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MAP OF EXPLORATION AREA



INTRODUCTION

PEDESTRIAN TO PILOT

Welcome to the Avon Canoe Pilot.

With this booklet, we intend to inspire and inform people to extend their use of both the tidal River Avon, the New Cut and the Bristol Docks.

Bristol is a leisure city, transformed from a post-industrial landscape over the past twenty years.

The next logical step in this process is the further extension of both use and size of the city waters.

Bristol is a unique city in the United Kingdom in that it offers adventure and extreme sports within the city. The Avon Gorge is an excellent site for climbing, canoeing and mountain biking, but greatly underused.

For example, sailing or canoeing under the suspension bridge is so rare that emergency service are often called when small craft are spotted in the water.

This is a shame.

Bristol is also unique for its city wildlife, offering plants that grow nowhere else in the world plus an abundance of rare and wonderful species of birds and animals.

It has been our aim to connect the urban centre to the wilderness of such places as Denny Island and to share this possibility with others. Imagine setting off from the city centre, navigating the challenging tidal Avon and then crossing The Severn Estuary, probably the most hazardous waterway in the world, to a small island surrounded by quicksand. No other city in the UK offers these contrasts and challenges.

The tidal Avon is quite a hazardous stretch of waterway for large and small craft alike. With some knowledge and planning most of these dangers can be transformed to ones advantage for pleasure and adventure.

Personal discipline and obedience to local and international safety standards are advisable.

We hope you find this pilot useful, and not too spoiling of your own adventures, whether they be in Bristol or anywhere involving water. Hopefully, you will also be entertained and inspired by our play, more so than reality reality. For many years I have crossed over the bridges that marry the urban territories that the New Cut devides. Like most pedestrians my relationship to the river has been remote, following desires and routes that never seek or go toward the river. My relationship till now has been one of indifference.

I lived for four years in Bedminster and crossed over from town and back daily. There was never a time when I saw the New Cut occupied, it has always been empty of vessel activity. The river seemed somewhat lonesome, other and distant. Maintaining a strange speed and brownness.

Occasionally, we would play on the bridges, often after a night out. Like every youngster filled with piss and vinegar. Back then the closest I got to the New Cut was a night when we hung off Bedminster bridge. High on mushrooms, I think... we hung by our feet with our bodies and hands dangling free. As Rachel hung we watched as her keys, money and fags fell into the dark waters below. I remember the interesting upside down view and a sense of total outrage towards the usual physical rules.

Like most Bristol folk, I have had some fun, some work and many summer evenings down by the docks. Looking over at the waters. The memorable events in relation to the docks, are few and momentary. As a dare Davey Pollop drank a pint of the docks water and was sick for a while. Finnians dad, after a World Cup glory moment, ran out of a waterside bar and jumped in fully clothed and Lucy lost her skateboard to it some years ago.

Whenever I sat by the bank, it never occurred to me to descend a ladder.

We had wanted a canoe for sometime to complete another exploration of underground spaces in the city. One evening in a pub I met Jo. She had a canoe. She was the first to take us out and finally we convinced her to sell it to us.

Now that we had a vessel to enter the water, the potential began to unfold. The apprenticeship in becoming a pilot began here in 2006.

Kayle Brandon

PILOT'S HISTORY

A PILOT MANIFESTO

The tidal Avon is probably one of the most dangerous waterways in the UK, with one of the highest tidal ranges in the world and many hazardous sand bars and rocks.

Over the centuries many ships have been lost whilst navigating it.

The unaccountable, unduly influential and overly secretive Merchant Venturers of Bristol were in control of its pilotage for 250 years.

Now, as in the past, you will not see any female faces in positions of authority in either the docks or on the tidal Avon except for the regular crews of the Avon canoe pilot.

In the Spring of 2007, an Avon canoe pilot attempted to guide and rescue foundered sailing boats at the mouth of the Bristol City Docks. The skippers refused to reply to verbal and visual contact in an attempt to preserve middleaged male pride. Being rescued by some dirty punks and women was going to be too much for them. So they stayed stuck in the mud.

The Avon canoe pilots have successfully guided many small craft up and down the tidal Avon on many occasions. Several of the guided vessel crews are now themselves canoe pilots. A pilot must know their waters, territory and the word on the banks.

A pilot needs to acknowledge their place in representing the wild ways of the river, and the social relations of the urban dockland. They must train in deciphering the elemental and psychological conditions of the water's course.

The pilot needs to be fit and able to guide and seek. She must know both bodies and let movement become absolute. The mind of the pilot needs to be open to the unexpected and able to give way to irresistible forces.

Challenge the current status quo and make way for new!

A pilot should host the newcomer, participate in anarchy and increase chaos as the river does.

The pilot should participate in keeping the waterways open, support life forms, activity and expression, increase the folk value by fusing common relations, preserve and maintain the wealth and health of the waters that keep the pilot buoyant.

The pilot may come across murky social waters, fixed habitual conceptions and crystallised constraints. They may become jostled by established powers and drowned by competitive trends. Meet these trials like a river meets a stick, a bird, a shopping trolley. Take it, feed it, shape it, bear it.

Seek the help of friends when entering into the pilot's mission.

RESEARCH METHODS

DISCO CANOE

An active educational training programme for the beginner pilot.

Research methods enable the potential pilot to engage with the complexities of entering new territories.

They have been formulated to reduce the distance between the known and unknown. A researcher needs to be able to access tools and techniques swiftly, hence the methods developed here employ shop standards and simple starting points.

When introducing a new channel, established channels become disrupted. These research methods may ruffle feathers as they gate-crash systems.

These methods double up as social events, recreational things to do with the days.

They do not require specialist schooling. They do require a state of experimental adventurism. The pilot must know how to rock the parties.

The terms of the night are different from the terms of the day. Navigate via the stars and avoid the wasted streets of fear. Adapt, form and transform the vessel.

Operating till the end of September.

Disco Canoe invites folk to share their pedestrian sound tracks. Simply plug the MP3 player into the on-canoe sound system.

Disco Canoe docks at various pontoons, operating in territories from The Cottage pub to Castle park.



Friday night at the Arnolfini pontoon, Pedestrian DJ Duncan.

BIG FLOAT

FRIDAY/SATURDAY 28/29 SEPTEMBER 2007

DAY ONE

The pilot needs to know thier vessel, how it bears and cuts the waters.

Trial and error construction of make-shift vessels can provide autodidatic experience.

DAY TWO

Drifting out to sea on flimsy floating materials such as inflatable lilos is often viewed as undesirable.

Navigating the tidal Avon is pretty tricky, but imagine drifting out into the Severn Estuary.

This is the Big Float concept.

You are invited to bring your own floatation and drift with us from Bristol city centre out to sea on the outgoing spring tide and then hopefully be brought back when the tide returns.

Bring your own sandwiches and safety devices.

For further questions look to the heavens.



Testing and adapting found PVC container.



DREDGING

Navigable waterways need to be kept clear of sediment and hazardous obstructions.

Dredging is one such cleaning method, but is also shopping for the frugally minded. It gives an element of the unexpected and has a 100% return on any acquisitions.

Use a grappling hook attached to a length of rope. The rope length needs to surpass the depth of the specified waters. Apply a simple method of launching the tool into the water, allowing some moments to pass as it settles, then slowly reel it in.

What has been lost and discarded might find its way onto the end of your line. Certain areas promise certain possibilities:

Shopping trolleys are ubiquitous. Skate boards can be found near the waters of Lloyds building skating spot, bicycles at Vauxhall and Bedminster Bridges and motorbikes at Cumberland Basin.

DREDGING EVENT

Take a useful item, throw it into the New Cut. Then we will dredge for it, who gets keeps!



Dredging off Vauxhall Bridge and Lloyds Amphitheatre



TIDAL STREAM CHART

Tidal stream measurements.

Tidal currents are of great significance to low power craft such as swimmers, canoes and sailing dinghies.

It is both safe and efficient to go with the maximum water flow instead of in opposition to it.

Tidal stream charts provide the exact speed of the current at any given tidal condition.

Being true to the street, our tidal stream charts were made using low technology, high technique.

We threw branches off a measured bridge and timed their journey underneath. When the time is divided by the bridge width you get the velocity of the water in metres per second.

Alternately, the purpose of gathering tidal stream data can be put to one side, transforming this method into the game of Pooh Sticks. A game Pooh and friends played together on warm and sunny days on a bridge over a river.



Tidal stream Ashton Gate Swing (width of bridge 9.5m)	br: br:	trea ce Swi idge 9.		chart Bridge	m/s multipi	m/s multiply by 3.6 for km/h	6 for kn	Ч/ч	
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BRISTOL BLUE FLAG

Quality of water is quality of life.

Living in a city can be wonderful if the river is clean and deeply depressing if dirty.

People that pollute rivers and lakes are criminals, but that's another story.

It is common mythology that immersion in The City of Bristol Docks will prove fatal.

Analysis of regular Bristol City Council test results suggest that swimming in The Docks is safe half of the year and blue flag equivalent at least once a year.

Generally, it is unsafe to swim in The Docks after heavy rain because of the surface water run-off into the River Avon which feeds The Docks.

Analysis also suggests that further downstream in The Docks the cleaner the water becomes (Cumberland Basin being the cleanest), indicating that The Docks has an entirely different and possibly healthier eco-system than the River Avon.

ANALYSIS

Blue Flag Award Scheme states that bathing waters must not exceed values of 500 total coliforms per 100ml and 100 faecal coliforms per 100ml in 80% of water quality samples, and 100 faecal streptococci per 100ml in 90% of samples taken.



Swimming at Bathhurst Basin. Water debris seen various places.



We WANT a swimming area in the docks.

Raised by: K Brandon & H Bunting on 30 August 2007.

We WANT a section of the Bristol docks as an open air swimming place. It is totally unacceptable that a city of over 750,000 inhabitants, with a major waterway through the centre has no open air place to swim. Bristol City Council's own water quality department's statistics show that it is safe to swim in the docks most of the year. Why are we denied entry to this water? We propose an area of the water outside Arnolfini as a public swimming spot.

It is important for the petition to receive as many signatures as possible to reflect the publics wish to swim in the docks..

SIGN THE PETITION

- ~ Heath Buting
- ~ Kayle Brandon

(Closing date for signatures - 15 December 2007)

PETITION PROGRESS

Please go to e-petition on the Bristol City Council website to add to the list.

The territories of exploration are divided by time, regulations and established behaviours.

Liberal access is of utmost importance. If we can't establish independent entrance points, we will be at the mercy of the lock-keepers. The tide already holds us to a timetable, we do not want to be bound to a human one as well.

The slipways are in a state of disuse, forgotten and buried under years of mud. The mud banks act as a natural deterrent to people's water entry. The main lock is open three hours before high water, then it closes.

We have developed some tools and techniques that extend times, entry points and range of access to the New Cut and River Avon.

We have invented and renovated access points and also extended the function of existing barriers.

NOTES FOR GENERAL ACCESS

Many of the points require a degree of walking; vessels can be heavy and cumbersome. Using a wheeled contraption for the vessel would greatly reduce the unpleasantness of entering water from unclassified or abandoned access points.

Carry extra lengths of rope, these will aid you in lowering, or hauling the vessel out of high-banked places (the distance between water and bank is relative to the tide timetable determined by various gods).

All manoeuvres can be reversed, aside from mud launching. All can be done by one person, but are much easier with two.

ROWNHAM FERRY SLIPWAY EAST

Whilst canoeing past Cumberland Basin on a low water spring tide, we noticed a semi mud-submerged slipway. This forgotten slipway is in an ideal position to by-pass the Cumberland Basin lock.

So on a later date we returned and set to work removing one hundred years of sediment using spades and brushes.

The work is still incomplete and made harder by heavy silt discharge from dredging in the docks.

If this slipway was clear, it would be an ideal access point into the tidal Avon at any time.

If you fancy helping, it's best to work in the rain, this not only keeps you cool but provides optimum mud slipperiness for sliding excavated mud down the bank in to the river.

Digging out the Rownham slipway is a great alternative to an 'after the office' gym workout... You will go home with that satisfied feeling of having sung for your supper.

The tools are installed permanently onsite. For potential digging partners call: 0117 965 6261.



Slipway working. Right insert Rownham ferry slipway west.



AVON CANOE FERRY JETTY

Between New Quarry, Avon Gorge & Quarry 3 Leigh Woods.

Whether you are a raver or a camper, the River Avon downstream from the suspension bridge is a formidable barrier. Ocassional ferry services have been offered for a low fee to stranded revellers.

A hazel jetty has been constructed and staked to the mud bank to lengthen the operating time of the canoe ferry.

This jetty is currently usuable from 01:30h before to 01:30h after high water.

HOW TO MAKE A MUD BRIDGING HAZEL JETTY

- ~ Cut 30 hazel rods, each 120cm long.
- ~ Form into matt/ladder using tri-twisted rope.
- ~ Roll up and transport.
- ~ Roll down mud and stake.
- ~ Do not stake too tightly to enable it to float away from mud when submersed.

Thinking about building a causeway...





Jetty making.

BATHURST BASIN

BRUNEL'S LOCK

FROM THE NEW CUT INTO THE BATHURST BASIN (DOCKS) AND VICE VERSA.

Ascend the ladder on the left side of the basin entrance into what is called 'God's Garden'. Avoid contact with the current tenant as he may begrudge your passing. Take a canoe bow/stern rope with you. Once on the bank, wait for your partner to repeat the action with the other rope (this can be done alone, but will be heavier work).

Walk along the bank pulling the canoe along the muddy Bathhurst Basin mouth.

Once close to the Bathurst Basin mouth wall, align the canoe directly below you and prepare to pull the vessel up onto the bank side.

Carry the canoe over the concrete barrier and carefully lower the vessel into The Docks water, descend the ladder and re-enter the canoe.

Ideal conditions: When antisocial land grabbers disguised as Christians are absent.

Canoe to Brunel's lock. Once there, exit the canoe and mount the concrete platform. Pull the canoe through and again slightly through the other side. Your partner should now take up position on top of one of the concrete columns, (this may induce feelings of vulnerability). The other then pushes the canoe towards the said column. Once the nose is resting near the feet of the person stationed on the column, takes hold of the nose of the canoe and keep it in position whilst the other person mounts and pushes the other nose to the end of their concrete column platform.

Once both canoeists have taken up position, prepare to lower the canoe using the guide ropes. Slowly nudge the body of the canoe over the edge and lower using the ropes, use extra rope depending on the height of water. *DO NOT WRAP THE ROPE AROUND THE HAND* but feed slowly through the hands.

Once the canoe has touched down, take turns descending via the ladders, the first pilot must hold and steady the canoe in place for the other.

Best used around high water.





GAOL SLIPWAY

GAOL SLIPWAY - BEDMINSTER BRIDGE, CORONATION RD

Coming from The Docks Bathhurst Basin into the New Cut.

Carry the canoe over Bedminster bridge and down the slipway path. Place the canoe down and carefully commence the walk down the slipway, hold and guide the canoe as you descend. Take caution, the way is muddy and slippery. Once you have reached the water's edge take turns in entering the canoe.

Best conditions for this access: high water to one hour either side of low water.

GOAL SLIPWAY - BEDMINSTER BRIDGE, CUMBERLAND RD

Carrying the vessel down the slipway path. Once by the ladder position, stand side by side and use the ropes to lower the canoe into the water. Enter the canoe via the ladder holding a guide rope during the descent. Steady the vessel and enter.

When too lazy or embarrassed carry canoe over the foot bridge.





MUD LAUNCH

Mud launching is exhilarating and messy.

Find a spot that's free of obstacles and has a steady gradient into the water. Position the canoe at a suitable angle for water entry. Physically guide the vessel down the bank into your launch spot which should be just past the reed and grass areas. The mud conditions will help you decide the moment for launching. Begin the launch and enter at the same time as your partner and brace yourselves at the back of the canoe.

Depending on mud conditions, water entry can range from a high speed water collision to slow and sticky slide-in. Fastest slides can be expected just after high water or heavy rain.

Mud launching is best done in your Sunday best.





UNDERFALL BANK

Carry the canoe through the gate in the steam railway fence to the towpath. The fence that separates the river bank from the path has a buckle in it, find the buckled part and push the vessel through the space. Walk with vessel in hand, along the reed heavy bank. Take caution, there are sudden invisible leg-breaking dips were the waters have eked away the bank. Find the most suitable entry point taking into consideration the speed of the flow from the nearby rapids.

Best conditions for using this point of entry and exit are when it's dark, raining and you are desperate.

DUTCH BARN RAILWAY GATE

Located by Underfall Yard dutch barn.

What arrogance to erect and maintain a 2km fence through a city centre, dividing residential and commercial areas from a recreational waterway! This had to be punctured.

Handmade gates enable folk to increase access to desired entry points. Too right!

This gate is made by cutting the railings with an angle grinder. The loose material is then re-hung using rope.

Please close the gate after use.





HOW TO PLAN A JOURNEY

No travel plan survives initial contact with adventure, but aids a steering course. First choose your media, whether it be air, land, water.

Make use of maximum current flow in river between low water +1 hour and low water +3 hour. Get tidal information from Harbour Master on 0117 903 1484.

Next, discern your method of motivation from such possibilities as wind, current, muscle, gravity.

Avoid river after heavy rains as there is a hazard of ecoli infection. Water is less muddy during Neap tides, due to smaller currents. Get water quality information from Harbour Master on 0117 903 1484.

Its also important to decide on a destination and if you are coming back or not. Details such as departure point and time are highly dependent on ambition.

Prepare sustenance: water, shelter and food should be priorities.

A proportionate balance between risk and safety is wise. Obtain information, orientation techniques, rescue plans.

Note that heavy rains cause high outgoing river current, neutralising incoming tidal current. Get current water level reading from Netham weir on 0117 977 6590 (09:00-15:45 winter/ 07:00-21:30 summer).

Have a clear understanding of your spiritual goals. Some seek enjoyment, learning and advancement.

HOW TO PLAN FOR DENNY ISLAND JOURNEY

Its best to arrive around low water for serenity and maximum exposure to quick sands. This is also a point when the water changes direction. Basically, you can go there on the outgoing tide, play in the sand a short while and come back on the incoming tide. Interestingly, the currents shortly before and after low water are at their strongest, which make for a fast and exciting crossing.

Having decided to be on Denny Island at low water we can choose our times of departure and return from Bristol with the aid of a tide table.

Check the weather before and during your journeys. Contact the City Docks and Avonmouth control for updates via mobile telephone or VHF radio. Winds over 15 miles per hour in The Severn Estuary are tricky. Waves over 50 centimeters, especially if coming from multiple directions at the same time are interesting for open canoe users. Air bags are recommended. Add regular occasions for breaks and rests. You will find several submerged sandy beaches in the tidal Avon around low water. Keep them a secret!

We use a resolution of ten minutes for time planning. Something smaller would be insane and anything larger could mean missing optimal currents.

EQUIPMENT LIST

- ~ Food
- ~ VHF Radio
- ~ Camera
- ~ Dry bag
- ~ Rucksack
- ~ Torch and spare batteries
- ~ *Map/ tide table*
- ~ First aid kit
- ~ Mobile phone and spare battery
- ~ Watch
- ~ Sunglasses
- ~ Hat
- ~ Waterproofs
- ~ Multi-tool
- ~ 10m of 9mm rope
- ~ 2m of 9mm rope
- ~ 10m of 6mm rope
- ~ 20m of 4mm rope
- ~ Bucket and sponge
- ~ Zip lock bags
- ~ 1litre water bottle
- ~ Pen
- ~ Rescue knife
- ~ Spare plastic paddle
- ~ 2 x wooden paddles
- ~ 2m foot hazel mooring pole
- ~ 2 x buoyancy aids

Pack kit depending on conditions and specific journey.

A JOURNEY

FROM THE DOCKS TO AVONMOUTH

- ~ Canoe from Underfall Yard to Bathurst Basin through the Floating Harbour.
- ~ Haul the canoe up the wall separating Bathurst Basin and the New Cut.
- ~ Carry the canoe over Gaol Ferry Bridge and down to Gaol Ferry Slipway.
- ~ Launch your canoe.
- ~ Cruise down the New Cut on the outgoing tide.
- ~ Shoot the New Cut rapids.
- ~ Shoot the Cumberland Basin mini rapids.
- ~ Cruise down the Avon Gorge.
- ~ Take a break on the Horseshoe Bend beach.
- ~ Carefully navigate the swift shallows at Nelson's Point.
- ~ Contact Bristol VTS and report position and intention.
- ~ Moor up in the Swash Channel.
- ~ Wait for tide to turn and return to Bristol.
- \sim Take a break at the Adam and Eve Folly beach.
- ~ Contact Bristol Lock and report position and intention to enter the city lock.
- ~ Pass through the lock and canoe to Underfall Yard.
- ~ If it appears you are going to be left outside the lock in the dark and rain for over an hour, then canoe up the New Cut and haul your canoe up the bank and across the road adjacent to Underfall Yard.









JOURNEY NOTES - THINGS TO DO & SEE

1. DOCKS TO NEW QUARRY CLIMBING WALL.

- ~ Ruined wooden structures are portside.
- $\sim\,$ There is a hot spring on the muddy bank just below the entrance to Clifton Rocks Railway.
- \sim The Burwalls underground river resurgence is opposite the hot spring, you can crawl into it.
- ~ Peregrine Falcons live in the gorge, and often fly overhead.
- ~ The River Frome interceptor resurgence creates a whirlpool, a collapsing emptiness which you can play with.

2. DOCKS TO NETHAM WEIR VIA NEW CUT

- $\sim\,$ The sensation of moving under the pedestrian bridges, avoid the spit from teenage boys.
- ~ The giant fig tree at Temple Meads bridge.
- ~ The concealed cannabis plantations behind Pizza Hut, Brislington.
- ~ McDonalds shit.
- $\sim\,$ Things carrying on regardless of the art world.
- $\sim\,$ Once at the weir. Look at it. Kiss, smoke, whatever.

3. DOCKS CIRCULAR VIA BATHURST BASIN

- \sim The sensation of moving under the pedestrian bridges. Avoid the spit from teenage boys.
- ~ Strange Bedminster water outfalls.
- ~ The plants living in the walls.
- $\sim\,$ Porn magazines floating in the waters.
- $\sim\,$ People like to wave a lot at untouchables, join in.
- ~ Tea at Brunel's Buttery.

4. DOCKS TO AVONMOUTH

- ~ Look at the creepy crawlies waiting as the water descends whilst going through the ship lock.
- ~ Be teased by the lock-masters and rap back.
- ~ Suspension Bridge, Suspension Bridge, Suspension Bridge.
- ~ Test depth of water with your panels. Avoid submerged shopping trolleys.
- ~ Two families of herons live either side of the bank. They sit in oaks and amongst the reeds. They've got lovely legs, and watch as you pass. Matching your moves with flighty retreats. Currently the two families are feuding.
- ~ Marvel at the mud's reflective glory.
- ~ It's OK to be angry.
- $\sim\,$ See the oriental seaweed, flog it at Farmers Market. It's organic.
- ~ Drink the drips off Avonmouth Bridge.
- ~ Resist the temptation of being sucked out into the Severn.
- ~ It's quite a vulnerable feeling out there.
- ~ On the way back see the Cormorant family. They nest at dusk, on the right side, all in one tree.

5. DOCKS TO DENNY ISLAND

- ~ Breaks through to another level and territory.
- ~ See Avonmouth notes.
- ~ See A Journey.
- ~ There is a dry store on Denny Island.
- 6. BLANK JOURNEY PLAN
- ~ Tear it out and start a fire.



JOURNEY - Docks to New Quarry Climbing Wall



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JOURNEY - Docks to Denny Island

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FURTHER READING

~ Safety Guidance For Small Boat Passage of The Severn Estuary.

~ Bristol Harbour Information For Boaters.

Both publications available fom the Harbour Masters office, Bristol.

~ http://duo.irational.org/avon_canoe_pilot

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