



BRITISHROWING

HRSA Monthly Report

May 2021

Stephen Worley

TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Incidents in May

Life Jacket tests

A club decided to send all 12 of its inflatable lifejackets away for servicing. Nine of the lifejackets were condemned as unsafe and have been replaced. The club has established a service log and will ensure that, from now on, lifejackets will be checked each year. Please do not assume that your lifejackets are serviceable, unless they have been checked recently.

Collision under a bridge

A 4+ collided with a 2- under a bridge and the 2- was badly damaged (see opposite). This occurred before the start of a time trial when there were lots of boats on the water.



The crew of the 2- were sheltering from the rain in a position that could not be seen by the cox of the 4+. The crew of the 2- were taken back to the club by launch as their boat could not be rowed. The club has since established a rule that all rowers at bow, and in a 1x, must wear hi-vis clothing.

Incidents involving motor vessels

There were several incidents in which rowers were put at risk by the poor behaviour of motor boat drivers. In one incident a narrow boat was not steering a straight course whilst its driver was holding a half empty beer glass and appeared to be under the influence of alcohol.

In another incident a cruiser was doing laps of the straight outside the club taking videos of rowers and steering on the wrong side of the river. It was subsequently spotted with the outboard running, but nobody holding on to the steering as the boater sat on the side of the boat laughing. The boat was zigzagging across the channel dangerously.



In a third incident a small motor cruiser failing to keep adequate lookout, going at speed and on the "wrong" side of river, nearly collided with a quad proceeding down river on the normal rowing line one third out from the bank. The helm of cruiser was taking photos through a long lens camera and looking behind him and all around.

Please take extra care in the vicinity of motor boats and do not assume that they will navigate correctly.

An encounter between a rower, a dog, and its owner

An incident Report described this encounter in an amusing manner. An anonymised version is presented in Appendix I. It is to be hoped that most dog owners do not behave in this way.

Boat damaged when on a trailer

The bow of a 4+ was damaged when the front overhang hit a wooden pole as the trailer was being backed round a corner. The boat was pressed against the safety hoops on the trailer and this bent the saxboard. The club will now always use a spotter when manoeuvring in a residential area.



Collision Avoidance

There were several reported collisions, some were due to crews crossing the centreline of the waterway, some occurred on bends and some occurred when overtaking, particularly when overtaking slow moving vessels such as Stand up Paddle Boards (SUPs) and canoes. It would help if everyone remembered the collision avoidance rules in the [COLREGs](#) as these regulations are effective in reducing the number of collisions and form the basis for inland navigation rules. The most relevant rules are:-

Rule 5 Look-out

Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.

Rule 6 Safe speed

Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed so that she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

Rule 9 Narrow channels

(a) A vessel proceeding along the course of a narrow channel or fairway shall keep as near to the outer limit of the channel or fairway which lies on her starboard side as is safe and practicable.

(f) A vessel nearing a bend or an area of a narrow channel or fairway where other vessels may be obscured by an intervening obstruction shall navigate with particular alertness ...

Rule 13 Overtaking

(a) any vessel overtaking any other shall keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken.

If this is difficult to remember then the short version is:-

- Keep a good look-out, at all times, particularly ahead
- Travel at a speed such that you can stop in the distance you can see to be clear
- Keep to the right of the channel (unless other local rules prevail)
- Take extra care approaching bends and
- Keep clear of the other boat when overtaking

It also helps to wear hi-vis kit so that you are easy to see.

This is not difficult and will help to prevent injury and damage.

Close encounters with Stand Up Paddleboards

The popularity of Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) continues to grow and people are to be seen having fun afloat on them in most parts of the country. Unfortunately rowers have been involved in some reported collisions and near misses with them. I expect that the popularity of Paddleboarding will continue to grow and we will both have to learn how to share the water safely and harmoniously. The guidance on collision avoidance, above, should help rowers to avoid SUP users.

I have recently been in contact with the Head Coach of the British Stand Up Paddle Association ([BSUPA](#)), and my colleague at [British Canoeing](#), and suggested that the following advice, or something like it, should be shared with their members:-

- *Keep a good look-out, at all times, particularly behind you*
- *Keep to the right of the channel (unless other local rules prevail)*
- *It is not easy for rowers to see directly ahead although they do try*
- *Rowing boats are quite wide from blade tip to blade tip (up to 7metres)*
- *If you think that a rowing boat is on a collision course with you then shout a warning ("Look Ahead").*
- *It also helps to wear hi-vis kit so that you are easy to see.*

The Head Coach has written to say that he is happy to publish this message on his website.

I have previously recommended the excellent [Tideway Code](#), A Code of Practice for rowing and paddling on the Tidal Thames. If you can suggest anything further then please let me know (write to safety@britishrowing.org).

Work with the Port of London Authority (PLA)

Rowers noticed that the condition of the supporting structure of a riverside walkway was a cause for concern. They reported in an Incident Report that a “*standard timber upright and cross piece have become loose and are at risk of falling into the river. The walkway appears safe regardless of this but at some point the timber will fall and could affect the long term stability of the walkway.*”

This information was shared with a colleague at the PLA who replied, with thanks, to say that they will investigate.

Sudden Cardiac Arrest Training

UK Coaching has produced a free life-saving digital learning toolkit that will enable you to act fast in the event of a sudden cardiac arrest, It is available [here](#). It uses real life scenarios in a coaching setting and the videos are relevant with simple messages which are reinforced with repetition and quizzes. It is important that everyone involved in rowing (and people not involved in rowing) are able to support members of their community in this way. This training is highly recommended.

Backstays in the Rules of Racing

Last month's report contained the following:-

The advice that “The forward port and starboard rigger on all boats, other than single sculls, should be protected by a backstay.” was issued by British Rowing in June 2013; it is still available [here](#). It is explained in a Safety Alert [here](#), and specified in section 7.1 of [RowSafe](#). This became a “rule” in section, “7-2-9 Boat Design”, in the 2021 [Rules of Racing](#); this contains the following:-

- c. The forward port and starboard rigger on all boats, other than single sculls, should be protected by a backstay

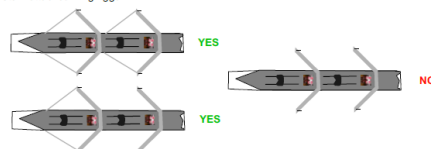
The word "should" rather than "shall" was used to provide the flexibility needed for boats which cannot have backstays fitted, perhaps because there is no method of mounting them on the saxboards. However, backstays should not be regarded as optional on boats where they can safely be mounted.

A colleague has produced the diagram opposite to illustrate this rule (thanks Tony). This appears full scale in Appendix 2.

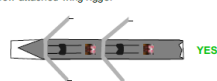
Backstays on Doubles and Quads

The following is guidance for the rule 7-2-8 c. The forward port and starboard rigger on all boats, other than single sculls, should be protected by a backstay. These examples show what is suggested and can be commented on.

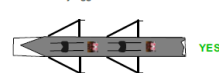
Stern attached wing rigger



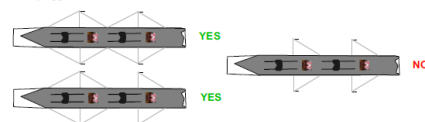
Bow attached wing rigger



Carbon two stay rigger



Metal stay rigger



Lifejackets for Coxes in Bowloaders

There was a question about lifejackets following some discussions at a club where various opinions were expressed, these included the use of “a canoe type buoyancy jacket” and a “manually-inflated inflating horseshoe”. My response was that the reason why buoyancy aids are not permitted in the Rules of Racing is simply that in the event of the boat capsizing then the aid would tend to push the cox upwards into the boat and make it difficult for them to escape. There is additional guidance in RowSafe following an incident where a cox's lifejacket straps became entangled. It is:-

Ensure that the cox's area of bow loaded boats has no protrusions or other obstructions that would catch on the cox's lifejacket straps, or clothing, or hair in such a way that it could impede their exit from the boat. Also ensure that the straps and clothing are adjusted so that they will not catch on any part of the boat. (RowSafe 7.1)

I am not sure what you mean by "manually-inflated inflating horseshoe". I would advise coxes to use a conventional manually operated inflatable lifejacket. There are some belt mounted lifejackets that inflate into a horseshoe shape but these have limited buoyancy and, once inflated, require the user to position them accurately.

It is possible to convert auto-inflation lifejackets to manual inflation using a conversion kit. This was explained in the October 2020 report available [here](#).

Minibus Safety

There was a request for advice on the carrying of passengers in minibuses when towing trailers. This was not in relation to driving licences. British Rowing does not have rules on trailers, just advice and guidance, in particular in Section 7.2 of [RowSafe](#) on Transport and Trailers.

Information on licensing requirements is available and can be provided on request.

There is a RoSPA Code of Practice for Minibus Safety [here](#) that contains the following.

"Passengers must have unrestricted access to two means of escape. A trailer must not be used on any minibus with rear facing doors which is carrying passengers, unless there is an emergency door on the nearside of the vehicle. In the event of a collision, it is likely that the trailer will obstruct the rear doors. Some new minibuses have escape hatches in the roof or through a side window, however, it is still vital that the rear doors are not blocked in case passengers cannot exit by the side – escape hatches should not be relied on.

It is the Operator's responsibility to ensure that when passengers are carried, access through the emergency rear exit is not restricted in any way by the trailer."

There is also a RoSPA Minibus Driver's Handbook [here](#).

Safety Alert - Check your Tow Bar

This Safety Alert has been issued to all Regional and Club Rowing Safety Advisers. A copy is included with this report.

Know your limitations and those of your boat

There was an incident when a sea rowing boat was caught in surf as it approached the shore, it was picked up by a large wave and swept towards the shore, it then broached (turned parallel to the waves) and was swamped by the next wave. The crew were assisted ashore by surfers and the boat was swept ashore and taken onto the beach. There were no serious injuries.

Boats of this type tend to cope well in the open sea but have problems in surf. The size of the surf does not matter as a small wave will pick up the stern and it is not able to steer when the rudder is out of the water.

This is just another demonstration of the need for rowers to think about what they are doing and understand what is going on around them.

Parents and their Children Land Training

There was a request for information about parents and their children land training together at a club. The response was to please follow the advice entitled "Setting up the RowErg for Kids" on the Concept2 website [here](#). The important issues are to maintain good technique and avoid overexertion. In addition, the club has a duty of care towards both the child and the parent, so someone else needs to be at the premises in case there is an emergency.

The condition of heel restraints following lockdown

Concern was expressed that heel restraints may not be in good condition following a long period of non-use and that clubs and rowers may have forgotten the need to check boats prior to each use. In this case the rower had found that the heel restraints were missing from his seat in the boat. This problem was discussed with colleagues on the National Rowing Safety Committee and it was considered that this was a probably an isolated, but worrying, incident.

This topic is covered in detail in RowSafe and we have an old but comprehensive video on how to check boats (available [here](#)). I issued a Safety Alert on boat checking in 2015, available [here](#). There was also a reference to boat checking (and the video) in a Safety Alert, [here](#), issued in March 2021. Please check your boats each time before you use them.

Frequency of Capsize Drills

There was a request for advice on the required frequency of capsized drills. The response was that there are no recommendations on frequency in RowSafe, and no rules. In normal times, when swimming pools are open, most clubs tend to hold them once a year. It may depend on how many new members there are who have not done the capsized drill.

If you cannot get to the pool then you could use the capsized drill training on RowHow. There are two versions; there is a version for rowers and an extended version for coaches and officials. These can be found [here](#) (click on the picture of the boy in the water). It is also worth asking people to do the Cold Water and Hypothermia training available from the same page.

Work with British Canoeing

There were several incidents involving interactions between rowers and canoeists. Information has again been shared with my colleague at British Canoeing.

Recordings for the Risk Assessment module

The Risk Assessment training module is being revised and will contain demonstration videos. Draft versions have been reviewed and comments have been provided.

Reports of Covid Infection at clubs

There was an enquiry about whether there had been any incidences of covid infection transmittal during group rowing. The response was that none have been reported using the Incident Reporting system. This may be a testament to the guidance provided in the British Rowing and the care that clubs and their members have taken.

Water Safety Management

There was an enquiry about the relevance of a Water Safety Management training course to rowing. This course is in three modules, as follows:-

- Level 1 Modules - Aquatic Safety Principles - Aquatic Risk Management - Aquatic Rescue Equipment
- Level 2 Modules - Beach/Inland Water Environments - Flood Management
- Level 3 Modules - Emergency Rescue - Aquaparks - Open Water Swimming - Surfing - Swimming Pools

This mostly focusses on drowning prevention and rescue. It should be remembered that rowing is a sport that takes place on the water and not in the water. My reply was:-

This may seem strange but drowning is not a major concern in Rowing Safety in the UK. Unfortunately this may not be the case in countries where the water temperatures are much lower than they are here. I can explain that further if anyone is interested.

The last rower to drown in the UK was a coach on the Tideway in February 2016. It is not unusual for rowers to rescue people who would otherwise drown; several rowers have received Royal Humane Society awards for doing so. It may help to understand that suicide is the cause of about half the drownings in the UK.

The latest UK drowning statistics can be found [here](#) and the underlying data can be found [here](#).

There has been some concern recently that rowing coaches may be tempted or encouraged to enter the water to rescue rowers. This is both unnecessary and dangerous. I have explained this in the April Monthly Report. This report also contains information about the drowning of two rowers in Iowa.

We already provide extensive advice to the rowing community through [RowSafe](#), [Safety Alerts](#) and [Monthly Reports](#). We have extensive e-learning and other training material for rowers and coaches, this includes risk assessment, what to do if someone capsizes, the treatment of hypothermia, and the use of a throw line. I would be happy to expand on this too, if requested.

I have reviewed the description of the training material that was provided. Whilst I can see that this training would be useful for some people I have concluded that it is not relevant for rowers and coaches bearing in mind the other training and guidance that they receive.

Cover photo of RowSafe

There was a comment that the cover photo on RowSafe 2021 shows a sculler looking ahead but not wearing hi-vis kit. This photo was selected from a set of stock images and was the most appropriate available. If anyone would like to provide a better image for RowSafe 2022 then please send it to safety@britishrowing.org; unfortunately there will not be a prize for the selected entry.

The circulation of these reports

There was a comment from a person who had just received a monthly report for the first time and who felt that these reports were valuable and should be sent to all Club Rowing Safety Advisers, preferably using their generic email addresses.

I explained that I have been writing these reports since first becoming HRSA, recent ones are available [here](#). The distribution list has expanded over time. I now send it directly to over 200 people, some of whom are in other organisations (e.g. PLA, RNLI, MAIB, CPGA, CRA, RoSPA, BC, BSUPA) and some are in other countries. I invite recipients to forward it to anyone they feel may be interested, and many of them do. When people ask me to add them to the distribution list then I use the address that they tell me or the ones that they write to me from.

I am not confident that reports are currently forwarded to all CRSAs so we are in the process of extending the circulation to include all CRSAs and my staff colleague will do this. He will use the email addresses for the CRSAs as listed by each club in Club Hub. It is up to each club to specify those addresses.

There was also a request to post these reports on club websites. This is acceptable as they are already in the public domain on the British Rowing website [here](#) and on some Regional Rowing Council websites. The Safety Alerts are [here](#).

Appendix 1 - An encounter between a rower, a dog, and its owner

Brief description of the incident: Sculling upstream , bright sun in my face, looking around every 5 strokes as we now have many open water swimmers.

Staying probably 5 feet further from the bank than normal, as the river widens just there and I had just checked behind me to see that there were NO other boats, boards or swimmers to be seen.

Sudden clunk as my left sculling blade glances the top of the head of a black Labrador swimming straight across my path. Fortunately I was just beginning to square my sculling blade. I immediately stopped. The dog carried on, appearing oblivious, bounced out of the water and ran around and plunged back in.

Measures taken: The dog owner was on her phone and had not even noticed, so I waved at her to get her attention and to apologise as I do not like hurting dogs.

This caused great offence. A tirade ensued, how dare I have a go at her for being on the phone and we rowers think we own the river etc.

I asked for permission to speak, which brought forward the F word.

Eventually, she stopped for breath and I told her that I had only stopped to apologise for the blow to the dog and to make sure it was OK.

The response is unprintable and carried on for five minutes, so I sculled off wishing her a nice morning.

I turned at the bridge, only to be met with an ongoing tirade as I sculled downstream past the 'lady'.

The dog appeared unaffected.

Were there any consequences?: I am only lodging this report in case she suddenly decides that I have given her dog brain damage or affected its ability to sire 200 puppies all valued at £2000 each.

She did not even bother to check her dog. She was straight back on the phone leaving her dog to roam and swim unattended.

I refrained from telling her, that as her dog was off the lead, the law is such that I could in fact sue her for any damage caused to me or my boat, she having failed to control her dog, causing an accident.

My morning was ruined and her dog probably had a mild headache. Such is life.

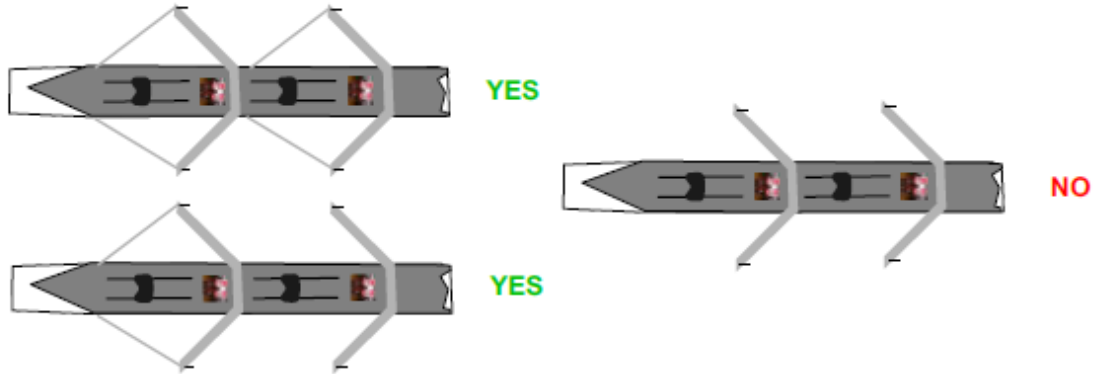
Appendix 2 - Backstays

Backstays on Doubles and Quads

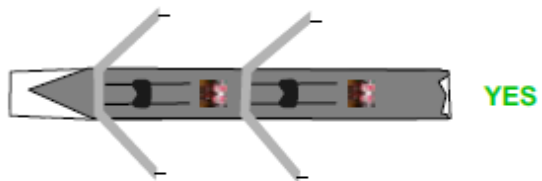
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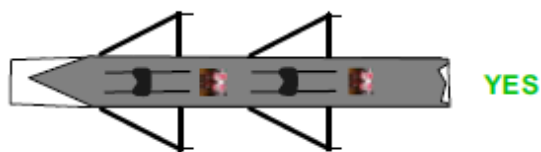
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