



# PPCA Newsletter

## August 2021

## Introduction

Welcome to August's Newsletter. This month Clive has an away day, I go up a river and Adam practices being invisible.

## Editorial

In Subterranean Homesick Blues, Bob Dylan (who later won the Nobel Prize for Literature) gave the very sage advice "Don't follow leaders". Admittedly, he immediately followed this with the slightly more obscure advice to "Watch the parking meters" but the point was made. Two of this month's articles talk about the joys (or otherwise) of leading a paddle and give a bit of an understanding of what is involved. While, on the whole, I think Dylan had a point, he had probably never been out on a PPCA club paddle so maybe he would have adapted his advice had he been herding cats in Plymouth Sound.

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

## Acknowledgements

The cover photographs are from the usual suspects.

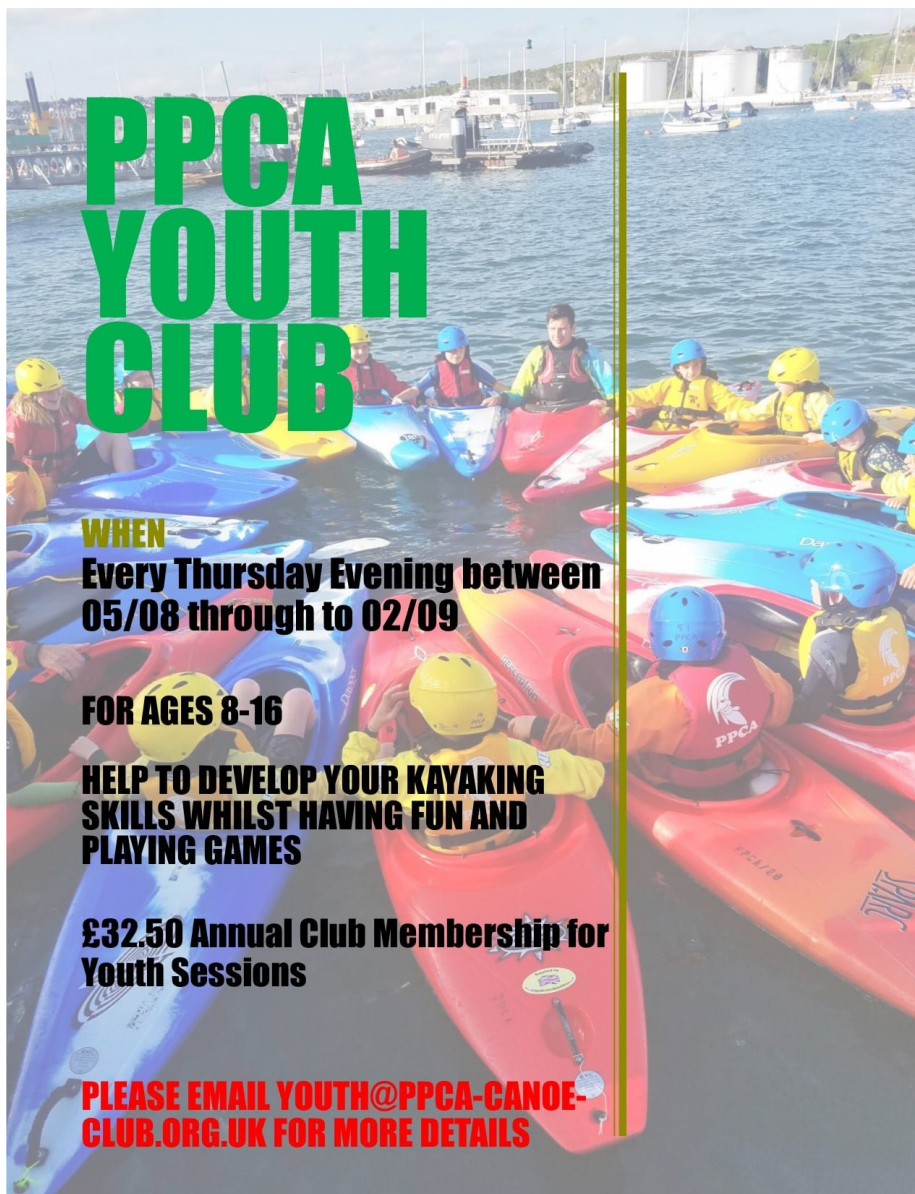


## PPCA Youth Club by George Hamblin

As I mentioned before, our club is going from strength to strength and we are really trying to boost the development of our Youth Section within it.

For this reason, if you could please share this poster or/and forward it on to anyone you might think would be interested I would be incredibly grateful.

Editor's note: the poster can be downloaded from Facebook.



**PPCA  
YOUTH  
CLUB**

**WHEN**  
**Every Thursday Evening between**  
**05/08 through to 02/09**

**FOR AGES 8-16**

**HELP TO DEVELOP YOUR KAYAKING**  
**SKILLS WHILST HAVING FUN AND**  
**PLAYING GAMES**

**£32.50 Annual Club Membership for**  
**Youth Sessions**

**PLEASE EMAIL [YOUTH@PPCA-CANOE-](mailto:YOUTH@PPCA-CANOE-CLUB.ORG.UK)**  
**CLUB.ORG.UK FOR MORE DETAILS**

## Features

### Who Needs a Leader? by Adam Coulson

I have had a little look for a suitable quotation with regards to leadership. Don't worry, I am not going to share the top 100 quotes on leadership, many of which are remarkably cheesy, and some of which come with emetic qualities. However, please allow me the indulgence of perhaps using just one or two, the first of which appears on a list at Number One and attributed to Lao Tzu. He said "A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves."

I have picked this out for sharing with the PPCA Newsletter readership as I think it is very apposite to paddle trip leadership. The team of paddlers come off the water, hopefully happy and possibly tired, but with a sense that they have fulfilled their personal objectives by their own efforts. This is equally attributable to a weekend expedition as an evening splash in the Sound.

My point is that I have not always appreciated the efforts that our leaders have made to get their "team" to this point at the end of their exertions, and I suspect that I am not the only one. It is only when you plan paddles yourself and then include other people in your plans that this becomes evident.

So what do they do? Well the initial plan may be formulated some days in advance and then advertised. The geography, tides and currents can all be researched in advance, but the weather may not be known until shortly before the trip. As we all know, wind and swell have dramatic effects on the success of the day – behind you all day is heaven, in front is hell! The leader is responsible for keeping records and for counting people onto and off of the water and then worrying if there is a mismatch between the two (but only if greater than 10%). They are responsible for ensuring that there is adequate equipment to cover all predictable and some unpredictable events and then for briefing the group with regards to the plan. Generally the leader should be last onto the water (to help a tail ender) and first off (to help with landing). They are responsible for the safety of the group and for any required rescues (although they do not necessarily have to perform them personally). Indeed it may be better to allocate a suitable paddler to help a victim whilst they monitor the situation and the whole group.

British Canoeing provides Participant Focused Leadership Guidance that states "a leader has the ability to lead safe, enjoyable, quality journeys/sessions based on the group's needs, abilities and aspirations". It may be worth reading that list again! This document then goes into detail on Venue Selection; Safety; Vision (the leader as a positive role model); Support (empathetic social support); and Challenge. Remember that this is leadership NOT coaching. This guidance is for the Sea Kayak Leader Award that approves candidates to lead paddles in up to 1 meter of swell, up to force 4 winds, 2 knots of tide and within 2 nautical miles of a landing point. Some earn their living doing just this, and others give up their time to lead club paddles, and some do both.

So what is our responsibility as participants on a lead trip? It goes a lot further than just paddling your own canoe (read kayak etc). The other day I talked about the acronym CLAP which we will return to now:

**C**ommunication. This includes verbal, whistles, radio, mobile phone, signals etc. It is a two way process – communicate clearly and ensure that your communication is received and understood and also listen and ensure that you have understood. There is responsibility on both sides. Communication is much hampered by distance, sea conditions and wind, when it can become remarkably difficult

**L**ine of Sight. This is considered especially important on White Water but is also relevant on the sea. It doesn't mean that everybody can see everybody else but that everybody can be seen by at least one other person. So do hang back and watch out for the straggler amongst the rocks – they may not be sighted by anybody else. Also ensure that somebody else has sight of YOU.

**A**nticipation. Everybody should be aware of potential hazards so that they can be avoided e.g. shallow rocks, tide races, overfalls.

**P**osition in Group. Each paddler should be conscious of their physical position within the group so as to be of maximum use to everybody else. This is usually referred to as “group awareness”.

So what is my point? Well it is that we should appreciate those leading paddles and be aware of the effort that goes into their job. But we should also make their lives as easy and enjoyable as possible by being active group members, looking out for each other. So what has brought on an increased awareness of this? Doing some training with, amongst others, Richard Uren in West Cornwall. So on that note I will end with a happy photo. Oh and yes, Richard did lead us to have our kayaks up on this rocky coffee spot that we wouldn't have visited previously. 😊





## Not Plymouth Sound Volume 2 by Clive Ashford with Photos by Joy Ashford

So, you've seen the sights of Plymouth Sound (and jolly good sights they are too) but you are now ready to be a bit more adventurous. This is the story of the club being a bit more adventurous. The volume 2 bit in the title should give you the impression that this isn't the first such story.

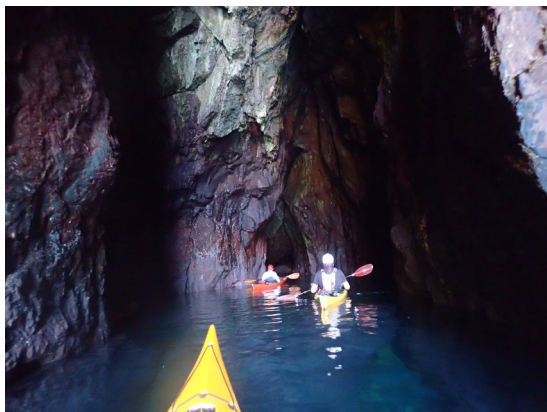
Readers of volume 1, still available on a good website near you, <https://www.pcca-canoe-club.org.uk/club-newsletter/> will remember that 4 of us launched from Porthpean on a day that was forecast to be cold, damp and breezy. By contrast volume 2 sees 13 paddlers take to the water at South Milton Sands on a hot summer's day with hardly a breath of wind. Only a cynic would believe that there could be any correlation between the weather forecast and the numbers attending, so I will leave you to ponder what's going on here.

For those of you with limited geographical knowledge South Milton is the beach in south Devon that has the Thurlestone Rock located just off shore. Getting to South Milton Sands means driving through narrow twisting lanes but if you follow me you get to drive along a lot more of them because I didn't take the most direct route. I wouldn't normally admit to this but there are witnesses.

On hot summer days the main car park at South Milton fills up quite early, and as already indicated this was a hot summer's day. The car park did indeed fill up quite early, but thanks to advice from Debbie and Stephen we were forewarned and arrived in good time.



We changed and congregated on the beach ready for our briefing. The extent of my briefing was to slope shoulders and pass the leadership onto Adam Coulson. Adam is going for his sea kayak leadership award so I took a back seat and let him lead this trip in order that he could gain valuable experience. (And so that I could have a holiday.)



The first lesson of Adam's day was to realise that 13 people take a lot longer to do things than a smaller group, as demonstrated by the amount of time it took for us all to paddle through the arch of Thurlestone Rock and for our photographers to finally decide that they had taken enough photos. It wasn't like that in the good old days of analogue photography!

What may well have been Adam's second lesson of the day quickly followed. He gave an instruction that I'm sure most people heard but that just a tiny proportion listened to. I will leave you to differentiate between the words "heard" and "listened to" but if you have ever been frustrated by talking to teenagers, sorry, I will re-phrase that, if you have ever had the honour and privilege of working with teenagers, then you will know exactly what the difference is.

The plan was to round the headland known as Bolt Tail, paddle in a generally SE direction to Bolt Head and then stop for lunch at either Starehole Bay or South Sands, Salcombe. From Bolt Tail to Bolt Head is just under 5 miles of dramatic cliffs pierced by very impressive caves. Landing is only possible approx. half way at Soar Mill Cove and there are tidal races / overfalls to contend with. In general terms Adam knows all about tidal races and overfalls, sometimes from an intimate perspective, and he was well aware of the tidal conditions that we would have to contend with on this trip. Suitably informed Adam was able to make all the scary decisions on our behalf, leaving the rest of the team to appreciate the beautiful scenery in what may well have been blissful ignorance. Oh, the joys of leadership.

When advertising this trip I had promised caves. We weren't disappointed and many a dark hole was explored, once again demonstrating how long it takes for 13 paddlers to satisfy their curiosity and photographic ambitions. We left the caves behind and examined the geology, some from close up and others from a more genteel distance depending on individual preference, although the lack of any swell may have been a source of frustration for our more expert paddlers. (To translate, some people played among the rocks and some didn't).

We visited Soar Mill Cove where no-one took up Adam's offer of a comfort break. I once again refer you to the "heard" / "listened to" comments noted earlier and observe that quite probably no-one except me was listening.

Somewhere along the way we saw a couple of seals and 3 peregrine falcons. The falcons put on a flying display that would put the Red Arrows to shame without any of the razzamatazz. Nature can be so inspiring.

There was more playing until lunch seemed like a good option so we paddled into Starehole Bay. Let me give you a piece of absolutely free information about Starehole Bay. Even on neap tides the beach at there is covered at high tide. We arrived very close to high tide neaps to find no-where to land. My stomach seemed to think that this was a problem but my ears and lungs

held different opinions. Starehole Bay was full of power boats some of which were moving at high speed with an equally high decibel count and sending out clouds of carbon monoxide. I've never been impressed with speed and console myself with the memory of seeing seals and peregrines, but even so it was almost a relief to find that the beach was covered and that we would have to move on to South Sands to land.



In case you were asleep (and who could blame you) I will sum up. We arrived at South Sands at high tide on a hot summers' day. Guess how busy the beach was and then consider the amount of space 13 sea kayaks need to land. Luckily there is a stream that runs across the beach in a series of small braided channels. No-one likes sitting in water so this proved to be an ideal nesting ground for our boats. We then wandered up the hill a little way and sat on a bench for a well-earned lunch....

....All except Stephen that is. Our briefing on the beach covered such items as radios, first aid kits and towlines but omitted to ask if everyone had lunch with them. I can tell that your lightening quick brain is well ahead of my snails paced typing finger and that you have already drawn the conclusion that Stephen's lunch is not in his boat. Luckily Bruce has some emergency money with him and lends Stephen a shiny £10 note with which Stephen visits the beach café in eager anticipation of some fine repast. We're in Salcombe. What culinary delight will £10 purchase in Salcombe? Well, without boring you with the fine detail I can tell you Stephen's purchases lacked any cordon bleu qualities and boasted a quantity that wouldn't keep a sparrow alive for very long. That'll teach him.

Lunch over and we re-launched. We did a bit of playing until we rounded Bolt Head at which stage most of the paddlers realised that time was marching on, that we still had quite a long way to go and that fatigue was setting in. With the exception of a few Duracell bunnies helmets were removed and the trip entered a social stage. Adam did manage to entertain a few fish with an impromptu capsized but other than that excitement was minimal.

In an uneventful sort of a way we landed at South Milton. The tide had receded so the carry back to the car park was longer than the carry down just a few hours earlier, but everyone helped and the boats were soon placed close to our cars and the process of changing started.

At the beginning of the trip there was the usual speculation as to how unlucky the number 13 is. Let me tell you that 13 paddlers took to the water, we paddled a total of 16 miles, explored caves, looked at some splendid scenery and saw a bit of wildlife. We were a little tired but all 13 paddlers got safely back having had a marvellous day out. Unlucky 13? Probably not.

My thanks to Adam for leading us, I hope he wasn't too traumatised, and to all the paddlers who made this another excellent PPCA day on the water. I also give a special well done to any readers not called Ivor that have managed to read this right to the end, a feat of endurance well beyond the call of duty. (Editor Ivor is contractually obliged to read what he publishes in this excellent newsletter and is thus exempt from any praise).

There are 2 further chances to experience "Not Plymouth Sound" with the PPCA, they are Sunday 15 August and Sunday 12 September. The distance will be slightly less at between 12 & 14 miles. See you then.





## The East and West Looe Rivers by The Editor

Because of work pressures, we haven't been able to make the club evening paddles this year. We have, however, been able to make the most of the high spring tides on alternate Saturdays to explore the local estuaries. This write-up is a bit of a cheat in that it combines two paddles from the same week on the same rivers, one going further up the East Looe and one further up the West.

The East and West Looe Rivers rarely look attractive propositions for a paddle. At anything other than a reasonable spring tide they appear as vast stretches of mud with a trickle of water added almost as an afterthought. On a high spring tide, however, they are transformed and stretches feel almost as though you are paddling on a lake.

We launched from the slip in the Millpool car park. The Harbour Commissioners have recently taken over this slip to keep it accessible to the public. This means there is a £2 charge to launch but, in compensation, you may get the opportunity to meet the grumpiest car park attendant on earth. In fairness, it was the hottest day of the year and the shipping container he had for an office was like a blast furnace but he was phenomenally miserable. Also in fairness, I should point out that the lady we met the second time couldn't have been more friendly or helpful, even pointing out that while she would charge us to use the slip's car park, the public car park next door was free after 18:00.

The first stretch of the East Looe is a bit featureless to be honest. A wide straight stretch of water enlivened by the very occasional passing of a train on the track on the west bank. Incidentally, I can't help thinking that if they were to put steam trains on this line they would make a fortune, but I digress. Once beyond Terras bridge, however, the river narrows and its whole character changes to an oasis of tranquillity. Terras bridge is one of those bridges that from a distance look a bit low but I can vouch for the fact that it is possible (just) to paddle a canoe under it on a 5.5m tide although you do have to get very low in the boat. The road at this point is also very low, of which more later.

I'm reliably informed that there are kingfishers on this part of the river but I've never yet seen one. There are definitely sand martins and various other birds in the "small brown" category which I have promised myself to learn to identify one day.

How far you can get up the rivers depends entirely on the tide. Too low and you will run aground on obstacles in the river (at least one ford and a weir), too high and you won't be able to get under the trees. That said, we reached a fallen tree just short of Sandplace which I think would put an end to any trip although the river appeared to be navigable for a good stretch beyond. We turned round and headed for the West river on a rising tide.

On our return to Terras bridge, we realised just how low the road was as it was now under several inches of water. The council had thoughtfully provided a raised pedestrian walkway to allow people to walk across at high tide and on this was a rather forlorn looking cyclist who had obviously realised that he wasn't going to get across in the dry for a couple of hours.

Having successfully limboed under the bridge we returned to the boring stretch of the river to find it transformed. The wind had died to a flat calm and the full river acted as a perfect mirror reflecting the trees on the banks and it looked a picture. Words like "mill pond" were used by all those present. These conditions persisted as we went back down the East river and turned the corner into the West where the car park attendant made a friendly gesture at us as we passed.

The West Looe is the more popular branch of the river and on a summer Saturday afternoon is covered from bank to bank with holiday makers clinging desperately to paddle boards. By the evening, however, it is peaceful and, given the perfect reflections, phrases like "we could be in Scotland" began to be used. About 15 minutes from the slip, there is a small picnic area with tables (all the beaches being under water) where it is possible to stop, open a bottle of beer and toast the birthday of one of the paddlers.

Another 15-20 minutes brings you to Watergate with its campsite. As campsites go, this is one of the best. It has minimal facilities and you can pitch your tent at the water's edge, or at least as close as you dare to allow for the need to leave the tent at some point during the night.

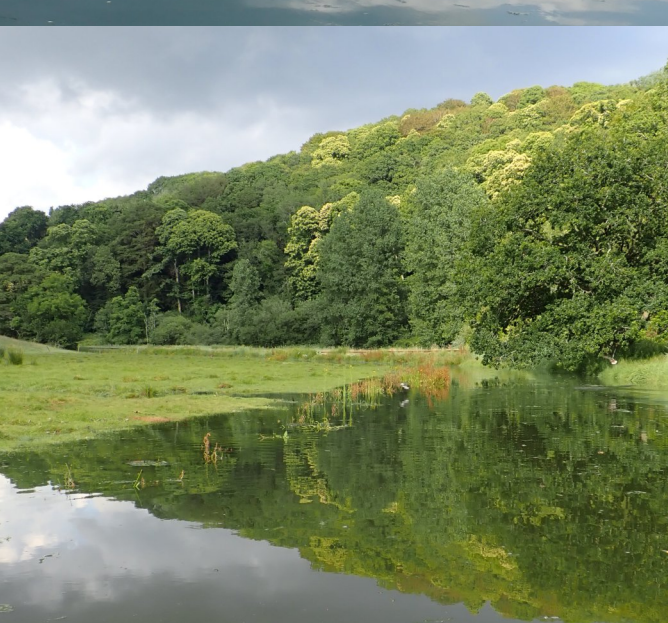
Unfortunately, this is also the place where the Cornish midges hold their annual convention and on one of these trips we had to turn back to save one of our party from being eaten alive. You can, however, press on quite a bit further, until not far short of Sowden's bridge and the views and tranquil atmosphere make this well worth the effort.

Returning to the slip, we again had magnificent reflections. I won't attempt to describe them, I'll let Tracy's photos do the talking. We have a deal while paddling. As Tracy is in the front, she takes the photos and videos while I do the work in the back. This probably isn't a paddle for those who want to be clinging on to their boats by the skin of their teeth as the waves break over their heads but for anyone who wants a peaceful paddle on a beautiful stretch of river, it's a must.

The small print: launching from the Millpool car park, allow 3-3.5 hours to do both branches to the end of the navigable extent in a tandem canoe. Other craft may be quicker but will be less fun. Launching fee £2. Car parking depends on arrival time but anything between £2-£6. There is a form to fill out when launching as they try to make sure that everyone who launches comes back again (assuming they return within working hours). Free parking and launching is available at Hannafore Point. This will add 20-30 minutes in each direction, longer if you go round the island, and tends to fill up very early.







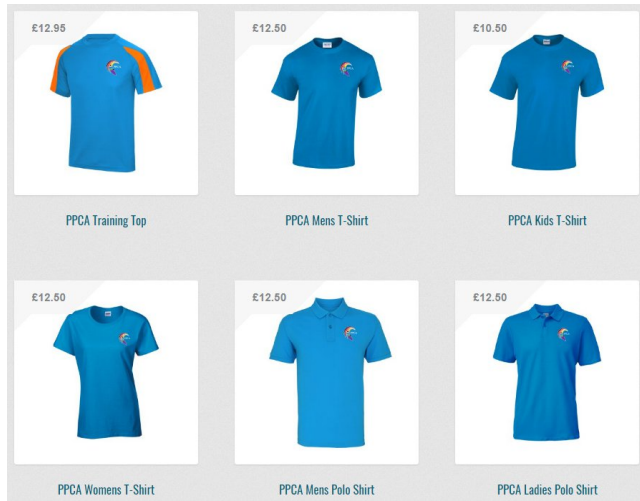


## Exchange and Mart

### PPCA Club Clothing by Jackie Perry, Publicity Officer

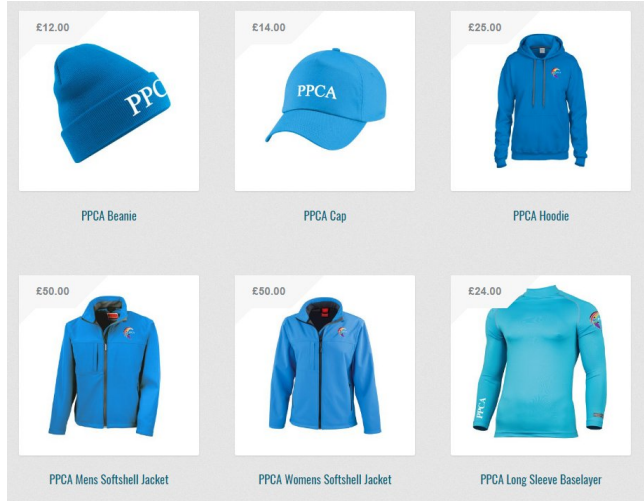
A full range of customised kit in either blue or black is available to order direct from Tailored Branding via the link below

<https://hsclothing.co.uk/ppca-3/>



Discount Available at Millets, 38/40 New George St, Plymouth PL1 1RW

One of our members works in the Millets store (Big 'Thank you' to Lee McKenzie!) on New George Street, Plymouth and has negotiated with his Manager a great discount of 15% on production of your PPCA club membership card. Usual T's & C's apply, e.g. goods already discounted/sales items might be excluded.



Discount Available at Kayaks and Paddles

Kayaks and paddles offer discount to local kayak and canoe clubs. The PPCA and Tamar Canoe club can get a discount up to 15%. This is an offer not a right for the person that is making a purchase, so please do not go upsetting Kayaks and Paddles employees as this discount might be taken away.



**Raise free donations** for us every time you shop online with easyfundraising!



<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/ppca/>

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