

# Incident Report

## Overview

<b>Date</b>	<b>11 June 23</b>
<b>Location</b>	Between Dunnottar Castle and Stonehaven
<b>Boat</b>	Spirit of Catterline
<b>Crew</b>	S1 (cox – 5.5 years experience. Medic. Female) S2 (stroke - novice. Female) S3 (#3 - novice. Female) S4 (#2 - novice. Female) S5 (bow. 10 years experience. Crew lead. Male)
<b>Conditions</b>	Mild. Some showers. Good visibility. Light breeze. Swell – moderate height, long period, somewhat confused.
<b>Summary</b>	<p>S3 was taken ill off Bowdun Head. Cramps in hand, jaw and chest, difficulty breathing, distressed and reduced consciousness.</p> <p>Mayday call was made and Shetland coastguard responded. Requested medical assistance and began making way back to Stonehaven.</p> <p>After a few minutes, waved down passing motor launch 'Fliss', and transferred S3 and S4 to Fliss. Fliss then took them to Stonehaven where they met the RNLI crew who were preparing to launch and handed S3 over to their care. Meanwhile, Spirit was rowed back to Stonehaven by S5 and S1, with S2 coxing.</p> <p>S3 received treatment and was subsequently discharged from the RNLI to the care of her friend.</p>

## Observations

- Ultimately, and most importantly, the situation was handled well by the entire crew and resulted in a good outcome. S3 received the medical care she needed as quickly as possible, and the boat and crew were returned safely to shore. The crew of Spirit and Fliss deserve the highest praise for dealing with a challenging situation in a calm and effective way.
- This highlights the need for as many people as possible to be comfortable using the VHF. Crew leads especially should use the radio routinely to overcome the hesitancy there is around VHF use.
- The VHF in use for communications was the HX210 (no DSC). The HX890 that remained in the cox's bag throughout the row. On reflection, this would have been a far better device to use because of the built in GPS and the DSC distress button. The distress call should have been made using the HX890, using the distress button first and then following up with a voice transmission.
- Transferring S3, who was conscious but unwell and unsteady, to Fliss was challenging. The casualty was effectively a deadweight lift. Fliss's freeboard and deck is a couple of feet higher than Spirit's, plus a hand rail to get over as well, which made it a difficult operation. A loop was tied around her under her armpits and two men in Fliss pulled her aboard, assisted by S5 and S4 in Spirit. Crew transfer techniques in a variety of conditions need further consideration, as well as consideration that taking Spirit under tow may be a better option in some circumstances.
- The oars were across the gunwales, and both they and the kabes were in the way while the two boats were alongside. Port side kabes should have been removed, and the port oars stowed inside the boat before Fliss came alongside.

- We need a more organised way to get oars in and out of the boat while in the water.
- Sea conditions were good so S5 & S1 had no difficulty in rowing back to Stonehaven. If the sea state was less favourable, a tow may have been required because either a) it may have been impractical to transfer to Fliss or b) we might not be able to make way with a reduced crew. In that case, a tow would have been required, but Spirit does not routinely carry a tow rope.
- If S3 had required more concentrated care, we might not have been able to make way. E.g. CPR on a thwart. Again that may require a tow, and also perhaps a drogue anchor to steady the boat, keep her in a safe position relative to the swell and reduce drifting.
- Holding Spirit alongside Fliss was challenging. Ropes were passed from Fliss for S2 and S4 to hold, and they found that difficult. We should review how we do this. Perhaps cleats or other anchor points on Spirit would be appropriate.

## Suggested Follow Up Actions

1. Concerted effort to make VHF use a routine occurrence in the club.
2. Develop and practice a method to stow and deploy oars while on the water.
3. Always carry a tow rope, properly attached to the bow, and a stern line that we can use when alongside another boat. (Could be in a bag in the bow and stern and a permanent fixture in the boat.)
4. Training/awareness of how to hold a rope safely.
5. Consider acquiring a drogue anchor.
6. Regular “incident drill” talk throughs and exercises.
7. Boat to boat transfer practice with the RNLI and other vessels as opportunity presents itself.
8. Review best practice for holding boats alongside.
9. Carry glucose tablets in the cox’s bag. In first aid kit?
10. Awareness of how to get a GPS lat/long on smart a phone.

## Timeline

See map below for course and location markers.

Time (approx.)	Event	Action
14:15 – 14:30	Crew change with earlier session	S1 had rowed in previous session so swapped to cox for 14:15 session.
14.32	Left Stonehaven harbour	Row south, as per previous session.
14:35 ish	Short shower of rain. Crew got a little damp.	
14:46 – 14:49	[Map Mark A] Drift test off Bowdun Head.  Rain had stopped by then.	Having not previously done so on this row, we stopped for a drift check before committing to pass Bowdun Head. Very little drift observed, so continued to row south.
14:55	S3 reports feeling unwell	Decided to row into shelter of Castle Haven and assess

Time (approx.)	Event	Action
14:55	<p>[Map Mark B] S3 clearly becoming increasingly unwell.</p> <p>She complained of feeling dizzy and cramps in hand, jaw and chest, difficulty in breathing and noticeably about to faint</p>	<p>S1 instructed S2 and S4 to safely lower to bottom of boat and kept talking to her. She was able to continue full conversation after lowered.</p> <p>Decided to turn back immediately.</p> <p>S1 and S2 swapped seats (S2 to cox and S1 to stroke) so that S1 could continue to monitor S3.</p> <p>S3 was laid down as comfortably as possible between #2 and #3 thwarts, with her legs elevated on the #3 thwart. S4 stopped rowing to support and comfort S3, while S5 and S1 continued to row.</p> <p>Woolly hat and foil survival blanket from cox's bag used to keep S3 warm.</p>
14:57 – 15:00		<p>Recognising that there was no margin for further deterioration of S3's condition and at least 20 minutes rowing with reduced crew to Stonehaven, decision was made to make a mayday call so that we would at least have medical response alerted by the time we arrived back.</p> <p>Mayday call was made by S5 and answered by Shetland Coastguard.</p>
15:02 – 15:10	<p>Continue to make way to Stonehaven with 2 rowing. Spotted vessel approaching from south (subsequently identified as Fliss) and attempted to call on channel 16 while they were passing Dunnottar Castle. No response, so waited until they were closer and waved to attract their attention as they passed Bowdun Head.</p>	

Time (approx.)	Event	Action
15:12	[Map Mark C] Fliss comes alongside by Strathlethan Bay. Fliss's starboard to Spirit's port side. Both vessels pointing north.	<p>After explaining the situation and a brief discussion with skipper of Fliss, we decided to transfer S3 to Fliss, along with S4 to assist and keep her company.</p> <p>Suggestion to inflate S3's lifejacket as a precaution prior to transfer was considered but rejected as it would make a difficult lift even harder.</p> <p>Rope was passed under S3's armpits and secured before lifting her aboard Fliss. The procedure we were about to carry out was explained to S3 first and made sure she was aware she was safe but there would be some brief discomfort.</p> <p>The transfer was carried out without incident.</p>
15:17	Fliss departs for Stonehaven, leaving S2 (cox), S1 (stroke) and S5 (bow).	Resumed making way to Stonehaven.
15:20 – 15:23	Further discussions with Shetland Coastguard regarding S3's condition.	We advised them that she was aboard Fliss and that we were making way to Stonehaven.
15:32	Spirit arrives Stonehaven, where S3 was already in the care of RNLI and being treated on the outer pier.	
15:41	S3's partner phoned by S5. No answer. Message left on voicemail.	
~15:48	S3 moved by stretcher to the RNLI station where she was monitored by the RNLI. After discussion between Scottish Ambulance, S1 and RNLI it was agreed that no ambulance was required and to continue monitoring at RNLI station.	
15:49	S3's partner phoned by S5. Explained situation. Unfortunately, S3's partner was unable to come to collect S3 so he asked a friend to come and pick her up.	
16:51	S3's friend arrives at Backies car park	
~17:00	S3 discharged from RNLI station into S3's friend's care.	

Interval 1/1: Just Go, Finish at  
11/06/2023 15:32:45 +01:00

