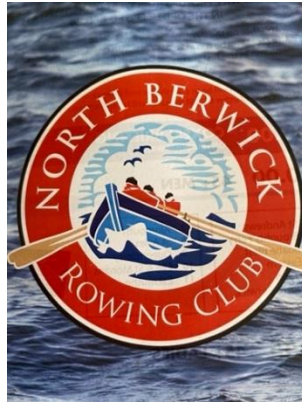


North Berwick – 27th August 2022 by Gill Ogilvie



As the post-lockdown season draws to a close, we headed towards North Berwick for what promised to be a day full of fun, sea and sand. With a stunning weather forecast, a great day was all but guaranteed.

In the early hours of Saturday morning the St Ayles was hitched up for the trip around the coast. She was one of 15 club boats to arrive at the beach, but certainly not the furthest travelled. Row from the Netherlands claimed that title, and it was fantastic that they could make it.



At the 9am coxes briefing the course was explained. A gruelling 3km course clockwise around Craigleith Island and back – certainly not for the faint hearted! Races were to be held in waves due to the large number of boats taking part. At 10am the fun began with the 45+ men's race. Grant skilfully coxed his experienced crew safely around the rock and back, gathering crucial information about conditions to pass onto the other coxes.

On their return there was a quick changeover for all crews, and it was straight back to racing.





This time it was Shona's turn to guide the boat around the rock. With flat-calm conditions and the sun beating down on the rowers, the challenge was to push through the high temperatures, especially at the far side of Craighleith Island. Again the 45+ ladies did the club proud, giving it their all and catching the back markers from the first wave. Was this going to be quick enough to secure a place? With very quick times from Eastern, Broughty Ferry and North Berwick, unfortunately it was not quick enough this time. However, 4th place was still a fantastic achievement!

After a short break, and refuelling from the laden tables in the hub, it was the turn of the mixed decades, coxed by Babs. The team fought hard to take first place in their wave. Now for the tense wait to find out how their time had fared against the second wave. However, Eastern and North Berwick boats in the second wave proved to be faster, knocking our decades down into third place. The first medal was in the bag!

It was the turn of the mixed open crew next. With Elsie motivating the crew and navigating around the increasing number of sail boats on the water, again the St Ayles boat finished first in their wave, beating the Netherlands - an achievement in itself. The nervous wait was on once more to find out if they had placed. With the race being the quickest of the day, the team were sadly beaten into 4th place; the second 4th of the regatta.



Next it was the turn of the novices, coxed by Grant (his one aim – not to kill anyone, although Anne may disagree). There was a hotly contested battle. Both heats were quick, and the team came back to shore having given everything they had!

Then it was the turn of the mixed 240, with Shona guiding them around the course. With the benefit of going in the second wave, Shona had boats in her sight to push her team onwards. The team gave a masterful display of rowing and stormed to victory almost 10 seconds ahead of the next quickest boat. Another medal added to the total and this time a well-earned 1st place!



The mixed 45+ was up next. By this point in the day the wind had picked up a little and the starters began struggling to get all boats lined up. The water was a bit harder to navigate. Susan weaved her way through the waves to guide her team safely back to shore. Again, this valuable information was shared with the coxes and the penultimate race was ready to go.

The open men's crew took to the water with Elsie in charge. This was the third time rowing round the rock for the majority of this crew, but you would never know it! They fought hard to make it to the finish against the tougher water.

The final race of the day was the open ladies. The ladies pushed hard to reach Craigleith Island. Shona showed great patience as she navigated through some "interference" at the back of the rock. Not letting up on the home straight, the crew brought the boat back across the line safely.

At 6pm the medals were presented. St Ayles were amongst the 11 teams to go home sporting new silverware with their win in the mixed 240 and their third place in the decades race.



All that was left was to do was relax, get a wee drink and tuck into some fish and chips from the Lobster Shack. A great day was had by all, and it was a fabulous end to the first racing season in two years.

