

# **BRITISH CANOE UNION**



## **A SHORT HISTORY OF CANOEING IN BRITAIN**



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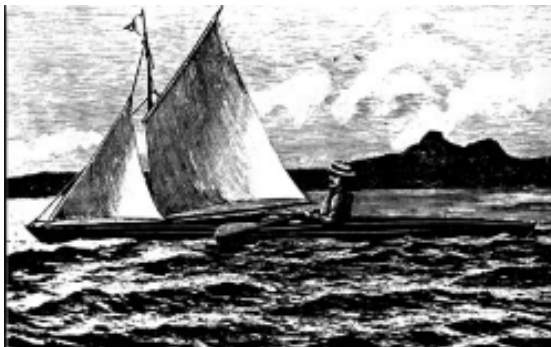


Plate 2: “The First Rob Roy” , from “Joun MacGregor”, a biography by Edwin Hodder, published 1894.

## Foreword

This short history has been compiled and checked from as many sources of information as could be found, and the editor has many friends to thank for their help. He would particularly like to mention John W.Dudderidge,OBE the President of the British Canoe Union, and Peter E .Wells the Commodore of the Royal Canoe Club, for their assistance in checking the manuscript.

It has not been easy to compile a history, which is simple to follow. With a sport with so many facets of such wide variety, to write it chronologically confuses the growth of the sections too much. The book has therefore been divided into parts, each dealing with one of these sections. Nevertheless incidents in one very often affected another. When this occurred cross-references have been made wherever possible. It is hoped that in this way a reasonable picture of the whole of the sport of canoeing can be grasped.



Plate 3: Shooting the rapids of the River Ruess, Switzerland



Plate 4: "In the Hayfields" near the Danube in Germany.

# Chapter I

## The Beginning

The first sign of any organisation in canoeing appeared when John MacGregor, a London Scot of very great energy, got Searle 's of Lambeth, boatbuilders, to build him his first "Rob Roy" in 1865. John MacGregor was a great writer; but, although he wrote many books describing his craft (He designed many more "Rob Roys ") he only briefly divulged that he got his original idea after seeing the canoes in "North America and the Kamschatka".

The Rob Roys themselves were essentially all-purpose travelling vessels for rivers and estuaries. They were propelled by double-bladed paddles; but they could also take advantage of any following wind by setting a small lugsail, the paddle then being used to steer. Some of these original Rob Roys can still be found. The one built for MacGregor 's cruise on the River Jordan and the Nile is preserved at the Royal Canoe Club, and there is another at the National Mountaineering Centre, Plas y Brenin, in Snowdonia. Many more of the same type of canoe were built and sold to the general public, and very occasionally even these can be found, still in use.

As a result of the lectures he gave and of the books he wrote about his voyages, MacGregor began to collect about him other enthusiasts, and in 1866 the Canoe Club was formed. The Prince of Wales joined the club and was made Commodore in 1867, which office he held until his accession to the throne as King Edward VII in 1901. In 1873, by command of Queen Victoria, the Canoe Club became the Royal Canoe Club. The Prince was Member Number 57, owning a canoe called "Risk".

The energy and speed with which the Canoe Club got going was remarkable and could easily serve as a model for many today. In 1867 they held their first paddling regatta, with fifteen canoes taking part. It was a well organised event, and the present Commodore still has a copy of the original, printed programme.



Plate 5: "Second Rapids" on the River Rheinfelden series.

## Chapter II

### Development and Organisation

It took time for the sport of canoeing to spread away from the Canoe Club, but the granting of the Royal Warrant made others look towards it, and to seek for themselves its enchantments. One of the first clubs thus to be formed was the Clyde Canoe Club, in 1876. This club existed in strength until shortly after the Second World War, and it was responsible for the "C" class sailing canoe, a class which has now all but died out. The club itself still exists, but it has gone over to sailing dinghies - and, we are told, fishing!

Progress was, however, slow. In fact canoeing got organised more quickly on the continent of Europe than it did in Great Britain, and in 1924 Austria, Germany, Denmark and Sweden founded the Internationalen Representation for Kanusport (IRK). Czechoslovakia joined it in 1925, followed by Finland, Luxembourg and Yugoslavia in 1932, Holland and Hungary in 1933, and Great Britain, America, Belgium and Switzerland in 1934. By 1935 there were seventeen federations.

The IRK had its headquarters in Munich. After the Second World War a new federation had to be built on the ruins of the old one. The work was started in 1946, when, among others, John Dudderidge represented Great Britain - he had been on the board of the old IRK since 1938 - and Charles de Coquereaumont represented France. The new body was called the International Canoe Federation (usually referred to as ICF). M.de Coquereaumont is now the President of the ICF and John Dudderidge is on the Board. The other long serving member of the board who deserves mention is Olov Verner of Sweden who was secretary from 1946 until his retirement from the post in 1972, by which time, the number of affiliated bodies had risen to 36.

In this country the first attempt to bring scattered groups together occurred in 1887, when the British Canoe Association was formed primarily for touring canoeists, and not as a legislating or governing body for the sport. Although this organisation remained active for a number of years, it never developed and quietly died in the 1920's, though in fact it never was officially disbanded, and its honorary secretary, Arthur Nisbet was still a member of the Royal Canoe Club in 1939.

On the continent, however, the sport was waxing. The German firm of Klepper had a design of folding canoe before the First World War. In the '20 's the Germans made good use of this invention, and canoeing became very popular. In fact, the Sport began to be linked with skiing, the one being followed in the winter, with the other in the summer.

In 1927 H .W.Pawlata, an Austrian, performed the first Eskimo roll done by a European. His roll is still the basic roll, the one taught first by most people today. Pawlata learnt to roll by studying papers written about Eskimos, in particular those written by Rasmussen.

The first Englishman to learn, did so directly from the Eskimos. This was Gino Watkins in 1930. Watkins dreamed of the Arctic Air Route, over Greenland, and went there to explore its possibilities. Whereas Pawlata learnt to roll for the fun of it - and what fun he has given us! - Watkins learnt to roll to survive and to obtain food for his expedition party.

In the early '30 's travellers to Germany began to bring back news of these elegant folding canoes. They were to be seen in thousands on the various German rivers. Some travellers bought them, and soon dealers began to import them. They became such an instant success that manufacturers began to appear. One of the first was Kissner, who started to make the "Folbot" in a small factory not far from Old Street, London, about 1933. Another early manufacturer was F.O.D. Hirschfeld, a refugee from Hitler 's Germany, who started on Tyneside in 1935, creating the firm of Tyne Canoes Ltd.

The owners of these new canoes began to look around for clubs. Finding very few, they began to form them themselves. In 1933 the Camping Club of Great Britain and Ireland gave birth to a canoeing section, and the Canoe-Camping Club came into being although it gained that name much later on. That same year the Manchester Canoe Club was founded, and there is an amusing story of one of this club's earlier tours abroad. In 1936 one Ferdinand Winkle invited a party of students from London University and their friends for a holiday on some Bavarian rivers. In this party were Ralph Tyas, and Maurice Rothwell, until very recently chairman of the Slalom and White Water Committee. For this tour the British contingent received the following commendation from the D.K.V. (the governing body in Germany): "Rightly are the representatives of the Manchester Canoe Club styled England's Kayak pioneers; they stand but little behind the finest performers of Europe." And there, we may be allowed to add, they remain to this day.

However, we must return to the organisation of the sport. With the creation of more clubs it became important to establish a national governing body. After correspondence in the national press the British Canoe Association (Mk.II) was formed, the founders being completely unaware that there had ever been a Mark I, or that its corpse was still lying around unburied. The new B.C.A. and the Canoe section of the Camping Club decided to amalgamate but to remain as a section of the Camping Club of Great Britain, and they affiliated this new body to the I.C.F. Its secretary, R.V. Ripley attended a Congress in Prague where the 1933 World Championships were being held. However, a national governing body needs to be entirely independent before it can affiliate other clubs to itself. After much argument a new national body, under the leadership of Hians Renold and with Mrs Jane Unwin as secretary, was formed and called the British Canoe Union. Its inaugural meeting was on the 28th March 1936, so that the British Team to the Olympic Games of that year went under the aegis of the B.C.U.

Now another personality appeared on the British scene, who had a great influence upon our sport. This was Franz Schulhof who came to England as manager of the London branch of an Austrian company. He brought with him a genuine Eskimo Kayak and a copy of it made by the firm of Grazer, together with the reputation of being among the first Europeans to do the Eskimo Roll (he invented the "Schulhof" or Put Across method), and with seven first descents of Alpine Rapid Rivers to his credit, among them the Upper Inn. He joined the Royal Canoe Club in 1937, and took parties from that club to rivers in the French Alps and to the Hampshire and Sussex coasts, where he made films, which were the foundation of the British Canoe Union film library. This library was set up by the writer in 1948 together with one or two films of his own making. It became too big a job to be run by an amateur, and in 1958 it was handed over to the British Film Institute to handle for the B.C.U.

Franz Schulhof also bears the distinction of being the first person to teach rolling in this country. He taught members of the Royal Canoe Club, and in 1938 the first B.C .U.Rolling Circus was launched, with exhibitions in London and Stockport. He has the honourable reputation of being the first "enemy alien" to have gained a commission in H.M.Forces; the Army changed his name to Frank Sutton and awarded him the Military Cross. He is now a British subject, has recently retired from business and lives in Buckinghamshire. He is an honorary member of the Royal Canoe Club.

In 1939 Franz Schulhof organised the first British slalom, at Trevor Rocks on the Welsh Dee. He was assisted by Maurice Rothwell among others. A second one was held on the Teme at Ludlow in 1940 but the war put paid to further activity until 1948, when the next was held at Tymain Island, on the Dee again. Geoff Sanders, now the chairman of the Council was there, as well as the old die-hards and some other, new blood.

If we have mentioned Pawlata and Schulhof as pioneers from the continent, we must most certainly also bring in Milo Dufek. Upon him we can hang much of the subsequent history of kayak canoeing. Until very recently Canadian Canoeing has remained technically static for a very long time, though the standard of skill has steadily gone up. Now, as we shall see, the wheel has very nearly turned completely. The increased skill has been much assisted by new methods of manufacture, and the new skills of the Kayak are beginning to help the Canadian paddler again.

But in 1952 Milo Dufek made his way out of Czechoslovakia and into Switzerland. He also transferred his affections from the Canadian to the Kayak, and brought the skills of the former to the latter. Milo Dufek was not only a canoeist of international ability; he was a fine showman. His magnificent demonstration of the "new" skills, and their obvious advantage over the old methods soon convinced the slalomists at least that they had got to learn them, too. So far as we were concerned, the British Slalom team, on its way to Merano in Italy in 1953, went via Munich to take lessons from the German champion Erik Seidel. Here began our Basic Strokes. In a book written by me in 1955, in the chapter on kayak paddling technique, I wrote.... it is a sad thing that only now is the art of paddling being studied ... " and I went on to suggest that we use the names of the Canadian strokes from which these strokes had sprung. The strokes then were not exactly what we have now, but they were very near.

In 1953, too, began another revolution. We had not yet got down to holding our canoes properly. Erik Seidel was sitting on a bag full of sawdust, which he had beaten into the right shape by bouncing on it! Should we in fact have a proper seat? Should we have knee grips? We now have both; the ordinary tourist is beginning to appreciate the value of these comforts. Nevertheless in 1959, six years later, Paul Farrant, the F.1 .World Champion Slalomist that year, had to make his own knee grips and foot rest. These things were not generally accepted.

Another factor which speeded the development was a change in the method of construction of canoes. Plastic materials began to appear, and the application of glass reinforced plastic (GRP) with its simplicity and its immense strength to weight ratio seemed obvious to the far-sighted. One of the first firms to experiment with this method of construction was J.L. Gmach, who began to offer for sale canoes made this way in 1956 or '57. Other firms were not long in following suit, although the rules governing international slalom prevented the inclusion of GRP canoes before 1963. Nevertheless progress has been

rapid ever since. The combination of the new technique shown us by Milo Dufek and the almost limitless shapes obtainable by the use of GRP have sped us on.

It became obvious that the rapid growth of the sport - not only in technique but in numbers also - might become uncontrollable by the Council of the B.C.U. Two or three of the competitive sides of canoeing were strong enough to have developed their own committees. Slalom and Sprint Racing (then called Paddle Racing) had been on the scene for a long enough time, though sailing was still dominated by the Royal Canoe Club. Now Long Distance Racing was beginning to appear, and the Ministry of Education was shortly to invite us to have a professional National Coach, which meant the creation of a Coaching Scheme, with its controlling Central Council for Physical Recreation some years before, in 1949. Technical Committees became an integral part of the government of canoeing, and the Constitution and Rules of the B.C.U. were written accordingly. Recently even more technical committees have been set up, and the Corps of Canoe Life Guards (of whom more in a moment) has been incorporated into the Union. There is a committee looking after Sea and Surf Canoeing, and the Council has arranged that those who wish to make Canoe Polo a serious competitive sport shall create a committee to control it properly.

This is not the place to give a close and detailed account of the development of the individual sections of the sport. The histories of some of those sections which have existed longest are given in subsequent chapters. But we must not forget our younger sections, one or two of which may turn out in time to be strong in numbers. Touring has always attracted the greatest number; in fact pretty well everybody who takes to canoeing goes on some sort of trip at some time, even if it be only for the afternoon. Consequently a great deal of the energy of the B.C.U. is devoted to this, gathering information on all our waterways, and fighting to maintain access to those where greater forces are endeavouring to keep them for their own sole use.



Plate 6: "Canal Miseries" by the Marne France.



Then the Coaching Committee has been mentioned. With the great interest shown in the sport by the educational world, it became obvious that some sort of national scheme should be set up to guide the teachers into a proper, safe way of teaching their young pupils. A coaching scheme was created by the indefatigable John Dudderidge, who toured the land in 1959 and '60, selecting people upon whom to build the scheme. In September 1961 the National Coaching Committee was set up, and on the 1st January 1962 the first National Coach was appointed. This committee has developed the scheme into a strong organisation, dividing the country into Areas, each controlled by an Area Coaching Organiser, with an Area Coaching Panel to help him, and Local Coaching Organisers to help in particular localities. Now there are part-time National Coaches, working in three of these Areas, and a fourth appointed to build up a scheme of coaching within the several forms of competition. There is a Standing Liaison Committee, with members appointed by the competition committees and the National Coaching Committee, to ensure that the National Coach with special responsibilities for competition gets all the help he can in setting up his scheme.

Perhaps the initial signs of any form of standard qualification appeared in 1947, when the writer formed a committee to devise a number of Tests of Proficiency. After two years' work it produced its first test. Some years later, after John Dudderidge had written a set of standards for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the committee produced the Advanced Test. Thus the National Coaching Committee was given some groundwork upon which to develop its standards for teaching. After some years with John Dudderidge in the chair to guide it, he retired from it and in 1966 Geoff Sanders, who had previously been its honorary secretary, took his place. The committee has always kept a close watch on all the standards, revising and altering as necessary, as time has shown; but it is worth noting that original test, first published about 1949, is still the basis of the present Proficiency Test. The committee of that time did its work well.



Plate 7: "The Rob Roy on Wheels" at Lauffenburg, Germany.

If all this scheme of teaching and coaching came into being in 1961, the Corps of Canoe Life Guards can claim to be that little bit older. It was first conceived by Rear Admiral (then Captain) Hoare who was doing voluntary work in the London Federation of Boys' Clubs. The serious East Coast floods of 1953 gave him the idea that a properly trained canoeist could do immensely useful work. However, floods are not available every day, and the Corps found itself drawn to lifeguard work on the beaches, especially those where great mass- of inland population go for their summer recreation. It was difficult to convince the ignorant that this light cockleshell of a vessel could be anything but a nuisance on the beaches, and it was a long, hard battle, only won by demonstration, before the Corps became an accepted part of the life saving services along our coasts. Again, John Dudderidge was initially in the chair until the scheme had some strength and he could leave it to stand on its own feet.

With all this huge development the organisation of the sport by amateurs became impossible, and in 1962 the Council of the B.C.U. decided to employ a professional secretary. Captain Alec Kennedy R.N., (retired) became the first secretary and offices were found in the Head Offices of the Central Council of Physical Recreation in London.

The reader will have noticed that throughout this chapter one name persistently appears. Without John Dudderidge the British Canoe Union and all else to do with canoeing would not today be in the strong position that it is. It will not be surprising, therefore if we close this chapter with the news that, for all this magnificent service, in 1963 he was awarded the **O.B.E.**, and in 1964 he was given the Award of Honour of the International Canoe Federation.

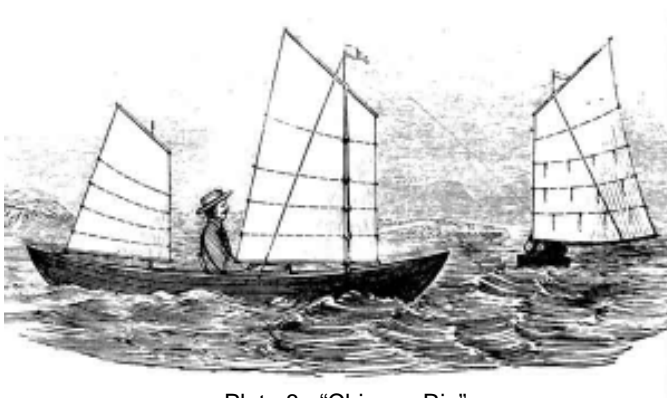


Plate 8: "Chinese Rig"

## Chapter III

### Sprint Racing

That original, well organised regatta in 1867 mentioned in Chapter I was to set off quite intensive competition over the next few years. At that first regatta the competitors had only their Rob Roys to race in; but very soon improved designs began to appear and the Rob Roy became longer and narrower, and so faster. The type which was evolved became known as the "Single Streak" by reason of its construction from two streaks or planks, one on each side, of cedar less than 1/8" thick. The actual dimensions as to length and beam varied according to the weight of the man for whom it was built, but an average size would have been 20 feet by 22 inches, decked fore and aft with a bulk headed cockpit or well, protected by narrow side decks and coaming. The paddler sat on the floorboards bracing himself against a backboard and adjustable footrest or stretcher. His paddle was about 7'6" long, spoon-bladed and unfeathered. Sadly, the last examples of these craft disappeared nearly half a century ago; but they were the direct ancestors of the modern racing kayak.

In 1874 the Royal Canoe Club instituted the Paddling Challenge Cup, the oldest paddling trophy in the world. Races for this were paddled in Rob Roys until the early years of this century when the, by then dominant, interest in single blade paddling led the club to change the race to Canadian Singles. Soon after the Second World War the club again reflected the changing fashion by reverting to Kayaks. Again in the latter part of the nineteenth century four-man Kayaks appeared. Like the original Rob Roys, they were clinker built and were known as Rob Roy Fours. These original craft were still in existence in 1950 when they were burnt as useless, the owners not appreciating their historical value. There is a story, for which proof has not been found, that in the '90's, the Swedes wishing to run some canoe races, the only racing craft available were found to belong to the Royal Canoe Club, and these craft by some curious process had arrived in Malta, from where the Germans carried them to Sweden! How and when they ever got back to the Royal Canoe Club is not related.

From the last decade of the nineteenth century into the first quarter of the twentieth, whilst in Britain the sport underwent a recession, in Europe it grew from strength to strength. Paddle racing was carried on in Britain very nearly only in the spring and autumn meetings of the Royal Canoe Club and at a few local regattas on the Thames. Great Britain was not represented in Copenhagen in 1924, when the first international organisation was set up, to regulate the competitive branches of the sport.

In Chapter II we have seen how the British Canoe Association and the British Canoe Union came into being. In the previous paragraph we have seen the creation of International-Representation for Kanusport, the I.R.K.

In 1933 the honorary secretary of the B.C.A. attended a meeting of the Congress of the I.R.K. in Prague, where the World Championships were being held. A Racing Secretary was appointed by the B.C.A., and he organised its first regatta at Chertsey in 1934.

At this time the I.R.K. had its headquarters in Munich, and the President and Secretary

were both German. They were influential in persuading the Olympic Organising Committee for the Berlin Games to put forward canoeing as a new sport for that programme. Their success led to a great leap forward in international canoe racing. The B.C.A. immediately made a provisional entry for the 1936 Games but with little or no idea how it would implement it.

Shortly after the first National Championships again at Chertsey, in 1935, the Racing Secretary handed in his resignation since he was going abroad. John Dudderidge took the job on, and at once set about finding and preparing a team for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. In the autumn of 1935 the canoeing world was invited to submit the names of canoeists prepared to take up intensive training. Notices were also placed in the national press inviting unattached canoeists to offer themselves. When a squad of about a score had been gathered, detailed training schedules were issued to the trainees and in London winter training began on the Tideway at Strand on the Green. In the spring of 1936 the training base was moved to the Royal Canoe Club where a 10,000 M. course had been measured out. By this time the numbers in the squad had fallen to about a dozen. Trials during the next two months reduced them further so that at Whitsuntide, when the squad moved up to Windermere to gain experience on water more like that which they were going to find in Berlin, the party numbered some half dozen from whom the team would need three men and one or two reserves.

On their return to London the Possibles were sent to a Harley Street heart specialist for thorough examination. A selection committee under the chairmanship of the then Commodore of the R.C .C. were given the trials results and the medical reports. The team were to concentrate on the 10,000 M event. G.W.Lawton came 8th out of 13 in the Folding Singles, and MR. Brearley and J.W.Dudderidge came 9th in the Folding Pairs.

These Olympic Games were an important landmark in that it was the first time a British team had taken part in an international event, at home or abroad, and the first time we had seen any top class international paddling. Paddling techniques were studied, craft examined, contacts made, and the team came back determined to see Great Britain at all future championships.



Plate 9: " Crossing the Sound" from the book "Come Travelling" by Warrington Baden-Powell

In the Spring of 1937 Dudderidge organised a two-week residential course at the R.C.C., and obtained the services of the leading German coach Geerhard Quandt who was also the German C.1 champion. The course was thus able to cover both Kayak and Canadian techniques. Quandt brought over with him the first K.1. The R.C.C. still had K.4's., new, carvel built ones. The enthusiasm thus engendered was so great that the R.C.C. bought a fleet of racing Kayaks from a maker in Linz, Austria, of three K.1 and three K.2 's., which were supplied and delivered in London for £80 the lot!

In the 1938 World Championships in Stockholm we entered a team for the K.1.,K.2.,F.1.,F.2. and C.1. classes, and the name of A. W. J. Simmons first appeared as a K.1. paddler. However, in general, our results that year demonstrated that we still had a long way to go.

The next Olympic Games were to have been held at Helsinki in 1940; but the second world war caused a recession, and in the 1947 National Championships we had to start again. However, the real rally came in 1948, when the first Olympic Games to be held after the war were in England, and the canoeing events were to be at Henley-on-Thames, on the same course as the Henley Royal Regatta. The B.C.U. was put to a very big effort indeed, since not only were there no competitors, but there were no canoes either. However, Messrs. Jicwood of Weybridge were approached by their materials superintendent Mr. Polovtsef, who had previously built kayaks in Finland, and they agreed to build a dozen Kayaks in time for the Games. They built them regardless of cost and, knowing that there was far too little money available, they made the B.C.U. a gift of them. It was upon these kayaks, and two racing Canadian canoes made by Austin Farrar of Wolverstone Shipyard on the Orwell that the foundations were laid upon which sprint canoeing might be rebuilt.

As a result, we were represented in all the Olympic events, including the K.1. for women, this being the first time that we had ever entered a woman for an international event.

Our representatives in the Canadian events were, perhaps, getting beyond the age of continuing in the competition field; but in 1949 Gerald Marchand appeared on the scene. He is the only one to have done so until Willy Reichenstein represented us in the World Championships of 1973. Since then some others have shown an interest in this class. This side of serious competition canoeing is, therefore, almost non-existent in the British Isles today.



Plate 10: Upset Race of the Northern Branch of the Canoe Club, 1872,at Holylake on the Mersey

Training in the Kayak world, however, began to gain momentum. In 1950 Eric Farnham took over the coaching of the team, and the Swedish coach Hans Berglund took the first post-war racing course at Bisham Abbey New boats, including modern K.4 's., appeared. Altogether the scene looked promising for the future, and there was great hope of achievement in the Olympic Games in Helsinki in 1952. But with a new and somewhat immature team, we found that standards elsewhere had also gone ahead and, although we did not do too badly, our placings were not as good as we had hoped.

In 1953 we did achieve a standard comparable with those on the continent of Europe, and we gained a second place in the first West European Championships in Duisburg, followed by a first in K.4 's., at an international regatta at Namur, as well as a second and a third in other events. In this year, too, we had the first of the annual sprint championships on the Serpentine in London, sponsored by the "News of the World". Altogether things began to look bright for the future.

However, things were not to work out like that. A few remained keen and worked hard; but it was too few. The cost of sending people to Melbourne in 1956 meant that only a very few could represent us in the canoeing events there. In their efforts to encourage others to join in sprint racing, the Paddling Racing Committee introduced the National Chine Kayak, but this exceptionally fine canoe, which could be made easily and cheaply at home, seems to have been before its time, as it did not get taken up in the way it was hoped, although events for it were arranged at many regattas. By 1957 the number of competitors had dropped to a dangerously low figure. In an effort to halt the decline the Paddling Racing Committee introduced junior and senior events. This latter decision produced a record number of junior entrants, and it appeared that things would pick up again. By 1959 we were again able to enter good teams, and in that year the European Championships at Duisburg saw the largest British team yet. Things began to look brighter for the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome. Indeed, our team did do better than previously. Of the four events for which we entered only in one did our entrants not reach the semi-finals. In the K.1. men's event Ron Rhodes not only reached the final - the first time in the Union's history, but by producing his best time ever, secured fifth place and thereby qualified for an Olympic diploma.

1961 saw the birth of the British Open Youth Championships. It was again hoped that, by building up a large group of enthusiastic young people in sprint racing, we would develop a sound pyramid of competitors, built on a broad base from which future world champions could be produced. However, as in many other sports, although this scheme was greeted with excitement by many, there were far too few who were willing to carry out the necessary organisation. The Central Council of Physical Recreation did all it could to back us with the paper work; but still the scheme never functioned as it should. By 1967 this brilliant idea had virtually been allowed to die again, partly because of the lack of willing helpers in its organisation, but also through lack of a standardised craft.

However, there were rays of hope. Although costs had started to rise and so make it more difficult for the true amateur to pay his own way. The Wolfenden Committee recommended that the Government should help. In due course monetary grant-aid started to help the international competitor. But still that pyramid did not have a broad enough base on which to build securely for the future.

But new trends cannot be denied, however much they are resisted in the first place. Young people like racing. The next job was to get their teachers to accept that they could. The idea of a “One-design” racing canoe was put up in 1969. At first it was turned down “because kids could not sit in a K.1”! However, after a struggle, the BCU adopted an early design of the dart-shaped K.1., and its designer, Jorgen Samson of Denmark, gave the sole rights of its manufacture in the United Kingdom to the British Canoe Union.

In 1970, too, the British Schools Canoeing Association was born. Who better to organise events for this new “Espada Youth K.1.”? They have accepted the challenge, and the interest reported by schools and youth clubs, and the comments made by the manufacturers of both the canoes and the moulds (for the canoes can be made by the young people themselves) gives great indication that at last we shall involve a large number of people in sprint canoeing.

But there is still much work to be done before Britain can lead the world in sprint racing. Having started behind us, other nations have worked harder and more earnestly, and are now a long way ahead of us. However we may dislike it, the days of international competition “just for fun” are away behind us. We have never been held in high regard in international racing. If we are to succeed we, too, must work with earnestness. The creation of Holme Pierrepont National Water Sports Centre (1972) and of a scheme to qualify specialist coaches in Racing (1973) will, we hope, go a long way towards this objective.



Plate 11: T. H. Holding and “Osprey”



Plate 12: Water Polo at Hunter’s Quay Scotland

## Chapter IV

### Sailing

We have mentioned in Chapter I that MacGregor could set a small lugsail on "Rob Roy". The energy and drive of the members of the Canoe Club gave them their first regatta in 1867. Other members, Warrington Baden-Powell, a brother of the more famous "B-P", among them, took up the sailing side with enthusiasm and, under Warrington's guidance the canoe soon developed into a fully equipped sailing craft. In fact a second field of competition sprang up, and the club was dealing with "Paddle Racing" and "Sail Racing".

By the early 1870's the new sailing canoe possessed centre board (newly invented in the U.S.A.) yawl rig and outboard rudder, and it could make a course against the wind. The canoeist stayed inside the cockpit and from this position could operate all the controls, raise, lower and trim the sails by using a complex arrangement of ropes. He gained extra power by moving bags of lead shot to the windward side; so, although kept busy, he was also dry and comfortable inside his craft.

In 1874 the Royal Canoe Club put up the Sailing Challenge Cup, to match the Paddling Challenge Cup mentioned in Chapter III. These two trophies, plus the New York Canoe Club International Cup mentioned later on, are among the oldest trophies of their kind in the world.

An early Baden-Powell design was exported to the U.S.A. and international competition began when Warrington Baden Powell and Guy Ellington challenged for the New York Canoe Club International Cup in 1886. They found that the Americans gained extra power by sitting up on the deck of their canoes, using bodyweight to counteract the pressure of wind in the sails and the British were outclassed by this new technique. Guy Ellington on his return designed "Charm" a lightly built craft in the American style, which crushed the opposition at home but still could not beat the Americans. Soon after this the American Paul Butler, a light but agile sailor, introduced the idea of sitting outside his canoe entirely, using a sliding seat. While the Americans adopted this technique with enthusiasm, long and bitter controversy about it raged in Britain. It was permitted finally in 1894 but banned again in 1904. By this time the British had moved away from the original canoe concept of a craft 16 ft long by 30 ins. beam which could still, on occasion be paddled. In 1896 the ever-inventive Baden-Powell, mindful it is said of his ever-increasing girth, sponsored a more powerful craft of 42 ins beam designated a "Cruising Canoe". 16 ft x 42 ins must have looked a bit stubby and the length was soon increased to 17 ft. and the Cruising Canoe was raced and became the "B" Class Canoe. Under the guidance of Linton Hope, a colourful genius who did much to influence the design of small sailing and power boats and even seaplanes, the B Class quickly became a fast and effective sloop rigged sailing craft. In the years before the First World War they were exquisitely built, strong, but light and could certainly plane. Their helmsman were confined to sitting on deck and in general they sought to be small scale sailing yachts and thought themselves superior to those who propelled their canoes by paddle. The sailing canoes were beautifully fitted and the modern style of Bermudan rig appeared as early as 1911. They performed ably on river or estuary.



After the First World War there was a period of stagnation until in 1932 Uffa Fox came on the scene. He was at that time designing, building, sailing and promoting the 14 ft. Dinghy from which stems the modern sport of dinghy sailing. He soon became adept at canoe sailing and designed and built two canoes, which would, with only a little bending of the rules, fit both the British "B" Class and the American specification. In company with Roger de Quincey, Uffa went to the U.S.A. in 1933 and won the New York Cup. Even more important than this, was the agreement between the Royal Canoe Club and the American Canoe Association for new International Building rules, which, with modification, form the basis of our present International Class.

Under these rules Roger de Quincey successfully defended the International Cup in 1936 and all seemed set for a period of expansion when again a World War stopped all sport.

At this time a very different type of sailing canoe, carrying 714 square metres of sail, was in use on the continent. It was recognised by the I.R.K., and a World Championship for it was held in Stockholm in 1938. In 1939 a challenge was issued to the Swedes to compete in their own canoes against the Royal Canoe Club in the August meeting at Hayling Island. The challenge was accepted, and the overwhelming superiority of the "Anglo-American" 10 sq.m. design was demonstrated. However, it was not until 1946, when the I.C.F. was constituted, that the 10 sq.m. sailing canoe was adopted as the International 10 sq.m under I.C.F. Rules and the sailors of the Royal Canoe Club began the conversion of their fellow sailors in Europe.

When peace came again materials were scarce and skilled craftsmanship hard to find. In 1948 Lou Whitman came from the U.S. with Adolf Morse to challenge for the Cup and demonstrated the first cold-moulded sailing canoe seen this side of the Atlantic. They failed, but Whitman returned in 1952 to win convincingly. By now Britain was overcoming wartime problems and new designs were coming along. The trouble was that by now the Americans were sitting at the end of a 5-foot slide (the maximum permitted by the Rules) supported by a cross head tiller pole with their sheets (the ropes used to trim the sails) made fast in special cleats. The British, on the other hand, sat on the sliding seat with feet braced against the hull, they used a lighter type of steering gear which would give no support to the helmsman and needed a firm foot support to brace against the pull of the mainsheet which was held in the hand. The British Canoe Sailors were unwilling to give up the better and quicker control which their sailing technique gave them, but could not match the power of the Americans in fresh winds.

This problem was solved by 1955 with production of the so-called "ladder slide" which enables the helmsman to reach five feet out with his feet firmly braced and the ratchet block which enables him to lock or free the mainsheet at will. Again the New York Cup gave the stimulus for action. A strong British team failed to win in 1955, but in 1959, with the new technique firmly established. Alan Emus and Bill Kemper brought the trophy to England where it has remained.

By now the Class was becoming truly international. The turning point had been the adoption of the Anglo American Sailing Canoe by the I.C.F. in 1946. It was taken up by Sweden and later West Germany. After a number of international regattas the first World Championship in the IC class was held at Hayling Island in 1961, with Great Britain, U.S.A., Sweden and West Germany competing. The British swept the board taking the first 6

places. But others were learning fast and although Britain still took the gold and bronze medal at the 1965 World Championship at Lake Constance, the silver went to Sweden. Sweden took the first four places in the 1967 European Championship held on their home water and just failed to take the gold from Alan Emus in the 1969 World Championship, again in England at Grafham Water.

During this time many technical changes have come about through the introduction of new materials - cold moulded, hot moulded veneers, GRP for hulls. Aluminium alloy for masts and spars, synthetic fibres for sails and rope - the development of fully battened sails is a story in itself. Increasing international competition in Europe has raised sailing standards and improved techniques, and this process is only just beginning with Denmark and now Spain joining the Canoe Sailing nations - for the great attraction of these craft is that the better they are sailed the faster they will go.

From 1971 the I.C.F. have adopted the Nethercot design as a "one-design hull". It is hoped that this will encourage modern series production methods and reduce costs but still give plenty of scope for original ideas. There is every hope that this will enable many more people, in more countries, to participate in this exciting sport.



Plate 13: "The Annual Sailing Race of the Royal CANoe Club for the Challeng Cup



Plate 14: "The Rob Roy Manoeuvre"



Plate 15: "Shallow"



Plate 16: "Shallower Still"

## Chapter V

### Slalom and White Water Racing

We have seen in Chapter II how the first development of slalom appeared on the continent in the late '20's, where it was linked with skiing, the one being practiced in the winter and the other in the summer. It can be deduced from this that this "marriage" began in the mountainous countries, and it is a further confirmation of this that both Pawlata and Schulhof were Austrian and Dufek a generation younger, was Czechoslovakian. It is worth noting, also, that the two sports are still operated in this partnership in those countries, the one being used as out of season training for the other.

Exactly when the first slalom was organised for canoes is lost in time, but one can imagine the skiers suggesting the hanging of poles over rapid water for a simple, timed run down between them. So far as this country is concerned, however, we have to thank Franz Schulhof for his work in 1939 and '40, for our first attempts at the sport. Again in 1948, he assisted our reawakening to it.

This re-awaking was late by comparison with the continental countries. They had reached the state of organising a World Championships at Geneva in 1949. Although we sent a team to Geneva, they regarded it as something of fun, rather than a serious business, and consequently ended up very much at the wrong end of the results lists. The best British entrant was "Dobby" Dobson, who had also competed, as a sprint paddler, in the 1948 Olympic Games at Henley-on-Thames.

The next World Championships were held in 1951 at Steyr, Austria, where we first saw the "Steyr" roll performed. Although we did somewhat better that year, the same attitude of mind still pervaded the team and it was not until 1953 at Merano in Italy that we were sufficiently depressed to do something about it. This was, it will be remembered after having been with Seidel the German champion, in Munich. There was a meeting of interested people at the Chalfont Park Canoe Club at Hambledon that autumn and the writer took on the job of coaching the British team into better shape. From there on upward progress became steady. The team attending the World Championships every other year appeared further and further up the results lists until in 1959, once more at Geneva, Paul Farrant won the coveted F.1. World Championship for us. It was distressingly sad that he died in a road accident the following Easter.

At the end of 1961, having seen the British team win the Bronze Medal at Spittal-auf-em-Drau in Austria, the writer retired as the team coach and became the first National Coach for canoeing. There was a slight recession in team results until coaches and managers were appointed again, when things began to pick up again. In 1970 (not a World Championship year) Great Britain gained 10 bronze medals, 3 silver and 3 gold medals among its international awards. There are bound to be peaks and valleys in our successes; but there is confidence that we are now among the top ten nations in this sport.

However, you will have noticed that the old, folding class of canoe has faded from the list. The emergence of glass-reinforced plastic, already mentioned has been responsible for this. It first made its appearance in the international slalom field at Spittal in 1961, when

it was used as part of the framework of the Klepper folding slalom canoe of that year. We were then using a design of Jack Spuhler 's, the Spuhler Mk VI, quite the best folding slalom canoe made in this country. Jack Spuhler is Swiss, but he has spent the best part of his life in England, and the contribution he has made to British Slalom cannot be over-estimated. He has sat for many years on the Slalom Committee of the I.C.F.

To return to glass fibre, as one might expect with anything new, argument waxed strong, for and against this new material. It was noted by those for it that it was stronger, and created sleeker lines. It was noted by those against that competitors could get away with bad "navigation" by rock-bashing and such bad habits, and that, put into either type, the champion still won! Nevertheless the advantages so outweighed the disadvantages that it won the day and by 1965 the folding canoe had disappeared from championship events. Glass reinforced plastic, plus the new skills, which Milo Dufek had given us in 1952-3, opened up a new and wonderful field in white water canoeing.



Plare 17: "A ladies' canoe trip on the Warwickshire Avon"

But if G.R.P. had produced more elegant kayaks and allowed paddlers to adapt newfound skills to produce even greater performances, the same could not exactly be said of Canadian canoes. The ideal mechanical shape for such a material, from the point of view of strength, is that of an egg. A Kayak, with its deck already in existence, could be rounded off in cross-section anyway. Indeed it was found that this was an advantage in its performance in rough water, since there was no sharp angle at the gunwale for the water to catch and so capsize the craft. In the case of the Canadian there was no big traditional deck. What was to be done? The only answer found was to deck the craft in, making what looked crudely like a misshapen banana with round holes left in it for the benefit of the crew. Indeed, certain persons, crazy for performance, have fought for lower bow and stern lines, similar to the kayak, so that passage under slalom gate poles could be facilitated. Such an alteration in design would so radically alter the concept of the Canadian canoe that it would no longer ride high on the water, with the ends rising to the waves. Rather, it would behave like the kayak, burying its nose in the waves. The sole remaining likeness to the North American Indian canoe would be the single-bladed paddle wielded from a kneeling position.

At the time of writing one is happy to be able to report that the I.C.F. Slalom Committee has ruled that no part of the canoe shall be higher than the line joining the bow and stern posts.

Nevertheless, the immensely improved skills in the handling of the kayak, together with G.R.P., have not gone un-noticed in the Canadian canoe world. The skills of the Canadian canoe are not so easily learnt as those of the kayak, with the result that those keen always to progress have moved from kayak to Canadian canoe. The newly developed skills of the kayak, first started by Dufek, are now being tried out again in the Canadian canoe. The more versatile "glass" boat reacts well to these strokes, and the wheel has turned full circle.

Meanwhile the idea of just racing straight down rapid rivers had not escaped the minds of many. Here, skill in reading water was just as necessary as in slalom; and stamina became even more important. Several miles down rapids needs nerves of iron as well, and it is not surprising to find rapid river racing on the increase.

"Racing" is perhaps a wrong word, since, like slalom, it is not a race in the true sense of the word, with the competitors lining up on a start line, but a timed competition, with the competitors starting at regular intervals and racing against the clock, the fastest man winning. Both slalom and white water racing are, therefore, competitions, not true races.

The first World Championship White Water Race was held on the R.Vézère in France in 1959, a British team consisting of most of the World Slalom team from Geneva that year was entered.

In 1971 the International Olympic Association accepted Canoe Slalom as a sport. The Olympic Games were to be at Munich in West Germany in 1972. An artificial aqueduct taking water into Augsburg had long been used for slaloms, and this "Eiscanal" was rebuilt to be the first fully artificial slalom course for championships in the world.

As a result of the outstanding success of slalom in the 1972 Olympic Games, the Sports Council and the Nottinghamshire County Council have been prevailed upon to build an-

other artificial slalom course, at the National Water Sports Centre at Holme Pierrepont. At the time of writing (1973) plans are well ahead with this project and a model is being built. Thus at Holme Pierrepont we shall have facilities for most of the major competitions in the canoeing world. It is to be noted that various River Authorities are now coming forward with offers to build other artificial slalom courses, of varying degrees of difficulty, in other parts of the country.



Plate 18: Among the rocks at 10 pm



Plate 19: On George's Bay Bar



Plate 20: "Somersault in the surf at Falmouth" - surely the first loop

## Chapter VI

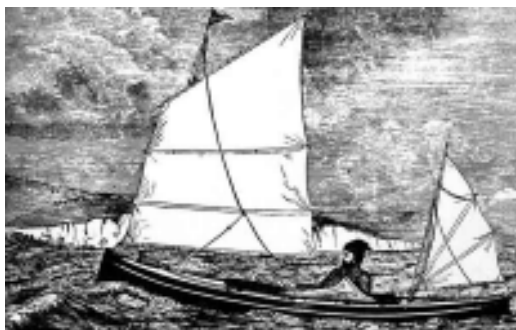
### Long Distance Racing

It may seem somewhat absurd to find the foundations of Long Distance Racing laid in a bet and a double sculling skiff; yet such was the case!

Owing to a threatened public transport strike in 1920 a group of friends in the Greyhound Public House at Pewsey fell to discussing other means of conveyance, and ended up with a bet of £5 that they could travel with their skiff via the River Avon from Pewsey to the sea at Mudeford, near Christchurch in less than three days. They won their bet with twelve hours to spare.

Nothing much happened for 27 years, when three R.A.F. men and a local farmer met a member of the original crew in the same pub. They decided to try their luck, got to Christchurch in 51 hours and so won a further £5.

The Devizes to Westminster Race was the next development. A Pewsey resident offered a prize to any crew who could beat the 51 hours from Pewsey to Christchurch. The Scoutmaster of the 1st Devizes Scouts took up the challenge but was turned down because the Scouts' canoes did not meet the requirements of the competition. Back again to the parlour of the Greyhound where Roy Cooke, a member of the 1947 crew, was planning a boat trip from Devizes to Westminster in 100 hours. Although this particular project fell through, the idea was taken up by the frustrated Devizes Rover Scouts, some worthy citizens of Devizes encouraged the Scouts by raising a sum of money to be donated to them if they could reach the sea by way of the Kennet and Avon Canal to Reading and thence down the Thames to Westminster, in under 100 hours. Thus it was that at Easter, 1948, the first two crews from the Devizes Rovers, paddling cumbersome homebuilt double Kayaks, completed the course with ten hours to spare. These pioneers of this, one of the toughest long distance races in the world, were all aged seventeen. Their original journey was followed with great interest by the people of Devizes, so much so that cinema programmes were interrupted to give the latest news.



Plare 21: "Closehauled on a Fresh Breeze" from "Practical Canoeing"  
by "Tiphys" published 1883



At Whitsun, 1948, two crews of the Chippenham Sea Cadet Unit covered the same course in just under 77 hours, and the competition was on.

Without any formal rules except the broad stipulation by the Scouts that crews should carry all their food and equipment from the start and receive no assistance on route, twenty crews set off from Devizes at Easter 1949. The best time that year was 49 hours 32 minutes.

Prompted by the growing interest, Frank Luzmore of the Richmond Canoe Club and some fellow members set up an organising committee, and Easter, 1950 saw the first organised race. From these modest beginnings the race has continued to grow so that now more than 200 crews regularly take part and the winning time has been cut down to under 19 hours for the gruelling 125 miles and 76 portages.

Other people became inspired by the concept of Long Distance Racing. At first the Sprint Racing Committee took charge of this new form of competition and set up a sub-committee in 1955 to administer it. Later in 1958, when L.D. had developed further, this sub-committee became an independent technical committee of the B.C.U. in its own right. For years it remained a very English competition, the cross-country version of our sport; but it began to spread abroad, first with races in Scotland and Ireland, and now in Europe and many other parts of the World; the child has grown up, and we suggest it will not be long before we have a World Championship in the event.

But perhaps "L.D." is older than this. In a letter to me, Frank Sutton talks of the early struggles to roll canoes, and mentions Leo Fruehwirth as the Austrian L.D. champion in 1928. Certainly there have been various other long distance races in the world; but the first that seems to have appeared as a seriously organised event in Great Britain was Luzmore's race in 1950.

In the early days any type of canoe could be raced by anyone, in an open class; but the impracticabilities of this were soon recognised, and various handicap systems were tried, with varying degrees of success. In 1956 a junior class was set up for those between the ages of 15 and 19, and the canoes were also divided into four classes, viz: singles under 15 feet, and over, and doubles under 17 feet, and over. The one-design National Chine Kayak was added in 1959. Ladies were allowed their own classes.

1960 saw further developments in the classes. There were now seven classes. These were K1, K2 and N.C.K.1., which were senior classes only, whilst other classes were provided for seniors, juniors and ladies, making fifteen classes in all. Hard skin and soft skin canoes were put into different classes. The soft skin class still providing for folding canoes. Hence there was an apparent anomaly between the maximum length for a soft skin double at 17'6" (many folding doubles were of this length) and that of its hard skin counterpart at 17'. In 1964 junior K1 and K2 events were added to the list, and other ladies' N.C.K.1 in 1966.

With the increasingly improved standards in paddling it became apparent that newcomers were discouraged by having to compete in the same class as the country's leading paddlers, and so in 1971 a system of divisionalisation was approved for the K. classes.

The top paddlers would now race in a separate class of their own, and the other senior paddlers were included in an open class, with a third class for juniors under 18 years of age.

In 1971, too, the Espada Youth K1 was introduced, with the competitors racing in three age groups: 12 to 14, 14 to 16 and 16 to 18, which groups were also accepted for Sprint Racing (see Chapter III).

Going back a few years, in 1957 Lloyds of London presented the Royal Marines with a most beautiful trophy in memory of their raid on Bordeaux by canoe during the Second World War. This, the Hasler Trophy, named after Major "Blondie" Hasler, the leader of the raid, was handed over by the Royal Marines to the British Canoe Union for administration. It is competed for annually by clubs on a points system based on about 25 recognised events. These are spread over the country with each club counting its best 8 results from the races, which it has entered.

The first National Championships in Long Distance Racing was held at Bradford-on-Avon in 1965. This is an "open" championship at which people from other countries may compete. It moved from place to place at first, but in 1971 it was agreed that the venue should become more stable so that sponsors might be attracted to it. It is at present held at Worcester over the August Bank Holiday weekend (1972).

Britain is now frequently represented in Long Distances Races abroad. Perhaps some of these events have not got the same across-country" atmosphere of the British races, but that is not to say that the idea has not been drawn to the attention of the I.C .F. Perhaps it will not be long before it is recognised by that body. Certainly it is very much alive in this country.



Plate 22: Canoe Cruise on the (Warwickshire) Avon

## Chapter VII

### Recent Developments

In Chapter II we gave some indication of the development of a number of new facets in canoeing. Mention has been made in the same chapter of the Corps of Canoe Life Guards. Let us now turn to some other items that are worthy of note.

#### The Film Library

Before the Second World War Franz Schulhof made three films with the aid of fellow canoeists from the Royal Canoe Club. These films were "Kayaking on the South Coast", taken on the Isle of Wight and at Cuckmere Haven, and showing some surfing; "Wild Water Canoeing in the French Alps", taken on the Rivers Durance and Verdon; and "Sailing Canoe Racing", taken in Chichester Harbour. These three films were much used by John Dudderidge and others to interest people in the sport immediately after the war.

From 1946 the writer made a succession of films, some educational, some pure interest, and in 1948 he started a Library consisting of his own films and those of Franz Schulhof.

Time passed; more films were made and offered. By 1958 the demands of the library had over-burdened an amateur organisation, and the editor negotiated with the British Film Institute to run it for the British Canoe Union. The B.F.I. itself produced a very good film on Canadian canoeing, made in 1934, which it added to the Library, and another old film, made by members of Gino Watkins' expeditions to Greenland right at the beginning of the '30s., went into the library under the title of "The Eskimo and His Kayak".

On taking up the post of National Coach in 1962 the writer had to relinquish all connection with the library, which was taken on thereafter by Maurice Rothwell, who has remained the B.C.U. Film Officer until the present time (1973).

#### Sea and Surf Canoeing

One of the films just mentioned referred to surfing at Cuckmere Haven. Nothing much happened in this field from 1939, largely because the war closed the use of the sea to most civilians. However, having seen the film a number of times, and being a patriotic Cornishman, Oliver Cock made up a small party to visit Polzeath, near Wadebridge, in 1952. It was such a successful holiday that it became an annual pilgrimage, with the numbers increasing every year. By 1964, however, the numbers had increased to such an extent on the already overcrowded beach that the local R.D.C. regarded them somewhat askance.

So they moved to Bude, where the local U.D.C. made it abundantly clear they were very welcome.

In 1966 Fred Dymond, the Harbourmaster at Bude, suggested that they ought to hold the National Surf Championships there. The thought had never occurred to anybody before, that there could be canoe competitions in surf; but by good fortune Mr Alan Kennedy, a very prominent member of the Royal Australian Surf Life Saving Association, had come on a final visit to the Bude S.L.S.C., a club which he had helped to found a good many

years before. As a parting gift before his retirement he gave a lecture and showed films on the competition of Malibu board riding. It was immediately fairly clear to Oliver Cock that the rules of this form of competition could be adopted to that of canoeing, and in September 1967 was held the first National Championship in canoe surfing on Crooklets Beach at Bude.

In 1970 a new form of canoe appeared on the scene from California, specially designed for surfing. It had a flat bow and considerable rocker, which enabled many more manoeuvres to be carried out. However, at the same time as doing that it also cut out some of the others, which were popular. Therefore a second class had to be allowed in the competitions, as the two craft could not fairly compete against each other.

1970 also saw the idea of competition in surf spread to the North East, when they held their first local annual championship; but on the whole the idea of competing in surf has not yet caught on. It is known that very many groups go surfing just for the fun of it, and this is as it should be; but it is a fact that this form of competition is on the increase, and it can be expected that many more will be taking part in the future.

However, since the 1960s and possibly led by the Scots who had been canoeing in the Western Isles for many years, there has been an upsurge of interest in advanced sea expeditions. In the middle of the '60s a double canoe arrived off St. Kilda from the Outer Hebrides. In 1966 Joe Reid and Andy Cornduff canoed across the Pentland Firth, a journey never to be undertaken light-heartedly. In 1968 a party of four canoed the length of the cliffs of Moher in Galway Bay. The Irish Sea was crossed from Dun Laoghaire to Holyhead in 1969, and from Whitesand Bay in Pembrokeshire to Rosslare in 1972. Advanced sea journeys of this nature are occurring ever more frequently, and it would seem that virtually no expedition is impossible so long as it is properly planned and is within the capability of the canoeist himself.

### Canoe Polo

This game was first mentioned in two books which came out almost simultaneously; first in Noel McNought's "Canoeing Manual" and very soon after in Oliver Cock's "You and Your Canoe", both published in the middle '50s. Although the rules differed, the basic objects of the game were the same in both cases: to have fun, and to release people from their inhibitions and fears in their canoes and so assist them on to greater things. Perhaps the idea of having fun was dominant and so the rules were kept to the barest minimum for safety.

The National Exhibition Committee decided to put a demonstration of the game on at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1970. The organisers intended to demonstrate what hilarious fun it was. Sadly, one or two of the teams got very earnest and serious about it, and there was born almost a brand new game, with a committee to look after it and to create rules for its conduct. In 1971 the National Canoe Exhibition at the Crystal Palace saw the first National Championships.

It is perhaps worth making mention here of the special design of canoe that is used in canoe polo in swimming baths. About 1966 Newham, a borough of Greater London, asked Bert Keeble, now the Director of the National Sailing Centre at Cowes, but at that time working in Essex, if he would design a canoe especially for use in teaching and training people in swimming baths. The stipulations were that the canoe should not be fast, nor should it have a sharp bow or stern with which to damage the bath. Mr Keeble

came up with a simple, wooden craft, which the National Coach tried out in the baths at the Crystal Palace. It seemed eminently suitable.

So eminently suitable was it in fact that Alan Byde designed a similar craft made in glass reinforced plastic, and dubbed it the Baths Advanced Trainer canoe, or BAT canoe for short. The name has stuck, and the game of canoe polo is very frequently referred to as BAT polo.

But “there is nothing new under the sun”. The earliest reference to anything that might be described as ‘Canoe Polo’ occurs in a copy of a national weekly “The Graphic” dated Sept. 18th. 1880 with an engraving of a game in progress at Hunter’s Quay, Scotland. The players rode barrels fitted with saddle cloths and under the water line a heavily loaded keel. Each barrel had fixed to it a wooden horse’s head and a tail was attached behind. The event caused ‘great merriment’ to the many spectators and ‘the efforts of the riders to control their steeds and at the same time use their ‘Rob Roy’ paddles to propel the hollow India rubber ball, were most ludicrous’. Certainly ‘fun’ was the main objective.

### Orienteering

This is a form of competition in canoeing, which is getting off to a very slow start. So far as we have been able to discover, it first appeared in print in the “Know The Game” series, “Orienteering”, published in 1965. It has gone on perfunctorily all over the United Kingdom since then. Perhaps one of its strongest centres is at Martham Ferry in Norfolk, where an annual event has been held since 1970. The sport is well suited to almost any piece of water but especially old wet gravel pit workings which have been allowed to run to nature. It seems odd; therefore, that more have not been attracted to what can be a very exacting sport.



Plate 23: “Paddling with the double-bladed paddle” from “Canoeing” by J.D. Hayward 1883, gives a good example of the ladies’ fashion for canoeing at the time.

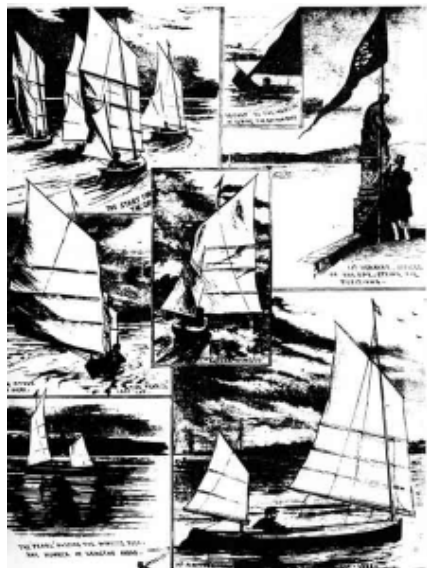


Plate 24: (Left) Sailing Canoes

Plate 25: (Right)  
"A Senior Rob Roy Fours of 1926"



Plate 26: (Left)  
An American 20 foot Cedar  
Racing Canoe (or) Club Four



Plate 27: (Left) Franz Schulhof on the Bregenzer Ach, Western Austria in 1932.

Plate 28: (Right)  
Paul Farrant, Britains only  
World Canoe Slalom  
Champion



Plate 29: (Left) A collapsible canoe,  
packed and ready for portage in two  
haver sacks

Plate 30: (Right) Canoe transport of  
1937 from "Canoe and Canoeing" by  
John Marshall





Plate 31: (Above) A Klepper Aerius folding single-seater, still at the Royal Canoe Club



Plate 32: (Above) The writer at Inverness, after a tour through the Caledonian Canal



Plate 33: (Above) Approaching Hell Hole on the River Wye, where only the experienced canoeist should venture.



Plate 34: (Above) A senior racing canadian tandem of 1926. R. A. Phillips and E. Freeman (Bow).



Plate 35: (Above) The River Usk near Gliffaes above Crickhowell

Plate 36: (Below) The Fall above Llamwllni on the river Teffi. in low water





## Chapter IX

### Bibliographical Notes on the Illustrations

The Frontispiece of this book was taken from "Pictorial Chronicles of the Mighty Deep" edited by Francis Watt and published about 1890. If the reader refers back to the illustration he will notice a little spirit stove on the ground to MacGregor's left. This was invented by MacGregor and a full description can be found in his book "Voyage Alone in the Yawl Rob Roy", published in 1867. Plates 3 to 7 are all from "A Thousand miles in the Rob Roy", a book written by MacGregor describing his journeys in his Rob Roy canoe, which was first published in 1866.

Plate 11 is from an original photograph and shows T.H Molding, one of the founder members of the Camping Club of Great Britain and Ireland. Holding was canoeing correspondent for "The Field" in the 1870s and '80s. and Plates 10,13 and 24 are all taken from that magazine of 1883. Plate 17 is also from "The Field", probably dated 1885. In the same issue the Wear Canoe Club is mentioned as cruising from Sandpoint "up the Wear" (!) to Chester-le -Street, and another trip, ~ the Tyne to Hexham was suggested. They must have had a lot of energy in those days! Plate 22 is also from "The Field", dated 1878.

Plate 12, is taken from "The Graphic" of 18th September 1880, which indicates canoe polo is certainly no modern day innovation. From a later edition of the same magazine, published 6th November of that year are taken plates 14,15 and 16. These are from a series of eight pictures of a trip from Bala Lake to Chester, on the front page. There is also an account of the journey within. Does such chivalry still exist? "White Rose" was 1214 feet long, three feet wide and weighed 60 lbs. She could be rowed as well as paddled.

Plates 18,19 and 20 are from the Boy's Own Paper of 1882. They illustrated the journey of a missionary, the Rev.Fred C.B.Faurey, round the coast of Tasmania in 1879.

Plate 24 further emphasises the kind of coverage "The Field" gave to canoeing and Holding's adjoining article refers to the Sportsman's Exhibition, canoeing at Birkenhead, on the Irish Blackwater, the Medway, the Warwickshire Avon from Warwick down, and the shootability of the Tewkesbury Wiers, of which the bottom-most is described as the "shootest". The "Pearl" shown in the bottom left hand corner of the picture, was priced at £40 (exclusive of ballast). Other articles, apparently in the same issue, describe the steam canoe "Silvia", and canoeing off Flamborough Head.

Plates 25,27 and 34 are from original photographs in the possession of the Royal Canoe Club.

Plate 28 shows Paul Farrant competing in a slalom of 1953. This, old Colwick Wier became dry when the new cut was made to the automatic sluices which now give height (head) to the water for the proposed artificial slalom course at Holme Pierrepont.



26,29 and 33 are from "Canoeing", by W.G.Luscomb (1936). Plate 33 shows

a folding double canoe above Hell Hole rapids in fairly heavy water. It is interesting to note flat paddles being used and no life jacket!

Plate 35 is taken from "Rapid Rivers" by William Bliss, who is in the front position of the canoe in the picture. This book dated 1935 is a collector's piece. 36 is from the same book.

Plate 37 (Left) is from a photograph in possession of P.Y.Wells, the commodore of the Royal Canoe Club. This is worth comparing with plate 8 "Chinese Rig" of 1871.