

Summer 2000

Well there is one great advantage of having a year of small tides and that is they are similar size right through the summer! This meant lots of evening surfs, lots of beers and a whole load of fun! Even the board shorts were coming out by the end of August! It also means a lot to tell, but I will try and keep things short and fun!?

Sunday 2nd to Monday 3rd, July

With the solstice only just gone and the tide due around 20:30 at Newnham there was plenty time for a couple of evening surfs on small tides. The river levels were looking pretty low after a dry spell.

Sunday night The Wizard, Drop Down and Twinkle Toes just reached Boats slab in time where water was barely 3' deep. The wave disappeared completely on bend only to hit the bank and rise to several feet in the space of a few feet. Quite a nice ride which was finely complemented by a glassy 3 foot shoulder at Jaws in the dusklight and a couple of ales and some nuts at Grumpy's Gaf.

Monday morning saw similar conditions at Boats and Toes scored the face for a fast(ish) left only to lose it cutting back! The Silver Surfer also out and scored his longest ride to date deciding to pop-up at the moment he was about to drop into the Bowl - held it admirably! At Jaws they were joined by Stiff Hands with a camera man in his boat. Bit of show for camera. Lovely!

With the evening came the crowd. Seven at Boats again with Drop Down, Stand-Fast, The Wizard, The Silver Surfer, Toes and a couple of others. Toes repeated his morning shame and had to tackle a roller coaster paddle over shallow western banks. The Wizard casually hopped off on far bank and wondered home east. Drop Down decided to take the paddleless option and rode across the lagoon. The Silver Surfer had partial success with new mal and other kid got his first stand-up ride. All stoked I think.. Roll on August!!..



Monday 31st July to Thursday 3rd August

The tides start to grow a bit this month and the river levels are looking really low. Could bode well for some of the reefs???

Monday evening and the crowd gathered again at Boats. The Silver Surfer, Drop Down, The Wizard, Twinkle Toes and a couple of Toots' mates. The Wizard bagged some face to carve his plank. One of the welsh guys managed to paddle back in behind Toes and Drop Down on the following Bowl peak to their inside!? Rode it across to the bank and while Toes and Drop Down had enough trouble stepping into the channel the welshies chased ahead and disappeared into the distance on a smallish Channel shoulder. The Fab Four continued upto Jaws to be met with a dusky slab breaking out beyond midriver. Beers again and Grumpy was...., well, grumpy really!

Tuesday morning and The Silver Surfer and Toes decided to try the channel. Weak, small, slow and long gone by the Inn. Jaws was dropping in size and they both took an early bath!! A first summer trip to Over followed and man the river was low with all the boulders out at the Slipway. With so little water off banks the wave peaked bang on them but backed off quick into the deep midchannel. Oh well!

PM and the crew gathered at the caf early. Indecisions ensued over where to surf and the eventual conclusion was the channel

" 'cause if we come off we'll be right by the pub! ".



So off everyone trundled to the White Hart carpark. Five minutes later The Silver Surfer, Drop Down, Standfast, The Wizard and Toes were cautiously following Buffalo down the slippery steps observing the exact spot at which Buff took a pearler. Another large gouge in the side of his rail! Midway down the wave gathered up and broke with a three foot shoulder. In no time the six were riding on up past the Inn with a couple more guys on the outside on a decent wall with a solid push. Buff carried it the furthest to Garden Cliff, but everyone was grinning in the pub especially those that had just scored their longest ride.

Wednesday am The Wizard offered Toes and Standfast a trip around the eastern shores.

Bore was running 15 min late by now which was a good thing for Toes arriving dubiously late at Boats. The Wizard managed to manouvere a bit on a larger than normal face in middle before Bowl. Then the wave rippled off to the sand (something different there??) and the three hopped off upriver.

First call was E-Land, a large sandbank covered by shallow water deepening to east bank. Wave was choppy with a strong tail wind blowing and squally weather but the ride was fun and Standfast was snapping.



Then came the legendary Cloudbreak and as the wave arrived , the wind dropped, and it put on a fine barrelling display on the corner. Stiff Hands was boating it and rode the bank while Toes and The Wizard rode out and back on a wave for near a mile. Bit too tight on the bend! Long walk back. Standfast meanwhile had a meeting with his maker as his leash got snagged up and he struggled under water to unleash. Was quite shook up by it all, but soon returned to the water!

Thursday morning Toes nipped out alone on a smaller tide and with light westerly breeze had a small slow wave in the Channel and clean two footer at Jaws.

Tuesday 29th August To Saturday 2nd September

This is when the fun really kicks off! With Red Devil Films around hoping to catch some good footage, a near full complement showed out through the week. Even Funky Feet and City Girl made the long haul from the east country. Again the river was verrrry low, and the pressure was gradually falling as a front moved in through the week.

Show kicked off Tuesday evening in the Channel with a surprisingly small turn-out, The Wizard, Funky Feet, Toes and City Girl, also joined by two other locals (Steve and mate?). Wave was smaller than end of previous month and nearly 20 min late (!), but all rode round to boulders in darkening sky, City Girl's new record! A few ales followed in the dim recesses of The White Hart, as The Silver Surfer joined us (late for a change!?), and the film crew ran their first reel.

Wednesday am The Wizard took out his boat and the other four headed for the channel, joined by The Frogman (aka Tranny Traveller) with his waterproof camera and strange looking lump of foam and cardboard! Andy (Toot's mate from June) was out below and rode a lovely wall above the kink with a very fine display of surfing but sadly(!) lost it just below. Toes and Frogman took it furthest with Frogman filming lots of 'nothing'. Except for a fine last minute of underwater gurgling as he was churned against the boulders where the water was just too shallow to continue! He lost a lens, cut his knee and no doubt dinged his board. Still, stoked to be back on the wave! Toes likewise rumbled with the rocks and lost another layer of glass from his board (who's got some wax then?) but all in a good cause!



Too much standing around meant a swift paddle to make Jaws on time where The Wizard joined in. Classy face again, followed by some mud slidding antics in the attempt to clamber out while the filmies were poking cameras through the hedges! Over Bridge, the sun was shining, and the boardies came out, though The Silver Surfer took it to extremes ditching the rashie as well! Quick wave on shallow banks backed off quickly again and Ten Feet failed miserably at attempted headstand.

The afternoon was spent doing a quick stint in hollywood followed by a mighty fine bbq cooked by an aussie! Sleep wasn't hard with dreams of the morning supertide(!?).

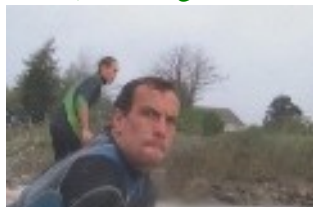
Morning was a bad start, well a non-start for Pegasus (the winged serpent). But eventually everyone made it in time to the lower channel, Funky had to paddle for his life to get there! Buff was back and this time he had

gone board shorts (brave!) for the whole chase. Standfast was back from Barnie too, along with Funky, Toes, City Girl, The Silver Surfer and a couple of new comers (Rob and Will) perched a little bit further up. Should be busy. Lots of canoeists on corner too but they had trouble on real small wave. It peaked below the crowd and everyone was off with Buff stealing the show on the shoulder for the camera fly by.



The crowd dropped one by one beyond the pub. The Silver Surfer, after a 1/4 mile struggle with a canoeist's paddle, not the canoeist though(!), succumbed. Buff lost it in deep water with a hoot from Funky seeing his chance to move in and practice those cross-steps. But strangely his funky feet failed him and he was defeated too, leaving Toes and Standfast heading for the cliff. After a few near misses, Standfast eventually slipped off the back of the wave, paddled out at the Strand, and promptly ran back to the pub, getting there before most of the others! Toes meanwhile headed on into the unknown dark depths of Garden Cliff as the wave began to gather force and started producing shoulders in the range of 3-4 feet, with a solid wall of roaring soup! The ride was long and tough in a lot of churning white water, but relief was felt when in the distance he made out a little black figure and a couple of boats. It was The Wizard and the Red Devils! Eventually traversing around 2.8 miles before his muscles gave way, Toes did not want that walk back and safely crawled his way into Wizard's boat!

(The Frogman Was Out And Here Are A Few Stills Of The Trip As Far As The Cliff - Click To Enlarge)



So while the others contemplated what to do about Toes he happily enjoyed a wave at E-Land and a quick thumping at Mud Banks, with The Wizard strutting his stuff and deciding to start riding the wave backwards instead!! At Jaws it was change over and Funky joined The Wizard while Toes hopped in The Silver Surfer's soul wagon. Dings occurred as Standfast, The Silver Surfer and nearly Buff plowed bankward off the wave! Oh the Jaws wave, well again a few more of the Frogman's shots:



While everyone waited around Over, Toes wondering where on earth City Girl had gone with poor ol Peg, Funky Feet got to see some of the classier breaks along the river. A couple of good rides were found and The Wizard conjured a recovery headstand for several seconds to the camera! Buff and Standfast took the short lived Over straight, while Toes and The Silver Surfer went for the Home Run, with a crowd of canoeists. Good wave mind excepting the boat wake, with Funky and The Wizard too travelling upto Maisemore and the end of the journey. Oh City Girl was found, but she had a long drive to view the scenery in search of the Toes!

Next morning, Drop Down was back from Devon with Hong-Kong-Tony and his sponger board. The Silver Surfer and Toes also in the channel. Wave was really small (more water now) and almost ripples upriver but in prone position everyone stuck with it. Drop Down eventually called it a day, H-K-T tried to run ahead on the banks but just too quick for his flipper feet, and The Silver Surfer got hurled down the falls in the gnarly 10" rapids on the crossing shallows. Toes sticking with it finally got 3' face up through the Cliff, and seeing The Wizard in the distance decided to surf through again. Big waves right through but a couple of scary deep wells could have meant a long walk back. Again a quick boat trip to Jaws. E-Land similar and while The Wizard rode right around Mud Banks, Toes experienced a true vertical dumping on the bend (formerly Donny's). Drop Down avoided a near collision and missed out on Jaws but the others loved it especially HKT. When The Wizard joined everyone on the Home Straight to the Weir, we all learned he had just cracked a four miler non-stop. Don't know he he could still stand up, but then The Wizard is the pro!

Finally on Saturday morning, Toes and the mighty Buffalo nipped out alone on a much smaller tide for a last, more peaceful, surf. The tide was still pretty fast moving and the wave was similar to thurs and fri upriver. Channel was small though, but good rides were had, and Buff rode the trailing wave right through Jaws, while Toes tried it on the Home Run, and came a cropper.



Well a fantastic couple of months. Sunny weather, low rivers and some really fun tides. Even a couple of bigish faces occasionally. The Red Devils were pleased with their footage and watch out for a mighty fine short film out next year sometime! Also on Sat am Toes hit his 100th ride on the river, so was pretty stoked, and being a statistical geek, even calculated that in 5 days he had ridden 16 of 18 attempts, and clocked up 17.7km - that is a lot of surfing! Hate to think how far The Wizard flew on his magic carpet!?

Similar tides again the end of Sept, but the current unsettled weather may affect fresh levels a bit. But small fresh could be classic. Sounds like more film crews will be around too so smile for the camera...
THE END (Phheewweee!)

(ps apologies if i forgot anything but memory was starting to dwindle a bit by the time i got to writing...)



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