

HULL LIFESAVING MUSEUM

SAVING LIVES THEN. CHANGING LIVES NOW.



OPEN WATER ROWING PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

BECOMING A MEMBER

GENERAL INFORMATION

ROWING BASICS

SAFETY POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

The Hull Lifesaving Museum (HLM) adult open water rowing program is committed to being a safe and welcoming program for participants of all skill levels. This handbook serves as a basic introduction to the adult open water rowing program for those who are thinking of joining or are new members. The Hull Lifesaving Museum (HLM) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

BECOMING A MEMBER

Membership Fees – Membership fees are collected by HLM. Please use the following link to make your payment: [Membership Link](#) Renewal of your membership is due by the anniversary date of when you signed up for your first year.

New Rower Policy - If you are new to open water rowing, it is requested that you attend separate sessions to develop the skills necessary to safely row with this program. These skills sessions will be scheduled and coordinated by HLM staff as needed. Please contact HLM staff for more information about these sessions.

Waivers - All rowers are required to sign and agree to a waiver of liability. Once you are signed up and provided a link to the HLM [iCrew](#) account, there is a waiver form there you will need to review and sign.

GENERAL INFORMATION

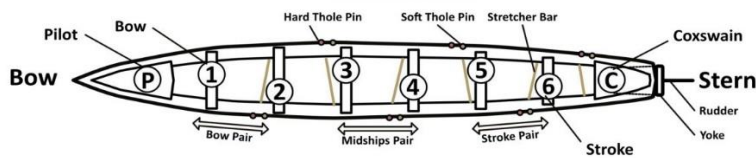
Where we row – Rowing at HLM takes place out of the HLM Boathouse located at 185 Main Street, Hull, MA. We row upon the coastal waters surrounding Hull will often row out to some of the Boston Harbor Islands located in the Hull area. Rowing routes and destinations are determined by the persons leading the row and are based on wind, weather, tides, sea conditions, and other safety factors.



When we row – Adult open water rowing occurs every Saturday morning at 7:30 am. During the late Spring, Summer and early Fall months, rows are also scheduled for Wednesday evenings at 6:00 pm. *Note: Wednesday evening rows are scheduled in iCrew to ensure crews and those leading the rows are available.* All rows are subject to cancellation due to weather or other issues relating to safety.

How long we row - Typical rowing sessions last from 2-3 hours in duration. However, some rows may be longer if it involves a destination to one of the many harbor islands accessible to the public.

What we row - The HLM open water rowing program primarily rows two types of vessels; Cornish pilot gigs, which have fixed seats for **6 rowers and a Coxswain** and Whitehall gigs, which have fixed seats for **4 rowers and a Coxswain**. Both types of vessels are built and designed for use in open water. The current HLM fleet includes 4 Cornish pilot gigs and 6 Whitehall gigs. https://www.cornwalls.co.uk/culture/gig-racing.htm#google_vignette



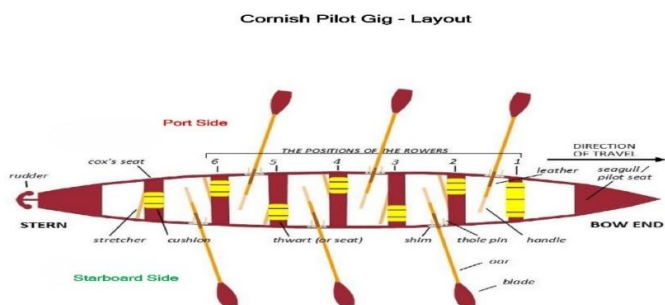
What to wear and bring – The adult open-water rowing program operates year-round so wearing appropriate outdoor gear for the predicted weather conditions is important. *Also, the gigs are launched from the beach so appropriate footwear that can get wet and keep your feet dry is important during the colder months.* Layering up is an effective way to go as you may find that you will be warming up during the row. Also, bring water for hydration, even during colder days.

Who leads the rows - The Hull Lifesaving Museum is the owner and operator of all rowing gigs belonging to the open water program. HLM staff members and rowing member volunteers will lead and coordinate the rows. All rows are subject to cancellation due to weather and any other factors which may affect the safety of any member. Communication with members is usually done via email as well as information passed along in the iCrew application.

Code of Conduct – Rower safety is HLM’s highest priority. Rowing members are expected to comport themselves with courtesy, a sense of fair play and inclusion. HLM welcomes all who are interested and want to participate, and we pride ourselves in operating a membership that promotes inclusion. If you believe that anyone is acting in a disruptive or unacceptable manner, please bring that to the attention of the rowing leader or Coxswain. They will contact the HLM staff, as necessary.

ROWING BASICS

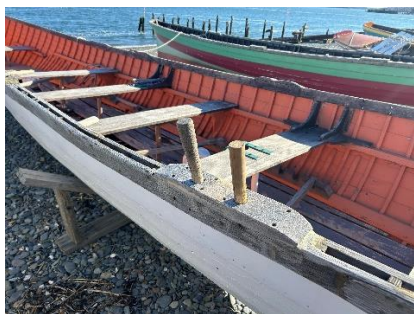
Knowing your way around the gig – You will become familiar with the layout and terminology used to describe various parts of the gig and rowing gear. Terms used may be familiar while others are unique to the club or based on traditional maritime nomenclature. Rowers are assigned seats (thwarts) by number. Starting at the bow (#1) and working aft to the stern and “stroke” seat (#6 or #4 in a 4-seat gig). *The Stroke Oar position sets the rowing pace/rate to be followed by all other rowers.*



NOTE: The side in which the oar crosses the gunwale - upper edge - and where the blade is in the water identifies the rowers side - not the side you are sitting on.

Rowing Gear - HLM's fleet has different oar-locking systems which include the traditional *Thole Pin system* and the more modern oarlock system (see photos). Each gig has its own set of oars rigged for it. There are two types of oars used. The Spoon and Hatchet type (see below).

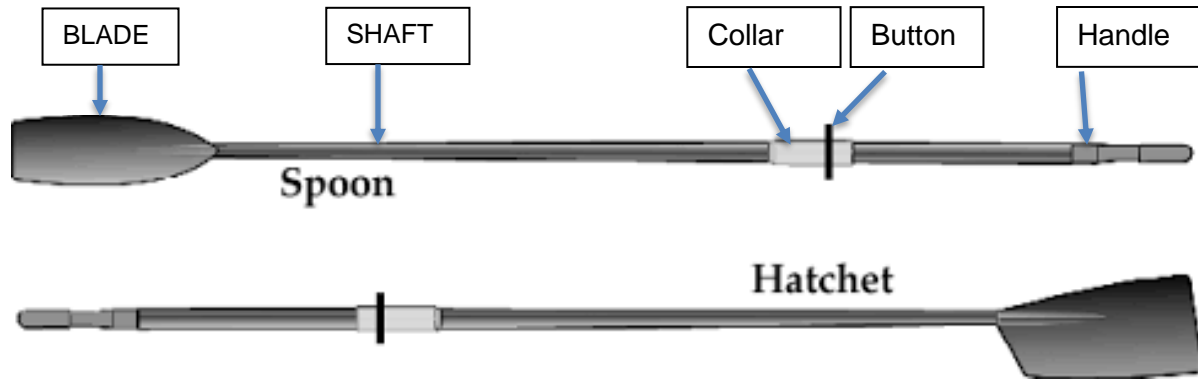
Thole Pins



Oarlock



OAR Parts and Types



Coxswain – (Cox) - The Coxswain will operate the gig’s rudder and give rowing commands to the crew. The Coxswain is in overall command of the gig and is responsible for the safety of the crew. All rowers are expected to pay close attention the Coxswain’s commands which are critical for maneuvering the gigs properly and safely.

The Rowing Stroke – Fixed Seat – Rowing in a ‘fixed’ seat gig with one oar per rower has its own unique challenges and techniques. Instructions will be provided by the Coxswain during rows. However, we recommend viewing the following series of videos, which provide an excellent presentation of the fixed seat ‘gig’ stroke technique: [Fixed Seat Rowing Stroke Videos](#)



Rowing Commands – The HLM rowing program uses the following commands, which may vary from other rowing clubs or types of rowing vessels.

- **“SIT READY”** – The rower leans forward pushing the oar handle forward, with the oar blade above the water. You are in the “ready” position and waiting for the next command.
- **“READY ALL”** – Command given from the *Sit Ready* Position to alert the rowers to get ready, but not row just yet and to get their attention. The oar blade is dipped in the water with the top of the blade barely out of the water.
- **“ROW”** – Command given from the *Ready All* position to start rowing.
- **“LET IT RUN”** – Complete the stroke and *stop rowing* with the oar straight out and held parallel above the water. The term comes from the idea of letting the hull ‘run through the water’ under its own momentum.
- **“BACK WATER”** – Command to row in reverse, backing your strokes from aft to forward. The ‘catch’ is reversed by dipping the blade and pushing the handle forward. This is used when backing the gig off the back or maneuvering it to turn.
- **“HOLD WATER”** – The rower dips the oar blade into the water and holds it tight, putting pressure forward on the oar handle and shaft, *but not pushing or pulling the blade through the water*. This is used to slow down or stop the boat from moving forward or reverse. It may also be given to 1 or 2 rowers on one side of the gig for assisting the Coxswain in turning the gig.
- **“ROW LIGHTLY”** – This command may be used to keep the gig moving forward but allow the gig to slow down as it approaches a dock or the beach when landing. The rower will reduce the strength and pressure on the blade but continue to row.
- **“POWER UP”** – Often stated as **“Power 10” or other numbers**. – Rower increases power, staying sync with the Stroke Oar rower. Used to accelerate the vessel through the water. Often used in racing events or when needed to sync the stroke rate of all of the rowers and to counter a head current or sea conditions.
- **“TOSS OARS”** – Lift and toss the oar up in front of you, while seated, placing the handle at your feet and raise the oar straight up – This command is used when docking the gig or when landing ashore to place the oars in the boat for egress out of the boat.

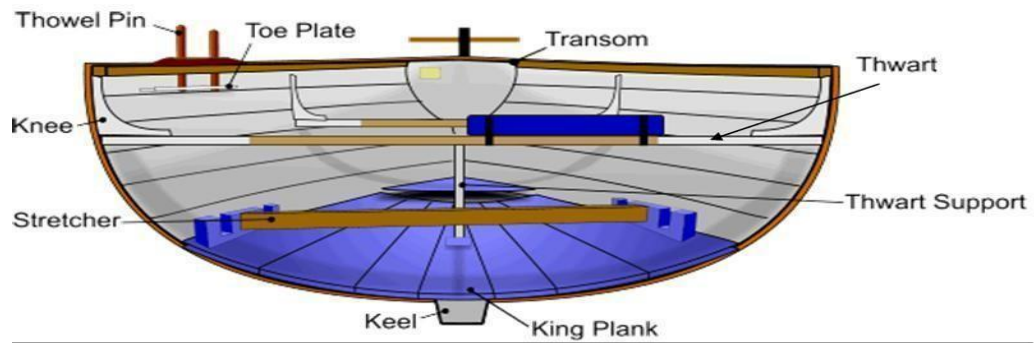
- **“SHIP OARS”** – Complete the stroke and then pull the handle of the oar past you toward the bow and then place the oar blade close along the side of the boat. Used also on some gigs when coming ashore and navigating in a narrow area or near another vessel to avoid contact.

Other Terms and Definitions

- **The Catch** – This is when the blade of the oar is dipped into the water at the start of the rowing stroke.
- **The Recovery** – This term is used to describe the movement of the oar blade back to the initial catch position by pushing the oar handle forward, then leaning forward to the ‘catch’ position for the next stroke.
- **Catching a “Crab”** - When the blade of the oar gets dragged deeper below the surface just before the end of the stroke, making it hard to recover the oar back to the catch position. The Coxswain may instruct you on how to correct that and what action to take when this occurs as part of your orientation in rowing.
- **Feather Oars** – This term refers to rotating the blade back to the horizontal position just after completing the stroke and occurs simultaneously as the recovery back to the catch position. While this is not common in open water rowing, Coxswains may teach this to you at some point. It is often used when rowing against the wind to reduce the ‘sail area’ of the blade on the recovery.
- **Foot Stretcher** – A 2–3-foot long one-by-one inch piece of wood located at your feet, which is used to push off with your legs during the catch. These are adjustable based on the individual rower.
- **Comb** – Notched pieces in the bilge (bottom) of the boat where the foot stretcher is set.
- **Gunwale (pronounced ‘gunnel’)** – This is the upper edge of the boat – top of each side where the oars are placed into position.
- **Thwart** – Seat that runs transverse – across the boat. These are structural members that provide strength to the hull as well as a place for the rower or crew to sit.
- **Princess/Pilot Seat** – Thwart located at the Bow, which is reserved for an extra person not rowing or commanding the gig.
- **Trim** – Term to describe how the gig is sitting in the water – measured from the stern to the bow – Longitudinally – front to back – as opposed from side to side.
- **List** – Term used to describe how the gig is sitting in the water from side to side (athwartships). This is corrected by shifting rowers or crew to one side or the other.

- **Stroke Oar** – rower sitting the furthest aft (back toward the stern). The #6 seat in a pilot gig and the number 4 seat in a Whitehall gig. This person sets the stroke rate/pace in coordination with the gig’s Coxswain.
- **Rudder** – Located at the stern and attached to the hull for steering the gig.
- **Rudder yoke lines** – lines used by the Coxswain to control the rudder.

Internal Parts of a Gig



SAFETY POLICIES

Safety is the number one priority of this program. Open water rowing is great fun and can be highly rewarding and challenging. Operating on any waterway poses certain risks and HLM and those coordinating the rowing program must consider **all** factors when determining the risk to any person who participates in this program. All rowers are required to follow and comply with all HLM safety policies and procedures.

Flotation - The Hull Lifesaving Museum will provide Type-III USCG approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) to rowers. However, all rowers are encouraged to purchase and seek their own individual USCG approved PFDs. There are many types of CG approved PFDs designed for rowing or paddling, including those that inflate or those with fixed flotation material. **HLM Policy requires that all persons wear a PFD while in a gig from September 15th through May 15th. From May 16th through September 14th, your PFD must be ready for immediate use if needed.**

Personal Survival – It is expected that ALL rowers can remain afloat **without a PFD**. If you cannot safely stay afloat or swim without the assistance of a PFD, please contact a rowing leader, Coxswain or HLM staff prior to rowing.

Float Plan – Designated Person/Worrier (DW) System - Under current HLM Policy, there will be a designated person ashore to communicate with and monitor each row to ensure that all gigs and crews arrive safely back ashore and are accounted for. The DW will be sent a list of boats, crews, location (destination) of the row and the expected time of return to the boat house. Each DW will be provided with proper guidance on who to notify if the person(s) in charge of the row fail to communicate with them by the designated return time. Coxswains and rowing leaders will also communicate with the DW if there are any changes to the float plan during the row as well as when all boats and crews are safely back ashore at the end of the row.

Marine Radio - Communications – Each Coxswain is required to use and monitor a marine band VHF handheld radio at all times while underway. All Coxswains are required to be familiar with the procedures for broadcasting a distress call in case of an emergency.

First AID – HLM provides standard basic first aid kits for each row. ***NOTE: If you have any medical conditions such as allergies, which may require additional medical care beyond basic first aid, please notify the Coxswain or rowing leader prior to every row.***