



Members' Information



www.StortfordCanoe.org.uk

14 March 2026

WELCOME TO BISHOPS STORTFORD CANOE CLUB

The club was established as Bishops Stortford & District CC in 1972, and during the following 50 years enjoyed success at national and international level – a tradition that we are keen to continue. In 2024 the club became a “Charitable Incorporated Organisation” (CIO) – Registered Charity No 1210058.

The club has a wonderful family feel and a membership that ranges from young children to much more senior members.

Throughout the year we provide our members with the opportunity to develop and improve their paddling through structured training and coaching. BSCC's small but dedicated team of coaches will be happy to talk to you about your paddling ambitions and provide you with guidance on how to achieve your goals. Perhaps you might even be willing to consider becoming a club coach yourself – something the club will be delighted to support.

BSCC is run completely by volunteers. Each of the committee members works hard on your behalf to develop the club and maintain the facilities. There is a huge amount to do to keep the club running smoothly, so if you would like to offer your services in any capacity please let one of the committee know. Volunteers are particularly always needed to help with maintenance of the buildings and grounds, and to assist coaches, both on and off the water – please do not hesitate to speak to a committee member.

The Social Committee in particular is always looking for new members – their role is to arrange the off-water activities throughout the year which help to raise much needed funds for the club. These funds, along with the annual subscription, are our only regular means of income and are used to maintain the premises and purchase new equipment, so please do give your support whenever the opportunity arises.

We are sure you will soon make new friends and find a welcome whenever you arrive.

CONTENTS:

- 1. COMMITTEE** – *roles and contact details*
- 2. GETTING STARTED** – *attending sessions, bringing guests*
- 3. SAFETY & WELFARE** – *physical safety, accident reporting, child protection & DBS, privacy, equality, medicines, use of changing rooms*
- 4. KIT AND EQUIPMENT** – *what to wear and where to buy it, club vests, hoodies etc, buying a boat, reporting equipment damage*
- 5. DEVELOPMENT IN THE SPORT** – *Competition coaching, performance awards, starting to race, joining Paddle UK (PUK), use of the Exercise Room*
- 6. CLUB MANAGEMENT & SOCIAL** – *Volunteering, joining the committee / social committee*

Bishops Stortford Canoe Club

Officers

Those marked * are Trustees

Chairman	Petr Luksan*	chair@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	07713 884962
Secretary	Angela Aldam*	info@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	01279 755089
Treasurer & Sprint Team Leader	Rich Winstanley*	treasurer@StortfordCanoe.org.uk & sprint@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	07734 863330
Welfare Officer	João Spinola	Joao@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	07732 933509
Safety Officer	Andrew Gurney*		07917 062305
Quartermaster	David Gurney	quartermaster@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	
Volunteer Coordinator	Kerstin Queeney*	volunteers@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	07990 563342
Social Committee Chair	Sue Commercial	social@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	07456 747408
Committee member	Robert Gough	premises@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	
Committee member	Lee Gaulton*		
NON-COMMITTEEE			
Deputy Welfare Officer	Angela Aldam*	Angela@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	01279 755089
Coaching	Joe Fitzpatrick	performance@StortfordCanoe.org.uk	07825 371434

There are photos of the committee, coaches and other members on the website (see [Committee](#) and [Coaches](#) under the About Us tab on the website) and also the Committee poster in the foyer of the clubhouse if you are not sure who is who!

2. Getting Started

When can I paddle?

Sunday morning sessions are open to members of all ability levels. Because the races that the club attends are almost always held on Sundays, the club will not always be open for normal Sunday paddling.

The routine **Sunday sessions** are listed on the printable list of club events which is emailed out with the newsletters and which can also be downloaded from the button on the "Club Calendar" page of the website (under the "Events" tab). This list also shows the competitions the club is attending.

We hold occasional **time trials** (short sprints, or longer ones of 5K or 10K) – an excellent chance to see how well you are developing. These may be during the Sunday sessions, on Saturday mornings, or on weekday evenings in the summer months. They are a handicap, so it is the most improved paddler (rather than the fastest) who will win.

After a while, your coach will start to suggest that you attend competitions as part of the club team.

As proficiency improves, members may attend more serious training at other times – see "5. Developing in the Sport" below.



Arriving at the Club

Sunday sessions usually begin at 10am prompt (sometimes a bit earlier if we are doing a time trial). Ideally, please arrive dressed ready to paddle. If you know how to, get out your usual boat, and a paddle and buoyancy aid of the right size, and find your usual coach. If you are joining in with a time trial you will also need to check in with the organiser on arrival.

How will I know what's going on?

Club news is sent out by email through MailChimp, including race reminders. Some information also goes out via social media. See the Social Media page (under the Members tab on the website) for a list of the Club's official channels and who is operating them.

There are a number of Whatsapp groups that adult club members and junior's parents can join - contact the Volunteer Coordinator (volunteers@StortfordCanoe.org.uk) if you would like to be added.

Leaving children at the club

Children under the age of 14 must be brought to the club by an adult responsible for them. An adult may need to help them to put on their buoyancy aid, adjust their boat and carry it to the water at the start of the session, as well as to put their equipment away correctly at the end of the session.

The club does not have any arrangements in place to look after young children if they have to get off the water early for any reason – while they are on the bank they remain your responsibility. Therefore, parents of under-14s must remain on site during club sessions unless they have specifically confirmed with their child's coach that they may leave. If you do leave, you must arrange for another adult present to take responsibility for your child if the need arises in your absence.

If juniors of any age are left at the club, make sure the club has your contact phone number and that the child's towel and warm dry clothes are available. If someone not known to the coaches will be picking up your child, this should be arranged in advance.

Can I bring a friend?

If you have a friend or relative who would like to join, please ask them to contact the Secretary and book a taster visit. Suggest they mention your name, as always try to give priority to members' family and friends, but advance arrangements are essential to avoid disappointment.

Occasional visits by experienced paddlers from other clubs, usually coming to participate in structured training sessions, are allowed on a reciprocal basis, provided they are using their own equipment and have personal (On Water) membership of Paddle UK. The Head Coach must be notified in advance of each visit.



Why does the club ask for permission to use my photo?

Named photos of all our members are usually put on the noticeboard at the clubhouse - we ask for your consent to do this. We also take photos of members paddling for use on the website and in press reports. If you have any concerns about the use of your photo (or your child's photo) please speak to the Secretary.

Please note that races generally take place in public places and that many spectators will be taking photos which they may share or publish, and results including paddlers' names are published on the internet. If you have concerns, please raise them before racing.

3. Safety & Welfare

Paddling safely

Although the risks involved in paddling open cockpit kayaks and canoes on a placid river like the Stort are relatively small, it is obviously in everyone's best interest that all possible care is taken, particularly where juniors are involved.

Members must read and adhere to the Club Rules and Buoyancy Aid Policy. These and other documents, such as the club's Risk Assessments and full Safety Policy, can be found in the reference folder at the clubhouse, and can also be downloaded from the Members' section of the club website.

Risk from disease/pollution

Any river in England could contain disease organisms or pollutants, and hand washing and showering after canoeing are therefore strongly recommended.

Weil's disease (leptospirosis) is caused by bacteria which could be present in river water and on the riverbank from animal urine. The risk of catching Weil's disease is very small indeed, but it has the potential to be serious, so any open cuts should be covered. In the very unlikely event that someone did contract it, the chief danger would be if it was not recognised, because it requires prompt treatment with specific antibiotics. It is therefore important for every paddler to know about the condition and, if you should fall ill, tell your doctor that you have been canoeing. Symptoms vary but may be broadly similar to influenza, usually occurring 7-14 days after exposure. Find out more on the [NHS Direct website](#).

Reporting incidents/accidents at the club

If you have an accident while you are at the club, a BSCC Incident Form should be completed. These can be found on the reference shelves beside the window in the meeting room. The completed form should be handed to the Secretary or any other committee member. In particular, please record any injury resulting in hospital referral. Other types of incident which should be noted include, damage to 3rd party property, libel/slander, and anything involving child welfare. Near misses should also be reported to the committee

You are also welcome to report incidents directly to PUK/CRT as appropriate using their online forms but please let the committee know you have done this, and complete a Club form too.



Dealing with Emergencies

An Emergency Action Plan can be found near to where the First Aid kit is kept (cupboard at the back of the main clubroom), together with details of the nearest hospital etc. Please take the time to read it.

The club has a semi-automatic AED (defibrillator) located in the hallway. A few club members have received specific training in using it, but it is designed to be used by ANYONE if the need arises – when the lid is opened it will talk the operator through the procedure. It is fitted with adult-sized pads, but a set of junior pads are also kept with it and can be exchanged as needed, plus a bag of accessories (shears, razor, facemask).



Equality at BSCC

BSCC is committed to operating without discrimination. Our Equality Policy can be found on our website. If you feel that there may be discrimination within the club, or that anything is causing disadvantage to certain members, you should bring your concerns to the attention of the committee without delay.

The club is committed to being as accessible as possible to people with disabilities.

Can medicines be taken with me while I'm paddling?

If you need to take medicines such as an asthma inhaler out with you on the water they should be in a sealed plastic bag or special dry bag. Ensure that the coach/trip-leader is aware of any medical conditions and any medication that you have with you. Junior's inhalers should be given for safe keeping to their paddling parent / coach / adult assistant. If other medication needs to be carried on the water (for the use of junior or senior paddlers), this must be discussed in advance with a coach or committee member and an appropriate arrangement agreed.

Can I accompany my child into the changing rooms?

The club has male and female changing rooms. The club expects that under normal circumstances, paddlers who are competent to paddle a boat independently should also be able to shower and dress themselves without assistance. If this is not the case, please discuss with a committee member – you will probably need to ensure that your child is always accompanied by a parent/carer of the same sex.

What precautions does the club take to ensure the well-being of juniors?

Everyone who works closely with children at the club and who may find themselves unsupervised (i.e. all the coaches) must undergo a DBS check. The club has Codes of Practice, and a Safeguarding Policy.

BSCC acknowledges that coaches are particularly well-placed to notice the first signs of child abuse. We understand the importance of the role we have in recognising the early signs and symptoms of child abuse or neglect and are fully aware of the referral procedures.

In the event that you have any concerns you should be raise them immediately with the club's Welfare Officer (or secondary Welfare Officer if you prefer), who will deal with all confidential information. A person needing help or guidance could approach any adult member of the coaching staff or committee. The person they approach does not have to be someone trained in child protection, but they will need to speak with the Welfare Officer on any matters that they feel need support. This should enable any person who has a query to approach either a male or female depending on who they feel comfortable with. If you feel unable to do this, there is a Paddle UK helpline number (0115 8968842, office hours only) and other contact details on their website here:

<https://paddleuk.org.uk/report-a-safeguarding-concern/>

By following the correct procedures, you are protecting both yourself and BSCC.

The club is committed to ensuring the well-being of its members and is proud to have been awarded ClubMark and TopClubGold accreditation by British Canoeing in the past. This scheme has been discontinued and the club is now working towards the Paddle UK QualityMark scheme which replaces them.

What information does the club hold about members?

The club asks for the contact details for each member (or parents of juniors), name, birthdate, gender, whether the member can swim, whether they consider themselves to have a disability (for statistics), and whether or not they have any medical conditions which could affect their participation in club activities. These details should be checked every year in June/July when you renew your subscription, and can be updated by the member in the online database at any time - but please do let the Secretary know as soon as possible of any change. If a member does have any medical conditions, there is an additional medical form; this too must be kept up to date. Medical forms in Word/PDF can be downloaded from the Document Library page for completion, and returned to the Secretary who will upload them onto the membership system.

Members' details will be shared securely only with those club officers / coaches who need them for their roles. The club has a Privacy & Data Protection Policy which can be seen in the blue folder at the clubhouse and downloaded from the Members' pages of the website.

4. Kit & Equipment

What should I wear?

BSCC paddles all year round, and it is important for your safety and comfort that you are appropriately dressed. Clothing for paddling should be thin, close-fitting and allow free movement. It should be made of a synthetic fabric which will absorb as little water as possible and which will dry quickly. Fleece is not suitable.

Items sold for "canoeing" won't necessarily be the right kind of thing, as they may be targeting other types of paddlers. You may have to look instead for items intended for running or cycling (cycling items tend to be cut longer to cover the back, which can be an advantage). Tops are often described as a base layer, and favoured brands include HellyHansen, RonHill and Skins. Popular leggings (sometimes described as "tights") include RonHill Bikesters/Tracksters. On colder/rainy days this should include a cagoule ("cag") and perhaps thin wind/water-proof trousers.

For winter paddling, it is vital that paddlers, particularly children, are warmly dressed. The most effective insulation will be achieved by having many thin layers under a windproof top, and adding a knitted or thermal hat. Some people find that paddlemitts ("pogies") help to keep their hands warmer.

In summer, a lot of light is reflected off the water, so a hat with a brim may help to reduce glare. Remember to use a waterproof sunscreen to prevent sunburn.



Shoes: Paddlers are always advised to wear footwear, though finding something that will fit into a racing kayak can be a challenge. Many paddlers favour aqua shoes or scuba boots. For the younger paddlers, the coaches have a strict "no footwear – no paddling" rule.

Swimwear: The club does not have individual shower cubicles, so you may like to wear swimming trunks/costume under your other kit and keep this on while showering.

Club Colours: If you are going to race in Hasler races or National Sprints you should buy "club colours": a racing top with the distinctive racing stripe. A basic vest can be purchased directly from club stock, and a range of other tops with the racing stripe will soon be available online from Zapkam (allow time for delivery). Other club-branded items (incl hoodies, dryrobe & hats) can be ordered from HECC. See the Club Kit page on the website (under the Members tab) for full details of what is available.

Pre-loved kit: The club also gratefully accepts donations of outgrown or other paddling clothing for resale to members.

Should I buy my own boat?

The club can provide the equipment you need to get started, but eventually you will need to buy your own paddles, and ultimately your own boat. When you become proficient, the Coaches will be happy to give help and advice on a suitable purchase.

The club has a limited amount of racking available for private boats. Quartermasters will consider a number of factors when allocating the available racking, including how much you paddle, race and volunteer for the club – the club's boat storage policy can be seen on the website. If the Quartermasters are willing to find you a rack, you will need to take out **Premium Membership** of the club and pay the additional fee. Storage of second and subsequent boats will attract a further, but higher fee (if permitted). Insurance for private boats (paddles etc.) is the member's own responsibility.

The club only licences its own boats. When you buy your own, you will need to have **personal ("On Water") membership of Paddle UK** so that your boat is licensed for use on the majority of canals and rivers.

You will also need to buy V-bars to transport your boat and, even before that, a suitable roof-rack for your car to fix the V-bars to – please speak to experienced members for advice.

Which boats can I use?

Some of the boats at the club are the private property of members, and these must not be used without their permission. Most club boats have stickers on them. However, not all of the club's fleet are suitable for use by all the paddlers – for your safety (and that of the equipment!) please ask a coach before attempting to paddle a boat you have not used before.

What should I do if I notice a damaged boat?

Please let the Quartermasters know about any damage to boats, other equipment, or the premises. Please do this in writing at the earliest opportunity. They can be emailed at quartermaster@StortfordCanoe.org.uk .



There are also some swing tags which can be used to mark boats which need to be taken out of service.

5. Developing in the Sport

What additional coaching/training is available to club members?

Our small team of dedicated qualified coaches and experienced helpers give their time and skill free of charge to members, who therefore have free access to ongoing training in flat-water kayaking and canoeing.

Novice coaching mainly takes place on a Sunday. Additional sessions are offered at no extra cost if we have Coaches willing to run them. Even when such sessions are run, the schedule may have to change at short notice to fit in with Coaches' availability.

These extra sessions are generally only suitable for those who have reached a certain standard already and they also require a level of serious commitment – the sessions therefore run on an invitation-only basis.

Club boat licences only cover their use during official sessions and the club's insurance also only extends to scheduled activities. Therefore, only members who hold personal (On-Water) Paddle UK membership can paddle from the club at other times. From 2025, storage of one private boat and/or out-of hours access to the premises requires the Member to be approved as a Premium Member subject to payment of an additional fee.

Members who have successfully been through a formal induction may be allowed to use the exercise room for off-water training using paddle machines and weights etc. Please speak to the Coaches or email performance@StortfordCanoe.org.uk.

Awards and courses

Coaches will be happy to assist in signing off DoE, Baccalaureate CAS, and GCSE Sport assessments – but please make sure you arrange this with them in advance, as it is much harder for the coaches to do retrospectively.

BSCC occasionally organise courses such as First Aid and Foundation Safety & Rescue. In particular, the club is keen to encourage and support any paddlers who would like to progress to become coaches themselves.

Do all club members have to race?

BSCC is primarily a racing club, and we encourage our members to start racing with us as soon as they are proficient. Most paddlers find they enjoy using their new skills in this way and attending the races is a sociable family event. However, not everyone wants to race and it is certainly not compulsory! For more details, see the "Get Racing" document.



What else can I try?

Opportunities to try other forms of paddlesport sometimes arise and are advertised to our members as they occur. In the past these have included rafting, bellboat races, slalom, and white-water races. Some events may require proficiency in closed-cockpit kayaks which the club does not routinely teach. There are neighbouring clubs which run pool sessions throughout the year where closed cockpit skills can be acquired – please ask for details.

Do I need to join Paddle UK?

Ideally, all regular canoeists should belong to the national governing body for paddlesport, Paddle UK.

Because the club is affiliated to Paddle UK and insured through them, all our members are covered by public liability insurance, but only while they are taking part in our scheduled club activities. Similarly, our boats licences are only valid for use in club sessions.

The additional advantages of having your own personal On-Water membership of Paddle UK are:

- a licence to paddle your own boat on most waterways, including the Stort
- public liability insurance whenever you paddle
- eligibility to participate in high-level racing (Div 6+)
- a regular magazine
- discounts on some purchases, courses, and boat insurance
- eligibility for BSCC Premium Membership (subject to other considerations)

Because BSCC is Affiliated to Paddle UK, all new members of the club who do not hold personal On-Water Paddle UK membership will routinely be registered by us as Paddle UK "Club Associate" members. Registered Club Associates can take part in competition (up to Div7 standard).



You can upgrade your Paddle UK membership to full On-Water membership by signing in to the "JustGo England" membership portal here paddleuk.org.uk/membership/ and going to the Membership tab. Full personal On Water membership currently costs £47/year for an adult, but cheaper youth, junior or family options are available, and also multi-year subscriptions. Paddlers upgrading to On-Water Membership from a pre-existing Club Associate Membership should not be charged PUK's extra "Joining Fee".

If you already have On-Water Paddle UK membership when you join the club, please sign in to the "JustGo England" membership portal and add BSCC as your home club.

6. Club Management & Social

Who owns/runs the club?

In September 2024 the club became a Registered Charity (No 1210058), specifically a "Charitable Incorporated Organisation" (CIO), and as such is now overseen by the Charity Commission. A copy of the club's Constitution can be found in the reference folder at the clubhouse and on the website. Responsibility for the club rests with the Trustees who are elected by the members at the AGM. Additional Trustees can be appointed temporarily between AGMs by the elected Trustees. Day to day running of the club is undertaken by a Management Committee comprising the Trustees and other committee members that the Trustees have appointed. The Management Committee meets approx 6 times a year.

Who does the cleaning and maintenance?



The club relies on all the members to keep the clubhouse clean and tidy, both inside and out. Please try to tidy up after yourself and help out by grabbing the Hoover or a mop whenever you see that something needs doing.



Please note that the club does not have any council rubbish collections and everything thrown in the bins has to be taken home by somebody.

Does the club run any social events?

The club holds an awards dinner every spring and a Christmas mulled wine event as well as other social trips and events such as a bowling night – family and friends are welcome. These events are run by the club's Social Committee, who also coordinate the club clothing available and organise the catering for the races.



If you have an idea for a social or fundraising event that you would like to see at the club, please speak to the chair of the Social Committee Social@StortfordCanoe.org.uk.

Better yet, why not join the Social Committee yourself? They are always looking for more people to get involved. Parents and spouses of paddlers can play a very valuable role in club life in this way.

How else can non-paddlers (parents/partners) support the club?

Bankside supporters at races are always appreciated, and in the case of children who are racing, their families play a vital role in transporting them to the events.



The club could not function without the time given by members and their families in clubhouse maintenance (e.g. grass cutting, painting), help at events (e.g. providing cakes, serving refreshments, marshalling) etc.

The club has a WhatsApp group that adult members, parents of junior members, and other supporters can join to coordinate this kind of ongoing volunteering – contact the Volunteer Coordinator (volunteers@StortfordCanoe.org.uk) to join the group.



If you have particular skills which could be of use to the club (for instance, if you are a qualified plumber or first aider) please do mention this to a committee member.