



Splash and Dash - 10th May 2014

On 10th May 2014, 2 OTRC Crews attended the Splash and Dash Event at Broxbourne.

A Splash and Dash event is an introduction to Racing in a very informal, friendly atmosphere. Boats are borrowed from the hosting club and the event has rolling starts, rather than stake-boats starts. The round-robin competition gives the newcomers-to-racing lots of practice and a chance to 'row through the nerves'! And then there's beer and a BBQ to finish! If only all head races were like this one.

Here are two reports from the crews (authors in red). It sounded like a great day. Congratulations to the participants. Does anyone else fancy taking up racing?

Crew O1: Martine, Kate E, Fiona, Rhona.

We had a wonderful welcome from Broxbourne and met up with Dick's crew O2 for tea and cake. Broxbourne, Lea, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Oundle crews raced over 300m approx. side by side in stable 4+ and 4x+ Boats. Thanks to Martine for stepping in and stroking our boat so ably.

The first 3 races we lost each time but we were up against mixed crews, some even had 3 men in them. Finally we were ready for the last race of the day, the sun had set and we were off. Once again we saw our opposition disappear out of our view but we kept going, the cox saying we were coming back and suddenly we were alongside and we managed to keep our heads and go past them for victory, a great finish to the day. The supporters making lots of noise on the bank really helped, thanks to you all, 2-legged and 4-legged.

Then we all had a super BBQ in the clubhouse with beers going down very easily indeed.

No blazer to award as we were so well looked after, boats ready to step in and out of and everything was very relaxed as promised. The marshals and coxes were fantastic as they carried on tirelessly for close to 3 hours with gentle encouragement and interest with no break, whereas we were able to keep going into the clubhouse between our events to warm up!



This must be after their win, judging by the big, cheesy grins!

Crew O2 - OTRC 'Boys' 4x+ (Dick, Tim, Steve, Jason)

Perhaps it was just coincidence that this week saw both the inaugural Women's Cycle Tour of Britain across eastern England and the inaugural eastern counties "Splash & Dash" event at Broxbourne, but the population of Broxbourne were mightily relieved that the OTRC 'Boys' crew were sporting considerably less lycra than the elite cyclists had in Oundle earlier in the week.

This was the first taste of any kind of competitive rowing for the whole crew (Steve, Jason, Tim, and Dick at Stroke) who had until recently only taken part in recreational rowing on Sundays. After only a couple of 'Learn to Race' sessions with John, which were our first experience of working together as a crew, we set off to Broxbourne not knowing quite what to expect or how well prepared the opposition were going to be.

The event was a 400m (almost) straight dash with a 'rolling start' so that no one had to worry about standing starts in the very blustery conditions. The finishing line was outside the clubhouse, where spectators and crews gathered to shout support and shelter from the wind.

Race 1 - Using Broxbourne's boats and a Broxbourne cox, it didn't bode well that our first race was against a local Broxbourne (mixed) crew! However, when they broke their boat before

leaving the jetty, we were able to get a 'warm up' row of the course in while they fixed it, which probably helped dissipate a few nerves and get used to the boat.

After Broxbourne fixed their boat and we'd both made our way back to the start, there was some slight confusion about exactly how the rolling start would work, but with loud instructions from our local cox we were quickly on our way down the course at a good steady pace. Spectators at the finish line said our cox took a fairly erratic line, which might account for stroke clashing oars with the Broxbourne's no 2. But as we continued pull out in front disaster almost struck as Tim caught a crab and lost an oar and we had to stop and re-start with the opposite regaining ground; some racing purists might say that we were blocking the river and Broxbourne couldn't get past, but as we reached the finishing line with half a length of clear water between us, all thoughts of an umpire's enquiry were lost in the euphoria of winning the first race we'd ever taken part in!

Race 2 - Our second race was against an all-ladies crew from Milton Keynes, so the umpire decided to give them half a length's head start. But it soon became clear what we lacked in technique was more than compensated for by power and we came in two lengths ahead.

Race 3 - Having won our first two races, the umpire decided to give the mixed crew from Bedford a full length's head start again, which was a bit of a worry, since all the Bedford crews had looked pretty strong in their previous heats. They'd even got matching T-shirts for goodness sake!

And we were not wrong to be concerned. While we did pull level in the first half, Bedford were coming back strongly in the second half and it was a very close race all the way to the line. In the end Bedford bow lost an oar in the last few yards and we came in ahead by a nose. A close shave, but at least the umpire was pleased that he'd given the crowd a race to shout about!

Race 4 - The draw for the next race meant that we didn't even get out of the boat after the previous one for a bout against another MK mixed crew. Umpire's advice was to take it easy, and again he started us a length behind. But by this point, Jason was finding enough spare breath from somewhere to shout 'encouragement' from seat two, and whilst our technique wasn't pretty, brute force and ignorance took us over the line a length ahead.

Race 5 - The final race of the evening was against another mixed Broxbourne crew, and I suspect everyone was getting tired – it was after all 3½hrs since we'd first boated, and it was

getting dark! But whilst the umpire again gave the local crew a length or so head start, we were determined to come away with a clean sweep and did so. Five wins out of five!

In summary, an excellent outing for a complete novice crew, and I hope, the small band of OTRC supporters. It was very well organised by the Broxbourne team, with great camaraderie between all the participants, and beer and BBQ to finish.