

NRC AGM November 18th 2019

Recreational and Explore Rowing report

Introduction

Recreational rowing offers an alternative to open competition through activities such as tours, challenges and leagues. Touring has for a long time been widespread throughout the world and has a strong social aspect. British Rowing celebrated its 25th annual UK tour last year. Challenges includes distance rowing on a variety of waterways. Leagues have been formed in several regions and in the UK were pioneered in the Northern region, where the Sunday League is open to recreational and returning rowers as well as to novices seeking an introduction to competition and to those who have retired from racing.

Sunday League

The Sunday League is organised by the Northern Rowing Council and is open to British Rowing members with a minimum of Row membership, in accordance with rules posted on the NRC website at <http://www.nerowing.com/sundays.html>.

The eighth season reached its conclusion in rather wet conditions at Tyne United on October 6th. Seven rounds took place this year, the only weather casualty being the June round due to have been at Tynemouth.

Tees RC was unable to host a round this year, creating a need for a new venue, and for the first time a visit to Ebchester was included, where a variation from the usual format, with rowers taking part in coxed and coxless doubles instead of quads, meant that no league points were awarded for the August round. This was the first competitive rowing at Ebchester since 1973 and supported the project to redevelop the Ebchester Boathouse.

The overall winners were both from Tyne ARC, It's Chico Tyne in the Open league and Tynequila in the Women's league. New trophies were donated for the competition by Stewart Allan of Durham ARC and these were presented to the two winners. Prizes were also presented to the runners-up in each league, both from Tynemouth RC.

The average number of teams per round has increased to 12, including one from Sheffield who only missed one round, but this masks a net decline in the number of participants over the past 5 years (where figures are available) as shown in the table below. The number of teams in 2016 and 2017 is artificially high because of the different rules in place at that time.

Year	Teams	Avg entries per round	Male	Female	Total competitors
2012	25	11.9			
2013					
2014	25	15.6			
2015	31	14.1	78	98	176
2016	45	14.6	68	89	157

2017	37	13.1	57	94	151
2018	27	9.5	40	76	116
2019	20	12.1	41	64	105

A schedule of rounds for next year is needed so that dates can be added to the calendar.

Increased numbers of participants would help to reinvigorate the league and regain the popularity of past years. Clubs have been encouraged to provide entries, and there are indications of some renewed interest for next year.

Leagues are known also to be in operation in the North West and Thames Regions (and possibly West Midlands). Each has devised their own format, loosely based on the Northern formula. Eastern Region aim to increase use of the Charles Stanley sponsored boats which they house, and forming a league is one of their plans for achieving this.

The North West and Yorkshire regions currently have no Recreational co-ordinator.

Touring

Thanks to the work of the Recreational Rowing Committee rowing tours continue to be well supported by a cross section of BR members, those from the Northern region included.

Despite less than ideal conditions the 26th British Rowing Tour of the Lake District went ahead in August/September. Rowers from 30 clubs took part using the 8 Charles Stanley boats as well as 16 coxed quads provided by other participating clubs. In a break with tradition the tour was divided into 3 groups with each group spending a day rowing round Bassenthwaite Lake, Ullswater and Derwentwater. A group of day rowers from Tyne United enjoyed their visit. The distance covered was not as far as planned because of the weather conditions. The new format made transport arrangements easier but was less good for group cohesion.

As well as the national tour the committee arranges tours in different regions of the UK and overseas, managed by clubs based in the regions visited, including the second Explore the Broads tour in June. Also in June the biennial BR European Tour visited Lithuania, which proved to be very popular and the 45 places filled up immediately upon opening last December. The Northern region was well represented, with members from Hexham and Durham taking part.

BR members are also able to participate in the annual FISA World Tour which this year was to Finland in July.

The Great Tyne Row took place on September 7th but with numbers reduced from the 2017 event, 17 boats taking part. Conditions prevented crews from reaching Tynemouth, the finish instead being at North Shields. To avoid being on the same weekend as the Great North Run it is proposed to move the GTR date in future to mid-August.

Other local day tours haven't taken place this year although there have been some private visits between clubs. To cover insurance and use of boats some clubs now ask visitors to take out temporary membership, the cost of which may deter potential visitors.

In October a 'Sitting at Backstops' tour was arranged jointly between British Rowing and Rowing Ireland, skirting the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

The Recreational Committee is satisfied with the level of use of the Charles Stanley quads for the above events over the past year, enabling the first tranche of the £100k sponsorship funding to be realised. The boats are standing up well to usage and the income from hire is sufficient to cover the cost of maintenance and repairs. It is anticipated that there will be a surplus upon receipt of the final tranche which can then be used to buy equipment such as a trailer, but this will need to be reviewed with BR and agreed with CS.

Planning of tours for 2020 is underway. The national tour is scheduled to be on the middle Thames (Marlow to Chiswick) between August 28th and 30th. The next European tour is likely to be in 2021 to either France or Ireland.

The Norfolk Broads tour will be repeated on June 6th/7th.

The Great Coal Row at Southampton didn't take place this year but a date of August 15/16th has been set for 2020, which is likely to clash with the proposed date for the Great Tyne Row.

Surveys of other possible routes have been carried out, some more feasible than others.

The committee has event insurance that will cover 4 tours each year.

Communication and links between Recreational and Masters rowers

Based on findings from a recent survey the BR Masters Committee sees benefits in working more closely with the Recreational Rowing Committee due to their shared demographic and the common needs of the two groups, and has invited representatives from the Recreational Committee to their next meeting on December 3rd. It is also considered beneficial to broaden the age profile for recreational rowing, which has usually been limited to older people, to include juniors, students etc.

The need for support for coaching of post-L2R recreational groups has been identified as a concern. Difficulty of finding trailer drivers is another ongoing issue for all forms of rowing.

Improved contact with clubs would also help to promote the benefits of recreational rowing and the huge value that recreational rowers bring to clubs, but it is often difficult to identify a suitable club contact who is able to liaise on behalf of recreational rowers as many clubs are focused mainly on competition. There is a desire to improve communication about recreational activities, possibly by means of a newsletter. A list of suitable contacts would therefore help information to be

communicated more effectively. There is a Recreational Rowing website at <http://www.recrowing.org.uk/> and a facebook group.

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