



Cygnet Newsletter

Christmas Edition 2016

At the end of the year, we look back at an eventful year for Cygnet. Last year was filled with events related to the 125th existence of the club, and the 50 years of friendship with Benrath; the December issue of last year's Newsletter was therefore filled with reports of meals, trips and lunches. In 2016 the focus swung firmly towards the rowing side of things with the recruitment of Tim Male as our coach from the end of the summer and his reign is already showing its benefits.

Merry Christmas and a Happy, Successful 2017!

Marjorie Israel, Club Secretary

From the Captain

At the beginning of autumn, the focus changed from regattas to building fitness both off and on the water, for the winter season with circuits sessions, erg evenings, and weekend outings.

Coaching

The big news is the recruitment of Tim Male as our lead coach. Tim is an ex GBR International rower and Olympian with a great coaching reputation. Since he started coaching us on 8 October we've seen much improved attendance at Saturday morning sessions and the double outings on Saturdays and Sundays is developing the squad's technique and fitness. We had 20 rowers taking in part in the 2k erg test on 29 October with 5 personal bests being set. Tim is coaching us on our overall fitness and training and providing guidance on diet and nutrition and challenging us all to raise the level of what we can achieve. I've had lots of very positive feedback from club members enthused by the focus and professionalism of Tim's coaching. This is a significant investment by the club and an opportunity and success has to be judged by results and squad growth. We have to commit and make it a success.

Racing

Four crews from both Cygnet and BBLRC travelled to Dusseldorf and Benrath for the annual Rhine Marathon and all crews finished in good time, with a third place in their category for Cygnet I of Neil Pickford, David French, Scott Livingstone and Alan Cox (subbing for Mike Collier), ably coxed by Lars Ludvig from Benrath. Never has a happier face been seen on the third place podium. Beer was drunk, bratwurst was eaten, and all agreed that a wonderful time was had with our Benrath friends.



Two weeks later, three crews entered Pairs Head (total 416 crews finished):

157 - Bart de Groot and Gavin Hunter IM1 2-

258 - Robin Harries, Capn Jez IM3 2x

266 - Ian Mountain and Matt Byrne IM3 2x

This year, we did not enter the Head of the River Fours, but we did have three crews entered in the Vet Fours Head

44th overall Mas B 4- (Bart, Gavin, Ian M and Gareth) 18:46, 3rd in category

139th overall Mas B 4x (Vasil, Tom, Piers, Tom) 20:26, and 11th in category

146th overall Mas Nov 4- (Anna, Nick, Cris, Jez, Scott) 20:40 and winner in category

Well done to Bart, Gay, Ian and Gareth on a high overall finish.

And well done to Anna, Nick, Cris and Scott for dragging the captain down the course to a victory in their category.

Finishing the 2016 official racing schedule, six Cygnets entered Scullers Head - David French, Bart de Groot, Guy du Parc Braham, Robin Harries, Cristobal Cabrera and Captain Jez himself slogged down the head course and, most importantly, paddled all the way back to the club as well.

Huge congratulations to Big Dave French for winning his category on his debut as a sculler and a top 100 finish (96th).

The full results for Cygnet were

96 Dave 23:31
226 Bart 24:32
328 Robin 25:16
363 Guy 25:30
371 Jez 25:32
432 Cris 26:24

Finally, congratulations to Coach Tim who won his Masters B category and was 11th overall in 22:22.

Social

As ever, the social side of Cygnet was not forgotten. At the end of season dinner we awarded Scott Livingstone with the GP Jeffries award for the most improved rower. Kiwi Scott has developed quickly since he graduated from the Autumn 2015 Learn to Row, competing in head races and regattas in crew boats and developing his skills in pairs, doubles and singles. Coupled with long levers and big engine means Scott has the potential to do well at a higher level and have a pot strewn career at Cygnet.

The Wally Wheldal award for Club Man of the Year was awarded to Alan Cox for his commitment to coaching the main squad and the LTR courses, rain or shine, always positive, patient and enthusiastic.

Recruitment

The latest learn to row course finished on 23 October, all participants have been invited to join the club and most have been carrying on rowing under Alan's tutelage as our new novice squad. Thanks to Alan for the hours he put in on and off the water imparting his knowledge in a clear uncomplicated and fun way. We have to wait and see how many will commit to the training plan that will get them competitive in the coming season but they should get their first race like experience at Plum Puddings on 18 December.

Longer term we must continue to grow our active rowing base through further learn to row courses in the spring and autumn. With a big name coach like Tim we should also be able to recruit experience rowers. Tim has talked about helping with a long term recruitment plan and we should take advantage of this and his reputation to draw in more rowers. I shall make this my focus for the rest of my captaincy with the support of Charlie and Nick.

Jeremy Pugh

Subscriptions and Donations

Subscriptions for 2017 are certainly due January 2017, and can be paid by electronic payment (please inform the Treasurer by sending an email to treasurer'at'[cygnet-rc.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@cygnet-rc.org.uk)) or by cheque.

If you prefer to pay by cheque, please return this tear-off slip with your cheque to the Treasurer, Matthew Byrne, Flat 102 Westfields, Railway Side, Barnes, London SW13 0PL. Active Members: members of the Civil Service Sports Council - £290.00*, Others - £360.00; Club Friends: Suggested minimum - £15.00.

Enclosed my subscription/donation for £.....

Your name _____

Your address: _____

Post Code: _____

Your CSSC* number _____ (please provide if you pay £290.00 Cygnet subs)

*** Club members paying the CSSC-member subscription fee are now required to show their 2016 CSSC membership card to a member of the Management Committee**

From the Club Secretary

Cygnets members, alumni and friends gathered at Leander for the Henley lunch on Saturday 29 October. The canapés were lovely, as ever, and one could get plenty as long as one positioned oneself in the right location. Once lunch had been consumed, and the chairman and captain's speeches were enjoyed, it was the turn of our speaker for the year. We had invited Cygnets member Matteo Perucchini and his fiancée to tell us some of his stories from his adventure rowing the Talisker Atlantic Challenge. Matteo rowed and won the Solo category in a new record time of 52 days 3 hours and 26 minutes.

I am not sure what I expected, but it wasn't the tales he told of the months of organisation, training, eating to put on a lot of weight; and that was before he set off! Some of the thoughts he shared from his time on the ocean were poignant and show that such a challenge is way more than just a very long physical effort and changes the person's outlook on life and his surroundings forever. I was particularly touched by his response to a question during an interview where he was asked if he ever ate fish on the journey: "I could not do that, they were accompanying me for days, they'd become my friends."

As our Captain later puts it in his weekly update: "If we thought we were tough guys for paddling to the Pink House and back in a bit of launch wash, Mateo's story of his transatlantic row in the Talisker Challenge put what we do into perspective."

Thanks are due to Stuart Gibbons for all his work organising the event.

Marjorie Israel

Dates for your diary

28 January	Quintin Head
12 February	Cygnets Birthday - 127 years
26 February	Cygnets Annual General Meeting - at the boathouse - 12noon

The Club Historian writes: A Running Club or a Rowing Club?

Our new coach, Tim Male, has recently introduced running into the weekly training programme. Relative newcomers and those weaned on ergometers may find this rather novel. However, there is nothing new here; running featured regularly in Cygnets's winter training regimen up until the 1990s.

G.P. Jeffries, captain in 1935-51 and himself a long distance runner, first introduced cross-country running into the training curriculum at Cygnets after the Second World War. In time, the growing popularity of running for oarsmen gave rise to the annual Oarsmen's Cross Country Race (see photo), an event that alternated between Richmond Park and Blackheath, followed by a slap-up tea in a local pub. In 1958, Cygnets member Malcolm Mills won the event outright. Cygnets continued to compete in this event throughout the 1960s and in 1969 a team comprising Roy Alder, Carey Rawlins, Colin Dominy and Robin Mayer won the Richmond Park event.



The most popular running routes for winter training at Cygnets were the Chiswick Bridge run (approx. 3 miles) and the Richmond Park run (approx. 5 miles). Both routes involved risking life and limb: on the Chiswick Bridge run, sprinters had to take their chances crossing the A316 at peak traffic flow, while the wild life in Richmond Park presented some unique challenges.

The Richmond Park run more closely resembled a cross-country route and entailed running across Barnes Common to Priory Lane before entering the park at the top of this lane and exiting at Sheen Lane Gate. Running through the park in pitch darkness with the deer rustling in the trees, particularly during the 'rutting' season which sometimes featured fierce mating battles, generally produced quite fast running times.

Having exited the park, runners were often presented with a moral dilemma at the Sheen Lane level crossing. As a general rule, runners were expected to run up and down the footbridge, regardless of whether the level crossing gates were open or shut; however, if the gates were open, the temptation to disregard the rule was huge.

By the time I joined Cygnet in 1973, running was well-established in the winter training schedule and around this time Peter Sly, our late president, presented a cup for running with tankards awarded to the winner of the handicap and the overall winner. Much controversy used to surround the setting of the handicaps, with contestants vying for an 'appropriate' handicap in the weeks leading up to the annual event. Woe betide the contestant who turned up on the night, seemingly without form, and won the handicap.

Malcom Burman, not a natural runner, recently recalled that during the 1970s at the height of his active rowing career, he was running up to twenty miles a week. Successive coaches introduced variations on a theme: George Plumtree used to have crews flogging up and down to the bandstand ten times before outings and shuttle runs in the gym on Tuesdays were an absolute killer. A combination of the Chiswick Bridge and the Richmond Park runs produced a route approaching seven miles. Newcomers to the club could be forgiven for thinking that they had joined a running club rather than a rowing club.

The death knell of running was the ergometer. One of these first made an appearance at Cygnet in the late 1980s: located between the doors of the boathouse, it was initially regarded with acute suspicion and dismissed as a gimmick. In time, however, it wheedled its way into the training curriculum and today, of course, the ergo reigns supreme. That said, though, it is encouraging to note that there is still a place for running in today's training regimen and, who knows, the Peter Sly Cup could yet be resurrected.

Merry Christmas one and all.

Club Historian

125 Years Cygnet History

If the above tale of history in the making has inspired you to look into Cygnet's History, why not invest some money in the latest Cygnet publication.

'A History of Cygnet Rowing Club 1890 - 2015' is a high quality, hardback book which has been substantially rewritten by Paul Rawkins and contains 84 full colour pages of text and photographs, much of it unearthed since the previous edition, published in 1990.



You can order your copy by e-mailing Paul Rawkins direct on prawkins@googlemail.com. If you do not have access to the Internet, please fill in the slip below and send it to Paul Rawkins, 30 Bracken Gardens, Barnes, SW13 9HW.

A History of Cygnet Rowing Club 1890 - 2015

YES, please send me 'A History of Cygnet Rowing Club 1890 - 2015' for the bargain price of £18.50 per copy (includes 2nd class postage and packing); or £19.00 for first class postage.

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