



PPCA Newsletter
December 2022

Introduction

Welcome to December's Newsletter. This month Terry continues his look at the Breakwater and Clive shows that, when you meet young people, anything can happen in the next half hour.

Also, don't miss our Christmas Market section, bulging with gifts for those people you feel you really ought to get something for but can't think what.

Editorial

As is traditional in the Christmas Edition, I'd like to pass on my thanks to all the contributors, both the regulars and the new and occasional ones who have sent in pieces over the course of the year. Thanks also to all the photographers whose work I have ruthlessly appropriated from Facebook for the various front covers. Without your efforts, the Newsletter wouldn't be what it is so thank you and Merry Christmas.

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.

Club Christmas Paddle, Saturday 17th December by Terry Calcott

It has been a few years since we have managed to have a club Xmas paddle. Brush off those hats and Santa costumes, and come join your fellow club members for a paddle feast and make merry. The paddle venue will probably start and finish from Mount Batten, but if a good weather window occurs it may be away from MB. The minimum dress requirement for this paddle (in addition to your normal paddling and safety gear) is a festive hat. The preferred costume is fancy dress above the spraydeck. We will have a communal picnic of festive fayre, out in the fresh air. I will be compiling a list of sweet or savoury nearer the time.

Please let me know if you are intending coming along by email terryc1@blueyonder.co.uk or a post on the PPCA forum or PPCA Facebook page (I will start these posts nearer the date).



Features

Plymouth Sound Snippets #10, The Breakwater Lighthouse by Terry Calcott

This snippet carries on the theme of the breakwater and gives a few facts about the breakwater lighthouse. As paddlers we often use this local sea mark as a way point during our trips. Located at the western end of the breakwater the lighthouse can be seen from many miles away.

As the breakwater neared completion in the early 1840s it became a hazard to shipping. It became clear that a lighthouse was needed to mark the location of the breakwater. The western end was the busier entrance so a lighthouse was designed for the Admiralty by Walker and Burgess. Built of white granite from Luxulyan in Cornwall it was completed in November 1843. Standing at 78ft high with an 8 foot lantern with 118 mirrors.



Photo from the Late 1880s

There were plans to build an identical lighthouse at the eastern entrance but to save money this plan was scrapped and a beacon was built (more about this in next month's snippet).



By 1867 a 7 cwt bell had been installed at the lighthouse to serve as a fog warning signal. This bell was originally made for Notre Dame Cathedral in Montreal, Canada, but was found to be out of tune. In 1879 a larger 32 cwt bell was installed, and the old bell was transferred to Gunfleet Lighthouse. The new bell had previously been used at Start Point lighthouse. The bell remained in use until 1994, when it was replaced by an electronic fog horn.



The Lighthouse Lantern and Fog Bell

Once completed the management of the light was transferred to Trinity House and was manned by resident keepers. In 1920 the lighthouse was converted to run automatically on acetylene gas. With the departure of the resident keepers, the light was monitored from the Trinity House fog signal station at nearby Penlee Point. In 1993 management of the lighthouse was taken on by the M.O.D.

Aliens on the Dart by Clive Ashford, Photos by Cameron Smiley

Buck was running the river trip on Sunday 6 November. He was going to organise a beginner's trip on the Lower Dart and a paddle on the Loop for our roughie toughie paddlers. I fancied a stress-free, gentle bob and so together with Julian I turned up at Plympton Car Park prepared to join the boys and girls on the Lower Dart. There were a number of people already gathered around so I said "hello" to those that I recognised, one of whom was Kevin. I then looked around to find some strange and alien looking lifeforms lurking inside the group. To set the scene I am quite used to paddling with people whose matt toned hair is either grey or white and whose wrinkly faces make a walnut look as smooth as a billiard ball and yes, I have looked in the mirror. Anyway, the creatures in front of me sported variously coloured glossy hair and skin that was smooth, tight and shiny. I glanced around but no-one else seemed to be taking any notice of these aliens who, I realised, were speaking to each other in English. I found all this a bit strange but eventually my slow-witted brain put 2 and 2 together. The first 2 was Kevin's presence and the second 2 was that Kevin is involved with the university. So, probably not aliens at all but students. (Although..... I don't need to finish that do I?) I lost control of my mouth for a moment and before I knew it I had said, "Oh, young people." Luckily there was a bit of amused laughter.

Brace yourself, I'm going to sum up. It was before 08:00 on a Sunday morning. I was in the presence of a bunch of students who were up, out and about and who were bright and cheerful. On top of that they communicating in proper sentences, not the grunts that you parents will recognise as teenager-speak. No wonder I thought I was in the company of aliens.

Skip forward an hour and now you join a bunch of paddlers watching the water tumbling over Holne Weir. The river was at a nice friendly level so, whilst I don't pretend to speak for the others I was looking forward to my gentle bob down the Lower Dart. At this stage Buck spoke to me. He told me that he would like to split the group in 2 and asked if I would be happy to lead the club paddlers while he and Kevin amused the students. How could I refuse such a fine offer? Including myself I had a group of 9, none of whom really needed any looking after, so my plans for a stress-free gentle bob were still intact and it was a happy, mellow Clive who launched into the river Dart. I believe that the students group also numbered 9 in total. Buck had requested that we all meet up at the feature called Broken Weir so with this in mind we set off.



Buck talking to the students at the start of the trip. Notice how dry they are.

I was a bit surprised that my mob seemed to be a little subdued and were spending more time sitting in eddies than I would have had anticipated. A plan was needed so after a while I found a friendly surf wave and told the group that everyone had to have at least 1 go at getting on this wave before we moved on. Instantly life became more lively. Once the fun started people realised that 1 go is never enough and in very short time there were queues of eager paddlers waiting in the eddy desperate to attempt to emulate or even surpass what the previous paddler had managed to achieve on the wave. Later on I also made up some games to keep the troops amused whilst running the rapids. I noted that there were smiles. Smiles are good.

We arrived at Broken Weir and were waiting the arrival of the students. Had this been a football match the half time whistle would have sounded. I got out of my boat to stand beside a tree. (Use your imagination.) As I returned from my arboreal experience the second half got under way, starting just as the students were arriving. I was able to witness Marina, an obviously inexperienced paddler, attempt to run the chute without troubling the water with anything as dramatic as a paddle stroke. The name Marina is a pseudonym. Marina was the name of the mermaid in the Gerry Anderson puppet TV series Stingray. In the following paragraphs you will read the name Marine. This will indicate a merman. I thought I ought to explain.

The inevitable swimmer was rescued in a suitably efficient manner and I wandered down the bank to help empty the victim's boat. As Kevin passed the boat to me, he asked if my group could join his because they had had a few swimmers and that he and Buck were becoming just a little fatigued. So, after letting my team know what was going on we set off again. Up until then my ambition of having a gentle bob down the Lower Dart were being fulfilled but all that changed rather abruptly because some of our Marines and Marinas took the opportunity of testing our rescue skills. In the interest of journalistic accuracy I have to point out that not all the Marines were students, but we did get plenty of rescue practice.

Some of the students were very much beginners so rather cruelly I was able to point out to our newer club paddlers just how far they had progressed since their early forays into river paddling.



Dave running Holne Weir with the author watching on

Eventually all the Marines and Marinas arrived at the egress point and were safely herded / ushered off the water. To egress the Lower Dart you have to scramble up a steep bank hauling your gear with you. I describe the Lower Dart as a grade 2 paddle with a grade 3 egress. On this occasion the egress was made even more unpleasant with the addition of an extremely heavy shower of rain accompanied by the odd flash of lightening and the resultant clap of thunder. Strange expressions like cats and dogs and stair rods could have been used to describe the rain.

So, for me at least, it was a day of 2 halves. The first half was the gentle stress-free bob that I had craved when I signed up for the trip but the second half was a lot more frenetic. At the end of the day I had expended a far more energy than I was expecting but I found that despite all this I had quite enjoyed myself. If overheard conversations in the lay by were anything to go by I wasn't the only person to go home happy. Speaking for myself, once I got home I cleaned up, sat down with a cup of tea and promptly fell asleep, but I rather suspect that our student contingent did something far more energetic. Buck informs me that "*whilst the students might have done more that Sunday afternoon, I retired to my bed in a darkened room for many many hours!!*"

Young people do get a rather bad press so, before I finish let me tell you that the students were a lovely bunch of people. They were friendly, helpful and considerate and created a marvellous atmosphere. They were an absolute delight to be with. If us old people would simply get out of the way then the world would probably be in safer hands. I look forward to paddling with the students again sometime soon.

Finally, to set the record straight, I have lumped all the students together and have referred to them as if they are not club members. In fact, a number of the students are also members of the PPCA. I was unaware of this fact while writing the story you have just read and have since been suitably educated.

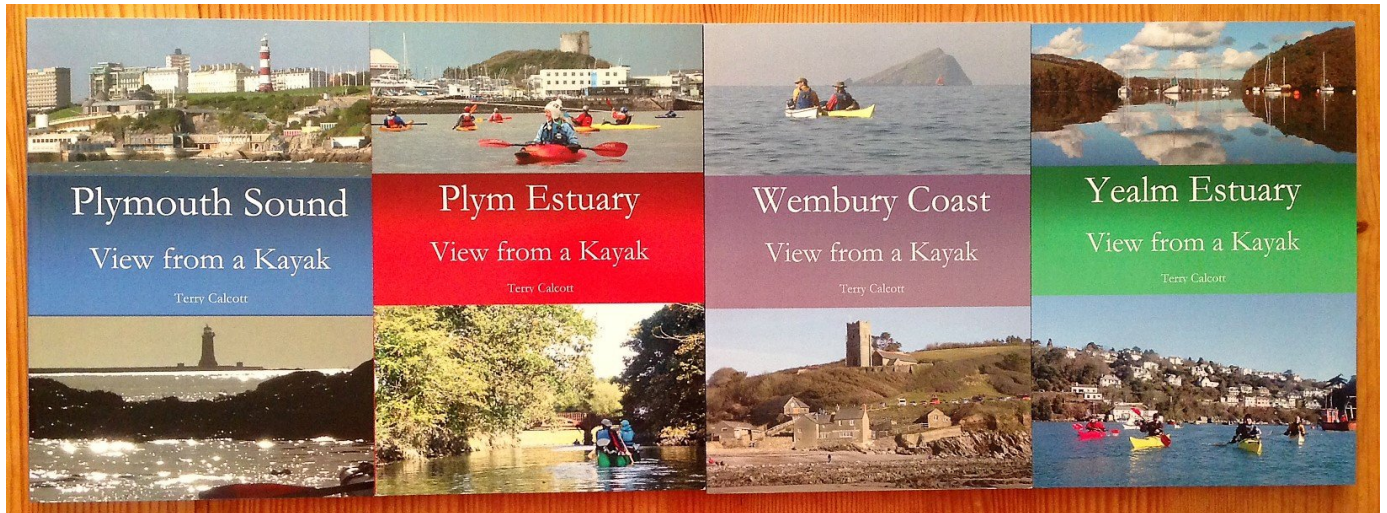
My thanks to Buck for running the trip and to all the paddlers for your company.

Christmas Market

View From a Kayak by Terry Calcott

With Xmas fast approaching, stuck for last minute stocking fillers for your favourite paddler? Then look no further. For those club members who missed out on the earlier print runs the following books are still available to purchase. 'View from a Kayak' Plymouth Sound, Plym Estuary, Wembury Coast and The Yealm Estuary. The books are a mix of local history, nature, with plenty of maps and photos to accompany the text covering everything that you can see from a kayak in your local area. A must for anyone who paddles regularly around our fantastic local coastline.

Price £6 a copy (or a special Xmas offer of 4 for £20) with all profits going to St Lukes Hospice. If you would like any of the books please email me at terryc1@blueyonder.co.uk or see me on a club Saturday recreational paddle.



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.



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



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

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