



Cygnet Committee Annual Report

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1 January 2022

The Cygnet Management Committee presents its one hundred and thirty-first report for the year ending 31 December 2021.

2021: the COVID-19 Pandemic saga continues

Not surprisingly, the COVID pandemic which reared up its ugly head in March 2020 did not miraculously disappear when we so desperately wanted it to. The eights heads season was still a write off, and it took a while before training as we know it started up again, albeit under continuing restrictions under the guidelines from HM Government as interpreted by British Rowing. The closure of Hammersmith Bridge in April 2020 continued and as a Club we were lucky to be based where we are, so that most of the “usual” stretch of the Tideway continued to be accessible to us, with long outings still possible. In July, rowing under Hammersmith Bridge was allowed, albeit still with the green light/red light system that could potentially leave a crew stranded on the wrong side of the bridge. The PLA have confirmed the light would go on red for alarms, and planned engineering works on the bridge, the latter of which will be published on a Notice To Mariners.

Bridges were not our friend this year as the PLA issued a Notice To Mariners that the North arch of Barnes Bridge would closed for significant periods from 24 August onwards, to enable the installation of the new foot bridge under that arch, with temporary navigation rules now directing crews rowing upstream to use the centre arch of the bridge. At the time of writing this is still ongoing.

Meetings were held via Zoom for most of the year, although by the second half of the year, committee meetings were held at the Boathouse.

Club Members and Friends

Nine new members were elected during 2021.

Encouraged by new CSSC membership rules, the club continues to encourage non-Civil Servant members to apply for so-called “linked” membership of CSSC to further strengthen our association with the CSSC.



In 2021, we sadly lost stalwart club member Malcolm Burman, who passed away unexpectedly to a fatal heart attack on 15 September, barely a month after his 70th birthday. A larger-than-life character, Malcolm was a member of Cygnet Rowing Club for half a century, initially as a fit young blade, followed by a decade-long stint as club treasurer and latterly one of two independent examiners.

Malc, better known to his close rowing contemporaries as 'Big Malc' aka 'Beermeister', joined Cygnet in 1971 and after his active rowing career, a “traditional Cygnet/BBLRC” marriage to his Julie and continuous support of Cygnet, Malc meticulously planned numerous canal trips with fellow club members, which focused on the best beer pubs en route. We will miss him.

Rowing

The ongoing pandemic scuppered a lot of racing, and the Committee were very pleased to see how club members pulled together to keep training, both on land and on the water.

From Easter the end of March, regular water sessions in all boat types were organized, first to have fun, and then to build up towards the summer and any regattas that were organized.

The Club participated in the Global Mile Relay in an eight with BBLRC, to support mental health charities; and the first actual regatta entered was Chiswick Regatta on 26 June where the Club raced in a Coxed Four, a Double, and a Single Scull. Ross Stuart won his event in the single at the event. The club also rowed at Barnes and Mortlake Regatta in July.

The Club also participated in the Scullers Head, the Pairs Head as well as the Fours Head and the Veterans Fours Head. Life was slowly going back to normal.

1 'Cygnet is a family and we are all just custodians of the club of that name, nurturing it for future generations.'

Vic Reeves (1920-2011)

On 19 June the first Learn to Row since 2019 was held and was well attended throughout the period till 10 August, when they “graduated”. The Sculling Camp, which had been planned for May at the Bungalow did not go ahead; the September sculling camp did go ahead as planned.

Looking ahead, the Captaincy plan to enter the 2022 Head Races, and hope to organize a training camp in April to set the squad up for a good regatta season.

Coaching

Beth Davidson continued coaching and, her amended land training programme during the Pandemic kept many a rower fit and sane. Once allowed, Beth coached outings of a vast variety of boat types, including eights, once that was allowed. In the meantime, Charlie Girdler-Maslen organized and coached many on-land training sessions, both with individuals, and circuits in smaller groups, socially distanced.

As ever, coxing continues to be an issue at Cygnet and we are very thankful for the coxing carried out by both club members and BBLRC members.

Additions to the Cygnet Fleet

Maintenance was carried out on the existing fleet as required, under the capable management of Iain Golder. At the Ordinary General meeting in July, the membership approved the purchase of a new Coxless Four, and the sale of the Peter Roche Coxed Four.

The fact that Cygnet continues to add to its range of good racing boats reflects both the success of the longstanding boat buying programme and the continuing generosity of members old and new in furnishing the necessary funding.

300 Club

The 300 Club administration is now firmly in the hands of Thomas Broadhurst, The usual draws were held through the year, albeit mostly on Zoom, rather than at Club functions, due to the limitations by the Pandemic. The results continue to be published on the Website and through Twitter. It is recognised that marketing efforts to promote this important fundraising tool to all club members old and new, in the past had a positive effect on the sale of 300 Club tickets and the Committee hopes that this progress can be maintained now that Club life is slowly returning back to normal, and new active members are encouraged to purchase as many tickets as they can afford.

General Meetings

Annual General Meeting –Held Virtually on Zoom on Sunday 28 February 2021

Was attended by Vice-President and Chairman N J Wylie, Vice Presidents Dr R P du Parcq, P L Rawkins, A Rawkins and P Brown, also Ms M Israel, M Byrne, T Broadhurst, I Golder, C Cabrera, S D Bush, M Drage, N Pickford, M Ozyurt, C Morgan, S Gourevitch, M Guttridge and C Jaguers. No apologies for absence were received.

Eleven Vice-Presidents were re-elected; Messrs M J Hughes, Dr R P du Parcq, R E Lambe, N J Wylie, P L Rawkins, C F Shea, A Cox, S D Bush, Dr N M Jackson, A J Rawkins and P Brown. On the Committee of Management, re-elected were N J Wylie as Chairman; Ms M Israël, Hon Secretary; M Byrne, Hon Treasurer. Mr N Pickford was voted Assistant Secretary and Mr R Bailey as Social Secretary. Committee Members elected were P L Rawkins, A Rawkins, I Golder, M Drage and M Guttridge.

A Cox, P L Rawkins, N V Pickford and M Byrne were re-appointed Trustees and M Burman and A Naylor were re-appointed Honorary Independent Examiners.

The Annual Report had previously been circulated and was adopted. The Captain presented a brief report. Mr Bush presented the Bungalow Report. The Annual Club Accounts were presented by the Hon Treasurer; these had not been completely reviewed by both Hon Examiners, so adoption was postponed to the Ordinary General Meeting.

Ordinary General Meeting & Election of Captaincy held virtually on Zoom on Tuesday 20 July 2021

Chaired by N J Wylie – Vice Presidents Dr R P du Parcq, Rawkins, A Rawkins and A Cox attended. Also attended M H Israel, Hon Secretary, M Byrne, Hon Treasurer, I Golder, R Bailey, Ni Pickford, M Drage, C Cabrera, S Gourevitch, T Broadhurst, J Berry, H Jonstromer, C Pretzlik and C Jaguers. Apologies were received from A Rawkins.

At the meeting, the 2020 Accounts were approved as both Hon Examiners had now seen and approved them, signatures are currently being sought. A proposal from the committee of management to purchase a new Coxless Four was approved. A proposal from the committee of management to sell the Peter Roche Coxed Four was also approved.

The outgoing Captain, C Cabrera Piguet was thanked for all his efforts and input over the three years of his Captaincy, including steering the Club during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and all resulting rules changes.

There being no other nominations the following were elected to Office:

Captain: R Bailey; Deputy Captain: M Drage; Vice-Captain: P Goldworthy.

Special General Meeting held at the Civil Service Boathouse on Sunday 28 November 2021

Chaired by N J Wylie – Vice President P Rawkins attended. Also attended M H Israel, Hon Secretary, M Byrne, Hon Treasurer, I Golder, R Bayley, and G du Parc Braham. Apologies were received from Dr R P du Parcq, T Broadhurst, P Goldworthy, M Ozyurt, N Pickford and C Cabrera.

The Special General Meeting was called to raise the subscription fees for 2022, and to obtain membership approval for the purchase of a replacement launch. These proposals were approved.

Club Management Meetings

Five committee meetings were held during the year with a 89% attendance record. The dates of meetings were mostly set at the end of each meeting. British Rowing was advised that the number of members for whom affiliation payments were due was 59. Items of special note are detailed below.

Civil Service Sports Council

The Civil Service Sports Council continues to support the Club and communication between Cygnet, the Boathouse Executive with CSSC is improving. The changes to CSSC membership that allow for a full member off CSSC to link with 6 Linked members linked membership plus the decision to make a Linked member after more than 1 year of membership a Full CSSC member and allow them to have their own Linked members are encouraging. Informal feedback from CSSC HQ is that they are pleased with the way Cygnet is making use of the new membership categories. They have kept in touch through the year and we are determined to get as many members into CSSC as possible. It is still a challenge to get Cygnet's Learn to Row courses published on CSSC documentation, but we will persist in our attempts.

"Cygnet's" Bungalow

Again, a successful year for our second important fund-raising source. The premises were fully in use from May until September and has proven very popular in a year when travelling overseas was a lot more complicated than it used to be.. Management of the Bungalow being carried out by Mr D Bush as Hon Bungalow Secretary. Mr Bush will present a full report at the Annual General Meeting.

The Cygnet Management Committee expresses its heartfelt thanks to Mr Bush who is and who always has been a staunch supporter and now manager of the bungalow since it was built.

The Website

The website continued to be updated by Neil Pickford, with Club officers able to post information themselves. It provides most relevant information about the club and its activities. All members and friends are urged to log on to www.cygnet-rc.org.uk.

Members and friends alike can now also follow the club's activities with the official Cygnet Twitter account @CygnetRC, and through this have access to regatta results, Tideway news from the PLA and British Rowing initiatives. The website is also the main link for the Cygnet photo archive, which we can highly recommend to all members.

The Club recognises the increasing importance of social media and is thankful for members' efforts in keeping the outside world informed about all things Cygnet.

Social Events

The usual social events were held, the majority of them in August such as the Club Picnic at Old Blades in Henley during Henley Friday, the End of Season “hog roast and beer festival” at the boathouse and the annual Clubs’ Day. It was very gratifying to see so many Cygnet members, old and new, attending these events.

The End of Season Dinner also saw the awarding of our two annual awards:

The G.P. Jeffries Cup for Cygnet Rower of the Year. This goes to the oarsman who has improved most over the past 12 months - and there were several to choose from but ultimately the award went to Matthew Gutteridge.

The Wally Whedal Cup for Cygnet Sportsmanship & Endeavour, also known as ‘Clubman of the Year’, is awarded to the rower who showed willingness and eagerness to lend a helping hand wherever needed: Mustafa Ozyurt. In this difficult year, he reinjected life and social spirit at the club.

Special rowing commendations went to Ross Stewart (last year’s rower of the year) for his achievements and success in the single scull again this season. And to Gareth Furby for his participation alongside the squad and development during squad outings this season and the significant improvements in the coached land and water sessions.

Before Christmas, older members were joined by some of the active squad members at the traditional Christmas lunch at the RAF Club, admirably organised by Lawrence McVeigh.

At the End of the Year...

We are all hoping that the COVID-19 pandemic is beyond its peak, as this has been another strange year with the continuation of the pandemic. We are grateful that the medical experts have managed to produce vaccines so rapidly and we now know that these have made a big difference in the lives of those who have been vaccinated. We are proud to see club members with jobs in the NHS not only doing their utmost at work, but still manage to help out at the Club; we hope the companionship and support from their rowing friends has made their life a bit easier.

Looking forward to 2022 the captaincy has plans to compete at Quintin Head, Hammersmith Head and, as always, the Head of the River Race and the Veterans Eights head. The club continues to be active both on and off the water. The Captaincy follows the policies laid down by previous holders of office and encourages club members to be further involved in club organisation. There is a constant hunt for coxswains, experienced or willing to learn and it is hoped that coaching will continue on both a professional and amateur basis. It is expected that 2020 will involve a very active racing season and the need for a high level of individual fitness will be necessary, so circuits remain on the menu.

The relationship with many other clubs both on and away from the Tideway is excellent, in particular that with Barnes Bridge Ladies Rowing Club remains as strong as ever. The camaraderie between members is remarked upon and Cygnet remains a very friendly and happy club.