

Volunteer Focus – August 2009

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 provides the opportunity for clubs, centres and committees to recognise their volunteers.



Many thanks to Dave Gray and Tyne Valley Canoe Club for their article below:

Way back in the midst of time sometime around the summer of 1996, Mark Wilkinson joined Tyne Valley Canoe Club. He had done very little canoeing and was a relative novice at the sport. I think he had tried it once or twice with his mate Steve Renwick but nevertheless he entered into the spirit of the club and became a very active member.

Mark very quickly showed an aptitude for kayaking and progressed very rapidly through the various awards. He gained his 1 star kayak in June 1996 and in 1997 progressed to achieve 2 and 3 star and the Canoe Safety test. Mark became a very accomplished canoeist and was quite content to paddle up to Grade 3 rivers.

As the years progressed, Mark became involved with the club as a coach and committee member taking responsibility for membership as well as being party games specialist at Christmas Parties! He was integral to the running of the club. Mark continued to progress with his canoeing and in October 1997 he qualified as a BCU level 2 coach and went on to be one of the first people in the country to gain a level 2 Coach Sport NVQ award.

A few years later, unfortunately Mark suffered a serious back injury which entailed an operation. This severely affected Marks ability to continue canoeing. He continued to contribute to the club for many years always being visible at the lock up giving out kit and the same can be said at pool sessions.

Just before Christmas, Mark decided to resign his position and both Canoe England and the club would like to say a very big thank you to Mark – for all of his voluntary contributions and the years of stirring service he has given to the club and Paddlesport. “Mark is going to be a real miss in Tyne Valley and the North East region,” says North East Paddlesport Development Officer Ray Hudspith. “As an event organiser and Paddlesport Development Officer I knew I could rely on Mark to help and generally be there to offer his time.”

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 Development Officer, Canoe England, 18 Market Place, Bingham, Nottingham NG13 8AP.