



## RCC Matters Summer 2015

Long summer days, hot and balmy weather. Just right for messing about in a boat. And aren't we just. Whether it's up in Skye; at Flamborough Head; on the river at Barrow; on the reservoir in Rutland; or on the Alley Alley O, we're paddling – training, learning, racing, working hard but above all enjoying ourselves.....

*Sara Davies*

### **New Main Body Leader**

Richard Sheahan has been appointed Main Body Leader. Congratulations Richard.

Plus..... a note from the minutes of the Rutland Canoe Club Committee Meeting on 12 April:

'We would like to thank and acknowledge the time and effort put in by Richard as Chairman of the Club. His passion, energy and

commitment was recognised by all. He brought in a new era for the club and we will need him to continue his work within the club to keep us on track.'

Thank you Richard.

### **Feature in 'Active' Magazine**

Active's reporter Jeremy Beswick visited the club on Sunday 14 June. His write up is in the July edition of the magazine:

"Having tried those little plastic canoes at seaside resorts a few times, I thought my trip to the Rutland Canoe Club at Whitwell on the shores of Rutland Water was going to be a doddle. An inland lake on a calm sunny day, pottering about without a care in the world, a nice gentle piece of exercise without much to trouble the adrenal glands or my limited reserves of courage.

Then they put me in a kayak. Now, the best way I can describe the experience is it's like suddenly finding yourself as a jockey on a frisky thoroughbred in the Grand National when your equine experience to date has been limited to a donkey ride on Margate

beach. As I drifted worryingly away from the bank into deeper water the craft lurched violently from side to side to the point of turning over (or so it seemed to me) and magically resisted any of my attempts to steer. I did, sort of, get the hang of it in the end following some kindly advice - and the friendly folk at the club were generous enough to give me a round of applause from the bank - but I was mighty glad to be within a few feet of the shore. This, I thought, is a much more serious sport than I'd realised. Club Chairman James Richardson continued my education. "Capsizing is quite common. If you're out on the water here it's often too far to swim to the bank so we practise being underwater and recovering your position in the boat all the time". Rutland Water itself has its less benign side too. "Beyond the headland you can encounter some pretty strong winds." he continued "You suddenly go from something like a pond to the sea. This is not a boring old reservoir". Fellow member Judi Sheahan added "This is a brilliant piece of water and can be challenging as conditions are never the same. You can go out in the calm and come back in a storm".

As with all sports where there is an element of risk, with the tension comes excitement. "The medium of the water itself is the best thing for me" James went on "You never know what to expect. When the wind's up you can skid along the top of the waves like a surfer. It's not unknown to hear the odd "yeehah!" from time to time". There is a sense of fun as well "You can creep up on your mate and nudge them so they spin round helplessly" he laughed.

As we spoke, I looked around to see people launching themselves from pontoons a good four feet above the water level and

deliberately turning their canoes over to practise safety routines and my admiration for this doughty band of like-minded people grew further. It was evident that the benefits in terms of fitness were more than I'd appreciated too.

Vivien Turner is one of many women members. "I broke my back" she told me "and my cranial osteopath recommended it, as at the time I had no core strength or muscles. Kayaking uses all of my body. Although women tend not to have such strong arms and broad shoulders, our hip movements are well suited to this - we paddle with our bottom!"

Neil Juggins is "a sort of a founder member" of the club who took up the sport at the age of 57, which was 23 years ago. I started by asking him if he'd had any near death experiences. "Oh yes" he answered casually "there's plenty of 'excitement' to be had, especially if, like me, you're not a good swimmer. But it promotes team spirit and we rely on each other. As we self-rescue, we can go on the water even if there are no safety facilities." Neil is into sea expeditions as are other club members who have ventured far beyond the limits of Rutland together, to places like Corsica, Sardinia and the Isle of Skye. Herein lies another dimension to the sport that's not immediately apparent to the uninitiated - the joy of exploration.

Sara Davies is a triathlete who's been a member for seven years. "For me, there's nothing as exciting as going off with a kayak on the roof of your car and your camping gear not knowing what adventures you're going to have." Judi agreed. "My first sea trip was to Fingal's Cave. Just amazing. In the kayaks we were able to get right into the back of the

cave – it was like a cathedral. To put the icing on the cake, as we came out there were a couple of otters playing in the water. Accessing places you can only reach this way and seeing familiar things from a different perspective is great”.

If you're enthused by the above, then you'll be pleased to hear that the club has ample supplies of Kayaks and Canoes in many different guises for you to try, paddles and, reassuringly for those like me, buoyancy aids in all shapes and sizes. Members range from 10 years old to 80 and from novices to the highly skilled. Sarah Outen learnt to kayak here, but you're not likely to bump into her at the club for a while – she's traversing the world by rowing boat, bike and kayak and as I write is to be found in mid-Atlantic. (To follow her progress and donate to her nominated charities visit [www.sarahouten.com](http://www.sarahouten.com)).

Those remaining meet every Sunday at 9:30 and are usually off the water by noon. Annual subs are an eminently affordable £85 a year and, as they say on their website, “We welcome paddlers of all standards, including total novices, so if you're already a paddler, or you're looking to try the sport, feel free to get in touch.” To launch yourself into this truly amazing pastime start with an email to [info@rutlandcanoecub.org.uk](mailto:info@rutlandcanoecub.org.uk)

Don't forget your adrenal glands and reserves of courage though.”

## Training

Sara Davies

Mike Cockerill is taking his courage in both hands as he works hard to train a group of 13 boisterous RCC members as they work towards their 3\* touring qualification. We've been meeting on a Wednesday evening down

at Rutland Water and tackling the joys of rescuing, sideways moving (whatever you do, don't get Viv started on her weird and wonderful sideways moving tactics!); support (or not!) strokes; turning; and reversing. Before you worry we have also gone through forward paddling too! And done a written assessment where there were some interesting responses to “Who is Rob Roy McGregor?”

We're all learning a lot – Mike is a fabulous coach – calm, patient, facilitating, pragmatic and above all enabling us to work our way through to the answers.

And we're having fun – it's a brilliant way to finish off a summer's day and transition from the world of work. Messing about in a boat in rather wonderful surroundings with a great bunch of mates – can't beat it.



## Trip Reports

### Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs Sunday April 5<sup>th</sup>

John Hawkins

“Who could resist the chance to spend Easter Sunday paddling around one of England's more pronounced pointy bits and along the foot of towering cliffs full of breeding

seabirds? Chris Packham and Michaela Strachan had made it all seem very appealing on Springwatch a couple of nights before, including a boat trip on calmish looking water.

We needed to catch the tide at the right stage to get round Flamborough Head in favourable conditions so being on the water at 9.30 was the target set by Mike Cockerill who was leading the trip. In order to make this deadline two strategies were employed:

- 1) Stay local overnight with a full English to give a good foundation for paddling;
- 2) Get up before sparrow's cough and whizz up the hopefully empty A1:

My wife Sarah and I arrived from our B and B just before 9.00, to see that almost everyone, including early birds Richard and Judi and Vivien and James, had already arrived - Respect! - and were getting ready to paddle. We were all on the water for 9.30 as planned and after a team photo set off East along the coast under 40m cliffs towards Flamborough Head in light Northerly winds. As we approached High Stacks we began to feel the uneven swell as the sea bed here is a wave cut platform and below the cliffs is a complex network of chalk towers and reefs.

As the guidebook puts it "Although a delightful cruise on a calm sunny day this could become a demolition derby for kayaks when swell is running from the east or southeast."

Rounding the point we could see Flamborough Head itself and later lighthouse and radio mast, the most easterly point in northern England.

The swell was uneven and uncomfortable. We could see breaking waves by the headland. As we got closer we could see that the waves

were breaking onto reefs and looked fairly predictable so paddling a respectful distance round them should keep us out of trouble. Rounding the headland into Sedgewick bay gave us more predictable sea conditions, though the onshore swell needed watching. As we picked up a favourable tide and paddled along the cliffs towards North Landing and then on to Bempton it was gradually becoming bird city. As we reached North Landing Mike checked we were OK as there are no get outs this side of Bempton Cliffs. Everyone was fine including those new to the sea. Flamborough Head - some debut! We could hear and see birds all the time now. Kittiwakes, Shags, Fulmars, Razorbills and Guillemots floated or flew around us. Star turn were the Puffins, "so sweet" rafting up under the cliffs where they nest in cracks in the rock, rather than rabbit burrows.

As we paddled towards Bempton Cliffs towering to 135M the birdlife became even more raucous as the population of several thousand Gannets made themselves known by sound, sight and .....er, smell. Gannets have a wingspan of nearly 2 metres so they look very impressive from a kayak at close range.

We had to leave eventually and headed back to North Landing. North Landing is protected by high cliffs from the wind and by reefs at the entrance from the swell. The reefs produce fairly steep swell around the entrance, but it all calms down as you get further in. We pulled in for a well-earned lunch stop to be met by Sarah negotiating the steep road down with an ice cream.

After lunch we worked our way towards Flamborough Head again. James, Richard and Lynette took the opportunity to explore the

cliffs up close. The breeze was falling away and we were getting used to the conditions so Flamborough Head looked a lot less daunting on the return journey. James, Richard and Lynette made straight for what swell could be found to surf on. Round the headland we were sheltered from any wind and the sea gradually became flat calm under sunny skies as we ambled back to South Landing for 3.30 to be met by the shore support from Andy's family, Suzanne and Sarah.

Tea and cake at the café at Flamborough Head rounded off a great day's paddle. Special thanks to Mike, who assessed the wind speed we could cope with and then arranged to have it delivered! Paddlers were Andy, James, John, Judi, Lynette, Richard, Steve and Vivien.

Shore support was by Andy's family, Steve's wife Suzanne and my wife Sarah. Guide Book quoted was Northern England and the IOM, Fifty Great Sea Kayak Voyages by Jim Krawiecki."

### **Seals and Skye, Lynette Shahmoradian**

Mike, John, Ben and myself joined members of Stafford Canoe Club on their sea kayaking trip to Skye. Their previous two years had been ideal weather, but it was not to last and we were restricted to the campsite for day trips rather than packing up our belongings and paddling to the horizon for overnight camps. We arrived the night before most of the others and were off on a trip on our own first thing. It was force 5 – 6, but sheltered in Dunvegan Bay where we headed out to some seal inhabited islands. We gave them a wide berth so as not to scare them from their islands, but there were still lots in the water

and they surrounded us in their typical curious fashion and seemed 'friendly'. Several were leaping out of the water and we mistook them for porpoises at first. Mike spotted a heronry with eight herons in one tree and Ben, John and myself paddled back to see them.

Next morning we set off with the Stafford crew after 'blessing' Joe's new boat with champagne. It was a great bouncy paddle, Force 3 – 4 plus swell and clapotis to play in and cliff top bluebells en route. We stopped for lunch at the Coral Beach, which, being half term had lots of families as well as sea kayakers. Some cows had wandered onto the beach from the grassland behind it and there were seals inspecting them from the turquoise water. On the way back we pulled in at a jetty and stopped for tea and cakes. In the evening we doused Ben's barbecue where he had set about cooking sausages as we were all going out to eat. Unfortunately, no local hostelry could accommodate a party of 11, so, after booking for the following night, we returned an hour later and Ben was philosophical as he tried to resuscitate his sausage barbecue.

The next day we paddled from the bay in the other direction. I headed off on my own around a small island with cormorants, black backed gulls and a few seals before joining the others on the way to our lunch stop at a beach with a waterfall and cowslips and bluebells growing a few feet up amongst the rocks. A little squall before lunch passed over to leave us in relative sunshine to enjoy our picnic spot. We surfed back into Dunvegan with the wind behind us and the likes of Michael, John and Ben just put their paddles up to catch the wind rather than paddle. I wasn't going to keep going back and waiting

for people who couldn't be bothered to put their blades in the water, so made a sprint back to the campsite and left them to it!

We finished the day with a fun meal out for eleven and said our goodbyes the following day as the forecast was continual wind and rain for the rest of the week. Thanks to John and the members of Stafford Canoe Club for opening their trip up to members of RCC.



*Harriet, Emily and Paul Laugharne on their first kayak race at Barrow.*

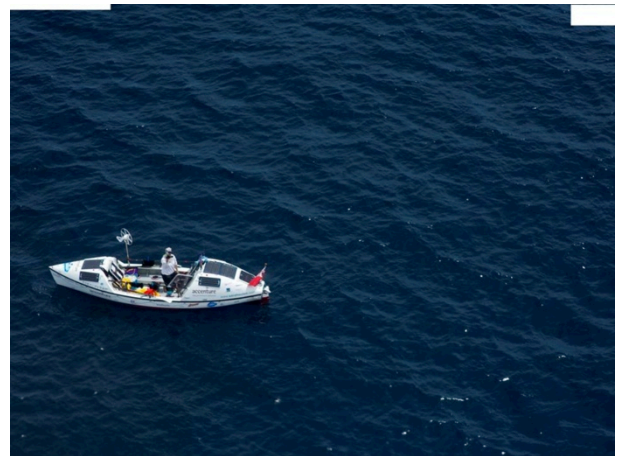
## **L2L Update** **Sara Davies**

So, to recap, RCC Life Member Sarah Outen is over 3/4 of the way through her global expedition London2London:Via the World in which she is attempting to loop the planet by kayak, bicycle and rowing boat, raising money for four charities and sharing stories about her exploits along the way.

She started in a kayak under Tower Bridge on April 1st 2011 and since then has kayaked, cycled, and rowed about 23,000 miles across land and sea.

On 14 May she set off on the final leg of her journey to row across the Atlantic Ocean from Cape Cod on the east coast of the USA to hopefully Falmouth in the UK. 3000 nautical miles (as the crow flies), this was estimated to take Sarah about 4 months. At the time of going to press, Sarah has rowed about 2000 miles but sadly only 600 as the crow flies due to adverse weather conditions. The row may therefore take a tad longer than planned!

The Canadian Military have been taking a close interest in Sarah and her expedition and sending planes out to keep an eye on her – photos have been taken and the poor pilots have been subjected to Sarah singing songs from the Lion King. She has seen whales, seals and her beloved Tweedles, been through a Desert Island Disc marathon and is still managing to chat to school children – spoke to Years 5 and 6 at Uffington School on 30 June. Winds and waves have battered her boat but Happy Socks has stayed upright to date and both are doing well. Onward and upward.



*Photo of Sarah taken by the Canadian Military surveillance plane*

I asked Sarah why she had decided to embark upon this expedition. She replied:

“ The why is most simply summed up by 'I love it.' I love to journey. I love to learn. I love being outside and immersed in my environment. The challenges to mind and body, the discovery of personal and geographical, the excitement, the learnings, the wild, the unknowns... I dreamed of the idea while on the Indian Ocean in 2009, wanting to extend my ocean experience to land and more oceans. I wanted to meet people. I wanted to learn about the world, feel and understand it through the context of a self-propelled journey and share it with an audience and schools, in particular.

And why such a big journey? Why not? The Indian Ocean was empowering - to know that I could survive and thrive alone for months at a time and also in the knowledge that it was just a task that needed a plan, like any other. In my 24 year old naivety I applied that to the world and London2London was born. Lots of us hold back from our dreams our ideas - for many reasons, out of fear of change, fear of failure, the unknown etc etc. But so often, these dreams never happen. My Dad's death at 53 and his life with arthritis before that showed me that life is too short to let dreams go. If we do, they might never happen.”

## **Future Events**

[Saturday 11th July](#) - Bourne Outdoor Pool & Barbecue

[Sunday 26th July](#) - Club Picnic and Family Paddle. A bankside picnic after the main paddle with non-paddling partners and children invited to paddle in the creek.

[Saturday 8th August](#) - Bourne Outdoor Pool &

BBQ

[22nd/23rd August](#) - Estuary/Sea Paddle - details to be confirmed

[Saturday 12 September](#) Foundation Safety and Rescue Training day at Rutland. Contact Mike Cockerill for details

[Sunday 27 September](#) - 3\* touring assessment. Contact Mike Cockerill for details

## **Club Paddle Sessions**

**Sunday morning paddles on Rutland Water**  
Club session for all standards, ages and boats 9.30am-12noon.

**Wednesday Afternoon Paddles**  
Stamina building paddles in long boats on local rivers, often with a cafe or pub stop. Please contact Lynette Shahmoradian

**Friday Morning Paddles on Rutland Water**  
Please contact Mike Cockerill