

Minutes of Isle of Seil Coastal rowing club 13 March 2025

Held in Oyster Bar at 7.30pm

Present:

Sue Fenton (Convener), Mary Norris (Treasurer), Annie Lawson, Rose Wands, Elspeth Cheshire, Julie Johnson, Alison Guest.

Apologies:

Gerard Hoen, Laura Langley, Ewan Kennedy, Mary Freer, Lindsey MacLeod, Barry Collinge, Claire McGhee, Clare Battersby, Teresa Cobb, Trudi Newton, Carol Collis, David Rowlinson.

Last year's Minutes:

The minutes should have said that Sue would like to stand down, not is standing down. Otherwise they were approved by Rose and Annie.

Matters arising:

Plea for coxing - Sue welcomed the new coxes having completed their training but said that they require more practice to take the skiff out so that they will be able to take Selkie out when Sue is not present. There were no offers last year to take over any of the parts for the convener role which Sue had outlined in the job descriptions.

Convener's Report:

Subsequent to the last AGM, Seil Community Cinema showed the film Tarrac, about a women's rowing crew in Ireland. It was hoped to run a come-and-try session the following day, to capitalise on newfound enthusiasm, but the weather was against us, as it was for much of the year; storms Ashley, Eowyn, Ernesto, Beatrice, Kathleen *etc* affected our outings; un-named storms were frequent. One one occasion, thick fog caused cancellation of an outing, most unusual.

We had the loan of Edith, a Wemyss skiff, over the winter, from Andy Rendle, the Scottish Coastal Rowing Association's (SCRA) secretary, collecting her from Fort William and returning her to Linnhe Marine for the Appin club to use.

In March, Iain Oughtred, the designer of the St Ayles skiff, Wemyss skiff and many other boats, died in Skye. Ewan had visited him in hospital, and the club sent him a Selkie card.

Apart from the more routine rows around Tornal this year, Selkie was towed up to Fort William Sailing Club to help celebrate Lochaber Coastal Rowing's launch of Each Dubh (Dark Horse). We rowed up Loch Linnhe to the impressive new Thomas Telford Marina at Corpach and provided try-a-rows before a BBQ. Skiffs from Nairn, Lorn, Appin, Glencoe joined us.

Selkie was towed up to Dunstaffnage to wave off the yachts on the last leg of Clipper Challenge Round the World Race. It was a bouncy row from Dunstaffnage to Ganavan for a picnic, in company with skiffs from Glencoe, Lorn and Appin. The

largely novice crew are still dining out on tales from that day - type 2 fun! Unfortunately, Selkie suffered some damage to the bow when being trailed home, bumping off the trailer restraints on the potholes having been incorrectly tied down on leaving Dunstaffnage. She was repaired over the next week with epoxy, followed by two coats of paint.

Litter picks took place on land and by skiff, earning the club valuable funds from the GRAB (Group for Recycling in Argyll & Bute) Trust as well as providing a valuable community service.

Exceptionally high spring tides floated Selkie out of the 'boathouse', and heavy rain got into the handheld VHF radio kept in the cox's bag. Unfortunately the radio didn't work, even with a new battery. Elspeth stepped into the breach with a spare radio, thank you!

Selkie had a private charter in July, to the 'Golden Girls' - some of our convenor's winning slidey-seat crew from 50 years ago. The girls came from India, Cornwall and Blairgowrie and enjoyed stunning weather, rowing up under the bridge to Ardfad Castle and a Pimms picnic on Goat Island.

Our bespoke boathouse, the old ferry Ostrea, is being broken up for scrap, so we were moved further up the boatyard. The cover, unused for a couple of years whilst the skiff was sheltered until a ferry needed some TLC. Thanks to Alison and Julie who volunteered to clean and reproof it, James mended the breakback, replacing the emergency splint, so hopefully there are a few years of life left in it (it's over ten years old).

The skiff was washed down a couple of times during the year; fresh water is metered so we are cagey about using it and upsetting Mike.

Polo shirts joined the club merchandise this year, but were often worn under warmer clothes...

Cox training was undertaken by six members of the club at Dunstaffnage marina in September. Selkie was towed up to use, alongside Lorn Coastal Rowing Club's Cruachan. The SCRA trainers, Ann and Liz, put members of four Argyll clubs through their paces in glorious autumnal weather over the weekend. They joined us the following day for a challenging row against the tide up under the bridge, recorded on video and introducing us to Fishy Fish.

The club held a Burns Supper in February, post-panto and Storm Eowyn. 29 members and supporters, attended and members both catered and entertained.

It's been a struggle this past year to get a full crew at the same time as suitable tides, reasonable winds and daylight.

Treasurer's report:

Mary would like to thank Jean Ainsley for scrutinising the accounts. We had 22 paid up members during the 23/24 accounting year.

The only grant we had this year was from the GRAB Trust for £81.25. Our main expenses were membership of the Scottish Coastal Rowing Association, £87.50 for our website hosting. Our insurance was up very slightly to £199. The main costs for skiff maintenance was for trailer repairs of £335.50 and then there are the usual costs of boatyard gifts at xmas. Since the accounts were closed on 32 October, we have had a Burns supper raising £173 and a further grant from the Grab Trust for £50. We have also bought a new radio for £157. To date our bank account stands at £1775.96.

The accounts were proposed by Annie and seconded by Elspeth.

Election of Officers:

Annie and Julie have offered to train with Sue to job share the Bosun role. Sue said that David has previously offered to help with maintenance.

Alison offered to take on the secretary role.

Maintenance:

Jean Ainsley has kindly offered their boatshed for maintenance which would be closer to reach but the access is steeper than Rose's and there is not electricity or water so maybe not ideal. Although in next year or two, Selkie requires a complete sand down to the wood; primer, undercoat and two coats of topcoat. For this year, a basic job would be sufficient focusing on particularly below the cox's seat and gunnels. This can be carried out in the boatyard on a dry warm day. Sue has already purchased paintbrushes and gloves in the Homebase sale! It may be that the thorough paint job would be best carried out by a professional next year – to be discussed further, along with fundraising.

Forthcoming Events:

Many of the regional racing events are invitation only, as the number of skiffs has dramatically increased from 46 to >200 since the inauguration of Selkie. We do have a local informal group of skiffs with whom we share events namely Glencoe, Appin and Lorn and Luing is just restarting with their two boats, a skiff and a yoal.

The Shuna circumnavigation is to take place with that group on 2 August and will be raising money for cancer research. It is being organised by John Blackwell and there may be some races as well as the Shuna circuit and some try-a-rows with the fundraisers coming from England and Ireland.

Five Miles From Home being organised by Ireland from 1 April for five days and will involve a virtual time trial race taking approximately 1 hour. We will row from Balvicar to Degnish point and back - flat out rowing – and there can be several teams. Entry fees will be charged – whether we row or not. Details have not yet been received.

Membership fees:

It was agreed that this would remain at £10 with fundraising to be used to cover a specific cost such as maintenance.

AOCB:

The importance of keeping up numbers of rowers was highlighted and Sue said that posters are up in the shop, Seil Noticeboard, our own facebook page and on Easdale Island. She also invites any new arrivals to the island and off island choir members etc.

Sue explained that starting new members required at least two experienced rowers plus cox along with two new rowers.

It was suggested that some informal club social events could be helpful in keeping up/increasing club numbers and would be an opportunity to share experience, explain current working and discuss potential changes/improvements. Sue will ask for a volunteer to be social secretary to help with this.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Minutes taken by Alison Guest