



Up the Creek December 2025

Editorial

Paul Hewson

It's a bit soggy isn't it?

At the time of writing, the weather is threatening the Christmas Paddle, but there are some photos from the recent club Christmas social on page 2. Nigel Hingston writes about the pool sessions on page 3. As usual, Adam Coulson provides an overview of the club's activities in November in the Chronicle on page 7. We have one article that indirectly tells you what a smooth and well-oiled machine has developed for club white water paddles on page 5. It does that indirectly, by telling you just how many spanners you can throw in the works and still get a paddle. Of course, reading the Chronicle this month I now want to find out about this missing car ... hopefully our roaming reporter

Leigh Kay Hatch may find out more by next month.

Finally, I wrote an extended set of notes for any would be contributors on page 10; this newsletter serves as a way of sharing our interest in canoeing and kayaking; many of you will have a lot of interesting material to contribute and I've put up a target schedule on page 11

Bah Humbug, or Season's Greeting or whatever I'm supposed to say to all readers.

As always, comments, questions, material to include in future editions:
newsletter@ppca.org.uk.





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Rapid reads

Christmas Social



Well, it wasn't stolen by the Grinch and it didn't need two weather cancellations before it happened. The Christmas Social in the George Inn on 10th December can be deemed a success.





Ivybridge Kayak Pool Session

Nigel Hingston

As another year draws to a close and the festive celebrations approach with ever more speed, I reflect on what's passed and what's to come. Top of my list, I muse on the kayak pool sessions, it is after all my third year of poolside involvement, overseeing members paddling, practicing, rescuing and rolling skills.

So, how's it gone? In a nutshell, very well if the smiles at the end of each dunking event is to be gauged by.

I am lucky to have a great team helping and supporting me at each evening. Firstly, Mark checks who's paid, is coming and if all the kayaks are usable. Secondly, the coaches who freely give their time, share years of experience and dedication ensuring members develop their skills and confidence. My personal thanks including Markl, Clive, Julian, Gavin, Adam, Helen, Alan, Allen, Andy, Jackie and Merryl.

And what of the members who attend? It's a great cross selection of our club, from, the newbies just starting their kayaking exploration journey to those who can roll proficiently on both sides and can even right their kayak with the flick of a hand! We even have Dave bringing in all manner of craft including a surf shoe and wave ski which incidentally has the stability of an Argyle forward standing on a football and causes the same merriment. We are still waiting for his inflatable pink flamingo to make an appearance. Dave's that is, not the footballer.

We attract a wide spectrum of ages, from Maddock and Kyle who with teenage enthusiasm makes every move appear so easy, I'm thankful for their parents who make the taxi trip just getting there. A special mention also goes to Helga who also looks on as a proud grandparent. And at the elder end Clive and I vie for a mention in the old boys club.

From day one my philosophy is to run the sessions based upon participants needs and expectations. So, if you have a fear of water and capsizing these nights are for you. Ask Latt and Shivi on their progress, the former was rolling after two sessions whilst the latter is now rolling two years on, both were beginners with just their introductory courses under their belts.

The sessions and organisation have evolved in a way we could have never comprehended. I appreciate members have busy lives and sometimes work and family emergencies do get in the way, consequently cancellations are part of our lives. However, when we have repeat incidents, this puts pressure and extra work on Mark who will do his best trying to fill empty spaces often at short notice, sometimes on the same day. Regrettably, block bookings are no longer allowed.

The session commences at 7:30pm and finish around 9:00pm, one and a half hours is a long time, tiring and usually after an hour a few people can be seen taking a well-earned



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relaxing swim.

The New Year see the introduction of monthly sea kayak sessions, spaces are limited since only 6 kayaks are accommodated in the pool. From previous sessions there is much interest and the benefits of practice in a warm well-lit

pool compared to the cold murky Plymouth Sound waters are obvious.

I anticipate the next three months will flash by and before we know it, Tuesday evening padding will be with us and ready to try out our recently honed skills.



It's not OCD

Clive Ashford

Are you in the habit of loading your kayak onto the roof rack placed upside down, and facing backwards? Well stop it. Here's why.

On 14 December the PPCA river paddlers were split into two groups. Pete was leading an intermediate trip on the Loop, and I was leading a beginner's trip on the Lower dart. (How discerning are you, belonging to such a brilliant club?) The Beginner's trip was going to include myself, Chris and Paul. I met Chris at Plympton and transferred his boat onto my car. It was loaded upside down and facing backwards. My mild OCD objected to this but I decided that this objection was irrational and that I should be a big boy and just get on with life. So I gave myself a good talking to and did indeed just get on with life. So, with my new found psychological freedom, we set off to the lay by adjacent to the Strawberry Fields café at Buckfast.



As arranged, we found Paul waiting there for us, no doubt eagerly anticipating a fun filled trip on the river. Don't you just love it when a plan comes together? Well, our joy was short

lived. While getting changed Paul ("*We have a problem*") Hewson calmly and, given the start of this sentence, predictably, announced that he had a problem. That problem was that the zip on his dry suit had broken. Paul set too trying to mend said zip and I tried to contact the intermediate group to see if anyone had a spare cag. You won't be surprised to learn that we both failed in our respective tasks. I did suggest to Paul that if he didn't capsize then he would be OK paddling with his broken zip. Paul didn't seem to think that this was very helpful. Instead, Paul suggested that he went home and collected his wet suit and cag and then we could proceed in a more conventional, if rather less exciting, manner. Paul lives in Newton Abbott and I can tell you that to drive from Buckfast to Newton Abbot, collect a wet suit and cag, and then to return to Buckfast takes almost exactly 30 mins. So, 30 mins later we were setting off to the start of our little watery adventure at Holne Weir.

All good? Any further twists to the tale? Well, there seems to be an awful lot of writing after this question, so you gentle and perceptive readers will correctly guess our calamity is going to continue. We were just about to lock up the car when Paul ("*We have a problem*") Hewson proved just how predictable my writing can be by announcing, once again, that he had a problem. This time he couldn't find his car keys. We looked under and around the car, we looked under the seats, and we looked in the car's nooks and crannies etc, meanwhile



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Paul emptied every pocket that he had. No key. We drove back to where Paul's car was parked, nicely locked up, and where a further search still revealed no key. Paul ("*We have a problem*") Hewson made a begging phone call to daughter Hannah to explain the problem that he had. After a five-star lesson in grovelling and creeping, Paul had arranged for the lovely Hannah to meet us at the end of our trip with the spare key to Paul's car. So, with a new plan organised, we got on the water and had a most very excellent paddle.

I idly note that no-one capsized, so with hindsight Paul would have been fine in his zipless dry suit, but in this case, I somehow

think that not even hindsight would have persuaded Paul to paddle with a broken zip. We got off the water to find (the lovely) Hannah waiting for us, together with her delightful daughter and Paul's spare car key. That's a lot of brownie points for Hannah, and in my experience, daughter's brownie points tend to be very expensive. So, I know you are thinking that our misadventures have nothing to do with loading the boat upside down and backwards, but I firmly believe that had we loaded the boat properly in the first place then Paul's zip would not have broken, and you wouldn't have had to read any of this nonsense. I will be very certain to load boats properly in the future.

Footnote

We got changed, did the shuttle and loaded the boats. (Properly this time.) Then, just to prove the importance of loading the boats the right way, we found Paul's original key. It was lurking underneath the roof rack straps. You

may scoff and point out the fact that there were three men looking for the key, you may then mutter words like "man search," but I beg to differ. I will continue to blame poor boat loading for all our troubles.

Editor's Footnote

There is just one minor footnote to add. Put yourself in the shoes of that little baby that got mentioned. You're sitting there with your Mum, in the car park at Strawberry Fields, generally behaving yourself and doing a good job eating your lunch. Then, without any warning, three men appear from the back of the car park, scrambling up from the river. One of them looks vaguely familiar, but you already got the vibe from your mum that these are in no way to be considered wise men. In fact, they are all wearing strange headgear and

bulky clothing and look very pleased with themselves. Then, horror of horrors, they start walking towards your car, pointing at you and waving. Rather than drive away, your Mum then opens her window and talks to them.

It's probably no surprise that said baby possibly had a nightmare and certainly had a bad night's sleep that night. In other words, I've already paid back approximately 3 Greenshield stamps-worth of brownie points doing a pre-school run so that mum and baby could catch up on their sleep the following morning.



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Creek Chronicle

Adam Coulson

Warm Wet Training Events

- Tuesday 11th November Pool Session
- Tuesday 25th November Pool Session

Wet Recreational Events

- Saturday 1st November A bit of wind seems to have kept members off the water so that Andy led a group of just 2 across the Hoe and up to St John on the monthly sea kayak paddle. However, they are reported to have had a most enjoyable trip.



- Saturday 1st November In the meantime, Brim led five up the Plym on the short Saturday recreational paddle paddle.
- Sunday 2nd November Clive reports that 9 paddlers ran the lower Dart surrounded

by beautiful autumn colours. There were smiles



- Saturday 8th November A still day with some left over swell so a group of twelve, led by Terry, headed out to Penlee Point. There was a little sport to be had there although the waves were not quite steep enough for surfing on. Ten headed back to Cawsand for lunch whilst two continued on to East Gear at Rame Head before we all met up at Picklecombe for the return to Mountbatten.



- Sunday 9th November Ten enthusiastic white water paddlers joined Phil on a trip down the Lower Dart including a couple of returners. The levels were conducive to playing on the features and some of us ran the Buckfastleigh Weir with greater success than previously. Definitely smiles all round.



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- Saturday 15th November Andy led a group of fifteen paddlers in a range of kayaks, who enjoyed a great paddle along the Eastern side of the Sound, heading towards Renny rocks. Looks like Paul found something to play in – great photo Joy



- Sunday 16th November Julian having graduated from White Water Leaders

school was planned to lead an alternative to the beginner's trip planned. However as everybody wanted to paddle the loop, Julian ended up doing a superb job of organising us to get safely from Newbridge to Holne Weir. The level on Austin's Bridge was just under a meter so that the river was lapping the slab as thirteen of us put in. Thirteen, was perhaps a little ominous and so it proved for one guest who capsized under Holne Bridge and thus decided that this wasn't for him today. And so we were twelve, comprising of a couple of small led groups and then the Wobblers, the Wibblers and the Players as we were allocated. Julian's job was made harder by the large numbers of other groups paddling the Loop but we found quiet time to play on the features, and indeed, let the features play with us! There were quite a few swims and so we got lots of rescue practice and Julian lots of leading experience. However I think it's fair to say that at least twelve of us had a grand Sunday morning. Thank you Julian.



- ~~Saturday 22nd November Recreational Paddle Cancelled~~
- ~~Saturday 22nd November Short Recreational Paddle Cancelled~~

There was a slight "On – Off – On" pattern prior to the planned standard and short recreational paddles today due to a weather front moving through. Indeed, both Terry and Allen went down to Mountbatten for a real time



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assessment of the conditions. However, to quote Terry “we checked the conditions locally and finding it hard to stand up on the breakwater we retired to the cafe. The met office recorded gusts of 51 mph at midday” Fair dos.

- Sunday 23rd November With yesterday's wind came a lot of rain and the gauges were such that at one point it looked unlikely that there would be a club paddle today. However, the waters dropped and Pete suggested a trip down the Walkham. The water level was great and so six of us paddled down the River Walkham and then onto the Tavy with lots of play along the way. It was established by experimentation that running the second last weir before Denham Bridge may not always be a great idea. There is a lot of manmade bric-a-brac to get caught up in, but it all turned out hunky-dory. The last weir play wave was working a treat, so we all reached the egress with smiles all round.



- Saturday 29th November The weather was better this Saturday and so Allen was able to lead a small group of four out on a short rec paddle, including a

new member looking to paddle white water. They paddled across the Hoe to Mount Edgecombe with return via Drake's Island.

- Saturday 29th November Another four joined Gavin for the standard recreational paddle and we headed over via Picklecombe to Pier Cellars. There was a playful long interval swell which made for some fun rock gardening along the southern side of Cawsand Bay to lunch. After lunch that same swell continued to entertain around the bay to Picklecombe and then we had a bit of a slog against the tide back to Mountbatten. A huge rainbow provided encouragement on the return but sadly we failed to find the gold!
- Sunday 30th November Phil led a group of seven paddlers down the Loop on this bright and sunny winter's day. It was 100% successful as seven went home again afterwards although one managed to lose his car along the way. I will spare that individual's blushes in this journal!

Dry Events

- 12th November Committee Meeting



What We're Looking for in the Newsletter

I thought it might help to set out, in a bit more detail, what we're looking for in the newsletter.

We're a club of over 100 members, with a huge range of interests and experience in canoeing and kayaking. Because of that, we'd love to hear from everyone; especially newer members. Even a few notes of introduction can be a great way to start a conversation if we later bump into each other out on the water.

What Can You Write About?

We're particularly interested in your experiences, for example:

- A recent club trip you enjoyed
- An external activity or course you took part in
- An adventurous kayaking trip, or something much more relaxed such as hiring kayak on holiday on a Mediterranean island

Essentially, if you had a good time and have a story to tell, we'd love to hear it. Nice photos are always very welcome too.

Don't Worry About the Format

If you'd like help turning your ideas into an article, just ask. I'm very happy to help. Likewise, if you have strong feelings about how your piece should appear, please let me know. If you want to know anything about the technical stuff I'm happy to ~~bore you to death~~ explain it. All articles eventually get converted into Markdown and then rendered for the newsletter, but don't worry about that: any file format I can open is absolutely fine. It's also nice if you can send photos separately, though that's not essential.

You don't even need to write a full article

A few bullet points are fine. You could even send a voicemail, and I can turn it into an article

Feedback Is Welcome Too

If you have opinions on anything you read in the newsletter, or even on the format of the newsletter itself, please get in touch. Once upon a time (before my time, apparently!) there were winter talks. Who knows maybe we should have a podcast instead of a newsletter?



Publication schedule for 2026

This is the plan for next year. I don't promise to keep to it 100%, but procrastination is a powerful thing. We'll see if this helps.

Deadline for contributions	Target publication date
13/01/2026	20/01/2026
10/02/2026	17/02/2026
10/03/2026	17/03/2026
14/04/2026	21/04/2026
12/05/2026	19/05/2026
09/06/2026	16/06/2026
14/07/2026	21/07/2026
11/08/2026	18/08/2026
08/09/2026	15/09/2026
13/10/2026	20/10/2026
10/11/2026	17/11/2026
08/12/2026	15/12/2026



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The PPCA Committee

PPCA is a friendly Club, and we'd love to hear from you! The Club is run by a committee of unpaid volunteers, most of which work full-time. Contact details are listed below. For non-urgent enquiries, please email the person you require rather than telephoning.

If you are new to paddlesport or thinking of taking it up then please contact our Intro Coordinator who can point you in the right direction. Our Intro Coordinator can also answer any questions you may have about our Club, courses on offer etc, drop them an email at intro@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Chair	Mark Perry	chair@ppca.org.uk
Vice-Chair	Anita Maidment	vchair@ppca.org.uk
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Health and Safety Officer	Damean Miller	safety@ppca.org.uk
Club President	Clive Ashford	president@ppca.org.uk

Thank you to everyone who contributed material, especially the material we just stole from Facebook.

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