



PPCA Newsletter

January/February 2021

Introduction

Welcome to December's Newsletter. This month, for the saddest possible reason, there is only one story, the death of our president Bob Grose. I have included tributes and photos from members, many of whom I know found it hard to write the pieces included and I have taken the liberty of reprinting the obituary of Bob that was published in The Guardian.

Editorial

I didn't know Bob as well as many of you did, not being a sea paddler. We never really got beyond a brief chat on a slipway before we each went off in separate directions and I only had the vaguest idea of the remarkable life he had led before any of us got to know him. I trust if any employees of The Guardian are reading this they will forgive me for purloining his obituary. If you haven't read it, I urge you to do so.

In his role as President, Bob never failed to send a Thank You and some words of encouragement after every Newsletter, no matter how thin the contents. No editor could ask for more.

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 photographs are some old photos of Bob from various contributors. Thanks to Steve Hoppins for sending some more in.

Bob Grose

Although Bob had told me a few stories about his life in the number of journeys we did together it was not until I read his obituary that I realised the extent of what he had achieved during his lifetime. That was Bob all over a very humble man. My early experience of Bob was when he came on a few winter paddling sessions on the rivers but although he became competent during these trips, I think his heart was more into the sea paddling side of kayaking.

I think we got to know each other much better when in July 2017 a group of us went to the Shetland Isles where I think Bob had ventured the previous year. A wonderful trip made even more interesting when Bob and I had several conversations during this period of a couple of weeks plus the journeys up there and back again. I must also say that his culinary skills were delightful with the several meals he made for all of us during this time plus the wonderful locations of the accommodation he had booked for us.

Later that year I became the PPCA Club Chairman with Bob as the secretary having already served 3 years on the committee. During that first year, we spent a lot of time reviewing and updating the Club Constitution and Rules along with the monthly meetings which were held at the Mount Batten Centre. During this time Bob had developed an eye problem for which the DVLC revoked his licence for a period of 6 months but this did not stop him from still travelling up and down from Totnes to Plymouth by train for these meetings with somebody picking him up from the railway station and conveying him out to the meeting. After the meeting somebody else would then convey him back to his home or part way where Jane used to pick him up.

Then at the Club AGM in 2018 Bob was voted in as our President a position I think he was very proud to accept certainly we were. This was a position he was supposed to only hold for a period of 2 years but due to the pandemic problems of 2020 he again accepted the committees invitation to remain as our President for a further 2 years. Such was the dedication and generosity of this man for which the PPCA is very thankful. Personally, there were many occasions that we have spoken where I have sought advice from him during this period for which I have been incredibly grateful for and I will very much miss him being there with the comfort of his advice and support in the future.

Bob, I think I speak for every member of our club who knew you that wherever you are now I have to say it has been a privilege to have had your companionship for the time we have known you and thank you so much for the great contribution you have made to our club.

Ken Hamblin (Chair PPCA)



Bob (Captain Birdseye) in the Shetlands 2017

Our two vikings



Bob and Joy near Muckle Flugga Lighthouse

I've no idea about when we first met Bob but I expect it was on a Saturday paddle. We would have encouraged him, imparted whatever knowledge we could and Clive would have bored him to tears with banal paddling stories. Bob's paddling ability gradually improved and in time he became a better paddler than both of us. Also, with the passage of time, Bob ceased to be simply an acquaintance and instead we were privileged to be able to call him a friend. We not only paddled together in our local waters but also spent a number of holidays together. Bob was both fun and educational to be with, for example it was Bob who introduced Joy to the fine art of whisky drinking.

We have many paddling stories that involve Bob but here is a dry land tale. Bob and I and a few others walked over Dartmoor to look at a recently discovered stone circle. Everything went well and we ate our packed lunch sitting beside this ancient monument, after which we tarried a while looking at the stones and speculating about their use. We then set off back to Postbridge, which was our starting point. On our return journey Bob saw stones in a different light and kept asking, "Do you think these stones are something ancient?" I reckon Bob pointed out at least 10 different undiscovered ancient monuments in just a few short miles.

I'm sure that we will be reciting Bob tales for many years to come, tales that will bring back happy memories and that will once again put Bob induced smiles onto our wrinkly old faces. It was a delight and a privilege to have you Bob, thanks for your company.



Editor's Note: As Joy pointed out on Facebook, there is a Just Giving page set up in Bob's memory to support the Trussell Trust. The Trussell Trust support a nationwide network of Food banks and together they provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty, and campaign for change to end the need for food banks in the UK. [Click here to see it.](#)

Clive and Joy Ashford

It was a particularly fine sandwich; fresh wholemeal bread, butter, houmous, watercress and sun-dried tomatoes – I really like those. If anything, I had slightly under catered – not many extras – but what my lunch lacked in quantity would be more than made up for in quality. I was really looking forward to eating that sandwich.

It was one of those Saturday paddles. Bob was leading a small group of us towards Cawsand. The weather was fine and the sea glistening as we bobbed along. I always enjoyed my chats with Bob. Whether it was his cycling adventures, the eco-house in Totnes or the projects he had been involved with over his long career, such as the reconstruction work he had led in East Timor. I always learned something new.

I remember Bob's first trip with the club. The conditions were testing and he looked really uncomfortable. I stuck close, as just off Devils Point, Bob took his first dip. I got him back in his boat in a jiffy as he really listened and followed the instructions without panicking. A couple of minutes later he obliged with a second plunge, so we went through another textbook performance. Cold and damp, he didn't complain, but I couldn't help thinking he wouldn't stick with things. How wrong I was. Years later, I remember how confident and impressive he looked in his Romany, as white-knuckled and well out of my comfort zone, we battled through a nasty swell just off Burgh Island.

Landing at Cawsand, my one thought was that sandwich. I was bloody starving. It was a sunny, busy day on the beach. We opened our lunch boxes and chatted about this and that. I ate the first half; it was a damned fine sandwich. Bob was standing next to me. I crouched down, unscrewed my thermos flask and poured out a cup of blackcurrant tea with honey. Standing up again, I reached for the second half, but it was gone. Strange, I thought, I'm sure I left it just there? Bob was nattering on about something. Bob was eating something that looked suspiciously like my sandwich. Bob's not the kind of bloke that would take another chap's lunch, I pondered, as he chewed away,

but as it turned out, Bob was exactly such a bloke. What an utter swine!

It was a mistake, of course. I can still see Bob's expression as he tried to appease things by offering me the inferior culinary production his wife had prepared – what looked like a combination of Marmite and compost – but I wasn't tempted. Somehow, the group cobbled together a few odds and ends, so I didn't starve. We all had a good chuckle about it.

Bob was such a lovely man. It's hard to believe he's gone.

Alan Braidford

I have only been with PPCA a few years now, so I wasn't lucky enough to know Bob as long as some other members. However, it was good to paddle with him as he was always cheerful, smiling and had a great sense of humour. There were often good anecdotes to be heard when out paddling with Bob. He will be missed.

Debbie Rowlands



I have been racking my brain trying to remember when I first met Bob in the club. My foggy recollection is that it was during 2010 although it could have been a year earlier? The first time however is still firmly etched in my mind. I was leading a club Saturday rec paddle and I think Bob came along as a guest paddler. He assured me that he had paddled before and was a competent paddler. Bob was dressed in a thin cotton long sleeved shirt and a pair of trousers. Reassured by Bobs confident words I suggested that he get changed and put his clothes in the members shed. His reply was these are my paddling clothes! Even though it was summer he convinced me (again) that he was fine paddling dressed as he was. It was a flat calm day and we were only paddling along the Hoe to Mount Edgcumbe so what could happen? We made it along to Devils Point and after a safety briefing at the Narrows as the outgoing tide was flowing a little briskly. Bob promptly capsized as he paddled into the flow. Once reintroduced to his kayak he promptly capsized again. Once back at MB I thought he would never come back paddling again. But the rest is history, he came back and took to it with such enthusiasm, drive and determination.

I had the pleasure of paddling with Bob many times over the years. He was natural in his kayak out on the water and loved rock hopping close into the shore. He had great timing, poise and composure in that turbulent zone of water and made it look easy. Bob was also a regular supporter of club activities and always came along on club paddles whenever he could. On the club easter paddles he would usually have a large display of flowery vegetation on his head.

Bob was a gentleman and always cheerful and ready to chat about anything when paddling along. He will be greatly missed, RIP Bob.

Terry Calcott



I have struggled to sit down and write these words as I still can't believe that Bob is no longer with us. Bob was an incredibly kind, positive and enthusiastic individual and he will be hugely missed by all who knew him. I have many wonderful happy memories of spending time with Bob in and on the water.

Bob was always up for a challenge and I always remember his enthusiasm for kayaking whether it was on the rivers or the sea. He was always extremely encouraging to his fellow paddlers and I can recall him patiently sharing useful tips for rolling skills. He was an incredible team player. Bob loved sea kayaking and I remember some wonderful trips on the Scillies where Bob was absolutely in his element in the huge rolling waves.

I remember one New Year's Day where he joined me for a New Year's Day swim with his children. Bob and his family arrived full of enthusiasm despite the bracing winds and freezing temperatures. Bob was one of the first people in the water and one of the last ones out. His enthusiasm for life was one of the many wonderful things I will always remember about Bob.

The PPCA has lost an incredibly special person. I know he would want us to continue paddling and I know we will think of him often on our future paddling adventures.

Bekky Stiasny

I paddled quite a bit with Bob over the last few years, probably more on non club paddles as we shared in some training and several holidays. You get to know people better whilst sharing a cottage or boat and exploring new places, mostly on the sea. He had an infectious enthusiasm for whatever he was doing – be it exploring a cave, spotting sea birds, looking at rock formations or spending the day in a small Scottish Museum. Bob was knowledgeable on so many topics – a great asset when Wikipedia was not available! He was a most interesting man who never spoke about his previous life and his enormous achievements. I learnt more from his obituary as he didn't like to talk about his work and was modest.

He was always warm in his greetings and took a genuine interest on what others had been doing. As a newer paddler I used to follow Bob through those narrow rocky gaps as he was an adventurous spirit. I am still trying to emulate his patience in waiting and watching for the right moment to head into a feature rather than trusting to luck! However he was not afraid of coming a cropper and I shall never forget what came to be called "Bob's Cave" in Brittany. I can still hear the "bang" before a smiling Bob emerged with an equally enthusiastic dog like kayak, wagging its tail! We will always refer to the "Bob Launch" which involves leaving the beach with kayak at a jaunty angle which slowly progressed to 90 degrees, unceremoniously dumping the paddler in the shallow water. Fortunately, Bob didn't take himself too seriously.

He gave a lot to the club having been secretary for some years. He brought wisdom to that role with a great deal of diplomacy that he then brought to the President's position. He worked hard to get his leader qualification and was delighted to lead, although sometimes from afar!

He is a huge loss to the paddling community, to all of his many friends, and to the many causes that he passionately supported. We miss you Bob

Adam Coulson



I think myself really privileged to have known Bob in both his sea paddling and river paddling career, since 2016. I have shared many a long van journey with Bob, kayaks and kit stowed in the back, off to Penzance and other destinations. I have never had such a good cab companion.

Bob was kind, clever, witty and sometimes hilariously funny but he never made fun or joked at anyone's expense. He also had a complete lack of ego and it took me a long time to realise what an extraordinary human being I was sitting next to.

I sold Bob my 60 litre Wave Sport Diesel Kayak and Bob turned his hand to white water paddling on the Rivers. I remember Bob drifting down a chute on the Walkham and becoming entangled in a submerged tree. No one else could have remained so calm whilst in danger and whilst lines were being thrown and mis-thrown and the tree trunks were sawn with tiny pruning saws that kayakers carry, Bob sat serenely, still with a half smile on his face and patiently waited to be freed.

Bob's true love was the sea and unless you were very fit you'd have a job keeping up with him. Bob would be way ahead in his white sea kayak, exploring gullies, rocks or playing in the waves. He loved the white stuff and appeared unafraid and the happy smile never left his face. I shall always remember Bob's battered old Tilly hat, his mischievous dark sparkling eyes and his total love and enthusiasm for life.

Bob was the most humane person I have met and his number one personal attribute was kindness. He "had a brain the size of a planet," but never extolled his own virtues or achievements.

If I as a fellow paddler, miss Bob and feel like something has been torn from my life, then how much more so dear Jane, Catherine and Eleanor must you feel it. My heart goes out to you and I'm so proud and lucky to have shared beautiful leisure moments with Bob.

Jane Hitchings

Bob Grose by Roy Head, Published in The Guardian

For some people, the work they do and the life they lead are in perfect alignment. My friend and colleague Bob Grose, who has died aged 71, was one of those people.

He did historically important work on HIV/Aids for the World Health Organization (WHO) in Africa, and for polio, HIV and leprosy for the Overseas Development Administration (ODA, later DfID) in India. Writing for War on Want in the mid-1980s, Bob was one of the first to predict that truckers would be high-risk vectors for the HIV epidemic in Africa. He was quickly snapped up by the WHO's Global Programme on Aids (later UNAids) in Geneva, where he worked from 1987 to 1992 as a technical adviser. He was ahead of his time, mobilising community groups in Africa to raise awareness of the epidemic: a focus of UNAids to this day.



As the ODA's senior health and population adviser (1992-99), he oversaw several huge projects: the eradication of polio (every year more than 100 million children were immunised in a single day); the launch of India's efforts to combat the HIV epidemic; and the elimination of leprosy. All of these stories have happy endings: polio has been eradicated in India, HIV is well controlled and 200,000 people were cured of leprosy on his watch. Bob is remembered by his colleagues there as a consummate professional, kind, wickedly funny, with a complete absence of ego.

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Bob was born in his grandmother's nursing home in Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, to Nicholas, an auctioneer, and Kathleen (nee Rushworth), a physiotherapist, although the family lived in Fowey, Cornwall. He attended Truro school before qualifying as a chartered surveyor at the College of Estate Management in Kensington, London. He travelled a good deal before doing a master's in international administration at Cornell.

It was in 1983, during an early posting to Yemen, that Bob met Jane Springham, who was working as a nurse at a small clinic on the Red Sea coast. They married in 1988.

Bob was determined to raise his young family near the Cornish countryside where he grew up, so in 1999 they moved from India to a farmhouse in Brownston in the South Hams, Devon. Bob spent the final decade of his career at HLSP, an international health consulting firm. When he retired in 2014, he became deeply committed to climate activism, and was arrested as part of Extinction Rebellion's demonstrations in April 2019. The couple moved to Totnes when Jane retired three years ago.

Bob was fearsomely fit. He performed a seven-minute plank during a family lockdown competition and thought nothing of a 20-mile kayaking trip. In Jane's words, "he died as he lived, cycling up a hill on a mountain bike, covered in mud, with a smile on his face. He wouldn't have wanted it any other way."

His family remember him as "the most extraordinary man to live with", a devoted father who woke up every morning interested in something new.

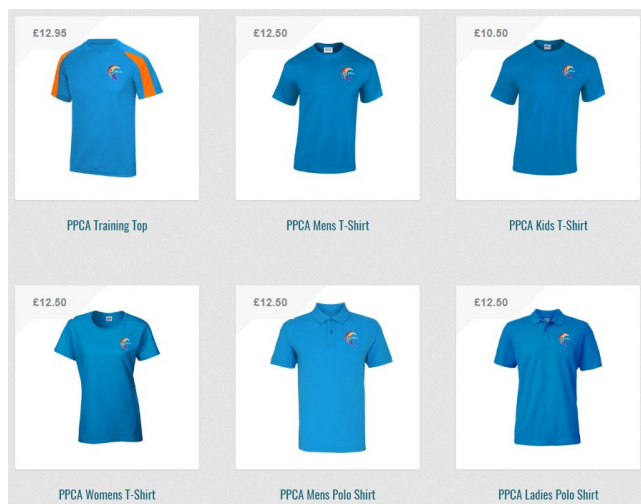
He is survived by Jane and their daughters, Catherine and Eleanor, and by his brothers, Timothy and Richard.

Exchange and Mart

PPCA Club Clothing by Jackie Perry, Publicity Officer

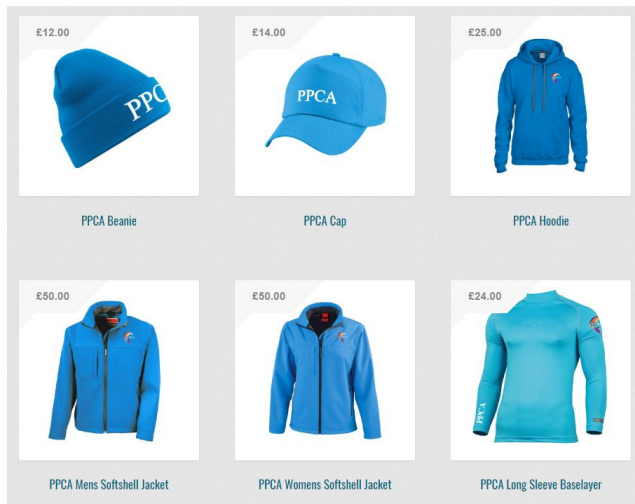
A full range of customised kit in either blue or black is available to order direct from Tailored Branding via the link below

<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.

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