

PURPLE



ROWING

Message from the Captains:

Dear Alumni, Members, and Friends of ULBC,

Happy Easter!

Welcome to the April 2026 edition of the ULBC newsletter. We are Kai Kelly and Alex Lahnborg, and we are delighted to share with you what has been one of the most exciting and successful periods in recent memory at the club.

In this edition, we look back at a packed winter season. We are also delighted to introduce two new sections: an Alumni Spotlight, and a first instalment of From the Archive.

As always, none of this would be possible without the continued generosity of our alumni, the Trust, and everyone who gives their time to support the club. Thank you.

Kai Kelly, Men's Captain — menscaptain@ulbc.co.uk

Alex Lahnborg, Women's Captain — womenscaptain@ulbc.co.uk



Pictured: Celebrating the 2025 PA winning 4+ at the Annual Dinner

Looking back at the last couple of months...

ULBC's annual Trial Eights took place on the Tideway. In the women's event, crews named Jacob and Edward engaged in a closely fought contest. Jacob recovered more than half a boat length in the closing stages to take victory by just one foot. The men's crews, Harry and Paul, were equally well matched, with Paul taking the win in another race that went right to the line.



The evening brought the Annual Dinner, which saw an excellent turnout of alumni and current athletes. A highlight of the proceedings was the ceremony in which the victors of the 2021 Henley PA 4+ presented blades to the winning 2025 PA 4+ crew. Thank you to Hamish Roots for the photography throughout the day.



Following the final 5ks of 2025, the club gathered for the Annual Christmas Dinner, at which the Athlete of the Term Awards were presented.

Male Athlete of the Term: Elliot Watson (centre)

Female Athlete of the Term: Emma Rouse (Second from right)

Freshers of the Term: Tabby Gauden (furthest right) and Gus Goode (second from left)

Best Fresher Erg: Elin Bahadori (Furthest left)



Hammersmith Head, 28/02/26



ULBC took to the tideway in full force for Hammersmith Head, entering 5 eights, with impressive results across both squads. Our Women's 1V recorded the fastest time of the day, beating the likes of both Leander and Molesey A.

Results:

Women's Championship 8+: 1st and 5th

Open Championship 8+: 2nd

Women's Intermediate 8+: 5th

Open Intermediate 8+: 6th



Pictured:

Top Left : Women's 1V

Above: Men's 1V

Left: Women's 2V

Bottom Left: Women's 3V

Below: Men's 2V



WEHARR 2026- An historic day on the Tideway!



The Women's Eights Head of the River Race produced some of the finest results the women's squad has seen since the club's founding. Our 1st VIII finished 2nd overall - matching the highest placement ever achieved by a ULBC crew at WEHARR. The 2nd VIII placed 12th overall, taking silver in the Senior category and bronze in the University category - the second-highest 2V finish in the club's history, and the highest in 23 years.

Results:

1V - 2nd

2V - 12th (Silver, Senior; Bronze, University)

3V - 63rd

These results are a real testament to the enormous effort put in by athletes and coaches throughout the winter, and the women's squad are already back at work, aiming to carry this momentum through to regatta season.



HORR 2026 Report

On Saturday the 28th March, the UL men's squad raced the Head of the River Race, showing the culmination of the speed gained over the winter. Over an ever more competitive field with 10 seconds separating places 5 to 15, the 1st VIII was able to place 12th, as the third academic crew. The 2nd VIII followed with a 59th place, over many other strong 1st eights across the country.



Results:

1V - 12th (3rd University, Winners of the Thames Valley Academic Award)

2V - 59th

Racing was followed by the 12th edition of our annual 'Sausagefest' social, which was a great celebration to mark the end of the winter months, as we look ahead to BUCS and the rest of regatta season.

Member spotlights!



Name: Harriet Wallace

College: School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

Course: MA Chinese Studies

“I started rowing when I was twelve at school in Canberra, Australia. The early mornings definitely weren’t my favourite at first, but after a couple of years I really grew to love the sport. In 2021, rowing gave me the opportunity to move to the US on a scholarship, where I competed for the University of Texas for four years. During that time, I was selected for the Australian U23 team and competed in the Women’s Eight event, finishing fourth. I wanted to keep rowing while doing my Masters, and London felt like a pretty exciting place to do that. I began studying Chinese at school after becoming close friends with someone who grew up in Shenzhen. Since then, I’ve been really interested in both the language and the culture, and I’d love to one day work in China–Australia relations.



I grew up on a sheep farm in rural New South Wales, producing lamb and wool. It was pretty isolated, so weekends were usually spent climbing trees, exploring, or digging things up. Because of that, I’ve always been drawn to travel and the idea of living in bigger cities.

My mum also opened an art gallery on the farm, so there were always artists around or workshops going on. Through this, I developed a strong interest in art, and now I love going to the British Museum after class when I get the chance.

Rowing at UL and living in London has been a great experience so far. The team is unlike any I’ve been part of before and I’m excited for the rest of the season!”



Member spotlights!

Name: Gus Goode

College: Queen Mary University of London

Course: 1st Year MEng Biomedical Engineering



Hi I'm Gus. I'm in my first year at university at Queen Mary doing the undergraduate section of my integrated masters degree in Biomedical Engineering. I learned to row at the Grange School in Hartford. Coming from quite a small squad at school I was really excited to join the competitive atmosphere at UL. After seeing the four win the Prince Albert Challenge Cup in the summer before I joined, I'm looking forward to carrying on the legacy in my years to come at UL.



Favourite UL Social: House Crawl was my first social at UL and was a great way to meet lots of members of the squad while in my first few weeks of training. Going from location to location was also a great way to see all the places the squad likes to socialise and take part in some fun challenges!

Favourite UL Race: My favourite race at UL was our trip to Italy to race the Memoria Paolo D'Aloja regatta. Getting to race the Italian national team members and winning a bronze medal was an amazing experience and a real privilege to be able to meet the national team members and trade some kit!



Alumni Spotlights - Stu Pearce

From sitting in the bow seat of the UL first eight, to coaching dozens of UL women to their first Henley Royal Qualification, all whilst balancing his full-time role as a Regional Specialist at Johnson & Johnson, Stu has been an invaluable part of ULBC for the last 13 years, and it felt only right for him to form part of our inaugural alumni spotlight.



1) What course did you do, and what years were you at UL?

I did three courses at UL - my undergrad was Biomedical Science at St George's University, my Master's was Biomedical Science (cardiovascular stream), a Master's of Research at St George's Hospital Medical School, and my PhD was in Cardiovascular Medicine at Barts and the London. I started rowing in my last year of my undergrad and rowed for the rest of my time there, so I was an active rower for seven years and then a bit after that too. In total I've now been involved with the club for around 13 years.



2) What are your best memories at UL, both as an athlete and as a coach?

"As an athlete, getting my white was probably the biggest one - that was 2018, or the day where I finished my PhD in the morning, and beat Brookes at Henley later that day. As a coach, one of my favourite memories, and it's probably a bit rogue, was beating Imperial A with the second eight, when Tom and Smithy were first here (2022). That was special. BUCS silver (2025) is up there too. If I'm completely honest, I've found coaching more rewarding than my actual time rowing. Getting people to Henley Royal for the first time, and seeing their faces when their name gets read out over the tannoy, and knowing I actively helped them in that process - that is very, very fulfilling. Results make fond memories, but so does just being part of that journey for people."

3) What does a week of volunteering look like; how do you manage your time commitments?

"I don't see this as a job - I treat it as seriously as my work, but I enjoy it and I want to be here, so it doesn't stress me the same way. If anything, it balances the stress of work. I do get stressed, (Tom knows I get stressed!) - but I care about it, and you always make time for the things you care about. I also make sure I carve out time for myself, to run and things like that."

4) What does ULBC mean to you?

"It means a lot to me - I suppose it's a kind of second family. There's a really nice feeling when you're at Henley or at any regatta and you see the badge, and people will actively look out for and help anyone who's been in the club. It runs through generations too. David Townsend and Maurice (Hayes) were huge influences on me, and I never even rowed with them - they were here decades before I started - but I feel completely comfortable calling either of them and saying I need help with something, and I know they'd give it. That common ground across generations is something really special about this club."



5) What would you say to other alumni looking to get involved?

"Just come down. I've taken a few people out on the launch and tried to keep people involved - Dave (Moreno) is a great example, he came down for one or two sessions and now he's helping out every weekend. It is more rewarding than I ever expected. Seeing people achieve what they've worked for, and knowing you played even a small part in that - it makes you feel genuinely good. It's their effort that gets them there, but being part of that process is very, very fulfilling. So if you're thinking about it, just come down."



Alumni Spotlights - Jean Rankine



On the 27th March 2026, I had the pleasure of interviewing Jean Rankine, a member of the UL women's squad from 1960-1965, and a pioneer of women's rowing in the UK, serving as Thames Rowing Club's first deputy captain

Pictured- ULWBC's 1st 4+ in 1963 (Left to Right): Liz Powell, Margaret Denne, J Packham (cox), Margaret Gladden, Jean Rankine.

1) What is your full name, what course did you do, and what years were you at UL?

"I am Jean Morag Rankine. I studied German and Swedish at UCL, with a special paper in Old Icelandic, graduating in 1963, then returned to do an MPhil in Old Icelandic - so I was at UL from 1960 to 1966, with a year in Copenhagen in between."

2) What was the ULBC women's squad like when you were here?

*"Women's rowing was an invisible minority within an already minority sport. We were completely separate from the men - different ends of the boathouse, different regattas, and I'd never even been in the men's lounge (now the crewroom) until recently! The squad was small; we only ever fielded one eight, selected from college rowers each summer term. I stroked the first eight for three years, though I'll admit there were always at least three *passengers* in the boat!"*



3) What are your best memories at UL?

"I simply loved rowing with the squad - it's why I stayed on to do a further degree! A particular highlight was travelling to Amsterdam to race, where I saw women competing in eights, fours, quads, doubles and singles. Seeing that was the moment I decided to take up sculling. I've also kept wonderful friendships - Margaret Gladden and I later did the Boston Marathon together in a double scull, all 36 miles of it from Lincoln to Boston."



4) What barriers did women face in rowing, and did your generation help change things?

Where to begin! Women's races were only 1,000 metres because we supposedly weren't strong enough for 2,000. We rowed in heavy clinker boats, had no school rowing to speak of, and were coached by a gentleman from Vesta who cycled along the towpath with a tin megaphone. When we wanted to race beyond university, there was almost nowhere to go - I eventually became one of the first female members of Thames Rowing Club, at a time when women were only permitted on the premises on Sunday afternoons for tea. But yes - by simply showing up, training hard and saying "we can do this," I believe our generation did help open doors.

5) Have you stayed in contact, and what would you say to female alumnae looking to get involved?

"Some of my old crewmates are sadly no longer with us, but I'm still in touch with Jenny Woods, who tracked me down after spotting my name in a Head of the Charles programme - she rang Thames and asked if I was the Jean Rankine she'd rowed with! My advice to alumnae is simply: do get involved. It's not separate anymore, you won't be made to feel a second-class citizen, and ULBC is a hotbed for women's rowing. Even just turning up and showing your support means a great deal."

From the Archive

Purple Rowing, No. 1 – March 1979

In March 1979, ULBC published the very first edition of its alumni newsletter – Purple Rowing, No. 1. Its stated purpose was to keep past and present oarsmen, their relatives, friends, students and members of the club up to date with developments in University of London rowing. Sound familiar?

That first edition reported on a 1978 Henley campaign that ended in controversy. Despite ULBC having led by three-quarters of a length and recording the fastest time of the day, they were disqualified in the Ladies Plate after the umpires awarded the race to the US Coast Guard Academy. The American crew themselves reportedly stated that ULBC were the rightful winners.

The same edition celebrated a win at the Miami International Regatta, a hat-trick of National Championship titles in the Lightweight Coxless Four, and a season described as quite simply the best ever.



Cover Page:

As the article states, every year, the cost of staying at the top in British rowing is increasingly difficult, and we welcome donations in any form

Henley 1978 produced close racing, exciting finishes and much controversy in the Ladies Plate. See full story on page two. This picture shows Tyrion passing the Stewards Enclosure in their controversial race against the US Coast Guard Academy. Bow G.M. Elliott, 2 S. Gunn, 3. G.W. Lemmens, 4 D.N.M. Horler, 5 E.I. Bremner, 6 Ian Stevens, 7 K.M. Mullane, Str. A.C. Mclean, Cox S.M. Jefferies.

THE PRICE OF SUCCESS

The cost of staying at the top in British rowing is becoming increasingly difficult to bear. Although the University's grant is higher than for other student sports, it requires supplementing if we are to continue to compete at the highest level.

It is interesting to note that of the top clubs in the country, ULBC is virtually alone in not receiving commercial sponsorship. Oxford and Cambridge are heavily supported by Ladbrokes, the National Squad are sponsored by Natwest, Leander are 'powered by Pimms' and many clubs, of a lower standard than UL, are aided by various concerns from pop groups to magazines.

Sponsorship is now widely accepted in both amateur and professional sport and ULBC welcomes suggestions from readers of this Newsheet.

A member of the ULBC Association

tical sponsor. Please let us have your suggestions. The experts may make something of them.

During the past year the ULBCA again gave most useful financial help. Invaluable support came also from an anonymous contributor found by Chris Hillidge, to the expenses of Lucerne; and from Stewart Wrighton Ltd. who made a generous contribution towards Henley expenses.

Lest it be thought that ULBC is relying on friends and well-wishers, it must be emphasised that last year they raised over £1,000 by their own efforts.

Corporate Benefactors:

It is to be recorded with gratitude that ULBC funds have been augmented over the past few years by the following gifts:
1974 Convocation Trust Fund £500
1974/75 The Goldsmiths Company £500
1975 Sir Murray Fox (t.d. Mayor of

1978 RESULTS

Kingston Head of the River:	First & Fourth
Passing Head of the River:	Second and Fifth
The Tideway Head of the River:	Seventh & Fourteenth
The Eight	
Miami USA International Eight:	First
Wallingford Regatta: Elite Eight:	First
British Universities Championships:	
Elite Eight:	Gold Medal
National Championships, Nottingham:	
Elite Eight:	Bronze Medal
Second Eight	
Brussels Treaty Race:	First
Wallingford Regatta: Elite B Eight:	First
Cambridge Regatta: Elite B Eight:	First
The Coxed Four	
Barnes & Mortlake Regatta: Elite Fours:	First
British Universities Championships:	Gold Medal
Nottingham City Regatta: Elite Fours:	First
Wallingford Regatta: Elite Fours:	First
Hedley River Regatta: Prince Philip Challenge Cup:	Semi-Finalist
National Championships, Nottingham:	Gold Medal*
The Coxless Four	
Barnes & Mortlake Regatta: Senior A:	First
British Universities Championships:	Gold Medal
Nottingham City Regatta: Elite Fours:	Silver Medal
National Championships, Nottingham:	
The Lightweight Coxless Four	
National Championships, Nottingham:	Gold Medal*
International Honours	
D.G. Townsend represented:	
Great Britain in the Coxless Fours:	Gold Medal
Salisbury Regatta:	Gold Medal
National Championships:	Gold Medal
World Championships:	
* New Championship Record.	

This is the first issue of a newsheet to be published annually and intended to keep past and present oarsmen, their relatives and friends, students and members of the ULBC up-to-date with developments in University of London rowing generally.

One of its avowed objects is to enlist your support for the furtherance of UL rowing at national and international levels which you can best do by becoming a member of the University of London Boat Club Association.

Do you have photographs, programmes, results cards or memories from your time at ULBC? We would love to hear from you. Get in touch at archive@ulbc.co.uk

Find us on social media!

Instagram: @ulbc

Mentorship Opportunity

We are relaunching this ULBC LinkedIn group to strengthen connections between current athletes and our alumni network, with a focus on professional engagement, careers insight, and networking.

As part of this, I wanted to ask that alumni in the group are open to current students getting in touch. This could be anything from a quick question about your career path to a short conversation for advice or insight.

To keep the group useful and respectful of everyone's time:

This is a professional space: focused on careers, networking, and development (rather than ULBC racing/results)

There is no obligation to respond to every message, and any level of engagement is appreciated

Students will be encouraged to reach out thoughtfully and respectfully, rather than sending generic messages, group members are welcome to reach out to current squad members with questions if they wish.

No commercial promotion or spam: unless it's clearly relevant and beneficial to the group.

The goal is simply to make it easier for current athletes to learn from those who have been through ULBC and gone on into a wide range of careers.

If you're happy to be contacted, that's hugely appreciated and if you have any suggestions on how to make this work well, I'd be very keen to hear them.

Join via this link: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3789384/>

Looking ahead

Having finished the Head Season, we now turn our attention to our upcoming summer racing. As always, we'd love to have your support and see purple on the banks.

Racing:

- GB Trials (11 -15 April, Carversham)
- BUCS Regatta (1 - 4 May, Holme Pierrepont)
- Ghent International May Regatta (9 -10 May, Ghent)
- Poplar Regatta (17 May, Docks)
- Metropolitan Regatta (30 May, Dorney)
- Marlow Regatta (20 June, Dorney)
- Henley Women's Regatta (19-21 June)
- Henley Royal Regatta (30 June - 5 July)

Supporters events:

- ULBC Women's Supporters Group (Saturday 20 June)
 - Parents' support (Wednesday 1 July)
 - General ULBC alumni meet-up (Friday 3 July, base at Cafe Regatta. Details tbc).
- These events are for those wanting to get together to support ULBC, please share your expression of interest by emailing Susan at shughes@ulbctrust.com

As ever, your support means everything to the club.

Kai Kelly and Alex Lahnborg



Pictured: Full Squad Pre-Paddle before Hammersmith Head

Alumni Spotlight and From the Archive sections are featured in this edition. If you are an alumnus who would like to be featured, or if you have photographs, programmes, or records from your time at ULBC that you would be willing to share for our archive, please do get in touch via the captains' emails. or archives@ulbc.co.uk We are keen to preserve and celebrate the full history of this club.