



September 2013 Captain's Column

Since the last newsletter the club has competed at another three events. The first event was St Ives Invitation Head Race and gave the chance for our new members to experience racing for the first time. It was fantastic to see our new rowers grasp the opportunity of competition and enter into the club spirit at OTRC. We were well supported by family and friends and it was great to see some new faces join our loyal band of supporters.

The club competes at a variety of events, some invitation, some local, and some up to Championship or National level. The invitation events are few and far between, but tend to have a less pressured environment and are a good place for rowers to start their racing careers. It was encouraging to see so many of our rowers already very competitive at this level and successful on the day, bringing home a number of "pots". The club prides itself on the club spirit and there were several examples of our new members getting this spirit and subbing when required, helping other members boat, rig and de-rig and help out other clubs. The enthusiasm and commitment from the whole club bodes well for the future of the club.

The next event for our new rowers is an event held at Milton Keynes in September and is another of these friendly events and a chance for our rowers to experience side by side racing for the first time.

The sport of rowing has the reputation of extremely hard training, often more than once a day and several days a week, so the competition at the national events is fierce. However, despite us not being able to train together to this degree, members of the club do not shirk the competition and we test ourselves at all levels. Our experienced racers entered both St Neots and Peterborough Regattas, which form part of our "local" level of competition. Both events were oversubscribed, which may indicate a level of Olympic legacy, but it meant that several club members did not get a race. Those that were fortunate enough to race were competitive at this level and it was very encouraging to see some of our juniors now compete on an equal footing in the adult events. In the last few years rowing clubs have struggled to keep members in 18 -30 category but, despite that trend, OTRC has been able to develop a squad in this age group so it was particularly satisfying to have winners from this section of the club.

The club aims to compete, as a whole club, approximately once a month but supports members who want to compete at other events. Some of our senior members also raced at Sudbury and Warwick regattas and whilst they didn't win were competitive and made the finals.

Our club member, Claire Connon was selected to represent England at the Home Countries International Regatta in the adaptive arms and shoulders category. This is the second time Claire has been selected to represent England and it is a testament to her and OTRC's commitment that she is able to sustain the level of training required to compete at this level. It was, therefore, unfortunate that other countries were not always able to put up athletes to race Claire - but she still won Gold! Claire continues to commit to the training and has her sights set on a GB place for Rio.

OTRC continues to give opportunities to members to experience and compete at the sport of rowing and has shown its ability to prepare rowers to compete at all levels. Well done to all the athletes, coaches, parents and helpers.

Best Blazer Award

The Judge was struggling yet again, to find any serious misdemeanours.

Then along came

Mark Quigley who capsized last week when out in his single. When asked what happened on a sunny, water-like-a-millpond day he answered, "I hit a duck." So for the double crime of falling in (in front of witnesses) and animal cruelty, the best blazer goes to Mark this time around.

Judge Dunn is fed up with members' integrity, conformity and general 'goodness'. He requests more 'sinning'.

Newcomers' Viewpoints

The Editor thought it would be interesting to read what people new to OTRC think of our club and of rowing in general. Here are some of the contributions:

From Martine Chandler – a 'novice veteran'

If you can't beat them.....join them! With three of the four Chandler's already giving this rowing lark a bit of a try I thought it really was about time I stepped up to the mark! So last September I

took a deep breath, hoped I wouldn't make a fool of myself and joined one of Anita's Learn to Row groups. I was thrilled to see so many other women of my vintage had also taken the plunge....well only figuratively of course.....but my fingers were crossed as I really didn't want to get my hair wet! What has surprised me most of all is that I really had not expected to love it quite so much. Now, to be honest, my style needs a lot of work and so does my fitness..... I know that Captain thinks there is far too much giggling and chatter..... and too many stops for taking layers off and then putting them back on again. But what a fantastic way to spend a Saturday morning....even the 8am starts.....and if only my dearest would agree to me giving up work....I could train more and maybe even start winning pots like he does! Oh and one last thing: I am so grateful to those of you who have put up with endless questions, pleas for help getting the boat in and out of the water, the endless patience of the coaches and the boozy nights in the pub. I am hoping to avoid the Blazer.....although I am sure it is only a matter of time.

From Tim 'Dinger' Bell – a returner

One year on from the London 2012, a spectacle that energised a nation of professional cynics, much is spoken about 'the legacy' that it has left. Has it inspired a generation? Going by the obesity statistics, that's a no. But it did inspire me.

Having rowed 10 years previously for my University, the anticipation of 2k erg test, insane fitness and pressure levels did not fill me with confidence but Oundle Town has proved to be something much more.

It is just over a year since I joined Oundle Town Rowing Club due to an impending necessity to stave off the effects of a desk job and certain sort of thirst but with little initial thought to the community and inclusion that comes from being part of a club. And the truth, as we all know but do not say enough, is that Oundle Rowing is something very special indeed. Inclusive in a way that other rowing clubs cannot be (I am dwelling on training schedules here!) and accepting of all, neither hail of body nor brimming with the vim of a junior, OTRC offers something to the soul.

Everyone has their own stories about the benefits of the Club but for my part, Oundle gave me a confidence that I had lacked, a lift up from a trough and an appreciation of the quiet humanity and connection that, cynical me, had not seen in a long while. Thanks go especially to the crews I have trained and competed with this last year for putting up with me. Tim in the morning is not great (as Mrs Bell has just said is an understatement!!).

So the Olympic legacy may not have gained much traction, but I think that indefinable spirit that lifted a nation lives on with this Club. Thanks for keeping me around!

From Alfie Loseby – a Learn To Row Junior (year 9)

First Impressions:

As we bumped along the track, I felt nervous and excited to be going to my first rowing session. When we arrived I signed in and was shown the main features of a rowing boat and given some basic instructions and then I got to go straight out on the water. We were in sturdy plastic boats so I felt quite safe and wasn't worried about falling in. We were tied to a rope so we didn't drift off and we got to row across the river.

I found it quite hard to row in a straight line and kept turning to one side but my instructor helpfully showed me what I was doing wrong. And by the end of the session I was getting a lot better. All the people were very friendly and helpful and on the way out I saw the long racing boats in the shed and I thought I would like to have a go in one of those, one day.

From Charlie Bell – another returner and no relation to Tim

Happy to be back out on the water!

After a 7 year break from rowing due to travelling and work life, I recently had the desire to get back out on the water and start paddling again. After spending my first visit to the club driving around town, going to the Prince William School and asking for directions from local townspeople, I eventually had some useful help which allowed me to find the location of the OTRC boathouse.

Whilst on my first outing, on the River Nene, I had flash backs to the last time I was out on the water rowing on a cold misty morning, pure bliss. I can't believe I have waited until now to return back to the sport. I wouldn't say it is like riding a bike but I am certainly getting back into the swing of things. It is nice to think that I have already been placed into a crew. We have only been out a couple of times but I see real potential. I very much look forward to our first regatta together at Milton Keynes.

Everyone has been most friendly and I feel I would be extremely happy rowing with you all. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for making me feel welcome to the club.

Membership

A reminder that membership fees are due on 1st September. A copy of the form has been circulated to all members for whom I have an email address. The completed form can be returned either in hard copy or electronically (it's an editable word document). Additional copies are available at the boathouse.

The form has also been uploaded to the club's gmail account.

Fees are £200 for adults, £100 for juniors with concessions for families/coxes etc. as in previous years. Please do take advantage of the prompt payment discount and save at least £20.

Please also check that your BR membership is up to date. Racers will need the Gold membership (Adult) in order to compete; Silver membership is required for all recreational members. Details are on the BR website (<http://www.britishrowing.org/membership>):-

Gold £50 Silver £25

Junior (14-18yrs) £24

Juniors under 14 £15

If you need more information, contact Simon Murray simonmurray36@gmail.com

Mark Jumps Ship

Mark Stratton, who has been one of the stalwarts of the club, is moving on to pastures new at St Ives. Mark was a complete novice when he started at the club and during his time lost his novice status in both sculling and sweep oar winning several points on his way to racing at Championship level in his age category at the British Masters. In the short life of the OTRC he is comfortably the most successful rower the club has produced. He also completed the Level 2 coaching certificate and became one of the club's coaches not only at the club but at regional level as well. He completely understood the OTRC spirit and in volunteering held several official and unofficial posts at the club including, "rigger fairy", boathouse manager, deputy Treasurer, chief of race entries and race fees, equipment consultant, and recipient of the "Blazer of Shame" - on several occasions. He leaves a big hole in the club but we wish him every success at his new club.

His leaving gives us the opportunity to reflect on what OTRC is all about; the grasping of the opportunities the club offers but also the need to help if we are all to benefit. It is good to see the OTRC spirit alive and kicking as members come forward to take on some of these roles, so if you feel able to volunteer you can contact any of the following:

Colin Bullock (Treasurer): colin.bullock1@btinternet.com

John Milborne (Race Captain): john.milborne@btconnect.com

Communication

Website: <http://www.oundletownrc.org.uk/>

Send articles for the next newsletter to the Editor angela.hook@live.com