

UTRC

NEWSLETTER
Autumn 2007



RAISING THE ROOF £1m TARGET IS SET!

In the last newsletter we were delighted to announce that planning permission had been granted for further development of our clubhouse and facilities, creating a two storey clubhouse with dedicated club room, enlarged training facilities and a balcony overlooking the greatest regatta course in the world. The development is intended to bring UTRC into the 21st century and secure our future as one of the foremost rowing clubs in Europe.

When Boris Johnson, then our local M.P, and now candidate for Mayor of London, opened our new boathouse in 2005, President Peter Sutherland revealed his intentions to start work on the clubhouse as an obvious next step.

When Peter told Boris we had permission to continue our development, he was keen to be our appeal Patron, along with Sir William Barlow. They are supported by our trustees Peter Sutherland, Michael Green, Brian Talfourd-Cook and John Anthony Hawthorne West, ensuring that we have tremendous backing in our commitment and belief for this endeavour.

The Race Is On

Together, we now need to raise the funds to make the development a reality. In case the headline didn't make it clear: **We need to raise £1 million!** And the race really is on as we want to start building in August 2008, anticipating the work to be complete in time for Henley Royal Regatta 2009. That doesn't give us much time to raise the funding needed to commit to its construction.

We made a good start at the fundraising launch on 8th July, with pledges of almost £50,000, but there's still a long way to go to get to £1 million. To achieve this goal - and build **YOUR** new clubhouse - we need



FUNDRAISING DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Get them in your calendar now to avoid double booking with important family events!

14th October 2007

A team of mad UTRC members are competing in the **Henley Half Marathon**. Come and show your support by cheering us along and get your money out by sponsoring us. Sponsorship will be split between UTRC and the Henley MS Society.

3rd November 2007

The Upper Thames Boat Races. The Town Hall, Henley. Tickets are only £15 including food. Please contact Juliet at juliet@perfectlypicked.com or call 01491 577193 for tickets.

23rd February 2008

The Upper Thames Auction of Promises. This promises to be a night to remember. A Black Tie Event at the Henley Town Hall - Put the date in your diaries and more information will follow shortly.

significant help from all members. There are a number of ways you can help:

- 1. Personal Donation** - If you send us a personal donation, and are a UK tax payer, we can reclaim tax from donations increasing the donation by 28p per £1. This is valid up to 5th April 08, after that it will be 25p per £1. Additionally, if you are a high rate tax payer, you can reclaim the 12% differential. Cheques payable to Upper Thames RC!
- 2. Company Donation** - If your company or someone you can influence can make a donation, we hope to get the donation matched with a National Sports Foundation Grant.
- 3. Standing Order** - We know that lots of you want to help but can't manage a lump sum donation. So to make it easier you can donate by setting up a standing order. If every member gave just £10 a month (or the equivalent of a good bottle of wine or a curry) that was gift aided - we would be another £45,000 closer to our target. A standing order form is enclosed with this newsletter.
- 4. Connections** - Do you know a high net worth individual or company who would be prepared to help in return for long term links with the club? We have a number of sponsorship options available. Let one of the fundraising team know if you can help.
- 5. Company Matched Donations** - Does your company offer a "matched donations" scheme for fundraising activity? A lot of large corporates do. Let us know if this is something you have available to you that we can utilise.
- 6. Attend events** - We do keep nagging about this, but we really need you to attend the events we organise. They are designed to be fun and a chance to get to know your fellow club members. And of course they bring us a step closer to our £1 million target.
- 7. Sell Our Activities** - We have a number of events that you can 'sell' on our behalf. Please invite your friends and family to our events. And, remember we are offering Corporate Team Building Days (more elsewhere in this newsletter).

FUNDRAISING UPDATE: LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Life membership will be given to all donations over £10,000

Think of all the ergo and gym sessions you can put in for that!

Or Henley Regatta weekends for that matter!

(N.B. Racking is not included)

Our stroke by stroke guide to raising a million...

We have a fundraising committee with individuals focussing on different areas (see below). However, this is a mammoth task and we almost all have full time jobs, so if you can help please speak up.

The Fundraising Committee:

- Peter Sutherland - Whip cracker and arm twister
- Steve Dance - Chair and Grants
- David Beadle - National Sports Foundation and Grants
- Juliet Machan - Members Fundraising
- Martin Unsworth - Grants
- Steve Tassell - Corporate Donations
- Marianne Ingledew - Joint Secretary
- Eric Ingledew - Joint Secretary
- Jon Thornber - Fundraising Treasurer

In addition, appeal fund Patron Sir William Barlow and club member Clive Scott Hopkins have been contacting various private individuals and organisations promoting the appeal fund.

Getting to £1 million

We have thought long and hard about how we get there. And we really do need to start building next year, otherwise we risk losing our planning permission. So this is how we have broken the target down:

	Target	Total achieved so far
Savings to July 07	£150,000	£150,000
Regatta income and other savings from 07-08	£50,000	£50,000
Members fundraising activities and donations	£150,000	£65,000
Corporate donations, matched funding, grants	£650,000	£10,000
Total	£1,000,000	£275,000

You will see that the total achieved so far in our largest target area is still quite small. This £10,000 is a pledge from Henley Town Council, and Peter and the Grants team is working tirelessly on increasing this figure. Initial contact has already been made with several local, district and national businesses, individuals, charities, sporting bodies and authorities to help us get to our £650,000.

More on Corporate Donations

We don't expect companies to give for nothing. For example, PizzaExpress has put up £2,000 in return for a development day at the club. A team of 12 PizzaExpress managers will be given an introduction to rowing with the chance to go out on the water with experienced oarspeople, coaches and coxwains. They will meet Sarah Winkless and hear her inspiring Olympian story. They will even be fed, although we'll give them a day off from pizza (if they're good!). These 'Company Intro Days' are being offered on a limited basis - do you know anyone who might sign up?

This is only one idea for encouraging companies to get involved. We're looking for lots more great schemes that you think will help us meet our target.

To date we have raised £275,000 which means we're hardly off the stake boats, so from now on, it's got to be:

UPPER THAMES ON THE BERKS STATION

ARE YOU READY...

ATTENTION...

GO !!!



A big pile of cash required to build the new clubhouse - can you help us find more?

CHAIRMAN'S CHORTLE

Steve Dance



As we enter the new rowing year UTRC is certainly living in interesting times with plenty of changes and challenges to look forward to.

Whilst many of you will be establishing your own personal rowing and training goals for the year, we all collectively as club members have some other significant and immediate 'club goals' to tackle.

Thanks mainly to the determined and persistent drive of Peter Sutherland, UTRC finally obtained planning permission to build a new clubhouse in March. This was followed by gaining CASC status from H M Revenue and Customs in May, a step forward which should significantly financially benefit the club. CASC stands for Community Amateur Sports Club – see www.cascinfo.co.uk for more information.

In addition, quietly behind the scenes in Spring Jenny Robb skillfully renegotiated contracts with the companies who rent UTRC land during HRR, significantly raising the net income to the club.

All of these events have helped to put us in a unique situation where we have the opportunity to build a new Club House and training facility on one of the most famous stretches of rowing water in the world!

Those of you who were in the UTRC enclosure on the Sunday of Henley Royal Regatta would have seen the launch of our £1 million fund raising appeal. We were fortunate to have support from several Henley Town and Wokingham District Councillors and Officers. The success of the launch can best be judged by the commitment of just under £50,000 from club members and friends that afternoon.

Furthermore, in July the UTRC Committee, on behalf of the club, formally instructed architects Burley and Stroud to proceed with formulating detailed designs and plans to start construction after the 2008 Henley Veteran Regatta and complete by March 2009.

Clearly, we have a long way to go in order to meet the appeal fund target. The next few months will tell how we all individually and as a club rise to the challenge of raising this money. As a club we are committed to this project and the opportunities it offers to take Upper Thames forward.

At this significant time for the club as well as wishing you success and enjoyment with your individual rowing and training goals, I urge you all to consider how you personally can contribute to ensuring the future success of Upper Thames Rowing Club.

A WORD FROM OUR NEW CAPTAIN

Will Hoodless



As the new Captain of Upper Thames I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and outline some of my priorities for the coming year. However, before I start I would just like to say a big thank you to my predecessor Juliet Machan for all her hard work and dedication over the last 3 years. She leaves the club in good shape for us to build on and I know is busy looking for ways to raise money for the new clubhouse.

For those of you who don't know me, I started rowing at Abingdon School when I was 13 (some 17 years ago!) and rowed in sweep crews for many years. When I finished at school I moved over to sculling and joined Upper Thames in 2001. I spent a couple of years sculling in Upper Thames crew boats before devoting most of my time to single sculling. I have always taken a very professional and critical approach to rowing and sculling and I believe it is this pride and professionalism that I can most effectively bring to Upper Thames Rowing Club.

Over the past few years we have taken many positive steps to improve our facilities and boat fleet, and the proposals to redevelop the club house can only help further in this regard. On the competitive front we have had numerous successes including wins at the National Championships and Henley Women's Regatta in addition to representation on national teams. Looking at the club in terms of overall performance, it's clear that while some areas have improved, others have stagnated slightly. My task is to help improving areas continue to thrive, and kick start the other areas.

As captain, my main focus will be to improve the performance of the Men's and Women's senior squads. At the same time I hope to maintain the good progress we have made in the Novice, Recreational and Veteran groups. I hope that these groups will work with us to ensure that we get the success we are looking for.

Specifically, my aims for this year would be as follows:

- Senior Men: I would like to see this group continue to improve as it has over the past year, with greater success at Henley Royal Regatta
- Senior Women: I would like to see the senior women's group qualify athletes in one of the women's crew events at Henley Royal Regatta
- Veterans: For the veterans it would be good to see a more structured group winning more events at the Henley Veterans, National Veterans and most importantly World Veterans regattas
- Juniors: The junior group is beginning to blossom again and I hope that we can encourage more young people into the sport
- Novices: I would like to see several of the group progress and join the senior squads

Overall, I would like to see all areas of the club racing more often and being successful. Let me take this opportunity to outline some of the measures that we will be putting in place to achieve these aims.

Training

The senior squads will be following a training programme that will be set by JPM. In order to allow athletes to train effectively and efficiently, between 18:30 and 20:00 from Monday to Thursday the gym may only be used by those following this programme. Of course, any member of the club is welcome to use the gym at these times, but they must be doing the training on the programme for that day.

We have painted the gym and rearranged it to facilitate this training programme, and it is very important that all members work to make sure that the area remains clean and tidy. If weights are left on the floor they become trip hazards, and a 20kg weight left on a barbell or leg press is not an insignificant weight to move, especially for tired or less strong athletes.

Competitions

We will be drawing up a programme of races which the club will be attending over the coming year. I am hoping to send the trailer to a competition at least every other week, and we will need people to volunteer to tow the trailer in order to facilitate this.

This will give more members of the club an opportunity to race. I would like the club to attend regattas at various levels so that all members of the club will find it easier to race if they want to.

I will be working with crews, athletes and coaches to assess their abilities and choose regattas that are at the correct level. It is important that the club always strives to give a good account of itself at regattas. By performing well it will reflect positively on us and help encourage new athletes to join.

Boat Fleet

Currently we have a fleet of boats that many clubs would be very envious of. We have boats of every class at a standard that would be able to win any event at Henley Royal Regatta. We treat them appallingly. Having inspected the fleet, the boats are filthy and covered in minor damages caused by poor handling when carrying to and from the racks. We will be cleaning all the boats and refurbishing some of them. Club members must have more respect for the club's equipment, ALWAYS cleaning them after use, and permission to use boats will depend on attitude.

It is important to remember that we do not have a professional boatman and when boats become damaged or broken that club members should make an attempt to fix the problem on their own. It is not difficult to replace shoes or gates if they break.

Captain's Surgery

On Thursday evenings, I will be holding a surgery at the club to listen to your comments and suggestions and answer any questions you may have. I have chosen to do this as it will enable me to focus on your issues. I would kindly ask that you don't disturb me while I am training - while you might have a fantastic idea, if you try to tell me it while I'm in the middle of bench pressing twice my bodyweight I might not be able to give you the response you are looking for! Alternatively, you can always email me at williamh@champion.co.uk

Finally, all that remains is for me to wish you all an enjoyable, successful and hopefully less weather affected season.

Will

AROUND THE SQUADS - SUMMER REVIEW

The Men: Ian Ringer

Following on from the sinking and cancellation that was the Head of the River race, the summer season started slowly and with no crew sculling on offer at Wallingford Regatta the men's squad jumped into scratch sweep crews. The men's eight finished 6th in their Senior 1 final, whilst Richard Moody narrowly missed out on winning novice single sculls. Finishing 2nd in the final, he proved unquestionably that "ergos don't float" by comfortably beating Graham Benton - the world indoor rowing champion - into third place.

A month later at the Metropolitan Regatta and the extra regatta focussed training had made all the difference and things were looking up. On the Saturday the men's quad of Dan Sadler, Ian Ringer, Richard Moody and Adam Rennie picked up the club's first win of the season in the senior 2 quad sculls, winning by just under a length from Durham University. Richard then doubled up with Will Hoodless and missed out by less than a second on winning the Senior 1 double sculls. On Sunday the quad stepped up to Senior 1 and finished a credible 5th in the final against a strong field, whilst Will Hoodless finished 2nd in the Elite open single behind former squad lightweight Tim Male.

Marlow Regatta was the final regatta before HRR and the competition was tough. The only men's boat to make a final was Will Hoodless in the Elite single sculls who finished a credible third. The scratch 4+ combination of Jim Burkitt, Tom Grange, Pete Jacobs, and Jamie Smith coxed by Caris Marsh posted a competitive time but in a strong heat were only able to finish fourth. The men's quad weren't able to make it through an extremely fast semi final in the Elite quad sculls won in under six minutes. Nonetheless, with Henley only two weeks away all the squad boats were looking competitive.



The HRR men's quad on their way to victory against Nottingham

A week later and the men's quad and Will Hoodless in his single were fortunate enough to have pre-qualified off the back of their season's results. However, the men's coxed four and pair were forced to go through the lottery which is the qualifying races. The four, now comprising Karl Henderson, Tom Grange, Jamie Smith, and Ollie Davies coxed by Caris Marsh, rose to the challenge and produced one of their best performances of the season ensuring that they qualified comfortably taking one of the six places available. The pair of Jim Burkitt and Pete Jacobs were less fortunate and despite a good row missed out on one of just three qualifying places available.

When the Wednesday of Henley came round the coxed four faced a tough draw against one of the favourites and a crew full of ex-boat race blues in 1829 club. Despite going out hard in attempt to cause an upset they eventually succumbed by 2^{1/2} lengths. On to Thursday and both Will and the Men's quad cruised through their races to provide the club with two crews racing on the Friday - something Club President Peter Sutherland was particularly pleased about.

Friday's racing was much tougher and was not helped by horrible water and wind conditions. The men's quad, although making a good race of it were beaten by the GB lightweight Leander/London squad composite by a verdict of just over four lengths. Will Hoodless' race in the Diamonds wasn't any easier and a repeat of his previous year's semi-final against World Champion Mahe Dysdale. Despite being extremely quick out of the blocks Will was unable to reverse the previous years result and create a 'Rocky' style ending and lost by around four lengths. Despite the disappointment of not making the weekend it was a credible set of results by all three crews which with the continued development of the men's squad should be improved on next year.

The National Championships held in Nottingham was the final event of the season bringing deserved successes and a collection of medals for the squad. The Men's quad (Dan Sadler, Ian Ringer, Mark Shimmin and Adam Rennie) once again led the way bringing home the Gold in the Men's Open Lightweight Quad Sculls with a two length win over Nottingham RC and Tideway Scullers School. Incidentally, a rather youthful and pleased Mark Shimmin was heard to say "I never thought I would win another Nat Champs medal thirty years after my last one". Will Hoodless racing in the Open Lightweight Single Sculls and Jamie Smith and Ray Poulter racing in the Men's U23 Double Sculls both finished in third taking home bronze medals. With Richard Moody missing out in the semi finals of the U23 single sculls and Jamie Smith and Ollie Davies missing out in the heats of the Open Pairs, Upper Thames were well represented and have laid good foundations to take forward into next year.



Jamie Smith & Ray Poulter proudly display their U23 gongs

The Juniors: Lizzie Hodges

I was hoping I'd be able to write less about the weather, or at least to say how the long, sunny days had encouraged young people in Henley to come and row at UTRC. The mixed weather over the summer affected the juniors like all our other squads, but the most serious impact was on the Summer School that we had wanted to run. But the rain did not deter the newer athletes and we ran an ergo club for a few weeks, while we waited for the towpath to reappear.

Nonetheless the squad did manage to race at National Schools, Egham, Marlow Town, Kingston, and Ross Regattas, in a range of categories notching up some good wins. Well done to everyone who took part in the regattas.

With a reasonably active squad of about 30, frequency per athlete is on the up, with faces (both athletes and volunteers) appearing every week – your help coaching, even helping take boats off the racks, is most valued. With the summer over, ergo clubs are set to resume at the Club and at Gillott's School.

The Women: Claire Forgie

The season's racing for the women's squad began at Wallingford Regatta on May 6th. It had been a long time since racing at the Eights Head, so the objective was to try and get a range of different crews racing in both divisions for race practice along with identifying potential combinations for HWR.

A coxed four with Katie Currie, Elise Cope, Imogen Roberts & Claire Ginn with Dom Foley coxing raced well but came second to a fast Molesey combination. Becks and Naomi raced in Elite 2x and, up against much larger opposition, raced well to achieve 3rd place in the final.

The following week we moved on to Gent, Belgium. A weekend of almost continual racing certainly tested endurance with some having raced seven times over the course that weekend. The competition in most of the events were challenging, including crews from Belarus with their enduring Olympic Champion Ekaterina Karsten. Our quad scull, comprising Anna Van Leemputten, MA Chalmers, Naomi Ashcroft & Becks Sadler, raced well on the Saturday, narrowly missing the gold medal by a couple of feet to a local Belgian crew.

At the Met Regatta we were looking to assess possible combinations for Henley Women's. Conditions were perfect at Dorney Lake early on in the day with hot sunshine. Many events were heavily subscribed, particularly the coxed fours. In the senior 3 event on Saturday our combination of Hannah Read, Elise Cope, Imogen Roberts and Claire Ginn raced well, and a strong last 500 meters helped snatch second place from Oxford Brookes University, just behind ULWBC. Becks and MA raced in the Lightweight 2x final, commanding the race from start to finish and beating Mortlake by 4 seconds, who were a further 16 seconds ahead of the 3rd placed crew. Beth Jackson raced

well in her single on both days, and excelled in her heat on Sunday in Senior 3. Katie Currie and Jenn Hawkins raced for the first time in their pair. After racing well with Katie at stroke on Saturday, they decided to swap seats for their later races. It proved a good decision, with a better performance on Sunday achieving a creditable third in their heat. Juliet Machan raced with Lizzie Hodges in Elite 2- finishing fourth on Saturday and second on Sunday. The biggest disappointment was the quad that had raced so well at Gent. Against an under-23 composite and lightweight crews from Mortlake and Durham University, they were off the pace on both days.

Three weeks later, and Henley Women's Regatta was upon us. The Intermediate coxed four of Hannah Read, Claire Ginn, Imogen Roberts, Elise Cope and Dom Foley qualified through the time trial and went on to win with relative ease in the 1st round proper against Oxford Brookes A. Vicky Rayment and Jules Reichel, racing in Senior 2x were less fortunate, losing to Newark. Come Saturday morning, Beth Jackson had a 1st round bye but was up against the eventual finalist from Imperial College in Senior single sculls. A slight missed stroke at the start gave the other sculler the advantage out of the blocks and from then on it was difficult for Beth to get back on

terms. Next up were Caris Marsh and Emily Forrester in Senior 2x who, as a relatively new combination, found Star Club far too experienced. However, the crews of Naomi Ashcroft and Becks Sadler in Elite lightweight double, the Intermediate coxed four and the Elite double of Katie Currie & Jenn Hawkins eased their way through to the semi finals, the latter having had a pre-race dip in the Thames! Last to race on Saturday was Anna Van Leemputten in Elite lightweight sculls. Anna was pitched against an up and coming talent from Sydney University who proved too strong for her.

Sunday of HWR was a rather emotional 'down and up' day! The Intermediate coxed four were up against a tough Newcastle University crew racing in a boat named 'Becks' - yes, after Becks Sadler. Despite digging deep, they could not get back on terms with Newcastle who, using the advantage of their station, powered off the start. Ironically this crew ultimately lost to the Oxford Brookes crew that had been narrowly beaten at the Met. That's racing!



An emotional Naomi Ashcroft after winning a record 11th Women's Henley title with Becks Sader in the Elite Lwt 2x

Within half an hour, the double had also lost to a very strong Leander/Birmingham University combination who had been to heavyweight trials and won the event easily. So it was down to the tried and tested combo of Ashcroft and Sadler. They had a relatively easy semi against Becks' alma mater Newcastle University, and then faced London RC in the final. In the end, it was a combination of experience, power, generally good sculling and great style that saw them take the title they first won together in 1998. It was an emotional end to Naomi's 'competitive' racing career (allegedly) with a record equalling eleventh win at HWR and Becks achieving her eighth HWR win.

After an emotional weekend, there was the interim focus of HRR qualifiers to think about. An eight was entered consisting of Hannah Read, Claire Ginn, Naomi (already back in the boat again!) Ashcroft, Helen Mangan, Imogen Roberts, Elise Cope, Juliet Machan & Becks Sadler with Dom Foley coxing. Despite racing well in what were tough headwind conditions the crew did not qualify.



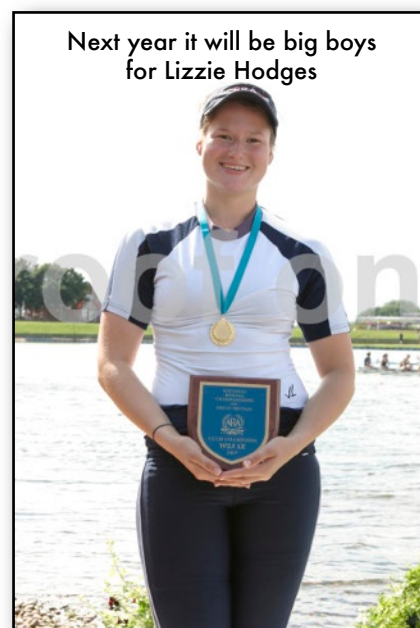
The season finished with some 'combined' success at the National Championships. Lizzie Hodges won Gold in U23 singles, and Hannah Reid and Kara Wirt claimed silver in the U23 double scull. Jenn and Katie combined with Furnival to win a silver in the 8, and Imogen Roberts racing as Reading got a bronze in the same event. Becks Sadler combined with Marlow and Reading to achieve a bronze in the women's quad scull.

LIZZIE HODGES WINS GOLD AT HOME COUNTRIES

Lizzie Hodges says you never know what you'll get at the Home International Regatta. This year the event, pitching England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales against each other, was held in Cork, Ireland. It might be reasonable to expect a pre-judgement of form at the National Championships in Nottingham, where Lizzie took gold in the U23 single sculls. Using an identical tactic in both semi-final and final, she breezed to victory by blasting out of the blocks, settling to her race pace and holding on through the notorious headwind.

A week later and Cork presents the same windy vista. However, things don't go as per the form book. After repeated consideration about the gearing, Lizzie repeats her explosive start, putting in a strong first 500 metres only to be surprised by another competitor who just does it better on the day. Ever philosophical, Lizzie explains that it's important in these situations to hold onto the points that contribute to the overall team score, and with that in mind, she fights hard to retain third place.

A quick cup of tea later (Upper Thames has taught Lizzie all she knows on this front) and it's a quick hop over into the quad. It's a fast, deeply committed boat and one of the most skilled combinations of world class women rowers to come together this year. With the Leander pair of Loveridge and Rowbotham in the stern, Nell Sage from Mortlake in the 2 seat with Lizzie steering from bow, it was, she says, "a step up in advanced technique." 5 strokes in and the quad were a length up and flying down the course. "We knew that so long as we didn't disturb the boat, it was our race. It sounds funny, but we were really relaxed, even at race pace." And then it was on to the party and another motivation for Lizzie to remain part of the national squad. "Next year it's all seniors for me," she says with a smile. There is a foot note, too. Standard selection for the national squad typically starts at junior level, but you never know who else you'll meet elsewhere. This year's Home International Regatta indicated that women's rowing in Britain now has real depth. Long may it continue onto the Worlds, Beijing and beyond, and, of course, for Lizzie.



Bar & Social Update: Jeremy Dobbin

A club supper took place on the 12th June and despite the cancellation of the Henley T&V we had a successful barbecue on the 4th August, plus some good weather, thank you to all those who attended both these events.

The intention is to recommence the Club suppers next month, same format as last year, main course plus a pudding all for the exceptional price of £6.00. The intention of these events is to get members from all sections of the club together, from the elite to the novice and recreational rower and social member. Please watch your emails and add your name to the list when it appears on the notice board.

RACING DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Please speak to Will if you want to race!

6 October

Pairs Head

14 October

Reading Small Boats Head

27 October

Marlow Long Distance Sculls

28 October

UTRC Small Boats Head

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! Please contact Andy McConnell if you can help

3 November

Fours Head

4 November

Veteran Fours Head

17 November

Henley Long Distance Sculls

25 November

Marlow 4s and 2s Head

1st December

Scullers Head

15 December

Walton Small Boats Head

The Novices

Everyone remembers their first time

When the day dawned for the novices' first regatta, an air of excitement – as well as trepidation – surrounded the group.

Although the event was Weybridge 'Ladies' Regatta, you could have been forgiven for thinking otherwise, as the novice men rallied around to support the lasses for what turned into a memorable and proud day of racing.

Except for one or two of the women's crew, all had been rowing less than a year, with many just a few months. The crew had worked hard to reach race standard and relished the challenge – as well as the prospect of bringing home medals for UTRC.

First out was the coxed four with Clair Desborough, Nikki Wright, Andrea Fisarova and Tracey Bowers. Susannah Coleman kindly stepped in at the last minute to cox and take four very nervous novices under her wing while Dom was in hospital suffering from kidney stones - OUCH! It was a brave first race, but the crew were out performed by Guildford R.C.

Undeterred, they later joined the rest of the group in an eight with the more experienced Vicky Rayment at stroke and Susannah again as cox. This proved to be a winning formula as the crew powered down the course, with rivals Eton Excelsior in serious trouble after catching a crab so large it prompted the race commentators to deliver the classic line – "Eton have put the trawlers out!" So trepidation gave way to jubilation and of course the excitement remained for many days.... and those first coveted medals will hopefully soon be joined by many more. Special thanks to Vicky Rayment and Susannah Coleman – and of course, the novice boys...thanks for your support!

A day at the races by Philip Cox-Hynd

One of the difficulties of being one of only 4 or 5 guys in a novice group of 18 (actually it is probably the only difficulty!), is that when the idea of entering a race came up in January there was no place to hide, and selection for the men's boat was pretty obvious. We were entered for several head races and started to get geared up, but each one got cancelled due to the river conditions.

The turning point came with Reading regatta. Ad, Matt, Robert and I were the only 4 guys available, so the seat racing was easy! Tracy was up for coxing us; all we had to do was train together. The challenge was that by the time we had entered Reading there were only a couple of weeks to go.

I like chance meetings, especially when one expectation turns into something else. On the Saturday 2 weeks before the race, Dom couldn't make it to the club and asked me if I would show a new 'novice joiner' around. "Sure," I said, "How will I recognise her?" Dom replied, "well on her form it says she is 6'5", or is that 5' 6"?" Her name is Anne".

So I met Anne and yes she was 6'5". I showed her round and we chatted and she asked "what are you doing this morning?" "Oh going out in a coxed four; first time as a team and with a new cox, should be interesting," I said. "Oh I'll borrow a bike a shout from the bank if you like".

I now detected a slight American accent and thought to myself 'she doesn't sound like a novice'. It turned out that Anne had coached a lot for Cambridge in the USA and here she was down for a scull on her own, at

That first session, with Anne on a borrowed bike, turned out to be the first of only six practice sessions that we managed to fit in before the race, but boy it was a baptism! To get a different perspective, to hear what Dom had been going on about but from someone new (and from someone with a strong personality that we guys weren't going to argue with!) was so important, if we were going to get from 'five bodies in a boat' to anything like a rowing team in 2 weeks.

On the day of the race unfortunately Anne couldn't be there. However, in our pre race briefing, Dom asked us what we wanted to achieve. We all said our bit. Mine was, "I don't want to mess up the start, or catch a crab and I want us to finish with dignity!" It was only when I heard the others speak that I realised they were as nervous as I was and, in as many words, wanted similar simple things!

This wasn't defeatism as it turned out. We were up against a University crew who were heard to say "I love novice races, they are such fun for us now," and after their first 5 or 6 strokes we never saw them again! So our wants for the race weren't too lowly, we did our nervous best and finished without incident or embarrassment.

It's funny, when I was asked to write this piece about my first racing experience I initially thought it would be quite short. Something along the lines of: "The first half was a blur, the second half was like trying to row with mild amnesia; all followed by intense relief." But I thought if I just wrote that down without something about what went before, it wouldn't be very illuminating - so my final message is - if you're thinking about racing this season - just do it!

The Veteran Ladies: Jo Wilby

Following the Veterans Head in March, where we just missed out on retaining our Vet B title to the blighters at Tideway Scullers, most of the Vets took a break to plan for other activities such as weddings, gardening leave, child-care, catching up with friends, doing the tax return, mowing the lawn - in fact, pretty much anything apart from rowing!

This year the Vet women decided not to go to National Vets and instead opted to carry out some serious social training at the next big wedding in the group - Louise Carey's. She looked absolutely beautiful on 23rd June while all the squad girls were flexing their muscles at HWR. The next big event was Henley Veteran Regatta at which we performed very successfully despite relatively few training outings.

We had 4 wins, including the Vet B 2x where Naomi Ashcroft and Becks Sadler continued their dominance in the double. A scratch Vet B quad, with Naomi and Becks joined by Nicola Dale and Louise Carey showed that they still have what it takes to beat a very strong crew from Thames, winning by a canvas. This was followed by the Vet B 8+ with Louise Carey, Jo Wilby, Elise Cope, Juliet Machan, Melanie Reichelt, Jenny Page, Nicola Dale, Sarah Girling and Becks Sadler coxing. It was a tough race to win, but we sneaked it by half a length over a Sons/Furnival composite, who it has to be said looked considerably younger than us.

The final race of the day was the Vet C 8+, a UTRC/TSS composite taking on the might of UK Gold (Star Composite) for the second year running. Our crew consisted of yet another well put together group of individuals - Louise Carey, Naomi Ashcroft, Claire McIntosh (TSS), Kate Grose (TSS), Pauline Bird (TSS), Rebecca Caroe (TSS), Nicola Dale, Jo Wilby and cox Brendan Desmond. The winning margin was just less than a canvas and a very sweet victory two years in a row! All round excellent results. Well done.

Henley Landladies

At least two of the novice squad are also part of the HRR army of "Henley Landladies". This is a Henley Regatta tradition coordinated by Pam Cole of the HRR headquarters which sees Henley families opening up their doors to host crews from all over the world.

Being a novice at UTRC certainly gave a new dimension to both Kirsten Wirt and Maggie Neale who hosted overseas crews this year. Kirsten hosted 10 rowers from Dublin while Maggie looked after 13 of the Seattle crew "Green Lake".

Unfortunately, Maggie didn't manage to organise an outing in the Seattle eight, but since their average height was well over six foot, this was probably the right decision in the interests of safety and Maggie's dignity. Both crews had a fantastic time, despite the weather and have vowed to return!

Like what you read?

Think you can do better?

We'd love to hear from you!

Send your thoughts and stories to:

newsletter@utrc.org.uk

The Veteran Men: Steve Dance

Men's Veteran rowing has been consistently developing and growing at Upper Thames. Although there are often many ingrained and personalised training schedules and differing goals to reconcile amongst the 'athletes', the squad really came together well over the last few months to race at several domestic and international events. These events included:



Copenhagen International Regatta

A small group of 'vet Cs' headed out to Copenhagen FISA international regatta at the end of May. A most enjoyable weekend was had by all including a win for the Veteran C quad against opposition that included a local crew comprising all ex Danish internationals and Olympians.

National Veteran Championships - Nottingham

The next major outing was at the National Veteran Regatta at Nottingham. The event was preceded by a week of sickness, injuries, rejected entries, transport and domestic problems, resulting in a day where every UTRC crew entered was a scratch

combination. The regatta had a record entry which was reflected in the standard of racing. With this in mind the club came away with a very respectable handful of silver medals in E2x, D4-, and C & D 8+. The star of the day was Clive Cooper who raced in every medal winning crew, earning him the call sign 'Super Cooper' for the weekend. It would also be remiss not to mention Andy Cicerski who won 2 medals after rejoining UTRC a fortnight earlier and being 'ejected' into his first racing since 'retiring' 5 years ago!

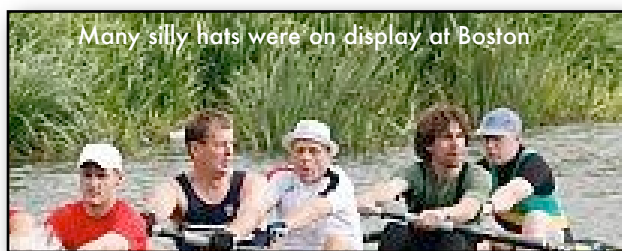
Henley Veteran Regatta

It's always a pleasure to race on home water at our home regatta, and with the exception of the vet D 4, for the UTRC men's veteran squad pleasure and experience were mostly what was gained. Pete Jacobs' subbed into the Vet D 4- for an injured Paul Stuart-Bennett, capably stroking them through the rounds and convincingly beating Norwich in the final. On reflection more outings and a tough winter's training will be needed for the rest of the veteran group to emulate the many successes of the UTRC Ladies veteran crews at this highly competitive and internationally acclaimed regatta.



FISA World Veteran Regatta - Zagreb, Croatia

Several Vet C, D and E crews took part at the recent World Veteran championships held at Lake Jarun, Zagreb, Croatia. The event received a record entry with crews from all continents, (with the current exception of Antarctica). Having entered expecting the weather to be a little more accommodating than our own summer, the crews arrived to find wet, windy and generally pretty miserable conditions. Nonetheless this didn't dampen the spirits too much and although there were no medallists, we placed highly in a number of events.



Ventilator Breaks Record at Boston Marathon

At the recent Boston Marathon our very own John Ewans racing in a composite Thames/Deben/Upper Thames/Walbrook Veteran C eight finished 1st overall and also broke the Vet C 8+ (and all other Veteran) course records.

John last competed in this race 26 years ago and being a scientific type is planning to continue the sequence by racing again in 2033.

Finally I would urge everyone to keep an eye out for 'racing veterans' Tim Kitto and Jeremy Dobbin who must have the club record this year for entering the most races. Their passion for racing has only been thwarted by the cancellation of regattas due to the summer flooding. It will be interesting to see if they maintain this record during the forthcoming head season, or whether it was a useful tactic to get Tim out of changing nappies!

UTRC - YOUR STORIES

Run for Love

But preferably money!

Some of you may know Leah Gregory. Leah joined the novice group when Club Captain Juliet Machan ran her introduction to rowing and sculling course last summer. Obviously running is not Leah's first choice of sport, but she finds that aside from ergos, it's a good way to keep up cardio fitness levels. To help motivate and improve her running and fitness, Leah has decided to set a goal of finishing the Half Marathon in good shape. Leah's decision coincided with the club's announcement for 'the great building development fundraising endeavour the like of which has never been seen since Captain Scott took to the ice' - so has decided to run the Henley Half Marathon in her UTRC all-in-one, no matter how chilly it gets. Scott would be proud!

Leah has pledged half of her sponsorship monies to the UTRC fund, and the other half to a charity. The decision to run in her UTRC all-in-one is not just because it is stylish, fetching and flattering, but to raise awareness in the town about Upper Thames and its goals (and its fabulous off the peg range of ready to wear rowing kit).

Leah won't be asking you for sponsorship, but she would love it if you will join her in your equally splendid UTRC garb, running the 13.1 miles alongside her. The more people we have wearing UTRC the more awareness we can raise (and possibly money).

The race is on Sunday 14th October 2007 which still leaves a short time to train for those people who do a minimum of jogging/running. Please let Leah know if you would like to join her in this fashionable challenge.

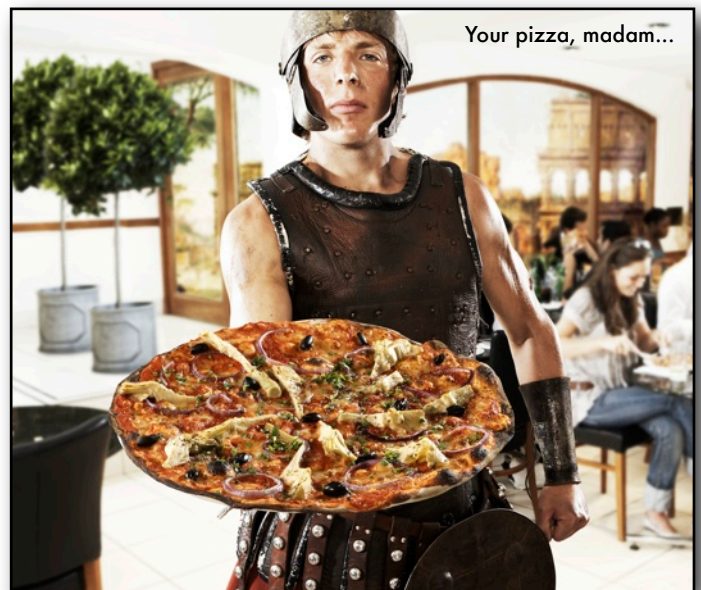
Richard Moody stars in ad for PizzaExpress Gladiator lookalike is our new Roman hero

We've all heard the stories of how cash strapped budding young starlets take to posing for the camera to make ends meet. Well that's sort of what happened to Richard Moody when he found himself a bit short of cash to pay for his Regatta entry fees.

PizzaExpress were looking for a gladiator type figure to promote their new Roman pizzas and when Welsh rugby union star Gavin Henson was unable to make it to the photo shoot Richard gladly agreed to step in and help out.

The photoshoot was held just before HRR and was sent out all over the UK as part of a national PR campaign. The feedback has been fantastic with many customers

asking exactly how they can meet this 'hunk of a guy'. Richard is now considering employing an agent to handle his affairs off the water.



Transatlantic Challenge Christmas at sea for UTRC novices

While the rest of us sit down to a fat goose and a flaming pudding at Christmas, think of UTRC members Clair Desborough and Sarah Duff as they row across the Atlantic with nothing more than dehydrated grub and desalinated sea water to wash it down.

The journey, from the Canary Islands to Antigua in the Caribbean, is a distance of 2,500 nautical miles. Madness? Quite possibly, given that neither had set their bums on a sliding seat until three years ago. Since then, the endorphin rush of ergo tests have clearly muddled their heads, and they have committed themselves to raging battle with 'the cruel sea'. For those of you who remember the classic 1953 film, Jack Hawkins and Donald Sinden stood on the bridge in well cut navy coats and roll neck sweaters, but not for our two heroes. Nowadays, trans-Atlantic rowers spend a great deal of time in the nude. Or so I'm told.

Modern fabrics and radio devices will ensure that our girls' time at sea will be as comfortable as possible, but there is a hitch. While their ambition is to beat the women's four-crew record of 67 days, seven hours and 20 minutes, they need two others to join them. The smaller matter of raising £50,000 sponsorship and sorting out the equipment may seem just as daunting, but the women are confident of meeting all their goals.

If you'd like to join them, or can help them raise the funding needed, contact the race organisers on 01364 644432 or catch either Sarah or Claire at the club.

LIVE ROWING COMES TO HENLEY TOWN HALL AT THE UPPER THAMES BOAT RACES

Saturday 3rd November 2007 @ 7.00pm

The first of our many fundraising events will be taking place on Saturday 3rd November 2007 at Henley Town Hall.

The event - **The Upper Thames Boat Races** - are boat races with a difference. We will be building a man made lake and holding a multi-lane regatta the like of which you will never have seen before!

24 boats will be taking part and local businesses are being given the opportunity to sponsor a 'boat'. The business whose boat wins on the night will then have a chance to name their very own Upper Thames boat - either a personal choice, or that of their business.

The sponsorship push has already begun and a number of local businesses have already signed up, including Ballards, The Henley Standard, Getfeedback, PSB's dental practice, SurfControl and PerfectlyPicked.

I run a local business - how can I get involved?

For the humble sum of £200 you have the opportunity to watch your very own boat compete, as this is all the sponsorship costs.

So what do I get for my money?

As well as helping us achieve our fundraising goal, we will be promoting the boat races and sponsors in the local press and through our website. If you win, you will be invited to a boat naming ceremony where you can name your own real boat. And as well as competing all over the world,

we hope that the named boat will be competing at Henley Royal Regatta next year - what better way could there be to promote your company in the region?

I don't have a business, but it sounds great - how can I get involved?

For members and their friends, the best way to get involved is simply to come along and have a great night out. Tickets for the boat races are £15 per head and include food and a welcome drink. There will even be a 'mini tote' to place a bet or two if you are that way inclined!

Also, we will need to some help organising things so please let Juliet Machan know if you are able to assist.

We only have 24 boats available to sell, so if you want to sponsor a boat or know someone who might, simply contact Juliet on 01491 577193 or email juliet@perfectlypicked.com

Tickets are also available now so get ready for a great night.

We look forward to seeing you there!

