



PPCA Newsletter  
April 2023

## Introduction

Welcome to April's Newsletter. This month Colin asks for volunteers, Terry debates a pact with the devil, Nigel talks blocks and Adam tells us what the worst part of sea paddling is.

## Editorial

Our President gave me a gentle prod to get this edition of the Newsletter out before the evening sessions started on the first Tuesday in April. As all of you who were on the Tuesday paddle will have noticed, I failed miserably to do this as I was on holiday on Jersey so, just in case there's anyone out there who hasn't been on an evening session yet, consider yourselves reminded. Depending on when I send this out I might also be in time to remind people about the Easter Paddle.

While in Jersey, I did what any paddler would do and looked at the tides. As you can see from the picture, Jersey has some interesting tides to say the least. Apologies to Clive but I'm afraid I long ago forgot my rules of sixths, twelfths, sixty-forths etc. but a back of the envelope calculation shows that the tide comes in at an average of about 2.5cm per minute, twice that at peak flow.

So next time we're cursing the tides in the sound, spare a thought for the poor old Jerriais paddler battling one of these monsters into St Helier.

Ivor Jones



## 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.



## News

### Volunteers Wanted by Colin Wilding

After a 3 year break the City of Plymouth Swimming Association have asked us if we are able to support the City of Plymouth Breakwater Swim 2023 as we have done in the past. Sea conditions are obviously a concern but they are anticipating one of the following dates, in this order - 19/8, 20/8, 2/9, 16/9, 5/8. They will have a maximum of 12 swimmers, starting from the Breakwater lighthouse, 2 hours before high tide and the swim is expected to last for up to an hour. Ideally 3 or 4 paddlers will be required.

Closer to the PPCA we have had a number of enquiries from cubs and scouts groups. This generated an income of over £2000 last year and we don't want to turn them away due to lack of support. If we can have a few more volunteers this would be beneficial to all of us. Please think about it and let me know.

### Sea Kayak Trolleys by Adam Coulson

The club has invested in 4 new sea kayak trolleys for use at Mountbatten by members. It is rather disappointing that the previous 4 trolleys were all broken within a surprisingly short period of time. Hopefully these new trolleys will prove rather more robust.

Please look after them by taking care not to misplace the lynch pins and by rinsing them in fresh water after each use. Two of the trolleys have been adapted so that they will stow in the rear hatch of the low volume Northshore Atlantic sea kayaks and even in the Perception Expression 11. These two are marked "small" to make it obvious which to use. Please do not try to "bend" the standard trolleys into these boat's smaller hatches.



The straps are attached to the trolley frame in a fashion to make them easy to use. If attached tightly in the way demonstrated in the photos, the trolleys will not come loose whilst wheeling a kayak, even over rough ground.

Hopefully these will make the worst bit of sea kayaking (manhandling the boat), that bit easier for all to enjoy the sport.

## Features

### Plymouth Sound Snippets #14, Devil's Point by Terry Calcott

This snippet is about one of the most interesting names associated with the Sound, Devils Point. Situated on the Plymouth side of the Narrows. The channel that separates Devon from Cornwall at its closet point and where the waters of the Tamar flow out into Plymouth Sound.

Generally, the whole area from Royal William Yard around to Firestone Bay is known as Devils Point. But just the small headland is Devils Point. The rest of the area is Western King.



Devil's Point

Where does the name derive from? It has been associated with various stories.

One myth is that Sir Francis Drake entered into a pact with the dark side and exchanged his soul for a storm that would destroy the Spanish Armada. But more likely is that the name is linked to the treacherous tides that meet at this point. As paddlers we often use Devils Point as a crossing over to Mount Edgcumbe. Depending on the state of the tide and if on springs or neaps. The flow can be extremely fast close into the marker beacon and cause turbulent water and standing waves. Good fun to practice breaking in and out of the flow.



Tidal Flow at Devil's Point



Just to the right of the red and white marker are the remains of an Artillery Tower which is another blockhouse built as part of Henry VIII's coastal defences. It was probably built by the Edgcumbe family to protect their harbour at East Stonehouse.



Map From the 1800s Showing Devil's Point

For centuries, Devil's Point been used by family and friends to wave goodbye or welcome home the crews of Royal Navy warships as they transit the narrow waters adjacent to Devil's Point.



## Breakwater Wave-Breaking Blocks by Nigel Hingston

Terry's recent article describing the Breakwater Blocks reminds me of my time working as a young engineer in the early 1980's for the Property Services Agency (PSA), a government department responsible for maintaining MOD properties, including The Breakwater.

Our office at Oreston overlooked the "moulds", used to create wave breaking blocks. A simple process in which a fleet of cement mixer lorries poured their concrete loads into the formers. Large iron rings topping off the finished product, with construction dates embossed for record purposes.

From discussion with my older colleagues, apparently a first generations of blocks were designed and weighed in at 50 tonnes, however it soon became apparent after the first winter storm season a number of blocks had migrated from the seaward side to the shelter of the Sound. Now bearing in mind the Breakwater is around 13m (43ft) wide on its top surface, it proved there is considerable energy in a storm.



A rethink, and plans were drawn up for a version 2 block, weighing in at 75 tonnes. However, a similar fate occurred, albeit fewer blocks made the journey north. So, mark 3, 100 tonne blocks were created,

Transporting and placing these monoliths on the Breakwater's seaward side proved a major task in its self. A twin pod pontoon with release hooks and affectionately named the Camel conveyed the blocks to their final resting place some 2 miles from Plymouth Hoe. On the appointed day, coinciding with an early morning spring tide the Camel was towed out with its block underslung to a prepared location, made by divers some days prior to the drop. Once in position the hooks were released and the block sank gracefully to the sea bed, whilst the Camel launched skywards, usually finishing off the show with a wave that drenched all on board. The complete operation is captured on YouTube; The Plymouth Breakwater DVD - FULL VERSION. Peter Mitchell: Submerged Productions (26:30).

The 100 tonne blocks we see today when paddling along the Breakwater help protect the structure from erosion. Every so often we experience a winter storm, (thankfully from the safety of dryland), but within the raging maelstrom a block is moved, sometimes completely over the Breakwater and at other times a single block is deposited on the Breakwater. Tantalising isolated and perched, a lone sentinel it reminds us of nature's forces, before being swallowed up in the next big storm, lost in the depths of Plymouth Sound.

## Exchange and Mart

### 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/>

## The Committee

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