



Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race 2019

PRESS RELEASE

Fowey River Canoe Club aims for victory in epic race

10 April 2019 – A small canoe club numbering barely 40 members in Golant, Cornwall is aiming for multiple wins in the annual 125 mile Devizes to Westminster (“DW”) International Canoe Race this Easter.

Fowey River Canoe Club won both the Senior and Junior crew trophies at the Waterside Series, the four preparatory races held on the Kennet & Avon Canal in the run-up to Easter.

Success in the Watersides is the best indicator of form among paddlers aiming to win DW, reputedly the toughest canoe race in the world.

Dan Palmer and Peter Wilkes from Fowey are racing in the non-stop Senior Doubles class, leaving Devizes on Easter Saturday and planning to arrive at Westminster Bridge in Central London on the early morning tide on Easter Sunday.

Meanwhile, Matthew Collinge and James Drage, both 18, destroyed all comers in the Junior Doubles class, beating the next placed crew by more than one hour in the final Waterside race, which runs 34 miles from Devizes to Newbury.

In the Senior Singles race, which like the Junior Doubles class, tackles the Devizes to Westminster race in four stages over the Easter weekend, Fowey member Michael Southey is aiming for first place.

Club coach Brian Greenaway said the Cornish team is well placed to beat a field that includes many overseas entries with canoeists this year coming from Australia, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and the US.

“On paper we are looking good this year,” Greenaway said. “We’ve worked hard as a team since October and everything is coming together well.”

Training for DW, as the race is colloquially known, is long and arduous. The race includes 77 portages around locks on the Kennet & Avon Canal and the River Thames, which means running is an all-too familiar part of canoeists’ training schedules.

“It’s a lot of hard work over many months, with long interval sessions on the water, gym sessions and plenty of running,” said Greenaway. “Although we are quietly confident, we know that DW is a long race and anything can happen.”

This year marks the 54th year of Greenaway's involvement with the DW canoe race. His first race was as a junior in 1965 and he went on to score wins in the non-stop Senior Doubles and Mixed Doubles.

After retiring to Cornwall, more ten years ago, Greenaway, 72, joined Fowey River Canoe Club and has been instrumental in turning the small Cornish club into champion canoeists.

"Easter sees practically the entire club turn out for the race, either paddling or running bank support, which is essential for a successful run," said Greenaway. "Many of the support crew are mums and dads with as much race experience as their offspring."

The DW canoe race attracts entrants ranging from international athletes to the Armed Forces. Every year hundreds of amateur canoeists attempt the race but around one-third fail to finish, most defeated by the sheer scale of the challenge.

About the Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race

The Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race takes place at Easter every year and is the world's longest non-stop canoe race. Frequently referred to simply as DW, the 125 mile event starts in Devizes, Wiltshire, and follows the Kennet & Avon Canal to join the Thames at Reading. The finish is at Westminster Bridge in London.

The non-stop Senior Doubles event starts at 7am on Easter Saturday, 20 April. Completing the non-stop race is a colossal achievement. Most paddlers take around 24 hours to complete the course, not stopping to eat, sleep or rest. The non-stop course record of 15 hours 34 minutes was set 40 years ago in 1979 by Tim Cornish and Brian Greenham of Reading and Richmond Canoe Clubs.

The race started as a wager in a pub in 1948. Seventy years on, it has grown into a firm fixture in the world's canoeing calendar and open to all comers. Previous competitors include Olympic rowing medalists James Cracknell, Ben Hunt-Davis, and Guin Batten, the explorer and adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, TV presenter Steve Backshall and his wife, Olympic rower Helen Glover.

Competitors carry tracking devices and can be followed at online at www.dwrace.co.uk

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You can follow DW on Facebook ([Facebook.com/DWcanoerace](https://www.facebook.com/DWcanoerace)) and on Twitter ([Twitter.com/DWcanoerace](https://www.twitter.com/DWcanoerace)). The event website is www.dwrace.co.uk

High-resolution images can be provided on request.