

Outdoor centre members take on challenge after seeing homeless



Staff from the Longtown Outdoor Education Centre who have canoeing 150 miles from Northampton to Wales to raise money for the Hope Centre

CE picture by SHARON LUCEY

Enthusiasts to paddle all the way to Wales!

STAFF from the county council's Longtown Outdoor Education Centre have embarked on a 150-mile challenge that will see them canoeing from Northampton to Wales in seven days.

The group will paddle across England's inland waterways to raise money for Northampton Hope Centre, formerly the Northampton Soup Kitchen.

The outdoor enthusiasts donned their wet suits and braved snow flurries and cold weather as they set off for their epic challenge yesterday.

The trip comes 12 months after canoeists from Longtown, run by Northamptonshire County Council, took part in a shorter charity paddle from Herefordshire to Northampton.

It was on this journey that the head of the outdoor centre, Mike Fawcett, decided to raise money for Northampton Hope Centre after finding men sleeping rough under a bridge in severe weather conditions.

Mr Fawcett said: "We were paddling along the Grand Union Canal and came across some people

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sleeping rough under the canal bridge.

"It reminded us that there are people in Northamptonshire sleeping rough.

"It soon became clear that we could raise money for a worthwhile cause."

The team includes operations manager Lee Cave, of Rushden, trainee instructor Tom Sharpe, of Kingsthorpe, Northampton, and fundraiser Laurianne Mackenzie of Cogenhoe.

Mr Fawcett said the team had been well prepared for tough conditions. He added: "We will have to look out for each other on the

River Avon as it is hazardous there."

The quest will see the team canoeing on the Grand Union Canal, River Avon, River Severn and Severn Estuary to reach their goal in Wales, amid predictions of yet another blast of snow this week.

On a visit to the charity Mr Fawcett discovered that two of the Hope Centre's clients were ex-servicemen.

Hope Centre spokeswoman Debbie Galton said the charity had seen an intake of ex-servicemen and women who were struggling to cope with the return to civilian life.

She said: "I think the causes for homelessness and social exclusion among ex-servicemen or women are the same as among any other group in society: mental health problems, childhood troubles, poverty, divorce, addiction and, increasingly, debt-related problems.

"But the transition from military to civilian life can trigger problems."

The team will aim to raise as much money as possible for the Hope Centre. To make a donation visit <http://www.justgiving.com/n2w>.



Museum celebrates ninth year

THE Sywell Aviation Museum will celebrate its ninth season of opening this year, on Easter weekend.

On Saturday, April 3, the museum will welcome We'll Eat Again, who will provide wartime food, and the Pitsford Home Guard who will carry out drill and manoeuvres all day.

Staff at the museum welcome anyone with vintage or military vehicles looking for an excuse to get the oil flowing and blow away the winter cobwebs with a good run out.

The museum will then be open every Saturday and Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday between 10.30am and 4.30pm.

Staff said they were interested in receiving donated or loaned artefacts, together with military and aviation books, mannequins and unmade model kits. Entry is free to the museum. For more information visit www.sywellaerodrome.co.uk/museum.php or call Ben Brown on 07968 061708.

NEWS BRIEFS

Terry Brown inquest: apology

IN a report in Thursday's *Chronicle & Echo* regarding the inquest into the death of Terry Brown, reference was made to an assault on Mr Brown's fiancée. We would like to make it clear that this was an alleged assault and at the time of Mr Brown's death he had been released on bail pending further inquiries. The report also stated that Mr Brown had left a handwritten note to his fiancée threatening to harm himself. It has since been made clear to us that this note was undated and had been disregarded by the coroner as a vague letter which did not make a direct reference to him harming himself. We are happy to make the corrections and apologise to the family for any upset caused.

■ **COMMUTERS** were facing serious delays last night after overhead power line problems caused delays on London Midland trains between London and Northampton. The problem, which first happened at around midday in the Berkhamsted area, resulted in a number of London Midland services being affected by the line blockage throughout the afternoon. Last night, rail bosses said they were hoping to run "as many services as possible". A London Midland spokesman said: "We apologise for any inconvenience and thank passengers for their patience."

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