

Coigach Community Rowing Club Oars

The oars we make at Coigach are between 4690 mm for the two middle oars and 4190 mm for the stroke oar. These weigh between 5.5 and 7.5 kg depending on whether they are made from douglas fir or pine, and that may seem quite heavy but weight is not the issue some would make it out to be, a small badly balanced oar can be much harder to row with than a good heavy oar. We still use one of our old oars in training though it cracked and has been repaired with a long fillet of oak and now weights nearer to 9 kg, it is still a favourite oar though we cannot take a chance on it cracking again in a race.

Coigach have been very successful with these long oars from U17 to 60+ teams, in sprints , very long races and everything in between, we reckon they are a large part of our success, and an oar that you can win with is basically one that is easy to row.

The oars are made to the above dimensions and most of the work is done at the blade first to get the outboard as light as possible, leaving the inboard as heavy as possible to begin with and gradually fairing the outboard shaft to give a little flex when leaned on hard, try to keep it as stiff as possible as under the pressure of rowing the oar will bend a lot and you just need it stiff enough that it unbends while still in the water giving up all the energy you have put into it, also a good reason for rowing long and slow. The bend on the oar should not be very apparent to you while rowing but will show up quite dramatically in photos. We now make the oars more rectangular in section as this saves a lot of shaping and is arguably stronger. To start with the oar can be left quite heavy and tested for stiffness and balance in the boat before final fairing. The oar should be balanced on the gunwale with just a light downward pressure from your arms. The blades can be made very fine. You can continue to get the weight down if the oar proves very stiff but keep the 60 x 50 section for a good length around the area of the pin. Once you have made one good oar it becomes a reference for all the others.

If we make them from pine we use 38 x 63 x 2.4 m lengths of Wickes

studwork hand picked for weight, straightness and small knots. These are scarfed into two 4.7 m lengths and then are glued together with the scarfs reversed to make super strong and light 76 x 63 x 4.7 m oar blanks with enough scrap left over for blades. Then they are sawn down to 60 x 50 ready for shaping. The cost is about £20 including epoxy glue but does require a lot more work. However you do not mind making any mistakes like you do when you mess up £100 worth of straight, knot free timber you have had to have shipped from Bristol and we have never broken any made in this way, only ones made from one piece of timber.