

Captain's report - AGM 2022

Introduction

I have been really pleased this year to see the club return in many ways back to the way we knew it before the pandemic. As a club, we are regularly attending races again, all squads have been taking in new members and we have seen a return of club social events with the club races, the annual dinner and with new events like the Halloween party. There are boats out on the water pretty much every day and we have athletes sweating it out on the ergos and grunting away in the gym. Things are back to normal. Except that I try not to just think of it as the normal that I used to take for granted, but instead that the pandemic has highlighted what a pleasure and a privilege it is that we are able to do what we do in the company and the spirit that we do it in. I hope many of you will feel the same way.

I have once again been pleased to work with such a dedicated and hard working committee this year. I would like to thank them for all of the time and effort they have given to the club and the support I have received from them in my role as Club Captain.

Results

The club posted a total of 65 race wins this season, a big increase from 21 last season and much closer to the numbers we used to be getting before the pandemic. The results can be further broken down as follows:

- 62 sculling & 3 sweep wins
- 3 coxed boat wins
- 32 womens, 33 mens & 0 mixed wins
- 13 senior, 31 masters & 21 junior wins

I would like to give thanks to our squad leaders for organising their athletes into racing crews and submitting race entries and special thanks to all those who have volunteered to tow the trailer this year, without their help many of us would not be racing.

Notable results

- Lauren Henry has continued her run of impressive results this year with a win in the championship single scull at Metropolitan regatta. She raced at Henley Royal Regatta getting through to the second round and losing out to the eventual winner of the event. She was selected again for the women's single scull at the Under 23 World Rowing Championships where she came 4th in the A final. She was also selected for the women's double scull at the Under 23 European Rowing Championships where she won a bronze medal. Recently at the senior and U23 GB rowing trials she came 2nd overall and only 0.35s behind Helen Glover who was the winner. These are incredible results and I look forward to seeing her rowing career continue to go from strength to strength.
- David Smith won two gold medals at the British Masters Rowing Championships in the Masters C single and double sculls. He went on to win a gold medal in the Masters C double scull at the Henley Masters Regatta. He finished his season by winning a very impressive four gold medals at the World Masters Regatta, three in the single and one in the double. Dave continues to be a force to be reckoned with on the masters scene.

Women's squad

Although a Women's Vice Captain was not elected at last year's AGM, Alex Wellings continued to have a strong involvement with the squad, offering coaching, guidance and

leadership. I am really pleased to have seen the squad grow this year as a result of the learn to row course and also from Alex welcoming in new members with previous rowing experience. I would like to thank Alex for all the time and hard work he has given to the women's squad over the past 5 years and I hope to see this squad grow further and work together to become a strong team in the coming year.

Men's Squad

Peter Mather took on the Men's Vice Captain role last year and I am pleased to see he will be continuing for another year. Peter has helped to bring members of the squad up to a level where they are independent and valuable members of the club. He has also welcomed in new members with previous rowing experience and been involved with the senior learn to row course. There have been first races and first wins for members of the squad as well as a number of masters wins from Graham and Steve. I hope to see this squad develop and grow over the coming year, and maybe even a return to the Head of the River Race.

Junior squad

Liz, Clare and Ang have continued to work together to run the junior squad this year. It has been great to see so many juniors racing with a number of the newer members having their first races and getting their first wins and some of the more experienced members competing at high level events such as the Junior Rowing Championships. This is a very popular squad and they work to take in new members and run taster days, supported by the junior members themselves, throughout the year. With the links the club is building with the Castle Mead Academy I think this will be a great advertisement for the sport of rowing and it will help to further grow the junior squad.

Emma Stewart will be standing down as the Junior Representative on the committee this year. Thank you to Emma for her work supporting the junior squad this year and for reporting their activities and achievements to the committee each month.

Recreational squad

Anne continues to do a great job of running the recreational squad which I believe is the most popular of all the squads and continues to get a lot of interest from potential new members. Anne's efforts and contributions to her squad and to the sport of rowing were recognised this year when she was awarded with a British Empire Medal. The club congratulates Anne for this achievement and as a club run by volunteers and it is always good to see their efforts recognised like this. The recreational squad have participated in a number of tours and events this year including a 24k Santa's challenge in Boston, a Good Friday row from Nottingham to Newark and a Halloween spooky row. The squad have spread the word about recreational rowing with introductions to other clubs including Boston and DMU. In combination with the juniors and other volunteers they were involved with a rowing experience day which I believe is a first for the club and raised £500. And they have also done some racing including a win at Loughborough Head race and a trip out to the World Masters Regatta.

Performance squad

The performance squad have brought in many impressive results this year, most of which have been detailed in the "notable results" section above. Teddy Sherman has been another rising star in this squad and he has worked hard with Howard to achieve a number of good results throughout the year and recently had his first experience at the British Rowing trials.

Howard's encouraging and positive attitude towards his athletes continues to help them have high ambitions and to realise that with the right level of work and dedication, those ambitions can be achieved. I look forward to seeing what this squad will achieve over the coming year.

Equipment

Equipment expenditure this year has mainly been maintenance of existing equipment and new fixtures and fittings for boats as follows:

- Professional repairs to the boat John Coleman.
- Servicing and new parts for the ergos.
- Sculling riggers for Simon Whitaker so it can be used as a coxed quad.
- New shoes for various boats.
- New backstays for various boats to comply with Row Safe.
- Cox box repairs

Clubhouse

Expenditure on the clubhouse has mainly been regular maintenance which Tim will give detail on in his maintenance report. At this stage the committee is still unsure of what costs will be incurred to put the disabled access lift back into service but options are being explored to minimise this cost and to try and avoid having to replace the existing lift.

Senior learn to row

This year's learn to row course has been the most successful that I have been involved with, having a great retention rate and bringing in 9 new members to the club. I have enjoyed bringing new people into the sport and to see them develop a passion for it, it has been one of the most rewarding tasks that I have taken on during my captaincy. I would like to give a big thank you to Hazel and Alex who both put a lot of time into helping run the learn to row course and to any other volunteers who have helped out as well over the past year.

Leicester Regatta

At last, Leicester Regatta returned to the rowing calendar in 2022 after being cancelled for 2 years in a row. The event was a great success and thankfully we all remembered how to put a regatta on. There were 44 events with 150 crews from 18 different clubs. Thank you to all those who volunteered for the preparation and on the day itself, without your help we wouldn't be able to run the event at all. I would like to give a big thank you to the regatta committee for their weeks of hard work organising and arranging everything for the regatta to run smoothly.

University Business

The committee are in regular communication with both DMU RC and University of Leicester RC on plans for training and safety. We have good relationships with both of these clubs and I expect this to continue over the next year.

Some thank yous...

- Many thanks to Tim Walton and Joe Holohan who have worked together and individually on a number of club maintenance issues this year. Thank you both for all you do to keep things working at the club.
- To all of the squad leaders, Howard, Peter, Alex, Anne, and the combination of Liz, Clare and Ang, thank you for your dedication to your squads. Your passion and enthusiasm for the sport sets such a great example for others at the club.

- Thank you to Nicola in her role as club treasurer for keeping our club accounts up to date, managing our membership payments and for keeping a lookout for funding opportunities open to the club.
- Thank you to Kim Clark who is our Chief Welfare Officer and to her welfare team. This is an important role in the club and the committee is very appreciative of the time she has dedicated to it and for the diligent and professional way she has gone about her responsibilities.
- Thank you to Sally for continuing to ensure we are all keeping safe on the water, especially during Covid when there were so many guidelines and restrictions to keep on top of.
- Thank you to Hazel Ward who is stepping down from the committee this year. Hazel has spent 5 years on the committee and 2 of these years as Men's Vice Captain. Hazel has coached and brought on many senior members over the years and has played a huge role in the senior learn to row courses.
- I would like to give thanks to Liz Pulford in her role as Club President, a role she has taken on for 16 years. Liz is a very dedicated member of the committee and as I said at the annual dinner, it would be easier to try and list what Liz doesn't do at the club. As well as the time she volunteers to the club, she is also a very successful rower, winning the oars-woman of the year award at this year's annual dinner. I would like to thank Liz for being such a great source of advice for me during my years as Club Captain and on behalf of the club I would like to thank her for her continued dedication and enthusiasm for the club.
- There are too many people to thank to be able to mention them all by name, and I like to think that is a very good position to be in, but whatever time you have given to the club, whether it is running a football car park, coaching a crew, clearing up the riverside or helping at the regatta, I thank you. We are a volunteer run club and members volunteering their time is what keeps us going.

Summary

As I look back over my three years as Club Captain I remember taking on the role fairly apprehensively and not really knowing what to expect. There have been a number of challenges over the years and none more so than getting through the pandemic. Working with the club committee, I have tried to overcome these challenges to the best of my abilities and I hope the club members feel that I have been up to the task. Although challenging at times, being Club Captain has been a very rewarding experience and I am pleased to have had the opportunity to give something back to a club that has given me so much over the years.

Our next Club Captain has been a member of the club committee for 5 years, 4 of which he was the leader of the women's squad and previous to that he was on the committee for the DMU rowing club as a student. He is a dedicated volunteer for the club, a skilled rowing coach, he is passionate about helping new members break into the sport and to develop their own passion for it and I know he has ideas and vision for how the club can be run. I hope the committee and the club members will give their full support to Alex Wellings as the next Club Captain.

Ben Pickering
 Club Captain
 November 2022