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# Waterfront

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**Racing Special**

**March 2009**

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## *Editor's foreword*

In the world of canoe/kayak racing we are always in season – I mean in the racing season, of course. The Hasler Series starts 1<sup>st</sup> October and continues with just a break from mid-November to mid-March. But during that break there are several longer distance races from the Ross Warland Memorial Challenge, the Waterside and Thameside Series plus races on the Thames and a descent race. Do all of these and you have canoed 187 miles but, with careful planning you could still do our own canal challenge, the Wey Hare & Hounds and the Essex Winter series or the Midlands duathlon series.

Worn out?

Ok, but all this has only been in preparation for THE race the "DW" – all 125 miles of it and 77 portages.

To celebrate it and the forthcoming challenge for some of BCCC's paddlers that I thought we should issue a Racing Special. I had tried to get it on a pink background, but have you seen the colour that comes out on Microsoft Word!!

## **Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race**

Known to all canoeists as "the DW" this race is run each Easter from, as its name suggests, Devizes in Wiltshire along the Kennet & Avon Canal and the river Thames to Westminster. This will be its 61<sup>st</sup> year.

It is a challenge. The race is 125 miles long and has 77 portages. The first 52 miles are on the Kennet & Avon and the next 55 miles are on the Thames with the last 17 miles being on the tideway from Teddington, through Richmond, Kew and Putney to Westminster.

There are five classes. The Senior Doubles with crews of two adults race non-stop from start to finish. There are three other classes of doubles that race over four days, as do Senior Singles.

The 4 day events start on Good Friday with a canal section of 34.5 miles to Newbury. The second day is 35.5 miles from Newbury to Marlow. Easter Sunday is from Marlow to Teddington a distance of 37.5 miles down the Thames. The last 17.5 miles is paddled on Easter Monday on the tidal Thames from Teddington to Westminster and this last section of the race will start at or about high tide at 5:50 in the morning.

The senior Doubles race is the longest non-stop canoe race in the World. Crews may start between 07:00 and 20:00 on Easter Saturday and are timed straight through from start to finish. They may, of course take a break or have a sleep, but most aim to race continuously through to the finish. Their start time will be determined by their assessment of how long it will take them to get to Teddington, where they join the tideway. They have a four hour window as they cannot join the tideway until 30 minutes before high tide and must join it no later than 3 hours 30 minutes after high tide. If they arrive too soon they have to wait – and thus waste time – if they arrive too late they have to wait approximately 8½ hours until the next tide to continue.

The fastest crews will aim for 18 hours or less. Most crews will finish between 20 and 25 hours. It is a race that needs careful planning and months of dedicated training if it is to be completed successfully. All crews must finish and vacate the finish site at St. Thomas's Hospital by 10 a.m. on Easter Monday.

Good preparation is key to get physically fit, to know and be comfortable in the boat and to know the route. Even so you never quite know what is in store over the course of the race as last year proved when Easter dawned with sub zero temperatures and the Thames flowing fast. 58 of the 119 Senior Doubles crews retired.



*James Bean and Gary Vallance wrapped up against the cold of last year's race*

## The DW 19 – 13 April 2009

### Runners and riders in BCCC colours for this year's race

The club has a long history of crews competing in the DW and this tradition is being carried on this year by 5 crews, possibly 6, all of whom are doing it for the first time.

#### Senior Doubles crews

##### **Jamie Cox /Derek Campbell**

Jamie has teamed up with Derek who is a member of Leighton Buzzard Canoe Club. They will be racing in the Senior Doubles event and aim to get down in one piece with a target time of 22 hours. They will be setting off about 10 a.m. on the Saturday morning and all being well will finish around 7 – 9 a.m. on Sunday morning. They are competing in the Waterside Series where they are presently lying in 5<sup>th</sup> place after two of the four races. They have paddled together over the past year or more in both sprint and marathon events and look to be in good form.



*Jamie and Derek in training*

##### **Ian Evans/ Toby Williams**

Ian and Toby have recently joined the club and they may race under the Army Canoe Union badge. Dark horses, I think, in the true sense of the dictionary definition. They are both doctors and I understand come from a background of endurance events. They are putting in training when work permits and got a good time at Thameside 2. Something tells me that they are a good bet to finish.

#### Junior Doubles

**Isobel and Naomi Smith**

Isobel and Naomi will be starting from Devizes sometime between 8 and 9:30 a.m. on Good Friday on the longest canoe journey of their young lives. Mark you, if you have followed their progress on the web site you will know the number of miles and training they have put in.

Given a fair wind you can bet Isobel and Naomi will be giving most of the boy crews a run for their money. They can't wait to get going!



*Isobel and Naomi*

**Brian Biffin/ Mike Rees-Clark**

Brian and Mike will be competing in the Junior/Veteran class in a touring Canadian canoe. They have been training over the last couple of months and have raced in the Waterside Series and have canoed parts of the Thames to gain knowledge of the course. They can start from 9:30 to 10:30 on Good Friday on the first leg to Newbury. Go for it, guys.



*Life can be lonely: Mike and Brian*

**Ian Mattison/Bernie Boyles**

Ian and son-in-law, Bernie, will be racing in the Endeavour class in a K2 over the four days. Endeavour have drawn the short straw as they have to start at Devizes between 7 and 8 a.m. Ian and Bernie completed Waterside B in 3hrs 54 minutes – their first race together in a K2. They have a simple race plan: to get there!



Ian and Bernie: Waterside B

### Senior Singles Class

#### Tracy Rees-Clark

Having had a taste of the DW last year in a K2 with Liz and having had to retire not far from Teddington, after some appalling weather, Tracy is toying with doing it this year in a single. She is debating in her mind whether she has done enough training. She is entering Watersides C and D which will be good tests for her, and will make her decision on finishing Waterside D. I hope she feels up to it – watch this space. She looks happy enough in this recent picture.



*Tracy on Waterside A at Hungerford*

**So who is your money on?**

A large number of the crews raise money for charity through their efforts in the DW and last year, for example, it is estimated that over £200,000 was raised by the paddlers. Three of our crews this year are seeking sponsors for their individual charities:

**Brian Biffin and Mike Rees-Clark's charity is Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice in Farnham.**

You can support them at <http://www.justgiving.com/briansdwmarathon>

**Jamie Cox and Derek are raising money for the MS Society**

You can support them at [http://www.justgiving.com/jamie\\_derek\\_dw2009](http://www.justgiving.com/jamie_derek_dw2009)

**Ian Mattison's charity is The Army Benevolent Fund**

Ian's link on the Just Giving web site is <http://www.justgiving.com/ianmattison1>

*Please support them generously: they are all good for an each way bet.*

**Good luck to all of the crews.** They will be welcoming of your support along the route, so please try to get to see them at some point. You can find much more information about the race on the DW web site (see below). I expect you will find their entry number and the website is up-dated on a regular basis throughout the week-end to show the progress of all crews.

<http://www.dwrace.org.uk>

## **And finally**

Congratulations to Isobel and Naomi on being invited to race with the BCU Marathon Racing Committee's development team at the Gent International Marathon race in Belgium on 27 March. Another 20km to go under their belt. Good luck, girls.

**The next edition of Waterfront will be out in April.**

**Please let me have articles/photos/dates for the calendar etc by 31 March 2009.**

