



1948-2016 - Celebrating 68 Years of Personal Endeavour

Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race 2015

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DW2016 – Taking on the Olympian 125-mile Challenge of Devizes Westminster

It's an Olympic year with a summer of exceptional sporting dreams to look forward to. This Easter over 600 paddlers will be taking on their own Olympian challenge paddling the 125-mile Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race. Taking place over Easter Weekend, Senior Doubles leave Devizes on Easter Saturday take on the course as a non-stop challenge, continuing to paddle through the night without stopping and arrive just downstream of Westminster Bridge in central London.

The 2015 had the first woman in the winning crew, with the mixed Senior Doubles crew of Lizzie Broughton and Keith Moule finishing the course in 16 hours and 40 minutes, over 80 minutes faster than the second place crew.

Also on the water was TV Presenter Steve Backshall who, with partner George Barnicoat, finished with a time of 23 hours and 17 minutes and raised over £46,000 for the World Land Trust conservation charity.

Other kayakers and canoeists take on the course in stages over four days starting on Good Friday. Breaking the course down into sections only appears to make it easier, with crews having to haul themselves back into their boats with ever greater aches and pains from the previous days 34 miles.

Everyone has to take on the demands of the course. From Devizes, it's 14-miles to the first lock and a welcome portage round the obstacle. By the end of the 55-mile Kennet & Avon Canal, over 50 locks, a 540-foot pitch black tunnel and several long runs carrying the boats have made the interruptions an additional discomfort.

Joining the Thames at Reading, the river arcs north and south before joining the tidal waters at Teddington at precisely the right time to join the ebbing tide to aid the 17-miles to Westminster Bridge. The Houses of Parliament backdrop is majestic, but usually painful with the turbulent waters churned up by rivercraft.

Elite competitors are playing out rivalries across individuals and canoe clubs. International entrants add a sense of the unknown, both in ability and how they've developed their understanding of the course. Easter Weekend is the end of a winter of intense training building up technique, mental strength and team work in the boat with their partner and along the waterside with support crews providing the essential nutrition, fluids and encouragement to keep a crew battling the environment through the night.

Alongside elite crews, entrants of all ages are taking on the race as a personal challenge – one of the toughest on the planet. It is the unique combination of physical, mental and psychological demands that draw the challenge. Many endurance events push the body and challenge the mind. But crews must meet the high tide at Teddington. If they miss it, it's a 12-hour wait for the tidal cycle to repeat; many retire if this happens from sheer exhaustion. All this with sleep deprivation from paddling through the night and a risk of taking a swim in the cold waters with the slightest error that often ends a DW campaign unless there's a very good support crew working with the team.

Many entrants are coming back to improve their performance on previous year. Many crews are looking to reach their 8th DW and qualifying for the exclusive 1000-mile club.

As with Backshall, crews often fundraise as well as taking on the challenges of DW, raising tens of thousands of pounds for their chosen charity. This year the Hypermobility Syndromes Association is the Devizes Westminster chosen charity, helping to raise awareness of a handful of syndromes that massively impact mobility.

About the Devizes to Westminster Canoe race

First held in 1948, the Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race, or "DW", is often described as "the canoeist's Everest". Starting in Devizes, Wiltshire and finishing downstream of Westminster Bridge in central London, the race is 125 miles long and passes 77 locks which competitors must portage. The first 52 miles are along the Kennet and Avon Canal to Reading, the next 55 miles are on the River Thames to Teddington. The final 17 mile section is on the tidal portion of the Thames. More than 600 competitors, racing open canoes or kayaks, entered in this year's race over Easter Weekend.

Watching the Race

You can watch the race along the course. Crews leave Devizes from 7am on Good Friday and Easter Saturday. Details of good viewing locations are available on the DW website at <http://www.dwrace.org.uk/suppcrew.html>

Senior Doubles crews carry a GPS Tracking device. Details of how to follow crews is on the DW website – www.dwrace.org.uk

Press Contacts

More information is available at www.dwrace.org.uk. For more information, interviews and photographs contact:

Press Officer Peter Hutchison, Tel: 07736 424200, email peterhutchison24@gmail.com