



The beginning of the 2024/25 season started well with new and established members getting lots of regular outings but unfortunately by mid-November the fickleness of the British weather began to foil our attempts to get out on the river. In the final weeks of 2024, a series of storm force winds and heavy rains left us helplessly watching the water levels oscillate between amber and red. It's not much compensation for lost outings, but it is amusing to look back at the editorial for a club newsletter dated 2001 which described similar frustrations with the lack of rowing opportunities

“What next? After the Great Floods and the Foot and Mouth, what new obstacles are to be thrown in our path this Spring? A Plague of Locusts, perhaps, or maybe a Plague of Boils? Or would it be too much to hope for a chance to do some rowing?”

Thanks to Peter Barker for uncovering this extract for us. Does anyone recognise the author?

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Have you a story to share with the rest of the club? We are looking for contributions for the next edition of the newsletter

Annual Club Dinner and Awards Ceremony 2024

Many thanks to Jo England for organising the annual dinner for the Club at the Hunters Inn, Longdon.

Everyone had a great time and the relaxed social start to the evening allowed members who did not see each other regularly because of boating at different times, to meet up to renew old friendships or to create new ones.

Following an excellent meal, Peter and Debs took their places at the front of the room to announce the award winners for the 2023/24 season. Following the presentation of awards, the informality returned and conversations flowed until it was time for everyone to make their way home.

Award Winners

President's Cup – Most successful Women's Crew
Maggie Jameson, Jo Hammett, Linda Scott, Liz Elston

Chairman's Cup – Most successful Men's Crew
Stuart Edney

Founders' Cup - Most successful Mixed Crew
Jules & Tabs.

Simple Cup – Most successful Junior Crew.
Hugh and George.

Severn Cup- Most Improved Rower
Michelle Davies.

Treasurer's Cup - Most Improved Junior
Grace Edney

Captain's Cup – Off Water Contribution to Competitive Rowing

Stuart Edney

Committee Cup - Non rowing contribution to the club
Linda Scott



Future Events – hold the dates

Miniheads in January/ February / March

- Jan 26th
- Feb 23rd
- March 30th

Club Quiz Night

This will take place on Saturday 1st at Manor Park Sports Club in Malvern, starting at 19.30. Further details to follow.

Boat naming ceremony

Provisionally, this will take place late morning on Saturday 1st March. As this is an outdoor event, the date may have to be changed due to adverse weather, so final details will be circulated to members nearer the event.

Plans for running ‘Learn to Row’ courses in 2025

We are planning to offer the next ‘Learn to Row’ course after Easter and are now accepting applications from potential new members. If you have any friends or family who would be interested in joining one of the L2R crews, please do encourage them to use the “join us” link on the club’s homepage and complete the registration form.

Vogalonga June 8th 2025

This year’s trip to Venice for the Vogalonga is almost full. This is the final call for participants or members wishing to join the reserve list. Contact Stuart Suckling stUARTSUCKLING@hotmail.com if

Winter circuit training

Wednesday evenings would not be complete during the winter without the URC Circuit Training sessions held from 6 pm until 7 pm at the Hill Centre, Upton upon Severn, WR8 0EN. Sessions open to ALL members. The cost is £3 per session and the club will bill you periodically over the winter season dependent on your attendance. We look forward to seeing you there!

Indoor Rowing

Members are welcome to use the club ergos for their land-based training. If you are looking for extra motivation for your ergo sessions, then the dedicated British Rowing website, “Inside Indoor” is a good place to go for technique videos, workouts, training plans, technical guidance and more - all designed by experts to help you make the most out of your sessions. Use [this link](#) to access all the resources.

Dates of upcoming external events

Note that entries to all the popular local Head events, such as Stourport, Wycliffe and Worcester have closed early because of the demand for crew places.

Event	Date	Further details
<u>Head of the Trent</u>	22nd Feb	3 Divisions with events for Open, Masters and Beginners’ crews
<u>Head of the Avon</u>	1st March	5 Divisions (Open, Masters and Low CRI events)
<u>Gloucester Spring Head</u>	16th March	Details of Long and Short courses not yet published) This year the event will be raced on the ebb tide between Mortlake and Putney (opposite direction to the Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race)
<u>Masters Head of The River Race</u>	23rd March	
<u>OARSport Junior Sculling Head</u>	26th March 2025	Dorney Lake.

Advance notice of Regattas scheduled for late April and into May

Birmingham Regatta – 26th April 2025

Evesham Regatta – 3rd May 2025

Evesham Sprint Regatta – 4th May 2025

Shrewsbury Regatta – 10th/11th May

Worcester Spring Regatta – 17th May 2025

Monmouth Regatta and Sprint 24th/25th May

As always, if you want to enter a crew for any event, please complete this [form](#)

Safety Reminders and Updates for ALL Members

Completing the Risk Matrix

The Risk Matrix MUST be completed before every outing when the conditions are identified as 'Amber'. You need to be absolutely certain you have assessed all foreseeable risks and you can react effectively to an incident, having planned for "What if...?" scenarios. The most important thing is to reduce the likelihood of a capsize, or if one should happen, minimise the time required to get out of the water and back to the marina to warm up and change into dry clothing. Take a bum bag and mobile phone on every outing. If in doubt, don't go out.

Useful information for all members when gauging the conditions on the river before leaving home

- 1. River level.** The 'definitive' river level is the water level on the post at the entrance of the marina but the water level measured by the Environment Agency at Saxons Lode gives a good indication of the state of the river at Upton (there is a link to this information on the club's web site). The direct link to the E. A. data is [here](#) and this site allows you to see the river levels upstream and downstream, which can help you make a decision about the chances of getting an outing.
- 2. Wind speed.** The predicted wind speed of wind gusts is given on the met office website [here](#). Gusts in the region of 30mph can be hazardous for rowing, particularly in small boats.
- 3. Fog and Debris** If you want to check conditions before travelling to the marina, there is a [town webcam](#) on the riverside near the Boathouse restaurant that allows you to estimate visibility and look for debris on the river.
- 4. Water temperature** We haven't a real time way to measure the temperature of the river water but it is strongly recommended that when the air temperature drops below 5C, singles and any inexperienced doubles should limit their rowing to between the end of Upton Ham down river and Quay Lane up river (where there is a greater chance of attracting attention / getting help if a capsize occurs).

Information from the Boatmaster Team

- 1. During the strong winds** before Christmas, one of the club singles (Hello Dragon) was blown off its rack and damaged the (private) boat underneath. The boat had been put away and tied down correctly. We are modifying the rack to prevent this happening in future, and in the meantime the boathouse crew have been going down and adding extra straps to protect the boats during the storms.
- 2. The boatmaster crew** have been going out over the last few years and trying to remove obstacles such as branches and clumps of growth which act as obstacles to rowers. We would be very pleased if there were some more volunteers to help us with these jobs. Learn to drive the launch, or offer to come with some tools to tackle the debris. Please speak to Andrew or Clive.
- 3. The club has now purchased two coxed quads**, replacing "Steve Cox" and "Steven of London". One quad will be converted to a coxed four, hopefully by the beginning of March. The other is available now to be rowed (UPT407). They are intended for general club use and to help intermediates transition from the stable boats used for 'Learn to Row' into fine boats. We hope that you enjoy using them.
- 4. We would like to expand the boatmaster team** to improve the maintenance of equipment, form a clean-up team occasionally and to help move some of the larger boats between racks and the trailers. Please contact Andrew, Liz, or Clive or email boatmaster@uptonrc.org.uk.

Festive Row Christmas Boathouse Games report 8th Dec.

Martin Reynolds reports on the impromptu social gathering at the Boathouse after the planned Festive Row had to be cancelled when the river went into the red.

Following the successful summer row to the Shed fuelled by Pimm's, the Recreational Rowing Committee hatched a plan for a similar row as a pre-Christmas event, this time with seasonal refreshments of mulled wine and mince pies. Heavy rain, followed by Storm Darragh meant that the river level rose to above 4m during the week preceding the planned row, so 'Plan B' was put into place, replacing the river outing with "Christmas Boathouse Games".



I arrived at the boathouse to find Pippa and her team decorating everywhere with Christmas lights and a regimented colour-scheme, based Upton colours. I hadn't realised you could have the wrong colour tinsel - the things you learn while being a member of URC! At the back of the boathouse Sandra, Paula and others were slaving over the cauldron of mulled wine and sorting out the mince pies etc. Other members arrived to help clear a space down the two bays in preparation for the games.



The fertile imagination of Linda was tapped to dream up the games and act as referee and I was roped in to assist. The result of Linda's efforts was a splendid variety of games that were fun and stretched the co-ordination skills of the participants.

Following some sampling of the mulled wine and mince pies to warm us all up, the games started. First was a game based on the rules of the traditional 'Pass the Parcel' but with a twist so that when the music stopped the 'winner' had a Christmas themed charade to perform. Whilst no prizes were given, Debs deserves a mention for guessing most of the mimes. Having wetted the competitive spirit- two teams were chosen for the remainder of the games.



The first team game was a relay where teams ran down the boathouse and around a bucket balancing a rubber duck on the end of a paddle, conveniently borrowed from one of the club launches, returning to pass on the baton (AKA paddle + duck) to the next team mate. This was closely followed various other games including players hobbling down the boat house with a potato wedged between their knees, riding a boat trolley wearing a life jacket, a version of Keepy Uppie with individuals having to run the length of the boathouse keeping a balloon aloft, then, bursting it and returning to the start point before the next member of the team could start. Possibly the most challenging 'game' was the human knot where each team stood in a circle, grabbed random teammates' hands, and then untangled themselves without breaking their hold.

The final game was a memory challenge with the two teams lining up facing each other. Team A posed while Team B mentally recorded their appearance, then Team B went to the other end of boathouse while Team A swapped clothes etc. Then Team B had to identify the changes. The teams then reversed roles with the winning team being the one which identified the most changes. During this Stuart's leggings ended up wrapped around Sarah as a stylish scarf! Well done Sarah!

This ended the competitive part of the morning, and the teams endeavoured to finish all the remaining mulled wine and mince pies etc. Non-competitive, but equally enjoyable!

My thanks go to Linda, and all involved in making a very enjoyable event.

New(ish) member, Will Garton-Jones has written this informative and entertaining account of his return to rowing after almost 40 years

The “Born Again” Sculler

It was June 2023 and I was standing on the banks of the Zambezi in Zambia looking at an old boathouse, where boats were launched for the 1910 World Professional Sculling Championships. With the river full of 8m+ crocodiles which would make short work of a sculling boat, I imagine the race was rapid. I and my business partner Peter Jones (who organised the more recent series of invitational regattas on the Zambezi between the University of Cape Town, Zimbabwe and alumni of Oxford and Cambridge Boat Clubs), were considering whether the dilapidated boathouse could be acquired from the Government and restored for tourism.



The regatta safety boats on the Zambezi have the extra job of looking out for hippos and crocodiles!



Rowing temporarily suspended for this crew!!

Peter thought our bid would be more credible if I were to start rowing again.....

Whereas I thought that was quite a big “ask” as the last serious rowing I had done was back in 1983 and I had the suspicion that since one became a “Veteran” at the age of 27, there was little chance of finding anybody of my age doing more than propping up the Rowing Club Bar. I also worried that after a 40 year lay-off the chances of me remembering how to do it or being able to cope with even modest physical rowing activity was not high. So it was with some trepidation that, once back at home in Castlemorton, I started to look for rowing clubs on the Severn.

I quickly found the Worcester Rowing Club but thought it too far away and visited AB Severn in Tewkesbury (who quickly assured me that they could only accommodate Juniors but failed to mention the existence of Upton Rowing Club!).

I had been driving past the Marina in Upton for four years without noticing any of the URC signs and had no idea there was a rowing club there. When Google suggested it, I was surprised and delighted to find a club so close to me and a quick Google Earth recce confirmed its existence as the racked boats were clearly visible. I visited the Marina a few times in the hope of catching some rowers – but no luck.

However, an email to the then Captain, Pippa Riddle, quickly yielded results and it was not long before I found myself in a double with Andrew Cracknell followed by a coxed four with some of the senior Club Members – which dispelled any idea of a lack of older rowers and although it completely confirmed my own dire lack of fitness, I also realised that I could remember how to do it.

In the double scull with Andrew, we managed to reach the bridge before I felt I had had enough. I think the pinnacle of that particular outing was ten consecutive strokes without stopping for breath. Andrew was sympathetic and I was determined to improve my fitness before subjecting him to a second outing.

The coxed four outing was memorable as it almost finished me off for good, with the rest of the crew showing me why they were Masters and that I had a long way to go. I survived, but it was touch and go at some points.

Next, I was corralled into the Developers group run by Linda Cracknell and Jo England – a most entertaining and enjoyable period with a fun group of recent joiners spending much of the initial period in quads followed by an extended period of ergo training over last winter using a programme designed by Linda Scott which proved to be very effective at recovering a reasonable level of fitness.

I became so enthused with this activity that I bought a Concept 2 which now resides in the garage along with a powerful wifi speaker and on which I have daily sessions to prog rock and heavy metal as well as more modern motivational music.

When I learned to row in the 1970s, we were required to train and compete in single sculls before moving into Sweep (a new term for me as we did not use it then) crews, mostly fours and eights (doubles and quads did not really feature) and I had forgotten how much I enjoyed just sculling for leisure. Unfortunately, even the fit 1970s “me” would have been too heavy for the selection of single sculls at URC, let alone the expanded and improved version of “me” in 2023/4 at double the rated crew weight for some of the lighter sculling boats.

Although I managed to get some sculling in Hello Dragon and Slipalong, I was never going to get close to their rated crew weights, so I started looking out for a solution. One popped up in the shape of a Hudson USP Predator based at Chester Rowing Club which I acquired for a very reasonable price after a brief inspection, a good sales pitch and no trial. My very own boat 50 years after starting rowing! With a rated weight of up to 116kg, this was a better fit.

Needless to say, things are never as simple as you hope. Although it looked lovely, actually sculling it turned out to be extremely difficult as though balancing it with the blades out of the water was easy, balancing it with the blades in the water was almost impossible as they “hunted” around failing to get a “lock” on the water – surely the wrong way around. And as I was sure it couldn’t possibly be me doing anything wrong (!!), I spent ages, with Jules Scrivener’s expert help, adjusting it and replacing the gates and inserts before I was satisfied. It turned out that sculling boats rated for that sort of weight are rigged for scullers much taller than me and it was only just possible to get the gates low enough for me to use. I am sure the previous owner thought he had been sold a dud and sold it on to me far too cheaply having failed to make it work - but all is well now and it is a lovely fast boat to scull.

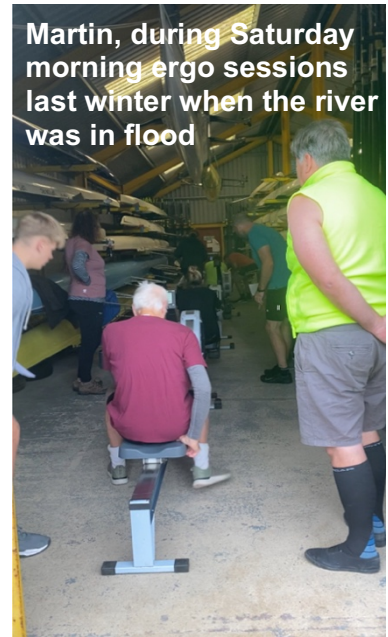
My ergo scores are now respectable (even though I am some way behind the Masters F ergo king who proudly told me he had managed to average a split time of 1:49 over an hour – not a URC member!) and I can scull in a double from the Marina to the Shed without needing to stop for a breather (though seldom do!). I think I could do it in a single – but not without hitting the bank and then probably sinking. I have, through injury, illness and adverse weather escaped racing, but that won’t last and I hope to do some again before long.

There are two great discoveries and one great re-discovery I have made thanks to Upton Rowing Club and its welcoming members: the first is that age (at least until you are 80+ when insurance issues start coming into play) does not prevent you from rowing and the Club has plenty of spectacularly fit older members to prove that point. The second is that double sculling is brilliant fun and my new favourite rowing activity: easy to organise, delightfully fast and, with the right partner, an unbeatable pleasure. And the re-discovery is that spending time on a river in a sculling boat of any type is a relaxing, restful, enjoyable, energetic and occasionally fiercely competitive activity all at the same time. Long may it last.

PS: Peter and I don’t yet possess the Zambezi Rowing Club boathouse – but we live in hope. I wonder anybody fancies reptile racing....?



Martin, during Saturday morning ergo sessions last winter when the river was in flood



West Midlands Recreational Rowing Committee Report by Jane Smith

Upton took part in the last event of the season of the West Midlands (WM) Recreational Rowing League on November 16th (postponed from September due to flooding).

It was held at Stourport and was a 2km mini-head. Despite very wet conditions, all seven crews from around the region performed well and times were very close with Upton's Four in a Tub in fourth position. The results helped bump Upton up to a very respectable third place in the league, the winner's trophy going to Oarsome from Bewdley – see final results opposite.

Upton did come away with the league award for the best turned out crew in our high-vis tops with club logos, so a big thanks to Pippa for getting us noticed!!



Club	Team Name	Total	Position
Bewdley	<u>Oarsome</u>	54	1
Bewdley	<u>Stroke of Genius</u>	49	2
Upton	Four in a Tub	43	3
Bewdley	<u>Viva Las Ross</u>	22	4
Bewdley	<u>Num-Sculls</u>	18	5
Stourport	<u>The Angels</u>	16	6
Ross	<u>Ross-Vegas</u>	11	7
Stourport	<u>The Bridgertons</u>	10	8
Stourport	<u>The Porters</u>	9	9
Ross	<u>WHIRSIR</u>	6	10

The WM League will continue in 2025, and we will be looking for URC members to sign up so we can ensure that one, or possibly two squads can be entered into each event in the next season. The WM league is open to any non-racing members and typically involves one event per month through the summer season (short sprint races, skills tests etc) rowing in stable touring boats. Squads of up to 8 rowers can be put together by a participating club, and each club can enter as many squads as it wants. From each squad, a coxed quad crew is put together for each event, so it's not necessary for every squad member to commit to all the events.

We try to have a couple of practice sessions beforehand so it's not too demanding time wise, the aim being more about having some fun! It would be a great way for our newer rowers to get a taste of competition in a light-hearted environment, but equally appealing to more seasoned rowers who might like to join in with something a bit different.

Members of the URC RECREATIONAL ROWING (RR) Committee:

Peter Barker (Chair), Sandy Barker, Sandra Bristow, Jane Smith, Martin Reynolds, Pamela Brewster, Bev Ramsden.

If you'd like to join the squad for next year or have any questions about the Club's Recreational Rowing activities, then do please speak to any of the committee members listed above, or email: jane@uptonrc.org.uk.

We will send out an email to members in the spring with details of URC and WM 2025 events.

Pre-loved Club Kit looking for new homes

We have accrued a collection of items of pre-loved club kit, mostly donated by ex-members. These garments are current available to inspect in the boathouse and if anything takes your fancy, please give it a new home in exchange for a donation to the club – either by cash into the postbox in the boathouse or via BACs to

Upton Rowing Club
Sort Code 40-45-05. A/c no. 21072552.

