

Robs' Power 10

Rob Roy Boat Club newsletter Summer 2013

www.robroyboatclub.net



Chris racing Vesta Scullers
Head 2012- photo by Big Blade
Photography

Spotlight on Chris Covey

It's 7:30pm on a lovely weekday evening. In the Robs bay at CRA boathouse, I notice several empty boat racks and see one of our masters men just back from a singles outing. As I wait, sitting by the Cam outside Caius, a small fleet of juniors weave past, slowed down by and adding to, river traffic. Then a novice women's VIII passes. One absolute beginner in the crew is coached through separation from the bank as she and another inch the boat along, their crewmates waiting at ease.

Caius bay doors are wide open. The two guys I'm waiting for are just inside, moving in unison, on two ergs locked together with slide trays, 7/8 of the way through their 16,000 m UT2 piece. Ben Hicks, now in his fifth year training with GB Start and winner of Mens Elite Single Scull at 2012 Met, is stroke, with Chris Covey following in tandem.

In 2010, Chris was part of Team Hallin, completing a record-breaking ocean row across the Atlantic in 31 days 23 hours and 31 minutes. A classic romantic, Chris made worldwide headlines when he knelt to propose to girlfriend Susie on landing at Barbados, bearing a ring he had hidden in the boat.

'Quick, go and do something stupid that might just kill you and if you survive, get married,' Chris later explained.

But when talking to Rob Roy Boat Club members a month after the ocean row, Chris touched on the true value gained from his experience-camaraderie amongst college mates from Durham, the excitement of seeing built their



Chris talking to juniors
in CRA boathouse

own triamaran design, learning about survival at sea, ocean navigation, dealing with chronic sea sickness, blisters, playful dolphins and an unaccountable attractiveness to flying fish. Memorably, Chris shared two insights about preparation and teamwork from his ocean row that easily transfer to flat water rowing.

'In an ocean row the crucial difference is, once you slip that line and you've started your row, whatever you have on board and whatever training you've done is what you have. But, equally, sitting at the start of any race, be that a head race in Cambridge or National Championships, it's about how much you can do beforehand so that you know you've done everything you can to give yourself the best chance possible.'



Spotlight on Chris Covey *continued*

Chris also discussed teamwork in a crew setting during his 2010 talk at CRA. He suggested that stronger athletes should work to make the boat a stable platform so that every crew member can achieve their optimal performance.

With still perfect sculling conditions outside, Ben and Chris' tandem erg piece ends, Caius boathouse doors are closed, ergs neatly stored away. I ask Chris how he feels about his ocean row experience in retrospect, two years on.

'It did nothing for my rowing technique and sent me physically backwards massively. Your muscles basically waste away but it does cleanse your mental aspect. Preparing for the challenge, we got used to sitting on ergs for a long time- a lot of four hour stuff or two hours on, two hours off. The longest one I did on my own was a 24 hour straight and I also did a two hour on, two hour off with Jack, my opposite man in the two seat for two days on Tottenham Court Road. That was in snow; it was freezing cold but we raised £1300 for Combat Stress. I had music on. I started listening to my ipod on day 26 of the Atlantic row. Then I wondered why I hadn't started using this before, because it's a lot better with music- it focuses you in the boat. You've got to pull hard. You become pretty much delirious by the time you've done six hours.'

Would you do another ocean row?

'No. not unless there was a really good reason.'

And you, Ben, would you row the ocean?

'Only if I can make Chris do it with me.'

Then Ben departs to recover, protein and carb load, relax after the hard training session. Chris kindly stays on- we have lots to talk about. Elite squad member, club liaison with GB Start, Equipment Officer and main contact for the new Stretham facility, Chris is integral to Rob Roy Boat Club's ongoing quest for excellence.

First topic is winter training. With some significant head races cancelled due to weather conditions (HoRR and Head of Nene) and the new St. Faiths gym programme on trial throughout last winter, I wonder about the impact on Elite Squad.

'This past winter was difficult simply because of the weather. It's been really really cold for a very long time. We tend to cross-train, things like cycling to work, which can be pretty dangerous when it's that cold. So this sort of thing became harder to do.'

'The St. Faiths facility was an excellent big-sized space, always controlled, not disturbed. It's a shame it wasn't sustainable but I actually think for the winter that was one of the best things we had going. We got through challenging erg pieces as a squad and were joined by some masters men and women and juniors, who benefited from ad hoc coaching. There were organised circuits, also some people doing yoga and everyone got a lot out of it. You compare that to erging at Caius, where if there are six people wanting to erg it can't happen, and that simply isn't good enough.'

'As ever at Robs, we suffer from finding it difficult to get coaching because coaching is quite time consuming. And it is something that I would like to gradually change. We seem to have gone through a bit of a vacuum where there has been no kind of coaching structure but Simon Goodbrand has been good at trying to start that back up. I hope it will filter down. If you have athletes who have succeeded at a high level nationally and achieved what they want to achieve, then they are in a position where they can help other club members. And so it goes down the chain and if you can build up that structure and maintain that structure, then you begin to see really good racing results as a club. This is something that gradually develops and we aren't there yet. Talented athletes tend to enjoy coaching good, committed individuals so these are people we aim to attract and retain at Robs.'

Earlier this year, at the Robs Annual Dinner, Chris summarised Elite Squad's impressive 2012 achievements. He mentioned Dan Clift's single scull win at Nat Champs, Ben Hick's Elite Single Scull win at the Met and the coxless Mens 4-IM1 Met win (crew Rob Stark, Chris Covey, Ben Hicks and Dan Clift). With this in mind, I ask about the squad's main focus areas and goals for 2013.

'For the 4-, our Henley performance in the Wyfold event was the really good one and we want to go back. That boat wasn't very long in development with not many outings for what a coxless four would usually want. Our performance at the Met was OK. Marlow suggested we were in the right kind of ball park to be competitive at Henley. The Wyfold draw was dreadful with all of the good boats stacked on one side but that's Henley and part of competing there. We knew the hot boat was Nottingham as we'd seen them race at Met and they were a class

above us certainly. In our first two rounds it wasn't particularly deft rowing, yet we were four strong guys who could push the boat through the pin. But we improved and then we had to face Nottingham and it was in that race that we seemed to raise our game very effectively. It wasn't enough to beat them, unfortunately, but I took a lot of confidence from that row and I think the rest of the crew did. We finished that race thinking we know there's nothing more we could have done there but now we know there's more in terms of preparation that we can do to win that event and we're coming back to it thinking- alright, let's do it properly this year.'

So Henley Royal, the first week of July, is the squad's current main focus. Have crews been formed?

'Not yet but Simon will be finalising his selections very soon. We have guys back from GB Squad trials and I am absolutely keen, as liaison between GB Start and Rob Roy Elite, that no Rob Roy athlete will be put at a disadvantage because they've gone through the trialling process to represent their country. So they can go off and do trials and always be welcomed back and encouraged to compete for boats. That's how it works.'

'The selection process is a combination of things. People tend to concentrate on seat racing but seat racing alone is quite a crude tool. The best way to select a crew is to try out people in different combinations in a boat and actually do training and work out what goes fastest. Do some seat racing, definitely. Get some erg data. If you make minor adjustments to our rig in the 4- and we are out training, we'll row well or row badly. Now if you consider seat racing, where athletes are dumped into seats in two boats, often the rig is completely wrong. It's also dependent on weather conditions on the day. And how you fit with the guys around you. You can have very strong guys who don't seat race very well. Simon has to select the crew that he feels he can develop into the fastest boat Robs can row in the Wyfold.'

'Apart from our Wyfold entry, other crews are developing too. Simon and Ed Parkhouse are racing well in the double scull. Athletes not selected for Wyfold may look to form other crews, possibly with some senior or masters guys. We'll have to see what people want to do. The aim is to peak both physically and technically for Henley. After Henley, people take stock. If we win the Wyfold, suddenly we've got four athletes who have won a club level event at Henley so the next level



Rob Roy Juniors Squad, lead by Enya Meadows, trains on the Cam

Spotlight on Chris Covey *continued*

up is an intermediate event, which is really tough. They could decide to go for that or they might prefer to focus on other events, maybe do some coaching, and then you strengthen the club.'

On the back of Captain Simon Goodbrand's recent equipment and squad shake-up, plus Claire Allen's SE grant win, the club fleet has advanced more this year than many members will recall from the past. The Mens Squad are thoroughly enjoying their new Filippi VIII, while Masters Women are delighted to have a new Stampfli quad. Another recent acquisition are 10 pairs of Braca-sport blades for the Juniors Squad. A blade repair and painting session was organised to give members the opportunity to chose which club blades they prefer.

As Equipment Officer, Chris, what are your thoughts about the current fleet and how would you like Robs equipment base to evolve?

'Every club boat now has blades assigned to it because that kind of consistency helps athletes progress. We have some good ergs and are looking for another winter training venue similar to St. Faiths.

Women's Squad have an VIII, their new quad, which converts to a 4- and a pretty

reasonable pair. For the men there's the Filippi 4- that we raced at Henley last year, a coxless 4- which we now have quad riggers for so it's a coxless four and a coxless quad if needed and we have the light and heavy doubles/pairs. We also now have the Filippi VIII to replace the Ted Bailey, which was something that needed to be done years ago.

So that's where we start off with the elite boats, the top level boats and that's the equipment that people should aim to use. It's important you have that because it means that people effectively get payback for their training. If they decide they are going to train really hard to be able to compete where margins are tight we can supply them at Robs with equipment that is representative of what they will be racing against. That's the important thing. We shouldn't be sat there with a Robs crews aiming to go top 40 in HoRR in a Sims that's been smashed in half because that's not what everyone else is rowing in. People may think that the Filippi 4- is a bit of a fancy boat but when you get to the weekend of Henley and you look around those boat tents, everything is yellow. What we don't want is people looking at Rob Roy and feeling that our top crews are not

supported by their club. With competitive equipment, we can get top results and that's how we want to advertise Robs. If we get that bit right, we will attract top athletes and it all filters down.

Top equipment should be looked after and it should be respected and only used by those people who need that equipment, crucially. I think people in the club are gradually adjusting to this. In the past there has been an attitude that anyone paying membership should have access to the entire club fleet. But this leads to clubwide mediocrity, where no one has aspirations to achieve anything. We need to ensure that athletes who aim high have access to the support they need at Robs.

Everyone has a right to have a boat that they can row in and improve in and if they don't have that they need to speak to me or their captain and we can sort it because that's not good enough. But people don't need to row in carbon fibre boats just to have a paddle around. I am very keen to clarify this. Elite kit cannot be used by non-elite members. For athletes working really hard and progressing, the carrot at the end is use of top equipment. These athletes race



Reid Jameson Potts
admiring a flock of swans
at Milton Lake



Stretham

Spotlight on Chris Covey *continued*

where margins are a canvas. In that context, a lightweight, high-spec boat does make a difference. If people flout the system, say by taking out an elite boat to race a scratch crew in a local event, they cost the club depreciation of an expensive piece of kit as well as failing to show respect for those athletes putting in the huge commitment needed to earn their place on that seat.

If we learn to replace our top boats with a depreciation model, we can maintain an excellent portfolio of equipment and still safeguard the club's finances. This means that everyone has equipment appropriate for them and that, as a club, we can excel in competition at all levels.'

As a result of a massive negotiating and set-up effort by Andy Turnbull, Simon Goodbrand and Chris Parkhouse, Stretham is the newest of Rob Roy Boat Club venues. Chris is main club contact for Stretham. What vision do you have for Robs at Stretham, relating to its significance for the Elite Squad as well as for other squads in the club?

'Let's consider our entire range of facilities. I like the fact that we've chosen to invest in various venues because I think a boathouse on the Cam would be useless. The Cam as a training venue is good for certain things. For people who want to go out and have a nice paddle in a single, do some crew boat work, learn to steer, prepare for local races. It's OK for juniors but complete novices who flounder around generally just get in the way. For athletes looking to race nationally at a high level it's no good simply because you can't get any serious, consistent training done.

This is why we have a structure of venues. The Cam is very convenient for those who turn up in a car, on bike or live in Cambridge. They can take a boat out, usually a single or something small, go for a row, then go home. Occasionally we might put an VIII out for Cambridge head race training.

Milton Lake, where we run the Learn To Row courses, is good for complete novices.

Now we have Stretham, which is a venue specifically for people who want to develop a competitive race pace. This provides a straight bit of river to enable training in such a way that you can put together an effective 2km piece without interruption. It's a fairly clear river apart from some cruisers. So Stretham is intended to develop our club's national, trialling and international level racing and I hope it will be retained as just that.

The intention is to allow all members to develop their rowing as quickly and safely as possible. The protocol for club members thinking they might need to use Stretham is to apply to me and the captains.

Contact Chris by emailing equipment@robroyboatclub.org.uk, Simon Goodbrand captain@robroyboatclub.org.uk, Anna-Rosa Gejlsbjerg womenscaptain@robroyboatclub.org.uk

There are options at Stretham- for example, two directions you can row. For coached outings, there is a launch but this involves extra expense so only makes sense for quite focused training. For a crew training for, say, Henley Masters, this is the sort of thing that Stretham is for. Crews applying to train there need to be racing at a reasonable level and have specific nationally competitive goals.

I would also like to mention our current erg set-up. I know that a lot of people erg at home or go to a gym. If club members wish to make use of the club ergs at Caius boathouse, please contact me or Simon. The Women, Men, Juniors and Elite Squads all use the ergs at various times and we can help to arrange access that doesn't conflict with other squads training.'

On behalf of the whole club, here's wishing you, Chris, and the Elite Squad good luck at Henley!

(based on a 30/04/13 interview of Chris Covey by newsletter editor)

Andrea Bosnyak, Katherine Webster, Carrie Bedingfield and Anna-Rosa Gejlsbjerg racing to win their Head of the Cam event in the new Stampfli 4x.

Still shot taken from www.spannerspotter.com video footage



Help Urgently Needed!

Committee Support Team Position Available

Our club relies on volunteering in order to function and progress. No one on the committee or support team is paid for their club involvement and all Rob Roy Boat Club members commit to helping the club when they join. If you haven't yet found a way to help out this year, please seriously consider if you can help fill the important vacant post listed below:

Anna-Rosa's recent appointment as Women's Captain leaves the position of **Events Secretary** vacant. RRBC runs two annual competitive events:

- 5 October- Cambridge Small Boats Head
- 19 October- Cambridge Autumn Head

These popular and well-established local events raise valuable funds for our club and allow us to make a positive contribution to local racing. **Events Secretary** is an intense commitment in the lead up to and during these two October events, but throughout the rest of the year, the position is dormant. This is a great way to make a really valuable contribution to the club for someone willing to commit to a short burst of summer/early autumn effort.

The main tasks involved are

- 1) Find Three British rowing qualified umpires who can attend the event(s). Liaise with them regarding race risk assessment and other documentation including information to competitors and safety information and organising the umpires on the day of the race.
- 2) Advertising of events (poster and other publications)
- 3) Organizing payment of race insurance
- 4) Liaise with Churchill college bursar regarding parking at combined boat house
- 5) Liaise with the council regarding access to Stourbridge common
- 6) Liaise with CRA regarding use of CRA boathouse for race control and the use and pickup and drop off of marshalling kit
- 7) Order Pots and race numbers for the events
- 8) Find marshals and start and finish teams and organize marshals rota

- 9) Organise qualified first aider for event
- 10) Handle all Entries and entry queries and payments
- 11) Do the draw(s)
- 12) Ensure that all the event documentation is published on the Rob Roy Website
- 13) Race control
- 14) Ensure that results are published on the Rob Roy website
- 15) Submit results to BR
- 16) Organise payment of race fee to Cam Conservators

If anyone is interested in volunteering to be **Events Secretary**, please contact our chairman, Andy Turnbull as a matter of urgency. Email chairman@robroyboatclub.org.uk or telephone 07974023880

Committee Updates

Claire Allen has invested considerable effort and time successfully applying for funding to develop the Womens Masters Squad and also to enhance opportunities for younger Robs women.

Here is Claire's summary of exciting news:

At the beginning of 2013, the Womens Masters Squad won a £10,000 grant from Sport England to invest in a new 75kg coxless four/quad scull and to finance two of the Masters Women (Captain Anna-Rosa Gjelsbjerg and Katherine Webster) to participate in a BR Coaching Level 2 Course. The rationale behind the grant request was twofold - in the first instance, to provide a more suitable weight boat for women and to encourage greater flexibility and involvement; secondly, to provide opportunities for older juniors to gain experience in coxless boats and to row with seniors. The addition of the new 4x/- affords much greater flexibility since womens' crews are no longer constrained by weight combinations. As a consequence, the existing lightweight 4x/- is more regularly available for junior use.

The new Stampfli arrived in April and the masters women

Committee Updates *continued*

are now ready to address the aims of the grant by providing weekly drop-in sessions for women (16+)

Participants should be competent rowers and/or scullers with previous familiarity of rowing and/or sculling in 2's or 4's.

The first 'term' of sessions will take place on Saturday mornings from June through July, meeting at 9:15 for a 9:30 start. Sessions will finish by 11:00 with the option of a tea/coffee break to follow!

If you have any questions or want more information please contact **claire.allen@email.com** or come along to a session!

To see the women in action, click onto this link:

<http://www.spannerspotter.com/v/2013/hoc2013/div1/120+RobRoy+W+MasB+4x-+1+of+3.flv.html>

Captain

Captain **Simon Goodbrand** focuses on crew lists for Henley Royal, with coxless 4- (John Hale, Dan Clift, Leo Lundgren and Rob Stark won at Met) , coxless 4x and the Goodbrand/Parkhouse double strong contenders

Membership

Membership Secretary **Matt Castle** reports that we currently have 81 adult members, 28 permanent junior members and 18 learn-to-row juniors with temporary club membership.

Kit

Kit Officer **Peta Parkhouse** reminds members that there will be an ordering window open with Crew in September so please can everyone try to anticipate their winter kit needs.

Communications

The Communications Team is currently working on a Members Only section for the website, a boat booking scheme, trial re-boot of the club's Twitter account, club noticeboard updates and ongoing improvements and refinements for the recently relaunched website. Any feedback/comments, please let us know. Email communications@robroyboatclub.org.uk

News In Brief

Charity Row

Huge thanks to all who kindly sponsored J16 **Hamish McLuskie** to single scull the Cambridge to Ely Charity Row on 23 February. The total amount raised by all who took part was £5,576.75 for Cambridge Pancreatic Cancer Centre. A similar 2014 event is in the planning stages, again being organised by Cantabs. The event actually took place in two directions, with Isle of Ely entrants rowing upriver, then Cambridge-based entrants rowing downriver later the same day.



Competition Winner



Congratulations to Elite Squad **Joshua Tonnar**, now rowing for Molesey, who won a pair of Godfrey Sports multi-use pogies through our website relaunch competition.

Asked 'What's best about rowing?' Josh's winning answer was:

'I do not sit on the erg for hours a week, brave the cold for kilometres a time and hurt my muscles every gym session to come second. And that's why I love rowing.'

(Photo from EADT24/ 29/9/10)

Amazon Row?

Conspicuously appearing in Div 3 of last year's Christmas Head race was an ocean rowing boat reputed to belong to ex-Robs, now Caius College student, **Austen Bolitho**.

The racing crew's cox was flamboyant, deploying a flare as Antony Wright and Chris Smith rowed past the boathouses.

Ex-Robs juniors **Amy Bland** and **Victoria Moody** had a go after the day's racing was finished.



Tantalisingly inscribed on the hull is the phrase 'Coming soon rowtheamazon.com'

Precedents have been set for this challenge, including Tristan Jones' The Incredible Voyage, where this one-legged man, who sailed the world with his one-eyed, three-legged, beer-drinking Labrador, recounts hair-raising adventures. Chapter 18, The Amazing Amazon, details an epic 3,000 mile struggle against what his publisher Sheridan House claim is the mightiest sea current in the world. Notwithstanding strong current, any voyage on the Amazon is likely to be thrilling. Amazon River Dolphins blush pink when excited, Red Bellied Piranha's enjoy finishing off their blood and flesh meals in seconds and Green Anaconda's lurk, happy to consume prey as large as a deer.

'I would set a record that would not be broken until man finds water amongst the stars.' claimed Jones, who died in 1995. Now there's a challenge!



21 metre wide spot on the river Cam
Photo courtesy of Bill Key

On Local Waters

The Cam between Jesus Lock and Baits Bite Lock is 5.25 km long. In a 2013 survey report organised by CRA President Bill Key, the width of the river was shown to vary between 19.5 and 23 metres. There are ten significant bends to negotiate from lock to lock. Little wonder that many visiting race crews crash and that Cambridge scullers learn early in their training about the need for attention to steering.

These are some standard distances of note for training purposes:

Jesus Lock to Baits Bite Lock- 5.25 km

Jesus Lock to Baits Bite Lock to Jesus Lock – 10.5 km

Standard head race course (Motorway Bridge to Top Finish)- 2.650 km

Head to Head (Railway Bridge to Motorway Bridge, turn and continue back to Railway Bridge)- 2 km x 2

The Reach (Post to Post) - 500m

Christmas Head course (Penny Ferry to Goldie)- 1.900 km

Ditten Fen Sprints course (Ditton Corner to Lower Finish, which is Morley's Holt)- 1 km

Cambridge Sprints course- 400 m

Champs Junior Head course (The Plough to Penny Ferry)- 1.45 km

Green Dragon to Baits Bite- 3.1 km

Relating to the Bumping Races, Pembroke College Coach **Matt Castle** explains:

'There are four main finish points for university bumps:

Men's Top Finish: post near green dragon foot bridge

Men's Lower Finish: Morley's Holt. This no longer exists but the current consensus is where the foot path splits between the Penny Ferry pub and the railway bridge.

Women's Top Finish: Peter's Posts. These are the posts next to the Parking Bays near the Penny Ferry

Women's Lower Finish: Railway Bridge.'

In fine weather, another possibility is to jump the lock for a longer outing. New concrete staging was created last year.

Dr. Phillippa Noon, River Manager for Conservators of the River Cam, offers this advice for jumping Baits Bite lock:

'From observation, it takes a crew between 10-15 minutes to 'jump the lock'. The destination pub is most likely the Bridge Hotel at Waterbeach, see

<http://www.chefandbrewer.com/pub/bridge-cambridge/s6335/>

Crews should not attempt this outing in high flows. The water levels always rise higher on the downstream side of Baits Bite Lock before they rise in the City, sometimes submerging the low level landing stage. Also, crews should use light pressure along these reaches owing to limited visibility, channel width restrictions and moored boats. We advise that a bank party accompanies crews on a bicycle with a spare set of dry clothing and a fully charged mobile phone. Crews have capsized in the past around Horningsea and it's a long way back to the City (4 miles). For reference, should an ambulance need to be called then the nearest emergency access points are (i) Clayhithe Bridge CB25 9HZ and (ii) Fen Road, Milton, CB24 6AF

Boats should also carry lights if the outings are either early morning or early evening (follow the British Rowing 'Row Safe' guidance on reduced lighting levels). Crews continuing all the way to Bottisham Lock need to take note of any sailing fixtures at Cam Sailing Club, usually at the weekends (refer to the Conservancy website at www.camconservators.co.uk).

The low-level landing stage at Baits Bite is approximately 15 metres long. The design for the steps (only 6 metres long) was constrained by the limitations of the bank gradient in relation to the trackway and the existing concrete slab (drainage sump); it would have been horrendously expensive to remove this block and re-model the bank. In an ideal world, the steps would have been the full length of the low level platform.

We ask that crews do not obstruct motorised vessels as they approach the lock and ensure that the high level landing stage



Vintage View of Fish and Duck Inn in the days of first owner Richard Pope.

Photo courtesy of Fish and Duck Marina

is kept free for them to come alongside. There is a difficult eddy created by Baits Bite sluices which can force powered craft towards the landing stage through a loss of steering control. It is not the intention of the helmsman to crush crews deliberately. Please give them space to maneuver and remember, for skippers of hired motorboats from Bridge Boatyard at Ely, this may be only the second lock that they have negotiated in their lives. Please be tolerant of any mistakes that they might make.'

Earlier this year, **Rob Oeffner** enjoyed single sculling to Waterbeach and back. Here is his account:

'I left early on Saturday afternoon after a respectable lie-in. The weather was beautiful. Anticipating possible difficulties getting my boat across the lock, I brought a wire and peg in case I needed to fasten boat to bank but this proved unnecessary. The river beyond Baits Bite is fairly uneventful apart from a few turns. It's quite narrow in places and you have to look out. In all, this was an extremely pleasant paddle in solitude. Apart from another lone sculler, I saw no one else past the lock. At Waterbeach I decided to continue the last few hundred metres down to Bottisham Lock. Who did I see there on the horizon? An ex- Robs Chairman who is prone to river rage...!'

This year's Cambridge to Ely charity row (held on 23 February in snow) reinforced the viability of rowing to Ely. Robs junior **Hamish McLuskie** completed the 17 mile challenge in a single scull. Afterwards he said he was glad to have chosen to go it alone. The VIII's had great difficulty jumping the locks, particularly at Bottisham, where hydraulics froze and had to be manually operated. Even a double scull capsized reboating at Bottisham. The concrete downstream landing area is high enough for blades to be slipped underneath. A bank party to assist scullers to reboat there is practically essential. Once past that obstacle, the most challenging aspect, even in February, was bank weed- well worth avoiding, as Hamish discovered but managed to work the scull free and stay upright- a fortunate outcome on a snowy February day.

Dr. Noon's advice on rowing to Ely:

'Occasionally, Cambridge crews make a day trip of this in the summer when the evening light is to their advantage. The distance is approximately 17 miles one way. Crews can portage around Bottisham Lock but the riverbank access is eroded and difficult. It may be easier to go through the lock, in which case you will need a navigation key for the control cabinets (issued by the Environment Agency to registered boaters, cost £10).

The Cutter Inn at Ely can provide hospitality.

The Five Miles From Anywhere No Hurry Inn (!) Upware (see <http://www.freewebs.com/fivemilesinn/>) is another potential destination. There is a slipway there for hauling out.

The boat must have a valid registration with the Environment Agency for waters downstream of Bottisham Lock. For registration requirements see

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/recreation/130051.aspx>

The local Environment Agency River Inspector is Mervyn Day, mobile 07889 111829, email mervyn.day@environment-agency.gov.uk He can advise crews about this trip.'

The row to Ely, of course, passes by what Robs calls Stretham, which is actually the Fish and Duck Marina at Little Thetford. The site is four miles south of Ely, at the junction of the River Cam, The Old West and the River Great Ouse. A marina first opened at this pivotal point in 1985 as Pope's Corner Marina but the Fish and Duck Inn has traded on site for over 100 years.

Built in 1850, the original inn sadly succumbed to subsistence and water damage in 2009. But current marina owners, James and Davina Harvey have plans to reinstate the inn on site. Currently closed for extensive refurbishment, the marina is hemmed in by Cam Washes- a protected site of Specific Scientific Interest due to colonies of breeding waders to the east and farmland on the opposite bank and surrounding area. Recent work includes removal of internal areas of marina and re-piling to increase mooring space with fixed jetties for narrowboats, wide beams or cruisers of up to 70' long. The Harveys are committed to creating a haven of flora and fauna at the site, which will be managed by resident John Aldous, also an experienced boat repairman for marina customers. A paved access road to the site is still to be completed. The marina, which benefits from panoramic views of Ely Cathedral, will re-open soon.



A happy cox for the Robs mens' crews- Stephanie Payne



Men's Masters VIII at Stretham

Rob Boy Boat Club's site presence is based on an agreement sealed in April 2013. Explains Chairman **Andy Turnbull**,

'For a modest investment we now have gained a secure 60 by 30 foot storage area, racking for boats, a coaching launch, a 60 foot landing stage, a changing area, access to electricity, ample car parking, access to loos, picnic benches and most importantly a clear wide river.'

'This is a facility for ALL Rob Roy BC members to use and will be an excellent training venue for crews and individuals wishing to access good water. It is and will be in the future a Unique Selling Point for the club and one that will attract new members wishing to get access to a better stretch of river.'

So far Elite Squad crews have been training at the facility for regatta racing and crew trials in the run up to Royal Henley. Also on site have been the Women's and Men's Masters crews, training for Master's Championships. Seen above pulling in after their first outing on Stretham water, one member of the Masters Men's crew, who thought he couldn't make the next training session, remarked on landing, 'Actually I can come to the next outing- that was fun!'

Saturday 8 June was Robs Open Day at Stretham, enabling all members, family and friends to visit and enjoy the site.

A User Guide for club members will soon be available, showing site layout and stating basic standards and site rules, which must be strictly adhered to.

The marina website is **www.fishandduck.co.uk**



Captain Simon overseeing juniors crews at Stretham Open Day

Cambridge is also blessed with several lakes of interest to rowers.

Milton Country Park has Todd's Pit Lake where Rob Roy Boat Club currently runs weekend Learn To Row courses for juniors. These are led by Enya Meadows. Overlooking the lake is a balcony and indoor seating area. This area with a view

overlooking the lake is accessible through a ground floor café, which serves hot and cold food and drinks. The cafe is open every day 10- 16:30; 9am opening on Saturdays. visit **www.miltoncountrypark.org** for more information.

Plans for the future are well underway for the Cambridge Sports Lake project, which officially received planning permission earlier this year. Headed by Mick Woolhouse, this venture has already raised considerable funding but now needs to raise much more to realise a purpose-built multi-use lake which could provide 3.2 km of quality water, including a 2km long international standard competition course at least 100m wide and ideally suited to rowing training. Challenges ahead include a road crossing and logistics of connecting the body of lake water to the river Cam but, with Mick leading the project, anything is possible!

Another campaign of note is Cam Lakes. If you have used The Tins Cyclepath from Brooks Road to David Lloyd, you may have noticed through high fencing a large lake to the right. Potential for boating activity? The Cam Lakes campaigners believe so.

Here is their vision, as per the Cam Lakes website:

'We view the Cambridge Lakes primarily as a natural site, with a very low impact from structures. The three separate lakes have the potential to accommodate activities based on safety and practicality. This might mean different areas or lakes for angling, bird watching, boating (canoeing, sailing, rowing, etc), swimming, scuba-diving, walking, rambling, rock climbing, and other such activities. There are also areas around the perimeter of the lakes themselves that could be developed into facilities to create a complete recreation destination. However, the idea is to maintain the natural beauty of the Lakes, while making them accessible for all members of the community.'

'This map on the next page shows the lakes and some potential development options. We will undergo an intensive period of consultation before developing a proposal.'

For more information and to show your support for/ express opinions relating to this idea, please visit the website:

www.camlakes.co.uk



Free Gym Session Offer

If you haven't already done so, why not treat yourself and your friends/crew to a free trial at Nuffield Health Gym (formerly Greens) in Cambridge?

Just visit the www.nuffieldhealth.com website, choose Cambridge and click on the free one-day pass box. When you have entered your details, you will be contacted by a member of the gym staff to arrange for your visit. Each person must individually apply. Minimum age for gym/sauna use is 16 years old.

Spannerspotter

www.Spannerspotter.com is a wonderful Cambridge-based website that allows you to catch a glimpse of crews racing Head of the Cam. There is also extensive coverage of the college May Bumping Races. If you enjoy and use the site, please consider donating towards video equipment hire for upcoming events. This can be done on the Spannerspotter website homepage.

Rowperfect Discount

Here is a message from Becky Caroe of Rowperfect:

We are offering Rob Roy Boat Club sponsorship with Rowperfect through to 1 October 2013

Please let your club members know... They might also like to join our Facebook page and newsletter where we send out coaching and training information and other special offers not available through the website.

We offer sponsored clubs a 5% discount off any products in the Rowperfect online shop for items shipped to the UK.

ROBROY is your discount code

Go to the shop www.rowperfect.co.uk/shop and select what you want to buy.

At the checkout Step 2 there is a box called "Redemption Code" put the word ROBROY (case sensitive) in there and a 5% discount will be applied to your shopping cart. Then proceed to the Step 3 to confirm the order.

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To book advertising space or submit articles for an upcoming newsletter, please contact the editor