

Durham Amateur Rowing Club

(Founded 5th December 1860)



TIMELINE of CLUB HISTORY 1860 -- 2010 ADDENDUM 2017

*The Club's Minute Book which covers the years 1921 to 1951 was missing at the time I wrote this timeline in 2010 – it was eventually found in the attic of John Short's former home in 2017! I have revised this section of the timeline using this minute book. **New material in red.***

- 1923 The President, J.G.Burrell presented a challenge cup to be rowed for each year at the club's scratch fours races. **The Club also received a donation of £5 used to purchase a trophy for the annual single sculls race – “The Cutter Cup”.**
It seems that maintenance of the Boathouse had been neglected and work was put in hand to replace spouting , fit grills over the windows, repair inside and boat racks and repairs and adjustments to doors.
- 1924 **The Club agreed to be members of a Northern Amateur Rowing Council. The insurance of “the property etc” was increased to £750. Opening of the Boathouse to take place on 5th April (the practice of locking the Boathouse and closing the Club for the winter continues).**
- 1925 **Apparently St. Mary's College had been keeping a boat in the boathouse for several years – they were asked to leave as the Club needed the space. Set of fours oars purchased from Aylings for £10 .12. 0**
- 1928 The Club produced the best crew for many years which won all the major events at the northern regattas. This crew comprised: R.R.Powney, J.W.Walton, J.Hopper, stroke R.Powney, cox W.E.Coldicott.
The President, J.G.Burrell and Secretary, H.M.Coyne organised a subscription list of past and present members and local businessmen and raised the cost of a new fine four for them. Built by Browns it was named “J.G.Burrell”. Launched on 25th April 1929. The Club also purchased three sets of four box loom oars from Aylings for £10 per set. At this time 1st crew oars were dark blue with two 2” gold bands, 2nd crew were light blue with two 2” gold bands and 3rd crew were light blue with one 3” gold band. Rowing Zephyrs (shirts) were trimmed similarly.
- 1930 **The Club paid a bill from J.Brown for £56-18-3 for overhauling all the boats.**

- 1931 Executive Committee agreed that the Club fall in line with other Clubs and start using sliding seats for Maiden Oarsmen for future rowing. (*Maidens were novice oarsmen*).
- 1932 Mr J.G.Burrell resigned as President due to ill health and Mr. G.R.Mackay was elected.
- 1934 Ordered two new clinker fours from Browns , cost £65 each with £10 allowance on the old boats and £2-10-0 discount. These were launched in April 1935. One named Martha after the wife of R. W.G.Mitham the Club Captain and one Edith after the wife of H.M.Coyne the Club Secretary. (*The Martha was still in service up until around 1970, the Edith having been sold to York City for £75 in 1955*).
- 1937 Long serving Captain R.W.G.Mitham (18 years) moved to Stalham , Norfolk and was replaced by J.F.H.Veitch. A dinner was held for him in the Three Tuns where he was presented with a gift of a bureau.
- 1938 Mr. H.M.Coyne retired after 16 years as secretary – replaced by W.M.Dwyer. The Boathouse was formally opened for the season on 2nd April.
- 1939 The only crew selected for regattas was a maiden crew – due to lack of members. The Boathouse was in poor repair and work was commissioned on re-slating the roof, new gutters and barge boards and external painting. In November it was agreed to keep the Club open for the duration of the War so that members on leave could use the facilities. Mr. Thurlow took charge of the club bicycle and flag for the duration. There seems to have been only very occasional use of boats 1939 - 1945.

Throughout the period of this minute book – 1923 – 1951, a recurring item is the issue of collecting overdue subscriptions from members!

The main source of income appears to have been profit from the Regatta Ball each June and the New Years Eve Dance. A small group of members (J.F.H.Veitch, W.M.Dwyer, J.R.Thurlow, W.R.Martin, J.Hopper, W.Wright, H.M.Coyne) kept the Club going 1939 to 1945, holding an AGM and running the New Years Eve dance each year – this made substantial profit and meant the Club was in a healthy financial position when rowing resumed.

The fine four G.R.Mackay, which was the first four boat until 1962, was built by Brown's in the 1930's. Date of purchase does not appear in the Minute Book. Custom has it that G.R.Mackay, Club President and owner of Durham Carpet Factory paid for it.

- 1945 A donation of £10 was made towards cost of repair being undertaken on the Museum (*Old Fulling Mill*) Dam – with the promise of another £10 when work was completed. This work was not completed until 1948 – total cost c£600.
- At the AGM the Secretary read a list of eight members killed on active service in the War and the meeting stood in silence for one minute in remembrance of :-
- A.R.Telford, RAF, 1940,**
J.F.Edge, Lt. HM Army 1942,
Harry Mossop, Lt. HM Army 1944
A.Raine , RAF, 1944
Richard Longstaff, Royal Navy 1944
Richard Beattie, Sub Lt. Royal Navy 1944
Charles.A.Riley, Major HM Army 1945.
Harold.Bailey. RAF.

- 1946 The practise of locking the Boathouse each October to be re-opened at the end of March ceased after 1940 and it was left open for occasional use of members during the War.
The Club seems to have operated all the year round from 1946 – possibly because less of the members were also playing members of the rugby club.
Either shortly before the war, or immediately afterwards, the old rule on amateur status was changed. Originally any person who was a tradesman or artisan earning a living by working with his hands could not join an amateur club or compete in an amateur race. This was changed so that only professional boatmen were excluded. The Club's membership for 1946 includes joiners, bricklayers, electricians, plumbers and coal miners. **There was an influx of “upwards of 30 new members presenting themselves in the evenings” in early 1946. Captain John Veitch and Vice-Captain Jack Thurlow were assisted with coaching by C.Dent, J.Thompson, E.Coldicot and L.Shaw. In November the Club had 38 members who had won 8 trophies. A new fine four was ordered from Browns.**
- 1947 **Proposal to provide lighting in the Boathouse – to explore possible provision of electric or gas lighting or buy oil lamps if cost was prohibitive.(this indicates that the Club was operating all year round – in fact the old Boathouse never did have gas or electric supplied).**
Fine four “Kit” was sold to St. Cuthberts for £20.
- 1948 The Club once again had an all conquering first four who were invited to compete in the Olympic Games final trials at Henley. Bow Ronnie Layfield (a colliery electrician), 2- Joe McGregor (City Council joiner), 3 Bill Golightly (legal executive), stroke Peter Mills (a plumber) and cox Bobby Brown. Only Bill Golightly would have qualified for membership of the club in earlier times. **The President , L.H.Mackay donated £50 and three Durham Carpets from his factory towards the cost of £150 to send the crew and coaches to Henley. (the carpets were offered as prizes in a raffle which raised £162).**
The Club sent a letter to Henley Regatta in support of a letter from DUBC requesting Henley to consider including an event for coxed fours. (This was an ongoing campaign, Henley finally adding a coxed four to their programme in 1963). In view of the introduction of eights racing at Tyne Regatta, the Club started considering purchase of an eight. Browns reported that they could not fulfil the order for a fine four (possibly because J.Brown had died and they did not have a master boat builder) and an order was placed with G.R.Sims of Hammersmith.
- 1949 The Hon. Sec. (W.M.Dwyer) reported that he was convening a meeting with DUBC , Durham School and South Shields with a view to forming a County Association. **(The County Association existed from 1949 until the early 1970's and competed in the County Eights event on the Tyne each year).**
The Executive considered a letter from the ARA regarding the amalgamation of the ARA with the National Rowing Association and Scottish ARA and decided to support this proposal. (the ARA clubs like DARC were traditional amateur clubs with predominately middle class membership and strict rules on amateur status. The National Association Clubs had allowed rowing for cash and other prizes and often used handicapping in races with a working class membership of dock workers, coal

miners etc. NRA clubs in north east included Chester-le-Street, Cambois, Tyne United and Hexham. The merger with ARA and NRA finally took place in mid 1950's).

- 1950 Repairs were carried out to the Boathouse roof and decoration inside and out. G.D.McPhee was paid £64. 15. 0 for painting and G.W. Blakey was paid £82. 18. 10 for roofing.
Mr.Stan Turner, a master at the Johnston School, requested permission to use the club boats on one afternoon a week – initial this was refused as “any form of dual control in the Club was undesirable”, later in the year Johnston school boys started rowing at the Club.
A clinker built eight was bought from Newcastle University for £50. New riggers were ordered for the old fine fours “Burrell”, “Ornsby” and “1928” of swivel pattern. *(these boats must have still had fixed pin riggers at this date).*
- 1951 New fine four named “L.H.Mackay” ,which had been ordered in 1948, was delivered in April from G.R.Sims at a cost of £175. 15.0 . Mr.Mackay, the club President donated £20 and two carpets, which were the main prizes in a prize draw which raised £145. This boat was not built as specified being flat bottomed and heavy and was never a success – the club’s first four preferring to use the pre war “G.R.Mackay” right up until 1962 when it was replaced with a boat built by Browns of Durham – named “J.Eric Brown”.
- 1952 On 7th March a meeting of 17 northern clubs was held in the Royal County Hotel, Durham. It was agreed to formally constitute the Northern Rowing Council as Division 7 of Group 111 of the Amateur Rowing Association. This was the first official north east grouping of ARA clubs (previously the division for the whole of the north of England had operated from the Birmingham Conference) .