



Cygnet Newsletter

April 2016

From the Captain

Since the last Newsletter, we consider Winter to be officially over. The Head of the River weekend marked the end of winter and the beginning of spring and it certainly felt cold out there. Well done to the three Cygnet crews that competed over the two days and especially well done for the 5 guys who participated in the HoRR for the first time after joining the club and taking up rowing just 5 months ago. I hope everyone got a buzz from it and didn't mind the choppy water down the course. Bragging rights go to Marj and Dave's crew, Cygnet 1 who beat Cygnet 2 by 39 seconds - the results were Cygnet 1 - 21 mins 23 secs (280 overall) and Cygnet 2 - 22 mins 02 secs (308 overall). Note that we put together two fairly equally matched crews, mixing up the novices with more experienced rowers. On Sunday the Cygnet/TSS Mas F composite finished in 22 mins 39secs 161 out of 219 in the Veterans Head; with the many changes and late substitutions in the crew it was astonishing they actually made the race!

Following a few weeks of a slightly less frantic training, we had the April Sculling Camp at our fab bungalow on its sleepy backwater in Weybridge. The river levels were just low enough for us to go ahead and give a bunch of Cygnets and Barnes Bridge ladies the opportunity to take their first sculling strokes in a single. All novices present ventured out in a single with the swim/don't swim ratio exactly 50:50. Those who didn't swim will have to try harder next time. I am happy to say that almost everyone also had a go in a double, which gave them the opportunity to get away from the playpen around the bungalow and explore a bit more of the Thames. Shooting the rapids at the Shepperton Weir never lost its excitement however many times you did it.

At the end of April, we'd like to express our congratulations and admiration to Charlie Pretzlik, our assistant WSA on completing the London Marathon in 4:21min. He did it for a very good cause, so if you are minded to sponsor him you can do it here: <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/CharlesPretzlik>.

Looking a bit further ahead, the club intends to enter crews at the local regattas, with Chiswick, Borne and Putney Town regattas all on the agenda.

Jeremy Pugh

Subscriptions and Donations

Are always due and can be paid by electronic payment (please inform the treasurer by sending an email to 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 - £260.00*, Others - £320.00; 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 £260.00 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**

OBITUARY: Eric William Wale
30th April 1931 - 11th February 2016

Rowing often runs in families. It is not hard to think of some of the longstanding names in our sport - the Phelps and the Barrys come easily to mind. Still, such longevity remains the exception rather than the rule at Cygnet. That said, though, one family that can point to almost a century of association with Cygnet is the Wales.

Eric William Wale, who died on 11th February 2016, was the son of W.G. (Billy) Wale, who joined Cygnet at Hammersmith in the early 1920s and remained a keen supporter in the post-war period. Minutes of annual general meetings throughout the early 1950s record the presence of both father and son and some of Eric's surviving contemporaries still recall Wale senior as an enthusiastic cheer leader at regattas, sharing in their trials and triumphs.



Eric joined Cygnet in 1949, directly from National Service, having served in the RAF. Indeed, according to Frank Caughlin, a fellow crew member, Eric's first appearance at Cygnet was in his RAF uniform. However, Eric quickly made the transition to 'civvy' street, initially joining the Treasury Solicitor's Department, before moving to the Telephones Branch of the General Post Office (GPO), thus maintaining family tradition ('Billy' had also worked in the GPO as a postman). In later years, this branch of the GPO would be hived off as British Telecom (BT), where Eric would enjoy a highly successful career until retirement in the late-1980s.

In 1949, Eric would have been welcomed at Cygnet as one of a new wave of 'young blood' upon whom the club's hopes of reclaiming the victorious years of the 1930s would hang. Eric took an active interest in club affairs and soon found himself on the committee. By 1950, the club was in a position to boat an VIII for open regattas consisting entirely of the post-war intake of new members. Thereafter, Cygnet continued to build up a competitive head of steam such that by 1953, in Eric's own words (penned in the 1990s), 'there was a real feeling that the breakthrough had been achieved'.

Eric was referring to a Junior Vllls win at Chiswick, Cygnet's first win in open competition since 1939. A photograph of the victorious crew drawn from Cygnet's digitized archives (available to view on the web site) shows Eric standing on the far right, the initials E.W.W. proudly emblazoned across his tracksuit top. Silverware aside, Eric also met Sylvia, his future wife, at Chiswick Regatta. By 1954, Cygnet was riding on a high and Eric rowed in winning Junior-Senior Vllls at Horseferry, Willesden and Kingston, followed by Maidenhead in 1955.



Every generation retains fond memories of their competitive (and less competitive) years at Cygnet. In Eric's case, we are fortunate that he chose to devote some of his retirement to authoring 'Cygnet Rowing Club: The Fifties'. This account, which proved invaluable in the compilation of a more recent history of the club, captures the spirit of the post-war era at Cygnet and justifiably concludes that 'the fifties were by any standard a period of significant achievement'.

Although Eric retired from active rowing in the fifties, he retained a keen interest in the club's activities for the rest of his days and regularly attended club social occasions. As club historian, I am particularly grateful for the club memorabilia that he periodically passed on to me in later years. Some of this memorabilia dated back to the time of Wale senior, like the 1922 Civil Service Regatta programme, which lists 'Billy' rowing three in Novice IVs.

One of Eric's regrets was that he never competed at Henley Royal Regatta, although 'the intention or aim was always there'. Nonetheless, he rarely missed an opportunity to attend Henley Royal, joining Vic Reeves and Frank Caughlin for an annual visit to the Stewards Enclosure. That said, Eric was happiest picnicking with family and friends out on the towpath close to the start of the regatta, comfortable in the knowledge (as he put it) that 'everybody does Henley in their own way'.

Eric is survived by his wife Sylvia and two daughters, Gill and Sarah. Among those who attended his funeral at Chilterns Crematorium, Amersham on 26 February were his rowing contemporaries Frank Caughlin, Maurice Hart and Brian Lovis, all of whom recalled carefree days sparring in club regattas on the Chiswick reach more than half a century ago.

*Paul Rawkins Club Historian
March 2016*

From the Club Secretary

Following a very exciting (!) AGM, at which a new Committee of Management was elected, the Club's Fixture card was printed, you'll find a copy of the fixture card enclosed.

Just to keep our faithful friends informed, some background information on what's been going on at the boathouse. From mid 2015, the floor in the committee/club room and kitchen has been steadily deteriorating; and remedial works carried out in September did not solve the problem. With the boathouse foundations under groundwater level, water had its wicked way with the wooden subfloor and the floor has become too dangerous to walk on. In fact, we had to restrict access to the club room and kitchen during the Head weekend to ensure visiting crews would not come to any harm. The Boathouse Captain, Tom Broadhurst, sourced a number of quotes, and following a Special General Boathouse Exec Meeting, went ahead and hired builders to remove the floor boards, screed the concrete underneath and install a brand-new floor (with heating) in the kitchen and club room. We are looking forward to a "reopening of the boathouse" party/bbq during the weekend of 14/15 May.

Dates for your diary:

30 April	Chiswick Regatta
7 May	Borne @ Chiswick Bridge Regatta
14 May	Putney Town Regatta
11 June	Barnes & Mortlake "International" Regatta
29 June-3 July	Henley Royal Regatta

"Cygnet" Bungalow

If you haven't made any plans for Summer yet, and quite fancy a quiet week by the Thames, please contact Derek Bush to see if there are any weeks left to rent the Bungalow.

You can contact him on 07880 548 804 or by email: hooman774@yahoo.com (please note that Derek is not using his derek75@post.com email address anymore).

Marjorie

Change of Address/Preferences

Please note you only need to fill this in and send it to the Secretary if you would like to change either your preferences, or a new address!

I'd like to receive the newsletter by post/email*

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

Post Code: _____

Your email address: _____

*Please delete as appropriate

Please send to Marjorie Israel, 126a Upper Tooting Road, London SW17 7EN, or email relevant details to: marjorie_israel@hotmail.com.