



BRITISHROWING

HRSA Monthly Report

August 2022

Stephen Worley

TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Incidents in August

It is not just rowers that need to be rescued

There was an incident in which a small motorboat was overloaded with 8-9 people in their 20s who appeared to be under the influence of alcohol. These people all rushed to one side of the boat to take selfies and boat rolled (but did not capsize) ejecting 5 of them into the centre of the river.

A coach was nearby in a catamaran coaching launch and immediately sped towards incident. Four ladies were happily swimming around but one man was beginning to panic. The girls told him to swim to the boat, but he cried that he could not swim. He must have been some 16 stone in bodyweight, morbidly obese and was beginning to sink and swallow water. The coach manoeuvred close to him very quietly, took hold of his arm and spoke quietly to him to get him to calm down. Under the coach's guidance, he somehow managed to get onboard the launch. He was hyperventilating and shaking. He wanted to get back on the motorboat and, once he had recovered, the coach moved her launch alongside the motorboat so he could step across with ease. They simply said thank you and motored off up through the bridge.

Take care to check the stretcher fixing

The whole of the stretcher in a 1x slid off the adjustment strips and the sculler capsized with his feet attached to the stretcher. He was able to remove his feet from the stretcher and was taken on to the accompanying safety launch. When you check the boat then please check that the tightness of the nuts holding the stretcher in place.

... and check your shoes

A 1x capsized and one shoe broke free from the stretcher. The issue was not one of loose screws but of the whole shoe upper tearing away from the sole. All screws remained firmly attached. As a result, the rower could not remove their foot from the shoe because the heel restraint was still attached to the upturned boat, and they had to contort their body to keep their head above water. The rower received help from the coaching launch and was eventually able to pull the attached foot free and could then remove the other rowing shoe.

There were no injuries but if this incident had happened in colder or rough weather, particularly if there was no help nearby, then it could easily have been much more serious.

Please do not just check the heel restraints but also check the integrity of each shoe and its attachment to the stretcher.



Take care of your hands

A sculler suffered infected grazes on the knuckles of her left hand due to the contact with the fingernails of her right hand at the crossover. This resulted in her having to take antibiotics for seven days and abstain from rowing and strenuous exercise. If you suffer from grazed knuckles, then please keep your fingernails short and do not forget to wash your hands.

Hazards due to low water levels

The recent drought, and the consequent low water levels, have introduced some new hazards, for example:-

- A 2x collided with a tree branch that would normally be under water.
- The vertical distance between the bank and a pontoon was greater than normal and a rower carrying a 1x stepped from the bank to the pontoon and went over on her right ankle. This resulted in a spiral fracture to the 4th metatarsal and fracture of 5th metatarsal towards the back of her right foot. She is in a surgical boot and on crutches for 6-8 weeks and on painkillers. She cannot drive and she cannot row.
- Some areas of the waterway that used to be shallow are now exposed and this restricts the width of the waterway and tends to force rowers to move towards the middle of the waterway. This has resulted in collisions.

Please take extra care.

Capsize of a launch

A coach attempted to land a launch on the bank, but missed and due to the height of the tide couldn't immediately try again. She therefore decided to go around the bridge to make it easier. The coach turned too fast and too hard, then ran over a log which caused the launch to capsize. Another coach rescued both the coach and the launch. The launch is being checked over and more vigilance will be taken with both turning and looking out for logs in the river. The engine was damaged mainly by the river water, but the hull was unharmed.

Take care of your valuables

Following a capsize at a regatta, the launch crew were attempting to recover the boat when the phone and car keys of one of the umpires fell in the water. The umpire went into the water in an attempt to recover them. If you have to carry valuables when afloat then please keep them secure, perhaps in a bag or zipped pocket.

Take care near barges

A very wide barge and a 1x collided at a sharp bend. The bow of the single was pushed around by the hull of the barge, so it was at right angles to the barge, the barge went over the hull of the single and it broke in two. The rower was pushed out of the boat by the hull of the barge but was not injured. The 1x was a write-off.



In another incident an experienced crew in a 4x was hit by a barge that was on the wrong side of the river. The bow steerer was constantly looking and saw the barge, but too late to avoid a collision. Fortunately, nobody was injured.

In another incident, a 12-year-old Learn to Row sculler was turning and the coach was on the towpath. A barge came up the canal and hit the boat causing it to capsize. The coach shouted at the barge to stop. The two men driving the barge said they didn't have a break and kept going. The barge was in the middle of the canal and did not stop even after the sculler had fallen in.

In yet another incident, a sculler was rowing in the correct position on the waterway and turned to see a large, work boat that had passed through a bridge and was on collision course. The sculler moved closer to the bank. The workboat driver seemed to be trying to pass between the sculler and the bank. The sculler continued to move to starboard. He then steered away hard and passed two metres from the sculler at some speed. The wash broke over the hull and filled the footwell.

Please take extra care around motorboats and do not assume that motorboat drivers will act responsibly.

Take care around moored boats too

The stream took the bows of a 2x under the bow of a boat moored in the middle of the waterway. The crew moved their weight towards the bow so that the 2x's bow dipped enough to free it. The 2x was rowed back to shore, the bow section had completely snapped off and was filling with water. The bow section was retrieved by a launch.



Take care after capsizing

Please remind people of the action to take following a capsize. There were some examples of not following the guidance in the Capsize and Recovery training (available on [RowHow](#) and [here](#))

After capsizing the sculler escaped the boat easily but he hit his head as he surfaced. He was dazed and found it difficult to focus on the task, but he held onto his boat. He was able to right it but was not able to get back in. He was asked to paddle to the bank which he nearly did but needed assistance with a buddy rescue from another sculler to get to the bank. Please remind people to protect their head when surfacing.

In another incident, a sculler capsized and was attended by the safety launch. There was some confusion, and the sculler swam about 25 meters to a slipway whilst the first safety launch recovered the boat. Once it was noticed that the sculler had started swimming to shore a second safety boat escorted him to safety (by then he was close to the shore). After the event, the sculler involved, and all other junior scullers at the club, were reminded of the procedures in the event of a capsize, and to always stay with the boat.

Look both ways

There were several collisions that could have been avoided had the steers looked to both sides rather than consistently looking to the same side. Please remember that there can be hazards towards the centre of the waterway as well as towards the bank.

Well Written Incident Reports

Some incident reports are cryptic but contain all the relevant information; there is nothing wrong with that. However, some are crafted in such a way that their message is conveyed in an amusing and informative way. It is a joy to read some incident reports. One such report explains the interaction between a sculler and a dog, this is reproduced in Appendix I so that the joy can be shared. Thanks Patrick.

Capsize of a gig

July's report contained extracts from the report on a gig capsize; that was compiled by a maritime consultant on behalf of the Harbourmaster. The report contained photos of the capsize provided to the consultant by the photographer, Mr Peter Robinson. Some concern was expressed because there was an expectation, in some quarters, that the photos would not be published.

These photos, and other information, were initially kept confidential in order to protect the integrity of the investigation. It is difficult to complete a thorough investigation in a background of poorly informed speculation. The key steps of any such investigation are to:-

- Collect evidence from as many sources as possible
- Examine the evidence to identify any contradictory and supporting components
- Try to find additional evidence to address any contradictions
- Analyse the evidence to identify the root causes of the incident

Root cause identification is seldom simple but there are many established techniques to assist us. Tools such as the Japanese Ishi Kawa (fish bone diagram) or the French *Arbres des Causes* (fault tree analysis) are often used. It is important that the process is respected and that the temptation to jump to conclusions based on incomplete evidence is avoided. Failure to do this can result in trying to find evidence to support inaccurate conclusions.

There were some questions about privacy and the need for permission from the copyright holder to publish the photos. The photographs were taken in a public place (at sea) where there can normally be no expectation of privacy, particularly as the people in the photo were not identified and it would be difficult to identify anyone from these images. The copyright holder is the person who took the photos; the subject of the photograph has no right of ownership of the image. Mr Robinson wrote to say that "I am happy for the pictures to be used in the interests of 'lessons learned' and appreciate being credited for them."

Risk Assessment Templates

I was asked where to find Risk Assessment templates as the writer could no longer find them.

The response was that they are still on the website [here](#). To find them either follow the link or go to the Safety Page (from the home page, hover over Knowledge then scroll down, if necessary, and click on "Safety", the column heading). Once on the safety page then if you scroll down you will come to a section headed "Essential Downloads for Clubs". This section contains a series of links, and you will find the risk assessment template there. If you access Row How and click on "Online Learning", then click on "Advanced Risk Assessment", then "Start", then you will enter the risk assessment training.

How many clubs have Defibrillators?

The 2021/22 Rowing Safety Audit contained the following questions:-

Does your club have immediate access to a defibrillator/s?

- There is one within the club
- There is an accessible one nearby that can be brought to the club in less than two minutes
- Do rowers know where other defibrillators are available so that they can be accessed should someone else need one during an outing.

The results have been analysed and this has yielded the following results:-

Region	number of clubs			
	within the club	accessible nearby	rowers know where to find one during an outing.	within the club OR nearby
Eastern	32	35	41	54
East Midlands	12	9	8	16
Northern	6	13	14	17
North West	11	12	14	19
South East Coast	4	7	2	8
Thames London	28	11	19	31
Thames South East	8	8	9	11
Thames Upper	52	51	67	82
WAGS	6	3	4	6
Wessex H&D	10	8	12	14
Western	5	10	7	12
West Midlands	15	11	12	17
Yorkshire	8	5	6	11
All Regions	197	183	215	298
of the clubs that responded the percentages are				
Region	within the club	accessible nearby	rowers know where to find one during an outing.	within the club OR nearby
Eastern	42%	46%	54%	71%
East Midlands	67%	50%	44%	89%
Northern	18%	38%	41%	50%
North West	44%	48%	56%	76%
South East Coast	50%	88%	25%	100%
Thames London	76%	30%	51%	84%
Thames South East	53%	53%	60%	100%
Thames Upper	56%	55%	72%	88%
WAGS	75%	38%	50%	75%
Wessex H&D	48%	38%	57%	67%
Western	33%	67%	47%	80%
West Midlands	71%	52%	57%	81%
Yorkshire	62%	38%	46%	85%
All Regions	51%	48%	56%	78%

This all looks very impressive until we delve a little deeper. This does not mean that there are 197 defibrillators within rowing clubs because in some cases several clubs share the same boathouse, and may all have access to the same Defibrillator (this is a good thing!). Unfortunately, the percentages are distorted because some clubs did not respond to this question. In the case of alumni clubs, for example, who use their institution's boathouse, this is perfectly sensible but there are a few established clubs that did not answer this question.

On balance I think that this is a very good result and that the provision of Defibrillators in rowing clubs is something that we can be pleased, but not satisfied, about. There are still plenty of opportunities for improvement.

In some areas there is scope for providing rowers with more information about where defibrillators can be found if one is needed during an outing.

Head mounted mirrors

There was a request for advice on the use of head (or hat) mounted mirrors by steers. A rower wrote to say that there is an opinion within a club that these are dangerous as people rely on them solely and they have been a contributory factor in some accidents. As a result, there is a move at committee level to ban their use. The rower's opinion was that they are a useful additional aid to regularly looking / checking and that they are recommended in RowSafe.

I replied to say that there are three positive references in RowSafe to the use of head mounted mirrors by steers. I have used one and found that it provided useful additional information. However, it is still important for steers to keep a good lookout in all directions.

I could not remember seeing a report of a collision where the Incident Report noted that the steers person was wearing a head mounted mirror. However, more recently, there has been a report of a collision where a steersperson was using a head mounted mirror. The advice remains the same, they are a useful source of additional information, but steers should still keep a good lookout.

Hosepipe bans

I was asked whether I had any information on what is allowed with regard to cleaning boats and other equipment, and are all clubs treated the same or are schools exempt due to childcare, etc.

My response was to forward the advice provided by the Thames Regional Rowing Safety Adviser (Tony Reynolds) which was to use two buckets, one for wash water and one for rinsing.

Swim Tests

Last month's comments on the swim test caused one reader to comment that as a school, and so working exclusively with juniors, we run a swim test and do not allow anyone to row unless we have seen them complete a 100m swim (although this can be any style on their front, and up to half can be on their back), a 5m underwater swim and a 2 minute tread water, as suggested by BR. Would you suggest that we add or swap one of these for floating? I agree that we shouldn't be excluding people! We do look at their time in the pool as a whole, and so sometimes mark people as generally weak, either not allowing them to row or contacting parents to suggest that they could do with some more practice. If they fail, we allow them to retest at the next opportunity (termly) and they can retest as many times as they need to.

The response was that British Rowing advice no longer suggests that rowers should be able to swim. The advice is contained within Section 3.6 of the current version of [RowSafe](#) which starts by saying:-

3.6. Competence in the Water

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 RNLI, RLSS and NWSF because it tends to conserve heat and energy when in cold water.

All participants in rowing should be competent and confident in the water. Each club is expected to use its Risk Assessment to determine the capability that it requires its members to have.

It should be recognised that the ability to swim in a pool does not guarantee the ability to swim in cold, exposed waters. This is explained further in the online learning module on Cold Water and Hypothermia and the Safety Alert - Cold Water Kills.

Everyone taking part in rowing should be able to:

- *Float unaided for at least five minutes*

And ideally:

- *Swim at least 50 metres in light clothing (rowing kit).*
- *Tread water for at least two minutes.*
- *Swim under water for at least five metres.*

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.

There are two reasons why we recommend that people float rather than swim (and therefore that rowers do not need to be able to swim provided they can float). One is the desire to make rowing everyone's sport and the other is that if a person falls in then it is safer for them to float rather than swim.

The RNLI, as part of the Respect the Water campaign (part of the UK anti-drowning strategy) has published several videos on the advantages of floating over swimming. .

- There is a hard-hitting version of this [here](#).
- There are more tempered videos [here](#) and [here](#).
- If you want to explain this to your pupils then you may find [Evan's Story](#) (video) useful

Please remember that our advice is if you fall in then stay with the boat and treat it as your liferaft.

Safety Advice on Concussion

A club rower, who also plays rugby, keeps getting head injuries when playing rugby. The club received a message in mid-August that she had “knocked her head in training and the school has now said that she has done it twice in two weeks, so she is not allowed physical sports until 17th September”. The rowing club questioned whether this meant that she could row because rowing is not a contact sport. She is completely symptom free, and she and her family would be keen to continue rowing once or twice a week.

The response was that the club should respect the 17th September date until there is clear medical advice to the contrary. The consequences of repeated head injuries can be serious. We have a Safety Alert on Head Injuries [here](#); this contains the following:-

Returning to sport

Exercising when suffering from concussion can make the condition worse. All sport should be avoided for 7 – 10 days or longer if the concussion is severe. Head injuries sustained outside rowing should be reported to the coach. If in any doubt seek healthcare professional advice and follow it.

England Rugby has extensive guidance on concussion [here](#); this contains:-

- The majority (80-90%) of concussion symptoms resolve in around 7-10 days, with symptoms resolving within 1 - 2 days in around a third of cases.
- Children and adolescents typically take longer to recover because their brains are still developing, and a more conservative approach should be taken.
- The brain is more vulnerable to further injury if it hasn't had time to fully recover

I believe that the rowing club should consider the long-term interests of the child and take a cautious approach. She should not be allowed physical sports until 17th September.

Lights on the Tideway

Last month I commented on the requirements for lights on rowing boats on the Tideway and included an obsolete reference to the previous version of the Tideway Code. This reference was taken from a Safety Alert issued in December 2015. The current version of the Tideway Code (A Code of Practice for rowing and paddling on the Tidal Thames) can be found [here](#) and the references to lighting requirements are on page 30 for rowing boats and on page 31 for coaching launches.

Lights on boats

Last month, I also asked for suggestions for lights on rowing boats. Someone sent me this “The following [LED lights](#) or similar seem to be an option combined [with these mounts](#).” If you are interested, then please have a look and let me know what you think.

Capsizes and Cold-Water Shock and Safety in the CPGA

Someone wrote to ask whether there were many cases of cold-water shock resulting from capsizes or other incidents. They had heard of rowers experiencing hypothermia having been in the water for a long time and wondered why there were few cases of Cold-Water Shock in rowing. He also asked whether I advise the Cornish Pilot Gig Association as he was interested in their policy on wearing life jackets at sea as the clubs seem to regard wearing lifejackets as a personal choice.

My response was that we have few reports of cold-water shock in the UK. Hypothermia is not the same as cold water shock and it is not unknown for rowers to suffer from mild hypothermia (= still shivering). Severe hypothermia (= no longer shivering) is much less common. Coaches and First Aiders are trained to deal with hypothermia. There was a serious incident at Iowa State University during the winter before last, I described this in some detail in two of my monthly reports. You will see there that the dangers of cold-water immersion are considerable.

As far as the CPGA is concerned, I have no official position within that organisation, but I do share my reports, etc. with them and frequently communicate with their Safety Adviser. The CPGA has rules requiring coxes afloat to wear lifejackets and it is also normal practice for their juniors to do so.

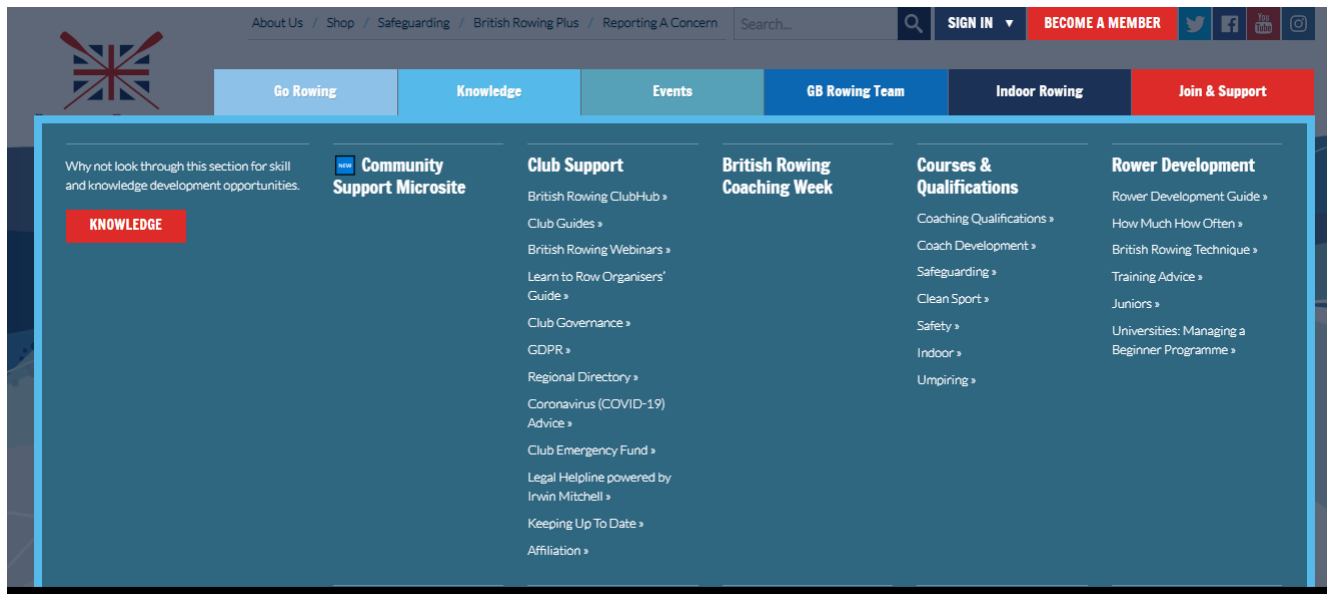
Towing boats afloat

Last month I made some comments on methods of towing boats afloat and asked for comments. The following comments were received:-

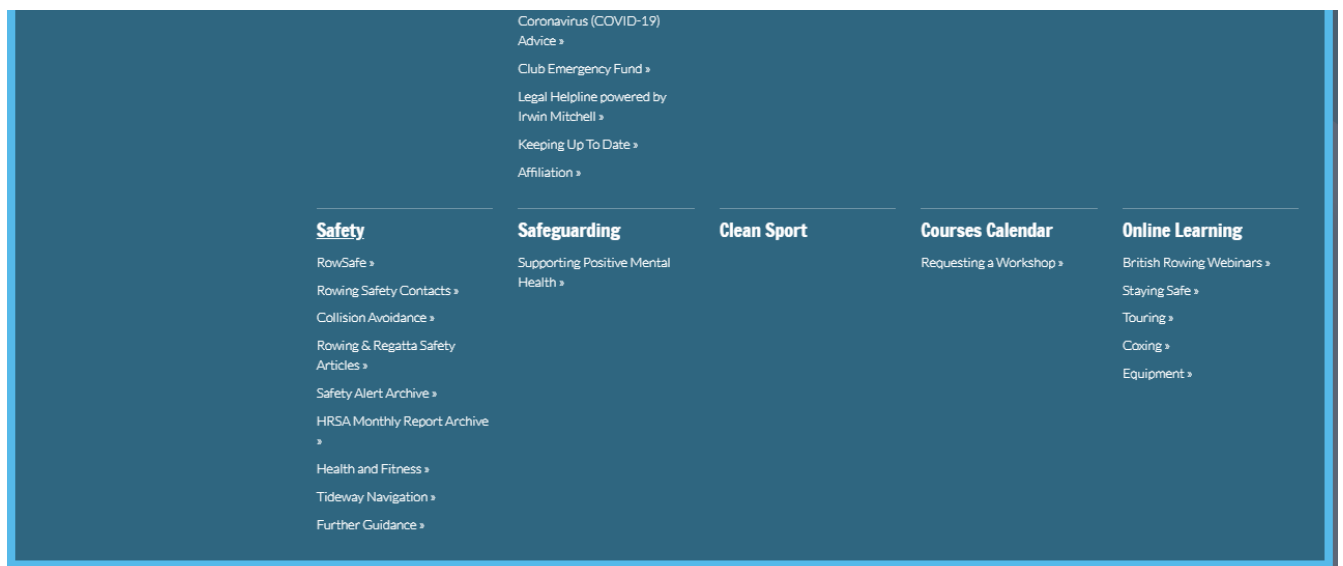
1. On river towing - we tend to use two boats, one at the bow and one at the stern, as often the boat is swamped and very difficult to control.
2. We recovered an 80 at race and used two slow moving launches – one at bow and one at the stern with the 80 parallel with the sides of the launches. It worked well and though the 80 was badly holed having hit an underwater obstacle, it was recovered without further damage to a slipway.
3. We once recovered a 1x, one person held the scull parallel with the launch and the driver and I brought the launch back to a landing stage. This was not easy. Steering is quite difficult and if the power is increased, the unrestrained bow starts to veer away from the launch. The scull was recovered at the landing stage without damage.
4. Towing a boat astern on a rope is fraught with difficulty as the riggers will tip to one or other side making the towed boat steer to one side and likely fill with water.

Access to Safety Information on the British Rowing website

There have recently been some changes to the layout of information on the website and the safety information appears to have dropped off the bottom of the screen. If you hover over “Knowledge” on the home page, then you will see something like this:-



Safety is not where it used to be but if you simply scroll down than you will find it here.



Alternatively you can go directly to the Safety page [here](#) and bookmark the page (make it one of your “Favourites”).

Appendix 1 - The interaction of a sculler and a Dog

Brief description of the incident: While sculling downstream approximately 5.5km into my weekly constitutional trundle, I was warned by a fellow club member of a dog in the river ahead of me.

I identified the aquatic creature as a young border collie, but with some odd markings suggesting a not entirely pure breeding of this noble type.

The owner was on the bank, not being of the swimming bent. He was attempting to recall the errant hound but had misplaced the squeaky ball normally used for said purpose. This disarmed, the pet (whose name I learned to be Jess) was doggie paddling around in the river getting ever further from her increasingly worried owner. I cornered the beast betwixt stern and stroke side rigger and backed down, guiding the naughty canine towards her owner. On reaching him, Jess decided that another lap was in order, other scullers having now arrived who were much more interesting than the withdrawal of off lead privileges.

I paddled away and around 50m from the owner, came across the dog, now seemingly enjoying the swim less and less by the second. She attempted to board my Carl Douglas by the stern canvass. A most unwise move in well-polished fine furniture.

The dog was by now panicking and thrashing about, so I grabbed her by the collar and pulled her into my boat onto my lap. This would have been fine had Jess not knocked my bowside scull out of my hand.

There then followed a slow-motion ballet of lurch to starboard, with water over the saxboard, followed by a quite quick flip back to port as Jess adjusted position. The resulting shift in balance flipped the boat, with both rescuer and rescued now in the river.

My feet came out of the shoes (brand new pair that outing - now smelling displeasingly of river water) as heel restraints were as required).

With almost no stream or wind, and a growing crowd (correct collective noun for scullers escapes me) of singles for company, I chose to practise my lifesaving stroke with a hairy dog instead of another person in pyjamas as it was last time I did this (why pyjamas always intrigued me- as did diving for a brick in them). I returned Jess to her relieved owner and then returned to my obediently waiting boat where I declined to wreck the saxboards by beaching over it and so towed it to a suitable mud bank where I got back in.

Measures taken: Rescued dog

Were there any consequences?: Suspect dog might not get any treats today or be off lead near the river for a while.

Please specify other safety concerns: Poorly supervised pet dog with all the recall skills of a deaf tortoise.