

30th anniversary 1990-2020



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held via Zoom on 27th November 2021

PRESENT

Euan Raffel, Peter Stanyon, Gerwyn and June Lewis, Terry Kenny, Gary Fruland, Steve Miles and his cat Pepper, Bruce Watson, Brian and Jane Pearce, Dave Purvis

APOLOGIES

Dylan Jones, Mark Dellar, Malcolm and Julie Rees

In the absence of a chair, it was agreed that Euan Raffel lead the meeting

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Agreed as a correct record. Proposed by Jude Pilgrim. Seconded by June Lewis.

MATTERS ARISING

ER reported the proposed increase in net fees have gone through this year. Teifi licence is now £450-500 per licence, Tywi now about £550 a licence. Season cut to May-July. Weather has meant little fishing has taken place this year. Doesn't appear to be having the affect Natural Resources Wales claims it will on increasing fish stocks. Committee discussed making a donation to the netsmen to make the licence fees for 2022 a bit more sustainable for them.

REPORTS

Chairperson

To start off I would like to express my thanks to all the Coracle Society members and committee for sticking with the Society once again this year.

Unfortunately there is very little to report on again this year.

Neither the Cilgerran coracle races or the Towy regatta took place due to the coronavirus restrictions. Fingers crossed for a successful 2022 coracle events season across the UK.

The new coracle net fishing season came into effect this year, restricting the season to three months (May, June, July). Unfortunately most of May was a wash out due to high river levels, rendering the season a lost cause for sewin fishing.

My son Dyfrig and I had the pleasure in attending the Ironbridge regatta this year. We both had a great time on and off the water and commend all of the organisers, volunteers and participants for a great day out.

Treasurer

Balances today – current account: £2309.97, deposit account £1250.68. Donation will be made to the RNLI in Sir Peter Badge's name at the request of Mary Badge and to the two coracle netsmen associations.

The 2020 accounts were presented for approval. Nothing much of note, balances are healthy, postage costs remain high. Insurance premium looks high, this was due to the timing of the insurance renewals for 2020 and 2021.

Proposer: Terry Kenny, Seconder: June Lewis
Accounts were accepted

Membership secretary

107 members – 89 individual, 18 joint/family/associate members. Small increase from 2020 year. Discounted rate offered for 2021, a few people took up this offer but most paid the full rate.

JP asked if we contacted members who have left to chase membership renewals. ER replied that yes, but not after their membership has lapsed due to GDPR – a number of emails are sent in the run up to expiry.

National Coracle Centre

"I have used the enforced lockdown this year to re-vamp the exhibition. As the centre for the last twenty-nine years has relied heavily on attracting coach groups, schools, etc, now I have to cater for small parties and individuals on a by appointment basis. Next season I hope to have a new website and a Facebook page to start season thirty-one. This of course is entirely dependent on the health of the country."

It was noted that in recent years there has been concerns on the future of the National Coracle Centre, but the above report from Martin Fowler suggests there is a more positive future for the centre.

Netsmen's reports

Tywi

2021 coracle fishing season was probably the worst on record. The rain experienced in May meant we couldn't venture near the river – after the floods we awaited the locusts to arrive, thankfully they didn't but the seals did which meant it was a constant battle for fish, which we couldn't win on their hunting ground.

In July, any salmon caught was catch and release and the sewin had moved upstream. With Tywi coracle licences currently set at £555 a year we are confident that fishermen made a huge loss, jeopardising the future of coracle fishing on the Tywi.

Had a visit from Robson Green in June, filming for a TV series recent aired on we think Channel 5. Spent time with Malcolm, shown how traditional coracles and nets made. Presented with a miniature coracle made by Julie.

Also had a visit from Gordon Ramsay, cannot discuss the project but information will follow.

Community Centre in Carmarthen received a lovely mural painted on the side of the building – Raymond Rees with coracle on back, croeso in rope design, and a motif representing the work of the water safety partnership and memory of those who have lost lives to the water.

Ironbridge Coracle Trust

Installed sculpture by side of river in April – cutout sculpture of Tommy Rogers. Regatta took place end of August, went really well considering covid conditions/restrictions. Coracle drift held in September, raised enough money to almost cover insurance bill for the year. Activities at new shed continue all the time – lots of crafting activities, making miniature coracles, used by the haiku society. Very interesting, very interactive, well curated and visited. Coracle course (only one to take place for 2 years) took place led by Terry, 7 coracles made. 2 went to Sheffield, 1 to Birmingham and rest remain in area. Followed by coracle drift and refreshment at the pub. Jude reported that Small Woods aren't running courses –

part covid, part other reasons – and won't allow ICT to run courses there; the two organisations are in dispute and discussions are ongoing as ICT are being restricted from fulfilling their Heritage Lottery Fund requirements. Main objection appears to be ICT undermining viability of Small Woods courses, though the latter aren't running... Restoration work finished on the Rogers shed, exhibition inside and looks like a coraclemaker's shed. Coracle trail in place in Ironbridge running between the two coracle sheds and past the sculpture.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President: Peter Faulkner (end of 3 year term)
Proposed Jude Pilgrim; Seconded June Lewis
Meeting agreed President can sit for a new term.

Vice Presidents: Rod Bowen, John Davies, Martin Fowler, Terry Kenny
Proposed June Lewis, seconded Peter Stanyon
Carried and elected en-bloc, with the proviso that should Peter's health deteriorate, Terry Kenny will take over as President

Chairperson: Mark Dellar

Vice chairperson: Malcolm Rees
Proposed June Lewis; Seconded Gary Fruland
Carried and elected en-block

Secretary: Dylan Jones (end of 5 year term)
Proposed Jude Pilgrim; Seconded Terry Kenny
Meeting agreed Secretary can sit again for a new term

Treasurer: Euan Raffel
Proposed Jude Pilgrim; Seconded Peter Stanyon
Carried

Committee: June Lewis, Jude Pilgrim, Dave Purvis, Julie Rees, Peter Stanyon, Bruce Watson
Proposed Euan Raffel; Seconded Jane Pearce
Carried and elected en-bloc
Gary Fruland elected on to committee – proposed Jude Pilgrim, seconded June Lewis

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Many logs have gone under the bridge here in Leintwardine during the last year. It has been another period of uncertainty, confusion and frustration for all sectors of society but paddlers have been busy behind the scenes.

On one hand we hear of 60,000 football fans bursting their lungs inside a stadium whilst on the other we are instructed not to sing in places of worship! I do hope that many of you will have coracled and enjoyed that unique feeling of floating effortlessly, wrapped in an euphoric sense of well-being and in perfect peace with the world.

After many weeks lay-off I took my hide coracle to the river. It was a beautiful evening bathed in glorious sunshine with not a breath of air. I paddled about for half an hour and returned to my usual entry/exit spot. Then came the big shock! I started the usual sequence of manoeuvres for exit but found that my legs were unable to lift my torso into a vertical position prior to stepping out! I tried again but failed... By now my brain was teeming with negative thoughts, the predominant one being "was this the end of my paddling activities?" Recovering from the initial shock I began working

on an alternative approach. Thankfully a solution was soon found and with some practice I was able to stand again on terra firma! My advice to all you young and/or supple enthusiasts is to make the most of your gift and get out there on the water whenever you're able. I have also noticed that my coracle has doubled in weight!

Despite the coronavirus, we have had an eventful year as a number of telephone conversations have revealed.

Gerwyn and Mary Lewis hosted a course at their family home and with Terry Kenny aboard 5 coracles were produced over the weekend of 24-26 September. Two coracles went to Sheffield, one to Birmingham and one to Somerset. The test run took in the notorious Jackfield rapids and three enthusiasts were dunked in the Severn with thankfully only pride being bruised. Confidence was fully restored after a few pints in the 'Half Moon'.

Terry Kenny attended the Ironbridge Coracle Regatta on August bank holiday Monday and whilst numbers were noticeably down, it proved very successful and as usual a good shop window for us. (Marion's report on this year's Ironbridge regatta is later in the Journal.)

Dave Purvis said his year has been very quiet and most events and festivals had been cancelled due to coronavirus. He was however optimistic and looks forward to a return to the norm in 2022.

Jude Pilgrim reported that the sculpture of Tommy Rogers had been unveiled in April near to the Museum of the Gorge in Ironbridge. Jude said that the Coracle Drift from Cressage to Ironbridge on 18th September had been great fun, with funds raised going to the Ironbridge Coracle Trust.

Martin Fowler has just closed the National Coracle Centre for the winter and had a reasonable season, welcoming small family groups as opposed to the coachloads of visitors before coronavirus. As reported last year, Martin took time during lockdown to refresh the centre and its exhibits, and we are hopeful for a more prosperous future for the centre.

We can all, I sincerely hope, look forward to more settled times when life will return to some semblance of normality. In the meantime get on the water whenever you can, enjoy this amazing and unique form of water transport, engage with the public. They are hungry for information, especially the young ones, and they will not forget their first encounter.

Finally, my thanks to the Officers of the Society for keeping our vessel watertight and on course. Although the Society doesn't have a motto, I would ask you all to 'Respect the Water!'

Meeting closed at 12.50pm. 2022 AGM meeting will take place on Monday 29 August 2022 at Ironbridge