

December Volunteer Focus

Across the country, volunteers are making outstanding commitments to Paddlesport. Without the coaches, officials, committee members, administrators and helpers the sport could not exist as it does today. A special thanks goes to all volunteers and this section will provide the opportunity for clubs, centres and committees to say a special thanks to their volunteers.

High Praise for Star Parent

Clubs and centres should sing praise to the paddlers themselves for bringing in some of the most valuable supporters in the sport – the parents, or otherwise known as the taxi drivers; club fans and backbone to the club. Many parents are lured into volunteering as a result of the many cold and dark nights of training sessions spent watching their loved ones training and learning to paddle. How better to spend that time, but to keep warm and busy by volunteering to help out your local club?

For many clubs, the parents provide invaluable help through the time they volunteer to the club while their 'little ones' are training. One volunteer who did just that was Brian Kelly and Wokingham Canoe Club are certainly thankful to his son Anthony for joining the club.

Brian introduced Paddlesport to the family during his time working for the RAF in Malta during the seventies. With his children, Brian explored the coasts of Malta which sparked Anthony's desire to join his club when he was older. "When he was out training I was loitering about feeling very bored so started doing general tidying up to keep my mind occupied, "explains Brian.

The club's treasurer, Osmund Siverston, praises Brian highly on behalf of Wokingham Canoe Club: "Brian fixes things that tend to get overlooked or ignored in a communal setting – I often bump into him wandering off, tools in hand, on another DIY mission. He might fix a shower, or clean off the rust and repaint an old set of V bars for the club, or he might just decide to give the club boats a good de-scale and spring clean. He brings seedlings to the club and spends time planting and nurturing pot plants and flowers around the place – I've never seen anyone else care about the little things like that! He is always the first to volunteer to take charge of the car park at our club events, but I've also seen him looking after parking at the Sprint Regatta at Dorney this year and doing the same at some other clubs race's with the humble reason being 'I just thought I'd see if I could help them'".

After gaining some tips and advice for himself, Brian mastered his own skills in a canoe to develop his accomplished 'paddling in a circle' to straight line paddling and true to his nature, Brian looked at other opportunities where he could help out the club: "I decided to take up coaching when youngsters used to arrive at the club with no coaches available and went away looking dejected. After retiring in 2004, I now have more free time to do general chores at the Centre and coach the Junior Squad."

Brian's coaching role has grown to helping parents transport boats to events as well as arranging and running evening training and weekend sessions for the young members of the club. His motivation to provide enjoyable sessions means Brian has to work hard during the gloomy cold winter nights to ensure indoor circuits or paddling machine sessions are fun.

Brian's efforts don't go unmissed by Wokingham Canoe Club as Siverston says: "Brian is a very decent person and a real gentleman with a lovely sense of humour, always ready to greet you with a smile and a quick witted comment. Every club needs a Brian if they are to develop and succeed!"

Many thanks to all the volunteers in Paddlesport. Let Canoe England know about volunteers in your area for the chance for them to be recognised in Canoe Focus and receive a special gift of thanks. Email volunteers@bcu.org.uk or write to the Volunteer Coordinator, British Canoe Union, 18 Market Place, Bingham, Nottingham NG13 8AP.