

MAD PADDLES

NEWSLETTER January 2012

Club Matters - Andrew Millest. (Chairman and Newsletter editor)

At the AGM in November, Bill Fox stood down as chairman after serving two terms. The activities Bill has driven through are too many to list here but suffice it to say that he has been a very busy bee on our behalf. At the AGM we thanked Bill for all the hard work he has done for MADCC and I'd like to thank him once again in print.

Bill's is a hard act to follow and the committee, with me as the newly appointed chairman, will be looking to you the club members, even more than in the past, to help us run and develop the club. We are not looking for people to become committee members, but we would like people to propose and help put into action their own good ideas. So, don't be shy, if you have ideas about MADCC – activities, getting new members, fundraising, raising our profile locally etc. then let me or a committee member know and we will do our best to help support your ideas.

Many of you will know that towards the end of 2011 the club was offered the chance of some land by the canal at Hurdsfield that is highly suitable for building a new club site. This is a fantastic opportunity that we need to seriously need to consider. There have been two meetings of the Hurdsfield community group at which MADCC has been represented by John Kavanagh.

An important reminder: all members should now have received a short questionnaire asking if you support the club going ahead with the Hurdsfield project. Please make sure you complete and return the questionnaire by 27th January as the committee can only move forward on the project with the full support of the membership.

Happy paddling in 2012!

Chris Cleaver – winner of Waterways and Environment Volunteer award

Our congratulations to Chris Cleaver (who also featured in the latest issue of Canoe Focus), who received his award on November 19th 2011, as part of the BCU's 75th Anniversary Celebrations. Chris, who is regional Waterways and Environment Advisor for the North West region, has been a strong advocate for the access campaign in his area. He has also organised the Mersey Tour over the last few years, and has worked tirelessly to develop canoe trails, including the Mersey Canoe Trail in his region.

Change 4 Life – Pauline Bett

Some of you may have seen the recent Change 4 Life adverts either on TV, in the newspapers or on the web (www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx). MADCC has joined the Change 4 Life Club Charter, which is a new initiative to support local sports clubs to promote healthy lifestyles in Merseyside and Cheshire, and we are now a Change 4 Life partner.

There is lots of information for families and individuals on how to make small changes for a happier, healthier future.

Change 4 Life is now for everyone. It's the nationwide movement with a mission to help us all reduce the amount of fat in our bodies. We all need to eat more healthily and become more active to give ourselves the best chance of a happy healthy future.

Please see the 8 healthy behaviours for children enclosed with this newsletter.

MADCC actively encourage all family members into boats, so if you normally bring your child along to Bollington, on Monday evenings why not come along and have a go as well.

60 active minutes... easy for all the family you don't have to be super fit.

Or use the link below to see some of the meal and other ideas.

www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/change-for-life-families.aspx

MADCC have obtained Change 4 Life Club Charter Bronze standard. We are working towards Gold standard.

Please contact me for any further information; Pauline Bett, MADCC Change 4 Life champion.

Planned Weekend Paddling Trip – 16/17/18th March

All we have a White Water Paddling Trip planned for 16/17/18th March. We will stay in Langdon Beck YHA on Friday and Saturday nights, which is not far from the start of the River Tees and High Force water fall. We hope to paddle sections of the Tees, the Swale, or the Tees WW centre, all dependent upon water levels. We will try and make the paddling trips appropriate to the ability level of people who come but if you have any doubts please give Alan Armstrong a call.



Low Force

The area is also great for walking with Cauldron Snout, High and Low force waterfalls not being far away and the northern Pennines being on the doorstep of the youth hostel. So if you do not fancy paddling there will be plenty of other things to do. I have stayed at the hostel; it is a warm and friendly place with a drying room. It is run in an environmentally friendly way with its own wind turbine and other items to reduce its carbon footprint and Jamie the warden is very friendly.



Langdon Beck YHA, Forest-in-Teesdale, Barnard Castle, Co. Durham DL12 0XN (Grid Ref 860304)

Costs will be about £17 per night for the accommodation. We will sort out food nearer the time but normally we organize communal breakfasts and packed lunches for which there will be a small charge. We have booked a limited number of spaces at the moment; if you fancy coming along please give me a call to reserve your bed.

Alan Armstrong 01565 640745

JUNIOR INDOOR SESSIONS: Fundamental Movement Skills – Neil Evans

It was great to see lots of our juniors out paddling at North West events last year. We really impressed other clubs with our attendance at their race days and hope you will be inspired to enter more races in 2012. Well done, cheers and congratulations to all MADCC juniors.

To help all of our juniors, whether they paddle just for fun or go to races, to improve their paddling in 2012, we are inviting juniors to 3 fun indoor sessions on Fundamental Movement Skills on the following Fridays, 2nd, 9th & 16th March at Bollington Community Centre (near the swimming baths) from 8-00 - 9-00pm. Arrive just before 8-00, so we can start on time. There will be a charge of £1 each to help to cover the hire of the hall.

This is not a 3 week course, so if you can only make one evening, that's OK.

The first Friday will include some inspirational canoeing films; then we will have a go at practicing some Fundamental Movement Skills.

The second and third Fridays will include more on Fundamental Movement Skills and some paddle machine practice after taking a look at some Forward Paddling videos.

What is the aim? : To help develop a good level of functional flexibility and the ability to perform basic full body movement patterns, using strength, stability and control.

Why do we need to exercise? : Paddle sport requires the whole body to act as a multi-joint chain. Exercises only use 20% of your maximum strength. And most exercises revolve around balance, movement and resistance. Therefore we need to exercise the whole body.

What's involved? : This is not a sweat session and there are absolutely no weights involved. Yes, I know, it sounds like a magical way to improve fitness – all will become clear!

What to wear? : General sports gear or loose casual clothes. Trainers are best. Track suit and tee shirts. Or anything you feel comfortable in will be OK.

How do I take part? : Just turn up. Or better still, telephone or email Neil Evans, if you would like to join in. It will greatly help if we have an idea of how many will be attending, from an equipment and space point of view.

Parents are of course very welcome. You could join in, help out or just observe. Tea/coffee will be provided. There will be more details about the sessions and the exercises closer to the date.

We really hope lots of you will feel included, welcomed and inspired to join in. If this first series is successful we may have other sessions throughout the year. Some may even be outdoors if the weather is good.

Sea Kayak Racing – by John Bunyan

A number of you may have seen me in my white sea kayak on the canal (just to confuse you I have two white sea kayaks...) and wondered about what I'm on about when I talk about "sea kayak racing". So here's an article about the sport and the races I normally try to get to. A number of club members already attend some of these events. If anyone is interested in participating in the further afield races, let me know.

While sea kayak racing is very popular in countries such as the US, South Africa, France, and Australia, it is only a small but growing scene here in the UK. Unlike these other countries, there is no real official governing body, so the sea kayak racing "calendar" consists of an ad-hoc collection of races. The events tend to be very friendly affairs with varying degrees of competitiveness from those taking part and in most cases the emphasis is on having fun and participation, frequently raising money for good causes.

Race Formats

There is no fixed format for races. They vary between straight forward courses over a set distance (shortest being about 5 miles, longest being 28 miles) with no route choice, through to orienteering style events that either require navigation over a set of controls that define a fixed route or a “score” event where as many orienteering controls must be visited in a defined time limit but in any order. Visiting and clipping the controls may involve exiting from your boat.

Starts can either be by lining up on the water in your boat on a start line, or a Le Mans style start where you have to run to your boat, put it in the water, then paddle off. Some finishes involve the reverse where you have to jump out of your boat and run to a finish line.

Boats and Equipment

The vast majority of people compete in traditional sea kayaks, but most events are won by someone paddling a purpose designed racing sea kayak such as my Epic 18x. These specialized kayaks have the following characteristics:

- They are normally 18 or in some cases 20 foot in length (to comply with the 18 foot and 20 foot classes in the international races)
- Have a full waterline length (no bow or stern overhangs like a traditional sea kayak)
- Have a rudder to aid steering
- Hatches and deck lines for equipment/safety to varying degrees



The number of these more specialized boats is increasing, and Tiderace have recently launched their Pace 18 in the same class. Though the UK designed racing boats are still mainly exported, there is bound to be some more interest generated with more manufacturers producing boats. The more sheltered and/or shorter races may allow open Canadians, or river kayakers to participate.

As for paddles, most people use traditional “Euro” style sea paddles, some even use traditional Eskimo style Greenland paddles but the people at the front of the pack are liable to be using marathon racing wings.

Other equipment requirements tend to vary and increase in proportion to the seriousness of the race environment. Most of the races might just require buoyancy aids and say a mobile phone, but the races on the open sea will normally require flares, VHF radios etc. to be carried. Spare paddles are advised too.

The Races

Currently aren't any races in the winter, but there is a sort of season that runs from spring to autumn. The best resource for keeping abreast of events is John Willacy's "Performance Sea Kayak" website: <http://www.performance-seakayak.co.uk/>.

6th May 2011 – Ravenglass Sequest

Held in the three estuaries of the Irt, Leven and Esk, this is a 3 hour "score" event where you have to visit as many controls as possible in the set time. Late finishing incurs heavy time penalties, and the tidal planning going up and down the estuaries makes for a real challenge. The Le Mans start is hilarious with everyone jostling to see which direction the fast guys are heading off in. The relatively sheltered nature of the course and the fact that the distance covered is up to you means boats of any type are generally accepted. A real fun event with keen racers through to families in open canoes taking part. Nice place to take non-paddling family members with the "La'al Ratty" steam train and Muncaster Castle nearby.



A Ravenglass seaquest control punch

TBC April – 2012 – Anglesey Open Kayak Race

First run in 2011, this event had 4 possible courses planned out, but because of near storm force winds it had to be run in the Menai Straits. In the end, this proved a very entertaining route with a following swell to surf at the start and finish combined with a lap of the Swellies. This made for a varied course and some good racing. Hopefully the 2012 event will be held in a more open sea environment somewhere on the Anglesey coast. Distance should be between 20km to 30km with some choice to shorten the distance for the slower paddlers. The 2011 event had a Le Mans style start.

23rd June 2012 – Conwy Ascent

Another estuary based event, this time starting in the mouth of the Conwy and paddling upstream for 15km on the incoming flood tide. Le mans start. Open to most classes of boat from racing K1s through to stand up paddle boards. Those not wanting to compete seriously can enter the "tour" where groups can set off earlier and paddle in their own time.

TBC June 2012 – Coquet Island Race

A 5 mile race (even shorter for juniors) in Northumberland with an on the water start from Amble harbour, round Coquet Island and back again. Perhaps not worth travelling up just for the race, it is a great excuse to visit a wonderful part of the country. The first time I did this race I paddled around the Farne Islands on the Saturday and it was my first close encounter with Puffins – hundreds of them just a few feet away at times. The bird sanctuary in the Inner Farne is also an experience (crash hat advised!).

7th July 2012 – Eddystone Challenge

Perhaps the “blue riband” event of sea kayak racing due to its length and seriousness. The 2012 event is the 10th anniversary of the race, so should be a special occasion. Originally a pure rowing event, it has been opened up over the last few years to kayaks, and now the field is about 50/50 rowing boats and kayaks. The route takes you out of Plymouth harbour and then 12 miles of open sea to go around the Eddystone lighthouse and return. Total length is about 28 miles. Officially you are meant to paddle as pairs, but this is not enforced, so times are recorded individually. Though well marshalled with yachts on station and safety ribs going up and down the field, it can feel very lonely out there on the open sea as the field spreads out over a wide area. The safety crews say they can’t see the kayaks very well.... So not for the faint hearted. The one thing they do strictly adhere to is the cut off time for rounding the light – if you don’t make it you will be turned around and the cut offs are aggressive if the wind is against you. If the forecast is for more than a F4, then a sheltered route in the Tamar is used, so there is a risk that you can travel a long way to Plymouth and end up not rounding the lighthouse. ☹



25th August 2012 – Oban Sea Kayak Race

First run in 2010, this is a race that starts and finishes in Oban harbour with a circumnavigation of the Island of Kerrera – about 20kms distance. I like this race because it has separate prizes for the over 50s, which meant I won two paddling jackets as prizes in the 2010 event (unfortunately the quality of the field vastly improved for the 2011 running...)! This event is well marshalled with a couple of safety ribs in attendance. The route can be a bit exposed to the weather and sea conditions can be “sporty” down at the southern tip of Kerrera, but it is no way near as serious as the Eddystone. Very competitive up front in the 2011 event, with about 15 specialist 18 foot racing kayaks in attendance.

TBC September 2012 - Fleetwood Seaquest

The original “Seaquest”, but a different format to Ravenglass. Run in the Wyre estuary, orienteering controls have to be visited in a set order so there is little in the way of route choice. Two courses are raced over – the 22km “Seaquest” and the 15km “Seatour”. Again, a very friendly event with all sorts of paddlers taking part. The last race I did was an on water start, but the race used to start on Fleetwood beach Le Mans style.



TBC September 2012 – Poole Harbour Canoe Race

Another long established race with multiple distances (4 to 15 miles) and classes of race held in Poole Harbour with the longer races going around Brownsea Island. Large contingent of racing skis in the main race due to the popular ski racing scene in the south west.



TBC October 2012 – Swellies Extreme Race

First run in 2011. Set in the Swellies – the tidal rapids of the Menai Straits – between the two bridges, this event is a mixture of races that involve slalom, racing and even rolling (that's a bit they missed out in 2011 due to adverse weather). Format for the 2012 event is unknown at the moment.

Post-Christmas Sea Kayaking Trip (from Parrswood to Sale) – John Kavanagh

The number of club members with sea kayaks is growing and as the tides were right for a trip around Hilbre island a plan was formed for a trip between Christmas and New Year. This trip can only be done at spring high tides as the island can be walked out to at low water. Our usual launching point is the slipway at West Kirby marina and the water only reaches here about 2 hours before the high tide at Liverpool, so there is only a relatively short window, especially at this time of year when it gets dark early. With 9m tides expected between 1:00 and 2:00pm on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday after Christmas things looked promising. A flurry of emails suggested Wednesday as the favourite option so we were able to indulge in Christmas excesses with the thought of some healthy exercise to follow. Unfortunately the weather put paid to these plans. On Tuesday the forecast for the next day was for mainly Westerly winds at force 5 to 6, gusting to 7 or 8, so the plan had to be abandoned.

Plan B

In the absence of a sea trip a number of us decided to have a trip on the Mersey. We started and finished a few hundred metres downstream of the Mersey Descent start and finish. We got on at Wilmslow Road, Parrswood and paddled about 9 miles to Ashton-on-Mersey Cricket Club, Sale. The river was at quite a good level (0.55m at Northenden, for future reference) and seven of us set off: Andrew and Sarah in a K2, Mary and Margaret in their touring plastic double, Ned and Vicky in an open boat, and me in a K1. Mark and Rachael nearly joined us but deserted us at the last minute for a rival group paddling on the Goyt. Our trip was uneventful (i.e. nothing went wrong) but at times it was very hard work. Although the river was flowing well the forecast wind arrived and at times we could hardly make any forward progress. Northenden weir was at a comfortable level with enough water to avoid the worst of the scrapes on the way down but not too much of a stopper at the bottom. All the little rapids were nice and bouncy without any big rocks to avoid. Half way down Mary and Margaret swapped boats for a short time with Ned and Vicky as they wanted to try something new. I am not sure they always went exactly where they intended but they managed to keep pointing downstream all the time.

The wind had been increasing all the time we were out, so we finished our trip feeling we had got rid of all cobwebs but felt that under the circumstances a sea trip might have been a bit too exciting (although we might have seen more seals). We will try to run a Hilbre trip again when the tides are suitable. Anyone interested should let me or Mark Finch know.

Cheshire Ring 2011 – competitor’s blog

A perspective, with some nice photos taken around the course, on the Cheshire Ring race from a first-time competitor: <http://getfreshair.weebly.com/cheshire-ring.html>

Club racing boats – reminder

A reminder that if you use the club racing K1s and K2s for training or for the monthly Hare & Hounds you should either pay a £30 annual fee or pay £4 per use to Pat Davison.

There is no charge for using the racing boats to represent MADCC at inter-club events such as Hasler races.

As part of development plan we do want to buy a third Kirton Tor as the two we obtained with a Project 2010 grant have proved to be very popular – so money from the fees will be used for a good cause.