

## Coleraine To Tokyo

Molly Curry competes at the Junior Worlds



This summer, Coleraine Grammar School Rowing Club made history by having our first pupil selected to represent Ireland on the world stage at Junior level. Our year 13 pupil, Molly Curry, was selected to compete in Tokyo, Japan at the World Rowing Junior Championships 2019. Quite special that the Junior Worlds venue is the same location as is selected for the 2020 Olympic Games. Molly and her crew-mate Rhiannon, from Killorglin Rowing Club, would compete in the Woman's Junior 2x category.

Molly travelled to Cork to the National Rowing Centre in June, some weeks

before beginning her travels to Tokyo. This was to facilitate a training camp organised and hosted by Rowing Ireland to best prepare the athletes who were to be competing in Tokyo. The six-week training camp was relentless, training twice a day - six days a week. Putting in thousands and thousands of metres each session (some days totalling as many as 50km); taking to heart the words always uttered by the late great Bobbie Platt MBE, "Mileage make champions". The coaches would start the training sessions in the mornings at 5am to try to prepare the athletes for the inevitable jet lag they

would suffer once they have arrived in Japan. A nice perk of this extended time training at the National Rowing Centre was the possibility to row alongside the Senior and U23 boats also training at that time. A memory Molly and Rhiannon will no doubt treasure for years to come.

Following this six-week marathon of rowing (eat, sleep, repeat), Molly began her 24-hour journey to Japan. Once in Tokyo, the athletes had a few days off before taking to the course the day before racing would begin. This was as much of a familiarisation the crews would get before being launched onto the world rowing

scene. Unluckily for Molly, the Junior Woman's 2x is a hotly contested event with 22 entries. Molly and Rhiannon raced through heats, a repechage, semi-finals and eventually qualified for the A Final. An amazing achievement in itself. At this point in the competition the girls had already out performed some of the main countries in World Rowing - Great Britain, Italy, USA, Canada and Spain to name only a few.

The final was a fantastic race, for those that had the pleasure to watch it. Molly and Rhiannon were competing with top class competition. A start list that consisted of crews from The Netherlands, China, Lithuania, Germany, Greece and Ireland is one that would put fear into even the most seasoned athletes and crews in the world. The girls rowed a fantastic race, heading out of the starting block hard and fast, settling into a solid race rhythm and battling with the Germans and the Greeks for most of the 2000m course. The girls crossed the line in an impressive 5th place, within touching



distance of the Germans in 4th and well ahead of the Greeks in 6th.

It's hard to put into words just how proud everyone at Coleraine Grammar School Rowing Club and COBRA are of this achievement. To be 5th in the world in a sport that Molly only experienced for the

first time some 3 three years earlier is simply outstanding. It is also worth noting that Molly was only 17 she achieved this result, with another year in the sport at junior level who knows what she can achieve. Well done Molly!

*Jamie Gibson*

## COBRA Members 2018/19

After a spell out of the sport, **Graham Hunter** returned to full time racing with **Vesta RC** in London. Notable results include a 4th place in the Challenge IV+ category at Head of the River Fours and placing 63rd overall at the Head of the River Race for eights. He was desperately unlucky to miss out on qualifying for the Wyfold Challenge Cup at Henley Royal Regatta, missing out by barely a second. He is looking forward to stepping on again this season.

**Hugh Moore** has made a strong impression in his first season rowing with **Queen's University Belfast**. Particular highlights include a first place in the Intermediate 4x category at BUCS Head in Gloucester and silver and bronze medals in the Champ Lightweight 2x and Intermediate 1x respectively. He also made his debut on the international scene

representing **Ireland**. He placed second in the single at the Home International Regatta and raced in Greece in the U23 European Championships. He didn't make the A final this time, but the outlook looks positive as he has plenty more years at U23 to make his mark.

**Richard Chambers** had an extremely successful season coaching at **Cambridge University**. He coached the Goldie crew to a comprehensive win over Isis and also coached the Great Britain U23 Mens IV- to a gold medal at the U23 World Championships in Florida. He has now taken up the position of Women's Coach at his alma matter, **Oxford Brookes**.

Closer to home, **Calum McBurney** has been competing all over Ireland with **Belfast Rowing Club**. He made the journey with his IV+ crew mates to Henley Royal Regatta to compete in the Britannia



Challenge Cup. Sadly due to the level of competition present, they failed to qualify the boat. However the experience will be forever etched in memory as he plans to up his game for another seasons racing.

**Jamie Gibson, Ross Cochrane and Alan Anderson** continue to assist Jeremy

Johnson with coaching at **Coleraine GSRC**, offering invaluable help throughout the 2018/19 season. **Corey McDowell** joined the coaching team in January 2019 after finishing coaching with **Wanganui Collegiate School** in New Zealand. Parents also continue to help out as well, with

**Gary Bones** and **Alan Martin** being CAI old boys.

It is fantastic to see COBRA members still involved with the sport – if you are taking part competitively by racing or coaching or just rowing recreationally, please get in contact!

## The ‘Mickey Eyre’

On Wednesday 27th November 2019, Mickey Eyre had on Coleraine Grammar School Rowing Club the boys he held a boat naming ceremony in memory of the late Mr Mickey Eyre. The Headmaster, Vice Principal, Chairman of the Board of Governors, Mrs Eyre, her son and daughter and Coleraine Academical Institution Old Boys were invited to this very poignant event. Mr Eyre was the rowing master at CAI throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and also Vice Principal in later years. A delicious lunch was enjoyed by all prior to the commencement of speeches. This was a great opportunity for people to share heartfelt memories of Mickey and to articulate how his coaching impacted their lives, even to this day, through the sport of rowing at CAI. It was also a great privilege for everyone to recapture the fond memories of Mrs Eyre and how she attended regattas with her husband and contributed by shouting from the banks for the school boys rowing past. If there is one quote to take away from the afternoon that conveys just how much of an impact

the boys he coached, it came from Olympian **Iain Kennedy**, who said quite simply - ‘He changed my life’.

Following the speeches, proceedings then moved from the school library to the boat house. Mrs Eyre graciously named the boat in memory of her husband and said a

few kind words of sentiment to all those who made the day possible. The boat was then taken to the river by our club Captains and Vice Captains for a short christening row. This was a prime opportunity for photos to be taken as the boat took to the water for the first time. We would like to convey a huge thank you to all those who attended the ceremony, and for making it so special.



For **Iain Kennedy’s** sincere words and memories and to **Alan Anderson**, who also shared his memories and whose very kind donation made it all possible. Also, thanks to **David McDonald** for taking photographs of this memorable event.

*Jamie Gibson*



# A Coach's Memoirs

## Sid Grey

I came to Coleraine in Autumn 1968, recruited by the famous Head George Humphries. At that time five masters helped in the Boat Club. Some change!

In charge was 'Mickey' Eyre who took over the club in 1956. Before this time, it rowed at a low level and had low expectations. He brought it up to rowing at Henley and in the Senior Championships and winning Irish Junior Championships. I know he kept records, but I don't think the school kept them, a pity.

I coached the 2nd VIII+ and I had a great run with it. I took over the 1st squad in '72 and the next two years we cleaned up in Ireland. Finished in a close pack in the final of the Senior Championships behind Garda who were finalists in the Thames at Henley and UCD who had won in the Ladies. Unfortunately, with exams we could not go to Henley. At the Home Internationals we lost by a canvas to Emmanuel who had won the Wyfold IVs at Henley. We beat them in the IVs by several lengths.

Noted oarsmen were Barry Barnwell, Hector Pearson, Colin Hunter, David Devennie, Campbell Tweed, Michael Nicholl, David Currie, David Gault and Erwin Cameron. All rowed at Senior Home International level, most for Scotland.

1974, a slack year

1975, another good year. Michael and Erwin were taken out of the boat as they were too old for juniors. They competed as senior pairs, at which they had quite a few

wins. They were 2nd at the Irish Senior championships, splitting the Irish Senior squad. The VIII+ won the junior championships with two Bann oarsmen.

After this year we were at a lower level but we did go to Chester and Northridge Regattas in Cheshire over quite a few years winning at Junior and also in Senior levels. On one occasion we received as a trophy of a silver covered oar which was proudly brought home. It was the oar of Andrew Irvine who had rowed for Oxford. He disappeared near the summit of Everest with George Mallory in 1924. A great oarsmen produced in this period was Geoff Canning, who rowed in the International Circuit with Colin Hunter in a 2-.

I took a coaching rest in the early 80s due to family, but gradually drawn back in and coached 1st VIII+ from 1999-90 and became Master-in-charge 1991. The club was getting much stronger and its

expectations growing. With the very fast '96 crew and an unbeaten Colts crew plus Alan Campbell, I looked forward to really knocking the door at Henley though it sadly was not to be.

From this generation:

Brendan Smyth - competed at Henley for over 20 years: 2 finals with TCD, one lost by 2 feet.

Richard Boomer - finalist with UL in the Wyfolds.

James Boomer - rowed for Leander and Olympic qualified for IV- for Ireland. Were not sent from lack of funds. Disgraceful.

Edward Grey – rowed for Oxford Brookes, Leander and Captain of Royal Navy crew. British champion in lightweight 2-.

Brian Steele – 3 Henley wins. Stroked GB U23 to win worlds. Could not get weight up enough for full crew.



# Coleraine Grammar 2017-18

The school rowing club enjoyed another successful season despite battling challenging weather conditions; resulting in an ever increasing number of events being cancelled or postponed. I think this is a mixture of global warming and strict health and safety regulations ensuring the sport is as safe as it can be.

The rowing club had a membership of 112 pupils with approximately 70% girls. To enable such a large number of pupils to be coached in a safe environment I was supported by a team of eight volunteer rowing coaches. This is not withstanding the huge input from parents and friends of CGS rowing, who give financial sponsorship, fund raise and source accommodation for overnight events.

My ethos, and that of the volunteer coaches, is to give as many people as possible a love of the sport of rowing and, I feel last season we achieved this objective in making the training harder and having the children bond as they face the challenges ahead. I know many of the rowers really strived with their studies to ensure they returned to school for this season or moved onto a rowing university to enable them to continue in the sport they love. On the contentious issue of rowing impacting on school studies I would hasten to point out that the rowing club has a large percentage of the school's

top academic achievers and all rowing pupils returned to school this September.

Not all rowers will make it to the top of the sport and every medal should be celebrated as none come easy and are the result of a seasons hard training and victory over equally likeminded and focused athletes. The rowing coaching team at CGS has proved it has the ability to take the very talented to the top of our sport whilst getting the very best out of those pupils that are prepared to make an effort.

Rather than quote our numerous rowing successes over the season I will endeavour to give you a flavour of the highlights of the 2018/19 season.

## COBRA Day

Past and present pupils of CAI/CGS gathered along with parents and supporters for the annual COBRA Day Christmas races. The old boys eight,

looking more athletic than old, took on the school boys eight. It was bow ball to bow ball until 1300 meters when the hard winters training of the school boys paid dividends and they stretched out to win by just over a length. A first win by the school boys since 2012!

What followed were fun races in quadruple sculls with a mixture of adults, boys and girls competing against each other in side by side racing. After numerous heats and semi-finals, a three boat final ensued with the winners earning a well-deserved box of sweets and the title COBRA Day Champions 2018.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the many supporters that turned up to watch the races, donated, mince pies, mulled wine and your continued support of CGSRC and COBRA. We congratulate the school boys on winning the Hamburg Trophy and look forward to the re-match!



National Schools Regatta



Senior girls training upstream of The Cutts.

**The Irish Schools Rowing Championship  
Lough Rynn, County Leitrim**

The CGS junior girls J15 eight became Irish Schools Champions 2019 and were delighted to be presented with their medals by Rowing Ireland CEO Michelle Carpenter. These young ladies overcame five other crews, extreme wind and waves plus equipment failure to take the gold medal position. It was a team effort but particular praise goes to the cox who truly excelled under huge pressure.

The eight lane regatta held on Lough Rynn in County Leitrim commenced in moderate winds which increased considerably during the morning with the regatta being cancelled due to safety concerns just before lunchtime. Safety is paramount but nevertheless hugely disappointing for the 57 pupils attending the event, the vast majority of whom didn't get to compete. Prior to cancellation our Year 13 boy Conor Kendall battled in the single scull missing out on a final slot but delighted to return without falling in. Our Women's U23 2x Curry and Bradley were the standout boat during the heats winning in comfort but, frustratingly, weather cancelled the final. The MJ16 8+ won the battle over Blackrock College but lost to a



Matthew Boyce and Rory Seaton

very strong Methody crew. Our WJ16 4+ came second in their final to a strong Colaiste Iognaid crew from Galway. Prior to cancellation CGS, Methody and Colaiste Iognaid all won gold putting the school well on track for a top three finish, very frustrating.

**National Schools Regatta, Eton Dorney**

Safe to say CGSRC had a fantastic weekend at Eton Dorney at the National Schools' Regatta, with some brilliant racing teamed with some fantastic weather! The first CGSRC crew to hit the water was the Boys J16 8+, they performed absolutely brilliantly coming

home in 17th position, only 4 seconds off the qualifying pace. Not bad considering there are 2 J15's in the crew!

Our Girls Championship Single Sculler Molly Curry stormed to an impressive victory beating 47 of the best scullers that Team GB could offer and set a new National Schools Regatta record for ChG1x by an impressive 6 seconds (nice cherry to top of the victory cake)! The previous record had stood for an impressive 7 years, huge congratulations fully deserved!

Onto Sundays racing and the Boys Championship Pair Matthew Boyce and Rory Seaton had a difficult race by their usual standards. This coupled with being against Team GB's top juniors meant they didn't qualify through to the finals. A disappointing result for the boys but they can hold their heads high considering the standard of rowing that was on display at the event.

The last crew to race was the J16 Girls 2x Rachel Bradley and Georgie Mclenaghan. They rowed to a fantastic 3rd in their time trial against 37 other crews, at the start of the day, and then stormed to victory during their semi-final. Once in the final the girls came up against the best J16 doubles in Britain and managed to come home in a fantastic 5th place. Well done to all competitors on their fantastic performances and a massive thanks to Glenshane Veterinary Clinics for



Ulster Champions

their support of this trip.

### **Ulster Rowing Championships girls crowned Ulster Champions**

CGSRC travelled to Belfast to compete in the Ulster Championships hosted by Queens University Belfast Rowing Club.

Our Boys J16 8+, competing for the coveted Craig Cup, had a fantastic time trial but unfortunately came up against very strong competition so sadly didn't qualify for the final.

The Girls J16 8+, racing for the newly established Iain Kennedy cup, had great row and qualified for their final. However, the Enniskillen Royal Grammar School J16 8+ that they met were just too good and our girls came home in 2nd place. Lastly our Girls J18 8+ faced MCB in the final of the Bobbie Platt Cup, they rowed a fantastic race and took the win convincingly and were delighted to be crowned Ulster Champions 2019. Great rowing by all the athletes and to our coxes for their performances.

### **Irish Rowing Championships Cork.**

29 CGS rowers made the long journey to Cork to the National Rowing Centre for the Irish Championships. The weekend was blessed with absolutely fantastic weather and flat calm conditions on Saturday and Sunday. All athletes performed well and should be proud of how they rowed and represented the school and their rowing club.

Stand out performances came from our Year 12 single sculler Kirsty Dalzell, who was up against other athletes a lot older than her, but she stepped up to the plate and rowed through heats and semi-finals to finish in a fantastic 6th place in the final of the Woman's Club 1x. Also huge congratulations to our Year 10 single sculler Georgie McLenaghan who won her final in the Girls J15 1x. This talented young lady also picked up a particularly kind compliment from one of the commentators of her race as being one of the 'ones to watch' for the future! Really well done!



Girls J16 VIII at National Championships

Our Boys J15 1x rowed a great race coming home in third place in his final. From an athlete that has done very limited sculling this year this is a fantastic achievement.

Both our J16 8+'s were very unlucky not to progress to their respective finals but our Girls J16 8+ did give us probably the most exciting race of the whole weekend, as they jostled with Galway RC A J16 8+ for the final qualifying place down the 2km Inniscarra race course. Our Girls A J18 4x- raced brilliantly progressing to the semi final and finishing in 5th place. This was great race experience for this young crew where bigger things are sure to come in the future.

Our Girls J18 1x, Rachel Bradley still only J16 and trying for a Homes International seat, rowed a good race but sadly came up just short of qualification but with still another potential 2 years in this event, the only way is up! The Boys J18 2- Jay McCafferty and Angus Bryce had a solid performance in their time trial for international selection. Our boys have only been rowing this boat together for a number of weeks and have showed promising speed when mixing with the main sweep clubs in Ireland. Men's J18 single sculler Matthew Boyce had his last race for CGSRC as he now

heads of to QUBBC in September to join his ex-doubles partner Hugh Moore, this pairing rowed to a fantastic 5th place at last year's championships.

CGS rowers had a taste, this weekend, of the extremely high levels of competition required to compete at the Irish Championships.

### **Welcome home ceremony for Molly Curry**

CGSRC gathered to welcome home Molly from her trip to Tokyo. It was great to see so many people out to support the rowing club and to celebrate Molly's amazing achievement with her.

Hopefully you found this report informative and enjoyable. The rowing club exists thanks to the generosity of the school in a difficult financial climate and the numerous local businesses sponsoring equipment to keep the club competitive. The current generation of rowers are being coached and assisted by parents who got involved a few years ago. If you can help in anyway, please get in touch with me.

*Jeremy Johnston*  
Head Rowing Coach  
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# Archives Relaunch

After a long absence, the COBRA archives have returned on our new website. The Archives record the history of rowing at Coleraine Inst, the transition into Coleraine Grammar School and the present and continuing achievements of the club.

Success in rowing started almost as soon as rowing itself started at CAI in the 1930s. The first recorded races were in 1930, against the established rowing schools of RBAI and Portora, both in IV+'s. The race against Portora being for the Wray Cup. The Coleraine men won both, beating RBAI by 8 lengths, the Wray Cup was rather closer, the margin of victory being only 4 lengths. This success continued with CAI going on to win the Wray Cup a further 8 times that decade alone.

Unfortunately, our records from the early days of CAIBC are not as comprehensive as we would like, with no information available at all for some years in the 1940s.

In these early years CAIBC did not have a dedicated boathouse of their own and had to share space in the Bann RC Boathouse for many years. This changed when a new river pavilion was built on the Ballycairn road in 1968. The Boathouse was quite an improvement on the increasingly cramped shared space at Bann. It offered not just more space, but was also closer to the school and had an Indoor Rowing Tank, a rare luxury.

This period saw even more success from CAIBC, with the club winning multiple Championships of Ireland, being selected to represent Ireland at various International regattas and the Club's continuing growth. With only a relatively small extension added to improve storage capacity, the Boathouse remained largely unchanged and was home to CAIBC and generations of oarsmen for over 40 years.



1931

By the 2000s the building was beginning to show its age, and a new pavilion was constructed in 2011. The current Boathouse offers more room for the growing fleet of boats, far less cramped conditions, and little chance of flooding. Though at the expense of the Rowing Tank, which is still said to exist under the hill which leads down to the River Bann. In 2015 CAI transformed into Coleraine Grammar School, with CAIBC becoming CGSRC and the introduction of girls rowing, which is shaping up to be as successful, if not more, than boys rowing has been in previous years.

A much more comprehensive history of generations of CAIBC and CGSRC can be found on the COBRA website at [www.cobrarowing.co.uk](http://www.cobrarowing.co.uk)



Naming the Janouseks

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

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

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If you have any comments or would like to contribute to the next newsletter, please get in touch at [alex.humphrey@gmail.com](mailto:alex.humphrey@gmail.com)

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