

EDITOR'S CORNER

I have struggled to fill the pages of Canews for the

last 10 issues - then I had a brain wave - how about less pages!!! - Theoretically, that means more editions but I'm not promising

If your finding Canews boring these day's, don't blame me! I have to fill it up with something, and if I don't get any juicy articles from you I have to fall back on what is almost becoming a log-book of the Ed's trips!! If the surf is down and the rivers are dry and you can't find anything to do, how about getting creative or sharing some handy paddling tips and snippets with the rest of us.

I am currently in the process of rationalising my software systems - getting rid of some old stuff and consolidating on Bill Gates (I hear groans from Larry). Consequently, a lot of the RCC files will have to be up-dated to new software. and you will notice a few changes in some prints (bear with me)

If any of you run Microsoft's Access and would like a copy of the RCC database, please shout. This includes mailing lists,

access officers, suppliers, trips and calendars, equipment inventory, etc.

Fancy getting into the Guinness Book of Records?

1st Bishops Waltham Scouts are going to attempt to raft 700 kayaks into a raft and float for 30 seconds (the current record stands at 648 kayaks, Illinois, USA)

They are looking, therefore, for 700 paddlers to join together. There's a £2.00 entry for each

To be attempted at Fairthorn Manor CC, R Hamble, Botley in May/June 1998

Please let me know ASAP if you are interested in joining in the fun

More info from

John Perkins 01489 894437

Colin and Liz Butler's new arrival

Congratulations to Colin and Liz on the birth of Charles



CANEWS

April 1998

Chopper almost 'Splats' at Lovers Leap

Got your attention didn't it! 22nd November after a week of solid rain (there was even a stopper on the Ford at Blissford!) we were encouraged to forego the arranged Loop trip in favour of the Upper Tavy. Six of us headed off - a mixed bunch including Charlie Dunhill who was to experience his first white water river. The plan was for some of us to walk in to the top section while others joined us lower down. Pete had described the top section of the Tavy with some enthusiasm so we were all anticipating a wild day.

When it rains all week - how can a river be dry! - but it was! - and, as a consequence, we drove back across Dartmoor to the Loop in a 'deflated' mood. The Dart was running at low to medium level - but sufficient for all of us to get wet. Charlie quickly adapted to the new regime and did remarkably well considering he had only experienced white water at one weir on the Stour (which he new inside out) - and he proved to have a dependable river roll.

The main spectacle of the day was at Lover's Leap where another group of paddlers had got into difficulties. I was not quite clear what had happened but a girl lay on the bank in a survival bag while a 'Devon Air Ambulance' helicopter was searching for a place to land. Anyone who knows the geography of the place can appreciate the difficulty that the pilot was having. After much circling he eventually made his attempt a few hundred yards down river where he managed to drop down to water level and slide across to the bank - but there still proved to be too little space between the trees to land. It was an impressive bit of piloting and you have to admire the courage of the pilot - there seemed to be only a few feet

from his rotors and the trees at the bank. After many attempts he had to abort and fly back upstream - I don't know if he managed to find somewhere else to drop, but an hour later the party (less the casualty) speeded past us on there way to Holne bridge - all with relieved faces.

It made us all think though!!

Ed

Barle

Walking boots would have probably been a better bet than kayaks for the first trip down the Barle this season (21 Dec). And it's doubtful if we would even have got our socks wet! Having said that, Gary, who was experiencing his first river trip, managed a complete immersion!

As luck would have it we cancelled the next trip on the Barle because of too much rain!! The river levels were reported to be well up and I was advised not to take inexperienced paddlers down without plenty of support (which I didn't have). By way of compensation, Victor Copeland and I shot the Tavy instead. With just two of us (and only one vehicle) we did it in style - even organising a taxi for the shuttle!!

Incidentally, the Tavy at normal levels is ideal for those that are bored with the Loop but don't fancy taking on the Upper Dart - it's somewhere between the two in it's grading 3-4 - although the upper stretches can be much more difficult in good flows.

Well Done Pete and Steve

It would take too long to list all the events that Pete Ambrose and Steve Frampton attended during 1997. There were over 40, spread over many of the good paddling venues in the UK. Steve was promoted to Division 2 (C1), Pete to Div 1 (K1M) and Div 2 (C1), and both were in the Prem. Div (C2). To give a taste of what these events entail read on to Pete's account of Grandtully & the Welsh Ladies!!

Upper Dart : 11 Jan 98

This was a week after the storms, when many rivers in the SW were on flood alert. Many of those down for this trip (me excluded!) were hoping for flood conditions and on the phone to Victor during the week he informed me, with some enthusiasm, that the Dart had burst it's banks.

On the day, however, the levels proved to have dropped to much the same as my first trip down this section (lapping the ledge at Newbridge)

The trip was a consortium of local clubs (2 Solent, 4 RCC, 3 Poole Harbour) - and we met some Southbourne paddlers at Kilmington Cafe too - heading for the Tavy. It seemed that everyone was heading for the rivers. This was borne out when we arrived at Dartmeet - where there were at least two other groups kitting up for what is normally a section of the Dart where you rarely encounter anyone else. There seemed to be more paddlers on the day than normal Access permissions allow.

We spent 4 1/2 hours on the water, letting a number of groups pass us while we stopped to play on everything. We bent a few rocks, heads and knuckles on the way down, and the wrong line down Pandora's Box gave a few of us a nasty surprise. Having said that there were no real mishaps on the day - and the only swimmer blamed someone else (Roy and Steve C have a tendency to get in each others way).

A great paddle, *Ed*



Living Life on the Lyn

29th December - to rid the system of Christmas excesses - and there's something particularly rewarding about paddling on a Monday morning!!

There were eight of us on what was essentially a Solent trip. I had heard a lot about the East Lyn - a 3km grade 5 rollercoaster running down through a gorge to Lynmouth on the Exmoor coast.

We had the normal wind-up at Kilmington, but rather than the *'your going to swim today'* type threats it had progressed to *'your going to die today'* - all part of the essential build-up to get the juices flowing.

Having had a number of 'dry trips' I reckoned that the river was likely to be low (which suited me fine). But it was pouring, water was flowing down the roads. Having taken an unusual but scenic route we arrived at the 'get in' (Watersmeet) and Pete informed me that the level was higher than I would wish for a first descent.

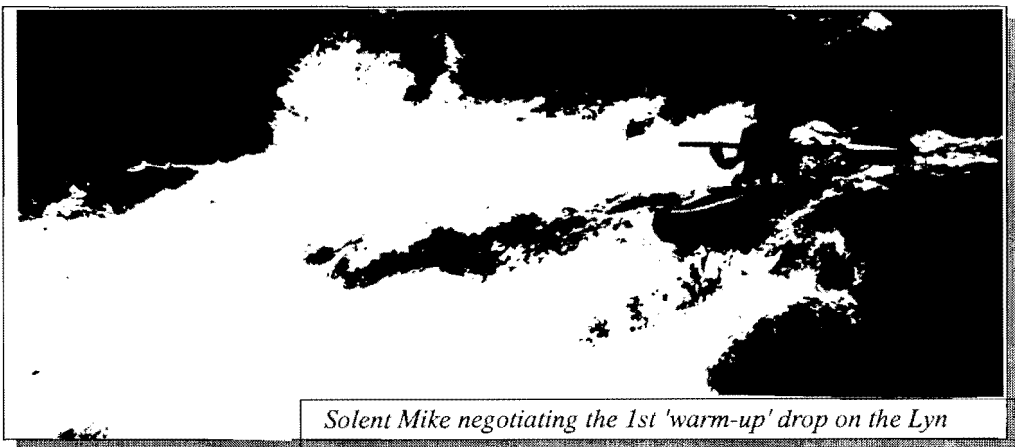
There's no gentle warm-up on the Lyn. You put in at the top of the torrent and get out at the bottom (or before if things go wrong!).

There was a 50m run before the first drop, which I reckoned should just about loosen me up - but having struggled to get out of the first stopper (3 feet from the put-in) I began to question the wisdom of the full breakfast.

I can't really give an account of the individual features on this river - it's constant white water in a narrow gorge, the constrictions providing for some powerful features. The main gorge section is beautiful, running through a steep sided wooded valley with some mean drops - that we actually got out to inspect (although more cameras were in evidence than throw lines). Once you enter the gorge there's no real going back - it requires a fair degree of commitment and some quick reactions. We all got wet, a few swam, one walked and a spud got dented - a typical day out with Solent.

It took us almost 3 hours to run the 3km's - that gives some idea of the number of 'incidents' that occurred on the way down. I would recommend the river only to those adrenaline freaks who get kicks from fear &/or a good thrashing. Having said that, I still want to go again!

Thanks for a great paddle Solent, *Ed*



Solent Mike negotiating the 1st 'warm-up' drop on the Lyn

Grandtully Slalom: 14/15 June 97

Having taken the Friday off to travel up to Grandtully, about twenty miles north of Perth, Steve had made up his mind to leave at 3 am to avoid any delays (which paid off). We arrived at 3pm Friday afternoon, having stopped for breakfast and supplies on route for this weekends event.

Examining the course when we arrived only the first ten gates had been put up and the only other people there belonged to the Welsh Ladies Slalom squad, which was training. So Steve and I got on to practice on the water which was flowing murky brown, which turned out to be about average level for this time of year (thank god for this weeks rain then!). It took us a while to find the camp site, very basic, a toilet which when you flushed it looked the same colour as the river water, as did the wash basin water and the drinking water from the stand pipe outside. The immaculate grass raised up from the car park looked like a well kept garden. Having cooked an evening meal we retired into the pub which was between the slalom course and the camp site.

The following morning, with the sun shining, we walked down to the river to find only two people practising the course. So with such an ideal situation I got changed and jumped into my K1. After two runs I had the course fixed in my mind and the following two runs went well. I got off to watch Steve's C1 practice run, he was still getting used to those gates which just seemed to keep swaying out of his way. At this point I still had two hours before the first runs which were to start at 11:30am (a very late start). So Steve suggested that I try the course in his C1 - as I also had a competition run to do in the C1 that day and needed to see how well I got on with those

gates. It turned out to be not too bad but a little unstable.

My first competition K1 run went as usual - a time of 2 minutes and 10 seconds with one 5 penalty for hitting a gate. I stayed in second place, 2 seconds behind the J12 paddler. Having got out of my K1 kit I had to get straight into my C1 kit and get back to the start for my C1 run, just 15 minutes later. My C1 run did not go so well - a time of 2:41 and with missing 1 gate altogether my time was well out. Steve's first run started by sitting at the start without his :- boat (which I had borrowed); C1 blade (which he had leant to another paddler in my division; and his crash hat which he just forgot.

His run was just as much fun (well for the crowd watching anyway). As Steve will tell you swimming is not advisable as rocks are hard and the water in Scotland verrryyy ccooldd!!

The second runs started at 3.30pm. I decided that it was 'all out' I had to go faster and clean, well, on my K1 run I hit three gates and missed 1 (well the gate judge said I did and a protest costs £1). I was 3 seconds slower but stayed in second place and picked up a prize. My C1 run I'd rather forget, but with a capsized and four attempts to roll up and with one leg strap very loose I slipped down the wrong side of the island and missed the bottom half of the course. I got third place (out of 3 paddlers). Steve's second run was better, 3:12 but with 410 penalties almost as bad as my C1 run!

Steve and I got on the water in the C2 during the latter part of the afternoon to practice some of our moves as we were competing at the double premier event at Canolfan Trewern the following weekend. We had encouragement from the Welsh Ladies who

were the only others on the water. Steve and I managed all the gates on the course, but alas not on the same runs! The complex section in the middle took most of the time but we mastered them after quite a lot of arguing over the exit angle (and getting Steve to shut his eyes as I told him it would work, I hoped). That evening was spent in the pub drinking pints in commiseration and playing pool with the Welsh Ladies (and losing - I have never heard of so many rules that they came up with!). We finally said good night at about 12:20am. As we walked back beside the river it was still light enough to paddle and looked perfect for a practice, but we were a little over the limit (can you be done for drunk paddling of a Kayak?)

The following morning the course had been redesigned for the second event of the weekend and this course, from first look, was a sprint course, for the first 12 gates were almost in a straight line. But not for long, in their wisdom they decided to shift one of the centre gates to force paddlers to go the long way through rougher water - this still made the course fast, just easier to miss the odd gate!

My first run went much as the day before, but without hitting any gates a time of 2:02. With me being the last paddler to run in my division by the time I reached the result board all the times were up and, comparing the times with everyone else's, it put me in 1st place!. Steve's C1 race was improving a time of 2:52, with the bad news of 160 penalties.

Second runs came all too quickly and, having been in this position before, I knew it could all change on the 2nd run. With the first half of the results through, however, no one was putting in a faster time than mine. With only

ten more Div 2 men to go it looked as though the only time to beat was going to be my own - so that was the target. The run went well until that one silly mistake and the knuckles just touching the pole. I had pushed too hard with a time one second faster than the first run but with 5 penalty points. Just to add more anguish to the moment, three results were not put up (re-runs or mislaid cards?). Steve's second run (2:56) was a much better result than his first, while 4 seconds slower he had more than halved the number of penalties. This left him a little behind the other three paddlers. But by the end of the season he had proved himself and got his promotion to Div 2 in C1.

When the final results were put up my name was at the top of the list the last three years of fighting the cold and wet had paid off - promotion to Div 1 at last. As I later found out, competing at this level gave me a lot more to do and an even bigger hill to climb having just reached the top of the last.

That evening was yet again spent in the pub drinking in celebration yet again with the Welsh Ladies Slalom Squad as they were staying of for a few more days practice. We did not play them at pool again though, not after last nights marathon.. The following morning we packed up our tent, said our good byes and started our journey to Tees-side (for a few more days paddling), via a breakfast stop in Edinburgh.

Pete Ambrose

A Quick Paddle from Iford

Monday was a clear fresh day. Elliott and I were both off from our respective houses of learning and a leisurely paddle on a week day is a luxury granted to students.

While I was quite happy to paddle at Mudeford, Elliott, for some reason, was being stubborn about launching from Iford Bridge - it transpired that this was due to lack of money for parking at the harbour.

On a Monday the river is very quiet - although we met a fellow canoeist who warned us about a lunatic swan further down stream. It was cold but not unbearable - both of us were well wrapped up and I was wearing my new piece of kit, a *thermal hood*.

We paddled up stream, keeping a look out for lunatic swans and fisherman - there was no wind and the heavy skies were breaking up.

I heard the weir before I saw it - a gurgling rushing bubbling mass. As we came around the bend the white water could be seen stretching right across the river. A big jet in the centre provided lots of fun.

We found it a pleasure to play on a white water feature without jostling and competing with stronger more competitive club members for a position. We turned our kayaks around and headed back. A very enjoyable paddle, thanks Elliott

Mike Scott

El Nino misses the Dart

What should have been a 'Valentines Day Massacre' on the Upper Dart on 15th February turned out to be a bump and scrape in very low-water conditions - still, it gave us

all a good opportunity to see the rocks that one bumps heads on in higher conditions.

It didn't matter anyway, we had another trip planned at the end of the month and, with all the reports of floods etc. resulting from El Nino's effects on the worlds weather, I had convinced myself that things would change for the last trip of the white water season.

It didn't, and I stayed in the office!

Frome : 1 Feb 98

I had left it too late to book access for another trip on the Loop - and so the planned trip was swiftly diverted to the Frome. We needed grade 2 trip to give some new members an opportunity anyway.

It was cold, but clear skies, and the river was much the same as always - murky water, lots of litter and debris, lowish levels but with the few good bits that we all remember.

Nigel enjoyed his first river trip and took all the drops with ease - even sledding down the banks of the 'zoom flume' with very little encouragement.

Despite some awkward positioning of fallen trees (one above the 'hole in the wall', the other above the 'flume') there were no swimmers and all enjoyed the exercise. - It's a shame this river can't be cleaned up a bit - I'm sure we would use it more often.

