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11/11/06 Sunny Scotland

On Saturday 28th Oct we all met up at the Bridge of Orchy for the first river of our 5-day jaunt. Chris S, Keith and Chris H had travelled up together and we had 2 cars for some Commando style River running action. The Orchy was pretty low and at this level it was a nice gentle warm up with a couple of surprises thrown in, due to the levels we had to portage a couple of bits that weren't running but even so it was pretty good. I imagine at high volume it would be quite a ride



The next day we breakfasted well [once Keith gave up trying to ration the Weetabix] and headed out to the Roy. When we got there it looked a little low so we rapidly changed plan and it was off to the Spean Gorge instead. The Gorge section was a good bet in these conditions, as it tends to wash out mess with high water, not a concern today. It was a great run through some great scenery. The paddling was mostly tight technical lines, good chance to practice boofs; it was a case of getting it right or getting wet.

It was still pretty early when we finished so we drove up to have a look at the Pattack. Thanks to the people in the hostel we found out the code for the gate to run the shuttle and the get in was almost as hazardous as the river. It was another gorge run and portages would have been tricky, thankfully we almost all ran everything, it reminded me a bit of the final section of the Kent, nice pool drops and although only 2km long it was fairly continuous [suited Keith as he prefers short rivers with plenty of inspections apparently] and it finishes in a nice slide which felt much bigger than it looked in the photos. If you look at the photos we all ran the 10m fall at the top, unfortunately we just forgot to document it [not strictly true]

Back to the hostel for some more Quorn based cuisine and slumping in front of the fire with a book. Ian and Alison joined us the next day, taking a break from their open boating on the Spey, and we made a return to the Roy, hoping the Gorge section would go. It did and again, the low levels made for some technical moves requiring plenty of inspection. I had an interesting moment with an upside down move through a constriction, too busy looking where I meant to go rather than going for it. We had to

walk around the infamous "Headbanger", but as someone pointed out, if that's what it's called why would you want to run it anyway.

After failing to locate the Sherpa's we ordered and having to undertake the carry out from hell [Ian cheated, Alison helped him] we went back to the Spean in the afternoon. The Levels had dropped a little more but it was still pretty entertaining. Thanks to Keith for documenting my swim here, I over stoked the entry, bouncing off the wall to go upside down whilst dropping off the edge. If I'd sat tight I probably would have flushed through but I was eager to test my new boat in a wet exit [really], plus I had lost my paddles in the confusion. In my defence I would say I had cleaned the drop the day before.



All being too knackered to cook that night we went to the Commando Bar for fortification and got an early night. The next day Chris H was feeling very ropey so like the good Samaritans we are, we gave him a bucket and piled into the car to go the Etive, which quickly turned into the highlight of the trip for me. The run in looked bony to say the least and Gnarly Chris [as he is apparently

known] was all for not getting on... shame on you Chris. We met up with a group from Leeds and London, who gave faffing a bad name. After an hour for the shuttle and 5 people looking for lost keys, only to be found inside the driver's dry trousers, we took matters into our own hands and lead the way. However it was a great day and the low levels made it possible to run almost everything on the river bar Crack of Doom. We got straight on to Triple Drop, and this was followed in quick succession by a series of meaty single drops, slides, slots and a 6m freefall to finish on Right Angle Falls. The difficult bit of this was catching the eddy at the top, other than that it was just point and go but my top tip for the day, learnt the hard way, is don't land it flat. Afterwards we headed off to Fort William for a couple of pints and to add a couple of metres onto the waterfall drop in the bar.



The last day saw Chris H feeling better and we headed into the back of beyond, after a look at a fairly startling look at what looked like rock filled waterfalls the guidebook had graded at 5+ we went for a more sedate run on the Arkaig, another Keith special i.e. only 2k. It was a nice way to finish the trip. It is lake fed so held it's level a bit and with a bit more water it would have

been quite adrenalin packed ride, as it was it was a nice warm down with a bit of grade 4 in the middle.

It was a great trip made all the better for Chris's local knowledge, if only he wasn't a vegetarian. We were well placed in the hostel for the rivers we paddled and I would recommend a trip up there for anyone who fancies a some solid class 3+ boating, I think 5 days on the river helped me make some good progress in technique and get to grips with my new massive boat. You would imagine water levels to be slightly more reliable up there and to be fair, we drove home through hours of torrential rain and reports of spate boating the next day but that's the way it goes.

Nick Lawrenson [Photos.....](#)