

Our SWPS 2018 Coaches

Margaret Pearson

Having been put off river kayaking at university, it was a long time before Margaret ventured onto the water again in a kayak. Then she was introduced to sea kayaking on a day when the sun was shining, the birds were singing and the seals were playing. And she's been hooked ever since. With the support and encouragement of her partner, and friends & mentors in the Inverness Canoe Club, Margaret has progressed from being a fair weather paddler to a BCU level 3 (sea) coach. She has even been enticed onto rivers on the odd occasion. She is one of the coaches who helps to organise the sea paddling programme for Inverness Canoe Club. She loves introducing others to the thrills and pleasures of sea kayaking.

Bridget Thomas

A keen white water paddler, Bridget has kayaked in many countries round the world covering 5 continents. In 1993 she became Ladies World Freestyle Champion, and in 1994 embarked on a year long white water odyssey - 'The World Tour'. More recently, a plan to paraglide into a Nepalese river and kayak back out led to another interesting holiday. Bridget was part of the team that produced the Scottish White Water guidebook and, making the most of the climate on the west coast, frequently gets to enjoy the rivers running close to her home in Fort William. A coach since 1994, Bridget enjoys sharing her passion for kayaking, rivers and wilderness with those she paddles with.

Mags Duncan

Mags started kayaking at school in her home town of Port Glasgow, unfortunately the sport of rowing had a larger attraction so for many years Mags ploughed up and down the Clyde in pairs, fours and eights. Kayaking was always the fun option as it just didn't seem such hard work. A move to work in Highland re-inspired Mags but the environment seemed strange. As a sea and loch paddler the river environment was alien. Mags can still remember the terror of her first river trip. Today as a Level 5 White Water coach she still has empathy with paddlers who suffer from fear and lack of confidence. Mags specialises in coaching women on White Water to develop their skills and confidence to take on the hard stuff and lead. Mags also still enjoys the sea and her Open Canoe and is a Level 3 sea coach and UKCC Coach Educator.

Gill Berrow

Gill started kayaking as a young teenager and has continued to paddle all through her adult life. She has enjoyed paddling boats of all shapes and sizes at different stages; surfing, slalom, alpine white water, sea kayak expeditions, whitewater racing, sprint, marathon, open canoes, touring.

She enjoys the many facets of our fantastic sport, and love the many and varied adventures it offers. She has paddled throughout Britain, and in many other parts of the world. Yet, even close to home, there are so many lochs, rivers, coasts and islands still to explore! She got involved in coaching while at school and many, many years later, still gets great enjoyment and satisfaction from helping others progress in the sport which has given me so much fun.

Vicki Haywood

Vicki was introduced to white water at the age of 30 when her now husband bought her a rafting trip on the Garry for her birthday. After having as great time on the water, she decided to take up kayaking and has been a member of Aberdeen Kayak Club ever since. Vicki has progressed through her UKCC awards and currently holds her 4 star river leader award. Vicki has always preferred white water paddling over all the other disciplines. She has paddled here at home in Scotland and also has travelled to the Alps to paddle the beautiful rivers that that area boasts. After attending a ladies development weekend with Mags a few years ago, she has found that she has been able to push herself and trust in her own abilities more. From being a participant at the first ever Symposium and being inspired by all the female coaches, Vicki decided to progress through her coaching certificates so that she could pass on her love of the sport to others. Vicki is currently preparing for assessment for Level 2 Kayak Coach and looking forward to doing her Moderate Water award.

Lesley Mackay

Lesley is a Greenland style paddling enthusiast and volunteer club coach in Orkney and has coached at the Scottish Women's Paddle Symposium, The Scottish Women's Sea Kayak Festival and Paddle Orkney. She spends most of her personal paddling time on building her repertoire of Greenland rolls and loves nothing better than helping other paddlers to give Greenland rolling a go. She has used the Greenland approach to rolling to help paddlers capsize with confidence, have more fun with immersion and troubleshoot rolling with a Euro blade. She was first coached by Cheri Perry and Turner Wilson, in 2011 and has gone back to them for more 'homework' each year. <http://vimeo.com/72131370> <http://mackayak-mackayak.blogspot.co.uk/>

Alice McInnes

Alice is a UKCC L2 kayak coach and as aspirant Advanced Water Sea Leader. Based in Edinburgh, she runs her own coaching and guiding business seakayakalice.co.uk and paddles on both the east, west and north coasts of Scotland. Alice loves paddling close into to the rocky shores testing her boat handling, practising her boat balancing skills, exploring the world-class Scottish coastlines and helping others enjoy our amazing marine environment. She's an active member of both her local club, the Lothian Sea Kayak Club and the online SSkeg Facebook community, and also a founder of the Women's Sea Kayak Festival.

Catriona Nicol

Catriona has been paddling since 2006 and was introduced to the activity through her parents, who thought it would be a good activity to do as a family after they joined the local club. Her discipline is sea kayaking and particular favourite skills to coach/ work on are, wet skills, rescue, balance and rough/tough landings! Catriona holds the 5 star leader award and is an advanced water endorsed coach. Coaching has so many rewards, and says "I love helping people gain confidence and new skills but most of all, having fun on the water".

Located in Shetland she enjoys the fantastic coastline with many caves and nooks to explore! Catriona works with her family business: Sea kayak Shetland, which puts her on the water Monday to Saturday through the summer. Through winter she enjoys pushing herself in the strong winds and have surf sessions and scenarios!

Anne Young

Anne is a sea kayaking enthusiast who started sea paddling while at school in Ayr. A short break away from kayaking whilst at university studying geology (it was all river paddling at university and she kept falling in while looking at the rocks so she stopped). Moving to Aberdeenshire meant sea kayaking again and she gained a BCU Level 3 sea coach award to help with club activities. She has paddled in Scotland, Norway, Croatia and France and looks forward to exploring other parts of the world.

As the Senior Coastguard Operations Officer for the Maritime and Coastguard Agency based in Dornoch she enjoys paddling with the dolphins and talking about safety equipment to anyone that will listen.

Rachel Hannan

Rachel been paddling for about 13 years having got into the sport following a family holiday in Italy, although she subsequently found a very old photo aged about 6 years in a kayak on a boating pond in Whitby! Rachel paddles regularly (most weekends) in Scotland on rivers, lochs and the sea and have ventured further afield to France. Her main discipline is Canadian canoe, but she is also an inland kayaker and sea kayaker. Rachel is a UKCC level 2 coach, and also have BCU level 3 for Canoe and Inland. She holds 5 star canoe leader and 4 star leader for inland kayak. Rachel enjoys coaching and got into it from being a teacher, and also because she found it a good way to improve her own skills.

Rachel started Grampian Open Boaters on Facebook as a way for canoeists to find friends and develop skills, as most Clubs are for kayakers; and she is particularly keen to encourage women into canoeing as a wonderful form of travel and adventure relying on technique rather than strength. Rachel loves the outdoors and am also interested in wildlife, bushcraft and photography.

Laura Bennitt

Since moving to Scotland in 2005, Laure has spent as much time as possible outdoors. Up mountains, over waves and down rivers, across moorlands and scree slopes, camping on deserted islands and hoping to catch glimpses of astounding wildlife. She moved to Scotland to take up a job as a riding trek guide near Edinburgh, and Laura used to work for Rough Guides, tracking down the best hard-to-find places and most interesting snippets of information to pass on.

Now as a qualified Mountain Leader, Advanced Sea Kayak Leader, and BC/UKCC Level 3 Sea Coach (one of only a handful in the UK), She runs guides to Scotland's most spectacular locations, take you off the beaten track, and help paddlers gain the skills to confidently enjoy the outdoors long after they leave.

Jessica Leggatt

Jess lives in Fort William and loves to paddle, both on the river, open water and expeditions. She enjoys taking folk out in canoes and river kayaks whether it's their first time in a boat or they are progressing into more challenging water. She has been studying for the last 4 years in both adventure tourism management and marine and coastal tourism but her passion really lies in coaching and helping those more nervous paddlers reach their full potential. Jess also loves to help out clubs, whether you need someone to take out those beginners and show them the fundamentals or you would like some extra coaching for those more experienced. Jess is also well practiced in the pool and has been running rolling sessions weekly for the last year, if your club needs a hand with 'how to coach' in the pool then get in contact and we can talk about your needs.

She holds the following qualifications- level 2 canoe and kayak, 4* White water kayak, 4* open canoe, International Swiftwater rescue, Wilderness First Responder first aid, 5* White water training, Raft guide trainee, Working through the Moderate Water Endorsement in canoe and kayak.

Zoe Newman

Zoe is passionate about introducing others to new experiences in the outdoors, helping people to develop the skills they need to fulfil their dreams and ambitions, and coaching those skills to foster independence and long term learning. She grew up in the North East of England with parents who climbed, hill walked, sailed and cycled. Personal hillwalking trips have taken me all over Scotland, England and Wales, and to New Zealand, Morocco, Majorca, Switzerland and Greece. Sea kayaking adventures have been mostly confined to the fabulous coast of the UK and Ireland so far, with her favourite trips being in Scotland, but in 2013 she ventured to East Greenland for the first time, and returned in 2014. Zoe have paddled on the sea on Scotland's fabulous coastline, the Hebrides, Shetland, Northern Ireland and the Irish West Coast, Anglesey, North and South Wales, the Southwest and Northeast of England, and on rivers in the UK, Canada, Slovenia and the French Alps- but there is still a lifetime of exploring to be done, mostly in my beloved adopted home, Scotland.

In 2017 Zoe became the first woman in Scotland to achieve the combination of British Canoeing Performance Sea Kayak Coach award (UKCC Level 3), and Advanced Water Sea Kayak Coach award. The Advanced Water Sea Kayak Coach award assesses a coaches ability to work with students over a series of progressive coaching sessions in the Advanced (5 star) environment. The two awards combined result in a remit similar to the (now discontinued) 'old' BCU Level 5 award.