

## INTRODUCTION.

This publication sets out to provide the answer to the question “where can I paddle my canoe?”, heard so often from both new club members and independent canoeists. The brief called for the waters to be easy and relatively safe for those with basic skills, to be free from problems with land owners or anglers and to be attractive journeys.

No apology is offered for the varying styles included which reflect the individual contributors as much as their rivers. Neither do we apologise for the lack of maps or pictures or for the many waters that the more experienced canoeist might expect to find. This is a first edition and, if canoeists find it useful, it will encourage us to produce an expanded and possibly illustrated further guide. Let us know the name of particular rivers you would like to see included.

British Waterways Board require licences for use of their waters but accept the display of British Canoe Union and Welsh Canoeing association membership stickers. Other canals and rivers may require licences in which case details are given in the text.

Unlike walking, which is well catered for in England by the many thousands of miles of footpaths, canoeists have very few opportunities to practice their sport without becoming involved with problems of access. It will surprise those who are just entering their canoeing apprenticeship that the majority of rivers in this country are private and they will not be made welcome by some anglers or landowners. The BCU, over many years, have with some success negotiated agreements, which allow access to some private rivers for canoeing. It is essential to note that where agreements have been negotiated the dates and times that the stretch of river is open for canoeing and any other conditions **MUST** be strictly adhered to, otherwise the future of the agreements is endangered.

This arrangement requires that the Regional Access Officer or Local Access Officer is contacted well in advance of any proposed use of such stretches if the paddler is in any way unsure of the terms of the agreement.

Local Access Officers (all volunteers) have been appointed for most rivers and up to date contacts can be provided by the British Canoe Union, John Dudderidge House, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5AS.

The information provided is given in good faith but neither the British Canoe Union, the contributors nor the publishers can accept any responsibility for its total accuracy. Every guide book starts to get out of date from the day it is published and canoeists must be prepared to find that conditions have changed. There is no substitute for the inspection of all hazards encountered.

This publication is the result of co-operation between the BCU Touring & Recreation Committee and the English Regions Management Committee. We are grateful to the many BCU Regional Officers who have provided the data.

Thanks must be recorded to Carel Quaife (BCU National Development Officer) for his encouragement, Mike Twiggs (Chairman BCU Access Committee) for his overall review of the access content and Ralph Tyas (Secretary BCU Touring & Recreation Committee) for his constant advice.

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## **NORTH EAST**

### **TYNE**

Bywell Bridge to Wylam - Grade 2 - 9 kms.

O.S. Landranger 87 and 88.

This is a pleasant touring stretch, with an occasional Grade 1-2 rapid, and covered by the Tyne Access Agreement. It is open all the year round and there is usually enough water for canoeists to avoid anglers.

The Tyne is just moving from very rural to being more urbanised on this stretch.

Kms.

0.0 Bywell Bridge. Old stone Road Bridge. Access on left bank downstream. Parking in large passing places. Long straight stretch, road on left bank. River bends to right, then left. Railway embankment high on right. Minor rapids.

5.0 Prudhoe Road Bridge. Prudhoe town on right. Tyne Valley Canoe Club, right bank, and Countryside Park (parking). Good rapid under bridge, keep left. River straight, then bend to right and left. Ruined railway bridge. Minor drops.

9.0 Wylam road bridge. Weir just downstream, 1 m drop. INSPECT (People have drowned here - dangerous in spate). Egress immediately below weir on left or below rapid just downstream also on left. River now becomes tidal.

### **TYNE SOUTH.**

Haydon Bridge to Hexham - Grade 2 - 13 kms.

O.S. Landranger 87.

This section of the South Tyne is frequently canoed, as the river is of a respectable size, in grade it is easy - but the Allerwash Gorge makes the scenery very rural, if not spectacular. The trip includes a short section of the river Tyne from the confluence of the North and South Tyne, 3.25 kms down to Hexham.

The Access Agreement gives unrestricted canoeing from Nov 1st to April 30th and from May to August but paddlers are asked to keep off in low water (it becomes a bind to canoe anyway). No canoeing September and October.

Please do not use any vehicular access apart from those mentioned here otherwise annoyance will be caused to local people.

Kms.

- 0.0 Haydon Bridge, Access is on right bank, downstream of new road bridge, down a short road through some houses to the Football Field. There is plenty of parking here.
- 1.0 Small drop (weir), followed by Haydon Spa rapid, big and bouncy in spate.
- 2.0 Shingle rapids, rocky ledges, gorge closes in, railway line on left bank. River valley then widens out. Fourstones village on left.
- 8.0 Paper Mill left bank, shingle bank on right, Take care not to be swept into left bank.
- 9.0 Road bridge. Warden village left.
- 9.75 Piers of old railway bridge, then confluence.
- 10.5 New A69 concrete road bridge. Rapids after, then piers of old bridge.
- 13.0 Tyne Green is on right. Landing, cafe, toilets, parking.

## **COQUET**

Amble upstream to Coquet Lodge Weir and return (tidal). Flat water apart from tidal weir between Warkworth and Amble - return journey is 8 kms.

As the stretch is tidal, there are not the access problems encountered on the rest of the Coquet. The last part of the river through Warkworth is

wooded and beautiful, and well worth experiencing, and then the estuary flattens out between sand dunes to the east and the coast road to the west. Amble harbour is interesting, but trips out to sea should only be undertaken by competent sea canoeists; the harbour has a bar which is treacherous at low tide and the sea out to Coquet Island is exposed.

A trip should be commenced upstream from The Braid, Amble (car parking next to Amble Marina) about 1 hour before high tide.

Kms.

0.0 The Braid. Access straight on to estuary.

1.0 Small tidal weir should be completely covered.

2.0 Warkworth Bridge. Landing on left bank above bridge, car parking. Warkworth Castle is on left. Town and castle well worth seeing. River now winds between wooded banks.

3.0 Castle is high above on left bank.

4.0 Coquet Lodge Weir, tidal limit. Return by same route.

## **WEAR**

Durham to Finchale Abbey - Grade 2 - 9 kms.

O.S. Landranger 88.

This trip is a North Eastern classic, starting in a picturesque historic city, flowing through a wooded vale and finished at an ancient ruined abbey. Historically there have been no access problems. (There is also very pleasant canoeing around the "Durham Loop", as the river winds for 3 km from Shinciffe around the Cathedral and Castle to the Durham weirs, but it has not been added to this trip as the weirs are dangerous.)

Kms.

0.0 Access via The Sands, a park on right bank, downstream of the Ice Rink.

2.5 Valley sides steeper. Many bends, pleasant wooded countryside. Occasional easy rapids.

5.0 Disused railway viaduct.

- 7.5 Pipe Bridge Rapid on right side of river (Slalom site). Drop more pronounced. Pipe Bridge follows (water pipes).
- 8.5 Caravan site left bank. Rocky shelves start in river.
- 9.0 Finchale Abbey footbridge, rapids under (Slalom site). Abbey left, landing left, also car parking, shop and caravan site.

## **TWEED**

Kelso to Coldstream - Grade 1 (plus two easy weirs) – 20 kms. One portage.

O.S. Landranger 74.

For this part of the Tweed, the left bank is Scottish, the right bank is Scottish to Carham, then English. This part of the river is very heavily fished for salmon so problems can be avoided by paddling on a Sunday when fishing is prohibited. (Otherwise you will be asked to stop if a fish is being played).

Kms.

- 0.0 Kelso, left bank below bridge, at the Mayfield picnic site and car park. Immediately a long shingle rapid (an old Tweed 'cauld' or shallow weir). River has long straights, high banks, agricultural land.
- 5.0 Weir. 1.25m sloping drop, two smaller broken weirs on left, play waves. Islands below. Portage this weir if in doubt.
- 10.5 Large bend to right then left. Carham village and church on right bank.
- 11.0 Weir. Carham Hall right bank.
- 15.5 Large island. Wark village on right bank.
- 17.0 Small weir - 0.5m drop.
- 20.0 Coldstream Town left.

## **KIELDER WATER**

O.S.Landranger 80.

Kielder is the largest man-made lake constructed in the U.K. recently and one of the largest in Europe. It is in N.W.Northumberland, reached by the main N.Tyne valley road from Hexham.

The lake is about 7 miles long, but a tour of its perimeter would be over 20 miles, and the option exists of camping on the wilder north shore. Access is only from the Leaplish Sailing Base on the south side, on payment of a fee.

The scenery is quite Canadian or Scandinavian, with miles of conifer forest in each direction, and Kielder is never crowded. However, winds at any time of year can be strong, and the lake should be treated with respect - waves can make canoeing very difficult and the water is always cold. The Information Base at Tower Knowe is worth visiting (near the dam itself).

## **CUMBRIA**

### **DERWENT (Cumbria) - DERWENTWATER - BASSENTHWAITE.**

O.S. Outdoor Leisure No 4 and Landranger 90.

This trip embodies the best of the Lake District, with two differing parts of the River Derwent, and two different lakes. A paddler would pass through the busiest part of the lakes, and not realise it.

Kms.

- 0 Grange. Launch on the infant Derwent. Grade 1 easy, pebbly rapids for 3 miles.
- 1.75 Derwentwater. The right (east) side of the lake provides shelter with several islands.
- 2.75 Scarf Stones, rocks, followed by Rampsholme island.

- 3.25 Lord's Island.
- 4 Derwent Isle, head for the marina at Portinscale.
- 4.75 Derwentwater Boat Club (marina). Entrance to the middle Derwent is to the right, amongst reeds. Can be difficult to find. The river winds and is gentle.
- 5.75 B5289 road bridge from Keswick, followed by A66 bridge. River now seems to bend endlessly amongst reedy banks.
- 9 River enters Bassenthwaite. First exit is on left, to west, at Powtherhow car park and picnic site. DO NOT land to the south of this. If heading down the lake:
- 12.5 Ouse Bridge, on Lower Derwent. There are access restrictions downstream of this point.

## **WINDERMERE**

O.S. Outdoor Leisure No 7.

On England's largest lake, the paddler can enjoy miles of canoeing (the lake is 13 miles long). Access points are numerous - Ambleside and River Brathay at the north end, Bowness in the middle, Lakeside and Fell Foot estate at the south end. The middle of the lake narrows and has a collection of islands and the only problems are the numerous power boats. There is a public right of navigation.

## **ULLSWATER**

O.S. Outdoor Leisure No 5.

Ullswater is only a little less attractive than Windermere, and can be busy as well, at 7 miles long. It is a favourite with sailors having very fickle winds. The scenery is fine, a road runs alongside the west side, and access is at Pooley Bridge at the north; Howtown, 3 miles down the east side; and Glenridding at the south end.

There is a public right of navigation.



## THIRLMERE

Distance: Circumnavigation about eight miles taking about half of one day.

Whilst some canoeists are interested only in rapid or wild-water rivers, and others compete in racing, there are many others who canoe for the pleasure of finding enjoyment as they paddle quietly along, exploring and visiting new scenes and developing an awareness of the things around them. It is to this latter group that Thirlmere will have a special appeal.

The attractiveness of Thirlmere and its potential for the touring or cruising canoeist lies in the beauty of the surroundings with the magnificent backcloth of mountains and fells around. It has an interesting shore-line and two islands, although landing on these islands is at present frowned upon, especially in the breeding season. There is an opportunity to observe and study wildlife along the shore-line and over the water, without disturbing it, in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility.

Canoes may be launched from the natural slip or beach at Armboth, on the west side of the lake where there is parking for vehicles and tailers. Buoyancy aids or lifejackets must be worn on the lake.

This paddle goes anti-clockwise round the lake. Although conifers predominate there are several varieties of trees in this area including birch, hazel, oak, rowan, holly and Hawthorn. You may well find other species.

Across the water on your left is the impressive backcloth of the Helvellyn range, a view enhanced by the peace and tranquility of your surroundings. If you pass Deergarth Island in the earlier part of the year you may find it carpeted by bluebells. Red deer and roe deer cross to this island by swimming when the lake is full, or wading through the shallows when it is low.

Keeping close to the shore near Launchy Gill you may see a dipper with its white bibs you enter its territory. There is a forest trail here which you could visit later if you have an hour to spare. The native red squirrel is to

be found here. Ahead of you is Hause How Island, closely wooded and with many fallen trees due to windblow. Ahead are the two promontories of Rough Crag, with Hause Point beyond. These headlands provide shelter when the wind is from the south and funnelled by the gap of Dunmail Raise.

At Dobgill there are two bays worthy of exploration. If the water level is high you can paddle your canoe a little way up a small creek in beautiful surroundings where the gill comes tumbling down, but this creek dries to a trickle in low water conditions.

The head of the lake is just ahead and it is in this area that the Canada Geese feed and breed. They are easily disturbed by walkers on the shore path, but from the water your quiet approach should enable you to pause and observe them without causing them to move away, except in the breeding season when they should be left entirely undisturbed.

The remains of the old stone walls can be seen here just below the surface of the water, and sometimes above. Your course now is along the eastern shore in a northerly direction. The church and car park at Wythburn are well screened by trees, but the old straining well of the reservoir is plainly visible, but not obtrusively so. The forest trees on this side of the water are mostly coniferous with a mixture of Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, Scots pine, Corsican pine, European larch, Japanese larch, Silver fir and Western hemlock and even a Copper beech.

You will most likely see wild duck - mallard and shelduck, and perhaps a cormorant, or even a raven or buzzard on or over this part of the water if you are observant.

About half way along the east side is the Swirls Forest Trail which leads out from the car park just across the main road. Then comes Station Coppice which is opposite your starting point. If time is running out, or spirits flagging, you could cut across the water at this point back to Armboth. But to complete the trail and discover what the rest of the lake has to offer continue along the eastern shore past Dalehead Hall, with its gardens and boathouse, to the north end of the lake under Great How

where there is a boom across to keep boats of any kind away from the 54 foot high dam and overflow.

Paddle over to the western shore under the shadow of Raven Crag, without crossing the boom, and continue round the point to Stair Wood. You are now almost at the finish at Armboth which is marked by a solitary monkey puzzle tree (Chile pine) showing against the spruce. On regaining the car park take a look skywards at the exceptionally tall pine trees with the straight boles towering overhead to a great height which is not evident when seen from the water as they tend to merge with the forest behind.

The lake belongs to NW Water PLC who permit recreational use of the area, including boating.

Map: O.S. Sheet 90 or NY31.

## **CONISTON WATER**

Coniston is the quietest of the large lakes, being 5 miles long from just north east of Coniston village to the River Crake outflow where there is a car park.

There is a public right of navigation.

## **LANCASTER CANAL**

O.S. Landranger 97.

The north end of this intriguing canal was abandoned some years ago, when new roads such as the M6 were allowed to cut it. It runs from Natland, just south of Kendal, about 12 miles along the A6/M6 corridor, past Burton and Carnforth to the head of the navigable section at Borwick. Some sections are weed covered, but the tow path is complete and paddlers have camped beside the canal.

From Borwick to Preston there are some 40 miles of lock free paddling! It runs through pretty pastoral countryside the whole way.

A BWB licence is required unless you have a BCU or WCA membership sticker.

### **EDEN - Wetheral to Carlisle.**

O.S. Landranger Nos 85 and 86.

Grade 1, 10 miles long.

This stretch of river allows for a good, long canoe trip, although the scenery is not spectacular.

Kms.

- 0 Wetheral, end of a sandstone gorge. A lane (cul-de-sac) runs alongside the river off the road from Warwick Bridge.
- 1 Warwick Bridge (A69). Large bend around Warwick Hall house and gardens.
- 2 River Irthing joins from right. Long open stretch, high banks.
- 4 Low Crosby village right. Two very long bends - open countryside.
- 6.5 M6 road bridge.
- 8 Carlisle suburbs begin. Parkland on right.
- 9 River Peverill joins left.
- 9.5 Rapids - Carlisle slalom course.
- 10 Road bridge. Exit river left. Sands Centre and car park.

## **YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER REGION**

The Yorkshire and Humberside Region is blessed by perhaps one of the biggest varieties of canoeable waterways in the whole of the country. They range from the completely placid canals, through gently moving lowland rivers to the mountain streams and rivers which can, in spate, give conditions equal to that found in the Alpine areas. Not only does the nature of the water vary but so does the scenery. Examples of all of these waterways come with either rural or urban views and it is the latter type which are largely ignored. probably because, although they are on our doorsteps, they are unknown. This is a great shame as not only can they offer enjoyable sport but they are accessible and could be used so much more without all the hassles over access and rights of way that bedevil so many other venues.

The Aire and Calder are the two main Industrial Rivers and it is because of them that so much of the present character of West Yorkshire developed. Not surprisingly then, many of the hazards on these rivers are man made and must be treated with respect. Flood conditions can provide some excellent conditions for extended tours in white water kayaks but **SHOULD NOT BE ATTEMPTED** unless you are absolutely confident of your own, as well as your companions' abilities. As many of the hazards are weirs **INSPECTION OF THEM ALL IS ESSENTIAL** before attempting to shoot. There is no disgrace in portaging.

All the routes described are possible at flood levels, low water routes may differ slightly but are much clearer.

### **CALDER**

The best section of this river is that above the slalom site at Sowerby Bridge. A suitable launching spot can be found at Mytholmroyd just opposite a garage/nightclub on the way to Hebden Bridge.

Weir 1. Approximately 2km from the start underneath a stone arched bridge at Brearley. A straight shoot down the centre or just left of it if in flood as this can give **BIG** waves with stoppers behind.

Weir 2. Approaching Luddendenfoot. A broken weir which in high water gives a long bouncy rapid. This leads down to a LOW BRIDGE which carries a pipe across the river. At high levels this has to be portaged on the left hand bank.

Weir 3. 500m below the low bridge. A straight shoot down the middle.

Weir 4 and 5. 200m below the previous weir and is probably the biggest drop. The first one is best shot over on the extreme RIGHT, up against the wall, as this then carries you on the best line through the smaller second one. An easy inspection and portage point is the demolished mill on the left hand bank.

Weir 6. This appears as you enter Sowerby Bridge and should be shot in the left hand corner. There can be a tricky little boil below this which might catch an unwary paddler.

Weir 7. Top of the slalom course. A small drop shot in the right hand corner.

Sowerby Bridge Slalom Course.

Below this point the weirs are more widely spaced and so long runs on more gently moving water lie between them.

Weir 8. 500m below the course is a large diagonal weir which can be shot, best of all in the left hand corner. This weir though is best inspected FROM THE BANK BEFORE you get on as its approach is lined by steep walls which would make portaging very difficult.

Weir 9. Wire works at Sterne Bridge. A bumpy shoot down the left hand side.

Weir 10. Broken weir at Copley. A bouncy rapid in high water.

Weir 11. The road bridge in Elland has a broken weir below it which can give a bouncy rapid at high levels.

Weir 12. Elland Power Station. A vertical drop onto a ledge on the left

hand side but a box weir on the right. This could be nasty in flood but there is an easy portage on the left hand bank.

Weir 13. 1km above Brighouse. A big weir but it has a straight forward shoot in the centre through some good sized waves in flood.

Weir 14. Brighouse weir. A strange combination of a rapid and a weir! On the right hand side by the cliff is quite a long rapid that starts off on the weir face. This produces some BIG waves in flood but can be a tricky shoot as they wash heavily against the cliff. The main weir can be shot but is not advisable if the right hand route is considered too bad.

This weir is a convenient stopping place as from now on the river is also the canal and the weirs become bigger.

Weir 15. Small drop under bridge in Brighouse. Right hand side probably the better route.

Weir 16. Big weir before M62. Can be shot even in high water down the extreme right hand side through some big waves at the bottom. A suitable egress point occurs here on the left hand bank after the motorway bridge.

From here to Mirfield are another six weirs, all much like the last, which can be shot in medium to low water levels. They are NOT recommended in flood.

## **CALDER Canoe Trail**

This is a circular trail, up the Calder and Hebble Navigation and down the River Calder. At 4.5 miles in length it is relatively short which makes it an ideal evening cruise.

The Calder, once the habitat of salmon and trout, became extensively polluted with the coming of the Industrial Revolution and the growth of industry in the West Riding. Over the last decade pollution levels have fallen significantly.

A BWB licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

The cruise passes through an area that was once heavily industrialised through wool and coal. As these industries pass so nature is once more taking control of the valley and the scars left by our industrial heritage are beginning to heal.

As this is a circular trail it is possible to start anywhere on its length. Horbury Bridge, where the A642 crosses both river and canal, makes a good starting point. However, for easy access, "The Navigation Inn" on Broad Cut is probably better.

To get to "the Navigation" leave the M1 at exit 39 and take the A636 towards Denby Dale for 0.5 miles. On the right just after "Grove Service Station" take "Broad Cut Road" (Tetley Sign - The Navigation) for 200 yards to the canal.

Start at "The Navigation Inn". This has canal side frontage and moorings in the Broad Cut. The original cut which was made around 1762 ran to the rear of the pub. What is now the front was once the back. The present cut was made some 70 years later.

Paddle upstream (i.e. westwards) under the railway bridge and portage Broad Cut Top Lock. On the left after the lock there is still a stretch used for loading coal from the British Oak Colliery which was then taken to Thornhill (Dewsbury) Power Station. The staith originally opened in the early 1850s and was rebuilt as recently as 1968. It was last used in 1981.

After passing under the railway bridge we come to a footbridge. To the left of this were shafts of Hartley Bank Colliery. First opened in 1840, it was closed in 1968. On the right an embankment can be seen. This carried the railway branch from the colliery to the main line.

From the canal there are pleasant views to the left towards the village of Netherton. After passing under another footbridge the waterway curves gently to the left. Around this curve will be seen the A642 road bridge. Just before the bridge on the left there was once a corn mill and lime kilns. The mill took its water from a stream fed millpond higher up the hill.



On the right between the canal and the river is the “Bingley Arms”. Either portage via the A642 bridge across the river and relaunch down the steep but manageable slope near “Bridge Carpets”, (This avoids a grade 2 rapid), or continue on the canal for a further 150 yards until you see a small basin off to the right. Do not enter the basin but disembark and portage via the obvious route to the river. You are now just above a grade 2 rapid formed by the collapse of a weir. Do not underestimate this rapid, inspect before shooting.

Once on the river you are following a waterway that has been canoed for at least 4000 years. Indeed a few miles downstream a Neolithic dugout canoe (17ft 9ins length and 4ft 2ins beam) has been found. It is now in York museum.

On the left after Horbury Bridge are a series of factories including Slazenger Sports and Peppleton’s Mill. The latter stands on the site of an early “Ford Mill”. This was one of the very early steam driven mills. It is thought that the mill was originally powered by a Newcomen or Savery type engine and certainly a 20hp Boulton and Watt engine was in use before the end of the eighteenth century. In 1812 the mill was attacked by a force of 300 Luddites who destroyed much of the machinery.

Just after the disused railway bridge that once brought coal from the Hartley Bank Colliery, Addington Mill comes into view on the left. In spite of its dilapidated state it is not a really old building and does not appear on the 1854 O.S. Map. The river now bends to the left and on the right bank you will notice Hartley Bank Old Lock House which dates from an earlier cut. Presumably late eighteenth century. The bend ceases and the river passes under a railway bridge. A few ripples mark the position of an old weir. In the field on the right Washingtons Lock marks the start of yet another early cut (c.1762).

On the left bank, the river is contained by a long stone wall which suggests that it may once have been used for mooring. On this bank, as the river starts a long “S” bend, is Duddle Mill an early steam powered fulling and scribbling mill (1791-92).

At the end of the “S” bend is a weir. This can be shot at certain levels. Inspection is strongly advised - far right is probably the best line. Portage on either bank is a safer alternative.

On the left bank at the weir stood Horbury Mill, the race taking roughly the line of the present footpath. In 1315 the miller, one Thomas Gyge, was fined 1 shilling for “taking salmon in the Lord’s water”.

Below the weir the islands used to extend beyond the railway bridge, and the small rapid just after the bridge is probably due in some part to bed contouring remaining from the islands.

On the right shortly after the railway bridge is the stary of Broad Cut. Disembark and portage Broad Cut Low Lock. A short paddle returns you to “The Navigation”.

## **HUDDERSFIELD BROAD CANAL Canoe Trail**

This is a canoe trail along the Huddersfield Broad Canal of just under 4 miles in length and is ideal as an evening cruise.

Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 sheet no 104, Leeds and Bradford. Guide to the Waterways 3:North.

A BWB licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

### History

In 1780, the Cooper Canal was completed after six years of building work, and became known as the Sir John Ramsden Canal because of the Baronet’s involvement with its construction. The canal was built to give Huddersfield a link with the Midlands where much of the raw wool produced near Huddersfield was bought for textiles. The total cost of building the canal was £11,974 14s.4d. The canal fell into decline by the middle of this century.

## The Natural Environment

The canal from Cooper Bridge to Aspley Basin has a diversity of habitats - industrial sites, playing fields, waste ground, allotments and the tow path all due to human activity.

Common species of bird along the canalside are tits, warblers, thrushes and magpies. Cooper Bridge is noteworthy as it hosts a rookery and the sewage works are a feeding place for snipe and sandpipers.

The nature of the canalside means there is a variety of plantlife with Mugwort near Aspley, Himalayan Balsam at Red Doles and Cooper Bridge lined with Hawthorn, Willow and Elder. The rare Esthwaite Pondweed flourishes on the canal as does the Narrow leaved and Common Water Plantains.

## The Route

Access to the route starts from where the Huddersfield Broad Canal enters the River Calder on the south side of the A62 Huddersfield - Leeds road. GR SE176205. A gateway opposite the Holme Spinning Company leads to a footbridge over the tail of Cooper Bridge Lock (No1). Car parking is to be found next to the petrol station.

Just below the entrance to the lock is a weir and below that the junction of the River Calder and River Colne, the valley of which the Broad Canal follows towards Huddersfield. Cooper Bridge Lock is a typical Broad Canal lock at 57ft 6ins x 14ft 2ins. Above the lock the canal turns sharply to the left to run alongside the river. The scenery is rural with a cricket pitch to the right only spoilt by an overhead power cable. The canal then turns to the right following the curve of the valley bottom to pass under the main Trans-Pennine rail link. The bridge in the past having clearly been extended to take more rail tracks.

The next lock called Colnebridge (No2) is soon arrived at with its narrow road bridge showing the signs that it was never designed to take the amount of traffic it does. Beyond the bridge the canal winds its way through

some smelly sewage works, widening at the end of the works to allow canal boats to turn round. An impressive brick rail viaduct is soon reached which was part of the old Midland railway network followed by Ladgrave lock (No3) with its unmodified example of a Broad Canal bridge.

The next stretch to Longlands lock (No4) is treelined on the left with an unusual assortment of buildings on the right. A sharp righthand turn after the lock and the canal passes under another disused rail viaduct with an unusual cream facing.

The canal swings right again and underneath a lengthy stone arch, which carries the A62. Access to the canal can be gained from here. This stretch of the canal to Turnpike Road Lock (No5) with its screen of trees and playing fields next to the towpath. Turnpike Road lock has a small weir and a short winding pound above it leads to Riddings Lock (No6) with its clear view of the Colne valley.

A straight pound then leads to Fieldhouse Green Lock (No7) and Falls Lock (No8). Away to the left stands Trafalgar Mills a former worsted mill and an early example of a planned production unit. The lock walls of Falls Lock bear the date 1906 compared with 1939 on the Fieldhouse Green lock walls.

Huddersfield Town FC can be seen away to the left as Red Doles Lock (No9), the top lock of the Broad canal is reached with lock cottage. From here on into Huddersfield industry closes in around the canal. Steps on the left bank lead into Canal Street to the clearly visible Waggon and Horses pub.

The canal bends sharply left past the council incinerator and into a cutting. A mixed industrial landscape is passed of mills, gasworks, bus depots and engineering works as the canal once again passes under the A62 to begin to enter Huddersfield proper. All is not gloom and doom though as the next bridge is the best known feature of the canal; Turn bridge otherwise known as Locomotive bridge. This lifting bridge, a wonderful device of wheels and chains, is operated by handwheel and dates from 1865.

A short straight after the bridge brings the canal to its present terminus, Aspley basin. The basin has been redeveloped to house a marina and restaurant. In past times though it was the site of one of the earliest council housing schemes and just past the Wakefield road bridge is one of the original warehouses, now redeveloped for housing. Next to this warehouse is a hand operated crane which used to serve the bonded warehouse which stood where Huddersfield Poly now stands. This is the start of the restored Huddersfield Narrow Canal which crosses the Pennines into Manchester.

Access to the water is via the car park next to the basin GR SE152163.

### **BINGLEY CIRCULAR CRUISE. (River Aire & L&L Canal)**

A BWB licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required and you should check that there are no problems on the river section with the Local Access Officer.

Set in the foothills of the Pennines the busy little town of Bingley is a good site from which to undertake a canoe trip. Much of Bingley is an island set between the river in the south and the Leeds-Liverpool canal to the north. The industrial landscape of this part of the Aire valley provides a picturesque and pleasantly surprising recreational canoeing experience.

The trip is essentially one of contrasts from the moving water of the Aire to the placid waters of the Leeds-Liverpool canal, from the industrial mill chimneys to the rural landscape on the fringe of Bingley. The journey takes approximately two hours, much depending on river levels and group ability. The river stretch is approximately 2.5 miles, the canal stretch approximately 1.25 miles - a total of 3.75 miles. The river grade under normal conditions ranges from 0 to 2 excluding weirs. There are many overhanging trees near the river bank and these may pose a potential problem for the inexperienced or, unwary paddler, particularly at high water levels. There is usually a clear path down the centre of the river. The Aire is slightly polluted and care should be taken to avoid unnecessary contact with the water.

## **Directions**

Take the A650 road from Bradford to Keighley. This main road runs through the centre of Bingley and forms part of the main street. Turn off the A650 opposite Bingley Fire Station, onto the A629 road to Halifax. Here, one enters a quaint, narrow street called Millgate, with the Old White Horse public house on the right. Within 50 ft the road crosses the River Aire on a stone bridge. Immediately after crossing the bridge take the first right turn, opposite the Brown Cow Inn, into a street of terraced houses. Turn immediately right again and follow the track down to where a gantry carries pipes over the river just above the weir. This is the launching point, please ensure that vehicles are parked at the side of this track. Do not obstruct as access is required to premises further on.

The beauty of this trip is that the start and the finish as within five minutes walk of each other. It is advisable to take vehicles to the finishing point and walk back to the start. Access to the finishing point is to turn down the track, turn left opposite the Brown Cow, over the bridge, turn right at the traffic lights into Bingley Main St., follow the road until a set of traffic lights are reached almost opposite Bradford & Bingley building society on the right. Turn left at these lights into Ferncliffe Rd., then take the first left into Chapel Lane and the first right down Midland Hill into the car park at the bottom, next to the canal. A metro water bus stop on the canal bank marks the end of the canal trip and is near to an access point from the canal into the car park. The walk back to the start takes approximately five minutes.

## **The river trip**

A good launching point is twenty feet or so upstream from the metal gantry across the river, once afloat and drifting downstream Bingley weir is encountered. There is not usually enough water to shoot the weir, canoes can easily be carried over or land on the left hand side. When the river level is high a stopper develops at the weir base. Once past the weir and under the road bridge, the river narrows somewhat. Overhanging trees on the banks, whilst making the trip more picturesque, do pose a potential problem: particularly in high water, for the unwary. The best course is

down the centre of the river. A quarter of a mile downstream from the start, the river passes through Myrtle Park. In extreme flood conditions, the metal bridge here can appear very low. A quarter of a mile after this bridge and after rounding a bend Harden Beck joins the Aire on the right. At the same point there is an island in the centre of the river, this should be passed on the right hand side. There is an obstruction in the river bed which can be difficult to pass in low water. Almost half a mile beyond this point one reaches Cottingley Bridge, which carries the main A650 Bradford-Bingley road over the river. Just over a quarter of a mile below this bridge is a shingle bank. The current flows sharply to the left and under some trees - take care here, particularly with inexperienced paddlers - it is potentially dangerous. The next major landmark down the river is Hirstwood Railway Bridge. After the bridge, the river swings to the left, an eddy on the right enables an inspection of the water ahead to be made. A broken weir and stepping stones, with small standing waves. Rocks lie below the surface, these rapids mark the end of the river section.

Just after the rapids the Seven Arches Aqueduct can be seen. Land on the righthand bank well upstream of the aqueduct and, preferably before the sewage works on the left. A track takes one to a small footbridge over a stream and up onto the top of the aqueduct. Total paddling time to this point is approximately one hour.

## **The canal cruise**

The Seven Arches Aqueduct is an impressive structure and carries the Leeds-Liverpool canal over the River Aire. The aqueduct was designed by Mr J Longbottom, who also designed the famous three and five locks at Bingley. This section of the canal was opened in 1774.

The cruise along the canal back to Bingley is the most tranquil and leisurely part of the journey and disturbed only by the occasional barge or water bus. The canal takes a much shorter and more direct route than the river; from the aqueduct the journey takes about one hour. The first and only obstacle is Cowley Gap locks, less than a quarter of a mile from Seven Arches Aqueduct. A portage round is necessary. Paddling down the canal

the scenery becomes increasingly industrial as the centre of Bingley is approached. The end of the journey is marked by the metro water bus stop on the left hand bank, next to the car park and before the bridge.

## **LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL - Kirkstall Valley.**

A BWB licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

The route taken is navigated by the best pubs situated next to the canal. The start point is where the Leeds to Liverpool Canal passes under the Horsforth New Road to the west of Leeds. Leave the canoes under the road bridge and take the cars to the car park next to the canal and adjacent to the central railway station (£1.90 per day) or on Sundays use the Asda car park. Return either to Rodley roundabout on the 670 or 760 bus (every 15 minutes) or to the Horsforth roundabout on the 25 or 730/1/2/3/5/6 bus. Both routes start from Wellington Road, return past railway station, turn left, major road to left of the Bingo Hall.

The first stop is in Rodley at “The Railway” pub at Calverley Bridge (small lane off A6120 Horsforth New Road). A pint will set you up for the trip and food can also be obtained from this pub which has retained the old opening hours as well as the hand pulled beer.

Paddle down through the Rodley Marina to the Rodley Swing Bridge where, should any canoeist require further sustenance, can be found two pubs. “The Owl” provides both hand pulled John Smiths and Courage as well as excellent value food. Opening hours Sat 11.30-4.00, Sun 12.00-3.00, weekdays 11.00-3.00, evenings 4.30-.

The other alternative is “Rodley Bridge” which serves electric pumped Bass plus lots of rude calendars. (Maybe a place to miss if with the family or Great Aunt Ethel).

Staggering back to the canoes and continue past the sewage works, moving through Fallwood Marina & Leisure Centre on to Newlay. Exit canal on east side after bridge no 221 should you wish to sample the hand pulled Whitbread Trophy at the “Abbey Inn”.



By now the pubs will have closed so continue of your way to the city centre but get a non-drinker to your car home.

## **AIRE**

Like the Calder weirs are the main hazard but there are some quite good stretches of rapids. Again good sport at high water but then the weirs have to be treated with respect. At high levels the river can be paddled from almost its source but the industrial section starts at Keighley. Access can be had from the main Keighley - Bradford road at a garage about 2km downstream from the town centre where the road crosses the river.

From here to approximately 2km above Castlefields the river winds through fields. There are some quite tight turns which are good for practising choice of lines. The new Keighley and Bingley bypass crosses the river several times and new structures now add extra interest.

Weir 1. 2km above Castlefields. A small broken weir with a shoot on the left hand side. Beware of slippery masonry and stakes which may catch drifting tree trunks.

Weir 2. Castlefields weir. Simple shoot down main tongue but again beware of stakes in low water.

Weir 3. Brown Cow Weir. A diagonal weir only a short drop. Unless flood conditions this is best taken in the centre at an angle pointing left. If this is washed out the river is in high flood.

Approximately 1km downstream is Myrtle Park where there is an island with the best route down the right hand channel.

Approximately 4km below here is Hirst Wood with quite a long rapid whatever the levels. A good spot to play about.

Weir 4. 1km below the aqueduct and rail bridge is Hirst Weir. It is possible to shoot it about three boat lengths from the left hand bank. Easy portage

using Rowing Club landing stage on left hand bank just above weir.

Weir 5. Saltire Weir comes up just after a green iron footbridge. It can be shot down the centre in low/moderate levels but the most reliable route, and the one to take if river is high, is in the extreme right hand corner, right under the mill building. This gives a very exhilarating ride!

Weir 6. Shipley Weir just after the main road bridge. It is best to come through the right hand arch and shoot in the centre slightly sideways (pointing left) if low, but use the shoot on the extreme right if moderate/high.

A good long rapid runs below this weir and there are several more between here and the next weir. There are also several places to finish or start a cruise:

Emmerdale Farm (Esholt)  
Apperley Bridge  
Rodley

Weir 7. 0.75km below the road bridge at Rodley is Whitecoats Weir, quite a big drop. In low/moderate levels this is a straight shoot to the right of centre. At moderate/high levels this can be nasty and is best portaged. Left hand bank is rather long and overgrown but recent clearance may have made the right hand bank from a point almost on the weir top possible.

Weir 8. Newlay Weir, another big drop. 2km below Whitecoats after a railway and old iron roadbridge. Shoot right of centre keeping straight down weir face. Portage on right hand bank above road bridge, then cross river and get in below weir.

Weir 9. Kirkstall Forge Weir, just past Abbey. Shoot on right if low but more towards centre if high to keep away from wall and overhanging trees. Leeds Canoe Club on left after road bridge.

Weir 10. 300m below canoe club is an island. If cruising take RIGHT HAND route (straight ahead rally) and down Island Weir. This is a bumpy step if low but at any level beware of stakes in centre and right. Choose route between them.

Weir 11. Boomer Weir! The BIG one. 100m below the Island Weir, a horse shoe weir with walls at each end. Shoot straight about a boat length out from the left hand bank. Keep straight as there can be a powerful boil at the bottom.

Weir 12. Museum Weir. A wide diagonal weir on a bend in the river. Best shoot is on the extreme left hand side but check first for debris blocking the exit. If river is low then right over by the Museum is the most likely channel to be clear.

Weir 13. Dark Arches. Leeds answer to the Black Hole! Take the THIRD or FOURTH arch from the RIGHT. The first and second are DEAD ENDS (literally). Depending on levels you will either slide through the tunnels or go like a champagne cork! Whatever level through it's dark and noisy but pretty safe.

Leeds Basin. Get out in car park on right hand side and expect to have an argument with the attendant who for some reason seems to think the river belongs to him!

Although both the Calder and Aire might seem a bit like canoeing down your staircase they do contain some good little rapids between the weirs and at low/moderate levels are fine for novices. If you think the scenery will be grim you will be surprised how rural it is. Even on the Aire it is only the last couple of kilometres when you are paddling past factories, and they are really quite interesting too. You certainly get a different view of the Town Centre.

Wildlife is certainly abundant and it's not just rats! In fact kingfishers frequent the Aire up to the point mentioned above so the water can't be that bad. This though is probably the thing that puts off most people. In fact, while they are not grade one rivers, they are not too bad. It can vary with levels quite a lot. Rising levels tend to be a bit murky as storm run off and churning up of the bottom occurs but after a while this clears. Likewise a long period of low water tends to make some bits ferment a bit but it's unlikely you would want to use them so low.

## **WHARFE Canoe Trail - Hebden to Barden.**

This section of river is covered by an access agreement which limits the days on which the river may be used and paddlers **MUST** contact the Local Access Officer for clearance **BEFORE** going on the water.

The River Wharfe, perhaps the most canoeable river in Yorkshire, lies within 20 miles of Leeds and Bradford, it offers canoeists a broad range of differing water conditions with outstanding views of the Wharfe Valley. The area is steeped in history, with Bolton Abbey gateway to the upper dale. Barden Tower, once a fortified lodge of the Clifford's of Skipton Castle, now a ruin, but to stand below the walls, looking back up the valley, absorbing the atmosphere of past days of glory can be a moving experience.

But back to the purpose of our canoe trail. We start at one of the two access points. Hebden Suspension Bridge, access to the river is gained via the Burnsall to Hebden road, one word of warning, mind the stepping stones just below the bridge. After a couple of minor rapids we enter a gorge section. White limestone cliffs rise above our heads leading us into Loup Scar. Low water reveals rock reefs whilst high water gives the unwary a cauldron of eddies which might make you regret that second fried egg sandwich. After the excitement of Loup Scar we have time to reflect on the outstanding beauty of the valley unfolding before us. Finally a flat section brings into view the bridge at Burnsall.

A local boy who made good, Sir William Craven, who went to London to successfully seek his fortune and in 1602 endowed the local Grammar School, rebuilt the bridge and church, he was the original Dick Whittington. For those seeking more gastronomic progress down the river, the Red Lion alongside the bridge or the Fell Hotel will provide all necessary sustenance for the next section of the trail.

For those on the water seeking fresh challenges, pass under the centre arch making your way to the right hand bank, the village green is the second access point (please use the car park). Moving water quickly brings us to a sharp left hand bend, mind the shallow water on the inside. More

paddling leads us to the start of Woodhouse rapids. Start on the left moving over to the right, mind the rocks, keep to the deep water. Suddenly you're picking up speed, the river funnelled into a channel, rocks on the left, trees on the right, this is good fun. But beware, one large rock in the centre is ready to give you a fright, nice bouncy waves to play on, but you are urged onwards by the prospect of ever greater delights.

For those on foot or in a car, who will by now be feeling the pangs of hunger after the excitement of watching those brave souls in canoes, refreshments are at hand in the Craven Arms and the New Inn at Appletreewick.

Whilst your support team are refreshing themselves, you will have enjoyed further pleasures negotiating many minor rapids which lead to your eventual arrival and possible baptism at Appletreewick Gorge Falls. Not for the faint hearted in high water, but with careful planning or just good luck, safe arrival in the pool at the bottom of the first fall is assured.

For those who have not paddled the river before a quick foray down the footpath will satisfy you on the best route. Paddle over to the right hand side of the island, making your way through the gaps in the rocks. Nice pools to sit in whilst you plan your next move. You should exit the fall on the extreme right hand side, this will ensure that you pass safely through the stopper which will gobble up the less able navigator. At this point you can egress from the water and try your luck again. But remember, for those less daring in the party the gorge is a cold place even in the height of summer it seems to draw a wind into the gorge which will chill your body. The second set of falls can look more disturbed than the top falls, but with care a safe descent is achieved with big bouncy waves to look forward to in high water. With hands beginning to feel cold you are encouraged to paddle on down the river. No more big exciting rapids or falls, but a pleasant trip with views of the valley unfolding at each bend in the river.

The end of the trail is at Barden Bridge, egress on the left bank upstream of the bridge.

## **URE Canoe Trail - Hack Falls to Sleningford.**

This section of river is 4 miles in length and is grade 2 except for Hack Falls which are grade 3.

You will see more canoeists on this section of river than perhaps any other river in Yorkshire as it has something to offer all canoeists. It is without doubt one of the longest running access agreements in the country and this is down to the goodwill of one family, the Bourne-Arton's of West Tanfield Lodge who have pioneered over many years a policy of shared enjoyment of their estate.

There are two access points on this section Mickley Weir and Magdalen Woods just north of Grewelthorpe.

Start your trip down the Ure from Magdalen Woods your spare vehicles at Sleningford (do pay what is a small car park fee) and wind your way up the riverside along pleasant country lanes whose hedges in summer are overgrown with wild honeysuckle. Then through the villages of Mickley and Grewelthorpe (remember this is not a race track) and take the Masham road, about 0.5 miles, parking at the entrance to the woods on your left.

You have to walk across the field to the launching site, but its a portage which is worth every step for the experience which awaits you (access to the river is opposite Black Robin Beck). Once on the water, you are quickly carried down towards a left hand bend, for the unwary what greets you can be quite frightening. For those who like to look before they leap, paddle over to the right hand side and inspect Hack Falls, for the experienced you can break out in the small eddies on the left just before the start of the falls. What greets you, depending on the height of the river is a jumbled mass of rocks and white water, but you can progress down the falls moving from eddy to eddy. For those less fortunate, there is a large pool at the bottom which allows you to get to the side and empty your boat. Always eager for further excitement or simply feeling the cold from an unwanted bath in cold water, paddle on down the river towards Mickley weir, plenty of rocks with eddies behind them to practice your breakouts before you reach the weir. Keep to the left hand side if you

intend to shoot it. Egress on the right if you want to portage the weir, which is now a NRA fish trap (in high water a stopper forms along the full length of the weir).

For those with less canoeing experience or who did not fancy the long walk down to the river, Mickley is the starting point for you (do not park your vehicles on the neatly trimmed grass verges).

The river from this point to Sleningford is less demanding except for the manmade hazard of West Tanfield weir, but even without water like Hack Falls it is still a trip with many interesting features. These include a number of rocky rapids, in low water a classic exercise in rock dodging, in high, good standing waves.

West Tanfield village is passed on the left with some very old and interesting buildings with gardens running down to the river. The last building before the bridge is a public house. The church is famous for the Marmions tombs and nearby stands the 15th century gate tower of the former castle.

Once under the bridge there is a straight section which leads to the weir above Sleningford, where there have been fatalities so be warned. You must keep to the right bank, if unsure portage it. Large stopper forms across 0.75 of the weir with a tongue running through on the right.

Below the weir the river cuts through a shallow gorge in Permian strata. Lots of breakouts, small standing waves and pools to play on. We are now in sight of our destination, Sleningford Caravan and Campsite. This is also the site of the West Yorkshire Canoe Club division 4 and 5 slalom, an ideal site to spend a day just playing on the rapids. Canoeists are made welcome and there is a shop on the site which holds a stock of camping gear.

Map: OS Sheet 99 Ripon 1:50,000 Second Series.

## **URE - Ripon to Boroughbridge.**

Map: OS Landranger sheet 99. Start 324704. Finish 394672.

The paddle is 7 miles grade 0/1.

Ripon is a charming North Yorkshire market town and is famous for its minster and being close to Fountains Abbey.

Our trip for canoes and kayaks is firstly along the canal and then on the river Ure to Boroughbridge. As most canoeists and kayakists arrange a shuttle service with their cars the most suitable car parking facility is adjacent to the traffic island and the river bridge at Boroughbridge as a finish point.

The start at Ripon is at the lock keepers cottage adjacent to the canal. Limited parking here and please don't block road access to the cottage. The paddle down the canal means portages round the locks unless one is lucky enough to coincide with one of the motor pleasure boats which use the marina on the right bank. The final lock to the river Ure provides a good place to picnic.

The trip down the river calls for more care - the river is much wider than the canal with sometimes large pleasure boats and speedboats with their attendant wash. Throughout the whole trip one is in open country and on early summer sand martins abound, nesting in the river banks.

On the left bank is a stately home open to the public Newby Hall with its miniature railway. The track runs along the bank for a short distance and passengers seem to delight in waving to canoeists.

Soon the river divides. The left arm is the river and the right arm a canal to the lock. Unless the river is in flood one can take the left arm and paddle towards the weir. Exit right above the weir and portage. The weir itself is difficult to shoot if the water is high as rocks abound. The weir is a pleasant place to have another break and often to see the barbel which seem to congregate below the weir. Making our way down stream once



more we come to the lock gate on the right, a place to watch the antics of the motor craft owners working the gates.

The river meanders on passing a camp site on the right. Beware of the high speed inflatables which seem to abound which are often piloted by children or youths who may not have respect for other river users with their wash. Soon one hears the drone of traffic which we have been free from until now. It's the A1 which we pass under and so on for perhaps half a mile to land on the left at our finishing point.

This point can be the start of a further trip to York which is usually made in two days with a stop at Linton Locks Campsite. However it is done in one day as part of the Yorvik cruise weekend, an annual event arranged by the BCU.

The trip from Ripon is on a navigation so either buy a BWB licence or display a BCU/WCA membership sticker.

## **SWALE - Richmond.**

For people who wish to have an introduction to paddling on white water access is almost always available on the stretch of the river below Richmond Castle between the Green Bridge and the falls or fosse as it is known locally. Access can be made just below the rapid or shoot which is 50 yards downstream from the bridge.

This will provide about 100 yards of running water with eddies and rocks and is an excellent training facility and is used on Saturday afternoons by the local Swaledale Outdoor Club with their kayaks. Members will always offer guidance to the newcomer.

A word of caution. The river Swale is perhaps England's fastest flowing river. Rain in Swaledale causes flash floods and the river rises quickly. In such situations get off the river because one could be easily carried towards and over the falls. Fatalities have occurred in the past!

## **EAST MIDLAND REGION**

### **SLEA OR KYME EAU.**

The River Slea rises on Willoughby Heath but the main water supply is springs two miles west of the town of Sleaford, its highest practicable point. The springs fail most years in summer and autumn and often throughout the year. This is the cause of much local controversy as the many boreholes are blamed for lowering the flow of the River Slea which often dries up between Sleaford and Cobblers Lock.

Much of the course of the red River Slea was straightened to form the abandoned Slea Navigation. There is an active Slea Navigation Society which has already restored Bottom Lock and is now working on Cobblers Lock. The Slea trip is a pleasant varied day out when navigable with several drops and portages. A right of navigation is still thought to exist on this river and there is only one disputed point; we are currently requested to portage the old lock at Haverholme. All the weirs on the river are disused locks, some of which can be shot.

Water authority: Anglian. Licence from National Rivers Authority, Anglian Region, Kingfisher House, Goldhay Way, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5ZR.

Ordnance Survey sheets nos: 121, 122 and 130.

#### Miles from Sleaford

- 0 Public car park, easy access onto river at footbridge.
- 0.5 Cogglesford Mill, portage right.
- 1 Low pipe across river, then weir, care required.
- 1.5 Weir, normally shootable, then A17 road bridge.
- 2 Weir, normally shootable.
- 2.5 Weir. Inspect carefully if shooting. Shallow weir apron.
- 3 White House.
- 3.5 Abandoned lock now a weir in private ownership. Portage left through wood, across field and road, put back on left bank. About 0.25 miles.

- 5.25 Cogglesford Lock, was shootable but currently being worked on by Navigation Society so inspect first.
- 7 Halfpenny Hatch.
- 8.25 Ruined Tower left.
- 8.5 South Kyme, Public House left. From this point the river becomes the Kyme Eau.
- 11.25 Bottom Lock recently restored by Navigation Society, Portage on right.
- 11.5 Farm bridge, the river tends to become weedy from here.
- 12.75 Flood Lock, Public House left, then Road Bridge then River Witham. On reaching the River Witham, turn left about 0.25 miles on left landing stage of Orchard Camp Site over bank or turn right for Boston 9.5 miles. (Camp site take side road SW from A153 at Tattershall Bridge for 1.5 miles through Dogdyke GR208542).

## **TRENT IN NOTTINGHAM.**

6 Kilometres (3.75 miles). Grade 1 (Placid water).

The Trent through Nottingham probably provides one of the shortest trips in the book. Nevertheless it is packed with interest. It makes a superb short trip for those who are fairly new to the sport, access is easy and there is plenty to see and do.

Start. The embankment near Wilford bridge. Parking is easy here (except on Saturdays in the football season) and wide steps make launching easy.

Proceed downstream (to your left on leaving the bank) towards Trent Bridge. If you are new to canoeing, try to keep away from the fishermen on the bank, and keep an eye open for racing boats training on this stretch.

Trent Bridge. There is a lot to see in the short stretch after the road bridge. Notts Forest football ground is on the right, with the County Cricket Ground behind it.

Nottingham was a busy canal centre in past centuries. The Nottingham

Canal leaves the Trent on the left, leading up to a waterborne “Spaghetti Junction” west of the city which connects routes from London, Merseyside and the West Midlands. The remains of the disused Grantham Canal can be seen 300 metres downstream on the right.

The right bank of the river carries a number of boathouses. Nottingham is a major canoeing centre, with many international level competitors living and training here. Nottingham Kayak Club have a clubhouse after the Football Ground, and you will probably see a number of canoeists training in their long racing kayaks.

After the second bridge (Ladybay Bridge) the scene becomes more rural, with parkland on the right. The next point of interest is the Canal Depot after about five hundred metres on the left. You can paddle into the dock and look around. The Trent from here down is a big river leading into Humber. This dock is where all the freight from the Midlands was trans-shipped from many small canal barges into bigger boats to be moved down to the North Sea and then abroad.

Leave the dock and move on downstream. There is a gaping tunnel mouth on the left bank after another 200 metres. You may be tempted to explore, but this is simply a culvert which drains rain water off the streets of west Nottingham. It is neither very clean nor pleasant once inside.

The river gets busier from here down, with sea cadets on the left bank, a sailing club further down on the right, and pleasure boats moving up and down the river. The best place for a canoeist is tucked into the bank on the right hand side, out of everybody’s way.

The trip ends at the National Watersports Centre at Holme Pierrepont. The best and easiest exit is the landing stage by the car-park on the right bank. There are two cafes here, good picnic sites, a Country Park with a nature reserve, and a number of watersports to look at. This includes racing on the Regatta Lake, or white water canoeing on the Artificial Whitewater Course. Take a walk round before you pack up and go home.

Map: O.S.Landranger 129.

## **DERWENT NAVIGATION (Derbyshire).**

Length 10-15 miles (depending on exit point). Grade 1 with a number of portageable weirs (some shootable).

The Derbyshire Derwent rises high in the Peak District and flows almost due south through the majesty of Ladybower and the beauty of Chatsworth Park. Unfortunately this part of the river is closed to canoeists.

The usable part is the Derwent Navigation, from Derby to the river Trent. This fifteen mile stretch combines a variety of scenery; urban parkland, an industrial development area with pockets of urban wildlife, and the rural farmland of South Derbyshire.

1. Start at Darley Abbey, 2 miles north of Derby city centre. Easy parking. Access above or below weir as required. Proceed downstream through urban parkland to:
2. Derby city centre. Weir. Portage on the right bank. The weir can be shot in suitable water conditions. Although the river continues downstream through an urban development area the steep banks are well vegetated, camouflaging the view, and making this part of the trip more pleasant than would at first appear. There are plans to build a white water canoe training site in this stretch of the river. The river now splits into three loops, giving a choice of direction. In each case the longer left hand route is more scenic, and the weirs are smaller and sometimes shootable. The direct route is less attractive but shorter.
3. First loop. Portage over the concrete weir slab on the direct route, or take the left hand route (no weir).
4. Second loop. The direct loop provides the easiest portage around the weir (on the right bank). The left hand route is more scenic but has a difficult weir to carry past.
5. Final loop. The direct route is too shallow except in high water. Take

the left hand loop, and then choose your own route back to the main river, shooting or portaging the weirs as required.

6. First exit point, south of Draycott where the road meets the river. The river from here down runs into rural farmland. There is however one weir which is difficult to portage so novice paddlers may do best to stop at Draycott.
7. Church Wilne. The first weir can often be shot, except in high water. The second is broken and has debris in the chute so be careful. Portage right bank.
8. Derwent Mouth, where the Derwent joins the Trent. The best exit route is found by following the Trent and Mersey Canal up to Great Wilne, where a car park and two pubs provide all that is needed.

## **NENE - General.**

This river runs from Northampton to the north sea right across the heart of East Anglia. Out of a total of 90 miles three paddles are suggested.

Water authority: Anglian. Licence from National Rivers Authority, Anglian Region, Kingfisher House, Goldhay Way, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5ZR.

## **NENE - Billing to Irchester.**

Access at Billing road bridge is easy with parking on the right bank. The river runs through pleasant country for about eight miles to Irchester. There are seven locks to be portaged without any great difficulty. Landing at Irchester, just off the A45 south of Wellingborough, is difficult however as the concrete bank is high. An easier point can be found under the railway bridge at the end of the gardens left. Toilets in the gardens.

## **NENE - Thrapston to Oundle.**

Access at Thrapston is usually from the right bank above the road bridge. There are four locks to be portaged, some have high banks and care is necessary, in the eight miles to Upper Barnwell lock adjacent to the A605. There is a canal side pub above Wadenhoe lock after about five miles. There is also a pub at Barnwell and restaurant. The attractive town of Oundle is a short distance down the road and justifies a visit.

## **NENE - Oundle to Peterborough.**

A more detailed plan for the 20 miles from Upper Barnwell lock, on the A605 to the west of Oundle.

### Miles

- 0.0 Upper Barnwell lock.
- 0.4 Lower Barnwell lock. Exit stream right hand bank before lock, reasonable exit with care. Portage to below lock, where you will find a landing stage with easy re-entry to the river.
- 2.3 Ashton lock. Best exit here is just before side weir on left hand side before lock. Portage to below weir and travel down side stream to rejoin main stream in a short while.
- 4.3 Cotterstock lock. Keep top left hand fork when approaching lock. Exit on right hand bank. Short portage to main stream below lock. Easy re-entry.
- 6.0 Perio lock. Keep to left hand fork at lock. Exit on right hand side, difficult but possible with care. Re-enter stream after very short portage - note this is private land so do not cause any disturbance.
- 7.3 Warmington lock. Exit at left hand bank. Short portage is OK with care.
- 9.9 Elton lock. Exit at left hand bank, above sluice. Easy exit, reasonable re-entry after short portage.
- 12.7 Yarwell lock. Keep to left at lock. Easy exit on right hand side. Short portage and easy re-entry. Note this is a private caravan site, please do not cause any disturbance.
- 13.9 Wansford lock. Exit at left hand bank. Portage over footbridge,

reasonable re-entry.

14.4 Wansford bridge. Pubs both sides.

17.7 Water Newton lock. Exit at left hand side. Short portage, reasonable re-entry.

19.5 Alwalton lock. Exit at left hand bank. Short portage across footbridge, reasonable re-entry with care.

20.5 Ferry Meadows Country Park.

## FOSS DYKE CANAL

The canal joins the River Trent, at Torksey, to the River Witham in Lincoln. 11 miles and on average 50 feet wide and 5 to 6 feet deep. Originally a Roman canal. Usually still but any flow will be towards Lincoln. Virtually the whole of the canal on both banks has now been piled. Ricocheting wash from boats can be a problem for unstable craft but it is not busy.

British Waterways licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

0 Launch by the lock at Torksey. The first part of the journey passes through quiet countryside although the view to your rear is dominated by the massive Trent Power Station.

3 At Drinsey Nook, the canal joins the A57 which is on your right.

5 miles you reach Saxilby - a large village. There are pubs and shops by the waterside, also a pleasant picnic area. The road crosses the canal here. After Saxilby you get good views of Lincoln Cathedral.

6.5 Just after the fertiliser factory on your right, the road leaves the canal on your left but you are then joined by the railway on your right.

8 You pass a point of access to the A57 (Burton Lane End).

9.5 Just after going under the Lincoln relief road (A46). there is the Pyewipe Inn on your left. They serve bar food.

10.5 You join Lincoln. On your left there are two factories followed by houses. On your right there are moorings.

11 You pass beneath a drawbridge to enter Brayford Pool. This is almost the heart of Lincoln. The pool is about 500 m long and 200 m wide. It has a small island (floodlit at night) and a lot of moorings. The whole area, administered by the Brayford Trust Ltd and has been



much improved in recent years. It is quite pleasant. You can leave the water from the Lincoln Canoe Club landing stage which can be found before the narrow-boat moorings, half way along the right (south) bank. However before leaving the water a 500 m round trip paddle under High Bridge is well worth while. It is over the River Witham which leaves the Pool as part of the Navigation to Boston. It is at the opposite end of the Pool to the Foss Dyke Canal - on your left. High Bridge, with its Elizabethan Buildings on it is on the main Lincoln High Street. Mind the swans and don't capsize here as there is no easy way of leaving the water. The sheer sides are rather tall.

## **ASHBY CANAL**

Use of the canal requires a licence from British Waterways Board or a BCU/WCA membership sticker on deck.

Here we have a complete length of canal which can be enjoyed in one day without portages. Built to service the limeworks and coalfield near Ashby de la Zouche, and never achieving its original aim of joining with the Trent, this canal is totally isolated and provides a good day's paddle.

Launch from the B4112 to the south of Nuneaton and you have twenty three miles of open country and lock free canal to enjoy. An alternative start is the A5 south of Hinckley at Lime Kilns Inn which reduces the distance by five miles.

Four miles further and bridges 25 to 27 give you access to Stoke Golding right. A further three miles and you pass across the site of the battle of Bosworth. Although minor roads cross the canal the impression from here on is of being in no man's land until you enter Snarestone, pass through the short tunnel and reach the wharf at the canal terminus.

## **GRAND UNION CANAL - Blisworth to Whilton locks (Weedon)**

Use of the canal requires a licence from British Waterways Board or a

BCU/WCA membership sticker on deck. This is a thirteen mile stretch through open country starting from the A43 canal bridge at Blisworth. Immediately to the south is the entrance to the Blisworth tunnel which canoes are not allowed to enter.

After a mile and a half note, but do not follow, the branch to your right which is the Northampton arm leading, by way of seventeen locks, to Northampton and the river Nene.

There are canal side pubs: The Old Wharf Inn at Bugbroke bridge 36 some six miles up, the Globe Inn at Stowehill some nine miles up, and in Weedon itself (at the crossroads of the A5 and A45) at bridge 24 some ten miles out. Beyond Weedon you will become aware of the M1 to your right as it thunders its way towards Watford Gap service area.

### **GRAND UNION CANAL - Crick to Welford (Leicester Section)**

Use of the canal requires a licence from British Waterways Board or a BCU/WCA membership sticker on deck.

Open country for this paddle of up to eleven miles starting from Crick on the A428.

This section is so remote that it does not even offer the usual canal side pub or village so you will need to be self supporting. After some eight miles, bridge 41 behind you, turn right onto the Welford arm with its one lock as you enter the town.

### **EREWASH CANAL (Two tours).**

The Grand Union Canal links a number of navigations, running all the way from Regents Canal in London up to the River Trent near Nottingham. The Erewash Canal forms the extreme northern end of the waterway, a spur line linking the towns of Eastwood and Ilkeston to the major waterway junction at Trent Lock. Because it is a cul-de-sac the Erewash Canal has

few power boats, so it provides very pleasant canal touring in scenic rural countryside.

There are two tours described here. The canal provides a simple but enjoyable journey which will be easily mastered by any level of paddler. For a more challenging journey the second tour described provides an interesting and varied ten mile circular tour linking the Erewash Canal, the River Erewash and the River Trent. The River Erewash is very small, not much more than a stream. It is normally too shallow in the summer, but with a bit of flow in the winter months it turns into a simple but fast grade 1-2 river. There is nothing difficult, even for open cockpit kayaks, but there is enjoyable water, and plenty of wildlife to see.

### **EREWASH Canal tour.**

Start point. Tamworth Road, Long Eaton (4 miles from Nottingham). The road runs alongside the canal for 300 yards, with easy parking and access. Once on the water head north (to your right when standing on the bank facing the canal).

After 0.25 miles. Long Eaton Lock. Portage past on the right bank.

1.25 miles. Dock Holme Lock. Portage on right bank. The erewash river is now visible on the right.

1.75 miles. Sandiacre Locks. Just past the lock is the junction with the Derby Canal, now derelict and sealed off.

2.75 miles. The canal now runs into Sandiacre village. A second access to the River Erewash is after this village. When the buildings and hedges stop there is a patch of open land which allows access to the river.

If staying on the river simply note these points and move on. When you turn round and head back to your car is up to you. This might be a good turning point for beginners, faster paddlers might want to go further. The canal simply continues in the same enjoyable way with no unpleasant surprises.

## **EREWASH Round Trip.**

Start Tamworth Road, Long Eaton, as before. Paddle up the canal and cross into the river at one of the two access points. Dock Holme Lock gives a ten mile round trip, or thirteen miles for Sandiacre.

1.25 miles. River Erewash. A simple but fun descent. Fast flowing simple water. Look out for wild life. The last Regional tour on this river witnessed kingfishers, herons, voles and a fox, despite being in the middle of a town.

5.5 miles. After a few bends the river runs into a lake. Paddle straight across to the south bank (between two islands). This bank is only 50 yards wide, and separates the lake from the River Trent. Portage across the bank and into the river.

6 miles. Paddle upstream. The Trent will be fast flowing here, so keep very close to the bank where the flow is least (no more than two yards out except when near fishermen) and stay on the inside of the bends. The width of the Trent, one of Englands biggest rivers, makes a sharp contrast to the Erewash.

7.5 miles. Cranfleet Lock. Take the right hand fork into the lock cut, and portage the lock.

8.5 miles. Trent Lock. The Spagetti Junction of the canal age, linking London, Liverpool, Humberside and Manchester. The entrance to the Erewash Canal is clearly signposted on the right bank. There are two pleasant pubs here if you have some spare time. After your break head on up the canal but watch out for drunken (power boat) drivers.

10 miles. End of trip, back at the start point.

## **EASTERN REGION**

### **BLACKWATER (Essex)**

Map: OS Landranger sheet 168.

A circular cruise covering about eight and a half miles of varied scenery - open estuary, busy waterfront, marshy creek and quiet canal. It starts and

finishes at the large car park at Heybridge Basin beside the Chelmer and Blackwater canal (GR 871069). Heybridge Basin is signposted from the B1026 road between Heybridge Village and Goldhanger. The cruise uses both the Blackwater estuary and the canal. You will need a casual day licence for the canal which can be obtained from the lockhouse beside the sea lock for £1 per canoe (in 1991).

Cruises on the top ends of estuaries always need careful attention to tide times. You can plan this one several ways but the route described here needs a start time about three hours before high tide. Tide tables are usually available in your local library. High tide at Maldon is 1 hour 43 minutes after Dover. If you haven't got access to tide tables, phases of the moon give a good indication. At new or full moon, high tide here will be between 1 and 2 pm (Summer time). Three days later it will be between 3 and 4 pm. Generally these are the sort of times that most people will aim for when planning this trip.

To get started, carry your canoes about 150 metres from the car park to the sea wall, past the sea lock (or you could paddle them on the canal but it is hardly worth the trouble). Launch from a muddy beach between the lock and a small chandler's shop, close to the two pubs. The water won't look very attractive at this point - three hours before high tide there is more mud to be seen than water but don't worry - things can only get better. Do a seal launch down the mud into the narrow channel and paddle out into the estuary. Ahead of you is Northey Island. It has one house on it and belongs to the National Trust. It is a bird sanctuary and landing is not allowed.

Paddle around the eastern side of the island keeping it fairly close on your right hand side. The first 2 miles are against the tide, and you will need to work quite hard, but the rest of the trip is with the tide. After 3 miles you reach the causeway that links the island to the mainland (Map ref 871 058). It will probably be under water but recognisable by the road leading down to it from both sides. A thousand years ago, in 991, marauding Vikings crossed this same causeway after landing on the island, to fight a memorable battle with the local Saxons from Maldon. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reported that the Vikings won, but it was a near thing.

From the causeway you can see the starting point of your trip barely half a mile away on your right. You have almost circumnavigated the island. From here on follow the left bank up the estuary towards Maldon, easily recognisable by the church spire standing above the houses on the skyline. Another mile brings you to Maldon promenade. A good landing point is just before you reach the massed ranks of moored Thames sailing barges (GR 860065). Here are refreshment stalls and public toilets. Alternatively, a little further on, among the barges, two pubs are conveniently close to the waterfront.

From Maldon continue, passing under the Fullbridge and then the new by-pass bridge, for about 2 miles to the head of the estuary at Beeleigh. (Beeleigh Abbey is on the left but hardly visible from the water). At Beeleigh (GR 840084) there is a complex network of channels through the saltings with weirs linking the Chelmer and Blackwater rivers into the estuary and canal. Keep to the right, portage up the long weir face (normally dry) and turn right into the canal through a flood lock (usually open but portage if closed). Try to arrive at Beeleigh within one hour of high tide to avoid getting muddy.

It is an easy two and a half miles back down the canal to the starting point, passing through Heybridge village, now rather industrialised. The canal itself is quite picturesque with several of the original eighteenth century brick bridges designed by John Rennie, who was also responsible for the Kennet and Avon canal. This stretch of the Blackwater estuary is quite safe as tidal water goes but a few notes may be useful for canoeists who are more accustomed to inland rivers and canals.

The upper reaches of the Blackwater are quite sheltered but you can always expect a slight chop when the wind is in the opposite direction to the tide and, with such a twisty channel as we have here, that is almost certain to happen somewhere on the trip. Spray decks are essential unless the weather is dead calm. If it seems too rough for you when you start off, it is quite simple to shorten the trip and paddle straight from the launch point to Maldon on the more sheltered west side of the island.

It is surprisingly easy to lose your bearings among the Essex saltings, even on a little inshore trip like this one. Keep an eye open for the two

Maldon church spires. At least one of them can be seen throughout the trip - even from beyond Northey island.

There is little commercial traffic into the port of Maldon nowadays but you will see lots of cruisers, sailing dingies, sailboards, water skiers, etc. If you follow the route suggested above you will find yourself clear of the main navigation channel for most of the time. The channel is marked by green and red buoys (green on the right, red on the left as you head up river) and it twists from side to side following the deep water. When you have to use it, as you will in the narrowest part of the river past Maldon quays, stay in a tight group and keep to the right.

Once past the Fullbridge in Maldon you are unlikely to meet any other craft. If you run out of time on the way up to Beeleigh, just turn around and return directly to Heybridge on the falling tide (which also, incidentally, saves paying the canal licence fee).

## **CAM OR GRANTA**

Historical Cambridge, the easy way by water. Grantchester to Baits Bite Lock. A distance of 11 km.

A pleasant placid water paddle that falls naturally into three sections as the water level drops at sluices and locks. The initial section south of Cambridge ends at former mill sluices above Silver Street Bridge. With luck there is a wealth of wildlife to see including heron, kingfishers, little grebes and perhaps mink. The river flows so slowly that there are brandy bottle waterlilies too. The middle section is along "The Backs", a scenic route arched by college bridges, and congested by punts in summer; and on the third section below Jesus Lock the paddler shares the river with rowing "eights", "fours" and scullers.

Access GR 436551. A country road joins the A603 Cambridge to Sandy road, with the A1309 Cambridge to Trumpington road. This road has two bridges. The one nearer to Trumpington crosses the main River Cam or Granta (the old name) and the western bridge crosses above a mill pool.

km

0

Launch on the left hand bank of the mill pool. There is a small lay-by to the east side of the bridge. The building by the bridge is a dwelling house and replaces the former mill which was burnt beyond repair in 1927. There are still jets of water under the house and bridge and at times the current is strong. To the right of the mill pool, slightly obscured by reeds is a post marking height above sea level in metres. Current level reads 7.4m (low). 100m Paddle downstream under the trees for about 100m until the mill stream joins the main river from the right. A small diversion may be taken by paddling to the right upstream for about 0.8 km to Byron's Pool. The way is pleasant, overhung by trees, shallow and twisting. It is reputed to be the site of Chaucer's mill in the Reeve's Tale, and also Tennyson's The Miller's Daughter. There is considerable doubt over whether Lord Byron bathed here or not. The joined river is shallow here but open. Deepest water to the right. Fleeting glimpses of the tower of the University library may be seen straight ahead. One of four copyright libraries, holding copies of all British printed matter, it housed 72 miles of bookshelf in 1989. To the left may be seen Grantchester Church of Rupert Brook fame: "and stands the clock at ten to three and is there honey still for tea", and possibly the roof of The Old Vicarage (1685), now owned by Jeffrey Archer. Trumpington Hall is visible to the right. The river is completely open here with fields to the right and Grantchester Meadows to the left. Further downstream on the right it is possible to see the spire (216ft) of the church, Our Lady and the English Martyrs, in Cambridge. Using this as a marker confirms that the river twists and turns here. Amazingly the rural environs remain until we are almost within 1km of the city centre. Keep a look out for anglers in the lee of the bushes, but they are usually on the left hand bank.

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Dead Man's Corner: a notice warns of deep water. Downstream the former University Bathing area, when river swimming was common. To the left the structure of the diving boards can be seen. Landing is not welcomed as it is now used by Naturists. Swimmers still use the area in the summer. The river turns sharply to the right almost under a pollarded willow, and enters a sheltered area of large willows and oaks. You may see kingfishers here if you are



lucky. A concrete facing on the right marks the site of another former bathing area. The mill stream (Snobs' Stream) leaves from the left leading to Newnham Mill, but also to a car park and toilets. GR 447573.

- 3 An iron footbridge heralds the start of the City and the river is now embanked. On the left bank of the river the basket store of the former Mens' Bathing Sheds now houses Cambridge Canoe Club (no toilets). The Fen Causeway Bridge is a single span road bridge, the road bisecting the common land on either side, and built only in 1926. There appeared to be little local demand for the bridge, and it was built largely to ease unemployment. Quentin Nelson wrote:

“The laying of the Foundations was An effort to be shunned But money being no object It was nicknamed “sinking fund”.

For when the concrete base was placed. On riverbed so dank It failed to find the bottom. And the whole construction sank.”

It is followed very shortly by Crusoe Bridge which connects the river banks, but does not give easy access to Robinson Crusoe island on the left. If you need to land, do so on the right hand bank before Crusoe Bridge.

- 3.75 The formal gardens of the Garden House Hotel appear on the right, egress on the left before the sluice gates on the left. Egress is made onto a foot/cycle path, so beware pedestrians and cyclists when carrying your boat down left to the water. The rollers to the left lead to the middle river and are designed for punts. There is a small pool at the bottom of the rollers for access, but keep well to the left under the willow when paddling out as the sluice gates to the right are about to be automated (Nov 1991). The mill stream from Newnham Mill joins from the left as the river sweeps to the right. Darwin College is on the left. The right hand side of the river is very shallow, and is popular with anglers. Egress left and up steps to toilets, before Silver Street Bridge. The river widens here into the mill pit, the site of two or possibly three mills to the right. In times of water shortage not all could work at once. This section of

the river is popular with punts. After Silver Street road bridge, the river is flanked by Queens' College, which is joined by a wooden footbridge built originally in this design in 1745/50, and known as the Mathematical Bridge. The left bank here has a marvellous display of daffodils in the spring and ends with a small ditch. (All college property used to be tightly enclosed by walls and ditches. In order to fulfil residence requirements undergraduates had to spend a specified number of nights in college each term, and had to be within the grounds by midnight). A small piece of land fronts the river between this ditch and Kings Bridge. This is the last remainder of Long Green, a marshy fringe which bordered the river and was owned by the town, before it was "acquired" by the Colleges. This encroachment of the river banks meant that the mills upstream were supplied by horse drawn barges with the horses walking on a gravel walkway on the river bed. The lawns of College property belong to the Fellows of the Colleges, and only they may walk on them. The private notices posted on the river banks indicate this long established tradition and are not specifically anticanoeist. King's College Bridge is a single arched stone bridge, moved here from slightly further downstream in 1824. To the right is the main tourist attraction of Cambridge, King's College Chapel. The foundations were laid by Henry VI in 1446 but building ceased with his death. Two kings later it was finished by Henry VII in 1515. The demarcation line between the earlier white stone of Magnesian Limestone from Hudleston, Yorks and the later Weldon stone is clearly visible from the north side. The fan vaulted ceiling is very high and delicate. Clare Bridge (1640) is a three arched stone bridge with the parapet ornamented with spheres. A trick question is to ask how many. Close examination reveals that one sphere on the upstream left hand side has a wedge-shaped slice cut out. Shortly after on the right a fixed metal ladder on the wall shows how members of Trinity Hall gain access to the river and their punts.

4.5 Garret Hostel Bridge is a single span modern footbridge. It is the only public crossing of the river between Silver Street and Magdalene Bridge. The gradient of the bridge is a challenge to cyclists in wet and icy weather. Should you wish to punt, the punt hire on the right is usually the best deal. Trinity College now borders

the river with its three arched stone bridge (1763/65). Immediately to the right is the Wren Library (1671/95) designed by Sir Christopher Wren and one of his finest buildings. As the river bears right, a full view of St John's College New Building (1831) is on the west side of the river. The herbaceous border in front of this building is always worth a visit. St John's Old Bridge is stone and in three arches based on a Wren design. Scratched on the upstream left hand pillar are the marks and dates of the two flood levels, 3 August 1879 and 14 March 1947. The second is the higher. The next bridge also belongs to St John's, it is the Bridge of Sighs and fully enclosed. After the bridge look up and back to the right to see the date 1671 high up on the wall. It is part of the third court of St John's. To the left at right angles to the river is a modern building (1967) claimed to be the finest twentieth century building in Cambridge, it is the Cripps Building of St John's.

- 5 The river now approaches Magdalene (pronounced maudlin) Bridge. This is the site of the original crossing of the river, for it is here that there is a spur of chalk from the Gog Magog hills which has been cut by the river leaving a firm surface on either side of the river. Initially there was a ford, later a series of bridges "The Great Bridge", and was the crossing of the Roman Via Devana from Colchester to the Midlands. This latest bridge is an internally reinforced copy of the single span iron bridge of 1823, and is the main road to the north out of the City. Emerging through Magdalene Bridge the vista enlarges. To the right a modern development on the old quayside, which was the last of such places to survive in Cambridge, going out of use in the 1920's. River traffic lost out to the railway which arrived in 1845. Immediately beyond is an old grey brick building with barred windows and faint black writing, which reads bonded warehouse. Here too is a charming drain outlet in the shape of a man's head with big nose and open mouth to release the water. The top of the head reads Benedict Spinola 13.XII.1574. To the left is Magdalene College (founded 1542). Magdalene houses not only the original diaries of Samual Pepys, but also the specially built bookcases that he had made for them at home. He bequeathed money to the College during his lifetime to build a library for his books and they arrived in the College in 1724. Further along to the

right there is a modern walkway in front of flats joining Quayside to Jesus Green, with the Spade and Becket. It is a popular pub with outside seating. The river is now beyond college property and there is no restriction on landing on any of the open spaces. The Gallery on the Cam, a permanently moored barge above Jesus Lock on the left, is a picture gallery with pictures for sale.

5.5 The footbridge now in sight crosses the river over Jesus Lock. Upstream on the right are five bronze lion heads with rings in their mouths. There are more (6) downstream also on the right before Victoria Bridge. Jesus College is hidden behind the trees to the far right. Portage right by the ducks on the steps, past the lock and launch by the anglers as you re-enter the water. There used to be a hefty charge for this privilege, but the sluice is being automated and the lock keeper is retiring. Toilets are available near the steps before the lock keeper's cottage. There is a fixed staff gauge on the right of the weir. The level reads 3.8m(Nov '91). Chesterton Road is parallel to the river here, and it is possible to egress here, but parking is very limited. This third section of the paddle is once more in open country, the main hazard being the rowing boats. A few have coxes steering from the front, but most have a cox at the back, who has to view around the oarsmen in order to see ahead. Canoeists should keep to the right of the river, except in the region of the Plough Inn at Fen Ditton, where they should obey the signs. Victoria Bridge is the first roadbridge. From just above it until well below Elizabeth Way roadbridge (A1134), there are rowing boat houses on the left. Most are college owned, but the University (Goldie) boat house is here as well as the two city boat houses. On the right on the Midsummer Common bank is the Fort St George in England pub. Before Victoria Bridge was built in 1889 the river crossing was at the pub with a ferry. Latterly it was on a "grind", a flat punt-like boat pulled across the river on a chain by a wheel. The pub has outside eating facilities, but road parking is from the north only, access by the footbridge. A second footbridge further downstream gives access to the north of the river. Cars may be brought down to Riverside (roadname) on the south, from Newmarket Road. From above Elizabeth Way roadbridge there is a high wall on the right bank along Riverside, and this continues

past the former Gas Works, and the Gas Holders, the sewage pumping station (under the river not into it) and beyond it to Stourbridge Common. Sewage was pumped up to the sewage works at Milton by a beam engine which may still be seen steaming at the Museum of Technology, which is now on the site of the former gas works. The tall brick chimney is a conspicuous landmark. On the left are Philips works, and their sports fields. Soon the river is crossed by yet another footbridge, to Chesterton Village. On the right bank is Stourbridge Common, which is usually grazed by cows and horses. Stourbridge Fair was traditionally held here from 18 September to 10 October. The tradition of the fair dates back to the Middle Ages, and people came from far and wide to trade. The fair was abolished in 1934, but some of its trading characteristics have passed to midsummer Fair, held on Midsummer Common at Midsummer. Across Stourbridge common to the right may be seen the floodlights of Cambridge United Football Club. Road access is good on the north bank at The Pike and Eel Pub, which has outside eating facilities, and a tolerant attitude towards dress. There is parking immediately downstream of the pub, and an easy egress area with a concrete bank. The towpath begins here and continues by the river to Baits Bite Lock. (No cars).

- 8.5 The next bridge downstream is a railway bridge, carrying the line to Ely, but immediately beyond is the line of a proposed relief roadbridge for Cambridge, for which there is much opposition. The tower of Fen Ditton Church is soon visible on the right through the trees. After a long straight the Plough Inn is on the right. Please obey the river notice at Ditton Corner and cross to the left hand side of the river. The reason for the change from right to left and back again is to cause boats going down-river to keep to the outside of the bend at Grassy Corner in order to leave room for practising "eights", which are very long, coming up-river to cut close to the corner without hitting the bank at bow or stern. Road access to the pub is through Fen Ditton village. A few houseboats are usually moored between here and the next bend, Grassy Corner. Beyond this is a small wooden hut on the left, which is used as the start of the "Bumps". These are rowing races of eights. Boats set off at two boat length distances from each other, the object being to catch

the boat in front and touch it. The following day, the boat bumped moves down a position, and the boat bumping moves up one at the start. Boats that succeed in making four bumps over four days' racing are deemed to have won their oars. Many colleges race two or more boats so the race is divided into divisions (sections) to make organisation easier. The top boat is Head of the River. Races are in February (Lent Races) and June (The Mays).

- 10.5 The river now passes under Bovis Bridge, the large bridge on the northern A45 bypass, which has no river access, but is a favourite place for anglers.
- 11.5 It is soon possible to see the large superstructure supporting the automatic sluice by Baits Bite Lock. Portage left and paddle about 100m downstream where a small road from Milton meets the river. Road access is via Milton village (not the A10 bypass). (There are cross roads at the northern end of the village, turn east and follow the road over the railway line to the river. It is dead end.) GR 488622.

The paddle may be extended from Baits Bite Lock to 15.5km Bottisham Lock GR 508658. Road access is from the west leaving the A10 by Car Dyke Road at The Slap Up pub on the Waterbeach bypass and then turning east at the north end of the village. It may also be continued to Ely 31.25km. Egress is possible here at the Maltings, with a car park, toilets and a friendly pub, GR 545798. Both extensions are for those that like extensive sky scapes and isolation; true Fenland scenery.

River licences. Grantchester to Jesus Lock the river is still licensed by the Cam Conservancy. Day tickets are not issued, but as long as boats are registered with their local waters the one-off tour is free. Regular visits require an annual licence from the Cam Conservators, c/o City Council Offices, Guildhall, Cambridge, CB2 3QJ. The Environment Agency state that they do not require licences from Jesus Lock to Bottisham. Below Bottisham, Great Ouse licences are required from the Environment Agency or display BCU/WCA/SCA sticker.

Map: O.S.Landranger 154.

## **CROUCH ESTUARY (Essex)**

This is a very easy cruise from Hullbridge Ferry to Battlesbridge and back, covering a total distance of 5 or 8 miles. Because it uses a helpful tidal current in both directions and the access is easy, it is particularly suitable for disabled canoeists and children who can handle a canoe competently but are not strong paddlers.

The trip starts and finishes on the north bank of the River Crouch at Marsh Farm Country Park, South Woodham Ferrers. The spot is also known as Hullbridge Ferry, after the village on the south side, although the ferry has not run for many years.

To get there, make for South Woodham Ferrers on the A132 and then follow the brown and white "Country Park" signs. Continue about 300 yds past the first car park that you see (Marsh Farm) to a second car park right on the sea wall. Canoes can be launched at all states of the tide from a fairly solid ramp (actually a continuation of the public road that you came in on) close to the sea wall. Do not try to launch anywhere else unless you like wading in mud.

To get the benefit of the tide you must plan the timing of your trip. High tide at Battlesbridge is about 2 hours after Dover. It will take you up to an hour to paddle there from Hullbridge. Allow yourself enough time for a picnic stop and perhaps to go beyond Battlesbridge, and remember that tide times are not exact but can vary by a few minutes with different weather conditions.

After leaving Hullbridge, heading west, the river widens out. The tidal current is still there, running in a relatively narrow and quite well defined stream, generally tending towards the outside of the bends. It is interesting to see if you can pick it out by the difference in the wave pattern and the trail of small debris, and use it to help you along. After about a mile you will notice a large square warehouse building in the distance. Its behaviour is curious - it moves from your right side to your left and back again as you wind your way through the flat Essex landscape. In fact; it is your destination. It stands beside the bridge at Battlesbridge.

Approaching Battlesbridge, the river narrows again. Passing under the

road bridge, you find yourself facing the recently restored water wheel of a tidal mill and what looks like a pair of lock gates. The idea is that the tide pushes the gates open and the water passes through to fill the river upstream. When the tide turns, the outrush of water closes the gates which then hold the water back. The resulting difference in levels above and below the mill drives the water wheel. Actually the wheel is not often seen working and the gates are sometimes tied open.

Paddle through the gates (the current is quite strong but not rough) and land on the right (north) bank for a break and a snack. The south bank is private. It is worth spending a few minutes looking round Battlesbridge, a village full of antique and junk shops. There are a couple of tea shops and "The Barge" pub is near the bridge. Make sure that you pull your canoes well up the sea wall bank before leaving them because the tide comes up further than you expect.

If you are still feeling energetic and have some time left before high tide, you can paddle further upstream, past the bypass bridge (A130) and the railway bridge. The character of the river here is completely different. It is just a narrow shallow freshwater stream until the rising tide fills it and reverses the current. On a peak spring tide you can get a mile and a half above Battlesbridge and land on the left, in the park at Runwell, if you can find a gap in the stinging nettles. But don't hang around after the tide turns - the water runs out quite fast.

Back at Battlesbridge, if you find the gates closed by the falling tide, you will probably have to creep round on the left (facing downstream) or you may have to portage. The flow over the gates provides a little patch of rough water to play around in - quite a rare thing in Essex!

Head back to Hullbridge Ferry with the tide. When you get there be careful not to get carried past it; the current runs strongly at the bottleneck formed by the road running down to the water. Weak paddlers especially should be shepherded into the left-hand side where there is less movement, well before reaching the landing point.

In spite of the various warnings scattered through these notes, this is a



safe and easy trip. The worst that is likely to happen to you is that you might get muddy. Buoyancy aids should be worn (of course) but spray decks are not essential. Open (Canadian) canoes are quite at home here. Timing is not critical as long as you make sure that you are at or beyond Battlesbridge when the tide turns and head for home soon after. If you haven't got any tide tables the phase of the moon will give you a near enough idea - see the notes on the Blackwater cruise.

Finally, if the weather turns nasty and you decide to cut short the cruise, Marsh Farm in the Country Park is open to the public and provides some interesting things to see under cover.

Map: O.S.Landranger 167, 168.

## **GREAT OUSE - General.**

Below Bedford the Great Ouse is a navigation and a licence is required from the Environment Agency or display a BCU/WCA/SCA sticker. This licence allows you to continue down to the sea but below St Ives the river becomes very open and less attractive as it enters the fens.

## **GREAT OUSE - Bedford to Great Barford.**

Launch from the public car park off the A418/A600 roundabout on the south east outskirts of Bedford.

Miles

- 2.0 Cardington slalom site on the left in the park followed by Cardington lock, portage left.
- 3.5 Castle Mill lock, portage right.
- 6.0 Willington lock, portage right.
- 7.0 Great Barford, the Anchor pub on the left after the bridge makes a good stopping place with grass area for picnic lunch if you choose to continue.

## **GREAT OUSE - Great Barford to St Neots.**

Great Barford lock, portage right.

9.5 Tempsford lock, portage right.

14 Eaton Socon lock, portage left.

15 St Neots bridge. Land in park on left above bridge. Car park and toilets. Town right.

## **GREAT OUSE - St Neots to St Ives.**

Launch from park above.

16 St Neots lock, portage left.

20 Offord lock, portage right.

22 Brampton lock, portage left.

23 Godmanchester. Slipway at the right hand end of the large pool at the Chinese bridge, shops, pub and toilets close.

24 Huntingdon. Riverside car park below town bridge on left with toilets and public slipway.

26.5 Houghton Mill lock, portage right.

28 Hemingford lock, portage left.

30 St Ives, public quay below bridge left.

## **LONDON AND SOUTH EAST & SOUTHERN REGIONS**

### **ARUN**

1. Pulborough to Pallingham Lock and return 7 miles.

2. Pulborough to Arundel 13.2 miles.

The Arun flows through varied and attractive scenery towards, and through the South Downs, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is a right of navigation throughout and no fees are payable unless the paddler continues the trip to Littlehampton Harbour. The upper tidal limit is at Pallingham Lock, but the tidal influence is negligible above Pulborough. The area is fine walking country. The Wey-South Downs long distance

path runs close to or along the river until it meets the South Downs Way where this crosses the river near Houghton.

Pallingham is too remote from roads to make a convenient starting point, but the winding wooded valley between it and Pulborough has great charm, and is worth paddling in both directions. At Stopham, about half way along, there is a 14th century bridge with an inn adjoining. The main road (A283) now uses a new bridge.

From Pulborough the river leads in great curves across former marshland (Amberley Wild Brooks) with the Downs as a backcloth, passing through them where they rise steeply to about 600 feet. On the east is open downland, on the west the wooded Arundel park. The Downs finish at Arundel. Side visits can be made to Arundel castle and park, the Amberley Chalk Pits museum at Houghton, and the Arundel Wildfowl Reserve between the Black Rabbit inn and the town.

The best access points are:

Pulborough, at the slipway near the old bridge (A29) GR 045385 (very limited parking);

Bury, at the old ferry landing near church GR 016130 (no parking); Greatham Bridge, GR 051162 (parking by west bank).

Houghton Bridge (B2139) (private landing, ask permission at boat hire/cafe) GR 025083;

50 yards on the right below Black Rabbit inn, beyond the roadside bank in a field (parking) GR 021070;

Arundel, at the Pay and Display car park on west bank a short way above the town bridge, where there is a river speed restriction notice. The river bank here has stone revetting, weedy at low tide.

Between Pulborough and Arundel use should be made of the tide to avoid muddy landings. From Pulborough start downstream as near high water as possible (High Water approx. Dover plus 3 hours 50 minutes). At Bury it is about an hour earlier, and at Arundel about an hour and a half earlier still. At Bury the flood tide runs for 4 hours before high water and ebbs for 8 hours. The tidal rise at Arundel is about 10 feet at springs and 8 feet at neaps. If doing the whole 13 miles from Pulborough to Arundel there is no

time (although the ebb runs fast) for dawdling if a muddy landing at Arundel is to be avoided.

The river below Arundel for the 5 miles to Littlehampton GR 026016 is fast on the ebb, but not very interesting. Landing at Littlehampton on either bank a short distance above the harbour mouth, the west bank being more convenient for road access. Harbour dues apply.

Map: O.S. Landranger 197

### **ADUR (above Old Shoreham)**

7 to 10 miles according to starting point and chosen route.

There are two headstreams, both called Adur, which unite near Henfield. The river winds through former marshlands between tidal banks to Steyning and Bramber, and then through a gap in the South Downs to the sea at Shoreham. In the southerly direction paddlers have the South Downs in view practically all the way across the marshlands.

In either direction the river should always be paddled with the tide. When the tide is out, so is canoeing. The ebb flows very quickly. The rising tide from Shoreham takes a long time to cover the sand bars between the railway bridge and Old Shoreham bridge and stony shallows near Bramber. A low water level makes access and egress along many parts of the river banks difficult. For a there and back paddle make sure that there is enough water for both starting and finishing.

Between Shoreham and Bramber the best points for ease of getting on and off the river and parking are: at the Adur centre, west bank near the Norfolk bridge (A.259) GR 211050; at the old toll bridge at Old Shoreham GR 205060; at Barge Dyke (slipway at northern corner with the river GR202069; from A.283 near the cement works GR 198086; and near the bridge close to a pub on the east bank at Upper Beeding GR 192106.

Going up-river the start needs to be 3 hours or more after low water,

paddling inland with the tide through the South Downs until the flow reverses, returning on the ebb. High water at Shoreham is Dover plus 10 minutes; at Upper Beeding bridge, Bramber, an hour later.

Above Old Shoreham the river is controlled by the Environment Agency. No licence is required.

At the northern end of the river the tidal limit on the eastern Adur above the confluence is at Shermanbury. The start of a down river trip to Bramber and Shoreham can be made at high tide about 2 miles above the confluence at the A.281 road bridge north of Henfield.

Alternatively, a start on the western Adur can be made at Bines bridge on B.2135. This branch was once a navigation (the Baybridge canal) above the original tidal limit near Partridge Green with one lock (now derelict) in the 3 miles to West Grinstead but there is no egress at A.24. This part can be explored upstream from and back to Bines bridge. Downstream between the bridge and the confluence some steps, which maintain the upstream level, may be exposed as the tide ebbs.

The Downs Link long distance path crosses the eastern Adur above the confluence and recrosses 2 miles south of it on old railway bridges; beware of swans near here; it is another 2 miles to Upper Beeding bridge GR 192106, near Bramber castle. The current through the narrow bridge can be very fierce - take it centrally. Steyning and Bramber, both picturesque, lie to the west, with shops, inns etc. The A.283 crosses the river south of Beeding. The river continues for another 3 miles through the downs to the new A.27 bridge, closely followed by the interesting Old Shoreham bridge and on to Shoreham harbour. Beware of the tidal race round the supports of the bridges.

Map: O.S. Landranger 198.

## **BASINGSTOKE CANAL**

The Basingstoke Canal, owned jointly by Surrey and Hampshire County Councils, runs from the Wey Navigation at Woodham, near New Haw, to Greywell, near Odiham, 31 miles. Following a lengthy restoration programme by the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society, the Inland waterways Association and the two County Councils, all locks are now in working order.

A very pretty canal throughout, passing, except in Aldershot itself, through heath and woodland, with plentiful bird life, fauna and flora. There are 28 locks in four flights in the first 10 miles between New Haw and Frimley, and then only one more, at Ash, in the remaining 21 miles. The summit level from Ash to Greywell is 15 miles long. All but the last half mile from King John's Castle is navigable. There is a towpath.

For those who do not wish to cope with locks the best part is the 21 miles with only one lock from Frimley Lodge Park, A.321 near Frimley Green, to near North Warnborough, west of Odiham. There is also good access at Reading Road Wharf, Fleet, about halfway, providing two medium paddles of about 10 miles. Access also at most intermediate bridges.

Annual licences for canoes obtainable from the Canal Office, Ash Lock Cottage, Government Road, Aldershot, Hants, GU11 2PS, tel. 0252-313810. Annual licence (1992) K1 £8.22, K2 £11.75. There are also 15 day visitors' licences: K1 £4.11; K2 £5.87. BCU Individual members displaying their current BCU membership stickers can use the canal without taking out a separate licence.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 186.

O.S./Nicholson Guide to the River Thames contains a detailed map, guide, history and illustrations of the Basingstoke canal.

GEO Projects map of the Basingstoke Canal (illustrated), published by GEO Projects (UK) Ltd, Newtown Road, Henley on Thames.

A useful illustrated descriptive folder including a strip map is obtainable from the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society, 14 Dinorben Close, Fleet, Hants, GU13 9SW, the Tourist Information Office, and the Canal Office (see above).

Access points (not a complete list):

Unclassified road near King John's Castle, North Warnborough GR 728518.

Colt Hill, Odiham, GR 716518.

Crookham Village, GR 792517.

Fleet, Reading Road, GR 808537.

Rushmoor, GR 853255.

Frimley Lodge Park, GR 891565.

Woodham lock no 3, Woodlands Road, near West Byfleet station car park, GR 042612.

New Haw bridge (on Wey navigation), GR 056630.

## **BEAULIEU RIVER**

A most charming waterway, winding and well wooded. Popular for sailing. The Beaulieu River is an exception to the rule that there is a public right of navigation on tidal waters. A charge may be levied. Enquiries at Buckler's Hard.

Landings on east shore at Gilbury Hard 2 1/2 miles from Solent; Exbury Village inland 1/2 mile (shop, PO); on west shore at Buckler's Hard 3 miles (inn, parking); at Bailey's Hard 5 miles, and at Beaulieu 6 miles from the Solent respectively. Access also at Lepe along the Solent to the east, towards Calshot, if the sea conditions are favourable.

1st High Water: Dover minus 35 minutes;

2nd High Water: Dover plus 1 hour.

Maps: O.S.Landranger 196 or New Forest Leisure (1:25000)

Charts: Stanfords no. 11; Imray Y.39.

## **CUCKMERE**

A short but very pleasant double run, about 5 miles each way, using the tide through the attractive gap in the South Downs past the picturesque village of Alfriston to Cuckmere Haven, where the striking Seven Sisters

cliffs stretch away to the east. Surfing is sometimes possible at the Haven. There is splendid walking on the Downs in both directions.

The present tidal limit is at a sluice a short way above Alfriston bridge, GR 524035, but formerly it was higher, and this and another sluice higher up are marked on old 1" O.S. maps as "locks". A trip can start in the morning from Alfriston Bridge on the ebb to Exceat and Cuckmere Haven, waiting there for the tide to turn for the return upriver. The flood tide does not top the bar at the mouth until about one and a half hours after low water; and the flood tide should be allowed to run upriver for another hour before starting. Otherwise the paddler will overtake the tide and may find the river too shallow. Car parks in Alfriston.

Doing the double trip in the other direction, the start upriver can begin at Exceat, A.259, GR 518995, where there is a car park. Judge the starting time by the tidal flow so as to make the return on the ebb from Alfriston. Vehicles are not permitted between Exceat and the Haven.

High Water at Exceat approx. same as Dover.  
O.S.Landranger 198.

## **HAMBLE**

The canoeable length is wholly tidal, about 6 miles from Botley to Hamble, and the direction of the trip and the starting and finishing points should be decided on after consulting tide tables. The forking channels to Botley and Curbridge at the upper end are inaccessible at low water. These upper reaches are attractive and may often be best tackled on a there and back basis from Bursledon.

The unusual pattern of tides in Southampton Water, with two High Water times, the first from the flood tide up the Solent, the second from the flood tide up Spithead, produce a helpful build up to a two hour high water, the ebb is short and fast.

The lower river is extremely popular for sailing craft of all sizes. At Hamble



where there is a slipway and car park (GR 484067), hundreds of moored boats line the banks, and it is advisable to keep clear of the main channel. There is also a car park at Hamble Common. Where, at the approach to Bursledon, the river bends to the left, there is a public hard and car park on the right (GR 459093). Approach from A.27 by Shore Road. Just round the bend on the left is the “Jolly Sailor” inn.

Above here there are three bridges, A.27, a railway bridge, and M.27, and then suddenly the upper river is in rural surroundings for the rest of the way. It is still quite wide, with tree and field lined banks. On the left is the Upper Hamble Country Park, and a pontoon used jointly by an activities centre for the disabled, scouts, and the Cricket canoe club. Opposite the pontoon a marker indicates the wreck of a 15th century wooden warship. 2 miles further on at Fairthorne Manor, an adventure centre, the river forks. The tributary stream on the right leads in about 1/2 mile to Curbridge (inn with car park). The river channel to the left becomes narrow and winding and leads in just over a mile to a pool by the A.334 at Botley. Access and egress here are awkward, involving lifting over railings by a very busy road, the car park being about 50 yards away in the village square. It might be preferable to return to the public hard at Bursledon.

Maps: O.S.Landranger 196.

Charts: Stanfords No 11; Imray Y.35

Tides in Southampton Water/Hamble; flood rises 2 hours, then 1 hour slack then again rises 3 1/2 hours to 1st High Water (Dover minus 20 minutes), followed by slight ebb and flood to 2nd High Water (Dover + 1 3/4 hours). Ebb: 3 1/2 hours.

## **MEDWAY - Tonbridge to Maidstone (Upper Medway Navigation)**

18 miles to Maidstone bridge

The Medway is the chief river of Kent, traditionally dividing “Men of Kent” from “Kentishmen”. The Upper Medway Navigation is managed under statutory powers in the Southern Water Authority Act 1982. To use it a

registration certificate from the National Rivers Authority, Southern Region, Guildbourne House, Chatsworth Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1LD, tel. 0903-820692, is needed. Charges (1992) annual (April to March) £10; month £3.90; weekly £2.05.

Month and week registration is also available from Tourist Information Centre, Tonbridge Castle, Castle Street, Tonbridge; NRA at Tonbridge Town Lock, Yalding Depot, Allington Lock and at two marinas at Wateringbury.

Most canoeing activity occurs between Leigh, about 1 mile above Tonbridge, and Allington, 2 miles beyond Maidstone. The width varies between about 10 and 50 m. There are nine locks, which can be portaged without much difficulty.

The river flows through pleasant countryside, rather open as far as Yalding, then between attractive hills to Maidstone. There is some riverside industrial development between East Farleigh and Maidstone. There is a towpath, but in some parts the banks are high or steep-sided.

At Yalding, after the Anchor inn a cut turns left just above the automatic sluices to Hampstead lock, below which the original river can be followed back for a good half mile to Yalding Lees, a large common, and Twyford bridge, below the sluices.

Access: Tonbridge -  
Brightfriars Meadow, car park, N bank, west of the castle.  
Hampstead lock cut, roadside or Yalding - (Twyford bridge), car park.  
Both are about 8 miles from Tonbridge.

Teston lock - parking by railway. 11 miles from Tonbridge.

Maidstone - 1/4 mile below bridge on right, car park.

At the intermediate road bridges access to and from the towpath is not always easy because of lack of parking space or difficult launching.

Most of the river is very popular for coarse fishing, and angling matches during the fishing season are frequent. Anglers and matches must be respected. The close season from March 15 to June 15 gives a useful

period at an attractive time of year when there should be no problems. The weirs associated with the locks, some of which are automatic, should be treated with the utmost caution. When there is any marked river-flow all the weirs are dangerous. In particular, the new weirs at Leigh and Oak lock should not be approached from above or below in any flow conditions; their weir/sluiice tails have major backflow between concrete side-walls and underwater obstructions leaving no way of escape to a canoeist in difficulty.

Beyond Maidstone the river can be followed for another 2 miles to the tidal lock at Allington, beyond which the tidal Lower Medway Navigation is not recommended.

Navigational and other detail:

O.S. Landranger map 188.

Inland Waterways Assn - illustrated Guide to the Medway, IWA Sales, 114 Regents Park Road, London NW1 .

Upper Reaches of the River Medway (strip map), Imray, St Ives, and from map shops.

## **OUSE (Sussex)**

Of the four rivers that flow through the South Downs to the sea the Ouse has cut the longest valley. It is tidal to Barcombe Mills (GR 430149), above which it was in the 1800s a commercial waterway used by narrowboats to above Lindfield. Remains of the locks on this upper part can still be seen in many places.

Below Barcombe Mills (access under the road bridge) the 4 mile section approaching the line of the Downs from the north makes a loop round the isolated Hamsey church. At neap tides there is little or no flow above Hamsey weir at the beginning of the loop. The artificial cut made to avoid the loop is narrow and often weedy and shallow. Lewes is an interesting and historic county town with a castle overlooking the gap through the Downs. Beyond Lewes the river has been embanked and the tide runs quite fast, but the valley itself is pleasant. The direction of the tidal current

should determine the direction of the trip, and spring tides are more interesting than neaps.

Ease of access to the river along the tidal stretch depends very much on how much mud is uncovered by the tide, but is always possible at Newhaven, Piddinghoe (small car park near the church), Southease bridge, and Lewes. At Newhaven and Lewes there is a choice.

Newhaven: public hard (GR 447010); easy access also from most of the west bank from the lifeboat station to the swing bridge, or from Denton island (GR 446015) above the swing bridge.

Lewes: from the public steps on the west bank near the old town bridge (GR 418103), or on the east bank just upstream at GR 419104 by Phoenix bridge (A.26) at high water (car park within carrying distance), or at GR 425093 above the new A.27 bridge on the east bank near the railway bridge, limited parking).

The best double run is from Newhaven to Lewes on the flood starting about 1 hour before high water, returning from Lewes on the ebb. If starting at Lewes or higher up it is best to finish at Newhaven.

High water at Newhaven approximately the same as Dover. 1 hour later at Lewes.

Newhaven to Lewes 7 miles. Newhaven to Barcombe Mills 13 miles.

Map: O.S.Landranger 198

## **ROTHER (East Sussex)**

From Bodiam Bridge, GR 783253, to Scots Float sluice, GR 933226, north of Rye is a pleasant trip of about 12.5 miles. Historically this length and some of the side channels, e.g. round the Isle of Oxney, were influenced by tides, and boats have long navigated the Eastern Rother. The course of the river is easterly along a valley between low hills, parts

being flanked by flood banks, finally bending south near Iden. No locks before Scots Float. Iden lock at the end of the Royal Military Canal is disused. There is no particular point in continuing on the tidal river beyond Scots Float, where there is a road leading to Rye.

Bodiam Castle, dating from 1385 and open to the public (National Trust), adjoins the starting point. Road bridges cross the river at Newenden (A.28), south of Wittersham (the start of the Rother marathon), north of Iden (B.2082), and at Iden lock. Rye, which once was on the sea coast, is a very interesting historical town, well worth visiting. Winchelsea, 2 miles south of Rye, a walled village established to be a port when the sea deserted Rye and later itself silted up, is also worth visiting.

The water levels on the Eastern Rother above Scots Float are managed for land drainage purposes by the National Rivers Authority, Southern Region, Worthing. No licence is needed. Below Scots Float they are also the Rye harbour authority, and harbour dues apply.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 199 and 189.

## **ROYAL MILITARY CANAL**

The Royal Military Canal was constructed as a defence work in Napoleonic times. It runs from Sandgate in a wide curve in front of the hills behind the Romney marshes to Appledore, then SSW to the Rother at Iden lock (disused). From West Hythe dam the canal is under the jurisdiction of the National Rivers Authority, Southern Region, who issue annual licences for small boats at Scots Float Depot, Rye, East Sussex for the length between West Hythe and Iden.

There are no really long straight stretches, as bends were made at intervals as part of its defence function. Between West Hythe and Appledore the canal may be weedy, and is silted up for a short distance beyond Appledore bridge.

Total distance West Hythe to Iden lock 19 miles. From Iden to Appledore 3.2 miles, which can be extended by starting at Scots Float sluice 1 mile along

the river Rother, or further upstream on the Rother.

Map: O.S.Landranger 189

## **STOUR (Kent)**

Fordwich to Plucks Gutter 8 miles.

The Stour is a navigation with a long history, as it served Canterbury. A statute of Henry VIII in 1514 granted rights of navigation above Fordwich to the inhabitants of Canterbury, but was repealed by a Kent County Council Act in the 1970s as one of a number of local Acts thought to be no longer needed. The rights of navigation between Canterbury and the upper tidal limit at Sturry are now in doubt.

From Fordwich bridge the tidal river runs through pleasant countryside past water covered areas caused by subsidence near Chislet to Grove Ferry, inn, 5 miles from Fordwich. The ferry has been replaced by a bridge. There is a choice between returning to Fordwich and continuing for another 3 miles or so to the mouth of the Little Stour and Plucks Gutter bridge (B.2046), inn. Half a mile before the Little Stour a sluice on the left marks the Wantsum, which before reclamation divided the Isle of Thanet from the mainland; but the right to use boats on it is now disputed.

Map: O.S. Landranger 179.

## **THAMES - General**

For hundreds of years the Thames was an important artery for commercial traffic and as one for the four "Great Rivers" of England has been a public navigation since time immemorial. During the 19th century it became increasingly popular for recreational boating. Tourist boats apart, commercial use of the Thames above Teddington has now virtually ceased, but the character of the river and the interest of the countryside and towns through which it flows have maintained its recreational popularity. There are canoe clubs associated with most of the towns, but not all have boathouses.

Above Lechlade the Thames is a narrow stream, scarcely usable except by canoes and small rowing boats. It then flows through quiet open countryside, with few towns and villages, until on approaching Oxford it is flanked by low wooded hills. From Oxford the river is wider, more boats are to be seen, villages and towns are more frequent. Between Wallingford and Maidenhead the hills are closer and more wooded. The river passes many towns and villages that are worth visiting: Oxford, Henley and Windsor are the best known to the ordinary tourist. From Staines riverside bungalows become more frequent, but there are many pleasant reaches all the way to Richmond. The locks - 45 in 120 miles from Lechlade - are not annoyingly close together. The tide flows up to Teddington lock, but a half-tide lock at Richmond keeps up the river level.

The non-tidal part of the Thames, except for the first 11 miles between Cricklade and Lechlade, is regulated by weirs and locks, so that unless it is in spate it can be canoed in either direction. Canoes can use the locks. Moreover, as most of the weir streams were formerly part of the navigable river they can be explored by short portages at the weirs. There are also a number of side-streams which rejoin the main stream, some bypassing locks. On these obstacles such as fallen trees, weeds, sluices, or fences may be encountered, and at some seasons there can be insufficient depth of water.

The public right of navigation on the 135 miles of non-tidal river between Cricklade and Teddington is, by statute, subject to obtaining a registration certificate (including use of locks) from the National Rivers Authority, Thames Region, PO Box 214, Kingsmeadow House, Kingsmeadow Road, Reading, Berks., RG1 8HQ (Tel. 0734-535000) and also from lock keepers. Charges (1992), calendar year £12, one month £6, one to six days £3 or a BCU / WCA membership sticker. On the tidal part below Teddington no licence is required.

To cover the whole non-tidal river in one trip means planning it as a week's holiday or more. For this it is sufficient to use the strip maps and guides commercially available, which give all relevant details. The shorter lengths described in this book are samples of the river's varied characteristics, and do not claim to be the only attractive lengths.

Riverside camping is not easy. The O.S. Landranger maps mark camp sites, and some lock keepers may be able to advise.

Below Richmond the ebb and flood tides run strongly, but one of the attractions of canoeing on the tideway is using the ebb to carry one through the heart of London to Greenwich, and the flood tide to return.

Maps and guides with strip maps are readily obtainable; examples are:

O.S. Landranger maps: 1:50,000; 163, 164, 174, 175, 176.

O.S. Nicholson Guide to the River Thames

Stanfords Map of the River Thames

## **THAMES - 1. Cricklade to Lechlade.**

A narrow, winding stream, not usually navigable except by canoes and small rowing boats. It is usually best in spring and early summer before there is much growth of weed. About 11 miles.

Start at the head of navigation in Cricklade, a short way below the town bridge (GR 103939). The river flows under A.419 through a flat, tranquil, pastoral countryside with only an occasional village. Shallows, small riffles and pools are likely when levels are low. On the bank at Inglesham a short way above Lechlade the Inglesham Round House at the mouth of the tributary Colne marks the end of the derelict Thames and Severn canal. From here the river is wider. Lechlade is an attractive old town. Inns at Cricklade, Castle Eaton and both bridges at Lechlade.

Mileages: Castle Eaton bridge 4.1; Hannington bridge 6.8; Inglesham Round House and footbridge 10.1; Lechlade bridge A.361 10.2; St John's bridge, A.417 11.6 miles.

For a longer paddle the trip can be extended below Lechlade. There are no more shallows and riffles. The countryside maintains its unspectacular character for about 20 miles, with six locks to beyond Northmoor. At Shifford the weir stream (the original river) makes a loop past Duxford village. Inns at Radcot and Tadpole bridges and at Newbridge, where the Windrush



joins the Thames.

Navigational detail: O.S. Landranger 163.

O.S. Nicholson Guide to River Thames.

Stanfords Map of the River Thames.

## **THAMES - 2. Bablock Hythe to Oxford**

10.9 miles by the navigation channel. Further by the Wolvercote circuit.

The river flows northwards with more interesting scenery, flanked on the right by the long ridge of Cumnor hill and Wytham Woods, turning east and south past the other side of the same ridge to Oxford.

At Bablock Hythe Ferry there is an inn on the left bank. There are two locks in the next 6.5 miles, Pinkhill and Eynsham, the latter just beyond the one road bridge, B.4044 at Swinford, connecting Oxford and Eynsham. The Evenlode enters on the left from Eynsham.

1.5 miles beyond the Evenlode (6.5 miles from Bablock Hythe) the navigation cut to King's lock turns off to the right, leading to the picturesque Godstow bridge (nunnery ruins) and lock. Trout Inn above bridge, from which a road leads eastwards to the A.40/A4144 road junction north of Oxford. See also the description of the Wolvercote - Godstow circuit below.

From Godstow the river continues past the Port Meadow to Osney bridge, lock and Folly Bridge, a convenient point for visiting Oxford. Salter's boathouse etc.

There is much of interest to see in Oxford. Street plan and guides to the buildings obtainable at the City information office and bookshops.

### **The Wolvercote - Godstow circuit.**

Instead of taking the King's lock cut, it is possible to continue along the

river round Pixey Mead to a weir at Wolvercote, and by a portage back to the usual channel below Godstow lock, which enables an interesting circuit to be made. The first half of the river is a recognised route used by boats passing from the Thames to the Oxford Canal, which is reached by a short canal (Duke's Cut) turning off to the left under A.40 and the railway to join the Oxford canal. The Oxford Canal can be followed to its terminus in Oxford, where the Sheepwash channel makes a short connection to the Thames above Osney.

Navigational detail: O.S. Landranger 164.

O.S. Nicholson Guide to River Thames.

Stanfords Map of the River Thames.

### **THAMES - 3. Wallingford to Pangbourne or Caversham.**

10 miles and 16 miles.

This is one of the most agreeable touring areas along the course of the Thames. Wallingford marks the transition from the rather open countryside below Oxford to a narrower valley with more interesting scenery. Leaving behind the conspicuous Sinodun Hills, from the top of which there is a good view of the Berkshire Downs to the west and the country between Oxford and the Chilterns on the east, the Thames passes the old market town of Wallingford. The river is wider; it is flanked increasingly by wooded hills as it flows by the Chiltern Hills and through the Streatley gap between them and the Berkshire Downs.

After a visit to the historic village of Dorchester, a start can readily be made at Wallingford bridge, with good public car parks nearby. Between here and Cleeve lock there is a 5 mile lock-free stretch, progress along which can be judged by three landmarks: Moulsoford railway bridge, 3.6 miles below Wallingford bridge, and two riverside inns, the Beetle and Wedge on the right bank half a mile further on, and the Leather Bottle on the left bank half a mile before Cleeve lock. Goring lock and bridge (B.4009) is only 3/4 mile beyond Cleeve. Goring on left (inn near the lock, and Goring station beyond), Streatley village to the left on A.329. From the hill

behind Streatley there is a fine view up the valley towards the Sinodun Hills and downstream towards Pangbourne. Some 2 1/2 miles below Goring is the Child Beale Wildlife Park, which lies in meadowland on the right.

At the Streatley gap between the Berkshire Downs and the Chiltern Hills the wooded hills close in on both sides and give the river a picturesque setting past Whitchurch and Pangbourne to Mapledurham. 4 miles from Streatley is Whitchurch lock and bridge (B.471), inn. Pangbourne (station) lies to the right of Whitchurch bridge on A.329. Go through the lock (portage difficult) and you can disembark after the bridge on the right in meadowland adjacent to Pangbourne centre and small public car park, about 10 miles from Wallingford.

Alternatively, carry on downstream through the attractive valley for another 2.3 miles to Mapledurham lock. Here there is no road bridge and the lock is some way from the main road. Although there is a narrow unclassified road on the east bank, it would probably be more convenient to return to Pangbourne or, better, continue for another 3 miles to the rowing club 150 yards above Caversham bridge on the right bank, where there is a public car park.

Navigational detail: O.S. Landranger 174.

O.S. Nicholson Guide to River Thames.

Stanfords Map of the River Thames.

## **THAMES - 4. Caversham (Reading) to Henley.**

9.8 miles.

After the urban area of Reading the Thames continues its picturesque course through the wooded Chiltern Hills for another 24 miles to Maidenhead, Henley being just short of halfway.

Caversham car park is about 150 yards above Caversham bridge on the right (south) bank. Launch near Reading Rowing Club and pass under

Caversham and Reading bridges. Caversham lock is about 3/4 mile from the start. The river Kennet, up which is the beginning of the Kennet and Avon Canal, enters 3/4 mile below the lock on the right.

After just over a mile the Thames reaches Sonning lock and bridge, and its very picturesque village. The next lock is nearly 3 miles ahead. at Shiplake. But it is more interesting to take St. Patrick's Stream, which leads off the main river sharply to the right 1.3 miles below Sonning. It is officially navigable, but a low sill has recently been built across the entrance to discourage larger craft. In low water this can be lifted over. The Stream winds down with a faster current to join the River Loddon on the right, leading back to the main river below Shiplake lock. (St Patrick's Stream is a fisherman's paradise; it is not very wide, so be courteous, keep away from their lines and avoid styles of paddling that might hamper them.) After a railway bridge, and Wargrave on the right, the narrow Hennerton backwater diverges to the right, giving another alternative to the main river, which it rejoins about half a mile above Marsh lock. Henley bridge A.423 is a mile ahead. Landing on the left, above the bridge, where there is also car parking.

Navigational detail: O.S. Landranger 175.

O.S. Nicholson Guide to River Thames.

## **THAMES - 5. Henley to Maidenhead.**

14.6 miles.

The river's picturesque course through the wooded Chiltern Hills continues. Some think this is the best part of the whole stretch from Streatley to Maidenhead.

From Henley bridge A.423 the route lies along the Henley regatta course and round to Hambleden lock and weir. Slalom site.

Three miles on is Hurley lock; Hurley village and road leading to A.423 on the right. There are pleasant backwaters reached by portages at the weirs, followed in half a mile by Temple lock. Not far beyond on the right is

Bisham Abbey, a historic building now occupied by the Sports Council as a national recreation centre.

Marlow suspension bridge and lock (8.1 miles from Henley) come into view round the bend of the river. This and Marlow Reach beyond are much used by canoeists.

After the end of the wooded Quarry Hill on the right the river, here much used for sailing, opens out more, passes Bourne End, reaching Cookham bridge, over 3 miles from Marlow. The centre channel leads to Cookham lock. On the wooded hills ahead Cliveden is conspicuous. The wooded hill gets gradually lower to Boulter's lock, with an inn, beside A.4094, convenient for Maidenhead. Land on right about 50 yards above the lock in the right hand channel. Car park across the road.

Navigational detail: O.S. Landranger 175.

O.S. Nicholson Guide to River Thames.

Stanfords Map of the River Thames.

## **THAMES - 6. Maidenhead to Staines.**

13.6 miles.

This length is scenically less interesting than those above Maidenhead, but is still very pleasant and passes several interesting and historical places. It is probably better taken in the upstream direction starting from Bell Weir lock, to Boveney lock and back to Windsor, about 10 miles, as the part between Maidenhead and Boveney is rather dull.

From Boulter's lock the river flows for 2 miles under Maidenhead bridge (A.4), Brunel's railway bridge and the M.4 to Bray lock, and then for another 3 miles past Monkey Island to Boveney lock. This has an apparently isolated situation, considering the short distance to Windsor. After Windsor race course on the right, and a sharp bend, followed by the A.332 Windsor bypass bridge and a railway bridge, Windsor castle, splendidly situated on the hill behind the town comes fully into view. Eton College meadows

and chapel can be seen to the left. Landing on the right above Windsor bridge is possible for visiting the town, castle and Great Park.

Windsor town bridge is now closed to cars. There are two stations nearby. Beyond the bridge and boat landings the cut to Romney lock is on the right. If the river is running strongly beware of a standing wave across the entrance to the lock cut. If in doubt, inspect, and maybe portage. Beyond the lock the river passes under a railway bridge and later the Victoria road bridge (2 miles below Windsor bridge) leading to Datchet. For the 1.5 miles from here to the Albert road bridge the river runs alongside Windsor Home Park and landing on the right bank is prohibited.

The navigation cut to Old Windsor lock bypasses a long loop and the lock is followed by an attractive reach past the Bells of Ouseley inn on right to historic Runnymede and Magna Carta Island, where King John was confronted by barons in 1215 and granted the Great Charter. Runnymede is now a broad and attractive public open space, traversed close to the river by A.308 and backed by Cooper's Hill.

Bell Weir lock is just beyond. Access to A.308, A.30 and M.25. Staines bridge is a mile further on.

Navigational detail: O.S. Landranger 175, 176.

O.S. Nicholson Guide to River Thames.

Stanfords Map of the River Thames.

## **THAMES - 7. Bell Weir lock, Staines, to Hampton Court.**

14 miles.

This stretch of the Thames is within the outer periphery of Greater London, but there are long lengths where suburbanisation is not noticeable, and some of the old riverside villages have retained their characteristic appearance. The hills are left behind, but there is ample scope for enjoyable canoeing. These waters are used by several canoe clubs. Hampton Court Palace, dating from the 16th century and extended at the

end of the 17th century, with its gardens and Home Park, is open to the public, and a visit is rewarding. Nearby is Bushey Park, the large deer park associated with Hampton Court.

Road access from A.308, A.30 and M.25 (via A.30) at Bell Weir Lock, Staines.

In about a mile the river goes under Staines road and railway bridges with the town on the left. It is rather suburban for 2 miles to Penton Hook lock, where the main river diverges to the right over a weir in a big loop (Penton Hook) back to the lock. The river then passes through more open countryside. Beyond Laleham on the left is Laleham Park, a large public open space behind the riverside road, which continues, giving good access to the river, along the river bank under the M.3 bridge to Chertsey lock and bridge (2 miles from Penton Hook). There are inns by the bridge. Opposite the lock the Camping and Caravanning Club has a riverside site, used for many years by its canoe section, the Canoe-camping Club.

The river continues past Chertsey Mead for 2 miles to Shepperton lock (7 miles from Bell Weir). Beside the lock weirs lead past a slalom site to a very pleasant group of backwaters into which the River Wey and the Wey Navigation enter on the right. Elmbridge CC and Weybridge on the right.

A quarter of a mile beyond, turn left and follow the winding course of the main river past Shepperton and Halliford , inn, on left. The Desborough flood channel, which diverges right under a bridge is straight and 1 mile shorter, but less interesting.

In 2 miles the river reaches Walton bridge A.244, past open ground giving road access, with marina etc. It leads in 1 1/2 miles to Sunbury lock, which is preceded by several weirs and a long backwater along the north side of the river. Sunbury on the north bank. Hampton is on the left after 2 miles. Westel-Thames CC is located on the left by the Bell inn, Hampton ferry. Another mile brings you to Molesey lock (14 miles from Bell Weir), with road access on right to A.309 and Hampton Court station. Hampton Court Palace is beyond the bridge on the left, and the River Mole enters on the right.

Navigational detail: O.S. Landranger 176  
O.S. Nicholson Guide to River Thames  
Stanfords Map of the River Thames

## **THAMES - 8. Hampton Court to Richmond Bridge.**

7 miles.

This short length passes several landmarks of interest, as well as including some pleasant scenery. Access to the river on the south bank between Molesey lock and Hampton Court bridge. The River Mole enters the Thames opposite the Palace. The first 2 1/2 miles to Kingston bridge curves round Hampton Court Park, past Thames Ditton, but is not very interesting in itself. Beyond Kingston bridge and its boat landings and boatyards the banks become more interesting. The towpath runs continuously to Richmond on the right bank. On the left, on Trowlock Island, half a mile from Kingston, is the boathouse of the Royal Canoe Club, the first British canoe club, founded in 1866. After another half mile, Teddington lock and footbridge. This is the last lock on the non-tidal river. An obelisk 250 yards beyond marks the beginning of the tideway under the control of the Port of London Authority. High water: Dover plus 4 hrs 4 mins (London Bridge plus 1 hr 15 mins). Small skiff lock or portage the boat rollers.

Along the 3 miles from Teddington to Richmond the tidal influence is small, as the water level is kept up by a half-tide sluice below Richmond. Normally the river above Richmond bridge can be canoed in either direction without difficulty.

Beyond Teddington lock the entrance to Ham Dock (Thames Young Mariners) will be seen on the right. About halfway to Richmond there is a landing on the left bank behind Eel Pie Island with road access at Twickenham. Further on, as the magnificent background of Richmond Hill comes into view behind Petersham meadows there is a good landing immediately before the 17th century mansion Ham House on the right with road access to Ham. At Richmond the boathouse of Richmond CC is



on the right by the “Three Pigeons” above the bridge. There is little point in going beyond here unless continuing down the tideway to Brentford and Kew. Richmond half-tide sluice is open to paddle through for 2 hours before and after high water. High water: Dover plus 3 hrs 50mins (London Bridge plus 1hr 11mins). Average duration of the ebb: 9hrs 10mins; flood 3hrs 7mins.

Navigational detail: O.S. Landranger 176.

O.S. Nicholson Guide to River Thames.

Stanfords Map of the River Thames.

## **THAMES TIDEWAY - 1. Richmond Bridge to Putney.**

8.5 miles.

This part of the Thames tideway has long and quite attractive stretches not lined with houses and buildings. For two hours before and two hours after high water the sluices at Richmond lock, half a mile below Richmond bridge, are open, and can be passed without change of water level. Below them the direction of tidal flow is important, especially at times of spring tides. It is less strong on the inside of bends and close to the banks, but it is much better to time the trip so as to minimise the need to paddle against it. The reaches beyond Kew are quite wide. Wind against tide can produce quite rough water, and because the course of the river is sinuous water conditions can be very variable. The towpath is on the right throughout.

From Richmond lock on the right the Old Deer Park and Kew Gardens extend for almost 3 miles to Kew bridge. Part way along the Old Deer Park the channel to the left of the island (Isleworth Ait) leads past the old part of Isleworth. There is a landing and access on the left at the London Apprentice pub near Isleworth church (1.2 miles from Richmond Bridge). Syon Park extends on the left for over a mile to the entrance of the Grand Union Canal. Beyond this are several islands (Brentford Ait) followed by Kew Bridge. Between Kew Bridge and the railway bridge beyond it there is landing and access on the left at Strand on the Green (about 3.2 miles from Richmond).

The long curving reaches between here and Putney are much used by rowing clubs. The course of the annual Oxford and Cambridge boat race and the annual Head of the River race, rowed in the reverse direction, extends between Chiswick Bridge and Putney. Beyond Barnes railway bridge (5 miles from Richmond), there is hard landing and road access (B.350) on the right, and half a mile further along, on the left, there is another hard landing between Chiswick church and Chiswick Ait. It is another 2.5 miles under Hammersmith suspension bridge to a good landing and road access on the right at Putney Hard above the bridge.

At Richmond lock,

High Water: Dover plus 3hrs 50 mins (London Bridge plus 1hr 11mins)

Average duration of ebb: 9hrs 10mins; flood 3hrs 7mins.

At Putney, High Water is about half an hour earlier, duration of ebb about 1 1/2 hours less, flood about 1 1/2 hours more, than at Richmond.

Map: O.S. Landranger 176

## **THAMES TIDEWAY - 2. Putney to Greenwich.**

12.5 miles.

On a good day the tideway between Putney and Greenwich can offer an enjoyable trip through the heart of central London, past the Tower and dockland. But the tideway needs to be treated with respect.

The tidal flow is strong, especially at the time of spring tides. It should be used, not fought. The reaches are quite wide. Wind against tide produces quite rough waves, and because the course of the river is winding, almost any trip will provide these conditions somewhere, often with a head wind. It is essential when setting the time for starting and returning to study the tides and make careful calculations about the time of high and low water, so that the tidal flow is always helping you. Be careful to check whether

the tide tables give Dover or London Bridge times and Greenwich Mean Time or British Summer Time.

Below Westminster there are often many fast motor driven craft which create awkward obliquely moving wash. Take avoiding action to keep out of the way of all other craft, and assume that they are not going to give way to you. Also, when pausing out of the main stream, watch that you are not drifting unwittingly towards moored barges and ships, or bridge piers. The flow under or round them can be strong enough to drag a canoe under or upset it. Swimming in the tideway is not to be recommended. Go properly equipped with spray deck and buoyancy in a group with others who have experience of paddling this type of water.

Putney Hard and the landing adjoining Greenwich Pier offer the most convenient points with good road access for starting, turning or finishing, but landing is possible at a number of intermediate points.

The Port of London Authority, Thames House, Gallions Entrance, London E.16 (071-476 5005) must be notified beforehand with details of the route and time of the planned trip. This is a safety precaution. They will probably also want to know about the experience of the participants.

Distances (miles) from Putney, right bank above bridge, with good road access:

- 1.5 Wandsworth Bridge.
- 2 Railway bridge. Landing on R near Battersea church.
- 3 Battersea and Albert Bridges.
- 3.5 Chelsea Bridge.
- 4.5 Vauxhall Bridge.
- 5 Lambeth Bridge.
- 5.5 Westminster Bridge. Landing at steps R. There are several other steps and stairs and several bridges before
- 7.5 London Bridge.
- 8 Tower Bridge. Landing on L before the Tower gardens.
- 9 "Prospect of Whitby" L. Landing adjoining, bad at low tide.
- 9.5 Shadwell Basin entrance L, youth sports centre.

- 10 Limehouse L and entrance to the Regents Canal. Much redevelopment of old docks on both sides of the river.
- 12.5 Greenwich Pier, R. Land above pier near sailing ship 'Cutty Sark'. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich Park and Observatory.

Tidal constants:

Dover plus L.Bridge	hrs min	plus min
Putney	3 18	39
London Bridge	2 39	-
Greenwich Pier	2 25	minus 14

The ebb lasts about 7hrs and the flood about 5hrs.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 176, 177

## WEY

A tributary of the Thames with two headstreams, one rising near Haslemere, the other near Alton, joining at Tilford, Surrey, then flowing first through sandy heathland, then below Guildford through lowland countryside to the Thames at Weybridge. It is a pleasant river, normally carrying enough water to float a canoe from Farnham, but above Godalming is private water.

The National Trust is the navigation authority for a statutory 17th century navigation from Godalming to Weybridge, 19 1/2 miles, partly along the river and partly along artificial cuts, popular with canoes and larger pleasure craft, and supporting a variety of water birds, fauna and flora. Canoe licences from the Wey Navigation, Dapdune Lea, Wharf Road, Guildford, GU1 4RR; telephone (0483) 61389 for application form; a lock winch can be hired. Also from Guildford Boathouse, Stoke Lock, Pyrford Marina and Thames Lock. Licence (1992) annual £12, under age of 16 £7; 21 days £6; 7 day £4. The British Canoe Union membership sticker gives exemption. The Wey Navigation has a towpath throughout, and road access at almost every road bridge. The recently restored Basingstoke Canal, 30 miles long, joins the Navigation at Woodham, near New Haw.

Throughout its length the navigation avoids suburban areas. There are many points of interest: Newark priory, Sutton Place (stately home), Guildford (guildhall, castle and other old buildings, modern cathedral and university), St Catherine's chapel ruins at Pilgrim's Way crossing, old buildings at Godalming. There are 16 locks over the total 19 1/2 miles, but two of them are water level control locks, normally open.

Pleasantest stretches:

Godalming Bridge (A.3100) to Mill Mead Lock (Guildford Bridge), 4 1/2 miles.

Dapdune Wharf (Guildford) or Stoke Bridge (A.320) to Walsham Lock and New Haw (A.318), 10 miles.

Several sidestreams bypassed by the artificial cuts can be explored. The original river (which is best done in the close season, mid- March to mid-June) takes a somewhat longer course of about 6 miles from Walsham Lock to Weybridge via Wisley and Byfleet, with one weir at Byfleet Mill. This must be bypassed by a sharp turn left into a narrow side stream 1/4 mile above the mill with a short portage at the end. In high water it is advisable to stop here and exit to Byfleet village via the lane on the left. The stretch beyond Byfleet A.245 bridge should not be attempted in such conditions, as there is a serious hazard in spate conditions where the river passes under the banking of the old Brooklands motor race track.

From the A.245 bridge a green gantry carrying a pipe can be seen crossing the river. If there is not plenty of headroom under the gantry, the Brooklands bridge (out of sight beyond) will be impractical for lack of headroom. Landing either at the gantry, where there is a rough path on the left, or at Brooklands, is difficult.

Maps and guides obtainable from book and map shops:

O.S. Landranger 186, 187.

O.S. Nicholson Guide to River Thames also covers River Wey. IWA River Wey Guide, IWA Sales, 114 Regents Park Rd, London NW1 8UQ.

Wey Navigation 4 ins/1 mile strip map, Imray, St. Ives.

## CHICHESTER HARBOUR

Chichester Harbour is the most attractive of three enclosed tidal waters on the Sussex - Hampshire border, and popular for sailing craft. It has four inland branches, of which Bosham and Chichester Channels are the most sheltered and attractive for canoeing. At the seaward end the dunes of East Head (National Trust) protect a sandy beach from which there is a view inland to the South Downs.

If the wind is more than slight paddling conditions on the more open areas can be unpleasant. Canoeists need to choose calm days and work with the tides, which run strongly. The flood tide runs for 7 hours until High Water (Dover plus 15 minutes). The ebb at springs runs with great strength out of the mouth of the harbour reaching 6 knots off Hayling Island, and can produce a very nasty sea on the shallow area to the west of East Head. It is advisable when paddling between West Itchenor and East Head to keep close to the east shore and inside the spur of East Head.

### **Access:**

On Bosham Channel, at Bosham, 1 mile south of A.27. Good landing behind the church at most stages of the tide. Bosham was a harbour in Roman and Saxon times. It is a picturesque village, with shops, inns, and a boatyard near the church.

On Chichester Channel, at Dell Quay, 1/2 mile west off A.286; Birdham and West Itchenor, both reached by turnings off B.2179.

Dell Quay is a group of houses with an inn, and boatyard. Good landing at most states of the tide.

Birdham village lies back from the shore. Access at the entrance to the Chichester Canal where there is also a yacht basin. The Chichester Canal leads to a basin close to Chichester station, but is blocked at several places and reedy. Although work is in progress at the Chichester end to clear the canal, it is not a practical water approach to the harbour at present.

West Itchenor lies opposite the entrance to Bosham Channel. There is a slip with good landing at most states of the tide. It is a sailing centre and has an inn and a car park.

At East Head: There is a large car park, with facilities, between West Wittering and East Head, with a footpath across the dunes to the harbour inside East Head at a sandy beach.

Distances:

Bosham to West Itchenor 1 1/2 miles; to East Head 5 miles.

Dell Quay to West Itchenor 2 1/2 miles; to East Head 6 miles.

Birdham to West Itchenor 1 1/2 miles.

West Itchenor to East Head 3 1/2 miles.

Bosham - West Itchenor - Dell Quay 4 miles is the most sheltered stretch.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 197.

Charts: Stanfords no. 10; Imray Y.33.

## **GRAND UNION CANAL - Bletchley to Cosgrove**

Use of the canal requires a licence from British Waterways Board or a BCU/WCA membership sticker on deck.

Launch into the canal above the lock at Fenny Stratford on the southern outskirts of Milton Keynes, just south of Fenny Stratford itself on Watling Street. From here you have twelve miles through the heart of Milton Keynes.

The first mile takes you through the outskirts of Fenny Stratford and the older villages but new housing starts to predominate. The new marina at Woughton on the left provides one of the new centres for larger craft together with a pub. Open areas abound beside the canal and the tow path has been opened up for enjoyment by the public.

On the left the serpentine terrace of Peartree gives way to private housing in Springfield. The right bank is mainly open park dropping away to the River Ousel.

Bridge 83 allows you to walk down (right) to one of the older pubs, the Barge at Little Woolstone.

Now you are in the heart of the new city with housing on both sides but generally kept back from the canal to allow for parkland. After the new road bridge, joining Central Milton Keynes to the M1, the left bank opens out into City Park. Bridge 81B carries the main park path down to Willen Lake. Views left over the cricket square up the the beacon on the belvedere and the city shopping centre. Another new road bridge brings an end to city centre and returns to housing on the left and open walks continue on the right.

Bridge 79D brings the private moorings of Pennylands on the left followed in about a mile by the Lionhearts Cruising Club moorings.

Bridge 78 offers you a stop for refreshment at the Giffard Park right. This is a suitable spot for a support car to meet.

Watch for the Old Wharfe House on the right followed by an industrial building built over the entrance to the old canal branch to Newport Pagnell. Great Linford comes up next on the left with its old church.

Eight miles brings you to the Black Horse pub on the Newport Pagnell to Wolverton road bridge 76 which is another good access point. Another mile and you pass under this road again.

Bridge 72 offers the New Inn on the left, followed by Old Bradwell right and the new aqueduct over Grafton Street. Through the back of Wolverton industrial area (note the railway mural decorating the old wall on the left) and past the railway station.

Bridge 68 we pass under the Old Wolverton Road with the Galleon Inn on the left. Another half mile takes you across the old aqueduct and on to



Cosgrove lock. The old iron trunk is a magnificent construction which avoided the necessity of taking the canal down to the level of the Great Ouse below and then up again on the other side of the valley. Either stop at the lock or continue for another half mile to the road bridge in Cosgrove village to finish.

## **SOUTH WEST REGION**

### **BARLE**

The River Barle runs within the boundaries of the Exmoor National Park which is an area of outstanding natural beauty. It provides continuous grade 2 white water which is usually not technically difficult, but which can be most exciting at high levels. The public has no right of navigation.

An access agreement currently (1992) allows canoeing by BCU/WCA/CANI/SCA members holding written permission from the BCU Local Access Officer during a limited period each year. Canoeing in this area is closely watched and monitored by the riparian owners and many other locals. In the past they have been suitably impressed with the general level of behaviour, and have subsequently offered a longer season. Please continue to uphold this standard of behaviour so that the situation can continue. The present season is from 1 October to 30 March.

Tarr Steps (GR 868322) is the present upstream limit of the agreement. Here there is no parking on the river bank, since this would block the turning circle. There is however a public car park just up the hill, where you will also find public toilets.

Most of this early section is fairly straightforward, although at high flow, the speed of the current can present problems to a swimmer. Breakouts are few and far between and trees overhanging the bank can be a danger. There is a well defined track which follows the river, but in the case of an emergency, the only way out is to follow the river.

Water Levels:

Low, Grade 2 if you can get under the stone clapper bridge at Tarr Steps.

Normal, Grade 2/3 if there is up to six inches between the water and the underside of the bridge.

High, Grade 3 if the water is level with the top of the bridge. Flood, Grade 4 if the water flows over the bridge. Marsh Bridge (GR 908289) is where the river starts to reach civilisation. There is limited parking here and direct access to the water.

On the outskirts of Dulverton is Dulverton Weir (GR 916284) where trees on an island in mid-river can cause problems along with the weir itself. Between here and Dulverton Bridge (GR 912278) is a series of falls which can be tricky, the last one in particular having a nasty hole that tips in the unwary or the inexperienced. These drops are inescapable since a portage here is virtually impossible to arrange. Dulverton Bridge (GR 912278).

Plenty of parking here alongside the H.Q. of the Exmoor National Park. Access to the water via a slipway on the left hand bank immediately upstream of the bridge. There are toilets behind the offices, and the small country town has all the usual facilities.

Water levels:

Low, Grade 1/2 if there are rocks showing here.

Normal, Grade 2 if there is up to 6 feet clearance below the bridge.

High, Grade 3 if there is less than 6 feet clearance.

This section is again straightforward with several sets of bouncy rapids, one small weir and one very large weir - Beasley Weir (GR 919270). Here portage is strongly recommended, using the left hand bank, since there are all sorts of fish counters and other paraphernalia hanging in the water.

Below the second weir, which is the smaller of the two, the river Exe joins from the left, considerably swelling the volume and size of the stream, even at low flow.

At Exebridge (GR 930245), leave the water just upstream of the bridge on the left hand bank. The landlord of the Anchor Inn will usually allow you

to use his car park, but ask first. Phone 0398 23433. We can recommend his hospitality.

Total distance 9 miles.

Tarr Steps to Marsh Bridge, 5 miles.

Marsh Bridge to Dulverton Bridge, 1 mile.

Dulverton Bridge to Exebridge, 4 miles.

Map: O.S Exmoor Tourist Map or Landranger 181.

WRITTEN PERMISSION TO CANOE THIS RIVER MUST BE OBTAINED IN ADVANCE FROM THE B.C.U. LOCAL ACCESS OFFICER.

The BCU Local Access Officer (1992) is Mr G. Warnecke, 15 Longfield, Mells, Frome, BA11 3PY.

## **DART - Buckfast to Totnes**

Much has been written about the various stretches of the River Dart, which is probably the prime white water canoeing river in the whole of the South of England. We include a section which is less popular than the often overcrowded "Loop" between Newbridge and Holne Bridge, but which will still present a challenge to many paddlers. The moving water and the weirs on this section ensure that it is at least a grade 2 paddle, which deserves more respect if the levels are high since the water flows very fast indeed. The public has no right of navigation. An access agreement currently (1992) allows canoeing by BCU/WCA/CANI/SCA members holding written permission from the BCU Local Access Officer during a limited period each year. The present canoeing season is from October 1 to January 31.

At Buckfast, where you will find shops, garage, pubs and the Abbey, park in a lay by on either side of the old Exeter road (B3357). DO NOT use the Little Chef Car Park.(GR 745667). Cross the field between the Exeter road and the A38 and launch into the main river via the small River Ashburn. (It might just be possible to paddle down, depending on the level of the water.)

On the Dart at half a mile, Salmon Leap Weir is a six stepped weir which is usually shot left or far left of centre. There is no actual portage agreement here, but the often used portage is a bit of a scramble on the left bank.

At 3 miles is Riverford Bridge (absolutely no access) followed shortly by Hood Weir, now almost totally disintegrated, the only problem being the many fallen trees that get caught up here.

At 4 miles is Staverton Bridge where access is possible from the left hand bank immediately after the bridge (GR 785637). Pub and telephone nearby. Within half a mile is Staverton Weir, shootable with caution, but beware of the rocks at the end of the shoot. Portage to the left of the shoot if necessary.

The water now slows as it is ponded back until after 3 miles you arrive at the very big Totnes Weir. This is normally shot along the wall or down the steps. Make your own decision, but it is very big! If in doubt portage right of the wall down the weir.

From this point the river is affected by the tide. Shoot through the railway bridge ( 2nd arch right) and the new road bridge to reach Totnes Old Town Quay on your left. There are various exit points but the best is probably near to the Rowing Club where there is a large pay and display car park.

Totnes has all the facilities of a small town including some fine pubs and tourist attractions such as the Castle and a Car Museum. There are steamer trips from here to Dartmouth.

Total distance 8 miles.

Map O.S.Landranger 202 or Dartmoor Tourist Map.

**WRITTEN PERMISSION TO CANOE THIS RIVER MUST BE OBTAINED IN ADVANCE FROM THE B.C.U. LOCAL ACCESS OFFICER.**

The B.C.U. Local Access Officer (1992) is Mr K. Chamberlain, Wydemeet, Hexworthy, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 6SF.

## DART ESTUARY

The tidal waters of an estuary are not subject to the same sort of restrictions as apply to boats on the upper river. This Estuary is controlled by the Dart Navigation Authority, and it is within their powers to charge fees. A day licence is available from the Harbour Masters Office at Dartmouth.

From Totnes, the River meanders through a sunken or drowned valley, which becomes wider and deeper as you approach the mouth. It is recommended that you try and catch the tide whenever possible, since the flow can be anything up to 7 knots. High tide at Totnes is approximately one hour after Dartmouth, where it is 5 hours before high water at Dover.

Paddlers should beware of pleasure cruisers, steamers and cargo ships which come right up to Totnes. Beware also of the winds which can be a hazard, seemingly coming at you from all directions. Conditions can and do change rapidly as you paddle around the next bend in the river. Towards low tide, keep to the main channel. The mud banks, particularly above Dittisham, are very prolific.

Around Totnes Steamer Quay, (GR 808597) there are many car parks, but the area furthest down the road is probably the most convenient to the canoeist (pay and display). There are toilets and a snack bar nearby. Totnes of course has all the facilities of a small town. Shops, pubs, cafes, and restaurants, as well as several tourist attractions such as the Castle and a Car Museum. In the summer months there is a popular street market when many of the locals dress in Elizabethan costumes.

Launch from the steps near to the Rowing Club on the east bank and set off down stream. After 3 miles you will pass Sharpham Point of Sharpham House on your right hand. A little further on the same bank is Sharpham Wood with its heronry.

After 4 miles, on your left is Duncannon followed quickly by Bow Creek on your right. At high tide this creek is canoeable to the pub at Bow Bridge, but at low tide, only the pub at Tuckenhay is possible.

The river now becomes very wide for the next mile or so to Stoke Reach. Keep to the main channel which is close to the left hand bank. There are shallows and mud banks on the right, especially at low water. This stretch becomes very rough with very big waves in any windy weather. It is very wide and can be quite intimidating.

Stoke Reach on your left hand leads back to the village of Stoke Gabriel. Here are pubs, shops, parking and a public telephone.

At 7 miles on the right hand you arrive at Dittisham. Here is a good popular pub on the water's edge with the village on the hillside behind. Opposite on the left hand bank is Greenaway Quay with its passenger ferry, do not attempt to land on the Quay; the owner will ask for a landing fee. There is a very strong current here, especially on the ebb tide, and lots of moored pleasure boats.

After 8 miles on the left hand bank is Noss Creek with a large boat yard at its end. On the right bank after another mile or so is the Britannia Royal Naval College. Beware of naval craft on manoeuvres. Just further downstream is the first of the vehicle ferries, the Higher Ferry. This works by sunken chains as it plies its way back and forward across the river and should be given a very wide berth.

From here onwards both banks become more and more busy with Kingswear on your left and Dartmouth on your right. On the Kingswear side you will now see the line of the Paignton to Kingswear Steam Railway. There is a large marina here, where it may be possible to arrange access and parking, or else land at the landing place just after the lower ferry and walk back to your car at the station car park. It is suggested that you land on the Kingswear side since for normal purposes it is closer to Totnes to shuttle cars. Those who choose to land at Dartmouth should use the Quay or the Inner Harbour. There is very limited paying parking, or, if you are very lucky a roadside spot if you have a non-canoeing driver. Before landing most canoeists will want to paddle down into the mouth of the estuary. You will see on the right Dartmouth Castle at the far end of the town before turning around to return to your chosen landing point. The mouth of the estuary can be quite rough with large waves and a great deal of traffic.

As well as the side creeks mentioned there are several others which allow the paddlers to choose whether to look for a secluded picnic spot or to visit the more obvious attractions of the waterside pubs. To paddle from Totnes to Kingswear stopping for your picnic lunch and a pint at the pub at Dittisham is to be heartily recommended as a midsummer outing.

Map: O.S. Landranger 202

## **EXE - Exebridge to Bolham**

The Exe is most famous for the Exe Descent which is held annually in November over a course from Salmon Ponds, Tiverton to the Quay at Exeter. This article however aims to give a picture of another section of the river further upstream which many will find to be very attractive.

The Exe is the major river of the area and drains a very large area of countryside. It rises high on Exmoor, in fact only five or six miles from the north coast, and flows to the sea at Exmouth. Over the years the river has been intensively managed, weirs have been built to pond back water for irrigation, to provide power for mills and for drinking. All the weirs on the river are shootable with care, although the nearer you get to Exeter the bigger they become and the more stopper power they exert.

The section described is grade 2 but at high flow beware the speed of the water as well as the numerous overhanging trees which might present problems, especially to a swimmer. Often the water is quite shallow and in many respects this section is ideal for open canadians. It is also suitable for those looking to gain experience and might make an ideal first big river trip for a novice. The Tiverton to Dulverton Road follows the river fairly closely and there are many points where a land crew may see the paddlers.

There is no right of navigation for the public. An access agreement currently (1992) allows canoeing by BCU/WCA/CANI/SCA members holding written permission from the BCU Local Access Officer during a limited period each year. For this stretch the present canoeing season is from October 1 to February 14.

At the Anchor Inn at Exebridge, near Dulverton (GR 930245), the landlord is very friendly and will usually allow you to launch from his car park, just upstream of the bridge. From here to Oakford Bridge (GR 919219) you will encounter two rambling and broken weirs, and the bridge itself ponds back the water and can present problems to the timid paddler. The water is normally quite shallow but does move along at fair speed. 2 1/4 miles.

At the Black Cat Garage the old A361 Taunton to South Molton road crosses the river and about a quarter of a mile downstream is the first of the compact weirs which show some of the power of the river. Further downstream care is needed to avoid the rocks in the river bed and by a fishing shack on the righthand bank is the first small rapid followed shortly by a more continuous set of rapids as the river takes a right hand bend upstream of the river Bathern joining on the right. 5 1/2 miles.

On you right you will now see the large rock faces of the Cove Quarries and having passed under a disused railway bridge there is a tricky spot with an island in mid-river. The right hand channel presents problems with two overhanging trees, the left hand is more straightforward but shallow and narrow.

The river now continues to flow between open fields and the wooded hillsides with small rapids and riffles presenting few problems. At Washfield Weir (8 1/4 miles), GR 943160, shoot down the wall before breaking right to find the deeper water to finally reach Bolham Weir (GR 948153), 8 3/4 miles from Exebridge and about 2 miles north of Tiverton . This weir is now a nasty concrete faced drop following work by the Water Authority in the not too distant past. There is a considerable regular, even holding, stopper; however the water is usually only knee to waist deep. The other drop below the main weir face contains some very large irregular rocks which can cause your canoe to stop dead if you hit one head on. The recommended route is to keep about six feet from the left hand bank. Land on the left hand bank and walk back to the road, or get out on the left hand bank above the weir.

There is limited parking in the road just upstream of the weir, with better parking some 200 yards back towards Dulverton. Unfortunately for our



purposes the old lay-by that we used to use was blocked up to stop the hippies camping in it.

Map: O.S. Landranger 181 or Exmoor Tourist Map

**WRITTEN PERMISSION TO CANOE THIS RIVER MUST BE OBTAINED IN ADVANCE FROM THE BCU LOCAL ACCESS OFFICER**

The B.C.U. Local Access Officer (1992) is Mr A Box, 9 Tuckers Meadow, Crediton, Devon, EX17 3NT.

### **EXE - Bolham to Bickleigh**

This section describes the very popular Bolham to Bickleigh stretch of the River Exe. The river is heavily fished and the Riparian Owners Association is very strong.

There is no right of navigation for the public.

An access agreement currently (1992) allows canoeing by BCU/WCA/CANI/SCA members with written permission from the BCU Local Access Officer during a limited period each year. **THIS MUST BE OBTAINED IN ADVANCE** (enclosing a s.a.e.). The BCU Local Access Officer (1992) is Adam Box, 9 Tuckers Meadow, Crediton. The present (1992) canoeing season is mid-October to mid-February.

At Bolham, about 2 miles north of Tiverton on the A396, park in a lay-by near to the South West Water intake point, or further along towards Dulverton in another convenient lay-by. N.B. The old lay-by which was the traditional starting point is now blocked to prevent access to hippies and travellers (and canoeists).

Immediately after the intake point there is a double weir (GR 948153) with a severe holding stopper below the first drop and some large rocks below the second drop. There is a shoot on the far left and a sloping fish run on the far right. However careful inspection is recommended.

After about 3/4 mile the river narrows to pour under Worth Bridge (Private

road). Beware here because trees often get caught on the bridge and further restrict the way past.

After 1.5 miles the water becomes slower and deeper as you approach the Salmon Pool Steps which are heralded by a low bridge/walkway across the river. In the past this bridge was used to fit “pins” or “slats” which locked together to dam back the river, thereby providing water for power and washing processes at the textile mill at Tiverton. The intake point can still be seen on the right bank. (GR 949139)

The steps which give the weir its name run under the trees on the left hand bank and get progressively more difficult as you descend. Beware the water coming in from the weir face on the right hand side and the big hole below the long final pool. Alternatively shoot straight down the weir face by a variety of possible routes but it might be quite shallow.

Below the weir the river is still shallow as you pass below the north Devon link road A361 and skirt around the secondary school between very high banks. As the river bends around to the left the water speeds up as you pass down the rapid beneath the Kennedy Way road bridge.

For the next mile or so the water slows as you pass the textile factory on your right hand through the small town of Tiverton. About 100 yards below the Town Bridge (GR 954126) is Town Weir where the best line is down the left hand side, but beware the high wall on your left which the current will try to push you into. Its only too easy to get your paddles tangled up and capsize here.

More fast flowing broken water as you pass under the now disused railway bridge to reach Waldrons Weir (GR 953120). Between Tiverton Town Bridge and Waldrons Weir a riverside walkway allows easy access for support crews and spectators 3.5 miles from Bolham.

After Waldrons settle down for a session of hard paddling as you pass several small riffles until you reach the Suspension Bridge Rapid after about 1.5 miles. Here a series of rock ledges and boulders restrict the flow to provide a short section of white water and often big bouncy standing waves.

Another session of hard paddling again through shallow water in places will bring you to Broken Weir (GR 941078). There are many shoots possible here, much will depend on conditions on the day, the water level and the number of trees caught here from the last flood. The weir certainly lives up to its name being largely made up of big broken boulders. There is a fish run on the left hand side which may offer a route down but beware of the small islands and other obstructions in the river immediately below the weir.

More deep water as you pass under another disused railway bridge to Bickleigh Weir which is immediately down stream of the bridge carrying the A396 Exeter to Tiverton road (GR 937075). Be careful because it is almost impossible to get close enough to the bridge to inspect from the water without being swept over the weir face. 6 miles from Bolham.

The stopper below this weir provides a fine opportunity for the posers to impress the public or their friends watching from the popular Fishermans Cott pub on the right hand bank. The story goes that Paul Simon stayed here and was inspired to write "Bridge over troubled water" sometime in the 60s.

Exit onto a stony bank on the left hand side where a small track leads back to the road. There is ample parking here but please use the car park, which is actually reached by passing under the main road. The management of the Fishermans Cott do welcome the canoeists but do rightly object to bare bodies changing in the car park. Please be discreet!

Map: O.S. Exmoor Tourist Map.

## **EXE ESTUARY**

The object of this section is to provide an idea for the summer months when the rivers are not available and to give a circular route thus avoiding having to paddle over the same stretch of water twice and the need to spend a long period shuttling cars.

The starting point is at the Quay in Exeter (GR 918919). Here in Haven

Rd. there is plenty of free parking and there are many features that will interest any non paddlers in the party. The City and Cathedral are within easy walking distance and immediately to hand is the Maritime Museum and a ten pin bowling alley. Those with long memories might recognise the area around the Prospect Inn on the city side of the river as the Liverpool of the BBC TV "Onedin Line".

To make life easier for yourselves you should as far as possible try to arrange for the early part of your trip to coincide with high tide. High tide at Topsham/Salmon Pool is approximately 30 minutes after Exmouth.

Setting of downstream you soon reach Trews Weir. On the right you will pass the lock gates leading to the Canal and the flood channel overflow and associated mechanisms. The weir, built to provide a head of water for the extension of the Canal in 1780 is shootable at most times since even when the water is low, the diagonal fish ladder/wall will provide sufficient depth.

Many of the old buildings on the left have disappeared, to be replaced by yuppie housing. The cream-washed building is dated 1774 and is known as the Old Match Factory. Its actual history is unclear and the name is probably incorrect. In the 19th Century, flax was produced here and some of the old granite troughs can be seen in the grounds.

On the left are the old nursery gardens of the City Parks Dept. the source of many of the plants that helped to win prizes in the Britain in Bloom competitions. Soon you will reach Salmon Pool Weir (GR 919909). A shoot is usually possible either down the face or again using the diagonal fish ladder/wall. If the River is high, beware the strong holding stopper. If low, beware the rocks in the river bed as the weir pool is affected by the tide. Here is an important salmon fishery. If there is anyone fishing or preparing to fish, please be polite and courteous and ask if you may pass through. It might sometimes be necessary to make a short portage along either bank. It is possible to portage back into the Canal from an inlet on your right hand across a football field .

The River now can get very shallow and you will often disturb shoals of

mullet in the shallow water. As you sweep around behind some very desirable residences you arrive at Countess Wear Bridge (GR 942395). Until 1282, the Estuary was tidal right up to the Quay where you started your trip. Isabella de Fortibus changed all that by building a weir somewhere near the present bridge thus diverting trade to Topsham which she owned. Efforts to retrieve the situation were unsuccessful until in 1563 a canal was built.

At certain states of the tide there are strong eddies and standing waves downstream of the bridge. About 150 yards downstream it is possible to portage over a narrow strip of land into the Canal.

On the left hand bank, on either side of the present bridge is a creek which was in the 18th century the site of a ship building yard. Vessels of up to 600 tons were apparently built and launched here. The shallow river being unsuitable for conventional launchings, a system was evolved whereby ships were raised onto floating casks, chained to kegs and then towed out to deeper waters. Also in this area in a road now known as Glasshouse Lane is the site of an 18th century glass works which used coal or "culm" mined from a spot on the present day University campus. Back on the water you pass the sewage works on your right before passing under the modern motorway bridge through the reed beds and extensive moored boats to reach Topsham on your left hand. Here another portage to the Canal is possible using the slipway of the passenger ferry (GR 965881). The Topsham lock back to the canal is disused and blanked off.

Many of the buildings and walls of Topsham are built from materials which were imported as ballast on ships trading into the Estuary. In keeping with this foreign influence there are many different styles of architecture. Topsham has all the features of a small town, including some splendid pubs.

Leaving the town, the Estuary now begins to widen and the deep water channel starts to meander. The most direct route to your destination may not be the quickest and you will be well advised to stay in the channel indicated by the buoys and marker posts. At this point you are going across the grain of the Estuary and at certain states of the wind and tide it can be

quite rough. Eventually the channel sweeps around to the left and you will arrive at the deep water entry channel to the Canal at Turf (GR 965861). Get out onto the “quay” at any convenient point but do watch out for the mud. It is very sticky and smelly! Portage the short distance past the lock to re launch in the wide mooring basin of the Canal.

Turf is an isolated spot and can only be reached by water or foot. The Hotel here is substantially as it was designed by James Green when in 1823 the original canal was extended. The entrance lock has curved gates originally built all in wood but lately replaced with more modern materials. The top gate has two ground paddles and three gate paddles, the bottom one has six gate paddles. All the paddles are operated by hand windlasses. The chamber is 122 feet long but as the central rails of the gates are removable ships of up to 136 feet can be accommodated. The curved sill of the higher gate is 7ft.6ins above the lower and the average rise is about 10 feet. This obviously varies as the entrance approach is tidal. Traffic through the lock has now decreased and the only ship of any size still going in and out is the S.W. Water sewage sludge vessel. Even this will stop soon as sludge dumping at sea is to be discontinued. The Council has ambitious plans to turn the Canal into a sort of marina and hopes to attract pleasure sailors during summer months.

Pause to rest at Turf and sample the hospitality of the Hotel and their barbecue or even eat your sandwiches in the spacious grounds before setting off back to Exeter again on the deep still water of the Canal.

The first section runs straight with the estuary only feet away on your right to a wooden footbridge which is at the head of the slipway reached by the passenger ferry from Topsham. The footpath from here crosses the marshes to reach another well known pub, The Swans Nest, at Exminster. Topsham Lock is now disused and the former keepers cottage is used for holiday accommodation.

Further on, near a hazard warning notice the Canal narrows and the curved stones of the entrance sluice to Trews Canal are still clearly visible. On the hill to the left are the extensive buildings of the former Exminster Mental Hospital, now closed as all the patients were returned to the care of the community.

Beneath the motorway and on the right hand bank is the mooring berth of the sewage sludge vessel and the Canal opens out to be almost lake-like. On the left are the remains of a wharf which served the lime kilns that can still be seen in the undergrowth. The Canal now narrows again and you reach the University Rowing Club Boathouse and the crossing point of the old A38, the infamous Exeter bypass known for its traffic jams on summer weekends. There are two bridges, the old swing bridge and a newer lifting bridge opened in 1971.

At the Double Locks is another Inn, this one dating from 1701 but now much altered. The actual lock pond is very large, some 312ft. by 25ft. and the gate paddles are operated by wheels instead of windlasses. The gates nearest to the pub have wooden balance beams which are made from timber taken from the HMS Exeter during a refit at Devonport in 1940 following action at the River Plate.

The Canal now skirts the edge of the Marsh Barton trading estate and away in front is a fine view of the city and the cathedral. At the Welcome Inn it may be possible to branch right through the Kings Arms Cut to regain the river and to return to your original starting point, providing the gates are open. Alternatively continue into the Basin where you will be able to inspect many of the floating exhibits of the Maritime Museum from the water level. These include a Chinese junk, a steam tugboat and an early steam dredger.

Leave the water by using either the landing stage and ramp of the Exeter Canoe and Rowing Clubs or of the Haven Banks Outdoor Activities Centre. If the Canoe Club is open please ask if you can use the changing rooms and showers and maybe come into the bar for a drink afterwards.

Thus you have completed your round trip, a total journey of some 12 miles, although shorter journeys are possible using the intermediate portages indicated. Both weirs are shootable but you should formulate your own plans according to the prevailing conditions and the make up of your party.

Map: O.S. Landranger 192

## **AVON (Bristol).**

The Avon Navigation, which continues the Kennet & Avon Canal from Bath to Bristol, is slow moving and generally follows a winding course which has been navigable since 1727. There are weirs and locks at Weston (Bath), Kelston, Saltford, Swineford, Keynsham, Hanham and Netham (Bristol). A tow path follows the river and is part of the Avon Walkway. The disused track of the old Midland Railway, now a cycle path, crosses the river four times between Weston Lock and Keynsham.

A BWB licence is required between Bath and Hanham, unless you have a BCU/WCA membership sticker. Below Hanham the river and the Docks are controlled by the Port of Bristol Authority and their licence is required. This can be obtained from the Harbour Master's Office, Underfall Yard, Cumberland Road, Bristol.

Canoeing is only one of many water sports activities on the river and therefore co-operation with the other users is important. Rowing Clubs operate above Kelston and Netham Weirs, and Saltford Sailing Club is situated upstream of Saltford Weir. With the re-opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal, boaters are using the river in ever greater numbers and the area has a large number of regular anglers. The fishing season is between the 16th June and the 16th March.

To avoid the industrial areas of Bath, the recommended starting point is either at Weston Lock or at the Bath Boating Station at Newbridge. There are a number of finishing points according to the distance you wish to paddle, Keynsham (7 miles), Hanham (9.5 miles) or Conham River Park (12 miles).

Weston Lock (GR 753649). From Locksbrook Rd, Bath. The towpath is by the road and you can launch from the steps on the lower side of the Lock.

Newbridge (GR 717658). Alternative starting point. Launch from the towpath on the right, just upstream of the bridge, between the bridge and the entrance to Bath Marina. It is also possible to launch from the slip at



the Boathouse PH, but permission should be obtained first.

Kelston Lock (GR 688669). The weir is usually shootable, but there is any easy portage at the lock on the right. There is a public car park and toilets at The Shallows on the left after the weir.

Saltford Lock (GR 693670). The weir is usually shootable, but there is an easy portage over the lock island on the left. The Jolly Sailor PH and car park is adjacent to the lock.

Swineford Lock (GR 692689). The weir is not shootable since the water downstream is too shallow. Portage at the lock on the left. No road access.

Keynsham Lock (GR 659691). Again the weir is not shootable, portage at the lock on right. The R. Chew enters from the left just below the weir. There is a car park by Keynsham Bridge in the slip road to the Lock Keeper PH.

Hanham Lock (GR 647701). The Chequers PH and car park is on the right bank. If continuing downstream, there is a small broken weir which is easily shot on the right. The drop is approx. 1 foot but this may be covered by a high tide. Very high tides can reach Keynsham Weir.

Conham River Park (GR 629722). On the right bank is a picnic area and car park which provides an ideal finishing point.

Map: O.S. Landranger 172

## **BATH CIRCUIT TOUR**

An (almost) circular tour which uses the re-opened Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Avon. The Canal originally opened in 1810. This section climbs up the hillside from the River Avon at Bath and then runs level along the side of the picturesque narrow wooded Avon valley with two spectacular aqueducts at Dundas and Avoncliffe, as well as a Pumping Station at Claverton (open Sundays between April and October.)

A BWB licence is required unless you have a BCU/WCA membership sticker.

The suggested starting point is at Bathampton (GR 777665) 2.5 miles from the start of the canal. By launching on to the canal by Bathampton Church and the George PH, you will avoid the awkward 0.5 mile portage over the 6 locks of the Widcombe flight at Bath. There are no other locks between Bath and Bradford on Avon. Arrange to shuttle cars to Green Park Road car park, Bath, near Churchill Bridge or be prepared to walk back to your car after your paddle.

There are several possible transfer points from the canal back to the river, depending on the distance you wish to paddle:

At Claverton/Warleigh Weir (GR 791643) 2 miles from the start.

At Dundas Aqueduct (GR 785625) 3 miles from the start.

At Avoncliffe Aqueduct (GR 804601) 5.75 miles from the start.

An interesting 1.5 mile extension can be made on the canal to Bradford on Avon, which is a picturesque and historic stonebuilt little town with an ancient bridge and chapel, old weavers' houses and an old Saxon church. Return to Avoncliffe on the canal.

The return trip by the River Avon to the centre of Bath starts at Avoncliffe.

Avoncliffe (10 miles to finish point). An easy portage to the river under the Aqueduct. The Cross Guns PH and tea shop nearby.

Limpley Stoke Weir (GR 782611) (8 miles to finish point). Portage on left over the face of the weir.

Limpley Stoke bridge. A small step under the bridge is usually covered and quite shootable.

Dundas Aqueduct (7 miles to finish point). Portage from the left hand side of the canal, path down to the river by the Rowing Club on the right below bridge.

Warleigh or Claverton (5.75 miles from the finish point). Portage from canal down the road and over the railway line. Pumping Station on left by the railway crossing.

Bathamton Weir (GR 774669) (2.5 miles from the finish point) Portage on left or over the face if low water. Usually shootable.

Pulteney Weir, Bath (GR 753649) ( 1 mile from the finish point). Portage on left over the boat slide. In low water conditions the horse shoe shaped weir can be shot over the ledges in the centre. In high water, the weir is very dangerous and canoeists have been drowned here.

FINISH (GR 747645). 0.75 miles after Pulteney Weir, pass the entrance to the Kennet & Avon Canal on the left. Egress on the right, just after Churchill Bridge. Cross over Green Park Road to car parks.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 172 and 173

Guide: O.S./Nicholson: Guide to Inland Waterways (South)

## **CULM - Cullompton to Hele**

The River Culm rises on the Devon and Somerset border and flows in a south westerly direction to join the R. Exe at Stoke Canon just upstream from the City of Exeter. Along much of its length this small river has been extensively managed to provide power and irrigation. There are numerous mills which harness the water power. This in turn means that at most times of the year there is a good rate of flow. A nice little trip of about 5 miles with a sting in the tail.

There is no navigation right for the public. and no access agreement. Before deciding whether or when to paddle this river advice about access must be sought in advance from the BCU Local Access Officer, Mr D. Walls, 71 Butts Road, Exeter, EX2 5EG.

A good starting point can be found at Cullompton where just adjacent to the M.5 motorway slip road, an access road to a small industrial estate

has a ramp on the right which leads down to the water level. If there is enough water here to paddle under the motorway, there will be enough for the whole trip. (GR 026078)

The River is never far from the motorway or the main Paddington to Exeter railway line and immediately under the first motorway bridge another branch of the river joins from the right, considerably raising the amount of water in the river. At the second crossing of the motorway beware of a series of metal gates which are hung on the downstream side of the bridge to catch floating debris.

There are several small rapids and tight bends to negotiate as you proceed but in normal flow the river is never more than a grade 1, although it still has the capacity to catch the unwary or provide a challenge for the improver.

Finally the water begins to pond back and become deeper and slower as you approach the Hele Paper Mills. Ahead the water vanishes through a metal grill, whilst to the left a sloping weir drops down and under the building which is on concrete pillars before bending to the left and flowing along the side of the mill. Pass under the bridge which carries the road to Bradninch and now to your right down a 2 or 3 feet drop with a series of standing waves. Disembark on the right hand side where a scramble up a steep boulder bank leads to the car park of the social club of the paper mill. (GR 992023)

Map: O.S. Landranger 192 or Exmoor Tourist Map

### **TAMAR ESTUARY - Round trip at top end.**

These sheltered waters wind through a very beautiful steep sided valley bordered at many places by woods, and are regularly used by local canoeists. The water in the river channel flows with the direction of tidal flow, with only small eddies close to the banks.

The route suggested for this paddle uses the channel between half-tide

and high water i.e. starting off when the incoming flood tide reverses the natural outward river flow, and paddling with the flow up-river to the beginning of the old Tamar canal, returning on the flood tide to the starting point before the water level has dropped too far. As the tide ebbs it reveals mud which makes landing increasingly unpleasant, and usually impossible at intermediate points between the points recommended. High water is about 1 hour after high water at Plymouth.

Start at Calstock, Cornwall, GR 436685, in an attractive historic setting below the railway viaduct. There is a public slipway and car park alongside the river, with pubs, cafe, shops and toilet. The route follows the river leftwards, passing Morwellham Quay on the Devon bank (GR 446697) in about 3 miles, continuing past Morwell Wood another 2 miles to the point where the almost dry Tamar canal channel diverges on the left. Here it is possible to land at any stage of the tide. About 200 metres from the landing a track leads behind some cottages past Lock Cottage (on the old canal) and on for about 3/4 mile with gradually improving surface to Gunnislake. A car can be brought as far as Lock Cottage, but this is not really a very convenient access point. It is better to return down the river when the tide turns. The river can be followed up another half mile to the weir at Weir Head, but there is no access or landing there.

Calstock - Weir Head and back to Calstock 10 miles.

An alternative starting point, which adds a mile to the journey in each direction, is at Cotehele Quay, Cornwall, GR 423681, which is a picturesque National Trust property with an ample car park and a slipway, for which a small day launching fee is levied, usable at all states of the tide. There is a cafe and restaurant and museum. Cotehele House, woods and gardens are on the hillside behind the quay.

Morwellham Open Air Museum is an extensive industrial archaeological area with interesting restored buildings and features dating from the 19th Century when the quay was a busy inland port from which copper, silver, lead, and arsenic mined in the hills behind were shipped to South Wales and elsewhere. There is ample parking, a shop, cafe and much to see and do. Admission fees are payable. Allow 4 to 5 hours for a visit. It is

private land, including the quay. Contact Morwellham Recreation Centre, Tavistock 832766, for permission to land or launch, though canoeists are welcome.

Landing below half-tide at Morwellham is very difficult because of deep steep mud banks. There is a slipway usable above half-tide leading to the dock, which dries out. To combine a complete visit to the Morwellham buildings and features with the round trip described above would be hardly possible. But with careful timing, it might just be possible to make a separate paddle up to the quay from Calstock, visit the principal sights and return to Calshot when the tide turns.

### **KENNET & AVON CANAL - 1. Wootton Rivers or Pewsey to Devizes.**

Use of the canal requires a licence from British Waterways Board or a BCU/WCA membership sticker on deck.

14 or 12.5 miles

There is easy access at Wootton Rivers, GR 198629, and a very pleasant paddle westwards to Pewsey. The wharf at Pewsey, GR 157611, has car parking, toilets and a small cafe. The wharf building houses information about the canal, and the town of Pewsey is a short walk away.

From Pewsey the canal winds through scenic Wiltshire along the Vale of Pewsey, where you can see the White Horse carved on a hillside. Just past the timber yard at Honey Street (some interesting pedigree ducks here!) on the towpath side is a pub ideally placed for a lunch stop (about 8 miles to go to Devizes). Continue on past All Cannings - the canal then takes a large loop to Horton bridge - and finally gets to Devizes wharf. Here you will find Tourist Information, souvenirs, crafts and refreshments, and toilets. The town is worth a visit if you have time to walk a short distance.

There are no portages.

The tour is equally pleasant if done in the opposite direction.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 173.

GEO Projects Map of the Kennet & Avon canal, from GEO Projects (UK) Ltd, Newtown Road, Henley on Thames, RG9 1HG  
Imray, Kennet & Avon Waterway, eastern chart.

## **KENNET & AVON CANAL - 2. Crofton to Kintbury.**

Use of the canal requires a licence from British Waterways or a BCU/WCA membership sticker on deck.

10 miles.

An interesting start to the trip is a visit to the famous Crofton pumping station, where you may be able to see one of the early 19th century beam engines working. Even if they are not in steam that day, the beam engines are fascinating and well worth a visit.

Park beside the level crossing at Crofton, and launch below the bridge, GR 263624. Paddle through Little and Great Bedwyn - avoiding attacks by swans. There are many portages at locks on this stretch, but enjoyable paddling nevertheless.

Hungerford is a lovely town, worth a walk round, if there is time. This is 6.5 miles from Crofton, and might be a good place for lunch. Soon after is Dun Mill lock - the portage here is across a bridge and in the other side of the river. A very pleasant area, usually occupied by a narrow boat selling drinks etc at weekends in summer.

Kintbury has a splendid pub right beside the canal - an excellent place to finish. GR 386672. Easy parking on the north side of the canal - but please do not leave your car in the pub car park while you are paddling.

10 locks to Hungerford. Another 4 to Kintbury.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 174

GEO Projects Map of the Kennet & Avon Canal, from GEO Projects (UK) Ltd, Newtown Road, Henley on Thames, RG9 1HG

Imray, Kennet & Avon Waterway, eastern chart.

## **WEST MIDLAND REGION**

### **AVON (Stratford) - General.**

The river Avon starts its life at Welford on the Northamptonshire and Leicestershire border, it is then joined by a stream from Sulby reservoir and then flows into Stanford reservoir. After this it flows through Rugby, Kenilworth, Warwick, Stratford, Evesham, Pershore and joins the river Severn just after Tewksbury.

The river is grade 0/1 through all its length with many weirs. After Stratford it is canalised for the rest of its course and it runs still and deep with the only respite being the weirs, which all must be treated with caution in medium or high water. Below Stratford motor cruisers can be a hazard in the better weather. The river can be canoed from Rugby in wet weather and it can become clogged with reeds and weed in the summer but gets clearer as it progresses.

Permission must be sought to pass through sections before Stratford they are:

Stoneleigh Park, The Estate Office, Stoneleigh Abbey, Warwickshire.

Warwick Castle Park, Park Office, Warwick, Warwickshire.

Charlecote Park, The Curator, Charlecote Park, Warwickshire.

A licence is required below Stratford-on-Avon from the Upper Avon Navigation Trust Ltd., Bridge 63, Harvington, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 5NR or the BCU membership sticker provides exemption. Below Evesham lock a licence is required from the Lower Avon Navigation Trust Ltd., at the Avon Lock, Strensham Lock or Evesham Lock.



## **AVON (Stratford) - Leamington to Stratford.**

Start at Leamington Canoe Club on the River Leam 0.7 miles above its confluence with the Avon.

Miles (Numbering starts at Rugby)

- 30.5 Portobello bridge, (A445), Leamington. River Leam joins here.
- 31 Grand Union canal aqueduct, easy portage to canal, followed by railway bridge.
- 32.5 Warwick bridge, (A425), access from park upstream left. Watch for chain across bridge arch.
- 32.6 Warwick Castle weir and old bridge, weir cannot be shot, shallow at foot. Watch for ferry rope at foot also, can be portaged on the left.
- 35 Leafield bridge, (private road).
- 36 Longbridge bridge, (A41).
- 37 Barford Mill, (disused), portage right between landing stages into lower stream.
- 37.5 Barford bridge, (A429), river shallow before bridge.
- 42 Hampton Lucy mill, land and portage on the right at first weir before the mill, road bridge just after the mill.
- 42.5 Charlecote Park, there are deer gates at both sides of the park, River Deane joins in the park, the river may be blocked by rushes in the summer.
- 44.2 Alveston Mill, (site of), access from left bank by road, (B4085).
- 46.2 Tiddington, access at the end of lane, GR 221561.
- 48 Stratford bridges, (A3400,A422), Stratford canal joins from the right 100 metres after foot bridge.

## **AVON (Stratford) - Stratford to Bidford.**

- 48.5 Lucy's Mill weir, choice of two weirs, right one has a stopper, left one is easier. Can be portaged on the left.
- 48.7 By-pass bridge, (A3400), and foot bridge.
- 49 Weir, Brake lock and weir.
- 49.8 Railway bridge.
- 50 River Stour joins from the left.
- 51.5 Luddington, weir and lock, always inspect weir, very rocky in low

water, shoot on the right side in medium/high water. Land on concrete slipway to inspect.

- 53.2 Binton bridge. "Four Alls" public house upstream left, good lunch stop.
- 54.5 Welford lock and weir, weir gentle slope easy shoot centre.
- 56.3 Pilgrim lock and weir.
- 57 Barton lock and weir.
- 57.8 Bidford bridge, (B4085), the main navigation goes through the far left arch. Access from park downstream left.

### **AVON (Stratford) - Bidford to Fladbury.**

- 59 Marcliff lock and weir.
- 59.5 River Arrow joins from the right.
- 61.5 Harvington Mill. Old gently sloping weir on the right side of the river. Shoot in the centre, rapids below. The lock is straight ahead.
- 62 Fish & Anchor Inn, access from the B4510 at the side of the ford. This can be tricky in all but low water, a better landing can be made at the caravan site 200 metres upstream, but see site manager first. Gentle fall at edge of ford.
- 62.2 Lock channel joins from the right. A good 1.8 mile novice circuit, over the weir, through rapid, over ford, up the lock channel, portage lock and back to the weir top.
- 64.5 Offenham, Evesham by-pass bridge, (A435).
- 65.1 Railway bridge.
- 65.4 Evesham lock and weir, shoot centre to right in low water, always inspect in medium/high water.
- 65.6 Evesham, Workman bridge, public park on the left just after the bridge, ideal for a lunch stop or access. Car parking.
- 65.8 Evesham bridge, (A435), public park just before the bridge on the right, access, car parking.
- 66.4 River Isbourne joins from the left.
- 66.9 Hampton Ferry, (wire across river).
- 67.5 Railway bridge.
- 68.5 Chadbury lock and weir, shoot right hand side.
- 70.5 Railway bridge, Fladbury Canoe Clubhouse right, access and parking.

- 71 Fladbury lock and weir, weir is on the right side of the lock house, this can be shot anywhere along its length. Access from bank above weir top on the right, parking 100 metres.

### **AVON (Stratford) - Fladbury to Tewkesbury.**

- 71.2 Fladbury bridge, (Jubilee bridge).  
75.5 Wyre Mill weir and lock, shoot on the left.  
76.5 Pershore weir and lock.  
77 Pershore bridges, old and new, (A44), access from left bank between bridges, from public car park.  
81.7 Nafford weir and lock.  
83 Eckington bridge, (B4080), access from upstream left bank, car park.  
84 Railway bridge.  
85.5 Strensham weir and lock, footbridge in 200 metres.  
88 Motorway bridge, (M5).  
88.5 Twyning ferry.  
91 Tewkesbury weir and lock, weir is on the right, shoot or portage left, the river Severn is now half a mile downstream. Alternative route, go left of the weir and lock and go down the town branch for convenient egress on right. This brinch reaches the river Severn in about a mile.

### **TEME.**

The River Teme rises on Kerry Hill on the Welsh border from where it flows in a generally south east direction through Knighton, Ludlow, Tenbury, Martley and on to Powick where it joins the river Severn.

The river can be canoed from Knighton in spate but the general starting point is Dinham weir at Ludlow where access can be obtained from the park or Whitcliff Common.

The river is graded 1/2 from Ludlow to Little Hereford and then grade 1 down to the Severn.

There are two alternatives:

1. tour with weirs from here to Little Hereford bridge or
2. an easy tour from Ashford bridge to the end.

Miles (numbering starts at Knighton)

- 24.6 Above Dinham bridge. Public park, car park, toilets, access from landing stage.
- 24.7 Dinham weir, shoot centre to left in all states. Good play wave at left end. Chain across the top of the weir in the summer to stop hire boats but can be ducked under.
- 24.8 Dinham bridge, access downstream right from Whitcliff common.
- 25 Weir, can be shot in all states but in medium/high water the tow back is deceptive, a canoe will get caught and it is a long scull to get out. After the weir go to the left of the first island and then go to the right of the second.
- 25.3 Ludford bridge, shoot centre or right arches (right arch may be shallow). Ludford Mill weir, this is a "v" shaped weir with the point facing upstream, the top right hand corner is broken, the main stream curves left then right ending in a stopper wave which can be penetrated in most states. It is then followed by a tail of standing waves. NOTE THAT THE OWNER OF THE WEIR LIVES IN THE HOUSE OVERLOOKING THE WEIR AND DOES NOT LIKE NOISY CANOEISTS SO PLEASE KEEP QUIET. IF ASKED TO MOVE ON PLEASE DO SO IMMEDIATELY. Portage in low water over the right hand weir sill, there is no portage in high water but the right hand weir can be shot safely at the far end.
- 25.6 Weir, at an acute angle across the river. Always inspect in high water. In low water it can be shot only at the right end but this end is dangerous in high water and it is best to go to the far left end in these conditions. Access/egress at grass bank above weir to Temeside (road name) from grass bank above weir.
- 25.8 Pipe bridge.
- 26.1 Pipe bridge. (Elan valley to Birmingham).
- 26.5 Small rapid, shoot right in all states.
- 27.5 Bridge, (A49), followed in 100 yds by railway bridge.
- 28 Ashford bridge, followed in 100 yds by Ashford weir, this is a curved weir and must be inspected in flood conditions. It can be shot in

most states by using a simple rule, shoot in the middle in low water and to the left in high water. Portage by landing left bank and carry around the mill, access by prior

arrangement with the mill owner. Beach 300 yds after is a good lunch stop.

30 Barret's Mill, broken weir, go left of island in all states, tricky right turn at the bottom in high water.

30.5 Large pool on corner followed by a small rapid.

31 Demolished aqueduct, shoot through centre arch, small rapid after.

31.6 Little Hereford bridge, (A456), access just after bridge on the right, small car park 50 yds.

32 Little Hereford church and footbridge, egress on the left and walk through church yard. Ideal parking on old railway track bed by level crossing 100 metres from the church.

32.1 Small rock ledge, small rapid follows.

34.2 Bridge, Farm road.

34.8 Ledwyche Brook joins from the left, Burford House and gardens on the left.

35.2 Burford weir, 1.5 ft high weir, gap on the left. Nice play weir.

35.7 Tenbury bridge, (A4112), access downstream right up slipway to town.

## **WYE - Upper - Glasbury to Whitney.**

The river Wye runs off Plynlimon Fawr not far from the source of the river Severn. The river flows in a southerly direction through Rhayader, Builth Wells, Hay, Hereford, Ross, Monmouth and Chepstow, it then runs into the Severn estuary not far from the Severn Bridge.

This river is predominantly in England and is one of the best touring waters in Britain with excellent scenery and the occasional small rapid. In high water the rapids are washed out and the river can run with considerable speed.

Above Hay-on-Wye the river provides some good canoeing but there is no established statutory right of navigation. From Glasbury to Hay-on-Wye

canoeists may normally travel up and down the river without express permission as a result of arrangements made with riparian and fishing owners.

#### Miles

- 0 Glasbury bridge, (A438), shallow after, keep left. Access from land upstream left of the bridge, car park by the public toilets, go through gate by the scout hut. Wye Valley Canoe shop just after the bridge.
- 3 Shallows, take the right side, watch out for submerged rocks.
- 4 Wye Cliffe weir, shoot on the right.
- 5.5 Hay bridge, (B4348), rocky section after the bridge in low water. Access from downstream right bank by outfall “steps” onto footpath.
- 10 Whitney Toll bridge, (B4350), access from slipway, upstream left bank. There is a charge for the use of this slipway of £1 per boat but it is usually possible to negotiate a party rate with the owner of the bridge, ask at cafe.

### **WYE - Middle parts.**

The Wye from Glasbury to Chepstow is an enjoyable tour of about 100 miles, with no weirs, and alternating placid and short lively stretches, nothing over grade 1. There is an undisputed right of navigation below Hay, but relatively few access points from roads. For full details see the Canoeists’ Guide to the River Wye (Shoesmith) obtainable from BCU Supplies, which contains navigational detail, a strip map, and particulars of access points and camp sites.

Hereford, an interesting historic cathedral city, about a third of the way down the valley, makes the best approach to the middle parts. Two sections are suggested for short paddles: Whitney to Byford, including Monnington Falls, and Mordiford to Ross-on-Wye.

### **Wye - Whitney Bridge to Byford (14 miles).**

Access from a private slipway on the left bank, upstream of the toll bridge,

near A438. A charge is made. Apply at the cafe.

The river makes a long bend to the east, and meanders through flatter but pleasant countryside. It passes the Boat Inn on the left, but landing is not permitted there. There is a sharp bend to Lockster's Pol, where there is a farm on the right, where camping may be permitted, reachable by a lane. Launching or landing only with permission. For the next few miles the river is placid with minor rapids from time to time, and a few shallows.

Eventually, 9 miles from Whitney, shortly after Little Scar, landing is permitted downstream of Bredwardine Bridge on the left. The road leads up to the A438 (GR 337448). Dredwardine village is on the other side of the river with post office, shop and inn.

After a sharp bend 2.5 miles further on, the river passes the Scar, a high cliff on the left, at Brobury. After Moccas Court and the abutments of the former Moccas bridge, there is a sharp S bend, some 3 miles from Bredwardine. Here the river divides at an island. The narrow left hand channel, overhung by trees, normally carries most of the flow over a small fall, the broader right hand branch over flat rocks being almost dry at low water. This is Monnington Falls, the site of a former weir. The place can be inspected by landing on the left bank (GR 375429).

A mile further on land 200 yards beyond a pumping station on the left at Byford, where a black and white house can be seen (GR 400425). An overgrown track followed by a road leads to the A438. (There is no public landing at Bridge Sollers bridge a mile further on.) It is of course possible to continue for a further 10 miles to Hereford where there is ample landing and road access.

### **Wye - Mordiford to Ross-on-Wye.**

20 miles.

Starting at Mordiford omits a straightforward but rather ordinary 8 miles paddle from Hereford.

Entry is possible at the bridge into the River Lugg, which joins the Wye in about 100 yards after passing through the remains of the old lock, but parking is difficult (GR 565372). Alternatively, permission to launch into the Wye about half a mile below might be sought near Holme Lacy bridge (GR 568304), where B4224 is close to the river. There is also a camp site on the left bank beyond the bridge.

The current livens a little as the river follows an attractive winding course flanked by low and often wooded hills, with several easy minor rapids at low water at the sites of former weirs. At 9 miles from Mordiford Hoarwithy bridge is reached (GR 549294). There is no public landing. The farm up the hill on the left may permit camping near the river about 400 yards below the bridge. Progress downstream towards Ross is marked by a footbridge near Sellack, 2 miles below Hoarwithy, and three demolished railway bridges crossing the winding valley. The first is at Carey (just above Hoarwithy). Round the bend beyond the second demolished bridge on the left after a steep wooded hill there is an attractive length between the unclassified road and the river at Hole-in-the-Wall (GR 612289), 15 miles from Mordiford. Here the PGL Adventure organisation has a canoeing centre. If you don't want to go all the way to Ross, you could ask the manager of the centre for permission for egress to the unclassified road. Telephone beforehand.

From Hole-in-the-Wall you continue for 5 miles past Backney Common on the right near the former railway bridge, unclassified road nearby, and under the motorway brodge to Ross. Egress at public open ground on left bank above the next bridge and below the town.

It is 6 miles from Ross to the start of the next section Kerne Bridge to Monmouth. Goodrich Castle dominates the last part of this stretch above the right bank.

## **WYE - Kerne Bridge or Lydbrook to Monmouth**

14.5 miles (12.5 from Lydbrook)



This Tour covers a stretch of the R. Wye between Kerne Bridge or Lower Lydbrook and Monmouth, and has the added attraction of including the Symonds Yat Rapids, one of the most easily accessible stretches of moving water in the South of England.

A start can be made on the left bank from the lay-by on B.4228 a short way south of the bridge. No launching at the bridge itself.

At Lower Lydbrook, there are two Car Parks on the same road, the downstream one being allocated to canoeists. An honesty box asks for a small donation both for parking and launching, it is neither smart nor clever to avoid paying ! Across the road is a public toilet.

Immediately below the Car Park, a small island forces the main stream of the river through a constricted channel to form a small rapid. It is possible to launch above the rapid so that the maximum enjoyment of the available water can be experienced. It is normally just possible to paddle back up this rapid, and some groups have been known to spend nearly all their day here. Welsh Bicknor youth hostel is on the right bank near the church.

As you paddle downstream, for the first mile or so there is a visible flow and the party should make good time to arrive at a black disused railway bridge (now a footbridge) and on the left bank the H.Q. of the Lower Lydbrook Fishery. Special Instructions here ask the canoeist to follow the specially erected signs. Paddlers should keep to the side of the river with the GREEN plaques and avoid the RED ones. This route is specially chosen so that it avoids the main fishing pools and causes the minimum of disturbance. You may also encounter fishermen in midstream and should be prepared to follow any route past them that they might indicate.

The river is well populated with wild life and you may see kingfishers and hear or if very lucky see the peregrine falcons which nest on the cliffs above the left hand bank. More signs ask the paddlers to not land on the right hand bank so that the gravel banks are not disturbed. The river sweeps around a huge right hand bend to pass under the iron bridge at Huntsham which carries the road to Symonds Yat East. There is a limited amount of parking here and it is possible to get in or out on the right hand bank.

The river now begins to sweep back to the left as it circles the bluff of the Yat Rocks. After a shallow stretch the water deepens again and you reach the area which is covered by the pleasure launches which operate from Symonds Yat East and West. A small passenger ferry on a fixed rope crosses the river from the pub on the right hand bank. Upstream of this pub there are several fields which contain caravan and camp sites as well as the Leisure Park and Entertainment Centre and about 250 yards from the River the Butterfly Farm and Maze Complex.

Downstream on the left hand bank at Symonds Yat West are more hotels and another pub as well as a Canoe Shop and Outdoor Centre, car park and camp site. Another passenger ferry crosses here.

There are many places here where you might land and this is an ideal spot at which to stop for lunch. You may decide to stop for lunch above the rapid or you may shoot the rapid and stop for lunch just afterwards. The Symonds Yat rapid runs down the left bank with break out pools on the right. It is possible with the river at normal levels to paddle back up and have another go, or you can always get out below left and carry back up. Most canoeists will be unable to resist the temptation to play on the rapids, but beware it does get very crowded, especially on a summer weekend. The spot is very popular with Canoe Instructors who bring their pupils to get experience of moving water and with slalomists who hang their gates to train. The Rapid is also the venue for two Division 2 Slaloms. If finishing here carry back up to the car park at Symonds Yat East.

The remaining paddle from here to Monmouth is fairly straight forward as the river passes through its fine wooded valley. On the right above and below the suspension footbridge is the Biblins, a Forestry Commission camp site for youth groups only. There is a waymarked path across it to King Arthur's Cave and the Seven Sisters Rocks. Canoe parties using the Biblins who wish to land or launch there must first obtain permission.

Monmouth is the home of two Rowing Clubs and as one approaches the town the paddler should beware of fast approaching rowing craft. Land on the right bank (GR 512128 ) at the steps (Council property) near Monmouth Rowing Club, upstream of the A.466 road bridge. Carry the

canoes through the subway under the A.40 to the Old Dixton Road and load there. Don't bring vehicles through the subway. Don't use the Rowing Club facilities without prior permission. The landing place at the Monmouth School Rowing Club on the left bank is private and should not be used without prior permission.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 162

O.S.Wye Valley Leisure Map 1:25,000

Guide: Canoeists Guide to the River Wye (Shoemith) obtainable locally, or from BCU Supplies

## **WYE - Monmouth to Brockweir (for Tintern)**

9.5 miles.

At Monmouth the river Wye enters a long scenic ravine with steep wooded hillsides that continues, except for occasional broadening, for 18 miles to Tintern and Chepstow. Here we include only the first nine miles to Brockweir, which is 2 miles beyond the highest point where the water level is affected by spring tides. Below Brockweir landing becomes increasingly muddy and difficult as the tide ebbs.

Launch on the right bank ( GR 512128 ) at the steps (Council property) near Monmouth Rowing Club, upstream of the A.466 road bridge. There is no direct access from A.40. Unload in Old Dixton Road behind the A.40 and carry canoes through the subway under the A.40 for launching. The rowing club is friendly, but don't try to make use of their facilities without prior permission, or impede their activities.

Below the road bridge and the confluence of the river Monnow the river gets much wider, forming confused shallow stony rapids when the water levels are low. Watch for masonry debris from two demolished railway bridges before the river narrows again. After a mile, at Redbrook, GR 536100, there are big boulders in midstream and often a straight running rapid. Village left on main road A.466. Landing is possible at the old ferry landing near the disused railway bridge, now a footbridge. Pub up right

bank. Watch for the huge horseshoe shaped ravine behind Redbrook village now well above river level. A very long time ago this must have been a loop in the course of the river, which cut through the narrow isthmus.

At Bigsweir bridge the main road crosses the river, but there is no access there. Bigs Weir itself is half a mile further on. This is one of the many weirs which were demolished 300 years ago when the river was made an open navigation. Unless the water level is high there is an easy rapid, usually best round the island on the left. Spring tides start to affect the river below the rapid; beyond Bigs Weir as the tide ebbs ground weirs are exposed every now and then, but are not difficult. Llandogo village is on the right; a landing is possible, but it is better to continue to Brockweir Bridge, GR 539012. There is a stone quay on the left (Gloucestershire) bank. Village also on left with shops and inn.

It is a short walk by footpath on the Gloucestershire bank from Brockweir and across a disused railway bridge to visit Tintern Abbey and village, avoiding the big curve of the main road on the Gwent bank. There is at present no convenient landing from the river at Tintern, and below high water steep mud is exposed. The former landing at the old ferry passage near the Abbey is behind the flood bank. There is a proposal to provide a landing stage but until it exists it is better to finish at Brockweir.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 162

O.S. Wye Valley Leisure Map, 1:25,000

Guide: Canoeists Guide to the River Wye (Shoemith) obtainable locally, or from BCU Supplies

## **PENK.**

The river Penk rises in Codsall Wood and flows north through Codsall and Penkridge to its confluence with the river Sow just east of Stafford.

It starts as an urban river but cleans up after a few miles. The river is generally placid and is an interesting paddle in medium water. The Staffs and Worcester Canal shares the same valley and often comes within

portaging distance of the river. It is one of the west Midlands most delightful small rivers.

#### Miles

- 3.3 Coven bridge, unclassified road, left off A449 4 miles north of Wolverhampton, access from field by bridge.
- 3.5 Saredon Brook joins from the right, access through farmyard (ask for consent on the day).
- 3.8 Mill stream goes off to the right, it can be canoed in medium water. Main stream bears left, bridge in 200 yds.
- 4.2 Bridges, rapid under, mill stream joins from the left.
- 5 Brewood bridge.
- 5.5 Minor road comes close, possible access.
- 6.2 Bridge, (A5), small 1 ft high weir after the bridge, nice play weir.
- 6.4 Lowford bridge, nice rapid under in medium water.
- 8 Beacon Hill, the river runs next to the road for one third of a mile, possible access.
- 8.5 Cuttlestone bridge, access downstream left bank, friendly farmer.
- 9.5 Whiston Brook joins from the left.
- 9.7 Bridge.
- 9.8 Railway viaduct.
- 9.9 Penkrige bridge, (A449), access right upstream bank, car park.

### **SEVERN - General.**

The River Severn has a long circuitous course from Plynlimon north easterly, then turning southerly to Gloucester and the estuary. There are no weirs between Shrewsbury and Stourport; this part of the river is ideal for parties of limited experience and for open canoes. It is generally easy running with the occasional small rapid. There is a right of navigation and no requirement to take out a licence.

Beyond Stourport and Gloucester there are locks, within the jurisdiction of British Waterways Board, and a BWB licence is required unless the canoeist has a BCU/WCA membership sticker. The paddle described below is above Stourport.

Access is not usually a problem with many parks, common land and council owned land forming its banks.

## **SEVERN - Ironbridge to Hampton Loade.**

15.7 miles.

At Ironbridge the river enters the “Ironbridge Gorge” and continues along a narrow valley through pleasant, later often wooded, hills to Bridgnorth and Hampton Loade. Its first part flows through the very interesting Coalbrookdale - Coalport area where the Industrial revolution first began in the 18th century. There used to be busy river trade to and from Coalport. All that is long past and the area, now part of telford, has been developed as an industrial archaeological complex, with much of interest to visit. The “Iron Bridge” itself still spans the river, but no longer carries road traffic.

The river is grade 1, mostly placid, with occasional lively stretches, and no weirs.

### Miles

78.7 Railway bridge (near Buildwas power station).

78.8 Ironbridge Rowing Club. Steps on left.

79.1 Access, car park and toilets on the left bank. Coalbrookdale industrial museum nearby.

79.5 Ironbridge. The first bridge in the world to be built wholly in iron. Town on the left bank. Coracles were formerly to be seen hereabouts.

80 Bridge (B4373).

80.3 Jackfield rapid. 170 metres of grade 1 rapid. Channel usually on right, with standing waves. Access left bank just after the rapid. Telford Canoe Club has a boathouse and is the contact for events on this rapid.

81.5 Footbridge. Boat Inn on the right. Camp site - contact Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. Blists Hill industrial museum, left bank.

81.5 Coalport bridge.

- 84.7 Apley bridge, private.
- 87.3 River Worle joins from the right.
- 88.3 Bridgnorth Rowing Club, steps. Access from the public car park on left bank.
- 88.9 Bridgnorth bridge. Interesting town on the hill, right. Terminus of the Severn Valley Railway.
- 89 Bridgnorth bypass bridge, A458.
- 94 Pipe bridge.
- 94.5 Hampton Loade. Ferry. Access on left by large car park. Inn on right. Camping in the field upstream of the inn (ask publican).

### **SEVERN - Hampton Loade to Bewdley.**

8.8 miles.

The river flows through a pleasant fairly narrow valley often wooded. The Severn Valley Railway accompanies it, giving the opportunity at certain times of the year for a return by train from Bewdley to Hampton Loade to fetch transport left there.

Miles

- 94.5 Hampton Loade, ferry, access on the left bank by large car park, inn on the right, camping on the field upstream of the inn (see publican).
- 95.2 Island, can be run on both sides but the right side is more interesting. Watch out for boils/whirlpools in the breakout on the right.
- 96.6 Alveley Colliery bridge, private road.
- 97 Highley, access on the right bank by the inn. Camping field upstream of the buildings on the right bank.
- 98.2 Borle Brook joins from the right.
- 99 Shallows and small rapid, run left around small island.
- 99.5 Arley footbridge, access on both banks (old ferry landings). Car parks and inns on both banks. For camping see car park attendant.
- 100.2 Arley railway bridge. Shingle bank in 100 yds go left side.
- 101 Eyemore rapids, the last natural rapid on the river, go to the left of

the island down tail of standing waves.

- 101.2 Rock ledge, shoot on the right in low water, covered in high water.
- 101.7 Water pipe bridge, access immediately after the bridge on the left up steps to small car park at the end of Rag Lane.
- 102.5 Dowles bridge, (piers only standing). Immediately after the piers Dowles Brook joins from the right.
- 103.3 Bewdley bridge, town on the right, access on the right 200 yds before the bridge into public car park (pay and display).

## **CHURNET.**

The river Churnet runs off Barley Hill and flows into Tittesworth Reservoir. When it leaves the reservoir it flows in a circular route skirting Leek and on to Cheddleton, Alton and then on to join the river Dove just by Rocester.

The Churnet has various industrial sites on its upper reaches so it is quite dirty, but as it progresses into more rural areas it becomes cleaner.

It is canoeable from just under the famous Flint Mill at Cheddleton and for a while it is joined by the Caldon canal. There is some rough water which is mostly man made. It is an enjoyable paddle but can be shallow in summer. Best paddled in winter months.

### Miles

- 0 Cheddleton bridge, (A520), access from pub car park, downstream right bank. The Caldon canal runs at the side of the river, also public footpath (The Staffordshire Way) runs between canal and river at this point.
- 0.2 Bridge.
- 0.25 Weir, only visible in low water.
- 0.3 Footbridge.
- 0.4 Footbridge.
- 0.6 Bridge.
- 0.75 Water board measuring weir shootable centre.
- 0.9 Bridge.
- 1.9 Footbridge.



- 2.1 Caldon canal joins from lock gate on right.
- 3.1 Consall Forge, the canal leaves on the left and the river flows over a weir ahead. New weir with sluices in centre unshootable. Portage, land right bank after canal bend, carry over lawns and put in below weir over large boulders. Red Lion Inn, good beer and food.
- 3.3 Bridge.
- 3.8 Rocky fall, 10 ft high, this is at a point when the river is channelled between the railway embankment and a rock wall. It is not entirely natural and has been concreted over in some places, again this is best shot in a plastic boat by shooting it from left to right along the obvious ledge, landing is on a rock ledge. In high water it can be shot in the centre. The portage is difficult and is a one at a time procedure down the left bank.
- 4.1 Railway bridge.
- 4.4 Railway bridge.
- 5 Railway bridge.
- 5.2 Froghall Bridge, (A52), the river flows between a large industrial site on its approach to the bridge.
- 5.3 Froghall weir, the weir runs at an angle across the river, shoot anywhere but inspect in high water.
- 5.4 Railway bridge.
- 8.3 Railway bridge.
- 8.8 Oakamoor weir and bridge, (B5417), the weir is only a few metres before the bridge and is a difficult shoot due to it being shallow at the foot. It can be shot in a plastic boat at an angle on the left side. Egress onto upstream left bank just before the weir, Churnet View Road, access at foot of the weir. Watch out for iron stakes by the bridge.

## **CALDON CANAL - Stockton Brook to Froghall.**

Opened to serve the Caldon Low limestone quarries near to Froghall in 1779 the Caldon canal saw a lot of trade until early in the 20th century when the railway took over the traffic. Canal traffic fell away and by the 1960's the canal was mostly unnavigable. Due to great efforts by the Caldon Canal Society, B.W. and the local authorities the canal was

eventually reopened in 1974. The canal was constructed using the cheap “contour” method and thus has few locks as it meanders its way through lovely wooded countryside, a delight to paddle on a summer’s day.

A British Waterways Board licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

## Miles

- 0.00 Stockton Brook Bridge, (A53), shops, pubs, a short portage to the bottom of the flight of locks.
- 0.2 Bridge, at the bottom of the flight.
- 0.7 Doles Bridge, just after this bridge the short arm to Endon basin leaves on the left.
- 1.00 Post Bridge.
- 1.2 Kidds Bridge.
- 1.6 Park Lane Bridge.
- 1.75 Smiths Bridge.
- 1.9 Brick Kiln Bridge.
- 2.2 Plants Bridge.
- 2.5 Hazelhurst Junction, get out on the left bank of the froghall branch and portage down the three Hezelhurst locks. The Leek branch leaves on the right and goes over the Froghall branch and the railway on Hazelhurst Aqueduct.
- 2.7 Hazelhurst flight finishes here, there are three bridges over the flight.
- 2.9 Hazelhurst Aqueduct, Leek branch passes overhead.
- 3.00 Bridge 38, Holly Bush pub, small 17th century pub, real ale, snacks. It may be easier to avoid the portage of the Hazelhurst lock flight by paddling along the Leek branch, over the aqueduct and portage down the bank to the pub.
- 3.1 Denford lift bridge.
- 3.2 Wall Grange Bridge.
- 3.8 Springs Bridge.
- 4.00 Cheddleton Bridge, (A520), village, shops, Red Lion pub, food. A feature here is the fine double wheeled flint mill (open w/e afternoons). River Churnet flows by the side of the canal here.
- 4.1 Cheddleton locks, two locks, bridge in between locks.
- 4.7 Basford Bridge.

- 5.2 Woods lock and bridge.
- 5.5 Willow Cottage Bridge.
- 5.8 Oak Meadow Ford lift bridge.
- 6.1 Oak Meadow Ford lock, bridge, this lock drops the canal to the level of the River Churnet, river and canal become one for a mile.
- 7.1 Consall Forge, an ideal lunch stop, River Churnet leaves to the right over a weir.
- 7.15 Foot and railway bridge, Black Lion pub, this is an outstanding pub in a beautiful setting, frequented by walkers in the summer, lunchtime food, real ale.
- 7.3 Mill Bridge.
- 7.4 Flint Mill lock and bridge. Adjacent is another old flint mill still working entirely by water power, water is drawn from the canal and drops 4 metres to drive a turbine which drives the mill.
- 7.5 Cherry Eye Bridge.
- 8.5 Froghall tunnel, (73 metres), B5053 goes over the top of the tunnel.
- 8.6 Froghall Terminus, a well preserved small terminus.

## **RUSHALL CANAL - Daw End Branch.**

Built in 1847 to connect the Cannock coal field to the Tame Valley Canal, this canal is now pleasant rural touring by-way for boaters and canoeists alike as it meanders through the Staffordshire countryside. In a joint venture between British Waterways, Walsal Council and B.C.U. this section was made into a canoe trail with Walsall Park Rangers having a selection of boats at Park Lime Pits for use by groups.

A British Waterways Board licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

### **Miles**

- 0.00 Longwood Bridge, (A454), Longwood Boat Club moorings, access.
- 0.4 Riddian Bridge, farm bridge.
- 0.7 Railway Aqueduct, Park Lime Pits, Walsall Ranger station, canoe trail administration. Road access from Park Road which joins Bosty Lane next to Daw End Bridge, Manor Arms pub, unusual pub with no bar food.

- 1.00 Daw End Bridge, Bosty Lane, Rushall.
- 1.25 Winterley Bridge, unclassified road.
- 1.5 Brawns Works Bridge.
- 2.25 Bridge.
- 2.4 Hopleys Bridge, unclassified road.
- 2.8 Aldridge Wharf Bridge, Shelfield to Aldridge road.
- 3.2 Barnfield Bridge, now in an industrial estate.
- 3.5 Northywood Bridge.
- 3.7 Lathams Bridge.
- 3.8 Hollanders Bridge, Horse and Jockey pub.
- 3.9 Walsall Wood Bridge, (A461), Bell pub with food and snacks. Village shops on North side of bridge.
- 4.3 Black Cock Bridge, pub of the same name by bridge.
- 4.9 Clayhanger Bridge, village 300 metres left, shops.
- 5.25 Catshill Junction and bridge, take right turn for Anglesey brinch, left for Wyrley and Essington Canal. Brownhills town and shops 200 metres.

## **RUSHALL CANAL - Anglesey Branch.**

A British Waterways Board licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

- 0.0 Catshill Junction.
- 0.2 Anchor Bridge, (A452), Brownhills shops, Anchor pub, snacks.
- 0.9 Ogley Junction, Wyrley and Essington old route to the Coventry Canal (abandoned 1954).
- 1.0 Anglesey Bridge, (B4155).
- 1.4 Middleton Bridge.
- 1.5 Railway Aqueduct, no railway now.
- 1.6 Freeth Bridge, (A5).
- 2.1 Burntwood Road Bridge.
- 2.2 Anglesey Wharf, coal barges were filled here until here until 1967, coal residue is evident everywhere.
- 2.5 Anglesey Basin, limit of navigation, dam and weir from Chasewater reservoir, Chasewater is now a country park around the large lake

with walks, preserved steam railway, boating and amusements.

## **TRENT - General.**

The river Trent rises on Biddulph Moor and flows south west through Stoke on Trent, then it turns east and runs through Stone, Rugeley, Alrewas and Burton after which it flows north until it joins the Ouse at Goole.

It is a rural and unexciting river which is generally placid but with some flowing sections. For most of its length the river is followed by the Trent and Mersey Canal.

## **TRENT - Great Haywood to Mavesyn Ridware.**

Miles (numbering starts at Trentham)

20.5 Great Haywood, the river flows over a small 1 ft high weir, the river Sow joins from the right. Old stone footbridge in 20 yds, access onto left bank between weir and bridge. Village 300 yds left over canal bridge.

20.8 Bridge.

21.7 Railway bridge.

22 Severn Springs bridge.

23 Colwich bridge (A51).

25.5 Canal aqueduct, beware low headroom, portage to canal.

26.5 Rugeley bridge, island follows go either side.

27 Railway bridge.

28.5 Railway bridge.

29 Mavesyn Ridware footbridge, access by putting into canal at Handsacre bridge (A513) and paddling westwards to 200 yds past the third bridge then portage through tunnel under railway onto footbridge. Beach on the downstream left of the bridge.

This point is a suitable finish for the above paddle and start for the following section.

## **TRENT - Mavesyn Ridware to Wychnor.**

- 29.8 High bridges, (B5014), island after best go left side, strong eddies.
- 30.5 Pipe bridge.
- 31 Nethertown footbridge.
- 31.5 Nethertown island. Two routes:  
Right route, weir in 600 yds usually dry, difficult portage through undergrowth, after 300 yds bridge, watch for barbed wire by the bridge, access right in 200 yds through gate into lay-by on the A515.  
Left route, go left over small broken weir, in 600 yds river Blithe joins from the left, in a further 400 yds  
egress right onto island just after a small stream. The island must then be crossed to a point opposite the gate into lay-by, get back in and ferry across to the bank by the gate which is the same egress as the right route.
- 33 Yoxall bridge, (A515).
- 36.2 Wychnor Hall and park on the left, ford, keep right in low water.
- 37 Alrewas Mill, bridges in 200 and 300 yds, Trent and Mersey Canal joins from the right and leaves on the left in 100 yds. River then flows over a weir on the right.
- 38 Wychnor bridge, (A38), access from field downstream right of the bridge, ask for farmer's consent. Swinfen Canoe Club slalom site.

## **TRENT VALLEY CIRCLES - General.**

The valley of the river Trent offers some unique opportunities for circular tours. The river's course is followed by the Trent and Mersey Canal which is within easy portage distance of the river in a number of places.

A British Waterways Board licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

## TRENT VALLEY CIRCLES - Tour 1.

Alrewas to Armitage and back (approx 15 miles)

Miles Canal

- 0.0 New bridge, (A513), just by Bagnall lock no13.
- 0.75 Common lock.
- 1.3 Hunts lock
- 1.35 Bridge 50.
- 1.4 Keepers Lock.
- 1.5 Junction Bridge.
- 1.55 Junction Lock.
- 1.65 Fradley Junction, the Coventry Canal joins from the left. Pub, food.
- 1.75 Middle Lock.
- 1.85 Shade House Lock and bridge.
- 2.1 Woodend Lock and bridge.
- 3.2 Bridge, (A515).
- 3.6 Bridge 55.
- 4.6 Tuppenhurst Bridge.
- 4.8 Bridge 57.
- 5.2 Handsacre Bridge, (A513), pub, shop, fish and chip shop.
- 5.55 Bridge 59.
- 5.75 Railway bridge.
- 6.05 Bridge 60, egress point in 100 metres on the right, footpath goes down tunnel under railway to emerge on the footbridge. River Trent
- 6.05 Mavesyn Ridware Footbridge, access downstream right, shingle bank.
- 6.9 High Bridges, (B5014), go left at island after, strong eddies.
- 7.6 Pipe Bridge.
- 8.1 Nethertown Footbridge.
- 8.6 Nethertown Island, two routes, best route go left over small weir. Right route has a weir that is almost always dry, hard portage through undergrowth.
- 10.0 Yoxall Bridge, (A515).
- 14.0 Alrewas Mill.
- 14.1 Bridge.

14.2 Canal joins from the right, turn right into canal.

14.9 Start point, (A513), bridge.

## **TRENT VALLEY CIRCLES - Tour 2/3.**

Long tour Great Haywood to Armitage and return (approx 16.4 miles) and

Short tour Great Haywood to Rugeley and return (approx 9.5 miles).

### Miles River

0.0 Great Haywood, access from lane, left off A51 going north through the centre of village (SP public footpath Shugborough Hall). Lane crosses first railway, canal and then narrows to a footbridge to cross the river. Launch from beach in between small weir and footbridge.

1.2 Railway bridge.

1.5 Severn Springs Bridge.

2.5 Colwich bridge, (A51).

5.0 Brindley Bank Canal Aqueduct, return for short tour.

6.0 Rugeley Bridge.

6.5 Railway bridge.

8.0 Railway bridge, small broken weir above, shoot on the right.

8.5 Mavesyn Ridware Footbridge, egress downstream left bank and portage through tunnel under railway to canal at Armitage.

### Miles Canal

8.5 Launch and paddle north (right).

8.7 Bridge 61.

9.1 Railway bridge.

9.6 Bridge, (A513), Plum Pudding pub, food.

10.2 Bridge 63.

10.3 Bridge 64.

10.6 Mossley Bridge 65.

10.7 Bridge.

10.8 Railway bridge.

11.0 Bridge 66, this is closest bridge to town centre.

11.25 Bridge, (B5013), river bridge 200 metres, right.

12.0 Brindley Bank Aqueduct, access for short tour return.



- 12.25 Bridge 68.
- 13.0 Taft Bridge 68.
- 13.5 Wolsley Bridge, (A51).
- 14.25 Colwich lock and bridge.
- 14.4 Railway bridge.
- 14.6 Little Haywood bridge 71.
- 16.4 Great Haywood, finish. Two pubs in village, food.

## **TRENT VALLEY CIRCLES - Tours 4/5.**

Long tour Great Haywood to Teddesley Park (River Penk) and back. Short tour Great Haywood and St Thomas's Bridge (river Sow) and return.

Miles Canal

- 0.0 Great Haywood, access from lane, left off A51 going north through the village by the Clifford Arms pub. Lane goes under the railway over the canal then narrows to a footbridge to cross the river. The lock is within sight, put in after it.
- 0.2 Great Haywood Junction, turn left into Staffs and Worcester Canal, bridge.
- 0.5 Cavan's Bridge, 108. After this bridge the canal widens into Tixall Wide, a lake like section, this is almost a mile long. Watch for Kingfishers here.
- 1.4 Oldhill Bridge and lock.
- 1.6 Tixall Bridge 106.
- 1.8 Milford Aqueduct, canal crosses the river Sow.
- 2.1 Milford Bridge 105.
- 2.4 Walton Bridge 104.
- 2.7 Stoneford Bridge 103.
- 3.0 Lodgefield Bridge 102.
- 3.4 St Thomas's Bridge 101, portage point to river Sow for short tour.
- 3.65 Railway bridge.
- 3.75 Baswich Bridge 100.
- 4.0 Meadow Bridge 99.
- 4.2 Radford Bridge, (A34), about 1 mile from the centre of Stafford.
- 5.1 Hazelstrine Bridge.

- 5.4 Deptmore lock.
- 5.6 Hoseford Bridge.
- 6.1 Acton Bridge 93.
- 6.5 Acton Moat Bridge 92.
- 7.0 Shutt Hill Bridge Teddesley Park and lock. Portage to River Penk 100 metres south through bridge. River is only 20 metres after gate.

#### Miles River

- 7.0 Access point for return.
- 8.5 Acton Trussel Bridge.
- 10.8 Radford Bridge, (A34).
- 11.5 Queensville railway bridge.
- 11.9 Confluence with the River Sow.
- 12.2 St Thomas's Priory, old island left channel silted up, keep to main stream.
- 12.3 St Thomas's Bridge, return to short tour.
- 14.3 Milford Aqueduct, canal goes overhead, low headroom in high water.
- 14.55 Milford Bridge.
- 15.5 Shugborough Park, keep to the left (main) channel, right channel feeds the ornamental pools in the park.
- 16.2 Great Haywood, egress between small weir and footbridge.

## **BRECON CANAL**

This is scenically one of the finest canals in the British Waterways Board's system. It is a contour canal. In the 33 miles from Pontymoyle, near Pontypool, to Brecon (almost the whole of it within the Brecon Beacons National Park) the canal runs level for 23 miles to Llangynidr, mostly along the side of the hills a couple of hundred feet above the Usk valley. There are five locks at Llangynidr and one 2 miles short of Brecon and one 375 yard tunnel near Talybont.

There are wide views over the lower Usk valley and beyond Abergavenny of the Black Mountains. The canal passes through several villages and there are a number of canalside pubs. Access is possible from road

crossings (though parking may not always be available).

A BWB licence is needed (short period licences are obtainable locally). The BCU/WCA membership sticker is accepted in lieu.

To enjoy this canal you need not plan to paddle the 33 miles from one end to the other. Also, as one part of the canal cannot be recommended as better than another, there is no reason to pick out particular sections for short paddles. The many road bridge crossings give scope for two or three different short one way or “there and back” paddles. Just start from a convenient access point near a road crossing and paddle as far as the mood suggests to another access point, or turn round and and paddle back to the first one.

Some intermediate access points are: Mamhilad (Great House Farm, map 171 GR 316043, turn west off A.4042 half a mile SW of Pen-perlleni), Govilon Wharf, Llangattock, Pencelli.

Camp sites on or near the canal are marked on the O.S. map at Gilwern, Llangattock, Pencelli and Brynich.

Maps and guides:

O.S. Landranger: mainly 161, short stretches on 160 and 171.

O.S. Brecon Beacons Leisure Map 1:25,000 covers Llanfoist (near Abergavenny) to Brecon shows road crossings more clearly.

O.S./ Nicholson Guide to Inland Waterways (South) - much detail.

A descriptive brochure is obtainable from the BW Canal Manager, Canal Office, The Wharf, Govilon, Abergavenny, Gwent, NP7 9NY.

## **ELLESMERE CANAL**

This canal, popular with cruising craft, is part of the Shropshire Union Canal system and leads from Whitchurch to Ellesmere, and beyond to the Llangollen Canal. It is a water supply feeder from the Dee at the Horseshoe Falls to mid-Cheshire. It provides pleasant canoeing across the open marshland of north Shropshire, passing several picturesque

meres as it approaches Ellesmere.

A British Waterways Board licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

### **Whitchurch to Ellesmere.**

From A.525 on the outskirts of Whitchurch across Fenns Moss and Whixall Moss to the junction with the Prees branch, 6 miles. Alternatively start at the top of the Grindley Brook flight of locks (A.41), a mile longer. The Prees branch can be followed for a mile to a marina, after which it is a nature reserve. Continuing, Cole Mere on the left is reached after 4 miles, Blake Mere on the right a mile further on, and after a short tunnel, the canal arrives at Ellesmere. The Mere, after which the town gets its name, is a short distance through Ellesmere to the north east.

Maps: O.S. Landranger 117 and 126

Guide: O.S./Nicholson Inland Waterways (Central)

### **OXFORD CANAL - Napton Top Lock to Fenny Compton.**

A British Waterways Board licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.

This section is the top level and so has no locks to portage. The canal is a contour canal following the sides of the hills whilst retaining its altitude and so its course is very bendy. The countryside is pleasant and views are sometimes extensive.

Start from the canal bridge at Marston Doles south of Napton where there is adequate parking. Launch above the lock and proceed south. It is about eight miles to bridge 136 (A423) and the George & Dragon on the right where you can stop for a drink and lunch before paddling back!

## **NORTH WEST REGION**

### **DEE TOUR - Farndon to Chester.**

This tour is a gentle meander through lovely Cheshire countryside and there is a right of navigation. At this point the Dee has little current so an out and back journey could be made if a pick-up at the other end is not possible.

Distance: 11 miles. Grade 1.

The village of Farndon is about 10 miles south of Chester and is situated on the A534. Parking and access at the Roman Bridge present no problems. The trip starts you off in no man's land with Wales on the left bank and England on the right.

Landmarks on the route are:

#### **Miles**

- 1.75 River Alun joins on the left.
- 4.5 Pulford Brook joins on the left.
- 6.0 Village of Aldford 500 yards to right and Aldford Brook joins on the right. England is now on both sides and the land is part of the Duke of Westminster's estate.
- 6.5 Iron Bridge. The Duke's house, Eaton Hall, is across fields on your left.
- 8.5 Start to look out for a lodge type building on the right as this will indicate the approach to Eccleston Ferry. There is no ferry but Ferry Farm will appear on the right and on the left bank a lane will end. The village of Eccleston is picturesque and is 500 yards up the lane. This is a suitable egress point but transport must pick you up on the left bank.
- 10.0 The Red House pub on the right. This has a jetty and welcomes pleasure boats.
- 11.0 Sandy Lane car park. After passing rather nice housing on the right you will pass Chester Motor Boat Club on the right and then a sailing club. Sandy Lane car park is on the right and is marked by a small

wooden jetty and a slipway. There are public toilets but they are not always open. This is your best egress point.

By road Sandy Lane is found by following the B5130 from Farndon to Chester. The car park is on the river bank just before Chester starts to get built-up.

## **DEE ESTUARY - Hilbre Island Tour.**

The Dee estuary has three islands which can be walked out to at low tide and paddled to at high tide. The estuary is shallow and dries out quickly therefore the journey must be accurately timed. Allow three hours for the tour and start about 1hr 30mins before high water.

Start from West Kirby. The promenade is one way so access is best made by finding Dee Lane which starts from near the railway station. Go down the lane and at the bottom you will reach the beach. DO NOT start from here. Times of tides are usually posted on the railings by the slipway. Turn left and drive the length of the Marine Lake. At the far end you will come to West Kirby Sailing Club. It is from here that you will start.

The launch will be a little muddy but once afloat paddle out beyond the walls of the lake and go out at least another 100 yards. Now you can turn and head for the first island, the Little Eye. This is approx 1 mile. You MUST pass the Little Eye with it on your right.

A reef runs between the Little Eye and the next island Little Hilbre. There is a sandy bay at the south end of the island. If you go exploring on the island pull your boat well out of the water as the tide is still rising. The island is covered in lovely turf and many wild flowers.

Little Hilbre is almost joined to Hilbre but the gap between them is a lagoon from which a landing on to Little Hilbre can be made and a landing to a lovely beach on the south end of Hilbre.

Hilbre is a nature reserve and there is a warden. There are a number of

buildings on the island and it is worth exploring. One building is the home of Hilbre Canoe Club. There are often many bird watchers on the island as the estuary is rich in bird life so please take care not to offend them.

The estuary has a large colony of very inquisitive grey seals and if you are lucky you will find a big head popping up to see what you are up to. They often come up very close and are one of the pleasures of the trip.

The route back is the reverse of the outward route.

**WARNING.** This is the sea and whilst the islands are not far out winds on shallow estuary waters can create quite a chop.

### **IRWELL - Burrs.**

The Irwell is undergoing a clean-up and general development for recreation close to Bury. A recommended start point is at Ramsbottom or Nuttall Park, shooting down the Gollinrod Gorge and then on to Burrs. This is about 5 miles including grade 2/3 sections (depending on water levels) and the section below the gorge is part of the Burrs Country Park for whom contact should be made with the Croal/Irwell Valley Warden Service 0204-71561 well in advance. The Burrs development allows paddlers to portage to the canal and paddle back to the top of the park and so enjoy the park section again.

### **MERSEY - Sale Water Park, Trafford.**

The broken weir provides a white water play area. The river can rise fast after rain and make the water “boily” and unpredictable.

Car parking adjacent to the river opposite the main building of the Watersports Centre (on other side of lake) or use centre’s main parking. The centre provides changing and showers.

A short circular trip is available (first check that the lake may be used at

the Centre and read lake restrictions and pay minimal charge required) using the river, weir and lake. Paddle across the lake to the river, launch above the weir and then paddle down the river to the next major weir, egress immediately below this weir, cross back onto the lake and paddle back up to the Watersports Centre.

## **PEAK FOREST CANAL/RIVER TAME.**

South east Manchester. Suitable for novices. 4.5 kms grade 1.

Map: Landranger 109.

Manchester A-Z page 64.

Start: Canal GR 941937, A-Z 4B. Bottom of Apelhorn Lane off A560 at Gee Cross.

Paddle canal to GR 939958, A-Z "A. 2 kms.

Portage cobbled footpath just before canal bridge left bank down to River Tame.

Paddle river 2.5 kms to GR 939937, A-Z 4B. Land above weir on left bank. Portage canoes up the track back to the canal.

A BWB licence is required unless you have a BCU or WCA membership sticker.

## **LLANGOLLEN CANAL.**

From the Horseshoe Falls where it is supplied with water from the River Dee the canal runs for 6 miles along the north side of the Llangollen valley to Trefor through good scenery, Llangollen town being about half way along. It is narrow, being originally intended only as a canal feeder and rather shallow, so larger motor driven cruisers cannot easily use it. A BWB licence or BCU/WCA membership sticker is required.



A “there and back” paddle is suggested, starting either at a suitable bridge near Llangollen or near one of the camp sites closer to the Horseshoe Falls marked on the map. There is a boathouse at Trefor where the canal makes a 90 degree bend, from which the return paddle can be made to Llangollen. At Trefor the Pont Cysyllte aqueduct built by Telford can be admired before the return paddle. It is 300 yards long and crosses 120 feet above the River Dee to Fron Cysyllte.

Map: O.S.Landranger 117.

O.S./Nicholson Guide to Inland Waterways (Central).

Warning: Although canoes are allowed to cross the aqueduct and continue to Chirk Bank passing through two tunnels and over the Chirk aqueduct on the way, this part should not be tackled by inexperienced paddlers or those likely to be affected by heights.

The Pont Cysyllte aqueduct is a long cast iron trough only just wide enough for a canal narrowboat. There is no room to pass any kind of craft coming the other way. The trough has a towpath with a guard rail only on one side. The other side has no guard rail and there is less than a foot clearance above the water level to the edge of the trough above a 120 foot drop!

The tunnels have towpaths but the channel is only wide enough for one motor driven cruiser or canal narrowboat. Use of the tunnels by canoeists is permitted by BWB only on certain conditions:

1. Only in groups of 3 to 6 canoes with an experienced canoeist.
2. Ability to swim.
3. Life-jackets.
4. Adequate buoyancy in the canoe.
5. All canoes to show a light forward.
6. All canoeists to have a waterproof torch and suitable whistle attached by a lanyard. These are sensible precautions. Meeting any craft coming the other way, or a capsize, in the tunnel can create hazards.

A BWB licence is required unless you have a BCU or WCA membership sticker.

## **MACCLESFIELD / PEAK FOREST CANALS.**

These two canals offer a considerable length of cut and fill canal, with tremendous cuttings and embankments, with the minimum of portages.

Starting from Kidsgrove there are 28 miles of the Macclesfield Canal to Marple Junction with 13 locks of which 12 are together in the Bosley flight. From the Junction it is a further 7.25 miles along the Peak Forest Canal to Whaley Bridge.

A BWB licence is required unless you have a BCU or WCA membership sticker.

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