

THE CHESHIRE

A TEAM OF SIX Falcon paddlers took part in the Cheshire Ring Race on Saturday 28 June. The race is a 96-mile loop of canals mostly winding through the Cheshire countryside (except the stretch through central Manchester), including 92 locks and 5 tunnels. The race can be done all the way through or in a relay in either K1 or K2. We opted for a K2 relay.

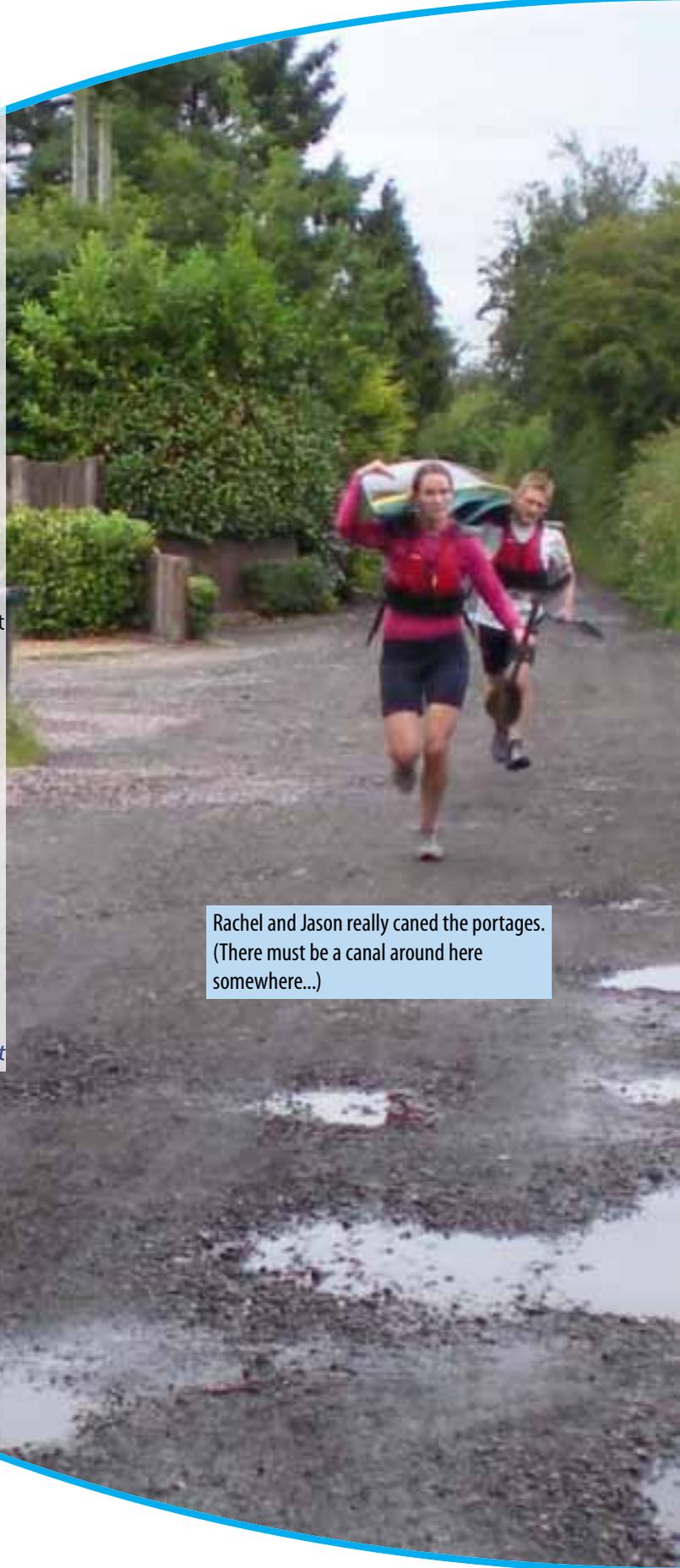
The three K2 teams were Heidi Koldsø and Ana Fortun-Garrido, Rachel and Jason Bennett, and David Waters and Andy Solway.

Heidi and Ana started the race at 10:55 on Saturday morning. Seventeen hours and 51 minutes later David and Andy crossed the finish line. Paddling on canals was hard work and it felt like treacle in narrow places! Other difficulties included a tree blocking both canal and towpath, finding the correct route in Manchester and spotting locks in the dark – many of them are just behind bridges and are surprisingly hard to see at night.

We all found the night-time sections tough, with the twin problems of darkness and tiredness kicking in. But this is an excellent race and I certainly enjoyed it. We're already talking about completing it within 17 hours next year!

A big thank you to our support crew, Peter Bennett and Paul Solway, who drove us between relay changeovers all through the day and night. If you are looking for a long-distance challenge, then this is a race I would thoroughly recommend.

Rachel Bennett



Rachel and Jason really caned the portages. (There must be a canal around here somewhere...)

RE RING



Still smiling (more or less!) at the finish.



Andy and David at the end of their first leg.



Ana and Heidi look tired, but they kept the pace up right through three tough night-time sections.



A BRIGHT AND EARLY START on Saturday (12 July) allowed the alpha males of the expedition to get our fleet of canoes onto the trailer at Falcon. A few hours later, everyone else rose from their lie-in to wander in, just as all of the work

had been finished. Of course, I had no problem with this arrangement, as it meant that I could finish the book I was reading. We then drove to a pub car park in what seemed to be the middle of nowhere. Mike of course knew exactly where we were (Radcot) and had made arrangements with the pub owner. They happened to involve buying J₂O, pork scratchings and twiglets, but that's beside the point. After this short break in the public house, we set off.

The next part of our trip involved, as you may have guessed, canoeing. I know. A bit

of a shock. However, the canoeing didn't last long, as we quickly reached Radcot lock. Now, the surprising part of the lock was the rapids, which were about 100 metres long. We went down them, to avoid all the bother of having to open and close the lock gates. We basically freewheeled down a long thin fish ladder (except a lot bigger). There was some white-water paddling and a lot of bumping into reeds before we burst out of the end with a plop. Then, more canoeing.

After a large amount of canoeing (unless your name is Finn Tadman*), we reached the Tadpole Bridge, and its pub. We were about to lay out all our sandwiches, mini cheddars, crisps, biscuits, salad and all the rest, when a waiter came and told us that we weren't allowed our own food. So we had to either eat theirs, or LEAVE. We chose the latter (much to my disappointment) and so had to keep going until we reached a little muddy beach on the side of the river. Here we were allowed our own



Doug lazes about while Pip (?) in the front does all the work.



Rafted up for a short rest.

CANOE CAMPING

food, which was a relief. After a light luncheon, we did – more canoeing.

After 10 miles we arrived at the campsite (at Newbridge) and set up all our tents. With a little persuading, we were able to take a dip in the lovely, clean river. As I stepped in, the slightly disconcerting feeling of something squishy under my feet made me wonder whether the river really was that clean. Memories of playing near some manure on the side of a river last summer replayed in my head.

We then got changed, went to the pub, ate dinner, played in the children’s park next to the pub and walked back to the campsite. We then spent hours toasting millions of marshmallows and putting them in between thousands of chocolate covered digestives, washing the flavour round our mouths... actually, we ate about three marshmallows and two chocolate digestives, but it sounds better if you exaggerate.

The next morning we woke up at the crack of dawn and turned on the cooker to get some hot water to making some Belgian Chocolate Orange hot chocolate, and warmed our mouths with the wonderful flavour. After some breakfast we had the scintillating task of packing everything away. You can probably imagine me slaving away with some troublesome carry mats, doing all the work while the rest of my family relaxed. I should probably have used the Childline number I memorised...

Then, we canoed.

And canoed.

And canoed.

We then ate lunch.

And canoed.

Then, finally, 16 miles later, with aching arms and exceedingly stiff legs, we reached our destination. Falcon!

Kitty Knight (age 11)



The campsite (below) – breakfast time (above).



ON THE THAMES





Catch Up o



IT'S BEEN A GREAT SUMMER so far for the canoe section, with some great weather being enjoyed with a range of excellent paddling.

The Tuesday evening sessions have gone from strength to strength, with numbers growing on a weekly basis. Tuesday trips have included visits to *The Punters* at Osney, *The King's Arms* at Sandford and a few trips round the Lasher circuit and the Cherwell river. We've also included some skills sessions, working on individual and tandem paddling. As the group grows Doug and I hope to see further development of the group through peer-led paddling starting on other nights of the week.

DOGGY PADDLE 2014

Doug and I abandoned the giddy heights of Div 8 Hasler racing on 18 May to lead a small group of eight Falcon Paddlers and a dog on the Doggy Paddle 2014. This is a charity event for Guide Dogs for the Blind, which involves an 18-mile paddle from Royal Leamington Spa, along the rivers Leam and Avon, and ends in historic Stratford-upon-Avon. The run goes through the spectacular grounds of Warwick Castle and Charlecote Manor, and it is a beautiful stretch of river. What made it particularly special was having Mary Pitman as one of the paddlers. For those of you who don't know, Mary is registered blind and regularly paddles with Falcon, along with Ollie, her guide dog, and Roger her husband – responsible for steering! We had great spring weather, good

river levels and a wonderful journey with a wide assortment of boats on the river. The organisation was excellent and with a number of portages to avoid some of the weirs we were well supported to assist Mary throughout.

Thanks to Leamington Spa Canoe club for all their support. Ollie as usual was star of the show, getting a lot of attention throughout the journey. Some of the group managed to shoot a couple of the weirs – Hampton Lucy mill weir was a good laugh, watching various crews giving it a go with a pretty high success rate and a number of boats getting swamped. Mid-afternoon found us paddling into Stratford, past the Royal Shakespeare company theatre for a well-earned rest and a dip in the river and ice creams for the younger members of the party.

The event runs every year so if you're interested in a great paddle in 2015, a good laugh and the chance to earn some money for a good cause then have a look at the website: <http://rlscc.com/page/doggy-paddle>

MIDSUMMER VICKY ARMS PADDLE

We had a fantastic turnout this year, with 35 paddlers in 16 boats on a balmy summer's evening. Great fun dodging the punts and punters in their graduation ball gowns as we cruised up the Cherwell. Doug managed to purloin a few bottles of *prosecco* as we sidled past some punts (all returned of course), and there was the added excitement of watching some students bungee jumping from Rainbow

on Canoeing 2014



bridge in The Parks. A good few hours at the pub then the highlight of the evening – the paddle back through the parks. This year we had the addition of a fantastic firework display free of charge.

We will be planning a Halloween/fireworks paddle later in the year so let's see if we can get even more of us on the river – pumpkin lanterns and fancy dress essential. Will keep you posted.

OUR INAUGURAL CANOE CAMPING TRIP

On 12 July, fifteen of us set off on our first Falcon canoe-camping trip – hopefully the first of many. We set off in a fair amount of rain, slightly disappointing after all the great weather we've had recently. But after unloading the trailer at Radcot bridge the weather generally improved. A quick stop at the pub before setting off (only to say thanks to the landlord for letting us launch!) and we were ready to go. The boats were crammed with camping gear: Philip, despite being solo in his canoe, seemed to have more gear than anyone else.

A great first day's paddle – 10 miles down to Newbridge farm. This is a really lovely stretch of river- meandering through lovely countryside, with only a few other boats for company. Highlight of the day was the canoe run down the left of Radcot lock – a lovely narrow little gentle rapid – makes great sense environmentally as well, with no lock emptying and filling required.

Saturday night was spent camping at

Newbridge Farm. It was here that the mountain of kit Philip had in his boat was unleashed. A tent big enough for three people, a fold-up bed, and next morning a stove plus bacon, eggs and beans for a full cooked breakfast – unlike the porridge and cereal the rest of us were having. The only thing missing was the Sky dish and TV for the footie.

The Knight and Tadman children braved some wild swimming along with Julian, while the rest of us waited to retire to the *Rose Revived* for evening meal and drinks. Toasted marshmallows (must be eaten between two chocolate digestives according to the majority of the Knights) and hot chocolate or whisky macs back at the tents and we were ready for the Sunday paddle.

A fine day on Sunday – 16 miles back to Falcon with a leisurely lunch at King's Lock. Saltires, union jacks and Maple leaves flying behind various canoes we set off in the sun. Sadly we had to leave Nic at Eynsham lock as she had to go on night duty but the rest of us made it back by late afternoon – just before the rain came. Great effort by all the youngsters as it was a long, hot day.

A big thank you to Keith Long for the loan of the trailer – we couldn't have done it without this so thanks a million!. Also to Peter Travis for driving the trailer on Saturday morning – again without this it would have been much more tricky. Will keep you posted on any further trips that we plan.

Mike Tadman

GRAND CANYON TRIP

SEIKO MAKINO has just come back from a three-week trip down the Colorado River. Here's her brief account, and some stunning photos!

- **Launch place:** Lee's ferry, downstream of the Glen Canyon dam
- **Get out:** Pierce ferry (aka Grand Wash), the mouth of the lake Mead, near Las Vegas
- **Length of trip:** 3 weeks, camping every night along the Colorado River
- **Distance paddled:** 280 miles.

There were sixteen people in our group, aged from 16 to 62. We travelled in four rafts and four whitewater kayaks, paddling about 10–20 miles every day.

The grading of the rapids in the Grand Canyon ranges from 1 to 10 (10 is most difficult). However they are graded for rafts rather than ayaks. Some rapids like Hence (grade 6-7) and House rock rapids (7-8) were easier for kayaks.

The water temperature of the Colorado River is 9-10 °C throughout the year. It was very cold swimming, even when the air temperature was over 30 °C.







The final mileage total from the Go Canoeing website.

AS PART OF THE BCU'S National Go Canoeing Week (24 May to 1 June), canoe clubs were asked to encourage as many people as possible to get on the river, and recorded how many miles they paddled. Doug and Callum Staff took on the task of recording all the miles that we paddled at Falcon during Go Canoeing Week. The total was a massive **1598 miles!** This was the second best total in the country: only Ribble Canoe Club paddled further. The full mileage list is shown in the table.

The overall target for Go Canoeing Week was 11,073 miles: enough to paddle all the way round Britain. In fact the final total was **34,010 miles:** over three times the original target!

Falcon was **second** in the overall mileage chart.

Top 10 Clubs	Miles Paddled
Ribble Canoe Club	1820
Falcon Rowing and Canoe Club Oxford	1598
Nottingham Kayak Club	1597
Wey Kayak Club	1492
Burton Canoe Club	1237
Hampton Canoe Club	1075
Lincoln Canoe Club	1068
Norwich Canoe Club	1021
Reading Canoe Club	1005
Thamesway Canoe Club	960

GO CANOEING!	
Paddlers	Mileage
Oxford College 12 Paddlers Taster Course Doug	12
24th Falcon/Uni Group (4)	18
28th Falcon/Uni Group (6)	27
30th Falcon/Uni Group (7)	28
31st Falcon/Uni Group (2)	16
Sat Adult Training Group Lucy et al. (10)	30
Saturday 9am Beginners (6) total 24 May	12
Sat 24th Phil R (3)	16
Adult Course 24 - 25 May (11 X 5 miles) Andy Doug	55
Reading Marathon Paddling 25th (38)	250
Canoeing Group (3) Tues Doug	12
Saturday 9am Beginners (18) total 31 May	36
Sat 31st Phil R (4)	16
Saturday Adults Beginner 31 May Doug	2
Sunday Beginners Adults (3) 1 June Doug	12
Isaac Saturday Course 24 May (7)	21
Isaac Saturday Course 31 May (6)	36
Callum's Paddling	2
Isaac's and Sam's Paddling	36
Doug's Paddling	10
Mon Jo (28)	140
Tues Emma and Ana's Paddling (2)	14
Tues Jo + Isaac (13)	65
Wed Timetrial (28)	122
Thurs AM Jo (17)	68
Thurs PM Jo (15)	90
Thurs PM Nick B (6)	24
Fri PM Jen (8)	32
Sat 10.30am (15)	60
Sunday 1 June (27)	189
Roger's Paddling	18
Richard's Paddling	25
David's Paddling	20
Jason and Rachel's Paddling	14
Rob's Paddling	38
Nick K's and Jenny G's paddling	32
TOTAL	1598