



CAMBRIDGE CANOE CLUB NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

<http://www.cambridgecanoeclub.org.uk>

*To get the club's diary of events and ad-hoc messages
about club activities by e-mail please send a blank
message to:*

camcanoe-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

*In case you already didn't know, canoeing is an assumed risk,
water contact sport.*

December 2005

If you received this Newsletter by post and you would be happy to view your Newsletter on the Cambridge Canoe Club website (with all the photos in glorious colour!) then please advise the Membership Secretary. Contact details are shown at the end of this Newsletter.

Chairman's Chat

My first Chairman's Chat and just in time to wish you all a very Happy Christmas!

I am fortunate to be taking over as Club Chairman at a time when we have established a steady increase in both paddler numbers and activity within the Club. No one can doubt the impact of the Wednesday evening series and the enjoyment gained from all of the trips offered by the Club. These activities are only possible with the help of an active Committee, many unnamed helpers and the paddlers who are also keen to have a go. Thank you to all who help to make the Club "work". The increasing popularity of paddling and the growth in numbers at the Club has highlighted some issues that will need attention. We are literally bursting at the seams with no room left for continued expansion. We need more space to rack our boats and kit to avoid undue wear and tear on these items. I very much hope that whilst I am Chairman we will begin to gather ideas for the creative use of space within or possibly around the clubhouse.

Finally, I started paddling and continue to paddle because I really enjoy the exercise, fresh air and the company at the Club. Above all, while I am Chairman, I hope that we can progress as a Club and still retain that enjoyment of the sport at so many levels. Once again I wish you all Season's Greetings and a Happy New Year. I hope to see many of you down at the clubhouse for the December Hare and Hounds (really an excuse for mulled wine and mince pies) and on the New Year's Day paddle.

As always, on or in the water

Terry Elsey

Christmas Party

The CCC Christmas Party already promises to be the great social event of the new year! It is such a runaway success that it already is **fully booked**, but this information is enclosed for those lucky few who are on the guest list.

This year's Christmas party will be held at Peterhouse College, Trumpington Street, on the 20th of January at 7:00 pm. The dress code (strictly enforced by bouncers wielding paddles) is black tie. The menu is:

Carrot & Ginger Soup

Corn-fed Chicken Supreme Stuffed with
Chestnuts & Stilton with port wine sauce
Creamed Carrots

Calabrese florets with basil chiffonade
Parisienne Potatoes

Pear & Cardamon Tart with
Saffron Creme Fraiche

Cheese & Biscuits

Coffee & Mints

Club Diary

Hare & Hound Races

Three races down, four to go, so you can start now and be eligible for one of our much sought after prizes, although not certain what they will be yet. I can award prizes for non racing boat paddlers, or play boats but do have to have people paddling them first.

Our next race will be on December 18th, the 25th is out for some reason, and we plan to have minced pies and mulled wine available to tempt people out. If you want to see what happens at these races and marvel at the speed and finely tuned bodies of our paddlers, yes I will be there, then come along. Bring your paddling kit just in case, you may be tempted.

Dates for 2006 have been arranged, and will not interfere with the Essex Winter series race dates if you really need to work off the excesses of Christmas.

Unfortunately, the first race is two days after the Club dinner, but I should be able to restrict myself to 3 lettuce leaves with 100 g of meat and a grape for dessert in my quest for ultimate performance.

So, the dates are

- 18th December 2005
- 22nd January 2006
- 26th February 2006
- 26th March 2006

and this leads nicely on to the **Cam Marathon** which will be run on April 2nd 2006, at which our new squad of marathon paddlers will sweep the board in all divisions.

Essex winter series dates and locations are:-

- 15th January 2006 Sudbury
- 29th January 2006 Barking
- 12th February 2006 Chelmsford
- 5th March 2006 Leaside

If you are interested in Marathon paddling, our dedicated band of paddlers are always willing to help with advice and/or training, contact Richard Stagg if interested.

See you in a racing boat

Arthur

New Year's Day Paddle

Start the New Year in the best possible way: paddling! On New Year's Day we will paddle from the clubhouse to Fen Ditton, where we will warm up with a pub lunch. We will meet at 10:00, aiming to leave at 10:30. Details will be posted to Camcanoe and the Clubhouse notice board, or contact Terry.

River Dart

The annual trip down to the River Dart is taking place on the 14th-15th Jan. 2006. The river is graded at 2-3 but can vary depending on water levels. There are many playspots and this has been a very popular trip in the past!

We will be staying in bunkhouse accommodation at the River Dart Country Park. The trip is limited to 16 places because of the accommodation and coaching cover. Contact Tim Mitchell by e-mail at mitchell-t@ukonline.co.uk for further details and to reserve a place!

Saturday Series

The immensely popular Wednesday evening series has been moved to Saturday afternoons during the winter. The next event is the paddle to Jesus Lock on Saturday 4th February. Paddle through the backs, into the town, and as far as Jesus Lock. At Jesus Lock we will take a break, grab an ice cream and have a gas! For those more mad in the group, take a helmet, wear a spray deck, and we'll seal launch off the side of the lock! Open to all; meet at the clubhouse at 12:00.

Canoeing Activity in the County

The County Canoeing organisation of the BCU, Cambridgeshire Canoeing Association held its Annual Consultative Meeting on 7 November at CCC Club House. It was not well attended by CCC members or those from further afield. The present officers; Chairman Arthur Davis, Treasurer Ron Payne and Secretary May Block agreed to stand for a further year. The programme for 2006 was discussed in principle: hire of Cardington (6 May, date tbc) a river tour (Saturday 2 June) and running the Huntingdon Great Ouse canoe marathon (24 September). The Reed Trophy awarded to a promising youngster was not awarded due to a lack of nominations. The Cambridgeshire Marathon Shield awarded to the highest placed paddler in the two marathons at Cambridge and Huntingdon (awarded on a points system) goes to John Mallet. Congratulations John.

*May Block
Secretary*

Cambridgeshire Canoeing Association

Changes in Canoeing over the next five years

The regional arm of the BCU the English Regional Development Teams – East met for their annual consultative meeting at the University Athletics Ground, Cambridge on 14 November. After the usual business the meeting was addressed by Richard Ward, English Coaching Development Officer on *Canoe England Development Plan 2005 - 09*.

The first area of the plan covers regional development including club development and links with outdoor and education centres. It recognises the contribution of the sport to health and the development progression delivered by the long term paddler development module in which there is progression from participation to competition. For us as Cambridge Canoe Club it also includes linking with community sport partnerships especially for young people.

Coaching will change. The BCU will deliver quality coaching by introducing the UK Coaching Certificate by December 2006 which will be implemented through a modular coaching scheme and initiation of the long term paddler development model by April 2007.

Their World Class Competition programme is measured in terms of medals at the Olympics, World and European championships. Though the target is Olympic medals there is also to be the appointment of an Officer to support non-Olympic disciplines.

There is a clear BCU policy on access to water and facilities and the development of canoe trails.

The BCU will provide an informative and beneficial service for its members which is easy to access using traditional and electronic methods.

Last but by no means least, is the management of an effective and equitable governing body, which will enable the BCU to attain level 2 standard of a sport governing body between 2005 and 2009. This will include approved standards for protection of children and the Equity standard to intermediate level. The attainment of 'Investors in People' and 'Quest' will be commensurate with these objectives, while undertaking staff satisfaction surveys.

This is the BCU integrated development plan. What it means to all of us as members of the BCU is that the BCU is moving from an autonomous body to part of an integrated National Coaching Scheme with many courses being delivered as generic courses in common with other sports. Much of this will not be apparent to members, but the titles of coaching awards and some requirements and standards will inevitably change. And I am not sure that the transition for present-day coaches to the new scheme is full developed yet. Time will show us the way.

May Block

Minute Secretary

English Regional Development Teams – East

Slenningford Mill Trip

October 1-2

6 o'clock Saturday morning came as something of a revelation. Not only do they actually HAVE a 6 o'clock in the morning on a Saturday, but a full four hours before my alarm should have gone off, I had managed to get to the canoe club and load sundry items of kit into the back of Ross Miller's car.

The journey North to Slenningford Mill (near Ripon in North Yorkshire) was uneventful, if somewhat longer than a car full of people desperate to get on the water on this, the first day of the River Ure "open season", would have wanted.

Having found our way to the ideally located campsite, we met the other 20 or so canoe club members to pitch our tents in the area reserved for caravans. The comments from the "veterans" who had visited in previous years of "oooh I've never seen it with that much water flowing through it" did little to ease the worries of us beginners.

Determined (if apprehensive) we kitted up, and Mike Price, Terry Elsey and Ross (and later Tara) looked after the beginners at the bottom end of the rapid section adjacent to the campsite. While Tim Mitchell took the rest of the group to go and play on a sizeable wave toward the middle of the 100 m of rapids.

Boz clearly fell out with the other members of this group, as he decided to leave his boat mid-river, and take up semi-permanent residence on the far bank. Having rescued his boat and paddle, Simon negotiated with Boz to come and join the rest of the group. The bruise on Boz's knee when he did make it over the river showed that this had perhaps hadn't been friendly persuasion (though Boz claimed he banged his knee on a rock in the river).

Not long after, Claire decided to test the efficiency of her buoyancy aid for the complete length of the rapids. After all the excitement, the majority of us decided it was lunch time.



After a quick bite to eat, Terry took a few of us up to surf some of the smaller waves at the top of the rapid section, and I think Tara stayed at the bottom with a few others. Tim and co. remained on the larger wave in the middle of the run. This cumulated in us all meeting at the bottom of the run. Janet was caught out by one of the nasty boulders

on the river, but successfully cushioned her landing with her face. Melinda, not content with playing "follow my leader" down the rapids, made her own way down the right handside of the mid river island. Initially backwards and then a little bit sideways, finally meeting the rest of us in the bottom eddy looking a little perplexed.



That evening saw Andy dash off to the nearby shops for BBQ supplies and a pleasant time was had by all getting a little tipsy and talking kayaks, roofbars and generally anything water related. Rumour has it some intrepid adventurers headed off to the pub, but I was fast asleep by that point (well, it was nearly 8 pm afterall).

Sunday dawned early and bright, and the river had dropped noticeably by at least 20 cm from 24 hours previously. A shuttle run was organised to take the majority of the group upstream to run about a 4-mile section of the river, culminating in the campsite section that we had spent all of Saturday on. Some of the better paddlers headed even further upstream to take in the Hack Falls. Though some of us were put off this option by the ½ mile carry-in from the carpark to the river!

Although it seemed like most of Yorkshire was trying to get on the Ure, things became a bit more relaxed when everyone was actually on the river. Terry led one small group down the river, with Tara taking the second group a minute or so behind. Although a bit bump and grind in places, with the odd nice wave train, the sun shining and a kingfisher out catching lunch, I could think of no better way to spend my Sunday morning.



An interesting portage around Tanfield Weir saw us climbing through trees and down banks, but once

downstream, it was clear why the weir and its infamous stopper, had been on '999' in the past.

A final blast (or swim, depending) through the campsite section and it was time to pack up the kit and make the long haul home, getting to the clubhouse a mere 38 hours after we had left. Its amazing what you can fit in a weekend when you really want to!

A great weekend was had by all and my name will certainly be near the top of the list next time the club heads up to Slenningford. Big thanks go to Tim for organising it all, Tara and Terry for looking after us beginners, Andy for his run to the shops, all the shuttle running and photography, and all the drivers for, erm, driving.

Andrew Twigg

Thanks very much for the introduction to white-water trip, it was really good fun. I'd like to thank everyone who made me feel welcome and look forward to the next trip. I really enjoyed the entire trip (even the bit where I capsized) and couldn't find any ways to fault it to my knowledge.

Tim (now known as Bob)

Westminster Paddle for Access – 9 November 2005

The piers of Putney Bridge were mirrored in the calm water, glistening in the sunshine. We could not believe our luck. For the past few days the wind had been gusty and strong, but here we were on the tidal River Thames with about 60 other canoes and kayaks all heading downstream to Westminster to deliver the BCU Manifesto for Access to Inland Waters in England and Wales to Members of Parliament.

The London Port Authority (LPA) was concerned about our welfare and security and so had imposed all sorts of restrictions on this mass paddle. We were to start in three groups initially and then all join up by Vauxhall Bridge and pass Lambeth Palace and the Houses of Parliament as a single group, avoiding the anti-terrorist exclusion zones. Our destination was Festival Pier downstream of the London Eye on the South Bank. There were a large number of play boaters who went off as the first (slower) group, followed by a group of open boats (including Dave and Renee Savage from Cambridge C C), with sea kayaks and racing boats coming in the final group. We were the



Access paddlers approaching Festival Pier on the South Bank of the River Thames, 9 November 2005.



Westminster group on the beach at Festival Pier.

only racing K2 (the Club's grey boat as being the most stable double that was not a tourer) and there was one racing K1. Our troubles started when we caught up with the play boaters too soon. Like all racing boats stability comes with forward speed and here we were having to stop paddling lying in the middle of the R. Thames waiting for the slower play boaters to draw away from us. So we sat and bobbed up and down, sideways and backwards though fortunately not upside-down as we feared. We had several moments of panic. One was as we approached a catamaran ferry at its mooring and were speculating as to whether we could actually paddle through its middle – when we noticed it had begun to move without warning. A rapid burst of speed (flight rather than fight) got us out of its path very quickly! Another concern was these large ferry boats turning in the river and sending standing waves across it. We thought we were out of trouble hiding behind a river pier only to be picked up by the wave coming from the rear and surfing us forward, our nose diving into the water up to the front cockpit rim! As the paddle progressed we learnt to keep a wary eye on our safety boat kindly provided by St John's Ambulance Brigade. Alas they had no concept of the fear that they put into our hearts as they roared past our group of paddlers sending out a considerable wave that at our slow pace produced an uncomfortably bumpy ride.



A brave MP (Peter Bottomley) takes to the water!

Some notes from the Outer Hebrides Sea Kayak Symposium North Uist, August 2005.

‘Where the land is all sea,
and the sea is all islands’

Anon.

For some time I’ve wanted to try sea kayaking, so last August I found myself flying up to Benbecula in the Outer Hebrides. From there I got a lift along single track roads and sea-washed causeways to Loch Maddy, the principal town of North Uist and the home of the Uist Outdoor Centre. This was to be my base for the next week as I attended the annual ‘Outer Hebrides Sea Kayak Symposium’, for me a week long introduction to the world of sea kayaking.

Collected here are some photos from the week, with a few explanatory notes.



Loch Maddy harbour

The UOC is like a small youth hostel and has bunkrooms for guests, along with kitchens, a dining/sitting area and most importantly a bar. Sensible people made full use of these facilities – never having been thought of as sensible I opted to camp next to the centre in a picturesque yet slightly marshy field.

The first couple of days were spent trying different sea kayaks and getting a feel for paddling on the sea. Sea kayaks are really nice boats to paddle – they combine the speed (almost) of a marathon boat with the ‘water worthiness’ of a river boat and are remarkably comfortable. On the downside they have the turning circle of a super-tanker and you can’t stern squirt them, no matter how hard you try. They’re also frighteningly expensive.

After a couple of days paddling the sheltered local waters I felt ready to try a longer trip, from the nearby island of Berneray back to Lochmaddy. This was quite an

It was about 6 miles downstream to Festival Pier and we paddled on the ebb tide, which had exposed a good stretch of shingle upon which we landed (unfortunately by then – around 12.30 pm – it was in shadow). Undeterred, the Access banner was unfurled, we munched our sarnies and the dozen or so MPs who had braved crossing the footbridge from the Palace of Westminster mingled and talked with paddlers on the beach. A few brave MPs opted to go for an open boat paddle (with guide) up to Westminster Bridge and back. The obligatory photocalls were made and several paddlers changed and went into the House of Commons to talk with the 40 MPs who had turned up to hear about the Access Manifesto presented by the BCU. This apparently was a good response from busy politicians considering the national security debate at the time!

Meantime, we paddled back upstream on the incoming tide to Putney – hot drinks, change and chat at Barne Elms Sports Centre and reunited with Dave & Renee Savage and started the slow haul back to Cambridge via the North Circular, A1M, etc.

A request for an Early Day Motion (EDM) has been made in the Commons and MPs are being lobbied to sign up to it. The motion is given below in case you are interested in requesting your MP to sign up for it:

‘That this House urges the Government to extend legislation on access to the countryside to allow canoeists and users of other non-powered craft the same access rights as those provided for walkers; acknowledges that the most successful Olympic canoeing nation, Germany, requires land owners to tolerate the use of non-powered craft on their waterways; and appreciates that with increased access to waterways, there will be greater participation in canoeing leading both to obvious health benefits for the nation and to increased chances of future Olympic success.’

A great day out, which hopefully will have raised the profile of canoeing and access to water with onlookers and politicians. Would we do it again? Definitely yes – but in a different boat!

May & Bill Block



The Access Manifesto delivered to MPs on 9 November 2005.



Camping by the loch.



Sea Kayaks – composite P&H boats in the foreground and a Feathercraft folding boat in the background.

experience as the wind picked up during the trip, which made the sea quite lively and (unknown to me) the skeg, which keeps you straight in a following sea, had jammed up on my boat. This made for an interesting open-water crossing where every right hand stroke was a sweep stroke in an attempt to make the intended landfall.



Preparing to leave from Bernerey, North Uist in the background.

On Tuesday evening the wind that had troubled us earlier on our trip picked up to a Force 10 storm. Trying to sleep in a tent in this was tricky, but quite exciting as well. Each gust would squash my tent to half its height, and the poles now have a definite bend in them, but it survived. Others were less lucky....



The inhabitants described it as ‘like being shrink-wrapped’.

The stormy weather put a damper on the plans for long trips over the next few days, so instead we stayed in the relatively sheltered sea loch by the centre learning useful skills and practising rescue drills. Duncan Winning, an expert on traditional Greenland kayaks, had brought some homemade Greenland paddles. These long thin wooden paddles were surprisingly good to paddle with and their buoyancy made rolling easy.



A ‘standard Greenland roll’ using a Greenland paddle.

The coaches were all keen to stress the importance of safety at sea – unlike river paddling there is no bank nearby and even small problems can become serious very quickly when you’re five miles offshore. To give us some experience of what happens when things go wrong, the Coastguard paid a visit with the local rescue helicopter. First we rafted up in Lochmaddy harbour and got blown

about by the downwash from the helicopter and then one of the people in our raft got winched up from her boat. We finished off on dry land by helping the Coastguard dispose of a case of out-of-date flares – November 5th came early for us.



Trying to stay upright under a 100mph wind.



Why you shouldn't look at the flare you've just set off!

On the final day of the symposium the wind had dropped enough that we made another tour, albeit sticking fairly close to land all the way. Although the wind was down to a Force 6, the rain was coming in horizontally. Good Hebridean weather!



Our last day's paddle – very bracing.

Andrew Cleland

The Tyne Tour

5th & 6th November 2005

Until a few weeks ago if you'd mentioned the River Tyne to me, my thoughts would be of strange bridges, Newcastle Brown Ale and, of course, a big, foggy river. Canoeing would be strangely absent. However every big river must start its life as a little river, and little rivers often do mean good canoeing - the Tyne is no exception.

A quick glance at a map shows the Tyne starting out as two rivers in the Northumberland hills, with the North Tyne being fed from the Kielder Water reservoir and the South Tyne rising on Bellbeaver Rigg. The two rivers work their way down through the hills to join just outside the town of Hexham, where the local canoe club bases its annual white-water festival – the legendary 'Tyne Tour'.

It was with this in mind that eight of Cambridge Canoe Club's finest headed up the A1, direction 'The North', one Friday in early November. The little village of Barrasford, a few miles upstream of Hexham, was our destination. Thanks to our social secretary's extensive network of contacts, we were doing the TT in style – no cold and damp tents on Tyne Green for us; we were staying in the village hall, guests of Warrington Canoe Club.

Friday evening was spent by most of the group checking out the watering holes of Hexham, whilst Mark Rison & I, being late arrivals visited the local in Barrasford. This was a fine pub, once the locals had recovered their powers of speech, which they'd strangely lost as we walked through the door. Wary of the next day's paddling (and personally keen not to repeat my Tryweryn experience) we limited ourselves to a couple of pints and then returned to the hall just in time to meet the others returning from Hexham.

Saturday we awoke to a bright autumn morning and the smells of cooking breakfast, again courtesy of the Warrington Club, who'd brought half of Asda with them. We quickly scoffed breakfast; some of the brave even tried Tara's 'microwave special scrambled eggs', which were apparently quite good, contrary to appearance.

Next came the inevitable faff of arranging shuttles to get us all back to Barrasford from the day's planned take-out at Hexham. Luckily Stuart from the Warrington Club was keen to get on to the water and drove everything forward in his own, inimitable, way. Even so, it was almost eleven by the time we all meet up just outside Barrasford to paddle the North Tyne to Hexham, taking in the infamous Warden Gorge.

We hadn't paddled 50m from the put-in when we were presented with some river wide rapids. A quick inspection showed river right to be the easy route, with an interesting, short but rocky rapid river left. Obviously we all went river left. The final wave caught Tim Massingham but he put in a swift roll to bring himself back upright and out of trouble. Only after we were all safely through did the word come around that we'd started the day with a Grade 3 feature – a first for some of us. Feeling suitably warmed-up and full of (in my case, false) confidence we continued down the river. The Kielder

Water dam was releasing water at about 25cumecs (cubic metres per second), so even the flat stretches of the river were no chore as we made our way through the beautiful Northumbrian countryside.

Shortly we came upon the old stone bridge at Chollerford, behind which lurked a sloping weir. Some of us took a route down through the fish ladder, which was surprisingly retentive; others slide down the face of the weir. We all got through with no swims, so confidence remained high.



Approaching the bridge at Chollerford, with the weir just beyond.

A wire stretched high across the river gave some the opportunity for the ritual of ‘paddle throwing’ – trying to get your paddle to pass over the wire whilst you passed under. Tim Ward took the opportunity to demonstrate why capsizing whilst trying to catch your paddle is a bad thing, as you’re then consigned to hand rolling to get upright again – no easy thing in a slab-sided play-boat. A paddler of lesser calibre (i.e. me) would have swum for sure, luckily Tim held on for a rescue. Still, no swims for us.

Shortly after we passed Hadrian’s Wall and then found a spot near an old mill to have a rest and eat the packed lunches we’d made earlier. During our lunch stop a couple of other groups of paddlers passed us by, mainly kayakers, but also an open ‘Canadian’ and a couple of C1’s.

Suitably rested and refreshed, we put back on to the river. Shortly after launching we came upon a nice stretch of Grade 2 water, with a big bouncy wave train, which was a lot of fun. Again, no swims.

By this stage confidence was positively overflowing as we approached the infamous Warden Gorge. This Grade 3 feature, where the river narrows through a low gorge, is described in the UK Rivers Guidebook as ‘*a series of waves, rocks and holes which will terrify novices and entertain play-boaters indefinitely*’. It is notorious in the Tyne Tour, mainly for the number of under-prepared paddlers the University clubs traditionally send through for swimming lessons. With this in mind there’s a small army of ‘safety’ people on the bank at the end of the gorge, all eagerly waiting to test their skills with a throw-line.

After a quick briefing from Tim Mitchell on which line to take and what to do if things went wrong, we set off to enter the gorge, one after another. Being the ‘most likely to swim’ I followed close behind Tim, hoping to stay upright by following his line. Sadly the gorge had other ideas and I was slowly but inexorably forced river right as we made our way down the gorge. The final wave came into sight, by far the largest of the set. My little boat tried bravely to climb the face of the wave, but sadly it wasn’t to be and after a futile attempt at a low brace I was flipped over, to inspect the brown waters and grey rocks of the Tyne. Rather hastily I decided to abandon ship and soon found myself floating down the river, boat in one hand, paddle in the other. The army of ‘safety’ sprung into action and I was swiftly thrown a well-aimed line, instructed to leave my boat and steered into the side. Safely on terra firma, I made my way down the riverbank to where Simon Thornton had managed to retrieve my boat. The gorge had claimed another victim and our group had its first swimmer – confidence was suitably restored to more normal levels.

The remainder of the trip to Hexham was uneventful, as we continued through the countryside and into the town. We took out on Tyne Green amidst hundreds of tents, like a mini Glastonbury Festival. A short walk to our cars and we loaded the boats and changed into dry clothes. As it was only mid-afternoon we strolled back over the Tyne Bridge, taking a moment to inspect the fearsome Hexham weir, and visited the trade stands that adjoined tent city to spend some money. Luckily for our bank accounts the skies darkened and we made a hasty return to the cars and then back to Barrasford.

Saturday evening saw most of us return to Hexham for a well-earned meal at the local Wetherspoons’ pub and a little light refreshment. Some people even made it out of the pub long enough to watch the town fireworks display; others of us weren’t to be distracted from the serious business of ‘socialising’. Later on we made our way to a ceilidh that was being run by the Tyne Tour in the local sports hall. By this stage the day’s efforts had caught up with most of us, and mindful of another day on the water on Sunday, we showed a remarkable degree of sobriety by opting for coffee or hot chocolate! All that remained was for our group to win most of the raffle prizes (not bad going considering there were around 500 people present) before we headed back to Barrasford for the night. By this time it had started to rain, hard.

Next morning and it was still raining, hard. Our plans for the day involved driving across country to Low Force, a waterfall run on the River Tees. First it was all hands to the deck to restore the village hall to its former state, pre-us. That done we loaded the cars and headed for Hexham, where we were due to meet up with Teeside University Canoe Club, who were joining us for the day.

A beautiful drive across bleak moorland and we arrived at our rendezvous at Gibson’s Cave. At this point it was obvious that the nights rain had significantly raised water levels – a little beck, which normally struggles to cover its streambed, had a good flow on it.



Normal Flow



Sunday's Flow

After a bit of debate, and guided by the Teeside paddler's local knowledge it was decided that Low Force might be a bit beyond many of us in these conditions, so instead we got back into the cars and made our way down river to a section of the Tees below Barnard Castle.

Here the trip starts with Abbey Rapids, a section of Grade 3, which ends with a big wave. There's a well-positioned bridge over the Tees just downstream from the rapids that makes inspection easy. The only downside to the bridge is that it's about 20m high, so everything looks quite small from the bridge. Abbey Rapids certainly didn't look too tricky with just some river wide features, but nothing particularly to worry about.

We made our way a few hundred metres upstream to the get-in and then paddled down to the rapids. What had seemed a benign stretch of white-water from up high took on a very different personality at river level. Coming over a blind lip to the last hole I found myself staring at a huge wall of water. Again an attempt was made to paddle up the face of the wave, but again the water got the better of me and I made another inspection of the river bed – the water was as brown as the Tyne, but the rocks blacker, and bigger. Another swim ensued, and another rope



The Tees at Abbey Rapids

rescue. This time though I was joined in the water by Tim Massingham, so I didn't feel quite so bad. Mark Rison also got toppled by the wave, but managed to roll up in the calmer water beyond it.

As we were collecting our kit and ourselves post swim, a University group attempted a massed descent of the rapid, with predictable results. Four swimmers in the water at once, boats and paddles everywhere. Luckily for them our safety people were still in place, otherwise they'd have found themselves swimming a rather longer section of the Tees, which being in a gorge would have made life quite interesting for them.

We then continued down the river, another nice paddle with some sections of Grade 2/3 water (and another, ignominious, swim for your writer). We arrived at the get-out by Whorlton Lido, where an old wooden-decked suspension bridge crosses the river. Just beyond that there is a river-wide natural ledge, which forms some good play waves, but also has a reputation for catching the unwary or unskilled. Being part of the latter group I decided against it and instead got changed whilst our better paddlers inspected the feature.



From the get-out we loaded up the cars and headed our separate ways, Warrington CC back to Cheshire, Teeside back to University and CCC back down the A1, direction 'The South'.

All in all, a great weekend, thoroughly recommended and already pencilled into my diary for next year. Big thanks to Tim Mitchell for organising the trip, Tara Downton for ensuring we had warm, dry nights sleep, Warrington CC for their hospitality, Hexham CC for organising the Tyne Tour and everyone who fished me and my kit from the river.

Andrew Cleland.

Soča River Paddling (and more), Slovenia 2005

In mid August, we (Boz, Mary, Gabriel and Alice Kempski) flew via easyJet from Stansted airport to Ljubljana in Slovenia for a ten day holiday in the Julian Alps. This was going to be an activity holiday and we were all looking forward to trying the various sports on offer. We were able to take paddles and most of our kit packed in a Nookie paddle bag. Although this was classified as oversized luggage, there was no handling or other charge at either end. We picked up a hire car and drove to our pre-booked apartment in Bovec. The first day was spent exploring the small picturesque town and getting to know what the numerous activity centres had to offer and their prices. Bovec was “kayak city” with virtually every vehicle equipped with uprights or J-bars carrying boats or rafts. Alice and Gabriel booked in for a canyoning trip and Gabriel and I booked in for a guided river run on a stretch of the Soča River graded 2/3. We negotiated a good price that included boat and equipment hire (just helmets and buoyancy aids in our case), guide and transport. There is no problem with river access and paddlers simply pay a daily fee of 400SITS (approx £1.20) for a river ticket as a contribution to conservation and river maintenance. As can be seen from the map, the stretches are well marked in terms of grade – these are also shown on bridges and elsewhere prior to the change of grade. The following day, Alice and Gabriel went canyoning which included sliding down waterfalls and jumping from great heights into pools of water led by a crazy guide by the name of Raouly. They really enjoyed the activity. The day after, we set off with our guide Diego and one other paddler to the chosen get on place a little South of Bovec.



A shot of the beginning of the Savica River. I would probably have portaged this section!

The River Soča is one of the most beautiful and interesting rivers to paddle. The water is so clean that you can drink it! There are loads of features including long and fast rapids, drops, surf waves, rocks to steer round (or not!) and sufficient eddies to stop off at and enjoy the magnificent scenery. One of the most memorable images is the emerald green colour of the water as it flows through gorges and ravines through the little villages sprinkled along the Soča.

After a thoroughly enjoyable paddle, we returned to Bovec and booked in for mountain biking and hydro-speeding! Hydro-speeding involves running a stretch of river using a streamlined float with grab handles and largely letting the current take you down supported only from your chest upwards. I found this very exhausting as you had to do some steering by performing a dolphin stroke with your legs wearing a thick neoprene suit and flippers. Alice quickly mastered rolling her float (it even took Gabriel some three attempts before he did it).

It seems to be possible to run the Soča river around Bovec even when the water level is relatively low, as was the case when we first arrived. However, half way through the holiday, we had two days of fairly heavy rain. Only paddlers would be delighted to have rain on holiday! This



Gabriel & Alice getting on the emerald green waters of the Soča



Map showing the different grades along the Soča



The Soča north of Bovec showing one of the ravines with Gabriel perched on the rock on the right.

made a considerable difference to the water level producing some brilliant rapids for the second run that we did – Gabriel and myself in kayaks, Alice and Mary in a 3 man raft. On one of the two rainy days we took a trip to lake Bohinj and the Savica waterfall which is the source of Slovenia's longest and mightiest river. Here, we witnessed what must have been a grade 5/6 section. We did not see any paddlers on that stretch.

Bovec, in Slovenia certainly offers something for the whole family: mountain walks and biking, rafting, canyoning, hydro-speeding and, of course, kayaking. The cost of living is cheap, with a restaurant meal for 4 including beer and wine costing around £20. Although we stayed in a self catering apartment, there was a good campsite just outside Bovec where many paddlers were staying. At this moment in time, Slovenia is still relatively "untouristy". Having now experienced paddling one of the most beautiful rivers in Europe, I can thoroughly recommend Slovenia to anyone who is keen to paddle a river that accommodates the full range of paddling skills. Could this be a possible Club trip?

Boz Kempski

The man with the strange bald patch

Some of you may have seen the strange bald patch on the back of my head this summer and wondered what it was all about — but been too polite to ask! Well, it's a long story, with a kayaking twist; read all about it at: www.avmsupport.org.uk/experiencesform.php?experienceid=53

Mark Rison

Pool sessions

Pool sessions will continue next year, at the same time and place: Abbey Pool on Sundays from 6:30 – 7:30 pm. Unfortunately our pool rental costs have risen, so adults will now be charged £4, juniors are still £3. In addition to the kayaks, we now have a closed-cockpit canoe available for you to try. However, ask a coach before using the spraydeck or strapping yourself into it!

Updates by e-mail

The CamCanoe e-mail list is used by Cambridge Canoe Club to distribute updates to the club's diary of events and ad-hoc messages relating to club events. This includes paddling opportunities that come up at short notice and last minute changes to normal club arrangements.

If you have urgent information for club members, e-mail any committee member who can post the information for you. Make sure to include your email address in the message if you want replies. Non-urgent information can also be sent to the newsletter editor for publication in the newsletter.

If you are not yet a member of CamCanoe, you can subscribe at any time by sending a blank email to:

camcanoe-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

You can unsubscribe at any time by sending an e-mail to: camcanoe-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

Newsletter

The newsletter relies on contributions from members for its content. The committee members get a regular nagging and usually come up with something but don't forget that you can have an input.

Have you been on any outings recently that others might like to hear about? Is there anything that you would like to know about? I can also include pictures – just e-mail me a jpeg image and it could appear.

Your New Committee

Honorary President	Bill Block
Chairman	Terry Elsey
Secretary	Boz Kempski
Treasurer	Russell McDonald
Membership	Andrew Cleland
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Quartermaster	Sam Browning
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Competition	Richard Stagg
Coaching	Richard Smith
Touring	Tim Mitchell
Members without portfolio	Arthur Davis
	Mike Price
Webmaster/Newsletter Editor	Povl Abrahamsen
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Duties

Please keep an eye on the duty list! Make a note in your diary of when your duty is. Make sure you get there on the day; if you don't turn up for your duty you are letting other members down.

The Duty Rota for pool and clubhouse can be seen on the Cambridge Canoe Club website:

<http://www.cambridgecanoeclub.org.uk>

