



The Bull

TAURUS BOAT CLUB NEWSLETTER

Issue 6 of the 21st century — February 2011



Richard Chambers (right), celebrates winning the lightweight fours at the world championships, Karapiro New Zealand, with Chris Bartley, Rob Williams and Paul Mattick

Dates for the Diary

Social

Sat 6 March	TAURUS TRAINING DAY
Sat 2 July	HRR BBQ
Sat 1 October	TAURUS DINNER

Rowing

12-13 February	GB Trials (Dorney)
19 February	Henley 4's & 8's Head
12 March	Reading Uni HRR
19 March	Women's Head
2 April	Head of the River
3 April	Vets Head of the River
16-18 April	GB Trials (Dorney)
17-19 June	Henley Womens Regatta
29 June — 3 July	Henley Royal Regatta

Taurus on Facebook

<http://brookes.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2459861924>

Taurus on Twitter

<http://twitter.com/taurusboatclub/>

Taurus is also on LinkedIn

as Taurus Boat Club (in Groups)

To sign up for Taurus membership:

visit www.taurusboatclub.co.uk/downloads/taurusform.xls and send the completed form to Simon Speirs. Only £20 a year, a bargain.

Club website www.taurusboatclub.co.uk

Chairman's thoughts

As I sit on the train writing this, I wish I was on the water rather than commuting to London. However as I look back at 2009/10 I am proud of Taurus and what we have achieved.

Dinner at the River and Rowing Museum last spring was an outstanding success. Three well-won Henley trophies on display, a speech by Steve Williams followed by awards to James Brown (for services to Taurus) and Pete Chambers (Taurus Prize). And to finish — as I have become accustomed to at the end of a Taurus event — me defusing a potentially tricky moment by apologising for an element of wheelchair action. Enough said.

The dinner was closely followed in March by the London Heads, of which more later in this newsletter. Thanks go to Will Bryant (later a Henley Royal 2010 winner) for rallying the troops for a 'young(er)' Taurus VIII to run over the marks at the men's Head: they finished in the top 50. The Veterans Head the next day found a crew seeking revenge for the defeat the previous year. Joe Von M pulled together a strong Taurus T1 eight which stormed home to victory (our 6th in 7 years!) T2 and T3 both made it to the finish without major incidents...

The meeting afterwards at the Spencer Arms pub (Lower Richmond Road, near Putney Common) is now a regular fixture and I enjoy seeing Oxford Poly leavers from the '80's mixing with recent Brookes leavers. There may be a difference in age but we all have a common interest in rowing and in Taurus.

The summer brought the Henley barbecue. A change of venue was sought, following the difficulties we experienced last year with a certain Secretary of HRR, oops! [*See the November 2009 newsletter for a full confession.....*]

Initial concerns that the Henley Cricket Club, just behind the Little Angel, was going to be too far away from the regatta site were soon

banished by the 100-plus attendees. Now we have such a following for the event I am confident that we will stick with the venue for the future. And if the booze runs out we can go to the HCC bar, what could be better?

Following Henley and the frantic Taurus season it is time for a bit of a lie down and preview of the coming year:

We are looking to spread the events a bit more evenly through 2011, and aim to end the year with the annual dinner.

In particular we will be aiming to celebrate the achievements of the year, welcome our internationals home and look forward to the 2012 Olympics and Brookes' involvement.

I have of course not forgotten to mention members achieving all sorts through 2010, often sporting Taurus colours. Our members have been competing at the Blenheim Triathlon, the Henley Swim (official and unofficial), Wargrave Regatta and various members continue to compete at HRR and Women's Henley.

So it is all good in the Taurus camp. Thank you for the hard work of the committee members without whom we otherwise wouldn't achieve the events. Also thanks to the support of Richard Spratley, Henry Bailhache-Webb and Paul Moss, especially when it comes to the London Heads. And of course, thanks for the support of the members who continue to attend the events that we organise.

I look back at the year's achievements, the train journey is behind me and I'm really proud of Taurus.

Keep doing it,

Pete Lowe

Conquering the world - 2010 team in NZ

It has been a very unusual year for the British squad: racing for world gold medals in New Zealand in November as the rest of rowing in the UK was wrapping up warm and preparing for the head race season. As always there were several athletes very close to Brookes and Taurus involved with the British squad, and we stayed up into the night to watch their races live on TV!

Losing out on precious sleep and taking on serious amounts of caffeine was undoubtedly worth it to see **Richard Chambers** (*left in picture*) win his second senior world championships in the lightweight coxless fours; the same event that saw him on the top step of the podium in 2007. It was an incredible race that climaxed with the British pipping the Australians by 0.07 seconds, and the first five crews finishing in just over a second. After taking a year out this was a fantastic way to return to the scene for Richard and we are delighted to congratulate him on his achievement.

Keeping it in the family, Richard's younger brother **Peter Chambers**, who is currently rowing and studying at Brookes, also made the long trip to NZ. He raced in the lightweight single, and after a very long season that saw him also racing at the under-23 world championships, he finished an excellent sixth. Pete will be surely pushing his big brother and other lightweights during the 2011 selection process.

There was a bit of disappointment for our representatives in the open categories. **Alex Partridge** in the coxless four, after dominating this season's world cup series and the early races of the world championships, looked like a good bet for gold. His crew led the final for three quarters of the way, establishing a considerable lead, but unfortunately the difficult conditions of the Karapiro natural lake got the best of the British and Alex only just missed out on a medal. Also just missing out on a podium finish was **Caroline O'Connor**, coxing



the women's eight. She was in third position with 500m to go, but the late surge of the experienced Romanian crew proved too much for the British girls. No doubt both Alex and Caroline will already be focusing on the Olympic qualifying world championships next summer.

We also had interest in the adaptive categories: **James Roe**, whose time at Brookes was followed by him establishing himself in the GB adaptive squad, finished a very commendable second in the LTAMx4+ behind a very fast Canadian outfit. Also in that race was **Helen Arbuthnot**, who was coxing the Irish crew which finished 5th.

After the regatta most of the team enjoyed a well-deserved break in New Zealand. In our next newsletter we hope to bring you a bit more about the Chambers brothers and their achievements. For now we limit ourselves to congratulating them, and all our former Brookes athletes in the senior squad on their efforts and results, and we thank them, as always, for taking the Brookes rowing name to the highest level.

Senior team dates for 2011:

- * Feb 12th-13th, senior GB trials (Dorney)
- * Apr 16th-18th, final GB trials (Dorney)
- * May 27th-29th, World Cup I (Munich)
- * Jun 17th-19th, World Cup II (Hamburg)
- * Jul 8th-10th, World Cup III (Lucerne)
- * Aug 28th-Sep 4th, World champs (Bled)

HORR 2010 - finishing the course



Flying without wings — Taurus takes on the Head of the River Race in 2010

After a successful return to the famous Mortlake to Putney race for Taurus in 2009, several 'survivors' of that crew decided to prove it was no fluke and try and make two years in a row. Will Bryant, whose full time job gives him plenty of spare time, was charged with assembling a crew, organising training times, and ensuring a valid entry was made, tasks that no doubt have heightened his appreciation for the work Spratley and Henry put in during his time at Brookes.

Unfortunately the many commitments of each member made it very difficult, or in fact impossible, to have any training with the starting VIII in the weeks leading up to the race; so it wasn't until D-Day that everyone was present for the roll-call, equipped with electric blue lycra. Yet after an encouraging pre-race paddle in the morning spirits were very high. Unfortunately a comedy of errors awaited the Taurus boys when it came down to business.

Problems with the steering and with the cox-box began for the cox, whom had only been recruited a couple days before and by this point was no doubt regretting her decision to 'have a fun day' as Will so cunningly sold it. Disaster seemed to have struck when the crew arrived late at the start, and only thanks to our former international Jonno Devlin's sweet talking of Sir Matthew Pinsent, who was umpiring, was

Taurus allowed to defend their place; much to the joy (disappointment) of some other crew members who thought they'd got out of racing at the last moment. If they thought it was all over then... it was five minutes later, as the crew realised the importance training, and being fit, had shown in 2009's result.

It was a tough race, and involved a strong battle against a Newcastle University crew, who Taurus eventually decided to let through (being generous, you know). Still, our representatives made it all the way to the finish line with a gutsy performance against all that adversity: the kind of performance that only a Taurus crew can produce.

The most memorable moment for the boys remains the strong contingent of support on Hammersmith Bridge, who were in strong voice and sporting the club flag over the side; testament that we do not do things half-heartedly. And all of Taurus is grateful to the lads and Jo Wright (cox) for putting on such a grand effort and maintaining Taurus' entry for 2011; any volunteers for that one?

If you would like to row for Taurus at the 2011 HORR (2nd April) please contact Will Bryant, email willbryant2@gmail.com. Closing date for entries is 5pm on 4th March 2011.

Taurus' great veteran expectations

Several years ago the Taurus entered an eight of 'mates' into the Vesta Veteran's Eights Head. This has now grown to three eights being entered each year and more often than not achieving significant success. On recent form T1, as we like the top crew to be called, has taken the headship 6 times in the last 7 years.

We still have the 'mates' crews taking part, with many of the founding members involved. But of course from not rowing all year round there is no grand expectation, apart from completing a decent run over the track and having a good time. Above all the Taurus spirit remains: don't take anything too seriously!

This has been the case so much that on many occasions some individuals (even in T1) have been entered to take part without knowing until a few days beforehand that they are in the crew. And it is a strict rule that crews (particularly T2) are not permitted to practise.

However as demonstrated by the 2010 crews, Taurus has a significant pool of talent to call upon, thanks to the success of years of drilling at Brookes. In fact after a small slip-up in 2009, last year T1 regained the headship, and no doubt will be out in force to defend it in 2011.



We can't bring you a decent picture of the 2010 crew so here's T1 (from a few years ago...) including T1 regulars James Brown, Danny Marett, Rowley Douglas and Dave Gillard.

The 2010 headship crew was as follows:

Rowley Douglas

Olympic champion cox in 2000 (GB 8+)

Joe Von Maltzhan

Brookes man from 1998 to 2001. Great Britain eight in 2001 & 2001, Boat race 2005 with Oxford. Multiple Henley winner.

Andrew Dax

Brookes man from 2001-2004. Winner of the Thames Cup 2007, National Champion Lwt 2-2007-2008.

Dave Gillard

Henley winner with Oxford Brookes in Visitors. Cambridge Blue and winner of the Grand in 1996 and Goblets in 1992. Jun/U23 medallist.

Jonno Devlin

Two times Olympian in 2004 (GB 8+) and 2008 (IRL 4-), world bronze in GB 8+ 2003. Brookes man from 1998. Multiple Henley winner.

Nigel Maynard

Brookes man from 1999-2002. Winner of the Fawley Challenge cup.

Alistair Cordey

Brookes man from 2005-2007 and won the Temple in 2006 and the Thames in 2009.

Dan Harte

Current captain of LRC. Former Great Britain Lightweight in 2003-2008. Commonwealth Gold Medallist in 2002.

James Brown

Ox Poly/Brookes 1993-1996. Henley winner with Oxford Polytechnic and Brookes and rowed and won as Taurus in composite with Brookes. Former lightweight international.

Pete Lowe

If you'd like to row in T1, T2 or T3/4/5 in 2011 contact Robbie Kennedy rabbie_k@hotmail.com

Bull action: Taurus rowing goes Xtreme

There was more international travel, and insane competition, for another Taurus athlete as **Katie Klavenes** was selected to cox a British representative crew at this summer's Red Bull X Row in Switzerland.

Katie took charge of a somewhat scratch eight of Leander and UTRC athletes, and after a week of on and off training, the outfit flew out to Switzerland a little unsure of what lay ahead.

If Katie thought she had finally figured out the sport of rowing she was in for a shock as, armed with only a very vague map of the course, she lined up on the start against ten other men's eights for a 27km rowing/running marathon through the Swiss mountains.

"I knew there would be some running and had been unwell in the week leading up to the race so was worried about keeping up with the boys", said Katie. "Luckily for me the lads were carrying the boat and blades, and what the organisers 'forgot' to tell them was that the

running would be up and down Swiss hills; so I just managed to keep up."

The race started in Zug with a 10km row, then a 4km run, a 7km row, a 2km run, a 3km row and, just to make sure everyone would crawl over the line, it ended with a 600m running dash to the finish line in Lucerne.

The British outfit (*below*) finished a fantastic third in a time of two hours six minutes. The top spot had been taken about a minute earlier by a German outfit featuring international sculler Marcel Hacker. But the satisfaction of finishing was a triumph of its own, as Katie recalls: "We overtook the Romanian crew (4th) on the second leg of rowing and that gave us a massive boost. It was such a long time racing it was great to finally cross the line."

Well done to Katie for competing in the Red Bull X Row and proving once again that Taurus athletes never hesitate to get stuck in to these crazy challenges.



Brookes medals at the under-23 worlds



We told you earlier of Richard Chambers' success at the senior world championships, and mentioned his younger brother **Pete's** meteoric rise into the senior squad. A few months before the trip to Karapiro, Pete was in action, racing lightweight singles at the under-23 world championships in Brest, Belarus.

After speeding out to a typically quick Brookes-style start, Pete had the mammoth task of keeping up with Iran's defending world champion, the 6ft-3inch Mohsen Shadi Naghadeh. Pete settled into second place, and managed to pull away from the rest of the field. He kept challenging the Iranian, but had to settle for silver against a very strong opponent.

But there was also international success for some of Pete's Brookes club mates. **Scott Durant** (6), **Matt Tarrant** (3) and **Karl Hudspith** (bow) were all selected for the under-23 men's eight (*above*), and joined the Brest team. Coached by Brookes' very own **Henry Bailhache-Webb** the crew finished in

the bronze medal position, after a very tight race which had the British boys always vying for one of the top three places. This is the second under-23 eight in two years Henry has coached to a medal at this level.

At the same event **Ben Lewis**, former Brookes boy now turned coach, coached the British men's coxed four to another bronze medal.

The FISU (student world) championships, held every other year, were in Hungary last summer. Brookes' squad provided five athletes, including three of the champion men's eight.

FISU 2010 Brookes results:

- M8+ (Karl Hudspith, Matt Tarrant, Scott Durant) - gold medal
- LM4- (Simon Barr) - 4th
- M4- (Alex Holden-Smith) - 8th

A quote from the boat

Brookes has long been associated with men's heavyweight rowing, but as this newsletter alone shows, we are a breeding ground for lightweights also. Yet it doesn't stop there, over the past few years there has been a lot of work done to expand and strengthen the women's side of the sport down at the Bowbridge boat house. After a truly remarkable year, current Brookes girl **Katherine Douglas** told us of some of the most memorable moments and about oarswomen at Brookes in general.

"After our first years of being a target for the boys' banter it was definitely time for a change and for the boys to be put in their place" said Katherine as she looked back on a fantastic year for the girls. "Last season we did plenty of switching between our coxed and coxless crew with Charlotte Powell doing a fantastic job as cox. We won the E4+ at the Met and then at Woman's Henley Regatta; and in the 4- we won the Champ event at BUCS, which qualified us for EUSA, where we finished off our season by winning gold in the same event."

Part of the success of the girls' great year is down to the expanded OBUBC coaching team. In addition to Richard Spratley's and Henry Bailhache's work, Paul Moss has been steadily developing the novice and girls' squads.

"The coaches are like parents to us, we have mummy Henry and daddy Mossy", said Katherine. "So when mum says no about something we can always rely on daddy to get our own way and vice versa." And after Katherine told us of 'Daddy Mossy's' pre-race chat at EUSA, we can be sure he fits in perfectly in the Brookes spirit of immaculate planning: "Mossy's race plan was the best: 'Girls, if you're not ahead: get ahead! That is all.' It was short but sweet."

Clearly the winning formula of girls rowing at Brookes is a strong parental-coaching team



Tina Thomas, Katherine Douglas, Lizzie Cottrell and Chloe Willis, EUSA champions, Sept 2010

combined with their single focus in training: "Rowing for girls at Brookes means doing one thing: stay ahead of boys at all times, and at all costs. Our cheeky little bursts around the river bends damage their egos and they just can't understand why they don't catch us."

But there has been no resting on their laurels for the girls as they are back on the river with the coaches, all determined to continue strengthening this important side of our club: "We have started off this season as we ended the last: winning E4- at the Fours Head", says Katherine. "Also this season we are very focussed and excited about a potential eight."

Katherine Douglas

Boat naming — and a lot of rain....

We on the Taurus organising committee like to think we are able to organise a good event: be it a BBQ, a dinner or a crew slogging down a racecourse. But there is one thing not even we can control: the damn English weather. So last year, what was meant to be a boat naming ceremony, a hog roast and a 500m sprint race between old boys and the current Brookes team, ended up being almost 100 people cramming tightly into the Cholsey boat house in an attempt to stay out of the pouring rain. [We probably took our chances when we organised the day for late November.]

Nevertheless, the Taurus/Brookes spirit made even this adverse weather day a success. A good turnout, the hog-roast under a makeshift tent, and no doubt some old boys were quietly grateful to the weather for cancelling any racing. The focal point of the morning was the unveiling of five newly named Empacher boats, which add to the already competitive Brookes fleet. From the Taurus fund, we were able to

contribute directly to the purchase of two brand new coxless-pairs, which now carry the names of **Rowley Douglas** and **Ben Hunt-Davis**, both former Brookes men and Olympic gold medallists with the Sydney 2000 8+. A new Empacher four was named for their crew-mate and Brookes lad **Fred Scarlett**.

A brand new eight was also bought, which will no doubt be one of the club's top boats, and was rightly christened after our most successful former Brookes rower, **Steve Williams**.

And last, but by no means least, Brookes acquired the winning coxless four from the Athens 2004 Olympics, which you may remember was already named **Alex Partridge** after injury denied him a chance to race in the event. After all his services for Brookes, we are proud that this boat will continue to bear Alex's name, and I think we can all agree that now that the boat is at Brookes, it will finally have the chance to feel some real speed.....



The new Empacher breeding centre — yellow shells in abundance thanks partly to Taurus and all your generous donations.

Above - Ben Hunt-Davis names one pair while Rowley Douglas (above standing to the further right) waits next to Taurus stalwart Clive Couldwell (centre) to name his. Right - Steve Williams with the new 'Steve Williams'



Newsflash — Taurus not banned from RRM

The Taurus 2010 dinner was a phenomenal success. This was most of all because our hosts, the River and Rowing Museum in Henley said we would be WELCOME back! (This has not been the case in past dinners where festivities have spilled over... *something about pissing off balconies, which we won't go into again — ed.*)

Thank you once again to **Steve Williams OBE**, who gave an excellent speech recalling his training sessions at Brookes and Spratley's inspirational chats which many, old and new, could relate to. No doubt anyone who has rowed under the Spratley regime over these past (hmm) *three* decades will have experienced the same training and same well-known pre-training chats. Who can honestly say they have never heard: "This is not a seat race; we are just going to do a couple of races and swap a few people round"?

It was fantastic to have so many Henley winners in the room that evening. To celebrate

this we were lucky enough to be allowed to put the Stewards' (last won by a Taurus rower in 2009), the Grand (2009) and the Temple (2006) Challenge Cup trophies on display throughout the evening. Or at least until the committee got so nervous we decided to lock them back in their cases and out of the way of the wheelchair racing circuit....

The evening drew to a close with members, both old and new, flaunting their stuff on the aptly named dance floor of 'The Bull'. It was once again lots of fun but of course this is always the case when the raw ingredients are a good dose of Brookes rowers and a cup or two of alcohol. And if nothing else, the dance moves themselves provided new entertainment.

We are hoping that after giving you well over a year to recover you will all be able to join us for our next dinner, which we hope to stage in the autumn of 2011.

Tamsin Adams



Taurus one-piece and Taurus pashmina available from the TBC Kit Shop. Modelled here by Peter Chambers and Scott Durant. Dance moves are the models' own....





A fine innings at the Taurus BBQ – howzat?

After the hugely successful 2009 Taurus barbecue, which attracted around 150 guests and got us almost thrown out of Butler's field for starting a 'commercial venture', the committee thought it would be best to down scale the event this year. We aimed for 100 guests and moved the location to the newly refurbished Henley Cricket Club, and the results were fantastic. Guests included current and past students as well as the usual scavengers from other clubs who realised our show was the best; but at least this year no rugby tackles were needed to retrieve stolen sausages from rogue passers-by.

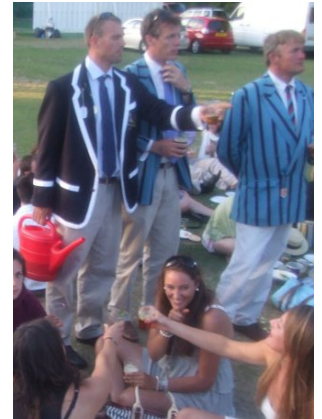
A massive thank-you goes to James Symington of Taurus and Dewintons for once again providing the mobile barbecue, which gave us food when we were hungry. And to all who manned the crusty watering cans, which gave us drink when we were thirsty. Although

next year we will have to be on the look-out for those students who took Pimm's without paying for it; it's to be expected of course, but we know who they are and we will have them signed up as Taurus members by the end of the year. We'd also like to clarify to the more mature members of the group, those who so elegantly wear their Poly blue jackets, that the original plan for the ice was not for throwing at rival barbecues.

A new venue and many new faces, but the real first for which the 2010 barbecue will be remembered is one that may well be wasted on many. Nevertheless it is worth mentioning; therefore we'd like to congratulate our Commander and Chief Mr Lowe on finally getting a burger.

Robbie Kennedy

BBQ 2011: Saturday 2nd July, Henley CC



Taurus on duty — a letter from Afghanistan

Rowing, drinking, competing, drinking and a bit more rowing: that may seem what Taurus is all about, but behind that exterior many of us do hold serious professions.

None more so than Taurus member **Antony Feltham-White**, who is an army chaplain currently supporting the troops in Afghanistan. Antony, who was a Poly-boy in the late 80s and rowed in last year's Vets Head 3rd VIII, wrote an update to Taurus from his tour of duty.

*Pictured: Ant (left) with RAF pilot **Nick Green**, the 1990 OPBC captain, in front of Nick's Chinook in Afghanistan in December 2010.*

*Patrol Base 2
Helmand Province
Afghanistan
20th November 2010*

Dear friends,

It's been just over a month already since I arrived back in Afghanistan, and thankfully it has passed relatively quickly which bodes well for the rest of my time here. I now have a 'permanent' bed-space which comprises of about 7 square-foot into which I have to cram my camp-bed, mosquito net and all my kit. Each tent holds eight people (some of ours have 14 crammed in). Most of us mark off our area using whatever we can, mine is now a fully enclosed cubicle of white material with a 'door', over which is the sign 'St Jude's Vestry' (patron saint of lost causes - not sure whether that is me or this place). I also have a small piece of carpet by my bed, so at least when I roll out each morning my feet have a fleeting feeling of normality.

It is looking like we may get hold of a heater to make our showers warm for a couple of hours each day. At the moment there are just four shower heads in a tent for over 200 personnel.



But there is always plenty of freezing cold water for washing and shaving! Toilet facilities are also somewhat primitive with a 'desert rose' for the boys (a drainpipe with one end buried deep underground and so called because of the sweet pungent aroma that develops). For the girls (there are a few here) and for a longer toilet stop we use 'wag-bags' as they are colloquially known. They are actually hygienic and better than they sound - but it's not porcelain. I leave them to your imagination.

The 2 PARA nattlegroup (of which I'm chaplain) has around 1,000 personnel scattered across our five main patrol bases and then our rear echelon group is at MOB (Main Operating Base) Price and MOB Bastion. They look after all our supplies. Each of the patrol bases is built around one of our rifle companies whose job it is to firstly, protect themselves, then to push forward and increase the safe areas for the Afghani people to go about their daily life and to allow our stability advisors to facilitate local self-help projects such as building wells, schools and clinics.

Our rifle companies also spend a great deal of energy and time mapping and getting to know what we call the 'human terrain'. In other words we make sure we know everybody in our area: who the elders are and the decision makers,

who is related to who and so on. It pays dividends to the work we do.

All of our patrol bases have recently been involved in distributing wheat and vegetable seed to the local people. Where we are based is a very poor rural area, and many of the farmers grow poppy as this is the most cash-rich crop. We hope that the free seed will encourage them to grow other things. Sadly, the Taliban try their best to bully people into growing poppy for them. In the areas where we are able to provide security we hope to see wheat and vegetables in the spring and not poppies.

Each of our patrol bases has a number of check-points that lie around them like satellites; these are manned by a multiple of our soldiers and a partnering multiple of either Afghan army or Afghan police. These check points are very basic and the soldiers have a very hard life when they are on duty there, especially now that the nights are very cold.

Nearly all our check points have been involved in some sort of kinetic activity (fighting), and every day we have foot patrols that are out all over our area. Broadly speaking to our north it is mostly benign while to our south it is more hostile. Most days the sound of gunfire can be heard in the distance. However, it is mostly sporadic and what we call 'shoot and scoot' by the Taliban. In our area rumour has it that the Taliban are very weak. Certainly the 'special forces' are always very busy in 'removing' the leaders which leaves the rest in disarray.

Thankfully the professionalism and training of our soldiers has kept them safe so far. There have been one or two lucky breaks, and we have had two soldiers wounded by gunshots (both will recover). They are very good in only returning fire when there is no chance of any civilian casualties. They have also been successful in finding and dealing with IEDs (improvised explosive devices — i.e. mines). Currently we have had the least casualties of

all the Brigades' ground-holding units - please keep praying!

We are making a positive difference here, but whether this can grow and be sustained I do not know. The Taliban are feared by most Afghani people. However, nearly all the people remain content that we are here protecting them. Every day sees all types of interaction and I have met with local religious leaders as well as the religious officers in the Afghan army. After initial wariness on their part I am normally welcomed and invited back to share food and chat with them. We are involved in much more than fighting here and in fact it is only ever the Taliban who initiate any sort of fight. They seemed determined to disrupt progress. Their attrition rate is enormous at all levels, but it seems there are always more waiting to join the fray - many who come over the border from Pakistan.

I am always amazed by the dedication and determination of our young soldiers. They are asked to perform extraordinary deeds in very difficult and dangerous circumstances. I know it is not always easy for them. Now that the first month 'honeymoon' period is over they face at least five more months of cold, hard wet slog. Please remember them in your thoughts and prayers.

All the very best,

Antony

Sadly since Christmas 2-Para have lost two men, their first casualties. We are putting further updates from Antony on the Taurus website, www.taurusboatclub.co.uk Thank you to AFW for finding the time to write to us.

If you would like to make a donation to the Parachute Regiment Charity that looks after the casualties, it is called 'The Afghanistan Trust' and you can find its website at: <http://www.afghanistantrust.org/>

Skiffing the Thames

The Taurus love-affair with the Thames is a long-standing one. Here **Alex Hoodless** tells the story of a Poly boys expedition in the finest traditions of the club.

My uncle-in-law, David Bradley, died in 2008. He had been at Pangbourne and was also an ever present member at Henley Regatta. He went on to play rugby for Harlequins and does indeed still hold the Harlequin gentleman's record for deckchair throwing in Lion Meadow on a Thursday night. It was therefore fitting that an expedition down the Thames was in order to raise money for the RNLI in his memory and to have a lifeboat named after him in Lymington.

Having spoken to a few of the boys regarding a potential expedition on the Thames, its fair to say that nothing happened for about six months! We had decided that May 2009 would be the date to go for it with the hope of some decent weather. In about March, the crew was formed of me, **James Symington** (wife very pregnant), **Pete Lowe** (never at home) and **Andre Zlattinger** (between Himalayan treks), sadly **John Cooper** couldn't join us due to the very recent arrival of youngster Tom.

Next question. What exactly were we going to do? A night of intense planning and imbibing suitable quantities of London Pride actually got us no further than 'row the Thames', or at least a bit of it.

Planning now moved into overdrive. We found a boat, courtesy of the Thames Traditional Boating Society at Caversham who lent us their truly magnificent society boat, *Sgian Dubh*. It is a quadruple skiff which currently holds the record for Lechlade Bridge to Southend Pier, a distance of 185.88 miles, in 31 hours. That's 6 miles an hour, non-stop!! We decided that Lechlade Bridge, which is the highest navigable part of the Thames, to Putney Embankment was about right for us. A mere 135 miles with just the 42 locks.

Some of you will remember the feeling when sitting on the stakeboats at the beginning of the racing season. The anticipation, money been paid into the bank, nervousness, hours ploughing up and down the Wallingford stretch between Benson and Cleeve locks finally going into something useful. We didn't feel like that. Having managed to chat up the very unlikely

twenty-something female marina owner for a free launch at Lechlade, we set off. Arses hurting within the first mile, we reached St. John's Lock. Anyone know how to.....?

End of day one we reached Clifton Hampden, just after Abingdon. It took 14 hours, 21 locks, straight through the Oxford Eights messing about. I have never seen such pain or indeed sunburn. BBQ by the Thames? Bigger that - pasta, bed.



Next day, not possible to sum up the pain as everything hurt, a lot, having arrived 8 hours earlier. Off again and a majestic parade down the Wallingford stretch with a stop at the OBUBC boathouse. It was now becoming increasingly important when you took your turn steering as this was done on a lock to lock basis but, basically worked out as four hours rowing and one hour off. Reached Bray that night very late, after 16 hours on the water and a mere 17 locks. Tied up outside Parkie's house. Why would you have a wooden crocodile in your garden?



to a few barges which aren't quite what they were. We left a note!!

Day three, our final day to Putney Embankment. Left at 5am. Arrived at 4pm. Missed the tide, beached the skiff at Richmond. 11 locks and a final push into a strong headwind, against the tide.

Would we do it again? Probably, but not all of it. Memories not sufficiently dulled yet. A few observations:

It's very bendy at the top of the Thames and its really difficult to steer a four man skiff. Sorry

The Oxford Eights produced the sum total of £1.40 for the cause. 'Nuff said.

We all hate most motor cruisers even more now and the barge people are just weird. Cats, pipes, flower pots, no idea where they are going and all at 3 mph.

One thing that we did appreciate is just how beautiful the Thames is from top to bottom and so varied from flood plains, to cities, meadows. The lung of the south east of England.



We were very lucky to have fantastic support from **Christopher Hopkinson** and guest appearances from **Alex Henshilwood, Alex Gandon** and **Sarah Winkless**. They all kept us going at some of the lower points and pulled hard.

Thanks!

Headline

Clive Couldwell was one of the rowers who founded the Oxford Polytechnic Boat Club, which became OBUBC when the college gained university status and changed its name in late 1992. Clive explains how the foundations of Taurus were laid in rowing on the Isis, back in the first days of the club.

Co-founder **Nick Ryan**'s early memories of rowing were arriving at the former Oxford Polytechnic in 1978 shocked that no boat club existed already. "Putting up a poster we found three other people with basic rowing knowledge who wanted to row. We were effectively all novices," he recalls.

Very quickly, a core group of experienced schoolboy and club rowers found themselves marshalling around 60 enthusiastic beginners. Many boat houses and clubs were approached. **Russell Cooke**, a former old boy of Reading Blue Coat School persuaded his alma mater to let the Polytechnic rowers get started in one of the school's eights.

But it was Oxford Falcon Rowing and Canoeing Club beside Donnington Bridge in Oxford which provided the Poly's rowers with their first home. "The equipment was ancient. There were few if any members so they were happy to help," adds Ryan.

Founded in 1869, Falcon is one of the oldest rowing clubs on the Thames. This friendly and sociable place offered the Polytechnic a safe haven which the organising group used to develop skills and ultimately create a new club – Oxford Polytechnic Boat Club (OPBC). The changing room was like wandering down memory lane, as experienced rowers of yesteryear looked down from within their misted frames.

By the end of that first 1978-'79 year, the initial rowing group had been reduced to a more manageable size and began to race as Oxford Polytechnic/Falcon composite crews

in a string of events from Wallingford to Monmouth, Worcester and Hereford, and finally Huntingdon. "You could say it was an idyllic time. I remember it as a series of scenes - of deckchairs, willow trees, WI sandwiches and beers by the riverside," says another of the Club's co-founders, **David Cooke**.

OPBC had started to grow as a power within the Polytechnic. Gym sessions were allocated and some money was found from the Students Union. Crews rowed in black vests with red piping. Social life took place in the Plough at Noke, and The Fir Tree pub just off the Iffley Road, with nutritional sustenance in the form of Brett's burgers (a much-mourned burger bar which used to be where the Saïd Business School is now).

The following 1979-1980 year Oxford Polytechnic/Falcon won novice men's fours at Monmouth Regatta and novice women's fours at Stratford-upon-Avon. With 1980-1981 came the raising of money for an eight and the influx of more experienced rowers from institutions with an established rowing heritage. The next decade saw Oxford Poly find its feet, alumni support, and begin to win big. Its rowers entered BPSA (British Polytechnic Sports Association) events, winning many championship events at the annual regatta.

Gaining **Richard Spratley** and **Tim Levy** as coaches spurred the club on, and during the '80s and '90s the club began to list victories at the biggest regattas, including Henley Royal, Women's Henley, and the Nat Champs, and to see medals won by representatives in the senior and under-23 national squads. The club has moved three times in the past three decades: from Falcon to the Isis Boathouse beside Iffley Lock; then to Wallingford Rowing Club, and finally to the Bowbridge boathouse at Cholsey, which was rebuilt by Spratley's team (including several ex-OBUC/OPBC rowers) in 2002.

Do you have a history anecdote? Email us.



Top — OPBC annual dinner, Linton Lodge Hotel, 1988 (spot the faces...)



Bottom — OPBC captain Pete Lowe and Taurus chairman Paul Lacey name the first new shell donated by Taurus, after the alumni club.

Above — the formal opening of OPBC's Isis Boathouse beside Iffley Lock. Left to right — Paul Lacey, Blaine Castle, Nick Green, Dr Bob Morris, Alex Gandon, Mark Dodwell, Ed Chetwynd-Stapleton, Pat Benjamin, John Foddy.



Blenheim Triathlon 2010

Former OxPoly man and current Taurus secretary **Alex Gandon** explains how members of the club have rediscovered the brainwashing received in rowing and taken up triathlon.

What do you do when you don't want to get up early at the weekends to go rowing anymore but your belly is starting to sag a bit, you still enjoy wearing lycra and you need to justify that expensive mid-life crisis road bike purchase?

Simple - you take up triathlon....

And so it was that a group of 40-something-year-old Taurus members entered the Blenheim Triathlon in 2007. Since then a few more have joined the sport (Editor's note - **Andy Dax** recently spotted coming 15th at a Dorney evening triathlon) and needless to say a shared spirit of healthy competition is driving times down year after year.

Blenheim 2010 saw the shock DNS of the 2009 Taurus champion, **Jack Broughton**, as he claimed to have "a bit of a cold." This opened the door to **Nick Rogers** who put in a blistering overall time, despite a relatively reserved bike section, and finished over two minutes ahead of Jack's previous best in 2009: 1h21m58s. **Tim Wright** came in an excellent second: 1h24m25s. And then it was my turn, as I finished a pleasing third in 1h25m59s. To complete the team, **Nick "Man Mountain" Green** pounded home in 1h29m01s. Almost as important as our final standings relative to each other (but not quite), was our overall standing, which ranged from 338th to 984th overall out of 2797 competitors; with our winner Nick Rogers finishing 16th in his (very senior) age class. All were personal bests.

2011 looks to be an even bigger Taurus year at Blenheim, with a determined Jack Broughton looking to regain his crown from Nick Rogers. **Paul Lacey** is back after a two year absence and our esteemed Chairman **Pete Lowe** is entered for the first time. The good thing

is that it's just a bit of fun and no one gets competitive... (honest)

Now – at risk of giving away triathlon's reputation as a sport for hard men only, it is important to explain that not all triathlons are Ironman events (2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike and full marathon run). We compete in the more popular sprint distance that involves a 750m swim, 20k bike and 5k run. Typical race times are anywhere between 60 and 90 minutes. Blenheim is a sprint distance event and makes an excellent first competition despite its reputation as a tough race due to its undulating bike and run sections and in particular the gruelling hill run from the lake swim back to the palace for the first transition.

So if anyone is looking for a reason to buy a nice bike and a wetsuit and has an unhealthy interest in seat-racing result sheets (triathlon is all about the numbers) then perhaps take a look at triathlon in 2011. The Blenheim event (June) is at www.theblenheimtriathlon.com

Like us, come and prove that Taurus is not only great on water!

*Right,
Alex
in full
flow:*

*yes,
nicked,
but we
just
could
not
resist
it....*



Taurus swim & breakfast



Pete Lowe and Alex Gandon tackling the Henley Royal course in alternative fashion... Taurus girls Hannah Blaikie, Katie Klavenes and Tamsin Adams were on hand to serve up a full English breakfast to the troops after the race.

Boathouse appeal

Readers of the last newsletter will know that an appeal has begun to raise money for a rebuild of the Brookes boathouse on the current site.

Here is a mock-up of the planned Centre for Rowing at Cholsey, Wallingford:



OBU Head of Fundraising Emma Radley writes to the Taurus membership:

"2010 was a difficult year economically for everyone, so the Campaign has made slow progress to date, but we are still hopeful that we can deliver the new boathouse in the future. The university continues to look for supporters who would like to make a donation to rowing at Brookes and we will continue to keep Taurus up to date with the project."

The appeal website is at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/sport/clubs/rowing/boathouse/> and includes a fundraising indicator.

Donations can be made online and are all very much appreciated.

Round the world on two wheels

This autumn the British senior-team athletes were concerned over having to face the long flight all the way to New Zealand. They may have felt less daunted by the 30-hour trip had they known Taurus member **Ryan Davies** is currently *cycling* to the Kiwi nation.....

Ryan decided he had had enough of his London lifestyle and job as an accountant, and together with his girlfriend Becks (*right*), prepared to cycle to the other side of the world.

"It'll be a relaxed-pace trip, and we have given ourselves 15-18 months to get there; I can't really expect much more of my girlfriend Becks, especially after I said no to a tandem bike", Ryan joked. "We will be camping in tents and staying with friends of friends along the way; we hope to get to NZ in time for the rugby world cup next year".



Good luck to Ryan and Becks on their cycling trip. The pair set off in early September 2010 and you can follow their progress and updates on <http://worldcyclingtour.wordpress.com/>

Cycling for charity

Many of the Taurus members thrive in challenges of all sorts. The excitement and will of pushing themselves to their limit comes from the 'education' they received down the Brookes boat house; after hanging up the rowing blades it is a way to still feel capable of that special something.

Every so often a Taurus member embarks on one of these feats not simply to satisfy their competitive spirit, but also to raise money for charity. In this newsletter we are keen to promote these fund raising challenges and give them as much exposure possible.

In February 2012, **Hannah Blaikie** will be swapping the rowing boat for the bicycle and in an attempt to raise money for cancer research will be cycling across Kenya. The challenge will be to cycle 400Km over five days. The course will run from the foot of Mount Kenya to the shores of Lake Victoria and will cross through

several of the country's nature reserves. Hannah will be battling the hot African weather, the hilly course, and maybe some of the local wildlife (though hopefully not too much).

The money Hannah raises will be will be divided equally to support the important work of three important charities: Breast Cancer Care, Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust and Ovarian Cancer Action. If you want to support Hannah and donate towards these charities, please visit www.justgiving.com/Hannah-Blaikie

If you want to raise the profile of a challenge you are taking on, whether for charity or not, get in touch with us and we'll do our best to tell everyone in our next newsletter. Or send us a report afterwards — money can still be raised when you have finished.

For starters, is anyone running the London Marathon for charity this year?

What is Taurus and who are its members?

Taurus was established in 1989 as the alumni club of the Oxford Polytechnic Boat Club. At the time the Polytechnic boat club had gained a reputation mainly for its social events: the three-legged pub crawl and annual dinner being the highlights. However, the rowing was steadily improving and the Poly started to attract existing oarsmen and women rather than novices who wanted to try their hand at rowing in Oxford.

There was a problem: the club was surviving on limited equipment. The club rented rack space from Falcon Rowing Club (*see page 18*), and the boats, all second hand purchases, were shared between the men's, women's and novice squads. The club had grown and the equipment could not last. It was only with the efforts of a few who patched up the equipment that crews were boated at all.

Taurus was therefore born of the ideas of a group of Oxford Poly oarsmen to address current problems, look to the future of the student rowing club, and act as a club for ex Polytechnic oarsmen and women to stay in contact with one another.

The constitutional objectives of the club are:

1. To promote social links between past members of OPBC/OBUBC.

Taurus is a social club giving members the

opportunity to continue friendships that have been built during the years spent at the, now, University. The club now hosts an annual dinner, a Henley barbecue and an informal all-comers regatta.

2. To support Oxford Polytechnic, now Oxford Brookes University.

The social club also has a very clear objective, to support Oxford Brookes rowing. At the time the Polytechnic was struggling to provide equipment at all levels. Taurus now raises money to provide equipment, however modest. The first purchase was a megaphone for the chief coach, and last year Taurus contributed towards the purchase of two new Empacher pairs.

3. To promote rowing participation among its membership.

The final objective is to promote "rowing" participation. Although Taurus has no clubhouse and owns no boats, it currently enjoys scattered participation and the regular outing at the Veteran's Head where we are always contenders for top spot.

The message to all current students is that for Taurus to continue and to continue to support Brookes Rowing we need more members. New members are you — THE STUDENTS..... Please join and become a part of the Taurus Boat Club. It really is something special.



Oxford Polytechnic racing at the Reading University Head of the River Race, 1988

Family affairs

Richard Chambers may now be in trouble if he says the best day of his life was winning the World Championships as in September 2009 he got married to **Abigail Buggs**. The couple (*right*) met at Oxford Brookes and have now been happily married for over a year.

Congratulations to **Adam Moffatt** for proposing to his girlfriend **Rachel Davies** (and for being accepted); the couple are due to get married next summer.

Well done to **Dan Marett** who last October married **Timma McKean**.

Congratulations to **Ben Lewis** who is now combining life as a full time coach at Molesey Boat Club and fatherhood after the birth of his baby son.

And finally one of our Boat Club couples, **Alex and Bryony Cavell**, had their first child this



year: little Harry Cavell. Congratulations to their expanding family.



Kit Shop

Taurus goodies available for sale NOW!

Ties	£25
Bow ties	£25
Tie & Bow Tie	£40
<i>(discount combination package)</i>	
Pashmina	£15
Cap	£10
Polo shirt	£10
Beaverater	£10
Postage (UK)	£4

Further details and a downloadable kit form can be found on the Taurus website at

<http://www.taurusboatclub.co.uk/kitshop.html>

Enquiries to: kit@taurusboatclub.co.uk

If you would like to appear in the next issue of 'The Bull', please send your photos, stories, news and gossip to web@taurusboatclub.co.uk