

OTRC Match Report – Club Regatta, 30 April 2016



The all-important question was: Will it be as good as last year? In 2015, OTRC held its first club regatta – an opportunity for people from all sections of the club to come together for a social and competitive day of racing. All types of crew and all levels of ability were catered for and the event was held in beautifully sunny weather.

2016 was not looking so good weather-wise, following a week of rain, hail, sleet and even snow, so all bets were officially off! However, 30 April 2016 dawned bright and sunny, if a little cold. The game was on.

The setting-up phase of the day went swimmingly, with all hands on deck and squads working in crew-like synchronicity to get everything ready: boats, shelter, registration, PA system and food. Rowers flocked to register for their races, last-minute jiggling of the draw to accommodate sickness and injury took place, the BBQ was lit and the kettles boiled.

The day started with the Senior Mixed Doubles competition. These were all scratch crews for the day, deviously selected to ensure good entertainment for the spectators. Early on, many crews were severely hampered by a worrying inability to steer (good rowing, bad steering) and those attempting a Saturday morning lie-in on the barges received some unexpected alarm calls as boats tapped and scraped their way past on the way to the finish line. Our apologies, barge-dwellers. The wheat was soon separated from the chaff and crews either moved on in the Main Competition or were relegated to the Plate Competition, where there would at least be another chance to row.

John “Adolf” Milborne managed the day’s speedy boating system with ruthless efficiency and the usual charming smile. There was no negotiation of boat or lane allocation this year. No picking your favourite boat or oars! No pretending you thought you had been allocated the field side instead of the barge side of the river! Do as you’re told, get in the boat, get away from the jetty and race. No messing. And don’t imagine you’re going to sneak in a little practice before rowing to the start ... He can only be bribed by beer and there was no beer!

Jason’s mellifluous American tones guided us through the day and kept everyone informed and entertained as he took on the role of commentator. He came up with a huge variety of ways of saying, “They’re lining up, the race has started, this crew is in the lead, that crew has hit a barge, and there’s the winner.” This was, until yesterday, a hidden talent, but Jason now has the job for as long as he and Kate are with us.

Rhona, Jo and their vast crew of assistants worked tirelessly to keep rowers and spectators fuelled with top class burgers, delicious cakes (the best yet) and hot drinks.

A stable boat competition was then slotted into the mix between the crew of George and Hana Smid and that of Daisy Attley and Elizabeth Smith. A feisty battle ensued with George and Hana coming out the worthy winners.

We also witnessed a real battle between our Learn 2 Row competitors. A round robin competition allowed each crew two races. Abbie Honeywell and Esme Kroese ended up as deserving victors of a competitive and enjoyable set of races. I suspect the girls may now have the racing bug!

The Junior Boys (well, young men, in truth) then took to the water. Somehow, Simon Murray ended up in this competition! Did you bribe the draw-master, Simon? Unfortunately, the silver hair gave it away, or we would never have known (yeah). This again was a round robin competition of, unsurprisingly, the fastest crews of the day. These were well-fought, close battles with Rohan and Will Berridge coming out on top. Well done, guys.

There were rather more girls available for competition, so the girls’ round robin event took place in coxed quads. Very close races, yet again, no less competitive than the boys’, resulted in medals for Daisy, Rochelle, Etholle and Laura. These were the only boats not to come close to hitting the barges, by dint of being coxed, but even they could not avoid the sharp turn at the end of the course and the lure of Charlie-Dunn-Reeds – the easiest place to capture a photo all day.

The senior competition continued amongst the other races until there were only four crews left – the finalists of the Plate and of the Main Competition. The 4 crews boated and it was then that our luck ran out....

The skies went dark, the wind blew viciously and the heavens emptied. Spectators headed for any cover with a view of the race course, club members held down the marquee and gazebo to stop them blowing away, while the safety launches and finalists struggled to the start. This was obvious proof that they were tough enough to take part in the finals.

OTRC Match Report – Club Regatta, 30 April 2016



The Plate Final was rowed first. Lel and Leslie battled not only Becky and Dick but the weather too. It was a close race with excellent, clean rowing in the foul conditions. Lel and Leslie managed to pull away from Becky and Dick in the last quarter of the race and came home the winners to raucous support.

As we waited for the final race of the day, it started hailing. Oh, joy! But the spectators were undercover. Jon Heaney and Kate Ellis (the commentator was not biased at all) were getting ready to race Claire Izod and Richard Box. Both crews had rowed smoothly and strongly in all their races, were equal in size/weight and (key fact here) had steered beautifully all day. Who would win? The support for both crews was equally divided and the traditional OTRC shout grew louder and louder as the crews battled down the course. It was “bow ball to bow ball” for most of the way down the course but Richard and Claire steered a beautiful course, stayed calm and in-time and just pipped Jon and Kate at the post. A couple of inches were all that separated the crews.

The medal ceremony was held in a cosy huddle under the marquee, as it was still raining hard. Medals were handed out to all winners, apart from the Plate Competition winners, who received an appropriate (and already traditional) plate each – of cakes. These were accepted graciously, particularly by Lel who can't eat gluten and for whom the prize was, therefore, useless! Sorry, Lel!

Clubman (person) of the Year awards were also presented. The awards are presented to a club member who has made a significant contribution to the club as a whole, rather than just for being a ‘good rower’. The senior award went to Claire Izod, presented by John Milborne. The junior award was presented to Becky Smith by Peter Dunn. Both ladies are renown for the support they give through others by their willingness to step in as a substitute crew member or to cox or to take on other non-racing tasks for the greater good as well as being keen to develop their own rowing skills.

Then the rain stopped and the sun came out. Aahhh! An extremely rapid clear up was executed, thanks to all the support that still remained and everyone went home to recover from another glorious day at OTRC.

The “OTRC spirit” is something we often talk/write about and new members of the club and outsiders may wonder what on earth we keep whittering on about, but yesterday epitomised the club spirit. Collaboration, enjoyment and competition mingled together to make a thoroughly enjoyable event. Rowers helping each other, good sportsmanship abounded and families supported, volunteered and stepped in to seamlessly fill in any gaps in ‘service’ without a fuss. Rowing is a great team sport. OTRC is a great team.

Thanks to everyone involved. If you missed it, make sure you don't make the same mistake next year!

Competition	Winners
Stable Boat (2x)	George and Hana Smid
L2R (2x)	Abbie Honeywell and Esme Kroese
Junior girls (4x-)	Daisy Attley, Etholle Brooke-Clarke, Rochelle Cox, Laura Dew
Junior Boys (2x)	Will Berridge and Rohan Anand
Senior Plate Competition (2x)	Lauren (Lel) Leer and Leslie Edwards
Senior Main Competition (2x)	Richard Box and Claire Izod
Senior Club-person of the year	Claire Izod
Junior Club-person of the year	Becky Smith