BRITISH ROWING

Honorary Rowing Safety Adviser Monthly Report

April 2024

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Serious Incident on the River Corrib in Galway, Ireland

This incident resulted in the loss of a 4+ and a 4x+, at Salmon Weir. Fortunately, nobody died. There were no serious injuries beyond the rowers becoming wet and very cold. The incident was investigated by the Irish Marine Casualty Investigation Board and their report is available here.

The incident occurred at Salmon Weir on the river Corrib on 14th January 2023, the previous incident in Ireland, where a young junior rower was held underwater by their long hair, occurred at Thomond Weir on the River Shannon.

Salmon Weir is more like a conventional weir with significantly different water levels on each side and sluice gates, slightly upstream of the weir, that are used to control the flow. There is a walkway above the sluice gates. It appears to be well protected by chains immediately upstream and a floating boom 100m upstream.

The incident involved a University Rowing Club 4x+ and 4+ and occurred in January 2023. Two novice crews who had been rowing for a few months went afloat in conditions where they would have been safer to stay ashore. The river was in spate and the wind was blowing Force 7 to gale Force 8 with strong gusts. They became fast against the floating boom, their boats capsized, and the crew members supported themselves in the water by holding onto the floating elements of the boom. They were in the water for about 16 minutes before being rescued by the coaching launches of another club.

It does not say this in the report, but I am concerned that the coach, in a launch, became separated from the crews to such an extent that the coach was not able to instruct the rowers how to steer away from the boom. This is clear from the photos. The coach did not have a loudhailer. Some of the photos from the report are included in Appendix 1.

The coach rightly did not attempt to use the catamaran launch to rescue the rowers as it was known to be underpowered and not sufficiently manoeuvrable.

The University has made many improvements and has moved its centre of operations for novice rowers to another facility well upstream of the weir and is in the process of moving its boathouse to this new facility.

The following comments in the report, should be of interest to rowing clubs, they are summarised below: -

Unsuitable weather conditions: The weather conditions were unsuitable for this outing and exceeded the capabilities of the crews. These conditions were foreseeable prior to departure. A Small Craft Warning and a Gale Warning were in effect from five hours before this outing commenced, as winds of up to Force 8 were forecasted to occur along the western seaboard. The conditions that were forecasted to occur, did occur; they were not unexpected. The weather conditions meant that the crews were unable to control their boats effectively and change course away from the weir.

Unsuitable river conditions: The river conditions were unsuitable for this outing and exceeded the capabilities of the crews. These conditions were foreseeable prior to departure. The river was in its normal winter spate conditions, with a high flow rate and a low water temperature. These conditions existed for weeks before and after this incident. These conditions occurred in the vicinity of a significant weir, which the crews had to row past on both the outward and return legs. The high flow rate meant that the crews were unable to control their boats effectively and change course away from the weir. The low water temperature meant that the crews were exposed to the dangers of cold-water immersion when their vessels capsized, and they entered the water.

Inadequate trip planning: The planning that was done for this outing was inadequate as it did not ensure that there were proper levels of supervision taking into account the weather forecasts.

Inadequate safety systems: The University Club did not have adequate safety procedures. These safety procedures exist, in part, to reduce the likelihood of informal decision-making leading to a poor decision to go afloat in conditions that indicate otherwise. In particular:

- The club did not have criteria that could be used to determine whether an outing may proceed. This should consider crew skills and experience; coach skills and experience; weather conditions; and river conditions.
- The club's procedures did not adequately consider the river's flow rate. The river's winter flow rate of ~300 cubic metres per second is fundamentally different to its summer flow rate of ~30 cubic metres per second, but the procedures did not differentiate between these.
- The coach did not have the Level 1 Coaching training and qualification intended for persons taking responsibility for the organisation of rowing activities.
- The coach did not have any formal training or qualifications in the operation of the launch.
- The club's risk assessment document identified many of the conditions that occurred during this incident; however, the assessment was not sufficiently comprehensive, and not supplemented by the procedures needed to ensure actual implementation during activities.
- The emergency services had difficulties with identifying exactly how many persons had been afloat; how many had entered the water; whether everyone had been removed from the water; and exactly where they were after being taken to shore. The club's Emergency Action Plan was not effective.

Unsuitable weir safety booms: The installation of the safety booms in the 1980s at a right angle to the river's flow created a situation that conflicts with current recommendations on how to maximise the effectiveness of such safety booms. Booms should be placed at an oblique angle to a river's flow, to ensure that vessels or swimmers that may impact with the booms do not have to be extracted against the flow. The report refers to a document that is effectively a design guide for safety at weirs.

Unsuitable coach's boat: The catamaran coaching boat operated by the University Club was unsuitable for the conditions and was not designed for use in a safety or rescue role on this fast-flowing section of river. It was known that the catamaran launch did not have the power and manoeuvrability needed to fulfil this safety and rescue function.

Incidents in April

Take care to stay on the correct side of the waterway

There were many collisions or near misses when crews crossed to the wrong side of the waterway sometimes when overtaking. These incidents include: -

- An 8+ was on the correct side of the river paddling upstream, a 2x was rowing downstream towards the 8+ on the same side of the river and the boats collided. Warnings were shouted but the boats collided. Please understand that warning shouts can be helpful but only if one, or preferably both, crews take action to avoid the collision.
- A 2x and a 1x were travelling in opposite directions and the 2x was on the wrong side of the waterway. The crews collided and the 1x capsized. The crew of the 2x apologised profusely.
- A 2x on the incorrect side of the waterway almost clashed with a 1x. The crew of the 2x called out and the collision was averted.
- A 1x going downstream and a 4x going upstream were too close to the centre line of the river and their blades clashed.
- A 1x started turning round without looking and 2x drifted over to the wrong side due to poor steering. The 2x went over the top of the bow of the single.
- A 1x was heading downstream and collided with a 2x heading upstream on the wrong side of the waterway as they were overtaking a crew on their side of the river. Both crews held it up, but there was a clash of blades.
- A 4+ was travelling up-stream at firm pressure, having done a racing start, but on the wrong side of river having overtaken a 2x. The cox saw a 1x coming downstream in their path. 4+ and 1x both responded quickly and held their boats up urgently. Contact was avoided. The crew of the 4+ apologised to the sculler.
- A 2x and a 1x were in the middle of the waterway. One rower looked ahead just before the collision but did not see the other boat coming because they were expecting it to be on the right side, but it came from the left side.
- A 2- was on the correct side of the waterway, slightly towards the middle and an 8 was rowing in the opposite direction, again on the correct side of the waterway but slightly towards the middle, going round the corner. The crews collided.
- A 4x was heading downstream around bend, doing a piece, and moved out to pass a 1x. They collided head on with a 4+. The 4+ was severely damaged.

If you overtake then take care to know what is ahead and only do so if the waterway ahead is clear. If you must cross the centre line, or row into an area reserved for others, then return to the correct position as soon as you can. Please take care to navigate in the correct place on the waterway.

What to do if someone has a Panic Attack

A rower in a 4x suffered a panic attack when heading towards bridge. They stopped rowing and the blades collided with those of other rowers. This pushed the boat slightly off course causing a collision of a blade with a bridge support. Members involved were supported by the club welfare officer, chair and captain.

There is useful information on panic attacks here Panic disorder - NHS (www.nhs.uk). This includes an interesting video on NHS Talking Therapies.

Illness following exposure to contaminated water.

There were two reported incidents of illness.

- A rower came into contact with river water thought to be contaminated with sewage whilst rowing. The rower suffered from diarrhoea and occasional stomach-ache. The symptoms cleared after a few days.
- A rower competed in a head race and subsequently experienced several days of diarrhoea. The rower believes that this was caused by the accidental ingestion of bacteria infected water whilst racing. Thankfully no other member of the crew reported similar symptoms.

Anonymised information from these Incident Reports was shared with Riveraction.

There is "Guidance on Rowing when the Water is Poor" (Guidance-for-Rowing-When-Water-Quality-is-Poor-March-2024.pdf (britishrowing.org)) on the British Rowing website. This was produced in consultation the Rivers Trust and Riveraction.

The Rivers Trust has issued a Sewage map that shows where the sewerage network discharges treated sewage and overflows of untreated sewage and storm water into rivers in England & Wales in 2023. This is available here Raw sewage in our rivers | The Rivers Trust. The Rivers Trust has also published a report entitled the State of our Rivers.

Take care of boats on trailers

There were two incidents with boats on trailers. In one the boat ties came loose resulting in a boat being able to move although it remained on the trailer. The vehicle stopped and the boats were retied securely. It was agreed that in future longer boats on the top rack of trailer should be tied with three ties and that only experienced people should tie them to ensure they cannot come loose, and ties should go the upright of the trailer rack so that even if a tie comes loose, a boat cannot completely come off the trailer.

In another incident a footplate appears to have fallen from a boat and was lost. In doing so it punched a hole in the hull of a boat below. It produced a small but deep hole punched through the hull.

An interesting minor collision

A 4x stopped to the right of the centre of the river and prepared for a racing start and a "piece". The crew checked their line several times before starting and did not see any crew heading upstream. Sometime later they saw a single heading slowly straight across the river. The crew lifted their blades as there was no time to change course. There was a minor collision, and nobody was hurt. By keeping their blades in the air, the 4x avoided hitting the 1x with them.

The rower in the 1x was wearing a khaki hoodie and the hood was on his head. They said that they had not seen the 4x. The crew of the 4x suggested that the hoodie might not be the best thing to wear and advised the rower in the 1x to shout if they see other boats heading towards them.

Please advise rowers to keep a good lookout and that it is difficult to do so when wearing a hood over the head.

Take care when competing on unfamiliar, fast flowing rivers

The cox and crew of an 8 are experienced but not familiar with rowing on fast flowing rivers. They were in the process of turning so that they could return to their host club. However, they turned too slowly and drifted downstream hitting a moored vessel side on and were held fast against it by the very fast flowing stream for around two to three minutes. A safety launch helped the crew to move away from the moored vessel.

Please take extra care when rowing on unfamiliar waters and take advice from local clubs.

Take extra care when the stream is strong and when the weather may change

There were several outings that were disrupted by changing weather.

An outing on the sea by a coastal rowing club consisted of two experienced 4+s and one of their most experienced rowers in a 1x. Both the CRSA and the club captain decided the conditions were suitable for the planned outing with these rowers although it was a little choppy and they should be mindful of the conditions. During the final quarter of the session, the weather made a drastic turn, becoming significantly rough.

All the crews decided to head for land. The 1x was back to the landing area ahead of the 4+s and attempted to land ready to help the fours in. At this point the weather was at its worst and, during a moment of relative calm, the 1x attempted to land. During this time, a huge, previously unseen wave appeared and crashed into the sculler, dragging them and the boat into the water.

Another wave followed, snapping the boat in half, and throwing the sculler up the beach. The rower in the 1x only managed to bring half the boat ashore. The two 4+s landed further down the beach and the crews ran help the rower in the 1x. The other half of the 1x was recovered. The rower in the 1x was not injured.

In another incident a coach decided to take two junior crews in stable 4x+s afloat. The coach was happy with the conditions, although the wind strength was close to the limit of acceptability so decided to do short laps in the relatively sheltered area at the bottom end of the dock. There was one coach with each crew. The boats drifted towards the less sheltered areas when they were turning. One of the launches started filling with water.

One crew and launch went back to the boat house. The rope attached to the other 4x+ came loose and became entangled with the launch propeller, causing the motor to stop. The other launch returned and attempted to tow the launch and 4x+ back but these boats had drifted into a less sheltered area.

Some workers at the docks helped the coaches to get the crew ashore.

Please take extreme care with ropes on boats and keep them well away from propellers. For short distances, it is sometimes appropriate to tow boats with the towing launch going in reverse with the rope attached to its bow. This keeps the rope clear of the propeller.

Also please do not be so keen to take rowers afloat in marginal conditions. Check weather forecasts. Take the capabilities of the crew into account when deciding whether you think it is safe to go afloat.

Take care to be nice to fellow rowers

An 8 was doing race start practices in the correct part of the waterway trying to keep as far to starboard as practical and out of the way of other crews. Their launch was positioned even further to starboard. A 2x rowed up from behind, either with poor lookout or attempting to undertake. The 2x was advised to take a look and hold up, instead it just easied and drifted into the back of coaching launch whilst shouting at the launch and 8+ to get out of their way.

It is OK to shout to others to warn them of a hazard, but it is not OK to shout to tell others to "get out of our way". This is just simple politeness.

Use some common sense when driving launches

The following is quoted *verbatim* from an Incident Report with any identifying information removed.

Brief description of the incident: A coach *was in a launch coaching* their *session when the launch ran out of fuel,* the coach *had not checked the fuel levels before setting off for the session.* The coach *then phoned another coach on the session, with no reply, and then someone at the boathouse. The coach in the other launch brought the* first coach *some fuel, and whilst re starting* the *launch, fell backwards into the river.* The second coach *stayed with* their *launch and then proceeded to swim to the shore.* A local commercial boat company's *staff then helped* the second coach *onto the bank, whilst another member of* the club *arrived at the scene and drove* the second coach *back to* the boathouse.

Measures taken: Both coaches have received re-education around behaviours in and around our launches, and the correct safety procedures. In addition, they are being supervised in launches over the next 2 weeks after receiving a ban from driving the launches for 1 week.

Please prepare and plan when operating a launch.

Examples of Good Practice

There were two Incident Reports this month that described how people can get it right.

In one incident a rower in an 8 began to experience severe asthma symptoms, so administered their inhaler and rested while six members of the crew rowed on. It became clear that this rower needed more help. The crew landed at the nearest club, where the rower lay down to recover, then was rowed back to their own boathouse by the remainder of the crew. The rower usually has good management of their asthma, and this attack was not of a life-threatening nature. The rower will be taking a break from outings until they recover from this event.

In another incident a rower in a 1x capsized and everyone involved followed the correct procedure. The rower climbed on top of their inverted boat. Safety launch recovered the rower within a minute and returned the rower to the club to shower and change. Another safety launch recovered the boat and blades to the club.

Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S)

There was an incident in which a WJ18 athlete was taking part in a 2000m Free Rate Test. The athlete had warmed up and confirmed they were fit and able to take part in their test. They had a target time of 2:00/500m splits for an overall time of 8:00. The athlete went off at 1:54.1 for their first 500m, they were advised to slow down and come off the pace. At 1437m the athlete fainted to the side of the indoor rowing machine and where one of the coaches was positioned. The coach caught the rower and lowered her to the floor, so no injury occurred. The coach stayed with the athlete who recovered after about five minutes.

The athlete stated they had low iron levels and were required to take iron supplements which they had forgotten to take that day. The athlete is ok, but the coaching team have spoken with them about the importance of self-care and to let the coaching team know if there is something different going on. The athlete stated that they now felt that they could talk with their coach about menstruation and had been embarrassed to discuss this before. The coach will check that the athlete has taken their iron supplements before training sessions.

I have been advised that this collapse is unlikely to have resulted from not taking iron supplements. Iron deficiency is a chronic condition and taking iron tablets just before exercise will make no difference to the individual's acute state. This a classic RED-S scenario.

RED-S or Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport is a significant health condition that affects performance. It is caused by a mismatch between energy intake and expenditure and doesn't just affect female athletes. There is more information on the Athlete Health page of the website and there is an information booklet here British-Rowing-RED-S-Infographic.pdf (britishrowing.org).

Safe handling of boats on land

There was an incident report and a request for information relating to the avoidance of musculoskeletal injuries when handling boats on land. It appeared that taller athletes were subjected to a heavier load than their colleagues when carrying boats "at shoulders". In this case it would be better to carry the boat "at waists".

There are few reported incidents of this type but there is useful information in the new British Rowing cox training Workshop. The course can be found here Course: Classic Rowing Coxing Workshop | Home (rowhow.org) Have a look at the Cox Training Handbook here Classic Rowing Coxing Handbook v1.2.pdf (rowhow.org), particularly pages 14 to 18. There is a link to this in this year's edition of RowSafe.

Coaching Ratios

There was a request from a rowing coach at a prep school for advice on the maximum number of children that a coach could safely supervise. The school is asking the coach to supervise 18 nine- to ten-year-olds olds on the water with potentially just two coaches (one who is just 18 years old). I was asked whether this is safe. What is the protocol for this?

The response was that from a simple safety perspective it would be easier to think about the number of boats rather than the number of children. The situation at the specific venue is also important. The risk assessment should provide an indication of the level of supervision required.

Supervising 18 nine- to ten-year-olds in singles is not the same as supervising two octuples. Even if the pupils are in octuples and there are no significant hazards on the water then having the primary coach plus two adults is, in my view, not sufficient. If it involves the primary coach plus one other, then this is more of an issue.

Please think about what would happen if something goes wrong. If one of the children was ill, injured or otherwise in distress then one of the coaches would probably have to provide one to one care. This would leave the remaining coach(es) to supervise the 17 children in two boats (at best). They would have to supervise taking one boat off the water while also looking after the other crew. I do not think that this would be safe.

One of the coaches is only 18. At this age they are adults, but they may not be mature adults. They may not be able to cope with the pressure if something goes wrong. It is necessary to make a judgement about their maturity.

Many clubs tend to take a lean approach to coaching and supervision of rowing, and this can work well while everything is running smoothly. However, it is so easy to overload the willing volunteer when things do not run so smoothly or when there are unexpected interventions.

We recently had an incident where someone on the riverbank started to criticize the young cox of an octuple. The cox became upset. The coach was alone, and it became difficult for them to both supervise the crew and protect the cox from the person making these comments.

In my view the school has a duty to ensure that these activities are adequately resourced. I feel that it would be more appropriate to have a team of at least four adults. They do not all have to be coaches, but they should know enough to be able to identify hazards and advise the crews accordingly and assist with the supervision of boat handling on land. If they can be taught how to check boats and adjust the position of stretchers to suit each rower, then that would be better. If they are also reasonably proficient with a throw line, then that would be better still. Once the outing had started there would then be two adults with each boat (assuming again that the children are in octuples). This should be discussed with the Club Welfare Officer.

There is another concern. I have copied my response to our safeguarding team. I do not give safeguarding advice but will point to the place where it can be found. It may help to look at Section 3.8 of our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. In practice it is difficult to keep two crews so close together that they can both be supervised by the same person so I feel that you should aim to have two adults with each crew.

If the children to use changing rooms, then a whole lot of other considerations apply. There is more information in Safeguarding Handbook 3.

RowSafe update

The annual update to RowSafe has been completed and issued. A new section on Rescue Provision for Adaptive Rowers at Competitions (section 4.8.1) has been added. Various items of safety advice that were also included in Safety Alerts and Monthly Reports in the last year have also been incorporated. The new version has been posted on the website here RowSafe - British Rowing and a summary of changes has been posted on the RowSafe page and is included with this report.

Review of Competition Documents

The JIRR Risk Assessment and Safety Documents were reviewed, and some comments were made. In general, the quality of this documentation was very good but there were a few small opportunities for improvement.

So, you think you know all about lifejackets

Test you knowledge by trying to answer these simple questions. The answers are presented in Appendix 2.

1. *What will a Lifejacket do that a Buoyancy Aid will not do?*

2. *Why should you never wear anything over an inflatable lifejacket?*

3. *How tight should the chest strap be on an inflatable lifejacket?*

4. *What can happen if you do not use your crotch (thigh) strap?*

5. *How often should a life jacket be serviced?*

6. *What simple checks should be carried out on a day-to-day basis or before use?*

7. *What would you do if you found the retaining clip on the actuating mechanism was missing?*

8. *Why is it important not to use lifejackets that have minor leaks?*

9. *What sort of lifejacket should you use when rowing on the sea or in other areas where there are significant splashes?*

10. *What should you do if you find a wet lifejacket?*

11. *Why should you never pin a crew's racing number to the casing at the back of a cox's lifejacket?*

12. *What should you do, if wearing an inflatable lifejacket, if you are about to fall into the water (this does not apply to coxes in bow loaders)?*

13. *What proportion of lifejackets failed in recent simple tests in London and Scotland (have a guess)?*

Appendix 1

Photos from the MCIB Report

Six landmarks on the river

1. University of Galway Boat Club's boathouse	4. The weir's safety booms
2. The Eglinton Canal	5. The Jes corner
3. The Salmon Weir	6. The Quincentennial Bridge

Figure 25: Aerial overview of section of river where this casualty event occurred.
Image Source: Google Earth.

Figure 27: Aerial overview of part of section of river where this casualty event occurred. Viewed looking north, showing: 2. The Eglinton Canal; 3. The Salmon Weir; 4. The weir's safety booms; 5. The Jes corner; 6. Quincentennial Bridge. Note: University of Galway Boat Club's boathouse (1) is out of view, to the south of Eglinton Canal (2).
Source: Galway Aerial Cinematography.

This report contains safety guidance. Please read our safety message and disclaimer.

Situation just before the rowing boats hit the safety booms

In my view this shows that the coach had lost contact with the crews, this is not mentioned in the MCIB report.

Figure 30: CCTV still image at time stamp 12:02:07, showing how the coach's launch downstream of the safety booms while the two rowing boats continued on their course towards the safety booms Source: CRYC

Figure 31: CCTV still image from time stamp 12:02:29, showing how the coach had realised the impending situation and had turned her launch boat to progress back upstream. Source: CRYC

The rowing boats fast against the safety booms 100 m upstream of the weir.

The "Tinny Boat" is a launch from another club.

Figure 35: Contemporaneous photo of the casualty event. Source: Connacht Tribune

Figure 16: The safety boom protection, 100 m upstream from the Salmon Weir.

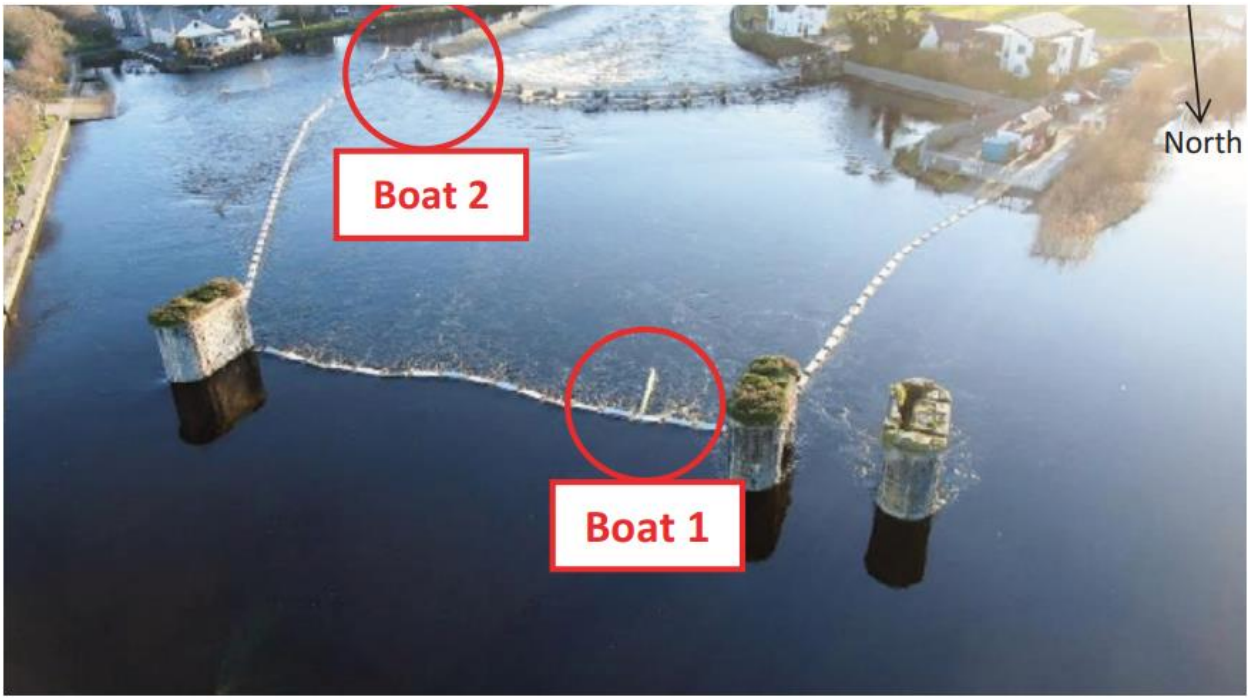

Figure 37: Aerial overview of the river on the day after this casualty event, highlighting part of Boat 1 on the safety booms and Boat 2 on the chains immediately above the weir. Source: Galway Aerial Cinematography

The General arrangement of the weir, Boat 2 is fast against the safety chains

After the crew had been rescued

Figure 39: Boat 2 on the chains immediately above the weir.
Source: Galway Aerial Cinematography

The type of launch used to rescue the rowers

The condition of the boats after recovery

2.6.4 Boat 2 was a Coxed Four (See example in Figure 20). This was a five-person vessel, comprising the coxswain seated near the bow and a crew of four rowers. The boat was configured for sweep rowing; each of the rowers had one oar (held by both hands).

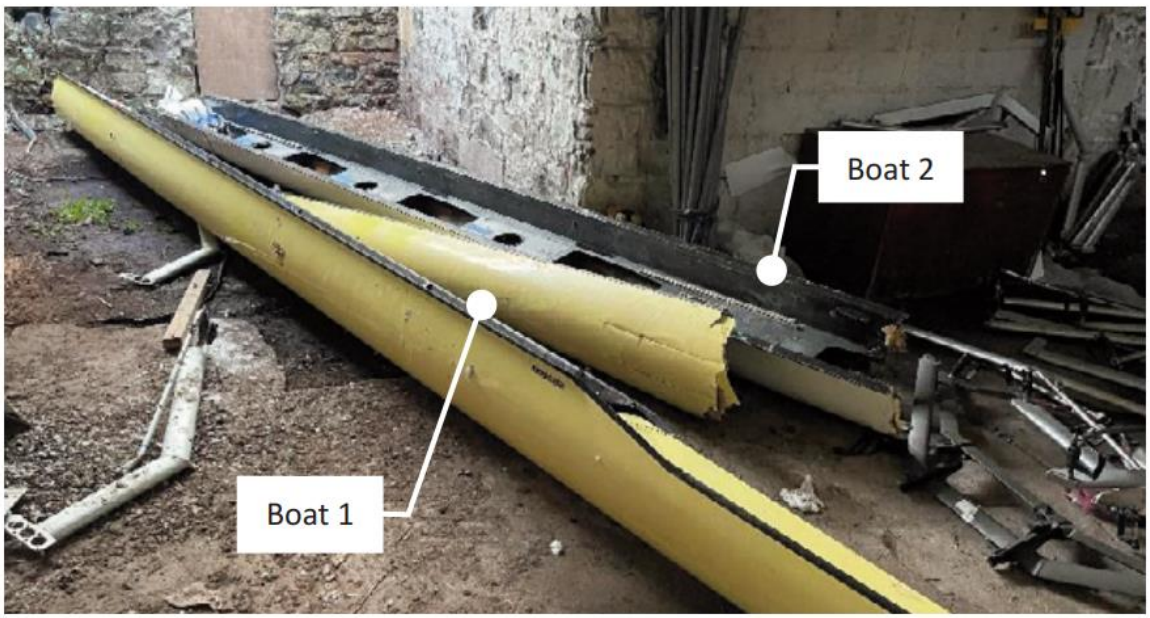

Figure 18: The remnants of the two rowing boats involved in this casualty event.

The recommended positioning of a safety boom

a A safety boom upstream of a weir should be installed at an oblique angle to direct debris towards one bank where it can be removed.

Appendix 2

Answers to the questions in the Lifejacket quiz

1. *What will a Lifejacket do that a Buoyancy Aid will not do?*

Turn a person onto their back and keep their face clear of the water (even if they are unconscious).

2. *Why should you never wear anything over an inflatable lifejacket?*

If it inflates then it will tend to crush the wearers chest and make breathing difficult.

3. *How tight should the chest strap be on an inflatable lifejacket?*

So tight that you can just get your fist between the chest strap and your chest.

4. *What can happen if you do not use your crotch (thigh) strap?*

The inflated lifejacket will rise up your body and not keep your head out of the water, it could come off and simply float away. (see the videos here, here and here).

5. How often should a life jacket be serviced?

Annually by someone competent to do so.

6. *What simple checks should be carried out on a day-to-day basis or before use?*

A visual check for any obvious wear and tear and that the crotch strap is fitted. Check the gas cylinder is present, tight and not corroded. Check the retaining clip on the actuating mechanism is in place. Check for signs of wear point or holes on the air bladder. Check the lifejacket has been serviced within the last year. When repacking ensure the manual inflation toggle is visible outside the cover.

7. *What would you do if you found the retaining clip on the actuating mechanism was missing?*

This could be a sign that the gas cylinder has been discharged. Carefully unscrew the cylinder and check if the diaphragm has been pierced either partially or completely. If it has then take the lifejacket out of use and have a competent person replace the cylinder and clip using a re-arming kit. If the cylinder is intact, then fit a new retaining clip.

8. *Why is it important not to use lifejackets where that have minor leaks?*

Leaks or weak areas in the bladders of lifejackets introduce stress concentrations. These can cause the bladder to burst and become useless when the cylinder is discharged.

9. *What sort of lifejacket should you use when rowing on the sea or in other areas where there are significant splashes?*

Use an automatic inflation lifejacket with a hydrostatic actuator. These are activated by water pressure rather than by becoming wet.

10. What should you do if you find a wet lifejacket?

Open it and remove the cylinder, check the diaphragm, if it has been pierced then ensure that a replacement cylinder is fitted before it is used again.

11. Why should you never pin a crew's racing number to the casing at the back of a cox's lifejacket?

Because it is too easy to pierce the lifejacket bladder.

12. What should you do, if wearing an inflatable lifejacket, if you are about to fall into the water (this does not apply to coxes in bow loaders)?

Pull the toggle to inflate the lifejacket before you enter the water. It may help to ensure that your head stays above the water. (Also, take a big breath in, this will counter the gasp reflex when entering cold water. Taking a breath when under water is often fatal.)

13. What proportion of lifejackets failed in recent simple tests in London and Scotland?

30% to 50%, also see the video here. In one RNLI lifejacket clinic, 75% failed (see here).