

Devizes to Westminster

Easter 2009

A brief report on the results for the BCCC paddlers.

Congratulations should go to all who took part and everyone can be proud of their achievement, none more so than Naomi and Isobel Smith who, at just 15 years old and amongst the youngest ever to take part in the DW, came third overall in the junior K2 race. In addition they were first junior ladies, and first in the under 17 class for schools.

Inevitably, with a race over 125 miles and taking up to 24 hours or more to complete, not everything falls neatly into place and, regrettably, Jamie Cox and his partner, and Chris Garwood and Ben Greetham were forced to retire.

The results for the BCCC were:

Senior K2

Ian Evans/Toby Williams 44th overall in 22 hours 39 minutes 19 seconds

Jamie Cox/Derek Campbell, retired at Longridge

Chris Garwood/Ben Greetham, retired at Old Windsor

Junior K2

Isobel/Naomi Smith 3rd overall in 18 hours 16 minutes 25 seconds

Senior K1

Tracy Rees-Clark 31st overall in 22 hours 56 minutes 32 seconds and 4th ladies K1

Junior/Veteran

Brian Biffin/Mike Rees-Clark 14th in 28 hours 19 minutes 50 seconds

Endeavour Class

Ian Mattison/Bernie Boyles 21st in 29 hours 27 minutes 35 seconds

The DW – views of your favourite columnist - the Backmarker.

Well it's over and mission accomplished. My son-in-law, Bernie, has achieved a long held ambition and I have met another challenge in my life that I thought I would never get to try. How did it go day by day? Read on.

Friday began well with the kit check at Devizes and at 0714hrs we set off. Not too many wobbles which characterise our starts but soon Bernie developed dead legs and took a few short breaks. Arriving at Wootton Rivers in just over 3hrs veggie soup and hot cross buns raised spirits and we started again ready for "the tunnel". At the Bruce Tunnel what a contrast to Waterside D! The marshals were very polite and we had to stop for a barge to go through. When we were released we were 30secs behind the K2 ahead and it was very smooth through the tunnel. Then on to our Achilles heel, portaging. Through Crofton it told on our time but we muddled through. Hungerford was a welcome site and then it was all downhill to end a tiring day at Newbury.

Day 2 and we set off in a sprightly fashion. The flow was not as fast as two weeks ago but we got into a rhythm and enjoyed the ride to Aldermaston. After this it was new territory for us so caution became the aim. Not keeping my head down long enough at Sulhampstead I received a nasty blow - but it did not stop us. Bernie held the boat up well and we moved on.

After Garston lock the short winding section before Reading really was a challenge. Then at Fobney lock a slip from Bernie and the rudder housing was damaged in the fall. Thus we limped into County Lock with great difficulty in steering. A quick repair before the Oracle Centre did not help matters and we reached the end of the K&A and into the Thames with great difficulty but made it into the Waterside Centre. Bernie then worked his mechanical miracle and we set off down the Thames a little later than planned but nevertheless intact. More difficult for me than Bernie our progress was steady but uneventful with stops for my increasingly aching lower back muscles. Nevertheless we ended up at Longridge tired but happy we had got this far.

Day 3, Easter Sunday and my 34th wedding anniversary!! (Now can you guess why the boat has been named OH NO!) Probably not a good day to choose to go kayaking but this is DW so we pushed on. Excellent morning progress with seats adjusted and no major aches to worry about we were actually ahead of time as we pulled into Bray. Up to Boveney my rendition of the Eton boating song as we paddled into Windsor did not inspire Bernie that much. I promised him a very different adult version but this was (maybe rightly) turned down and we soon forgot this as we neared Romney lock. Progressing well now we

headed into Bell weir and at last we were inside the M25. However the section to Penton Hook took its toll on my back and we had to make too many stops for our liking but which became very necessary. Our support team was now boosted even more by a support team colleague on bicycle and he followed us right down the Thames to the end. Despite seeing us take probably too many breaks Mike was a great help to our morale and kept us going. After Molesey we were into familiar water for Bernie and this helped a great deal. Finally as we came into the lock cut at Teddington my daughter had arranged for many local friends to cheer us into the lock and it was very welcome. The last few hundred metres and we ended the day.

Day 4 and we can't quite believe it. Last July we took part in a 17-mile race from Maidstone to Tonbridge and we thought then that it was a horrendous distance. Now we are saying to ourselves only 17 miles to go! What a difference. Did that chap yesterday at Sunbury really say "well done boys this is the 100 mile point!"

Yes he did and so on Monday at 0633hrs a mass start set off everyone on the final leg. Just after Richmond we thought my back would start aching again but it was Bernie's dead legs

that became the major hiccup. We were travelling well however so the pattern was set for the trip. My back problems began in earnest at Hammersmith so we had one-mile efforts with short stops to stretch and take on chocolate and water.

After a stop at Battersea we were intent on stopping again but the sight of Vauxhall Bridge changed all that. The end was there for us to see, so it was head down and paddle into the finish. 3hrs 1min was far better than we'd hoped for. Thus at 0934hrs on Mon 13 April 2009 we crossed the finish line of the DW Race and euphoria took over. Total time 29hrs 27min we were the last Endeavour K2 to finish but the bottom line is WE DID IT!! 18 months ago I arrived at BCCC having never sat in a marathon kayak before but with a plan to compete in the DW. I not only competed in the race but I completed it. Thank you to all at the club and my support crew. My smile will never be bigger than it was at the top of Festival Hall steps.

Ian Mattison
15.04.09



Finished at last

Yes! You too could do the DW and be head and shoulders above everyone else.



Well, maybe you would feel a bit wobbly so why not try it first in the warmer waters of Hanohano bay, in Honolulu?

To see what you are in for go to

http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_g8RQLI9eRjQ/Sah5SaVZYxI/AAAAAAAAA0/5kqPtsgggZY/s1600-h/Hanohano2009_0137+copy.jpg

Derek & Jamie's DW Report 2009



Derek and I would like to thank you all for all the kind words and encouragement that has been given, in the build up to and after the actual event. We have managed to raise over £1500 for the MS Society.

As some of you will be aware, we were unable to complete the whole distance due to me damaging my shoulder badly, but we did get to Longridge Scout Centre on the Thames which is some 74 Miles, this by itself was a massive achievement as it is over twice the distance that either of us has ever paddled.

I am lucky that my cousin's wife Clare, did a degree in Sports Science and is a qualified Physiotherapy, so I have spent the last couple of days at their house having acupuncture and massage on my shoulder which is now much better, but don't expect to see me in a kayak for some time yet, till it has fully healed.

We had a lazy morning getting ready for the race 11:42 seemed like an age away, its only when someone said its 11:39 should you not be on the water that we started to really move. We hit the start line only 3 minutes past our planned time which did not worry us in the slightest; we had not seen anyone set off in front of us, so knew we were going to have quite a lonely paddle along the canal but this was not the case as all the people out walking their dogs, cycling and on the narrow boats were shouting encouragement as we went by.

We portaged the low swing bridges to give our legs some blood back which worked well apart from the second one where I stood in a red ants nest and two climbed up inside my trouser leg and

started to have a feast, I found the first one who went for a swim straight away we paddled on. We saw the support crew on one of the bridges and I shouted about needing some antiseptic cream. They were all thinking oh no he has damaged his hand. They were waiting at another bridge further on to administer the cream, this is when I found the second ant that was still biting me around the ankle; he quickly went and joined his friend in the canal. We were then almost at Pewsey when a swan took one look at Derek and decided that he did not like him so hissed as we went past. About 30 paddle strokes latter the swan decided Derek was not paddling fast enough so decided to have another go this time he would do it by dive bombing Derek in the back, as he did he caught Derek across the arm, which spurred us on to go a bit faster.

We were soon in a good rhythm, with our support crew feeding us at every opportunity they could. Mike Martin came for a run alongside us for quite a few miles to make sure that the gates were open and that we also had more food. Then we hit a big problem at the tunnel, a big slow barge was coming through towards us, the Marshalls stopped us. We were sitting there for what seemed like forever and by this time two of the crews that had started 15 minutes behind us had caught up with us. Eventually the barge popped out of the tunnel, we had now been sitting there for 10 ½ minutes, we were both starting to feel a bit cold so started off straight away to find Mike the other side after he had run up and over the top. As we went through Newbury there was a shout from Derek we can't stop paddling there was no horn.

We then just kept plodding on mile after mile till Woolhampton where I had the first round of deep heat, which seemed to do the trick. At Aldermaston Kari strapped on a heat pack while one of the Marshalls (who is a Physio) gave me a bit of treatment, as we pulled away from Aldermaston the marshal that had given me treatment told our support crew that she doubted that I would be able to complete the race. We were now over 50 minutes down on our time so we picked up the pace from about 6mph to about 7.1 when we had the little bit of flow there was on the Kennet.

It was now getting dark, we should have been at Wokingham before it was dark but that was still a fair way off. We paddled though the Oracle with a couple of cheers from onlookers and then popped out onto the Thames. This was another big milestone, just round the corner now to some warm clothes, warm food, and another generous helping of deep heat. Ten minutes was all the time we were given to get changed eat, drink and back on the water as we were now well over an hour down on our time and if this was not picked up we could miss the tide. In the back of the boat there was a cry from Derek, " I'm getting high off all this deep heat."

I was now in serous pain and Derek could tell, he kept asking me if I wanted to continue, and I told him that we have to make it over half way.

It was now pitch black as we battled our way down the Thames; we had a near miss with one Island and two Canadian canoes, that just appeared out of nowhere. We were still plodding along at just over 7mph and at Hambleldon the third load of deep heat was applied, I was now in real agony as the deep heat seemed to be burning the skin and the pressure of my buoyancy aid was making it worse. I would have given up at this point, but had it not been for Jayne giving me a good talking to and telling me to get on with it and work through the pain, I must point out that no one had told her about the Physio that had look at my shoulder way back at Aldermaston, so we got back into the boat and headed off again.

As we stopped at Marsh to get out I commented to Derek we were now ½ way which was great news. Unfortunately we walked the bridge as every movement was sending pain through my shoulder, but again we got back in and backup to the same pace of just over 7mph, by now I was

thinking that Derek must be doing most of the work himself as my paddle stroke was barely higher than the cockpit rim.

Marlow was the low point of the race as this is where I decided enough was enough and before I did anymore injury to my shoulder we would have to call it a day. Gavin offered to put the boat on the roof and drive us to the scout centre but one more bit of defiance, we decided we would paddle there as it was only another 1000 meters and then we could jump in the hot showers before all our dry clothes turned up.

Derek and I would like to say a big thanks to all of our support crews, for all the time and effort they have put in for us over the past 6 months with all the on water and off water training.

Derek and I had a long chat last night and we have decided that we will be doing the race again as we both know that if my shoulder had not gone we would have completed the DW, so here's looking forward to Easter 2010.

Kind Regards
Derek & Jamie