



# NEWSLETTER

## November 2005

Take a peep at the club's jazzed up website (thanks to Stewart) and use the message board:  
[www.uptonrc.org.uk](http://www.uptonrc.org.uk)

### Editorial

This newsletter marks the end of an important era in our club's development. After eight years of hugely productive work as chairman, during which time he played a massive part in establishing the club and setting it on a firm course for the future, Peter Barker stepped down at the recent AGM to "spend more time with his vines". We are very grateful to you, Peter, for the energy, organisation and vision that have characterized your enormous contribution to our club, and we are mighty glad that you are still involved on the committee as fundraising co-ordinator. We wish John Dean the best of luck as our new chairman. Among other changes we say goodbye and thank-you to our retiring President, Lady Rachel, and welcome to our new President Dave Semple, who has supported the club in so many ways since its inception and was its first secretary. Details of the new committee and non-committee posts are presented in a table in this newsletter.

Other treats in store for you below are: reports on mini-heads organized at Upton by Captain Cox and recent competitive rowing activity at regattas and Heads of the River; an explanation of the term 'recreational rowing' by Peter Barker; Ron Paterson's embarrassing recollections of a cox's dress code at Henley in the 1960s; news from the recent club dinner; finally, we introduce 'Bell Notes' – a regular slot for our new chairman to offer us a few thoughts.

The weather forecasters have told us to expect a severe, cold winter. Some say we may even need icebreakers to ensure we get a row. So it's reassuring to know that, in a coxing capacity, our forward-thinking Mr. Robinson has started practicing by aiming the hulls of our precious boats at solid objects on or near the river.

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### Captain's Log

#### Mini-heads

Captain Steve has organised mini-heads at the club to give us some training and experience at longer-distance rowing at the start of the Head of the River season. The first of these, held on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2005, was a valuable pipe-opener. Nine crews (eight IVs and a double

scull) competed in two divisions over the course from The Swan flagpole to the Whitehouse and back. Despite some good-natured disputes about the precise location of the turning point, all enjoyed the 30-odd minute row, with times expertly recorded by Gabby and Ros. It was especially gratifying to see several recently qualified ex-foundation rowers competing well against more experienced crews.

The second mini-head was held on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October and also involved eight IVs and a double scull spread over two divisions. This time a launch marked the turning point and there were fewer disputes as a result. Crikey! Those 'Phantoms' took us all by surprise and produced the fastest time of the day in a heavy boat shaped like a banana.

## **Competition**

### **Ross Regatta** (29<sup>th</sup> August 2005)

A men's Veteran D coxless quad (George Strang, Johnny Birks, Peter Barker and Ron Paterson) had its first taste of competition at this sprint regatta in the sun.

### **World Veteran Masters Regatta** (Strathclyde, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2005)

Liz Killick, rowing as Upton with three women from Birmingham, came a close second in both Vet. D coxed and coxless IVs.

### **Worcester Autumn Regatta** (11<sup>th</sup> September 2005)

The men's Veteran D coxless quad (Ron Paterson, Peter Barker, George Strang and Johnny Birks) took part in an unusual challenge event against a men's Vet D coxless IV from Abingdon Rowing Club. It involved each crew racing each other twice: first as quads and then, having re-rigged the boats, as IVs. Abingdon won both races, by 4 feet and 2 lengths respectively.

### **Stourport Vets and Juniors Head** (24<sup>th</sup> September 2005)

This new event attracted rather few entries, so the host club decided to hold it as an invitation event rather than under ARA rules. Upton took three crews to enjoy a relaxed and sunny day at this friendly club further up the Severn. In finishing order, with times over the 2.5km course they were:

- 10:17 Men's VetD 4X- (Ron, Peter, George & Johnny)
- 11:02 Women's VetD VIII+ (Linda Scott, Mandy Davenport, Lynne Stirling, Helen Barker, Annie Surman, Deirdre Thompson, Sandy Barker, Pauline Mason, Andrea Oliver (cox))
- 11:35 Mixed VetD IV+ (Pat Cox, Freya Biggs, Lynne Stirling, Angus Macleod, Andrea Oliver (cox))

### **Worcester Small Boats Autumn Head** (9<sup>th</sup> October 2005)

We took four veteran crews to race over this 4.5km course on a fine, sunny day. Our men's quad had no competition at Vet. D. Nor did our three women's IVs have veteran competition, so they were entered as Women's Senior 4. In finishing order:

- 17:18.55 Men's VetD 4X- (Ron, Peter, George & Johnny) No competition
- 20:17.18 Herons (Annie Surman, Sue Martin, Sandy Barker, Pauline Mason, Johnny Birks (cox)). This Vet. E crew came second out of six in their category behind a Hereford crew, beating much younger crews from Worcester and Stourport.

- 21:15.44 Kingfishers (Joy Larner, Helen Barker, Linda Scott, Deirdre Thompson, Pat Cox)  
22:45.04 Sandpipers (Angela Rodway, Jenny Worthington, Lynne Stirling, Freya Biggs, Peter Barker).

These last two crews suffered some serious clashes with other crews and lost time as a result.

Thanks, as ever, to our brilliant boatmaster Bob Hines for repairing the damage!

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## Sweepings off the boathouse floor

John asked me to put together a few notes on recreational rowing but first of all let me thank you all for making the Club Dinner such a special night for me. Johnny's kind words are still ringing in my ears and the coffee maker is being used overtime. A big thanks to you all.

Recreational rowing is well established in many countries in Europe, North and South America and down-under. Some recreational rowing is done on the Thames but compared to France, Holland and Germany it is small.

Recreational rowing is a complement to racing rather than an alternative. It does not mean that you have to choose one or the other. As the name suggests it is non-competitive and is done to keep fit in a pleasant environment and in good company. It provides an opportunity to enjoy the wonderful stretches of water that are available to row on throughout the world.

It is normally done in wider boats that are easier to sit and provide more room to stow the picnic hamper etc. Many of the boats are coxed doubles and quads as sculling is the preferred method of propulsion rather than sweep oar.



*This is a brand new quad made by BBG of Berlin photographed at Maidenhead Rowing Club*

Recreational rowing can take a number of forms. In its simplest it may be no more than an outing on Sunday morning as part of the normal 'club row' except it is in a boat that is easier to sit compared with a 'fine' boat. For this reason these boats make very good training boats. However, recreational rowing involves longer distance rowing such as touring. For example, we may organise a days rowing up to Kempsey with lunch at the Walter de Cantalupe. A week-end tour could be a tour down to Gloucester (like the excellent trips down to Ashleworth that Biggsy has organised over the years) or up the Avon from Tewkesbury to Pershore and back. We have good contacts with other clubs all over the country where we could take our boats for a tour on their stretch of water. We also have contacts in Holland, France and Ireland if we wanted to go overseas.

The ARA also organises at least one tour every year. Brian, Ron and I went on the Yorkshire Tour last July – you can read Brian's excellent article on this tour in the next newsletter.

So all we need are some boats - that is why, in part, I am now fundraising for the Club. We have a meeting of the fundraising sub-committee coming up shortly so do look out for news of some exciting events that will be for you, the members, and your families and friends to come along and enjoy.

Peter 'two bottles' Barker

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## Ron's recollections

Dominic's splendid photograph of his 1967 incarnation has prompted me to ransack my attic for anything of a similar vintage, and here it is – coxing Aberdeen University at Henley in 1968. In case you don't instantly recognise me, I am not the geezer on this side with the chamber pot on his head, but the guy in the far crew with the hugely extended tin lips. These were before the days of cox boxes, so as well as wearing a Donald-Duck-like megaphone on my face I had to juggle with a couple of stop watches that were strapped to my leg.



Unfortunately, wearing a ridiculous get-up seemed to be *de rigueur* for coxes at Henley in those days. I had planned to race in a tracksuit, but this horrified our coach, who was one of the old school. Instead, he insisted that I should wear a blazer, with collar and tie, white trousers 'and a lid'. I drew the line at the 'lid' (not having a chamber pot of my own to hand), and tried to resist the white trousers on the basis that I possessed no such effete garment, only to have him thrust a pair of his own upon me. These, being umpteen sizes too large, were

held up by an intricate assembly of safety pins. And thus I rode into battle more appropriately kitted out to attend a formal dinner than to participate in a sporting contest.

There were no plastic boats in those days either. Our vessel was probably big and strong enough to have taken us safely across the North Sea, and was so heavy that we would concede half a length off the start in every race before we could get it moving. It had the biggest rudder I have ever seen – a great big plank of wood about two feet long that wouldn't have been out of scale on an oil tanker. The oars were wooden, with leather sleeves attached with copper nails; the gates were made of brass, as were the wheels under the seats; and there were wooden clogs attached to the footplate. It was in fact later in that year, at the Mexico Olympics, that a boat first appeared with shoes bolted to the stretchers – this was Karl Adam's gold medal winning eight, from Ratzeburg in what was then West Germany. Karl Adam was a legendary coach of the 1960s. He came to the Scottish ARA's coaching conference in the following year, where he made one of the most breathtaking remarks for any coach who might doubt whether there is enough local talent available to produce competitive crews. A delegate asked him how he managed to get such a fast crew out of Ratzeburg, which had previously been a relative backwater within German rowing. He replied, "Ratzeburg is quite a big town with 20,000 inhabitants, and it has a grammar school; so there is always going to be enough raw material on hand to produce a world class eight" (!)

In the photograph, we are managing to see off Oriel, who were the fastest Oxford college that year, after having been half a length down off the start as usual. We next raced an Oxford University development crew rowing as Cherwell. After losing the customary half length off the start, we stayed that way for the remainder of the race, losing by half a length, which was somewhat galling. Cherwell subsequently won the event (the Ladies Plate), although they didn't really deserve to. Torrential rain turned the Thames into a raging torrent for the rest of the regatta, in which the crew drawn on the enclosure side had a three length advantage over the crew in the other lane; Cherwell had been lucky enough to have been the first name out of the hat at the draw, giving them the enclosure side in every race.

As a footnote, the winners of the Wyfolds (coxless fours event) at the same regatta was a crew rowing as Severn Scullers, which included a young chap called Dave Lambert. I wonder whatever happened to him ... ?

Ron Paterson

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## News from the AGM held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2005

The AGM voted in favour of an increase in the fees. This reflects the increasing costs of running the Club (Rent and insurance alone will amount to £5000.00 this year and both have to be paid within the next couple of months).

Adult Rower	£200
Junior/Student	£75 (£25 per Term)
Cox	£10
Patron/Social	£35 minimum

Subscriptions are now due. Please see Freya Biggs.

Adult Subscriptions can be paid in 3 installments. Last cheque to be dated 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005.

### Committee 2005/6

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Membership Secretary	Freya Biggs	01684 592007	07968 919939	
Boatmaster	Bob Hinds	01905 820887		
Junior Organiser	Vacancy Please see Steve Cox for info			
Fundraising Co-ordinator	Peter Barker	01684 592906	07974 158839	<a href="mailto:ppb@stratascan.co.uk">ppb@stratascan.co.uk</a>
Ordinary Member and Kit Sales	Sue Clifford	01684 310813		sueclifford1@hotmail.com
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### Additional Posts

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## Training

### Circuit training

Winter circuit training has started! Every Wednesday at 7.30pm a band of up to 20 merry masochists gathers at Hanley Castle School sports hall. If you haven't tried it yet, do come along and discover exciting new ways to get hot and sticky, followed by a bit of socialising and essential rehydration in the Three Kings.

### Ron's Amazing Training Schedule (RATS For short!)

A strange new language can be heard at the boathouse as club members get their heads around an excellent new training schedule devised by Ron Paterson. Based upon two sessions per week on an ergometer (rowing machine), the schedule has been tried initially by the Women's Squad and has recently been distributed more widely. The principle behind it is that you should vary the intensity and duration of the sessions so as to get the best overall training effect. Feedback so far is very positive and, with monthly tests over 5 kilometres built into the programme, there are already signs that it is producing improvements in our endurance. For a copy or further guidance, contact Ron on [ronpaterson@lineone.net](mailto:ronpaterson@lineone.net)

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## New Quad Acquired

A magnificent ex-GB squad quadruple scull has been acquired for the club by Clive Killick.



The quad is designed for lightweight women and small juniors. The 'roughened' skin is intentional; one of the GB coaches obviously believes the sharkskin theory that roughened surfaces create less drag in water. Most experts don't agree and it should be possible to polish the boat back to its original state with a tube of T-Cut and elbow grease.

The history of the boat is that it was bought for the GB international team in 2003. It was raced at the 2003 World Championships but after that it was only used for trials at Dorney.

Clive plans to use the new quad mainly for the U13 and U16 crews from Malvern schools.

## Upton Rowing Club Dinner, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2005



*Peter receives a coffee-maker at the club dinner to mark his retirement as chairman*

With a traditional mix of good food, laughter and public humiliation, an excellent club dinner was enjoyed by over 60 members in Upton's Memorial Hall. Tributes were paid to retiring chairman Peter Barker, and entertainment was provided by Patrick Adams (introducing a mythical Cornish rowing club keen to twin itself with Upton) and Ron Paterson (presenting another side-splitting poem with full audience participation, reproduced below).

### **The Official History of Upton RC**

By Ron Paterson

Back in the year of nineteen ninety-five  
The town of Upton barely was alive  
Beside the town an unseen river flowed  
Yet on its waters no one ever rowed  
Till one day, Steve Cox, staggering from the pub  
Said 'There's a river! Where's the rowing club?'  
He hunted high and low but didn't find it  
He searched throughout the town, and then behind it  
On drawing a blank Old Coxy was astounded  
And there and then resolved a club be founded  
He raced back to the pub to ask his chums  
(An ill-starred, motley crew of drunken bums)  
"Who wants to form a club and do some rowing?"  
But they said, "Gosh! Is that the time? We're going!"

"Oh, come on guys, it won't be like you're thinking"  
Said Steve, "It's just a good excuse for drinking".  
The beery bunch considered this suggestion.  
And supped their ale to validate the question.  
At length, a pledge of fellowship was sworn  
And thus it was the Rowing Club was born.  
As you can see, a cunning cove was Coxy  
A crafty bloke, both devious and foxy  
He knew that rowing clubs require tradition  
And quickly made creating some his mission  
When registering the club he played quite dirty  
And claimed we had been going since 1830  
The ARA, being gullible, believed him  
(And up till now I haven't undeceived 'em)

So Upton ranks with Henley and Leander  
As older than the rest (and therefore grander).  
Steve then had to face the nitty gritty  
Of drumming up some guys for a committee  
His first coup was to get Dave Semple  
Whose dimples rival those of Shirley Temple  
Then seeking help from someone rather darker  
He managed to recruit Commander Barker  
Pete Barker is a vintner of some note  
Though almost all Pete's wine goes down Pete's  
throat  
Once this triumvirate had been secured  
The future of the club could be assured  
Their first task was to choose some colours  
To make us shine as bright as Tideway Scullers  
The votes were cast for purple, green and yellow  
(The sorts of shades that grace a French bordello)  
Not many know this choice was governed by  
Steve wanting to reuse his old school tie  
The overall effect's completely garish  
And adds new meaning to the word 'nightmarish'  
But even if the impact's not the best  
It means that Upton's got a rowing vest  
As if that didn't sound enough alarms  
Steve added to our kit a coat of arms  
So on our breasts we bear a bleeding phoenix  
Which makes us want to wipe the drips with  
Kleenex  
This bloody bird, a creature straight from Hades,  
Reminds me of some very scary ladies!  
Of course I'm not referring to *our* girls  
Cos all of them are absolutely *pearls*.  
A badge like this deserves to have a motto  
Like 'Mine's a pint!' or 'Bloody hell, I'm blotto!'  
A rowing club is nothing without boats  
And Upton would take anything that floats  
We started begging, borrowing and stealing  
And moved from there to wily wheeler dealing  
And soon we had a fleet that was quite splendid  
(Considering twenty quid had been expended)

It's true, some of the boats were prone to leak  
And some could only take you up Shit Creek  
But most of them were fundamentally sound  
So the rowing club was finally off the ground.  
To get these boats gave us a great beginning  
But soon the members were no longer grinning  
The reason was, that we could not relax  
While none of our fine craft had any racks  
So off to Malvern Hills the treasurer sped  
To plead for subsidies to build a shed  
We thought his prospects of success were slender  
But back he came, weighed down with legal tender  
So potent was this monetary injection  
that Upton rowers got a *huge* erection  
At last the club was fully up and running  
And since then our successes have been stunning!  
We're world champions at cancelling Heads  
And all our crews now race like thoroughbreds  
(This last achievement isn't great, of course,  
Since rowing isn't suited to a horse)  
We've raced on many courses, long and short  
In London, Amsterdam and Welland Court  
And everywhere we've gone, we've made a splash  
In my case, usually stemming from a crash  
Ten years have passed, and under Pete's command  
Our name's become a legend in the land  
In all that time, our most successful feat  
Was getting Biggsy to upgrade our fleet  
His means of doing so was jolly nifty  
He scattered all our boats on the M50  
But now our first decade has come and gone  
John Dean is in the chair to take us on  
Who knows what Upton Rowing Club might  
achieve?  
And all from small beginnings, hatched by Steve!



*New president Dave Semple comforts a suitably chastened recipient of the 'Calamity Cup' as he admires a magnificent memento (created by Freya Biggs) to his trailer towing and other misdemeanors during 2005*

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### **'Bell Notes' (AKA wise words from our new chairman)**

When I first joined the club some eight years ago, I turned up to find Steve Cox and others applying yards of Duck tape to a very old and very dilapidated wooden coxed four.

"What's that?" I said.

"The boat you're going out in" he said.

"Oh dear" (or words to that effect), I said.

"It'll be fine" he said.

I gazed uneasily at the thing – the upturned hull clad in its miles of silver tape looking like a stranded miniature zeppelin (these days it would have been in with a chance of the Turner prize) and swallowed hard.

Fifteen minutes later having carried the boat from the grassy patch opposite our boathouse down to the present boating area – no trolley in those days, but you didn't need to warm up! - my fellow crew members and I gingerly stepped into the frail looking craft, and under Steve's guidance made our uncertain and wobbly way out into the marina. I was hooked!

Since then, I have become fitter, healthier (marginally) improved my sense of balance and had a lot of fun - and this latter, for me, is the essence of rowing. Whether you compete or not, whether you cox, or not (and if you don't, why not?), it has to be enjoyable. Ok, I know we all have the odd 'orrible outing, but generally it is a great feeling to be out on the river with like-minded individuals in a boat that 'sits', exercising

in the fresh air (and sometimes, as we all know, it is *very, very* fresh.) and then retiring to a local hostelry for re-hydration.

In addition, I would have missed the comedy:-

Boz, offering his Upton crew to row the sideboard of a heckler....

Finding two Upton oars in the middle of the A417, putting them in the back of my estate, driving on to the M4 and being greeted by the sight of two of the crew jogging down the hard shoulder asking how many I had found - whilst in the middle distance Captain Cox, was being given sound advice by some traffic police...

Boating at a head and discovering we had three bowside and five stroke side oars...

Take your rowing as seriously as you like, but enjoy it! (And if you are having a problem, let us know so we can help put it right).

John Dean

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## **Celebrating Upton RC's first ten years!**

Members and friends scrubbed up nicely to enjoy a special evening afloat on the Conway Castle on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2005. Thanks to Ros and her gang for organising it all.



*Bad taste gay wedding? No! It's Upton RC's tenth anniversary cake being cut by Captain Steve Cox and Chairman Peter Barker afloat on the Conway Castle*