

Spring 2000

With the Proxigean Tide occuring in July, the spring equinox bores were the smallest for seven years, with only a single ten metre tide occuring at the start of May. If nothing else, the small EA forecasts kept the crowds away and the river was deserted other than the regular crew. Apparantly(?) the wettest April on record led to a total wash out for the month and similarly the March New Moon suffered from high river levels and small tides!

We were pleased to finally discover that the 'Legendary Orange Beanie Man' was none other than former distance record holder Steve King! It was great to finally meet one of the most experienced river surfers, having surfed Secrets with him for several months...

Monday 20th to Wednesday 22nd, March

A bit of a dry spell in the middle of the month meant the river level was low which was beneficial for the small tides, and the channel at Newnham was only 50 yards across!

Waiting for the go ahead from my nurse to get back in the river, I (Tomo) missed the bores on Monday and Tuesday.

Matt and Dave made it out on Tuesday and joined by Steve at Secrets rode an unexpectedly large bore that walled across half the river at about 4 feet enabling each of them plenty of space to turn and manouvere. The wave formed down towards the pylons and was the largest at Secrets of the year - quite surprising considering the tide! However the wave backed off on the bend fairly quickly which seems to becoming a regular occurance.

On Wednesday morning at Newnham I got back in the water for the first surf in six weeks, along with Matt, Phil and a couple of Welsh guys (who we had to persuade to get their suits on!). The performance of the wave probably made them wonder wether it was worth it! A high pressure was over the channel and the winds were blowing light northerly. We watched a solid four foot peak at Boatyards which soon sectioned out though. With the lagoon narrowed by pertruding sandbanks on the eastern side, the wave held a line towards the Newnham channel. Matt managed to get a wicked drop-in as the wave peaked at three foot in the top end of the lagoon before wrapping around into the channel. But the wave diminished pretty quickly leaving Matt scrambling with Phil and the Welsh guys to fight for a one foot shoulder that not only tapered off quickly but was breaking at an angle towards the sandbank. I had decided to stand upriver to wait for the wave to reform. Luck had it I was in the right place and got on a similar size shoulder now heading straight up the channel. I was briefly joined by one of the Welsh guys who had legged it up the sandbank and actually got ahead of the wave (it was moving fairly slow), but he soon

came off again in the shallow foaming whitewater. As i reached the White Hart the wave formed a long 2 foot right which was pretty nice but soon backed off beyond the pub! Well stoked to have a good ride first attempt back!...

When I finally got picked up by Matt I was shocked to hear that Phil had stood on something that had gone through his rubber bootie into his foot! The poor guy was in agony and Matt took him to hospital to get it checked out! Now, over six weeks later, Phil still can't walk on his foot and apparantly is shortly going to have another operation! And what caused the damage....? Most likely a hook or a reed, but it shows the dangers are not just in the river but can be on the bank as well!

I went on up to Secrets where along with Dave rode a solid 3 foot face that had peaked several times down river. The wave form was lovely walling out into the river and especially clean and glassy. We rode it to the bend where again it backed off!

Wednesday 3rd to Saturday 6th, May

With April washed out it was a long wait for the May full moon bores. Sadly, a bit of a communication breakdown occurred with our computer's hard drive being blitzed and out of action for a couple of weeks. So we failed to arrange to meet up with a couple of the guys, Liam and new-comer, Dave (Birch). We heard that Dave turned up an hour late at Newnham on Saturday but was planning on checking it out Sunday and Liam headed for the coast! Donny and I decided to watch a couple of tides first to see how the river had changed following major shifts in sandbanks throughout April.

Wednesday evening we watched the bore from the church at Newnham (an excellent view of Bullo and below) and were surprised to see how much water was still in the river, with the Newnham channel nearly twice as wide as it was in March! Nothing much happened at Bullo (though the tide was small), but we saw a small, continuous wave from Boats right passed Broadoak. It would appear the lagoon is still fairly small and not affecting the wave too much.

Thursday morning the river had dropped a bit and I saw a similar wave from White Hart Inn, then for the evening tide Donny and I watched Newnham and raced on up to Garden Cliff. At Newnham an impressive barrel at about four feet formed in the bowl before entering the lagoon - it looked quite impressive! Then at Garden Cliff we were surprised to see a new channel formed up the east bank while the west (north) bank's channel hit a dead end on the sand! The wave looked pretty spectacular from the top of the cliff (a great viewing spot) with three different shoulders, one in each channel and one over the dividing sandbank! The wave didn't slow down much pushing over the large banks either.

Friday morning I decided to attempt the impossible and get in that barrel at Boatyards Bowl for a photograph. This was the largest tide since February, again with a high pressure over the country and northerly winds around force two. The wave broke across the river well down below the boats and as I drifted down towards it realised it was a solid three foot of white water and moving really quick! The wave hurled me out in front when I first picked it up. As it passed over the deep channel below the nab, a

shoulder shot to the east sandbank and I managed to get up on it. As the wave began to peak into the bowl, I turned to get the line for the barrel, and got the shock of my life to see the face reared up at head high in a long section feathering in the offshore wind! For a moment I forgot I was on a river and not in the sea, but realising I would get thumped regardless of any barrel, I bottled it and swung my board forward to hang on. As the wave sectioned I got hurled out in front of the wave and managed to gather my board and stay in front of the wave! With much exertion and a lot of dragging in the sand on a much smaller wall of whitewater I managed to cut across the lagoon into the Newnham channel surfing prone, but came a cropper on the gnarly one foot shoulder as it broke at right angles to my line flipping me off my board! The wave up through Newnham appeared to wall across the channel at a couple of feet.

So, I decided to have a stab at the evening bore up the Newnham channel. The bore was due at nine but was about 15 minutes late, and I couldn't see a lot by the time it arrived. Apparently Donny saw someone attempting to get the wave down at Boats, perhaps it was Liam??? I managed to pick up the wave just as it straightened up in the channel and rode as far as the pub where I lost the wave attempting a cheater five! Probably the best ride I have had on the river with a lovely face breaking both left and then right at about two feet. And the fact it was nearly dark, there was no-one else around and I was in a river made me pretty stoked for the rest of the night! As I was getting changed, Dave (James) rocked in on his way to Gloucester not having realised there were tides - that communication breakdown again!

On Saturday morning I surfed at Newnham again alone with my brother watching for the first time since he was a kid! 'New' Dave missed by an hour! Similar wave but slightly smaller, and I came off attempting a manouvere that just wasn't possible before reaching the pub! On up to Secrets and I was pleased to see Dave Lawson in his boat - I figured the wave must have been pretty good the day before for them to be out and this was a similar tide. As the bore came up another boat arrived, and it was Steve who hopped out by me while Dave headed further up. The wave, regular as clockwork, pitched up around the bend and broke off the bank at about four foot. Lacking e-mail at the time, I thought this was a good moment to mention the June BBQ to Steve so we had a chat as we rode along. I was so busy talking that I failed to notice Dave trying to get into the wave off the tapering shoulder, a near impossibility. I could have moved in to give him a better face but totally missed him! Sorry!! Then the next I knew I sunk my nose on a bit of boat wake and flipped under, narrowly avoiding taking Steve with me! It died on the bend and Steve and Dave headed on up river in their boats.

Got e-mail from 'New' Dave who got a short ride on the wave at Newnham on Sunday which broke at about three foot up past Boats and about two foot up the channel! Not bad as the tide had dropped right off. Must have been something to do with the planetary line-up perhaps??

Unfortunately there was going to be the opportunity to see top international longboarders, Wingnut, Jay Moriarty and Cody Craig surfing the bore in May, as they are in the country in conjunction with the Welsh Longboard Classic. But the only tide in the period is the May Full Moon, one of the smallest spring tides of the year with very little chance of a wave. But maybe next year (?) and you can still catch Jay and Cody at the Classic on 13th-14th May (standby 20th-21st) at Llangennith beach.

Now, the next surfable tides are at the start of June on the New Moon, and it looks like a few of the guys from the Welsh Longboard Club are going to come up. We are planning on all meeting at Newnham on Saturday evening to surf and then have a BBQ afterwards (weather permitting). This will hopefully be a good opportunity for all the local crew to get together (hope Phil's foot recovers!), especially those people who we have failed to meet up with yet.

As far as the forecasts go, the tides are similar to this months. A dry spell in May could narrow the channel at Newnham and make for a better wave. Could be a bit of a squeeze with everyone surfing, but there will be plenty of choice with the Newnham channel, Boatyards and even Bullo for the more adventurous! Oh best to bring your own tucker for the Barbie!...

Courtesy Tom Wright, Copyright 2000 boreriders.com