



CANEWS

March 2017

EDITOR'S CORNER

Thanks to all contributions to this edition.
Another short one but a good one.
It would be great to get some more of you
doing write ups, after all it is your chance to
tell everyone what a great time you have had,
and to write about some of the antics that your
fellow paddlers have been up to.

CAPTION COMPETITION



'what have you done with the canoes ??? ' Nigel W

And you thought that Tim's van looked a mess..... !
Nick L

RCC converts a dumper truck into a "smutt
spreader" by judicious placement of key members,
Simon B

HALF A DART CAMPING TRIP

In an effort to cater for as many people's
wishes as possible, I decided to try running
two Dart camping trips on consecutive
weekends instead of one, with the bonus of
smaller groups to make camping and catering
easier.

The first began well with a lovely afternoon
and evening to paddle down from Totnes, or
equally from Stoke Gabriel or Dartmouth
where some chose to park their cars to suit
their own plans. New member Simon Whipple
could find nobody to travel with and was
concerned about finding the campsite on his
own. He planned to arrive at about 7pm and I
assured him it would be easy to find; a classic
"Can't miss it". He called from Totnes to say
he'd arrived late but would be with us soon.
By the time he'd packed his kayak it would be
dark so I listened and looked out for a torch
on the river and at the time I expected him to
turn up he phoned from an unknown place
where the river "narrowed and is blocked by a
tree". Clearly not the main estuary, and I
guessed he'd turned into a channel in the salt
marsh known as Hole in the Wall. He isn't the
first to make that mistake, and it is easy if you
follow the right hand bank in pitch dark.

He thought about camping there and finding
us in daylight but I persuaded him to retrace
his paddle strokes out of the marsh and turn
right. This was important to me; he had the
bacon.

Meanwhile Jonathan and Bev had already
launched a rescue mission and found Simon
making his way towards us. All was happy
and harmonious in the camp. Sarah &
Jonathan also turned up after dark and Sarah
was hopping with excitement as Jonathan
had caught his biggest fish ever. Cleaned
then grilled over the fire, we all had a taste.
Nice fish!

The next day was a big event on the Dart.
Nearly 1000 wild swimmers took part in a 10k
swim from Totnes to Dittisham and it was a

wonderful spectacle as they snaked in a long line down the estuary. Unfortunately, some of their safety boats and jet skis did nothing for the simplicity and tranquillity of the occasion and their wash gave our canoes a good bashing on the shore before we launched. We slowly overtook most of them on the way downriver, and stopped at Dittisham where my sister had a stall selling her artwork, notably a commemorative map of the Dart specially drawn for the event. The finish looked great, with wood-fired hot tubs for the swimmers and great value food stalls that had Lee slobbering and almost tempted to spend some money.

We had plenty of food on board though, I was looking forward to Sarah's home baking and the rains were threatening, so we had an early lunch on the beach then set off for Dartmouth as the first drops began. Georgie was my bow paddler and as we passed the anchor stone it was wonderful to see her eyes light up as we saw a seal very close by.

The rain increased steadily during the early afternoon and we moored at a Dartmouth pontoon in what felt like a monsoon.



We had to wait a couple of hours for the tide and dripped embarrassingly into in a tea shop, where we sat watching downpipes and gutters overflowing for as long as seemed respectable. Ice creams were inappropriate, even to Lee, so we shopped for dinner then took refuge in the bandstand while the fire brigade pumped out the market square. I went ahead to the canoes and spent a happy half-hour bailing. All four had about a foot of water inside and looked as though they'd been capsized, not just moored in the rain. Of course anything that wasn't in a good dry-bag suffered and was unpacked in a state

somewhere between damp and destroyed. The young Burke girls were amazing, smiling through it all, but rainy canoe trips can take their toll on a three year old so Maia fell asleep in the bandstand and Freya, seven years senior, held her sleeping sister on the canoe seat under an umbrella for the paddle to camp.



Knowing the bad forecast, I'd taken the precaution of packing some dry kindling from the first campsite in a plastic bag, but that had been underwater in the bottom of the boat, so wasn't very helpful. Anyway, we got to the campsite, rigged tarps and soon had a big fire going thanks to the ever-faithful candle-end. A very happy time we spent there with Bev's wonderful camp fire catering and a few bottles.

On Sunday Dot & Cindy left for Dartmouth and then home to prepare for more paddling adventures in Greece. The rest of us chose a more arduous option of paddling to Stoke Gabriel against the tide, and mostly against the wind.



We had lunch on the beach with more of Sarah's perfect pies, then some went for a walk around the village and Sarah & Jonathan

left the trip as their car was parked there. The diminished group of two Simons, Freya, Maia, Lee, Georgie, Bev & I had a quiet paddle back to Totnes where us Deakins had the pleasure of a meal waiting at my parents' flat on the riverside.

Unfortunately the second planned weekend didn't happen as people gradually dropped out for all kinds of reasons from pressure of work through health and injury to recovery from operations.
Barry.

THE 2016 CANOE FESTIVAL

I and a few friends attended this event in 2015 and came back saying what a great time was had.

Having seen the photos 6 of us decided to attend the 2016 Festival. Its held on the river Drome in the Dauphine Provence in south west France.

I had holidayed in this area several times but never canoed there and knew what a beautiful area it was. The Festival itself takes over a whole campsite and has direct access to the river.

Our group consisted of Ian and Margret, Mike Worth, John Wheeler and Jenny Dennet (both PHCC members) and myself.

We drove down over a couple of days, taking the back roads and enjoying the journey. We arrived on the Thursday evening and planned the next days Paddle. The facilities were great and most impressive were the four huge tepees that would seat the 350 paddlers.



Having found out where we could put in and paddle back the 14k to the campsite, we then spent a frustrating half and an hour trying to find it. Eventually we stopped to ask directions at a camp site. The site owners told us to park our vehicles and use their slipway at no charge.

We had the river to ourselves and enjoyed paddling in the crystal clear water. The foothills of the Alps with snow capped mountains in the distance made it a wonderful experience.



That night a band was playing in the tepees and the bar was open, a perfect day really.

Saturday was The Grand Decent, when everyone puts in a couple of miles below the lovely old town of Die and paddles the 28k back to the site.

Unfortunately there is a boulder garden just down from the put in and someone in a hired sit on baulked Ian and Margret and the both took a dip.

That evening, we were served a superb meal and the raffle took place. Needless to say

none of our party won the paddling trip to the Greek isles and even worse, we didn't get the white water canoe.

All the time the festival was running, there were workshops running, covering a myriad of subjects, so some of us did these on the Sunday.

Monday the rain started, and boy, it didn't stop.

Our next paddle was to be the Tarn Gorges.

We found a site with direct access to the river and Ian placed 3 marker stones up the bank to check the rise of the river.

Next morning they weren't even in sight. We couldn't believe how much it had come up. As we watched, we saw huge branches being swept down and the river volume increase perceptibly.

Yep, sightseeing was agreed. Further down river is the Pas de Souci. This is a section where massive boulders force the river to flow through and under the boulders.

The noise of the river was quite intimidating, although we were some 50ft above it on a viewing platform.

There have been several fatalities at this spot and there is a memorial to a German paddler who died in 1981, they then found his body four months later.

The forecast for the rest of the week was rubbish so we headed for the Dordogne.

We later heard that a group of British paddlers had gone to the river Allier with a coach. It was so high that they never got on the water all week.

The Dordogne was a lovely paddle, again we had it to ourselves.

Getting to the put in was interesting. I hadn't been part of the planning so as Navigator I did a double check when I saw that we would be paddling 40 miles. I think we would have needed head torches for that trip even with a good flow.

A quick change of plan and we were shown to a put in by a lovely fisherman who took the trouble to jump in his car to guide us.

It's a lovely scenic river with cliffs rising out of the river and châteaux guarding its banks.

There was a good flow so the paddle was easy.



As for the Gorges, well another trip to the Canoe festival will be on the cards. It's a really fun event, lots to do and everyone is so friendly. The plus is the trade stands are happy to let you take their equipment on the river to try it out.

So let's hope the rain gods are away the next time we get to the Gorges....

Dot.
