

second door on the right beyond it and a member of staff would come out. I paid my £5 when she did but was not offered a receipt. In the circumstances I thought it better to have one and it was written out longhand for me on a scrap of paper.

The scheme is being run by Serco. Living in the southwest, I rarely need to use the Dartford Crossing, also managed by Serco, the last on the Thames, the next upstream being the Woolwich free ferry some 15km upstream on the South Circular. Others are less fortunate, even some heading to Holme Pierrepont from the southeast.

While all significant Scottish bridges are now toll free, as is the Prince of Wales bridge between England and Wales, the situation is different in parts of England. The two tunnels and a bridge which make up the Dartford Crossing were effectively paid for by 2003. The toll was increased by a third in 2012 and as much again in 2014 when the toll booths were removed because the money could not be raked in fast enough and was resulting in congestion. There is information on display about the Dart charge, to be paid by phone, and mention of the London Congestion Charge, which may not make sense even to those who speak English as that zone is above Tower Bridge, well over 20km upstream. Lack of anywhere to pay suggests there is no need to pay and lack of anywhere to stop to check adds to the illusion. The crossing is used by 160,000 vehicles per day, 5% of the drivers of which do not make the payment by midnight the following day because they do not have phones, the ones they have are not operating, they do not understand or they just forget. Thus, they incur an initial fine of £35 on top of the toll, if paid within 14 days, to be recovered otherwise even from drivers in Europe. There is little sympathy if you give your card details to a scam crossing website. I recall having to go home a day early to get to my computer to pay the charge by the cutoff time. For drivers who do not have an online presence there are some other obscure ways to pay, details available online, but you would not want to rely on Royal

Mail to deliver your cheque by the following afternoon and you would not want to forget, like so many. The crossing is free from 10pm to 6am so, presumably, there must be a regular bottleneck of traffic on the M25 slowing in order not to arrive just before 10pm with a corresponding rush to get there before 6am.

Do the maths. Compare the income from fines with the £70,000,000 per year from tolls. Perhaps the attitude at Holme Pierrepont will be different.

World Games qualification

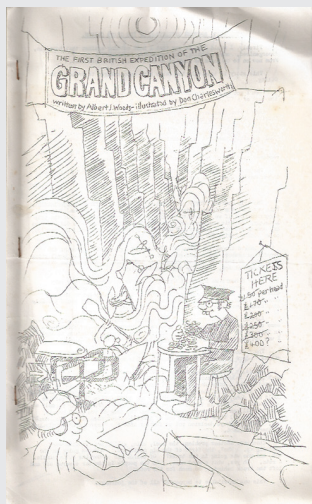
The World Games in Birmingham, Alabama, next year will include the first marathon event. Teams will have a single K1 in each of the male and female classes, up to a maximum of 20 kayakers. Britain has qualified a starter in each class, who will also be able to take part in a short distance race. The events will be on Jul 11/12th in the Oak Park Mountain State.

Polo will be at the Birmingham Crossplex venue over Jul 14-17th. Qualification was to have been decided on the world championships in Rome in June. France, Italy and the Netherlands have secured men's and women's team places for Europe with GB the remaining women's team and Spain the last men's. Notably absent are the Germans, who have dominated the competition since it was started in 2005 with five of the eight wins over that period.

Rachel's latest move

Rachel Smith has joined maritime medical experts Red Square Medical. A qualified paramedic, she is now using her medical, marine and marketing skills together. In the past she has been the Bank of Scotland's marketing manager for marine finance, has worked for the Hydrographic Office, has rowed the Atlantic and has been our prolific dragon boat racing correspondent.

Back then



50 years ago

* Written by Albert Woods with cartoons by Don Charlesworth and prepared by Midland Canoe Club, the humorous long report on Chris Hawkesworth's British Grand Canyon expedition was issued as a supplement to *White Water Magazine*.

20 years ago

- * Anna Hemmings and Helen Gilby took the women's K2 gold at the Stockton world marathon championships, Anna's second in two days.
- * Peter Bland, on a course umpire's boat at the world sprint championships at Poznan, put his blazer on to follow each race, as required by ICF rules, but removed it because of the heat each time while returning to the start. The event's opening ceremony let off 1.2t of fireworks but the Brazilian's hit upon economy by buying a Trabant as cheaper than hiring a real car.
- * John Court used his Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship to visit exotic parts of the Pacific with the intention of using outrigger canoe racing for the disabled.
 - * Cleveland Metroparks regained their world record with a raft of 776 canoes and kayakers.
 - * The EA warned that there would be floods on rivers if they relinquished control of navigation.
 - * The Outdoor Industries Association ran a £100,000 advertising campaign to get the country back on its 'feet' in the aftermath of the Foot & Mouth shutdown, despite the fact that former slalomist Andrew Maxted was their marketing and development director.
 - * Southampton Boat Show included a steep white water rapid with paddlers on flow to 2m³/s.
 - * Our guide to the River Waveney included the canoe launch platforms installed as part of the river's new access agreement, which the Government were to ignore when imposing their own inferior 'agreement'.
 - * John Griffiths coached the British women's and mixed crews to beat China at the fourth world dragon boat championships in the USA.
- * Peter Bray paddled solo and unsupported across the Atlantic on his second attempt despite numerous storms.
- * Malta Canoe Union paddlers achieved the first one day kayak circumnavigation of Malta.
- * Percy Blandford recalled getting into trouble with the Post Office for stuffing his local postbox with his successful PBK plans.
- * Sweden was offered as a destination with no tides, predictable weather, multiple islands and the ability to land almost anywhere.
- * The French authorities declared a boat with length:beam ratio exceeding 10:1, such as the British Nordkapp at 10.4:1, was a beach toy and it would be illegal to go more than 300m from shelter.

