



The Coracle Society

Founded 1990

Spring 2007



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Website, Conwy Richards

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Peter Faulkener

Quentin Page

Dick Mundy

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A Message From our President Sir Peter Badge

2006 has proved to be a very important year for the society because it has seen the departure from office of our Chairman and other officers.

Peter Faulkener succeeded me as Chairman and has served us with great distinction. He is a wonderful ambassador for coracles and those who use them throughout Britain and Europe. He has also created his own brand of coracles, namely, the 'Terme' and made popular the the Boyne paddling currach. He also founded the Lientwardine annual regatta enjoyed by so many people over a number of years and has led the society with warmth, humour and kindness. Peter, however, would, I know be the first to recognise the excellent work done by his wife, Vivienne as Secretary. She succeeded the founding Secretary, John Williams Davies and discharged her duties with calm modest efficiency.

The third person to leave office is Frank Jones, our Treasurer. He not only handled our finances with considerable skill but regularly enlivened us with his engaging personality.

Lastly, we have lost from office our most able membership secretary, Brian Pierce. Sadly we have also lost two invaluable members of the society through resignation, Alan and Nina Grove. To all of them I express my gratitude and that of the society.

We are very fortunate in having as our new Chairman, Conwy Richards, an immensely able coracle maker and an indefatigable searcher after knowledge on all matters concerning coracles. I know he will serve us well as will Chris Partington as our treasurer.

If I may close on a personal note. In 2001 my wife Mary and I saw literally hundreds of coracles in Vietnam and met a number of their makers. This year we have just returned from Cambodia and Laos. Bearing in mind the closeness of those countries to Vietnam I felt sure we would discover another source of coracles. Alas, not a single one; although there were many 'country' boats, these however, were all made of whole wood construction, and of an elegant canoe shape being either paddled or pushed by two oars. This goes to show nothing can be taken for granted where coracles are concerned! Conwy and I would be most grateful for information concerning

coracles and allied craft found beyond our shores.

Peter Badge

Coracles on the Warwickshire Avon

After our trip on the Oakham Canal I decided that Rutland was not really suited to coracling (this was before the advent of Rutland Water) and Sonia Rolt who lives at Stanley Pontlarge near Winchcombe offered me a home for the coracle in her garden shed, where she kept the coracle belonging to her late husband L.T.C. Rolt. This

had been made for him by Harry Rogers.



Sonia Rolt Reading 'The Times'
at a coffee Break

In 1980 we visited her and took the coracles to Fladbury Mill, on the River Avon, where there was to be a sort of Coracle Jamboree following a meeting of the Newcomen Society at Oxford. There were in all nine coracles there, including a strange craft the shape and size of a coracle apparently made of aluminum. My wife had

organized a very fine picnic with the help of Oxford covered market. I launched my coracle and set off but after a few minutes I got over-enthusiastic, forgot Estate Rogers' instructions and drew myself head first into the river. Fortunately I had a spare set of clothes in the car, so I was able to dry out in the Mill and get properly dressed in time for the picnic. The coracle floated down to the weir and was rescued by one of the others.

On another occasion we went to Fladbury Mill with Sonia and the coracles and had a much more successful time. Unfortunately the following year I was disabled by a mysterious illness and have never been able to take out the coracle again, much to my regret.

David Tew.

Coracle Society A.G.M. 2006 Chairman's Report



A very warm and sincere welcome to everyone, especially those who have traveled long distances. This is the society's 16th A.G.M.

Since our last A.G.M. at Shrewsbury much has happened at home and abroad. The world is a different place to live in. Our daily lives are threatened by acts of terrorism our very planet is under threat from pollution, greed and power. The modern expression "moving on" is something of a contradiction in terms as it is possible to "move on" without actually going anywhere.

My Chairmanship has lasted several years and, having moved on myself, feel that now is an ideal opportunity to pass the office on for a new head to take the paddle and move the Society forwards.

The hi-tech. world of Communications has, so far, passed me by, for I do not have a computer, but I have a feeling that 'Coracles and currachs' may soon have a web site of its own!

We have new enthusiastic members whom I know are willing to take on the responsibility. The retirement of the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer last year drew our ranks together and despite some obvious problems we have SURVIVED!

Chris Partington, alias Windy Miller of Mortimer's Cross fame, generously agreed to hold the purse strings together until a new treasurer could be appointed at the A.G.M. I thank Chris sincerely for that because of our new website and the daily advance in IT most society enquiries go either to Conwy Richards or Brian Pearce our membership secretary.

This does not mean that the office of secretary is defunct, rather that the work load is very much lighter now.

The usual annual regattas have been successful, continuing to keep coracles in the public eye. The website has grown immensely since Conwy took over...his enthusiasm and unstinting energy are awesome.

I was sadly unable to hold the 13th regatta at Leintwardine this year on the usual fixed date due to what I shall call simply a misunderstanding! As a result however I have no intention of holding further coracle events there. So the Teme door closed but the Lugg door opened and the regatta was moved to Mortimer's Cross Mill, hosted by the now famous Windy Miller. The venue was perfect in its way and the event spread over three days saw enthusiasts camping, swimming, fishing and generally relaxing and enjoying the fresh air. Of course there was coracling galore and also model making and the displays. Not to forget the now very famous, 'Miller's Mile' Challenge".

Those attending are keen to return and I feel confident that the event will grow and become a major festival. There were teething problems but a "pow-wow" on the Sunday afternoon proved very positive. Criticisms were discussed, particularly that of the fund raising issue ie. for future events. The presence of 'Kipperman' Mike Smylie, his display, helpers and mouthwatering freshly smoked kippers added fragrance, colour and taste to the event.

Simon and Anne Cooper, the 'Salmon Folk' graced the event with their excellent display.

Media-wise the Society's profile is kept high and very much afloat. Geraint Jenkins's new publication "The Coracle" is most welcomed.

The society has gone through a challenging period. Change has come in the form of new enthusiastic members offering their talents and from existing members for both official and unofficial tasks. Our best way forward is to unite, stand firm and work together for the common cause. Of course there will be differences of opinion, that is healthy, but as your retiring chairman I would appeal to you all to unite in the fundamental aim of taking the Coracle Society forward with renewed vitality, enthusiasm and dedication.

My sincere thanks to the various officers for their support and help over the years, particularly to our Founder and President. Sir Peter Badge who has been a fount of advice and wisdom since I took over from him.

By the close of this A.G.M. the society will have both new and re-elected officers. May I wish them a successful year ahead. Work hard and above all have fun.

Peter Faulkner.



Around the river with Bronze age transport

THEY date from the Bronze Age and were once very popular with poachers - but on Saturday they were the star turn at a 21st century event.

Round and flat-bottomed, coracles are not the most glamorous of boats.

But they sailed through a series of sprints and slaloms at a race day run by the River Stour Trust.

Around 20 coracle owners joined in the fun on the River Stour at Bures - and spectators got to take part, too.

Andrew Richardson, chairman of the trust's navigation committee, said: "We had sprints, slaloms, relays, and something called whirling dervishes, where you see how many times you can go round in 30 seconds."

"It was great fun and we will definitely do it again next year."

"People who came to watch were able to join in. It's not difficult to master the technique."

"On a ten-year-old boy visiting from America had never been in a coracle before but ended up winning two events."

"The only mishaps were at the end when we had polo. There were a few spills, but it was no problem because we had safety boats and life-jackets."

Andrew said the event was a way of getting people using the middle part of the Stour where there are very few boats at the moment.

"One of our committee is a coracler and that gave us the idea."

"Coracles are probably the oldest kind of boat in Britain."

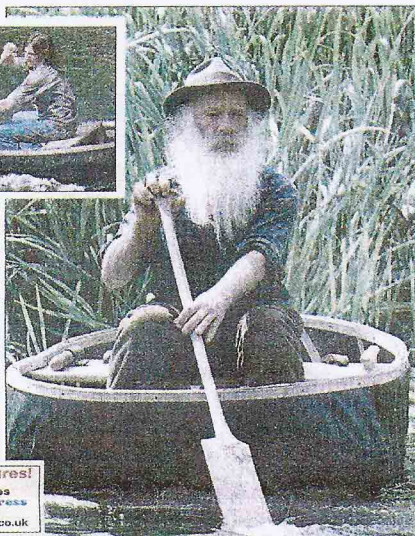
"They used to be very popular with poachers, because they're so light you can put them on your back and run away."



It's a coracle ... people tried their hand at paddling the ancient round-shaped craft at a fun day on the River Stour at Bures on Saturday. Right, coracle builder Quentin Page shows how it's done.

(Clockwise from top left: DS08-32, 28, 25, 26, 30. Pictures: David Hall)

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Ironbridge International Regatta

This year's competitors included a Frenchman, a brace of Americans, a New Zealander and somebody from Norfolk. It being Bank Holiday Monday in Ironbridge, no doubt there was a similarly international mix among the crowds of spectators.

Jean-Pierre had come from Amiens specifically for the Green Wood Centre course, which precedes the regatta, and by now will be paddling his coracle on the Somme. For 2006 the course was so heavily subscribed that we needed two tutors, Kevin Grimley and myself. In spite of the weather, we produced 15 coracles, some of which boosted the novice class at the regatta. As an aside, participants in GWC courses have made 40 coracles this year.

After heavy rain during the previous week, we were afraid that we might have the ultimate nightmare on the Monday, namely a day of perfect weather and a dangerous raging torrent. But it must have all soaked into Wales, and the river was barely faster than normal. And apart from one shower, the weather was good.

The regatta was well attended, featuring the usual events. This year's expert sprint saw the old guard ousted by young Tom Coppin, who won the John Davies trophy and a Poundland polystyrene glider — we spare no expense! As usual, the highlights were the 360 spins, won by Jamie Balfour, and the polo. There was a satisfying number of capsizes, the finger of suspicion pointing towards Wendy Gee. J arnie also won the prize for the most capsizes. After presentation of the valuable prizes, the fleet paddled down to the bridge, to the delight of the 'grockles' on the Wharfage.

A special entrant this year was 80-year-old Marybelle Reynolds paddling her self-built coracle "Rodgers Return". Marybelle is related to the famous Rodgers family of Ironbridge, as her father was Eustace's cousin. She was interviewed, along with some other competitors for the BBC's "Midlands Today", which gave us a slot in their evening programme. You can see a *film* clip of Marybelle on www.davewhitehouse.com.

As well as the water events, GWC had organised a number of events on the bank. There was a paddling pool for youngsters to try a coracle —somebody fell in. Several rural crafts such as bodging, basket making and burger frying were also demonstrated. All in all, a good time was had.

If you haven't been to the Ironbridge regatta, put the date in your dairy now. Not difficult to remember —

August Bank Holiday Monday 2007, 2008, 2009

Terry Kenney



Willow Coppice

Willow Coppice is now being planted as a renewable energy source (possible coracle building material). Pictured above is Gareth Gaunt of Renewable Energy Growers on his farm at Siicklinghall Yorkshire. The group currently consists of 50 farmers growing 10,000 tonnes per year.

Source Yorkshire Post June 24 2006
Website www.energycrop.co.uk

Portsoy2006 The13th. Annual Scottish Traditional Boat Festival

Attendance records soared as crowds flocked to a sun drenched Portsoy on the Moray Firth (Aberdeenshire) over the weekend of 8th and 9th July 2006 for the town's 13th



Annual Boat Festival. A reported 20,000 crowd packed into the tiny seaside port during the two days, surpassing last year's record of 16,000.

The festival attracted about 100 boats, some dating from the 1890's, making it the largest collection of traditional craft ever gathered in Scotland. Society member Dave Purvis from Ripon teamed up with members of Eyemouth's International Sailing Craft Association, and, for the first time, with volunteers from Archeolink Archeology Park at Inch in Aberdeenshire to make the long trip North for the third year running.

We took up a 19ft. Hastings beach boat (Argonaut), a six oared wooden Admiralty gig, with a selection of coracles- all from the Eyemouth collection, and Archeolink's pride and joy, a hide "Neolithic" Currach built for them on site at Easter by that well known Neanderthal-Peter Faulkner!

On Friday night we managed to get Argonaut rigged and into the clear blue water of the bay a good hour before the rest of the craft were ready, and were delighted to sail into up to a dozen pods of Bottlenosed dolphins who circled us and subjected us to their curious investigations for more than thirty minutes before making off when the other boats began to appear-a most memorable experience.



Any chance of a tow?



The Flyer a hide 'Neolithic' Currach
built by Peter Faulkener



Saturday dawned bright and clear; first job was for Dave to finish off the reproduction Spey coracle which we started last year-this has subsequently been presented to Elgin Museum for display alongside the original Spey boat which was recorded by Hornell in the 1930's; a half size boat will be finished this year to go into the old Portsoy Salmon House display when restoration works are completed. The rest of the morning was spent with the Archeolink squad proofing the "Faulkner Flyer" Currach ready for the launch on the lunchtime tide.

Lunchtime came and many willing hands came to our aid to put her in the water, but despite warnings many ignored our advice to avoid the fresh coat of Lanolin grease and finished up sticking like flies to flypaper- so we set off on the Maiden voyage with ears ringing with quaint Scottish terms of endearment- at least that's what it sounded like to us English folk unfamiliar with the Banff and Buckie dialect!

Sea trials across an open stretch of water was livened up by a small swell which tested the nerve of some of the Landlubbers on board, but it did mean we got an extra couple of knots speed from the paddlers anxious to make for the haven of the harbour.

Last year Dave ran a team build with the Portsoy Primary School pupils when eight Shrewsbury Coracles were built; the local Scout Troop have subsequently built another four, so we finished up with over a dozen craft on the water during the weekend, dominating much of the Harbour based activities, and like the Battery advertisement on T.V.- we kept an going long into low- tide when all the other boats were grounded!

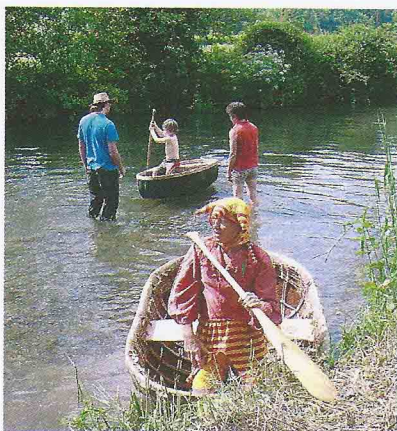
Our coracle group have now become firmly established as a feature of the Festival, and Society Members are assured of a warm welcome if any want to come along for a paddle and the 'crack' at this year's event being held from 29th. June to 1st. July 2007.
For more information see -

www.scottishtraditionalboatfestival.co.uk

Dave Purvis



Coracle Regatta, Mortimers Mill 2006



Peter Faulkener

byshire was first into a fish almost first cast and had a tough time landing it. This was his first go in a coracle but he didn't fall out as expected. The winner was Quentin Page from East Anglia. He caught 5 fish and returned them. Louis came 2nd.

A major part of the weekend was "The Millers Mile". Competitors needed to paddle from the Mill, up the mill stream to the weir, get out onto the bank and run, carrying their coracle, to the main river below the weir, then paddle back to the Mill, all against the stop watch. Peter Faulkner set the record with a time of 6 minutes 17.60 sec. The previous world record set by Dave Nicoll of 6 minutes 22 seconds lasted only a day! The youngest competitor of The Millers Mile, Johannes Prosser, aged 9, did a time of 21.55.

Last Year June 16-18, was the first Mortimers Cross Coracle Regatta. Taking the place of the Lientwardine regatta, it was a great success and was mentioned twice in the The Daily Telegraph!

Believed to be a nationwide first was the fly fishing from a coracle open competition. This involved fishing with dry fly or nymph from a coracle on a stretch of the upper Lugg, running through the grounds of the Mill. Louis Smith from Der-



Fancy Dress,
Mike Smilie (Kipperman), Peter
Faulkener & Conwy Richards

Compare that with the slowest time on record last year set by Alex at 28 minutes you can see the race suits all ages and abilities or inabilities. Louis Gordon made a pop record called The Millers Mile last year at the Mill and published it this summer in his CD compilation called 'Closed, Gone Fishing'.

Results

Millers Mile, Saturday

1st Dave Nicoll 6.22 (Medal Winner), 2nd Wendy Gee 6.43, 3rd Nick Coppin 7.21.24, 4th Peter Faulkner 7.55.71, 5th Sandra Prosser 8.06.40, and 6th John Underhill 8.09



Peter Faulkner in action
Millers Mile

Sunday,

1st Peter Faulkner 6.17.60 (Medal Winner), 2nd Simon Cooper 9.28.59, 3rd Ian Buzzard 10.41.15, 4th Alex Harrison 14.42.05, 5th Bob Briggs 21.54.05 (First time in a Coracle and fell out a few times), 6th Johannes Prosser 21.55, 7th Paloma Prosser 23.25

Grand Parade of frivolously dressed Coraclers.

Saturday.

Joint 1st (3 children in one Coracle) with "Pirates" Antonia, Johannes & Paloma Prosser. J'net our worthy Judge chose them because they had incorporated their Coracle into their design as well as dressing up. (All 3 were Medal Winners), 2nd Peter Faulkner as a Jester. 3rd Bruce Watson as Batman, 4th Conwy Richards as A Medieval Archer. 5th Chris Partington as Ye Olde Miller.

First Race. Adults 60 metres.
Saturday,



Conwy Richards

Bures Regatta 2006



For some time now, a few of us in East Anglia have felt that it was time there was a few coracle events in the East of the country, so I suggested a coracle regatta to the River Stour Trust. Initially I thought I was going to have to organise it, but the Trust picked it up and ran with it, so we owe a huge thanks to Helen, Andrew, George, Mark and all the other River Stour Trust members who made the day so memorable.

We thought long and hard about the venue, the possibilities were Sudbury, Bures, Wissington, Dedham, Flatford or Cattawade. We chose Bures because of easy access and parking as well as it being a particularly beautiful stretch of river with the picturesque town of Bures being only a few hundred yards upstream.

To a large extent we modelled the event on Lientwardine, ie. no entry charges, nominal prizes (rosettes designed printed and laminated by Mark), no public address (because we didn't have one), and no trade stands (because we didn't know whether anyone would turn up)! As

it turned out all these factors created an event that was intimate and fun with a atmosphere not unlike a 1950's school sports day, with the sun blazing down from a clear blue sky and local scouts providing a superb Bar-B-Q.



I arrived with a trailer and car stuffed full inside and out with my collection of coracles - one Iron-bridge and three GRP plastic. and another curious pea green grp coracle borrowed from a Trust



member.

Quentin turned up to demonstrate coracle building, then Dave Nicoll, Derek Ladkin, and Conwy and Sheila arrived. Members of the public started to turn up and they were invited to try a coracle so we spent an hour or so giving

lessons. Everyone was warned they might fall in but in the end only one person got seriously wet!

After setting up the course, a line of plastic milk bottles down the middle of the river, it was race time.

The first race was the 'Expert Sprint' which Quentin won followed by Dave Nicoll with me predictably bringing up the rear. The next was the 'Intermediate race', won by Alf Rendell, followed by the 'Novice Race' won by Ann Harley.

Next came the team relay, Quentin headed one team, I headed the second. I have to admit that despite much cheating and obstruction by me Quentin's mob won!

After this came the one arm race, Dave won, Quentin was second, and yours truly third, yes well ok, last!

Then we had a "Non winners race", Jemima Killick was first, then Alex Stammers, and Amelia Swan third.

By now the novices were getting the hand of coracle control and the whirling dervishes, how many 360 degree spins you could do in a minute, was won by young Alex who had not been in a coracle before the day. Dave Nicoll and Andrew



Higginson came joint second with Ann Aris coming third. I chickened out 'cause I get dizzy (and I was getting a bit fed up with coming last).

Finally was the 'Poachers Run', this was to have been started by the shout of "Bailiff", but Andrew forgot and blew his whistle, the contestants then headed off down river picking up wooden fish, beautifully made by George, to finally climb out of the river and run across the field to behind the hut carrying coracle, paddle and fish. The winner of this was young Alex, I came second and Dave came third. I reckon I would have won, had we not given Alex the advantage of not having to carry his coracle (so ok I'm a poor loser). Quentin didn't take part as he was busy closing the sale on yet another coracle. We then cleared up the course, and the public then got the opportunity to play in the coracles again.

The two stars of the day were Alex, who mastered the coracle to the point where he was very serious competition, and Quentin with his long white beard and tales of daring do in the wind and waves of the Stour Estuary, who kind of stole the show.

Finally at around four o'clock we closed the proceedings. It was agreed by all that the day had been a terrific success, every one had had a great time and a lot of people had been introduced to coracleing. We all felt we would do it again in 2007.

The date for 2007 is Saturday 4th August 12.00-5.00pm

Everyone is welcome and there are plenty of B&B's and Camping as well as much good paddling and gorgeous countryside. Ring me on 01206 302033 or email me at r.mundy@zetnet.co.uk for details.

Dick Mundy



Editorial



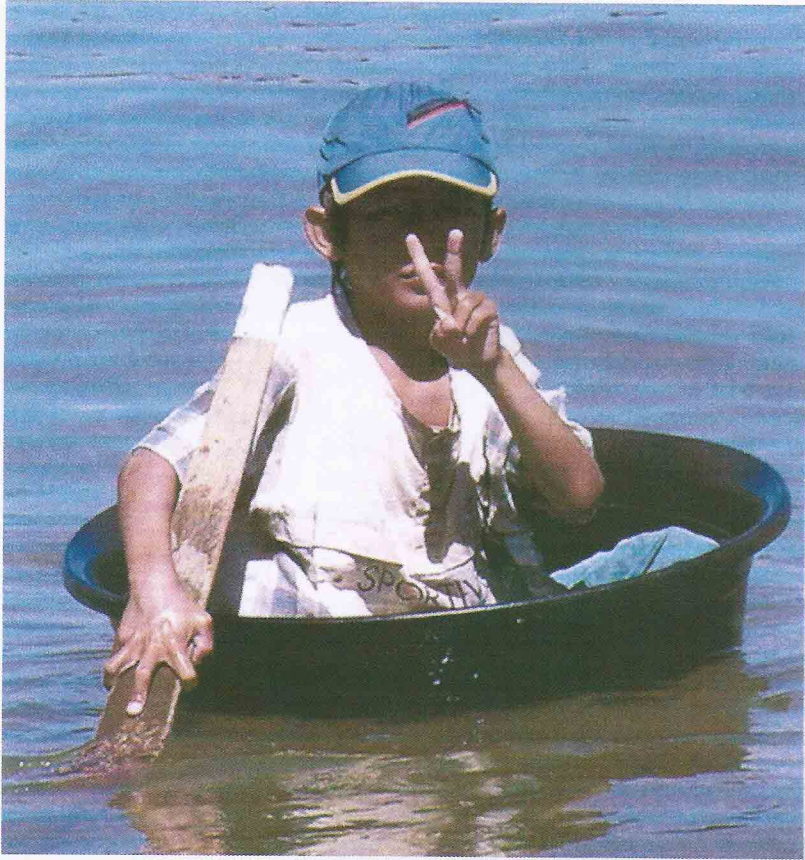
This issue represents a landmark for the Coracle society. For the first time the journal is being created on a personal computer using desktop publishing software (Serif Page Plus). The big news though is that the Coracle Society now owns a colour laser printer, an OKI3300n. Having done the sums, we discovered that this would not only give us the flexibility to use colour wherever we wanted, but it would pay for itself within the issue. It also gives us the option to print membership cards, posters and flyers etc., as well as printing back issues whenever required, for example to send to new members.

You may notice on the rear cover, another logo. At the last AGM, it was decided to retain the original logo ie. the one on the front cover. However, the 'Coat of Arms' logo has been in use for some years now on the web site. It appears that this site is not actually supported by The Coracle Society, and is privately funded by Conwy (who is now our chairman). As the web site is in effect an independent entity, it can use whatever Logo it wants, and as the web site is doing the Coracle Society a great service, it seems reasonable to respect this and use the coat of arms, but only in reference to the web site.

Finally due to the unfortunate resignation of Alan Grove, I am acting as stand in editor for this issue, stand in because I have never been elected as editor. So if you want the Job turn up and volunteer at the next AGM (mid day June 16th at Mortimers Mill Coracle Regatta) I assure you that I will step aside most graciously (or should that be eagerly).

Dick Mundy

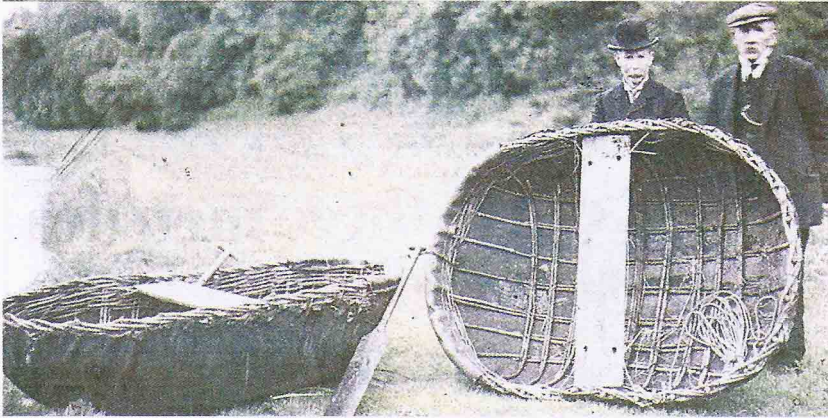
The Ultimate Coracle ?



In Cambodia there is a lake called Tonle Sap, it covers 2,700 sq kms and has a low water depth of about 1 meter which rises another 7meters with the annual flood and covers 16,000 sq kms. It has very rich fish stocks and supports a large population of fisherfolk who live in floating villages which move around with the changing seasons. This young boy had found a coracle-like plastic bowl and is paddling in a very similar way.

Sent in by Martin Fowler, Cenarth Coracle centre

An Early Photograph of a Boyne Currach



This amazing photograph appeared in The Daily Mail Thursday April 12, and is part of the Musee Albert Kahn collection in Paris. It is a very early colour photograph known as an autochrome, and can be dated to just after World War 1. Albert Kahn was a hugely wealthy banker who "Wanted people to see that there was nothing to fear from foreign cultures." He commissioned and collected 72,000 autochromes.

Edwardians in Colour-The wonderful work of Albert Kahn started on BBC Four April 19th, but is sure to be repeated and well worth watching

It is probable that the museum is open to visitors, but I have no idea of the details, but the collection contains many other photographs of rural Ireland and the UK.

Dick Mundy



Yak Hide Boats , Tibet.

The boats take about a week to make and last about a year and each boat can carry around 8 to 10 people. Four skins are lashed to the wooden framework, and no sealant is used, but a strip of leather inserted in the seams. The boat is rowed with roughly constructed oars



David Tew



Above is Ted Pitman carrying 'Sedgemore Sadie' his 'Somerset Coracle' which is made entirely from Willow.(For more information on this see January 2005 issue)

Below are 1/10 scale models built by Ted of various Welsh (and IronBridge) Coracles



Aluminium Teifi



This is a project I am currently working on, it is a teifi in shape only. It is built from 3mm Aluminium strips pop riveted together by 4mm countersunk aluminium rivets. As I was afraid the whole thing might sink I built the seat as a thin hollow box which was then filled with builders foam. Why Aluminium? Well, I wasn't sure about my basket making skills, and I thought this might be a lot quicker as I wouldn't have to mess about splitting Willow and weaving hazel, just buy a sheet of aluminium, and chop it into strips on the firm's guillotine. It hasn't quite worked out like that, engineering materials require engineering drawings, so I scanned drawings from Hornel and Geraint Jenkins into TurboCad, scaled them up to full size then drew my lathe layout on top. I then drew this out full size on a large piece of cardboard, and built my coracle over this. In fact the frame took some time to build as the aluminium does not share the same bending characteristics as willow so I had to make templates for all the bends, and still had to modify most of them, then there were all those POP rivets! The next job is to cover it, probably calico and bitumastic. The sea (pond) trials are due soon, I will keep you posted, if I survive that is!

Dick Mundy