

Convener's report for 2011

We have had a very productive year for our first year as a club, and so much has been happening I hope I don't leave anything out.

Last winter at this time our High School team was busy building Cul Mor and our own Ulla was undergoing intensive surgery in my garage, so we had no boats on the water at all.

Then Ulla re-emerged with her beautiful gold writing and a workable launching trolley. Thanks to the generosity of the Harbour Trust, Cul Mor arrived soon after, and then Loki joined her, so Ullapool has had 3 skiffs for all of last season.

Fiona started getting all her friends to come rowing and the membership snowballed, which was fantastic. David Thomson came up with his wife from Wales to watch me coach the womens' crew, fortunately deciding I should get the Coaching certificate.

Our first regatta was at Coigach, in pretty windy and wavy conditions, but the Coigachs persevered and we had a really enjoyable regatta at an alternative location round the corner. Portobello did very well at this regatta and we began to notice their gig style of rowing which we decided it would be good to copy.

The STV and Daily Mail came to interview the women so fame came their way, and we have seen that publicity is a good way of getting people interested in skiffing.

Portsoy was I would say, our first big regatta, and the weather was sunny although there were big waves. The racing in the open sea was just great, and we won a few prizes. The camping and the shore side attractions were also great, and we are definitely intending to go back this year.

The Tall Ships in July turned out to be a very well organized and attended event. We did some fundraising and took people out to row round the ships, followed by races between the ship's crews in the 4 local skiffs. These were great fun, we raised some money, and unknown to us at the time, the Lord Lieutenant Janet Bowen was there and decided to ask us to represent Ross-shire at the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant on the Thames.

By this time we were heavily involved in organizing our own regatta, and the medal factory was in full swing. We had decided to make medals for all, so it ran into hundreds. Our regatta involved lots of Ullapool people, both inside and outside of the Club, including the Harbour Trust and Loch Broom Sailing Club who manned their rescue boat. Safety cover was run by Ron Davidson and his friend Tony, and they did an excellent job.

The weather forecast gave us qualms but in the end the sun shone and the wind did not get too strong. The beach start was spectacular and the spectators had a really

good view. Our Ulla ladies team achieved a spectacular result by beating a younger and fresher team from Porty in the Open Womens race, to our enormous delight. It was an historic win. We also entered other mens and womens' teams which was impressive since we were also running a large regatta. I'm glad to say other clubs helped out with umpiring.

The ceilidh that night was one of the best I've been to. The music was excellent (we have them again this year) and everyone was dancing. Lots of locals and tourists attended and many skiffers thanked us for laying on a great event.

The following day many of the skiffs came for a barbeque at Logie Bay and that was also a success. Ullapool has a lot to offer skiffies, and I'm really looking forward to this year's regatta.

It would be a fitting return to those clubs who supported our regatta to go to theirs this year, and they are on the calendar for those who want an action packed weekend away.

In October Alex Jordan launched the Wemyss Skiff here, and many had a try out of her. She is a boat for two rowers, considerably lighter and cheaper than a St Ayles Skiff. If we wanted to build one it would be a way for two rowers or two rowers and a cox to go out without needing a larger crew.

Chris made a really good calendar which has made us a handsome profit, but if you want to add to that profit I have a few here. In the Autumn John was brave enough to don a dry suit and be the man overboard for a very interesting and valuable exercise in the harbor. We also swamped Ulla and bailed her out, and practiced anchoring. We must do this all again for those who did not take part, but there are pictures and video on the website.

At the end of December we heard that we were allocated a place at the Jubilee pageant and plans are well advanced for the crew who volunteered to travel down. There is a chance to go to Greenock and Anstruther regattas with Cul Mor for those who are not going to the Thames.

We are putting in a bid to the SCRA to host the World Championships in 2013, when we hope to invite crews from the USA, Australia, England and the Netherlands. Potentially this is 30 boats, and we have the support of the Harbour Trust and Event Scotland.

We have concluded a successful negotiation with LBSC over a subscription to cover all our members to use their facilities and to park both boats. We are putting a keysafe in each boat with a key to the clubhouse, and the code will be made known to our members.

Chris and Sue Evans are retiring from our committee and we must thank them for all their hard work. I am glad to say Chris is still going to maintain our excellent website

and I'm sure he will continue to be the official photographer. Sue has also agreed to help out when asked.

All in all, our club has made a very promising start and the forthcoming season looks good.