

INVERNESS ROWING CLUB

SAFETY BULLETIN No 1 / 2022 - 26 September 2021

safety@invernessrowing.uk

“Safety” Why bother?

There is a “risk” to everything we do be it deciding to cycling to the local shop, perhaps without wearing a helmet as it is only just down the road, or going on a journey by car to that same local shop wearing our seat belt; an instinctive action for driving (agree or not we have been indoctrinated into wearing a seat-belt for car journeys for our own good).

We use “safety”, most of the time subconsciously, when assessing the risk and from that assessment we decide to accept – or not – practices and or rules so that we can take a course of action for a reason (eg training to improve ability) but also to protect ourselves (most of the time that is) and our colleagues; for example The Highway Code works well when followed!

So how does this apply to rowing – for us it is mostly reviewing the “what ifs”...and taking actions / precautions / training to mitigate any poor outcomes as well as understanding the consequences of our actions:

- what if I get into a single scull having never sculled one before without support from a mentor...
- what if I / we go rowing during a thunderstorm...
- what if I / we go out in windy conditions for the first time...
- seldom few of us wear a life-jacket when sculling / rowing and that is an accepted risk of our sport n.b. rowers life-jackets are available at the Club if you elect to train in marginal conditions – but should you go out is the question?

IRC has L2R training for new rowers so they can get on the water safely and competently, safety and rescue equipment, good boats, maintained equipment, a risk-assessment, procedures for going on the Canal and using the water and a safety feedback system. A what...? More about this later...

All this is intended to make for a pleasurable, safe, outing for members – not the same as a good technique rowing session however.

The result of all of this rowing safely participation by IRC members is that during the past 6 months I have had much not much of note to comment about on Safety.

The advert. No safety concerns from Club members...or does it seem to be too onerous to say anything or write something? Feedback is essential so that all can be informed (such as the swing bridges new transit procedures). If you think something is not right or have a safety-related niggles then just send an email to me at safety@invernessrowing.uk as a starter please.

Calendar Review Aug – Sep 2021

1. 26 Jun – Our Juniors rowers successfully completed capsized drills in the Canal near the Boathouse. A drill for everyone else will be arranged in due course but perhaps in the warmer waters of a swimming pool methinks.
2. 30 Aug – An incident that was a **Near Miss** with the consequences being potentially highly serious for the sculler and extensive damage to a boat. Fortunately it was a **Near Miss** with no consequences and only a report subsequently filed to SR:

A Club sculler following the canal navigation rules returning to the Clubhouse was almost hit by a transiting yacht. The prompt action of an observant bystander on the Bank who yelled loudly and frequently made the yacht take hard manoeuvring action including going full astern on its engine.

The cause, in my opinion, from the photograph and talking to those involved was that the yacht was not on the correct side of the canal nor was it keeping a proper lookout in accordance with the rules for avoiding a collision; n.b. avoiding a collision is the responsibility of all vessels according to international maritime law.



The lessons for us to consider:

- we cannot trust or expect every vessel to follow the Canal navigation rules – correct side and a good lookout
- as in this case we must do our utmost to stay on the right-hand side of the canal
- might is right (from our precarious position) so we must keep a good lookout; visually and aurally
- if you are going to an ‘intense’ training session then consider having a spotter on the Bank to check-ahead; you can then confidently concentrate on the task of perfecting your rowing / sculling skill

3. I have heard anecdotes of close encounters with stand-up-paddleboards (SUPs) and canoes throughout this season. SUPs have become popular because they offer easy access to [any] water and you can get afloat without any consideration for others or ‘water’ knowledge. Most SUP riders and canoeists I have observed seldom look behind themselves as they meander down the Canal...and we certainly go faster than they do [over taking vessel is the give-way vessel] - please keep a good lookout.

If you have a ‘poor’ encounter with another water user then please let me know - a few words in an e-mail will suffice: safety@invernessrowing.uk Incidents however must be notified using the Clubs incident reporting form at the website <https://members.invernessrowing.uk/incident-reporting/>

It would be good to build a record, if needed, and decide if further action is needed to avoid any unpleasantness.

Thinking of Autumn & Winter Rowing.

Not what you wear on the day for your outing but what you might need with you if it all doesn’t quite go to plan: do you carry any spare clothing such as a

bin-bag with pre-cut head and arm holes (for those trying to be super-light and speedy), spare hat, gloves or a space blanket for instance? A waterproofed mobile phone perhaps maybe with the What3Words App installed – the Clubhouse location is - **MASH.VALUES.ACTIVE**. As importantly does somebody know where you are and what you are doing; even if it is someone at home? I would encourage you before the weather turns cold to revise your solo / crew capsize intentions?

Finally, have you read the suggested Do's and Don't's of IRC posted on the inside of the main door? Just be ready for that 'what if scenario...' please

Finally:

Do keep a good lookout as obvious vessels could still sneak up on you.

