

Drumchapel and Clydebank Kayak Club – A Brief History

There had been a strong history of kayaking and canoeing in the Clydebank area from the Second World War onwards where the workers at the various shipyards would take off for a weekend's voyaging often in home-built boats made from wood frames and canvas. There was a Clydebank Canoe Club however by the late 70's, early 80's this club had ceased to exist as a going concern.

In 1987 there were two groups operating in the local area, both of which were tasked with providing development opportunities for local people through outdoor sports. In Drumchapel, the Instructors from the Drumchapel Adventure Group (DRAG) were teaching kayaking and this was being mirrored by events in Clydebank where a region-sponsored Outdoor Education Initiative (OEI) was also using kayaking as a development medium. Instructors from both organisations soon realised that a local club was required to allow their students to develop their kayaking.

During 1987 a joint initiative was established between these two groups and the Drumchapel & Clydebank Kayak Club was born. The club used the Drumchapel Swimming Pool as a base for pool sessions and boats were borrowed from OEI and DRAG for outdoor trips. Initially professional instructors provided instruction but as the level of skill held by members increased members themselves entered the BCU Coaching Scheme, obtained awards and so became responsible for the coaching of others within the club, setting a trend that has continued to the present day.

I first joined the club in the winter of 1987 and my early memories of the club during that time involved learning to roll in the pool at Drumchapel Baths and then successfully rolling outside for the first time after a capsized on the wee stopper on the River Teith.

The club started off as a mainly river and surf type club with only a little sea paddling taking place. Looking back at old copies of newsletters, you can see that in April 1995 there was a club trip to Granton-on-Spey when 16 paddlers were out on the River Findhorn. However there was still some sea paddling going on as on 13th May 1995 Robin Lloyd-Jones (Yes, he of *Argonauts of the Western Isles* fame) was running a sea paddling trip starting off at Helensburgh.

By 1995 the club had moved to the school pool at Drumchapel High School. We stayed there until 2001 when this pool was demolished and we then moved to the school pool at Cleveden Secondary. This was far from ideal and the club improved greatly when in 2003 we moved to our current location at the Playdrome in Clydebank.

Over the years the focus of the club has changed with a greater emphasis on the purchase of our own equipment, through grants awarded by the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the Lotteries Grants for small Groups schemes. We have also obtained our own storage container and sets of equipment so that we can outfit beginners. There is a lot more sea paddling taking place, but still a fair amount of river paddling ongoing as well. Open canoes have provided a new aspect to the club's activities and we still try to organise surf trips on a regular basis throughout the year.

One of the highlights during the club's existence included a river paddling trip to the French alps in the summer of 1998. Unfortunately I missed out on this one despite having done most of the planning due to the eminent arrival of my oldest child....bad planning you might say! However I was there in spirit if not in body as my fellow paddlers took some life size photographs of me with them and made sure to have their photos taken at some of the classic rivers and rapids with me included in paper form!

During the 90's the club also had a successful canoe polo team. We were SCA canoe polo div 3 champions in the 1997-98 season and in 2000 were the div 2 champions. We then played in Division 1 for several years and even ran a Canoe Polo session at Easterhouse pool. However, this has fallen by the wayside in recent years but the potential still exist for its resurrection as we have lots of new youth members whose paddling may benefit from taking part in this discipline.

Other highlights have included the hundreds (it must be by now) of weekend sea trips paddling stretches of the coast and visiting islands and even paddling on the coast of Norway. There have surf trips, river tours and all manner of recreational canoeing events such as the annual mince pie paddle and the clean-up days which have benefitted the environment of some of the islands in Loch Lomond.

Over the years there has always been a hard core of people who have kept the club running and have worked on the committee behind the scenes. Without their blood, sweat and tears the club would have folded a long time ago. I'll finish this short history by thanking them for their efforts and with a gentle reminder to everyone that a club doesn't run on its own. It's taken a lot of work over the years from a number of people to keep things going and it will take effort in the future. The club is nothing more than the sum total of its members and you should think about what you as a club member can contribute towards the next decade of the club's history.

The following have all held posts on the club's committee at one time or another:-

Chris Simmonds Chairperson Late 80's, early 90's
Margaret Downie Chairperson Late 80's, early 90's
John Baraclough Chairperson 1993 -'95
Derek Blair Treasurer 1991 - 2004
Sandy Johnston Secretary 1991 -'96 and Chairperson 1997 - 2000
Maggie Johnstone Chairperson 1996-97
Graham Swanson Secretary 1997 - 2002
Rab Burns Chairperson 2000 - 2008
Ron Downie Secretary 2002 onwards
Donald Smith Treasurer 2004 onwards
Colin Adam 2008 onwards

There were other people who served on the committee at various times and I must apologise for leaving them out. I've just listed the holders of the main posts and hope that this will suffice. If I have the dates wrong for some of the above posts I'm sure you will let me know.

That's my version of the last 20 odd years, now let's look forward to a club that's going from strength to strength and look forwards to see what the next 20 years will bring.

Sandy