



Port of Plymouth Canoeing Association

Wet News 76. February 2013.



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March edition of Wet News.

Items for inclusion in the March edition of Wet News to reach the editor, Clive Ashford by 21:00hrs on Sat 9 March please.
Publication date Sun 10 March

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The editor (Clive Ashford) reserves the right to edit / reject items submitted.

Disclaimer. Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the PPCA.

The prologue.

I was cycling towards Princetown when the bolt securing my saddle sheared, meaning that I had to ride the 11 miles home with my bottom perched on the end of the saddle post. Gentle readers, I hadn't been cycling for a couple of months so I was expecting some pain, but not in quite such a delicate area.

White water safety and rescue course. (WWSRC).

Congratulations to Alan Ede, Andy Kittle, Andy Nicholls, Bekky Stiasny, Bob Grose and Jenny Nicholls on completing the white water safety and rescue course organised by Alan Ede. Congratulations also to Jane Hitchings on completing the same course but at a different time. As the title implies the WWSRC gives an excellent oversight into basic white water safety and rescue techniques and is very worthwhile for the budding river paddler. Whilst the WWSRC covers quite a serious subject they are also a lot of fun, if you run rivers and haven't attended one of these courses they come highly recommended.

Inland Moderate Water Endorsement.

Congratulation to Phil "Bully" Cleave on passing his inland moderate water endorsement. Phil joins the growing band of club coaches who are now more highly qualified than the old codgers like myself. I look forward to watching and learning from a new source.

Advanced notices x 2.

Midsummer(ish) camp, 14 – 15 June. The eagerly anticipated midsummer(ish) camp will take place on 14 – 15 June 2013. Booking is not necessary and details will appear closer to the date, but this camp will take place in South Devon.

Roseland weekend, 12 – 14 July 2013. The equally eagerly anticipated Roseland sea kayaking weekend will take place on 12 – 14 July and again further details will be published in due course but if you would like more info contact either Linda Brady on 217678 / 07747 744084 or Mary McArdle on 881166 / 07533 825898

Pool sessions.

There was a lot of warm and wet activity going on at the pool session held at Plympton Pool on 21 Jan. There are other pool sessions planned for 18 Feb, 18 March & (provisionally) 15 April. There are places available on these sessions (£10 payable in advance). To book a place please contact Zoe Boyle, youth@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk or 07814 131654.

Mount Batten members shed door. (A copy of Syd Evans posting on the website).

Mount Batten has informed us that the Shed Doors have recently been serviced and are now functioning satisfactorily. The new company who have the Service Contract have advised that stopping the door intermittently is probably causing the sticking issue we have been experiencing recently. The contractors are currently looking at renewing the motor contactors and will be advising MB shortly. In the short term can all members who use the sheds Open the door FULLY by pushing the button positively, and then lowering the door to the required height. If the door fails to move, firm positive pressure on the button should alleviate the issue. If you experience any further problems please inform a member of the committee.

PPCA - Your Club History (Update). (President Terry Calcott).

Many thanks to everyone who has sent me information about the club over the years. A big help has been Doug letting me have all the previous club newsletters from 1998 and lots of photos and reports, I have a mountain of information with all the key events and characters of the time. This information has linked up nicely with the recent club newsletters which Clive has been editing over the years.

What I need now is some information from before 1998 back to the clubs formation in 1972. Nick Benny is digging out some stuff from the 80's which should fill in some gaps. I have a list of ex club members which I am gradually working through and getting around to contact.

If you have any recollections from the early days or leaflets or photos please can you let me know. Without your help and input this project will be hard to move forward and form a concise history of your club. Please email me at terry1@blueyonder.co.uk with anything you may have, many thanks.

The Mewstone, please keep off during the breeding season.

The Mewstone is a nationally important site for breeding seabirds, particularly cormorants and shags. All water users are asked to refrain from landing on the Mewstone during the breeding season, which extends from the beginning of March to the end of July.

Novice Paddle. (David Pedlow, part 1).

There are two ways to tell a story. One is, "Begin at the beginning, go on until you reach the end, and then stop". The other, "You begin in the middle of things, sir, as all good epics should."

Faced with this contrary advice I have decided that, as there is no way this afternoon's Novice Paddle down a River Dart running well within its bed could achieve epic rating (not given the amount of water and dramatic events the Dart has seen over the last month), I had better start at the beginning.

Which means a major "Well done thou", for Julie; who somehow used my perfectly innocent enquiry to manoeuvre me into a position where not paddling became virtually unthinkable. A big "Thank you", too, to John and Julie for restraining the wickeder sides of their personalities, and lending me not a small nippy boat, but one that had so much volume that I swear it could have carried me across a pool of petroleum. Even better, its "critical period" (the time between an event and capsizing) was longer than my own reaction time, which meant I could hope to keep it upright. Thanks are also due to Emu and James who quietly kept themselves amused, whilst John put so much effort into coaching me; and to everyone else for (by and large) leaving me the whole of the river to unpredictably move around in.

Photo by Joy Ashford



Author David Pedlow looking super confident.

Once I'd done half a dozen ferry glides and break-ins, convinced myself that my boat wasn't trembling for the opportunity to capsize, and worked out which way this funny feathered plastic paddle thing should be held, I managed to get the background adrenaline level low enough to begin to relax and enjoy the simple stuff (like going down a relatively quiet bit of river).

I don't know how many drops, weirs and proper rapids we went down, nor what they were called. Super high adrenaline levels are not conducive to clear recollection. I do remember John encouraging me to seal launch over a two foot high rock ledge, just before I repeated the move on the river; and thinking

what a masterstroke of coaching that was, even as the nose of the boat tipped downwards and I searched for the tongue beyond it, and the eddy below that.

Seven years ago, paddling a Romany down the Menai Straight at half tide, I blamed the fact that I was wearing varifocals for my inability to see eddy lines (a deficiency which led to my capsizing, and swimming, in the Swilly Whirlpool, whilst my instructor was totally absorbed in chatting up the one piece of talent on the paddle). Today I discovered that, by and large, I just can't see them. Something that I can only hope remedies itself with practice.

What Julie? No! No! No! I meant "Might remedy. . . if given"(Exit pursued by Predatory Coach).

And so, dear reader, I did it all again . . . (David Pedlow, part 2).

When hurting, they say, it is a good idea to try and think of something else. And so, between the baritone snatch and song of calf and thigh muscles, and the piercing top A's from beneath my instep, as one foot or the other, or both, reacted to an overenthusiastic thought of movement by instantly clenching into petrified claws; I tried to think smilingly of yesterday's river paddle, the "onlie begetter" of this morning's little nest of pain.

I hadn't been nearly sick with apprehension beforehand, this time; but the moment I slid into the water and my brain was overwhelmed with a flood of signals from a strange new paddle in gloved hands, that was unlike anything with which I had ever paddled before, I was sure capsize was imminent. How I survived that first ferry glide - rigid in the kayak and staring at the paddles, trying to make sense of these new paddling sensations rather than what the stream was doing - I don't know.

Happily John was on hand to take me to task; urging me to relax, forget about the paddle, and LOOK where I wanted to go with head and body; and slowly matters improved.

This time I was encouraged to pick my own way down the river. I soon learned that part remembered lines from a fortnight ago could be positively dodgy in this lower water state; that somehow I had to try and make sense of the mishmash of water in front of me, reducing it to some sort of pattern. Upstream and downstream arrows swam up into my brain to help me pick my way, with rather too many scrapes and flexings of the bottom of the boat, down to the Anvil, and on to Broken Weir where, despite the lower flow I seemed to find a much rougher ride on my own than last time.

Pre-occupied with breaking into the eddy below Broken Weir, I'm not quite sure what happened; but when I looked up it was to see the hull of a kayak pinned against a rock, whilst its occupant extracted herself upstream to stand mid-thigh deep in the middle of the river. The boat released itself, came down over the weir, and was shepherded by our mob, who had paused to play, into the bank; whilst the stranded paddler's group came past her one by one and down the weir to congregate in the eddy below mine.

Despite the temperature they didn't seem to feel any sense of urgency in terms of assisting their stranded paddler; and it was left to Julie to clamber along the bank and throw out a line to support her in to the side, and help her (she must have been well chilled as to the legs by now) clamber up on to the bank.

Later, going down towards a longish little canyonee stretch that had emerged from the higher water - and become much more fun as a result - I saw her walking round, boat on shoulder; and then - as I pulled into the eddy below the beach where her mates were waiting - saw her, now dragging her boat behind her, still alone, still with 50 yards or so to reach them.

Clearly their mindset was that they would accompany and even support and encourage her to the edge; but from then on - rather like dying - she was on her own, since not a one of them held a guardian angel union card permitting them to meet, and help her, on the other side,

I thought of the way Joy had used her good shoulder to help me carry my boat to the get in on both my trips; the way that at the get out, last time, Mark had seized my boat, slung it on his shoulder, run it up the bank and carried it to the lay-by; whilst Julie used a sling to pull me up the bank, and I staggered exhausted after him; and I felt happy and relieved to be paddling with a PPCA group, instead of with hers.

Open boat peer paddle.

When Martin Mills put a post on the forum advertising an open boat peer paddle on the river Dart on the 12 January I thought, "that should be interesting," and promptly ignored it, so I am completely at a loss to explain how I subsequently spent a day out in an open boat on the river Dart on the 12 January. Never the less I was there, so here is my account of my first (proper) white water trip in an open boat.

My already fragile confidence wasn't enhanced when in the small hours of the 12 January I was woken by rain driving against our bedroom window, and then my nerves became even more ragged when we arrived at Holne Weir and I saw the river level, which was higher than I would have liked. A conversation with Martin calmed some of those nerves but I confess to being less than enthused as I got into Joy's open boat, (she very kindly let me borrow it for the day). My minimal level of enthusiasm was further dashed when I noted that I was the only novice paddling solo.

I needn't have worried. My first break in went like a dream, as did running my first mini rapid, my first break out and my first ferry glide. (Breaking in & out is the method of getting in and out of the river flow, and ferry gliding is a method of crossing a river). Out of the 15 paddlers on the trip I reckon there were 4 who fell into the "expert" category; that is quality paddlers who quietly let their skills do their talking for them. Armed with this opinion I pestered Denise, Ian, Martin and Ted with questions, listened to their answers and watched as they demonstrated moves which I almost completely failed to emulate. I can only get better.

Some 20 minutes into the trip I found myself sharing an eddy with John Mitchell where we compared notes. We both agreed that the morning was going well and were both surprised at how forgiving the boats were, but the best bit was that so far we had omitted to partake in any swimming activity. We knew we couldn't relax but 20 minutes without meeting the Mount Batten Squid was a definite bonus.

We now arrived at the first major features of the day, The Anvil followed by School Rapid. Martin sent skilled paddlers ahead to wait at strategic points on the rapid and then let us novices loose. Buoyed up by my success thus far I set off with every intention of breaking out into the eddy between these two features, but very early on it became obvious that my angle of approach was wrong and that paddling into the eddy wasn't going to happen, so I needed a new plan A. New plan A was to run School Rapid, which I did with a surprising level of apparent competence, I even picked one of the harder eddy's to stop in and was delighted to find my boat and I, both still together and upright, gently bobbing in said eddy almost as if I knew what I was doing. Surprisingly gratifying.

As I paddled over the lip of The Anvil I had registered a malevolent presence writhing in the stopper. I was far too preoccupied to take very much notice but as our guest paddlers, Karen & Graham, dropped over the lip it became apparent that this presence was the Mount Batten Squid. A flurry of tentacles had our guests unceremoniously parted from their craft and sent for a refreshing swim down School Rapid. I would like to say that I sympathised but somehow my overriding emotion was smug. Sorry.

The day progressed and before too long we stopped at Broken Weir for a picnic. Ted asked me if I had brought the BBQ along, which obviously I hadn't but on reflection that may have been an oversight. I feel that somehow I have let Ted down. For those that don't know, Ted Fearon has recently joined the club and is an old style level 3 coach for both open boat and inland kayak. Welcome along Ted.

I have to confess that if the trip had finished there I would have been delighted; I already ached in places I didn't know could ache and my judgment was getting impaired. I think I might have even told Martin that I was enjoying myself at one stage, which just shows what fatigue and exhaustion can do to a man. If Martin ever quotes me I will stoutly deny making any such declaration and if he produces a video I will claim expert manipulation within Photoshop.

Talking of a lack of judgement and Martin, (the links here are almost professional), I spied Martin being played with by the stopper at Broken Weir. There is nothing quite like watching and learning and I learnt that there is a thin line between a high recovery and a panic stroke. So that was Martin quietly letting his skills do his talking for him, I guess, only there was a lot of noise.

Photo by Joy Ashford.



Your favourite editor shows his best side on the approach to Island Rapid.

Photo by Joy Ashford.



Paddling skills to aspire too.

The next piece of excitement was the fearsome Island Rapid and once again Martin organised some safety cover for us novices. He needn't have bothered because every one of us ran the rapid like experts, leaving those on safety duties as mere spectators, a fact that I will take as testament to our improving paddling skills.

More of the same followed including Justin and Bob receiving a personal visit from the Mount batten Squid, not that anyone was surprised. Martin has since likened Justin & Bob's paddling style to witchcraft and I wouldn't argue with one so wise. Do they still burn witches at the stake? If so Justin had better watch out. (Bob has nothing to worry about; I am convinced that he is far too wet to burn).

The day ended with tired but happy people hauling the boats up the bank adjacent to Buckfast Bridge and across the road to the waiting cars. If you promise not to tell anyone I will admit to having had a brilliant day out and that if Joy lets me use her boat again I would love to repeat the experience. Looking around I noted that our experienced paddler appeared to be daisy fresh but not me; I got home and promptly fell asleep, nursing aches and pains that took quite a few days to subside. Pain is gain as they say, ooch.

Thanks to all you paddlers for your company and banter, thanks to Denise, Ian, Martin and Ted for your help, encouragement and patience and most of all thanks to Martin for running this trip. Here's to next time.

Picture Bazaar
Photo by Sharon Gardner.



Chris Carters' feet exuding laughing gas.

Old Nosey, our roaming reporter...

...is pleased to inform you that the standards at the Lady Millbrook school of safety line throwing remain consistent, which means that if you are expecting to receive a line from said establishments' proprietor then you may benefit from a prior visit to the In Deep shop at Mount Batten, who can supply the air bottles, regulators and mouthpieces necessary to keep you alive whilst you wait for a safety line to reach you.

Old Nosey, our roaming reporter, would let it be known that your favourite editor is in no position to feel particularly smug, after all Old Nosey doubts that Lady Millbrook will teach you how to lasso a tree!

Diary dates.

Date	Type of paddle	Location	Session leader
February.			
Sat 9, 08:15	Open boat peer paddle. TBA <i>Meet 08:15 at Mount Batten for those wanting to use club boats, otherwise see forum.</i>		Martin Mills 07530 004070.
Sat 9, 10:00	Recreational paddle	Mount Batten	Neville Cannon 07773 342787.
Sun 10, 08:30	Intermediate river trip TBA <i>Meet at Plympton B&Q ready to leave at 08:30.</i>		John Elworthy 01752 823381.
Sat 16, 10:00	Recreational paddle	Mount Batten	Neville Cannon 07773 342787.
Sun 17, 08:30	Intermediate river trip TBA <i>Meet at Plympton B&Q ready to leave at 08:30.</i>		Julie Elworthy 01752 823381.
Mon 18, 19:30	Pool session <i>This session needs to be paid for in advance. Please see December Wet News for details.</i>	Plympton Pool	Zoe Boyle 07814 131654.
Sat 23, 10:00	Recreational paddle	Mount Batten	Neville Cannon 07773 342787.
Sun 24, 08:30	Intermediate river trip TBA <i>Meet at Plympton B&Q ready to leave at 08:30.</i>		Ken Hamblin 01752 365404.
Sun 24, 08:00	Open boat river trip TBA <i>Meet at Mount Batten at 08:00 to collect boats etc.</i>		Ian Ruse 07980 355019.

March.

Sat 2, TBA Sea kayak paddle TBA Terry Calcott 07828 652775
Times and venue will appear on the club forum a few days ahead of this trip.
The club sea kayaks can be booked with the Club Equipment Officer, Alan Ede, by a text to 07799 556876 or an e-mail to alancede@hotmail.co.uk

March (continued).

Sat 2, 08:30	Novice river trip	TBA	John Elworthy 01752 823381.
	<i>Meet at Plympton B&Q ready to leave at 08:30.</i>		
Sun 3, 09:00	Intermediate river trip	TBA	Ken Hamblin 01752 365404.
	<i>Meet at Plympton B&Q ready to leave at 09:00.</i>		
Sat 9, 08:15	Open boat peer paddle.	TBA	Martin Mills 07530 004070.
	<i>Meet 08:15 at Mount Batten for those wanting to use club boats, see forum for details.</i>		
Sat 9, 10:00	Recreational paddle	Mount Batten	Neville Cannon 07773 342787.
Sun 10, 08:30	Intermediate river trip	TBA	Julie Elworthy 01752 823381.
	<i>Meet at Plympton B&Q ready to leave at 08:30.</i>		
Sun 10, TBA	White water kayak 3* assessment		TBA
Sat 16, 10:00	Recreational paddle	Mount Batten	Terry Calcott 07828 652775.
Mon 18, 19:30	Pool session	Plympton Pool	Zoe Boyle 07814 131654.
	<i>This session needs to be paid for in advance. Please see December Wet News for details.</i>		
Sat 23, 10:00	Recreational paddle	Mount Batten	Joy Ashford 01752 344425.
Sat 30, 10:00	Easter paddle	Mount Batten	Terry Calcott 07828 652775.
April.			
Sat 6, TBA	Sea paddle	TBA	Terry Calcott 07828 652775.
	<i>Times and venue will appear on the club forum a few days ahead of this trip.</i>		
	<i>The club sea kayaks can be booked with the Club Equipment Officer, Alan Ede, by a text to 07799 556876 or an e-mail to alancede@hotmail.co.uk</i>		
Sat 13, TBA	Recreational paddle	Mount Batten	Neville Cannon 07773 342787.
Mon 15, 19:30	Pool session.	Plympton Pool (Provisional).	Zoe Boyle 07814 131654.
	<i>This session needs to be paid for in advance. Please see December Wet News for details.</i>		
Tues 16, 18:00	1*plus	Mount Batten	Andy Nicolls, Jenny Nicolls
	2*	Mount Batten	Chris Doidge, Jane Hitchings
	3*	Mount Batten	Clive Ashford
	3*plus	Mount Batten	Ken Hamblin
Sat 20, 09:00	Go Canoeing Session	Mount Batten	Linda Brady
Sat 20, 10:00	Recreational paddle	Mount Batten	Terry Calcott 07828 652775.
Tues 23, 18:00	1* plus	Mount Batten	Andy Nicolls, Jenny Nicolls
	2*	Mount Batten	Chris Doidge, Jane Hitchings
	3*	Mount Batten	Clive Ashford
	3* plus	Mount Batten	Ken Hamblin
Sat 27, 09:00	Go Canoeing Session	Mount Batten	Ian Brimacombe 07720 957304.
Sat 27, 10:00	Recreational paddle	Mount Batten	Ken Hamblin 01752 365404.
Tues 30, 18:00	1* plus	Mount Batten	Andy Nicolls, Jenny Nicolls
	2*	Mount Batten	Chris Doidge, Jane Hitchings
	3*	Mount Batten	Clive Ashford
	3* plus	Mount Batten	Ken Hamblin
Advanced notice.			
May 10 – 12	Wye weekend	Kington youth hostel	Clive Ashford 01752 344425
	<i>Booking essential, see January Wet News for details.</i>		
June 15 – 16	Midsummer(ish) camp	TBA	Clive Ashford 01752 344425.
	<i>Details TBA.</i>		
July 12 – 14	Roseland weekend	Roseland Centre	Linda Brady 217678 or Mary 881166.