

## **History / Heritage of the BCU**

The BCU is the governing body of paddlesport; sending it's first athletes to paddle in the Berlin Olympics in 1936. From those early days with only a handful of canoe clubs affiliated, the BCU has grown to represent over 450 affiliated canoe clubs, 60,000 members, and, as the icing on the cake, GB Canoeing has won five medals at the past two Olympics.

The BCU would not have got to where it is today without hundreds of supporters and volunteers over the decades. It is easy to criticise and pick fault with any big organisation, but it takes much more effort to be constructive and to really believe in developing for paddlesport for everyone.

### Major stepping stones, key figures

1887 – The British Canoe Association was formed for touring canoeists, but it died in the 1920s having never become the governing body.

1924 – Canoeing was *the* sport to be in on the continent and the IRK (Internationalen Representation fur Kanusport) was formed by Austria, Germany, Denmark and Sweden.

1930s – canoeists were beginning to form clubs all over the country with Manchester Canoe Club and the Canoe Camping Club formed in 1933. There became a need for a national governing body. The British Canoe Association (Mark II) was formed as part of the Camping Club.

1936 – Someone realised that in order to become a national governing body, the BCA had to be entirely independent so after much discussion the British Canoe Union was set up.

1938 – 1<sup>st</sup> BCU rolling circus was set up by Franz Schulhof. As well as leading trips to whitewater rivers abroad, he set up the first slalom in Britain in 1939.

1950s – the BCU coaching scheme was set up through the hard work of John Dudderidge and the first people took the new Proficiency tests, and then the Advanced tests.

1962 – Canoe sport was developing so much that it became impractical for the governing body to be run entirely by volunteers and so the first member of staff was appointed at their new offices in London.

### John Dudderidge

One of the key figures in the history of the BCU and the development in canoeing. He was personally involved at all levels, right up to representing Britain in the creation of the ICF (International Canoeing Federation) from the old IRK. He was awarded several medals from the ICF in recognition of his devotion to the sport and an OBE in 1963. The President of Honour of the BCU sadly died in 2004. Now you know why the BCU headquarters is named John Dudderidge House!

### The Nations

Although the BCU represents the interests of canoeists across the United Kingdom at a local, national and international level, from the early days, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had a degree of independence. The Scottish Canoe Association was formed in 1939 and the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland was formed in 1965. The Welsh Canoe Association was not formed until 1978 when the SCA, CANI and WCA became the governing body in their own nation. In recent years Canoe England was set up to represent English canoeists.