**Captains Report – Annual General Meeting 27th March 2022**

Last year at the AGM I started by saying that last year wasn’t quite the year of Captaincy that I expected. Luckily, this year has been a little bit more normal. Unlike last year where we were in lockdown for a vast number of months, this time round we have just had to follow restrictions which I have to say, all members did and enabled us to keep our COVID numbers down and have an area of some normality in life. One thing that I can say having been captain through this year is that I led us into a battle and I am now glad to say that I have been able to lead us through the recovery. The lockdowns of last year brought frustration and anger to many, but it made us all appreciate and realise what we have. This year was different; we were able to keep the club open with some restrictions and guidance in place. Hopefully the frustration and anger subsided but the feelings of appreciation and understanding were maintained.

I did spend the majority of the year with an email drafted to inform the membership that we would have to go back into lockdown and limit the boat classes we were able to use. However, from the start of the year when we were informed that we could use all boats, this draft wasn’t needed.

For all racing wasn’t all smooth sailing this year with limitations and restrictions in place at nearly every event we attended, I have had the privilege of leading the club in a year that we have been able to show what Tees RC are made of. There have been some great wins throughout the year and some great milestones achieved from the junior section through to the masters. Some of these achievements are listed below; I hope that as you read them, they will give you a sense of pride of the membership that we hold at Tees.

* National Schools Regatta – Kate and I took five of the junior boys, down to National Schools at the end of May. Competing across the Championship Single and the Championship Quad, the boys came up against some incredibly strong competition in some incredibly tough categories. The boys all stuck to their race plans and did themselves proud, handling themselves with integrity and respect both on and off the water.
* National Masters Regatta – We should have had more than the crews we did competing at this event, however, due to a road traffic collision only one of our crews on the start list was unable to compete. However, Richard Manners, competing in the Masters C 1x put in a very solid row to bring home the bronze medal.
* Lucy Radley’s Epic Row – London Youth Rowing have now created a Centurion Penant off the back of the incredible efforts of Lucy whilst raising money for London Youth Rowing and Boston Rowing Club. Lucy is a regular on the start list of the Boston Marathon. This year, she decided the go one better than the normal Boston Marathon distance and decided that she may as well row back as well!
* Durham Regatta – As we all know, one of the most prestigious events that we enter across the racing season and there is always a large entry. This year was no exception, we turned up in force with 25 entries competing across the weekend. Not only did we compete, we brought home 4 wins including a very close ½ a canvas win in the Womens Elite Single for Becky Graham bringing home the Charles Curtis Trophy. Racing over the long course in Championship Quads, a crew of Harry Clark, Elijah Stannard, Ben Summers, and Tom Hillier, took a 6 length win to bring home the Geoff Clack Trophy.
* Henley Women’s Regatta (HWR) – We had a composite Tees RC/Teesside University Aspirational Double entered into HWR this year. Unfortunately, COVID prevented the crew from racing, but it was great to see the Tees name back on the draw at HWR and a first for Teesside University. Well done to the crew of Becky Graham and Lucy Freeman who trained so hard to get up to the standard to be ready for such a big event.
* Henley Masters Regatta – We had a number of crews entered into Henley Masters this year. Not only were there some close races, but there was also a win in the Masters H 4x- from the crew comprising of Ralph Pickles, John Lund, Bob Bainbridge and Tony Stocking.
* Henley Royal Regatta – This year was the first year in many that we had Tees RC represented as a full crew on the start list for Henley Royal. Unfortunately, the crew came up against some very quick crews in their category and didn’t make it through qualifiers, but what an achievement to have a crew on the start list of all three Henley Regattas.
* British Junior National Championships – This year we had 7 crews entered into the regatta across J16 and J18 categories. All the juniors did the club proud both on and off the water supporting one another to achieve the best results they could produce on the day. There were some incredibly close racing from the Tees crews resulting in some of the best racing of the days. The support from banks was phenomenal and the commitment on the water was admirable from all athletes.
* BUCS Regatta – Teesside University took a couple of crews over to Nottingham to compete at BUCS regatta this year. This event is the main event for all university rowers in the year, Aaron Preston was competing in the Beginner Single and went on to win a Silver Medal. An incredible achievement for a small university programme.

There were a number of other races across the region in both regatta and head season, however, if I was to write out every event we attended you would all get bored (even more than you probably already are).

Alongside the achievements at the above events, there were some other incredible achievements from those associated with the club, none more so that Laurence Whiteley who went on to win a second Paralympic Gold Medal at the delayed Tokyo 2020 games.

To see how the membership pulled together during COVID and now maintain that friendly atmosphere, supporting one another is great to see. I went into this year expecting the worst and praying that it wasn’t going to be a replay of last year. Luckily, it appears my prayers were answered, however, that doesn’t mean it has been easy. There have been a number of times throughout the year, where I have wanted to throw in the towel, but thinking about the achievements that the club have had this year and the way that we have bounced back from the COVID pandemic, show me that I am lucky to be trusted to be the Captain of such an amazing club.

The continued support and sense of community among the membership has been great to see for another year, whether that be at an event, the running of our incredible Learn to Row Programme or just the simple thing of asking one another if they are OK. Let’s look forward to the next year and hope that 2022/23 provides a year of true normality, with no restrictions due to a pandemic and gives us the ability to show what we are made of.

Hopefully, you aren’t too bored by this report as I would now like to say a few thankyous!

* The Committee – you have continued to support me throughout the year, providing a sounding board when making decisions and giving me the ability to continue to drive the club forwards. A special thank you to those members leaving the committee this year – your work and input has been appreciated by not just me and other members of the committee but by the club as a whole
* Ralph Pickles and Alan Pearce who continue to keep the centre running and who have made sure that the centre abides by all restrictions and government guidance even when not in lockdown
* Kate O’Sullivan and the Junior Coaching Team – our juniors continue to go from strength to strength and continue to be competitive at all events they attend. Without the hard work and the hours you put in, we wouldn’t be able to say that we have such a strong junior section who have the respect of all members as well as the wider rowing community
* Learn to Row coaches – this year has seen an incredible intake of Learn to Row athletes and I know that the waiting list continues to grow, potentially even beyond the capacity of the programme as it stands. Your efforts and the time that you have put in to develop these athletes is greatly appreciated and taking on such a task is no mean feat.
* Lucy Radley – this year you fully embraced the position of Equipment Manager and with boats being allowed back on the water, we have seen a great increase in the amount of damage to the fleet. Your efforts in undertaking the repairs yourself or co-ordinating for others to do these is greatly appreciated and keeps us with a fleet of boats that is envied throughout the region
* John Lund – we have had some large pieces of damage this year and you have always been there to do these repairs for us where possible. For this we are all thankful as the quality of your work and the timescales in which you can turn these around is truly mesmerising.
* Finally, all Club Members. From me, I would like to thank you for trusting me to be the Captain again. I know I may do things that you think are wrong and I know that I make mistakes, however, there is always a feeling of support within the club, for which I am grateful.

We started this year with COVID being ever present and controlling our lives, we finish this year with COVID taking a back seat and the sense of community and the competitive nature of the club shining through. Fingers crossed the second part of that last sentence continues to be true within the club over the next year.

Onwards and upwards from here for Tees Rowing Club.