

### **Early Racing on the Forth**

No history of Stirling Amateur Boating and Swimming club would be complete without some reference being made to boating and boat racing on the River Forth prior to the formation of an organised club.

Previous to the year 1853 regattas were held at Alloa, Dunmore, Airth, Perth, Dundee, Glasgow, Gairloch, etc, and though the suggestion had been repeatedly made that Stirling might well a regatta, no action was taken until 1854, when a crew rowing the 'Thistle', challenged a crew of railway porters to a race then from the Cruive Dykes to the Old Bridge in the 'Rose'. The race took place on May 30, and resulted in a victory for the railway porters. A large crowd gathered to witness the finish of the content. Mr James Johnstone, who had built the "Thistle", got up a crew, challenged the winners of the first race, and on June 13, 1855, med the railway porters on the same course. Mr Johnston's crew not only won the race, but reduced the previous time by some four minutes over the three and a half mile course.

### **A Welcome Gift**

One result of the first race was the receipt of a letter from Mr John Macfarlane, or Coneyhill, inviting the crew of the 'Thistle' to meet him. Two crew members attended and received a cheque for £200 for the furtherance of boating and regattas at Stirling.

### **Regatta Club Formed**

A Regatta Club was immediately formed, and the pastime quickly grew in popularity. Six boats were procured, named 'Commodore ', 'Coneyhill ', 'Red Rover ', 'Sterlini ', 'Scotsman ' and 'Lightning ', and a club boathouse was also built. The Town Council gave the Club £7 10s for the Burgh Stakes Race at the Regatta and on July 22 1854 a grand day's racing was witnessed by a large crowd. Mr Macfarlane attended, accompanied by a number of his friends, and so pleased was he with the day's event that he gave £50 to provide a challenge cut for thirty feet outriggers, and placed £500 of North British Railway stock as a permanent fund to meet expenses. The Club progressed so favourably that in 185 a uniform was adopted.

### **Race for the Macfarlane Cup**

The first race for the Macfarlane Cup was at the Regatta of 1855. The weather was fine, and the number of spectators larger than on the previous year. Among those present were the Patron of the Club, the Provost and Councillors and the elite of the neighbourhood. A grandstand had been erected, and refreshments were provided for members and friends, the day being proclaimed a holiday. The content for the Macfarlane Cup lay between a Stirling and an Edinburgh crew. Both crews were comprised of army personnel and after a well contested race the Edinburgh crew were declared the winners.

Racing now became very general, and throughout the season numerous club contents were held, between various crews in the Club, with an occasional race against the railway men.

Trips up the river were much enjoyed - on one occasion a crew rowed to Cardross on the Stirling Carse, then, by carting their boat overland, reached the Lake of Menteith, returning by the same route later in the day.



1 The Macfarlane Cup

### **The Club in Financial Difficulties**

As early as March 1856, the Club was devising means to remove the debt incurred by the erection of the boathouse and in the following year a committee was appointed at the annual meeting. The Clydesdale Club issued a challenge to row in fours, pairs, or to scull; however, the contests did not come off.

On May 12 a spirited but friendly impromptu race took place between the "Blue Bell" and "Red Rover" and on June 3 another between the "Pirate" and "Cambuskenneth", which raised considerable interest, and ended in a challenge by the "Pirate" to row again.

### **The Regatta of 1856**

July 26, 1856, witnessed a keen content for the Macfarlane Cup, with crews entered from Glasgow, Dumbarton, Manchester and Edinburgh. The Edinburgh crew arrived two weeks prior to the Regatta and practised daily. A newspaper report of the Regatta says:

*"As the hour for commencing proceedings drew near, the banks of the river presented a most beautiful and animated spectacle, no fewer than seven thousand persons lining them on both sides. The Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council, headed by members of the Club, in uniform, proceeded in procession to the grandstands; the Macfarlane Cup was borne before them, and on arrival there was placed in front of it. The numbers of boats of all descriptions on the river was immense, from the handsome little yacht of Mr Paton, Clackmannan, to the needle-like skill of Mr McNiel, Glasgow".*

*"The final for the Cup witnessed a grand race, with Manchester defeating Dumbarton. Mr Macfarlane was unable to be present, through illness, but entertained his friends to dinner in the Royal Hotel; while the Club dined in the Star Hotel. Is it too much to expect a revival of this interested scene? Surely not, when rowing is acknowledged to be one of the finest pastimes."*

Poet William Sinclair wrote this poem about the Macfarlane Cup content:

*"The challenge cup, the challenge cup,  
Macfarlane's glorious challenge cup,  
Another day comes racing round',  
when you may win the challenge cup"*

### **Regattas in 1857**

At the regatta on July 18, a Stirling crew won the Burgh Stakes Race, and the four-oar jolly boat race, beating Glasgow and Newcastle crews. The Macfarlane Cup was won by a Newcastle crew, Glasgow, crews taking second and third places.

At the Lake of Menteith Regatta, held on September 2, and supported by a large contingency of Stirling oarsmen, the only first prize gained by local rowers was in the youths' race.

### **A Walk-Over for the Macfarlane Cup**

With a view to bringing the Macfarlane Cup back to Stirling, lighter built boats were called for, such as were used on the Clyde and other rivers.

On July 16 the "Star of the Forth" gained second prize at Dumbarton, and in a criticism it was stated that "if they put more body into the strokes they would be hard to beat".

This year everything seemed favourable for a grant Regatta in August, prizes being numerous and competitors plentiful, including the famous Calderheads of Cartsydyke. Yet only one entry was received for the Macfarlane Cup, Clydesdale having a walk-over, a condition of affairs much regretted by all interested in local boat-racing.

### **Gentlemen Amateur Rowing Club**

In February 1859, a meeting was held with the object of forming a Gentlemen Amateur Rowing Club, and a president appointed.

### **Racing in 1859**

During March several changes were made in the officer-bearers of the Boating and Regatta Club, and the Club was reported to be in a flourishing condition.

On July 15, a Stirling crew carried off first prize; value £15, at Dumbarton Regatta, and high hopes were again raised for the return on the Macfarlane Cup to Stirling.

The crew who won the County Stakes Race at the Stirling Regatta on July 30, also competed in the Macfarlane Cup race, but only gained second place to Clydesdale.

At the Lake of Menteith Regatta later in the year three first prizes were gained by Stirling crews.

### **A Racing Innovation in 1860**

At the Flag Regatta on June 2 1860, two innovations were introduced; the previous custom of tall boats rounding one boat or buoy being changed to the new method of the buoy for each boat; while prizes in kind other than flags were awarded.

One first prize and five second were gained by Stirling crews at Lake of Menteith this year; while the Loch Lubnaig Regatta, attended by crews from Greenock, Dumbarton, and Stirling, the latter putting three crews in for the Ladies' Plate Race, the Stirling boat 'Crest of the Wave' came in first. Both these regattas were well attended, Loch Lubnaig being patronised by Prince Victor of Hohenlohe and many of the aristocracy.

Stirling Regatta seems to have gone back this year, and one race is recorded. The home crew thus secured the MacFarlane Cup. Mr Macfarlane and his many friends were disappointed at this failure to carry on the Stirling Regatta and shortly afterwards he received back his cup from the custody of the Town Council.

### **Thirty One Years On**

After a lapse of thirty-one years, during which time the river was practically deserted, scarcely a craft being seen on it except the fishing cobbles, and an occasional day's racing organised by the military; a canoe, named the 'Heath', might be seen going up and down the river, its occupant looking lonely. This solitary devotee of boating was made the recipient of much river lore, and was frequently asked to start a boating club, but the first effort he made locally in the way of aquatics was to organise swimming galas in the years 1891 and 1892, at each of which there was around 4000 onlookers and 70 competitors. As a result of these galas he was urged more strongly than ever to start a club. Several preliminary meetings were held, and in September, 1893, the first public meeting was convened at Dowdy's Temperance Hotel and a Club Committee formed.

Other clubs were visited, boats bought at Greenock, Port Glasgow, and elsewhere, and a boathouse built. The boathouse, some 40 by 20 feet, was built on a site reportedly adjacent to the clubhouse of 1854.

### **A Grand Opening**

The formal opening was made on Thursday, May 10, 1894, when twelve clubs and numerous private boats, including the canoe 'Heath', and another canoe, the owner of which was on his way round the coast of Scotland, took part in a procession to the scene of former rowing contests, between the Old Bridge and Kildean. Here, the Hon President gave a few interesting reminiscences of boating in the earlier years, and expressed a strong hope that the new club would go on and prosper.

From this time full use was made of the advantages provided for enjoying a sail on the river, and on May 30, at the first committee meeting after the opening, the Secretary was instructed to purchase a sixteen feet out-rigged skiff and two new jolly boats of the latest design from McAlister of Dumbarton.

On June 11, the first content took place in sixteen feet skiffs for a silver medal presented by the Provost and a book given by a local patron. A large number of spectators witnessed the race. This was followed by a second competition, the newspaper report referring to which says:

*"Although the weather was unpromising, there was a good attendance of the public, who showed by the presence and patience the interest that has been aroused."*

On July 12 a most interesting ceremony took place, the naming and launching of two new jolly boats.

*"Several hundred friends assembled at the boathouse. The Hon President introduced his daughter, to whom Councillor Small presented a pair of silver scissors, subscribed for by the wives and lady friends of the members, and at the same time reminded her of the old wives' take that a sharp-pointed instrument of any kind is unlucky unless something is given in return. The Hon President's daughter propitiated the fates by giving a coin in exchange, and then, cutting the red, white and blue ribbons, the boats were launched, the first being named 'Milly', and the second 'Drysdale'. The boats were manned and rowed about on the river and many compliments were paid to the builders on account of the 'neat and good workmanship'. A swimming match for juniors under fifteen years for a silver badge was held. A skiff race for youths for a silver badge brought a most enjoyable afternoon to a close.*

### **A Cruise to Gargunock**

On July 19, a cruise to Gargunock took place which was subsequently minuted as follows:

*"Sixteen members started from the Cruive Dykes, at 10am, in five boats, and the canoe 'Heath', for a trip to Gargunock. The weather at the outset was of the finest description, and the wanderers enjoyed the beauties as well as the difficulties behind Craigforth. Mr R Mailer and family, of Woodyet, gave us a hearty reception, and with their liberal supply of milk added to our own provender, we partook of a well-earned lunch. After being shown over the farm, we proceeded onward, but the remainder of the day was unsuitable, as thunderstorms came on and held away until evening. We arrived at the boathouse at 9pm, wet, but in good spirits, and thoroughly satisfied with the day's outing."*

### **Swimming Galas**

While all this boating was going on, swimming was not being lost sight of and two galas were held. Six members of the Club went down to Kincardine and inspected a large 60 by 19 feet barge, with the object of using it in connection with a floating bath. A complete model was also made, but these efforts failed to rouse the local's interest and support.

### **Revival of Stirling Regatta**

Some members viewed the first Regatta, held on September 29, 1894 with some trepidation, but success crowned their efforts.

A large crowd assembled on both banks of the river and on the railway bridge near the boathouse. The commodore moored his yacht, 'Shan-tell', at the starting point, and the officials took their positions. The Stirling Brass Band played on the town's barge. The varied programme of events was keenly contested, and at the close of the day the Provost presented the prizes.

On November 28, eighty members and friend of the club sat down to supper in the Royal Hotel. The Hon President presided, and the company included local dignitaries who enjoyed an evening of entertainment including songs and instrumentals.

*"Judging by comments passed and hopes expressed the Club was bound to be a success in the years to come".*

## **1895**

The minute book in 1895 shows the earlier part of that year to have been a time of excitement and considerable progress. Both the Castle and High School were well represented in the membership, and many patrons were secured, including His Grace the Duke of Montrose.

The Town Council granted a sum of money to be rowed for as the Burgh Stakes, and a Club championship was duly inaugurated.

Some minor racing took place during the months of April, May and June.

The opening cruise in April comprised six boats, which sailed to the Cruive Dykes, with games and refreshments being enjoyed by all present.

### **Lifeboat Saturday**

August 24, 1895, will long be remembered as the first Lifeboat Saturday in Stirling, when there was an imposing procession through the town, consisting of representatives from the Town Council, Guidry, Seven Incorporated Trades, Castle, Boat Club, Canoe, Lifeboats, and various industries, and concluded with the launching of the lifeboat at the Regatta, which was held that day, above the bridges. A practical demonstration of buoyance clothing was also given.

There was a large crowd present, the weather was fine, and the numerous events included:

100 yard swim, quarter mile swim, junior skiff, pair-oar jolly boat, invitation pair-or, pair-oar jolly boat (junior), invitation pair-oar jolly boat (junior), Burgh stakes, Championship of the Club, and the greasy boom contest which consisted of a greased wooden pole suspended over the water along which the young participants had to pass and return without falling into the river. The prize was normally a ham donated by one of the local butchers.

### **Stirling Joins the Scottish Amateur Rowing Association**

The election of office-bearers for the year 1896 raised friction, and nearly caused a split. However, at an adjourned meeting office bearers were elected without further event.

The Club became affiliated to the Scottish Amateur Rowing Association, one result of this affiliation being that competing crews came from other amateur clubs in Scotland to attend the regatta, held on the Cambuskenneth Abbey course on August 24, 1896. Scullers and crews from Port Glasgow, Dumbarton, Helensburgh, Clydesdale, Clyde, Dundee, and Portobello attended, and a roar of delight broke from the crowds when it was realised that three Stirling men were to row in the final of the open skiff race. The aquatic display was by the West of Scotland Swimming Club, Glasgow, and included an exhibition of swimming by the lady champion of Scotland. The Regatta was graced with the presence of a steam yacht from Alloa. The President presented the prizes at the regatta tea in the Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling, and in a racy speech enlarged on the beneficial effects of athletics in general.

On September 11 the Burgh Stakes race took place and the next day the Club took part in the second lifeboat procession in Stirling.

At the club supper in December over a hundred gentlemen sat down. The Hon President presided and the members and guests enjoyed an evening of speeches and music.

### **A New Challenge Cup**

Early in 1897 a valuable Challenge Cup was subscribed for by members of the Club and friendly, which at once became one of the most coveted prizes in Scotland. The cup weighed approximately 83 ounces and cost £28 10s.

On April 3 the opening cruise was attended by sixty-one ladies and gentlemen, including the President of the Scottish Amateur Rowing Association.

On May 24 twenty-three members went to Alloa, Dunmore, and Airth in five boats and the canoe 'Heath'.

### **Success of Stirling Oarsmen**

The usual Club races came off during the season, and at the regatta, on August 28, crews entered for the Challenge Cup race representing, Portobello, Eastern, Club, Clydesdale, Port Glasgow, and Dumbarton. Every crew endeavoured to win, but the final showed Stirling 1st and 2nd place with Eastern 3rd. A protest was entered, and the Eastern crew came back on September 11, when the result was exactly the same. The victorious Stirling crew, with this race, began a most creditable list of honours during the following years. Glasgow Eastern Swimming Club assisted with the swimming events.

During 1897 the club held nine club competitions, seven cruises, and attended most of the top open competitions held by other clubs.

The season was brought to a close by the first illuminated cruise on October 1, when eight boats and a canoe, beautifully decorated with Chinese lanterns and bucket lamps, sailed down to Cambuskenneth Abbey and back, a fireworks display being part of the programme.

### **1898 - Championship Disappointment Looms**

The annual business meeting took place on February 22, 1899, and office bearers were appointed. The Vice President intimated his intention to resign but was not allowed to do so! The winners of the Challenge cup were to be elected to represent the Club in competition for the Junior Championship of Scotland.

On March 3 it was agreed to purchase one new and one second hand four-oared out-rigged gig. In April two additional gangways were laid for racing craft.

The official opening of the fifth season was celebrated by a cruise to the Cruive Dykes, in which fourteen boats took part. The weather being on its best behaviour, games were heartily entered into.

A trainer was now considered a necessity and engaged, and the insurance on the boathouse raised to £300.

At the Championship race on June 18, at Loch Lomond, our crew were leading the way, but the cox mistook the boats that formed the finished point, and Dumbarton crew forged ahead to win. Much disappointment was shown by the assembled support following what was reported as '*a phenomenal race*'.

At the Regatta on September 3rd, the Stirling crew beat all comers in the race for the Challenge Cup, and thereby enhanced their reputation. A fine display of high diving given by Vale of Leven Swimming Club, a display of live-saving drill by its members, and a humorous aquatic sketch, entitled 'Spain v America', was prominent features of the day. The Bridge of Allan Pipe Band was in attendance, and at the finish competitors and members had tea together in the Golden Lion Hotel.

### **Amateur Status Clearly Defined**

The minutes of March 6, 1899 showed that there was a spirit of unrest and desire to wake up in the Scottish Amateur Rowing Association and the Portobello and Stirling clubs, and the SARA wisely made the definition of an amateur more comprehensive than hitherto'. A suggestion to raise funds to clear a debt of £25 which still remained on the Club's property was made. It was also resolved to send three crews to compete in the Scottish Amateur Rowing Association events at Clynder.

A new out-rigged four-oared gig was added to the boat stock, and named the 'Challenger'.

### **Junior Jolly Boat Champions of Scotland 1899**

On July 1 a Stirling crew succeeded in securing the Junior Championship of Scotland in jolly boats at Portobello.

The Regatta on July 8 was held about the bridges, and, for some unexpected reason, only two clubs competed for our Challenge Cup. Stirling put three crews on the water, but the winners were the representatives from Portobello. In the senior four-oared jolly boat race Stirling gained second place.

At Helensburgh Regatta, on August 12, first prize in the four-oar jolly boat race was won by a Stirling crew, and second place secured in the pair-oar race by other Stirling oarsmen.

On November 23 the Club had a well-attended smoking concert in the Station hotel. Baillie Steel occupied the chair, and the usual loyal toasts were given, songs sung and the prizes distributed.

In December it was decided to have a dance in place of the usual club supper.

In a bid to boost membership the Club was brought to the notice of the master of Stanley House School and the people of Bridge of Allan.

### **Champions of Scotland 1900**

On June 4, a pair-oar race had to be abandoned, because the competitors had found that climbing to the top of Ben Cleuch to see the sun rise had been too much for them. This inability to race preceded the Club's name being raised to the highest point possible, as on June 25 it was minuted:

*"At the annual four-oar Championship Regatta, held at Greenock on Saturday last, our No 1 crew, while still all juniors, attained the highest honour open to amateur oarsmen of Scotland, viz. winning the Shield race, thus becoming Champions of Scotland for the current year. Their opponents were Dumbarton No 1 (holders), Stirling, Dumbarton No 2, and Clyde. Little did they think of the reception which was prepared for their home-coming. They were carried shoulder-high from train to brake, and escorted through the town by an admiring crowds of all ages".*

The regatta of August 26 was well supported and the weather excellent. Stirling crews won the Burgh Stakes, the Challenge Cup and the four-oared jolly boats. The Alloa club gave a display of water polo and diving, and a mock 'rescue' party was amusing. At the regatta tea which followed, the Hon President presided, and was supported by many prominent visiting oarsmen. The Scottish Shield and the Challenge Cup were presented and the oarsmen honoured for their efforts.

The Club championship was held on September 22, with the dance on December 19 attended by forty couples.

### **Competition 'Off the Water'**

In 1901 there was competition for the posts of Captain, Vice-captain, Treasurer, Assistant secretary, and Boatman, 'a capital thing if carefully carried out'. The list of patrons was greatly augmented this year.

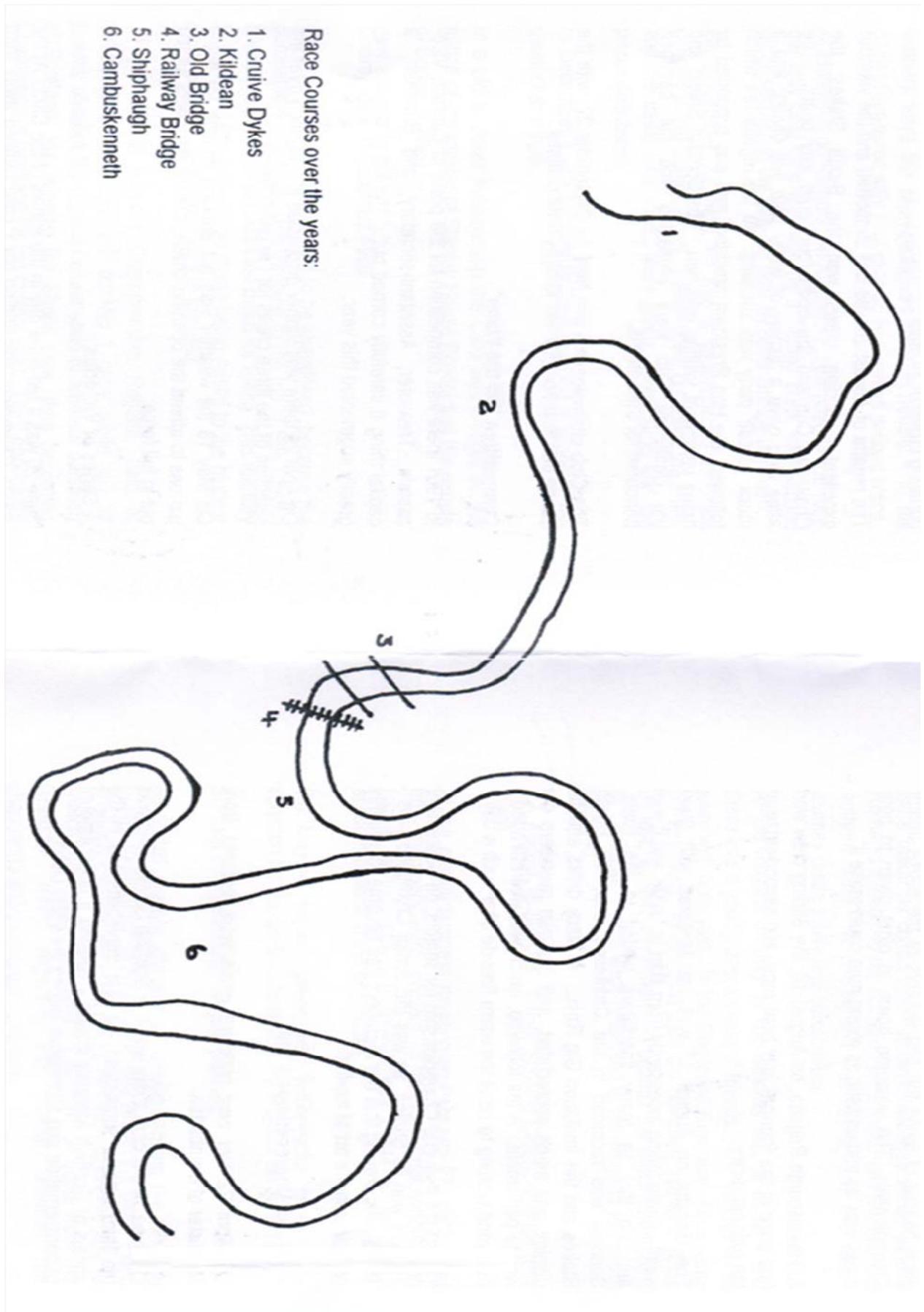
On April 29 there was further discussions and division over the selection of the three crews for the championships.

On May 18 the weather was not enticing enough for many patrons to attend the opening cruise, but the members turned out in full force.

### **A Series of Victories**

June 20 was a red-letter day in the annals of the Club. At the SARA Championships Stirling No 1 crew romped away from the Dumbarton and Clydesdale representatives, and so won the Scottish Shield again. The Stirling junior crew had the great honour of being the first winners of the SARA Junior Championship. The welcome home at night given to both crews was '*an enthusiastic as young men could make it*'.





**2 The Meandering River Forth at Stirling**

At Helensburgh Regatta, on August 10, the Stirling crew won first prize in the four-oar jolly boat race, and second prize in the pair-oar race.

The Regatta on August 17 was not favoured with good weather, rain falling incessantly from start to finish, and it was amazing that so many spectators waited to the close. Success was recorded in the Challenge Cup, the Burgh Stakes and the Invitation Gig Race. A fancy dress aquatic was much appreciated, and our own members did well to participate. A tea followed, which was well attended - everyone wishing to be at the warm fireside after such a day.

The SARA Pair-Oar Championship for seniors, on September 14, was won by Stirling, as was the Junior Championships - *'these wins proving that our members had become thoroughly proficient in the art of rowing'*.

### **1902 - An Unprecedented Year**

On April 22 two new pleasure boats were ordered from McAlister of Dumbarton.

On June 14 our club again won the Scottish Shield. This was the third time in succession - a feat unprecedented in the annals of Scottish amateur rowing - causing a large amount of consternation and admiration among the sister clubs.

On June 21 the Club and friends celebrated the Coronation by having a cruise in twelve boats to the Cruive Dykes. It was wet, but shelter was found, at Old Mills, where members were made as comfortable as circumstances would permit. Remarks suitable to the occasion were made and the national anthem sung. A photograph was taken, and the return journey made safely and comfortably.

At the Regatta on July 19 the weather was at its best and there was a goodly assemblage of friends. The various races were well contested. In the Challenge Cup race, Alloa came off victorious. In the third heat our oarsman had to do their utmost, as they were matched against the junior champions of Scotland. Prizes were presented at the Regatta team which followed.

On August 16 the Club Senior Sculling Championships took place.

At the annual business meeting on February 27, 1903, over fifty members were present, a marked improvement on former attendances. A motion was made to get more accommodation in the boathouse.

On May 4, senior, junior, and junior-junior crews were selected for the SARA Championship Regatta on June 13.

### **Stirling Championship Hopes Dashed**

As stated already, the fact of Stirling winning the Scottish Shield three times in succession had made the other clubs seriously consider the matter, and the Clyde club was able to snatch the Shield from Stirling this year. A quote from the Glasgow Herald regarding the contest between the champions and ex-champions states:

*"As sensational a contest as has ever taken place on the river"*.

At the Berwick-on-Tweed Regatta in July, Stirling won the Marshall Meadow Plate for pairs, and second prize in the Sculling Skiff race - not bad for young members on their first appearance at this regatta.

Stirling Regatta took place on July 25 this year, and an extract from the Sentinel reads:

*"The weather was all that could be desired. Several thousand spectators were present, and the pretty dresses of the fair sex, together with the regatta attire of the sterner portion of the spectators, made the tenth annual Regatta an event to be remembered".*

*"Alloa, for the second time, won the Challenge Cup. They were a most formidable crew, and it was no disgrace to be beat by them, although they showed the possession of more muscle than oarsmanship".*

At the tea and presentation of prizes several prominent visitors were present, and the chairman notified the Alloa crew that he would endeavour to win back the Challenge Cup.

### **Funds in Hand**

The annual business meeting on February 26, 1904, heard the Treasurer intimate a balance in the hands of the Club treasury, and a very substantial balance with the Regatta treasury. The business management was noted s having improved.

### **Life Saving Instruction**

During the earlier part of the year instruction in life-saving and resuscitation was given to a class formed from among the club members, first in the form of lectures, and afterwards at Alloa, where they received a course of training at the baths,

As the official cruise on May 14, twenty boats and canoes took part. Games and races were indulged in and 'medals' presented to the various winners.

### **Third Junior Championship Win**

In the race for the Scottish Shield at Glasgow on June 4, Stirling met as Royal West crew, who, it was rumoured, had been training for two years in preparation for this event. The Royal West crew won after a most exciting contest. However, the Stirling Junior crew, for the third time, secured the Junior Championship.

At the Royal West Regatta on June 18, Stirling oarsmen won three second prizes.

### **Visit to Ireland**

The Club sent a crew to take part in an eight-oar and other events at the Coleraine Regatta on 7th and 8th July, but not being accustomed to such a long boat, they had little chance of winning.

At Alloa Regatta Stirling were represented in the final of the junior four-oar jolly boat race, but our crew went 'crab' hunting, and so didn't win.

On August 17, sixty members and friends went by train to Aberdour and enjoyed themselves. Rain fell in torrents for some time, but the excursionists enjoyed themselves, as if getting wet was a new and unlooked for pleasure.

At the Annual Regatta on August 27, no less than twelve crews competed for the Challenge Cup, and Stirling succeeded in capturing it yet again.

In the Junior Pair-oar Championship of Scotland race at Glasgow on September 12, Stirling Pairs took second and third places.

On October 28 there was a splendid gathering of members and friends at supper in the Golden Lion Hotel. After supper, toasts, songs and reports, filled up a night not soon to be forgotten.

### **New Boathouse Wanted**

On December 14, at a special meeting, the Club resolved to have a Bazaar in order to raise sufficient funds to build, and, if possible, equip a suitable boathouse. Great enthusiasm prevailed, and a large committee was at once elected.

### **1905 - A Busy Year**

At the annual business meeting on February 24, 1905, annual favourable report was submitted, showing a clear balance in the Club and Regatta funds. Office-bearers were elected, and a lively interest in the Club displayed by all present.

The Allow club were showing extraordinary prowess this year, and again lifted the Challenge Cup from us at the Regatta on July 15. The Sentinel of 18th July describes the event as follows:

*"The twelfth Annual Regatta of Stirling Amateur Boating and Swimming Club was held at the Forth above the bridges on Saturday, commencing at 2.45pm. The course was from Speedie's 'wee park' to the 'big tree' and back. The weather was on its best behaviour, and thousands of spectators lined each bank of the river. Viewed from the river the scene was a very pleasing one, and there was every indication of that the annual event is as popular as ever. There was eight events in the programme, which included the final of the Burgh Stakes, the four oar open race for the (Stirling) Challenge Cup, the four oar open senior gig race and a display of diving, swimming etc, by six members of the Alloa Swimming Club. The 4th Stirling Company Boy's Brigade Pipe Band discoursed selections during the afternoon".*

*"Alloa were never seriously challenged, and the result was never in doubt. This is their third year of the cup, although not in succession. The losers (Stirling) deserved praise for their plucky stand they made. This was their fourth time over the course, and the second prize they received was well deserved".*

Exhibition of diving and graceful swimming by six members of Alloa Swimming Club:

- **Sketch**  
pleasure sailing under difficulties
- **Diving**
- opening dive, pyramid, novice dive, lady's dive, leg dive, high dive - hands and feet tied, blindfolded, duck and screw diving

- **Swimming combination**  
25 yards breast stroke, 25 yards side stroke, floating various styles, walking and revolving, 25 yards overhead stroke, 25 yards back stroke, sculling, shipwreck, rolling overhand plank.
- **Angler verses fish competition**  
Mr Crockett (Stirling) the angler and Mr Brown (Alloa) the fish (the fish won, the angler failing to hand him within ten minutes)

The usual tea and distribution of prizes followed in the Station Hotel.

Five race evenings were held and twelve regattas from home, attended with only one victory recorded - the Ladies Plate Challenge Cup at Berwick-on-Tweed.

### **Illuminated Cruise - A Brilliant Spectacle**

The Sentinel report of September 25 reads:

*"Summer sports are waning, and on river as on land, the healthy activities of the past few months have subsided as the dark and chill evenings stole quietly on. To mark the close of their season, which has been a great social success if disappointing from a racing point of view, the Stirling Amateur Boating & Swimming Club held an illuminated cruise on Thursday evening, and a very brilliant affair it proved to be. Considerable taste and ingenuity was displayed by the members in the decoration and illumination of the boats, and even in daylight the effect was very pretty. At night when the Chinese lanterns and fairy lights were all aglow, the scene was one great beauty, the reflections of the lights on the water as they danced and flickered under the movement of the boats, adding a transient, will-o'-the-wisp effect to the scene. Heading by the petrol launch 'Viking', the seven or eight boats which took part in the parade cruised about for a couple of hours between the bridges and Shiphaugh, and the sight was admired from the river bank by hundreds of spectators. The night was dark, and there being no wind, the conditions were exceedingly fortuitous. The front of the boathouse, where the crowds most congregated, was also brilliantly illuminated. On this occasion, again, the ladies were a feature of the party. Snatches of song and music were occasionally wafted from the boats, but something better might have been done in this direction. The proceedings lasted from eight to a little after ten o'clock. The club closes their season on Saturday first, but in view of the bazaar in December, the members will not be idle during the next few months".*

During the year the members had vied with each other as to who would do the most work. Everything seemed in augur towards a successful Bazaar and subsequently a boathouse worthy of a Club which offers a splendid gathering place for all, and more particular to the young men of the town and neighbourhood.

### **The Grand Bazaar 1905**

The Public Halls, Albert Place, Stirling were the venue for the Grand Bazaar of 6th, 7th and 8th December 1905.

*"On Thursday at noon the grand bazaar which was promoted by the Stirling Amateur Boating and Swimming Club was opened at the Public Halls. The Boating Club, which was resuscitated in 1894 after an interval of thirty-four years from the collapse of the old club in 1860, had had a very successful career during the twelve years, which have passed since then, and it has yearly gained in popularity in the town, the record of the Club being second to none in Scotland. With an increasing membership, the present boathouse has been found quite inadequate for the needs of the Club, and the object of the present bazaar was to raise sufficient funds to erect a new and up-to-date boathouse. The project was set agoing over a year ago, and has been energetically pushed forward since by a very active Executive Committee, who were fortunate in securing the assistance of a large number of friends, and a very able body of stallholders. That the latter had been very busily engaged for months was evidence by the magnificent collection of goods brought together for disposal. The bazaar was very pretty decorated, the hall being arranged to depict a quaint riverside village. At the back of the platform there was an interesting and realistic scene on the River Forth, showing the boats of the Club as seen at an opening cruise. Forming the background was the Abbey Craig with the Wallace Monument. On each side of the hall were representatives of early English houses and typical cottages most picturesquely situated, with their tiled or thatched roofs, oaken beams, overhanging gables, and latticed windows. The various stalls were placed in these houses and cottages, and would, with their flowers, foliage, etc, recall to mind many well-remembers scenes of country life".*

*"The Marquis of Graham performed the opening ceremony at noon and was accompanied by local dignitaries and members of the Committee. The Provost said that the Boating and Swimming Club of Stirling had established themselves, and meant to stay. Time was when there was a Boating Club in Stirling, long years ago, but there was long interval when Stirling has no such Club, notwithstanding the fact that the river was very suitable. It was only of late years that this enterprising Club had spring into existence, and held its own. It was composed of men who were determined to do their best for their Club, men who could make good crews, men who could make winning crews. It was common knowledge that the Stirling men had upheld their own wherever they had gone, and that they were able to do it again. This splendid bazaar showed that they had enthused others with a like interest in their cause, and the ladies had come forward to help them in the splendid exhibition of work".*

*"The Marquis of Graham said he must thank them for the very kind way in which they had received the words of Provost Thomson. He expected that they had been saying to themselves and everybody else what a terrible day it was, because it was so wet. He did not think it was at all terrible, but was just the right sort of weather for a boating club bazaar. It had been put very happily that there was no rain there would be no river, and if there was no river they would be no rowing, he thought, if they would excuse him saying so, they have found a very appropriate person in himself to open this bazaar, he was saying so without any vein of conceit, because when at Eton he took up rowing in preference to cricket, and became a 'wet bob'; instead of a 'dry bob'. He spend his time mostly on the river instead of the cricket field, and he could not help thinking for a moment of the great advantages under which oarsmanship in Stirling then occupy the place it did now., and boating men had then to overcome many difficulties. The river itself was not considered absolutely out of bounds, but the streets and roads leading to the river were, and if any boy was found on these roads or streets he was immediately caught and punished, but if near the river he came face to face with a master, the latter did not see him. There was a funny thing happened once. The headmaster, Dr Keat, heard that this rowing was being carried out to great excess and the eight of them were going up the river to have a big champagne lunch. He determined to put a stop to it, and let it be known that if anybody was caught rowing he would be punished. He took a horse, and riding up the river blank waited. Eight fellows came rowing hard up the river, and he called on them to stop. Instead of stopping the eight took off their hats and cheered. The headmaster galloped up to the stopping*

*place, there found the occupants of the boat were not boys, but men who had been hired for the job. At the same time a lot of little boys came out behind a hedge laughing at the way the headmaster had been duped. The upshot was that twenty boys next morning were soundly switched. The objects of this bazaar were worthy of their hearty support, especially when they considered that the Rowing Club of Stirling had been thrice the champions of the amateur rowing world of Scotland. He thought it was right the Club should be supported in its endeavour and efforts to have the boathouse worth of their reputation. The Club, he was glad to say, had enrolled fifty new recruits, and he was sure that the consensus of opinion in that room would be, when they thought of the excellent physical results of rowing, and that in the pursuit of this sport they were trespassers on no man's right or any men's pleasure, that they hoped that these fifty recruits would be turned into five hundred. He had very great pleasure in declaring the bazaar open".*

*"The Bazaar was opened on Friday by Colonel Hunt, commander of the 91st Regimental District. Colonel Hunt said the formation of a club for the pursuit of any branch of sport gave a local stimulus to the game, and lent facilities for the acquisition of merit in the performance. This was peculiarly the case when rowing, which was one of the oldest of their sports. When men met together in a club such as they were met to assist that day, it showed how much one could be of service to the other. The object of that bazaar was to raise sufficient funds to the erection of a boathouse. During the past eleven years the club has been most distinguished, in fact, second to none in Scotland. He thought that the development of such a Club was likely to be in every way advantageous to the citizens of Stirling, and well worthy of their support. He had much pleasure in declaring the bazaar open".*

*"On Saturday the opening ceremony was performed by Mrs Steel-Maitland of Sauchie. Mrs Steel-Maitland, in declaring the bazaar open, said it gave her great pleasure to be there that day to wish all possible success to the Stirling Amateur Boating and Swimming Club. She trusted that they would all help to make that, the third and last day of the bazaar, even more successful than the two previous days. After the eloquent remarks from the Chairman she would not attempt more than a few words, as attention paid to the prettily decorated stalls she thought was likely to be more beneficial on such an occasion than long speeches from the platform. She would point out that the bazaar in particular was worthy of being brought before their notice. It was only by providing good wholesome recreation that the young men could be kept from the temptations of town life and made better citizens of Stirling and members of the community at large".*

Money raised over the three days exceeded £1,000.

### **Some Quotes from the Bazaar Programme**

"For long with patient skill to please you, we did try; your case is far more easy - you merely come to buy"

"What the committee hath made to charm, let no man despise"

"Open your purse that money and the mater may both be at once delivered"

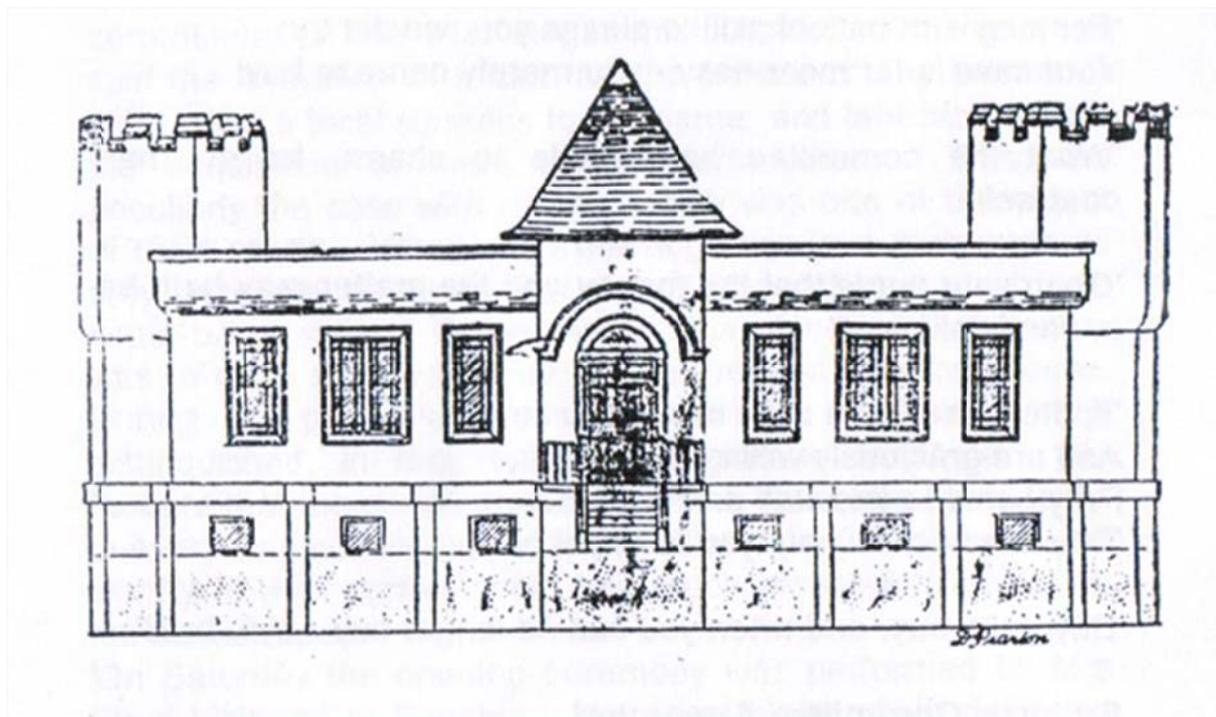
"If, then, you have cash in your purse, and are graciously willing to spend it, pray come to this stall and disburse, these ladies will help you to end it".

"Buy, buy, buy, and when you can no longer buy - bye, bye!"

### Building Committee Appointed

On December 26, 1905 a building committee was appointed to produce plans for submission and approval to the General Meeting with the proviso that 'they do not exceed £700 on buildings, fittings and all fixtures'.

The sketch (below) is of the club house about to be erected for members of the Stirling Amateur Boating and Swimming Club on the riverside near the end of Millar Place. The exact site is about the length of the building, some 54 feet, below the termination of the thoroughfare, and the design being of a pleasing and harmonious character, should fit it with the picturesque beauty of the spot. The plans are by Mr A M Lupton, Stirling, and show a building with turrets in the old battlemented style of architecture at either end, and length by 33 broad. On the ground floor there is accommodation for about thirty racing boats, in addition to the usual appurtenances of such a club. The principal entrance is reached by an avenue from Shiphaugh Road, and a short flight of steps leads into the hall of the main building. To the right there is a large visitors' room, 21 feet by 24 feet, turret to the river front, or by the same staircase ascent to the flat roof, from which a splendid view of the river and surrounding district will be obtained. To the left of the entrance hall it is a large dressing room, 31 feet by 24 feet, from which also there is a convenient access to the river front by the turret on the side, and to the boatshed underneath. The divisions are moveable, and will allow the whole floor space being made available in the winter time for gymnastics purpose. The Captain's room, which can also be used for Committee meetings, enters from the hall, and is situated immediately behind the visitors' room. At the rear of the dressing room, and entering from it, is a bathroom, fitted up for ordinary and spray baths, and lavatory accommodation. The building will be of brick, harled in colour, with the piers relieved and ornamented in cement.



3 Sketch of the New Clubhouse

### Challenge Cup Returns to Stirling

At the annual regatta in July 1906 three Stirling crews contested the final for the Challenge Cup following heats including crews from Alloa (the holders), Clydesdale, Portobello and Port Glasgow. A ladies and gents race featured as part of the proceedings involving Stirling oarsman with a lady partner. The President, at the regatta tea, commented to the effect that 'he had had many proofs that the members of the club were gallant young men, but he thought their gallantry had risen to the height of chivalry when they allowed the ladies to take part in the competitions'.

Berwick-on-Tweed regatta in early August saw Stirling successful in no less than three events. On their return to the station that evening they were met by a large number of their club mates, who gave them a hearty reception.

### New Clubhouse Opened September 1, 1906

*"The handsome and commodious clubhouse which has been built at the riverside, near Millar Place, for the Stirling Amateur Boating and Swimming Club, was opened on Saturday afternoon under circumstances that most fortunate and inspiring. In the first place the weather was of the most glorious description, the sun bathing the rich landscape in a soft iridescent light through which the distant Ochils and they Abbey Craig were faintly distinguishable. The heat, indeed, was just too oppressive even for those who acted the passive part of spectators, there being scarcely a breath of wind to relieve the torridness of the day. In every other respect the function was equally favoured. There was a large and representative attendance of ladies and gentleman belonging to the town and district, their presence testifying to the widespread interest in the Boating Club and its affairs, and the place it has won for itself among the organisations of the town. The invited guests, who numbered several hundreds, had the unrestricted freedom of the building, and its capacity and completeness were generally commented upon. On the flat roof during the afternoon there was a continual stream of visitors, who enjoyed their novel surroundings and the splendid view of the river, and the racing that is there to be got".*

*"The opening ceremony took place at two o'clock in the large clubroom which extends the whole length of the building on the side facing the river. It is presided over by the Commodore of the Club and honoured guests where the President and his wife, Mr and Mrs James Murray of Polmaise, the Provost and many other members of the Town Council and prominent townspeople. On the table in front of the Chairman the Challenge Cup and other trophies won by racing events that afternoon, were in view".*

*"Mrs Murray said she really could not adequately express to them her great heartfelt pride and gratitude at the honour which had been conferred upon her. She had come with the anticipation of opening the clubhouse, but when she arrived she found it open. She had also prepared her little speech on the footing that she would have to open the door at the end of it, but that had all been upset, and the speech wouldn't do now. She was afraid that they had chosen a very bad person to open the clubhouse, because if there was anything she did not like it was boating, and if she did have to get into a boat her only feeling was how quick she could get out. At the same time she appreciated and thoroughly understood that both swimming and rowing were two very healthful and very invigorating exercises, and she hoped all the young people of Stirling - both young men and young ladies - would avail themselves of and enjoy the shelter of that beautiful clubhouse. Though she did not enjoy swimming and boating, she enjoyed a regatta, and the one a few weeks ago she was specially delighted with. She even enjoyed the immersion of a 'young lady' in a very smart hat, and more the less that it was not until afterwards she discovered that the 'young lady' was a boy".*

