



## Rowing at Coleraine Over The Years

Alan Anderson

Okay, to avoid confusion, I'm not THAT (unsuccessful) Irish Championship years ago (it still hurts to count the Alan – the Olympian. I'm a generation attempts, and winning a round at Henley. years!). As I thought about it, there earlier ('74-'81). Given that I spent the Then age and injury sentenced me to 21 seemed to be four types of changes – the first four years coxing, nature didn't have years as Treasurer (and coach, boat flippant observations; the more pertinent the Olympics in mind for me. Though I repairer, builder, .....) at Lagan Scullers, changes to the club; what actually hasn't managed to grow enough to have to start before finally returning to the homeland changed; and then what maybe should rowing in my 6th form and really got into to help Jeremy's coaching team on change in the future .....

serious heavy training while at Saturday mornings. Firstly, the passing observations. I won't Southamton University for four years. But enough about me. I was asked to even mention the obvious proliferation of Returning to Belfast Rowing Club, I can write this article about the differences mobile phones, but will start with cars – only claim my highlights to be a few that I've noticed in the club since I left, 35 there doesn't seem to be a single child



1979/80 crew

Alan Anderson, Willie Fleming, John Dean, Peter Huey, Stephen Peden, Steven Yeoh, Ronald Walker, Ian Murphy, Alan Wilson (cox)

who walks or rides. I recall one guy in my era who had to cycle miles to catch a bus to school, then do his rowing training, catch the bus then cycle a few more miles home, every day. (Note to Jeremy: ban cars except mine and make them jog down the lane as a warm up). You don't even need to hold your nose as you pass the pig sty as it has been physically and metaphorically replaced with a gas tank. No wonder I got a funny look when I sent them on a warm up run to the pig sty!

Then there's the river, which I guess is much as it was, but it seems a much more dangerous place to me now – maybe because I'm more aware of the dangers. As a child you thrill in the excitement of shooting the rapids of the Old Bridge – today as a coach, I'm mentally preparing the rescue plan every time I see a whirlpool crab. Clothing - I really can't remember wearing anything other than a singlet, maybe with a T-shirt under it in the winter, and a pair of white double seated rowing shorts, if you were lucky. Today it is all lycra multi-layer thermals, gilets and waterproofs. Hypothermia never did me any harm (except maybe stunt my growth?). Yet, even properly clothed, there is still a reluctance to help pull the launches out when it is a really low tide and the trailers drop off the bottom of the ramp.

But what about the real changes? Well the obvious one is the introduction of girls since the amalgamation. I can only see good in this. Quite apart from all the benefits shared with co-education, it opens our wonderful sport to twice the audience (I'm old enough to remember clubs that have only relatively recently allowed female members!). Does it allow girls to feel equal in a once male dominated sport (and world)? Without generalising too much, I think the girls in the current generation are showing the boys up a bit, so I think yes, it does. Mind you, the clubhouse seems an awful lot noisier on a Saturday morning than I remember it – which either means girls chatter more ... or maybe it is just the

whirr of so many rowing machines. It is an impressive suite of equipment, even if it instils fear and pain in every child as they are measured to the tenth of a second of their performance. How relaxed it makes the old "tank" feel. It was much less of a piece of torture, with its swooshing puddles and not a measurement in sight. Today there is no escaping the numbers on an ergo!

Whilst talking equipment, I hardly need mention that the current fleet is impressive (though we could still do with some more). And a far cry from the all wooden fleet I learnt on. We still had two huge clinker eights (Ballycairn and Ballysally, if I remember right) that took about 16 of us to lift. If you were good, you progressed to the "shell" boats, maybe the "Restricted" ones that still had a keel running along them. Only the best got the racing shells. All polished with Turtle Wax before every regatta. Oh yes – at regattas, coxes wore whites and blazer. I can't see that happening today.

Of course introducing girls doubles the demand for coaches and this is where I see the biggest change since "my days". Back then, virtually each year had its own rowing master, most with years of rowing experience. Today there are none (though maybe the students prefer to escape from teachers for their sport!). Thankfully, Jeremy is in position now, which makes mid-week games days almost possible, but Saturdays or events would be impossible without extra assistance. Obviously the pressures on teaching today are different from the 70's, so we can't expect things to run the same. COBRA is doing a sterling job in physical and financial support, as well as lobbying the school, but I fear the structure and funding of the club isn't yet as sound as it could be.

Part and parcel of this is the unmistakable fact that the quality and quantity of rowing is so much higher than I remember in my years. Perhaps this is all part of evermore demanding progress in all

sports. Through the omnipresence of water bottles, even with the first year venturing out between the bridges, who won't even work up a sweat, suggests to my cynical mind that in this modern world, appearance and accessories are more important than effort .... or am I just getting old? But on a Saturday I now regularly take crews down to the Barmouth, and always double outings on a Saturday – in my day we never went below the railway bridge, just up to the Cutts and back, maybe twice. Winning is always getting harder.

What hasn't changed? Well, it is only with the wisdom of old age that you realise what rowing, with all its trials and tribulations, does for your character. But I still see that today in the confidence instilled in a beaming first year who manages to do a loop from the steps in a yellow training scull. Or the fear conquered after a capsized when the next outing ends with an accomplished smile. The cox who realises he is appreciated when his crew bring him birthday gifts. As they say, all humanity is there, and rowing, like most sports, is a great way for children to learn it. And winning, that is still good too!

And 8am in mid-winter is still as cold as 35 years ago! And the Bann still whips up into a storm at the slightest breeze. Nobody wants to wash the boat. The rain always stops just as you are coming off the water. Some things never change!

The future – what might change? As hinted earlier, the structure of the club is much improved, and will hopefully go from strength to strength, with a more stable basis. As COBRA matures, its membership can only increase. Hopefully a stronger club will then result in a stronger COBRA, with female representation as our alumni go out into the wider rowing world and bring back their experiences (and finances) to help the next generations.

*Alan Anderson*

# Corey McDowell

For the 2016/17 season, I had decided to take a step back from full time rowing at Reading to focus more on university studies and give myself a break from the demands of combining training 12 times a week whilst studying for a degree. This meant I was no longer doing as much competitive racing but I was still training fairly regularly at the boat club to maintain fitness. The main highlight of the head season was forming a crew with two RUBC alumni members and a current PhD student to race at Reading University Head. It was great to be back in a boat racing again with some old friends, unfortunately we were not as fit as we used to be as our result showed we were quite a bit slower compared to two years ago! Still, a very enjoyable day was had and it worked in well with the annual RUBC dinner later that evening.

The final race of the season for RUBC was the European Universities Regatta in Subotica, Serbia. The club had qualified seven boats for the event, but a member of the 2nd lightweight quad had to pull out due to injury two weeks before the club set off to Serbia. I was given the call-up and hastily made my way back to Reading to get some



training sessions done with the crew, and to shed a couple of pounds to get back to lightweight again! We arrived in Subotica in high spirits and we quickly got accustomed to the course. However, in the race for lanes on Friday it was clear that substituting into the boat at short notice was going to be challenging. We struggled to keep up with the rest of the crews and finished last, well off the pace. We were really frustrated with the result, so we went back to the drawing board, made some changes and by the time of the final on Sunday we were feeling more confident of getting a positive result. Conditions for the final were atrocious, with a strong cross-headwind creating very

difficult racing conditions. Despite this, we went out aggressively at the start and managed to maintain our rhythm throughout the race and we finished in 4th place, a very respectable result for the crew given the circumstances. We were quite lucky we did not end up sinking! Overall it was a fantastic trip and a brilliant end to 4 years at RUBC. It almost made me miss the daily grind of rowing during term time!

Now I'm currently working as a tutor and rowing coach at Wanganui Collegiate School in New Zealand. Outside of the classroom and down at the river, I'm working with the U15 squad and sometimes helping out with the U16 squads too. The U15 and U16 boys recorded a win in their first race in an 8+ together at Wanganui Regatta, and the U15 boys were unlucky to lose by a foot in the quad race. Unfortunately, the other regatta this term in New Plymouth was cancelled, but we have more races in Wanganui, Karapiro and Twizel coming up in the new year and it'll be exciting to see how the boys and girls develop for those regattas!

*Corey McDowell*





## 5 years ago - 2013

COBRA helped purchase a Stampfli 8+. The Schoolboys beat COBRA, winning the Hamburg trophy for the second year in a row. The School competed at School's Head for the third consecutive year.

Senior squad was: Adam Millar, Corey McDowell, Scott Warke, Matthew Warke, Jonathan Kennedy, Reuben Simpson, Aaron Meenagh, Oliver Gage, Jack Mullan, Jack Murray, Ben Taggart, Josh Taggart and Marc Bucklee.



## 10 years ago - 2008

10 years ago the CAIBC Quad of Jonny Mitchell, Michael McNaul, Robert Hart and Jamie McBurney claimed 2nd place in the J18 Quad at the Irish Championships.



## 15 years ago - 2003

CAI competed at Tideway HERR London, Henley Royal Regatta and Irish Championships (bronze - J18 4+). Squad: Conor Campbell, Iain Giffin, Jason Taggart, David Dunlop, Colin Stewart, Chris Smyth, James Humphrey, Phil Hamill, Alex Humphrey, Graham Blair, David Ewart, Peter Topping.

Naming ceremony for the 'Camus' at Henley Royal Regatta performed by Olympic gold medallist Tim Foster.



## 20 years ago - 1998

26th July 1997 saw Johnny Coulter representing Ireland at the Home International Regatta which were held in Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham. He competed in the coxed 4 where Ireland took the gold medal, ahead of England, Scotland and Wales.

# Alumni in Rowing

Many Coleraine Alumni and members of in the World COBRA are still involved in rowing in one Championships in the way or another. Some are top level LM4x. Joel raced the athletes for club or country whereas some LM2- all season making take more pleasure messing about on the the A final in all major river. Many still brave the elements to events with Bronze and coach the next generation of school and Silver in the World Cups and university athletes, and a few enjoy the and a fourth place in the sport as a supporter from the side-lines. World Championships.

After retiring from International competition, **Richard Chambers** is now Assistant Coach at Cambridge University Boat Club. His main role is coach of the 2nd VIII Goldie.

Richard's brother **Peter Chambers** and **Joel Cassells** compete for GB Rowing. In 2017, Peter competed in all the various categories of lightweight sculling events with highlights being winning the LM2x at



the first World Cup in Belgrade and Silver

**Mark McMullan** has been coaching Novice Men's squad at Queen's University for the last 3 seasons, the Novice 8+ won BUCS, Irish Universities and Irish Championships last year. He was also awarded the Donal Murphy Prize for excellence at Queen's rowing last year for his continued contributions to rowing at the university.

**Calum McBurney** is Captain of Belfast Rowing Club, and finished 5th in the Intermediate Four at the Irish Championships.

**Jack Murray** is rowing when not studying at Manchester University, whilst **Jordan Gregg** is President of his club Harper Adams. **Michael McNaul** still occasionally drives the bus for his alma mater, Glasgow.

**Stephen Feeney** does some work on the mental preparation side of rowing with one of the top junior clubs in England, St. Pauls School.



When not teaching Maths at Belfast Inst. **Stephen Archibald**, runs the school rowing club there.

**Iain Kennedy** is a long time coach at Portora in Enniskillen (now Enniskillen Royal Grammar) and has recently had the inaugural girls J16 Ulster Championship trophy named in his honour.

Last but not least, **Jamie Gibson**, **Ross Cochrane** and **Alan Anderson** give up a significant amount of time and effort coaching the boys and girls at Coleraine Grammar with Jeremy, with more occasional help from **Philip Hamill** and **Alex Humphrey**.

I'm sure we have forgotten some people, please get in touch and we'd love to include you next year!

## Gift Aid Status

Following last years achievement of reregistering COBRA as an official charity after rule changes in Northern Ireland, COBRA Treasurer, Philip Hamill fought through significant red tape, to get Gift Aid Status for the organisation. This means that any future donations from tax paying members are worth 25% more to COBRA, and we can back date donations to June 2016. We will be contacting all members to request them to complete a consent form allowing us to claim gift aid on your behalf

For reference, we are company number 45083, charity number 104834 and have Gift Aid registration NI00680.





# Coleraine Grammar 2016-17

The September term commenced with almost boxing day sales like frenzy as the year 9 girls scrambled to sign up for rowing. Some were initially disappointed but as the term continued a few realized rowing really was the toughest sport in town and moved to less demanding activities leaving room for others. The rowing club membership settled at 127 with over 100 pupils attending every Saturday.

In October the rowing club held its annual dinner at the Royal Court Hotel Portrush. This function was kindly attended by the headmaster and representatives from the Board of Governors. The venue held 150 and was oversubscribed; guest speakers included Olympians Alan Campbell, Richard Archibald and GB rower and ex Fermanagh girl Miss Holly Nixon. In a pleasant blend of informative speeches and good craic the evening passed in a flash, a very generous raffle raised £1,200. The following awards and rowing club positions were presented by the guest speakers. Club Captain Hugh Moore, Ladies Captain Caroline Barr, Club secretary John Anderson, Vice-Captain Coran McCook, Ladies Vice-Captain Gemma Quigg and boatmen Jamie Millar, Jamie Grant. The achievement award was shared between Sarah Kirkpatrick and

Alec Scott, most improved rower went to Matthew Boyce. The two top indoor rowers boys and girls went to Hugh Moore and Molly Curry.

In January our top two ergers travelled to Limerick to take part in the Irish Indoor Rowing Championship. Nobody enters these competitions for fun, testament to the many buckets strategically placed around the hall as extreme effort can induce vomiting. Hugh Moore a year young came in the top third of the highly competitive under 18 category. Molly Curry again a year young won a bronze medal in the under 16 category and this outstanding result was to see her invited to a Rowing Ireland training camp later in the month.

In February the Rowing Club was delighted to take delivery of a touring quadruple scull. This stable boat was bought thanks to the generosity of four major benefactors Coleraine Old Boys Association, Golf Links Hotel Portrush, Scott Engineering Garvagh and the Ulster Branch of Rowing Ireland. In a boat naming ceremony hosted by the Headmaster the benefactors were thanked for their generosity and the boat was named "Deerstalker" a reference to the restaurant within the Golf Links Hotel

complex. The boat will have two primary uses to teach children starting in September to row in a stable environment and to bring revenue into the club via parents rowing in it mid-week. This very social practise entails rowing down river to a local restaurant for coffee and returning all for a modest fee.

In March the rowing club attended Lagan Head of the river in Belfast and enjoyed some success the most obvious being the girls' junior 15 and 16 eights coming a close second to Enniskillen Royal Grammar School (formerly Portora) arguably one of the best sweep rowing clubs in Ireland. Many CGS rowers enjoyed their first competitive head of the river race.

In April the regatta season commenced. The small venues tend to be side by side knock out racing, and offer the most exciting of all sport for spectators. We travelled to Neptune Regatta in Dublin full of hope and aspirations. It is my experience in most regattas during the day something unfortunate happens to one of your crews or your competitors. This bad luck evens out over the course of the season and you just ride the punches when it's your turn. In Neptune if it could go wrong it did go wrong. A boat winning by a huge margin was disqualified for clipping a lane buoy, another disqualified for being late to the start not withstanding a huge traffic jam of boats in an oversubscribed entry. When a crew I would have put my house on, caught a crab (sounds like this should be in the fishing section) and lost, I should have dived for one of the excellent boathouse bars. However I remained and given it was April fool's day when one of the volunteer coaches phoned me to say one of our boats crashed while leading a race and was badly damaged, I thought it was a joke; it wasn't. I will need therapy before we return to Neptune next year.

The Irish Schools Championships were





held in Limerick in mid-April and the good times returned with some outstanding results. A league table was run based on results and CGS came joint 13th out of the 42 schools competing and the highest placed school from the North. Hugh Moore the seventeen year old single sculler came an outstanding fourth out of 32 rowers in the under 23 category. The girls' junior 15 eight won their final to be crowned Irish Schools Champions 2017. Rachel Bradley won the junior 14 single scull final and joined forces with Molly Curry to win the junior 15 double scull final. All other crew rowed with distinction just missing out on medals due to the high standard of competition.

The following week two girls and three boys entered the Belfast City Marathon as a relay team in direct competition with their COBRA counterparts. The purpose was to raise money for Mencap. COBRA completed the event in a very creditable 3 hours 32 minutes with the pupils a mere 4 minutes behind them. A tremendous worthwhile achievement for all involved.

At the start of May we attended Portadown regatta with every increasing numbers just under 40 rowers many experiencing their first regatta. Everyone enjoyed their day made difficult by blustery conditions. The boys junior 14

quad laid Neptune ghosts to rest by winning their event as did the girls' junior 14 double. Both girls junior 15 quads met in the final The girls 15 eight stormed to another victory this time over Neptune. The boys junior 15 squad showed considerable fight and determination and they gave me great hope for the future.

The following week 28 rowers entered Carlow regatta, due to its location it necessitated travelling down the night before. Accommodation is always a problem and I decided camping was the way forward a throw back to my youth and how the majority of rowers did it in years gone by. Carlow hosted us in style by providing a meal at the boathouse the night before and then a kind Carlow member gave up his large back garden to be turned into a mini Glastonbury without the singing talent. It certainly was an experience and as I may try and talk parents into attending next year I won't go into details.

The rowing by CGS was spectacular 28 athletes brought home 39 medals winning ten boat categories. Not everyone won a medal and how they dealt with disappointment amongst such success was a real testament to their character. I enjoyed all the success but in particular single scullers Jack Edgar and Kathryn

Boyce clearly both terrified in their respective first sculling race. The boys 15 eight gave me a race against Fermoy that will remain in my memory for a very long time unbelievably exciting with CGS hanging on to win in style.

A two week break and then Belfast sprint regatta when I entered one of the largest squads ever, 48 rowers many competing for the first time. Experience proved decisive and those with race pedigree behind them delivered the medals winning the men's J18 single scull, women's 15 quad and 14 single scull. A large number of finals were made but not turned into victories perhaps a lack of race hardness. Lessons were learnt boys particularly learnt that a victory one week does not guarantee further success.

Mid June another trip down south for seven athletes this time to Athlone regatta. The weather was unbelievable the car showing 27 degrees, I launched the crews and wished them well before scurrying back into the shade. Athlone is a oh so serious regatta a big step up for our athletes. Very few boats go through from the 5 lane heats to the final usually just one or two. Our j18 sculler Moore won his heat and came second in the final he managed a third place in the j18 double accompanied by his j16 crewmate Boyce. Our girl J15 sculler Curry rowing up at J16 won the event and then rowing three years above her age category and came 3rd in the J18 event. Our J18 girls double of McClelland and Quigg just missed out on the A final whilst our J15 girls double of Dalzell and Bradley came 3rd out of twelve boats. Our j14 girl sculler Bradley won her event. I christened this lot the magnificent seven.

On the last Saturday before the school holidays 57 rowers travelled to Portadown for a fun regatta. Our excellent hosts were repaying the hospitality we showed them last year when they visited CGS. This will hopefully become an annual event. The rowing consisted of mixed crews of all ages, sexes and clubs competing against





than others I will give them an opportunity to test once their respective seasons have ended.

The Craig Cup consisted of a three boat final Enniskillen, Methody and ourselves. Enniskillen stormed to a commanding lead that they never relinquished leaving an epic tussle between Methody who led CGS for 1300 metres of the 1500 metre course. The resilience that I witnessed in Portadown and Carlow came to the fore and carried CGS 3feet clear over the line I have rarely if ever cheered such a great second place.

The girls in a two boat final stayed in contention with Enniskillen until the last bend that fell in Enniskillen's favour allowing them to pull away for a 3 length victory. I was delighted with the performance of both crews and look forward to next year's competition when we try and bring these trophies home.

In mid-July two rowers attended the Irish Championships in Cork and made a little bit of history by being the first CGS rowers to compete at this Championship. Our year 13 boy Hugh Moore faced a daunting task in the junior men's single scull competing against forty of the top junior scullers in Ireland. This talented young man set the tone for the weekend when he led the field in his heat from start to finish and booked a well-deserved semi-final place. In his next race he again led off the blocks but was overhauled and finished the event a very commendable 13th position especially as he is a year young and will be back faster and stronger next year. On Saturday morning he completed again this time with the

majority of the opposition being university students another outstanding semi-finals slot was achieved.

Our year 10 girl rower Molly Curry quietly watched her team mate's achievements waiting for her opportunity to shine. She was entered a year young in the highly competitive junior 16 single scull category. This hugely talented athlete rowed controlled heat and semi-finals before unleashing her power and storming to gold by a country mile. Later on Sunday afternoon this young lady raced in her own age group j15 and secured another emphatic victory. These two rowers deserve huge praise but they are but the talented tip of a huge iceberg of CGS rowers waiting to follow in their wake

That's a summary of a very busy and I believe successful season, the foundation blocks are now in place for on-going improvement year on year. None of which would be possible without the immense dedication of Dr George Hull and our volunteer coaches Alan, Alex, Andy, Darren, Ivor, both Jamies, Kathryn, Phil, Ross and Tony. Every medal won is down to your hard work and enthusiasm. Huge thanks also goes to the band of parents who have supported rowing in so many ways from driving vehicles, to taking photographs, to being the appropriate lady present for the girls on away trips.

As the rowing club grows both in size and standard more help will be needed in terms of coaching, equipment, fund raising and sponsorship. If you can help in any capacity please get in touch.

*Jeremy Johnston*

each other and providing you took part in a race you won a medal. The racing and barbeque were excellent and enjoyed in equal measures.

On Monday 26th June two crews travelled to Enniskillen to take part in the junior 16 Ulster Rowing Championship hosted by Enniskillen Royal Grammar School. The boy's trophy was the Craig Cup with a history going back to 1952.

The girls inaugural event was the Iain Kennedy Cup named in honour of Iain a stalwart of Enniskillen rowing and former CAI Old Boy. The majority of CGS crews were a year young with 13 of the 16 rowers eligible to compete at this level next year. The boys boat had a talented rugby player whilst the girls an equally talented hockey player. I am a believer in children doing more than one sport and if they have fitness and rowing talent better

For more information on COBRA or rowing past or present at CAI & CGS, visit our website at

[COBRARowing.co.uk](http://COBRARowing.co.uk)

or

[facebook.com/COBRARowing](https://facebook.com/COBRARowing)

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