

Drumchapel & Clydebank Kayak Club

Newsletter

July /August 09

Coast Guard Trip

Several years ago the club arranged a very successful trip to the Coast Guard Rescue and Co-Ordination Centre in Greenock. We now trying for another trip which will be in the near future.

Trips

River Glass & Beaully: This trip was an absolute cracker. However, only five members turned up for this brilliant trip. On the Friday night Andy and Liz, Bill and Ronnie and myself turned up at Cannich camp site to be ready for the following days paddle. None of us had been to this area before, so it was new to us all. The weather, as usual was forecasting strong winds all day!

We launched 200 metres from the campsite into the river. Although there were not many rapids on this part of the river, or for that matter any other part of the river, the water was still flowing fast enough for us to make good progress. One depressing thing that made this trip "memorable" was the amount of "live" stock that had been drowned and washed down the river. There were several sheep, a cow and even a deer whose decomposing remains were dangling from some branches several feet above us!

Further down the river it turned towards the east, and into the wind, which made the paddle very hard work indeed for the Open Canoes. In some instances where we thought there were rapids, in was in fact "white horses" whipped up by the wind! As we neared Aigas Gorge there was a whole hillside covered in beautiful yellow Gorse bushes, a rather spectacular sight. Shortly after we entered Aigas Gorge, this has got to be one of the most dramatic sights I have seen from a canoe, it would rival any sea cliffs that I have seen, breathtakingly beautiful. The whole area did not look like any part of Scotland that I had seen before. Another benefit of this trip was that the only way that you could see the cliffs was from the water. After leaving the Gorge we paddled the remaining 2 kilometres to the

get out point near the dam. Even along this stretch of water the cliffs and surrounding scenery was truly fantastic. This was a trip that you had to do to appreciate. A truly fantastic trip, for all the unfortunate people who did not manage this trip watch, this space because I am sure that it might appear again in some form!

Mull of Galloway: Julia and I were planning to cross the Minch over to the Shaint Islands and from there over to Harris, over the long weekend in May. Unfortunately the weather forecasts were not looking that good the further north you went. So our next plan was to head south to The Mull of Galloway where the maximum wind speed was indicated at just a Force 5, and dropping with plenty of sunshine to boot!

We arrived at Drummore on the Saturday night; this is the most southerly village in Scotland. And we found a campsite right next to our launch spot and only one minutes walk from the pub! Things were looking good so far. Having worked out the tides, and knew we were on Spring tides. I knew we had to be at the Mull of Galloway for no later than 12.30 for slack water at the headland. The tides around this part of the trip can run up to 4 knots, which is half the speed of lets say the "Gray Dogs" or the "Corryvreckan". So if we were 10 or so minutes late or early it should not really matter!!!!

The Sunday morning was fantastic with a light southerly wind and clear blue skies as we paddled the 10km from Drummore to the Mull of Galloway. Just before we reached the point we could see the tide still flooding in, and opted for a break in a near by bay to allow for the tide to change in our favour. We were back on the water at 12.35 and had a five minute paddle to the start of the headland. It was on this part of the paddle we both noticed that the tide had in fact changed and was now thundering out into the North Channel, and we were going that way now wither we liked it or not, as we were being sucked out by the tide! What happened to slack water; or for that matter a gradual increase in the tidal rate!

I just managed to break into an eddy behind some rocks at the base of the Mull and watched Julia being taken further out before she managed to break into a large eddy that formed behind the Mull. It was at this point I noticed that I was being sucked back into the tide race! This was not part of the days plan! After a few very powerful strokes I was back in the eddy with Julia. We both looked at each other and commented that the tide was flowing just a tad faster than 4 knots, and the tide had just changed! Either I had got the tidal planning wrong or the tide changes very quickly around this area! This was certainly the biggest unplanned tide race that I had been in! By this time the wind had pick up to a good force 4-5 which made the surrounding sea conditions "interesting" to say the least. Time for plan "B" to come into operation!

We landed at a small bay called West Tarbet, just north of the Mull of Galloway for lunch and take stock of the situation. By this time I had serious doubts about my tidal planning considering the "4" knot speed of the tide race we encountered earlier. The tide streams of

the west coast of the Mull of Galloway can run up to 5 knots and we were aware that there were further tide races and over-falls to come. The sea state was also looking a bit lumpy with the wind conditions, overall things were not looking that good. We thus opted for an extended lunch break and walk the 2km up to the lighthouse to view the tide race around the headland. If the conditions remained the same by the time we returned we would camp for the night at this bay.

When we reached the Lighthouse we could see over the Solway Firth, south, over to the Isle of Man and over to Ireland, but what was most impressive was the extent of the tide race that surrounds the Mull of Galloway. The tide race must extend for around 10 miles that we could see, starting well inside Luce Bay to the east of the Mull and then sweeping around and then out into the North Channel. The extent of this tide race must equal the Corryvreckan; however the extent of this tide race was not mentioned in the "Pilot", Charts or the "Scottish Sea Kayaking" book. This sounds vaguely familiar to those who were on the Burrow Head trip several years ago! So much for the great start to the day!

We grabbed a coffee from the surprisingly busy cafe at the Light house and discussed our options. One thing that was becoming clearer was that my tidal planning was looking more correct by the minute, but I had still my doubts at this time! The average tide stream out in the middle may be only 4 knots but closer in shore it is much, much faster, and very, very quick at changing. Back at the beach the sea looked just as big, so we opted for a walk along by the shore, when we noticed that the wind had dropped a fair bit.

Plan C now sprang into operation. If the wind was to drop just a bit more the sea state might drop as well. If so we could push on to Port Logan a further 15km to the north, most of it against the tide, but hopefully we could eddy hop our way along. If we could do that, it would either mean a short paddle on the Monday or a mega paddle into Stranraer, the most realistic get out point! As we were discussing those points the sea state began to ease, it was time to get back on the water.

The light and sea conditions as we paddled north were fantastic, along with the spectacular scenery. As always all good things must come to an end, and they ended with each headland, and their associated tide race that were against us. The large residual swell meeting the oncoming tide race produced some very "interesting moments"! On several occasions we managed to get through tiny gaps in crashing swell on the jagged rocks and at the same time trying to avoid the very large tide races that were just off the rock by a few feet. Later we both tended to agree that our paddling skill might have had something to do with us coming through unscathed but there was defiantly a very large piece of luck that was with us that day!

We eventually made Port Logan around 8pm after covering 27km and eventually found a nice camp spot that looked over to the lights of Belfast. The forecast for the following day was to be much lighter winds from the south but still with a 5 knot tide in our favour.

Hopefully tomorrow would be much better. In the morning we were up and on the water around 8am to paddle against the last of the tide, again eddy hopping our way along the coastline. We reached Port Patrick for an early lunch and discussed our options; we could get out now, or push on to Stranraer with the tide now in our favour. We opted for the latter.

From Port Patrick to the Lighthouse at Corsewell Point was some 20km away and we managed that distance in just 2 hours with the help of the tide! We were now rounding the northern tip of the Mull of Galloway, and the tide now drops off to just 2 knots. But just to make things a bit more interesting as we approached Loch Ryan two Sea Cats Ferries appeared, thankfully there were going very slow and did not produce too much of a swell. Further into the Loch; the north eastern side of the headland did not look as interesting on the map, it was however quite stunning with lots of little caves, arches, and stacks and to mention the surrounding plant life, absolutely beautiful. From this point on it was a real slog into Stranraer, we eventually got off the water around 6.30pm having paddled some 57km on the Monday alone, a total distance of some 84km in two days.

Just as Julia went to get her car, the rain started! Julia returned around one hour later with a story that we should all take on board. When we left on the Sunday morning we left the car in the Pub car park, and since the pub was closed we left no message with anyone to say when we were returning. On the Monday afternoon the owners of the Pub contacted the local Coastguard to inform them that we were missing, and that a search was being organised to find us! The local Police took the vehicle registration and then passed this information on to the local Police at Eaglesham who then contacted Julia's partner, Del. By the time this happened Julia had already contacted Del to say we were off the water. And the whole "search" was thankfully called off.

It was our entire fault for not informing the Bar staff of our intentions, so we can only say a very big sorry to them. So as you can see we had quite an eventful trip, and most defiantly a grade "C" trip. If I was to do this trip again, and I will, because it is a stunning trip. At least I will be more prepared next time and plan the trip in Neap tides as opposed to Spring tides! And also inform the local of our intentions!

Paddles to look forward to.

Going into July, we have options: members can either go to Loch Lomond or attend some of the evening trips away, the options are illustrated. The first Tuesday evening is a trip to the spectacular Bass Rock, which is one of my all time favourite paddles. For those wishing to attend this trip meet at the store for the usual time, and we should return to Glasgow for around 11pm - Midnight. The 11th of July will be the first of two dates for the 3*(sea) Assessment. The second date has still to be confirmed. On the 14th there will be something different for those who wish to try it; Gorge-Walking, at the "Devils Pulpit". You will require a Wet Suit/Dry Suit, Buoyancy Aid, Helmet and trainers or boots, plus a full change of clothing. The following Tuesday there is a trip out to the "Sugar Boat" just off Helensburgh.

On the 25/26 of July there is a paddle down in the inner part of the Solway Firth area and we will be leaving on the Friday Night, it is Spring Tides which should mean that the area could be interesting! (If there is bad weather forecasted, hopefully there will be a plan "B"!) On the Tuesday the 28th there is a short trip down the River Forth, if there is enough water!

Into August, the first trip is out from Luss to find the Wallabies. The remaining Tuesday nights will be spent at Drumkinnon Bay doing skills or going on short trips on the Loch. On the 14-17 there is a grade "C" trip, leaving from the north end of Skye to the Shaint Islands and over to The Isle of Harris. We plan to get the ferry back from Tarbet to Uig. (Again, if bad weather strikes there will be a plan "B", even if it is just one or two day trip, so keep in touch if you can't make all four days.) On the 29th there is a paddle again down in the inner Solway Firth area, this time it is neap tides, so it should not be as sporting! Into September, (already!) there is a paddle around Ardlamond Point a relatively short, but beautiful paddle in the Cowel area.

So hopefully the above information is enough to "WET" your appetite for a paddle and we will hopefully see you out on the water.

Diary

Date	Location	Grade	Contact
July			
7 Tuesday	Bass Rock	A	Rab 01877 382141
11	3* (Sea) Assessment		Rab
14 Tuesday	Gorge Walk		Rab
21 Tuesday	Sugar Boat	A	Rab
25/26	Solway Firth	B	Rab
28 Tuesday	River Forth	Grade 1	Rab

August

4 Tuesday	Loch Lomond	A	Rab
10 Monday	Play Drome, 7.30	Committee Meeting	
11 Tuesday	Drumkinnon Bay	SKILLS	Rab
14/17	Shaint Islands	C	Rab
18 Tuesday	Drumkinnon Bay	SKILLS	Rab
25 Tuesday	Drumkinnon Bay	SKILLS	Rab
29	Solway Firth	B	Rab

September

12	Ardlamond Point	A	Rab
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Please remember to phone up the night before a sea trip to check up for the trip status. (Between 7pm-9pm) If you require equipment or a lift, could you please contact the trip organiser at least a week prior to the trip?

Remember to print and pin this list up, or mark the dates into your Diary.

Thanks

Rab Burns