

Totnes Canoe Club



Newsletter May 2012

The new summer season is now well underway and we extend a big welcome to all our new members, as well as welcoming back existing members. The end of the usual whitewater season was as dry as a bone and then April has been the wettest on record, providing some epic paddling conditions. Sadly, this exceptional weather resulted in the first two Monday night sessions being cancelled – safety is the absolute imperative – and gave us a lively second Tuesday session.

Taster Session & Joining for the New Season

This year's taster session exceeded all expectations with over 50 people coming to have a go on the water. Thanks to Paul & Julie, as well as all the other coaches and helpers, for looking after everyone and getting many to sign up for the courses. We are now pretty much full for beginners courses for the whole of the summer. A sign of the continued growth in interest in Kayaking and Canoeing.

There are many different disciplines within the sport, from paddling flat water lakes, rivers and canals, through to whitewater of varying grades of difficulty; from sea expeditions to surfing; from fishing to racing. Ask your coaches if you are interested in trying something out.

Pool Session

Free to members, the next one is at the end of the month on Saturday, 26 May – 5.00 til 6.00 for beginners; 6.00 – 7.00 for more experienced. At Totnes Pavillion Pool as usual. Come along and get wet in the warm, and practice those support strokes and maybe even learn to roll.

Exe Trip

You will have seen an email from Chas about this trip next Sunday 13th (if you didn't then please let your Editor know, email: secretary@totnescanoeclub.org.uk) Its the perfect trip for beginners with a gentle bimble down the river then back up the canal. We can help you



Artists impression of the Olympic White Water Course at Lee Valley

get there and back, and also ensure kit is supplied and transported too if necessary. So there really is no excuse is there!

Please contact Chas if you plan to join the trip so we can co-ordinate the logistics: chas@billing123.plus.com

As you will see from your Club Calendar there is a trip each month on one of the local estuaries. Make a note in your diaries and look out for further emails.

Exe Canoe Trail – see www.canoe-england.org.uk/media/pdf/Exeter%20Canoe%20Loops.pdf

INTRODUCTION

The Canoe Loops are a series of self-guided circular canoeing/kayaking trails that link the River Exe and Exeter Ship Canal between Exeter Quay and the Exe Estuary. There are four loops which can be paddled from different access points and in different combinations. Head down the river and back up the canal and you are ready for longer trips. It takes most people 2-3 hours to paddle each loop and the complete circuit from Exeter Quay to Turf Lock and back in 17hrs, which can take a full day.

To cross between the river and canal and avoid weirs and locks, it is necessary to carry your canoe(s) (or pull on trolleys). See map for routes and locations of numbered access points (look out for way marker posts with a canoe symbol). Read the 'Map a Safe Trip' and 'Code of Conduct' sections of the leaflet before canoeing the loops.

WHAT TO SEE

The route passes many scenic areas and sites of interest. These include the historic Exeter Quay and Ship Canal, Riverside Valley Park, Spottish Quay (a nature reserve) and the Exe Estuary. The estuary is designated as a Special Protection Area, due to its international importance for wildlife. You may see kingfishers, greys, sandpipers, cormorants, avocets (especially, wails and others are occasionally seen). There are several pubs along the route where you can stop for refreshment.

In the middle ages, Exeter was an important centre for the wool trade. Sailing ships came up the River Exe to load/unload goods at the Quay. During the 13th century disputes with the rival port of Tipton led to a weir being built to divert trade to Tipton. Exeter Ship Canal was consequently built in 1556 to enable ships to reach Exeter once more. Large sailing ships and barges were towed along the towpaths using horses. In 1877 the canal was extended to Turf. Many original features are still visible today but current use is mostly for recreation and conservation.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- 1 Park vehicles in car parks highlighted, not where they may cause an obstruction.
- 2 Minimise contact with riverbed, aquatic plants and bank-side, particularly in the shallows.
- 3 Wildlife should be given a wide berth and passed quietly. Avoid disturbing wading birds, nesting birds, the water's edge and breeding birds. Keep to the main river channel – avoid entering the flooded nature reserve.
- 4 Only use recognised public access points and landing places. Do not trespass on private facilities or moor canoes where they may obstruct boats.
- 5 Keep well away from anglers – pass quietly by the opposite bank avoiding their line and tackle.
- 6 Avoid lingering in river pools or below fish passes on weirs (where migratory fish rest).
- 7 Give way to and do not cross in front of oncoming craft (boats and rowers may have difficulty seeing you).

Contacts

Environment Agency www.environment-agency.gov.uk 01392 34204
 Exeter City Council River & Canal Office 01392 21026
 Exe Estuary Partnership www.exeter.org
 Home Boat Owner Exeter Canoe Centre www.homeboat.co.uk 01392 43468
 Canoe England www.canoeengland.org.uk 0146 270 950
 British Canoe Union (BCU) www.bcu.org.uk 01392 21900
 Exeter Canoe Club www.exetercanoeclub.org.uk
 All Water users www.exeter.gov.uk 01392 42424
 Scaffs & Paddles www.scaffs.co.uk 01392 42424
 Boat Exe visitors at Totnes www.totnes.org.uk 01392 42424
 The Blue Gem www.bluegem.org.uk
 Copies of this leaflet can be downloaded from www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Exeter Canoe Loops is a partnership project between the Environment Agency and Exeter City Council

PLAN A SAFE TRIP

Canoeing can be hazardous and is undertaken at your own risk. You must make your own assessment of danger based on your knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and the conditions. Water at the base of weirs can be dangerous, particularly in high flows. Hidden obstacles may be present under the surface. Portage points enable canoes to safely avoid weirs. Ensure you are physically able to carry/pull your canoe over the portage distances and can use the access points (some are not suitable for larger craft).

Downstream of St James's Mill, low tides can make the river too shallow to canoe and some access points unusable. It's safer to restrict tidal trips to fair conditions and 2 hours either side of high tide. During lower tides, follow the main buoyed river channel in the estuary. Increased hazards on the estuary can include wind, waves, currents, boats and their wakes.

Check conditions beforehand via weather reports, river levels and tide tables. Membership of canoe clubs, personal liability insurance and appropriate protective gear are advised (e.g. buoyancy aid, helmet). For more information contact a canoe club, shop or association (see contacts on back).

A guide to circular canoeing trails linking the river and canal

Olympic Torch Relay

On Sunday 20th May the Olympic Torch relay will be passing through Totnes, coming down Kingsbridge Hill, along Station Road, then over the river and up Bridgetown Hill at around 2.00 in the afternoon. The local sports clubs will be gathering around Borough Park and the Pavillion Centre to showcase their activities. The Canoe Club will have a presence with some form of static display. The river above the weir is too far from the proceedings, and low tide puts the river under the railway bridge beyond use.

The Olympic Canoe & Kayak events are as follows:

Flat Water Sprint

C-1 200 m (canoe single) Men
C-1 1000 m (canoe single) Men
C-2 1000 m (canoe double) Men
K-1 200 m (kayak single) Men
K-1 200 m (kayak single) Women
K-1 500 m (kayak single) Women
K-1 1000 m (kayak single) Men
K-2 200 m (kayak double) Men
K-2 500 m (kayak double) Women
K-2 1000 m (kayak double) Men
K-4 500 m (kayak four) Women
K-4 1000 m (kayak four) Men

White Water Slalom

C-1 (canoe single) Men
C-2 (canoe double) Men
K-1 (kayak single) Men
K-1 (kayak single) Women
Note that C-1 (canoe single) Women will be an event in the 2016 Olympics

The competition boats and techniques are considerably different from those we use for recreational paddling.

Team GB had reasonable success at the last Olympics in Beijing. We sent seven competitors, four women and three men and came back with three medals:
GOLD Tim Brabants Men's K1 1000m flat water racing
SILVER Tim Brabants Men's K1 500m flat water racing
BRONZE David Florence Men's C1 Slalom

The 2012 team will be announced shortly, trials took place in April.

If you want to see more, including video clips, have a look at the following links:

www.olympic.org/canoe-kayak-flatwater
www.olympic.org/canoe-kayak-slalom



C1 Slalom. Looks like a kayak? Well its actually the single bladed paddle that makes this offically a Canoe.



K1 Racing. Have a look at a video of K1 Racing and watch the arm technique – the main power comes from body rotation. Look at the size and shape of the boat too: comfort jetisoned for speed.



K1 Slalom. Green poles are downstream gates, Red poles upstream gates, and all have to be entered in a numbered order without being touched



Preparing for the new season: Kit check & repair day at the boat shed



Connor, Sam and friend inspect Euthanasia on the Upper Dart at a seriously high level

Staying Informed with the Club Forum & the Yahoo Group

If you haven't yet checked out the new forums now is the time to have a look. There is lots of other information and discussions on the site, its not just about peer groups.

To have a look just go to:

www.totnescanoclub.org.uk/forum/index.php

To see instructions on how to join the forums:

www.totnescanoclub.org.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=36

Whitewater

The weird April weather meant the rivers were full just after the traditional whitewater season closed. Club members were out on the moors with these high levels. A few pictures illustrate the fun, but at these levels the river is very unforgiving. Be careful out there...

The whole issue of access to rivers is a hot potato, and there is plenty of contradictory information about. Landowners and angling clubs (who have paid large sums of money for fishing rights) will tell you they own the river and you cannot paddle without permission. This however has never been proven in law. Most kayakers will tell you the opposite – that no-one owns the water flowing over the riverbed and if there is enough water to paddle you can go ahead. The Environment Agency are concerned that there is no environmental damage, especially to the salmon breeding grounds (known as Redds) which are mainly way upstream around Princetown.

The BCU have traditionally encouraged the various interest groups to agree access agreements, but this is based on the assumption that landowners can allow or disallow access. More recently the BCU has promoted access arrangements which are supposed to enable hassle free paddling for official groups such as schools who need an official arrangement. This leaves (by default) individual paddlers free to make up their own minds.

On the whitewater sections of the Dart, the BCU suggest a season from October through to March,



Jeremy on Staircase Rapid on the Upper Dart at very high level (the slab at Newbridge would be well covered, with water flowing through the third arch and up the steps towards the car park!)



The Slab at Newbridge at the higher end of medium last week

although – as we have seen recently – the highest levels often fall outside this period. Many paddlers will suggest all year access based on a minimum water level (level with the stone slab at Newbridge where the Upper Dart ends and The Loop begins), as with this amount of water fishing is not possible.

This confused situation sends out mixed messages, as Anglers and Landowners see an agreement they therefore assume that paddling outside it must be wrong. On the other hand many paddlers see the arrangement as an imposition of rules that are not necessary, not legally enforceable and restrictive, purely to allow a very small number of people sole use of the fabulous resource that is the River.

Club member peer groups will no doubt be paddling throughout the year when levels are suitable.

Easter in Wales

Easter saw an outing by various club members as a peer trip to the wilds of Wales – to the Tryweryn and the Dee. Canolfyn Tryweryn is the location of the Welsh National Whitewater Centre and there is a convenient dam at the top of the river that allows controlled releases of between 7 and 15 cumecs (cubic metres per second; one cubic metre of water is one tonne), so you can always be sure of water. Except this visit where unusually the water authorities decided only to release one day over the holiday weekend which curtailed the groups plans somewhat.

The River Dee is close by at Llangollen, and that did have some water, so fun & games ensued as the pictures on the following page illustrate.

Peer Trips

Boats and kit can be borrowed by Club members for use on peer trips free of charge. Remember, these are not official club trips run by a coach – they are purely a group of friends paddling together, sharing their knowledge. See the Yahoo group and the Club Forum for details of such trips past and future.

If you fancy paddling somewhere just post a suggestion and see what replies you get. Its not all advanced and scary whitewater, or committing sea trips – we do have many flatwater outings too.

Deb Pinniger

Two time world freestyle kayak champion, Deb Pinniger gave a talk to the Club back in March which was well attended. The evening started with an exciting video of white water paddling put together by the Club's own Rowan James.

Deb then presented her photography from the Ladakh area of the Indian Himalayas and described the paddling and development work she had undertaken in the area.

The evening rounded off with Deb presenting pictures and anecdotes from her time working on the Zambezi.

Deb Pinniger surfs a standing wave, probably the Zambezi

New Coaches

The Club now has four brand new coaches for this year. Julie Perren, Paul Rutherford, Mik Wells and Sam Dixon all recently qualified as UKCC Level One coaches. This is a great achievement and involved various training sessions along with a rigorous two day assessment. In addition to passing the coaching tests, all coaches have to be fully CRB checked, attend a Safeguarding & Protecting Children workshop, hold a current first aid certificate and attend a safety and rescue course. Congratulations to all four of you, the Club is stronger as a result.

The Club pays for much of the coach training and their BCU membership, otherwise all coaches give their time voluntarily for all training sessions and trips.



Level One coach training

Flickr

There are lots of photographs loaded on Flickr – the Club has its own page where you can see many of the pictures taken of club activities over the last year or so. Check out:

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/totnescanoclub>

Other pictures can be seen on the official Club website, and also on the Yahoo Group pages. All pictures welcome, do please add any you have taken. This is your Club so please get involved!





*The Upper Dart
Pandora's Box aka Surprise Surprise*



*Jerome on the Upper Dart at a
relatively low level in February*



The River Dee

