

RIVER AIRE: SOURCE TO SEA CHALLENGE



A sponsored solo, multi day canoe expedition of over 100 miles from the source of the River Aire in the Pennines to its confluence with the sea, in aid of a Rotary Club international emergency water aid charity, Aquabox

To be undertaken by Robin Naylor in collaboration with interested Rotary Clubs

The Challenge

In order to justify sponsorship this will be a demanding endurance event with significant challenges en-route:

- It will involve a journey of over 100 miles
- It will involve sustained physical effort over a number of consecutive days. Canoeing or running an average of over 20 miles a day over a 5 day period.
- It will be undertaken by one individual using only a canoe, raft or kayak with only a paddle for propulsion.
- Due to significant obstructions en route and the nature of the river it will involve a substantial amount of portaging (carrying the boat). This will include running and carrying the boat for up to 10 miles in the earlier stages of the expedition.
- It will involve negotiating/avoiding over 20 weirs plus other obstructions such as the 'Dark Arches' in Leeds and the other natural hazards of a sizeable river.
- As the expedition will end at the Humber Bridge the journey will involve powerful and expansive tidal waters requiring consideration of rules of navigation, tidal streams and meteorological factors

The main limiting factor will be a strong easterly wind.

Timing will be dependent on Humber tidal conditions. Tidal stream predictions suggest starting on Tuesday 16th September to enable navigation of the Humber on the weekend of 20th/21st September 2014

The Route

The challenge will involve following, as closely as is practical and safe, the course of the River Aire from its source near Malham in the Yorkshire Dales to Humber Bridge near Kingston upon Hull, the point where its waters have merged into the Ouse and Humber.

Day 1 (20 miles) Malham Tarn to Cross Hills

Starting at an altitude of 1230' in the limestone country of the Pennines at Malham Tarn (*canoeing subject to National Trust permission*) the river soon disappears underground, to emerge below Malham Cove. For the next few miles the river is shallow with many obstructions including fencing and ancient low clapper bridges. For these reasons it may be necessary to run up to 10 miles 'portaging' the boat (*canoeing subject to landowner permission*).

Near Gargrave it will be possible to by-pass possible obstructions using the Leeds Liverpool canal which runs close to the River Aire at various points. The route will then pass west of Skipton with the objective for day 1 being to reach Cross Hills

Day 2 (24 miles) Cross Hills to Leeds

On this section, passing well known place names such as Bingley, Riddlesden, Saltaire, Esholt, and Kirkstall Abbey, a number of weirs will be encountered. It is likely that most of these will require portage. Today's section ends in Leeds city centre where a paramount concern will be avoiding the Dark Arches where the river runs under Leeds railway station. Towards the end of this section using the Leeds Liverpool canal, that runs adjacent to the river, may be a safe option, depending on river conditions.

Day 3 Leeds to Beal (22 miles)

The river now starts to wind across the flood plain but still holds some surprises: in high water levels the weir near Woodlesford creates one of the biggest standing waves in England: the Aire Wave.

Day 4 Beal to Goole Bridge (24 miles)

After about 8 miles the river is crossed by the A19. Shortly after this it becomes tidal. Near Goole the Aire joins the River Ouse and tidal effects now have significant consequences for timing of the journey.

Days 5 Goole Bridge to Humber Bridge (25 miles)

The Humber estuary. Wide expanses of powerful tidal waters fed by the rivers Ouse and Trent with frequent use by commercial shipping. Due to mud and steep embankments there are few opportunities to land.

Robin Naylor

Robin is Yorkshire 'born and bred'. Brought up in Sheffield, lived in Hull for a time but has resided in Bradford for the past 20 years.

Robin has been involved in canoeing and kayaking for nearly 40 years.

Currently his main interests are:

- Multi-day long distance wilderness exploration by sea kayak or open Canadian canoe. He has been involved in expeditions and long distance journeys by canoe or kayak in Sweden, Finland, Arctic Norway, Scotland, France, Greece and Turkey
- White water open canoeing

Robin's other canoeing endurance achievements include:

- Long distance marathon e.g. 125 mile non-stop Devizes-Westminster race
- Long distance open sea crossings e.g. English Channel crossing

Robin has also participated in many other endurance events including the London, New York and Paris marathons and mountain marathons.

Robin is semi-retired and, when not canoeing or running, devotes a large proportion of his time to voluntary work, including being secretary of Queensbury Celtic junior football club and acting as a ranger for Sustrans.

facebook: Rotary Aire Challenge