



Annual Report - April 2019 to July 2020

Trustees

Gaynor Allen (chair)

Georgina Brown (club captain)

Pauline Crerar (Treasurer)

Katie Swann (secretary)

David Lee (membership secretary/regatta captain)

Sharon McFeely

Stewart Page

It has been quite a year (or a year and a bit). This is by far and away our most successful year to date in terms of membership, regattas, SkiffieWorlds, social rows, and general club activity. We have begun to win medals and have proved that we are a club that can hold its own locally and nationally and also internationally. It's been a great year for the club, but just as we were busy preparing for the 2020 season we were stopped in our tracks by a global pandemic.

Rowing Regattas and Expeditions

We started the 2019 season with medals for the novice team at Boatie Blest and carried on winning at every regatta we attended – other than Broughty Ferry – ending with an astounding gold and silver at the very competitive North Berwick Regatta. It has to be said we trained hard over the summer in preparation for the Worlds and this made a huge difference to our fitness and also our attitude. Kate's Skiffiepsych sessions made a big difference as did the club meetings to prepare ourselves for our first ever world championship. Although we didn't win any medals at the World's, we did get into four finals and six reperchages and also had a fabulous week. We realised that we probably peaked after a month later than the Worlds at North Berwick, but it was all good learning for 2022. We were really proud of all of our rowers, as our club worked really hard getting ready for the worlds and reaped the rewards of this with many other clubs congratulating us on how far we have come.

We were also very busy with a packed programme of social rowing in company with trips along the newly-opened Forth and Clyde Canal, which included a trip around the Falkirk Wheel; a very hard row along the Tay from Perth to Dundee; a second row to Inchcolm island in not very great conditions leaving another club capsized; an eventful row to North Berwick, which changed to Queensferry at the last minute when we were almost stranded and ended up drinking craft beer and eating pizza at Port Edgar's annual festival; and the 2019 events finished with our old favourite the Tweed Row. We also sneaked a cheeky row on Loch Tay just after New Year, which had four seasons of weather in a few hours,

but was beautiful nonetheless and we will be back to maybe row the length of the loch another time.

Training and the World Championships

We have trained harder than ever before for the 2019 SkiffieWorlds in Stranraer, and this has definitely taken the club to a whole new level. In the spring/summer of 2019 we took every opportunity of getting on the water to train and set up a series of doodle polls to ensure everyone who wanted to train was on the water as much as possible. We have completed more new coxes and rowers' training programmes and had another rowing technique session to help improve performance and posture. We also hope this will keep rowers more healthy and cause less injuries.

After the rowing season ended we continued to be more structured with our rows and split sessions between training and social and also encouraged coxes to help with technique on all rows. We were just about to step up our training for the 2020 season when the pandemic struck.

Our RowFit sessions continue to do well (Thursdays 8-9pm at Queen Margaret University) and we were talking about an extra evening session led by a team member, who has also offered to lead with some fitness training when rowing is cancelled.

During lockdown we have had Zoom fitness sessions. We are encouraging rowers to work on their own fitness. In general we have continued to see a massive improvement in rowing due to better technique and fitness, with members realising they need to be fit to row.

We still need more coxes. Two more rowers became full time coxes and others are getting more experienced to be able to be responsible for the boat in future.

Social events

We just has one fundraiser this year, but it was a good one. We had a music and quiz night with our very own band The Normans. This attracted lots of members and their families and friends and raised about £2,000 for the club. We also went curling again and had a couple of celebratory nights in Staggs. During lockdown we have held a regular Zoom quiz, with members taking it in turns to be quizmaster.

Membership

Our membership has continued to grow steadily throughout the year and we have done our best to try and accommodate new rowers into our busy schedule. A new members WhatsApp group has been set up to make it easier for new members to get a space in the boat, and we have also created shorter rows tailored for newer rowers for their first few times on the water. We now have a system of getting new rowers trained up to go out in the boat and being told when the time is right for them to move on to normal social sessions and training.

We have had 16 new members throughout this period and now have 65 members. We have about 50 members, more than ever before, rowing regularly.

Boat repairs – Prestongrange

Our first job was to make another set of oars with the Douglas Fir we had left. As we had a few broken (and fixed) oars during the last regatta season we wanted to make sure to get it right. We made the new, new oars, which most people seem to really like as we learned from our mistakes with the first set of oars.

They were so successful we decided to alter the World's oars to be the same and got rid of the plywood blade.

The oars took quite a bit of time, so we turned our attention quite late to Honesty. After spending so much time on Steedie last year, it was Honesty's time for a makeover. We decided to put spacers in the gunwales, which was a huge undertaking and took a great deal of skill from Graham and Alister Haddon, a retired joiner, who came on board to help out. After the gunwales were finished, we sanded, painted, and generally delivered TLC to our first boat and made her (almost) as good as Steedie.

We had just taken Steedie in for her bit of TLC before lockdown was announced. The boat building/maintenance is a very big part of the club and should be an even greater focus when we get our boatshed.

This wasn't the best year at Prestongrange as the Arch Store (where we do our repairs) is not in a good state. We were out of the building for a few weeks when water came seeping through the roof very close to the electric lights, and the building is not getting even the most basic of maintenance.

Eskmuthe Boatshed

As Prestongrange falls into a state of disrepair, it is now more crucial than ever to have our own boatshed. We have been working with East Lothian Council on building this in the car park at Fisherrow Back Sands for several years and are hoping this will take place within the next year. We secured planning permission in the autumn of 2019 and plans are now in for a building warrant. The club asked for the boatshed to be as sustainable as possible, and also for there to be an element of self-build if possible. We have come up with a good compromise and the walls will be made of Durisol blocks, designed for self-build and made of 90 per cent recycled pallets held together with cement. The roof will be made from plastic tiles made with recycled plastic and all recyclable. We are now working with a new architect and a structural engineer from Musselburgh. The boatshed will consist of a workshop, which will take up two-thirds of the space, and a member's 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, and we are hoping it will also be used for socials.

Communications

TeamApp has been a massive boost for the club and has enabled members to communicate effectively. Our media presence continues to be very good with Twitter and Facebook and have regular items in the Musselburgh Courier. Our website continues to grow and is looking really good, so please keep an eye on particularly the members' section, as there is lots of information. A massive amount of work goes in to communicating with members and also outwith the club, and this is an area where we are being noticed. Anything of note that happens in the club is communicated effectively through one of our mediums.

Calendar

Following from last year's club Christmas cards, we did a Calendar this year. We are always open to ideas for fundraisers and something to give club members a bit of a laugh.

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 will display our Green Flag, awarded by the Scottish Coastal Rowing Association in recognition of our work, in our new boatshed. This concern for the environment is behind our plans for a more sustainable boatshed, and a great deal of effort has been put into this.

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.

We try and make the club more than just a rowing club but a community. We are always open to new suggestions of things to do both on and off the water and welcome members getting involved.

Gaynor Allen
Chair (April 2019-July 2020)