

Rhwyfo CIBC / RWYC Rowing 2020

by Sarah Roberts

As for everyone else, 2020 was a strange year for us rowers. We started in January plotting a new adventure, row around Ynys Môn, for the summer. Over previous years we have managed to go away for at least one long haul rowing event each year. In 2019 it was the magical Morbihan in Brittany, the year before we had the sun drenched Sail Caledonia through the highlands of Scotland and Ocean to City, Cork. How could we top them ?

Many of us have hankered to row around Ynys Môn for a while, why not create our own bit of magic round the island? It was not to be. Unfortunately, Covid rules denied us any rowing for most of the year. Despite being outdoors in the freshest of fresh air, a Celtic longboat requires that you sit less than 2 metres apart - even though you're looking at your fellow rower's back! Some of us did manage a few outings once the bubble rule was extended, launching from Y Foryd which gave us a few lovely rows around and out through Aber Menai, even to Dinas Dinlle - a welcome liberation and boost to the endorphins (*see the report below*)

We look forward to new plans to keep one of our boats in Victoria Doc along with the Caledonian Yawl which is nearing completion. It will be lovely to row out of Caernarfon straight to sea. Let's hope we can set out from there around Ynys Môn this year.



Never let the lack of water get in the way of an adventure. As we headed out to Dinas Dinlle for an ice cream, Keith raised a few concerns about tide, distance and the impending sunset. To be honest our thoughts were along the lines of, how long is it since we've rowed, will the shop still be open and isn't this brilliant.

As we surfed to a halt in the gentle waves, Kate and Sally jumped out and hoofed it up the beach and came back clutching dripping vanilla cones, yum. We've walked along the beach at Dinas many a time and noticed the large sand bar between the shore and the narrow gap at Fort Belan. There's invariably a channel of water wide enough for a Celtic to row through. What we hadn't bargained for was one of the lowest tides of the year. Brian coxed us confidently into the channel with the words 'I know there's a gap at the other end of this' ...Hmmm not too sure about that!

About half way into the channel we ran out of water, sand to the left and right of us and three inches of water. Fear not though, everybody out and start pulling. Usually were pulling on oars but hey ho. Keith thought his second ever outing was to be his last and said so. The sand was a sticky mixture of silt and water which sucked even Sally's sausage dog wellies to a standstill. Kate went ahead and scouted the landscape for a gap. She came back with a shake of her head, we'd been dragging the boat up a sand bar and there was a three foot dry hill ahead. Dragging our beloved Branwen up a sand dune was not an option.

We rested in the darkening light and stamped up and down trying to keep warm wishing we'd had a coffee instead of ice cream. Meanwhile the tide had slowly turned and gradually our wellies were detecting a change - water! Back to the hauling and hoping, the race was now against the sunset and texture of the quicksand. A magic combination of water and sand just supported our weight enough to haul Branwen into a narrow channel. We jumped in and sat for a good ten minutes, oars in hand, while Brian sat on the edge of the coxes' seat, with one leg in the flowing stream willing us on. At last the tide gave us enough momentum to swish into the Strait.

As the sun set we breathed a sigh of relief and headed back to Aberforeshore. Even Keith had to admit he'd enjoyed the experience in retrospect and we're all looking forward to exploring new parts of the Strait and beyond in 2021.