PENGUINS AT LOCH NESS (AGAIN) – 19TH SEPTEMBER 2026

This year saw an assortment of Penguinauts arrive in Scotland for the Monster the Loch (MTL) challenge. The Jackasses consisted of a mixed English/Welsh/Scottish crew: Pete Beaumont, Charlie Beardmore, Dai Evans, Al Crawford and Barry Graham, whilst the Chinstraps: Pat, Matt, Callum, Nick and Niki were all drawn from the Davis clan. We assembled to row up to 21 miles along the Loch to raise money for the registered charity Penguins Against Cancer (www.penguinsagainst cancer.org.uk), ably supported by Chris Fryer our logistics officer and travelling reserve.



A lone piper plays a lament, heralding the rain

The portents were not good. A wind of 18 knots gusting 30 put the intended finish at Dores out of action due to large waves. The organisers therefore amended the course so competitors started and finished at Fort Augustus having rowed 11 miles, half with the wind and half against.



Team Jackass loafing on the Loch side



Team Jackass afloat

Despite the inclement conditions the Jackasses were relatively cheerful. The combined weight of the cox and stroke positions was 70kg less than the previous year. In addition the boat was not filled with gallons of water as the flap had been fitted to the self-bailing device, and its outflow was not below the loch's water level. Pete (who has done some rowing before) was metronomic as stroke and Barry, having pushed the envelope a bit during practice, settled down to cox very competently. The Chinstraps were an amazing

collection of father, mother, son, son and uncle, 3 of whom had never rowed before a practice session, very generously provided by Staines Boat Club, a few weeks before. Niki, clearly in charge, kept a tight ship throughout.



Chinstraps, aka The Davis Massive, at practice in sunnier climes

The leg out to the halfway marker was fast as the wind blew in our direction of travel and we were able to surf on the waves. It was all going swimmingly well. At the turn things unsurprisingly changed however. Rowing into a very strong wind and against significant waves is a challenge. Morale was further enhanced when it started to rain. Light rain alternated with heavy rain, squalls and downpours so that despite everyone being sensibly clothed, we all got very wet indeed. Fortunately, our rented boats were designed for coastal rowing and coped magnificently.

Both crews performed creditably and we compared timings against last year at the finish, as we shivered over some freezing lager in a very muddy field.

MTL 2025 Penguins Against Cancer boat came 113th out of 118 competitors at an average speed of approximately 4.3 mph

MTL 2026 PAC 1 Jackass boat came 65th out of 122 competitors at an average speed of approximately 7.7 mph

MTL 2026 PAC 2 Chinstraps boat came 102nd out of 122 competitors at an average speed of approximately 6.3 mph

Last year's lessons which we heeded were:

- Ensure the flap is fitted (to the self-bailing device)
- Row faster

- Consider getting a lighter crew

We also raised £11,600 for Penguins Against Cancer (more than 4 times as much as in 2025). The Penguinauts would like to thank all those who so very generously supported us with their donations and the incredible coaching duo of Shannon and Greg Fletcher.



The Davis Massive, bemedalled and smiling

Charlie Beardmore

PAC President