

RowUK

Inspiration. Aspiration. Perspiration.

2017 Annual Report



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Each morning, I wake up with one mission – to change the lives of young people through the power and discipline of sport.

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After nearly two years of planning, RowUK came to life in September 2016. We had a concept and we wanted to prove it.

Our concept is that sport is an excellent vehicle through which to raise aspirations and build confidence in young people who, for whatever reason, don't have the self-belief to fulfil their potential. We are also unapologetic in asserting that competitive sport, as distinct from non-competitive physical activity has significant benefits which are yet to be fully understood. We wanted to examine this properly and get some robust analysis as to 'what works' and why.

At a younger age, I shied away from competition. Now, I relish it. What changed was that a few key people backed me. Those life-mentors were the teachers, coaches and senior teammates I met through sport. They pushed me, guided me and always expected more. They led by example, they were patient and they were consistent. That's why I started RowUK. I wanted to create an environment where good kids could thrive.

So, after fifteen years of working in both the state and independent education sectors, and also for London Youth Rowing, I felt I was ready to build an effective model as I

saw it - and to test it properly.

In November 2014, I heard on the Leeds alumni grapevine that the university's rowing club had moved into the newly-opened Leeds Boat House. The following year I was on holiday in Yorkshire and popped in to see for it myself. It was a midweek afternoon and this beautiful new facility was locked up and quiet. Back down in London, the centre I ran was teeming with kids every day. I wrote to the university with a plan to open up the boathouse to local schools. Long story short, they contracted the newly created RowUK and just over a year later I moved back to Leeds.

We got to work. There is now full time professional coaching in the nearby Gorse Academies Trust and that programme is set to expand again in September. We have university students coaching indoor rowing clubs right across the city and we are about to stage the third RowLeeds Indoor Championships. To hold the competitive aspects of the programme together, the University of Leeds Boat Club recognises it needs to be the most compelling destination available for ambitious junior rowers leaving school. That will take time but the building blocks are moving into place.

A word from Ben Cox, Founder of RowUK

As I have said, I know how important it is to have people looking out for you, guiding you through selection and demotion, through victory and defeat. But a plucky anecdote isn't enough. What is needed is hard evidence.

Only robust and clinical analysis, across large cohorts, will give an understanding of the complexities facing schools and families in our more deprived neighbourhoods. We have hunch, but we want to know for sure.

Thankfully, the University of Leeds Schools of Psychiatry, Biological Sciences and Food Science and Nutrition are just as interested as RowUK in getting the answers. In 2018, we will roll out the research programme, iRoW (impact of Rowing on Wellbeing). We will seek to understand the impact of our programmes on physical and mental health and, ultimately, a national and even global view is part of our long-term plans.

But why rowing? In some senses, it wouldn't matter if it were rugby, cycling, ballet or anything else. We are a niche and costly sport and that makes it harder to reach more young people. The answer is that rowing, rightly or wrongly, has a reputation. In many respects that reputation is unjustified. However, it cannot be denied that, in schools at least, rowing is a badge of pre-eminence reserved mainly for the independent sector. Success in this sport for the young people we serve will be emblematic far beyond the parkland surrounding Dorney Lake. More than anything, it will echo back to south Leeds in a way that requires no explanation to the children and families we work with and, eventually, to those decision-makers who can help shape their futures.

We have already received exciting requests to manage programmes in other cities. Elsewhere, commercial opportunities are presenting themselves and we will capitalise on the right ones at the right time, helping to reduce our dependency on traditional grants and donations, and allowing us to drive our programmes forward with agility and innovation.

We are strong advocates of the benefits of sprint rowing and we see this as the future of the sport. We are talking to national and international interests in this area and

will be building relationships with sponsors and partners throughout 2018. Also, the demand from the fitness industry for experienced coaching is a new and exciting feature of our sport and an area where we are already starting to add value. Making sure RowUK is a byword for quality is paramount as this side of the business grows.

We plan to scale up beyond Leeds at some stage, but we have no desire for our impact to be a mile wide and an inch deep. For now, we want to build a bullet-proof delivery model and a world class research programme. Zoning in on that comes before everything else.

Last but not least, we are excited to be launching the *RowUK Foundation* in February. This will mean that RowUK will now have a charitable fundraising vehicle through which we can financially support and grow the incredible work being delivered by all of our valued partners.

This report aims to share more about what RowUK does and why it does it. We made some pleasing progress in 2017 and we have some exciting plans for the year ahead. If you like the sound of what we do and would like to work with us in 2018, I'd love to hear from you.



2,296 people introduced to rowing

2 visits by international rowing programmes

18 races won by Gorse students

3 ground-breaking research programmes

12 newly-qualified coaches

1 new student internship placement

20 schools taking part in our programmes

37.0 fastest RowUK250 submission

500+ Instagram followers

1 new British Rowing affiliated rowing club (The Gorse Boat Club)



The RowLeeds Indoor Programme is the first step into the sport for most school rowers in Leeds. We have set up indoor rowing clubs in local schools, with pathways into Leeds Rowing Club for those young people who want to progress to the water. First thing first, we needed to boost the profile of the sport and put rowing on everyone's radar. So, 2017 started with a series of RowShows through January and February where we delivered free indoor rowing taster sessions to over 1,500 school students.

This is a participation programme and we know that participation needs a purpose if it is to be meaningful and grow. Therefore, we have decided to celebrate two things: talent and persistence.

The RowLeeds Indoor Championships happen once a term and they are there so students can represent their school by pitching their talent and their training programmes against other schools across Leeds and Yorkshire. The Indoor Champs have already yielded some very promising talent (see [Joe's Story](#)) and there's plenty more where that came from.

However, not everyone can be two metres tall and we happen to think that perseverance is just as important – if not more important – than genetic good fortune. To reward such consistency, we have created the Metre Meter, a scheme to encourage students to get on a rowing machine and rack up a little bit of daily distance at a manageable pace. We have put up enormous wallcharts in their gyms, with regular milestones to mark off, and certificates to be handed out in assembly. A million metres is the final target.

We want to make sure that Leeds students get the best introduction to rowing possible, so we have sought out some great coaches to help them on their way. What we needed were champions, with a passion for the sport, going into schools to light a few fires. The University of Leeds is committed to its students playing a positive role in local schools and has set up an outreach fund to train and support those students who wish to make a positive contribution during their time at Leeds. The university provided funding for formal qualifications including a Level 2 Assistant Coach, DBS checks and a Child



Protection and Safeguarding course. By October last year, 12 UoLBC members were fully qualified and ready to go.

The programme saw its launch in the autumn of 2017. We currently have a quarter of Leeds schools signed up to the programme and there has been plenty more interest from others. The coaches are encouraged to build their own programmes, integrating their personal coaching styles with the tone and messaging of the wider RowLeeds aims.

This year, to help with strained school budgets, we have also launched an equipment investment plan where RowUK matches a loan ergo for each machine a school purchases itself. We are able to double the spending power of each school and therefore the equipment available to each club.

We are excited to have brought indoor rowing to over 2,000 young people in 2017 and this number is set to increase substantially in 2018. We are also tracking these individuals as they graduate to our partner rowing clubs down at Leeds Boat House.

RowLeeds Indoor Rowing Championships

The RowLeeds Indoor Championships are staged once a term and hosted by the University of Leeds at its state-of-the-art Gryphon Sports Centre. They are what all the RowLeeds schools are working towards and, in the short time they have been running, have already produced some outstanding results.

Each school sends a team of 10, with a boy and girl from each year group through Years 7-11. Each team member will race as an individual in their own age category before all coming together for the Team Relay at the end of the day.

We also have a Special Invitation race for those young people with physical, learning and sensory disabilities. It is quite something to see the whole crowd and competitors stop what they are doing in the middle of the day to give full voice to this important part of the event.

Autumn's event fell on the 10th November and we had schools outside Leeds attend for the first time. For schools involved in our Indoor Rowing Programme, their coaches were in attendance to offer last minute tips and race

tactics. Whilst face painting, ping pong and various other activities kept nervous competitors entertained, it was hard to peel away from the drama on the big screen. Teammates, teachers, parents and friends screamed and shouted from behind the barriers, willing the last few strokes out of those on the race floor.

Coming into the last race of the day – the Team Relay – and the stakes were high. This double-pointed category meant that it was all to play for, with the winner likely to take the Victor Ludorum trophy. Each school conducted their hushed team talks as they waited for the race floor to open. Younger students looked up to older team captains as they issued last instructions. Once the 10 minutes were up, just one metre separated first and second place. No one could tell who had clinched the victory. After much tension, Ruth Gorse came out on top. The day also saw four British Rowing 'Gold Standard' times achieved, an impressive feat for those who had only just started rowing. The day was a great success and we are now looking forward to the Spring Champs on the 23rd February.



Meet new Leeds junior, Joe Bramham-Butts

We interviewed Joe Bramham-Butts of Prince Henry's Grammar School, Otley about his new hobby, rowing

Tell us a little bit about yourself

I am 14 years old. I live in Rawdon. I like sport (rowing, rugby, athletics, especially the long jump, fell running), art and taking pictures. I dislike French. Not the French people, French language at school!

So you have a great engine and an explosive ability. Perfect for rowing. So what got you into it?

I was asked to try indoor rowing at the RowLeeds RowShow. I was then selected to row for the my school at the Indoor Champs and I won my event. I was told that there were now facilities in Leeds where I could learn to row on the water and a place I could cycle to locally. I did the Learn to Row course and have been a member of Leeds Rowing Club since June. It was a good time of year to start in case you fall in!

What exposure did you have to rowing before and what were your impressions of the sport?

I knew about rowing as I'd seen it on the Olympics, but I used to always think it was for posh people because of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. I thought it was only really for private schools. Now I see that it's about getting everyone involved.

What's your favourite thing about rowing?

I like using the power in my legs. It's quite fun. I just enjoy using my legs, they are my favourite thing to use.

How does training make you feel?

Happy. It hurts while I'm doing it but I then you've completed it and you get that sense of achievement.

How does racing make you feel?

It's amazing, lots of fun. You have to be aware of where you are going and you've got crews ahead of you and behind you. Not everyone moves out of the way!

What would you say is the highlight of your rowing experience so far?

Being told that I have the potential to take it really far. I've never been told that before - that I could take it to a high standard.

What are your goals for this season?

I want to get my technique right.

Who do you look up to in the rowing world and why?

I look up to Jack, my teammate, because I want to be as good as him, or better, especially when we do our ergs.

If you could sum up rowing in one word, what would it be?
Power.

Do you prefer indoor rowing or outdoor rowing?

I prefer being outdoors as you can see what you are doing. Indoor is like doing the sport on a computer. You're doing it, but not feeling it.

If you could share one top tip for someone starting out, what would your advice be?

It doesn't matter if you fall in. Have no fear.





We spoke to Sir John Townsley, Executive Principal of The Gorse Academies Trust, about the ground-breaking programme his schools have embarked on with RowUK.

“The only time in my 30 year career that, during a speech, I’ve been interrupted with a voluntary standing ovation and a round of applause, was when I spoke about our rowing programme at prizegiving this year.

We hadn’t thought about rowing until Ben at RowUK came to speak to us. We had just opened a school in Leeds City Centre. With the compact space available, we were never going to be in a position to have large fields for traditionally dominant sports like rugby, hockey and cricket. We needed to be creative and selected volleyball and martial arts as two of our three core sports. What got me about rowing was coming to an understanding about how elitist the sport actually is, with very few people at a representative level coming from lives characterised by deprivation. We thought we could play a part in changing that. I had no idea how big rowing would be and how it would catch the imagination of our students and their parents.

Rowing is like going to a Buckingham Palace garden

party; it gives you a taste of what other people take for granted. And that’s what our children have now got.

Our children are now starting to feel and understand what a regatta is about - what competing is about - and they love that. Rowing reinforces our message that there is almost nothing that is really worth doing that doesn’t require 10,000 hours of practice. You cannot sit in a boat and row really well, make yourself proud, your teammates proud and your parents proud unless you put in the hours. You’ve got to stick at things, to get out there on that horrible night in December, when it’s nearly dark and nobody wants to go near that water, but you go out and you end up feeling great about it. It’s also a sport which lends itself to measurable progress. You train and, before too long, you see the difference.

If something is backed from the top, it will get support. I spent half an hour last week with the last students in the building on a Friday evening - the rowers. My first thought was ‘this is breathtaking’. These students will blow the lid off the performance of all schools in the region. I don’t think we would ever have said it, but rowing has become one of the principle contributing factors to that performance. Unlike other activities, if we took rowing out of the curriculum, there would be revolution.

I want all of our children in all of our schools to have the opportunity to row - to have access to a coach and to get onto the water. If they want to take it further, we want to make sure they have the chance to go on and compete.

A programme like this takes diligence, graft and rigour. Another thing we are also conscious of is that rowing is an expensive sport. We must plan carefully so that once the early enthusiasts have gone, we have a sustainable financial structure. We also want to press forward with the associated medical research (iRoW), with RowUK and the University of Leeds. The relationship we have with the University is extremely valuable and important to us.

We want to win some big regattas. I want to prove that you don’t need multi-million pound investments to win. We do want to have some success stories but, mostly, I just want our children to enjoy the sport.”

Meet The Gorse Boat Club coach, Abigail Finch

I learnt to row at school in Cheshire, aged 11. From there I went on to row at The King's School, Chester. I represented Great Britain as a Junior (aged 16-17) before going to University in Bangor where I had a (long) break from rowing, instead focusing on coaching and the development of the club there. I studied French at University and became a teacher, but always missed rowing and coaching and was delighted when this job opportunity came up. In August 2016 I duly relocated to Leeds to start my first full-time coaching job at The Gorse Academies Trust.

The vision of RowUK was, in essence, to introduce performance rowing to the north of the country and to ensure that what is traditionally seen as an elitist sport, was accessible to all. The Gorse Boat Club (TGBC) was the way in. Over the past 12 months, we've made huge steps. We have gone from no coach and no athletes, to one full-time coach, numerous volunteers and staff coaches, 17 coached sessions a week and 60 participants on a full training plan. As the club has developed, I have worked with PE staff at The Ruth Gorse Academy and have developed a Scheme of Work for indoor rowing in curriculum PE. This enables all students to have a go at rowing and for staff to identify potential. These students then go through a selection process over a number of months, allowing us to assess both ability and commitment. We now have a group of 30 Year 8s, 15 Year 9s and 16 Year 12/13s across two Academies.

One of the biggest enablers for this club has been the support of staff and their continued commitment to facilitating the aims of TGBC. This has meant that I have been able to work towards our ultimate goal of developing world class athletes right here in Leeds. Our motto is just that; "Vernaculus Insignissimus" or "Home Grown. World Class". This reflects our aim to take students, and athletes, from Leeds, and provide them with the skills to go out and experience wider horizons and higher aspirations than they ever knew existed. It is absolutely central to what we do. This performance aim is only part of our ethos.

We believe we have a responsibility to prepare students for life beyond school, both physically and mentally. As a coach, I strive to develop the mental and physical



robustness of my athletes. This goal is supported both by TGAT and RowUK through initiatives such as nutrition seminars, compulsory physical activity each week, and the iRoW study facilitated by the University of Leeds.

TGBC has already competed in several races; a different world in itself. We have had huge success at two RowLeeds Indoor Championships and have sent boats to races all over the North West and North East. In early 2018, we will have 4 boats and 20 athletes competing at The Schools Head of the River and The National Junior Sculling Head in London.

From a coaching point of view, I have made my own steps. The connections I have made in Yorkshire, via introductions through RowUK and my own drive, have meant that I have been able to learn from the very best of the country's talent. It has become clear to me that the potential in Yorkshire is huge. RowUK's links with the University of Leeds gives us access to Strength and Conditioning coaches and facilities, as well as academic studies. Furthermore, we have a fantastic support network, unrivalled stretches of water and the support of outstanding coaches throughout the region. The Gorse Boat Club could not have picked a better region in which to start this groundbreaking venture.

We asked Callum Fergusson, a recent 'graduate' of the RowLeeds programme at Elliott Hudson College what rowing has meant to him.

"I can't think of any better way to spend my time than to be out on the water with other people who all have the same goal in mind: get the boat moving! I started off rowing at college as a way to get fit, healthy and gain some confidence, and it has evolved into a huge method of stress relief, where I can switch off from the outside world and just focus on one thing. I absolutely love the sport and all the people that I have met through it; I certainly wouldn't be the well-rounded individual I am today without it. As a matter of fact, I don't think I would be doing what I am doing today if I hadn't taken it up. I am currently doing a legal admin apprenticeship, and for around 90% of my interview, I spoke all about rowing and all the things I have learnt from it. For example, I learnt how to be focused and driven, and it also showed me that my limits are much further than I first anticipated.

Before I found out about rowing through college, I had little to no exposure to it whatsoever. As someone with



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You will have prepared for weeks, and it all comes down to this moment. It is pure electricity.

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little interest in sport prior to starting, I thought to myself 'this seems like something I could do', so I pushed the boat out (pun intended) and put my name down for it. Before I knew it, I was training six or seven times a week, and I found that I was really enjoying myself. If I had to give some advice to someone just starting out, it would be to persevere through the learning curve. For quite a while, I was absolutely terrified of falling in the water, until I bit the bullet and decided to go in a single. This showed me that there was nothing to be afraid of, so long as you know what you are doing. Once you feel comfortable with the sport, it is an absolute joy to be out on the water, totally at one with the boat.

My love for rowing is at its absolute peak on a race day. The atmosphere of everyone around you preparing and how friendly and supportive everyone is towards their competition is really quite a sight to behold. Once you are at the start, and the adrenaline kicks in, there is no feeling like it. You will have prepared for weeks, and it all comes down to this moment. It is pure electricity. Rowing has really helped me to deal with some tough situations, by providing me with a much-needed outlet to relieve tension built up in a way I had never experienced. If anyone is even thinking about rowing, I would say go down to your club and just give it a go, you will not regret it.”

PullingTogether was launched in the Autumn and is the name we give to the fundraising campaign for our school-based projects. So much of the programme in Leeds is about different organisations and stakeholders pooling their resources and working together for a common purpose. We very much operate by the maxim, "It takes a village to raise a child" and we felt it was important that our campaign name acknowledged the collective effort that goes into providing a supportive and welcoming environment both on the water and off.

The proceeds of this fundraising go towards building our indoor rowing offer first, buying rowing machines for schools, meeting volunteer expenses and salary costs, providing coaching resources and staging the RowLeeds Indoor Championships. As young people progress to on-water rowing, inevitably some will need support, so we will be making a contribution to the *Widening Participation Fund*, subsidising membership and race fees for those young people who cannot afford such costs.

It is important that we secure these funds so that we can provide meaningful activity and a sustainable and professional service. Full time positions are important in helping us to deliver the step change we seek, making sure we put the energy and efforts of the volunteers in both UoLBC and Leeds Rowing Club to best effect. Similarly, as the programmes grow, so do the equipment demands. We want to ensure that we are in a position to support all who are interested.

We would to thank Lloyds Halifax, The Yorkshire Sport



Foundation, The Rowing Foundation, The Grant Foundation, Lord Bamby's Foundation, The Lynn Foundation, The Hobson Charity, The Bartlett Foundation, The Nichol-Young Foundation and the Barnard Kenneth Hutton Charity for their support.

Want to donate time, equipment or funds to Pulling Together or the RowUK Foundation Widening Participation Fund? Get in touch to find out more about our programmes and 2018 objectives.

RowLeeds

HOME GROWN. WORLD CLASS.

At RowUK, we believe our delivery model to be groundbreaking and we are confident it will become of national significance to those interested in using sport to enhance social mobility. As we continue to grow our programmes, we want to expose our model to the scrutiny of independent academics and, in the process, gain important insights.

We believe a good way to discover best practice is through a consistent set of metrics and an open sharing of the resulting analysis. We want to evaluate the long-term social and economic benefits of our programmes and to collaborate with partners sharing our commitment to Widening Participation. This term, used by educationalists, refers to the process of ensuring underrepresented groups apply to higher education and, more importantly, enjoy an experience there which is rewarding and enduring.

In partnership with the University of Leeds, we have developed a research programme called iRoW (impact of Rowing on Wellbeing). Funding has been confirmed to roll out a one-year pilot across the Gorse Academies Trust from September this year. This allows us to build an accurate picture of what we are seeking to measure and how we are going to measure it. It will include a full-time Research Intern, working within UoL's Educational Engagement Team, to be supervised by Prof. David Cottrell (UoL School of Psychology), Dr Mark Hopkins (UoL School of Food Science and Nutrition) and RowUK. The research protocol has passed ethics approval and we have consent from Gorse to work with their students and seek ascent from parents and guardians.

There is plenty of evidence surrounding the impact of rowing and sport on physical health, but surprisingly little on how it affects other outcomes. We want to start by understanding how our programmes affect physical and mental wellbeing and, in the long-term, we hope to determine how this relates to school attendance, academic attainment, admission to university and employability.

We are curious and we are pragmatic. Whether the goal of the research is Widening Participation or performance

sport, we are already starting to establish ourselves as a collaborative hub. As we build our data sets, both within and beyond the scope of iRoW, collaboration with rowing clubs and programmes across the country is welcome. In addition to participation data, RowUK Research might extend to involve everything from further biomechanical analysis to championing new and innovative performance software. It might include tapping into census data and conducting longitudinal statistical modelling to show economic impact. What our curiosity does require is for us to be open to good ideas wherever we find them - and being willing to challenge our own preconceptions if better methods come along.

iRoW represents a first step towards scientifically evaluating the co-curricular environment we need to provide if our young people are reach their full potential. We are fortunate to be working with academics as committed to Widening Participation as ourselves, but also ones who will hold our feet to the fire if our model has a weakness.

We believe education needs to take this sort of evaluation seriously if we are to close the opportunity gap in this country. We will start modestly, in a niche sport in a city in the north of England, but we look forward to contributing to the debate before long.

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We spoke to Cormac Nolan at the University of Leeds Biomechanics Laboratory about his research project on footplate design.

What is the title and objectives of your research?

'Biomechanics of Simulated Rowing'. There are two main objectives; to compare the kinematics of rowing between Swingulator and ergometer rowing, and investigate the kinetics of the lower limb during Swingulator rowing.

How did you approach this project?

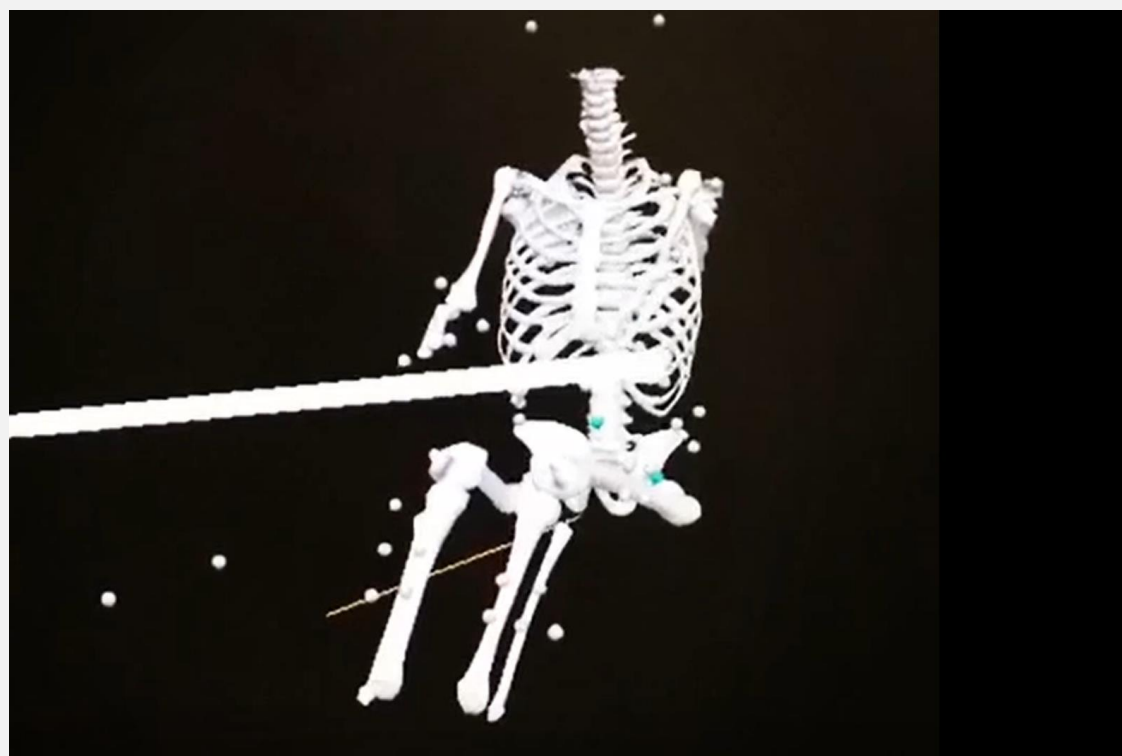
We used a standard ergometer and Swingulator with force plates added to the Swingulator to investigate the kinetics. Motion capture and analysis software Qualysis and Visual 3D were used to calculate each kinematic variable. I conducted the research under the supervision of Dr Neil Messenger and Dr Todd Stewart, neither of whom are rowers.

Do you think having no rowing experience is an advantage to this sort of research?

As a keen sportsperson I was aware of the basic concepts of rowing, however, I had to gain a more advanced knowledge. I began the research with an open mind and was willing to investigate things that had not been talked about before in rowing literature.

What are we seeing in this image below? [\(see video\)](#)

This is a visual representation that can be created for each athlete using Visual 3D. Each segment of the body is identified so that calculations can be made to provide data such as; joint angles, joint moments; centre of



pressure and gravity, speed and range of movement etc.

What stage is your project at?

We have shared some initial findings with the GB Rowing Team, Janousek & Stampfli Boats and of course, RowUK. I'm trying to provide information for them to advise on future work. As one of the first studies using this equipment we have created a strong base of knowledge. We need to decide what interesting parts we should investigate further and design more experiments to keep the research current and moving forward.

Do you think this research has any other applications?

I think it would be very beneficial for people to see, not only the data presented, but a visual representation of the rowing stroke. This would provide athletes and coaches with all possible viewpoints which they may be able to use to analyse technique.

If you could give rowers one top tip following this research project, what would it be?

It's tough to give any athletes tips as a non-rower and I'm sure coaches wouldn't be happy with me giving them advice! However as a general tip from this research I would say that there's always things to learn, so keep an open mind.

Internships at RowUK – meet Lydia Evans

At the University of Leeds, it is common to do a placement year. Sandwiched between your second and third year of study, there is the option of either studying abroad or working in industry. It's very popular amongst students and rightly so. It's the chance to find out what you might want to do after graduating, build skills and make connections. It's invaluable to undergraduates. I didn't see myself in a typical placement programme with a large multi-national. I wanted to find a placement where I could build on my passions and make a real impact from day one.

Having taken on the role of Club Captain at the University of Leeds Boat Club in Spring 2017, I set about investigating any and all possible ways to facilitate the progression of the club. I'd heard of Ben at RowUK and the work he was doing, but knew no more than the fact he was an alumnus who had worked in rowing and had now moved back up to Leeds. A meeting was scheduled and it didn't take long for me to be convinced that joining up UoLBC with RowUK's work was going to be a good thing for both the club and young people in Leeds. It was rowing, it was a lot of third sector experience and it was a fast growing, innovative start-up. I was hooked.

In August, I joined as a Development Officer and I now sit nicely as the link between RowUK and UoLBC. I'm a face to recognise in the office and I can communicate the progress we are making to the student committee and the wider club. There is a huge amount of energy within the club, and a lot of time to give. Students are keen to give something back and I have been able to really harness that appetite in support of the work RowUK is doing across Leeds. I am also able to drive the transformational change that I find so exciting by sowing the seeds for future development where I can.

On a day to day basis, my time is mainly split between managing the RowLeeds Indoor Programme and fundraising. The frontline experience of working with the children on our programmes is critical in helping me to tell the story to those who might fund what we do. A typical day could see me working on a bid in the morning, then heading in with a coach to help with a session in the afternoon. Other days I spend meeting Heads of PE, recruiting new schools onto the programme

and helping our coaches with their professional development.

What gets me out of bed every day is seeing the school students learn a new skill or get a PB down at the rowing club. It's great to see how hard they push themselves when they're racing their peers. I get to see the UoLBC novices out on the water alongside The Gorse Boat Club's performance squad, helping each other push off the pontoon. Bringing new people into the boathouse community, and developing the sport of rowing in Leeds has been really rewarding so far. I am looking forward to continuing that work throughout 2018.



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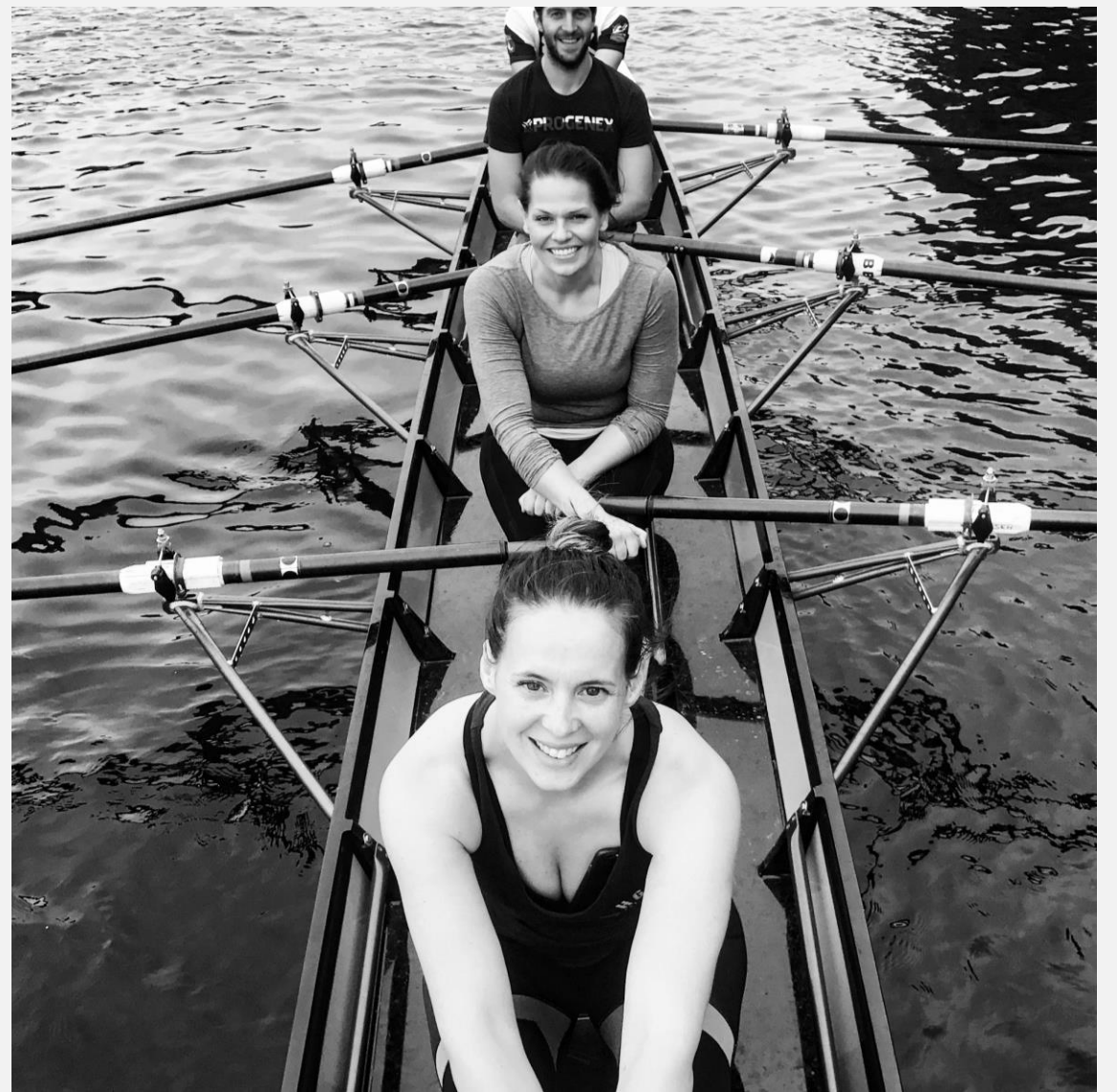
I truly believe that we are onto something incredibly powerful; the benefits to all involved are vast.

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Rowing excellence in the fitness community

With indoor rowing growing rapidly as a sport in its own right, CrossFit boxes, gyms and fitness centres are seeking out experienced coaching. At RowUK, we are excited about the growth of rowing throughout the fitness community. We are champions of opening the sport to new audiences. You don't need to ever get in a boat to be able to call yourself a rower.

We provide personal training and Foundation Workshops to the fitness community in the Yorkshire area. We also get indoor rowers onto the water. In 2018, we will expand our performance coaching team. Quality is our priority and we will develop this offer at a pace that guarantees RowUK sets industry standards.



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I was really worried about how unprepared I was heading into my first ever indoor competition. As soon as I began the coached sessions I felt immediately reassured; we went through many different aspects of indoor rowing, from power and posture through to sprint starts and, whilst there was a lot to take in, the coaching style made the whole process a brilliant experience. As a result, I went on to finish third in one of my workouts – but more than that, it has sparked a little fire in my belly. Next stop, a half marathon and a super-quick 1 km time!

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CrossFitter, Sam Ward



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