

HRSA Monthly Report

August 2018

Stephen Worley

Rescue at Sea

Members of Worthing Rowing Club should be commended and congratulated for their rescue of a person from the sea. The Incident Report contained the following:-

"Details of injury/health issues and any medical treatment administered/required: A woman with mental health issues was spotted out at sea by rowers from Worthing Rowing club whilst training. They rowed out to her and she seemed distressed so they asked her to hold onto the boat or an oar so they could tow her in. She wouldn't/couldn't so one of the rowers got into the sea and swam her in. The police and coast guards were involved. No-one was hurt but the woman was very distressed. "

There is a news article at <https://www.worthingherald.co.uk/news/rowing-club-members-describe-rescue-of-teenage-girl-from-water-in-worthing-1-8596277> , it contains the following:

"A young crew from Worthing Rowing Club have been praised for pulling a teenage girl from the water near Splash Point in Worthing last Tuesday.

Emergency services were alerted to a girl in the water off Marine Parade at around 7pm. The novice men's crew at Worthing Rowing Club were in the middle of a training session ahead of the regatta on Saturday when the sculler saw the girl and asked the crew of five to assist.

Mike van Doorn said they rowed over and tried to pass her a blade to hold onto. When she did not respond, he said: "I decided that I couldn't leave her there so I jumped in. "I grabbed her and pulled her to the side of the boat." The crew, who were far out from shore in the high tide, began to carefully row back to the beach while Mike clung on. The 31-year-old said: "It was certainly a bit of an experience holding on to the side of the boat."

Rob Bradley, the coxswain, who at 15 was the youngest crew member, directed the crew back to shore and said: "It felt like it took a long time, we couldn't go very fast." Donovan Tomlinson, 16, who was also on the boat, said the other two members of the crew were relatively inexperienced. He said: "Us three have rowed together before but the others were new so we were a new crew out there. It's good that we did it."

They reached the beach safely to find police officers waiting to take the girl home.

Gill McLean, secretary at Worthing Rowing Club, praised the team for their efforts. She said: "It's really quite amazing what they did." Two of the crew were only 15 years old and another two had only just started rowing so they did very well in a difficult situation. "We are very proud of how they reacted to it. They coped very well."

A spokesman from Sussex Police thanked everyone involved for their assistance. The Shoreham lifeboat was also called but was stood down on route to the scene.

Incident Reports

Incident reports were reviewed (other than those of simple capsizes). Comments were made on a few and some were forwarded to others for information. Incident Reports that describe medical treatment beyond first aid and those that describe medical issues are routinely shared with the Honorary Medical Adviser. Those that contain potential safeguarding issues are shared with the Lead Safeguarding Officer.

In one incident rowers found a dead (human) body in the water. Their coach followed the correct procedure which is as follows:

- If the body shows no signs of life then send the crew back to the boathouse
- (If there are signs of life then call for help, recover the body and provide first aid support)
- Dial 999 and notify the police
- Ensure that someone stays with or near the body
- Ask the drivers of any passing boats not to approach the body
- When the emergency services arrive then direct them to the location of the body

Note: If emergency service support is needed to assist a person in difficulty in, on, or alongside the water then tell the emergency operator. If on the coast or on the Tideway then ask for the Coastguard, they will task the Lifeboat or airborne search and rescue service.

The rowers were distressed by the sight of the body but were reassured by their coach. The members of Leicester Rowing Club involved should be commended for way in which they dealt with this incident.

There was a recently reported incident at a bumps race in June in which a boat failed to hold up, as instructed by Marshalls, and accelerated into the back of a stationary boat. The cox of the stationary boat required some medical treatment and the boat was damaged. The offending cox was banned from the river for the remainder of the Bumps campaign.

In a recent incident a wing rigger became detached and the sculler capsized. There is information on the correct fitting of wing riggers on the British Rowing website at <https://www.britishrowing.org/2016/05/do-you-secure-your-riggers/>

There were two separate incidents of anti-social behaviour with launches inconveniencing rowers. In both cases this was followed up (in one case with the police and river patrol and in the other with the local National Park Authority) and the offenders dealt with.

A member of the public lost control of a tricycle outside Tyne Rowing Club and headed straight down the steps. He built up quite some speed, lost control and ended up in the water. He was not injured but was assisted from the water by members of the club.

The effectiveness of bow balls in collisions

Two recent collisions have shown that bow balls provide little protection in the event of a collision where the tracks of the boats involved are perpendicular. This is shown in the photos below (boat names have been removed to avoid embarrassment).



In both cases the bow, and bow ball, of one boat penetrated the hull of the other.

Concussion

There was an incident in a bumps race when a rower suffered a blow to the head. The incident report contained the following:-

Following a "Bump" the crew was required to pull over to allow following crews passage along the narrow river. While the crew was still rowing at full pressure the coxswain steered the racing eight to port in an attempt to move as far out of the way of oncoming boats as possible but failed to slow down before doing so and guided the racing boat very close to the tree-lined bank. The boat was still moving at full speed when its bows passed beneath the trunk of a tree which grows out of the river bank at about 45 degrees. The rower in the bow seat was knocked unconscious by the impact with that tree trunk and the inertia caused her to be squeezed between the tree trunk and her port (stroke) side oar handle as she was somersaulted into the river over the port gunwale. She regained consciousness underwater and was able to hold her breath until she emerged on the port side of the boat which the rest of the crew had, by then, drawn to a halt. The rower suffered severe shortness of breath, deep scratches from the impact with the tree and very severe bruising, which developed in the two to three days following the impact, but was otherwise unharmed. "

This incident was discussed with the Honorary Medical Adviser who expressed concern about many aspects of the incident. He was also concerned that the concussion aspect of this injury was not treated as seriously as it should have been . He advised that he would have "withdrawn the rower under the rules of 'concussion' , had her formally SCAT5 tested by a medical practitioner and followed a post-concussion protocol (withdrawn from all activities (including screen time and work) for one week - then reassessed and if showing improvement, gradually return to work over the next week (if not a longer rest period which can extend to 6 weeks). The adherence to this protocol is critical to the long term recovery of the casualty."

There is further advice on concussion in [Chapter 8 of RowSafe](#) (see section 8.5) and in the [Safety Alert on Head Injuries](#) (included with this report)

The ability to see objects ahead of the boat.

There has been further feedback on head mounted mirrors. This is summarised in Appendix I and largely reinforces the previous information that these can be a useful aid to scullers and steers but that it takes some time and practice to use them effectively.

Port and Starboard

There has been further discussion on the use of meaningful and universally understood terms. It is important to avoid confusion especially when dealing with users of other types of boats. The use of standard terminology, as specified in the Rules of Racing, would remove this potential confusion. A Safety Alert is in preparation.

Exit of coxes from bow loaded boats

Concern was expressed that, in an emergency, a cox may have difficulty in extracting themselves from the coxes seat. There may be a problem with clothing and lifejacket straps. Anyone with any experience of these issues is invited to contact me at safety@britishrowing.org .

Children sculling unsupervised

There was a question about the whether it would be safe for an experienced and proficient 17 year old sculler to go afloat unescorted. The answer was that from a pure safety standpoint it would be possible, if the conditions were suitable, but that there may be safeguarding issues as anyone who has not attained the age of 18 is, in law, a child. The question was referred to the Lead Safeguarding Officer and her reply is reproduced in full as it contains so much useful and relevant information.

“From a governance perspective, affiliated clubs are directly responsible for all under 18s at all times when they are using club premises or engaged in activities from, at or on behalf of the club. This applies whether or not their parents are present or have given consent for any other arrangement.

If parents wish to supervise their own children in rowing activities from, or at the club, it must be clearly understood by everyone that the club is still responsible, and that parents may only act in this capacity if authorised to do so under the club’s own governance, and having undergone all the required training and safer recruitment checks that would pertain in respect of any other volunteer whom the club wished to deploy.

The position under British Rowing’s Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy, which is mandatory, is that under 18s must be directly supervised by an appropriate adult on behalf of the club for the entire duration of their attendance at the club or involvement in club activities:

‘Participants under the age of 18, even those qualified as coaches, should be supervised at all times’. (British Rowing Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy, Section 4.4)

On this basis, for an affiliated club to permit an under 18 to attend the club or to engage in rowing activities without appropriate club supervision would be considered to be a breach of British Rowing Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy.

I realise that is not the response that you will necessarily have been hoping to receive. Nevertheless, I hope that it clarifies matters. Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me, and I will be pleased to hear from you.”

The Lead Safeguarding Officer can be contacted at lso@britishrowing.org .

Defective Throw Lines

In last month’s report there were some notes on a on a specification for throw lines with a request for comment. There was one comment (from John Mulholland) on these notes. This comment was incorporated into the document and it was forwarded to BSi.

I have been invited to be part of a British Standards institution committee to discuss and, perhaps produce a standard on throw lines. Having such a standard would help rowing clubs as it would give them confidence to know that if they were buying a BSi “kitemarked” product then it would be of good quality.

Blind Sculler

There was a request from a club running sculling courses as a sculler with a severe sight impairment had booked onto the course. The club intends to check out his ability in a double, but he wants to scull in a single. The club will arrange for to have a competent sculler in front of him to steer him and a launch close by. The club asked for advice on safety and the treatment of a person with a disability.

The safety advice was “It is not common, but by no means unusual, for people with a visual impairment to scull in a 1x, however it does need care. The approach of having another sculler nearby, to help steer him away from hazards, works well on relatively quiet waters but may be a challenge on the Tideway. If you can find quiet times or quiet areas of the river then that may help. It would also help to have a launch nearby but not too close as engine noise could be a problem. Please avoid the more hazardous areas, such as upstream of moorings and piers.

If a sculler with a visual impairment capsizes then they may have a problem locating their boat and climbing onto it and paddling it to safety (it all depends on the degree of visual impairment). It would help if they were wearing an auto inflation lifejacket. They would not then be able to climb onto their boat but would be safe while waiting to be rescued by a launch. I know that this will not be popular as many people with disabilities like to feel that rowing is a sport where they can participate alongside others on an equal footing; many can and do. However, I feel that it would be prudent for him to wear a lifejacket at least until he has demonstrated what he can do.

It may help to learn more about this chap from his club.”

This reply was copied to people with greater experience of coaching people with disabilities, the following very helpful advice was provided.

This was from Jacqui Traynor. “When working with any person with a disability it is always a good start to have a discussion with the individual to understand more about their disability and what coping methods they already have in place. Blindness is not necessarily absolute and through discussion you might be able to discern what they can see and where there may be challenges.

Your suggestion of starting in a double is a good one, whilst the rower familiarises themselves with the river. Putting them into a position to steer the double would then provide them with the opportunity to demonstrate competency at navigating hazards and even taking instruction from another rower or launch.

I am aware of blind scullers using walkie-talkies to aid communication in the boat from a launch -this could mitigate any concerns of communication over the noise of a launch.

Implementing a buddy system to call out to the sculler with visual impairments is also a good idea and in the event of a capsize, providing they are familiar with buddy rescue, they can support each other.

This was from Ella Willott. “We received an email is from a gentleman based in the States, who has developed a form of remote controlled rudder to help steer Visually Impaired scullers. It has been tested with some success by 3 VI Scullers so far, two of them Stateside, and one from the UK. The gentleman who has developed the remote controlled rudder system would very much like others to test it, if they are keen to do so. If this is something you or anyone you know of is at all interested in, please contact me directly and I can put you in touch with him. (contact ella.willott@britishrowing.org)

The use of stable boats at sea

There was recently an incident involving stable boats being used on the sea. They were swamped but remained buoyant and the crews needed to be rescued.

Boats of this type are designed for several applications, including for people who:-

- are new to rowing and are yet to develop their skills,
- are interested in rowing for fun and less interested in top class competition,
- are interested in touring and carrying the equipment they need for overnight stays, and
- need a boat that they can row when the water is too rough for fine boats.

In the incidents the boats were the Swift Freedom "Touring Gig" boats. These should not be confused with Cornish Pilot Gigs that are designed for use at sea.

Sea rowing boats tend not to become swamped in all but the most severe conditions because they are designed to use bailers. The sliding seat coastal boats are fitted with self-bailers where the movement of the boat through the water, at speeds above 3 knots, tends to remove the water from inside the boat. Offshore sliding seat rowing boats have open transoms so the movement of the boat causes water to flow off the deck and out of the back of the boat. Pilot Gigs have manual bilge pumps or carry bailers.

Please remember that inshore stable boats, of this type, are not designed for use at sea. Please understand that conditions at sea can change rapidly so, even if the conditions look good they may not stay that way. It is best not to venture onto the sea in boats that are not designed for this environment.

British Rowing Sculling Festival

The updated safety documentation for this event was reviewed. It was an improvement on the previous version but some of the required actions listed in the risk assessment were still not included in the safety documentation.

British Rowing Offshore Championship and Commonwealth Sprints

The updated safety documentation for this event was reviewed. This had been completed to a very high standard and a few minor opportunities for improvement were identified

Other Advice

The following questions were received:

Q A question has arisen recently about the status of members who have either completed a course designated as 'safety boat' or one designated as 'power boat'. Both, as I understand it, are to RYA level 2 standard. Some members have completed the one designated 'safety boat' so understand the context and scope of that course but a number of members who have only completed a power boat course have asked me whether they are qualified to provide cover to activities from what we designate as a safety boat. I actually have one driver who is concerned about her legal exposure if things go wrong. The question is "should we be using the power boat trained persons to provide safety boat cover or must they all do the 'safety boat' course?"

A I do understand a little about this as I have both RYA Level 2 Powerboat and Safety Boat qualifications, both with Coastal Endorsement. There is information on these two qualifications at <https://www.rya.org.uk/courses-training/courses/powerboat/Pages/level-2.aspx> and <https://www.rya.org.uk/courses-training/courses/powerboat/Pages/safety-boat.aspx>. The powerboat qualification is a pre-requisite for the Safety Boat course. The Powerboat course is mostly confined to boat handling skills and the Safety Boat course prepares boat drivers to assist people in other boats, mostly sailing dinghies.

Qualifications are great but what we are really interested in is competence. Some people are qualified and not competent and many are competent but not qualified.

That does not help much so let's try to be more specific. Please do not assume that someone driving your safety boat needs to be competent to the standard of the RYA qualification. All rowing clubs are different and the level of competence will depend, to a great extent, on the venue where you row and the type of safety support that they are expected to deliver. The level of competence that they will need can be determined from your risk assessment. If you look at all the controls that say something like "rescue with safety boat" then you will have some idea of what is needed.

The job of the safety boat driver can be made much easier if rowers are taught to climb on top of their inverted boats, if they capsize. It is much easier to rescue someone from this position than it is to drag them into a boat when they are bobbing about in the water.

Your boat driver who is concerned about her own personal liability has little to be worried about. The [Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Act 2015](#) applies directly. If the boat driver can show that she had "a predominantly responsible approach towards protecting the safety or other interests of others" then the court is required to take this into account. It has been argued that this is simply a restatement of common law.

Please also remember that membership of British Rowing includes member to member insurance that should cover safety boat drivers in these circumstances, providing they are each members of British Rowing. I have copied this note to a friend and colleague who knows more about our insurance. I am sure that she will correct any mistakes that I may have made in this regard.

The following information was provided on insurance by a member of the Membership & Rowing Community Team:-

We try not to make any recommendations in terms of insurance but refer questions to our providers, Howden. We have, as of last week, revamped our insurance website to make it much easier for all parts of the rowing community to use and understand the provision. If it doesn't have an answer that you need, then Howden's contact details are there to cover any specifics either over a phone call or email - it is what the service is there for. I would say for extra clarity it is worth asking them about this point. Please find the website here: <http://british-rowing-insurance.co.uk/>

Appendix I – Further Feedback on the use of head mounted mirrors

My mirror is a converted cycling one designed to go on a helmet and attaches to the brim of my baseball cap, it is also slightly convex. I row on the Thames which is a river that is in a constant state of flux and the rowing channels are different every time we row, as the river is tidal at Quintin.

The mirror allows me to align the bow of the Boat to a point in the mid distance rather than responding to the curvature of the river. You can therefore steer more like a cox, than a sculler, picking points to row to rather than reactive steering to the bank of the river. It takes practice to learn how to scull with a reversed image and the convex nature of the mirror means you are closer to what is in front of you than you think. It is an aid, not a complete answer, particularly in the rain, where drops on the mirror significantly reduce its efficacy. However I would now not scull without it as it really does work.

and

I am writing at your request to let you know that I use a head mirror when sculling (1X and 2X). I use a 'Take A Look' mirror, which is actually marketed for cycling. It attaches to the peak of a cap.

I am a 63 year old Masters F, and was introduced to the mirror several years ago by my doubles partner.

The secret, as you say in your report, is persistence. When I first tried it, I wasn't impressed, and didn't think it was better than looking around. It took me far longer to look into the mirror, focus, and process information than a quick glance behind did. But I persevered, and it took me about a year to fully learn to use it, get used to it, and for it to become automatic.

Now, I wouldn't go out on the river without it! As well as the safety aspect, I can steer a much better line, and it is brilliant when racing!

and

After over 50 years of singling (as well as sweep rowing) I reached my early seventies realising that turning my head to look over my shoulder was becoming increasingly difficult.

On the recommendation of a fellow club member I tried a head mounted mirror. Try as I may I simply could not get on with it and gave it up using it. This led to further thoughts about problems of elderly single scullers which I have found are relatively common.

One is simply getting into the boat from a landing or pontoon (as opposed to straddling the boat in shallow water). Old knees tend to mitigate against the necessary one legged squat not only resulting in a heavy landing on the seat but also risking further damage to said knee joint.

The other consideration is that the very nature of single sculling means that one often sculls unaccompanied. For we oldies this presents a greater safety risk than for our younger counterparts. Unless a regular buddy is available to act as wing man old people on their own, cold water and very narrow boats can be a potentially risky combination.

I was fortunate in that at the same time as accepting the above that I discovered the joys of coxless double and quad sculling. If one avoids being the steerer there is no need to keep looking round to check the course, it is easier to get into and out of the boat with someone holding it and being in company is less risky should anything go wrong.