

The Magazine

The quarterly magazine of the Avon Outdoor Activities Club

www.aoac.co.uk

Autumn 2009

**Beach Olympics and Boogie
Boarding in the Gower**

**Learning to Kayak
with the AOAC**

**Bog-Hopping, Beer Drinking
and Star Gazing at Sennen**

**Mountain Biking in the
Quantocks and Cotswolds**

**Coastal Walks and Sewage
Pipes in Boscastle**

**Stormforce Winds, Pants
and Sail Ale in Scotland**



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Cover photo of mountain biking in the Quantocks by Ian Harding

Fancy being on the AOAC Committee?

A number of positions will become vacant at the end of this year (March 2010) so if you're interested start thinking about which role you might like to do and contact the current post holder for more details. Without a new Committee the AOAC cannot continue!!

Planning an Activity

We do need people to start thinking ahead and planning new things for us all to do BUT in order to make things happen effectively there are a few guidelines to follow....

- ✓ Contact me at activities@aoac.co.uk to check the activity is okay for AOAC insurance to cover and to let me know the proposed date so we don't end up with everything happening at the same time.
- ✓ Book the activity and send me notice confirming date, time, place, cost etc. If there is a deposit to be paid I will get the treasurer to sort it with you.
- ✓ Do a risk assessment form, generic ones exist for most activities, to be returned to the policy officer (Nick Walker) - if you need any help filling it in, just yell.
- ✓ Fill in an income & expenditure form (on website). This needs to be returned to the treasurer (Richard Simms) with any money immediately after the event: treasurer@aoac.co.uk
- ✓ Send me an advert for the event and I will ensure it goes into calendar on the website and the weekly emailed newsletter.
- ✓ At this point you need to put something on the notice board to advertise the event.

If you need advice about an activity talk to one of the organisers - identified on the website, on the back of this magazine or the Club notice board.

Looking forward to a fantastic year packed with loads of activities that are well attended and lead by loads of different people - after all, variety is the spice of life and that is what the Club is all about!

Cheers!!

Carrie Stone

The Chairman's Bit

Welcome to this autumn edition of the AOAC Magazine.

I would like to welcome Alex Gibbons to the committee as Development Officer. So if you have ideas on how the Club can be improved, then please contact Alex at development@aoac.co.uk. To help introduce a new generation to the Club, Alex is planning to advertise the Club within some of the large local employers who have graduate recruitment programmes, such as Airbus and Orange. If you work for an organisation with lots of under 30s, and can post a poster on your intranet or notice board, then Alex will be very pleased to hear from you.

One important role of the Development Officer is to identify training needs within the Club, so we can continue the ethos of members leading and teaching other members. Over the last few years the Club has lost several of its qualified mountain leaders, who have moved away from the area, so I am pleased to report that the Club has approved a subsidy request for mountain walking leadership training.

Kayaking has been enjoying an upswing in participation over the past 12 months, with previously novice paddlers rapidly gaining competence and confidence. This has meant that the BCU level 3 award which the Club could tutor and assess was no longer sufficient, so the last committee meeting has agreed to subsidise level 4 white water kayaking training and assessments. To meet demand, we have also approved the purchase of some new kayaks, and associated kit, including small waist spray decks.

Leaves are tumbling, the clocks have fallen back, and stepping from October into November has signalled a noticeable change in the weather from mild sunny autumnal days, to considerably cooler, grey, stormy days. My barometer had been showing a pressure of between 1015-1030Mb for October, but the past few days has seen it hover at about 994Mb, a level I haven't seen it at since last winter.

That said it shouldn't be an invitation to forget about the outdoors, and snuggle up under a duvet. There are ongoing opportunities to get out there and enjoy swishing your feet through the mounds of fallen leaves, e.g., walking along the Ridgeway, paddling, or going on multi-activity weekends in the Brecon Beacons or mid-Wales. However, the number of days activities in the calendar for the next few months are looking a bit sparse, so consider introducing Club members to you favourite autumnal walk, or mountain bike ride.

Until the next edition, get out there and enjoy the outdoors.

Richard

AOAC CHRISTMAS PARTY SAT 19th DECEMBER

'Allo 'Allo

FANCY DRESS THEME - SIT COMS

Get your thinking caps on for Fancy Dress at the Christmas Party

Halo, 141 Gloucester Road

8.30pm till 1am

Buffet and Disco

Absolutely Fabulous

Blackadder

Tickets £10 available from Carrie Stone and Clare Gundry

A Right Gurt Giggle in the Gower!

Tales from a very wet and windy Welsh adventure

Now, one would have thought that a weekend of camping on the Gower in the height of summer would have been idyllic - all that sun, sea, supping, & sizzling sausages on the BBQ - splendid idea! However, to be truthful, Liz (ex Wiltshire bird*!) & I had an extremely "low moment" as we emerged from Sainsbury's in Swansea - rain, coming down like stair rods! Somehow our BBQ ingredients suddenly became tres unattractive! But we are the AOAC don't you know & we battled our way through to the Gower to be met by a flurry of activity as other clubbies fought to get their tents up! Things then took a turn for the better when the wine came out!

After being told to "SHHHHHHHH" by the campsite manager on a number of occasions followed by moi becoming the "shush meister" a few of us congregated on the beach (in the rain!) to carry on the merriment into the small hours!

Cycle rides & coastal walks were the order of the day on Saturday, apart from a small "breakaway" group who decided that beach Olympics would be a splendid way to spend the day. Steve & Simon, vying for the gold medals, organised the activities. First up was "Sling the Seaweed", highly technical & you had to get the right technique within the "zone" & we're sure it's an event the IOC will consider for the 2016 games! After 2 rounds & a steward's enquiry, Simon (I think) or was it one of the girls, won, much to Steve Down's dismay!



Next up was the "Sand Dune Shuttle" an event which involved us running like headless chickens through a chicane & up a sand dune then back down to the next person! A highly competitive event in which I ended up going A**e over T*† down the sand dune then resembled a piece of sandpaper - not a good look!



The final event was "Pass the Pinot" in which we all excelled! An extremely cheeky bottle emerged from Simon's rucksack, splendid show old boy, which was graciously received by all contestants! Steve rounded off the proceedings by trying out the pole vault, it snapped & he ended up in a rock pool - nice one!



The rest of the day was spent in varying degrees of soggy either in the pub or tents & finally a few hardy souls went onto the beach to catch some surf! Emma & I had second thoughts on the surf lark & spent a most enjoyable hour practising Salsa in a chip shop foyer on the beach while waiting for the surfers return - such class!

Sozzled & soggy, we then woke to glorious sunshine on the Sunday morning & all sat around watching our tents & cars steam dry from the previous night's deluge! Then it was off to Rhossilli Beach for boogie boarding, bronzing and kite flying! Big Stu provided a splendid display of sand sculptures, paying particular attention to detail on his mermaid - very pert they were too!! After the beach BBQ we rounded the weekend off with a game of cricket - Posh Andrew adding to the afternoon's entertainment by running onto the pitch & streaking - "I say, that's not cricket", but actually, it was!! All very funny!



Thanks to Ali for organising a fantastic weekend in a stunning part of the UK. Great set of people as always & I had a fab time - rain? What rain! It certainly didn't dampen our spirits & mine's a Bombay Sapphire - cheers!

* You can take the bird out of Wiltshire but you can't take Wiltshire out of the bird - hurrah!!

Words by Ali Hobbs

Photos by Liz Catchpole and Ian Harding

Boscastle Weekend Sept 2009

Two accounts of a sunny weekend by the sea in Cornwall

The Newbie's tale

When I first joined the club at the end of last year, I was told to "do a trip" as soon as possible. I kept putting it off until finally I took the plunge and booked onto the Boscastle trip at the end of September. I knew some of the people going from kayaking (and they're all really friendly) so I hoped the others would be too. I wasn't disappointed.

The main activity day was Saturday and a few hardcore walkers were arranging a 15 mile hike round the coastline from Widemouth back to Boscastle. I heard a few horror stories in the pub the night before such as "Don't do it, it's a killer walk", "You'll never be the same again" but I decided to do it anyway. We managed to set off early (even without any tea from Keith) and started our adventure full of beans, striding out and chatting. What was all the fuss about I was thinking. A few "ups and downs" later, all became clear. The views were spectacular, the sun was shining, the sea was glistening but the hills were so frequent they soon became small mountains - well to me anyway. However, sensibly, we took a lot of short breaks and kept going at a fairly steady pace. The good thing about hiking is that you can chat for hours and we did! The main topics of conversation were: running marathons (boring for everyone else except myself and Aj), the pros and cons of men, eating Cornish pasties during a hike and basically how amazing we were! Our lunch stop

was in Crackington Haven. I was really looking forward to a nice cup of tea and to try the infamous Cornish pasty. However, Aj had different ideas and insisted I shouldn't have a pasty for lunch as it would hinder my ascent out of Crackington Haven. As the newbie, I thought I should listen to the more experienced AOAC'ers so did as I was told. Instead, I ordered an unsatisfying saffron cake thing and had to watch feeling rather miffed while Keith started to tuck into a huge pasty. Note to Newbies: don't listen to Ajit.



We continued and along the way decided that we were invincible and made a pact to tell everyone back at the hostel how easy it was. After we arrived back, we legged it slowly up the rock to see the

sunset and unfortunately after one sip of wine, I interrupted Ajit's tales of inhumane strength and stamina to announce to everyone that we had made a pact to say how easy it was. Note to Newbies: don't break pacts after one sip of wine! Back at the hostel we ate a delicious chilli made by Ali and Allen for a bargain price and drank lots of wine. A few of us played Taboo and some were better than others, ahem. I mean, a few descriptions were a little suspect: "Some people eat them" (you'd naturally think it was food but no, the answer was worms. Nice one Ajit). Sam's attempts weren't much better either!! Note to Newbies; don't go on the same team as Ajit or Sam.

I had a fantastic time and enjoyed everyone's company. If you're reading this and wondering whether to go on a trip, I fully recommend it. You're made to feel very welcome, you're included in everything and as long as you can have a laugh you'll have a great time.... Just make sure you don't listen to Ajit's dietary advice.



Words and photos by Sally German

Sam's story

The sun was shining... sandwiches were packed... so in true AOAC style a group of us set off along the coast toward Tintagel ('sea to the right!').

It really was a glorious day – blue skies and clear views out toward the sea, the coastline is truly dramatic and unspoilt with views all the way down to Bude. We perched on the rocks at aptly named 'Rocky Valley' for lunch – whilst Big Stu aka 'David Bailey' took some choice shots of crashing waves in front of us.

We – or at least I – appeared to 'miss' the acclaimed 'Ladies Window' (a hole in a rock to those who don't know) obviously too much chatting from the girlie section of the group!

Soon enough the image of King Arthur's Castle loomed and the obligatory tea shop stop was taken at Castle beach café... where upon memories of a flying parasol remain. We were lucky to escape with our lives! Unfortunately a neighbouring customer



was not so lucky – but thankfully no significant damage resulted – to the lady or the parasol!

Refreshed we branched off – a few of us meandered down to Castle beach... where upon we came across what we thought were a visiting 'bowling' team hidden behind the rocks. Well with what looked like their bowling bags, bowling uniform and huddling together on the sand 'talking tactics' how were we to know they were a spiritualist group or 'earths cleaners' as they remarked û thanks to Susie.J we were corrected on judgements and assumptions..!

A peer into 'Merlin's cave' as the tide was low and a few more choice photies before we legged it back up the hill to Tintagel to catch the next bus back to Boscastle – as a cool swim in the sea was beckoning.

So with the sun still shining and changed into more appropriate attire, myself, Lucia, Damian, Liz.O, Big Stu and Elise headed along the path to the harbour mouth. Oh how much we were looking forward to diving into the clear, cool water! The memory of walking alongside a huge pipe and slight 'egg' smell as we trundled along to the sea paled into insignificance when the water looked so very clear and inviting. Oh how we all laughed and encouraged Lucia to perfect her diving off a rock into the water – although still conscious ourselves of the previously mentioned 'pipe' and 'egg', we kept our heads above water! Poor Lucia... big mistake... huge mistake!! Whether it was the sea water, something you ate or indeed beer from the night before you did suffer a little! I do wonder however if it was somewhat psychosomatic given we found out from the hostel warden, that indeed that was a sewage pipe leading down to the harbour mouth..!! Still, the blow hole was mightily impressive..!

Words by Sam Gaudion

Mountain Biking in the Quantocks

Our little group met at the car park in Holford early on a beautifully warm and sunny Sunday morning in late September. After all the normal fettling and faffing we finally set off up the first climb of the day, gradually stretching out the riders as the climb got steeper. It has to be said that the Quantocks are particularly hilly and not for the faint-hearted but our cheery group continued to the top to be greeted by the open vista of the Bristol Channel with a clear view to the hills and valleys of Wales.



Riding across the open moorland we came to the top of Smith's Combe and then set off at respectable intervals to career downhill, criss-crossing the stream to various whoops of delight and the screech of brakes.

Regrouping at the bottom, we were treated to sight of Duncan's buckled front wheel, the result of slamming slightly too hard into the bank of the stream. Try as he might he just couldn't get it back to its normal shape so unfortunately headed back to the car. The rest of us carried on, skirting the edge of the moorland before ascending through the forestry trails in West Quantoxhead back towards Beacon Hill.

A well timed lunch break saw us basking in the sun and looking back towards Minehead and Exmoor in the distance. Before long we were heading towards Bicknoller Post and then off downhill again into Weacombe. No accidents or mechanicals this time but another strenuous climb tested the resolve and sense of humour of some of our party. From this



point it was agreed that we should head back across the moor towards the ominously named Dead Woman's Ditch before smiles were restored on the final single-track descent down Holford Combe and a thoroughly deserved cream tea at the picturesque Combe House hotel.

Thanks to Steve for his stalwart map reading; also to the brave new member Tim for keeping a cheery outlook despite getting out of his comfort zone at times and to Karin and Katy for upholding the fact that mountain biking is not just for the boys.



*Words by Ian Harding
Photos by Steve Woodward and Ian Harding*

Kayak One Star Course

A kayaking novice learns some paddling moves with the AOAC

Before I started on the 1 star kayaking course at Saltford I never knew it was possible to be a ballerina on the water, but after weeks and weeks of pirouetting on the Avon I now know that it is!

I should say that pirouetting, i.e. spinning round and round, was not part of mine or anyone else's plan but just the kayakers' way of telling us that they were in charge and we were going to have to try a little bit harder!

Miraculously though the ten of us learnt how to paddle forwards and backwards and various numbers of bow strokes and stern strokes and earned ourselves the award at the end of it – our ticket to being able to paddle down the weir and more.

The instructors Mark, Andy, Dave, Lucia and Sarah were brilliant and very patient with us and very wisely started off by teaching us the basics on dry land. We were all sat in our kayaks on the bank of the Saltford car park, and occasionally Andy or Dave would hop on the kayak that was tentatively balanced on the picnic table to give us more of an idea of the strokes, if they were lucky Mark would even turn the kayak for them (whilst it was perched on the table) so we had an idea of which way the kayak would move with each stroke – if only it was that easy on the water!

Then comes one of the most difficult parts “keeping your weight low” whilst sliding into a wobbly kayak resting on the water and then away!

The instructors made the course really good fun with a series of races with the A-team versus the X-team, not taking the whole thing too seriously was definitely the way to go. Other little games like walking across

a row of kayaks ensured we had a lot of fun and got very wet! Ironically, the taller men seemed to come off the best after this exercise! Most of the men successfully walked around the row of kayaks gripping onto our buoyancy aids and helmets only to land back in their boats dry as a bone! Others, like Nic, were not as fortunate and learnt the important exercise of climbing back into their kayak from the water! Those with the smaller boats (like myself) also ended up half submerged in water when a 6'2" man walked on the back of their boats!



The most nerve-racking bit of the whole course was learning to capsize and, believe me, all the drills on dry land go out of the window when you're actually upside down. But the instructors prepared us really well and were watching our every move when we went over and so we all felt safe. Well done, especially to all the ladies in our group, who did it week after week and felt a lot more confident by the end.





For the test we had to paddle up and down the Avon for a couple of hours and show that we would be safe on the water in the future by displaying various strokes and answering questions about circumstances that we could find ourselves in, then came the dreaded capsized and a swim to the bank. What surprised me about the test was how casual it was and that helped because I felt much more relaxed on the water. At the end of the course all of the instructors performed Eskimo rolls to show that they weren't just pretty faces!

All in all it was such good fun and I feel so much happier on the water now than when I took my first tentative strokes on the River Avon. And I know that it is down to all the instructors instilling us with so much confidence, so thanks guys for all your help and well done everyone who passed this summer and have taken their first steps to becoming kayaking extraordinaires!

Words by Laura Harrison, photos by Lucia Mundiñano



Force 9 in the Firth of Clyde // There are warnings of gales in ... Malin...

Tales from the Scotland Sailing Trip September 2009

Saturday – Provisions

Having spent what seemed like half the day in Tesco, Port Glasgow, procuring provisions, Fiona Hiscoke and I were the last to arrive at Largs Yacht Haven on 4 September. Some while later, all 4 trolleys of provisions were bumped down the footbridge, on to the pontoon where Hullabaloo was berthed. After a frenzy of activity by the crew, eventually all had been stowed in practically every conceivable place inside on board: cupboards, under sinks, bunks, the chart table, water tanks, beside the batteries under the seats in the cabin etc.

There was one exception to this – the carrot cake that Paul Thomas had carefully nursed and protected during the long drive up from Bristol in Andy King's overfull Rover. Looking somewhat battered, it was callously jettisoned, being mistaken for cake left on board by the previous charterers.

Under heavy grey skies and with cries of something about "...gale force 7..." from the other two boats, Storm Wind and Jim Bob (whose crews had stayed to go to the Largs Viking Festival), we slipped our mooring and headed out of the marina, past Cumbrae, and up the murky grey waters of the Firth of Clyde towards Greenock.

Soon we were cruising along at an exhilarating 8 knots with 3 reefs in (which means that only 30% of the sail was up). The Scottish clag descended upon us, and our destination, Holy Loch, looked anything but holy, upon arrival there at dusk a couple of hours later.

There is not much in Holy Loch: a chandlery, a hotel (which Andy and Paul rated 1/10 on the sail ale scale), and a pub which was full (the only one that would be all week), with plenty of men in kilts and a 6/10 on the sail ale scale.



Sunday – Pants



Sunday morning was glorious, providing splendid views up the steep heathery and bracken covered loch side to the mountains at its head. It was, however, pants day. Overnight a pair of blank pants had appeared on the cabin steps. Thoughts turned to which member of the male crew had discarded them overnight. All became apparent over breakfast when Paul revealed in disgust that he had found the pleasant present in his bunk, kindly left by the previous charterers.

The bright skies soon gave way to more Scottish clag, but it became drier when approaching our destination that evening, Rothesay on Bute. A traffic light system is in operation at the harbour entrance. If the lights go red, you have to rapidly retrace your wake away from the harbour to avoid being mown down by the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry to Largs.

Once safely past the ferry, you are in the outer harbour, where the pontoons are designed for much smaller yachts than 41' long Hullabaloo, so we gently shuttled forward and aft, waiting for the footbridge (which blocked the entrance to the inner harbour) to be lifted. This happened some 15-20 minutes later, allowing us to navigate through two submerged concrete supports, into the inner harbour, and to comparative shelter from the approaching force 8 / 9 storm.

As soon as we had docked, Andy, Paul, Maurice Houkes, Helen Tanner went ashore to find a battery shop – the 9v battery in the boat's smoke alarm was dying, causing it to bleep regularly through the night. An hour or so later, once dinner was ready, they returned from the 'battery shop', with no 9v battery, and tales of how Helen had upset the shopkeeper by contaminating the battery with lemonade.



After dinner, the crew braved the torrential rain and gales force winds for a dash from the yacht, up the bridge off the pontoon, through large puddles to the 'battery shop'... only to find that it had closed. Humph. It was 9pm. By default it scored nil on the sail ale scale. Being confronted with the option of a longer dash to the next 'battery shop', or retracing our steps, the hardy weather beaten sailors retreated back to the shelter of Hullabaloo.

Those Monday blues

The overnight gales and torrential gave way to another bright blustery morning. Time to inspect the Victorian facilities on the harbourside. The facilities are a local working tourist attraction and award winning museum, with a Twyfords curator in attendance. The gents are most impressive, with at least 24 white streaked black marble urinals standing about 5 feet high; clear cisterns (which at one time were fish tanks); a good range of conservatory plants; original patterned Victoria green or black tiling, and light streaming through the glass part of the roof.

Once the footbridge had been opened to let us out of the inner harbour, we were soon tacking our way up the beautiful Kyles of Bute, passing seemingly isolated whitewashed cottages. Vivid colours from the gorse and heather amongst the mainly green bracken leapt off the land into the loch. At the northern end of the Kyles, we anchored for lunch and seal watching.



That evening the VHF radio crackled into life for the shipping forecast with its usual soothing and melodious tone and a gentle Scottish accent. "There are warnings of gales in Viking, North Utsire, South Utsire,... Shannon, Rockall, Malin, Hebrides...". Hmm more gales. The Malin area forecast for the next 24 hours could have been better. Gale force 9 rising to storm force 10. The in-shores forecast for the Firth of Clyde that followed didn't offer much comfort either...

We were beginning to question whether we were wise to come to Scotland for sailing, let alone in the autumn, but thanked our blessings that we were safely moored up in Tarbert on a pontoon and sheltered from the south-westerly/westerly storms. Meanwhile Jim Bob and Storm Wind were to ride out the storm on mooring buoys in Lamlash and Loch Ranza on Arran. We heard later in the week that the crew of Jim Bob had been confined to the boat for 24 hours, as there had been a 3 feet swell in Lamlash harbour and it had been too dangerous to take the dingy ashore.

Wednesday – Goat Fell

Having sat out the storms by walking in the hills around Tarbert on Tuesday, we slipped moorings before sunrise and were rewarded by a glowing pale golden light all around, bouncing off the gentle ripples on Loch Fyne and with sightings of porpoises.





By lunchtime we had picked up a mooring in Broddick bay on Arran. Helen, who had never rowed before the trip, demonstrated expertise in taking the crew ashore in an admirably straight line that would have made a competent crew examiner very proud, and which put the efforts of the rest of us to shame.

Andy and Paul were determined to find some decent sail ale, so peeled off towards the Arran Brewery, while Maurice, Fiona, Jenny Weatherill and I had Arran's highest peak, Goat Fell, in our sights. Having bagged the peak and absorbed the panoramic views over the island, to the mainland either side of it, we sailed around to Lamlash to join up with Jim Bob and Storm Wind for the first time in the week to hear their tales of seeing pilot whales, and swimming with 20 feet long basking sharks.

Getting to the pub in Lamlash could have been easier. Night had fallen and we found that at low tide the only dingy drop off point was the end of a pier. A via ferrata kit to clip on to the rungs would have been a useful aid for the first 15 feet of the 20 feet long ladder, covered as they were with seaweed and slime. While it was good to meet the crews of the other boats, unfortunately the pub was another to receive a low rating on the sail ale scale.

Thursday – Seals

Our route took us down to Kildonan on Arran's south coast, for lunch watching a colony of 200-300 seals, before drifting, sun bathed, in light winds northwards back towards Broddick, with views to the distinctive Ailsa Craig – a pointed island 10 miles to the south of us, and a tall ship. About half an hour later the tall ship was looming larger on our aft quarter, the canon portholes were clearly visible... and it was flying the skull & crossbones! Thoughts turned to defending the yacht. It seemed that we would have little choice but to sacrifice supper and retaliate with Molotov cocktails made from vodka filled swede or melon.

Friday – Cumbrae

Friday was another bright sunny day. Light winds made for steady but gentle progress back towards Largs. Paul dug out the pilot guide for Little Cumbrae, and noted with interest that visitors would be forcibly deterred from landing. Scanning the island with the binos it didn't appear heavily fortified, so we could be in with a chance. Soon our plans were to change when we realised that we had already exhausted our weaponry against the pirate ship, so opting for safety over valour we changed tack and detoured to the island's larger neighbour, Cumbrae.



During the week Maurice had been saying that when sailing he usually goes for a dip over the side. Now I can understand this when in the Med, but in Scotland, albeit at the time of year with the sea temperatures at their warmest?! After lunch, in a bay about 200m from a lovely sandy beach, as some of us went ashore to explore the main settlement of Cumbrae, Millport, Maurice donned his swimmers and took the plunge. Given the speed at which Maurice circled Hullabaloo twice, before scampering aboard, I assumed it must have been pretty cold even for the igloo hardened Maurice.

In the evening we were rejoined by Storm Wind and Jim Bob. The week was ended off dining al fresco on



gourmet surprise, with the setting sun dropping behind the silhouette of Arran, illuminating the sky with fiery yellow, oranges then purple hues. What a way to finish a superb week. Sail ale scale 10.

Thank you to: our commodore, Maurice, for organising the week, and to the crew of Hullabaloo for making it such an enjoyable and memorable week. Thanks also to the little auks for providing squawking moving targets as we navigated the Firth of Clyde.

Words by Richard Hiscoke, photos by Si Hall



Sennen Weekend Aug 2009

A tale of typical British weather, bog-hopping, beer drinking, birthday celebrating, watersports and star gazing

Friday 28th August

The annual end of summer bank holiday camping trip was to the Trevaylor Camping Site at Botallack, St Just, near enough to Sennen to call it the Sennen Weekend! The club had reserved the usual big field AKA 'Shanty Town' so called for all the different tent sizes, adhoc pitching positions and general chaos. In addition, we also had the perimeter grass verges on the leading road to the field – AKA 'The Avenue'.

Myself, George and Mark arrived around 5:30pm – the sun was out but it was blowing a hooley which was going to make for interesting tent pitching. After surveying the surrounding area, we concluded that a pitch at the top of The Avenue would be the best place; near to the wash block, away from the rowdy party animals in Shanty Town, and as we found out, the most social position as we got to say hello to everybody as they passed by. Of course, the other factor when choosing a pitch is to be as far away from Rob Giles's snoring – however, that would probably mean camping in a different county!!!!

We all started pitching our tents, at which point people who had already setup tended to want to have a full indepth conversation with you, oblivious to the fact that you are too busy chasing your wind blown canvas around the campsite – at one point, my tent nearly went over the 8 foot hedge to the next field. Big Stu, who had arrived the day before, kindly chipped in and helped (albeit under protest!). George, who had a pop-up tent, just unceremoniously threw hers to the ground and hey presto job done!

Her job also made much easier by the fact that all her stuff seemed to be stored in my tent porch !

After pitching the tents, blowing up airbeds and transferring all our wares inside, a well-deserved beer was called for. Mark had cunningly placed an order with Skinners Brewery in Truro to have a 40 pint polypin of Cornish Knocker delivered to the Reception for our 'consortium' consumption. That meant for a tenner each, myself, Mark, Big Stu, Juliet, Ajit and Andy Oggers owned about a 6 pint share – bargain and good real ale to boot.

We then wandered into Shanty Town to check on who else was around. Kate and Adrian were struggling to pitch their marquee (1 bedroom, 1 dressing room, 1 living room/dance floor with disco lights!). A few fellow campers helped them out.

The local pub was the Queen's Arms, which was about a 5 minute walk (or 20 minute stagger depending on extent of inebriation). Knowing that the pub was going to be chocker with hungry and thirsty AOAC'ers turning up throughout the evening, we reserved a table for dinner – and also advised them in advance to order more beer. On the last en-masse AOAC trip we drank the bar dry, yes we really did!

It was a lovely clear evening, so after the pub, we charged our campsite glasses and popped into Shanty Town for a bit of star gazing. Sam & Bridget had laid out blankets and were supping on warm alcohol tipples (medicinal of course, I think a few peeps were going down with colds - or 'Kennel Cough' as Juliet delicately put it!)



Saturday 29th August

Saturday morning, I was rudely awoken to a tent invasion. George, who had surfaced first, decided that she needed her stuff that was in my tent porch. In my book, if you are going to wake someone up, you should at least compensate them with a cup of tea in bed! I made this known by politely asking for a brew, OK I lie, what I bawled out was 'WHERE'S MY TEA B**CH'. I think this also had the effect of waking up most peeps on The Avenue.

Breakfast was a leisurely and social affair. Uncommon for a Cornish campsite, there was actually mobile phone reception. This allowed us to get onto the internet to find out what the surf forecast was at Sennen Cove. The surf forecast was reporting 12ft swell !!! Gulp!!! Not sure if my inflatable bodyboard would survive that let alone me !

Over breakfast, a plan was formed to park the cars at Sennen Cove, do a circular walk via Lands End, then end up on the beach for a bit of bodyboarding and general fun and frivolities.

Mark led the walk. To save us having to go all the way down to the cove and then trudge back up the hill to get on the coastal path, we headed straight across from the car park. This meant we needed to get across some of the scrub land in order to continue our walk along the coast path. "Look" said Mark, "There's the path we want", as he pointed over towards the coast, "We can cut through this bit, it looks do-able" (may not be verbatim!)



The next 15 minutes were spent what can only be described as 'bog hopping'. One moment you were on terra-firma, the next moment your whole entire leg would disappear down a muddy, slimy hole. The comedy value in watching peeps navigate through the quagmire was priceless. Of course, being hardy AOACers, we all had suitable walking foot ware on didn't we. Didn't We? Well, some of us did, most had boots on, some had sandals on – squelchy squelchy, but the award for the most inappropriate foot ware on an AOAC walk goes to Elise in her pink Flip Flops ! At Lands End a few peeps dropped out, including Elise bless her – we told her that to get back she had to go through the bog again, but I don't think she appreciated the joke.

The rest of the walk was uneventful compared to the earlier excitement, however the scenery and of course company and conversation made it a thoroughly enjoyable walk.

We arrived back at Sennen Cove, for cream teas, ice creams, pasties and a spot of bodyboarding and beach bumming. Those not on the walk had decamped there earlier and had been risking life and limb in the swell, playing volley ball, building sandcastles and generally enjoying themselves.

Steve Down had fashioned a makeshift changing cubicle which was put to very good use. I donned my shorty wetsuit and pumped up my inflatable bodyboard. By the way, I highly recommend the inflatable bodyboard, it packs away really small making great for taking on holiday, and it actually works – it really does catch the waves. I personally found the waters a bit rough for my liking, so I abandoned the bodyboarding in favour of eating ice-cream instead!

There must have been about 100 AOACers camping by Saturday, most of them were congregated for the mass BBQ in the Shanty Town.

I couldn't understand why Mark kept insisting that I had to make 2 trips from our tents to the BBQ venue.

"You can come back for the table", he said.

"Andy can carry that now" I retorted resourcefully.



I picked up 3 plates and counted them 1-2-3.

But, when I got to the BBQ Mark said "You've only brought 2 plates, can you go back and get another please" and held up just 2 plates.

"Eh? I brought 3, I counted them?" I replied quizzically.

Anyway, off I trotted back to my tent, all the while scanning the ground looking for a plate that I must've dropped, thinking that I was going slightly mad.

I returned back to the BBQ, additional plate in hand, to a huge round of 'Happy Birthday' by everybody

and was presented with the most fantastic cake I've ever had in my life. Huge thanks to Mark, Big Stu, George and Andy for clubbing together to buy it and especially to Big Stu and Dave for putting a seat belt on it and transporting it all the way down in the van!

The cake was gloriously decorated with a river, kayak, mountain bike, snowboard boots and a runner – anyone would think I was an all-round athlete (round is about right!).

So, it had all been a ruse to get me out of the way, as the hidden plate re-appeared. I was highly embarrassed, but also very appreciative to the lengths that peeps went to – so thank you all very much for making me feel so special ☺ I did protest slightly as it wasn't actually my birthday until the Monday, but from that point on it was my birthday all weekend !!!!

The atmosphere in the Shanty Town that evening was wonderful, on returning from the wash block and approaching the field later than evening, it was quite awe-inspiring to see the glow of all the different BBQ fires, the aroma of cooking and the hum of different groups chatting and laughing. This is probably the most unity I've ever witnessed amongst all the different club members.

Sunday 30th August

Sunday morning I was once again rudely awoken, this time to George roaring "GET OUT OF BED B**CH" – touché !

Knowing that today was going to be grey, cool and wet, we decided the evening before that this would be an ideal day to take the kayaks down to Sennen Cove to do some kayak surfing. The surf-forecast was predicting 5-6 foot wave and no wind – ideal conditions.



We scouted around for other kayakers to join us, but Dave Morgan had decided to do a cream-tea pootle, Steve & Jo didn't really fancy it, Julia and Phil were going to have a go later. So, it was just myself, Mark and Andy.

As the weather was a bit inclement, getting a parking space at the car park by the beach was easy. We kitted up then lumbered down with kayaks on shoulders, to the beach. We found a great spot, made even better when the Coast Guard evicted the bodyboarders that had encroached on the area.

I can honestly say, those few hours spent kayak surfing is the most fun I have ever had in a kayak. The wave sets were rolling in consistently, which meant you could chose which one you wanted to ride.

It was most exhilarating, from punching out through the waves with the spray and waves breaking over the front of the boat and spraydeck to then turning around and catching the surf.

There's much anticipation as you hear the thundering of the wave getting nearer, Mark and Andy shouting "GO GO GO", you start paddling, you lean forward, then you are elevated high up in the air, you try and lean back, you go from zero mph to what feels like 100 mph.

The next few adrenaline fuelled moments are spent trying to resist the wave from turning you sideways. I was frantically moving my paddle from side to side attempting stern rudders to maintain direction control. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't. When it worked "YEAAAAAAH" and "Did you see me? Did you see me? I got the wave!!". When it didn't ... Glug, Glug, Glug – eject! No worries, back to the

beach, empty the boat then get back in again – simples !

Rob Giles had been on a group walk, and allegedly during the walk he was showing off his alpha male prowess by engaging in 'who can run up the hill the fastest' competition with new member Rachel, who for some reason he kept calling Helen! A consequence of this display meant that they both became separated from the rest of the walking group and somehow found themselves stranded in Sennen Cove, with no provisions, no money and aghast – no mobile phone! Luckily for Rob he found us at the beach so didn't need to get mountain rescue out after all and we took them back to the campsite. We passed Julia, Kim and Phil Taylor on their way to go kayak surfing – hopefully they would have as much fun as us.

As we were still in the grey damp cloud, we decided to pop into St Just and eat in the Fish & Chip restaurant, far more civilized than eating the chips in the car at Cape Cornwall. I'm sure had there been a sunset it would have been lovely !

That evening I was still high from the kayak surfing and I admit I was being a 'kayak bore' – poor Big Stu endured the brunt of it as everywhere he went one of us would be talking about the kayaking today! To distract myself from the amazing day on the surf, myself and Big Stu started a Texas Holdem poker tournament in the pub. Bridget and Liz Moore said they were unsure of the rules "Don't worry, we'll teach you, get your money out!!!!" Welsh Chris got fleeced, which was surprising as he used to be a casino croupier and should know better, however, he was taking advice from his brother Roger so perhaps not all his own doing.



After being ejected from the pub – no not for gambling – but because it was ‘time at the bar’, we strolled back to the campsite. It seemed that the campsite bar was still going, so a few peeps, led by Kate and Adrian, Liz O, Welsh Alison etc piled on in for a cheeky late nightcap. Roger and Johnny were debating about whether to go in or not, and were suffering from a severe case FOMO – Fear of Missing Out. I said something quite profound apparently (have no idea what as I was liquored up – Liz Moore had been forcing Sambuca on me during the evening!) but whatever it was, it put them at peace and they retired for the evening.

Monday 31st August

Most people were leaving today, however about 25 or so of us had decided to stay on the extra night and leave on Tuesday.

We had another leisurely breakfast this time tucked inside the tent to escape the rain showers. It was my birthday today, and I had a few friendly birthday visits bringing cards and wishes. Fiona had kindly baked me a chocolate cake, and Welsh Alison also gave me some cup cakes so I was doing very well on the cake front by the end of the weekend!

With a brighter day than the Sunday promised, Adrian led a circular walk from the campsite. The first feature on the walk was Botallack mine where Phil Taylor gave us a potted history. As is usual for Cornish Coastal walks, the views were stunning and the terrain varied. Interesting conversations were held along the way, with fascinating insights on evolution and humanity provided by Roger and Johnny.

We stopped for a well-deserved ice-cream break followed by a well-deserved beer break after in the village of Pendeen. After suitable refreshments we trundled on through the countryside back to Botallack.

Just as were we getting back, the weather deteriorated so our thoughts went to finding a place to eat for dinner. After doing a bit of research, we pretty much booked all the tables in the Commercial Hotel in St Just. Dinner was very pleasant, the food and ambiance was fantastic. We won't mention Potato-Gate, but let's just say, never get in the way of Steve Down and his tatties !!! As it was my birthday day proper, Mark had managed to sneak a bottle of Moet passed my eagle-eyes (fooled twice in one weekend – I must be losing my spidey senses) this was brought out at the end of the meal, and was thoroughly enjoyed – thanks Mark ☺

Across the road was The Star Inn, where the traditional Bank Holiday folk band were playing. The house cat was curled sleeping amongst all the noise, unflinching – we later found out that the cat is deaf which explains a lot. Further merriment was had, the folk band were very entertaining and it was a fitting end to what was a cracking day, and all-in-all a cracking weekend.



Phil, who had kindly been our taxi that evening, drove us back to the campsite, whereby we gathered to enjoy the last remaining beer left in the polypin. The night skies had cleared, and Dave Murdoch had brought his telescope along with him this weekend. He set it up, and pointed it at the various constellations, planets and of course the moon. After star gazing, the whole weekend had caught up with me and I fell asleep in my camping chair – absolutely worn out from a great time.



Cheers to everybody involved in organising the weekend and thanks to everybody who made it a wonderful end of summer bank holiday camping weekend.

*Words by Lucia Mundiñano
Photos by Stuart Bardsley, Ian Harding & Lucia Mundiñano*

Seven Springs Vs Devils Chimney

Another epic MTB day out in the Cotswolds

The first thing that struck me was how attractive everyone was. This, according to the experts, is a natural side effect of mountain biking. Normally when you meet people in the corner of an empty car-park at some strange hour, the people tend to be less aesthetically pleasing – but that's another story.

Anyway, once I figured out that by actually pushing down on each pedal alternately you could make the bicycle move forward, this for me opened up a whole new way of riding a bike. We were off! Across car-park! Across main-road! And into a field!

A friendly farmer gives a cheery 'Good Morning', a couple of bunny rabbits dance, a young woodpigeon serenades us, and a moody hare gives us a surly stare and runs away. But that didn't matter. We were off-roading! Living the dream, and amongst the glorious Cotswolds countryside.

We had a bit of a climb to start with, but according to mountain biking gurus S-Club 7, the secret is to "Don't stop, never give up, hold your head high and reach the top", but given that I'd had a full EPO breakfast meant I was able to cope, and we were soon at the top. Then it was a mixture of ups and downs, witty banter, woodland glades, intellectual conversation and country lanes.

Just before lunch we passed another famous spot frequented by those who liked outdoor activities, which gave us another fabulous view of the surrounding countryside. Splendid. Then after crossing a very busy road with relatively few fatalities, we stopped at the Air Balloon pub. Sadly there wasn't a pie on the menu that took my fancy, so I had to settle for the more healthy option of cheese & bacon jacket potato – which was nice.

After lunch, the adventure continued, rustic bridle ways, posh people shooting their pheasants, winding lanes, and fascinating biking anecdotes, and then we arrived at the Devil's Chimney. And wow! Yet another stunning view coupled with a mini-playground for bikes. Lots a different dips and jumps, from gentle slope, to a cliff!

Strangely, at the bottom of the cliff someone had spelled out the question in rocks and stones; 'Will you marry me?'. Sadly for all you romantics out there, the Proposee had carefully spelt out their answer: 'No'. Looking back it's not that surprising, the Devils Chimney isn't the most romantic of place names. I would have thought that if you're going to propose at the bottom of a cliff, then at least chose somewhere that at least sounds romantic, maybe 'Heart Cliff'?



Anyway sadly, just as with Eldorado, all good things must come to an end, and this ride was no exception. But what an ending, a lovely bit of single track, with a few cheeky drop-offs and some walkers to abuse. And then the grand finale, an amazing brilliantly fast decent. Wahoo!

It's hard to put it into words, or if I did, it wouldn't do it justice. But for those of you who don't go Mountain Biking, and can't see the thrill of wearing lycra and covering yourself in mud, it's like this: Imagine being on one of the world's most exciting roller-coasters, but one that's located in the heart of nature. One without a queue. One that makes you more attractive (apparently) and one where on occasions you may have doubts whether you're going make it, but one that you know deep down you're absolutely safe and nothing can go wrong, as it's an official AOAC activity!

The AOAC don't do award ceremonies, but if they did then I've no doubt that this would certainly be nominated for best day out 2009, and probably take the Oscar - so top marks to Lucia for another grand day out!

Words by Jim King OBE, photos by Lucia Mundiñano



Mountain Biking in the Sierra Nevadas

After yet another not so great summer weatherwise, we fancied a bit of autumn sunshine so in late September Ewen and I jetted off to Granada in Andalucia, southern Spain, for a week's mountain biking. This wasn't an official AOAC trip, but I thought we could do a bit of a recce, to see if this could be a future AOAC MTB overseas holiday – you never know, it might happen!

We were met at the airport late at night by Shaun, the main guide and owner of Ride Sierra Nevada MTB holiday company. Tactfully suppressing surprise at the size of our bike boxes, Shaun managed to squeeze us into the van before delivering us to our accommodation for the week. We were staying in a lovely 4-storey, 2-terraced house in the centre of Monachil, a village near Granada in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. There was just time to greet our fellow guests and grab a quick beer before bed.

The next morning we woke to amazing views of snow-capped mountains and lush green foothills, liberally dotted with whitewashed houses and terraces of olive groves. Eager to get out there and ride we assembled our bikes, loaded them into the van and headed up hill to the start of our first day's biking. We started off with fellow guests Angela and Lee climbing up vehicle-width tracks through a pine forest, eventually to emerge at a clearing and the start of a technical descent down a dried up river bed. Being used to wet muddy conditions in the UK, it took some time to get the hang of the dry loose trails, where both front and back wheels slide all over the place, especially if you're too cautious. As in most things MTB, "momentum is your friend".



The rest of that day was spent criss-crossing the hills and valleys along mainly singletrack trails. While I found most of it rideable, there were some tricky switchbacks, and each one of us fell off at some point – but luckily there were no serious injuries. Scraped and bruised but on adrenalin highs we descended to a bar for the first of many well-earned cervezas.

For the second day, we rode straight from the village house along a river valley before climbing steeply to a forested area behind Monachil. We were treated to some stunning views of the Sierra Nevadas before descending on some awesome sweeping singletrack to

the next valley and the town of Cenes de la Vega. Stopping briefly to bandage Ewen's thumb nail which he'd managed to bend back (ouch!) in a wipe-out coming off the hill, we climbed again from the town, up another dry river bed until we reached what looked like a play-park complete with an assault course and small MTB loop. Apparently keen Granadians go there to work out in their lunch hours. We did actually spot a Lycra-clad keenie doing some sit-ups in the sun.

From here, the route took us along some terraces that hugged the hills above Granada, eventually descending into the town itself. We actually rode through the grounds of the famous Alhambra palace, tourists scattering in our wake as we bounced down the ancient steps of the town. That was fun!



Wednesday was rest day, so we headed back into Granada to see the sights – well, we managed half an hour in the Cathedral before hitting a tapas bar for most of the afternoon! They kept bringing out such delicious plates of food, it would have been rude not to buy a beer to wash it all down with... We spent the rest of the day in the Turkish Hammam, soaking our tired muscles in the hot baths and being treated to a relaxing massage.

Thursday was the "biggie" – we spent the morning climbing up an access road from the ski resort of Pradollano to the Pico de Veleta, at 3398 metres the second highest peak in the Sierra Nevada. It was shorts and t-shirts weather at the start of the climb, but by the time we reached the top we were fully layered up against the bitter icy wind. There was just time for a quick photo in the snow before we jumped back on our

bikes to descend to more a more pleasant temperature and lunch. My hands almost froze solid on the descent but it was worth it. Especially as I almost managed to beat everyone else to the top!



After a much-needed hot chocolate we set off downhill towards Monachil, again traversing the hillsides down some sweeping singletrack. I was really enjoying myself until we came to a precipice, which our guide Shaun said was rideable. Screaming some very unladylike expressions I made it down the slope in one piece, heart pounding and with a slightly sick feeling in my stomach. I do wonder why I do this sometimes!

On Friday we woke to the most glorious sunny weather, and set off on what was to be our best day's riding. Loads of sweeping singletrack down through pine forests, with only a bit of climbing in between to get the heart pounding. One of these descents was 4km long, I took off at a couple of points, and was really enjoying having a full suspension bike. The trails in this part of the world really are amazing, with views to die for at the top of most climbs, and almost nobody else out there to spoil the feeling of remoteness and calm.

On Saturday and Sunday there was a fiesta in Monachil, which seemed to consist of the local horsemen (and the odd woman) getting decked out in all their finery, and doing a bar crawl on horseback for most of the day and night. By late evening some were decidedly wobbly but they managed to just about stay in the saddle. Ewen and I spent the weekend messing around on our bikes but it was really far too hot for any serious MTBing so we found ourselves more often than not heading into a local bar for some more tapas and cool refreshments. Well, we were on holiday!



For our final day, Shaun took us to an area that we had not been to before, the countryside started off being much more open and arable and we found ourselves riding through olive groves and along a river valley. This is the life I thought, a nice gentle day to finish off an excellent holiday. But no, it was soon to change. After a brief stop to take on an energy bar, we started a killer ascent through a pine forest which seemed to go on for hours. Eventually reaching the top we ate our sandwiches lying in the sun, and I was looking forward to some nice easy sweeping descents to our designated pick-up point. These descents turned out to be much steeper than I had hoped, with many technical switchbacks to test even the experienced riders in our group, and I eventually gave up trying to ride them and had to resort to pushing the bike down! The others in our group managed to make it to the bottom without putting their feet down - they must have been used to riding rabbit runs off camber.



So, in a nutshell, the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas are a great place for mountain biking, with a wide range of trails to suit all abilities and some fantastic weather. We were well looked after by Shaun and his partner Csilla at Ride Sierra Nevada, but there are other MTB operations out there to consider too if the AOAC MTB crew wants to organise an autumn / winter / spring overseas trip in the sun. And the Alhambra Especial cervezas are not too bad either!

Words and photos by Liz Catchpole

Avon Outdoor Activities Club – Membership Discounts

The under mentioned discounts are available on production of a valid AOAC membership card.
These discounts are not valid in conjunction with any other offer, sale or reduction.



www.ellis-brigham.com

10% Discount

This offer is only available at the Bristol store:

160 Whiteladies Rd, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 2XZ. Telephone 0117 974 1157. Map: <http://www.ellis-brigham.com/bristol.htm>



www.itchyfeet.com

10% Discount

This offer is only available at the Bath store:

4 Bartlett Street, Bath BA1 2QZ. Telephone 01225 337987
Map: <http://www.streetmap.co.uk>



www.outdoor-active.co.uk

15% Discount

This offer is only available at the Woodford store:

Damery Works, Woodford, Berkeley, GLOS GL13 9JR
Telephone 01454 261058
Map: http://www.outdoor-active.co.uk/kayaks_canoes_about-us-map.html



www.stanfords.co.uk

10% Discount

This offer is only available at the Bristol store:

Stanfords, 29 Corn St, Bristol, BS1 1HT.
Telephone 0117 9299966
Map: <http://www.stanfords.co.uk/info/bristol-store.11.GP.html>



www.stormoutdoors.co.uk

15% - Discount

This offer is only available at the Chipping Sodbury store:
Storm Outdoors, 31 Horse Street, Chipping Sodbury, Bristol, BS37 6DA Telephone: (01454) 315430.
Map: [Storm Outdoor Leisure](http://www.stormoutdoors.co.uk)



www.kayaks.co.uk

10 % Discount (On most items)

This offer is only available at the W-S-M store:
66 Uphill Way, Uphill, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset BS23 4TN
Telephone (01934) 613 612.
Map: [Google map to Performance Kayaks](http://www.google.com/maps/place/66+Uphill+Way,+Uphill,+Weston-super-Mare,+Somerset+BS23+4TN)



www.tauntonleisure.com

10% Discount
20% on discount evenings (Jun & Dec)

This offer is only available at the Bristol store:
38 - 42 Bedminster Parade, Bedminster, Bristol, BS3 4HS.
Telephone: 0117 9637640 / 9530486.

Map: <http://www.tauntonleisure.com/information/bristol-store/58/>



www.snowandrock.com

10% Discount

This offer is only available at the Bristol store:
Units 1-3, Shield Retail Centre, Link Road, Filton, Bristol, BS34 7BR
Telephone: (0117) 9143000

Map: http://www.snowandrock.com/store_bristol_superstore.htm

NEW



www.theoutsideelement.co.uk

Discount for AOAC members (P.O.A.)

Contact: Dennis Stanfield

Telephone: 0797 470 3129

Upcoming Events

Friday 4th / Sunday 6th December – Christmas Walking Weekend at Swanage YHA. Fully Booked. See [calendar](#).

Saturday 12th / Sunday 13th December – Dartmoor Paddling Weekend. Staying at the beautiful Modbury Cottages. It depends on water levels and paddling abilities for which river we paddle each day. Possible kayak surfing at Bigbury. Must have done white water training. Contact keith.chantATbristol.gov.uk OR DougalAT422.co.uk for more details and see [calendar](#).

Saturday 12th December – Christmas Meal. The meal is at 6pm at Cosmo, a very popular restaurant in Clifton on the Triangle. The total cost for the all you can eat evening meal is £12.99. Followed by drinks in Clifton. To secure your place I need a deposit of £5 payable to AOAC by 28th Nov. Email chris199brown"at" yahoo.co.uk and see [calendar](#).

Sunday 13th December – Cotswolds Walk – Naunton. This walk takes us through the lovely Cotswold, through idyllic Lower & Upper Slaughter, bustling Bourton-on-the-water and through the Windrush Valley along the River Eye. The walk is 10 miles and there is a nice pub at Naunton when we get back. Contact Keyna Garner at keyna6000"at"live.co.uk for more details and see [calendar](#).

Saturday 19th December –AOAC Christmas Party – Theme this year is SITCOMS!! Venue is HALO at 141 Gloucester Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8BA from 8.30pm to 1am. Tickets £10 in advance from Clare Gundry and Carrie Stone. Each AOAC member can bring one non-AOAC friend.

Saturday 26th December 2009 / Saturday 2nd January 2010 – New Year Trip to Snowdonia. Fully Booked. See [calendar](#).

Saturday 26th December – Boxing Day Walk. Destination, timing etc to be decided! Contact Clare Gundry at clareataoac"AT"googlemail.com and see [calendar](#).

Saturday 16th / Sunday 17th January 2010 – Lake District Paddling Weekend. For intermediate and above paddlers. Contact DougalAT422.com for more details and see [calendar](#).

Saturday 30th January / Saturday 6th February 2010 – Ski and Snowboard Trip to Tignes, France. Reserve list now open. This year, we have managed to secure exclusive use of a fabulous 5* catered chalet, Chalet Aigle in Tignes, France. With its own swimming pool, sauna, and bar, Chalet Aigle is just 10m from the slopes, 400m from the lifts and 5 minutes from the town centre with its bars and nightlife. And after a hard day's skiing, you can enjoy afternoon tea and cakes, followed by a three course evening meal, with unlimited wine. Tignes is linked with Val D'Isere, and is part of the vast skiing area of L'Espace Killy – with 300 km of pistes, the resort ideal for all levels, from the most nervous beginner to kamikaze off piste skiers and snowboarders. Flights are from Bristol. To book your place, send us your deposit cheque for £150 together with your booking form. Email: aoac.ski2010ATyahoo.co.uk for details or talk to Nic Reisner, Fiona Reid, Karen Ross, Roland Allen or Vince Holt. See [calendar](#).

Saturday 13th / Saturday 20th February 2010 – Winter Walking Week in Scotland. This will be our 3rd annual winter mountaineering meet. This year we will be staying at the world famous Claichaig Inn, in their luxury wooden lodges. There are only 14 places available and 4 have been booked already. The cost of the trip is £165 per person, that includes: – 7 nights accommodation in a luxury wooden lodge; 1/2 day indoor climbing; 1/2 day indoor ICE CLIMBING (including equipment); use of sauna and steam at the ice factory after your day's arduous climbing; FULL day instruction in winter walking/ mountaineering - depending on experience. Not included in that price is: transport/flight (as in previous years some drive rather than fly thus keeping price down as you don't need to hire a car when you arrive); food - normally buy own shopping on the Saturday in Fort William although Claichaig does magic food; hire of technical equipment - this can be prebooked from the Club stores. Email robertgiles212"AT"btinternet.com for more details and details of where to send the cheque and see [calendar](#).

Friday 26th / Sunday 28th February – Dartmoor Paddling Weekend. Staying at the beautiful Modbury Cottages. Possible kayak surfing at Bigbury. Must have done white water training. For details contact Mark Athay at A320MarkATyahoo.co.uk and see [calendar](#).

Saturday 29th / Saturday 5th June – Multi-Activity Camping Week in the Scilly Islands. If you think you may do this trip please let me know so I can assess interest. This is likely to be a 5 or 7-night trip starting on the end of May 2010 bank holiday weekend. We will be staying at the Garrison Campsite (<http://www.garrisonholidays.com>). Activities include walking, diving, swimming with seals, boat trips, windsurfing, sailing, sea kayaking, golf, horse riding, watching gig racing, eating, drinking and generally having a damn good time! This trip includes the return boat from Penzance to St Mary's, 5 or 7 nights camping and all luggage transfers. Total cost to be confirmed. Please contact Sarah Green at sarahgreen987ATgooglemail.com and see [calendar](#).

Saturday 12th / Saturday 19th June – Mediterranean Sailing Week. Sailing in the sun from Dubrovnik to Split. This is the annual AOAC relaxed sailing trip in the med. Novices are welcome. We will be island hopping, sometimes mooring in marinas and sometimes anchoring in secluded bays, often hopping off the boat for a swim. Price £350 includes transfers and yacht charter. Book own flights from Bristol; these go up as the holiday gets closer. Deposit £150. Balance in March. **We have booked 6 yachts and they are now full but a reserve list is open.** We are limited now by the number of skippers available. Contact: matt.hughesATblueyonder.co.uk for details and see [calendar](#).

Saturday 26th June / Sunday 4th July – Ardeche Multi-Activity Week. Principally a kayaking trip to the Ardeche region of France with lots of grade 2 water ideal for learning to paddle on moving water. Fantastic limestone gorges, warm water and bright sunny days. Other activities can be included if someone else wants to come forward and organise them. Approximate costs will be £300. These include ferry, travel, campsite and food but not the cost of hiring the kayak or tuition. Contact Andy Wilson at wilsons"AT"hotmail.co.uk for more information and see [calendar](#).

The Back Page

Committee Contact Details

Chairman	Richard Hiscoke chair@aoac.co.uk
Secretary	Ali Hobbs secretary@aoac.co.uk
Treasurer	Richard Simms treasurer@aoac.co.uk
Membership Secretaries	Phil Taylor & Roland Allen membership@aoac.co.uk
Policy Officer	Nick Walker policies@aoac.co.uk
Activity Coordinator	Carrie Stone activities@aoac.co.uk
Development Officer	Alex Gibbons development@aoac.co.uk
Communications Officers	Clare Gundry & Liz Catchpole communications@aoac.co.uk
Equipment Officers	Sarah Gay & Richard Silsby equipment@aoac.co.uk

Activity Organisers Contact Details

Badminton	Neil Lyons (advanced) Jo Murphy (beginners) badminton@aoac.co.uk
Climbing	Paul McCloy climb@aoac.co.uk
Mountain Biking	Biking Group biking@aoac.co.uk
Cycling	Fraser Bridgeford cycle@aoac.co.uk
Walking	Carrie Stone walking@aoac.co.uk
Skiing	Nic Reiser, Fiona Reid, Karen Ross, Roland Allen & Vince Holt aoac.ski2010@yahoo.co.uk
Sailing	Matt Hughes sail@aoac.co.uk
Tennis	Steve Grant tennis@aoac.co.uk
Canoeing	Phil Webster & Dennis Stanfield canoe@aoac.co.uk

AOAC Forum - Quick Guide

You don't need to register to read postings on the [Forum](#) (which is located on the website) – just click on the titles to open them and see what has already been posted. If you want to reply to a posting or post a new Topic then you will need to register and login first.

TO REGISTER: At the top left of the screen it will say "Welcome Guest. Please Login or Register", click on "Register" and the registration screen will be displayed.

Username – This is the name you will use to login \ logout of the board, please use your first name and at least the first character of your last name ie "BobS".

E-Mail – This needs to be a valid email address that you have access to, it will be used to notify you of your registration process and allows personal messages to be sent to you. **IMPORTANT** – If you do not tick the box "Hide email address from public?" then it will be available for all members of the Forum to see.

Choose Password \ Verify Password – Please use a secure password, not your username, or your surname. .

I Agree – Click on this box and then on the Register button to submit your registration.

You should receive notification of your registration by email almost immediately. Once your registration has been confirmed by a board administrator then you will receive another email and this will then allow you to post to the Forum.

TO USE THE FORUM: Click on Login and enter the username and password that you used for registration. You should then review your profile details and settings, click on "Profile" towards the top left of the screen – From here you can modify all aspects of your account and notifications. Look through the settings on the left hand side of the screen under Modify Profile.

If you need help, either post a question on the Forum or email the Forum administrator for help.