



## **MAD PADDLES**

### **NEWSLETTER January 2015**

#### **Delamere Drive Update**

Although things may seem to have gone quiet for a while, MADCC is still working hard with our partners the TS Ardent Sea Cadets and the Hurdsfield Community Group to develop the plans for a new club site alongside the canal in Macclesfield.

Over the past couple of months we have done a public consultation exercise with residents in the Hurdsfield area: This uncovered some opposition from the residents who live closest to where the proposed building will be, but we think many of their points can be dealt with in the building design and by continuing to engage them as we develop our plans.

We have consulted with Cheshire East highways department to make sure that the single-carriageway road that leads into the proposed site is not a show-stopper for planning consent. Happily, although the highways people would prefer a 2-way road, the fact that the road has been used in the past to give access to the now-demolished garages, there is precedent for vehicle access so the narrow road is not considered a reason to refuse planning permission.

We have met with the Cheshire Police architectural crime-prevention officer who has given valuable practical input into ways to make the new building vandal-resistant –

without having to resort to fences/guard dogs/crocodiles in the moat... Our architect will be able to build this advice into the final plans.

We have registered this project with Canoe England as a major capital project. Unfortunately, this doesn't mean they will give us any money (as they have already spent all their grants until 2018), but it does mean we are on their radar and the capital projects officers at CE have already given really useful advice to us.

The next big step is to finalise plans and submit a planning application; the architect advises that this will take 2-3 months, so making an application by the end of March seems feasible. Planning applications can take up to 13 weeks to arrive at a decision, so we may not get an outcome until June/July. Beyond that point, once we have raised the money needed for construction, the actual building time is around 8 months. Our architect advised us that a total time of 18 months to get planning permission plus construction time would probably be realistic.

Where does that leave us at present? As well as the planning permission, we need to start applying for grant funding – and think about ways the club can start to fund raise for itself. Canoe England has also suggested that we (MADCC/Cadets/Community group) form a charity right away; this charity would be the future management group for the building, and charitable status could help getting grants and possibly save some money on taxes.

None of us has done this before so we are learning as we go along! We have previously asked the question of members, but if there are people in our club who have legal knowledge, or have been involved with our clubs who have done big grant applications or set up as charities, please, please get in touch with Andrew Millest or another committee member. It would be so useful to be able to ask people with experience dumb questions.

*Andrew Millest*

## Avon Descent

The Avon Descent is an annual national descent race from Stratford-on-Avon to Bidford-on-Avon. The course covers 10 miles and has 5 weirs that can be shot in racing kayaks, Canadians and plastic boats, and one tricky weir that is best portaged. The race takes place in early November so very variable weather and water conditions can be expected!

The race is now unique in England as the only event that provides competitive descent racing for flat-water K1s and K2s. The race challenges paddler's skills – but not too much – and is a great introduction to descent racing for anyone considering the Liffey Descent.

MADCC was first represented at this race by Chris Cleaver, but for the past 5-6 years a small contingent of members has become regulars at the race. This year seven members (3x K2s and 1x K1) met on a relatively balmy November morning in the car park just outside Stratford.

Warm-up preparations for the race were briefly interrupted when one of Liam's small sons decided, unnoticed by any of us, to test the water temperature by falling in! Luckily one of the other competitors was more alert and fished the youngster out with no serious harm done.

River levels were moderate this year which meant that each of the 5 shootable weirs was passable but some care was needed to pick lines to avoid the biggest rocks. The first weir, in the middle of Stratford presented no problems and we had a good audience from the tourists who throng the Bard's birthplace at all times of year.



*John Broadhead and Andrew Millest at weir 1.*

The upside-down K1, paddled by the eventual winner was soon recovered and went shooting past us before we'd reached weir 3 – some people are just too fast!

Weir 2 was a bit rocky this year but didn't faze the MADCC entrants.



*Adrian Fisher and Matthew Herbert*



*NED Price and John Kavanagh*

Adrian and Matthew had got a good start and made the most of their advantage to pull away from Andrew/John B and NED/John K. These pairs then battled it out in a close race until the portage at weir 3 where a bit of luck allowed Andrew/John B to get on the washes of a faster group of K2s and pull away from NED/John K. Everything was going swimmingly until weir 4 where Andrew/John B went swimming... NED/John K took the advantage and vanished into the distance!

Liam King in K1 paddled a very controlled race, showing the skills he learned paddling on the Liffey when a member of Salmon Leap canoe club.



Overall, a grand day out, with Liam winning the veteran K1 event, Adrian/Matthew 4th, NED/John K 9th and Andrew/John B 12th in the K2 event.

The race will be back in 2015 and it would be good to see a bigger MADCC contingent – in race boats, open boats or plastics.

## **Icy and dicey**

Alex had snapped up a bargain secondhand Mk2 Mamba over in Buxton just before Christmas so he was itching to get it out on a river and see if he'd made the right choice of boat – the fact that it was three below outside and we'd spent the previous day sledging up on the Cat and Fiddle didn't seem to faze him at all, so on Sunday morning he, Alan Armstrong, Alex Garrett and I met up for a mid-winter's trip down the Goyt.

Crunching through frozen leaves and slipping across icy puddles on the way down to the river was a new one for me and not for the first time I was wondering if this was a sane way to spend one of the few quiet days in my Christmas break, but the four of us made it down to the riverside and figured the levels looked good (.47m at Marple Bridge according the Environment Agency site) for a gentle bimble which would be Alex G's reintroduction to river paddling after some time off. We seal-launched off the rocky shelves and the first thing I noticed was the "feel" I was getting through my borrowed neoprene gloves was awful, so they were soon stuffed inside my BA and I resolved to get a pair of pogies.

Luckily it was too cold for any meltwater to have come off the hills (!) so the water itself was not too chilly, and the air was perfectly still, so even without gloves I wasn't in danger of losing any fingers. We made quick progress down the river with just a few waves to sit on, some practice for us all in ferrying, eddying out, breaking in. It was a pleasure to watch my Alex zipping back and forth in his new boat, obviously relishing the performance and capabilities of the kayak. I really think the Mambas are superb river running boats – my Mk1 has certainly improved my confidence and thus paddling. Alec G was doing well too in his little Pyranha Varun and I think all of us had forgotten the chill in the air.

The first moments of note came at the drop above Marple Bridge – it's about three or four foot I suppose, and is smoother with a bit more flow. Today the approach was made tricky by some low hanging branches and the low levels. Alex F went at it aggressively, but caught his paddle on a branch and ended up dropping over half sideways, one handed, emitting what can only be described as a "Patrick Nolan" yell. He must have recovered quickly enough as I soon saw him emerge from the froth, now with both hands on his paddle. I learned a lesson, went under the branches almost flat on the deck, slid down with only a deep brace needed at the bottom.

It was the next hurdle, the measuring weir, that caught us out. Alan shot down the centre chute with no problems, Alex F followed but didn't have quite enough speed on, or perhaps did not reach forward far enough to get a good fast power stroke in at the bottom. Regardless, from my position hovering five or six yards back from the lip I could see his paddle tip shifting around a lot, and far too close to the weir – he was clearly stuck. After a few seconds I decided he might be in trouble so quickly got to the bank, asking Alex G to follow, and ran up to the top of the weir steps with my boat on my back. From there I could see Alex was in a hole, wedged against one of the concrete shoulders of the weir, and he didn't look like he was coming out. He was managing to keep mostly upright, I saw him roll once and may have missed another, but he didn't look happy. Alan was below to the left, and already had his throw line out but was throwing short of Alex, I cursed my stupidity in clipping mine into the boat as my cold fingers fumbled with the carabineer before I got it free, just in time to see Alex finally bail out in response to Alan's shouted advice, and I tossed the line. All that practice for the coaching and FSRT courses paid off, and the bag snaked a couple of feet downstream of Alex and he snagged it on the first try. He made a VERY satisfying weight on the end of the line and I tugged him out of the flow and towards Alan waiting on the bank. He was unruffled enough to wade in lower downstream and collect all his gear, with the exception of his helmet camera which is presumably still rolling around in the towback, but the experience had clearly been exhausting.

However, the training worked, the safety gear worked, the helmet worked – although it's a bit battle scarred! Alex G had kept himself back out of harm's way, and we'd all

gained some valuable experience and more respect for the unpredictability of weirs, even at low flows. And I won't be clipping my throwline in again!

After that it was pretty tranquil, some bumpy wave trains, some beautiful sights – a thick icy mist blanketing the river just above the kayak course, only disturbed by a heron flying out of it, wingtips leaving foggy helixes behind. A couple of buzzards too, a flash of blue that was probably a kingfisher.

Then it was just the broken weir at Chadkirk to shoot, which paddles much easier than it looks, (albeit after a slightly technical approach). Alex G took a very unlucky swim there while breaking in, caught out by a slightly low edge I think. And then we were off the water – a little blue and wrinkled around the edges, but no worse than that.

Who's up for the same again next year?

*Frank Fisher*

## **Raid Pyrenees**

Having got the date of the Sella Descent wrong I ended up needing a challenge. A few people had mentioned the Raid Pyrenees and Tony Machin had mentioned riding coast to coast, Med to Atlantic which gave me a gem of an idea. I decided to cycle to meet my sister in Tarragona. Across France and drop down from Andorra to Tarragona, 520 miles and 22,000m of climbing.

A number of people helped me plan, including a friend who had walked/hitchhiked across France in 1978, a cycling friend at work, and John and Andrew from the club. Andrew suggested I carry a chain link extractor which I would not have completed the ride without.

The plan was to ride from hotel to hotel which is the same as John and Andrew have used when cycling in the UK and allows you to travel very light. I had booked most of the hotels using Booking.com which worked perfectly. All the hotels were cheap and

cheerful and had ski rooms to store bikes in. The first one was a fantastic art deco hotel with Fawcett's customer services.

On the first day I stopped to watch a group of French school kids being instructed in a sort of kayaking without a boat. They had floats and threw themselves into a very nice shoot and tried to swim/surf the wave train. I had my first equipment failures when a tyre blew having worn through. I managed to do a temporary repair and ride 18km to the next town where I could buy a new tyre.

The next two days were 90 mile rides with two cols of 2000m each. I found 2400m of climbing was a good day, 3600 was too much. Feeding was also important and it took me to day three before I had cracked how much to eat. Beautiful weather and fantastic scenery, you can't really beat this type of riding.

Day four was when I left the set route of the Pyrenees Raid and climbed up and out of France through the col and into Spain. This is where I broke a chain and had to fit the emergency link Andrew had suggested I carry. A very wet day and the only time I cycled in traffic, this is the only HGV route from France into Andorra. A wet horrible day when everything got wet, including my phone. This was the closest I came to taking the large plastic bag bought to carry my bike by air, and sleeping in it, but once I crested the col it was an easy ride down to Puymorens into Spain.

The next day was planned to be 200 plus km, a bit too far and Google was not clear about whether roads were paths and suitable for riding a road bike on. The map showed the road ending at La Molina but my research suggested there was a road. So, trusting to my planning, I set off and cycled up a valley for 6km of steady climbing, lost my nerve and dropped back into the small town of Alp where I tried to use my limited Spanish to get instruction. Back I went up the same hill and climbed Col de Creueta which was the most spectacular climb of the ride and I was the only cyclist on it.

The last day was always a bit ambitious and after another major detour I dropped into Manresa, the outskirts of which are industrial but the centre is a mediaeval town with a very African feel. I was scratching my head looking for the tourist information centre when approached by a cyclist who via sign language asked me if I wanted to

sleep and then lead me to the hotel he and a group of mountain bikers use when riding from Barcelona. The next day was rolling hills before a long descent into Tarragona. When I got to the coast I took all my valuables out of my pockets and walked into the med fully clothed. A fantastic experience and I cannot recommend enough solo riding, without having to consider anything else. Eat ride sleep repeat; fantastic!

The most individually evocative memory was riding over the top of the Tormalate in the evening mountain mist with the gentle clonking of cow bells.

I am already thinking about where I can ride five hundred miles next year.

I have most of the planning info if anybody wants to give it a go.

*Adrian Fisher*

## **A Trip to the Seaside**

Planning a sea-kayak trip is always a challenge. Recently it has started about a week before, trying to get a few people interested that have boats. After that it is a look at the forecast; this is always too early as things always change during the week, but it is good fun imagining what we should do. This usually involves planning trips around Anglesey, as it is one of the world's best sea kayaking destinations, with a large tidal flow as the tide is squeezed around Anglesey before flowing into the Irish Sea and Liverpool Bay. When it gets down to a couple of days out from the trip it is time to make a decision, at least where to meet.

The most recent trip we decided to meet in Llandudno west beach. The wind had reduced all week making this trip much easier, also the tide which can get up to 2knots (3km/hr) around the Great Orme was flowing with us. It was also at 90 degrees to the wind which meant it shouldn't cause us much problem. When the wind is flowing against the tide this makes the waves higher and steeper and a little more caution is usually needed but we were fine for this trip.

Neil, Alan T, Mike, Graham and myself met at west beach. After a quick walk to the sea, which was a long way out we quickly got changed and then the drivers took the cars to Rhos-on-Sea, about 16km away by sea. Graham and I started to move the boats, it was a quick reminder that sea boats can be heavy and five boats to move soon warmed us up. In fact before long we were overheating which wasn't expected a couple of days before December. It was a glorious day with the wind even less than forecast and quite warm.



The others soon joined us and then we were off, heading at first to a buoy just off shore and then to Great Orme. The cliffs towered over us and a couple of caves to explore meant an interesting paddle. We all played in and out of the rocks close to the shore challenging ourselves to be able to manoeuvre our boats between the rocks and waves. We could feel the tide pushing us along as we turned into Llandudno main beach. We explored the pier's architecture; there were fishermen casting off at its end and we ended up doing kayak limbo under the girders to make sure we avoided them.





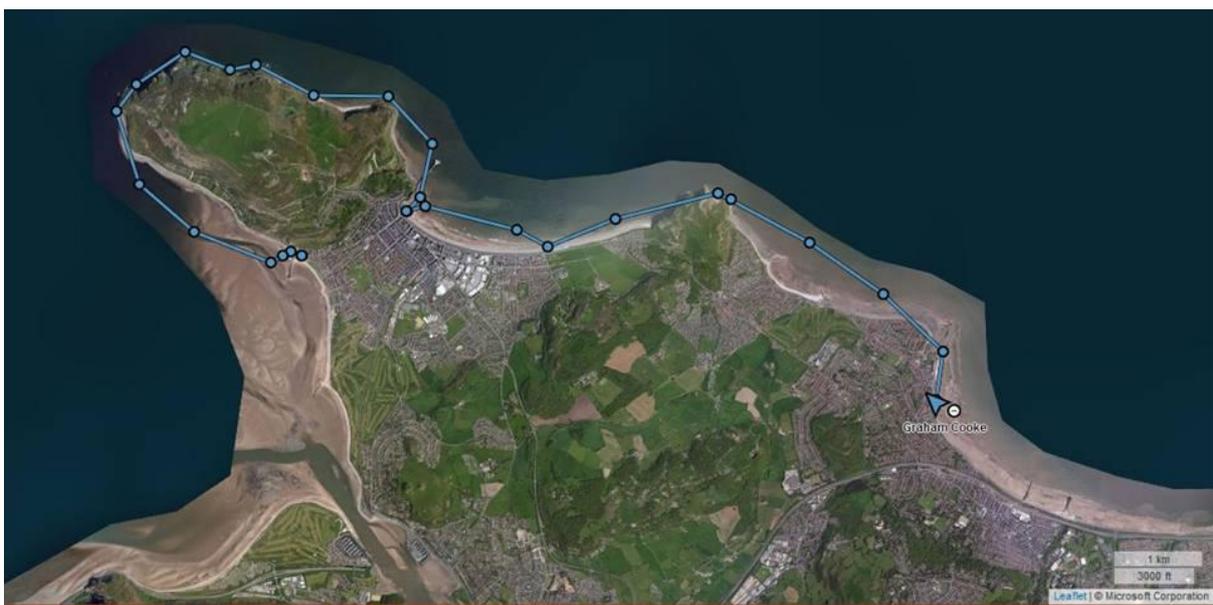
It was lunch time and we got out on the sandy part of the beach at Llandudno and sat on the jetty where people were posing for photographs in the sunlight. The moon was just visible in the sky with the low lying sun.

The majority of the journey was still in front of us and a quick paddle across the bay led us to Little Orme. There are often seals here with people walking along the cliff tops so they can watch the seals playing in the water of the bay. As expected there were a couple playing close to the cliffs; a youngster and its mum probably. We stayed watching them for a while, they always surface at the back of the boat with a loud snort. They enjoy swimming along in your wake. We had a couple of goes at trying to fool them by paddling backwards, but they were too clever for us and didn't follow at that time.



*Neil being tailed by a seal*

A determined paddle for the last few kilometres brought us to Rhos-on-Sea. A successful roll for Mike; he was practising before going to do a rolling course the following day, ended a lovely trip. None of us wanted to get off the water as the weather was still so good, people were eating ice cream walking along the front at Rhos. The temperature and sun dropped quickly as we got changed, another great trip completed.



To ease organising sea trips I have put a regular trip in the club calendar, the first Sunday of each month. The club has a sea kayak available for club members to borrow, if you would like to come and try paddling on the sea then get in contact. It is probably worth being equivalent to 2 star standard as there can be waves at times and we often do a journey of several miles, if in doubt come and speak to me, or one of the other folks that regularly come along. We will adapt the plan to make sure it is suitable for everyone coming along.

*Alan Armstrong*