



# PADDLE

·1981·

·HELSINKI·STOCKHOLM·OSLO·



Wave after wave pounded across the bows, slapping the small, yellow craft into a sickening roll. Captain Roland struggled manfully with the controls trying to keep the boat on an even keel but the outboard was ineffectual against such an onslaught of wind-whipped waves. Wallowing helplessly, walls of grey-green water towered ominously on all sides.

"If one of those breaks over the boat....."

With water washing around my knees, I grabbed a handy dixie and baled for all my worth. Cutlery and small items of baggage, once carefully stowed, flew everywhere.

"If another one of those swamps us, well be goners," I thought.

As we went down for the third time, I remember thinking: "You'll pay for this, Henderson! I must have been out of my mind to agree to this!"

"This" was just one of the episodes from the Swedish leg of "PADDLE 81".

PADDLE 81, brainchild of Ernst Davies, erstwhile friend and once colleague of Frank Henderson, set off on July 9<sup>th</sup> from Helsinki on its epic 600 mile voyage across Scandinavian waters to its final destination, Oslo.

This was an international event aimed at raising money via sponsorship and the sale of souvenirs for a holiday scheme for disabled children and formed part of the Nansen International Children's Centre contribution towards the Year of the Disabled.

Taking part was a group of proficient and

experienced canoeists from many European nationalities, ably supported (often in the face of insurmountable odds) by a brave band of what could only be described as equally international lunatics. F.H, Ro Floyd and yours truly fell into this latter category.

The organization of the event was somewhat intermittent to say the least, though this produced more high spots and excitement than might otherwise have been encountered.

Although the publicity side did not realize its full potential, the population of Southern Sweden must now gradually be becoming aware that Paddle 81 passed through their neighbourhood as they find the many notes and stickers left attached by various members of the party to lighthouses, trees, garages, signs, lock-gates, marker buoys (and girls!!), elks, and several other obscure rendezvous points.

Unfortunately, not all offers of sponsorship were forthcoming, though an extremely valuable one, in terms of morale boosting alone, was the Bounty sponsorship. Not only did the company donate £2,000 to the cause but supplied the expedition with enough Bounty bars to give the 12 canoeists one each every day for the following 3 years. It was due to this that the trip was rechristened "The Bounty Run". Without its daily "taste of paradise", I don't think the expedition would have covered such distances as the canoeists managed in the time they did. They certainly wouldn't have got through that night spent without tents or food — quite a disastrous start to the Swedish section.

But that's another story .....

"The Journey Out - Innocents to the Slaughter."

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July → Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July 1981.

Up at 5am. Never knew such times existed! All kit packed night before. Mark Thomason (one of the canoeists) stayed overnight with us at '53'. Frank arrived at 6am to pick us up and Roland Lloyd, who was also on the trip in place of Wally. We travelled up to Uxbridge on A40(M), where we picked up Don Riddle, a disabled canoeist, from his Ruqslip home; the van now had two canoes strapped into it - one double, for which the Unit had raised quite a bit of money, and Don's single. Don can walk with the aid of sticks and a caliper on one leg, making him quite mobile.

Arrived Felixstowe around midday and relieved ourselves before heading for ferry (Torline). Drove on almost straight away and having packed van below decks (headroom just enough with canoes!) we made our way to the cabins - Ro, Frank, myself & Don in one and Mark sharing another one deck below. Settled down in one corner of Cafeteria waiting for food time. Boat left c. 1:40pm and at 2pm ship's facilities opened up. Roland and I made straight for the Restaurant for the cold table luncheon (Smörgasbord) and indulged ourselves 'til contented (i.e: bloated!!). We still had packed lunches to eat, too!! Toured ship to clear systems - weather overcast but so far dry. Remainder of day spent in chatting (Don was really tied to one spot) and occasional trips out on deck. Ship very crowded - not to our liking - but some of the "views" very worthwhile. Finished evening with a spell of watching the roulette wheel & blackjack table. The croupier at the latter could have dealt my pack all night!!

Slept to the deep thrumming of the engines right through to 9am - no daylight entering cabin tended to throw us out time-wise. Due to mix up in communications, only Roland went off to main restaurant for gargantuan brekkers but I was fed to queiring for meagre café rations. Afterwards, we toured ship again and got in some stores from ship's shop (Jameson's Irish Whiskey - 1 litre bottle, for the drinking of). Lunched in café and at 2pm docked in Goteborg in now pouring rain. Eventually cleared customs etc and got underway on E3(?) to Stockholm.

Countryside similar to Norway but the "feel" of the Norwegian vista was somehow missing. Farmland with big barns just like Norway. As we came along E3, weather dried & brightened. We reached Stockholm around 10pm in evening sunshine and made contact with our contact at Stockholm Station: - 2 Dutch people in blue Ford transit covered with Paddle 81 stickers and avertizements. (later introduced as Joanna & Jaap).

Taken to campsite and met the rest of the Dutch contingent: Johan Timmes (Jaap's brother), Karen Wierda, who had started off in Helsinki on support group but after a days travelling in the motor boat vowed to remain on terra firma for the remainder of the trip, and Eline Achterhuis - an elegant blonde with enchanting smile - who appeared to be attached to Johan but as soon transpired would attach herself to whosoever took her fancy at any particular moment.

What information R.E. Paddle 81 each of us knew was exchanged (took about 5 seconds!) and after tea and cookies we retired to our tents - Roland, Frank

and myself making first inroads into bottle of Jameson's.

Arrangements had been made to use a local canoe club's clubhouse, so we left campsite around 10 am, Roland & myself taking a canoe each by water the 1½ - 2 kms. to the clubhouse. Quite an experience, my first time ever in a canoe. The clubhouse itself was quite a posh affair - boathouse with clubroom, kitchen, showers, sauna and changing rooms and veranda upstairs. Main canoe party, we learned, had been held up due to bad weather in Baltic but should now be arriving sometime today. Canoe club members popped in & out during our stay to train and no doubt have a look at this PADDLE 81 expedition. Besides our group and the Dutch group, John Court was also jetting in to join the expedition and Frank went off to pick him up from the airport. John had, in fact, just finished at the canoe world Championships at Bala in Wales, where he had coached the British team to some honours (though not sure if they didn't win their particular section - K4, I think?)

Late afternoon the main party arrived and much hugging and joviality took place and later formal introductions were made. It didn't take long for the clubhouse to be turned into something more resembling a refugee camp with tents, washing lines and washing and semi-naked people littered all over the place.

FOR SALE : 400 T-SHIRTS - ALL SIZES - 'PADDLE 81' MOTTO;  
APPLY : F. HENDERSON , STRS, GLOUCESTER.

A further extract from the diary of:

"A Journeyman in Sweden".

Our arrival at Stockholm Central Station in a white Bedford van laden with canoes and plastered in PADDLE 81 stickers had the desired effect - we were ignored to a man. Where were the expectant crowds, abuzz with excitement over the arrival of a contingent of the international, Trans-Scandinavia canoe expedition? Should they not be pushing their way forward, eager to buy up a souvenir tee-shirt, 400 of which had been concealed in every available nook and cranny of the van? (to "avoid any unnecessary problems at the Swedish customs").

Too tired from our 2 day trip from Gloucester to ponder over the absence of any advance publicity (something that was sadly lacking over the next couple of weeks) contact was established with the Dutch group, who like us were joining the expedition at Stockholm, and we made a somewhat circuitous trip out to the camp site.

This was only a temporary residence for the next day we transferred to the premises of one of the many Swedish paddle clubs, whose boat house and surrounds were put at our disposal. Here we met up with the main party (delayed by bad weather on the Baltic) and the clubhouse soon took on the air and appearance of a refugee camp as wet kit was spread to dry in the warm summer sun, canoes repaired and fresh supplies brought in, sorted and repacked in the expedition's 2 support boats and 2 vans.

Everybody made full use of the splendid facilities available for there was no guarantee that during the following weeks regular campsites could be found every night. It was here that yours truly was

introduced to the delights of the sauna - in true Scandinavian style !! (i.e. mixed !!!).

Those 2½ days of almost party atmosphere, where canoeist and support groups were altogether in one place did alot to create the spirit of camaraderie that was invaluable in conquering the trials and tribulations which beset the expedition in the following fortnight.



Stockholm Paddle Club's Boathouse

Home for 2½ days!

∞

One such episode avid readers of VENTURE 44 will already have read. Another happened immediately after setting out from Stockholm.

"We had been told our route across Sweden from Stockholm to Grottemburg was along the Göta canal. What could be more idyllic, we thought, than meandering along still canal waters enjoying the beautiful sunshine of the Scandinavian summer? Our illusions were, however, quickly shattered when the group diving the two support





The English Contingent - a Motley Crew!  
John Court, Ernst Davies, Mark Thomason, Roland Lloyd,  
Frank Henderson and Don Riddle.

ad

vans overland, "lost" the canoeists and their two support boats. 'How can one lose such a flotilla of craft on a mere canal?' you might ask. Well, the Göta Kanal for over half its length traverses several lakes, two of which, Vättern & Vanern, are more like land-locked seas, and the stretch from Stockholm to Söderthölje follows the Baltic coast for some 50-60 miles, providing plenty of opportunity to hide between islands, headlands, in little bays and the like, all completely inaccessible from the road. It was in this region that the 'misplacement' of the canoeists occurred. If the organization of PADDLE 81 had been previously suspect, this 'losing' of the canoes and their support boats brought home to everyone its complete absence. The idea was for the two vans to drive on ahead of the canoeists and as well as arrange a suitable

campsite also try to get much needed press coverage and sell souvenirs in towns through which the expedition would be passing, no mean task since none of us spoke Swedish!!

This particular day, Frank and myself were driving one of the vans and we were to keep a lunchtime rendezvous with the canoe flotilla to pass on details of that day's publicity and campsite arrangements.

In brief, unbeknownst to us, the canoe party made such good time in the morning that they arrived at the lunchtime rendezvous point 2 hours ahead of schedule. They elected to press on but left no notification for us that they had already passed through (This could have easily been done by either one of the support motor boats remaining behind or else leaving a message).

Assuming that they had over-estimated their capabilities, or worse still, had come amiss and been forced to halt, we tried to back track their route - a task made difficult by the wooded shoreline and lack of roads down to the water's edge. When suitable vantage points were found, many frantic minutes were spent scanning the water for the flash of canoe blade. Local Swedes were quizzed in a mixture of pidgin English and sign language but to no avail. The canoeists were nowhere to be seen. Lack of fuel forced us to return to the town where our other half had been left to effect repairs to the expedition's main van. We left behind us many a bemused Swede, convinced the English were truly a race of lunatics. They certainly won't forget Paddle '81, for we left stickers, messages and directions stuck to any prominent object near the waterside.

This missed rendezvous would not have proved



The beautiful + enchanting  
Eline .

too serious if it hadn't transpired that somehow all the tents, cooking equipment and food had that day been packed into the two vans. The two support boats accompanying the canoeists did not even carry an emergency food supply or shelter.

When the canoeists tired and put into a small, secluded bay, any hope of our making contact with them disappeared. The only chance was to be in the right place at the right time should either of the two motor boats come looking for us.

With the onset of darkness, though, there was nothing else we could do except return to the campsite ourselves. So having notified the local authorities

of the "missing persons", we turned, somewhat perplexed and worried and without any supper ourselves!

The next day dawned bright and sunny except from under our cloud of gloom, we didn't notice it. Once again, our net of contact points was set up and two of us took out a rubber dinghy to search all the neighbouring inlets, bays, etc. We were set for a long day. We needn't have bothered - within two minutes of setting off, we literally ran into one of the canoists, who directed us around the headland into a tiny, little bay, where some of the others were still sitting huddled around a still-smouldering log fire; a rather weary and subdued band they were, too. I didn't have the heart to tell them that for the sake of five more minutes paddling around the next headland, they would have run slap bang into the campsite. (How they missed seeing the camp's illuminated floating theatre - or bothering to investigate it? - remains another inexplicable (inexcusable!?) mystery).

Needless to say, the inevitable inquest was held over a very large breakfast later that morning and the rôles of the on- and off-shore support vessels re-examined. This was just as well for some of the weather we ran into later on nearly saw the canoes and their support vessels marooned on an island for several days.

As it was, poor navigation, lack of sufficient spare fuel, combined with bad conditions, nearly saw us "shipwrecked" on some rocks in the shallows of lake Vanen. But that's where this account started.

The Morning after the  
Night Before!!



FOOTNOTE : It was after this "cock-up" that F.H. took to wearing an extremely dark pair of shades and frequently retired behind a book of crossword puzzles, trying to appear inconspicuous in his PADDLE 81 tee-shirt and flippers. Only the promise of a visit to the local Konditori (cake + tea shop) to sample the Swedish speciality of Råkem - prawns, laid with various degrees of artistry (depending on price) on a bed of salad, egg and mayonnaise all piled on top of a thick slice of buttered, confectioner's bread - could draw him out of these solemn moments of solitude and invariably,



lunchtime break beside canal lock.  
in middle of civilization

straight into an animated discussion with Karen, our frequent Dutch companion in the van, whose mastery of the English language (albeit with American accent!!) was quite formidable.

Yes, the ups & downs of Paddle 81 affected everyone in the party one way or another.

Most obviously, the Dutch group, who at the drop of a hat tended to drop everything else for a quick skinny-dip and dive (and we thought the Swedes were forward!!). On such occasions the English members all stood

around discussing trivia like the weather over a cup of tea, while trying to look unconcerned and as completely detached from the rest of the party as possible, while flabber-ghasted and somewhat indignant passing locals gazed incredulously

on as the bare facts of the situation were revealed before their very eyes.

This exposure to such open frankness soon took its toll on the traditional "stiff upper lip" - our "typically English" olympic coach, John Court, took to wandering about camp on sunny mornings with just his Y-fronts on and carrying a washing up liquid bottle (why the squeeze bottle, we were never quite sure); and even Michael, our very reserved and quiet spoken Scottish cook was seen one morning sitting on a rock at the lakeside, covered head to foot in only a lather of soap-suds, singing raucous melodies of his highland home (something about a girl called Heather).



PADDLE 81 display and souvenirs.

Michael & Karen attempting to persuade the local population to part with their kroner in return for various souvenir items.



Lunchtime break 'au naturel'  
(and the swimmers usually were!).



Stockholm — Sweden's beautiful capital.





## The Canoeists.

(from left to right & front to back)

**Johann, Jane, Ilse, Jan, Mark,  
John, Don, the two Danish boys  
& Peter the singing Dutchman**

**And with Ernst Davies  
in the orange support vessel one**





Rear Admiral F. Henderson  
making inspection of  
British support vessel.  
Captain R. Lloyd invites  
him to board & partake  
a tot before setting off  
on an intrepid voyage  
into the Swedish unknown.



Don Riddle



created  
told  
Early morning start:  
Roland, Don &  
Eline in support  
vessel 2, manoeuvring  
out of the reed beds.

quiet  
sitting  
to foot  
melodies  
(and Heather).



Roland and Ilse pause for a photograph during  
one of the less hectic parts of PROUD 81.



John Court, squeeze  
bottle in hand, sets  
off for the daily ritual  
of the early morning  
ablutions.

Jane  
the water nymph



