



NEWS REPORT

February 2002

Editorial

Once again, the tempests blow and the flood waters roar. A pretty normal winter in Upton. But at least we succeeded in running the Head this year, and a great success it was too, which we can now build on in future events of various kinds. Very well done to all who helped (which doesn't include your Editor, who was locked in an ARA meeting elsewhere on the day – I'm sure it went all the better for my absence).

As you will have seen, we have now completed the replacement and refurbishment of our equipment following last year's trailer accident, and in particular have taken delivery of a superb new Janousek four for the ladies. We will be holding a grand boat-naming event after club rowing on Sunday 14 April, so stick that in your diary.

Upton Head of the River Race

An ability to remember the one successful running of the Upton Head of the River Race used to be a mark of seniority in the club. No longer! On Saturday 12 January, a rare meteorological window of opportunity opened up for us, with the ice melting just in time, and the floods not yet arrived. As a result, we were able to welcome 31 crews, from clubs far and near, to race against the clock.

Eights, fours, quads and scullers competed in two divisions. The morning division was over a 4¼ mile downstream course, with the afternoon division over 3 miles. The fastest crew of the day, in any category, was a Senior 2 men's eight from Bridgnorth. The Phantom Four won the Veteran F event for Upton.

The Head sub-committee of the club are to be congratulated on the smooth running of the event and thanks are also due to Keith Andrews and his crew who kept the competitors supplied with hot food and drinks on a chilly but enjoyable day, even if the Fire Brigade very nearly had to be called in relation to some sausages! SARA are also to be congratulated on the very professional marshalling service they provided all along the course, and in providing excellent communications. They particularly impressed Chris Llewellyn, who was evaluating proceedings on behalf of the ARA, and may find themselves in greater demand for other events as a result.

Regatta calendar

Here are the dates of the main regattas that you may wish to attend this year:

February

23 Worcester Head

March

9 Women's Tideway Head

17 Gloucester Head

23 Men's Tideway Head

24 Vesta Veteran Head

30 Boat Race

April

20 Birmingham

May

4/5 Evesham

18/19 Shrewsbury

June

1 Worcester

2 Monmouth

3 Hereford

8 Bridgnorth

15 Stratford

16 National Veterans

29/30 Ironbridge

July

3/7 Henley

13/14 Llandaff

19/21 Nat Champs (Nottingham)

27/28 Bewdley

August

10/11 Stourport

17/18 Commonwealth Champs
(Nottingham)

24 Gloucester

25/26 Ross

September

8 Worcester Veterans/Juniors

October

13 Worcester Small Boats Head

November

10 Stourport Small Boats Head

30 Evesham Head

Don't forget the Ball on Saturday 13th July 02 and watch out for announcements on other social activities and fund raisers.

Umpires wanted

The West Midlands region is looking out for more qualified umpires, and Gabby Tolkien has kindly agreed to run an instructional seminar for us at The Anchor on Wednesday 13 March at 7.30 pm. Those who want to go on to qualify as an umpire will be able to take the necessary tests later in the year. However, even if you don't want to seek the qualification at this stage, you may still find it interesting to attend the seminar in order to add to your understanding of how the system works and how the rules of racing are applied. If you want to attend, call Gabby on 01386 45334.

Captain's Log

The Head season so far has seen Upton crews at various events and the men's VetC4+ have been training and competing at a respectable level. The men's winter lunch was very successful, although we were unable to row in the morning due to thick ice in the

Marina. This did not prevent an intake of suitable beverages and some very good food. It would be nice to hold this lunch as an annual event.

The Upton Head was a huge success and following an appraisal by the ARA we proved that we have the expertise and the determination to hold such an event. I would like to express my gratitude to all those who officiated on the day, (and those who worked very hard prior to the event) especially those from other clubs. The Vet C catering crew did a splendid job in providing food and drink all day long, raising an excellent amount of money and nearly setting fire to Pete's pagoda.

I hope that the crews training for the HERR and the Vesta Head will have time on the water to prepare properly for the events and my thanks to those who are giving time coaching.

Graham

The thoughts of Chairman Barker *or Sweepings from the boathouse floor!*

During the short winter days when we are deprived of rowing due to floods etc. my mind mulls over various ideas of what we can do when the weather and river conditions permit. I would like to mention two such ideas in this Newsletter.

- *An Upton Marathon*

One of the great assets we have here at Upton is our 16 mile stretch of water from Worcester to Tewkesbury. Though it may not always be available to us due to flooding we rarely use it to its full extent. Most club outings turn around at the 'shed' with some audacious crews risking confrontation with the natives at the Rhydd. The 'Upton Row' at Christmas and the 'Summer Row' do give occasional glimpses of river life beyond Upton but I would like to see our stretch of river being used more adventurously.

I have put on the notice board in the boathouse details of a 32 mile 'marathon' in two halves to be held on Sunday 7th April. The first half will be in the morning from Upton to Upper Lode Lock at Tewkesbury and back to Upton – a distance of 13 miles. The afternoon will be a tough upstream row from Upton to Diglis Lock at Worcester and back to Upton – a distance of 19 miles. Rowers can enter either the morning or afternoon events or both if you are completely daft. Times will be taken for each crew but it is not intended to make this a race. However these times can be used as a benchmark for future crews as I hope this will become an annual event.

- *Recreational Rowing*

I would also very much like to see a recreational rowing section develop within the club. I suspect that there are a number of people in and around Upton, as well as existing club members, who would be interested in taking a skiff out on the river in the summer. A hamper in the bows with a bottle of white wine in a chill box (Tiltridge of course!) strikes me as being a good way to pass a day with friends or even the wife.....

Excursions further a field could be organised such as a trip up the Avon to Stratford or a re-enactment of “Three Men in a Boat” on the Thames.

Anyone interested in either the Marathon or Recreational Rowing do get in touch with me (see telephone number and email address below).

Boat Race Bash

Just a reminder that Sandy and I will be holding our ‘Boat Race Bash’ at Tiltridge on 30th March with a big screen and of course refreshments. Everyone from the Club and their partners are welcome to come. It would help with catering if you let us know if you’re going to join us – 01684 592906 is the number to ring.



I found this photo on my computer of one of our intrepid mens vet crews amidst the bustle of the Vesta Head last year. It should get those rowers who are going to the Tideway in March in the mood.

We would like to compile a list of email addresses for as many club members as possible. If you have email please sent the address to me on ppb@stratascan.co.uk.

Peter

Changes to the Rules of Racing

There have been a number of minor changes to the rules, which were described in the December/January issue of *Regatta* magazine, and they take effect from 1 April. Most of them are rather technical changes to the procedures for weighing coxes and lightweights, but there are also some changes to the points system, which basically mean that you can win more events at Senior 3 and Senior 2 levels before you are promoted to the status above.

One thing that umpires in our region will be checking more rigorously this year as crews go afloat is that all members of the crew are wearing the same strip. So make sure you have an adequate supply of the necessary kit.

Horny etiquette

A few points on the use of the air-horns, as you go in and out of the marina entrance:

- Please point them away from the rest of the crew, preferably straight up in the air. They are incredibly loud and stroke's head will still be ringing at the end of the outing if the cox gives him or her a direct blast as you go on to the river.
- Please don't use them at all if you are going out in the early morning. Anyone sleeping in one of the moored boats will probably have a cardiac arrest.
- Please don't test them by sounding them inside the boathouse – the echo inside the building could be sufficient to kill all the occupants including yourself!

And finally ...

One of the nicest things about this club's committee meetings is that they present only a fairly low risk of violent death. This has not been my universal experience elsewhere.

The prevailing culture within the club I belonged to in Glasgow during the 1970s was one of aggressive and merciless repartee among its members. A leading exponent of this was an irascible character whom (in case he ever reads this and comes looking for me) I will call John. He was in his mid-thirties (which seemed pretty old to the rest of us at that time) and balding prematurely, and this encouraged him to pour scorn upon the Laughing Cavalier hairstyles that most of us sported in these days.

On arriving at the boathouse one day I immediately sensed that the atmosphere was very strange. Most of the members were capering about in almost uncontrollable glee, but one man whom I didn't recognise was sitting down with a face like thunder. He looked vaguely familiar, however, and I quickly deduced that he must be a younger brother of John's, because apart from a luxuriant head of hair, he looked very like him. Then the penny dropped: John was wearing a wig! And not just any old wig, but an exuberant, ridiculous, flamboyant, pantomime wig! The whole thing seemed so unlikely that I wondered if he was really playing a surreal joke on the rest of us, just to see how we would react.

If so, he should have known better. I'll say this for him, though: he was a brave man, coming into our club of all clubs with a wig like that, especially after all the abuse he had heaped on everyone else. And he needed to be, because he was now getting a torrent of cruel mockery that would have destroyed a weaker spirit. And things went from bad to worse over the next few weeks. John persisted in coming down with his wig on, and each time he was met with even more vile insults, which all the rest of us had been industriously devising and rehearsing at home during the intervening days. Even more rashly, he would hang his wig up while he went out rowing, with the

inevitable result that by the time he came back his wig had been hidden, run up the flagpole or otherwise treated with a profound lack of respect.

Matters finally came to a head at the next committee meeting. John was last to arrive, which gave the rest of us time to polish up the latest jibes we had prepared for him. Then in he strode and sat down, looking exactly like a very angry man who happened to have a dead mongoose on his head. Before any of us could speak, he bellowed ‘Right! I’ve just about had enough of all of you [many expletives deleted] – the next person who says anything about my wig is going to get it!’ With which, he pulled out a very real and nasty-looking gun and placed it meaningfully on the table in front of him.

This changed the mood of the meeting very abruptly. None of us knew whether to dive for the gun, dive for the door or assume that he was joking and try to laugh it off. Through inertia (or perhaps because we were frozen in terror) we ended up using the last of these as our working hypothesis and continued with the meeting as if nothing had happened, but in a somewhat subdued atmosphere. Our business was conducted in record time. Wigs were not on the agenda, and no one raised the subject under Any Other Business. At the end, John rose, pocketed the gun and, bidding us good day, strode out leaving us to reflect on the incident in stunned disbelief.

As it turned out, neither the gun nor the wig was ever seen again, nor did we see much more of John. He resigned from the club soon afterwards and joined one of our rivals, once again as bald as nature intended.

So Upton committee meetings are rather tame affairs by comparison. Just occasionally, however, when they begin to drag on excessively, I am tempted to wonder whether placing a large piece of artillery on the table might speed up proceedings. But on the whole, I think it’s probably better as it is.

Ron Paterson