



PPCA Newsletter
December 2023

Introduction

Welcome to December's Newsletter. This month we have the first ever article by an Associate Member, details of two Christmas events and Terry describes an institution that may be disappearing.

Editorial

As ever, the December Newsletter is a chance to thank everyone who has contributed articles over the course of the year whether they be regular contributors or people contributing their first article. hopefully many more members will feel the urge to contribute next year.

My thanks also to all the people whose photos I have purloined from Facebook to make the front cover collages over the year. I haven't credited everyone individually but you know who you are.

All that's left is to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and I'll see you in 2024.

Ivor Jones

Newsletter Editor

PPCA

Christmas Social

**Tuesday 12th December
20:00 until last orders**

Mountbatten Pub

Christmas Jumpers optional

Club Christmas Paddle, Saturday 23rd December by Terry Calcott

Brush off those hats and Santa costumes, and come join your fellow club members for a paddle feast and make merry. The paddle will start and finish from Mount Batten. 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).

I am also running a Boxing Day paddle (weather permitting), more details nearer the time.



Instagram

Good news for those members who "don't do" Facebook. The club now has an Instagram page so you can ignore that as well. To find it, look for `post_of_plymouth_canoe_club` on Instagram or [click here](#). Anyone with an Instagram account can follow club activities via this page.



port_of_plymouth_canoe_club

Following Message + ...

12 posts 31 followers 4 following

PPCA

Founded in 1972 we are a friendly club based on the Mount Batten Peninsula Affiliated to British Canoeing.

www.ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram profile page. On the left is a circular profile picture showing several people in colorful kayaks on a body of water. To the right of the profile picture, the username 'port_of_plymouth_canoe_club' is displayed. Below the username are three buttons: 'Following' with a dropdown arrow, 'Message', and a '+ person' icon. Further down, the profile statistics are shown: '12 posts', '31 followers', and '4 following'. Below the statistics is the name 'PPCA' in bold. Underneath is a bio: 'Founded in 1972 we are a friendly club based on the Mount Batten Peninsula Affiliated to British Canoeing.' At the bottom of the bio is a link icon followed by the website address 'www.ppca-canoe-club.org.uk'.

Features

Letter From America by Bruce Burton

Dear PPCAers,

As some of you may know, last April Susann and I packed our bags, and a mass of other stuff, and headed off to live permanently in California. It was with a heavy heart as I had loved living in the South Hams with all it has to offer, not least membership of PPCA. I was determined to continue kayaking over here for as long as I am able and a priority for me was to ship my lovely Romany Surf 5000 miles so I could continue to use it. To begin with we lived in the apartment that we have used for some time. However we eventually found a house that we liked in the city of Petaluma, about an hour's drive north of San Francisco. This is as far out as I wanted to go as I wanted to continue to paddle in San Francisco Bay. It is in Sonoma County, so good for local wine and with some lovely countryside.

I was already a member of Bay Area Sea Kayakers (BASK) and have paddled with a group of them whenever I have been in California, and I have subsequently joined a local club, Petaluma Paddlers, and another group which is an offshoot of a cycle club that we both belong to. It's surprising how often kayakers are also cyclists too, isn't it Joy? Soon after we bought this new house, we purchased a double Delta kayak, so I now have a nice selection of kayaks at my disposal, my Romany, the Delta double and a Dagger Alchemist that I bought a few years ago.



I have managed to do a reasonable number of outings since we have been here, some with Susann in the double and the others in my Romany or Alchemist with groups from one of these clubs. However, unlike PPCA, none of these groups have regular organized club paddles, so I don't know for certain from one week to another whether I am going to be going afloat.

My paddles so far fall into one of the following categories.

Flat water, for example on Napa River, Russian River, Bodega Bay and Sonoma Lake where currents are minimal and we have taken the double. It may be that, when the snow is melting in the Sierra Nevada, there is more flow in the rivers. I haven't experienced that yet.



Tomales Bay, which is a long thin bay, is actually an extension of the San Andreas Fault. Generally this is a mellow stretch of water with not a lot of current. However, towards the mouth at the north end of the bay, currents can be very strong particularly during the ebb and there is a serious risk of getting swept out into surf. Sharks are reputed to hang out there. Tomales Bay is also notorious for strong winds that blow along the bay later in the day, creating a vicious chop and making any crossing of the bay a bit challenging. Kayakers, especially inexperienced ones, sometimes get caught out by this, having started their paddles in easy conditions and finding it hard to return to their put in points later in the day. I experienced these conditions on one of my paddles this year and had to concentrate to keep a steady course across the bay with a 15 mph wind and choppy waves on my stern.

San Francisco Bay paddles are dominated by tidal currents as well as wind. Although the tidal range is not great, there is a massive area of shallowish water, which has to wash out through the Golden Gate. The volume of water going through this rather narrow gap is said only to be exceeded in the world by the outflow from the Amazon. Consequently there are areas where the current is strong and, if the tide is going in the opposite direction, moderate sized breaking waves can build up. Sometimes area of turbulent water can arise unexpectedly. On one occasion we were paddling past some islands in the Bay in very easy conditions and we found ourselves in an area of turbulent water and breaking waves where the current was sweeping through a gap between the islands. This only lasted maybe 100 meters and we were back into easy conditions again. Paddles are usually arranged to take advantage of the currents so that one paddles with the flow, have lunch and then paddles back with the opposite flow. Makes for an easier life and sometimes a long lunch. The wind too can be a factor. In the summer the wind often gets up in the afternoon as a result of inland areas warming up. I have experienced a change from more or less calm to a 15 mph wind in just a few minutes.

Paddling out in the Pacific is yet another experience and my favourite of the paddles that I have done. I have only done this twice so far this year, in both cases going out under the Golden Gate Bridge. Because currents are in the region of 5 kts during ebbs and floods, paddles 'Out the Gate' (OTG) are usually times so you go out with the ebb and return with the flood. Once this year on a short paddle I did try and get out the gate when the tide was flooding. Some very hard work and I just inched along. A bit scary too as I wanted to avoid being pushed against the bridge towers. Once outside the immediate gate area you are in the potentially large Pacific swells. Sometimes these are hardly noticeable away from the shore, but build up with considerable power when you get close to rocks. This gives rise to wonderful opportunities for rock gardening if your skills are up to it. You may have seen the videos made by Neptune's Rangers, some of whom paddle with BASK. To take part in this sort of adventure you need to have a rock solid roll and the ability to self-rescue in difficult conditions. All above my pay grade.



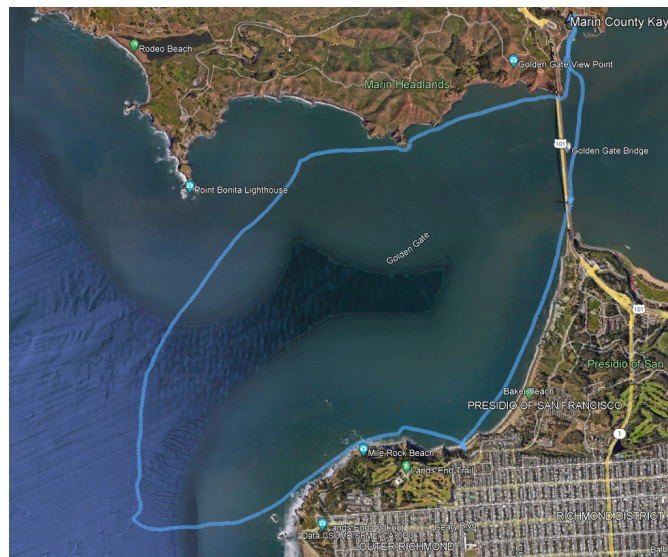
One memorable paddle, in April, when we launched at a place called Horseshoe Bay, near the Golden Gate Bridge, and paddled out under the Bridge on an ebb tide. We kept to the north-west shore for a while until we had passed Point Diablo. Our trip was enlivened by fog horns from the bridge towers and Point Diablo. The idea then was to cross over to the south-east side of the Golden Gate channel. However, although our crossing was timed to be at more or less slack water, we hadn't taken into account the massive amount of water from the Sierra Nevada snow melt that was flowing out, significantly adding to the ebb. As a result we got pushed a lot further south west than we had intended where there was a fairly large swell, fortunately not breaking. This is all the while crossing the main shipping channels in and out of San Francisco.

Eventually we reached the southern shore and were able to claw our way to a lunch spot (with a surf landing). After lunch we worked our way back to the south tower of Golden Gate Bridge and hung out there as we had heard on the radio that there was a container ship coming through and we didn't want to be in its way. I was busy taking a photo of this ship, when I realized that all the rest of the group I was with were paddling strongly so as to pass behind the ship. Fortunately I set off behind them as we soon encountered the bow wave which was huge, someone estimated 3 metres. I was a bit concerned as I knew that there would be other waves behind it but my trusty kayak breasted them with no great difficulty. I was told subsequently that had I stayed close to the tower, I would most probably have been smashed against it. I felt it would have been nice if someone had mentioned this beforehand. So this was a bit of an epic, with the total distance being about 13 miles for what had been advertised as an 8 ½ mile trip.

None of my other paddles so far have been as interesting as this. Most have been mellow with lovely warm sunshine and some interesting wild life. Harbor seals are common and I have also seen sea lions and a couple of pods of porpoises, multiple egrets, both great and snowy, brown pelicans and white pelicans (often at the same place but distancing themselves from one another), kingfishers (very different from the European ones) and several ospreys, including nesting birds.

So I have managed to keep paddling all those miles away. I do miss PPCA though and, of course, all you lot. PPCA is such a wonderful resource, with regular paddles you know will happen. I have said in the past what a debt I have to our wonderful coaches who turn out so we can paddle safely and have great fun, and now I don't have that to the same degree I appreciate it all the more.

I have to admit the weather is pretty nice here.



Plymouth Sound Snippets #22, The Sandway Chalets by Terry Calcott

This snippet is about another familiar landmark which we often see when paddling to Cawsand. The green tents of the Sandway campsite.

They appear each year from April to September in a row just back from the shore on a raised ledge. The tents are made of green canvas with a wooden frame and wooden doors and windows to blend in with the surroundings.



Sandway

The campsite was initially the preserve of men, but it didn't take long for the wives and families to join them and make the journey over and enjoy the campsite. Permission was gained from the Mount Edgumbe estate to use the campsite officially.



The history of the campsite goes back to the early 1930s when young men from Plymouth came over to fish the coastline near Sandway. It was a long journey to get back to Plymouth, so the men pitched tents on the flat area above the high-water mark.



Sandway Canvas Tents

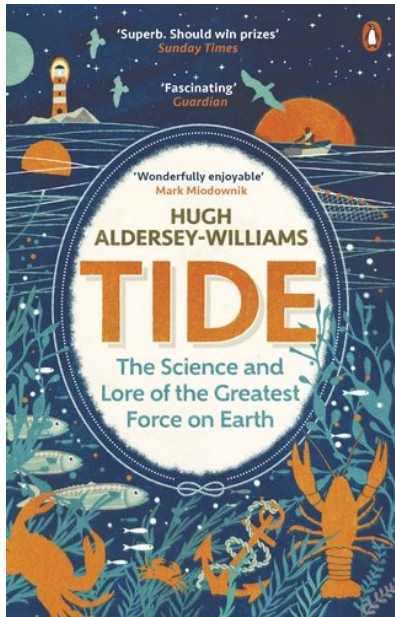
The start of the war closed the campsite down and it remained shut for the duration. After the war many of the original families started using the campsite again and it expanded to around twenty tents over the years. This has continued up to the present day. During the winter months the tents are stored in sheds inside the old fish cellars at Sandway.

A great tradition and it was always a nice sight seeing the green tents going up at Easter. However, this year the campsite never appeared and after a bit of research it seems that the powers to be would not grant permission to erect the tents due to there being the chance that the tents could be washed away in a storm and a danger to life!

Not that I am an expert, but they have stood for most of the past 80 years without any incident. Hopefully this is only a temporary cessation of the tents being erected and we will see the sight of green canvas next Easter.

Paddlers' Book Club

An occasional (probably very occasional) feature in which members recommend books that may be of interest to other members. This month The Editor looks at *Tide* by Hugh Aldersey-Williams.



At first glance 400 pages on the subject of tides might seem like overkill - what can you possibly find to say about them at such length?

The search for an explanation of how tides work has taken centuries and defeated many of the greatest scientific minds. Even the apparently simple question as to whether tides result from water moving horizontally or vertically doesn't have a simple answer. Galileo wasn't above ignoring the facts to make his theories work and even Newton had to massively simplify the process in order to explain them.

Historical figures had their issues as well. Both Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great were born on the relatively tide-free Mediterranean coast and had their plans of conquest undone because they didn't understand tides.

If this makes the book sound a bit dry, it's actually anything but and there are more than enough useful snippets to keep your nearest and dearest ~~bored rigid~~ entertained for days on end. For example the town of Ciutadella on Menorca has tides of less than 1m virtually all year but on some days, when the wind is in the right direction it can set up a resonance in the bay resulting in a tide of over 10m which floods the town. Also, in Norse mythology, there were nine wave gods, one for each type of wave.

One of his more interesting suggestions is that the best way to understand how tides work is to pick a spot on the coast or by a tidal river and stay there for 13 hours, from one high tide to the next, observing how the flow and height of the water change over time. As with all things to do with tides, this turns out to be rather more complicated than you would at first imagine.

It's a fascinating read and makes you realise that, even if you think you have a reasonable understanding of tides, the truth is far more complex and intriguing than you would have imagined.

Exchange and Mart

Discounts and Offers

A selection of discounts and offers are available on the PPCA website. [Click here](#) to see them.

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.

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