



PPCA Newsletter
Colin Wilding - A Tribute

Introduction

This is the third of these Tribute editions that I have produced in my time as Editor and they don't get any easier to compile. I've included pieces that people sent me specifically for this edition and also messages that people put on Facebook. I've also included Nigel's piece from Facebook about the Saturday Paddle in Colin's memory. There were too many photos for me to individually credit them all so I've filled a few pages with an assorted selection. Apologies if I've missed yours.

What shines through most clearly from the pieces is the love and respect that Colin was held in by everyone who knew him, from the newest club members to those who had known him for years. Hopefully this edition captures something of his spirit and is a fitting tribute to him

Ivor Jones, Newsletter Editor

I am not sure of the exact date but think that it was in 2019 that Colin collected his very shiny and sparkling new sea kayak from British Sea Kayaks. He had been rather coy about the colour scheme but did give away that it was to be dressed as his favourite bird. We fairly quickly ruled out the crow, egret and magpie. I think there may have been some comments about the possibility of flamingos! It clearly was not going to be a SBJ (small brown job) – don't think I've ever seen a brown kayak, and I suspect there's a very good reason for that. Greens were a possibility, but I never heard Colin wax lyrical about parrots or discuss the call of the cuckoo. Thus it was partly by process of deduction and by working on Colin that we discovered his plan for "The Kingfisher". What we didn't expect were the sparkles which really lit up the kayak – the added "wow" factor.

We were doing some training that summer with Rick Cooper to achieve the Coastal Sea Kayak Award. We were the "Gang of Four" comprising Colin, Tony S, Bob G and me and spent a few Tuesdays over the spring and summer being coached in the various skills required for the award. We put ourselves up for the sometimes rather direct critique by our coach. I vividly remember poor Colin being informed "that is an expensive paddle, so use the whole of it in the water"! We all took that on board, regardless of the cost of our paddles. Little did we know then that just 5 years later there would only be 2 of us left. That rather reinforces the philosophy of "Carpe Diem"

I was there when Colin put the first scratch on his very beautiful and shiny new sea kayak. A small error of judgment left him sitting high and dry on some rather abrasive looking rocks. I may have been slightly out of ear shot but prefer to think that Colin showed great restraint because I heard no four letter expletives whilst he sat there waiting for several minutes for a suitably large swell to aid his recovery. I do remember the noise, as that now not quite so shiny boat departed of the rock. Colin waited until the lunchtime stop to examine the hull with baited breath – there was no structural damage. Thinking about it I really can't remember Colin swearing at all.

When, several years later, Colin got his plastic boat – an orange Delphin (to at least continue the colour theme in part) there were few limits on the rocky places into which he would willingly venture. One day we paddled out of Warfleet Creek near Dartmouth with some friends from the Totnes Club. I could see that Colin was up for anything but did not expect him to make a rather 50/50 gulley run early on in the day. Sadly the odds were against him that day and we put a rather embarrassed Colin back in his boat within 500m of launching! Indeed Colin never lost his enthusiasm for sitting on rocks as can be seen in this photo taken by Karen on 27th January this year. To be fair he was not the only kayaker to sit on that particular rock on that particular day. However, note the grin.

There are many other stories of challenges that we faced together. Unfortunately, Colin has had more than his fair share of injuries over the last few years that have prevented him from taking part in as many adventures on the water as he might have wished. However he was always willing to help others and even met us for lunch one day at Wembury Beach in case we needed a lift back to MB on a post injury first paddle. I shall miss his company and the many phone calls from him whilst out walking Bailey the dog.

RIP Colin.

Adam Coulson





I don't have many close male friends but Colin was certainly one of them. This didn't initially come about through our shared membership of PPCA, where he was a member several years before me and was one of the many members with whom I had yet to engage.

Jackie, while working at the University of Plymouth Medical School had twisted my arm to become a 'test' patient for medical students during their studies. I had to report to a waiting area early one morning, and as I walked in there was Colin sat at the back - probably having already tucked into the bacon roll provided for breakfast. He called over to me, and it took me a while to recognise this stranger from PPCA, being totally out of our common environment.

It turned out that we had both undergone the same surgery when in our 40s, hence why we were suitable 'guinea pigs' for the students to practise their medical and inter-personal skills. This meant that as we members of the same 'club', when on the water and out of earshot of the other paddlers we held our own self-help group with no-holds-barred surgery related topics and ongoing impacts that might have made the other paddlers squirm.

Following that, because neither of us stepped back quick enough, we both ended up as committee members. That meant that Colin and I would have a phone call 2 or 3 times a week. These conversations were usually interrupted with deafening calls of "Bailey Come!" as he reigned his dog back in, or else some pauses as Colin stopped to pick up some litter on one of his daily walks.

In 2022 and 2023, along with several others, Colin committed himself to working with the Cub and Scout groups during the Summer evenings. It was great seeing the fun he had working with these kids, although on some occasions we had to fish him out of the water too (I'll leave Sarah to give the full details). Colin managed to be so enthusiastic that he often injured himself when joining in - eg when jumping off the wall and damaging his weaker leg even before he hit the water. I think it was then that I reminded him that we were in our 60's and not 20's - but that didn't stop him once he returned from the injury.

During the time that I knew Colin, through our many conversations it was obvious that he was a committed family man and was very proud of them all.

I'm already missing Colin as a club and committee member, but more as a friend, and can't quite believe that I won't be having any more of those phone calls or Summer evening paddle and play sessions.

Mark Perry

I will remember Colin as being always incredibly helpful, kind and funny both on and off the water. The last time I saw him was at our January Committee Meeting. I type the minutes as I go along and he was sat next to me looking over my shoulder and teasing me about my spelling and grammar. He was incredibly committed to his role as Club Leader. It is my job as Secretary to read out, and enquire on the status, of all the ongoing actions. Poor Colin always seemed to have loads of actions on the go, but always managed somehow to keep pace with them with a cheerful stoicism. The subject of Remits will never be quite the same again!

On the water, I particularly remember one time when he was advising me on support strokes to help avoid capsizes, he was showing me one particular method when he suddenly flipped the boat right over! I was a bit surprised, and said to him something like, "Oh I didn't realise you were going to do an actual roll!" to which his reply was "No neither did I!"

Like all of us I just cannot believe I won't see Colin again or hear him and Mark chatting on the phone about Club issues as they regularly did.

It was a real privilege to be on the Committee and paddle with such a lovely chap.

Jackie Perry



Fond Memories of a good all-round guy.

In the short time I have paddled with the PPCA I'm impressed by the friendliness of its members and how easy conversations are struck up with individuals when on a group trip as we journey along. We talked of members past and members now, one name that kept cropping up was Colin, everything was positive as I learnt of the present Club Leader. Helpful, guiding, encouraging, approachable, generous are just a few of the words which reflected his character and nature.

I was soon to meet Colin, initially, a complete stranger, but within minutes I knew he was totally trustworthy and would have my back should the weather and conditions change. All the glowing reports were true.

We found commonalities; time spent in the Dockyard, electrical engineering, families and mutual friends from a lifetime enjoying the great outdoors. His sense of fun supported by a beaming smile was infectious, in short, he was a good all-round guy. His quest for learning, observing and imparting this information was inspirational.

Next time I'm paddling the Plym and a brief flash of iridescent blue and green catches my eye the Kingfisher will bring back memories of Colin, his appropriately coloured sea kayak and our precious times together.

Nigel Hingston



I think I first paddled with Colin around 2016, or maybe a bit earlier? Being an ex-dockyard worker our paths crossed occasionally at work. Although our conversations inside the dockyard walls were always about kayaking.

I have many happy memories of paddling with Colin. Both on club paddles but also on the many peer paddles we did together. The past few years with him paddling his much-loved Kingfisher Romany Surf. Several of us have the same kayak but the Kingfisher always stood out on a paddle and the colour scheme was always a talking point whenever we met other paddlers.

We used to take the micky out of Colin not for his sea kayak but for the amount of Whetman kayak equipment he had. Every time he turned up, he had a new piece of their kit. His friend Tony has a similar love of the brand, so they got labelled as the Whetman twins. I should point out the kit is excellent.



I can remember at the end of a paddle both Colin and Tony wanted to do a few wet skills and use some of their specialist equipment. I can't remember what they were trying to do and practice but it involved one of them capsizing and the other rescuing. Somehow the communication between them got confused and they both appeared upside down and out of their kayaks, much to everyone's amusement.

One of my last memories of Colin was on the day of his last paddle. He was running a little late and arrived with his drysuit half on. He told me he had a new neck seal fitted but hadn't managed to trim it to size yet. He pulled out a rusty pair of trauma shears and we attempted to cut the neck seal with him pulling the latex and me cutting. It was proving tricky, and I knew we were going to make a lousy job of it. I said Colin why don't you ask at the dive shop next door to us, they will have sharp scissors and will be experts in trimming latex. A few minutes later he appeared smiling and with a thumbs up and his drysuit on and zipped up ready to paddle.

After the sea kayak paddle quite a few of the paddlers met upstairs in the bar. Everyone was jovial and full of post paddle stories. I can remember Colin enjoying his hot drink and chatting away while at the same time doing battle with a solid looking chocolate brownie.

Colin was a good friend, and I will miss him, especially out on the water chatting and paddling. I have many fond happy memories and will take these with me whenever I paddle.

RIP Colin

Terry Calcott



What tragic news and such a shock after chatting to Colin on Saturday following the paddle. He was a kind and caring friend, always interested in others and adept at making fellow paddlers feel at ease and welcome, willing to go the extra mile to give back in a sport he was so good at. I always enjoyed conversing with him and he was an immensely reliable perceptive paddler who embodied the ethos of the PPCA in his willingness to help others and share of his skills in a quiet and selfless manner. He radiated a joy at being in the great outdoors which was infectious and it was always lovely to see his beloved 'kingfisher' on the water. He always spoke lovingly of his family and was so proud of Sonia...my deepest sympathies are with them; his loss will be immense and he will be missed so much.

Mary McArdle

Very sad news. I recall quite a few conversations I have had with Colin. He was a gentle, caring and kind person, always happy to listen. He was very proud of Sonia and his whole family. In fact he recommended Sonia as a counsellor to me. We are all connected due to the kayaking, a pastime we all love. We also feel this loss together and think of you. RIP Colin.

Birgit Cloos

Colin was such a great guy. I only joined the club recently and he always made me so welcome. And always lovely to have a chat on the water. I had the privilege of paddling with him on Saturday and we were discussing coaching plans for the club in the future. A top man.

Allen Wearmouth

My sincere condolences to Colin's family and club members who knew him much longer than I did, I always enjoyed our chats and his passion for paddling and the club were very evident. He will be sorely missed RIP.

Kathrin O'Hagan

Can only ever think of Colin smiling, laughing and always ready to help. We had a great day Saturday with him right up to the cafe and the somewhat stale chocolate brownie he valiantly ate. Smiling through to the cheerful wave goodbye. He will be remembered so fondly by everyone who was privileged to know him. Sincere condolences to Sonia and all the family of whom he spoke of frequently.

Merryl Docker

I can only echo what everyone else has said. Such a nice guy to everyone. Sincere condolences to Sonia and the whole family. He will be truly missed. RIP Colin.

Andy Kittle

Russell and I were both shocked and saddened to hear the terrible news about Colin. We had both come away from our paddle with you all on Saturday saying what an incredibly warm welcome we had received as new members from you all. We both enjoyed some chats with Colin and were looking forward to getting to know him better. Naturally our hearts go out to you all who knew him well and to his family. What a terrible shock it must be. Sending our deepest condolences.

Kaja and Russell



I have not been a member very long, but I wanted to reach out and say I am sorry for your loss. I know Colin will be missed.

Aimee

Like everyone in the club, I'm so sad that I've had my last paddle with Colin. Not able to put my sadness into words but it weighs heavy in my heart.

Helga Pinn

I only met Colin a couple of times, but found him to be a lovely man, so enthusiastic about encouraging me as a "newbie" kayaker. I share your sadness and shock of a life cut unexpectedly short, but how wonderful that Colin was able to enjoy time with you guys just last Saturday.

Louise Goodman



Saturday 3rd February Rec Paddle Led by Terry and Gavin (Thank you).

Saturday's paddle is a unique event as the sea paddle and short trips are amalgamated into one. Both long and short boat paddlers gather together so we can give thoughts on our fond memories of Colin. It is a time to share feelings and reflect.

Terry gives an excellent pre-brief, HW around departure time at 10:30hrs, a 20-knot plus wind and grey dull skies, not the most inviting Sound days, so we elect for the River Plym option.

It's a good turnout, 19 paddlers, the sea is a bright display of green, red, yellow, blue and orange GRP and plastic kayaks gliding off the eastern slip. Bob records the moment for You Tube viewing as the brisk wind takes our large group up river. We round the bend and sheltered from the wind enjoy a pleasant paddle northwards. The group has formed into sub-groups and we talk, chatter and most importantly, laugh. Remembering times past including other trips, mini epics, and simple stupid things we have all done. Kayaking after all is a great leveller.

Lunch break and a minute's silence whilst we all remembered Colin and his family. Food a great conversation starter, sounds of The Embankment traffic melt and is lost as we are talking and munching. The sun makes a brave appearance with its light reflecting over the return journey's route.

All too soon we are making plans to leave the exotic beach resort of Saltram Sands, an hour later its white sands would give way to mud – time to go. The return trip is uneventful, but allows exploration under dark wharfs, mooring pontoons and viewing unusual craft. The final leg and we face the stiff head wind, but the ebbing tide makes our going easy. The day's trip is finished, kayaks stored and changed we meet in The Lookout for beverages, cakes and satisfied smiles.

Nigel Hingston

