

## **DEVA Canoe Club, Club Report 2009/10 For AGM on Thu 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010**

The club has now been running 11 years and is still going strong with over 100 members. The same as happens every year we gain a new intake of enthusiastic newbies, usually from the winters Northgate Arena sessions, who regularly show the rest of us up in their keenness by being the first ones on the water and the last ones off on a Thursday night. We also lose a few of the existing members, or as the previous secretary put it “some members hang up their wetsuits while new ones come to try the fun of swimming down the weir”.

Last year we lost 22 members (15 males, 7 females) and gained 40, so had an overall total of 119 members. Of these members 97 were male and 22 were female, 16 of which were family members.

Our club members vary in age, ability and discipline. Being an adult club the youngest members being 18 years old right up to at least one member in their 70's. Ability wise we have everything from complete beginners up to total “madheads” (i.e. the highly experienced paddlers who are also adrenaline junkies). As for disciplines they range from those who like to paddle on the flat to those who prefer whitewater, Those who prefer tight streams and ditch-bashing to those who live for the open sea. We have sea kayakers, surf kayakers, playboaters, open canoeists, scenic river paddlers, serious whitewater kayakers and everything in between.

This last year has seen various changes to the club. These include the addition of extra members to the committee and a re-organisation of it due to time-consuming but important grandparent duties of the original founders who had been working hard to run the club for all these years. So thank you to all new and existing committee members. A club website has been launched along with an interactive forum for members to discuss kit, organise trips, etc. As DEVA CC is mainly based on peer group paddling, with riverside sessions that allow members to learn skills while meeting future paddling partners in a relatively safe environment the official club forum and unofficial club Facebook site has made inter-club communication easier for members.

We have enjoyed a wide range of trips, Training days and socials this past year. Socials have included September's end of season meal and drinks at the Stamford Bridge Inn, where we then returned in January for the clubs belated Xmas meal, as well as full weekend away paddling trips.

The number of whitewater trips/training sessions were limited at times due to illness and injury of the main leads Simon and Ray, who are now seemingly fighting fit and back running lots of trips for us. Nevertheless we still managed to have Simon's yearly Whitewater Safety and Rescue Introduction course at Llangollen (run by Ray, Phil and Libbie on Simon's behalf). As well as general trips to Llangollen and the Lower Trywern. Alan Reay also stepped in and has been running whitewater trips. So overall members

have had the chance to paddle the River Severn; Ironbridge to Bridgenorth and Newton to Abermule, River Wye; Builth Wells to Boughrood, Halton Rapids and the Irwell at Burrs Country Park as part of a charity paddle event for the Cumbria Flood Fund (where one of our members won a brand new Jackson kayak in the raffle!). Again thanks to all members that organised or helped with any of these trips or any others including the sea trips below.

The sea kayakers have had regular weekend sea paddles to Hilbre Island, Great Orme, & Menai Straits, Among other breezy areas. Also on the weekends they have not been on the sea they can be found participating in a “SunDee” paddle – obviously on the River Dee and on a Sunday, Meeting at Sandy Lane and paddling down to the Iron bridge and back again.

There was also the yearly Boxing Day paddle at Chester Weir on the River Dee, which quite a few brave souls ventured out to take part in, Question is did they go for the paddling or the mulled wine and mince pies provided afterwards?!

Last year saw two club weekends away; One in the Lakes aimed mainly at the beginners and one to Dartmoor aimed at the intermediate and advanced paddlers. These trips take a lot of organising and rely heavily on “background” help, Especially those people that do the cooking or shopping or lead on the rivers, So thank you to all of them and to all participating members that make our weekends away such a friendly, fun and welcoming atmosphere. However I have to say DEVA CC trips must be the only place that your “Library Books” can give you a hangover!

There were many ad-hoc trips last year among groups of friends to Wales, Whitby, Lakes, Alps, Uganda, etc.

There was also of course the traditional Thursday night sessions held at the Riverside centre, These ran every Thursday from 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009 until 17<sup>th</sup> Sept 2009 when the evenings were no longer light enough to paddle and were co-ordinated by Peter Steel. There were also many other members helping out behind the scenes whether it was by keeping an eye on or teaching the beginners or collecting keys and opening/closing the centre or bringing the important things along like milk and biscuits. Without all of these people none of the sessions could take place, so thank you to everyone (such as Alan, Ian, Phil, Bill, Peter, Simon, Ray, Lyn + many more) involved.

These nights included an excellent demo night provided by Brookbank, various skills training sessions for beginners and the usual fun on the weir for the more experienced members. Tea and biscuits were also provided after every session to give members a chance to warm up after those (often pre-planned/instigated) OBEs, get to know each other through chatting and try and remember to swap contact details ready to organise their own paddling particularly once the evening sessions ceased.

The Thursday night sessions had a good turn out with an overall total of 663 people attending. Individual night's attendance ranged from 2 to 39 people, often dependent on the weather and bravery of participants. Kayakers are a funny breed – how many of us

don't like getting wet from rain but will happily crash down the wettest whitewater?! At least there's always a warm cuppa on offer after at the riverside centre.

Additionally there were the all year round (except when it's in flood or icy and too cold!) Tuesday morning Llangollen sessions, which are made up mainly of those who are retired, work odd shift patterns or teachers with regular school holidays. Towards the end of the year Ruaidhri also started up Sunday afternoon Llangollen sessions as detailed on the club forum, which will continue into this year.

The clubs finances continue to remain healthy with total income from all sources exceeding the total expenditure, thus allowing the club to offer bursaries and training grants (upon successful application) to it's members, as well as purchasing 2 left handed paddles for club use. It also allowed the club to purchase 2 whitewater safety kits (dry-bags containing: 1<sup>st</sup> aid kit, duct tape, throwline, whistle, torch, tapes, Carabiner, survival bag and 4-way split paddles).

A total of £920 was paid out to hire the riverside centre, which (along with tea and biscuits) was covered by weekly paddler payments.

All club kit including whitewater boats, paddles, sea kayaks, set of 2-way radios, spraydecks, helmets, safety kits, etc is generally stored at the riverside centre or one of the committee members homes and can be borrowed upon request by club members as long as reasonable notice is given and it's not already in use. Additionally if anyone is interested in organising a trip, especially any beginners who aren't experienced enough to lead themselves, please speak to the committee or other club members as I'm sure they'd be happy to help. After all the main assets to our club are not the pieces of equipment we own but the members we have and their experience.

The club relies on its many volunteers to keep it running, so whether you're a newbie or one of the "old hands" get involved. Even if you can't lead people down rivers or teach them to kayak, I'm sure you can make tea, lock/unlock doors or just help with the washing up on trips. Lets make sure we have another year of good fun and paddling.

Due to the clubs financial position membership fees for 2010-2011 will remain at the current level of £10 a year (unchanged since the millennium).