



Photographer: Graham Woolven

Emma Love

### Interviews: Emma Love

On August 1st 2019, British Canoeing launched the Stand Up Paddleboard White Water Coach Award. In a series of interviews, Emma Love grabbed some zoom time with eight of the extraordinary women to have qualified or are on route to qualifying. All with unique stories and interests but all with one passion in common – the incredible paddlesport that is white water SUP!

Emma Love is an Ambassador for both British Canoeing #ShePaddles and California Watersport Collective.

# Lisa Boore

[www.outdoorcoachingandguiding.co.uk](http://www.outdoorcoachingandguiding.co.uk)



Lisa Boore is a professional outdoor practitioner. Based in the Brecon Beacons, 2020 was a busy year for Lisa, including becoming a British Canoeing WW SUP Coach and setting up her own business, Outdoor Coaching and Guiding. Lisa is a founding member of South Wales Whitewater SUP, one of the most exciting peer paddling groups to have developed last year.



#ShePaddles



Lisa Boore Photos: Dan Thorne

#### Can you tell me about the very first time you had a go at paddling?

It was when I was ten years old. We went on a week-long school trip to a residential centre in Somerset called Mill on the Brue. We had the opportunity to go to lots of different activities, including open canoe, and I recall we had a female instructor called Kate, who I found really inspiring. On reflection, it was because of her that I studied outdoor education at university and then went on to work in the outdoor industry as a practitioner.

#### I always think of you paddling white water on your SUP, but I recently spotted some photographs of you in an open canoe.

Other than paddling SUP (sea, open and white water), I spend most of my time in an open canoe, either on the white water or on multi-day expeditions both here in the UK and worldwide. I love the experience of being self-sufficient in the wilderness. It is an environment I always find so inspiring.

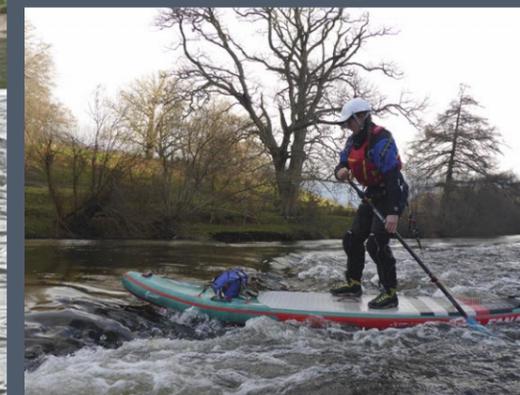
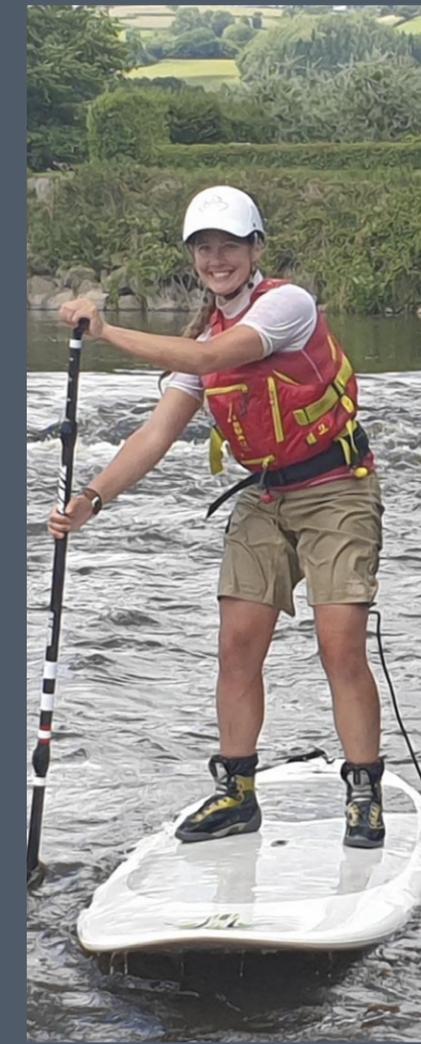
#### Can you describe your very first experience of playing on a SUP, and then what led you to think about taking a board on the white water?

I remember first seeing SUP on the paddling scene around 2013. My first paddling experience was hiring a board on the coast; I had previously tried regular surfing, and, frustratingly, I found I could not get the board to match the speed of the wave. But with SUP, I discovered that by combining my open canoe skills with my ability to read the wave, I suddenly had success! Sadly,





 **South Wales  
Whitewater SUP**



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I live over an hour away from the sea, making regular SUP surf trips challenging to do. I can easily access a lovely section of the river Usk; it is only a five-minute walk from where I live, and because I have this water so close, it just made sense for me to join up both my white water and surf SUP skills. I just mixed them all to see what would happen!

**I love the journey you describe; how being restricted geographically plus the mixing of inquisitiveness with your skillset takes you naturally to think about the possibilities of playing on white water. Can you describe your very first time paddling a river on a board?**

It was 2015, and a friend of ours, Alex Tonge, brought over a couple of boards; I was on mine and my partner, Dan Thorne, joined us. There were the three of us paddling SUPs together on the Glasbury to Hay (River Wye) at what was our canoe club reunion, and we thought it was amazing! I had always thought paddling on this particular bit of river was quite boring just because I teach on this section

every week – it is easy for me to visualise the water, and I know what to expect. Getting on a SUP board has given me an absolute love of this section of the river.

**What drives you to keep ‘playing’?**  
What drives me to keep getting on a board is that it is just so great to be learning! Whereas with a canoe, I know I can scrape across rocks and get away with it. I can’t do this on a board as I will land on my face, which hurts! White water SUP is a skill that I still have to master, and that is exciting.

**2020 was an incredible year with five women (including yourself) qualifying as WW SUP coaches – why do you think this has happened, and do you think this is unique to our discipline?**  
I believe women are happy to explore different disciplines and how they come to WW SUP breaks down into two different routes; firstly, there are those (like me) who are white water paddlers, who think ‘that looks cool’ and want to learn something new. Secondly, some women have no prior paddling experience, and

initially, they learn flatwater SUP skills but then think what is next?

If you want to learn, the natural progression with SUP would be either racing, the sea or white water. I think we are seeing women coming through within the WW SUP community because we are such a friendly group of people, and it is a supportive and encouraging environment to learn in. I don’t think the increase in women coaches is limited to WW SUP, and I can now see women leading the way in other white water paddling disciplines.

**To me, it feels such a special time to be part of the WW SUP community. Do you share this sentiment?**

Yes, I like the sense of community; our sport is open, not at all egotistic, and we are all still learning. It’s where I feel we were with paddlesports 20 years ago. I wonder whether this lack of ego is because we don’t have a competition element to our sport, so there is no jealousy. It will be interesting to see if SUP X takes off and whether our

community will change as it becomes competitive. Let’s chat in 10 years and see where it is at!

**You are one of the founding members of South Wales Whitewater SUP. How did this group come about?**

I didn’t want to own or be responsible for a club, and I knew people in the area who paddled, including outdoor instructor friends who were also keen to start a group. I had been following ‘Nottingham Whitewater SUP’ on Facebook for quite a while, and I liked how that peer-led group was set up. So, we decided to use this model, and in June of last year, we created our own Facebook page, ‘**South Wales Whitewater SUP**’.

We currently have 159 members, which is a nice size. It works because any of our members can put up a post asking who wants to meet for a social paddle, and then they organise themselves. I think, on average, around ten paddlers meet at these socials. We have had some great trips down the river Usk and, last summer - when the Usk and Upper Wye

were closed for fishing only- we met regularly at Symonds Yat. It is a lovely little park and play spot. We are very happy for anybody to join us as long as they have some white water experience and deem themselves safe on the water.

**What are your words of advice to anyone keen to try WW SUP?**

I don’t think ‘just go for it is the right attitude, but, sadly, you see it a lot on social media like YouTube, Facebook etc.; these platforms are not always the best source of guidance. First and foremost, the question you have to ask yourself is, what experience do these paddlers have, and what qualifications do they hold? Every river you paddle has to be respected. Yes, it is a great playground, but you need to have both the ability to do dynamic risk assessments and make good decisions; these abilities only come with experience. My advice is, go paddle with someone who knows what they are doing and you can trust. Failing that, get some professional coaching.





# Charlotte Louise

@supwithcharlotte

Based in the East Midlands, Charlotte Louise is currently working towards qualifying as a British Canoeing WW SUP Coach. Here we chat about her first experience trying out WW SUP, working towards her qualification and her ever-growing passion for the need to create a bathing status for all our rivers and lakes.

Charlotte Louise  
Photo: Zac Allin



Charlotte Louise  
Photo: Beth Kirby



#ShePaddles



Matlock  
Whitewater SUP

## Do you have a specific memory of falling in love with paddling?

I clearly remember this as one of my best days ever! My uncle is a kayaker, and he was determined I would become one too. When I was around 13 or 14 years of age, he decided to take me to a kid's club in Thamesmead, London. I remember, we pretty much just played games all day, including canoe polo, running across the bows of the boat, capsizing, jumping in, and I thought, "this is amazing" - I just loved it! From then on, I continued going every weekend for the rest of my teenage years, mainly because I loved the social side - I made so many friends there. It was this initial experience that ignited my love for paddle sports.

## Alongside Stand Up Paddle Boarding, do you paddle any other craft?

I am qualified to teach kayak and open canoe, so when I am working for other outdoor companies, generally, this is what I will be teaching as taster sessions. I don't paddle these types of boats as much as I used to because I like playing on stand up paddleboards, plus I have my own business, SUP With Charlotte, which keeps me busy.

## How did you discover WW SUP?

I initially saw it first on social media quite a few years ago; I think it was someone paddling somewhere in America, and I remember thinking it was ridiculous, it looked fun, but it looked crazy! I think all the videos I saw were from the USA, and I didn't know if it was a thing in the UK. It wasn't until I worked at Holme Pierrepont Country Park that I came across the peer paddling group, Nottingham Whitewater SUP. I watched them playing on the WW course, and I thought it looked so much fun, so I messaged them asking if I could have a go.

## Can you describe that first experience paddling a SUP on white water?

Because I kayaked, I thought some of those skills would cross over but, it was nothing like I imagined it would be! The Nottingham crew made it look really easy, plus they were having so much fun, so I thought it couldn't be that hard. I expected to stand up straight away on my board, but I found it was the complete opposite! I spent more time swimming, but I remember that the

few seconds I was standing felt amazing. Barry Hughes (who alongside Beth Kirby had supported me that evening) sent me through the washing machine, and somehow, I don't know how I made it through! That first experience was enjoyable, and it made me realise just how addictive WW SUP is.

## What is the driver that keeps you wanting to SUP on white water?

For me, it is the experience as a whole. There is the social aspect; getting on the water with a group of friends and having a laugh. I like being outside in nature and exploring places I wouldn't usually see on foot. I also love it because it is good for your mental and physical health!

## How has the experience of working towards your WW SUP orientation been over the past year?

I think it has been a positive time getting out on the water with friends to practise my skills within a peer-led group environment. This is helping me to prepare for the British Canoeing White Water SUP Orientation and the assessment. I find instructing and coaching a really interesting circular process. Even when I am the lead, I am learning how to coach, which, in turn, informs how I lead.

## You mentioned you have a mentor?

Yes, and I would recommend having one if you are interested in coaching. My formal mentor has recently qualified as a British Canoeing WW SUP Coach, which means I can ask questions and talk through ideas if I am not too sure or not confident in what to expect about the process. I also have informal support from peer groups, Matlock Whitewater SUP and Nottingham Whitewater SUP, from friends I paddle with and even my manager for the organisation I work for in Derbyshire.

## Let's talk about the environment for which I know you have a passion, focusing on the poor quality of our waters in the UK. Where has this developed from?

Right from the beginning as a paddler, it is ingrained in us to look after the environment. For example, if we see rubbish on the water, we pick it up and take it with us. We are taught about cross-contamination and why we should always



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(@nottswwsup)



Charlotte Louise **Photo:** Beth Kirby

wash our boats and boards before transferring between different rivers and lakes. Very sadly, I, like so many other paddlers, have witnessed plastic pollution first hand, and, even more recently, I experienced several severe bouts of illness due to the poor water quality of my local rivers. I now have to avoid certain places I love to paddle because I am so scared of getting ill

again. With so many of us accessing our waterways for numerous leisure activities, I don't think it is ok that our health should be put at risk. I firmly believe that all rivers and lakes should be safe to use and awarded bathing water status. It should be a human right that we can safely go in and on our water, so for this reason; I feel I have to do something about it.

**I know you have been proactive in contacting local newspapers and key agencies about the poor water quality. What has been the response?**

I have contacted many agencies and companies, both national and local, who are associated with the river and have an interest in it being safe. I've signed petitions, contacted MP's and my local council - the latter two I never got a response from! I found that I kept being passed from one organisation to another. My impression is that no one knows who has responsibility for the water quality and, to my mind, they should all come together to solve this. I genuinely feel that the people who have the power to do something are not responding or showing any concern. There just seems to be this wall, and while I know I will continue to raise awareness of this issue, I am now unsure what to do next other than going out and standing on the street with a sign! Perhaps it is a case of getting as many paddlers out on the water, at the same time, to wave banners and protest so we can get all these organisations to pay attention!



Charlotte Louise **Photo:** Zac Allin