



# Eagle Canoe Club Newsletter

## Summer Autumn 2013

Hello to you all. I hope you have had a lovely summer's worth of paddling. The nights are well and truly drawing in now and we are at the point where Eagle doesn't run every week. Do not despair! Throughout the winter there will be paddling for the hardy few that wish to take on the Wensum on a cold dark Wednesday, for the rest of us each club night there will be a special interest talk/show/discussion in the club house. These range from a night showing canoe and kayak videos any of you may have put together to a night talking about how to rescue a pinned canoe using ropes and pulleys. All of these can be found on the program Stuart sent out this month.

We have a number of great articles in the newsletter from Stuart trying to make people fall in the water by making them stand up in canoes and push themselves around with long sticks to messing about in playboats and what mobile phone apps Simon Allen uses on his phone on a regular basis!

You will see a number of articles from people about Jez Middleton who sadly passed away following a traffic accident during the summer. My lasting memory of Jez will be of someone with boundless enthusiasm for everything he did. I think it is testament to the bloke that people are still saying they only really understood how much he did for Eagle when he sadly is not with us anymore. I don't know what more to say really, I hope his family were touched by the number of people who showed up to his wake. I have never been to a funeral where so many people have turned up to celebrate someone's life like that. It was great to see that Jez had a lasting impact on so many others not just us Eagle-ites.

That is all from me from this newsletter and I leave you with some great articles from some other Eagle members. If you have any articles you wish to see in following newsletters then write it and send it to me. Thanks **Pete**

## EDITORIAL



## PLAYBOATING

Now for a long time I have watched people in play boats and thought – what's the point ! Many people see me as predominantly as a canoeist, and I have to be honest, within Norfolk that is pretty true. I do have a kayak, but it is rarely used in this county unless I'm coaching, but it does go to Wales a lot more than my canoe !

However, for a while now I have been having "issues" with my roll. It works lovely in the swimming pool, and to a lesser extent it works in the river in the cold, dark water, however, the minute you put it in a bit of moving water (even Horstead) a little voice pops into my head that says GET OUT !



I have tried lots of things, and this winter have spent a lot of time in the pool dressed in all my white water kit (looked a bit daft with a helmet & BA in the pool !), Jez had given me exercises to practice in my living room (the neighbours think I have gone mad) and I have changed from a screw roll to a C to C (go to the pool and all will be explained), however, none of this made a significant difference until 2 weeks ago that Pete & I went to Horstead and paddled play boats.

This is a boat I'm not familiar with and I ended up, upside down (a lot) unexpectedly and in the main flow, however, I was determined to come back up and not swim – all my pool sessions, living room practice and C to C came to the front of my mind (together with the voice that said GET OUT), however, as our evening wore on, the voice got quieter and quieter until I was falling in and thinking YOU CAN DO THIS! (I now just have to get rid of the voice on my left hand side).

Watching Pete play and try different moves and with my new found confidence, I thought, do you know, I think if I get one of these silly little boats it will really help my white water paddling and confidence.

So – what's the point ?! **Stuart**



## THE RIVER WISSEY – EAGLE VENTURES TO THE FENS...

Last summer after joining Kevin's trip and paddling on new water from West Somerton to Womack Water, I felt inspired to come up with my own trip idea for the 2013 season.

Initially I had chosen the River Lark for my trip destination, as my first encounter with a canoe was via a Canadian neighbour and the River Lark as it flowed through Jubilee Fields in Mildenhall. The fact that my younger brother jumped at the chance to go in the canoe, whereas I was satisfied with watching from the bank isn't really relevant...

As I was away in New Zealand until May, I was glad to see that my trip had been scheduled for later in the season, giving me plenty of preparation time – or so I thought! In reality I hadn't done much about it at all until August this year. Then after much deliberation, website searching and contact with other canoe groups and river access officers I decided that the longer stretch I wanted to do would be too weed clogged and shallow for a decent paddle. Time to look elsewhere...

As luck would have it Tony Brooks from Sue's Canoes was at the club one evening and I casually asked him what he thought of the River Lark, or was there anywhere else he could recommend that would make for a good club trip. He immediately suggested the River Wissey near Downham Market – I thought it must be in Cambridgeshire and would therefore be too far for a casual day-trip, but he assured me it was still in Norfolk and that it was a pretty river, much like the Waveney, so the decision was made there and then. So I had a location, the next challenge was to arrange coach cover, as although I had the date in the programme, there was a lack of coach allocation.

After much persuasion, Tim eventually agreed to accept the challenge – now I had a destination and a coach, but as I don't own a boat, or have the means of transporting one, I needed a way of utilising the club trailer – so I could actually attend my own trip! Stuart had agreed that if I found a willing volunteer he was happy for me to use it.

I had deliberated on making the trip one-way from Stoke Ferry to Denver Sluice, however I soon changed my mind - as it would take us an hour or so to drive to the put-in, then we would need a (usually time consuming and tricky) 'Eagle Shuttle' before even getting on the water, a there and back option seemed far easier.



Denver Sluice became the put-in point, there would be an opportunity for a pub stop along the way and if we wanted to venture that far, the Sugar Beet Factory at Wissington would be our turning point.

I casually mentioned in the pre-trip email that it would be an all day trip of approximately 12 miles and that we would be back in Norwich for 5pm. I also asked whether a kind-hearted person would be willing to tow the trailer. Step forwards Matt and Sally the Scenic – and I thought it was only girls who named their cars!

I had an additional 11 keen paddlers lined up for the occasion, and after working out the logistics and the feasibility of sharing tandem and solo canoeing duties, I thought I had it sussed. However, what with one excuse or another, on the day the number decreased to 7. This was no bad thing though, as it made for fewer boats on the trailer and less bodies to organise into cars. We managed to squeeze into two cars and had four boats between us, I even made special allowances for Matt as he was towing the trailer and allowed him to bring his kayak.

We arrived to find Denver Sluice bathed in lovely autumn sunshine, unloaded the boats and kit and headed out on the water. The River Wissey is a tributary of the larger Great Ouse, and we paddled along this larger river for a short period before reaching the Wissey itself. There is also a large cut-off channel at the sluice, with some rather ominous looking guillotine sluice gates – interestingly enough, this channel flows from Denver to Barton Mills on the River Lark.

As we entered the Wissey Tony mentioned he had seen an otter at this spot before, but I think we were chatting too much for any sightings. We did however come across a couple of large Swan families, Kingfishers, a Buzzard drifting on the thermals and a lot of white Doves.

After a brief coffee stop we found a lovely grassy field for our lunch stop at Hilgay. Apparently Hilgay is 20m above the surrounding fenland, and on the nearby bank of the cut-off channel is Snowre Hall, a building containing some of the earliest domestic brickwork in England. We didn't actually see it though, and the only building we were interested in was the local pub. We decided to visit the Rose and Crown on the return journey though and so pressed on to the glorious sight of Wissington Sugar Beet factory. My river guide Tony told us that the excess heat generated from it is used to heat greenhouses full of tomatoes on the other side of the bank – we didn't see these either!

The river proved to be as pretty as Tony had said, and gently wound its way through the fenland countryside. Stands of Willow and Poplars occupied the banks and a few day boats passed us along the way. There was also the odd derelict building on the bank, which prompted Tim to discuss the merits of doing up such a property before asking why anyone would actually want to live in the middle of the fens anyway...

The return journey to the pub seemed to take less time than on the way upstream, so a few of us made use of this extra time by partaking in some refreshing beverages, and made friends with the pub cat. The weather had stayed warm and sunny until now, but as we joined the others for the last stretch back to Denver Sluice the sky darkened and the heavens opened. Luckily it was only a 'light shower' and most of us didn't bother with waterproofs – as Tony pointed out blue sky wasn't too far away and we did dry out before we reached the end.

An uneventful 14 miles later, we returned to Denver, loaded the boats in record time and headed back to Norwich with everyone daydreaming of a nice Sunday dinner. Despite not quite getting back to Norwich at my estimated time (make that nearer 6 than 5pm!) the trip was a definite success and it was worth the drive to the fens for some more new miles. I couldn't have done it without help though, so would like to thank Tony for the idea, Tim for providing coach cover and Matt for towing the trailer. Alex provided the style as usual and in the end all I had to do was provide some yummy sticky ginger cake.

I am planning some more trip ideas for the autumn/winter season – Sunday pub-lunch 'n' paddle on the River Lark anyone?





# POLING FOR THE UNSTEADY

So, I turn up for a nice evening intending to work on my canoe turns in preparation for my 2 star assessment, happy with my plans I get out my favourite one seater, the Yellowstone Solo Bell, the roll call is done and arms are going up for the various activities for the night, as the lone 2 star canoer I get put together with the lone 3 star canoer, we sit on the bank and Stuart says to us ‘tonight we can do some towing and learn about ways to help out tired paddlers, then we can try out some canoe poling’. POLING!!!. I would like to know what psychotic swimmer decided that poling a canoe would be a good idea. The poor man must have had issues.

So, we get upstream from the club to a point where the water is deep, and cold, and full of weeds, and Stuart says ‘Right lads, lets try out some poling’ Cue increased heart rate, cold sweats, blurry vision and a general sense of extreme dread.

So, slowly, veeery slowly, I stand up in the canoe, it wobbles ever so slightly, I sit back down, I try again, that’s it, I’m standing, Stuart rocks his canoe to demonstrate how stable it is, I wobble mine a lot less, legs shaking, still dry, we start to do some manoeuvres, forwards, backwards, turny turny, wobbly wobbly, still dry, yay for me. Then it is time to head back downstream, I’m going slowly, veeery slowly, the pole shakes its way through the water, my legs shake their way through the boat, still standing, still dry, I can do this.

I am the first to admit that my balance isn’t too good, my flexibility is worse and I revel in imaging what could happen, but, it was actually kind of fun. Once I started talking to Martin and Stuart and thinking less about my precarious position on a plank of plastic with a twig to paddle with, things went quite well.

We got back to the club, still standing, still dry; my inner thighs are on fire and a grin on my face. I had had a good time; Stuart reckoned he had never known me to be so quiet, I can only be thankful he didn’t hear what I was muttering as we had made our way downstream, some of it was quite shocking.

I would like to thank Stuart, genuinely, for a fun evening, I did not mean those things I muttered and I actually learned a lot, probably more than on my first night.

Moral: - Do something every day that scares you, just not to the point where you need to change your clothing.

Thanks, **Lee Corstorphine**





# A POLING EXPERIENCE

When Stuart mentioned poling I hastily took my seat in the front row in the club house and waited for the show to begin. It was some ten minutes later that I discovered the rest of my group disappearing downstream in their canoes. Twenty minutes later I found myself down river without a paddle and armed only with a 15 foot long by 2 inch diameter pole with not even a sail attached to it. That evening I was to discover that there are other things one can do with a pole.

Under the watchful eye of our coach Stuart he had us all standing up in our boats, poles horizontal looking like a bunch of very unstable tightrope walkers. He was desperate for some big splashes but we all kept our composure and mastered this art very quickly.

Suffice to say that the only casualty into the drink was a loose cow up river on week three –now that's another story -.

On week two we spent some time practising how to feed the pole quickly and smoothly between hands and swapping hands whilst keeping the steady speed and flow of the canoe and turning the boat around the pole.

Week three was an experience. Having freed the cow we all managed to get to Hellesdon Mill when the fun really begun. These are the conditions that poling comes into its own upstream against the flow in shallow water (in some places anyway).

All the practising in the river in weeks one and two that had seemed really easy suddenly turned into one push forward and three canoe lengths backwards as we all tried to master the techniques Stuart had showed us. We all gradually made headway towards the flowing current and once there tried to move across the river against the flow and turn and generally try to stay upright and in control of the boat and pole.

It was a great short course on poling and a great deal of information/techniques has been acquired by all participants; it is as usual now up to us to try and put into practise on a regular basis.

Thank you Stuart. **Simon**





What can you say ? I have never experienced a loss like this and never want to again. I have felt numb for weeks now and find it so hard to come to terms with his loss. I got on well with Jez and we have worked well together over recent years. He has been a guiding influence and provided much support during some testing times (don't mention the H word!)

Jez' role at the club has evolved over recent years, with him taking on the Coaching Development Officer role to which he brought a wealth of experience, together with an ability to run numerous courses, or through his networks (the scale of which we've now seen) to organise courses he couldn't run.

He introduced me to many things including facebook and was instrumental in the club making more use of this a medium of communication, something I intend to continue to develop. He also set up the club calendar on google which is linked to the club web site (which I'll now have to maintain) and got all the club documents in one place on dropbox so we only have 1 version in existence at any one time ! It is only when someone has gone do you truly realise how much they were doing.

Jez was an accomplished paddler and had become a valuable asset on club trips, although I did have to tell him off from hogging play waves or pulling peoples spray decks off at inappropriate moments ! His enthusiasm was infectious and his enjoyment for what he did was obvious from his grin and laughter.

Who ever picks up the coach development role will have a hard act to follow, but there is so much reward from helping other people to reach their dreams (or to persuade them that it is their dream and see them rise to the challenge and enjoy it !). I am a great believer in the motto "the more you put in, the more you get out". This was certainly true of Jez. He will be missed. **Stuart**



Most of you will know that in late June we lost a friend and Eagle coach, Jez Middleton, in a tragic accident on the A11. This shock came when the loss of Chris Wright was still very much in our minds; collectively we were not even beginning to get over Chris's absence, so to lose Jez, at this time, in this manner seemed such a bombshell as to, at first, be incomprehensible. I guess to a certain extent is still is.

I've obviously got a whole bundle of memories of Jez, way too numerous and lengthy to go into here. Suffice to say that I shall remember and take inspiration from his unfaltering keenness and dedication, his unwavering enthusiasm for paddlesport and for Eagle Canoe Club. He was very often the first to the club and the last to leave, unlocking and locking sheds and boats. I'll remember his coaching with his usual succinct style. His determination to put his name down as Level Three coach on as many of the club whitewater trips as he could manage. The fact that he paddled so well - so much better than me - despite not owning a kayak. How does that happen?!? I'll remember the time he passed his assessment on the Olympic whitewater course and I didn't. And the time I nearly fell off my chair when he said he'd like to run some courses at Eagle, just me and him. Oh, and the time, that one indelibly-etched time, that Jez bought me a pint... I'm sure that you all have your own memories of Jez.





My main, over-riding memory of Jez isn't paddling-related, but I feel compelled to pass it on, along with those that I've already mentioned. It was through my work. I'm a consultant Environmental Scientist, involved in, among other things, the Northern Distributor Road, twenty kilometres of dual carriageway through the countryside to the east and north of Norwich. Turns out it runs about two hundred yards from Jez's front door. My memory is of the time Jez turned up at an NDR public exhibition I was helping to run. He'd just learned that the scheme was getting closer to actually happening, and he came down to the exhibition, quite upset that his peace and tranquillity of his home was potentially to be lost. My memory is of the way that, despite being so upset, being so frustrated, so bloody angry that these things out of his control were being inflicted on him and his wife, he conducted himself with grace, and with moderation, and with dignity and poise. Arguably far more than the situation needed, far more than he had cause to. I know very few people who could have behaved in such as way in those circumstances. I know I wouldn't have been able to. And so that too is how I choose to remember Jez.

And right now, I imagine Jez, wherever he is, to be in a kayak (no doubt borrowed from St Peter for an indeterminate period), surfing the most beautiful, glassy, blue-green wave, mid-way down an amazing, boulder-strewn whitewater river, with the beaming smile on his face that became clamped there, each and every time he was paddling. Rest in peace Jez. **Simon Allen**



Dear Stuart;

Just a quick note to you and all your members for such a great "send off" you put on in memory of Jez last Wednesday. It really was the most amazing event and one which I'm sure Jeremy would have whole heartedly enjoyed. The number of people who turned up at the Crematorium and the canoe club was quite staggering, a real tribute to Jeremy. I was so touched by the number of people I'd never met before who came up to me and said what a great guy Jez was, how he'd helped them in one way or another, it was so wonderful to hear but also very humbling and saddening all at the same time.

The BBQ you laid on was fantastic. I would be most grateful if you could please pass on our heart felt thanks and gratitude to all those who assisted in making Jez's "party" an occasion for us all to remember with great fondness.

**PADDLE ON JEZ**

My very best wishes **Rex**

# FIVE MUST HAVE APPS FOR PADDLERS

Here are a few of my favourite apps that I use when paddling. Which apps do you use?



**Magic Seaweed** – A fantastic resource for monitoring and predicting surf conditions. It taps into offshore buoys and their telemetry, as well as complex weather monitoring systems, to give accurate real-time surf and swell conditions, as well as predictions up to five days in advance. It includes information on direction of swell, frequency of waves, size of surf, tides, all sorts, plus loads of beach by beach info on the best time of tide to catch waves for the UK, Europe and the rest of the world.



**St John's Ambulance First Aid** – Everyone should have first aid skills at their fingertips. No argument. Whether you've been on courses or not, this is a simple step-by-step guide to first aid for almost every situation you could find yourself in, be it on the river or going shopping. There are loads of first aid apps out there alongside the St John's one. Do your research and get one on your phone today.



**Animated Knots** – One of many knot-related apps, but this is the one I use. Sortable by situation – boating, camping, rescue, fishing, surgical(!) – this app is fantastic and features step-by-step guides on how to tie knots, hitches, loops and all sorts. Geeky, but brilliant.



**UK River Paddling** – A fantastic app to help you choose where to paddle, particularly for the whitewater paddler, subject to river levels, weather, access and all sorts. It uses GPS, and links to a wealth of information from published, well-respected guidebooks. It also ties in to real-time Environment Agency telemetry, so you can see exactly how much water is in monitored rivers. Genius.



**Runmeter** – Ok so the name sounds like it's a bit of a one trick pony, and to be fairly I mostly use it when I'm out running, but this is an app that uses GPS technology to monitor any activity you may be doing. Press start when you start, and stop when you stop, and it does the rest. A whole bunch of stats (geeky again – noticing a theme?!?) on distance, time, average speed, fastest speed, calories, all sorts. It's almost endlessly tailored to what you want to know. It gives you maps with your route plotted on them, and if you do the same route more than once it'll tell you if you're going faster or slower, over whatever increments of distance you like. Finally, it synchronises with your calendar, so when you open up Outlook at work on Monday morning, you can show your colleagues exactly where you've been and what you've been doing. **Simon Allen**

## WILDLIFE CORNER - DRAGONFLIES

Returning once more to Jez, he asked me if I'd do a piece on dragonflies in my Wildlife Corner series. So here it is.

Officially, there are two sub-orders, one damselflies and the other (confusingly) dragonflies. Damselflies are insects in the sub-order Zygoptera (meaning "paired-wings"). All four wings are near enough equal in size and shape. They are usually small, weakly flying insects that stay close to the water margins or water surface. When at rest, most species hold their wings along the length of their abdomen.

Dragonflies are insects in the sub-order Anisoptera (meaning "unequal-winged"). Hind wings are usually shorter and broader than forewings. They are usually large, strongly flying insects that can often be found flying well away from water. When at rest, they hold their wings out from the body, often at right angles to it. The eyes are very large and usually touch, at least at a point.

Eggs are laid either on plants, on the water surface, or on objects underwater, and these hatch either in two to five weeks or the following spring. The larvae that hatch live underwater are carnivorous, eating all sorts of aquatic insects, and then when temperature and day length are both right, they change from breathing underwater with gills to breathing air using their lungs, then climb up plant stems out of water and emerge from their carapaces as dragonflies. Some species emerge in unison, which is a spectacular sight. The dragonflies then take on their amazing iridescent colouring, depending on the species.

I had the entertaining experience not so long back, of watching an expert at How Hill talking to some tourist about a local species, the Norfolk Hawker. He was standing knee-deep in swamp with various species darting around him, when someone asked him which one the Norfolk Hawker was. "This one" he replied, pointing to one flying close by, at which point it landed obligingly on his outstretched finger! **Simon Allen**