

Pooling resources

In a Lords debate on schoolchildren's swimming, brought by Lord Cryer (Lab), Baroness Smith of Malvern (Lab) claimed 591 swimming pools had closed in the last 16 years, Baroness Davies of Devonport (Con) adding that 25 are closing per year, wages and fuel costs being major factors. As a result, many fewer children are learning to swim. As a watersport, we should all strive to be able to swim.

Lord Storey (LD) added that safe water rescue should include line throwing. The canoe lifeguards have taught us that we are mostly not as good as we would like to think.

Pools are often used for canoe polo. Even when these facilities do not close, the closure of others puts pressure on those remaining.

The Canal & River Trust have launched a new programme in Nottingham to help black men feel safer and more confident in and around water.

Funded by Sport England, Mandem Swim offers black men the chance to learn to swim in a supportive environment, build water confidence and start to enjoy the benefits of spending time by water. The sessions are aimed at men who have never learned to swim as well as those who feel nervous in or near water and would like help overcoming their fears.

The charity has been running a similar programme aimed at black women in Nottingham, Swim Sista Swim, for the past two years. In that time, the award winning programme has seen more than 150 women taking to the water for the first time with some going on to compete in national paddling competitions.

Research from the World Health Organisation shows that members of the black community are statistically at greater risk of drowning. At the same time, black men are underrepresented in the water based wellbeing activities run by the trust, including canoeing.

Montgomery mast removal

During the Second World War the SS *Richard Montgomery* sank in the Thames estuary. It contains more explosives than any other wreck in the world and could cause an explosion exceeded only by a nuclear device. Its three masts project above the water but there is concern that corrosion could cause one to fall and trigger an explosion so they are to be removed. While the wreck is well buoyed, the masts give a precise indication of its position and would show if it rolled.

Getting the hits

While in the school Scouts we undertook a climbing trip to the Cairngorms that took in four of Britain's five highest peaks. We were well equipped, well briefed and had undertaken previous trips preparing us. High on Cairngorm we encountered a couple from Abington with two young children in wellington boots. I remember the details because we were horrified about how ill prepared they were and the risks they were running.

Sadly, unprepared and ill equipped people on mountains are becoming increasingly common. Mountain rescue teams are carrying out ever more rescues. Often, their patients are not injured, just out of their depth, depending on rescue calls to get them out of trouble. The 50 years old injured climber of the past has been replaced by the early 20s adventurer who has read that the mountains are a fun place to be for excitement.

It seems that ever more people are being encouraged onto the hills by social media. This is being countered, especially in America, with

warning notices and with barriers to stop people falling over drops. The wild places are becoming more like theme parks.

Back in those earlier days there was a trickle of incidents of Scouts in canvas kayaks, again without safety equipment and limited knowledge of the risks. These days they are more likely to be on paddleboards, often on the sea, unaware of the risks and assuming they can do anything a sea kayak can do. Even on the coast or at lochs there have been fatalities of people swimming or walking off beaches with subsequent complaints that there were no notices to tell them that the outdoors can be dangerous.

The issue seems to be social media sources trying to promote the excitement of the outdoors for maximum hits rather than giving the rather boring safety education.

Grand Union Canal extra locks

The Grand Union Canal Transfer scheme will use the canal to move up to 113l/s of water from Minworth to Chaul End, near Luton, with a flow rate up to an additional 1.1km/h. A number of additional locks will be installed and water levels will rise but the canal should have a more secure water supply with less risk of drought closures.

Pill boxes to bat boxes

CRT have converted two pill boxes on the Kennet & Avon Canal to bat caves at Garston and Hamstead locks. Unlike the £100,000,000 HS2 bat tunnel, bats are expected to be on the inside. At the same time humans are locked out, avoiding the less savoury activity to which some of them have been subjected.



The bat cave at Garston Lock.

Registering personal locator beacons

New measures to strengthen search and rescue response to incidents involving people with Personal Locator Beacons have come into force.

When PLBs are discarded or change ownership the new details must also be provided.

When a registered PLB or EPIRB is activated, HM Coastguard can use the details supplied, such as emergency contacts, to gain crucial information to support rescue efforts and send the best resources to help.

False alarms can be traced more efficiently, too, keeping rescue teams on readiness for real emergencies and avoiding unnecessary missions into potentially dangerous conditions.

The registration requirement does not apply to PLBs on unpowered

craft such as kayaks and canoes although the MCA encourage all PLBs to be registered.

Here are some real life searches:

- An unregistered PLB broadcasting from London sparked three separate searches during July and August 2025. Activations were traced once to Ealing and twice to Paddington. Each time emergency services were alerted and stood down hours later with no one found to be in distress.

- A PLB dumped at a waste recycling centre was the source of an alert in Exeter which scrambled Dawlish Coastguard Rescue Team in January 2023. Without an update of its disused status and calls to registered numbers going unanswered, the search continued for about two hours until the PLB could be traced to a skip and destroyed.

- A boat in a box was the riddle deciphered by HM Coastguard, thanks to contact details registered to a PLB activated in Antigua in February 2023. A search wasn't required as it was quickly ascertained that the accidental alert was from kit inside a seagoing rowing boat packed up for return to the UK, having recently crossed the Atlantic.

The benefit of registering your PLB is simple. It gives you and everyone you're with a head start to being rescued from an emergency.

The registration process is free, takes just 15 minutes and could make the difference between life or death. You can do it online at no cost.

HM Coastguard will react to every beacon alert received. Registering your PLB helps them quickly work out when it's a false alarm with no one in danger or to focus resources when people are in real distress and need help.

To register a PLB or EPIRB with the UK Beacon Registry visit <https://www.gov.uk/register-406-beacons>, call 020 3817 2006 or email ukbeacons@mcga.gov.uk.

New SAR bases

HM Coastguard have opened two new Search & Rescue bases using AugustaWestland 189 helicopters as are being used at some other of their ten bases. The new bases are at Oban and Carlisle to operate in summer months to assist locations where frequency of incidents has been shown to be higher. This seems to be a reversal of the policy of closing bases to save money and is to be welcomed.



Carlisle's new search and rescue helicopter.



Friends of Chris Blakey who have been following the story of the Austin 7 he drove to Tokyo may wish to know that it now occupies pole position in the Country Classics car museum in Taunton.



Seen at Great Bedwyn during DW, a fast C1 loading with compost and white wine. There's a story there somewhere.

ACCESS & environment



CRT are raising funds to tackle floating pennywort on the River Soar. The most effective way to deal with it is to pull it out physically. The weed can grow 200mm per day and double its weight in three days.



Stephen Hardy

Eureka!



The Thule Keswick Mountain Festival over May 15-17th has teamed up with Visit Utah. With a wide selection of outdoor activities, it includes the grade 3-4 Green River, the grade 4-5 Colorado and plenty of calmer rivers, lakes and reservoirs across the state.



Tagsley have a tracking card which is just 1.8mm thick so it can be hidden away in a canoe. It works with Apple Find My, a two hour charge providing five months of cover. There is no subscription cost.



Sonobuds at £29.99 provide instant translation between any two of a gross of languages. A charge gives up to eight hours of availability.

A sense of place - Gas Street Basin



The Cube and the Mailbox.

Birmingham's Gas Street Basin is usually reckoned to be the centre of Britain's canal system. Surely no other 600m straight packs in so much of interest.

The Cube

Approaching from the south along the Worcester & Birmingham Canal, the reach starts at Windy Corner, where the weather can cause problems for narrowboats. Overlooking it is the Cube, built on the site of former working horse stables. The design is so complicated that no contractor would touch it so the designers had to set up their own construction company.

Adjacent is the Mailbox, formerly housing Birmingham's mail sorting office and now occupied by shops, restaurants and the BBC.



Gas Street Basin, the heart of the British canal system..



Holliday Street Aqueduct.

Holliday Street Aqueduct

Holliday Street Aqueduct is barely noticed from the canal but from the street beneath can be viewed its ornate ironwork.

Gas Street Basin

The basin itself is becoming less conspicuous as skyscrapers rise around it. The Library of Birmingham, the largest public library in Europe, is located by its finish of interlocking rings.

The route onto the Main Line of the Birmingham Canal Navigations passes under a footbridge. When first dug, the Worcester Bar was here, preventing the two canals from coming closer than 2.1m from each other so that loads had to be lifted from one to the other. This concession was obtained by the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal which ran from Stafford to Stourport and didn't come nearer than the far side of Wolverhampton but would have lost some of its Severn traffic to the new canal.

Black Sabbath Bridge

Broad Street and its buildings are carried on what is now called Black Sabbath Bridge, on which is a bench with portraits of the four heavy metallurgists. The bridge has been widened repeatedly, as seen by the various profiles underneath, which have probably caused numerous heads to have been banged over the years.

The International Convention Centre

The International Convention Centre is reached by a footbridge over the canal from various restaurants.

Old Turn Junction

At Old Turn Junction the Main Line bears left, the Ouzells Street



Black Sabbath Bridge.

Loop goes sharp left and the Farmer's Bridge Flight drops away to start the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal, overlooked by the Malt Shovel, the Sea Life Centre, the Utilita Arena Birmingham and a full sized Duplo giraffe to draw attention to a Lego Discovery Centre.

The island in the centre of the canal is not a roundabout. It was installed during the Second World War to help stop the flow of water in the event of bomb damage.

Lego Playground

A full sized Duplo giraffe draws attention to the new Lego Playground.



The International Convention Centre.



Old Turn Junction with the Main Line crossing.



The Duplo giraffe and Lego Playground.



Old Turn Junction with the Utilita Arena Birmingham, Birmingham & Fazeley Canal and Malt Shovel.



Under 17 schools winners Barr/Hulton.

Butler/O'Grady finally win

ThruDark Devizes-Westminster Race

The ThruDark Devizes-Westminster Race suffered from a cold wind this year but it was a following wind. Taken with a reasonable water level and freedom from weed, this gave respectable times. The overall win went to Butler/O'Grady, who were 39 minutes faster than they were last year, when they took 3rd place, having been in the top three for three successive years. This year the 3rd place went to Durden/Walkinton, who had taken the first two singles places in 2025.

Having won the last two years with record holder Sharpe, Anoushka Freeman teamed up with another Richmond member this time, Perry, but they had problems and finished in 10th place, three hours slower than last year.

There were no club entries at all in the juniors, public schools providing the entire complement, Barrett/Brown of Kimbolton School winning by 58 minutes from under 17s Barr/Hulton of Marlborough College.



Third and final lady, Mariana Revesz.



Bending the fence to permit the Garston portage.



Running the Sheffield Lock portage.



Ludy Hills/Carol McLaughlin at Dun Mill but not to finish.



Hicks/Hicks negotiate the awkward Dun Mill kissing gate.



Damon White, third placed C1.



Ian Thelwell and quadrathlete Nigel Unwin.



Tribble/Rosenow of Cokethorpe School, the only Under 16s.



Anoushka Freeman/Robert Perry at Great Bedwyn.



Singles winner Shaun Harte.

1L - Black Swan Salver: 1 T Kubisch-Wiles, Reading, 20:18:01.
2 L Murnaghan, Taunton, 23:39:26. 3 M Revesz, Richmond, 25:45:00.

1LV - Fastest Veteran Lady: 1 L Murnaghan, Taunton, 23:39:26.
2 M Revesz, Richmond, 25:45:00.

1LO50: 1 L Murnaghan, Taunton, 23:39:26. 2 M Revesz, Richmond, 25:45:00.

1 - Marsport Shield: 1 S Harte, Banbury, 15:14:55. 2 T Bell, Bradford-on-Avon, 15:50:31.
3 M Rees-Clark, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 15:57:18.

1Univ - Fastest University Single: 1 T Camilleri, Wey, 16:02:43.

1V - Maureen Duck Memorial Cup: 1 S Jones, Taunton, 16:57:07.
2 N Poole, Devizes, 19:36:28. 3 A Clark, Addlestone, 21:16:37. 4 J Mason, Devizes, 22:00:57.
5 D Fisher-Jeffes, Pangbourne, 22:01:09. 6 P Sumner, Elmbridge, 22:54:48.
7 N De Jongh, Bisham, 23:30:39. 8 S Hillier, Devizes, 23:36:02. 9 L Murnaghan, Taunton, 23:39:26. 10 D White, Reading, 24:29:41. 11 M Revesz, Richmond, 25:45:00.

1050 - Half Century Cup: 1 N Poole, Devizes, 19:36:28. 2 A Clark, Addlestone, 21:16:37. 3 J Mason, Devizes, 22:00:57. 4 P Sumner, Elmbridge, 22:54:48. 5 N De Jongh, Bisham, 23:30:39. 6 L Murnaghan, Taunton, 23:39:26. 7 D White, Reading, 24:29:41. 8 M Revesz, Richmond, 25:45:00.

C1 - Mobile Adventure Canoe Trophy: 1 N Poole, Devizes, 19:36:28.
2 L Murnaghan, Taunton, 23:39:26. 3 D White, Reading, 24:29:41.

2LJ - Junior Ladies Trophy: 1 Lane/Greggs, Churcher's Coll, 21:32:12.
2 Brazier/Palmer, Kelley Coll, 21:55:15. 3 Croucher/Janaway, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 22:51:32

2L - Woodpecker Cider Ladies Rose Bowl: 1 Bird/Whelan, Newbury/Gloucester, 22:15:00.
2 Riley/Trower, Fowey R/Tamar Valley Nomads, 24:53:22.
3 Pilkington/Fischer, Paddlesport, 25:36:39.

2LV - Bulmers Cider Trophy: 1 Bird/Whelan, Newbury/Gloucester, 22:15:00. 2 Riley/Trower, Fowey R/Tamar Valley Nomads, 24:53:22. 3 Pilkington/Fischer, Paddlesport, 25:36:39.

2U16: 1 Tribble/Rosenow, Cokethorpe Sch, 21:27:04.

2U17Sch - BSCA Junior Trophy: 1 Barr/Hulton, Marlborough Coll, 18:53:00.
2 Gaievji/Morrison, Churcher's Coll, 19:22:47. 3 Williams/Wells-Cole, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:24:43. 4 Kornerup/Duncan, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:35:54.
5 Batistich/Metcalf, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 21:19:48. 6 Lane/Greggs, Churcher's Coll, 21:32:12. 7 Loud/Barton, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 21:54:54. 8 Hibberd/Higgins, Churcher's Coll, 22:03:24.
9 Andrews/Wright, Kimbolton Sch, 23:00:15. 10 Lowe/Lloyd, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 24:15:53.
11 Picking/Walker, Cokethorpe Sch, 24:19:55. 12 Tilbury/Allison, Dauntsey's Sch, 25:53:10.

2J - Wiltshire Gazette Shield: 1 Barrett/Brown, Kimbolton Sch, 17:54:45.
2 Barr/Hulton, Marlborough Coll, 18:53:00. 3 Gaievji/Morrison, Churcher's Coll, 19:22:47.
4 Burrows/Morrow, Oundle Sch, 20:02:08. 5 Ellinor/Wright, Kimbolton Sch, 20:09:39.
6 Williams/Wells-Cole, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:24:43. 7 Kornerup/Duncan, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:35:54. 8 Booton/Powell, Churcher's Coll, 20:36:29. 9 MacDonald/Bird, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:47:49. 10 Massey/Morris, Dauntsey's Sch, 20:51:11. 11 Hunt/Mackenzie, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:57:52. 12 Ramage/Dain, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:59:44.
13 Prettejohn/Dennis, Kelly Coll, 21:02:42. 14 Batistich/Metcalf, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 21:19:48.
15 Barrowman/Skordis, Marlborough Coll, 21:23:35. 16 Tribble/Rosenow, Cokethorpe Sch, 21:27:04. 17 Lane/Greggs, Churcher's Coll, 21:32:12. 18 Martin/Nelson, Dauntsey's Sch, 21:41:02.
19 Loud/Barton, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 21:54:54. 20 Brazier/Palmer, Kelley Coll, 21:55:15.

2CivJ - Berksonion Trophy: 1 Barrett/Brown, Kimbolton Sch, 17:54:45.
2 Barr/Hulton, Marlborough Coll, 18:53:00. 3 Gaievji/Morrison, Churcher's Coll, 19:22:47.
4 Burrows/Morrow, Oundle Sch, 20:02:08. 5 Ellinor/Wright, Kimbolton Sch, 20:09:39.
6 Williams/Wells-Cole, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:24:43. 7 Kornerup/Duncan, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:35:54. 8 Booton/Powell, Churcher's Coll, 20:36:29. 9 MacDonald/Bird, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:47:49. 10 Massey/Morris, Dauntsey's Sch, 20:51:11. 11 Hunt/Mackenzie, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:57:52. 12 Ramage/Dain, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 20:59:44.
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15 Barrowman/Skordis, Marlborough Coll, 21:23:35. 16 Tribble/Rosenow, Cokethorpe Sch, 21:27:04. 17 Lane/Greggs, Churcher's Coll, 21:32:12. 18 Martin/Nelson, Dauntsey's Sch, 21:41:02.
19 Loud/Barton, Lord Wandsworth Coll, 21:54:54. 20 Brazier/Palmer, Kelley Coll, 21:55:15.

2 - Devizes-Westminster Challenge Cup: 1 Butler/O'Grady, Falcon/Runcorn, 16:46:17.
2 Gregory/Lane, 17:08:41. 3 Durden/Walkinton, Elmbridge/Chelmsford, 17:28:38. 4 Escott/Webster, Bradford-on-Avon, 17:44:14. 5 Martiartu/Dawson, España/Falcon, 18:41:56. 7 Voller/Thornton, Hereford, 19:08:20. 8 Plant/Drummond, 19:50:38. 9 Zielski/Brown, Runcorn, 19:52:25. 10 Freeman/Perry, Richmond, 20:22:41. 12 Ives/Lawson, RE, 20:47:21. 13 Kershaw/Cotton, Gloucester/Bradford-on-Avon, 21:32:50. 14 Bowyer/Bowyer, RAF, 21:33:09. 16 Margot/Fiacco, Cambridge, 21:49:11. 17 Tibury-Clark/Long, RAF/Falcon, 21:54:47. 18 Johnson/Kelly, Tonbridge & W Kent, 22:04:13. 19 Bird/Whelan, Newbury/Gloucester, 22:15:00. 20 Hicks/Hicks, Norwich, 22:21:52.

2JV - Fred Bartlett Trophy: 1 Webb/Williams, Wey, 17:08:52.
2 Quinton/Statham, Pangbourne, 17:51:01. 3 Wiemer/Pafatis, Cambridge, 20:03:56.

2Ser - Devizes-Westminster Services Trophy: 1 Ives/Lawson, RE, 20:47:21.
2 Bowyer/Bowyer, RAF, 21:33:09. 3 Cotterill/West, RE, 22:46:38.

2RN- Roger Crane Memorial Trophy: 1 Richardson/Titman, RM, 26:56:30.
2 Trafford/Bridger, RM, 32:56:40.

2A - Devizes-Westminster Army Trophy: 1 Ives/Lawson, RE, 20:47:21.
2 Cotterill/West, RE, 22:46:38.

2RAF - RAF Trophy: 1 Bowyer/Bowyer, RAF, 21:33:09.

2OS - European Overseas Trophy: 1 Witteveen/Zegers, Nederland, 18:55:45.
2 Latvenas/Satikas, Lietuva, 20:38:51. 3 Declan/Murphy, Ireland, 21:47:16.

2OS - Overseas Trophy: 1 Witteveen/Zegers, Nederland, 18:55:45.
2 Latvenas/Satikas, Lietuva, 20:38:51.

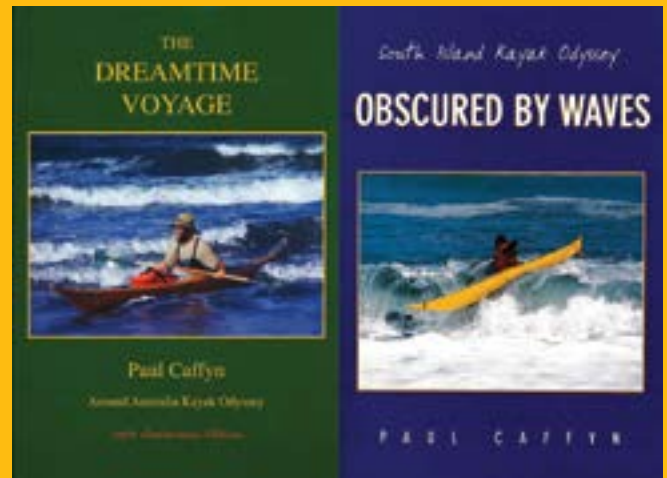
2 Half Century: 1 Kershaw/Cotton, Gloucester/Bradford-on-Avon, 21:32:50.

2 Thelwell/Unwin, Bradford-on-Avon, 22:22:12. 3 Passmore/Ashford, Tonbridge & W Kent, 24:29:50. 4 Smith/Clark, Elmbridge, 24:35:27. 5 Jarratt/Carter, Lincoln, 24:42:58.
7 Scrivener/Davies, Falcon, 26:43:31. 8 Meeson/Finch, Basingstoke Canal, 26:47:36.

2F - Folding Boat Trophy: 1 Richardson/Titman, RM, 26:56:30.
2 Trafford/Bridger, RM, 32:56:40.

C2L - Senior Ladies C2 Trophy: 1 Pilkington/Fischer, Paddlesport, 25:36:39.

C2 - Devizes-Westminster Canadian Trophy: 1 Voller/Thornton, Hereford, 19:08:20.
2 Pilkington/Fischer, Paddlesport, 25:36:39.



Paul Caffyn Klassic Kayaking Books

Now available in England, both the Australian and South Island books.
Sadly, the exorbitant cost of overseas postage has killed off mailing these A4 size books from NZ.
However, an old work colleague, Mick, loads up his hand luggage after he visits NZ annually. He has already sold out of the recent 2nd edition of the Stewart Island book but the two classics are available in England from:
paulskayakbooksuk@gmail.com

Publisher contact
Canoeist, mail@canoeist.co.uk

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