



NEWSLETTER

May 2006

Editorial

In this newsletter there's just time to enjoy recollections of Upton crews racing on the Tideway, before we look forward to the regatta season, with plans for our own regatta on 29th/30th July firming up nicely (all hands on deck please!). Before then, make sure you don't miss out on two crucial social events in June: the Garden Party looms on the 18th (how come it always falls miraculously on the sunniest day of the year?); and on 20th June Andrea has organized a 'Bags and Accessories' evening in the Upton Sports Club – be there with your cash, or be Oh so Square!

Talking of fundraising efforts, having played a very minor part in the Club's Spring Fayre on 6th May, I'm struck by how such events always seem to be organised and run (mostly) by the same few busy working women. Do we take their contribution for granted? I hope not! Whatever – we owe them huge thanks for their efforts (they raised £205 for club funds by cunningly persuading the good folk of Upton to buy all sorts of things they hadn't known they needed so badly).

Captain's Log

Competition

(See separate reports on the Tideway Heads below).

Evesham Regatta 29th April 2006

Mark Brookes and Andrew Langden raced in a Senior 2 coxless pair. Racing against a schoolboy crew they were down off the start, came back at them but unfortunately hit the bank.

Evesham Sprint 30th April 2006

The above S2 2- lost again.

A Senior 3 Evesham-Upton composite coxed IV won its first round race, then lost in the semi-final to a crew entered for Henley.

Dorney Lake (Ball Cup) 6th/7th May 2006

Schoolboy scullers attached to Upton RC raced under the Malvern College banner: The J13 Quad rowed well; in a multi lane race, only losing by 2 lengths; the J16 Quad also rowed well against strong competition, as did the double scull. All enjoyed the experience and everyone was pleased with their performance. Well done to Clive Killick and his helpers.

Monmouth Sprint and Regatta, 27/28th May 2006

Three Upton crews were entered for the sprint day, but racing was abandoned part way through the day due to rising water levels and debris coming down the Wye. Thanks to John Dean for towing the trailer there and back – all good practice!

Future competition

We look forward to crews entering the National Veterans' Championships at Holme Pierpoint in June.

Ron, Peter, George and Johnny are training well in their quad; Ron and Johnny are working with the women's squad, with two or three IVs training for the National Vets.

Club Rowing

Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings are well attended; now that the weather is warming up more juniors are returning.

'Two Grand Days Out' – Johnny's memories of the Club's participation in the Tideway Heads on 25th/26th March 2006

It was a treat to see three Upton crews racing on the Tideway on this mildish spring weekend: a men's Senior 3 VIII in The Head of the River on the Saturday; followed by a women's D VIII and a men's Novice C VIII in the Vesta Veterans' Head on the Sunday. For over a dozen members it was their first Tideway Head, so nerves and new experiences brought a certain sticky something for them. To add further spice to the occasion, Annie Surman calmly announced on the way up that, in light of an unbelievably enormous birthday looming the following week, this would be her last competitive row. So all was set up for a memorable weekend as we headed along the M4 towards West London.

None of this would have been possible, of course, without the constant, skilful labours of Bob Hines, our long-suffering boat-master who (for reasons we needn't go into) had recently worked on more interesting cracks and bent fins than I've had hot dinners; Steve Cox and John Dean got the lights, rear bar and tyres fixed on the trailer; and Peter Barker towed the trailer without a single buttock-clenching crunchy-scrappy noise that I heard all too often while towing last year (I still go pale at the sight of signs for Hammersmith Bridge); thanks are also due to Thames Tradesmen's RC who kindly permitted us to boat from their patch of the Tideway on both days.

After an incident-free drive to London we parked the boats at TTRC and Annie in Putney, before Peter and I checked in to Wandsworth's Holiday Inn (pausing only to play 'spot the other rowers' in the hotel lobby). George Strang joined us to shout tactics over massive lamb shanks among the braying yuppies in the Ship Inn nearby. On returning to our room Peter and I failed to disable the hotel's powerful heating-cum-dehydration system, so we woke frequently through the night to slake our thirsts, before rising to pig out on continental breakfasts in preparation for our race.

The sight of 420 Vllls marshalling and racing on the Tideway is thrilling, especially with the GB squad well represented in the first few crews. Upton's mainly veteran men started at 282, with many much younger crews following. Despite being overtaken by a few, the crew rowed well and finished the course in 22:49. Skilfully coxed by Miss Motivator (Debbie Thompson), the crew was (from Bow) Ron Paterson, Peter Barker, Kevin Grice, Stewart Robinson, Angus Macleod, Andrew Langden, George Strang and Johnny Birks. At the finish at Putney, before our long row back up to TTRC, we entertained nearby crews by demonstrating how our cox and no. 7 could swap places while stroke lay back with his eyes (and mouth) shut. Thus, George took over the coxing (steering us pinball wizard-style, some might say) all the way back to Barnes Bridge and Debbie rowed for the first time since her shin operation. She raised a few eyebrows (it was a men only event, after all), but not as many as the sight of the ARA Treasurer rowing at bow, who prompted many a marshal to wobble in his boat, before shouting fond abuse across the water! The following extract from the World Championships internal newsletter shows how widely reported was Ron's presence in the race (don't they know what a fine oarsman he is??):

The old motto "you're never too old to row" was also ably demonstrated by the

Championships Treasurer who was seen sitting [rather than pulling? – Ed] in a bow seat for the race. There was a lady in his crew who was pushing down a bigger puddle than our favourite accountant, who reportedly spent the whole race counting the number of potential spectators for the Championships along the towpath.



*Upton's Men's VIII in the HoRR, 25th March 2006
(thanks to Angus for the photo)*

Mothering Sunday started bright and a bit breezy as Upton's women and Novice men gathered to thrash the Thames in the Vesta Veterans' Head of the River. Starting only five places apart, there was a competitive frissant between the two Upton VIII's as we queued up below the start by Chiswick Bridge (the men looking cosy, if not over-warm, in their arctic survival suits). Both crews raced well but the women had the edge, spurred on by a well-timed case of Chinese whispers: just before the start a marshal innocently offered advice on the conditions: "could be a bit choppy at Harrods Depository" was heard by Upton's women as *'could do a bit of shopping at Harrods possibly'*. Encouraged by this unexpected offer of retail therapy, the women rowed with a powerful rhythm (finishing in 23:50, 25 seconds ahead of the Upton men) and were the fastest non-composite crew in their division.

As cox, it was tempting to take this new motivational technique further by mumbling to the crew through a distorted cox-box: "Sweet breeze [*ream teas*] by Barnes Bridge"; "Big push at Chiswick Eyot [*Big piece of chocolate cake*]"; "Nasty brine [*Glass of Wine*] by Hammersmith Bridge" (you get the picture). As it turned out, the women rowed so well (spurred on by a right old tussle with a younger Bewdley men's crew that took ages to pass us) that none of this was necessary, so I trotted out the usual nature notes: "ring-necked parakeets at three o'clock, herring gull overhead, *splat!* - oh yuk!" and so on. Mind you, as we stormed towards the finish, rating 32, I was relieved I only had to offer them a cormorant by the Black Buoy (a shag might just have upset their rhythm).

Back home I slept like an over-tired dormouse that night and dreamed I was coxing a crew of furry animals, each one laden with bulging Harrods bags (and rowing amazingly well considering). There was a serene otter or two, a giggling water shrew, a smattering of jocular mink and sniggering water voles, and a very perky beaver in the stroke seat.



URC's WVD VIII at the Vesta Head, 26th March 2006: Linda Scott, Pauline Mason, Deirdre Thompson, Helen Barker, Lynne Stirling, Sandy Barker, Annie Surman, Sue Martin, (cox Johnny Birks, squatting).

Ian Mackie's reflections on a foundation crew's preparations for fame and fortune on the Tideway.

Having had no previous rowing experience other than in the early 1960s assisting at the Scottish Universities Regatta on the Clyde, standing on guard on a bridge to stop the youths hurling bricks on the boats (before your time Ron?), and later watching a daughter row in the 'Bumps' on the Isis, I have always had a desire to have a go at this rowing job.

On a balmy Spring evening about a year ago Peter took two of us out in Pablo and assured us that a fine boat was a piece of cake. Stroke-side Barker said us foundation rowers should be adept at sculling and sweep oar rowing on both sides. We spent the summer evenings and weekends learning the art, with the odd Captain's Head Races of dubious turning rates at the White House. Those lovely summer's evenings with the sun sinking behind the Malverns, viewed in a wobbly way as we lurched from side to side. Brian always says we are down on bowside.

The Captain came out in the launch, assessed us and said we had passed. Brian and Dennis were the only two to have passed the unofficial capsized drill.

On the last Wednesday evening row before purgatory with Freya (*for the uninitiated, this is a reference to the club's excellent winter circuit training, organized very competently by Freya Biggs – Ed.*) in the Hanley Castle School, followed by rehydration in the 3 Kings, I heard some rumour of Head Races as we groped our way ashore in the lashing rain and half light.

Stourport Head seemed a pleasant start, and our first experience of derigging, rigging, derigging, rigging especially with bolts too long. An experienced member pointed out at least we were Head Rowing. Hazards of the away game became all too apparent when Peter *et al* passed Monmouth RC with bits of their boats on the side of the road (most Club history seems to revolve round wrecking boats or trying to row in mountainous seas).

I was out of the country for the Worcester Head. A boat from Shrewsbury School clashed with our VIII and the stewards in their wisdom made us start last.

The Vesta Head. Well at least we finished! If ever we go again I would prefer to boat near the start or I would even volunteer to drive the trailer nearer the finish! Having trawled through 4 photo agencies, I wish I had a copy of us looking like a porcupine on the way back. Not one blade in time! With Colin kindly driving 5 of us, after loading the boat to yet again to be conveyed by Peter, we decided to give the Thames Tradesman RC Bar a miss and headed home. Brian waved Peter home and had to have a drink on his own! We had our first drink in the King 's Head and discussed where we went from now. Lewis proposed 'Learn to row'. After the Vesta Head I feel we have only just started.

On behalf of the foundation rowers of early 2005 and Jo and later Ruth *et al* I thank Peter, Steve and Pat, (and Jeremy especially for sitting in at 2 minutes notice) and the rest of the Club for putting up with us. Congratulations to Lewis on the eventual birth of his child. Ian



URC's Novice men's VIII at the Vesta Head on 26th March 2006: Lewis Jones, Colin Calderwell, Ian Mackie, Brian Swindells, Pat Cox (cox), Dan Herbert, Andrew Scott, Dennis Crowley, Richard Betts.

Bell Notes

As I write this, high winds, heavy rain, and low cloud dominate the view from my window – that'll be spring then!

At least we now have the longer days - allowing us to get out and do some club rowing on Wednesday evenings. I coxed a crew of eight stalwarts two weeks ago, when, guess what? It was high winds, heavy rain, etc., etc.,. However, as one of our members said to me the other day, 'At least with rowing you're exercising out in the fresh air with nice views; in a gym I would be looking at four walls and paying a lot more money for the privilege'. We were doing a charity walk along the Malvern Hills at the time, and guess what? It was high winds, and heavy rain, etc. etc. - the exception, of course, was that we were *inside* the low cloud for a change!

I hope that all of you who can, have volunteered for duty sometime over the Regatta Weekend on the 29th and 30th July. If you can help and you haven't been contacted, please get in touch with Steve Cox. You can still reach him at coxyofmingelane@hotmail.co.uk

At the time of writing, it was looking as if we may have been awarded the grant by the A.R.A. enabling us to purchase the two recreational rowing boats. If this is confirmed then it will be almost entirely due to the efforts of Peter Barker. I had some minor involvement on the periphery of the process and I know how much hard work Peter had to put in, in order to make the application work. So if it is confirmed, we owe him a big thank you!
Getting the boats will allow us to row on the river (Sculling or sweep oar) in a nice wide(-ish) and, therefore, more stable boat and, of course, the lighter nights will allow us to see for much longer all those high winds, heavy rain and low cloud....

Happy rowing!

John Dean

2006 SOCIAL CALENDAR

Sunday 18th June 2006	Garden Party from 1pm at Welland Court. Tickets £10. Contact Pat Cox for more details.
Tuesday 20th June 2006	8pm. 'Bags and Accessories Party' at Upton Sports Club to raise funds for the Rowing Club. Loads of trendy stuff on sale including bags, jewellery and scarves. There may also be greeting cards and stationery. The bar will be open and we will provide some nibbles.
Saturday 29th July 2006	Upton Regatta
Sunday 30th July 2006	Upton Sprint Regatta for novice crews from pubs, clubs, firms and just good friends.
Friday 13th October 2006	Upton RC Club Dinner, Memorial Hall Upton
November 2006	Line dancing in the Memorial Hall - Date to be confirmed

Committee 2005/6

Post	Name	Home	Mobile	E Mail
Chairman	John Dean	01684 594221	07905 592352	jwd@dsl.pipex.com
Secretary	Ros Adams	01531 636951	07709 969502	ros@riversidetraining.co.uk
Treasurer	Andrea Oliver	01684 593180	07947 806897	andrea.oliver@virgin.net
Captain	Steve Cox	01684 593849	07779 637191	coxyofmingelane@hotmail.com
Women's Vice Captain	Pauline Mason	01684 593194		tmmason@btinternet.com
Men's Vice Captain	Debbie Thompson	01684 592035	07931 988688	debs_83@hotmail.co.uk
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	ppb@stratascan.co.uk
Ordinary Member and Kit Sales	Sue Clifford	01684 310813		sueclifford1@hotmail.com
Ordinary Member	Grahame Turner	01684 563289	07711 606680	grahame.n.turner@btinternet.com

Additional Posts

President	Dave Semple	01684 593505	07778 755236	dsemple@dowtyauto.com
Vice President And Safety Adviser	Gabby Tolkien	01386 45334		gtolkien@onetel.net.uk
Welfare Adviser	Joy Larner	01684 594830	07773 195769	joy.larner@tinyworld.co.uk
Junior Representative	James Turner	01684 563289	07747 104036	grahame.n.turner@btinternet.com
Newsletter Editor	Johnny Birks	01684 575876	07974 083763	johnnybirks@vwt.org.uk