

Heavens above, the Wye must not die!

A river pilgrimage to raise awareness and to call for action to stop pollution of the river.

An extraordinary voyage is planned for **August 15th to 19th**. A sculpture of *Our Lady of the Waters and the Wye*, mounted on two canoes made into a canoe-catamaran, will be floated for 75 miles downstream, from Hay-on-Wye to Monmouth.

The pollution crisis. Biodiversity has crashed in the Wye due to pollution from chicken farm slurry, overflow of sewage, excessive use of fertilisers (3000 tons of phosphates a year going in the Wye, when it can only cope with 300), run off from arable land and soil erosion. The voyage aims to raise awareness and to call for concerted action to cleanse the river.

The plan. The voyage, the brainchild of Fr Richard Williams of Hay-on-Wye and Philip Chatfield, the sculptor, will leave from Hay Bridge on **August 15th** and arrive in Monmouth on **August 19th**, via Bredwardine and Moccas (**15th**), Hereford (**16th**), Marden, Lugwardine, Holme Lacy and Hoarwithy (**17th**), Sellack and Ross (**18th**), and Goodrich and Whitchurch (**19th**). Other canoeists and wild swimmers will accompany the canoe-catamaran. Art exhibitions will be held at Moccas Village Hall and Whitchurch Church with many events *en route*: music in Hay, trumpet and saxophones on Bredwardine Bridge, Georgian chants by the monks of Belmont at Moccas and a feast in Moccas Village Hall (**15th**); evensong at Hereford Cathedral (**16th**); morning coffee at Marden and Lugwardine, evensong with Ross Choir at Hoarwithy Church and a picnic (**17th**); a lunchtime picnic with bagpipes at Sellack; evening prayer at Ross (**18th**); and evening prayer at Monmouth Church (**19th**).

The sculpture. The wooden sculpture is about 4 ft in height, on a plinth 1 ft high. The sculptor is Philip Chatfield, who nearly drowned on the brig *Maria Assumpta* when it sank off Padstow in 1995, and who has since carved stone statues for Tintern Abbey, St Mary's Church, Monmouth and elsewhere.

The canoeists. Philip Chatfield, the sculptor (15th to 19th August); Callum Bulmer (15th to 16th); and Nigel Thomas, Vicar of Cleeve (17th to 19th); with the final stretch into Monmouth led by the Deputy Head of Monmouth School and his wife, who are both Atlantic rowers.

The wild swimmers. Nicola Goodwin of BBC Hereford and Worcester and others.

Media coverage. The voyage will be covered by the BBC, the *Daily Telegraph* (where a splendid article appeared on 9th May) and local media, with documentaries planned by Bernard Walton (Aquavita films) and Palash Dave. It is hoped to livestream the voyage from a webcam on the sculpture's crown.

Related plans. The sculpture will eventually be sited in a hillside shrine at Capel-y-ffin, where, in 1880, the Virgin Mary was said to have appeared to two boys of ten and eleven, one of whom said to the other: "if that thing comes any nearer, I am going to hit it with my stick!" Further voyages may be undertaken in future.

Exhibition in the Woolhope Room, Hereford (above the Library in Broad Street) from July until the end of August. The exhibition, organised by the Woolhope Club, illustrates the rich heritage of the Wye – its geology, history, architecture, botany, ornithology, mammals and invertebrates – highlights current pollution and shows how sustainable farming practices can help. The exhibition will also visit local libraries and churches and move to the Herefordshire Archives and Records Centre in 2023.

To watch the progress of the voyage, or take part in the events, see the details in the schedule!

Voyage of Our Lady of the Waters and the Wye

August 14th 6pm: Evensong St Mary's Church, Hay-on-Wye.

August 15th Hay-on-Wye to Bredwardine

9am: Process sculpture from Hay Church to Hay Bridge w by local fire brigade.

10am: Hay Choir at Hay Bridge.

10.30am: Launch from near Hay Bridge , Hay-on-Wye

12.30pm: Whitney Bridge.

5pm: Lyndon Eatough-Smith on trumpet, Cathy O' Rourke on saxophone to play Bridge over Troubled Water on trumpet on Bredwardine Bridge as the canoeists arrive and land.

6.30pm: The monks of Belmont will do a Gregorian chant in Moccas Church.

7.30pm: A feast at in Moccas Village Hall and an exhibition by local artists about the Wye in the Village Hall.

August 16th Bredwardine to Hereford

10am: Launch from Bredwardine Bridge

11.30am: Monnington

11.45am: Preston Church bells.

12am: Byford

2 - 2.30pm: Lower Eaton Bishop.

4.30pm: Arrive Hereford Cathedral - Bishop's landing stage.

5pm: Procession through cloisters.

5.30pm: Evensong Hereford Cathedral.

August 17th Hereford to Hoarwithy

10 - 10.45am: Coffee at St Mary the Virgin, Marden (by road as Lugg impassable).

11 - 12am: Further coffee and cake at Lugwardine Vicarage (by road).

12.30pm: Launch from Bishops Garden landing stage at Hereford.

12.30pm: Victoria Bridge.

3.30 - 4pm: Holme Lacy Bridge

6.30pm: Evensong at Hoarwithy Church with the Ross choir, followed by a bring your own picnic on the river bank.

August 18th Hoarwithy to Ross-on-Wye

11am: Leave Hoarwithy Church.

12am - 1pm: Picnic lunch at Sellack, with Patrick Darling playing bagpipes on Sellack Suspension Bridge.

3pm: Foy Suspension Bridge.

5pm: Arrive Ross. 5.30 Evening prayer in Ross RC Church.

August 19th Ross-on-Wye to Monmouth

10.30am: Ross depart.

10.50am: Wilton Bridge.

1pm: Kerne Bridge (Goodrich Church), with a gathering on the bridge.

3pm: Yat Rock View (Gibbings View).

4pm: Goodrich/Symonds Yat bridge.

4.15 - 4.45pm: Tea at Whitchurch Church and art exhibition.

5pm: Symonds Yat rapids.

5.30pm: Biblins Bridge.

6.15pm: Dixton Church.

6.30pm: Monmouth Boat House, land at town boat house steps, canoes will be home, carry statue up to church - 2 transatlantic paddlers (Deputy Head of Monmouth School and his wife).

7pm: Evening Prayer in St Mary's Church and statue to stay there overnight.

August 20th Monmouth to Hay

Statue will travel by road over Vale of Ewyas and through Capel y Fin via the Gospel Pass to Llanigon and then to St Mary's Church in Hay-on-Wye, remaining there until final placement.