

I'll say this for RCC members: they don't give up. Plans A and B having failed, Debbie took it upon herself to capsize and fake hypothermia, knowing that as a responsible sort of person, I'd probably vanish into the depths of Bramble Wood searching for first aid manuals, warm blankets, heliports, etc, and never be seen again. But she'd forgotten something. We had a doctor with us. Brushing me aside as I tried to take my trousers off (well, somebody had to do something, didn't they). Jacqui administered assistance. Swapping her enviable position as Canadian navigator and chief rock spotter for a chance to rediscover the real thing in Debbie's kayak, she watched Larry paddle off with his frozen cargo.

Then Liz hit upon a cunning plan. Knowing that even if I did have a Swiss Army knife with a saw, it would be buried deep in the recesses of my canoe, she stalwartly paddled straight into an undercut bank, complete with tree roots sticking out. Disregarding my entreaties to "*paddle left!, paddle left!!*", she struck a steady course for the right and disappeared under the rolling water. Now I knew. Murder, mayhem and lost for ever in the wilds of Cornwall nothing - I was to stand trial for manslaughter instead.

Just as I had clamped myself to the tree and exited my canoe, Graham G yelled that Liz had partially righted herself. Just as I had got back into my canoe, everyone yelled that Liz had gone under again. I decided to wait and see what happened. For at least 500ms. Then I yanked the front of Liz's kayak as hard as I could - it's surprising how much force you can exert when you have a life sentence dangling in front of you. Liz and the kayak finally parted company; the kayak immediately became trapped on another tree, giving me time to ferry Liz to comparative

safety on the opposite bank. Graham and I then spent 5 minutes breaking branches before we managed to retrieve the canoe.

By now, Bev, the two Grahams and Albert had gone quiet - they were obviously hatching an even more Machiavellian anti-snorer plot. Luckily, we made Notters Bridge before nightfall and before they had put whatever it was into action. Just.

And it's no good telling me I dreamt all this. I didn't sleep a wink on Sunday night, because Marion kept on waking me up to tell me that I was snoring.

Nick

FOR SALE

Falchion 385

Yellow, good condition and complete with spray deck, paddles, back-rest and buoyancy bags - £120 o.n.o.

Contact Karl : 01202 813093



CANEWS

Winter 1995/6

1st February 1996

The Wye & Usk : November 11/12

Was it on or off? - rumours were flying that Perth y pia was double booked. I know that I wasn't alone in refusing to believe that the Usk trip could possibly be cancelled.

Noone knew until Thursday night, when a welcome phone call from Barry put everyone's mind at rest - and it had begun to rain (after a long dry spell) - 'icing on the cake'

Barry had managed to arrange alternative accommodation, book access on the river, and let everyone know what was happening in the space of a few days - well done mate!

13.5 of us finally made the trip. All arrived at Bredwardine Lodge &/or the Red Lion from 7.30pm onwards. Colin's flight arrived on time despite the unscheduled stop-over requested by Elliot, who hadn't gone before we left.

After a few jars at the Red lion there were sighs of relief when we all remembered that we were not faced with the steep hill up to Perth y Pia, but a civilised 200m stroll to our beds

Bredwardine Lodge is an old converted school that sleeps 45, a characterful and roomy place that proved an excellent alternative to our normal venue. We were sharing it with another party (of around a dozen)

Nick's snoring ensured everyone a memorable first night - Larry and Jacqui (who were in the know) preferred to travel back to Gloucester!

We awoke to pouring rain (which, I believe, everyone welcomed) and a cooked breakfast courtesy of our hosts Tony and his wife

Saturday : Wye

The decision was made to paddle one of the upper sections of the Wye: Buith Wells to Llanstephan, and, after a comparatively long drive, we were on the water at around 10am.

This section of the Wye proved to have a number of interesting features and play spots - but stretched over the 12 Km length, with some long paddles between. The features were made interesting through the geology of the river bed - with uneven shelves resulting in unpredictable waters.

Hell Hole was intimidating - a short narrow shoot but hard-up against a rock face with a particularly hazardous shelf just below water level. We watched another group shoot this - some successfully and some with very narrow escapes.

Larry and Jacqui, in their canadian, shot the fall gracefully - Jacqui waving her paddle in the air with one hand, pure exhilaration (or something) written on her face, while Larry battled admirably at the back against the consequences of his wife's misdemeanour.

Conscious of the severe penalties that would be meted out for slight errors in judgement most of us kayakers chose the chicken run - but Danny took the plunge (literally).

It was getting dark by the time we made our egress point - and we all enjoyed a shower of leaves and rain while changing into dry clothes. We arrived back at the lodge 5 mins before dinner was served - after which there was a dose of aprè-kayak down in the pub.

Sunday : Usk

We had elected to paddle from Llansantffraed (nr Talybont) to Llangynidr. Jake had kindly volunteered to look after

Paul, so permitting Barry and Bev to both paddle.

The water level was perfect - higher than last year, but not washed out - with one play-spot leading into the next. We were, unfortunately, sharing the river with a large number of other paddlers - but it did little to steal the magic of the day. It took us 4.5 hours to cover a distance of approximately 5 miles - a measure of the amount of playing on the way down.

Mill Falls is, of course, 'the feature' and it was excellent. Everyone shot the falls with the grace and expertise for which the club is renowned. Elliot even demonstrated a left-hand roll in mid falls - enjoying a round of applause and the honour of 'paddler of the month' bestowed by an appreciative (and relieved) audience. I was fortunate enough to witness Elliot's happy grin of sheer delight as his head broke surface (well, that's what he told me his expression meant!)

Jacqui, disregarding Larry's previous comments, again waved to the crowd, with her paddle in one hand, during their descent.

We lunched below the falls, watching other groups playing.

The run below the falls was superb - with a large number of good surfing waves and tidy eddies. With full support and encouragement from all, Mike, (whose confidence knew no bounds) managed to secure his place astride a 12' (or thereabouts!) wave and showed all how it was done.

It was in one of the last 'runs' of the day that Jacqui finally through caution to the wind and hurled her paddle into the river - all I saw of this event was a solitary paddle floating passed and Barry reluctantly leaving a surfing wave to charge after it. But it

appears that both L&J abandoned ship further downstream and swam a good section of river before a fleet of kayaks were able to nose the waterlogged canadian to the bank

We arrived at our egress point at around 2.30 pm - but the day had been so good that there was a noticeable reluctance to get off the water.

The weekend was fantastic - and it would never of happened if it hadn't been for Barry's determination, hard work and large phone bill - that turned a potential disaster into a resounding success at the last minute - thanks, again.

Pool Behaviour

Pool sessions prove a life-line for many, during the winter, when Tuesday evenings no longer provide an outlet.

On a number of occasions, staff at Ringwood Rec Centre have had to remind us of a few basic rules:-

- When the sessions are well attended, there should be a realistic limit on the number of boats in the pool at any one time (say 14) - and, if necessary, we all take turns.
- Boats should be clean when they are brought in - large beetles, leaves, bits of sponge, and sandwiches from the last trip, etc. should be cleared out before hand.
- Take care of the sides of the pool

'Frostbite Tour' : Llangollen

There was a very small RCC contingent (of two) that decided to sample the WCA (Welsh Canoeing Associations) *Frostbite Tour* of the Dee at Llangollen on Sunday 14th January. John Beeson had organised a joint party from RCC and Salisbury Canoe Club to make the trip but, owing to injuries, etc. Karl and I found ourselves alone. *Less than three there should never be* - should we still go?: of course, there are going to be loads of other kayaks on the water to show us the way.

Having hit the road at some brutal time we arrived at the Chainbridge car park at 9.30am, having been fortified by a cooked 'motorway' breakfast that gave both of us 'gut ache' for the rest of the day - and began to learn what kind of an event we had joined. There were hamburger stands, stalls selling canoeing gear (at high prices), a free (and very efficient) shuttle service with trailers, rescue cover at all the main falls, and a lot else besides.

The event is held twice a year (November and January) over full weekends, with access from Corwen to Llangollen (a total of some 12 miles). The first 10 miles (Corwen to Horseshoe Falls) *Upper Dee* provides a grade II paddle. The 'hairy bits' are all concentrated in a two mile section from Horseshoe Falls to Llangollen. In view of the efficient shuttle service, we elected to try two runs of the 'hairy bits'

There had been a lot of rain over recent weeks, and the water level was high (not quite 'spate' but romping and boisterous). Having purchased our tickets at the carpark (£5.00 for BCU members) we wandered down to inspect the *Serpent's Tail* (one of two grade IV drops on the river) - pondering the best route down (like true professionals).

We elected to close our eyes and paddle hard!

We carted our boats and gear the 200 yds to the access point just above Horseshoe falls and began our descent (knowing that we only had a few minutes to warm up before the *Tail*). Karl, nursing a strained shoulder and sore throat, had armed himself with two packets of opal fruits, tucked down the sleeve of his Cag - for their 'mouth watering' properties. (A more effective remedy in these conditions would have been simply to part the lips!).

We were bouncing down the *Tail* before we had caught breath. However, our strategy had worked, and on opening our eyes we were both safely in the eddy below the stopper - grinning. This gave us over a mile of paddling to loosen up before the next hairy bit. This mile proved a pretty constant grade III, with *Broken Weir, Half-way Weir, Tombstones, Factory Falls* all providing plenty of play holes and stoppers (all hogged by teenage rodeo stars performing extraordinary acrobatics, which shattered any confidence that we had).

Town Falls represented the other hairy bit. We had paused on our drive through Llangollen to view this section from the bridge (along with many other paddlers), and had elected to choose a slight 'chicken run' (although I don't believe any bird would have survived) which involved skirting the main drop and shooting the falls just below a 'bush'. We watched some others go over the main drop, but elected to retain our strategy and managed to spot the 'bush' somewhere in the maelstrom - it proved a clean descent.

Very pleased with ourselves, we paused for our packed lunch (right next to a snack bar!) and then 'caught the shuttle' back to

particularly unforgiving weir, and the only other casualty must have been Albert's throat (and Graham Deacon's ears)

It took us over 5 hours to negotiate the 8 miles to Horsebridge

The Day We Almost Lost Steve's Boat ..Or "Food For Thought, Not For Fishes"

Sunday, 7th January, provided a good education on how quickly things can happen when there are big waves.

The weather was excellent that morning (i.e. raining, windy, cold!) and the surf was well up off mudeford (and too big to handle off Highcliffe). Only a few members were daft enough to get out of their beds, and a few of those that did probably wished they hadn't!

All started reasonably smoothly - there was no need to seal launch off the wall (as the sea was almost coming over it!), and the surf did not look too daunting. Steve Hunt and Vince had just gone out by the time Karl, Mike and myself turned up.

The surf, while messy, provided some exhilarating rides (washing machine style) and we all looked to be having fun. When Vince swam the first time we were able to raft up and get him back in his boat in less than a minute (despite the surf)

Then things started to go wrong. Vince executed a perfect forward loop (but parted company with his boat), at the same time Karl (who had forgotten his spray deck and was using some leaky old thing) began to sink. The sea spread swimmers and boats quickly. Vince was pulled ashore, Karl was x-rescued but Vince's boat was waterlogged.

Paul had just arrived to ride some waves (or so he thought!) : he joined us to make a raft of 4 boats in an attempt to empty Vince's. We were getting along fine when a huge wave (somewhere between 6' and 30') caught the raft and had everyone over. When I surfaced there was carnage (every boat turned over, Steve swimming and Paul struggling to roll up with what appeared to be a cracked rib, Karl still sinking!)

Within the space of a few seconds the situation had deteriorated to - 1 swimmer, 2 waterlogged boats, 1 sinking paddler, 1 paddler with cracked rib, myself & 100 waves.

We all managed to get ashore, but it was a struggle and we were not able to retrieve Steve's boat - which had been swept along the coast at a remarkable rate of knots. We hailed a passing RNLI boat to ask if they would retrieve the missing kayak - as it happens, Pete Ambrose was at Avon Beach and grabbed it for us.

As it all worked out - no lives or boats were lost, but the morning did illustrate:-

- How quickly swimmers and boats can be swept away in heavy seas
 - How exhausted paddlers can become in such seas
 - How important appropriate insulating clothing is (swimmers were in the water for a long time while being towed back against the tide)
 - why not to forget your spray deck
 - why it is necessary to have at least 2 (if not 3) paddlers able to assist swimmers when the surf is up
-

Surfcall

The *Canoeist* (December 95) carried an article on the *Surfcall & Surfax* service. A copy of one of the fax pages that can be gained is given, opposite.

Unfortunately, I have had little opportunity to test the accuracy of the reports & forecasts but, bearing in mind the considerable variation in surf from one beach to another around Christchurch, it is likely that the information will prove, at best, an indicative guide only.

Using the service on a regular basis could get costly. The price of a fax is approximately £1.70 per page and telephone calls are at 49p per minute (39p per minute cheap rate times).

If, however, you have as much difficulty as me in predicting waves (using the *wet-finger-in-the-wind* principle) you might like to try out *SurfCall*.

Alternatively, I believe that Karl has an old sock flying from his TV aerial!! (prices negotiable?)

Fax Services:

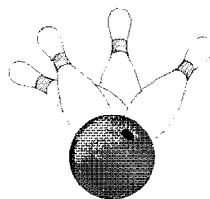
- **0897 200201 : Surf Fax** ("Today's waves"): a 1-page report giving details (for the whole UK) on the height of waves and swell, wind direction, sea temperature and approximate tide times
- **0897 200202 : Beach Report & Forecast:** a 2-page report giving details of today's and tomorrow's waves, wind and weather
- **0897 200203 : Wind Flow Chart 24hr forecast**
- **0897 200204 : Best & Worst Polluted Beaches**

Telephone Information

To get details over the phone:-

- 0839 360 360 : Cornwall/Devon
- 0839 360 361: Wales
- 0839 360 362: Scotland
- 0839 360 363 : East Coast
- **0839 360 364 : South Coast**

Skittles Night: Friday 8th December



This was held at the Ringwood Football Club premises in Long lane - which proved to be an excellent venue for a family night entertainment - with pool and darts,

alongside the skittle alley

Plenty of members, and their children, turned up - each contributing to a table overflowing with snacks. (Nick, can we have your recipe for Pizza?).

The Bland girls were definitely in their element, with plenty of eligible boys there, who were trying to avoid their (far from subtle) advances.

After the first round of skittles, which seemed to go on for hours, those that fancied their chances for the big prize, each contributed 50p to the pot for a second 'sudden death' round. All conversation ceased and a hush fell in the hall as everyone paused to witness the nail-biting final between Barry and Elliot, each aiming for the one remaining skittle. Elliot took his loss with good grace as Barry walked off with the pot.

The evening proved to be an excellent social event which didn't require baby sitters. Thanks for arranging it Karl.

Chainbridge for a second run - with more playing.

The second run was, sadly, not a repetition of the success of the first (perhaps our confidence was too high). Just over *Horseshoe Falls* I got pinned, went over, scabbled frantically under the surface for my lost paddle, which, thankfully, I retrieved before running out of breath. Having rejoined Karl, he had discovered he was shipping water at an alarming rate and was checking his spray deck. We pulled over to the side and, on inspection, found he had holed Larry's boat. On this second run we had decided to discard all the kit (including the repair tape) that we had taken on the first (they didn't seem a need) - a lesson learned.

Re-employing the tape from Karl's helmet (used to keep his head warm) we managed to patch it temporarily and charged down the Tail. Karl, with a stroke of genius, realised that if he shot the tail upside down, the 'hole' would be above the surface and so this he did!

A little way further down we managed to locate a paddler with about 6" of repair tape left, which gave us the opportunity to reach the Town (providing we didn't hang around). With no pause to play, we swept down the remaining falls, this time across the main drop at *Town Falls* without incident, Karl now adding to his 'ailments' a heavy cloud of guilt. (It wasn't his fault Larry!)

Having packed up, we enjoyed a coffee at the side of the river watching the rescue service battle with loads of swimmers and empty kayaks at town falls - all very efficiently done. At least we hadn't come out of our boats!

All in all it proved an excellent day - certainly worth the drive. A club tour of the Dee is certainly recommended (the hairy bits are optional and it's a beautiful stretch of water). We are returning in November - who will join us?

Thanks to John Beeson for organising it and sorry your back didn't allow you to join us on the day.

Canoeing 96

International Canoe Exhibition 1996

Saturday/ Sunday February 24th / 25th

The National Exhibition Centre,
Birmingham

10.00am to 7.00pm

Adults £7.50. Under 16 £4.00

Price includes admission to The National Boat, Caravan and Leisure Exhibition - taking place at the NEC at the same time.

Fame at Last!

Ringwood Canoe Club in the Headlines

Barry's "No Machos Yet", together with Richards "Top Tips" article both featured in a two-page spread in January's Issue of *Canoeist*.

(Why "Top Tips" was edited to "Handy Hints" is anyone's guess!)

River Tamar/Lynher 2/3rd December

Graham G and I drove down to Delaware centre on Saturday morning - leaving at 5am and arriving in time for breakfast and just in time to witness the bleary eyes and the "who set off the fire alarm?" accusations. We had missed the Friday night warm-up session

We were all well fed and kitted up before Keith, who was to be our SI for the day, turned up. There was a party of 30 paddlers staying in the other side of the complex, all taking instructor training/assessment over the weekend. It took about half an hour for them to clear the car-park before we were able to leave.

12.5 of us had made the weekend, a comparatively small party, which raised the efficiency of the shuttle. (The centre supplied the Canadians and trailer).

Once at Greystones, with the boats humped down to the bank, we started to take a closer look at the craft that we would be paddling on the day. Other than Larry, Jacqui and Barry (who were in the know), the remaining 8 paddlers boasted an accumulation of approximately 5 minutes experience of Canadian paddling! The first challenge of the day was to correctly identify the bow and stern of the boats - which prompted some debate. It was obvious that we all needed some very basic instruction.

Barry took us through a 'dry-run' of basic canadian strokes - J-stroke, goon, draw, bow cuts, crossbow draws, etc. This avoided some embarrassing questions for Keith, when he went through the same procedure on his return from the shuttle (by which time, we were all able to nod our heads knowledgeably to his questions)

The weather was warm and wet. It had been raining for one or two weeks and, consequently, the water level was high and the river flow rapid, with a few grade 2 falls. Overflowing with misguided confidence we paired up and elected bow/stern responsibilities with minimal fuss - and were on the water at approx. 10.30am. Everyone picked it up pretty quickly - with no boats drifting out of control down stream.

My first real education was at the first weir, which looked an easy 3' drop - disregarding the better advice from Keith, G & myself, along with L&J elected to shoot this. I was blissfully unaware of the fact that I didn't have a spray deck - and, although shooting the weir successfully, had not fully appreciated the 'bow ploughing' capabilities of the Canadian - I was pleased that I was at the stern! The boat (and Graham G) surfaced swamped and unstable.

Paddling Canadians requires a different emphasis on basic kayaking skills. A Canadian is some 17' long, and does not respond to light touches of the paddle as does a kayak. Strong positive strokes are required to adjust the boats line. Consequently, draw and rudder strokes take on a new dimension, and river reading becomes much more important - correcting a poor line in the middle of a rapid is not easy. This made the experience a challenge and very rewarding.

Sergeant Major Albert was certainly in his element, bellowing non-stop instructions to Graham Deacon as they hurled themselves into the experience in the best traditions of a Dragon Boat race.

It was amazing how well everyone took to it - and by the end of the day we were no longer novices. Only one spillage occurred, when Nick and Liz were shooting a

DATE ↑ TIME TOTAL OF PAGES ONE

TELEPHONE VOICES
TO HEAR REP: 0839-380350 & 1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.0

TODAYS WAVES

WELCOME TO **SURF FAX**, GOOD SURFING.

KEY: WAVES AND SWELL IN FEET

TODAY'S WAVES AT MAJOR BEACHES
LOW GENERATED SEA SWELL

SURFCALL'S REPORT

TODAY'S TERRESTRIAL & SATELLITE INFORMATION
UPDATED DAILY

STORM..... LOW PRESSURE.....SWELL DIRECTION...DISTANCE...INTERVAL...SIZE...ETA
MAJOR BEACHES (INDICATORS) ANTICLOCKWISE

NEWQUAY (BAY)	DUNBAR
FISTRAL	ABERDEEN
CRANTOCK	FRAZERBUR
PERRANPORTH	GH.
ST AGNES	CULLEN
PORTREATH	SINCLAIRES
GWITHIAN	BAY
HAYLE	ACKERGILL
HAWKS POINT	DUNNET
PORTHMEOR	FHURSO E.
SENNEN	SANDSIDE
PRAA SANDS	MELVICH
POLDHU	DURNES
MAENPORTH	SANGO BAY
PENTEWAN	BALNAKIEL
BANTHAM	TREE
BOURNEMOUTH	HARRIS
SOUTHBOURNE	LEWIS
LITTLEHAMPTON	ISLAY
BRIGHTON PIERS	MACHRISHANISH
DYMCHURCH	COMPTON
VENTNOR LOW	RHOSNEIG
LOWESTOFT	PORTHNEIGWL
EAST RUMTON	ABERDAROW
BACTON	FAIRBOURNE
WITHERNSEA	TYWYN
S.BRIDGINGTON	ABERSTWYTH
FILEY	NEWQUAY
N.BAY-	WHITESANDS
S.BAY-	FRESHWATER W
SCARBOROUGH	MANOBIER
ROBIN HOODS BAY	PORTEYNON
SANSDEN	LANGLAND B
STAUHES	REST BAY
SALTBURN	LLANTWIT
SUNDERLAND	LYNMOUTH
SOUTH SHIELDS	WOOLA-
LONGSANDS	COMBE
WHITLEY BAY	CROYDE
HARTLEY REEF	WIDE-
ALNMOUTH	MOUTH
PEASE BAY	HARLYN
	WATERGATE

SOUTH WEST SURF CONDITIONS		
North Coast:	feet	South Coast
<i>Woolacombe</i>	6-8'	<i>Messy to choppy</i>
<i>Croyde</i>	6-8'	<i>Praa Sands</i> 8'
<i>Saunton</i>	6'	<i>Pentewan</i> 6'
<i>Bude</i>	6-8'	<i>Bantham</i> 6-8'
<i>Newquay Bay</i>	4-6'	
<i>Fistral</i>	6-8'	
<i>Perranporth</i>	6-8'	
<i>St. Agnes</i>	4-6'	
<i>Hayle</i>	6'	
<i>St. Ives</i>	4-5'	
<i>Sennen</i>	6-8'	

LOW TIDES +3 +4

ADD +HRS +5 +6

(APPROX) 12.30am +1 +0 +1 +5

Outlook: Increasing

Locations:

INTRA-RED CLOUD SCAN

SEA TEMP 20 TO 7C

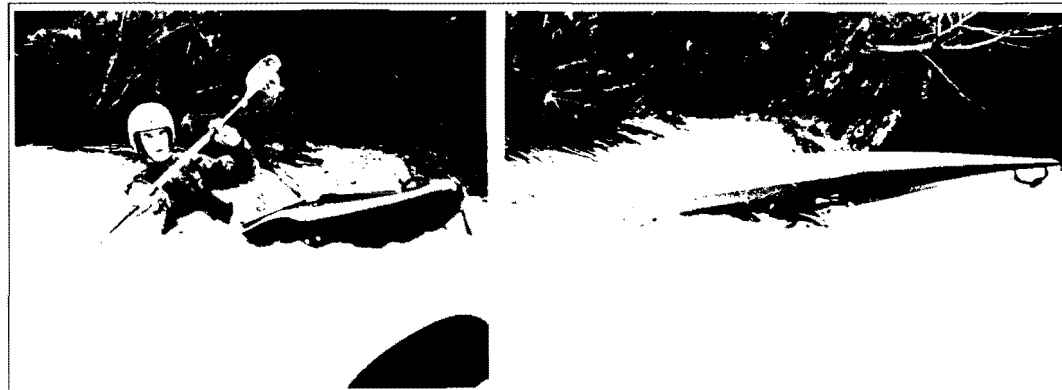
River Barle 21st January

The river Barle is a tributary of the Exe and runs through a narrow winding wooded valley within the boundaries of Exmoor National Park - at 2 1/2 hours away it represents one of our 'local' white water venues.

A small party of 6 made the 1-day trip down the Barle (but there will be more next year!). We paddled the full 10-mile stretch from Tarr Steps to Exebridge, which gave us 4 1/2 hours on the water. The river level was low (for the time of year), providing, generally, a grade II run, with a fair degree of bottom scraping, reminiscent of the Dart in October.

We rock-hopped our way down the first 6 miles to Dulverton, where we paused for a very cold lunch, and spent most of our time warming up under the hand drier thoughtfully provided in the public conveniences.

The four miles below Dulverton proved to be the best section on the day - with a number of play bits that gave us the opportunity to warm-up and restore circulation to locked fingers.



Stopper Playing on the Barle : Pete looking cooland the Editor keeping cool!

Beasley Weir, just below Dulverton, provides a succession of 7 drops, with a very friendly stopper at the last, which gave us almost 1 hours entertainment. Pete Ambrose demonstrated some perfect 360's, while Karl and myself seemed to manage one skyrocket to every two rolls!

We egressed at 4pm at Exebridge, on the Exe, about a mile below the confluence, and next to a pub. Having gone through the agony of changing into dry gear in a biting wind we hobbled over to the pub dreaming of toe-warming in front of a blazing fire - but the door was locked! Luke warm coffee in the car park had to do.

Conclusion : it's a nice river, and, at the flow we experienced, is suitable for everyone (and provides the play spots for those that wish to get wet). Make sure you don't miss the next trip and make sure you reach Exebridge before the pub closes.

Thanks to Pete Ambrose for organising and leading the trip

Lynher - Look Out!

Sunday 3rd December 1995

Larry's cunning booby trap worked well. Creeping out of the room for a pee in the middle of the night as quietly as possible and without turning on so much as a torch (after all, I didn't want to wake anyone who'd finally managed to fall asleep despite my snoring), I met severe resistance at the door. Despite being almost certain that the entire club had assembled in the bedroom with the intention of stopping my snoring once and for all by beating me to death with Canadian paddles, I kept my composure.

The heat on my right thigh (from a storage radiator gone berserk) grew intense as I deftly fended off blow after blow. This must be part of their plan: a combination of partial thickness burns, concussion and then cast adrift in my kayak on some lonely Cornish river. I could see it all clearly - an everyday canoe accident. I sought solace in the kitchen from Bev, who was preparing a midnight snack for Jake (though quite why Jake needed two cheese sandwiches and a mug of tea hasn't yet been satisfactorily explained).

Sunday dawned cold, wet and grey: a typical Gunnislake December morning. But every cloud has a silver lining: having put my trousers on I got to take them off again so that Jacqui could administer some of her potent magic (Editor's note: the lengths that some of our male club members will go to know no bounds). An unhurried breakfast followed by a mystery drive round Callington in the mist saw us somewhere above Newbridge, looking at the Lynher in spate. A rather long car shuffle and we were ready for the off. Graham G, Graham D, Albert, Debbie and Elliott, Bev, Liz, Larry and

Jacqui (in their Canadian, with aforementioned paddles), and me.

Fast and furious. That was the description given by the landowner whose advice we sought. No, not of the Lynher, but of the farmer who was coming to see us shoot the first weir. Or was it a farmer who was coming to see us to shoot us just because we were there? Nobody seemed too keen to hang around to check the finer points of interpretation. Apparently it had something to do with his cows not liking yellow canoes. Being the proud owner of a blue boat (just thought I'd mention it) I was obviously unconcerned about this. Until I realised I was trapped at the scene of the crime by the barbed wire that I had so courteously raised for my fellow paddlers - who had all disappeared from sight. So that was it; plan A having failed, the snorer was to be left to the mercy of mad farmers and colour-prejudiced bovines. I'm pretty sure my canoe got scratched at this point.

We enjoyed a very pleasant paddle along the edge of Bicton Wood down to Newbridge, though I seem to remember that a number of people took swims on the way, including Jacqui and Larry who were debating which side of a rock to pass on, at the end of a particularly fast section of rapids. Unfortunately, they reached the rock before arriving at a consensus. We had planned to meet Barry and Jake for coffee in the National Trust car park at Cadson Bury, but by the time we arrived, lunch was deemed more appropriate. Then it was a seal launch back onto the river for the second half of the trip.