

COBRA Presents New Boats Named After CAIBC Coaching Stalwarts



On the 9th December 2023, COBRA handed over a new Janousek eight and double scull to the school rowing club. Having named a new four “Mickey Eyre” a few years ago (after the rowing master/VP through the 50s to the 80s), these new boats were named “Sidney Grey” and “Steen Anderson” after these CAIBC coaches from slightly more recent history.

With typically seasonal wind and rain, the boat naming ceremony took place within the new boathouse, which gave visitors from Sid and Steen’s era a chance to view

the new facility. As well as the two guests of honour, the ceremony was attended by the Headmaster, the COBRA board, many COBRA members and contemporaries of Sid and Steen.

COBRA Chairman Jamie Gibson welcomed everyone and said that as well as honouring our two guests, it was an occasion for COBRA to celebrate achieving its goal of purchasing a new eight whilst also stretching to purchasing a new double scull, which was recognised as an equally pressing requirement for the

rowing club. This had been achieved by many years of fundraising and membership donations, assisted by a couple of grants.

The Chairman recounted quotes in praise of the two guests from some of the past CAIBC athletes who could not be there on the day.

COBRA Board member Ross Cochrane talked about how the cost of the boats had been raised. Although primarily funded by COBRA member donations,



approximately a quarter of each boat was met by a grant – from the Rowing Foundation in the case of the double scull, and from Halifax for the eight. He highlighted that we were yet to purchase blades for both boats, although donations had been received from Fibrus and Dunnes towards this. Donations were welcome to enable us to complete the purchase of blades. A separate donation from the Sandpiper restaurant had enabled COBRA to buy a “Cox Box” amplifier system for the new eight.

COBRA Treasurer Alan Anderson introduced the two guests; primarily he said, because he was the only board member old enough to have been rowing when these two teachers were coaching. Although he commented that it was highly commendable that COBRA had such a young profile and that these boats were funded (with a few exceptions) by the younger rowing generations, he encouraged the older generations to come forward and join COBRA or make a donation.

The fact that COBRA was buying boats for CGSRC and naming them after past CAIBC coaches was an example of the continuity of the rowing club from CAI to the CGS amalgamation. Though he did point out

that the old, heavy, clinker-built wooden boats and wooden oars were a world apart from these lightweight carbon fibre racing shells.

In introducing Steen and Sid, Alan didn’t detail all their many Championship wins or Home International crews, which are already well documented in the COBRA website archive. Instead, he pointed out that Sid and Steen’s impact was much wider than this – as well as the scores of top performing athletes, were hundreds who still benefited from their guidance and attention. Rowing, like most sports, is a great complement to the academic



learning; teaching perseverance, discipline, social and teamwork skills. All of which turned out young adults much better prepared to be successful in life, thanks to Sid and Steen’s dedication (and on top of a teaching timetable too).

The Steen Anderson 2x

Having returned from Australia, Steen came to teach at the school in the mid-70’s. Having an interest in the water through the Ocean Youth Trust, he wandered down to the river and was spotted by Mickey Eyre – and before he knew it, he had been “volunteered” to coach rowing.

He has maintained his interest in the rowing club ever since – and has been “volunteered” again, this time to write a book of the history of the rowing club, which is now in its second draft so will hopefully be published soon.

Before naming the double scull, Steen recounted how useful rowing was in making contacts for young athletes, wherever they go in the world.

The Sidney Grey 8+

Having been educated at Methody, Sid started teaching at CAI in 1967. Although prior to that the rowing club had many successes under Mickey Eyre, it continued and flourished with Sid on board too, with

many Championship wins, Home International selections and wins (in those days, it was usual to select a complete crew for the Homes, rather than today's composite crew from various clubs).

Sid's coaching spanned 3 decades, culminating with the '96/'97 Henley crew. A very impressive coaching career, summed up by a quote from Geoff

Canning who described Sid as "a hard, inspiring taskmaster, who knew how to win".

Sid recounted how much pleasure he had derived from his years of coaching, and the friends made. His wife Doreen did the honours naming the boat.

After the Chairman officially handed the

boats over to the school, the Headmaster thanked COBRA for providing them and for their ongoing support, and thanked Sid and Steen for their service over the years.

Donations to the blade fund can still be made on the "Donations" page of our website.

<https://cobrarowing.co.uk/donate/>

2023 Season Highlights



COBRA day 2022 was hugely successful. We were able to field the inaugural COBRA women's VIII+ and although they were beaten by a strong school crew, the COBRA men went on to win the Hamburg trophy for another year.

Onwards from the new year, COBRA members rowing at university and club level went from strength to strength.

The first Head of River of 2023 was **Lagan Head of River**, Belfast. John Harte's Men's Club 2 VIII+ was fastest overall in race 1, also winning their category. Hugh Moore finished 7th overall and won the Men's Senior 1x, with Fergus Bryce coming in 2nd place in the category. Matthew Boyce won the Men's Senior 2- category. In the second race Matthew and Fergus

competed in the Men's Senior 4x- winning their category and the race overall. Calum McBurney, rowing for Lagan Scullers Club came second in the same category. This is the first time since 1998 that a 4x- (and not an VIII+) has been the fastest overall crew in the 5k race at Lagan HOR!

On February 18th there were medals all round for our COBRA members who raced at **BUCS Head**. Rachel Bradley, rowing for The University of Newcastle, won gold in the Women's Championship 4x- and bronze in the Women's Championship VIII+. Jack Edgar, rowing for De Montfort University, achieved bronze in the Men's Intermediate Lightweight 4x- and 5th in the Men's Intermediate 4x-. Kirsty Dalzell, rowing for University of Nottingham, placed in bronze position in the Women's Championship Lightweight IV and 15th in the Women's Intermediate VIII+. John Harte, coxing for Queen's University Belfast, placed in silver in the Men's Beginner VIII+, 8th in the Men's Intermediate IV+ and 21st in the Men's Intermediate VIII+.

The next race was **Women's Eights Head of the River Race** on the tideway (River Thames, London). Rachel, rowing for The University of Newcastle, placed 14th overall and Kirsty, in The University of Nottingham's 'B' crew, placed 88th overall. Impressive results considering there were 305 boats on the water racing.

The final head race of the season was **Erne Head of the River**, Enniskillen. COBRA members Fergus Bryce and John Harte



raced for Queen's University Belfast. John won the Women's Club 2 VIII+ and Fergus' Club 2 VIII+ came 2nd.

Regatta season kicked off with Hugh Moore being selected to race for Ireland at The **37th Memorial "Paolo D'Aloja" International Regatta** in April. On the Saturday, Hugh raced in the Men's Lightweight 1x and placed in bronze medal position. On the Sunday, Hugh brought home the silver medal in the same category.

Great results came from Caversham in April at **GB final trials**. Rachel Bradley was 4th in the u23 category, which put her in a fantastic position for international selection later in the season.

BUCS Regatta, running over three days, was a huge success for our COBRA members competing for their respective universities.

Hugh Moore, Queen's University Belfast
Men's Champ Lightweight 1x – 1st
Men's Champ Lightweight 2x – 1st



Men's Inter Lightweight 4x - 6th
 Angus Bryce, Bangor University
 Men's Inter Lightweight 1x - 41st
 Men's Inter 2x - 59th

For the second time in the season, Hugh Moore competed for Ireland on the international stage. Hugh was selected along with Olympic gold medallist Fintan McCarthy to race in the Men's Lightweight 2x at the **European Rowing Championships** in Bled, Slovenia. Hugh and Fintan finished in a well-deserved 6th place after exciting heats and semis.

Men's Inter Lightweight 4x - 1st
 Fergus Bryce, Queen's University Belfast
 Men's Inter 1x - 1st
 Men's Inter 2x - 2nd
 Men's Inter 4x - 2nd



1st in the B final of the VIII+ on the Sunday. Kirsty raced in the Women's Championship Lightweight 1x placing 5th in this category.

Rachel Bradley and Kirsty Dalzell raced at **Henley Women's Regatta**, enjoying the company of COBRA members, parents and coaches spectating and supporting from the bank. Rachel, with her doubles partner from The University of Edinburgh, made it to the semi-finals of the Championship 2x on Sunday. Kirsty, recovering from injury, qualified from the time trial of the aspirational lightweight 1x but unfortunately lost out in the heat later on.



Rachel Bradley, Newcastle University
 Women's Champ 4x - 3rd
 Women's Champ VIII+ - 4th
 Women's Champ IV - 4th

Matthew Boyce, Queen's University Belfast
 Men's Inter 4x - 2nd
 Men's Inter VIII+ - 15th
 Men's Inter IV - 14th

Kirsty Dalzell, University of Nottingham
 Women's Inter Lightweight 4x - 3rd
 Women's Champ Lightweight IV - 4th
 Women's Champ Lightweight 2x - 9th

John Harte, Queen's University Belfast
 Women's Beginner VIII+ - 4th
 Women's Beginner IV+ - 9th
 Men's Inter IV+ - 14th
 Women's Inter IV+ - 18th

Molly Curry, Queen's University Belfast
 Women's Champ 1x - 6th

Jack Edgar, De Montfort University, Leicester
 Men's Inter Lightweight 1x - 21st
 Men's Champ Lightweight 2x - 15th

June brought more accomplishments for our university rowers at **The Metropolitan Regatta** at Eton Dorney, the venue of the 2012 Olympics. The Met regatta runs over 2 days, athletes compete in a time trial and then proceed to their respective finals based on the result. Both Jack Edgar and Rachel Bradley competed on the Saturday. Rachel competed again on the Sunday as did Kirsty Dalzell. All three raced for their respective universities. On Saturday Jack placed 3rd in the D final of the Open Championship 4x-. Rachel placed 7th in the A final of the Women's Championship VIII+ and 5th in the A final of the women's Championship 2x. She then proceeded to place 2nd in the A final of the 2x and

Henley Royal Regatta Qualifiers saw four COBRA members enter to fight for the sought-after spots to race side by side during Henley Royal Regatta. Rachel Bradley and Molly Curry prequalified for The Princess Grace Challenge Cup the week prior. Matthew Boyce, rowing in a IV for Queen's University and Jack Edgar, rowing in a 4x- for De Montfort University took on the 2,112m course on Friday but unfortunately did not get through the time trial. Molly and Rachel's quad convincingly won against Nottinghamshire County Rowing Association by 2 lengths in



the first round on the Wednesday morning. Unfortunately, on the Friday they were beaten by the senior GB quad who went on to be the eventual winners of the trophy. Well done to all four athletes, your performances do not go unnoticed at such a prestigious event!

Hugh Moore went on to compete at another senior international event, this time in the Men's Lightweight 1x, at the **World Rowing Cup III** in Lucerne, Switzerland. In a tough field of athletes Hugh came out 4th in the C final.

Mid-July, Molly Curry and Rachel Bradley were selected to race in the GB 4x- to compete at the **U23 World Championships** in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. After a tough few days of racing they finished on a high, placing 2nd in the B final, putting them in 8th position overall. A fantastic result for this young crew, and amazing to have our COBRA members represent 50% of an international crew!

Despite the downpours of rain, the **Home International Regatta** proceeded. This year the regatta was hosted by Rowing Ireland at Lough Rinn. Fergus Bryce and John Harte, representing Ireland, put on an impressive performance in both their first senior international regatta. Fergus Bryce brought home gold in the 4x- 2km race and came in 2nd behind the England



crew in both his 2x 2km race and 4x- 500m sprint. John Harte coxed the men's IV to a 3rd place finish in the 2km race and just missed out on the podium positions in the VIII+ 2km and 500m races.

After a well-deserved break over the summer, head season 2023 swung into action beginning with **Lagan Autumn Head of River**. Fergus Bryce and Hugh Moore won the Men's senior 4x- and Fergus also won the Men's senior 1x category. Matthew Boyce's Men's Club IV+ achieved 1st place as did Molly Curry's Women's Senior 4x-.

Lagan HOR was quickly pursued by **Erne Fours Head of River** where we had our Queen's rowers racing again. John Harte coxed both the Men's Club 2 4x+ and the Women's Club 2 IV+ to victory bringing home two pennants to Belfast. Hugh Moore raced in the Men's Intermediate 4x - placing 3rd. Matthew Boyce also picked up a 5th position in the Men's Intermediate IV.

In early December, Rachel Bradley raced on familiar waters at **Rutherford Head** in Newcastle in both divisions. Despite the sub-zero temperatures and snow, she brought home gold in the Women's 4x- and silver in the Women's VIII+.

During October it was announced that COBRA member John Harte had become Captain of Queen's University Boat Club. This is an honourable role, and we wish John all the best during his tenure. John was previously boatman at CGSRC for multiple school years and this along with his extensive coxing experience both at school, university and now international level ensures the club will be in good hands.

Molly Curry was also announced as Queen's University Ladies Boat Club kit officer. Molly, being extremely organised and approachable, will be able to take this role in her stride. It is great to see COBRA members selected for these rewarding committee roles.

It was wonderful to see such a turnout of COBRA members supporting the club at CGSRC's annual club dinner as well as friends and fellow rowers from Queen's University Belfast and Nottingham University.

The evening was spent catching up with old friends and getting a glimpse of the latest happenings and successes at CGSRC. It is truly encouraging to see the younger generation at the club continue to work hard at both training and races, following in the footsteps of many past pupils and COBRA members. We would recommend any COBRA members who wish to join us for next year's dinner to get in contact. We would love to see you there.

To conclude, it is only right to say a hugely deserved thank you to every single one of our COBRA members and also to the coaches and parents of the school: From the boats and blades purchased by COBRA that allow so many pupils to get on the water, to the hours of coaching provided and finally, but most importantly, for the ongoing encouragement from the riverbanks at races and beyond. Your help and support have inspired many to continue loving and thriving in the sport after school rowing whether that be on the club, university, national or international stage. Best wishes for the year ahead and we look forward to seeing what 2024 brings.





Fundraising Update

2023 has undoubtedly been the most successful year of fundraising to date for the organisation. A sum slightly over £10000 has been donated to the charity from various trust funds and companies.

This gave us the opportunity to purchase a new Janousek 8 and Janousek Double which were both presented to CGSRC at a naming ceremony on 9th December 2023. An equipment donation with a value of £37000.

Whilst it was decided at the AGM last year that COBRA would move to purchase a much-needed double, the dream of buying a new Janousek 8 was still there. At that time, it seemed a long way off.

The funding for the double was supplemented by a donation of £3000 from The Rowing Foundation.

Buoyed by the successful application for funding for the new Double, the organisation undertook a project to look closely at the current stock of boats and determine exactly what the equipment needs looked like. This became known as "Project Rejuvenate".

Rejuvenate identified that the average age of equipment in the club was 24. The oldest 3 boats were the Slemish (2), Ballycairn (4) and the Ballysally (8). These 3 boats dated from the 1980s and were identified as the boats to be targeted for replacement. The funding required to achieve this, with oars, comes in at just over £62000.

With funding secured for the new double through COBRA funds and The Rowing Foundation, attention turned to securing the new 8.

With Project Rejuvenate completed in a format presentable to grant authorities, we set about sourcing potential funding from outside COBRA. After a lengthy application process The Halifax Foundation in Northern Ireland confirmed in February 2023 that they would offer us grant funding of £5992. This generous donation pulled financial planning for the new 8 forward by at least 2 years and in the spring 2023 an order was placed with Janousek for the 2 new boats. The new boats were collected from Janousek and delivered to Coleraine (by COBRA) in September 2023.

In June COBRA member Rachel Bones was able to secure a donation from IDS Chartered Accountants for a new set of sculling oars for the school.

Over the summer months COBRA applied to the Fibrus – Play it forward campaign. In September 2023 Fibrus confirmed that we had been successful, and we were in receipt of £800. This money was ringfenced for new oars.

Once School had returned post summer break, one enthusiastic COBRA parent member contacted various local companies to see if there was any funding available. Through this much appreciated work COBRA received 2 donations of £500 from Dunnes Stores and Andras Hotel Group. Andras are the owners of the Sandpiper Hotel in Coleraine. £795 of this money was used to fund a new CoxBox for the club with the remainder going towards the oars fund.

In October, COBRA was informed that we had been successful in our application to Tesco Stronger Starts. This was another funding application for oars and our project was selected alongside 2 other local projects. Customers can vote in store for their preferred project, and this runs until January 2024. Depending on the result of the vote COBRA will receive either £500, £1000 or £1500 from Tesco.

At the time of committing to purchasing the new boats we were unable to fund oars. In the new year we will prioritise purchasing oars and we have now ringfenced approximately £1700. Looking ahead to next year our plan is to fund 4 pairs of sweep oars and 4 pairs of sculls. A new pair of Concept2 sweep oars cost £720 and a new pair of sculls cost £550.

Whilst the fundraising projects undertaken by COBRA over the past year have helped considerably, the real thanks must go to the members. Members' regular donations received since 2016 coupled with Gift Aid covered 75% of the boat costs. Without their generosity none of this would be possible. In 2015 COBRA purchased the Bobbie Platt MBE (a Janousek 4) and we had been building funds since that last big purchase.

Looking ahead to the future we plan to fund the oars as mentioned previously. The last piece of Project Rejuvenate will be the purchase of a new 4 to replace the Ballycairn, along with new oars. The manufacturer for this equipment has not been decided. There will also be a period of fund building for this.

Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond we want to grow the organisation. We have set a target to increase the membership to over 100 in the coming years. Regular donations of £5 and in some cases more, coupled with Gift Aid represent much of our income. As I said previously without the generosity of the members none of this would be possible.

Through the Archives

5 Years ago – 2018

Despite a disappointing head season with a number of races being cancelled, CGSRC had one of its most successful regatta seasons to date, picking up 30 medals across 7 regattas in almost all age categories and boat types.

The stand out performer of the season was Molly Curry, who won the Woman's Junior 1x Championship of Ireland. The first win in a Championship event since CAI won the Junior 4+ 28 years before in 1990.

Molly was also selected to represent Ireland at the Coupe de la Jeunesse regatta, where she finished 3rd in the 2x.



10 Years ago – 2013



COBRA helped purchase a Stampfli 8+, the 'Richard Archibald'. The Schoolboys beat COBRA, winning the Hamburg trophy for the second year in a row.

The School also 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.

15 Years ago – 2008

The CAIBC Quad of Jonny Mitchell, Michael McNaul, Robert Hart and Jamie McBurney came 2nd in the Junior 18 quad at the Irish Championships. Jonny Mitchell, Michael McNaul and Peri Stynes represented Ireland at the Coupe de la Jeunesse.

COBRA members Alan Campbell, Richard Archibald and Richard Chambers also competed at the Beijing Olympics. Alan finished 5th in the 1x, Richard Chambers 5th in the Lwt 4- and Richard Archibald 10th in the Lwt 4-.



20 Years ago – 2003



CAI competed at Tideway HRR 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.



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

COBRARowing.co.uk

or

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Editor: Alex Humphrey

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

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