peers, so how do they do it? These paddlers are combining a high level of sprint performance with high levels of boat control and have an integral understanding of how to keep their momentum going. They know when to put the power on, when to time their strokes and how to keep momentum through whitewater features.

If we understand what slows us down, we can understand when to put the power on

Stoppers, waves, drops, rocks, changes in flow direction can all slow us down, but they can also be where we can keep our momentum going if we deal with them effectively. We are looking for the path of least resistance and we are also looking to keep our bow dry. When water piles up onto our boat it slows us down which reduces our momentum, meaning that we are less likely to escape the stopper and that the wave is more likely to move us off our intended course. When we are dealing with these features this is where we apply our top end 4-6 strokes; simply paddling towards them as fast as you can won't give you much advantage but deliberately changing pace and gathering momentum will.

For example let's look at using 6 strokes in total to clear/punch a stopper. The key here is that the first 3 (or 4) are before the drop and the remaining 2 (or 3) strokes are to keep your momentum coming out of the stopper. This change of pace, created by some vertical strokes to drive the boat and some positive body posture when exiting the stopper, will really help to clear the feature and keep your momentum going.

Top tips (these link directly back to our fundamentals!):

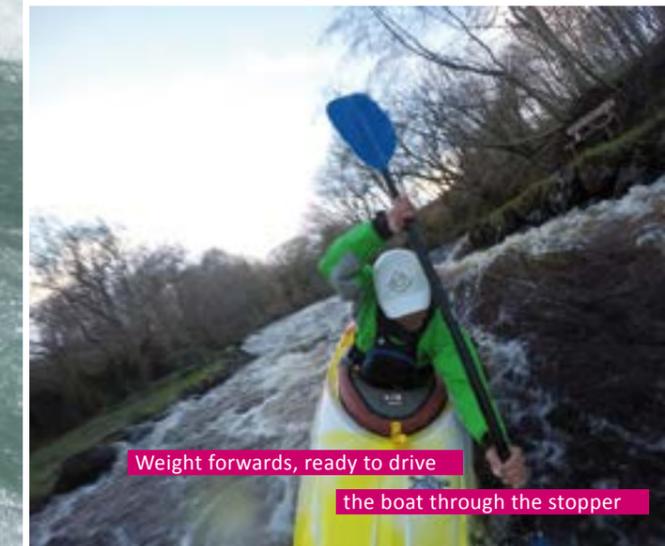
- When you line up your paddle to pull your keystone to take us off the drop, over wave or through the stopper, aim for this to be vertical as it will have the most driving force which will help to keep up the speed you have generated leading up to the drop.



Becky Ruscoe engaging her core and pushing with her feet



Get those hands stacked on top of each other and over the boat to keep your paddle vertical when driving the boat



Weight forwards, ready to drive the boat through the stopper

- Once you have pulled your keystone to help you clear that stopper, think about punching it with your top hand. This lines your paddle and your body up better to make less resistance against any water that might be coming over your boat. It also means that you are getting your body wound up for the next stroke after the feature.
- Imagine that you are trying to head-butt the stopper/wave when you are punching through it. This encourages you to get your weight forwards, which will help to keep you moving through the recirculating whitewater.
- Finally try pushing your feet too, as if you are trying to poke your toes through the stopper. This will help to transfer your power effectively and keep you driving the boat.

Some exercises to develop these techniques

When we initially get on the water, this is the perfect time to spend 5 or 10 minutes continuing our warm up and working on a few drills to help improve our technique.

Change Gears

- Think of your boat as having 4 forward paddling gears:
- Slow floating speed (hardly paddling)
 - Low gear (slow continual paddling)

- High gear (moving fast and generating consistent power)
- Top 4 strokes (4 of your hardest strokes to really make your boat move)

Practice changing up and down between these so you work on changing your pace while you are paddling. You could even have someone else shouting what gear you need to use from the bank. A common error I find is that most boaters have 2 speeds, very slow and as fast as they can! Remember once you have done your top 4 strokes, change back down to a lower gear immediately.

Figure 8s

Paddling figure of 8s encourages us to use our edges and our body position to encourage our boat to carve. We want to try and use forward strokes to keep our momentum going rather than sweeps. Let the edges and your body posture do the turning of the boat and your paddle just keeps the boat moving. Once you feel like you can do this, see if you can just paddle on the inside of the turn.

Continual S's

This is an evolution of the figure 8's which focuses on the direction change which occurs in the middle of the figure of 8. Essentially you are only paddling on the inside of the turn for 3 or 4 strokes before changing

direction to the other side. This exercise works on our ability to change direction and has direct connection to breaking in and out.

Get a friend to help

It goes without saying that getting a friend to help with all of this really does work. Take turns to be the coach and give some feedback to help each other. If it's possible use a video camera, tablet or phone to get some footage that you can review later. Often what we think we do, isn't what we actually do!

CHRIS BRAIN

Chris has been kayaking, canoeing and coaching for the last 15 years and runs his own business, Chris Brain Coaching, delivering paddlesport coaching, safety and rescue courses and REC First aid training.

Chris would like to thank Pyranha kayaks, Immersion Research, VE Paddles and Robin Hood Watersports for making fantastic kit and their continued support

chris@chrisbraincoaching.com
www.chrisbraincoaching.com



THE GRAND CANYON

Words: Vicky Barlow
Photos: Pete Astles, Vicky Barlow, Pete Catterall,
Doug Cooper, Lara Cooper, Katy Jones, Paul PJ Jones,
Dave Rosseter, Laura Tipper, Nick Tipper, Andrew 'Snakey' Whiting

The invitation arrived in October 2013:

We would love it if you guys wanted to join us on the Canyon!

Trip launch date is 7th October 2015 ... Lara

Two years later we were standing on Canyon rim, looking down at the ribbon of river below. At this point the Canyon was about 10 miles wide, and nearly 1 mile deep, with numerous side canyons slicing away from it. It was breath taking. In the distance the river arced in 2 distinctive bends – Marble Canyon. This was at mile 40 which we would hit on day 5. Looking at the bends in the far distance, ringed by insurmountable canyon walls, it suddenly dawned on me how committing this trip would be. Apart from the put-in and take-out there was only

1 other official access point at Phantom Ranch, 88 miles into the trip. And from Phantom Ranch it was a 1-day hike out to the road. Other than that it was a helicopter ride out. I thought back to my preparation for the trip. I done the obligatory YouTube search, and had seen headcam footage of Lava Falls, the biggest rapid on the river, and had decided that 'it didn't look too bad'. I was starting to think that I might have underestimated this trip ...

In my Google research I'd found 2 distinct kayaking perspectives of the Grand Canyon.

The positive: over 200 miles of dam-controlled grade 3-4 white water cutting through one of the natural wonders of the world. Intermediate white water Nirvana. The negative: 200 miles of dam-tamed white water that 20'000 people descend annually, in kayaks, rafts, dories and motor rafts. More theme park than National Park. Looking at the river below, I was leaning towards the former perspective, especially as we running it in October – the motor raft season had finished, but there was still enough warmth in the sun to dry out our kit. Lara, our trip

leader, had chosen her dates wisely. She'd gathered a team of old friends for what was set to be a white water reunion (similar to when the Muppets got back together). We were to run the 225 miles from Lee's Ferry to Diamond Creek over 15 days. A team of 11 – Lara, Nick & PJ rowing the three oar rigs, with Katie and Laura as first mates, and myself, Dave, Doug, Pete A, Pete C, and Snakey paddling kayaks. Well, when I say kayaks ... I had opted for the comfort of a Liquid Logic Remix, whilst Pete C had squeezed himself into a Wavesport X, Doug

had gone for the speed and surf-ability of a Double Dutch Screamer and Snakey had gone full retro with a Sleek.

Lara had (very sensibly) decided to use an outfitter to provide all the kit. And I mean *all* the kit. Rafts, oar rigs, kayaks, tables, chairs, cooker, coolers, food, toilet ... everything. All we had to do was bring our personal kit plus tent and sleeping bag. Oh, and we had to provide the beers ... more on that later. I'd done a couple of multi-day kayak trips before, where evening meals consisted of rice mixed with packet soup and half a tin

of tuna, so when steak, salmon, and Oreos cheesecake were mentioned it seemed like a positive start. Even better that all this would be carried on the rafts, and not be crammed behind my footrest. And then came the news that we had each had a 50 litre drybag for our kit. I could take 50 litres of expd kit??? I don't think I own that amount of kit ...

And that's how the trip started, in Flagstaff one exceptionally cold and wet afternoon, when Canyon Reo, our outfitter, dropped of our drybags. The rain was torrential, and it was cold. Much colder than



Looking down the Canyon from the South Rim



Blue skies and clear water at the put-in



Lara dropping in on day 7

I had expected. The outfitters said that it was normally 10 degrees warmer in the canyon than at 'plains-level', however, with freezing rain it was hard to imagine.

The next morning was outfitting day, which was 3 hours of kit-familiarisation with Canyon Reo before the drive from Flagstaff to Lee's Ferry. We spent the morning learning how to set up the 6-burner stove, use the Katadyn pump, and arrange the toilet. One of the golden rules of the Canyon is that you take everything out. And that really means everything. We had a toilet (groover) and a pee bucket. The pee bucket could get emptied in the river, whilst the groover (an ammo box with a toilet seat) would be sealed up and packed back onto the raft. Glad I was in a kayak ... We had 3 huge coolers, one for each raft, plus 2 produce boxes. Each cooler was filled with alternating layers of food and super-dense ice. We would work our way through the layers to the bottom of the cooler, then move onto the next one. These coolers were crammed with beef, fish, milk, cheese, fruit juice, cream cheese, salad ... And to supplement this the produce boxes were packed with fruit, veg, bread ... Food was not going to be a problem.

Feeling fully prepared for 15 days on the river, we set out to Lee's Ferry to meet up with our advanced team who had gone ahead to set up the rafts. They weren't joking about the temperature difference – from synthetic down to shorts. It was blue skies and around 25 degrees at the put-in. Perfect. And quiet too – just

one other team were leaving with us – a group of raft guides who were obviously there for some fun on the river. We were shown around our rafts, which were threaded with a complex web of straps to hold the coolers, crates, boxes, buckets and dry bags in position. At this point I realised that our raft guides were the most important people on the trip – not only were they pushing all of our kit down the river, but they were also the only ones who knew where everything was, and what combination of straps needed to be loosened to release it (my 'most-important people' did vary throughout the trip – when it came to dinner it was Katie & Laura, and the river it was Pete C).

That night we slept in our tents on the riverbank, under clear skies and with the sound of the river washing against the bank below. The omens were good.

Day one was a fantastic warm up – more blue skies and clear water. That is till we hit the first tributary a couple of miles downstream. Until that point the water had been clear, then we saw muddy red water sluicing in from river right, and the clear water soon disappeared. They call it the Colorado for a reason. However, this wasn't going to dampen our spirits – we were in the Grand Canyon, and as we drifted between the towering red cliffs we knew it was going to be a trip of a lifetime.

The geology of the Canyon is remarkable. At the Lee's Ferry the Canyon cuts through sandstone, siltstone and shale and then it drops nearly 700 metres



Doug earning some airmiles



Perfect start to the day



Cliff camp



Pete C smashing Granite

to the take-out at Diamond Creek. As you descend through the Canyon you drop through the layers of rock, which means the Canyon walls are constantly changing, and the nature of the rapids with them. From wide, shallow rapids of sandstone and shale, to the narrow schist gorges, with deep powerful water. Nothing had prepared me for how spectacular the scenery would be. You'd think that 15 days in a gorge would be pretty repetitive, but it wasn't. Every day brought a change in scenery, whether it was gargantuan lava plugs lodged in the centre of the river, or the Henry-Moore-esque basalt sculpted smooth by thousands of years of abrasion.

In our team were two Canyon veterans, Doug and Pete A, and they suggested we finished day one with 'Badger' one of the chunkier early rapids, and overnight at Jackass camp just below it. Like most (but not all) of the rapids this was a read and run, with a green tongue feeding into a bouncy wave train. We were all smiles as we unloaded the rafts at the bottom – hovering around waiting for instructions as to what to take off and where to put it. Within an hour tents were pitched, tables popped, and the kitchen assembled, and we were ready for our first camp beer. To be honest this had been the most contentious trip issue. When the pre-trip emails were flying back and forth everyone was pretty laid back about the menu, kayak selection, trip duration ... and then someone mentioned beer. This prompted a hurricane of emails, culminating in a spreadsheet that calculated everyone's daily allowance based on room on the raft. In fact, certain bits of kit were abandoned to make room for more beer. Pete A was our bar manager, and had done a sterling job in sourcing the beverages. With the exception of the diet root beer, which was still floating around the cooler at the end of the trip. The night was spent pondering the qualities of pineapple beer and shooting the breeze – it had been years since we'd been away together so there was a lot of catching up to do.

Day 2 saw the first major rapid of the trip – House Rock. The outfitters had warned us that there were 4 rapids that were flipping rafts this year – House Rock, Hance, Horn and Hermit. As well as the two usual suspects – Crystal and Lava. The morning had been a succession of nice warm-up rapids before the main event. We hopped out to inspect – a big bouncy rapid that slammed into a headwall at the bottom and then rebounded into a large hole. There was a line right of it – pretty easy for the kayakers, a bit harder for the rafts. The rafts styled it – driving right and skirting the hole. However, the rapid was about to claim it's first victims ... Just as the last of the our team pushed off, the group we'd met at the put-in caught up with us, and jumped out to inspect ... we saw them again a few hours later, as they floated past our campsite in a staggered procession, a little less exuberant than they were now. Their gear raft had flipped in the hole. That was the last we saw of them, although we did pick up some river swag later in the trip that might have been theirs ...

The days drifted by in a haze of read-and-run rapids, towering canyon walls, and beers around the campfire. ... Day 3 we dropped into the Roaring Twenties – probably my favourite section of river. Mile after mile of read and run rapids that featured lots of eddy-serviced waves. And at end of it, Redwall Cavern – a vast chamber carved into the Canyon wall. ... Day 5 – one of our biggest days with 70km to run, plus a scramble up the canyon wall to visit the ‘granaries’, which date back to 1100AD and were perched on a ledge high above the river ...

By day 6 we’d got a good routine of camp set-up and breakdown. Everyone pitched in, and the kitchen was ready for it’s first service within a couple of hours of us landing at the campsite. As for the campsites ... the guidebook (all 120 waterproof pages of it), listed all the beaches, along with what size they were, and what sunlight they got. So, if you had a large group that preferred the morning sun you could find a beach to suit. And because of the ‘take everything out’ policy, there was very little (if any) trace of anyone being there before you. In fact, an early storm had washed most of them clean, so when we arrived we felt like we were the first people to step onto them. And, as we hadn’t seen another group for 4 days, we really felt like we were the only ones in the Canyon. The world could have fallen away around us and we wouldn’t have noticed. It was an amazing feeling, and I was exceptionally pleased that we had come ‘out-of-season’. I couldn’t imagine sharing the river with a procession of motor-rafts.

All this read-and-run probably meant we were a bit too complacent when we hit Hanse, the second big rapid of the trip. We had caught up with another team who were inspecting it, however, we opted to read and run, with Dave leading PJ’s raft, followed by Pete A, and Pete C with me tucked in behind. The other rafts and kayaks had eddied out to wait for the signal. It was a big rapid. Bigger than I’d expected. I dropped in to see PJ’s raft side surfing in a large pourover, and Pete A and Pete C making a move that I couldn’t follow. To cut a long swim short, I took a swim, my boat got pinned and Dave parted the river to recover it. Decision-made – I’d hop onto Lara’s raft for the remaining biggies and kayaking everything in between. A stress-free way to run the river – thank you Lara and Nick!

We’d enjoyed blue skies everyday since the start of the trip. On the easier days a shortie cag was in order. For the bigger rapids it was time for the long-sleeves. The sun warmed the rocks all day, which acted as radiators throughout the night – perfect for drying kit on. Not so good for camping next to as you baked slowly throughout the night. However, these blue skies didn’t last forever.

On day 10 we camped opposite Deer Creek, with the plan of ferrying over and hiking up to the top of the waterfall. However, the weather had different ideas. As we unpacked the rafts a gale force wind tore down the Canyon, ripping up tents and blowing our gear into the river, There was a mad scramble to pin down kit whilst getting sandblasted by the



Dave showing PJ the line through Lava



Nick and Laura nailing the line



Snack time



Another tough day



Canyon selfie



Snakey kicking back



Another night under the stars



The team at the Diamond Creek take-out



Dropping in

mini hurricane. Then the rain came. A torrent of fat droplets, thundering down on the camp. The dry cliff behind us rapidly became a waterfall. The waterfall opposite us turned from crystal blue to raging red. That was the start of our stormy week. The evenings were punctuated with magnificent displays of lightening that forked overhead, striking down on the edge of the Canyon. Sitting in our tent, deafened by the rain and thunder, our tent illuminated by lightening, we wondered if we’d get fried or washed away first. That was the first of a number of stormy evenings, which were spectacular, if a little inconvenient. We had to break out the kitchen tarps, which were big enough for the kitchen, but not for our group. On an upside it provided a tarp-tech challenge for our resident open boater.

By this point we had well and truly slipped into Canyon life, we floated down the river as a loose group, drifting together to chat, hovering around the snack raft around mid-morning. We’d close up for the rapids, drop into formation for the bigger ones, and jump out to inspect the tricky ones (about 6 in total). For one short section we dropped behind the rafts to give them a small push through some dog water. 1 mile of slack water out of 225 – not a bad ratio. The rapids were pretty straightforward for the kayaks – if you could run a line across big volume grade 3–4, and take a hit or two, then you’d be all right. A solid big-water roll was handy too ... For the rafts the lines were a little tighter,

however, our guides nailed them all – full respect for them pushing those rubber cargo ships for 225 miles!

The river carried us through a succession of narrow gorges, past waterfalls, caves, sidecreeks, and amazing rock formations. Katie, Laura and Lara acted as unofficial tour guides, reading the points of interest from the guidebook and answering our never-ending rounds of questions. We paddled through the narrowest section of the Canyon, just 23 metres wide. Floated past blackened lava fields, and Vulcan’s Anvil – a volcanic plug lodged in the middle of the river. Nailed the lines through Horn, Hermit, Crystal and Lava. Watched bighorns graze amongst the undergrowth, coyotes prowling in boulder fields and even a pair of condors arcing high overhead. We were also entertained most evenings by the campsite residents, whether they were ringtail cats or kangaroo rats – all of which made brazen but unsuccessful attempts to share our dinner.

It was a truly unique experience, so when we arrived at our final camp, it was with mixed feelings. We celebrated with the last of the pineapple beer and with whisky popcorn (sorry Doug!), and watched the stars rise over the Canyon walls for the last time. It was the end of a remarkable trip, one that had totally exceeded my expectations. The white water was world class, the scenery was breathtaking, the whole experience was, well, I’d say once-in-a-lifetime, however, that means I won’t be going back again. And I will be going back. Definitely. I’m just waiting for the invitation ...

Road Shows 2016

11 th April	Plas Menai	10 th October	Plas Menai
13 th April	Brecon (venue tbc)	12 th October	Brecon (venue tbc)
18 th April	Llandysul Paddlers	17 th October	Llandysul Paddlers
19 th April	Cardiff International White Water Centre	18 th October	Cardiff International White Water Centre

All Roads Shows will run from 6.30pm – 8pm

Who are the Road Shows for?

All Canoe Clubs/Venues and key delivery partners are welcome.

All paddlers are welcome whether you are a Canoe Wales member or not.

Content for Spring Road Shows:

- Canoe Wales update – where are we and where are we going
- Who's who
- Survey feedback & results
- Membership database
- Insurance update
- DBS checks
- Activator award
- Grant aid
- Informal group discussion
- Feedback

Outcomes of the Road Shows:

- A better understanding of where Canoe Wales can help
- Know who in the Canoe Wales team looks after which area
- Understand the modernisation of the database and the benefits of it
- Know where to access certain grants and where to get assistance when applying for them
- Understand the volunteer orientated coaching qualifications
- Understand what level of insurance cover you have and where to go if there are any queries

We will be collating feedback at the end of each Road Show and this will inform us of the future direction and content of the Canoe Wales Road Shows.

For more information contact Canoe Wales:

admin@canoewales.com | 01678 521199

or visit: www.canoewales.com