



BRITISHROWING

HRSA Monthly Report

April 2022

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Incidents in April

Broken arm following collision with a tree

After spinning, bow's rigger in an 8 hit a tree trunk that was sticking out of the water, this caused the backstay to shear and the rigger to buckle from the impact. A few seconds later bowman said that his arm was broken. A strong gust of wind may have helped to propel the boat towards the tree trunk.

The rower's broken arm required surgery; it will be in a cast for 2-3 weeks and there is expected to be a 6-month recovery process.

Please keep a good lookout and avoid tree stumps and other obstructions.

Take care to check your heel restraints

There was a head on collision between a 4- and a 4x after which the 4x capsized and one rower was not able to remove their feet from the adjustable shoes for some considerable time because the heel restraints were not connected and the shoes were really tight. The rower was only able to stay afloat because he was holding onto the 4-.

It is reported that the heel restraints were not checked before the outing. The club will remind all members "that mandatory safety checks on the boat MUST be performed before boating".

A similar incident happened at a training camp in Scotland.

A Safety Alert on Checking Heel Restraints is included with this report.

Take care to check other items too

A coastal 4+ took on water during a launch into rough water. It rowed away from the shore and opened its self-bailer (to get rid of the water). The bailer failed and left the boat with a gaping hole where bailer should be - water was quickly taken on so the crew headed for the shore signalling to people on the beach that help was required. A controlled storm landing was executed with plenty of help. Nobody was harmed. The club will repair the self-bailers and ensure that, in future, they are checked prior to launching.

Attacked by a swan

There were three reports from one club, on separate days, of an aggressive male swan attacking rowers in a 2-, 4x and 4-. In paddling upstream, the boats could not avoid passing close to a female swan nesting on reeds.

The club has approached everyone it can think of for advice and has had no useful responses. Members have been advised to be aware and row carefully past swans. Avoid smaller boats if possible.

There is more information on attacks by swans [here](#), where it says that "*the males are fierce in defence of their nests, especially during the spring nesting season - April to June.*" The club could consider avoiding this area of the river till after June but this would seriously reduce the length of river that they can use.

Be aware of other boats

It is that time of year when people want to have fun afloat again in all sorts of boats. Some of these people appear to have little understanding of navigation rules, or of how to control their boats, or both. Please take great care around other boats.

In one incident a hired rowing pleasure boat was stationary, near the bank, ahead of a 1x. The 1x started to pull out to pass and the pleasure boat continued towards the centre of the river and hit the side of the 1x near the stern. A similar incident occurred with a 2- the following day.

In another incident a 2- took a wide line so were rather central in the river. The crew was aware of an approaching motor cruiser so stopped their boat. The cruiser was about 50 metres away and took no evasive action as they were not looking where they were going. There were shouts to them to stop, and the 2- tried to get out the way. The cruiser continued at speed and mounted the bows of the boat, and then came to a stop on top of the boat, which then capsized. The rowers managed to swim the boat to safety. The damage to the boat is shown opposite. The people on the cruiser did not apologise, and were laughing at the incident with a blatant disregard for how much danger they put the rowers in. The RRSA has written to the club asking that this incident is reported to the Navigation Authority urgently. It is understood that the Navigation Authority is investigating this incident with a view to taking punitive action.



In another incident a 4x was hit by a narrow boat that was in the centre of the relatively narrow waterway on a bend. The 4x had almost stopped. The oars were submerged under narrowboat; this resulted in a slow motion capsize. The crew stayed with boat, righted it, getting back in and rowing short distance back to club, and immediate wash/shower.

In a further incident a 4x was in the correct navigational position to the rower's left of the fairway. The steers looked ahead and saw 40 foot white cruising boat with many people on board, on a collision course and travelling very fast. The crew held hard and moved out of the way; the boats missed each other by about 2 meters. The cruiser did not change course or speed. The people on the cruiser appeared to find the incident funny and it continued at some speed up the river, causing considerable wash.

In another incident four rowers were afloat in 1xs. One took a wide line around a bend and collided with a narrow boat in the centre of the river and the 1x capsized. There was extensive damage to the 1x. The club has introduced new sculling guidelines; all rowers in 1xs must have a bank-party.

There was a further incident when a 1x collided with a Trimaran that was on the wrong side of the river. The sculler shouted but collided causing some damage to the top of the scull which almost capsized. The sculler was assisted by a nearby safety launch. There was some damage to the 1x.

An experienced Junior sculler was sculling along the straight part of a river. Suddenly and without warning a narrow boat pulled out quickly in front of him. The sculler collided with the narrow boat snapping a blade (which sank) and knocked the sculler into the water. The sculler was being sucked in towards the propeller until another boater shouted to turn the engine off. The boater, who is reported to have had an open can of lager in front of him, said to the sculler that he didn't look before pulling out. The sculler, and the boat, were taken back to the club. The sculler suffered minor cuts to his leg. The boater then proceeded on his journey.

There was a near miss when a motor vessel moved to the incorrect side of the river approximately 20m ahead of sculler travelling in the opposite direction. It suddenly stopped directly in the path of the sculler with no warning and performed a change of direction manoeuvre on a corner. The sculler did an emergency stop and avoided collision. The sculler was clearly visible and weather conditions were fine. The RRSA has spoken to a contact at the company operating these motor vessels. He will remind his crews that they should maintain a good lookout for rowing boats, not turn immediately in front of them, and sound their horns when turning.

An 8x was stationary in the river, with its bows into the stream, on correct side of the navigation. A motor cruiser was coming downstream central or just on the wrong side of navigation. The 8x followed the coaches instruction and started to move closer to bank. The cruiser then veered across river just missing the 8x. The stroke of 8x was instructed to back down by the coach as the cruiser manoeuvred out and set off immediately, never adjusting speed, just missing the bows of the octo (passing where it had been). The cruiser apologised as it proceeded to crash into the opposite bank and carried on towards the lock. The crew of the 8x were all OK, one rower looked shaken up so the boat returned to the boat house. It is understood that this incident was reported to the navigation authority and that it is investigating with a view to taking punitive action.

Take care to keep a good lookout

There was a collision between a 2x that was crossing a river and a 4x that was doing a steady state piece. This resulted in damage to both boats as shown below.



Fortunately nobody was injured. Please take care to keep a good lookout and prevent collisions like this.

There was a low speed collision between a 2x and a 1x when the 2x crossed from their station to collide with the 1x. The 2x commented that as the "collision was not at speed, it was not a matter for concern". This comment is, in itself, concerning. It is easier to keep a good lookout and to steer, at low speed than it is at high speed. If a crew fails to do this when it is easy then this is concerning as this at-risk behaviour could cause serious consequences when they are moving at speed.

There is no such thing as a “blind spot”

A 4+ collided head-on with a new large yellow buoy placed earlier that day because the cox had not seen the buoy! This did not cause any injuries but resulted in a 6 inch crack along the glued joint at top of the bow. Coxes were reminded not to neglect basic coxing and make small course changes so that they can see whatever is ahead.

Take care to avoid exposed water

A crew were training on a large expanse unfamiliar water. It was the first session of the day, high winds had been predicted. The coach and safety adviser separately assessed the then current conditions to be very calm despite forecasts of wind. The session started and a bow-loaded 4+ crossed to the far side of the expanse of water thinking that if the weather changed it would be able to row back as the forecast was predicting a gradual increase in wind speed. This was the side of the expanse of water towards which the wind was blowing. The weather changed significantly during the over 20-30 mins and the boat quickly became swamped by waves breaking over the side.

The safety launch recovered the cox, who was in the most vulnerable position, and directed the boat to row about 100m to a slipway. From there the rowers and boat were recovered back to the boathouse and warmed up.

Please understand that wave height is a function of:-

- fetch (the distance the wind has blown across the water),
- wind strength (the wind velocity across the surface of the water, this is less in sheltered areas), and
- time (the time for which the wind has been blowing)

This can be compounded by a funnelling effect where the shelter provided by the land varies and wind is stronger in some areas than others.

Please respect the weather forecast - just because the conditions look OK at the start of the outing, this does not mean that they will still be OK at the end. Also please remember that the water conditions differ depending on the extent of the shelter.

Take care on land

A rower walked into a rigger in the boathouse and suffered a cut to the head. Members were reminded to protect rigger ends, especially at head height and to check for unprotected riggers and cover them, on entering boathouse.

A club was manoeuvring its trailer out of a field following a competition when one of their boats hit a boat on another trailer and broke the end of it. This was due to inadequate lookout.

Take care with objects on the ground

A junior rower nearly stepped into smashed glass when they returned to the pontoon after an outing. The coach ensured that the pontoon was clear before the outing. The club is communicating to all coaches to ensure that the pontoon is clear before an outing and also on return from an outing so that everyone is protected from this harm. Members will also be informed. The club is raising funds to have a fence built around the pontoon to prevent members of the public from using it.

Calls from the bank

Some clubs use bank riders or coaches, on bike to accompany their crews and assist them. Bank riders and coaches will shout to the crew to warn them of approaching hazards but often the crews do not hear these calls. Please consider issuing bank riders and coaches with megaphones so that they are better able to warn the crews.

Take care in unfamiliar surroundings

A 2- was boating from steps in an unfamiliar venue where it is not possible to have both oars on the water. A local club member tried to help but the boat tipped and banged the steps causing both rowers to fall out. The area where the rigger is mounted on the bow side of stroke seat within the boat was cracked.

Take care on bikes

A bank spotter was cycling along the tow path when her throw line became entangled in a wheel. She fell forward over the handle bars knocking her head on the left temple. She was taken to A&E for a check-up and subsequently made a full recovery. The club has provided advice to members on the packing of throw lines and for the need for cyclists to wear helmets.

In another incident a coach was cycling along the river bank when he was overtaken by a cyclist who collided with the coach's arm and handlebars, knocking him to the ground where his head hit a collapsed fence and signage. The passing cyclist failed to stop. This incident resulted in swelling and a cut to forehead/. It was treated at local minor injury unit, standard head trauma tests, wound cleaned, glued and dressed.

Take care around canoes

A canoeist reported that she was canoeing in a group when she was overtaken by a 4 moving at speed. The canoe was close to the bank and the blades of the 4 were within inches of the canoe. The canoeist shouted to the rowers that they should watch where they are going. One of the rowers replied that they could not do that because they were going backwards. Two of the group have now stated that they are too frightened to paddle on the river after this incident.

The canoeist then stopped at their clubhouse and reported it to the person in charge. She apologised on behalf of the club said she would deal with it. The club subsequently reminded its members about steering safely and respecting other river users.

The club has gathered together an informal group from the local rowing, kayak, canoe and barge clubs where they discuss safety issues and how they can improve them. The canoeist was invited to come to these meetings as a representative of her group.

The Incident Reporting system

There was an enquiry from the “Safety and Well-Being Associate” at USRowing who is working on the development and implementation of a mishap reporting system. He had read through the British Rowing procedures and looked at the reporting system itself and was curious about how we make the information accessible to members once it has been collected and reviewed. One of his goals is to make USRowing’s incident information and lessons learned useful to membership directly. He asked whether we create an annual report or other output on safety to membership. He also noted that reporting has the option of being anonymous, and asked whether reports trigger any administrative actions by British Rowing?

My reply was that the most important characteristic of the Incident Reporting system is that people trust it. It is a "no fault" system, people submitting reports are confident that they will be thanked and appreciated rather than ridiculed and blamed. There are positive consequences and no negative consequences to reporting. We take great care to ensure that this happens. It takes care, diligence and time to build up this level of trust but do not let that put you off, if it takes time then it is best to start as soon as possible.

At the end of each year we reward the clubs that have submitted the most reports. The reward includes giving them each a certificate signed by our Chairman and me, and naming and praising the club in my monthly report. Please see the January 2022 report (the reports are in the public domain on the British Rowing website [here](#)). There are similar comments in the reports in the early months of other years.

Individual Incident reports can be opened for comment and the other clubs involved are invited to comment.

We are happy to receive anonymous reports but most people choose to include their names, email addresses and club details. I guess that less than 3% are anonymous. We treat all reports in the same way.

My Monthly Reports each start with the lessons learned from the incidents reported that month. These are anonymised and are intended to share this learning with the rowing community. The Monthly Reports are widely distributed within and beyond British Rowing. Recipients are encouraged to forward them to anyone who they think would be interested and I know that many do so.

We compile annual analyses of incidents at the end of each year. The latest one is on the website [here](#). They are summarised in Monthly Reports (usually in January) and the analysis report is circulated with the Monthly Report.

We also use the learning from incidents, and elsewhere, to produce Safety Alerts. These are sent to all clubs, distributed with my Monthly Reports and are archived in the public domain on the website [here](#). Please have a look at these too.

Please do not forget [RowSafe](#), this is our comprehensive and extensive rowing safety guidance manual. It is updated annually. It is in the public domain on the website.

RowSafe 2022 Update

Last month I described the 2022 updates to RowSafe but omitted the changes to section 3.6, now entitled “Competence in the Water” because they were still being discussed. It is understood that the discussions have now concluded and these are the changes to that section.

Section 3.6 has been amended to include “floating” as an alternative to “swimming”. The following introduction has been added:-

“It is important that rowers who find themselves in the water do not panic and are able to respond so that they can keep themselves safe. In effect, this means that they should be able to swim or float. Floating, rather than swimming, is recommended by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) and National Water Safety Forum (NWSF) because it tends to conserve heat and energy when in cold water.”

However, it does state that

“Each club is expected to use its Risk Assessment to determine the capability that it requires its members to have. “

and

“Those rowers who can only float or swim when wearing a buoyancy aid should also wear such an aid, or a lifejacket if coxing, whenever they are afloat.”

A Safety Alert explaining why you should Float to Live if you fall into deep water is included with this report.

Also, the following has been added in Sections 3.2, 4.9, and 8.1.

Do not wear a hoodie when rowing or sculling as the thumbs tend to catch in the pocket, or when coxing in a bow-loader as it could become entangled and impede a rapid exit.

RowSafe 2022 will be posted on the website as soon as possible.

RNLI How To guides

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution has published a series of “how to” videos as follows.

- How to Teach your Child to Tread Water [here](#)
- How to Teach your Child to Float [here](#)
- How to Teach your Child to Signal for Help [here](#)
- How to Teach your Child a Survival Stroke [here](#)

These are intended to show parents how to teach their children but could also be used to teach rowers of any age to improve their competence in the water.

Anyone who is unsure about floating rather than swimming is invited to look at [this](#), then look at Evan’s story [here](#).

A Safety Alert on “Float to Live” is included with this report.

Work with British Canoeing

There was an incident that contained the following:-

On the way back I had a problem with a rigger (a bolt holding the two stays together sheared) but managed to scull to the bank where I got out of my boat safely. I didn't fall in. A Canoe club launch took me across to their club where they were able to find me a replacement bolt which they cut to size.

This was shared with my colleague at British Canoeing with a request, if he has the opportunity, that he thanks the canoe club involved on our behalf.

The report, summarised above, under "Take Care Around Canoes" that includes information about the informal group from the local rowing, kayak, canoe and barge clubs to discuss safety issues and the invitation to the canoeist in the incident to come to these meetings as a representative of her group, was also shared.

How to find the Safeguarding handbooks

There was a request for information on how to find these handbooks. There is a summary of changes and four handbooks, as follows:-

Handbook 1 - The Club Welfare Officer

Handbook 2 – Handling Concerns

Handbook 3 – Club, Training and Competition Guidance

Handbook 4 – Safety in the Digital World

These can all be found from links on the Safeguarding page [here](#).

Crotch (or thigh) straps

There was a question as to whether we should make the use of crotch straps compulsory; it was noted that they were thought to be expensive and buoyancy aids do not have them.

The response was that, in general we provide guidance and advice, we do not make rules.

The video [here](#), shows that a crotch strap will keep a lifejacket where it is supposed to be and not wearing one will allow the lifejacket to come off over the wearers head.

The RNLI video [here](#) describes how to fit lifejacket crotch straps and what happens if you do not.

A universal crotch strap may be purchased for £6.99 [here](#), hardly expensive if it can save your life.

While we are considering lifejackets, there is a RNLI video on "How to check and maintain your lifejacket", [here](#).

What do Regional Rowing Safety Advisers do?

A Regional Rowing Safety Adviser (RRSA) is looking for a replacement and wanted to provide a Role Description for that person. I advised that there were job descriptions for Club and Competition Rowing Safety Advisers in RowSafe and outlined the duties of a RRSA.

The RRSA produced the following Role Description

- Be fully conversant with British Rowing's RowSafe
- Complete British Rowing's online safety learning (Safety Basics Understanding and Managing Risk, Cold Water and Hypothermia, Capsize Drill, Advanced Risk Assessment)
- Develop contacts with Club Rowing Safety Advisers
- Review regatta safety plans, emergency action plans and risk assessments
- Assist with risk management where requested
- Review and, if OK, accept Club annual safety audits
- Work with and support clubs whose audit or safety plans are inadequate.
- Give feedback and / or advice on incidents
- Promote safety training within the Region
- Report to Regional Council meetings - advise the regional committee and advise the clubs in the region on safety and where unsafe practices are seen to be taking place
- Produce an Annual Safety Report for the Region
- Disseminate good practice
- Attend meetings with the National Rowing Safety Committee (at present monthly by zoom)

If you have any other suggestions then please let me know.

How to climb onto an inverted boat following a capsize

A Regional Rowing Safety Adviser received a comment that a rower cannot "bounce themselves down and up far enough out of the water to" climb onto the boat and "in the course of multiple attempts to do it, they get exhausted and water goes into their nose, sinuses, etc."

The response was that I sympathise as I have difficulty doing this too. The easy way is to move towards the bow of the inverted boat. There is no need to swim, simply pull yourself along the boat. When you get there then face towards the boat and push the bows down and between your legs. Lean forwards and keep pulling the boat towards you till you can reach the riggers, then sit up.

If you try this from the stern then you may have a painful interaction with the fin!

Do not forget, it is important to "Get your body out of the water".

People cool faster in cold water than in cold air

A rower who is also regular cold water swimmer thought that they get colder in wind with a wet body than staying still in the water. This is a subjective impression that is not supported by the science. A quick search revealed the following:-

The rate of cooling is dependent on the density of the fluid that you are in. Water is about 1000 times more dense than air. There is plenty of evidence, for example it says [here](#) that:-

"Air is a poor conductor of heat. In fact, it is considered a thermal insulator. A feather-filled sleeping bag is both light and incredibly warm because it traps the internal air, keeping it immobile between the layers of feathers and material. This stops heat from transferring from the body inside to the outside air.

Water is a better conductor of heat. Even without warm clothes it is possible to survive and be active at 0°C or less. However a person in 0°C water is likely to become unconscious within about 15 minutes and survive less than one hour.

Cold water can remove heat more than 20 times faster than air. In effect, this means that a much larger volume of air is needed to achieve the same amount of cooling as a quantity of cold water. " and:-

Water is a much better conductor of heat . If you have ever stepped into a pool that is the same exact temperature as the air outside, you may have noticed that it still feels cooler than the air around you. This is because **water is very efficient at pulling the heat away from your body**. ([here](#))

and [here](#) in answer to the question "Why does water feel cooler than air?"

Firstly, to make a valid comparison between how water and air 'feels' on your skin, two conditions would need to be met:

1. Both water and air would have to be at exactly the same temperature.
2. That temperature would have to be lower than human body temperature (strictly speaking skin temperature).

If those conditions are met then water would certainly feel cooler than air. Several factors are responsible for this.

1. Water has a much higher [Specific Heat Capacity](#) than air, making it a far better coolant than air.
2. More intimate contact between water and skin, compared to air and skin, results in a higher [Heat Transfer Coefficient](#) which makes water again a better coolant.

and

However, because the thermal conductivity of water is 24 times that of air, and the energy required to heat a given volume of water by 1°C is 3500 times that of air, the cooling power of cold water in terms of human deep body temperature is approximately three times that of cold air at the same temperature (Smith & Hanna, **1975**). ([here](#))

and

A cadaver cools more rapidly in water than in air because water is a far better conductor of heat. For a given environmental temperature, cooling in still water is about twice as fast as in air, and, in flowing water, about three times as fast. ([here](#))

The same simple bit of Physics again

Last month I explained that the quickest way to reach the bank when rowing in a stream was to head directly towards the bank and not be concerned about drifting downstream. One person was not convinced so mathematical proof was provided. This is available to anyone who would like to see it, all you have to do is write to safety@britishrowing.org.

JIRR Safety Documentation

The Risk Assessment and Safety Plan for the Junior Inter-Regional Regatta have been reviewed and comments provided. Some opportunities for improvement were identified and described.

BROC & BRBSC Safety Documentation

British Rowing Offshore Championship and British Rowing Beach Sprint Championships Risk Assessment and Safety and Emergency Plan were reviewed and a few comments were made.

Avian Flu Restrictions Lifted

It is understood that the restrictions on boating in one small area have been rescinded. The restrictions were due to advice from one member of the Health Prevention Agency who seemed unwilling to consider further advice on the level of risk or on the fact that there were no restrictions in other areas.

It is concerning that the opinion of one person can have such an impact on our sport and other on-water sports. There are plans to consult on how such a situation can be avoided in future.