

Chair's annual report, March 2018 to April 2019

We had our AGM in April 2019 and voted on the following Trustees:

Gaynor Allen (chair)
Georgina Brown (club captain)
Katie Swann (secretary)
Pauline Crerar (treasurer)
David Lee (regatta captain)
Stewart Page
Sharon McFeely

We have had an incredibly busy year and the club has seen improvements in all areas. We have increased membership, been to more regattas and on more expeditions, carried out modifications to Steedie Falconer to make her a better racing boat, made new oars and generally had more people out on the water more often. On land, we have had more people attending Row Fit sessions and embarked on the Skiffiepsych project to examine the psychological aspects of rowing and team work. We have continued to hold regular social events, including brilliant 5th birthday fundraiser, a water-themed book group and a curling trip!

Rowing Regattas and Expeditions

Throughout the season, we have competed in local regattas hosted by Boatie Blest (Port Seton), Portobello, Newhaven, Queensferry, and North Berwick. We have been more successful in the regattas overall and ventured as far afield as Portsoy (with Dunbar) and Ullapool, where we reached the final of every category that had a final. We also reached the semi-finals in one category at Port Seton. The season ended with Scottish Coastal Rowing Association's Freshwater Sprints on Loch Tummel and Pauline, Sharon and Graham won three gold medals for the South East Scotland team. We also won a gold medal at the Queensferry regatta, where Steedie was victorious in the mix-up race.

Our social rowing expeditions were also stepped up as we ventured to Holy Island and Coquet Island (Northumberland) and rowed in a flotilla from Kinghorn in Fife to Inchcolm Island (on the Forth). We also took part in the flotilla to celebrate the opening of the Victoria and Albert Museum on the Tay in Dundee and rowed to Paxton House on the Tweed. This year, we had the first Eskmuthe road trip where members took the boat to Portsoy, then on to Findhorn before meeting up with fellow members for the unforgettable Ullapool regatta. We also did our

first New Year's Day row in a while, and gave a salute to the Loony Dookers.

We decided to host our first full club regatta in three years, which proved a big success. We had eight teams on the Back Sands and had very positive feedback from all competing clubs, who all enjoyed the fun races (the blindfold race and the 'double mix-up' race). We also made us over £1000 on the food and raffle. This was a huge undertaking and we were very pleased that everything ran smoothly - thanks to careful planning and great support from club members.

Membership

Our membership continues to rise steadily and we have stopped needing to do taster sessions to attract new people as people are now regularly approaching us. We are trying to hold more structured new rower days to give those who have approached us a chance to get on the water. We have had a few people leave the club, but this has been more than offset by those joining - and we are above 50 members and rising. More importantly, we have more members than ever rowing regularly.

Training and the World Championships

We have completed a new coxes and rowers' training programme and have introduced a rowing technique session to help improve performance also posture. We also hope this will keep rowers more healthy and cause less injuries. We have been doing lots of training sessions (every other weekend weather permitting) and are really trying to get fitter and stronger to compete in Skiffieworlds. Our RowFit sessions are going well (Thursdays 8-9pm at Queen Margaret University) and we have tried some Saturday morning sessions, but these have not really taken off. We are encouraging all rowers to work on their personal fitness as that will make a real difference to our competitiveness as a club. It is great to see the improvement in almost all rowers as we are more focussed and members are showing real commitment.

Boat repairs - Prestongrange

We went back into Prestongrange in September this year and decided that Steedie should get a complete overhaul. We started with workshops on basic joinery and made a new workbench. We made new oars and began making significant changes to Steedie, moving seats, and making new rowlocks and new footrests. Honesty is now in for a quick facelift. We have encouraged more people to carry out the repairs and this has proved successful, with more hands on deck. The boat

building/maintenance is a very big part of the club and should be an even greater focus when we get our boatshed.

Eskmuthe Boatshed

We have been working on getting our own boatshed in the car park at Fisherrow Back Sands for several years and are hoping the end is in sight. We have tweaked our original proposal and have had new plans drawn up that we hope will work better for the club. These will be submitted to ELC planning along with letters of support from local organisations and a traffic survey of the car park to prove the seven parking spaces are not used very often. We will keep members informed of our progress.

The building will consist of a workshop, which will take up two-thirds of the space, and a members area, which will use the remaining third. We hope that members will benefit greatly from having our own building with the potential for social activities, fitness and creative elements. All club meetings and training sessions will be held there.

Governance

We now have code of conduct documents for committee members and members. We have looked at our health and safety procedures and altered the way we operate to ensure safety is at the heart of our rowing sessions. We also have child protection and a club strategy document, which covers the next five years. These can all be viewed on the club website.

General

Our two boats have been on the water more times than in any other year as our club continues to grow and members row more regularly. In the first week of January, both boats were out 4 days out of 5 - and we have introduced regular Monday and Friday rows, which have proved very popular. We will also be able to organise more evening rows (when tides allow) and in general, we are trying to put on sessions whenever rowers want them, as long as we have a cox available. ADD SOMETHING ON TRAINING MORE COXES? -This increase in rowing and regattas/expeditions, alongside changes in the way we collect fees for travelling, has brought in extra income for the club and made it more financially viable in terms of covering the costs of keeping both boats on the water - and a potential boatshed.

Community

Community continues to be important to our club, and we took part in the town's annual festival week parade as well as taking the Scouts out

and fitting in new rowers. We have also refurbished picnic benches at Prestongrange as a thank you for using the Arch Store for our repairs.

Communications

We continue to have a good media presence with Twitter and Facebook and have regular items in the Musselburgh Courier. Our website continues to grow and is looking really good. If anyone hasn't looked in the members' section, please do so as there is lots of information. A special thanks to Kate Allan for not just creating the website, but for regularly updating it. Also a big thank you to Pauline Crerer for the work she has done on our new club communication too Team App. This has really helped to transform the club and keep everyone up to date with all our activities.

Christmas cards/thank you cards/tote bags

We did a club Christmas card this year, which was good but had a few snags. We have learned to do next year's in the height of summer to get the light! We also have club thank you cards and tote bags. All of these have paid for themselves and made a modest income.

Environment

We are a club which cares for the environment and we organise regular beach cleans in the town and also pick up any litter we see in the water. We are affiliated to the Marine Conservation Society UK and also to Keep Scotland Beautiful. We have been awarded a Green Flag by the Scottish Coastal Rowing Association in recognition of our work.

Our club continues to grow and thrive and is now a very established part of the harbour and the town. We believe that this has been another important year in securing a solid base for ourselves. We are always trying to get better, work with our neighbours and make sure the club serves its membership.

Gaynor Allen

Chair (March 2018-April 2019)