

The Numenius

March to August 2022

The latest news, views, and announcements of Curlew RC

INSIDE

WeHoRR

Giving as good as you get with the Curlew ladies under the banner of 69!

Head Boys

A round up from all the other major Head Races in '22, Veterans Eights and HoRR

Dispatches from the Henley Campaigns

The men go small (boats) the women go large and make some history



The Lost Newsletter

By anonymous Curlew scribe

As 2021 ended our erstwhile Chairman Matthew Richardson wrote of his hope for a better year and happier times. Alas as the Covid-19 pandemic began to loosen its grip on the world, 2022 brought forth new calamity, an invasion of a sovereign nation on the European continent. While we pay homage to the brave rowers and people of Ukraine, we know in an interconnected world no one is immune, especially when energy is instrumentalised to nefarious ends. But we shall navigate this storm much as we have the past two years with the support of our members, past, present, and future. Curlew RC will outlive us all!

While the history will mark 2022 as a turbulent one, the second half of the head season, through to the regatta season, has seen Curlew renewed. Coach Joe O'Neill's tenure was shorter than we would have liked (he was called back to Australia to take up duties as a newly appointed Grandfather) but what results he got out of our athletes in a short amount of time! Personal and season bests across the board and a strong showing across a number of races. A foundation we hope that will be built on next season. This newsletter comes a little later than we would have hoped, lost, alas, at the printing press and then recovered in an archaeological dig by intrepid explorers [Editor: this is more exciting than the truth and I suggest you do not interrogate the veracity of this tale]. Better late than never, why not retire to your study, settle in front of the fireplace, and catch-up on Curlew news.

& MORE!

Even more racing, more rowing, more Curlew news! You hunger for it, and we give it to you (eventually)

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WeHoRR: 296, 2, 3, 69, 58

Five numbers to capture the road to WeHoRR and the event itself. The 2021/22 season has proved to be a strong one for the Curlew women, which saw Anita Jeff's Grand Plan™ manifested. An example to us all, Women's Captain Anita went into the 21/22 season knowing exactly what she was going to do: take eight Curlew women plus one cox, further than any had been in Curlew's history. More on that later, but first let's talk about the second half of this Head season and a remarkable Women's Head of the River Race.

As we entered 2022, the first race of the year was Hammersmith Head in late February and an early test of Curlew's brand-new coach, Joe O'Neil. His training plan, in force since January had been a real shift. No longer was it ergs every Tuesday and Thursday, but ergs Monday to Thursday, and a lot more of them. Some of us protested [Editor: well, I did]. But Joe was implacable. If we want to be fast, then we had to build fitness. It was our choice to make. What seemed like cruel and unusual punishment paid quick dividends. More than seasonal bests were a multitude of personal bests, scores which lots of folk said they had never expected to achieve.



In parallel, Curlew's top women's VIII+ came together bolstered by an invasion from the USA of former college rowers, Molly Davies and Allie Schmidt, joining their countrywoman Kiernan Loue as well as long-time European and British Curlew members Kat Blomberg, Wizzy Heap, Kamile Matulenaite and of course, Anita Jeff. Completing the line-up was the powerhouse new entrant, Katie Hillman, and cox Charlie Lamb. Racing under the number 296, the women raced Hammersmith Head and they flew, coming second in their category - missing by a slither first place. It was a race that underlined the strong potential of these women.

WeHoRR approaching, lessons from Hammersmith were consolidated. The line up was tweaked. Wizzy to bow with Anita, where her technique shone the brightest. In the engine room Katie, Allie, Kat, and Kam, and leading was Kiernan backed by Molly. Alexander Smith, one of Curlew's most successful coxes was enticed to return, unable to resist the lure of a crew that we all knew were going to impress. Finally, WeHoRR 2022 was here, the first for three years, and Curlew RC was racing under the auspicious number of 69 in the Maxine Livesey. Calm and collected, race prep was executed, race briefings given by Coach Joe and there was nothing else left, but to take to the water and show over 6.8km what Curlew women are made of. And what a race. Curlew started strong and did not let up. A flawless line from Alex saw them power past several rivals with ease.

But as so often is the case with the UK's treacherous climate there was a battle on their hands at Hammersmith bridge as they turned into a wall of wind and the chop became frightful. As one rower, Kat, recalled 'all I remember is thinking that my shoulder was going to come out of its socket and then Alex swallowing a faceful of Thames water and choking down the cox box for a full minute. Traumatized.'

It was also said afterwards that the cox regretted his merriment the night before amid the motion of the boat. Digging deep and pushing through, displaying true grit, the crew pushed through and finished the race, securing 58th place. A spectacular achievement. We had to consult the annals as we thought this might be our highest ever placement for WeHoRR, but it turns out a Curlew crew from some years earlier had placed slightly higher. At The Numenius we know comparison is the thief of joy and that races are not easily compared. Who can know what the weather was like then and how strong the field? What is indisputable is that this was a stunning achievement from the women of Curlew RC in 2022.



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Man HoRR

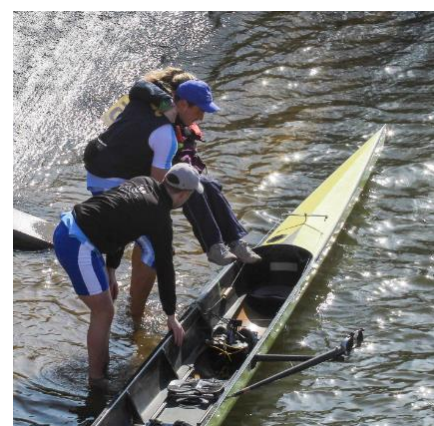
The club, buoyed by the Women’s success at WeHoRR turned its sights on the Head of the River Race. Eventually they decided to put forward two Vllls and then for good measure, another two the next day at Vets Head of the River. This saw a number of rowers doubling up to the do the course on both Saturday and Sunday. Apparently 6.8km isn’t enough for some people.



HoRR: Not one to be pushed into a hasty decision, Captain Ben Mitchell gave careful reflection on when to bring the men together to start racing in eights. The first half of the season had seen an emphasis on coxless fours with Ben setting a high standard for admission into an eight. His unspoken mantra seemed to be ‘train harder’, and the club held its breathe wondering if anyone would be able to train hard enough for him?

As we wended our way through February he relented, convinced by improved erg scores, multiple PBs, and the music of the composer Andrew WK who reinforced to him it was indeed ‘time to party’. There would be an eight, and wait, not one eight but two. Preparations intensified, including, and I do not jest, discussions on which bottles to bring to relieve themselves in, discussions on baselayers they would all need to wear in what was later described as frankly excessive levels of detail, and one rower maintaining the correct strategy for fueling would be to drink a jar of honey directly before the race. But between the intense prep, there was always time made after practice to rush to buy the last available croissant to prevent a fellow crew mate from getting it. Hammersmith Head helped refine the plans for HoRR and with some tiny tweaks to the format the crews were ready - barring the hasty repairs to boats (with a hacksaw!) undertaken by the seven seat of Curlew A and club stalwart, Fabien Mitchell.

For Curlew A, pictured here (including one of my favourite shots of our cox Issy being carried into the boat by Captain Ben) it was an ambitious strategy. They set off at a blistering rate, set by the machine Peter O’Callaghan, an Irish man who is a man of few words who lets the rowing speak for itself. A good row against a strong field saw them come 96th out of nearly 300 crews. A respectable result on which they will no doubt build on in 2023. They are hungry for it. Whether or not they used those bottles will remain between them and the cox. Poor Issy.



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But not just Curlew A at HoRR, there was also Curlew B. They hadn't had much opportunity to row together but were still keen as mustard. In the words of their stroke, the ever excellent and deadpan Ben Owen, it was a 'memorable row'.

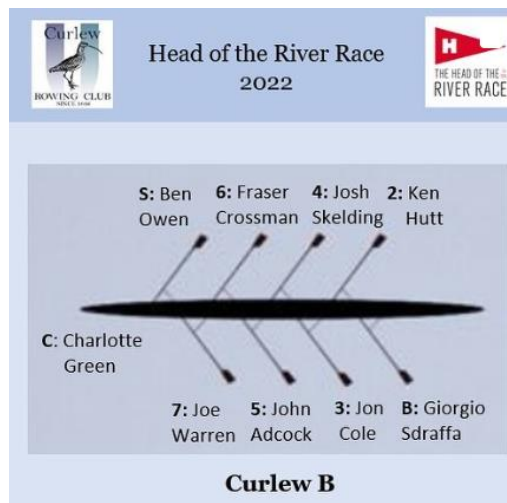
They came 206 out of almost 300 crews and are just too gentlemanly to boast about all the scalps they claimed. No less than four of them enjoyed it so much they came back the very next day to do exactly the same thing again. How many other clubs can say the same?¹ None but Curlew!

Veterans HoRR 22

2022 proving itself to be a very special year we have another event that deserves due mention in the Curlew Book of Days. The race, on the Sunday following the Saturday of Head of the River, we had two crews, Masters B and Masters C. In addition to being fine mens of Curlew, a huge number of them had raced the day before, no less than five! Was it the triumph of optimism? Was it a mistake? Was it a quick subbing in after omicron took down a rower? Was it just a mad love for rowing nearly 16k? It was all of these things dear reader. So, while we salute all of our rowers in this event, we give a special salute, to John, Jon, Felix, Giorgio and Ken. I bet you felt it after. Alongside them was Issy doubling up on coxing duties, I'm sure feeling the effects of the festivities the night before, but not letting it show.

Not just this, there's more. We were pleased to send our three of our novices, very recently graduated from Learn to Row in December 21, to race in one of the boats. Richard, Frieder and Ciaran competed for seats, having followed the senior training plan since January. And what a first race! They did great. A tidy row, slotting right in and having a whale of a time. We have pride. A lot of pride. A photo, shown overleaf, is a close up of them showing their evolution to a throuple, united by their love of free speed.

So onto results, our Masters B crew came 42nd and our Masters C crew came 94th. Very respectable I'm sure you'll agree. Well done gentlemen (and Issy!).



¹ No sources provided. Go on, prove me wrong! If you include a stamped addressed envelope I may reply. Maybe

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The Spring Fling

Closing out March, and before training for the regatta season took off in earnest, it was time for Curlew's much-delayed Christmas Party (another victim of the rise of Covid-19 variants) and a chance for some much-needed fun and fundraising for the club. Portents had looked ill for this event, but a rescue committee was formed and with much effort, most notably from Darci Dutcher, the event took place and was a great success by multiple metrics.

First, there was a great deal of fun. Mentions of note go to Fraser Turner for running a raffle while in parallel roasting Curlew members, delivered expertly in an impressive set of heels. There was also dancing and much imbibing - safe to say that Curlew RC met the bar minimum of the venue with ease. Second, a moment for appreciation for the 21/22 captains with a presentation of gifts, photographs commemorating their most recent race achievements. Third, excellent fundraising efforts, perhaps Curlew's most successful single event fundraiser! Between a raffle so successful that we had to handwrite tickets to an auction helmed by Fabien (who may have found his second calling) we raised an impressive £3,300. A significant chunk of this was a consequence of the bidding war to name Curlew's new Empacher coxless IV between Felix and Richard Kiveal, won eventually by the latter. He chose to name the boat for his newborn daughter, Ava. Finally, Curlew RC's Spring Fling, in the humble opinion of this writer, excelled in decoration which paid homage to club icon, Nick King.

It was a great event, and the club owes lot to the volunteers who brought it together. We've already mentioned Darci, but we would like to thank all of those who donated prizes to the raffle and auction, and all those who bid with such fervour. The good doctor Robert Kennedy was especially generous, donating multiple Henley Royal Regatta tickets and tours of legendary clubs, like Leander.



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Peterborough Jubilee Regatta 22

By Jenna Holmes: A sunny Jubilee bank holiday weekend seemed ready to be a delightful setting for a first ever race for half our crew, with six of us only just recently graduating from the Autumn/Winter Learn to Row. Then Sunday itself decided to pretty damp and miserable, but hey ho.

The only mixed crew in the division, Loretta and I held the fort as bow pair. Ryan was in the coxing seat and kept us focused and in the zone ("no yeah Curlew-ing in this boat"). We said hello to the reeds as we boated up the course, but then with exceptional precision got ourselves onto the stake boat and ready ahead of our opposition. We looked like we knew what we were doing at least.

The race itself might not have been all we hoped for, but I thoroughly enjoyed racing with such good friends from Learn to Row and seeing just how far we had come. Most of the race went by in a blur and a particular highlight as we raced down the course was the shouts of "yeah ladies" from other crews for our bow pair!



Those who have been at Peterborough will know the need to get off the course sharpish at the end with very little room for manoeuvre. Ryan, maybe a little zealously, got us over to the side of the basin only for Loretta to suddenly grow a foot or so above the rest of the crew as the boat mounted the side!

We may not have qualified for the final, but I took some joy that we were fifth out of sixth in the heats which for a mixed crew is a bonus in my book.

Nottingham City Regatta Race Report 22



Wait, what happened here? Well, I suppose a picture speaks 1000 words.... Martin Pendlebery assists his Captain between regatta heats. This was the only race report received by The Numenius. How licentious.

The Committee commends

So many mentions of note. Thanks to **Issy** and **Charlotte** for stepping up to be social secretaries mid-season and running a fab, and profitable, BBQ. To **Ryan** for taking up coxing duties when needed, alongside **Ben Owen**. To our volunteer coaches **Jack** and **Nick**, who put so much into the development squad and assisted at a very successful training camp. To **Jon Cole** who for being such a general good egg who never fails to help out. To **Darci, John, Fabien**, and **Fraser** for their efforts to make the Spring Fling such a success. And to all the club members and supporters who have come down to cheer Curlew on at various events.

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The Henley Campaigns of 2022



The women of Curlew started the 21/22 season knowing what they were working toward, an VIII+ and by the time they hit early February the crew had largely consolidated. For the men the merits of small boats over large were carefully debated, with Coach Joe and Captain Ben Mitchell concluding that for the men it would be a coxless IV (the latter no doubt swayed by the club's almost box fresh Empacher. As the women knuckled down to their training, it was seat racing for the men and battles fought over four 1500m races at the docks. Closely fought, a crew emerged consisting of Peter, Fabien, Ben and Nick. Taking on Nottingham City and Marlow, they were able to secure prequalification for Henley Royal. In parallel, another four Curlew men decided to form a second coxless IV and try for qualification at the event itself.

First on the Henley circuit came the Women's event. Going into the racing we knew the crew had the potential to do very well, with a season of seemingly continuous build and one of the best WeHoRR results in Curlew's history. A strong start saw a confident qualification in the time trial, with Curlew ranking well. A well earned break before the side by side saw the women draw Putney Town RC - a crew Curlew had rowed against well in other clashes and proven we could beat. The race itself saw the wind come up, favouring the other, slightly heavier, crew - as did Curlew's coxbox breaking.



Coach Joe summed Curlew's HWR with 'our time trial was impressive, resulting in a seeding and what seemed, on paper, an easy route into the last eight. Unfortunately races aren't rowed on paper and the opposition hadn't read the script. In the fastest and most exciting race of the day, Curlew were pipped at the post and edged out of the regatta. We learned a couple of things over the weekend. We're quick, we finished sixth in the time trial, but we lack experience in head to head racing. We'll only go faster and we'll have another year under our belts next time round'.

One Henley proving itself not enough for these women they decided to make Curlew history by entering our first ever women's boat into Henley Royal for the Wargrave Challenge Cup qualifiers. They had a fantastic row on the day, but it was an extremely tough competition for a handful of spots and they did not qualify. The club is extremely proud of the achievement's of these women over the 21/22 season and looks forward to 22/23 to see what they do then.



The women's journey complete, next up was the men in their coxless IVs. First, Curlew B in the qualifiers, comprising of Ben Owen, Dominic Wong, Martin Pendlebury, and Joe Warren. A crew who had only come together a few weeks ahead of Henley Royal, they felt they might sneak in. While they didn't, they had a great experience, had no tangles with the dreaded booms, and know what it will take next year. Then it was Curlew A's turn, debuting on Tuesday against Northwich with Felix swapped into the boat for Nick (the latter had selfishly booked a holiday over HRR). Over to Coach Joe again for his summary again:

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'Come Tuesday, the guys in A were ready to race. The ergs done, the sweat sweated, the guys were prepared albeit our stroke was under the weather. Knowing Northwich alongside us were nine seconds faster than us the last time we met, the plan was to go out hard and see how the opposition handled a bit of pressure. And go out hard we did, and for a while there it had the desired effect. Northwich were surprised to see us take an early lead and they nearly collected the booms in an attempt to overhaul us. Still with our noses in front, the guys from Northwich applied the power and crept ahead by the barrier. We gave it our best shot but were overhauled by superior power and grunt. The debrief was positive and the message was clear, we have a competitive group, and are within reach of the later rounds. Next year!'



Coach Joe not being held captive by whimsy like me, failed to mention that the commentators also confirmed that Ben and Fabien are indeed brothers, something that were not previously aware of, nor had anyone else guessed. Perhaps if Captain Ben grew a beard?

Festivities followed with members of Curlew RC's past and present celebrating the season and congratulating our Henley boats at a very fun BBQ, the first in two years, where the club raised £800 (thanks Issy and Charlotte) and your scribe, me, ate four hotdogs. Yum. Alas, it was also a successful time for the Covid virus which saw a large number of Curlew members laid low in the following weeks. The perils of being a bon viveur in the modern age.

2022 also saw Curlew field an VIII+ for Veterans Henley! Club Captain, John Adcock, gave us a report: 'After the pain of having to withdraw the 2021 crew due to COVID infections, Sparra was risk managing us to within an inch of our lives. Some might argue that not actually rowing the racing VIII together at any point during training might be taking things a bit far, but we did all keep our social bubbles to a minimum and even nearly avoided the Henley BBQ outbreak that wiped out the rest of the club. We did lose Charlotte to the dreaded double line and were immensely grateful to Alex for stepping in at the last minute.

So it was with a sense of relief as well anticipation that we met up for early morning rigging. After just about getting over the fact the coffee stall wasn't open yet we took in the wonderful scene with the familiar Henley landmarks. The water looked invitingly flat and gentle tail wind stroked the booms. In their wisdom the organisers had put us straight into the semi-finals and we were drawn against Kingston, a club that had beaten us by a few seconds at Vets HoRR - our extensive network of rowing spies could only come up with "they're not all that". That in mind we went through our race visualisation which had us a couple of lengths up after a supersonic start. It was then time to get on the water and some last practice starts while trying to catch a glimpse of our opposition. Alex prepared us perfectly and we arrived at the start in good time, we felt properly warm and ready for anything.

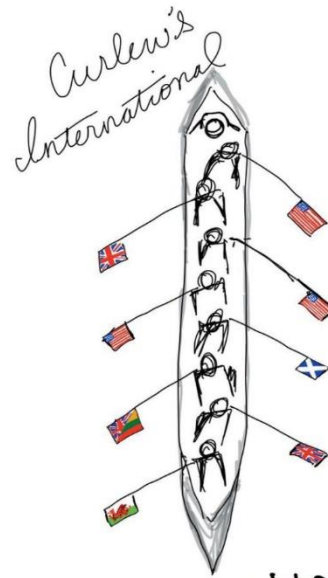
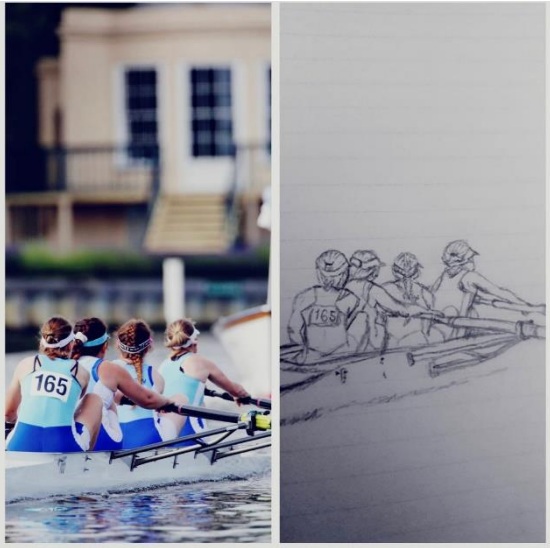


The flag dropped and we were off, as we came out of our start we had a small lead! Which we held onto for a few strokes before Kingston started to slowly pull back and then away, by halfway they were over a length up. At that point the Curlew fight back began, we found some extra speed and started to reduce the gap and although the finish line came soon enough for my ageing legs there wasn't enough time for us to pull back Kingston's early lead. The verdict was a respectable, if disappointing, loss by 2/3 of a length. While not a win, I enjoyed my first Henley. Until next year!

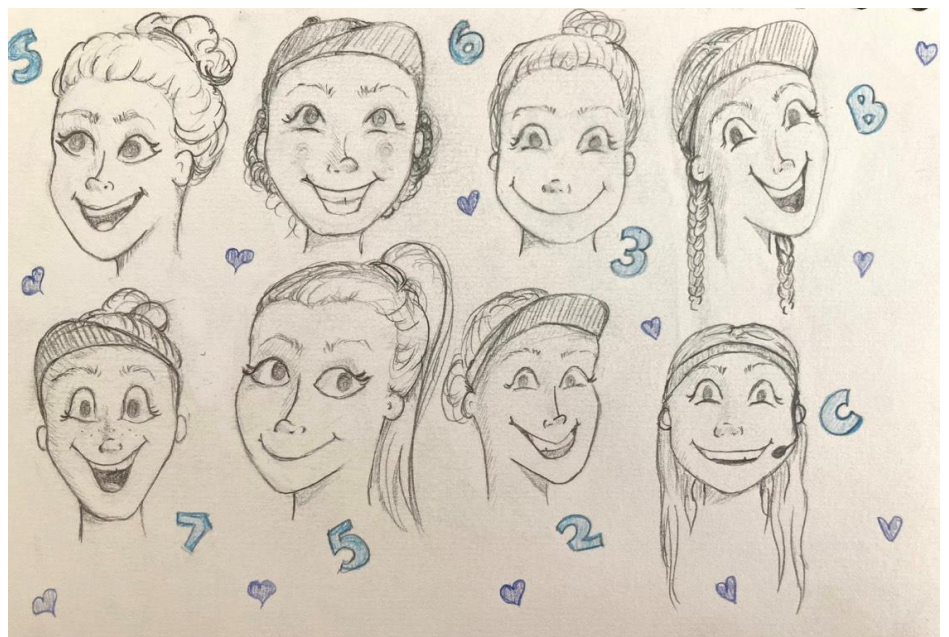
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Art of Curlew: Women's Henley Regatta edition

Ahead of the Women's Henley Regatta 22 we asked out top women's crew to draw us something, and they rose to the challenge with gusto. Here are their artistic renderings to delight you.



WOMENS
VIII



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Oxford City Regatta

And toward the end of the summer season comes the fun regattas and an enduring favourite for Curlew rowers, Oxford City. This weekend saw Curlew victories for the women in both eights and coxed fours, drinking, hats, and impromptu river swimming. An all-squads affair, saw us put out 12 crews across Saturday and Sunday, not including the Saturday sprints. We even entered sculling categories! Proving that Curlew can actually scull. I was surprised as anyone. This was also a special event for the fact that Curlew fielded two women's eights, something the club hasn't been able to do for a long time. Hopefully the start of a new trend!



Kingston Regatta



Despite the Curlew Henley BBQ proving to be a covid superspreader event, the club was still able to field two crews to the Kingston Regatta although a couple of others were obliged to sit the event out. Although a bummer, it was the responsible thing to do. Despite a smaller Curlew contingent, we packed a punchy performance, with Felix winning in his single and the women coming second in the Vllls (but first in our hearts).



Goodbye to Coach Joe

There were a few big resignations in 2022 as you may have noticed. But in addition to two of our most recent Prime Ministers (!) the late summer also saw us say goodbye to Coach Joe who leaves us to return to his family down under and to welcome his first grandchild.

There can be no comparison between Curlew's Coach and Prime Ministers Johnson and Truss however, Joe's growth plans for Curlew worked against a variety of metrics (erg scores, technique, race placement) and he proved, beyond a doubt, that he can definitely outlast a lettuce.

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Goodbye to Coach Joe (cont.)

Beyond his domination of vegetables and leafy foliage I'm not sure entirely where to begin. For a man that joined us in February of 2022 and departed early August in the same year, he had a big impact on our club. Probably one of our more successful coaches, and in the world of coaching very much the real deal. I could list his achievements while with us (many) but, reflecting the spirit of the man himself, never boastful, I'm going to talk about the things we grew to love about him.

For many it was his style of dress. Forget Steve Jobs, Joe was a brand. Week in, week out, old well washed bucket hat and red trackie bottoms. And allied to this he was delightfully and unexpectedly swears in the funnest of ways. Why did he nickname one of best and most versatile female rowers Shithead? No one knows. (It may have reflected a little name blindness on his part, for a while four promoted devs were just referred to as 'the novices', 'bring the novices' he'd say. 'Tell the novices to do this...')

His delighted use of the best Anglo-Saxon vernacular reflected a plain speaking, but factual and objective, coaching style. Joe told you needed to do improve and it speaks to the quality of his coaching that a little of him would go a long way. Rowing nerd, master of a line up, confident in his expertise, he helped a large number of our rowers truly excel. He showed from the get that we could do a lot more and push a lot harder than we thought, brushing off complaints (mostly mine) with an 'ah well' and telling us to get back on the water.

Could he have been more sympathetic to my blisters and that one time the Saga's steering was profoundly broken? Probably yes. But what a pleasure to have known and be coached by him, albeit alas it was shorter than we would have liked. I asked him for some parting words, and he declined. He thinks that he might be back one day, musing briefly on 'unfinished business'.

And Au Revoir Jack Pooley



Mr. Jack Pooley. A true gentleman, avid rowing enthusiast, and one of the nicest people in Curlew.

Long before I wrote for The Numenius and was just a novice rower in Curlew, I used to think of Jack as 'Nice Friendly Senior'. Like many Dev rowers fresh off Curlew's Learn to Row I was thoroughly intimidated by the majority the senior squad who were all very tall, sporting magnificent quads and beautiful. They operated at a different level with their set boats, wins at regattas and endless Henley talk. To them we must have seemed, at best, enthusiastic as we worked through the thousand stages of learning that rowing requires. But Jack, as tall and strong as beautiful as all of his peers stood out for being really fucking nice. And the swearing for emphasis is warranted on this occasion.

In addition to a quick smile, many funny rowing stories, Jack always had time for every member of the club without any discrimination or condescension. When asked he stepped up to coach our novices (we ask so much of the legendary Coach Nick, but he is but one man) and was proved a complete natural pretty much from the get. The last L2R loved him. And everyone benefitted from his pointers on the bank and in the gym. But of course, this isn't just it. He also helped out getting us connections to other clubs to find a way to solve problems when they arose, he showed up to most of the big races to support our crews (even after coaching sessions) and many things besides.

We are alas losing him to a new life in Brighton with his partner and adventures new. We cannot resent such a move, but rather reflect on how lucky we have been to have Jack in our club. We wish him the very best of luck.

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Fundraising

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Over £32 million raised | 4.9/5 on Trustpilot | 1.8 million users

Rowing is a sport for everyone, but the reality is it is not cheap! Curlew RC punches above its weight, but with more equipment and coaching we can grow, and achieve, more. This year has proved the potential of Curlew, our membership is growing, and we want to push to the next level. With our recent influx of members, we're in a position to move to two competitive women's Vllls and three men's Vllls. Exciting!

If you would like to see us in better boats, you can help the club to either through a one-off donation, or by supporting us through Easyfundraising. This is a free way to support the club when you shop online, with 4300 retailers giving us a donation if you just click a button. Details below. We've raised more £2500 through this and it was at no cost to our supporters!

If any reader would like to make a one-off donation, help us to secure corporate sponsorship, or even buy us a boat, please email curlewfundraising@gmail.com immediately. Such largesse will be rewarded with much gushing in The Numenius.