

Mytchett to Westminster

It is four years ago that Naomi and Isobel did a one star course at Wokingham Waterside Centre during their Easter holidays. Having enjoyed it, we looked for a local club and ended up at Mytchett, signing up for the Paddlepower programme.

Not many weeks later we received our first copy of 'Waterfront', which we read avidly (honestly). In fact I remember two articles as being particularly significant.

Firstly, a piece written by Brian Gandy about a race happening one Sunday afternoon in May. It said that anyone could join in – sounds like a bit of fun for the girls, I thought, and so Naomi and Isobel, paddling Lightnings, entered what was to be their first of many, Hasler races.

The second item that sticks in my mind was by Paul Batchelor and Pete Absalom. They had spent Easter doing something called the DW. From what I remember, this involved eating lots of potatoes, not doing enough training (according to the editor) and being lifted out of their boat at the end. Fascinating stuff, but it did leave the question of 'What is this DW then?'

In the following weeks and months, we found out that DW stood for the Devizes to Westminster race, a long race, much to be aspired to, along with other races called Watersides and Thamesides. These contained exciting challenges such as tunnels, for capsizing in, flights to be run and pounds to be paddled. Anyway, aspire to it, Naomi and Isobel did.

So the following Easter found them doing the Elmbridge half marathon, a 13 mile race for the under 16s. The year after, they entered Waterside A and B and last year completed the whole series. So what next but the DW itself, and so we found ourselves on Easter Monday morning, quite early on Easter Monday morning, at Westminster Bridge joining in and witnessing scenes of euphoria as each crew finished and achieved their goal.

So, the real point of writing all this is to allow me to say a huge thank-you to everyone, and there are many of you, who have helped, encouraged and inspired Naomi and Isobel on their four year kayaking journey. We do appreciate all the time you give to coaching and running the club.

Well, Naomi and Isobel may have achieved their DW ambition, but something tells me, this is not the end of the story!

Ruth and Howard Smith
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