

## In Memory of Darren Quigg



On the first Saturday of the autumn term, we were deeply honoured to host the boat naming ceremony in memory of our late friend, colleague and coach, Darren Quigg. Darren had been the Strength and Conditioning coach for the school rowing club almost since the amalgamation (and later the rugby club too) until he was sadly taken from us too soon, last year.



The presence of over 200 people within the boathouse was a powerful testament to the influence Darren had on so many lives – rowers current and past. The boat was named by his daughter Gemma, a past Captain of the rowing club, Head Girl and current COBRA Board member.

The coxed quad/four was funded by many groups of Darren's friends: current rowing club athletes, past alumni, parents, and Darren's CrossFit group of friends. We extend our sincere thanks to all who contributed to this project. The boat will serve the athletes of Coleraine GSRC for many years to come, standing as a lasting tribute to the values of commitment and dedication that Darren embodied and instilled in us all.

# Roddy Clark—CAI's Oldest Active Oarsman

## *Interview by Alan Anderson*

**Alan Anderson:** What age are you and are you one of the oldest competing oarsmen in Ireland?

**Roddy Clark:** I'm 81 – but I'm only the 2nd oldest, my double partner Stevie Smith (LSC/BRC) is the oldest.

**AA:** What years were you at school?

**RC:** I went in 1956 and left in 1961. We didn't row in the winter, so I started rowing in the summer of 1957. In fact, rowing had stopped at the school, but Mickey Eyre re-started it so we were the first ones. He just went round the class picking the tallest people, so that's how I got involved although I did have a bit of a family rowing background.

**AA:** Who was the Headmaster then?

**RC:** It was Dr Humphreys – who had just taken over from William White in 1955.

**AA:** What were your school days like?

**RC:** Well, I was a boarder until my last year, when my father retired from the army so they brought me out of boarding and we lived in Portrush. Though I much preferred being a boarder and would have liked to have stayed on as my friends were all boarders!

**AA:** I presume back then, you rowed from Bann RC as the first school boathouse pavilion wasn't built yet? How integrated or separate were the schoolboys from Bann?

**RC:** Yes, we rowed out of Bann boathouse but competed as CAI. We didn't really mix with the Bann rowers during term time. But after term ended, a few of us ended up at the Inter-Provincials rowing for Bann.

**AA:** Did the school have its own boats, stored in Bann boathouse or did you borrow theirs?

**RC:** I don't remember, but they were heavy wooden clinker eights, we never had shell boats. I remember the pulley system we used to lower and raise the boats down the steps; they were so heavy. This was in Bobby Platt's time at

Bann, though we were coached by Dan Cunningham, a physics teacher at CAI, along with arts teacher Mick Devitt (aka The Boss). Though Mickey Eyre was the number one man. He took it very seriously – we weren't allowed to go to Henley because if we got to the finals, it would have meant rowing on the Sabbath. In fact, that was one thing I didn't like about boarding at CAI – you were made to go to church in the morning and evening – walking down in a "crocodile" (a long procession of boys). Apart from this, you only got out of boarding school on a Saturday afternoon – which was one of the attractions of rowing, in that it got you away from the school more often.

**AA:** How often did you train?

**RC:** I think we were training most days, but not during the winter term. It was always in the boat; we did no land training. I remember Bann still had the upper hall in their boathouse, but I don't remember doing any training in it. I do recall an incident where one of the Bann rowers threw a shoe at me, I ducked and it smashed through one of the windows! I also remember that up in the rafters of the upstairs hall, there hung the holdall of one of the bookies who used to take bets on the regatta races back then. One particular race didn't go to plan and this bookie was going to be out of pocket, so he scarpered and left his bookie's briefcase behind and it hung in the rafters as a memento of the escapade.

**AA:** Have you stayed in contact with any of the guys you rowed with those days?

**RC:** Unfortunately, not really. Mickey



Stevie Smith (LSC) and Roddy Clarke at Brandenburg World Rowing Masters Championships 2024

Eyre was obviously on the scene for a long time. I stayed friends with Roland Woods, now in Ballymena.

**AA:** You had a family connection to Bann RC before you went to CAI?

**RC:** Yes, my grandfather, father and two uncles were all Bann RC members. I think my grandfather was Captain (or President?). Actually, my grandmother rowed (which wasn't usually allowed in those days) but the story was that the fishermen in Portrush used to race against the women and my grandmother (being well built, like my father and uncles) won the race. My uncle was the first person from CAI to be killed in WWII and his name is on the war memorial in Portrush, which was instigated by his father, my grandfather.

**AA:** What regattas do you recall racing at?

**RC:** I remember Galway Regatta and the Wray Cup, which I think we won. I remember at one Bann Regatta, Dickie Clarke (a bit of a clown, but no relative,



though he had been in Singapore with my father and got a piece of shrapnel in his head which was never removed!) tried water-skiing through the town bridge with a top hat on – but it was too low and it knocked his top hat off! And one thing which wouldn't be allowed by health and safety these days – I remember they used to fire a shotgun to signal when a crew passed the finish line.

**AA:** That brings us to my next question – what has changed most over the years?

**RC:** Well, the boats are lighter. They used to be wood, brass and leather whereas now they are carbon fibre and plastic. The intensity is probably much more nowadays. I enjoyed my school rowing and look back fondly on it. It is how I got to see Ireland. Although born in Coleraine, I had travelled the world as my father had been in the army and we had spent a year or two in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya (as it was then), Germany and England.

**AA:** What has been your rowing story since leaving CAI?

**RC:** Over the years I've rowed at Queen's, Lady Victoria, Belfast Boat Club, Belfast Rowing Club and Lagan Scullers Club. During that, I emigrated to Vancouver in 1969 for three years but didn't get round to rowing there.

**AA:** You are still competing?

**RC:** Yes, we were at Banyoles World Rowing Masters Regatta this year, as in previous years. I still enjoy the rowing. Even when I was Captain at Queens, I said studying came first, then enjoy the rowing and winning is a bonus. There's a good group of us Masters here who apart from the rowing, meet for brunch once a week. Another example of the camaraderie was that at Banyoles, I did a composite crew with Dick Galway from Calgary, a guy I had picked out of the Freshers crowd at Queens 61 years ago because he was 6'3" tall and looked like he would be good at rowing (just like Mickey Eyre did - nothing changes). He's only 80 but is still rowing so it was very satisfying to race in a composite crew with him after all these years.



1959/'60 1st VIII+

R.R.B. Craig, **N.R.C. Clarke**, R.A. Eyre Esq, P. Shannon, S.C. Crompton, D.D.T. Craig, B. Dean (stk), R.W. Woods, J.H. Boyd, C.J. Patterson (cox), R.A.C. Davis (cox).

**AA:** Weren't you awarded the Masters year friendship. Rowing "Octo" medal?

**RC:** Yes, last year at Brandenburg, we were presented with our Octogenarian Active Rower Society (OARS) medals.

**AA:** What is your best rowing memory?

**RC:** Well, it is probably winning the Senior Pot (of Ireland) on the Bann, for Queens BC in 1962 – which they have not won since.

**AA:** ...and your worst?

**RC:** One I'd rather forget was a race (Wray Cup maybe) where I came off my seat – but in those days the seats were more prone to getting stuck. One year at the Senior Championships, Dr Humphreys was in attendance when someone gave me a bottle of beer which met with his stern disapproval. Things were much stricter back then. Dress code was rigorously enforced – you'd be belted if you took your jacket off on a hot summer's day, or even threw or kicked a ball on a Sunday.

**AA:** What have or do you get from rowing?

**RC:** Mainly friendships and social contact. My current double partner Stevie was my cox when I stroked the Queen's eight in 1965, so that's a 60-

year friendship.  
**AA:** When you were a kid at school, did you think you would still be rowing at 81 and what would you say to today's athletes?

**RC:** No, not at all, there was no such thing as Masters rowing back then though people did keep rowing into adulthood. I would commend today's rowers to stay with the sport beyond their school years.

**AA:** Without being rude, how long do you intend to keep rowing and competing?

**RC:** Well, I've no plans to stop yet, as long as Stevie keeps going, though he's like a spring chicken compared to me. I would also like to continue rowing with Lady Victoria Boat Club as long as they will have me! I still enjoy the excitement of competition, even if I've gotten used to getting beaten more often than not, but I don't go home and cry in my beer.

Most of my friends are in rowing. Like a band of brothers, you go through things together, the weather, the training, the racing – it's not always fun but you have the character-building experience together. It enhances the friendships in ways other experiences don't.

# COBRA Members Update

## BUCS Head

The 2025 season began with BUCS Head on the Tyne in February for our student COBRA members. Rachel Bradley, Kirsty Dalzell, Fergus Bryce and John Harte collectively picked up 1 gold, 3 silvers and a bronze over the weekend.



## BUCS Regatta

Once again, our student members excelled themselves representing their universities at BUCS Regatta. Congratulations to Newcastle for winning the Victor Ludorum!

Highlights are as follows: Rachel and Molly came away with gold medals in the W Champ VIII+ and Inter 1x respectively. John also picked up golds in the W Beginner VIII+ and IV+. Fergus raced to a silver medal position in the Open Champ 2x, and Kirsty secured the win in the B final of the W Champ Lwt 2x.

## London Met

Rachel, Molly, Kirsty and Fergus raced well down the 8-lane course at Eton Dorney in June! Many A finals were made with Molly placing 3rd in the W Ch 1x, Kirsty placing 5th in the W Ch 4x and Rachel 6th in the W Ch VIII+.

## Henley Women's Regatta

Molly, Rachel, Kirsty and John all convincingly qualified with their crews from the time trials on Friday. In the afternoon Rachel's Champ VIII+ defeated Edinburgh University 'A' in the heats. John's development IV+ drew

Oxford Brookes, then unfortunately missed out on the quarter finals. Molly started off Saturday with a confident win in her heat, progressing her to the semi-final. Kirsty's Academic VIII+ fought with Bath University 'A' in the heats but in this round were knocked out. Rachel's VIII+ drew the eventual winners of the championship category, just missing out on a spot in the semi by 1.5 lengths. On Sunday Molly faced Olympian Imogen Grant in the semi of the Champ singles. After an excellent race by both scullers in a tough headwind, Imogen came away with the win, later going on to win the category.



## Henley Royal Regatta

Rachel and her VIII+ from Newcastle University competed in the Island Challenge Cup. The crew convincingly won against St Andrews and Oxford Universities on Thursday and Friday respectively. On Saturday they faced Oxford Brookes 'A'. The crews battled right to the line with Newcastle winning by a foot, progressing to Sunday's final against Rutgers University. Although Rutgers came away with the win, we couldn't be prouder of Rachel and her crew, twice Henley Royal finalists, and BUCS gold medallists.

Another mention goes to Graham Hunter, Captain of Vesta Rowing club. Vesta made history on Friday at qualifiers. They not only pre-qualified their Wyfold IV but also qualified their 'A', 'B' and 'C' VIII+ in the Thames Challenge Cup.



## Irish Championships

Molly Curry started the weekend strong by reclaiming the Intermediate 2x Championship (previously winning this title in 2022). John Harte coxed the Women's Novice 4x+ to victory on Saturday morning, securing another Irish title!



## International events

Rachel fought a tough battle to finish 4th in the final of the Women's Double Sculls at the FISU World University Games. Whilst Fergus Bryce competed at EUSA in Bydgoszcz, Poland. After placing an impressive 2nd place in the Open 2x at BUCS Regatta, Fergus and his doubles partner qualified their boat to represent the UK at this prestigious event eventually winning the B final.





# CGS Rowing Club 2024/25

The 2025 season saw Coleraine GS Rowing Club travel all over Ireland and compete against some of the best clubs in the country, collecting wins across many categories. As always a lot of hard work put in by the athletes, coaches and parents throughout the year and thanks has to go to every volunteer helping make these things possible.

## Lagan HOR - March

CGS rowers enjoyed great success at Lagan Head of the River, Belfast in the first races of the 2025 season. We were delighted to win four categories, WJ18 1x, WJ18 4x+, WJ15 4x+ and MJ15 4x+. We also had several notable second places, none more so than the M Club2 2x coming 2nd out of seven boats, four being from Queens University Boat Club. All our rowers performed well in beautiful spring sunshine.



## Lagan Scullers Club HOR - March

At Lagan Scullers Club Head of the River in March, Coleraine GS enjoyed seven category wins from J15 through to J18. Unfortunately, on Friday evening we had to take a disappointing decision and withdraw our relatively inexperienced J14 crews for safety reasons. It proved to be a good call as races were shortened in distance due to difficult conditions on the Lagan.

## Commercial Regatta, Dublin – April

We were delighted to win five events all at our very strong J15 age group, both boys and girls. That does not take away from the fantastic achievements of other crews from our J14 boys and girls in their very first race through to the Senior Girls who fought through to a final just to miss out on the win in a



thrilling race.

Our MJ16 4x+ likewise won a heat and quarter final only to be knocked out by the eventual winner and home crew from Commercial RC. Such is the popularity of rowing, all regattas are oversubscribed resulting in time trials to decide which two crews get to face off in a final. In the MJ16 1x we just missed out in the TT, Johnny came a very respectable fourth out of 19 crews. Ryan and Joshua likewise were fourth out of 11 in J18 2x and Stevie and Matthew 4th out of seven in Club1 2x. All showing these crews are well in the mix for future medals. Our Club2 4x+ just lost out in another close final again losing to the host club, Commercial.

## Portadown Regatta – May

We had 11 medal winning crews at Portadown Regatta with some rowers from our Junior club in Year 10 through to the Seniors in Year 14 taking home medals. We won in nearly every category on offer at the regatta spanning from Single, Double, Quadruple Sculls and the MJ18 8+.

Every rowing medal is hard fought for.

Johnny B won a heat and semi-final only to miss out in the final by one foot after 1400 meters in the J16 1x category. Our J18 boys and girls 4x- plus our MJ16 4x+ all fought through to finals but just failed to turn the final race into gold. Our WJ16 1x led her final for 90% of the race when a momentary lapse in concentration cost her the race.

We were extremely proud of all 57 of rowers many racing for the first time, not only in their effort and sportsmanship but how they represented CGS away from the school. I was told on numerous occasions what lovely young people our rowers are.



## Lough Rinn Regatta – May

Congratulations to our Senior Oarswomen Elena and Daisy who came





a very credible 4th place in the Under 19 2x category at Lough Rinn Regatta. This is one of the top regattas in Ireland and it's pleasing to see the girls can compete with the some of the best.



#### Trinity Regatta, Dublin – May

Trinity Regatta saw Coleraine GSRC win three categories in a highly competitive environment on the Liffey. Our WJ18 1x fought through heats to eventually win in a category of 18 other scullers. The Girls and Boys J15 4x+ brought home brilliant wins in their respective categories following some of the best racing of the regatta. Our W Club1 1x had an unlucky draw coming up against the category's eventual winner in the first round and also our MJ16 4x+ fought hard through to the final before coming up against a simply better crew.

#### Belfast Sprints Regatta – May

Coleraine GS rowers took four category wins and were in a few other races that were nail biting races for the CGS supporters. We won the MJ16 8x+, WJ16

8x+ and the MJ18 2x. The best win from a coaching development perspective was the WJ14 8x+, winning with seven girls racing for the very first time.

#### Athlone Regatta – June

This regatta, due to its central location, draws crews from virtually every club in Ireland. The rowers braved torrential rain at times, but it didn't put our rowers off. Success followed in the MJ18 1x and also MJ14 4x+. We won a further six categories with both Boys and Girls at J15. The majority of our crews who didn't get gold on this occasion came second giving great incentive for the future.



#### Erne Fours HOR – November

Particular praise goes to our MJ15A 4x+ who won their category beating crews from Enniskillen, Methody, Galway and Dublin. This is one of the hardest long-distance races in the calendar. Our MJ15B 4x+ unfortunately suffered an equipment malfunction which was frustrating for all concerned. Our other two crews, MJ18 4x- and WJ15 4x+ were just off the pace of the category winners.

#### QUBBC HOR – November

Coleraine GS took wins in four categories; MJ16 VIII+, MJ15 8x+, MJ15 4x+ and WJ15 8x+. The rowers also achieved some hard fought second places in the MJ18 2x, MJ16 4x+, MJ16 2x and WJ18 2x, WJ15 4x+. The aforementioned victories came over strong crews from Methodist College Belfast, Bann RC and Blackrock College Dublin.





# Through the Archives

## 5 Years ago - 2020

The 2019/20 season began much like any other, with rowers eager to build on the previous year's momentum. Early success came from Head races, with crews bringing home several pennants. However Covid-19 halted everything, the rest of the season's racing and even on the water training had to be cancelled.

The rowers kept going regardless, training by themselves on ergs in garages and living rooms in anticipation of getting back on the water. Clubs across Ireland introduced a series of "Virtual Regattas" which, although far from a true replacement, offered both racing opportunities and a touch of normality.

International competition continued despite the disruption, with Molly Curry and Hugh Moore both representing Ireland at the Junior and Under-23 World Championships respectively.



## 10 Years ago - 2015

2015 marked both an ending and beginning. CAI amalgamated with Coleraine High School and CAIBC transforming into CGSRC. Resources were initially stretched, and COBRA members stepped in to support the day-to-day running until Jeremy Johnson took over as Head Coach.

Regatta season saw the club compete under its new name for the first time and brought respectable result, including the first wins for Girls crews, many of whom had only started rowing earlier that year.

## 15 Years ago - 2010

This year saw the appointment of Chris Black, a CAI old boy as coach of CAIBC, who after a turbulent previous season brought some much needed stability to the club. Laying the groundwork for the club's gradual return to prominence in Irish Rowing. The club also raced in Great Britain again, ending a long absence from competition there.

## 50 Years ago - 1975

Looking further back, The 1974/75 season was one of the most successful seasons in the clubs history. Wins accumulated throughout the year, culminating in victory in Schoolboy VIII+ Championship of Ireland. This crew went on to represent Ireland at the Home International Regatta, where they finished second.







**We're excited to announce we've partnered with Sport NI Olympic Legacy Fund to invest in rowing equipment at Coleraine Grammar School Rowing Club!**

**Sport NI has pledged £30,500** to our Crowdfunder, on the condition that we raise at least £16,500 within six weeks (**closing 9th January 2026**). There is no upper limit to what we can raise during this period, and every pound donated will go directly towards new equipment for the rowing club. This is a fantastic opportunity to deliver truly transformational change for our athletes and our club.

Please check out our Crowdfunder page, spread the word, and consider supporting if you can – every donation makes a difference!

**[www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/cobra-rowing-into-the-community-1](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/cobra-rowing-into-the-community-1)**

Reminder if you are a UK taxpayer to tick the Gift Aid box when donating.



For more information on COBRA or rowing past or present at CAI & CGS, visit our website at

[COBRARowing.co.uk](http://COBRARowing.co.uk)

or

[facebook.com/COBRARowing](https://facebook.com/COBRARowing)

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If you have any comments or would like to contribute to the next newsletter, please get in touch at [alex.humphrey@gmail.com](mailto:alex.humphrey@gmail.com)

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