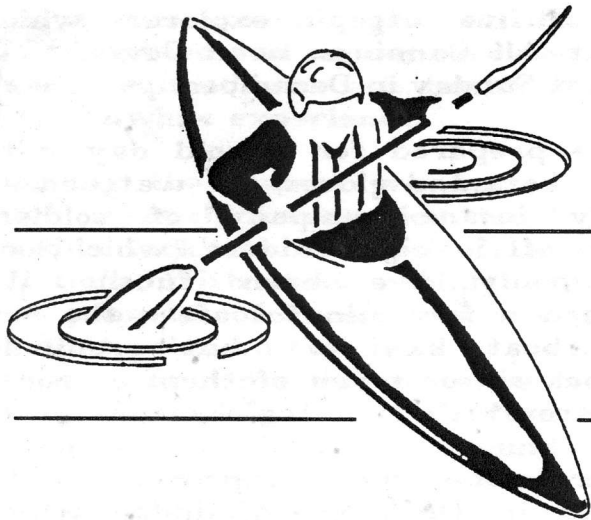


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# CANNEWS

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JANUARY 1990



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RINGWOOD  
**CANOE CLUB**

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# CANNEWS

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# Wareham - The Experience

Ten in the morning was a little optimistic for me and, as usual, I arrived late. As a result, the expedition set off around eleven from Rockley sands. The intrepid six paddled toward the distant horizon, the conditions were good and the sun shining. There were some odd looks from the fishermen who were wrapped in numerous layers of clothing, which reminded me that I must get "Don't worry, I'm totally MAD" stencilled on my bouyancy aid, to stop people asking.

The tide stayed at its peak for most of the trip and it was easy going, once I remembered the right direction. I was the only one to have paddled the trip before, so everybody presumed that I knew where I was going, what silly people! Still, Poole Harbour was quiet and we didn't see many boats until we reached the mouth of the river.

The paddle to Wareham is frustrating as you can see the roofs of the town and especially the church, but one never seems to get to it. The waterway bends and curves, and the buildings forever looking as though they are just around the next corner. It is pure torture as you start to hallucinate the food and beer waiting in the picturesque pub by the bridge. The whole team made it easily in two hours.

Lunch was welcome but we didn't stay long as it was necessary to catch the tide turning to help us on the return journey. The paddling back down the river was pleasant and like a Sunday stroll, weaving in and out of the moored boats. Ducks, coots, and other wildlife eyed us warily as they darted into the tall reeds; except for one coot which didn't care how close you came (either that or he was dead, we couldn't quite tell).

The harbour crossing proved harder as there was an icy wind that created small waves, the kind that spray you as you break through them, the cold water

finding those warm, dry places around your body. The light was fading fast but we managed to reach the beach by dusk.

I always enjoy paddling anywhere, but nothing is more welcoming than dry clothes and hot coffee at the end of a long trip - I wished I'd had some!!

*Matt S.*

## Ice Breakers!

Maybe other members of the club had more knowledge of conditions on the Kennet & Avon Canal in Winter than the band of five intrepid explorers which met at All Cannings, near Devizes, on the first Sunday in December.

As we prepared for a cold day with woolly hats and gloves, we watched an equally insane company of soldiers setting off in 'rigid raiders' (which look uncommonly like bath tubs!). We launched a few minutes after the last army boat had left, but gradually overtook six or seven of them en route to Pewsey.

At first the canal appeared to be covered in thick green sludge which gave off a revolting smell. Once past this, we realised we were paddling through water with a generous quantity of crushed ice floating on top. We were surprised enough about this, even though it was so cold, but little did we know what was to come .....!!

As we approached Pewsey, we overtook the leading army craft and discovered they had been breaking ice for us. Long stretches of the canal were completely frozen over, to at least 1 inch thick in places. We made our way over it learning new skills in how to canoe on ice - take a run at it, get as much weight as possible on the ice, and force the paddle into the cracks which subsequently appear. Barry definitely excelled as our Master Ice Breaker although we think that, with by far the heaviest canoe, he had an unfair

advantage. Matt proved to be a worthy follow-up crew, trying to beat the 'bergs into submission with a sawn-off paddle lost earlier by one of the raiders.

At Wootton Rivers we stopped for a well-deserved pub lunch, albeit an hour later than scheduled, to be timely met by Liz and children who had decided to take the easy way; by road! After Barry and Steve had completed some nifty car-juggling, we launched our canoes again .... into more ice! A mile or so later and Paul was questioning the wisdom of going on; we all began to doubt our sanity but, with a tunnel ahead of us for inspiration, we continued. Negotiating the tunnel was very exciting and gave us a brief respite from the freezing ice. At 500 yards in length, it was much longer and darker than anticipated and canoes careered off walls at frequent intervals, but it was a well-worthwhile experience.

On leaving the tunnel we battled on through ever-thickening ice until we reached a lock about 1 mile from our destination. With dusk rapidly falling, and no prospect of a reprieve, we gave up at that point and decided to portage the canoes the remaining distance (as it happens, the lock gates at Crofton had been opened to drain the pound for maintenance work, so there wasn't any water for the last half mile anyway!). We finally arrived at Crofton Lock as darkness was falling, cold, wet, and slimed to the gills, but, oddly enough, very satisfied with the day's events. We packed up pretty quickly and bid our farewells in the sure knowledge that we were all totally mad.

*Jill T.*

### The Dangers of Being Cold and Tired (and Leaving The Brain at Home).

Last weekend, Matt, Albert & Steve decided to paddle from Boscombe Pier to Hengistbury Head where there was good surf. As one monster wave came in, Matt was busy watching the birds. Steve shouted "Wave!" .... and Matt did!!!

## The Wall of Water

A grey wall is what the water looks like at cockpit level. Not an uncommon sight while paddling, or should I say, attempting to stay upright on the River Dart at the beginning of November.

There was a good turn out from the club with ten canoeists arriving on the Friday night. Saturday morning was dismal, mist and cold, and it didn't look good. Indeed, the weather proved unpredictable throughout the day with spells of both sun and rain.

After a warm up, we were into the water practising ferry gliding, that is crossing the river in a straight line. This is not as easy as it sounds when the water is flowing at 10 knots! Then on to 'breaking in' and 'breaking out', which is paddling from an eddy into a current and vice versa. By this time, and less than a mile downstream, many of us had capsized at least once. Although it was numbingly cold, the exhilaration of the fast water more than made up for it. By lunchtime we had all discovered that the effort needed in fast water is not paddling forward, but staying upright and using all those support strokes we were supposed to practise in the pool!

Next a weir. It looked harmless but it was explained that it could be anything but, and, as with any weir you are contemplating, we were advised to take a look. After hearing about the 'stoppers' that could stop the careless canoeist permanently, I was definitely apprehensive. There was no need, however, as the excellent coaching and advice saw us all safely through.

At the end of the day I was wet, cold and exhausted. Parts of the body that I thought never could, had gone numb. The queue for the shower when we got back to the centre showed that all of us felt the same way. After a good dinner and a couple of pints however, the cold was forgotten and the experiences of the day retold.

Sunday's weather was more promising and the canoeing more appealing as we

now had some idea of what was to come, or so I thought. The day proved it's worth with one great highlight, the weir at Buckfastleigh. It is huge and the water was gushing over it, in what can only be described as a torrent. As we got out, I thought that we were going around, but no, to my horror we were going to shoot it. The best route was explained and one of the instructors demonstrated. It was a case of either 'do or don't'; I did and it was fantastic. Just before going over the top, I asked myself, "Why, at the beginning of

November, am I about to immerse myself in ice cold raging water?". There was no chance to answer as I was all too soon battling away from the base of the weir. I can honestly say though that the experience is indescribable and thoroughly recommended.

All went home tired, slightly cold, but happy. The weekend was, and is, worth every minute, as well as being a good testing ground for Damart underwear!!

Matt S.

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*Dates For Your Diary.....*

Jan 21st	River Avon at Breamore.....	Ring Matt on Downton 22494 for details
Jan 27th	Pool Session at 6:30pm	
Feb 3rd	River Dart White Water.....	Ring Steve (Verwood 822736) for details
Feb 4th	River Axe Canoe Race.....	& send enclosed entry form by Jan 26th
Feb 17th	{ International Canoe.....	Ring Paul on Downton 3510 for details
Feb 18th	{ Exhibition at Crystal Palace	and to arrange transport
Feb 24th	Pool Session at 6:30pm	
Mar 11th	River Hamble Trip.....	Ring Barry (F'bridge 55325) for details
Mar 15th	Ringwood Canoe Club AGM.....	Recreation Centre at 8:00pm (see below)
Mar 17th	Pool Session at 6:30pm	

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**Ringwood Canoe Club AGM**

The Club AGM will be held at 8:00pm on Thursday March 15th 1990 at the Ringwood Recreation Centre - all members should attend. If you have any items for the agenda, please convey them, in writing, to the Secretary, Glynis Marsh, to reach her by February 28th 1990. Nominations for Committee Members (all posts) will be accepted on the night. More details nearer the time.

**Telethon '90 - May 27th-28th**

TVS has contacted the Club asking us if we would be interested in participating in the Telethon '90 campaign. The Committee has considered the idea and would like to find some way of promoting this appeal. So, if you have any suggestions for fund-raising activities (preferably involving canoeing!), please contact any Committee Member, as soon as possible.