



MAD PADDLES

NEWSLETTER April 2012

Club Matters - Andrew Millest.

We are now well into the canoeing year with Monday night sessions at Bollington starting on 16th April and Brereton sessions on 12th April. For those wanting to paddle at Brereton please contact Pauline Bett to obtain a lake permit.

Membership renewal time is also here and you should have or will shortly receive renewal forms again to be returned to Pauline Bett.

As you can see from the top of this page, the club now has a stylish new logo designed for us by Andy Hargraves, who is also working with Bill Fox to refresh and update the content of the club website which will be unveiled in the very near future.

Rachael Clarke has been working on plans to publicise the club more widely and one of the first achievements was for me to have a slot on the Silk FM breakfast show earlier this month to talk about the club and to highlight the Go Canoeing "come and try it" event we are holding for the general public at Adelphi Mill on Sunday 15th April.

It's great that Andy and Rachael have stepped forward to help with club development – living examples that you don't have to be a coach or a committee member to get involved with club matters. I know from chatting to club members that there is energy and good ideas out there so please, step forward and share your thoughts and get involved!

In preparation for the new season the club has purchased, with generous help from Bollington council, a new Canadian canoe. In addition, thanks to our own efforts, we have purchased an almost new, very stable racing K2 which is perfect for the club Cheshire Ring team. I look forward to seeing lots of you making good use of these new boats.

As you should all now know, the club is engaged in early-stage discussions about possibly moving to a new site at Hurdsfield. At the February committee meeting, the club committee reviewed your replies to the questionnaire about this proposal. Many thanks to those who replied; we had 40 responses (approximately half of the voting members), all in favour of moving ahead. There were some reservations expressed about sustainability and about the impact of increased subscriptions - be assured that the committee will continue to keep these important issues in mind as plans are developed. There were also lots of offers of general help, expertise in construction planning, and for fundraising - thank you, we will be in touch.

Now we are assured of your support, the committee will continue to move forward with the Hurdsfield site discussions. The article which follows summarises progress so far.

Update on progress in developing a new MADCC site (at Hurdsfield) - John Kavanagh

A lot of small but important steps have been made, useful contacts established and we have a much clearer idea of our immediate and long term goals and their associated timescales.

A Hurdsfield Community Centre Group (HCCG) has been formed to bring about and eventually run a new Community Centre in the heart of Hurdsfield and an Outdoor Centre/Canoe Club at Delamere Drive adjacent to the canal. I am the MADCC representative on this group which has held three meetings so far and plans to meet monthly from now on. Much of the focus is on what might happen in the centre of Hurdsfield but I am being active to keep up attention on our proposals. As far as we are concerned, actions so far are:

- As examples, members of the HCCG have visited Sutton Scout Hall and we have plans to visit Crewe Community Centre.
- A HCCG website has been set up, currently this is just a holding page with no content, see www.hurdsfield.info
- A series of photos of the Delamere Drive Site have been posted at <http://truswell.org/hurdsfield/delsite>
- A company called Big Society Works (<http://www.bigsocietyworks.com/Home/>) have been commissioned by Cheshire East Council to assist in 5 projects concerned with transfer of assets to the community – ours can be one of these projects. A representative from this organisation should be coming to the next meeting

Alongside this activity we have done the following:

- Met with Gareth Fields the Senior Development Officer (North) from Canoe England at the site, he was very supportive and positive.
- Gareth visited the site with Chris Hawksworth (Planning and Facilities Manager, Canoe England). He said that "it (the site) and the club are both worth supporting to the hilt".
- Both Gareth and Chris have given useful advice and a lot of useful suggestions on actions/timescales and remain willing to help as things develop.
- Andrew Millest and I met with Paul Kendall from Cheshire Sport who was also very encouraging. His organisation will have to give any applications we make their seal of approval so this is an important contact to have made.

Our immediate goals for this year are firstly, to begin to establish a presence on the site and a relationship with the local community and secondly, to create a legal entity to take on the lease for the land.

The first of these will be by holding a series of "come and try it" sessions, run from the Delamere Drive site. The first two of these will be on Sunday 27th May and Sunday 17th June. We will only be able to bring a limited number of club boats by trailer, so help with getting some other boats there would be greatly appreciated, as would having as many club members as possible to be around to show a friendly face and be on the water demonstrating their paddling skills and helping with beginners.

MADCC Paddler Development – Chris Cleaver

The club exists to help members enjoy themselves and develop as paddlers. That is why we start at the beginning with boat hire and training so a child or adult can start with no equipment, knowledge or experience. This training takes place on summer Monday evenings on the canal with instruction through a structured syllabus. For children, this is the stages of the Paddle Power syllabus with Paddlepower Passport in the first year and Paddlepower Discover in the second year. For adults, we use the One Star and Two Star awards, probably spread over two years.

We also provide training in the swimming baths in the winter, there are two objectives from this: for beginners to have their first capsize experience, and to learn to capsize with a spraydeck and escape safely, in clean warm water with an instructor standing alongside. For the more experienced to learn advanced support strokes and the Eskimo roll.

We find that paddlers, child and adult, get stale and lose enthusiasm if there is not continuous development and challenge, hence the need for the training structure. The opportunity for

paddling different types of craft- kayak, open canoe, racing kayak, and coracle provides further interest.

Paddling a short kayak few hundred yards on the canal is exciting to start with but after one or two years of basic training it does become commonplace. Here there is a choice for your child to perhaps move on to another hobby or to commit to canoeing and benefit from the stretch and development. Three of the most popular developments are earning more skills awards, flat water racing (at which the club has extensive experience), or moving onto rivers for flat water touring or white water, these are not exclusive and many people do all.

These developments need parental support, to take children to other evening or week-end events and to carry canoes and ultimately to start buying equipment. The club has racing kayaks for training and race use, the Monday evening boats can be used for an introduction to easy rivers but it will become necessary to buy your own river kayak if you want to develop your skills on more challenging rivers.

The coaches may not notice your child's need for stretch or know your level of commitment so it is partly up to you to talk to the coaches about your child's development. This is something we'd encourage parents/carers to do when sessions on the canal resume in April.

And of course there is yourself; we say it is never too late to start canoeing, so why don't you develop too? You do not have to play wet games, you can keep fairly dry in a kayak, or use an open canoe. We also need adults to help run the club and club events. You do not have to be a paddler to do this. Talk to a coach or committee member about helping.

The coaches are all volunteers who developed their personal skills in the club and then took additional qualifications in coaching. These are internationally recognised qualifications which can be stepping stones to working in the outdoor activity industry. Your child's interest in canoeing could be a lead into a career.

And to show you the horizon, canoeing is more than you see on the canal. There are a wide variety of branches: Flat water touring, river touring, whitewater paddling, canoe camping, sea touring, surfing, marathon racing, whitewater racing, slalom, canoe polo, freestyle. Carried out on a variety of waters, as part of a hostel weekend in the lakes, a camping weekend at the coast, or an Alpine trip. The choice is yours.

Change 4 Life – Pauline Bett

As part of the Change 4 Life programme pdf copies of the following posters, which can help to develop healthy eating habits are now available. If you want copies of the pdfs please contact Pauline.

MADCC in Teesdale – Bill Fox

A new location for our March away weekend: eleven of us, staying at an outdoor centre at Langdon Beck. Friday evening was damp and dreary – less pleasant for us, but good for lifting the rather low river level.

On Saturday we decided to paddle the Tees from Winston to Piercebridge; a 7 mile section of grade 1 to 2 water. A briefing at the get-in to make sure we all worked from the same script. We launched immediately onto the first gentle but shallow rapid – not an easy way to start for the less experienced or rusty paddler – but then on to the flatter water beyond.

This section of the Tees is described as “mellow” – a good description for the big wide river, with flat sections interspersed with gentle rapids. At this low water level the rapids tested your water reading skills as you searched for the best route through. A rocky section tripped Brian up, and he waded ashore while we emptied his boat and then we continued steadily on. There was plenty of bird life about – dippers, wagtails, heron, ducks, oyster catchers and a pair of redshank.

Saturday evening, and a clear dark sky full of stars – no light pollution here! A gentle walk to the local pub for a drink and very good food.

Sunday dawned cool but bright. We cleared up the bunkhouse and then left with our convoy of seven cars for Middleton and the bridge over the Tees. The plan was to paddle the seven mile grade 3, section down to Cotherstone. Eight of us paddling today; with Brian, Julie and Becca walking along the lower part of the river.

The first half of the river seemed to fall gently. Maybe there was less water than the previous day; maybe it was just the different section of river. The water level was low and on some of the gentle rapids we had to push and shove our way over the rocks.

On the second half of the river, it was narrower and cut deeper into the rock, giving steeper and more challenging rapids – grade 3 even at this low water level.



One rapid caught us out. Finchy went part way down and waited. Bill struggled through some awkward rocks. Mark was ready with a throw line at the bottom. Pat had to ease herself over a shallow ledge. Adrian capsized but rolled up and then managed the tricky move left to the bottom shoot. Adam's boat wedged between rocks and Mark's throw line helped him to the bank. Finchy dislodged Adam's boat, but then he capsized. Alan and Paul took the slower but maybe safer route walking down the boulder strewn bank. Back in the boats, we carried on steadily to the Cotherstone get out; it was 3.00 and lunch was overdue!



Many thanks to Alan for organising the weekend, and for coping with being bounced from one overbooked bunkhouse to another, and then to another! Also thanks to Pat for organising our food.

There are lots of outdoor activity options in Teesdale as well as canoeing. Bear it in mind for next March!

A trip to the Vyrnwy – Alan Armstrong

A new river to paddle, this is always exciting. The Vyrnwy is a dam release river in mid Wales. The club had stayed near to it, with a plan to paddle it, a few years earlier at one of the March weekends away. But, due to low water levels, we never managed to get on the river.

I had been watching the EA river levels for the previous 3 days and it had only stopped releasing for about 6 hours, but, there was always a risk of it stopping before we started. After a check on the EA river levels that morning Paul Davison, Mark Hayes and myself set off to paddle it. Paul and I travelled together with a plan to meet Mark there. We met up in Pont Robert, the get out. Paul and I inspected where to get out which looked like a slow walk through the church graveyard which we didn't fancy on the Sunday so we quickly found an alternative.

Mark arrived and we were quickly changed to drive to the get in. After setting off both Mark and Paul told me they had left their glasses and couldn't read the map so I punched the location of where we were going into the Sat Nav. It took us through Dolanog, where there was a weir which the guide book said we should portage. We thought we could have a look at it as we might be able to shoot it. That wouldn't have been a good decision as it was a thirty foot craggy weir with a tree stuck in it half way down. We felt lucky to have looked at this.



Dolanog weir

We were now off to the start and drove to where the main road crossed the river. We parked right next to the river and got the boats off and were preparing to get in. An old man walked past and asked us where we were going. Mark said “down the Vyrnwy to Pont Robert” and he replied “You might be some time down there.” “Why is that?” we replied. “Because you’re on the Banwy” he told us. We had followed the Sat Nav and had managed to get on the wrong river! After a quick look at the map and a realisation of where we were, we put the boats back on the car and drove to the right get in.

The Vyrnwy was a really nice river grade 2/3 with a couple of awkward drops that needed inspection as it was the first time we had paddled the river. It was continually fast flowing but never too difficult. It had some nice gorge sections and the water was beautifully clear all the way down.

After a couple of hours we arrived at Pont Robert feeling very relieved we had not ended up on the Banwy. We met a few of the locals in Pont Robert who were very friendly and welcoming. It was a good trip and good river and well worth keeping an eye on the EA river levels for another occasion.

The River Eden in February – Bill Fox

The last two years’ trips on the Eden had their challenges. How would we fare this year? Our first attempt wasn’t a good omen: the Siberian winter had taken over and the roads were treacherous. Too risky to travel.

Fortunately, river access was available on another date. Late February, and the weather much better. A burst of rain mid-week showed on the EA’s level gauge, doubling the river level – but only for 24 hours.

Our group of 6 kayaks and 1 Canadian arrived to find the river still at a good level, with the rapids by the Lazonby bridge well covered.

A busy morning at the get-in car park; another group of paddlers were setting off as we arrived. Then a convoy of Subaru enthusiasts roared in, parked up, admired each other’s cars, revved up and went on their way. Then a second Subaru wave arrived.

We launched and warmed up. It was some time since Kerrian had paddled the Eden, and three years since Sylvia had been on moving water, so they were cautious. Paul and Alan led the way, with Chris following on. We bounced down the flow under the road bridge and played briefly before moving on to the following wave trains and play spots.

Finchy was a good route spotter – particularly as he was the only one of us who could stand up in his boat and see ahead while on the move!

The rocks in the Nunnery rapids, which had caused us the trouble on the previous two trips, were well covered, so little need to navigate around them. It was a matter of keeping your line in the flow, and enjoying the bouncy waves.

The narrow rapid on the left side of the river which is often quite a challenge had some fast moving water and some particularly good waves; it was important to keep your line, to avoid being pushed off course, and to enjoy the roller coaster ride!

We stopped to look again at the carvings of faces and the inscription on the base of the sandstone cliffs near Armathwaite, and to wonder again just who had carved them there, and how long ago.

Instead of getting out by the Armathwaite weir, current practice seems to be to shoot the weir and get out at the road bridge below. Chris had a look at the fall at the right side of the weir, but decided the left side was more predictable. So after some careful scouting we all shot the weir down the left hand chute, taking care to allow for the side flow coming in part way down. Then a gentle float down to the get-out by the bridge. A pleasant trip, with good water, in mild weather. Very enjoyable!

RACE INFORMATION – Neil Evans.

We have a range of racing boats to suit all levels of experience and have plans to update the fleet if we can raise money through grants. So, as racing is an important activity at the club we want more people to have a go. You can paddle K1 or try K2 with one of the experienced paddlers. You will never know what you are missing unless you try it!

Nationally, in the junior Lightning series we are currently in 3rd position and 1st in the North West series. So, to improve or keep our position we are relying on our juniors and their carers to keep getting along to the races in our region.

You can see all race results and lots of general information about canoe racing at www.marathon-canoeing.org.uk .

I will be involved in coaching forward paddling again this year – **but I need an adult volunteer to help coordinate our Lightning paddlers** and look forward to hearing from anyone who wants to take this on, even if it's for just one race this year?

INDOOR SESSIONS – Neil Evans

Hope you enjoyed the first three sessions, held at Bollington Community Centre. Week 1: - We watched the BCU Go Canoeing DVD. We noted 12 different craft that could be propelled by paddles. They were sprint kayaks, polo, sea, surf, touring, wild water racing, freestyle, slalom, open, bell boats and the British indoor ergo challenge.

Afterwards we practiced strength and balance exercises, along with positive thinking, with help from my faithful assistant Charlie. Later we all joined in the noble art of bum walking. And demonstrated how this is connected with good body rotation, via shoulder and hip working together. Remember the tinsel.

Week 2 :- We reviewed what we did last week. Then more exercises and the walking balance beam. The now famous standing jump competition, easily won by "spring heeled" Jim. Later we demonstrated basic paddle strokes and how to roll on dry land. Thanks to my assistants George and Jim.

Week 3:- Watched the BCU Forward paddling DVD and then applied what we'd learned with structured coaching for all on the ergo machine.

Hope you found some worthwhile points to take away and practice and hope you will put your knowledge to use on the water. Thanks to Pauline and Graham for computer assistance, and to everyone who participated or helped.