



CANEWS

April 2008

EDITOR'S CORNER

THE WEB SITE – www.ringwoodcanoe.co.uk

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

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

THE RIVER AVON 'BLOG'



If you have any photos, information etc. on the river Avon that might be appropriate for the 'Blog' – please let me know

See: <http://theriveravon.blogspot.com/>

CAPTION COMPETITION

Visit the web site for the Caption Competition



"Paul's feelings were obvious as it came up to a full minuet since Ross's disappearance"

Mark Giddens

PHOTOS – A SIGN OF THE TIMES

Canews is now becoming a club photo-album – I get loads of photos submitted for the site, but very little text to go with it. I guess, in this age of digital cameras, this is a sign of the times.



The week before the trip the Torridge had been over its banks, so we were a bit unsure of what to expect. It had fallen back to its normal level though, and was perfect for the mixed group of novices and old cripples. Perhaps that's a bit unfair, I was the only real cripple, and we did have my boys Jake and Lee, and Jo Ratford, with us to bring the average age below fifty. I was nursing a herniated disc and had the pleasure of looking on while the others did all the boat carrying. I could get used to that! In the canoe I was fine, kneeling in a perfect posture for the back injury, and I felt much better after two good days of gentle paddling.

Ros and Dave worked hard to convince the less enthusiastic old paddlers that we could run both the sections proposed for the weekend, together on the Saturday. They didn't really succeed, so we left one car at the mid point to run a shuttle for those who expected to drop out there. In fact everyone paddled the full 18km from Sheepwash Bridge to Beaford Bridge without complaint, apart from Nick Leatherdale, whose kayak back strap had failed and left him in real discomfort. As usual we didn't get afloat till mid day, but the weather was excellent for January, little wind and plenty of sun, and paddling till 4:30 was no problem.

Newcomers Graham Mussett and his son James came along just for the first day. They had a bit of trouble negotiating the tight bends and trees, and each had capsize. There were a few worried looks on the old faces when Graham went into a tree and capsized, in a classic "strainer" situation. Fortunately I was just behind him, pulled his kayak free, and he righted himself with support from my stern. James was not to be outdone and followed his father's line precisely. He wasn't so lucky with a rescue and had the second of three swims. He got

very cold at lunchtime but several people took pity on him, rallied round, and got him into some of their spare kit. They both were pretty tired come the end, but enjoyed it, I think, despite the cold.

Nick had brought a ready-made curry, so was able to satisfy his addiction for a couple of pints in the pub with a few other drinkers, whilst the not-so-desperate went back to heat the dinner up.

On Sunday Liz Gibbons went walking and Nick went photographing, so we were a depleted group. We paddled from Beaford to Torrington, an even more leisurely trip, with a couple of weirs to add interest. Lunch was typically laid back, with a sunny, grassy field to nap in. After that we took a look at the first weir, a simple slope with a drop of about 4 feet, but with very little water. A simple slide for the kayaks. I pushed my canoe afloat before Bev had a chance to stop me with cries of "You're not. Not with your bad back!" and it was no problem – provided you had a solid brace on the weir face. With a drop that high an open canoe gets very unstable. With its bow in the water and stern resting on the lip of the weir, none of the wide mid-body is in the water, so the stability has to come from the paddle. Sorry Dot, whatever your protestations at the time, the photo shows your paddle high-bracing in the air. Still, you have to get your money's worth out of your dry suit sometime I suppose, and you must get really hot in it. Mikes Farnden and Worth, and Dave Chadwick all did great jobs of recovering from some impressive angles, whilst others declined the support stroke challenge.

The second weir was a much smaller and simpler vertical drop, with little chance of capsizing, but with much more flow it looked more daunting. I knew the telling off from Bev would be far more painful and long lasting than the cold shock, if for some reason I did capsize, so I thought I'd better not risk it a second time. Only Dave and Jo Ratford shot it. Even that came only after some serious bullying from me, and comparisons with the much more threatening weirs on the Liffey, that, apparently, they were in training for. Ros White even put off the rest of the kayakers by portaging her brand new creek boat. Should have bought a flat water touring boat if you're not going to paddle down hills in it Ros!

Simon Burke and Marion Leatherdale were open canoe partners for the first time. After a few nervous moments early on Saturday, Marion's confidence in her novice partner grew, but not enough to try the weir. Simon enjoyed it so much he went out and bought himself a canoe.

The wildlife highlight came on Sunday, with two otters spotted swimming in different reaches of the river. The Torridge is notable for the lack of any development or roads along the banks so perhaps it is a more likely place to see them than most rivers we paddle.

Most of us returned to the cottage to try and eat up some of the food, but we had to concede defeat on all the cakes Jo had baked. Thanks to all the caterers for another great feasting weekend.

Barry D

EXMOOR 9/10TH FEBRUARY 2008



LEPE TO BEAULIEU 24 FEB 2008



AVON MARCH 2008



What a great day it turned out to be. After spending the previous night in the New Forest helping with a scout night hike

in wind and rain I was really pleased that I made it to the Avon (you will wish you had gone Liz). More than thirty people set off from the Alderbury launch in sunshine and a high river and it was good to see so many taking advantage of this one day's access.



We were soon at Longford Castle where I expected the weir to be washed out, but in fact, it presented a challenging stopper for the few who got in to it. I was taken by surprise and found myself very inexpertly struggling to get out- I can't remember when I last practised this. Ross was there to offer lots of advice and Mark G gave it a good try while the rest looked on.

Soon after this we saw an Osprey fly over carrying a fish (at least I was told it was a fish by Laura as it was a bit of a blur to me). There weren't very many birds on the trip but Chiffchaffs were singing all the way, we saw several Grey Wagtails, occasional Little Egrets, Grey Herons, a Kingfisher and lots of Swans.

At the first bridge I had just gone through when there was a crash behind me and I looked round to see Laura with her paddle stuck in the ironwork of the bridge while she hung on to it. Help soon arrived in the form of Mark G who struggled to release the paddle, dropping his own in the process and then capsizing. I did not think he could hand-roll and hoped he would stay in his boat for a rescue which he duly did. Meanwhile someone had managed to extricate the paddle and we were all off again.



Lunch stop came very quickly making me really aware of how short the old trip used to be before Barry put the effort in to negotiating the longer route. We portaged round the weir and then played in the pool below for a while and I lost my woolly hat which got flicked off by a branch and sank before I could retrieve it. Bev was then very generous as she lent me her

prized cap which she had all those years ago when we paddled in Finland. I looked after it with great care and was able to return it unscathed.

There were two nice weirs to play on and the last was very enjoyable with a good standing wave which was very hard to get on to, but great if you did.

At one of the weirs Ross and Sarah had a go at a high cross or something similar and shipped a bit of water, whereupon Ross suggested that they try again. Sarah's response was very determined and they didn't!

The section through Downton was very interesting and the final part was superb in warm sunshine.

I still wish we could paddle in late April but this certainly was a great day out. Thanks again to Barry for organising it.

Paul Toynton (Photos from Mike Worth)

IMAGES FROM INDIA

In March 2008 twelve of us embarked on a mini-adventure to paddle in the Indian Himalayas – targeting areas that see few tourists, yet alone paddlers. The trip was arranged by Mark Rainsley (big thanks) and the group comprised Mark and Heather, Chas Couchman, Oliver Renison, Liz Garnet, Claire Cheong-Leen, Andy Newell, Andy Levick, Dave Hodgkinson, Simon Knox, Dave Surman and myself

A selection of images tells the story

Day 1 Rishikesh and the Ganges

Flying Gulf Air, with 'frequent flyer' membership we had 30kg. But, with creek boats and camping kit this wasn't enough. We hadn't warned them of the boats but, thanks to some broken scales and a bit of good luck, we sailed through check in and were off the ground at 09:30

We arrived in Delhi early morning, loaded up a couple of mini buses and drove north to Rishikesh. It was the day after Holy Day, the festivities were still in swing and it looked as though we had arrived in an India partaking of a national paint-ball fight. A warm-up paddle on the Ganges, big Grade 3+ waves from Shivpuri to Rishikesh.

Rishikesh is a Yoga capital with many western hippies (we could even get Pizza!)



Day 2: A long Drive

A morning spent wandering around the town re-familiarising ourselves with India and then we drove up the Ganges and Alaknanda valleys, 7 hours driving and we were too late to paddle and so found a hotel at Karnprayag

Day 3: Pindar

We paddled the Pindar (a tributary of the Alaknanda). A 7 hour paddle of approx. 30km from Naranaybagar to Simli. Beautiful grade 3 and 4 rapids.



A load of park officials were there to greet us when we arrived at the get out at dusk - more phone calls and debate

Day 4-6: Alaknanda

The following morning dozens of Park officials turned up at our hotel to extract a hefty 'official fine' from us. (5000 rupees). Then we headed up to Chamoli where we loaded boats (which took a while for the first 'multi-day') and headed off down the upper Alaknanda. The three day paddle down to Rudraprayag gave us plenty of Grade 4 rapids with a mix of big-water paddling and tight technical gorge runs. We camped the first night near Nandprayag (opposite a funeral Pyre) and the following night at a beautiful beach somewhere downstream of Karnprayag where we watched monkey antics as the sun set



Day 7: Mandakini

The Mandakini gave us around 20km of grade 3 to 4+ entertainment



Throughout the trip we also provided entertainment for the locals who lined the bridges and banks whenever we passed a village



Day 8 Driving to Barkot

A 7 hour drive to Barkot - a distance of approx 100kms – which gives some indication of the state of the mountain roads!



Day 9: The Yamuna Gorges

A long climb with the boats down the terraces saw us on the upper Yamuna, for 5 hours of continuous Grade 4+/5 steep creeking down to Kuthnur



Day 10/11: The Tons

Paddled the upper Tons from the confluence with the Rupin River. Approx. 15kms of powerful Grade 4+ with volume and gradient. We saw our first poor weather with thunder, lightning and cold rain. We hooked up with the vans and drove a few kms south of Mori to camp by the river.

The following day we paddled the lower Tons from Mori to Tiuni. We anticipated a rest day of grade 2/3 However, no rest – we paddled 30kms over 6 ½ hrs and the last 15kms proved an endless array of technical rapids ranging from Grade 4-4+, including one big 5. There were 8(!) swims on this trip which ended in thunder and rain



Day 12/13: The Sutlej

We drove across the 3000m pass to Rampur, a town on the mighty Sutlej River. We loaded up and launched in the afternoon downstream of Rampur, surviving a few big rapids before a delightful campsite





Day 14: Shimla

We spent a day in Shimla chilling with hot showers and good food at this colonial hill station. Here we saw our first non-Asian faces in over a week, giving some idea of how off the beaten track we'd been



Day 15 - a 12 hour drive back to Delhi for our flight home the following morning.

Costs

Remarkably, the whole adventure cost around £850 (including flights) - Flights = £418, hire of bus and driver £247, Cash <£200. Admittedly we lived frugally (although there wasn't really any opportunity to spend). When we didn't camp we stayed at the best hotels in town (at £3 or £4 per night) and there's only so much you can spend on noodles!

A sad note to end

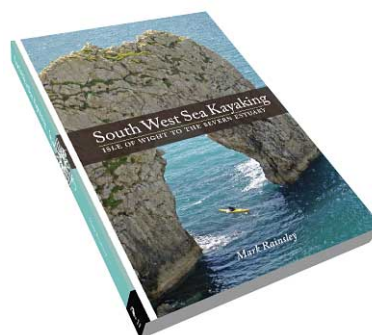
The future of kayaking in this region is bleak – hydro projects are springing up everywhere. We checked out the Bhagirathi (which joins the Alaknanda to form the Ganges) only to find that the river is already lost to hydro projects. Within a few short years the Alaknanda and the Yamuna will suffer the same fate – all are holy rivers (but that doesn't seem to matter a dam) – excuse the pun

Graham B

SOUTH WEST SEA KAYAKING

Isle of Wight to the Severn Estuary

Mark Rainsley



Mark has finally finished his book on Sea kayaking our local shores. He launched it on 12th April (less than a week after we returned from India and he hadn't even unpacked!). This is available from Presda Press for £19.99. You should ALL get a copy – it is packed full of practical information on locations, tides, get-ins and get-outs, pubs, tea rooms, etc., it will also tell you 101 things that you don't know about your local paddling area and it is beautifully presented. And, I know how much work Mark put into producing it.

As Presda says:-

The south-west coast of England is described in 50 great voyages, from the Isle of Wight to the Scilly Isles to the Severn Estuary.

As well as describing 50 great kayaking journeys, this book presents all the navigational and tidal information a sea kayaker needs on this magnificent section of coast. This means that it can also be used as a kayaker's 'pilot' for any journey they might wish to undertake in this area.

A fascinating read and an inspirational book

Shameless plug by Graham B