



PPCA Newsletter

April 2024

Introduction

Welcome to April's Newsletter. This month we have news for sea kayakers of all abilities, Clive finds weather forecasts to be unreliable, Terry finds some more guns and we celebrate the start of the evening paddling season. The Newsletter also dips its toe into the previously uncharted world of Art.

Editorial

It's interesting to read Clive's article on the changes in BC and, by extension, the PPCA over the last decade or so. While you could be forgiven for seeing this as the addled ravings of a grumpy old man, it certainly makes you think. When I joined the PPCA, I spent most Tuesday evenings cold, wet and upside down in the water struggling to master skills that were generally far beyond me. The rec sessions were a welcome lifeline as they meant I could go for a paddle, stay relatively warm and dry and learn on the job as it were. That said, those Tuesday evening sessions have given me skills that have stayed with me ever since - not just the obvious ones like self rescue and going in a more or less straight line but also things like counting the number of boats on the water at regular intervals, looking at where the back marker is, staying in a group when nipping across the shipping lane seconds before the ferry comes in etc. I don't want to be one of those people who says "things were better in my day" and I certainly don't miss being upside down in freezing cold water but I can't help thinking that newer members may have missed out on some valuable experiences along the way.

Ivor Jones

Newsletter Editor

News

Tuesday Evening Club Recreational Paddles by Terry Calcott

Now the clocks have sprung forward, and we are getting lighter evenings. It can only mean one thing, the start of the club Tuesday evenings. Recreational paddles and also various training sessions.

I have the pleasure of leading the first 4 weeks of the rec paddles. As usual we will be ready to paddle and, on the water, around 18:00. The paddle usually last around 2 hours and makes use of tidal and weather conditions. Most of the paddles will be out exploring the Sound but if needed we have the option of more sheltered paddling up the Plym.

To join in the rec paddles you will need to be confident paddling out in the Sound in a mix of sea conditions and able to paddle a couple of miles. The air and sea temperature are still very cold at this time of year. Please dress for colder conditions with plenty of layers. As usual club equipment is available to use.

If you have any safety equipment, please bring it along. I would expect regular paddlers to have a survival bag and a whistle. Also bring along any other kit if you have it, first aid kits, vhf radio, towlines etc. safety kit is of no use at home and should be carried every time you paddle. As a group we always have a good selection of kit between us.

Hopefully we will have a good start to the season with some better weather than we have had recently. Looking forward to seeing all the regulars and some new paddlers venturing out. The Tuesday evening rec paddles are a good way of building up paddling stamina and confidence before joining in the regular longer Saturday paddles.

Introduction to Sea Kayaking by Terry Calcott

An early heads up about an Intro to Sea Kayaking Course being run over 2 consecutive Tuesday evenings starting 7th May and following on the 14th.

If you have wanted to try sea kayaks out but never had the opportunity now is your chance. The sessions are aimed at those club members who already have some paddling skills but are novice sea kayakers. The sessions are also suitable for club members who have been in sea kayaks but want to brush up on the basic skills and learn something new. Due to limited time the sessions are about transferring the paddling skills you already have and using them in sea kayaks. We will cover some theory and a lot of practical aspects of sea paddling. The later session will include towing and boat repairs if we have time.

Venue Mount Batten time 18:00 to 20:00.

Club sea kayaks are available for use (I have block booked the club sea kayaks) or bring along your own if you have one, if you would like to book a place and a boat or have any questions please let me know by email terryc1@blueyonder.co.uk or phone 07828 652775.

Sea Kayak Safety and Rescue by Adam Coulson

PPCA are pleased to be able to offer the NEW British Canoeing Sea Kayak Safety and Rescue Course which aims to provide paddlers with the key safety and rescue skills required to operate safely and be able to deal with common problems on the sea, in both sheltered and moderate conditions. The course is a rough equivalent to the White Water Safety & Rescue Course recommended to all WW paddlers.

We will be running the course over 4 Tuesday evenings from 21st May through to 11th June. L3 Sea Kayak Coach (Advanced Water) Rick Cooper will be working with us to deliver the course. The cost to members will be a very reasonable £25 in total. Attendance at each session is required. The course can be done in one day, but spreading it over 4 sessions will make for a much better experience for candidates.

Throughout the 7 hour course, paddlers will explore simple strategies and safe skills that can provide the tools to solve common paddling issues. Topics covered include safety frameworks, contact and towing rescues, self-rescues, dealing with equipment damage/failure, as well as assisting others.

The course is suitable for all ages and great for individuals, clubs and groups wanting to expand their safety practices on the sea. Suitable craft include sea kayaks, sea specific sit on tops and closed cockpit kayaks but we will be using sea kayaks. Club boats will be available for candidates. Participants need to either hold the British Canoeing Awarding Body Sea Kayak Award or equivalent ability to the paddling environment and have the boat control required to participate fully in the course.

Course Content

Throughout the course, paddlers will explore simple strategies and safe skills that can provide the tools to solve common paddling issues. All modules are interactive, practical sessions, discussing and using equipment, and exploring possible solutions to common issues in a moderate sea environment.

The Sea Kayak Safety and Rescue course is a 7-hour programme that consists of 8 modules:

- Sources of information
- Safety frameworks
- Contact and towing rescues
- Self-rescues
- Deep water rescues
- Dealing with equipment damage/failure
- Landing and first aid
- Reflection and skills checklist

Certification

Attendance certificates are issued to candidates by their Delivery Centre, following a recommendation from the course tutor.

Booking

Interested? We have a limited number of places on this course and so please register your interest with Adam by e-mail to president@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk or give me a ring on 07834 286461. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have. Further detail can be found on the BCAB website

Mount Batten Centre Opening Times by Emma Denham, Centre Administration

As we gear up for a bustling season ahead, I wanted to keep everyone in the loop regarding some exciting larger scale events happening at the centre and our updated opening times.

Events:

Cadet class Pre-World Event: Thursday 4th to Sunday 7th April

PPSA Regatta: Thursday 6th to Sunday 9th June.

Cadet class Nationals & Worlds: Saturday 27th July to Friday 9th August. This is our largest event of the season, and the centre will be extremely busy over this period. There will be very limited parking available on site.

Other event dates which we are awaiting for confirmation on:

22nd & 23rd June	- small car park booked
19th - 23rd Aug	- small car park and pontoon space
6th - 8th Sept	- small car park and pontoon space
12th - 13th Oct	- Cornish Gig Regatta

Centre & Lookout Opening Times:

Centre	Lookout Lounge
January – March	January – March
Monday – Sunday	Monday – Sunday
09:00 – 17:00	09:30 – 16:30
April	April
Monday- Sunday	Monday – Sunday
08.00-18.00	09.30-17.30
May – September	May – September
Monday, Friday & Saturday	Monday, Friday & Saturday
08:00 – 22:00	09:30 – 22:00
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Sunday	Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Sunday
08:00 – 20:00	09:30 – 19:30
October – December	October – December
Monday – Sunday	Monday – Sunday
09:00 – 17:00	09:30 – 16:30

Please note that our opening times may vary, so be sure to check the social media pages for any changes.

We're looking forward to another great season and hope you are also. Thank you for your continued support.

If you have any questions or need further information, feel free to reach out.

Features

It's No Joke by Clive Ashford

This article is largely based on my opinion and doesn't pretend to reflect the position of the PPCA. Read it and then speak to other people to form your own, probably more balanced view.

I'm not the youngest paddler in the club but I am not alone in being of a certain vintage, look around and you will see what a fine vintage we are, but that not why I'm sat here with my trusty old John Bull Printing Set. Settle down and be prepared for some vintage revelations but be warned, you have just had the last smile that this article will give you. As it says at the top, it's no joke.

When I started paddling our governing body called itself the British Canoe Union. (BCU). A new paddler was encouraged to develop his/her skills by working towards a series of BCU star tests, numbered 1 – 5. Star tests 1 – 3 were taken in general purpose kayaks, star tests 4 & 5 were discipline specific and were either inland (white water) or sea. Later the BCU added surf to the list of disciplines. The syllabus for each star test was easily understood and progression was in evenly spaced steps. Most club paddlers aspired to become a 3-star paddler.

There were a similar set of star tests that our canoeist (open boaters in today's parlance) could work towards, and the paddler with a competitive streak could work towards a series of placid water awards. All these awards were easy to understand but definitely not easy to achieve. Whatever your discipline, if you had attained your 3-star then you were a competent paddler in that discipline.

At the same time the BCU ran a highly respected coaching scheme. With suitable training and experience the paddler with a 3 star could become a level 2 coach, and the paddler with a 4 star could become a level 3 coach. (We were called instructors and senior instructors in those days but let's keep it simple.) A level 2 coach could train and assess up to 2-star and a level 3 coach could train and assess up to 3-star. A level 3 coach could become an assessor. There were several types of assessor, but an A1 assessor could train and assess up to 4-star.

At this stage the PPCA had a good number of level 2 coaches, a fair number of level 3 coaches and a handful of assessors, all of which meant that we could provide training and assessment of kayak paddlers up to 4-star, all within the club. We also had coaches in the canoe discipline. I know that we could assess to at least 3-star canoe, and maybe 4-star. It was a long time ago and my memory is a bit vague.

To sum up, our members were working hard to achieve their 2 and 3-star awards, a healthy number of paddlers were embarking down the coaching path, and all our coaches held recognised BCU qualifications and were members of the BCU in their own right. Generally speaking, things within the PPCA were good.

Things were working quite nicely so the BCU saw fit to make some radical changes.

1) They changed the star tests. Although these changes were made many years ago, I will refer to the revised system as the "new star tests." The new 1-star could be taken in any craft, including sit on tops, and there was no longer a requirement to perform a capsize drill. This award was now referred to as an encouragement award, which meant that no paddling skills were necessary.

2) Someone within the BCU decided that paddlers had to become proficient in both kayak and canoe. The new 2-star included both craft but to a standard that was only just a bit higher than the old 1-star.

3) The new 3-star became discipline specific, hence the new 3-star was either sea or white water. (No doubt there were other disciplines like surf but again my memory is vague.) The new 3-star was pitched somewhere between the old 3 & 4-star award. It doesn't take a genius to realise that the step from the new 1-star to the new 2-star was fairly small, whereas the step from the new 2-star to the new 3-star was enormous.

4) At the same time the BCU took the opportunity of changing the language used in the syllabuses. They changed from being clear and concise to something rather more soft focused. Those of us with a somewhat limited grasp of the English language found interpretation of the new award syllabuses a tad challenging.

5) Paddlers didn't like the new 2-star, mostly because they didn't want to learn skills involving two different types of craft. Most people found that getting to grips with one type of craft at a time was enough of a challenge, thank you very much. At this stage people attended the Tuesday night 2-star sessions but very few people actually took the award.

Around this time the BCU abandoned its well-respected coaching award scheme in favour of the UKCC scheme. (UKCC may, or may not, stand for United Kingdom Coaching Certificate.) I believe that this was done at the insistence of the government in exchange for Olympic funding. Suddenly the path into coaching became a lot more complicated and bureaucratic, which resulted in less people taking up coaching. A few of our coaches converted to the UKCC scheme. A few of our coaches (not necessarily the same few) wondered why.

Also, at around this time the BCU became a professional body. There is nothing wrong with that, the organisation is far too large and complex to be run by volunteers.

There have always been outdoor centres offering paddling courses but now we also see the evolution of the professional coach, paddling experts who were making a living out of the paddling public. Again, there is nothing wrong with that as long as the professional coaches are removed from the governing body, but the cynic in me holds the opinion that these professional coaches hold influence over the BCU at board level and that such a vested interest is not healthy.

In 2014, against a background of discontent, the BCU changed its name to British Canoeing. (BC). At the time I wrote:

1) If it isn't broken don't mend it. Historically the BCU had an excellent system of star tests and coaching awards. They destroyed all that and instead foisted the current (almost unworkable) regime upon us.

2) If it is broken, then a change of name probably won't help. British Canoeing really is broken. They can call themselves whatever they like but they really do need to get themselves fixed. Quickly.

So, what's happened since 2014? Everything nice and rosy, is it? Well, no. We no longer have any star tests, instead we have awards like discovery and explorer. The language of the new syllabuses has changed from "soft focus" to "positively fuzzy" and very open to interpretation. Don't believe me? I attended a meeting with a top BC representative who informed us that if he were running a sea kayak assessment in the Solent then it would be different from a sea kayak assessment in Plymouth. Same award, different assessment. Does that seem right?

BC seems to have abandoned the UKCC coaching scheme. Instead, leadership and coaching have been separated into their own schemes, both incredibly complicated to understand and time consuming to achieve.

A major change to the training regime is that all training is now supposed to be "student led." So, we have students who, by definition, don't know what they don't know, setting the training agenda based on a syllabus that is vague and open to interpretation. Insert your own comments here.

In 2014 our Tuesday 2 and 3-star training sessions were well attended. In 2023 we struggled to put on any training sessions due to a lack of interest from our members. Our rec paddles are now regularly attended by paddlers with very little in the way of formal training. It shows.

In 2014 all our coaches held BCU qualification and were members of the BCU. In 2023 many of our coaching staff have become disillusioned with BC and have allowed their membership to lapse, meaning that BC no longer recognise their qualifications.

There are very few paddlers embarking on the leadership/coaching path. Look at the calendar and note the ages of your session leaders, (most of us are over 60) then try to work out how many of those names will still be there in 10 years' time.

In 2014 the PPCA could train and assess up to 4-star in house. In 2023 we had to buy in a professional coach in order to train and assess members for their sea kayak award. (Broadly speaking the old 4 star.)

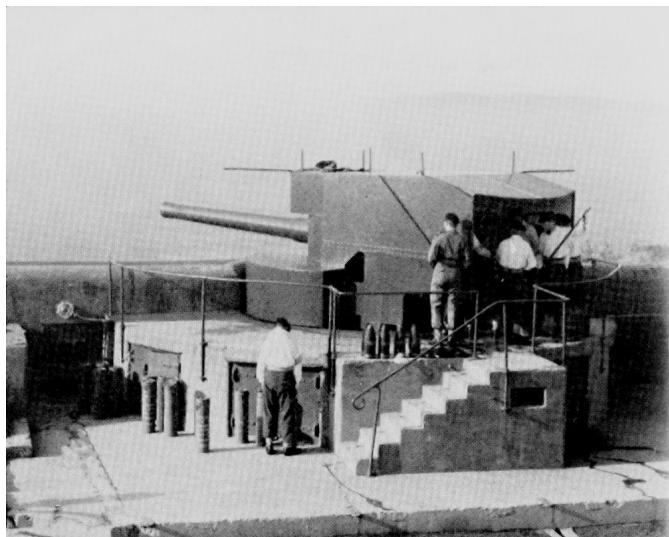
I firmly believe that the people at the top of BC are highly intelligent which, by inference means that they know exactly what they are doing. So, they must be either reasonably satisfied with the current situation, or they realise that there are a few problems and are going to make suitable changes. In spring of 2024 BC is changing its name again, this time to Paddle UK. (PUK) So, is this the clean sweep designed to cure all our problems? or shall I refer you back to the paragraphs in italics above?

As is says at the top, It's no Joke.

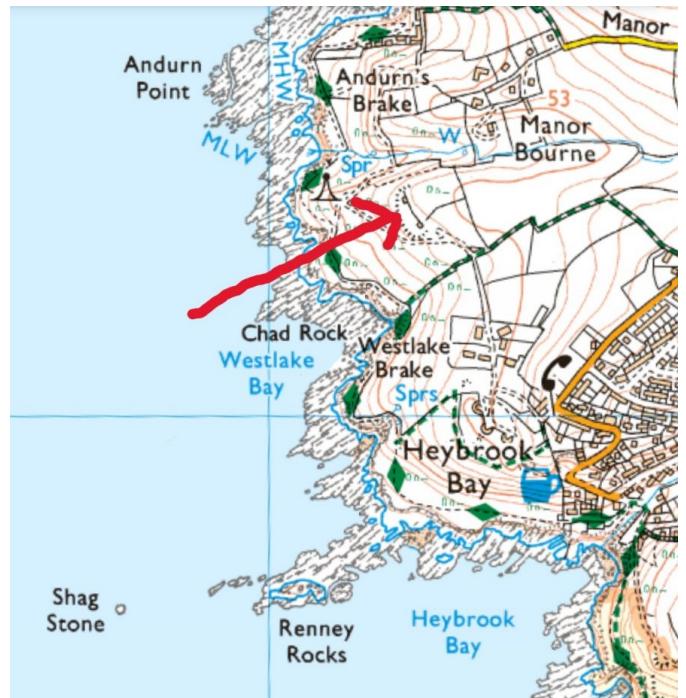
Plymouth Sound Snippets #26, Lentney Battery by Terry Calcott

This snippet is another military themed one, Lentney Battery. Although not visible from the sea it is only a short walk from the coast path near Andurn Point a little further along the coast from Bovisand.

I have visited several times over the years, and it is well worth making the short detour. Lentney Battery a Coastal Battery was built to cover the east side of Plymouth Sound. It was completed in 1905 and was originally designed to have three 6-inch breech loading guns but only two were installed.



Lentney Battery During Operational Times



Lentney Battery remained in commission during the 1920s but was then stood down in 1930. However, WWII led to its reactivation. In this period, it was used as a training facility. For a short time after WWII the site was used as a training site and also to test British and captured German weapons, it was decommissioned in 1956.



Lentney Battery up the hill behind the navigation marker



Lentney Battery Today

A Short Paddle by Clive Ashford

The club Calander for Sat 2 March 2024 showed that the “first Saturday of the month sea kayak trip” would be led by Brim and that the “first Saturday of the month short paddle” would be led by Joy. As the date approached Joy found that she was unable to lead the short paddle so I volunteered to take her place, no doubt in a pre-emptive sort of a way. This was to be the first Saturday short paddle that I had led so my excitement knew no bounds.

Being an outdoorsy type of chap the weather forecast is never far from my mind. In the winter months my primary focus is on the predicted rainfall, which will fill our rivers (or not) and may cause my life to be exciting, entertaining and maybe a little scary. Suddenly I had a change of focus because, in order to paddle around the Sound, the predicted wind speed and direction became more important factors. There are various weather forecasts available that are often a bit different from each other, so I look at a number of weather forecast websites. The sensible thing to do would be to look at all the available information and predict that the weather on the day will be at some midpoint between all these forecasts. That’s not what I do, instead I look at all the forecasts and go with the one that best matches my desires, hence I often think the forecast is wrong.

I find a forecast for the weekend that is encouraging and write a long-winded post advertising the trip on the club forum. I’m quite proud of my post, go and have a look.

Around the same time Brim posted that the sea kayak trip would launch from Hannaford Point, West Looe.

Some things in life are predictable. With Brim running a sea kayak away day and with me running the short paddle there was a 99.9% chance that there would be a peer paddle leaving Mount Batten on the same day, and guess what? At 10:00 on 2 March a peer group launched at Mount Batten. An event so predictable that you could have used it to set your watch.

Anyway, back to the short paddle. We were a small but select group of paddlers. As well as myself there was Jonathan and Lesley. Jonathan asked me if I would do him a favour and zip up his dry suit. My Pavlov’s dog reaction to being asked to zip up a dry suit is to say, “Of course, I’ll make sure I leave an inch.” Jonathan asked why I would do that so I told him that it was for ventilation purposes. The ensuing confusion led me to explain that I wouldn’t actually leave an inch and that I said I would simply for comic effect. Admittedly the comic effect was minimal and wasn’t enhanced by having to give an explanation.

I hadn’t had the pleasure of meeting Lesley before but she came along with a cheerful smile and a shiny sit-on-top. Making friends is easy with a cheerful smile so paddlers occupying two kayaks and one sit-on-top launched from the Mount Batten slipway in a pleasant and friendly fashion, and with all zips etc properly fastened.

As with all trips this one was meticulously planned. My meticulous planning had come up with the idea of paddling around Jennycliff Bay to Bovisand Harbour, cross to the Breakwater, paddle along to the fort before an open crossing to Drakes Island for coffee. We would then complete the circuit with a short hop home assisted by a following wind.

As mentioned above I had found a friendly forecast for the weekend. If I remember correctly, the forecast I had found was for gentler conditions than the weather we experienced on the day. We launched in sunshine but there was a bit of a westerly breeze and the sunshine was very definitely not wall to wall. Showers were never far away and the temperature was definitely March.

Just as you would expect from a short paddle we bobbed along and we talked, and some of us explored the rocky gullies. Everything was going to plan and we arrived at Bovisand Harbour in good time. I took the opportunity of checking that we were happy before explaining that as we were now two hours after high tide we could expect a bit of current trying to push us out of the Sound, a current that would be stronger as we approached the Breakwater, so we would need to paddle accordingly.

Let’s sum up, we were experiencing healthy outdoors exercise in wonderful company and were having an educational experience, all rolled into one short paddle. On top of that our session leader was checking on our welfare. Isn’t the PPCA wonderful?

Everyone was happy so we set off. Avoiding the confused water that is often present just south of Bovisand Harbour we headed towards the Breakwater. There was a bit of swell running causing small surf waves to curl around the eastern end of the Breakwater. I steered a course that would avoid that particular piece of frothy excitement and we made slow but steady progress against the current. As we got close to the Breakwater a squally shower scudded across the Sound from the Cornish side, increasing the wind speed and reducing our temperature. Looking at the water passing our boats it appeared that we were making good progress but, a look at the safety cage on the Breakwater revealed the fact that we were in fact paddling hard just to stand still. After ten minutes of not actually getting anywhere I decided that Cable Beach seemed like a very nice place for a cup of coffee so we turned around. The educational part of the trip had taken on a practical flavour as we learned firsthand that paddling with the wind and tide behind us made for much faster progress than battling against the same elements. I can report that it didn't take long to get to Cable Beach.

Cable Beach was exposed to the cool westerly wind. We had consumed our snacks but interestingly no-one suggested going for a swim or spending a happy hour sunbathing, so we didn't tarry. Instead, we quickly re-launched and made our way back to Mount Batten. I had originally advertised that we would be back by 12:30 but in the end it was 13:30 by the time we got off the water, so not such a short paddle after all, but enjoyable for all that.

So, my first Saturday Short Paddle turned out to be quite memorable. My thanks to Jonathan and Lesley for their part in it.

Art & Literature

View from a Kayak by Terry Calcott

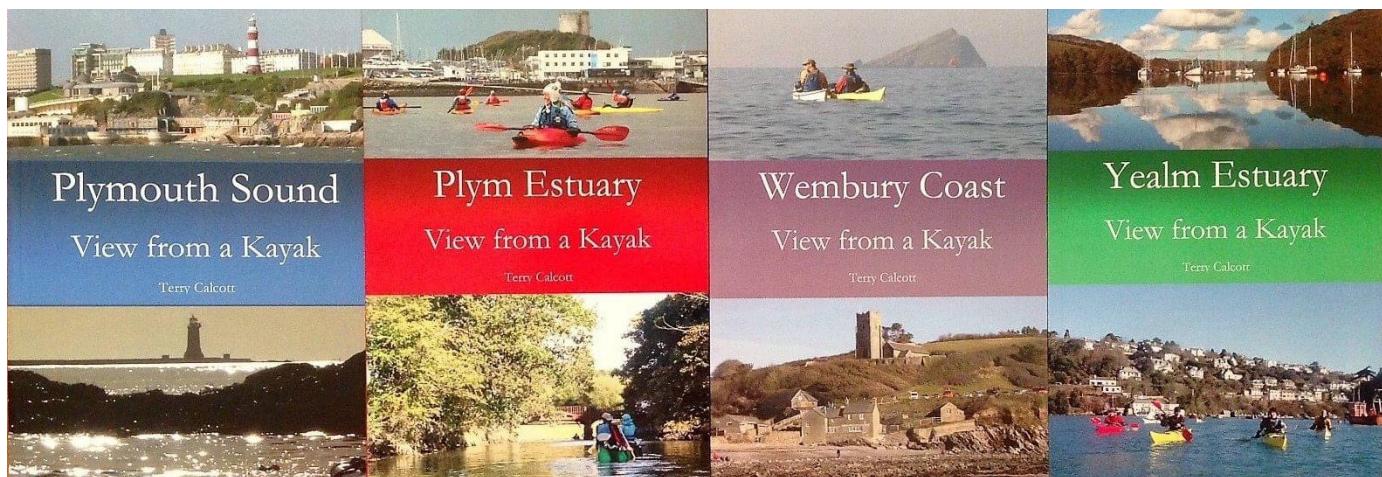
I have had several enquiries from club members asking if the View from a Kayak books are still available to purchase. The good news is YES.

They are £6 each or a bargain 4 for £20.

If anyone wishes to purchase the books please contact me at terryc1@blueyonder.co.uk

I will also bring along some books along on Tuesday evenings once the club sessions start and also on the Saturday Rec paddles.

All profits this year will be going to St Lukes Hospice.



21 Group Exhibition by Kevin Tole

The 21 Group of artists, of which I am a member have an exhibit at the Artmill and Framing Centre, Hyde Park. which runs from 22nd March to 20th April. I will be showing 3 paintings plus there will be a lot of work from the other 21 Group artists.

Exhibition by

THE 21 GROUP OF ARTISTS

Preview: Friday 22 March 5pm - 7pm



Tony Aldrich
Richard Allman
Lar Cann
Sonia Fynn
Mary Gillet
Jill Goodman
Dorothy Hanna
Val Jones
Wendy McBride
Nigel Moores
Robert Mountjoy
Clark Nicol
Teresa Pemberton
Jenny Pery
Ley Roberts
Rita Smith
Richard Sunderland
Oliver Teagle
Kevin Tole

Images left to right: Tony Aldrich, Kevin Tole, Ley Roberts, Wendy McBride, Dorothy Hanna, Bob Mountjoy, Jenny Pery.

Artemill Gallery

83 Hyde Park Road, Plymouth PL3 4JN

22 March - 20 April 2024

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm
Saturday 10am - 4pm

@artoftwentyoneg



www.21group-of-artists.com

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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