

## WELCOME

A warm welcome to rowers and their guests to the second DIY Burns Supper hosted by the Isle of Seil Coastal Rowing Club, (our first supper was in 2015) celebrating our tenth year. Our beautiful skiff Selkie was launched for the first time on 19 May 2013, held our first regatta in June and competed in the very first World Championships in July. A steep learning curve! Since then, selected highlights have been rowing in fog through the Cuan, in the snow in Balvicar Bay, up the Clyde, through the Crinan Canal, along the Sound of Mull, through the Dorus Mor in sweltering heat (remember that?!) as part of RowAround Scotland, under the Ballachullish Bridge - and a cardboard cutout Selkie made a guest appearance in the Seil panto! We fondly remember George Houston who was instrumental in building both the original and the stage version.

We have to thank Dr George for getting the Seil Skiff project off the ground. The cost of the boat kit was divided into 64ths, Viking style, and shares sold so that many more people are represented in the community than actually row, or were involved in the build. The current rowers are very grateful. Both Ewan and I were in the build team, and still row, titanium parts notwithstanding. Not just a boat made, but friendships too.

Selkie was built in a barn at Oban Seil Farm - most appropriate as we are remembering Burns, who started off life on a farm as a ploughman. He became Scotland's first poet laureate, or Makar, and was around over 200 years ago; the face that launched a thousand shortbread tins. There is no mention at all of Burns actually rowing himself, but you can be sure that he would have rowed like the clappers if he was on one side of the Sound and there were girls on the other.

The coaching secret of rowing a quad is rythmn, rythmn, rhythm and passion. It could be said that Burns had plenty of both. But more of that later!

SKIFFIE GRACE adapted from Burns' Selkirk Grace

Some hae boats and canna row  
And some wad row that want tae  
But we hae boats and we can row  
And sae the Lord be thankit

## INTRODUCTION OF ALISTER

At vast expense, we have managed to engage the renowned soloist from Seil Sound for this evening, Alister Mill. He is a slidey seat rower, but we won't hold that against him, as well as a longterm supporter of Selkie.

## TOAST TO THE LADDIES

Thank you Ewan, for having your arm twisted to give a fine toast to the lassies. In the spirit of equality, I should call it 'the toast to the gentleman', even though they are sporting the passion pleats.

Ewan stated that 51% of coastal rowers are women. Looking around, it is more like 99% in this club - the same demographic as the wild swimmers, the Blue Tits, some of whom are here tonight.

It is telling that the SCRA's first convenor, Robbie (who rowed Selkie with Ewan and I from Appin to Kilchoan down the Sound of Mull over three days) has now started a new group with the #tameswimming. This involves swimming lengths in 23 swimming pools in 2023, to draw attention to the fact that many pools are closed - lack of staff and enormous heating bills.

Us oarsome lassies can gossip and row at the same time, unlike most men, who cannot! Our skiff, as are all boats, is a she, and Selkies are a mythical combination of seal and woman. Ewan was the bard who advertised Selkie as 'a rowing machine with scenery.'

However, it is obviously quality not quantity which is important here. On behalf of us Amazonian active dinosaurs, I toast the gentlemen - especially the specimens who are brave enough to run the gauntlet tonight - but most of all, our chief boat builder and oar maker, Ewan and main cox, James. Don't forget that only the guy who isn't rowing has time to rock the boat ...

#### VOTE OF THANKS

A big thank you to all who have contributed in any way to this DIY BURNS Supper, cooking, decorating, playing music, giving recitations, singing and slideshows. Hoping to see you all at our AGM next month when we shall also be having a talk about the Scottish Charity Air Ambulance.