



PPCA Newsletter

January 2022

Introduction

Welcome to January's Newsletter. This month Bruce sends in one of his bulletins from San Francisco Bay. Sit back, relax and imagine those grey skies are actually deepest blue and filled with pelicans....

Editorial

Firstly, apologies for the non-appearance of the December Newsletter. Quite simply, I didn't have anything to put in it. I realise that for many members, Christmas isn't Christmas without the December Newsletter and I can only hope that not too many Christmases were ruined by its absence.

This means that I am performing my traditional thanks to all the contributors in the first Newsletter of the New Year. Thank you to everyone who has contributed, the Newsletter wouldn't exist without you. It's been a difficult year once again with occasional glimpses of something approaching normality. Let's hope next year will be better (although I may have said the same thing last year).

Thank you also to all those whose photos I have pinched from Facebook to decorate the front covers. I've tried to remember to credit everyone whose photos I've used but apologies if I've missed you.

So here's looking forward to a New Year with plenty of paddling and plenty of contributions to the Newsletter.

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

As ever, I have plundered Facebook for the cover photos - my thanks to all concerned especially Andy Kittle who appears for the first time.

Features

Paddling in San Francisco Bay by Bruce Burton

As some of you will know, I am married to an American lady and we spend part of each year near San Francisco. At least we did until Covid struck, and for much of last year I was here in Devon and Susann was in San Francisco. However normal service was resumed last June and, once again, we departed in late September for a few weeks in California.

When I am there, I paddle with some people from Bay Area Sea Kayaks (BASK). This is a large club with a wide range of skills. Unlike PPCA they don't have regular club paddles, rather individual members initiate paddles and people sign up to go on them. Numbers are often limited. In previous years, a friend of mine has organized a paddle each Thursday at different locations in the general Bay area. However, because of illness, he no longer does this and, on my return, I had to hook up with other members of the Thursday group. It took a few weeks this time before I managed to get on a paddle but having done so, I was able to get out several times.

Paddling in the Bay area is very different to paddling here in Plymouth. All of my paddling this time was done within the Bay. On previous trips I have done a few paddles 'Out the Gate', which means going under the Golden Gate Bridge. This is a much more serious proposition than paddling in the Bay. Going under the GG Bridge itself is a challenge as there are fierce tides that flow through there. This narrow channel has a flow of water that is second only to that of the Amazon. Tidal currents through the Gate can be in excess of 6 kts and timing one's passage is critical. Competent paddlers that I know have needed to be rescued when they have been swept under the Bridge. Once outside the Gate you are exposed to the Pacific Ocean often with large rollers. Within the Bay, conditions tend to be mellower. However even here local knowledge is important, as, although the tidal range is small compared with Plymouth, usually less than 2 meters, tidal flow can be strong and there are well known places where wind against tide can create significant standing waves. Paddles tend to be planned to take advantage of the tidal flows. Another hazard, more in the summer than the winter, is that the wind can get up in the afternoon very quickly. Suddenly you can go from more or less calm to a strong Force 5 or so within just a few minutes. Within the Bay opportunities for rock hopping (rock gardening in the US) are very limited. Out the Gate is a very different matter with major rock gardening opportunities in big swells. You may have seen videos of Neptune's Rangers playing in the surf in this area. Somewhat out of my pay grade.



This year I managed five paddles. The first was from a place called Horseshoe Cove, which is a common starting point for Out the Gate paddles, but we went the opposite way, taking advantage of a strong flood tide to take us across to Angel Island. We pulled onto a beach on the island for lunch and then continued to circumnavigate the island, passing through Raccoon Strait, which is one of the places that the tide can rip through. By now however it was more or less slack water, with the beginning of an ebb tide. We crossed back to Horseshoe Cove with an increasing ebb tide helping us along. Just before we got there we passed a headland called Yellow Bluff, where the ebb tide flows very strongly and which can be fairly

challenging. Although early in the ebb, there was an area of disturbed water off the bluff, which added a degree of interest to our final few meters. The total paddle was about 8 miles on a warm but misty day.

The next paddle was from a place called Richmond, which I reached after crossing the Bay Bridge. We paddled along the western shore of a long thin island called Brook's Island, which also acts to separate out a shipping channel. We had to be a bit careful crossing this channel as a high speed ferry uses it and that's not something to tangle with.



The third paddle started from San Pedro, a very funky harbour with lots of live-aboard boats. We paddled south, past the Two Brothers, a couple of islands one of which has a light house on it, and headed under the Richmond Bridge to a small deserted island called Red Rock, again assisted by a good ebb tide. We stayed on this island for quite a while having lunch and waiting for the tide to turn. The ebb was both stronger and more long lasting than the tide tables indicated, because flow from the Sacramento river was greater than normal following the 'atmospheric river' rain earlier.

The fourth paddle started from a bit south of the previous one, but in this case we went in a NE direction, again passing through the gap between the Two Brothers. This time, despite the fact that we were close to slack water, there was a significant current passing through this gap, with a very distinctive tide line and disturbed seas, including some moderate breaking waves. Either side it was flat calm and the disturbed area was no more than about 100m. The rest of the paddle, which was around 10 miles, was pleasantly mellow and warm.



My final paddle of this session was in Carquinez Strait, another area with strong tides. In order to put in we had to cross an active railway line, with fairly frequent trains. Fortunately there was plenty of warning of an approaching train with sirens sounding at the crossing and the train's horn blasting from some distance away. We started the paddle by weaving in amongst abandoned pier pilings, which was interesting in the current, but a poor substitute for rock hopping. Another 10 mile or so paddle to a place called Martinez and back.

As always, I enjoyed the chance to paddle and be out on the water, and the lovely weather was good too. However, I always miss the variety of coastal features and sea conditions in and around Plymouth Sound. I enjoy the company of the people that I paddle with in California, but I also miss the camaraderie of PPCA.

Exchange and Mart

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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