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# Welcome to the February Canoe Focus

**Although it's difficult to top the achievements and excitement of last year, I think we can certainly give it a try!!**

A huge welcome to our February edition of Canoe Focus! It's a bit late to wish you a Happy New Year but I do hope you have had a great start to 2013 with plenty of paddling. The weather has certainly made life interesting. Please be careful out there.

This issue contains stories on exciting developments and events at Lee Valley as the Olympic legacy begins to unfold and there is advice on how to get involved in Canoe Polo, which is a really fun way to engage people in paddle-sports.

This edition concentrates on paddling opportunities in the North East and also makes suggestions on new things to try for those of us that are looking for a new challenge in a new year.

The feedback has been really positive about our new-look Focus, which hit your doorsteps in December and we have taken all your comments on board. Our readers have responded well to our call for articles, photos, and stories that really tell us what you love most about our sport. Please keep sending your items in. It might not be a fully developed-story, perhaps just an idea for something we could include a piece on, particularly if you feel there is an aspect of our sport we haven't covered yet.

Thank you again for your continued support, and your feedback. I look forward to being able to update you on further developments in our sport in the April issue.

*Paul*

Paul Owen, Chief Executive.

**"The feedback has been really positive about our new-look Focus, which hit your doorsteps in December and we have taken all your comments on board. Our readers have responded well to our call for articles, photos, and stories that really tell us what you love most about our sport."**



## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

We are very keen to receive contributions from our readers. We'd love to see articles and ideas flooding in and these should be submitted via [canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk](mailto:canoeingnews@bcu.org.uk).

Even if it's just an idea – drop us a line and we'll give you some advice.

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Please also use this e-mail address as a way to submit feedback on how we're doing. We are really committed to reflecting the views of our members, so we welcome all of your comments. You can also use the Canoe England Facebook page - [www.facebook.com/canoengland](http://www.facebook.com/canoengland)

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## REGULARS

- 06 In-Focus**  
News and events from your region
- 
- 14 What Gear**  
Kit for tackling the DW canoe race
- 
- 16 GO Canoeing**  
Go Canoeing Week 2013
- 
- 18 FOCUS On**  
The fast, furious and fun sport of Canoe Polo
- 
- 44 Your BCU**



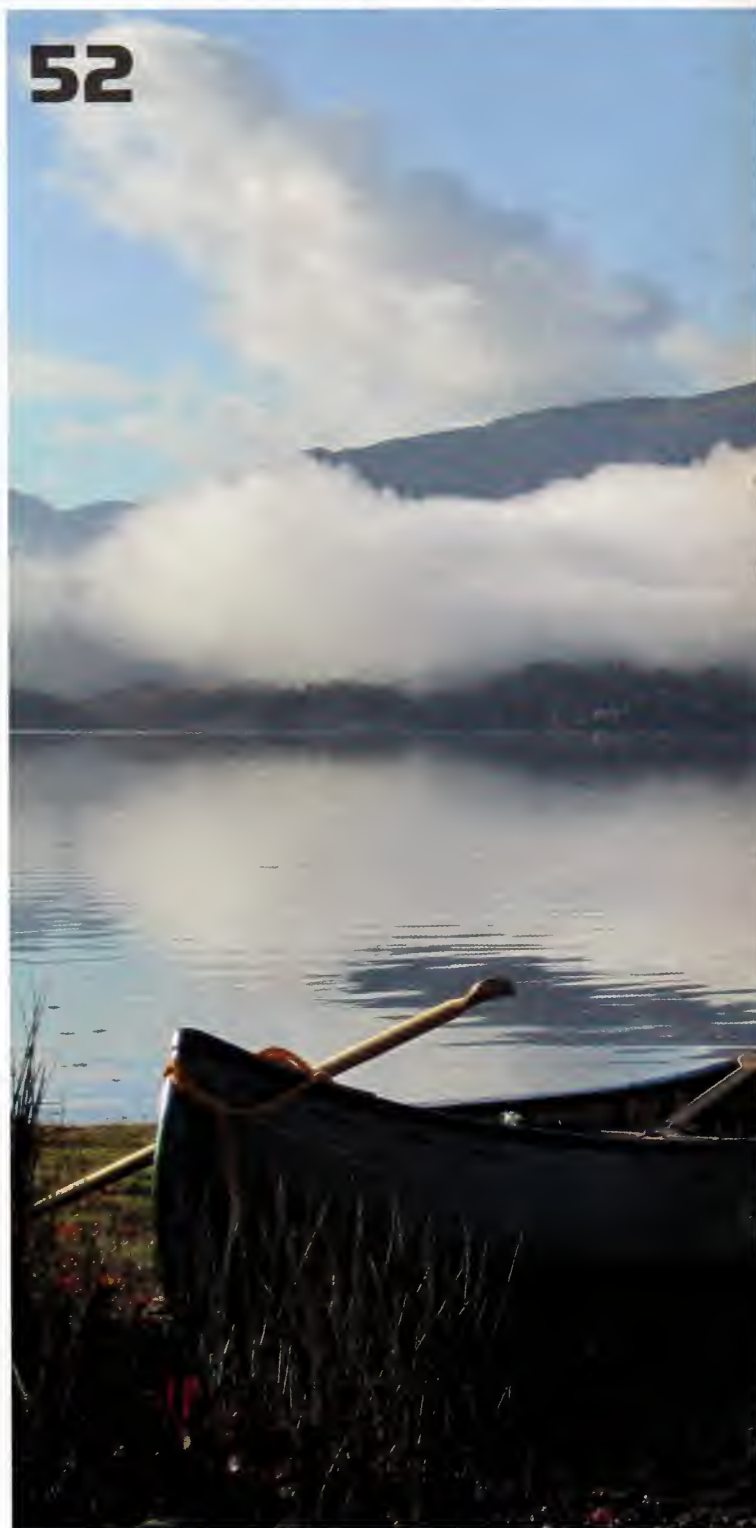
- 
- 56 Into FOCUS Photo Competition**  
The latest entries in our popular photo-competition
- 

## FEATURES

- 20 The Hurley Classic**  
Full report from this iconic freestyle event
- 
- Safety & Rescue Work**  
Some of the PYB Team swap the rivers of Wales for a more exotic working environment!
- 
- 26 Paddling in the North East of England**  
Touring, coastal and white water paddling trips in this beautiful region
- 
- 30 Lee Valley White Water Course**  
Exciting times post Olympics at this fantastic facility
- 
- 36 A Winning Vision**  
Marathon paddler Ben Brown is a man on a mission.
- 
- 38 Spice Up Your Paddling**  
Some great ideas to get your paddling juices flowing.
- 
- 58 Floating on Air**  
An inflatable canoe & a camper van prove to be the keys to paddling freedom
- 

Front cover:  
Dynamic action from the Hurley Classic Freestyle event. Image by Antony Edmonds

52



20

Hurley classic report



Chris Gale



38

Ben Brown



58

Spice up your paddling



## RISING STARS

The Jaguar Academy of Sport has recently had its third Annual Awards where five of the fifty Jaguar Rising Stars were provided with Special Recognition Awards for their fantastic sporting achievements over the year.



Sam Ibbotson, a promising slalom canoeist from Doncaster, was one of the recipients. Sam finished his 2012 season on a high. He's ranked number one U16, number two U18 and 11th in the overall rankings. He's now starting winter training moving up to the Olympic Development Programme (ODP). Sam has also received a Special Recognition Award from the Jaguar Academy of Sport for his excellent sporting achievements.

Sophie Pyatt, swimmer from Stoke on Trent, has travelled to China for a 3-week training camp at the Shanghai Oriental Green Boat Training Centre. Whilst in China Sophie competed in the Chinese Trio Cup where she won the 100m back and received a Chinese

The Jaguar Academy of Sport is looking forward to following all the Rising Stars progress into the New Year and beyond.

**For more information go to [www.jaguaracademyofsport.co.uk](http://www.jaguaracademyofsport.co.uk)**

## GO CANOEING: HERTS & ESSEX

Team GB canoeing Olympic gold medallist Tim Baillie and silver medallist Richard Hounslow made a surprise appearance at a recent forum held at the Lee Valley White Water Rafting Centre. They showed off their medals, talked about their experiences and endorsed the importance of club volunteers and community involvement in successful sports development.

In a joint initiative between Canoe England, Active Essex, the Herts Sports Partnership and Hertfordshire is Ready for Winners, sixteen clubs from the two counties came together to maximise on the success of our elite British canoeists this summer at the London Olympic Games.

A series of presentations, coupled with opportunities for discussion, formed the programme for the evening. Jeff Toser, regional officer for Canoe England, highlighted the Go Canoeing programme; John O'Callaghan of the Herts Sports Partnership outlined the support available from Community Sports Partnerships for local clubs development; Howard Nicholls from Active Essex discussed suitable marketing activity that clubs could adopt; and Peter Simmons of the Herts Sports Partnership talked about recruiting, retaining, recognising and rewarding volunteers.

Simon Ricketts, manager of the host venue provided an overview of plans for the Lee Valley White Water Centre's development post-Olympic Games, including the formation of a new canoe club at the centre.

All involved enjoyed an insightful and inspirational evening that will support the development of canoeing to go from strength to strength in both counties, as both a recreational and competitive sport.

Image: Herts Constabulary



## EXETER CANOE CLUB - RACING SECTION

Exeter Canoe Club Racing Section held their annual end of season party and prize giving at the end of last year. The event is the social highlight of the racing year with an excellent dinner provided by Steve Bedford, a few prizes for worthy winners, a very short speech from the club's Vice Chairman Richard Ward and a lot of fun. The club was delighted to host as guests Mitch and Sue Bewsey from AS Watersports and Brian Greenaway and Emma Pearce from Fowey River Canoe Club as the SW Region MRC representatives.

In order to promote marathon racing and to capitalise on the Olympic legacy, Exeter Canoe Club Racing Section has instituted a SW Region Hasler Trophy to be awarded on an annual basis to the club gaining the most points in Hasler races across the region each season. The winning club for the 2012 Hasler season was Fowey River Canoe Club. The picture shows David Green, President Exeter Canoe Club (right) presenting the trophy to Brian Greenaway (centre) and Emma Pearce (left) of Fowey River Canoe Club. On handing over the trophy, David remarked that the last time he had presented Brian with an award was in 1966 when as BCU Head Coach he presented Brian with the Rhodes White trophy!

Marathon racing in the SW region is active, but limited to a relatively small number of widely dispersed clubs with a growing number of competitors and events. Races are held on rivers and estuaries offering some excellent, if at times challenging, water. Those resident in the region or visiting are encouraged to take part in races either as qualifying competitors or competitive guests.

**Race dates are being finalised and will be published shortly on the Exeter Canoe Club website: [www.exetercanoeclub.org.uk](http://www.exetercanoeclub.org.uk)**



## A PLACE IN HISTORY

Kayaks North West is undergoing major refurbishment, expanding from 1300 sq. f to over 2500 sq. f of space to further cater for all types of canoeists and kayakers in the Manchester, Chester, Liverpool and greater North West and Wales area.

Marina Village (the home of Kayaks North West) has been supplying local paddlers since the early 80s and was one of the first specialist kayak shops in the UK. Paddlers have always been able to drop in for a brew and a chat about the latest gear; and the team at the shop will continue to offer the friendly relaxed environment that paddlers cherish and enjoy.

Those who are new to canoeing and kayaking will find information about equipment, where to paddle or what coaches or clubs can help, and the seasoned



## CLUB MARK GOLD FOR NORWICH

Norwich Canoe Club capped off an incredible year in which they won the National Marathon Championships, Hasler Finals, and National U12 Marathon Team Championships by achieving Club Mark Gold status. This prestigious award recognises the quality of work in the community, strength of coaching and management and the development and execution of a dynamic training programme leading to high level racing performance. Norwich is one of only nine canoe clubs in the UK to have received this award. It was presented by Athens Olympic Bronze Medallist and current Team GB Senior Sprint Team Coach Ian Wynne, who joined the club for an evening gym session and inspired the young paddlers to follow in his footsteps.



professional will find the latest gear and expert advice. Boats and equipment from major brands and suppliers will be also be stocked to provide the best service and range for customers in store and online, as well as present regular evening and weekend talks, workshops and guided paddle trips to help the development of the local canoeing & kayaking community.

Pyranha Kayaks made some of the first rotomoulded kayaks in Europe at Marina Village in the 70s and the site will now incorporate a historical collection of canoes, kayaks and rotomoulding technology to give people the opportunity to see how much industry has developed over the years. Kayaks North West will be open as usual during renovations, and the grand opening will be announced in April.

Image: Rob Eyton Jones



## LEGACY PROJECT UNVEILED

The first part of the 2012 London Olympic legacy project to increase the numbers of youngsters taking up canoe slalom gets underway this month when GB Canoeing begins offering training sessions at Lee Valley White Water Centre.

Enthusiasm at the Hertfordshire-based centre has continued unabated since August when Team GB athletes won a gold and silver medal on the Canoe Slalom course. Winter-long canoeing coaching, teaching basic skills to beginners, all sold out immediately, whilst club canoeists from a broad radius are making a regular pilgrimage.

GB Canoeing's Lee Valley Legacy Project is targeting a young audience, seeking paddlers aged nine to 16 years old, particularly from the local community, for a coaching programme from which it is hoped future champions will emerge. "We're looking for talented youngsters, who may already be involved in Slalom or a different branch of the sport and particularly those who have never paddled before" said Elaine Skilton, GB Canoeing's Project Implementation Manager, who is leading the initiative with colleague Mike Chandler, in cooperation with Canoe England, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and local canoe clubs.

Top level, affordable coaching at an Olympic venue is a golden opportunity for youngsters. Not only is Lee Valley arguably the world's finest white water venue, equipped to coach the complete spectrum with every facility from flat water to an Olympic standard course, but also all who use it will share the waters with the GB Olympic Canoe Slalom squad.

"This is the best opportunity we have ever had to promote the sport and by putting on these sessions we will be providing the chance for more children to take part in Canoe Slalom and hopefully develop some of those participants to become the Olympians of the future," says Skilton, who will also be taking the sport into local schools as part of a Talent ID programme.

"We are looking to ensure we have a greater number of athletes progressing through the performance pathway, and this programme will help to ensure continued performance success for the GB Canoeing team."

The coaching, initially running on weekday evenings and weekend mornings, will include competitive opportunities in the spring and summer. Being on the edge of London with unlimited potential to put paddles in the hands of thousands, the plan is to expand the coaching as demand grows.

An already amazing opportunity got even better for both club and elite paddlers when, at Christmas, Sport England awarded the BCUC and GB Canoeing £1.6 million to begin developing a performance centre at Lee Valley for use between GB Canoeing and a community club.

"In my view Lee Valley is the best facility in the world and providing a dual usage facility for the performance end and the community club will be another huge asset," said Andy Maddock, GB Canoeing's Slalom Programme Manager, who was part of the team that designed the centre for the London Games.

"Our key vision on the back of the 2012 Games is to build a legacy and have at local level, people of all levels of the pathway competing in Canoe Slalom, with a view to ultimately having someone from the area winning an Olympic medal in 2024 and beyond."

If you are aged nine to 16, interested in Canoe Slalom training and coaching, or are interested in coaching or volunteering in this exciting programme, please register your details at <http://bit.ly/leevalleyslalom> and we will be in touch with you with further details soon.



## SOLIHULL SCHOOL GOES ON STREAM

Water sports enthusiasts at Solihull School can now paddle in the wake of their Olympic heroes in their new racing kayak. The state-of-the-art two-man carbon-fibre boat donated by the Parents' Association will enable members of the year-old Canoe Club to train and compete effectively in regional events including the annual 125-mile international race from Devizes to Westminster.

It was built by Kirton Kayaks of Devon to support a booming interest in canoeing and kayaking at the independent school in Warwick Road after Team GB won six medals in the disciplines this summer.

Club membership is currently made up of senior boys and girls. Next year it will be widened so that boys and girls as young as eight will be able to test their skills and stamina in the Midlands round of the Hasler Series, the national club championship in marathon canoeing.

Phil Higley, Teacher in charge of Canoeing, told FOCUS: "Canoe Club members are thrilled with this magnificent donation from the Parents' Association. It will enable kayaking to really take off as a competitive sport at Solihull School."

During the winter the Canoe Club meets every Tuesday after hours at the swimming pool on the School campus in Warwick Road. Members join Solihull Canoe Club on the canal at Catherine-de-Barnes in lighter and warmer weather.

Solihull School works closely with Solihull Canoe Club, which makes use of the School pool for canoe rescue and skills training.

Solihull School Canoe Club members admire their new kayak donated by the School's Parents' Association: (left) Alex Browse, Sam McCumiskey, Rachel Hedley, Nicola Frankland and Cayla Balfour, and (right) Oliver Griffin, Jon Super, Alice Florito, Beatrix Huissoon, Isabelle Alderson and Phoebe Harland



## PADDLE POWER TO THE PEOPLE OF STOKE-ON-TRENT

New Horizons Sport and Leisure Centre is offering canoeing for beginners and improvers starting 2 March. Four free one-hour taster sessions are planned 2-4pm on 9 and 16 February. A fun pool based Slalom Challenge event is also planned for the 30 March open to both individual paddlers and teams of three.

With four medals in this year's Olympic Games, Team GB's Canoeing and Kayaking team succeeded in raising the profile of a sport that can be enjoyed by both children and adults. Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Sport and Leisure service are building on this success by offering beginner and improver short courses for adults and children over eight at New Horizons Sports and Leisure Centre in Chell.

An initial course held in late 2012 demonstrated that Stoke-on-Trent has many potential paddlers full of enthusiasm to try this exciting, healthy and fun sport. Each six-week course is backed by Canoe England and follows their coaching framework in the safety of New Horizons 25m pool. Completion of the course sees each participant awarded their 'Paddlepower Passport' or One Star Award (depending on age), both of which form the first step in national schemes designed to ensure a high level of canoeing ability and safety. Participants are also offered the opportunity to meet Paddlers from Trentham Canoe Club at the end of the programme and try a session run in partnership with the club outdoors on the lake at the clubs Trentham Gardens base.

The next course is due to start on 2 March, running on Saturdays from 2-3pm for beginners and 3-4pm for those that already have some canoeing experience.

Local paddlers are also invited to test their skills and fitness in a 'Slalom Challenge' event, which will be held at New Horizons pool on 30 March between 10am and 1pm. Run in partnership with Canoe England, individuals and teams of three will complete a timed slalom course to win one of a number of prizes. Entrants can be club paddlers, unaffiliated canoeists and enthusiastic beginners. Entry is £6 for individuals and £15 for teams of three. For those who prefer to keep their feet dry there will also be a fitness challenge using an 'Ergo' (a dry side canoe simulator) to see who can paddle the furthest in 60 seconds.

Paddlers who complete the range of new courses need not look far to enjoy their newfound sport. Stoke-on-Trent has an enviable network of, waterways and lakes just waiting to be explored either with one of the local clubs or independently. From canals to local lakes and rivers, a canoeist in Stoke will have to paddle many miles to see all that's on offer.

**For more information call New Horizons on 01782 235037.**





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News From Your Region

**CENTRAL**

## **HERTS YOUNG MARINERS PADDLERS SELECTED FOR JUNIOR TRAINING CAMPS**

Danny (13) and Sam (15) who both race for HYM COPS, have joined 21 paddlers from the Southern Region, in being selected for the junior slalom training camps over the winter. Both Danny and Sam secured well-earned promotions this year. Danny who races in the Junior 14 and under category secured 3612 points whilst Sam who is in Junior under 16s secured 3773 points. This qualified them both for promotion from Division 3 and they will start next years' race season as new boys in Division Two.

Both Danny and Sam had previously attended slalom-training sessions on the Legacy Loop at the LVWWC. Sam said "I am really pleased to have been selected and I can't wait to have a go on the Olympic course in my slalom boat". Danny told FOCUS, "I thought I'd had a great year when I got promoted but it is even better to have been selected".

Stuart Cresswell from Herts Young Mariners Base said "The talent that we have within HYM COPS has yet again been identified with two more of our young paddlers being given the opportunity to further develop and fine tune the skills they have already displayed in this discipline. This is fantastic news for Danny and Sam and as slalom is an Olympic sport I am still convinced I will see an Olympic gold medal in our trophy cabinet."



## **EAST DEVELOPMENT AWARDS**

At the recent East Regional Development Team ACM from Bedfordshire and Luton, Geoff Tilford (Viking Kayak Club) was awarded East Region Performance Coach. The following were awarded the Canoe England Services to Paddlesport awards for their over 25 years of volunteering in canoeing; Ann Hoile, Cynthia Tingay, Julian Brown and Keith Jennings – Leighton Buzzard Canoe Club. Congratulations to them all. Nominations for the 2013 Volunteer Recognition Awards will be open in the Spring 2013.

## **CARDINGTON ARTIFICIAL SLALOM COURSE**

Cardington Artificial Slalom Course has recently appointed a new management committee after Jim Croft has given over thirty years to the site, ensuring it continues to run throughout the year, attaining the Canoe England Long Service Award in 2011. Chair of the East Regional Development Team said, 'Well done to all for a very good turnout at the ACM, and a strong new management team - Shaun Bower, Graham Missing, Phil Simpson, Dave McCarthy, Toby Breckon, Gavin Walker & Bob Burnham - elected to drive Cardington forward. Thanks to Jim Croft for his many years of service keeping Cardington running and good luck to the new team!

**Interested users can now find out more about using the site at [www.cardingtonwhitewater.co.uk](http://www.cardingtonwhitewater.co.uk) or [www.facebook.com/CardingtonSlalomCourse](http://www.facebook.com/CardingtonSlalomCourse)**

## **SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR SUP**

Stand up Paddle boarding (SUP) is one of the fastest growing paddle sports around and it can now be enjoyed as much on our inland waterways, as it can at the coast. Central SUP is one of a small number of clubs set up around the country to cater specifically for SUP paddling and was started by keen boarders Chris

Kenyon and Scott Warren. The club, based in Tamworth in the West Midlands now runs training sessions and club activities as well as regular trips, races and events for adults and juniors alike.

Chris discovered Stand Up Paddle boarding through his desire to be out on a board more often, yet being landlocked in the middle of the country it was difficult to get out to the ocean as much as he'd like. After trying SUP for the first time, Chris was soon hooked and after meeting Scott they decided to share their passion for the sport and set up Central SUP. "Stand up Paddle Boarding can be a really sociable activity," said founder Chris, "Our club members are great bunch which I have witnessed firsthand by watching how they are with a newcomer, they are always inviting and friendly".

Interest in their success over the last year has reached the media with radio interviews, newspaper articles and a recent appearance on Central News.

Chris and Scott have lots of exiting plans for the future, including moving to a bigger home and continuing to run a Midlands race series.

**They are keen to share their sport with individuals and canoe clubs, so if you fancy having a go then visit [www.centalsup.com](http://www.centalsup.com) for more details and get in touch.**





## NEW BROWNHILLS BASE FOR RSC CC

Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club recently celebrated the fantastic achievement of gaining Clubmark status by moving into a new home at Brownhills Canoe Centre. The centre, which came close to closing its doors in September has been given a new lease of life and now is set for a bright future.

RSC CC formed itself in 1990 from an offshoot of Birmingham Canoe Club and for its first 10 years operated from a 30ft narrowboat called "Dhow". The club sadly lost its mobile club house in 2008 and have since been based between Rushall Olympic Football Club and Blackroot Pool on Sutton Park.

Run by an enthusiastic and dedicated team of volunteers, RCS CC has over the years built up a reputation for being a family based recreational club, open to anyone and any age as long as they enjoy the sport! As well as providing opportunities for young people and running Go Canoeing starter sessions at last year's Community Games, the club has a '50 Plus' scheme for older paddlers who can be coached by coaches of a similar age.

The club will keep its base at Sutton Park but will now run sessions from the canoe centre in Brownhills,

which until recently was faced with closure. The centre which is fully equipped with showers and changing facilities, will offer the members a warm, clean environment to enjoy their paddling on the Wyrley and Essington Canal. Club Chair Mike Nicholls said "This was a wonderful opportunity that the club grasped with both hands, it's sad to say goodbye to Rushall but we look forward to the challenge of building on our success at both sites".

Now the club has attained Clubmark it has an exciting future to look forward to in the coming years. The celebrations begin with a launch event planned for April 7th 2013 where everyone is welcome to come along and celebrate with the club.



## THE NORTH

### GRANT SUCCESSES FOR THE NORTH

Congratulations to Tyne Valley and Penrith Canoe Clubs who both were recently successful with a Small Grant from Sport England. Penrith CC, a newly formed club will be using the grant to buy Canoe Polo boats and equipment. Tyne Valley have bought a more diverse range of White water solo canoes and other competition slalom and surf boats and some sit on tops. Coquet Shorebase Trust have also been successful with an Inspired Facilities Grant for £50,000. This major funding will go towards new storage facilities at their Ladyburn Lake facility at Druridge Bay Northumberland.

### YORKSHIRE ACM AND VOLUNTEER AWARDS

The Yorkshire Regional Development presented the annual Volunteer Awards at their Annual Consultative Meeting at the end of last year. The meeting provided a great opportunity to reflect on all the fantastic events and paddling developments that had been achieved over the past twelve months within the Yorkshire region as well as to look forward to plans for the year ahead.

The evening started with a great video presentation prepared by the current RDT Chair - John Bates, which highlighted all of the paddling opportunities in the region. The ACM then proceeded with the usual round of reports and official business before Vice Chair - Chris Hawkesworth was asked to present this year's volunteer awards. It was a great opportunity for the region to show their appreciation to just a few of the volunteers whose hard work has allowed paddling opportunities in region to continue to develop.

The evening finished with a traditional 'Pie & Peas' supper and a fantastic slide show presentation on sea kayaking around Ireland from Pete & Wendy Bridgstock.

### YORKSHIRE SPRINT SERIES

Dates for the 2013 Yorkshire Sprint Series have now been set. These are fun events where you don't need to have sprint experience to take part. There will be a range of boats available to try and we will be racing over distances of 50, 100 and 200 meters. This year we will also be including a flat-water race in WWR boats for those who fancy.

The organisers are planning five events this year with an additional race being hosted by Pennine Canoe Club. There might even be an athlete from the GB sprint team visiting us at one of the events. Watch this space!

If you would like to book a place at one of the events please contact the organisers below.

27th April 2013	Roundhay Park, Leeds
John Bates	rdtchair@yorcie.org.uk
25-May 2013	Kelsey Gardens, Hull
Julian Medina	medina180@msn.com
08-Jun 2013	Ellerton Lake, North Yorks
Dave Adams	membersrep1@yorcie.org.uk
03-Aug 2013	Pennine Canoe Club
David Jeffries	marathon@yorcie.org.uk
31-Aug 2013	Manvers Lake South Yorks
Sam Meadows	sam.meadows@manverslaketrust.co.uk





## PADDLE IN THE PARK

Sefton Positive Futures in conjunction with Parks and Green Spaces, Canoe England and Merseyside Police gave young people the chance to come along to take part in kayaking taster sessions in Coronation Park Crosby during the summer holidays.

The programme has been a runaway success with average attendances of 32 people coming to the sessions.



A special 'Paddle in the Dark' event was also ran on 30th October (Mischief night) the event had 53 young people on the water and also another 50 trying their best to gain the fastest time on the Kayak Ergo machine.

These sessions form part of the Active Sefton/Park Ranger Service 'Paddle in the Park' programme aimed at complementing the success of the Street Games initiative already in its fourth successful year. The idea behind the schemes is to provide positive activities in parks and green spaces. There are plans to expand the delivery of the Paddle in the Park programme at various sites around the Sefton area Merseyside.

The young people who attended the paddle in the Park program also attended the presentation Evening which was held at Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre in November. The Mayor and Mayoress of Sefton, Cllr Kevin Cluskey and Cllr Linda Cluskey were on hand in the evening to hand out all the paddlepower certificates and to congratulate all involved in the running of the event especially all the young people.

## SOUTH EAST

### LONGRIDGE ON THE THAMES

Top Centre Status was awarded to Longridge on the Thames recently. This makes the Activity centre the 9th Top Centre in the Country and the 3rd in Berkshire. They are currently planning a celebration event to showcase their achievement

### THREE MORE HAMPSHIRE CANOE TRAILS!

With thanks to a donation from New Forest District Council a further three trails for Hampshire have been designed are available to download for free through the Sport Hampshire and IOW website. The trail leaflets are produced on tear proof, waterproof paper and can be brought through local canoe clubs and shops for £2.50 each. The new trails are Calshot Beach, Keyhaven to Hurst Castle and Eling and Southampton Water.

## SOUTH WEST

### SURF LIFESAVING AT EXETER CANOE CLUB

Exeter Canoe Club Racing Section recently hosted a day of surf lifesaving racing. The intent was to support marathon racing across the south west region. On a still, clear and sunny but still cold day, 65 paddlers took part in a variety of on and off water activities; this was supported by 15 enthusiastic volunteers providing the workshops and in the kitchen preparing lunch. The event attracted a wide range of paddlers from across disciplines with sea kayakers and Saunton Sands Surf Life Saving Club looking to improve their forward paddling, a large contingent from, Fowey River Canoe Club, Bristol and Exeter universities and Devizes to Westminster crews from across the south west.

The day started with two group paddling sessions down the canal to Topsham (8 miles) and Turf (10 miles) and a series of workshops including DW training advice

by Brian Greenaway and paddle stroke analysis by Richard Ward and Andy Davey.

After lunch, Richard led a session on 'Goal Setting' to add focus to training and Andy gave a quick update on Canoe England. There was then a free paddle period during which attendees were able to try out a different range of boats including Kirton Kayaks K1s and K2s as well as a Kayak Pro fast double sea kayak. The programme finished off with a short scratch team relay race during which the racing kayakers showed just how fast a boat can be made to go!

At the end of a very successful day, a special presentation was made to Dennis Walls, Chairman Exeter Canoe Club, by the Racing Section to mark the club's Diamond Jubilee (founded in 1952) and his significant contribution over many years. The club would like to say big thanks to Bill and Viv Sharpe for organising the day and to all the other volunteers without whom the day would not work

## WESSEX

### GOLDEN OPENING

Olympic athlete Ed McKeever and gold medallist recently assisted the opening of Wiltshire Council's £22 million HQ. Fellow Olympians, Paralympians, Games Makers and Olympic Torch Bearers at the event, joined Ed.

Ed was a key speaker at the opening and he thanked the support from the county sport partner; Wiltshire and Swindon Activity Sports Partnership (WASP), friends, family and GB Canoeing. Ed demonstrated his skills on

a kayak ergo, offering his assistance to those wanting to give it a go. He later signed personalised postcards to inspired fans and supporters.

Recently one of the footbridges in Bradford on Avon has been renamed the 'McKeever Bridge' as a tribute to Ed. **WASP are looking to support future 2016 Olympic athletes with Wiltshire Council's Funding Future Olympians grant fund, apply at: [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/fundingfutureolympians](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/fundingfutureolympians)**





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THE FOCUS GUIDE TO THE KIT NEEDED FOR THE FAMOUS DEVIZES TO WESTMINSTER CANOE RACE

# Completing the DW

From its origins in the Greyhound Pub in Pewesey way back in 1920 to the present day, the world-famous 125-mile Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race, or DW as it is commonly known, has presented paddlers with a unique and challenging endeavour. The equipment you choose to tackle the DW can be the difference between crossing the finish line or not, so here is the Canoe FOCUS rough guide to essential DW survival kit...

## BUOYANCY AID

This is a compulsory piece of kit for the race. It's personal choice, but a light, slim-cut model with plenty of freedom of movement is best. A front pocket can be a real bonus too for carrying energy snacks and the like.

## SUPPORT CREW

Undoubtedly your most important resource and essential to completing the DW. Being a support crewmember is arguably tougher than doing the actual race! Your crew keep you hydrated, fed and provide the right gear that you need at the right time. They need to be tenacious, organised, good with a map, able to operate with not much sleep and above all else have a great sense of humour!

## BASE LAYERS

A good wicking base layer is essential and again is a compulsory piece of kit. Something like a Helly Hansen Lifa is just the job, and a matching set of tights or bottoms will complete the set and keep you warm in the darkness hours!

## PADDLING TOP

A lightweight-paddling top is a good idea to keep of any rain or spray and to keep the cold out. Avoid anything with tight seals as these can rub. This can be carried by your support crew while not in use.

## MID-LAYER

If you're going for non-stop it can get very cold in the middle of the night and many a race has been saved by the addition of a Buffalo, or Paramo style top. Even a good fleece layer will make you feel like a new paddler. Carried by support crew when not in use.

## WATERPROOF ROUTE MAP

A waterproof map case or a laminated map of the route is really handy of keeping track of where you are on the route, especially if you manage to get separated from your support crew.

## HEAD TORCH

You are required to display a battery powered forward facing white light from Dreadnought Reach onwards, and to carry a torch by the rules. So a good head torch is a great way of ticking those boxes. Small lightweight ones are best. Your crew should have a few sets of spare batteries (and even head torches) just in case.

## PADDLES

Any good touring paddles will do the job, the lighter the better, but for the serious DW participant it has to be a set of winged paddles. These allow you to produce a much more efficient stroke, which will really help in eating up those mammoth miles. You'll be hanging on to these for a long time, so be sure to make sure you're comfortable with your paddle of choice and preferably will have used it in your training and race build up. Padded grips may seem like a good idea but they will very probably make your hands sore after a while.

## FOOTWEAR

Choosing the right footwear is pretty important, not so much for the paddling but for all the portages. Most crews run at least some of the portages and some can be very long. Your shoes need to provide you with a degree of insulation yes, but they also need to be light and give you good support for pounding over, often muddy, ground with your boat on your shoulder. Wet suit boots aren't ideal and you may find that good quality set of running shoes do the job better.





## BOAT

The DW has been attempted in all manner of craft (even a raft) but the usual weapon of choice is a marathon racing boat, as these have both the forward speed required, but are also light for the myriad of portages (77 in total) that are required throughout the DW course. If you want to compete in the blue ribbon non-stop event, then it's really a racing K2 that you're after. If you want to go solo, and do the race over 4 days then a racing K1 is really the best tool for the job. Plastic touring kayaks and open canoes are also used but the weight of these will really start to tell in the later stages of the race.

Image by Susie Brown



## HEADWEAR

It is compulsory to carry a wool or thermal head covering that covers your ears, so a good quality woolly hat, or fleece headband is ideal. For the daylight hours a lightweight peaked cap is also a good idea to keep the sun off if the weather is fine.

## GLOVES OR POGIES

If the weather is poor then a set of pogies can prove some respite, but they can add time while you try and get your hands in after every portage. We find that shorter, neoprene ones are better in this regard. Some paddlers use gloves for warmth and to help with chaffing.

## DRINKS BOTTLES / RESERVOIRS

A sports drink bottle is not only compulsory it's essential as you'll need to keep taking on those fluids as you work hard for hour after hour. There are specifically designed holders to help you carry it, or you may wish to put it in a front buoyancy aid pocket. Bladder style reservoirs are also OK, but can be fiddly to fill quickly. Most crews will carry a bottle that will then be replaced by their support crew at every opportunity.

## SURVIVAL BAG

Compulsory and could be a lifesaver after a case of an unplanned swim, exposure, exhaustion or all three at once!

## WHISTLE

For emergencies, a lightweight plastic pea-less version will do the trick. Usually carried in your buoyancy aid.

## SPRAYDECK

These are compulsory for kayakers, but they do a grand job of keeping you dryer and warmer throughout the race. You can use either nylon or neoprene versions and they are often zipped to aid exiting and entering the boat. Unlike other disciplines the spraydeck stays attached to the boat at all times rather than to you.

## ENERGY BARS & FOOD

Your support crew will be carrying most of your food, but it is compulsory to carry a 200g bar of choccy or an energy bar with you. Again it can be stowed in a buoyancy aid pocket

## WHITE LIGHT STICK

This is compulsory and must be attached to your buoyancy aid.

## MOBILE PHONE AND WATERPROOF CASE

Useful for contacting your crew or the organisers in an emergency (if you have a signal of course!).



# Go, Go, Go Canoeing Week 2013

After making a huge splash in 2012, National Go Canoeing Week is set to return for 2013. From the 18th-26th of May there will be a whole range of events and activities taking place across the country, aimed at encouraging more people to pick up a paddle, climb into a kayak and have a crack at canoeing.

National Go Canoeing Week 2012 was a great success and featured Starter Sessions run by canoe clubs and centres from London to Liverpool and from Cumbria to Cornwall, giving novice paddlers the chance to try the sport and meet the staff and volunteers at their local centre.

Other events held to mark the week included a Go Canoeing Easter Camp, a Family Fun Day in Falmouth, an Open Day at Hatfield Outdoor Activity Centre and a river clean up on the Medway in Kent. The week even included an Olympic qualification double-header, which saw Britain's top paddle-sport athletes competing for a place in Team GB's London 2012 squad.

Go Canoeing Development Officer Jenny Spencer said: "With around 120 sessions across the country, last year's event was a great success and really showcased the vast array of opportunities available in our wonderful sport. We're confident National Go Canoeing Week 2013 will be even bigger and better and whether you're an absolute beginner or an experienced paddler there will be something exciting for everyone to get involved with. So put the date in your diary and keep checking the website for updates about what's going on in your area. 2012 was a fantastic year for Go Canoeing and we will be working hard throughout 2013 to make the initiative an even bigger success. We will be working with more providers to create a network of Go Canoeing Guided Tours across the whole country and will be significantly increasing the number of Canoe Trails available on the website. We've also got an exciting range of new events we'll be trialling this year and we'll be working on adding new content to the website to make it a hub of information for everyone involved in the sport."

Clubs and centres, however big or small, are being urged to think about ways you could get involved and help promote the sport. The easiest way to get involved is to register some Go Canoeing Starter Sessions, but if you've been considering organising a larger event, why not tie it in with National Go Canoeing Week? **CF**

**"We're confident National Go Canoeing Week 2013 will be even bigger and better and whether you're an absolute beginner or an experienced paddler there will be something exciting for everyone to get involved with."**

**NATIONAL  
GO CANOEING  
WEEK  
MAY 2013**



Photo: Peter Wells

**"We've also got an exciting range of new events we'll be trialling this year and we'll be working on adding new content to the website to make it a hub of information for everyone involved in the sport."**





Photo: Antony Edmonds



## USEFUL INFO

To register a Starter Session, visit [www.gocanoeing.org.uk](http://www.gocanoeing.org.uk) or email us at [info@gocanoeing.org.uk](mailto:info@gocanoeing.org.uk) if you would like your event to be part of National Go Canoeing Week



Tim Bailie & Etienne Stalder Olympic Gold 2012, image: Pete Asites

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Photos by Glenn Summerbell

# How to Get Involved in Canoe Polo

**It's fast, furious and very, very fun. Canoe polo is a fantastic discipline and regularly played by teams and canoe clubs up and down the country. With the wealth of clubs participating in canoe polo, not to mention all the canoe clubs that exist purely to play the sport, there is more opportunity than ever to play canoe polo.**

## GETTING INVOLVED

No matter how much experience you have of playing canoe polo, or even of kayaking in general, there are clubs, leagues and teams throughout the UK giving anyone and everyone the chance to play. Beginner's leagues, scout leagues, local and regional leagues, and the BCU national league structure (which include youth and ladies leagues) means that there's always canoe polo to get involved in whatever your fitness level, age and ability.

## FINDING A CLUB

The easiest way to start playing canoe polo is to find a local club who play the game, get in touch about when and where they meet, and turn up to one of their sessions. Almost every club will have a weekly training session where they play games and practise skills and techniques. Some clubs, having a larger number of players and wider range of abilities, may have sessions aimed specifically at beginners.

Finding a club can be tricky as they aren't widely advertised, but many canoe clubs will have knowledge of where you can try polo, even if they don't participate themselves. There are also resources on the Internet to help. Check on the BCU canoe polo website club



finder [www.canoe polo.org.uk](http://www.canoe polo.org.uk) or post a message on [canoe polo.com/forum](http://canoe polo.com/forum), both are excellent resources. Many clubs and leagues have their own websites, and a large number of universities and scout groups participate in canoe polo too, a quick internet search will tell you who is playing polo in your region.

## PLAYING THE GAME

When you attend a canoe polo session you'll usually be able to borrow a boat, spray-deck and a paddle. They'll also provide you with a helmet with a faceguard and a numbered buoyancy aid too, both of which are compulsory to play the game. Take along any kit you have which may be useful, such as your own deck a cag and warm clothing if you are playing outdoors.

When you're kitted up and on the water you may be forgiven for wondering if that whilst throwing the ball, catching it and shooting at goal, you need another set of hands to paddle! But experienced players will be able to show you techniques for keeping control of your boat and the ball at the same time. One handed catching and passing will follow, then you'll be pushing people in to get hold of the ball (yep, pushing is allowed!).

As with all sports, there are rules that govern canoe polo. Joining in with your local polo club will allow you to pick up the rules fairly quickly. They are designed primarily with safety and fair play in mind. However it is sensible to have a good understanding before playing competitively. There are official rulebooks available from the BCU, and refereeing courses that take place each year, which will qualify you to referee competitive matches.



## COMPETITIVE CANOE POLO

The BCU national league structure is the largest in the UK and the Open category consists of 4 divisions, containing around 100 teams. Division 4 is the most suited to novice polo players, and the experience of teams in each division increases right up to division 1, which contains the best teams in the UK. These leagues consist of four or five Saturday afternoon/evening tournaments, held in large swimming pools, between September and April. Anyone can play in the Open category, but the BCU also organises additional leagues specifically for Women and Youth teams.

As well as the national leagues, there are local and regional leagues up and down the country. These leagues are generally more informal and are run to provide additional opportunities for clubs and individuals to play entry-level canoe polo. Some local and regional leagues may even have equipment for teams that can be borrowed or hired for the evening, meaning you don't have to invest in buying new equipment straight away. With a variety of divisions catering for all abilities and taking place during the same time of year, many clubs choose to enter teams into both national and local leagues to play as much canoe polo as possible during the season.

During the summer months a number of canoe clubs host very large outdoor tournaments, which attract teams from all over the country and even teams from overseas. They are held over a weekend with the winners from each division crowned in a final on Sunday afternoon. Many British clubs also travel to compete at similar tournaments held on the continent. There are large and well-attended yearly tournaments in France, Belgium and Germany and most countries throughout Europe.

Organised by the ICF there are World and European Canoe Polo Championship events held every two years. Canoe polo also features in the World Games, which takes place every four years. Great Britain is one of the world's foremost nations, consistently winning medals on the international stage.

## THE REWARD

So after attending a few sessions, you may start to see what canoe polo is all about. Within the sport of canoe polo there are plenty of places to go, people to meet and games to be played. You may find that paddling a kayak and throwing a ball go hand in hand.

### 2016 CANOE POLO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

As you may have read in previous issues the BCU has won the bid to host the Canoe Polo World Championships in 2016 on the Serpentine in Hyde Park for event details see [www.canoepolo.london2016.com/](http://www.canoepolo.london2016.com/) or follow us on Twitter @FundraisingCPWC for our updates.

## USEFUL INFO

If you want to get involved and find out more about Canoe Polo for [www.canoepolo.org.uk](http://www.canoepolo.org.uk)

## ADVICE FOR CLUBS STARTING OUT IN CANOE POLO

If a club doesn't have a canoe polo program already in place it may seem like a daunting task to get up and running. However there are resources, grants and the BCU Canoe Polo Committee knowledge and experience on your side.

### THE BASICS

Firstly you'll need a stretch of flat water to play on. Canals, docks, lakes, flat areas of river and indoor and outdoor swimming pools are all used to play canoe polo. A full size pitch is 35m long by 23m wide, though most swimming pools are more than adequate to begin with. The goals are 1.5m wide by 1m tall and hang 2 metres above the water level at either end of the pitch. A size 5 canoe polo or water polo ball is used in Open competition and a size 4 ball is used for Women and Youth competition.

### INDOOR PITCHES

The most popular option is an indoor pool, it can be used all year round and there is often space to store equipment so sessions are easier to run. Whilst choosing a venue, it is important to consider how you will install a set of lines to hang the goals at each end of the pitch. The bottom of the goal should be 2 metres above the water level, allowing for the height of the goal (1 metre) and the dip in the line, means the fixings in the walls along the poolside need to be 4-5 metres above the water surface.

### OUTDOOR PITCHES

An outdoor pitch will require more work in setting up. Constructing a pair of floating goals will be the best option if the pitch is on open water, with floating ropes to mark the boundaries of the playing area. The floating elements should be anchored in position using the nearby land or by positioning floating buoys and sunken weights. There are both free construction plans for building your own floating goals and commercial products available for setting up entire floating pitches.

### THE EQUIPMENT

Canoe polo equipment is specially designed with both performance and safety in mind. Because canoe polo is a contact sport, each kayak must have foam or rubber bumpers on the bow and stern, and the hulls and decks are designed to have no sharp edges. Similarly with paddles, rules govern the minimum thickness of the paddle blade so as to improve safety for all competitors. Also compulsory are helmets with faceguards and polo specific buoyancy aids that have additional padding.

This equipment must be the same colour throughout the team, and starting a new team or club will allow you to choose your own team colours. Each team member is required to have a matching boat deck, buoyancy aid (with numbers and a reversible 2nd colour), Lycra top and helmet. Although in reality, for lower league competition these rules are less strict.

### GRANTS

Grants are essential to many clubs to provide equipment and facilities for members to play and improve. The Canoe Foundation awards funds of up to £2,000 to clubs, and funds up to £10,000 are also available from Sport England. Local government organisations are another good source and regularly award grants to clubs too. To qualify for a grant your club must show how the money will be spent and how this will benefit club members and help more people to play canoe polo. There is always advice available to help clubs with the process of completing applications from the organisation themselves.

### THE COMMITTEE

The sport of canoe polo is run by a small group of dedicated people who are keen to see more people getting involved and enjoying the sport. The committee is responsible for organising the national leagues, the annual club championships and the entire day-to-day running that the sport entails. So if you are interested in finding some kit, starting a new team and getting involved in a league they'd be glad to hear from you. **CF**



Report by Dennis Newton

# The Hurley Classic Freestyle Event

DENNIS NEWTON REPORTS ON THE ACTION FROM THE LATEST INSTALMENT OF THE HURLEY CLASSIC FREESTYLE EVENT ON THE RIVER THAMES



**“The whole event centres on the Hurley Classic Freestyle Competition, which offers freestyle paddlers of all abilities and age ranges a chance to compete against each other.”**





Paddlers line up to compete on a classic three gates. Image by Dale Mears

**The SAS Hurley Classic freestyle event on the River Thames was back for its 25th year this winter, bigger and bolder than ever. Priding itself on a fun and inclusive ethos, the Classic saw world-class freestyle paddlers competing alongside eager amateurs in a thrilling series of events. Kayakers from across Europe and beyond attended giving the longest running freestyle event in the UK a truly international feel.**

To get as much fun and on-the-water action in to the program the latest Classic event featured many old favourites and some new additions, most notably a Boater-X race and stand-up-paddle-boarding. Hurley continues to see an increasingly large number of entrants with 150 people competing in events across the weekend.





The Boater-X start ramp provided a spectacular start. Image by River Zoo

Boom! And they're off...  
Image by Dave Wortley

Patrosz Czaundera - image by Dale M...



## BOATER-X

The Boater-X race was, for competitors and spectators alike, one of the highlights of the Saturday, with four paddlers per heat launching from a 22-foot high ramp into the river and manoeuvring a marked course involving eddies, white water and weir gates. The Boater-X saw champions old and new, competing against coaches and avid paddlers.

**"The Boater-X was a really exciting event. It's the feeling of being chased and chasing down the competition. It's a great spectator sport as you can see exactly what's going on, and the entry ramp is guaranteed to offer some carnage!"** Jenny Crimes (Winner of the Women's Boater-X).

**"The SAS Hurley Classic Boater-X on Saturday was epic"** Shaun Baker (pioneer of extreme white water kayaking, and Hurley Classic veteran)

The Boater-X proved to be very exciting to watch and quickly became a firm favourite. Jenny Crimes sprinted to victory after coming off the wave for the second buoy in the lead. Following a close run men's final David Bain sprinted ahead to avoid the crashes and take the first Hurley Men's Boater-X title.

## COACHING WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES

The Hurley Classic also offered a series of workshops and lectures throughout the weekend. These included the Freestyle Orientation for the new BCU Freestyle Coaching and Star Awards, providing the next generation of freestyle coaches.

There were also lectures on utilising sports psychology to obtain the most from your paddling performance, white water safety and rescue, and the Environment Agency's strategy on weir development and management.

## FREESTYLE JAM

The whole event centres on the Hurley Classic Freestyle Competition, which offers freestyle paddlers of all abilities and age ranges a chance to compete against each other. The initial sessions were 15-minute heats featuring eight paddlers. This jam session format offered future stars and local paddlers the opportunity to compete with their heroes.

**"The format for the jam sessions (15-minutes to score as many moves as possible) meant variety was important. At the start of every 30 second run I'd tick off some of my saver moves and then as time was running out I'd go for bigger moves with flush potential!"** Sam Anderson –

**"In the heats it was a jam. This enabled me to relax a lot more and take my time. I was happy with how it went because I managed to try new moves I had been working on"** Kim Aldred - Freestyle Kayaker

The top five from the heats competed in an International Canoe Federation (ICF) style final. This year saw fierce competition in the men's final with Peter Csonka (current World Cup Champion), Joaquim Fontané (current European Champion), Bren Orton (Junior Men's European Champion), Mathieu Dumoulin and Sam Anderson (British National Champion) all battling it out on the classic Hurley three gate configuration of waves.





Kim Aldred - image by Dale Mears



Chilling out between events. Image by the River Zoo



The three gate set up of the wave allowed for some big moves. Image by Dale Mears



The ethos of the Hurley Classic is all about participation and fun. Image by Dale Mears

The final offered a thrilling spectacle with each paddler bringing his own style. The strategies varied between using the first and second gates. I put that question to both Peter and Mathieu:

**"I knew it was the safest option to do tricks in the first gate hole but I decided to enjoy and do my rides in the main wave. It's so rare to be able to compete in an actual wave that I didn't want to miss it".**

**Mathieu Dumoulin**

**"In Hurley there are two features, I decided to compete in the first one, because I had paddled there more in training. It's harder to throw aerial moves but it's more sticky and you don't need so much time for set up." Peter Csonka**

The competition was full of excitement with Mathieu breaking his paddle on the second run:

**"On the second ride I broke my paddle. I kept going for the show but didn't score much even though I had a lot of fun". Mathieu Dumoulin**

The eventual winner was Peter Csonka, followed by Joaquim Fontané and Mathieu Dumoulin.

The women's final was equally as hotly contended with Nina Csonkova (European Champion), Fiona Jarvie (2008 European Champion), Flic Mearns and long-time Hurley local Louise Wigmore. Nina threw

down a selection of impressive moves including a Helix to take the title. I asked the ladies what was memorable about the event:

**"I met many friends which I haven't seen for long time. I enjoyed the whole atmosphere there and competition was just a bit of it. But I have to pick up one highlight from this weekend, it would be the fact that me and my husband finally won together at the same time." Nina Csonkova**

The junior results were taken from the jam session scores. The winner of the junior men's event was Bren Orton, who also competed in the men's final and the winner of the junior ladies was Nuria Fontaine.

**"It's pretty surreal, to be paddling against the guys I grew up trying to emulate is an incredible feeling. I'm really looking forward to competing in the seniors next year and being pushed harder than ever by such great and experienced paddlers". Bren Orton CF**

**"The Boater-X was a really exciting event. It's the feeling of being chased and chasing down the competition. It's a great spectator sport as you can see exactly what's going on, and the entry ramp is guaranteed to offer some carnage!"**



The SAS Hurley Classic Freestyle Event



The SAS bank was home to the event HQ. Image by Dale Mears



Hurley local Doug Cooper knows how to go big at Hurley. Image Dave Wortley

**HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN FREESTYLE?**

Freestyle kayaking now has a great structure to support all levels of recreation and competitive freestyle in the UK. There are a number of ways of getting involved in competitive freestyle, firstly through local canoe clubs, many of which now do freestyle sessions in club pools or on local play features. Supported by the new BCU Freestyle Coaching and Award programmes club coaches can better develop and challenge those interested in recreational freestyle.

Those young paddlers who would like to try competitive freestyle can also attend one of the Youth Freestyle Series events. These are a number of one-day events aimed at progressing white water paddlers. They are open to all paddlers (18 and under) with a fairly reliable white water roll who want to improve their freestyle or white water paddling or who want to take part in a fun freestyle competition.

The next step in this progression would be the Club Championships, league and GB selection events (age 15 plus), and of course competing in events such as the SAS Hurley Classic.

I asked GB freestyler the current Men's World Freestyle Champion James 'Pringle' Bebbington what he feels it takes to become a world-class boater.

"For the future World Champions out there, first off, get a boat that fits you and that you've tried and liked before you buy it.

There is a huge range of playboats to choose from now so my recommendations to try out would be the Dagger Jitsu, Wave Sport Project X, Pyranha Jed and the Jackson Rockstar.

Next my MAIN advice to you is to enjoy what you do. It's the first key to success so don't ever take it too seriously.

Get into the habit of trying moves on both sides and try all moves you can imagine not just the ones your good at.

Don't be afraid to fail or look silly. I spend the majority of my sessions falling on my face trying moves I can't do (yet...) so if I cared too much what people thought I'd have gone home crying many years ago. The bonus of this approach is that you'll learn at a much faster rate.

About competing, don't stress about them too much, if you're paddling regularly, enjoying what you do and trying lots of moves all the time, success will come sooner or later so just enjoy your time on the water.

Wishing you big moves and shiny medals, Pringle – World Freestyle Champion



The happy winners collect their rewards. Image by Dave Wortley

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dennis Newton provides white water coaching and guiding services ([sweetwatercoaching.co.uk](http://sweetwatercoaching.co.uk)). He is a BCU Level 5 Coach and the GB Freestyle Team Performance Director.

**USEFUL WEB LINKS:**

- Youth Freestyle Series: [youthfreestyle.co.uk](http://youthfreestyle.co.uk)
- GB Freestyle Committee: [gbfreestylekayak.com](http://gbfreestylekayak.com)
- BCU Freestyle Awards: [canoe-england.org.uk](http://canoe-england.org.uk)



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Images by Adam Harmer, Pete Catterall, Dan Butler, Jon 'Spike' Green and James Savage



By Jon 'Spike' Green

# Safety and Rescue Work

## BELOW AND BEYOND MOUNT KENYA

Anybody want to go run some first descents out in Kenya? Those of you familiar with Adam Harmer, a leading coach at Plas Y Brenin, will know that there will be a twist... This time, as far as I can make out, Adam had promised to head out to Kenya to do some 'work'. Then he realised if we came along then we could do most of it for him! So the plan was formulated... head out to Kenya, explore the whitewater potential and deliver some BCU qualifications whilst we were there too...

This article is only about the courses not about the firsts, although these threads do come together at some point!

Type in [www.whitewaterkenya.com](http://www.whitewaterkenya.com) and you'll see why we were out there. They are a long established and very well respected outfit, running... well have a look for yourselves. They wanted us to come out and run a White Water Safety and Rescue (WWSR), Advanced White Water Safety and Rescue (AWWSR) and a 5 Star

(Inland Kayak) Assessment for their staff. Such is the international reputation of these BCU awards that they were the ones that they wanted to be involved with as professional qualifications.

Adam was their first contact as he has worked for them previously, it then quickly became inextricably linked with the Plas y Brenin paddlesport department. As that of course is where we all work!





### RIVER HAZARDS WITH TUSKS!

We arrived in Nairobi to the good news that the rains were first-rate this year (despite the drought, and other troubles elsewhere in the country). Given that there was so many demands on time – namely the running of a busy raft/adventure travel business and our desire to run some new rivers, we quickly realised that a ‘modular’ approach to the courses would work very well...

Work day one – Adam, Dan and Pete ran day one of a WWSR course for a group of Savage Wilderness Safaris staff. The course was run over two venues on the first day, firstly a bank based safety session at the rafting camp, covering the core principles of safety & rescue, then a practical session further upstream. We initially wanted to run the course based purely at the camp, but were persuaded otherwise, due to the Hippo whom had taken up temporary residence close by – a hazard not often found in North Wales. The students varied in experience, from first season camp based who wanted to work towards guiding on the river, to those with 20 seasons experience, allowing a brilliant sharing of experiences, tips and techniques.

Meanwhile I ran a day of AWWSR for those who were ready for it, and were looking to do their 5 star Assessment. The base is on the Tana river right by the

‘get out for the commercial rafting’ section. Our afternoon venue was another site a brief bus journey a few kilometres upstream and then a raft trip down. It was so great to work in some new and utterly stunning venues. Chocolate brown water, blue skies and the African hills and plains all around. Mind you it was cold, a couple of folks put a cag on later in the day!

### REAL LIFE RESCUE

An interesting real-life WW rescue incident occurred over lunch. We were just tucking in, when a local floated past in a dugout. He was gesticulating wildly about something... Anyway, too late he plops out of control over a natural weir, capsizes and loses the boat, his bike/phone/wallet and only later did we find out that he’d been employed by the owner of the dugout to move it down river! He of course realises that he is in deep shh... trouble and despite not being able to swim tries to hang onto the boat. Eventually Dan gets a rope to him and he lets go and waves goodbye to the boat. Poor fellow! ▶

**“Such is the international reputation of these BCU awards that they were the ones that they wanted to be involved with as professional qualifications.”**



**SAVAGE STARS**

Work day two – Today I ran a day of 5 star assessment for Kris and Ibrahim who both guide and coach for Savage. Today I was mostly looking at their paddling skills. We went to run what is their local river, but it is in HIGH flow and full on for the remit of the award. I, and they, needn't have worried though as both proved themselves to be paddling above the standard and did a great job of leading a, more nervous than I should admit, assessor down the big volume pool drop river. Ibrahim by the way is Ugandan and usually works on the Nile. He did admit to being less-experienced on this low volume stuff – oh how I laughed!

Bit more Advanced WW training then it's time for beer and another slap up feed, a great day.

Work day three – Time to finish the 5 star A for Kris and Ibrahim... They both handled the big volume/pool drop nature of the Tana very well, so we head to the Mathioya for something different. In the end the river is pretty huge - think pool drop grade 4, and add flood state and much of it out of remit. Pete finds a section that is ideal, also at the top end of the award.

Both boys pass easily – great for both, but especially Ibrahim. We think he is the first Ugandan to pass the BCU 5 star award! We feel quite proud to be a part of this, not sure why!

**A DAY FOR FIRSTS**

Work day four – James's turn, he owns the company... so we've been bribed by the staff to give him a hard time – go on then, why not! So the second day of James's assessment is on the first descent of the Nyamindi! That'll serve him right for living in paradise. So we point him at the river and say 'Get on with it.' And he does, he cruises the day. Very strong performance. What a river too, beautiful, low volume pool drop, classic run. He previously cruised his first day, guiding us down our Kenyan warm up run (a lower water level run down the Mathioya). So it's highly possible that he's the first Kenyan 5 star holder too!

Work day five – The final sessions of the two safety and rescue courses. This feels good too, a whole group of Kenyan and Ugandan folks into the BCU scheme. **CF**

**USEFUL INFO**

Kenya is a great place to paddle. At the time it was very easy to get there with your boats – but I now hear that Virgin no longer fly to Nairobi(?). Once in the country if you really need some help, try [www.whitewaterkenya.com](http://www.whitewaterkenya.com) or if there's a group of you we could put a course together for you with Plas y Brenin. Contact me at [jon.green@pyb.co.uk](mailto:jon.green@pyb.co.uk)

Below and Beyond Mount Kenya 2011. Paddlers – Adam Harmer, Pete Catterall, Dan Butler, Jon 'Spike' Green and welcome to James Savage as a new team member.

Many thanks to all those that helped the trip to work so well – Pyranha, Palm, System X, Plas y Brenin and The Welsh Sports Association.



For more details on the BCU Star Awards and Rescue & Safety courses go to [www.bcu.org.uk/tests-and-awards/](http://www.bcu.org.uk/tests-and-awards/)



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"We initially wanted to run the course based purely at the camp, but were persuaded otherwise, due to the Hippo whom had taken up temporary residence close by - a hazard not often found in North Wales."



A swimmers eye view of a rescue







# Paddling in the North East of England

Article by Phil Scowcroft, Paddlesport Development Officer, Yorkshire.

The North East of England has a huge variety of canoeing and kayaking opportunities. The area is infinitely varied and a network of rivers and canals wind their way through a variety of environments, everything from wild isolated moorland, through beautiful forests and countryside, though urban, industrial and historic city centres and on to the coast. The coastline itself is equally diverse in both scenery and conditions offering rugged cliffs, beautiful surf beaches and numerous islands and estuaries to explore. Whatever your choice of paddling you are sure to find something to make your trip to this fabulous area of the country worthwhile.

It would not be possible to list everything on offer in Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire, but I've picked three venues for white water paddling, touring, sea kayaking and playboating. In each case I've tried to pick a 'Classic' venue which if you haven't already visited, should be at the top of your 'to do' list: a 'Standard' venue, which gives a real taste of what the area has to offer; and finally a 'Hidden Gem' that you might not have heard too much about but which is well worth the effort to seek out.

## WHITE WATER

### Classic - River Tyne

If you paddle white water and you haven't made it to a Tyne Tour yet then you have seriously been missing out. The first weekend in November usually sees around a thousand kayakers and canoeists converge on Hexham for a guaranteed release of water from Kielder Reservoir. Tyne Green next to the river is turned

into a sea of tents and trade stands for the weekend. Various sections of the river offer routes to suit all abilities - including complete beginners now thanks to the 'Go Canoeing' initiative. There are plenty of bars and restaurants in the centre of Hexham only a short walk away from Tyne Green and the evening entertainment usually includes numerous canoeing themed lectures and presentations as well as the now legendary Ceilidh at the local leisure centre and the event also coincides with a great firework display in Hexham as part of their Bonfire night celebrations. Overall it is a fantastic event and as usually also provides an opportunity for catching up with paddlers you haven't seen for years as well as paddling some great water in fantastic scenery. Of course the crowds aren't for everyone and if the river is up, then there is plenty of fun and different sections of river to explore at other times of the year as well. You can find out more on the website [www.tynetour.org](http://www.tynetour.org)



Tyne at Chollerford



### Standard – River Ure

Winding its way through some of the most picturesque sections of North Yorkshire the Ure has much to offer for the white water paddler. The river also hosts one of the best-attended annual events of the Slalom Calendar at West Tanfield next to Sleningford water mill, a site that has also become popular for white water training courses and boasts an excellent campsite on site.

There are numerous sections on the Ure to suit your ability and which take you through some of the most stunning scenery in Yorkshire. The Yorkshire Regional Development Team has recently purchased a section of land near Ripon, which has made access to the river much easier. You can see more on their website [www.canoe-england-yorkshire.org.uk](http://www.canoe-england-yorkshire.org.uk).

### Hidden Gem – River Coquet

Near to its source in the Cheviot Hills in the heart of the Northumberland National Park the river Coquet offers some excellent grade 4 paddling for the adventurous kayaker in some wild and rugged scenery. As the river winds its way to the coast the scenery gradually changes becoming less wild and more rural passing through some beautiful villages and becoming less technical to offer good grade 2 paddling. The river has much to offer on various sections all the way to the sea with plenty of interesting scenery on the way including passing right next to the spectacular castle at Warkworth before arriving at the pretty seaside port at Amble.

There is also a River Coquet Canoe trail, which you can download from the Canoe England website at <http://bit.ly/V1GL62>

**“Near to its source in the Cheviot Hills in the heart of the Northumberland National Park the river Coquet offers some excellent grade 4 paddling for the adventurous kayaker in some wild and rugged scenery.”**

There is an access arrangement from Mickley to Sleningford. For current information on the access arrangement please contact Ken Harrap, the local waterway adviser at [www.canoe-england.org.uk/waterways-and-environment/waterways-information-service/](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/waterways-and-environment/waterways-information-service/)

There is also a canoe trail from Boroughbridge to York and more information can be found at [www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/where-to-paddle/canoe-trails/](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/where-to-paddle/canoe-trails/) ►



Coquet at Warkworth



**TOURING****Classic – River Ouse, York**

The city centre in York has built up around the River Ouse and a waterside view can offer a new and interesting perspective to some of the historic and spectacular buildings and bridges on offer. The river at this section is flat wide and slow moving which means that you will need to avoid plenty of other river traffic in the form of pleasure craft, rowing boats, motor cruisers and the big passenger 'York Boats' plying their trade to the thousands of tourists the city attracts. A great way to see the best of this section of river and to learn all about the history of the area from an experienced guide is to sign up for a Go Canoeing Tour. You can see more at [www.gocanoeing.org.uk](http://www.gocanoeing.org.uk)

**Standard – River Tees, Stockton-on-Tees**

The building of the barrage on the River Tees has meant that the previously tidal section of the river at Stockton-on-Tees is now kept permanently at what was the high tide level and which now provides some excellent touring opportunities for exploring the area. The former docks are linked by short canals, which provide a good circular route through the historic quays. A replica of Captain Cook's ship the Endeavour is moored at Castlegate Quay and there are plenty of interesting bridges, historic buildings and structures to view including the barrage itself. Again to get the best out of this section of river go with a guide on a Go Canoeing Tour, find details at [www.gocanoeing.org.uk](http://www.gocanoeing.org.uk)

**Hidden Gem – River Esk, Whitby**

The River Esk at Whitby provides some excellent touring in spectacular scenery. The river heads towards the coast from the North Yorkshire moors and whilst the upper sections can offer some good white water opportunities, it is, as it gets closer to the sea, that the river offers excellent touring paddling. Making its way through beautiful countryside and tree lined banks the river flows steadily towards Whitby before reaching the tidal section at Ruswarp. From here the river passes under numerous interesting bridges and the banks are lined with quirky buildings and interesting structures with the occasional side route to explore. As you approach Whitby Harbour the views of the abbey overlooking the town are simply stunning. Its best to time your trip to coincide with high tide to get the best of exploring the harbour area and don't forget to take some cash to enjoy some of the best fish and chips in the country.

Esk at Whitby



Ouse at Millenium Bridge, York



## SEA KAYAKING

### Classic – The Farne Islands

The Farne Islands are one of the most important seabird colonies in England hosting 23 species of seabirds, including around 37,000 pairs of puffin and the best way to explore the islands is by sea kayak. As well as all the bird life on offer the islands are also home to a large grey seal population, with more than 1,000 pups born every autumn. There is also the very real possibility of seeing dolphins, porpoises or even whales if you are lucky! Historically, the islands have strong links with Celtic Christianity and are also famous for the exploits of Grace Darling and her farther who performed heroics in rescuing stricken sailors after a shipwreck on Longstone Island. The Farne Islands offer spectacular scenery including looking back to the main land with some of the best views of Bamburgh Castle and the Cheviot Hills you can ever have. It is easy to see why the Farne Islands are a huge draw for sea kayakers from all over the country and abroad.

### Standard – Coquet Island

Lying just one mile off the coast of Northumberland, near to the fishing port of Amble, Coquet Island is a RSPB managed nature reserve. It is designated as a 'site of special scientific interest', and is a safe haven for puffins, terns, and seals and in particular provides an important nesting site for the rare Roseate Tern. Only RSPB wardens are allowed to set foot on the island, but simply viewing the island makes a really interesting day trip especially if combined with a journey further down the coast to take in the nearby beautiful Druridge Bay. Every year there is an organised 'Round the Island' race organised by Coquet Canoe Club, which even if you are not the racing type can provide a great opportunity to get a taste for this area of the coast in an organised event with safety cover provided. You can get more information about the race as well as other useful advice on paddling in this area on the website [www.seakayakingnorthumberland.co.uk](http://www.seakayakingnorthumberland.co.uk)

### Hidden Gem – Flamborough Head

Jutting out into the North Sea off the Yorkshire coast between Filey and Bridlington, Flamborough Head is one of the most spectacular areas of chalk cliffs in Britain. The cliffs are made from chalk, which was laid down millions of years ago when dinosaurs were roaming the earth. These cliffs are now a bird spotter's paradise and are home to one of the largest sites of nesting seabirds in England, which includes a rare colony of gannets. The cliffs also provide lots of interesting features for the intrepid sea kayaker to discover, with caves and stacks providing some spectacular scenery and there are numerous coves and beaches to explore along the way as well. Just watch out if you get close to the cliffs though, as the anglers on the cliff tops are not always too fussy about where they cast their lines! ▶

Farne Islands



Coquet Island Race



**“Flamborough Head is one of the most spectacular areas of chalk cliffs in Britain. The cliffs are made from chalk, which was laid down millions of years ago when dinosaurs were roaming the earth.”**



Flamborough Head



**PLAYSPOTS**

**Classic – Tees Barrage**

The Tees Barrage International White Water Centre is one of the leading white water courses in the country and as well as being a popular venue for slalom races and rescue training, it provides some great playboating opportunities. The site has undergone a revamp recently and the new Diamond course with 3.7m of descent is one of the steepest in the UK. With an updated white water main channel and a new second channel, there are plenty of waves and holes available to test your playboating skills. The site is also built from movable blocks so features can sometimes change between your visits providing new and different river features to play on. It is also possible to try demo boats or book a coaching session on site. Further information is available on the website: [www.tbiwwc.com](http://www.tbiwwc.com)

**Standard – River Washburn**

If like me you first paddled the Washburn about twenty years ago, you will have memories of trying, with limited success to hit micro eddies and then getting recycled in a fairly meaty stopper at the bottom of a broken weir, or was that just me? If you have not been back since then, however, think again! The Washburn Committee have done a fantastic job of improving the river so that it is a lot more user-friendly with plenty of features and different playspots available. The off the water facilities are also being improved all the time making it a fantastic regional resource. Be aware though that the Washburn relies on releases from Thruscross Reservoir in order to run, so you'll need to check the release dates. Further information is available on the Yorkshire regional website & now via Twitter: [www.twitter.com/BCUWashburn](http://www.twitter.com/BCUWashburn)

**Hidden Gem – River Wansbeck, North Seaton Colliery**

I doubt that there is any more hidden gem than this in the whole of the country. I lived next to it for three years before finding it. It lies hidden next to the busy A189 dual carriageway near Ashington and only exists for about 20mins at high water spring tides. Usually in its place is a nasty weir, which you would want to give as wide a berth possible. However, when the tide comes in high enough to cause the water to flow upstream, it forms a series of play waves of various sizes and shapes across the full width of the river with handy little eddies behind each of the bridge stanchions. It doesn't last for long and you have to get your timing spot on, but it's also only a few hundred yards from a good surf beach as well, so you can combine both if the conditions are right. I now try to time my surf sessions to allow me to use the flood tide to drift back upstream and then have a quick play here before getting off the water. **CF**

As with all sea and river trips you should take the time to do some research and familiarise yourselves with any hazards, such as weirs, tides etc.



Washburn



Wansbeck Weir

**USEFUL WEB LINKS:**

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# Lee Valley

## White Water Centre 2013

The realisation of the 'Olympic Effect' created by Team GB's Gold and Silver medallists Etienne Stott, Tim Baillie, Richard Hounslow and David Florence, who triumphed in the Canoe Slalom Double (C2) at the London 2012 Olympic Games, could be seen when Lee Valley White Water Centre opened its doors once again to the public.

After hosting 60,000 visitors during five days of Olympic competition, Lee Valley White Water Centre has met the challenge of preserving the spirit of the Games in its Olympic afterlife, offering the excitement of a world-leading course with grade 4 rapids to everyone from elite athletes through to school and community groups. If the achievements of Stott and Baillie et al, are to be replicated in future Games, it is safe to say that this venue will have played an influential role in shaping the future generation of paddle-sport stars.

Following a winter break, rafters, kayakers and canoeists will be welcomed back to the venue. With paddling having begun first on Thursday 17 January and rafting to follow from Friday 1 March, visitors will benefit from 2013 upgrades to the centre including two new changing rooms accommodating 25 people, additional car parking and outdoor food and drink.

Despite being a world class-venue, which will forever be associated with 'The Greatest Show on Earth', it is clear from speaking to the team at Lee Valley White Water Centre that inclusivity is at the forefront of their post-Olympic agenda.

Working with the Herts Young Mariners Base and Edmonton Canoe Group there are now more opportunities than ever for beginners to learn kayaking and canoeing. New bespoke courses will offer learners a tailored programme, which matches their ability.

White water safety, leadership and rescue training programmes are now also in place, meaning the next generation of coaches is taking shape alongside the athletes themselves.

For those that have advanced paddle-sport skills, after completing an assessment, there are two exhilarating options: the 300m Olympic Standard Competition Course or the 160m Legacy Loop.

With a flat-water warm up lake sitting alongside the giant course, there really is unlimited fun to be had at the venue, and for beginners, a big, swirling incentive to progress to the next level.

Online booking leaves little excuses to those slow to shrug off their winter sluggishness. Members have already been busy booking their Legacy and Olympic course sessions, while beginner's sessions, progression sessions and kayaking competency assessment can also now be booked with the click of a mouse.

Despite its non-Olympic status rafting is growing steadily in popularity, with the Junior Raft Series recently created, giving a huge boost to the sport at youth level and providing a window to young rafters ahead of the 2013 Rafting World Championships in



New Zealand. The new competition, the largest of its kind in the UK's history, will be held on Saturday 23 February and Sunday 24 February at the world-leading Olympic venue where competitors under the watchful eye of GB Rafting selectors. Selection for the senior team was made in December with the Peak team grabbing the win and a shot at the Southern Hemisphere showpiece. The Dark Dog team took second and the consolation of a place in the European Championships. **CF**

**"Despite being a world class-venue, which will forever be associated with 'The Greatest Show on Earth', it is clear from speaking to the team at Lee Valley White Water Centre that inclusivity is at the forefront of their post-Olympic agenda."**

### USEFUL INFO

Find more information on the full range of training options at Lee Valley White Water Centre by visiting [www.gowhitewater.co.uk](http://www.gowhitewater.co.uk) or calling 08456 770 606





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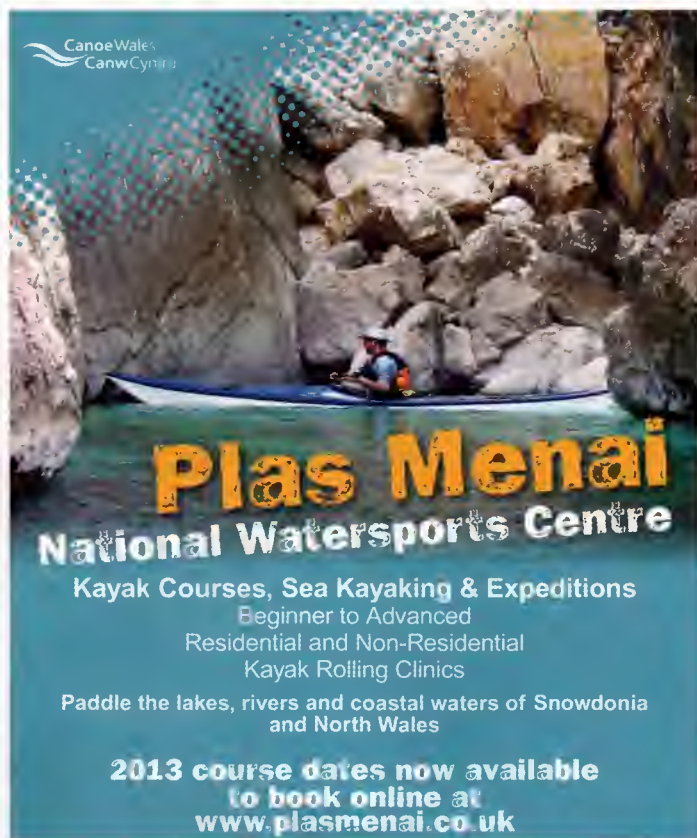


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# A Winning Vision

## AN INTERVIEW WITH MARATHON PADDLER BEN BROWN

Marathon paddler Ben Brown left the world in his wake with National and World titles. After stepping away from the sport to concentrate on other projects in 2011 he's back and has his sights set once again on scaling the heights to a World Championship podium. But Ben's vision goes further than his own personal paddling goals, he's passionate about raising the understanding and public profile of his beloved sport and has some clear opinions on what it takes to take it there...

**You've just recently returned from a year out of competitive flat water kayaking, how does it feel to be training full-time again? Is it going well so far?**

Taking a year out and being a spectator was refreshing, I needed time to miss the sport, training and racing. Training is going surprisingly well yes, I feel like my paddling is technically better already.

**You have two distinct aims now that you're back: what are they?**

I want to race the Marathon World Champs and win again, I'm not sure how long this will take but I enjoy the process, so no rush. I also want to give back to the sport, canoeing has given me a lot and I feel like it's a great time to be racing and sharing my experiences.

**Looking first at your "Quest to make canoeing cool," take us through the image problems you think it's currently suffering from?**

It's not so much a quest, more taking responsibility to help where I can; I'm focusing on the UK. I believe British flat water racing can be so much more, I'm asking people to look at our sport in a different way, see the potential it has and walk the walk. Too many people complain about issues holding our sport back, but few

**"Enjoy your paddling. If you develop a love for racing that's great, see how far you can take it with commitment and you'll be surprised how good you can get."**

actually stand up to help make changes. The image of our sport is generally improving, it's visually appealing with good looking healthy athletes who are winning medals, but outsiders still ask me if I can 'roll over and back up' and 'do you know Steve Redgrave?' this lack of basic public understanding is our fault. In some cases people who either don't believe it can grow anymore, or they don't care are holding the attitude to the future of our sport back. So to answer the question, it's more of an attitude problem, we need to get away from thinking our sport is for the kids who can't play football or perhaps struggle in social environments, it's for everyone! Once we start to actually believe our sport is awesome (which it is) then changes will start to happen. The higher up you are in the canoeing world the more responsibility you have, athletes, coaches and staff at the top must help to grow the sport in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are up against other sports like triathlon and cycling that are getting it right, we can learn from them. ▶







**Is this an issue that affects all areas of our sport, or flat water racing in particular?**

I can only vouch for flat water. Slalom was a huge success at the London Olympics and I'm sure it wasn't just me asking where my local slalom club is. The crazies that drop down huge waterfalls in plastic boats seem to be getting it right too; brands like Red Bull and GoPro are all over them. Surfski paddling is exploding onto the paddling scene and growing rapidly, converting even the most safety conscious sea-kayakers to 'the wild side' (wild means not packing a stove and sleeping bag on a 2-hour paddle). Surf-skiing has been developed into a prize money sport fuelled by eager sponsors and kit hungry paddlers, the beach-surf-lifestyle vibe helps a lot but it's not a great spectator sport, it's supported by its paddling communities. We can learn a lot from the surfski community, let's hope the ICF help to increase numbers without sterilising the discipline.

**Why does the sport have this problem?**

Let it be clear that we are getting it right in some circumstances, there are people who believe our sport can grow, it's not all bad. I think paddling has been stuck in the un-cool rut for a while now and never quite made it out. By un-cool I mean how the flat water paddling lifestyle is perceived by others, and indeed, ourselves! My perception of my racing lifestyle is that it's cool, but outsiders or sponsors are not easily convinced of the growing popularity of our sport, let alone perceiving it as cool enough to invest in. Only our top Olympic athletes make a living from it, and that's mostly thanks to the huge Lottery funding we get, in most cases you have to be Olympic Champion to be considered for private sponsorship. Once our sport gains some public credibility then we stand a chance of getting outside investment. I believe we need to get some young blood into the organising committees to shake things up. It comes back to complacency and the closed mindedness of some people, quite happy to settle for second best. Are paddlers not concerned that the public don't see the difference between rowing and canoeing? Why don't we have races where there is prize money?

**What are you planning to do to help the situation?**

I'm still working that out, I do my best to have a good influence on other paddlers, particularly young paddlers. I love racing marathon and want to help it grow into to discipline that can support it's own team of professional athletes, rather than just those who do not fit into the sprint system. My visual output is important to me, with online media I can show people what I get up to with my videos, photos and blogs show that the lifestyle is attractive and the kit is cool. I like to be interactive online. I also try to give back to my sponsors; I want to make sure I'm good value for money; I think more athletes should do this. If Jantex sell more paddles because I make the effort to promote them, then I get given more paddles, it's simple and everyone benefits.

**Who's going to benefit from the image revolution you're attempting to initiate and why?**

Everyone in the sport could benefit from this but mostly grass-roots level where participation should increase

a lot. Younger and older athletes looking for support and sponsorship will benefit, paddling brands will make more money and can support races with prizes, the races get more entries and money, clubs can buy new boats, and membership grows. If race entry fees increase we wouldn't mind because the prizes would be awesome etc etc, the list goes on and it's a domino effect. Essentially higher participation numbers will create more competitive top paddlers and we will be more dominant on the international scene. More World and Olympic medals equals more good influence on kids.

**So ultimately, is the 'cooler' vision you have for canoeing more or less attainable and accessible at a grass-roots level?**

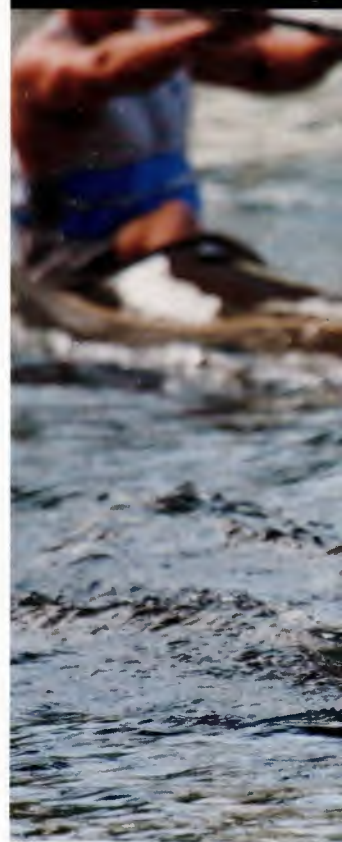
The development of 'cool' will entirely benefit grass-roots level. Financial gains to the top performers is only a small part of the end product. A lot of talented kids I've met recently aren't committed to paddling and racing, as it's not an inviting lifestyle. I grew up watching Ivan Lawler, Steve Harris and Tim having a great time training to win, winning and living the pro athlete dream. To me paddling was the best thing ever, but now I see so many very talented kids who don't believe in their own potential to win races. The current club structure can't support and help develop 'cool' because our National structure takes the talent away from the clubs. The 'Xbox & parties' lifestyle is winning the 'cool' battle with the kids, why sacrifice fun to develop a 'career' in a sport that people think is rowing? If our sport was more 'cool' then it wouldn't be a discussion, kids would choose paddling. Where is the career that is meant to come with the success? Who do the kids have to look up to and copy if our best paddlers aren't at the clubs?

**Do you think that the relatively low, compared to recreational branches of canoeing and kayaking, participation in flat water racing could be down to the fact that kayak marathon in particular requires such a high level of commitment, beyond the realms of possibility for those who don't consider themselves 'pro athletes'?**

I don't think success in marathon racing requires any more commitment than any other sport or paddling discipline, you get out what you put in. If anything marathon is more accessible as you can beat people who are faster than you by out thinking them. Almost all the international marathon racers I know have jobs.

**Why should an everyday recreational canoeist or kayaker who doesn't have the time or inclination to become one themselves get behind our 'pro-athletes'?**

I think most people have an interest in 'who is the best' even if they don't race they have an interest in the sport and can relate to it. I hope there is also a sense of pride for our GB athletes doing well at international events. Most athletes are trying to have a positive impact on others and inspire young people to work hard at anything, not just sport. It would be great to have people turn up to races just to watch, drawing a crowd isn't easy but there are simple changes that can be made to help this, even at the small events.







Ben getting in the winter miles on the River Thames. Image by Antony Edmonds



Image by Antony Edmonds

**“I want to be remembered as gracious in defeat and humble in victory, and to have inspired others to push themselves and to be their best.”**

**Why do you think that to date other areas of our sport have fared better in the image department? Top level white water kayaking is getting the sort of coverage you're seeking, with the likes of CNN interviewing Tyler Bradt, Red Bull making films with Steve Fisher and extreme races getting corporate backing from Adidas and Teva, for example?**

Participation levels are at an all time high for white water, and someone at some point has looked at the sport and seen the potential, it has been marketed successfully and the high profile visible athletes are being supported well, the visual media output is professional and competitions are loaded with prizes and money to attract the big names. With everything in place they still have the issue of white water, it's not easily accessible and it's not cheap to drive up a mountain! Somehow this sport is growing rapidly and it's mostly fuelled by the passion and belief of the paddlers, they know their sport is awesome, even if it's not an Olympic discipline. ▶





Image by Antony Edmonds



Image by Antony Edmonds

**With your drive and determination you could, and this is still the case, have been a major player in this [top level whitewater] area of the sport. What drew you to marathon and sprint racing instead?**

I've never been exposed to white water. I live by the Thames and I've been going to Elmbridge Canoe Club for 19 years. The club has made me into a racer, I like the tactics and the distance; this is the sport I've grown to love! The reason I stuck with flat water is because I've perceived myself as good at it, I enjoy the technical challenge of paddling, I also love beating people who are physically bigger and stronger than me! Nothing beats the feeling of gliding effortlessly over perfect flat water, seeking out every last inch on every stroke, honing your movements.

**How did you find yourself in the position where you were able to work your way up the junior rankings in flat-water racing?**

I had a great group of mates at the club, we were fairly competitive but it wasn't until age 15 when I could see the correlation between training hard and winning races. Racers like Ivan and Steve Baker, Brabants and Ben Farrell heavily influenced me, I wanted to be like them and paddle like them. My dad has always guided me through the 'are you doing this 100% or not?' phases, most of the time the answer was yes, but I was never really sure until 2006 (2<sup>nd</sup> year senior) when I came 4<sup>th</sup> at the Marathon Worlds. I always raced sprint and marathon, I never considered choosing one or the other. It was little junior regattas like Bochum, Boulogne and Gent that taught me how good the European club paddlers were, and gave me a clue as to my own ability.

**Is paddling recreationally anything you'd ever do if you weren't competing at a top level?**

I've done a bit of sea kayaking with dad when I was younger, I loved being out there with dad but I wasn't that interested in just plodding around! Recreation for me is surfing and alternative training. I didn't paddle much in my year out, I didn't like how rubbish I was!

**What would it take alongside an image re-brand to make flat water competitive kayaking more accessible, what role do clubs play?**

Clubs play the biggest role, they are the home of the paddlers, and it's where you grow up, learn and push yourself. I think some clubs could do more to support the paddlers they already have by individualising coaching and asking people what do they want from the sport? I'm sure if some kids were just asked what they want, given a few suggestions of what they would be good at and show them the options, my dad always laid out the options to me whenever I was 'distracted' and I always picked racing. I never ever regretted it, even though it wasn't the easiest option.

There's been a bit of an issue with clubs recently whereby World Class Canoeing has sent a coach to assess the junior paddlers and make some suggestions. Instead of the world class coach chatting with the junior's coach they just make some big changes, which have essentially set back the work of the club coach as well as undermining the club's coaching. Junior's are easily distracted by the Union Flag covered men in red



Gortex GB coats, it can put pressure on the athlete/ club coach relationship when the athlete is told polar opposites about technique etc. Clubs need to be aware of this, welcome input from the red coats but make sure they are working WITH the club coaches and not direct to the athletes. The red coats need to respect the unpaid work of the club coaches and the athletes needs to have faith in the coach they spend the most time with.

**When you decided to take a break after the 2011 Singapore World Championship was the plan to be out only a year, or was it more open ended back then?**

To be honest I wasn't sure if I'd even come back to training. I was set on developing my career in film and photography, which went well, but the racer in me found it hard to be a spectator.

**What's the reaction of the kayak marathon world been – you were undefeated nationally in consecutive years before you took a break. Your return must be causing ripples?**

So far it's been great, everyone is very supportive and I've got a fantastic support network around me. My dad is super stoked that I'm having another pop at it, and he still tells me I could be Olympic Champion if I wanted! Mum is also happy that the washing has doubled since I started back so it's all good! My announcement on Facebook got over 400 likes so that was a nice welcome back. My training group are happy I'm back, Jonny Tye is my apprentice and I love having some input into his paddling. Jonathan Boyton and myself have put down some great sessions in the last couple of months but he complains about my lack of wash!

**"I believe British flat water racing can be so much more, I'm asking people to look at our sport in a different way, see the potential it has and walk the walk."**

**ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- Member of GB sprint and/or marathon team since 16 years old.
- Made way up through junior rankings, and regularly finished in top three at Nation marathon and sprint events.
- Regular podium finishes at international junior marathon competitions.
- Won the inaugural Junior Marathon World Championships in 2003.
- 2005 national marathon champion. 17th senior world championships.
- 2006 double national marathon champion, 4th senior world championships.
- 2007/08 World Champs final in K2 500m with Jon Schoefield, 9th narrowly missed Beijing qualification. European Champs final, 9th in 2008.
- 2009 double national champion in marathon and K1 500m sprint.
- 2010 was a "good year." Many PBs in training, undefeated in marathon internationally & nationally becoming the first British male marathon world champion since Ivan Lawler in 1999.
- 2011 taken off sprint funding; became self-funded. Once again an undefeated national marathon champion, and won a world cup in Rome. Finished 12th in Singapore Marathon World Championships. Made the decision to take a year out to focus on videography and photography.
- October 2012 got back in training, marking a return to competitive flat water kayaking. Goal is to reclaim world champion title in marathon, and "drag British canoeing into the 21st Century by making it cool."

Special thanks to Antony Edmonds of AE Photography for providing the excellent racing images of Ben in action.  
[www.aephtotos.co.uk](http://www.aephtotos.co.uk)

The views expressed by Ben in this article are his own and do not necessarily represent the views of the BCU.

Do you agree with Ben's views?  
Let us know on the Canoe England Facebook page  
[www.facebook.com/canoengland](http://www.facebook.com/canoengland)

**From somebody who knows, what does it take to be a K1 Marathon World Champion?**

I'd say you need to be knocking on the door of a sub 3:35 1000m, have the tactical experience to play the field to your advantage and get around the course efficiently. Mostly you need the belief that you're good enough to be up in that front group, and anything can happen on the day. For those who aren't going to win a race take Ivan Lawler's advice - 'if you're in a group of people who are faster than you, then you're doing it right!'

**What would you like your 'paddling' legacy to be?**

I want to be remembered as gracious in defeat and humble in victory, and to have inspired others to push themselves and to be their best.

**Do you have any advice to youngsters just beginning their journeys in to paddle-sports?**

HAVE FUN! Race as much as you can. The junior international circuit is brilliant, well worth working hard to get onto the team. Race and train outside of your comfort zone, this is where you learn. Don't specialise too much as a junior and work hard to be a great all-round paddler. It takes years of practice to even be able to train at the level needed to be world class senior. It's all about learning your limits by pushing yourself mentally as well as physically. Juniors develop at different rates, don't worry if you're not on top of the podium or if you're not as big as your competitors, it's all preparation for seniors, when the racing really begins! Be careful whom you take advice from, but be patient with those who are willing to give it. Respect all your competitors.

**What one piece of advice would you like to give to your fellow paddlers?**

Enjoy your paddling. If you develop a love for racing that's great, see how far you can take it with commitment and you'll be surprised how good you can get. There's something to learn from everyone. Learn about yourself by pushing your limits, you can do anything if you believe in yourself. Support your sport in its growth! **CF**

Image by Antony Edmonds



**USEFUL WEB LINKS:**

To find out more about Ben and to follow his progress check out his website and social media pages  
[www.itsbenbrown.com](http://www.itsbenbrown.com)  
[www.facebook.com/stalkbenbrown](http://www.facebook.com/stalkbenbrown)  
[www.twitter.com/ben\\_brownie](http://www.twitter.com/ben_brownie)



## OLYMPIC SLALOM CANOEIST WALSH RETIRES

Campbell Walsh, Athens Olympic Games K1 silver medallist, Beijing Olympian and successful international competitor has announced his retirement from the sport. Campbell has competed in canoe slalom for 23 years and for 19 seasons as a member of a GB team, 13 of them as a full time athlete.

Campbell spoke Canoe FOCUS about his decision, "I'd said for a few years that I would most likely retire at the end of 2012, but committing to that decision has been difficult. I've been living in a little canoe slalom bubble for most of my life, being lucky enough to pursue my childhood passion. Since the final World Cups I've become more and more comfortable with the decision in my head. On reflection, it has been a good process. I am now fully retired, and I'm completely happy with that."

Walsh forged a remarkably long and glittering career, packed with medals and podium finishes. Alongside winning the silver medal in the 2004 Athens Games and competing at the 2008 Beijing Games, he won bronze medals in the 2006 and 2007 World Championships, was World Cup Champion in 2004, European Champion in 2008 and fourth in the 2009 World Championships. Drilling further still into the statistics, he achieved 20 top 5 places and 11 medals in his 67 major international competitions between 1999-2012.

When we asked Campbell whether there was one highlight that stands clear above the rest for him he replied, "My greatest achievement is having consistently medalled at major championships for a number of years, particularly in the period from 2004 to 2009. In a lot of major championships I hit the podium, which is quite rare. Certainly in that period there weren't many people, if anyone else, that was hitting the international podium as regularly as I was."

As a GB Team member for almost two decades Walsh has seen at first hand the increase in funding through the National Lottery and the resulting advances in coaching and training. "When I was 18 years old and moved to Nottingham to train there was one full-time and one part-time coach employed in the whole of the country and they were both for Olympic level. Nowadays there are five coaches for the Olympic squad, five full-time coaches for the development under-23 squad and numerous other employed coaches working at the home nation or regional level. Lottery funding has made an enormous difference. There was a transition period when the sport went from very amateur, some people adopted a very professional attitude within that, to being much more professional. I got to experience that and that was really valuable."

"I have been in a very privileged position of being a full-time athlete," he added. "Over these 26 years of paddling, so many people played a role in inspiring me, helping me and supporting me, to both achieve the above results and live an enjoyable and rewarding life.

"I'm sure I will always own a kayak, stay in touch with my paddling friends and follow the sport closely."

**To read more from Campbell about his career and his decisions to retire go to [www.campbellwalsh.com/news](http://www.campbellwalsh.com/news)**

## WATERWAYS & ENVIRONMENT

### AN INVITE TO MEMBERS MEETING

The Waterways and Environment Team would cordially like to invite Canoe England members to a meeting on the 16th March 2013 at Brownhills Community Association, Walsall, to help them with planning and promoting future actions as well as finding out about what they do. The day will commence at 10.00hrs for coffee and the meeting starts at 10.30hrs and concludes at 15.30 hrs. The topics covered will include items such as the areas of our work including environmental work, plans for the future, and the Rivers Access Campaign. There will be plenty of opportunity for questions and open discussions we want to meet you and hear your thoughts too.

Numbers are limited so you need to apply to [access@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:access@canoe-england.org.uk) to book your place. This is a members' only event and only pre-booked members will be able to attend. The meeting is aimed at Canoe England Members situated in the Central Regions of England. Once you have booked a place you will be sent you further joining instructions.





## YOUNG PADDLERS ENJOY NATIONAL TALENT CAMP

Eleven young canoeists from across the country recently attend the Youth Sport Trust's National Talent Camp at Loughborough where they were put through their paces, by amongst others Olympic canoe slalom star Richard Hounslow, to learn what it takes to become Olympic champions. The young paddlers joined 90 other aspiring young athletes at the sixth national camp, run by leading youth sport charity, the Youth Sport Trust.

Inspired by Team GB's historic success at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, these promising young sports stars got to reflect on what has been an outstanding year for British sport and use this inspiration to motivate them on their journey into elite sport. The four-day event offered England's most talented 13-18 year olds insight in the world of performance sport and the harsh reality of the demands and commitment required to be the best in their chosen sport. Seven sports were represented at the 2013 camp and a number of athletes across different sports selected by the British Paralympic Association.

- 13 year old Noah Hazelwood from Basingstoke, Hampshire
- 14 year old Megan Stone from Stone, Staffordshire
- 14 year old Jade Hollick from Bramhall Stockport, Cheshire
- 15 year old Emma Ricketts from Nuneaton, Warwickshire
- 15 year old Jonathan Atkinson from Peterborough, Cambridgeshire
- 15 year old Emma Kirkbright from Guiseley, West Yorkshire
- 15 year old William Smith from Eastleigh, Hampshire
- 16 year old Jack Childerstone and 16 year old Ed Haws from Surrey
- 16 year old Samuel Kirschstein-Smith from Peppard, Oxfordshire
- 17 year old Jessica Warrior from Teddington, Middlesex

Joining the canoeing stars was Athens 2004 Olympic Gold medallist and Youth Sport Trust ambassador, Darren Campbell, who shared his experiences of his journey to elite sporting success and the pressures of being an elite sport performer. Darren told Canoe FOCUS, "Like me, many of these athletes will face some hard challenges and some will doubt their ability to achieve their dream. However, if they are committed, work hard and realise the sacrifices they will have to make in order to perform at the highest level, they will be on the right road to sporting success."

Photographs courtesy of the Youth Sport Trust



## BCU SLALOM COACH EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The BCU Slalom Technical Panel has initiated a program specifically aimed to develop coaches who wish to develop or further their coaching skills in canoe slalom. A copy of the coach development model for slalom is available from [russell.smith@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:russell.smith@canoe-england.org.uk) this shows the route through for those coaches who wish to take a pathway optimised for slalom.

### SLALOM MODULES THAT SUPPORT COACHES INCLUDE:

#### Discipline Support Module Part 1 (DSM1)

This course is aimed at all BCU qualified coaches (of any level), focusing on how they coach as well as the beginnings of Slalom specific knowledge of what to coach. It looks to support paddlers up to Div 2. Applicants must be 16 years or above, need not have any previous experience of slalom (though participating or coaching slalom experience will help)

#### Discipline Support Module Part 2 (DSM2)

This course is aimed at those coaches who already have the knowledge of the beginnings of coaching canoe slalom and looks into the various techniques and skills needed to take a paddler through to Premier Division. Applicants must be 18 years or above and have experience of coaching slalom. This is the usual entry route for athletes wishing to develop their coaching skills and qualifications.

#### BCU UKCC Level 3 - Discipline Specific Training Part 3 (DSM3)

This module is part of the BCU UKCC level 3 Coach Program it looks to give the coach the additional tools to support paddlers through to Premier - Level 3 coaches can plan, implement and analyse Long term development programs with the associated coaching behaviours.

**Courses can be run if there is sufficient demand, if you are interested in putting on a slalom module or would like further details please contact your home nation Or alternatively email [russell.smith@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:russell.smith@canoe-england.org.uk)**

## TAKE COVER

We have updated the Canoe England web site to give more information and advice on insurance - [www.canoe-england.org.uk/insurance/](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/insurance/)

You will find details of both the Civil Liability and Boat insurance and a link to the new Canoe England Perkins Slade site which gives in depth advice on Liability insurance.



## HEALTH & SAFETY

Canoe England is also pleased to introduce a free advice line for Clubs and Disciplines on all Health & Safety issues. The service is available on 0845 076 6485

In 2013 CE have also introduced a Health & Safety website, which will enhance this service by providing risk assessment templates and advice. And don't forget that CE also provides a free legal helpline for Clubs, which is operated for us by DAS. The number is 01 17 933 0693.





# NATIONAL SPRINT REGATTAS

Image by Antony Edmonds

The National Canoe Sprint Regattas are, fittingly, held at the National Watersport Centre in Nottingham. Over 70 clubs, GB Team athletes plus visiting International club teams all regularly come to race.

Canoe Sprint is unique among sports in that, 'brand new' paddlers who have just reached the required standards can compete in the same regatta, over the same course and on the same days as Olympic athletes. You can watch and cheer on our GB Team competing for their international selections, an hour later you could be starting your own race using the same starting gate and lane you had seen a Canoe Sprint World Champion using a short time before!

All the Olympic distances are included, that is 200 metres, 500 metres and 1000 metres, either in a sprint canoes or kayaks. Boats do have to conform to a standard, (same standards as for the Games), either singles (C1 or K1), doubles (C2 or K2) or fours (C4's or K4's). With races within ability bands for Juniors (Under 18 Boys & Girls), Seniors, (Men & Women), Masters (Over 34 Men & Women) and the recently introduced, Paracanoe, (Men & Women) international competitive athletes with a disability. Also run alongside the National Competitions are the Paddle-Ability events, races for paddlers with a disability and the 'Mini Sprint Series' for 9 to 12 year old youngsters, in specifically developed kayaks for this younger age range

There are various 'themes' to the National Regattas including 'The Inter-Services' event where these highly trained men & women from the Army, Navy and Air Force paddle against each other for their Annual Trophy; it isn't always the Navy who are superior on the water!

'The Inter-club' competition is one of the most well attended and strongly contested regattas, where clubs from all over the country compete on a points basis for the coveted 'MacGregor Paddle Trophy'. This can result in rather unusual crew boat combinations with all the clubs looking to form as many scratch 'club boats' as possible.

'The National Championships' brings out the best of the best. Instead of competing in the usual ability classes, competitors race for the honour of becoming a National Champion and being awarded one of the various perpetual trophies. There are National

Champions titles for the different age groups across the three distances and for both singles and crew boats. Juniors compete in Under 18, Under 16 and Under 14 age groups for championship races; Masters compete as Over 34 years, Over 44, Over 54 and Over 64. The National Championship regattas are the events a lot of the paddlers consider to be their favourite weekend, with many medals being proudly worn around the lakeside to show that all of the hard training had paid off.

When asked why they attend paddlers have said:

- 'I go because I enjoy competing against some of the top paddlers in the country. It enables you to know where you're ranked in the country.'
- 'Sitting on that starting line with the butterflies and smile of anticipation. No matter what level you are at there is a competition for you, be it the person in the lane next to you, or just competing against yourself.'
- 'I enjoy supporting my canoe club and watching all the races from the Lightning to Paddle-Ability (which is amazing) to Squad GB paddlers'
- 'For personal progression, seeing my times improve regatta to regatta, year on year.'
- 'National Regatta weekends are always exciting and entertaining, especially if the weather is not perfect.'

Other than for the excellent racing and viewing opportunities, with around 300 races over the weekend, usually with two or more races on course at the same time, there is always plenty to watch or take part in.

You can also enjoy a wander around the Trade Stands, try out new equipment with a great choice of boats for sale both new and second hand and it is the place to pick up these all important tips on repairing equipment etc.

Some people's motivation is for purely social reasons, to meet friends both on and off the water. Also to 'network', to meet and discuss ideas, maybe get new training tips and share the knowledge and experience of other coaches and athletes. Others, it is to 'get noticed by the right people' and ultimately for a chance at international selection for Team GB Canoeing.

**Whatever your paddling goals and expectation the National Regattas are a great weekend.**



# FEMALE FOCUS



## LADIES PADDLE SYMPOSIUM

The first Ladies Paddle Symposium for England and Wales will be held on the 27th-28th April 2013, And with the LPS course booking form now available It's booking up fast. The organisers are aiming to tailor the sessions to your needs, so when you place your booking please let them know what disciplines you want to be coached in, and an idea of the sort of things you would like them to cover.

On the Saturday night of the event all participants and the coaches will have a meal all together at Glan-llyn with a few informal talks and video presentations to inspire you all along your paddling journeys. The list of coaches involved is pretty impressive, so there'll be no shortage of amazing coaching available no matter what kind of paddling you're in to:

- Fran Kohn - Organiser and Kayak Coach
- Lowri Davies - White Water Kayak and Freestyle Kayak Coach
- Mags Duncan - Kayak Coach
- Trys Burke - Sea, Kayak and Canoe Coach
- Diane Lee - Canoe Coach
- Nancy Chambers - Canoe Coach
- Fiona Rice - Sea Coach.
- Phil Clegg - Sea Coach
- Dave Hollins - Kayak Coach
- Chris Eastabrook - Kayak Coach
- Tom Parker - Kayak Coach
- Dave Brown - Kayak, Sea, Canoe and GB Women's Raft Team Coach.
- Kim Bull - Kayak, canoe and Sea Coach
- Jules Burnard- Canoe Coach
- Justine Curgenvin - Inspirational sea paddler and filmmaker!

If you have any questions please email Fran Kohn at [ladiespaddlesymposium@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ladiespaddlesymposium@hotmail.co.uk)

## BEHIND THE SCENES WITH FRAN KOHN

### THE ORGANISER OF THE LADIES PADDLE SYMPOSIUM

Fran Kohn is a white water kayak coach living in North Wales She's travelled all over the world with her kayak including Chile, Colombia and Nepal and she's also a member of Team Pyranha and the GB Women's Raft Team. Last year she and her partner set up a coaching company called River-Flair. Canoe FOCUS caught up with Fran to discuss the ethos behind the event. . .



### What was your motivation behind organising the Ladies Paddle Symposium?

After having coached on the Scottish Ladies Paddle Symposium I thought it would be great if we could take the idea south of the border so that as many women as possible could get the benefit of a weekend paddling and learning with their female peers. I'm really passionate about getting Ladies involved in paddle-sports of all kinds whether that be competing or just going out and having fun.

### What can women attending expect?

A great fun weekend with coaching by some of the top coaches in the industry in all disciplines, talks and videos from some inspirational female paddlers, and a chance to network and socialise with other lady paddlers.

### How do you feel a single sex peer group can benefit some female paddlers?

Some female paddlers will feel more relaxed within an all female peer group, which will help with their learning and confidence. The atmosphere when paddling in an all female group is so different to that where the females are in the minority. It can feel more supportive, less intimidating and help those in the group to have a greater ownership over their learning.

### What are you most looking forward to?

Spending an inspirational weekend with a group of paddling ladies on and off the water!

### What advice would you give to women just starting out in the sport?

There are so many different sides to paddle-sport that there is something for everyone. Try lots of different things more than once, fall in a few times, find some lovely people to paddle with and remember it is about having fun!

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**AS** WATERSPORTS



# VOLUNTEERS

## JUST REWARDS

2013 sees the launch of a brand new look to the successful Paddlesport Reward Scheme. The scheme recognises the hours, which dedicated volunteers across the country are giving to our sport. The scheme allows you to log hours and receive rewards when you reach a certain number of hours. From January 2013 all volunteers, who register for the scheme will receive the new look reward scheme logbook. When 25 hours (bronze), 50 hours (silver) and 100 hours (gold) are reached, volunteers send their logbook back to Canoe England and we will send you your free gift and certificate.

The scheme is a great way for clubs to reward their volunteers for all the hard work and hours committed each week to ensure canoe clubs up and down the country are successful and sustainable.

**To register yourself on the Paddlesport Reward Scheme please download the registration form from the volunteer section of the Canoe England at [www.canoe-england.org.uk/volunteers/volunteer/paddlesport-rewards-scheme/](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/volunteers/volunteer/paddlesport-rewards-scheme/)**

## LONG SERVICE NOMINATIONS OPEN

The Canoe England Long Service Award recognises the long standing contribution of volunteers who have committed 25 years or more to paddle-sport regardless of their role - from coaches to committee members, to those behind the scenes making the tea or repairing equipment.

All volunteers receiving this award will receive a limited edition pin badge and join the roll of honour.

Download an application form from the volunteer section at the Canoe England website.

## CLUB FORUMS

A series of club forums are taking place across the country throughout February and March. A club forum is a useful workshop available to all Canoe England clubs and this year we have enlisted the help of Sport England Club Leaders Programme to facilitate one of the workshops. The morning workshop will be focussed around the benefits of 'Developing a Marketing Strategy', delivered by Club Leaders. In the afternoon session, delegates will have the option of attending a Time to Listen Course or an event/activity Safety Module. The cost for the day will be £20 per person (lunch included).

For a full list of dates and venues check out the Club Forums page on pg 51. To register your interest for and to request a booking form please contact [jack.ford@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:jack.ford@canoe-england.org.uk)

## URGENT REQUEST FOR HELP AT SYMONDS YAT

Volunteers and equipment are required for this project in the South West. Canoe England/BCU is responsible for the maintenance of rapids at Symonds Yat and a volunteer sub-committee of the South West Region now manages them. Four years ago groins were installed in the rapids to both arrest erosion and improve the paddling experience. At the same time rocks were installed at the head of the island but volunteers were unable to plant willows and other trees on the island or to attend to other island and erosion issues. Since then high water levels and other environmental issues have intervened and the work has become badly delayed.

An alliance is now in place to make sure these tasks are undertaken. The Symonds Yat Preservation Group

involves local clubs and hire companies, The Environment Agency, Canoe England, the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is underpinned by money from the Canoe England Capital Grants Fund, (Sport England and DCMS), club and private donations.

This really needs to happen in order for the rapids and the island to be usable for the long-term future.

Subject to final budget, if you can bring a minibus or a car full (minimum 3) and do a full day of volunteering the Group will try to fund your fuel.

The work involves willow planting - programmed for 23/24 Feb and 2/3 March. The Preservation Group would also like to have volunteers from clubs, scouts, guides etc in place for these two weekends and a preliminary meeting with some team leaders to control/direct volunteers, so that valuable time is not wasted.

### There are five areas of key work:

- 1 Steps top and bottom of rapids (8 volunteers min)
- 2 Willow planting and transport in open canoes of willow onto the island (20 volunteers)
- 3 Rock/wall maintenance, Hessian bags filled with stone dust and cement to fill gaps in walls (10 or more volunteers)
- 4 Banks team, pruning tidy paths, fill potholes on both sides - (20 volunteers)
- 5 Wall building team on top walls (10 volunteers)

There is also a large amount of kit that will be required. A small digger, cement mixer, cement, stone dust, 100 Hessian small sacks, shovels, saws, pruning loppers, lump hammers, sledge hammers, stone saws, large willow logs for damming island channel, 5 metre posts for slaloms lines x 10 and a BBQ team to feed the workers! The Group would love to talk to any builders merchants/tool hire etc to sponsor materials or equipment.

**If you can provide equipment or organise and bring a team with a leader to the Rapids please liaise with Paul Howells: [paul.howells@btconnect.com](mailto:paul.howells@btconnect.com)**





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# RIVERS ACCESS CAMPAIGN

## BENYON REJECTS CANOEIST CAMPAIGN TO PADDLE OVER ANGLERS' RIGHTS

Canoe England (CE) are extremely concerned and disappointed by the news article posted on the Angling Trust (AT) website - 'Benyon rejects canoeist campaign to paddle over anglers' rights'. CE feels that this news article is both inaccurate and defamatory to the paddling community and its governing body. CE would like to explain its position by responding to the comments made in the AT article that follows: *'Angling bodies have been getting increasingly concerned at the conduct of the British Canoe Union (BCU) and Canoe England (CE) who are encouraging canoeists to defy the law and trample over anglers rights. They have been promoting a 'Right to Paddle' campaign for several years and simply refuse to acknowledge the existence of limitations on navigation in civil law. Both organisations promote canoeing guides and events, which encourage canoeing on rivers where no lawful right of navigation exists. Organised trespasses are becoming all the more commonplace and are promoted through the 'independent' website 'Song of the Paddle' www.songofthepaddle.co.uk/ which promotes what they call 'open canoeing.'*

*The Angling Trust recently sought clarification on the canoeists' demands from Fisheries and Natural Environment Minister Richard Benyon. The minister strongly rebutted the notion of an automatic 'right to paddle' up every stream, brook and river in the country regardless of the impact on either the environment or other river users.*

*Richard Benyon made it clear in an interview for the Angling Trust members' magazine The Angle that there would be no legal right to paddle without the riparian owners' permission. The previous Labour Government was clear on this and the policy of voluntary access agreements only has now been re-affirmed by the Coalition government.*

*Angling Trust National Campaigns Coordinator Martin Salter said: "The Angling Trust has been challenging the claims being made by militant canoeists that they should have a right paddle up every river, stream or brook in Britain irrespective of ownership or the impact this has on wildlife or other people's enjoyment. The rights of navigation are clear in law and there are thousands of miles of navigable rivers and waterways to which canoeists have legal access. We also have well worked voluntary access agreements in place which allow canoeing on some rivers such as the Dart and the upper Wye at times of high water when fishing will not be affected.*

*Because the BCU is refusing to recognise the law of the land it is pulling out of these voluntary access agreements claiming they are now unnecessary. The rejection of a 'right to paddle' by Richard Benyon is most welcome and we call upon the organisations that represent canoeists to recognise the law of the land and that it is not going to be changed in their favour any time soon. Continued authorised trespasses by the BCU could put funding for their sport in jeopardy which would be a shame as there is plenty of water out there for everyone to share provided that people agree to operate within the law and do not think that they can trample over the rights of anglers and others."*

England does not encourage paddlers to 'defy the law and trample over anglers rights'. In the majority of cases anglers and canoeist are quite capable of sharing the waterways in an amicable and sustainable manner. **Canoe England is not promoting an automatic 'right to paddle' up every stream, brook and river in the country regardless of the impact on either the environment or other river users. Canoeists are generally very committed to conserving the natural environment with little or no cases of damage being caused to the aquatic environment.** Their commitment can also be demonstrated by the vast numbers of river cleans carried out by individuals and canoe clubs throughout the country on an annual basis. Both the environmental protection of the natural environment and the shared use of the waterways are highlighted in our environmental leaflet -You, Your Canoe and The Environment.

Canoe England has and will continue to promote canoeing as an environmentally benign activity. CE has demonstrated that they are committed to ensure the natural environment is protected through working with environmental organisations and the promotion of responsible and sustainable paddling.

**Examples of ways that CE and its members are actively involved in building our green credentials into the future include:**

- Working with the South Cumbria Rivers Trust developing an environmental awareness as an element in coaching syllabuses
- Volunteers engaged in Water Framework Directive, wildlife surveys, habitat improvement and river care projects
- Taking bio-security measures to prevent the spread of non-native aquatic species
- Acting as watchdogs of the river environment alongside the anglers.

This work is supported by good practice publications and web site material, which are widely available to paddlers and environmental organisations -You, Your Canoe and the environment, and Canoeing on the Sea. CE also has a Sustainability Policy developed on the principles of Local Agenda 2, which includes elements of inclusivity to meet social, economic and environmental requirements

**CE would like say that they disagree with the AT and Mr Salter's comments that the legal position for inland waters is clear.** The AT shares with some a view that common law supports a position that where rights are not explicit, navigation may constitute a trespass. Canoe England does not subscribe to this assumption. We believe the Magna Carta and the strength of recent historical research on historical use are grounds for a presumption in favour of access and public rights to physically usable inland waters. It is noted the Angling Trust has not produced an informed challenge to the research by the Rev'd Dr Caffyn's. Whilst not a lawyer he has received degrees at both Masters and Doctorial level for his research. We would have expected the Angling Trust to argue and justify the certainty that the law is settled.



### THE CANOE ENGLAND RESPONSE

The BCU represents some two million paddlers around the UK with the majority of these members being affiliated to Canoe England. Like the Angling Trust, our members represent a number of different disciplines that require different types of water to paddle to satisfy their needs. For example, white water is required for slalom, flat water for touring and sprinting and a coastal environment for sea kayaking.

**One of Canoe England's overall aims is to increase participation in these different environments and at the same time increase places for people to paddle.** The increase in participation is supported by Sport England, as the aim is to encourage all ages to participate for a number of beneficial reasons such as socio economic benefits, and health and wellbeing.

In carrying out our aims we wish to ensure our members act responsibly through formal training/coaching. Canoe



Public access to inland waters remains a long-standing issue that has not been addressed by a succession of government administrations. It has caused some interests to consider canoeing can be unlawful.

The Countryside & Rights of Way Act (2000) omitted to address this issue. However, government was given to commission the study "Water based sport & recreation: the facts (2001)". Significantly the study identified the uncertainties about the legal position of public rights of navigation, plus potential solutions.

**CE would like to draw attention to Mr Salter's statement that Voluntary Access Agreements (VAAs) or Access Arrangements (AAs) worked well which allow canoeing on some rivers such as the Dart and the upper Wye at times of high water when fishing will not be affected.** The truth is that the BCU has endeavoured to develop VAAs for nearly 50 years with little success. These arrangements exist on a few rivers and typically provide highly restricted and inadequate access. However, the government research for canoe access on the Rivers Mersey and Waveney has produced principles and a benchmark for VAAs; forming the basis of government policy for access to inland waters to be achieved by the voluntary route. CE believes that this should be applied as the national standard for VAAs. The research has demonstrated that it is possible to achieve:

**All year round access supported by an Access Code outlining responsibilities of all water users.**

- **Environmental protection as appropriate, e.g. setting mutually agreed minimum river levels.**
- **Respect flora, fauna, and other users**
- **Identified sites for launching and landing**
- **Publicity and information dissemination of VAA**

CE takes a pragmatic view of Access Arrangements. Our revised Position Statement for the Shared Use of Rivers has provisions for entering into AA's and fulfils the criteria of government for AA policy. Namely, they should be developed on a joint local management basis that helps to protect the natural environment and respect the rights of other user interests. It also understands and caters for the need of some individuals, or small organisations to have AAs to ensure they have a greater certainty of access at a particular time and place. Our Position Statement also evidences how Government policy for AA's has failed i.e. Rivers Teme and Wear.

For AAs to work they are dependent on other water users and the riparian owners commitment for secure access managed on a self-regulatory management basis. It is unrealistic to expect an organisation such as CE to have powers to enforce canoeists to abide by AA's. Many canoeists are independent of CE and we encourage all to follow the guidelines of such arrangements.

## THE FUTURE

CE has worked well with the Angling Development Board with the promotion of kayak fishing. **We would wish to continue to work in partnership with the Angling Trust for the purpose of the sustainable use of our waterways for the benefit of people of all abilities and interests.**

# WATERWAYS & ENVIRONMENT

## WELCOME TO SCOTLAND

Here's some advice on access using the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC)

- The Code is online at [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)
- SOAC does not cover any motorised access which means there can be no driving or parking on estate or farm roads without permission.
- Please treat other countryside or water users with respect, and be aware of the practices with regard to camping etc.
- If there are commercial campsites available in the area you travel to, it's best to use them – Scotland is not all true wilderness
- If you decide to 'wild' camp, then you must follow the 'Leave No Trace' principles - wild camping really for a few people for a few days rather than a 30-strong canoe club staying in one place for a week. Litter, out-of-control fires, and human waste cause Scottish land managers much trouble each year.
- Be very careful with dogs and keep them under close control
- You have to share both rivers and lochs with anglers, either on the bank, or in boats – avoid any lines out, and paddle past them quickly and quietly
- If you are in a large group, then you really have to plan your trip – inspect any rapids on rivers in advance if you have any concern about them, think where you are going to park vehicles, and especially think about suitable campsites
- Be safety aware – take note of weather forecasts – you may experience snow in June!
- Be environmentally aware – do not seal launch over moss and lichens on rocks, or in gorges, do not damage trees or plants, and do not take any vegetation or water from one water body to another. We are working hard to avoid the importation of any Non-Native Invasive Species.

Apply the 'Check – Clean – Dry' principles with your canoe or kayak after every trip.

Above all else – enjoy yourself – take only photographs, leave only footprints!

There are two guides to waterways in Scotland ('Scottish White Water', Edition 2, and 'Scottish Canoe Touring', both published by Pesda Press.

In addition, the Great Glen Canoe Trail has its own guide go to

[www.greatglencanoetrail/info](http://www.greatglencanoetrail/info)





# PADDLE-ABILITY

## PADDLEABILITY SYMPOSIUM

Canoe England, in partnership with the Lake District Calvert Trust are pleased to announce the dates for the first Paddle-Ability Symposium on the Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th March 2013 at the Holiday Inn, Great Barr, Birmingham. This weekend of activities is for coaches who would like develop their knowledge, experience and understanding for working with disabled paddlers. The Symposium will provide an excellent forum for coaches to share ideas, experiences and their ideals.

The symposium will be split over two days the first, primarily classroom based, will offer a range of workshops and networking opportunities and well as a 'Question Time' opportunity where delegates can put their queries to a Paddle-Ability panel. The second day of the symposium offers delegates the opportunity to complete the Intermediate Paddle-Ability Module.

To register your interest in the Paddle-Ability Symposium please complete and submit the online Expression of Interest Form [www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/paddleability/paddleability-symposium/](http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/our-sport/paddleability/paddleability-symposium/)



**Calvert Trust**  
Lake District

**Canoe England**  
Something for Everyone

### Paddle-Ability Symposium

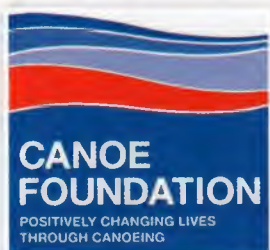
**16th and 17th March 2013**  
**Holiday Inn, Great Barr,**  
**Birmingham**

An opportunity for coaches to come together to share ideas, experiences and learn more about working with disabled paddlers.

Workshops include:

- Foundation Paddle-Ability Module
- Intermediate Paddle-Ability Module
- A range of workshops for coaches and volunteers

For more information and a booking form contact the Canoe England Disability Officer Clarissa Smith:  
Email: [clarissa.smith@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:clarissa.smith@canoe-england.org.uk)  
Tel: 07702954919



## 7TH HUDDERSFIELD CLAYTON WEST SCOUT GROUP

When Huddersfield based Clayton West Scout Group was offered the opportunity of an indoor kayak facility, if it could provide the equipment, the group turned to the Canoe Foundation for help.

The Canoe Foundation was established to encourage the development of paddle-sport, so the Scouts looked to the Foundation to help realise a long held ambition to have a near at hand all weather kayak resource.

The 7th Huddersfield Clayton West started offering kayaking as a resource some 12 years ago, and recently added a small fleet of open boats to enable the group to offer skills training to the new 2 Star level. However, an all round facility had eluded them, until last September

when the local swimming pool offered a space for kayak sessions on the basis that the Scouts purchased and managed the equipment, and provided the instructors.

Within six months the 7th had secured funding

and by January 2013 the facility was in operation at Scissett Baths in Huddersfield. Newark-based Teksport supplied the boats for the project. John Clifton at Teksport commented to Canoe FOCUS; "We were happy to help the group with a fair discount on the boats. They already operated six Teksport boats boat from the Scout Jamboree Fleet and we were happy to help them add to their fleet and open this new facility for Scouts in their village." Group Scout Leader and Level 3 Kayak Coach, Ewan Scott said; "Indoors facilities are very useful, they help us work on 'wet' skills with beginners, and are ideal for rolling clinics and teaching support and recovery skills. However, access to pool sessions can be limited and this small resource means that we have the option of pool sessions for beginners, improvers and for skills training where in the water support can be invaluable. It beats standing in a muddy canal or a freezing pond hands down."

Additional funding for the project came from two Huddersfield bodies, the Common Good Trust and the Davey Foundation.

Scouts and Explorers from Clayton West Scouts with their coaches at their initial pool session.



## GRANT APPLICATIONS – NEW YEAR, NEW RECORDS

During 2012 the Canoe Foundation continued to grow, receiving more application and awarding more grants than ever before!

In response to this growth, and as part of general modernisation, the Charity updated its grant application processes with new application forms, guidelines and procedures coming into effect from September 2012. At the same meeting application deadlines were set for 2013, the first of which was noon on Monday 7th January; and yet again received a record number of applications almost double that for the same period last year and almost 450% up from 18 months ago!

There are exciting times ahead for the Canoe Foundation as they look to continue in our mission of 'positively changing lives through canoeing'; building

on the £190,000 we have already awarded in the past 10 years and the difference their support has made to some 35,000 individuals.

For further details about Canoe Foundation grants, case studies from some of the projects they have previously supported, all the latest news and details of how you can support the work of the Canoe Foundation take a look at the website [www.canoe.foundation.org.uk](http://www.canoe.foundation.org.uk) Regular updates can also be found at the **Canoe Foundation Facebook page** at [www.facebook.com/canoe.foundation](http://www.facebook.com/canoe.foundation) or on **Twitter @CanoeFoundation**



# CLUB FORUMS

# 2013



To register your interest and request a booking form, please email [jack.ford@canoe-england.org.uk](mailto:jack.ford@canoe-england.org.uk)

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> February** **Book by 6<sup>th</sup> February**  
**Venue:** Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre,  
Leicester. LE4 5PN

**Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> February** **Book by 13<sup>th</sup> February**  
**Venue:** Bewl Water,  
Kent. TN3 8JH

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> February** **Book by 14<sup>th</sup> February**  
**Venue:** University of East London Sports Dock,  
London, E16 2RD

**Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> March** **Book by 20<sup>th</sup> February**  
**Venue:** Manvers Waterfront Boat Club,  
Rotherham, S63 7DG

**Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> March** **Book by 20<sup>th</sup> February**  
**Venue:** Mepal Outdoor Centre,  
Cambridgeshire, CB6 2AZ

**Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> March** **Book by 23<sup>rd</sup> February**  
**Venue:** Tynedale Function Suit, Tyne Green,  
Hexham, NE46 3SG

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> March** **Book by 1<sup>st</sup> March**  
**Venue:** Southampton University  
Wide Lane Pavilion, Eastleigh, SO50 5PE

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> March** **Book by 1<sup>st</sup> March**  
**Venue:** Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre,  
Merseyside, L22 1RR

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> March** **Book by 7<sup>th</sup> March**  
**Venue:** Exeter Canoe Club,  
EX2 8DP

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> March** **Book by 14<sup>th</sup> March**  
**Venue:** RiversMeet, Hardings Lane,  
Gillingham, SP8 4HX

**COST:** £20 per head  
(maximum of 4 people per club)

## Programme

- 9:30 Arrival
- 9:45 Opening keynote
- 10:00 Workshop 1
- 12:30 Lunch (provided)
- 13:00 Workshop 2
- 13:00 Workshop 3
- 15:00 Open Forum
- 15:30 Summative Session
- 16:00 Depart

## Workshops

1. **Developing a marketing strategy:** Sport England Club Leaders will take you through the numerous advantages of having a clear marketing strategy
2. **Safety Module:** This workshop will provide role specific event/activity management training for clubs safety representatives.
3. **Time to Listen Course:** A course designed to equip those with a designated child protection role at clubs with information to fulfil their role.



CHECK OUT THE BEST CANOEING & KAYAKING IMAGES FROM THE SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER ENTRIES IN TO OUR REGULAR PHOTO-COMPETITION... AS WELL AS THE OVERALL WINNER FOR 2012

# Photo Competition

We're constantly amazed at the beautiful photos that you submit each month, from the inspiring images that flood into the FOCUS office and inbox it's pretty clear that, not only are you paddling in some fantastic locations, but you have a great eye for capturing the spirit of our brilliant sport.



**Have you got a cracking Canoeing or Kayaking shot that might be a winner in 2013?**

Send us your best canoeing or kayaking photo and Senior entrants could win a Cotswold Outdoor Voucher while Junior winners receive a WHSmith Gift Card. There is a prize for the winner of the year selected from all the winning monthly entries.

We can only allow one entry per person per month. To enter simply send a large photo (at least 5 megapixels) on a CD along with your contact details and a few words about the photo to Coral Jackson, British Canoe Union, 18 Market Place, Bingham, Nottingham, NG1 8AP or you can email your entry to [coral.jackson@bcu.org.uk](mailto:coral.jackson@bcu.org.uk)

Chris Gale - Derwentwater in the lakes - WINNER!



Neil McAra



Mark Percy



Thomas C. Ward



Martin Holwill



Jason Cole



Vicky Duckworth



Neil Gregory





Chris Weston - Hurley Weir during the Hurley Classic Competition 2012 - WINNER!



Christian Thomson



Duncan Smalley



Eddy Powell

Brian Saxton



Hannah Sheridan



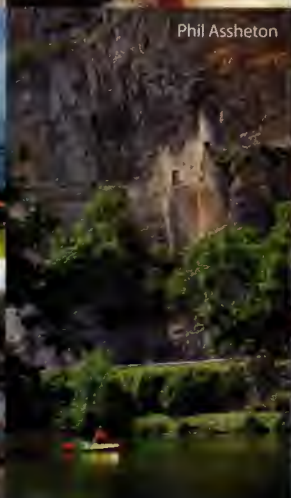
Tim Harlow



Clive Wycherley



Andy Bond



Phil Assheton



Chris Redwood



Alex Veness



Heather Playdon



Ben Thorpe





Thom Guy - Washing Machine on the Loop Hugh Jenkinson in the unique Dagger Tiger Mamba! - WINNER!



Dawn East



Mark Mills



Mike McPeak



Andrew Bartle



Tim Harlow

Tony Green





Joshua Crook



Mark Wain



Martin Wrigley



Jonathan Maddox



Overall Winner 2012  
March 2012 - Nikki Legg - River Wey, Godalming





A trip to some new, exciting river and country can really fire up your passion for paddling again.

# Top Tips to Spice Up Your Paddling

Article by Phil Scowcroft

## TRY SOMEWHERE NEW

It's easy to just stick to the same old venues that you are used to and know well, but paddling can be much more interesting and rewarding if you are exploring somewhere new! No matter how much research you do you are never 100% sure exactly what is round the next bend, which adds to the excitement and expands your horizons. Try travelling further a field and see what other regions of the country have to offer, or plan a canoeing holiday or expedition abroad. There are endless numbers of fantastic rivers in Europe that are only a short hop across the channel and a bit of a drive away. The Alps have been a favourite for white water paddlers for many years, but there are lots of other alternatives that are equally accessible. Or why not be really adventurous and head off somewhere more exotic? How about the Himalayas, Canada or

South America? There are specialist holiday companies springing up now who can help organise these trips for you. I recently heard about a Canadian outfitter who prided themselves on the fact that anyone could turn up at their store naked with just a credit card and they would sort out everything they needed for a canoe camping holiday. Things are certainly much easier now than when I first flew off on my own with my kayak and all my kit to meet up with a group of German paddlers to explore rivers in Costa Rica.

## TRY SOMETHING NEW

Of course you don't necessarily need to travel to spice things up a bit. There are plenty of different ways of making things a bit more interesting in your local area. Try setting yourself a few challenges such as how many break outs you can actually make down a short stretch





Getting to grips with canoe poling can really improve your skills.

**“It’s easy to just stick to the same old venues that you are used to and know well, but paddling can be much more interesting and rewarding if you are exploring somewhere new!”**

**Are you getting a bit tired of doing the same thing week in week out in your trusty boat of choice? Well maybe it’s time to start thinking about doing something just a little bit different to spice things up a bit. Here are a few suggestions that might just inspire you to try something different.**

of river, how many waves you can surf, how fast can you get from A to B, how far can you paddle in a day? Do you really know your local area that well anyway - where does that river or canal you drive by everyday actually go? I’ve been amazed by what paddling opportunities I’ve found on my doorstep.

Try just getting out of your comfort zone? Why not try swapping equipment with your friends, or maybe try a demo boat or borrow a different one from the club. You could try your hand at poling an open canoe rather than paddling it on the river.

When was the last time you got out of your boat into the water or took a swim down a rapid? I fell out of my open boat on my last trip and was amazed how much I enjoyed it. You can have some great fun practicing your rescue and swimming techniques before you have to use them for real. ▶



Enjoy the wildlife



**TRY A NEW DISCIPLINE**

If you are an open boater why not try kayaking or vice versa? It not only gives you a better insight into how the other half lives, but you'll find you also pick up different skills that will transfer back to your preferred discipline. Try going surfing, playboating or sea kayaking. The great thing about our sport is that it is so diverse, but how many of us really make the most of it? There are all the different competitive disciplines as well. Have you actually had a go at canoe polo, slalom, wild water racing or marathon? I recently tried sprint kayaking for the first time having previously dismissed it as looking far too serious, but I couldn't believe how much fun everyone that gave it a go and tried it on the day had!

**ACCESSORISE**

Everybody loves a new toy and maybe you were good this year and Santa suitably rewarded you with some new kit or maybe you were naughty like me and have to go and buy your own toys, either way having new kit is a great way to get you itching to get out on the water again. Whether it's a new boat, paddle, cag, buoyancy aid or helmet, it is difficult to postpone the

curiosity around how good it is actually going to be and really helps to keep yourself keen to get out there again even in these cold winter conditions.

One of the best toys to keep you amused on the water is a waterproof camera, whether it takes stills, video or both there are some great models available with all sorts of different features and they can be mounted on your helmet or boat to get some really interesting shots and video footage.

If you don't have much money to spend you can modify your existing kit. Spend time outfitting your boat with some foam padding or find out what happens if you alter the position of your seat. If you have an open boat try rigging up a sail with whatever you can lay your hands on. You can always just take something extra to play with on the water; one of the funniest trips I remember was when canoe polo guru Dave Brown suddenly produced a ball to practice our passing skills whilst negotiating a white water section of the Durance in the Alps.

Of course you don't just have to stick to inanimate objects. Does your other half paddle, if not why not? How about persuading them to join you for a day on the water? No other half, then what about taking someone for a date on the water? Let's face it they're going to find out about your other passion eventually. What about taking the kids or even the dog? Of course this doesn't work if your reason for paddling is an excuse to get away from one or all of the above, in which case you probably don't need any extra incentive to get out there.

**"You don't necessarily need to travel to spice things up a bit. There are plenty of different ways of making things a bit more interesting in your local area."**

Canoe Polo





## TAKE MORE INTEREST IN YOUR SURROUNDINGS

How many of us blindly paddle down the river or along the canal without really paying much attention to our surroundings? Where we paddle gives us a unique perspective on some wonderful scenery from a viewpoint that only a few of us are privileged to see. Rivers and canals also pass by some fabulous historic buildings and structures, but do we really know that much about them? A bit of research in advance of your trip can give you an idea of what to watch out for and you can impress your fellow paddlers with your new found knowledge. We also get to sneak up quietly on wildlife when they are least suspecting it and from a direction they are not used to seeing people approach from. There is a wealth of interesting flora and fauna out there and rare species are returning to our waterways as the quality of water improves. When was the last time you saw a kingfisher or an otter? Take time out to look around you and you will be amazed at what you can see.

## KEEP IT SPICY!

There are loads of things you can do to spice things up a bit and I'm sure you can think of a few more yourselves. Why not plan an event or themed trip for your club where you can paddle in fancy dress, or how about seeing just how many of the above you can get into one trip? You could follow Nic Burne's example of jumping out of his open boat mid river to take photos (probably of a family member posing with some wildlife). Whatever you do just get out there and have fun! **CF**

Take photos on the water



Nic Burne gets wet in the name of a good photo!



**"If you are an open boater why not try kayaking or vice versa? It not only gives you a better insight into how the other half lives, but you'll find you also pick up different skills that will transfer back to your preferred discipline."**



Make a canoe sail



Doggy Paddle



# Floating on Air

Article and images by Jon Sims



Taking possession of our new camper van presented freedom with a hitch. Strapping our kayaks on the roof was not feasible and the prospect of getting away without getting afloat was not a happy one. Lateral thinking suggested that, if we could not fit boats on top, we should consider the ample room inside. We duly took possession of a large bag containing a Stearns Backcountry double inflatable canoe. Even further lateral thinking saw it strapped onto the bike carrier on the rear of the van. The world, potentially, was now our oyster...



Ten minutes with a pump

One particular corner of the world that had long been beckoning was a secret place known alternatively as the Marais Poitevin or, more descriptively, La Venise Verte; The Green Venice. A one-time marsh, just inland from La Rochelle on the Atlantic Coast of France, this area had, over the centuries, been drained by a myriad of tiny canals, leaving a chequer-board of small fields. Over this has grown a canopy of trees through which filters a light so green that you can almost taste it. The silence is disturbed only by birdsong, the lowing of the indigenous coffee coloured cattle and the occasional splash of an elusive otter. I had recalled this place from a long past family holiday when, heading for Spain in our split screen VW, we had camped at Coulon on the banks of the Sevre Niortaise, the jugular to the adjoining canal network. As a teenager, the tiny punts for hire at the campsite provided freedom from my family and I fell in love with the secret world of this aquatic forest. Now my wife, Bev, and I could return, fully equipped for exploration.





Venise Verte, silence and a sense of exploration



One of those Livingston moments



Mellowston—emerging from the trees at La Garette

Exploring the Lynton River in Hampshire

**“The sense of utter peace and detachment from the outside world is total. The sense of exploration as you head deeper into the trees deludes you into believing that you are alone in your discovery. And all made possible by a large hold-all bag and ten minutes of inflation!”**

**A WORLD OF MEMORIES**

Never go back, so they say, as reality and memory rarely cooperate. It is some measure of Le Marais Poitevin that the experience was even better than I remembered. The sense of utter peace and detachment from the outside world is total. The sense of exploration as you head deeper into the trees deludes you into believing that you are alone in your discovery. The sudden revelation of a tiny farmhouse is a delight and meeting a rare boat coming towards you is a real Dr Livingston moment. And all made possible by a large holdall bag and ten minutes of inflation! ▶



**HOMEGROWN ADVENTURES**

We do, of course, have plenty of canals in this country. Over 2,000 miles in fact and, although some of them are better left to holiday narrow boats, there are many where the waters are calm and the scenery is not obscured by the towpath hedge. One such is the Monmouth and Brecon Canal in South Wales where the canal side campsite at Pencelli, with obligatory local pub, proved a perfect launch point. To one side, the lush Brecon Beacons roll down to the water; to the other, the equally lush River Usk wanders unhurriedly down its expansive valley. The canal threads its way in between, alternating wide open views with intimate woodland. It isn't far to Brecon but there isn't any hurry amidst scenery like this and canoeing an inflatable is never going to be a means of rapid transit. Better to sit back in upholstered comfort and paddle gently.

Nearer to urban chaos is the Basingstoke Canal where the Canal Centre campsite at Mytchett gives access to remarkably verdant waters as the canal belies its commuter belt surroundings. Sandy heath is fringed by dense woodland and flashes, which widen the canal into broad, shallow lakes where you alone can drift over shoals of fish and watch the variety of dragon and damselflies which make this a unique waterway. SSSI status sounds so matter of fact. All you need is the evidence of your senses.

**A BREEZE OVER THE BRINY**

And so, to the sea, where although inflated paddlers must be aware of the tidal currents, the inherent stability and abundant buoyancy provides safe and salty pleasure. Enclosed waters are ideal and the Backcountry has seen action close to home in Poole Harbour and Christchurch Harbour (neither of which, happily, comply with the modern definition of harbour). We enjoyed similar waters in Brittany, to the East of Le Havre at Havre de Rotheneuf where, as everywhere, bystanders were amazed by the conjuring trick of a boat emerging from a bag. Freedom in a holdall. Floating on air! **CF**

**"The canal threads its way in between, alternating wide open views with intimate woodland. It isn't far to Brecon but there isn't any hurry amidst scenery like this and canoeing an inflatable is never going to be a means of rapid transit. Better to sit back in upholstered comfort and paddle gently."**



Coffee break on the river in Coulon





The lush Mon and Brec Canal

Face to face with the indigenous coffee coloured cattle

**“And so, to the sea, where although inflated paddlers must be aware of the tidal currents, the inherent stability and abundant buoyancy provides safe and salty pleasure.”**



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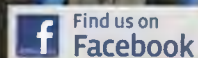
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