



Drumchapel and Clydebank Kayak Club – A Brief History (updated 2024)

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 providing 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. Towards the end of 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, boats were purchased and members themselves entered the BCU Coaching Scheme. Awards were obtained and club members became responsible for the coaching of others within the club, setting a trend that has continued to the present day. My early memories of the club during the winter of '87 involve learning to roll in the pool at Drumchapel Baths and then successfully rolling outside for the first time after a capsize on the wee stopper on the River Teith.

The club started off as a mainly 'river and surf' type club with not a lot of sea paddling going on. 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 the club moved to the very small school pool at Cleveden Secondary and then in 2003 we moved to the Playdrome in Clydebank. This led to an expansion of the club's membership and activities. A pool container for boat storage was obtained and situated outside the pool. A lot of the



older members will have memories of carrying boats before and after each pool session, braving the cold as we walked round the outside of the Playdrome with a stack of boats on the trolley!

When West Dumbartonshire Leisure determined that the Playdrome was not fit for purpose we managed to get involved in the planning stage and secured space within the new Clydebank Leisure Centre for our pool boat storage. What a difference this has made to pool sessions with no need to spend half an hour lugging boats about before and after each session.

Over the years we have purchased and obtained a lot of our own equipment, often 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 containers and sets of equipment so that we can outfit beginners.

There is still a lot of sea paddling taking place, but plenty of rivers as well, with the odd foreign trip thrown in for good measure. Club paddlers have travelled to and paddled in such diverse places as France, Slovenia, Finland, Norway, Elba, Vietnam, Patagonia, Uganda, USA and Costa Rica. White water kayaking or sea kayaking has been the focus of these foreign trips but there have also been a number of club open canoe trips much closer to home with rivers paddled include the Spey, Tweed and Dee.

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.

Paddleboarding became a new sport for the club when 4 paddleboards were purchased during 2018.

Club highlights have included the hundreds (it must be by now) of weekend (and longer) sea trips, paddling stretches of the coast and visiting various Scottish islands including St Kilda, the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland. There have also been trips to Machrihanish and other locations to partake of the surf and there have river trips all over the UK.

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 will finish this short history by thanking them for their efforts and with a gentle reminder to everyone that a club does not run on its own. It has taken a lot of work over the years to keep things going and it will take further effort to carry on the work 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 thirty-four years of the club's history.



My thanks to anyone who has been involved in the running of the club whether in an official committee role or by just coming along to help out. Special thanks must also go to the many club members who over the years have pursued leadership and coaching qualifications, who have run trips and who have made the club the welcoming place that it continues to be.

Long may it continue!

Sandy