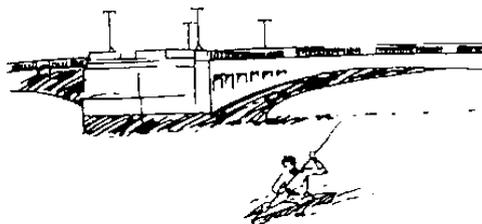


Reading Canoe Club

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Your RCC Newsletter, October 2020

What a rollercoaster year 2020 has proved, but we got through the tough parts (so far!) and, after a short pause off the water, got back to what we love – paddling. It's been a very demanding year in terms of administration ... keeping up with each new government announcement and the extra measures it required. Thank you first to those who have volunteered to be part of our Covid-compliance taskforce and giving up your time, and to members for bearing with us as, each time, we put new measures in place. A big thank you as well to all the coaches for going that extra mile ... firstly for springing into action and organising alternative training – the Zoom sessions in particular – and now for putting on all the extra coached sessions. A total of 1300 this winter.

We have inevitably lost some members, as we haven't been able to run the club in the same way we are all know and love. There have been fewer sessions to sign up to, none of the great social events or the exciting racing programme that we have previously taken for granted. And we have been unable to run any beginner courses or any Under-10 sessions. But all these activities will be back, hopefully at some point early next year.

Thank you as well to those members who made prompt payment for membership during lock down and after. We recognise that not everyone is in a position to do this, but without this source of revenue we wouldn't be able to balance the books this year. We would like to welcome our new members too – it's great to see new faces at the Club, getting well stuck into sessions or just being out on the water. If you are new, please do introduce yourself and if you need any help, please ask.

And, great news, Nigel hopes to run some **Sunday 10k races** starting very soon, so watch out for notices.

Chairman's Message

Dear Member

As you know we are a club run by volunteers. So I am especially proud of those of you who have willingly given up your time to help us manage the phased re-opening of the club, implement coaching, support our time trials and develop the winter programme.

We all know the benefits of being able to paddle and exercise. So it is very important as cases of Covid-19 increase in the community that we all work to minimise the opportunity for the virus to spread amongst our members.

It is the responsibility of all of us who use the Club to help keep each other safe, and allow as many members to participate as possible as we go into winter.

We do not want to start restricting individuals or activities because of poor behaviour, but we will if it's necessary.

So, it is OK to give a gentle reminder to others about:

- using the online booking system, cleaning hands and equipment, keeping a safe distance, and specific procedures
- being properly prepared (clothing, BA), paddling in groups and to one's ability as river conditions change

Our aim must be to always keep ourselves and others safe on the river – so the same should apply to activities in the clubhouse.

This newsletter provides a summary of the July questionnaire, thank you for completing it and your feedback. Much of our response to your Covid comments is covered by our actions since and our request for you to support them.

The Annual General meeting on 14th November will give you an opportunity to better understand the impact of the last few months on the Club's membership and finances and will set out our thoughts for the future in attracting new members and income.

However, frequently the speed and availability of what we can offer depends on having suitably able and willing volunteers. So if you think you can help, whether as a coach or in helping to operate the Club, please contact us.

We value your feedback, so if you have any suggestions or concerns, please send them to info@reading-canoe.org.uk or let one of the committee know.



Safety First – Paddling through the winter:

You will have all recently been sent the Winter Training Programme, along with information on how we plan to remain covid-compliant and keep all our members safe.

In addition, as conditions become colder and the flow picks up, please take extra care:

- 1) Layer up – make sure you have enough layers to keep warm, including a spray deck, a hat, cag and enough layers below it. And possibly pogies.
- 2) Check the board at the top of the internal stairs – if it's on amber, you need to take extra care as the flow is up; if it's on red, you can only use club equipment with a Level 2 coach or above. Even with your own equipment, it is advisable only to go out with an experienced coach.
- 3) Paddle in groups and well within your ability
- 4) If paddling in the dark, make sure you have a white light on the back of the boat

AGM 2020 – 14th November 12pm

The proposal for this year's AGM is for it to take place virtually, on Zoom. This will be on 14th November at 12 noon. Details of its format, dates for nominations and motions have just been posted on Facebook/ emailed to you. Nearer the time, we will of course send or post up a link.

Please do make sure you join the meeting – it's your Club and it's important you have your say. It is also important to have a quorate present at the meeting to make it official – that's about 30 of us. Please let us know if you plan to attend by emailing info@reading-canoe.org.uk, so we can count you in.

In addition, as sadly there can be no awards dinner, we will be announcing a limited number of Trophy-winners at the end.

Club Survey

Thank you to all members who filled in the Club Survey. The adults did well with a 20% response rate, while juniors were a little reticent about letting us know what they thought! As ever, there was a range of opinions and experiences.

- 1) From the responses, most were happy-to-satisfied with how well the Club dealt with the pandemic and bringing in new measures. Most of you seem happy with how safe it is paddling from the Club. There were a few concerns about Time Trial as that got off the ground – it was so popular. But with new measures implemented, the slow and fast starts separated, this seems to have been resolved. And now it's stopped until next Spring.
- 2) There were strong views from a good number about how to deal with persistent offenders of the Covid-19 rules, but generally it was felt that a quiet word, followed by a firm word, then possible sanctions was the best route. No one wants a heavy hand – we are a club, we all want to have fun, but, of course, not at the expense of putting others at risk.
- 3) There have been helpful learnings to take from some of the new format sessions that were brought in – what worked well on Zoom, how the smaller on-the-water groups worked better for some, but not for all.
- 4) There were many asking for the changing rooms to be opened up, especially in the colder weather. This is now done with appropriate Covid-19 measures (see website), but showers should only be used in emergencies please.
- 5) Looking forward, members had suggestions about how to boost income and attract new members next year. We won't be opening up the hall to hall hirers this year, but hopefully at some point next year it may be possible. We will focus instead on attracting new members by putting on beginner courses again, in whatever format is possible at that time. The need for more paid coaches was also a prevalent view amongst respondees.
- 6) The juniors were largely very positive about what coaching they were receiving at the Club. Of course, not the U10s because, sadly, with current precautions, none could be run at all. We hope very much these sessions will return next May.

Loaned equipment – WE NEED IT BACK!

As you will remember, when the Club first had to shut and also when we reopened with restrictions, we lent out equipment. Firstly it was ergos and gym equipment. Not all of this has been returned. If you still have some at home, NOW is the time to return it. It'll cost £68 to replace the missing dumbbells.

All of it should have been signed out. Please do not take any kit without doing this.

Buooyancy aids have also been loaned out. If at all possible, please do buy your own and return the Club one as soon as you can. They are much needed.



We are missing a number of our new dumbbells – have you got any that have slid under the bed or sofa? Please do check

Talent Club Partnership

Over the last three years Reading Canoe Club has been part of British Canoeing's Talent Club Partnership. In return for three year's funding, we have worked hard to bring on new talented juniors with the aim of training them up to be part of the GB squad. Obviously this year's efforts for recruitment went out the window, but the Club's coaches have worked hard and effectively with those juniors already enrolled to bring them up to a high standard.

The current three years of funding ceases in March and we currently are putting a proposal forward to secure funding for the next 3-year period, closing date early December. We are certain it's a very positive opportunity for the Club:

- 1) It makes clear to all members, especially our juniors, that we want to support the development of our athletes, to help them reach their full potential.
- 2) It provides an opportunity to attract new members.
- 3) Through the multi-club events we host, it helps our coaches exchange ideas, recognise best practice and make improvements in our coaching which will benefit all members. It also allows us to explore more sustainable means to fund our contract coaches which is increasingly important as we look to the future.
- 4) It promotes good club governance.
- 5) It promotes knowledge transfer between British Canoeing, Club Coaches and Paddlers and provides a pathway to challenge and influence thinking.

NHS QR code

The Club now has a Track-and-Trace QR code displayed in a few locations (thanks Evan for sorting) around the building. These should be used in addition to the Google sheets booking system. The Google sheets remain our primary access log as well as an important part of our covid-secure process. Therefore slots must be booked using them please. Launching by just checking in via QR is not sufficient (you are welcome to do both).

If you are on site for a reason not covered by the Google Sheets, (parents whose children are on the water for example), you should use the QR code to check in.

As a Club we have a legal obligation to maintain a track-and-trace register. Please help us stay with-in the law by using these methods.

Three events that did happen this year ... in reverse order!

Mini junior sprint regatta – the first and the last of 2020!

Saturday 5th September 2020 saw some much anticipated K1 Sprint Racing on the River Thames at Caversham, in spite of the global pandemic. In the absence of any Nottingham Sprint Regattas this year, Reading Canoe Club's Junior Coach, Freddie Kemp, organised a Covid-compliant Mini Sprint Regatta for some lucky juniors.

All social distancing rules were observed and any spectators were spread out on both banks, including interested passers by taking an afternoon walk on the promenade. The weather was fine with none of the traditional gusty crosswinds of Nottingham. Instead, the participants expertly negotiated a range of rowers, cruisers and barges and their washes. Racing lanes had to be a bit flexible!

For several of the Juniors, this was their first experience of a Sprint Regatta and Freddie ran the event in a traditional format. The timetable included 2 groups of K1 Races: 200m, 500m and 1000m distances with extra time allowed to warm up and warm down. Each race was announced in advance and the paddlers organised themselves for the start of their race – great experience for the next Nottingham Sprint Regatta. There was no 'Team in the Tower' for processing the results, Freddie started and finished each race on his bike and shared the times at the end of the afternoon.

There were no start buckets for this Regatta but the racing was serious nonetheless. There were a couple of speedy special guests leading the field and 'rinsing' the paddlers behind them – all part of the Regatta experience! Naturally, the usual mountain of snacks was consumed back at the club to boost those energy levels between races.

A huge thank you to Freddie for putting together a great experience for the Juniors that have trained really hard with his coaching this year, despite all the changing rules and challenges that coronavirus has presented. An excellent afternoon of racing.



Isabelle racing down the prom



Miklos racing the 500m, having mastered his new boat over the summer

South Cerney English National Talent Squad Regatta, September 2020 *by Alex Tonkin*

On the 16th September British Canoeing held a regatta at South Cerney for the English National Talent Squad (ENTS). This regatta was extremely well run, with three team bubbles in order to adhere to government guidelines for Covid-19. We raced in three time trial events: 150m, 400m and 800m. Followed by a team 150m relay. Our goal was to have the lowest cumulative time, and therefore the fastest times gained the most points. After the lack of competition this year, our two RCC paddlers – Sam Betts and Alex Tonkin – enjoyed this opportunity to race with friends. The highlight event being the 150m relay.



Alex Tonkin racing down the course

Thameside 1, 2020 ... that was February

With heavy rain, sodden ground, overflowing rivers and high winds for the two weeks preceding Thameside 1 this year, it was exceedingly touch and go whether the race could go ahead. In fact, on the Tuesday before it, Race Coordinator Dan Seaford did a race inspection and found parts of the towpath under more than a metre of water.

Still Dan had faith and by Saturday, the weather and the water levels had



Sam Betts on form

dropped significantly. So, with special measures in place and only experienced, competent paddlers permitted to partake, the race went ahead.

It was a tight ship on organisation, very well run. Thanks Dan. Participants were understandably down, but still there were entries from 28 K1s and 29 K2s. Harry Freeland from RCC took 1st in JMK1, his dad Jeremy was 3rd in VMK1, while among the K2s Erika and Nigel were 3rd in Mixed K2 and Bethan with FOX paddler Anna was 2nd in SLK2.

Thanks to all the volunteers who risked the wild weather to man the course and the whole RCC team for making it happen.

Dates for next year are:

Thameside 1 – 14th February, Thameside 2 – 28th February



Jeremy Freeland was 3rd in VMK1

Nottingham sprint regatta dates for 2021

17-18th April, 5-6th June,
10-11th July, 4-5th September

There will also be one held at South Cerney, near Swindon, on 1st-2nd May.

Covid-19 in brief:

- **If you have been asked to self-isolate, show symptoms of Covid 19 or have a temperature, please stay away from the Club.**
- **It is going to be a long winter. Please help each other to maintain social distancing, good hand hygiene, and remember to wipe down equipment and follow the Club Covid guidelines for each activity.**
- **All the current club Covid guidelines can now be found in one place on the Club website reading-canoe.org.uk/covid-19/**
- **These guidelines have been updated to reflect the planned use of the ergos and the hall.**
- **Look out for one-way systems at busy times, minimise what kit you bring on site and only leave it in designated areas.**
- **Remember to book your slot on the relevant Google sheets with your name (and use the NHS track and trace QR code for the site).**
- **Let us know what is going well and what can be improved on Covid-related matters. Please email: covid@reading-canoe.org.uk**
- **Winter is coming, social distancing may mean fewer people are around when you paddle - be prepared for the conditions, paddle safely and within your ability.**

Fleet Report *by Peter Mainprize*

Every Covid has a silver lining (sorry). Repairs and maintenance to boats continued and increased through lock down and is still ongoing. Sadly the purchase of a new K2 Stiletto and K1 Zeta were postponed pending a review of the impact of the pandemic on the Club's finances. However a second hand Toucan was acquired (No.223 White) which is now in service and proving very popular – the front position in the boat suits shorter paddlers.

Christmas Paddle, Wednesday 16th December
... weather and Covid-19 permitting. Remember to sign up
at the Club or let Brian/Nigel know.