

CHAPTER TEN

A GRADING SYSTEM FOR CANOEING AT SEA.

By using the tables below, one may discuss whether a sea trip is suitable to a particular group of canoeists. Three factors require analysing before a proposed expedition is graded. These are:

- (a) Effect of wind on the sea
- (b) Tidal influence
- (c) The relative commitment entailed.

In the three tables, (a), (b) and (c) points 1 to 6 are given to various potential conditions which are likely to exist. These conditions must be evaluated by careful planning and preparation by reference to charts, tidal atlases, tide tables, Reeds Nautical Almanac, Coastal Pilots, weather reports and local information.

Points from each table are totalled then, by reference to table (d), an overall grade for the proposed trip may be determined. I to VI.

Besides each grade listed, the sort of experience and technical proficiency required of a group and its leader, related to B.C.U. elementary, proficiency and advanced proficiency certificates.

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- (a) Wind affect on Sea
 1. Calm easy water
 2. Mild chop or swell under 1 foot high
 3. Rough choppy waves up to 2 feet high
 4. 3 foot waves where canoeists disappear in troughs
 5. 4 foot waves
 6. 5 foot waves - difficult to keep together
 - (b) Tidal influence
 1. Little or no tidal effect
 2. Some tidal effect up to 1 knot
 3. 1 to 2 knots - progress difficult against current
 4. Tide races and overfalls 2 to 4 knots
 5. Tide races and overfalls 4 to 6 knots
 6. Tide races, overfalls and whirlpools 6 to 8 knots.

(c) Relative commitment entailed

1. Landing easy at all times
2. Landing occasionally more difficult more than 200 yards away.
3. Landing only effective every 400 yards.
4. Landing over 1 mile away
5. Landing over 2 miles away or landing impossible due to cliff.
6. More than 5 miles from shore or safe landing.

(d) Grading

Grade	Points	Group	Leader
I	1-3	elementary	proficiency
II	4-6	- proficiency	proficiency +
III	7-9	proficiency	- advanced prof.
IV	10-12	proficiency +	advanced prof.
V	13-15	- advanced prof.	advanced prof. +
VI	16-18	advanced prof. +	advanced prof. +

The following examples show how the grades may be worked out and how conditions do affect the final result.

River Conway	(a) Calm (b) 2-4 knots (c) easy landing	
	$1 + 4 + 1 = 6$	Grade II
Bardsea Island	(a) Waves choppy 2 ft. high	2
	(b) Tide 6-8 knots	6
	(c) Landing over 1 mile	4
		12
		Grade IV
Irish Sea	(a) Waves 2 ft.	3
	(b) Tide 4-6 knots	5
	(c) More than 5 miles from land	6
		14
		Grade V

The final decision on whether one should attempt a given sea trip with a certain group lies somewhere between the leader's strength, endurance, judgment, compatibility, technical ability, and experience and the weakest member of the group. Remember that a technically able group is no substitute for the leader's experience. The final decision therefore depends on:

1. The Target

- (a) Easy coastal trip (b) Estuary canoeing (c) Surfing (d) Round

headlands and reasonable cliffs (e) 5 miles off shore or along inhospitable cliff lines.

2. Ability of the group as shown above (Leader and weakest member).

3. Equipment

This must be checked under the following headings:

- (a) Personal canoeing equipment
- (b) Personal clothing
- (c) Navigation
- (d) Sustenance
- (e) First Aid and emergency equipment
- (f) Rescue aids

4. Strength

The potential strength of a party depends on an assessment of:

- (a) Strength of leader
- (b) Strength of average member of group
- (c) Strength of weakest member
- (d) Age of group
- (e) Pre-training amount, depth, quality and grading
- (f) Medical allowances
- (g) Sleep
- (h) Food
- (i) Size of party

5. Prevailing Conditions

This depends on an evaluation of weather conditions, state of the sea, effect of tidal influences, time of year and time of day.