

In this issue

- 2** Editorial
Chair's chat
- 3** 2017 Annual General Meeting and regatta
BBC Countryfile Live
- 4** Bures regatta
Carmarthen river festival
- 5** Miniature coracles for sale
Coracles on television
- 6** West Wales coracle caught salmon/sewin awarded
protected status
2017 events calendar
- 8** The Coracle Society Officers 2016-17/Contact us

Editorial

Euan Raffel

Welcome to another year of membership with The Coracle Society.

I shall keep my editorial brief. A couple things I wanted to highlight, covered in detail later in the newsletter, is our return to BBC Countryfile Live this year, the recent exposure coracles have enjoyed on the television and the successful awarding of protected status for West Wales coracle caught salmon and sewin.

An important housekeeping note - Dylan Jones, our secretary, has concluded his role at St Fagans: National History Museum in Cardiff. Please take note of his new contact details on the back cover (email address is unchanged), should you need to contact him.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and please keep sending in your news, photographs, updates and events - it's awfully difficult to produce it and the Journal without your contributions.

Chair's chat

Bruce Watson

Greetings coraclers one and all. Against my better judgment, I reluctantly agreed to become Chair last year when Judy Pilgrim stepped down. Having been assured by her that I wouldn't really have to do anything, I now discover that I am expected to write a few words for the newsletter. Talk about walking blindfolded into a pit!

No doubt there a different reasons why people get interested in coracles. For

me it was, in part, the appeal of building cheaply one's own unique small boat.

In Kenneth Grahame's 'The Wind in The Willows', one of the characters says something along the lines of "There is nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats". So yes, that was my motivation to build my first coracle some 28 years ago. But another part of it was to make a small contribution to ensuring the continuation of an ancient craft. It was mentioned by Julius Caesar when he wrote up the memoirs of his trip to Britain in 54 BC, and it is unlikely that the locals had just invented the coracle in honour of his visit!

With all this history in mind, I was delighted to hear of the award of PGI status to salmon and sewin caught by coracle in West Wales. If this results in a premium price for these fish with culinary connoisseurs, then it should help to keep the coracle netting tradition alive and thus pass on something of great cultural value to a younger generation. But it's not all good news. The Teifi netsman have decided that this year they will catch-and-release all salmon caught because of very low stocks. Personally, I find it praiseworthy that they will still bother to make the effort to go out at night in their little boats, just to maintain their netting skills without the promise of a financial reward for these very desirable fish. With my political hat on, I might say this is really throwing down the gauntlet to all the riverbank-based rod fisherman, who in my opinion all too easily love to blame others for over-fishing. Now let's see THEM catch-and-release too!

I am sure that by now all members will know of Jeremy Paxman's attempt at

handling a coracle at the Ironbridge regatta last year. (Marks out of ten anybody?) Some of you may even have seen this on television earlier this year. May I request that if Society members can think of any other gullible celebrities we can embarrass in public, they should contact the Society with their suggestions as soon as possible? Naturally we will strive to make this happen with the maximum of publicity worldwide!

And finally, at a recent committee meeting, regrets were expressed that events have been poorly attended. Current membership is 109 worldwide, of whom 99 are in the UK. Come on guys, there must be an event somewhere near you this year. Not everything happens in Ironbridge, or West Wales! Have a look at the Events pages on the website or the listings later in this newsletter and choose one to go to. If you are a real novice, perhaps having just built a coracle on a recent course, don't let shyness stop you from attending an event. Nobody will laugh at you... indeed you will be welcomed. One of our highly-trained Court Jesters will even offer their expertise and advice if you wish. Give it a try - you might even enjoy it!

2017 AGM and regatta

This year our AGM and regatta will be held at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, as part of our involvement with BBC Countryfile Live.

The AGM will be held on Saturday 6th August, in the Waterside zone where we will be exhibiting. Due to restrictions from the organisers, the meeting will start at 6pm. The regatta will however take place

during the day as usual, at 2pm. We hope that by holding the AGM at Countryfile Live - and the more central location of Blenheim Palace - more members will be able to attend either for the day or for a longer period of the show. See the article below for details on this year's Countryfile Live and how to register your attendance - necessary for you to receive entry passes and permits.

Full details and updates regarding the AGM can be found on our webpage, coraclesociety.org.uk/agm. Don't worry if you don't have internet access though, we'll send you details about the weekend in the post in June.

BBC Countryfile Live

3rd-6th August 2017

We will be returning to BBC Countryfile Live this year, as part of the Waterside zone. Planned activities include have a go coracled sessions, coraclemaking demonstrations, regattas and traditional coracle demonstrations by the Teifi Coracle Netsmen's Association. We are also planning to have a pond on shore for younger guests to have a go at coracled. Many thanks to our partner organisations - the Ironbridge Coracle Trust, Teifi Coracle Netsmen's Association and Carmarthen Coracle and Netsmen's Association - for supporting this event with us.

Other activities on the zone include have a go kayak and canoeing, Explore Britain, have a go fishing, zip line, climbing wall and assault course. Elsewhere on the show will be Adam's Farm, National Trust activities for children, food markets, shopping attractions, craft stalls and daily shows in the Countryfile Theatre.

We cannot make an event like this happen without the support of our members, to help us with running the activities. In exchange for coming along and offering your help, you will receive **free parking and camping** in the new for 2017 Waterside zone on site staff welfare area. **Staff catering is also being provided this year**, which will provide you with three meals a day - including a cooked breakfast option and hearty evening meals, so you don't have to worry about cooking after a long day on the show! Currently the catering will be offered for a small fee (about £5 per person per day) but, depending on sponsorship funding, this may be subsidised or made available for free. And of course, you will have **opportunities to explore the rest of the show**.

So we can order the relevant passes and permits, if you would like to attend Countryfile Live **or the AGM** please register via the online form - www.coraclesociety.org.uk/cfl17 or complete and return the enclosed form to Euan Raffel by **17th June**. We will welcome any support you can offer, whether it is just a day or two, or the whole show duration. If you are able to offer a day or two before the show opens to assist with building the Waterside zone this would be greatly appreciated.

For more information on BBC Countryfile Live, visit their website www.countryfilelive.com or contact Euan Raffel - contact details on the back page.

Bures coracle regatta

Steve Miles

.....

After having to cancel last year, we're back. As usual it will be a relaxed event with some races and pottering around on the "lovely river Stour". Our event is all about pottering around in coracles and sharing our knowledge of using them.



As yet, we don't have a refreshments stall or volunteers to man it, so you'll need a Thermos in your picnic hamper. But there will be a charity cricket match to watch as well. The event is located on the Nayland Road out of Bures (CO8 5BX) -

drive past the cricket pavilion and park by the river. On the Friday we'll be camping at Rushbanks Farm (CO6 4NA). All are welcome to bring a tent and join us, just look out for my old land rover.

For more details contact the River Stour Trust – email coracles@riverstourtrust.org or phone 01787 313199

Carmarthen river festival

Julie Rees

.....

Carmarthen River Festival returns this year on Saturday 8th July 2017 from 4pm to 8pm (main events from 5.30pm). There will be free canoe and kayak taster sessions, river demonstrations, the annual raft race, duck race and not forgetting the famous coracle races.

There will be a coracle race for everyone to take part in; The Coracle Society Novice Race, a Relay Race, a King of the Towry and a few more if everyone can muster

up some coracle adrenaline!

There will be dryside activities, food stalls and local community stands. It's FREE admission and the event is organised by local river users, so please support if you can.

For more info, please visit 'Carmarthen River Festival' on Facebook, email carmarthenriverfestival@gmail.com or phone 01267 235199

Miniature coracles for sale

Martin Fowler

After many years trying to find someone to make 1/12th scale coracle models for the National Coracle Centre shop. I have tracked down a man from Haverfordwest who makes very good versions of what he calls a West Wales coracle which is a cross between a river Teifi and Towy. He also makes a good river Boyne and a river Teme complete with skin covering.



All are available by post. The West Wales and Boyne are £25.00 plus p&p, the Teme is £20.00 plus p&p. To place an order contact me - email martinfowler7@yahoo.co.uk or phone 01239 710980

Coracles on television

Euan Raffel

The start of the year saw coracles featured three times on mainstream television shows.

In January, as part of Michael Portillo's exploration of the East Coast Main Line, he had a go at coracling during his stop in Dunbar, with the East Lothian junior rangers, as part of his well received BBC series *Great British Railway Journeys*.

In February Robson Green took to the Teifi, to try his hand at coracle fishing for his ITV series *Tales from the Coast with Robson Green*.

After spending some time in daylight getting to grips with the Teifi coracle, he returned in the small hours to experience traditional coracle fishing. The weather conditions on the night hampered their efforts, but they were able to catch a fish just as dawn broke.

In March, as previously mentioned in Chair's Chat, Jeremy Paxman tried his hand at paddling an Ironbridge coracle, at last year's Ironbridge regatta as part of his Channel 4 series *Rivers with Jeremy Paxman*. He shared a few words with coracle veteran Terry Kenny, before receiving some expert guidance on the water from Wendy Gee. He even took part in the novice race, although he didn't do particularly well!

Televisual events like these, when done well by producers, help to our cause and we welcome contact from production companies to arrange these events.

West Wales coracle caught salmon/sewin awarded protected status

Julie Rees

Following a number of years hard work, led by the Carmarthen Coracle and Netsmen's Association and supported by the Teifi Coracle Netsmen's Association and the Welsh Government, the European Commission recently awarded Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) to West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon and Sewin.



PGI is an indicator of a product's authenticity and strong links to a specific region. West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon now shares PGI with well known British foodstuffs, such as Melton Mowbray pork pies, Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese and Arbroath smokies.

The awarding of PGI to West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon will bring more awareness to this unique part of British heritage, which continues to face threats of reduced licencing. It is also a testament to the extremely high quality product produced by the Teifi, Taf and Towy coracle netsmen through this traditional fishing method.

Editor's note - congratulations to all those involved with the process to make this happen - we hope the traditional coracle netsmen benefit from future security and success of traditional coracle fishing as a result of these statuses being obtained

In related news, the Teifi coracle netsmen announced 1st April that they will be releasing all salmon caught in the 2017 season. This is due to concerns about very low salmon stocks, caused by recent pollution events and other factors. The hope is that other anglers will follow their lead and through doing so will help the salmon stocks to recover

2017 events calendar

Here is a summary of events taking place in 2017. Details are correct at time of printing - please check with the organiser or the Society secretary before travelling.

If you know of any coracle-related events not listed, or are organising one yourself, please get in touch so we can spread the word - visit coraclesociety.org.uk/contribute or contact the Secretary. If you do not have internet access and would like more information about these events please contact the Secretary

Hereford River Carnival - Saturday 29th April

Coracles welcome to attend - bring your coracles! Hereford, Herefordshire.
Contact Hereford River Carnival - www.rivercarnival.org.uk, 01432 276462 or email polly@rivercarnival.org

Highland Folk Museum vintage day/heritage days - various, see below

Have a go coracling. Dates: 28th May, Thursdays in July, 3rd August, 10th August, 26th August. Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore. Contact Highland Folk Museum - 01540 673551 or email Raymond Green zenxan@btinternet.com

Coracle making course with Alyth Craft Tourism - Thursday 1st to Monday 5th June

5 day residential coracle making course. Alyth, Blairgowrie. Contact Alyth Craft Tourism - 07729 016850 or email alythcrafttourism@gmail.com

Carmarthen River Festival - Saturday 8th July

Annual river festival with coracle and raft races. Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire. Contact Julie Rees - 07974 772393 or email jrees@trevaughan.freemove.co.uk

Welshpool Coracle Regatta - Saturday 22nd July

Welshpool regatta returns for its third year. Welshpool, Powys. Contact Society secretary, Dylan Jones - details on back cover

BBC Countryfile Live including Society AGM/regatta - Thursday 3rd to Sunday 6th August 2016

We will be returning to this year's BBC Countryfile Live. See article in newsletter for details. Blenheim Palace, Woodstock. Contact Euan Raffel - 01332 988334 or email euana@coraclesociety.org.uk

Bures coracle regatta - Saturday 5th August

Camping Friday night, regatta Saturday. Bures, Suffolk. Contact River Stour Trust - 01787 313199 or email coracles@riverstourtrust.org

Cilgerran Festival Week and coracle regatta - 11th to 20th August

Annual festival week with family friendly events. Coracle regatta takes place on 19th August from 2pm. Contact Mark Dellar - 07964 361665 or email m_dellar@yahoo.co.uk

Coracle making course at Small Woods, Ironbridge - Friday 25th to Sunday 27th August

Build an Ironbridge coracle, ready to use at the Ironbridge Regatta on the Bank Holiday Monday. Coalbrookdale, Telford. Contact Small Woods - 01952 432769 or email fayhurford@smallwoods.org.uk

Medieval Festival at Herstmonceux Castle - Saturday 26th to Monday 28th August

England's medieval festival. Includes coracle making demonstrations and have a go coracling. Herstmonceux Castle, Sussex. Contact MGEL - 02081506767 or email info@mgel.com

Ironbridge Coracle Regatta - Monday 28th August

Annual regatta at the rowing club. Ironbridge, Shropshire. Contact Ironbridge Coracle Trust - 01952 275606 or email judyawalker@blueyonder.co.uk

The Coracle Society Officers 2016/17

President	Dr Irving Finkel
Vice Presidents	Rod Bowen John Davies Peter Faulkner Martin Fowler Terry Kenny
Honorary Chairperson	Bruce Watson
Honorary Vice Chairperson	Malcolm Rees
Secretary	Dylan Jones
Treasurer	Euan Raffel
Committee	Mark Dellar Gerwyn Lewis June Lewis Brian Pearce Jude Pilgrim Dave Purvis Julie Rees
Teifi netsmen's representative	Mark Dellar
Tywi netsmen's representative	Malcolm Rees
Ironbridge representative	Terry Kenny

Contact us

Secretary

Dylan Jones, 14 Duffryn Close, St Nicholas, Cardiff, CF5 6SS
Email info@coraclesociety.org.uk | Telephone 07796 097202

Membership Secretary

Brian Pearce, 5 Cedar Close, Teignmouth, Devon, TQ14 8UZ
Email membership@coraclesociety.org.uk | Telephone 01626 774844

Treasurer/Editor

Euan Raffel, Apartment A Coppice House, Yates Avenue, Aston on Trent, DE72 2BG
Email euan@coraclesociety.org.uk | Telephone 01332 988334