

Stour Sailing Club

Coastal Rowing Project June 2016 – May 2017

Since 2008 some Club members have been rowing their own Claydon Skiffs both for fun and in races around the region. During that time Coastal Rowing has become more and more popular nationally and now there are lots of new local coastal rowing clubs, and increasing numbers of sailing clubs that also have rowing sections.



LOTTERY FUNDED

At the beginning of 2016 year the Club agreed to set up a coastal rowing project to increase the opportunities for people to get involved in rowing for fun and competition. It took a while to get there but with the help of a £10,000 grant from Sport England Lottery Fund, the Club has a brand new Harker's Yard Gig launched on 1st October

The Coastal Rowing project funded by the Sport England Grant ran from the 1st June 2016 to 31st May 2017. The project has also been supported by a donation from the Rose Family in memory of William Rose for whom the Gig is named.

The aim of the project was to increase the opportunities for people to get involved in rowing, by holding Club Rowing sessions that any member can sign up for, and opportunities for non members to have a go without having to join the Club first. Our participation targets were to get at least fifty people out rowing during the year, and to race as a Club with men's, women's and mixed teams in the Harker's Yard winter series between October 2016 and February 2017.

At the end of the project the Club had to report back to Sport England on how well we did against those targets:

Target 1:

- Organise Regular Club Rowing Sessions

Achievement: **Target Met**

- Two Club Rowing sessions were held each week (one weekday and one weekend) week during the year when tide, light and weather conditions allowed
- 59 organised Club Rowing Sessions were held during the year (**not** including races or sessions that had to be cancelled due to bad weather). Some of these included more than one boat or crew.
- 350 individual club 'rows' (**not** including races)

Target 2:

- Get 50 people having a go at rowing

Achievement : **Target Met**

- 55 different individuals rowed at least once during the period

Target 3:

- Field women's, men's and mixed teams to compete in the 2016-17 Harker's Yard Winter Series.

Achievement: **Target Met**

- We fielded a Men's, Women's and Mixed Crew were fielded in every single race over the nine events in the series (27 races in total)
- At the end of the series Stour Sailing Club finished a very creditable 9th overall out of fourteen Gigs, and took a stunning 3rd place overall in the last event of the season.

And Finally..... Over the year 22 women and 33 men rowed with the Club. Our women worked hard – eight women rowed over the winter series while eleven men rowed over the same number of races. We are not young – our average age over the year was 55+ - but we are keen – and we gave the younger crews a run for their money!

This Log aims to show the fun and activity behind the numbers.

Sunday May 22 – Push the Boat out Day

Slightly ahead of the 'Official' start of the Project, in May the 'Rowers' took part in the Club's very successful RYA Push the Boat out day. The Claydon Skiffs Witchoar and Lt. Washington spent the whole time out on the water apart from embarking and disembarking crews. Witchoar even had a fresh coat of paint for the occasion.

Nineteen new rowers came out to 'have a go', most of them liked it, some enjoyed it enough to join the Club and keep rowing, and some went on to race for the Club later in the year. The Push the Boat Event is not included in our participation numbers for Sport England.



June 4 & 5 - Rowing Festival

Only two weeks later it was time for the two day Manningtree Rowing Festival with lots of visiting coastal rowing clubs and boats from as far afield as Gravesend and North Norfolk. The first day focussed on our local boats the Claydon Skiffs, and some of our 'push the boat out' rowers gamely returned for another go and raced in the Skiffs along with visiting Claydon Skiffs and crews on a slightly gloomy day.

The weather for the second day of the event was warm and sunny and twenty visiting boats of all types, and crews from all over the East Coast joined us for a race to Wrabness, and back to tell the tale. The second day also included a micro series race as part of our starts and finishes and it was great to see so many people both rowing and sailing enjoying the weather and the water.



Sunday June 26

Following the Rowing Festival we had a period of wet and windy weather, with much bailing out of boats but no rowing possible.

On 26 June Club Rowing started in earnest and Lt Washington went out twice with some established crew members and some returning 'Push the Boat Out-ers'.



Saturday 2 July

The first day of the Tour de France and two boats out on the water for the Tour de Stour, a mixture of "old" and "new" rowers, and with a very novice Cox for Witchoar. The sun thought about shining, but was largely put off by the wind and the clouds - although the rain held off. We rowed over to the Pink House where there was almost a mutiny by the Witchoar crew who realised that all of the sweets were on board Lt. Washington. Disaster was averted by a sneaky sidle up to Washington to acquire sweets (we be pirates indeed). Then a choppy row across to Mistley Quay and home, hugging the shoreline along the Walls. The stiff breeze made for a tricky run up to the Club Quay - but we made it safely back to the Club for tea and biscuits.



Sunday 17 July

A lovely day for a row - a bit cloudy and quite windy - but getting hotter as the morning went on. On the way we saw the largest number of sailing boats and canoes out on the water so far this year – and were even joined by a cargo ship coming in to Mistley Quay. It was a long hard row down to the Beacon, and an even harder row for most of the way back until the wind dropped a little and a good six miles there and back.

Saturday 23 July – Round Canvey Island Race

The Round Canvey Race is one of the highlights of the summer 'away' programme, a 17 miles row which takes close to three hours in a Claydon Skiff.

The event this year took place on 23 July. Lt. Washington took the trip to Benfleet Yacht Club for the race and the crew included two of our new Rowers who had started rowing only at the Push the Boat out event two months before. We promised them that it would be fun, and it was (at least once we had finished!)



Sunday 31 July

A lovely day for a row as we took a trip down to the Beacon and back - with the river almost to ourselves.



Wednesday 3 August

Our first weekday Club Row, and the first of many opportunities for those lucky people who have time during the week.



Saturday 6 August

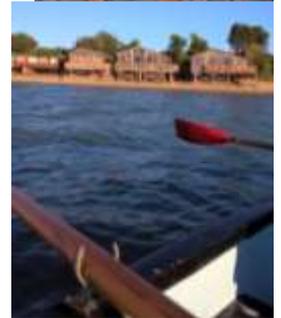
Another beautiful day to visit the Pink House

Tuesday 9 August

A lovely afternoon row, leaving the Quay for trip down to the Beacon and a choppy, windy row back via the Quay.

Friday 12 August

An evening row down to Wrabness and back - a bit blustery and choppy on the way down, and a wine gum stop after number 4 before a row back. Then back to quality test the beer at the Club - still excellent and even better after an eight mile row!



Saturday 13 August

Our second evening row in as many days. Lovely conditions, flat calm, no wind and a beautiful sunset.

Tuesday 23 August

Windy conditions had meant that no rowing was possible over the weekend of 20-21 August.

Tuesday 23 was hot and sunny for an afternoon row. A tough old pull out to the pink house - against a stiff sea breeze and strong tide. Then back past the Quay and the Walls where we were forced to send the Cox over the side to go and get ice lollies for the rowers. What nicer way could there be to spend a weekday August afternoon - luxury!





Friday 26 August

Friday evening found us out on another row across to the Pink House and back via the Quay. A hot evening made much more pleasant by a decent sea breeze which even tempted a few sailors out before it died away. Just for a change it was a pleasant row over and a bit of a slog back.

Sunday 28 August

Another nice morning row - leaving at the top of the tide at 9am (we didn't fancy an 8am start on a Bank Holiday Sunday).

We sailed down the river on a good sea breeze, but it was rather harder work coming back against the breeze and the tide! Then Coffee and a natter in the Club before getting on with the rest of the day.



Monday 29 August

Last row for some before the Great River Race and a decent row down to Wrabness and back.



Tuesday 30 August

The lucky mid-week rowers get to go out again

Saturday 3 September

Each year since 2008 at least one boat and crew from Manningtree has taken part in the Great River Race. This year was the first time we had entered as a SSC crew and we took Lt. Washington with a mixed veteran crew for the 22 mile race from Docklands to Ham along with 330 other traditional fixed seat rowing boats.



Manningtree Witchoars Crossing the line at Ham



The Stour Sailing Club crew – the 'Manningtree Witchoars' completed the course in choppy, windy conditions in 3hrs and 41 seconds, coming home as the second mixed veteran crew overall.

After the River Race we took a bit of a break for holidays and the Club's World Micro-Championships and then we were back on the water.

Friday 23 September

Late afternoon row in almost perfect conditions to celebrate the day after the autumn equinox - making the most of the opportunity. We took a trip up to the bridges and back and then along to Mistley Quay - then across to the Pink House and back home - really good going for two new rowers. Still no sight of the Seal - but plenty of swans!



Tuesday 27 September

Early morning row reversing the triangle - over to the Pink House then a tough row against the wind across to the far side of Mistley Boatyard - pausing only to say hi to Clive (Lt Washington's former owner) as we passed Mistley Tea Rooms and then back for a coffee in the Club.

Lovely morning rounded off by a trip to pick up our lovely new Club Gig.

Saturday 1 October Launch of William Rose





Launch Day – first time in the water and first row



First William Rose Club Row – Tuesday 4 October

A choppy, windy day but we had had to cancel our planned row on the Sunday as it was too windy and we were determined to go out. So we had a challenging first 'proper' row after the launch. Our first excursion took us up to the Cattawade Bridges – passing by the Rose Builders building to say hello and show her off. Then back down to the Quay and back – trying to get the hang of Gig rowing.



Saturday 8 October

Out for another go – with a different crew and with Will trying out a very different technique for rowing the Gig.



Saturday 8 October – Further Afield

Two SSC Rowers Sarah and Sharon took part in the Fixed Seat European Rowing Cup at Lake Maggiore in Italy, rowing with Rowhedge Coastal Rowing Club in 'Gozzi' boats.

They did well, making it through the heats to the women's final where they came in sixth. They had such a good time that we might well see if we can get an invitation for Stour Sailing Club in 2017



Sharon and Sarah – Bow and no 2 on Lake Maggiore



Thursday 13 October

William Rose went for a Boy's trip out, on another wet and blustery day. Despite the conditions and lack of practice they made it to the Pink House for a coffee break where they ordered bacon rolls to be provided back at the Club. The weather cheered up a bit mid-trip and they enjoyed it enough to want to do it again the next week!

Saturday 15 October

Our last chance to have a go in the Gig before the first races in the Harker's Yard Winter Series on Sunday - and it meant that all of the crew had rowed in the Gig at least once although not for long and not together! Sharon had her race watch on and we tried various techniques and stroke speeds to see what effect they had. Sharon and Caroline practiced coxing skills along the way. The overall verdict was that we all needed a lot more practice!



Sunday 16 October

The first of the winter series of Harker's Yard Gig races and we were off to Brightlingsea along with twelve other Harker's Yard Gigs. Our objective was to have fun, and if possible, not to come last. We succeeded on both counts.



Post Race picture of the Crew



Yes the fenders were supposed to be out!

Across the three races (men's, women's and mixed) we came home 11th out of 13 Gigs on the day. The women's crew did really well, coming 7th out of 13 Gigs in a close competition. There is a video of the women's crew crossing the finish line <https://www.facebook.com/marcel.mcclarnon/videos/10210054397663911/>
A good first time out with plenty of room to improve over the series.



Wednesday 19 October

Another Boy's trip out on a very windy day. They had a bit of a blow down along the north shore almost to the Beacon and then a hard, bouncy row home. They did well and earned their coffee and doughnuts in the Club afterwards,

Thursday 20 October

Another mixed day weather wise but the rain did not put off our rowers and we took William Rose out twice with two different crews.



We picked up Ted and Jean from the Quay in the rain for their first row in the Gig. Ted is a member of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen - he said that they make a cup of tea when it rains, but came for a row anyway. In the end the sun eventually came out as we took a trip under both bridges, passing by the Rose Builders Building first. The tide was so high that it almost looked as if there was no room under the bridges – and we disturbed a Heron into flight as we came into the lagoon on the Suffolk side of the estuary.

Our first row took us over to the Pink House where we stopped for jelly babies and a bit of chat. Then we rowed back to the Club Quay to disembark crew and to pick up more rowers.



Great excitement on our return as we had picked up the frame and cover for William Rose earlier in the day and could cover her up safely until the next row when we next have some water in day light on Thursday morning.

Thursday 27 October

A lovely morning mid week row in William Rose, taking a tour round the Jewson's wharf works - admiring the pontoon brought in for the works - well hidden out of sight from the beach - and then off to the Pink House, back via the Quay and back home where we were met by Jane's children Martha and Alexander who were keen to help get the boat back in the compound (in between looking for Jelly fish that is). Beautiful calm weather, with just a hint of the sun breaking through - what could be better?



Saturday 29 October

Getting some practice in for the second leg of the Harker's Yard Winter Series. Another fantastic day, more like Spring than autumn - flat calm, sunny and warm - what nicer start to the day could there be. Helena and Ruby came along for the trip.

Sunday 30 October

Second Race in the Harker's Yard Winter Series and a trip to Rowhedge along with thirteen other Harker's Yard Gigs. Sadly William Rose picked up some damage at launch which meant that we could not row her in the races. However the William Rose crews raced in Tyrant, gallantly lent to us by Rowhedge CRC for the occasion.



Women's crew in action

Across the three races (women's, men's and mixed) the crews did really well with the women coming home 8th out of 14, the men 12th and the mixed crew a brilliant 5th. The results placed us 11th out of 14 in the league so far, but only two points away from 8th.

Tuesday 1 November

The Club Row went out in Witchoar to test the theory "train hard, race easy". A definite change in the weather with the beginning of November and a more autumnal feel. We took a turn to inspect the continuing work on the Wharf and cast envious glances at the sadly only temporary pontoon before heading off to the Pink House for jelly babies. We even practiced some sprints for the next race.



Thursday 3 November

Another trip for the 'Boys', this time out for a lunchtime row in Witchoar. Apparently a good time was had by all, but they forgot to take a photo so we have no proof!



Toughing it out in Witchoar

Sunday 6 November

The weather forecast had predicted gales. In the event the winds were strong, but not gale force and it was cold and wet, the first of our real 'winter' rows. However, we had ten people up for rowing and although we thought about just going for coffee instead we thought that having got down to the Quay we might as well go out.

Both Witchoar and Pyefleet (borrowed from the Pioneer Trust for a little while) were out today. Over to the Pink House and back with Tim as impromptu safety boat, then back to the Club to unfreeze.





Sunday 13 November

The day before had been miserable, pouring with rain and windy and we had had to cancel our planned Club Row. However the forecast for Sunday was better and so it proved as we set off for Mersea Island for the third leg of the Harker's Yard Winter Race Series. The day was also Remembrance Sunday, with the two minute silence observed on the water. The event was hosted by Mersea Island Coastal Rowing Club at the Dabchicks Sailing Club. We had a good day for our third ever race event in a Harker's Yard Gig. We were joined by Keith and Maria both in their first races for the Club, and Keith racing without having rowed in a Gig before. This time we competed in Pyefleet, trying to win the record for the crew rowing in a different Gig for each race! Fourteen Gigs took part and the Stour Sailing Club Teams came home 9th in the men's and mixed and 8th in the women's. Overall that kept us at tenth in the league for the time being – and still hoping to move up over the series.



Velocity observing the two minute silence



Post Race Team Photo



Lift Out

Rowing carries on all year round but sailing less so. At the beginning of November most of the cruisers are craned in to the compound for lift out.

With the club compound is full of Cruisers there is no access to get the Gig in the water via the Compound and the West Hard.

Rowing on home waters will carry on through the winter in Witchoar which can be left on a mud mooring over the winter.

We are all looking forward to lift in at the end of April when we will be able to use William Rose again for Club Rows and also get Lt Washington back on the water.

Tuesday 15 November

The lucky mid-week rowers were out again. This time in Witchoar as the lift out of the Cruisers was in full swing and the compound was full of cranes, boat tractors and cruisers. It will not be possible to launch the Gig from the West Hard again until after the lift in in the Spring.

A beautiful morning for the middle of November, and we practiced swapping sides and places followed by a sprint back from Portishead to the finish line – always a courageous exercise in a half ton Claydon Skiff but we need to do it more often if we are to have a chance of moving up the league.

Then back to the Club House for coffee after a quick break to help move some of the smaller cruisers to their winter home in the East Compound.



Saturday 26 November

A beautiful morning for rowing, flat calm and bright. It would have been even better if Witchoar had not been full of water, including the fore and aft compartments (clearly not water tight compartments). There followed lots of frantic bailing before we finally set off for a row. Nick joined us this morning and did brilliantly well on his first time out. Then back to the Club for coffee and cake, no better way to start the weekend.

Sunday 27 November



Getting Ready for the Mass Start for the Women's Race

A cold and early start as we took William Rose to Stone Sailing Club at St Lawrence to take part in the fourth race meeting of the Harker's Yard Winter Race Series. Fourteen of the current seventeen Harker's Yard Gigs took part. Launching from the beach, and with a mass start rather than the more usual time trial format made for some exciting starts and racing, especially round the marks.

The races were a bit longer than usual over a triangular course of 2 miles or so in choppy and cold conditions. At the end of the day the results had William Rose at 11th in the women's, 8th in the Mixed and a fantastic 5th in the men's – moving us from tenth to ninth in the overall league so far - way to go crews!



Post Race Picture of some of the crew!



Tuesday 29 November

A mid-week Club Row on a bright, cold, but sunny morning.

The water was mirror like, with some ice left over from the night's frost. We went for a long meander on the estuary today going past Mistley Quay and the boat yard where we saw our first Seal in a long time, then over to Stutton where we saw another Seal (or perhaps the same one again) and then home. On the way we surprised flocks of birds into aeronautic clouds. A real privilege to be on the water this morning.

Saturday 3 December

A lovely Saturday lunchtime row with two different crews - not bad for a cold December day. We Rowers almost had the water to ourselves once again - apart from the Fishing Boat crew testing their engine at Mistley Boatyard - and a distant glimpse of a sail down towards Wrabness.



Sunday 11 December

An 8.30 start for a Sunday morning. A cold but bright and beautiful morning as we took a trip under the bridges and down past the Quay and back.

Tuesday 13 December

Another glorious mid-week morning row with a pause at the Pink House to be entertained by huge murmerations of sea birds wheeling and buzzing across the surface of the estuary and the mudflats. We practiced handbreak turns and sprints along the way.



Wednesday 14 December

The 'boys' took Witchoar out for a lunchtime row in the mist.

Saturday 17 December

A huge lunchtime tide and we played 'how foggy does it have to be before you can't row?' An outing first for the men's crew and then a second trip with a mixed crew on board.



Sunday 18 December

Off to Brightlingsea with William Rose for the fifth race day in the Harker's Yard Winter Series and the last before Christmas.

The day saw some very close racing with a mass start and a short run down to the first mark. There was little time for the field to spread out resulting in all fourteen Gigs trying to negotiate the mark at more or less the same time.

The women's crew engaged in an epic tussle with Defiance – just pipping them to the post on the finish line.



Women's team crossing the line



Men's team in action

The final results put us 7th in the women's race, 8th in the mixed and 9th in the men's – keeping us at 9th in the league overall so far with four race days to come in the new year.

Tuesday 27 December

Another beautiful cold, bright and sunny December morning as we took a "blow the cobwebs" row down to the docks and the pink house and back with one crew before swapping over for a visit to the bridges on a second outing, followed by bacon butties in the Sailing Club Parlour.



Friday 30 December

In a change from Coastal Rowing six rowers from the Club paid a visit to Sudbury Rowing Club where we tried out a very different sort of rowing in a fine eight. Again a lovely morning but cold, breaking the ice on the water and feeling ourselves lucky that we did not end up in the river which at times seemed a possibility. Being in a sixty foot long narrow and tippy boat, close to the water, with carbon fibre oars and gates and

feathering was to say the least a learning experience. Thanks to Keith's expert tuition we eventually managed to row with all eight oars, and for very short moments of time almost had all of the oars in the water together at the right time (but not quite!). We may be back (but when the weather is warmer!).



Monday 2 January

The first row of 2017 and another bright, frosty day as we set out for a lunchtime row. Two crews out today, with a row over to the Pink House with the first crew including a sprint on the way back and then back to the Quay pick up the second crew for a trip under the bridges and then row to Mistle Quay with a sprint back.

Musings on Tide and Mud.....

The tidal nature of Manningtree combined with the short days mean that opportunities for Rowing in January and February are very restricted. Mud is great for birds but useless for rowing. For two of the four January weekends in 2017 there were no day time tides, and although the tides were better on the remaining two weekends – these coincided with Harker's Yard Series races elsewhere! Weekday tides were slightly better, but not much – and February was not much better either.

....And Weather

Manningtree and Mistle were the subject of a severe weather warning for flooding on Thursday 12 January. With a high tide, north sea surge and onshore winds anticipated all of the flood gates were shut and locked and we had to cancel our planned club row!

In the event the surge came ahead of the high tide and the winds subsided meaning that the impact was less than expected, although it would not have taken much more to cause significant problems.

Photographs taken at high water at lunch time the following day show how close it was.



Sunday 15 January

The Crews set off for Burnham on Crouch with William Rose for the sixth race in the Harker's Yard Winter Series. This time the weather lived up to its name, cold, rainy and occasionally sleeting. But at least the threatened snow did not materialise.

Once again the races were for Women's, Men's and Mixed crews, this time over a longer course and with a mass start. The Club had its best result in the series so far, 8th in the Women's, 9th in the Men's and 6th in the Mixed. Overall we remained 9th out of 15 Gigs in the series overall, with three more races to come. With so much rain there were not many photographs taken on the day!



Women's Crew in Action



Mixed Crew

Saturday 21 January

Once again there were no rowing tides at Manningtree this weekend. William Rose took a trip to Brightlingsea to celebrate an SSC Club members 80th birthday with informal racing and a pirate party. Two William Rose crew members rowed in the only all women's crew on the day in Molliette. Molliette was coxed by the birthday boy Sid and led for much of the race after which he penned an ode in their honour.

*The river Colne stood slack and still, the sun shone wanly as it will,
Four of the fittest and the fair by blade and oar conveyed me there.
They fought for glory on that day, precise and good their strong oar play,
Gave mighty shock to break back men who leaped at thole pinned oars again
To best us if and when they could.*

William Rose took a chicken for a row on her Bow (we could not find a parrot!) with some of BCRC on board and Russell and Shirley took a trip in Violette.



Sunday 22 January

William Rose stayed at Brightlingsea overnight ready for a bright an early row on Sunday on a beautiful, cold, icy but sunny morning in flat calm conditions with sea ice on the water. The rare chance to row William Rose in non-race conditions gave us the chance to try out some freshly leathered, borrowed oars from Lt Washington.

We shared the water with Brightlingsea Gigs Molliette, Violette and Velocity, later joined by Tyrant and Aquiline from Rowhedge CRC.

Thursday 26 January

Back on the Stour and back in Witchoar on a bitterly cold morning – not helped by having to bail half a boat full of icy water out before we started.

Undaunted (mostly) we took a row along to the Dock and across to the Pink House and back before calling in for tea and biscuits in the club.



Sunday 29th January

Another race day and the seventh race in the Harker’s Yard Winter Series hosted by WivGigs at the Wivenhoe Sailing Club and our turn to help with the timekeeping for the event as well as competing.

We decided to try out our borrowed oars (1990’s Sutton needle oars from Lt Washington with the collars taken off and leathers put on) in race conditions for the first time. It was difficult to know whether they made the Gig faster, but they felt better to row with than the flat ‘training oars’ that we had used until now.

The racing was once again phased time trials with two Gigs starting at a time and with William Rose drawn against Tyrant, one of the leading Gigs in this year’s series. Racing along the river means views for spectators and it was great to have some support there from family and friends.



Another set of good results for us in very close racing, eleventh in the men’s and seventh in the women’s and mixed races, keeping us in a very respectable ninth place in the league overall, eighth in the women’s competition and seventh in the mixed, with two races to go.



Women’s crew



Men’s crew before the race



And the mixed crew to complete the set.

Tuesday 31 January

Back on home water for a lunch time row in Witchoar, pausing only to bail out half a boat full of water yet again.

It was a cold and breezy day but we made it down to the Quay to pass by two Ships at the port, then across to the Pink House before coming back to the Club for tea and biscuits.



On the weekend of the 4 and 5 February there were no Rowing tides at Manningtree, then our planned Club Row on 9 February had to be cancelled due to illness.

Sunday 12 February

Another race day and the penultimate race in the Harker's Yard winter series, this time at Maldon, famous for Sea Salt, Thames Barges and mud (lots and lots of mud).

We had a couple of new faces in the crew racing for the very first time.



Racing was once again hard fought with each race starting with a hard slog against the tide for the first leg, followed by a tide assisted return. It was not our best day's racing so far, but our results were enough to keep Stour Sailing Club at 9th in the league overall, 7th in the mixed, 9th in the women's and 10th in the men's, with just one more race to go.



Women's Crew



Men's Crew



Mixed Crew

Tuesday 14 February

Valentine's Day so nothing else to do apart from to go for a lunchtime row. The crew did do quite a lot of rowing but also spent as much time just enjoying the sunshine at the Pink House and trying to get the pair of swans to cooperate in making a heart behind Witchoar (they didn't quite understand the instructions) - lots of birds and even the Seal put in an appearance. Then back to the Club for tea and heart shaped shortbread.



Saturday 18 February

A lovely flat calm, still and almost spring like afternoon (although still on the cold side) for a club row in Witchoar down to the beacon and then round and about before coming back.



Thursday 23 February

A Club Row was scheduled – but storm Doris made her way through the country and gales stopped play!

Sunday 26 February

The last race of the 2016-17 Harker's Yard Gig Winter Series. The event was hosted by Marconi Sailing Club, so an hour and a half road trip for William Rose and crews. It was windy and choppy on the water so much so that not a single photograph was taken from the Gig. We had a series of hard rows over the three races - but what can we say except we 'saved the best 'till last'. With the help of some brilliant tactical coxing making the best of the conditions (and of course some brilliant rowing as well) William Rose finished 3rd in the women's, 6th in the men's and 5th in the mixed. Overall the Stour Sailing Club finished 3rd overall on the day. A great end to the winter series.



Third place overall on the day!

The overall results of the series before discards put William Rose 8th in the women's; 8th in the mixed, 10th in the men's and 9th overall.



Gloomy skies before the start of the men's race



Women's Crew on their way to a brilliant third place

Sunday 12 March

After a while with no suitable rowing tides it was time to ride the waves again, apart from a lack of waves. There was a big mid-day tide and flat calm conditions for a club row this morning. After a pause to bail out the boat we set off to entertain the tourists and bikers along the walls by showing off our 'pretty rowing' and then over to the Pink House where we surprised the bird watchers and back via the Quay and a quick look at the works to Jewson Wharf followed by coffee at the Club.

We saw lots of cruiser readying activity at Mistle Boatyard, and some in the compound. We did see a cruiser under motor coming down from Harwich - but no sails although to be fair it was a great day for rowing but not much wind for sailing!



Tuesday 14 March

Another big tide and time to try out our "three rowers in a four seat boat" trick, which we haven't practiced in a while. It is good practice and it would be a shame to miss an opportunity to be on the water just for want of someone to lend an oar.



Thursday 16 March

A chance to bring Witchoar up on to the Hard at lunch time for a wash and brush up (do not try this with a Gig!)



Saturday 18 March

A bit of a blustery day today with rain threatening but holding off. We had two crews for two club rows in Witchoar. The first crew out were blown by a brisk westerly down to the Pink House. The wind was enough to tempt a couple of windsurfers out. Then a tough row back across to Mistley Boatyard and home. The next crew out took a trip down towards Bradfield - when we stopped rowing we were being blown at over 4 mph down towards Harwich so we turned around for another tough row home - this time against both the tide and the wind. Thanks to our Cox for keeping us out of the worst of the wind. All in all a good afternoon's rowing and lovely to be out on the water.



Tuesday 28 March

Yet another lovely Spring Day for a row. This time we had a new rower on board and the first dog 'Skipper' as passenger for a long while. We took a trip to the bridges and then down to Mistley Docks and back while our new rower quickly picked up the technique and our canine passenger was so relaxed he was asleep for most of the trip. Nice to see lots of activity in the compound with the cruisers being readied for lift in.



Sunday 2 April

Almost a summer's day today with lots of people on the beach and lots of children enjoying the mud! A lovely day for a row to the Beacon and back – around 6 miles and breezier than it looked.



Sunday 9 April

A beautiful hot and sunny spring morning as we set off early in the morning with William Rose to Brightlingsea for an adventure.

Along with eleven other Gigs we took part in the Tony Adams Memorial Event - a row from Brightlingsea to the Lightship at the Hythe in Colchester, passing through Wivenhoe and Rowhedge along the way. Dinghy racing was in full swing at the Wivenhoe Sailing Club as we passed through.

Not content with the seven or so mile to the Hythe we carried on up river to see how far we could get (in years past Sailing Barges were able to make the trip into central Colchester). We managed to carry on for a mile or so until the river narrowed far enough for us to think we had better turn the Gig whilst there was space.

On the way back the Gigs stopped in at Rowhedge on the way back to witness the naming and blessing of Rowhedge Coastal Rowing Club's new safety boat and 'Egret' the Club's new small GRP Gig. Then a gentle row back to Brightlingsea - around 16 miles in total in glorious sunshine.



Tuesday 11 April

A treat for the mid-week rowers with another lovely mid-day row in sunshine. A new rower out for the first time today as we took in the quay and the pink house. Great excitement with the first sighting of a seal in the estuary for a while, and a sail hailing from Manningtree.

Saturday 15 April

Still lovely weather for April with sunshine but also with a stiff north westerly making for a bit of a chop and a tough row for the two crews out today.

The first crew out spotted a seal and the second crew took a dog with them for the trip.

The westerly made putting the Skiff back on the mooring tricky – but made it at the second attempt!



Sunday 23 April

A lovely St George's Day morning for a Club row at 9.30am, a little chilly out of the sun, little wind and almost mirror like conditions.

We are conscious of the need to keep fit - so we delegated Sharon to run the London marathon today (well done Sharon for finishing despite picking up an injury 18 miles in!). The rest of today's crew played 'how many people can you get in a Claydon Skiff to row to no 6 (the Beacon) and back?



The answer today was seven - with rowers switching over to take turns coxing and as passenger. Along the way we saw lots of activity in the compound with only two days to lift in, four kayaks on the river and at least three cruisers taking advantage of what little wind there was.

As we got close to the Beacon we were approached by a Seal which played around the Skiff to the sound of a cuckoo on shore while we enjoyed our jelly baby stop. When we turned for home the Seal decided to follow in our wake before eventually giving up.

Wednesday 26 April

The first day of lift in - and "a bit more wind than was wanted" (to quote Will). Great to see the cruisers going back on their moorings for the summer season - and all so professionally managed.

The Club Row this morning took in a hard row down pass Mistletoe Quay, and then a bumpy row across to the Stutton foreshore where we basked in warm sunshine for a while sheltered from the wind, followed by a tough row back against the tide and the wind.



Sunday 7 May

An early morning row with a brisk north westerly breeze. We took a trip across to the North shore to keep out of the wind and were rewarded by some watery sunshine. Then we crossed over to the Beacon where we were again visited by the seal (we are considering a small on board fish locker) and made our stop whilst watching a cruiser making good headway under sail back to the Club. Then a tough row back home.

Tuesday 9 May

Another mid-week row complete with a rower out for the first time, and Skipper who is rapidly becoming the Club Rowing mascot.



Friday 12 May

A sneaky extra row slipped in to the schedule to take advantage of the lovely weather. The crew disobeyed were too busy rowing to take a picture!

Tuesday 16 May

A breezy day for a row. We are trying to encourage more people to cox so that we can go out more often and get more boats out at a time over the summer. We went out with six onboard so that a couple of rowers could practice coxing as well as rowing with our regular cox also on board.



On the way past Mistlely Quay we stopped a while on the mud bank to give way to a cargo boat leaving via the channel. Then as we passed Mistlely Boatyard we once again saw a friendly seal – it has been a good year for seal sightings so far. The trip today took us along the Essex side of the River taking in a view of Bradfield Beach and the Wrabness beachhuts in the middle distance.



Saturday 20 May

Two boats on the water this evening for our first evening row of the summer. It was our first opportunity to get William Rose back on home water following the cruiser lift in, and another chance for some novice cox practice

A lovely warm evening but it was surprisingly choppy and breezy as we crossed to the pink house, back across to Bradfield and home.



Wednesday 24 May

A lovely morning for a Club Row in William Rose, hot and sunny with only a hint of breeze and flat calm water. For three of the four crew members today this was their first row in the Gig and conditions could not have been better. We took a trip under the first bridge to get used to the technique and then a longer row down past Mistlely Quay and back

It was not such a good day for sailing, but it was good to see both a mirror dinghy and the club topper out on the water.

The children on the beach were entertained by a Seal coming close in enjoying the sunshine (no photo sadly we were gone by then) – the Seal was probably in for the warmth and the fish – we saw plenty in the shallows today.





Monday 29 May

The end of the Bank Holiday weekend and an opportunity to take four new rowers out for a go in William Rose.

The thunderstorms and torrential rain of the night before had passed over and the weather was hot but overcast. We took the Gig out twice with different crews for trips under the bridges and further afield to watch the micros racing in the distance.

All of our new rowers said that they enjoyed the experience – so we hope to see them again some time soon!



Wednesday 31 May

The last day of our year long initial Coastal Rowing Project funded by sport England Lottery Funding and lovely afternoon for a row in William Rose.

On the way back we were rewarded by the sight of a young seal out of the water on the mudbank in front of Mistletoe Quay, also out enjoying the sunshine. The sand coloured seal on a sandbank was almost perfectly camouflaged and not too worried as shipped oars and floated by so as not to disturb it.



Thanks to everyone who has helped, or rowed, or supported us during the year!