

OTRC Match Report – Alton Water, March 2016



OTRC competed at Alton Head for the first time on Saturday. It is easy to assume that other clubs have an easy time training, so it is good to visit new clubs and see what factors they have to overcome. Alton Rowing club is on a large lake and shares its facilities with the local sailing club, which says a lot about the weather factors they have to contend with. This was also an opportunity for Oundle to compete on a large lake and get practice in the sort of conditions that might prevail at the major Championships and races held on multilane courses. The lake produced both variable conditions throughout the day and a swell that gave our crews an opportunity to experience lake conditions.

Once again the OTRC spirit came to the fore before any crews had boated as members stepped up to the plate to sub. Louise stepped into the W J17 quad, and Daisy in the W J17 2X as Rochelle had picked up an injury. John subbed in the Vet 2X as Alan was laid low with a virus. Rhona subbed into Alton's junior quad but Man of the Match went to Jack, who had turned up to support but ended up subbing in both the Women's Eight and the club's successful Men's Novice Eight, when Charlie had a navigating nightmare.

The club performed well with the girls WJ 17 quad just missing out winning their event by a couple of seconds. Jo & Vicky won the W Vet 2X competition, the Men's Eight won the Novice event and the boys J16 quad was fastest crew of the day and, therefore, fastest OTRC crew as well. They won a big and shiny tankard which we hope will be housed in a new clubhouse.

Despite the long journey those that competed had a very enjoyable day and Alton was a very hospitable host club.



Boy's J16 Winning Quad

J16 4x-: Conor L, Joe P, Rohan, Will B 3.2K Time 12.11 HEAD OF THE RIVER WINNERS

Firstly well done to Conor whose excellent steering helped us to catch up the eight despite the fact that the course had no clear route. The race started strong gradually slowing though as we pushed on, although the determination to catch the eight gave us a little more energy and soon after we achieved that goal. All in all a brilliant race finishing as both Oundle's and the day's fastest crew and taking home a cup for the club. Our time was 12:11 (18 seconds faster than the men's quad who beat us last time). I look forward to more races soon although first all four of us have to get through exams.

W Mas C 8+ (Vicky, Jennie, JACKIE, Jo, Libby, Zoe, Fiona, Claire, cox: Rhona). 3.2K Time 13:23

Another early start and the question 'why do we do this?' fighting for space with 'what have we forgotten?' in my head. We headed off to pastures new for some lake racing at Alton (Norfolk, not Hampshire, Charlie Dunn.) A sickness shout from our number 6, Becky, meant a late sub, and with all other female possibilities apart from our own cox also racing in the same division, options were limited. We could either drag a heavy bloke down the course in the cox's seat and ask Rhona to row, or stick a set of testicles in the boat somewhere else and hope they pulled

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their weight. It was going to be a pretty hairy call whatever the choice, so in true OTRC fashion I put off the decision myself and rang Rhona and asked her if she wanted to row or cox. She said cox.

Decision made. Becky could recover from her lurgy at home and not share it. As he was driving the trailer and would be there anyway, John would row in the ladies 8+. We would be able to use this to build up for the regatta season. As we had no race oppo the organisers wouldn't have a problem. We'd all get lots of feedback. Positive outcome all round.

So, we turn up and guess what, dear reader? One of the old men was also poorly. Alan McMurdo was not fit to row in the vet E 2x. (And I so nearly had it sorted....)

Aha. Guess who I spotted. The lovely, and fairly girly (?), Jack Stratton.

Hurrah! Two weeks earlier Jack had been a solid helper and supporter of the women's crew at the WEHARR. What better way to thank him than to offer him AN ACTUAL ROW IN OUR BOAT. Perfect.

The silly excuses of 'No kit. No second X chromosome. No thanks' were easily brushed aside, and once we found him a set of leggings that didn't have a pink stripe down the side he was good to go. And John could be Alan. Just what we always wanted!

We boated, rowed up across the massive lake (I bet it's really nice in the summer) with Libby at 6 and Jack at 4, and settled for a little rest near the start. Our nearest crew were the J164x, who sent out a "have any of you got a rigger jigger" SOS.

Well, being the w8+, obviously we had several. But none we were prepared to risk chucking over to them. Luckily, as we had Jack in the boat, he suggested it would be a great wheeze to hang on a branch of a nearby tree and make the boys row over and get it, without letting it drop in the lake. This we did. A brilliant distraction for all of us. Boys are so different, aren't they? (add your own punchline..)

Then we rowed under the bridge, spun, headed off down the course. For most of the way we hit a steady rhythm, and a good rate. The WEHARR practice was so useful for the waves, despite the lack of hail this time, and we hit a proper purple patch in half where it really felt good. A slight dip in the second third where we lost the drive was where we let the J16 boys go past us, but we had a good finish and overall it was a solid performance. Well done ladies.

The J16 boys went past us looking very smooth, but obviously the fabulous trophy they won for the club by being the fastest crew of the day is actually ours, for the all the help we gave them! Well done boys. And of course, special thanks to our super sub, Jack.

Nov8+: Dick, Jack, Ian, Leslie, Peter C, Jason, Antony, Mark F; cox: Paul 3.2K Time 12:34 **WINNERS**

"Where is Charlie Dunn?"

A question frequently asked an hour, 45 minutes, 30 minutes, 15 minutes before our boating time. The more appropriate question, it seems, was: "Does Charlie know where we are?"

Fortuitously, super-sub Jack Stratton, who had already rowed the course in the morning division, stayed around for another go, and we waded into the lake to try our hand at getting into a boat without a dock. Once that was sorted, we set off for this multi-national crew's first outing together since early February. The warmup was stable and offered a good opportunity to get a feel for the intermittently choppy conditions on the lake.

After a brief rest, and some intimidating glances from the much younger and lighter Alton Rowing Club oppo, we set off. The row was smooth and fast, holding a consistent rate of 30 strokes per minute for the duration of the race - possibly our fastest stroke rate for a longer-distance race to date. The crew adjusted well to the occasional change in conditions between the more wind-sheltered areas of the course. The author of this report, having not rowed at Doncaster, considers this race to be our most complete race to date, with steady power and consistency for the duration of the course. Massive credit to our cox, Paul, who steered an excellent course, most notably successfully navigating us through a flotilla of junior sailors whilst trying to return to the boating area. Thanks again to Jack for subbing in late for our esteemed-but-directionally-challenged crew member, who was thankfully located uninjured in Alton, Hampshire.

We weren't the fastest OTRC boat on the day, but we did leave with shiny medals around our necks for the second time in this crew's young rowing career. To the faster crews, congratulations, and we'll see you at Abingdon (hopefully that course has more bridges)!

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Mas E 4x- Bob, Charlie, **Simon**, John 3.2K Time 12.29

Although there was no direct opposition for us in the event, there were a number of challenges we set ourselves, not least in being the fastest club crew on the day. We set off with high expectations, especially after the morning's recce by bow pair (see Mas F report below). The conditions were similar to the morning with the only choppy water near the start. Once again steersman John plotted an excellent course (GPS evidence again; or was it the same data from the morning race?) and we bowled along at a good rate and rhythm. Having overtaken one of the novice eights at the 1km mark, we closed in on both the other masters (C) quad and the OTRC novice 8. Having got to within a canvas of the C quad at about 2km, the pace inexplicably dropped (too much racing, too much beer?) and we fell back, although picking up slightly at the finish. Results showed that our time was exactly the same as the C quad, 3rd= overall; faster than the OTRC 8 but well beaten by the J16 quad. Well done boys!

MasE 4+: **Martyn**, Hugh, Brian, Peter Dunn, cox Becca CP 3.2K Time 12:54

As is the OTRC way we prepared for this event by having no practice with our rearranged line up. Andrew was unavailable due to a jolly to the south of France. Brian kindly agreed to take his place and we set off on the long journey to Suffolk ably chauffeured by Peter, who tried very hard to keep morale up by assuring us it was a beautiful part of the country. On a bright sunny day I'm sure he would be right.

Time to boat and head down to the start. The lack of time together started to show as we paddled down the course.

Some words of encouragement from Becs had us rowing more as a crew, and by the time we arrived at the start it was coming together quite well.

Off we went and settled into our race fairly quickly. It was uneventful until we caught and passed the Alton eight and Becs had to call for eyes in the boat. Obviously we don't pass enough boats.

All in all a decent row considering the conditions and the lack of practice. Would have been nice to have some competition to row against but we performed reasonably well against the other vet E crews.

Big thanks to Becs for coxing, Brian for subbing, Peter for driving and Hugh for being Hugh.

MasF 2x: John M, Simon 3.2K Time 13:16

6.17am, just left home; ping, a text from Alan - dreadful lurgy-high temperature-silly to attempt a row. So during the 2 hour drive to Alton I'm contemplating bacon sandwiches, hot coffee, warm clubhouse while the rest of the competitors brave the cold winds and choppy water. Oh the wishful thinking! On arrival and confession of my unfortunate and enforced withdrawal, a wizard wheeze is dreamed up to deprive your correspondent of aforementioned comforts. So it came to pass that John agreed to steer, and we launched ourselves off the beach. Conditions were not as bad as feared and we made it to the start without incident, with the chance to practice a couple of starts in the choppiest water. The bridge at the start gave us a moment of anxiety (which arch to go through?) but all became clear as we set off. Rating a steady 29-30spm we kept a good rhythm; John steered the racing line (& we have the GPS data to prove it) and all was going well until we were overtaken by a (young) mixed double crew from Deben. Nevertheless we finished strongly and were satisfied with the row. Not bad for a first outing!

WmasD2x : Jo and **Vicky** 3.2K Time 14:14 **WINNERS**

Having a lunch break between our 2 rows was very civilised. Much tea drinking and flapjack eating (We needed to sample the new recipe) took place in preparation for our second race. Having rowed the course in the W8+ and chatted to a few bow steers people from the morning race I was more worried about the steering than my legs lasting the distance. I always aim to take the "racing line" but that was not too clear on a large lake with bends, and with the pre-race briefing echoing in my head - don't go too near the shore, don't hug the bank, mind the buoys, don't aim for the church spire (the most prominent land mark I could see) I felt somewhat anxious.

We boated, taking a while to adjust not having rowed the Weldon Craft for many months, and set off on our wobbly way to the start. An increase in wind and the passing safety launches made us quite nervous and tippy on our warm up. We had a steady start following our oppo Angela and Claire's steering line for the first 500m or so (thank you Claire!) Jo set a good rhythm and we had a solid row, less tippy than the row up and feeling the payback for our efforts in line with our mantra "long and strong". We made the finish without too much wayward steering however felt we could have made more of the last 500m. A discussion about increasing the rating versus keeping it steady and strong to be had!

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W Mas E 2x: Angela, Claire 3.2K Time 15:46

POSITIVES:

- We had a good time
- Weather conditions were excellent (apparently!?! Shame we didn't take the bikinis)
- We rose to the challenge of a new distance and new type of water
- We didn't lose (no opposition)
- Power nap on the way home for Angela as Claire continued her duties and steered us home in the Izod Audi.

NEGATIVES:

- We didn't win (no opposition)
- We were slow (but not the slowest)
- It was a long way
- We were exhausted
- We nearly capsized during the unusual boating process and Angela got hit on the head with an oar (It really wasn't your fault Daisy and the head is probably the best place to hit me!)

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Rowing 3.2k on an ergo is nothing like rowing 3.2 km on a choppy, windy reservoir. We are mustard on an ergo
- Must get fitter and improve technique
- A day out with OTRC is always a good one

WJ17 4x: Sophie, Becky, Daisy, Louise 2.2K Time 07:49

With Rochelle off with a bad knee, Louise stepped in as a sub. We had a quick row up, working on timing and tapping down quickly. We were the first crew down in division 4 but we started too near to the start without realising so we crossed the start not yet at firm pressure which was quite annoying but we quickly picked up the pace. Being the first crew, I had no one to follow down so I chose the worst possible way down; straight down the middle where it was most windy. Well done me!

We were over taken on the inside near the end which resulted in us almost crashing into a yellow buoy but that helped us to push even harder at the end. They then stopped at the finish which meant we had to stop to prevent crashing into them yet I was the one to get shouted at for stopping. But we now have a new personal best time but I recon we can still do better. Thanks to Louise for subbing and to everyone that helped with our boat.

WJ17 2x: Daisy, Becky, 2.2K time 08:10

Me and Becky were in Division 1 doing the short course of 2200meters. We thought it was a really fast row and at good amount of power as well. Unfortunately, at the start we had to wait for a long time due to timing faults at the finish, but we didn't let that get us down. During the race we were side by side with another double, thinking they were our opposition, but at the end finding out our opposition didn't row. However we thought it was a great race! And well done to the other crews, you all did really well!!

WMasD 4x-: Anita, Angela, Martine, Becca 2.2K time 08:24

After a brief detour around the less salubrious parts of Ipswich Docks on a chilly, grey-skied morning, arrival brought an extraordinary view of acres of beautiful but choppy water - not at all what we're used to.

Boating at the original start time, we rowed up & spent a while trying to relate the water we were on to the map from the briefing, interrupted by cries of "Where IS the start?"

We got ready, only to be told that both the timing system and launch had failed so we all got fully dressed again and tried not to think about needing the loo.

The actual race felt good - with John's advice about tapping down ringing in our ears and reminded by Martine we made good progress. No major disasters and a good course steered by Becs brought us in for our fastest time ever as a crew; faster than at Star over 2k.

Public apologies to Angela for driving off with her Rate Meter and thanks to Jo for lending her wellies.

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Stable Coxed Quad Alton Rowing Club + Last minute sub Rhona 2.2K Time 10:04

After lunch, Alton rowing club were wanting a female sub for their beginner girls quad, so I stepped up. The rowing experience between the 3 teenage girls added up to about 14 months totals and they were desperate to row in the event.

So we gathered at the boat and I had changed down to my rowing kit. Then it transpired that the last minute Cox had never coxed before and was feeling a bit pressured so she asked if I could then Cox and she would row at bow as she had last rowed 20 years ago. So I rushed back to the car, via Jennie, who had our car key, to put all my coxing layers back on.

Then a few minutes later the bow seat rower realised it was a sculling boat and she had only done sweep oar rowing 20 years ago, so we decided it would be better if I did row and she would Cox, so again I rushed off to the car, via Jennie (car key, please keep up)

to change to rowing kit again. I couldn't help thinking I'd be too exhausted to row soon.

Anyway at last we were in the boat, having pushed it down to the water on a trolley. The invention of the wheel cannot be understated with a heavy boat, please note!

We had a steady row up to the start of the short course where the Oundle J17 girls were somewhat surprised to see me in the bow seat, clearly not their oppo.

Finally we were off and the rate was a little high, but that's 12 year olds for you. We were chased all the way down by a Peterborough U3A Stable 4+ with 3 men and a lady and only just held them off with a steering issue. They should have known better.

So a pretty good race, especially as one of the crew had only been rowing for a month and they will do really well when not against old men!

PS Jennie thanks for your patience

