



PPCA Newsletter
April ~~2019~~ 2020

Introduction

Welcome to April's Newsletter. Under rather strange circumstances, Adam has some membership news and Clive describes himself as grumpy. Stephen, meanwhile, provides some much needed escapism. Look on his photos, fellow paddlers and weep.

Editorial

This is definitely a peculiar Newsletter to edit. With nobody allowed to paddle and no prospect of any paddling in the immediate future, we're fortunate that a couple of articles came in last month so there's something to read this month. Next month, however, could be even thinner than usual. If anyone has any spare time once the grass has been cut (again) and the floor hoovered (again) and fancies turning their hand to writing an article, I would be most grateful. An alternative would be for me to produce a Greatest Hits package i.e. recycling a load of old stuff on the pretext that it's what the readership wants. To avoid that fate, get writing now.

In the meantime, stay safe and well and let's hope we're back on the water soon.

Ivor Jones

Newsletter Editor

Next Committee Meeting

Please forward any items you would like considered at the next committee meeting to secretary@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk. They will go to the secretary.

Next Edition

There is no specific deadline as such for contributions but please bear in mind my general sloth and indolence and let me have anything time-sensitive well in advance.

Contributions

Please send any contributions to newsletter@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Acknowledgements

The eagle-eyed among you will notice that I have recycled last April's cover as photos this year are in rather short supply. Thank you once again to the usual suspects

Notice from Club Membership Secretary by Adam Coulson

Dear PPCA Member

As you are aware, all club activities are currently suspended due to Government edict in the face of the Covid 19 pandemic. Paddlesport plays a major part in many of our lives but everybody has to prioritise and professional sportsmen and women are suffering a great deal more as a consequence of this horrible disease. Like many of us, the club's income has been much reduced as we are unable to run courses for the foreseeable future. However we still have expenses to pay.

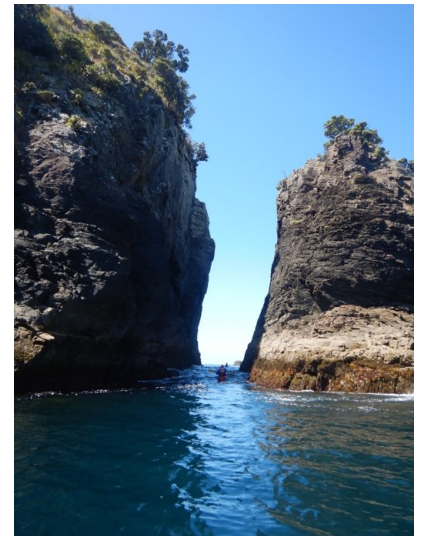
To ensure that the membership suffer no financial loss we are currently offering to extend everybody's membership by the same period to the nearest month for which activities have been suspended. We feel that this is the fairest way to deal with the subscriptions. We are therefore sending out all renewal requests as normal and hope that members will subscribe to another year of paddlesport plus the period of closure. We are endeavouring to keep in touch with a newsletter in the meantime.

Stay safe and we all look forward to meeting up back on the water.

Features

Kayaking Great Barrier Island, New Zealand by Stephen Pryor

If you look at a map of North Island New Zealand you will find Great Barrier Island on the east side. It is about five hours by ferry from Auckland out in the Pacific: big surf beaches, caves and cliffs on the east, deep rias and rocky islets on the west, mountainous and rugged in the interior. About 70 km long and 40 km wide, it is a kayakers' and hikers' paradise.



The mountains drop abruptly into the sea on the east side. This paddle out and around an islet 8km offshore on the second day made us feel very small in our kayaks under towering cliffs and through caves with 5000 km of Pacific over the horizon.

The day was enlivened by a capsized on the ocean side as bigger swells came with awesome power every 7 to 10 minutes. The sudden mass of breaking surf is rightly called a bomby. You learned to look out for them. We had mostly light winds and only occasional sets over half a metre so we were lucky.

Drowned river valleys winding deep into the mountain interior on the west side made for good sheltered paddling. The headlands terminated in islands with narrow channels and sharp needles with extraordinary eroded shapes. We weaved in out and around these archipelagos for two days. A three metre tidal range meant a portage for either get in or get out but did not cause rips or races. Exits for a rest were not easy to find so the distances seemed longer.



The longest paddling day was 28 km and the shortest 17 km. Overall in eight days (including a day ashore due to wind) we covered 150 km mostly with fully loaded boats. On day four the tiny van and trailer transported nine kayakers, the boats plus kit across the island (straining a bit up the narrow hairpin roads) so we did about half the distance on each coast.

We were decamped, boats packed and on the water by 9am most days and had a beach or surf landing break every couple of hours. Camp sites were beautiful remote grassy clearings either next to the beach or portage across a sand bar and paddle up a creek. A tap, a pit loo and a shelter for cooking, what more could you need when the sea temperature was 21 degrees?



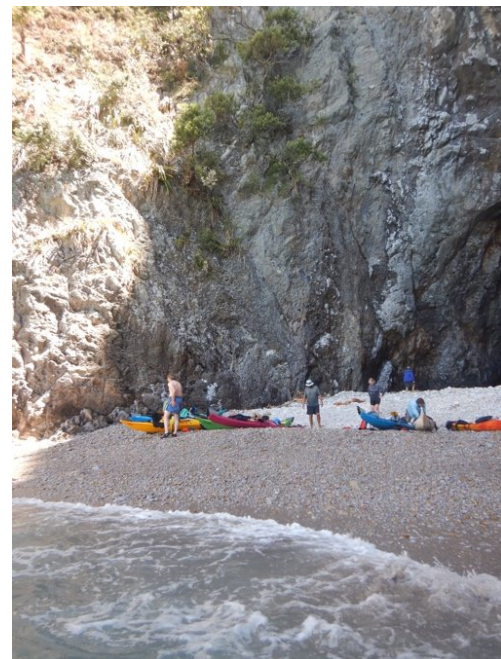


Talking of food, even on day seven we were still eating fresh fruit and vegetables and only just finished the home made flapjacks. Magnus, our leader helped by Ana and Chris were wizard paddlers but also highly organised caterers. With few supplies available on the island, in total they brought from the mainland fresh and dried food for 225 delicious meals. Our contribution was to chop the veg and wash up.

On one windy day (25 knots) we did not paddle. Some went hiking to the highest peak at 740m through craggy gorges. Others walked an hour to the hot springs: think rock pools in the jungle not a beauty spa.



On the sea and on land we saw diving petrel (photo), poteke (teal), dotterel, white faced heron, pied oyster catcher, Pacific gull, silver gull, plover, kaka, marsh hen, shearwater, and shag.



Our leaders' wildlife knowledge was only surpassed by their awareness of Maori culture and traditions, even how to adapt BCU type competences to Maori outrigger racing canoes. Experiences of being skipper on a 70ft schooner in the South Atlantic and portaging across Rannoch moor had us enthralled. No less the stories of the other paddlers, who had variously paddled the Bass Strait (240km), circumnavigated the Island of Elba etc etc.

For kit enthusiasts, the boats were Q Kayaks Penguins and Skuas similar to Prjon Seayaks equipped with rudders, Werner paddles, spray skirts, PDFs, tow lines long and short, helmets, paddle floats, split paddles and mask/flippers/snorkel.



No wildlife in the hot pools but we were shown a 4ft long eel somewhere else. Marine life included sting rays (large, mind your feet!), king fish, snapper (caught and eaten), bronze headed shark, seals and pups and dolphins which played around the boats one day. We were awed, fascinated and exhilarated by their speed and beauty.



The trip was a fabulous paddling adventure with excellent leaders in conditions that were near to perfect. The few people who live on the Island call it a slice of paradise. It was a privilege to paddle there.

You can find out more from:

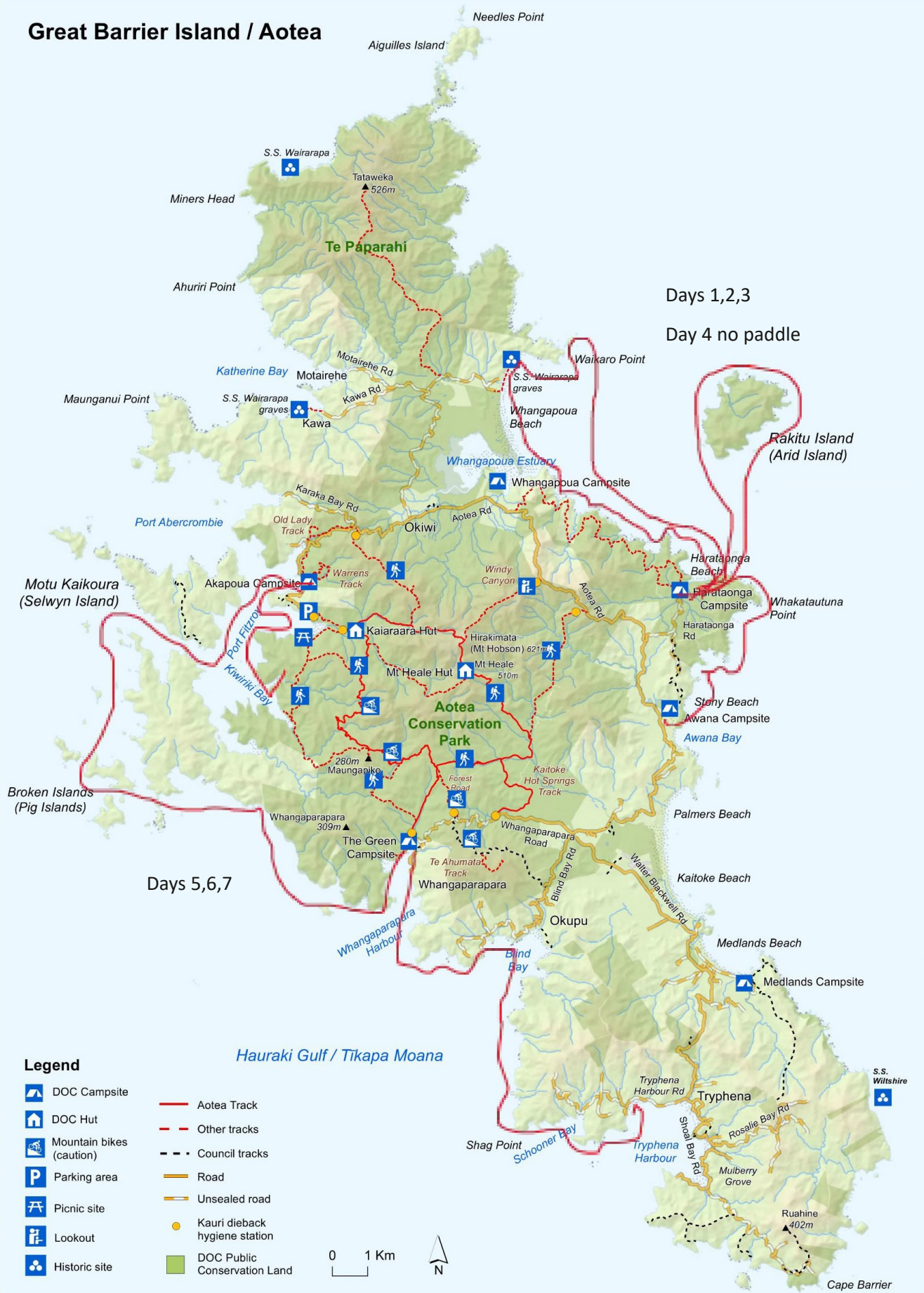
New Zealand Sea Kayak Adventures. They are based at Bay of Islands, another superb paddling destination - next year's trip for sure.: www.nzkayaktours.com.

NZ Department of Conservation web site also has useful information: www.doc.govt.nz

Other multi-day trips we have done are: Bohuslän archipelago Sweden (unsupported), Pelorus Sound South Island NZ (unsupported), Espiritu Santo Baja California (supported).



Great Barrier Island / Aotea



Dartmeet, a Wet Nostalgia by Clive Ashford

The 2019 – 20 river season has been one of the best for years, for instance I have run the Upper Dart a total of 27 times since the beginning of October including a very pleasant St Patrick's Day's paddle with Doug & Emerson. I have paddled with Doug for more years than I care to remember, and Emerson was once a member of the long defunct Saints Canoe Club, so in a somewhat reflective mood I thought I will describe the thrills of paddling the Upper Dart and give you a bit of a nostalgic low down on past river paddling. From now on I will refer to the Upper Dart as Dartmeet, because that is what we used to call it when I was young. (The gentle reader may like to insert their own comment here.)

I have spent many years cultivating a mildly eccentric and grumpy persona and although I say so myself, I think that I have done a pretty good job of it, but I am now going to add "sounding like grandad" to my CV, so here goes. "It wasn't like that in my day, you've never had it so good." Oh, how I enjoyed that.

So, you whippersnappers will not remember the dark old days when river paddling was restricted by archaic access agreements that we felt we had to comply with. In the dim but surprisingly not so distant past we had to get permission to paddle on the Dart and had to book tickets. If I remember correctly is cost £1 per trip but you could buy a season ticket for the Loop. Numbers were restricted, for instance the maximum number of paddlers on Dartmeet was 20 per day. Just imagine that if you will. I was reminded quite how bad things were a few weeks ago when I encountered what I will call "a few gentlemen" on the banks of the river Tavy. These "gentleman" were a lot younger than me (most people are) but had an attitude that even the Victorians would have described as old fashioned.

Anyway, all that is simply a pre-ambule to help pad out Ivor's most excellent newsletter. Let's talk about Dartmeet.

Photo by Doug



Once a Saint Emerson

On St Patrick's Day we changed, sorted out the shuttle and launched into the East Dart at Dartmeet. For those of you that don't partake in river paddling let me tell you that sorting out the shuttle is very much a dark art and one that causes a lot of mayhem. Unfortunately we all have stories, some more than one, about car keys being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and whilst these stories are highly entertaining when being regaled in the pub, they are not quite so funny when someone is committed to walking from the bottom to the top of any particular river whilst their erstwhile paddling companions are forced to stand around in a windswept layby in the pouring rain. I could go on but I appreciate that even in these difficult times you do have lives to live.

The aforementioned level of 0.55m at Dunnabridge is on the low side, thus the paddling was comparatively slow and gentle, which nicely matches my current mental state, but let me take a few minutes of your valuable time to describe Dartmeet to you. It starts off as a shallow grade 2 but soon becomes a nice grade 3 paddle with loop type rapids, i.e. shortish rapids that are well defined and have plenty of space between them to pick up swimmers. Any such swimmers are probably attempting a river that is going to get far too hard for them but never fear, there are plenty of opportunities for these hapless paddlers to carry their boats back to the start and save themselves from an awful experience later on. Or not.

Photo by Doug



The grumpy and mildly eccentric author

Now the rapids have become a fairly continuous grade 3, with plenty of route choice and many opportunities to practice eddy hopping skills for those of us who like that kind of thing. The result of all this eddy hopping is that progress down the river is relatively slow, and why not? Well, the modern white-water warrior seems hell bent on getting from the top to the bottom of a river in the shortest possible time, that's why not. They seem to enjoy themselves so who am I to criticise? but I don't subscribe to their form of madness, and this is why...

Photo by Emerson



A happy, smiling Doug

looks up, they will observe Bench Tor and Mel Tor majestically towering above them, with quite possibly a Buzzard or 2 spiralling on the thermals. In my opinion taking one's time is to be thoroughly recommended.

The continuous grade 3 rapids end and our intrepid explorers sit in an eddy to check that heart rates, lung capacities and fear levels are within acceptable parameters. By now we have paddled a lot of grade 3 white water, most of which is harder than anything that the Loop can offer, but none of which is encumbered with anything like a printable name. (I say printable name because I confess that on occasions, I may have been less than gracious when experiencing an unexpected but rocky encounter, or finding that the river has decided to take me on a route that I hadn't chosen. Oh, the joys of river paddling.) There's also the consideration that if you tried to put a name to every recognisable feature on Dartmeet then you would end up with a list of drops and rapids taller, and even more pointless, than one of my stories. (But not this one, naturally.)

Now the gradient steepens and the rapids ramp up to a grade 4. The Mad Mile they call it, but whether this section is actually a mile long I have no idea, sometimes it seems a lot longer, especially if I'm having a bad day or we have to get involved with rescues. (On this occasion everything went well so the Mad Mile seemed remarkably short.)

The Mad Mile is a reasonably easy grade 4, especially at the relatively low levels that I paddle it, but it is still grade 4. That's a whole grade harder than the Loop, and there is an awful lot of it. The gentle grade 3 eddy hopping gives way to something a little more focused. Concentration is now the order of the day and appreciation of the scenery suddenly seems to be less of a priority. I don't pretend to be speaking for any of my paddling companions, they are perfectly capable of digging holes for themselves, but I find that running the Mad Mile consists of a lot of tense paddling interjected with moments of complete terror. Let me introduce you to the moments of complete terror, using the names that I learnt all that time ago. Firstly, there's the Grade 4 Version of Lovers Leap followed by Tree, The L Shaped Weir, Euthanasia Falls, Surprise Surprise and Old 2 Rocks. The modern paddler will recognise some of those names but not others, a fine example of how language evolves. The modern paddler has also named the interceding rapids but I observe that giving something a name simply results in making it a bit scarier, and I find Dartmeet scary enough as it is, thank you very much.

Photo by Doug



Anyone seen my boat?

Somewhere along the terror filled maelstrom the bedrock changes from granite to something metamorphic, but I've never really been in a position to observe exactly where!

Once Old 2 Rocks has been completed there is a big pool to rest in and an opportunity for reflection, knowing that there is nothing downstream to cause concern. The delightful Cave Rapid that follows allows for a mellow wind down before the river enters a mile or so of grade 2 shallows that have to be negotiated before the final 3

grade 3 drops just above New Bridge.

To finish the trip, we clamber up the bank, egress to the car park and let the smiling begin.

Puzzles

A new pull out and keep section devoted to puzzles brazenly stolen from the internet.

This week a Word Search. Can you find the word "kayak" in the grid below

Kayak word search.

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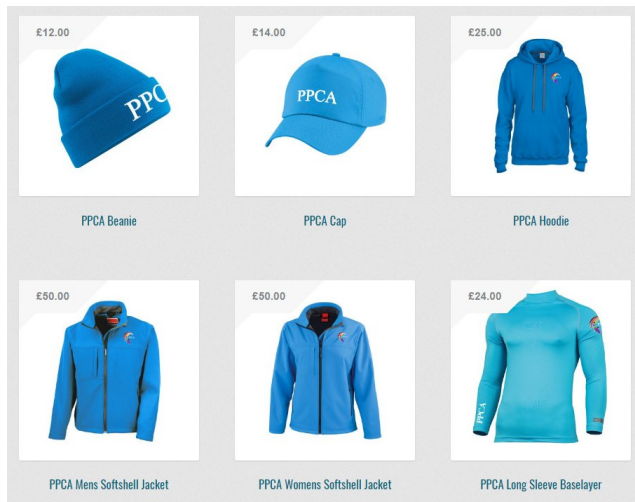
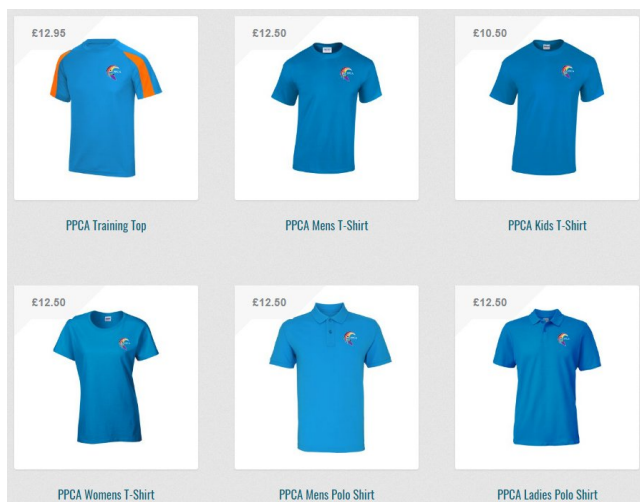
Words to find:
KAYAK

Exchange and Mart

PPCA Club Clothing by Jackie Perry, Publicity Officer

A full range of customised kit in either blue or black is available to order direct from Tailored Branding via the link below

<https://hsclothing.co.uk/ppca-3/>



Discount Available at Millets, 38/40 New George St, Plymouth PL1 1RW

One of our members works in the Millets store (Big 'Thank you' to Lee McKenzie!) on New George Street, Plymouth and has negotiated with his Manager a great discount of 15% on production of your PPCA club membership card. Usual T's & C's apply, e.g. goods already discounted/sales items might be excluded.

Discount Available at Kayaks and Paddles

Kayaks and paddles offer discount to local kayak and canoe clubs. The PPCA and Tamar Canoe club can get a discount up to 15%. This is an offer not a right for the person that is making a purchase, so please do not go upsetting Kayaks and Paddles employees as this discount might be taken away.



Raise free donations for us every time you shop online with easyfundraising!



<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/ppca/>

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