

Exeter Canal trip - 07/04/07

The 6 mile long Exeter canal runs from the canal basin (near the centre of Exeter) out to Turf lock where it joins the tidal River Exe.

The club paddled the stretch of canal from Double locks out to Turf lock, returning along the same route to Double locks (must be a good trip, pub at the start, ½ way & finish). At Double locks our start point is a very nice Pub dating from 1701.

After sorting out the usual transport arrangements and club boats at M'batten, the group travelled to Exeter, via a prearranged rendezvous at Haldon hill to pick up more paddlers enroute. 15 club members appeared at the Double locks car park, the usual Saturday suspects but also a few faces taking to the water for the first time in 2007. The weather was glorious, no wind and bright sunshine, ideal for paddling. After a short brief and the application of sunscreen the group took to the water. We had the canal virtually to ourselves, a couple of fishermen were seen, the only passing traffic being a few other paddlers in canoes & kayaks and the small passenger ferry. As canal paddling is not particularly demanding, the order of the day was having a relaxing paddle and partaking in intelligent conversation on a variety of subjects with the other club members. (That's what happens when you bring together such a diverse group of individuals from various backgrounds)!



Coffee break

After an hours paddling we had a coffee stop on the bank opposite Topsham (a very nice spot). Canal paddling is a strange phenomenon as much of your view of the surrounding countryside is obscured by the canal bank and you don't see much until you stand up!

The paddle out to Turf lock passed without incident, the group disembarked from their craft and took up residence in the pub beer garden for lunch. The Hotel remains much the same as when designed in 1823, it is an isolated place with most of the trade coming from cyclists and water users. The bar staff are used to seeing customers in strange paddling clothing. However when I was in the bar waiting to purchase my ½ pint of shandy, I overheard John Dow ask the barman 'excuse me do you have a mop I can borrow as I have had an accident'. John was stood in a large puddle of liquid, was it the result of a weak bladder or the contents of his spraydeck emptying onto the floor! Why not ask John next time you see him.



Feeding time

The group now suitably fed & watered took to the water for the return journey. Formation seal launching was performed from the high canal bank (1 foot) to the watching massed crowds. The paddle back in the sunshine passed without incident, the highlight being a snake (Anaconda or Grass snake not sure which) swimming across the canal in front of us. We continued on, yet more conversation about world politics & classical literature was evident amongst the paddlers.



Seal launching

A thoroughly enjoyable day trip away from our usual paddling environment. Time spent paddling about 3 hours, time spent resting about 1 hour. Total distance paddled (approx 8 miles).

Terry C

If you are interested in participating in estuary paddles there will be a number run throughout the year by various club coaches (look out for details in Wet News).