



Up the Creek July 2026

Editorial

Paul Hewson

This month's newsletter has more good vibrations than you can shake a paddle at. We catch up with a former club member who has swapped our local waters for the surf of California on page 2, celebrate the arrival of a brand-new boat thanks to a generous bequest on page 6, dive deep into the tide tables for those who like their harmonies to come with harmonic constituents on page 5, and round things off with our regular roundup of who's been paddling where in the Creek Chronicle on page 8. So grab your board . . . sorry, boat. . . and don't worry if you get tide up in the technical bits as there's something here for everyone, whether you're surfing the newsletter or just having fun, fun, fun until the paddling's done.

Any new paddlers who've recently climbed aboard are warmly encouraged to send a mini pen-portrait (just a couple of lines will keep things shipshape) so we can all get our bearings and not be paddling among strangers. If you're happy to send a photograph as well, that would be the bung well and truly tightened before paddling (not that I ever forget).

As always, comments, questions, material to include in future editions: newsletter@ppca.org.uk. Now that we've had a couple of new member introductions recently maybe a few more people will be encouraged to send in a couple of sentences about them.





Kayaking in California

Bruce Burton

It is now more than three years since I completed my last paddle with PPCA, after many years of great fun and companionship. My wife Susann and I moved permanently to California, where we now live. For those that remember me, I am still alive and still kayaking. I go as often as I can on a Thursday with a group from Bay Area Sea Kayakers (BASK). On the whole we are fairly fogeyish, so I fit in well. Sometimes I also paddle with another club which is based in the town where we live, Petaluma Paddlers. The arrangements with these clubs are very different to those with PPCA. BASK is a big club with many members. However, it owns no property, so we have to keep our kayaks at home or make other arrangements. There are no regular club paddles or coaches to lead paddles. Whether we go out depends on an individual club member initiating the paddle. These may be advertised on the Club website, but sometimes members are just notified by email. Each year there is an intensive skills training period for which members have to qualify and then commit to turn up for several weekend sessions. This seems to be rather comprehensive, but as far as I know doesn't lead to any specific qualifications. I haven't had the time to participate in one of these sessions. Many of our members are highly experienced and very skilled. You may have seen videos made by Neptune's Raiders rock gardening in big waves. This group is associated with BASK, but are all well above

my pay grade.

Paddles take place from many points in the Bay Area. The map below shows some, but not all of the put-in points. I live in the town of Petaluma, which is in the center of the map to the north. This means that a round trip in excess of 50 miles is not uncommon. The two areas that we paddle in most often are San Francisco Bay north of the Golden Gate bridge and Tomales Bay, a narrow inlet that is part of the San Andreas Fault.

The San Francisco Bay has a number of characteristics that are quite different from the conditions that you encounter in Plymouth Sound. The area is very much greater, between 400 and 1600 sq miles, depending on which sub-bays are taken into account. This compares with Plymouth Sound at about 25 sq miles. The Bay is also shallow for most of its area, mostly less than 30 ft, which means that the main shipping channels have to be dredged. This has a number of consequences. There is only one exit to the sea, through the Golden Gate, and the amount of water flowing through this is apparently second only to the Amazon. Consequently, there are areas where the tidal currents flow very strongly. The Golden Gate at peak flow or ebb is like the Narrows on steroids. Added to this are the hazards of frequent container ships coming through the Gate. These can throw up a considerable wash as they don't want to slow down as they have to navigate a tricky area.



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On one occasion a group of us were trying to cross the Golden Gate when one of these monsters came through. We were faced by a bow wave of about 9 feet, which was interesting to say the least. If we had been near one of the bridge supports there is a good chance that our kayaks would have been smashed.

One of the characteristics of paddling in the Bay is that very often winds get strong around midday, especially in summer. This is because the interior of California becomes hot giving rise to westerly winds that can go from a gentle breeze to a strong wind in a few minutes. Because the Bay is shallow, winds can quickly generate Bay Slop. These are steep waves, usually only 1- 2 feet in height but with breaking crests and often without a clear pattern. When the wind is going in the opposite direction to the tidal current, this can lead to the formation of large standing waves and very disturbed seas. Not a comfortable place to be in a kayak.

Tomales Bay is somewhat different. However here again a large mass of water has to pass through a rather small, shallow entrance. If you are caught in the ebb near the entrance, it would be very difficult to avoid being carried out into the ocean, where there is a barrier of large breaking waves where great white sharks are reputed to hang out waiting for one of the numerous seals that breed in the bay to be washed out. Much of Tomales Bay, however is a lovely spot to paddle with the western side a nature reserve and very lovely. We see lots of water fowl there, harbor seals, pelicans, osprey, kingfishers, river otters, leopard sharks and bat rays. Like San Francisco Bay, however, the

wind conditions can change quickly and wind can funnel along the bay making crossing back to a starting point challenging. People get caught out there from time to time and some people don't make it.

Occasionally, when the conditions are right, we go outside the Golden Gate Bridge ('Out-the Gate'). I always enjoy these trips. More skilled kayakers than I, do this more frequently and enjoy rock gardening. This is a more extreme version of rock hopping. The Pacific Rollers have a great deal of power in them. Even when it seems relatively calm, as the rollers approach the shore they suddenly grow and I have seen them send spray 50 ft up the cliffs. If we do go 'out-

the-Gate' we make sure that the tides are right, passing out through the Golden Gate either at the end of the ebb or slack tide, and returning on the flood.

We have also made gentler trips on various rivers. The Petaluma River, is our local river and rather polluted and not very interesting, The Napa River is very pleasant, a bit like a larger version of the Dart and the Russian River, which again is a lovely river with not too much current (except in Spring with run off from the mountains) and a lot of people swimming, paddling in rubber tyres and generally messing around on the water.. We have also paddled two estuaries, Estero Americano and Drakes Estero, which I have described previously.

So, there is plenty to do here, but I very much miss rock hopping in Plymouth Sound, the regular coach led PPCA trips and, of course, the company of you fine people.

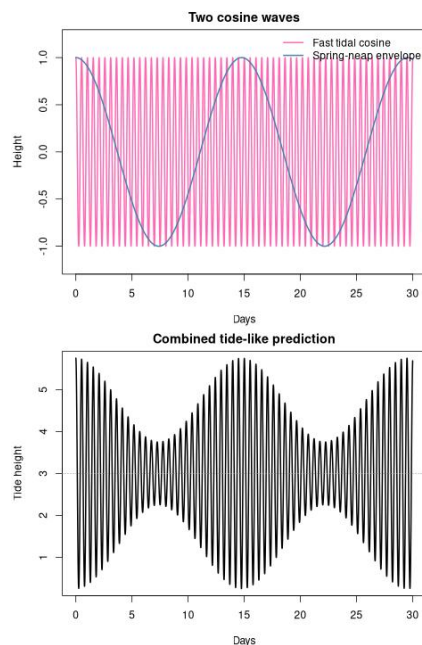




Why Tide Tables Are Free in the US but Not Here

S. Pring-Tide

Reading Bruce's article reminded me that in the US you can use free tide apps that show the tides years ahead for places like San Francisco Bay. In the UK, we hit a paywall (or have to buy a book) if we want more than next week's tides



Remembering a little school maths (sorry) needs us to drag up sines and cosines. Tide prediction uses these: a tide curve can be built by adding together dozens of regular cosine waves, each with its own timing and size. One of the main lunar ingredients is called M2. If you shift a cosine left or right, make it taller or

shorter then add it to another wave, you start to get something that looks rather like a tide record.

The sea level at any coast is pulled around mainly by the Moon and the Sun. But each bay and harbour responds differently, depending on its shape, depth and coastline. Tide experts break the pattern into a set of regular waves, each tied to the Earth-Moon-Sun system, with an adjustments for how strong and delayed it is at that place. Once that has been done, a computer can predict tides far into the future once it has the right numbers / adjustments for local strength and delay. In the United States, these tidal numbers are open public data; anyone can use them to build tide apps and long-range predictions. In the UK, the official tidal data and long-range prediction tables are licensed products from the Hydrographic Office, so book publishers, websites or app developers usually have to pay if they want to reproduce them in full.

Of course, for most of us the bigger question isn't what it costs to know the precise strength and delay of a cosine wave, it's simply whether the weather and our schedules align enough to get us to the launch point. It might be nice to have tidal harmonics and digital maps, but nothing beats the simple satisfaction of actually getting a paddle in the water.



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New Addition to the PPCA Fleet

Mark Perry (Club Chairman)

At the end of 2025 the Club were contacted by the family of Marguerite Pike advising that she had bequeathed £1000 in her Will to PPCA for the purchase of equipment. Marguerite was a keen swimmer and became President of the British Long Distance Swimming Association (BLDSA). In the past PPCA had assisted in providing safety cover during some of their swim events.

Clive Ashford (Club President) tells us a little more about Marguerite:

If you had met Maggie Pike you would remember. If memory serves, Maggie was the

chairman of the City of Plymouth Amateur Swimming Association, (CoPASA) an organisation that encouraged open water swimming activities around our beautiful city, long before anyone had coined the phrase open water swimming. One of the CoPASA major events was to organise the breakwater swim each year. The event was both small and huge at the same time. The number of swimmers was strictly limited to something around 10, but the safety organisation behind the event was enormous. Maggie was able to co-ordinate groups of water users that would, otherwise, hardly interact with each other. For instance,



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in 2002, Maggie had organised that 12 PPCA member, who's job for the event was to escort one swimmer each from the Breakwater to the Hoe. She also organised for by two escort boats, with medical support on board, the coast guard RIB, and 2 jet skies to help with the safety cover. Quite an impressive feat.

I only met Maggie once her long distance swimming days were behind her, but she was never short of a story. I seem to recall her telling me about swimming back to the Hoe from the Eddystone, during which time Maggie had to speak to her escort vessel because it was going off course!"

Well, thanks to this generous donation we are pleased to announce that we have been able to purchase a brand new kayak for the Club - a Dagger Stratos 14.5. This particular boat was

purchased as our Vice Chair, Anita, was asked if, as a newer member of PPCA, she was aware of any gaps in our fleet. Anita suggested that there were not really any intermediary kayaks to bridge the gap between the existing GP boats / Expression 11s and the full sea kayaks to help build confidence and stamina via longer trips.

The Stratos will be a fantastic addition to our Club Fleet, and many thanks to Pete Anderson (Club Equipment Officer) for arranging its purchase – which came in at just a few pence under the £1000. The kayak is seen here with Lesley Hitchen (Club Introductory Course Coordinator) about to use it during the first Sea Kayak Safety and Rescue training session – and we can report that it got the 'thumbs up' from Lesley.



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Creek Chronicle

Adam Coulson

Wet Training Events



- ~~Tuesday 2nd June:~~ Welcome to Flaming June. All events were cancelled.



- ~~Tuesday 9th June:~~ All activity was cancelled due to the weather



- Tuesday 16th June: Damean took two for training
- Thursday 18th June: A session was provided for 1st Ivybridge Scouts



- Tuesday 23rd June: Damean had four out sharpening their skills.
- Tuesday 23rd June: Adam had a few out on an impromptu rolling session.
- Thursday 25th June: A session was provided for 1st Ivybridge Scouts
- Sunday 28th June: Jane ran an Intro course



- Tuesday 30th June: The first evening of four Sea Kayak Safety and Rescue sessions and we did some boat

maneuvering, paddle storage, deep water rescues and eskimo rescues with great success. In the photo on page 6 you can see our new club boat a Dagger Stratos 14.5 about to be about through it's paces by Lesley. For me the name "Stratos" will remain associated with the legendary Lancia rally car of the mid 70s.

- Tuesday 30th June: In the meantime Clive went discovering (or was it exploring) with a newbie
- Tuesday 30th June: Jane had three from her recent Introductory course with her for some further kayak experience.

Wet Recreational Events



- ~~Tuesday 2nd June:~~ Welcome to Flaming June. All events were cancelled.
- ~~Friday 5th June:~~ The weather may have put everybody off but Pete had a good time leading himself!
- ~~Saturday 6th June:~~ All activity was cancelled due to the weather



- Tuesday 9th June: All activity was cancelled due to the weather
- Friday 12th June: Damean lead four



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paddlers

- Saturday 13th June: Pete lead 11 paddlers



- Tuesday 16th June: Andy lead six paddlers
- Friday 19th June: Brim lead three paddlers round to the West Hoe and Millbay
- Saturday 20th June: What was planned to be a routine sunny paddle in the sound became slightly more of a challenge on the way back due to the combination of fog and a fleet of Cornish Shrimpers. With the aid of compass Nigel led a group of eleven safely back to Mountbatten



- Tuesday 23rd June: Nigel led ten paddlers out on a hot sunny evening around the eastern side of The Sound
- Friday 26th June: Nigel lead seven paddlers on a gentle Friday night paddle

- Saturday 27th June: A good day around The sound visiting Penlee Point and stopping for lunch on a fairly busy Cawsand Beach (the sun was shining). We had a look at a passing German naval supply ship "Berlin" as she was tugged into the Hamoaze; a very new looking freighter leaving the Cattewater; and a very posh cruise ship "Evrima" at anchor in the sound with her "well healed" passengers being ferried in & out of Sutton Harbour; not to forget the slightly less posh Cawsand ferry! Thanks go to Andy for leading a group of 14.



- Sunday 28th June: A planned trip to Exeter Canal was cancelled



- Tuesday 30th June: Nigel led a rec paddle

Dry Events

- Wednesday 10th June: Committee Meeting



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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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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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