

# The BAD News

## January 2007



**Bri competes at Slalom,  
Winter Series event, Orton Mere (Peterborough)  
December 2006**

# North-East trip, November 2006

by Ros

Traditionally we go to the NE the first weekend in November (when access to the Tees and Tyne opens) for the Tyne Tour. However this year for logistical reasons we postponed the trip by a couple of weeks, which given the water levels at the Tyne Tour was no bad thing (reports from people who go every year were that Warden's Gorge was the lowest they'd seen it, despite the release from Kielder reservoir).

So on Friday most of us skived off work (except for Alan, who is a hardworking student, which means that he doesn't have any lectures on a Friday) and headed up the A1 to paddle the Tees. Martin filled us in on detours to avoid the Black Cat roundabout and on depot locations of certain stores and hence where certain lorries were likely to be heading to / from. Given that he was driving, it is fortunate he didn't send himself to sleep!

Water levels were nothing like last year (when the rocks at Abbey Rapids were covered and the river was brown) so we opted for a short section from Barnard Castle to Abbey Rapids. At the get-in Martin announced he had a couple of thousand photos left on his camera, and after about 3 photos of Andy getting changed, he ran out of photos and decided that the previous number he had quoted was actually the picture size in pixels.

The run was pleasant but uneventful. At Abbey rapids themselves we spent some time re-running them, experimenting with different lines, catching a tight eddy on river left, videoing the excitement, and wondering who'd lost an extremely high-heeled shoe whilst portaging.

We then headed into Barnard Castle, a quaint little place where parking is possible but a pain, for a café stop, and then on to Mark and Lynda's comfortable 4-bed pad in Spennymoor where we grabbed a quick shower and headed out for a curry.

On Saturday morning the levels in the Lakes were expected to be high. Oz had driven up on the Friday night to visit relatives in Hartlepool, and since we didn't have his number we woke Colin just in case he had the number, which he didn't. Finally Oz rang and Andy dissuaded him from paddling, as he expected it to be a bit too exciting for a first river trip! So we headed the 60 or so miles to the Lakes district where levels were much much higher than in the East. Only Andy and Martin in the group had run the Greta before, and said it was a tedious scrape. We met Barbara at the get-in [paddling with Edmonton canoe club, as apparently our trips are too difficult for her] who told us it was easy grade 3 all the way. Andy was dubious, but didn't want to leave anyone to kick their heels in Keswick for the day, so we queued for a spot at the get-in amongst the other large groups, including lots of open boats.

We paddled the river in 2 groups of 4 until the first rapid. The first group had all run straight through a large hole so had thoughtfully got out to warn us, particularly Alan, that it was there. We watched 3 guys in inflatables punched through the hole and then opted for routes around it.

We carried on down the river which was a good bouncy grade 3 with some long-ish rapids, watching boats of different shapes and sizes float past / get pinned (I rescued a floppy hat which had to belong to an open boater!). Alan sensibly opted out of some of the rapids but did extremely well on those that he did paddle, especially the one he didn't want to paddle but around which there was no real portage route.... About 2/3 of the way down we met Barbara emptying her boat for what was apparently about the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, unconvinced that it was a grade 3!

We pulled into Keswick around dusk. The first of our groups had rescued a couple of kayaks that had floated past the get-out, one of which contained car keys! An excellent day on a new section of river.

In the evening Martin and Andy played footage taken at Abbey Rapids on Friday and contrasted it with footage from the much higher levels the year before. Mark and Lynda prepared an excellent meal (curry again).

On Sunday morning we opted for a long but fairly easy section of the Tees which only Mark had done before. Here the Tees is a nice wide river - it is generally easy to see the whole group - and the rapids are short so swims are short-lived. As we waited for the shuttle at the get-in - fairly slow grade 2 water - Andy announced that this was more moving than anything Oz had been on before. Both he and Alan did extremely well however - one of Oz's swims had something to do with the rest of the group picking a smallish eddy, which he then fell out of the back of and led the next rapid backwards! One rapid towards the end deserved inspection mainly because it went round a bend and was, by the standards of that river, quite continuous. Both Oz and Alan did fine, however Nigel notched up what he claimed was his first ever swim, and got his boat pinned at the bottom. I was glad he had a full drysuit on so could climb in to attach a line.

We reached the get-out before dusk and stood around scoffing various food items before saying goodbye to Mark and Lynda, and heading home.

Thanks to Andy B for organising the trip, to Mark and Lynda for the wonderful accommodation, and to Barabar for providing the entertainment on the Greta!

Paddlers were: Andy B, Alan, Martin, Adam, Ros W, Paul C, Nigel C, and Oz

## IVEL REPORT - 2<sup>ND</sup> DECEMBER 2006

By Gerald

I found an e-mail on my computer inquiring if I could write a report for the Ivel trip. I thought now how do you make one of those sound exciting, ah well here goes.

The trip was organised by Roy as a prelude to the evening Christmas Bash, a meal and a drink. Now that's unusual for BDCC.

I casually drove over to Beeston. Planning to arrive ten to fifteen minutes before the booked time for the meet. With plenty of time to have a good read of the paper before everybody else arrived.

Imagine my surprise when I arrived to find five people already running round, unloading boats and starting to get changed. A BDCC meeting starting early, never. So I joined in the rush. With choruses of "we know where your going" from Roy's family aimed at anybody who ventured towards the bushes.

Everybody changed. I was volunteered as the shuttle driver by Ros. With the shuttle run completed, we are all back at the start point. Very efficiently organised if I must say so.

I am told the early start has been caused by a couple of people bottling out. I don't think that's the right word, but you know who you are and because of you I didn't get to do the crossword.

We are on the water. Ros leading in her Kayak, Alan in the Invader, Rachel and Alicia in a Canadian, and me in the oil tanker/T Canyon and Roy and Luke in the duo, talk about little and large, I don't know how the bow wasn't two to three inches off the water.

So we are off down the raging Ivel. The sun is out with very little breeze, a pleasant day for it. Paddles flashing in all directions from the Canadian.

We turned right at the junction and were met by two swans guarding the top of the first drop. After waiting a few minutes for the guarding angels to move on, they seemed determined no one should pass, so the decision was taken to portage.

We continued on to the next drop. Some people kept on about a low bridge somebody had mentioned, but we navigated it without any problems. Considering the practicalities of the make up of the group and the boats being used the decision was taken to portage again.

Launching was easier said than done. Ros seal launched down a nearly vertical drop, collecting a load of weed at the bottom. Somebody who will remain nameless moved back up river about fifty yards and launched his boat down the bank. Unfortunately he wasn't in it at the time. Seconds later it was escaping, floating clueless, sorry crew less down the centre of the river which at this point had quite a bit of flow. Ros had a struggle to get it to the side and keep it there on her own. The errant crew member had to scale down the bank through the vegetation and rejoin his boat at a spot I do not think he would have picked from choice. I got my boat down the bank and launched it.

The Duo and Canadian had to be moved further down river where the bank was lower before they could be launched.

There was only one further incident as Rachel was getting to the Canadian, there was an Errrrr and she ended up partly immersed. She quickly recovered her dignity and successfully boarded, she took it all in a light hearted way. Luke and Elisa swapped places and we were away again.

The next drop was initially taken without incident. Ros, Alan, Roy and Alicia were o.k. Followed by the battleship Canadian. I told Rachel to watch out for the tow back half way through and to paddle for her life. This she did with no problem and I followed her.

Unfortunately Rachel had paddled so determinedly, that she missed the break out and continued a short way further on. Seeing as they were out of sight I followed and checked they were o.k. Only to be followed by Alan who told me that somebody had come out and they needed help.

I started to paddle back against the raging torrent, (I've got try to make it sound good) to be met by the other two boats drifting down intact. I was told half a story about somebody going surfing and getting stuck in a stopper. The other boat knocking the first one out and becoming stuck themselves. Roy doing some flash surfing and showing off for a while, more by fear than skill, also aided by an inability to escape, but eventually the boat came out of the stopper, off its own accord. Roy claimed it was all intended, but if you believe that ??? The end result was Alicia came out a lot wetter than when she started, muttering something about dad dunking her. The two adults had managed to keep themselves dry, never mind the little one.

Taking the next fork right. Down through the disused lock. With the flow and a straight run down, no obstructions or hazards to worry about, no problems were experience.

On to Tempsford Mill where the next drop was negotiated successfully. The two Canadian paddlers being full of themselves having enjoyed the two drops they had paddled without any heart stopping events.

We then had a steady paddle to the get out point. When we joined the Ouse, Alan was keen to play on the weir. Ros persuaded him not to as there was quite a lot of water coming over it.

As soon as we could see the get out, there were shouts from Roy's family "DAD, DAD, HERE'S THE PUB" can we go in? I can see they are good budding BDCC members.

Paul S and Caroline met us at the get out point.

After changing and loading the boats. Refreshments were taken at the previously mentioned hostelry. Then we made our own ways home. Some to prepare for the Christmas bash. Sorry kids you missed out.

It was a very good paddle. Very pleasant with fine weather, a small friendly group, with slightly more water in the river than normal assisting us on our way.

Thanks to Ros and Roy who organised the trip and to those who participated.

## Yorkshire trip, 7-8 October 2006

By Julian

Saturday morning started early at 5 a.m. Maybe it should have started a little earlier for me, as I arrived 35 minutes late at Adam's house. This was partly because I left late, and partly because I failed to notice the difference between pages 50 and 51 on the map. Fortunately, Adam was very understanding (or very polite), so I put my gear in his car and off we went, picking up Andy on the way. Twice more Adam's halo shone: his journey timing was impeccable – we arrived exactly 35 minutes late (sound familiar?) at Slenningford campsite – AND he did it without speeding!

It's some time since I paddled any white water (about 12 years) and unfortunately my wetsuit seems to have shrunk. I'm sure that's what it is. The two sides of the zip didn't really want to meet in the middle, but I zipped it up anyway, with no detrimental results apart from restricting my breathing. This effect increased as I added spraydeck, kag and buoyancy aid. However, undeterred by such trifles, I picked up my kayak and marched to the put-in.

Before we even got on the water, I was reminded of my least favourite aspect of canoeing: having to carry a heavy kayak on my shoulder for ages. However, this dark cloud quickly disappeared from my horizon when I got on the water. And what a great stretch of water it is, with plenty of break-ins, break-outs, waves, pour-overs, stoppers etc., not to mention a few rocks. There was plenty of variety, too, enough to occupy a wide range of paddling abilities, ranging from the elite of the BADCC hot shots at the near-professional end of the scale, down to some canoeists who didn't actually get in their open canadian, but just controlled it from the bank with two pieces of string. I suppose it's a bit like flying a kite instead of a real plane. They've got sense, though – they didn't get wet when their canoe capsized! However, they still wore dry suits and buoyancy aids, just to be on the safe side.

We all had a lot of fun playing on waves and stoppers, working our way up eddies, ferry gliding, and running down the rapids. I was intrigued by the club system of queuing for stoppers: everyone should wait patiently for their turn, except certain members who can just go straight past everyone else to the front of the queue. I never quite managed to work the system out, but I'm sure it was all completely logical. What I did work out was how to go farther down the river than anyone else when ferry gliding.

*[editor's note : Julian only got as far as writing this much, but any contribution is better than nothing, so I'll briefly finish off, though the trip was over 3 months ago now so my memory of it is a bit hazy!]*

We spent the evening in the local pub, as usual, and had a warm night on the campsite (really) except for Andy & Shirley, who'd booked accommodation for wusses, and Justin, who had friends to go and stay with. In the morning we headed off to the Wharfe (which wasn't particularly close!), meeting Justin en route. The Wharfe was low but paddleable and has a few slabby river-wide drops, a more continuous rapid, a large sloping weir and then Linton falls, a serious grade 4. Alan took a swim on the continuous rapid, which was to convince him to invest in a drysuit, but he made a brave attempt at the rapid considering that it was his first river trip. The weir is impressive (i.e. scary) in height but has a jet so is safe to run, but Paul S rafted up with Alan to help him down. At Linton falls we watched someone from another group swim the last bit of the drop, which didn't look pleasant, so that put everyone off except for Paul S, who ran the rapid well. Andy B would have been tempted, but he was in the Duo with Shirley and I don't think it would have done the relationship too much good if he'd taken her down it!!!!

Thanks to Paul S for organising the trip. In as far as I can remember, paddlers were: Paul S, Justin, Andy & Shirley, Alan, Ros, JC, Julian, Adam, Colin, maybe a Clarke or two? And there must have been someone else!

## Greta Carnage, by Barbara Pigden

On the weekend of 18/19 November I decided to go on a trip to the Lake District with another canoe club. This trip was already arranged when Andy announced his North-east trip and somehow full board and accommodation sounded good. Our club decided to do the river Greta as they had done so on previous trips. This is a grade 3 river so, as I am reasonably comfortable on grade 2 with the occasional grade 3 rapid, I joined the trip. I now know that the grading system is a complete “wet finger in the wind” assessment.

It was a very pleasant surprise to bump into Andy et al at the put in for the Greta; they had driven over from the north east in search of good water. I expressed confidence in my ability to do the river, wiser heads were not so sure

We got to the put in and comments like “it’s very high and stonking along at quite a rate” did nothing to deter us. We set off with Lee, a highly skilled paddler as our leader, with Conal, Ian, Alan, Paul, Keith and me. As paddlers we were all looking for our first full on grade three river.

We set off at quite a rate and noticed an absolute dearth of eddies. I was (pretend) leader at the start as no-one else wanted to even think about it ( I though I’d get my bit over before it became too hairy) so a couple of grade 2 rapids done at high speed and three eddies found, my job done.

Lee then took over when we got to the grade 3 bit; “follow me” he commanded as though we had any other idea of what route to take. The rapid was un-remitting as we crested and then sunk into the waves and smashed through the haystacks; water was pouring in all around us. Ahead of us a massive stopper (to me) loomed with a back wash of about 4 feet (it was way over my head height) - Lee punched through the stopper, Ian went through, I followed. It was as though someone had grabbed the back of my boat and turned it over violently as the stopper trashed me. I was out of my boat, swimming for the first time with three others from the group.

We took the opportunity to scout the next rapid. As I walked down the bank I said to myself while I looked at the hazards, “I can do that and maybe that and, if I’m still upright, that and that but that stopper looks hard”. In other words the next rapid seemed to go on for ever and whilst I could possibly cope with the individual elements the prospect of linking everything together so that I was still on a good line or upright, was not good. Lee suggested that throw line cover at the big stopper would be useful so I selflessly volunteered to stay bank side with my throw line. The guys all came through the rapid like pros though one did have the temerity to capsize AFTER my position so the line stayed in it’s bag.

Once all back in our boats again we were back into the seemingly never- ending high water rapids, every yard a struggle to avoid a rock, negotiate a drop, punch through a stopper or just keep upright in the turbulence. No eddies to stop in or even vaguely catchable. We all went over a drop then the mainflow ran straight under a tree. Paul, in front of me, went straight under the tree capsizing as he went; thankfully he and boat separately came through the other side. I tried desperately to reverse ferry glide to the side (I should have tried to break out of the main flow into the middle of the river). I slowed down long enough to do a “controlled” pin and laid hard onto the tree with all my strength whilst trying to keep my boat upstream of me. As I peeled off my spray deck my boat was whipped off me by the flow and pinned under the tree. I pushed my boat out for someone to catch but by now there were four of us in the water again.

We all made it to the bank and the boat and paddle search took some time. We were on the wrong side of the river so Lee had to paddle back up river and then ferry glide over. I then held onto his boat as he crossed back over the river.

Back in our boats once again we battled on. Next was a broken weir and then CONTINUOUS, FAST, HIGH RAPIDS.

We did the weir drop and I went over again, as did four others. Five bodies, five boats, five paddles all loose in the water. I remembered my defensive swimming position, feet well up and in front, looking for an eddy to swim to. There were no eddies and the banks were more dangerous with trees, than the main flow. It was academic anyway as actively swimming was futile in the power of the water. I was constantly flipped by the water as I tried to maintain my defensive swimming position, rocks bashed into my thighs and turned me head first. It was difficult to breathe as water kept pouring over my face. I was petrified to see a large stopper coming towards me, if you think they look big from a

boat, tried looking at them from a “flotsam” viewpoint. Apparently you are supposed to curl up into a tight ball when going through a stopper to minimise your grab-ability to the stopper, but you don’t need to remember that because instinctively that’s just what you do. I prepared for impact, screwed up tightly and prayed for a swift exit from the stopper. It was horrible as I spun through it but mercifully also rocketed out; back swimming and still struggling I saw no eddies, no let up in the force and I felt my strength draining, knowing that the rapid just continued with more rocks, strainers and stoppers and drops down stream and that I was totally powerless to avoid any of them. Breathing was very difficult, I became concerned that I would lose the will/consciousness/ energy to keep righting myself as the water pummelled me and flipped me. The possibility of entrapment or pinning filled me with fear.

Seemingly out of nowhere Lee paddled out to get me, amazingly I was a very compliant rescuee and didn’t try to stand on his head in an attempt to save myself, he pulled me out and then returned to fish out the other four (who complained that Lee’s “ladies first” rescue protocol was sexist)

We looked a sorry bunch, limping from the many rock bashes but thankfully no breakages; we climbed to the footpath and started the 2k walk into Keswick. Lee and Conal, who had remained upright brilliantly, then disappeared for hours in search of boats, paddles and kit. We did pick up boats on the way as they and other paddlers had found stuff and pushed them onto the banks. Keith kept spirits up by wise-cracking that we had really just done a Triathlon- we had paddled, swam and now hiked (with boats) our way to Keswick.

We then all got the chance to spring into action when a canoeist came past us in difficulty. We dropped the boats, jumped down to the river bank and formed a human chain, holding each others buoyancy aids, as he leaped out of his boat and grabbed onto us. He still had hold of the canoe’s painter so we all hauled in his boat. We got to Keswick to find the last of the boats in the park-but we had lost two paddles, one being my beloved Seven2 paddle. (It has my name and telephone number on it so I live in hope).

I reflected on how in the course of the afternoon I had gone from worrying about dying, worrying about my son who was with the following canoe party, worrying about my boat to finally fretting about my paddle. The saying “don’t sweat the small stuff” springs to mind. (but please do call if you find my paddle).

The next day I got back in my boat nervously as we set off to do the river Rothay, a grade 2 with a grade 3 non-portage-able rapid. The water levels had dropped significantly (apparently that’s what happens in the lake district) and I was assured that there was plenty of cover and it was a good river. I did the trip without incident, albeit without my favourite paddle but awaited the grade three rapid with trepidation. We got to the end of the trip and I asked what happened to the rapid- “we did it by the bridge” they told me- “that was no grade three like yesterday’s grade three” I said.

Lessons learned:-

1. In high water all bets are off
2. Do not go passively as a follower, ask about safety cover, speak out if you have concerns about the river. Lee did an heroic job but even he couldn’t be in two places at one time-we could have done with at least one other expert paddler at the back.
3. Don’t assume it’s always safer nearer the bank- I saw what trees do to passing paddlers.
3. Check all safety gear, throw-line, bivvy bag etc- when you need them you need them urgently.
4. Pay attention to first aid courses, it can be dull bandaging mates or inflating dummies in class but when you need it for real you’ve got to know what you are doing.
5. When things go wrong on the river they can go rapidly and horribly wrong very fast- be as ready as you can be for it.

**Winter Series Slaloms, Orton Mere**  
**By Bri (articles originally written for the local papers)**

There was success for Baldock and District Canoe Club on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November at the first of the Winter Series Slalom Events held at Orton Mere in Peterborough.

The water level at the start was at the highest level seen for a number of years, though this did not deter over 90 competitors from across the UK from taking part, including some of the country's top paddlers. All the paddlers from all divisions competed for the overall title in their relative class, with prizes being awarded to the best in each Division as well.

The NRA had to make changes to the Sluice gate that controlled the river flow due to high rainfall the night before the event and a large wave train proved to be the downfall of many paddlers.

First up for Baldock and District was Brian McCusker in the Men's Kayak, and his overall position was 21<sup>st</sup> despite a penalty. This run was also good enough to earn him first place in the Division 2 Vet category.

Next it was the ladies turn and Carmel Buttimer put in a good performance despite not being able to practice on the very difficult course to finish Fourth in Division 2

Michelle Grudzinsky put in a very polished performance to finish in first place in the Ladies Division 3.

In the Canadian Singles, Baldock's Paul Stephens also proved successful by placing first in Division 2

Buttimer and Grudzinsky team up for the Canadian Doubles event and again there was more success as they gained first place in the Division 4 event.

After the first run were complete, there was a significant change in water levels with the NRA closing the Sluice and creating a flatter but more boiling course. This left little choice for the organizer to declare that first run results would count as final.

December 17<sup>th</sup> saw the second Winter Series Canoe Slalom, on the River Nene at Peterborough. This is the final event of the year and Baldock and District Canoeist Brian McCusker was again in action competing in the Men's Division 2 Kayak.

With all Divisions mixed together for the overall title and prizes for each Division and Class, there was a lot to compete for, for all 60 competitors.

In sunny conditions but with temperatures of 2 degrees, the competition was hot. On a very tight course with a fast flow and very confusing currents, Brian's first run was very fast on the first half of the course leading up to the testing gates in the main flow. The NRA had again been helpful, by manipulating the weir gates and providing a large train of waves to test the competitors. Brian coped well with these gates, but a very slight touch on one of the gates in the flat section was noticed and a 2 second penalty awarded. This was still a very fast time ahead of a number of Division 1 paddlers.

His second run was not quite as fast, and more penalties were also incurred, so Brian's first run was taken towards the overall placing. His time was good enough for 15<sup>th</sup> Overall, 2<sup>nd</sup> in the National Division 2 and 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional Veteran (for paddlers over 30).

The next event is The Stone Series which takes place in Staffordshire, starting on 21<sup>st</sup> January and Brian will be looking to keep his winning streak going into next season.

## **Baldock Babes (polo) results:**

### **4<sup>th</sup> October:**

Won 6-0 v ULU and 2-0 v St Albans C

Drew 1-1 v Avon Ladies B

Lost 6-0 v Old Speckled Hens (who are currently at the top of the league and are looking for promotion next season)

Not bad for a team doosed up with painkillers and other medication to keep them going throughout the night.

Every player scored in the first game alone... The standings at the end of the evening were:

Claire 3 goals

Carmel 2 goals

Michelle 2 goals

Kirsty 1 goal

Lesley 1 goal

Thanks to the support team of Colin, Andy and Julian who were so surprised after the first game that they threatened to drug test us!

### **2<sup>nd</sup> December:**

After gaining some confidence after the last tournament in Stockport the intrepid Baldock Babes trooped up to Derby hopeful of similar success.

The evening started with a game against ULU. Lesley and Carmel scored some lovely goals (mainly set up by the fearless Claire) to give the Babes a 5-1 victory in a great start to the evening.

The second game was against Avon Ladies B. The Babes has drawn against the Avon Ladies in the last tournament but went into the game fired up and ready for action. Even with some fantastic delayed acting from the Avon Ladies to gain sympathy from the refs the Babes were victorious (3-1) with goals from Michelle and Carmel.

After a 4 game snack break where the Babes munched their way through a delightful picnic of party rings, donughts, french fancies and other healthy foods in direct opposition to the team talks going on at other corners of the pool it was time for the next game...

The next game was against the league leaders Old Speckled Hens who had been steam rolling over the opposition for some time. Could the Babes stand in their way backed up with comments (about the Babes) from the England coach of "they look like they could take on anyone tonight"? At half time the Babes had held off the Hens to 1-0 which was unbelievable. The second half was played as fiercely as the first half especially by the Hens who seemed to be a little peeved by the Babes. It was 4-0 to the Hens at full time which was the lowest victory margin by the Hens all evening :-)

The final game was against St Albans C. Another nice game in which Kirsty and Claire shot the Babes to victory with a 4-0 win.

Men's polo results from tournament 1 (supplied by Steve Bratton)

### BCU National League Div4 Central - Canoe Polo 2006/2007

Tournament 1																			
Team A				Goal Scorer				Total	Result	Team B				Total	Result				
1	Trent Tigers							0	Win	V	Team B	7	2	2				3	Lose
2	Letchworth	8	8	8				3	Win	V	St Albans F							3	Win
3	Blakedown B	6	1					2	Win	V	St Albans E	8	9					2	Lose
4	Trent Tigers							0	Lose	V	Cambridge Uni							0	Lose
5	St Albans F							0	Lose	V	L'boro A							3	Win
6	St Albans E	7	8	3	9			4	Win	V	Letchworth	8	5					2	Win
7	Blakedown B	5	6	6				3	Win	V	Cambridge Uni	7						1	Lose
8	Cambridge Uni	7	1					2	Lose	V	L'boro A	10	12					2	Lose
9	Blakedown B							0	Draw	V	Letchworth	5	8	5	2	7		5	Win
10	Cambridge Uni							3	Win	V	St Albans E							0	Draw
11	St Albans F	5						1	Lose	V	Trent Tigers							0	Lose
12	Letchworth	7	8	8				3	Win	V	St Albans E	9	6	9	3	7		5	Win
13	Trent Tigers							0	Lose	V	L'boro A	11						1	Lose
14	Blakedown B	5	2	6	2	1	5	1	7	Win	V	St Albans E						3	Win
15	L'boro A	16	10	16					3	Win	V	St Albans F						0	Lose
											Cambridge Uni	2	7					2	Lose

Goal Scorers:

Chris: 7 goals

Paul: 3 goals

Joe: 2 goals

Kirsty: 1 goal

## Paddling the Mighty Cam 11<sup>th</sup> November, by Pete Nash

Early start on Saturday the weather had forecast an overcast day for the rest of the country but we seemed to have missed it as I was awoken by Chloe, to an un-seasonally bright and mild autumnal day, strangely we tend not to be late for any morning activities any more in the Nash family, thanks to our enthusiastic get up and go daughter, so come 6:00 Chloe had packed her bag and was ready to go.

I am unsure what the neighbours think of us around here as there always seems to be a boat or two on the drive, canoes on the roof of the car, mountain bikes leaning up against the lamppost, or this weekend a chuffing great canoe trailer and canoes, giving for the local Bus driver yet another obstacle to manoeuvre round! (Many thanks to HYMB for lending me one, shame the small one did have a flat tyre, memories flooding back as we headed off on the trip to Wales several years ago when Mike drove the trailer to Symmonds Yat only later to discover the trailer had practically ripped the bolts out of the trailer mounting brackets.)

Grantchester has a lovely get in point with weeping willows, mill races and even an old nag in black to greet us on route, the pub and tea shop are just round the corner as Steph and Helen will testify to.

To break possibly another record, we were on the water by 10 and followed the meandering river into Cambridge for about 12.00. Tim paddled ahead and then found the slipway and rollers down to the Backs. A quick detour for one of Tim's sons to show him Daddy's old student digs by the river then we all had a guided tour of the Cambridge colleges, with history and folklore legends of what students got up to on the various bridges criss-crossing the river. Janet took out her mobile phone at the same time as some spotty young novice punt started to explain something about a story to his Japanese tourists. Navigator temporarily distracted and punt driver obscured, the Bow Bell was bearing down on the unsuspecting Marchioness, collision inevitable, it was a tad late to decide on whether canoes or punts have priority, all I can say is that I was glade I was the one sitting down and luckily I had Janet to blame for the lack of pilot-age. Picking Janet back off the bottom of the boat and dogging the pole of some old punt we headed off past the stunned and now a gasp tourists.

We paddled on to the lock and a point where twenty years ago there was a nice pub, alas now an expensive restaurant, then back to Maudlin Street and Henrys for lunch.

A quick phone call from Helen found Fee who was practically standing behind her at Kings College brought the rest of the party together and Lucy and Chloe played with Belle after her first new experience of the day - a park and ride bus!

Tim went shopping for presents with sons in tow whilst we all had a pleasant lunch, then the fun of rescuing the boats from Scudmores' punt pontoon started with a nearly wet egress from Natalie.

Helen and Chloe jumped into the boats followed closely by Belle and Steph who got into the boat with Tim and Jamie much to Tim's surprise (for Belle's second new experience of the day and yes Steph was in a boat - there are witnesses!). Natalie and Vicky got the best deal and only ended up with the pushchair as we headed back upstream, this time against the wind and tide. Belle got just a little bit excited by the ducks, and Tim looked slightly more worried as we headed back trough the line of punts and seemed quite enthusiastic when the punt rollers were back in sight and Helen and Steph decide not to tempt fate and walked the pretty route back to Grantchester instead.

All in all we had a great day and the trip takes about three and a half hours of leisurely paddling, with an extra hour on top for a riverside lunch, linked with a perfect autumnal day.

For more information on open boat trips check out the canoe website [www.songofthepaddle.co.uk](http://www.songofthepaddle.co.uk), which has details of trips, paddlers forum and paddling tips and advice. Thanks to everyone for a fantastic day.

Adventurers included Peter, Helen and Chloe Nash; Tim, Jamie and Sam Plgden; Janet; Natalie and Vicky; Nick Tilley; Steph and Belle with Bri, Fee and Lucy giving directions and support from the bank!

## **A girly trip, with a load of random people I hadn't met before...**

### **By Ros**

I've always been a little sceptical of girly trips, as they don't involve much paddling. However I received an email from Gina, asking if I could help out with leading on a girly paddling trip to Devon, paddling Dart Loop / lower Tavy etc. Gina was in the same uni canoe club as me though not at the same time – I've met her a few times at uni reunions / hen dos etc, and bumped into her once at the Treweryn though I didn't actually paddle with her on that occasion. There was no-one else on the email list whom I knew, but I thought I might as well give it a whirl, even if it was a bit odd that people I'd never paddled with wanted me to lead a group!

Over the next couple of weeks the emails flew, with more and more names being added. The ring-leaders were Gina's friends in Reading who are ex-Reading university, and Gina's sister-in-law who is a Phd student at Bristol, but at one point it appeared that every female fresher in the country had been invited, and looked like a bit of a nightmare. The name "Dafni" appeared too, which I assumed (correctly) to be "Daffers" who posts frequently on the forum on *ukriversguidebook*, and sounds a bit mad, as well as being fairly awful at canoeing for someone who has been paddling for about 8 yrs. There was also a few dubious hotmail addresses along the lines of "kayakingchick87" (not a real address to preserve the privacy of the individuals, some of whom I never met, but 87 suggested dob in 1987 which made me feel old!)

As the event drew closer the list dwindled to Reading uni cling-ons, people who live in Reading, Bristol uni and me. There were some last minute car hassles in Reading as the guys – some of whom are the other halves of those on the girly trip – were having a separate trip but had been taken out by a LH drive crane / run over a badger, so were a couple of cars down. Still, the prebooked accommodation had fallen through so Sharon had booked Runnage farm bunkhouse nr Princetown, sleeping 12 with a large dining area & efficient drying room. It was great for us, but for a bdcc trip would be too far (1.5 miles) from a pub – this being a studenty trip Gina had to sit on a crate of beer on the way down; then Dafni bought more beer down there unnecessarily so Gina made sure it was well packed in the boot for the journey back! The Bristol group sorted out food for the whole group – one dinner, 2 cooked breakfasts and 2 packed lunches, for an amazing 7 quid a head with minimal faff.

In the end there were 10 of us, and I grabbed a lift from Reading with Sharon, Gina and Dafni. After a lot of faff due to lack of uprights, some lockable wired straps which were impossible to tighten, and stories from Gina about how a driver from Bristol uni lost a roof-rack, caused a pile-up, caused injuries, wrote off 2 cars, and got 6 points (a ban for a new driver), followed by a slightly more cheerful trip to the chippie, we set off.

On Saturday levels were clearly up so we headed over to the Tavy at Tavistock, and split into two groups, mixing people up. Most of the girls said they never get to lead / rescue on a river as they paddle with macho blokes who take over if they hesitate at all (most date other paddlers, as is usual in uni canoe clubs....). I thought they were exaggerating, but was happy to stay at the back of our group as I often get to play Mother Duck, and at the back you get to play on waves. That is, if the front of your group ever stops..... I had thought Sharon was exaggerating about lack of experience leading, but as we shot past lots of playspots (yes, that scrapey bit of grade 2 was up!) I realised she really was inexperienced. Second in our group was 'Fozzie' who apparently prefers to be at the back, third was Dafni who can't read rivers or roll, and fourth was Bryony whom it turned out had massively under-sold her ability at the get-in, and should really have had a turn at leading. I fell off the back of the group immediately helping a numbie rescue some paddles (he could get hold of them, but not at the same time as his own paddles, so he couldn't do anything with them – Gina was relieved to be able to tell them they weren't qualified to join her group!) and Bryony struggled to attract the attention of the front. Eventually we regrouped and bounced on down the river, till Dafni found a

rock to clip and took a swim. Her boat pinned on a tree branch a couple of metres out from a tree-lined bank but fortunately upstream from a large eddy (albeit on the other side of the river). So we had to portage back upstream to a gap in the trees, ferryglide, and push our way through the undergrowth to get to the bank by the boat, climb waistdeep (at least on Bryony, who was the shortest in the group) into the eddy, attach a rope, and swing the boat out round the branch and back into the eddy. At this point most of the group were happy to watch from the eddy opposite, but I did feel guilty when Bryony had completely lost her voice on Sunday and was too ill to paddle.

Further down was an impressive set of stoppers which we ran blind, resulting in a triple capsize at the front of the group. Luckily the first two rolled and so we were able to chase Dafni & boat again, but the paddles were lost. Dafni is the first swimmer I've seen to produce splits from her own boat, so we were soon on our way again.

At the confluence with the Walkham we passed a large group – I guess Edmonton again, as Tim Pigden was amongst them. I glanced upstream at the footbridge which finished half-way across the river when we ran it in spate in 2000; this time the river was high but within the banks. We inspected the major rapid on the Tavy, pulled out of the eddy to run it and rapidly eddied out again as Gina appeared chasing Hayley's boat. (Hayley is a fresher who'd only been to Symonds Yat before but had bought a brand new EZ because it was on special offer but hadn't invested in air bags. As she swam 6 times on Saturday I was quite glad to be in the opposite group to her!) Boat rescued, we continued on fairly uneventfully, with Dafni finding her paddles propped upright in an eddy and then finding that with numb fingers the splits were impossible to disassemble. For a bit I paddled holding 2/3 of the splits along with my own paddles (which makes my lower arms ache!) but then Bryony used a penknife to get the splits apart.

At the get-out we loaded up a few boats and stood around waiting for the other group, along with large numbers of Tim's group. Soon enough Hayley and Jane went for a double capsize under the bridge, missing the getout and providing Gina, Di and Claire with more excitement than they really wanted! On the drive back Sharon and Gina spoke to their other halves, hearing the one guy had swum in a stopped on the Ogwen for a minute and another had had a trip to hospital for stitches....

On Sunday we opted for an easier river, so headed across to the Barle. This has always been a boring scrape, but on this occasion there was enough water to do the section down to Tarr steps (we usually do a lower section). This was a grade 2 river with lots of small features, excellent for teaching break-outs, ferryglides and leading. The run was much less eventful, which was a relief to everyone.

At the get-out we met one of the group of 36 from Sussex uni who'd been getting on at Tarr steps – he'd swum 3 times in the first km and been sent back to the get-in to wait, sitting in his soggy wetsuit. Unfortunately our cars were full so we couldn't offer him a lift to the get-out, and as we drove past Dulverton at dusk (*eddy out* hand signal from Claire out of the window of the car in front, and a guidebook was thrown from one car to the other!) there was clearly still a lot of faff going on the river so I guess he had a bit of a wait. There was a post on *ukriversguidebook* the following day from someone who lost 2 boats on the Barle (grade 2 bimble) which I assume was that group!!!!

Whilst chatting on the way back Sharon and I established that we did actually meet on Ramsay Island last May – she was in the group with the girl with the suspected dislocated shoulder [which wasn't actually dislocated it turned out] whom Charles gave a lift back to the mainland to in his rubber bus. Small world!

All in all, the trip exceeded my expectations, though this had a lot to do with the weather, and the fact that the final trip size was more manageable than the 20+ who were on the list at one point. The girls all got on and paddled, with the less experienced keen to learn. There was no portaging, though the lack of eddying out above rapids may have contributed to this! I realised that in some ways I am lucky to paddle in a more mature club going through a baby boom with fewer advanced paddlers available on trips away, but I also feel we are much more patient when encouraging less experienced paddlers to lead than some uni / 20 something groups might be.