

OWEN'S BRIEF HISTORY OF ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES UK

'Adventure Activities UK has a very wide reach for a small organisation, with a partner company in the US, satellite centres in Sussex and Hampshire, and with other centres planned to come online in due course. But we started small.... with just me, my van and my kayak in fact!



WHAT DO WE DO?

We do a lot, we've come far, and we are going a lot further! Together we will achieve that!

The company started life with me travelling the UK training paddlesport coaches and providing technical advice to clubs, outdoor centres and the Navy. Delivering leadership training courses in canoe, sea kayak and white water kayak, and frequently leading commercial expeditions in Scotland. Much of my time was spent off the Isle of Wight, but always with a lot of enquiries about coach training and sea kayak courses to be run on the Island, so Isle of Wight Sea Kayaking was formed to meet this need.

In those days, we had just a few part-time staff running courses, and as we became more visible on the Island we took many enquiries from tourists who also wanted to go kayaking. Whilst we were running six full 'Introduction to Sea Kayaking' courses a week, we had more tourism-based clients during the summer months.

At this point, land activities started to be introduced and the name changed to Adventure Activities Isle of Wight to address the tourism market. The team at this point was a receptionist, full-time instructor and an apprentice, with me still running my consulting business and helping out part time.

Next, we started running coasteering, which was mainly for stag and hen groups in the early days. Coasteering is something we've brought to the South Coast, as in those days it was only run in Pembrokeshire. We also became well known for pushing the boundaries of what is done commercially on Sit On Top (SOT) kayaks, and so our approach was replicated across the UK and our team was asked to consult on setting up other providers for SOT kayaking on the sea.

We are still at the forefront of development in this field having written and established Water Skills Academy (WSA) awards, which is the only national qualification for SOT kayaks, and will continue to lead best practice at the top end of what is run for clients.

With our water activities still based at Freshwater bay, in 2016 we moved our Head Office and land activities to Tapnell Farm - the island's ever growing tourism hot spot!

In October 2016, we ran our very first residential trip for National Citizen Service (NCS) groups with tremendous success! It was a lot of hard work and perseverance from the team but resulted in phenomenal feedback from both the young people and their NCS leaders... and just a few months later we were fully booked for residential trips in summer 2017!

WHAT IS IT THAT WE DO?

In a nutshell; we provide epic experiences that create lifetime memories for our guests.

We provide awesome learning opportunities for our students and we, hopefully, inspire everyone to achieve more than they thought they could, be it our clients or our colleagues.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We are still moving forwards... developing new products for new markets, continuing to drive best practice and excellence through exceptional training, and encouraging our people to be the best version of themselves in all that they do.

At the end of 2018, we moved to our own land centre at Stoats Farm which enables us to expand our residential offer from 180 young people to 270 staying with us at any one time.

2019 will see us recruit 25 Seasonal Adventure Tutors and Guides, with over 100 young people interested in joining our team - and 20% of those being local people we can offer skills and qualifications leading to real employment opportunities.

We are extending our activity centres through our relationship with Away Resorts, which started in 2018 with tourism water sessions at Whitecliff Bay and now will include Sandy Balls in the New Forest.

Our philosophy... never stop, keep moving, love what you do!