

The Exe Descent Canoe Race.

Introduction.

This is a long distance canoe race of 19 miles. It involves shooting weirs and rapids. Many canoes are written off in this race every year.

There were three going to this race, they were Jim Cranham, (Driver, co driver and co-co driver.) Fred Farrow, (Navigator and the mad paddler,) and Pete Berryman, (Co Navigator and sensible paddler.) Fred Farrow, the mad paddler, was the only one of the three participating in the race.

We left on Friday night from Jim's office in Acton and headed for Taunton. We stopped for a meal consisting of steak and accessories at a pub. We stopped liquid refreshment. We arrived in Taunton and spent the night on the carpet of a friend. On Saturday we went to Taunton to do some shopping and went to the Wellington Scout hall to help work on a Land Rover. After lunch (a ploughmans and a pint,) we went to look at the course.

The river was very low and numerous jagged rocks were exposed. We looked at the weirs and tried to determine the best course to shoot them. We only got part of the way down and had to stop due to failing light. We went to Exeter to see the Longridge Canoe Club and discuss the course with them. We then went back to Wellington Scout hall and looked at slides of last years race. These were mainly of me in one of the rough weirs in which I fell out. The slides made me tremble with fear.

We went back to Taunton to change and then went out to dinner. After dinner we went back to where we were staying, watched the slides again and some others and went to bed.

After breakfast we went to Wellington to meet some other people, and then to the start, which was smashing as we could not see due to the sun in our eyes, so many boats got hit and some people capsized.

The paddlers were still bunched at the first weir and I hit another boat going over it. There was a stretch with some small rapids followed by the two weirs in Tiverton between which was a shallow run where I and others grounded. Weir two had a small stopper wave, and I got wet in the spray. This was followed by numerous small rapids and shallows. (Scrape Scrape.) Painful sounds. At the next weir I misjudged the distance and ripped my spray deck and life jacket. As I approached the next weir I saw a K2 (racing boat) stuck on the weir but it freed itself before I hit it. (Scrapes.) More rapids. The next weir was shot down a narrow fish shoot through a small gap in a wall and I missed a large boulder, Phew, made it! Another weir and small rapids. I was now beginning to feel tired and the next stretch was long, flat and shallow. The next weir I had not seen and I followed another paddler over but found I was heading for a wall, swung the boat round to head at another wall, swinging round again and running down the wall, through a stopper and on. The next weir was Cowley Steps