

CONVENER'S REPORT 2018–19

I'd like to start by thanking you all for coming, and by thanking all the members who have given generously of their time this year in many various guises to ensure that the club continues to flourish.

2018 was a very successful year for Glasgow Coastal Rowing Club. We started the year on the 1 April with 64 members, and this steadily increased to 105 members – 58 female and 47 male – at the close of the financial year on the 31 March.

Thanks to the hardwork of treasurer Ian Watson and fundraiser Michael Stratigos, the club has been fortunate to benefit from several grants this year.

In April club members gave very generously to our special barge refurbishment fund, raising £740. In June we received a £500 grant from the Sports Council of Glasgow, which was spent refurbishing the barge – more on that shortly. In December we received a grant from Glasgow Area Partnerships of £2,893 which allowed us to place an order for a set of new oars from Collars which will be arriving very soon, and also to purchase a road trailer for the club. Thanks to our small surplus of funds, the club was able to contribute £320 towards a wheel lock and trailer insurance for this new trailer.

We have built upon our existing relationship with the Clyde Maritime Trust, who in February 2018 very generously granted us the use of the vacant barge at Kelvin Harbour pontoon. Thanks must go to Gordon McCracken for taking the lead on refurbishing the barge, painting and clearing it out on behalf of the club, and to member Tom Malone for his efforts to create suitable oar storage inside it.

The £500 grant from the Sports Council of Glasgow enabled us to replace two windows on the barge and also to run electricity into it, so that in future we can have cups on tea on the pontoon – I am sure everyone agrees that this will be a very good thing on a cold morning!

Our connection to the CMT has developed further, and in September a small dedicated cohort of club members began to build a new skiff in the CMT's workshop, which will be on permanent loan to the club once she is launched.

Under the supervision of Lachlan, the CMT's boatbuilder, this team of volunteers has made rapid progress, something that the CMT is delighted about. All of the volunteers have honed their woodworking skills as a result of this project. Painting of the as yet unnamed new skiff is underway, with a launch date to come in the near future. This year we have also been fortunate to have our accounts independently audited by the CMT's accountant, further enhancing our ties to them.

Skills training is something that the club is very keen to promote, and there are many different skills to be found in coastal rowing. Some of our members benefitted from VHF training in January, in a short course run by member Ross Ritchie. If anyone has any ideas about further courses that they think would benefit the club please do let the committee know.

With three skiffs on the water there is undoubtedly an ongoing heavy commitment to maintaining the boats, and this is something that the committee is mindful of. Our boats sit in the water all year round, and although this makes access quick, it means that they take the brunt of Glasgow's fickle weather.

Throughout May and right through to August *Gobhancroit* and *Lady Danger* were taken into the CMT's workshop in turn, and thoroughly refurbished inside and out, again by a team of club volunteers. This work was slow and meticulous, taking approximately 7 weeks to complete on each boat, but it is something that we have to commit to if we want to continue to row skiffs on the Clyde.

Maintaining boats is expensive, and despite our best efforts at forecasting costs, we ended up spending a significant sum – a total of £1,300 – on both vessels, however these very thorough refurbishments should mean that we won't have to do such a complex overhaul on an annual basis, going forward.

We rely on our members to report any wear and tear and indeed damage to the boats as soon as possible, and thanks must go to Anne Macdougall of GalGael for the weather-eye she keeps on all our vessels and her efforts to bail them out when they are fit to burst from all the rain we get.

Keeping these ongoing costs in mind, we are always keen to hear about ideas to help the club raise cash. Late last year two of our more artistic members, Emma Brown and Kat Garbutt, came up with an excellent idea to make greeting cards. They created a unique stencil design featuring one of our skiffs and a hardy crew battling the elements. In February and March Kat and Emma ran workshops on the Tall Ship where our members made 98 unique cards. These cards are available for purchase tonight and we hope you'll agree that Emma and Kat, together with our volunteer stencillers, have created some really beautiful mini artworks.

Obviously GCRC benefits greatly from our connection to the Clyde Maritime Trust, who allow us to use the pontoon and the barge free of charge. A condition of our continued use is a commitment to helping to keep the pontoon and its environs litter-free. To that end, we have a 'No trace' policy on litter on the barge and the pontoon, and so far our members have been great at taking their rubbish away with them – so many thanks for that!

More seriously though, on September 5 Michael Stratigos worked with the Marine Conservation Society to organise and undertake a thorough litter pick of the pontoon and the area surrounding it, picking up a huge range of plastics and other detritus. As a result, the Scottish Coastal Rowing Association gave the club a Greenflag Award. Plans are afoot to continue these litter picks in conjunction with Keep Scotland Beautiful's Upstream Battle programme, and so Michael and Kate McBoyle (our Club secretary) recently attended some training to learn about what is involved in that. Hopefully you will have seen their email about the first of these ongoing surveys, which takes place on the 5 May. A small group of members is leading on these efforts, consisting of Michael, Kate, Shona Henderson, Bob D'Arcy and Connor Walker.

Since its inauguration, GCRC has supported the Clydebuilt Festival. Last September the club ran its own tombola during the two-day festival, manned by volunteers, and with prizes kindly donated by members. Our tombola is a real hit with festival visitors, and we managed to raise about £300. If anyone has ideas about what we could do with our stall this year then please let us know.

We also helped to run the Castle to Crane race, running the finishing line, helping to lift skiffs from the water and by providing the organisers with general help. Michael and Gordon ran a scavenger hunt on the Sunday, for any visiting clubs who wished to participate. Scottish coastal rowing as a sport is strongly reliant on the assistance and volunteering provided by clubs like ours and races such as Castle to Crane would be impossible to run without this help, so once again, thanks to everyone who took part.

With that in mind, I must also thank the skippers who took on the training and coxing of the crews for the race itself, Ewan Strachan and Shona Henderson. They did a sterling job, and I know that the race was very much enjoyed by the crews. We'd like to encourage anyone who has ambitions to take part this year to have a go at it, and to book on to the sessions Shona and Ewan have started to put up on Eventbrite. Given that we now have a trailer and a new Regatta and Race Coordinator (Floortje Brandsteder), members will have the opportunity to take part in regattas further afield, should they wish it. Regattas offer us a great chance to row in different waters and to see new parts of Scotland.

GCRC, perhaps by virtue of its plum position on the Clyde, is sometimes asked to assist the wider community with access to the water. In the past year we have featured in a music video for the Scottish band Niteworks, taken out visitors from Outward Bound, and hosted various visiting rowers from other clubs around Scotland. We also assisted the artist Robert Thomas James Mills with his Glasgow International installation as part of the GI festival. We are always happy to help visitors get out rowing where we can.

As you know, sometimes demand outstrips supply, and it can be hard to get a place on a row. We currently have 15 skippers on our books, and we are always looking for more, so I'd encourage any of our members who are willing to take an active part in setting up and taking charge of rowing sessions to speak up and let us know.

This year we have drafted a development strategy for the club, and it has been emailed to everyone in advance of tonight's AGM. We hope people have comments on it and ideas about how to grow the club and encourage rowing in general. Members are always welcome at the committee meetings, the dates of which are published in the minutes available on GCRC's website.

I have very much enjoyed my year as convener and am more than happy to continue, but I wouldn't have been able to do it without the support of the other office bearers, Treasurer Ian Watson, Secretary Kate McBoyle, and committee members Michael Stratigos and Gordon McCracken, so many thanks to them.

And now I'd like to hand over to Ian, who will give us his Treasurer's report.