

Chairman's Report on the Year to July 2021

About The Weather and The Pandemic

Any report on the last rowing season has to reflect the fact that it started with us all in the grips of the second wave of the pandemic, consequently we spent most of the Winter and Spring season out to Easter in lockdown. It was probably of little consolation that for the bulk of that period, the river was in flood. Once again, we issued out all the gym equipment and took to Zoom. The club was secured, and we moved to reduce any influenceable overheads. As a consequence of our actions in the first lockdown, we were able to significantly discount subscriptions for the 2020-2021 season and effectively reduce the fees proportionate to the number of weeks we were not able to row.

The second unlock was faster than the first and rowing resumed for the para squad on 22nd March and for the rest of the club on the 29th March. In Step 2 the early season heads and regattas we cancelled and the first real events kicked off in May. Marlow Town Regatta took place on a rescheduled date in late June. It was an incredible event, highly appreciated by the participants and a fitting tribute to the efforts of all who made it happen. We were the first river regatta to run in our region and set a high bar for those who follow.

Despite all the potential pitfalls, we have emerged from the last rowing season with membership up year on year, in a good position financially and making substantial progress on a number of our longer term plans.

We Are Nothing Without You

Once again, we need to reflect on the fact that we are hugely indebted to all who have stepped up, volunteered and in many cases, gone above and beyond the call of duty. Many thanks to

- You who stepped forward and volunteered during the year. We had an incredible response to the volunteer call for Marlow Town.
- John Stephenson who works tirelessly as boatman and has continued to do during these challenging times.
- David Plaskitt who has had a tough year, been an outstanding membership secretary, kept the building running along with Peter and taken the reins on the landing stage project.
- Peter Hunt who has been at the centre of pretty much all of the action. Has renewed our launch fleet and truck, kept the building running, been an incredible moving force in the regatta and a huge amount more.
- The regatta committee and all who helped make the regatta happen. We collectively pulled off an incredible result and overcame a significant number of challenges. Many thanks, Jeremy Rowe, John Kirtland, Peter Hunt, Christine Weaving, Helen Thompson, Charles Hill, Russell Peacock, Naomi Riches, Ruth Naylor and event supremo, David Jackson.
- Our squad coaches and leaders, paid and unpaid, who put in some incredible hours at odd times of day and in all weathers. Many thanks to Peter Chambers, Enya Lyons, Matt Evans and Katerina Kleshneva for a huge piece of work to get the club ready for the reopening in March. Peter in particular went above and beyond.
- Mark Ruinet, retiring this year as the lead JDS coach. Mark has been a huge part of renaissance of our Junior Squad. JDS graduates feature on many podiums and form the backbone of the current squad.

- Monika Bagga, retiring this year, who has been another driving force in the junior squad, running the back office, communicating with parents and generally doing whatever it takes to mobilise a small army of young people.
- Lai Ching Brindle who runs the junior squad finances, has a Phd level understanding of Cardinal Red pantones and marquee specifications. Next time you see the Marlow tents and flyers, visible from outer space, remember to thank Lai Ching.
- Retiring committee members, Helen Thompson, Dave Brindle and Kingsley McDiarmid..
- Our committees and sub-committees who have done a great job in challenging times.
- Helen Thompson for all she does for our outstanding Learn to Row programme along with Mike Landers and his coaching team who are doing an exceptional job of extending our reach.
- Richard Lewis who has kept the Go-Row program going and recently returned his group to the gym
- The Security team who once again made sure the building was safe, secure and in good order.
- The Masters Women and Senior Women, who have once again stepped forward for any number of jobs and kept the place in great shape.

Our Priorities



1. Junior Squad – Performance, Funding and Numbers.

Last year we reported that we were off target with our junior plan and needed to take some remedial action. Happily, I can report that we are back on track in what has been a challenging turnaround year for the Junior Squad. Memberships are above target and have the potential to continue growing, we are passing through the break-even point and have an incredibly talented group training well, performing and enjoying their rowing.

Junior squad performances have been excellent in the limited competitive season to date with strong performances and significant number of wins at National Schools, Junior Sculling Regatta, Marlow Town and more recently, Kingston Borough.

The group has been stable with one regretted loss for this year as Enya Lyons, Junior Coach, joined the Police force in May. Enya has made a huge positive contribution to the club and will be missed.

JLTR continues to be an important part of our junior plan. The Easter and June courses taught forty rowers and we have sixty nine participants signed up for the Summer courses with September and October now starting to fill.

Year	JDS	J14-J18	TOTAL
September 2015	35	69	104
September 2016	10	80	90
September 2017	12	66	78
September 2018	15	71	86
September 2019	15	58	75
September 2020	19	47	66
July 2021	28	78	106

2. Culture and Sense of One Club

Once again, collective social activity has been challenging given the recent context, that said, the continued levels of mutual sport during lockdown were incredible. Hopefully we can do more on this front in the coming months as we progress through Step 4. Given the incredible efforts by our volunteers, we hope to kick start social activities, outdoors, with a “thank-you” BBQ on Sunday 25th July.

3. Competitive Performance, Expectations and Development Paths

The Senior Squad has grown in numbers since the arrival of Head Coach, Matt Evans and coach Alex Morris. We started the Senior Squad with 15 men and 15 women and now have 18 men and 24 women. Early season racing has been good with a significant number of A finalists. HWR saw a record number of Marlow entries and we look forward to HRR.

Overall wins are hard to judge for last season and this season given the almost complete absence of events between UTAH in 2020 and National Schools in 2021, although the current win rate and HWR win for the WJ16 4x- are incredibly encouraging.

The work going on in our ALTR, Improvers and Developers groups is hugely encouraging and a huge credit to Mike Landers, Lisa Knill and their coaching team. Hopefully, the latter part of the season should give the opportunity to see the Masters, Developers and Improvers squads in action.

Year to 31 Aug:	Total Wins (Almanac)	HRR	HWR
2013	81	Fawley	WJ16 4x-
2014	72		
2015	71		WJJ18 2x
2016	59		WJ16 4+
2017	50		
2018	80		
2019	97		WJ16 4+ / WPR3 1x
2021			
2022			WJ16 4x-

4. Fundraising for Fleet and Equipment Renewals

For the second year, our fundraising efforts have suffered some obvious limitations, that said we have done well given the circumstances. The balance of this year's spends are targeted at:

- replacing one bookable coxless quad
- upgrading or replacing bookable sculls
- racking improvements to resolve access along the wall by the bridge.

Year	Boats Purchased	Fundraising / Spend
2018-2019	JW 4x/- M 4x/- W 4x/- W 8+ W 4+	£123,256
2019-2020	JW 8+ M 4+ BikeErg – donation J 2x/- - donation Security system	£51,860
2020 - 2021	Five ergos SW 4- JM 4x+ JLTR Stable singles	£49,932

Windfall fund.

The windfall fund was generated after we won our VAT claim against HMRC. The plan is to use these funds to either get to items we could not afford to when building the new club, remediate know issues or provide a long term benefit in areas other than boats. We held the funds until we were assured that the HMRC claim was over and have now started to progress a number of projects.

- Five replacement launches and an additional engine - Complete
- Replacement truck – Complete
- Replacement safety radios - complete
- Replace front door and fix drainage in brick paving – drainage complete, door ordered
- Level hardstanding and replace landing stages in a way that eliminates the gap – final negotiations
- Kitchen extract upgrade – at design stage

5. Communications and Presence

The second lockdown gave our website development team the time it needed to take the specification and turn into a fully functioning website. At the same time, we chose to continue to develop our membership database, integrate the traffic lights, hook up our Flickr images account and also integrate the SuperSAAS booking system so that members only have to access a single system. The website benefitted from some great images, courtesy of Mark Hamilton, Jeremy and Geraldine Rowe and a host of others. Since launch in March traffic volumes are up five-fold and we are generating a steady volume of contact leads both to row and to use the bar. We continue to make process improvements through the membership database that will help the membership secretary, learn to row administrators and allow members to self-serve in a number of areas. Many thanks to Tracy Reader, Dom Tyler, Matthew Wire and Nic Westreich for a great new website.

Splash has continued through lockdown and thanks to the new website, has an improved look and feel. We typically get around 300 read confirmations each week, given the volume of emails most people receive, this is pretty good going.

6. MRCT Margin and Revenue

The bar has been badly hit by the lockdowns and the various COVID regulations. Just before the first lockdown we had two months where we hit our target revenue and margin, sadly not long enough to be able to know whether we have a longer term success. Hopefully the coming year will allow us to make some progress on our commercial activities as well as use the bar for club social events.

Conclusion

Despite a second year impacted by COVID, the club is doing exceptionally well, both absolutely and compared to many others. We are back up and running, have a healthy and vibrant membership and made a great start to the rowing season. The junior plan is working and we have real traction in the adult learn to row programme and the development pathways that follow it. We look forward to the coming year that will hopefully allow us to see the progress of the changes that have been made to the Senior Squad, Masters Women's and Masters Men's squads. As last year, MRCT remains work in progress and has some incredible potential.

#yeahmarlow