

MAD PADDLES

NEWSLETTER January 2013

Club Matters - Andrew Millest.

Winter paddling has continued at a variety of venues as you will read below! At the first Hare & Hounds on 13th January we had to break some ice but luckily there were no Titanic moments!

At the time of writing, the club and the Sea Cadets were waiting for Cheshire East planning department to give their opinion on whether the planned centre at Hurdsfield is likely to obtain planning consent. If their opinion is positive 2013 is going to be a very busy year raising money and applying for grants.

Since the AGM, we have a new committee member, Neil Evans, who is also going to be taking on the role of training officer. Neil will be supported by Rob Stannard who remains on the committee and we are delighted that both of these experienced paddlers will be helping coaches and non-coaches to develop their skills.

Fresh up from the factory in Devon, we have taken delivery of the final race boats purchased using the grant from Sport England: we now have a brand new fast but stable Mirage K2 (the Cheshire Ring race boat...) and a third Tor K1. Just the new wing paddles to come!



Well in advance of Monday evenings resuming after Easter: **We will need some volunteers to help out with registration and taking monies on club nights.** Chris Cleaver who has been a bankside stalwart is moving away from the area and we need a replacement. If 2-3 people (you don't need to be a paddler!) could volunteer it would be possible to have a rota - please let me know if this important club role is something you can help with.

Finally, with my Editor hat on: thanks to the authors of the excellent articles in this issue.

Teesdale weekend away – take note and book!

We have booked an Outdoor Centre in the Teesdale Moors for our weekend away on the 23rd/24th March. We visited here for the first time last year and thought the centre was great and the local area good. Accommodation is booked for the Friday and Saturday night. This area is great for all sorts of outdoor activities from cycling to walking on the Teesdale moors, High Force waterfall is only 3 miles from where we are staying and a short walk from the road, so if you do not want to paddle or want to bring a non-paddling friend or partner then there is plenty to do.

We will try and paddle sections of the river Tees suitable for those that come along; there are sections of grade II, III and IV so something for a range of ability levels.

We ideally need 14 people to come to contain costs. The cost is £18 per night and we have access to a self-catering kitchen. What we normally do is jointly organise breakfasts and packed lunch (more details to follow on this), and then go out for an evening meal on the Saturday. There is a good pub close to the centre.

If you would like to come along please contact Alan Armstrong as soon as possible but definitely before the end of February.

Link to the [High Force Centre](#); [Picture of the centre](#)

Canoe Sailing on Coniston – Graham Cooke

For some time I have been interested in cruising sailing canoes (not IC10 racers) and was planning to convert my open boat for sailing – however, I was lucky enough to find a purpose designed, all wooden, boat for sale, fully equipped and with a 44sq ft sail. Although looking very similar to a small sailing dinghy, the boat is light enough to car-top single-handed and the canoe style hull means that it can be efficiently paddled as well as sailed. Instead of a centre or dagger board, sailing canoes are generally equipped with one or two side mounted leeboards which leaves plenty of space in the middle of the boat. Sealed storage compartments fore and aft as well as side tanks provide a safe level of buoyancy for open water self-rescue and small outriggers can be fitted to enhance the stability in demanding conditions. Canoe sailing has a long history, but the exploits of John MacGregor, described in his 1886 book, “A Thousand Miles in the Rob Roy Canoe”, did much to popularise the sport in former times (although if you read the book you will recognise his boat as a kayak and these days dry, rather than grey flannel, suits are the recommended attire!). However, today canoe sailing is a rarer discipline, most commonly using simple ad hoc sails to assist downwind progress. Despite this, the design of sailing canoes has developed rapidly over the past decade or two with the advent of purpose designed sails, small outriggers to reduce the chance of capsizing, covered decks and inherent buoyancy. Much of this has been driven by the Solway Dory company at Grange-over-sands, closely associated with the Open Canoe Sailing Group. The OCSG meet during the year at different venues, either lake or coastal locations, as sailing canoes are boats to go places and excel on open water. After a few email exchanges, I joined their last meet of the year, at Coniston Water in late October. It was billed as a gentle meet for all abilities.

Arriving at the campsite on Friday morning there were a number of canoes already out on the lake. They varied from standard moulded open boats, with both simple and complex sailing rigs, through to purpose designed trimarans and other outrigger designs. In rougher weather the outrigger designs are very seaworthy and some can even be converted for on-board camping. I pitched my tent and got on the water as soon as I could. The wind was about force 3 and I decided to tack upwind – so that I could be blown back to the campsite if I had any problems. As I neared the Bluebird Café, paddlers/sailors were emerging after lunch and rigging their boats. The plan for the afternoon was to head south, around Peel Island (3.5 miles away) and then return to the campsite.

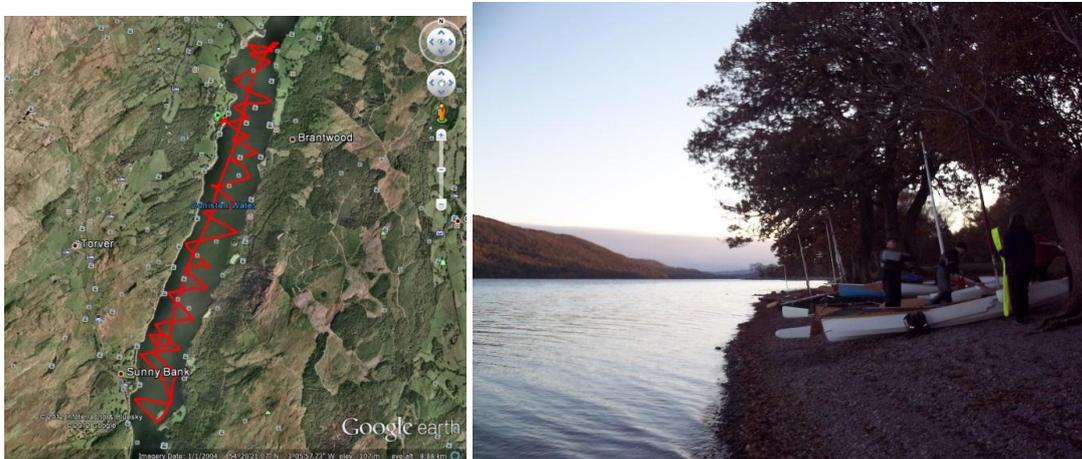
As we set off the northerly wind began increasing until it was approaching F5 with gusts well over F6 lifting spray from the wave crests. Heading directly downwind the effect was just like a following sea with periods of surfing and then climbing up the wave. I took a few pictures

early on, but soon control of the boat became my overriding concern and the camera was put away! This was the first time I have been in rough conditions on a freshwater lake and my mind was continually puzzled by the presence of waves, yet lack of salt taste.



Many boats sported outriggers and these significantly assist during gusts and, should the worst happen, make recovery much easier. Some boats without outriggers decided to turn back part way down the lake but most of us carried on south.

As I cautiously approached Peel Island I saw other boats already in the very small and well sheltered harbour on the south side; there was not really room for another vessel and visible rocks just beneath the surface made me think twice about getting my lovely wooden hull too close – so I partially reefed the sail, stood off for a while and then made a long slow tack while the others re-launched. Turning north with a reefed sail we all made good progress into the weather and into the now significant swell. The balancing act of wind, water, body-weight and timing the turns, made for quite exhilarating sailing. Crashing through the waves and heeling the boat combined to cause some water to be taken on; so twice I had to pause to bail – I was not alone in this. It is always said that the weather changes rapidly in the hills and by the time I reached the campsite the wind had dropped to almost nothing and I was reduced to combined paddling and sailing with a full sail area – it was like a different world.



The evening was spent around a small fire which served to impart some warmth following the cold afternoon.

After a very cold, clear and windy night, Saturday morning started with a briefing for the day, including the suggestion that the weather could be heavier than the Friday – it certainly seemed so as we launched. For safety the OCGS use a buddy system and I paired up with another member, Tom and his son in their trimaran, and we sailed back and forth playing in the wind, the relatively short reach meant that we were spared the larger waves of the previous day. Plenty of photographs were taken, including this one of me. [photo by Chris Wheeler]



After a few hours we went in for a warm drink and a quick look at some of the new arrivals readying to launch. Soon after I was called on the vhf by Chris who said that a group of them were heading to the Bluebird Café for lunch (looking at OCSG blogs it seems that food features heavily in their activities). I turned north and tacked as hard as I could to try and catch them up – a futile task – I arrived last. During lunch the wind died to virtually nothing and the early afternoon's sailing was slow and sedate with people trying each other's boats, taking more photographs and testing capsized recovery.



Unfortunately, the need for me to work on Sunday meant that I had to leave that evening and so, tired and aching, I packed up the boat and headed home. Later, the word from the others was that Sunday had been a washout – so I didn't miss much.

The group meet had been an excellent experience. I learned a huge amount and sailed in some quite demanding as well as idyllic conditions.

There is an excellent video of the meet at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0bCfTqEyEg> – my red sail can just be seen at the 2 to 2 ½ minute mark.

Moving Water Trips November; December 2012 – Alan Tonge

Moving water trips are arranged by the club (usually in the guise of Alan Armstrong) normally on one Sunday each month. These sessions are invaluable for inexperienced paddlers like me, as they offer the chance to paddle under the watchful eye of a club coach and put some of the Bollington / Brereton training into practice. Summer moving water paddles are often dictated by water levels but this Autumn Alan arranged a couple of trips a little further afield, to the River Eden and the River Lune, as well as what turned out to be a mini-epic trip to the River Goyt in our own backyard (Marple)!

River Eden: Lazonby to Armathwaite; 7 Miles; 4th November 2012

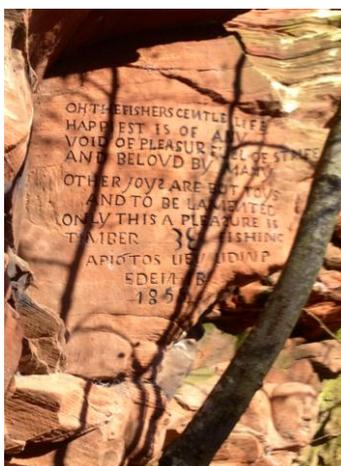
The promise of paddling this beautiful stretch of river (the name says it all) made up for the early frosty start. We met at Westmorland Services then travelled to the put-in at the car park by Eden Bridge in Lazonby (B6413). It was clear to those that had paddled this stretch before that water levels were high as the pebble bank opposite the put-in was almost covered and the relatively gentle flow at this point became very swift as it funnelled under the bridge. This was one of the largest paddling groups that I have joined this year with 9 kayakers and 3 Canadians. The promise of the Eden was obviously enough to draw paddlers from their other weekend duties! Those of us left at the start, whilst the logistics of the shuttle were worked through, warmed up with a few ferry glides.

We eventually set off with the sun at our backs close to Noon. It was apparent that at the day's water levels the trip would be relatively quick, with many of the usual river features 'washed out'. Nevertheless the volume and speed of flow presented a demanding paddle for a novice moving water paddler like me. Rather than negotiating the rocks in the several stretches of rapids the challenge was more about dealing with chains of standing waves and some fairly confused water around the edges of the main flow.

This stretch of the Eden passes through the Lazonby estate and is largely inaccessible by road or on foot (unless you are fortunate enough to be able to fish there), which adds to the pleasure of viewing the valley from the river as it passes through a steep wooded valley with sandstone cliffs.

Distracted by the view I became the first person to capsize (tradition dictates that the first to take a dip writes up the trip for the next newsletter!). No excuses I simply didn't maintain sufficient upstream edge as I rejoined the main flow from a photo opportunity in an eddy, all part of the learning process! As usual a couple of coaches (thanks Alan and Bill) were on hand to help me quickly to the bank and back in the boat and we were soon on our way to catch up the main group. The open boats made excellent progress with a couple of stops after the rapids to bail-out and re-inflate air bags that hadn't fared too well from close encounters with 'next doors cat'.

Towards the end of the trip there is a stretch of sandstone cliff that has some carvings including an inscription and a couple of gargoyles, presumably made by an inspired angler at much lower water levels.



The big finale to our Eden trip came in the form of the weir at Armathwaite Mill about 800 metres from the 'get out' at Armathwaite Bridge. I adopted my usual strategy of holding back and watching what happened to other paddlers as they shot the weir. The open boaters made it down without difficulty, but a couple of the kayakers got caught out. This did nothing for my nerves, but did help me pick the better line (2 metres further to the right)!

All in all this was a great trip we had beautiful crisp autumnal weather and got to paddle an exciting and attractive stretch of river. In total we spent 2 and a half hours on the water to complete 7 miles, maybe not as quick as we'd anticipated.

River Lune: Rigmaden Park to Kirby Lonsdale; 7 Miles; 18th November 2012

Another invigorating (cold) early morning start brought us to Burton services on the M6 for a quick coffee before heading for our 'get-out' at Devil's Bridge in Kirby Lonsdale. Several stretches of the upper-Lune are paddleable and can be joined to make a longer trip. We had chosen to paddle a 7 mile stretch from Rigmaden Park down to Devil's Bridge.

Again having completed the shuttle we set off at around noon, a group of 7 kayaks and 2 open boats. The weather forecast had been quite favourable so imagine our surprise to be paddling directly into the face of a shower of hail. Our conversation rapidly shifted to a discussion of the merits of gloves versus mittens, versus pogies.

At about the half-way mark we gathered in an eddy by a rather ornate (for a farm) bridge over the river to wish Alan a happy birthday. Unfortunately there was no cake so we made do with a selection of chocolate bars and other energy snacks!



This is a relatively gentle stretch of river passing through a wide valley of estate and farmland, the banks steepen as you approach Kirby Lonsdale. The river splits at a number of points to form large islands with choices as to whether to take the 'low or the high road', and these along with a couple of shallow rapids form the main interest before the last mile of rapids down to the get-out. It makes a good longer trip for beginners to moving water. We only had one minor mishap, with a capsize as we passed through the rapids about half a mile from the finish. One of the party in a longer boat broached on a submerged rock in a shallow section resulting in a dunking.

All agreed that despite the hail this was a pleasant paddle that was not over-challenging at the moderate water levels which we experienced, we covered the 7 miles in 2 hours 25 minutes. Plans for a future extended trip were discussed, but this would probably not appeal to those more interested in white water.

River Goyt: Roman Lakes to Chadkirk Country Park; 9th December 2012

For many MADCC members the Goyt represents a very familiar paddle. Water levels rise and fall quickly, but as long as there is sufficient water to scrape through it is a good paddle. There was plenty of water when we chose to paddle the Goyt in early December! The Environmental Agency website reported a level reading at Marple Bridge for 8:30am that morning of 0.94m which is right at the upper end of the typical range for that stretch. When we arrived at the 'put-in' at Roman lakes it was clear that the river was higher and flowing much faster than the previous times I'd paddled there.

Initially 5 of us chose to paddle, but as we approached the first weir above the Roman Lakes road bridge we reconsidered the suitability of the trip. The group comprised 2 coaches and 3 less experienced paddlers including myself. Paul shot the weir then decided that in the conditions it would be safer for the rest of the party to ferry glide back to the bank and

portage. After a river side conference four of us agreed to continue the trip whilst one of the group returned to the put-in to collect his car.

The stretch down to Marple bridge proved uneventful, with a portage round the weir, many of the usual features were washed out. Paddling on to Brabyn's park we shot the measuring weir river-left before heading swiftly down to the 'Horseshoe Weir' where portaging was definitely the only safe option. Everything was going well until after the rapids above the Manchester Canoe Club slalom course. A momentary lapse and a brief fumble with a paddle, led to the other less-experienced member of the party capsizing, he and I scrambled safely to shore while Alan and then Paul chased the free boat as it headed rapidly downstream finally catching it and bringing it to the bank in the large eddy on the right of the river where it turns left sharply near the bottom of the slalom course. It took some time to get both paddlers and my boat overland to this point as the banks were steep and slimy with mud, but after 30 minutes or so we were ready for the off. This wasn't the best point to rejoin the flow, and to emphasise the point one of the coaches managed to capsize whilst demonstrating to us what he wanted us to do. A wayward glance over the shoulder whilst talking to us caused him to catch an edge and with the speed of the flow he was in and forced to wet exit. A further race to catch his boat ensued whilst the two novices in the party sat safely on a shingle bank we were under strict instructions not to move! I was very pleased that I'd chosen to wear three layers of thermals under my wetsuit by the time Alan and Paul reappeared some way down stream about 40 minutes later. They managed to execute several ferry glides back up stream before clambering out at some steps in the wall and carrying Paul's boat back upstream from where he was able to descend back to us. We were ready for off! One capsize (not me), a pinned boat and a bankside change into dry clothes later we finally left the slalom course behind, we'd spent over an hour and a half dealing with the various stages of this rescue and the afternoon was drawing in. We paddled off briskly for the final stretch of the paddle 3 of us portaging the broken weir at the footbridge in Chadkirk Country Park and were soon back at the cars in what remained of the daylight.

This trip brought all kinds of learning points for me; with this much water the Goyt was a very different river from the one I'd paddled before, I'll definitely continue carrying dry clothes and a hot flask on moving water trips, and maybe a torch!

The dates for moving water trips in 2013 are already on the MADCC website calendar. In most cases (except for trips requiring a license, like the Eden and the Lune) the venue isn't decided until the week before and is posted as a discussion strand on the website forum, I've been to the Goyt, the Derwent at Matlock, the Irwell at Burrs Country Park (Bury) and the Dee at Llangollen, with the club this year.

If my accounts haven't put you off please consider joining the trips planned throughout 2013, I'm really grateful to the coaches that support novice paddlers like me, but it would be great to join a few more intermediate paddlers to make space for more beginners coming through!

A day on the Dee – Andrew Millest

On the 30th December, Tony Machin dragged us out of our post-Christmas stupor and a group of us assembled at Sandy lane, Chester for a different sort of moving water trip – in K2 racing boats. The river was running very high and fast so moving water skills were needed to deal with the eddy lines and boils whilst trying to stay very close into the bank as we paddled upstream towards Farndon. After about 1.5 hours paddling, delayed slightly when one of the crews hit a "zone of funny water" and took a quick but cold swim, we reached the iron bridge in the heart of the Duke of Westminster's Eton Hall estate. After a quick stretch of legs we turned and, powered by the flow, were back at Chester in about 40 minutes! We then retreated to a local pub, which had splendid views up the river, for a pie and a pint.

We plan further trips to the Dee or Weaver in K2s and this will be a great chance for all those people who last summer expressed an interest in doing the 2013 Cheshire Ring race to partner up with an experienced person and get used to doubles paddling. Dates will be announced on the calendar and forum.

The Anglesey Sea Kayak Festival – Neil Evans

This started as a simple weekend away. But why not add the Monday and make it 3 days. I noticed there was a 3 star sea kayak assessment on the Wednesday, so decided to make it 5 days by filling in the Tuesday with the Coastal navigation and tidal planning course. The weeks before saw Anglesey lashed by torrential rain and freezing storm force winds. So I arrived on Friday evening fearing the worst. No one had made it on to the top campsite, although wheel marks showed some had gallantly tried, but failed to reach half way, before slipping down sideways. Most sensible people kept at least 2 wheels on a solid surface.

Day 1 Surfing: Morning broke and it was one of those wonderful warm, sunny, cloudless October day that make everyone feel glad to be alive. We arrived at Cable Bay and paddled round the headland to Rhosneigr, where surf waves were in plentiful supply. Of course everyone pushed themselves, so there were lots of swims. But, by the end of the day, we all felt learning had taken place.

Day 2 White water: Another sunny day. We paddled from Menai Bridge, against the flood tide to the islands between the 2 bridges, for breaking in and breaking out practice, before they were covered by high tide. Everyone progressed really well. But, are there any canoeists out there, who can truthfully say they enjoy paddling in large boils? We eventually headed way back and made use of the ebb tide, ferry gliding in the ever increasing flow under the bridge.

Day 3 Rock Hopping: Only average weather now. At Trearddur Bay we practiced what we had learnt on the first 2 days and of course did the inevitable forward paddling. This was certainly not for beginners, with large waves and swells taking us through reasonable sized gaps. The first day surf training saved me on a couple of occasions. And I did learn the value of having well practiced rescue skills, as well as a good first aid kit and a sound knowledge of how to use it.

Day 4 Coastal navigation and tidal planning: A useful indoor course. The most important lesson learnt, was to use more than one resource when gathering information to be used on a proposed trip. To highlight this, we split into 4 groups and all planned a similar trip, only using the one resource we were given. Of course every group had very different plans and because no group had all the facts, they left themselves open to potential mistakes. I was amazed how many kayakers had come from Norway, Denmark and Sweden for the courses.

Day 5 - 3 star sea kayak assessment: I arrived to find Aneka from Switzerland, who I had met a few months before on the training course, was also ready for assessment. As usual it did provide some light hearted comments, like how do you become a sea kayaker in Switzerland. But as she pointed out, Lake Geneva is a very big lake. The day was cold and windy, as we set out from Porth Dafarch, so we were both looking forward to the rolling and rescues. We passed with flying colours, so both went home very happy.

Forthcoming external events

With the burgeoning interest in sea kayaking in MADCC members may be interested in the 2013 Scottish Sea Kayak Symposium 24th – 27th May 2013 (28th – 31st May Extended Activities), Sleat peninsula, Isle of Skye. The event will be based at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic College.

We would strongly recommend that if any of your members are interested in attending that they register their interest at www.seasymposium.org so that they are sent an application form when these become available in early 2013.

There will be skills sessions, lectures and talks, slide shows, guided paddling trips, and a ceilidh. There will be a limited number of sea kayaks available for hire.

The 2013 Symposium promises to be a special occasion combining the fantastic paddling opportunities of the Skye coastline with top tips from leading sea paddlers and coaches. Our contributors are accomplished speakers, top coaches, respected authors on kayaking, and expedition paddlers who will join with experts on the wildlife and culture of Skye to make this the kayaking forum of the year.