

As the alarm went off on Sunday morning at 5:30 it seemed like an early start. But the sat-nav had suggested a three hour drive to Builth Wells in mid Wales for a re-tour to the WYE “O” WYE bother trip of December.



A reduced but committed band of BCCC members (Paul and Andrew Jeffs, Richard and Nick Boreham and Garry Winckley) met at the Lion Hotel at 9:00am. The full Welsh breakfast was supplemented with teacoffee (both in the same pot). After debate and agreement Paul suggested with current water levels we paddle the Ifron back to Builth. Having enjoyed the breakfast we moved to Garth to deposit the Kayaks. The bridge over the river was covered in a layer of ice which felt like our previous trip. Checking out the levels over the bridge the enormous Salmon lurking under the bridge was an ominous sign of things to come.

After a short ferry of cars we set off down stream in glorious January weather. The sun warming the paddlers and showing up the amazing ice, still left in the eddies and shallows from the overnight frost. After minor repairs to Andrew’s footrests we continued on.



The water levels were low but consistent and enough to keep the kayaks flowing.

The frequent arrival of new and interesting features kept the group interested, with Paul calling for breakouts in the first eddy of every rapid. I'm sure the experts Paul, Andrew, Richard and Nick enjoyed my arrival to the group with surprise. Fantastic surfing, ferry gliding at speed and antics at every opportunity really added to the enjoyment and sense of satisfaction.

After a number of break-ins and outs across features I fell for my first swim of the day, catching the flow I reacted too slowly and rolled, straight in and unfortunately straight out of my boat. Paul, as always, was close at hand and my dry suit remained dry as I recovered my dignity a little lower downstream. I collected my boat, paddle and clambered back in.

After another mile we stopped for lunch, using Paul's excellent new shelter to warm the parties, we had a most social lunch.



Heading off down stream we continued to make the eddy's and enjoy the changing conditions as we passed through feature after feature.

The next small drop again produce another fantastic wave and surfing opportunity to practice, which we all enjoyed and on my last breakout, again had me using my well developed swimming skills as the group came to my rescue.

The weir was fantastic with everyone playing in the wave and Nick and 'Rew riding over the top and back upstream. An extended relaxation period was enjoyed by all playing and surfing.

As we approached the final bends before the merge with the Wye, I could hear conversations of the impending rooster tail rapids and trepidation at what was to come. Paul assured me we would be fine and to stay two boat lengths behind him!! I did and the first rapids were amazing bouncing between rocks riding the surf dropping down the river, as we reached the rooster tail Paul had a moment and I tried to miss him ending up going backwards down the biggest of the drops (note from Paul – my bad line). As I went over, I tried in vain, to rescue myself but went under again, from nowhere Paul appeared and I grabbed the front of his boat, upsetting his balance we both ended up swimming. After a good swim through the end of the rapids we both rejoined out boats and remounted.

It was my third swim of the day, but not the last for other members of the group!! (note from/to Paul, remember not to grab immovable objects)

As we joined the Wye and made the last easy paddle down to the exit point, at almost 4pm it had been a fantastic day in amazing scenery, fantastic water and great company.



After short ferry to retrieve cars we made the trip back home, tired, achy, exhausted and elated after a fantastic day.

Thanks to Paul for organising, Richard for his encouragement, Andrew and Nick for their patience.

Garry