



MYC Paddling Section

Our Journey Has Begun



A Glorious Day For The Inaugural Paddle At Borth-Y-Gest

S'mae. It has been almost a year since we had our first group paddle of the Merioneth Yacht Club (MYC) Paddling Section at Borth-Y-Gest so I have been moved to put pen to paper just to remind ourselves in these difficult time of what a fantastic year 2019 was for us. Hopefully we can return to fully enjoying our beautiful estuaries, lakes and rivers in 2021.

It is hard to believe that we only held the initial public meeting at the Porthmadog Leisure Centre on the 8th May 2019 followed by the first paddle on the 15th of May. Since then we have held regular summer Wednesday evening paddles on local estuaries and lakes as well as regular winter Monday evening teaching sessions at Harlech Pool. We have had an excellent level of participation with groups numbering in the high twenties on occasions.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to getting this up and running or has participated in the sessions. We have had many new members who have also been participating in wider club activities such as rowing, swimming and music nights. I will not embarrass anyone by name but I would just like to say it has been a pleasure for myself and I hope those that have contributed and participated have enjoyed the experience as much as I have. I hope this is the start of something special and enduring.

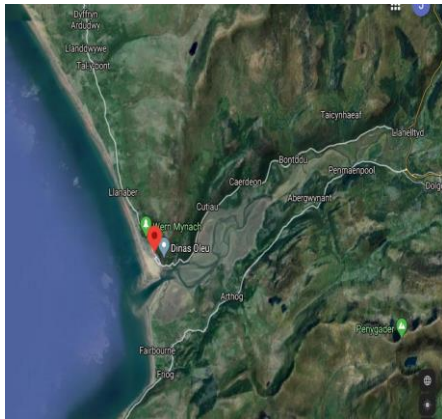
A Great Way To Discover Our Stunningly Beautiful Estuaries

It has been our pleasure to explore two of the most beautiful estuary settings in the world as part of our 'standard' evening paddles, the Mawddach Estuary and the Porthmadog Estuary. We have experienced all manner of weather and tide conditions as part of our activities and a few of the paddles against wind and tide have been quite a work out. I think we have all learned many lessons about finding sheltered water and eddies for a breather and the best routes for the prevailing conditions.

We have been blessed with many beautiful evenings to fully appreciate the majesty of the settings. We are indeed lucky people. My thanks to the skilled experts in these environments who have made this possible.



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The Mawddach Estuary

Our paddling area in the Mawddach Estuary extends from the Barmouth harbour area where the MYC Clubhouse is situated to The George III pub at Penmaenpool. On an evening paddle we enjoy:-

- Shooting the historic Barmouth Bridge
- Close up views of the Clock House and Mawddach Terrace
- Views of the mountain ridges to Cader Idris
- Recuperation in the MYC Clubhouse (and bar)

We are looking to extend paddles next year to round trips to The George III. This is a fantastic paddle on a good day, a must do.



The Porthmadog Estuary

Our paddling area in the Porthmadog Estuary extends from the Porthmadog Marina past Borth-Y-Gest to the sea exit. On an evening paddle we generally enjoy:-

- Exploring the sea caves at high tide
- Practising slalom on the old wooden pier posts and numerous buoys
- Views across the Rynogydd
- Close up views of the historic Powder House

We are looking to extend these trips next year to include full trips starting on the Afon Dwryrd all the way to Borth-Y-Gest when the tides allow.





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Spoiled For Choice – Fantastic Lakes & Rivers



Llyn Dinas



Afon Dwyrdd



Afon Dee

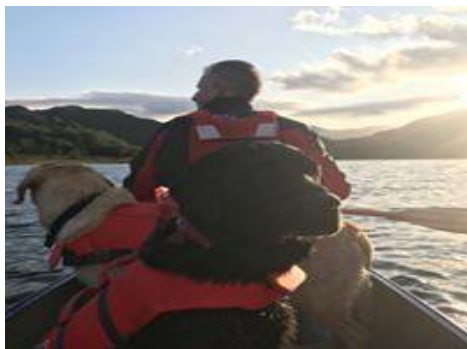
We also ventured onto a few of the local lakes and rivers, but there is so much left to explore. One of the nicer challenges to have!

We had an amazing paddle on Llyn Dinas. It was great to paddle in a place where the water stays where it should do, very relaxing. We used canoes and kayaks and had an amazing level of participation which challenged our logistics a bit. Thanks to all that towed trailers. We need a barbeque there for all club members next year (volunteers required!)

Rivers are a different kettle of fish and can be serene and relaxing one moment and requiring frenzied activity the next.

The Afon Dwyrdd was excellent fun which we did twice. A fairly relaxing section of the river but it required 'Seal Launching' off the bank, and the subsequent infrequent righting of kayaks. A generally serene paddle until where the Afon Prysor joins. The hydro power station generates power in time for Coronation Street. A little bit of white-water time ensuedall good

A small group also ventured onto the Afon Dee. A fantastic coach who will remain nameless (JJ) described it as "a serene coast down the river admiring the autumn colours". For those that follow in 2021 that actually means "hold onto your pants / panties this is going to get wild". Fantastic day, it was a great run and I still smile at the memory.





MYC Paddling Section

The Lifeblood Of The Section – Having The Qualifications

The greatest challenge in getting the section running and ensuring its long-term future is making sure that we have coaches with the qualifications to take the groups on the water. We are hugely indebted to the two skilled coaches that came forward to support the start of this venture from the open forum meeting at Porthmadog on the eighth of May 2019 and the Outdoor Partnership which supported us at every step. Without this commitment and passion for developing paddling in the local communities we would have been years away from delivering what was actually achieved in 2019. My thanks to the individuals and organisations, it has been a genuine pleasure to work with them all.

The Paddle-Sports Instructor class of 2019 at Plas Dol-Y-Moch



We did not rest on our laurels however and we managed to get five more club members onto the first rung of the coaching ladder i.e. Paddle-Sports Instructors. This enables this group to lead taster sessions as well as groups in sheltered water conditions.

There is much more to come and we will continue to invest in those interested in coaching. If you would like to get involved let us know, we need new enthusiasm all the time.

In 2021 we aim to promote Personal Performance Awards as well. Encouraging members who want to achieve recognised skill awards is very important as we want to promote best practice in paddling as well as the most important aspect having fun.



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Winter Blues No Chance

Thanks to the hard work of individuals in the background we did not have to pack up our dry bags for the winter, but instead moved to a different if more benign environment for the winter Harlech Pool. Throughout the winter we ran kayak skill and water confidence sessions every Monday night. My thanks to the wonderful staff at Harlech Pool who helped with the kayak instruction and swimming lessons without laughing at us (too much) brilliant.



This was a fantastic time for us all to practice skills and have fun in a safe environment. It also gave some of our new Coaches the opportunity to take on some of the activities under the watchful eyes of the wise ones. Thanks to all those that suffered at our hands we will be more experienced next year!



We had participation from a wide range of age groups which bodes well for our medium-term aspirations to promote youth development in the community.

We undertook activities such as games, water polo and skill sessions including capsize drills and recovery skills.



Inevitably there was a fascination for learning the Eskimo Roll. Practise confirmed that a half roll is pretty easy if a bit a challenging on the breathing front. Practice also confirmed that the other half can be a bit challenging. Orientating everything upside down is a little interesting. A lot of progress was made and we had a number of successes ... more to come.

Not sure yet whether we can do the same this winter due to current circumstances but my fingers are firmly crossed.



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What Comes Next ?

This is not the easiest question to answer in these strange and difficult times. We have however done some outline thinking.

This year we are doing background work on procedures, risk assessments and skill development plans. These are a necessary part of running a successful club and if anyone want to help out in any capacity you are always most welcome. We are assuming that we will have limited or no outdoor paddles this year, we will monitor Government and Welsh Assembly advise and communicate thoughts for discussion

In 2021 we intend to run a similar programme of events as in 2019 but in a more considered manner spreading the load of getting on the water. We also hope to increase the participation in our coaching scheme, progress further those already in it and also to offer Personal Performance Awards to our active paddlers. Having fun is always going to be the ethos, but many members have already achieved some of the Paddle Awards without even knowing it.

We also want to develop a more social aspect to the section available to all club members as well e.g. Llyn Dinas BBQ / Beach BBQs and MYC Clubhouse events. Suggestions and volunteers necessary.

To expand the depth of the section it also important that we start to expand contacts with other kayak / canoeing clubs in North Wales and beyond. I anticipate that many opportunities and a lot of fun will ensue.

In 2022 we have ambitions to extend the club offer to a wider audience, potentially expanding the youth focus of the section.

More than anything let me know if you have great ideas and aspirations, we aim to be dynamic and responsive.

It's A Mad Mad World

These are the strangest of strange of times. I have met so many wonderful people through this small endeavour but above all things I hope you and your family and friends are healthy and safe. I look forward to seeing you all when these times pass. Hopefully in 2021 we will be free to enjoy our paddling again.

Hwyl am rwan.

John