



Wey Kayak Club

Newsletter

www.weykayak.co.uk

October 2005

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT...

WE HAVE A NEW CLUBHOUSE!

Yes, shout it loud, tell the world, A NEW CLUBHOUSE!

We've held an opening party too and what a great evening it was. The building was much admired by members of Guildford Borough Council, the Samson Centre (MS Society), Guildford Sub-Aqua Club, University of Surrey Canoe Club and, of course, Wey Kayak Club. Bill Bellerby, who opened the previous clubhouse (and wielded the first sledgehammer to knock it down again), did the deed once more and made a very eloquent speech. To round off the evening Alistair Bayliss and his band played a fine selection of classic hits, from the Rolling Stones to Jimi Hendrix, from Cream to Status Quo.

The Waterside Centre is, of course, indebted to a great number of helpers who have worked immensely hard to get the building finished in time. There were times when we thought we might never be ready but we made it by the skin of our teeth – it's not true that the paint was still wet. I know there are still some small items to be sorted out but I want to say a very sincere thank you to all who made this possible – you know who you are.

Over the Winter the plan is to move on to Phase II – the rebuilding of the gym and sub-aqua boat sheds. **However we still need funds to make this possible so please keep going on the fund raising efforts.**

Thanks, too, to all those who helped make the Wey Marathon in July such a success. This was our first event in the new building and, although it was still something of a building site, everything went extremely well.

The Club only just qualified for the 2005 Hasler Finals, so thanks to all of you who made a big effort to attend local marathons in recent months. Let's not run the risk of missing out next year! Let's all help set the ball rolling by attending as many marathons as possible this autumn.



The Hare & Hounds series of races is nearly upon us so get the dates in your diary (see separate article) and the **Commodore's Christmas Dinner** will be held in our fine new clubhouse on **Saturday 17 December**, everyone welcome.

As many of you know I am now away until 15 December, firstly at the Marathon World Championships in Perth and then on holiday. So I won't be at the first three Hare & Hounds – the usual team has been briefed and I'm sure everything will go smoothly – and I'll be back just in time for the Dinner. See you then! **Jim Rossiter**

HARE & HOUNDS ... I know Summer has barely finished but the Club's series of Winter races is already fast approaching. The dates are set, the invitations have gone out and our new clubhouse stands ready. All that will be missing will be our chairman and his wife (you'll need to organise some help in the kitchen, Peter!).

So get these dates in your diary and let's launch the new clubhouse in style this winter:-

6 November
20 November
27 Nov (spare)
11 December
18 Dec (spare)
15 January
12 February
26 (Feb (spare))

CHRISTMAS DINNER



Saturday 17 December

Waterside Centre

7pm (for 7.30pm)

Tickets: £15 (£12 for Juniors)

For tickets contact:
Julia Simmons (01483 825503) or
Alison Sokolov (01483 834363)

RACE REPORTS... We have a host of races to report on. After all July to September is perhaps the busiest part of the racing year. I'm delighted to say, too, that several different correspondents have made contributions. I thank them all.

There are two particular success stories but almost every member who has competed somewhere has enjoyed some success. So without further ado let's get into the reports.....

The BCU National Sprint Championships can often be a tricky event for the Club's youngsters. The racing is in age groups rather than on ability and so often they seem to be struggling to compete against much stronger paddlers.

So it was great to see Mark Childerstone fall into exactly the right age group (under 14) to allow him to wipe the floor in all his events. He was the undoubted star of the July regatta in Nottingham as he won seven, yes seven Under 14 National titles as well as an Under 16 K2 2.5 km race. **EIGHT TIMES NATIONAL CHAMPION!**

It was a bonus (no, relief is the right word) to find that conditions at Nottingham on the first weekend in July were somewhat improved on April, May and June when, quite frankly, the weather had been awful, and Mark took full advantage. He was the only Under 14 paddler to dip below 5 minutes in the final of the 1000m as he took the gold medal. In the K2 1000m race he teamed up with long-time partner, Dean Terry (Maidstone) and annihilated the field to win by a massive 22 seconds.

Mark did much the same at 500m where he won a close contest for K1 gold and then romped home with Dean at K2 by 12 seconds. Easy wins at K4 boosted the Childerstone medal tally and Mark then went out and won the 2.5km K1 race from his K2 partner to add to the Under 16 gold. Just fantastic, Mark!

Wey had other paddlers performing at the top of their game that weekend too! The Gillbe sisters were in fine form, Celia taking gold in the Womens C 500m K1 and then, with Clare, taking lesser medals at K2 and K4.

Lauren Godsavage took silver in her Under 16 K2 1000m and 2.5km races, Fay Lamph won silver in the Girls Under 18 1000m K2, and Rachel Cawthorn took bronze in the Girls Under 18 500m K2. Rachel then teamed up with Harriet Towler and Ellie Hilderley to win two silvers in the K4 events closely followed home by the K4 containing Fay and Lauren. Great stuff, girls!

Amongst the boys, apart from Mark, success was harder to find but Paul Wycherley flew the flag for the club in Mens A by taking silver at 1000m K1 (by a whisker from Pete Almasi) and 500m K1, the latter just two seconds off the Olympic Bronze medallist, Ian Wynne.

Finally in the Lightnings Jack Childerstone took third in the Under 10 1km. From top to bottom Wey had a great regatta but congratulations must go to Mark. It's not often we have an eight-times national champion in the club.

Gordon Wycherley

FROM OUR EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT ...

It was in the unlikely setting of Plovdiv in Bulgaria that the European Under 23 and Junior Sprint Championships were held. Plovdiv is an ancient city situated on the old trade routes between Asia and Europe. It has a fabulous, much restored Roman amphitheatre (where the opening ceremony was held) and a major exhibition centre which plays host to international fairs of all kinds.

In a city which boasted some of the worst road surfaces I've ever seen, and a style of driving that would not be out of place in a demolition derby, the small band of British spectators were in for a greater success than they could ever have imagined.

BCU Development Manager, Anne Ferguson, takes up the story ... After the Under 23 1000m K2 heats and semi-finals Paul Wycherley and Ben Farrell were looking like a class act. They missed automatic qualification for the final from their heat by a whisker but dominated their semi-final to come home an excellent first.

They were looking in good shape for the final but in the early hours of Saturday morning a medal was a long way from their thoughts as Ben was suffering from the effects of a Bulgarian belly bug that was exacting its vengeance in the usual tell-tale fashion.

Despite this ominous pre-cursor both lads performed magnificently to win a bronze medal. Said Alex Nikonorov, their coach, "They raced a very smart race. They were consistent, quick off the start and held their pace through to the end when the other boats were dropping back". In fact the Bulgarian scoreboard had them in second place to only the Romanian boat (*which would go on to win gold in the senior European Championships - Ed*) only for the decision to be reversed 15 minutes later. The Brit boys were pipped by the Hungarians by 0.0025 sec, one pixel on the photo-finish, a distance that relates to approximately the width of a squashed gnat. It was that close.

After the medal presentations I asked Ben if this was his first medal. "No", he said, "I have an U14s national championship medal but I think this one supercedes that now". Paul and Ben were naturally delighted with their afternoon's work and, watching from the stand, the Wycherley and Farrell parents were ecstatic. Said Eric



Farrell (who coached Tim Brabants and Ian Wynne to their Olympic medals), "They were great!" It wasn't that Eric is a man of few words - the occasion was an emotional one.

Anne was right, it was just wonderful to see such a fine 110% performance from the lads. It did much to make up for the difficulties we all experienced with event security. The sixteen years since the fall of the Berlin Wall seem not to have totally eradicated the unsmiling, baton-fingering, it's-more-than-my-job's-worth-to-let-you-pass mentality. Nevertheless the people were generally very friendly, the receptionists in our hotel were unfailingly helpful and even the security guards gave us a smile as we left.

SPAIN REPORT... On 3 August the Great Britain Start Squad took out nine athletes to experience the Trasona Camp, competing in mainly the Sella Descent, Spain's kick-off to the racing season along with two other races (The Nalon and Ribadesella K4).

Having travelled out on the Thursday, we had two days to acclimatise and prepare for the racing. The day of Sella was very hot, something we came to realise before the start when standing next to our boats on the bank, holding our paddles at the ready, for around 40 minutes.

Many of the GB boats had excellent starts, the best being that of Amoret King (Reading) and Claire Spencer (Hereford) who raced ahead of all the GB boys in the land start, but then unfortunately broke their rudder during the race.

Indeed all but one of the squad boats had very interesting stories to tell by the end of the race, with broken seats, lost paddles, capsizes, fights and several injuries. The girl crews that completed the course were Amoret and Claire, finishing in sixth place, and Meghan O'callaghan (Elmbridge) and Lauren Godsave (Wey) who came fourth.

The boys who finished the race also did very well too, with three U16 boy's crews completing the course and coming a creditable way up the results. The memories of the race afterwards were that of excitement, fear and lots of adrenaline!!

The 10km Nalon, also an overwhelming race of 5km downstream racing with shallow areas, and then racing back upstream portaging over the shallow streams, had the girls winning U16 – with Amoret and Claire in first place and Meghan and Lauren in second.

In the boys' race came even more excitement when two of the K2's capsized in the same place, one being able to empty the boat and carry on, the other having to abandon the boat and walk the way back to the finish through what they described as 'a jungle'.

The final race before the week of training ahead was Ribadesella, a 10km K4 race in the harbour. In the boys' U16 category we had two boats, one having an excellent start and getting into the lead group, later to be overtaken by the other crew of Robert Poole, Ben Haynes, Andy Guy (Leighton Buzzard) and Tim Pendle (Norwich) who came a very well deserved third. The only girl crew of Jessica Walker (Royal), Emma Dougall (LBZ), Claire and Amoret came first, as the country had done the previous year.

The team all did very well on the camp, everyone got on really well and would like to thank the coaches that went on the trip including Dyson and Ali Pendle.

Lauren Godsave

It's been great this time round to get so many submissions from Club members. Please keep them coming! It makes the job of Newsletter Editor a whole lot easier if he gets race reports and other feedback. All input and comments are welcome – keep them coming, to Wycherleyassoc@aol.com

WEY MARATHON... The new clubhouse was definitely a work-in-progress but at least we were able to use it for the Wey Marathon on its new July date. Peter Morley even managed to get a very serviceable kitchen up and running plus racing in K2 with James Mountford who had not been paddling for 15 years.

Regardless of the hurly burly that is always checking-in at these events and despite a temporary glitch in the results service the whole day went well. The weather was kind, there was good turnout of paddlers and Wey had some success on the water.

In Division 2 Jon Simmons came first just ahead of Rob Williams while Jack Childertone won the Under 10s Fun Race. At K2 Sage and Roy Fieldus, preparing for the rigours of marathon racing in Perth, won Div 3/4 while Mike Walsh and Richard Williams won Div 7/8. In addition we filled places 2, 3 and 4 in Div 4 courtesy of Phil Gunney, Dave Collings and Mark Childerstone.

SENNEFFE... On 19 August Sarah Hannon took a group of paddlers to Senneffe in Belgium for their regatta. The paddlers were Mike Walsh, Fay Lamph, Tom Bridge, Lauren Godsave, Mark Childerstone, Mark Lamph, Hazel Childerstone and Jack Childerstone. Competition was tough and there were some close fought races against teams from clubs in Holland, Germany, Belgium, England and strong national teams from Israel and Luxemburg.

However we came away with 12 medals. In the U12's Hazel won gold in the 2km, silver in 100m and teamed up with a Belgium paddler to win the 500m K2. Mark C in the U14 won gold in his 2km. Lauren won bronze in the 5km in the U16 and then paddled up to U18 to win 2 silvers K2 with Fay in 500m and 1000m. Fay also picked up silver in her U18 500m and 2 bronzes in the 5km and 1000m. Everyone did well and had an enjoyable weekend, and we must thank Sarah for arranging everything.

Mark Lamph

BCU MacGregor Paddle... The September Inter Club Sprint Championships for once showed some excellent weather with virtually no winds giving some of the best results this year. In fact Wey finished a creditable fifth in the BCU MacGregor Paddle points table.

Amongst our best results were a fine first place for Mike Childerstone in the Mens Vet B K1 500m, Rachel Cawthorn and Ellie Hilderley who won Girls A K2 500m, and Mark Childerstone who won the Boys B K1 5km.

There were several promotions as a result of some good times and good placings. Rachel Cawthorn was promoted to Girls A, while Lauren Godsave and Ellie Hilderley were promoted to Girls B. Tom Bridge and Mike Walsh moved up to Boys B and Guy Mullins to Boys C. Well done to Fay Lamph, Lauren Godsave Sarah Hannon and Jo Etheridge who finished well in the Womens K4 500M race. Harriet Towler, Mark Lamph, Matt Welch and Charlie Welch also did well over the weekend with the boys D K4 finishing in an excellent third position.

Guy Mullins

NATIONAL MARATHON CHAMPIONSHIPS ...

An extremely well organised Championships was held once again at Worcester with K1 and K2 events in age as well as divisional categories over two days. Four courses were set plus a shorter course for the U10 and U12 paddlers. These were of the circuit style, meaning that several short laps had to be completed and that you could never leave the swell created by all the boats behind – more, perhaps, for the spectators to see. Oh, and of course a false portage right beneath the stands.

Many medals were taken home by our paddlers and Wey came fifth overall. Mike Walsh should have been awarded another for the most races entered. On Sunday, paddling 7/8 K2 with Jack as a warm up he then raced in 5/6 with Richard. Clearly he wasn't tired from Saturday when he won Div 7 and then came 4th in Div 6!

We had three other winners, Charlie Welch in the U12 boys, Fay Lamph/Lizzie Broughton in the U18 Girls K2 and Mark Childerstone/Dean Terry in the U14 Boys K2.

Mike Childerstone

TOUR DE GUDENA... On 8 September Tom Bridge and Fay Lamph travelled with Team GB to Denmark to take part in the Tour de Gudena, a race that takes place over two days on a system of large lakes and rivers. Tom took part in the U16 event over 52 km. Fay teamed up with Lizzie Broughton from Richmond to compete in the women's K2 race over 87 km.

On the first day we paddled across two large lakes, which tested our navigational skills and at times the waves made it feel like we were at sea. After the first day, and half way through the race, Tom was in 5th place but only a few seconds behind 3rd place, whilst Fay and Lizzie had a 10 minute lead over the rest of their field.

After a 5 o'clock wake up, the second day was spent racing down a river which had enough weed to rival the Nottingham lake. After an event filled day in his race Tom managed to move up two places in a final sprint to the line finishing in 3rd place. Fay and Lizzie managed to maintain their lead and finished in 1st place.

After the award ceremony, and some sandcastle building followed by a trip to Legoland, we returned home from a very tiring but enjoyable and successful trip.

Fay Lamph

BCU HASLER FINALS... On 18 September, kayakers and canoeists from all over the country met at Norwich CC for the Hasler Final. The conditions were calm, but they didn't stay like it for long when the paddling started!

The competition and the course were tough, including a portage for Divs. 7, 8 and 9 which is unusual. Represented mainly by junior paddlers Wey came 10th out of 29 clubs overall. Some took "a swim", but made good recoveries. Among those who finished in the top ten of their divisions were: Mark Lamph/Charlie Welch, Matt Welch, Guy Mullins, Chris Luck, Mark Childerstone and Tom Bridge. In the Lightnings, medals were won by Hazel and Jack Childerstone who were 3rd and 2nd in their races.

Charlie Welch

SOBEKA... Only three days into the school term and I was lucky enough to be selected to go to Sobeka in Belgium with the Start Squad. The three minibuses left the M25 services on Friday morning and headed for Dover. That evening we were practicing on the regatta course, a stretch of canal outside Zvevegem in Belgium and site of Sobeka Canoe Club.

After staying the night in a youth hostel ten minutes from the course, there was time for another practice on Saturday morning before the first events, the long distance races. For me competing in the U14's, this was a 2km race, 1000 m up the regatta course and back. Sarah had organised a junior club trip to Sobeka last year and to nearby Seneffe this year so I was wasn't daunted by the idea of it being an international. I positioned myself between the two fastest guys I knew, Patrick Lux from Potsdam and Toon Broeckx from Neerpelt (Belgium). This worked well and we both were on the German guy's wash for the whole race until the other squad paddlers dropped off and it was a sprint between me and two other paddlers. I couldn't quite catch the German but came a good second and the Belgian coming in third.

My other events were K1 100 m, 1000 m K2 with Dean Terry, and 1000 m K4. 100 m racing was really fast. Last year I hesitated at the start and missed the final. So I stayed extra alert this time round. I came second in my heat and second in the quarter final to qualify directly to the final where I came fifth behind the same German and Belgian in 1st and 2nd places.

Dean and I had some poor practice runs in the K2 as we were leaning badly and had to stop in practice to slap for support. This was followed by a pretty poor heat, so we were very pleased with our final when we pulled it all together and came second and beat the other pairing in the squad who had laughed at us when we had almost fallen in earlier!

Rachel Cawthorn came 3rd in the U18 in the 5km race and 2nd in her 500m heat and 3rd in the final, then 1st in her 1000m heat and 4th in the final. Ellie Hilderley made the U16 K1 500m final to come 8th and Ellie and Harriet were 3rd in 5km K2 and 2nd in 500m K4.

Everyone had a great time and we'd all do it again.

Mark Childerstone

LOIRE MARATHON (1)... Great! One week at school and time for another trip with the Start squad, this time to Angers for the Loire marathon. Lauren competed in the U16 race over 25 km, properly started Le Mans style. Our race starting further downstream was more chaotic half in half out of our boats but I got off to a good start next to the squad K2 pairing. We followed channel markers to avoid the big sand banks and ran a portage through the streets for several hundred metres before more river and a finish after a breakout from the fast current into a backwater. I was placed 1st coming home before the K2 and Lauren came home 2nd in her race.

Mark Childerstone

LOIRE MARATHON (2)... Another successful trip for Great Britain at the Loire marathon on 25 September with several Wey paddlers medalling! Travelling out on the previous Wednesday, the team was able to practise the course and prepare for the difference in this river compared to the Thames, the width and fast flowing water being the main worries!

The athletes selected were all either U14 or U16 K1 or K2, the U14s racing a 16km race with one portage through the town. The three U14 boys competing in K1 achieved the top three places, with Mark Childerstone coming first. The other U14s (girls K2 and boys K2) came 2nd and 1st in their races. In the U16 race, a 26km race with two portages, the boys (Andy Guy, Tom Lowe, and Philip Thorogood) came 2nd, 3rd, and 4th.

In the girls U16 Lauren Godsave and Meghan O'callaghan had a very tactical race on each other's wash finishing 2nd and 3rd. The coach who took us, Melvin Swallow, also medalled, winning the veteran race. Everyone had a great time on the visit enjoying the race, and the food throughout the trip was lovely!

Lauren Godsave

ELMBRIDGE MARATHON ... it was good to see a number of Wey paddlers competing for 2006 Hasler points, and doing well, on the Thames in early October. In fact the Club had a total of four first places – in the morning Ellie Hilderley/Rachel Cawthorn won Div 7/8 K2 while Charlotte Thomes/Alex Sokolov won Div 9 K2 (Hazel/Jack Childerstone were second in this race).

In the longer afternoon races Mark Childerstone secured an excellent win in Div 4 holding off a strong field at the start, through the first portage and, importantly, on the long drag up the 'cut' to the line.

Rounding events a depleted Div 1/2 K2 field was headed home by Perth-bound Paul Wycherley and Ben Farrell, by a massive ten minutes. In a lonely second came Rob Williams/Ewan Cox followed by Roy Fieldus/Sage – a clean sweep of the podium positions for Wey!

Gordon Wycherley

EVENTS CALENDAR ...

16 Oct	Windsor Marathon
22 Oct	Royal Junior K2
23 Oct	Richmond Marathon
6 Nov	Hare & Hounds (1)
20 Nov	Hare & Hounds (2)
20 Nov	Exe Descent
11 Dec	Hare & Hounds (3)
8 Jan 06	Frank Luzmore K2
15 Jan 06	Hare & Hounds (4)
12 Feb 06	Hare & Hounds (5)
8-9 Apr 06	National Regatta, Nott'm (1)
6-7 May 06	National Regatta, Nott'm (2)
3-4 Jun 06	National Regatta, Nott'm (3)
10 July 06	Wey Marathon
22-23 Jul 06	National Regatta, Nott'm (4)
2-3 Sep 06	National Regatta, Nott'm (5)

FROM OUR EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT ...

(Again)... the 2005 Sprint World Championships in Zagreb was the largest ever with teams from 78 nations taking part. Great Britain's team of 15 athletes were entered in 13 events and for the first time since 2001 we had boats represented in all three disciplines.

With so many nations taking part many events had four semi-finals with just two boats through and the fastest 3rd. This is not the best system and can be very unfair if conditions change during the regatta.

The weather during the competition varied from warm and sunny on the first day to cold and rainy on the last day with quite a lot of variation. Generally the course was running fairly, ie no lane had any significant advantage, but race conditions were definitely fastest on the first two days.

Competition was always going to be tough but at the end of four days hard racing all 13 boats had made the semi-finals with 6 boats going on to make B finals and three boats qualifying for A finals. Nine of our 13 entries achieved personal bests during the competition.

Ian Wynne was one of those with a PB. His 1.37.82 in the semi final was faster than his time in Athens.

Peter Almasi's time of 3.36.15 in the semi finals took him safely through to the A final where he finished 8th his best World Championships result to date.

Matt Lawrence/ James Train had a great regatta. They had personal bests in both the C2 500 and 1000 and seemed to get better with every race. Their C2 1000 time of 3.39.85 took them to 2nd place in the B final and they are now ranked 11th and 15th in the world in these Olympic events. These are fantastic results for our U23 C2 and we hope they can build on this for Olympic qualification in 2007.

All of our K2 crews, including Paul Wycherley/Ben Farrell and Ed Cox/Ed McKeever achieved personal best times during the competition and were disappointed not to make the A finals. Paul/Ben finished a very strong fourth in their semi-final and battled to sixth (15th in the world) in the B Final. Ed/Ed kept everyone on tenterhooks as we waited for a re-run of one of the semi finals. The boys had finished fifth but would they squeeze into the B Final as one of the fastest 'losers'? Right at the end of Friday we got the news – yes, they'd made it. They finished seventh in the B final.

In the K1 200 Ed McKeever raced exceptionally well in his first international in this event. His times in the heat and semi were very fast (37.15 and 37.47), enough to take him through to the A final. There Ed went even faster (37.03) laying down a benchmark for the future.

Although the team had performed well we were all disappointed not to be bringing home any medals. However with more than half of our team still U23 this year there is real promise for the future. The experience of racing in such a big and competitive regatta will stand them in good stead.

Note different National Regatta dates in 2006

THE XATHEPINE OEST IAGE.

COMMUNITY SPORT CLUB COACH SCHEME... Some of you may know that the government has put £millions into Sports Coaching recently to combat teenage obesity and win a medal or two at Beijing and London. The BCU has been very quick to appoint lots of Community Sports Coaches in this area, including Brian Greenham at Reading and Ivan Lawler at Elmbridge.

Peter Morley and **Catherine West** have joined this roll of honour for Flatwater Sprint and Marathon at Wey. We work six hours per week funded jointly by Wey and the BCU. We have already attended some courses where the very novel techniques of balance, co-ordination and agility were expounded. It is called *FUNdamentals* and the idea is that we all teach the basics to all before specialising too early. Then everyone can change sport or discipline more easily. Well! It is called fundamental.

Actually that course was very good. We also went on a disabled awareness day and Peter is intending to put it on at Wey as it was excellent.

This is our sixth year working with schools and we tried a few new local ones such as Sandfield, Queen Eleanors and old favourites such as Northmead and Holy Trinity but for various reasons – timing, finance and political initiatives – only Boxgrove (age 8-12) sent children. We started with six but the number subsequently rose. They attended on Wednesday afternoons from 4pm – 6pm.

As in previous years we hosted the University Summer School, Guildford Holiday Fun and the council scheme for more disadvantaged kids, The Fish Project. We are hoping that the lovely new building might encourage more of them to join and carry on paddling.

Peter Morley and Dave Howie had great success taking the Cranleigh 6th formers from scratch to DW in 8 weeks. Our emphasis as Community Sports Club Coaches is on the younger child so I took the paddling machine to the Spectrum for the Surrey Youth Games in early June. Some 150 kids had a go over the 6 hours and we gave out leaflets, our Club Information booklet and BCU info.

Catherine

Our Club reputation as the most social has taken a dive in recent years. Obviously it's been difficult with no premises. Now we have a lovely new equipped clubhouse we need keen and committed members helping a Social Sec (vacancy on the committee) to organise dances, discos, parties, BBQ, bingo anything to keep the social cohesion within the club that has always been the hallmark of Wey. **Catherine**

See you at the Christmas Dinner !!!!!

AND WHAT DID YOU DO THIS SUMMER?... Now that I have moved to the sunny seaside I have taken on the mantle of sea (well estuary really) coach. The change is dramatic. It is always windy and you always burn. The tide is always out so you always have to carry very heavy boats miles down the hard. (This is the opposite of the gloop a technical term I first encountered in Belize whilst leading an expedition for Raleigh 4 years ago. It is the clean but amazingly gluey residue found on the bottoms of rivers when the tide is out or they open the lock gates.) Although I never fall in I still have to shower to wash all the salt off and you know how I hate to get wet.

All the staff are identikit blonde and tanned and called Steve/Rob/Mike/Nick aged 19/23 doing Sports Science at College and competent at all sports, winding children up and singing badly. Their ridiculous songs include the good cop / bad cop routine with yours truly fulfilling the bad cop role admirably.

The kids are the same, the skills the same but the main problem is one of "scatter". Take any 8 beginners and within 2 minutes they have made off to all points on the compass. They are blown or drift with the tide or can't steer. They hide behind moored boats and sailing boats and yachts or motor cruisers or simply hang on to buoys. When they fall in they swim one way whilst the boat and paddles race in opposite directions. The salt water makes their eyes stream and they gasp, totally incapable of listening to a simple instruction let alone obey it.

Lipeze, sunscreen, 5 litre water bottle and a dry bag are essentials as is an enormous buoyancy aid which has a tow rope, knife, first aid kit, walkie-talkie attachment and various other buckles and bows. Less than sexy neoprene booties are the latest fashion. The pay is less than the minimum wage and after an all day session with 40 teenagers (80% Chinese) I fall asleep in the bath and then stuff my face with 1lb of pasta and drink a little red wine!

BUT it is a fabulous 5-mile drive past the remains of a Roman Villa and picturesque Bosham. It only takes 10 minutes. It is local and different and I'm upgrading my skills and meeting new people with different attitudes to life and paddlesports. It is outdoors and never the same. The sea is always busy. The other instructors are fit and helpful. The kids love it, and me, despite me doing the grouch. I am getting more experience every day which will all help as in October I'm going with Andy (R.C.O.) Hall, son Martin plus fiancée Jo, Peter Morley and 8 others, to Nepal. We have the choice of paddling or rafting grades 2-5. So I'll try and write another gripping chapter of my novel on the life of a level 2/3 coach "Belize –that's in Africa isn't it?"

P.S. Now that I have 5 beds and 3 toilets anyone wanting a weekend trip on the sea / harbour, I now have some local knowledge of slipways, tides and cafes.

Catherine