

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Trip Grading

<u>Tuesdays</u>	18.30pm every Tuesday evening: The Haven, Mudeford. Regular Tuesday evenings throughout the summer unless an event has been organised elsewhere	
<u>Sundays</u>	10.00am every Sunday: The Haven, Mudeford. Regular Sunday mornings unless a specific event has been organised somewhere else	
<u>Tuesday 22 July</u>	Poole Harbour BBQ: A trip around Brownsea Island with a BBQ en-route. Meet at Rock Gardens car park, Sandbanks (on the left just before the road becomes one-way) at 19.00. Bring food, drink, torch, midge repellent.	1
<u>26-7 July</u>	Trewern: Welsh Canoeing Associations charity tour. Contact Graham B	3
<u>Sund 3rd August</u>	Lulworth > Warbarrow Bay: A paddle from Lulworth Cove to Warbarrow Bay. Meet at Lulworth Cove carpark at 09.30. Dependent on conditions, this is suitable for all regular paddlers. Contact Paul Toynton	2
<u>Aug/Sept ?</u>	Holme Pierrepont: Pete Ambrose is hoping to organise a short weekend in Nottingham sometime in the summer. Contact him if you are interested	3
<u>Weekend 6-7th September</u>	Devon Canoe/Camp Weekend: Probably combining estuary opportunities and coastal paddles for those interested. Please contact Barry for details. If anyone is interested in a 'splinter group' coastal paddle please contact Steve Sambell	12 3
<u>Sunday 14 Sept</u>	Swanage Overfalls: meet at the lifeboat station at Peveril Point at 10.00. Bring a packed lunch. Suitable for all regular paddlers. Contact Nick Leatherdale	3
<u>Tues 23rd Sep</u>	Committee Meeting: The Haven, Mudeford (after evening paddle)	0
<u>Weekend 27-8 Sept</u>	Ifracombe Surfing Weekend: Twice in one year! (by popular demand). Contact Nick Leatherdale to secure space	23
<u>Sunday 5 Oct</u>	River Dart: Day run on Loop (subject to rain!) : Contact Graham B	3
<u>Weekend 18-19th October</u>	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. Contact Barry D.	2
<u>Sund 2nd Nov.?</u>	River Barle: Day trip : Tarr steps to Exebridge : Grade 2/3. Contact Graham B	23
<u>Weekend 15-16th November ?</u>	Perth-Y-Pia: Paddling the Usk for more white water - a well attended annual event in (for RCC) luxury accom. This might be shifted to the 29/30 Nov. This trip requires early booking - so let Steve Sambell know if you want to come	2
<u>Sunday 23rd Nov</u>	Exe Descent: Anyone with the stamina please contact Steve Sambell	3
<u>Sunday 23rd Nov</u>	River Dart: Day run on Loop (subject to rain!) : alternative for those without the energy for the Exe, and, with luck, the river may be quiet. Contact Graham B	3



CANEWS

August 1997

The Avon April 97

Our annual jaunt along the Avon was as well attended as always. The influence of the clubs purchase of the Scouts was all too evident, with a record number of Canoes on the water. The tally stood at 6 Canoes, eight kayaks and 21 paddlers. For the first time (and I hear cries of triumph from Jaqui, who sadly missed the spectacle) more were paddling Canoes than Kayaks.

At odds with the days forecast, the sun shone. This was probably owing to my electing to believe the weathermen and wear my recently purchased fleece lined salopets - so all those that donned shorts and achieved tanned knees owe me!. Mind you, I wasn't the only one in salopets, Bev had borrowed Barry's maternity pair for the day - the only kit that could extend around the bump that was shortly to be Lee.

The day proved to be an uneventful, relaxed amble - although Dorothy, who experienced her first moving water, (in and out of her boat), would probably not agree. An extended, and very civilized, picnic gave some of us a chance to sample Larry's new Soujourn.

Lee Arrives (at last!)



Lee burst out on Tuesday 6th May 97 - a week after the Avon - already an experienced paddler!

Congratulations to Bev and Barry

Thanks, Tracy

All those that attended the AGM in May, I am sure, were inspired by Tracey Allens accounts of her trips on some of the rivers of Europe, including the Rhine and Danube. Her lively chat was illustrated by some great slides and her enthusiasm and 'go-for-it' attitude makes for a great ambassador for the sport. Thanks, Tracey, and please join us for a paddle when your down this way.



Thanks to all the contributors to this issue - please keep the articles flowing

You can now e-mail your articles ringwood.canoe@btinternet.com but please let me know as I won't check this mailbox daily

Upper Dart Trips 1998 : I have access for eight on :

- *Sunday 11 January 1998*
- *Sunday 15 February 1998*

For Sale

Prijon Canyon (purple)

1 lady owner, full airbags and plate footrest. Excellent condition. £280

Philpette Canoeing Fitness Machine
(Canoeing in front of the TV?!): £60

Contact: Sharon Miller,
69 Rosehill Drive, Bransgore, Hants.

☎ 01425 673119

Surf 'n sex in Devon Ilfracombe - 24-25 May 97

After a very pleasurable trip down, taking the scenic coastal route via Minehead and Lynmouth and stopping for a pint in Dunster, Karl, Elliott and I arrived at Seagulls at around 19.30. For future reference, Seagulls is on Tors Walk Avenue, not Tors Walk (which explains last year's fiasco, when Richard and Ruth spent hours trying to find the place in the dark).

Following the customary warm welcome from John and Ann Redmond, the three of us went off in search of food. After being serenaded through the town by a bagpipe-wielding band of Scots, we settled on the Britannia, down by the harbour. From past experience, we knew the fish and chips were excellent. What we hadn't bargained on was the nightlife.

Juicy Lucy was her name. She first appeared in our bar, elegantly clad in a black pour-on dress that went some way towards covering many of her finer points. Since the only occupants were the three of us, slouched in armchairs discussing pension scheme contributions, she went round to the public bar in search of a more dynamic audience.

Ribald laughter, shouts of "I'm not putting my knickers back on until he does" and rapturous applause indicated she'd achieved at least part of her objective. Apparently the entertainment involved a bar billiard table and something called 'potting the black'. 'X' was beside himself, was this really sleepy old Ilfracombe on the north coast of Devon, or had we mysteriously been transported to one of the World's more obvious fleshpots? Just as he'd drunk enough Courage to carry out an in-depth investigation (or at least, venture as far as the public bar doorway to see what a

man could see), it all went quiet. Juicy Lucy had gone elsewhere, taking most of the pub's customers with her. 'X' was disconsolate. It was all that we could do to persuade him to walk back with us - he felt it essential that we check-out every pub and nightclub en-route.

Paul, Albert and Steve had arrived by the time we got back to base. They'd had an exciting time too, drinking cups of tea. After exchanging pleasantries (an old and relatively inexpensive English custom) we retired for the night. Karl and Elliott enjoyed the luxury of a TV in their bedroom; Nick was banished to the special snorer's room downstairs. So much for camaraderie amongst sinners.

Saturday dawned on us. From the car park, I watched several seals playing in the surf at the foot of the cliffs. After dragging Paul and Steve away from their breakfast, I awarded myself the title of honorary wildlife spotter when Paul said that he'd never seen seals at Ilfracombe. Now proved to be no exception. Steve pointed out that I'd been happily watching rocks for the last half hour.

The surf didn't look too promising from the car park at Croyde, but we decided to venture out anyway. In fact, although far from ideal for surfing any distance, the waves provided plenty to play on. The largest were about 6 feet and drove straight on to rocks at the northern end of the bay, which involved some fairly fast manoeuvring to avoid being left high, dry and dead. It was during one of these high speed turns that Nick encountered a pink neoprene mermaid on a body board, in the curl of a wave; subsequent on-beach apologies revealed she came from Ringwood!

After playing on the water for about three or four hours - with only a brief stop for lunch - everyone had had enough, so we decided to break with tradition (the annual Baggy Point clamber) and go for a walk at Saunton instead. Leaving Steve and Karl snoozing, Albert, Elliott, Paul and I embarked on a 2-hour hike across the dunes. The orchids were great, but the highlight was meeting Lawrence of Arabia's camel. Or maybe it was a large dog, I don't know - dehydration and sand blindness had begun to set in.

On the way back to Ilfracombe, we stopped at the Rock Inn in Georgeham for a pint. This was probably a mistake, because 'X' promptly fell in love again, this time with a barmaid who made the tactical error of telling him that he "was welcome any time". After much debate about whether or not we should eat there - a decision made doubly difficult by everyone agreeing about everything, which meant that much to Paul's disgust there was no room for argument - we knocked 'X' over the head, dragged him into a car, and made our escape.

He came to in time to suggest that we went back to the Britannia for something to eat, but in fact we ended up in the Old

Constabulary. Luckily this is now a restaurant. And offers very good value - with the exception of its after-dinner coffee, which consists of instant Nescafe served in large tea cups. The waitress confessed it was her first night, but made an excellent job of serving us; even 'X' was well-behaved, so she passed her baptism of fire with flying colours. After the meal we visited a few pubs to try and find Juicy Lucy for 'X', but he went to bed a disappointed man.

On Sunday we checked out Croyde and Saunton, but there wasn't any surf. This was more like the Ilfracombe surfing weekends that we've grown to know and love! We drove back to Ilfracombe, parked the cars just outside the harbour, and paddled to Watersmouth. The sea was quite choppy with a heavy swell, making the going hard but fun. The coastline is interesting, with lots of inlets and crags to keep the rock-hopping fraternity happy. After a protracted and very laid back lunch, it was back to Ilfracombe and home.

As always, everyone had a good time, and I promised 'X' that I wouldn't mention his name when I wrote up the trip. Surfers, orchid lovers and seekers of a generally good

time should take note that due to popular demand a second trip to Ilfracombe is planned for the 26th to 28th September this year. Contact Nick to reserve a place - 'X' already booked his!

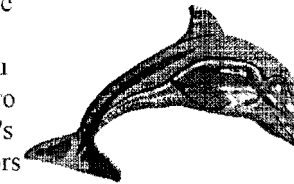
Nick

Steve displaying complete composure in the the 6' waves



mountains. I bought a book of "Kayaking in South Island" which describes the Mataura as 'uninteresting', but the author only seems to be interested in Grade IV -VI water, so I rather wasted my money there.

Ruth and I both competed in the Gore Triathlon a couple of months ago. This comprised something like Mountain Bike for 20km, Kayak for 8km on the Mataura, and run for 5km. Ruth was in a relay team, and I attempted the whole thing, as a tribute to my male menopause. I have to report that Ruth's kayak time was a minute faster than mine, but you must remember I was saving myself for the run. Ruth's team came second in the Women's Open relay, and I came third in the Veteran Men's Individual category. (In case you think it's relevant, there were two competing teams in the Women's Open relay, and three competitors in the Veteran Men's Individual category.)



There's a place called Porpoise Bay about an hour and a half drive South of us. The surf there seems to be excellent - moderate, predictable, continuous, and non-dumping, on to soft sand. A bit like Croyde Bay, but there's very few people there. We went there with our kayaks, but before we'd even got the boats off the roof we spied a dorsal fin in the surf below. Grabbing some body boards (yes, yet more outdoor equipment purchasing, I'm afraid) we scampered down to the water. We paddled around on our boards for a few minutes. Then I saw something glide right under me. A Hector's Dolphin - only to be

found in New Zealand, and only four thousand of them left. From then on we had almost an hour with about eight of the little chaps, playing around us. It was difficult to know what to do to keep them amused. Most of the time we just lay on our boards going "wow" and "yo" and "wo" and "way hay" and "yee ha" and other rather ridiculous expressions of delight. I felt like one might on meeting someone great and famous - privileged, but unsure what to do apart from stare and smile.

Towards the end of our time in the surf an excited-looking lady joined us. It turned out she had been studying Hector's dolphins for about fourteen years, being a Doctor of Marine Biology in Dunedin. By chance, later that evening where we were staying, we found a definitive book on the

subject that had been written by her. So it must be the closest I've ever got to my unrealised childhood fantasy of being in a 'Jacques Cousteau' type adventure.

Last weekend we canoed on the Dart river - presumably named after, but quite different to, its English counterpart. Wide, 'braided', opaque grey and fast-flowing, it is sourced and surrounded by the snowy peaks and glaciers of the Southern Alps. We were taken many miles upriver by jet-boat (that was the non-ecological bit) and then canoed down in inflatable Canadians. Our guide was a chap called Eric Billoud, apparently a name in French kayaking in the Eighties, and what's more a nice bloke. It was non-technical but beautiful wilderness stuff - Grade I-II, with few hazards, the main one being the temptation to take far too many photos.



So, our New Zealand experience so far has been great fun in many ways, but there really is a lot we miss about the UK, and not least the Ringwood Canoe Club, which we are pleased to confirm is now admired and respected internationally.

Sorry it has taken so long to communicate. We plan to be here until the end of 1997. Anyone who is thinking of coming out this way, do please get in touch - B&B with Ruth and Richard has been highly recommended, and there is a 100% discount for RCC members.

Very best wishes to you all.

Richard and Ruth

Orne Trip : April 1997

One 17 seater minibus, one landrover, one car, 2 kit trailers, one canoe trailer, 11 canoes and 24 people set sail on the night sailing from Portsmouth to Caen on Thursday 3rd April. The youngest was due in 4 weeks. Well done Bev. Thanks for holding on. There were also 5 under 10s most of whom belonged to Swiss Family Bland, who paddled our only 17' canoe and who at the end of the trip could have been a dragonboat crew by themselves. For this trip when it became clear that many more than the expected 12 wanted to come we had to borrow boats and juggle transport to try and keep costs down.

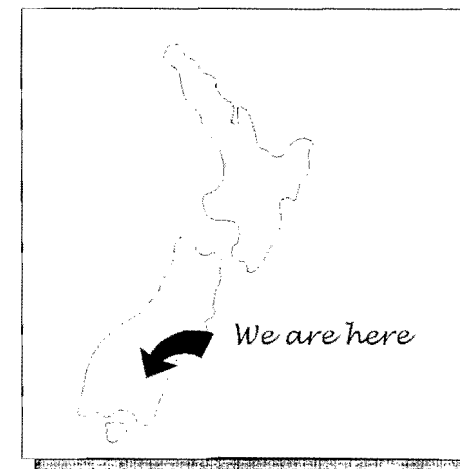
Paddlers Abroad

We really enjoyed receiving *Canews* here in distant parts. The club clearly goes from strength to strength. The recent Information Pack for new members is superb - congratulations to the Editor and to all contributors.

Before getting to New Zealand we had a week's stop-over in Florida. It was hot and very humid, but we were fortunate to be staying with family friends who had air-conditioning and a pool. We swam in the Mexican Gulf which was about 87°F. We visited National Parks, saw strange plants and animals, and basked in the sauna-like environment. Two hurricanes veered past us during our week's stay. We hoped to canoe in the Everglades, but the timing, the heat, and our lack of knowledge of the area worked against us. It would be an amazing place to come back to, after doing a bit more research. There is a 'hundred-mile' waterway in the Everglades on the South West part of the Florida. You can hire open canoes and paddle gently over about a week, camping out, and taking detours as required to avoid motor boats. The wildlife is abundant and fascinating. It would be wise to avoid swimming - watersnakes and alligators are common. The main problem in organising such a canoe trip would be getting to and from the start and the finish. There is an extraordinary lack of public transport in Florida. There are some very occasional Greyhound buses to a few major destinations, but the ticket-booking agencies only speak in Spanish, which says a lot about the socioeconomics of the State.

In New Zealand, we are living in a town called Gore, which is roughly the same size

as Ringwood. But there aren't any good pubs. It's towards the south end of the South Island. It's a cheerful place with few pretensions, and although quite rural, it's not culturally isolated. Indeed, supermarkets are open on Sundays. A town of some ten thousand people, there is a theatre, an art gallery, a museum, and a public swimming pool - much the same as Ringwood's pool, but the pool kayaks are better! (and there are kayak sessions every week at a social hour i.e. 6.30 pm.)



But there is nothing to compare with the good old Ringwood Canoe Club here. Only a very few people seem to turn up to the pool sessions. There is a kayak club in Invercargill (45 minutes drive) but by all accounts they don't tend to run anything less than Grade 5 water.

There seems to be a characteristic of New Zealanders, with regard to sports, including kayaking. People will either say "no, I don't kayak", or they say they do, which invariably means they are supremely skilled with no detectable sense of fear. There don't seem to be any people who engage in a sport at a low

or intermediate level. I tended to a lady the other day who had injured her hand kayaking. It turned out she had been running a river of Grade 5 "drop pools" with a few friends, after a total of only two weeks paddling experience. After injuring herself, she had to walk (all the others carried on down the river) for six hours out of 'the bush' to get to a main road. I decided she wouldn't be interested in my Poole Harbour BBQ trip anecdotes.

We went sea-kayaking in the Marlborough Sounds (at the North East end of South Island) before Christmas. Three friends from the UK joined us. The instructor watched us paddle around in circles for a minute or two and said "yeah, you guys should have no problem". We then set off on our own for the next three days. It was great stuff, although dolphins and Orca were elusive. We did however see large flocks of Pied Shags, huge shoals of jelly fish, and a strange flightless and fearless bird called a Weka, which came to investigate our camp one evening, and tried to run away with our kettle. What made the trip particularly exciting (as with much of outdoor New Zealand) was the notable isolation. For most of the three days we saw only two or three fishing boats in the distance and no other kayakers. We didn't carry a radio, but I would in future. The instructor assured us that he would send a motor boat out over our intended route if we were more than a day late. The conditions were quite interesting with very strong winds and high waves at times, and long stretches without any landing possibilities. At one stage we all ceased paddling, and were blown along by the wind for nearly an hour, in the right direction fortunately, making probably around three knots through the water.

Whitewater 'sleding' is an alternative to whitewater rafting or kayaking. Put on a wetsuit, helmet and fins, and hold very firmly onto a reinforced polystyrene 'sledge'. Then, like a cumbersome frog, head on down the Kawarau River (averages 150-200 cumecs) for an hour or so, sampling Grade 2, and 3 and finally Grade 4 rapids. Our guides, who'd been quite jokey for much of the trip, made us beach above the Grade 4 finale. They suddenly took on an air of seriousness, and spent about ten minutes briefing us on the features of this rapid called the Chinese Dog-Leg, making a detailed sketch in the sand. "Remember, the most important thing is a 'Go-for-it attitude'", they said, worryingly. "You must turn yourself right after hitting the second standing wave, and bloody turbo-paddle as hard as you can from then on. Don't get caught too far left or you'll be taken to the bluff." "What would happen if you got taken to the bluff?" I asked naively. "Just don't", was the darkly enigmatic reply. Fortunately we all avoided the bluff. But my friend Paul suffered a severe laryngeal (throat) spasm on hitting the very first standing wave and subsequently likened the Chinese Dog-Leg experience to being in a washing machine with cling-film over his mouth and nose for a couple of minutes or so. In other words, he wouldn't really recommend it.

We live near the hospital at Gore, on the edge of the town. About 300 yards away is the Mataura River. It is fairly wide and fast flowing with some very pleasant Grade 2 rapids to play on just near us. As with most New Zealand rivers it is clean enough to drink, and you rarely see anyone else there. The water level and power of the rivers can vary considerably and rapidly according to recent weather in the distant hills and

Thanks here to John Griffin and Clive Aylett for the boats and to John Chittock for organising the transport. Karl, in true Sir Galahad style, did a MIDAS test so that we could have 2 qualified drivers for the minibus. Thanks Karl. The barrels came in handy too. Unfortunately there were too many boats to use the RCC trailer and John kindly lent us his trailer, which held 8 boats.

We mustered at Foxlease and apparent chaos resolved into order as boats were transferred to the trailer and onto cars, tents etc were packed in the kit trailer, and everyone decided who was going to sit where. Consternation from all as Andrew managed to poke himself in the eye with a twig, and commiserations from everyone for Steve whose shoulder injury was so severe that he could not come with us. This of course led to the formation of the Hampshire Ladies Team, RCC Division - Liz and Jaqui that is.

Once packed up we repaired to the kitchens for tea and some of us threatened to expire from the heat which came from a number of sources! Jaq's frozen milk cooled things down a bit, we had a final pit stop and were off. By the time we got on board it was quite late and most of us had a quick drink and went to bed. Those with cabins did better than the others who had to contend with rampaging french teenagers.

Off the ferry next morning to a bright sunrise, headed for Pont D'Ouilly where the river Orne changes from a white water to a placid river. We unloaded everything and everybody, then shuttled the vehicles to Clecy where we were to camp for the night. More of that later. Some of the kit went with us but most of it stayed in the transports. The flotilla got under way with all 6 Blands in the same boat complete with two improvised

seats - one was our firstaid box, so a splinter in the derriere would not have been a problem there! RCC members are very resourceful.

The first weir came up quite quickly, but thanks to John Griffin's map we were expecting it. It was a tricky jink between a large tree and the bank to complete the manoeuvre. Jason fended off admirably and no-one got wet - yet! The next weir yielded a little more excitement. Foxlease and RCC had different methods of dealing with these features. Matt and John revved up, charged over and fell out. Barry drifted gently up to it on a perfect line and went over with great dignity. This effect was lost when we realised that he'd stripped off before running it. We knew you would do it even if you didn't! After that everyone who tried it went over safely, including Matt and John who braced beautifully this time, if still at speed.

I had never paddled any distance as stern paddler on moving water so Liz and I got quite exhilarated at little riffles and rapids that everyone else took for granted. Geoffrey and Steven encouraged each other in various ways and by the end of the first day were a very proficient team.

When we reached Clecy we looked for the viaduct which marked our campsite and found, just below the weir, a slalom course! Perfect. We climbed the hill to the site and realised that it wasn't just canoeists who used this area called La Suisse Normande. On the high cliff face opposite were chains of climbers roped together, headed for the top. These cliffs were a training area, with high friction rock.

It had been a long day, so priority was to pitch the tents, cook supper and go to bed.

I'd like to say a big thank you to my long suffering husband who not only put up with my mithering during the planning stage of the trip but during it managed to do all his own work and a lot of mine as well. The chilli - a little number I'd prepared earlier - had thawed out well on the trip over, so supper didn't take long. Yes, I know Barry, I forgot the salad. Monsieur Fred's campsite was wonderful. The only other guest was a caravan from Ashurst of all places. Lots of hot water, a bar on site, what more could you want? Sadly we had one casualty of the bar. Claire fell over a 3' drop on the way back to the tents, followed closely by Dave, but fortunately her knee was much repaired by morning. Thanks to her our linguistic life was made much easier. It is definitely good to have a native speaker with you on a foreign trip. **Time for bed.**

Saturday dawned bright. Off to the bakery for croissants and french bread. Madame Fred had given us some milk. Our griddle handled sausages for 26 admirably but some poor soul had to clean out the scrambled egg pan. Ugh. Washing up detail was splendid. Thanks folks. Bev managed to hang on to young Lee but I had a fit each time she clutched at her stomach. I did bring a delivery set just in case.

The only problem was that Matt, John and I could not find the next campsite. It could have been one of two, and when we drove into the first and found it derelict we assumed the other one would be open, returned to Fred's campsite and got everyone on the water. The day had dulled down and the river was a bit less rural than the previous day. We lunched on the tarp in a wood by a hydroelectric dam. Matt and John had adopted the role of rescuers and managed to get very wet while keeping

everyone else dry. Thanks chaps. The most significant feature for me that day was a large strainer blocking a right hand bend, guarded by a large rock I didn't see. We rocked, leaned downstream, did all we could but were stuck fast. Matt to the rescue again. Swiss Family Bland gave it a sensible miss too. Other rapids and weirs were easily negotiated, with Liz and I gaining in confidence as we went on. Liz, you were wonderful for morale.

Having started so late, we were concerned that our arrival at Thury Harcourt would be late also, but we made really good time despite often strong head winds. Once there, I went with Matt to recon the campsite which turned out to be a non starter. Rather than camp in primitive conditions, we decided to return to Monsieur Fred's with its lashings of hot water. I went back with the chuck wagon and had tea ready for everyone else when the convoy arrived with the ravaging hordes. It's a pity we hadn't left the tents up! Fred was delighted to see us back and joined us for a while over supper. Bev and unborn Lee were whacked and went for a sleep, so Barry became commis chef and mystified me by saying "Poor Elliott" 101 times. In fact, it was Poor Elliott indeed, because as Barry cut the last of millions of mushrooms into the risotto mix, he told me that our Elliott HATES mushrooms. Sorry pal! My job was made much easier by my trusty stirrers Debbie and Frances. We erected the tarp between two large trees and moved the centre of operations under it - well the boys had to find some use for those enormously long ropes they had brought. Lazza provided a little excitement when he set the lawn on fire. Stove trouble again! After supper, we all convened in Monsieur Fred's bar, paid the bill (ludicrously cheap for what we got) and generally relaxed.

Next morning was dull but promised to clear to sunshine. The griddle did a better job on the previous day's sausages than the bacon, but I was so relaxed I couldn't get excited. By this time there was something wrong with every stove we'd taken, but we managed. After breakfast we shuttled to Pont du Bois and soon were paddling towards it from Thury Harcourt. It was a delightful stretch of river. There were plenty of shallows for Lazza to show off his prowess with the pole. Sarah and Paul ran their first weir, down an oblique fish slide. We had lunch in an idyllic meadow full of sunshine, buttercups, clover and other spring flowers. John tried poling upstream to the accompaniment of Larry and Karl on the tin whistle. The canoeing highlight of the day came when we met a concrete chute over a weir. It was just big enough for the boats to pass down, and was more like a straight helter skelter than a weir! Getting lined up was the hard bit for some and quite a bit of circling went on. Swiss family Bland did it in style and the expression on the kids' faces was a treat for us all. Nice wobble Graham! We paddled on, running or portaging weirs until we came to the last one. This was interesting. It was a multi-staged salmon leap, switchbacking down the side of a dam face. Ros abseiled down the face while others scrambled down the side and the boats were lowered on ropes to the water below. We exited the river 200yds on and were quite sad to end our river journey. While the boats were all brought up and put on the vehicles, Barry gave Liz and I a lesson on using pulleys to retrieve ours from the steep bank we'd pulled it up on.

No-one wanted to go to the city yet and we had a few hours to kill before the ferry left, so we had a look at the map, found a forest nearby, and headed for that. Perfect. It even

had a stone table-tennis table which I commandeered for my centre of cooking operations. All the food left came out and we cooked hot dogs, onions, baked beans, and polished off all the fruit left. Thanks here to Geoff and Steven for their help with the sausages and especially to Jason who manned the baked beans and generally helped all through the holiday. Thanks Jace. Once supper was over the fun switched to the clearing where our painters and lines turned into skipping ropes, and we tried to get a record number of paddlers into the rope at once. How many was it in the end? Geoffrey ventured into Houdini territory when he managed to escape the ropes that Barry had used to tie him to a tree. Ros amazed us with her handsprings. We had the place to ourselves and were reluctant to leave it, but time was pressing and we had a ferry to catch, so we packed up and drove to Caen. En route the Porters had to stop at a wine merchant and stock up. Typical!

At the boat, John managed to be last on again. Never mind John. We know it was not your fault really. By this time it was midnight and some of us planned to work the next day, so retired to bed. At 6 a.m. next morning we had docked, and drove to Foxlease where we redistributed the kit, said our goodbyes and went home.

The general verdict was the trip was a success. Despite the angst that goes with organising these things, I really enjoyed it and would like to do a similar trip next year. It would probably be organised differently, with smaller groups and only our own boats (that was my real headache). Any Takers?

Jaqui Porter