

CANOE FOCUS

**#ShePaddles
Ambassador
Top Tips**

Page 8

**Spotting
the signs of
spring**

Page 12

**Performance
Preview**

Page 22

Contents

Welcome

Welcome message from Keir Worth,
Director of Paddlesport at British Canoeing **3**

News

Latest news stories making a splash in the
paddling community **4**



#ShePaddles

Introducing International #ShePaddles
Ambassadors from the Cayman Islands **6**

Top tips from our
#ShePaddles Ambassadors **8**



Our Partners

AquaPaddle – Making paddlesports
accessible to all **10**



Paddlesport

How do you get into Surf Kayaking? **12**



Access and Environment

Spotting the signs of spring **12**

Clear Access, Clear Waters news **13**



Paddler Spotlight

Learning to white water kayak with a
disability **20**



Performance

Performance Preview **22**

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events Calendar **24**

Welcome

Welcome to the March edition of Canoe Focus.

A warm welcome to the March edition of Canoe Focus and the arrival of spring, which will hopefully provide the improved weather we all crave for more and better opportunities to get out and paddle. There is so much to look forward to over the coming weeks and months, whatever our passion for paddling and paddlesport, and the gradual onset of warmer weather and longer days always signal the beginning of what is an extremely busy period for everyone in the paddling community.

In this month's edition, we provide an update on British Canoeing's recognition as a governing body for SUP and what this means, and we share how to get involved and participate in surf kayaking. We highlight upcoming events across paddlesport disciplines, including in sprint, paracanoe and slalom, as GB's elite athletes begin the process of qualifying for the Olympic and Paralympic Games next year.

Conservationist, journalist and author Simon Barnes tells us about the signs of spring we can all keep an eye out for over the coming weeks, whilst there is also advice from #ShePaddles ambassadors for women who are looking to get out and paddle, and a great article from Chris Nadollek on learning to whitewater kayak with a disability. I am sure many will also enjoy news from Aquapaddle - the charity dedicated to promoting the benefits of paddling across communities.

We are amidst another very exciting and busy period for everyone at British Canoeing and across the paddlesport community too. My focus, as Director of Paddlesport, will be upon providing the best possible support across paddlesport disciplines. This will include supporting the Olympic and Paralympic disciplines of canoe slalom and kayak cross, canoe sprint and paracanoe, but also the array of other disciplines including canoe marathon, canoe polo, freestyle, ocean racing, rafting, SUP, surf kayak, wildwater racing and canoe sailing.

Whichever discipline we paddle, as a community, we create chances to help and support others in a way we couldn't on our own. This summer's busy events calendar could not go ahead without the priceless and selfless contribution of volunteers who give their time and energy so generously. Athletes from across disciplines are preparing to compete domestically and internationally, and they are supported by coaches, officials, support staff and swathes of volunteers - all of whom contribute to create the best possible environment for paddlers of all ages to participate in local, regional, national and international events. Structured sport is fantastic at bringing the community together and creates opportunities to make new friends and acquaintances, which in turn generates a sense of belonging, acceptance, connection, contribution, inclusion, and identity. We achieve so much together.

Looking ahead, whatever type of paddling you enjoy, I hope that you maximise all the benefits that come from being on the water over the next few weeks and months. It is a fantastic time of year, especially when it comes to nature and witnessing seasonal changes.

Keir Worth


Director of Paddlesport
British Canoeing



STORIES that are making a **SPLASH**


Check out the stories that are currently making a splash within the paddling community.



For regular updates on stories like these, straight to your inbox,  **become a British Canoeing member**

British Canoeing to support retailers with increased SUP safety guidance

British Canoeing is supporting major UK retailers to increase their provision of safety guidance for stand up paddleboards, purchased in store and online. We are extremely pleased that Tesco will be using our SUP infographic as a safety sticker on all Tesco Stand Up Paddleboards, this will also include a QR code linked to our [Go Paddling website](https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/go-paddling) to provide further information.

 **Find out more:** www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2023/british-canoeing-to-support-retailers-with-increased-sup-safety-guidance




British Canoeing become a recognised body for Stand Up Paddleboarding

British Canoeing has been formally recognised as a National Governing Body for Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) after receiving confirmation from Sport England. Going forward, Sport England will recognise SUP as a discipline of Paddlesport. This decision applies to England only. It is the first time that Sport England has given 'recognition status' to two governing bodies in different sports for a single discipline.

This is great news as over the last three years British Canoeing has seen a huge growth in Stand Up Paddleboarding.

- > Over 50,000 British Canoeing members having an interest in Stand Up Paddleboarding
- > An increase in SUP activity and SUP specific clubs across the 380 British Canoeing affiliated clubs in England
- > The number of SUP participants accessing British Canoeing Awarding Body regulated qualifications and awards, with over 25,000 SUP specific certifications issued
- > Increased safety messaging and support, including a review of the use of SUP leashes and attendance at a Parliamentary Reception to discuss SUP safety and awareness
- > Support for entries to compete in the team events at the 2022 ICF SUP World Championships, including the development and promotion of the selection policy and process

 **Find out more:** www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2023/british-canoeing-to-become-a-recognised-body-for-stand-up-paddleboarding

Get more from your time on the water this season



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PADDLE
LOGGER

Introducing our NEW INTERNATIONAL #SHEPADDLES AMBASSADORS



In celebration of International Women's Day on 8th March, British Canoeing announced two brand new International #ShePaddles Ambassadors, Lisha and Kiristen. They are both inspirational women based in the Cayman Islands who are passionate about promoting paddlesports, nature, fitness and health.

British Canoeing is proud to have a partnership with the Cayman Islands which aims to raise awareness of the benefits of paddlesports both in the UK and the Cayman Islands, while encouraging keen enthusiasts to consider the Cayman Islands for their next paddling adventure. We look forward to sharing more from our international #ShePaddles ambassadors over the year, but for now you can get to know a little bit more about them below.

LISHA WATLING

Cayman Kayaks, Cayman Islands

Born and raised in Canada, I have enjoyed kayaking on rivers, lakes and oceans in the summer months. Being able to paddle year-round in the Caribbean is a dream come true. I have done whitewater kayaking in the rivers and waves, but it is not my first choice for my weekly escape. On occasion I go for a paddle on our SUPs in the shallow sheltered waterways close to our home but being on a kayak is my go-to sport. Kayaking gives me an opportunity to get away from the busyness, noises and distractions around me. There is nothing more wholesome to me than doing some big deep breaths out on the water surrounded by the sounds of the natural world.

In 2010, with a background in hospitality and business, I ventured to the Cayman Islands. A few years later, I married my husband Tom, who was a local Caymanian and a passionate naturalist. Today, we run our own business, Cayman Kayaks, which offers night-time kayak tours to Bio Bay, where bioluminescence can be experienced at its best in high concentrations. We also guide tours through the Cayman wetlands, educating paddlers about the importance of this ecosystem which is vital for human existence. Both Tom and I are passionate about preserving these natural resources that surround us, and believe that kayaking is a way to minimise the impact of exploring these delicate ecosystems.

In addition to the environment, heart health is very important to me as I was born with a heart condition. The repetitive motion of kayaking elevates your heart rate, which over time strengthens your heart's muscles and makes it easier for the organ to supply your body with a healthy supply of blood.

As an International #ShePaddles Ambassador and a businesswoman in the paddle world, my hope is to inspire women around the world to get out and paddle, whether as their daily exercise or weekly escape outdoors. I would like to see more women take control of their health and get involved with an existing paddle company or start their own!

Paddling fact: For the Pirates-Week Festival here in Cayman, I helped build a cardboard boat, which we made in the shape of a kayak, and we won the race!



KIRISTEN COUSINS

Vitamin Sea, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

I was born in Norfolk, Virginia and took up paddleboarding in 2010. I acquired my first paddleboarding sponsorship shortly after arriving in the Cayman Islands in 2012.

I have always had a passion for water and action sports and first discovered SUP in Orlando, Florida where I became hooked! I am a firm believer that paddling is not only an amazing way to stay fit, but it also has great benefits for one's mindset and mental health. I not only love the fitness benefits of paddling, but also how it keeps me outside and connected with mother nature in so many aspects; from flatwater to down winding to surf. It helps me to connect not only with myself; but with others on a deeper level.

I have been teaching paddling since 2011 and yoga since 2015, so it was a natural progression for me to combine the two. I am a PaddleFit Legacy coach and have been teaching PaddleFit for 10 years; in fact I was the first person to teach SUP fitness classes in the Cayman Islands. It has been an amazing journey in the paddle world, where I have been able to work the famous Wanderlust Festival, film with major TV networks, land in Forbes Magazine and more!

By being a part of the International #ShePaddles movement I hope to empower more women to get onto the water; especially women who look like me - I strongly believe in representation on the water. I also hope to empower women in business and to remind them that if they can shift their mindsets around the sport of paddling, incredible things can happen for them.

Paddling fact: In addition to paddleboarding, I kiteboard, wakeboard, skateboard, surf and snowboard. Paddling has given me the opportunity to enjoy some incredible places. From paddling the clear waters of the Cayman Islands, to the famous Lake Louise in Canada, to teaching certifications on Lake Como in Italy. One of my favourite SUP Yoga poses is the headstand.

 @VitaminSeaCayman / @itskiristen

 Vitamin Sea Cayman

#ShePaddles is a British Canoeing initiative which aims to increase the number of women and girls involved in the paddling community. Ambassadors are selected annually in the UK to represent the #ShePaddles initiative.

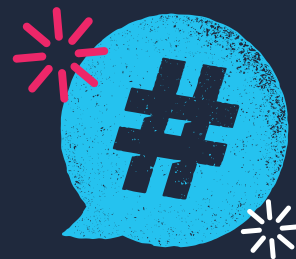

Find out more:
www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/guidance-resources/shepaddles

CAYMAN ISLANDS
GRAND CAYMAN | CAYMAN BRAC | LITTLE CAYMAN

 **SHEPADDLES**
SPREAD THE LOVE!



TOP TIPS from our #SHEPADDLES AMBASSADORS



By Claire Scott



2023 saw the coming together of a new cohort of British Canoeing #ShePaddles Ambassadors, full of exciting ideas and initiatives to continue the great work of the women that came before us.

The goal for #ShePaddles Ambassadors is to bring paddlesports to women and girls who may not have experienced it before and feel comfortable trying something new or for those who may not have had access to paddling in their community until this initiative began.

When we met and started sharing our plans for 2023, we quickly realised we had so many useful and innovative tips and tricks that we put into practise everyday when prepping for our coaching, trips, days out and socials on the water that we wanted to share.

We have compiled these into a selection of tips, tricks, and handy ideas to help your paddling experience.

#ShePaddles is an initiative by British Canoeing which aims to increase the number of women and girls involved in the paddling community. You can find out more about the initiative and join the community here: <https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/guidance-resources/shepaddles>

Dani
Abram's
top tip



You can find
a club near
you **here.**



My top tip to anyone looking for ways to make paddling easier would be to join a club! Not only does this help with finding company and new friendships, which has been the most rewarding thing for me in my own paddling journey, but it can open up a world of free kit! Okay, maybe not totally free - but as good as. Whenever I have been stuck, or wanted to use something, or even fancied trying a whole new boat, my club has my back. From kit, gear, food and car rides - I can sometimes paddle for less than a fiver if I need too.

Saira Is-Haq's top tips

While I've been able to lift a playboat onto my car roof, it's never been that easy for me to lift my sea kayak or racing kayaks onto the roof. I'd recommend using a Drop Down Roof Rack System, it allows you to load your boats from the side and keeps your hands free so you can strap the boat on. The push up system then moves the boat into position on top of the roof allowing complete independence and freedom.

Wearing glasses has always been a pain for my sporting career, but I won't let it stop me. It's even harder with kayaking because the glasses often get wet. I wear contact lenses (and waterproof mascara!) and keep a spare pair in the BA pocket too just in case.

Really important - always put a contact number on your paddle and boat, if you lose your paddle or even the boat after capsizing someone may find it further downstream.



Lucy McQueen-Jones' top tips

I'm a paddle surfer, so all my paddling happens at the beach. Having a van means you can throw all your kit inside instead of putting it up onto roof racks. I know for me, this was something that took a while to perfect. The key items that make changing easier for me are:

- > A trug that's big enough to stand in so that your wet kit goes straight in there
- > A changing robe/ towel, so that you can get ready without dropping your towel and keeps you warm in all weather conditions.
- > Talc so you can put your leggings or jeans back on with ease.

Cathy Miles' top tip

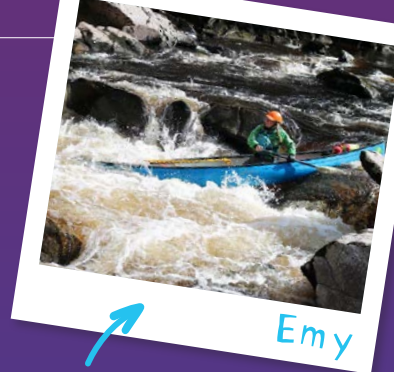
My top tip is a footless dry suit. There are several brands available. I have owned a variety of drysuits all of which came with huge feet and I couldn't get shoes big enough to cope with the excess material and still be confident walking and portaging with my paddleboard. They are similar to a boiler suit as they are quite thin so would need lots of layers underneath. It has the added benefit that I can actually get into it on my own!

Cathy

Emy McLeod's top tips

My tips are all about preparation and how it can make life easier when you get on or off the water.

- > Pack a warm flask and a warm cosy hat. A hot water bottle is great to wrap your clothes in that you want to change into after you get off the water as they will be extra warm.
- > Warm Up! Do a bit of stretching, running about and warming up prior to going on the water
- > Try not to get your feet wet when getting on the board / into the boat at the start of your paddle. It can be tricky at first but if you start with wet cold feet, you'll only think of your wet and cold feet. If paddle boarding, move your knees onto the board then work up to standing up if you're able to. And you are getting into a kayak or canoe, stabilise the boat first and then carefully get in.



Claire Scott's top tips

There are so many great tips already mentioned but a few that I'd add..

- > I've always found getting in and out of a full body wetsuit a bit of a faff. I use neoprene leggings and a separate top. It means when I warm up I can ditch the top and wear a rash vest on warmer days. Also for friends I've paddled with who have limited mobility it makes it easier for them to get into. If you have limited strength or mobility, give it a try
- > I have a great gadget for my car door, it latches to the door lock clip and gives you a step, meaning you can reach the roof for tying straps with ease. It was under £10 from amazon
- > There are some great SUP racks out there that let you clip your boards in reducing the time needed to use straps to secure your boards. Lots of brands now make floating sunglasses, another great tip for summer paddles
- > Having a PFD that has pockets large enough to take your camera and essentials is a must have for me. It saves time opening and closing deck bags while you're on your board. For longer trips, I have colour coded dry bags with a see through panel on each so I don't have to root about in one large bag.



AquaPaddle – MAKING PADDLESPORTS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL



AquaPaddle is a national paddlesports charity created and founded by passionate paddlers who want to bring the benefits of paddling to the whole community.

Through a network of partnerships, AquaPaddle runs paddling sessions for those less fortunate and who would benefit from the positive physical and mental aspects of being out on the water.

How it all started

AquaPaddle was founded in June 2021 by Brett Scillitoe of Dittons Paddle Boarding, with trustees Anthony Wagstaff and Arnold Jager, and a small but dedicated management team of volunteers. This team of inspired paddlers wanted to create an organisation that would increase and improve accessibility and inclusivity of paddlesports by offering free paddle sessions to disadvantaged groups and local communities. Whilst donations and sponsorships would be the basis on which the charity would be financed, additional regular funding was essential, and this is where the idea of 'parkrun on the water' came to the fore, initially known as AquaPaddle (5K). This free 5km timed event started to build the AquaPaddle name and aim to support donations to the charity.

AquaPaddle is a timed social 5 km paddle on a waterway such as a river, canal or sea, with the ability to track the time of individual paddlers who start and complete the route. Whilst always ensuring the safety of paddlers during the event.

On 17th July 2021, the team ran the first ever AquaPaddle with 12 AquaPaddlers on The Thames near Hampton Court Palace. The initial trial was successful, but the timing system needed improvement, and since commercial RFID tags would be too expensive, the team needed to create their own simple timer that could be used by anyone on a mobile phone.

Fortunately, software developer Al Patterson (planetroast.com) came on board and built the AquaPaddle timing system. With these systems in place, and a few more club AquaPaddles, the event was ready for the greater public.

On April 10 2022, upstream from Hampton Court Palace, on the Thames, the new timing system was used on its first AquaPaddle. It was a great success, and this was only the beginning of the adventure.

BlueSpace

AquaPaddle BlueSpace is the name of the free paddle sessions offered to disadvantaged groups, local communities and those in need who could benefit from the physical and mental wellbeing of being out on the water. With the support from partnerships and donations, AquaPaddle can give back to local communities.

In July 2022, AquaPaddle worked with their local delivery partner in Godalming and with Surrey Care Trust who provide learning, training and mentoring to support young people and adults improve their chances in life. A keyworker with eight participants joined the stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) session to teach the group the safety and skills of SUP. It was a fun day of adventure to learn board skills, teamwork and confidence for everyone involved.

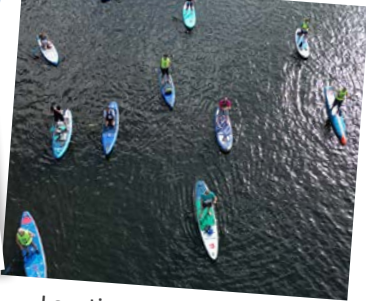
Later that year in August, AquaPaddle provided a BlueSpace session for the Dost Center Charity, a community for young refugees and migrants who have experienced challenges arriving in the UK feeling vulnerable and isolated. Most of the young people on the session had bad experiences on or near water on their journey to the UK and so the purpose of the session was to give them back confidence and calmness about being near water. The group learned water safety and SUP skills on the river Wey in Surrey surrounded by the idyllic countryside. BlueSpace is a major focus for 2023 with some funding already secured from the Active Thames Fund to provide BlueSpace sessions in the Port of London Authority (PLA) area.

Location:
Hampton-Molesey





Location: Swansea



Location: Hampton-Molesey

AquaPaddle – The Event

As the free, timed 5km event from the Molesey riverbank on the Thames on alternating Sunday mornings became popular, other paddle clubs were starting to talk about AquaPaddle and how they could get involved.

Elite SUP racer and coach Emily King became AquaPaddle's first patron and set up AquaPaddle Swansea. Soon, Blue Therapy Active in Southend and Paddleboard Maidenhead began regular AquaPaddle events bringing more people from new areas to this community.

The growth continues nationally with AquaPaddles now taking place in over ten locations across the country and there are many more on the way in 2023. With the network in place, AquaPaddle will be able to deliver more free paddle sessions to those who do not have access to paddlesports through the BlueSpace sessions.

British Canoeing is supporting AquaPaddle events. It is helping to grow the number of locations for people to take part through its affiliated clubs and other organisations, supplying a venue support package including funding safety equipment, and signposting paddlers to take part.

AquaPaddles are now taking place across England and Wales. Meeting mainly on Sunday mornings, the free, timed social paddle provides an opportunity for those who want to improve their fitness and wellbeing, meet other like-minded paddlers and have fun.

AquaPaddle tourism has also started with AquaPaddlers, travelling to take part in other events across the country.

Supporting AquaPaddle


Over the next year AquaPaddle will be launching different programmes to raise money and awareness of the benefits of being out on the water. We will be signing up Delivery Partners across the country to help provide the BlueSpace sessions. The Partners will need to be established paddle clubs or paddle businesses, with experienced instructors and coaches. They will also need to be trained or experienced in working with vulnerable people.

If you want to get involved and run your own AquaPaddle, you need to be a Paddle Leader or Instructor and have a group of willing volunteers, where possible, trained in Water Rescue, to help you. Ideally you will be part of a paddle club (kayak, canoe, or SUP).

AquaPaddle is looking for enthusiastic people to join their mission of making a difference in the community! They need both financial and equipment support, as well as long-term partners. It's an amazing opportunity to help create meaningful change - join now and be part of something special!

If you are part of a paddle club, and you would like your organisation to become an AquaPaddle Delivery Partner, we would like to hear from you!

Learn more about AquaPaddle at

 www.aquapaddle.org
or contact paddle@aquapaddle.org



Location: Southend



Information on
venues and dates
can be found at
[aquapaddle.org/
upcoming-paddles](http://aquapaddle.org/upcoming-paddles)

Location: Maidenhead

HOW DO YOU GET INTO SURF KAYAKING?



We hear from Simon Hammond, Chair of the English Surf Committee, about how he started Surf Kayaking and how you can get involved in the exciting discipline of Surf Kayaking.

The UK has a great history of surf kayaking. Teams from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland regularly compete with tremendous success at world level. But for most surf kayakers, it's simply the pleasure of riding waves that draws them into this sport. There are plenty of waves, big and small to suit everyone.

There are two main starting points to get into Surf Kayaking. You can learn to surf kayak as you start to build your basic kayaking skills, or more commonly, kayakers who have already developed their paddling skills, progress to surf to develop techniques and knowledge.

Unless you are lucky enough to live near a surfing beach, it's likely you started paddling through a different discipline like flatwater, whitewater, SUP or racing. So even if you only get the chance to go surf kayaking once or twice a year, it doesn't matter. What matters is that you give this amazing sport a go!

We live on an island with great surfing beaches around our coast and most of the craft we use for general paddling can also be used to catch waves and feel the exhilaration of surfing across them.

It doesn't take much to get started. Here are a few tips to get you safely out on the waves.

If you are a complete beginner...

Let's get straight to the point. As a novice kayaker in the surf, this includes the smallest white water waves, you're going to capsize a lot. It's the equivalent challenge of trying to teach your child how to ride a bike by taking them to a steep hillside for their first lesson! Now it's not impossible but you've got to have patience, determination and good airbags. As well as the willingness to capsize and empty your kayak over and over again.



This is exactly how I started, with a group of friends, some basic kit and a crazy drive to figure it all out. What we really needed was a coach who could look at what we were doing and help us to avoid our mistakes. If you are an absolute beginner, a coach can help you make quicker progress. Looking back, our biggest mistake was not being taught how to roll. A few recommendations:

- 1** If you haven't got a solid roll, spend some time surfing sit-on-top craft and stable wave skis. You'll spend much more time in your surfing session actually riding waves rather than capsizing and emptying out.
- 2** When you have a good feel for paddling, learn how to roll. Get into a good fitting kayak and work with a coach to develop a solid roll. This might take a few sessions and is most commonly done in a warm swimming pool environment but there is nothing stopping you from learning this technique in the sea. A diving mask can help to stop your sinuses filling up with water.
- 3** Use a kayak that has some surfing features. A surf kayak should be a good fit for balance and manoeuvring, flat bottom and edgy, not too much volume and as long as possible. There are plenty of old plastic kayaks that make good surfing kayaks and lots of modern play boats and river running boats that have good surfing features.
- 4** Spend lots of time playing close to shore in the white water waves, developing a strong upright body position in the boat with engagement through your core and connection down into the kayak with your thighs and feet. Get used to being sideways to the waves and sideslipping towards the beach.

Why not get some training with the BCAB Surf Kayak Award. This award will give you the confidence to paddle in gentle surf with sloping and spilling waves with proficient skills. You will learn how to select a suitable and safe location on which to surf.

If you've already developed your kayaking skills...

A lot of kayakers that try surf kayaking have already developed their skills elsewhere. The trick here is to make the most of the environment and to surf in a safe and responsible way. A few things to consider:

- 1 Bigger isn't better and survival surfing scares everyone! Stay in control and develop your surfing skills progressively.
- 2 Find a vantage point and spend some time looking at how the surf is breaking and how others are surfing. Can you spot any predictable patterns both in terms of breaking waves and dangers such as rips?
- 3 Talk to lifeguards and other surfers, they will have useful information that can help with your own decision making. Websites can give you loads of information on where to surf and together with a tide table, you'll be able to plan your sessions to give you the best conditions.
- 4 Forget about surfing towards the beach, it's all about progress across the wave. Techniques such as bottom turns, top turns and cutbacks are the basis of sound surfing. Look at Youtube footage to understand the principles of these techniques.
- 5 Come and try out a surf kayaking competition. These events are friendly and welcome all ability levels.

Develop your skills with the BCAB Progressive Surf Kayak Award. You will develop your surfing skills and you will be able to better assess the surf zones.

If you can already Surf Kayak...

There are plenty of surf kayakers all around the country that have been playing with this sport on and off for years. They might be solo paddlers or members of a club but their skills and knowledge are invaluable to the next generation. We need you. Use your own love of this sport to encourage others into it. You might even benefit from the following:


- 1 Go on a surf kayak leader refresher or training weekend. You'll love it, you'll come away with a clear understanding of how to run a safe surfing trip and how to help your enthusiastic friends to progress.
- 2 Work alongside another surf kayak coach and shadow them at work. You'll pick up loads of good tips and tricks that will help you to organise your own surf kayaking sessions.
- 3 Put yourself forward to organise the next club surf trip. Do your research about where you'd like to go and liaise with a surf kayaking coach when you get there.

Why not become a Surf Kayak Leader or Surf Kayak Coach to support the development of others skills. The Surf Kayak Leader is open to anyone with experience of paddling in moderate surf conditions.

 paddlesuptraining.com/courses/surf-kayak-leader

So what are you waiting for? This is a great sport and one that our elite paddlers are winning world titles in. It's not complicated and can easily be part of your bigger paddling experiences. Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, South Wales, Northumberland, the Scottish north coast and the Irish west coast are all great venues, but wherever you are, the waves aren't that far away.

For more information contact any British Canoeing Awarding Body Surf Kayaking Coach via the Paddles Up Training website.

 Find out more:
paddlesuptraining.com/courses/surf-kayak-award

 The Surf Kayak Coach is designed to support you to coach paddlers who want to gain/improve their surf kayaking skills.
paddlesuptraining.com/courses/surf-kayak-coach



SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF

spring



Paddlers have long since felt the benefits of being on the water, especially when it comes to nature and quietly witnessing seasonal changes.

While spring is now upon us and day and night are about the same length, you may have noticed plenty of signs of the season in the past few months.

Birdsong, buds on trees and early spring flowers, like snowdrops, started popping up on the riverbanks in January.

Conservationist, journalist and author Simon Barnes is a keen paddler and ventures out along the River Chet, in the Norfolk Broads, all year round.

Before he started paddling he was a dedicated horseman, but his “life changed” after difficulties with a horse. Taking to a kayak “sublimated an urge to ride” and began a new more tranquil pastime, said Simon.



“One of the great joys of paddling is that it doesn’t make a din and so you’re just moving along easily and in no hurry.”

His first paddle of 2023 was on 2nd January when he spotted buds on the willow and alder trees, fresh nettle growth and ground ivy, along with the sounds of birds preparing to mate.

“The tendency is to think that spring is something that happens in March or April, on that day when suddenly you take your jacket off and wear it on your thumb, or go and drink outside the pub,” he said, speaking in January.

“But right now the ash tree in front of me has got bugs on it. There’s birdsong already... I heard a drumming great spotted woodpecker. Marsh harriers are interested.. just raising an eyebrow at each other.”

Simon’s book *Rewild Yourself*, is a guide to making ‘hidden wildlife appear before your eyes’. Chapter 19 is titled *How to turn into a swan*, a feat of transmutation performed simply by using the Canadian canoe.

“It’s very much keeping your ears open for birdsong as you pass... you’ll hear the song of great tits which is the most obvious one... [They call] ‘teacher teacher teacher’”

In February, you would have probably heard song thrushes while paddling your local waterway, or during a walk.

“[Thrushes] give a repeating phrase... two or three times,” he said. “[They will] think about it and then try another one. That’s lots of different variations of phrases, but always, always a repetition.”

In the UK, migrant species like swifts and cuckoos arrive in the spring. Just before they appear, Simon said you should take delight in the “laidback fluting whistle” of our native blackbirds.



Of course, mallard ducks are the likeliest species you will spot during a paddle. As we enter March you will see them flying in pairs, with the female at the front. Deeper into spring, another male may join.

However, according to Simon, he is not an “interloper”.

“He’s chasing the two of them off because they’ve been trespassing on the water that he has annexed for himself and his own partner.

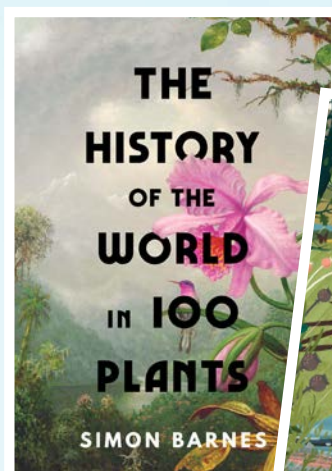
“It’s a very restless thing going on.”

Ultimately, whether or not you’re there to spot wildlife, by paddling along a river you are part of the “living process”, said Simon.

“You’re there [on the water] because it’s a way of looking and participating in the landscape.

“There’s a pleasure in moving the boat and getting a real value for each stroke.

“You just seem to have that period of weightlessness. And that’s one of the great pleasures.”



Simon Barnes is the author of the bestselling **Bad Birdwatcher** trilogy, **Rewild Yourself**, and **The History of the World in 100 Plants**



**Clear Access
Clear Waters**

Clear Access, Clear Waters news

The Clear Access, Clear Waters campaign team was buoyed by a recent announcement by the Labour party.

Shadow environment secretary Jim McMahon said it was a “scandal” that only 4% of waterways allow people the right to swim or paddle.

He said the Labour party would pass a right to roam act if it comes to power.

It followed the High Court ruling against wild camping on Dartmoor. A decision that led to an outpouring of anger from the public.

The decision threw the question of our ‘freedom to roam’ back into the spotlight.

Over 2,000 people turned up on Dartmoor to protest at what they saw as an erosion of access rights.

Ben Seal, British Canoeing’s head of access & environment, felt the Dartmoor decision was a step backwards in terms of freedom to explore.

However, he said there is optimism going forwards following Labour’s announcement.

“Maybe we are just starting to see the embers of our fire beginning to glow just a little bit brighter,” he said.

“The coalition of support is widening and the case for change is becoming increasingly more compelling.” We will keep you posted with any future developments.

Finally, please remember the Big Paddle Cleanup is happening between 27 May and 11 June.

2023



**Big Paddle
Cleanup 2023**

27 May – 11 June 2023



Find out how
you can help:
[#bigpaddlecleanup](#)
[clearaccessclearwaters.org.uk/](#)
[bigpaddlecleanup](#)

WE ARE PROUD TO BE OFFICIAL PARTNERS OF BRITISH CANOEING'S BIG PADDLE CLEANUP

"As a partner, we wanted to be involved in one of British Canoeing's initiatives that would really make a difference, so when we got talking about the Clear Water, Clear Access Campaign and specifically the The Big Paddle Cleanup, it fell into place.

We wanted to help highlight the importance of keeping our waterways clear and clean, to encourage more people to take part and to recognise volunteers by way of a monthly champion award, and who better to do it with than Chantelle Grundy (Access and Environment Lead) and Jake Crone (Environment Project Officer).

The Lancaster Canal is close to me and I needed a good excuse to get into the water this year, so we met at Owd Nells Canalside Tavern in Bilsborrow, which has excellent and easy access to the water. We had already had our clean up kit delivered to us, so once the kayak was off the roof and the paddleboard inflated, we were ready to go. Cath and Jake walked along the bank and Chantelle and I were on the water. I must say, having walked the dogs on part of this stretch a few weeks ago, I didn't think we would find much litter, as it seemed quite clean, but how wrong I was. On the water, we picked out so many bottles, cans, which were generally lodged in between the canal boats or stuck in the reeds and roots.

We were all stopped several times by walkers who were thanking us for clearing up and it was a pleasure hearing Chantelle and Jake talk to them so passionately about the whole clean up campaign.

We covered a stretch of water just over a mile long and filled 4 bags in the 90 minutes we were out. Our haul for the day, which as well as all the bottles and cans, included a pair of size 13 trainers, a flip flop, slider, garden chair, festoon lights and a kettle. We separated it all out and then took to the local recycle centre and kept the sacks to be reused after washing.

I must say, the feeling of reward you get from volunteering and making such a difference to the environment in which we paddle is immense. This is how we came up with the idea to have a monthly CleanUp Champion award to help put a spotlight on individuals and groups that go out and give up their time to keep our waters clear."

Peter Gowans - UK Country Manager

If you'd like to get involved with The Big Paddle Cleanup visit -

clearaccessclearwaters.org.uk/bigpaddlecleanup



New horizons.

The Pursuit collection.

Featuring brand new styles designed and developed for women.



Give your paddling wardrobe an instant update with the newest additions to our Pursuit collection. The Women's Pursuit Neoprene Jacket and Women's Pursuit Neoprene Leggings are made from 1.5mm neoprene and offer comfort and flexibility, allowing you to layer up or down as the seasons change.

British Canoeing members get 15% OFF Gill products.

Shop now at gb.gillmarine.com



Doing it for the girls!

The Pursuit collection.

Featuring brand new styles designed and developed for women.

Girls drop out of sports at 1.5x the rate that boys do by age 14. By age 17, more than half of girls will quit playing sports altogether.

Feeling self-conscious is one of the reasons cited by women for dropping out of sport at an early age. As they get older this is often compounded further and reasons such as fear of judgment, lacking confidence and not having enough time are most commonly associated with women not being as active as men.

However, in recent years, initiatives by Sport England (This Girl Can) and British Canoeing (#ShePaddles) have helped to encourage more women to take the plunge and take up some form of exercise. Launched in 2018, #ShePaddles is a British Canoeing initiative which aims to readdress the balance between men and women in sport and improve the opportunities for women and girls in paddlesport by supporting clubs to attract, retain and increase participation.

Research conducted prior to the launch of the #ShePaddles initiative cited fears around appearance as one of the main barriers to women participation. Since the programme launched Gill have been working closely with the #ShePaddles ambassadors to understand exactly what they want from their kit to hopefully break down this barrier to participation.

For the new Women's Pursuit Neoprene Jacket and Women's Pursuit Neoprene Legging, Gill worked alongside former #ShePaddles ambassador and current Gill ambassador India Pearson. India SUPs and also does SUPYoga. She was looking for products that were versatile and flexible, both in how she wore them and the movements they allowed her to do while practicing SUPYoga.

In recent years Gill have increased their range of female specific styles and continue to do so for future collections. Later this year, they will be releasing their biggest range to date of female specific styles and colours. Here are their top female picks, suitable for a range of water-based activities.



1.



2.



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3.



4.



5.



1. Women's Pursuit Neoprene Jacket - £70

The Women's Pursuit Neoprene Jacket is made from 1.5mm Neoprene and features a handy zip down the middle. Designed and engineered specifically for women, it can be worn in a variety of ways. In warmer months wear over a swimsuit or bikini or when the temperature drops wear over a thermal base layer and pair with the Women's Pursuit Neoprene Legging. (Sizes 8-18)

2. Women's Pursuit Neoprene Legging - £70

The Women's Pursuit Neoprene Legging is made from 1.5mm Neoprene and features a deep waistband with a handy rear pocket. Like the Women's Pursuit Neoprene Jacket it can be worn in a variety of ways. In warmer months pair with a swimsuit or bikini or when the temperature drops wear with thermal base layers and pair with the Women's Pursuit Neoprene Jacket. (Sizes 8-18)

3. Women's Pursuit Shorty - £70

The Pursuit Shorty is ideal for warmer conditions, whilst still providing thermal protection without the heavy bulk of long sleeves and legs. The suit has an ergonomic fit for ease of movement and long back zip puller to assist in getting in and out of. (Sizes 8-18)

4. Women's Dynamic Long Jane - £89


The Dynamic Long Jane is a versatile, adaptable and insulating suit designed and engineered to perform with you in the water. Using a 4-way stretch fabric and a front zip for easy access, the 3mm Neoprene offers a protective and comfortable fit. (Sizes 8-16)

4. Dry Cylinder Bag 25L - £25

Keep your gear and valuables safe and dry in this 25-litre upright holdall, constructed with PVC tarpaulin for full waterproofing. A practical, fold-down, watertight seal means that no water will come into contact with the items you want to keep dry and protected.

LEARNING TO WHITE WATER KAYAK WITH A DISABILITY



Ahead of International Wheelchair Day we caught up with Chris Nadollek, a whitewater paddler and wheelchair user from Nottingham who has been paddling at  Holme Pierrepont Canoe Club since 2021.

Chris, club coach Andy Steel, and club Chair Dawn Scott, share with us his journey with the club and how the club works to make paddling accessible to people with disabilities.

At the National Watersport Centre in Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham, resides the whitewater course that **Holme Pierrepont Canoe Club (HPPCC)** calls home. Every Saturday, the club takes to the water, as well as offering recreational and open sessions, touring trips and slalom training. Chris Nadollek was one of many members joining the club on a crisp Saturday morning when we visited the club.




Read more:
Paddler Spotlight:
Learning to
whitewater kayak
with a disability

The community and enjoyment of being on the water is at the heart of what makes the club, even with the competitive opportunities they provide. "It's very much about people's mental well being as much as anything else, just coming together and getting out into the outdoors paddling with a group of friends", says Dawn Scott, the club's Chair.



Chris originally started his paddling journey after his daughter encouraged him to have a go, and since joining the club, Chris' paddling confidence has gone from strength to strength. Both Chris and the club have had a steep learning curve in learning how Chris' disability impacts on his paddling, and how they can best support him to get out on the water: "The club's great, everybody is so friendly, everybody wants to help each other. It's more like a family", he explains.

The club welcomes people of all ages, levels of experience and abilities, and provides a range of different paddling opportunities. This means taking the time to listen to individual needs and understand what it is new paddlers want to get out of their experience on the water. Dawn explains: "Do you want to go out on a stand up paddleboard, do you want to get in an open canoe, do you want to go whitewater kayaking, do you want to do touring trips? What is it you want to do and how can we help you to get to that point? And that's about finding individual solutions."

Andy Steel is one of the club's coaches, and tells us that supporting Chris to develop his kayaking skills has been largely trial and error, making lots of small changes to make a big difference, including increased bank safety support, providing an extra kayaker on the water with Chris, and reducing the size of the groups Andy works with alongside Chris to give him the time to build his confidence with new skills. "It's just a lot of little things, but it comes from dialogue - to me it's the same process of coaching anybody. British Canoeing's coaching philosophy and the club's philosophy is making someone an independent paddler", says Andy. Chris credits much of his ability to paddle to Andy, telling us: "He's gone away, he's done his homework ... from the day I said I wanted to do this he's bent over backwards to enable me to do it."



We just need to work with people and look into what they can do and then capitalise on that, and work out how we can support them to achieve what they've come down to do. It's all about supporting people to do the sport we love.

— Dawn Scott, Holme Pierrepont Canoe Club Chair

To find a club near you, including those that support disabled paddle, use our **club finder tool**. Here you'll find clubs local to you and details of how to get in touch.



Regardless of his positive experiences, physical access is still the biggest barrier to Chris getting on the water, even at the course at Holme Pierrepont. "I'm lucky because I've got a team behind me that will get me to the water. If I didn't have them, I wouldn't be able to do this." Once Chris reaches the bottom of the whitewater course, he has to rely on other paddlers on the course with him to carry him back up, and he says this experience isn't uncommon, and has been similar when visiting other parts of the country.

Nonetheless, Chris tells us he's enjoying his paddling more than ever, taking harder lines on the course, and challenging himself as time goes on. He encourages any paddlers with a disability thinking about paddling to give it a go, as everyone's "here to help".

Thank you to Chris for sharing his story with us. We'd love to hear all about your paddling journey, experiences and the great work happening in the

**YOU COULD BE OUR NEXT
PADDLER SPOTLIGHT FEATURE!**



Find out more about the initiative **here** and share your stories and photos with us via our form **here**



PERFORMANCE PREVIEW

The road to Paris starts here!

2023 is set to be an action-packed season for Canoe Sprint, Canoe Slalom and Paracanoe, as the British teams prepare to take on over 15 international competitions in the next six months, some of which feature those all important qualifications for the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games next year.

The eagerly anticipated 2023 Canoe Slalom World Championships at Lee Valley White Water Centre in September and the 2023 Canoe Sprint and Paracanoe World Championships in Duisburg in August both provide Britain's international paddlers with the first opportunities to secure boat quota spots for their nation at the 2024 Games in Paris.

But before then, those hard yards put in during the gruelling winter months will be called upon this April, as the athletes look to secure their berth on their respective international teams for the upcoming year.

Canoe Slalom and Kayak Cross Selection - Lee Valley White Water Centre

8-10 April 2023

Canoe Slalom and Kayak Cross is first up on the event calendar, as white water paddlers from across Great Britain descend on Lee Valley White Water Centre for three days of action, looking to secure their place for the upcoming World Cup series, a European Games in Krakow, and the small matter of a home World Championships right on the doorstep at Lee Valley in September.

There will also be places on offer for the junior and U23 competitions, with the Junior and U23 World Championships in Krakow the highlight of the calendar in August.

Paddlers will have five runs on the Olympic course at Lee Valley, with points awarded for where they finish in the table for each run. Their best three points scores will be combined to give their overall selection ranking score.

Kayak Cross will see paddlers post two timed runs down the course, with the best time counting towards selection.

All the stars of slalom will be on show, with Tokyo Olympic silver medallist Mallory Franklin, and Rio 2016 Olympic Champion Joe Clarke MBE to name a few.

The event is completely free to attend so make sure you head down to Lee Valley over the three days to see the best slalom paddlers in Britain battle it out.





Canoe Sprint and Paracanoe Selection - National Water Sports Centre, Nottingham 15-16 April 2023

Just one week later, Holme Pierrepont in Nottingham will see canoe sprint clubs from across the country head to the regatta lake at the National Water Sports Centre for the first national regatta of the season.

Two days of competitive racing await as senior athletes as well as our world-leading paracanoe programme battle it out for selection to the teams looking to head to the early season World Cups in May.

Coming into the season off the back of a record-equalling ten medals at the World Championships in 2022, Britain's paracanoe squad will all go head to head to get their early spot on the international team for the World Cup in Szeged. With a whole host of Paralympic and World medallists battling it out, it's not to be missed.

Britain's best canoe sprint athletes will also be battling it out as they look to book their place in the World Cup Pool, which could gain them access to both the World Cup in Szeged, as well as a following World Cup in Poznan. Off the back of an impressive European Championships in Munich last summer, the top paddlers will be looking to ensure they're putting on the British race vest once again this summer.

Following the two international regattas, athletes then return back for a further selection regattas in June and July to secure their places at the 2023 World Championships where they can qualify Olympic and Paralympic places for Britain at the 2024 Paris Games, as well as a third World Cup being hosted at the Olympic venue in Paris.

2023 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships - Lee Valley White Water Centre 19-24 September 2023


The 2023 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships is coming to the UK at the iconic Lee Valley White Water Centre in Waltham Cross from 19-24 September 2023.

Built for the London 2012 Olympic Games, Lee Valley White Water Centre is renowned across the globe as one of the best white water courses in the world and next year it will play host to around 300 of the world's best athletes from across 50 countries as they battle it out across a week of high octane competition.

Join us and experience the thrill of the action as GB's top stars including Olympic medallists Mallory Franklin and Joe Clarke MBE, take on the best in the world on home turf, to compete for the coveted world title - and British quota places for the Paris 2024 Olympics too.

Keep an eye out as tickets will go on general sale this spring!

Lee Valley last hosted an international competition in 2019 when the ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup came to London, with Britain winning a grand total of seven medals over the three day event - GB's best ever result at a World Cup.

For more information about the 2023 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships,  **visit the event website here.**

Make sure you keep an eye on the British Canoeing channels for further information about the selection races as well all the World Class Programme international competitions throughout the year.



Upcoming Events Calendar

Performance Events

- APR 1-2** **1st-2nd April**
Nottingham
 British Open Sprint Race & Selection
- APR 8-10** **8th-10th April**
Lee Valley
 Canoe Slalom Selections Series
- APR 15-16** **15th-16th April**
Nottingham
 Canoe Sprint and Paracanoe World Cup Team Selection Regatta
- MAY 7** **7th May**
Peterborough
 British Marathon Short Course National Championships
- JUN 3-4** **3rd-4th June**
Nottingham
 Paracanoe, U23 & Junior National Championships
 SUP National Championships

- JUL 1-3** **1st-3rd July**
Nottingham
 Sprint National Championships
- JUL 22-23** **22nd-23rd July**
Norwich
 British Marathon National Championships
- AUG 26-27** **19th-24th September**
Nottingham
 Freestyle European Open & Club Championships
 Canoe Polo National Championships
- SEPT 2-3** **2nd-3rd September**
Nottingham
 MacGregor Regatta
- SEPT 19-24** **19th-24th September**
Lee Valley
 2023 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships
- SEPT 25-29** **25th-29th September**
Wales
 British Open Surf Kayak

Recreational Events

- APR 1-2** **1st-2nd April**
Lincoln
 #ShePaddles Networking meet-up
- MAY 19-21** **19th-21st May**
Aviemore
 Scottish Women's Paddle Symposium #ShePaddles
- JUN 10-11** **10th-11th June**
Bala
 #ShePaddles Cymru White Water Festival
- JUN 4** **4th June**
London
 Paddling with Pride
- JUN 23-25** **23rd-25th**
Colchester
 #ShePaddles Weekender
- JUL 15-16** **15th-16th July**
Ullswater, Lake District
 EID Paddle
- JUL 22/23** **22nd/23rd July**
Birmingham
 Paddling with Pride
- SEPT 23** **23rd September**
Lee Valley
 #ShePaddles Conference

Clear Access, Clear Waters Events

- MAY 16-22** **16th-22nd May**
UK
 Invasive Non Native Species weeks
- MAY 27** **27th May-11th June**
UK
 The Big Paddle Cleanup

