

## Late Spring 2000

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*Due to the number of stories there are to retell from this short weekend of bore surfing at the start of June, we have decided to give it its own section. Also pictures for the month are included and you can click on these to enlarge.*

In brief, there was no chance of a surge as high pressure engulfed southern England but prevailing south-westerlies gave a slight push, and the search was on to find some good waves. Probably wisely, the Welsh Longboard Club did not show (there would not have been enough room for everyone!), but we were pleased to be joined by one of their main men, Toots (aka Paul Preedy), for the weekend, and a couple of his mates, Simon(?) and Andy for one session each. The east-coast crew, Keith and Dan (Dwarfie) were down, and we finally got together with newcomer Dave B.



We also finally got together with Steve for a surf at Newnham, and I think he enjoyed it as much as everyone else, even after 18 years of experience!! There were lots of old stories to hear as well...

[Waiting For The Bore, from left...Dan, Dave, Tomo, Toots, Steve and Keith](#)

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### *Friday 2nd June*

Friday morning I (Tomo) decided to nip out and survey the potential for the weekend and Matt complied as the *guinea pig* and hopped in at Broadoak and drifted down towards the encroaching ripples! Yes, it was real small looking, though a reasonable peak had formed at Boatyards. The general layout of the banks had changed dramatically since May, with a huge chunk cut away below Collow Pill, preventing any surfable wave anywhere below Boats. Likewise, the *lagoon* was large and it was evident that a large volume of the tide-head would disappear to the wrong side of the channel! Oh well! Mind the river level

was surprisingly low considering recent rainfall and remained constant through the weekend, which meant potential!?

So, the first sign of a wave in the Newnham channel was a small 6" shoulder breaking towards the spit of the sandbank. It was over a 200 yds up the channel before it finally straightened its course and started to wall up. Matt had been hanging in prone on the piddly shoulder but now was up to his feet. However the wave continued to pull towards the bank and die in the middle, then reform (similar to refraction though recurring), so Matt was up and down like a sprinning 'Roo!! Even though the wave was so small, I began to get slightly concerned as he disappeared into the morning mist somewhere towards Garden Cliff! Unable to see him get out I decided to race on up there in *Pegasus* to pick him up. After searching the narrow lanes I resolutely returned to the White Hart totally prepared for what I would see...Matt drying off with a big grin on his face. He did nearly reach the cliff (over 2 mile ride!!) and had decided to walk back around the bank! Doesn't say a lot for my vision!

Friday evening the real fun started...

The tide was slightly bigger than the morning with a slight sw breeze and the barometer sitting around 1010mb. Quite a crowd of us amassed at the White Hart in preparation, Dave, Dan, Keith, Liam and me, with Donny on camera duty, and Steve leisurely soaking up the sun on the sandbank, having walked out from Arlingham. Poor ol newcomer, Dave B, had arrived late at Newnham, paddled out there, and as we drifted down we had the amusing sight of him three times chasing ahead of the wave, then paddling only for the ripples to wash over his back! I think the picture (by Mr Birch) shows it all!



Dave B chasing the tiny Newnham shoulder (Courtesy Mr Birch)

As the wave reached us it had grown to a daunting foot and Dan, Steve, Dave, and I (narrowly avoiding running Liam over in the process!) hung on for a ride back to the pub. In fact Steve seemed so locked in with his monster board (10'6") that I reckon he could have quite easily mosied on round to Garden Cliff. On the outside shoulder I seemed to be spending more time paddling to stay with the wave than soul surfing - mind Keith and Liam had to paddle back what they had just walked down! I was exhausted by the time we crawled out to find a sniggering Toots on the bank having seen such an hysterical display!



So, off we all went to Secrets. We might have kept this place a Secret but we have created the crowds ourselves and with seven of us sitting in the water waiting for a small tide, I knew this was going to be a hard battle!!

The wave appeared around the kink and showed reasonable signs of walling up to a couple of foot. I a moment of inspiration and totally against Dave's better judgement, I paddled down towards the wave to try and pick up the outside. But the wave that was building just didn't *build!* Steve and Toots (now suited up) put in the paddle work and earned the shoulder which tapered off from a good two foot. Dave had heeded past experience and sitting well up he joined the other two after a brief battle with turbulent white water. The wave went around the bend and Toots was there until it died off after another couple hundred yards.



Good old Secrets, true to form! And Toots seemed pretty stoked! At this point there was only one place to go - 'The Severn Bore'. Steve had no clothes with him, because he was planning on paddling back across to his van at Arlingham on the ebb, but the lads soon produced a scattered garb! There were a few distraught faces when the pub declared they had stopped serving food. But he couldn't refuse those hungry faces and was soon digging out some ham, egg and chips which filled the hole.

After everyone had dispersed, Dan and I gave Steve a lift back to Newnham only to send him off into the darkness with what appeared to be a fast flowing ebb! (Don't try this at home!!) We couldn't believe it to here the next morning that he had got out right by his van! Then it was our turn to seek out food, ending up at the Cinderford kebab house...Mmmmmm!



## *Saturday 3rd June*

With the tide peaking in the evening, a light variable breeze and a median pressure, there was only one place to head Saturday morning and that was Boatyards... For once Dan, Keith, Liam and I made the early rise (even though Liam attempted to sleep in a very confined space!) and we joined up with Matt, Dave, Toots and another of the Welsh crew, Simon(?). Before this, only Dave, Matt and I had been surfing at one time at Boats. Evenso, everyone picked it up, except poor old Keith again. The wave peaked at a couple of foot well out from us in the river and we all had white water for much of the ride. Dave, furthest out, got the shoulder first but it soon died under him. Surprisingly the wave did not pitch in the bowl, and we all resorted to hanging a sharp left prone across the *lagoon* to make the connection. It wasn't going to happen and as we ground on the sand, everyone charged for the bank to get ahead of the wave. Simon was first there and held on in the shoulder for a short distance up the channel. I tried but had the same experience as Dave B on Friday, and the others decided to leave it!

Toots and Simon headed on to Minsterworth to give more room at Secrets, which was wicked of them, while Dave had to shoot off. But only Dan bagged the wave, along with Steve who was using the more accessible boat option. Similar size again but just walled up slowly.

With the general exhilaration of the bore chase we thought what the hell and headed up to Over to have a look. Things were looking up, the river was well over a foot lower at the banks than last time we sat out here. True to form though it walled up slowly, and there was not enough face for Toots, Simon and Matt sitting further down. Especially as Dave Lawson was already tucked into the bank on at the critical point. I paddled like hell and was surprised to feel the board propelling and as I popped up I realised the next obstacle was Liam in front. Again just managing to avoid him I hung in only, to my surprise, to see him also pick up the face and pop-up! Liam's board is only 8' so I don't know how he planed in, but boy was he stoked afterwards. The ride was short but it was good to see Over starting to work again. And Steve also picked up the wave on the west bank for a couple of hundred yards - haven't seen that since spring 1998!

Saturday evening we had arranged to BBQ it. Dan, Liam and I were feeling worse for wear after an afternoon surfing the strong tidal push at Porthcawl. But Dan found enough energy at the last minute to get the food in - good work! While Liam decided to take it on at Broadoak again, Dave, Dan, Keith, Dave B, Toots, another mate, Andy, Steve and I headed on down to Boats. The wave was pretty identical, but slightly bigger and a much more pronounced ledge formed in the bowl. Only Keith failed to pick it up, and the rest of us rode the whitewater like *The Magnificent Seven*! There was a bit of rough and tumble as we went along but we all managed to keep each other in the wave.



We had a new obstacle to face in the form of our newly acquired waterman - Donny and his waterproof housing. It certainly gave a new angle on things and we got some good stills.

Dave and I, hanging-in on the edge of the shoulder, lost the wave entering the bowl, while the others once again surfed over the lagoon towards the sand spit. This time it was Andy who chased the wave and got a decent ride on up the channel. Liam meanwhile was too far out at Broadoak to get into the wave and soon returned to Newnham with BBQ in tow. As we stood around chatting someone pointed out a black blob on the sand bank, east side, way up towards the bend. We all suddenly realised that Dave B, who was on the inside at Boats, had got caught in the current and been carried a fair way up river! He eventually made it back to the car park and seemed too stoked with the ride to be bothered about the paddle.

Again we decided to split-up up-river, and while Dave, Toots and Andy went to Secrets, Keith, Liam and Donny prepared the barbie, Steve suggested he show Dan and I an *extra special* secret. This spot we can only name 'X'. It is somewhere between Newnham and Gloucester - good luck!! And, man, it was wicked! By the time the wave arrived dusk was becoming dark, and we barely saw the face pitch up to near four foot in a huge section. Sitting out in the river Dan and I both had plenty of space on the face to move around or just feel the power of the wave at this point. This wave will be awesome when its big again! The guys got a good rise at Secrets too, and Toots went further, nearly reaching the bend to the lower Minster straight.

After all the rushing around everyone was well hungry, and it was great to arrive back to a sizzling barbie. We may have gone overboard on meat slightly, but there was plenty to go around and plenty of time for some of Toots' classic stories - especially one involving a beer drenched encounter with Nat Young, caused by Guts perhaps!?! The night finished with a showing of Donny's footage from the day by which time everyone was dozing and Keith (after all his paddling) was long gone!

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### *Sunday 4th June*

This time, we were late!!! Dan was so knackered he decided to meet us at Secrets, Liam shot on ahead, and Keith and I leaving last minute decided to head for the White Hart. This left Boats to Dave, Dave B,

Toots, Matt and Liam. Liam unfortunately had to endure the paddle back, while the other four surfed up and over the lagoon again.



The wave really pitched up in the bowl and Dave got a real shock as he was swallowed up with a mouth full of silty water!



Photos Courtesy Mr Birch

This time it was Matt who ran on up the sandbank. In fact he ran so far up ahead of the wave he got onto it as it began to straighten again, and only about 50 yds down from Keith and I who *really* wanted that shoulder. Fortunatley for us Matt was so knackered that his legs gave way as he popped up!

After many attempts Keith's time had finally come! He was up and riding fairly quickly, while I sat out on the shouler where it was hard work. Keith was riding for over 2 minutes, hooting away and waving his arms. The only words to describe it: 'Very Stoked!!'.



When Keith came off I had gone prone, but soon had some more face and was up. In fact this went on for sometime until I realised I had gone far beyond the pub. At this point there was a bumpy section of rapids where I struggled with churning water and sticking fins, but held on and reached the Strand bank and headed on up towards the cliff. I lost the wave, but it peeled on up river, a couple of hundred yards before the boat, and with a big grin got out to start the walk back.

This is when all chaos broke loose! Matt and Keith came to find me in *Pegasus*, I walked back, hitched a lift with Donny, we passed Matt and Keith heading back, we stopped, they didn't, we turned around, passed them again, we stopped, they didn't, we turned around, we passed them again, we just headed on to Spot X!!!! All very confusing and it meant that Dan turned up to find his board in my van somewhere(?) and by the time he had retrieved it it was just too late! Guttled. I on the other hand did alright out of it and got in at X to be joined by Matt and Steve (en boat).

Dave Lawson was also in and another of the older crew on a buoyant windsurf board. The wave was a beaut (but slightly smaller), and we had a great ride with Steve putting in lots of turns out in the middle on the face. All Dan could do was watch. Oh and I very nearly collided with *The Frogman* who got some great shots again!



The wave at Over was messed up a bit by the wake of Dave Lawson's boat as they sped by to pick him up! But Matt and Dan pulled into it, and Steve took the far bank again. Fairly short, but Dan I think was slightly relieved!

Come Sunday morning the non-locals had all headed home. Everyone was pretty stoked from a fun weekend, and this left Matt and I planning on meeting Steve at Boats for last evening surf. By 5:00pm I was absolutely shattered. Two very late nights, endless surfing, chasing and driving had killed me and I resorted to filming Matt and Steve as they rode a lovely glassy face up river. The river was like a mill-pond and the wave was lovely and clean. It really pitched up in the bowl and thumped down behind the guys as they hung on but backed off fairly quickly! Steve said his goodbyes and headed east while Matt drifted back up towards me with yet another big grin!

Well, I know it has been a long convoluted rambling, and I'm impressed if anyone's made it this far. But the stories have to be told, and this has been one of the better weekends we have had on the bore hunt. The bore doesn't need to be big if you have a good crowd out prepared for anything...

Great one guys! Catch everyone in July perhaps. Small but surfable!?



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