

Spring 1999

Wednesday 3rd to Friday 5th, March

Once again (!) the start of March was affected by heavy rainfall. High river levels left no bores at all up stream of the Horseshoe Bend (just surges). Undaunted, Donny and I (Tomo) headed for Boatyards on a wind and rain swept early Wednesday morning! We were hardly able to see the river ahead of us in almost horizontal rain and were distraught to see the bore appear to our right hand side (off the sandbank), and unreachable in the strong currents. The best we could do was sit and wait for the tide to take us back up river!!! Undaunted by this humbling river experience, we headed straight back out the next morning giving plenty of time to get well down river before the wave arrived. Donny sat well below the bottom boat and was rewarded by a perfect shoulder forming with about a five foot face. I was so busy hooting as he came hurtling towards me, that I totally forgot to get in position and found myself trapped in a large wall of white water, which tumbled me about fifty yards up stream!

Finally we decided to watch the wave at Broadoak on Friday to get an indicator of its performance on the Newnham stretch for mid month. There was a seriously low barometer reading that morning, and high freshwater levels. We witnessed the largest wave that we had seen in this stretch, as a face of approx 7-8 feet loomed up off a newly formed sandbar below the Nab! It was phenomenal and then went on to peel crisply both left and right for a good couple of hundred yards before sectioning and finally dyeing in the deep channel. This was a unique experience, and the wave was clearly visible to the naked eye although a good mile away - if only we had surfed!!! It showed the true variety in the wave occurrence of the Severn Bore, that this could happen at the Nab where the river is still wide, while up at Over, the bore was just a surge as the flow changed direction...

Thursday 18th to Sunday 21st, March

Mid month arrived with much excitement. The largest bores so far of the year were due on Friday and Saturday. However, as stoked as we were to have a beautifully sunny week, the high pressure that refused to go away was gravely detrimental. Thursday was a case of small rides on small waves for Donny, Matt and myself. On Friday a few more surfers showed up. Down at Newnham we joined up with Dave James, one of the guys who was surfing the bore back in the 80's before interest died out, and Matt (I guess) persuaded him to join us down at Boatyards, where we also saw the appearance of another surfer, a guy apparently from Surrey. The shock came as we discovered that a huge deep channel had appeared over night across the river where the boatyards wave normally should run! Disaster loomed for the potential ride. The guy from Surrey caught it first and was soon joined by Dave who nipped across on to a nicely formed shoulder. Soon we (five of us) were all on it, and soon enough the wave died in the newly formed channel! That was that! We decided to try out a new spot above the Bore pub which was

unsuccessful, while Dave zapped off to Secrets and rode a nice little 3 footer for 1/4 mile. At Over the wave seems to be pretty weak at the moment (unable to carry through the bridge!). But a fun ride!

As the weekend came, so did the Glos canoe club. Donny and Matt were away. I went out on Saturday off Newnham car park, joined by Dave and a lot of canoeists! For the first time all year a wave formed and carried through Newnham to Broadoak, and this should be substantially bigger in April, weather holding! Dave rode up to the pub where he had come from, I fell off!! I was stoked though to get a 250 yd ride at Over, on the river all alone with a good 100 people on the bridge watching! (Play to the crowds!!!) I nipped out alone on Sunday too, and saw a few of the Bristol crew at Newnham, though they didn't go in and I didn't see them further up river (But different spots I guess.) It all went pear shaped for me as a canoeist rattled into my side out of control whacking against my ribs, and then without an apology disappeared on up river. This has immobilized me for several days now and I have had continual pain. Please canoeists make sure you can control your boat before you go out on the bore! It's just too dangerous otherwise AND it happens far too often!! Even so I worked my way up river and caught a fine ride at Donny's on a four foot face, with Dave Lawson in his ducky along side, and ditto at Over, where again I had the river and crowds to myself!!

Yeah the wave is definitely picking up as the big spring tides approach, and we are starting to see more regular happenings at the traditional spots than in late winter, though Minster is still a bit odd! April should be cool, but as much as I pray for Hot Sun (!) perhaps we could do with some cooler days around the weekend of the 17th-18th and low baro readings would be wicked! Roll on the 17th, and we understand that the Welsh Longboard Club are going to be making an appearance that weekend. Could be busy, but lots of good surfers out. We look forward to it guys!...

Thursday 15th to Monday 19th, April

Well, what a month this has been! We have never seen so many people out on a single wave at Newnham, and many other history making events happened....

The club started out on Thursday evening, where enough light allowed a ride on the smallest tide of the weekend at Newnham. Donny, Tomo, Matt, Danny and Fee all had a fun time on a little wave that showed good prospects for the weekend. And Matt was content to ride the best part of a mile beyond the White Hart Inn.

Friday morning we were privileged to be joined by 'Guts' Griffiths and The Gill with his water proof camera at Newnham. Matt, Tomo, The Gill and 'Guts' cruised 1/2 mile together crammed on a tiny shoulder with Dave further across, with all sorts of fun antics - including 'Guts' near decision to pick up his unleashed board and walk across the other three to the face. Fortunately he changed his mind!! One

by one we toppled, and 'Guts' was eventually left with the face he had been wanting! At the same time we believe Fee made history by becoming the first female to ride the bore standing up for a short distance. If anyone can dispute this then let us know! She was so stoked, and amazingly has only surfed twice in the sea! We all decided to give it a stab at Minsterworth, where all year nothing had happened. Bad decision, as the wave jacked up and hurled us into the bank! Doh..Dave meanwhile had chosen well, and nipped down to 'Secrets' where he had a long ride on a nice 3ft shoulder. Over was small and only picked up by Tomo and Dave, who had picked the correct bank, for a 300 yd ride to the bridge. Then it was back to Matt's for coffee where he flashed out his new camera that impressed the Welsh guys so much, they all went off into Glos to get one!!

Friday evening we had just enough light again and a few of the Welsh Longboard Club had also turned up at Newnham. Again Matt had a wickedly long ride, but this time credit goes to Gillie, who rode a short board right passed the pub! (Perhaps the longest ridden wave by a female?) Dave and Tommo had a fright when they realised they had ridden across to the far sand bank and were caught in an unpaddle-able current. It took a long time to get through it and they were extremely disheartened as they watched one of the younger Welsh crew charge against the current on his knees! After the surf we all rolled up to the Severn Bore Pub for drinks with the Welsh crew, Toots, Al, Tony and the rest.



Saturday morning was a farce! When Matt wandered off down to the little sandbank at Newnham he was promptly followed by 15 other surfers! They lined up like the start of a jockey race. When the wave came it was hilarious. A few made it through the original scuffle and we watched one of the younger Welsh guys use up his bag of tricks as he claimed the face. Gillie not content with her previous ride, disappeared beyond the pub into the distance, much to Matt's panic, who in such a hurry to go and find her forgot to tighten his board to his roof! Ding city!!



With most of the visiting surfers heading for Minsterworth and 'Wipeout Lounge' we decided to slip off to 'Secrets', where again (u guessed it!) Matt picked off the wave and disappeared around the bend for an impressive ride! When we reached Over, having fought through a million and one cars on route, we heard all the tales of mass wipeouts at Minster! Chaos again! At Over there were at least twenty odd surfers in the water. This did not bode well as we knew the wave was not great and positioning was

essential. For some reason, as the wave came close, everyone headed into the middle of the river, while Tomo, who had been sitting out there, moved back to the bank to the perfect spot. He pretty much had the face to himself as he moved across the wave, with Dave on one bank and Toots on the other bank also riding upto the bridge - BUT alas, no further..! Last year the bridge was no problem, but this year it has become totally elusive!

Sunday morning saw another huge gathering at Newnham to witness a strange phenomenon! Although the tide was hardly any smaller than Saturday, the wave failed to form until it had passed 'Jaqui's Reef' beyond the carpark, leaving everyone bemused except for a lucky sponger who was up river, caught it and headed towards the White Hart. 'Secrets' again for us, and Tomo and Matt together rode the wave around the bend, chatting as they went, content with the peace and quiet! As they paddled back, they saw Danny zap past in one of the boats, having firstly had a tussle with a bank and then been offered a ride!

We soon found him on the road beyond the Severn Bore, board in hand hitching a ride to Over!! We heard that the rest were prepared at Minster this time and Toots and a few of the crew got good rides past the pub and up the straight. Again a large number of surfers gathered at Over, and while Toots narrowly missed being dropped in on by a fridge, his mate was caught underneath and fortunately just managed to get his leash off. Close shave! Watch out for those fridges!! On the other bank it was the BRC that weaved through the masses, with Matt, Tomo and Danny all getting a ride, along with one of the Welsh crew. When a canoeist suddenly appeared over Tomo's board he was content to give a push and watch the guy spin off the back! Matt hitched a boat ride up river to Maisemore, where he too had a rather rougher tangle with a canoeist and a short ride.

It was great meeting all the Welsh crew and we were pleased they all had a good time. Look forward to seeing you all down at Longboard Classic in May! But it was amazing at the chaos on the water, with so many boats, canoeists and surfers - it was a surprise no one got really hurt. Dave Lawson was out too over the weekend, and respect to the true 'Guru' of the bore!

On Monday Matt and Tomo had the river to themselves once again. Newnham was again weird as hell, so they didn't bother to get in! At 'Secrets' they went a bit further than the previous day on a slightly smaller wave. And at Over, with the knowledge that they would not make it through the bridge, Tomo decided to get cocky, and pulled off a five second headstand down the face to the delight of the 12 people on the bridge!! (History again??) Tomo has now clocked 26 rides for the year so far and is on course for his target of 50!

It was certainly a hectic weekend but it all added to the fun of the Bore Experience. Good to hear a few other guys (Alex and Mate(S)) who we had failed to meet up with, also had a wicked time. At the end of the day, the experience of sitting in a river with a wall of water heading towards you is like nothing else!
Roll on May!....