

# CANOE FOCUS

**Happy 25th  
Birthday  
Green Star  
Canoe Club**

Read more on page 10

**The Pull of  
the River**

Read more on page 13

**Become a  
Paddlesport  
Instructor**

Read more on page 7



# OUR STORY

{ Autumn  
Winter  
'18 }

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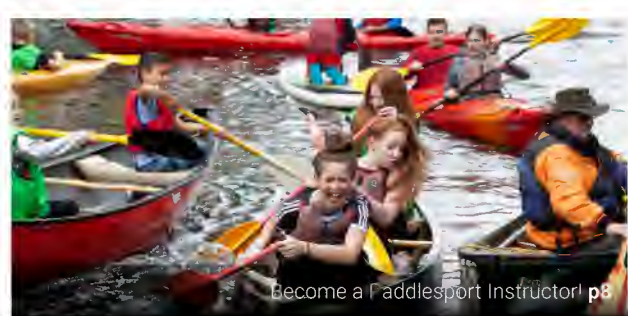


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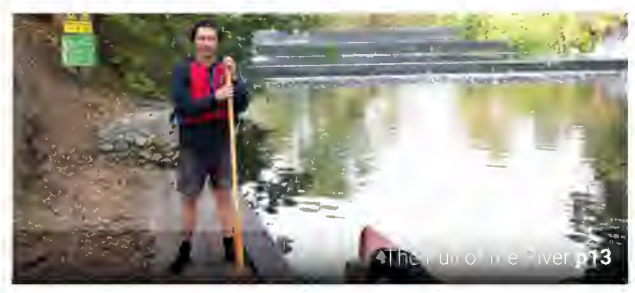


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# Welcome to this November edition of Canoe Focus

We seem to have moved from summer to autumn in the blink of an eye and for my colleagues and I, that means we are deep into our review and planning period and already looking ahead to 2019.

I remember receiving pictures to my phone of our slalom athletes training on the water in Lee Valley on the day in February when the Beast from the East brought the country to a grinding halt. This dedication was rewarded in Rio in September when the team came back with four team medals and three individual medals, including two silvers for Mallory Franklin in the WC1 and WK1. We offer huge congratulations to the whole team and a special mention to Mall and her coach Craig Morris for an outstanding season.

There have been several more notable moments and successes in 2018. In June, July and August we recorded our highest ever monthly membership numbers for three months in a row and will finish the year with more members than ever before.

We made great progress in other areas too during 2018. We launched more than 20 new canoe trails and new challenges including the River Wye 85 Mile Challenge and the Wye Canoe Trails (see page 16).

We reviewed the Star Awards and launched the new Personal Performance Awards (see page 12). These will be live from January 2019 and will bring benefits to thousands of paddlers of all abilities and offer something for everyone within paddle sport.

Athletes in all of our disciplines performed incredibly well again in European and World Cups and Championships, and won more than 100 medals between them across all disciplines. A fantastic achievement.

Of course there was much more, and we will capture this in our Annual Review to be published in March 2019. We continue to focus on the delivery of Stronger Together, our four year strategy and there are more exciting developments planned for 2019;

- > The delivery of the Personal Performance Awards
- > A club membership management system being offered to all clubs
- > The launch of our Clear Access Clear Waters Charter in Westminster on 28 November
- > Hosting the 2019 ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup in Lee Valley on 14-16 June 2019
- > Launch of a new web facility which has all the rivers in the UK mapped and key features detailed
- > The launch of Go Paddling to include a host of resources to help clubs and centres attract new paddlers and new members
- > Launch of web pages for those new to paddle sport or British Canoeing, full of helpful tips and hints, information on trails, clubs, centres and membership
- > Launch of a new British Canoeing online store
- > Launch of British Canoeing Insurance for all of your equipment and travel needs
- > Our Club Development Conference on 09 March
- > Our Coaching Conference on 23-24 November

There's lots more planned for 2019. I hope you are looking forward to it as much as we are.

Happy paddling.

**David Joy**  
Chief Executive British Canoeing

## SAVE THE DATE

### Saturday 9th March 2019

- Annual General Meeting
- Stronger Clubs National Conference
- Volunteer and Recognition Awards Dinner

British Canoeing will once again be hosting the Annual General Meeting, Stronger Clubs National Conference, and the Volunteer and Recognition Awards on the same day

**Saturday 9th March 2019 - at Eastwood Hall Hotel in Nottinghamshire.**

Further information is now available on the **British canoeing website**



# NEWS

For the latest news from British Canoeing head to our website!  
If you're not a member sign up to our FREE membership category to receive regular newsletters and updates.

[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news)

[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/membership/join-us-online-here](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/membership/join-us-online-here)

Welcome to the  
Canoe Foundation

## Canoe Foundation relaunches to take new direction

The Canoe Foundation, the charity that has supported a wide range of canoeing projects over the last 10 years, has launched a new website and a refreshed set of objectives to continue making an ongoing impact and change lives through canoeing.

The relaunch of the Canoe Foundation will provide the chance for paddling communities across the UK to apply for grants to develop local projects, alongside the opportunity to donate and fund raise to support the charity.



Click here  
to read  
more

## Chelmsford Canoe Club win 2018 Hasler Finals

Chelmsford Canoe Club's dominance of the Hasler Finals continues. As October's Hasler Final event saw their team take a fourth consecutive win, ahead of the hosts Norwich Canoe Club with Wey Kayak Club in third. Meanwhile, Leighton Buzzard Canoe Club's Lightning paddlers had a convincing win in the Geoff Sanders trophy, which they last won in 2008.



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to read  
more

## The Dave Perry memorial race 2018

Once a year the West Midlands Regional Development Team hold a regional paddle on the River Severn, from Bridgnorth to Upper Arley in memory of Dave Perry who passed away in 2016. Dave was an incredibly popular paddler who used to enjoy trips on the section of river.

This year's trip took place on the 7th October and saw Elliot Perry, Dave's grandson take part in the 8 kilometre challenge for the first time. From joining a local canoe club, taking part in pool sessions, learning to roll for the first time and taking on his first trip on the river, we found out all about his preparations in the run up to the memorial paddle!



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to read  
more

## World Rivers Day 2018: Your clean ups

World Rivers Day 2018 took place on Sunday 23 September and we heard from groups of paddlers who took part in waterways clean ups to mark the occasion!



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# Performance News

## 7 medals for the British Canoeing Slalom Team at the World Championships in Rio!

It didn't take Great Britain long to top the medal table on the opening day of action with an impressive two gold and two bronze from the team events, demonstrating the squad's growing strength in depth. The K1M and C1W teams produced fantastic performances to take the gold medal spots with the C1M and K1W teams also picking up impressive bronze medals, to make it four from four.



Mallory Franklin cemented her place in the history books to become the first female paddler to win four medals at a Slalom World Championships adding two individual medals to her team haul. After a consistently strong season, she also won silver in both the K1W and C1W events, her tenth and eleventh podium places this year. Ryan Westley also added the World Championships silver medal to the European gold he won earlier this year, to bring his successful season to a close.

 To read all the news and stories from the competition, [click here](#)

## 12 athletes represented Great Britain across 11 events at the 2018 ICF Canoe Marathon World Championships, held in Prado Vila Verde, Portugal.



On the first day of the championships Emma Russell and Sam Rees-Clark claimed bronze medals in the K1 junior and under 23 women's events!

It was a team effort and another medal for Emma Russell, as she joined with Freya Peters to win GB's third bronze medal in the K2 junior women's event.

In the senior events, Lizzie Broughton finished in eighth place in the K1 senior women.


 [click here](#) to read more

## Gold and silver success for FOA at Canoe Polo Euro Clubs Champs

Liverpool based Friends of Allonby (FOA) won two medals at the ECA Canoe Polo European Clubs Championships, held at the National Water Sports Centre in September.

Over 30 teams participating in the European Canoe Polo Championships were actively involved in helping to stop the spread of invasive non-native species (INNS) with a check, clean, dry initiative which saw over 200 boats kit and clothing washed down to prevent the spread of INNS elsewhere.

 [click here](#) to read more about check, clean, dry

 [click here](#) to read more about the Canoe Polo European Clubs Championships



## Nikita Setchell wins Gold on international debut after racing the final twice

Nikita Setchell became European K1W Junior Champion whilst the Great Britain team showed real strength in qualifying an athlete for all four finals on the last day of the Canoe Slalom Junior and U23 European Championships in Bratislava.

Setchell, who squeezed into the K1W final in tenth spot, was first off in the final, getting to gate 13 where a pole was missing. She carried on before her race was stopped at gate 16.

Twenty minutes later she was back composed on the start line for a re-run and the last competitor to go. Astonishingly she finished the run not only fastest but almost three seconds ahead of the second placed Eva Alina Hovecar of Slovenia.



**click here**  
to read  
more

## Canoe Freestylers Compete in European Championships

The Great Britain team won two medals at the European Canoe Freestyle Championships in Bratislava in August.

**Gold** - Otilie Robinson Shaw K1 women's junior  
**Bronze** - Harry Price K1 men's junior

The current World Champion and 2018 World Cup winner Otilie Robinson Shaw added the European title with a dominant display in the K1 women's junior event, posting a score of 496, over 200 points clear of Isabelle Voelkel from Germany in second place.

In the K1 men's junior final Harry Price added a bronze medal for Britain, finishing ahead of team mates Matthew Stephenson and Alex Ludlow in fourth and fifth place.



**click here**  
to read  
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## Medal success at Sprint and Paracanoe World Championships

Great Britain topped the medal table at the Paracanoe World Championships in Portugal, claiming seven medals.

The eagerly awaited Battle of the Brits saw Charlotte Henshaw claim her first World tittle, in the women's KL2 200m, crossing the line ahead of Emma Wiggs by just 0.7 seconds. There was also a bronze medal for Charlotte in the VL3 on the first day of the Championships.

Emma Wiggs bounced back in the VL2 200m, to claim another World title, ahead of teammate Jeanette Chippington in second place. Jeanette also claimed the bronze medal in the women's KL1. There was also a breakthrough bronze medal for Jack Evers, who finished in the podium places for the men's VL3 200m.

In the Sprint World Championships there was medal success for Richmond's Lizzie Broughton, who claimed gold in the women's K1 5000m gold alongside the silver medal in the K1 1000m.



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to read  
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# Become a **PADDLESPO INSTRUCTOR!**

Whether you are looking to run starter or taster sessions, games or short journeys at your club, centre or organisation then the NEW Paddlesport Instructor Award is for you!

  
**Find out more**  
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Canoeing  
Awarding  
Body website.



  
**Find out more**  
by watching  
our short video



Two days of combined training and assessment

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Practical Course – **Minimum classroom time**

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Aged **14 and over**

**Stable craft** – Kayaks, Canoes, Sit on Tops, Stand Up Paddleboards

Available from **January 2019!**



# HAPPY 25TH BIRTHDAY GREEN STAR CANOE CLUB!



**Grant Mockler of Green Star Canoe Club in Doncaster shares the history of the club, it's basis on fun and how founders Barbara Cox and Esther Mathews developed a club that has changed lives and become one of the biggest slalom clubs in the country...**

In 1993 Green Star Canoe Club was formed by Barbara Cox and Esther Mathews following Barbara's retirement from The Scouts. Barbara being the type of person not willing to put up her feet, with years of scouting experience between them and Esther's canoeing ability and experience; Green Star was born.

Over the last 25 years the club have made a dramatic and wonderful impact on the sport of canoeing, and is one of the biggest slalom clubs in the country. Their devotion to helping kids and adults at all levels has been astounding. Not only is canoeing promoted but general life skills and building self-esteem, responsibility self-reliance, respect and many more traits that mould the kids (and parents) into positive role models.

The club has touched and changed so many lives and has taken on challenging situations; kids from difficult home lives, providing people with mental and physical disabilities a chance to learn and enjoy canoeing, elite athletes that have lost their way and countless more.

In some instances, lives have been saved, and in many, positively reshaped. Last year Esther received the British Empire Medal for her devotion to the development of children and adults from grass roots to the top of canoeing.

Over the years Green Star Canoe Club has been one of the most prolific canoe clubs in the UK, with several members competing at national and international level, not only in slalom, but in polo and freestyle.





The club has worked with local schools and scouting groups, organised slaloms at all levels, trips to many locations and are known up and down the country, be it, Grandtully in Scotland, Oughtibridge, Orton Mere, Tryweryn in Wales, the Tyne Tour, the list goes on. It is a familiar sight to see the Green Star van turn up with a large trailer full of boats and Esther and Barbara on the river bank. Green Star has worked with many other clubs to the mutual benefit to all.

**The past and future success of the club is based on getting young kids and their parents/guardians involved in learning the basics and developing their skills, attending events and trips, volunteering and camping with one aim, "ENJOYMENT".**

In recent times the club has struggled with numbers and Esther and Barbara had been trying to operate the club and coach with only a few dedicated volunteers. Sadly Barbara passed away last year leaving a massive hole in the structure of the club. This is being addressed by pulling in new members and volunteers to re-structure the club. Like all clubs this is achieved by volunteers, either voluntary or "encouraged", either way, Esther would like to thank all past and present volunteers for their support.

On 1st and 2nd September Green Star Canoe Club celebrated its Birthday during their canoe slalom event at Hatfield Water Park, Doncaster. Barbara was sadly missed but she especially ordered in some perfect weather. Paddlers and friends travelled for afar to attend this event, a special thanks to all from; Manvers Waterfront BC, Halifax CC, Bradford and

Bingley CC, West Yorkshire CC, Manchester CC, Pennie CC, Stafford and Stone CC, Glanford and Scunthorpe CC, MAD paddlers and Leeds CC.

The Saturday was dedicated to practice and coaching, some paddlers were new to canoeing and many new to slalom. The whole day was dedicated to fun and there were bank to bank smiles from kids, adults and parents. The youngest was 5-years-old and the oldest was 70-years-old.

On the Saturday evening there was a barbecue with friends and members who enjoyed a burger and sausage or two. Everyone mucked in with the cooking and Esther, not wanting to have any fuss, was forced to a round of Happy Birthday Green Star before making her escape.

The Sunday was more practice and then the serious business of competition, but making sure it was still packed with fun. Every competitor excelled and gave brilliant performances, everyone should be proud of themselves. All elite paddlers start at this level, even Olympic Champions capsized their boat at the start of their paddling careers and there was certainly some talent on display over the weekend.



Last year Esther Mathews was nominated for an British Empire Medal for her work with Greenstar Canoe Club, **you can read our Canoe Focus interview with her here....**

# NEW Personal Performance Awards!

Get ready for January 2019 when you can take a NEW Personal Performance Award! If you're looking to progress your skills in any craft or for recognition of your learning and development, then these are the awards for you!

## The choice is yours!



### The NEW Paddle Awards

Start, Discover, Explore - are aimed at those new to paddlesport, getting into a boat for the first time on sheltered water.



12 disciplines with 3 awards each – Any discipline from Stand Up Paddleboarding, Rafting to Polo!

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- > No dual discipline – choose the craft of your choice!
- > Great to track your progress and acknowledge your personal skills
- > Allows you to choose the craft and the environment you wish to paddle

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**Canoeing**  
**Surf Kayak**  
**Sea Kayak**  
**Touring**  
**Stand up**  
**Paddleboard**  
**Freestyle**  
**Rafting**  
**Polo**  
**Racing**  
**Slalom**  
**Wild Water**  
**Racing**



**Interested in becoming a Provider of the Personal Performance Awards?**

Find out more about the requirements and complete your eLearning today!



**Click here to watch the short video**

# The Pull of the River

Author Matt Gaw explains in his new book why his experience of 'being free on the river' is more controversial than he first thought...

I can still remember the first stroke. The first time the paddle cut the water and pushed us on, through a river fringed with low-slung willows and furred with pollen. It was a moment of calm, the lulling shush of water on the wood of the canoe, the whirlpools from our strokes that winked in the light, where every thought that was not of this river, dripped overboard to be carried away by the current.

It is now two years since that summer evening on the Stour when I discovered that secret window into a new world. My friend James Treadaway had, for reasons I still don't quite understand, decided to build a canoe. He beavered away for months in his back garden, a suburban Noah, bending, shaping and gluing wood to form a 16ft Canadian canoe, whose handsome curves and broad bottom he painted a joyous nautical red.

During the next few months after that first trip, I travelled by canoe whenever I got the chance, both with James and also alone. We re-explored the "familiar": the Lark, near our

hometown of Bury St Edmunds, the Colne, the Alde and the Granta, but also ventured across the UK, seeking new rivers, new waterscapes.

On our quiet adventures we paddled along everything from the smallest tributaries to stent-straight canals and broad-backed flows hurrying towards the sea. Over chalk, gravel, clay and mud. Through fields, woodland, villages, towns and cities.

I soon fell deeply in love with being on the water. I treasured being sunk beneath the land, seeing waterscapes that could not be glimpsed by land. The river, the metronome rhythm of paddles that sent both brain and muscles almost to sleep, became my pulse.

Although the pull of the river was about an increased connection with my environment and some thrilling glimpses of wildlife (from the wobbling gas flames of kingfisher to watching wild beaver in Devon) it was (and is still) also about freedom.

>>



Matt Gaw Headshot by Jennifer Leavy

The pull of the river by Matt Gaw

Dipping a paddle into the river is to cross a boundary, to merge with something wilder. The self is turned to bubbling, wind-whipped foam: overcome and overwhelmed. Human and current run free.

The sense of escape is increased by the fact that rivers are often borders, both to counties and countries. Following them is to occupy a no-man's land where it feels like the only law is the push of the paddle against the current. In the canoe we are free to wander, alone and unchecked. Although there may be only ever two ways to go, the possibilities seem endless. Where there is water, there is a way.

Or so I thought. It wasn't long into the trips that would eventually grow into my book, *The Pull of the River*, that I found being free on the river was more controversial than I thought. While in Scotland and many other European countries there is a public right to access non-tidal rivers, across England and Wales there is, with British Canoeing membership, undisputed access to just 4 per cent of rivers. That's roughly 1,400 miles of largely slow-moving water out of the 42,700 available. To journey elsewhere, according to landlords, particularly representatives of the Angling Trust, is to commit trespass – a civil offence that allows landowners to seek damages or an injunction.

Internet forums suggest a quicker, nastier justice is often meted out with leaded lines and barbed hooks.

A survey carried out by British Canoeing in May 2018 makes equally grim reading: accounts of verbal abuse, maggots hurled at children and boats pulled from the water. During my paddles, although I have thankfully never been confronted in an aggressive way there have been plenty of indications that I'm less than welcome – whether it is scrawled signs or barbed wire strung across the river's flow.

So, is the right to roam rivers, the feeling of freedom I and countless others have experienced while travelling on water just an illusion? The answer is simple: no. Research carried out by Dr Douglas Caffyn, whose MA and PhD focused on historic river access, made waves when he argued more than a decade ago that non-tidal rivers (there is no dispute over access to tidal parts of rivers) have always been public and nothing in law has ever been done to change that.

His views, which were supported by British Canoeing and taken to heart by many paddlers, have though, been controversial. So much so that The Angling Trust and subsequently Dr Caffyn hired QCs to argue over everything from interpretations of the Magna Carta to the similarity (or otherwise) of paths and rivers. DEFRA, drawn into the debate several times, has repeatedly said the law is open

## WIN!

We have a signed copy of Matt Gaw's new book for you to win. **To enter**, register your waterways clean up using our online form on our website!

**Click here**

(Closing date: Friday 7th December)



to interpretation. Instead they have asked for both groups, paddlers and landowners to come together locally to work out access agreements.

Historically, such agreements have proven to be inconsistent and unnecessarily restrictive. In order for access agreements to work, water users and landowners need to be committed to work together on an equal basis that helps protect the environment and ensures our waters are enjoyed and shared by everyone. But, while landowners continue to refuse the legal right of paddlers and open water swimmers to navigate rivers, any discussion starts from a point of inequity.

My own belief is that it is now time the Government stepped in, either to mediate or preferably to regulate access to waterways in line with Scotland, which would also take into account any environmental concerns that might exist on some rivers.

This is why I will be supporting British Canoeing's new charter, calling for access to our rivers to be recognised in law. It is a pioneering move; something that could both increase people's enjoyment and connection with the waterways where they live, while also encouraging them to become their guardians.

After all, if people do not use and love their rivers, the chances are they will be less likely to look after them.

I know that in the relatively short time I have been paddling, I have been changed by rivers. They have seeped through my skin. Flooded my heart. It is a feeling, an experience, that I believe everyone should be free to enjoy.

**It is time, with the help of British Canoeing, to make it happen.**



The Pipe on the Waveney

## Access and Environment Update

**With the launch of the Access and Environment Charter just around the corner, there has been lots of proactive and positive activity by staff and members happening over the past few months.**

Our Places to Paddle team have been out and about meeting stakeholders, influencers, MPs and other organisations to drum up support for our vision of fair, shared, sustainable open access for all.

The Charter will be launched in November in Westminster and the case for change will be made very clear. The paddling community must come together through its actions on the water as well as off the water to campaign for fair, shared, sustainable open access.

Every effort made to care for and enhance our waterways is helping not only to protect

the environment, but make the case for canoeists being a critical part of their future.

We love hearing about the various river and canal clean ups which are taking place up and down the country with increased frequency. We're thrilled to have launched our online clean ups tracker so we can see what you're all up to and share the good news.

The partnership with Surfers Against Sewage, one of the leading environmental charities in the UK, enabled us to make significant improvements to our local waterways, together. Do keep us up to date with your events and stories around access and the environment.

Keep an eye out on the British Canoeing website and social media channels for more information and to see how you can get involved.



# Are you ready for a new challenge

**There's a new British Canoeing challenge route on the block and it's the longest one yet! If you're looking for a big adventure to train up for then this could be the one for you.**

The **River Wye 85 Mile Challenge Route** is designed as a multi-day challenge, with the opportunity for canoe hire and camping along the route. Starting from Glasbury, journey through the serene Wye valley, taking in the beautiful scenery of England and Wales. The challenge is written to be completed over four days but the more competitive paddler may want to cut this down to three or even two.

It wouldn't be a challenge route without a time to beat, so our live leaderboard will allow paddlers to check out the fastest time to beat. Don't forget though, it's 'on the water' time which counts on the board not how many days you do it over.



For full information about the challenge route, including route details, area information, canoe hire and accommodation visit: [www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/wyechallenge](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/wyechallenge)



On the Wye by James Carnegie



Siblings paddling the Wye by Ian Harris





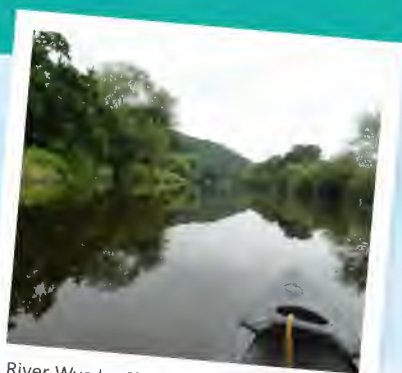
# River Wye Canoe Trails

If you would like to explore the River Wye without the challenge element then check out our seven new canoe trails.

These trails take in the same area of the Wye but on shorter journeys, from 8.5 to 16 miles long. With canoe hire centres situated all along the Wye these trails are perfect for a family day out or a trip with friends.



Canoe on the Wye by Nick Wells



River Wye by Claire Cox



Taking it easy on the Wye by Emma Peto

Find the Wye trails and many more at:  
[britishcanoeing.org.uk/go-canoeing/places-to-paddle/canoe-trails](http://britishcanoeing.org.uk/go-canoeing/places-to-paddle/canoe-trails)



# Stay paddle fit this winter with Kayak Pro!

**There is more to canoeing than paddling a boat, and the journey often starts off the water. We caught up with Grayson Bourne; owner of KayakPro, former World Sprint Champion and five time British Olympian to talk about how KayakPro, manufactures and designers of world class ergometers, continue to use innovation to shape the future of paddling, working together with British Canoeing as part of the Trade Partnership.**

From the early days of running the British Indoor Kayak Championships in 1991, to producing their latest Compact Kayak Ergometer with British Canoeing's outreach programme in mind, KayakPro have a long association with British Canoeing and their ergometers are widely used by beginners, aspiring athletes, to Olympic and World Champions.

For Grayson and his team, the ethos behind KayakPro is simple; to make the best quality exercise products available; and as official supplier to the past four Olympic Games their products are renowned for their quality and accuracy.

**"We bring the best quality exercise products, above and beyond what is available in the larger commercial market.**

"We manufacture state of the art machines which service pretty much every water sport out there. Our standards are the best quality we can make, and quality first is what really matters in this business." says Grayson.

He points to how working with British Canoeing has inspired new products for the paddling industry, and how changing technology means that they are constantly striving to produce innovative products, helping paddlers to become the best they can be.

A major project for KayakPro and British Canoeing was to produce a transportable, robust and reliable performance ergometer which could be taken to schools and clubs

to deliver outreach programmes. From this collaboration, the compact ergometer was born.

"The "compact" has now become the gold standard for ergometers worldwide. It's a real example of "Stronger Together" delivering tangible results." explains Grayson, and with more new projects on the horizon the development of unique products continues.

"We offer the development of unique products, and we see it very much as a two way process, as British Canoeing will be able to help us develop and take them to the bigger market."



From smart device connected ergometers to Internet [ergometer-to-ergometer] training, group programmable sessions to virtual reality simulation paddling. KayakPro have many technological developments which will become available over the coming year, in order to aid the advancement of canoeing.

However, for KayakPro, the partnership goes beyond simply selling products.

“For us, it’s not just about selling more products, we became partners because its part of the Stronger Together strategy. There are a lot of people who paddle out there, and I think British Canoeing could be the glue that brings everyone together.

“When there’s a large team involved it becomes easier to achieve, and we are happy to be a part of this process too.”

It’s clear that Graysons vision is driven by a passion for paddling as he explains,

**“Those of us that paddle, have a sheer delight in this sport, that typically lasts a lifetime and to share and expand the pleasure to others is a gift.**


“To work together, hand-in-hand with British Canoeing to develop paddling in the UK, we see a bright future for the development of the sport and our many mutually shared, joint goals make for a perfect synergy.”



## KayakPro Winter rental scheme!

KayakPro are here with a solution to banish those winter paddling blues, and keep your training on track throughout the colder months.

**From as little as £60 Per month** incl. VAT the KayakPro ergometer rental programme provides a low cost way to have your own ergometer – but without the large up-front cost of buying outright.

  
**Find out more**  
on our website



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**RENT A KAYAKPRO ERGOMETER**

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# Red Paddle Co

## 10th Anniversary Feature

Interview with Red Paddle Co Founder - John Hibbard

### The early days...

It's hard to imagine it now, but there was a time when the inflatable stand up paddleboard was not really recognised as a 'real' board. It was referred to more as a 'lilo', and seen as a bit of a joke by many of the worlds big watersport brands and market players.

Up until then every type of board used on the water was made of fibre glass and foam. And the inflatable SUP was something very different. Not the norm. In the early days of SUP it was a time when if you wanted to get into the sport you had

to commit and buy a 12'x30" hard board. Not that practical for most recreational paddlers. They were just big, heavy and hard to carry!

So what made John Hibbard the founder of Red Paddle Co believe in the inflatable SUP and commit 100% in the early days to set up solely an inflatable SUP brand?

**We spoke to John about the past, present and future of Red Paddle Co...**

### Coming from a professional windsurfing background what was it about SUP that first appealed to you?

The simplicity and the social aspect were the big ones, plus the fact that there were so many transferable skills from windsurfing. It also was something else to do when the wind was down.

### When did you first see an inflatable SUP and what were your thoughts?

Early 2008. My first impression was 'Great idea, badly executed'. I loved the practicality, transportability but not the fact that it looked awful, bent when you stood on it and didn't fit back into the bag it came from. I immediately thought that if I could solve the performance issues then inflatables were going to become the most relevant product for most people.

### Is it true that in the early days you and the inflatable Red Paddle Co brand were seen as a joke? What did people say and what was your response?

SUP itself was the joke! Before we could sell a board we were convincing people on the sport. We literally



spent two years going paddling with retailers and their customers, presenting the sport. In some cases, we would surprise the paddlers by deflating their boards after they stepped off at the end of the session. They had no idea they'd just been on an inflatable board.

### In the early days did you have any idea that SUP was going to grow into what it has become today?

I think I did. Or at least I was hoping it would. Everyone I took paddling loved it. Probably what hasn't happened as I had expected is the level of participation at the performance end of the sport – Surfing and Racing. I competed in a lot of the first major race and surf champs around the world. Events like the Battle of the Paddle in California, Hamburg World Cup, 11 City and original

Waterman League surf events in Europe. I was pretty sure that side of the sport was going to be massive. It has yet to really turn out like that.

That's okay though, as the experience driven part of the sport, the social side, the bit we all do to relax, is booming and that's just fantastic – not just from a business perspective but also from the angle of getting more people outside and onto the water.

Between 2008 and 2012 John Hibbard and Red Paddle Co pushed the development of inflatable SUPs, demonstrating that inflatable boards are a genuine product and can be taken seriously. Many of the hard board brands who had previously shied away from the inflatable side of the sport, now saw there was very much a place in the market for iSUPs and started to include iSUPs within their board range.

**But with many other brands now making inflatable boards what makes Red Paddle Co different from everyone else?**

### **When did you feel Red Paddle Co really made their mark in the world of SUP?**

The first years were tough. Not because of the inflatable tag but just because we needed a foundation of paddlers to spread the word. Our first year or so of sales figures were pretty poor. I remember being excited when I had sold the 100th board – after about 300 days of trying! That seems funny to think of now.

### **What are the major developments that you believe make Red Paddle Co stand out from the other iSUPs on the market?**

First and foremost it's our attention to details. Making a good inflatable board is exceptionally hard. You are dealing with a three dimensional textile product that moves and shifts during the build. Our quality control is like a military operation these days. We've learnt from our mistakes and we have learnt from experience. Running our own production and having the full say in how and when things are done has been a very important step.

Along with that focus on build quality there are also elements such as our Titan Pump (fast and easy inflation) and our wheeled carry bag that

are a true point of difference. The bag is a good example of attention to detail. It is built from the same materials you'd find in a windsurfing sail. Meaning it is strong and robust.

I believe we are the only brand to actually control the recipe for our material. This means we are getting exactly the finish and performance we want. This is not off the shelf stuff.

### **How big is the Red Paddle Co team and family now?**

We are a 15 strong team here in the Red International Development Centre. We have a team of designers working flat out, an operations team that are making sure we are getting products delivered on time into over 60 countries and a creative team who are responsible to bringing the brand to life through amazing images and video. This is no longer a one man band! We are also sold in over 1500 shops around the world. We literally do reach right around the world from London to Lima and back via Melbourne and Moscow!

Today, with nine board ranges, 22 boards, and the worlds best research and development and iSUP technology Red Paddle Co has undoubtedly become the biggest stand alone iSUP brand in the world. So where else can Red Paddle Co and the journey of the humble iSUP go from here?!!

### **What exciting developments can we expect to see from Red Paddle Co over the next few years?**

In our development centre we are working on products that won't see the light of day until 2020. There is plenty going on. We are all about making the sport more accessible, safer and more fun. SUP is an experience driven sport and so we want to make that experience better.

### **Where do you think SUP will be in 10 years time?**

As a sport I think we are only now starting to reach the major adoption stage. We see no reason why we can't help introduce more and more people onto the water. Paddling across the bay or down the river with the sun starting to set on a summers evening is just so compelling. I just want more people to experience that sense of freedom and escapism. You don't need to go to Hawaii or the Cook Islands to get an amazing buzz from paddling. I love it and I can't wait to share it with more people. Do it safely, with the right equipment and you are in for a lifetime of great paddling experiences.

# OUR STORY

{ Autumn  
Winter  
'18 }

Rab Microlight Alpine Jacket £190  
Rab Ascendor Pants £160  
Lowe Alpine Peak Ascent 42  
Rucksack £75



Columbia Pike Lake Jacket  
£120

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Salomon X-Ultra Mid 3  
GTX Boot £140

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Let's go somewhere

# TRENT 100 ADVENTURE

**Adam Evans of Nottingham Kayak Club explains how him and his team became the first to complete the Trent100 challenge in kayaks and canoes..**

Adam Evans of Nottingham Kayak Club (NKC) explains how along with his three teammates Callum Longshaw, Woody Snapper and Claire Davies, they became the first to complete the Trent100 challenge in kayaks and canoes...

This year the Trent100 Challenge welcomed Team Nottingham Kayak Club as an experiment. The four of us are keen kayakers, that's right, kayakers at a SUP event, I told you it was an experiment...

We were invited by event organiser, Mark Price, to see if the Trent100 could be opened up to the wider paddlesport community, and all four of us from Team NKC can honestly say "HELL YES".

There were challenges but nothing we could not overcome. We took part with three sea kayaks and one open canoe and the first challenge was carrying the boats the 500m walk from the car park to the start line. We were all dreading this, but with the help of the organisers we overcame it.

We set off first, full of confidence we'd be faster than the SUP's to follow. "We will put the kettle on for you all when we reach the halfway point"... we were wrong, very wrong. Soon enough the first team sailed passed, then another, then another. These SUP guys are fast, but every single person who came passed spurred us on.

After a solid 10 hours of paddling and a few portages we reached the halfway point, and what a halfway campsite it was. It was very much a festival with lights and various tents. We headed straight for the food tent where we were given plenty of warm food and drinks. There was a yoga session, and to our amazement there was even a massage tent! The facilities here were second to none, with clean showers and toilets readily available and plenty of entertainment from Mark Price on the microphone, and the SUP movies on the big screen.



Day two started with breakfast and a great opportunity for team member Woody, who was given the chance to continue using a SUP. Despite paddling one only once before, he completed the final 43 km, what an achievement!

The portage at Sawley Marina saw the SUP paddlers walk over the lock gates. This would be impossible for kayaks but luckily the lock keeper was on hand to operate the lock for us and we paddled straight through.

We reached the finish line to cheers and applause. We had made it, the first kayakers to participate in the Trent100 and we had loved every minute of the challenge.

We would like to offer a big thank you to Mark Price and all the organisers for inviting us to your event. We all had a fantastic time and we hope the Trent100 will open up to other paddlesports, as there are few organised endurance events that are open to kayakers who are not interested in marathon or sprint racing.

**Thanks again from Team NKC**

