

GCRC Convener's Interim Report July 2020

This year we have thus far been unable to hold our 2019–2020 AGM, which would normally have taken place in April. The impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic has been felt around the globe, and it continues to prevent club members from rowing on our beloved river Clyde. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that people's safety is of the utmost importance, and that remains the case whether we are on land or on water. As soon as it is deemed safe to do so the club will make a return to the water – we just need to be patient for a bit longer.

Looking back to April 2019, we started the year with a small cohort of members continuing to build our new skiff, *Kelvin Kelpie*, in conjunction with the Clyde Maritime Trust, which was completed and launched in June by the Lord Provost Eva Bolander. New life jackets and sundry safety chandlery and safety equipment was purchased to complete the outfitting of the new boat, funded by generous donations from club members.

We received our new boat trailer in May, with a view to enabling participation in regattas and events further afield. Guidelines on safe towing were drawn up for members to use as a reference and we experimented with the best way to load, secure and unload the skiff from the trailer. The first event we were able to participate in was a 'show and row' at Inverary in May, with a view to demonstrating to local people what was involved in skiff rowing. Many people were able to try it out, and the local community is now engaged in the process of building their own skiff.

In June members started to train ferociously for the triennial Skiffie World Championships which were held on Loch Ryan, Stranraer, between 7–13 July. Members travelled down for the week and took part in several race heats for the Men's U40, Women's U40, Mixed Open and Mixed 50+, competing alongside teams from around the UK and further afield. Ideally training would have started earlier in the year but the pontoons were out of bounds and completely deconstructed for several weeks over May and June, as significant dredging had to take place at the mouth of the river Kelvin. Thanks must be extended to Seaforce, who moved the pontoons and boats to safe spots along the Clyde whilst this work was undertaken.

In September the club once again took part in the Castle to Crane race, with two teams taking part. Members organised and ran a stall at the Clydebuilt Festival where children were able to make their own origami skiff which they could then take home. Members also generously loaned rowing machines so that people could have a go at 'beating the clock' to see how many strokes they could make in 30 seconds.

A safety survey of our lifejackets was undertaken in late September, where we evaluated the gas bottles and straps on each of our lifejackets to ensure they were functioning as they should. A log book was established to assist with tracking these checks going forward.

In October *Gobhancroit* was taken into the Clyde Maritime Trust's workshop to dry out in preparation for a refurbishment. Club volunteers devoted many hours to sanding, painting and varnishing her back to a good state of repair and my thanks go to them for completing this demanding task, and to the CMT for facilitating our use of the workshop.

Some major improvements were made to the pontoon barge – our clubhouse – throughout the year. A new port hole cover was installed, the grille was removed from the window and a fresh coat of paint applied to the sides. Some new shelving was acquired for the inside to assist with equipment storage, and a small safe installed where we can keep keys and items such as radios. Somewhat prophetically, a hand sanitiser unit was installed to assist with good hygiene. Small tyre fenders were also placed along the side where the pontoon and barge abut, to add some extra protection.

Two grant applications were made to the Arise Fund and Sports Council for Glasgow which enabled us to buy three covers at £500 each for the skiffs. These are designed to keep rainwater out of the boats when they are not in use and are tied up. Each cover is bespoke to an individual skiff, because there are unique variations to every skiff. As anyone who has bailed one of the boats out after heavy rainfall will attest, covers are extremely useful because they will also help minimise degradation of materials.

Litter picking surveys of the area continue in conjunction with Keep Scotland Beautiful, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust, and the Friends of the River Kelvin, with our latest survey taking place in January 2020, when a horrifying number of earbuds were counted, amongst a vast amount of other plastic detritus. Club members continue to take part in these surveys and we are grateful to everyone who assists.

Last but not least, our rowing sessions were enjoyed by many people throughout the year, both members and people keen to try out rowing for the first time. These sessions are operated by our volunteer skippers, who like all of our other volunteers, give generously of their time. I would like to extend my thanks to everyone who has taken part in the club's activities throughout the year, but in particular to the committee members and office bearers, who have the unseen yet important task of ensuring the club survives and thrives.

Finally I would like to thank everyone who renewed their club memberships for 2020–21 at what is a difficult and uncertain time. Although the Coronavirus Pandemic has curtailed our rowing for the moment, your commitment to supporting the club will ensure that at some point in the future we can take to the water once more.

Fiona MacLeod
Convener