

CHAPTER NINE.

THE BRITISH CANOE UNION ADVANCED SEA TEST. - KAYAK ONLY.

The purpose of this test is to ensure that the successful candidate has sufficient knowledge and skill to take parties on advanced sea journeys with safety. He must give evidence (e.g. log book) to satisfy the examiner that he has taken part in at least four advanced trips, and have assisted the leader in two of these. He must already hold the Sea Proficiency Certificate which he will produce at the time of testing. The test will be conducted on the sea in an advanced situation. An advanced journey is one that is undertaken on open water as defined for the Sea Proficiency Test, (i.e. moderate conditions, - not a flat calm), and involving a minimum of five hours paddling, (probably 12 to 15 nautical miles) for which the candidate is totally self-sufficient. The passage route must include an open crossing where the canoeist is committed to a minimum distance of three miles from shore for a minimum of one mile's paddling. It must also include passing through an area where tidal races and over-falls occur, and exposure to a no-landing zone (e.g. sheer cliffs) of at least one mile. Spring tide speeds for the route must register a minimum of three knots for at least one hour of the tidal sequence. Recorded wind speeds of force 3 to 4 with an average wave height of 3 feet. Where stronger winds and worse conditions prevail, necessitating an alternative route in the same area as the planned trip, the journey will count provided a wind speed of force 5 to 6 is logged by the local coastguard. It must be noted that an important factor in any advanced journey is the planning of it. The trips must have been carried out in different sea areas.

The Candidate will:-

- 1 Pack his canoe for a one day trip, including the following items:- spare clothing, repair kit which must be capable of dealing with a large hole in wet and salty conditions, packed lunch, equipment for providing a hot drink, emergency food, flares, whistle, first aid kit, torch, matches or lighter, polythene bag of minimum size 6ft x 3ft. for use in case of exposure, compass.
- 2 Demonstrate advanced surfing techniques; i.e. manoeuvring on waves forwards, sideways and backwards; rolling under breaking waves. The demonstration must reveal an ability to handle 5 to 6 foot surf competently.

- 3 Demonstrate and take charge of, with partners, a Deep Water Rescue and an Eskimo Rescue.
- 4 Demonstrate an approved method of resuscitation.
- 5 Answer questions on the following with the aid of a chart where necessary:-
 - (a) Repairs and maintainance;
 - (b) The causes of tidal streams and how to allow for them;
 - (c) The use of transits, taking bearings of known features, and the use of the compass;
 - (d) Sea conditions and effects of wind, particularly on:-
 - (1) shelving bottom (4) overfalls
 - (2) lee shore (5) tide races
 - (3) rips
 - (e) Weather forecasting from observation of cloud formations, and the means of obtaining and understanding weather forecasts;
 - (f) Group leadership and control;
 - (g) Estuary canoeing;
 - (h) Types of canoe and equipment;
 - (i) General knowledge about canoeing including competition.
- 6/ Plan a sea canoeing expedition of two or three days duration, in detail, from an unfamiliar chart in conjunction with the pilot book and tide tables. The candidate will demonstrate how to 'lay-off' a course to allow for current and/or wind.

Clarifications.

- a. The candidate is expected to lead a party; it is assumed that the party is of Advanced Test standard, and that it is not a coaching situation. You should be prepared for a group of 3 to 8.
- b. The definition of an advanced trip is not very specific. It should have the following ingredients:
 - calm conditions will not prevail throughout.
 - detailed prior planning will be required.
 - it will probably be at least 10 miles long.
 - landing will be impossible for reasonably long periods.
 - some difficulty will be involved e.g. heavy weather, tide races, shipping lanes.

Experience.

It is unlikely that a candidate presenting himself for testing with only a minimum advanced canoeing experience (six trips, including two assisting a leader) will really have sufficient practical knowledge to deal with the variety of situations that will be expected of him.

Build up your experience by going to as many different areas as possible, and canoeing in a variety of suitable conditions.

Some important points which the Examiner is looking for.

1. Good technical skill. Master your canoe in the surf and become a reliable first time roller in the waves. Practice the various forms of deep water rescues so that you will know from first hand experience the best way to get someone back into his canoe when the need arises.
2. Good and varied experience of sea canoeing.
3. Sound knowledge and understanding of sea canoeing.
4. Good prior planning, including obtaining local knowledge (coastal pilots etc.) and an up-to-date weather forecast.
5. Effective navigation and position fixing.
6. Ability to recognise signs of deterioration in the weather, and a combined awareness of your surroundings for your best escape route if needed.
7. Good group control. This means keeping the group together, but not on top of each other, and maintaining communication between members of the group. This is particularly difficult when emergencies occur. Arrange practice emergencies during training, in this area there is no substitute for practical experience.
8. The ability to handle difficulties calmly, efficiently and positively. This requires confidence which is developed through experience.
9. Sure knowledge of the limitations of yourself and your group in relation to the elements,

and an ability to monitor the state of tiredness and/or coldness of the group.

10. Full normal and emergency kit must be complete, and in first class condition.

Leadership at Sea.

In the preceding section the word experience crops up often. Experience gives you the only opportunity of discovering what the sea is all about, what your limits are, and what sort of difficulties you are likely to encounter.

The following points are worth adding.

- (a) Get your advanced test and gain all the experience that this implies.
- (b) Perfect your equipment and maintain it well.
- (c) Plan your expedition in detail and include alternatives and escape routes.
- (d) Get up-to-date weather forecasts, modifying or cancelling your plans if necessary.
- (e) Notify the Coastguards of your plans, and any emergency contingencies, ensuring you let them know of your safe arrival.
- (f) Brief your group thoroughly, and do a final check on equipment and fitness. The briefing should include route, timing, hazards, signals and emergency drills. Do not take someone else's word for the competence of a member of your party.
- (g) Having set off, keep a grip on the group, and be alert to what is going on around you.
- (h) Always operate with a reasonable safety margin.
- (i) Amidst all the formalities of leading groups at sea, try to remember to make your trips enjoyable and interesting.