



BRITISHROWING

Honorary Rowing Safety Adviser Monthly Report

April 2023

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Awards and Commendations

In the [January 2023 Monthly Report](#) I described a Successful Resuscitation in Mounts Bay, Cornwall. I nominated the three people most instrumental in taking immediate action to save the life of their crew mate for [Royal Humane Society Awards](#) (RHS)

The RHS recently informed me that:-

- Simon Dean has been awarded a Resuscitation Certificate
- BlueBell Hill (the cox) has been awarded a Certificate of Commendation, and
- Peter Trythall has also been awarded a Resuscitation Certificate

I am sure that we all would wish to congratulate them on this outstanding achievement.

Death of a rower

At the end of an outing a rower helped with lifting the boat from the water and then walked towards the Boathouse. He complained of chest pains and collapsed with what appeared to be a cardiac arrest. The Emergency services were called, and arrived about 10 minutes later. Unfortunately, shortly after he was transferred to the ambulance he was pronounced dead. Our condolences go to the club and his friends and family.

Incidents in March

Take care to look after your own crew

There was an incident where a coach on the bank shouted to alert a crew from another club to tell them that there was a stationary crew in mid-river. The coach then continued to give directions to the crew from another club, just shouting at them to stop, rather than coach his own crew to come back in the bank. After the crews had just avoided a collision the coach shouted "Did you not hear me shouting". If you are coaching or steering then it is important to keep a good lookout and ensure that your crew is in the correct place on the waterway. Please instruct your own crew to get back on the correct place on the waterway rather than shout instructions to others who are acting correctly. Do not wait till your crew has crossed into the wrong place. Instruct or steer your crew early so that they do not put others at risk.

In another incident a coach was racing two 4xs against each other forcing a 2x of another club to take action to avoid a collision. The coach did not tell her crews to stop racing but warned the 2x to keep over which they did not think was fair due to them being in the correct place on the waterway.

Take care not to use a megaphone early in the morning

There was an incident in which the occupant of a boat on a mooring complained that he was woken at 7 a.m. by a coach using a megaphone. Please take care and be considerate of others.

Try to be nice to each other

A 1x, was being followed by a 2-. The rower in the 1x decided to take a rest, tucked into the bank to stop, and noticed that the 2- was heading directly at this rower. It was clear that the 2- hadn't seen the 1x ahead and needed to take evasive action. The rower in the 1x shouted to the crew of the 2-. It became clear the 2- hadn't started taking evasive action was going to collide with the 1x so the rower in the 1x shouted again.

The 2- had a coach on the bank who took exception to the shouting and berated the rower in the 1x. This was totally unjustified as all the rower in the 1x was trying to do was prevent a collision. The behaviour of the coach was not acceptable.

Please take care to treat others as you would hope to be treated yourself. Behaviour is important.

Take care to keep a good lookout

An 8+ was rowing on the correct side of the river, but there was a stationary launch directly ahead on the same side that was having problems with its engine. The driver was not keeping a good lookout. The cox failed to see the launch but the bow members of the 8+ noticed that the Launch was directly ahead. They shouted and all 8 rowers held up their boat and slowed it down enough to avoid a major collision. The inflatable launch was punctured and the 8+ lost its bow ball. There were no injuries and the launch was helped back to the club by another launch.

If you think that your cox cannot see the waterway ahead then help them by checking yourself and warning others as appropriate.

In another incident a 4- that was travelling downstream pulled out onto wrong side of the river to overtake 2 cruisers. There was an 8+ travelling upstream, towards the 4- at race pace. The view ahead of the cox of the 8+ was obstructed by the cruisers and the rowers. The rower at bow in the 8+ did look ahead, saw 4- and called easy and called to the other crew. Both crews held it up. The boats came together but only at low speed. There was no damage and no injuries. Had rower at bow in the 8+ not looked ahead at that point, there would have been a full speed head-on collision.

Please take care to look ahead before you pull out to overtake and please help your cox by checking that the waterway ahead is clear.

In another incident a 4x was doing a 500 meter piece and collided with the stern of a slow moving hire river cruiser boat. The crew of the 4x did not see the cruiser. This caused one reverse carbon wing rigger to be broken and another to be severely damaged.

Please keep a good lookout at all times.

Do not assume that messages are received

A launch had a steering problem a message was posted on the coaches' WhatsApp group that the launch should not be used. Unfortunately, a coach who had not read the message attempted to drive the launch on the river. The club has a system of putting red tags on boats that are out of use, this system will now be extended to launches.

Keep away from weirs particularly if there are inexperienced rowers in the boat

A 4x+ containing experienced rowers in bow and stroke seats and two rowers who had recently completed a learn to row course started to turn in the usual place however the turn did not happen as quickly because the new rowers were unable to help with the turn and their blade work hampered the turn. The crew was being swept by the flow and the wind and narrowly avoided a close encounter with the weir.

If you have to turn upstream of a hazard then please take care to give yourself plenty of room particularly if you have inexperienced rowers aboard.

Take care with the storage of riggers

Some clubs have to remove the riggers when putting their boats away. There was an incident when moving boat rack, a rigger fell from 2.5m high onto head of rower and a boat was damaged. First Aid was provided by another member (a paramedic) and the Safety Adviser. The riggers have been removed to a safer location. The rower has made a full recovery and the boat has been repaired.

Take care when indoor rowing

The rower was training on an indoor rowing machine and pushed it for the last 5 minutes of a 60 minute exercise and became ill. The rower was known to have a heart condition and the club was aware of the appropriate emergency actions. A defibrillator was collected from a nearby site and an ambulance was called. No treatment was delivered before the ambulance arrived as the rower was conscious and responsive. The defibrillator was not used and was returned after the ambulance had left. The rower was taken to hospital and was still there ten 10 days later.

Please exercise restraint and take care of yourself.

Be prepared for anti-social behaviour

A group of youths persistently obstructed access from the water to a pontoon and shouted abuse as a group of rowers tried to come alongside. This was reported to the local Community Support team.

Incidents of this type, but usually not so extreme, usually happen later in the year when the weather is better. Please be prepared and plan what action you will take if this happens at your club.

Work with British Canoeing

Information was provided to a colleague at British Canoeing about incidents involving canoeists.

In one incident a Kayaker persisted in navigating on the “wrong” side of the waterway, so as to shelter under the bank, and narrowly avoided a collision with scullers.

Some Incidents do have Consequences

There was an incident in late March in which a Coaching launch was in collision with a stationary Police Launch that was holding station mid river. This incident was summarised in last month's report. The helm of this launch has been issued with a Harbour Master's Formal Reprimand for failing to keep a proper lookout in accordance with the International Collision Regulations and for Navigating Without Due Care and Attention in accordance with Section 108 of the Port of London Act 1968. A Formal Reprimand is the highest level of Enforcement Action that the PLA takes below a Prosecution, which was felt necessary in this case due to injuries being caused and the potential for the incident to be even more serious.

The reprimand included the following statement ***“When navigating coaching launches in future, it is vital to remember that the primary responsibility of the helmsman should be on the navigation of their own vessel, and not upon coaching or accompanying rowing vessels. If your role requires you to be primarily focused upon coaching, then another helmsman should be sought who can focus upon the navigation of the vessel.”*** This is good advice, please take care to follow it.

There was another similar incident in April in which a coach, who was also driving a launch, was focussed on the crew being coached and did not keep a good lookout. This resulted in the launch being on a collision course with 4- travelling in the opposite direction in the correct position on the river. The crew of the 4- shouted a warning and the launch changed course but still hit the bow of the 4x.

In yet another incident a work boat was creating excessive wash that swamped one rowing boat and caused another to take on a significant quantity of water. This was reported to the Port Authority who have been in contact with the operators of this vessel and the master at the time of this incident. They held an enforcement meeting with the master of this vessel and highlighted the concerns raised in the report. In addition, they have reminded them of their responsibilities as detailed in the local byelaws.

RowSafe Update 2023

The 2023 update of RowSafe has been completed, and the new version has been posted on the website. It can be found from the link on the [RowSafe](#) page.

Changes from the 2022 edition are highlighted in yellow throughout the document and are also listed [here](#).

Tidying the website and removing some obsolete documents

There were documents on the website that contain the old (2008) RowSafe logo and are now obsolete. The Control Commission Checklist and the Competition Safety Checklist have been removed. It is hoped that any problems found during boat checks at competitions will now be reported using the Incident Reporting system as currently happens in at least one region.

Should coxes complete the capsize drill too

A club had a cox who did not row and did not want to complete the capsize drill. I was asked for advice.

The response was that sometimes coxes do not appreciate that coxed boats capsize too. It helps if they know what they are expected to do if they find themselves in the water. Also, it is important that coaches have confidence in their coxes. Most people enjoy the capsize drill in the pool. The reluctance may be due to the cox not being confident in the water. Please make it clear to them that they do not have to be able to swim. All they have to do is float and hold on to some part of the boat.

The way we normally do it is to put the rower into the boat so that they can move to the middle of the pool. Someone then climbs onto the stern canvas so that the rower in the boat can experience buddy rescue as a rescuer. The rower then capsizes and experiences rescuing themselves. The next rower then gets into the boat and one who just capsized climbs onto the stern and experiences buddy rescue as the person being rescued.

Preventing people from jumping off pontoons

Last year a member of the public jumped off a rowing club's pontoon to enter the river and subsequently drowned. It is understood that a Local Authority Health and Safety officer suggested that the Health and Safety at Work, etc., Act 1974 requires the club, in this case, to provide a substantial barrier to prevent members of the public from gaining access to the river via the pontoon.

My response was that the club should consider the safety provision made by the council in preventing access to the river from other areas of the towpath. It would be unjustifiable for the Council to expect the Club to do more than they, in fact, do themselves. You could use what the Council does as a precedent to establish the level of provision that would be reasonably practicable.

The legal requirements are quite long and complex. There is a summary in Appendix I

I do not think that it is reasonable to expect the club to physically restrain a person who enters onto its property (or property that it occupies) with the purpose of preventing them from entering the water. If the club cannot be expected to restrain them then the club should not be expected to erect a barrier to prevent them from entering the water. I think that the club will have discharged its duty of care by simply providing information (e.g. a warning sign) to inform them of the danger.

First Aid training

There has been some discussion about the St John Emergency First Aid Awareness sessions that are available at no cost. These are, in effect, taster sessions that outline the substantive training that is available from this organisation. They include very little actual training with no hands-on learning, formal training, testing or certification.

St John Ambulance publishes First Aid videos that provide some information on specific subjects. These do not constitute formal training but they may be of use either as a reminder, or in preparation for more formal training. The videos include:-

- [How to do the Primary Survey](#)
- [How to do CPR on an Adult](#)
- [The Recovery Position](#)
- [How to treat severe bleeding](#)
- [How to treat shock](#)
- [How to treat an asthma attack](#)
- [How to use a Defibrillator \(AED\)](#)
- [What to do if someone has a stroke](#)
- [What to do if someone is choking](#)
- [How to treat shock](#)
- [What to do if someone has a spinal injury](#)
- [How to bandage a sprain](#)
- [What to do if someone is having a diabetic emergency](#)
- [How to help someone who has fainted](#)
- [What to do if someone has a seizure](#)
- [How to treat a fracture and fracture types](#)
- [How to help someone with a head injury](#)
- [How to treat heat stroke](#)
- [How to treat heat exhaustion, signs and symptoms](#)
- [How to treat frostbite](#)
- [How to help someone having a heart attack](#)

also

- [How to treat drowning and](#)
- [Agonal breathing in cardiac arrest](#)

Do not forget the [life-saver app](#), this is brilliant.

Guidelines on Major Incidents

The following guidelines have been published on the British Rowing website.

Guidelines for Responding to Major Incidents at Competitions can be found [here](#).

Guidelines with dealing with the Aftermath of a Serious Incident at a Club or Competition can be found [here](#).

Coaching Ratios

I was asked by a coach where they could find the “the British rowing students and boats per coach ratios”.

The reply was that real life is not that simple. It all depends on your Risk Assessment.

Factors to consider include:-

- the risks at your venue
- the conditions at the time
- the level of experience, capability and ability of the crews and the coaches
- the boats being used and
- the age of your crews (adults or juniors)

There may be other factors too.

Appendix 1 - some legal issues relating to the duty to care for members of the public

The relevant legislation here is Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc., Act 1974. The "etc" is important in this context. Section 3 States:-

3 General duties of employers and self-employed to persons other than their employees.

(1) It shall be the duty of every employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in his employment who may be affected thereby are not thereby exposed to risks to their health or safety.

(2) It shall be the duty of every self-employed person who conducts an undertaking of a prescribed description to conduct the undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that he and other persons (not being his employees) who may be affected thereby are not thereby exposed to risks to their health or safety.

(2A) A description of undertaking included in regulations under subsection (2) may be framed by reference to—

(a) the type of activities carried out by the undertaking, where those activities are carried out or any other feature of the undertaking;

(b) whether persons who may be affected by the conduct of the undertaking, other than the self-employed person (or his employees), may thereby be exposed to risks to their health or safety.

(3) In such cases as may be prescribed, it shall be the duty of every employer and every self-employed person, in the prescribed circumstances and in the prescribed manner, to give to persons (not being his employees) who may be affected by the way in which he conducts his undertaking the prescribed information about such aspects of the way in which he conducts his undertaking as might affect their health or safety.

Guidance on the meaning of "reasonably practicable" can be found on the HSE website [here](#). This contains the following:-

The definition set out by the Court of Appeal (in its judgment in Edwards v. National Coal Board, [1949] 1 All ER 743) is:

"Reasonably practicable' is a narrower term than 'physically possible' ... a computation must be made by the owner in which the quantum of risk is placed on one scale and the sacrifice involved in the measures necessary for averting the risk (whether in money, time or trouble) is placed in the other, and that, if it be shown that there is a gross disproportion between them – the risk being insignificant in relation to the sacrifice – the defendants discharge the onus on them."

In my view, the club has a duty to maintain its property in a way that ensures that it does not do any harm to members of the public. So, for example, in the case of the landing stage, it should be maintained in a condition that it does not collapse when someone stands on it and so that it has no sharp protrusions. It should not harm the unwary user.

I do not think that the 1974 Act can be used to require the club to limit the conscious actions of members of the public. If they choose to throw themselves into the river then there are probably many places where they can do so and it is not proportionate, and therefore not reasonably practicable, for the club to try to stop them. The risks are obvious and there comes a time when people should be responsible themselves for their own decisions to take risks.

In considering risk reduction measures it is also important to identify any additional risks that such measures may introduce. In this case, the construction of a substantial barrier could prevent a person in or on the river from using this route to escape from it.

I believe that another key statement in law can be found in the Occupiers Liability Act 1957, in Section 2, Extent of Occupiers Ordinary Duty, [here](#). Subsection 5 states:-

The common duty of care does not impose on an occupier any obligation to a visitor in respect of risks willingly accepted as his by the visitor (the question whether a risk was so accepted to be decided on the same principles as in other cases in which one person owes a duty of care to another).