

*The Journal
Of
The
Coracle Society*

Founded 1990

January 2006



The Coracle Society

To promote the knowledge of coracles, currachs and allied craft, their construction and use, also their study and collection.

To support the continuance of fishing involving the use of coracles.

To encourage the holding of regattas, races and allied events.

To support the craft of coracle building in all its forms.

Contents

Society aims.....	1
Contents, cover picture.....	2
Officers of the Society.....	3-4
From the editor.....	4
Chairman's report.....	5
Tim Oakes.....	6
Poem.....	7
Dave Purvis at Portsoy.....	8
Mill challenge.....	9
Knitted coracle.....	11
Cilgerran.....	12-15
Coracle racing 1881.....	16
Coracle shop sign.....	16
Nelson.....	17
The secret of eel island.....	18
Future event.....	18
Boys own paper 1893.....	19
Suppliers.....	20

Cover Picture

The upper Tywi late nineteenth Century and the Stepney-Gulston family. The coracle appears to of a Tywi type but unusually with a lathe gunwale. The nets men at Carmarthen were yet to make or use this version. Even more unusual is the paddle that appears to be from the River Teifi. More about this family in the next issue.

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Committee member and stand in editor for this edition

Conwy Richards

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From The Editor

It is at Christmas time that I am putting the finishing touches to this magazine and it is also my first attempt as an editor. I do not own a computer but have used the old fashioned method of 'cut and paste' with glue and tipex. I have been in the Society for ten years and have always wanted a go at this so I hope you like it.

In my address book I was surprised that I only have about a dozen details of other members despite the fact that membership is always about 150. So who are the other one hundred plus people I have never met? It is to you that I offer an invitation to a summer regatta. (my favourite has always been Leintwardine) At the time of writing it is snowing heavily so a sunny afternoon on the river is something to look forward to. I also would welcome you write about any 'adventures' with coracles. I am hoping for a story about the long distance journey down the River Severn last summer.

Conwy Richards

Chairmans Report for the A.G.M. held on the 10th of July 2005 at Shrewsbury.

Welcome and thank you for making the effort to attend this our 15th annual general meeting of the Coracle Society.

A special welcome to Sir Peter Badge our founder and President and Lady Badge.

Over the past fifteen years we have held our agms at coracle strong holds i.e. where there is an historic link, we have been to Cilgerran, Ironbridge, Welshpool, Bodnant gardens (nr Conwy), Bewdley and Carmarthen. I am delighted to tie this years' AGM into the river festival here at Shrewsbury where the Davies family have plied their craft for many generations. Sadly John Davies cannot be here with us today but we extend to him our best wishes to him and hope that the family tradition will be maintained and prosper for future generations.

The spring flyer extended into two pages this year and reflects the continued growing involvement of society members. I have received a number of complimentary remarks about the newsletter that is very encouraging. It used to go out in November and I feel that it should go to press no later than early December so that our membership secretary can also enclose the membership reminders. That gives us just over four months to get copy-there is none to hand as yet (gentle nudge).

The three main regattas continue to draw crowds with Leintwardine attracting over 200 spectators and many participants. These events are an excellent shop window where the public can be entertained and educated. Conwy Richards and Dave Purvis have done legion work as ambassadors in West Wales and have made strong friendship amongst the nets men. Their enthusiasm and knowledge have been in no small way responsible for the resurgence of interest in that sector, to involve outsiders and re-establish public events, congratulations to them. I look forward to see the Welsh connection flourish (I am sure many pints of Welsh beer have been consumed to that end). May I thank our officers

for their work and support. Their task is not a thankless one but to enjoy and take pride in that is again reflected in the smooth running of the society and a genuine feeling of friendship and fun that runs through it.

I know that Conwy has put in a great deal of time and work on our new website that is rewritten and now up and running. He tells me we have had at times over 3000 visits a day.

I keep hearing of 'rogue' coracle makers who have yet to enter our fold. If you meet any please encourage them to get in touch with Brian Pearce our membership secretary and eulogise about our society which is dynamic, friendly and offers the opportunity for new ideas and possibly new venues for events.

Finally a very big thanks to Michael and Jennifer Connor for allowing us to use Willow House for our agm and liaising with the River Festival committee to enable us to do the demonstration on the River Severn. Fellow coraclers thank you for your attention and don't forget your stories for the newsletter!

Peter Faulkner



Tim takes wild tales on odyssey

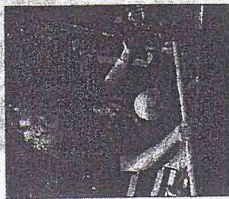
HAPPINESS, according to storyteller Tim Oakes, is a candle-lit fireside and interested listeners.

Born in Liverpool to Irish parents, wild Celtic tales have always fascinated the 45-year-old former journalist, who once worked on the heavy metal magazine *Kerrang*.

Since moving to Lydbrook, Tim has become equally hooked on ancient folklore from this neck of the woods – the 'strange' borderland between Albion and Cymru where stories as old as the Iron Age pour out of a labyrinth of caves and mines.

Tim's other great interest is building coracle boats from the age when adventurers fearlessly rode the seas in wicker vessels bound together by leather hide.

Now, having constructed his own 10ft corragh, or large coracle, Tim plans to travel the waterways of Britain telling tales as he



AT THE HELM: Tim Oakes.

Photo: Janine Jansuch

goes – like a modern-day version of the Greek storyteller Homer of *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* fame.

"I tell lots of little stories that I've learnt or developed over the years or I perform my own set show, the *Runeship*," explained Tim, who has been booked to appear at the Wyche Wood Festival in Cheltenham this June.

"It is in two halves. Part one is about this magical character called Haffryn who was a navigator, pirate, thief and slave trader. He lived 3,000 years ago and sailed the world in a coracle."

"Haffryn is my own invention. He lives within me and I have named my coracle after him."

He added: "Part two of the show is about a real-life guy, called Luke Hughes, who died in 1905. He was a man who once wrote a book called *Tim's Tales*."

but he had hardly been out of his own village, unlike Haffryn who had zapped all over the globe but got no recognition."

Constructed out of little more than canvas and bitumen skin, Tim's light weight coracle appears thin and vulnerable.

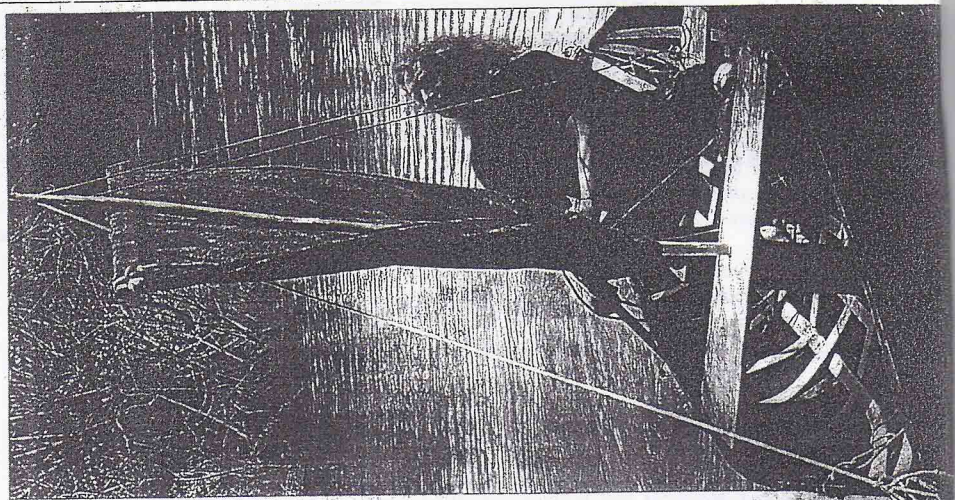
He admits he takes his life in his hands every time he takes to the water.

When he embarks on his tour of Britain he will not be travelling exclusively by boat. Haffryn will be with him wherever he goes, from South Devon to the Scottish Borders.

Tim said: "I took the boat out for its first voyage a couple of weeks ago and it felt amazing. It was very noisy because it is built like a series of drums."

"It's like an animal. It is alive and I'm inside it. No wonder they used to paint eyes on the front of them."

"Going to sea in them is just an amazing experience."



Tim Oakes was featured
In this article in the
Forester. He is the Third
Member I am aware of with
a curragh.
If you have one please send
in a story about it.

The following is from Nicola Freshney poet and in the Christmas theme.

Oh come all ye faithful
(and those who are not!)
to a day by the water
we can promise a lot.

There'll be plenty of fishing
for Salmon and Trout,
we just can't guarantee
you will get any out!

If racing's your pleasure
then we will deliver,
whatever the venue
pond, lake, or river.

Please bring your families
food and warm coats,
but most important,
remember your boats!

There is one condition
we state categorical
the vessel you use
must be a coracle!

Dave Purvis is the busiest Coracle society member and this article explains about his involvement at the Traditional boat Festival at Portsoy Scotland.

Friday June 24 2005

The Press and Journal

Youngsters keep things shipshape at Portsoy



Hayley McKenzie, 11, and Shaun McKay, 10, hard at work at the Portsoy boat festival with project co-ordinator Dave Purvis

by John Thomson

SAILING and boat building sessions in the run up to a major maritime festival in the north-east this weekend have proved a hit with youngsters.

The lessons have been organised in conjunction with the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival at Portsoy.

A lottery grant of £4,500

from the Awards for All scheme was obtained by the parent support group at Portsoy to bring tutors from the Royal Yachting Association to the town.

A team of instructors have been working this week with over 100 children eager to try sailing.

Workshops have also taken place to show youngsters how

to build dinghies and coracles.

Boat festival chairman Roger Goodyear said: "The enthusiasm from the youngsters has just been fantastic.

"All of them who have taken part in the sailing tuition will receive certificates."

The dinghy workshops were held by instructor James Crombie while the coracle

building was masterminded by expert Dave Purvis.

During the week a replica of a Spey coracle in Elgin museum was constructed by basket weaver Jane Wilkin-

son. The main festival activities run tomorrow and Sunday with a packed programme of offshore and onshore attractions.

The Coracle Society has received this proposal from Chris Partington of Mortimers Cross mill a few miles from Leintwardine .

This is a proposal I am putting to members of the Coracle Society for their approval. I envisage a race that would happen annually. Not particularly on any one day but whenever a participant is in the area and wants to race against the clock coracling the course. A stopwatch would be employed and the fastest time at the end of the year being declared the winner.

The course is roughly 400 meters up the millstream away from the mill towards the weir. At a point near the weir the participant would alight onto the bank and then carry their coracle across a narrow isthmus and re-launch themselves into the weir pool of the River Lugg and paddle down (or be swept down) to the finish line near the mill.

The millstream is a deep slow stretch and the land to cross is fairly uneven and muddy with steep descent over an obstacle. (For me this piece mirrors what many coraclers had to put up with in the past as they used their craft for poaching and often had to run to avoid capture).

The River Lugg stretch currently has rather more obstacles of submerged trees and branches than I would like and the Environment Agency has promised to drag some tree roots out. But other than that it is a very exciting fast stretch with pools, rivulets and shingle banks to negotiate. Thrills and spills every yard, not for the faint hearted and worthy as a championship coracling course!

Would you like to come over and try the course and see what you think of it? I can offer space for camping over the weekend and access to the waters edge is good. My name is Chris Partington (01568-708820) or send a text on mobile (07941-328979). Mortimers Cross Mill is a scheduled ancient monument in the care of English Heritage and is open to the public every Saturday and Sunday in the summer months 10am to 4pm. Potentially there is huge scope for maximum publicity of the event and the Coracle Society

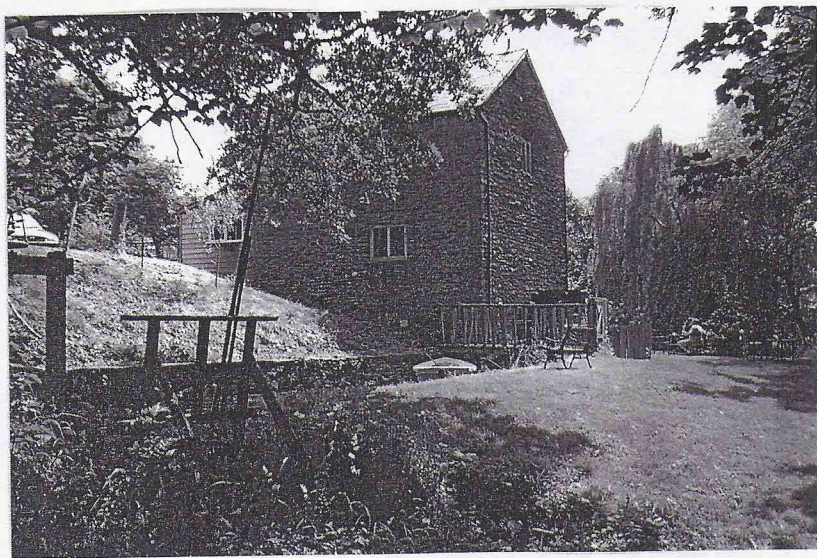


Photo by Dick Mundy

A knitted coracle. Debbie New is an Australian married to a Canadian and well known as a writer of knitting and lace making articles for British, Australian and American magazines, she is also known for her acrylic art. The origins of this article are from a chance meeting with Dave Nicoll at the marina on the old River Nene at March in Cambridgeshire.

Pictures of her knitted coracle appear in her book "Unexpected Knitting". Debbie was inspired to produce the craft after seeing a coracle on the narrow boat belonging to Dave but declined an offer to try it on the water. Debbie was not new to coracles having learnt about them in British History as an Australian schoolgirl. She began by making a mock up from black wool while still in England and later made the finished one by knitting 'swirling lace' as "this is a swirly craft" from a fine Merino wool which was to be dipped in fibreglass resin, but the test piece made the lacework transparent when the effect wanted was for the lace to be white against dark water. The finished coracle cover was later dyed a darker colour and the accompanying picture shows what is probably the most unusual skin ever used on a coracle.

Original information from Dave Nicoll





*Presentation of the Coracle Society cheque for £100 to the treasurer of the Cilgerran coracle regatta by Viv Faulkner, the money to be used for an engraved plaque or slab to read;
Cilgerran Coracle Regatta
"An art in its own right"*

Regata Cilgerran 2005

Fe gofiwch fod Cymdeithas Gwryglau Prydain wedi gofyn i'w Thrysorydd drefnu gwobr o £100 ar gyfer cystadleuaeth yn Regata Cilgerran. Y nod oedd parhau â'r gwaith o greu cysylltiad rhwng yr hen draddodiad o weithio â chwryglau yng Ngorllewin Cymru a'r diwylliant newydd o ddefnyddio cwrzglau at ddiibenion hamdden yng ngweddill Ewrop. Roedd pobl Cilgerran wedi'u syfrdanu a thipyn yn amheus. Rhyw £5 neu £10 yw gwobrau'r Regata bob amser. Byddai gwobr o £100 yn drysu'r drefn a fu mor werthfawr dros 55 mlynedd o gystadlaethau cwrzglau blynyddol – y gyfres hiraf yng ngorllewin Ewrop. Roedd trysorydd Gŵyl Cilgerran, Mr Gordon Lewis, yn gymorth hawdd ei gael mewn cyfyngder. Cynigiodd wrthyf dros y ffôn y dylid defnyddio'r arian i brynu plac neu hambwrdd a fyddai'n cael ei gefnogi ar y cyd gan Gymdeithas Gwryglau Prydain a phwyllgor y Regata a'i gyflwyno, efallai, i enillydd yr 'arddangosfa agored trafod cwrwgl' a oedd i'w chynnal rhwng eitemau 10 ac 11 yn regata 2005.

Roedd y cytundeb hwn yn ein meddyliau wrth i ni, eich Thrysorydd a'ch Ysgrifennydd, deithio i Gilgerran o Leintwardine. Aethom trwy Gorslas i gasglu fy nghefnder, sy'n siarad Cymraeg ac sy'n gweithio i Antur Teifi, asiantaeth ddatblygu sy'n hybu twf economaidd mewn ardal sy'n cynnwys Cilgerran. Buom yn cwyno wrtho am y ddelwedd sydd gan grefft hwylio cwrzglau yng Nghymru. Gwelwn luniau o hen ddynion whisgerog a gwargam mewn hen ddillad duon yn sleifio i lan yr afon i geisio dal eog gloyw. Mewn gwirionedd, mae'r cwrwglwr modern yn fwy tebygol o fod yn gyfreithiwr ifanc yn lynnw'r cwcw o'i BMW i hwylio i lawr yr afon fyrlymus fel ffordd o ddianc rhag pwysau gwaith. Fe sonion ni am y gwaith y mae tref Amwythig yn ei wneud yn y maes yma. Maen nhw'n trefnu achlysur lle maen nhw'n treulio wythnos yn hwylio i lawr Afon Hafren o fynyddoedd Pumlumon i Amwythig ac maen nhw'n targedu masnach ymwelwyr Lloegr er mai yng Nghymru y mae 95% o'r daith.

Hwn oedd y tro cyntaf i mi ddod i Gilgerran. Roedd y regata'n llenwi'r pentref. Roedd bws gwennol yn rhedeg rhwng y cae parcio a safle'r regata ar ddam o dir gwastad uwchlaw'r afon ger ceunant goedlog hardd. Roedd yno stondinau a bwyd a diod ar werth ac roedd Mr Ron Davies yn gwneud cwrzglau. Cynhaliwyd 14 o wahanol eitemau yn ystod y prynhawn. Roedd tipyn o samon yn yr afon y noson gynt a bu llawer o'r dynion wrthi'n pysgota tan y wawr.

Roedd yno ryw 6-700 o ymwelwyr ar y tro, felly mae'n bosib bod cyfanswm o tua 1,500 o bobl wedi bod yn y regata yn ystod y prynhawn – tipyn o gamp i achlysur na chafodd lawer o hysbysrwydd yn ôl safonau heddiw. Trwy wrando ar acenion y gwylywyr, daethpwyd i'r casgliad bod tuag 85 % ohonyn nhw yn dod o'r tu allan i orllewin Cymru. Ychydig iawn o'r cystadleuwyr oedd yn hen ddynion whisgerog; roedd llawer mwy o gwrwglwyr ifanc, heini nag a ddisgwyliem yn ôl yr ystadegau. Roedd yr enillywyr yn gyflym. Cafwyd llawer o dynnu coes rhwng y gwahanol ardaloedd a gwae cwrwglwyr Afon Tywi a oedd heb droi i fyny ar gyfer eitem 4. Chwarae teg i samon Afon Teifi – fe nofodd un ohonyn nhw yn syth i mewn i'r rhwyd yn ystod yr arddangosfa dreillio, ar yr union amser pan oedd pawb yn y dyrfa'n gallu gweld y ddau ddyn a'r rhwyd rhwng y cwrzglau yn glir. Dyna i chi gyffrous! Daliwyd pysgodyn saith bwys a gorwedda'i'n loyw a hardd ar y sach wrth gael ei raffio i'r gynulleidfa.

A'r £100? Wel, trefnodd Mr Gordon Lewis gyhoeddiad dros y com siarad i ddweud bod Cymdeithas Gwryglau Prydain wedi rhoi £100 i Regata Cilgerran a'n bod yn haeddu clap. Cafwyd cymeradwyaeth hael. Tynnwyd lluniau'r Ysgrifenyddes, Mrs Faulkner yn cyflwyno sic e'r Thrysorydd. Cytunwyd y byddai'r anysgrif ar y plât neu'r slab neu'r plac yn dweud:

Regata Gwryglau Cilgerran

"... camp ynddi ei hunan"

Frank Jones
Trysorydd

Cymdeithas Gwryglau Prydain 2005

It will be remembered that the Coracle Society instructed its Treasurer to arrange for the institution of a prize of £100 for some event at the Cilgerran Regatta to continue the work of reconciliation between the ancient working coracle tradition of West Wales and the newer leisure based coracle experiences of the rest of Europe.

There was an appalled silence from Cilgerran at the thought. Prizes at the Regatta amounted to £5 and £10. A £100 bounty would overturn a prize structure which had proved valuable over the fifty five years of annual coracle events, the longest sequence in the west of Europe. The treasurer of the Cilgerran Festival, Mr Gordon Lewis, very gently rescued me from error. By telephone, he proposed that the money be used to create a plaque or tray which would be jointly supported by the Coracle Society and the Regatta committee and used as a trophy perhaps for the winner of the 'open coracle handling display' event scheduled between events 10 at 11 at the 2005 regatta.

With this agreement in mind, your Treasurer and Secretary travelled down to Cilgerran from Leintwardine. We went via Gorslas to collect my cousin, a Welsh speaker who also works for Antur Teifi, the public sector development agency which promotes economic growth in the region which includes Cilgerran. We complained to him about the way in which images of coracding were used in Wales. Ancient and whiskery old codgers, dressed in bible black and snuffing down to the river bank to sneak a brilliantined salmon, peer down from hoardings and displays. The modern reality was more likely to be a lawyer hauling the boat from his BMW to float down whitish water for a weekend away from preoccupation with mammon. We pointed to the work that the town of Shrewsbury was doing. Their long distance deliverance week down the Severn from Plynlimmon to Shrewsbury with delivered the tourist images to England even though 95% of the event lay in Wales.

It was the first time I had been to Cilgerran. The regatta blocked the village. A bus shuttled us down from the parking field to the regatta site on a small plateau set above the river in a beautiful wooded gorge bending away to right and left. There were stalls and food and drink and Mr Ron Davies making coracles at his drawbench and 14 events throughout the afternoon. There had been a run of salmon in the river the previous night and many of the Teifi fishermen had been up at least until dawn.

There were 6-700 visitors at any one time so, with comings and goings, perhaps 1,500 people attended the afternoon event, an astonishing achievement for an event not widely advertised by modern standards. Our local contact, with a swift survey of accents, reckoned that 85 % of them came from outside West Wales. Few competitors were whiskery old codgers; the number of young and athletic coraclers considerably exceeded the proportion that statistics lays down for our proper guidance. The winners were fast. There was the usual amusing rivalry and factious contention with the Towry men who did not turn up for Event 4. The Teifi salmon were very obliging since one of them apparently ran straight into the net during the demonstration of trawling, at the very point where everybody in the crowd had a clear view of the two men and the net hanging between their two coracles. It was excitingly done. The fine catch weighed seven pounds and lay serene and shining on its sacking as it was raffled to the audience.

And the £100? Well, Mr Gordon Lewis arranged for an announcement over the loudspeaker system that the British Coracle Society had donated £100 to the Cilgerran Regatta and deserved a round of applause. This was given- and well given. There were photographs taken of Mrs Secretary Faulkner handing over the cheque to the Treasurer. There was an agreement that the engraving on the plate or slab or plaque would read:

Cilgerran Coracle Regatta...

"An art in its own right"
The Coracle Society 2005

Frank Jones

**CILGERRAN CORACLE RACES
2005
Programme of the 55th Annual
CILGERRAN**



CORACLE RACES
SATURDAY 20th AUGUST 2005
To Commence at 2.00pm
Programme 20p

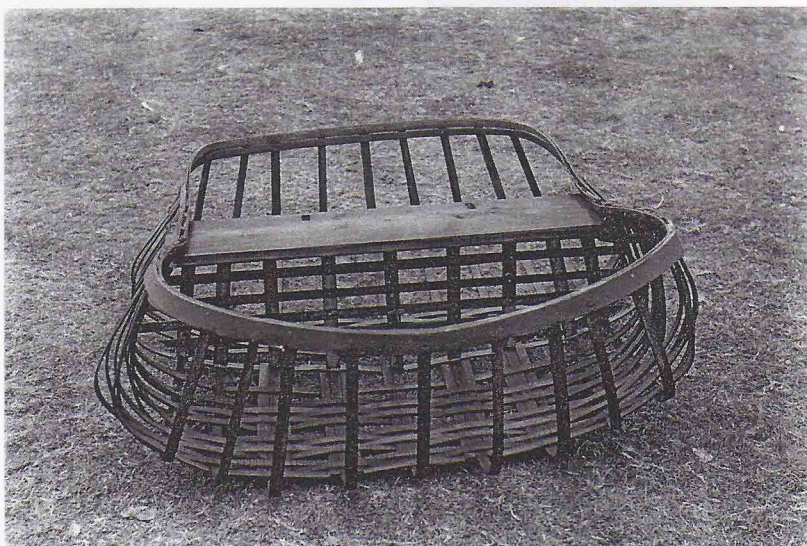
Programme cover, Cilgerran coracle races 2005

The Secret of Eel Island

The thirteen part children's drama was broadcast on Channel 5 in the summer of 2005 and was filmed on the Norfolk Broads at Wheat Fen.

I was approached by Eye film and television (of Norwich) about supplying a coracle (writes Conwy Richards), also I was asked to instruct a young actor in paddling a coracle. He was the easiest person I have ever had to teach the tricky technique of paddling to and only ten minutes was needed. The production company still have the coracle so perhaps we might see a second series. The coracle I supplied is of a lower River Dee design and of a type once used at Bangor-on-Dee and an exact copy of one at the Museum of Welsh Life at Cardiff.

You can see more on their website "The Secret of Eel Island".



Future Event.

We have heard from Laura Sole the curator of Bedes World, the museum of early medieval Northumbria at Jarrow. (www.bedesworld.co.uk) They annually hold a medieval fayre and last year they sailed a Norse longship on the River Don. For 2006 they have expressed an interest in members participating with their coracles. The Event is Scheduled for Saturday 21st of May but might be extended to include the Sunday. We hope for more details for the spring newsletter.

BY SOMEVILLE GINNEY,

From time to time there have appeared in the "B.O.P." articles on practical boat and canoe building which have proved of eminent service to many of its readers. But the boats manufactured have required in some cases considerable time to make, and also more money than some boys have at their disposal; and in other cases even when finished they may not have been practicable for all kinds of water. A coracle, however, for a boat is exceedingly cheap to make, and it has the advantage of being able to go anywhere where there is three inches of water, and above all it is very light and portable, and can easily be carried by the owner unassisted.

It is many years now since I and my brother constructed ours, and as they are no longer in existence I shall have to trust entirely to my memory in describing the *modus operandi*; but if I am not very accurate this will not matter much, for the coracle is not made on such exact lines as a boat or canoe, because the balance does not require to be so exact. At best it is but a rough kind of vessel, but at the same time a very handy and useful one in parts of the country well supplied with ponds and streams, and unconnected sheets of water. Neither is it at all crank when the owner has become accustomed to its peculiarities.

In shape it is like a walnut shell, with the bows much more shallow than the stern. At least this is how we built ours, which were really experiments, for we had neither of us ever seen a real one, but we had a model about three inches long, which had been bought somewhere in the south-west of England, to help us. This, however, was constructed of very thin slips of wood interlaced as the foundation, and this construction we immediately saw was beyond our powers, so we had to hit on some other mode of procedure.

We were small boys at the time, so calculated we should not require very big boats to carry us, and made our drawings accordingly, which were very like the following, fig. 1 being a ground plan on a line with the gunwale, and fig. 2 a side view. The length of the larger (for we had one made slightly smaller than the other) was about 4 ft. 6 in., and the width about 3 ft. Armed with these

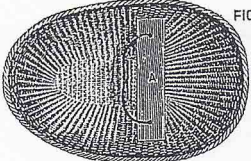


FIG. 1.

drawings, we went to a basket-maker and instructed him to make two articles of osiers just in the same way as he would make a basket, with a strong double rim round the edge, very much after the pattern a dustman's skop was made.

FIG. 2.



The man was a handy kind of fellow, and in a few days delivered what looked very like two large egg-spoons without handles, made in wicker-work. Our chief reason for having one made slightly smaller than the other was for convenience in travelling, for we had but to remove the seat of the larger one, and the smaller then went inside it and took up no more room. The basket-maker's bill was, I believe, 10s. for the larger, and 7s. 6d. for the smaller. We also purchased some stout and fairly closely woven canvas, sufficient to

make an outer covering for each coracle; the cost of this was only a few shillings, and thus prepared we set off for the country house where we were going to spend our summer holidays. On arriving there, we stretched the canvas tightly over the outside of the wicker-work, and with the aid of a packing-needle and a ball of string fastened it all round over the rim of the wicker-work. Our next proceeding was to procure the pitch, called, I fancy, Russian pitch. This we melted in a big pot over a fire, and laid on with a brush all over the canvas. It dried in a very few moments, and we were able to put on a second coat at once. This dried perfectly hard and firm and smooth, as the top of a private brougham. At this distance of time I cannot remember whether we gave them a coat of pitch inside as well, but I certainly think it would be a good plan to do so, for in paddling there is always some water dripping from the blades of the paddle, and this would in time rot the unprotected osiers and canvas.

Our coracles were perfectly watertight. The seats, ordinary pieces of board, we fixed with stout string some three or four inches below the edge of the wicker-work, thus making them more steady, trying them in one or two positions, till we found that they were quite balanced. We used a paddle which we got the village carpenter to make for us. The handle was of ash, with an ash blade at either end. Much like an ordinary canoe paddle, but more roughly made.

We were now ready to take the water, which we did very gingerly at first, until we came to know the peculiarity of our craft. As we had been working more or less in the dark, we were doubtful as to the weight-carrying capacity of the coracles, but the first trial set us at rest on this score, and, so far as carrying us boys, we found they were quite capable of carrying a heavy man. They were light as feathers, only drawing two or three inches of water. At first they appeared too light, for, having no keel, every stroke of the paddle drove the nose right over, and

one's course, in consequence, was a serpentine one.

This is a drawback that the users of coracles have to put up with. And after all, speed being no object, it doesn't matter very much. We found them most delightful vessels. There was hardly a stream or a pond anywhere near that we did not explore, and the river that fed the ornamental water in front of the house where we were staying, and which, on account of shallows, was impracticable for a boat or canoe, we followed for miles, exploring it in fact. Very few were the places we could not float over, and when we came to sluice-gates or mill-dams we landed, and carried our craft on our backs.

We found the easiest way of doing this was with a stout cord fixed to the seat, which I have shown in fig. 1, through which we passed our heads, the coracle then hung on our backs, and left our hands free to carry the paddle, and anything else we might have with us.

The only difficulty we experienced with them was on entering or leaving them, for being so light, and having no keel, it was necessary to tread well in the centre of them. If, however, the bank was a low one, only a

few inches above the level of the water, it was easy enough, because the bows would rest on the bank until you were fairly seated, and then all you had to do was to lean back slightly, which action raised the fore-part, and you floated off; and in the same way when you wished to land on such a bank, you had only to paddle hard towards it, and just before touching, sit back, when the bows would run up high and dry, and you could walk out on to *terra firma*. But this is a proceeding which requires care, for in attempting it once, my brother sat back rather too far, and the next instant had turned a complete somersault, and was in the water with the coracle reversed floating over him like an immense mushroom.

We found them of the greatest use for fishing; it did not signify how roedy or weedy a place was round the banks, we embarked in our craft and paddled out into a clear place, where we anchored by means of a brick tied to the end of a rope, the other end of which was made fast to the seat, and we could defy the reeds, and wage war with the fishes, while other would-be sportsmen could only scowl on the bank.

Providing the occupant can swim (and boating should be prohibited to all who cannot), and does not indulge in "larks," the coracle is a perfectly safe craft, and being so light, can float pretty nearly everywhere, and so will escape banks and stones where other boats would ground. For lakes and rivers, where there are no large waves, nothing can be better, providing speed is not required, and for my part I should not mind trusting myself on the sea in one, if it were a calm day. As to their sailing capabilities I cannot speak, never having tested them, but I should fancy they would not answer at all, having neither ballast nor keel.

I had almost forgotten to mention another of their virtues, and that was, when it came on to rain when we were out in them we paddled to land, hauled them out, and sat under them reversed, and found most perfect shelter. When they were not in use we always took them from the water and kept them, bottom upwards, on the bank.

My brother and I had many enjoyable days in our coracles; and I fancy, from the ease and cheapness with which they can be made, they would prove excellent sources of amusement to many of the "B.O.P." readers.

This gem from 'The Boys Own Paper' of 1893 was sent in by Ted Pitman

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