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Building a Raft for the Monmouth Charity Raft Race

(The following guidance notes have been kindly provided by Hampshire Rafter Bruce Fraser, they are not mandatory.)

Basic Construction:

If one uses 6 x 500 litre barrels to provide the buoyancy, an oblong wooden cradle or grid with 9 slots the size of a half-barrel, the three on each side designed to sit astride the barrels, leaving the middle three empty for the hull spacing forms the basic structure. Whilst virtually any materials can be used, remember to clean away anything that may be an irritant, cause pollution or damage the river environment. Fixing can be by bolting or bonding or screwing or tying together, but if the barrels are cut open for easier fixing remember they will sink unless they have some additional flotation built or inserted into them.

Steering:

A rudder or tiller can be attached to the back timber to steer the raft but there is a disadvantage in that someone will be needed to steer and it can also break.

Alternatively, the back two paddlers can use their paddles to steer – a far simpler method but something that needs some practice.

Nose Cones:

Anything to soften the passage through the water will help the raft go faster.

Improvements:

The following principles can be adopted in whole or in part to obtain improvements over the basics above:-

Size a) Longer rafts go faster but are harder to steer and transport

b) Wider hull spacing makes for greater speed and stability but makes for more difficult steering and transportation.

Weight a) Lighter rafts go faster but become more unstable, and especially if the crew outweigh the craft.

b) The lower the centre of gravity, the more stable the raft, but the less amount of barrel in the water, the faster it will go due to less drag.

Miscellaneous:

a) Rowlocks are not permitted, so paddles if used need to be manageable. Propulsion can usually be by any means other than a motor so pedals, pushing, carrying, etc. may well be necessary especially when grounded or if your design fails

b) Seating of some sort will provide comfort but does add weight and will need to be fixed firmly.

c) A surface (30 cms x 45 cms) for a number is required on both sides.

d) Using Water cannon at Monmouth will bring exclusion from the race on hygiene and safety grounds.

e) Always make sure you are wearing a lifejacket in your own interests!

Useful contacts:-

Paddles.....Peter Dean on 01793884985 or hdean@btconnect.com

Barrels.....ECO Containers on 01495 352609 (Mark Tossell)

.....Smiths, Coleford on 01594 833308 www.smithsofthedeans.co.uk

Buoyancy aids..... www.ewetsuits.com

..... www.force4.co.uk

.....It is also worth trying E Bay

Happy Rafting