

Drumchapel and Clydebank Kayak Club

January/February 2007

Newsletter

Well Christmas and New Year is just about on us, so we wish you all well and hope that Santa is good to you all, but only if you're good. Hopefully we should have a provisional sea trip list available around about now-ish for next year's trips. Remember if you would like to add to the list please feel free to do so. Also in this newsletter is a calendar of activities taking place in the pool.

Remember these sessions will work up to your BCU 1*- 3* skills. (Assessments will be during the summer months.) If you are unsure about anything that is taking place please, please, please ask. If there is any specific skill that you would like to see then please ask, remember the instructors are instructors, not mind readers, we need you to ask us what **you** would like. In the last newsletter there was a list of skills and courses that members would like to do this year. At this moment there have been only 7 returned from the whole membership. So does that mean that only 7 members would like to develop their skills this coming year?

Trips

Away back in the distant past, well the 5th of November several member of the club ventured out in Open Canoes to paddle from Loch Achray to Loch Venachar and on to Callander. Looking at the SCA Touring Guide book this trip was a gentle grade 1. After the obligatory tea and rolls and sausage we ventured on to Loch Achray. While myself and Colin set up the shuttle we had a look at the river crossed under the old bridge, at this point small alarm bells went off in my head the water definitely was at least Grade 2 standard and possibly even very easy grade 3! So anyway back to the Lochs we went with this information in our heads. Once we got back to Loch Achray we had found out that Stuart had capsized in flat calm water; today had all the hallmarks of an epic, and we had not yet set off!

Once we were all in our boats we paddled about 50 meters out then rafted up and the wind blew us down the remainder of the loch without us taking another paddle stroke. The eastern end of the loch runs into the "Black Water", which is a very gentle and very beautiful paddle especially in autumn colours. This leads out into the western end of the Loch Venachar, again we rafted up, put up a large sail and sailed the 6km down the loch. We were averaging 6km an hour on Colin's GPS and at some points 8km per hour!

On reaching the end of Loch Venachar we entered the river "Eas Gobhain" by several easy small weirs. Approximately 1km from the start of the river we came across the road bridge. We stopped and had a quick inspection down stream of the rapids; remember this is supposed to be a grade 1 river! I managed to see further down the river an area of slack water on river right and then directed everyone to it. After paddling through some very low hanging branches and through some easy grade 2/3 rapids (Remember this is supposed to be a grade 1 river.) I ended up in the slack water that I had seen. The only problem was that the flat water was a funnel system for a testing station for SEAPA, and the river was actually 3 feet below us down an embankment.

Our problems were still not over yet, there were further rapid's ahead that I could see. Once all the canoes were together, I had a look further down stream to assess the situation, and I was shocked to see what I had found. When I returned I then asked Colin and Stuart to confirm my fears; and we generally agreed that the main rapid that we could see was a grade 4, with at least a 3ft or 4ft vertical drop on it, and no lines to take on it, with further good grade 3's above and below that rapid. For those amongst us who are not that familiar with open canoes, a current BCU 5* Open Canoeist **must have experience on grade 3 rivers!** This was supposed to be a grade 1 river, and there was no mention of any rapids at all let alone a very technical grade 4 in the guide book. For this grade of rapid to be missed out in a guide book is say this down right dangerous is an understatement. If I had not taken the line into the flat water on river right there was no chance of a get out before the rapids, which would have been very dangerous for all concerned.

The only option was to portage the canoes! The first thing we had to do was lift the canoes up a 6ft vertical wall with a 3ft railing on top of that! Then move the 200meters canoes down past a fence and through a bramble jungle to slide the boats back down into the river. This easy little exercise took around one and a half hours from start to finish. The end result was that it was now just before 5pm and we still had to paddle the remaining 2km back to Callander in the dark, and on a river! Thankfully there were no other rapids to Callander, but plenty of overhanging trees that are very hard to see in the dark. I think I can safely say that we were all glad to be of the water at the end of the day.

The paddle up to the bridge had been great, and you could see that there were many converts that day to Open Canoeing. But the day was spoiled by the total lack of information regarding the rapids, and the actual grade of the rapids just down from the bridge. This can only cast doubt on further rivers that are illustrated in the SCA Touring Guide that we know nothing about. But surely, that is why we buy a guide book in the first place so that you do not require any further information! I have since written a letter to the SCA regarding this matter.

Diary

Date	Location	Grade	Organiser
Jan 2nd	L Leven	Open to All	Donald 0141 429 0538
Jan 6th	L Etive	Open to All	Donald 0141 429 0538
Jan 9th	Pool	Capsizes & Swims	Ron/Ian
Jan 14th	Loch Fyne	Grade A	Rab 01877 - 382141
Jan 16th	Pool	Fwd Paddle & Low Brace	Colin/Brian
Jan 21st	River Leven	Grade 1	Rab
Jan 23rd	Pool	Stopping & Low Brace	Julia/Ian
Jan 28th	River Teith	Grade 2	Rab
Jan 30th	Pool	Sweep Strokes & Rescues	Donald/Rab
Feb 3rd	Fife Coast & Night Paddle !	Grade B	Rab
Feb 6th	Pool	Reverse Paddling & Sculling	Rab/Brian
Feb 11th	River Teith	Grade 2	Rab
Feb 13th	Pool	Draw Strokes & Rolling	Ron/Julia
Feb 18th	Firth of Forth	Grade A	Rab
Feb 20th	Pool	Stern Rudder & High Brace	Colin/Donald
Feb 24/25th	Aquatic First Aid	Open to anyone	Colin
Feb 27th	Pool	Low Brace & Rescues	Julia/Rab
Mar 6th	Pool	High Brace & Low Brace Turns	Donald/Ian
Mar 11th	River Clyde	Grade 2	Rab