

THE OTRC SPIRIT

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF OUNDLE TOWN ROWING CLUB

**May 2021
Edition**

Featuring:
Back to the river

Introducing:
*Next steps after lock-
down*

**With special
contributions from:**
*A select few—thank
you xx*



Chairman's Summary

By Simon Murray



I am delighted that we have now been able to reopen the club and to see many of you back on the water again. I know that during this past year many of us have re-assessed our commitment to the sport and now wish for a different experience than was the norm pre-Covid. The club exists to serve the rowing aspirations of all members ranging from a purely recreational experience, a fitness/social activity or the full training regime and competition that many were familiar with in the past. It seems that OTRC is not alone, with other clubs having similar discussions. BR is looking at this and we are in contact with them to explore the opportunities and I will report further in due course.

The committee met recently, the notes from which should be posted on the member's page of the club website. Some of the key items discussed are covered elsewhere in this newsletter and include a proposal regarding membership fees and an update on the situation regarding the planned boathouse/clubroom development.

We have also pencilled in **Friday 16th July as a date for the AGM**. Assuming Covid restrictions have ended, we hope to be able to hold this as a face to face meeting, and if technology allows, with a zoom option for anyone not able to attend in person.

One of the key agenda items at the AGM is the election of officers. Technically all posts are up for election each year, new committee members bringing fresh ideas are always welcome. Some members are standing down at the next AGM so these positions need to be filled. It is a particularly exciting time to be involved as we emerge from Covid and also move forward with developing the upper floor of the boathouse into a club room. Please do let me know if you feel able to contribute to the running of the club.



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Boathouse Building Update—by Simon Murray

As reported previously, we have engaged the services of a structural engineer to check the structural calculations for the boathouse in line with the building regulations requirements. We have now received his report and it is as we expected, i.e. that without major strengthening work, mainly to the building columns, we won't be able to use the upper floor of the boathouse as originally intended with gym, training facilities etc. However the calculations show that we can fit out the space with kitchen, toilets etc. and use the space for social activities, with a limit of 40 people at any one time.

To get full building regulations approval we need, in addition, to satisfy requirements relating to fire safety and the use of the generator and these are being addressed.

The committee have therefore now agreed that we can now move ahead with planning the next phase of the project. A design already exists for the upper floor fit-out (see diagram) which we need to review to confirm it still meets our requirements. Then we need to get estimates for all the work, establish what we can do ourselves and where professional input is required, and start a fundraising programme to raise the money we need to complete the work. Please let me know if you are able to help with this, e.g. with building experience, project planning and management skills, fundraising expertise etc.

As we progress with this project, we will identify extra skills required so please look out for further information and requests for help. Pls see drawing on page 6 of this newsletter.



Club Committee A reminder of the current committee members (thank you)

Main Committee:

Chairman – Simon Murray

Secretary – Sally Cheney*

Treasurer – Peter Cook

Club Captain – Emma Stratton*

Safety Advisor – vacant (Dick Meads officially stood down Summer 2020)

Welfare – Alan McMurdo

Co-opted: Mark Felton

The main committee meets quarterly, club officers attend only when relevant items are discussed.

Other club officers:

Buildings & grounds – Philip Chandler*

Boats & equipment maintenance – Hugh McCormack

Membership – Fiona McCormack

Publicity – Zoe Smeeth*

Social – Daisy Attley

Fundraising – Angela Hook

*standing down at next AGM

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Membership Fees—Simon Murray



At the start of the first lockdown, the committee agreed that membership fees would be waived/deferred until we could offer all club facilities including crew boat rowing, coaching, organised sessions etc. As restrictions are lifted we are increasingly able to offer more; junior sessions have restarted in full, members are beginning to form their own crews and coaches are offering their time on an ad-hoc basis. Over the next few weeks (until the end of June) we are encouraging all members to return to rowing in whatever way that suits them. We recognise that there is some anxiety among members regarding the risk of infection but we hope this will fade over the next few weeks.

The committee agreed to restart membership payment from the 1st July 2021. The annual full membership fee for 2019-2020 was £240pa and there will be no change in this for the year to 31st August 2022. Our policy is to offer an “early bird” discount for those who pay annually during the first month and for this year this is extended to any member paying a 14 month fee from 1st July 2021-31st August 2022. The offer will be the usual discount plus one month free.

Summary of fees as follows:-

Category	Annual fee	Early bird discount (annual)	14 month fee (1/7/21-31/8/22)	14 month fee if paid in full by 31/7/21
Gold	£240	£30	£280	£230
Silver	£170	£20	£200	£165
Bronze	£90	£10	£105	£85

Also a reminder that all rowers should also be members of British Rowing. Several BR memberships have lapsed (understandably); if yours has, please can you now check and renew your membership. While full BR membership (“Race” £60 adults, £30 juniors) is a requirement for competition, their “Row” membership (£32.50) is perfectly acceptable, and should you wish to take part in racing events when they restart you can upgrade as required.

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Throw back to - A Paddle To The Mill And Back With...

Anita Dunn from 2017



You are the current Club (Junior) Captain, what does the role involve? I'm not really sure if other clubs do it this way, but as an adult on the Committee I look after the interests of the Juniors regarding events, coaching and special considerations like the Junior Sculling training days that we attended. Its an overview role really with a view to allocating crews to sessions and integrating the needs of the Juniors within the whole Club setting.

How long have you been rowing Anita? I used to row to the shops in an old clinker built wooden tender as a child on the river in Dartmouth but didn't learn to row in a "proper" skinny boat until about 2002 at OTRC.

Where did you learn to row? Mrs Milborne & I learned together & my first capsize was with her in/out of a double on the Regatta Straight. At the time, OTRC were based at a caravan on Lilford Lodge Farm and beginners learned to row on what became the fishing lake & is now the Marina. Our old jetty can still be seen just before the white finishing post with a tree growing through it. We stored our boats on a trailer at the water's edge.

How did you get involved with OTRC? 2 reasons really, firstly my son Jack & then my other children rowed at PWS and I got involved as a parent helper, and then our local osteopath (who bears the responsibility for a lot) suggested that it might be good therapy for dodgy knees for both Peter & I.

How has the club changed over the years? It has changed hugely in a number of different ways. Firstly the Club is much bigger now in every respect and has a greater proportion of Adults than at the beginning. Initially it was started with Prince William School and the greater proportions of members were juniors. With the increase in numbers, there have been some organisational changes to accommodate everyone and the structure of the committee has expanded to spread the roles between members. We now have a high ratio of trained coaches for the number of members we have compared to many other clubs. Most of those that trained were parents of children that rowed or adults that learned to row with the Club. We compete more often & have more opportunities to train both indoors & on the water. The atmosphere is still the same though, for which I'm thankful.

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Anita Dunn from 2017

In your various roles at OTRC which element to you enjoy the most? I have several roles & enjoy them all. The Junior Captaincy is a relatively new one, so I have been able to develop that from scratch. Developing a Clubhouse has been a dream of mine from the early days and I took on the role of Fundraiser in order to try & achieve that. Now, as part of the Clubhouse Development Group we're applying those funds to that project to get the most for our money. At the moment, we're doing more spending than fundraising but Phase II will need more applications. Coach/Session organiser: I love the analytical side of coaching and get a buzz from seeing changes in technique that I have helped the rower to make. I also enjoy the Sudoku of the weekly sessions. Race organising is also good fun if you like Sudoku. Lastly, but most importantly, rowing. It is a great de-stresser, we're out in some of the most beautiful countryside in England with a view that not many other people get to see, you meet lovely people who also love what you do and it offers a challenge not only when you race but also when training-we can always get better. The short answer is that I like them all.

Why do you feel the club is so successful? We are unconventional, compared to most rowing clubs, and have designed/developed a format within which most people can find a place whether they want Special Needs rowing, Social/Recreational, U3A or are Students returning from University. We still have that "new" feeling in that we know that we can do it, do it our way and follow our own path. We've broken the mould. Other, more traditional Clubs can be shackled by convention. Ultimately we are successful because of the generosity of so many people that give of their time & talents.

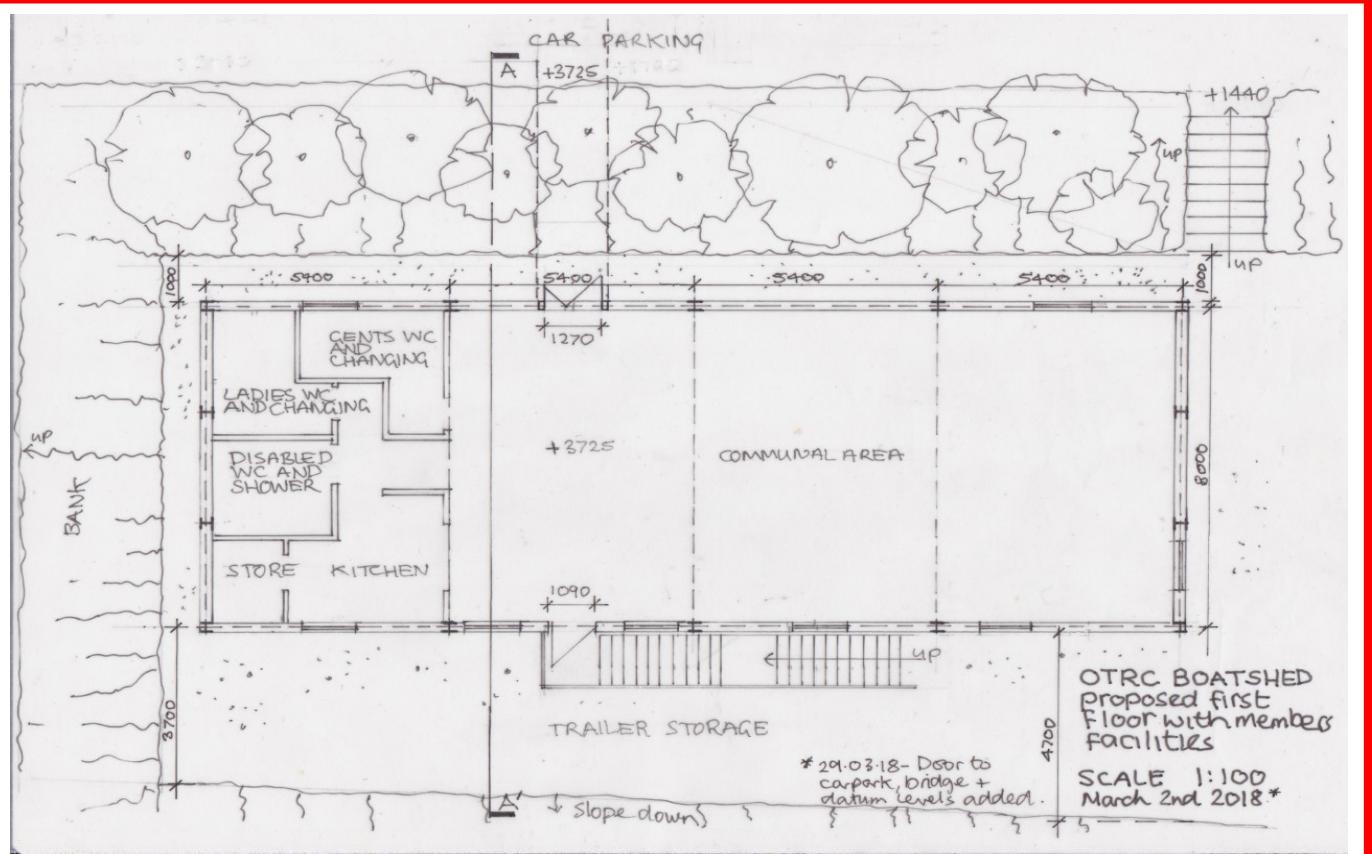
What are you looking forward to in 2017/2018 at OTRC? The first Bacon Sandwich & Cup of Tea in the new Clubhouse! Seriously, I'm really looking forward to using the new clubhouse to develop some new sessions. This could help our session coaching using video, S & C sessions, perhaps Yoga or Pilates. I would also like to encourage more daytime use of the Club and the indoor facilities will help this. I have plans to develop a Women's daytime session and continue with the after school club. Hopefully the coffee & cake/bacon sandwich incentive along with somewhere to warm up & take refuge will be an incentive for more people to get involved. I would like to see parents join in with boating, squad organisation and coaching or anything else that needs input. After all, that's how most of us started and look where the Club is now!

What is your most memorable rowing experience? There have been a few, but the most extraordinary was coxing the first OTRC Men's 8+ on the Tideway. Many Thanks to them for hauling me along, I'll never forget it and probably won't have the opportunity again.



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Learn to Row Sessions - July & August 2021

As we haven't been able to welcome new members to the club over the past 12 months we are keen to start our learn to row courses over the summer (this is dependant on COVID guidelines). For us to be able to run these sessions I am calling out for volunteers!

We will be running 6 sessions for each programme; an adult programme will run on Monday evenings - 6.30pm-8pm and then a junior programme will run on Saturday afternoons 2pm until 3.30pm.

- Junior L2R course will start 3rd July
- Adult L2R course will start 5th July

If you would be willing to help; even if it is just for 1 session please could you let me know by 26th June so that I can make sure we have enough people available. You don't need to be qualified, all I need is willing volunteers who can hold a rope, carry boats, talk to people (key) and know the rowing basics.

I would be really grateful for any support in starting to grow OTRC once again!

Thanks

Emma

PS. If anyone is aware of someone who could be interested and hasn't done so already, please ask them to get in touch with me

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OTRC Summer Regatta - 26th June 2021

Calling out for volunteers!!!!

We would love to see you at our OTRC Summer Regatta this year, which we hope will mark the return of full rowing and will also mark the start of our socials again. As always we are looking for bakers, BBQ's, caterers (or willing individuals to organise the meat etc), MC's, entertainers, sound equipment, launch drivers, marshalls...you name it!....

If you can help with the organisation of this; or have any equipment you are able to lend us, please could you let me know by 31st May so that we can start putting things together.

Please put the date in your diaries - we look forward to seeing you there. Anyone who wishes to row - I will be reaching out at the beginning of June.

Depending on COVID guidelines, it may be a slightly different set up this year but we will be doing our best to run the summer regatta as normal.

Look forward to hearing from all of you budding volunteers!

Emma

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News

- Mid week sessions (Tuesday & Thursday) will now start at 6.30pm due to the sun being up for longer - so please join these sessions (18+) if you would like to have a row!
- We would like to slowly start holding more 'sessions' to enable more people to row... if you would like to row and receive coaching at the weekend could you please let me know so that we can start to look at the return of coached sessions



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SNAKES IN THE GRASS by Leslie Edwards

There are thousands of grass snakes living on the edges of the river Nene.

Yet they are rarely seen.

On two occasions during the very hot weather in July and while rowing I was lucky enough to have sightings of adult grass snakes swimming and then basking, on the water lilies near the boathouse and then two weeks later at the turnaround point close to the Mill.

10 THINGS ABOUT GRASS SNAKES

1. Grass snakes are completely harmless to humans as they are non-venomous.
2. They are semi aquatic and spend most of their time on the edges of ponds and rivers.
3. They prey mainly on amphibians – frogs and toads but also worms and beetles and similar.
4. They are very well camouflaged – see the photos – and with a yellow ring on the neck they blend in very well with the abundant water lilies.
5. They are active from April through to October – so they are out on the river NOW. They must hibernate somewhere protected from frost; garden compost heaps are a favourite place.
6. They have some interesting defensive tactics. If disturbed or picked up they may feign death, or like lawyers they may excrete a foul smelling fluid from their anal glands, or they may re-gurgitate their food, or raise the head and neck so that it resembles a cobra.
7. They lay between 8 and 40 leathery eggs in June and July which hatch in August and early September.
8. They are preyed on by herons, crows, foxes, badgers, owls and other birds of prey.
9. It is illegal to harm a grass snake or to trade in grass snakes without a licence. But it is legal to capture and keep them in captivity. (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)
10. They are found over most parts of Europe and much of Asia. For many years the British grass snake- *Natrix Helvetica* was thought to be merely a sub species of the Eurasian grass snake -*Natrix Natrix* . However genetic testing in 2017 proved it to be a different species in its own right; a kind of Brexit snake.

So keep your eyes open when rowing in hot weather and you might be lucky enough to see one of these harmless but charming snakes—see photos on page 12

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Update from Hugh McCormack, boat maintenance manager April 2021.

Despite limited access to our club premises over the past year, we haven't been sitting on our hands!

First of all, a big 'thank you' to Angela and Duncan Hook for doing a 'proper job' of cleaning up and repainting all the oars – they look fantastic! ...or at least they did until we got our hands on them! Please try to avoid scraping them across the jetty if you can.... Particularly not at times when Angela is down at the club!

Over the last year or so, as part of our on going programme of maintenance, we have had two of our most regularly used fine Singles Sculls renovated – the 80 kg Lola and the 70 kg Ayling's, as well as two of the Swift Freedom singles- 'Row 4 Life' and 'Shockwave'.

This was made possible with a very generous donation of £3000.00 from The Rowing Foundation, which OTRC match funded. Boat repairs don't come cheap, that's why it's important that we look after our boats, handle them correctly both on the water and getting them on and off the water. It's also important to report any damage to boats, so that it can be dealt with quickly, the 80 kg Single had to go back to the repair shop again because it incurred further damage to the hull which wasn't reported. There is a white board inside the boathouse entrance where information can be left.

One of our Swift Freedom doubles is also currently being renovated without additional funding and we plan to apply to the Foundation for another grant to enable us to renovate all the boats in our Adaptive/ Recreational rowing fleet.

We have also been stocking up on boat spares including several more pairs of adjustable shoes to help ease the problem of ill fitting footwear.

Finally, if you have any issues or 'feedback' on anything to do with boat maintenance or have skills that you think we can use please have a chat to me, Simon Murray, our Chairman or Emma Stratton, our Captain.

No More Leaks, Boris!!!

Yes, unlike this Government we have located the source of our leak and fixed it....although we are yet to fill the gaping hole in the roof of Cambridge House! Thank you Martyn Dunkley you're a Star!

Martyn is currently not a member but has bought himself a Single and plans to re-join the club soon for some recreational rowing.

He has replaced the outside tap, which has been leaking for quite some time and the stopcock in the kitchen.

We now need to replace the plasterboard ceiling and do something with the kitchen units.

If you have some time on your hands and the necessary skills we'd really appreciate your help getting Cambridge house back in use.

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