

Autumn and Winter 1998

Monday 10th to Tuesday 11th, August

The largest tides of August were forecast as only two stars by the Environment Agency, though it gave a perfect opportunity for uncrowded surfing. This was the first time that I had actually surfed the bore, and the anticipation as the roar of the wave can be heard at a great distance down at Newnham is extremely foreboding! No-one else was out on the river except Donny and I and we both caught a few rides over short distances, and looked forward to the bigger bores in September.

Monday 7th to Thursday 10th, September

Matt and I had an early start at 'The Severn Bore' for this months session and the reputation of the bore was immediate as we met up with a group of travelling Germans who had specifically stopped in England to ride the bore before heading on to surf the Irish coasts. The first day saw some good rides by a couple of the guys - Marcus headed a long way around the bend at the pub and ended up getting out on the opposite side to his camper leaving him stranded for quite a while. While Oli got a good mile ride at Over, and several of us rode from just above the Parting to the bridge. It's so wicked as a whole array of cars and campers speed up the A48 from spot to spot to get there before the wave, then burning through fields and sliding down the mud banks - quite an experience!



On the second day, Matt and Oli rode a good mile and half from below Over right up to the weir itself where the bore is finally forced to back up in its course. Disaster nearly struck as they both had to dive for the bank and clutch at trees to narrowly avoid being dragged into the weir! Matt repeated this on the Thursday but was fortunately given a lift out by Dave Lawson's speed boat. Once again the river was fairly empty over the period except for the occasional canoeist and a couple of the local guys turned up. It was cool meeting the German crew and seeing them all so stoked after the first day that they ended up staying longer than planned.



Tuesday 6th to Friday 9th, October

As Autumn crawled in and the water temperature dropped, the highest tides of the year pumped through this month. Tuesday saw a small turn out of surfers - Matt, myself and the two Phils (and the entire Glos canoeing club!!). Good rides were had by all on a wave that was reaching five foot off the banks. Matt even got covered by the lip at 'The Severn Bore' - the first time we'd seen any kind of tube!

With the only predicted five star of the Autumn roaring through on Wednesday night. Under the full moon night Matt and I attempted a boar chase and managed to catch it at four different spots. It looked monstrous under the night sky, and man I was looking forward to the next morning.

Wednesday morning was the largest rideable tide (daylight tide- in fact I had heard a rumour that one of the Phils was out the night before under the full moon!?) we'd had so far this Autumn, and a lot more people turned up to get in on the action. Including our top pro longboarder Chris 'Guts' Griffiths, who was doing a bit of filming, and a few of the Welsh (Langland?) Crew.



'Guts' certainly made the point that anything can be done on the bore that can be done in the sea (if you're good enough). Apparently he nose-rode right the way through Maisemore!



Hundreds of people turned up to watch the bore at Over, and parking was minimal as all the surfers rocked up from down river and parked wherever there was a curb. The crowd got a good site with both a big bore and half a dozen surfers cruising under the bridge.



Thursday was a pretty similar size wave, and I was totally stoked to get my longest ride yet at Newnham - dead chuffed considering I was riding a 7'6" mini-mal that is not the greatest long distance rider. The board, the same board I had learnt to surf on, was unexpectantly hurled into the trees at Minster. as I was sucked under, all 'cause I was too close to the bank. The poor stick was shreaded across the middle. Alas! At least I didn't drown, as it felt at the time like I was under for ages. It certainly taught me a lesson on the dangers of Bore surfing! Guts' who returned for a second day was also pretty p.o.'ed as he was interfered by canoeists at Minsterworth and then had his legs uprooted by a canoeist just before Over Bridge. We have it on film and it was a nasty wipeout. There is a big problem with canoeists losing control like this but it's everyone's river, I guess!? Of course the worst thing is that once you are off the wave that's it, unless you have a boat!



Matt yet again was rippin' it up all week with some long rides and some impressive control and manoueveres. He would certainly have got the title for best Autumn surfer (if such a thing existed!)



Wednesday 4th to Saturday 7th, November

With Donny back from his Autumn travels we were both up for some serious bore riding this month, but were gutted by the continual rainfall and floods at the end of October that caused the river levels to rise to bursting point. This meant Bores would be very unlikely. My surfin' buddy Danny had even taken the Friday of work to drive up from Kent to have a go. Anyway, on both Wednesday and Thursday evening Donny and I chased the wave up river to see if there were any positive vibes. We managed to watch it at six different spots between Newnham and Minsterworth - involves a lot of country lane driving! There was a spot we found on private land (Sorry! Can't mention the location!) where we could certainly hear something breaking about two hundred yards below, though it was too dark to tell exactly what.

Determined to catch something, Danny and I went out on the Friday morning, and with the go ahead from a very welcoming farmer, paddled down river and waited against the bank. As we saw the Bore approach in the distance we could also make out a surfer (Dave Lawson?) so were hopeful. But then it totally faded out and he dropped off about a quarter mile down from us.

However, I guess due to a nice large sandbank, and the amount of fresh water, two hundred yard below us the bore jacked up to form a fantastic face (about six foot) in the middle of the river. I caught the wave and it took me about 800 yards up river on a really smooth clean face - I couldn't believe my luck, except the walk back to the camper was long.



We went on up to Over but the river was flooded over the banks so there would be no bore coming through. We had found possibly one of the few spots that day that a face had formed, and Donny

reckoned it was the biggest (non-bank) wave he had caught on film so far. The next morning Danny & I went out again, but the wave was smaller - I missed it, being too far out, but Danny got a cool ride and was well pleased. Other than Dave Lawson we saw no one else out on the river that month.

December

With yet more rain throughout November (wot's going on?) we were sceptical of any bores in December but Donny, Matt and I had a crack at Over on the largest of a small set of tides. Matt sat down river from us and managed to sneak a ride to the bridge on the tiniest little wave tucked right up against the bank.

Nothing for us however! Oh well, bring on the Spring.....

Outlook

It has been rumoured that with the lunar cycle passing the Bores are steadily going to drop down over the next few years, and the forecasts posted for '99 aren't entirely favourable. But after the experiences of the Autumn we believe there is always a potential for a bore ride of some sort, whether on a face or white water - it's just awesome to be surfing a river! And there are plenty of uncharted spots on the river stretch still. There maybe some small rides through Feb after both Full and New Moons, and they will grow through the spring. Expect the biggest Bores of the year to occur in April (conditions being well - please stop raining!)
