



# CANEWS

*June 2007*

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## EDITOR'S CORNER

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DON'T FORGET THE WEB SITE – the event list is kept up to date and the notice board, trip reports, etc. are there for you to fill !

[www.ringwood.canoe.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.ringwood.canoe.btinternet.co.uk)

+ - the photos are in colour – by the time this has been through the photo-copier it loses so much!!

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### CANEWS IS AVAILABLE ON-LINE

This (and the last few) Issue of Canews is available in Acrobat pdf format for download direct from the web site (right hand click and select save as).

If you don't need a hard-copy posted in the future (and you feel like saving some forests and my time and costs on copying, envelopes, etc). let me know

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### ARTICLES PLEASE

A normal plea for articles.

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### CAPTION COMPETITION

Visit the web site for the Caption Competition



Ross laughed – the sight of Dave C swimming, his boat nowhere to be seen, was becoming all too familiar. (Paul B)

Ross expresses concern as hypothermic trip survivor reaches river bank (Nick L)

## THE BARLE

10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> March 07

**Present:** Mike, Dot, Paul, Bev, Jake, Dave, Nick, Ross, Mark, Ollie, Tim, Jo, Barry, Graham, and the 3 scouts; Ben, Jacob and Ant.

**Walkers:** Dot, Bev and Lee

**Accommodation:** Northcombe camping barn



### Day 1 – Tarr Steps to Dulverton (or Exebridge)

The Barle is a beautiful grade 2 river with a number of weirs and features along its length. The put-in was at Tarr Steps, an ancient stone footbridge across the river. Word has it that it is possible to pass underneath the bridge. However, being a mere 1.5ft above the water, it might be a place to destroy another Canadian!



The weekend began with road closures, detours, and Tim's broken car. As 11 dry souls headed for the River Barle, Bev, Dot and Lee did a spot of walking from Tarr Steps for the day, which appeared to be speedier than paddling! Breaking all club rules, we were on the water before 11. Whether this was by some miracle, or because we weren't following Ross' directions, it is hard to say! ☺

The popular canoeists' subject of river levels was put to good use, with morning greetings of 'good river levels'. The Barle consisted of shallow rapids for most of the paddle, with larger features along the way. Most unusually the sun was shining. The day started off well for Dave, who managed to fill his boat with water 400m into the paddle.

After much deliberation of where to stop for lunch, we enjoyed a cheery break before continuing to Dulverton. River features included a smooth weir which everyone shot, and a short stretch of chicanes just short of Dulverton. These narrow

sections provided much entertainment, despite no one opting to go swimming.

By the time we reached Dulverton, it was 3.30pm. There was a little ambiguity in the time required for this paddle. An online guide which was a tad optimistic, suggested a minimum time of 2hrs from Tarr Steps to Exebridge. In 4.5 hours we had managed to complete 2/3 of the distance! Decisions were made by most to finish for the day and head for the pub. Hardcore enthusiasts Ross, Tim, Mark, Ollie and Barry barrelled on to Exebridge for a play on more waves.

Unfortunately for the rest, the pubs weren't in our favour. Two were shut due to private parties, so back to the barn it was! Dot cooked a beautiful spaghetti dish with a whole array of sides: salad, breads, cheese, and kale, brought by Sue (Barry's sister) who joined us for the evening. A draughty night in the barn with only moderate snoring made it quite a comfortable place!

### Day 2 – Dulverton to Exebridge

Additions to the group this morning included Bev, Graham, Ant, Jacob and Ben. Due to the earlier finish at Dulverton on the Saturday, it was decided to paddle Dulverton to Exebridge. The distance was debatable (depending who was asked!) roughly 10km from Tarr Steps to Dulverton and approx 6km to Exebridge.

There were a number of larger features on this stretch of river, with 2 weirs, waves and the rocky sections at the end of Saturday's paddle. The main feature of the day was a roaring 5-step weir with a strong pull back on the top level. Most portaged by climbing over an old building to the river side. Ollie and Ant rode the right side of the weir where there was a less vicious route involving 2 drops. Another weir followed with a smooth chute following a tree.



The technique of 'sitting upside-down in a canoe waiting for a rescue', originally sported by Mark, was a popular occurrence when playing on a number of waves and stoppers. Swimming episodes were demonstrated by Jo and Mark on the chicane sections of the previous day.

The Barle merged with the river Exe a few kilometres from the finish point. More water gave rise to a number of waves which were surfed by all. A few swims and rescues later, and some excellent surfing by Jake, we arrived at Exebridge. A beautiful paddle with 'good water levels'!!!

Jo Ratford

## KAYAKING IS NOT A CRIME



Once a year we are 'allowed' to paddle our local river (Hampshire Avon) - and this year, through negotiation with 7 new landowners, we were given permission to paddle an extra couple of miles. All in all, 10 kms from Alderbury to (almost) Woodgreen.

We were shouted at and challenged before we put on the river, and again a couple of times on the float down. Why? it was outside the fishing season so we disturbed no fisherman, we left no footprints and drifted quietly along disturbing nothing and committing no crime.

Despite the angst we enjoyed our quiet day on the river - It's too bad that there are some miserable folk around that, through snobbery and intolerance, do their best to spoil life for others.

Thanks, Barry, for all the hard work that was necessary to allow us our 'day on the water'

Graham

## AVON PADDLE, MARCH 2007

We have been paddling through the Longford Castle Estate for 18 years, with permission requested and granted annually. Traditionally the trip ran from Alderbury to Downton in late April, but the date was moved to March last year to accommodate a change to the fishing season. This made the trip less appealing to novices, fair weather paddlers and picnickers, and I thought it would be better to try to extend it and include some more river features so that it would have more appeal for the frost-hardy winter paddlers. Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time.

Our contacts at the Longford Castle Estate were happy to allow us to continue to the southern extent of the property, which is downstream of Downton, and provided a couple of names of neighbouring landowners. Each contact led to further names, addresses or telephone numbers, and I eventually wrote to, telephoned and met with eight tenant farmers and landowners. With one exception they were helpful and cooperative, one of the estate owners taking time to drive me around to view possible egress and parking places, and asking if we were going to paddle every Sunday! The exception was a farmer who didn't want to know when we were paddling in case his granting permission rendered him liable in the event of a canoeing injury.

The river had been over its banks a few weeks before, and always takes an age to drop, so this year it was the highest level we have paddled. For those of us who have moved up to open boats, this gave a great view of the swaths of wild daffodils on the Longford Estate and the birds feeding on the meadows. Those lower mortals in kayaks had to take our word for it. The bird life was abundant just above Downton, with herons, egrets, buzzards, goosanders, little grebes, lapwings, sedge warblers, chiffchaffs, and a kingfisher all within sight of each other.



The trip was well attended, with 28 people in 22 boats. So many in fact that I had to count several times and accept an average result as the most likely. I don't think we lost any on the way but some of the less experienced paddlers finished their trip at the usual egress point above Downton to avoid the aggressive water below the bridge there, which cannot be portaged.



The 2 mile extension to the trip was well worthwhile, and

added some interesting features. Just below the usual egress point is a set of hatches that must be portaged, and where I took some flak for the muddy bank edge. Katie Cunnea, a new member on her first outing with us, disappeared up past her knees, and discovered the high level of sympathy that we have all come to expect in such circumstances. She had shorts on anyway. Far more sympathy was lavished on Todd, the dog trained by Becky to avoid discomfort and seek the warmest place in a bed, but for him the mud was up to his belly.



Next on the list is the road bridge at Downton, three arches offering three choices: a powerful stopper, a fast wave and some impressive boils, or a fast jet of water impinging on steel piling. We all took the middle option without any problems apart from a bucket or so of water in each open boat. Knowing that Becky isn't a great fan of white water I had asked Paul if they would be getting out above Downton, and showed him a photo of the bridge and its waves. He said "No, we'll go all the way, but don't tell Bex." Curious, I thought, that it tripped from his lips as if it is a phrase he uses often. Their wooden canoe fared well, they did go all the way, took a healthy gulp of water aboard and Becky yelped with delight at the climax. I think Todd, startled by another dose of discomfort so soon after the last one, jumped ship and shook himself dry in our boat.



A few thrill seekers then went to investigate the stopper below the big hatch by the old tannery, and found some local residents who were interested in their activities. For some it

seemed a novel interlude to their coffee morning, but another was moved to reach for his camera to gather evidence for a potential claim for trespass, or something. He asked for information about us so Nick asked him his name in return. He declined enthusiastically but as Nick put it – "Never mind, we know where you live". No protection for him from the threat to anonymity that an association with RCC can bring!

At Charford the river divides into two streams, one with a weir where they split and the other with a weir where they converge again. This unusual arrangement gave those who ran the first weir the opportunity to play below both. I kept expecting Graham, our wild river runner, to plunge into the fray beneath each weir, but he disappointed me every time. He was suffering the dulling effects a heavy night of murder, mystery and drink, he said. All the open boats ran the second weir, a smooth sloping drop beneath a footbridge. By this time Ross, with Sarah on their first test of domestic harmony in a club Canadian, almost had full control of his boat and ran the 50 metre wide weir beautifully, with only a glancing blow on the side wall. Harmony prevailed and Sarah kept smiling throughout. This was also the scene of a memorable first for David Cunnea, his first RCC trip and his first roll on a river. Well done Dave!

One more bend and it was the end of the trip at the bridge below Hale Park. A very convenient parking space right next to the water, but a bit too close for one unfortunate driver who had parked his car in the river a few days before. He had reported it to the police but we could see no sign of it through the murky water. Presumably the Environment Agency will have something to say about it when the water clears. The local Fisheries Manager doubtless will have something to say about it disturbing the angling, if his view of disturbance by canoeists is anything to go by. He challenged us when we shuttled the cars with "What's going on here?" followed by "I don't understand you canoeists. Why can't you go and rent your own river somewhere?" He wasn't pacified by my reply that we do sometimes arrange our own river, "... and today we are on this one" so we retreated to our shuttle bus.

It was a successful day out for the club, with a full range of abilities from the most experienced of our members to some holding a paddle for the first time. For novices the conditions were tricky, with some very fast flows and some trees that were best avoided. All did well and we had no swims. Let's hope we can go all the way next year.

Barry.

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## SYMPOSIUM

n. pl. sym-po-si-ums or sym-po-si-a (-z -)

- A meeting or conference for discussion of a topic, especially one in which the participants form an audience and make presentations.
- A convivial meeting for drinking, music, and intellectual discussion among the ancient Greeks

[Latin, drinking party, from Greek *sumposion*: sun-, syn- + *posis*, drinking; see p (i)- in Indo-European roots.]

Well, I guess 'Symposium' was an accurate name for the Anglesey gathering of sea kayak 'anoraks'. There was certainly plenty of drinking and talking going on over the weekend - with a, perhaps, unhealthy bias towards the one subject.



200+ sea kayakers from around the globe met to chat, paddle, drink, paddle, snore, paddle. Although I felt a little like a (river) 'fish out of water' the Symposium did give me the opportunity to experience the handling of big boats in big swells, overfalls and tidal races. I did learn that sea kayaking doesn't always have to be a mellow side of paddlesport

Graham

### ACCESS CONSULTATION MEETING

I attended a Consultation meeting called by the Environment Agency on 'Strategic planning of water-related sport & recreation' held at Bovington 9<sup>th</sup> May. This was one of four meetings held across the South West to discuss local and regional access issues. The Bovington meeting specifically targeted the Dorset, Wiltshire (Avon), Poole & Bournemouth area.

The Environment Agency has been requested by Defra to produce a Water-related Sport and Recreation Strategy for the South West of England. The EA have commissioned University of Brighton to assist them.

The EA accepts that the development of such a strategy requires input from representatives of a wide range of other organisations to gather views on current and future provision for water-related sport and recreation throughout the Region.

Ringwood Canoe Club was not specifically invited to attend – but I had picked up on the meeting from UKRGB and applied for attendance as a 'stakeholder' organisation on the Avon. James Hinves of the BCU also attended to represent the regional/national perspective

There were about 20 organisations that attended, including Surfers, water skiers, horse riders, sailors and, of course, anglers. The purpose of the workshops is to obtain a range of views and knowledge from across as wide a spectrum of water related recreational activities as possible.

It has to be said that Brighton Uni organised the day very well. Each organisation produced an A1 poster prior to the event stating the main issues. Participants were split into two groups and each group ran through four workshop sessions to discuss

- Demand and participation
- Social and environmental impacts
- Current provision
- Future provision.

The fact that the BCU and RCC both attended meant that canoeing interests could be represented in both groups.

Hopefully, I will be in a position to attach Brighton Uni's notes of the meeting that will be circulated to all participants.

The value of the exercise, no doubt, will be known in the fullness of time but the river access issues and case were strongly aired. It was staggering how many attendees at the meeting did not know that canoeists were unable to paddle the rivers! At least our attendance afforded the opportunity to educate the un-informed and, hopefully, bring new allies to the cause!

I didn't come away from the day too jaded – but neither did I come away fired up with enthusiasm and optimism!

Graham

### SORT, PYRENEES (FOR A WEEKEND?)



I usually consider the 5 hour drive to North Wales a long Haul for a weekend, but I couldn't pass up the opportunity for one pence flights for a weekend's boating in the Pyrenees.

Tim Rex, who lives out in Pau, had invited us to join his French Canoe Club trip to Sort

Leaving in the middle of the night, for an early Saturday morning flight to Pau followed by a 4 hour drive across the mountains to Sort we didn't get on the Rio Noguera Pallaresa until 4pm. With 35kms to paddle to the take out I questioned the wisdom of the plan. But, the river was tanking along. A big, bouncy continuous grade 3 and 4 run woke us all up and we reached the get out by 7pm for well deserved cervezas.

The canoe club had been busy preparing a Paella while we were on the river and the Anglo-French-Spanish festivities kicked in on our return to camp. Wine, Sangria, Porto etc. ensured that language was no barrier as the conversations became more ridiculous.

Sunday proved to be more drive than paddle as we searched for sections suitable in the high conditions. We found a 3/4 section way up in the alpine meadows that fitted the bill.

A long way for a weekend's boating - but great fun all the same I paddled with Chas and Richard from Southbourne, Jools from somewhere up North, RCC's very own Tim and Tim Rex from Pau. Thanks to Pau Canoe Club for putting on such a good show and T Rex Tours for all the organising.

Graham

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## SPEY 2006

I got my copy of the Open canoe association magazine through the post but I didn't get around to reading it till I came back from holiday in July. When I did read it I saw an ad for a trip in October to paddle the Spey in Scotland, led by 2 instructors from Woodlands Outdoor centre, Glasbury on Wye. I phoned to book on but wasn't to surprised to find that the trip was fully booked. I could have kicked myself for not spotting it earlier.

In September I received a call that there was now a place available due to someone having dropped out. The cost of the trip was £275 which included transport (plus Canadian) from Glasbury., a weeks food and accommodation plus instruction.

Those taking part were able to stay at Woodlands on the Saturday night ready for the early start on Sunday. Kevin Jackson and Chris Mosedale our instructors soon had all the boats loaded onto the trailer and we were away shortly after 8.30a.m.

There were 9 of us on the course with varying degrees of paddling experience - from Penny and Philip who were training for their level 3 instructor to Ken who had loads of sailing experience but had never paddled before.

It was a ten and a half hour journey to our very comfortable cottage (8 bedrooms & 4 bathrooms, some cottage!) at Dulnain Bridge which is about 12 miles from Aviemore. Sunday evening was my first taste of Kevin's fantastic cooking, I knew then that it was going to be a great weeks holiday.

On Monday the put in was at Loch Insh. It was a still clear morning, the surrounding mountains looked beautiful in their autumn colours reflected in the still waters of the lake.

Once on the water Penny very kindly took me under her wing, she had to log up teaching hours to get her next qualification, so I was lucky enough to end up with my own personal instructor. Penny showed me how to do a power stroke which immediately increased my water speed, plus lots of other tips on technique etc.

The Spey starts at Loch Insh and runs 74 miles before reaching the North Sea at Spey Bay. The section we paddled on Monday from Loch Insh to Boat of Garten was 14 miles of grade 1. The Spey is quite wide with lots of fast moving riffles. It was a warm day, the scenery was superb, with all the green and golds of a highland autumn day.

On Tuesday we put in at Granton on Spey missing out approx 12 miles of slow moving water. This 14 mile section to Ballindoch Bridge was faster more constant water. It was noticeably cooler with some scotch mist hanging about so we lost some of the fine views of Monday. Kevin and Chris had us doing lots of break ins / outs and general boat control. Phil took every opportunity to pole, he let me try his cranked paddle which he favoured. It felt very different to my own paddle so I soon handed it back.

We started to see some very good sized salmon jumping. Along the banks we saw many very desirable fishing bothies. Kevin told us that some of the fishing beats command a price of £1000 a day, however it was commented on by all the paddlers that all the fishermen and ghillies we passed all week all either gave a friendly wave or called a pleasant greeting. These guys are paying huge amounts of money to fish and as for the ghillies it was their livelihood but none of them had any problem with canoeists sharing the water with them. What is it

that makes the majority of fishermen south of the border so dog in the manger!

Wednesday s paddle was from Ballandauch to Craigellachie, a distance of 13 miles We had an 8.15 start. This section had 2 rapids. The first is Black Boat rapid. We all ran this successfully. It drizzled on and off all day I had forgotten to bring my hat so I borrowed one from Phil. It was a bit too big and kept falling down over my eyes Still the way I paddle that's probably an asset. The second big rapid is called Knocando you can imagine the fun we had with a name like that. The rapid is quite long and curves round to the right. You had to keep river right all the way as river left there is a small cliff . If you got it wrong the force of the water would push you into it. We all got down without too much bother. As we paddled that afternoon the rain started to set in with a vengeance.



Thursday it was decided to run the same section but to get out just after Knocando. There had been torrential rain overnight and the wind was blowing a hoolie. The river had come up a lot. The force of the water was very noticeable; it was big brown and swirling. Kevin got us to break out just above a right hand bend and told us to ferry across the river to an eddy where he would be waiting for us.

Working as hard as I could I soon realized I was going to miss it. Kevin called to me to go on and break out river right where Chris would be waiting. Try as I might I couldn't get to Chris either and found myself being swept around the bend. I saw Pamela and joined her in an eddy. My heart was hammering and I felt completely out of my league. When Kevin joined us he told us he had asked us to go for those eddies just to show us what force of water we were dealing with. This was a very different river now. Breakouts became much more must do, you didn't get a second chance to make an eddy.

When we got to Knocando we broke out above it river right. Kevin told us to ferry over to land and inspect. As Pamela and I got half way across a huge gust of wind swung us around, by the time we got our boats straightened up we had lost valuable ground. We both ended up paddling through some weird boils. It was like trying to paddle through treacle. Then we saw the rapid, oh dear. It looked totally different to the previous day. The only saving grace was that the water had risen so much that there was now an island river right which thankfully meant there was a chicken chute. The downside was that we would have to ferry back across to a small must make eddy. I have never put so much effort into paddling in my life. Every stroke was accompanied by a grunt of effort ( I had always previously thought this was just an affectation used by tennis players at Wimbledon) I made the breakout but my heart was thumping and that wasn't due only to exertion.

Thank God for that chicken chute. We all got down it without incident and took out just below the rapid. There was a very

high and steep hillside with winding steps up to the car park. Kevin and Chris rigged up a pulley system and in no time had all the Canadians hauled up. Then it was back to the cottage for well earned tea and cake. We put the tv. news on only to find a severe weather warning for Scotland and reports of storm damage and floods. Ho hum, why is it that whenever I go on a canoeingcourse my very own rain God makes an appearance. I can see a pattern emerging here.



Friday Craigellachie to Aberlour [Spey Bay]. Kevin promised us an easy ride today. After all the heavy overnight rain the river was full on. We had made an 8a.m. start because of the long shuttle. There wasn't to be any practice, just running the 17 miles of the river with a stop for lunch.

It was wind up day today. Mary was given a different paddle and couldn't get on with it. She was told it was because it was a left handed Canadian paddle. Being as Mary normally only paddles kayaks she fell for it completely. Kevin also told her that as a bow paddler when they went into a hole the correct thing to do was put your hands as far forward as she could on the gunnels and throw your weight forward! The water was so fast it was just a case of enjoying the ride with very little effort.

Pamela headed for every hole she could and I followed her through them, great fun. However I saw her heading for a huge hole with Chris and Kevin behind her. When I saw them both peel away I decided that discretion was the better part of valour and did the same thank goodness. I heard Mary shriek as the Canadian disappeared into the hole, only to rear up seemingly vertical on the face of the wave. A lot of bailing ensued.



As we approached the coast the Spey changed character. It was split into many channels by shingle banks. Of the 74 miles

of the Spey we had paddled 73% without incident, when all hell broke loose. We rounded a bend only to see a bridge which was at a tangent to the river with very large trees forming evil strainers on each stanchion. Chris got into an eddy on river left and called us to follow him while Kevin went on to check it out. Once again I found myself in the grip of several large boils. I realized there was no chance of me making the eddy as I was still heading for the strainers at a rate of knots. I started ferrying, again grunting with the effort. I don't think I've ever been so scared, as it seemed that I wasn't going to clear the strainer. Afterwards Kevin congratulated me on my ferry. I didn't tell him it was all down to fear and panic. I got into a small eddy and watched in horror as the 2 following Canadians both hit the strainer. All four paddlers tried to jump into the branches but all including one Canadian were dragged under the strainer by the force of the water. A few seconds later three swimmers appeared downstream but there was no sign of Ken. At last he broke the surface. His foot had been trapped in the branches and he had been held under for quite some time. Kevin and Phil rescued all the swimmers while Chris put his rope and rock climbing skills into practice and climbed down from the bridge to try to free Pamela's boat. Some 20 minutes or so later the other Canadian surfaced from under the strainer and Kevin managed to get it ashore.



While all this was going on the swimmers huddled in the emergency tent to keep warm. Pamela had just had the gunnels of her boat repaired after an argument with some rocks on a Welsh river. Chris eventually freed her boat and brought it over to her and yep, the gunnels were in need of repair again as the force of the pin had creased the boat.

As we set off again to paddle the last ¼ mile we passed a seal pup lying on a shingle bank, it was a nice finish to a great trip.

That night Kevin cooked us haggis with tatties and neeps. Ian put on his highland kilt and we toasted each other with highland whisky. It was a great week by any standard and I hope to do it again.

Dot