



## Bedford Sprint - 13th July 2014

During the summer months and the holiday season it gets increasingly difficult for the squads to have enough members to put together crews for the competitions. This year is no exception, but we managed to get some crews together to compete at Bedford Sprint Regatta for the first time. We were joined by our L2Race group in the third of their race series, racing under another format.

Unfortunately a number of crew didn't get a race, and for those that did, many were moved into different categories or handicapped events. The morning got off to a slow start as one or two members struggled to get to Bedford at the allotted time and with the new primary format there were some problems allocating the equipment to L2Race competitors. Once on the water our L2Racers acquitted themselves admirably and the first part of the day had our only successful crews.

Later in the afternoon, the blushes of the "racing section" of the club were saved by the J14 quad who won in a closely contested race, so close in fact that they didn't know if they had won or not - well done J14s! In the penultimate race of the day Jack continued with his winning ways this time in IM3 2X racing with his Dad in an Oundle/St Ives composite crew, although we may claim it as an Oundle win.

### **Vet D 2- "B crew" (Philip, John M)**

These two upstarts had decided to enter the pair event and in so doing challenge the supremacy of our longstanding "A crew" pair. Because of the draw, the "B" had to beat a Peterborough crew to join our "A" in an eagerly awaited OTRC clash. Clash seemed to be the watch word of the day for the "B" - Captain Crash was once again in charge of steering.

The "B" crew are a new combination and being of Vet D vintage had poor memories, so when sorting out the crew order both members had forgotten Captain Crash's record. In the few training sessions prior to the event there were no signs of the problems that were to befall poor Philip in the Stroke seat. Philip had raced half an hour earlier but had been delayed getting back to the jetty, so the "B" boys were fortunate to make it to the start in time for their race i.e. no time for any practice or reducing their tension. (Thanks to the Chairman for assisting with the boating).

Off the start they were unsurprisingly tense and were quickly down on the Peterborough crew but Philip had raced earlier and quickly settled into a more relaxed rhythm so the OTRC boys started to make a fight of it. Unfortunately for Philip, Captain Crash was well up for the fight and was determined to get “eyeball to eyeball” with the Peterborough crew. In this heightened state of fighting spirit Captain Crash veered into Peterborough’s lane with the inevitable consequences. Philip’s blade made contact with the Peterborough boat and our boys had to stop rowing. But our fighting heroes were not finished yet, they started back racing accompanied by some enthusiastic cheering from the bank side umpires. Captain Crash, now with the “red mist” affecting his performance, weaved wildly around the course hitting all of the remaining marker buoys to the finish. Peterborough crossed the line first but the continuing vocal support from one of the umpires suggested that whatever the outcome the OTRC “B” crew would not be welcome back in the competition. The rest of the club were denied the fun of watching the OTRC “A” vs “B” race - maybe something to look forward to at a future competition?

#### **Vet D 2- “A” Crew (Jon Heaney & Mark Quigley)**

The D2- event had the potential for some major club bragging rites as there were only 3 entries, P'boro, and 2 OTRC crews, the new guys, Phil and John and the tried and tested pair of Quiggers and me. Fortunately for us we got the good side of the draw and had the bye to the final, which meant we only had to worry about Phil and John beating P'boro who we knew to be faster than us.

Phil and John were all over, literally, P'boro after the start, but being that close meant they had to start again and P'boro got away.

So it would be P'boro in the final for us. We knew it would be a big ask for us to beat them, as they have always been faster each time we have meet them. This time was to be no different, we had a good start and held them for the first 250m, but then they pulled away to a 2 length lead. So we came in second and there are no prizes for second place, but the main thing was we didn't lose to the new guys on the block! Maybe next time who knows? I think the writing is on the wall.

#### **J15 2x Rochelle Cox and Becky Smith (Jnr)**

We were well prepared before-hand and we had a good plan for the race, we were at the start line with the intentions of winning the race and getting into the second heats and hopefully into the final, however they then said attention and go, and we unfortunately were behind from the

start, so it was difficult to catch up. We were both very disappointed with the outcome, so we went and cheered ourselves up with a nice meal from Nandos.

### **IM3+ Hugh, Tim, Charllie B, Richard Cox: Jack Stratton**

Supersub Hugh joined us for the earliest of OTRC's races. A decent start for our scratch crew but our oppo, a crew from Robinson College, Cambridge, proved to be too good! early bath's all round but a nice little regatta race!

### **IM3 1x Jack Stratton**

After 3 hours of waiting around I was finally able to boat, only to find my bungee still holding my seat still! Emma quickly took it off and sent me on my way. Quick warm-up followed by 10 minutes of waiting got me guessing what my oppo would be and I guessed right with him being a honey monster, and as someone so kindly pointed out pre-race his arms were twice the size of mine! So we raced and he was the better sculler (and rower coincidentally as he had no less than 6 rowing points!) winning comfortably.

### **IM3 2x (Philip & Hugh)**

Due to the vagaries of the organisers (more of them later...) these two old chaps, usually racing in Vet D, were to pit themselves against a crew whose average age was not much more than half, yes half, our brave Normandy Veterans' average.

So, fresh from re-staging the aforementioned amphibious landings at their last outing for the club in St Ives (thanks incidentally to Dick for the superb photographic evidence of that occasion which will now, as a result, never be forgotten!), Hugh & Philip were keen to make amends. Indeed their oppo comprised half of the St Ives crew that beat them on that occasion - the other half bearing a remarkable resemblance to our very own Jack Stratton.....surely not? With no reed beds to attract them, Philip lined the craft up at the start on the Embankment station, on the outside of the long sweeping bend, with the intention of straightening the course as much as possible so as not to overstretch his limited capacity for steering. (You see, he really does think about these things – it's not all by accident!)

Off they went and although, apparently, gaining a margin at the start, our brave boys' efforts came to nothing more than a soaking wet second, although if slalom had been the event, they'd have finished with a clean record!

Ho-hum.

And now back to the Bedford Sprint organisers, well, one official in particular.....you all know the stories by now, so I'd like to suggest that the particular official (let's keep it clean and call him the

“GR-umpire”) should be awarded the blazer of the millennium....the problem is I'd be killed by the rush of seconders!

**IM3 2x (composite crew) Jack Stratton, Mark Stratton**

We beat Hugh and Phil! We beat Phil and Hugh! We beat Hugh and Phil! We beat Phil and Hugh! We beat Hugh and Phil! We beat Hugh and Phil! We beat Hugh and Phil! We beat Phil and Hugh! We beat Hugh and Phil! We beat Hugh and Phil! The semi was closer than the final though! Btw we won the final and won a 'salver' a pathetic excuse for a prize at a rowing event! Can't even drink out of them!

**J14 2x Will Berridge, Jordan Bone.**

These guys have been quietly improving week by week as a crew and demonstrate the keenness evident throughout the J14 boys squad. They were pitched against a Star Club crew with home water advantage, and although given the more advantageous clubhouse station were slower out of the blocks than the competition. Nevertheless, cheered on by their own supporters club they stuck to the task and according to Will the finish hooter sounded twice in quick succession indicating a very close race (officially 2 lengths but it must have been a short boat!). Great effort guys!

**J14 4x+ Jordan Bone, Alfie Loseby, Rohan Anand, Joe Pendred; Cox: Becky Smith (the younger) WINNERS.**

The majority of this crew are still only in their first year of racing and already have wins under their belts so know the smell of success. In a straight final, and expertly guided by Becky in her first competitive race as a cox, they wore down the opposition from Falcon to win an exciting race by (officially) a canvas. Well Done!

**Vet E 4+ John W, Brian, Mark Q, Jon H, cox: Hugh Mc**

The crew welcomed back our stroke John 'Scolari' Whight from his ruddy-cheeked adventures in South America and lined up against a Bedford D crew allowing us a 4 sec stagger in this first heat. A good powerful start allowed us to maintain and increase our lead to about 2 lengths, from which despite our lack of recent outings we were able to maintain a reasonable rhythm and comfortably control and win the race. A pleasing start marred only by our dangerous return to the start by some officious marshalling. Thanks to Hugh for coxing.

Scarred and scared by the previous experience Hugh handed over the coxing duties to the able Becs and we lined up in the Final in the last race of the day against our nemesis known as Star Hunt. Knowing we had to 'pull something out of the bag' for this one we had a less controlled start albeit good enough to stay with Star until half way into the course where they took a small lead. Unfortunately our response was inadequate and our style and function was replaced by poor timing and shortening of stroke. However we did give Hunt a run for his money and we came away from this event with a positive attitude reflecting on our areas for improvement.

### **Vet E Quad Simon, Brian, Alan, John M**

Prepared and mustered by our erstwhile coach and steersman who promised us he had learnt from his previous race this young and fresh-faced crew ( at least compared to their opponents ) lined up in the Final against a Hornets crew- VET G age 65 + !!! -zimmer frames visible on the embankment- and waited for the start.....and waited for the start, for it was a full 10 secs after the stagger allowed that we were given the all clear to commence our race. Cheered on by some fantastic Oundle support and despite our extended rest we made a bit of a poor and splashy start. Trying to remember the details of our previous technical outings we did manage to recover some-what but never caught even a glimpse of these Cacoon extras to the finish. Definitely a work in progress!

### **WIM3 2x Jo and Vicky**

Not our finest hour! - the start was not bad, but steering was an issue, hitting every buoy along the course. The course looks very different the wrong way round! It was also a bit longer than we thought, which might be why we stopped before the end of the race, thinking the hooter we heard was for the end of our race....sadly not!

#### ***Excuses:***

- *We arrived to find boat kindly rigged but our oars missing from the trailer, so had to play a game of 'hunt the oars' before boating!*
- *Checked boat but failed to spot missing heel restraint, which was noticed by kindly Marshall. Boating assistant ran to get spare (thanks) but then put our oars in the wrong way round (thanks!).*
- *A collision with a feisty quad on wrong side of river on the way to the start. Just what we needed to calm our nerves!*
- *Arrived at the start to find a pair of schoolgirls who gave us one of those looks only a teenager can do so well. (Wished we had not had our VetC entry rejected)...*

In truth: we didn't find that elusive rhythm and rowed the whole race on our shoulders, giving every buoy a friendly tap on the way past, so plenty to work on.

Oh, and all topped off by a lively discussion with the very officious Umpire on the row back!

### **Primary Race – W1x (Learn to Race)1X Kate Pathak**

The format of frequent races and adapted recharge for two lanes with a loser v winner race, worked well for the explore contingent. It meant we got time on the water experiencing the heat of the moment racing. It was a well organised and friendly event and my main opposition was Milton Keynes who all looked rather intimidatingly fit.

I narrowly lost the first race by a canvas, then won the next two heats and finally lost the final amid much cheering and encouragement from the bank.

I was disconcerted to get quads cramp in the quad race before my final and have learnt how long and dehydrating a day on the water can be, however it was enormous fun and a great introduction to racing in single sculls.

### **Primary Race 1x (Learn to Race)— Jason Ellis**

For the third event in the “Splash and Dash” series, Bedford offered the option of a single in addition to the typical coxed quad. I took the plunge (not literally, surprisingly) and gave it a go. In this spirit, the remainder of my match report shall be in (poorly written) haiku form:

#### **Race 1: Oundle vs. Milton Keynes (win, opposition couldn't find a boat, 4:59)**

Stroke gate not quite right  
But, with opposition scratch,  
Blazer-worthy win.

#### **Race 2: Oundle vs Bedford (Loss, 4 lengths, 3:14)**

Now, with gates correct,  
Swans and “crabs” do compromise,  
Vengeance shall be mine!  
Thanks as always for the support; looking forward to the next opportunity to race!

### **W VetC 4x Keely W, Becky Smith (Snr), Becs CP, Claire I**

As Auntie Angela had only just returned from her hols and was suffering from jet-lag, I was asked to sub in the Qua. Although rather nervous – I'm still trying to get to grips with this sculling lark after many years as a sweep oar rower – I was keen to have a go. We had a sneaky practice outing on the Saturday which went surprisingly well, so we feeling fairly confident.

I arrived at OTRC at 12:45, closely followed by Becs and Keely. After a couple of minutes we were wondering where Claire was. Keely decided to ring and check. "Hi, Claire, are you coming to the club today or did you think I was picking you up?" she asked diplomatically. "I thought we were meeting at 1:30" was the reply – first Blazer of the day?!

A quick dash to Polebrook to collect our errant crew member and we were on our way to Bedford.

Boat rigged, course discussed, oars collected and we were ready to go, although a little late as we had to wait for 2 sets of oars from the men's double. I was wondering how we could share 4 oars between the quad – perhaps a return to sweep oaring after all.

We found our opponents and made it to the start. Attention ... Go, and we were off. A rather splashy start but then we settled into a steady rhythm. Unfortunately our opponents had the lead from the start and continued to pull away. We had a good finish and came away feeling that we hadn't had the perfect row but had been beaten by a stronger crew. Back at the landing stage this was confirmed by Alan who told us, "When I saw them boat and go straight to square blading, I thought, Oh dear."

Oh dear, indeed .... but thanks, girls, for having me.