

DEVA Canoe Club, Club Report 2011/12 For AGM on Thu 14th June 2012

The club has now been going for 13 years and we hope will continue to do so for many more. We still have over 100 members although many of these are different ones to what we used to have. Every year without fail we gain a few enthusiastic newbies and lose a few existing members to family life, DIY and other (less exciting than paddling) time consuming activities.

The female population has also dropped back down to around its usual number after my excitement in the small increase last year. Our membership is currently made up of 99 males and 21 females, that's just over a 4:1 ratio, so ladies we're still in luck and can pick and choose our fella's as far as paddling partners go!

DEVA's age range is still 18yrs to 70+ yrs old with everything in between. Our members still range in ability from complete beginners who've barely been in a boat to fully-fledged madheads addicted to the adrenaline rush of throwing themselves and their boats off waterfalls.

We have members from many paddling disciplines and with a variety of craft preferences. Our members include playboaters, surf kayakers, open canoeists, scenic flatwater paddlers, scary top end white water paddlers, sea kayakers, basic whitewater paddlers, and probably anything else you can think of! In fact we have recently had a few members discover coracles and at least one of these is now looking to build his own. However we all have one thing in common which is we all paddle for fun and enjoyment. We're also a friendly bunch keen to help others and introduce them to the joy of our sport.

Unfortunately we seem to have spent most of this year, again, fighting to keep the riverside centre. We are not at the end of this fight yet but at least we have secured usage of it for another season. So a huge thanks to all that helped with that and especially Peter Cook who has been leading the fight and attending all the meetings they insist on timetabling during working hours.

There have been a few changes within the club this year, mainly concerned with spreading jobs out among more people to reduce the workload on individuals. The 2011 riverside key rota had a total of just under 20 people opening and closing the centre, so a huge thanks to all these people. The quantity of volunteers meant each person only had to do the odd few nights, but without them the riverside sessions could not have run. Similarly thank you to all those who signed up as coaches/helpers and to Simon Carver who spread them out onto a rota to make sure newbies always had experienced company to look after them on a Thu night and eventually introduce them to the weir. There were also additional club leads this year in order to ensure we could continue to run regular club weekend day trips, without being reliant on Simon and Ray always being available, so thank you to everybody involved in this. Without these experienced paddlers volunteering their time we wouldn't be able to offer all our leading, coaching, advice, etc free of charge as we always have and intend to continue to do so.

Thanks to Simon Carver who organised the clubs yearly lakes trip and his chef Peter Steel for a great weekend that all participants thoroughly enjoyed and those who opted not to go definitely missed out. DEVA CC still remains the only place where your "Library Books" can give you a hangover!

Also thanks to Bill who organised the Dart weekend later in the year for more experienced paddlers and those that helped him as cooks, leads, first aiders, etc. This weekend was also greatly enjoyed by all involved and I have heard only positive comments from our guests from MCC that joined us. However the Dart trip has to get the prize for our most impressive paddler injury of the year! One of our MCC guests broke her knuckle on the Upper Dart at the well known super-hard grade 4 drop called "Surprise Surprise" (just after we had spotted a rescue helicopter air lifting someone out from a group in front of us), unfortunately she did this while walking around the drop rather than paddling down it and so caused amusement within her club. Luckily we had Jamie with us who professionally strapped her finger up with the aid of duct tape meaning she could continue paddling. She tells me his handiwork was described as "superb" by hospital staff when she got home and went to get it looked at the next day.

The clubs forum was always quiet but now seems to have taken a backseat with the clubs Facebook page going from strength to strength. Existing members have been out in force posting ad-hoc friendship trips on our Facebook wall and newer members are learning it's always worth asking if you can join in even if you are unsure if you meet the required ability level, as long as you are honest about your own ability. After all none of our regular members will purposely put you at risk or on water that you won't cope with, so the worst that can happen is they reply with "not this time due to your ability level or the current water level". Often (water level allowing) you will find that they will willingly take you and look after you if it is at the top end of your ability, so thank you to all members who have been doing this and as such helping less experienced paddlers to improve their skills.

In addition to the two already mentioned weekend residential trips there have been many opportunities for club members to get on the water this year and DEVA must have become well recognised at MEM, Llangollen. With our usual Tue morning group, the newer seasonal Tue evening group, Sunday's year round group and a few people joining in with MCC's seasonal Fri evening group all at MEM.

Thursday nights as usual were home to our seasonal (April to Sept) Chester river and weir sessions which included our usual come try it sessions and our yearly Brookbank Demo night, as well as the all important hot drink and biscuits at the end. These Thu night sessions were followed by a social drink in the Falcon pub for an increasing number of members, where the bar staff got to recognise us and even provided water bowls for our dogs.

Mon and Tue pool sessions at Northgate arena, where many of our coaches volunteer and other members go to practice, were also running all year (except school holidays). We acted as marshals (and duck collectors) for the Hospice of the Good Shepherds charity (plastic) duck race on the river Dee in July. Our annual boxing day paddle took place on the weir, followed by the usual mulled wine and mince pies (luckily the river wasn't solid ice this year and this event did not need postponing as happened last year). Also number of DEVA members joined TRC for their annual New Years First Float, which was quite exciting with the Dee in flood and Serpents tail more of a river wide wave than the usual stopper and rock bank. Some also joined TRC for their

yearly Xmas Eve paddle at the Burrs.

Other weekend day trips included Lower Tryweryn, Serpents and MEM in Llangollen, River Severn (including Jackfield rapids), Washburn (thanks to Gill, a photographer friend of Kerry's, who popped down and took some awesome shots of DEVA members), Halton Rapids, Irwell, Goyt, Conwy, Llundwyg.

Sea kayakers have also been getting out with trips from West Kirby to Hilbre, Little Orme to Llandudno, along the Conwy estuary, Colwyn Bay, etc as well as their weekly SunDee paddle.

On the social side of things we had our end of season meal at Tropeiro in Chester, which was very much enjoyed by all who attended and the most was made of their "all-you-can-eat" policy. January saw another all-you-can-eat event, this time at Fuxion a chinese on Cheshire Oaks using Kerry's birthday as an excuse to get club members together during the winter months. Then March hosted a leaving meal at La Fattoria in Chester for one of our members who is a soldier and so has had to go to Afghanistan for several months. On top of that there were the usual sneaky Thu night drinks in the Falcon pub on the way home from riverside sessions and the odd ad-hoc Chester night out clubbing arranged through the club facebook page.

DEVA is and always has been very keen to promote safe paddling and so organised a repeat of the external AWWSR course run by Lowri at Flowfree (at a discounted rate) for those that were interested.

We also ran our 3 in-house (free of charge) safety courses, which we hope to continue as yearly events. These were Safety 1 which is basic flatwater safety and rescue and was held on one Thu evening session, Safety 2 which is basic whitewater safety and rescue (Simons popular yearly course) held one weekend day at MEM in Llangollen and the new Safety 3 which is more advanced whitewater safety and rescue run by Peter Steel on Serpents. All three of which received positive reviews by those who took part, especially the whitewater ones, so thank you to everyone that organised or helped with these.

The financial position of the club continues to remain healthy with the Riverside sessions paying for themselves (i.e. tea, biscuits, centre rent, etc) via evening fees. Therefore money was available to purchase new kit and equipment as required to allow us to continue offering boats, kit, inflatable roofbars, etc for use on club trips to any members who do not have their own. We will also continue to offer bursaries and training grants to club members (upon successful application) for external courses (particularly those that will benefit the club or increase the safety of paddlers on the water).

Due to the clubs financial position the membership fees for 2012-2013 will again remain at the current level (unchanged since the millennium), which is £10 per person and £5 per additional family member. This will only be changed if the Riverside Centre rental fees increase considerably, as obviously we would need to fund that increase in order to continue to use the facilities. Riverside fee's will also remain at £2 per evening for members and £3 for non-members, with a nominal fee of £2 to borrow club kit for an evening and £5 for a day trip.