

# Up for ten

Exmouth Gig Rowing Club Newsletter

Issue 6 - April 2016

## A word from the Chairman

Exmouth Gig Club is 2 years old! Another milestone in the club's history marks the start of a new 'club year' and a glance at our website events page tells us that this year is looking busier than ever! The excitement is mounting again for the Isles of Scilly World Pilot Gig Championships and our second attendance at the event between 29th April and 1st May. Rodney Bey has had a winter refurbishment ready for its journey to the islands and is looking good to stand alongside 145 other colourful Gigs in the biggest event of the calendar. Thank-you to all those members who helped get Rodney stripped down, dried out and re-painted; our best chance of getting our racing gig as light and agile as it can be. A big joint effort which will pay off in the long run! A quick inspection of Rodney by Lyme Regis boat builder Gail McGarva confirmed the Gig is in good shape for a 21 year old boat and has been well looked after. This encourages us to preserve Rodney for future generations of rowers.

A new and exciting chapter for the club is upon us with the Exmouth Sea Cadets HQ offering us some storage space and access to parts of their new building, which is under construction on Camperdown Terrace. Their hope is to offer us space at the site from late summer 2016, in return for a contribution to their ground rent. The seed was sown for that idea back in January 2014 when we first approached the Sea Cadets interested in their project; keen to have our base as close as possible to the Camperdown Gut inlet, where there are strong historic links to traditional boat building.

Parts of the Members Area of our website are under continual development by Max to tweak the message board and how we use it. We will be updating you further on these changes as they develop. Some of the tweaks have been designed after listening to our rowers feedback during sessions and at the recent AGM. You may see the odd test email flying around as this work goes on in the background.

A new club year brings with it a refresh of the Committee. I would like to welcome Tanya, Matt and Greg into the committee and thank them for putting themselves forward to help develop our club, bringing with them fresh ideas. They will help us build on the hard work done over the last year by Max, Carrie, Phil, Keith and Sophie who I would also like to thank for continually giving up their own time as volunteers to keep this club running.

Ben



## Easy oars!

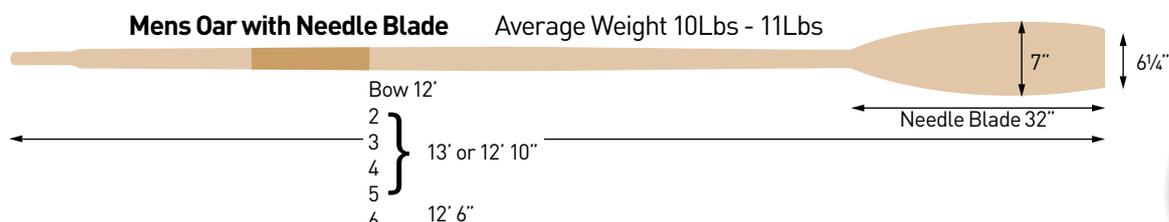
Imagine rowing out of port in appalling sea conditions, with the absolute belief that your gig will be the first to an incoming sailing ship, ready to guide them back safely in to shore... OK, now imagine doing this in oil skins, wrestling with a 14ft heavy wooden oar as you pull it through the water propelling your gig forward into the storm!

Pilot Gig design has stayed much the same for nearly 200 years, with the specification being agreed in the 1980's, but Gig Oars have moved on and developed in shape to adjust to the shorter sprint style of racing that we see though out most of the summer racing fixtures.

For over 100 years from the mid 1800's, Gig Oars were up to 14ft (4.26 metres!) long, lending themselves to the long arduous trips out to sea to put a pilot on an incoming ship. The modern design we row today are just under 13ft in length in seats 3 and 4 and just over 12ft long in the bow and stroke seats.

Beautifully crafted from Spruce and Ash, the gig oar has a hollow mid section of the loom (shaft) and each set is designed based on the info you give to the skilled craftsman. Flexibility, blade shape/size, the scoop of the blade and the thickness of the handle are all variables which make up this finely tuned and balanced bit of kit. Therefore a set of oars suitable for a championship winning team will be different to a set designed for novice, intermediate or youth rowing teams.

The blade shape has evolved again to suit the punchier shorter strokes that are rowed in the modern sport; the older style of rowing for these working boats consisting of a longer slower stroke, often with the oar handle pulled into the side of the body or even slightly past it. Shorter wider 'Macon' blades are more commonplace now than the longer narrow 'needle' shape blade. (although at times, crews revert to the narrow shape blades in choppy seas).



[www.exmouthgigclub.com](http://www.exmouthgigclub.com)



# Get to Know your club member

## Name:

Sophie Cook – Committee member

## Who is the most famous person you have met?

In a previous life I used to jet off all over the place and was lucky enough to end up staying at Carl Ryan house near Dublin for a weekend of partying which would have been amazing except I was so excited to have a weekend without children that I rushed off to the airport and forgot my bag!! When I arrived Carl the owner of Ryan Air asked where my luggage was and was concerned that they had lost my bag! I sheepishly owned up that I'd forgotten it!!! Luckily he made me an appointment to meet Louise Kennedy a designer friend of his to buy some new clothes!!

## What first attracted you to gig rowing?

I had kayaked for the last couple of years and when we moved to Exmouth I wanted to try a new sport so when we saw an advert for the club in the paper for a beginners session it seemed like a good idea!! We turned up with no idea what to do but loved the physicality of it. There is nothing like being outside on the water to re-calibrate your senses!

## What is your favourite film?

That's a hard one as I have favourites depending on my mood... but my go to feel good movie has to be Mama Mia and yes I was one of those sad people who went to see the film several times including the sing a long version.

## What is your favourite TV programme?

I love thrillers and grisly murders so I get hooked onto Silent Witness, Dexter and due to the fabulous surroundings, Death in Paradise. The Series I'm really into at the moment is Orange is the New Black, a great look at an all female prison and it's inmates.

## Do you have any other hobbies apart from gig rowing?

Before we moved I used to breed rare breed chickens and Exhibition Dewlap Toulouse Geese and body board most weekends.

Since we've moved to Exmouth it's either a cycle ride, walk along the beach or curled up in front of the fire with a good book!! That's if I get time..

## If a movie was made about your life, who would play you?

It would need to be someone who could laugh at themselves as I can get myself into silly situations. Would be happy with either Sandra Bullock or Cameron Diaz (I can always dream)!



## Whistling up the wind!

So, having been a salty old sea dog in a previous life, spending a bit of time around boats, stood on quaysides and on the water I may have picked up the odd superstition or saying along the way. Some of you may have even heard me utter some of them from time to time.

This winter we've been able to schedule much more rowing than last thanks to having Avocet to use, especially when Rodney Bey is having a facelift. I have, however, been surprised just how many sessions we have had to cancel for strong winds, it has been especially windy this winter!

With that in mind, one particular superstition comes to mind, that of "Whistling up the wind", namely if someone whistles it'll be windy. I thought I'd do some research...

**Apparently it started with witches!**

"Whistling up a wind is the most common forms of weather magic and has been practiced for hundreds of years. Depending on the pitch and tone of the whistle..... a witch can create a gentle breeze or a sharp gust of wind.

Traditionally, if the skill of whistling up a wind does not come naturally to you the option of making a 'wind whistle' out of willow or alder wood is available. You could also use simple glass bottle - all you need is to be able to make a whistling sound.

To whistle up a wind, you would first take a deep breath (close your eyes if you need to), centre yourself and focus the energy you breathed in. Let it mingle with your own energy/magic whatever you want to call it and then literally breathe out the energy into a whistle.

The tone/pitch/length of the whistle you make decides the type of wind you will get. For example a low pitched whistle which sounds like 'breath over a glass bottle' will form a light breeze and a short sharp piercing whistle will form a huge gust of wind."

So there you have it! I assume that it can be done accidentally and that's what's caused the particularly windy weather we've had over the last few months, well, either that, or, we have a few weather witches as members!

Max

## Meet the committee

Chairman – Ben

Vice Chair – Max

Secretary – Phil

Health & Safety – Tanya

Treasurer – Greg

Other members, Sophie, Kieth and Matt



## Last word

A big thank-you to our sponsors/supporters for helping us to make this club a reality!

Websites and more

Sport England

Norman Family Trust

