



PPCA Newsletter



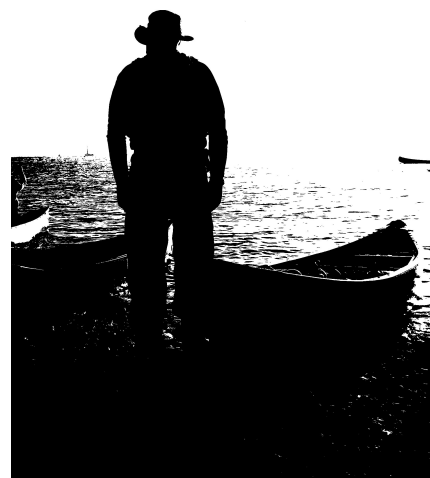
Ian Ruse

This wasn't really what I expected when I took on the job of Newsletter editor. I thought I'd be putting editions together featuring the amusing exploits of members, odd bits of news and some entertaining pictures. I never dreamed that I would be composing an obituary, let alone one for somebody as apparently indestructible as Ian.

The word "legend" is overused but in the paddling community, Ian was just that – a legend. He had been everywhere, done everything and knew everybody. There didn't seem to be a stretch of water anywhere in the world that Ian hadn't paddled with a club, with friends or during his time in the Navy.

Most people who joined the club in the last few years will only have known Ian from the open boat sessions he took on Tuesdays and, particularly, on Fridays, a session which he made his own for many years and which always involved the Kelly kettle and bag of jelly babies, but in the course of his career he had paddled all types of boats and competed as a kayaker at a high level.

Ian was always happy to share his experience and had forgotten more about paddling than most of us will ever know. He was never happier than when he was sitting in a boat with a newbie explaining the intricacies of a J stroke. He was always infinitely patient with beginners no matter how incompetent – I well remember him keeping up his encouragement one Friday evening as I made repeated failed attempts to get into the harbour at Axmouth until I finally made it, completely exhausted.



Ian never seemed to be off the water. As well as the PPCA, he paddled with the Tamar and Axe Vale clubs and various groups of friends. When he wasn't paddling, he was generally working on his boats and paddles. Estimates of the number of canoes in his home varied but he was generally believed to have about a dozen, in the front room, on his stairs and anywhere else they would fit.

Ian believed passionately that paddling was a family sport and that you were never too young to learn. Seeing a family on the water was one of his great pleasures and it was typical of him that the day he died he had taken a friend and her children out for a day on the Dart.

Ian was a fount of stories as anyone who was ever pinned in a corner of the Morley on a Friday night can attest. His stories covered every aspect of a long and varied life – the Navy, his work as an electrician and his exasperating apprenticeship. If on the second or third time you were in the Morley with him, you realised the fount wasn't quite inexhaustible, it didn't really matter, they were still good stories.

He wasn't perfect – he never came to terms with modern technology (computers were a complete blind spot although he could work a mobile phone after a fashion), he was chronically incapable of estimating the time it would take the Brittany ferry to get from the horizon to his current location and he never really came to terms with the power pry, referring to it as the "goon stroke" much to everyone else's irritation but everyone who paddled with him learned from the experience and the world was a better place for having him in it. We will all miss him terribly.

What follows has no real structure – it's just a series of memories, comments and pictures of Ian. Much like an evening at the Morley.

From Keith Wallace

My name is Keith Wallace and I was one of the six founder members that started the PPCA. Ian Ruse was discovered by founder members Barry Lavers & the late Ted Raybould, when they went to HMS Drake swimming pool to practice canoe rolling & rescue techniques in the 1970's. Ian was there and they got talking and asked him if he would be interested in joining the PPCA - he said yes. We already had good canoeists, but none with his knowledge so he became a very valuable member. Ian was still in the Royal Navy as a chief petty officer on board HMS Hermes and on one occasion some of us were invited to a function at the petty officers mess by Ian. In 1982 I paddled in the Devizes to Westminster canoe race with another experienced canoeist called Shelia Skinner. My support crew was Ian & his then wife Penny & George Skinner, with Ian in charge. Ian & Penny became good friends of me my then wife Rosemary & my son Duncan, as he did with many others in the PPCA. I remember when his daughter Rachel was born, & my son was one of her friends. I went on many sea & river trips with him & others. Although he was not a founder member, he was without a doubt the longest serving member of the PPCA, by far to date. Ian's teaching techniques were second to none, & he has many canoeists to be thankful to him for where they got over the years.



From Bekky

Ian Ruse was an incredibly keen coach and open boat enthusiast. Despite my limited J-stroke skills he rescued me from inevitable cabin fever a few years ago by getting me back out on the water after an ear operation when I had been strongly encouraged to keep my ears dry - this is a difficult task in any water-sport but Ian had no hesitation in accepting the challenge. He organised lots of gentle paddles and was extremely patient as I did my best to try and master one-sided strokes.

He very kindly even brought my Dad out on the water one time when he was visiting Plymouth. My Dad still talks about that lovely sunny day paddling even now.

Ian regularly organised both club sessions and peer paddles and was always willing to coach novice paddlers. Even though we caught up less frequently as our paddling interests went different routes he would always stop for a chat at the PPCA club shed and was always happy to exchange paddling tales. He was extremely proud of his daughter Rachel and I am sure she is already aware of the positive influence this gentle giant had both on the paddling community and further afield.

Ian's patient coaching style fostered the development of many paddlers of all ages not only within the PPCA but also in other kayaking clubs and friendship circles. Ian was always very passionate about his open boating activities and even when he was undergoing radiotherapy his face would light up when he talked about getting back out on the water. Whenever I see an open boat on Plymouth Sound it will remind me of Ian Ruse and how much enjoyment he introduced to others by sharing his love for the sport. I suspect that would make him smile.



Alright Plum – Our Friend Ian Marsden Ruse.

The sad news of a good friend's demise though inevitable is always hard hitting, especially when unexpected and their long association has made such an impression during your life's journey. Ian was such an example.

We met in the early eighties when after a lifetime (at that point for me) paddling for fun, my next progression would involve developing coaching skills – the route to Senior Instructor spread out. From day one we hit it off, a common association with; The Navy, HM Dockyard and electrical engineering ensured we both had shared interests. Ian, an ex-Chief Petty Officer turned civvy electrician offered an alternative focus, aside from canoeing, which would consume our lives.

Living in Lower Compton, literally just around the corner from Ian and Penny's house resulted in frequent visits and endless cups of coffee, such was the warm hospitality which greeted you along with a young bouncing Rachel on her trampoline. The family all wore handmade Buffalo cardigans, knitted compliments of his Mum whom he always refer to as Ma.

Ian proved a valued mentor, teacher and coach with sound practical advice born from many years kayaking and canoeing as I journeyed through the path to Senior Instructor along with fellow trainees Dave Jarvis and Eddie Michie. Upon gaining the requisite qualifications Ian and I shared training and assessment weekends at venues close to home around Plymouth, to further afield including Barnstable and Lyme Regis organised by Dia Bunyan and Mike Cotton, respectively. Travelling in the Ruse Land Rover "Tank" became an accustomed transport mode and on a couple of occasion I even drove this *interesting* vehicle, which appeared to defy all known laws of physics. It tended to over steer on a right hand bends (with a clunk) and drift straight through left handers!

Returning once from a Lyme weekend descending towards Marsh Mills round about (long before the fly-over was constructed) I began applying the brakes about half a mile before the junction, minimal response, I started sweating, eventually after standing on the brake pedal (with both feet) and using the steering wheel for more leverage the fully loaded Tank, complete with gear, nine passengers and fully loaded kayak trailer came to a halt in the empty middle lane of the round about – lucky it was around half past midnight!

Bringing this deficiency to Ian's attention when unloading his smiley response; "The brakes are a bit stiff, but given enough time and distance you will stop".

His interests extended far beyond BCU coaching and club events and involved helping the general community. Swan sweeping and ringing around Kingsbridge Estuary, safety kayak escort for the annual Torbay long distance swim and who will remember the twenty coach raft configuration of Thomas the Tank entry drifting by as we covered the annual Dart Raft Race. The smoke emitting, water spraying red lobster was another story!

What of club events? Indeed three local organisations come to mind – PPCA (obviously), Plymouth Polytechnic (now Plymouth University) and The Probation Service (canoeing proved a positive rehabilitation tool for young offenders). All were located in lock-ups along Phoenix Wharf (Plymouth's Barbican).

During term time, Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings would see the Polytechnic's boathouse emptied as hordes of students drained the store of all craft and like a scene from Wacky Races groups of around 60 venture beyond Fisherman's Nose, all under Ian's safe guidance and tutorage. This in an era long before risk assessments and Health & Safety culture we witness now.

Before moving across to Mount Batten PPCA's boathouse prove the epi-centre from which water ventures commenced, whether on salt or fresh water. At a time when canoes and kayaks were constructed in wood or GRP

(plastic boats were in their infancy and just emerging on the market) a club trip could prove epic resulting in one's pride and joy destined to the car boot for the return journey. Ian always appeared unscathed, such was his skill and natural awareness on the water.

And who could forget his fleet of personal canoes and kayaks, most notable a C2 of dreadnought proportions with cockpits located close to the bow and stern, rather than the modern centrally configured types. One favourite trick involved inviting eager young unsuspecting canoeists to have a go in the beast. With the youngster sat in the bow cockpit and under careful guidance from Ian the pair would launch into the Dart's full fury and after shooting turbulent rapids Ian would suggest they played in a stopper. The C2 would inch forward until the bow grabbed by the hole would slowly submerge in the maelstrom, meanwhile Ian in the rear safely played the boat. A combination of the front person disappearing in white-water foam and screaming would suggest to Ian when the C2 required extraction. The same stunt worked equally well in 6ft surf – "who said C2's couldn't be used for surfing", was one of Ian's stock phrases!

Phoenix Wharf saw many a young budding canoeist develop under Ian guidance. Roger Farrall and Nick Benny ran successful Dart slaloms for a number of years. And whilst mentioning Nick a certain novice Miss Carrivick, whom we all know as Annette first cautiously paddled from the wharf. PPCA members have come and gone over the years, but a few like Ian have stayed loyal to the club from the early days. Ken Hamblin, Linda & Paul Brady, my old long time friend and kayaking partner Andy Stamp and I dare not forget Rowena – all inspired by Ian.

I had planned to write a brief 300 word account of memories with Ian, but it soon became evident there were so many fun antics, some related above and of others – Max emerging from Ian's house naked, CB radio, Ian in a tutu, diving trips, Devizes to Westminster Long Distance Race, Bedford, Newgale, Eddystone trips, sea kayaking trips, open boating, top diving board kayak launching, kayak trailers overtaking their towing vehicles, Bob's (Ottley) Open Canoe Weekends at Axminster, - all of which, and others will be related in greater depth when we celebrate his life.

I met Ian unexpectedly last year in a model railway shop (I wonder how many people knew of this interest?). After discussing the merits of modelling in N or OO gauge (Ironically the big man's interest was in the smaller N scale) our talk turned to our glory days when a decent set of Gee's wooden paddles would set you back less than £50 and GRP boats were the business (we forgot about the constant maintenance). We bemoaned some changes and praised others just as old men do and whilst I have drifted away from canoeing (I now race on twin trapeze catamarans), Ian still had that enthusiasm, fun for life, all giving spirt for which his friends and family have admired and loved throughout his lifetime.

Good dependable guys are few and far between, especially those that have made such a positive impact - Ian was one such person. Your character will live in our memories for ever.



I first met Ian when learning to canoe in Bedfordshire. He had many friends who taught paddling to name a few; Copper, Pam Brookes, Bluey and Robin. My sister Marion and elder brother Bernie would attend Bedfordshire outdoor camps held at Newgale in Pembrokeshire. Ian would attend with his wife Penny and daughter Rachel, he would lead the canoeing and diving whilst Penny was head chef in camp. On 14 August 1979, we were camping in force 10 tents in a large open farm field when the Fastnet tragedy happened force 10 winds took hold of the campsite in the dark of night. We were awoken by staff calling us to get out of our tents and help save a marquee by holding guy lines. Next one of the marquee main post snapped with a terrifying sound. The young people were then ushered to safety in a large coach out of fierce winds and heavy rain. We were scared and frightened the coach was swaying due to the force of the wind. I recall a window blowing out of the bus and further chaos, we exited the coach to a barn. In the morning Ian and Penny took a group of us down to the shore at Newgale there were stricken yachts and debris strewn along the beach, helicopters continued to search. I remember being carefully looked after by the staff, they too must have been shocked of the events of that night.

When moving to Plymouth in the early 80's I lodged with Ian, Penny and their young daughter Rachel. There are many stories one could tell. Just a few follow;

Ian had led a group of canoeists from Phoenix Wharf to Cawsands. We had a memorable day taking diving tanks, masks, lead weights in his orange and blue C2, we'd dived in clear waters and speared the odd fish. On the return paddle the weather had changed, wind and waves were challenging us as we reached Fort Picklecombe. Ian was in the stern of the C2 and I was in the bow. The diving equipment loaded in the middle section. So the inevitable happens, large waves breaking side on to the C2, we brace and skulk to avoid capsize and finally were upside down. Ian rolled the C2, the diving bottles and weights following 360 degrees too. When we righted Ian's words 'alright Plum' we continued to Phoenix Wharf surfing. Tremendous adrenaline and fun.

I recall another time when retuning from a surfing trip at Bigbury in 'tank' Ian's beloved beige series 2 Land Rover. We were all recalling our surfing stories of the day, when driving down Aveton Gifford hill the 'tank' front bonnet flew open obscuring the driver's view. Ian calmly continued to steer peering round the bonnet with his side window open until he was able to stop and secure the bonnet. This story has often been retold.

On another day, we had been on the river and returning home. The 'tank' was loaded with paddlers and wet kit, a laden trailer of boats in tow. However, on this particular day, we went down a hill and Ian made comment when the trailer overtook the 'tank'. He again was calm and collected.

Ian Marsden Ruse, had a wonderful mum he called Mar. She returned from Canada with balls of buffalo wool. Ian for many years wore a buffalo cardigan made for him by Mar. His Buffalo cardigan and flip flops in the 80's were his signature attire.

I have many memories and long-standing friends from paddling both in Bedfordshire and with the PPCA. Ian was a true friend to many and has crossed so many people's lives in his love and passion of canoeing.

Bye Plum and thank you

Samantha Pluckrose: What a shock really can't believe he's gone! He was an awesome coach and a great man 😞😞

Mark Upton: Really sad news, please pass on my condolences to his daughter.

Helga Pinn: I am sad to hear this. RIP Ian x

Tracy Jones: I'm shocked and so sad. Best wishes to the family.

Neville Cannon: Oh no. That's a real loss. Thinking of his family at the sad, sad time. RIP Ian.



Philip Lucas: Oh what a real shame. It was Ian who introduced myself and my sister to kayaking and the PPCA in the late 80s as my sister new his step daughter Kate. A loss to the club and paddling. My condolences to his family.

Steve Pike: Such sad news. Ian was responsible for introducing me to kayaking and the PPCA. Thought are with Ian's family

Graham Brown: Sorry to hear this news. Ian taught be a great deal about canoeing. I will always have fond memory's of my time on the water with him. A great loss to us all.

Mary McArdle: I'm very sorry indeed to hear this news.

Linda Brady: Wow! Such a shock. Ian will be greatly missed.

Adam Coulson: I came too late to paddle sport to know Ian well other than by reputation. What a huge loss primarily to his family and friends and then to the paddling community.

Bettina Schadow: Ian Ruse - a true legend of a kind, a hero in lots of ways, an inspiration to so many - words can't describe the loss we're feeling. A workmate, an amazing canoeing, camping and outdoors coach, a generous friend, true adventurer and above all very caring and helpful man - thank you for your time and patience, encouragement, your fantastic stories, bringing me to canoeing and the PPCA, giving me the confidence and support through difficult times, inspiring my children and many friends, always lending a helping hand and never stop fighting to bring this sport and intimate nature experience to children and young people. You gave us precious memories and although we were looking forward to so many more wonderful days on the water with you and friends....on your last day you were doing what you loved most in great company. RIP grand man. Your legend will live on. Lots of love and prayers to the family.

Diane Hoppins: Such shocking and sad news. He was such a lovely coach with great expertise .Always reassuring and patient when my strokes went awry, always full of interesting stories and always with the Kelly kettle and full range of refreshments for a welcome break. A very sad loss. Love to his family.





Julie Elworthy: Sad day indeed thoughts are with his family. Rest in peace Ian.

Andy Kittle: This is very sad news. Ian will be really missed. Condolences to his family.

Jack Frost: He will be very much missed please pass my respect on to the family.

Annette Benny: There are some people who come into your life - they share their wisdom, they teach and give of themselves and they do it with great fun. Ian Ruse was one of those people and from whom I learnt a huge amount over the last 33 years.

He will be sadly missed. My love to his family xxx

Damean Miller: A great man who will be sadly missed. Taught so many, so much. A true gent of the water. Please pass on my condolences.

Terry Calcott: Such sad news. Ian was a gentle giant and just got on with what he loved, paddling and passing on his vast knowledge of the sport to others. He will be sadly missed by many. Rest in peace.

Holls Gr: We were with Ian yesterday. He introduced my newbie friend and her daughter to canoeing along the Exeter canal. Ian and all of us had a wonderful day, friends, food, water, laughter. We took him for a meal to say thank you. He had what appeared to be a heart attack whilst driving us all home through the Dart valley. He somehow managed to slow the car and saved a very serious incident. We've spoken to his family. I'm so sorry for him, his family and all of his friends. Prayers are with all.

