

## **1948 Juniors Establish the DW**

Editors Note: The following is an extract taken from the History of Canoeing - BCU. Thus while we may think it was the Juniors who were allowed to compete with the Seniors it would appear that in fact it was the Seniors who were allowed to compete with the Juniors. The adults then appear to have taken over. The report indicates that the first rules were set by these Scouts. Frank Luzmore who retired at Henley in his attempt in the Summer of 1948 took on the development of the race after completing the event in 1949. As the 1950 rules make clear the race was open to competitors without restriction of age. In 1952 however the Juniors were no longer allowed to compete with the Senior Competitors and were required to race over 3 days (latter 4 days).

Thus it was that at Easter, 1948, the first two crews from the Devizes Rovers, paddling cumbersome home built double Kayaks, completed the course with ten hours to spare. These pioneers of this, one of the toughest long distance races in the world, were all aged seventeen. Their original journey was followed with great interest by the people of Devizes, so much so that cinema programmes were interrupted to give the latest news.

At Whitsun, 1948, two crews of the Chippenham Sea Cadet Unit covered the same course in just over 76 hours, and the competition was on.

Without any formal rules except the broad stipulation by the Scouts that crews should carry all their food and equipment from the start and receive no assistance on route, twenty crews set off from Devizes at Easter 1949. The best time that year was 49 hours 32 minutes.

Prompted by the growing interest, Frank Luzmore of the Richmond Canoe Club and some fellow members set up an organising committee, and Easter, 1950 saw the first organised race. From these modest beginnings the race has continued to grow so that now more than 200 crews regularly take part and the winning time has been cut down to under 19 hours for the gruelling 125 miles and 76 portages.

## **1948 Results with comments - Easter, Whitsun & Summer**

### **Easter 1948**

At this stage Oily Brown the leader of the 1st Devices Rover Scout Crew saw the opportunity for raising much needed Group funds by his Rovers taking up a similar challenge of paddling canoes to Westminster via the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Thames from Devices in under 100 hours. A number of the public spirited people of Devices were happy to back the challenge.

So, over the Easter of 1948 two Rover Scout crews, namely Peter Brown & Larry Jones with Brian Walters & Brian Smith, blazed the trail, paddling two Canadian canoes over the now famous course, their time 89 hours 50 mins.

### **Whitsun 1948**

During the Whitsun of the same year two crews of Chippenham Sea Cadets set out to better the Rovers time:-

Ray Parker and Geoffrey Bushy

David South and Frank Attrill setting up the new record of 76 hours 50 mins.

Note: Advised by daughter of paddler that it was Roy Parker and not Ray April 2017

### **Summer 1948**

Four crews from the Richmond Canoe Club set out from Devizes but the summer growth of reeds in the canal forced them to give up the attempt.

They were;-

Mike Pay & Frank Luzmore	retired at Henley
Donald Finn & Trevor Woodroffe	retired at Windsor
Norman Ripplingham & F Knee	
Sidney Rowe & George & Flint	

Editors note: Allen Bennett states :- the Whitsun 1948 Sea cadets time was 76:05, not 76:50 - confirmed by newspaper reports at the time (plus I have an account written by one of the cadets). One report (Good Thursday 1949) gives the time as "...76 hours, 5 minutes..."; another "...pulled into the pier at Westminster Bridge at 9.35 on Tuesday morning\*. They thus broke the Devizes boys' record by 5¾ hours..." \* they started at 05:30 on Saturday morning.

The Summer 1948 attempt: A Richmond CC publication states that "...the first crew succumbed at Wootton Rivers..."

### **1949 Results with comments - Single, Double and Three Man Crews**

1949

At this stage in the evolution of the enterprise there were no rules or race organisation, never-the-less a dozen or so crews independently of and, previously unknown to each other set out from Devizes at Easter with the object of bettering the time put up by the Chippenham Sea Cadets.

Those who finished were as follows:-

Frank Luzmore & Henry Ross	}	
George Flint & Mike Pay	}	Richmond C C time 49hrs. 32mms.
G M Watson & V W Wills	}	145 Bristol Sea Scouts 53h 10m.

#### **Amongst those who retired were :-**

Harold Drewett & Nick Cattalove	}	
David South & Tony McIver	}	Chippenham Sea Cadets

#### **Percy Blandford (paddling a single canoe)**

Alan Fitzjohn & John Bramley	}	Alperton Sea Scouts
Bill Young & Dave Folding	}	(Retired at Chertsey)

David Keane, Albert Davies & Peter Bengel, Hillingdon Rover Sea Scouts (A three man crew)

The unexpectedly wide interest shown at this stage coupled with the fact that single, double and three man crews were competing against each other prompted Frank Luzmore, Albert Weibel, Henry Ross of Richmond Canoe Club and other interested organisations to set up an organising committee to produce rules and. run an annual event from the following year.

Editors Note: Allan Bennett states:-

"It is recorded in the history that both crews reached Teddington shortly before low water and George Flint and Mike Pay in the faster canoe reached Westminster 41 minutes before Frank Luzmore and Henry Ross, in a time of 49hrs 12 mins, but the crews had raced as a team, and so the winning time was given as 49 hrs 53 mins, and all four names are recorded as winners" G Howe.

This is confirmed by a report in the Times

Regarding the first single: according to the newspaper report prior to the 1949 challenge, Percy Blandford (small boat designer and author of books on canoeing) paddled from London to Devizes for the event in order to gain information on the course for the Alpertons Sea Scouts crew.

According to David Keane's account (most of the accepted history seems to have stemmed from what DWK has written), Percy Blandford attempted the Challenge in a single alongside the Alpertons Sea Scouts who were in two doubles. It is from DWK's record in the results (published 25 years on) that they pulled out at Chertsey on the Devizes run.

Regarding the 'accepted' history: David Kean (DWK) was a real DW enthusiast, with first-hand knowledge from Easter 1949, but (as with most of us, I suppose!) his accounts are tainted by his personal views and experiences - hence we have the view that the 1949 Challenge was a haphazard affair when several crews just turned up and were unaware of each other. This does not seem to be the case - though to David Keane, himself, this might have been so - his team was not recorded prior to Easter 1949, so he may have 'just turned up'. DWK joined the Committee in 1954. It is also evident that as others joined in later years (esp 1990s onwards), they have added their own flavour to the write-ups without having the same detailed first hand knowledge or understanding of the event. Hence, we have the statement that the 'Devizes to Westminster Challenge Cup was first presented in 1950' and that it was 'backdated' to include the 1949 winners. Plus the claim that there were no 'rules' in 1949. Of course there were! Exactly the same rules as the Rover Scouts and Sea Cadets followed, but as the title of the trophy determines - it was a challenge' not a 'race'.

All but David & his 3-man crew had contacted the Rover Scouts before Easter and were listed in the local press (and had arranged to stay in the scout hut). The AE Weibel trophy had already been donated prior to Easter 1949, so all but DWK knew what was at stake! The trophy was snatched back from the Rover Scouts by Richmond in order to use it for the race that they subsequently organised from 1950 (as opposed to the 'challenge' that existed till then). Hence, the reason for inclusion of the sea cadets time, but not 'backdated' to include the original scouts.

**1950 An account by one of the winners -Robert Forrest-Webb (Robert Webb in the records. Still alive at 88 yrs old.)**

I am considerably saddened by the lack of historical information about this race. I was the winner, with Henry Ross in 1950. Henry and myself knocked 16 hours off the existing record. We had no need to go faster than we did. The canoe we used was home-made and we beat teams from the SAS and Royal Marines. Both Henry and myself were ex-servicemen...Henry losing his parents in a German extermination camp just before WW2. It was still rationing here in England and we trained on horse meat and coarse red wine! Horse meat wasn't rationed and red wine was exceptionally cheap and had been recommended to the British Team by the team doctor. We all lost a lot of weight and just before the World Championships in 1950, were all muscle and virtually no fat at all. This meant that although we had exceptionally fast starts and would have won all races as short as 250 meters if these distances had been used at that period, we didn't have the stamina for the long distances against good international competition. Perhaps I should also point out that all of us has been through the 2nd World War, the bombings and the shortages of food etc. We didn't do too badly, and the Richmond Canoe Club today exists because of us.

Submitted 2017 Robert Forrest-Webb (Bob Webb in the records. Still alive at 88 yrs old.)

**1950 Results with comments - The First Organised Race**

**DEVIZES TO WESTMINSTER CANOE RACE**

**Results of the first organised race 1950**

Place	Crew	Club	Time
1	H Ross & R Webb	Richmond Canoe Club	34h 52m
2	H G Bruce & J F Litherland	R M Amphibious School	35 12
3	D W Keane & A Davies	3rd Hillingdon Rover Sea Scouts	40 11
4	PL Rawll & T Smith	R M Amphibious School	40 37
5	A K Newbum & J H Wride	R M Forces Volunteer Reserve	55 31
6	R F Russell & D H Farmiloe	R M Forces Volunteer Reserve	55 46
7	E L Draper & E H Flood	Southampton Coalporters A R Club	56 31
8	A Townsend & L Arthur	Middlesex Hospital	58 09
9	R B Tofield & H Andrews	Inland Waterways	59 26
10	G W Danger & A C Danger	Liverpool University	62 30

Something like 17 crews took part.

The organising committee having been set up during the months prior to Easter 1950 this year saw the first organised race with set rules and a trophy for the winners put up by Albert E Weibel of Richmond Canoe Club.

A Note in the Times indicates the 2nd place crew of Captain H. G. Bruce and **Corporal P. B. Jackson** were using a heavy service kayak weighing 112 lb. Perhaps typical of the Canvas Klepper still used today. Thus there is a conflict between the names given in the Times and the results. The 1951 results show Bruce and **Litherland**

### **1950 Rules - Competed without restriction of age, normally resident in the British Isles**

#### THE "DEVIZES TO WESTMINSTER CHALLENGE CUP" CONTEST.

To further the general interest in canoeing, Mr. Albert Weibie of the Richmond Canoe Club presents the above cup for annual competition. It is hoped thereby to encourage the design and building of craft and kit that are light in weight, easily transportable over rough ground and also suitable for coastwise touring. The course extends from the London Road Bridge at Devizes via the Kennet & Avon Navigation to Reading a distance of 53 miles with 57 locks, thence down the Thames to Westminster Pier, a further 71 miles and 20 locks.

The race shall be run in accordance with the following rules which have been drawn up by the donor and an Administrator Committee representing the British Canoe Union, Boy Scouts' Association, the Sea Cadets, Inland Waterways Association and the Port of London Authority Staff Club.

#### RULES

- 1 The Cup may be competed for by any canoeing team without restriction of age, its members must be normally resident in the British Isles. Teams shall consist of two canoeists in one canoe which shall have a minimum seating capacity of two and the team reaching the finishing post in the shortest time shall be adjudged the winners.
- 2 Any type of canoe may be used. The only method of propulsion shall be by double or single bladed paddle.
- 3 Competitors may choose their own starting time after 8.00 a.m. on Good Friday and must complete the course by 8.00 p.m. on Easter Monday.
- 4 All locks on the Kennet & Avon Navigation must be portaged. On the Thames the locks may be used.

5. Equipment as follows must be carried:-  
Tent or tents, ground sheets, sleeping bags or blankets to accommodate crew.  
Cooking stove and fuel, cooking utensils, also sufficient spare clothing to provide adequate protection in the event of emergency.
6. Food and drink except water, for the entire journey must be carried from Devizes and shall not be purchased or accepted from any source on route.
7. Members of organisations must carry visibly their respective colours in the form of badges, pennants or other makings, details of which must be supplied to the Organising Secretary. A number plate, which will be supplied but which shall remain the property of Committee will be attached to the canoe and must remain in position while the race is in progress.
8. Competitors shall not obstruct other teams, they shall leave clear passage at locks for disembarking and embarking and following craft shall be allowed to overtake unhindered on demand.
9. Competitors who collide or inflict damage to another canoe or paddle shall be disqualified.
10. The start and finish of the race shall be witnessed by members of the committee or their representatives who will inspect canoes and kit and give written confirmation as to dates and times of start and finish. Canoes may be stopped and inspected by the Committee representatives at any part of the course, the time taken being allowed for at the finish.
11. Each crew must provide themselves with the canal and river permits and produce them to the Committee representative at Devizes.
12. Entrance forms and fess must be in the hands of the Organising Secretary 21 days before the race.
13. Failure to observe any of the above rules may disqualify the crew concerned.
14. Protests must be registered within 24 hours of the finish, i.e. by 8.00 p.m. on the Tuesday and must be sent in writing to the Organising Secretary within three days.

FRANK LUZMORE

31, Petersham Road,  
Richmond, Surrey.

Organising Secretary.

Note: the above rules kindly provided by Allan Bennett

### **1951 Comments in Results - Thames in Flood**

This year the Thames was in full flood, during the night one crew strayed off course and paddled through the goal posts of a football field before finding the main course of the river again.

### **1951 Rules - Kit must be Serviceable and Suitable**

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  - 4 All locks on the Kennet & Avon Navigation must be portaged. On the Thames the locks may be used.
  - 5 Equipment as follows must be carried:-
    - Tent or tents, ground sheets, sleeping bags or blankets to accommodate crew.
    - Cooking stove and fuel, cooking utensils, also sufficient spare clothing to provide adequate protection in the event of emergency.
- Note:- This must be such as would normally be regarded as serviceable and suitable for light touring conditions. Competitors are warned against the attempted use of extremes in kit.**
- 6 Food and drink except water, for the entire journey must be carried from Devizes and shall not be purchased or accepted from any source on route.
  - 7 Members of organisations must carry visibly their respective colours in the form of badges, pennants or other makings, details of which must be supplied to the Organising Secretary. A number plate, which will be supplied by which shall remain the property of Committee will be attached to the canoe and must remain in position while the race is in progress.
  - 8 Competitors shall not obstruct other teams, they shall leave clear passage at locks for disembarking and embarking and following craft shall be allowed to overtake unhindered on demand.
  - 9 Competitors who collide or inflict damage to another canoe or paddle shall be disqualified.
  - 10 The start and finish of the race shall be witnessed by members of the committee or their representatives who will inspect canoes and kit and give written confirmation as to dates and times of start and finish. Canoes may be stopped and inspected by the Committee representatives at any part of the course, the time taken being allowed for at the finish.
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FRANK LUZMORE  
Organising Secretary.  
31, Petersham Road,  
Richmond, Surrey.

Note: the above rules kindly provided by Allan Bennett

Allan also states:

1. Weir-shooting banned from 1951 (lucky if you consider the Thames that year!)

A report from the Times indicates that the Rules for the Devizes-Westminster race and the Weibel Cup were unchanged in the main from 1950, and the race was open to double-seater canoes of any type. All food, drink (except water), and camping gear must be carried throughout the race, and no replenishment en route are allowed. It also states that better arrangements for the reception of competitors have been made with the London County Council who generously made available canteen, sleeping accommodation, showers, and boat storage at County Hall. In latter years a shower unit from the British Army was used.

### **1952 Rule Changes Bans the use of Radio's**

The Times reports that a new rule forbids the use of organized intelligence. Apparently a factor in the win by the 21st Special Air Service in 1951, when their regimental mobile wireless kept them in touch with rivals' progress. Given the critical importance of intelligence in winning wars this must have come as somewhat a surprise to the crews. The starting window was also reduced to 24 hours rather than any time over Easter. In 1953 the only senior crews to complete the race were from 21st SAS although both the Junior crews who started completed.

Today (2011) knowing how your competition is doing could be a critical factor in a race, actually a time trial, particularly for fast crews trying the "daylight run" who should have the advantage of knowing what time they need to beat. Even with crews going for the same tide, if I were on a support crew, I would regard it as my responsibility to know where the competition was and ensure my crew was aware what was happening. Of course whether a crew can respond on a very long race when tired is another matter but this race and subclasses can be won or lost by seconds. Indeed as little as 2 seconds.

The main reason for good communications is an ability to know where the crews are. This may be more important for a team with a team leader who's responsibility is to ensure that the support crews meet their boats. An ability to have multiple support crews at consecutive locks enables a team to pass crews through pre-positioned support. Communications enables support to be moved at the right time to the right place.

### **1952 Two Junior Crews Complete Course**

Evening News - Portsmouth

CANOE BOYS ARE SAFE

Canoe No. 11, reported missing during the 124 mile canoe race to Westminster passed Richmond this morning.

In it were Sea Cadets A. Francis and G. Moat, of Chippenham.

They had many accidents on the way breaking two pairs of double paddles, and arrived at Richmond using half a blade each

Their canoe is named **The Endeavour**.

They reached Westminster at 12 03 p.m. and qualified as junior winners (they are 16).

Another Chippenham cadet crew Terry Walker and John Guy, both 15, in their canoe the Determined. reached Westminster at 9.47 to-day. Although not officially entered in the race because they were they were too young they wanted "to show them we were strong enough." They took just under 72 hours beating their unit's record by Over 3 hours

Editors Note. The official Results state "This year was the first year of the Junior Class unfortunately there was no winner as neither crew complied fully with the rules.

Reported in the Yorkshire Evening Post

Paddling an ex-commando canoe. We slept for 2 hours each night. We only had one sleeping bag so we took it in turns and while one slept the other ran round the field to keep warm. Since Friday all we have had is chocolate and glucose.

The reference to beating their units record relates to the 1948 time of 76:05. No time is recorded in the results.

### **1953 Radio is back**

The Times reports that the Special Air Service, who have two crews in the list, will provide regimental signallers to set up wireless posts along the course so that officials at the finish will know the locations of competitors. The use of radio was to continue for many years until replaced by mobile phones.

### **1954 Racing Canoe's are banned, Women allowed - Canoe Camper Spring 1954**

#### **DEVIZES - WESTMINSTER**

***This much discussed event is probably better known to*** the non-canoeing public than any other canoeing activity, but by its nature it is not one for the majority of canoe campers. When Easter comes round there is usually much interest but little information about the race, and we are grateful to Percy Blandford for bringing the matter up. Frank Luzmore himself provides the following information : " The Devize to Westminster Canoe Race Committee was formed by me soon after the race was started by a few enthusiasts, and representatives have been appointed by the following bodies to serve on it during the four years it has existed : Inland Waterways Association.. Port of London Authority Staff Club, Royal Marine- C.C.. Special Air Service C.C., Richmond C.C. There are also members of the Sea Cadet Corps and Boy Scouts' Association as well as an observer appointed by the B.C.U. paddling committee. From the Canoe Camping Club Bill Young, Len and Pat Leach are on the committee. **Racing canoes pure and simple are banned from the race so that odd bods from nowhere can have a go. Women are catered for in F 2s and Canadians.** Further requests for classes would be considered. "The rules and instructions for the race occupy nearly four foolscap pages, and the object of the trophies is set forth thus :—" to further the general interest in canoeing and canoe racing and to encourage the design and building of canoes and kit that are light in weight, easily transportable over rough ground and also suitable for coastwise touring."Those wishing to enter for the race should write for rules and entry forms to Frank Luzmore, 31, Petersham Rd., Richmond, Surrey. Completed entry forms must be in his hands a fortnight before Good Friday each year. K.T.

The above provided by Brian Greenaway

Editors note: the bold type is my addition to stress these points.

### **1955 Comments in Results - The first Fibre Glass Canoe**



1955 was the first year that fibre glass canoes were used in the race, one in each Class. Both were home designed and built especially for the race and to complete the coincidence both were used for the first time when they set out from Devizes that Easter.

One crew, incidentally paddling one of the fibre glass canoes, successfully portaged County lock in Reading and promptly capsized. Finding themselves out of their depths and unable to swim due to the weight of their gear they were only able to regain the bank by walking under water across the bed of the river. Chris Bacon, one of this crew, expressed unusually strong displeasure of the experience which, rather surprised his friends because he happened to be by profession a Sub-Mariner

From Allan Bennet

The first DW K2? According to Gillie Howe, he remembers watching an RAF cadet crew from Cranwell wobble away from the start in 1955 in a K2. They retired at Newbury after several capsize.

The comments by David Keane refer to the first fibreglass boats which were not K2s. These were, in fact, built by David Keane together with the mould which cost him around £200.

### **1956 Will it be Lechlade to Westminster Next Year - Canoe Camper Summer 1956**

#### **THE LAST 124 MILES**

At Easter what was perhaps the last Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race was paddled. It is still possible that something may be done about the Kennet & Avon Canal but otherwise by next year it will lie completely useless. Even now three of the pounds between Devizes and Reading are dry. Next year's race, if not from Devizes, Will be from Lechlade to Westminster (141 miles), longer in distance but easier because in moving water all the way. The race hitherto has been run from Devizes down the Kennet & Avon canal for 54 miles to Reading, past 57 locks all needing separate portage. From Reading it continued down the Thames navigation to Teddington, a further 54 miles and another 20 locks; then down the often rough tideway to Westminster bridge, reputedly the toughest and longest canoe race in the world. This year it was tougher than usual because of head- Winds and cold night conditions. The Marines won for the third time in succession, taking 28 hrs. 32 mins., a remarkably good time considering the conditions. They used a 17 ft. Maxen. a moulded Scandinavian kayak of proved ability. 2nd and 3rd came the Special Air Service crews, and 4th the Royal Navy in a 23 ft. Fibreglass boat, the aft section of which swivels to form a rudder. This is the second of its class, and the two together cost £250 to build. The first of the two also was entered but retired at Sonning. Out of 27 entries only eight finished. Dave Cunningham and I entered in my old Canadian Bobcat. but we were forced to retire through exhaustion at Maidenhead, Headwinds slowed us down and caused breaking waves on the open stretches of the Thames: we had to drive her very hard. At 03.00 hrs. on Saturday, 18 hours and 70 mile out from Devizes we sat down for a few moments to rest and awoke several hours later. Dave I am sorry to say, for he is an excellent crew under any circumstances due for his National Service. This leaves me crew less, if not clueless, so I should be pleased to meet anyone who is prepared to train hard for next year's race in a very fast kayak or Canadian.

Alan G Perkes.

### **1957 Comments in Results - Paddler completes alone**

Special award to Trpr. R.Rodda, 21st S.A.S. Regt. for completing the course in 36 hrs, 36 m paddling alone for 32 1/4 miles, 16 3/4 of which were against the tide.

Alan G Perkes reports that there was thin ice on the Kennet and Avon canal

### **1958 Comments in Results - K2 completes course (may have been 1957)**

1958 was the first year that a K2 was to successfully cover the course, there were still no fibre glass K2s on the market and the high cost of moulded plywood boats had restricted their use on such a course. As a result only two very old K2s had been used earlier and these had both failed due to their age, one broke in half longitudinally the other broke in half transversely.

Editors note:

Allan Bennett states "The first K2 to finish the course was 1957 (Gillie Howe), not 1958."

The two boats to which he refers are correct, but the transverse broken boat is what Gillie Howe paddled with Jack Edmonds (5th place in 1957). They patched it up with gaffer tape! The other (Alan Perkes & Bob O'Keefe from Richmond CC), broken longitudinally after hitting a lock-gate, was "successfully bartered for two cups of tea (with sugar), thereby setting up a rate of exchange with the natives of the area".

Apparently, these K2s were paddled by the German team at the Helsinki Olympics in 1952.

Also in the same race was Paul Farrant (paddling with Tom Shenton). Paul became slalom World Champion in 1959, but, tragically, was killed in a motorbike accident whilst returning to Hambleden after retiring from the Devizes to Westminster race in 1960.

### **1958 The 1st Single to Complete & a Junior Completes after 90 miles alone**

Unconfirmed reference to Ernest Smith in 1958

Robert Dewsnap wrote: 1958 Junior Doubles (then called Junior Section): the boat taking first place was crewed by Aldridge RM and Dewsnap RG. - ANECDOTE: We were classmates at Merchant Taylors' School, Sandy Lodge (Northwood). We wanted to enter as members of the school Scout group, but the Headmaster, Hugh Elder, doubtless in accordance with the policy of the Board of Governors, wrote to our parents explaining that because the school was a Christian foundation he could not approve our plan to go canoeing over Easter. So we entered as private individuals, independent of any institution. At the start of the next school term, however, when it turned out that we had won, Mr Elder gave a eulogy at the first morning assembly, saying how well our victory reflected on the school. That was, for me, an early lesson in politics. A second boat was crewed by our schoolmates MG Hogben and, I think, Rusty Laidler (TM). For some hours on the Saturday, Roger Aldridge and I kept company with an Ernest Smith of the Special Air Services, whose intended crewmate had fallen ill. At that time, there were no Senior Singles, so he was going it alone, and unofficially. - For us Juniors there were 2 overnight stops, at Newbury and at Marlow, in a Sea Scout Hut. - Easter was fairly early, 4-6 April, and on Saturday the weather turned cold and it snowed. Later, we gathered that most Junior crews had jumped out of their boats and phoned home to mummy and daddy for rescue

Ernest Smith: I think my Dad told me after the race that he was mentioned in the press. That would have been a London newspaper of the Monday, 7 April 58. I should think he finished, yes. He looked as if he would, and the press mention, if I remember it rightly, supports that belief. At a guess, he would have been in his early 30s, so date of birth around 1925 - if that helps. Anyway, he was alone in a one-man kayak, which he portaged by turning it on its side and hanging it on his shoulder. The last we saw of him was at a rather complicated footbridge at Marlow on the Saturday evening. He was going non-stop.

For anyone with the time for more political reflection, it may also be said that the biggest of the CND Aldermaston Marches was also taking place that Easter weekend of 1958.

Safety regulations have certainly changed over the years. I think we had hardly heard of lifejackets, so all we had was our homemade canvas kayak, 2 paddles, some simple provisions, and 2 soon waterlogged sleeping bags for the floorboards at Newbury and Marlow. Oh, and a map of the course.

Allen Bennett States:- I did hear that that someone had entered K2 but turned up with a single - I think Peter Begent told me - but he didn't give a name and there is nothing in the official results that I can see. 1958 is a very unlikely year for someone to achieve such a feat as the race was in a snowstorm and 22 mph NE wind. Peter B said that conditions were so bad that Devizes Constabulary arranged a police escort for him down the course for his own safety!

Editors Note:

In other communications we have a reference to a Maroon beret. The Maroon beret are understood to be worn by 21 SAS until 1958. Two crews from 21 SAS were listed as retired from the race W J Malcolm & P Rosser and M J Facer & J S Eustace. There were also two Smiths listed as retired J R Smith from the Met Police Smith from T CC

Allen Bennett states:- T CC was probably Thames Canoe Club which was situated on the island between Sunbury and Molesey, later occupied for a short period by Westel CC.

Although the single was thought to have been reported in the press the only mention of a Lone Canoeist in the Times is of a 17-year-old member of the Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Artillery, A. Lewis, who apparently completed 90 miles of the race alone to finish 2nd. Given the conditions in 1958 which were very bad this must have been real trial. Strangely the official results make no mention of the event and although a year earlier Trooper Rodda was given a special award for paddling the last 32 miles and in 1963 Peter J Spensor was also given a special award for completing alone, Lewis's effort in paddling 90 miles as a Junior appears unrecognised. - Was the Times right or was Ernest confused with Lewis.

### **1959 Junior Race Moves from 3 days to 4 days**

From Allan Bennett

Just found an account of 1962, which states Juniors raced over 4 days (Newbury, Marlow & Ham stops), so, the change must have been made in 1959, 1960 or 1961...

Note the Richmond Records (1992) suggest the juniors raced with 3 overnight stops in 1953. It is assumed this is an error as they were reported doing 2 stops in 1958.

### **1961 A Give the DW a New look says S Blayney (Canoeing June 1961)**

The most spectacular aquatic Marathon in the British calendar of sport; and apart from a casual nod of acknowledgement from the odd sports writer, the DW race was ignored by the press. Do the DW organisers have no press liaison or accept that canoe races have no general appeal. The Oxford and Cambridge boat-race has a write-up verging on hysteria.....but how many people actually row, or are otherwise interested in the sport? The O & C boat-race is a straight, uncomplicated contest between two crack crews, over a short, well-tryed course for the duration of a few minutes. The DW race is such a fantastic conception, demanding so much of human courage, that to finish at all is an attainment of no mean merit.

The challenge was thrown out by a man who knew the course, and who considered that 100 hours was an impossible odds. Two champions have done it in 18 3/4 hours. 125 miles of varied waterways; Reeds as thick as a wet blanket; Submerged piles angled and sharpened to pierce the toughest hull; Rapids; Weirs; Portages so difficult that a strong man is reduced to a trudging Zombie before the race is half through. 400 men, scooping, digging, splashing, slipping, scrambling, trudging, slugging, scooping, scooping.....400 pain-torn, brain-shorn, rain-borne MEN, pulsating through the wet hostile blackness.....Damp, cramp, and eyes of sand. Come day, come night, come day.....and still they scoop.....Paddles broken; rudders gone; ply-wood shattered; canvas rent; broken limbs; crumpled bodies; exhaustion; exposure; pneumonia; hallucinations.....And the public are not interested? I don't believe it. This race has EVERYTHING. Challenge. Endeavour. Victory. Defeat. Courage. Skill. Pathos. Excitement and Human Interest.

The preliminary preparations are of interest. The men and boys throughout the country scouring boathouses and backyards in search of craft they can afford to 'do up' for the race. The touching innocence of what they are taking on. The repairing sessions of varying effectiveness. The disappointment at finding that the carefully doctored craft isn't man enough for the task. The keen training programmes. The pet theories on kayak, gimmicks, appendages, dress, tactics, health and food. The wisdom of those who have 'done it before', And there is even scandal for our more

'progressive' papers.....The paid, trained "amateurs'..... The mobile workshop the broken paddles which grow new blades.....The washable 'indelible' ink.....The grievous lack of voluntary officials the almost total lack of 'checking number through'.....The superficial kit checks of superficial kit.....The cotton sheet described (and accepted) as a 'sleeping bag'.....The three minute chemical blocks described as a cooking device.....The thin polythene lunch bag described as a water container.....The mobile soup kitchens.....Unfortunately this race is marred by a small element of misplaced team spirit which says "we will win by whatever means possible for the good name of....." This is not a military operation, and it should not be tackled like one.

**The man who comes in last can proudly hold up his head and say: "I did the D/W course".** It does not matter who came first. Every competitor in the D/W race holds one position in common, be they 16 or 52.....They have proven themselves to be men. So let's have less of this misplaced team-spirit and wangling. Let the B.C.U. and 'CANOEING' do their bit in recruiting stacks of voluntary helpers who will not yield to well attended but misplaced kindness; for to put one unlucky crew on its feet is giving a gross disadvantage to the other competitors. Let the B.C.U. get the press interested. It CANNOT be difficult.

Get the rules sorted out. A crew who have paddled through hell for over 100 miles and are STOPPED by the tide, and who show such resource and enthusiasm that they pick up the damned thing and run with it to the end of the course.....deserve a medal.....not disqualification. A racing motorist or motor-cyclist may win a race by PUSHING his vehicle over the line. It is perfectly orthodox for a canoeist on tour to carry his craft if it is the easiest way to reach his rendezvous on time.....or have even the officials forgotten that the declared purpose of the race is to develop the art of canoe-touring? It is true that this Touring race is developing into a long distance K.2. sprint. No one wants anyone eliminated, but how can a K.2. Crew with fit, trained, military canoeists, be honestly pitted against students, in genuine TOURING kayaks, carrying genuine CAMPING kit, and genuinely on their own? Touring kayak which has an INTERNAL capacity for carrying sufficient camping kit and gear to sustain the crew in good health and spirits over a long period is a craft which could not reasonably be expected to compete in a sprinting race. It should be suitable stable to allow the crew to rest or relax ON THE WATER. It should not be necessary to land when the craft is heaved to. Camping kit should include a tent capable of protecting the crew from the rigours of any kind of weather they may reasonably expect to encounter enroute. The same rule applies to their clothing, and sleeping equipment. TOURING requires that a camper is not only protected, but is also COMFORTABLE. A square of cotton is NOT a tent. You cannot provide yourself with nourishing food if you carry the 'Mummies little helper's cooking set'. And no serious camper would sit in the dripping undergrowth trying to coax sufficient enthusiasm from a solid fuel tablet to provide a hot cooked meal. Let's be realistic about this. Let's sectionalise the race more fairly. Let K2's race against K2's.....but don't call it touring. Split the touring classes up so that seniors can enter for a canoe-camping race.. ...and let the camping factor be as important as the racing. Have an intermediate class. A 16 year old cannot seriously be classed in the same group as a 20 year old. Let it be a shorter lapped race for 15 to 17. 15 miles a day is more than plenty for them. Let the present arrangement stand for the intermediate 18 to 20. And let such seniors who may so desire, follow the intermediate pattern but competing against seniors of a kindred spirit. And how about organising an annual reunion of all those who have ever competed in this epic of human endeavour? And as a post-script I would like to ask what about singles. Racing against each other and classed as above, they would be slower but what an achievement!

The above provided by Brian Greenaway

### **1961 B The reply to S Blaney by W S Crook (Canoeing September 1961)**

A FINAL WORD BY CAPTAIN W.S.CROOK (Winner Class B 1961) ON **D W. RACE**

The DW article by Mr. Blaney in your June issue is of particular interest to me. Whilst I am a member of the Services as well as the Service-Representative of the DW Committee (and therefore unable to reply individually to certain points he raises) there are one or two other facets which I think would bear comment.

His zeal is, if I may say so, more than commendable, but I do think he has missed certain vital factors in his appreciation. Firstly, in that the Race is held over the Easter week end, it has to compete from the outset with many other athletic and sporting events of major and national importance. Press

potential is therefore reduced considerably. Secondly, the overall time factor is very much against a near and concise press report - to include final results and timing's - appearing in time for it to be considered "good news".

I must object strongly to his sinister implications: "mobile workshops", "soup kitchens" and "washable 'indelible' ink" are unfair observations indeed without solid proof. If he has this proof it should have been placed before the Committee at the earliest available date. I have never seen a cotton sheet accepted as a sleeping bag, but I have often used a chemical block as a cooking device, and found it perfectly adequate under the severest conditions - not only whilst canoeing, but overseas on exercises and operations. If this testimonial is not enough, I cannot conceive the criteria by which Mr. Blaney judges the efficiency of his cooking devices. Further I cannot see the objection to a polythene lunch bag being described as a water container; it holds water perfectly adequately - what more is required? I also take objection to his saying that the Race should not be tackled as a military operation. Military operations are under-taken after logical sifting of cogent factors, and one's ultimate course is dictated by the relative importance of these factors. Neither is this process peculiar to commanders of Field Forces: "appreciation of the situation" are perfectly straightforward analyses carried out by all of us in everyday life. If anyone wants to achieve a measure of success in this great Race he must be prepared for hard work and sacrifice, the degree of which in each case depends upon his personal physical potential. And, furthermore, if he does anything other than approach the problem logically before he starts work, he is doomed to failure. Mr. Blaney also seems to have missed the point in the establishment of the experimental 'B' (kit less) class in this year's Race. This was inaugurated to accommodate the K2 (which is obviously not built to carry any degree of touring or camping kit) and to class it out of the same race as competed in by the touring fraternity. For various reasons this particular arrangement has proved impractical, and one or two suggestions for making it workable are due to go before the Committee. I think his projected singles race would be extremely ill-advised. Although I am comparatively inexperienced, I do feel from the time I have spent on the course by day and by night that a KI race within the organisation of the DW would be foolhardy in the extreme. Whilst I have had the good fortune to have taken part in three Races without serious trouble, the likelihood of finding oneself in difficulties in a small boat - through weather conditions, exhaustion, or whatever it may be - is one which simply cannot be practicably catered for by the organising body. Neither should they accept so grave a responsibility. To my mind there is no doubt that this is first, last and paramount a two man race. Any colour, glamour and public interest gained by a singles event is too easily linked with the likelihood of tragedy. That view is the result of an appreciation of the situation from factors observed by experience. His article contains one very good idea; I would very much like to see an annual reunion of DW competitors - but I wonder what their reaction would be to a banner, spread across the hall in which they are reunited, saying for all to see: "Welcome to Competitors in the Devizes to Westminster Race of Human Endeavour". I think many people would blush at that!

The above provided by Brian Greenaway

**1961 Devizes - Westminster Dale Johnson ( Canoeing March 1963 )**

Devizes - Westminster 1961

BY DALE JOHNSON

I was able to realise my ambition of competing in the Devizes-Westminster Canoe Race in 1961. The only canoe available was my PBK22 (launched March 1960) and I realised from the beginning- that this was not a very suitable craft with its limitation of 15ft length and 30" beam. A friend, who although a keen sportsman had not previously done any canoeing, was eager to enter with me, and in February and March we canoed together, on five occasions, a total of about 80 miles. Being fairly fit and with this paddling behind us our aim was Just "to complete the course". "Pilot" underwent the following modifications in preparation for the trip: fitting a rudder, provision of webbing carrying straps at bow and stern, fitting fibre glass seats (which have since been removed as unsatisfactory) and attaching canvas bags between the frames to take our loose kit. Good Friday afternoon saw us at the assembly area for the start- The Wharf, Devizes. We were not downhearted by the slick lines of the other canoes or even the remark of another competitor to his companion that our canoes looked "... like the Queen Mary". The kit having been checked and packed, we were a little surprised at the total weight as we carried the canoe across and put it in the water. We had only taken what I thought to be the minimum but various items were not very light in weight - we had a camping primus stove and a full size tent and groundsheet. On looking back we could have lightened the canoe by several pounds

with more careful selection of kit and omitting the spare paddle which we carried on the fore deck. Having paddled up to the start, we were on our way at about 2.30 p.m. and battling along the 14- 1/2 miles of level before striking the first of the locks as dusk was falling. There were two sections between locks, each of some 200-300 yards with little or no water, and carrying our heavy canoe around these additional hazards proved quite a strain on the back muscles. We paddled through the night to stop about 7.30 a.m. just short of Reading for breakfast. This meal consisted of warming up two pre-cooked steaks, and a quick brew of coffee before pushing on through Reading to join the Thames at 9.40 a.m.

Progress down the Thames on Saturday seemed slow although we paddled steadily - at one stage both of us dropped off to sleep for a few minutes during a short breather while we were drifting with the current. Evening came, darkness fell, and not knowing the river very well or wanting to take any chances with the weirs which sounded most ominous in the dark, we decided to spend the night at Chertsey Lock which we reached at 9.40 p.m. Laying the groundsheet on the bank we were in our sleeping bags within a few minutes. Unfortunately we didn't wake up until 6.30 a.m. and after a quick brew of coffee and soup we were chasing downstream in the hopes of catching the last of the tide below Richmond Lock. This we just managed to do and continued paddling hard to get as far as possible before it changed to come racing up against us. With 6 miles to go (at Putney Bridge) the water turned and we battled on with the tide getting stronger every minute. With a head wind blowing the tide and a heavy shower of rain against us, the last mile was extremely hard going. On the outside of that final bend with the worst of the tide race and the elements conspiring against us we could only inch our way along to pass the finishing line at about 2.15 p.m. We gratefully accepted the offer of the race officials to take the canoe out of the water - and we were both amazed that it needed four of them to lift it. To our surprise, the excellent race organisation gave us a hot meal, and then we left for a hot bath - and a good long sleep! My aim in writing this article is to encourage other canoeists who are thinking of entering this year's race and show that the distance can be covered in an ordinary canvas covered canoe without special training. Naturally a number of lessons were learnt from our first attempt and these I summarise as follows - although elementary in nature they have been learned the hard way.

1. 15ft. is quite definitely too short for ease of paddling and speed - length should be at least 16ft. and preferably 17ft or more.
2. Both canoe and kit must be as light as possible - those 77 portages certainly take it out of you.
3. Some form of timetable must be worked out to make use of the final tidal section - don't leave it to chance as we did.
4. Any knowledge of the course will prove invaluable. We were very pleased to have achieved our aim of completing the course at our first attempt - our actual, placing was 54th (117 competed, 65 finished) with a time of 47 hours 43 mins. Had we planned our starting time better and obviated the time spent in sleeping at Chertsey, then our time might have been reduced to about 37-38 hours. I hope to put the lessons I have learned to advantage this coming Easter.....

Readers interested in acquiring further first-hand information on the D/W Race should consult the May 1961 issue of 'Canoeing' where we reported an interview with that year's winner - Capt. W.S.Crook. A few copies of this issue are available price 1s.3d. (post free) from: The Circulation Manager, Canoeing Publications, 6 The Mall, Brentford Middlesex.

The above provided by Brian Greenaway

### **1961 Five New Trophies (Canoeing March 1961)**

#### **DEVIZES TO WESTMINSTER RACE**

The D/W race grows bigger every year, that is the number of crews entering for the race does. This year Frank Luzmore is thinking in terms of 200 entries; This is big business. There are five new trophies:

THE FRED BARTLETT TROPHY for the building and racing of the home built canoe making the fastest time.

THE D/W CIVILIAN TROPHY presented by Councillor P.J. Jennings of Devizes for the fastest civilian crew.

THE D/W SERVICES TROPHY for the fastest Service crew. Open to the three Fighting Services, the T.A. and Volunteer Reserve.

THE WILLIAM BIRD TROPHY for the building and racing of the home built canoe making the fastest time in the junior class.

THE CLASS B TROPHY for the fastest crew racing in restricted time.

CLASS B. you will recall, is a new class open to Seniors who think they can complete the course in under 26 hours, or come within 12% of the winners time. No camping gear is required to be carried, only a change of clothing. This is one of the most curious arrangements to be found in racing particularly as it adds nothing to the race except to relieve a certain number of the necessity to carry certain specified items of camping equipment.

Way back when Bert Weibel first presented his Challenge Cup people actually used to camp during the race, and one of the stated aims was to encourage a sort of super touring canoe. Nowadays no one would think of serious cruising in a D/W canoe, that is if they took the D/W race seriously. Surely the answer to all this is that if there is to be a new class it should go back to the original aims of the race. For example, why not run a race in three stages: Devizes to Reading, Reading to Teddington, and Teddington to County Hall. For the first two days the starts could be staggered, for the last day a mass start at Teddington. Winner would be the crew with lowest aggregate time. But, all crews would be required to camp out for the two nights between stages. Such a race would be a fine combination of camping and racing and would probably have considerable appeal. It may be argued that you can't mix the two, but they did. And the idea is no more illogical than creating a new class to get round carrying a few pounds of gear.

The above provided by Brian Greenaway

Editors note: The Services Trophy appears to include the Reserve Forces in 1961. I would be logical to assume that the Services Trophy was restricted to the Regular forces when the Reserve Forces Trophy was introduced.

#### **1961 Senior divided into Class A & Class B**

#### **CLASS 'A' carrying kit. 117 Crews entered, 65 Crews finished, 1 Crew disqualified.**

WINNERS of the D/W Challenge Cup, the illuminated scroll and the plaques by "Light Craft" in a record time of 20 hrs. 59min. using a K2 "Accord" GILBERT B. HCWE & CHARLES E. TANDY,

R.M.C.C. Plaques by "Light Craft" for 2nd place in a time of 21hrs.46mins. using a K2. "Sharkie" DAVID MITCHELL & ROBERT A. SEEGER,

R.M.G.C. Plaques by "Light Craft" for 3rd place in a time of 22hrs.42.mins. Using a N.C.K.2 WILLIAM MUNDELL & GILBERT SMITH, 22nd S.A.S. Regt. C.C.

WINNER of the DESIGNER'S TROPHY for the design of the winning canoe. JORGEN SAMPSOM of Denmark.

WINNERS of the D/W CIVILIAN TROPHY presented by F.J. Jennings Esq. of Devizes for the fastest civilian crew in a time of 25hrs.45mins. JOHN CAMPBELL & ARTHUR BARRS, North Sea Camp C.C.

WINNERS of the DW SERVICES TROPHY presented by the Royal Marines Canoe Club for the Fastest Service crew in a time of 20hrs.59mins. GILBERT R. HOWE & CHARLES E. TANDY, R.M.C.C.

The FRED BARTLETT TROPHY for the fastest Home Built canoe in a time of 25hrs.45mins. JOHN CAMPBELL & ARTHUR BARRS, North Sea Camp C.C.

The TYNE CHALLENGE CUP and replicas for the fastest senior crew in a rubber collapsible Canoe in a time of 25hrs,26mins. WALTER POXON & ANTHONY HOWELL, 22nd S.A.S. Regt. C.C.

**CLASS "B" carrying reduced kit and racing in restricted time. 14 Crews entered, 5 crews finished within the specified time, 1 crew was disqualified.**

Winners of the Class "B" TROPHY in a time of 20hrs.37mins.5secs. William Crook - 1st Lancs. C.C. & Rich.C.C. & Robert O'Keefe - 1st Middx. and Rich.C.C.

The Committees Medals for 2nd place in a time of 20hrs.42mins.45secs. Terence Hardy & John Cann, 22nd SAS Canoe Club.

The Committee's Medals for 3rd place in a time of 21hrs. 41/2mins. Malcolm Alien & Ronald Payne.

The Times states as expected the " B " class which did not have the strict rules on carrying camping and cooking gear, set the best time but by only 22 minutes.

Editors note: The B class was not run again although as the years went by the Kit list was changed.

#### **1963 Comments in Results - Paddler completes alone**

Crew No.2, Michael Brett had to retire from the race at Staines and his partner Peter J. Spencer decided to try and complete the journey alone paddling the remaining 55 miles. The Committee have agreed that a special award shall be made for his outstanding performance.

#### **1964 Junior completes alone**

The times reports that S. C. Weller, 17, Royal Navy paddled alone for 40 miles to complete the DW in 31:55. Weller is not listed in the official results. So far as I am aware this is last report of a paddler continuing alone. In the previous year a paddler in the Senior Race (Peter J. Spencer) was given a special award for a similar action. The present rules make it a condition of entry that this may not be done although if two paddlers lose their partners it is permitted for them to form a scratch crew in order to complete the challenge. This condition is known to have been in force since at least 1973.

#### **1964 Life-jackets**

Allen Bennett States:

Life-jackets compulsory from 1964 - the design followed the BCU then EU regs.

Editors Notes:

When I first did the race in 1972 the life-jacket I used was based on two blue sacks front and back connected with white tape. The sacks could be inflated with air by blowing into a nozzle. I might have put two puffs into mine. Later we were required to use jackets with permanent buoyancy.

#### **1965 Comments in Results - disqualifications**

The result sheet has been delayed this year due to the fact that the Committee has had to investigate a far greater number of infringements of rules than ever before, with the result that 4 crews have been disqualified and 6 crews have been penalised 1 hour. However, amongst the crews which retired during the course of the race a further 25 would have been liable to either disqualification or penalisation in some way. The breaches of rules involved seem to be due to misinterpretation of rules and to habits formed in previous years when we had only a small number of officials to cover the



course, which resulted in such infringements going unobserved. This points to the fact that, if the Committee is to improve the organisation of both the race and the publication of the result sheet, it must have a far greater number of volunteers from the organisations taking part in the race to help supervise the race, and its attendant duties on the day. Since the committee has already started work on next year's race, it is up to those who receive this result sheet to start now to consider what help they can give the race in 1966.

CHAIRMAN

### **1966 Comments in Results - disqualifications**

One crew was disqualified and two crews penalised by 1 hour. However, among the crews who retired, there were a further 49 Infringements of the rule's many of which would have necessitated disqualification. In one case a canoe was transported by road and re-launched further down the course, the crew of this boat is known to the committee. The committee consider that this sort of conduct is deplorable and contrary to the whole spirit of the race. There was an excellent response this year to the committee's appeal for volunteers to assist with the supervision of the race. Nonetheless, It is hoped to further expand and improve the organisation for future years and it is up to those who receive these result sheets to consider now how they can best assist with the running of the race in 1967

Allen Bennett States

Listed as a note by the time-keeper (Chris Graves) in the 1981

Junior race:

"Team 63 was overage (known before start). Not included in results" Spence & Bradshaw 24:27:16

2011 Junior race:

Paddler underage - chairman informed before they entered, entry accepted, but DQ after finish:

145 Xavier Burgess & Luka Pullela Pangbourne College 23:20:12 (Taken from results before they were updated)

There have been a number of underage paddlers completing the course, including 12 year-olds! Perhaps some lied about their ages, others were given dispensation to take part. Malcolm Starkey (RLP) took part in 5 Junior races over 6 years! I think the junior age was reduced to 15 in 1990 (maybe 1989).

I also know of one Junior winner who was 21 years old... (he says they all did it in those days).

Editors Note:- from the 1998 rules

(c) At the discretion of the Company, entries may be accepted for the Senior Class from applicants under the age of 18 years (to a maximum of twelve months) provided that they have entered and finished the race on at least one previous occasion as a Junior.

(d) All Junior Class entrants must be under 19 years and not less than 15 years of age on the 1 st January in the year of the Race, and must have paddled at least 40 miles in one day . The lower age limit will be waived in cases where there is a history of the competitor is submitted to, and accepted by, the Competition Secretary, up to a maximum of one year before the 15th birthday.

However the 2011 state

All junior entrants must be under the age of 19 years and not less than 15 years on the 1st of January in the year of the race and must have paddled a minimum of 34 miles in one day.

### **1968 The first Waterside Race**

## WATERSIDE WINTER SERIES

The final race of the "1<sup>st</sup> Water-side Winter Series" took place on Sunday 24th March over the junior "MD-W" course, that from Devizes to Newbury, a distance of 34 miles.

There were several additional entries for the last race, among them being Cook/Stimpson and Paganelli/Evans of the Para Regt. It was obvious from the start that these crews along with P.Lawler/Avery and M.Bosher/R.Lawler were out for fast times.

Lawler/Avery put up the fastest time covering the course in 5hr 29min 25sec with Cook/Stimpson on their tails finishing with 5hr 33min 37 sec. - Bosher/Lawler retiring around the Bedwyn area.

Unfortunately these fast crews were not entered for the complete series and the senior event was won by M.Whitby/B. Greenaway of the Richmond Canoe Club with a time of 5hr 54min 21sec.

First place in the junior event went to Kearns/Bunce of J/L Regt. Dover with 6hrs 34min 42sec a Waterside crew of Tarrant/Gow taking second with 6hrs 35min 23 sec.

Kearns/Bunce held a 7 min. lead over Tarrant/Gow at Foxfield but the gap gradually closed and at the line only 41 sec separated the crews. This win gave the Junior Leaders pair the overall win in the junior series, Bosher/Chapman winning the seniors on the first three races.

Note in this first race the best 3 results were used rather than all 4 races.

### **1970 C1 Recorded**

I remember it well! .. However, it is 40 years ago .. our kids were about 5 and 7 ( the only photo I have of him is with Jan & Ivan).... so anything I say could be slightly inaccurate but he made great paper aeroplanes .

Topor Lajos ( Topor being the surname ) from Ferencvaros Club, Budapest came and stayed with us for probably six weeks to prepare for the event. It was quite an experience. He spoke no English whatsoever .. and never improved . We learnt to drink Tokaji and eat gristly sausage , but he learnt no English

Canadian canoeing as far as racing was concerned was very much in its infancy here, and it was difficult to sort him out with equipment. Luckily Ken Piera lived near to us . He was one of the early C1 racers and he provided a boat. There was a lot of do it yourself efforts at making a variety of kneeling blocks before we finally came up with something suitable.

As far as I remember we did the distance over the 4 days, taking him home at night and starting again the next morning. He did get to Westminster but I don't remember how long it took. I think it was agreed that we timed him ourselves because it was such an unorthodox entry.

I have made inquiries about him with other Hungarian friends. Apparently he was even unorthodox in Hungary. He had a passion for very long distance projects and went on to do much more extreme things ( but I can't remember exactly what they were).

It was the then chairman of the DW Committee (David Keane) that roped us in (Di Lawler and family) to help him.

### **1970 K1 recorded**

The following text is taken from the official results for 1970

On 23rd June 1970 paddling a single canoe independently and unofficially of the canoe race organisation Sgt Worsly of the AAC Arborfield covered the D/W course in 40hrs. 45mins.

The first major attempt on D W by overseas crews was in 1970 when Denmark entered 2 crews made up of their very best marathon paddlers Crews from Europe have two major drawbacks when doing the race. One is not knowing the course at all, especially difficult during the night, but also most of the water they train on is often frozen till end of February. Means they have a much shorter time to train.

Of the 2 Danish boats, I only have the names of the finishing crew which was J.Sorensen and H Pape . The race saw only 51crews finish out of 114 entered that year. There is no doubt they were the fastest crews with the best paddling technique on the water that year. Thanks to the Gudena marathon race which was started in 1968 the Danes at that time were probably the top nation at marathon racing. Sorensen and Pape finished 7th overall in a time of 21h 40.

The best overseas result was that of another Danish crew , S Hansen and A Jorgensen of Sundby KC who were 2nd in 1972 in a time of 19h 13min only 4 mins from 1st place Great result for a crew that had never paddled the course before

#### **Other notable Danish Results**

1991 H Stuart and L Thyngesen Copenhagen K C set a Women's record of 20h 24m

1993 L Thyngesen and M Sondergaard from Kastrup and Skovshoved set a Mixed record of 18h 06m

The fastest overseas crew is that of P Houttkiet and B Dewitte of Harebeekse K C Belgium

1996 were 2nd in 18.00hrs only 3mins from 1st place but it was Houttkiet 5th attempt.

The most remarkable overseas result is that of M Davis and R Davis from Michigan who in 2016 racing in mixed C2 were 3rd in 18h 24m

With thanks to Brian Greenaway

### **1971 Comments in Results - first girl**

Possibly the first girl to paddle the D/W was Sheila Burnnett partnered by Colin Dickens both of Cambridge University C.C., they covered the distance in 46hrs. 50mins. in 1971. Unfortunately, at this point in the races evolution, the rules did not allow ladies to compete.

Notes added after e-mail from Sheila.

Burnett S E and Dickens C P entered the DW race and completed the course in 1971. On arrival at Westminster they were told they had been disqualified (because Sheila Burnett is female!) My understanding is that our time was never officially recorded and, although my memory may be at fault here, I don't think we were even listed on the published results as being disqualified.

Our DW race was reported in Canoeing magazine, but the time was given incorrectly as 46 hours 50 minutes. At the time I contacted the editor to point out his error. However, I can only think that the magazine has been the source of that incorrect time being given in Brian Greenaway's book and on the DW website.

The facts of the time are these:

We left Devizes at 0830 on the Friday morning.

We arrived at County Hall steps at 1920 on the Saturday evening.

That gives a total time of 34 hours 50 minutes.

(Even after all these years I could find people to bear witness to the fact that we finished on Saturday evening!)

The time includes six hours or so camping overnight at Marsh Lock (for which, of course, we did not expect any allowance to be made).

The time also included a full kit check at Reading for which we would have expected time to be deducted.

It was a surprise to me when, today, a friend told me we appeared on the DW results website. If we can be included with our true time (at least the 34 hours 50 minutes if you cannot risk estimating the kit check time), then I would be pleased to have us included. I would rather the website did not perpetuate the fiction of 46 hours 50 minutes.

### **1973 Note on Ladies from the results**

#### **RESULTS OF THE SENIOR CLASS 1973**

46 104 J. P. Hull A. M. Evans Canoe Camping Club 49:57:03

On occasions during the years prior to the introduction of the mixed and ladies classes in the race there were several successful but unofficial D/W runs made by girls. By cutting their hair fairly short, wearing life jackets, allowing their male partners to do all the talking and taking advantage, as was possible at that time, of starting during the night, it was not all that difficult. In fact the girls claimed that it was really quite easy but, one suspects that the truth was that it was just one hell of a strain for the poor girl to keep quiet while her male partner did all the talking. Our records of these unofficial female crews are incomplete but, one such crew was Ann Mary Evans (later Ann Mary Booth) and Jonathon Hutt who in 1973 covered the course in 49hrs. 57mins.

Editors note: It is understood that Ann was originally entered as 'Amery McIntosh-Evans' and was was in fact Ann-Marie

"In due course the application form was sent off and accepted by the Race Committee for Jonathan Peter Hutt and Amery McIntosh Evans, both aged 18."

### **1973 Rules**

#### **THE DEVIZES TO WESTMINSTER CANOE RACE COMMITTEE**

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J. Shepherdson

Camp Marshals  
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Course Umpires  
C /Sgt G. Howe  
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Representative Officers  
Lt. Cdr. J. G. Shilcock (Sea Cadets)  
Hon. Sec. Royal Marines C.C.  
P. Lea (Scout Assn.)  
L. Bird  
(K. & A. Canal Trust)

The organising committee stress the vital importance of all competitors wearing life jackets during all training runs.

#### THE DEVIZES TO WESTMINSTER CANOE RACE

B.C.U. Classification A17.B108.P76

To further a general interest in canoe touring and racing, also to encourage the design of canoes and equipment that are light, serviceable, easily transported over rough ground, yet suited to estuary conditions. The following trophies are presented for annual competition by experienced canoeists, Senior and Junior, carrying equipment as specified in these Rules.

#### SENIOR CLASS

1. The DEVIZES-WESTMINSTER CHALLENGE CUP donated by A.E.Weibel. PLAQUES donated by Small Boat Magazine for the fastest Senior Crew.
2. PLAQUES donated by Small Boat Magazine for second place.
3. Medals for third place.
4. The DESIGNERS TROPHY donated by Henry Ross, and CERTIFICATE for the designer of the winning canoe.

5. The DEVIZES-WESTMINSTER TEAM TROPHY donated by the Lancashire Regiment, and CERTIFICATES for the team of four crews registering the lowest aggregate times out of the four or five crews nominated.
- 5a. CERTIFICATES for the team taking second place.
6. The FRED BARTLETT TROPHY and MEDALS for the crew building and paddling the fastest Home-Built canoe.
7. The DESIGNERS CERTIFICATE for the designer of the fastest Home-Built canoe.
8. The DEVIZES-WESTMINSTER CIVILIAN TROPHY donated by F. Jennings and MEDALS for the fastest Civilian crew.
9. The DEVIZES-WESTMINSTER SERVICES TROPHY donated by the Royal Marines Canoe Club and MEDALS for the fastest Services crew.
10. The DEVIZES-WESTMINSTER RESERVE FORCES TROPHY donated by the 10th Bin. Parachute Regiment (TA) and MEDALS for the fastest Reserve Forces crew. Open to RNR, RMFVR, TA and R.Aux.A.F.
12. The DEVIZES-WESTMINSTER SCOUTS TROPHY donated by the Borough of Devizes for the fastest Scout crew.

### JUNIOR CLASS

21. The WILTSHIRE GAZETTE SHIELD, and PLAQUES donated by "Small Boat" for the fastest Junior crew.
22. PLAQUES donated by "Small Boat" for second place.
23. MEDALS for third place.
24. The DESIGNERS CERTIFICATE for the designer of the winning canoe.
25. The JUNIOR TEAM TROPHY donated by the Lancashire Regiment, and CERTIFICATES for the team of four crews registering the lowest aggregate times out of the four or five crews nominated
- 25a. SHEILD donated by Metropolitan Police Training School, Hendon for the team taking second place
- 25b. CERTIFICATES for the team taking third place.
26. The WILLIAM BIRD TROPHY, and MEDALS for the crew building and paddling the fastest Home-Built canoe.
27. The DESIGNERS CERTIFICATE for the designers of the fastest Home-Built canoe.
29. The BERKSONIAN TROPHY donated by C.S. Campion and J.B. Eustace for the fastest Civilian crew (Police classed separately)
30. The POLICE TROPHY denoted by the Wiltshire Constabulary Amateur Athletic Club for the fastest Police crew.
31. The JUNIOR SCOUTS TROPHY donated by the Greater London Council for the fastest Scout crew –

### FOR OPEN COMPETITION BY SENIORS OR JUNIORS

40. The SIR LOUIS & LADY GLUCKSTEIN TROPHY for the crew or crewman displaying exceptional courage and fortitude.

CERTIFICATES are awarded to all competitors who complete the course (unless disqualified)

N.B. SENIOR & JUNIOR TEAM TROPHIES.

In order that small units shall have the same opportunity as large units for the team awards, each unit must indicate on the Entry Form the crews to be it's Nominated Team. (See rule 2,d.)

OWING TO THE INCREASING INTEREST IN THIS ANNUAL EASTER RACE, IT MAY BECOME NECESSARY TO PLACE A LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF CREWS TAKING PART AT SHORT NOTICE. PLEASE SEND YOUR ENTRY AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE AND DO NOT OVERLOOK THE TIME LIMIT.

JUNIOR ENTRANTS. It is regretted that, owing to the limited amount of overnight accommodation that exists at camp sites, the committee is obliged to restrict the number of Junior Crews to the first one hundred entries received. It is in your own interests, therefore, to send in your entry at the first available opportunity.

### RULES

1. COURSE The course commences at Park Road Bridge, Devizes, and proceeds along the Kennet and Avon Canal to join the River Thames at Reading - a distance of 53½ miles with 56 portages. The remaining 71½ miles are paddled on the Thames to the Finish at Westminster Bridge, involving a further 20 portages and making a total paddling distance of 125 miles. Only the navigation channels of the Kennet & Avon Canal and the River Thames may be used and all portages must take place on the Towing Path except where otherwise shown on the official D.W. Route Map, or the official Lock Portage Diagram. No other route is permitted. The Route Map and Lock Portage Diagram comprise part of these rules.

2. ELIGIBILITY The race is open to all male amateur crews of any Nationality in accordance with the ages here specified.

Any breach of this qualification will incur automatic disqualification.

a) All Senior Class entrants must be not less than 18 years of age on March 1st in the year of the race.

b) All Junior Class entrants must be under 19 and not less than 16 years of age on March 1st in the year of the race, and must have paddled at least 40 miles in one day.

c) At the discretion of the Committee, entries may be accepted for the Senior Class from applicants under 18 years of age provided that they have entered and finished the race on at least one previous occasion.

d) Senior & Junior Team Trophies - All crews who may be eligible as winners of these trophies must be from one club or unit based in one area, and must habitually practice canoeing in that area.

The Committee reserves the right to make any enquiries considered necessary to establish that no wider interpretation of this rule places other teams at a disadvantage.

**e) The Committee reserves the right to refuse entries at its discretion**

3. CLASSES There are two classes. Senior and Junior as defined in rule 2.

Senior crews may choose their own starting time within the twenty-six hour bracket from 08.00 hours on Good Friday to 10.00 hours Easter Saturday, but must state their intended start time on the entry form. The Senior Class race non-stop for the entire 125 mile course.

The Junior Class races in four stages. Each stage takes place on a separate day commencing on Good Friday as follows:-

Stage 1 - Devizes to Newbury (34 miles) Good Friday

Stage 2 - Newbury to Marlow (35 miles) Easter Saturday

Stage 3 - Marlow to Ham (38 miles) Easter Sunday

Stage 4 - Ham to Westminster (17 miles) Easter Monday

Crews cook their own meals and must sleep at the official overnight camps at the end of each day's racing. At Newbury and Marlow, the camps are in hired buildings, whilst at Ham, crews must sleep in the tents which comprise part of their compulsory equipment.

The first three days take the form of a time trial with crews starting at intervals each morning. The last stage is a Mass Start timed to suit the state of the tide. The racing time for Junior Crews is taken as the aggregate of their paddling times for the four days.

4. CANOES

a) Canoes may be of any type, but must be constructed to accommodate and be manned by a crew of two.

b) The only method of propulsion shall be by means of single or double bladed paddles.

c) Canoes may be lined from the bank along shallow stretches of the canal.

d) All canoes must contain sufficient buoyancy to support their crews in the event of a capsize.

5. SAFETY OF CREWS

a) All competitors must be able to swim 100 yards in canoeing dress.

b) All competitors must, at all times during the race, wear service-able life-jackets in the manner for which they were designed.

c) Crews are not permitted to shoot any weirs.

d) All crews leaving Devizes must be equipped with a torch in working order, whether its use is anticipated or not. Below Teddington Lock at night, the torch must be ready for instant showing in compliance with the Port of London Authority bye-laws. Between Vauxhall Bridge and the Finish, at night, a visible white light must be shown continuously.

**COMPULSORY EQUIPMENT** In addition to the clothing worn by crews at the start, the following SERVICEABLE equipment must be carried by all crews. The kit will be inspected both at the Start and at least once along the course. Time penalties will be imposed on any crew found to have items of equipment missing:-

- a) Two-man tent with support 40mins.
- b) Stout two-man waterproof groundsheet. 20 mins.
- c) Filled, quilted sleeping bags for two persons. 40 mins each
- d) Two shirts 10 mins each
- e) Two pullovers or jackets 10 mins each
- f) Two pairs of trousers or shorts 10 mins each
- g) Two pairs of socks 10 mins each
- h) Two pairs of shoes 10 mins each
- i) One cooking stove and fuel 10 mins each
- j) One saucepan (1 pint minimum capacity) 10 mins each
- k) One 1 pint container 10 mins each
- l) 2 plates, plastic or metal (aluminium foil not acceptable) 10 mins each
- m) 2 drinking vessels, plastic or metal 10 mins each
- n) 2 knives, plastic or metal 10 mins each
- o) 2 spoons, plastic or metal 10 mins each
- p) 2 forks, plastic or metal 10 mins each
- q) Torch in working order 10 mins

Each of the above must be treated as individual items and NOT serve a dual purpose. Tents and ground sheets must give full-length cover and weather protection to both members of the crew. Items (a) to (i) inclusive must be packed in waterproof bags or containers.

**NO CREW WILL BE PERMITTED TO START UNLESS THEIR KIT COMPLIES WITH THE FOREGOING LIST, OR IF CERTAIN ITEMS ARE CONSIDERED TO BE INADEQUATE.**

## **7. FEEDING**

- a) All crews are permitted to receive food and drink at any point along the course. However, they are strongly advised to carry a reserve supply with them from the start.
- b) All Junior crews shall bring with them to Devizes, three separate tins measuring approximately a 10 inch cube. (ie: 7 lb biscuit tin) In which should be packed food, also fuel if desired, for each overnight camp and the following day's racing. The tins should be painted Green for the 1st camp (Newbury), Yellow for the 2nd camp (Marlow), and Red for the 3rd camp (Ham). One tin per crew per camp. These food packs are part of the crew's kit and will be transported by road to the various camp sites, where each crew will be issued with its appropriate tin. The crew's race number must be displayed on the lid and one side of each tin in digits of not less than two inches in height. No Junior crew will be permitted to start the race unless all three tins shall have been placed in the care of the Camp Marshal at Devizes,
- c) Water points will be sited at the following places and will be marked by a twelve inch diameter orange disc.- Alton Barnes, Wootton Rivers, Hungertord (Lock 74), Newbury, Aldermaston (Lock 95), Reading (Blakes Lock), Shiplake Lock, Marlow, Bray Lock,, Staines (Bell Weir Lock), Shepperton Lock, Teddington Lock

## **8. IDENTIFICATION**

- a) A number plate (which is returnable) will be issued to each crew and must be secured on the canoe in such a position that it can easily be read from the right hand bank. It must remain in position from Start to Finish.
- b) Before leaving Devizes, each crew member must have an Identity Wristlet, which must not be removed during the race, attached to his wrist by a race official.
- c) Canoes may be marked at the discretion of the Committee.

## **9. CREW CHANGES**

- a) Last minute changes either to crew members or starting times, should be notified to the Chief Starter at the Black Swan Hotel, Devizes, between 19.00 and 23.00 hours on Thursday; at Park Road



Bridge between 10.00 and 12.00 hours on Friday; and at the Black Swa between 19.00 and 20.00 hours on Friday, and at no other times.

b) ENTRIES ARE ACCEPTED ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IN THE EVENT OF A CREW MEMBER BEING UNABLE TO CONTINUE, HIS PARTNER MAY NOT PROCEED ALONE. SHOULD ANY COMPETITOR DISOBEY THIS RULE HE WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE BARRED FROM ENTERING ANY FUTURE DW RACE. HOWEVER, THE ABLE PARTNER MAY, IF HE WISHES, LINK UP WITH ANOTHER CREW-MAN SIMILARLY PLACED AND FINISH THE COURSE. A new crew so formed should report the facts to the nearest check point or race official giving their names and the race number under which they are continuing. They should also confirm this information at the Finish. THE NEW CREW'S TIME WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR ANY AWARD OTHER THAN A CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION. (The Sir Louis & Lady Gluckstein Trophy is not included in the context of the last sentence)

#### 10. STARTING

a) Crews must be reported to the Crews Marshal at the Council Wharf at least 30 minutes prior to their starting time, and be on the water 5 minutes before that time.

b) Juniors will be notified of their starting time by the Starter, but must be ready by 08.00 hours on Good Friday.

c) Senior Crews must complete the course by 11.00 hours on Easter Monday, and must

have vacated County Hall by midday having removed all equipment.

d) Competitors shall keep clear of other canoes at all times and shall in no way obstruct the passage of other canoes. Any crew causing a collision, or damage to another canoe or equipment, or endangering another crew, shall be disqualified. Following crews shall be allowed to overtake unhindered on demand.

#### 11. OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE

a) Crews are permitted to obtain assistance from any source in the repair of canoes, paddles, or equipment sustaining damage during the race. However, canoes undergoing repair shall not be moved away from, nor along, the towpath unless carried by its crew, and by no other persons.

b) Paddles, rudders and clothing. Including spray-decks, may be replaced if necessary.

c) Medical assistance is permitted in case of illness or injury only.

d) In addition to food and drink mentioned in Rule 7(a), the foregoing constitute the only forms of assistance open to competitors in the race. ANY OTHER FORM OR MANNER OF ASSISTANCE GIVEN TO, OR ACCEPTED BY A CREW SHALL RENDER THE CREW LIABLE TO DISQUALIFICATION.

e) In the case of Junior crews, no outside assistance as defined under (a) and (b) above shall be permitted between the times of leaving the water at the end of each day's racing and re-embarkation on the following day.

12. FOUL PLAY If it be established by the committee that during the race, substitution of canoes or personnel has taken place, or that transport overland, or by water, for the purposes of shortening the course has been effected, the offending crew shall be disqualified and may be permanently barred from entering any future race. Also, the B C U. will be informed of such action. Furthermore, should it be established that any Organisation has condoned such foul play, that Organisation may be barred from entering any personnel in future races-

13. KIT CHECKS Canoes may be stopped at any point along the course by committee representatives for the purpose of checking that full compulsory kit is being carried. A diagonally-halved Red and Yellow flag will indicate a check point and the time taken for the check will be recorded by the Kit Judge and deducted from the crew's overall race time.

14. UNIVERSITY BOAT RACE On the occasions when the Boat Race is held on Easter Saturday, the river is closed to all traffic for some 2 or 3 hours whilst the race is being run. During such closure, any crews arriving at Kew Pier will be held there until the river is reopened, and the amount of time they are delayed will be deducted from their overall race time.

15. RETIREMENTS If compelled to withdraw from the race, competitors must telephone 01-928-4870 or inform the nearest check point at the earliest opportunity WITHOUT FAIL.

#### 16. INDEMNIFICATION

a) The Committee can accept no responsibility for any mishaps to competitors, however caused, which they may incur whilst taking part in the race.

b) The Committee accepts no responsibility for clothing or items of equipment left on the camp sites.

**17. PROTESTS** Any protests concerning infringement of these rules must be handed direct to the into a morior ^Micei 01 a Kace Committee member at one of the following check-points: Devizes, Newbury, Marlow, Ham or Westminster . Such protests must be made in writing, must be accompanied by ten corroborative statements, from independant witnesses, where relevant, and must be handed 1 BEFORE the CREW OR CREWS CONCERNED REACH THE FINISH

18 ENTRIES Entry Forms and fees must be in the hands of the Competition Secretary not later than 21 days before Good Friday The receipt of the Entry Form and Fee shall be deemed to indicate that the entrant have read and understood these rules, Entries received after the stipulated date may be accepted, but an additiona1 fee of £' per crew. Will be payable .

19. TROPHIES Winners of trophies will be held responsible for there safe custody and return in good condition. They must be returned at least one month before Easter ot the following year Any person or organisation who consistently fails to return trophies, either by the stipulated time, or in good condition, may be barred from holding trophies in future.

## 20. JUNIOR CAMP SITES

a) No person other than a race official or competitor shall be allowed **access** to any building used for the accommodation of competitors.

b) No competitor may leave a camp site without the permission of the Camp Marshal.

21. BREACHES OF RULES Failure to comply with the foregoing rules will render the offending crew liable to disqualification. Race officials having no personal interest in any other crew taking part in the race may disqualify any crew for flagrant breaches of the rules. Where any doubt exists, the crew shall be warned that their actions will be reported to the committee, and a quorum of said committee will deal with the matter at it's discretion after hearing the competitors case.

## 22. CONDUCT OF CREWS AND SUPPORTERS

a) All crews and their supporters must maintain a satisfactory standard of conduct throughout the race .

b) Any crew member who persists in oeating noise and other forms of public annoyance shall render the crew or crews with which he is associated liable to penalty.

c) Any crew supporter who persists in creating noise or other forms of public annoyance shall render the crew or crews with which he is associated liable to penalty

d) Any crew member, or crew supporter who fails to observe the instructions of any rac official shall render the crew or associated crews liable to penalty.

e) Penalties for breach of the above rules shall be at the discretion of the Committee, and in addition, may result in entries for future races being refused.

23. SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTE The Committee's decision in all matters shall be regarded as being final. These Rules, the Official Route Map, and the Lock Portage Diagram are subject to amendment each year.

## NOTICES TO COMPETITORS

Under ideal conditions, the race calls for strenuous and sustained effort. In bad weather, it can be extremely arduous, and below Teddington on the Tideway dangerous. ONL EXPERIENCED CANOEISTS WHO ARE ABLE TO SWIM, AND WHO HAVE TRAINED HARD FOR AT LEAST 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO EASTER, SHOULD ATTEMPT THE RACE. **all** INTENDING COMPETITORS ARE REMINDED OF THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF WEARING LIFE-JACKETS DURING ALL TRAINING RUNS. TRAINING Competitors are advised to spare no effort in training over long distances and in portaging locks with the weight of kit and with the canoe which they intend to use for the race. Training should take place in all weathers, both by day and by night . Up-to-date information as to any special dangers on the Thames is available from the Thames Conservancy, phone Reading 583583.

THE COURSE The Kennet & Avon Canal section of the course is derelict for most of its length apart from stretches around Newbury and Reading which have been restored to a navigable condition. The disused sections of the canal present many hazards to canoeists, and competitors are therefore advised to make at least one training run on the Canal to familiarise themselves with it.

Members of the Committee who have paddled over most of the canal section warn of the following dangers and conditions :-

Summit Level (Crofton) - Completely dry, portage unavoidable.

Broken-down lock gates in many places. Generally the lower gates have collapsed, but in some cases, the top gates are intact only below water level, all traces of beams and paddle gear having gone. Silting Severe in a number of places to the extent that grounding can occur. Avoid stepping out of a grounded boat without first probing with a paddle - you could sink into soft mud.

Submerged stakes and rocks These occur in countless places, but be particularly careful at landfalls near locks. Low Bridges Care is called for in shooting these, particularly at night.

Several have been reinforced underneath with steel girders which can cause severe head injury to an unsuspecting paddler. Swans Easter usually co-incides with the nesting season and many a canoe has been capsized by an irate parent unused to the passage of boats. Pass by keeping close in to the opposite bank. If the swan gives chase (as they invariably do), do not attempt to retaliate with paddles; it had been known for paddles to be broken by swans. If unsure of the best action to take, disembark and portage. Weirs These generally take the form of overspill sluices. Listen for the sound of rushing water and steer well clear. The River Thames is relatively straightforward, although fatigue will by now affect competitor's awareness and strength. Thames weirs constitute definite danger and should be avoided. Take particular care at the following:- Shiplake, Marsh, Hurley, Marlow, Cookham, Boulton, BRAY is notoriously dangerous - keep well in to the left hand bank when negotiating the right-

hand bend immediately before the lock, Romney, Old Windsor, Bell Weir, and Chertsey. On the Tideway, keep clear of commercial traffic and at night keep a lookout for moored barges and buoys which do not always display a light. All competitors must strictly observe Rule 5 and display a visible white light between Vauxhall Bridge and Finish if arriving after dark. On both waterways, use the towpath as a guide to the navigation channel, or for portaging locks. You are safer in the centre. Canal Lock numbers, where given, are in the form of an iron plate attached to the towpath lock-gate lever.

EMERGENCIES In the event of a capsize, stay with your canoe - it has buoyancy. It is most important to have the best protective clothing to combat rain and cold The main consideration of the compulsory change of clothing should be warmth. Keep your sleeping bags and spare clothing in water tight bags - at worst your life could depend on them in the event of a capsize in sub-zero temperatures. If help is needed, or if you are forced to retire from the race, and there is no official in the immediate vicinity, telephone the nearest of the following bases within the time limits shown. State your position and circumstances to a race official if possible .-

Devizes Wharf-Devizes 3638, Black Swan Hotel - Devizes 2906 until 10.00 hours Saturday, The Plaza - Newbury 3550 12.00 Friday until 12 00 Saturday, County Hall, Westminster - 01-928-4870 from 06.00 Saturday until 11,00 Monday, or any lock-side communication point. On the Tideway, competitors are at liberty to call the Port of London Authority and River Police piers for general assistance;-

Kew Pier, adjoining Kew Bridge, right hand bank.

Barnes River Police, 371 Lonsdale Rd., S.W.13, right hand bank below Barnes Bridge.

Hammersmith Pier, upstream of Hammersmith Bridge, left hand bank.

Putney Pier, adjoining Putney Bridge, right hand bank

Cadogan Pier, Chelsea, adjoining Albert Bridge, left hand bank.

CANOES These should be strong enough to withstand the inevitable abrasion and rough handling which they receive along the canal and on portages. Stability is another consideration, particularly in view of the rough conditions which can generally be expected on the Tideway- Competitors are reminded of Rule 4(d) which refers to Inbuilt buoyancy.

JUNIOR CAMP SITES Junior Crews arriving at the overnight stops should not stop paddling until they hear the finish signal (either a bell or a car horn) At all stops, land on the right hand bank. At night, the stops are marked by a flashing red light and lookouts will be posted.

Friday Night (Newbury) - Land at the Car Park just after the second bridge below Newbury Lock

Saturday Night (Marlow) - Land at Marlow Rowing Club immediately before Marlow Bridge.

Sunday Night (Ham) -Land at Thames Young Mariners Base half a mile downstream from Teddington Lock.

ACCOMMODATION AT DEVIZES Competitors ONLY can be accommodated in the Corn Exchange, Devizes, on Thursday or Friday night free of charge. Sleeping bags will be necessary. Under no circumstances may canoes be brought into the building. For those who would rather arrange private accommodation, the following is a list of hotels and boarding houses in Devizes:-

Black Swan Hotel, Market Place. Bear Hotel/Market Place.

Bell Hotel, Estcourt St. Castle Hotel, New Park St.

Crown Hotel, St. John's St. Moonraker Hotel, Nursted Rd,

Melbourne Guest Houses, Bath Rd.

The Plough Boy Cafe in the Market Place makes a point of providing reasonably priced meals for competitors and supporters on the Thursday evening, with breakfast from 6 am. on Good Friday.

ARRIVAL AT WESTMINSTER Upon sighting Big Ben, keep to the right hand bank and land at the first flight of steps past Westminster Bridge. These are marked during daylight by a red and yellow flag, and at night by a red and white alternating light. A whistle will be used for timing the Finish, just before reaching the steps. Beware of strong back currents in the lee of the bridge piers. TIDE TIMES, ETC. High water at Teddington is approximately 1 hour 2 min after London Bridge. Times of high water at London Bridge are given in Tide Tables, the A.A. Handbook, and Old Moores Almanac. Richmond Drawlock is raised 2 hours before, and lowered 2 hours after, high tide at Teddington. (ie: clear passage is only possible during these 4 hours) If the way is blocked, portage on the left hand side (boat rollers).

LICENCES ON CANAL AND RIVER Competitors are reminded that the following training periods are covered by their entry fees:-

a) Kennet & Avon Canal\

b) River Thames \- For a period of one week prior to, and/ including the race.

Any crew who wishes to use either waterways outside the periods stated must first be in possession of an appropriate licence, obtainable from the following sources:-

Canal Permits:

Telephone:

River Thames:

Telephone:

Pleasure Craft Licensing Officer,

British Waterways Board,

"Willow Grange",

Church Rd.,

Watford, WD1 3QA.

Watford 26422

Thames Conservancy,

Burdett House,

15, Buckingham St.,

London, W.C.2.

01-839 2441

Competitors whose canoes already carry current licence or exemption plates for either waterway / may, after the race, apply to the above authorities for a refund of the appropriate portion of their entry fee covering their training and race licences. If making such a claim the owner's name and the number of the relevant licence plate must be quoted. Competitors are earnestly requested not to use the waterways without a licence as this could easily prejudice permission being granted to hold the race. The committee trusts that all concerned will observe the proprieties in this regard.

RACE NUMBER PLATES The official number plate must be attached to the canoe with surgical, or similar adhesive tape. On no account must impact adhesive such as Bostik be used for this purpose since it causes problems when the plates have to be stored after the race. Each number plate remains the property of the committee and must be handed in at Westminster immediately after the race, or to a race official if earlier retirement take place. Failure to return your number plate, or if it is returned in a mutilated condition, will incur a charge of 50p. to cover the cost of replacement.

The number plate is a crew's permit to be on the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Thames for the period of the race. Without it a crew will not be permitted to take part, and any crew seen paddling without the plate being visible on it's canoe will be deemed to have retired from the race.

DRINKING WATER Water is available to all competitors at the Water Points listed under Rule 7(c) . Under no circumstances should canal water be used for drinking or mouth-washing. An attack of enteritis could be the result of such action.

ADDRESS CHANGES Please ensure that if you change your address for correspondence as stated on your entry form, you notify the Competition Secretary promptly.

ENTRY LISTS These are not circulated to competitors prior to the race, but are published in the official programme on sale at the start and along the course.

RESULTS A full list of results will be sent to each crew shortly after the race. Crews will also be notified of the date of the trophy presentation. TRAVELLING CLOTHES If securely packed and labelled, clothes left in the charge of the Camp Marshal at Devizes will be transported to Westminster at competitors own risk, providing that vehicle capacity will permit it.

TRESPASSING AND ACCESS Competitors are requested to make it quite clear to their supporters that vehicular access to either waterway may only being gained by public roads, and to warn against noise, deposit of litter, and other forms of annoyance to local residents by race followers. British Water- ways have already had occasion to complain officially to the committee about damage caused to private property by heavy vehicles being driven on estate roads not open to the public. These annoyances, if permitted to continue, could prejudice our privilege of using the waterways for future races. The committee therefore relies on each and every crew to ensure that their supporters are made fully aware of their responsibilities in this respect.

#### PROCEDURE AT DEVIZES

Any Senior Crew wishing to change their start time, or any Senior or Junior Crew making changes to crew or type of canoe, must report at one of the following times and places:-

Thursday •- Black Swan Hotel - 19.00 to 23.00 hours.

Friday - Park Road Bridge - 10.00 to 12.00 hours,

Friday - Black Swan Hotel - 19.00 to 20.00 hours.

Any sudden and unavoidable change of crew or canoe taking place just prior to the start must be notified to the Competition Secretary at the Wharf. Junior Crews at the Corn Exchange will rise in time to have their quarters cleaned, all items of refuse placed in rubbish bins, and to be at the Wharf Car Park by 08.00 hours on Friday. Senior Crews must be at the car park thirty minutes before their scheduled starting time.

#### ALL CREWS ARRIVING AT THE WHARF CAR PARK SHOULD PROCEED AS FOLLOWS :-

1. Report to the Crews Marshal at the Wharf Main Gate.
2. Take canoes and equipment into the wharf enclosure and place them in a position convenient to the Kit Checkers.
3. BOTH CREWMEN TOGETHER, go to the area in front of the small brick office inside the main gate to have Individual identity wristlets fitted. These may be attached to either wrist. State your race number when your turn arrives .
4. Return to your canoe and lay out your compulsory kit alongside so that each item is clearly visible.
5. Make contact with a Kit Checker and have your kit inspected.
6. Stow all kit inside your canoe, then carry it to the landing stage. Do not launch until instructed to do so by the Raft Steward.
7. After launching, paddle down to the second bridge from the wharf and await final instructions from the Starter.

BEFORE LEAVING HOME FOR DEVIZES, MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE ALL YOUR KIT,  
NUMBER PLATE, ETC., WITH YOU.

Last Updated 11/10/2016

**1975 Comments in Results - K1 Non Stop & 1st Ladies K2**

1975

During the years prior to the introduction of an official class for singles a number of stalwarts paddled the course solo and independently of the race organisation One of those we have a record of is A J Ince BSc. DIC. PhD. who paddled a K1 over the course in 22hrs 7mins.

Editors note:- Also paddling that year were the first all female crew of Maurene Hossack with her niece Jo Saxby. Both K1 and K2 crews trained from their base of Leverton's in Windsor which was run by Abdul Considine. Although they were not allowed to enter, as was the custom at that time, they were allowed the facilities of the race and given a completion certificate. The following year Maurene paddled with her neighbour Diana Johnson in the new Senior Ladies sub class.

The Windsor, Slough and Eton Express Friday April 11, 1975

LOCAL ladies Maureen Hossack (left) and Jo Saxby have really upset the men and rocked their boat ...

For, the two ladies have just completed the gruelling Devizes to Westminster endurance canoe race competing against teams from the marine commandos and army, and have struck a blow for Women's Lib!

"The Devizes to Westminster Committee does not usually allow ladies to compete", explained Maureen: "Anyway, we arrived there and paid our £6 entry fee to the stewards and they let us compete unofficially".

### **1977 K1 recorded**

The following text is taken from the official results for 1977.

1977

Another successful unofficial solo run was made this year by Marcus Church in 26hrs 50mins

Editors Note: Marcus Church is the last known singles paddler to complete the course in 1977 and before the singles 4 day event was introduced in 1985. K Booles entered a K1 in the singles race in 1990, removed his number at Newbury and retired from the 4 day race to complete the last known non stop K1 run. The committee did not approve and banned him from further competition.

Several crews paddled singles prior to 1985 for reasons that are not always known, perhaps even to themselves, perhaps because they wanted a tougher challenge, or wanted a smaller field of competitors. The first reported single attempt is Percy Blandford in 1949 however he retired with his two Junior Doubles Boats from Alpertown Sea Scouts at Chertsey, having apparently paddled from Westminster to Devizes to gain information on the course. In 1950 the first known rules were drawn up which stated "Teams shall consist of two canoeists in one canoe". Thereafter the first successful singles run reported is of Ernest Smith in 1958 who's partner was ill. The 1966 results list a J A Millbourn without a partner but it may simply be that this was a double and the name of the partner was lost in history. This result was added with others by hand and without a time. In 1970 Sgt Worsly paddled the course in June. Also around 1970 it is noted that David Keane (Chairman of DW) asked the Lawlers to support a Hungarian, Lajos Topor, using a C1. In 1981 the Chairman of the US Canoe Association also paddled a C1 with the Juniors. Indeed all these crews are thought to have either paddle with the Juniors or over more than 1 day. In the early years the Junior race was over 3 rather than the now 4 days. In addition to those who set out alone, two crews are recorded as completing alone. In 1957 we have R Rodda and in 1963 P Spensor. Both men were given a special award by the committee. I am also aware of one crew (John Catto) who in 2002, having regard for the present rules of the DW completed the race with his support crew after his partner was unable to continue and after he had notified the organisers of his retirement from the race.

Having done the DW twice in a K2 myself, I had some idea what I was taking on in 1975, but in truth only really did so because someone told me it was impossible. I suspect that few of us knew much about others who had done it as most of the notes were only added to the results for the 50th anniversary bound set that was produced for 1998. Given the absence of information the target time I set was deliberately conservative but this was to come back and bite me later as I reached Teddington hours before high tide. A real concern in trying to do it alone in less than 24 hours was for morale and I thus set times which I hoped I would beat to keep my spirits up. In the event I was well up at Reading having been cheered by a fisherman at Theale who told me the Thames had come up and had a good flow on it and also by the total strangers who fed me with chocolate bars and other goodies. I was also fed and watered by the DW checkpoint staff at Bray. I suspect we were all looked after by other competitors support crews if we needed help. A feature of the DW being the willingness of everyone and anyone to help. David Keane chatted to me before the start to offer encouragement, the full facilities of the race organization and a warning that the helpers tended to lose their sense of humour after a day or two. We had exchanged letters before the event so he was not surprised to see me but I am not sure he believed me when I replied if I am not there in 24 hours I am not coming. I believe that the comments in the results show that David assisted many of us who tried the single. Certainly he did not stand in our way though I do not think that any of us were allowed to enter the race.

Of course time moves on, people and attitudes change and safety and the responsibility of management became such that it all stopped and competitors are now very strongly discouraged from attempting the single non stop run, at least at Easter where it might reflect inadvertently on the DW organisation. I doubt those who did it non stop would have been interested in a 4 day race, they could have done that anyway and raced with the juniors as others had done but the success of the present 4 day singles race has encouraged others into the race and that is as it should be. Safety was an issue. A single in trouble has no other support to depend on and so we move from not encouraging reckless actions to seeking to prevent them.

### **1986 Comments in Results - Finish moved**

In 1986, due to the demise of the Greater London Council they were unable to offer the usual facilities at the finish for the Junior and Singles Classes. Alternative arrangements were made for these crews to finish at the Westminster Sailing Base some distance short of the usual finishing line. An exception was made for the three leading junior crews who were timed over the full course. The change this year unfortunately does mean that the Team times cannot be considered for the record.

### **1986 ALTERED COURSE**

As part of the disruption caused to the 1986 Race by the abolition of the GLC, the Senior Singles and Junior Doubles course was shortened. Special arrangements were made to enable class leaders to compete for the record to Westminster. New records were established this year as follows:

Junior Doubles      23 D. COULSON and J. ELLIOTT (15 hrs 1 min 16 sees)  
Senior Singles      418 R. BELCHER (15 hrs 39 mins 28 sees)  
Senior Singles Ladies 465 A. PLANT (16 hrs 38 mins 10 sees)

### **1990 Last K1 non stop**

Ken Booles

There was someone in the mid '90s. My notes have this rather unuseful quote:

"...the competitor continuing on through Newbury and defying all attempts to return him to the overnight stop. The attempting of such a feat is considered foolhardy and he has been banned from ever entering the race again....."

I do know that Hugh Hoskins of Bradford-on-Avon did complete the

course in the early 1970s (71,72 or 73 - I was competing in the Junior Section at the time and we got reports on his progress). He was a regular on the racing scene and is now a vicar somewhere in Wiltshire, so I suppose I ought to try to make contact.

In my notes I found this from 1997:

"It is intriguing to speculate whether one year we will have a female competitor in first place."

Allan Bennett

### **1992 From the Richmond Records**

Richmond Canoe Club

The following extract comes from the Thames User of April 1992

#### **MEMORABLE INCIDENTS**

1948 Pioneer trip made by two crews from Devizes Rover Scouts who paddled from Devizes to Westminster in 90 hours.

1949 Seventeen crews entered for the first official marathon race from Devizes to Westminster at Easter. Time taken reduced to 49hrs 32mins by two crews from Richmond Canoe Club.

1950 Frank Luzmore heads official organising committee. First winner of race challenge cup is Richmond Canoe Club with an improved time of 34hrs 52mins.

1953 Junior class established; Entrants must make three overnight stops.

1954 Military units enter crews and Royal Marines win senior class, and continue to record the best time for another 15 times.

1968 Parachute Regiment crew of Pagnanelli and Evans break 20-hour barrier.

1970 Crew from Richmond Canoe Club break army dominance by winning 21st race.

1977 First time women and mixed crews permitted to enter. Best time: 20hrs 46mins achieved by Mary Garrett and Sheila O'Bryne of Richmond CC and Argonauts CC.

1979 Brian Greenham of Reading and Leighton Park CC with Tim Cornish of Richmond CC set new record time of 15hrs 34mins. still the best time.

1985 Singles class introduced.

1991 International team challenge added to singles class: entries restricted to three boats per nation.

P.Davey

Hon. Secretary

Editors Note. The first Ladies crew was in 1975, followed by 1976.

### **1992 Oldest Competitor**

Oldest paddler to complete the course as far as I know was John Powell (Leaside CC) though I don't know his actual age.

1992 G Marsden & R John Powell 61:50:34 Combined age 155  
John finished in 71, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90 & 92.

Next is:



1974 Archie Beale & LP Cocks 51:04:10 Combined age 130

Ladies:

1992 Esther Jean Boatman & Gillian Lesley Goodchild 49:18:04 Combined age 103

Alas, it seems such times would not be permitted any more and the caveat that combined ages were only recorded for a few years.

Allan B

Post Script

Hi. I'm now living in Turkey and thought i'd catch up on DW this year.  
Looking at your records Veteran (155) Marsden & Powell.  
John Powell I know was 81 when he completed his last DW as I was a coach at Leaside at the time.  
His ambition and in his words "I want to die canoeing"  
He was a gentlemans gentleman

The Race

1992

C J Tatam

### **1993 1000 mile club member disqualified**

1993 - Disqualification

Sometimes times are tough. In 1993 a Veteran senior double was disqualified. Unfortunate as otherwise there were no gaps in a total of 11 completions.

We completed the race and were later disqualified for not showing a white light below Vauxhall bridge.

Boat no was either 227 or 229 I can't remember we were both from the same TA unit

John Ferry/ John Harkin

Editors Comment.

The rule on a light below Vauxhall bridge has changed over the years

The 1973 rules stated

d) All crews leaving Devizes must be equipped with a torch in working order, whether it's use is anticipated or not. Below Teddington Lock at night, the torch must be ready for instant showing In compliance with the Port of London Authority bye-laws. Between Vauxhall Bridge and the Finish, at night, a visible white light must be shown continuously.

Time penalties

q) Torch in working order 10 mins

In 1998 the rules stated

(iii) Below Vauxhall Bridge and up until disembarkation at the finish a visible white light MUST BE SHOWN CONTINUOUSLY facing forward.

## MAXIMUM PENALTY - DISQUALIFICATION.

Of course the rules needed to be tightened following the Marchioness disaster in 1989, but none the less unfortunate.

The **Marchioness disaster** occurred on the River Thames in London in the early hours of 20 August 1989. The pleasure boat *Marchioness* sank after being run down by the dredger *Bowbell*. There were 131 people on the *Marchioness* crewing, waiting and attending a private birthday party; fifty-one of them drowned. **1997 Rules - Start time**

In 1997 the Senior Start window was stated as :- Senior doubles crews may choose their own starting time within the thirteen hour bracket between 0300 and 1600 hours on Good Friday

## **FROM 1998 ONWARDS**

It is intended to permanently change the Start and Finish options in this class. From 1998 onwards it is intended that the Start time bracket will be from 0700 hours Good Friday to 0900 hours Easter Saturday. This will allow fast crews full options every year for a daylight run on Easter Saturday, or an overnight run on Good Friday. Pre-booking of kit checks and starts after 1200 hours on Good Friday will still be required, but by phoning Westminster and being given a Late Start Reference. In addition crews will not be permitted to pass Teddington Lock prior to 0100 on Easter Saturday and no allowance will be given. The details in this paragraph are given this year for INFORMATION ONLY

## **1999 Handbook Notes - Lt Cdr Shilcock & War Canoe Entered**

### **Lt. Cdr. John G. Shilcock MBE, RN**

John retired this year from active involvement on the DW Race Committee, after 41 years of untiring service. He has agreed to accept the post of Life President of the DW Organisation. His marathon tour of duty began in 1958, when he took over from Nel Taylor as the representative of the Sea Cadet Corps on the Committee. He quickly settled down to assist the Committee in every possible way utilising the resources of the Sea Cadet Corps to help build up and improve the organisation of the event. In 1961, John was instrumental in arranging for the SCC to print the first programme for the DW. At that time there were no computers and printing was normally too expensive for short runs. John arranged for the first safety boats to be used at Westminster and the Sea Cadet Corps continue to provide this service now. Another important contribution made by John, was to involve the Sea Cadet Corps communications team who operated VHF radio from check points to the DW Information Centre. When computers were introduced, they quickly adapted their system to feed data into the DW system. Every year, John has visited DW check points, offering thanks and encouragement. John has contributed a great deal to building up the DW to its present size and significance. All involved in the DW Organisation thank him for his work and help over the years.

From the entry list

### **WAR CANOES**

501 DOLGALL, Linden & STAPLEFORD, Debbi CLUB : Fireflies Ladies / Dragon Boat Racing Team (DW Perspective has 35:05 as their time)

Editors note:- from the 1998 rules

### **4. CANOES AND KAYAKS**

(a) Canoes and kayaks are referred to in these Rules as boats. They may be of any type, but must be either single (one person) or double (two person) propulsion.

## **1999 Handbook Notes - The Origins**

## **THE COMPETITION**

The DW has four major classes and within each, there are several trophies. Every competitor who finishes receives a medal and a certificate. Competitors in one class, the Senior Doubles, paddle "Straight through". They can start at any time between 0700 and 2000 on Good Friday (and 0130 to 0630 Saturday) and finish between 0630 Saturday and 1010 on Easter Monday. More than 50% of the crews in this class will finish on the Saturday morning tide. The fastest boats are more likely to start Friday afternoon and finish on the Saturday Morning Tide. About 25 - 30% will not complete the course. Crews will all aim to pass through Teddington Lock about 1 hour after High Water, to obtain the maximum benefit from the ebb tide. Serious calculations involve tides, crew fitness, etc. to determine the optimum start time at Devizes. Fortunately for many crews finishing the course that matters more than the time taken. Some of these crew's decide to wait for the next tides, either at Teddington, or further down at Putney. The other three classes take place in four daily stages. They travel about 35 miles each day, stopping the night at Newbury on Friday, Marlow (Longridge) on Saturday and Teddington (Ham) on Sunday. Junior Doubles have to stay in designated sites, but Senior Singles and Veteran/Junior crews may leave the course each night. The starts each day provide high activity, as does the mass start at Ham at about 0540 and 0610 BST on Monday morning and the finish at Westminster about 2 hours latter.

## **History of the Race**

### **Origins**

The idea of the Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race originated at the Greyhound Public House at Pewsey. Owing to a threatened rail, and bus strike in 1920, alternative means of transport were the subject of conversation at the bar. Arising from this discussion, a group of friends bet that they could travel by the River Avon from Pewsey to the sea at Mudeford, near Christchurch, in less than three days. Using a 26ft double sculling skiff and overcoming all sorts of hazards, the intrepid boatmen won their bet with twelve hours to spare. Although very well publicised in the local Press at the time, so far as is known, the journey was not attempted again for 27 years. A 1947 crew composed of three RAF men and a local farmer was inspired to repeat the exploit by a conversation with a member of the original crew in the same Greyhound Public House. They won their £5 by reaching Christchurch in 51 hours. The Journey has been completed several times since, with the record time currently standing at around 20 hours.

### **The Beginning of the DW.**

The Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race arose as an off-shoot of the Pewsey to Christchurch competition when a Pewsey resident offered a prize to any crew that could better the 51 hours time of 1947. Ollie Brown, the Scoutmaster of the 1st Devizes Scouts wanted to take up the challenge but did not qualify because the Scouts' Canoes did not meet the requirements of the competition: sculling skiffs had been specified. Once again, we return to the back parlour (now the Orchid Restaurant) of the Greyhound at Pewsey. One member of the 1947 crew, Roy Cooke, was planning a boat trip from Devizes to Westminster in 100 hours. Although this particular project fell through, the frustrated Devizes Rover Scouts took up the challenge. Thus it was, that at Easter, 1948 the first two crews from the Devizes Rovers, paddling heavy home-built double canoes, completed the course with almost twenty hours to spare and £20 towards the groups canoeing funds. The rules were simple: "A boat to be taken from Devizes to Westminster in under 100 hours. All food and camping kit to be carried in the boats". At Whitsun, 1948, two crews of the Chippenham Sea Cadet Unit covered the same course in just under 77 hours. Further attempts by other crews in the summer were foiled by the thick growth of reeds in the canal. So it was, that a race was established and Easter was selected as the best time of year for the race.

### **The Growth of the Race.**

At Easter in 1949, there were no rules or race organisation, but nevertheless a dozen or so crews, some previously unknown to each other, set out from Devizes. The fastest boats had bettered 50 hours. One of these paddlers, Frank Luzmore, who had also been one of the unsuccessful paddlers the previous summer, then played a leading role in formalising the organisation. Using a committee largely drawn from the Richmond Canoe Club, he continued to organise the race through to the 1970s. In 1950, Albert Weibel donated a cup, providing incentive for paddlers to paddle non-stop through the night. The cup was backdated to include the fastest crew of 1949, an excellent idea had it

only gone back a further year to include the Scouts and Sea Cadets. In 1951, with the river in full Hood, the fastest times were just over the 24 hours. Since then, they have fluctuated from year to year with an underlying trend slowly reducing them to a record 15 1/2 hours in 1979. Since then, times of 16 and 17 hours have been recorded. The fastest time in 1993 was just 2 minutes outside that elusive record. It was quickly realised that paddling non-stop was probably too dangerous for juniors. So, in 1953, the committee established a separate race with enforced camp sites. This race has developed into the current four-day staged races that all finish with the mass run down the tideway on the Monday morning. Since the early days, single paddlers had raced amongst the doubles crews. Again, the greater danger of having a single person paddling non-stop through the night caused the Senior Singles race to be instigated in 1986 in parallel with the Juniors. The Veteran/Junior race began two years later. Races within Races. Initially, the race had been considered too dangerous for women. Over the years, embarrassing situations in the showers demonstrated that the rules were being breached, mostly by mixed doubles crews. In 1976, an official subclass was created within the Senior Doubles race for Senior Ladies. Two years later, a Junior Ladies Class was added to the Junior race. Mixed doubles trophies were added soon after. 1997 saw the advent of the first junior ladies team trophy. Canadian canoes were also officially made a sub-class within the Senior race in 1976. A Junior sub-class for Canadian Canoes, was not included until 1986.

### **The Devizes Scouts**

The four original paddlers, were all Rover Scouts with the 1st Devizes Scout Troop. The 1st Devizes Scout Troop is interesting in its own right. When Baden Powell returned from the Boer War and started the first ever Scout troop at Brownsea Island, he also wrote to several of his friends and suggested that they do the same. One of his closest friends, Col Steele lived in Devizes. Baden Powell and Col Steele had been close friends at the siege of Mafeking, where Col Steel was a medical doctor. The Col acted promptly to this request and formed the 1st Devizes Scout Troop which is therefore the second troop ever formed in the world. In 1947/8 the Scout Leader for the troop was Ollie Brown. He had four very enthusiastic senior scouts and wanted some project to occupy them. Originally, he arranged that they were given the materials to build a kayak that could form the centre of such a project. When it was known that they were building their own canoe, someone else gave them a very old but useable Canadian canoe. These two canoes were the ones used in the first Devizes to Westminster. It was to continue this project that Ollie finally arranged the challenge that led to their Devizes to Westminster trip.

### **Editors note.**

The 1950 rules make no stipulation on sex.

- 1 The Cup may be competed for by any canoeing team without restriction of age, its members must be normally resident in the British Isles.
- 2

### **2000 Unofficial record is set.**

Steve Baker (Elmbridge) and Duncan Capps (Army) Crew 414 also finished the 2000 DW. Setting an unofficial Record of 15hrs 17mins 45secs.

We had an official kit check and start from Devizes at 0551hrs on Saturday following 2 other boats which set off that morning; David McAllister-Hewlings and Bryan Newbutt of Nottingham Kayak Club at 0315hrs and DW veterans, Brian Greenaway and Geoff Tilford of Richmond and Bedford at 0500hrs.

We were unaware that there had been a safety incident during the night although through conversation with the starting officials we learned that some of the crews had been held up due to conditions on the Thames and would be continuing at dawn. It was not until we reached Froxfield that our support crew were informed by mobile phone that the race had now been abandoned which came as a shock. At Hungerford we were stopped by our support crew who explained that we could not keep racing officially as we were compromising the race organisation which we agreed was unacceptable. The number was removed from the boat and we confirmed with the DW organisation that we were retiring from the race and so were no longer in any way their responsibility. We then

continued to paddle the course coming off the canal in 7hrs 29mins, running the river in 6hrs and the Tideway in 1hr 48mins to finish in a total time of 15hrs 17mins 45secs.

We received an official start at 05hrs 51mins 25secs and in addition to our stopwatches have a verifiable finish time of 2109hrs courtesy of Big Ben

#### Editors Note

The safety incident at old windsor occurred when the River Thames was running at record levels. Three crews became trapped on the island above the weir with another trapped against the weir itself. Probably the result of the very bright beam from a light on the weir pointing directly into the eyes of crews it demonstrates the importance of not blinding crews who could not see beyond the light and were unable to see the lock cut. It also demonstrates the importance of knowing the River. The lock keeper opened both sets of paddles on the Lock to divert as much of the flow through the lock as possible before reducing the flow over the weir to allow the trapped crews to escape.

See also record attempts

#### **2003 Strong head winds**

Strong head winds slow most competitors by some 2 hours

#### **2008 Start switched to run the Canal at Night**

2008, It was due to very high water levels on the Thames which were forecast to fall if the race was delayed 12 hours. There was a time window at Dreadnaught Reach which you couldn't leave before, as well as the tide window at Teddington.

#### **2010 Hansard MP states DW is an easier way of getting here than fighting a general election**

10th June 2010 Claire Perry MP for Devizes quips "We host the Devizes to Westminster canoe race, which some might say is an easier way of getting here than fighting a general election."

#### **2016 4 day race stopped at Teddington**

High winds cause the 4 day race to be stopped on safety grounds. The senior race continued as normal as it was finished before the storm

#### **2018 A reflective on change by Nick Adnitt**

A week today 136 crews will set off from Devizes on the 70th year of DW. Flow conditions on the Thames are better than they've been for a few years and the K&A is fairly topped-up. Who-knows what the weather will deliver as the forecast seems to change daily, but let's hope for heavy rain for the next few days, and a light tail wind, not too cold, no snow and no fog on Saturday. The big question though, is will Tim and Brian's 15 hour 34 minute record from 1979 ever be broken? Only four other winning crews have recorded less than 16 hours since then, the last being 20 years ago (Not including 2000 when the race was officially cancelled as the Thames was bonkers, and only six crews recorded a time).

1979 15:34:12 Greenham B R & Cornish T J - Reading and Leighton Park & Richmond

1998 15:37:36 Baker Steve & Dark S - Royal & Bradford on Avon

1989 15:39:13 Wells Paul R & Wells Mike J - Richmond

1994 15:42:03 Phillips Mark C & Lewis Richard - Royal Navy K A & Bradford on Avon

1993 15:57:40 Thornton M & Alston S - Elmbridge & Chester

So why is it when so much supposed progress has been made in terms of boats, paddles, kit, training, nutrition, support and the condition of the course, that the record remains stubbornly intact? What factors are different from 20, 30, 40 years ago to these days?

I completed the race in 78, 80 and 81, so I know what it was like back-in-the-day. First off we were so much younger! Has the average age of the competitors increased? Are today's young marathon super-stars still up for it?

**Some of the developments we didn't have back then include:**

- Wing paddles
- Carbon fibre and Kevlar
- Computer designed boats
- Gortex
- Lycra
- LED lights
- NiMH or Li-Ion batteries
- Sophisticated base layers
- Wicking clothing
- Energy gels
- Energy bars
- Mobile phones
- WWW or social media
- Real-time tracking
- GPS, Garmin, HRM or other tech
- Under stern rudders
- Poggies

**Stuff that was available included:**

- Woollen pullovers and hats
- Nylon shorts
- Nylon water proofs
- Aluminium paddle shafts
- Asymmetrical fibre glass paddle blades
- Over stern rudders
- Canvas and rubber hockey boots

**Factors in our favour were:**

- No 'elf & safety
- No tide window
- Lights weren't mandatory
- Crews could paddle under Newbury bridge
- Didn't paddle Cookham lock cut, it was straight to the weir
- There were few parking restrictions
- No Dreadnought compulsory portage
- Not much in the way of Thames water management
- No low bridge at Bull Lock

**Things which have improved over the years:**

- The "Jungle" downstream of Thatcham where the bull rushes covered the entire width of the canal for about a mile.
- The Crofton stretch was dry, so there was no choice but to run 1.5 miles.
- The get-outs and put-ins at the portages have improved enormously, especially on the canal.
- The weight and bulk of a full survival kit has been massively reduced.
- The condition of the K&A, plus weed management.
- Boats, paddles, kit.....etc

So unless we have a year with exceptional water and weather conditions, I don't think even a couple of world champions could set a new record.

What do people think?

Editorial - Another development in 2000 was the Jubilee channel which diverted flood water from Bolters lock to Eaton. This reduces the peak flow in high flow years limiting it in the Thames to about 130 cm/sec.

**2018 Race Truncated at Reading**

**DW Web site**

Senior Doubles Race: High water changes  
30 March 2018

Due to excessively high water and flow on the Thames, we have had to make some restrictions and changes to this years race.

Senior Doubles:

Paddlers must complete the safety matrix to show competency. Those that score under 12 should seriously consider not starting.

No paddlers will be allowed to paddle on the Thame in the dark. This gives two options:

Split Race: Paddlers start from 8am Saturday and race to Dreadnought Reach, Reading, where the clock will stop. Racing and the clock will restart from daybreak Sunday.

Non-stop: Paddle the canal in the dark, start Saturday Up to 8pm. Crews will not be allowed past Dreadnought until daybreak.

Stages race:

To be confirmed soon.....

Conditions are still changing and if they worsen, more drastic measures may be required.

We are doing everything we can to keep the race running and ask for your support at this difficult time.

### **Notice on FaceBook from DW**

ALL racing for DW 2018 will finish at Dreadnought Reach.

That will be the end of DW 2018, due to current river conditions.

Thank you for your understanding and support - please lend a hand if you can, transporting people / boats that need a hand.