

Convener's Report – April 2022

Thanks to the pandemic, it has been three years since our last in-person AGM. Much has changed in the interim, with lockdown restrictions placed on our rowing activities to the extent that we were unable to get out on the water for most of 2020 and 2021. Our fleet of three boats has been moored up at the Kelvin Harbour pontoons throughout, but they have weathered the Covid storm largely due to the diligent checking carried out by our volunteers. During 2020 *Lady Danger* was protected from the worst of the weather because she had her new cover hopped-on just prior to the outbreak; the other two vessels had to wait until a gap in lockdowns just before the delayed COP 26 conference in October 2021 for the work on them to be carried out to enable their new covers to be donned. However, this has been completed and all three boats are now protected.

These skiff covers make a huge difference to the condition of the boats, and it is the hope of the committee that they will mitigate some of the worst effects of our Scottish weather so that we don't have to carry out full refurbishments on them with the same regularity as before. My thanks go to outgoing committee member Gordon McCracken for his commitment to maintaining the fleet, sourcing the skiff covers, and for his expertise and ingenuity in devising a method for using them on the water, as well as his invaluable support in looking after all our equipment and the barge.

It is a fact of life that change is inevitable, and so several other committee members are also resigning at this AGM. Our long-serving treasurer Ian Watson and dedicated Secretary Kate Borland are vacating their positions, and new volunteers have stepped forward to take their place. Both Kate and Ian have proved to be a great source of help and support to the club and have given advice to me and the rest of the committee on a regular basis. Their input will be sorely missed, but on behalf of the club I thank Ian, Kate, and Gordon for helping to get GCRC off the ground and into good shape, and for continuing in their roles over the challenging past three years.

We have also recently lost our experienced fundraising champion, Michael Stratigos, who has relocated to the north of Scotland, and committee member Liza Downie has also stepped away in the last few weeks. Sincere thanks to Liza and Michael for their efforts on behalf of GCRC in terms of fundraising, maintenance, and environmental surveying.

It is my own intention to vacate the role of convener in 2023 so that a new person can take the club forward, although I very much hope to and plan on continuing as a skipper and member of GCRC in the future. However, in the forthcoming year I will be on hand to assist the new committee and office bearers as they find their feet.

The restrictions placed on our rowing, by virtue of being sited in Scotland's largest conurbation, have meant that GCRC has been slower to get back to 'normal' rowing. We are not yet able to hold open mornings where new people can simply 'show and row'. One of the reasons for this is that some of our skippers remain cautious about possible Covid exposure, and that is their absolute right. Our skippers are all

volunteers, and they must use their best judgement as regards whether it is safe to take a boat out whilst the risk of catching Covid remains real. However, there is always room for new skippers to come and train to enable them to take the boats out and organise rowing sessions. The more skippers we have, the more sessions can take place. If anyone is interested in becoming a skipper just drop us an email.

With the natural ebb and flow of people moving away and joining other clubs, it would be remiss of me not to encourage all our members to get involved in the club in ways beyond simply turning up to row. We need you to take the lead on helping to maintain the fleet, tidy the club house, litter-pick the slipway, help to fundraise and tow the trailer so that we can take the skiffs to events. There are many ways members can get involved, either through the committee or in practical ways on the pontoons. One thing GCRC does not lack is a range of skills amongst its members, so please come forward and help ensure its survival. The reality is that if we don't bring some new blood on board to help run the club then there is a real danger that GCRC will not continue to be viable in the immediate future – your club needs you!

As you all know, we have recently had to raise our membership fees to cover the cost of the mooring facilities we use at the Kelvin Harbour and for access to the Tall Ship's workshop for maintenance, which whilst regrettable is still very affordable. Our fixed costs aren't changing – we still need to maintain the boats and equipment and insure them. Thanks to everyone who has renewed their membership for the 2022/23 season, and to anybody who is swithering about it, please do respond to the request for renewal. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank The Tall Ship and GalGael for their ongoing support of GCRC. Without the loan of their skiffs, we would literally be rudderless.

We do have some interesting upcoming events this year: two significant ones are the triennial SkiffieWorlds, which will take place in Kortgene in the Netherlands in July. A small number of club members are planning on attending. They will borrow a skiff locally for the competition, and training sessions are currently underway on the Clyde. The Castle to Crane race will resume on 3 September, and GCRC will hopefully have two boats in the running for it, if not all three.

Finally, GCRC is a mixture of those that like to compete and those that like to just row socially. With the size of fleet that we have there is room for both. Fingers crossed we'll be able to come together on the pontoons more easily in the future now that restrictions are being eased.

Fiona MacLeod

Convener

