



A Brief History of Lakeland Rowing Club

By Club Chairman, John Knox

Until 2007, there were no rowing clubs between Brampton and Lancaster, a distance of hundreds of square miles, stretching to the West Cumbrian coast.

Lakeland RC was set up by a small group of dedicated rowers in retirement, and since 2007 has grown as new members have been taught to row at the Club's northern base at Derwent Water Marina at Portinscale, near Keswick.

2006

The initiative for setting-up the Lakeland Rowing Club came in 2006 from Roger Heise, an electrical engineer, recently retired after a successful career in Germany, and now based at Silverdale in the South Lakes. Roger had been in touch with the Amateur Rowing Association (now British Rowing) as well as a number of local interested parties and two friends, John Knox and Ian Hill, with whom he had rowed at university many years before.

A dinner meeting was held at the Jumping Jenny restaurant at Brantwood, Coniston on 11 November 2006, attended by 11 people including two ARA representatives. Access to suitable water for rowing was identified as an issue. Roger had started discussions with the YMCA at Lakeside on Windermere, and John Knox had spoken to the owner of the Piel Wyke landing on Bassenthwaite, where Nick Cowan, a local GP, had been boating regularly for some years. It was agreed to take these discussions further, and to convene a further meeting to constitute the club formally.

The second meeting was held at the George Hotel in Penrith, with 9 present. A committee was appointed, comprising Roger Heise (Chairman), Andrew Thomas (Secretary), John Knox (Treasurer), Zoe Jagelman and Sue Heise. Roger reported that he was close to an agreement with the YMCA. On the recommendation of Simon Darnborough, representing the ARA at the meeting, the meeting agreed (a) to affiliate with the ARA, and (b) to adopt a constitution based on an ARA model.

2007

At a further meeting held at the YMCA at Lakeside in May 2007, the Constitution, based on the ARA model, was adopted. An annual subscription of £96 was agreed, set deliberately low in view of the limited facilities on offer, and to be attractive to new members. Roger was still in discussion with the YMCA, but in the meantime he had gathered together a small fleet of second-hand boats, donated by other rowing clubs in the UK and Germany, and these were being stored in his garden (see photo).



Shortly after this meeting the Club received a setback when the YMCA withdrew its offer of accommodation following a change in ownership of its site, but within a few weeks he had located another site in a disused sawmill at Cunsey, further up the western shore of Windermere.

However, following a positive meeting with the agent of the site owner, Lord Inglewood, outline drawings were prepared for a boat store at Piel Wyke on Bassenthwaite, where Nick Cowan was organising regular outings with a small group of scullers (see photos).



2008

In February 2008, a pair of stable quadruple scullers was ordered, with a grant assistance from Sport England, and shortly afterwards launched from the Cunsey site (see photo). However, outings were infrequent as it proved difficult to attract members from the South Lakes area, probably due to the remoteness of the Cunsey site.



Meanwhile, work continued at Bassenthwaite, outline plans and a specification were drawn-up for a boat store building, and a preliminary environmental assessment as undertaken by a student from Lancaster University.

2009

In March 2009, a meeting was held on site with a planning officer from the Lake District Planning Board, who identified a number of critical obstacles relating to access, trees, flood risk, flora and fauna, and indicated that the Board would start from a presumption of not approving the development

Thus discouraged, further work on the Piel Wyke proposal was delayed while the search continued for another base in the North Lakes.

2010

At the suggestion of Ian Hill, there was a discussion with Dave Williamson, the owner of the Derwent Water Marina in Portinscale, to allow the Club to keep some boats at the marina. The Grange School, from Northwich, Cheshire, offered the loan of a boat trailer, and in November 2010 one of the stable quads and two lightweight double scullers were moved from Cunsey to Portinscale.

2011

Northern members of LRC enjoyed several outings during the following winter – despite losing several weeks due to ice, and later due to floods. (photos) Recruitment remained slow, however, with only 11 members at the end of 2011.



2012

At the end of 2012, the club had reached a crisis point;

- only 12 full members, 1 student, and 10 “learners” at various stages.
- With that membership, the Club was barely viable
- Fees for outings on Derwentwater this year had enabled the Club to cover its costs but there would be a cash shortfall of £680 in December, until subscriptions come in in 2013.
- Attempts to increase membership over the past year have had very limited success
- Activity levels at Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite had been less than hoped – primarily due to bad weather throughout the summer. Good use had been made of a Virus Yole stable double-sculler (on loan to the Club from John Knox), but the stable quad on Derwentwater has been used on three only occasions in the year – once with only three rowing.
- The boats on Windermere had not been used since 2009
- There had been no progress with plans for a facility on Bassenthwaite

2013

At the AGM early in 2013, some actions were agreed and actioned;

1. reduce costs, particularly insurance
2. Increase subscriptions and outing fees, and charge racking fees for privately-owned boats

3. Sell one of the stable quads, and use spare funds (if any) to invest in racing shells (2Sc or IV).
4. Abandon the Cunsey site
5. Scrap or otherwise dispose of the GRP doubles at Portinscale and the wooden boats at Cunsey

Other more drastic actions were considered but not implemented;

1. Remove trailer and boats from Derwentwater to a location away from either lake, and transport to Piel Wyke when needed
2. Dispose of all club boats but maintain the club as a “shell” – with members responsible for their own boats and equipment
3. Disband the club

One of the quads was sold to Wayfarers Rowing Club from Surrey, and a secondhand fine double sculler was purchased. Following some positive local publicity arising from a charity event using the club’s remaining quad, membership at Portinscale began to pick up, including some experienced rowers who hitherto had not been aware of the development of LRC.

2014

Early in 2014, Fiona Marley Paterson, a new member based in Kendal, joined the club and re-invigorated the development of the club on Windermere. British Rowing had been looking into the development of a joint water sports centre with the National Park Authority at Brockhole. Fiona helped the Park with the development of its proposal, and at the same time identified a number of potential members for the club in the South Lakes area.

Fiona was able to raise substantial grant funding to purchase two new stable quads. Although the plan for a watersports centre at Brockhole did not proceed due to planning difficulties, Fiona was able to find a new base at the National Trust’s Fell Foot Park at the south end of Windermere, which offers excellent facilities for both lake and river rowing.

During 2014, 3 members qualified as Learn to Row Instructors, and in 2015, two more became fully-qualified UKCC Level 2 coaches which enabled the club to offer “Learn to Row” courses to new members.

2015

During 2015, membership has expanded steadily at both North and South sites, and now stands at around 50 on each site. Links have been established with Keswick School (North) and Windermere School (South), with 23 students from Keswick School completing the L2R course and 8 going on to join LRC.

Crews from LRC have started to take part in regional regattas and head-of-the river races (time trials), with some notable successes. Nick Cowan and George Frost have taken part in regional regattas over many years, representing LRC. In 2015, Nick won the Northern

Regional sprint championship in his age group, and won a silver medal in the National Championships.

In July 2015, LRC invited clubs from the North Region to a day of Sprint Races, as part of the Derwentwater Regatta organised by the National Trust.

Crews from LRC South have taken part in regional "Sunday League" regattas, with outstanding success, and in August organised to well-supported Sunday League regatta on Windermere. One student member has been selected for National Squad training.

At a meeting of the club committee on 29 October 2015, it was agreed that this level of membership and club activity would enable both sites to be independently viable, and there was little merit in trying to operate the two sites as one club. An extraordinary general meeting of the club will be held on 26th November, to establish a new independent club to be based at the South site, with Lakeland Rowing Club to remain at Portinscale. This new Club will commence operations on 1st January 2016.

2016

Lakeland South formally separates from its parent club and becomes Windermere Rowing Club. Lakeland Rowing Club continues to operate out of Derwent Water Marina in the North of the county, with a steadily growing membership and an array of Learn to Row courses planned for the coming year.