



1948-2012 - Celebrating 64 Years of Personal Endeavour

April 2012

NEWS DIARY PLANNING – 6/7 April in Devizes. 8/9 April in Westminster.

Sir Steve Redgrave leads quartet of Olympians in 125 mile Devizes Westminster Canoe Race

Sir Steve Redgrave will be joining hundreds of kayakers and canoeists taking on the 125-mile Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race this Easter. Fellow Olympians Ben Hunt-Davis, Sarah Winckless and Kate MacKenzie are also pairing up to take on one of the toughest endurance events in the world.

DW, as the race is known in kayaking circles, has two-person crews teaming up to complete the gruelling 125-mile race. Leaving Devizes in Wiltshire on Easter Saturday, competitors paddle day and night without stopping to reach the finish line by Westminster Bridge in central London. Held annually since 1948, DW demands intense training and preparation for up to six months. In total over 500 people in single and double kayaks are expected to take part in the 2012 race.

Five times Olympic rowing gold medallist Sir Steve Redgrave, along with partner and old friend Roger Hatfield, will spend most of Easter weekend on the race course. Also making a shift from rowing to kayaking are Sydney gold medallist Ben Hunt-Davis and Athens bronze medallist Sarah Winckless.

It's a demanding race for anyone bold enough to approach the start line with around one third of crews forced to retire each year. Sir Steve's former rowing partner James Cracknell – and DW2009 finisher – has been giving Redgrave some advice; "Test your race food, use a narrow boat for speed, run the locks and get a support crew that will push you." Good tips from Cracknell who finished in an impressive time of 20 hours and 26 minutes, while he can't help lament "it's rubbish being unable to use your legs to the same extent as in rowing. But at least you're going forwards!"

This year's Senior Doubles race starts on Saturday 7 April. Crews will not sleep or stop to rest. They'll eat and drink entirely on the move. In DW, non-stop means non-stop. The fastest complete the course in around 17 hours, others will take around 24-hours, happy to have completed one of the toughest, open-to-all endurance races on the planet.

In addition to Olympic rowers moving to what Cracknell calls 'the dark side' and taking up kayaking, entrants have a wide range of backgrounds to take up the challenge including first timers and crews that didn't finish last years. William Borrett and Daniel Robson are taking part after years of talking about it when Will's partner Sam bought the entry as a Christmas present. Andrew Parks and

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Ash Holbrook are using the event as training to kayak around Great Britain in a record time. While Mike Crankshaw is paddling with Steve Howard in memory of much his love nephew Royal Marine Adam "Ads" Brown, killed in action in Afghanistan.

Many crews fundraise along the way, choosing their own charity or fundraising for DW 2012's official charity The Canoe Foundation that aims to positively change lives through canoeing.

The course is a great journey through the heart of southern England. Devizes Westminster International Canoe Marathon sets out from Devizes, heading along the Kennet & Avon Canal to Reading, then down the Thames to Teddington ending just downstream of Westminster Bridge.

The event takes canoeists to the limit of mental and physical endurance, battling against the steady and inevitable onset of physical depletion. It is the one of the longest non-stop kayaking races in the world.

The four-day race for juniors, singles and seniors, is equally demanding, starting on the Friday 6 April, completing the course over four stages to finish on 9 April, Easter Monday. Open to anyone over 15 years of age – many schools take part – you'll need to train for at least six months if you're new to paddling.

For more information about Devizes Westminster International Canoe Marathon visit www.dwrace.org.uk where you can follow the race online. Social media information available through Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/411361872008/> and Twitter #dwcanoerace.

A Press Pack will be issued in the week leading up to the race and available from the website.

For more information, an interview or photographs contact Peter Hutchison on at peterhutchison24@gmail.com or on 07736 424200.

For more information about the Canoe Foundation visit www.canoefoundation.org.uk

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