

INTRODUCING READING CANOE CLUB



Reading Canoe Club has been in existence for over forty years and has a new purpose built clubhouse. Based on the banks of the River Thames in the Warren, Caversham the club house offers boat storage, club room, showers, weights room, kitchen, servery and barbecue area all on a private site. The River Thames is a superb location on which to learn to canoe, to train or to participate in recreational activities

Getting started

Beginners

For racing kayaks the place to start, both for adults and juniors, is at Reading Canoe Club on one of our introductory courses. These are aimed at getting you out on the water and ready to join the club.

Contact the club or check the website to find out what is available.



Amber's lightning race gets caught up with the Senior Mens Assessment race - Southampton Hasler Marathon 2008

Equipment

The club provides the use of basic equipment to get you started: boats, paddles and buoyancy aids. Club equipment is clearly marked and stored away from the private boats and paddles, if in doubt please ask which you may use.

The use of club equipment means that you do not need to purchase your own equipment until you have a good idea of what will suit you. Scheduled coached sessions always take priority for equipment use, so you must make sure that if you take out a club boat it will be back in plenty of time.

There is a boat leasing scheme for juniors which can take them through the first few racing divisions, and we are constantly reviewing our requirement for club boats at all levels.

Club equipment must not be taken away from the club unless permission has been given, and if you want to use a club boat for a race then you need to book it.

Juniors

Reading Canoe Club has great facilities for juniors (Under 18s). We have BCU qualified coaches running regular sessions for all abilities from novice to elite. Juniors can start developing water skills in the fun sessions, progressing then through the junior training groups. The club takes child safety seriously; club officials working with children are CRB checked. The contact for child safety issues can be found on the club website. Please remember that most of our coaches are volunteers, and their responsibility ends with the session – please ensure that younger juniors are collected promptly.

Juniors are expected to respect the club equipment, and to ensure the safety of the whole group must obey their coach at all times. The coaches reserve the right to exclude a junior from their sessions if necessary. Hot showers are available after sessions, but juniors are requested not to linger and waste the hot water. Changing and shower facilities are separate for men and women but are shared with the whole membership (adult and junior).

PaddleSport

The Paddle Sport series of regional events gives young juniors a great introduction to competitive canoeing, and covers a wide range of related activities. The local clubs take it in turn to host one of the team-based competitions, and points are accumulated through the season. Reading teams always do well and have a great time.



Brian at the helm of the bell boat

Social



Nigel's Christmas paddle

Reading is a very sociable club. Paddlers congregate in the hall for coffee after paddling on most weekends, and there are occasional fund-raising breakfasts. Each year we combine a meal with the Annual General Meeting, and a Christmas party in some form. We have some traditional social paddles such as the annual Picnic Paddle, the Fireworks Paddle and the Christmas Paddle – when a fleet of open boats (canadian canoes) set out with crews made up of senior and junior paddlers and parents.

Volunteers

The club is largely run on a voluntary basis. Most of the coaches are giving their own time on a regular basis – so please be prompt to start and finish sessions and be understanding when capacity is low.

All help is much appreciated, so don't be shy if you can help in any way. We always need help with organising our race events – from help with checking in, to marshalling and catering. It's a great way to get to know other club members. We also need help maintaining the club – and it is a condition of membership that every member should give at least one day of work per year.

Canoe Sprint & Canoe Marathon

Racing

Reading has a strong tradition of Flatwater Racing both in Marathon and Sprint events. Most of our paddlers take part in the regional Hasler Marathon Series races that take place locally. A number also compete at the National Sprint Regattas in Nottingham.



*Dave, Ewan & Nick at Pangbourne
Hasler Marathon 2008*



Charlotte at June Regatta 2008

Racing boats are long and streamlined for speed. The faster you get the thinner the boat. Under-12s start off in the very stable Lightning K1s, and race in the Lightning classes. Marathon races are grouped by ability divisions only, whereas Sprint races are also divided into senior and junior categories which are further divided into mens and ladies.

Training

There are a number of race training groups to progress through, and often the juniors and seniors will train together. Training includes boat-work, gym-work such as weight training and conditioning circuits, running, and core stability exercises. All our coaches have the relevant qualifications from the British Canoe Union, and most are ordinary club members volunteering their services to make sure we can support and improve our paddlers. Coaches working with juniors are CRB checked. In the winter most of our training will be land-based and we use "ergo" paddling machines to keep the paddling skills up to scratch.

Canoe Slalom

Reading has a strong Slalom section who train regularly in front of the club, and compete at regional and national level. Although the water in front of the club is placid, the group regularly head off further afield in search of more exciting water – for example at the Cardington Slalom Course.



Slalom paddlers use closed-cockpit boats, and Reading makes sure that our paddlers learn all the steering and safety skills they need, organising swimming pool sessions during the winter months where members can learn to "roll" a boat.

Canoe slalom is one of the most spectacular watersports, demanding skill, stamina and courage. The aim is to run a rapid river course marked by "gates" fast, and without touching. A "gate" is two poles, suspended over the water. Green and white gates are negotiated in a downstream direction, red and white gates upstream. The gates are placed so that you must make tricky cross-current moves and use the eddies and waves. A touch is penalised with 2 seconds added to the competitor's time. Missing a gate costs 50 seconds - a wipeout in serious competition. Each competitor takes two runs, and the times are added together. Four classes compete: Men's and Ladies' Kayak, Canadian Singles and Canadian Doubles.

Safety

Safety is hugely important in our sport, both on the water and in the gym. Our general safety policies and club rules can be found on our website and on club noticeboards. Being a member of the club does not automatically entitle you to take out club equipment and paddle off on your own!

Experienced senior paddlers with their own equipment are expected to adhere to BCU and club guidelines. At the top of the stairs we have a display which indicates the river conditions as assessed by a qualified coach. This information is dated so that you can see how up-to-date it is. Use your own common sense too – if the board is on green but there is a howling gale and the water is fast then err on the side of caution and don't go on the water.



Looking After the Equipment

Our equipment is expensive to buy and is precious to us, we need to keep it in tip-top condition. Please be careful with the boats – don't put fibreglass boats down on concrete, or sit in them on land! Only the plastic "lightning boats" are that robust. Watch the rudder when you are carrying the boat, and watch the front when coming in to the landing stage. Paddles are also surprisingly vulnerable – treat them carefully. You may be liable for any damage beyond reasonable wear and tear (for example damage during a race) – in particular if a professional repair is required to one of our higher spec boats. However, repairs to general usage and wear and tear damage may be done in-house or may come under our maintenance budget – so don't be shy of reporting any problems you may find. Missing or damaged kit should be reported on the damage/fault report forms located in the lower lobby..

Most importantly – canoeing is fun!



Brian and Amo try high-kneel C2 at Interclubs Regatta 2008

Reading Canoe Club

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