



# CANEWS

March 2015

**A BIG thank you to the contributors  
Dot T, Lisa C and Barry D**

**A SHORT ISSUE THIS TIME. IF YOU WOULD LIKE  
A WRITE UP OF YOURS TO BE IN THE NEXT  
CANEWS SEND THE SECRETARY A COPY.**

## CAPTION COMPETITION



- Mike had always dreamed of being Kate Winslett, but his weekend persona was about to be rumbled..... *Mike F*

- Panto rehearsal time with the 'fairy' godmother and the three ugly 'sisters'! *Annie R*

- After listening to Showaddywaddy's '3 Steps to Heaven' Mike was finding step 2 a little tricky.

- Lack of bikes was becoming a problem for the newly formed RCC stunt cycle display team.

Or

- Mike's Red Arrow safety training was going well, having mastered the 'I've lost my plane' recovery manoeuvre.

*Paul B*

-Mike; Up a ladder without a paddle ! Made a nice change from the more usual creek !!!

- The sheer embarrassment of driving the Fiat Doblo led Mike to practise for a new mode of transport ! Flap,Flap, Flap,...aft burners on ! ( I think that's spelt a.f.t ! )

- Mike was shamed into learning how to ride a bike, if he started training now, he'd be able to put stabilizers on his tricycle when he get home !

*Tim B*

- Captain Worth begins to realize that he'd been had when he got a 'good deal' at the bike shop. *Dot*

- While the "children" were busy at the Kids' Club circus skills session, Mike showed more respect for his years and chose angel training on the stairway to heaven. *Barry D*

*Thanks for all the entries some good ones there.*

## A SHORT HOLIDAY IN FRANCE.

Lee, Bev and I had arranged to meet Jake, Lisa and Charlie, and they travelled a day earlier so we found them settled on a campsite on the bank of the river Allier at Langeac in Southern of France. It is a long drive, particularly via the tunnel, so we had an overnight camp in Chartres on the way, and were treated to an amazing light show that they install in the summer, projected onto the buildings. The river looked lovely but the first thing that caught Bev's attention was the mini-golf.

The river has a range of paddling from flat to grade 4, and all of it in great scenery. The weather wasn't great though, so Lisa had at least 3 layers on most of the time. Bev & I had to move our tent on the first evening as a downpour revealed that the flat ground we thought we'd pitched it on was in fact a slight hollow, which turned into a pool as we barbecued happily under a tarp.

The first day we drove upstream to Prades and paddled back to the campsite. Most of the rocks are volcanic there, with lots of basalt columns and other interesting formations. That section has a lot of nice, friendly, grade 2 rapids and a weir with a small drop that dented the beautiful repair I'd crafted on the stern of my open boat. No leaks though.



On our second day we went for a walk to a lake that Lisa had spotted on the map and had an urge to go round. Very nice it was too. Bev marched us all to the mini-golf, but sadly for her it was closed that day. On the third we paddled the next section of the Allier from the campsite down to Lavoute-Chilhac, a really attractive village on a big meander of the river. This part was gentler, with small rapids and a few weirs, but still wonderful scenery. A few hire companies operate on these parts of the river so we sometimes saw small groups of people, but it was never busy. Lee paddled the club's Jackson Duo with Charlie and both had big smiles all day.



Bev had heard tales of challenging Grade 3 rapids on the upper section of the river from Chapeauroux to Le Pont d'Alleyras, so she tried to tempt us with mini-golf but was unsuccessful so she and Lee opted for a bike ride from Le Pont d'Alleyras. Their account of that

sounded pretty challenging to me, particularly the climb they made when they got on the wrong route. That part of the river is wonderful and the rapids are fun, not hazardous. Jake, Lisa and Charlie in particular, recounted with delight all manner of tales of pins and capsize from the club trip on the Allier the previous year, but the river was higher this time, so faster but without as many rocks to hit. Of course the skill level may have been a bit higher too, haha.

We started that day in the company of two men in an old, but very nice wooden open boat, and a young lad in an old kayak. Only one buoyancy aid between them, but plenty of cushions and enthusiasm. Jake retrieved some of their wayward kit after a capsize but we left them to sort themselves out and didn't see them again.

The railway runs alongside the river, with a few viaducts and tunnels, but otherwise you feel quite remote and this is a really great paddle.



We had another non-paddling day together which Bev said was for Charlie's sake, but really it was to satisfy Bev's inexplicable lust for mini-golf. She and Lisa certainly enjoyed it; both nearly splitting their sides at my expense. I'm glad I provided so much entertainment ladies, but mini-golf is a very serious sport so please show a little more respect in future.

Then, while our friends headed for home, we went further South to find our son Jake who was working near the Ardeche, at a PGL activity centre on the bank of the river Cèze. We camped beside it and had a short paddle up and down. It is a beautiful river but had too little water for a worthwhile trip. Jake didn't have any free time during the day but Bev, Lee and I paddled the Ardeche, starting at 08:30 from Vallon-Pont-d'Arc to try and get ahead of the August holiday crowds. Even at that time, there were some paddlers ahead of us, but it wasn't a problem at all. We usually had about a dozen others in sight, but later in the day it would have been over a hundred I think. It is certainly a spectacular place and I can understand the attraction of spending a night in the gorge, but we didn't have time, and it is easily paddled in a day.





We finished around 15:00 and I hitched back up for the car while Bev and Lee waited with the boats and counted the other tourists coming down. They estimated about 2000! One of the highlights of the day for me was the swarm of alpine swifts that nest in the roof of the huge rock arch over the river. Amazing sight! Perhaps we'll go back some time in the off season, and travel at a slower pace to take in more of the wildlife. Another long drive home followed, with another overnight camp to break it up, but we had the deadline of a big family wedding so couldn't afford to hang around. It was an excellent holiday and thanks to Jake, Lisa and Charlie for organising and sharing most of it. Barry D.

### CRY OF THE DART

The Dart has a reputation for taking lives, not those of kayakers and canoeists, but from long ago. There is an old saying in Devon :

Dart, Dart

Every year she claims a heart.

I've known the river for most of my life and there does seem to be some truth in the saying, though not precisely one per year of course.

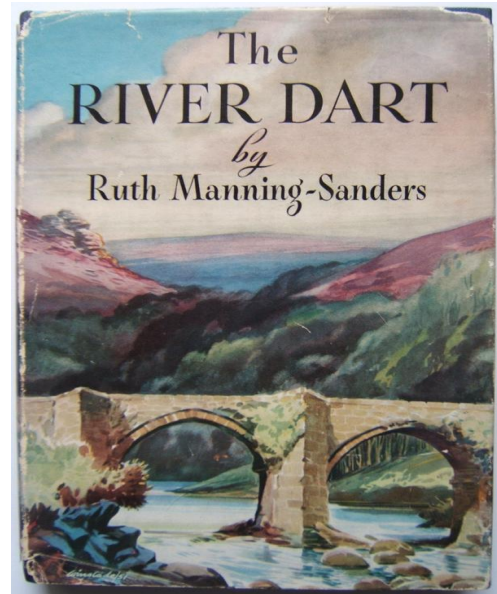
Apart from a variety of accidents and misadventures, there are some interesting tales of sudden torrents sweeping people away. In an old book "The River Dart", Ruth Manning Sanders describes how Dartmoor folk have warned that when she has made up her mind to claim a heart, the Dart cries a warning, though usually without time for her victims to escape.

Here is an extract from the book:

*There is the story of two men of Hexworthy. They were about to cross a wooden bridge over an apparently innocuous river when they heard a sudden roaring. 'Run, run, here comes Dart!' cried one to the other. They ran, but Dart caught them, and whirled them away to death.*

*Then there is the story of John Edmunds, who is buried in Dartington churchyard. It was August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1840 – John Edmunds' wedding day. He and his happy bride, sitting side by side in a cart drawn by Edmunds' trusty horse, were coming away from Staverton Church, where they had just been married. How gay they were,*

*how proud, how heedless of any sorrow, how absorbed in each other and in the thought of the long life together that lay before them, as they drove down by Dart banks toward Staverton Ford! ... And then, suddenly, Dart cried, and a wall of water rose up against them: bride and bridegroom, horse and cart – all were swept away. The body of the poor little bride was later found entangled in the branches of a tree, some way down the river; the man's body was found three weeks afterwards; the horse, struggling in the dark and foaming waters, was carried away over the weir near Totnes bridge, and broken fragments of the cart, leaping like living things in the torrent, tore at his hide as they swirled past his battered carcase. So swift, so relentless is the fury of Dart when it cries.*



Staverton Ford is the point below Staverton Weir, where we often take boats out close to where my parents used to live. It used to be the route of a cart track from Staverton to Dartington and Totnes, and was the main route across the river there before the bridge was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

These may sound like tall stories, but I have my own evidence of the Dart's power when it is unleashed. I was about 15 or 16 and had a small boat at Totnes on a mooring in the Mill Tail, the side stream that comes from Totnes Weir and joins the estuary where my parents live now, beside the Steam Packet inn. One morning I had a call from a friend in Totnes Boat Club to ask if I could help to look for all of the club's boats which had disappeared. In the early hours of that morning a policeman was walking across Totnes Bridge on his beat. It was low tide but he heard a roar from upstream - the cry of the Dart - and was terrified to see a wall of water coming towards him out of the dark. Presumably some trees had become lodged on the weir and formed a dam. When it broke free it released a flood of water, trees and other debris washed off the banks. The sudden flood picked up all of the boats moored in the main river just below the bridge. They were on chain risers connected to two heavy ground chains, each with 2 heavy anchors at their upstream ends and a third downstream. The boats, chains and all six anchors were flushed down to the end of the wharf opposite Steamer Quay, a short distance beyond where we launch for our

annual camping trip. They were in a tangled mess of chains and trees that took days to unravel, with a lot of damage to the boats of course. Some boats were missing and, as my boat was moored in the Mill Tail and was unaffected, I was able to go down the estuary to search for them. I found one friend's boat high on the mud at Duncannon, four miles downstream, with a hole in the bottom. I think it must have been taken there in the surge, otherwise it is unlikely to have found its way up onto the mud, particularly as it was holed and the incident happened at low tide.

The Devon based folk group, Show of Hands, perform a great song "Cruel River", which tells a tale of the Dart, similar to that of John Edmunds. You can find it on YouTube, or on our CD shelf next time you visit us.

**Barry.**

### DUCK RACE

We have received another cheque from the Fordingbridge Roatary as a thank you for our help with the duck race this year. We will be donating the cheque to the Disabled canoeing association again.

Thanks to all who came down to help.



#### Dorset Disabled Canoeing Unit

Affiliated to Canoe England and Associated with Poole Harbour Canoe Club

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24<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Dear Barry

As secretary of the DDCU I have had passed to me your recent letter addressed to Paula giving details regarding the generous donation of £200 to our club.

May I say a huge thank-you to you all at Ringwood Canoe Club for the donation; we will be looking towards purchasing some new kayaks this year and your donation will help to swell the coffers in this respect. Our aim is to broaden the range of craft that we have on offer, particularly now that we have a larger number of paddlers attending.

Here's wishing us all kind weather and good paddles in 2015!

Regards

Jon Dalton (Secretary)

### SUNDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> MARCH. TORRIDGE TRIP.

We woke to a wet and windy morning, well some of us did and some woke later to the sun shining and the birds singing asking where all the rain was. Viv After another hearty breakfast, which we all needed to prepare for the adventure ahead.

The decision to walk along the coastal path from Trentishoe or to some of us renamed Trenchfoot. We

were going to loop back round walking up beside the River Heddon before navigating up and over the hill. Well you couldn't go wrong on the coastal path, well not without dire consequences. So with the wind blowing a tad fresh, the sun shining and beautiful scenery the mood was good. The conversations interesting and extremely varied - it could only get better.



We decide to stop for lunch in a sheltered spot with glorious views of the sea and the Heddon valley.

When Jo mentioned her most recent trip to the cinema the conversation took a low turn so we swiftly moved on.



With Barry in the lead the group seemed to spread out to re-join at the bottom of the valley, not true to RCC usual form Annie had a slip and no one had a camera ready. Hope the elbows ok Annie.

We took a short detour to the small bay at the bottom only to find that we were on the wrong side of the picturesque river. We were discussing the route down in an open canoe when reaching the bay quickly decided it would not be such a good idea as you would be flushed out into some large surf crashing in.

We then headed back up the valley to catch up with Annie, Dave and Jo who decided not to go for a closer look at the crashing waves.

The weather started to turn slightly darker but hoping to get back before anything too heavy came in.

What none of us took into consideration at this point was that Bev and Barry were leading the way. Which



means some rain or hail has to be encountered at some point in the day. Well, true to form it started as a little light rain and moved on to proper skin removing hail.

At this point we had to head up and over the hill. Bearing in mind Barry had the map.

We all huddled together while Barry went in search of the footpath. On returning he assured us that the animal track that we had passed was the correct path.

Let's just say there's nothing like finishing the day with that warm red glow only obtained from wild wind, hail and a good climb. Great company and of course a drop of Deakin adventure.

Many thanks everyone for making the weekend great fun. [Lisa Cox](#)

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### **TORRIDGE (DOT'S VERSION)**

We were once again staying at Dave and Annie's friends lovely holiday cottage. Sea Lock Barn, our usual place was once again let out for the entire winter,

Most of us met up in The Black Horse pub in Torrington, where we all had excellent meals.

Sue and Viv cooked breakfast for everyone and we headed off for a days paddling.

After a fair amount of rain, the river was flowing quite fast and it was decided not to do the top section as its pretty narrow in places. With the combination of high water and overhanging trees it wasn't an attractive option.

We made fairly fast time and didn't linger too long over lunch as there was quite a cold breeze.

When we got to Taddipore weir, we all got out to inspect it. It had a large towback most of the way across. The only place we could have run it had a branch in the way, so it was a definite portage.

We then decided to play silly wotsits to see how many people we could fit into my Canadian before getting back on the water.

The two concrete slabs either side of the fish steps were completely under water and it made it difficult to see where the chute was but we all made it down OK, After the take out we headed for a well earned drink in the village of Frithelstock, the back for a great dinner cooked by Jo R, with Annie doing a mean crumble to follow. Nice one guys.....Dot



After some more easy paddling, with the current doing most of the work we were soon at the town weir.

The one unusual sight was of several Rea's in a field beside the river, we did a bit of a double take on that one