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**OUR YEAR BY BEWDLEY ROWING CLUB**

**6th April 2020**

**Our year**

This report is presented to Bewdley Town Council as a look back to our 2019/20 season summarising our performance in competitions, key events and our business operations as a Community Amateur Sports Club. We started the year strongly, with a planned year of competing at both local and national competitions, and enjoyed success at our own events. The season has ended somewhat unpredictably, hindered by the weather, and more recently, like many amateur sports clubs, have seen unprecedented events which has led to the temporary closure of the rowing club.

**Competitions**

**Pub and Club 2019**

Our first major event of the year, our annual amateur regatta for beginner rowers was yet again a huge success for the Club, and an important fundraiser. In glorious sunshine on Saturday 1 June, over 30 crews from local clubs, businesses, pubs, gyms competed against each other in front of crowds of spectators lining our stretch of the Severn. Women’s, men’s and mixed crews became competitive rowers for the day, trained and coxed by club members, racing over a 500m course for trophies, tankards and free club membership.

As usual, our members pulled out all the stops, becoming commentators, chefs, bartenders, tea makers, bakers for the day, making the day a success. The event raised £7500 and also benefits Bewdley’s economy, with the many spectators using local shops, cafes, restaurants and bars.

With early wins of the season by Bewdley crews at Nottingham Masters and Club regatta, Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth and Trentham, it was building up to be a successful year. In June, we had two crews, and two composite crews compete at British Rowing Masters Championships in Strathclyde Country Park, coming away with several second places. It was then onto Henley Women’s Regatta, where a women’s four competed against some stiff competition, including international crews. Three weeks later, the same women’s four scooped gold at the Henley Masters Regatta, an impressive achievement on a national stage.

The Club enjoyed wins later in the season at Stourport and put in a good showing at Hereford, Monmouth, Worcester, Ironbridge and Ross on Wye regattas.

**Bewdley regatta 2019**

Despite the weather, we enjoyed a successful annual regatta, with clubs from across the country descended on Bewdley, and with increased entry numbers from the previous year. Two days of fantastic racing was had, including the renowned Sprint Eights, and Bewdley finished its home regatta, sharing top billing for most wins, with Worcester Rowing Club.

In September 2019, the Club was proud to take a delegation to the Worlds Masters Rowing Championships on Lake Velence, in Hungary. 30 members, plus coxes and supporters, across all disciplines, travelled to Hungary, and between them competed in 21 races, alongside 723 clubs spanning 52 countries. Sadly, no medals this year, but some strong performances, including from crews competing for the first time.

The end of 2019 and start of the new year has been a challenging period, and like many other sports clubs, community groups and businesses has presented extraordinary challenges.

We entered the Winter Head season with enthusiasm and a plan to take crews and boats to as many competitions as possible, in particular, to support events at our neighboring clubs.

Regrettably the weather had a different plan, and prolonged periods of rain and high river levels forced events in the Autumn to cancel. It also meant many weekends of river training were not possible.

In November, three women’s crews (fours) participated in the Veterans Fours Head alongside 400 other clubs on the Thames in London. Despite the minimal river training, crews performed well, one winning their category for the second year running, and another coming second.

Since then, the last competition we participated in was Stourport Head at the end of January, with good wins for the Men’s crew, and one of the Women’s fours.

**Promoting rowing**

The club ran three Learn to Row courses across the year, and a beginners open day in June, encouraging people to take up rowing as a sport. Along with other clubs in the region, we held a ‘Splash and Dash’ improvers competition in August with both our Bewdley men’s and women’s improvers crews winning.

**Improving our fleet**

This year, we have undertaken a review of our boat fleet, sold a number of boats, including donating one to a start-up rowing club on Teeside, and repurposed some stock. Given the increasing numbers of members competing, we bought a brand new Eight, and expanded our fleet of single sculls. We bought new, and refurbished our existing stock of blades, and following a survey with our members – and in recognition of prolonged indoor training time due to river levels - some new gym equipment.

**Club operations**

Our membership has remained steady this year, and currently stands out 184. In June 2019, we held Chair and Captains’ elections at our AGM, and appointed new Club Captains (Kim Martyn-Smith and Haydn Hughes) and a Chairman (Doug Jackson). Under their leadership, we took stock of our committee structure and streamlined our governance arrangements. Newer members have taken up club roles on our committees,

Our clubhouse hire has proved popular in the last few years, with good bar facilities and inside seating and outdoor patio offering an excellent venue for parties, wedding receptions and funerals, bringing in a good revenue. We have also held several social events for our members, the most recent being a quiz in aid of Sport Relief, which raised over £250.

We enjoyed a sponsorship arrangement with Lye-based Sadler’s Brewery, supporting us on key events as the Pub and Club and main regattas and building our merchandise stocks. Before the Coronovirus pandemic, we were forging new arrangements with Hobson’s Brewery, in partnership with our local brewery in Bewdley.

The desperate weather at the end of 2019, and beginning of 2020 bought some challenges, including a leaking roof into our boat house, following the UK storms. The floods of February and March this year brought challenges, and our grounds, including the boat house were impacted. However, the actions we took as a club, and with the help of our members, ahead of the worst of the floods have limited what could have been more damage to the club, as we have seen with some of our neighboring clubs along the Severn.

**Partnerships**

The club is an important part of the local community, with many members, past and present, living locally. We have strengthened our links with community partners, enjoying good relationships with local scout groups.

For the past 2 years the Club has enjoyed a business arrangement with Hire a Canoe, renting out part of a field for canoe storage and car parking, boat launch from our steps and use of our bar facilities by their customers.