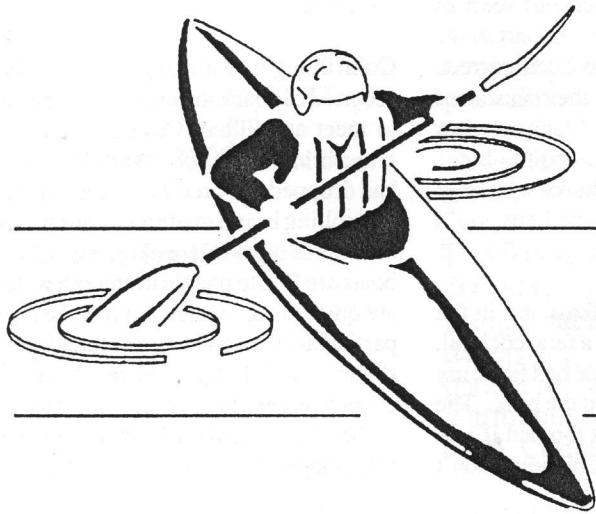

CANNEWS

JULY 1991



RINGWOOD
CANOE CLUB

CANNEWS

The Devon camping weekend

Last June, Steve, Paul and I had an excellent weekend paddling from Totnes to Kingsbridge in South Devon. I thought it would be worthwhile repeating the trip with more people this year, and that it would be interesting to finish at Bantham, in order to include the impressive cliffs to the west of Salcombe. Total distance almost 40 miles.

The forecast promised fair weather for half the weekend, so Friday evening saw a group of eight gathered at Totnes, comparing notes on how to pack a kayak with enough camping kit to fill a car. Once the parking was done, someone found a box of cornflakes that still needed a space: more shuffling and shoving, and then we were off on a brilliant sunny evening, paddling on the top of the tide with the Dart Estuary looking its finest.

From Ringwood were old-timers of the trip: Steve; Paul and I, together with Warner and Peter. We were joined by Colin and Liz Butler - who, being locals, had paddled the River Dart but had not been around the coast - and Bob Watson, who will be familiar to those who paddled the Usk last year.

On Friday evening, after about an hour's trip down the river, we camped at Pighole Point. A patch of grass at the top of the beach and plentiful supplies of firewood make this a good spot. I had persuaded Jackie to prepare a large pot of Chilli and some garlic bread, which we soon had warmed-up on the fire, and were able to eat while watching the full moon rise across the water. The river is idyllic on a warm summer evening when the air is still and the only sounds are the owls and curlews calling. The only disappointment was that the seal was absent this year. Bob entertained the late night camp fire watchers with some soulful Scottish tunes on his harmonica, and we reluctantly retired.

After a leisurely breakfast (I am glad Colin found room for the cornflakes!), we paddled to Dartmouth, where we stopped for fresh milk and one or two forgotten supplies. The sky was clear and for the first time in weeks it was warm enough to paddle in just a T-shirt. The wind was from the north-west, so when we left the river, the water was calm and the paddling easy. We stopped for a coffee break in Redlap Cove and then split into two groups: one paddled straight to

Totnes, while the other followed the beach in search of wildlife and fish. The fish were quite determined not to be tempted by the various lures I trailed throughout the weekend, so I didn't get my fish for Sunday lunch this year.

We lunched on the beach near Torcross, and for the first time heard a few murmurs about a slightly aching muscle or two. The wind had backed to a Westerly and the crossing of Start Bay had been a bit of a slog. The coast is very interesting from there onwards however, and with strong currents and eddies around Start Point, and a large and very loud nesting colony of kittiwakes, there was something for everyone.

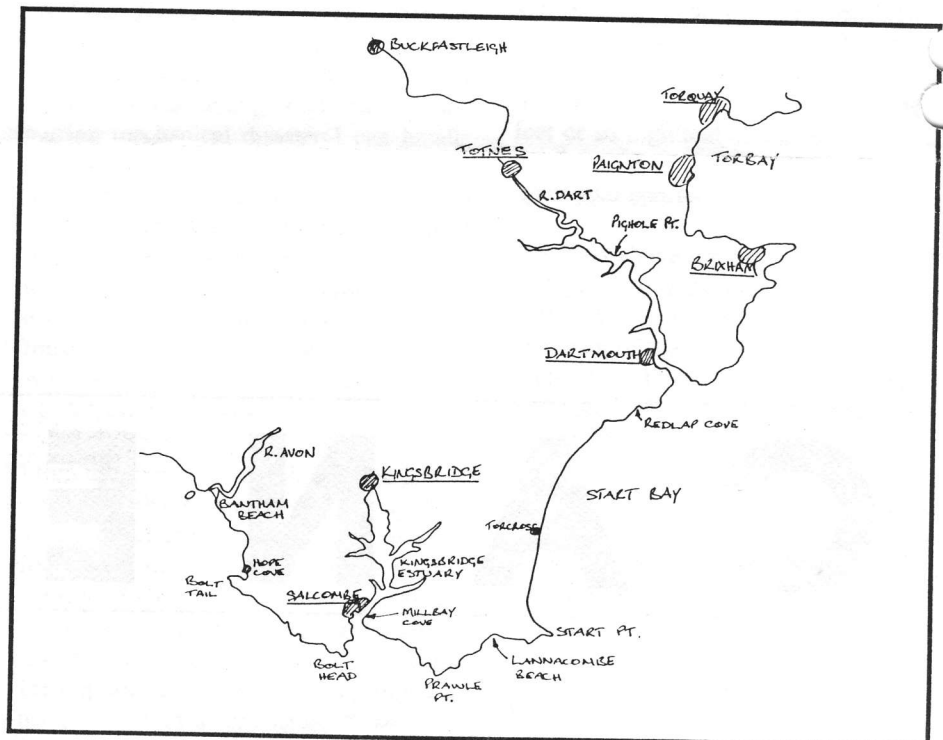
On Friday evening, Colin's car had been shuffled to Lannacombe in anticipation of he and Liz dropping out at this point, so we camped on a secluded beach just west of there, in order that they could depart in the morning. The forecast had been correct, and as we pitched our tents the rain started and the clouds came down to block our view of the headlands. At this point, Steve discovered that he was the lucky winner of the wet sleeping bag award - perhaps you'll get a good night's sleep *next* year, Steve?!

We dined on a vegetarian feast and in the gathering gloom I invented a new cocktail. I mistakenly thought someone had filled my mug with coffee, and I added the milk. The 'Start Point Cocktail' is not too bad if you keep your eyes closed, but somehow I don't

think the regulars at The Haven will be tempted to put a dash of milk in their beer. The aching limbs and soggy surroundings meant that most people were in bed early, but three of us managed a modest walk along the coast path before it got completely dark. No hint of a moon that night unfortunately, and the harmonica recital was rained off.

The wind blew hard from the west for most of the night (or so Steve reported in the morning), and the waves on the beach were more than a match for Bob's snoring. I was woken in the morning by a sheep rooting around on the beach beside the tent, but it was gone by breakfast time, so it was cornflakes again. Colin and Liz departed for the warm dry retreat parked near Lannacombe, and the rest of us put on all the clothes we could find and headed out onto the waves.

Colin thought he might join us later, having escorted Liz back to the car, and we arranged to meet at Millbay Cove in the mouth of Kingsbridge Estuary. Although the wind had dropped to Force 2 or 3, the waves were still rolling in and made paddling around the headlands quite interesting. Heavily-laden boats are fine to paddle in smooth water, but are quite tiring to manoeuvre in heavy seas, particularly when they are breaking over shallow rock ledges and reefs. The cloud cover was very low, so the view was limited to the beaches and the bottoms of the cliffs. We stopped for coffee and met Colin and



Liz. Colin of course now preferred to stay dry for the rest of the day, and so they left us to it and headed home.

Peter by this time had discovered that the Dancer is not quite an 'all round boat' and trying to keep it on course had taken its toll on him. He and Paul, who had been paddling Jill's touring canoe, swapped boats for the remainder of the trip.

In a westerly, there is no refuge in the cliffs between Bolt Head and Bolt Tail, so we planned to stop for lunch at Hope Cove. These cliffs should have been a high point (sic) of the trip but were shrouded in clouds above about sixty feet. The waves were about four feet high and breaking on the rocks, so we were forced to paddle a few hundred yards off-shore, denying us the main pleasures of rock-hopping and bird watching. We now paddled as a tight group, being so obviously alone on the sea, and wary of the danger of capsize with a loaded kayak. This stage would have been a total anti-climax were it not for an amazing performance by a group of fishing gannets. Normally feeding well out to sea, these huge gulls are not often seen diving at close range. We paddled amongst them as they fell out of the sky all around us, and it was hard to pay attention to the waves.

We arrived at Hope Cove - not before time by general consent - and sought a sheltered place for lunch. Unfortunately, the harbour contains a sewage outfall and at low tide is not the best place for a picnic. We found a corner out of the wind and smells, and lashed off most of our supplies. Peter produced an enormous fruit cake, like a musician with a top hat, from his BDH bottle.

The final short stretch along sandy beaches with outlying rocks was quite easy paddling, the waves being a lot smaller and not bouncing back as they had from the cliffs. We arrived at Bantham to find surf about five feet high and perfectly formed. For those with an ounce of energy left it was too good to miss, so we unloaded the boats and three of us returned to the water. I had been completely soaked all day, despite wearing two cags and two spray decks, so I thought another half an hour was well worth it. The club's fibreglass Reflexes aren't the best surf boats though, and I had to concede defeat and leave Paul, still in the Dancer, and Bob in his Corsica, to their fun.

We were met by my sister and family, with their car and mine, to get us back to Totnes. They were rather alarmed at the amount of car park our gear occupied but we squeezed it all into and onto the cars, and headed back to the start. A mere 40 minutes drive away! A couple of lessons learnt over the weekend were:

Don't take anything you might not need - there isn't any room for it.

Don't leave behind anything you think you can do without - you'll only be uncomfortable without it.

And finally, we proved Bob's saying about the weather to be as true as he claimed: "sky at night, weather in the morning."

Barry

Teddy Bears' picnic

Once upon a time (9th June), Goldilocks, three bears and some of their woodland friends decided to go to Sandbanks for a picnic. The woodland folk decided (quite rightly) that the inclement weather was not conducive to picnicking. Goldilocks, meanwhile, who had been eyeing the sky and the bears somewhat suspiciously, decided the latter could be trusted but the former could not, and wisely bade farewell. The three bears, however, had come for a picnic - and a picnic they would have. Picking up their tuck bags they trundled off to find a slightly calmer spot. One of the bears said he knew of a convenient Picnic Launch Area near Rockley Sands, and so it proved to be.

Making sure their goodies were secure, our intrepid bears set off across Poole Harbour into the WIND. After paddling for some time (but not really going anywhere), it was decided the time had come to do what comes naturally to bears. PICNIC.

After beaching across some incredibly black and sticky mud, a small sandy strip was reached which offered a degree (!) of protection from the wind. The picnic was a jolly affair and after some light banter (during which one of the bears actually smoked a pipe!) our merry threesome set off once more. After paddling around for a while longer, but still not really going anywhere, our cheery chappies turned and headed home. With the wind and waves at their back, our

three weary bears had plenty to keep them busy. Upon reaching the shore, the remains of the picnic were consumed, and yes, someone did have honey butties.

It had been a strange day, nothing in particular had been done or achieved, and yet our three intrepid bears were agreed that the day had been most enjoyable, not a bad picnic at all.

Warner

An away-day in a bathtub

The idea seemed OK. It would be a challenge, but there was nothing to lose sleep over. A 16k run, no problem there, followed by a 16k paddle, shouldn't have any trouble with that, and finally a 48k cycle, that should be OK, just. Had there been any inkling of what was to transpire in the canoe section, I would probably never have started the event. Frustration was to be elevated to new heights.

The event was the Birmingham Multi Marathon at Kings Heath Recreation Ground on the 2nd June. We arrived at this location at 09.00 on a cold, dark and dismal morning. The forecast was for even colder, wetter weather coming in. Unfortunately, the forecast was correct. After briefing - where we were informed of a new Sunday market, a donkey derby and some roadworks, all of which would liven-up the bike ride!! - the race was started punctually at 10.00. Although not without an impromptu 'bang' from the starter when the starting pistol refused to play!!

The run went as planned, a time of 61mins being good enough for 11th place on the run, a quick change of footwear, grab a water bottle and trot off down the gravel track, some 100m to the canal. Into the canoe and off, still in a good position. Shortly after I leave, a K1 slides past - ignore him, settle down and find the rhythm. Within a kilometre, three more slide past in quick succession, I get a vision of Barracudas eyeing-up their next meal. Must concentrate, don't let the pace drop. Still they come past, eating into my precious cushion of time. Bloody K1s. They were relentless - no matter how hard I worked, I could not shut them out. I could not believe it - 2kms from the turn-round point and the lead canoes

were passing me on the return leg! And so it continued. I arrived at the turn with a K snapping at my heels, at least I could turn faster, HA! BIG DEAL! Come on, go, settle down and find the rhythm, go-go.

Within seconds, the Barracuda slides past and my frustration boils over into despair. Bloody K1s. I look at my watch and the despair deepens, an hour to the half-way point - much too long. Other touring and slalom canoes pass me on the opposite side, still on their outward leg and a long way behind. It is no comfort.

A barge is manoeuvring up ahead and momentarily blocks the canal, his wash causes panic amongst four Ks who have to hold back. I plough on and pick one of them off, the revenge is sweet, but very short-lived. He re-passes.

About 3kms to go and suddenly I have the canal to myself, or rather, me and my yellow bathtub. Those in front have gone from view, and those behind are probably at least as tired as I am, which is by now very tired indeed. My hands are numb, followed closely by my brain, and the wind is biting. Another look at the watch, I simply cannot believe how long this is taking me. Despair evolves into depression. Paddling is now an automatic function. The end of the section comes into view, so what? People on the towpath clap and shout encouragement, who cares? There have been many past events in which I have been in far worse physical condition, but I cannot remember one where my mental state was at such a low ebb.

The unthinkable had to be considered. Retirement.

Difficult to think of, almost impossible to say, it sticks in the throat like bile. The cold and wet could be handled, it is part and parcel of canoeing, but I felt the frustration and desperation I had experienced had thrown into question my ability to concentrate for another 48kms. Mistakes can be painful on a bike. That was that then, retirement it was.

As I approached the finish a noise intrudes. Good grief!! I had forgotten - Sheila and the children. How long had they been standing beside this black strip of water in the cold and wet, waiting for a long-overdue bathtub? Anger bubbles up inside. Anger at this yellow tub which refused to go any quicker,

but really, anger at myself for expecting it to. The Reflex is a good canoe, provided it is operated within its limitations. I had simply asked too much of it. Like entering the Grand National with a donkey! Anger bubbles again. I touch the side after 1hr 55mins of paddling, but even now I cannot recall exiting the canoe. It is on my shoulder and I am trotting, fatigue takes over and I walk. The children are irrepressible. "Come on, Dad." "Get after them, Dad." "What do you need, Dad?" (my head examined).

Numb fingers fumble with cycling shoes and a jam roll. Sheila tries to introduce some order, it's a no-contest! "Here's your bag, Dad." "Here's your bike, Dad." Eventually I am ready, into the saddle, past the timekeeper and out into the traffic. Settle down now, concentrate, find the rhythm, haven't I been here before? Just a second, I was retiring wasn't I? HA!! The Charge is On!!

The priority now is food, numb fingers struggle to get the food from bum-bag to mouth (wish I had remembered gloves). A rider comes into view, no number, not in the race but he'll do for target practice!! A short distance later another competitor appears, I close on him and thinking dark thoughts accelerate past - that's for the yellow bathtub!! This procedure is repeated a number of times prior to the 32k point, each one I pass giving more satisfaction than the one before. Into the last third of the race and I am calm now, in control, but most definitely tired. This is familiar ground however, and barring mechanical disaster I can handle what's left. Control is what's required, must regulate what energy is left or it could still go wrong. Two more riders get picked off, most satisfying, but it doesn't diminish the aches. Just about everything hurts, and every hill is punishing. Inside 3kms to the finish and the charge is on! GO! GO! Approaching the last corner and it's sharp, careful, don't fall now.

From the turn to the finish is about 200m, but the children's voices carry clearly, they are animated, irrepressible!! I cross the line for a total time of 4hrs 36mins, feeling considerably more tired than when I finished the canoeing, and yet I am happier. The time is good enough for 32nd out of 64 finishers. I change into dry clothes and get a hot drink, nectar. The rain is light but steady now, but

no-one is in a rush to leave, the organisers have laid on a buffet despite the conditions and everyone shows their appreciation by staying to the finish, or perhaps they just stayed for the beer!!

I huddle against the cold, and dig my hands into my pockets, what's this? . . . Gloves!! Ho Hum, such is life. We round up the team and set off home, tired but much wiser. Would I do another? Perhaps . . . perhaps if I had a Barracuda . . . ? PS: What about a team entry next year?

Warner

Solent madness

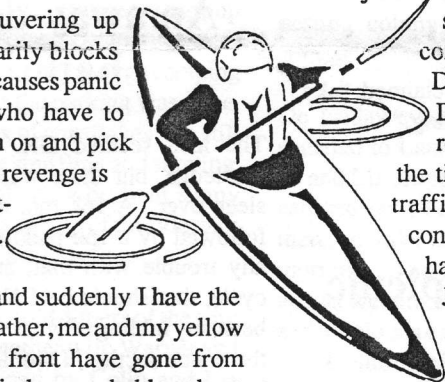
A brief but memorable visit was made to the River Yar from Keyhaven, by seven paddlers in early May. We were greeted on the beach at Keyhaven by one of the local wise men who advised us that he had never seen the Solent so rough (well, not quite, but he was convinced that we were on a suicide mission). We declined the offer of his binoculars as we could see the waves quite clearly enough beyond Hurst Spit.

We set off with a fresh breeze from the North and an opposing, incoming tide, to take a closer look. The big waves were due to the overfalls on the far side of Hurst Narrows, where the strong incoming tide runs over a shallow area and into deeper water. The situation could only improve - despite the worsening forecast - when the tide turned at lunchtime, so we proceeded across. We found a narrow gap between two areas of overfalls and, with the aid of the tide, shot through it. I think we each rode over only half a dozen big waves, but at 10 feet or so high and breaking, it was quite exhilarating, or nerve-wracking, depending upon your confidence.

The river above Yarmouth is very unspoilt and quiet, but only about a mile and a half long. We lunched beside the marshes, upstream of the bridge which blocked our route, and at this point we were closer to the south coast of the island than we were to the Solent side.

The return trip was a marked contrast to the outward leg: with the tide having turned, the Solent was transformed, with only friendly waves to be seen and the sun shining on the water. The waves were behind us and we surfed the last mile or so to the Spit. Don't miss the next trip in October!

Barry



Dates for your diary

Some of the events shown below need firm commitments from members so that we can organise them properly, so please run through the list and contact the appropriate people as soon as you can.

- Sunday August 11th: Kennet and Avon canal trip. Meet at the lock next to Denford Manor Farm bridge (OS ref 352682) just east of Hungerford at 9.30. Lunch stop will be at Little Bedwyn, just west of Hungerford: there is a pub, but to be on the safe side, at least bring some sandwiches. The trip - which is approximately 8 miles and involves portage around 16 locks - finishes at Crofton Pumping Station on the side of the canal. There should be time for paddlers to take a look around (the beam engines will almost certainly be in steam). Non-paddlers - including children - are likely to find Crofton a very interesting way of spending a few hours. Contact Barry for any further information.
- 6th, 7th and 8th September: A repeat of last year's surfin/ramblin/eatin/drinkin weekend at Ilfracombe. Two days on the best surfing beaches in Devon, staying at very friendly accommodation (includes Tom & Jerry at breakfast). Paul now needs to know firm numbers for this event so that he can book the guest house, so please contact him straight away if you intend to go. In exchange for this, he will provide obtuse clues about the location of the guest house.
- Sunday 22nd September: River Hamble trip to the usual pub for lunch. Meet at Bursledon public slipway (next to Moody's Boatyard) at 10.30.
- Saturday 19th October: I. O. W. trip. Meet at the landward end of Hurst Spit (OS ref 300908) - not Keyhaven Village - at 09.00, and remember to bring a packed lunch. The trip will be around 10-15 miles, depending on conditions and strength of group. We hope to paddle round The Needles and Alum Bay, returning via Yarmouth or possibly over the spit, from the seaward side to the cars. Contact Barry if you need to know any more.
- Sunday 27th October: Treasure Hunt. Alan says that this will be different from the usual event. The only clues he's given away so far are that it will be held in the Ringwood area, will finish at a pub that caters for children in time for lunch, and that children are welcome to bring their parents. Contact Alan for details about times, parachute requirements, etc.
- 1st, 2nd and 3rd November: Another trip to Powys, South Wales. Stay in superb accommodation near the top of Table Mountain. Paddle the Usk - one of the most scenic rivers we've come across. Steve has now booked this event so you probably don't need any further information, but if you do, he's your man.
- Nov/Dec: Mixed-ability club weekend at Hexworthy, paddling the River Dart. We will try and book a specific date for this event as soon as we have some idea of the number of people who are interested, so please contact Barry as soon as possible.
- Friday 6th December: Beer and skittles evening at the Churchill Arms in Alderholt. Starts at 7.30. Snacks available.
- Jan/Feb '92: Experienced-canoeists' weekend on the River Dart (a non-Heworthy event). Again, we will organise this as soon as we have some idea of the number of people who are interested, so please contact Steve as soon as possible.

27 Shears Brook Close

Bransgore

Christchurch

Dorset. BH23 8HF.

9th June '91

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Dear Barry,

I would like to say thank you to you and all the Cause Club members for your wonderful gesture in planting the trees in Julian's memory. As you know, he was a modest man and would be so touched, as we all are, by your gesture.

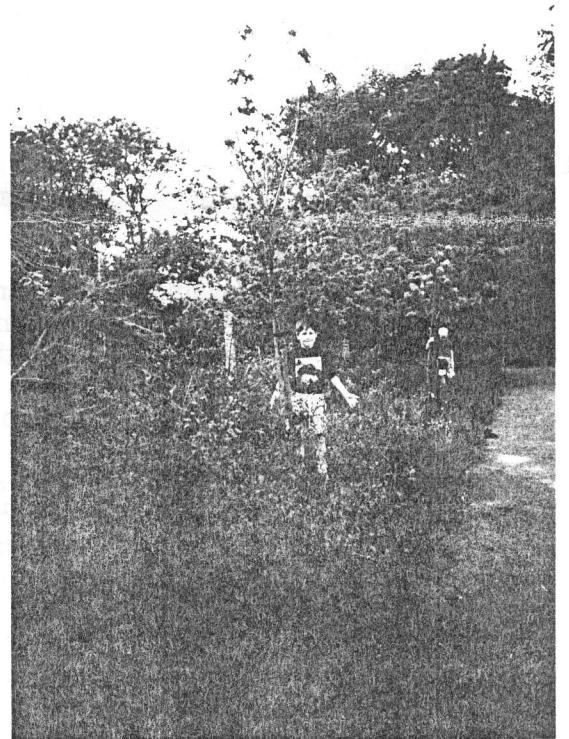
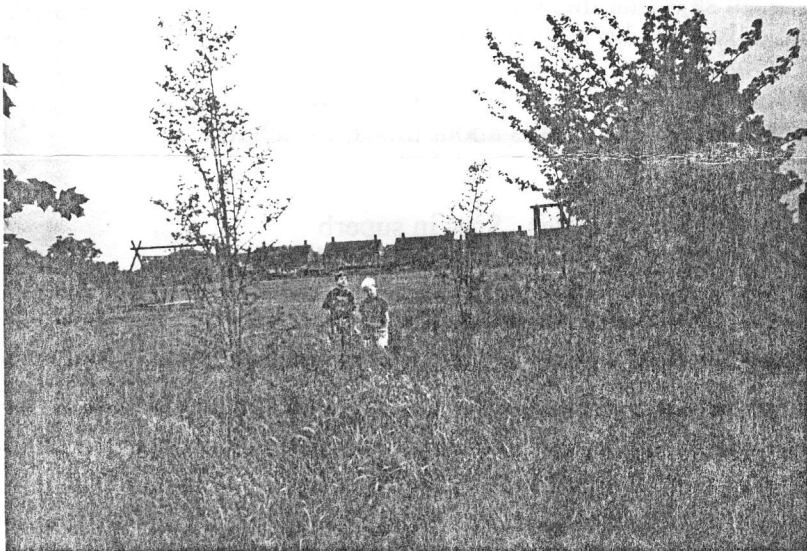
It is so lovely that you were able to plant the trees in Bransgore, and I have taken some photographs of them with Matthew and Richard. I know how proud they will be to see Daddy's trees grow with them over the years.

Thank you for sending the copy of your newsletter. We are proud that you will be making the Hengistbury Head race an annual event and presenting a trophy in Julian's memory.

Thank you also for your kind offer of help. Matthew and Richard are keen on sport and would like to try canoeing one day, so it would be nice to bring them along to a pool session sometime in the future. Meanwhile, please thank everyone once again for their kindness.

Best regards,

Pat, Matthew & Richard.



Stop press

Following a very successful day out last Saturday, when we paddled from Lulworth Cove to Durdle Door for a picnic with the non-canoeing members of our families, we have decided to fit another trip into our already-busy calendar. If it's anything like the last trip, you would be well-advised to come: the weather was superb and a slight sea swell made paddling great fun. Coupled with which, you get a chance to take a close look at some of the best coastal scenery in Europe (well, OK, Dorset). The trip will be on Sunday 15th September and as before, bring a picnic and the family. Meet at Lulworth Cove at 9.30 - the road between the car park and the beach is closed to traffic after 10.00, so if you're late you'll have to carry your canoe down. Contact Peter Moreton for any more information if you need it.