



BRITISH ROWING

# HRSA Monthly Report

October 2019

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## Royal Humane Society Awards

### Royal Agricultural University BC

The RHS Awards of Treatments on Parchment and a Resuscitation Award were presented to Henry Jackson and Alfie England at the Royal Agricultural University Prize Giving on 23<sup>rd</sup> October. They will be presented again at the WAGS Regional AGM at Saltford on Sunday 17th November.

The rescue was described in the March 2019 monthly report. The rescue involved both rowers entering very cold water to rescue and save the life of an unknown man.

This photograph was taken after the presentation and shows me, Henry Jackson, Alfie England and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Joanna Price.



### Boston BC

Robert Parker and Anita Lowe were nominated for Royal Humane Society awards following their rescue and resuscitation of an unconscious man found face down in the river. The rescue was described in the July Monthly Report, available on the British Rowing website [here](#).

We have been notified that Robert Parker has been awarded the Society's Testament on Parchment and Anita Lowe has been awarded a Resuscitation Certificate.

It is planned to present these awards at the Boston Heads on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020.



## Incident Reports in October

### Rower suffers a stroke following a head injury

There was a head-on collision between a 4- and a 2x in which the person rowing at bow in the 2x suffered a blow to the head. The 2x was in the correct position on the river but the 4- was on the wrong side of the river. Neither crew had looked around sufficiently. The collision was at full closing speed. The rower at bow in the 2x was hit on the head by an oar, and fell straight out of the boat. About a week later she suffered a stroke that was, in the opinion of the surgeon who treated her, caused directly by the impact of an oar on her head.

The coach had seen that his 4- was off line and he was shouting to them to steer back towards bow-side, and then he shouted to them to stop. The 4's steerer was steering to try to get back on station, but not early enough or strongly enough to prevent the collision. There was no holding water or last-minute attempt to stop by either crew.

It has since been reported that the person involved suffered a micro-tear in an artery as a result of the blow, which caused a clot hence the stroke. She has been told that a complete and full recovery is likely.

There are two lessons we can learn here. We must take extra care to avoid collisions and we must respond appropriately to head injuries. Both of these subjects have been covered in recent Safety Alerts that can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

If you suffer a head injury then do not shrug it off as if it were not important. If someone else suffers a head injury then take care of them. If you, or they, have any of the symptoms listed in the Safety Alert then follow the guidance there. If you feel ill later then seek medical advice and explain that you have suffered a blow to the head.

The effects of the blow to the head may not appear for some days, as in this case. If you, or someone that you know, suffers a blow to the head then let others (parents, partner, relatives, friends) know about the head injury and advise them what to do if any of the post-concussion symptoms occur. Check at 24, 48 and 72 hours after the head injury and go to hospital, or advise them to go to hospital, if any of the post-concussion symptoms occur. There is more information on symptoms [here](#), if these symptoms appear then the casualty must go to hospital and be formally assessed.

Collision avoidance requires everyone to ensure that they are in the correct place on the waterway and keep a good lookout, particularly directly ahead. It also helps if you are conspicuous - wear bright colours in daytime, white at night and make sure that your lights, if needed, are working correctly. If you cannot see ahead then stop and look properly. If you think that you are about to collide then perform an emergency stop and shout to the other crew. Practise emergency stops frequently.

Head injuries and concussion can have long term effects and can result in permanent injury and even death if the symptoms and signs are not properly observed and managed. Strokes can be life changing or life threatening events.



## **Actions following a collision**

There was a collision between two 2xs in which a rigger was damaged. The Regional Rowing Safety Adviser (RRSA) asked the club whether the bow riggers on each of the 2xs was fitted with backstays. It transpired that those on one boat were and those on the other boat were not. The RRSA then asked whether there were plans to fit backstays.

The club replied that the boat without backstays has now been fitted with them. Backstays are being retrofitted to other boats that do not have them. The membership have also been reminded of the need to adhere to the circulation pattern and to look around regularly.

Backstays do not prevent collisions but they do provide a degree of cushioning and deflection if a rigger hits a rower. It is also worth noting that backstays reduce pin deflection in the drive phase of the stroke; this tends to make the boat go faster.

### **Damage to 1x**

A 1x was damaged (see photo) following a collision with a motor boat that suddenly appeared around the end of an island.



### **Collisions on bends**

There have been several head on collisions where crews were either cutting the corner or taking wide line around the bend and, in both cases, not keeping an adequate lookout. Please encourage crews to keep a good lookout and take the correct line around bends.

### **The “can of coke” fallacy**

It was reported that a sculler who capsized was given a can of coke to drink in the misguided belief that this would provide some protection against. It will not. There is no practical, effective prophylactic treatment, post immersion.

### **Eights and smaller boats**

There were several incidents involving collisions of eights and smaller boats. Following one collision, a cox was admonished for failing to prioritise safety over continuing the “piece”. In another, a cox allowed his boat to take a wide line so that he was on the wrong side of the river when it collided with a 2-.

However, in another incident a cox of an 8 was keeping a good lookout and avoided a head on collision with another 8 that had drifted onto the wrong side of the canal. He did this by having his crew wind down and holding it up during a piece. This behaviour is commendable.

### **Lights on boats, not on coxes**

There was a near miss when the cox was wearing a small light on his head, rather than having a light fixed to the boat. It is thought that this light was not seen initially because the cox was turning round.

Lights should be fitted to boats and not to coxes or rowers.



## Issues with the Safety Audit

Many people have written to say that they have found it difficult to access and complete the Safety Audit. This is a summary of the advice provided.

The location of the audit survey form is different this year from last year and different for each region. The links for each region can be found [here](#).

Information is routinely sent to Club Rowing Safety Advisers (CRSAs) but some clubs have new CRSAs and have not notified British Rowing of the change. CRSA can register themselves (and club administrators can do this for them) in Club Hub. Here are the instructions:-

To assign new roles, login to your club profile in ClubHub Portal and click 'Club Members' link at the top of the page as per screenshot example.

Search for your member or click on their tile if you can see this. This will display their profile page, click 'Club Role' tab. The next page will display the role that they have, and a list of other club roles available. To update this, click the yellow 'Update' button.

Tick the role (or roles) you want this member to have. In this case select the appropriate tick-box, then click the yellow 'Save' button.

You'll see on this page there are lots of different roles listed, and if you want to record who does what in your club, this is the place to do it.

You'll also see a blue icon above the roles. If you hover your mouse over this, you can see which roles have what level of access and permissions to the ClubHub system, and what this means in practice.

There have also been problems finding a club's Google Drive. Regional Rowing Safety Advisers have this information and their contact details can be found [here](#).

Both Maks Orzel and Tom Ramsell have left British Rowing. Further advice can be obtained by emailing [clubs@britishrowing.org](mailto:clubs@britishrowing.org).



## The need for young coaches to be supervised

There was a request for advice, following a regional coaches meeting on the extent to which young coaches who drive launches (people aged 16 to 18, who have completed a Rowing Leaders course and hold an RYA Level 2 Powerboat qualification) should be supervised. The following advice was provided.

I am not the best person to give welfare advice but I have had it drummed into me that in law, people are children until they reach the age of 18, whereupon they transform, as if by magic, into adults.

We have a Safety Alert on Children Driving Launches that is attached and available [here](#). It contains the following:-

*"Launch drivers who support rowers can quickly, and without much warning, find themselves in stressful, difficult, and life threatening situations. Competence is necessary but not sufficient; maturity and experience are also required, these have to be acquired, they cannot be taught."*

I also wrote about this in the Monthly Report of August 2018. That report contains the following:-

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

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

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

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

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

With this in mind, it is clear that a person under 18 who is qualified to do so may drive a launch providing that there is a responsible adult (not necessarily a launch driver) in the launch with them. Having one in another launch is not sufficient. The same applies to coaches who are not yet 18, they must be accompanied by a responsible adult at all times.



## Rowers with a Visual Impairment

There was a request for advice from a club that had an enquiry for a potential member who has visual impairment. Where could they obtain advice on how to prepare a risk assessment for this kind of disability? The response was...

The challenge that we all face is to find a way for people to enjoy rowing rather than restrict their access to the sport. This is sometimes difficult but we must remain positive and start by thinking about what people can do rather than what they cannot do. It is all about supporting people to achieve their aspirations rather than restricting their access to the sport.

The term "visually impaired" covers a multitude of conditions. Discussion with the rower involved can reveal the extent of his or her impairment and also include what the rower would like to start by doing.

In some areas people with a serious visual impairment learn to scull in a fix. This requires them to have a radio link to a coach or supporter afloat. In compiling your risk assessment you should consider the extent to which this is practicable where you row. There is no need to worry about this now but it may become an issue as the rower develops in confidence and competence.

The risk assessment should include normal outings, what to do if things go wrong, and hazards in and around the boathouse.

Normal outings should not be a problem. Initially it would be best to use coxed boats and not place the rower with a visual impairment in a position where vision is important (e.g. at bow). It is important that there are people around them who can help, perhaps by explaining some things. Do not expect rapid progress but do not be surprised if progress is rapid. Let the person learn at their own speed.

The more difficult part of the risk assessment is what happens if things go wrong, for example what happens if the boat capsizes. The problem here is how do you ensure that this rower maintains contact with the boat. If a neighbouring rower can be relied upon to help in this event then this may be sufficient. If the rower with a visual impairment cannot swim (ask them) then there may be a need for them to wear a lifejacket just as there is a need for any other rower who cannot swim to do so. Try to minimise the extent to which you treat the rower with a visual impairment differently from other rowers. Ask the rower, if they would feel more confident in a lifejacket then provide one for them.

You will need to keep the boathouse and the area outside extra tidy. Blind people are very careful to remember where things are and rely on those things always being in the correct place. There are lots of things that people can walk into, or trip over, in and around boathouses. Riggers are an obvious example. You will need to explain all this. The extent of the support and care needed will depend on the extent of the visual impairment.



Blind people are often not treated well by some others in society. There is a tendency for other people who assume that they need help to grab them and "help" them. This can make them feel nervous with others. They will need guidance around the rowing club. At first ask before you touch, it is a bit like dealing with juniors. Respect what the person tells you. The important lesson here is to make friends and develop trust.

It is not unknown for blind people, and their dogs, to be attacked in public. I know this sounds incredible but it has happened.

Visual impairment and blindness are not the same, one is the extreme version of the other. If your rower is blind and is guided by a dog then you will have to find somewhere safe and secure for it to stay while the rower is busy. Please do not underestimate the need for security; it is not unknown for dogs to be stolen. Try not to let people make too much fuss of the dog, these are highly trained working animals, not just pets.

I have used the word "you" for convenience, it is not meant to be personal. These comments apply to everyone who comes into contact with your new rower.

I checked RowSafe and in Chapter 9 there is extensive guidance on items to include in risk assessments. Section 9.8 deals with Pre-existing Health Conditions and Low levels of Fitness. It does not include anything on visual impairment. This may be an opportunity for improvement that I can address at the next revision. However, I may need help to do this.

British Rowing is striving to make rowing more diverse and more accessible. Do not be afraid to ask for help if you need it. (This note was copied to a member of staff with relevant specialist knowledge and to a staff member who supports clubs in this area.)

## The 2020 update to RowSafe

A list of the planned topics for updates was provided in the September report. This can be found on the British Rowing website [here](#).

We will review the advice to clubs on rowers who have a visual impairment.

In addition, the advice to rowers who do not feel well will be checked to ensure that it includes:-

- If you feel unwell do not row (most with AF do not feel well and will certainly underperform)
- If you feel unwell and are worried about your health go and see your doctor and follow his/her advice
- Cardiac screening of junior rowers is available.

Please write to me at [safety@britishrowing.org](mailto:safety@britishrowing.org) if you would like to suggest any further improvements.



## Support for the Cornish Pilot Gig Association (CPGA)

Information on an incident was shared with the CPGA Safety Adviser and others. The incident involved a gig travelling across a swell 50 metres from the shore when a large wave partially swamped the boat. The boat listed over under the weight of water expelling four junior rowers and their oars. The Adult cox and remaining junior rowers turned the gig into swell only to be further swamped capsizing the boat. (Gigs, and all other sea boats, are vulnerable to waves on their beam, this can be a problem when turning.)

All rowers, the cox and the supervising adult were now in the water swimming for shore. They received assistance from parents on the beach and the local Coastguard. The rowers were wearing automatic inflation lifejackets and these operated correctly. The cox and supervising adult were wearing manual inflation lifejackets but these were not activated.

An ambulance was called and two of the parents that assisted were briefly hospitalized.

All rowing by the club has been suspended pending outcome of an investigation.

Clearly this is serious. The outcome may have been more serious if the crew had not been wearing lifejackets or if they were not fitted correctly or had not inflated correctly. This is good practice in these conditions. Section 10.2 of [RowSafe](#) advises that clubs use their Risk Assessment to determine under what conditions rowers should wear lifejackets.

It is fortunate that this event happened at a time of year when the water is not excessively cold, so close to the shore and not offshore of cliffs. Had it happened in the late winter or early spring, or in a different location, then the consequences could easily have been much more serious.

The report does not indicate what happened to the boat but it is suspected that it was recovered. We should be thankful that lives were saved, boats can be rebuilt, people cannot.

Information was shared with the CPGA Safety Adviser.

There was another incident on the same day but at a different location where a gig was stranded in the harbour mouth. This required the fire brigade to attend and rescue the crew using mud mats.

## what3words

There have been questions about the usefulness of this app for defining a position. The three word position definition can be used by emergency services controllers to identify a location precisely. It is a highly valuable tool. A Safety Alert is being prepared and will be issued soon.



## Work with British Canoeing

Information from an Incident Report where assistance was provided by a group canoeists to a group of rowers and coaches was shared with colleagues at British Canoeing. In this incident a 4x+ became entangled in a collection of trees and branches that had built up at the end of the moored boats.

The stream pushed the boat sideways against the debris with the bow pointing towards the middle of the river and the stern towards the bank. All starboard side blades were now trapped under the debris and with the river pushing against the side of the boat and pushing the port side down towards the river.

Both launches present for the outing moved in to either end of the boat and attempted to dislodge the boat. The movements of the boats' occupants and the drag on the side of the boat cause it to tilt and the boat capsized. All occupants of the boat successfully kept their heads above water and were instructed to keep hold and stay with the boat.

The rowers were instructed to get themselves out of the water and on to the boat.

A group of about ten canoeists from a local club came to assist; this was greatly appreciated. Each of the rowers slid down the boat towards the bow and one by one was rescued by the canoeists who took them the 50 metres back to the club stage, with each of the rowers and cox holding on to the back of a canoe and its handle.

Having ensured all the crew were back safe and unharmed the next stage was to attempt to rescue the boat that was now completely entangled with the debris stuck at the end of the moored boats.

The canoeists provided further assistance in recovering the boat.

Information was also provided on another incident where canoeists were innocent victims in a collision.

## Is there an eyesight test for coxes and steers

Advice was sought on the need for a minimum eye sight test for coxes and steerspersons as a club has a cox who is prohibited to drive on account of her eyesight. She is keen and needed but some people have queried her eyesight.

The response was that we do not have eyesight tests for coxes and steers. However, if they cannot see well enough to drive a car then I doubt that they would feel confident to steer a boat. We use driver health criteria, and the DVLA guidance in relation to epilepsy, so I think it is reasonable to use the DVLA criteria for the eyesight of people who steer boats. I think that most collisions are caused by people not looking rather than not being able to see but this does not mean that we should be lax on eyesight requirements.



## Speed Limits for Launches

Q It has been assumed that launches coaching crews could travel at the speed of the crew to ensure that they were coached and kept safe. Is there a rule about this and, if so, could you point me in the correct direction? We have a lot of large moored motorboats that we pass and they are constantly asking us to cut speed and wash. Whilst I agree that we should all share the river, last week I was accosted whilst following a Novice women's coxed four rowing in pairs that I'm fairly sure wouldn't be able to manage 6mph.

A British Rowing does not have any rules about speed limits for launches. Some waterways specify limits but we do not. Our main concern is about not creating wash. There are several statements in RowSafe to:-

- Keep wash to a minimum, except in an emergency.

The extent of wash from a launch is dependent on its speed and the hull form. When a launch is planing then it tends to produce little wash. When it is not quite planing then the wash can be large. When a displacement hull is travelling above its waterline speed then the wash will increase significantly as engine power is increased even though the speed does not increase much. (Please let me know if I need to explain this further.)

## Displaying RowSafe

Q Should clubs still have a hard copy of row safe at hand (pinned on the safety board)? Is British Rowing going to produce paper versions for noticeboards.

A The current version of RowSafe was never intended to be printed. It was always intended to be electronic with internal and external hyperlinks so that it is easy to search. Think of it as an encyclopaedia rather than a novel. It was never intended that someone should start at the beginning and work through to the end.

## Best Practice Safety Communications in a club

A club uses 'WhatsApp' for communicating between club members and every week it has a Safety Message . This can include, river conditions, any reports of problems on the river, feedback from incident reports, weather conditions , fishing competitions. Advice is also given safety checks and navigation reminders.

In developing a social media and information sharing strategy that includes juniors, clubs should be aware of section 5 of the Welfare Guidance documents, available [here](#).



## Backstays

There were several questions about the requirement to fit backstays and whether financial support was available from British Rowing to clubs to enable them to do this. The questions and answers are summarised below.

**Q** Please can you clarify the April advice on backstays being applied to all boats with the exception of sculling boats.

**A** This advice was not actually issued in April, in fact it was issued in June 2013 and can be seen [here](#). It was incorporated into RowSafe in April 2018. This does apply to sculling boats but not to Ixs (it applies to all rowing and sculling boats with a crew of 2 or more).

**Q** I understand the suggested empirical evidence that backstays might reduce the severity of an impact on the person in the bow of a boat, but this is not a directive as I read it.

**A** RowSafe contains advice and guidance, in fact it is a statement of what British Rowing expects its member clubs to do. In that sense it is not a directive.

**Q** We, and a club we host, will need to retro fit around 30 backstays to comply. Might BR assist in this?

**A** If you think about this then it should become clear that you are asking whether British Rowing will provide financial assistance to every club in the country to make their boats safer. British Rowing is not in a position to provide financial subsidies to every member club in the country to make improvements to their fleet.

There were subsequently further questions, as follows:-

**Q** Do we have to comply, or is this a suggestion we might take up?

**A** This is safety advice and guidance as stated above.

**Q** If we choose not to and suffer a serious collision - at home or at a regatta, how will the Boat Club management stand with regard to not implementing the advice of BR? Are they liable?

**A** Club Management must bear responsibility for their decisions. The question of liability is best answered by your insurers. If you insure through our insurance partners, Howdens, then you may find the answer on their website [here](#).

I found this on that website:-

**"Combined Liability Insurance** - cover has been arranged to protect the organisers of British Rowing affiliated regattas and processional races, as well as those regattas that are compliant with British Rowing Rules, RowSafe and are individually approved by British Rowing. This will protect the organisers and organising committee against the cost of a claim made against you following injury to someone else or damage to their property. Cover is provided up to a maximum limit of £10m."



This indicates that an event has cover if it is compliant with RowSafe. You may wish to infer that it does not have cover if it is not compliant with RowSafe but insurance arrangements are highly complex and it would be best to approach whoever provides your insurance, yourself.

*Q If we have to defend a class action by relatives or an individual, what support or otherwise might BR offer to the club?*

A British Rowing is not in a position to provide you with significant financial support. However, we may be able to help by directing you towards people who can provide you with assistance for a fee. You should discuss financial matters with your insurer.

*Q Why not sculling boats - surely they are as likely to be in a collision as any other boat?*

A I explained earlier that this does apply to sculling boats but not to Ixs. The reason is a little complex but is based on the difference in rotational inertia about a vertical axis of different boat types. In any impact, the force at impact is dependent on the impact velocity and the inertia of the bodies that collide. If you want a detailed explanation then please ask.

In simple terms, a horizontal impact on the rigger of any boat will tend to cause that boat to undergo rotational acceleration about a vertical axis through its centre of gravity. A Ix, only has one heavy component (the sculler) and the rotational inertia is small because the mass of the sculler's body is concentrated in one place. Bigger boats have much greater rotational inertia because there are several heavy components (scullers' or rowers' bodies) separated by some distance. It is the separation distance that is the dominant parameter.

In even more simple terms, a collision with the rigger of a Ix will cause that boat to spin away from the collision and impart little force on the body that collides with it.

## How much and how often

In last month's report, I referred to "How much and how often", this is Welfare Guide WG3.2, available [here](#). There is further guidance on "On-Water and Indoor Rowing by School Children" available [here](#).