

OTRC "Match Report" - Milton Keynes, September 2016



Milton Keynes Regatta has been on OTRC's calendar for a number of years and with its relaxed atmosphere has been a favourite for several of our members. For the first time this year the regatta has become a full blown BR event, rather than an invitation event as in the past, which requires BR umpires and officials i.e. the Blazers to be in attendance. It turned out to be a more difficult event for us this year for a number of reasons.

Despite the first emails about the event being sent more than six weeks in advance, the club organiser was still having to emailing members to confirm their availability and find subs for those had dropped out during the last week; after entries had closed. The day before the event our Women's Vet B Four lost their opposition and were informed that the event had been scratched, only for it to be re-instated the following morning. Newly laid plans, like a lie in, had to be cancelled and the girls hot-foot it to Milton Keynes. On the day, for a number of reasons, we had to find five subs for our crews; so a heartfelt thanks to all those club members who volunteered to take on these roles, giving not only OTRC members a race but also their opposition.

The gusty wind combined with the wash from the umpires' boats made the lake choppy and conditions difficult throughout the day, as well as the weather being a bit chilly for the spectators.

Racing was suspended during the middle of the day when a rower from another club was taken seriously ill, requiring first aid, ambulance and air ambulance attendance before going to hospital. There followed a discussion amongst the organisers and then individual clubs to see if competitors felt it appropriate to continue with the event. OTRC's members and supporters showed great respect and dignity in dealing with such a sensitive situation. This was not a "black and white" decision but after consultation with all of the participating clubs, the organisers felt it appropriate to continue with the afternoon racing.

There were some sterling performances on the water: Richard and Lel provided the most exciting race of the day in winning their first round, likewise Daisy and Emily kept the crowd on its feet with a winning close finish. The Women's Vet B Four all made it to the course on time, without a lie in, and won their final in a close finish. The boys' quad once again provided OTRC with a win, demonstrating their application can produce crews that are more than the sum of their parts, whatever combination is available. Late in the day the old men's quad won a close race showing that age is no barrier to exciting finishes. Off the water Ron was "Man of the Match" putting in a huge shift rigging and de-rigging boats throughout the day and again back home at OTRC. Thanks must also go to the club members and supporters who helped crews boat, on and off the water, carry shoes and oars. Whilst the event was understandably a little subdued following the medical attention for the casualty from Loughborough, the OTRC spirit was clearly in evidence throughout the day.

John M

J18 2X Alfie, Joe

No report from Alfie – probably still recovering from his very early start (08:15 race) and his coxing duties.

Mas D/E 4+ Martyn, Andrew, Hugh, Peter

8.30 am racing is an early start and I sense we were not as awake and 'in the zone' as we might have been. The start was good and our rhythm was ok but we lacked power. The opposition got away from us but by the time we woke up and started closing them down it was too late. It all seemed to be over incredibly quickly and disappointingly. A big thank you to Emily though who kindly got up very early to cox us old chaps and did a great job, it was hard to believe it was the first time she had done it. Sorry we didn't respond better to her instructions to deliver the power!

Vet D/E Pair: Philip and John M

In the first round OTRC were drawn against a younger crew from Bedford, which meant OTRC had a 3sec head start. Philip is the club's most successful single sculler and a very experienced racer in doubles as well. John if nothing else talks a good race. So with choppy conditions, a gusty wind, a 3 sec start and all this experience you might have expected a composed start. Not a bit of it; the "red mist" descended and they set off at a cracking 36 stokes per minute, massively higher than anything they had managed in training. Despite such a frantic start they held off their younger opponents and even a huge boat stopping crab at about half way down the course didn't bring them to



their senses, as they went straight back to rowing at 35 spm. They crossed the line more than the 3 sec they had from the handicap; a triumph of guts over technique.

There followed much talk of "long and strong" before the final, which was against an experienced and very useful Milton Keynes pair, of the same vintage. Once again all the advice and good intentions went out of the window off the start. Although Philip tried to control the rating their progress was more akin to a drunk on an ice rink, than the controlled passage of an elite pair to which they aspired. The Milton Keynes crew, having got away off the start, couldn't let up as although the OTRC crew lacked technique they lacked for nothing in the guts department; but this wasn't, in the end, enough to beat the MK crew.

W Mas D 4X- Angela, Fiona, Rhona, Anita

Was this an old season quad with subs or a new season quad with different subs? We had lost the plot on that one. We'd rowed once before together but not in this order. So all fairly normal there, then! The water felt surprisingly choppy but the warm up and the couple of practice racing starts went well. We had a good, clean start but the Milton Keynes crew was ahead of us from the first stroke. Almost immediately the umpire was shouting at Milton Keynes to get back into their lane, which must have been more than a little un-nerving for Rhona, steering her first race in the quad. Then he was shouting at us to do the same thing, so a bit of firm on bowside was required. Fussy umpires! After we straightened up, the row was clean and fairly rhythmical – just need more practice at legs-down at a high rating. Room for improvement but enjoyable.

Mas E/F/G 1X Philip

With a total of five entries in this event, there needed to be one heat to provide two semi-finals and unfortunately for me I was one of those who had to row the heat. This meant three rows to win a medal....

Far be it from me to deny the value of my £9 race fee, I did think this was a tall order when the remaining field would only need two rows for the same medal.....perhaps I should have asked for a discount....?

Anyway, after a 10 second handicapped start in my first race, I managed to qualify for the semi-final and in that, I came in a close second to my arch rival from MK (well, it wasn't that close, but it sounds better if I say so).

Although I was willing my nemesis on to win the final since I could at least then say I lost to the winner, it was, unfortunately, the sculler from the club called Nemesis who won: I don't think I'd have stood a chance – three races or two!

Ho hum.

Perhaps I'll take up competitive punting instead.....

MxNov 2X Lel, Richard

We have had a good year in our double, we have won a couple of pots and the rowing has been superb so we were feeling good about our prospects for this race. Unusually for the mixed novice category there were a reasonable number of entries meaning there would be a heat, and semi and a final. So having rigged the boat, (we did attempt to change the shoes too as it is seemingly pure will power holding the old ones together, but sadly the new pairs didn't fit the footplates, non-standardised equipment in rowing, imagine that!) we made our way to the jetty, boated and made our way across the lake. It was a very windy day with a reasonable swell on the water, not ideal but at least the wind was with us. At this point we attempted our usual warm up of some square blade rowing, (a lot of people call this showing off, I would say just a good technical warm up....but it does look damn good too) we quickly abandoned this though as trying to square blade at 90 degrees to the wind with waves hitting the boat is somewhat tricky it turns out. Having got to the marshalling area we waited for our opposition to arrive, there were 3 crews racing in our category at the same time, we were against Broxbourne, a very young crew who told us that they had only raced together twice.

We were called to the start, lined up and settled, the start was called and we were off. It was a tough start, the wind and waves were buffeting us around and the water was feeling decidedly lumpy. The other crew had fared better off their start and had pulled ahead slightly, undeterred we settled into our rhythm and were making good progress. Around half way down I saw the other crew falter in the waves and we drew level, then as the end of the jetty came into sight we started to wind. It was neck and neck, stroke for stroke as we came towards the line, as we crossed, the bleeps were almost simultaneous, neither crew knew who had won and we had to wait for the announcer to confirm

OTRC "Match Report" - Milton Keynes, September 2016



it was us. The verdict was by a bow ball, a good race which kept the crowds entertained.

So on to the semi-final, this time we were up against Cambridge 99. This crew was made up of and extremely tall pairing (personally I think there should be a height restriction or at least a height category for example Mx Nov 2x under 6ft) and having seen their first race I knew they were quick. The wind had dropped a little now and the water had flattened out so much more favourable conditions for the race. We lined up again, and go was called. From the first stroke the height advantage showed and they were pulling away with every stroke, we felt it was a much better row than the first round but did not progress any further. All in all an enjoyable day and a good finish to the regatta season, looking forward to the Heads

Mx IM2 8+ Ian, Charlie, Fiona, Claire, Ron, **Andrew**, Angela, Rhona, cox: Alfie

I love this crew. Our one training outing was a lot of fun and this race was spirited. Alfie was coxing for the first time and showed incredible confidence managing the boat during the warm up, start and during the race. Despite spectator comment it felt like a good start and we settled into a good rhythm, the boat was really moving. Naturally my head was completely in the boat so I was unaware that we were neck and neck the whole way down the course and just ahead in the closing stages but a spurt from Northampton in the final metres just took them past us on the finish line and they beat us by a bow ball ! Frustrating result, but thank you to all my crew mates and I would be up for doing that again if you are.

W J18 2X Chloe, **Daisy**

Our race was a scratch crew. I subbed and was racing against my own team mates! We started off with a great warm up but then emptied half of Caldecotte lake into our boat on our first stroke. It tipped us sideways and I was wondering where my spare set of clothes were. This gave us a bit of adrenaline before our race! By some miracle, we were able to keep afloat and bailed out. Although our balance was interesting at times, our start was pretty strong and things were looking up. Unfortunately, the other Oundlers were a strong and experienced crew and rowed beautifully. We enjoyed our row, learnt from the experience and will beat them next time.

W Mas B/C 4+ Smithy, Libby, Keely, **Zoe**, cox: Daisy **WINNERS**

Summary - We won but it weren't pretty.

Elaborated version - Our opposition pulled out last night, so we all had a couple of gins, easy in the knowledge that we could all have a lie in.

THEN - The early birds amongst us went into a whatsapp overdrive as miraculously MK had put a crew together to give us a race.

Some of us were still in bed an hour before our 'it's back on' leave the club time!

At MK Daisy got us organised and on the water in good time. Our start was as rehearsed, we were in front of the opp, we got scrappy as we tried to stay there with the final 10 strokes starting to improve as we ran out of puff. A first row and first win for our boat. We hope that next time will be slightly prettier!

W Mas D/E 2X Jo, **Vicky**

The weather had taken as autumnal turn (unusual for MK). I optimistically arrived in shorts, but soon added a couple of layers. It looked choppy out on the lake too.

Our opposition, although older, we discovered before we boated had won a gold medal at the World Masters Championships last year in a pair. However this was a sculling race, so maybe they had no sculling experience? We boated and went through our warm up as planned. The MK crew were given a 4 second head start. More optimism required! Our start was good and powerful and we made up some of the 4 second deficit, but we didn't really ever get into that all important rhythm - Bow being a bit keen to up the rating. Choppy water in the middle section challenged both crews however we stayed behind for the rest of the race. Back to the drawing board - more practice required.

Mxd Mas C/D 4-: Simon, **John M**, Keely, Zoe, cox: Rhona

Over the years OTRC have put out several scratch crews, including mixed boats, and it is a credit to the technical application of club members that they have always managed to have a decent row. In fact the club motto is "not bad for a first outing". So it was at the turn of this four, as a scratch unit, to take on a well drilled crew from Broxbourne.

OTRC "Match Report" - Milton Keynes, September 2016



After a short chat to focus the minds OTRC boated in some fairly choppy conditions, which didn't faze them at all. On Rhona's call to paddle off there were a few squeaks from the crew as they nearly managed the extraordinarily difficult feat of capsizing a four. They composed themselves and set off again with nearly the same result. How could such a crew of experienced rowers make such hash of it? They persevered with their warm up pitching and yawing, crashing and banging. In determined mood they tried a couple of 10 stroke racing starts, in which they managed air shots, boat stoppers, and splashing but little forward motion. They were now at the marshalling point for the start, and at this point in proceedings there is an opportunity for a bit of banter with the opposition and within the crew. This four were silent, determined and bit grim faced, contemplating humiliation.

The Broxbourne crew looked considerably younger than the OTRC four but were in fact older meaning they had a 4 sec head start, things were not looking good. A quiet and determined OTRC crew lined up on the start and waited the long 4 sec after Broxbourne had set off down the course. On the "go" 4 sets of legs hammered down on the stretchers and the boat surged off the stake boats - balanced!!!! Given the row up to the start you might have expected some hesitancy from the crew but they were fully committed to each other and there would be no half measures. They were straight onto the next strokes, the rating rising, the boat speed picking up, no scrapping blades across the water, no pitching and yawing just the sound of water rushing under the hull. In the space of a few short seconds the crew had gone from contemplating humiliation to fighting for the win. In a Hollywood B movie the perfect rowing would have continued for the duration of the race, but this is the real world and although the OTRC crew was fully committed the lack of practice together was showing. Rhona kept up the technical calls and at 1/4 distance let the crew know they were gaining on Broxbourne. The OTRC crew continued to chip away at the Broxbourne lead and although they reduced the 4sec handicap failed to beat the beat the Broxbourne crew. With their self-respect restored, the crew were once again able to join in the banter; not bad for a first outing!

Mx Mas C/D 4+ Martyn, Peter D, **Angela**, Claire, cox: Richard

A boat of subs. Angela subbed for Becky, who had obviously put too much into her W4+ win and retired with an injury. Richard was a great substitute cox. The opposition, as usual at Milton Keynes, looked as if they could have given us all at least 10 years and rowed like it too. The race was a bit of a 'curate's egg' – good in places, a bit stinky in others, but it was good fun. Thanks for letting me sub guys and you owe me a fizzy water the next time we're at the pub, oh venerable Judge, for writing your report!!

W Nov 2X Emily, **Daisy**

Round One = Won easily...

****TEN MINUTE BREAK****

Semi-Final = Won Epically...

****ANOTHER TEN MINUTE BREAK (Wahoo)****

The Final= OH DEAR!

We were not expecting a hard row considering our first two were amazing and felt like normal training sessions (except that we did not break an oar or footplate or damage ourselves!). Our start felt strong but the opposition were beasts from the start and pushed us to the limits. It was a strong row and we felt good but unfortunately, we were thrashed!

IM3 4X- Rohan A, **Joe P**, Will B, Connor L **WINNERS**

I had already had a long day at Milton Keynes and this race was my last chance for a medal. As Will, Rohan, Conor and I walked the boat down to the water we eyed up our competition (who all looked around 25 and beefed up!). The water was rather choppy rowing up, however we had a few practice starts before racing. This helped as our start was near perfection. We were ahead almost from the start however we kept pulling away throughout the race. Around half way we had a slight veering into their lane but recovered and rowed through to the finish for a victory. The elite crew strikes again! ;)

WJ154x+ Laura, **Erin**, Etholle and Emily cox- Alfie

As we hadn't rowed together for a while we were unsure of how it was going to go. We had a slow start and fell behind the Broxbourne boat but quickly got going again. We kept rowing hard until the finish but the opposition won by about two lengths. Overall, we had a great day and enjoyed ourselves. Well done to all the other crews!

OTRC "Match Report" - Milton Keynes, September 2016



Mas D/E 4X- Hugh, Alan, Jon H, John M **WINNERS**

The old gentlemen were trying for the first time the squad approach to the quad...quad squad..it has a ring to it after all. They received a bye straight into the final on account of their dashing good looks and general joie de vivre and found themselves up against some youngsters from Broxbourne. Due to the age discrepancy our heroes had a 3 second start advantage. The water in the middle of the lake was far worse than in shore and slowly but surely the Broxbourne nippers closed in on your favourite squad quad combo...Length in the water, physical determination and a perfect steering line enabled your heroes to hang on and win by half a canvass....we like to provide some entertainment...Not bad for a first outing...

W J18 2X Rochelle, Becky

No match report

W J18 4X- Rochelle, Daisy, Beatrice, Becky

No Match report.

J18 1X Harry

No match report