

Devizes to Westminster 2010 : Congratulations to all competitors

The results have already been posted and these tell much of the story. They cannot tell of the mental and physical pain the paddlers go through in training and in the race. Neither can I but Sarah has written a few words and Matthew Murnaghan has given us a support crew view.

There are some statistics below. I am not sure if 12 is a record entry for the BCCC but I think it probably is. A quick count of canoe club entries shows Richmond Canoe Club with 21 entries followed by the BCCC.

All the BCCC crews all finished which is great seeing that 35% of the overnight crews retired.. The conditions were described by the organisers as being deceptively difficult and as a result 35% of the non-stop crews failed to finish. . All the crews deserve special mention, but two in particular.

Steven Rees-Clark stepped in at just a few day's notice to partner Jason Ashwell when his regular partner, Nigel Cole, fell ill. It is to his great credit that he and Jason completed the 125 mile course coming 66th out of 101 finishers in the non-stop event. (His decision to race meant that with Mum Tracy and brother Mike, there were three members of the same family competing. Surely that can't happen very often.)

The second is Isobel Smith who cut her head on a low bridge on the Kennet on Saturday morning. She and Naomi had an enforced stop when they got to the Thames to receive medical assistance but after being patched up they carried on to finish in fourth place overall. They were awarded a time allowance for their enforced stop which tantalizingly put them just 40 seconds behind the fastest all-female crew. They also won the fastest U17 Schools Trophy – over two hours ahead of the next boat. It is amazing the powers of a bit of vinegar and brown paper.

OK I should mention the others. Tracy and Liz suffered disappointment two years ago when – in really cold conditions – they had to retire. This year they were well pleased to have finished. And likewise, Jamie and Derek also finished in a very respectable time: they, too, had to retire last year.

The boys crews of Jason and James and Michael and Nick finished in excellent times in sixth and eighth places respectively and their times added to Isobel and Naomi's won them the junior team prize.

Our only senior singles paddler, Sarah, battled painful wrists and shoulder with great determination to finish with a great run down the tideway on Monday morning to win the fastest veteran ladies prize.

Taking a wider view, the Thames was high – on "Red Boards" for the entire length to Teddington which would have been of great assistance to most crews. The times taken for the non-stop race ranged from 16 hours 20 minutes to 48 hours 28 minutes. Special mention should be made of T J Rose of Worcester Canoe Club who first competed in 1968 and was competing for a record 20th time. He finished in a time of 34 hours 7 minutes.

Are you doing it next year? Start preparing now!

Richard Boreham has kindly given us a link to some photographs and I have added some below.

Richard's link: <http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/RBZiggy/DevizesToWestminster20104Day#>

The DW in Numbers

125	Miles from Devizes to Westminster
77	Portages, where competitors have to pick up their kayak and carry it around an obstacle
324	Total number of crews who started this year
250	Total number of crews who finished this year
126.08	Flowrate in cubic metres/sec of the Thames at Maidenhead on Easter Sunday. Environment Agency Red boards were on display for much of the river.
12	Number of BCCC paddlers who started this year's race
12	Number of BCCC paddlers who finished this year's race
5	Number of trophies won by BCCC paddlers this year

Junior Team Trophy:- Isobel and Naomi, James and Jason D, Mike and Nick

Junior Schools Trophy;- Isobel and Naomi

Senior Ladies K2 Trophy:- Liz and Tracy

Veteran Ladies K2 trophy:- Liz and Tracy

Veteran Ladies K1 Trophy;-Sarah

300+ Number of Texts sent by Sam RC whilst doing overnight support

0 Number of blisters on the hands of Steve after completing the overnight race. (Although I am told there is a sore spot elsewhere!)



Sarah portaging Marlow Lock



Isobel and Naomi and Jason and James at Wraysbury



L to R: Sarah; George Barnicoat (Cokethorpe School); James; The Duke of Wellington; Jason; Naomi; Steven RC; Tracy RC; Isobel; Nick; a beheaded George III and Michael RC.
(Courtesy of Ian Mattison and Wellington Barracks).

And one further thing – Mad Sec thinks you have cartoon withdrawal symptoms so has sent me this:

Henley Straight - Easter 2010



"Remember the DW next time you have to produce a sample of 'Mid Stream Urine'".

Brian Gandy 06/04/2010

Devizes to Westminster: We was there

As seen by a support crew

What I did with Dad on Saturday 3rd of April

Firstly I started off at The Bridge before Pewsey.

Next I stopped at a hedge near a railway bridge and the canoeing bridge on the road.

After That I went to Crofton Level Crossing. It was an old fashioned Crossing. But after we crossed it we saw a train. It was 2 First Great Western HST's.

Then we went to Froxfield where we had lunch.

After lunch we went to Kintbury. A level Crossing was near Kintbury Station. During the wait for Mum, the level crossing went off. It was very good waiting for the train.

After that it was Hampsted. Not far away from Kintbury. We were just waiting for Mum again.

At Newbury we were thinking about waiting for Mum.

Now to Thatcham Station with 3 waits at the Level Crossing. But after the 3rd train had gone we still had to wait. When it left the barriers rose.

Finally we went to Woollhampton Just after the level crossing but after that a Swing bridge was near. I was tired so I said "goodnight" To Mum and left. But we had to stop at Tracy's house first & went Home.

The end!

Matthew

And as experienced by a competitor

Sarah's DW 2010, K1 senior singles.

Well I did it. I managed to complete my first DW, in Howard's trusty Tor. It was with great relief, satisfaction and joy that I crossed the finish line at Westminster Bridge, in an overall time of 22hrs and 30seconds (blast those 30secs!) which was 1hr35mins ahead of my pre-race schedule. It was both a physical and mental journey, and I went through highs and lows and scary bits over the 4 days.

Day 1: the headwind on the dead K&A was no help whatsoever, and I ended the day 5 mins down on schedule, finishing in 7 hr and 34s despite trying hard to get under 7 hrs. Being attacked by a swan, having to wait for 3 barges under bridges and annoyingly not being held at the tunnel and having to follow a very slow Canadian through it did not help! The headwind somehow caused serious jip to my wrists which was worrying.

A disaster at home prevented recovery so on day 2 I was tired and my mind was elsewhere. The first part of the day I was so slow I was on an 8 hr schedule (falling in under a very low swing bridge didn't help), and kept feeling like retiring, but I couldn't allow that, and perked myself up, and all of a sudden I was back on track, so much so that my support crew almost missed me at Dreadnought Reach. First time through the Oracle in a K1 and I nearly lost the boat at the portage! The Thames was flowing well on a mix of amber and red, and I was very pleased I'd done Thameside II (even though it was in a K2) as I knew where the tricky bits would be. The pull of the weirs was very strong and quite alarming at times. Finally I was heading for Marlow, and the finish of day 2, and was astonished to find I'd done it in 7hr5mins, 10mins ahead of schedule. So I'd really sped up from the first half of the day. By now my wrists were appalling and my shoulder was very grumpy indeed. I was concerned.

Day 3: I was very grateful that I only had 13 portages. Ibuprofen and Paracetamol helped my very painful shoulder. The river was flowing quickly and the weirs were worse than yesterday. I found I needed some strong paddling to keep out of them. Somehow I didn't see Windsor Castle as I was concentrating on getting the line right in the eddies. Into Molesey and Charles had the perfect exit and entry point sorted, which was great as there were lots of boats and the rollers were under water. Someone said we'd done 100 miles now, which was great to hear. Howard and Richard B were shouting me on here too. There was some very horrible water some time before Teddington Weir, which was scary as I knew I couldn't be doing with falling in there! Pleased with myself for staying in the boat, I was very tired indeed when I reached Teddington Lock, and was relieved to hear the marshal say it was only 500 yds to the finish. Mike was there to take my boat which was great as I was a bit all over the place. My time was 5hr 48mins, over an hr ahead of schedule, so I must be doing something right. Just the tideway left. I'd been dreading it since I put my entry in.

Day 4: I feel sick, due to anxiety. Isobel came to talk to me to say it wouldn't be as bad as all the horror stories one hears, and gave me a few pointers. I did feel a bit better afterwards. We were off at 07.11 and after the initial start I found myself with a group of 5 boats. We stayed together for a while, but gradually drifted ahead/behind each other. I always had a couple of boats in the general vicinity though which was useful as they are easier to focus on than the 'big water'. I was surprised and pleased that I wasn't bothered by the width of the tideway at any point. I was bothered by some overtaking large fast cruiser things though, and one kicked up such a wash that I'm still not entirely sure how I stayed upright. The conditions on the Tideway were very variable, with some parts very calm, and others a bit of a nightmare and very scary.

All of a sudden I really started to feel the tide, and things starting coming up a lot quicker, so reading further ahead was really important! A very large smile came across my face when I saw the words 'Vauxhall Bridge' as I knew I was very nearly there. We were instructed to go between some barges before Westminster Bridge and finish close to the side, so I started doing that, then really had to work hard to make it as they were coming up very fast indeed! There was lots of shouting and cheering from the banks which was fantastic to hear. At last I was paddling under Westminster Bridge, and felt rather emotional as the claxon went. I had made it down the Tideway, in 2hr 5m! And I'd completed DW in K1. Yahoo!!

Much grateful thanks goes to my fantastic support crew, Brian and Stella Gandy, Charles and Katie Hicks, Mike and Mary Simpson, and Tim Nicholls.

Sarah Francis 6.04.2010

