



The Abbey River and Chertsey Weir

By Anna

August 2021



We paddle along the River Thames and then fight our way through the narrow jungle that is the Abbey River, a fun jungle exploration. Two hours later we pop out by the Chertsey Weir, a chance for those that want to play on the pour over or just watch as others perform their loop, spins and swims.

Nearly two years after my first paddling trip with CAP, I returned to the place where it all started for me - The Abbey River and Chertsey Weir.

I've always loved kayaking, and a colleague had suggested I google some kayaking clubs in SW London. CAP was the first club I contacted; it was so easy to book a slot on their upcoming trip along the Abbey River, all the equipment was provided, and Chair of the club, Mike Ransom, offered advice and support as to what to expect from my first trip.

From memory, the following things stood out for me on that first trip, back in early September 2019

- ❖ How welcomed I was made to feel - Jenny was one of the first people to take me under her wing and helped me along my first CAP paddle. Everyone I spoke to on that first trip were very encouraging
- ❖ My first "drop" – shortly in to the trip, there is a small weir, where the first drop is equivalent to one step down, and the second is a couple of feet down. When I first did that drop two years ago, I was none the wiser, and sailed down without any fear.
- ❖ The Abbey "River" – River may be the official terminology, but "jungle" would be far more accurate! This is one of my favourite trips to do, not just for the natural beauty along the way, but you really do feel like you're in a far away land, where the jungle meets the water.
- ❖ How much my cheeks hurt from smiling – this CAP crew were all about having a laugh!



Two years on, and not much has changed. Jenny is now not only a dear friend, but along with Ian “Pool Bunny”, she was a leader on this follow up visit to the Abbey River.

This time around, having experienced far bigger drops, and on white water, I still felt a little rush as I revisited my first drop. This time around it was Sahar’s and Akhilesh’s turns to do their first drops, and they nailed it!

The River (Jungle) still provides a beautiful trip through crystal clear waters, and still offers the challenge of navigating through lots of overgrowth, with the reward of the Weir at the end. It’s what we Aussie’s call “hard yakka”, and it’s equal parts challenging and fun.

My cheeks were, as always, sore at the end of the paddle. Being on the water always makes me smile, but the laughs that we always have during a paddling trip reminds me what I felt when I did my first CAP trip – I’ve found my people 😊



The Basingstoke Canal

July 2020

Kat and I had a great day with CAP on the Basingstoke Canal. CAP is a great open, friendly, and fun kayaking club. When we arrived, we were greeted very warmly by members and Chairman Mike Ransom.

The safety instructions were clear and comprehensive, Mike took a lot of time to make sure that the newcomers were made welcome and really felt part of the group. Kat is an experienced kayaker unlike myself, but the members soon taught me the best way to make progress and I found myself really enjoying the paddle.

“Après-Paddle” was a quick trip to Odiham Castle and a pretty country pub, socialising outside around a lovely lake.

Throughout the trip and the subsequent visit to the Pub we all ensured that Covid-19 regulations and Social Distancing were observed.

We are really looking forward to the next one and maybe doing some white water paddling soon. Thanks Mike and thanks CAP.

Shak and Kat





1st March 2020

The Chelmer, by Callum

Big Water on the Chelmer! (Well to me at least)

This was to be my first trip with the club, who'd welcomed me in as a member recently, and my first ever go on paddling on rivers and canals – so I was very much looking forward to it! I'd been having a lot of fun in the pool sessions brushing up on my neglected paddle skills with everyone, so I was excited to see how I'd do in the real world.

There had been quite a lot of rainfall in the week building up to the trip, so the potential of high-water levels only added to my excitement. Luckily, March 1st brought us wonderful sunshine, so our plans to paddle the Chelmer Navigation near Chelmsford in Essex were able to go ahead. Eleven of us arrived at our getting on point, Paper Mill Lock, and set about getting ready and having a bite to eat before setting off.

The water was still fairly high, and throughout our 5-mile paddle there were areas that had flooded completely. However, that didn't stop it being a fun and relaxing paddle through some beautiful scenery, made all the better by the lovely bunch of Cappers I was with! And as my first trip on a river I really enjoyed getting a new perspective on the countryside as we paddled through.

About halfway through we stopped for some lunch where we ran into the ever-friendly Bramston Canoe Club.

Along with the paddle we'd hoped to shoot some of the weirs along the way. Jay tested a few runs for us less experienced members and judged most of them to be a little too high. The last weir, just by our getting off point at Langford, looked like a better option though, so we all gave it a go! It was my first time shooting a weir and a lot of fun, and as a bonus I didn't end up swimming!

All and all a great trip and I can't wait for the next!

Dee Weekend

By Ivan Scattergood

May 2012



Wern Isaf Farm

Tents pitched, beers out, the fun started. Chris did threaten to get the twister game out whilst waiting for the rest of the motley crew to arrive but beers, a bbq and chatting took preference.

Saturday

Morning started with Chris playing mum by cooking some bacon butties, then off to JJ's to tackle, in my case, the river Dee.

We split into two groups. Chris's group and Ivan's group being named half way through the day Ivan's Angels.

Ivan's Angels were shown and practiced ferry gliding, breaking in and breaking out etc. Most entertaining when you have never done it before.

Even more entertaining were the three drops, epically when I had my first view of the river bed and tiny fish trying to escape my bulging eyes and flapping arms whilst I was trying to get out of my overturned kayak. Ivan was at hand to make sure I was ok and both Ivan and Melanie did a great job in keeping my confidence up.

Ivan's Angels did all three drops round JJ's and it was great to watch other people going over the drops and play in the bottom of them.

Gary and his assistant Rolo were taking photos of all the days activities.

Saturday night we all went to a brilliant choice of Chris's, an Italian restaurant called Fouzi's apart from Rob G as he thought that watching England play football (if that's what you can call it) was a better choice (ed – a brave man to be doing this in North Wales).

Later some of the CAP group went on to a pub and I heard Rob E decided to walk along the wall of the bridge in his drunken state.

Sunday

After a cold night of trying to sleep we woke to another glorious sunny day. After packing away the tents we made our way to Horseshoe falls.

Ivan's Angels looked worried and the main question was "where are we getting on this part of the river?" Ivan gave us our instructions but it was a battle for us all. Sue ended up going backwards down the first part with Ivan in hot pursuit, I decided to park myself on a rock and stay there and in the distance, I could hear Mel being quite firm with Ivan.

Horseshoe Falls



Horseshoe Falls

Once we got going, we were heading towards Serpents tail. Once again, I scared the fish while Ivan rescued the kayak, after making sure I was ok. Ivan's Angels then parked their kayaks so we could watch our more experienced paddlers ride the Serpents Tail.

Serpents Tail is perfectly named, with all the water disappearing into a narrow channel on river right which will scare the be-jesus out of some. But our brave paddlers did it. Caroline was brilliant to watch as her face said it all. Full of smiles she made her way down. Once at the bottom she shouted. "Can I do it again"?

Gold medal goes to Mike who admitted he was worried but really enjoyed the excitement of making it to the bottom. Then there was Derek. Well what can I say but smooth operator. Yes he did capsize but with ease got himself back up not once but twice.



Serpents Tail

When everyone had finished with the excitement of the Serpents Tail it was an easy paddle for most, but not all back to JJ's.

The cars were loaded and home we went. What a great weekend.

Thanks to: Chris for organising this great trip, Ivan for being so patient, Gary and Rolo for the photography, both Robs, Gary, Chris and Ivan for ferrying everyone about

Mike I hope you enjoyed the rest from all your usual organising



Even A Drop To Drink

By Mark Easton

May, 2012

I've been meaning to write about CAP's Easter trip to the Lake District and the Tees since before we headed home, but a deluge of rain, work, and life kept on washing over me, and to my sin I've only just reached for my keyboard.

I was going to write about the serious lack of rain that led to low water levels, of gambling on sheep, of chasing sheep, and of midnight sheep rides, of the poor quality of Coniston beer but CAP's nonetheless insatiable appetite for it, of quaint walks that turned into mountain scrambles along knife edge ridges, of the fussy nature of Youth Hostels and their inability to stock Kendal mint cake, of mass planking to amuse Chinese lesbians, of sitting against walls without chairs, and of swimming in mountain lakes, but none of it's particularly relevant for what was, foremost, a club white water paddling trip.

Even though lack of rain and low water levels would usually spell disaster for a white water trip, Mike's meticulous planning pitted us against the river Kent on Friday, the Tees Barrage on Sunday, and then the river Tees on Monday.

The river Kent was mostly a story of bump 'n' grind (not the kind of bump 'n' grind that a certain coach practices regularly within the confines of their bedroom) and there was just enough water to make it passable, with coupled with a couple of features made it the perfect entrée for the weekend.



Afterwards, full of hope and desperation, we eagerly traipsed to Backbarrow bridge hoping the river Leven would be paddle able, but alas, the flow was little more than the offering generated by two hung over Squirrels relieving themselves after a particularly heavy night. It most certainly didn't even vaguely resemble the angry water demon of legend. It was pretty obvious to all concerned that the Lake District had little to offer our intrepid group, so we headed to the youth hostel for a night of commiseration and of beer.

After spending Saturday mountain climbing Helvellyn, we headed across the Pennines to spend Sunday at the Tees barrage. Although resorting to a man made courses instead of rivers seemed a touch dirty. Given the dire state of the rivers, and the wonderful flow of the barrage, it was the most excellent choice.



The course was not only practically empty, but the combination of its short, 95m course, and the changing levels of the longer 300m course made it the perfect paddling day for everyman. From playing the waves, through to fast, furious wave-train runs, a lot of swimming, some more playing, some fast demonstrations by Darren of his Hand of God, and some paddle-smashing high jinks by Rob, it was a brutal and enthralling day that ably showed how much fun a well-placed man made course can be.



Suitably tenderised from Sunday, the final day of the trip saw us head up the River Tees for a sojourn from High Force to Low Force falls. Recalling that the last time CAP undertook this paddle, the Tees almost drowned half our winter membership, the day was hotly anticipated by all. However, after starting with some more bump n' grind it was quickly obvious it was a remarkably different river.

Salmon Leap falls had movement but was pretty dry, which made for a tight but passable run, after which it was on to Low Force falls. Low Force was noticeably light on the water, and a pale shadow of the beast that almost swallowed Darren two years ago. Even so, it made for a pretty drop and still had enough power to make a paddler defecate their dry suit.



As I said at the beginning, I'd been meaning to write about CAP's Easter trip since before we headed home. While I was worried there wasn't much to say about the trip, it was a most excellent weekend. Water levels were bad, there was a serious lack of rain, and the Coniston beer really was poor, but the combination of cunning planning and the group's natural inclination to misbehave made for a tub thumping getaway from Easter's deluge of religion and chocolate.

CAP's Easter trips are, without doubt, the only way to go at Easter, and even although the country was descending to the darkest depths of drought and all the group (including Ed) were old enough to know better, the combination of paddling and pleasure made the trip worth writing home about.

CAP Hire the Lee Valley Legacy Course

By Ivan Scattergood

September 2012



On Sunday 23rd September CAP returned to the magnificent Lee Valley Whitewater Centre. Having seen it in action during the Olympics we were keen to get back on it. We hired the course for CAP but to help fill it and spread the cost we also invited our friends from Putney Bridge and Battersea Canoe Clubs to join us.

Prior to the main party arriving Jez, Gary and Jay decided to take on the monster Olympic Course. Both Jay and Jez confess to getting spanked big time. Jay went over the big drop, got sucked in backwards and then did a reverse somersault into the monster's jaws. Not liking the taste of this young Ransom upstart, the monster eventually spat him out and Jay promptly proceeded down the course, upside down and over the next two big drops. Grabbing each precious breath of air, whenever he could, Jay eventually rolled back up, a big smile showing his contempt for the monster! Gary being the more sensible, watched Jay's line and carefully avoided the monster's jaws.

Eventually, after battling the other monster, the M25, the rest of the Club arrived, all cursing the nightmare traffic which existed both ways around that orbital car park. There were fifteen CAP paddlers who quickly got to work in taming the Legacy Course. For six of our members it was their first time at the Lee Valley. Patrick, Caroline, Rich, Adam, Nathan all started off on the final downstream stretch but quickly moved onto tackling the whole course. All did incredibly well and the smiles that they displayed as they mastered the course was evidence of their exhilaration and their achievements!

Young teenager Emily decided that the water was slightly bigger than she anticipated and opted to watch enthusiastically from the side. Having none of this, coach Gary quickly positioned her in the front seat of the Duo and proceeded to take her on about six laps of the course. As the nose of the duo complete with the nose of Emily surfaced from each big wave there was a huge smile of enjoyment on Emily's face, brilliant !!! Granted that smile turned to consternation as Gary surfed the Duo in the bottom wave and Emily lost her paddle but despite throw lines being at the ready Gary paddled out. Next time Emily will be showing us just how to paddle it, on her own, but no doubt with one of our enthusiastic coaches glued to her side. (memories of Ed !) I decided that I should also get my nose wet so my boat and I promptly went for a swim !

At the end of our session, Patrick, Caroline, Rich, Adam & Derek all passed their Legacy assessment. Well done to them all. The assessor said to me afterwards that he was extremely impressed with the dynamics of how the CAP contingent had worked together during the afternoon, the diligent small group coaching, the motivation and the way people were buddied up and he was confident that as our members progressed onto Whitewater rivers they would be extremely well looked after.

A nice unsolicited compliment, from an experienced level four coach, to the work that Gary and Darren, very ably assisted by Mark, put in on this occasion and indeed on every occasion that they're out with the Club. With our three day Beginner's Whitewater Weekend in South Wales looming up in mid October, magnificently supported by 20 members, it will be interesting to see how all their paddling progresses ! We have no doubts of course, they will all perform brilliantly!

Darren managed to find a few minutes away from his pupils and displayed his usual paddling, looping and cart-wheeling skills whilst Chris paddled extremely competently and showed just how she has really progressed since her last visit.