

Overview

Mortlake Rowing Club is the oldest component part of the present-day MAABC. It was established in 1877. Next came **Anglian Boat Club**, which started in 1878. It merged with Mortlake Rowing Club in 1962 to become **Mortlake Anglian Boat Club**. **Chiswick Rowing Club** was the result of the amalgamation of two local clubs, Bedford Park and Bedford Park & District and later merged with **Mortlake Anglian Boat Club** to become **Mortlake Anglian & Chiswick Boat Club**. **Alpha Women's Rowing Club** formed in 1927 and was to merge with **Mortlake Anglian & Chiswick Boat Club** in 1984, since when we have been: **Mortlake Anglian & Alpha Boat Club**.

The Origins of Mortlake Institute Rowing Club

*Based on contributions from **Mike Williamson, Les Rule** (in his late 80s and who joined the club in 1936) and **Gordon Hilliker** in May, 2003.*

Unfortunately the official documents dealing with the club history have long since been mislaid, so we will have to rely on our recollections and hearsay.

The club was founded in 1877 as **Mortlake Institute Rowing Club** boating from a shed along side "The Ship" public house. In the early 1900s plans were developed for building the stone river embankment between Watney Brewery and Kew. We presume that the councils of Richmond and Mortlake decided that as all the rowing clubs on the Surrey side of the river were based at Putney they should have one between the two towns. The site chosen was a strip of land between the river and the crematorium, steps were incorporated in the new embankment for easy access to the river and two 1914-18 army huts were acquired, one for boats the other as a clubhouse and changing room just behind the steps.

The facilities in the club were pretty basic; cold water was pumped from a well beneath the site, which worked better at high tide! Hot water was supplied from two Burco boilers and showering consisted of a bowl being tipped over yourself after washing. The ladies loo was a chemical closet under a corrugated iron shelter at the side of the clubhouse, known as the Mayoress's Parlour after her personal use! Heating was by two coke burning "Tangye" stoves which provided a great glow on cold winter days in the changing room and more importantly in the BAR. So the Mortlake Rowing Club was born and stayed the same until 1960 when it was burned to the ground.

Rowing in the 20s and early 30s was a very mixed sport, sharing the river were both professional and amateur oarsmen. There is no information relating to MRC during this period except to say that the Club retained its amateur status as it has done to the present day. There were a few faded photographs of crews in long shorts who may have won races in these early days and it is generally accepted that the Club's reputation as a very popular and friendly club amongst other rowing people was established at this time!

From the mid 30s the club enjoyed an influx of new young members and in 1936-37 the Club was boating two successful eights, both using heavy, second hand university boats. In addition the Club also had a Wyfold four (**Waite, Muir, Jennings, Currie**) who were a hot tip for Henley but a certain Adolf Hitler had other ideas. The Club had a boatman at this time, known as **Bill**, who although rather on the stocky side would also cox when needed. He later introduced a young lad, **Dennis Duncombe** to the club as a cox. After the Second World War Dennis went on to become one of the tideway characters, a 15 stone powerhouse, he had many other attributes including coaching, boat repairs, and a hard working Club Captain.

During the war, although most of the members left to join the Armed Services, the Club opened on Thursday evenings and at the weekends. The older members, mainly **Max Wuest** (a Swiss coach the Club had both before and after hostilities) **Boney, Les Rule, Wickins, Hugh Staines** (who started the old members' annual lunch) and others when on leave including **Alan Bothwell** (who later left money to the Club for a new boat) managed to dispose of at least a Firkin of Bitter and several dozen bottled beers during the week! One worry the club had was the council dumping rubble from the bombed houses on waste ground alongside the club, which eventually reached and broke through the fence.

During WW2 the sister of then Club Captain **Peter Harrison** took to sculling at the club. Hitler's bombs missed the club, but one landed at low tide about five yards below the up-stream end of the steps. This caused a large crater that retained water even at low tide and in which the Miss Harrison was able to practice sculling manoeuvres without fear of falling in. 50 years later the fore-shore at that point remained soft underfoot where the crater had eventually silted up.

Thankfully, most of the members returned to rowing after the war. Although five years older they gave a very good account of themselves, winning Maiden and Junior Eights in consecutive years. In 1948,

Haberdashers School used the Club for their own rowing club, run by **Peter Keevil** and **John McNair**. This arrangement showed its value to MRC very quickly as a nursery for new members including **Mike Williamson**.

Also about this time the **Worcester Union Rowing Club for the Blind** were affiliated to MRC, they were a great asset to the club scene, and very much admired when on the water. It was always a good day when they entered as individual's and won a Pot at club regattas.

Annual social events that the Club took quite seriously were a rowing date with **Eton Excelsior R.C.** and a darts match with **Cygnets R.C.** for the famous "Toilet Seat" trophy.

The "fifties" proved to be the most successful period for the Club under the captaincy of **Roland Bond**, 1950-Junior Eights (S4) 1952-three wins at Junior Senior Eights (S3) and two victories at Junior Senior Fours (S3). In 1957, coached by **Marcus Alexander** (who was very involved in the merger with Anglian) three further wins were achieved at Junior Senior Fours (S3) and several close senior races (S2). The following year the Club made its first visit to Henley entering Wyfold Fours; unfortunately, like many other clubs before us, beaten at the first attempt.

The boathouse collapsed at one stage and was repaired using plywood sheets from advertising hoardings, which made the club very visible from planes landing at Heathrow!

In November 1960 the Clubhouse burned down - with the loss of two famous paintings of Henley Regatta c. 1900; other paintings; photographs; the finest collection of Beer mats on the Tideway; all the boats; and so many treasured memories. Luckily the insurance did pay for some new boats and its first coaching launch. This all happened just as the club was amalgamating with Anglian, and the few active members of both clubs, now homeless, spent their inaugural period as Mortlake Anglian rowing from Tommy Green's boathouse at Barnes, or joined other clubs until the new premises were completed.

The Origins of Anglian Boat Club

*Based on contributions from **Colin Cracknell** in May, 2003.*

The **Anglian Boat Club** was founded in January 1878, the first general meeting being held in the Occidental Tavern in the Strand. The name of the club was selected from a shipping list and, after looking between Hammersmith and Kew, **Anglian** settled at Maynards Boathouse, at Strand-on-the-Green, close to what is now the UL boathouse. The first club race was held in May 1878, when three fours raced from Kew Railway Bridge to Barnes Bridge. By July, two eights were racing over the same course and from then on there were regular club races for all classes of boats.

From the following season **Anglian** entered the local regattas in fours eights and sculls, but had to wait until 1883 when their first win was recorded by **J.G.Evans**, in Junior Sculls, (equivalent of the present Senior 3), at *Barnes and Mortlake Regatta*. The following year saw the club's first win in eights at the *Metropolitan Regatta*, and thereafter **Anglian** were regular winners or finalists at junior events. In 1886, **W.H.Cumming** won senior sculls, (elite), at the Metropolitan Regatta, at that time considered the third sculling event after the *Wingfield Sculls* and the *Diamond Sculls* at Henley.

The early membership seems to have been drawn from civil servants and businessmen from the City of London. In the early 1880's there was an influx of Scandinavians, enough to boat an eight and challenge the "English" membership of the Club. By 1887 Anglian felt confident enough to send an eight to *Henley*, although they lost to *Thames* by two thirds of a length in the first heat. Rowing at seven in this eight was **W.Broughton** who later went on to win several Henley medals with Thames.

After the turn of the century the Club appears to have grown and was seen more often competing in eights at regattas. From 1908 a group, including **B.C.G.Fisher**, **Maurice Piggott** and the cox, **Geoffrey Carr**, were competing and winning at more senior events at the better regattas. This culminated in their *Thames Cup* victory at *Henley* in 1910, where they won the final by 3 feet. The Club continued to win class events, mainly in eights, until the outbreak of the First World War, where two of the 1910 eight and four other Club members lost their lives.

After the First World War many of the members returned, and eights were often sent to *Henley*, but they were never to repeat their successes of the pre-war years.

Events Leading Up To the Amalgamation of Anglian Boat Club and the Mortlake Rowing Club

Based on contributions from Stan Roots in May, 2003.

In the years between the ends of World Wars I and II **Anglian** failed to achieve any noteworthy success on the river. Its move in 1937 to Tom Green's Boathouse at Barnes Bridge, from its previous more prestigious home at Strand-on-the-Green, was symptomatic of its decline over the inter-war years.

Its reduced overheads certainly helped to maintain a modicum of viability up to the outbreak of the Second World War, when rowing throughout the country was confined to occasional outings when serving members managed to obtain leave. The ability of the Club to meet its quarterly rental payment was said to have rested upon the consumption of pils of bitter delivered to the Club by Fuller, Smith & Turner. The landlord himself contributed to the bar profits although non-serving members did their share.

The Club's lack-lustre performance on the river continued until 1956 when four more determined new members came on the scene (**Peter Heywood, Stan Roots, Ted Rotherham** and **Ken Bell, Coach: Karl Vernon**) and managed to win several coxed four races. They went on to win more senior types of races in 1957, culminating in an appearance at *Henley Royal Regatta* where, after winning their first heat, they lost fairly narrowly in the second. Not perhaps the most impressive performance by today's standard, but it showed that, at long last, the Club had recovered its ambition.

Encouraged by success, albeit not outstanding compared with the larger Tideway clubs, it proved not too difficult to attract more oarsmen who, in their turn, acquitted themselves well in the next few years. It was at this point that **Jerry Buckland**, (coach of the best VIII and a keen social member of **Mortlake Rowing Club**), suggested a merger of the two clubs. He argued that as **WRC** was about to be re-housed in a new bungalow type boathouse, built by Richmond Council, the time was ripe for the two clubs to come together. The situation was that **Mortlake Rowing Club** did not have the active membership to make full use of the new premises whereas **Anglian Boat Club** had a useful active membership but were forever facing problems arising out of their accommodation at Tommy Green's.

After several months of consultation a small working group drawn from both clubs recommended amalgamation. Accordingly an inaugural meeting was held in November 1962 in the Ibis clubhouse, (now occupied by **MAABC**), which agreed the appropriate resolutions including the adoption of a new set of rules embodying the name, **Mortlake Anglian Boat Club**. The merger proved to be wholly successful.

The Origins of Chiswick Rowing Club

Based on contributions from John Hart in May, 2003.

Chiswick RC was the result of the amalgamation of two old local clubs, **Bedford Park** and **Barnes and District RC**. The colours were green and yellow with green blazers. The Club rowed from Tom Green's Boathouse, the Victorian clapboard clubhouse (no longer there), beside Barnes Bridge. Boats were on racks outdoors and subject to flooding. Most rowing members were lads from Staveley Secondary Modern, coached by **John Langfield**, rejects from rugby and football, who won UK internationals before leaving at age 16. They were Chiswick's 'dowry' when the Club merged with Mortlake Anglian which then had no racing crews and few young members. For several years Chiswick RC's former VIII rowers formed the core of **Mortlake Anglian & Chiswick**.

Mortlake Anglian & Chiswick Boat Club

Based on contributions from David Henderson in March, 2003.

In the Summer of 1973, there were only six competitive rowers at **MACBC**. **Tony Maffre** (the captain) and **Lou McVeigh** were sculling and pairing, with wins in both, and there was a novice four which included **Kevin McEvoy**. Although they had been staggering along unsuccessfully all season, they finally came good, reaching the final at *Ross* and winning the next week at *Hammersmith*. One of the members dropped out, and **David Henderson** joined the crew the following season.

Otherwise, there were the 'come-all-ye' outings on a Saturday afternoon, with the likes of **Stan Roots, Tub Bryant, Jim Jones** and **John Hart**, and a couple of younger people who were up to novice-racing standard if a crew could be found for them – namely, **Peter Hoile** and **Andy Napier**. A third contender turned up at winter training, and eventually a fourth – **Peter Harvey** – in the Spring. They surprised themselves – and the rest of us – by reaching their final first time out, and although they had to wait until mid-season for their win, at *Molesey*, it was always on the cards. A four, with **Kevin McEvoy** and **David**

Henderson, won Senior C at *Richmond* in 1974; although they also came very close on numerous other occasions, that was the club's only win that season.

1974 also saw the last appearance of the 'great' MACBC elite crew of **Maffre, McVeigh, John Toffi** and **Martin Brooks**, who re-formed to pot-hunt at Monmouth. Unfortunately they ran up against the Wallingford Schools crew that would win Britannia a month later...

1975 was a very quiet year – possibly the only win was **Jim Jones** in novice sculls. In 1976 a squad which included **Kevin McEvoy, Andy Napier, John Churcher** and the **Peters Hoile** and **Harvey** scored a couple. Late that year they poached a TTRC member – who arrived with **Bill Mason** in tow. Bill would take the winter training for a couple of years, and set water-work programmes, although he only very rarely actually coached.

David Henderson was captain at the time, and for 1977 – our centenary year – he set the optimistic target of 10 wins, which he wanted to include a win in eights, one at Senior B or better, and a head pennant. Also on the wish list was an appearance at Henley. **Bill Mason** took the Club seat-racing on the Grand Union Canal at Southall to select the eight, which included all the usual suspects, plus **Richard McEvoy**, still to score an early-season novice win, and **Colin Cracknell** back from overseas. A senior B eights win at *Molesey* took care of two of the items on the Captain's wish-list, and a one-race appearance in *Thames Cup* (31 entries – no qualifying!) accounted for one more. Two eights wins in one day at Hammersmith boosted the total to nine, and on the very last day of Henderson's captaincy, **Ian Roots** won the J14 pennant at one of the upriver sculling heads. Hence Captain Henderson's target for the year was achieved.

In 1978 **Henderson** wasn't enjoying his first-eight rowing, and dropped out of the squad as soon as a replacement showed up (and missed out on a heat win in *Thames Cup*). By 1979 he had more or less stopped rowing altogether, although did coach an excellent novice crew which won first time out – including **John De Villiers** and **Peter Lawson**. **Ian Roots** immediately grabbed John to row in a four which went on to win Cs, Bs and a senior A that season, and still more in 1980/1. **David Henderson** tells that by then he was in Belgium and his Mortlake rowing days were, sadly, just a pleasant memory.

But the memory was revived in 1997 when the 1977 Thames Cup Henley eight re-formed and performed a row-over during the Lunch Break of *Henley Royal Regatta*. All nine original participants returned from around the globe and even Laurence McVeigh and Bill Mason, coaches from 1977 were on duty, albeit with other crews. The crew were: Bow: **Peter Hoile, John Churcher, Richard McEvoy, Andy Napier, Colin Cracknell, Dave Henderson, Peter Harvey**, Stroke: **Kevin McEvoy** and Cox **Jacquilin Wade**.

ALPHA

Alpha began in 1927 and from then until the fifties the Club produced champions and internationals with regularity. **Margaret Barff, Irene Forey** and **Jean Wilshee** were singles champions on more than one occasion. **Irene Forey, Pam Body, Pauline Rayner (nee Samson)** all represented Great Britain abroad. Access to Tommy Green's Boathouse deteriorated and even the building of the Hounslow Boathouse did not enable us to attract and hold the membership that an active club requires and the merger with **MACBC** followed in 1984.

Mortlake Anglian & Alpha Boat Club

Some recent successes.

Sue Appelboom. Lwt 1x. Represented Great Britain at three World Rowing Championships (Vienna 1991, Tampere 1995, Strathclyde 1996); and represented England at the Commonwealth Rowing Regatta 1994 (Canada), silver medal. Winner of Women's Lightweight Single Scull at Henley Womens' Regatta for ten consecutive years, 1990-1999. National Champion, in both lightweight and open single scull, 1991 and 1994. Coached by **Tony James**.

Sue Appelboom & Liz Marsh. Winners of Lightweight Double Sculls at Henley Womens' Regatta, 2000. Coached by **Tony James**.

James DiLuzio with Matthew Wells (of QEHSBC, Hexham) and representing Great Britain, won double sculls at the FISA World Junior Rowing Championships, Hazewinkel 1997. Coached by **Darren Whiter**.

Pippa Wilson represented England at the Commonwealth Rowing Regatta 2002 (Nottingham), winning Silver medals in Women's Double Sculls with Charlotte Dalton from Thames RC and Women's Quadruple Sculls with Charlotte (TRC), Jen Smith (Warwick), Jane Fisher (Worcester). **Pippa & Charlotte** were also winners of Double Sculls at Henley Women's Regatta 2002.

Updated 24May03

PHOTO GALLERY

One photo shows one of the fires in Mortlake's boathouse mentioned above (the other was in the changing room behind the bar). Beer was only set up on the bar when there was an event taking place, normally it was brought up in jugs from the cellar. It was almost certainly Watneys Red Barrel (Draught).

A picture on the wall in the old boat club is of **Max Wuest**, a loyal supporter of the bar and the club. His name was on the Mortlake IV that beat Anglian at *Hammersmith and Putney Regatta* in 1956. The collection of beer mats was a feature of the bar, collected from around the world by members, ex members and friends over many years.