

OTRC Match Report - Abingdon Head April 2014



In an attempt to add variety and spice to everyone's lives, the Captain signed OTRC up for a new venue this month. Everyone was up for the challenge and the interest of a new river, with new bends and currents. Well, they were up for the challenge until most of them discovered it meant a 5 am alarm call in order to leave Oundle at 6am to reach Abingdon in time for the first division! In fact, two of our more experienced rowers (I won't name them, but the Judge knows who they are, so expect to wear the Blazer, boys) decided they needed their beauty sleep more than a chance at winning a pot and scratched from the first division because it would mean getting up too early. Tut, tut, boys.

The weather on the way down was very worrying - high winds and heavy rain - but wasn't as bad as it could have been. The high winds remained but the rain held off for the three divisions.

Abingdon is a very beautiful spot, with a lovely stretch of river, although dotted with many safety/navigation buoys which tested the coxes and steersmen of the day. The stewards and volunteers of Abingdon rowing club were delightfully friendly and extremely helpful. Our supporters, as usual, were 'top notch'. We also won three races, so a good day was had by all. All in all, a good day. May we go again, boss?

Congratulations to all the winners.

W VetC 8+ (Vicky, Jennie, Keely, Jo, Anita, Becca, Angela, Claire, cox: Rhona) 9:26

Due to some unfortunate illness (we hope that Smithy gets well soon) we had a slight rearrangement of the crew and decided to have a 'sneaky' outing in the race crew the day before - thank you to Anita for subbing and Vicky for being our stroke.

We were not quite the last boat to arrive at the start, but it was close (thanks to a Men's 8 that thought that they only needed 7 blades to row the boat when getting organised before boating).

After a quick turnaround and clothing adjustment we were off, at a brisk 30-31 rating through most of the course slowing slightly in the rough water (worse than the Tideway) but picking it back up later for a strong finish. It was expertly steered by Rhona (unlike other boats later -W.NOV.2x) who managed to avoid all the red buoys (targets for other boats). The time was 9.26 - 10secs behind the other crew in the race, so a close second from a good solid row.

IM3 4+ (Ian B, Tim B, Charlie B, Richard B, cox: Paul) 09:29

Our first race as a crew came with its challenges... a 5:00am start! Arriving bright and early at the River Thames for Division 1, we made our way to the water's edge with cox Paul to test the new configuration. Miss-communication amongst the Marshalls resulted in several spins at the starting area before eventually finding our waiting spot. Building up over ten, we entered the race at a steady rating, maintaining momentum with Paul's directed steering. An unwelcomed testing of the boat's balance through turbulent waters resulted in the catching of crab by Stoke. After a quick recovery and re-calibration command from Paul, we powered through the last quarter of the race arriving rather wet at the finish line. On reflection, some good spells of steady rowing, although somewhat messy and choppy in parts. With some guided coaching and further practicing at race pace, there are promising signs for boat "Bradshaw".

WVetD 4+ (Angela, Jennie, Anita, Claire, cox: Charlie) 10:51

Following a (welcome) change of boat, which necessitated a change of seat order and the seemingly club constant of not much time together to practise in that order, there were some good elements to the row, but more points for improvement. Everyone in the boat gave 100% and learned a lot from the outing. Excellent coxing from Charlie Dunn was appreciated. He steered extremely well, gave us lots of encouragement and politely and calmly ignored some very rude old gits (no, not from OTRC)! Thanks, Charlie.

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Nov 1x: Jack **WINNER** 10:06

Anticipating the worst after an old geezer fell in just before I started the race, I set off and immediately went wrong, going all out thinking I had passed the start without realising, after a woman shouted "GO" at me. So I got my rhythm and consequently almost fell in, getting my rigger caught under a 10ft tall wave, I got back into said rhythm and consequently got cut off trying to overtake a guy who didn't understand that you could actually be overtaken without trying to take the other person out. As a result I had to stop and then went hell for leather to storm past him (I couldn't contain my smile), consequently I stupidly forgot to be on the right side of the buoys, and produced a magnificent handbrake turn and carried on my merry way, went past another person who didn't understand how to steer and apparently won! As a reward I had to get my boat out ON MY OWN in ferocious winds, luckily some old guy helped me because I had to get my boat out ON MY OWN.

(p.s. I'm not bitter about having to get my boat out ON MY OWN).

WNov 4+ (Fiona, Martine, Kate E, Rhona, cox:Richard) 14:36

Substitutions were being considered when Hugh still hadn't managed to deliver Fiona to the event 10 minutes before boating. They tried to pin the blame on their innocent houseguest (who was trained to shout "come on Oundle" before departure), but we all know that they just left the house too late.....

During the one minute available to them the crew went over their tactics which mainly consisted of "remember to pull up, tap down", enjoy ourselves and make it to the finish line at some point during the outing - we did in fact achieve a remarkable time (look it up!) Richard did a fine job in the Cox seat by not looking too concerned about the rowing style and the fact that the boat appeared to have very little to offer in the steering department.

All four of us could still walk afterwards, so next time - more on the legs!

Mas C/D 2x (Hugh, Philip) 8:31

Phil and Hugh started off down to the start, both pointing in the right direction which was a good omen, replete with flapjack, beetroot juice and all the other necessary ingredients for a winning row and determined to beat John and Bob's time of 9.12. They made a steady start and kept to the bank as planned, only occasionally venturing out to play 'aqua golf' with the marker buoys. Rough water and quite a lot of stroke side rowing around the long bends made the going difficult at times, but we soundly beat our club competition, with an adjusted time of 8.31 only to have victory cruelly snatched from our grasp by Bewl Bridge RC with a time of 8.11....I wonder what they had for breakfast?

W.Nov2x (Keely and Katy) 10:14

After negotiating the twists and turns of the course in reverse on the row to the start, Keely and I parked up to enjoy the long wait, chatting through tactics, wind-chill, parking in trees and crampy legs! When the start finally came it was with a lot of rowing on red to avoid the post mid-stream, then we settled to a much steadier rate than we've perhaps previously employed, which proved a great help in negotiating the choppy waters without losing boat speed or rhythm. Upon catching our nearest crew and overhauling them we reached the biggest bend of the course, along with several other boats, and in avoiding them heard the words every rower loves to hear - the ever-helpful "you're going to hit the bank!" At this we abandoned rowing on stroke side, hauled on green then buried our reds to execute a neat handbrake turn before promptly rowing away from the carnage which enveloped the following crews - phew! Re-establishing ourselves, we hauled steadily for the line, finishing in 10.14 and missing out on second place by just two seconds! Keely did a fab job negotiating a very tricky course and our newfound paced approach to heads racing will I'm sure make a return next winter - now here's to the summer season!!

PS - If there's a man of the match prize for Abingdon Head it must go to Keely for her epic trio of races - straight out of the eight and into our double, then on into the victorious four!

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W Vet C 4+ (Vicky, Jo, Keely, Becca, cox:Rhona) 9:51 **WINNER**

With Smithy having gone down with the Lurgy, we were very grateful to Keely for stepping into the 2 seat, and especially pleased that even though she is young enough to be our daughter, the maths kept us in category.

Having already been down the course in the W Vet C8+, Vicky 'fast hands' Birchall was in the stroke seat again, with Rhona on her third journey down the upper Thames, this time back in the coxes seat after rowing in her WNOV4+, and Bec straight out of the men's 8+, which she had just coxed instead of Smithy.

After a long wait at the start, we spun and headed off back down the course. Rhona gave us loads of encouraging calls and despite the wind and choppy conditions, we were able to keep our rating up around the 30 mark, but more importantly, keep our balance and our rhythm. This made for a row that although hard work, left us feeling that we had got some payback for the effort we put in.

The cheers of the supporters on the bank were, as ever, a great help, and the spectacle of seeing the Jon Wight Vet D4+ crew mowing down some of the other ladies crew made us doubly pleased we had got off from the start before them. As a vet C crew in a vet C/D event, we had a time penalty, but, hey, that didn't stop us winning!

Vet E 2x (Bob, John M) 09:11

Banter very much the order of the day, with (seemingly) hours to spend at the start before racing, little else to do but abuse other competitors. Good fun - but not so good for the pre-race preparation / warm ups etc.

We lined up with our fellow E2x (MK) chasing us and some super fit youngsters ahead, so looked like being an interesting row.

When the start did come along, it all went - initially - very well, with our noble captain both steering a sound course and pulling stroke over the course.

We soon began to catch up the crew in front and were holding off our rivals behind. Once we overtook the crew in front, leaving them free to crash into our rivals, the race seemed assured...

However, buoyed by adrenalin from the crash, the MK recovered to row much faster and we discovered some sand banks and green buoys, which - between these - have almost certainly cost us the immediate race.

Overall, not a bad outing for our 2nd race - and third time together this year - particularly knowing the MK double have been practicing for 4 - 5 years...

Looking forward to much more for the rest of the season!

Vet E 8+ (Bob, John, Simon, Peter D, Martyn, Brian, Hugh, Alan, cox: Becca) 8:01

Basking, in their success of the previous week's tideway experience and boosted by a couple of ringers, the crew were looking forward to their race. The boat was already prepared and ably warmed up by The Ladys, once we'd solved the 'where's Hugh?' question, Becks got us safely down to the start, but with little banter time and we were soon off.

Despite some concerned input from 'the ringers' stroke had to work hard to keep the rating down to 32spm, which was pretty much held throughout the race.

True to the club's motto - this was a first outing with this crew, so - understandably, it was a little scrappy, which wasn't helped by the more usual Thames conditions than the crew experience the previous week.

But it was a gutsy performance, ending up with a tussle with the crew in front towards the finishing line, which we're sure we won...

All in all, a very encouraging performance anticipating great potential for the rest of the season.

Vet E 4+ (John W, Mark Q, Jon H, Brian, cox: Paul) 9:11

Six months after our last competitive row and disruption of the crew's winter training plan, we were looking forward to the weekend. However, Brian fell victim to the lurgy on Saturday - making a valiant effort to raise himself like Lazarus on Sunday to row in both the 8 and the 4. Thus it was we arrived at the start line concerned to ensure we nursed Brian over the line. The starters had obviously heard of our fragile condition and gave us a start position behind several ladies crews, including own own Oundle ladies. This was to hamper us severely later in the race. After much hanging around at the start we were eventually called forward only for our electronic guidance system (the rate meter) to decide we'd been hanging around for so long it turned itself off. So, starting strongly, we surged down the course and started to close down the ladies, but the young crew

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directly in front had also caught the crew in front of them and a tsunami of rough water added to white caps on the course. Despite calls for the crews to move over we had to take the long route on the outside of the bend, clashing blades we gave no quarter and cleared both crews in front. We could now see the Oundle ladies but couldn't quite catch them before the finish. Overall a good row considering everything - our time of 9.11 (unadjusted) not quite good enough for a pot but easily taking the club 4's honours. Next week the crew has two races at Bedford to really see whether the 5% plan is working before the Masters.

Nov 4+ (Charlie D, Jock, Ben J, Josh D; cox Simon) Time 9:46

Most of the guys, comprising the bulk of the J16-18 squad, are still in their first full year of rowing and with the lack of training time over the winter have not had the chance to settle and develop as a crew. Nevertheless, buoyed by the fact that they had already been out in this line up twice before, there were high hopes of a good performance on the day.

A solid warm-up session on the way down the start, some general discussion with the cox of another crew about which direction to go (to get to the start) and fatherly advice dispensed by the cox largely unrelated to the task at hand all helped pass the time.

In fairly challenging conditions the crew tackled the course manfully (!) and finished in a time of 9.46 which while failing to challenge the top of the leader-board was a creditable performance, being only 9 seconds adrift of 4th place.

The guys accepted that it was the best row the crew had had to date (it was the third outing) and that there is plenty more to come hopefully in time for the Ball Cup in a month's time.

J13a 2x (Ben Honeywell, Josh B) 10:36 **WINNERS**

This was a new combination with minimal training time. The boys had a good row and came out on top with a good winning margin. Good job, well done!! A very promising start to their rowing careers and a credit to OTRC.

J14a 4x (Joe, Alfie, Josh, Jordan, cox: Ben Honeywell) 09:28

This was another young crew who did a fantastic job on the day, working together to put in a great time for a relatively inexperienced crew. They worked hard to keep up a consistent rhythm, helped by good steering and calls from the cox. Another performance that bodes well for the future of OTRC. Well done boys!

J15a 2x (Rochelle, Becky) 10:33

Back together again to race the double Becky and Rochelle had a strong start, but then a few steering issues along the course. However they kept their form and regained their usual enthusiasm before the finish, recounting the tale with their usual smiles.

J16a 4x (Emily, Beth, Melissa, Julia) 09:55

A change in crew for the girls for this race following a few weeks of interrupted training. However the girls had a good row in choppy conditions with challenging steering for Julia. They looked on form as they rowed the finishing straight but were up against strong opposition.

Mas D 1x Philip 09:51

Unusually for me, I was on time for boating, even though it was ten past eight. I was told however, by the very nice lady blazer, that I needn't worry myself and that I should come back later when there were a few other people about!

About an hour and a half later, the race finally got under way and I rowed a good line, in the fastest part of the stream. This was where it all went wrong though: the stream was going the wrong way (or was it me?) - on the long straight in the second part of the course everyone seemed to be catching me (and indeed were!).

I finished the race rather disappointed with my performance - I think it confirmed that I'm not very good in the morning! Looking at the results however, and only now realising I was the only MasD.1x, I actually beat the MasA.1x and I beat two of the three IM3.1x, so all in all not a bad effort....and Captain Jack is snapping at my

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heels, so I'd better redouble my efforts so he doesn't get too big for his boots!

WNov 1x Lucy 11:18

Seeing as all my crew mates were busy, I had a lonely day in Abingdon with just my single to look forward to. Rowing up to the start I wasn't filled with confidence as the waves were starting to come over the edge of my boat and there seemed to be more obstacles than there should be in a 2000m stretch of river. However, I decided to think positive and give it my best shot. This didn't happen, or if it did I've overestimated what my 'best shot' looks like. Having been overtaken within about 10 strokes I lost focus and didn't really get into a rhythm until the last 10 strokes when I was, once again, being overtaken. I'm hoping that this was just a bad day and have my sights set on giving Ball Cup my real 'best shot'.



THE END