



# Eagle Canoe Club Newsletter

## Spring Summer 2013

Hello and welcome to my first attempt at the newsletter. First I must apologise for any poor punctuation and spelling. Anyone who works with me will know these are not my strengths.

This is the first newsletter of the new season. A big welcome to any new members that have joined this year, I hope you like the club. A big hello to anyone that re-joined this year, I hope you achieve all your aims this year, be it gaining a star award, paddling a river you have had your eye on for a while, mastering a different discipline, learning to roll or hitting Tims 100 miles of new rivers challenge.

I myself wanted to paddle 100 miles of new (to me) white-water rivers this year. So after 3 trips to Wales during the truly tropical winter we experienced I have managed about 700 meters of new white-water river. I was beginning to feel a little disheartened until Tim mentioned that the challenge starts at the beginning of the club year, so I have gained another four months and lost only 700 meters of freezing cold river Dee.

I am sure many of you have heard of the sad passing of Chris Wright recently. A few members have written some words about their memories of Chris so I will just add that Chris was massive figure at Eagle and he will be sorely missed.

A big thank you to Mark for producing the past newsletters, I didn't realise what a big task these could be until I started making this one.

So please keep sending in your articles and photos as it makes my job much easier and it makes for much more interesting reading if you don't have to sit through the same usual articles from the same usual contributors. So without any further time wasting here is an article from a usual contributor – your Chairman – Stu Pontin. **Pete**

## EDITORIAL



## WELCOME TO EAGLE

A warm welcome to all our new members and welcome to Pete's first edition of the newsletter which he has inherited from Mark.

This year seems to have got off to a good start and Colin's induction group appears to be working well. The decision to go back to star groups also appears to be giving more structure to club nights and is resulting in more regular attendance by members.

Notwithstanding this, we always seek feedback from all members (new members views are especially valued as you see things with very different eyes to the rest of us), to tell us what is working and more importantly, what isn't. Please do not wait to be asked, but pass on any comments to your coach who will feed back to me and to the coach meetings which happen throughout the season.

We also encourage members to get involved in formulating (and organising) the programme, so don't be shy, all ideas are considered – we got several good ideas put forward around a camp fire on the Waveney trip (mostly alcohol inspired !) but they will be taken forward for further discussion. **Stuart**



# FIRST TRIP

Following the birth of my daughter last February, paddling has taken a bit of a back seat. However, with spring arriving it was time to get Ella afloat for the first time. The first challenge was getting a buoyancy aid. As we were in Wroxham we popped into Norfolk Marine where we were helpfully able to try on a range of buoyancy aids. The difference in fit and comfort was soon seen and before long Ella was the proud owner of a bright yellow Nemo buoyancy aid – a good reminder that internet shopping may sometime save you a few pounds but sometimes you really do need to try on a range of goods to ensure you get the right one for you.



Next challenge was picking a day when the conditions were going to be good. A fine May day was forecast and we headed to one of my favourite put in spots at Hautbois which is between Horstead Mill and Buxton Mill. How long before she gets bored, will she try and jump in, will she want to paddle were all questions we had on our mind.

We got afloat and surprisingly Ella sat happily on a kneeling mat, contently watching the river go by. I am sure she thought she must be strapped in like she is on every other mode of transport we take her on!! We gently paddled up towards Buxton mill, the only real concern being the intense sunshine which Ella's young skin tends to quickly react to. Towards Buxton Mill we strayed into the territory of a very protective swan which decided to chase after us back downstream for about 500 yards – it simply wasn't going to give up. We returned back to Hautbois, having had an uneventful trip, happy that our first paddle had been a complete success and hopefully the start of a pastime Ella will enjoy as much as we do. **Mark**

## WEEKEND PADDLING ON THE WAVENEY – PERSPECTIVE OF A NEWBIE



Short version – It is the best fun I have had with my clothes on! Thank you for everyone on the trip for making it such a lovely time. I learned so much in those two days.

More detail?

Lizzie and Joel did a great job of organising the trip and were ably supported by some of the more experienced members. It was fascinating being part of the whole preparation process of getting the right boats and cars and people. It was relaxed yet professionally done. The main strengths of the trip were that everything was a team effort and we had a laugh.

The first day was the toughest day, lots of shallow bits, portage and fallen trees across the river which just added to the fun. I felt safe yet valued as a team member. Some paddlers went over the weirs Tim said were ok. We saw lots of wildlife; sweet calves, old enough be separated from their mum, who came right up to those who went to see them; swans on their huge elaborate nests; ducks, geese, a barn owl and scary bulls with their harem daring us to come ashore.



Tim often took the lead and we could see his hat floating across a field in the distance. Colin sometimes took up the rear and entertained with his unique sense of humour. Stuart, Kate, Jane and Pete were keeping us safe in the middle. We all looked after each other.

Homersfield pub field was our moss topped sandy soil overnight stop. Interesting landing techniques! Pitched tents and got out the refreshments – didn't see a lot of tea? Wonderful menu at the pub but I opted for the crocodile we caught earlier. I didn't include the story of catching it in case I alarmed junior members. ;-) By the end of the evening we had a deeper insight into the character of my fellow paddlers.

Next day, there were a few shallows at the beginning of the trip and a fallen tree but the river changed character as we got closer to Bungay. Wider and deeper. There was more wildlife and a lovely shelly beach where we stopped for a break. We met novices in hired canoes with interesting techniques on the Bungay loop. Joel spotted some female wildlife and was ready to offer assistance but backed off when their mates turned up and he realised they were quite safe. Close to the end Tim sent us two by two through a quiet idyllic section surrounded by some amazing buildings and gardens. Shhhhhh... he told us. We were pretty tired at the end and loading up the boats was a more serious business as we all thought ahead to a long hot bath.

When we arrived at the club there was a huge party at Gibraltar Gardens and two cars had blocked the gates! Grrrrrrrr said all. Adam spotted a telephone number on the front of one and we got rid of that one. The GB manager was apologetic and lovely and did her best to find the remaining driver but that took some time. How Stuart got the trailer of canoes and Pete his van through the narrow gap between the ILLEGALLY parked car and the gate - I don't know.

I haven't mentioned everyone by name but I enjoyed the company of all those on the trip. Thank you all again for such a wonderful weekend. **Rosie**



## 100 MILE PADDLE CHALLENGE

For anyone motivated by articles in earlier newsletters and seeking to paddle 100 miles of new water in the current membership year you may like to know the following mileages from the club to some of the local river spots, also the distances paddled on our club trips to date.

Eagle downstream to Cow Tower, Norwich - 2 miles  
Eagle upstream to Hellesdon Mill - 2 miles  
Eagle upstream to Sweet Briar Road bridge (outer ring road) - 1 mile

And for those who have joined recent club trips...

04-05-13: Syleham Mill to Homersfield - 8 ½ miles  
05-05-13 : Homersfield to Bungay - 6 ½ miles  
01-06-13 : Ross on Wye to Symonds Yat - 15 miles  
02-06-13 : Symonds Yat to Monmouth - 6 miles

All distances are one way only.

Keep your own record of how far you've paddled and tell everyone at the end of the year!

**Tim**





Every now and again you meet someone who fundamentally changes your life and inspires you to do something, and then all too soon they are gone. Following the loss of my Mum and now Chris I have firmly come to the conclusion that you have to get “busy living” and not put off to tomorrow what you should be doing today (especially when the sun is shining !)

I have only known Chris for 7 years but I have spent many memorable hours with him and he has taught me many valuable lessons both on and off the water, and he has been pivotal to the way I have chaired the club over the last few years. I will miss his guidance and support. You will hear from others about their memories and time with Chris and I do not propose to go further other than to say we can all contribute to Chris’ legacy by seizing the day and getting out their paddling and having fun (the decorating will wait to a rainy day)

Carpe Diem

**Stuart**

It was with great sadness when I learnt of Chris’s illness and ultimately his passing away. Having paddled at Eagle with Chris for around 14 years, like many, my paddling and life have been strongly influenced by Chris’s passion and enthusiasm for open canoeing. Chris will perhaps be best remembered for his camping trips to the river Wye and Lugg where he has taken many members to get their first experience of real moving water. Indeed my first memories of paddling with Chris are on a trip back in the late 90’s where Chris, myself and Tim found ourselves paddling a new stretch of the river Wye that the guide book had indicated as ‘a few small fast flowing stretches’. 500 meters after the put in we turned a corner and came across a whole series of interesting drops, rapids, holes and lots of rocks. Certainly not what we had expected, but under Chris’s watchful eye we successfully navigated the stretch with grins that stayed with us all day.

A few years later I had the pleasure of another memorable trip again with Chris and Tim – in these days the club was much smaller and in particular the open canoeing section was nowhere near as popular as it is today. This time we headed out on the OCA rally in Pangbourne. I doubled up with Chris for an unlikely paddle – a canal trip through Reading – with about 14 portages!! This trip however, was one of these to always be remembered. A lovely warm summer’s day, a new piece of water and yes, lots and lots of carrying the canoes! Towards the end of the trip we paddled straight through the centre of Reading, hundreds of people were sitting on the steps down to the river and it felt like we were on stage at a theatre! A few hundred yards further on we found another surprise. Traffic lights on the river. For whatever reason they stayed on red, so we jumped the lights and paddled down a very long and narrow tunnel, just wide enough for a canal boat expecting to have to paddle fast backwards any second.







The following day I was being assessed for my 3\* - I was one of Chris's first 3\* trainees and he thought it would be good to get me assessed independently of Eagle to make sure he had taught me to the required standard. Of course, with Chris's training I passed.

We had the fun of many more trips to the Wye and in later years the River Lugg and a number of tales spring to mind. On one trip Chris decided that he could run and launch from the beach area where we had stopped for elevenses. A large splash and a roar of laughter from everyone saw the very unusual sight of Chris having capsized!! On another trip to the Lugg where the weirs were proving great for shooting, Chris decided to let Colin take his camera and shoot the weir first so he could film Chris's decent. Unfortunately for Chris, Colin decided to take a swim half way down the weir and Chris's camera was also taken for a swim!! Luckily it survived in the water proof case.

Away from paddling, Chris loved gadgets and being outdoors. We had a lucky escape one afternoon exploring Thetford forest by cycle when I ran over an adder whilst we were racing round the 'black run'. Chris thought it would be a good idea to go back and see if we could find it and check it was ok.. Not really the best thing to do to a very annoyed snake but we turned round to try and find it and luckily it had slithered off into the undergrowth.

Back at Eagle, I can hardly remember a club night in the 14 or so years I have been a member when Chris has not been present running a coaching session. Indeed it's probably fair to say that every paddler that has done open canoeing at Eagle in this time has benefited from Chris's experience, patience and attention to detail in one way or another. Another favourite of mine had to be when Chris did 'all in sessions' when we capsized all the open canoes and then had to get everybody back paddling again.

Chris was the organiser of many local trips and was often found at Horstead Mill teaching people how to break in and out. Other trips that Chris ran included paddling at Bawdsey where it was possible to enjoy playing in the surf on an incoming tide and many trips on the river Waveney. Chris had a passion for paddling on the Norfolk broads and again, he introduced me and many members to another of his favourite paddles, the Dilham Canal, along with many other paddles from the likes of Wroxham, Barton and Ranworth.



Chris loved experimenting with different styles of paddling and had self-taught himself some American freestyle - namely the 'wedge' and 'axel'. When you try to replicate these strokes you start to appreciate the skill and knowledge that Chris possessed. Chris was also keen on canoe sailing and had constructed his own sailing rig although my favourite memory was on the river at Southwold when we were all having a sailing race and Chris was standing up sailing with a golfing umbrella!!!

Without doubt the club and the sport has lost a great asset and friend, although Chris will continue to influence future generations of paddlers as the coaches and members who he taught pass on his skills. **Mark**





As many of you will know, Chris had been a key member of the club and was an active coach for 25 years, introducing hundreds of people to the joys of paddling and especially to canoeing.

At the recent committee meeting a number of suggestions were put forward as memorials to Chris and I would like your involvement in these. The committee agreed that we will do the following:

- 1) We will buy 2 canoes from the money donated to the club in Chris' memory and we would like to name these in his honour. We would like members suggestions for names which remind you of Chris or of places or events that Chris was passionate about. For example, he loved the River Wye, he taught himself how to free style paddle with lots of uniquely named paddle strokes, and he was access officer for the broads and introduced many people to some of its quieter and more picturesque areas.
- 2) We would like to put up some pictures of Chris in the club room. If you have any good pictures of Chris which you think would be suitable then please forward them to me. We will then get members to choose their favourites to include in a montage.
- 3) Integral to Chris' character were his paddling hat and the rubber duck on his canoe which accompanied him on many trips. We would like to develop a 'cartoon' character of the rubber duck which could be put on the canoes we buy, but which could also be developed to feature in future designs for club hoodies etc. If you have any artistic talents please get creating. Again we will put the different designs out to members to choose their favourite (I have attached some pictures of Chris with hat and duck)

We hope to announce the chosen boat names, photos and duck character at the BBQ which is being held at the Eagle pub on Saturday 3 August. All entries should therefore be submitted by 12 July to allow time for members to select their favorites.

If you would like to contribute to Chris' memorial fund please make cheques payable to Eagle Canoe Club and give them to me on any club night. Chris also requested for donations to Viva (Vegetarians International Voice for Animals) so if you'd rather make a donation to them, again give it to me and I'll ensure it gets passed on. **Stuart**







## GINGER NUTS ON THE WAVENEY

Now, before you get the wrong idea there was no smuttiness on this trip. The ginger nuts of the title refer to one of the many and varied snacks which were brought along on the trip from Sylham Mill to Bungay on the 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

I went on my first weekend trip with Eagle Canoe club in 2011 and have been on 3 or 4 since then. Although I've organized a few school trips abroad its taken a couple of years at Eagle to feel confident enough to volunteer to organize a trip for Eagle paddlers.

Lizzie and I joined Eagle around the same time in April 2011. In the middle of winter 2012/2013 a conversation in the Fat Cat pub ended in us deciding that we wanted to do the Waveney Trip again. As no one else seemed to be volunteering to organize it we were gently encouraged to take on the responsibility.

In this article I'm going to run through some of the basics of organizing a paddling trip so you too can feel confident about volunteering to organize a trip. The rewards and benefits are great. It gives you a great sense of satisfaction to help give people this experience. Its also nice to share out the job of coordinating trips so the coaches don't have to do everything.

The first thing we did was to have breakfast. (Yes, more food!) We found a copy of the 2011 trip letter and adapted it for the purposes of our trip. We also had a look at the route on google maps and a good old fashioned OS map to familiarize ourselves with where we would be paddling and where the weirs were and the entry and exit points etc. This was done over coffee and maple syrup pancakes at the Reading Rooms.

We were then informed that there wasn't actually that much else to organize until 3 weeks before the trip. At this point Damon was heavily involved in the organization. His role in coordinating names of interested people and ensuring the safety of the trip was pivotal. However, due to the top-secret nature of his role, you will have to try and obtain the details directly from him.

(Back to reality) An email was sent out about a month before the trip telling people that the trip was happening and announcement was made each week at Eagle club nights. The email gave details of the trip and a deadline for names and deposits which is generally about two weeks before the trip. In the meantime a phone call was made to the Black Swan pub at Homersfield where we would spend Saturday night. The deal was that if we ate in the restaurant we could camp for free otherwise it would be £10 each a night. The food is exotic and good quality.

A week before the trip we assembled the list of names which included information about what boat people want to paddle and their transport needs. Some people will kayak, others will canoe solo or tandem and some may swap.

The complicated bit which Lizzie and I....oh yeah and Damon... couldn't do was to sort out which boats and transport to take and how many vehicles we would need. So Si and Stuart were enlisted to do this bit. On the day they were needed again to work out the shuttle requirements so we had most cars and equipment at the finishing point.



That is pretty much the extent of the organization required for a 2 day trip on a lowland river such as the Waveney. On the actual trip the experienced coaches were responsible for the safety of the group. If there had been no Waveney veterans there Lizzie and I would have planned the breaks and warned people about upcoming portages.

In hindsight, as one of the organisers, it would have been good to have a better knowledge of the river to know good places to stop for breaks and see sights of interest.

Hopefully this little summary of our trip planning experience will encourage others to volunteer to organize trips for Eagle Canoe club. Eagle coaches will always provide any assistance or guidance you need help with. The magic of calculating boats and transport is still an enigma to me and that is something to work on for next time.

The trip itself was wonderful. The weather was perfect. The campsite and pub food were very welcome at the end of a day of paddling. There's nothing like packing up your tent and slipping into the water on a sunny Sunday morning. The pace on the Waveney is suitable for everyone and curious cows and the occasional Kingfisher make a nice distraction. And fairly regular stops every hour or so give ample opportunity to consume your chosen snacks, whether they be ginger nuts, coffee or cold sausages. **Joel**



## PROGRESSIVE WHITEWATER ONE – SYMONDS YAT



Whitewater.....yes please!

Symonds Yat rapids are a grade 2 man-made feature, used by kayakers and canoeists for whitewater training. They are set within the Forest of Dean, straddling the River Wye and the name is said to have come from a Robert Symonds, a 17th-century sheriff of Herefordshire and "yat" as an old word for a gate or pass.

So, having woken in the morning to the chorus of the birds singing, and the sun beating down and glistening off the water, I headed out for a quick stroll.



The lodge itself is set within a canopy of trees, a small path winds its way down to an opening where the river and campsite can be accessed. The valley is bathed in an array of colour and the beauty of it all is just breath taking. Standing on the bridge, I could hear the rapids in the distance and was eager to commence the days paddle; albeit after a cup of tea and some breakfast!

After a kayak up stream and a spurt of energy required meeting the first of our rapids, we were split into groups and taught some of the basics, such as; ferry gliding, what an eddy is, where the eddy line is, and eddy out.....

With some confidence and skills under our buoyancy aids, it was time to access the larger rapid. Having not taking a dip into the waters yet, it was inevitable that my time spent dry was nearing an end! This of course happened (several times) during different manoeuvres throughout the afternoon. Having said that, the water wasn't too cold and a gung-ho mind set was flowing! During the afternoon session, much fun was had by all and many skills learnt; folk retreated back to the lodge with smiles and achievement written all over their faces.

The evening was spent chilling in front of the bbq and then, fire pit, with conversation and laughter flowing. It was soon time for bed, in order to paddle some more in the morning prior to packing up camp and heading for home.

To conclude, this trip was the first that I have attended, and as a new member, I was apprehensive regarding not really knowing anyone who was participating in it, and of course being unaware of what competencies I had in paddling to 'do' white-water. The coaches were fabulous and taught at a level that you felt comfortable with. The group dynamics varied in skill and everyone supported each other during the entirety of the weekend; from cooking to cleaning, to paddling.

Would I go again, and would I recommend it to others..... Indeed I would, with no hesitation.

A big thank you to all of the coaches who gave their time and experience, and to the group for making me feel so welcomed. Bring on next years trip! **Emma**

