

# INVERNESS ROWING CLUB

## SAFETY BULLETIN No 2 / 2022 - 07 December 2021

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Oh Dear!

*IRC Proudly Presents* your opportunity to complete a **CAPSIZE DRILL**

**What:** Capsize & Other Safety Related Drills  
**Where:** Inverness Aquadome Swimming Pool  
**When:** Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2022; 1230 – 1530 (approx)

**Why:** fear x incomprehension x lack of training = inhibits progression & fun  
collected x knowledge x practise = improves performance & fun

Not that you want to capsize into the Canal more so at this time of year however, many an experienced Club rower has capsized at or near the launch area. The probability that you will capsize sometime during your rowing career is highly likely (the spoon of your oar might hit a submerged rock and over you go or you are pushing yourself on the water and the balance goes...).

So come along and experience, and or refresh, a capsize drill in a safe, warm environment where you can practise swimming with the boat and try a re-entry. More details in the New Year but meanwhile please sign-up on the Outings calendar please.

Some re-entry clips can be found here:

<https://www.rowperfect.co.uk/capsize-drill-get-back-rowing-boat-flipping/>

## Club Incidents Since Safety Bulletin No 1 / 2022

I have three “Near Misses” with a risk of collision to report all occurring late Summer. Perhaps the more serious event was a single sculler near the power lines area and on the correct side of the Canal was nearly mowed down by yacht not obeying navigation rules, travelling at an inappropriate speed nor keeping a suitable lookout. It was only a loud bellow from someone on the Bank in good time to give the yacht’s helm warning to complete an emergency manoeuvre (helm and engine full astern)

Note the calm water near the sculler in the picture from where the yacht went full astern.



The other incidents were similar: craft on the wrong side of the Canal, poor lookout and excessive speed.

Conclusion: Lookout, Lookout, Lookout. Even at this time of year you need to keep a lookout for yourself and crewmates and or have a spotter on the Bank as a safety measure.

Last Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> Dec 21, I was bow seat in a Double returning to the Boathouse and approaching the Kennels and I steered the boat wide to overtake a single (yes we were going that fast!). I went too wide and consequently worried a pair of kayakers – my apologies were gracefully accepted. My steering focus was on the single’s position – not good lookout on my part. So easily done to get it wrong.

The recent Head weekend went well. Two capsizes occurred one was gear failure where the wing rigger parted at the angle seam the other was a ‘routine’ unintentional capsize. Both incidents received prompt support from the Bank and safety boat – one sculler recovered to the Boathouse the other clothing changed and race continued.

Safe Rowing  
Gary

## Continuing the Capsize Theme and On a Sombre Note I Pass on Two Information Items From British Rowing



### **Safety Alert - Stay with the boat**

In March this year, two rowers died at Iowa State University when their boat capsized in cold (4-5 °C), water and windy conditions. All five of the rowers had passed a swim test. A report contains the following “... we knew the water was cold. We decided that we all needed to swim to shore”. Had they decided to stay with the boat, and let the wind blow them to the shore, then the result may have been different. There is more information [here](#).

Only two British rowers have died accidentally after capsizing this century. One in 2000 and one in 2005. Both were competent swimmers and both chose to swim away from their boats.

If you fall in, what are you going to do? The simple answer is stay with the boat unless doing so will put you in greater danger (for example of being hit by a motorboat). There is further information in the British Rowing Capsize and Recovery online module [here](#), and to the Cold Water and Hypothermia module [here](#).

If you stay with the boat then it will keep you afloat. If you can climb on top of the boat then it will keep most of your body out of the water and reduce the rate at which you will get cold. It will also make you more visible and makes it easier to get into another boat than it would be if you were bobbing about in the water.

If you swim then you will put yourself at greater risk. It is not essential for rowers to be able to swim but they must be able to stay calm if they enter the water and be able to float, preferably by holding onto their boat. You should wear a buoyancy aid if you are not confident of your ability to stay calm and float.

If you are tempted to swim then please remember that the bank is always further than you think and it will take more time to swim there than you expect. Swimming wastes energy and energy is a precious commodity when you are cold and wet.

Do not forget to shout, wave and call for help if there is anyone else in the vicinity. It is OK to leave your boat when somebody offers to take you aboard theirs.

The advice to float and not to swim is also included in the to swim is RNLI [Respect the Water](#) Campaign and advice from the [Royal Life Saving Society](#). This is all supported by the [National Water Safety Forum](#).

### **If you fall in then do not swim, simply stay with the boat and float to live.**

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October 2021

[This Safety Alert is a safety guidance document. Please read our safety message and disclaimer.](#)

## and Finally

*The MCIB report contains the following:*

*4.5.3 Hair Entanglement. The Quad's female crewmembers had their hair tied back, Rower No3's hair was tied up in the form of a ponytail. When the Quad capsized and Rower No 3 entered the water her hair became entangled in the rowlock and trapped the rower under the water...FISA guidelines make no mention of rower's hair length or safety issues related to rowers hair length and it can be deduced that in context of rowing entanglement in the equipment mounted on a rowing boat is an unusual type of event. Despite this, the length of hair, albeit tied back in a ponytail, was the cause for the rower's entrapment in the Quad and therefore a causative factor of her subsequent injuries.*

BR Comment: Any rower with long hair may find it helpful to wear their hair in a 'bun' or 'top knot'. There is no specific guidance but note that British Gymnastics make it very clear that there must be no loose hair below collar length...and if longer it must be tied up...long plaits are not allowed.

## The Incident in Ireland

In February 2019, a 4x+ capsized and was held against a bridge like structure, in Limerick, Ireland. A 12 year old girl rower was held underwater for some minutes as her long hair was entangled in a rigger. She was subsequently rescued and taken to hospital.

It is understood that she was not expected to survive. She did survive and is still recovering. She is now able to walk and talk, and is going to school.

The Irish Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) has recently issued its report. This can be downloaded <https://www.mcib.ie/reports.7.html?r=258>

The report is long (144 pages) and is difficult to read. An anonymous and very abbreviated summary is provided in Appendices to this report, as follows:-

Appendix 1 – The sequence of events during the Incident.

Appendix 2 - Recommendations for Rowing Ireland and Current Practices of British Rowing

Appendix 3 - Recommendations for the Rowing Club in Ireland and the corresponding references in RowSafe

Appendix 4 - Information previously shared in Monthly Reports

### **The “Weir”**

The term “Weir” is repeatedly used in the report; it is better to think of this as a bridge. It was used between 1940 and 1978 to monitor the number of salmon passing

upstream, and to catch some for commercial purposes. It has been disused for almost four decades."

There are photos on the internet of a broken boat alongside the weir. The Coach reported that the boat remained intact during the incident but was damaged later in an attempt to lift the swamped boat from the water using ropes.

### **Use of Personal Floatation Devices**

There is a legal requirement in Ireland for people afloat to wear Personal Floatation Devices. However, there is an exemption for people in "Olympic Style Rowing Boats".



Thomond Weir - Downstream View (south side).

### **The availability of a knife**

The Coach was not carrying a knife and one was not included in his safety kit. This kit was limited to an engine kill cord, one lifebuoy attached by a 3 m rope to the boat, two paddles and the PFD worn by the Coach.

At the time of the incident the Rowing Ireland Safety Manual did not include a knife or equivalent in its list of equipment. The Coach is a former member of the Irish Naval Reserve for five to six years and had completed their Gemini (Inflatable Boat) Coxswain Course. It is standard practice for safety knives to be carried in safety boats. This is included, for example, in RYA Powerboat training.

The Irish Government Code of Practice, however, specifies a list of the equipment that should be carried in safety boats supporting Olympic style rowing boats. This list includes a knife.

### **Issues to be considered**

The first question to be considered is with all our Rowing Safety training, guidance and advice could this happen here? In my view it could.

Was it "reasonably foreseeable" that a rower would be trapped underwater by the entanglement of her hair in a rigger? In my view it was not before this incident but it is now.

## **Actions here since the Incident**

Support has been, and continues to be, provided to Rowing Ireland.

## **Legal liability of coaches**

It is understood that at least two of the rowers involved in this incident, or their representatives, will initiate legal action to secure compensation. If successful, the cost of meeting these claims could be very significant.

Anyone who coaches here should be aware that Coach Membership of British Rowing includes the benefit of professional indemnity insurance to a limit of £10,000,000.

Coach Membership is available to anyone with a British Rowing coaching qualification. Clubs can also endorse any of their unpaid coaches so that they will be eligible for Coach Membership of British Rowing. The application should be by a member of the club Committee and made by completing the form [here](#).