

MRC Captain's Report 2025/26 Season

Introduction

In preparation for tonight I looked back at my Captain's Report from 2022, the post pandemic season, with our belated 150th anniversary celebrations.

Some themes jumped out (you may recognise them):

- Highest ever rankings in Tideway heads
- Record number of entries at (rescheduled) HRR
- Bridge works and relocation of singles to Bisham
- Dealing with the loss of Katerina Kleshneva (this year we mourned Jeremy Laming)
- Congestion on the pontoons
- Mike does too much (Incidentally, Ed tells me the lack of volunteers also featured in the early Club Minutes of the 1870s)

"Building the club" was a constant theme then and now. Today we face the increasingly frequent issues with our actual physical building, and how those affect our plans to build on and enhance what our club offers.

Last July, the new committee came in with a focus on our culture of collaboration, whilst striving for an ever better experience for all our members. The Club Survey gave everyone an opportunity to feed back on their current experience and give us ideas for future direction. In response to our questions on how you view the club now and how you want it to be, the key words you used were the same for both:

Inclusive, Welcoming, Competitive, Supportive, Friendly

So, how did we build these in to the club this year?

1. Rowing Growth, Ethos & Development

- **Coach Development:** Fundamental to the promotion of a positive club culture are our squad coaches, both employed and volunteer. In February 2026, twelve of our coaches and club leaders gathered for two development sessions, facilitated by Emma Westcott. The focus was on fostering reflective practice, sharing good coaching ethos, and streamlining internal organization and communication.
- **Adult & Junior Development:** Our Adult Learn to Row (ALTR) program saw 70 participants complete the course, with an impressive 39 retained across our Development and Improvement squads. A huge thank you to stalwart coach Mike Landers, who has handed over the ALTR course leadership to Tamsin Vernon this season. The Junior Learn to Row (JLTR) programme welcomed 107 participants, generating substantial income and funnelling fresh talent into our junior squads. The 2026 intake for both programmes is already heavily subscribed.
- **Member Onboarding:** To improve our welcoming process, we have established a "Club Greeter" role to handle inquiries, show potential members around and point them towards the right squad or group. We have also updated our official digital Induction Pack, which will also soon feature practical "how-to" videos.
- **Safety First:** The long-awaited online Safety Induction modules are complete and undergoing system testing ahead of a roll-out this coming season. Many thanks to John Kirtland, Jim Cotter and Josh Pert for their persistence with this project.

2. Infrastructure & Fleet Maintenance

Maintaining our club assets this year has required much volunteer skill and strategic organizing:

- **The Fleet & Logistics:** Heavy usage of our trucks and trailers was recorded during the head race peak and has continued into the summer regatta season. Our lead coaches Jamie and Pete, plus a contingent of Masters and Young Vets squad members stepped up to drive and tow on most weekends, to enable us all to train and race. The Masters Men (MM) squad also did an expert job deep-cleaning the club trucks. And in an effort to clear the age-old mystery of "which trailer is which," Lorna expertly labelled all three club trailers.
- **Launches & Boat Maintenance:** Launches are now individually allocated to specific squads to check, clean, and maintain. All launches were fully serviced before and after the Marlow Spring and Marlow Town Regattas. John Stephenson, Pete Chambers, Jamie Axon, and Mike Parsons handled ongoing boat and ergo repairs in-house wherever possible, but we still had a number of boats sent off to Eric Simms, John Tetley or Fillipi for more substantial fixes.
- **Equipment & Rack Audits:** Alex and Cath undertook an audit of all the boats in the club with a view to selling or scrapping unused externally racked boats to free up premium space. We also reviewed our racking policy for private singles, again looking for ways to increase usable racking space. A note on Equipment Responsibility: Despite frequent reminders, some members are still failing to return gear to its correct home, report damaged items, or clean gym equipment. This lack of individual responsibility causes unnecessary aggravation for fellow club members and is a definite area for improvement.
- **Building & Facilities Upgrades**
 - **Corridor Transformation:** We have successfully converted the first-floor corridor into a much more practical and pleasant space, featuring a custom-built lifejacket store and a new trophy cabinet.
 - **Foyer & Entrance Project:** A dedicated team of volunteers is currently designing and gathering quotes to transform our main entrance into a more welcoming, inspiring space. We are incredibly grateful to the professional graphic and interior designers from our membership who have stepped up to lead this creative vision.
 - **Women's Changing Rooms:** Plans to expand capacity have been formally proposed to the committee to better accommodate our growing membership.

Funding Note: Implementation of both the foyer upgrade and the changing room expansion is temporarily on hold pending further funding.

3. River Conditions & Operations

Mother Nature tested our patience during the winter, but she couldn't break our spirit:

- **Winter Floods:** January and February 2026 brought severe river conditions. The dreaded "Red Light" forced us off the local water for extended periods. However, this triggered an impressive logistical effort to mobilize hundreds of rowers away to Dorney Lake and the Tideway on a weekly basis.
- **Gym to the Rescue:** While the river was raging, the gym was utilized to absolute capacity on weeknights and weekends, ensuring our athletes maintained peak fitness. Thank you to all squad leads who worked collaboratively to share equipment and space over those congested months.
- **Spring Recovery:** By March and April 2026, the floods finally receded, allowing us to resume normal water operations on our home stretch just in time for training camps. Over Easter, several successful camps were held, including a highly rewarding, if 'character-building' junior trip to freezing France.

4. Racing Achievements & Regatta Highlights

Despite the severe winter weather disruptions, our crews proved that land training pays off, securing an incredible array of podium wins across the season:

- **Autumn Highlights (2025):** The season kicked off with strong multi-boat entries and stellar podium results at the Upper Thames Autumn Head, Nottingham Autumn Head, Henley Sculls, and the Norfolk Sculls & Norwich Small Boats Head. We even flew the club flag internationally at the prestigious Head of the Charles Regatta.
- **Winter Hardship & Trials:** While the Worcester and Weybridge events succumbed to cancellations, our high-performance athletes continued to shine. Notable elite representations included strong showings at the GB Rowing Team Senior/U23 Open Trials (both November and February events) and the U19 Trials, featuring standout indoor and trial performances.
- **Spring Triumphs (2026):** As we transitioned into the major head season, the club showed immense strength and depth at the Junior Sculling Head, Head of the River Race (Page trophy winners), WeHoRR (14th), and Vesta International Masters Head.

Marlow Spring Regatta: A crowning achievement for the club's operations, Marlow Spring was exceptionally well-run. It saw a massive wave of volunteering and participation from every corner of the club, translating into record entries and a spectacular haul of podium wins.

- **Early Summer Peaks (2026):** A crowning achievement for the club's operations, Marlow Spring Regatta was exceptionally well-run. It saw a massive wave of volunteering and participation from every corner of the club, translating into record entries and a spectacular haul of podium wins. Our athletes carried this momentum right into the heart of the championship calendar. At the National Schools Regatta and British Rowing Masters Championships, the club asserted its absolute dominance with a magnificent collection of gold medals. Meanwhile the Marlow Town Regatta proved to be a great showcase of the club's strength and inclusivity, with particular success in the Junior and Adaptive categories.
- **Henley Regattas - A Historic Entry Record:** The grand finale of our racing season saw the club reach unprecedented heights at the UK's premier rowing events. We celebrated our all-

time record number of Henley Women's Regatta and Henley Royal Regatta entries, with most qualifying and several advancing deep into regatta week. Among the incredible highlights, our Senior and Junior High-Performance athletes achieved magnificent outcomes across the week—most notably securing a historic, dramatic victory on Sunday to take home the Diamond Jubilee Challenge Cup, alongside an elite top-tier triumph in the Silver Goblets & Nickalls' Challenge Cup. To round off our residency upstream, our largest ever entry at Henley Masters Regatta resulted in 6 finals and 3 wins.

5. Looking Ahead

The club is in fantastic health as we cruise deeper into the summer season. We are enjoying excellent regional and national visibility, highlighted by recent high-profile visits to our sessions by British Rowing CEO Tom Solesbury and BR Chair Diana Hunter, both of whom left with a glowing impression of our vibrant community spirit.

This club **is** the members. My heartfelt thanks go out to the committee, our coaches, our squad reps, the regatta organizers, and every single member who stepped up this year to fix a broken seat, mop the gym, teach a new rower, clean a truck, serve breakfast, tow a trailer, cheer on a Marlow crew, or secure a win. In other words, thank you to everyone who did something **Inclusive, Welcoming, Competitive, Supportive or Friendly** to build on our club traditions and make MRC the club we all want it to be.

Ruth Naylor, MRC Captain

12 July 2026