

Flag Waggers

Neil Pickford

Have you ever wondered how many people it takes to replace Nick Wylie and Richard du Parc in the British Rowing umpires line-up? No, neither have we but we are pleased to report that the Civil Service boathouse has recently contributed three new umpires to the circuit:

Congratulations to Stuart Gibbons (former Cygnet Captain and Henley Lunch organiser), Helena Gibbons (BBLRC stalwart and Stuart's better half) and Charlie Pretzlik (former Cygnet Vice-Captain and current Safety Advisor) who all passed their final umpiring exam (the dreaded 'desktop') in September. They are now fully licensed to wear white slacks, carry clipboards, wave flags, ring bells and otherwise pompously shout inaudible instructions through a megaphone at wayward scullers during races.

It was a particularly 'interesting' time for Stuart and Helena who also had to cope with the arrival of their first-born, Daniel, at the end of July and we'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate them for both achievements!

We understand that The Chairman was most encouraging throughout the whole process (the umpiring not the baby making!) and our newly-qualified Flag Waggers would like to extend their thanks to Nick for all his assistance and encouragement.



Stuart seen here practicing some pomposity on his own club at Borne Regatta back in May. Doubtless the Masters F quad obeyed all instructions implicitly...

Contacts

www.cygnet-rc.org.uk

Chairman 07753 863430 [chairman\[at\]cygnet-rc.org.uk](mailto:chairman[at]cygnet-rc.org.uk)
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Cygnets Bungalow 38 Hamhaugh Island, Shepperton

The bungalow is ideal for a riverside holiday and is available for booking by members and friends between May and the end of October. Other periods and winter bookings may be available, please enquire. **Contact:**

Derek Bush [bungalow\[at\]cygnet-rc.org.uk](mailto:bungalow[at]cygnet-rc.org.uk) 07880 548804

Cygnet 300 Club



This is our principal fund raiser which keeps our fleet maintained and up-to-date. Tickets are just £10 each and there are ten annual draws with a top prize of £100 and a bumper £250 Christmas top prize. All members and friends are encouraged to participate and active oarsmen especially are expected to have a 'few' tickets. **Contact:**

Guy du Parc Braham [dupb01\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dupb01[at]gmail.com)

A History of Cygnet Rowing Club, 1890–2015

Copies of this high quality, hardback book are still available from Paul Rawkins. **Contact:** [prawkins\[at\]googlemail.com](mailto:prawkins[at]googlemail.com) or in writing to 30 Bracken Gardens, Barnes, SW13 9HW



Subscriptions and Donations

Active members: CSSC £290.00*, non-CSSC £360.00

Club friends: suggested minimum £15.00

For **electronic payment** please email the treasurer for bank details on [treasurer\[at\]cygnet-rc.org.uk](mailto:treasurer[at]cygnet-rc.org.uk)

By **cheque**, along with the tear-off slip below to: Mr M. Byrne, Flat 102 Westfields, Railway Side, Barnes, London SW13 0PL

.....

Enclosed my subscription/donation for £ _____

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

Post Code: _____ Your CSSC no.*: _____

*CSSC members are now required to show their CSSC membership card to a member of the Management Committee



CYGNET ROWING CLUB

November 2018 Newsletter

From the Club Secretary

Marjorie Israël

This special edition newsletter has a very special supplement written by our Club Historian Paul Rawkins, to commemorate the Cygnet oarsmen that served in the First World War, 1914-1918. As Czeslaw Milosz said in The Issa Valley: ***"The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to tell their story for them."***

Cygnet would like to extend many thanks to Tim Koch (AKRC) who has kindly offered to help tell that story by producing a permanent memorial to those Cygnets killed in action during WW1. This will be displayed in the bar.

This newsletter will, of course, also give you the full story about all the activities in and around the boathouse and elsewhere, as the regatta season drew to a close with several 'socials' and the winter training and Head racing programme began. Please see the Captain's report inside for all that has occurred. It's been a busy couple of months, particularly for beer sellers!

2018 Fixtures for the one hundred and twenty ninth season

October	6 th	Pairs Head, Rhine Marathon Düsseldorf
November	3 rd	Fullers Fours Head of the River (12.00)
	4 th	Veterans Fours Head
December	1 st	Vesta Scullers Head

2018 Club Events

November	10 th	Henley Lunch, Leander Club
December	8 th	BBLRC Christmas 'Ball'
February 2019	24 th	Annual General Meeting (12.00)

From the Captain

Cristobal Cabrera

We finished the summer with a few social events: First was Clubs day with BBLRC on the 8th September featuring The Great Boathouse Bake-off, a double boat naming, some 'mixed side-by-side pieces', a few beers and a BBQ in the sun.

The following weekend we had yet another great weekend at Hamhaugh Island for our 'Autumn' Sculling Camp. We had fantastic weather, did lots of sculling, had a few (spectacular) capsizes, swimming, another BBQ, a few more pints (for the soul) and loads of fun.

Even more fun (and yet more pints) was had at the squad End of Season dinner, which this year took place at our traditional watering hole, Ye White Hart. The most important business of the evening was the presentation of the Wally Wheldal Cup to the most improved oarsman (Hendrik) and the J.P. Jefferies Cup for Club man of the year (Rupert).



Blue-on-blue: Mixed coxed four action from Clubs Day

After this 'mini rowing holiday' we went back on the Tideway to follow the training plan from our new head coach Chihiro Calvin. A UKCC Level 2 coach (in both Rowing and Strength & Conditioning), Chihiro has a long pedigree with clubs both on and off the Tideway and her previous crews have an enviable list of medals and pennants to their name.

We've embraced the autumn with optimism and warm clothes and competed in both the Pairs Head and the Rhine Marathon at the beginning of October:

In London for the Pairs Head on Saturday 6th October it was wet, wild and windy. Very tough conditions but excellent races for both Cygnet Crews of Sam and Scott in the pair and Gareth and Simon in the double – who missed the Masters C pennant by just 0.7s!



Gareth and Simon just 0.7 seconds away from glory

On the same day but a few hundred miles away in Düsseldorf, conditions for the Rhine Marathon were another story altogether: sunny, dry and warm. Water conditions were consequently pretty good but with the Rhine at its lowest level for 100 years, there was much less stream than usual so a little more effort was required. Both crews still managed the 43km in under 3 hours though: 02:45:07 for Mike C, Nick W., Tom B and Katy B, and 02:48:52 for Neil P, Cris C, Anna C and Marj I. Both boats merged afterwards to form a strong eating/drinking/dancing squad led by Mike and Alan Cox, partying with the youngsters until late. We even lasted longer than our hosts. As usual, Cygnet and BBLRC "Only here for the beer".

So back to training, we have now started circuits again on Tuesday with Maxi, a qualified fitness instructor who is also a top class rower. The sessions are rowing-centric, building core strength and stamina to back up the work we do on the water and in The Shed on the ergs.

We had two boats racing at HoR4s on Saturday 3rd November: a Challenge quad comprising Scott, Alex, Vasil and Cris, and an Intermediate (Novice) coxed four of Henrik, Eric, Rupert and Tom B, with Katy in the driving seat.

For Vets 4's Head on Sunday 4th November we were represented by a Masters F coxless quad in the form of Paul R, Steve, Rhodri and Ian G. Next up, Scullers Head ...

And finally, the latest Learn to Row course members had their last session on Sunday 4th and we very much hope they will all be strengthening our Novice Squad.

The squad and coaches are very much looking forward to a successful end of 2018 and good a Head and Regatta Season in 2019.

The Davison Award

Marjorie Israël

And speaking of Head races, we are all delighted with the news from the Head of the River Fours Race Committee, announcing:

"The introduction of a new discretionary award in memory of Noel Davison. Noel was, in addition to many other rowing related volunteer roles, the Honorary Secretary of the Head of the River Fours from 2014 to 2018. He tragically lost his battle with cancer this summer.

"In honour of his significant contribution to this event and in recognition of his stalwart support of our sport the Committee has decided to create the **Davison Award**.

"After consultation with Noel's family, and in line with his roots, interests and passions, the award will be given to 'the standout performance from a small club' and it will be at the Chairman's discretion. The winning club will receive a decorated blade in line with the six Category winners and club representatives will be invited to the prize giving party at Fullers Brewery in January 2019."



"Only here for the beer" rehydrating after the Rhine Marathon. As always, Cygnet and BBLRC would like to extend their thanks to numerous members of Benrath RC, in particular Mucha and Tichel, without whose enormous help we'd not be able to take part in this great event.

The Fallen

Wilfred Thomas Dooley was born in 1888, joined the GPO straight from school in 1907 as a sorter/tracer and became a member of Cygnet in March 1914. At the outbreak of war, he enlisted as Private 2053, 1st/8th Bn London Regiment (POR) and was dispatched to France on 18th March 1915. He was killed in action on 15th September 1916, aged 27, during the assault on 'High Wood' in the Battle of the Somme.

Albert John Dunn was born in Camberwell in 1877, joining the GPO from school. By 1911 he was married with two daughters. Probably a member of the Territorials before the outbreak of war, Albert was posted to France on 18th March 1915 as Sergeant 290 1st/8th Bn London Regiment (POR). He was killed in action on 25th May 1915, the last day of the Battle of Festubert. He was 38.

Ernest William Erridge was born in 1889, the son of a coachman from Kensington Park Mews. Prior to the war, he worked as a letter sorter and had already served in the Paddington Rifles and the London Regiment (POR). At the outbreak of war, he re-enlisted with POR and was sent to France on 18th March 1915, subsequently attaining the rank of colonel. He was wounded in action and transported back to England where he died on 8th April 1916 aged 26.

Robert George Erridge, brother of Ernest, was born in 1891, joined the GPO after leaving school and served for a time with the Paddington Rifles. An active club committee member, he enlisted with 1st/8th Bn London Regiment (POR) and was sent to France where he rose through the ranks to Company Sergeant Major. He was killed in action on 30th October 1917, aged 26, during the Second Battle of Passchendaele.



Cornelius Gibney was born in County Cavan, Ireland in 1883. By 1911 he is listed as an honorary member at Cygnet, living in Fulham, south-west London and working as a GPO sorter. At the outbreak of war, Gibney, pictured above, enlisted as Private 5932, 1st/8th Battalion, London Regiment (POR). Wounded during the Second Battle of Passchendaele, he was taken to a Casualty Clearing Station at Dozinghem where he died on 30th October 1917 aged 34.

Arthur James Rixon was born at Lambeth in 1887, worked for the GPO and was mobilised as Sergeant 5 1st/18th Battalion, London Regiment (London Irish Rifles) in August 1914. Sent to France in 1915, he attained the rank of Company Sergeant Major and fought in the battles of Loos and Ypres. He was killed on 7th April 1917, aged 33.

John George Rogers was born in Islington in 1887 and worked as a GPO sorter at Mount Pleasant. At the outbreak of war, he enlisted with the 1st Royal Marine Bn RN Light Infantry. He was killed on 17th February 1917 during a German artillery barrage on the 1RMLI assembly area prior to the Battle of Miraumont.

Albert Roland Russell is the person we know least about, beyond the fact that he lived in Ealing, worked for the GPO and rowed at Cygnet. A Lance-Sergeant in 17th Bn The King's Liverpool Regiment, his last will and testament records him as being killed in Flanders on 8th May 1918.

Arthur Bond Thaine was born in 1881 and worked as a GPO sorter at Mount Pleasant. Soon after war broke out, he enlisted as Private 492095, 13th London Regiment (POR) and was duly dispatched to France. Aged 36, Thaine was killed in the trenches at Neuve Chapelle on 1st March 1917 on what was described as a 'quiet night' with only two casualties.



Cecil Arthur Toms was born in Wandsworth in 1878. The son of a bookbinder and a milliner, he was educated in Wandsworth, before joining the GPO as a sorter-tracer. By the outbreak of war, he was married and subsequently had two children. Called up as Private 375586 2nd/8th Bn London Regiment (POR), Cecil was killed in action on 30th October 1917 during the Second Battle of Passchendaele.

Bertram Thomas Valentiny was born in 1881, the son of a haberdasher. By 1899 he was working for the GPO as an operative on a pneumatic mail distribution system. At the outbreak of war, he was married with four children and enlisted as Private 9/11027, 11th Bn The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment), rising through the ranks to Sergeant. He was killed on 20th January 1917, aged 36, during a raid on enemy trenches, south-west of Ypres.

CYGNET RC

World War 1 Centenary Commemoration

Lest we forget



Design: Neil Pickford

Words: Paul Rawkins

Thanks to Ian Mountain (Cygnet RC), Mike Willoughby (Organiser of the exhibition 'Rowers of Henley and the Thames who died during World War 1') and the descendants of Cecil Toms for their help in researching and providing additional material for this commemorative document.

From Rowers to Riflemen

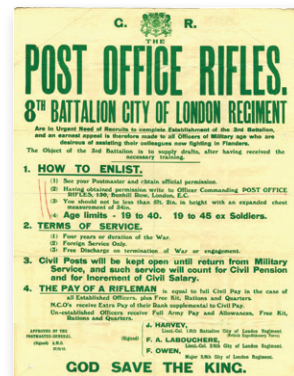
Any institution that has been around since 1890 is unlikely to have escaped the dead hand of warfare; Cygnet Rowing Club is no exception. The outbreak of the Boer War, less than ten years after Cygnet's foundation, would be the first conflict to claim several members' lives. However, the First World War was on an altogether different plane that threatened the very existence of Cygnet RC, among others. By the time hostilities drew to a close in November 1918, seventy-nine active and honorary members had served with the Armed Forces; eleven of them would never return.

For Cygnet, 1914 started with high expectations. An ambitious racing programme was agreed, a concert and dinner arranged and the club regatta was revived to include a race for double sculling skiffs with lady coxswains. It was also agreed to apply again for ARA affiliation. By the end of the year all this would seem like a dream of a bygone age.

WW1 would be unlike any other conflict, before or since. 'Dusty' Miller, the first club historian, wrote:

"It can truly be said that 1914 heralded the beginning of an end of an era that crumbled in August of that year and which by 1918 had disappeared for ever".

With the outbreak of war, most Cygnet volunteers signed up to the Post Office Rifles (POR), the General Post Office's (GPO) dedicated regiment. The POR had a long history dating back to the mid-19thC; today, they are best remembered for their role as infantrymen on the Western Front. Many would have responded to a flier similar to the one shown here from the collection of the British Postal Museum.



Such was the strength of patriotic fervour sweeping the country that the 1st/8th Battalion Post Office Rifles rapidly became overwhelmed with recruits and a 2nd/8th Bn had to be formed in September 1914. Initially styled as a reserve regiment, supplying reinforcements to the 1st Bn, by January 1917 they too had been dispatched to the 'front'. The POR served in all the

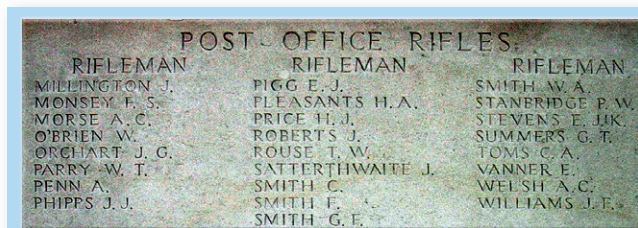
main theatres of conflict on the Western Front from 1915-18, sustaining severe losses at Ypres and Passchendaele.

The 1st/8th Bn embarked from Southampton on 17th March 1915, moving to the 'front' in early May in readiness for the Battle of Festubert, which claimed the first Cygnet fatality, Albert Dunn, a sergeant, who died on 25th May. He had been in France for barely one week. Further fatalities followed in 1916 with the demise of Ernest Erridge and Wilfred Doley, the latter during an assault on 'High Wood' in the Battle of the Somme.



The POR were at the forefront of the fighting throughout 1917, losing more than half their number at Wurst Farm Ridge in September during the Third Battle of Ypres, which gained especial notoriety because of its focus, in its latter stages, on the village of Passchendaele. Fought in appalling conditions, even by the standards of WW1, it was here, in what came to be known as the Second Battle of Passchendaele, 26th October to 10th November, that three Cygnet members – Robert Erridge (brother of Ernest), Cornelius Gibney and Cecil Toms – met their deaths on the same day (30th).

Four others – Arthur Rixon, John Rogers, Arthur Thaine and 'Bertie' Valentiny – were unfortunate enough to die in minor skirmishes or smaller set piece battles throughout 1917. Mercifully, 1918 claimed just one casualty, Albert Russell, who was the last Cygnet member to die in WW1.



There is no formal memorial to the POR in France. The names of the Cygnet fallen are commemorated at Menin Gate (Rixon and Valentiny), Le Touret (Dunn), Thiepval (Dooley and Rogers) and Tyne Cot (Erridge R, Russel and Toms). Others are interred at Dozinghem (Gibney) and St. Vaast Point (Thaine) † All of The Fallen are remembered in the Post Office Rifles Book of Remembrance at Church of St Botolph's-without-Aldersgate, London EC1.

The Home Front

Before many months of hostilities had passed, most Cygnet members had been caught up in the maelstrom and would return to rowing only fleetingly over the next five years. For those who were lucky enough to survive, one of the greatest comforts must have been the knowledge that there was anything to return to at all. Unlike so many clubs that languished and were never reborn, Cygnet strove to carry on regardless.

Club meetings continued to be held regularly throughout 1915, although there were rarely more than half a dozen members present. Nonetheless, they conducted business in the usual fashion, elected a trickle of new members, agreed to send Christmas cards to absent members and arranged to make donations to various charities.

A letter to members at the end of 1915 recounted how serving Cygnets home from France had visited the Club *"to enjoy the novelty of once again taking a seat in a boat"*, talked of improvements to The Camp ('Cygnets' bungalow) and ended with the hope that before 1916 was out *"Cygnets will have returned to greet the 'Old Cocks'"*. It was, of course, not to be.

As the war rumbled on into 1917, the secretary rarely missed an opportunity to express the hope that there would be an early return of all, and a rebirth of the desire for active sport. Nonetheless, even he found it a struggle to remain upbeat in the face of so many wounded men returning from the 'front', as this extract from one of his reports reveals: *"It must, unfortunately, be realized how great is the number who are now deprived of the ability to participate in many sports. Some of these could take part in the pleasure side of rowing and... It is a sport that will be welcomed as one that can be shared with those to whom fate has been less kind."*

Yet the 'Old Cocks' refused to concede defeat and the report continues, *"In arranging our fixtures, we propose to revive the "Up River" trips in which those unable to take part in the vigours of racing could join. So when asked 'What of the future' we can surely say 'It is of the brightest'."*

As club members convened on 18th June 1919 for the first meeting since the end of the war, many must have mourned 'The Fallen'. Yet their sacrifice had not been in vain: the meeting elected a host of new active members, agreed a racing programme and fixed a date for the Annual Concert. Cygnet Rowing Club was back in business with a vengeance.