South Island Rowing has hosted five regattas this year and overall it has really been a great season for rowing. The comparatively calm weather, the availability of volunteers and the work behind the scenes of our dedicated people and contractors has helped in the success.

It is the secondary schools regattas that took centre stage this year with both the South Island Secondary Schools and the New Zealand Secondary Schools regattas being very popular. However, we cannot forget that it is the rowers we are catering for and obtaining positive feedback from the rowers makes all the stress and effort worthwhile. The University Championship Regatta was the last regatta of the season and now is the time to reflect on what we have achieved and where to for the next season.

The next significant event for South Island Rowing is the Annual General Meeting (AGM) which is scheduled to be held in Twizel on Saturday 14th May. This will be followed by the first Board meeting post the AGM and will set the scene for the next years activities.

Meridian South Island Secondary School’s Regatta

After some six weeks since the South Island Club Champs this regatta emerged with the memory of being blown out last year. This meant that many of the systems to be put in place had not been tested and in real terms this was to be a trial run for the New Zealand Secondary Schools Regatta. As can be seen from the picture on the right, the weather was settled and pleasant.

With finals being at 10 minute intervals, it gave schools a chance to see what would happen if this occurred during the New Zealand Regatta, and in particular the effects of boat and personnel clashes. It was also a good test for the ceremonial team. It proved that they could just cope with the 10-minute interval and having the boats return to the boat park first, relieved the congestion behind the dais. The pictures below show the medal winners of the under 18 boys and girls eights races. Obviously a little more work was required to the dais.
Preparation work

Before South Island Rowing can host a premier rowing event in New Zealand, there has to be a lot of preparation. It is difficult to describe the amount of work that has to be undertaken by the volunteer staff.

Quietly working away in the background was Michael Hennessey. Singlehandedly, he rewired the whole Start complex. This was quite a challenging electrical task, and has now been set up so that loss of power from the 40-year-old cable in the lake will not stop the regatta. It also means that the boat holders will now will be able to have power for heating, and hot drinks in their shed.

Des Borgfeldt manufactured the the light and sound system extension at the start to ensure that the 10-lane capability can be fully used next season.

Artificial grass was laid on the top of the dais. This made the surface much more comfortable for those in bare feet. The picture above shows Charlie Crampton and Dan Steven installing the capping around the dais.

While it took some time to realise, the boat wash is now fully operational. As can be seen in the picture it is working well. However, it appears that some drivers forget to close their windows after initiating the wash and drive through it! One or two drivers also had some difficulty realising that their boat trailers are wider than their towing vehicle. But overall. It is a great success.

Another project that was half completed was the wastewater stage one. The pump failure at the SICC Regatta meant that SI Rowing had to get the new gravity line into the boat park toilets. This was duly completed and the testing of it took place at the SISS Regatta. There were no problems and SI Rowing is confident that the wastewater system on site is now working well.

One further action was to upgrade the entrance signage. This was done by allowing our local sponsors to have their signs displayed. The posts were installed earlier in the year and once the signs were printed, Trevor Wilson obtained the boards and mounted the signs. The picture below shows the signage on both sides of the road. It is intended to upgrade or replace the signage on the left to maintain its pristine appearance.
The regatta was hosted this year by SI Rowing and the amount of preparation work behind the scenes was extensive. This must have been one of the most successful regattas ever held here. Of particular note was the overall behaviour to the rowers and feedback received from various sources including the “Twizel Update” clearly indicated the exemplary behaviour of the visitors to the town.

Being an outdoor sport, weather plays a very important part on how the regatta progresses. It seems that the warnings about keeping warm were acknowledged and it was encouraging to see rowers making wise choices about their attire. Similarly the wind and fog did impact on the progress of the regatta. While a conservative approach was taken we know this was appropriate given the potential for disaster with such a large event. However, everything was played out within the time frame expected and the use of the Sunday as a spare day was not required.

While the regatta is affectionately known as the MAADI Cup it is the boys under 18 race that is for the cup. It was keenly “fought” and Christs College won this year. However, in the eyes of the media (and possibly many others too) this win was overshadowed by the extraordinary feat of a 15-year-old young lady from Ashburton (Veronica Wall) who won the Under 16, Under 17 and Under 18 single sculls. Congratulations Veronica! However, next year maybe there is someone out there who can similarly emulate this feat.

The statistics are out and they show 119 schools attended and this included over 2,200 rowers. It was also noted that there were some 31 medal winning schools...for some it was their first medal and others their first for many years. It was encouraging to observe more relatively unknown schools on the dais to receive medals.

The major trophies winners:
• Star Trophy (Champion School): St Peters
• Maadi Cup (U18 Eight): Christ’s College
• President’s Scull (Champion Sculling School): St Peters
• Executive Trophy (Champion Sweep Oar School): Rangi Ruru School for Girls
• Springbok Trophy (Boys U18 Fours): Christ’s College
• Dawn Cup (Girls U18 Coxed Fours): Diocesan School for Girls

One gauge of the success of the regatta is the impressions left and just how this is reflected in the media.

The following are two extracts from the “Twizel Update”:

Last week’s rowing event was amazing in so many ways. We managed to be on the outskirts of a couple of teams and watching the well-oiled machines in action was amazing. The energy and passion that so many proud parents and coaches put into making sure their athletes were fed and watered at the right time was amazing to see. Seeing the focus and dedication of the athletes, their determination in competition, their joy in winning and their gracefulness in defeat.

Twizel put on such a show and watching the racing during the week with the wonderful views over the lake was just outstanding. South Island Rowing can be very proud of putting on such an amazing event.

And again from our very supportive Local Member of Parliament... Jacqui Dean

As the waters settle once again on Lake Ruataniwha, it is apparent to me that events such as the Aon Maadi Cup provide a wonderful life experience for those taking part. We often hear the current crop of teenagers being described as ‘lazy’, which I think is particularly unfair.

As an MP, I get to meet highly motivated and ambitious teenagers regularly and it did my heart good to see over 2,000 young people converge on Twizel for this special event. It’s one thing for a teenager to put their hand up to be involved in something like this, but it’s quite another to put in the countless hours of hard work and to show the dedication required to compete at this level. It is also no mean feat to travel away from family and friends to unfamiliar surrounds, to be watched by thousands in a highly charged environment.

The event, as always, was very well supported. It was wonderful to see wide-spread media coverage of the races and for communities to follow the progress of
their crews and take pride in their efforts. I would like to acknowledge all those who worked tirelessly to make this regatta a success. Those groups and individuals have done a wonderful thing for rowing in New Zealand, but more importantly they have provided an opportunity for over 2,000 teenagers to work towards and take part in something they will never forget.

Finally, South Island Rowing was pleased to have you visit us here and use our facilities. We were very encouraged by the behaviour of the athletes and the skills they brought. Thank you for coming and we trust you will visit us again in two years’ time.

Looking at the complex and tents and rowing from the water.

Some of the crowd watching the last races

Over-joyed Christ’s College boys after their Maadi win.

Photos here kindly supplied by Steve McArthur, Rowing Celebration
Volunteers

It is the volunteers who make up the operating fabric of most sporting bodies in New Zealand. They are the people who work for an organization by freely giving their time without payment. While there are a few paid administrators, the bulk of the operational activities are undertaken by volunteers. The volunteers are not there to take or give abuse but to obtain some enjoyment and in our case, return something back to the sport.

Many do not realise that much of the physical work for a regatta like the one we have just had was undertaken by volunteers. Without their continued contribution and support, contractors would have to be employed to complete the work. For this regatta it would either be cancelled, or more likely have a substantial increase in entry fees.

It has been rather obvious that many of the volunteers are ageing and there seems to be fewer coming on who are able to undertake such activities. The older ones have a lot of experience and want to be able to pass this on. If you are able to undertake some volunteer work please let us know.

For example, our first aid room saw more than 120 visit them during the NZ Secondary Schools Regatta regatta and some 60 given physiotherapy. With our first care person being over seventy and contrary to popular opinion, she is a volunteer herself. You can appreciate how important it is that we have more appropriately qualified people volunteering to assist. This is only one area and we welcome any others who are able to assist. So, take a bow volunteers, we really appreciate your dedication and perseverance at this regatta.

Lessons to learn

Operationally speaking there were a few issues and lessons were learnt for future improvements. There was some feedback from those present and this was appreciated and will facilitate some changes. We welcome any feedback regarding how we can deliver a better venue to the rowers and supporters.

- The regatta management programme had some issues here but overall it worked well.
- The communications systems need some improvements in both the equipment and its use.
- A similar situation arose with the PA system. Comments from Kay Gregory has given us some ideas where this can be improved. This will require more work during the year ahead.
- The telephone system needs improvement and some expansion for a large regatta. Further the EFTPOS equipment will require upgrade work and it may be that our communications will alter as a complete package.
- More training on the use of equipment, processes and systems is needed to ensure its safe and effective operation.
- Many complained about the slow internet access. Unfortunately, the broadband capacity out of the complex is not adequate for a regatta of this size. This even affected the on-line result updates for ‘rowIT’. Some serious investigation work into alternatives is being explored.
- The entry and egress from the complex is another concern. While there are some alternatives being explored in terms of traffic management and parking areas there are two things we cannot change – some people do not know how to park their vehicles properly to minimise the impact of others and there is only one road to the complex.

There are always some more ideas coming in as to where we need to focus and we welcome any suggestions.
Earlier this year we saw the opening of the new Medical Centre for Twizel. This is a significant achievement for a small community that raised the funds (~$2M) to create what is believed to be the best Medical Centre in the District.

Being part of the community and having members who regularly use the medical facilities, SI Rowing was involved with the fundraising for this centre. Its importance cannot be over emphasised as Twizel is one of the most distant communities from hospital services in NZ.

Every year, SI Rowing has allowed community groups to collect gate entry fees at its major regatta as a way of raising funds for community projects. This year the Medical Trust operated the gate to raise funds for new scanning equipment so that those with conditions such as suspected broken limbs can be diagnosed correctly before embarking on their 160Km ride to hospital.

Contrary to popular opinion, this is not a profit making venture for SI Rowing. Although we are very grateful to those who donated to this project it was disappointing to hear of the few who limited the funds raised by choosing to avoid the gate fee and abuse those who were manning the gates.

The following appeared in the Twizel update:

*A big thank you to those who helped on the gate at the rowing on Friday and Saturday. It was a lot of work but worthwhile, raising a substantial amount of money for the Medical Centre. Special thanks to Jane and Bruce (Chalky) White for their work on the ground and organising the crew.*

*Simon Williamson, Chair High Country Health.*
Aon University Rowing Championships

This regatta was held during ANZAC weekend. As we have seen in recent times the weather was favourable for rowing with most events being completed. The late Sunday wind did cause some disruption. Again, it was thanks to the dedicated few who volunteered their time that enabled the regatta to run as smoothly as it did.

Of course there always had to be an incident to really start things off. During the first race one of the eights managed to directly contact a buoy. But this was not an ordinary buoy but a rather large display buoy denoting the outside edge of the course. Consequently, we can see from the picture on the right, a rather embarrassed coxswain following the rest of the boat (picture below) back to the boat park.

One visitor to this regatta was Fred Strachan. Fred is the Vice Patron of Rowing New Zealand and a Life Member of South Island Rowing. He was recently discharged from hospital following a major operation. He continues to be an avid supporter of rowing here in Twizel.

The picture shows Fred along with his son John and Pat McQuinn, Vice Chairman of SI Rowing.
As previously mentioned there has been a lull in the project while Secondary Schools regattas were completed. During that time the materials for the next phase of the project have been accumulating. The picture shows the accumulated pipes in the foreground with the valve chamber in the background. Excavation work for this phase is scheduled to start on 26 April.

In preparation for this work, trees have had to be cleared along the road in so that the pipes can be installed. While the trees have been felled, they still need to be cut up and removed. This will make a substantial difference to the entrance way and in particular the car parking. The picture on the right was taken from the location of the valve chamber and shows for the first time the route to the hut and the entrance gate.
Any contributions, comments or correspondence for this newsletter or website should be forwarded to the Secretary. (secretary@ruataniwha.co.nz)

South Island Rowing Incorporated
PO Box 291, Twizel 7944
www.ruataniwha.co.nz