



PPCA Newsletter  
September 2022



## Introduction

Welcome to September's Newsletter. Following Helga's excellent piece last month, I'm delighted to welcome Karen to the elite group of writers who have had pieces accepted for publication. The criteria for selection are stringent but I'm sure many other members could easily fulfil them. Elsewhere, Adam talks skegs, I go on a bit and Clive pushes gardening analogies to the limit.

## Editorial

The nautical mile is a curious measurement. Quite why we measure distance differently at sea (and in the air and, amazingly, in space) is beyond me but it seems to be stubborn and has yet to go the way of the rod, pole or perch. I won't go into the definitions here - they are slightly mindbending - but a curious feature is that, as the earth isn't a perfect sphere, by the original definition, a nautical mile was about 1% longer at the poles than at the equator. So next time the club asks you to paddle 50 nautical miles in a month, head for Ecuador.

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.

## Features

### British Canoeing Website by Adam Coulson

There appear to have been some changes to the British Canoeing website that totally baffled me such that I had to phone them up. However having sorted it all out I came across some offers that I had no idea that members could benefit from.

Bear with me – this isn't simple but you might thank me in the end. I am only writing this to help others – I am an ordinary member of BC like some of you.



So I used a search to log into British Canoeing as usual and clicked on what I thought was the log in <https://bcsl.britishcanoeing.org.uk/> It looked different from normal and rejected my name and password (several times because we all presume it's us that's wrong). Grrrr. Where I should have gone is <https://britishcanoeing.justgo.com/>

To access the British Canoeing Services Login go to <https://members.britishcanoeing.org.uk/register> Then press on the arrow top right of the screen. This will take you to the BCSL login and you can register there – I used the same details as the normal “justgo” site for simplicity. There is a link in the Member's Hub that will take you to the GoMembership site so it makes sense to just use this portal anyway.

The BCSL login will give you access to the members hub. There you will find discounts for Paddlelogger, Erdinger, Gill, Experience Freedom, Caravan & Motorhome Club, Halfords (10%), Aquapac (30%), Personal Performane Awards (50%) and many others. There is even an explanation of why BC have 2 websites:

#### *WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEMBERS HUB AND THE GOMEMBERSHIP PORTAL?*

*The GoMembership portal is the system British Canoeing uses to administer and manage membership and coaching. Members can use it to renew their membership and update their personal details.*

*Members' Hub is designed to bring together all your personalised useful information. This includes member benefits, discounts and exclusive content.*

*Keep checking in as we are regularly adding new content and features to help you get the most out of your membership.*

Happy browsing!

## Kayaking Lundy by Karen Sargent

Last year, Adam and I set a target to paddle to Lundy this summer. We knew that Clive and Joy would be interested as we had just circumnavigated the Isle of Wight together in September 2021. In January we got together and planned dates and possible playmates for this adventure. Having coordinated holiday diaries we all pencilled in 13th to 17th July as our Lundy window.

Joy suffered a shoulder injury so pulled out early on, as not able to paddle the distance required. Adam then suffered similar problems, withdrawing 48 hrs before we were due to leave. However not wanting to miss out on all the fun, Adam booked a return ticket on the Oldenburg to enjoy Lundy on foot and support us.

As June drew to a close and the long range forecast looked promising, we arranged 2 nights camping for 6, from 14th July. There was so much excitement with messages sent back and forth in work time. Suddenly we were all thinking that this was actually going to happen. Adam was busy planning our route and tidal flows. The Bristol Channel has a tidal range of up to 12m and the North/South flow on springs can reach 5 kts. Our dates coincided with spring tides. There are 3 possible launch sites for a Lundy crossing: Lee Bay, Ilfracombe and near Hartland Point. The decision was made to leave from Lee Bay and enjoy a ride on a fast flowing tide. Lee Bay is a beautiful little hamlet with free parking and toilets and one of my favourite paddle locations. It offers some shelter for launching except in South Westerlies at high spring tides. The crossing from Lee Bay is a lot longer than Hartland but offers tidal assistance (if you get it right!) A bearing of 300 degrees was calculated from Lee Bay, a direction that doesn't change during the 4 hour crossing. Adam had given us a 5 minute rest every hour and plotted hourly waypoints. Lisa loaded these into her GPS as back up. Adam and I found these breaks helpful on previous crossings and gives a target to aim for.



### Thursday 14th July 2022

Karen, Lisa, Clive & Stephen. 07:30 Left Lee Bay. Weather 10kts gusting 18kts.(3/5). Swell 0.6m 9.6s. Sunny, Mod Breeze. Sea State: Slight –Mod. Compass Bearing 300. The request made from the Manager on Lundy is that we inform Milford Haven Coastguard and himself when we left Lee Bay and on safe arrival on the island.



From Lee Bay, Lundy couldn't be seen, so our compass bearing was important. We had been paddling for about 10mins, when Clive came over and said to me "are you happy with our course"? "Yes", looking down the foredeck just as Clive asked. We were 330 degrees not 300 so corrected and decided then to pay more attention to the compass and less to my excitement. There had been too much chatting about signing the logbook for kayakers, and celebration puddings for that evening!

It was about an hour into our journey when we first saw Lundy, faintly on the horizon and to the left of us which was very reassuring. Early on the crossing Clive had mentioned that he felt sea sick, something that has afflicted many a mariner and after a further hour this had not improved, so we setup a tow with Stephen as support and Lisa navigating to the next waypoint, putting in a small correction for the brief delay. We found that the GPS wasn't able to monitor our track if travelling too slowly, so Lisa set the pace. Another hour into our journey (10:30), and Clive succumbed to his sea sickness. We contacted Milford Haven coastguard explaining our predicament. Shortly after, the Barbara B (a dive boat on the way to Lundy) arrived to lend assistance. We said a

sad good bye to Clive as The Barbara B loaded Clive and his kayak. Lisa and I will have a lasting memory of seeing Clive's rear, in his cheery seahorse trunks, being pulled aboard the Barbara B en route to Lundy! We watched the dive boat steam ahead of us, hoping that Clive would soon feel better and very much looking forward to seeing him on our arrival.

So now we were three - Lisa, Stephen and me. We decided against stopping for a break at waypoint 3 and cracked on. We arrived off Tibbett's Point at 12:05 which was our target on Lundy, allowing lee way to drift down to Landing Beach and reduce the risk of missing the island! We were worried that Adam, crossing on the ferry would see only 3 kayakers on the water. Apparently he spotted Clive's kayak on the slip after disembarkation and was quickly brought up to date. We landed 30 minutes later. We shared all of our excitement and details of the crossing after the reassuring news that Clive was sleeping up at the



village. We changed and ate lunch with Adam on the slip, watching lots of equipment being unloaded and interviews given as this was the start of The Lundy Marine Festival 2022. The Barbara Bee was part of the festival.

Walking up the steep climb to the campsite we were met by Clive walking down to meet us. He was still weak but feeling better. Re-united we were happy to have all arrived safely and ready to enjoy some time in the sunshine on this unique island. We cooked our evening meal, walked to the pub for pudding (as promised) and signed the Kayakers Log Book. There was much jesting from the Lundy manager and film crew on the Barbara B as we walked to the pub that evening. We had such a warm welcome from the Lundy Team - Lundy is quite a magical island.

#### Friday 15th July



The following morning we all explored the West Coast of Lundy on foot as far as the tide race at the North end called The Hen and Chickens. After lunch the four paddlers launched from Landing Beach to circumnavigate the island, so arriving at The Hen and Chickens tide race in its quieter phase and enjoying the tidal flow behind us. There are at least 35 caves on Lundy of which, we explored a couple according to the state of the tide. There were lots of puffins bobbing on the water and some very friendly seals that followed and played with us from the Hen and Chickens back to Landing Beach. Adam shouted to us from East cliffs, taking photos; but I know wishing he was paddling with us..

#### Saturday 16th July

Karen, Lisa & Stephen. Weather. Wind NE 9/14kts. Swell 0.6m 9s. Sunny Mod breeze. Sea State Slight – Mod. Compass Bearing 110 degrees.

Clive had already decided not to paddle back and had arranged a ticket for himself and kayak on the ferry, keeping Adam company back to Bideford. They decided to walk the East side of Lundy and enjoyed lunch together at the Northern Lighthouse where they were able to sit in the sun watching the seals playing in the water below. We launched from Landing Beach at 15:30 and Clive came down to see us off. Adam was waving from the cliffs as we paddled out of view. The tidal assistance on the return journey was less than predicted. This meant more paddling and a change of bearing on the way. We were very pleased to step ashore at Lee Bay at 20:30. Adam arrived with the car and we said goodbye to Stephen, after packing and loading up.



Clive had a very educational evening watching the Bideford Saturday nightlife on the quayside with his kayak, patiently awaiting our arrival. Lisa, Adam and I arrived late and hungry, such that a cheese burger and chips never tasted so good! Kayaks were loaded and there was a little conversation in the car before stopping at traffic lights near to home. Yes, Lisa and I had slept all the way.

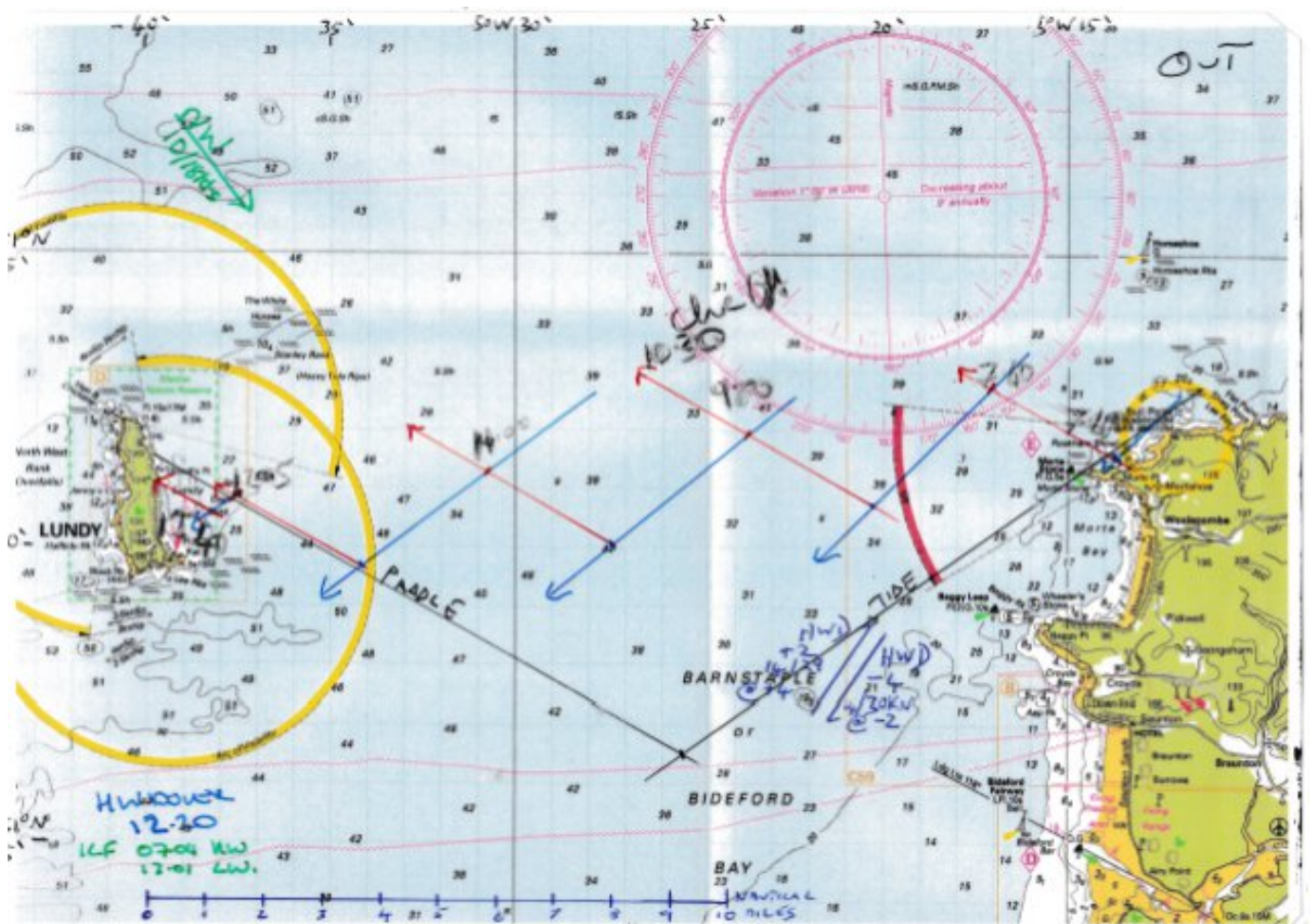


Thank you Adam for making this all possible - we felt you were paddling with us, as had all your navigation notes. Thank you for excellent company Lisa, Clive and Stephen. Stephen, I need your date cake recipe - what an energy boost between waypoint 3 and 4 on the way back. Plus, I think, a 'Shout Out' for PPCA, for all the different trainings, learning, and patience of coaches and leaders over the years. Thank you from Lisa, Stephen and me.

And so, to our next adventure? Well, I do have something in mind. You'll have to wait for the next chapter in 2023.

Notes:

We clocked 5.5kts in the middle of the Channel a combination of paddle power and tidal flow. We all found it very interesting and exciting to know distance to the next way point and the speed we were travelling. Encouraging us greatly in the middle of the Bristol Channel, having a GPS was great. Christmas list?



## The Price of Paddling by The Editor

As someone who regularly paddles the local estuaries, it's noticeable how expensive it can be simply to get your boat on the water. Registration schemes, harbour dues, launching fees etc. all mount up very rapidly without taking into account car parking fees, ferries and other minor details.

I thought it might be useful to put together a list showing what it costs for various local rivers. The table below shows what the various river authorities would like you to pay for the privilege of paddling. Just to make it clear, I've chosen launching places that will give you a decent length of paddle (10 miles at least), based on going up the river with the rising tide and returning on the falling tide. Other launching sites may be available where these fees may not apply (or can be avoided) but the slips in the table are in a convenient place, are free of weed and mud, have reasonable parking and often have toilets and a cafe attached.

River	Launch Point	Annual Fee	Launch Fee
Tamar	Saltash/Saltash Passage	Free	Free
Tavy	Saltash/Saltash Passage	Free	Free
Lynher	Saltash/Saltash Passage/Wacker Quay	Free	Free
Plym	Mount Batten/Oreston	Free	Free
East/West Looe	Millpool Car Park		£3.50
East/West Looe	Hannafore Point	Free	Free
Fowey	Harbour/Mixtow	£20.00	£10.00
Fal	Falmouth Haven/Tregothnan		£3.00
Yealm	Newton/Noss	£20.00	
Exe	Topsham		Fee applies
Exe/Exeter Ship Canal	Boat Club (currently closed)	Free	Free
Salcombe	Harbour	£6.00	
Tiverton Canal	Canal Basin		£5.00

Prices are correct at time of going to press but may have changed by the time you get there. I've been told there is a fee to launch from Topsham but I can't find any details online.

Essentially, each river authority is a law unto itself and can run its own registration scheme and charge what it likes for launching.

The Fowey clearly leads the pack here with both an annual registration fee and a fee per paddle. We've paddled the Fowey twice this year and plan to do it at least once more so this gets expensive very quickly. For your registration fee, you get a plastic disc with a number on which is tied to a list of your details so that if they find your boat drifting somewhere, they can let you know. This, of course, only applies on the Fowey.

So what do you get for your money? Given that if you have a fee, you have to pay someone to administer and enforce it, you have to wonder whether, out of the high season, it's worth the while of the authorities to collect it. That said, if you want a well maintained slip that's safe to launch from at all states of tide, someone has to maintain it and they have to be paid. At Looe, the Town Trust took on the maintenance of the slip to avoid it falling into disrepair and to avoid it becoming private when access could have been far more expensive, if it was permitted at all. They also take your details, issue you with (another) tag and count everyone in and out. You can launch for free from Hannafore but this means navigating the harbour mouth and doing battle with the tourist craft and erratically driven hire boats.

As councils become more and more strapped for cash, it is quite likely that these fees will rise and that more fees will be introduced.

So what is the legal position? There is a general feeling among some paddlers that it is free to paddle all tidal waters. According to British Canoeing *"In nearly all cases there is a Public Right of Navigation (PRN) on tidal waters... up to their historic Normal Tidal Limit (NTL). The right to navigate tidal waters may be subject to a payment of harbour dues and restrictions"*. So, yes you have a right to paddle, but the authorities have a right to charge you for the privilege.

Canals and rivers actively managed for navigation require a licence (£45 p.a.). Non-tidal rivers are something of a grey area and vary on a case by case basis. The landowner on each bank owns the river up to the centre of the river, or the whole thing if they own both banks. The landowner can choose the level of access they allow. This means that there is only free access to 4% of rivers in England - approximately 1400 miles - with the fishing lobby being particularly keen to restrict paddling. In Scotland, however, with some of the best fishing in the world, there is free access to all rivers.

BC have a campaign to promote legislation for free and open access to waterways which takes about 30 seconds to sign online and I would encourage everyone to do so.

I can't help feeling that given the money we pay to insure our boats, the insurance company could provide a tag that would remove the need for rivers to register your boat individually. Alternatively the RNLI or BC could provide a similar service although it would entail a bit of bureaucracy and it would still be up to each authority as to whether or not they recognised it.

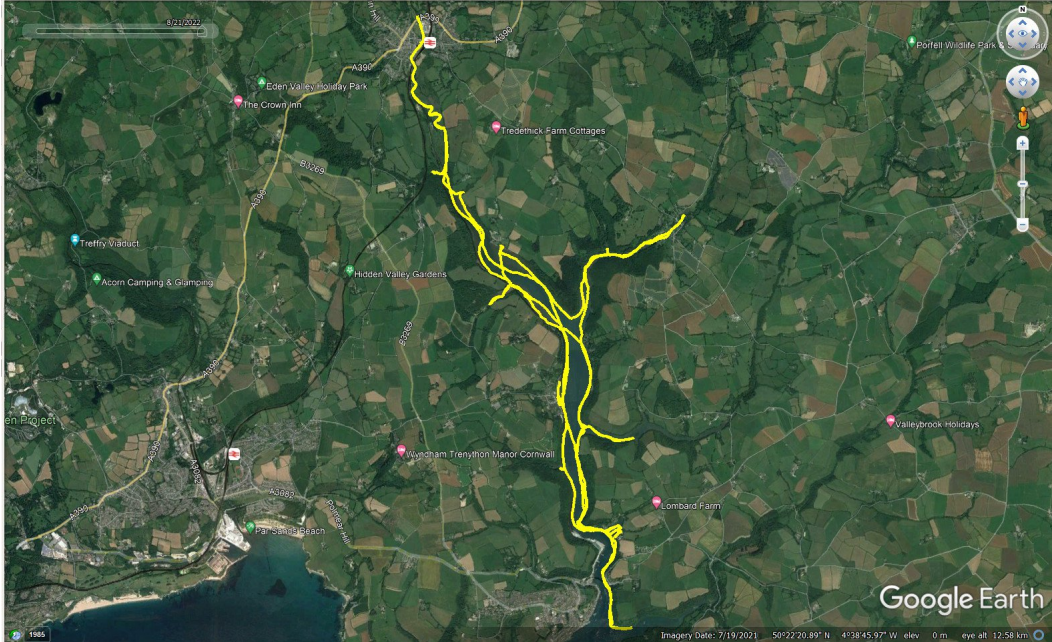
Just to stop this becoming a total moan, in Looe out of season, the launching attendants get starved of human contact and become quite chatty. It turns out that one of them does wood turning for a hobby and has a sideline making wands which he sells to the white witches of Cornwall (apparently there are quite a few). One of the other attendants is a white witch and has one of his wands so woe betide anyone who doesn't pay their launching fee in Looe.



## Paddling the Fowey by The Editor, Photos by Tracy

As I have mentioned elsewhere, paddling the Fowey can be an expensive business. That shouldn't detract from the fact that it is a beautiful river and well worth a look.

This piece combines two paddles, both from the boatyard at Mixtow, each paddle going up a different branch of the river. The Lerryn branch is about 13 miles including a diversion to Fowey harbour, the Lostwithiel branch about 15 but both of these included some diversions that could be omitted if required. Lerryn can be reached on most tides but Lostwithiel requires a spring.



First of all, the Fowey is a working river and you're reminded of this immediately on launching as the boatyard faces the loading bay for china clay ships. The industry may not be what it was but these boats are still pretty large and are best avoided. If you're particularly lucky/sad you may see one of the occasional china clay trains that still use the line alongside the river.

We went up the east bank of the river, simply because that was the side we launched from. At this point, the river is quite wide but feels narrower due to the number of boats moored here. This doesn't stop there being plenty of wildlife – fish, egrets, kingfishers etc. There are numerous creeks and inlets along the way that are worth investigating but it's best not to succumb too far to temptation if you're planning to get to Lerryn or Lostwithiel on the rising tide.





A couple of miles upstream from Mixtow is Golant with its own harbour which provides an alternative launching point, albeit on the west bank.

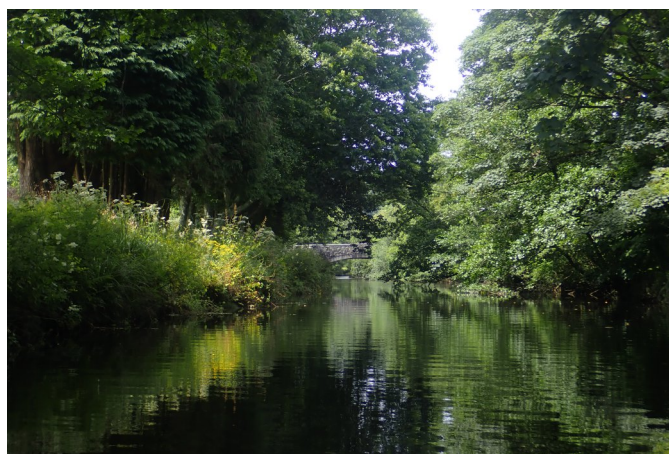


harbour and more picturesque. You have to zigzag a bit on neap tides to get to the end and it's worth looking out for the submerged stepping stones as you get to the village.

The Lostwithiel branch is longer but no less scenic. We got as far as the bridge that carries the main road over the river on a middling spring tide so it should be possible to go a little further on a really high tide. Again, it winds through quite farmland with plenty of wildlife and stunning reflections. There is a picnic area near the bridge where you can stretch your legs.

The river divides at St Winnow with the east branch going to Lerryn and the west to Lostwithiel. This is the shallowest part of the river and it's worth checking where the channel is before starting. On the west bank is the Penquite Royal Boathouse, built for Edward VII. It's worth a look but the owners make it clear that you are not welcome to land.

The Lerryn branch is the more popular, possibly because it is shorter and has a pub at the end. This means there may be a lot of people with minimal directional skills crossing your path. That said, it's a lovely branch, narrower than the stretch up from the



We came back along the west bank. The railway runs along the edge of the bank here with several bridges providing access to more inlets well worth exploring. In one of these we had the bonus of a seal sitting on the grass.

On returning to Mixtow from Lerryn, time was on our side so we carried on to the harbour. After dodging the Bodinnick ferry (a bit less fearsome than the Torpoint one) you end up in the main harbour. It's at this point that you realise just how deep the Fowey is when you suddenly see a cruise liner with at least seven decks in front of you. The passengers must have doubled the

population of Fowey if they went ashore. The harbour is full of yachts but is fine to paddle on a quiet day.

We've yet to explore all the creeks so there are probably a couple more paddles to do before we repeat ourselves. It's certainly a river worth paddling but don't get caught out by the fees.





## My 50 Nautical Mile Tree by Clive Ashford, Photos Credited Individually

I note from a previous edition of our most excellent newsletter that Ivor, our esteemed editor, has also become the editor of his local allotment newsletter. I write this to see which publication Ivor decides is most appropriate, and indeed if it should ultimately end its days in the recycling bin or the compost heap. (Or, probably more appropriately, an incinerator a far far away.)

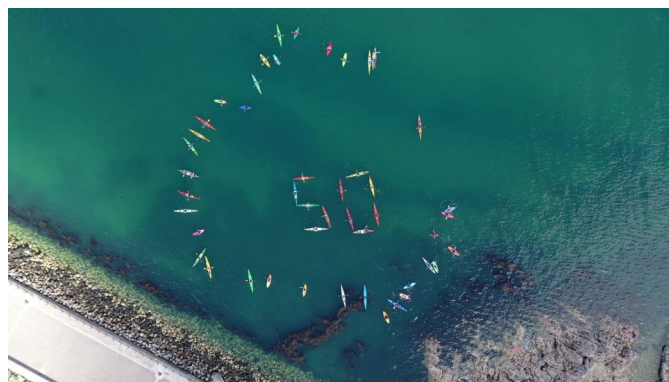
The kernel of a seed appeared on the club forum:

*A challenge for the individual to paddle 50 nautical miles (nm) in the month of July. Each individual would need to keep a log of their efforts to show how their 50 miles were achieved. Either Strava app or logged note book etc.*

I was wondering whether to plant myself in this particular bed when Gill let it be known that mugs would be awarded to successful participants. Being a mug for mug the seed was sown. I soon discovered that I was sharing my (peat free) compost tray with Adam, Gill, Karen and Lisa, a truly mixed bed of thorns and roses I'm sure you would agree. (There will be other 50nm trees flourishing in other seed beds, but I don't know who or where they are.)

Germination took place on the 2 July when I joined Terry's sea kayak trip. Having arrived at Penlee Point

Terry kindly let me take approximately half the paddlers to put out feelers as far as the beach at Eastern Gear, just to the east of Rame Head. The feelers found some stony ground that caused us to re-plant Gill into her lazy bed, otherwise known as the good boat Bob G. 11 nm and we were growing well.



A Giant Floating 50 Flower (Peter Rowlands)



Lisa and Stephen in a gap on Lundy (Karen)

At this point I should prune the weeds of unrest that I can understand are beginning to infest the greenhouse of your imagination. I can assure you that I am not going to give you bud by bud account of my blooming 50nm tree, instead I will pick out just a few of the many mighty acorns.

The problem with being planted in the traditional way is that one tends to be somewhat rooted to the spot, which is a bit of a bind, so I decided that I'd follow the example of the Triffids and the Ents and be a bit more mobile. On 7 July Jane H and myself transplanted our small boats to Wembury. It's been a long time since I've bobbed around this part of the coast in a small boat so we explored nooks, crannies and caves that we had

either forgotten about or that we were discovering for the first time. We got as far as Sea Rush Cove (it's a real place, look it up) before returning via the Mew Stone. Distance wasn't the aim of the day as demonstrated by the fact that we took all day to clock up just 7nm. Growing was going to be slow but steady.

We shoot ahead now to nm 31-33. On a beautiful summer Saturday the PPCA celebrated its 50th year with what may well be the shortest ever Saturday paddle, a mere 3nm, but 3nm that blossomed into a colourful pageant with some 52 paddlers in 48 boats taking to the water and, among other things, making a giant floating flower shaped like the number 50. I had the ~~dubious pleasure~~, sorry, honour, of leading this paddle. I put it on record that I have no intention of leading the paddle that celebrates the next 50 years.

Next, we branch out to the rather special island of Lundy. You may or may not have read that my Lundy paddling ambitions had been somewhat blighted with sea sickness and that (unlike my paddling companions) my paddle to Lundy had taken the form of a boat replacement service. It just goes to show that not all greens are good for you. I didn't want my paddling to wilt completely so on 17 July Karen, Lisa, Stephen and myself circumnavigated Lundy Island. There are reasonably serious tidal races off each end of Lundy, like Venus Fly Traps lurking snare the unwary kayaker, and the west coast has no practical landings, being made almost entirely of steep, high cliffs. Paddling the west coast of Lundy is a very committing paddle. We launched from the beach on the eastern side of the island and set off in a southerly direction. Very quickly we saw our first seals but then we sprouted through a narrow gap through which the tide was flowing. Normally we would have been delighted but the previous days dramatic events somewhat sapped our enthusiasm and the west coast paddle proceeded in a forest of tension. That said we saw many more seals and some rafts of puffins, and let's not forget that we were paddling around Lundy in glorious sunshine, and that Lundy is a biodome of pure loveliness.

There were more seals and more puffins followed by more gaps to shoot through. The final gap shot us around the northern tip of the island and left a bunch of very relieved paddler sporting huge beaming smiles. The trip down the east coast was graced by a whole bunch of seals that decided to escort us most of the way back, but there were no more puffins. Everything in the garden was rosy, the green bits from the previous day had been weeded out and were fading into nothing more than an unpleasant memory, never the less the 7nm we paddled felt like a very long way.

Nm 79 – 86 saw Jane H and myself bursting into flower at Kingswear. As we launched a steam train trundled by, a good start to a day that bloomed into something a bit special. We passed the remains of the grade 2 listed Kingswear Torpedo Battery. I have copied this from the Historic England website, simply because I know exactly how interested you are. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1391688?section=official-list-entry>



Tidal Race at the North End of Lundy (Karen)



A Seal (Lisa)

*The torpedo battery sits on a large concrete platform built on top of an earlier swimming pool overlooking the approach to Dartmouth Harbour. It consists of a low sub-rectangular brick structure camouflaged in part with an external facing of broken concrete slabs set in concrete. The pitched roof is of reinforced concrete with a covering of haphazardly placed concrete slab fragments to enhance the impression of a thatched boat house of random rubble construction. There are openings in the seaward and landward facing ends. A single substantial opening in the seaward end has a stepped upper lintel, presumably reflecting the need to camouflage this end in particular.*

*It was through this opening that the torpedoes would have been launched. On the landward end there are two unequal sized openings through which the torpedoes would have been carried into the battery. The larger southern one is denoted by a segmental flat arch and the smaller northern one by a segmental pointed arch. The wall on this end is of plain concrete. Internally, a raised concrete plinth in the western part of the building contains three elongated hollows complete with iron fittings aligned along the axis of the building. These would have supported the firing mechanism for the torpedoes. A winch also standing on this plinth was installed after the torpedo battery fell out of use. The base of a davit standing close to the building on the edge of the quay represents an integral, if slightly divorced part of the battery.*



I won't bother to describe how we negotiated a jungle of rocky features but, in keeping with the botanical theme, I will report that we had lunch near Ivy Cove. Fertiliser absorbed we visited the rocky islands of Mew Stone, Shag Rock and Shooter Island where seals are almost guaranteed. Jane claims to have counted 15 grey seals but I think she may have counted some twice. All very impressive but even that wasn't the highlight of the day because, while we were marvelling at the seals, a pod of maybe 15 dolphins scythed by. They seemed to be on a mission so we didn't see them for very long but what a sight. 15 dolphins. All at once. I'm still smiling. Our fruitful day ended with an ice cream but not before the sapling like boy in me was treated to the sight of another steam train.

The crowning glory of my 50nm adventure happened when Jane H and myself rooted around Berry Head, again in our small boats on a fairly calm day. There is a narrow crevice that pierces Berry Head, a crevice that has never been very appealing in a sea kayak due to a knotty little kink just inside the entrance. After a bit of careful observation, we twigged that if we approached the kink and executed a twist that would make a topiary hedge gardener weep with joy, then our bonsai boats could spring through the crevice with relative ease. This proved to be correct, much to the delight of Jane and myself.



Sowing the Seeds (Stolen from Bethsig website)

Further on we got to the end of a cave where I spied a narrow passage leading deeper into the cliff, a passage that appeared to open out again. I squeezed through to find that the inner chamber boasted a thicket of stalactites hanging down from the roof, and fields of flowstone looking like glaciers glistening on the rocky slopes. While my sea kayak has given me many happy memories sometimes my small boat offers so much more.

To sum up, my 50nm challenge had roots in Brixham, Lee Bay, Lundy, Kingswear, Mount Batten, (4 times) Portwrinkle and Wembury. In the end my 50nm tree grew to a stature to 86nm. I am aware that this wasn't

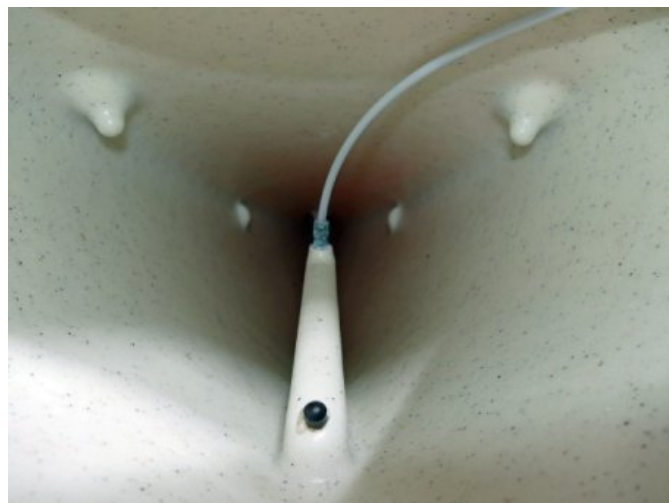
the biggest specimen on show in the produce tent but I am quite pleased with the result, what it lacked in size it more than made up for in quality. Each branch on my tree bore an enormous crop of fruit, with each piece of fruit taking the form of a smile, a happy memory or a shared experience. My thanks to Gill for sowing the seed and for all my paddling companions for joining me in the woods. My congratulations to all the other 50nm trees that flourished in July, I hope your experiences were as fruitful as mine. Finally, to Ivor I say, "enjoy your gardening."

Now, where's that mug?

## Who Needs a Skeg? by Adam Coulson

I have recently had a few conversations with fellow paddlers about skegs and therefore thought that it might be worthwhile writing a short article for the newsletter on the subject. Of course, "Adam" and "short article" are not often found juxtaposed so apologies if I fail in that mission. However stick with me and I'll try and fulfil Lord Reith's ambition to "inform, educate and entertain". By all means let me know which I have succeeded or failed in. All opinions in this article are my own and you are very welcome to disagree and discuss in future editions – we'll publish a reader's letters page yet!

Of course some hardened sea paddlers might make the point that skilled kayakers don't need a skeg in their sea kayak and if you are in the fortunate position of specifying a new boat you might be able to opt for "with" or "without". Retrofitting is possible but not easy. I have had boats with and without. Some short play boats are less stable in a straight line such that a skeg may be partially deployed much of the time whereas a low profile long well packed kayak will track straight in most circumstances (but of course be difficult to turn). A skeg can make your paddling in wind a lot less hard work and thus a lot more pleasurable. Is there a down side to having a skeg?



They do take up some space in the stern hatch, although for expeditions it is possible to pack things like tent poles and pegs each side of the skeg box. It is a place where kayakers are slightly more prone to developing leaks and because they are a mechanical device they do go wrong from time to time, and may require a little maintenance.



A skeg is not the same as a rudder and fulfils a different purpose. A rudder is for steering a kayak whereas the skeg is a device for adjusting the boat's trim (that is the angle it makes in the water). There are many different types of skeg but they mostly allow the paddler to deploy a plastic blade down into the water from the stern of the boat. Some are controlled by a cord working against some form of spring loading – the simplest being a bungee. Others are controlled by a wire.

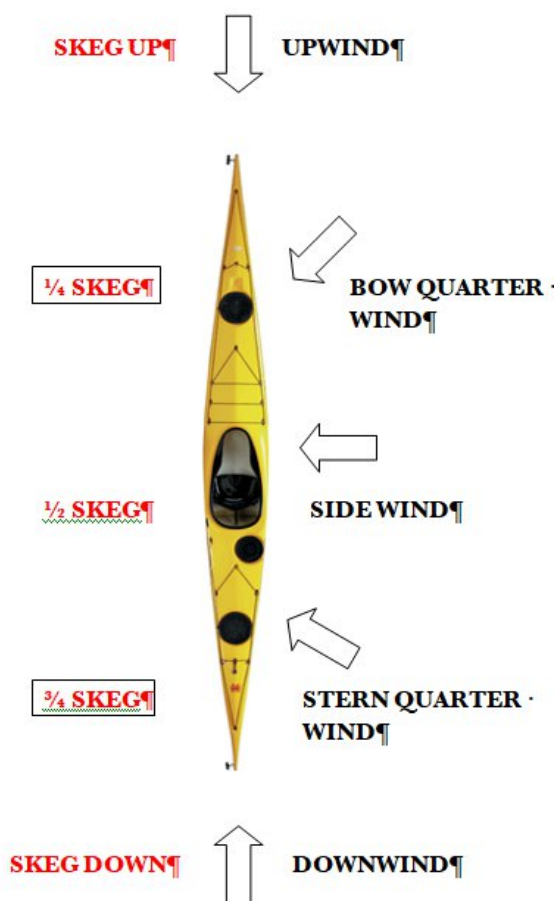
So what does it do? When the wind blows against your kayak, there is a tendency for it to blow the stern away more than the bows especially as the wind speed starts to exceed Force 4. This turning of the boat into the wind is called wind cocking. The

reason for it is that when paddling forwards the bows tend to get locked into the water by the flow down each side (the faster you paddle the greater this effect). However the water around the stern is already disturbed and thus the rear of the kayak is freer to be turned. This effect will be affected by the trim of the boat. More weight in the stern will reduce wind cocking as will leaning back, although forward paddling then becomes less efficient. If you put too much weight in the stern then the boat may lea cock (the opposite of wind cocking) and you may struggle to turn up wind which is slightly dangerous as you can only go where the wind takes you!



So how and when do you use it? There are some formulas for skeg deployment which I have tried to demonstrate in a simple diagram (at end of article) However, I would recommend that you spend some time playing with the skeg in the wind and on the water to find what works for you. If the wind is blowing your stern around put some skeg down until it stops doing it. Too much and the boat may swing too far the other way. This process is trial and error and relies on “feel” but in my opinion better than the formulaic approach in use. For example if I am surfing along on a following wind and sea I will often not use any skeg at all, but let the boat go with the wave and then apply a correction, rather than having the skeg fully down. When actually surfing the skeg will make it exceptionally difficult to turn back out through the breaking waves if you forget to lift it. I should have mentioned that the skeg down will help the boat track straight, but makes it much more difficult to turn as a result. Don’t use it if you don’t need it.

I mentioned skeg maintenance and will follow up with another short (tee hee) article on replacing a cable. The commonest problem is that you launch off the beach and then whilst out on the water the skeg obstinately refuses to go down. The most likely reason is that some of the aforementioned beach is stuffed up around the skeg in the skeg box, jamming it there. It may be possible to ask a paddle buddy to try and pull it down for you and to make this easier it is a good idea to drill a small hole in the tip of the skeg and attach a fine cord that can be pulled on (see photo). Landing forwards and launching backwards reduces the risk of this occurring. The worst thing that you can do is pull your boat along the sand by the bows, forcing sand or small pebbles into the box. If in doubt, check it before you launch again. There are some horror stories of skegs jamming downwards such that the solo paddler is unable to turn and can only go with the wind. I must admit that in such a situation it would be better to ditch and try and tape or jam the skeg up, but not easy. However, that is very rare.



On balance, I think skegs are a benefit in a sea kayak. On a long open crossing with the wind on your stern quarter it becomes hard having to constantly turn the boat downwind with one side of your body doing twice as much work as the other whilst also maintaining an edge. It is good to have those skills but only gets harder with this particular aging frame. I recently made a one way trip from Mountbatten to Hope Cove in a force 4/5 westerly wind with 1 – 2 m of south-westerly swell (i.e. all behind me). It was great having that push from behind but I would not have been able to resist the constant wind cocking without the benefit of a skeg. Even with it I was mighty pleased to take a seat in The Hope and Anchor at the end, awaiting Karen and car!

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## The Committee

### Chair

Mark Perry  
chair@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07801 310 993

### Vice-Chair

Kevin Jones  
vchair@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

### Club Leader

Ken Hamblin  
leader@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07790 293 952

### Assistant Club Leader

Vacant  
acleader@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

### Club Secretary

Jackie Perry  
secretary@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07523 965 748

### Membership Secretary

James Hubbard  
membership@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07752 125 012

### Welfare Officer

Alan Ede  
welfare@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07799 556 876

### Intro Course Coordinator

Colin Wilding  
intro@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07928 578 144

### Treasurer

Sharne Dodds  
treasurer@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07964 912 837

### Equipment Officer

Pete Anderson  
equipment@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07958 694 434

### Publicity Officer

Gillian Mann  
publicity@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

### Youth Development Officer

George Hamblin  
youth@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07805 085 499

### Health and Safety Officer

Damean Miller  
safety@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

### Club President

Adam Coulson  
president@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk  
07834 286 461