



PPCA Newsletter  
July 2022

## Introduction

Welcome to July's Newsletter. This month Doug and Adam have news of some skills sessions, Terry talks about the Sound and Clive has an epic camping tale of Homeric proportions.

## Editorial

50 years is a long time for any institution to exist, let alone a canoe club. This is a hugely significant anniversary for the club marked by a number of events. This issue had to go to press before most of these vents took place but I look forward to receiving write-ups for the next edition.

A word of warning that, since the last issue, I have also become the editor of our local allotment association newsletter. I shall endeavour to keep the two separate but if I start droning on about lasagne beds and white root rot then I apologise.

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

As ever, I have plundered Facebook for the cover photos - my thanks to all concerned.

### Doug's Skills Sessions by Doug Sitch

I am running some more 'Doug's Skills' sessions in Aug & Sept to focus on avoiding a capsize using support & recovery skills. The dates are:

- 16 Aug
- 30 Aug
- 13 Sep
- 27 Sep

Times are the same as usual Tuesday night sessions at Mount Batten, to be kitted out and ready to paddle at 6pm.



### Sea Kayak Rescue Training by Adam Coulson

By way of introduction to this short article I will start with a couple of extracts by Clive from the forum:

*We bob around the Sound on club trips with hardly anyone capsizing and needing rescuing, which is good but does mean that when things do go awry, we don't excel ourselves in carrying out our rescues. We think our rescue skills are good but actually, when push comes to shove, we are adequate. To try and change this there will be a number of sea kayak rescue skills training evenings during the summer.*

*The forecast for Tuesday evening is for 22mph southerly wind. Far from perfect conditions but we are going to find somewhere to hide from the wind and carry on with running the sea kayak skills session as planned. Ready to be on the water at 18:00.*

Our first session went ahead on the evening of Tuesday the 28th June. It wasn't exactly "flaming June" as 5 of us gathered in the entrance of the club shed to get some shelter. Forecast read 17 gusting 30 knots from SSW and swell of over a meter with 11 second period. It had been raining heavily such that I decided to don paddle gear at home as the best way to stay reasonably dry. There weren't too many others about for some reason. The flag on The Citadel was horizontal and tugging hard on its attachment. Lots of white caps could be seen racing across the Sound as I drove down past Catalina Villas. From the Mountbatten yard, as we were all wet already, we decided "why not" go ahead?

Thus, after a bumpy launch we headed to the spiky buoy with a view to turning right to Sutton Harbour in search of some shelter. It was high water on spring tides and the waves were breaking over the top of the Mountbatten breakwater. Nobody was fishing. We paddled to the end just so that some of us could stick our noses (well bows to be accurate) out into what they call "conditions". There were tasty conditions a plenty (mostly salt flavoured) which soon surfed us across the Cattewater and into the relative shelter of Sutton Harbour. Even there, somebody had left the door open and there was a fair old draft.



And so it was that we rattled through some of the drills with great efficiency and considerable success. The hardest bit was shouting over the wind and fighting to turn our boats back into the same. It became part of our learning to work with rather than against the wind. So we completed an impressive list of manoeuvres including kayak capture and manoeuvre; Eskimo Rescue; Deep water rescue; Hand of God rescue; and Self rescue. Everybody was keen to improve and the finer points of each technique were discussed. We even threw in a bit of



towing practice. The return paddle to Mount Batten was broken by a Deep Water Rescue out in the open water and wind – more real life conditions. Paddling back against what felt like a steady Force 5 soon banished any idea of feeling cold and thus 5 wet but happy paddlers returned to base. The worst bit by far was changing into “dry” clothes in 45 degree driving rain before packing up and returning to dry and comfy homes, but with a vow to return.

Our second session was a week later on a rather different evening with regards to the weather and sea conditions. On this occasion 9 of us gathered at

Mountbatten for a chat before heading down to the water and mustering at the usual pole. We headed around to Jennycliffe Bay where a little shelter could be had from the mild North-westerly breeze, and low water provided a gently shelving beach to play off.

On this occasion we started off with capturing a boat and then went straight into a deep waster rescue where pairs practised being both rescuer and victim. Alternative techniques were tried for regaining the cockpit and everybody was rapidly successful in their attempts. We had previously identified that some practice at balancing on a sea kayak would be beneficial and we soon had all of the paddlers successfully paddling around whilst sitting on their back decks. Landing on the beach from this position proved to be highly successful. I must admit we were a little disappointed by the lack of splashes! However, this soon changed when we embarked upon a 360 degree rotation whilst sat on the back deck – some not until having completed 359 of those! However the group were very willing to give this a go and some showed a gritty determination to get his done. These balance exercise really help to bond you with your kayak and I would recommend anybody to have a go and use the techniques on a regular basis – it is so much easier to just stand up when landing on a beach. The photos are of this exercise.



Having emptied out the boats it was time to try something new and so those who wished to had a go at “self rescue”. Very well done to those who succeeded – this is not an easy procedure and requires lots of practice. By this stage it was gone 8 o’clock and 9 wet, tired but smiling paddlers made their way back around to Mountbatten.

There are another two sessions planned for 26th July and 2nd August. Do come and join us – it’s hard work but great fun.

## Features

### Plymouth Sound Snippets #5, Plymouth Sound by Terry Calcott

A short snippet this month about the name Plymouth Sound. It is interesting that there is only one other body of water in England with the name Sound. This is a tiny area of water on the Norfolk Broads called Heigham Sound. Although not in England there is also another Sound on the Isle of Man, the Calf Sound. Outside of England Sounds are numerous especially in Scotland. Also, many Commonwealth countries have Sounds, New Zealand, and Canada at the top of the list. Although I can find no reference as to when Plymouth Sound was first named and by whom. It does appear on maps from the early 1500s so may be from Elizabethan times?



Late 1500s Map Showing The Sounde

What does intrigue me is why there are no other Sounds in the Southwest? Especially with our abundance of major harbours and estuaries, Falmouth, Dart, Poole etc.

In geography, a Sound is a smaller body of water typically connected to a larger sea or ocean. There is little consistency in the use of sound in English language place names. It can refer to an inlet, deeper than a bight and wider than a fjord, or a narrow sea or ocean channel between two bodies of land (similar to a strait), or it can refer to the lagoon located between a barrier island and the mainland.

The term sound is derived from the Anglo-Saxon or Old Norse word *sund*, as meaning 'gap' or narrow access.

We are fortunate to be able to paddle on such an outstanding area of the sea that we know as The Sound.

## Midsummer(ish) Camp, 18-19 June 2022 by Clive Ashford (Photographers in Brackets)

By tradition I run a PPCA sea kayak camping trip as close to midsummer as is practically possible, given that our younger paddlers have to go to work. This year's little effort was held on 18 – 19 June, hence the title Midsummer(ish) camp. Normally these camps are gentle affairs with not much happening, but that wasn't the case this year. I feel a bit of an essay coming on, so make yourself comfy and read on.



Loading the Boats at Blackpool Sands (Gill)

After a few false starts I fell back on the tried and tested arrangement of parking at Blackpool Sands car park and camping on Long Sands, a beach that has no landward access and therefore very little chance of the landowner asking us to leave. The plan was to set up camp on Long Sands, and then for anyone that wanted to extend the paddle to do so by exploring the coast as far as Berry Head. Caves, coves, sea stacks and wildlife make this a very appealing extension.

We have used Blackpool Sands on a number of occasions and once again the very nice people at Blackpool and Start Partnership kindly gave us permission to park overnight in their car park. With my trip advisor head on let me tell you that if you want to meet friendly and helpful staff, then Blackpool Sands is the place to go. Equally, if you want to experience spotlessly clean loos accompanied by gentle classical music, then Blackpool Sands is still the place to go. Someone commented that the trip was worth it simply for the loos.

My paddling companions will tell you that the view from Blackpool Sands is stunning. You gaze out over Start Bay with Start Point lighthouse glistening white in the distance. My paddling companions will also tell you that the view from the nearby Venus café is equally impressive, as are the sausage baps and other culinary delicacies on sale there. At this stage the gentle reader may be wondering why my paddling companions are admiring the view and culinary delights to be had at Blackpool Sands rather than experiencing the scenery from a rather more first-hand perspective. Well, while my paddling companions were discovering the pleasures of Blackpool Sands I was driving through the lanes of Devon towards Plymouth to rendezvous with Joy. Joy was bringing me the buoyancy aid that I had left very neatly hanging up at home. A huge thank you to Joy. I would like to refer to my paddling companions as friends, but for the sake of accuracy I probably shouldn't be so presumptuous.

So, a little(?) later than planned, we launched. The sky was grey and there was a force 4 ENE wind blowing. Blackpool Sands are sheltered from the ENE wind so we hugged the coast, played in the rocks and generally had pleasant little adventure until we arrived at the mouth of the river Dart. We were now about to make a 2km open crossing in a generally NE direction. The crossing was slow as we were given a no holds barred taster of what we were going to experience later.

Gill was paddling the club low volume Atlantic sea kayak that is named Bob G. For those that don't know Bob Grose was one of our keenest sea kayakers who sadly passed away in 2020 and the boat was named in his memory. It was good to paddle with Bob again if only in spirit. When things got a bit hectic later on in the weekend some unkind soul mentioned that Bob wasn't being much help!

To run an overnight kayaking camp, you need two things:

1) You need to find somewhere to leave cars overnight that has easy access to the water.

2) You need to find somewhere to camp that is a suitable distance away from the car park. (And obtain permission to camp if necessary.)



The Author, Gill and Bob G. (Karen)

We reached the shore near Newfoundland Cove, turned right and paddled on towards Pudcombe Cove. If anyone was expecting this to be easy, then they were in for a bit of a shock. Even though we were under cliffs progress from Outer Forward Point to Pudcombe Cove was hampered by a force 4 headwind.

Just before Pudcombe Cove there is a little inlet that looks like a dead end, but if you paddle into this inlet you will find that at the end you can turn right and paddle into a tunnel. If the tide is high enough then you can exit this tunnel into Pudcombe Cove. Gentle readers, at the time we arrived the tide was indeed high enough to exit into Pudcombe Cove and so that is what we did. My paddling companions were surprised and delighted in equal measure, so much so that I think that I may have regained some of the respect I had lost with the BA debacle. (But I'm not going to canvass any opinions.)



Gill and Adam exiting the tunnel into Pudcombe Cove (Karen)

With hindsight, we should probably have had a discussion about the conditions and modified our plans, rather than blindly following our original intention of camping at Long Sands. But we didn't have hindsight so carried on regardless. Probably an error.

Our direction of travel gradually turned northerly. You will remember that the wind was force 4 ENE so we were now exposed to all it had to offer, which was quite a lot. It was definitely force 4, gusting force 5, so progress was either slow or very slow and was further hampered by a south flowing tide. Stopping would have meant losing ground so we bashed on. At sometime over the next hour thoughts of visiting Berry Head subsided and then disappeared altogether. If I was a gambling man I would bet that Adam was the last of our group to abandon any Berry Head ambitions, but gambling is not in my blood so all bets are off.

We passed two members of the other group, one of whom didn't look to be enjoying the conditions. They didn't ask for help so we assumed they felt they were coping OK and decided to carry on.

Wind conditions were still tough as we landed at Long Sands, but the preceding week had been calm and the wind hadn't yet had a chance to build up any appreciable waves, so landing was easy. The other group landed at Scabbacombe Sands, which is just a few hundred metres south of Long Sands and is accessible from the coast path, or via a steep path leading to a car park 1km away. This information will be relevant later.

We pitched our tents towards the back of the beach where they were protected from the worst of the wind, but even so we were reminded that tent pegs don't have much grip in sand, a fact ably demonstrated when the pegs holding Gill's tent gave up the unequal struggle and allowed Gill's tent to take off. We re-pitched it using rocks as anchor points. This was far more effective.

You are intelligent and perceptive people so I don't need to tell you that my paddling companions' tummies had been fortified by delicacies such as sausage baps. My tummy, on the other hand, was deficient in the food department and so we stopped at Pudcombe Cove to rectify the situation, but not before I inform you that as we entered the cove there was another group of maybe nine paddlers in the process of launching, presumably having already dined. This group didn't seem to want to be sociable, either with us or indeed with each other, so we got on with the job of servicing my growling tummy.

Suitably refreshed we relaunched. Armed with



Happy Campers - Rob, Karen, Lisa, Gill & Clive (Adam)

I had pitched my tent adjacent to a little gully, a gully that boasted hardly any air movement and a gully that I used to cook in. Said gully was a bit dark. I was sitting tending my stove when there was a bright flash. "What was that?" I thought, then, KERRBOOOOOOM!!!!!!!!!!!!!! "Ah, it was lightning." We were treated to quite an intense display of mother nature in a most dramatic mood.



The Camp Fire (Lisa)

The evening passed as evenings do on these occasions. There was a fire. There was beer / wine / other stuff. There were stories. (Mostly true, but you know how these things are after beer, wine and other stuff.) There was halloumi, there were pancakes, there were marshmallows and there were other snacks, the details of which have disappeared from my (at best sketchy) memory. There was speculation as to just how high the high tide was going to come, to which the answer was, "Not high enough to worry about."

Whilst we were reasonably sheltered it was fairly obvious that the wind wasn't dropping. Given the length of time that the wind had been blowing, and

given that it was blowing all the way across Lyme Bay, it was no surprise to find that the waves were building. We slept to the accompaniment of surf pounding onto the beach. I kept waking up and thinking that in the morning launching was going to be either interesting or challenging. Spoiler alert: it turns out that I was right.

You may be wondering what had happened to the other group, and to be honest so were we. We never saw the two separated paddlers arrive and there was a bit of speculation as to their whereabouts / welfare. Speculation is rarely helpful but it does keep one entertained. Anyway, on Sunday morning we watched some of the other group paddle away from Scabbacombe Beach and head toward the next headland. We then observed a capsized kayak before all the paddlers disappeared behind the headland. Now it was time for us to launch. There was surf, some of it dumping. Launching proved to be challenging but with the aid of Adam holding our boats five of us managed to get off the beach without any dramas. This left Adam with no-one to steady his boat while he launched. As Adam was struggling to get out from the beach the Atlantic 85 Dart RNLI Lifeboat appeared on the scene. They approached us to ask if we were the group of kayakers in difficulty and went away once they realised that we weren't. Five minutes later they returned. They said something on the lines of, "We know that you know what you are doing but we have a major incident developing. We have called in the all-weather lifeboat from Torbay to deal with two people that have been in the water for 40 minutes and we have called in the coastguard helicopter to winch three people off the cliff. Can we ask that you return to shore until we've dealt with this incident, please?" The answer, of course, was yes, so we re-joined Adam on the beach. Had Adam been successful in getting afloat we would have landed on Scabbacombe Beach instead to take stock of our situation, but Adam was just sorting himself after a third swim so we returned to Long Sands.

By now the surf was even less friendly with more frequent waves, some of which dumped with a lot of power. We decided that we weren't going anywhere until conditions became a little more manageable so set about relighting the fire and keeping warm. We had not been expecting to be spending the day on the beach and had very little in the way of spare food, on top of which we had disposed of our excess water. Staying another night was a grim prospect. There was a (I think light-hearted) discussion as to who we should eat first. I volunteered any vegetarians because they wouldn't be eating meat anyway.



Long Sands Camp (Lisa)



The Dart lifeboat returned and one of their crew swam ashore for a discussion. He strongly advised against paddling to Blackpool Sands so we told him that when conditions allowed, we would paddle around to Scabbacombe Sands and evacuate from there. The lifeboatman was happy with this and asked us to keep the coastguard informed of our actions.



Karen about to make a surf landing while returning to Long Sands on Sunday morning (Lisa)

We lounged on the beach looking out to sea and came to the conclusion that sitting on a beach all day was an overrated activity. It was mid to late afternoon when the frequency and power of the waves seemed to abate a little and Adam suggested we should attempt to leave the beach. We improvised a “not very textbook” launch system that worked well enough but not before I experienced the following events. I was on the water and attached to Adam’s boat via three tow lines. I was at the limit of this tow when I saw a wall of water rear up in front of me. Unable to go forward due to the tow line my boat went vertical into the break. The inevitable result was a fairly unpleasant swim back to shore. I’ve never been a fan of wild swimming. I

haven’t changed my mind. Adam and I revised our non-textbook plan and we both successfully got afloat at the second attempt. As an aside, can you imagine how hard it is to paddle forward with three tow lines streaming out behind you? Well, in case you are deficient in the imagination department let me inform you that it’s very hard, except that there are a lot of “verys.”

So, we were all safely out beyond the break ready to land on Scabbacombe Sands. What could possibly go wrong? Well, the surf was still running causing five out of the six paddlers to arrive at the beach using various swimming techniques, again without reference to any textbook. To describe the scene as ragged would be generous.

On the beach were three kayaks from the other group. Just as we secured our boats well above the high tide line some of the other group members walked down the path from the car park. We discovered that:

- 1) All their group had been safely evacuated and were OK.
- 2) They were going to carry their gear and one boat up to the car park, leaving two boats on the beach to be recovered another day.

Adam negotiated that we would help them carry kit out in return for a lift to Blackpool Sands. They agreed but advised us that they only had room for two drivers.

During the drive we learned that:

- 1) The other group were from the midlands and that they had hired most of their boats locally.
- 2) Their two separated paddlers had spent the night in another cove that had no landward access.
- 3) The whole rescue situation had been a bit traumatic and that they were struggling to come to terms with events. It would take a while for them to get over the weekend.



Dart Inshore Lifeboat (Karen)

It seemed like for ever later that Adam and I returned to the car park. We found that the rest of our group had been very busy humping kit up from the beach and generally behaving like sherpas. You will have to look back to see how far it is from the beach to the car park but I will inform you that the car park languishes at a height of just over 130 metres, which for those of you that use a proper measuring system is over 426 feet, or an unprintably long way if you have just made three or four trips humping kit in the manner of a very busy sherpa.



Carrying a boat up from the beach. It looks easier than it was. (Karen)

The wind was forecast to abate on the following Tuesday, a day when myself, Adam, Karen and Lisa were available to sort things out. (Gill and Rob had work commitments.) To make things as easy as possible we carried the two workers kayaks up from the beach and left the other four ready for our return on Tuesday. Scabbacombe Beach is fairly remote so we were quite happy to leave the boats unattended. We went home feeling somewhere between tired and exhausted and reflecting that Saturday morning seemed like a long lost distant memory.

So, that's the end of the midsummer(ish) camp report, except that this is a story that keeps giving. I took some kit back to Adam on Monday expecting to make

arrangements for Tuesday, but Adam informed me that there was an update. The farmer, (Paul) who was aware of what had happened, saw some lads taking an unhealthy interest in the boats on the beach. Adam had a text advising that Paul had transferred the boats into a field for safe keeping on Sunday night and that he was going to recover them to his barn sometime on Monday. Adam had a number for Paul but had to leave a message on his voicemail. Eventually Paul spoke to Adam and advised that we would be able to pick up the boats any time after 10:30 on Tuesday.

During Monday it became apparent that we all had kit missing. There was so much missing that it was obvious that the boats hadn't been completely emptied by our four sherpas on Sunday. We were very relieved to find this kit safely stowed in the boats when we were reunited on Tuesday. I opened my day hatch and wondered why it was so wet and why it stank of beer, then I realised that I had an un-opened can of beer that hadn't survived the experience of two free fall beach landings through surf and had exploded.

The four of us then took advantage of a beautiful warm, sunny day to paddle from Brixham to Long Sands and back in lovely gentle conditions. Just what we needed after the excitement of the midsummer(ish) camp.

My thanks to all at Blackpool and Start Partnership for allowing us to park at Blackpool Sands and to farmer Paul for his efforts in safeguarding our boats. Finally, my thanks go to Adam, Gill, Karen, Lisa and Rob for keeping it all together and for making this a memorable weekend, and let's not forget to say thank you to Joy who came to the rescue with my buoyancy aid. Personally, I'm hoping for a less eventful trip next time.

## 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 10%. 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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