



Henley Women's Regatta

Alan Anderson

This year CGS made a return visit to Henley Women's Regatta after its first entry in 2021.

HWR is much more than a regular regatta. Whilst most of our local regattas may include muddy fields, wind swept lakes and BYO catering, HWR is on the same picturesque course as the historic Henley Royal Regatta – rolling lush green fields along the wooded Thames valley, with the church tower at one end of the straight, two lane, boomed course and the Temple Island at the other. Impressive Red Kites circling overhead, only out done by the Spitfire flypast (which almost ruined my lunch in the Chairman's Enclosure... but I risked losing dessert to rush out to see and hear it). HWR isn't as busy, corporate or international as HRR (though it does attract international crews), but is all the better for that. It is an entertaining event for the non-competitor – as the travelling parent group found.

That first year was very much testing the water, coming out of a year and a half of lockdowns that severely curtailed training and competition. In fact, HWR 2021 was pretty much the first event attended in two years. We were represented by Kirsty in the Aspirational Lightweight 1x and by the "Mad Four" in the Junior 4x- event, supported by coaches Jamie Gibson and myself, along with parents.

The standard at HWR has been growing every year and whilst not at the international level of HRR, most of the top domestic crews were there. Most events



are over-subscribed and operate an initial time trial to select the top 16 crews to go forward to the side-by-side knock out racing of the next three days. Last year, Kirsty qualified, becoming the first CGS rower ever to do so, but was put out in the first round. The Mad Four unfortunately did not qualify in the very competitive Junior 4x- event. Both crews promised to return the following year (the parents seemed as enthusiastic, if not more!).

So, the return in June 2022 saw both boats hoping to improve their performance, but the venture was given an early set back when a transport issue meant the boats would arrive too late for the time trials. Fortunately, two alumni came to the rescue – Molly Curry (who was also attending, for QUBLBC) very graciously lent Kirsty her boat mere hours

before she needed it herself, and a quick call to Richard Chambers secured the loan of a nice Empacher IV from Leander Club, where he is Women's Coach. Great thanks are due to these two alumni for helping us. Plus, Richard gave the group a guided tour of the Leander clubhouse and is obviously keen to promote the NI involvement past and present (and future!).

As one of the Mad Four was no longer Junior, they had to race in the Aspirational 4- event this year, against university crews. Doing the time trial in a strange boat didn't help and although they failed to qualify to the next stage, they were only two places away from doing so which was impressive for a school crew.

Kirsty also improved on last year's time trial, finishing in the top eight,



Why the name “Mad Four”? Well, they are just such lively, boisterous (and very noisy) teenagers. They brought such life, (and noise) to the boathouse, they will be missed. An example of this was on our first visit in 2021 - we were exploring Henley town and as our group headed down past the church by the ancient bridge, this elderly gentleman, walking his equally elderly Golden Labrador, was startled by the tour de force (and noise) of the Mad Four waking the sleepy town. He started up a conversation, asked where they were from and wished them well in their racing. Somehow Erin got given the dog’s lead and it proceeded on its daily route, while Erin screamed as if tied to stampeding wildebeest! All in a day’s work for the Mad Four, but it shows how they can light up even an historic, picturesque place like Henley upon Thames. I think the old man was enlivened by it all too.

guaranteeing a favourable first round before meeting and losing to the eventual draw. Her first side-by-side race saw her winners (Leander) in the semi-final. win comfortably by three lengths, again a first for CGS at HWR. Appropriately, both alumni were later selected for the GB U23 squad to race in the 4x- at the European championships. Whilst this was obviously a momentous achievement for Kirsty, as a coach we have to take our rewards where we can and following her race down the famous course, in the umpire’s elegant “slipper” launch, was a highlight for me. Unfortunately, Kirsty went out in the quarter final round to a more experienced sculler, but no doubt she will be able to progress further in future years as she continues her rowing at Nottingham University.

HWR was the last event for the Mad Four before they split to different universities. They should be commended for staying together through the difficult Covid years. Whilst we have rightly lauded the several individuals who have made the junior international scene in recent years, I think the Mad Four could arguably be called the best crew we have had since CGS was formed.

Strangely, and quite honestly, a year later at this year’s event I was walking down past the church on the Sunday evening, passing time before we went out to dinner. The rowing was over and most had gone home. The town was recovering to its usual sleepy self. I saw an elderly gentleman and an older Golden Lab walk slowly out from the church yard, heads down, ambling aimlessly along their regular evening walk. I think they were missing the Mad Four.... too.

As HWR is one of the premier events of the season, it is a great opportunity to see some top-class racing, at both junior and senior levels. This year we were lucky enough to be able to see a couple of our recent alumni competing at the very top level. As already mentioned, Molly Curry was racing in the Championship 1x, and recorded the fourth fastest Time Trial. Her quarter final was a decisive three and a half length win, but she then lost her semi-final by a closer two length margin. A great result after an injury constrained season. Rachel Bradley was racing for Newcastle University in the top Championship 4x- event and posted the third fastest time trial, won their quarter



2022 Season Highlights

Our COBRA members scattered across the UK had a great comeback from the pandemic and restrictions on training to have an incredibly successful 2021-2022 season.

The rowing calendar started with the first GB trials in November where COBRA member Rachel Bradley attended and placed 8th in the U20 2k erg time trial then was the fastest U21 single sculler on the water, coming 10th overall.

Closer to home COBRA director Kirsty Dalzell competed in Lagan Head of River Race, placing a close second in the Women's Club 1x.

BUCS Head of River, held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, saw COBRA members Hugh Moore, John Harte, Jack Edgar and Rachel compete for their universities.

For Queen's University Belfast: Hugh brought home a gold medal in the Men's Lightweight 4x- and a bronze in the Men's Championship 4x-. John coxed the Men's Beginner VIII+ to bronze medal position.

For De Montfort University Leicester: Jack placed 4th in the Men's Intermediate 4x- and 6th in the Men's Intermediate Lightweight 4x-.

For Newcastle University: Rachel achieved a silver medal in the Women's Championship VIII+ and bronze in the Women's Championship 4x-.



Many COBRA members attended this year's club dinner organised by Jeremy, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Well done to Kirsty and Rachel who received The Atchison Trophy for Crew of the Year for their efforts throughout their school rowing careers and for achieving a silver medal in the J19 2x at the Irish Championships in 2021. This was the first crew to medal from the school since 2010 when CAI achieved a silver medal in the J18 4x-.

In the final GB trials, in April, Rachel placed 2nd in her C final, which ranked her as the 5th fastest u23 single sculler in GB, setting her up well for future potential selection.

The end of April saw probably the busiest weekend all year with BUCS Regatta held at The National Water Sports Centre in Nottingham and of course Portadown Regatta more locally.

BUCS Regatta was extremely successful for our COBRA members; John Harte started off the weekend strong with a gold medal in the Men's Beginner VIII+. He then, along with Matthew Boyce came 4th in the D final of the Men's Intermediate VIII+. Matthew also placed 2nd in the C final of the Men's Intermediate 4x- and 6th in the B final of the Men's Intermediate 2x.





Hugh Moore picked up another gold for Queen's in the Men's Intermediate Lightweight 4x-.

Molly Curry competed for Queen's in the Women's Championship 1x and placed a fantastic 5th in a highly competitive field, and while returning from injury.

Rachel got silver in both the Women's Championship 4x- and the Women's Intermediate IV+, while also placing 5th in the Women's Championship VIII+ and 6th in the Women's Championship 2x.

Jack raced in the Men's Intermediate Lightweight 1x and went on to place 6th in his B final. He then went on to race in the Men's Championship Lightweight 2x and Intermediate 4x- placing 13th and 17th respectively.

Kirsty competed at Portadown Regatta, winning the Women's Club 1x category.



Next up was Henley Women's Regatta in June.

To race at this regatta competitors must first qualify from a time trial, 16 crews get through and then two crews race side by side in knock-out rounds i.e., heats, quarter finals, semi-finals and finals.

Kirsty reached the quarter finals of the Aspirational Lightweight 1x,

Molly and Rachel both reached the semi-finals of their categories. Molly raced in the Championship 1x and Rachel in the Championship 4x-.

John raced in the Development IV+ and placed a respectable 19th in a popular category but unfortunately this didn't qualify them to proceed to heats.



It was great to see some of our COBRA members participate in Henley Royal Regatta this year. Matthew and John raced for Queen's in the Temple Challenge Cup, unfortunately beaten by a stronger crew from the University of London in the heat.

Rachel raced for Newcastle in the Island Challenge Cup heat against Brown University, USA, who went on to be the eventual winners of the category.

COBRA member Graham Hunter competed for Vesta Rowing Club in the Thames Challenge Cup but unfortunately didn't qualify for racing. However, his crew was the third fastest non-qualifying boat.



Kirsty, Molly, Matthew and John all travelled to Cork to compete in the Irish Championships.

Molly was extremely successful and convincingly took the win in both the Women's Intermediate 1x and the Intermediate 2x with Sam McCormick, another Queen's rower.

Kirsty placed 5th in the Women's lightweight 1x and was the only U23 to reach the final. Matthew and John competed in various categories over the weekend, well done to all involved!



International Regattas

Our COBRA members competed in three different international regattas this year.

In July, Hugh and his doubles partner Ciaran Purdy achieved a fantastic silver medal for Ireland in the Men's Lightweight 2x at the U23 World Championships in Varese, Italy. The extremely exciting A final is available to watch on the COBRA Facebook page.

At the U23 Europeans Championships, in September, in Hazewinkel, Belgium, Molly and Rachel raced together in the Women's Championship 4x- and placed 5th. An amazing result for this young crew during their debut on the GB Rowing team.

To finish off the season Hugh secured a spot on the Irish Senior team and raced in the Men's Lightweight 1x at the Senior World Championships in Racice, Czech Republic, placing a very respectable 3rd in the D final at just 22 years old.

To conclude the season COBRA would like to say a big thank you to all COBRA members, coaches and parents for their continued support to the club, without which this article would be nowhere near as extensive. We look forward to seeing what the 2022/2023 season brings!





About COBRA

Membership of COBRA is open to anyone who wishes to support rowing at Coleraine Grammar School, whether or not you are a past or present rower, and regardless if you are a past pupil or not.

For more than 80 years CAI and subsequently CGS has maintained a strong, proud, rowing tradition, producing excellent crews, year after year, that have competed successfully throughout Great Britain and Ireland. Oarsmen and women have gone on to excel further in club and national crew boats basing their success on the comprehensive and complete rowing platform that they obtained, thanks to their experiences at the school.

Over the last decade alone, old boys and girls have competed at all levels; Junior, lightweight and senior in events such as the Home international regatta, the Coupe de la Jeunesse, the Commonwealth rowing Championships, World Cup regattas, World Championships and Olympics. Within University and Club crews, CAI/CGS rowers have won elite events at British and Irish Championships as well as at the world renowned Henley Royal Regatta. Past pupils have further excelled in the fields of club organisation and coaching of rowing and the survival and success of the club in recent years owes much to this facet.

Due to the costs and time associated with the sport of rowing, we believe that it falls within the responsibilities of past oarsmen and women to help, as they have the passion and desire to support such a great establishment. It cannot be doubted that each rower owes much to the boat club that has not only given them success on the water and the opportunity to row at unprecedented heights but has also provided many great friendships, experiences and key lessons for life.

This is why we have set up COBRA. The short term aim was to support CAIBC financially as well as in terms of administration and coaching, to help develop this 80 year old, proud rowing tradition. Our original long term aims were to act as a supporters club for CAIBC and to provide a body within which old boy oarsmen may keep in touch with each other and even compete together.

As CAI and Coleraine High School amalgamated in September 2015, the COBRA members welcomed the opportunity to continue to support the club as it takes its new shape under the guise of CGSRC. As such, COBRA will continue to promote the sport of rowing in Coleraine and neither our short or long term aims have changed. We look forward to the continued success of the club and welcoming new oarsmen and oarswomen into our organisation!

We realise as indeed you must too, that this will not be easy and will require both practical and financial support from those who can proudly say that they themselves were once CAI/CGS rowers. COBRA has been set up as a nonprofit organisation, with membership open to all, who have had or have a connection with CAI/CGS and/or who have an interest in the sport of rowing. The yearly membership fee and other donations are used solely to obtain the above objectives. If you would be interested in finding out more, please contact us at chairman@cobrarowing.co.uk

COBRA has been set up as a charity for tax purposes with all donations used solely to obtain the above objectives. If you would like to make a donation, please get in touch with us and we can provide a Gift Aid declaration form, which when completed, obtains from the Inland Revenue a further donation by way of the relevant % of Income Tax. You must pay an amount of income tax and/or Capital Gains tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the tax year (currently 28p for each £1 you give).

The Directors



Jamie Gibson
Chairperson
CAI 2005 - 2012

After leaving CAI Jamie attended Ulster University completing a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He has been coaching at CGS since 2017 and Chairman of COBRA since 2021.



Callum McBurney
Secretary
CAI 2003 - 2010

After his time at CAI, Calum has been a member of Glasgow University Boat Club, Belfast Rowing Club and Lagan Scullers' Club. He has been a Director since 2014, and Secretary since 2015.



Ross Cochrane
CAI 1997 - 2004

Coach at CAIBC/CGSRC 2005 to present.
COBRA director since December 2015.



Kirsty Dalzell
CHS 2014 - 2015
CGS 2015 - 2021

Kirsty was women's captain of CGSRC in the 2019/20 season and went on to coach for a year after leaving school. She is currently studying Veterinary Medicine at the University of Nottingham and rows for UoNBC. Kirsty is responsible for COBRA's social media platforms.



Alex Humphrey
CAI 1997- 2004

Since leaving 'The Inst' Alex rowed at Loughborough University and coached at Portora Boat Club and Leicester Rowing Club. He's responsible for the occasional emails and annual Newsletter.



Mark McMullan
CAI 2005 - 2012

Mark was CAIBC captain during the 2010/11 season. After leaving the Inst, Mark rowed and coached at Queen's University Belfast and for a number of years now rows out of Lagan Scullers. He manages the COBRA website and archives.



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

COBRARowing.co.uk

or

facebook.com/COBRARowing

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If you have any comments or would like to contribute to the next newsletter, please get in touch at
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