

# The Scarlet Blade



FREE TO MEMBERS

ISSUE 3

## Chairmans Message

**A**s the Spring edition of the Scarlet Blades lands on your doormat let us hope that the cold chill of Winter has finally departed.

Since the new year there has been much activity down at Kingston both on and off the water. Back in February we held the Annual Dinner and those of you that were unable to attend missed a really splendid evening with some very entertaining speeches. Neil Thomas the outgoing President of the A.R.A. very kindly proposed the health of our Club, and James Crowden, a Henley Steward and the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire made the reply on behalf of the guests. As well as having the Captains of other Clubs present we also entertained Steven Redgrave and Matthew Pinsent the Coxless Pairs Gold Medallists in Barcelona, John Godden from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames who is effectively the Club's landlord, and Barry King from the National River Authorities, who gives us so much help with the running of the Heads.

Those of you present at the dinner will remember Leslie Parsons announcing that he intends to step down as President of the Club this year. He will, I know be greatly missed by everyone, and a supper will be held in the club to celebrate Leslie's retirement. Details will be sent out to all members sometime in the future

and it is hoped that as many as possible of our older members, who have known Leslie over the years, will be able to attend.

Those of you who saw the national press a few months will know that King's School Wimbledon have brought Barcay's Bank boathouse down at Putney. Kings have been tenants of ours for about 25 years and it has been pleasing to see their crews going from strength to strength over this period. We wish them well in their new abode.

Whilst mentioning schools our congratulations must go to Kingston Grammar School who won the School's Head, and also won the Senior 3 pennant at the Tideway Head, finishing in 32nd position out of 500 crews. We wish them all the best for the coming regatta season and look forward to seeing them in the final of the Princess Elizabeth at Henley.

The main event on the water down at Canbury Gardens has been the Kingston Head of the River which took place for once, in glorious sunshine, in the middle of last month. This event started by John Edwards and then managed so ably by Brian Colborne for many years, has grown in its importance in the rowing calendar and receives entries from as far away as Dartmouth in Devon. For the second year running we had representative crews from Potsdamer Ruderclub Berlin, and a social evening

was held in the Club afterwards. Apart from supplying some excellent German wine Potsdamer very kindly donated a replica of the Brandenburg Gate made entirely out of a £50 note and £10 notes. We are hoping to make a visit to Berlin in September, and enter at least one crew for their long distance race which is rowed on the lakes and the river running through the city, there will be more details of this event in the next newsletter. Also this year, for the first time we had Dragon Boats taking part and they provided a fitting finale to a great afternoon's racing.

Through the bar window it would appear that we have many promising oarsmen and women and what we lack in numbers at the very top end of the spectrum we more than make up for in keenness and dedication of those who are training down at the club. With the passing of the vernal equinox and the sun having started its climb towards the summer solstice our thoughts must naturally turn to the coming regatta season. I would like to take this opportunity of wishing all our crews success and I hope to see as many of you as possible at the various regattas, remember your vocal support is a great moral boost and can provide just the tonic that the crew needs to find those extra few feet of speed.

Lets hope for fine weather and successful racing,—see you on the towpath.

**PETER KING**



# Captains Report

The regatta season proper has now been here for while since the last edition. The time when rowing actually becomes enjoyable, the weather becomes warmer and the perennial oarsmen crawl out the woodwork for a winters training condensed into a week.

The senior mens squad which put in a considerable amount of training and effort through the winter months with Tessa and Nick had a undeservedly disappointing Tideway Head result in spite of a promising 3rd place at Kingston HOR. The womens first eight, with a relatively young crew full of potential, finished 11th, missing the Top Ten by 0.3 of a second. The entries in the womens head reflects the strong growth interest in womens rowing with over 200 crews for the first time, more than double the number of entries five years ago. Womens rowing can no longer be classified as easy!

The novices are striving to be the fittest men down at Kingston. If the senior men can go out at for two morning outings then so can the novice men, but earlier at 6.00 am. They will be a crew to watch just as soon as they manage to release the hand brake.

Nancy proved to a very successful training camp for all who went on it demonstrating the feasibility of doing three training outings a day and surviving with hands and backside still intact. The camp was invaluable in helping gel together some of the different styles and individual temperaments apparent earlier in the season. The week ended with a cunningly contrived win in Open coxless fours at Nancy regatta. My personal thanks go to Don Casey for again master minding the whole event.

A new coxless four/quad has been bought to replace the ageing Parman Marine four. The old Home Loans double scull, much beloved of old. has now been sold. converted to a pair and sent off to Henley in imitation Empacher yellow livery. With luck (i.e. SIII men) the Medical News four

will be refurbished and sent away for a respray and a refit to bring it back into use. Even the Donoratico coxless four might be brought back from the brink and has been sent off to Cambridge by the veterans for a lick of varnish and a considerable amount of TLC in their quest to find a boat to row in.

Operation Sweepoar started with a hangover, courtesy of the novice disco the night before. The windy damp weather didn't help all those doing double outings to come in raring with energy and enthusiasm, but thanks to all those who persevered and set about dropping (Big John) and painting the flag pole (Bill Manning), repairing the ergos (Senior men), boats (Tessa, Howard & David), lights (Martin & Colin), etc, etc.

Since the heads the Senior men won coxless fours and open pairs, along with a number of double scull and quad wins by the Junior girls at Marlow Spring. Steve Ross submarined and ploughed his way to win his Novice sculls at Notts City, racing in some ridiculous conditions (beating Andy Roberts now at I. C. ) on the way. On Sunday he got through to the final in SIII sculls whereupon all racing was cancelled. So size isn't everything, as David would have said to Goliath. On the same weekend, Damian Hammond's women won coxed fours at Borne, and finally at Ghent, the club won the Bronze in womens Open coxless fours together with a wealth of wins by Ian South's junior women in double and quad scull ARA crews.

Over the May Bank Holiday weekend KRC made the pilgrimage to the West country with a trailer crammed full of boats and a load of cars bedecked with scullin boats (sorry to those who thought they would fit on the trailer!). At Worcester we again won the Victor Ludorum with a total of 9 wins. The Mens open coxless four was notable for having to race three times in direct succession against Bradford, once when Bradford hit an Eight 5 strokes from the finish, 1 dead heat before

finally winning by a length. Character building stuff. The Novice men, releasing the hand brake a fraction, won both Eights and Coxed Fours. On Sunday at Monmouth, the largest regatta in Great Britain, had a record entry requiring races every 2 minutes through the day, but also the worst weather for many years. Pandemonium quicky set in resulting in 3 wins and some very bedraggled KRC campers. At Hereford the 'new' SIII men, among the few who stayed on, let the hand brake off still further and were narrowly beaten in the final of SIII Eights. On the same Saturday as Worcester, the Womens junior 16 Quad won at the National Schools at Nottingham before the whole event was cancelled due to dangerous conditions. Still on the same Saturday the Veterans more wisely drifted down to Twickenham to win Vet C Eights.

More recent and important regatta news is that our Henley Thames Cup Eight and Queen Mother Quad both won Open races at Reading, obviating (hopefully!) any need to qualify.

Good Luck to all those racing at Henley, and may the results reflect the hard training!

PS. For those who still haven't read this years Almanac, KRC was attributed 142 wins for 1992, more successes than any other rowing club in Great Britain!

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# 'Blade GOSSIP

## Blade Gossip

Due to a serious lack of gossip requested in the last "Blade" but not supplied by readers, many stories revolve around training camp. This is a sad indictment as to the state of our extra-curricular activities as nothing much happened in France either.

## River and Blues

A demonic leader and his fanatical followers lay siege to an encampment while concerned relatives in England received only garbled information from siege members - Waco? - no, Toul. This took place before events in Texas, Don Casey and the seventh day novices took over Toul Rowing Club and during the course of their stay managed to destroy the image of the 90's man and take male bonding to new heights. More than one female rower foolishly climbed the stairs to the sleeping quarters to use the toilet and was faced with the sight of naked men trying to light their farts. After three days of rain, the bedrooms were full of drying kit and resembled something between a Latin-American jail and a Bosnian refugee camp.

## Good Mooming

Toul to the un-initiated is the antithesis of the French image, (ie) there was nowhere decent to eat and drink, nothing to see and a distinct lack of chic (except for us!). In fact the only thing to do was row and train **the penny has just dropped!** - No Indian or Chinese restaurant, and extremely poor pizza

restaurant - what's French cuisine coming to? though we did find a rather hospitable cafe run by a 16 stone woman with a moustache who gave me a kiss on the last night there - who says I can't pull.

## Spit or Swallow?

A word to the wise, if you don't read French - ask! Mark Mawby ordered tete du veau, with enough confidence to know that veau was veal, however if he stayed awake long enough in ecoute and repeter classes at school he would of realised that he was ordering the head of a calf. That's what he got, complete with brains, checks and two curious hollow spiral, objects with bristles, we told Mark that they were the nostrils only after he had eaten them!

## Rhythm and Booze

One of the constant pleasures of Toul was being able to buy a case of beer for only a fiver. The novices enjoyed this experience on a daily basis and bring a warm-hearted crew invited Andy Tompkins for drinks one night. I still don't know how ten people managed to get through 3 litres of wine and 125 bottles of beer, who says we didn't take training camp seriously.

## Deathrace 2,000

The novice sculling race for the Don Casey trophy, due to take place on Good Friday in Toul was unfortunately abandoned due to four near drownings and two ripped ankle ligaments.

## UL Rowing - a life?

The only non-rowing interest apart from the previously mentioned gastronomic treats and the daily trip to the hyper-marche, was provided by the UL lightweight squad who interrupted their meditation and fasting in Nepal to sample the delights of the Moselle river. It was obvious from the outset that these girls meant business rowing-wise and therefore wisely avoided any attempt to be engaged in pre-coital conversation, and kept their dealings with us to a minimum. Their training regime was long and arduous, and their diet spartan, it consisted of alpen with water, dried fruit and Trill, I can't be sure but think I saw some hessian undergarments and hair shirts drying on their trailer. After the Nancy regatta however they were seen to be taking the occasional glass of wine and one was even seen eating some meat, so there is hope for them.

## Yet more depravity

Although on a sack cloth and ashes regime in France, the UL girls plus many others will be attending the next Novice extravaganza - "F\*\*\* Moderation 2 excess is not enough" set for July 10, the day of Kingston Regatta. This is obviously an event not to be missed. A theme for the evening hasn't been decided on yet but getting drunk, dancing and being involved in a meaningless physical relationship for an evening seems to work well so we'll probably stick to that.

# Fear and loathing in Lorraine

## Geographical certainty in Northern France

### **DAY 1 - Heads on the Window... a spree on Don's credit card**

There had to be a catch in the cheap rental of the Kingston Community Transport minibus, and this was it. Written in the contract small print was the clause that all passengers had to travel with their heads propped against the window, producing copious amounts of drool. Whilst this behaviour was second nature to Colin, some of the other passengers found it tiring. Arrival at Dover gave a welcome break. It was then that Jon Bass referred to from now on as Shirley to distinguish him from John "Rose" Baddley) announced his possession of a credit card in the name of one Mr Donal Casey, and would we all like a drink?

Once on the ferry the only refuge from the hordes of screaming school kids out to get laid on the slopes of Val D'Isere was in the bar, where luckily they took credit cards, and Shirley put his experience of signature forgery to good use. Editors note: the writers' recollection of events over the next few hours are somewhat hazy. The story resumes where they became coherent once more)

### **DAY 2 - Another country... rapids and bends... Neil eats horse's dick**

A detour through Kelloseka (Northern Finland) did seem like quite a large diversion just to get cheap petrol but Don had assured us it would be worth the few extra miles. The boat club was eventually reached at about 6am, and having dumped the trailer it was off to the hotel to sleep. Imagine if you will a room barely large enough to fit around a double bed. Now imagine this room with a bunk bed, three hunky rowers, and much rancid dripping wet kit hanging off any available point in the room (and this was just Tessa's

room). Come with us then to the Twilight Zone that was the Hotel de Nuit, a bargain at 145 francs a night.

We had a first paddle after rigging the boats, then the coach appeared for a pitch inspection. The outlook was not good - massive stream, boiling rapids and contorted bends were going to make side by side comparisons difficult. Which of Bill's drugs she had taken was not clear, for the river was to all intents and purposes straight (the bends the steersmen managed to create for themselves tended to put the gentle meanders of the river to shame). Later on in the week whilst sitting on the river waiting for the launch to catch up one day when it was particularly overladen (Howard and Nick were passengers) the crews actually moved ever so slightly upstream.

That night a group visited the local pizzeria, amongst them Neil, who will from now on never forget the translation of "Andouillette".

### **DAY 3 - Shock.... A Pattern emerges.... Compatability testing explained**

It suddenly became horribly clear - this was to be the pattern for the next 8 days: Eat, row, buy food, eat, row, eat, sleep, eat, row, shower, eat, sleep. But there was also relief - the relief of finding out that we were not going to be seat raced. We were instead going to be compatability tested. Compatability testing, for the benefit of those who are blissfully unaware, is nothing like seat racing at all. It involves putting out two crews, assessing how compatible the people in each crew are, swapping two people over, and again assessing compatability. The fact that boat speed is used as the quantitative measure of compatability is incidental, and purely

a convenience.

### **DAY 4 - Trevor has a bad outing**

The fact that we were not being seat raced did little to appease Trevor after every crew that he seemed to be in got a sound thrashing. The coach's encouragement that a few bad outings maketh not a donkey, and that he had been so very lucky having the same coach for some six months, and that everything had been logged, "up here you know (pointing to the temple) seemed not to cheer him up at all.

### **DAY 5 - A change in the weather.. smooth tarmac discovered**

We had omitted to mention that up to this point the weather had been complete crap. Wind and rain mostly, with definitely no sun. This was all to change today, with the only disadvantage being that we had to watch Bill rowing in swimming trunks. We did discover a new measure of sunlight intensity - the Baddleyometer, where the total exposure to sunlight bears a direct relation to redness of skin. The device need some adjustments, since it reached its maximum reading after only fifteen minutes.

It was on this evening, whilst driving through the town centre after a fine dinner, that Shirley astounded us with the first of many profound geological observations - "My, isn't this tarmac smooth". Others that were to follow included "Look at that fine example of a dissected plateau", but the most astounding was on returning from the regatta, where he had not been feeling too well, when he suddenly arose from his coma to exclaim "Cor, look at those limestone inclusions".

### **DAY 6 - The coach is relieved**

Tessa showed noticable signs of

relief at the safe arrival of her car (or was it the driver?). Now that Howard was here the real compatibility testing could begin. There were now 12 as opposed to 11, which made putting three fours out a whole lot easier. It gave Simon Mepharn a chance to show that he was compatible with something other than a girls quad. The joy of videoing also began, or rather the joy of taking the piss out of everyone else whilst watching the footage. The best bits were at the end of the tape, and had been shot in Kingston some weeks earlier, and the true mickey taking of those not present to defend themselves started. Dave Relph appeared on screen to cries of "Alright my loves", and "Good game, good game". I believe that these cheap jibes had something to do with his jutting chin at the finish, but never really understood myself.

#### **DAY 6 - Thinning hair noticed**

There was more video work today, which pointed out one glaring fault Steve Fraser, whilst sculling, turns away from the camera to check his course. This is a huge mistake, since if he turned towards the camera, the automatic exposure control would not break trying to compensate for the reflection from his bald patch.

#### **DAY 7 - Mike attempts aversion therapy coaching methods... Barbeque Bill behaves badly... Alluring alliteration**

Having noticed his teapot wrist on the video yesterday, Mike decided to cure it by strapping a

Stanley knife to the inside of his outside arm. The theory was that if he bent his wrist at the finish, it would be cleanly slashed by the blade, resulting in quite a bit of pain, and he probably wouldn't do it again. There was a suggestion that Shirley should try a similar arrangement to teach him to control his steering foot, but he wasn't game.

In the evening we had a traditional English barbeque in the pouring rain. Bill took control, only to lose it totally after half a pint of lager shandy. He and Howard had a competition to see who could look the most ridiculous, but it was declared an instant draw. Later on Jim turned compere and host, suggesting we play all the party games he was really good at, but he was beaten in all of them. Nice try Jim.

#### **DAY 8 - A discovery**

The coach finally realised today that a boat will go much quicker if it has four men in it than if it has three men and a girl. Astounding.

#### **DAY 9 - A race... a domestic win at an international regatta... Jim loses his kit**

And so it was on to Nancy International Regatta and kit exchange, which is something the French have much to learn about. It is absolutely no good proffering a threadbare nylon oil in one with little in the way of distinctive markings, and hoping to get a nearly new Kingston one in exchange. They must be strange, though, since one of them nicked a pair of Jim's patterned trousers -

no accounting for taste. The one crew win Kingston achieved was in fact a domestic race with a somewhat forgone conclusion Kingston I versus Kingston II. Both crews were very nearly disqualified for steering into each other, but made it to the end without clashing.

Possibly the most embarrassing result of the day was that of mens and womens lightweight singles. Steve Fraser, who had entered the mens event, was four seconds slower than the winner of the womens event, who happened to be Theresa.

#### **DAY 10 - Martin awakes with a whinge**

The journey back proved most uneventful, apart nearly writing off a vintage Rolls Royce (oops) and the Kingston tradition of almost running out of petrol on the Motorway, and then doing it for real later on.

The assembled masses finally made it back to the club where one arduous task remained - that of dividing the alcoholic spoils. Tired and weary (totally shagged out more like) we could all reflect, whilst testing the compatibility of the Captains supply of beer stomachs that the camp had once again been a total success. Many thanks to Don for organising and Tessa for coaching. Particular thanks should also go to the drivers of the trailer, who should be bought lots of beer next time you see them in the bar, since without them there would have been no rowing. Roll on next Easter.

### ADVERTISEMENT

Keith Riches has been a member of the "Club" for a number of years after a probationary period as a professional guest at the various dinners.

This followed the family tradition as his Brother, Derek, was a member for many years, being a particularly staunch supporter of the bar.

Keith is the Senior Partner of a five partner firm of Chartered Accountants practising with offices in Walton on Thames and Dover Street, Mayfair.

The practice has a very strong Tax Department, advising on all aspects of taxation for wealthy

individuals, less wealthy these days, Lloyds Underwriters, U.K. and overseas companies.

Apart from routine audit and accountancy work, the firm prides itself on being very strong in general business advice and has undertaken feasibility studies for projects in Africa, Malaysia and China.

To use a car manufacturing analogy, if you think of the large firms of Chartered Accountants as Fords or Vauxhalls, Riches & Company is a Rolls Royce - albeit at Skoda prices!

# Jim's French Report

**A** mass of scarlet laundry was reported to have invaded France in early April. The French put up bold resistance, removing all relevant sign posts in Lille which sent at least 5 of the invaders to the far corners of the country, followed by a similar ploy in the mapping department which had the destination clearly marked as being in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. Fortunately Jim "Tonto" McCall used the old Indian tracking trick, driving aimlessly around until stumbling across the hotel. Under the pretence of a training camp this mobile challenge to the very existence of Persil finally came to rest in Toul, which is near nowhere in particular.

Eye witness accounts say that the laundry pile was led by Captain Tompkins, however sightings have been unconfirmed. Don Casey, the well renowned and over used jock strap in this pile, is known to have master minded the whole affair with Gruppenfuhrer Tessa von Millerhoffen leading an "elite" group from which this sad tale has been leaked.

The advanced party arrived in a Hoovermatic Delux (with spin drier), cleverly disguised as a minibus, from which the courageous group took their proud name, "Kingston Community Transport". They were followed by a selection of smelly socks, calling themselves the Novices and a band of sweaty crotched lycra shorts, the Senior 3's. Late re-enforcements were provided by an assortment of beer stained shirts and the perfectly pressed women of ULBC.

The Novice men were involved in a near tragedy when they were forced to go without beer for almost two minutes on their very first day. However within the week they had managed to single handedly finance the opening of a glass recycling plant and gave the local orthopaedic specialist a new raison d'être, having sprained more ankles

per square novice than a one legged drunk in a bum kicking contest. The wise old sages of the elite group looked on wisely and sagely, wondering how long this carousel of drink, row and volleyball could go on for. But mostly they wished they had the energy to get on the carousel. Still, even the "elite" group had to laugh at the lighter moments, like Bill's attempted hit and run on two of the Senior 3's.

The invasion force came prepared with the finest rowing craft, supplemented by some Aylings boats. A report was put out in the local press, which translated into something along the lines of "Eengleesh rameurs train trois time a day and are due to kick ass at Nancy regatta". They certainly know a thing or two those French journalists, like how to count up to trois, but their eye for an ass-kicking rowing crew seems to have failed them on this occasion. In an effort not to disappoint, the cunning von Millerhoffen entered two sacks of laundry into the coxless fours at the regatta, an event which no other club seemed to realise existed, or if they did/they were with the rest of the assembled masses searching for a toilet.

Success finally came when the only real elite task force, the ladies' sculling section, not only won the lightweight sculls through Theresa but beat some of the men into the bargain. It is ungentlemanly to mention names in this regard, but fortunately gentlemanship went out with zephyr shirts so I think "Four Second Fraser" should get a mention in despatches for this feat (go back to jail Steve). Other victors during the week came on the barbeque night. Unperturbed by the rain, Bill "Barby" Burrige ran the cooking side of the affair while everyone else stayed inside and hid beers. The award for most beer worn goes to the chef himself. This gave rise to

Nick Ronald's winner in the quote of the night category "I can't believe we drank two cases of beer" (you didn't Nick). In the bar games, bottle walking champion was Brendon McQueen while levitate and spin the chair champion was Big Bad John Gilsenan with von Millerhoffen taking the women's title. Carmen Miranda award goes to Colonel H. Prior, whose ensemble was garbage rather than garb, consisting of a pineapple hair do, Kronenbourg sticker, assorted foliage and ten dilectibly painted finger nails. Finally the Eitsirch Drofnil prize for running backwards very fast goes to Trev Green, for whom a retreat on to John Baddeley's knee seemed more acceptable than the attentions of one particular delight from ULBC. Of course no invasion is complete without the women, so thanks to the pants-on sisters of UL; making our invasion incomplete :Postscript: thanks to all those who organised the trip, coached, drove trailers. As other reports in this issue will no doubt bear out it was a great success.

## LESLIE PARSONS

I am sad to report that on the 22nd March Leslie suffered a stroke. He was taken to Kingston Hospital and remained there until the 21st of April when he was moved to St. Mary's Hospital Hampton. He is now recovered sufficiently to be back at home but the stroke has left him with a slight speech impediment. He is undergoing treatment for this condition and I am pleased to report that he is responding. And making a gradual return to his normal old self.

It will not be possible however, to hold the proposed celebratory evening at the Club and therefore this event is postponed for the time being