

# NOTTINGHAM RC

Words: Mark Cooke

Established in October 2006, Nottingham Rowing Club is already gaining a reputation as a rowing force to be reckoned with, having scooped enough silverware to fill the cabinet this summer alone and continuing to entice new members from the community and local schools into giving the sport a go.



not to be missed, NCRA decided that they too liked the idea of one single club. Consequently, after six months of negotiations surrounding a new constitution, NRC was formed. Almost straight away, the independent junior club, NSRA, also requested membership. Overnight, four clubs merged to form Nottingham RC, the largest rowing club in the East Midlands region with over 200 active members and a combined fleet worth over £200k.

"How can you justify a club of this scale outside of London?" you may ask. "Location, location, location," responds club president Keith Atkinson. "We are very lucky to be based on one of the best rowing rivers in the country, with over

9,500 metres of very wide, rowable water, which is shared with only a handful of canoeists and the odd narrowboat."

The River Trent itself is a fabulous resource, but the Club is based less than a mile away from the National Water Sports Centre, which provides 2,000 metres of dedicated rowing water and two excellent land training facilities. Alongside this are three top-class sporting universities – Loughborough, Trent and Nottingham – all of which have their own rowing squads and are based either on the River or at the NWSC. These Universities are now working closely with the new Club to help each other achieve real success in the sport. Add the support of the City, County and Rushcliffe Borough Councils – and the fact that Nottingham is a vibrant city with excellent employment opportunities and an exciting social life – and it's no surprise that so many rowers are attracted to the city to further their sporting careers.

The benefits of the single Club are obvious. NRC now operates out of two large boathouses based on the Trent and five boat bays at the NWSC. Where there was once three committees, each desperately

## ERGO CHALLENGE



On 13 March 2007, a 20km ergo challenge comprising teams from Leicester Tigers, PriceWaterhouse Coopers and NRC was held to raise money for the Tigers and NRC's 'Ergos in Schools' project. The Tigers team – Martin Johnson and his sister, Graham Rowntree and Matt Poole – proved no match for the experience of NRC! Frantically jumping on and off for 15 stroke bursts, Rob Yates, George Caines, Dave Marshall and Francesca Jus-Burke recorded a comfortable victory in an incredible 1h 19s.

## JUNIOR ROWING

Formed largely from the highly successful Nottingham Schools Rowing Association, the NRC junior section has over 40 active members ranging from 10 to 18-year-olds. A high-class coaching team – led by ARA community sports coach, Jim Waller and ARA National Junior Coach of the Year Julie Edwards – ensure a high level of safety is maintained throughout training. The results speak for themselves, with wins at national and international level, including the incredible George Caines who won J16 1x at the 2006 National Championships in a record time of 7:34.68.

“With a setup like Nottingham’s, success seems almost guaranteed but being a relatively new club, only time will tell whether it all works. Initial signs are promising...”

## NOTTINGHAM ROWING CLUB



**FOUNDED:** 2006  
**REGION:** East Midlands  
**COLOURS:** Oxford Blue, Royal Blue, Gold  
**BOATHOUSE:** Nottingham Rowing Club, Middle of Three, Trent Side North, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5FA  
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Nottingham is renowned in the rowing world for two things: Big races and inclement weather. There will be few of you out there who haven't had a freezing slog up to the beginning of Trent Head, or put a boat on the water at Holme Pierrepont wondering whether you will ever even make it through the waves to the start, let alone finish the race. For those committed crews who train at Nottingham week in week out, however, there is an entirely different scene emerging.

Rowing on Trentside has been a permanent fixture for over a century, but up until recently a rather disjointed one.

Nottingham Britannia Rowing Club, Nottingham Boat Club, Nottinghamshire County Rowing Association (NCRA) and the Nottingham Schools Rowing Association (NSRA) were all striving for success, while effectively rowing in each others' back pockets. On 1 October 2006, however, Nottingham Rowing Club (NRC) was formed. Initially this was a merger between 'The Brit', famous for donating the Britannia Challenge Cup (Henley Royal Regatta) and the Jackson Trophy (Head of the River Race), and 'Boat Club', which for a number of years had been Nottingham's most successful club. Seeing an opportunity

## HIGH PERFORMANCE

Head coach Ade Roberts runs this section of NRC based at the National Water Sports Centre. With a Silver medal in W4x at the U23 World Championships in 2006, you can be sure that the High Performance Programme is up and running with a vengeance. Drawing on members of this squad, the top Women's Eight finished fifth overall in the Women's Head of the River Race. Firing on all cylinders, the facilities offer individuals and crews the opportunities and support needed to succeed at the highest level.



# CLUB SPOTLIGHT



PHOTO: BIG BLUE

## EVENTS

NRC holds two high-profile events during the year, in conjunction with Nottingham and Union Rowing Club: The Trent Head and Nottingham City Regatta. NRC also holds Nottingham Autumn Heads during October for small boats.

squads, where once it was impossible to place all the best rowers together in the best boats, the coaches now work together to plan a structured path of achievement.

NRC is already looking to the future, with recruitment a high priority in two major areas. Firstly the Club is looking to increase its involvement with juniors and indoor rowing. Though NRC already supports nine inner-city school Dry Start Programmes, the Club is now looking to increase this by a further nine secondary schools in the Rushcliffe area. This will give over 1,000 schoolchildren the opportunity to join an indoor ergo scheme. A further 1,000 will be able to try the Club's Wet Start Programme which is run by community coach Jim Waller at the NWSC. Secondly, the Club runs a sculling school for new recruits to the sport. This programme – also based at the NWSC – is run voluntarily by NRC members and is a fantastic way to get a feel for the sport in the summer months, before all the hard grind of winter training kicks in.

With a setup like this, success seems almost guaranteed. In reality, only time will tell how it all works, but the initial signs are promising. The women's squad entered four eights at the Women's Head of the River Race, with the First Eight finishing a commendable fifth and winning the Senior 2 pennant. The men also entered four boats at the Head of the River Race, but unfortunately due the treacherous conditions, only one was allowed to cross the startline.

So, it's fair to say that the foundations have been laid and the expectations are high. Sporting new all-in-ones and freshly painted blades, you can be sure to see NRC attending all the major regattas around the country. ■

## SUMMER SUCCESS



PHOTO: PHILIP HARDING

Lindsay Morton, Danielle Graham, Helen Bloor (coach), Anja Feegel and Catherine Lineker celebrate their Senior Quadruple Sculls win at Henley Women's Regatta 2007

NRC has enjoyed a triumphant summer, with significant appearances at all the major regattas. The men's squad won Gold in LM4- and Silver in LM4x at the National Championships and five crews faced tough competition at Henley. Perhaps the most notable achievement has been the NRC women who won the Chariman's Trophy for Senior Quadruple Sculls at Henley Women's Regatta. The crew – comprising of Danielle Graham, Catherine Lineker, Lindsay Morton and Anja Feegel – faced stiff competition in all of their races including beating Marlow Rowing Club in the final. Coach Helen Bloor, herself a Henley Women's winner, was immensely proud: "The girls have had to come through difficult races, it was fantastic to see their mental commitment held strong; something we had worked hard on in training."

trying to provide equipment and facilities for their own members, the holistic approach makes not only organising day-to-day outings, but also the crucial tasks of long term planning and budgeting, much easier. The merger also released some capital which has helped refurbish the clubhouses and buy a substantial amount of new equipment. A programme of boat replenishment is also underway.

Most important, though, are the new opportunities which are offered to NRC members on a number of levels, from the elite right down to the complete novice. Since the merger, NRC has attained Clubmark status and both ARA World Class Start (sponsored by Siemens) and High Performance Programmes are now established inside the Club, giving athletes the opportunity to move up the ladder more easily than before. In the senior men's and women's

## PRESIDENTIAL PULLING POWER

Keith Atkinson MBE is a long standing member of the Club, having held the position of captain before becoming club president in 1977. During a 50-year association with rowing, Keith has also qualified as an ARA Gold Award coach and a FISA international umpire. Since his retirement from teaching, Keith has been heavily involved with Concept2 and is a founder member of their education team. In 1997, Keith began trialing a Concept2 ergo training program, meticulously logging each session. 10 years later he is now on 20,350,000m, and counting...