

Firth. In addition, I kept outside the central shipping lane for most of the time.

Big waves not too much of a problem in a RR – after all they are designed for them.

That's me paddling down the Awe in spate in the 1970s. I capsized in the wave and rolled up shortly after. Wouldn't be trying that now.

Note relatively low heart rate of my training and racing, when I am mostly in red and orange.

See below, on the right, for comparison: 8 miles in a Surf Ski on canal five days earlier – flat out. 77 minutes.

Damage to body: None whatsoever. No aches and pains, no numb bum, no sore arms, no blisters. Went for a paddle two days later – no problem at all. Only damage was skin abraded on the side of both big toes with having to use the T-bar so much in the last two hours. I always paddle with bare feet.

Concluding remarks

Was it worth it? Yes and no. Pleased I was able to sustain over 4 hours in difficult conditions, but the Firth was far too tricky to be enjoyed. So, mixed views. Won't be doing it again for sure, but why not give it a go in quieter conditions? It's a lovely paddle, and you don't have to be daft and race down it like me.

See more data to following.

Tide and weather on the day. I set off at 6.35am. High tide Stirling is an hour after Leith (5am).

Surf Ski and Marlin River Racer. Both 10kg, same width at the cockpit and roughly same stability.

I can sustain 10 kph in both in calm conditions, although the Ski is slightly faster. Twenty years ago I could sustain 11 kph in the Marlin.

Note fastest current at the Kincardine Bridges, where the river narrows. Variable speed in the Firth depending on how difficult the waves were, and decreasing with the arrival of low tide an hour before I finished.

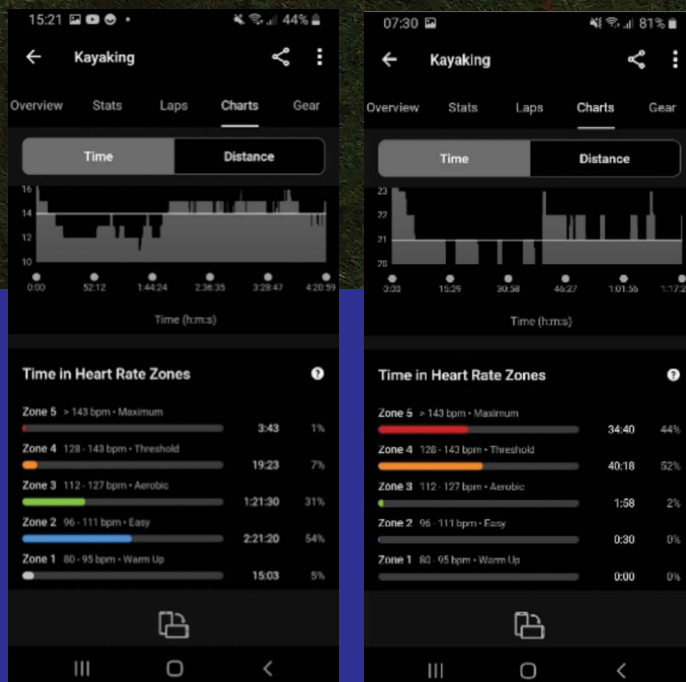
Max heart rate of 149 is about right. The rough rule of thumb for max rate is 220 less your age, which gives me 142 bpm.

Isn't the heart an amazing organ!

Andy Morton

A guide from Stirling to Cramond, all of the river in this article, is included in *Rivers of Britain*. The August 1999 guide in *Canoeist* covered the Falkirk shore from Kincardine to Cramond. My Kevlar river racer was built for the 1979 world championships and has since had an additional skin over the hull as it was getting rather flexible but I can still lift it with my little finger. – Ed.

Racing kayaks for the sea, 10kg each.



Low heart rate training and high rate racing.