



PPCA Newsletter September 2019

Introduction

Welcome to September's Newsletter. This month, we have some more fiction from the Krafy Kayaker and Clive's monumental trilogy reaches its epic conclusion. Standby for the Director's Cut. It's a bit of a thin edition after last month's bumper; even the calendar looks a bit thin with the end of the evening sessions. Never mind, it's quality rather than quantity.

Way back when, The Pogues, whose Fairytale of New York has become a family favourite at Christmas were known as Pogue Mahone. They got away with this for quite a while until a particularly alert DJ realised that this was gaelic for "kiss my rear end". Given the quantity of gaelic in Clive's piece this month, it's perfectly possible that Clive is following their example and smuggling any quantity of filth into his piece unbeknownst to your editor. If this is the case, please accept my apologies.

Editorial

I would just like to add my own tribute to all the words that have been said about Tom Clarke, particularly since Tom achieved what had hitherto been believed to be impossible and taught me how to paddle a kayak in a more or less straight line.

Tom was an infinitely patient and expert coach who was always prepared to explain how a stroke worked and how you could make it more efficient. Admittedly, his explanations were sometimes so detailed that he left little time to put theory into practice but they were lessons that stayed with me for years.

He was always believed to be the oldest active member of the club but this could never be definitively established as, somehow, he always neglected to put his date of birth on his membership form.

One of my favourite memories of him is the image of him standing next to John Mitchell glaring at each other having somehow managed to overturn an open boat in less than six inches of water on the edge of the Hoe.

Thanks Tom.

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 cover photographers for August are, as ever - Joy, Debbie, Tracy and Terry.

Features

The Scottish Isles Trilogy Part Three: We Saw Some Beasties by Clive Ashford

Let me give you a quick re-cap of our peregrinations* of the Scottish Isles so far. In the first part we were based on Skye and visited the amazing Spar Cave, and then in part two we visited the equally amazing but entirely different Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa, 3.5 miles off the coast of Mull. (Two islands in one story, you lucky people had quite a bargain.) Those of a claustrophobic nature can relax; there are no caves in this story.

You will probably deduce from the title of this month's contribution that I am going to talk about wildlife, so just to set the scene this little story finds Bob, Clive, Ian and Joy staying in Shepherd's Cottage in Glenaros, which is on the isle of Mull. As luck would have it just a few hundred yards from the cottage is the short Aros River estuary and on most evenings we would wander down to this estuary to watch a dòbhran (otter) feeding. The dòbhran seemed to quite like feeding on crùbagan, (crabs) so it would appear that we have something in common.



Ben More - Photo by a passing iolair-bhuidhe (Maybe)

Our best wildlife paddle was a couple of days after our Fingal's Cave epic that was so brilliantly described in last month's newsletter. I'm going to tell you that we carefully planned a one way trip from Calgary to Croig, a relatively modest 9 miles. You may well scoff at my use of the word carefully (and I confess that the sceptic may have a point) but as we were paddling in waters of which we had no local knowledge I can assure you that we took the planning stage of all these trips very seriously.



A dòbhran - Photo by Joy

We set up the shuttle, changed in an (un)pleasantly cooling shower and then launched into Calgary Bay. Views of the Treshnish Isles opened up as we paddled towards the rocky outcrop of Rubha nan Oirean (Point at the Entrance of the Bay) under dull grey skies.

I was leading as we rounded Rubha nan Oirean and there, on a rocky ledge, was a large dòbhran. (If you've already forgotten what a dòbhran is you will have to refer to an earlier paragraph in order to remind yourself.) This dòbhran had its

back to me and was munching away on a fresh eisg (fish). I know that it was a fresh eisg because it was still wriggling. I pointed to the dòbhran and drifted along. Bob and Joy were able to see the wee beastie but in order to avoid hitting a rock Joy had to put in a paddle stroke. This disturbance spooked the dòbhran making it abandon the eisg and scurry off into the water, which in turn meant that Ian missed out on the sighting. By this time the dòbhran had devoured the eisg's head so being abandoned didn't do the eisg much good either.

A little later Ian was lucky enough to see a dòbhran that the rest of us failed to see, so the dòbhran sightings were evened up.

We paddled north towards Calaich Point under quite high cliffs that would have given little scope for landing had the occasion demanded. Of course the occasion didn't demand any such action and instead we saw two or three of what I am going to call leumadair, (dolphin) but may well have been peileag (porpoise). The sky may have been dull and grey but we were in possession of huge sunny smiles, especially when we saw a dorsal fin scything through the water towards us.



Two leumadair near Traigh Cadh an Essa - Photo by Joy

As we approached Calach Point we could see that just off the headland the surface was disturbed by either a small tide race or overfalls. Bob was very keen to experience this disturbance first hand so headed off into the maelstrom. (That's my description; being a paddling wizard Bob will liken conditions to a millpond.) After a short beasting (bob around) we returned to the coast but not before we saw some more leumadair, or maybe the same leumadair again, who knows? On one occasion we saw the classic view of some tail flukes just as one of the leumadair started to dive.

All this excitement had made us hungry so I made it my task to find a lunch stop. Very soon we paddled into the bay of Port na Caillich (If you can't work out what that means then you are not the intelligent and discerning reader that I thought you were.) and could see a beach that was accessible through a gap in the rocks. As I paddled towards this gap I saw the belly and all four feet of a dòbhran. This dòbhran had surfaced right in front of me and quickly dived, so I was expecting that to be the only sighting but happily I was mistaken. The dòbhran resurfaced and we were able to watch it for quite some time before it finally disappeared. This dòbhran was both smaller and lighter in colour than the one we had seen on the rocks earlier so I deduce that it was possibly a young one, but perhaps you know better.

Now here's a little aside that I will give you at no extra cost. I quite like seeing wildlife but even though I paddle with my eyes open it isn't often that I get to see something first, but on this trip I was the first to see dòbhran on two separate occasions and was able to point them out to my fellow paddlers. I can report that there is a great pleasure to be derived from sharing such a privilege.

We ate a well earned lunch on the beach and after a bit of exploration Ian looked at the approaching black clouds and surmised that we were going to get a bit wet. Ian gets the prize for the most accurate weather prediction because just as we got back onto the water we were hit by a deluge. The rain came down in stair rods as the saying goes. For those younger readers a stair rod is an often wooden rod that was used to hold stair carpets in place before the invention of carpet gripper. I can categorically inform you that never once were we hit by any wooden rods, so quite where the saying comes from is a bit of a mystery to me; however I can tell you all the waves were beaten flat and that the huge rain drops kicked up a fine spray, reducing visibility.



The rain came down in stair rods - Photo by Joy

For the remainder of the trip we saw no more notable wildlife, but we were in Scotland so seeing ròin (seals) is a given.

Moving on to the last day of our holiday the weather forecast was for wall to wall sunshine, light winds and maybe almost warm. While my paddling friends hatched a plan to paddle out of Carsaig Bay I decided that I would walk up Ben More, which at 3169 feet above sea level is not

only the highest point on Mull but also Mull's only Munro. (A Munro is a hill whose summit is over 3000 feet above sea level.) The walk up was steep and made me puff but I got to the top in just two breathless hours. As I arrived at the summit the clouds parted to reveal a pair of iolair-bhuidhe (golden eagles) soaring above me. They performed acrobatics, dancing on the air currents until they eventually flew off into the distance. Already feeling happy I looked at my surroundings. With very few clouds I had clear views of the coast from the Mull of Kintyre right around to the Outer Hebrides, and looking inland I also had clear views of the Highlands including Ben Nevis and the hills around Glencoe. I ate my lunch in a very contented fashion.



Waterfall at Traigh Cadh an Essa - Photo by Joy

Not to be outdone on either the wildlife or the scenery front our paddling fraternity saw the famous Carsaig Arches and explored a waterfall near Traigh Cadh an Essa, (Essa Beach.) They also saw gobhar-fiadhaich (wild goats) and a pod of leumadair that put on a display especially for them. To finish off a memorable paddle the water became glassy calm causing remarkable reflections as they returned to Carsaig Bay. The gentle reader will conclude that the holiday ended on a high note for all of us.



Reflections in Carsaig Bay - Photo by Joy

Thus ends the 2019 Scottish Isles trilogy which, to sum up, is not nearly as long or intricate as Lord of the Rings but is quite possibly just as farfetched. My thanks (in strictly alphabetical order) to Adam, Bob, Ian, Joy and Karen for their company, for making the two weeks so much fun and for allowing their names to be published in such a dubious set of tales.

*Peregrinations. In the introduction to last month's newsletter Ivor, your newsletter editor, used the word peregrinations to describe my stories. I confess that I had to look this word up but now that I have I see no reason why you shouldn't benefit from my recently extended vocabulary. Joy asked me why I didn't print the meaning of peregrination.

The answer is that I don't think you are as thick as I am, but if you are then you can look up peregrination in the same way that I did. The exercise will do you good.

For information I used Google translate for the no doubt dodgy translations.

Good paddling, Clive A.

Editor's Note: peregrination - a land inhabited by birds of prey

Fiction

The Fabulous Five Go Paddling - Zip Me Up by The Krafty Kayaker

The Fabulous Five, the new members who you may have come across in last month's newsletter, have settled in well. You might say they bear some resemblance to past, present and future club members. Indeed, you might think "I am sure I have met them" or "who does that remind me of" but you would be mistaken because the Fabulous Five are entirely fictional.

Here they are again: The Leader, The Ancient Mariner, Median Middling, Victoria Sponge and Ginger Bread.

For good or bad the Fabulous Five are accompanied on their paddles by a capricious, fickle ethereal being with a dual personality. It is called Lucky or Shortstraw depending on what happens.

The Fabulous Five had a couple of adventures during the summer which you might have read about. This story is about a paddle earlier in the year and maybe we can learn from it.

Zip Me Up

You could tell it was going to be a winter paddle; the water was cold and the air colder still. The breakwater was a barely visible line of white and the wind whistled through Mount Batten. Everybody looked like an over-dressed Michelin man. Even Ginger said "I don't like the look of it"

Median was running late. The usual things had taken longer than average that morning. His normal paddling kit was not in its habitual place. By the time he slipped into his dry suit the others were on the water, waiting.

They got to Cable Beach. It was messy but just about OK for rock hopping.

"Find a buddy and put your helmets on" said the Leader. "Median, stay close to me".

Up above, Lucky was worried: "Does he know his dry suit is open?"

"He ought to know better" was the sharp reply from Shortstraw.

At Bovisand the Leader repeated himself (he does not often do that): "Hey Med, stay with me"

But Median did not hear. He was 50m away, upside down in a mass of white water.

It looked worse than it was. The Ancient Mariner, totally reliable, towed the boat away from the rocks with Median clinging onto the stern.

They tried the heel hook rescue, the knee over rescue, the pull-up, the belly flop but Median was above average weight and below average fitness and his suit was filling up. He weighed a ton.

Then Ginger, a large strong lad (paddling since he was a toddler) leaned right over both boats, grabbed the scruff of Median's buoyancy aid and dragged him back into his boat.

By now everyone was cold, Median was colder still. They called it a day.

Even Shortstraw was sympathetic: "Lucky, get those showers hot for them won't you"

That's it from me.

Aye and Anon.

The Krafty Kayaker.

The Long View - a word from the Canny Coach

Given the difficult conditions there are several lessons here guys.

Know what the plan is; stay in contact with the coach; find your comfort, stretch and panic zones.

Can you rescue others when it is rough? Can they rescue you? How long does it take you to get back in your

boat?

Give yourself time before you paddle. Check your kit and check it again. Look at the water, feel the wind. Know the weather, the tide, the group. Get things in focus and be confident before you go.

Safe paddling.

The Canny Coach

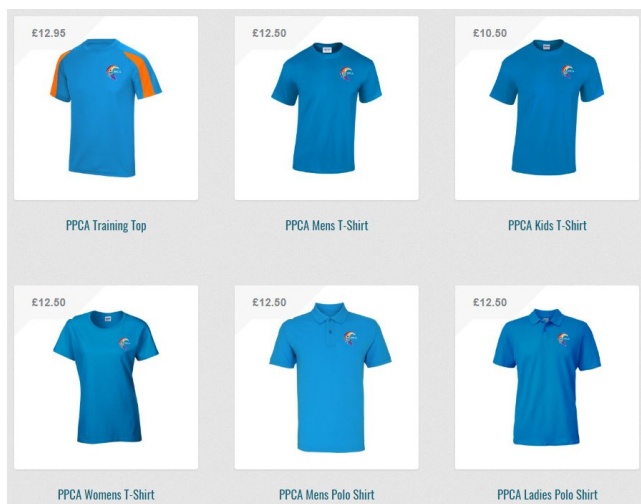
Watch out for next month's Fabulous Five Go Paddling story: "Winter White Water".

Exchange and Mart

PPCA Club Clothing by Jackie Perry, Publicity Officer

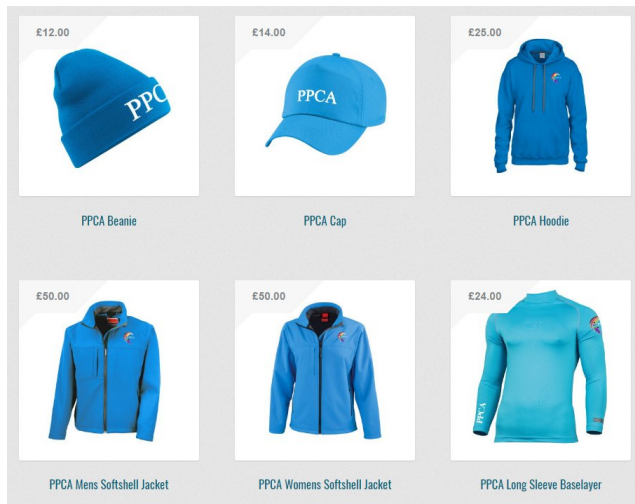
A full range of customised kit in either blue or black is available to order direct from Tailored Branding via the link below

<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/>

Club Calendar - Please Check Website for Updates

For the Diary

7th August 2020: Isles of Scilly

Intermediate Sea Paddles (Sundays)

22nd September - Clive Ashford

Recreational Paddles (Saturdays)

7th September - Terry Calcott (Sea Paddle)

14th September - Clive Ashford (Toppers weekend)

21st September - Gavin Bennet

28th September - Terry Calcott

5th October - Clive Ashford (Sea Paddle)

12th October - Brim

19th October - Andy Kittle

26th October - Joy Ashford

Courses

7th September - Intro - Pete Anderson

Pool Sessions (19:15)

6th September

4th October

Open Canoe (Friday)

6th September - Jen Nicholls

13th September - Sam Pluckrose

20th September - Pete Anderson

Evening Sessions (Tuesdays)

3rd September Explore Award - Pete Anderson
Late Start - Brim
Rec Paddle - Andy Kittle
Sea Award - Clive Ashford

10th September Explore Award - Pete Anderson
Late Start - Brim
Rec Paddle - Andy Kittle
Sea Award - Clive Ashford

17th September Explore Award - TBC
Late Start - TBC
Rec Paddle - TBC
Sea Award - TBC

The Committee

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