

COBRA



Coleraine Old Boys Rowing Association

Issue Five - 2010/2011



World Championships 2010
Rowing with Cambridge University
Tribute to Mickey Eyre

Running from Manchester to Newcastle
A Tour of the Bann
And more.....

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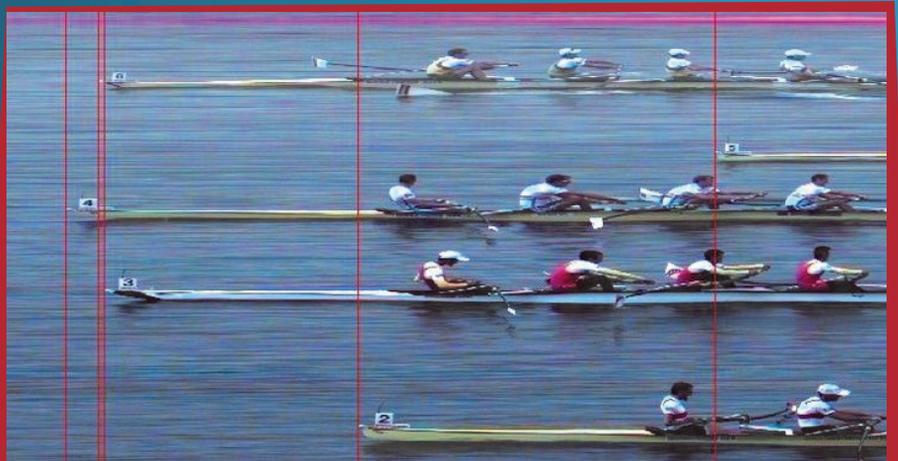
Best in the World

Once again the 2010 World Cup Series brought about a hugely impressive medal haul from the two COBRA members competing at international level for Great Britain, Alan Campbell in the single scull and Richard Chambers in the lightweight coxless four.

The opening race of the 2010 series took place in Bled, Slovenia in May and both men immediately reaped the rewards of a hard winter's training by hitting the ground running with a silver medal apiece. This first international regatta of the season also set the standard for some great racing and rivalries, with Ondrej Synek of Czech Republic taking gold from Alan, and even more so with the Danes piping Richard's crew to the line by just one second in what would turn out to be an extremely closely fought rivalry throughout the three-race series.

A month later and the crews took to the water again for the second world cup regatta in Munich. Alan had strong races in the quarter-final and semi-final and ended up fifth in the final, with Synek again taking gold. Richard's lightweight four picked up their battle with Denmark exactly where they had left off in Bled, and raced side-by-side with the Danes and the Czechs up to the 1500m mark. However in the final 500m the GB crew just had enough left in the tank to make a move and reverse the previous result, beating the Danes by just over a second in a thrilling sprint to the line.

In July Alan and Richard were in Lucerne to race for GB in what was the biggest entry ever for a world cup event. With all the top international rowers at the final race of the series, Alan had a return to form and made short work of the quarters and



semis before chasing the in-form Synek all the way to the line for silver medal, ahead of reigning world champion Mahe Drysdale. Richard and his crew, wearing the yellow jersey after their win in Munich, reached the final in similar fashion to Alan. At the halfway point they were in fourth place with Switzerland out front, Italy second and Denmark, the world champions, third. With the boats in a tightly-contested flat-line at the 1500m the spectators sensed this could be the race of the event. Neck and neck, as they had been throughout the series, and conscious of the Danes sprint-finish, the GB crew made their move first and in an extremely close finish they took gold from Denmark by 0.07 seconds, a photo finish needed to separate the two crews. Alan and Richards medal hauls helped GB to win the overall world cup series with a record-breaking number of medals.

The squad then had three months to prepare for the world championships which were held in November on Lake Karapiro, New Zealand. As it had been during the world cup regattas, both Alan and Richard made it through to their respective

finals in impressive fashion, despite rough conditions on the lake that added an extra challenge to the racing. However their days of slog-ging through white water on the Bann must have stood them in good stead as both men again put in fantastic performances in their finals to help GB top the medal table at the end of the world championships. Alan burst out of the blocks as usual and led Drysdale and Synek at the 500m mark. However through the middle section of the race the form man and the world champion came through, but Alan didn't give up without a fight, and used his customary sprint finish to eat up the distance between himself and Drysdale, unfortunately just running out of water and crossing the line in third, just half a second off silver. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Richard's main challenge in the lightweight four didn't come from the Danes, but instead from a combination of the Australians, Germans and the Chinese. In similar fashion to Munich, these crews raced side-by-side for nearly 2000m, with the lead swapping on numerous occasions. The GB crew used the experience they had

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gained from the head-to-head racing with Denmark through the world cup series to push on and take gold in their second photo-finish of the season, with an ever-so-slightly larger gap of 0.08seconds this time, and just another 0.01 seconds separating silver and bronze.

Philip Hamill



A summer with Cambridge University

Last season felt like it had all ended after I got a rib injury ruling myself out of any international lightweight boats. Whilst I was injured I sat on the bike a few hours a day to ensure that when I did come back I was in some sort of shape.

The options were limited for the summer as to what I could do and what I thought I should do. I had a few friends that raced in the winning

Elite coxless fours event. This earned me the seven seat in an eight with the rest of the Cambridge blue boat in the Grand Challenge cup at Henley. That all sounds great but it was probably the least preparation I'd done for such a high level event. However we managed not to embarrass ourselves too much -the New Zealand national eight only beat us by one and a half lengths. I think if my crew had spent less time socialising post boat race and more time training we could have had better results and another few races at Henley.

After Henley I jumped into another heavyweight eight with a mixture of Cambridge, Oxford Brookes and Durham students for the World University Championships.

Even though we only had a week training in the boat prior to the race, everyone was fit and healthy which, funny enough, makes

a difference! We had cracked out some very respectable times in training so we were confident in the speed that we had, and if a crew was going faster than us then they were extremely fast. We did the job in each race and progressed through to the final without too much pressure. For the final we shot out of the blocks ensuring we led the race from the first stroke and by the 250m we had a comfortable lead. However due to our "blazing it" off the line start we started to burn and blow coming through the 1k. Luckily enough there was a big enough buffer to hold the lead and win gold.

I had a fantastic summer with lots of high level, world class racing. I managed to maintain my lightweight physique though, much to the annoyance of the Cambridge lads who were annoyed that I had weighed in at only 73kg as they wanted their crew to look more 'stacked' than that! But they had, after all, invited a lightweight into their crew!

Stephen Feeney

boat race crew this year so we jumped into a scratch four and raced Metropolitan Regatta, winning the

had a week training in the boat prior to the race, everyone was fit and healthy which, funny enough, makes



A Tribute to Mickey Eyre



On Thursday 27th May 2010 at 2.00pm, in Coleraine Methodist Church, a packed congregation said its final farewell to RA Eyre Esq., Bsc., which included his wife Sylvia, children David, Elizabeth, Rosemary, extended family and his many friends and admirers. Although it was a sad occasion, Sylvia wanted it to be a celebration of a life fulfilled, an emotion emphasised throughout the moving funeral service.

RA [Eric] Eyre, or Mickey as he was widely known, had a passion for rowing which started at Coleraine Inst when he stroked the school 1st IV during the 1942-43 rowing season, and in the following season became both Captain and stroke of the crew which included his brother C.G. Eyre, who rowed in bow.

In this personal tribute I will refer to aspects of his wider influence and recall in part the two years when I rowed for the 1st VIII of 1963-64 and 64-65, which Mickey coached with such splendid success. Apart from being a naturally talented oarsman and coach, Mickey was also not only an IARU Umpire, but an International Rowing Umpire as well. During the church service, we were told that, when offered the opportunity to umpire at the Olympic Games, he turned down the once in a lifetime honour in favour of a fellow umpire. This was typical of his self-effacing

modesty - someone who put others before himself.

Looking back to those glorious days of the 1960's, there were tough days as well as good days. Days when it seemed that Mickey would never stop handing out 'constructive criticism' from a loud hailer, as he steered that

little red launch he favoured, from one side, of the stern of the eight, to the other. Days when the 'flat-out' courses between river markers on the Bann, meant we had to turn around and do it all over again and again. Days when Gym training circuits never seemed to end and days when the eight just had to sit, perfectly balanced, hands down, blades off the water, no matter what the weather threw at us; wind, rain, hail or snow.

But it paid off; when thinking became automatic, when the boat 'struck' perfectly every time, when the water sang under our sleek boat, and our eight blades felt like one. When you could sense the power surging through the entire length of our slender craft and you knew we were all sitting upright looking like the well-oiled rowing machine we were. When you could feel the pride with every stroke we took, a pride and a comradeship that Mickey had worked so hard to instil in every one of the nine man crew, from cox to bow. We felt invincible and we almost were! He forged us into Irish Schoolboy Eights Champions in 1964 and 3rd in Senior Irish Rowing in 1965. But to us, the day of all days was at Coleraine Regatta on the 12th June 1965, when we beat the then top Senior Irish eight, Garda 'A', by one length and one canvas in the final Senior race. The town of Coleraine just seemed to erupt with joy. People were leaning over the bridge yelling and screaming

with delight. The banks were thick with supporters and townsfolk applauding and cheering and we felt ten feet tall. Mickey was overcome with joy and that dazzling smile he was so capable of turning on, split his face from ear to ear.

"I've just been told by the headmaster, that in honour of your success today, you are to have the freedom of the town this evening," he told us, as we recovered our equilibrium. If he had offered us the world it couldn't have topped that!

He later wrote that he felt that was the crew's finest hour. From that moment on I knew I would become one of 'Mickey's Boys'.

I was at that church service on Thursday past, with two of my former rowing comrades, Desmond Hill and Noel Graham both of whom had nothing but heart-felt praise for Mickey. Since then I have read two more tributes from crew members of my two years. Dr. Kenneth Hunter wrote, *"I have memories of a wonderful, even great, rowing coach/maths teacher/personal mentor....I will always remember him as one of the positive influences of my life"* and Raymond Cochrane, who said, *"There was no other teacher from the school who had a more influential role in that stage of my development than Mickey had, either in the classroom, on the river, or in other areas of life."*

I can only echo the views, sentiments and emotions of my rowing comrades and say that Mickey helped shape my life, not only through his rowing and coaching expertise, but with his positive attitude and determination to succeed.

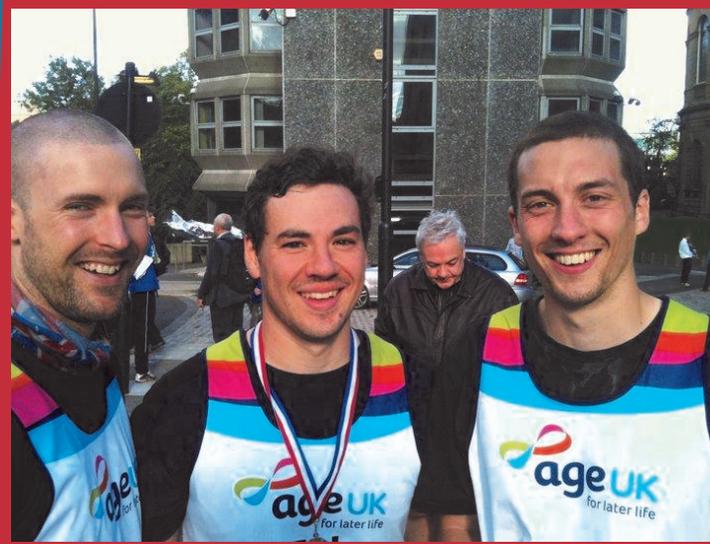
Ian Harvey

(the full version of this article can be found on COBRARowing.co.uk)

Take the Long Road

In September 2010, I watched in horror as the final droplets of my sanity drained from the bottom of the barrel as I set out to run five marathons in five days to raise funds in aid of Age UK (formerly Help the Aged). I was accompanied by my friends Neil Rostance and Sam Kelvey as we departed Manchester on 14th September with the aim of reaching Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 18th September. Following which, we planned to 'compete' in the Great North Run on Sunday 19th.

Naturally, along the way we discovered just how foolish an undertaking this was. Unfortunately, our meticulously planned route was inconveniently draped across a number of mountains during an apocalyptically rainy week. This caused a number of problems, both physical and mental. In spite of our preparation and training, we still felt we had underestimated the magnitude of our challenge and quickly made the transformation from stallion-like models of supreme fitness, admired by women



and feared by men, to shambling, whimpering wrecks.

Nevertheless, we somehow managed to crawl our way to the finish line in Newcastle after five days of extreme moaning. As planned, we took part in the Great North Run on Sunday 19th September and even managed to finish ahead of a few people! We all finished in a blistering time of 3 hours 5 minutes (although it felt more like 8 hours!). Our final total

raised for Age UK was £ 1,820 which was well above our target and made all the frustration, pain and downright idiocy worthwhile.

For anyone with plenty of time on their hands and a high boredom threshold, you can still watch our video blogs from before and during the run at

www.takethelongroad.co.uk

Colin Stewart

New Coach at CAI

The Black name will be familiar to many Old Boys. Chris and Mark were both committed members of CAIBC, whilst their father, Clarke, has championed the club by serving as a school Governor and drove minibuses full of boys to many regattas over the years. Not to be out done, Dorothy, the boy's mother, has fed many of us at various barbeques and other events.

In September Chris was appointed as CAI's rowing coach and 6th Form study supervisor. Since leaving school he has gained considerable coaching experience in England as part of the Henley Stewards Charitable Trust Scholarship coaching programme, as well as rowing at a high

level with British Rowing's World Class Start development programme at Tees Rowing Club and most recently with Durham University. The school was delighted to appoint someone of Chris' calibre. He has quickly settled into his role and instantly established excellent relationships with staff, parents and most importantly the school's oarsmen. Rowing numbers are currently very healthy and Chris has put in place an excellent program which allows our senior oarsmen to develop whilst also effectively introducing the boys from Year 9 onwards to the sport of rowing. The progress made has been clear to see. The senior squad have steadily improved

throughout Head Season and raced at the School's Head of the River Race in London for the first time since before 2000.

In the time Chris has been coaching at the club he has made an extremely valuable contribution to not only rowing, but the school in general. We all look forward to the coming Regatta Season and wish Chris and the boys every success. In less than six months Chris has made an extremely valuable contribution to not only rowing, but the school in general. We all look forward to the coming season and wish Chris and the boys every success.

George Hull

COBRA crew rows from Lough Neagh to Coleraine

There were plenty of aching muscles and blistered hands as a COBRA crew took part in the Irish Rowing Union's tour of the Lower River Bann in early September. The crew of Jason Taggart, Philip Hamill, Alex Humphrey, Michael McNaul and Steven Archibald took on the marathon endurance challenge along with four other crews from Carlow, Dublin, Galway, and Belfast.

Early on in the 60km course from Toome to Coleraine, the crews passed through Lough Beg, a huge five square kilometres expanse of water set in a deeply tranquil area of low woodland with a seemingly endless straight line of markers denoting the navigation channel, with only the Church spire on Church Island to serve as a point of reference in the distance. The post-lined, arrow-straight channel through the lough is highly reminiscent of the famous boomed course at Henley and would be an excellent location for a Head Course or a Regatta Course were it not for its complete lack of boating facilities!

Owing to the uncompetitive nature of touring rowing the pace was leisurely and the row was split over two days, with the five specialist touring boats being docked at Kilrea overnight and the COBRA crew

spending the night at fellow COBRA member, Andrew Wright's farm in Glarryford.

The long slog was punctuated by the enforced breaks at the four locks on the Lower Bann at Portna, Movanager,

Carnroe and the Cutts at Coleraine which the crews used to take on some vital high-energy snacks and share in some friendly banter with the rival crews. These locks drop the river from a height of 13 metres above sea level from Lough Neagh to the Barmouth and are hand operated by the team of lock keepers who man each set of gates.

Apart from the lock keepers, the only signs of life as the river widened out and snaked downstream through acres of low-lying fields came as the crews passed through Portglenone, Kilrea and eventually the more familiar sight of Drumagheglis, where the valley becomes much narrower, with woodland on both sides.



Coming out of the lock gates at the Cutts the crew raced the last 2km of the journey in spectacular fashion on their home water to end of what had been a hugely demanding and punishing, yet thoroughly rewarding and insightful weekend of rowing. One of the COBRA crew, Michael McNaul, a former pupil of Coleraine Inst and now a student at Glasgow University said, "It was great to see the rest of our home river, but it will be a long time before I get back in a boat." Two weeks later Michael returned to Scotland to begin pre-season training with Glasgow University Boat Club!

Philip Hamill

Rowers Mark Sesquicentenary

In a break from the traditional format of the annual COBRA BBQ, this year CAI were delighted to welcome crews from Bann, MCB and RBAI as the oarsmen marked the 150th anniversary of the school. As the sun finally made an appearance the fours and quads took to the water and raced a 2.5k time-trial from the Cutts to the school boathouse. There was

then a quick spin and back up to Dunnes with the time-trial results seeding the crews for the head-to-head racing down to the boat club. The second session of racing saw six eights take to the water and repeat the same race format. In the final of the Junior 18 eights race, Bann narrowly piped CAIBC to the line while CAI recorded a convincing

win over MCB in the Junior 16 eights final.

Shenanigans then put on a wonderful BBQ for all present as the boys and parents from the different clubs mingled and had an opportunity to get to know each other.

QUBBC—Life after CAI

The start of the year for me was all about keeping my head down and doing the work. After tests during regional head races, I was selected to stroke the Queens University senior eight at Tideway, the biggest event of head season. After a very challenging race we placed 9th overall which set us up very well for regatta season. This started at the Irish Universities in Cork where I won the senior eights and intermediate doubles events. Following this regatta was BUCS, the British equivalent. Having used Cork as a warm up, our crew was much more confident and we powered through Oxford Brookes to win the top eight event, and take the title of fastest university in the UK.

Henley Royal Regatta was a new experience for me and came with many new challenges like rowing in the six seat - I must be the smallest six-man ever! My favourite race involved us rowing through Brock University (Canada) from behind to win, putting us into the semi final as the sole remaining UK crew in the

event. Against Nereus (Holland) we were just off the pace, but this is a top European university so we were pleased to have been so close.

Our eight, with two replacements from UCD, was selected to represent Ireland at the World University Rowing Championships in Hungary. We had a nervy start to the regatta but experimented with our race plan in the following races and managed

to get a better performance which got us through to the final. Given the 40degree heat, this was the toughest race of the year but we managed 3rd behind Great Britain (with Stephen Feeney on board) and Estonia, and holding off big pushes from France and Poland.

Jonathan Mitchell

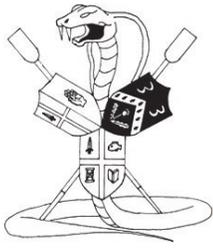


Dinner in honour of Bobby Platt



In March 2010 over one hundred people, oarsmen past and present, friends, staff and parents, assembled at the school museum for a reception followed by a meal in the Templeton Auditorium to recognise the huge contribution Bobby Platt has made to rowing at Inst.

The speakers on the night shared with us their fond memories of working with Bobby over the years and how he had impacted not only their rowing careers but their lives over a 25 year period. To end the night we heard from the man himself when he was interviewed by Richard Archibald and fielded questions from the guests.



Coleraine Old Boys Rowing Association

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1st June 2011

Dear CAIBC Old Boys,

With the school's appointment of rowing coaches for the last two seasons, the Association has been looking at ways of supporting this progress within the club. It is felt that addressing deficiencies around club equipment would have the biggest positive impact on the long-term health of the rowing club. The current equipment is ageing, with two-thirds of boats being over 15 years old. Lack of investment in this area now will lead to a need for significant investment in the longer term. Fifteen years ago, a major fundraising campaign raised funds for the purchase of six boats and numerous oars. Since then, six boats and a trailer have been donated to the club from individuals, the Old Boys association and the Friends of CAI to meet the growing needs of the club, rather than replacing redundant equipment. C.O.B.R.A. have made two boats, five ergs, eight sweep oars and five sets of sculling oars available for use by the boat club.

Rowing Eight in 2011

It is hoped that between 2011 and 2020 C.O.B.R.A. will be able to fundraise sufficiently to impact the club's equipment priorities, looking specifically at upgrading the Club's Rowing Eights (with three of the current eights being 27, 23 and 15 years old and showing their age). With the old boys addressing this area, the club and school can fundraise to renew smaller boats and other equipment.

COBRA are looking at buying Janousek Eights that will provide good racing boats now and good training boats as they age. Currently these boats cost £20,500 (inc. VAT) therefore this will be the single biggest venture the Association has undertaken.

We are asking Old Boys and friends for a single donation towards the purchase of a Rowing Eight in 2011. We will of course be glad of any amount, but we have suggested amounts that could be donated and how many donations would be needed to hit our target. If old boys could give £500 we would only need 41 donations to get the schoolboys this boat. However we realize that everyone has different circumstances and so we are suggesting donations ranging from £100 to £2000 and hope that you give whatever you can. Donations can be made through www.Bmycharity.com/COBRA2011 and you can track the progress towards the target online and we will circulate an update in August. Alternatively, cheques can be posted to the above address.

We hope that Old Boys will be able to support the current and future schoolboy rowers, just as previous old boys have supported the club throughout the years.

Thank you for taking the time to read this update and we hope you feel able to support our endeavors in the period ahead.

Yours in Rowing,

Bobby Platt MBE

(Patron C.O.B.R.A.)

William Wright

(Chairman C.O.B.R.A.)

Richard Archibald

(Captain C.O.B.R.A.)