

Paul Kirtley's Blog

Wilderness Bushcraft • Survival Skills • Outdoor Life

Paul Kirtley: This is the Paul Kirtley podcast, episode two!

Female Voice: The Paul Kirtley podcast.

Male Voice: The Paul Kirtley podcast. Wilderness bushcraft, survival skills and outdoor life.

Paul Kirtley: In this episode, I chat with my good friend and colleague, British canoeing maestro, Ray Goodwin. We discuss wilderness expeditioning in canoe. Specifically, we talk about the mindset and attitude you need in order to make the right decisions, particularly when you are in wild and remote settings. On a practical level, we talk about the tactics we employ when we decide to run rapids and those we employ when we don't, as well as how to protect our kit. All of this is born of experience of course and Ray has some tales of woe to share along the way too.

Male Voice: You're listening to the Paul Kirtley podcast.

Female Voice: The Paul Kirtley podcast

Paul Kirtley: Hello and welcome to this, my second podcast. I'm your host, Paul Kirtley. Thanks for joining me. The conversation you're about to hear between Ray Goodwin and I is one that took place during a wilderness canoe trip we undertook together with a small group of clients. If you're not familiar with Ray and his canoeing exploits, then let me explain a little bit more about him. He's been a pioneer of the open canoe in the U.K. for many years and many people consider him to be the U.K.'s foremost canoe coach. He was the first coach to be assessed at the highest level, that's British Canoe Union level five, in three disciplines of canoe, inland kayak and sea kayak. Ray's paddling career has taken him far and wide and he's expeditioned on four continents. Even closer to home, he's achieved high adventure and groundbreaking journeys from the grueling cross-country trips

of his early days in canoe to the first circumnavigation of Wales in canoe and the first unsupported canoe crossing of the Irish sea. Personally, that latter one is something which boggles my mind. Making an open canoe journey where, at your most exposed, you're 30 miles from the nearest land. I just can't imagine how that feels really.

Ray has also been an active writer in the field of canoeing. He wrote two chapters of the British Canoe Union canoe and kayak handbook as well as sections of the standard U.K. textbook on white water safety and rescue. Ray's own comprehensive book on canoeing was published in 2011. It's simply called canoeing and it covers all aspects of paddling an open boat. There's lots of detail in there, lots of fantastically photographed color sequences of canoe technique and I'd highly recommend that. I'll put all the details of these books I've mentioned in the show notes to the podcast. They'll be on my blog underneath this episode of the podcast on my blog at paulkirtley.co.uk, that's paulkirtley.co.uk. So Ray was originally my canoe instructor and as I went back to him for more training, we struck up a friendship and over time, we came to an understanding of each other's capabilities and decided to form a partnership where we offer training. We run expedition skills training courses in the U.K., we run a couple of trips here in the U.K. and we also run guided expeditions in Canada as well, where we're combining paddling skills and bushcraft skills to their best effect.

And it's on one of these trips when we were paddling on the Bloodvein River earlier in 2014, one sunny morning that Ray and I sat down with a cup of coffee at the most fantastic campsite, I think one of the most amazing campspots I've ever stayed at. The view was just incredible and this amphitheater of water that we were looking over with these rapids flowing into them, absolutely stunning particularly earlier that morning when the mist was rising. It's quite a high differential between nighttime temperatures and daytime temperatures when we were there, sort of warm days. The water was warm but then the air temperature dropped at night and there were these amazing misty mornings with the sun breaking through and this was just stunning, this place. This conversation took place towards the end of our trip. We had a little bit of time in the bag so we could afford to sit down and have a chat and we talked through many aspects of the trip, how we approach a journey like this and why we simply love the Canadian wilderness for canoe tripping.

Paul Kirtley: Well, I'm sat here on the banks of the Bloodvein River with Ray Goodwin. Hi Ray.

Ray Goodwin: Hi there, Paul.

Paul Kirtley: And we're currently undertaking a trip paddling down the Bloodvein and just thought I'd invite Ray to talk a little bit about the trip so far. How are you finding it so far, Ray?

Ray Goodwin: Yeah, really good. I just like being out here, to be honest, and it's something I've -- it's work but it's something I've needed for a while. You get away from the stresses of home, running a business, answering emails and out here, everything becomes very simple. There's a river in front of you every day, you get on the river, you got to paddle, you got to make decisions. But it's all very straightforward and immediate.

Paul Kirtley: And can you describe a little bit about the river from a paddler's perspective

Ray Goodwin: Well, I think if you've never paddled out here, then it is to me and it is a classic canoe river. It's the sort of river that led to the canoe. Because you're traveling through the forest, the Boreal Forest and there's lakes, marsh forest everywhere so the only way of traveling through the landscape in summer is by canoe. And this particular river is what a British paddler would describe as pool drop in that, you have long flat sections that some of them even feel lake-like and then you'll come to a constriction, a drop and there you'll have a rapid. Now at that stage, you start making proper canoe decisions - Do you paddle it? And the sort of thing is I will paddle it home at the top end. I'm not going to paddle out here, because I've got to look at, you know you're going to take a battering physically, by taking a swing or you break the boat. What are you going to do you know, the boat is the thing that has to be protected perhaps above all else.

And so, you're going to paddle some of those rapids, you sometimes line it, use a rope to lower the boat down. That requires a lot of judgement as well, not to get too brave on that. And when all else fails then everything's got to go on your back and walk the portage trail. The thing with this river, it's a very traditional canoe river. It's been used for thousands of years. So when we walk the portage trails,

we're walking the same trails that Native Americans walked with birch-bark canoes. The traders traveling through the area with packs of furs heading back home or packs of trade goods. They walked the same trails where we're walking now. So to me, the whole landscape explains the canoe.

Paul Kirtley: That makes sense. So we started over the border in Ontario. We're in Manitoba now. We started up at Artery Lake. There's some pictographs up there and you're quite interested in pictographs, aren't you? It's one of your areas of particular interest. You always get excited when we find pictographs.

Ray Goodwin: Very much so. It did amuse me further down the trip. Just in the last 10 days, we've seen two other people. They'd come in by float plane just to fish and we were busily searching for a pictograph site. The guy that was fishing there said, "I've been fishing here 25 years and we've never found it." So whether it's something that existed years ago and has since fallen away, and nobody's amended the record. But yeah it does and again, I don't have the pictograph site on Artery Lake where we flew into is very special, it's one of the best sites in North America and you've got numerous pictures of canoes on it, and very very out-linish. It's very stereotyped. One of them has even got what looks to be a serpent below it which, if I'm correct, it's the serpent that if you upset that particular spirit, then with a flick of its tail, it could upset the canoe. There's a shaman on there, a medicine man and a very powerful one because it looks like a line of a bolt of lightning to his head and in fact, I'm told it's a line of power. And he's carrying his medicine bag which is an otter skin with his medicines and precious things will be carried within it. So there's a whole series of these down the river but that is the most special. For some people, that would be incredibly spiritual. For me, the connection is with canoe people. And I like to leave an offering there of tobacco. Again, I would say, that to me connects me to thousands of years of people that canoed this area.

Paul Kirtley: And being part of that tradition.

Ray Goodwin: Very much part of that tradition. And that makes it incredibly special to me. And I suppose you could go and paddle other rivers in the northwest of Canada [inaudible 00:09:46] near the mountain, but these were never canoed by the native peoples. These are a modern canoe trip, whereas this is a trade route. This is where people have traveled for thousands of years through this landscape.

Paul Kirtley: So tell us a little bit more about the sort of geography of the river, Ray. We started out on Artery lake, over the border in Ontario. We're now in Manitoba and we're heading towards Winnipeg. What's the total length of the trip that we're doing here?

Ray Goodwin: Our total paddling is going to be around the 140, 150 mile mark. Now, if that was a straightforward river with flow, that wouldn't actually take us that long. But it's this intricacy of portage lining, inspecting rapids and actually just living in rhythm with that landscape. So the miles you cover each day is not big, but it's always interesting and it's ever changing. The other thing about it is this is a very beautiful river because of its rock. Some people think that it's called the Bloodvein because these bright ochre red lines that run through it. There is debate. Others say that it's because of a battle that was lower down the river and we'll never really know why it's called the Bloodvein. But it goes through the Canadian shield which is a hard rock area, scoured in the last ice age and everywhere you look, there are striations, stripes, scratches across all the rock surfaces. Any flat rock surface, you will see the scratches from the rocks at the bottom of the glacier. Now, they only disappeared 15-20 thousand years ago. And then the whole area is in filled. It's in-filled with water, anything that's low lying but not drained will turn into a bog into moss cake. Higher areas will have trees, and some areas will just connect with the river system. So this river drains a huge area.

Paul Kirtley: And all the way down to Winnipeg.

Ray Goodwin: Down to Winnipeg and from Lake Winnipeg, down via another river into the Hudson Bay. So this is the beauty and the arrogance of empire. Back in the rein of Charles II, the Hudson Bay Company was granted by royal charter, every piece of land that drained into Hudson's Bay. And it's, you know, a good chunk of a continent in reality. And so all the land we're traveling through, it one time, nobody did tend to ask the natives whether they objected to this or not, but supposedly all this land at one time belonged to the Hudson Bay Company that we travel through.

Paul Kirtley: Yeah, quite some terrain. So you're based in North Wales in the U.K. and you have your home turf there which you know very well and you've also paddled in many parts of the world in different continents. Apart from the history

and being part of a tradition, is there anything else that brings you over the Atlantic to paddle here?

Ray Goodwin: It's the sheer scale of it. We've now been on the river what, some 10 days, and each of those 10 days would be a decent day out in the U.K. and yet we still got three or four days to go until we're actually down at Lake Winnipeg and we'll be out of the area. And in fact, three or four, three days now to the first permanent habitation since we left Red Lake by float plane. So it's the extent of it, and also, it makes the decision making very very different to the U.K. and you asked me earlier in the trip, you were asking me about some lining, using the rope again to take the boat down a rapid. And I said, well, you know, I looked at one and I said, we're carrying this one. But if we were in the U.K. doing an advanced leadership course, I'd expect people to line[SP] down that.

Paul Kirtley: And that would be five star?

Ray Goodwin: Yeah, five star, the advanced leader award. And I would expect someone to have the ability but I looked at it and I went well, in the U.K., worst comes to the worst, I lose a boat, and that's very expensive and we can walk away. The road is not going to be far away.

Paul Kirtley: We can literally walk away and get the bus home, can't we?.

Ray Goodwin: We can walk away. We can get the bus home. If somebody goes over and twists an ankle, if somebody, worst case, went over and broke a leg, well, even in remote parts of Scotland, it's relatively easy to get somebody out. I mean, North Wales, all the roads are in the bottom of the valley alongside a road. So you can easily evacuate somebody. Here, yeah, okay, what are we going to do, satellite phone? If we're in the right area, maybe we can get float plane in. If not, maybe we've got to get a helicopter in. Evacuation, and if there's bad weather, as we found at the start of the trip, float planes can't fly into the area, nor can helicopters, they need visibility. And so you're very much, you're level of risk – So rapids that I would paddle at home- I think there's two reasons I don't paddle out here. One is the risk. I've finally realized that I've got to back off somehow. And the, it's risk to boat, risk to self and it's just in the context of this big environment, you've really got to take the level of risk down a long long way. So we have paddled some big rapids and one pair took a swim on one. But before we ran it, there was a line but

more importantly than there being a line for a canoe down there, was the consequence.

If they took a swim, they were still in deep water, big waves, deep water and washing into what effectively was a lake. Now, other places I've looked at and thought, well if you take a swim there, well, you might take a battering, again you don't want that. Or the boat could get pinned and broken. And without a boat, you can't paddle out of here and you can't walk out of this area. There is no way, until the coming of the railways, through this area further south of here, you couldn't travel through these areas other than by canoe. And even today, we've met two groups of people on the river who were fishing and that's spread out over 100 miles. And I will say, for our British audience, they were very very pleasant and pleased to see us.

Paul Kirtley: And they were also in boats.

Ray Goodwin: They were also in boats. They were in boats and the way they'd accessed the area was float plane. There is no way in. Now, in winter, different ballgame. Traditionally, it would have been snowshoes to access these areas and nowadays, some of the places people will come in by snowmobile. But it's a very remote place.

Paul Kirtley: It's worth saying this, this area of Boreal forest that we're in is about the size of Denmark. It's huge and that we're paddling through the bottom end of. And it's pristine, it's absolutely fantastic. And it's been a real pleasure to be here. So when you're looking at the risks, Ray, you're sort of looking at it in that kind of classic risk assessment way of it being a factor of both likelihood and consequence or severity and you're looking here at the fact that the consequence is higher and therefore you've got to rein it back on the likelihood basically.

Ray Goodwin: Very much so. And I'm trying to get over to people. There are times when it's quite normal for us to kind of double load on a portage, so I'll put a food barrel onto my back and it's got a proper harness, everything, so it's comfortable enough and thank goodness we're eating our way through it, that's all I can say.

Paul Kirtley: We're doing our best, aren't we?

Ray Goodwin: We're doing our best. I encourage you to eat as much as possible at this stage so that my barrel is lighter. Then on top of it will go my personal kit which is in another rucksack and that's my tent, my spare clothing, my boots, everything else goes on top of it. Because I've got a decent amount of camera gear, the camera case will go in my hand and I will go across the portage trail. But when the going gets difficult, and we've done this several times, I mean yesterday morning was absolutely classic. The put in yesterday morning gave me the heebies. Because you know you have two steep sections of rock, one of which if it was grass below you would have walked down because if you'd slipped it was no problem. But if you'd slipped you would have bounced off the ledge and gone over another drop, which is six, seven feet a couple meters and then the final climb down, so we agreed beforehand, you know, you and me we came back to the group and we said we're going to be careful. In the end, we put a rope down it and people only took one pack down the first one and then the packs were handed down the second one.

And we've done things like that with a canoe, normal that we've walked back, picked up a canoe and we carried it on our own. Now there are other places on this trip where we've looked at it and said, canoe's going down here, we'll manage it between two people and we'll manage it in our hands. And again in those cases, because the canoe is plastic, the canoe will actually bounce, but the person won't bounce. And you break an arm here, you twist an ankle and it has serious consequence. Twisted ankle so that you cannot carry a load means everybody else has got to carry an extra couple of loads across a portage. And if it comes down to it then maybe, you can't continue the trip. We then got to get to an area where maybe we can get a float plane in.

Paul Kirtley: And that's the thing for me as well in terms of looking at the risks of the land based activity, particularly around camp with using axes, for example, to take firewood and to split firewood, again people are using them automatically in a way they are used to using them in a scout camp for example at home, where they're near to cars and again here, you might not be so injured that you need immediate evacuation. We've got several people who have plenty of first aid training here who could deal with a bad cut or what have you. But again, if they're partly immobilized or they're incapacitated from using they're hand or what have you, then it has a knock on effect on the rest of the trip.

Ray Goodwin: Yeah, very much so and I think sometimes, particularly within paddlesport, within the U.K., we do push the limits of it. And I think having done an awful lot in the U.K., gaining very high level awards in the U.K. for canoeing, you come out here and one of the biggest things I've had to learn was, yeah I could line that, I could paddle that but I'm not going to. Because however unlikely it is that I'm going to get it wrong, there is a chance of that. So what I'm tending to do is run rapids I know with certainty that I can run, I know with certainty that even if, that either I'm not going to capsize and I'm certain of that or the bigger rapids we've run well there is no consequence. It's deep water, it's just you're in there or the kit is double bagged, my sleeping bag is not going to get wet because that's another consideration with it. The other thing with the paddling though and I think that's surprised some of the clients on the trip and would surprise a lot of people who haven't done it. When we started this trip, we had 14 days food in the boat plus all our personal kit, saws, axes, whatever and we've rationalized how much we're carrying and that is a very, very heavy boat.

So in a British context, I would expect in advanced situation to be able to change where I am in the rapid, changing the line. So I might enter the rapid at one point, go across the flow to avoid something, make another maneuver to avoid something else. Here, basically, it's very difficult to maneuver with any speed. So I really want to look at a rapid and say I'm entering there and I'm following the main flow through or it's going to be a very simple change in direction within that rapid, which very often I'm setting up at the start. The boats are so much slower, they're deeper in the water they're more likely to take on board water in big waves and so your tactics have really got to reflect that.

Paul Kirtley: And do you find it hard to rein it back or do you find it easier now over the years that you've done more paddling out in places like this that you've got that ability just to switch modes from sort of domestic mode to expedition mode?

Ray Goodwin: I think I have now got that ability but that's because I've taken a couple beatings out here in places that I should not have taken them. Six years ago, I was on this river and it went into a huge flood. Myself and my partner Lena, were paddling brilliantly and beautifully so much so that if I say my gander was up, I was feeling, not immortal, but I was feeling pretty good and I love paddling big lines and I'm on the rapids. We paddled a big line and it was there but I made an

error. I just didn't factor in one extra wave and it threw the nose and it took me out into a place I really should not be and I took probably the worst swim of my career. And the reason I always talk to other people about it, I shouldn't have run the line, the consequence was too huge. I also highlighted another issue for me, that that trip had been squeezed between two blocks of work at home so I was on time constraints. What we've done on this one you know, I have very serious discussions on this because it's an oddity.

If you're selling the trip to fit it in a fortnight, and this one doesn't. And that was to create the time so that I could make decisions without a time pressure on them. And again, that's a big factor out here, so yeah, I've learned to rein it in. And one of the things I really go on, is I look at something and my level of experience, if I can just look at it and say yep this is okay, I'm going to line it, bang bang bang bang, or I'm going to paddle it there down out there, that's good. If I'm standing there pondering it going well yeah what about that, then that now is what I use as a signal, shouldn't be doing this. And you've seen this time and time again. In fact, in one occasion you saw me pondering because the clients were asking some detail about it. But you could see I was pondering, you said, time to walk. And absolutely...

Paul Kirtley: Let's just get the stuff out of the boats.

Ray Goodwin: I really listen to that now within myself that if I'm having to think too much about a rapid, then that's not the rapid to run out here. Back in the U.K., if I'm pushing the top end of my ability, I can spend 15, 20 minutes really studying a rapid, how I'm going to do it and then what is termed visualizing the running of it, visualization. I will run the rapid through in my head, to the degree in some cases that I will plan individual puddle strokes, where I'm going to clip an individual wave, how I'm going to use it to throw the nose of the boat. But I think that's inappropriate in an expedition context. If it's that complicated, I shouldn't be doing it.

Paul Kirtley: Also for somebody that doesn't have your experience level because you had a lot of experience in white water kayaking before you came to the open canoe as well and clearly you had a very good understanding of how water moves and how it moves you around while you're amongst it. And for somebody that

doesn't have that level of experience, they don't want to be starting to try to do that sort of thing anyway, do they?

Ray Goodwin: Not out here, no. This is not the place to learn. This is the place to apply your learning. And yeah you will learn further out here but what I'm thinking is that if you want to be good then you push your limits in places where if it goes wrong, there isn't a consequence because of the scale of the area. So if we have to walk away from a boat in the Vermilion Gorge [SP], or on the lower Twairm [SP]. Well, on the lower Twairm we wait until the dam turns off and go and get the boat if worst comes to worst. The Vermilion Gorge, we're never more than about, and it feels remote when you're in there, but I don't think you're more than about 15 minutes from a road by walk in any part of it. And so that's the place to learn what you can do and here is the place to rein it back in to certainty.

Paul Kirtley: So the aim here is to get down the river in one piece really, isn't it, without incurring those risks.

Ray Goodwin: Oh absolutely. Absolutely. And it's as you say, it's the context, it's such a big scale that everything has to work.

Paul Kirtley: So on this trip, Ray, this is the second time you've been down this river, clearly you talked about the high water volumes which you encountered last time with the heavy rains further upstream six years ago. What else has been different for you this time or what have you gained from this trip or what have you learned on this trip or seen on this trip that you didn't the last time?

Ray Goodwin: I think really for me, I really feel I'm beginning to settle into wilderness paddling out here. I think six years ago was part of the learning process. And I think now, I'm beginning to apply those lessons. Yes, six years ago, I was guiding a couple of clients. One of them was highly experienced as a paddler. I was paddling with Lena and here, the big difference is that we've got some very very good people on the trip. People who are going for leadership awards back in the U.K. and so mentoring them as much as anything, rather than coaching, helping them with the decision making, working out what they need to do, involving them with the map work, letting them understand how decisions make out here. So that's been a really enjoyable part of it, being a mentor to folks on the trip rather than just a guide.

Paul Kirtley: And you mentioned map work as well, clearly that's part of it. Of course, you're following a river and it's flowing downstream, and I guess in terms of, compared to trying to navigate on foot through the forest that surrounds us that it's relatively easy to stay on track. But what advice would you give people in terms of navigating a river like this and what do you do that's different to other land navigation perhaps? Do you have different strategies for navigating a river rather than navigating on foot?

Ray Goodwin: Well, I think first of all, people need to understand the difference that this is a river system, in that a lot of time there is no flow and you are effectively in what feels like a lake or...

Paul Kirtley: A set of interconnected lakes.

Ray Goodwin: A set of interconnected lakes. And even when it is in its river bounds, and you know we went up one wrong channel briefly. It felt wrong very quickly, I pulled my compass out it was on the wrong orientation for where we were meant to be, so we quickly you know we'd wasted a couple hundred meters. So I find a number of little tricks that I have. One is very plain and simple, I don't bother with a lot of detail because if I did, that I'm going to spend my entire life with my nose on the map and I'm not going to enjoy being in the environment. Actually, just looking around the forest, looking round at the rocks, you know chatting to people. I would have to be so banged up with that map. So I'm going back to the United Kingdom and I'm going to run a mountain leader training course and parts of that course we will really have our noses on the map and the ground, very very fine detail indeed. Here, a lot of the time I don't need that detail so what I can do is, well ah the river is heading westward for the next few kilometers, take a glance at where the sun is at a particular time, well the sun should be on that particular orientation throughout that.

Then I'm going to turn north, well the sun is going to be behind me and yeah I can take into account different positions of the sun through the day, but it just gives me a very quick reference to which way the river is running so I can relax. And then just paddle on down, ah here's a bend coming up that's where I turn north and maybe a few places I'll need a bit more detail from the map, but a lot of the time just by peeking at the, because the river does big twists and turns as it follows fault

lines. Then I know the section I'm on, I know that the next rapid, you always know there's a rapid coming because there's a noise. And the bigger the noise the bigger the rapid, generally. And in fact, one of the customers was talking about this, he said 'I know how you grade rapids now Ray, you do it on the noise don't you?'

Paul Kirtley: Well now it was Rob that said that,

Ray Goodwin: Was it?

Paul Kirtley: Yeah, it was Rob that said 'what grade does it sound' was the phrase and Lee reckoned you do it on how far down it looks from the,

Ray Goodwin: Yeah oh right that was it, do I look down and can I see the pool at the bottom or am I looking at the tops of trees? If I'm looking at the tops of trees that's a big drop, so I don't tend to look at those very long in terms of lining or anything else, it's a light pack on the back and let's get going. So, yeah.

Paul Kirtley: Good so we've got sort of three or four days left now, what have we got in store? More of the same?

Ray Goodwin: Yeah more of the same, we've got rapids, we've got a couple, got a number of portages. So, I think the nice thing now, this is where it's, I think hard to understand is that we've traveled at a fairly steady pace and some long days but you always, one of the things in the wilderness is you need time in the bag, you need time to spare. Now I've got to this end of the trip and the reality is that we could probably push to the end of the trip in just over a day and a half. If we did days the length of some of the earlier days and we've got three days to do that. So we can be much more relaxed, do this recording sit in the sun, it was a cold night last night so I'm enjoying sitting in the sun.

Paul Kirtley: First frost last night, it was frost on our packs and our tents this morning.

Ray Goodwin: And there was frost on my toes I think. Tonight there will be socks on my toes, the thermals will be on and my head will be much better wrapped. But now we can really, the priority earlier in the trip was to make distance, the priority today is to find a really really nice campsite that's going to catch the sun and relax into this environment. But if we traveled like this at the start, at this stage, we're

then pushed time wise, we're trying to make distance and if we hit strong head winds or really bad weather, we've got a problem. And one of the things in river travel out here and this is what caused the problem six years ago, you need time in the bag, you need time to spare so if you've got bad weather or the river goes really crazy water level wise, you've got time to do longer portages, you've got time to sit out a day or two of bad weather without it really impacting on your overall time.

Paul Kirtley: You don't want to be forced into making bad decisions, basically.

Ray Goodwin: No. And time very often, you look at so many accidents out here in different environments and time pressures and it's a real factor with modern life, you go back into the U.K., people 'I'm going to do Snowden this weekend.'. And particularly charity dues and the like, we're doing it on this date. Sometimes the weather is not suitable and out here, you're traveling 14 days. So we've seen lovely beautiful sunny days, scorching hot factor 60 sunscreen, we've seen a really strong headwind, we had one day we were cutting into a headwind and we just saw a wall of hell come across the water towards us. The winds weren't so strong that we needed to be onshore and it was just exciting and I really regret not having the camera running at that point because it was absolutely phenomenal, it was elemental.

Paul Kirtley: It was elemental. Absolutely.

Ray Goodwin: But you guys behind us you saw it hit us first, and all I was interested was, for my back paddler to keep the bow into that. But you're going to get, in a fortnight, you might get really lucky and get a fortnight of really fine weather, you might get unlucky and get a fortnight of really bad weather. But what we've had is generally the reality, which is a complete mix, we've had really wet days, you need to be in camp early. But because we kept moving in the early part, we now have spare time. And spare time, when you're guiding a trip, leading a trip, mentoring a trip out here is absolutely precious.

Paul Kirtley: And the portaging is slick now and everybody knows the score.

Ray Goodwin: Yeah this team got the portaging down very quickly and I always, it's one of the things I judge people on out here. Not that I'm that judgmental, I'm quite chill.

Paul Kirtley: Not outwardly.

Ray Goodwin: Not outwardly. But the ability to organize a portage, whether you can just get it done, no fuss, minimum mucking around, do it in two loads. Once you start having to do three loads because you've got bits of gear here, bit's of gear there, you can't carry the stuff, it just feels disorganized. And this team's been fantastic because that organization on the portage is reflected in the organization of everything else they do. So I think it's a fine thing to judge people on.

Paul Kirtley: Good point, good point. Right, I guess we need to get camp packed up and get on the river before too long, as pleasant as it is sitting here in the sun. And absolutely fantastic spot we've been camping last night as well as, sort of almost like looking up at an amphitheater, isn't it? It's absolutely fantastic.

Ray Goodwin: I think this has got to be our best campsite of the trip. You know, we're facing straight into the sun, we've got sun till quite late into the evening. Huge lagoon with a massive class four rapid running into the top end of it. And then Lee going out for a swim to wash off, and a beaver appearing, pretty alarmed I'm not surprised Lee hasn't shaved for a while, and the beaver slapping the water in alarm to warn other beavers, yeah I don't blame the beaver for that.

Paul Kirtley: And we've got squirrels and woodpeckers and all sorts in there in the forest behind us, it's sort of thick jack pine and black spruce behind us. Some wonderful lichen, so the overall, the whole effect is absolutely fantastic, it's a great spot. And there's a squirrel now, on cue. Red squirrel chirping in the woods.

Ray Goodwin: Now if you can time a moose to walk by on the other side, yeah I'd be pretty impressed Paul, but I don't think your up for that.

Paul Kirtley: My skills are not that high yet? A couple more trips and I'll be able to charm a moose. Right, anyway, let's make a move. Thanks a lot Ray.

Ray Goodwin: Thank you, Paul.

Male Voice: You're listening to the Paul Kirtley podcast

Female voice: the Paul Kirtley podcast

Paul Kirtley: Well I hope you found that conversation interesting and informative, and it gives you a little insight into the thought process and decision making process on trips as well as why we love tripping in that environment so much. Thanks to Ray, thanks in particular to his leadership and bringing his experience to bear on that trip and thanks also to the four guys who were with us on that trip, Lee, Malcom, Rob and T.C., you guys made it such a fantastic trip as well and it was great to travel with you and I hope we'll be traveling again at some point. If you're interested in any of the trips that we do, you can find them over at frontierbushcraft.com, that's my company, frontierbushcraft.com. Look under courses, look under expeditions, you'll find the various things that we do there if you're interested. Let me know what you think about this podcast in particular, you can tweet me @Pkirt, that's P-K-I-R-T. Papa Kilo India Romeo Tango. Thanks for joining me on this, my second podcast, thanks for listening, I hope you enjoyed it and I hope you'll be able to join me on the next podcast which will be out before too long. In the meantime, take care. Bye.