

Spring '97

# The Scarlet Blade



PRICELESS FREE TO MEMBERS ISSUE 15

## Chairman's message

by Peter King

With the Head season nearly at a close, it is perhaps an ideal time to review the last few months since our last newsletter. Once again the Annual Club Dinner was well supported and all credit to Libby and Scott that the second highest number of members and their guests met in the Ardross Suite at Sandown Park racecourse to enjoy what I thought was a most entertaining evening. I can thoroughly recommend this event to everyone if not for the food, then most certainly for the fashions. Our ladies once again showed that their wardrobes contained more than just tracksuits and all-in-ones and graced the evening with some stunning outfits. Certainly the occasion can rival the Oscars for fashion innovation. Among our many guests was Mike Spracklen who had kindly agreed to propose the health of the Club. Unfortunately his own health was under pressure that evening having almost totally lost his voice, his wife however, who accompanied him, very ably delivered it on his behalf. Our chief guest was John Inverdale, he of BBC's Rugby Special and a radio 5 presenter, who gave us some very

amusing anecdotes of some of the things that take place behind the scenes in sports broadcasting. He also made some very relevant points about our own sport and the fact that it does not get the media coverage it deserves. As is usual now at the Annual Dinner, the Captain awarded the Poupart Cup and we were delighted that Mrs Poupart who was a guest of one of the members, was present to hand it over to this year's winner David Baldwin. For those of you unfamiliar with this trophy, it is awarded annually to the person who in the opinion of the Captain has made the greatest contribution to the Club off the water. Speaking to Gary Meacham before the dinner, he told me that he had at least four other people whom in his opinion were deserving of this award. It is a great credit to and speaks very highly of, the current attitude and enthusiasm of some of the active members of KRC that they should want their Club to be one of the best, both on and off the water. I was particularly delighted that David was this year's winner because when he served on the committee last year as

Safety Officer for the Club, he single-handedly prepared our Water Safety Code, a task I know took him many hours of hard work. Those of you who frequent the club from time to time will have noticed the ongoing renovations that are taking place. I am most grateful to all those involved for giving up their time to help restore the interior of our clubhouse and in particular Domenyk Honey who has and is, overseeing all of this work. Many of the old photographs of Club crews of the early part of this century have been completely restored and it is a real pleasure to see some of the people and events that have been a part of the Club's history displayed for all to see. Once again if anyone has something that they think would be of interest please let the Hon Secretary, or myself know. Some years ago a system was set up whereby we can safely store items relevant to the Club's history, at the Kingston Archive Centre so that they will not get lost. At the latter end of last year whilst discussing traffic arrangements with the Police for the open events we run, they informed me that there was a scheme to introduce controlled parking in the roads surrounding the area of the boathouse. Having heard absolutely nothing about this from the council, I penned off a letter to them reminding them that they had a sports facility in Canbury Gardens with an active membership of over 100! That was some months ago and so far they haven't even bothered to reply, my guess is that it's back to the drawing board! Hopefully the winter weather is finally

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THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE KRC!

# Novice Men: Crew interview

by Stuart Allen

A couple of weeks back I took the opportunity to ask some of the guys involved in the squad a few questions...

**Why did you start rowing?**

*Richard:* I felt that rowing was the best sport for me.

*Jerome:* For Pleasure (!)

*Ryder:* I had a love for the sea.. it was the result of spending years as a sailor.

*Laura(Coach):* Because my boyfriend did it.

*Steve:* Because I was fed up standing on the bank watching my son do it.

**What do you hope to get out of it?**

*Richard:* Lots of pots on my mantle piece... and fitness

*Jerome:* Winning at a race, meeting people, being fit.

*Steve:* To learn to row properly.

*Laura:* Fitness, achievement.. to win.

*Ryder:* to get enjoyment - working as a team .

**Has there been anything involved which you didn't expect?**

*Ryder:* Yes, the commitment.

*Laura:* Yeah - how big my muscles would get!

*Jerome:* The weights. I'd never done that - I found it very boring at the beginning and hard.

*Richard:* There's a pecking order.

**What were your first impressions of KRC?**

*Jerome:* It was a bit confusing because no one told me what to do... until I met Laura.

*Richard:* I found the club to be switched on... it seems to have direction.

*Ryder:* Relaxed, inviting and the sense of a good time.

*Laura:* A winning club.

**Tell me about the high and low points of your rowing so far.**

*Dan:* High... Rowing across the English Channel. Low... facing the sunburn after!

*Laura:* High... Being in the reject crew at Henley and losing in the final. Low... Losing in the final at Henley.

*Fiona(Cox):* Haven't had any (at

coxing).

*Ryder:* High... getting in the top crew. Low... the disruption it has had on my relationship.

**How do you like to unwind?**

*Laura:* Beer.

*Richard:* Playing the piano.

*Ryder:* I like to lie in the middle of a mown piece of grass in a star shape.. watching the clouds.

*Dan:* I fish quite a lot.

**Have there been any members of the club who have particularly helped you?**

*Ryder:* Colin Greenaway, Damian, especially Laura.

*Richard:* Christelle... moral support.

*Steve:* Chris.

*Laura:* Mad Rachel she makes me look sane!

**Any other comments?**

*Ryder:* It's encouraging to see that a group of guys of a varying age can all mingle and talk and have something in common.

## The season so far...

Since the start of the season, I have been in charge of trying to balance a disparate group encompassing both open men and women. My duties to date have involved coaching the open men's group although my job has been facilitated by Damien Hammond who has coached Tony Larkman and Colin Greenaway. These two recently excelled in the trials held for the men's sculling squad on Bank Holiday Monday. Both progress to further trials later in April. The fastest 'non-qualifier' was Ben Long who, I have been assured, will be considered as a strong candidate next season. Damien has also been sharing the coaching load for the men's 1st 80 which improved greatly in the run up to the men's head finishing a creditable 28th and perhaps more notably, within 50 seconds of the winners. Most pleasing for the club was the 2nd 80 which leapt to 62nd place from a rather paltry mid-hundred position last year.

On the women's side, I have been struggling to set up a training unit because of the disparity in this small squad. At the top end, Mary Stevens continues to balance her studies and training admirably and, exams allowing, currently looks capable of competing in either the open or U-23 squad. The women finished a creditable 24th ably stroked by Alison Barnett although a lack of experience and consistent, hard training prevented the crew from finishing well inside the top

twenty. Both squads have improved greatly in the recent weeks and have kept the momentum going towards the scullers' head. There is, however a message to all athletes - KEEP TURNING UP. As a squad we lost valuable training time towards the end of last year and the beginning of this, because of non-attendance from several members. Keep up the recent run, please folks!

Looking past the sculler's head we will be looking to amalgamate both men's open with S2 and S3 status oarsmen (as we intend with the women). This, we hope, will allow people at the top and bottom of both squads to row with a larger group of oarsmen with similar ability. It also means that Damien and I will be joined on the coaching team by Gary Smith who has developed the S2/3 men's squad excellently over the winter months. We look to boat a status 80 which he will coach and possibly two fours from the upper end of the squad.

As for the women, we still have to meet (!) but hope to put out an 'open' four and a status 80 to race at Women's Henley and on to the National Championships.

My thanks to all those who have assisted me in my first year as 'chief coach' both with advice and manpower. I have hugely enjoyed the good spirit at the club and I look forward to a fast, injury free summer season!

Chris Elmitt

# Captain's report

by Gary Meecham

I am writing this report as the winter training season is fast drawing to a close and thoughts start to look towards the summer. Since the last edition of *The Scarlet Blade*, Christmas has been and gone and hopefully everyone has had a good start to 1997. As promised in that edition, I will give you a review of the 1996/1997 Head Race season.

The Club has not actually competed at many Head Races this season, as the coaching staffs, have placed the emphasis on an increased level of technical work on the water so that crews will be better prepared for the 1997 Regatta Season rather than racing week in, week out through the winter months. This decision has also been prompted by the fast rising costs of entries and travel, which does have a major financial impact on many of our athletes at a difficult time of the year.

The performances and results we have seen during the winter at all levels have been very encouraging, and as a result we are all looking forwards to the Summer Regatta season. I would like to thank everyone who has in any way been involved in the coaching. The results to date this season have been:

**Boston Marathon:** Steve Aquilina - Winner Senior 2 Single Sculls.

**Head of the River Fours:** Mens Quad Sculls - 18th and 19th in identical times, Mens Senior 2 Coxed Four - 193rd (7th in division), Womens Quad Scull - 151st (5th in division).

**Kingston Small Boats Head:** Of the 15 crews that were racing for pennants, 4 crews achieved wins - Mens Open Coxless Pairs, Mens Novice Coxed Fours (despite having to carry the captain over the course), Womens Senior 2 Coxed Fours and Womens Senior 2 Double Sculls, 5 crews were 2nd in their division and no crew lower than 5th in a division.

**Tiffin Small Boats Head:** Of the very small Kingston entry, wins were achieved by the Mens Senior 2 Coxed Four. This was a squad trial race for women and a number of Kingston women performed to a very high level with wins being achieved by Jane Hall Lightweight Single Sculls and Victoria Fangen - U23 Single Sculls.

**Burway Small Boats Head:** Angus Gait - Veteran C Single Sculls.

**Womens Head of the River Eights:** Senior 2 - 9th (Winners of Senior 2 pennant), Senior 1 - 24th, Veteran - 46th (2nd in division), Senior 3 - 95th, Novice - 167th (3rd in Novice Club division).

**Kingston Head of the River Race:** Mens Senior 1 - 14th (3rd in division), Mens Senior 3 - 28th, (5th in division), Veteran C - 39th (Winners of Veteran C pennant despite a very harshly awarded time penalty for aggressive steering by the Kingston coxswain, who is a qualified umpire!!), Mens Novice - 56th (Fastest Club Novice Eight), Womens Senior 3 Coxed Four - 103rd (3rd in division), Womens Novice Eight - 104th (3rd in division and Fastest Club Novice Eight).

**Mens Head of the River Race:** Open Eight - 28th, Senior 1

Eight - 62nd (an improvement of 87 places over 1996), Senior 3 Eight - 167th (an upwards move for the fourth consecutive year), Novice Eight - 292nd (Fastest Club Novice Eight).

In addition to the Head Races, the Club has kept the competitive spirit up by inviting other local clubs to come and train with us at various times throughout the winter. Twickenham Ladies were entertained by the Senior 3 Women, whilst the Senior Men were visited by University of London and more importantly by Molesey with 3 Eights from each club racing against each other. Hopefully this will lead to the resurrection of the Bass Hughes Underwood Races next year, that have not taken place for at least 7 years.

The Club has been very well represented at National Squad trials throughout the Winter with very notable performances from Colin Greenaway, Tony Larkman and Ben Long who are still in the running for selection. The women have again been well represented with 10 girls still in with a chance of selection at Heavyweight, Lightweight, Under 23 and Junior International levels.

It is important that we continue the good work that has taken place during the winter, on during the coming months so that even more improvements are forthcoming and then hopefully we will see the Club reaping the benefits during the 1997 Regatta season.

On the equipment front, we have been restricting expenditure to the maintenance of our current equipment so as to ease the burden on the Clubs finances. The Club has started up a Boat Fund which everyone is working hard to build up, particularly the Veterans under the guidance of Scott Tunbridge. We are very close after 5 months to having enough funds to purchase a new Four but the ideal would be if we could get further assistance from any member or friend, new or old in adding to the balance of the Boat Fund, then maybe an Eight would be a viable proposition. While we are talking Money, we are still looking for a Sponsor/s, so would anyone who has any ideas please contact me as soon as is possible.

I must now raise the very serious issue of Rowing on the Kingston Reach during the hours of darkness. Their have been a number of recent incidents and despite notices around the Clubhouse, Oarspersons particularly in small boats are not following the Rules. ALL BOATS MUST carry a WHITE 180 degree LIGHT on their BOWS and STERN. Any other type or colour of light is not acceptable. The Environment Agency who control our stretch of the river are aware of the incidents and if we continue to offend may find ourselves either as individuals or a club being prosecuted, which could lead to a ban from the river. PLEASE treat this matter seriously as it does impact on the future of the Club.

Finally, don't forget Thursday Night is Club Night - food available at a reasonable cost, so please come down and mix with the active/veteran oarsmen/women and help swell the Bar profits. Good luck to everyone throughout the summer months and may many wins be forthcoming for Kingston Rowing Club.

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## Chairman's *message* continued from front cover

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behind us although I must say it didn't feel like that when I finally came ashore after three hours on the water at the Tideway Head. As usual I make my annual appeal to as many of you who can, to come along and support our crews. The Thameside regattas have a

charm all of their own and we nearly always have crews participating at them. Can there be any greater pleasure in life than standing in six inches of mud, an umbrella in one hand and a pint in the other suffering advanced hypothermia, - I don't think so! After

the many hours of training over the winter months we owe it to our rowers to support them wherever possible, so welly boots out raincoats at the ready and umbrellas to hand - see you on the towpath!

*Peter King*

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## Social *Programme*

The social events this year have been extremely successful, as well as running (reasonably) smoothly and attracting many members, a considerable amount of money has been raised for the boat fund.

Forthcoming events for the KRC social calendar are as follows:

1. Thursday nights once a month are boat fund evenings. This involves a raffle or a quiz. Prizes have included 1 960's rowing kit, vodka, tea at steward's and some of RR's peculiar foreign beer.
2. There will be an auction on the 1st June. This is organised by Laura Binns who wishes to revive the tradition of a KRC pledges auction. It promises to be very funny and a big fund raiser so please contribute by pledging whatever you can and/or attending on the day.

## Kingston Head 1997

On a pleasant but blustery day approximately 90 eights and 40 fours rowed over the course from the Water gallery at Hampton Court to a point half way along Steven's Eyot, the island opposite the Club. This year's winners of the Pearce Trophy was the University of London 1st VIII who completed the course in the second fastest recorded time. The day was an immensely enjoyable for spectators and competitors alike and my thanks go out to the very many people who were involved and helped make it the success it most certainly was. The numbers involved with running an event of this size are upwards of 50 and today's demands of safety as well as accuracy of timing and punctuality of the organisation put a great burden of responsibility on those helping to ensure that all runs smoothly. My hope is that those responsible for setting the rowing program will take all this effort into account and ensure that future Kingston Heads are supported by our entire club crews. When one considers that the whole day raised approximately £3,000 nett. for the Club, then this has to be an event that we should not only support 100% but encourage even more clubs to come along and participate in. For those of you with forward planners in your diaries, next year's Head will be on the 14th March.

### *Leslie Parsons*



*As this newsletter goes to press we have just been informed of the death of Leslie Parsons. A full obituary will appear in the next edition of the Scarlet Blade. Our sincere condolences to Sally and John Peters.*

