



## Editorial

*Paul Hewson*

Another inch of rain and I'll be going to Tesco in Kingsteignton in a Kayak. In the meantime, I had another letter from our reader.

Dear Creaky Editor,

I have just discovered you have another reader. A real one. Not me, not a fictional construct made up from listening to too many radio comedies. Please explain why I was not consulted.

Yours, aghast,  
Mrs Trellis  
North Wales

Well, I'm pleased to say (after many requests) we have an introduction from a new member on page 2; many thanks to Bernadette for sending that in and please, please, please; if you have joined recently could you get in

touch with some words so we can welcome you. It's nice to know somebody reads the newsletter ... and in turn it's nice to be able to welcome a new member.

Following earlier congratulations from Adam Coulson (club leader) one of our recently qualified White Water leaders has written a piece explaining a little about the work that goes into gaining one of these qualifications on page 4.

Otherwise, we have an introduction to Blue Fin Tuna on page 6; a reminder about boat storage fees on page 3 and a round-up of the club activity last month on page 8.

As always, comments, questions, material to include in future editions:  
[newsletter@ppca.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@ppca.org.uk).



## Welcome New Members

Twas when walking down at Mount Batten one day  
That I spotted cards and discovered the PPCA;  
A former rower and keen to get back on the water,  
I hoped that kayaking might also appeal to my daughter.

I eagerly checked out the website to see  
What the club might have in store for her and me.  
It looked fab and the intro course seemed to be  
The obvious choice for M, if not me.

But I discovered that day, on beautiful, still water,  
That I had plenty to learn along with my daughter(!)  
Who'd kayaked before but found it really tough,  
Only to find she had Covid, poor love!

So here I am, a very happy new member,  
B(ernadette)'s my name and I joined in November  
(October actually!)  
I quickly made quite an impression  
With bare legs at an autumn sea paddle session!



Bernadette Bishop

You're a lovely, warm, friendly club  
And thank you for your welcome.  
Here's wishing you lots of safe, happy paddling  
In 2026, everyone.

See you soon on the water :)



# Up the Creek December 2025

## Rapid reads

### Boat Storage Fees

*Helga Pinn; Membership secretary*



January is that special month when we embrace another year, full of exciting paddling plans. If you store your boat in the members' shed, please remember that boat storage fees are due this month. You would not wish your beautiful boat to feel uncomfortable in the shed. Many thanks to all those who have already paid. Details can be found through the reminder email I sent at the start of the month or on our PPCA website. Thanks.



## The journey to White Water Leadership

*Julian Miles*

Where to begin? With the first trip on the Lower Dart in late 2020 when I spent more time swimming than paddling? With the bump on the head in the Walkham which gave me my first black eye since my teens (and which Ali would say resulted in a marked personality improvement!). Or did it start with growing awareness of a dependency? The yearning for the next "trip"; the cold sweat associated with a cancelled paddle; the need for ever greater technical challenges and the inexorable search for the perfectly executed play surf; the adrenaline rush of a roll in turbulent water. Or maybe there was a subtle scent of altruism; the appreciation of all the coaching and encouragement I'd received over the years within PPCA and the desire to support others. Wherever it started, it lead to a point in October 2024 where I recognized that becoming a White Water Leader was no longer a distant dream; more a challenging goal. And to quote the dean of my medical school "assessment drives performance"; the effort of learning and preparation would improve my paddling, safety and leadership. I also discovered that Jack Moore was keen to achieve his Leadership qualification so we agreed to work towards the assessment together. There was lots of knowledge, skills and techniques I needed to meet the prerequisites of Paddle UK. By this time I had already linked up with other paddlers on social media and was regularly paddling the Dart

Loop midweek. Through one of these contacts I was able to join a White Water Safety & Rescue course arranged by Paignton Canoe Club. This two day course on the Dart involved learning and practising techniques for recovering paddlers and boats from many different scenarios. Then there was a specific course for White Water Leadership training. We had one day on the Dart and a second on the Teign during which we learned the essential skills of planning a trip, leadership on the river, communication in different scenarios, anticipation and mitigation of risk and yet more rescue techniques. It was also necessary to attend a 2 day first aid course which Alan Ede arranged for a group of PPCA members in March 2025. In addition to these, I was pushing my paddling skills. Two of us had a days coaching on the Upper Dart (more swimming) and 3 of us had a trip to the National White Water Centre in Tryweryn (you've guessed . . . more swimming!). These in addition to as much paddling on local rivers as time and water levels would allow. Jack and I booked our assessment with Ian Dovey for early March 2025 . . . and waited for rain . . . and rescheduled. . . and waited for rain . . . and rescheduled again. . . and eventually by the end of April it was clear there wasn't going to be enough water for the assessment that season. After a few confidence-building paddles in October 2025 we re-booked our assessment for 7th November. The week



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beforehand, we highjacked a peer paddle to practice some of the rescue skills and then spent an evening in a pub running through the syllabus, assessment criteria and fine tuning our plan for the day. The morning of 7th November dawned, and the gauge showed we had enough water! Our four "guinea pigs" duly arrived at Holne Weir and we consolidated vehicles and met "Dovey" at Newbridge at 9am before walking almost a mile upstream to launch. Our "introductory brief" was more like a comedy double act with Jack and I alternating paragraphs.

And then we were off. We alternated the lead as we moved down river with Dovey assessing our judgement and listening to our communication with the guinea pigs. He continuously quizzed us as we recovered swimmers and their boats, safely retrieved a pinned paddler and then a pinned boat. At "Triple drop" he had us doing pop-outs and side surfing and deliberately kept pushing us until we capsized. Now rolls are funny things; for months you can have a confident, crisp technique which brings you swiftly upright. Then for no obvious reason, it all seems to

vanish and you struggle, fail and have to bail. Self confidence seems to be an important element and, for the first time in months, I had failed to roll a few days before the assessment. So it was with great relief that, having found myself upside down in turbulent aerated water, my muscle memory kicked in and I popped upright again a moment later. Jack followed suit and lead the last few sections down to Holne Weir. In turn, we each became unconscious paddlers while the other demonstrated the "hand of god" recovery. Then down the weir to the get-out and we thought it was over. But Dovey had us take out and talk through all our safety equipment and soon afterwards quietly congratulated me: I had passed! Half an hour went by as we shuttled the cars and kayaks and our guinea pigs bid their farewells. And still Jack didn't know if he'd been successful! He went off to talk to Dovey while I kept a respectful distance. As the time ticked on my heart began to sink; surely this must be a long debrief and "better luck next time" talk. But when Jack appeared from behind Dovey's van he had a big grin on his face: and PPCA had two more White Water leaders.



## Plymouth Sound Wildlife 7#

*Terry Calcott*

### Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*)



This wildlife snippet is about a rare visitor to the Sound but now a regular visitor to the waters of the southwest. Bluefin tuna used to be a regular sight in UK waters but due to overfishing the population declined and virtually disappeared. In recent years sightings have improved year on year, this may be due to climate change shifting the distribution of their food source or quotas on catch limits.

Identified by its distinctive metallic blue colouration, with a white under belly. Its body shape is torpedo like making it extremely streamlined in the water. The Bluefin tuna has a specialised blood vessel structure (counter

current exchanger) which allows it to keep its body temperature higher than the water temperature. This helps it swim quickly even in cold waters. They must also continuously swim forward with their mouths open to keep their blood oxygenated.



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Photo by Rupert Kirkwood, taken off the South Devon coast.

They are a long-lived species with a life span of around 40 years. They can grow to 4m in length and weigh up to 900 kg. Exceptionally powerful fish capable of reaching speeds of 65

kph.

I have only had one very brief encounter with a Bluefin tuna within Plymouth Sound. This was over in Cawsand Bay when one leapt out of the water just in front of us. No time to get the camera out and capture the moment.

Local southwest paddler Rupert Kirkwood has had several close encounters with feeding shoals of tuna. He manages to capture stunning photographs of the tuna. I have used several of his photographs in this article. If you are interested in seeing more of his photographs, he has an online blog called 'The Lone Kayaker' or have a look at his Facebook page by the same name.



Photo by Rupert Kirkwood



## Creek Chronicle

*Adam Coulson*

### Warm Wet Training Events

- Tuesday 19th December Pool Session

### Wet Recreational Events

- Saturday 6th December Sea Kayak Paddle cancelled due to high winds
- Saturday 6th December Short Recreational Paddle cancelled due to high winds
- Sunday 7th December White Water Paddle. It rained a lot last night so river levels were high and rising during the morning so sadly, white water trip cancelled also.



windy conditions abated meaning that Nigel's trip could progress beyond the Cattewater. We checked out the rusty man (still there) and had a look at the West Hoe hole which is not quite navigable by kayak! After a first run through Drake's Gap we crossed up the Tamar to Millbrook which was very calm, sunny and colourful. Anybody recognise the pontoon? I spoke with the chap at the Voyager Boatyard who has been restoring it. After visiting King Billy we paddled out to the Bridge before returning to inspect another hole - this one on the Drake's Island seawall. A second run through Drake's Gap led us back to MB.

- Sunday 14th December. Clive rather cryptically writes: Beginners trip, lower Dart. Three of us had a most splendid paddle, but there were logistical concerns before we got on the water.
- Sunday 14th December. Pete led the intermediate paddlers down the loop with about 0.6 on the Dunnabridge gauge. Nine of us in total completed the trip with a few rolls and a couple of swims - all part of the play experience. What fun!



- Saturday 13th December. The forecast

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- Saturday 20th December Recreational paddle cancelled again due to wind
- Sunday 21st December Lots of folks gone Christmas shopping? Julian led a group of four down the Lower Dart on a beginner's trip. A high river level revealed that intermediate paddlers can also be challenged on this section of river!



- Friday 26th December. ~~Short Boxing day~~ paddle cancelled due to the weather.
- Saturday 27th December A cold and windy but beautiful sunny day saw just a dedicated few navigating the eastern side of Plymouth Sound sheltering under the cliffs. Lunch in the sun on Bovisand Beach and we picked our way back between the rocks to MB.



- Sunday 28th December Clive, the leader, writes: 3 paddlers marked the final PPCA paddle of the year by partaking in a very pleasant little bob down the lower Dart on Sunday 28 December. Our priority was not to get too cold. We succeeded.

## Dry Events

- 10th December Committee Meeting
- 10th December Club Social



## 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](mailto:intro@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk)

|                           |                |                                                                    |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chair                     | Mark Perry     | <a href="mailto:chair@ppca.org.uk">chair@ppca.org.uk</a>           |
| Vice-Chair                | Anita Maidment | <a href="mailto:vchair@ppca.org.uk">vchair@ppca.org.uk</a>         |
| Club Leader               | Adam Coulson   | <a href="mailto:leader@ppca.org.uk">leader@ppca.org.uk</a>         |
| Assistant Club Leader     | Vacant         | <a href="mailto:acleader@ppca.org.uk">acleader@ppca.org.uk</a>     |
| Club Secretary            | Jackie Perry   | <a href="mailto:secretary@ppca.org.uk">secretary@ppca.org.uk</a>   |
| Membership Secretary      | Helga Pinn     | <a href="mailto:membership@ppca.org.uk">membership@ppca.org.uk</a> |
| Welfare Officer           | Alan Ede       | <a href="mailto:welfare@ppca.org.uk">welfare@ppca.org.uk</a>       |
| Intro Course Coordinator  | Lesley Hitchen | <a href="mailto:intro@ppca.org.uk">intro@ppca.org.uk</a>           |
| Treasurer                 | Julian Miles   | <a href="mailto:treasurer@ppca.org.uk">treasurer@ppca.org.uk</a>   |
| Equipment Officer         | Pete Anderson  | <a href="mailto:equipment@ppca.org.uk">equipment@ppca.org.uk</a>   |
| Publicity Officer         | Sarah Carlson  | <a href="mailto:publicity@ppca.org.uk">publicity@ppca.org.uk</a>   |
| Youth Development Officer | Jane Hitchings | <a href="mailto:youth@ppca.org.uk">youth@ppca.org.uk</a>           |
| Health and Safety Officer | Damean Miller  | <a href="mailto:safety@ppca.org.uk">safety@ppca.org.uk</a>         |
| Club President            | Clive Ashford  | <a href="mailto:president@ppca.org.uk">president@ppca.org.uk</a>   |

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