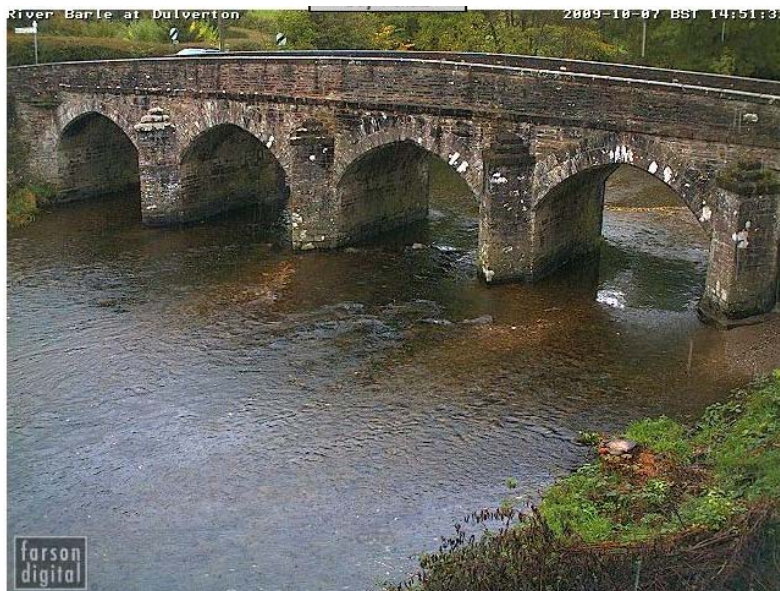


More from the River Barle

The River Barle was to be my first experience of moving water with the exception of Guildford weir. Dad found a webcam of the river at Dulverton so we were looking at the water levels through the week. On the Monday it looked really low:



Dad was hoping for more water, Mum was worried so was happy with the water being a trickle not a raging torrent, rain was on the way! Not enough though as even after the rain the levels were still low.



We picked up Adam and set off to Dulverton in the rain. Following a good night's sleep in my bunk bed and breakfast it was decided by the group that the Barle was too low so we should try the river Taw. After sorting out the boats, cars and kit we set off down river. Although the water wasn't that fast I didn't mind as this was my first trip down a river. We found some features to have a play on,

which I suspect for the better paddlers seemed a bit tame. Everyone was really helpful and was happy to help with my technique and I improved my ferry gliding a lot.

The paddling between features was hard work and I was starting to get tired having never paddled this far before. It seemed we were on the water for ages and the breaks helped renew my energy. Then it happened: a tree jumped out in front of me as I was going round a faster bend and I got tangled up. I was holding on to the tree trying to get my spray deck off whilst still in the boat. Eventually I managed to get out of the boat with Liz telling me what to do and helping me stay calm while Richard got my boat. Dad had tried and failed miserably almost going in himself after being attacked by a different tree: it seems to be unusual for dad not to have a swim while kayaking!

After getting back in we set off to complete the last stretch which was thankfully uneventful if not a slog,. My shoulder started to hurt and dad got a few scowls for trying to keep me moving along . The bridge at Umberleigh was a nice sight and after some cake and hot chocolate we set off back to the hostel.

I slept well Saturday evening and although we didn't paddle Sunday I had a great time on my first trip. Thanks to everyone who helped organise, cook and give advice, let's hope next time we get more water.

I didn't even have to use the tea towel as the grown ups did the washing and drying.

Lauren Ashwell

22/10/09