

More than clubs

CLUBS ARE THE LIFEBLOOD OF OUR SPORT, PROVIDING A SPACE AND FACILITIES FOR ROWING. BUT THEY'RE ALSO MUCH MORE THAN THAT, AS ROWERS OF ALL AGES DESCRIBE OVER THE NEXT FEW PAGES



PHOTO: SIMON BELL

Newark RC hosts the Newark Head



WHAT IS A CLUB?

“It provides a support network for its members to engage in their common passion in a safe and structured environment – whether it is for fun, well-being, competition, or a combination of all three.”



Dr Graham Collier, 72, Stratford-upon-Avon BC

“An eclectic group of people, with different interests and commitments, yet all have this one common passion that results in strong friendships forming and some of the most precious memories being created.”



Katie Sparks, 24, Pengwern BC

#YourStories

Have a story about your club or community? Why not let us know via www.bit.ly/bryourstories



The London Otters at the Gay Games in Paris

Sam Crouchman at Rowhedge Coastal RC



WHAT DOES YOUR CLUB MEAN TO YOU?

“It is my insanity and my sanity. The insanity of willingly completing those tasty ergs that really hurt, getting up at an hour that shouldn’t exist on a weekend morning to face a freezing wintry dark session on the water, enjoying the sprints sessions during the summer that make you feel just a little bit nauseous. However, all this apparent insanity is my sanity. Being able to just nip down to the club, see my friends, my squad, and release some stress out on the water or on the erg truly keeps me sane.”

Katie Sparks, 24, Pengwern BC



“It kept me out of trouble as a youth, found me a wife and gave my children a focus. It means a lot.”

Peter Lloyd, 71, Stourport BC



“It means the world because it’s taught me that teamwork, both on and off the water, is what belonging to a club is all about.”

Jane Hindmarch, Newark RC



“IT IS MY INSANITY AND MY SANITY”

“The club has been a lifeline for me, especially last summer. I moved back to the area following a divorce and it has been a fantastic way for me to meet a huge range of new people, make new friends and be part of a very accepting community.”



Suzi Richer, 37, Lakeland RC

“The club is an extended family to me.”

Adam Curtis, 39, Bideford ARC



“My club means a great deal.

It was my gateway into a sporting world I had never considered before starting university. My club inspires me. I am reminded of its many achievements every single day I walk into the boathouse, with rows of photos of those who excelled before my time. My club gave me the great friends with whom I spend a good deal of time training and having a bit of fun outside of the boathouse! My club allows me to keep fit and healthy – not only physically, but crucially, mentally.”



Basil Saiq, 20, Imperial College BC

“I get to row (exercise) on a beautiful stretch of the Thames (being out in nature) with a wonderfully diverse, generous and fun group of people (socialising) who help me develop my rowing, coxing and boat maintenance skills (learning). What more can you ask for from a club?”



Liz Palmer, Goring Gap BC

“Norwich Rowing Club is a special place to me – it’s where I have met some good friends, had great ups and downs. Everyone is really friendly and I really enjoy being there. I am always involved in training and racing; coaches always adapt sessions so that I can take part as much as possible.”



James, Norwich RC junior

“My club is a big part of my life, both in terms of time commitment and the influence it has had on my personality.



It’s the place I can go to express my desire to push my limits in the hope of achieving something I value. The club both provides me with the means of doing that and the people to motivate me in the process.”

John Gowing, 19, Exeter University BC

“I joined Yare Boat Club as a non-rower who had barely even been in a boat before.



But our members showed lots of patience as I got to grips with technique. Before long, I was cruising along the river in a single scull. Now I go down to the club on Sunday mornings, just as the sun is rising, and can’t wait to get out on the water. The sport is great for my health and being part of our club is great for my soul.”

Mark Moore, 41, Yare BC

“The club means everything to me! It is virtually my second home, as during the last 30 years or so I have spent many happy hours there with other members, and still do. I have a very personal relationship with the building – my great-uncle was a member in 1881 and was a partner in the company that built the original clubhouse – so it could not be more meaningful, and I am proud to be a member.”



Gerald Lindner, 89, Pengwern BC

“It is a space where I can socialise and be myself with my crew members, and where I can perform my best, either on the rowing machine or on the water. The friendly and competitive atmosphere also helps me cope with school stresses as I get to spend time with my friends and row out any anxieties that may be in the back of my mind.”



Millie, Maidstone Invicta RC junior

“The Otters has brought a huge amount of positivity to my life. Not only have I found a sport that I really enjoy and gets me outdoors, but I have also made some real lifelong friends and even found a housemate. Being surrounded by people who both understand me and allow me to be my full self, whilst also pushing me to continue to improve has really enriched my life and made me an all-round happier person.”



Alexander Buck, 27, London Otters RC

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT YOUR CLUB?

“I think the best thing about our club is the variety in our membership. We are open to everyone, of all abilities and this has attracted people from different backgrounds, different parts of London and different professions – we have business owners, accountants, civil servants, journalists, photographers, to name a few. Without it, I don’t know what I’d do with all that free time!”



David Callaghan, 27, London Cornish Pilot Gig Club

“First and foremost being able to get out on the water and row. But the club is also a place where I have made good friends, both those who row and those who volunteer. I am one of the club coaches and I love to see people new to rowing, young and old, learning and progressing.”



Fiona Brown, 61, Burton Leander RC

“It’s a community that’s away from the one where you live or work. And, in our case, it has quite literally been built by its members. We moved to our new patch of ground – rented to us by the National Trust on the shores of Derwentwater – last spring. Between us we put in all the fencing, shifted all the gravel and created a temporary base from wood, shipping containers and Portakabins to house boats and people.”



Suzi Richer, 37, Lakeland RC

“I love being out on the water amongst the mist and the swans. I love the fact that it is physical and therapeutic at the same time.”



Caroline Champion, 59, Bridgnorth RC



PHOTO: PAUL MILLS



PHOTO: YARE BC

“I am very proud of the fact that Imperial College Boat Club is affiliated with the mental health awareness campaign Rowing Together for Healthy Minds, which serves to remove the stigma around mental health and create more open discussion. This is super-important for student rowers, who have the challenging task of juggling 11 training sessions per week with a full-time degree!”



Basil Saiq, 20, Imperial College BC

“What I like about the club the most is that we are one big – dysfunctional, at times – family that seems to just keep growing, but I wouldn’t change it! The support that everyone shows each other is unreal. We have two boats that take part in our winter series, and whichever boat goes over the line first, the next thing the crew does is turn around and look for our other boat, cheering them across the line.”



Sam Crouchman, 24, Rowhedge Coastal RC



Derby RC

PHOTO: DREW SMITH

“IT’S A GREAT FEELING TO KNOW THE PEOPLE YOU TRAIN ALONGSIDE HAVE YOUR BACK, BOTH AS AN ATHLETE AND AWAY FROM A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT”



London Cornish Pilot Gig Club

PHOTO: TODD WHITE

erg fan is finally still, we still want to spend time together as a whole. The thing I would miss the most is the loyalty that each member of the club has to their peers; #bleedgreen. It’s a great feeling to know the people you train alongside have your back, both as an athlete and away from a competitive environment.”

John Gowing, 19, Exeter University BC

“Our boathouse is on an island, separated from the mainland across a narrow stretch of river. When I reach that mooring and jump in one of our ferries, there is always a slight spark of enchantment in the air. I’m crossing over to a special place where I know I’m going to both catch up with friends and scull on a stunning stretch of river. Whether it’s a gloriously sunny summer afternoon or the misty chill of a winter’s morning, I love it there. There’s something magical about our island home.”



Mark Moore, 41, Yare BC

“Sharing in each other’s success after new PBs and race results after working hard. The River Orwell is absolutely stunning and provides a mental break from the daily grind, so I would really miss that. But it’s the camaraderie between members that makes it for me, both on and off the water.”



Bev Goodchild, Ipswich RC

“The wonderful setting on Chester’s River Dee. If the club wasn’t there I would very much miss the opportunity to row with friends on a beautiful stretch of river close to my home, the fellowship of my crew and the constant challenges to my own limits.”



Irene Adam, 55, Royal Chester RC

“Some of the clubs I was in before did not have such a large social component. At Herne Bay we have regular social

fixtures, informal parties at the clubhouse, etc. We have been able to integrate training with a more social side on the same day, especially in the winter when training is not as enticing!”



Manuel Marques, 29, Herne Bay ARC

“My favourite aspect of my club is that the members are friends beyond the time spent completing our programme. Once the boathouse doors are down or the



"I WOULD MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ROW WITH FRIENDS ON A BEAUTIFUL STRETCH OF RIVER, THE FELLOWSHIP OF MY CREW AND THE CONSTANT CHALLENGES TO MY OWN LIMITS"



PHOTO: ANDREW ADAM

Irene Adam at stroke with her Royal Chester crew

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE MEMORY?

"Seeing some of the juniors I have taught win their first race. The joy on their faces and the excitement of their parents is overwhelming. And for myself, winning the Captain's Cup for my own racing achievements."



Fiona Brown, 61, Burton Leander RC

"Last year, I attended the 10th Gay Games in Paris. The competition was no walkover and the temperatures soared to over 30° making it a challenging event. However, in true Otter style we did it with a smile and gave it our all, bringing home eight medals as a club. I felt so proud representing my country and club and the whole event will be in my memory forever."



Alexander Buck, 27, London Otters RC

"My favourite memory of my club was at the British Rowing Junior Championships last year. During many of the races that my club competed in, the commentator called out many times that he could hear us shouting from the other side of the lake."



Millie, Maidstone Invicta RC junior

"Bruce Lynn is the coach for the adaptive squad at Marlow and has the ultimate 'can do' attitude. Nothing seems to phase Bruce, despite our regular calls on club nights: 'Bruce can you just...' – it's always received with a cheerful 'Yes, will do!'"



Sally Hopewell, Marlow RC Adaptive Squad

"In 2004, I received an email from Australia, from the granddaughter of a Pengwern member in the 1890s. Her grandfather had fought in the Boer War, but emigrated afterwards to Australia, where in 1908 he started a farm in Western Australia, south of Perth, and named it Pengwern!"



Gerald Lindner, 89, Pengwern BC

"When coming back from a long weekend of racing at Eton Dorney and winning medals at Marlow Spring Regatta, lots of members congratulated me on my achievement."



James, Norwich RC junior

"Fiona's race cake – this just embodies so much! It was a massive achievement for me to go from a learn-to-row course to competing at Rutherford Head of the River Race within a few months. After racing, we tucked into Fiona's race cake, which is actually at least two cakes that she makes for all the club's rowers. I don't think I've ever needed so much food as I did after that race!"



Suzi Richer, 37, Lakeland RC

"The favourite memory has to be James Roe MBE winning a Paralympic gold medal in 2012. It was a seismic moment in the history of the boat club. James' success and the 2012 Paralympic Games generated immense interest locally in our sport."



Dr Graham Collier, 72, Stratford-upon-Avon BC

"My memory comes from my rowing coach, who as a young lad was known to cause mischief. A senior member of the club at the time noticed him loitering around town, making a nuisance of himself, and took an opportunity to give a piece of worldly advice – i.e. if I see you around here again, it better be in this club. Over 35 years have gone by and he is still in the club!"



Adam Curtis, 39, Bideford ARC

"We were invited to take part in the Bermuda International Gig Regatta. We had two crews out in Bermuda and it was a truly amazing experience – including helping the organisers to move some boats from one side of the island to another in the pouring rain! I can't wait to go out and do it again."



David Callaghan, 27, London Cornish Pilot Gig Club

"Laughing on long car journeys, winning a club shield, setting a course record in a double at Bristol, winning a pennant in a mixed Vesta crew on the Tideway, winning in a flighty single before overturning (gracefully!) at the landing stage in front of the person I'd just beaten – swans, swans and more swans in the morning mist."



Caroline Champion, 59, Bridgnorth RC

"Coxing the novice women's four after finishing exams in the summer of 2018 and seeing them go on to win in their category at Reading Amateur Regatta. I am very far from a typical cox's weight and I assume all the training with a huge dead-weight, drag-inducing guy at the bow of the boat helped!"



Bazil Saiq, 20, Imperial College BC

"Riding the umpire's launch following my son rowing in the Goblets at Henley Royal, a lightweight pair from a provincial club beating Royal Chester on the line. The umpire then turned to his guests and said that was the best race he had ever seen."



Peter Lloyd, 71, Stourport BC

"I remember, during an Explorer race at Marlow, me coxing a quad and shouting at our stroke: '20 strokes to the finish – give it everything you've got!' Which he did, only for me to then realise I had misjudged the end and had to ask for 20 more. The look on his face said it all as he gasped for breath."



Liz Palmer, Goring Gap BC ■



PHOTO: YARE BC