



# PPCA Newsletter

## May 2023

## Introduction

Welcome to May's Newsletter. This month Terry looks at a great wall that cannot be seen from space and Doug gets into the recovery position on his carpet.

## Editorial

So we've had the Easter Paddle and the Coronation Paddle, Midsummer isn't far off and the evenings will soon be drawing in. Better get paddling while there's still some light left.

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

### Plymouth Sound Snippets #15, The Great Wall - Target Butts by Terry Calcott

This snippet is about what is known to locals as the Great Wall. Not to be confused with the one in China but a prominent local landmark which rises on the top of Staddon Heights on the SE side of the Sound.

As paddlers we often use it as a waypoint and a familiar sight to get our bearings when needed.

The wall was built in two phases: the north half for the army between 1860 to 1870. At a time when they were converting to higher velocity rifles and a longer distance practice range was required. The southern half was constructed for the Royal Marines between 1872 and 1894. The junction between the two walls is clearly defined.



These firing positions are now obscured by the Staddon Heights golf course. All that remains is the wall (butts) which provided protection from any rounds missing the targets.



Buttresses



The wall is 300 metres long and heavily buttressed along its length, it is aligned NW to SE. The rifle range would have had several different firing positions depending on the weapons being used.



The Military Wall (left) and The Royal Marines (right)

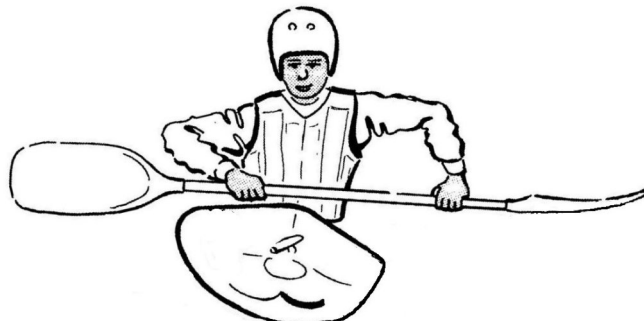
## Recovery Skills by Doug Sitch

These are key skills for anyone who paddles on the sea in the prevention of loss of balance & capsize. They are essential for any adventurous paddler, but also a necessity for all paddlers for unexpected events, beach landings and the odd 'rogue' wave. I will be coaching these skills on selected (alternate) Tuesday sessions starting 23rd May.. My sessions will focus on these skills – Doug.

**Low Recovery:** We can use the low recovery to manage a small loss of balance and use it to rectify that loss and push us back upright.

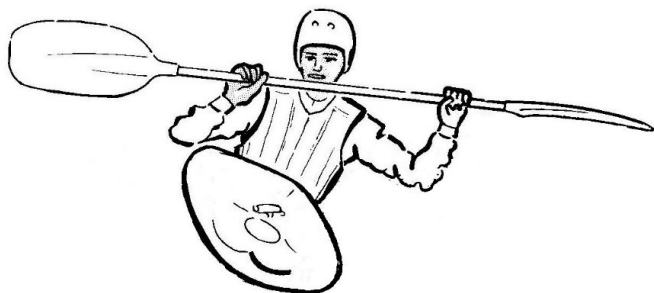
The picture here shows the basic posture to adopt. The key features are:

- Use the back of the blade to push down on the water (on the right of this picture) paddle at right angles to the kayak
- Hold elbows high – try and get the paddle near the body (shoulder over paddle) – forearm near vertical.
- Reach out a little to that side to gain more leverage and turn a little to that side.
- Push down through the back of the paddle to get your body/kayak back in balance.



It is important to keep the paddle flat to the water and not to twist it. You will find that to get the paddle back to the surface after a low recovery that it will need a twist, but not until after the recovery has finished!

The low recovery position can be modified a little by the paddler turning their body towards the paddle and placing the paddle a little further to the rear. It allows a longer 'reach' and become especially useful when the kayak is moving forward – to provide a trailing support stroke – giving support for longer.



**High Recovery:** The high recovery is a very powerful skill in preventing capsize. When practised & perfected, it can be used for any loss of balance and even form part of a 'half roll'. It is the second half of many Eskimo Roll techniques.

The paddle position is much higher than in the low recovery taking longer to set up and not becoming effective until the paddler is off balance.

The key features are:

- Use the face of the blade to pull down (on the right of this picture) at right angles to the kayak
- Hang below paddle - elbows low – the paddle near the body.
- Reach out a little to that side to gain more leverage.
- Pull down on the paddle and use the resistance to get your body/kayak back in balance.

Note: When learning this stroke, the paddle must be held in front of the body at all times (and not over the head) and that the extended arm should not be locked straight, but always bent a little.

The high recovery can be made when static or on the move, provided that the blade face is flat to the water. A slight lift in the leading edge can help it to 'plane' on the water, providing support for longer.



The high recovery position on the 'off' side (the Left side for right-handed paddlers) can feel difficult to get the paddle face flat to the water. It requires that the paddle is twisted back and up by the hands without changing the grip held by the right hand. Persevere - you can do it!

For a strong recovery stroke it needs to be effective – the flatter the paddle is to the water, the better. In the picture the paddle is as low as possible. Avoid the temptation to lift the non-drive hand – keep it as low as possible – see pic.

When the kayak is a long way off balance and the body in the water, then a hip-flick is used to help you up. Drive the kayak up first, whilst keeping the body in the water, and then follow with the body. It makes it much easier.

It can make the recovery easier by leaning back a little. However, the paddler must avoid the tendency to reach back with the blade. The paddle needs to be kept at right angles in the middle of the kayak – not forward, and NOT to the rear. Leaning back should generally be minimised as it can weaken the hip-flick. Photo above courtesy of Kay Wilson.



**Practise:** The recovery skills need to be practised if a paddler wants to 'keep' them. They require confidence, technique and muscle-memory. Avoiding practise through a lack of confidence simply means that a paddler cannot rely on those skills. The only way to keep the skills up, strong & instinctive is to use them regularly and practise them at all opportunities – every time you are on the water! Then you will be ready for the unforeseen!

Practise of low recovery can be done at home or anywhere on dry land. All you need is a paddle (no kayak). Sit on floor, carpet, lawn, beach.... You will find that you can adopt the posture and then use the paddle to return you upright as you lean on it. Remember – back of the blade downwards and elbows up!

High recovery can also be practised at home. Again, sitting on the floor holding the correct paddle posture (paddle face down, elbows beneath paddle) and resting the paddle on something 10-14 inches (25-35cm) high. Anything sturdy will do. I find that the sofa is a good height! You can then practise leaning over, whilst hanging under the paddle and restore yourself upright using the paddle. Keep legs straight avoid leaning back or forward. You can take this all the way to shoulder on the floor as required (remember to keep paddle in front of body).

Both of these recovery techniques can be practised in shallow water such as at the beach – you only need enough water to float. This reduces anxiety of possible capsize with the fall-back plan of pushing off the bottom in recovery. The best method is to practise well within your skill (small steps), and do it over & over 10's, 100's of times. You will naturally progress so don't rush it!

**Hand Positions:** It is very, very important that you use the same hand grip/positions for all your paddling. These have to be the same ones for paddling forward. If a recovery stroke is needed there won't be time to change them!

For a right-handed paddler then the right hand has ONLY ONE position – their left hand has only TWO positions – these can be found by looking at your left hand when forward paddling. These positions are 1) supporting the paddle whilst paddling on the right (doing anything on the right) and 2) the correct grip for paddling on the left (anything on the left). When paddling on the left, the forearm should make a right angle with the paddle shaft AND the blade. The RIGHT forearm should always make a right angle with the paddle shaft AND the blade.

*For a left-handed paddler then the left hand has ONLY ONE position – their right hand has TWO positions (only two!) – look at your right hand when forward paddling. These positions are 1) supporting the paddle whilst paddling on the left (anything on the left) and 2) the correct grip for paddling on the right (anything on the right). When paddling on the right, the forearm should make a right angle with the paddle shaft AND the blade. The LEFT forearm should always make a right angle with the paddle shaft AND the blade.*

It is common to hold the paddle wrongly when practising recovery skills. It is natural to try and make things feel easier – and not be aware of it! Check just after you have finished a bit of practise – deliberately ‘freeze’ your hand positions – look down - are they the same as when you forward paddle? If you have to make a grip ‘correction’ after practise then you have not been holding the paddle correctly in your practise.

### Coping with Waves:

On the sea, there are often waves coming at us. Most cause us to bump up & down a little and do little harm. However if they ‘break’ presenting a white frothy face, then things get more interesting! These defensive skills can be used to protect a paddler from a capsize. They are easy to master and perfect for handling waves at a beach.

**Most Importantly:** When a breaking wave is coming sideways on, do NOT lean away from it. You must lean INTO it.

**Low Recovery:** This skill is sufficient for small broken waves with the paddler shifting their weight a little onto the wave using a low recovery on the wave.

The wave will hit and push the kayak (and paddler) along (towards the beach) with the paddler managing to stay upright. Lifting the edge of the kayak (on the beach side) allows the boat to be pushed sideways without ‘catching’ the edge. Allow a small ‘fall’ into the wave as it hits and the kayak is then pushed under.

Note that the paddle is held back-face down on the wave, with the elbows up – pushing down. Whilst the wave is pushing the kayak sideways there is plenty of lift under the blade. When the kayak is no longer being pushed sideways then sit upright again.

**High Recovery:** This is useful for all sizes of waves but more especially for larger ones.



Again, the paddler shifts their weight towards the oncoming wave and leans into the wave. The wave will hit and push the kayak (and paddler) towards the beach. Lifting the edge of the kayak is essential to allow the boat to be pushed sideways without ‘catching’ an edge. Allow a ‘fall’ into the wave as it hits and then the kayak is pushed towards the beach. The picture above shows the paddler with their paddle on top of the ‘pile’ – it is far better to have the paddle ‘inside’ the wave where it can reach the ‘green’ water – keeping the paddle lower (and safer).

Note that the paddle is held face down onto the wave, with the elbows down – pulling down. Whilst moving sideways there is lots of lift available under the blade. When the kayak is no longer being pushed sideways the paddler must sit upright again.

## 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/>

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