

# Halifax Canoe Club Newsletter

*January/February 2012 Edition*

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## 2012 - Year of the Faff !!!



A Classic “ Faff ” scene at the beginning of January’s Eden trip

# Ramblings from the chair

Hi All

We are slowly winding our way towards Spring and the warmer weather but there is a lot still going on around the club. The winter river trips and club Sundays are still continuing. I'm still not getting on the river as much as I would like as work just gets in the way - poor do really.

I did manage the annual New Years Day paddle which was very adventurous. The river was very high and we had to portage a couple of drops. I stepped into what I thought was a shallow puddle on the side of the river but in fact it was slightly deeper. I am 5' 10" and I didn't touch the bottom; fortunately I had my dry suit on so bobbed back up like a cork.

I'm going to Anglesey on the annual Easter Bank Holiday club trip which is great fun and well recommended. If you want any further information see the website or contact John & Debbie Stopford.

Thanks to everyone who gives up their time to organise trips and events and to those who work behind the scenes. I am looking forward to another successful year ahead.

Peter



# Abbie Richardson - kayaks for the kids

Junior Club member Abbie Richardson took to the water as part of her success in raising a very impressive amount for BBC's Children in Need. On the 6th November 2011 Abbie set off on her 5 hour triathlon

raising an amazing £575 for the popular charity. Abbie's dad Paul said "Abbie really wanted to do something for Children in Need so since she loves kayaking and cycling we came up with the idea of a triathlon challenge". The amazing achievement consisted of kayaking 5 miles, cycling 10 miles

and finishing with a 5 mile walk. "We based it all around the canal for ease and safety", said Paul, concluding "she was very tired at the end!" I bet she was ! We're all very proud of you Abbie and huge congratulations from everyone at the club.



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In each monthly committee meeting our swashbuckling Health & Safety officer, club coach and all round top trooper Simon Spencer comes up with some linguistic treats. This month's word

is "Rax" - to perform the act of reaching or stretching; reach for or try to obtain something. For example, if your boats get stuck in a big stopper by a weir and you just can't reach them. Also see 'disavail' - to lose something!

Thanks Simon, once again your infinite words of wisdom make the world a better place to live in. Jedi Word Knight indeed you are !!!

**Rax**



# Keith's River Esk - 7/1/2012

Ah, the river Esk - fish and chips, seagulls, the 99 steps, Dracula, packs of roaming Goths, Jet necklaces, etc, but hang on, we didn't go to Whitby, this is the river Esk that flows down from the Grampian mountains over the Scottish border and onto the Solway Firth.

And what a peach of a river it is, crystal clear water, regular wave trains, abundant bird life, beautiful arched stone bridges, the smell of Scottish pine trees drifting down from the banks. The Sun was shining warm on this January morning in Langholm and everyone was on time and raring to go. What could go wrong?

Well, for a start someone might forget their helmet and cause a significant delay in procedures. But never mind, that gave us ample time to catch up, have a coffee, and speak to another group of paddlers about their planned day. A pleasant bunch they were too, one chap, Curt, was a Star Wars enthusiast, who'd decorated his boat with figurines from the movie. So while we waited, stifling our yawns, we faced Curt and Darth making their way down the stream.

Before too long, the shuttle was run and we were finally on our way. The water level was high and the going was good, we darted about on



waves like a small flock of starlings in murmuration, weaving back and forth across the flow.

What we didn't know was that this was going to prove to be 'Ladies Day' on the river Esk. Although Christine,

Shim, and Lois's millinery could not compete with those at Ascot they certainly were the stars of the show.

On last year's Esk trip Dig and Lois famously washed up on a rock, like flotsam and jetsam, in the middle of a churning set of grade 3 rapids, and it was to this event that talk turned as we progressed onwards.

“The rock of doom” is coming up, “oh no, not the terrifying torrent”, “yes the disastrous drops are just round the corner”. Fortunately we were able to get out on river right and inspect the section prior to attempting it and made specific plans of where to go and where to avoid.

Naturally that all goes out the window as you bob down and just try to stay upright. Everyone who tried, made it down in one piece, but it was the descents of Christine and Shim that took our breath away, respectively pirouetting and dashing around the obstacles with aplomb, smiling serenely as they went.

Meanwhile, Lois was filming and Ian, Guy and Dig led a barbershop chorus of “there is nothing like a Dame”, right there on the slippery, rocky bank.

Emboldened, we took on the rest the Esk had to throw at us without even raising an eyebrow.

Everyone was visibly tiring out now; Dig even earned himself the title of King of the Yawning. And then eventually we arrived at our destination - the pretty wee village of Canonbie.

And this is where I leave you folks. Perhaps someone else will tell you what happened next ... (see Les’s pastiche on the Eden further on)

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## Anglesey Easter weekend

Every year John & Debbie Stopford organise the club’s Easter paddling weekend.

This year is no different. You are guaranteed to have the best time in and out of your boats. The legendary Stanley Embankment is the paddling highlight of the weekend where those brave enough can tackle the standing wave of doom !!!

This year we will be based in a new campsite which looks nice and relatively central. There are also static caravans and other options available for all members who do not camp.

The club trailer will again hopefully be heading West with usual rates per boat for fuel costs for the driver.

John & Debbie welcome old and new club members to join them and you will have a cracking time with experienced paddlers - we did last year !!!

For more info contact Debbie or John on Hx 367337. Further details are also on the club website with links to campsite and booking form.

# Members Spotlight



**Name:** Shamim Lindsay  
**Kayak level:** "Old" 4\* kayak, new 2\*  
**Discipline:** River running, open boating and sea kayaking  
**Happiest kayak moment:** Successfully running Hollows Mill rapid on the Esk last year - it was the start of my enjoying running bigger rapids after years of being too scared. Mind you, I got too full of myself then and capsized on the next small wave so the happiness was short lived.  
**Scariest Kayak moment:** The first time I went down the white water course!  
**Best Place you've Kayaked:** Scotland  
**Place you'd love to Kayak:** Sicily



**What do you love most about the club:**  
*Really friendly people who've become good friends*

**What would you do if you weren't kayaking:**  
*I drag anyone who'll come round art galleries*

**Favourite Film:** *Fargo, Joel and Ethan Coen - the shooting and shredding is not my thing but Marge Gunderson is a great woman*

**Favourite Book:** *Brazzaville Beach, William Boyd*

**Favourite Music:** *I'm stuck in my youth, as Dig will testify*

**Other Sports/hobbies:** *Visiting art galleries and museums, watching films and telly, reading, strolling*

**Something nobody knows about you:** *I'd like to add a coracle to my small fleet*

**Name:** Les Ford

**Committee Role:** *Competition and acting secretary which I will hopefully have shed by the time this comes out*

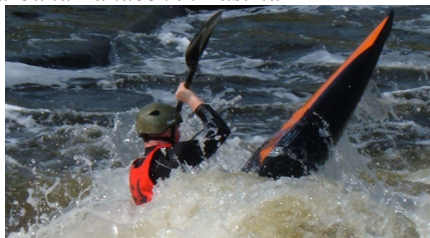
**Kayak level:** *5 star kayak, working on 4 star open boat, Level 3 coach, Div 1 slalom*

**Discipline:** *River running, slalom (K1, C1, C2), open boating, occasional WWR, coaching*

**Happiest kayak moment:** *Three I can't split: passing my L3 coach, paddling down Pians rapid on the Sanna, promotion to Div 1 in slalom*

**Scariest Kayak moment:** *The scare was for Sarah on the bank, I was pretty calm throughout - I swam at a HPP slalom race and got stuck in the eddy line vortex underwater and had to swim down to get flushed out.*

**Best Place you've Kayaked:** *The Alps around Landeck in Austria*



**Place you'd love to Kayak:** *Nepal or the Grand Canyon*

**What do you love most about the club:**  
*Helping people to discover and enjoy their paddling*

**What would you do if you weren't kayaking:** *Don't understand the question!*

**Favourite Film:** *Don't have one!*

**Favourite Book:** *Love Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan series, but the anorak in me means I read a lot of coaching books, 'the Inner Game of Skiing' being a current favourite (and no I don't ski)*

**Favourite Music:** *U2 and Abba*

**Other Sports/hobbies:** *there's lots (walking, biking and other sport) but never time! Although doing a triathlon is on the horizon!*

**Something nobody knows about you:** *I once spent Christmas day in a tent 18,000ft up a mountain!*

# Volunteering in 2012

Got a New Year's resolution? Want to get more involved in the local community? Want to learn new skills or get stuck into the running of the canoe club? Then here's a few ideas.

- Club Ambassadors – would involve going with committee members to road shows and events, helping to design publicity material and generally promoting the club to new members, potential sponsors and the local community.
- Social Media Volunteers - would be to help Dig with the Club's Facebook and Twitter accounts, comment on things, post interesting news stories and generally drive up use of the pages and help people to know about things the club is up to.
- Meeters and greeters – we need people to open up the canoe club, put the kettle on and take the register before the evening sessions over the summer, especially before the junior and adult beginners sessions. This helps to make people feel more welcome and allows the coach to concentrate on preparing the session and getting kit ready. No experience needed, just a friendly face.
- DIY enthusiasts – we always have jobs to do around the river site and buildings. Do you have secret DIY skills we can call on to help with specific jobs or tasks? If so let us know.

We need more than one person for each role so the more the merrier, just get in touch.

If these don't take your fancy, then we also need people to write articles for the newsletter, take photos for the website, organise fund-raising events, plan trips, coaching and lots more besides.

If you are interested in any of the above then please contact Victoria on 07855 367043 or email [victoriajbradford@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:victoriajbradford@yahoo.co.uk)

## **Dates for your diary: Volunteers needed:**

24th March - River and site clean-up.

14/15th April - Washburn Division 2 Slalom event being organised by Les, helpers needed.

9th June - River and site clean -up.

9th September - Washburn paddle being run by HXCC. All profits go to the Club. Helpers needed all day with a variety of jobs available.

6th October - River and site clean-up.

# The return of normality

The return of normality on the River Lune (18th December 2011)

I have to confess that I've been getting a bit concerned about my paddling recently as on two consecutive river trips I have failed to swim – I've wobbled, smashed into rocks, drifted down drops backwards, even followed Dig's lead down a couple of rapids – but to no avail.

In a desperate attempt to remedy things I joined a select band – Les, Jess and Nick - on a section of the Lune just before Christmas.

Not just any section – but the site of my first ever river trip about 8 years ago where, owing to the fact that I had to act as responsible(?) adult for my son, I

was on a wholly unsuitable stretch of river and swam 11 (yes, eleven) times in a day and a half!



It is a fantastic stretch of river, consistent grade 2 and 3 rapids with a couple of harder sections added in. With only four of us, faffing was kept to a bare minimum and we were on the river in good time.

Nick's tales of hippo-avoidance and what to do if faced by crocodiles, gleaned from his recent trip to Uganda, were an entertaining if not entirely relevant way of spending the early part of the trip and by mid morning I was resolutely upright and sneakily wondering whether I would get to lunch time unscathed – I wouldn't!

Les has a range of tried, tested and effective river leadership styles and the one that he had employed up to this point was an airy, nonchalant "you'll be fine, find your own line down" – as we rounded a bend in the river his style went up a notch as I was summarily directed to "sit in that eddy" and await a signal.

His final words as he temporarily disappeared from view were “there’s a big rock at the bottom – watch out for it”. True to form I spotted the rock, I watched the rock, I hit the rock, I hugged the rock and finally I bounced off the rock and capsized into the river’s welcoming embrace.

Things were back to normal and as I spluttered my way to the bank I’m sure I heard Les mutter “only 10 more swims to go”. As it turned out there was only one more to go but it provided a good illustration of another facet of Les’s leadership skills – his command of a range of shouty voices. Approaching what I now know to be called the Strid, Les pointed to the eddy where he wanted us to be, and with a minimum of fuss Nick and Jess did as they were requested.

Being seduced by Les’s gentle tone, and thinking that the eddy looked a bit crowded (and small) I suggested that I’d go for the next one only to see Les’s whole demeanour change and a voice like a foghorn demand that I “get in this eddy NOW!”.

Well, I did my best, nearly made it, dropped out of the bottom of the eddy, turned backwards, drifted back in to the flow and tackled the Strid in reverse gear. Thinking that this was a little advanced even for me, I tried to turn to face the front, got half way and had my second dip of the day.

As we all know, Les has a number of different shouty voices for these situations and personally I prefer the calmer “just grab the back of my boat, you’re fine” kind, but this one was at the other end of the scale and I was left in no doubt that Les wanted me to “drop everything, keep your feet up and swim like hell” – so I did but not before taking in a few bumps, scrapes and mouthfuls of the Lune.

Having reached dry land I was able to watch with considerable respect as Nick and Jess showed me how it should be done and even had the good grace to save their laughter until I was out of earshot.

That was the end of the dramas for the day as we completed the rest of the trip unscathed. A great day in so many ways – a beautiful river, excellent company, minimal faffing, an object lesson in leadership and shouting styles, but most of all a personal return to normality – after all what would paddling be without the occasional swim?

Mark Limmer

# Not Keith's report on the Eden !!!

And where our lyricist has left us the jobbing writer takes up in a pale imitation of the great man's style . . .

Ah a return to Eden, lush vegetation, people wearing fig leaves, forbidden fruit hanging within tempting reach etc, but hang on we weren't in biblical times, we were in Cumbria, this is the River Eden that drains a large chunk of the North Pennines and Lake District past Carlisle and into the Solway Firth.

And what a peach of a river it is, not quite crystal clear water, even better bouncy wave trains, abundant bird life, beautiful arched stone bridges, the smell of the village recycling point in the car park, cutting through an impressive red sandstone gorge, and the promise of mystical carvings in the rocks near the end.

The Sun hadn't quite arrived on this slightly less warm January morning in Lazonby, but reinforcements had, and everyone was on time and raring to go. Having issued several reminders to anyone prone to forgetting their helmet, what could go wrong? Well, for a start someone might forget their spray deck, and cause a significant delay in proceedings. Groans all round, but no sympathy today. He was left to contemplate this schoolboy error with a book and direction to the café while we left him at the get off and returned to paddle the river. But never mind, that gave us ample time to catch up, have a coffee, and speak to another group of paddlers about their planned day. A pleasant bunch they were too, although there were no storm troopers in their open canoes; apparently the access agreement doesn't allow them.

Before too long, the shuttle was run and we were finally on our way. The water level was decent and the going was good, we darted about on waves like a convocation of eagles circling eddies and gliding down flows as if soaring thermals hunting out prey. What we didn't know was that this was again going to prove to be 'Ladies Day' on the river. Although Christine, Shim and Lois again forewent the lavish millinery they certainly were the stars of the show – but not for the same reasons today. Although the racing analogy worked much better as Orange Supersonic became the first to unseat its rider at an early hurdle.

Again tales of previous trips down the Eden filled the air as we progressed onwards: 'do you remember last year when we needed wheels to get down', 'what about the time Les and Mark did the rapid backwards in the open boat', the day Johnny swam in an inch of water', and 'remember how we laughed when we were waist deep in mud walking out to the car'.

On a previous Eden trip the standing wave off the final weir reached epic proportions, sending paddlers airborne off the crest at random angles and varying orientations to the water's surface. So it was to anticipation of this churning grade 3 drop that talk eventually turned. However, no matter the level of terror invoked by the impending maelstrom, all seemed resolute that it was an infinitely better prospect than the 'walk of mud and cow pooh' from the alternative get out.

Fortunately we were able to distract everyone with antiquities carved in the inaccessible cliff just above them – faces smiled back at us and old English verse challenged the tongue.

But "the terrifying torrent" was still waiting for us. One by one inspection from the middle of the river highlighted the line, and a rousing chorus of 'I will survive' cheered paddlers on their way. Naturally, lines down rapids are only really for guidance, as fight or flight instincts take over as soon as the froth begins.

Sitting at the bottom allowed your author to further develop the proto-

type theory of 'line creep' – i.e each successive paddler follows the one before, but just a bit further to the left until some one goes just an inch too far and flirts with disaster.

This left blue dagger to become the second faller on ladies day, unseating its rider at the final hurdle. Now line creep could become the latest spread betting craze, a more skill based challenge than simply backing the most likely swimmer on a given day;

however I fear there is too much potential for match fixing for it to become a global phenomenon.

Meanwhile Lois was preparing to re-launch having met up with 'the man with no deck' who had walked up in the hope of an encore from the barbershop chorus as the soundtrack to the excitement on the river. Emboldened we took on the rest the Eden had to throw at us without even raising an eyebrow – to be honest there was barely enough river left in which to elevate said brow. After two days on the water, Dig had moved beyond yawning to nodding off, or was it just the weight of his head-cam taking a toll on his neck? And so we arrived at our destination - the pretty wee village of Lazonby.



Keith O'Hara's ghost writer (Les Ford)

# EVENTS LIST

Below are details of forthcoming club events.  
Please view interactive events list on the club website for more details,  
contact information & previous trip reports

<b>February 2012</b>		
Saturday 4th February	Club AGM & Social evening with Awards	
Sunday 5th February	River Greta Trip, Cumbria (gd 3)	Les Ford on 01484 854099
11th - 18th February	Scotland river tripping week	Les Ford on 01484 854099
Tuesday 21st February	POOL SESSIONS CANCELLED	Sarah Ford on 01484 854099
<b>March 2012</b>		
Sunday 11th March	River Trip TBC	Cliff Speight on 07917 022366
Saturday 24th March	River and site clean up	Victoria Bradford 07855 367043
Tuesday 27th March	Club membership and sign up social night 7pm onwards	Peter Face on 07855 503544
Saturday 31st March	River Ure club trip	Cliff Speight on 07917 022366
<b>April 2012</b>		
6th to 9th April	Anglesey Easter club week-end	John & Debbie Stopford on 01422 367337
14th & 15th April	Washburn Division 2 Slalom event being organized by Les, helpers needed please.	Les Ford on 01484 854099
<b>June 2012</b>		
Saturday 9th June	River and site clean up	Victoria Bradford 07855 367043
<b>September 2012</b>		
Sunday 9th September	Washburn River cruise - organised by HXCC	Les Ford on 01484 854099

Halifax Canoe Club Ltd, Greenups Mill, Wharf Street, Sowerby Bridge