



# PPCA Newsletter



## August 2017

### Introduction

Welcome to August's Newsletter. As promised, normal service has been resumed with a bumper holiday special. We have the welcome return of Shed News, an assessment of a three star assessment, a piece on a recreational paddle and an article of Dickensian length and splendour from Clive that could be subtitled Five go Wild in Shetland.

### Editorial

Every now and again you get an insight into how other clubs do things. We were in Bath recently and the local club were doing a taster session below the weir at Pulteney bridge in the city centre. They drew quite a large audience, admittedly mostly foreign tourists, and several rounds of applause when one of the ~~victims~~ participants walked all around the noses of the boats. I don't quite know how we could do anything similar – our city centre doesn't really lend itself to this sort of thing – but they certainly raised their profile quite successfully.

Ivor Jones

Newsletter Editor



## The Committee

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## Next Committee Meeting

The next committee meeting will be on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September, venue to be confirmed. If you have any points you wish to raise, please contact Bob Grose [secretary@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk)

### The AGM by Terry Calcott, Chair

The annual PPCA AGM will be held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October at 19:00, venue Mount Batten.

The purpose of the AGM is to listen to reports from the club officers. Various club awards will also be presented and finally the election of a new committee.

The committee consists of:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Club Leader
- Deputy Club Leader (co-opted by Club Leader)
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Welfare Officer
- Equipment Officer
- Membership Secretary
- Course Co-ordinator
- Youth Development Officer
- Publicity Officer

Please think about supporting your club. If you would like to put yourself forward for any of the committee posts let myself (Chair) or the Club Secretary know. You will need to have a Proposer and Secunder from within the membership.

It is vital that the club forms a full committee to carry out the club business on your behalf. It is also important that we form a well-balanced committee from within the membership with a variety of views across the whole spectrum of paddling. Please speak to any of the existing committee if you are interested in a particular role.

### Shed Access by Adam Coulson, Membership Secretary

Would members please note that access to the PPCA sheds at Mountbatten is restricted. To access the club equipment shed, the Mountbatten reception staff are authorised to sign out the key to anybody presenting them with the relevant access card. These cards are held primarily by coaches so that they can access the equipment required for sessions.

The member's boat shed keys are held by those who have a boat stored in the shed having signed an agreement that they are responsible for whoever might access the shed when unlocked by them. Many members have a key for this – available on payment of a £10 deposit. These keys remain the property of the club and must be returned when the member's boat is no longer stored there, or when the member leaves the club. Please get in touch with me if you would like to obtain a shed key.

The point of this article (I know – slow as ever to get to it) is to request that members refrain from putting the Mountbatten staff in the position of having to decide whether to allow a member access to either shed. Basically if you do not have a coach card or a shed key they will decline your request. To avoid embarrassment, especially with the junior staff, Andy Mossford from the Mountbatten Centre has requested that you please don't ask!

### Stars on a Soggy Saturday by Adam Coulson

As most of you will know British Canoeing run a system of assessments designed for different crafts and different types of paddle sport. These are a star system and further details are available on their website ([click here](#)). It is a requirement of PPCA that members should hold a 1\* certificate and this can be achieved on one of the excellent 1\* days run by our coaches for the benefit of new paddlers. As would be expected, the next step is a 2\* assessment which requires a level of competence in both a kayak (any type) and canoe. I have virtually no experience of canoes and like many chose to skip the 2\* award. I hear that BC is considering changing this requirement for different craft. Thus having sat the 1\* some 5 or 6 years ago I started the 3\* training on a Tuesday night in 2015. Unfortunately work meant that in 2015 and 2016 attendance was somewhat variable but improved this year. The coaches that run these sessions do an excellent job in helping you develop skills that make you a better paddler and in preparation for the assessment. Each coach has their own style and we are very fortunate in PPCA that they give their time quite so freely. Thus having prepared over a long time, it was with some trepidation that the date of the assessment loomed. Lots of preparation should increase the chance of success but also adds to the pressure through expectation! I had passed the 3\* White Water assessment last winter but had not prepared in the same fashion as for the test at sea.

The assessment can be taken in a sea kayak, a general purpose boat or even a sit-on-top with thigh straps. Most people use a GP boat although some of the required strokes are of greater relevance in a sea kayak. The other consideration is that I thought the assessment would be slightly more difficult in boats of a very different length. One



of the downsides of a GP boat is getting all of the required kit into it whilst still retaining a degree of flotation in the stern! Bear in mind that you need to stuff in lunch, a drink, spare clothing, a first aid kit, emergency snack, a body bag (sorry a survival bag – the former only if it all goes very wrong!) and a boat repair kit. Then there's the spare paddle between the group. Suddenly that sea kayak seems like a good idea! What's more the kit will be inspected after you have been

swimming to ensure it's still dry. I arrived down at Mountbatten in good time in order to get everything prepared with the other candidates prior to Clive's arrival. I should have known – I don't think I've ever arrived anywhere before Clive!

The assessment comprises a day paddle during which you will be asked to perform various drills. If the assessor is sympathetic (which Clive can be) then you will perform the Eskimo, paddle present and deep water rescues later in the day. Another slight down side to a shorter boat is the tendency of the paddle to slide off the upturned hull of the other boat during presentation – I had visions of a swimming rescue. Jane (H) came along to help Clive and made for even numbers for the rescues. The weather was better than expected and the rain held off until later in the day after a wet start, so that we had quite a pleasant paddle in familiar waters. We were encouraged to do a bit of rock hopping en-route and this is one way to demonstrate various turning strokes. I decided that this was not the time to take too many risks and thus passed up on some borderline opportunities, having made a fool of myself all too often previously.

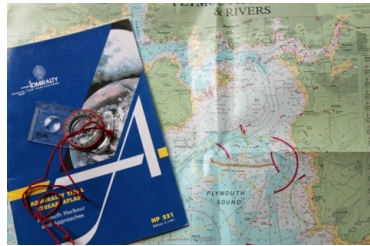


Thus we found ourselves at Bovisand Harbour doing draw strokes on the move – one of the things that all of us were a little worried by. We then pottered back to Cable Beach to do support strokes. The high support is, I am told, the commonest reason for failing. We all did loads of them in an attempt to please our assessor. I have an old shoulder injury that had started causing considerable pain a week or so before and thus was doubly worried about this and the roll. Having been rolling reasonably reliably for some time, my technique had all gone to pieces some 2 weeks prior. I know not why. Like many things when you start worrying about it the brain tells you "it's not going to work" – and guess what - it doesn't! Thanks should go to Buck and a group from the club who helped a lot with some rolling sessions leading up to the test. My shoulder was so stiff that it was not a problem to keep everything "within



the box” as it hurt too much to do anything else. The best of it was that I capsized whilst doing a high brace on the move and then rolled up, very grateful that that bit was out of the way!

Having got a fair bit already done lunch was a reasonably relaxed affair. I was careful to talk about anything except paddle sport as thought I might let myself down and lose points! We picked our way back and did all of the rescue drills without incident. As the weather was variable a decision had been made at lunchtime that we would do our viva in the bar at Mountbatten. This was a great decision as a hot shower and a drink surely improved brain performance. You are expected to have some knowledge regarding the sport, the weather, the sea and other users, and who might pull you out of it if all goes wrong. I think some background reading helps this lots and I am reasonably confident having planned trips for just Karen and I on a regular basis. I was mildly disappointed that Clive and



Jane didn't ask to see my paddle log! I was hoping for multiple choice, but at least there were no essay questions. A basic knowledge of tide tables, maps and charts is required.

I would recommend 3 books to help, as well as OS maps; Imray charts (C14 covers Plymouth Harbour & Rivers) and the Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlases. I read Bill Mattos' "The Kayaking Handbook, a Beginner's Guide" when I first started paddling. "Sea Kayak Handling" by Doug Cooper is an excellent manual as is "Sea Kayak Navigation" by Franco Ferrero. And then there's the internet, font of all knowledge and misinformation! However "Based on Fact" by C. Ashford was no help at all!



So what was the end result? Well you can probably guess that I wouldn't be writing this article if I hadn't passed! Indeed the British Canoeing 3 Star Award certificate dropped on the door mat this morning. So am I a much better paddler as a result? Well not of the assessment but yes as a result of the training done and experience gained. I am comfortable taking part in sea paddles with a certain level of confidence & competence. Indeed I would be out with Brim and Co. right now if the shoulder was working better. But once it's healed I'll be back and wanting to push the boundaries back a little further. And you might still find me in 3 star sessions because it's also important to keep these skills from going rusty. Indeed I vaguely remember that when I was a new member there were 3\* Plus sessions? It would be good to have opportunities to develop further within the club.

One (you might think the only) reason for writing this article is to encourage members to put themselves through the coaching and assessments for the British Canoeing awards. It's stimulating, rewarding and great fun. Oh, and one other reason for writing is to acknowledge the enormous amount of help and encouragement from coaches and paddle buddies within the club – thanks to you all! Will see you out on the water soon.



*Clive's post*

*Hi all, I'm running the rec paddle this Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July*

*The forecast is disappointingly autumnal but on the positive side conditions should be lively. We like lively. (Can't you, just hear Clive saying this with a cheeky smile)*

*Dress suitable and come along for a jolly little paddle that may well include some white bits.*

*On the water at Mount Batten at 10.00.*

*See you there, Clive.*

Our weekend plans had changed. Should have been camping/kayaking and visiting my parents in Cornwall. Miles (one of our two cats) had other plans, won't go into details, but pleased to say he is back to old self now. So with nothing better to do, found ourselves at MB on the Sat morning.

Weather: Sun & Showers. Wind SSW, 15kts with 19kts gusts. Swell 1.8m. Sea State Mod or Rough. Spring Tides LW 11.47 - 1m: HW 17.48 - 5.4m

12 paddlers met for Clive's briefing. Not a bad turnout considering weather. Went through the usual drill, signing in, safety equipment etc. Needless to say the whole gang up for a "lively" paddle and some fun. "OK, let's meet at the green pole". Off we go, final checking of boats, onto the water and the "Green Pole". Once on the water a few stretches and braces to warm up.

Paddled to the end of Mount Batten Pier. The next bit, Clive said, was paddling to Jennycliff, which will be a bit lumpy as a cross wind, and to stay close as a group. When we reached the far side, helmets on for some rock hopping. Some of you who know me will be aware that I have a few personal targets for this year. Having made a good recovery from knee surgery in March, nothing is going to stop me now. So:

- 1st challenge never say "I can't". Just do it.
- To be rolling by the end of the season.
- To whoop less, when I am on a white water feature
- To never stop paddling whilst doing the 3rd!

So with this in mind I follow Clive and Adam. Pretty easy as was sheltered, but a good warm up. We stop and gather in Bovisand Harbour. Clive checking we were all OK. "Liveliness" due to increase in Bovisand Bay, so stay close and no rock hopping for 10mins. So off we set again, still laughing and chatting. Yes, was a harder paddle as we head into the wind and swell, wet faces from the waves breaking over the bows. I was a bit jealous at this point of those in sea kayaks, having a much drier time. Looking round could see the group enjoy the paddle. All on a mission to the next rock garden. More rocks, more swell and white stuff! Followed Clive so I could see where he was going and how he was tackling the rock hopping and breaking swell. Wet face again, paddle harder and yes having lots of fun with compulsory grin/grimace. Clive dancing around the rocks, caught by breaking wave – paddle hard and clear again. Old self says "no, play safe, go round the outside". Meet Clive at the other end, saying, "didn't fancy that then?" (With a twinkle in his eye). That does it and turning catch sight of Adam playing in the same rocks, paddling, smiling and buffeted by the waves. Not able to decline the invitation I turn my boat round, and paddle hard to catch Adam up, just in case. Same rocks, same waves and I didn't stop paddling - yay! Worked my way through using range of strokes. Wow, that was fun. Pleased with self as only a few took this route around Westlake Bay.

We gather in the shelter of Renney Rocks. Lots of rock to hide behind as LW and Spring tides. Now, Clive, "we have a choice" ("we like choices don't we"). Either out beyond the rocks into the swell, to Shag Stone and back, or early lunch on the beach. Majority wanted "lively" and that's what we get into the swell and head wind, needing some concentration. We go out in a close group, but safe surf distance between each boat. Cut inside the Shag Stone so that wind and swell propelling us back to the shelter of the rocks. Clive, Mike and Adam run a narrow gap, waiting for the right wave to flush them through. Hum, I know my limits. Then to lunch on the beach. Last to land as Adam and I did a bit of messing about in (and out) of boats on the way. A couple of planned rescues, successful roll for Adam, not for me this time.

Half way through lunch, Clive presents "another choice". Some of us a bit surprised at the suggestion that we find some white stuff and do some surfing. This from a man who doesn't do surfing? That or join Joy for more direct route back to MB. Hmm. Enjoyed chocolate from Robin sharing end of term gift from one of his pupils. Thank you! Decision made.

Seven search for surf with Clive. Adam, Big Jane, Smeg, Mike, Robin, Bob S and me. Bob shares that he likes surfing, especially upside down! Arriving off Bovisand Beach, Clive shared a few handy tips, and was agreed that swimmers would make for shore but all to keep eye out for each other. OMG, what fun. Couldn't contain excitement "I'm surfing" for all to hear. Paddle out and repeat. At one point sharing the same wave as Adam. Next a huge wave. Too big, but hang on, I'm riding it, and for a long way before it chucked me off and in. "Are you ok?" I hear. Thumbs up! A few more smaller runs, but surfing is very tiring and we still have a paddle back.

We then paddle back to Mount Batten, with a tail wind and swell, via Bovisand Harbour, and across Jennycliff Bay. Beginning to flag at this point. Secretly I think some of the boys were too. Jane was hardly paddling her boat, surfing along side, keeping me company. Not long and we were having hot showers, then coffee/beer, catching up and what a fun "lively" day has been had.

Long term joke between us that Clive knows how to put a smile on a girl's face. Well certainly today - best rec paddle so far this season. Thanks to Clive and the 11 others, that made this a paddle to remember.



At the end of June five intrepid PPCA members went to Shetland. Shetland is remote. To give you an inkling of just how remote take a piece of paper and write the word Shetland right in the middle in your smallest handwriting. Now look at your handiwork and you will have an idea of just how far Shetland is from, well, just about anywhere.

### The Shetland flag.

If you want to take a car loaded with sea kayaks to Shetland you first have to drive to Aberdeen, which according to the mapping service of a well known internet search engine is 614 miles from Plymouth. You then need to get on a ferry that will ease you along the final leg of your journey taking something like 12 hours to cover the 225 (Stugeron recommended) miles from Aberdeen to Lerwick. So, from Plymouth to Lerwick is 839 miles and then, as we discovered, Shetland is a surprisingly large place. (According to Wikipedia Shetland covers an area of 566 square miles and in 2012 had a population of 23,210). To get from Lerwick to our first week's accommodation at Aith added another 20 miles onto our already impressive total.

### Why take sea kayaks to Shetland?

Photo by Joy



Take a look at a map of Shetland and you will see words like cave, natural arch, skerry and stack written all around the coast. At the edge of the land you will also notice cliffs, coves and even a few subterranean passages. Take a look inland and you will see words like burnt mound, broch, chambered cairn and settlement, all written in gothic print. Finally you will notice large areas filled with nothing but contour lines, lochs, rivers and streams.

We went to Shetland primarily for the sea kayaking but also for the scenery, the wildlife, the culture, the history and because we could.

A blow hole. Just one reason for taking sea kayaks to Shetland

### Introductions.

I will introduce you to the crew.

**Clive. (Me).** Some say a person of outstanding character and ability. (Oh no they don't).

**Joy.** Person of outstanding character and ability but in her case this description is accurate. Joy can let go of her paddle to take photographs in all but the biggest of seas.

**Bob.** No cave is too big, too small or too dark for Bob to explore and no gap is too small for Bob to try and squeeze through. Bob is able to memorise relevant facts from the guide book thus making him a font of some knowledge.

**Ian.** All of the above, especially the "Oh no they don't" bit.

**Ken.** The groups care in the community project. Ken's serious paddling days are behind him but he expressed a desire to visit Shetland for all the other reasons. Ken achieved the twin goals of providing invaluable transport support and saving Ian from being the butt of all our humour.

Photo by Ken



Four Intrepid Paddlers

Photo by Ian



Transport Officer



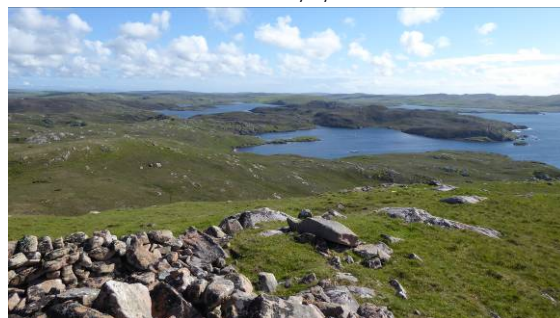
## Beach holidays in Shetland?

Shetland boasts many varied beaches; sand, shingle and pebble, large and small. Some have easy access and others are only accessible by boat. In late June England was sweltering in the highest temperatures since the summer of 1976 but when we arrived in Shetland it was grey, wet, cold and windy. During our stay the weather was often bright but temperatures never crept above the mid teens and it was always windy, in fact where we paddled each day was almost entirely dictated by the wind speed and direction and on four days we deemed it to be too windy to paddle at all. In our experience Shetland is the perfect place for a beach holiday but only if you happen to be a seal.

### Our first paddle.

I'm not going to give you a blow by blow account of each paddle we did but I will take time to report on our first watery exploit. Having settled into our accommodation Bob was very keen to get on the water, despite the force 4 WNW wind and predicted showers. We launched from Aith harbour and paddled into the wind to stop at Northra Voe on the island of Vementry. From here we walked up to the highest point of the island, Muckle Ward, (295 feet), on top of which is one of the best examples in Shetland of a Neolithic chambered cairn. Although there was still a breeze blowing the skies had cleared making the surrounding vista a joy to behold, and bog dwelling flowers like Tormentil, Bog Asphodel and the carnivorous Butterwort made a colourful carpet on which to walk.

Photo by Joy



Pleasing vista from the top of Muckle Ward

We re-launched and paddled back to Aith, this time with the wind and swell at our backs. Bob set a blistering pace and didn't waste any energy looking behind him, which was a bit odd because Bob's natural habitat is at the back, nosing around close to the shore. By the time we had completed our 12 mile paddle some of us weren't feeling very fresh. I distinctly remember "glad to finish" being one of the more polite expressions that crossed my mind.

### Geology.

If you give a geologist a hammer and let him loose on Shetland then it's quite possible that you will never see him (or her) again. Paddling around the coast we certainly saw plenty of geology and whilst I don't pretend that we understood much of what we saw it was fascinating all the same. At a number of places around the islands there were what I will describe as sculptures. Shaped to represent that particular area these were constructed to show the underlying geology.

Photo by Joy



Sculpture showing the geology of Northmavine

### Caves.

Gentle readers, let me start by dispelling the myth that some caves are like cathedrals. Caves are places formed in geological time that we humans find hard to comprehend, by contrast even the most ancient of cathedrals is almost brand new. If anything, cathedrals are like caves.

Photo by Joy



Sea urchins in a cave

The coast around Shetland is riddled with caves, some places taking on the look of a Swiss cheese. There are more caves than you can shake a stick at, (whatever that means), in fact there are so many caves that I'm not really sure how Shetland manages to stay above sea level. I conclude that either witchcraft or skyhooks are involved.

What caves are is generally dark, atmospheric and mysterious. Sea birds nest on the cracks and ledges near their entrances and you can quite often spy sea urchins and star fish in the water. The deeper you go into a cave the darker it gets, a kind of darkness that is almost tangible and that seems to eat the light from your head torch.

We entered a cave on the island of Muckle Roe. There was no indication that this wasn't just another cave until a little way in when we saw light filtering through at water level. The right hand side of the cave seemed to be supported on

pillars and was being lit by light from an entrance that we couldn't see. The whole place had a somewhat spooky atmosphere that reminded me of a horror film set. Fearing some sort of malevolent presence I decided not to explore this particular cave any further.

Ian and I had been in one cave and didn't know where Joy and Bob were until Joy appeared from a dark hole saying, "It's quite deep and too dark for my torch, I've left Bob to it." A little while later we heard the banging and bumping of fibreglass hitting rock and then a plaintive cry, "I think I need help. Please." I ventured into the cave to find that in trying to turn around Bob had managed to get his boat wedged, which in the low swell looked like a precariously unstable situation. I haven't seen a textbook that describes how to carry out a rescue in such circumstances so what happened next was effective but definitely not textbook. I have to confess that Bob was given the opportunity to relive this experience many times during our stay in Shetland; an exploration of any cave was often preceded with a little cry of "Help."

In another cave, this time on West Burra, the initial cavern diminished into a narrow passage. As the swell came in air was expelled from this passage and then as the swell dropped again air was sucked back in again. The cave appeared to be breathing and my over active imagination decided that this was dragons breath.

I have already mentioned that the weather was constantly windy and that we planned our paddling to keep us in sheltered waters. The upside of all this is that we were often paddling in conditions that made exploring caves reasonably easy.

### **The Shetland Bus.**

The Shetland Bus was the name given to the civilian service that operated out of Shetland and took agents and supplies to the Norwegian resistance fighters during World War 2. We finished our exploration of Ronas Voe and landed on the beach at The Blade where a group of five people were admiring the scenery. After a few pleasantries we found out that the Norwegian lady we were speaking to was the daughter of one of the Shetland Bus skippers, and that her father was the foreign civilian most decorated by the British Government. We also learnt that the father of her host owned the shipyard in Scalloway from which the operation was based, their respective families remaining friends ever since the war. We spent a little time spellbound listening to their stories and later in the holiday we visited the museum at Scalloway where we expanded our knowledge still further. This encounter was a real privilege and turned out to be the highlight of our non-paddling Shetland experiences.

### **Natural arches.**

If there are more caves than you can shake a stick at on Shetland then the number of natural arches could easily account for a second stick. The largest natural arch is located on the island of Dore Holm and looks like a huge dinosaur taking a drink. Once through the arch there is a passage that penetrates right through the island. Such a passage is simply asking to be paddled through and sure enough Ian led the way. All went well for Ian and then it was my turn. I approached the entrance and reached the point of no return just as a group of larger swells came through. I teetered on the top of a swell for a few seconds before plunging into the void with no particular concerns until a jet of water shot out of an unseen side entrance and sent a surf wave coursing across the passage in front of me, a wave that bounced back off the sidewall making for rough and confused water. Quickly realising that this wasn't going to be an isolated wave I tried to speed up, but it suddenly felt as if I was paddling through treacle. Inevitably the next wave saw me much more heavily involved in the action than I wanted to be and caused me even more consternation. A recording of the incident would have caught me saying, "Not happy, not happy, not happy." Had I been a cat I would have just lost a life. I wasn't having the best of days, during the same trip I had been out of my comfort zone at the Skerry of Eshaness, found myself stranded on a rock after misjudging a narrow passage near The Neap and then having to

Photo by Bob



A cave, not a cathedral

Photo by Bob



Dore Holm natural arch.

To give a sense of scale, look for the kayaks.

perform a recovery stroke whilst being completely off balance after losing control paddling through yet another natural arch. Going back to my cat analogy I had already lost four lives when I declined the offer of exploring a sea stack called The Drongs, where the guide book informs us, *“the sea here is invariably in motion even on the quietest day.”* I chose to fall back on my trusty old mantra of “he who runs away lives to run away another day,” and to sit on the beach basking the sun.

Most of the natural arches that we paddled through gave no such entertainment, and we did paddle through a lot of natural arches, instead they were nothing more (or less) than hugely impressive.

### **Puffins and other wildlife.**

On day two we launched from Hoswick. Within ten minutes a female voice squealed, “Puffin! I’ve seen the first puffin!” Our number one lady paddler is rather partial to puffins; in fact I would go as far as to say that puffins are Joy’s favourite bird. There are no prizes for guessing who took the following photographs. Good aren’t they?



All our paddling was accompanied by a chorus of terns and oyster catchers. Other species such as razor bills, gannets, guillemots, skua, shags and cormorants were constant, if quieter companions.

The sightings of aquatic mammals proved to be a little disappointing. In the two weeks we spent on Shetland we saw just two porpoise and two sea otters, and not everyone saw those. We did however see sea seals (or selkies as Shetlanders call them, although according to legend selkies can shed their skin and become human on land). I can report that I can now easily distinguish between common and grey seals.

### **Sea stacks.**

Another shaking stick will account for the profusion of Shetland sea stacks of all shapes and sizes. Some stacks were close to shore while others were a little way off, and some stacks resided in splendid isolation while others huddled together in groups. On occasions we appeared to be playing games of hide and seek as we explored the various channels between the stacks.

### **Top of Shetland. (One).**

On a non-paddling day I suggested a walk up Ronas Hill, which at 1476 feet is the highest point on Shetland and one that the ancients saw fit to mark with a chambered cairn. From the cairn our view was obscured by cloud but just a few feet lower Shetland was spread out before us. One notable feature of Shetland is that it’s big enough not to feel like an island and even from this high vantage point it was impossible to see the coast in all directions.

Photo by Joy



The view from Ronas Hill. Shetland is big enough not to feel like an island.

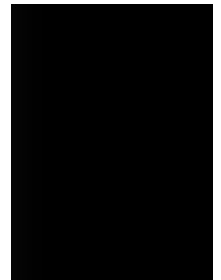


## Fine ale in a cosy pub.

No-one goes to Shetland to sample fine ale in a cosy pub, or if they do they will be greatly disappointed. Pubs are very few and far between on Shetland and the best beer we had all holiday was a delicious brew called Dark Island that was brewed on Orkney and served on the ferry. It goes down well with Stugeron.

## Subterranean passages.

There was surf running off the headland as we approached the westerly corner of Muckle Roe and I was trying to work out a route that would avoid all this excitement. Armed with his knowledge of the guidebook Bob had a more adventurous plan. He entered a cave where, lurking in a corner, he found a dark crevice that had a breeze blowing out of it. After a number of twists and turns this dark and rather confined subterranean passage eventually emerged into daylight on the other side of the headland. An interesting route that neatly bypassed the afore mentioned surf. Other subterranean passages are available but are equally as dark.



Inside a  
subterranean  
passage

## Ancient Shetland.

Much like a geologist with a hammer if you give an archaeologist a trowel and let him loose on

Shetland you may never see him (or her) again, or to put it another way there are more sites of archaeological interest on Shetland than you can shake... oh you get the picture. There are very few trees on Shetland. I may be wrong, (but as I'm Mr Perfect I would seriously doubt that), but I have a theory that this lack of trees is due to them being cut down to satisfy the demand for shaking sticks.

I digress. None of us are of a trowel wielding persuasion but history is interesting and so we did visit the ancient site of Jarlshof that boasts more than 4000 years of (not continuous) human settlement in the same location. We also visited the Iron Age broch on the island on Mousa, the best preserved broch in Scotland. As with a lot of pre-historic sites no one is really sure as to how a broch was used but its fun to speculate isn't it?



Broch of Mousa

Not ancient but we also visited the site of some preserved click mills that were mills driven by horizontal water wheels with no gearing.

It was all very interesting and educational.

## Top of Shetland. (Two).



Muckle Flugga lighthouse

Just off the top (northern tip) of Shetland is a lighthouse built on a rock that revels in the absolutely marvellous name of Muckle Flugga. Muckle Flugga lighthouse, which was built by Thomas Stevenson, is the most northerly lighthouse in Britain and seeing it was on Ken's bucket list. We made a kind of pilgrimage to the top of Shetland taking two ferries and crossing two islands before walking almost three miles to a vantage point overlooking Muckle Flugga. (I just love writing Muckle Flugga, it sounds so naughty doesn't it)? It was windy, too windy to paddle, and not even very clear but everything was alright because just being there made Ken smile, and a happy Ken is a joy to behold.

## It's a what?

Here are some questions that you may wish to ponder. Some caves have multiple entrances. At what stage does a cave become an arch, or a passage, or a subterranean chamber? And when does an island become so eroded that it is now a sea stack? In the end I decided that it doesn't really matter, no matter how the cartographer decided to describe any particular feature it was the grandeur of the place that impressed.

## An evening of culture.

Whilst there are very few pubs in Shetland every village has its own hall and Skeld is no exception. We saw an advert for a Simmer Dim happening in Skeld village hall. (Simmer Dim, meaning summer twilight, describes the time of year around midsummer when the sun dips below the northern horizon for just a few hours each day). The advert said come along with an instrument to join in, or simply sit and listen to traditional music. 80% of our group enjoys a bit of traditional music so we left Ian watching telly and went along, not really knowing what to expect. When we arrived we found that the hall was already fairly full with some 30 musicians of all ages playing a variety of instruments. Fiddles, accordions, guitars, whistles, mouth organ, cello and electric pianos made up the band and one chap had what he described as a soprano sax, which was a pocket sized saxophone that produced plenty of sound! Players joined in and left as they saw fit but the mostly instrumental music just kept coming. We were spellbound and mesmerised in equal measure.



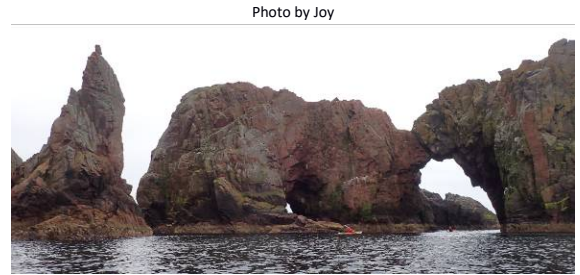
The band at the Simmer Din

In the hall there was a display of old instruments, (mostly various fiddles), with cards giving their potted history and asking for any further information. During the course of the evening a number of these museum pieces were played, a fiddle made of brass being of particular interest. I'm delighted to be able to report first hand that traditional acoustic music is alive and well in Shetland.

There was a break in proceedings for a buffet. Bob commented on the wonderful scones whereupon the lovely Josephine, (Bob's words), informed him that she had worked like a whirling dervish to produce these and that they were not scones at all but were in fact bannocks. Imagine referring to a Cornish pasty as a pie and you will understand just how lucky Bob was to escape unharmed. A friend of the lovely Josephine informed us that she, the lovely Josephine, made the best bannocks in Shetland. I wouldn't dispute this.

Not only did we have a most excellent evening but we learnt that Shetlanders are lovely people, providing that you don't call them Scottish or insult their bannocks!

That just about sums up our visit to Shetland. As previously noted we went to Shetland primarily for the sea kayaking but also for the scenery, the wildlife, the culture and the history. All boxes ticked, ambition achieved.



An arch? Cave? Sea Stack? Island? Who cares?  
Kayaks give a sense of scale.



The Drongs. To give a sense of scale, look for Bob in his kayak.



## 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](mailto:newsletter@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk)

## Club Calendar

### Tuesday, 22 August

18:00 2 Star Kayak Training - Jen Or Sam  
18:00 2 Star Open Canoe Training - Damean Miller  
18:00 3 Star Kayak Training - Chris Doidge  
18:00 Recreational Paddle - John Mittchell

### Friday, 25 August

18:00 Open Boat Family Rec Paddle - Ian Brim

### Saturday, 26 August

09:00 BC One Star Course - Clive Ashford

### Tuesday, 29 August

18:00 2 Star Kayak Training - Damean Miller  
18:00 2 Star Open Canoe Training - Jen Nicholls  
18:00 3 Star Kayak Training - Doug Stich  
18:00 Recreational Paddle - Terry Calcott

### Saturday, 2 September

10:00 Sea Kayak Paddle - Terry Calcott

### Tuesday, 5 September

18:00 2 Star Kayak Training - Damean Miller  
18:00 2 Star Open Canoe Training - Jen Nicholls  
18:00 3 Star Kayak Training - Doug Stich  
18:00 Recreational Paddle - Terry Calcott

### Saturday, 9 September

10:00 Recreational Paddle - Andy Kittle

### Tuesday, 12 September

18:00 2 Star Kayak Training - TBC  
18:00 2 Star Open Canoe Training - Jen Nicholls  
18:00 3 Star Kayak Doug Stich  
18:00 Recreational Paddle - Terry Calcott

### Saturday, 16 September

10:00 Recreational Paddle - TBC

### Tuesday, 19 September

18:00 2 Star Kayak Training - Last Of Season TBC

18:00 2 Star Open Training - Last Of Season Jen Nicholls

18:00 3 Star Kayak Last Of Season Doug Stich

18:00 Recreational Paddle - Last Of Season Terry Calcott

### Saturday, 23 September

10:00 Recreational Paddle - TBC

### Saturday, 30 September

10:00 Recreational Paddle - Clive Ashford