

Lifetime Achievement Award Dave Merrick



It is hard to portray accurately the impact that Dave Merrick has on the Helford River Gig club.

Throughout the years he has undeniably devoted more time and enthusiasm than any other member in the club,



Christine Winans
Chairman HRGC

I first met Dave Merrick when he came to a Helford Gig Club rowing session at Helford Passage some 20 years ago. He had previously been rowing for Porthleven and Culdrose and wanted to achieve more.

He was keen and enthusiastic right from the start (much keener than me at training properly). Within a short period of time he made his way into our A-crew, drove us all to training harder and to achieve more. We went from being a competent A-crew to a good one mostly thanks to David pushing us to train harder.



Within a couple of years David started taking an active role in coxing and coaching, which for the last 15 - 18 years he has done with great success and he has been completely selfless in giving up his time and energy for teaching people to row, making them better rowers and making decent racing crews. His outstanding success has really been with coaching and coxing ladies' crews but especially junior crews where he had notable successes winning the Under 14 Championships at Hayle and the Under 16 Championships at Newquay. I know that all the boys in the crew during those years hold him in high regard (my son being one of them) and attribute their success entirely to Dave Merrick's coaching and coxing.

He has served the Helford Gig Club for many years on the committee as a treasurer, active committee member and an enthusiastic member of the maintenance team plus organising the gigs to go to events. Without him I do not think that Helford Gig Club would be what it is today.

I personally gave up A and B crew rowing some years ago but Dave, at the age of 62, still continues to do so. When it comes to rowing and training he is the go-to person in the Club. At times, he can be a bloody pain in the arse, but underneath I think we all respect him, thank him and think that he would be absolutely deserving of a lifetime achievement award.

I can't believe there is anybody in any other gig club that will have done more for their Club and to the benefit of its' rowers than David.

I wish him all the best.

Richard Winfrey

Although Dave has been on National coaching courses he and others in the HRGC have, in the early days, been instrumental in trying new techniques. Introducing long and powerful rowing strokes with pauses at the end of the stroke to aid timing and technique. As well as introducing more upright rowing, with shorter strokes.

He is the only member who has consistently organised evening fitness classes in the club house and was instrumental in instigating a 15-minute pre-rowing session on the beach to warm up. Furthermore, was instrumental in obtaining and setting up our 6 ergo rowing machines in a dedicated room in our club and has run regular ergo sessions, which are now continuously booked throughout the Winter months on an hourly basis, both in the day and evening periods.

The core values of the club are that rowing, in general, should be promoted at every opportunity and taught to any and everyone who shows an interest. That interest can be channelled into both competitive or social rowing depending on the individual's wishes. Dave has continually shown his strong alignment with these values by coaching and coxing beginners through to A crews of both sexes and all ages.



In a sentence; "Dave is just the sort of person any club would want in their membership, to further their aims, to look after their assets and to encourage others into the wonderful world of rowing"

Simon & Tina Walker

When you look at what Dave has been involved in and is currently involved in he is one of those persons that the club could simply not do without. Gig rowing is a major part of Dave's life. Many of his family members are also involved in gig rowing.

When asked he always says yes to any help and assistance required. He spends many evenings and weekend encouraging and developing rowing skills ranging from the finer techniques of rowing to seamanship and water safety. He understands the history of the sport and what it can do to provide competence and confidence to young and old. He respects the sport and particularly the boats and equipment. The gigs have history and require respect and care which he provides and passes on to new comers to the sport.



Dave has had considerable success with crews he has trained and coxed and been part of himself. He has taken both our junior under 14 and 16 crews to county championship success. He has taken our ladies and men's rowers to many county and world championship podium successes. In the last 6 years he has been a key member of our club's super vets crew (over 50) winning 4 times and runner up twice including winning in 2017 i.e. current world champions.

He has assisted in raising thousands of pounds for charities such as rowing and coxing in the London Great River Race on several occasions. He coxed a young crew from Helford River to the Scilly Islands some 70 miles to raise charitable funds. One of his junior crew who he trained from early years has just spent the last 12 months attempting to qualify for inclusion in the team GB rowing squad.

A few years ago, the Club achieved CLUB MARK a recognised and much respected certification ensuring the club meets the highest of standard within the sport. Dave assisted in updating many of the club policy documents and upgrading standards within the club plus training and qualifying as a level 2 coach (two qualified coaches required to be awarded club mark)



Helford River Gig Club is one of the oldest established gig clubs. It has a growing membership with all age categories represented. It offers rowing to leisurely and competitive rowers. It is a club well respected within the gig rowing community

Much of the club's success can be attributed to Dave Merrick.

Phil Badger

U14 Champions - Hayle



Dave was my first rowing coach, and the reason I believe he deserves this award is that I have never once heard him say no to someone asking for a Cox or a coaching session or even just a paddle about.

He coached me for six years at Helford and played a huge part in making the junior squads both enjoyable and really very competitive. Knowing the people, I was rowing with, and looking back on it now, I don't know how or why he had the patience with us to keep turning up. I recently had a few weeks off to return to the gig club after being away for 5 years. I found Dave still just as committed as ever. Rowing in his own crew, coxing for the others and coaching the juniors seemingly every day.

I believe that Dave has the qualities that make gig rowing what it is. The desire to be competitive and drive the sport, the sense of responsibility to your club that makes them such great communities to be part of, and above all, not knowing how to quit!

Ed Gleadowe

At age eleven with a group of similar aged boisterous friends, we jumped in a Cornish pilot gig for the first time with Dave Merrick as our cox and commander.

At that age we were more interested in playing video games and causing mischief than voluntarily jumping in a Cornish pilot gig. We willingly put ourselves through pain, while seemingly at the time to achieve nothing.

Somehow Dave managed to get us in the boat week after week. In the rain, hail, sleet and storms and under his coaching we actually enjoyed ourselves. So much so that we trained hard and won the U14 and U16 championships. Inspiring our parents to get out on the water and give the sport a crack themselves.



U16 Champions - Newquay

As time moved on, and life took our young crew to different parts of the country for education and work rowing never left our hearts and always brought us back together year after year. So much so that as a crew with Dave at the core, we organised a charity fund raising challenge row from the Helford River to the Isles of Scilly (75 miles).

During the final few hours of the nineteen continuous hours rowing, most of us were fighting exhaustion. But Dave was still holding his form and pulling like his life depended on it. Leading by example and showing true grit and determination.



Helford to St Marys - 75 miles

Dave Merrick is one hell of a Man. I and many others owe our entire rowing career to him and truly believe he is an unsung hero of the sport. Not only does he show true leadership and rowing ability, but he is a truly integral and long-standing committee member to our club. Most importantly of all, to this day he is still introducing new people young and old to rowing. Giving countless hours of his time and energy to offer people like me the chance to enjoy and compete in this amazing sport. I speak on behalf of many, thank you Dave Merrick for all you have done.

George Wilson

Dave's commitment to rowing is outstanding, both within our club and at national level. He is always the one who will umpire / wait until the end to put the gigs away / bring home kit on or in the famous green Nissan Micra.

He gives up every Saturday throughout most of the year to cox / coach / row with the entire club. During the winter, spending many hours in dark and wet mornings waiting for a bunch of hungover, gossiping rowers to get organised, he pushes them hard and has for the last few years been the driving force of many podium finishes in Scilly & Newquay.

He will always jump in to cox the novice rowers. He has taken on the role of bringing on the junior rowers from Roger Rosier, one of the club's founder members. He has brought crews on from the tiniest junior who can hardly hold a paddle to rowing in the squad of 8 former junior rowers from Helford to Scilly a few years ago in a charity row.



His commitment to encouraging rowers of all levels is truly commendable – to be a super vet World Champion on the Friday and rowing with an eclectic mix of beer drinking social rowers for the next 2 days and finishing 100th. He is always the first to stand up for a challenge or stand down and let others take part.

He brought an ergo down to the Ferryboat Inn and put it on the road in front of a full pub one July evening and MADE me do my Newquay ergo with an audience of beer drinking fish and chip eaters!!!

Ottie Skewes

Dave never gives up on any member of the squad, no matter how hard they find it to train and understand the details behind ergo/indoor rowing schedules and rates, or technical accomplishments on the water; from tiny Junior rowers who have difficulty just holding an oar, to boarder-line dyslexic people such as myself, who struggle with simple lefts and rights and the numbers game of the ergo! He has taken unconfident, shy Juniors and adults from complete inability through to being accomplished competitive rowers. Over the years, facilitating others to win championships at all levels; and last year becoming a World Champ himself. An amazing and so well-deserved achievement!



Ultimately Dave's modesty lies in the fact that he is a team player, someone who inherently knows that it's the team that matters, it's the sum of all parts that makes the whole thing work. His quiet and steadfast 'working hard in the background' attitude comes naturally to him. His ego does not get in the way of anything that he does, his search and quest for his own success is never something I have witnessed. But he drives himself hard and he has a profound understanding of how much energy and long-term effort, needs to go into success; the importance of time and repetition and the slow and secure grasping of techniques.

But broader than this, Dave teaches, without knowing it, comradeship and team support and the joys of sport; healthy bodies and healthy minds from sociable competition. He aspires for everyone individually to achieve beyond their horizons and as a team, achieve more than any individual part could imagine.

One final anecdote; recently a once Junior rower returned, aged 24, having taken his rowing right up to training with Team GB members. Whilst that in itself is fabulous, having been trained by Dave at age 13, he returned to give something back to the club in the spirit of Dave Merrick. He worked for a couple of weeks with the Junior Squad where he himself had begun his rowing days. Quite simply, Dave's passion, his selflessness and his commitment to rowing shone right through this young adult...what better legacy could anyone leave?

Dave Merrick is unique and loved by all, and his part has helped to make HRGC what it is today.

Sara Gadd

The sport of gig rowing has a reputation for being inclusive to all ages and abilities, with a great balance of fun and competitiveness - Dave is the epitome of all that the sport represents. He is never pre-judgemental or biased to age or gender, and supports the development of rowing ability in everyone.

Throughout the year he devotes an enormous amount of personal time to training rowers of all standards - he is on the water coxing the Junior rowers once a week, as well at regular events; throughout the winter he runs a circuit training evening to assist with physical fitness in preparation for the World Championships in May; in the summer he attends every regatta coxing ladies and junior crews and rowing with men's crews; in the winter season he commits every Saturday to training/coxing/selection in preparation for the same championships; he also coxes the more social sessions (ladies/men's nights) nurturing rowers in their ability and confidence to transition from social to competitive rowing. There are countless times where he has jumped in to help crews in their training/social rowing slot when they have found themselves short of a cox at the last minute due to illness/injury.

Not content with time just on the water, over the past few years Dave has been an advisor to the selection committee for selection of crews for major events, however this year he has taken on the responsibility of official selector, and as chief selector manages and organises the processes and selection committee. He is also an invaluable member of the Gig Club general committee, which meets monthly but deals with rower and club management issues on almost a daily basis, Dave also took on the responsibility of treasurer last year adding to his already full schedule. He knows what equipment we have, what we need for the future, and is proactive in thinking about what the club needs to encourage



new members as well as maintain the existing membership. And still, somehow, he manages to find time to row and compete (and work!).

I have personally been rowing for 10 years, and during that time Dave has been a constant source of encouragement to continually improve and row within and outside of my own parameters – his enthusiasm encouraged me to return to competitive rowing after a break following childbirth (twice!), he has been supportive through injury recovery (inevitable in this sport!), and pushed me to train harder and realise my capabilities, despite his frustrations at my own lack of commitment/confidence at times! And in my role as chairman his ideas and enthusiasm are a great asset.

Without Dave's unfaltering generosity of time and devotion to the encouragement of others our club, and the sport, would be at a loss. He is undeniably one of the greatest local ambassadors for the gig rowing, and we are extremely lucky and proud to have him as a member of Helford River Gig Club.

Christine Winans

Dave has always been a large part of my rowing career, starting from the age of 12 where I joined the junior crew which Dave coaches and coxes. He coached the Helford junior crew which won the under 14's and 16's for a number of years. Over the past 12 years Dave has always been there with supportive advice and critical feedback which has allowed me to improve my technique and work my way up to the top ladies' crew of the club. I don't know anyone else who would sit in a gig for 5 hours every Saturday morning during the winter months leading up to Scillies.

As well as enjoying rowing himself, Dave also coxes a number of other crews which means he is generally down at the water for at least 4-5 times a week in the summer months.



He is also part of the selection committee and club committee where he has sat as the treasurer for many years. Dave commutes from Truro every session, so that means he drives for at least an hour every time he needs to get down to the Helford. I feel Dave really deserves this award as he's a complete asset to the club which probably wouldn't run unless he was involved in it somehow.

Grace Maguire

I joined Helford around 7 years ago. The main reason for choosing Helford was not that they were a successful club (which they were) but they seemed to have a good structure and commitment to training. Dave has been central to that structure and commitment and provides the consistency that any club needs to continue to compete at a respectable level as well as provide opportunity for less competitive and social rowers. Everyone in the club is aware of the efforts that Dave has put in (and continues to) over the years, it is very difficult to imagine what the club would have developed into without his input.

Tony Halliday



I have only known Dave for just under three years now, but he is quite exceptional; a needle found within a hay stack. For someone of his age to have so much enthusiasm and pride in bringing along new rowers and to help competent rowers improve is no easy task.

I have been fortunate to have Dave coach me for a few years now and it has been much needed, on and off the water. He is so committed to the club; he rows, coxes, coaches circuits, helps with maintenance of boats and is the treasurer for the club.

A great man and a much-needed member of the Helford River Gig Club.

Sam King



I don't think there could be a better sport club member than my bro. He's not there just for his own satisfaction. Dave wants the best for every member. His dogged aim is to get all rowers and crews to reach their rowing potential be they Ladies A or Super vet. C. He is always there for the juniors. Dave is a committee member, cox, rower, selector and mentor in general. He is equally enthusiastic about the social side of club membership and Helford stands out as a successful and happy club.

Ann Muller

I have so much respect for the commitment Dave (my uncle), at 62, has to not only his own rowing but to what he has done at Helford and for the crews at Helford. I talk and seek advice regularly from Dave about my own training programme because I greatly value his knowledge and experience.

Fergus Muller

I know Dave Merrick through my work as regional development officer for British Rowing. I have always known Dave to be passionate about the sport of gig rowing, highly supportive of both his club and the wider rowing community.

As well as being a keen rower himself, Dave has been dedicated to giving back, undertaking a level 2 coaching course to increase his knowledge and support the many hours of coxing and coaching he does in his home club at Helford.

Dave is also very supportive of junior rowing, and has volunteered for a number of years at the Cornwall School Games, taking time off work to do so. He is there at the crack of dawn mucking in with all elements of the day including launching of boats, set up and acting as a stand in coxswain for any teams who are short.

I would fully support Dave's nomination and would see it as a small token of appreciation for the number of years he has given to the sport of rowing.

Rhiannon Bailey

