

2020 Fixtures *for the one hundred and thirty first season*

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2020 Club Events

All events were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions with the exception of Club Day on 6th September, which went ahead in a much altered and socially distanced format.

2020 Club Events

The OGM also went ahead as scheduled on 14th July but took place via Zoom. Your duly elected captaincy for 2020/21 are:

Captain • **Cristobal Cabrera** (returning for a third year)

Deputy • **Sam Sears** (returning for a third year)

Vice • **Martin Drage**

The Annual General Meeting will take place on 28th February 2021 at 12.00 – hopefully in the bar, otherwise online .

From the Club Secretary

Marjorie Israël

Who would have thought almost a whole year of racing would be cancelled? First the weather gods threw a spanner in the works cancelling all the main Head races, then COVID-19 appeared to decimate the regatta season.

The Exec. has had a busy period during the pandemic; following the first Lockdown, meetings were held and arrangements made for a Covid-secure boathouse. Lucky scullers were allowed out first, with strict planning and cleaning protocols in place, followed by same-household doubles. Gradually the types of boats allowed increased and we had just returned to mixed household eights when further restrictions were imposed, followed by Lockdown II. At least we now know what arrangements need to be made to keep everyone safe. At the request of members, ergs were made available to be taken home, which I'm sure greatly helped in keeping people occupied and active at home.

This pandemic isn't over yet, but we will certainly emerge at the other end as a more computer-savvy club! Committee and emergency meetings, even the OGM were all held virtually (via Zoom) and were as well attended as the real ones in the bar in years gone by. Shame that the bell wasn't rung for the chairman's round!

As we continue to adhere to government rules to avoid families, friends and club mates getting the virus, we wish all members good health and strength for the Christmas period and the New Year. We remain positive and hopeful that we will meet again, in person, for a good session in 2021.

Contacts

www.cygnet-rc.org.uk

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Cygnets Bungalow *38 Hamhaugh Island, Shepperton*

Like everything else, Covid restrictions forced the Bungalow to close for much of the summer but we took the opportunity to do some useful maintenance. It's now shut down for the winter but we look forward to welcoming visitors in 2021 – hopefully! *For bookings or enquiries please contact:*

Derek Bush • [bungalow\[at\]cygnet-rc.org.uk](mailto:bungalow[at]cygnet-rc.org.uk) • **07880 548804**

Cygnets 300 Club



The 300 Club has continued to operate during the year, despite the lack of events at which to hold draws. A full list of lucky winners is available on the website.

This is our principal fund raiser which keeps our fleet maintained and up-to-date. Tickets are just £10 each and there are ten annual draws with a top prize of £100 *Contact:*

Tom Broadhurst • [tombroadhurst\[at\]live.co.uk](mailto:tombroadhurst[at]live.co.uk)

Subscriptions and Donations

Active members: CSSC £330.00* • non-CSSC £400.00

Club friends: suggested minimum £15.00

For payment details please contact the Treasurer, Mr M. Byrne Flat 102 Westfields, Railway Side, Barnes, London or email [treasurer\[at\]cygnet-rc.org.uk](mailto:treasurer[at]cygnet-rc.org.uk)

Henley Lunch

Neil Pickford

Another club event that Covid put paid to this year was the annual Henley Lunch at Leander Club. Originally a veterans-only event, it was opened-up to active members about 15 years ago, to help with dwindling numbers.

However, the number of attendees have continued to decline and along with rapidly rising costs, the writing was already on the wall for the Henley Lunch. This year's cancellation has simply hammered the final nail into the coffin of this event. A sad decision for the committee who would like to extend their gratitude to Stuart Gibbons and his predecessor, Phil Beckett for all their efforts arranging the Henley Lunch over the last 20 years or so.

There are plans to rearrange the social diary to include an alternative event a little closer to home. Watch this space.



CYGNET ROWING CLUB

December 2020 Newsletter

From the Captain

Cristobal Cabrera

Dear Cygnet Family and Friends, I hope everyone is doing well and keeping safe.

With the need to observe strict social distancing restrictions, May began with outings only in singles and doubles of the same household. Then as the restrictions relaxed, bigger crew boats were allowed and training was updated accordingly although no regattas were allowed.

In September we managed to celebrate a socially distanced Club Day including a mixed boat time trial. Thanks to all who made the day possible and congratulations to Rubina Curtis for whom a BBLRC boat was named as part of the day's activities.

Since this September we couldn't go to Hamhaugh Island for Sculling Camp (and to celebrate the Bungalow's 100th anniversary), we did a long sculling day on the Tideway instead, with three outings across the day. During the first, low-tide skills session we were joined by a seal as a special guest! Secondly a double and quad session followed by a final long, double-tide return paddle to Richmond for the more experienced single scullers.

Good (Covid-safe) training sessions continued on the water with Beth and Strength & Conditioning on land with Charlie, plus coached ergs. The main goal was to have fun and find some rhythm with the hope of some racing at some point before the end of the year.

In October, after a long hiatus, an actual race took place on the Tideway! Congratulations to Barnes Bridge Ladies for managing to organise Pairs Head of sorts. Cygnet didn't enter any crews as our focus was on the Fours Head weekend, where we had two crews entered on both days. But unfortunately (and inevitably) we went into Lockdown again and the races were cancelled. So we organised a Virtual Fours Head with two teams of four, running the course distance instead. *The Pickford Crew* of Andy, Martin, Pete, Rupert raced in at 33:54.5 while *The Jackson Crew* of Beth, Mustafa, Cris, Simon scored 35:17 it was great fun!

From the Captain

continued

Talking of fun, that same week there also was a special BBL / CYG online Quiz Night. Big thanks to our social secretaries Rupert and Samantha for organizing.

December saw us back to where we were before Lockdown II as, luckily for us, we emerged into Tier 2.

Nevertheless it has been a challenging year for everyone. A big thank you and congratulations to all of those involved in putting together the Clubs' and Executive Covid-safe guidelines and adapting them when it was required. Well done to everyone who has continued training and coaching.

Don't forget that hope is also contagious so keep safe and positive. Wishing you all Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and looking hopefully towards a successful 2021.

Hammersmith Bridge

Neil Pickford

On 13th August and with no prior warning, it was announced that Hammersmith Bridge would be closed completely from 5.00pm that day – including all river traffic transiting under the bridge. The reason for the closure was that existing cracks had worsened considerably due to the extreme temperatures (exceeding 30°C) of the previous week. The bridge looks likely to remain closed for the foreseeable future and the PLA have put in place a 15m Exclusion Zone on either side of the bridge.

Due to COVID restrictions, there was very little rowing activity anyway. That which has been possible has obviously been severely disrupted by this closure, particularly for clubs based below the bridge. Indeed, the 2021 University Boat Race has already been moved to Ely because of the situation.

The potential repair bill has been quoted at £141m and central government funding is widely viewed as essential. A Task Force comprising the principal stake holders and chaired by the Under Secretary at the DoT has been convened to take over the project and formulate solutions.

A public meeting hosted online by the Task Force in October revealed that the funding issue was no closer to being resolved. Hammersmith and Fulham Council were adamant that the bridge's Grade II* listing would be respected and while there were no plans to demolish the bridge there are rumours that it could be over six years before it can be re-opened to motor traffic. Let's hope that river navigation doesn't also stay restricted for that long! Temporary crossing solutions, including a ferry service, are being considered.

David Webb

Paul Rawkins

Once in a while, the death of a Cygnet alumnus mines a deep seam of contemporary consciousness: David Webb, an irrepressible 'wet-bob' of Olympian repute, who died on 25th June at the age of 77, was just such a man. In early July, his son Nicolas wrote to inform us of his father's sad demise in the hope that someone might remember him; he was not disappointed - within hours a tsunami of memories poured forth from his fellow crewmen.

David joined Cygnet in 1970, his short stature and well-honed vocal cords marking him out as a coxswain from the outset. He was initially let loose on a novice IV – Gary Fettis, Jeremy Berrisford, Stuart Fraser and Richard du Parcq – subsequently steering a host of club crews to victory, culminating in Cygnet's first post-war entry at Henley Royal Regatta in 1972 and again in 1973.

Official club photos of the time show David immaculately turned out in his coxswain's regalia, his inventive mind always thinking ahead. Gary Fettis recalls 'I remember his sartorial elegance which carried through to everything he did. There were no built-in speaker systems in the '70s, so David took it upon himself to install one in our VIII and very neat it was too with all the speakers placed inside Harrods' plastic bags to keep them dry'.

Other Cygnet contemporaries remember an insatiable socialite who always knew where the best parties were and, more to the point, how to gain entry to them. Norman Cowling wistfully recounted how 'he frequently tried to get us to drink what he called an Evelyn Waugh noonday reviver – a lethal mix of Guinness, gin and ginger beer – I never knew if it was his own invention'.

Then, as now, 'club hopping' was not uncommon. David decamped to Thames Tradesmen in 1973 and thence to London where he steered the renowned McLeod and Christie coxed pair, which gave him his entrée to the 1976 Montreal Olympics. A second Olympic appearance with the same duo followed in Moscow in 1980. At Cygnet, it remains a source of pride that the 1972-3 crews produced two world-class GB competitors: David in the Olympics and Stuart Fraser in the World Championships (1975-76).

Aside from rowing and gate-crashing all the best venues in town, David retained a lifelong interest in music and the arts. He played violin and piano to a high standard early in life, mastered the art of conducting and went on to play percussion in the National Youth Orchestra. At Oxford,

he read Greats/Classics at Hertford College, albeit without much enthusiasm, before heading north to complete a degree at Hull (where he made Larkin's acquaintance).

The world of work brought new challenges, initially as a manager for the Festival Ballet/English National Ballet, followed by careers in the Civil Service and British Telecom prior to a contented retirement in East Sussex with wife Veronica. Nicolas would be delighted to hear from David's old teammates and can be contacted via email at nicolas.webb@talk21.com

Greg Steene

Paul Rawkins

It is with great sadness that we record the death of Greg Steene, who died suddenly on 20th November at the age of 70. Greg joined Cygnet in the 1970s; a solid bow/stroke side man, he powered several Vllls over the head course and proved to be a timely addition to the Plumtree VIII of 1977.

For a club steeped in the ways of the Civil Service, Greg was a breath of fresh air hailing, as he did, from the world of boxing. Henceforward, après rowing took on a whole new meaning. Contemporaries recall an action-packed night at the ring side in Clapham Town Hall, when Chairman Nick Wylie emerged speckled with blood, and he was only a spectator.

Others recollect a weekend at Stourport Regatta where Greg kept the whole camp site awake all night recounting jokes and bawdy tales that nobody could remember the following morning. Few pots were won that day. Jackie, Greg's wife, who survives him, was not above joining the fray, steering Greg and Mike Evans in non-status pairs at Llandaff regatta, 'a trip noted more for the visit to Barry Island for the 2.00am bar rather than the rowing'.

Mike reminded us of Greg's wedding reception where we rubbed shoulders with all the great and the good of the sparring fraternity including 'John Conteh, lots of other boxers, show biz types and a couple of Krays (but not the twins!)

A legendary boxing manager and match maker, Greg drifted away from the club and we had not seen him for some years. However, for those of us who were lucky enough to know him, they were memorable times indeed. Greg's son Aleck would be pleased to hear from anybody who would like to share their memories of Greg. Please contact Aleck via email at aleckj@gmail.com. A memorial event will be held in 2021.