

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**10.00am every Sunday: The Haven, Mudeford.** Regular Sunday mornings unless a specific event has been organised somewhere else

**18.30pm every Tuesday evening: The Haven, Mudeford.** Regular Tuesday evenings throughout the summer unless a specific event has been organised somewhere else

Sund 29 Sept Watch the start of the BT Global Challenge from Hurst Castle from mid-day

Weekend 7 8 Sept **Trewern:** White water weekend on the river Trewern. North wales. Camping, and joining the Welsh Canoeing Associations *Festival of Canoeing* tour. This is subject to water release from the dam. Grade 3 water. some river experience required. Contact Graham B (who can't go!) for details

Weekend 14 15 Sept **Devon Canoe/Camp Weekend:** Probably combining estuary opportunities for beginners and coastal paddles for the more experienced. venue undecided. Please contact Barry

28 29 Sept **France: Cancelled**

5 6 Oct **Woodmill Salmon Pool Open Day**

Sun 6th Oct **River Dart or Barle:** whitewater day trip - if enough rain. Contact Graham B

Weekend 19 20th October **River Dart:** A budget weekend of white water for all standards at the camping barn at Holne. We shall introduce novices to white water on the lower stretches, while others may want to paddle the whiter bits. £10.00 deposits to Barry by end-September

Saturday 26th October? **Hallowe'en Party :** Following the success of last years 'burn-up' - a possible repeat of the BBQ & Bonfire this year Karl ? (watch this space)

Weekend 2 3 November **Exe Tour:** BCU 60th Anniversary Tour : Saturday Exbridge to Bolham. Sunday Bolham to Bickleigh. Grade 1/2 with weirs. Contact BCU

Sund 17 Nov **Exe Descent:** Anyone with the stamina to keep Steve company. please contact him

Weekend 23 4 November **Perth-Y-Pia:** Paddling the Usk for more white water - a well attended annual event in (for RCC) luxury accommodation. Steve has booked the accommodation (and access?): **£10 deposit by end-September to Steve - 1st come 1st served**

Weekend 7 8th December **Canadian canoeing:** At Delaware Outdoor Education Centre. Gunnislake: an introduction/improvement to Canadian paddling on the River Tamar (under expert tuition). £10 deposits to Barry by Mid November

Friday 13 December? **Skittles night:** At the Ringwood Football Club premises. Can we repeat the event this year Karl ?

Sund 5 Jan ? **Upper Dart:** Whitewater day trip - Grade 3/4 - Contact Peter

18 19 Jan? **River Dec, Llangollen:** WCA's *Frost Bite* tour probably this weekend

*NB: "?" means date not yet confirmed*



# CANEWS

## September 1996

1st Sept 1996

## Belgium Buzzards, Damsels and Weed

I won our June holiday in a tombola. Strictly speaking, it was a 5 day cross channel ferry passage for 4 and a car. The destination was determined by headroom - for the canoe, of course. Le Havre > Portsmouth allowed 1.93m - we were 2.03m but said nothing!. In fact we had 2 canoes, because the Deakins came too - including Deakin Junior. Our balding battered *Reflection 16* housed the new inflatable which, with its gunwales raised by sundry sleeping mats, drybags, etc., was to keep young Jake from harm - for most of the trip anyway.

Next question - what river to paddle? This discussion lasted long into the night the week before departure - so much so that, as is the way with most boozy decision taking, by the time we embarked for Le Havre on 19th June we still didn't know if we were going North, West or South. The Ardeche and the Dordogne were a little far, but our fallback if the northern weather was lousy. 2 northern rivers were possibilities: the Risle which flows into Le Havre harbour and the Semois in Belgium. These were both very gentle rivers, marked on our France/Ardennes Watersports Map as "*rivers of great scenic beauty*". The only possible drawback was that they were geared to tourist kayaking with many outfitters and campsites along their banks. Yes, we were camping, and the folding kitchen sink came in very handy at 14-month old Jake's bathtime - when he was in it he wasn't in or into anything else, so Bev could relax a bit.

The watersports map of France/Ardennes region is very informative, grading the rivers difficulty/scenic beauty by colour coding. Barry was given the task of choosing which river to paddle and opted for the Semois in

Belgium, just over the border. It twisted and turned through high hills and looked interesting on the map.

Leaving Le Havre, we by-passed Amiens by a devious little route discovered by Barry and later found ourselves passing a war cemetery close to the Somme, surrounded by fields teeming with poppies - no wonder they figure so largely in the war poets' work. We went in and stayed a while. The monument was a tall cross with a long bronze sword embedded in relief on it. The headstones were touching in long rows, fronted by narrow flowerbeds full of carefully tended perennials - roses, broom and many others. We were quite sorry when we found that we didn't have a pen to record our presence in the visitors book. Larry didn't find anyone from his Grandfathers regiment there. I found the whole place quite moving. It had a serenity I hadn't expected.

So far the sun had shone constantly. Now our adventure began. We arrived at Florenville 7.5 hours after leaving Le Havre looking forward to our 3 days on the river. We registered at the campsite office with smiles all round until the patron saw the canoe. "*You have a problem*" he said. It turned out that the next day (Saturday) was a national fishing day and no canoes were allowed on any river, anywhere in Belgium. So, down to a 2 day paddle.

The consensus was to camp there for the night and next day walk along the river and find a likely put-in spot for Sunday. The valley was quite beautiful with steeply wooded sides, so, although disappointed at missing a days paddling, Saturday would have its compensations. Barry found us an unmade road, skirting the river which, fortunately, was bone-dry (just as well!)

It gave us a view of tomorrow's prospect. Weed!, masses of it - long strands 12' long covered in tiny white blossoms which, while very pretty, wreaked havoc with Larry's and Barry's hay fever. The river was invisible beneath this great white carpet. We decided to go further on and have lunch at a picnic spot. These are designated by black spots on the map - aptly as it turned out. We had just packed up to leave our idyllic meadow when a farmer drove by on his enormous tractor, saw us, and screeched into reverse yelling obscenities at us in French. He'd seen the canoe, was a fisherman, but was not interested in listening to our assurances that we were not going to paddle that day. Jake, by this time, was strapped in his baby seat in the back of the car. The farmer revved up the engine and I kept my cool until he drove it menacingly right at the car. When I told him that there was a baby in the car he did stop, but then spat right in my face! Not pleasant, but I've had so many other noxious substances in my face (job hazard) that I couldn't really get disturbed by it. However, it allowed me to indulge in my more colourful French accompanied by all those wonderfully flamboyant gestures a lady is never supposed to use. He then went to investigate another family and we made our getaway.

Next port of call was a farm for children, beside a tavern. This was the starting point of our walk. Jake talked to (and got bitten by) the ducks and then we crossed the river and climbed the hill. We chose the longest of the several walks on offer and Larry got very adept at pushing the buggy over extremely rough terrain. Occasionally only 2 of the 8 wheels were on the ground. There was a viewpoint at the top which gave us a glorious view of the valley. Then began our descent. Larry and Barry took one side of Jake's chair

each and went swiftly down the 45° slope. Jake slept on oblivious. I had to take off my shoes to get a grip on the ground. No one has yet invented a safer shoe than the human foot. I felt like some ungainly monkey as I broke my descent with the saplings either side of the 'path'. Bev descended equally slowly but rather more elegantly.

We saw many buzzard-like birds (and I nick-named my tractor friend as the *Belgium Buzzard*). Kingfishers, pied and grey wagtails and swallows darted among the damsel flies which hovered over the river giving it a blue hazy appearance. We inevitably went into the tavern at the end of our walk, drank a few beers, comforted Jake who couldn't understand how a duck could bite him twice, and then went on to Bouillon, a largish town which was to be our put-in. The river was more navigable there.

The campsite was basic but adequate. After many glasses of wine Larry and I paddled over to the opposite bank to cut 2 sapling poles with my trusty Swiss army penknife. Larry was determined to learn the art of poling on this trip (he did too!). When we got back we found Barry and Bev around the campfire having been invited by some Belgians to join them. It turned out that they thought Bev was cold because she was huddled around a citronella candle trying to keep the mozzies at bay! They were nice and we decided that Belgians weren't so bad after all.

Next morning we had a quick breakfast and were off. There were 2 weirs to negotiate - one had been a quick lift-over in the town, but a croissant buying spree and the inevitable feasting held us up a bit. The second weir was more complex. As we paddled under the "*DAANGER*" wire towards

a small slip on the left a gang of young fisherman shouted at us. "Not again". I thought, but it was OK. One of them had managed to wrap a line and float around the wire and wanted us to retrieve it. The fact that it was 6' in the air didn't bother them. Lazza to the rescue. My low brace was tested as Larry stood up and rocked the canoe every time he reached for the thing, but eventually it came free and in return the lads carried all our equipment over the weir.

At this point we met the Belgium leisure kayakers - millions of 'em. We gave up trying to outdistance them (there was always another batch in front) and decided to have lunch on a shingly beach up ahead. We pulled up only to find it occupied - by a canoeist in a Hiawatha-type canoe who had brought a portable table, a barbecue, some wonderful wine, an old English sheepdog and some delectable smelling fish. The poor man's peace was shattered, but he was very pleasant about it.

After lunch we pressed on, accompanied by the ever present damsel flies. These are relatives of the dragonfly, bright royal blue, and with four wings, not two - beautiful. Our campsite that night was easy to find from the river, but by road it was much more difficult as we found when we had to return to collect Larry's 50' line (up hill, down dale, onto building sites, etc. etc. Somehow we found it but none of us is quite sure how! it just suddenly appeared). Anyway, we had a game of volleyball, a few jars and turned in early. It had been a hard days paddle through the weed. (We found out late that the months of May and June were the worst for rivers just because of the weed).

Jake (14 months) was wonderful on the trip. He was happiest with a stick in his hand,

leaning over the side paddling away. He had his own moment of glory on the second paddling day, when he launched himself over the side! Buoyancy aids work! - up he bobbed with no harm done. The only casualty was his nappy - those things are designed to hold water, not let it go, and it weighed a ton! A quick change in the sun and he was non the worst for wear.

Peace and harmony restored, we headed for Alle where we planned to have lunch. Mistake! The shops close from 12 to 2 in Belgium. Fortunately there was a bakery which kept open house and we treated ourselves to a huge crusty loaf and a fruit tart - you know, one of those to die for!. Back to the bridge and we guzzled the lot under a tree by the water. Very civilised. You can't beat al fresco meals!

We packed up our debris and paddled on to our final town which was Vresse Sur Semois. We moored up to a flight of steps beside a little tributary of the river. It was very shallow and quite wide, flowing over clean pebbles. There was an old bridge connecting the island we moored on to the other side and a shallow ford behind that. It was a picturesque spot, spoiled only by the startling baying of a large pyrenean mountain dog which took a dislike to our decidedly scruffy appearance. Bev and I went to book into the campsite about 100yds away, while the men organised the boats.

Regimented was not the word for this campsite. The caravans had everything but picket fences and I'm sure they mowed their patch of grass. We arrived and mayhem broke loose! Jake was everywhere, the contents of the boats were everywhere, and we made more noise than the rest of the campsite put together! Jake deposited in our

blue folding kitchen sink (he pretended it was a canoe) completed the bohemian chaos.

Barry hitched back to get the car from Bouillon and he tells a wonderful tale of 4 lifts in 3 cars, one of which took him hurtling at 100mph along unmade tracks through the woods with a driver who didn't believe our campsite existed (see Barry for details)

Supper that night was Risotto - i.e. all our left-overs mixed in with rice and some terrific Ardennes sausage that was so full of garlic I'm sure we'll stay healthy for the rest of this year - no germ could survive it! The final task was to retrieve Larry's line from the previous campsite, more wine, then bed.

We had an early start next morning to get back to Le Havre, but as always more haste less speed. When Larry packed the stove away he grabbed the - very hot - generator pipe. Jaqui to the rescue! At last!! The field dressing I put on his thumb and forefinger was significant. So much so that he couldn't do up the buttons on his poser 501 jeans and we had to do it for him! Bev and I that is, Barry would have none of it.

We had an easy journey back to Le Havre where the last chapter of our adventure unfolded. We presented our tickets to the clerk who looked puzzled, asked first for our passports and then asked which one was Jake!. She than told us that we were not due to come back till the following night, but she would let us onto the boat anyway. It seems that P & O had awarded me a bonus day on my prize and didn't tell me. Barry hasn't let me forget it since. Moral, always check your ticket dates, even if they are free.

Ps. I was impressed by the relationship between anglers and canoeists on the river

They treated one another with respect. The canoeists avoid the lines unless the river makes it impossible, when the fisherman withdraw them. Both sports cohabit all year - why not here!

PPS. The Belgians don't like French money

Dear All,

Having talked to several of you regarding the trip to France, it looks as though this trip would be best postponed until late spring or summer of next year. Many of you have commitments right up till Christmas - mc included!

The ferry crossing would be approx. £30.00 pp, but campsites are cheap and the total cost shouldn't be more than £40 each. (I'm going to try to cut back on that if I can) I will hopefully have access to a minibus which takes 5 kayaks on top. With Karl's trailer we should have ample canoe capacity.

We will probably paddle the Orne which is gentle paddling - a bit like our Avon trip - suitable for everyone and ideal for Canadians. By that time Larry & I should both have solo boats, so our double will be available to borrow.

If we travel on the Friday overnight ferry and return on the Sunday overnight crossing we should have 2 days paddling. If anyone prefers to make it a longer trip, I can arrange that too.

Please let me know if you are interested soon. I can probably get a better discount if I book early and if there are quite a few people going.

*Jaqui.*

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### Karl's Trailer

Thanks to Karl Hardy, the club now has use of a canoe trailer - that can carry up to 18 kayaks (or 12 kayaks + our two Canadians). The trailer can also carry a substantial amount of kit.

### Chertsev's Rodeo Hole

One Tuesday evening in mid-August, Pete turned up flaunting some rather tasty photos of himself, Steve F and Karl W strutting their stuff... on the Thames! Having seen the antics and been reassured time and again that there was no danger involved (and sunk a few pints of that delicious 6X at the Haven House), I suggested that I might like to give it a try the following week.

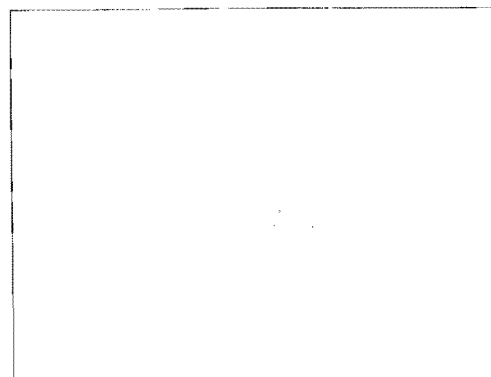
After a quick sprint up the M3, stopping at Fleet Services only to rendezvous with Steve and Karl (Pete cried off - something about having too much work!) and grab Ginsters and guzzles for lunch, it was just a short paddle across the river and portage down to the weir side and .... nothing. Water levels aren't particularly good at this time of year I know, but this was ridiculous! What must be one of the longest weirs across the Thames (well over 100 yards) had a mere trickle of water gently caressing its steps - oh well, it was a pleasant morning and I could always make up a few hair-raising stories. As it happens, we had arrived as a couple of divers were finishing an inspection. A little gentle persuasion resulted in them agreeing to open the one sluice gate that was of interest - it allows water into a walled channel about 6 feet across producing a 3ft head of water cascading over the base of the weir into a deep hole and creating severe amounts of turbulence: this was more like it.

*The other Karl playing at the same spot a few days later.....*

After a few minutes of watching Karl and Steve get to grips with it and listening to conflicting instructions about the angle and speed of approach and amount of lean and tilt to use, I tentatively poked my bows into the waterfall... BIG mistake - in a trice I was upside down without a clue which way was which then, all of a sudden, the water calmed and I came up spluttering! For the next hour or so we practised pop-outs, pirouettes, loops and rolls - Karl, as usual, stealing the show with some pretty impressive stunts - brilliant! Eventually, exhaustion and sore knees meant that I didn't make the umpteenth roll and took a swim before retiring.

Thoughts which occurred to me on the way home were: what a great little play hole, and why does it have to be so far away? Seriously, though, for those people who have recently purchased a boat it's a good way to find out how to handle it (and where it needs padding) and anybody who's whitewater skills are a tad rusty would benefit from a trip to Chertsey for a brush up before this season's expeditions. WARNING: experienced paddlers only - its not a trip for the faint-hearted!

*Steve Sambell*



### Pool Courses & Sessions Winter 96/97

Barry has booked up the courses and pool sessions for this winter, the dates are all given below.

Please let any friends (or strangers) know how marvellous the courses are, and encourage them to book their place direct at Ringwood Rec. Centre

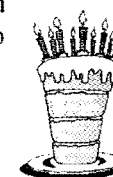


<u>Pool Canoeing Courses</u>			<u>Club Pool Sessions</u>
<u>Beginners Course '96</u>	<u>Beginners Course '97</u>	<u>Rolling Course '97</u>	
5th November	7th January	18th February	19th October
12th November	14th January	25th February	2nd November
19th November	21st January	4th March	16th November
26th November	28th January	11th March	11th January
3rd December	4th February	18th March	25th January
10th December	11th February	25th March	8th February
<i>All Courses : Tuesday 10pm and 11pm.                      All Club Sessions Saturday 6.30pm and 7.30pm</i>			22nd February
			8th March
			22nd March

### Mike's Birthday Bash

Bev organised an impromptu (and surprise) get together to celebrate Mike's 40th on 29 August.

Congratulations (or commiserations) Mike



Please feel free to contribute to the next edition : favourite recipes, problems, knitting patterns, and even canoeing reports, are all welcome!!

Thanks, Jaqui & Steve, for filling up this edition!

### Woodmill Salmon Pool: Open Day

**Saturday 5th October : 10:00>14:30**  
**Sunday 6th October : 11:30>16:00**  
*Demo boats available*

A chance to brush-up on your white water skills before the main events this winter

### Lost (& Found)?

Andrew Gibbins has lost his black helmet (with Andrew written on it)  
 Last seen (he thinks) : Lulworth trip in July '96

*Does anyone know where it is?*