

The Numenius

December 2021

The latest news, views, and announcements of Curlew RC

INSIDE

New Head of Rowing Announcement

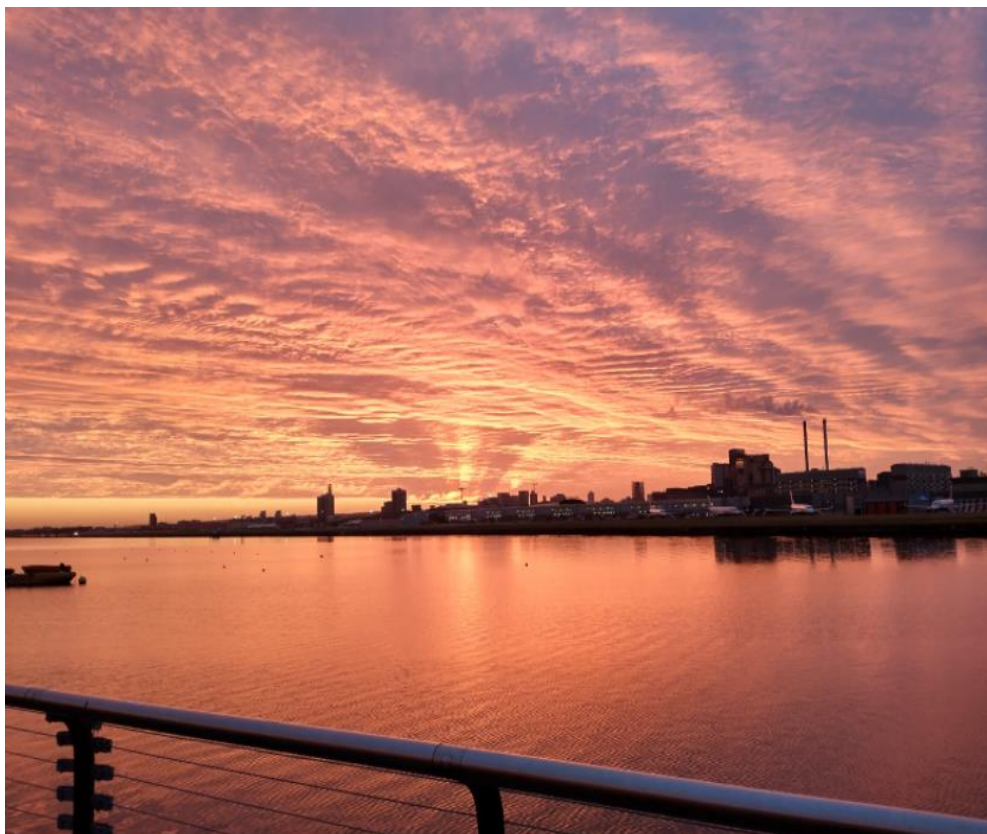
A fist sneak peek at our
new Head Coach

We Give Good Head

Race reports from Upper
Thames Autumn Head,
Docklands Head, Vets
Fours Head and BRIC

New Curlew Kit

Fashions fade, style is
eternal. Sartorial elegance
brought to you by Curlew



Christmas message from the Chairman

By Matthew Richardson

As 2021 ends I had hoped to be writing to you all that happier times are upon us. However, this latest variant of covid-19 has thrown an unhelpful spanner in the works and we are unsure of the impact on the rowing world. Nevertheless, as a club we stand well prepared to withstand again any restrictions presented to us. For that I thank you, our members. Without your support there would be no club. We shall overcome.

The past year has brought challenges but also great rewards. We qualified for Women's Henley and Henley Royal, our pandemic Learn to Row course finally finished, and we have started a new one. But not just this, our Men's Captain smashed a 5k club record and won the British Indoor Rowing Champs. We invested in our equipment with the purchase of a trailer load of boats, including an Empacher IV and play boats to support our development squads. Inevitably, amid all the positive, there is always some negative, and that manifested in Curlew losing our coach Alex Brown, who left the club in early November for a new job in Leeds.

As we move into the new year we have excellent news. I am excited to announce we have a new Head of Rowing, Joe O'Neil starting in early February. I am convinced that Joe will be a fantastic addition to Curlew Rowing Club, and I hope the entire club supports him as he implements new ideas and training methods. The committee is proactive and passionate about moving our club ever forward. Finally I wish you and your family a very merry Christmas and a Happy New year.

Learn to Row 2021 Graduate!

Find out more about the
class of 2021

Announcement: New Head of Rowing

Dear Member,

The Committee is delighted to announce they have appointed a new Head of Rowing for the 2022 Season. Our previous coach Alex Brown stepped down in late September. Since then, the Committee has been working tirelessly to appoint a replacement. After a long search, I am very pleased to announce that Joe O'Neil has been appointed and will start from early February. In his new role, Joe will oversee the senior squads whilst also actively engaging with the development squads ensuring his philosophy and training plan is embedded within the entire structure of the club.

The Committee is truly excited about this appointment and is confident that Joe will be able to give the club much needed direction and competitive edge. The Committee would also like to extend thanks to our membership who have stayed loyal to the club during this turbulent time and applaud the great work that our Captains have done to bridge the gaps between Alex leaving and Joe starting. There is going to be a lot of hard work needed in January to get the boats, squads, and club ready for Joe, so please ensure you make yourself available when called upon.

A bit more on Joe O'Neil:

Joe has been involved with Wellington Rowing Association (New Zealand) for the past 16 years, and during that time he has held several posts

1. 2005 - ongoing: Coach, Women's Seniors
2. 2008: Rowing coordinator, Coach and crew selection for the Master's programme.
3. 2012 - 2017: Club Captain, where he focused on improving the club's equipment and results on the water.
4. 2020/21: Club Captain

As the Head Coach of the senior Wellington Women's Squad - he has won half of the club's medal haul over the past decade at the National Championship of New Zealand, as well as bringing success to the Victoria University Club and the Trans-Tasman Team.

Joe has also worked incredible closely with Chris Jones who is the Senior Men's coach at Wellington, Chris Jones for those who are not aware was a lightweight rower at Oxford and London RC. Together they have established an effective training discipline throughout the club, to reinforce a consistent approach to technique and to restore Wellington to a prominent position in New Zealand Club rowing. Joe also ran the successful Corporate Challenge programme which engages adult rowers new to the sport, many of whom go on to row for the Club for many years. There will be much more information on our new Head of Rowing over the next few weeks as we onboard Joe to Curlew RC.

Joe will be relocating back to the UK after Christmas and will be taking up his duties in early February. We, the Committee, are very excited to open this new chapter of Curlew Rowing Club under the stewardship of Joe and wish him all the best in his new role with us.

The Committee.



The Numenius

Reports from Upper Thames Head



Upper Thames Autumn Head saw Curlw send a Women's VIII, a Men's coxless IV and a Men's Masters coxed IV. Our first head in almost two years, it's fair to say the weather was unkind. Seriously unkind. A 30mph headwind assaulted our rowers. But the rowers, and coxes, of Curlw are made of tough stuff and took on the challenge! Here's some reports from our intrepid rowers.

Molly Davies (Women's VIII): Upper Thames Autumn Head was the first race of the year for the Curlw Women's squad; for a couple of us, it was also our first race ever with Curlw. For one rower, it was even her first week at the club! Lucky for us that she joined and stepped up, and into the boat, since we had a few injuries in the weeks beforehand that needed substitutes. [Editor: Thanks Allie]

The day got off to an ominous start, as we arrived at the racing site in the pouring rain. Luckily, miraculously, the clouds parted, and the sun appeared as we were approaching the starting line. It was quite the race. Not only did we row into a fierce headwind, but our steering became clogged with leaves halfway through and our coxswain had to steer with her hands! None of that stopped our crew from keeping the power on, pushing to the end, and finishing strong. We were cheered on by our all-star Captain, Anita, who watched from the banks with a broken wrist and shouted encouragement. We may not have medalled, but we got off the water feeling proud of our performance and ready for the racing season ahead.

Jon Cole: The weather forecast was not looking good in the run up to UTAH, but on the morning it was even worse than predicted. Driving rain on the journey there made for challenging road conditions, but at least we were dry.

However, by the time of boating, the rain had made way for blue skies although the wind fancied sticking around. Our Masters D boat was ably marshalled to the start by Issy, although an over-eager competitor got a bit close and took out our bow number, never to be seen again.

We started well with purpose, if not finesse, but as we rounded the bend the full force of the block headwind hit, and we prepared to endure several minutes of unpleasantness. Issy spotted the carrot of another boat who were going less slow than us and three old men in me, John and Ken and a slightly younger Giorgio finally passed them after about a kilometre of trying. It then all went a bit sloppy as tiredness set in, but we finished. We'll not dwell on the results, but good to have our first race of the season under our belts. Onwards and upwards!



Blazin' Squad

- By Charlene Woolley

As we all know, dressing well is a form of good manners. In a Curlw RC blazer, you are so well dressed you are ready to meet the Queen [Editor: both Elizabeth Regina II and Mama Ru]. Intrepid 2021 joiners, Ben Mitchell, Kiernan Loue, and Wizzy Heap (pictured left and right respectively) were awarded their blazers for Women's Henley and Henley Royal qualification. The official presentation took place at the docks for Ben and at the clubhouse for Kiernan and Wizzy. Congratulations all!

The Numenius

Reports from Docklands Head

Curlew RC sent a huge number of boats to the Docklands Head, a sporkmillion. Or eleven across squads. In some disgraceful one upmanship our rivals Globe sent twelve. Nevertheless, Curlew typically does well on home turf and this year was no exception. We were pleased to celebrate no less than three wins in 2021, a nice beginning for our post-pandemic return to rowing [Editor: Or so we thought]. Here's a round up of races from some of our intrepid, and winning, rowers.

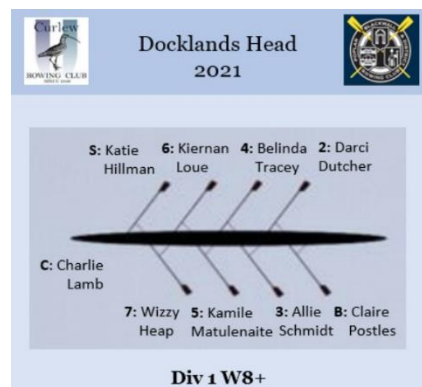
Wizzy Heap (Women's VII and IV-): The date: 7 November 2021. The time: 8am i.e. an actual lie in, on race day of all days?! The location: London Regatta Centre a.k.a. the noisiest aircraft fuelled stretch of water you could possibly ever row on, a.k.a. where we have our coffee every Saturday and Sunday, and do a little bit of rowing before, a.k.a. *OUR* docks.

First division saw our W8+ gearing up for their second consecutive weekend of racing after Upper Thames Autumn Head, but this time Katie setting the rhythm as our stroke. Our wonderful co-captain and stroke-turned-coach extraordinaire, Anita, decided she would also add to her rowing CV (and British Rowing license) and be our coxswain for the race after illness struck our Cox community. After a little bit of the traditional Curlew faff, and on-land warm up, we were ready to go through the bridge onto the other side of the docks, many of us for the first time, sit idly and shout our lungs out for all the other Curlew crews that passed before we turned around and set off ourselves.

The race didn't have the same horrendous head wind as the week before, but the conditions felt tidal. It wasn't something we had prepared for. The first 750m of our race felt cool, calm, and collected - but the conditions got the better of us for the rest of the race where we lost our heads a little. It felt like we forgot all the wonderful tekkers we'd taken years working on! But these are good lessons to be learned at the beginning of head season. Considering we felt like it was one of our worst rows as a crew, we still came second out of the four crews entered and can hold our heads high.

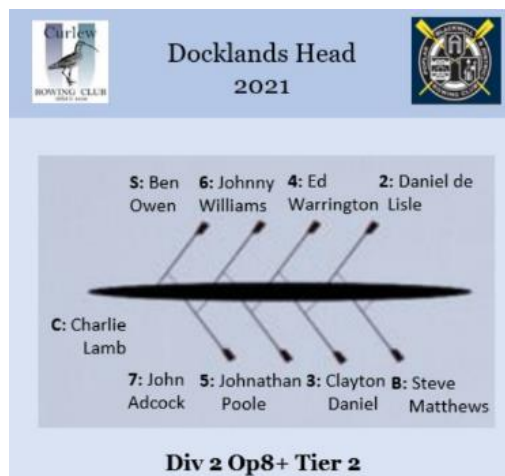
In the second division, four out of the eight got a chance of redemption in the W4-, and redeeming it was. Whilst the weather decided it would get worse, we decided to keep our heads in the boat and stick to our race plan. With a quick turn around after the first race, we were back through the bridge in the blink of an eye, trying to avoid the calamity of J16 boys Vllls boating just ahead of us. Similar to the first race, our first 750m was long and strong, but conditions got blustery right where we passed our Curlew fans (thanks, guys!) under the bridge. Choppy was an understatement. But we pushed on and felt like champs - with the special assistance of Dahlia screaming encouragement from the other side of the docks on her bicycle all the way to the end. We emerged victors against not only Lea with only two seconds to spare, but were also the second fastest IV Curlew entered that day after the men's MAS B! Men, if you'd like us for HERR, we will review these requests on an application basis, and be in touch with our decision in 20 working days.

Overall a day of lessons and victories - a very good start to a promising head season!



The Numenius

Johnny Williams (Tier 2 Open VIII): One Sunday morning back in early 2020, a group of strangers gathered at the London Regatta Centre. Filled with trepidation and nervous excitement they took their place in the tank ready to embark on their inaugural 'voyage'. Fast forward to the present day and a select few of that original group are again experiencing similar emotions, but this time our vessel is a RACEBOAT.



Muscular men in lycra is something I am not altogether unfamiliar with coming from a background of professional rugby, but wearing my first all in one was like suiting up for battle. One might have hoped that the challenges of the longest Learn to Row in club history would have seen the sporting gods looking upon us favourably for our first ever race by providing clear skies and calm water. But alas, Poseidon wasn't in a forgiving mood and churned our home waters into a crab catching gauntlet. Nevertheless, we went through our warm-up routine and felt fluid from the first few strokes, as Joe our unfaltering Coxswain, made the calls that steadied our crew and prepared us to maximise our efforts to best effect. I guess on the surface, there's nothing highly technical about sliding up and down a seat on rails, but to do so with collective synchronicity is a thing of grace and a feeling I have never felt before.

Maintaining our position in the water before the start was both a challenge and a spectacle. Many of the crew had never felt this level of nervous anticipation and looking across at the other boats it was as though we were part of a great armada. This was a race against time, very befitting of a club based on the meridian. Joe made the final adjustments to our positioning as we approached the start gate and the pressure on our footplates increased! As the 'King' states every Sunday...lets Rock & Roll! Our cox adjusted his fetching pink headset and let out the war cry...LET'S GO BOYS!



We built our speed and set a healthy stroke rate from the start. Assertive calls from the stern demanded power strokes for ten, longer at the finish, and as always...slow the slide. By the time we reached the bridge our rhythm was set, buoyed by the cheers of fellow Curlewians we went hunting to overhaul our first boat. Orders now came with increasing intensity and demanded yet more power, more length. Like all good crews we heeded the call and mercilessly took our bounty leaving them in our wake. With the clock ticking and finish line approaching we knew every second and every stroke counted. So we drew on the last of our energy reserves and commitment to bring the boat home.

Elation came immediately thereafter, despite not knowing the outcome of our joint efforts, [Editor: They won Tier 2!] we were all ecstatic to have performed to the best of our abilities as a single unit, in what was, after all, our first competitive event. Composing ourselves after the exertion however did lead to a slight turning issue before the warm down. Thankfully our cox, eventually, rescued the situation and got us out of trouble; we rowed ourselves back to fulfil the necessary duties of any outing on the water.

Personally the scenes, sensations and memories made that day will stay with me for the rest of my life and I am I sure my crew mates will feel the same way. Performing your best when it matters most is what competitive sport is all about. To paraphrase the words of a great man..."IF you can keep your 'head' when all about you are losing theirs...and which is more...you'll be a ROWER...my son!"

The Numenius

Docklands Head continued...



But it wasn't just a win for our women and some of our novices, it was also victory for the increasingly impressive pair partnering of Ben and Felix! Men who like to let their performance on the erg and the water speak for itself, they are men of few words. But they did have this to say. Ben: 'We knew the conditions were awful from the VIII in the morning, but we'd raced together before and trained a fair bit in similar water. With some tight steering, and a bit of good luck, saw us avoid the problems that befell other crews. This enabled us to push on after 1k and win in moderate comfort'. Felix: 'We won because pulled harder, and we didn't crash into slower boats'. Quite! Excellent show gentlemen.

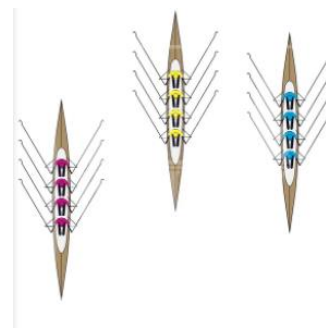


Veteran Fours Head

- By Charlene Woolley

We were pleased to send three coxless IVs to this year to the Veteran Fours Head. We had Masters A, B, and D. Our Masters A and B were typically stoic after the race. From the legendary Sparra we had this: 'After the race, feeling better for some beers in us, we think there are lots of opportunities for improvement. But we've got a secret plan to turn things around! Great to be racing again.' We'll be watching their progress with interest in the Numenius. For a more fulsome report of this event please see overleaf for a report from Jon Cole.

Race Calendar



Quintin Head - 29 January

Hammersmith Head - 27 February

Reading University Head of the River - February (TBC)

Women's Eights Head of the River Race - 13 March

Head of the River Race - 26 March

Veterans Head of the River Race - 27 March (TBC)

The Numenius

Veteran Fours Head continued...

Jon Cole (IV MasD): From the summer, John was keen to take advantage of our progressing years to enter a Masters D boat at Vet Fours Head. Slimmed down to a coxless IV for this race after our Issy-assisted Upper Thames Autumn Head, we tried to coax the Ann Roberts to sub-2 minute splits in the run-up to the race, but it wasn't really clicking. Come the day, the conditions were great and after a luxurious trip down to Putney in Giorgio's dodgem, sorry, Tesla, we made quick work of rigging and focused on multiple toilet breaks [Editor: Racing nerves does the same to me too!]

This was my first time on the tideway and the joys of boating from the riverbank as we set-out to marshal to the start of the championship course, rowed in the reverse direction on the ebb tide. It was quite something to be out on the river with all those fours and quads while passing the legendary landmarks from the boat race.

We got off to a solid start with Giorgio keeping us on a great line following Felix's advice. We were expecting the faster master's E crews to come past, and come past they did, but each mini race to hold off the inevitable pushed our pace when we might have eased off. We navigated Barnes and Hammersmith without incident and held steady until John called out our marker as Craven Cottage came into view. We then really gave it some welly and finished off the job.

In the pub post-race, I'm not sure if it was my naïve enthusiasm or the beer, but John and Ken's initial disappointment in our time gave way to some solace in us only being six seconds off the Curlew Vet's boat. With three 5k PBs (and me not far off) in recent weeks, I'm sure there is more to come with this crew.



British Rowing Indoor Championships



A heady few weekends of racing was capped off with the British Rowing Indoor Championships. Curlew's most enthusiastic ~~sadists~~ ergers entered, Karin Kraemer, Jon Cole, Felix Hemsted, John Adcock, Steve Matthews and Ben Mitchell. Curlew RC showed well with some respectable placing across the board and some PBs. Mentions of note go to Steve Matthews who placed third in his category (55-59) and plaundits to the mighty Men's Captain Ben Mitchell who came **first** in the Open Men's 2k with an impressive 6:14.3! Following his victory he had this to say: 'I had hoped to race in the lightweight category to reclaim a title won in 2012. Unsurprisingly, nine years on, it is harder to lose weight. I couldn't shift the final 2kg. I wanted to record a time so entered the Open 2k instead. I knew from the lineup I might have a chance of a medal. The race was extremely tight throughout and I was behind for the first half. I managed to spin things up enough in the final few hundred metres to hold off a comeback and win!'. Curlew RC is naturally immensley proud, but also a little terrified of Ben's power to weight ratio. We plan to dine out on his achievements for several months to come.

The Numenius

New Rig for Curlew RC

- By Charlene Woolley

Another year, another search for a kit provider. Kit Secretary is one of those jobs that some might question on the Committee. It is not frequently called upon, but be assured when it is, there is quite a lot of work to be done. With an influx of new members and an increasingly complex lending system for racing all in ones, Darci Dutcher stepped up to not only design our newest iteration of kit, but to identify our Pantone colours (smurf blue not cutting it as a descriptor apparently) and secure a new supplier. With apparently simple instructions from Committee; that the racing kit be uniform with previous iterations, no chevrons whatsoever, and as much jazzy bird print as possible on the non-racing kit, Darci delivered. Feast your eyes on the new kit below!



These items and more are available for purchase now on Rival Kit's [website](#) now! We'd like to thank Darci for her determination and patience in this matter. She was unshirking in the face of duty. Checking on the transparency of the material, fitness of prospective kit with our general preferred underwears and testing pocket quality. She also did the seemingly impossible and brought Committee to agreement on our club colours as per the Pantone palette. As a reminder, you can still buy general Curlew merchandise on the [Kit Crew](#). While the time for Christmas giving is beyond us, its never the wrong time to treat yourself and make clear your rowing loyalties with a range of training wear, jackets and indeed bobble hats.

Curlew Learn to Row 2021 graduates!

Our Learn to Row cohort 2021 have graduated! Unlike the prior course we are pleased to say that we managed to stay broadly on schedule and while we were obliged to innovate in how we run the course, things ultimately came together really rather well under the oversight of Curlew legend Nick King. Our cohort, nicely pictured below at their second social shindig, have decided to name themselves 'The Lads'. I'm not sure why exactly, but I'm loving the camaraderie and energy these guys are bringing!



They've gone into small boats from the outset, making great use of the playboats we acquired through the Alton boat purchase. And while we had an early capsizing with one double, the learners in question were unphased and raring to get back on the water. But this group is not just enthusiastic about the water, they are also proving hungry for the erg! And this is exciting. Despite being brand new to the machine of pain, they are posting some pretty tasty scores and showing the dedication it takes to make a successful rower. We're very excited about the women coming through, who are posting scores which are not far off of our senior women. Including a 1.39 from one learner woman on a 500m test.

This group has probably been one of our fastest sets of learners. In a mere four weeks of sweep rowing, they managed to go all eight - something we haven't seen before on our courses. We're expecting a good number of them to stick with rowing when we resume in the New Year. All being well, the lockdown gods, being kind we hope to see them in their first race in March!

The Committee commends

Lots of folk to thank since the last newsletter. First of all, we have **Darci** for all of her work on the kit and then the irrepressible **Charlie Lamb** for all tireless efforts on our socials, especially the postponed Christmas Party. Your efforts will bear fruit Charlie! We'd like to give a massive shout out to **Jack Pooley** for stepping up to coach after Alex's departure. The committee were pleased to award him with a coach's jacket, pictured below, not least for his efforts with our most recent Learn to Row. We'd also like to thank **Poplar RC** for loaning us their tank at short notice and all the course volunteers especially, **Murat Demircan** who proved to be a very fun volunteer and extremely popular with our latest cohort of learners.



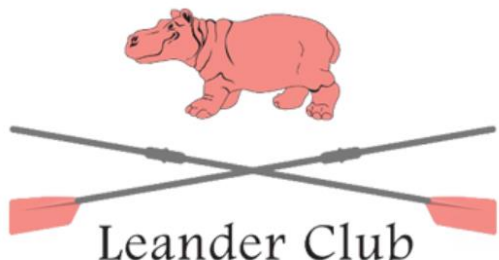
Announcement: Spring Ball

By Charlene Woolley

As ticket holders will know our planned Christmas merriment was scuppered by a new coronavirus variant, Omicron. With some pain, the Committee discussed the risks and decided on balance that we should postpone the Christmas party and the events surrounding this such as the Plum Pudding races. While disappointing for all, the sharp rise in infections seen even in the immediate days after have underlined this was the right decision. But despair not social Curlewians! Where there was once a Christmas party, we shall have a spring ball instead! And it will be just as good, if not better, because we will hopefully be past the latest pandemic shenanigans.



Reminder: Leander Lunch, 24 April 2022



Leander Club have confirmed they would be delighted to host our current members and alumni for a Club lunch during the Spring. Things being well, and with several booster campaigns under our belt we should be in a position to have a fun and safe event!

Leander Club, based in Henley, is the oldest non-academic boat club in the world, with notable alumni including: Matt Pinsent, Steve Redgrave, Anna Watkins and Rebecca Romero. The event will mark the launch of Peter Blaseby's book on the History of Curlew Rowing

Club - with some special guests invited to say a few words! The format will be a buffet lunch, running from midday to early afternoon and include some drinks, with the bar open throughout. Indicative cost is £50 per ticket. Register interest [here](#).

Fundraising

easyfundraising
feel good shopping

We've raised

£2500.00

with easyfundraising!

Help us raise **EVEN MORE** for **FREE** when you shop online

Use the link below to support us

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/curlewrcl>

4,300 online sites will give us a free donation when you shop with them - at no extra cost to you!

Download the easyfundraising App

Over £32 million raised | 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. With the pandemic restrictions easing we've been able to restart some of our fundraising activities, running two taster days back-to-back and launched a new Learn to Row course, our first since February 2020. But our membership is growing, and we want to push to the next level. With our recent influx of American women, we're in a position to move to two competitive women'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 £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.