

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the GORING GAP BOAT CLUB

28th November 2007

### Chairman's report

Thank you for attending this evening's meeting. The AGM is an important event for the club as it provides an opportunity for all members to input into the running and future direction of your club.

Firstly, I would like to thank all the members of the 2007 GGBC Committee for their work and support throughout an eventful year which brought many highlights and a number of challenges. I would also like to mention especially those members and friends of the club who worked hard as a group in planning and preparing for the 2007 Regatta and who then pulled together equally well in order to mitigate the impact of the sudden cancellation of the event.

It is appropriate to mention 3 individuals who have made special contributions to the GGBC during this year. **Hedley West** – although not a serving Committee member in 2007 - has given up a lot of time to work on the renovation and maintenance of many of our boats down at the Oratory throughout the year, in addition to making a major contribution to the work of the Regatta Committee. Later in the meeting, I would like to return to further acknowledge Hedley's long and invaluable service to this club.

That our boats are looking in such good shape is testament not only to Hedley's hard work but to the continued determination and commitment of **Richard Bowsher**, who has continued to amaze us all with his capacity and enthusiasm for making things happen within the club. Richard has continued to be the driving force behind the increasingly diverse rowing activities at GGBC and his innovations have meant that the club is now very well equipped to cater for the aspirations of all different types of recreational rowers. You will see from his report to follow just how much activity has been taking place within the club, and it is fair to say that much of this would not have happened without Richard's leadership. In addition, he still found the time alongside Hedley to carry out considerable repair and renovation work on several boats. Well done Richard and please accept our vote of thanks for all your efforts.

Thirdly, when taking over as Treasurer a year ago, I am sure **Fen Harbridge** did not envisage such a stressful and busy period of work as that which ensued with the cancellation of the Regatta. The need to administer refunds, deal with amended supplier payments and work with Committee members to minimise our losses required a large amount of work and great attention to detail in order to keep full control of all the financial implications. Fen has ensured that all the accounts have been administered efficiently and that the Committee has been well informed at all times. I would like to thank Fen tonight on your behalf for these efforts.

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July was probably the major event of the year when we really had no option other than to cancel the Regatta having been overwhelmed by the weather. Naturally this resulted in massive disappointment for all involved especially people like Mike Cheeseman, Andy Mckenzie, plus helpers, who had put in hours of great work preparing the site. I am sorry to report that the club has inevitably suffered some financial loss as a result. On the positive side however, many members and several non members such as Paul Devine, Lou Tate, and Nick Bubb worked really hard in order to minimise our losses, and we enjoyed great support and goodwill from suppliers, entrants, and customers of the Regatta, many of whom were happy to waive their application for any refund. In particular we enjoyed fantastic support from our main sponsors the Swan at Streatley, and from Mr Richard Bishop at Streatley Farm which helped to significantly reduce the potential loss. Following a general review of the 2007 Regatta, the Committee has been considering proposals to slightly change the organisational structure of the event for 2008. This may include the appointment of three managers or co-ordinators – Logistics, Commercial and Competition - reporting either to an overall co-coordinator/chairperson, or even direct to the main Boat Club Committee. It remains to be seen whether this approach will be achievable or of benefit, but in theory, the three co-ordinators, each with their own small teams and concentrating on just one key area of the event should be able to introduce measures which will strengthen the financial performance of the event whilst allowing us to spread the risk and put in place some contingencies should we ever be faced with a repeat of this year's situation.

The events of July did not prevent the club from enjoying an active and successful year. Rowing activities as mentioned above are now more diverse than ever – and

when we review the Captain of Rowing's report in a moment, I sincerely hope all members will be enthused, and proud of what is going on. If we are going to continue to develop these events, we really need one or two committed active rowing members to help with the running of them in 2008. If you have been impressed with what has been achieved to date, then please don't hesitate to step forward if you fancy getting involved in the planning and execution of some events and activities – I can promise that you will have some fun and a great sense of achievement from doing so.

Membership, although down on 2006, has remained reasonably healthy, and stands at 107. We have attracted over 30 new members during the year mainly though not exclusively as a result of the L2R programme. Thanks to Tim Greaves for his efficient work as Membership Secretary this year. As mentioned at last year's AGM, the new 5 year agreement with Oratory school was duly signed off in March and we feel we have achieved good value for money, together with increasingly close and collaborative arrangements with the rowing section of the school. Mike Colinson has worked hard in succeeding Bruce Evans as Committee member with special interest for our punting activities. Unfortunately we have continued to struggle with one major issue in this area, that of accessibility and ease of boarding the punts at the Swan. Although proposals have been made and meetings held we have not yet achieved our objectives. There will be an opportunity to consider this issue further later in the meeting.

As you may be aware, a small working group has drafted a Development plan for the club over the past 2 years. An important element of this plan continues to be the long term permanent location of the club. I know that an extraordinary amount of work has been done in the past by successive sub-committees in evaluating sites and submitting planning applications. In my opinion, the eventual return of the GGBC to a permanent site in the Goring Gap should continue to be one of our primary aims, and I would like to see the project placed once again into the hands of a fresh sub committee who would work in addition on the Development Plan. New possibilities will continue to arise and we should be ready to respond to them quickly if necessary. A good current example could be the planned work on the Thames Water facilities at Gatehampton about which Mike Colinson and Stuart Hunt have already made some preliminary enquiries.

It can be difficult at times to remember that this is a recreational and accessible club, which exists in order to enable us to get out onto the water and enjoy the sports of rowing and punting in good company and wonderful surroundings. I think there are times when we all need to step back and remember this. The other thought I am left with at the end of this year, is that the Club absolutely must serve the needs and wishes of its members. It is the job of the Committee to ensure this is done, but I strongly believe it is a “2 way street”. In an attempt to engage better with all members, we produced a feedback survey in March, hoping that the results would set the direction and priorities for the current and future Committees. In the end, we received only 16 responses – statistically too insignificant to draw any firm conclusions from. I hope we will try the survey again in 2008 and if so, I would urge everybody to take the opportunity to submit their views and engage more closely with the club. Only by doing this, can we ensure that the club belongs to the members and that it progresses and develops in the widest possible interests of us all.

The best way of engaging and influencing the future of our club is of course to volunteer tonight for election to the committee, to offer to join one of the Regatta organising teams next year, or to step forward to assist regularly with events and activities as previously mentioned. Please, if at all possible, do try to get involved in one of these ways, for this is what a successful future for our club depends on.

Tim Gill

Chairman GGBC 2007.