

# Tonbridge Canoe Club



## Newsletter September 2009

### *A Note from the Editor*

Thank you to all of those who contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Please send contributions for the November edition to me by November 8th.

Due to other commitments, I am looking to relinquish the role of Newsletter Editor. If anyone would like to take on the role, in the new year, please get in touch and we can have a chat about it.

Tessa.Dias

tessa.dias@hotmail.co.uk.



## Leamington Spa 10th-12th July

Despite the rather doom and gloom weather forecast, fourteen brave souls made the journey to Banbury for the annual touring weekend. Arriving Friday evening (apart from one father and son double act that woke me up at midnight!) we descended on the pub for a traditional Friday night meal.

Commendably the group were all prepared for a nine o'clock departure in the morning and we soon met up with Chris from Banbury canoe club, whose knowledge of the river proved invaluable as ever especially when we came up to a chute that had been blocked off since the last time we had been there. Given that most of the group were in touring boats, the wise decision was made to portage the chute, though Alison was happy to go down the chute in her own boat and keep her feet dry!

Determined not to lose out on their race training, Phil and Rory took the Mirage out on Saturday, getting some decent sprint training done and managing to keep the boat upright until capsizing mere minutes from the end after what Phil claimed to be "stability testing".

Mysteriously, we found two elaborate decorated panels floating in the canal which Ed was able to identify as Sikh religious icons though the group were unable to agree on how they might have ended up floating in the canal. After a unanimous decision to go to the pub once more, rather than risk the weather, we were all up and raring to go on Sunday morning having done the difficult job of taking down tents, having breakfast and being ready to paddle by nine o'clock.

The car shuffle was organised as usual with great precision so that the only real challenge of the day was paddling! Apart from one notable incident soon after launch in which Jane and Jeremy found themselves in the K2 being trapped between two canal boats (not their fault!) the day went without a hitch and a enjoyable paddle was had by all. Thanks as always to the organisers for all their hard work and thanks to the shuffle drivers who make the second day trip possible.

Rory Clark

## Club Code of Conduct

It is the policy of Tonbridge Canoe Club that all paddlers, volunteers, coaches and parents show respect and understanding for each other and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the Club. The aim is for all paddlers to improve performance and have fun.

Everyone involved in the club should abide by the Club Rules and Policies.

### Paddlers

- Take care of all property belonging to the club or club members
- Treat other club members with respect at all times - on and off the water- treat other paddlers as you would want to be treated yourself.
- Control tempers and avoid behaviour which may inconvenience or upset others
- Co-operate and listen to your coach or club officials

### Club Officials, Coaches and Volunteers

- Consider the well being and safety of paddlers before the development of Performance
- Develop an appropriate working relationship with performers, based on mutual trust and respect
- Make sure all activities are appropriate to the age, ability and experience of those taking part
- Display consistently high standards of behaviour and appearance
- Follow BCU and club guidelines and policies
- Hold the appropriate, up-dated qualifications and insurance
- Encourage paddlers to value their performance and not just results
- Never condone the use of prohibitive substances

### Parents/Guardians

- Help your child to recognise good performance, not just results
- Never force your child to take part in sport
- Never punish or belittle a child for losing or making mistakes
- Publicly accept official's judgements
- Support your child's involvement and help them to enjoy the sport
- Use correct and proper language at all times
- Set a good example by applauding good performances of all paddlers

September 2009

## Swan Round Up - 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> July 2009



Last summer I was talking to a friend who told me about the bi-annual swan round up at Abbotsbury in Dorset. She described how a flotilla of canoes and kayaks were used for a two day exercise to force the swans from the east end of the Fleet Lagoon to the west end, where the Swannery is located. The birds, which typically moult at this time of year and are unable to fly, are then herded into holding pens, from which each swan is carried by volunteers to be recorded/ringed, vaccinated and health checked before being released back into the lagoon. This sounded like a great experience and so I contacted Abbotsbury Swannery to enquire whether they would accept a few extra paddlers. Dave Wheeler, the Swan Herder, confirmed that we would be welcome and so it all began.

### Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July

At 9.30am we joined a large group of keen paddlers at the Royal Engineers Bridging Camp in Wyke Regis for our briefing by Dave Wheeler. We were informed that all boats (approximately 50 kayaks & canoes in total) should form a line, evenly spaced, across the width of the lagoon and slowly travel west for 7 miles. Dave confirmed that although the majority of swans were already waiting for us at the other end of the lagoon our objective was to ensure that any swans we encountered were herded in front of us and didn't escape through the gaps.

Through out the day we steadily paddled the seven miles through very choppy water and not one swan got past us. We were encouraged when Dave started the days debrief with 'Of all the years I have done this job...' but couldn't really argue with the '...you are the worst line I have ever seen!' With our four swans (yes, that's right, four) merged with the waiting herd of over 600 we felt we had successfully achieved our goal.

The day ended with some of the paddlers wading across the lagoon to secure a boom intended to stop the gathered swans from all making an escape bid.



### Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July

We arrived at the Swannery at 5.30am for a final briefing by the Royal Swan Warden Professor Christopher Perrins. The Professor explained, with diagrams, the precise military operation that was needed to herd the swans into the holding pens.

Unfortunately I don't think we paid enough attention as it seemed a lot more difficult to put the plan into action whilst on the water than it looked on the flipchart, even under the direction of the Prof. As he shouted instructions to us through the loudhailer you could frequently hear the words 'fill those gaps', 'you are doing nothing, and 'useless!'. Although there were a few escapees the remaining swans were successfully herded into the holding pens.

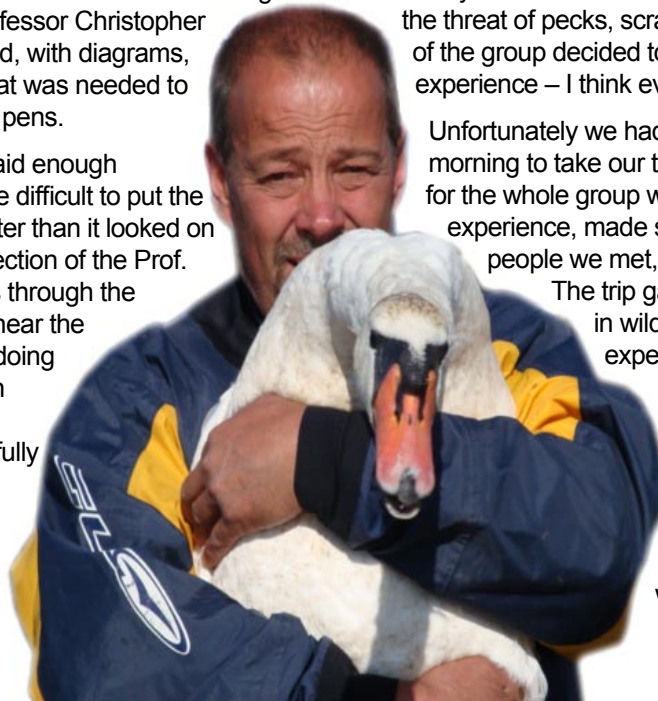
Once the boats were landed we were invited to assist with the next stage of the process

and carry the swans to and from the experts. Despite the threat of pecks, scratches and feather lice most of the group decided to participate. What a fantastic experience – I think everyone should get to hug a swan.

Unfortunately we had to leave mid way through the morning to take our tents down, but I think I can speak for the whole group when I say that that was a fabulous experience, made special by all the interesting people we met, the group that went from the club.

The trip gave us a unique chance to assist in wildlife management, enabled us to experience rare wildlife including hares on Chesil Beach and allowed us to paddle in usually restricted waters.

Now if only those docile swans in Dorset could have a chat with our friends on the Medway, life would be much easier!



**Samantha Croker**

## River Cuckmere 5th September

This was our last scheduled tour for the season and we had a great day. There were 14 of us including two of our friends from Banbury CC. The weather was kind and we had a tide-assisted doddle of a paddle upstream. We managed to avoid upsetting the swans too much as we scrambled out at Alfriston for our lunch break. An unusual spider caused some interest – was it a wasp spider? – luckily it was not in my boat!

Jeremy made the mistake of ragging Jane when he did not have a clear escape route and got thoroughly splashed for his pains! It seems he just likes to get wet by any means!

On the way back, it was windy as usual, nothing we couldn't handle, but Pete seemed to have a small problem as I overheard him say "I had to undo my zip to have a scratch"! It turned out that he was talking about his spray deck and some water seepage! Phew!

As usual thanks to those who transported boats.

We will be planning next year's touring schedule in the next month or so – watch out for the details on the touring notice-board. We will have the new trailer then so more paddlers will be able to join the tours – all are welcome.

**Alison Wilkins**

## Latest Club News

### Saturday organised activity sessions

...will continue until the end of October, as follows:

19th Sept	Down river trip
26th Sept	Canoe training session
3rd Oct	Leigh barrier paddle
10th Oct	Slalom around the poles
17th Oct	Plastic boat activities
24th Oct	How long does it take?

The Monday evening summer paddling sessions draw to a close on the 28th September as the dark evenings are drawing in.

### Guest paddlers

The club has a duty of care to everyone using the club facilities. We have guidelines and training programmes in place to ensure that everyone paddling is trained to a suitable standard to be responsible for their own safety on the water.

This does however mean that we cannot allow members to bring along non members as guest paddlers, except in the following circumstances:

- If the guest paddler is experienced and can prove their ability to at least BCU 1 star standard (i.e. pass slip or BCU certificate) then a member can take them as a guest paddler on an occasional basis. It is customary to make a small contribution to club funds in these circumstances.
- If the guest paddler is a novice or cannot prove their ability to BCU 1 star standard, then they may only paddle in the presence of a club BCU qualified instructor.

Either way you should get permission from a club committee member in advance.

So if you want to bring along a guest member you either need to get proof of their ability OR arrange for an instructor to accompany you on the water. Please do not just turn up and expect to paddle. Sometimes we can arrange a quick informal assessment for experienced paddlers who just happen not to have never done any formal qualifications.

Key holder members found to be taking non members on the water without complying with these guidelines run the risk of having their clubhouse keys withdrawn.

Sorry, but safety comes first.

### Winter race training in the dark

The evenings are drawing in and in a few weeks time the clocks will change and there will be no more light evenings until next year. The racing group will continue training at 6pm through the winter on Mondays and Wednesdays. Obviously it is pitch dark at this time, so if you are joining in these sessions please remember the following:

- You must have a forward facing LED light (preferably red) on you or your boat, so that everybody can see you approaching. THIS IS COMPULSORY – WE WILL NOT LET YOU ON THE WATER WITHOUT THIS. Cycling lights are ideal. No bright torches please as these just ruin everyone's night vision. If you have a rear racing light as well, all the better.
- This is not the session to be trying out new wobbly boats. Use a boat you are confident in and can survive clipping the odd tree or riverbank without falling in.
- Only paddle in the dark if you are familiar with the river in the daylight. You need to know where you are going and where the overhanging trees etc are, as you won't always be able to see them in the dark.
- Always pass on the RIGHT hand side of those coming in the opposite direction, even if it isn't the racing line. Only go around the Island in an anti-clockwise direction.
- If you do fall in, get your boat to the bank as quickly as possible to avoid it being rammed by somebody else. Keep an eye on the river and shout if you see the red light of a boat approaching so they know you are in the water and to slow down and help you.
- Always stop to help a swimmer in the dark, even if they say they are OK.
- If the river is flowing fast, we will cancel the session and not allow any club boats on the river, as obviously it is extremely dangerous to paddle a flood in the pitch dark.
- If there is ice on the river we will also cancel the session as it is impossible to see ice in the dark and it damages the boats, besides also being very dangerous.
- The club strongly recommends wearing a buoyancy aid even if you don't normally, especially if you are in a K1 and not staying in a group for the whole session.
- If you are a junior you MUST stay with your accompanying adult on these sessions. Buoyancy aids are compulsory for juniors.

The common sense guidelines must apply for everyone on the water, whether you are race training or not, in order for them to be effective.

### \*\*\* New boats update\*\*\*

In the last newsletter we listed a load of equipment that was being purchased from this years subscription income.

Anyway, some new paddles and buoyancy aids are on order and will be arriving very soon, along with some sea kayak spraydecks. We have also managed to buy two excellent condition second hand K2s from the Great Britain Kayak Team for the price we had budgeted for one boat. Once we have obtained a few replacement footrests and seats, we'll have no excuses for not going faster in them, as these boats have been to several world championships!

### Medway Marathon – 2nd August

23 club members took part in this years Medway Marathon from Allington Lock to the clubhouse in Tonbridge.

Conditions were warm and sunny with a bit of a headwind, so record times were not expected for the 18 mile course with 9 portages. For many it was the first chance to try all the Environment Agency's lovely new landing stages at the portages, which made getting in and out a lot easier and quicker than in the past. Club members all did very well and recorded the following times:

Clive Neale	2:20:39
Andy Davey	2:22:46
Matt Stenhouse	2:45:45
Yael Ford	2:45:47
(Course record veteran lady)	
Dean & Lorriane Martin	2:47:26
Gabor & Tibor Levai	3:02:15
Jeremy Clark	3:03:03
Nic Johnson & Rob C2	3:03:21
John Mathieson	3:04:56
Phil Clark	3:05:46
Paul Cooper	3:20:56
Will Carus	3:22:31
Rory Clark	3:32:11
Alison Wilkins & Jo Smith	3:35:40
Peter Clark	3:48:18
Sarah Davis & Jane Blunt	3:46:04
Phil Munslow	4:27:52

Well done to all those who paddled, and a big thank you to everyone that helped on the day. A profit of £188 was made, mainly due to sponsorship of the prizes by Tripper, arranged by Matt Stenhouse, to whom another big thank you is due.

### Tonbridge Divisional Race – 23rd August

I don't know whose idea it was to organise 2 races in 3 weeks, but our annual marathon race also took place in August. Despite it being holiday season, 22 club members raced on the day. The weather was hot and sunny which was great for spectators, and even better for ice cream sales from which we made some extra profit!

Club members results were as follows:

Div 3 K1	2nd	Pete Ford	1:52:41	12 miles
Div 4 K1	4th	Matt Stenhouse	1:20:37	8 miles
	5th	Nick Barton	1:33:29	
Div 4 K2	2nd	Clive & Phil	1:09:38	
Div 6 K2	4th	Dave & Jeremy	1:21:59	
	5th	Nick & Will	1:22:00	
Div 7 K1	5th	John Mathieson	0:44:42	4 miles
Div 8 K2	2nd	Rory & Robin	0:45:00	
Div 9 K1	1st	Rory Hopcraft	0:45:41	
		(Promoted to Div 8)		
	5th	Rosemary Clark	0:52:54	
Div 9 K2	6th	Peter Clark	0:55:41	
	10th	Liz Gallop	0:56:59	
	3rd	Greg & Nick	0:45:35	
U12 boys	6th	Jo & Adrian	0:50:38	
	5th	Sam Mathieson	0:26:34	
U10 boys	3rd	Jonathan Neale	0:24:36	

A big thank you to everyone that helped on the day. Your efforts raised another £517 for club funds, which we've put towards new boats. Special mention and thank you must go to Colin who got stitched up with working out the times and results for 103 paddlers all on his own!

The number of paddlers and good results meant we have qualified for the 2009 Hasler inter-club competition finals, which only feature the most successful 4 clubs from each region from all 10 qualifying races. Well done to everyone who has helped achieve this and good luck at the final.

### Racing Calendar

- 
- 27<sup>th</sup> Sept** Hasler Finals – Divisional marathon inter-club finals for the most successful four clubs in each region. We might just qualify this year thanks to our new paddlers!
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Oct** Elmbridge Marathon (Weybridge) – nice Thames race where all the top paddlers turn up.
  - 11<sup>th</sup> Oct** Windsor Marathon – Another race run by a very friendly club on a lovely bit of the Thames close to Windsor Castle.
  - 18<sup>th</sup> Oct** Richmond Marathon – Normally the final divisional marathon of the year for us. Can be a bit choppy and fast flowing as its tidal, so K2's for the wobbly people at this one!
  - 29<sup>th</sup> Nov** Ross Warland Time Trial – Banbury CC. The first canal race of the winter. 20 miles with lots of portages but a nice safe canal. Time to try out those Waterside and DW K2 crews! Excellent bacon butties at the end at Banbury CC.
  - 6<sup>th</sup> Dec** Stour Descent – Its a long drive to this West Country venue, but the race is one of a kind. Lots of trees, weirs, and other obstacles. Its a bit like the Upper Medway trip but in racing boats and much more cold water. Its 15 miles but you don't notice that as its so much fun.

Details for all these from Clive Neale 01732 361759