



# CANEWS

May 2013

## EDITOR'S CORNER

A BIG thank you to the contributors

Barry D, Paul B & Simon B

### RCC HISTORY

Old issues of Canews are available to download and savour. See some real old school paddling!, find out what happened a decade or so ago, and for those RCC long-timers, relive some memories and cringe at what you, or others, said at the time.

### NEW EDITOR, NEW WEBSITE, NEW SECRETARIES...

You may -or may not have noticed that there have been a couple of recent changes within RCC.

We have a new website - set up by our newly appointed Webmaster Simon.....He's done a pretty good job don't you think?

Canews will now be edited, and Secretarial duties picked up by yours-truely, after our long standing secretary Graham has finally decided to throw the towel in and retire.

Thanks Graham for all of your hard work over the years - and here's for a great retirement. Keep us updated with your adventures.

Nichola

### CAPTION COMPETITION

Visit the web site for the Caption Competition.



*After resigning as long standing RCC secretary. Club members were dubious about Graham's future plans in setting up England's first Underwater Estate Agents.....Dot*

And three from Mike W

- *'with a face like that you won't sell anything'*
- *Even the bloody rivers for sale now*
- *'Gosh' said Graham 'I'm having fun on this street' as he paddled passed his neighbours house*

### A MESSAGE FROM SIMON....

Ringwood Canoe Club has a new Website

Frequent web users may have noticed that we have a new website. While fully functional this is still a work in progress and further changes will occur as time and enthusiasm allow

The aim of the new site is to provide a logical navigation through the respective pages of club information and to make it easier to maintain and update without specialist software.

The old site will continue to exist as an archive of club information. Over time the intent is to migrate the Trip reports onto the new site to allow easy navigation.

New features/information will also be introduced if these are of benefit to the club membership.

Main change that most users will experience immediately is the format of the Events List. This is now best viewed online and will be viewable as a list or as a calendar. Members will also be able to download events as iCAL format to allow direct import into your own calendars on outlook and other similar applications.

In due course I will look to create a nice user generated printable format along the lines of the old format.

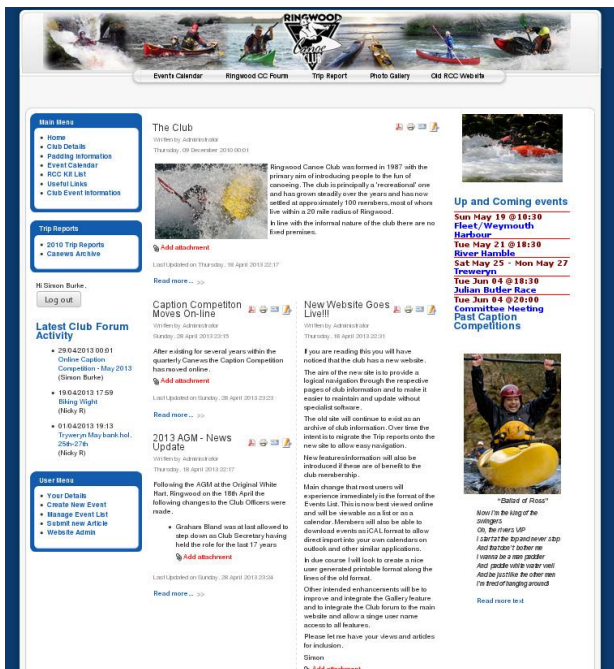
Other intended enhancements will be to improve and integrate the Gallery feature and to integrate the Club forum to the main website and allow a single user name access to all features.

In order to keep the site fresh it would be nice to have content from your paddling activities to add - both text and photos please.

We have also moved the Caption Competition online to the Forum with the aim of hosting a new photo every month or so - best photo/caption combinations will make it into Canews and to the home page for prosperity. Prizes - only the warm feeling of making light of a fellow paddlers embarrassing moments.

Final note - remember that this is the public face of the club and can be used to demonstrate the clubs active nature but only if updates are provided so --- If you have events you want posting or short teaser articles of longer write ups destined for Canews send then through to Simon and Nichola. Even if it is only a couple of great photos; that you think would look good in the

Don't forget the RCC Forum still exists!



collection used to add colour to the text send them our way.

Don't miss out on impromptu trips, gossip and banter.

If you haven't registered - please get in touch with Graham, Nichola or Simon who will set up your registration.

## Exe/ Barl Weekend 2013

Planning for the Exe weekend inadvertently started at the club meeting the weekend before, where it was decided that we needed a guinea pig to test the durability of the clubs latest purchase....A brand new, shiny, unscratched prospector 15 open boat.

I have no idea why they chose me?..... a dedicated kayaker with absolutely no experience of white water open boating and I'm pretty sure I don't have a beard either....(a must if you are an open boater) Maybe they needed to test if it really did float up-side-down. Or maybe they just decided it was time I joined 'The Dark Side'? What ever the reason, there was absolutely no way I was going to get out of this, as a whole array of complex logistics of how the boat would get to Exmoor was decided before me.

On the Friday night the Deakins and I arrived in Dulverton after a pleasant 2 ½ hr journey and met Dot, Ian, Jake Lisa, Charley, and Paul in the pub for a bit of grub and a couple of 'lemonades'. Later we headed up to Northcoombe Barn where we found that it had in some ways been refurbished, but at this point was no less cold, which was fine because Dot, Bev and I came armed with hot water bottles and we weren't afraid to use them!

Sue and Gareth and Wesley joined us on the Saturday morning and we headed up to the put-in on the exe. Just as we were about to get in Jake had a text message from

Tim who was going to join us but he was still an hour and a half away...and he would catch us up later??

The paddle started off smoothly and there was actually some water in the river for a change, which made our only obstacles now, the trees which had fallen across after the recent flooding. The first fallen tree came at a small bridge not far from the put-in a small way down the river, but before we knew it, Jake W was out of his boat sawing the branches off the tree and had cleared a way through one of the arches.

We got moving and I passed through the arch after rather a lot of manoeuvring and unintentional barging. Feeling quite pleased with myself that I had managed to negotiate this tricky manoeuvre in my new 'barge' I failed to notice that a smaller branch sticking out across the river from the bank which, within a blink of an eye had me across the chest and tipped in sideways!...

It was here that I realised the open boat was going to behave in a completely different way to a kayak and was going to take a lot more perseverance to get it to go in a straight line!

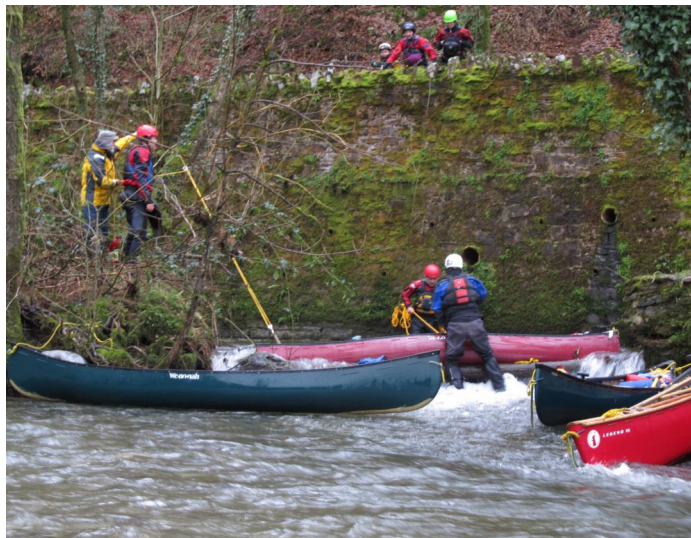
Well at least we found out that the new open boat floats....well sort of when it is full of water! and I was pleasantly surprised to find that, that even after a complete capsize I still had dry hair and had only got wet up to my waist....well I guess it does have some bonuses.

Everyone in the group seemed to be enjoying themselves, Gareth and Wesley our newest and most budding kayakers seemed to be getting on great, there were no more capsizes and Bev was enjoying paddling her new Wavesport kayak. But it was Sue, one of our best and most experienced female paddlers who was going to be the next to come-a-cropper, at the first weir....

Somehow Sue had taken a slightly different route to the rest of us and bypassed the main weir, instead she came down a dodgy side shoot and got pinned on which only could be described as a horizontal telegraph pole across the end of the stream. She was ok and was now safely on the bank, but it was soon obvious that the boat wasn't going anywhere.

Soon Ian, Jake W, Paul, Barry and Wesley were on the case, with ropes galore and a lot of strength that still wouldn't dislodge the thing. In the end

they resorted to 2 pig rigs (a 3:1 rope pulley system) one on the front of the boat and one which attached to the wall above, to eventually heave the boat out of its hold.



After the drama had passed, we continued down the river only having to dodge another two blockages, and one more swim. We stopped briefly for lunch and there was small talk about when Tim would catch us up. All safe in the knowledge that Tim was perfectly capable of looking after himself and we would see him at some point, we carried on towards Exebridge.

Jake pulled some moves on the last drop, with a few hairy moments when we thought he might actually get his feet wet but he disappointed us all... Well until he had a sneaky swim on the last weir by the old power station (but I won't mention that incase no one else knew)...

Arriving at Exbridge we were fascinated by 3 fishermen on the river bank who miraculously seemed to be pulling fish out of the water every few seconds. They explained that the trout farm the other side of the river bank had overflowed in the floods and they now had to catch all the escapees to prevent them from eating and disrupting our native species. Dot spotted this as an opportunity and asked if we could take some for our tea.

Just loading up the boats Dot got a phone call from our 'happy wanderer' Tim. The phone call went something as follows.

Dot: Where are you? Tim: In Sainsburys carpark in Tiverton in a survival bag. Dot: What are you doing there? Tim: I got a bit lost and I put in at Exbridge...I thought it was strange that I never caught up with you...could you give me a lift back to my van? Dot: Ok where did you park? Tim: I don't actually know...

So, Dot Went off on her own mission to locate Tim and his van while we all kept warm in the pub!

Well dinner that night was something of a feast with a selection of 3 courses on offer, fresh trout to start, Bev's lovely home made curry for mains, and Barry's blackcurrant crumble and custard for pudding. Needless to say we could hardly move afterwards and shortly headed off to bed to sleep it off.

The Sunday morning arrived with some slight drizzle, or so we thought until we arrived at our put-in on the Barl, when we realised that it might have been slightly more than drizzle in the hills as the river was now a raging torrent...well as much a raging torrent as the Barl can get.



Everyone got ready for a days paddling and got on the water. With it's speed and force, the water within 100 yards of the start, took Lisa and didn't give her time to avoid a low tree, which she ended up hitting and got tipped in. A few other people saw this and decided that it was just going too quick and it would be difficult to keep control especially of the open boats, so they decided to get off and go walking instead.

Some of us staid on including a very brave Lisa and headed off down the river. Luckily I decided to give the open

boating a miss today and I was back in my trusty kayak.

Tim joined us from the start this time and decided to paddle in Bev's new boat making a total of 3 kayakers all together with me and Gareth and Barry, Jake, lisa, Ian and Sue stuck to their open boats.



It was a great paddle down the Barl with a few more tricky bits than normal, but we all were getting on great, especially Gareth who didn't seem phased at all by the unusual conditions.

Sue had a slight slip up on a set of rapids near Dulverton which caused her to have a quick swim, but other than that all was well. We got to the Salmon steps just outside Dulverton and got out to scout them out. It can be said that there definitely no salmon hanging around there as it was flowing very high with some nasty looking stoppers down every step.



Before we knew it, Jake had decided that he wasn't going to go home without giving it a try, so within a flash he was in his boat and down the weir and waiting safely at the bottom. The general consensus with the rest of us was 'bugger that for a lark' and we all launched back in below the weir and paddled on down to Exbridge, meeting the walkers in the car park at the end.

All in all it was a fantastic weekend and everyone had a lot of fun! It did seem a little quiet without our prestigious chairman 'foghorn Worth', but I can say that the new prospector has been well

and truly tested and works very well....who knows,  
I  
may even take it out again one day :).  
Nicky R

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## **TORRIDGE TRIP 2013...**

Dave & Annie

Joe

Dot

Mike

Bev and Barry

Jo

Lisa, Jake and Charlie

Marion & Nick

Nichola

Me

(Apologies if I've missed anyone!)

When I put my name forward to write up this trip, I found out that Barry had (very efficiently I might add!) already written a trip report. Rather than give up on the idea, I decided that given Barry's age and declining memory I was bound to recall more events and with greater accuracy. So here we go... er... what was I writing about again... um... oh yes, a trip on some river (I'm sure it began with 'T') somewhere in Devon with a bunch of people I have a vague recollection of!

I hadn't done this trip for a couple of years, and being one of my favourite trips on the RCC calendar, I was very much looking forward to it. I arrived at Sea Lock Barn around 6.30pm on the Friday and received the usual warm welcome with a nice cup of tea. Most of the bunch were already at the barn and it was great to catch up with some folks who I hadn't seen for a while.

We headed off to the Black Horse pub in Great Torrington for dinner and were met by Barry, Bev, Nichola and Dave's local friends (Elizabeth and Phil?). Jake also joined us later in the evening. I think there were about 18 or 19 of us for dinner in total so the staff had a tough job on their hands keeping us all happy. It was a pleasant meal though in good company.

Back at the barn, we realised there were more people than beds and the more macho among us (or crazy?), namely Mike, Jake and Joe, decided to sleep outside under the stars. Rather than me! Nichola drew the short straw and had to sleep in the top bunk above me. Apparently the reinforced, industrial-grade ear plugs did a good job of keeping out the sound of the snoring but unfortunately couldn't prevent the vibrations and small tremors that measured 1.3 on the Richter scale! I'm sure it wasn't all coming from me.

On the Saturday, the usual plan of paddling Sheepwash Bridge to Hele Bridge was abandoned due to low levels in the river, so we put in at Hele Bridge instead. There was some entertainment at the put in. Firstly an impressive seal launch from

the higher part of the bank by Jake, although there was some disappointment within the group that he landed the right way up. The less brave of us launched from a lower and very boggy bit and I almost took a premature swim (without my boat) as I slid down the slippery mud. A determination not to be the target of Mike's ribbing for the rest of the weekend somehow kept me from a head first dive into the muddy river.

The paddle down the river was a chilly one but very pleasant with the odd bit of sun breaking through. Jake and Lisa's young son Charlie was in a kayak on a river for the first time and did brilliantly well for his first time on moving water. Unfortunately he took a small swim on one of the faster sections and decided he'd prefer to keep Dot company in her Canadian for the rest of the trip. I have to say though, it's not very often that I see Dot unable to get a word in edgeways!!

The stop for lunch was chilly and we were all feeling the cold a little - even Barry had a coat and a pair of gloves on! Surely a first? The get out was at Beaford Bridge and we were soon in the Clinton Arms at Frithelstock for a beer (or hot chocolate for some). The sun decided to make a more sustained appearance and a few sat outside to enjoy it while the rest of us huddled around a cosy fire inside the pub.

Dinner that evening was a fantastic curry cooked by Nick and Marion followed by equally tasty desserts of crumble and cheesecake. Probably to Nichola's annoyance, I hijacked her crossword and with the combined brain power of the RCC (ok, mostly Barry and Marion), we completed it by bedtime. We must all be getting old if crosswords are the entertainment of choice!

It was a bitterly cold night with freezing temperatures outside and the three nutcases: Mike, Joe and Jake were still determined to sleep outside (there was some male pride at stake here). There was a sharp frost in the morning and the paddling kit that I'd left outside to dry, sorry, freeze was completely solid. It was my first ever experience of attempting to put on a pair of icy wetsuit boots, much to the amusement of the sensible ones who'd left their kit inside overnight.



### ***Cold and Frosty Morning at Sea Lock Barn***

There was less interest in paddling on the Sunday (not helped by the cold and grey weather) and the group was divided into paddlers, cyclists and walkers. Myself, Dot, Jake, Barry, Mike and Dave set off to do the shuttle and drop the cyclists off along the way. I was the only one representing the kayaking minority but it may have been a different story if I had succumbed to the pressure of the others trying to get me into an open boat! I'm sure they just wanted to see me fall in!! I stuck to my guns though and decided that cold conditions, a dodgy knee and a 10 mile paddle was probably not the ideal scenario to learn the art of paddling a Canadian.

The six of us made reasonable progress from Beaford down to the Puffing Billy in Torrington with only a couple of shortish stops for coffee, lunch and leg stretching. It was certainly colder than the day before and at the first stop I found a lump of ice in the back of my kayak. There were also some icicles that had formed from a drainage pipe in one place along the bank. Barry had experimented with a new thermal sock arrangement and was less than impressed when his feet were colder than usual. I think we were all suffering from cold toes though.

We reached the first weir, probably a couple of miles from the finish and, with such a reduced flow over it, there was a sneaky little rock jutting out from the chute on river right. This caught out poor Mike who didn't get quite enough momentum going over it and capsized at the bottom, much to Dot's amusement! Unfortunately there were no cameras on hand to capture the golden moment. The remaining opens decided to

portage, not fancying the idea of getting colder. I shot the weir on river left down the slope instead with a little wobble in the tow back at the bottom, but came through unscathed. Jake decided to 'play' a little in the weir and met the same fate as Mike - cold and wet!

There were no incidents at the final weir just before the get out, although I nearly got caught out by the funny little sideways push at the bottom of the second step. I should have learnt from the last time I did that weir.

Cold and tired, we finished at the Puffing Billy, but still an enjoyable trip. A little more sun, as was promised in the forecast, would have been nice but hey, at least it didn't rain as well.

Yet another very enjoyable weekend with the RCC. Thanks to the cooks and to Dave R for organising again. Maybe next year I'll do it an open boat (but don't quote me on that!).

**Paul B**

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### **Barry's Account... Torrige, March 2013**

It has been about 4 years since I went on this club trip so, with my ailing memory, it was just like a new one. It was certainly well attended, in fact the barn was overflowing so our gallant Chairman Mike, toughie Jake Wiltshire and Dave & Annie Ratford's son Joe all chose to sleep outside in the fresh air. It wasn't really necessary because there was plenty of room on the lounge floor but they all enjoyed their outside experience, despite the sub zero temperatures and frosty pillows. Those of us inside were very grateful to be spared Mike's night-time antics. Those of you who've ever shared a room, or even a barn, with him will understand.

The river was very low, but with evidence all the way of how high it had been just before Christmas. There were grass, bits of plastic, hay and straw bales and even some mature trees left high above the top of the banks, and whole lines of trees torn from the banks on the outside of many of the bends. We didn't see evidence of structural damage to buildings, walls or roads as we had on the Exe and Barle though.

The Torrige is a gentle touring river, and one that any club member who has some control of a boat would enjoy. There are a few weirs but they can be portaged easily, and the only challenges for novices are the bends where you might get pushed into the bank if you don't paddle. Why not consider it next time if you fancy a weekend away without the adrenalin rush of white water. The scenery is a bit grey at this time of year but it is a lovely river despite that. The snowdrops were

everywhere and daffodils trying to make a show, which will be fantastic in a week or two. The birdlife was good too, with the usual buzzards, ravens, grey wagtails and goosanders that we always see on the Devon rivers, more wrens than Bev or I have ever seen, and Kingfishers in twos and threes, pairing up or competing for territories perhaps.

This weekend young Charlie Wiltshire (only 6 years old) was determined to have a go in his little Dagger Dynamo kayak, and set off on Saturday to try some moving water. It was a brave move on such a cold day, and he did really well, but had to concede that he wasn't going to paddle 8 miles and swapped to the front seat of Dot's canoe for the rest of the day while Bev and I took his boat on board ours.



Nichola is clearly getting a taste for open boating and used the club's new Prospector again. Other open boaters were Dave and his niece Jo Ratford, Chairman Mike and Lisa Cox. Nick made his annual appearance in a kayak, with Paul Beeston and Jake Wiltshire for company.

After a cold paddle we adjourned to the Clinton Arms at Frithelstock where the sun came out and tempted some of us to enjoy a drink in the garden. The lesser mortals huddled round the fire and toasted their toes. Bev and Lisa discovered that the hot chocolates there are so yummy, and so cheap, that they walked 12 miles the next day to get another one.

Only six of us took to the water on Sunday. Jo, Annie and Nichola went biking, Bev, Lisa and Charlie went on the hot chocolate safari while Nick and Marion volunteered for shuttle bunny and barn tidying duties, and had an otherwise relaxing time. It was a very relaxing paddle, with some entertainment provided at Darkham weir by Mike and Jake who obviously believe that it's never too cold for a swim.



Thanks guys.

Thanks also to Nick and Marion for a lovely curry on Saturday night, and to all the other catering helpers. We always feel the need to cut down for a week after these weekends, but we wouldn't want it any other way.

**Barry.**

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## Historic navigation of the Avon. An extract from "The Story of Godshill" by Jean Westlake.

It seems probable that civilised man first entered Britain by way of the Hampshire Avon, for the first major civilisation to arise in England and to attain eminence during the Bronze Age was centred on the high chalk lands of Wessex. It must be remembered in the early (pre-Roman) days, that there were no roads as such. The great rivers were the main highways: There were three

'main' roads, the Hampshire Avon, the Bristol Avon and the Thames with its tributary the Kennet. The Hampshire Avon was the most important, being the nearest to Northern France. There were no locks or weirs or mills in those days and the Avon was certainly navigable to Salisbury as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This was the way immigrants penetrated the country and trade routes were established with the outside world.

**Barry.**

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## **River Avon. A gentle paddle, suitable for all.....**

After the coldest spring for many a year, we were blessed with a reasonably warm day and, although I only had half a dozen names on my list, half the club turned out for this early season "gentle paddle". The river was higher than we usually find it, but a couple of days before I'd spoken to the river keeper who told me that it was the lowest it had been since last April. That was the only time we'd had to cancel the trip because of a lack of water, but it had rained a few days later, and rained all year it seems. What a period of extremes!

The river flowed fast so it wasn't hard work and we could relax and enjoy the scenery, and chat of course. We were soon at the weir below Longford Castle where the little stopper looks friendly and always tempts a few to play. It always catches out the unwary though because it has a long tow-back, much longer than a playboat, and isn't easy to paddle out of. We had a few laughs, especially at the expense of Elliott whose sculling and balance looked pretty rusty after too long away from white water. Young Wesley had to give it a try and looked cool but couldn't get out. It took two open boats daisy chained together to pull him out. One wasn't enough because the tow-back cancelled the paddling power even of Mike Farnden; well, he was a bit rusty too.

Onwards and downwards we went, to the hatches at Standlynch weir where we usually stop for lunch. Here Jake Wiltshire, his first time on this trip, was making the most of the playing opportunities and stopper practice. Unfortunately he underestimated the power of the vertical curtain of water and couldn't get out of that stopper. While I was eating lunch and chatting I became aware of people dashing about and throwing lines. Jake was swimming under the weir and, although he could stand, he couldn't walk out against the current. The line he caught was thrown from the footbridge above the weir and his rescuer, with a big smile, pulled him through the length of the stopper to the bank. As I turned to see this I also saw his boat disappearing down the river on the fast flow. Nobody else was on the water and, as I jumped in my open boat I realised that I had no throw line or sling in it. Well, why would you on a placid water trip like this? I untied a painter from the boat, launched and took up the chase. I managed to tie the rope to it and get it to the bank, but not until it had gone below some

fallen trees. Jake came to retrieve it but it was quite a struggle for me to paddle back up between the trees to the rest of my lunch and Bev.

Past a lot of swans, ducks and the first chifffchaff that I'd heard this year and we were at the hatches just above Downton, which most people usually portage. Sometimes one of the hatches is open enough for us to pass under and it looked as if it might just be possible to get an open under this year. Bev said she'd walk so I put her ashore and went to try and run the hatch while a few others got out for the portage. The gate was just too low to clear the bow, by a few millimetres, and as I was stopped the boat swung diagonally against the concrete pillar. There was no danger and I was able to pull it back on line, move forward a bit to get the bow under the gate and slip through. Several others followed, without making my mistake, while I went to collect Bev and help some others to re-launch. What I'd forgotten was that neither Lisa Cox or Patrick Prior have ever considered walking around anything, and neither of them were in control of their kayaks, Patrick because he's hardly paddled anywhere, and Lisa because she's used to a single blade and a much bigger boat. I wasn't too surprised when I saw Lisa swimming behind me below the weir, nor when Patrick followed close behind, but I was a bit disconcerted that there was only one kayak between them. While they were being taken ashore I climbed out to see Patrick's boat lodged solidly across two of the concrete pillars above the gates. Apparently both of them had misjudged the line into the open gate, been pinned and capsized on the concrete pillars, and swum through the next gate which was open, but only about 100mm above the water so looked a lot worse than it was. Why didn't anyone advise them to portage? Oh yes; that was the leader's (my) job. After a bit of faffing about we got a rope onto the kayak and pulled it free so that it was washed through undamaged. Wesley gamely went after it below the weir but as he nudged it towards the bank he failed to see the fallen tree behind him and found himself in a proper little strainer. His kayak capsized of course, but he was able to climb up the tree safely. I saw this one coming, jumped in my boat again and chased after him, to the surprise of Dot who was with Patrick on the bank, hailing me to give him a lift down to his boat. She couldn't see Wesley's efforts at continuing to pile on the excitement, or was it stress, for the ill-equipped and shamefully disorganised organiser! The remaining features of Downton bridge and Charford weirs gave some more opportunities for skills practice but no more grief for me.

Ah well, nobody suffered more than a dunking or hurt pride, but...yes, I took thoroughly well deserved ear bashing from Bev and Elliott for my lack of leadership.

Back at Overtheway the traditional tea (sorry, beer for Mark Gleed) and cakes rounded off what, for most people, was a great day's paddle on placid water, and for others a memorable one in



some tricky spots. Thanks to all those who brought cakes, and to those who provided us with entertainment. I hope you'll all come back for a gentle paddle next year. Sorry.

**Barry.**

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## Biking I.O.W

RCC by name is a canoe club, but it seems that a lot of its members over the years have been brought together and built friendships by not only canoeing, but by taking part in a number of other varied social events too..... This is why, when I decided that a Bike ride on the Isle of Wight was something that I would really like to do, I turned to the club to find some willing participants (or mugs) to keep me company.

The plan: to catch the 09:25 ferry at Lymington over to Yarmouth.....

Naturally Tim turned up at 09:20 with a slip of time to get himself & bike sorted, get the van secured?, buy his ferry ticket and get his parking ticket. Needless to say we were a little relieved when he made it he finally made it through the barriers with about 30seconds to spare before the ferry actually left. We all gave a small cheer from the top deck of the ferry where we were all watching the drama and taking bets as to whether he would actually make it or not.



Even Martin and Jason made it with plenty of time to spare, after (from what it sounded like in a text message) Jason rolling out of bed at about 08.45

with the mother of all hangovers, going to collect Martin, loading the bikes and getting to Lymington from Ringwood.

Contrary to popular belief I had actually spent a great amount of time studying the Isle of Wight map and figuring out a route, but as with most of these things you never actually know what the paths or roads will be like until you get there- and they definitely don't tell you on the map how muddy they are.

My aim was to follow the path from Yarmouth along the coast up to Newtown Creek -a part of the island which we have paddled many times, but never actually seen from land. The path was lovely with great views across the Solent on one side and lovely spring woodland on the other. Admittedly a pair of Welly boots would have been



the best way to get through the mud, but as we only had bikes....

After all that hard work we decided we were due for a quick refreshments stop at the pub in Shalfleet (well it would be rude not to stop for a cider on such a lovely day). Suitably refreshed we got going again and continued on our route towards the Newtown estuary.



After all that hard work we decided we were due for a quick refreshments stop at the pub in Shalfleet (well it would be rude not to stop for a

cider on such a lovely day). Suitably refreshed we got going again and continued on our route towards the Newtown estuary.

We managed to navigate the numerous stiles and electric fences and finally got back onto some solid ground, when we were then stopped in our tracks at the next gate, as a large sign was plastered across it which read... 'footpath only No Cycling'. So, we were just about to all get off our bikes and walk them down the path, when a pleasant lady from the house came over and started to explain why it was not suitable for cyclists (even those pushing their bikes). She told us that it was very muddy with only a small track, and it would be very difficult to get through. I could tell that everyone was thinking the same thing... 'well that's the type of path we have been on so far, why would this make any difference', but as not to cause any conflict we turned around and decided to try and find another route down.

I guess the alternative route wasn't such a compromise as we passed some great views over the creek, and had some fun riding down the huge hill along a much welcome solid road surface.



We also managed to cycle along some parts of the estuary which we had never seen before and we took a detour up through the old town, where we



found a rather interesting old building, which was just crying out for a group of cyclists to come and practice their best poses on.

Jason was flagging a bit as the hangover had really started to kick in and Dots knees had gone all wobbly, so we decided to stop for lunch and tackle the hills afterwards. The hill started about ½ a mile up the road from where we had stopped and continued for another 2 miles, where it brought us out onto the top of a bridle way with magnificent views across the Solent to the new forest and Fawley. Hats off to Patric, Bev, Lee, Jason and Tim who managed to stay on their bikes to the top, but Dot and I didn't manage so far in the saddle so met the others about 10 mins later.

The next leg of the ride was to take us through Brighstone Forest- a wood at the bottom of the field and over quite a few bumps. Tim decided he was going to ride down one of the mini quarries in the field and went down head first, much to our amazement (considering that 'Bike jump Lee' wasn't even going to attempt it) he came out upright and in one piece at the bottom.

After reaching the other side of the forest we finally found a huge down hill track leading us to the start of Compton down, which we all rode down as fast as we could and met at the bottom - there was some debate as to whether Tim would actually stop or not, as the breaks on his £20 charity shop bike had probably seen better days (possibly in the 80's) but he did finally grind to a halt just in time.

For a while it made us feel like all of that up hill peddling was worth it - well, almost....until we saw the next hill we had to make it up.... As it turned out.. the hill wasn't so bad this time and we all took it at a leisurely pace. Some walked and some rode, but how ever we got there, it was all worth the view at the top which stretched across the whole of the 'West Wight' to one side and as far as Yarmouth and the New forest on the other side.



Once we hit Freshwater, the thought of climbing another hill to get across Tennyson down and up

to the Needles was one of horror so, as an alternative we decided to take the incredibly flat track back to Yarmouth along the River Yar.

We took a slightly wrong turn at the beginning to get onto the path, but it was well worth the extra distance, as once we had stopped there was a rustling in the tree above, and a little red squirrel appeared and sat staring at us for a few minuets (probably thinking...look at those idiots) and then promptly ran off through the branches.

We found the path and started our last stretch to the ferry, by this time I was absolutely gasping for a well earned cup of tea, and so the last stretch was a quick one in my case. I was so relieved when we finally got into Yarmouth and found the last open tea shop in the town, which just happened to be right next to the ferry.

Some of the others decided to head on back and catch the earlier ferry...but nothing was going to come between me and my cup of tea....and very nice it was too!



Thanks to everyone who came along and helped to make it so much fun. You really are great friends :)

This was the route we took in the end... The green area of the graph below shows our elevation! And the blue area indicates our speed.

**Nicky R**

Distance	Duration	Avg. Pace	Avg. Speed	Burned	Climb
22.78 mi	5:47:45 h · m · s	15:16 min/mi	3.93 mph	1,968 calories	1940 ft

