

PURPLE



ROWING

Message from the Captains:

Dear Alumni, Members, and Friends of ULBC,

Welcome to the June 2026 edition of the ULBC Newsletter. As another successful season draws to a close, we're delighted to share some of the club's recent achievements, from training camp and Championship racing to Henley Women's Regatta.

This season has been one of the most successful in recent years, reflecting the dedication of our athletes, coaches, volunteers, and supporters. None of it would have been possible without the continued generosity of our alumni, the ULBC Trust, and everyone who gives their time, expertise, and encouragement to the club. Your support enables our athletes to compete at the highest level, and for that, we are incredibly grateful.

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

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



Pictured: The UL squad at the Brive Training Camp

Find us on social media!

Instagram: @ulbc

BUCS Regatta

The women's squad delivered a landmark performance at Championships, claiming the club's first Championship VIII title since 2018 in emphatic fashion.



The crew of Sophie Wrightson (cox), Hannah Lemanowicz (s), Emily Hegarty, Georgie Banton, Emma Rouse, Emily Lavelle, Harriet Wallace, Alex Lahnborg, and Tilly Ollerenshaw (b) produced a dominant display from the off. Getting out ahead early, they established clear water over the field and never looked back, crossing the finish line by a commanding margin to secure a memorable victory.



The success did not end there. Splitting into fours for the remainder of the regatta, the squad demonstrated its exceptional depth by taking silver in the Championship Coxless Four and bronze in the Intermediate Coxed Four.

BUCS Regatta



The Intermediate Quad capped off an excellent weekend by taking victory also. With members returning from injury and some racing one final time, it was a particularly special result and a fitting reward for their perseverance throughout the season. The squad also fielded two fours and a double, both of which raced strongly.



The men saw medals in two events, across the intermediate 2- of Kai Kelly(b) and Joe Middleton(s), and the intermediate 4+ of Matthew Creaser (s), Gus Goode (3), Elliot Watson (2), Sam Dunlop (b), Rafi El-Dabl (c). There was further strong racing in an eight, and two fours.



Ghent International

Ghent International Regatta - 9th/10th May 2026

ULBC travelled to Belgium for the Ghent International Regatta, producing strong results across both squads against high-quality international opposition over the weekend.

The men's Championship 8+ were the standout performers, recording wins on both days of racing against a strong field that included Leander, the Polish U23 8+, and tough Dutch competition.

The women's squad also had plenty to celebrate, where the Championship 8+ took bronze on both days, while the double also secured bronze. It was a strong overall showing across multiple boat classes.

A really pleasing weekend of racing for ULBC against some of the best international and U23 opposition on the calendar.



Poplar Regatta



Results:

Women's Gold 8+ — 1st 🥇 (For a third year running!)

Women's Gold 4+ — 1st 🥇

Women's Gold 4x — 2nd 🥈

Women's Gold 2x — 2nd 🥈

Open Gold 4+ — 3rd 🥉

Women's Trophy 4x — 1st 🥇

Women's Trophy 2x — 1st 🥇

Women's Trophy 4+ — 2nd 🥈

ULBC returned to the docks to compete at Poplar Regatta on the 17th of May. Despite some less-than-perfect weather conditions, it proved to be an outstanding day for the club, with every single crew entered going on to medal in their respective events, displaying strength across the board.

This outstanding collective performance saw ULBC take the Women's Victor Ludorum for the regatta- A fitting reflection of the depth and strength currently running through the women's squad.



More Summer Racing



We raced the Saturday of Met, racing some familiar crews. The men were able to turn around recent results, beating crews we were bested by at BUCS. The women faced competition of the highest calibre in the A final, with 1.5 seconds separating the top 3 university crews.

Women's Championship 8+: 6th
Women's Championship 2x: 8th
Women's Championship 4-: 9th
Open Championship 8+: 14th
Open Championship 4+: 12th, 30th
Women's Championship 4+: 17th
Women's Championship 4x: 23th



Ratzeburg:
A ULBC/Molesey composite 8+ and 4- travelled to Ratzeburg, racing across the weekend. Across both days, the 8+ won with commanding margins, beating the likes of the German U23 8+ by over 6 seconds on the Sunday.



Find us on social media!

Instagram: @ulbc

Training Camp 2026 - Lac du Causse, Brive



With the trailer departing for France immediately after the Saturday of Met Regatta, the athletes flew out on Monday morning, arriving at Lac du Causse and getting straight back on the water with an evening paddle to settle in.

The ten-day training camp provided the ideal environment to build speed ahead of the summer racing season. With three sessions on most days, the focus was firmly on high-quality training, combining technical work, long kilometres, and race-pace pieces to maximise boat speed ahead of Henley Women's, Marlow and Henley Royal.

While rowing remained the priority, there was still time to unwind between sessions. The now-traditional boules tournament returned, alongside the Second Edition of The University of London Challenge, where UCL A emerged victorious over Misc B in the final, while last year's finalist coaches' team saw their campaign come to an end in the semi-finals.

By the end of the camp, the squad returned to the UK having completed a huge block of quality training, with faster crews, stronger athletes, and plenty of confidence heading into the Championship season.



Henley Women's Regatta

ULBC enjoyed another outstanding weekend of racing at Henley Women's Regatta, highlighted by a composite Championship Eight with Molesey Boat Club, featuring four UL athletes, claiming victory to become the fastest women's eight in the country. The club fielded five crews in total, with three progressing to Sunday's racing.



Our Aspirational Academic 4x of Hannah Schuh (s), Ella Tarczy, Tabby Gauden, Nathalia Johnson (b), produced a particularly strong result, progressing to the final but unfortunately losing out to a strong Reading University crew.



Academic 4- reaching the semi-final

The UL women now set their sights on Henley Royal Regatta, with boats prequalified in the Bridge, Island, and Town Challenge cups, and our quad going to qualifiers to compete in the inaugural Queen Victoria Challenge Cup.

Marlow Regatta



Ch 8+: 11th

A strong performance has the eight as the third fastest temple eligible eight at Marlow. Top two crews both within striking distance and look forward to picking up speed and turning the result around over the next two weeks.



Ch 1x: 13th

Zizi raced his single in preparation for his lwt u23 representation, looking to build on his performance for Henley Royal.

The last 8-lane race was at Marlow regatta for the men, with all crews racing very strongly. With all crews vying for qualification spots, there was very intense racing. Valuable experience for HRR was gained, and we look forward to gaining speed until then.



Ch 4+: 14th, 20th

PA A were the 5th fastest PA four, and also look to gain speed. PA B also produced a solid performance, being competitive with other top fours.

Member spotlights!



Name: Tilly Ollerenshaw

College: University College London

Course: MSci Mathematics

Hi I'm Tilly and I've just completed an MSci in Maths at UCL. I came to UL as a fresher after learning to row when I was 16 at Cambridge 99s. It was a small club in Cambridge, so it was a huge jump in scale and performance when I moved to London and started at UL. I was originally enrolled in Architecture at UCL, however after the first year I came to realise that this wasn't the right path for me. I took an internal transfer onto maths, and I have loved this so much that I stayed to complete a masters specialising in algorithmic graph theory. This is my final year at uni, and next I hope to work in logistics and network optimisation.



UL has given me so many great experiences, like racing in some amazing locations, being able to go on camp in Brive, and lifelong friends! I have loved the opportunities I have had to progress here, from not being boated for races at the beginning of first year to racing in the Island A crew at Henley again this year. My highlight of this season so far has definitely been winning champ eights at BUCs, and part of the reason this felt so special was all the messages from alumni and recent students because it was so cool to see how many people were watching and following along!



Member spotlights!

Name: Rafi El-Dabl

College: Queen Mary, University of London

Course: 4th Year Medicine



Hi I'm Rafi, a fourth-year medical student at Queen Mary, and a coxswain at the Purple Palace. I'm pretty new to the sport, having only coxed properly for a year. I started at Barts and the London Boat club in 2025, where I quickly fell in love with the opportunity to be a leader, employ tactics, and get the absolute most from the athletes in front of (or behind) me.

In September of 2025, I joined UL, hands down the best decision I've ever made. UL has quickly become a second home, an environment where I was both able to make lifelong friends in a thriving social environment, and work on my craft at a HPC. I became obsessed with development, sponging info from the coaches, and aspiring to perform at the level UL is known for. Being at medical school and a full-time athlete has been challenging, having to balance training, studying, and placements. That said, I knew that if there was ever anything on my mind, I could always turn to my friends and coaches at UL.

My first racing season at UL has been an incredible experience, I have been beyond privileged to lead top boats to strong finishes at WeHoRR, Gent, BUCS, and more. Being able to race between the booms in my first year of coxing is something I am very proud of, and I am forever thankful to the athletes, coaches, and alumni at this club, as without them none of this would have been possible. #YeahUL

Alumni Spotlights - Flora Blake-Parsons

“Having rowed at UL as a Master’s Student from 2019-21, ‘Flo BP’ served as Tyrian captain from 2022-2026.

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

I studied an MSc in Astrophysics at UCL from 2019 to 2021.



2) How did you first get into rowing, and what drew you to UL?

When I was 13, if you weren't in the hockey teams, they made you try rowing – and I just never really stopped. After Edinburgh I didn't want to finish rowing, and UL was really competitive at that point. They announced they were going to bring in the student event at Henley, and I thought UL was probably the place to try and win it.

3) What are your best memories from your time as an athlete at UL?

My first year was COVID, which was quite difficult, but because we'd all been through it together and spent so much time in the lockdown bubbles, coming towards that summer felt really special. My favourite memory is probably Henley 2021 – at Henley Women's we won the pair, the four and the academic eight within about an hour of each other, and then at Henley Royal we were racing the second eight on the Saturday. Sitting on the start line looking across and seeing the whole squad there – Hugo said before we raced that this just doesn't happen. The stars kind of aligned, and when we crossed the line and started cheering the other crew over, I thought: this is a real club with real spirit.

“

4) What is Tyrian, and what made you want to take on the captaincy?

Tyrian is the alumni boat club – anyone who's ever rowed for UL is welcome to join. It's quite varied, from people who train together and race throughout the year to people who just want to do one fun race in the summer. The age range is the whole range, from guys in their 70s to people who graduated last year. When I left UL I thought: that just can't be it. I felt so attached to the club and taking the Tyrian role seemed like a good way of staying involved.



5) How did you balance it with work, and is it a big commitment?

Honestly it's not that onerous – sometimes a few hours on a Sunday, but most of the time it was fine. My first year I was also rowing at Molesey and had a full-time job, so it's definitely doable. I work as a physicist at the National Physical Laboratory, quantifying how much radiation someone is given during radiotherapy for cancer treatment, mostly on site Monday to Friday.



6) What does ULBC mean to you, and any advice for current athletes?

It feels bigger than just the group of people currently rowing – it's very cool to see how much UL meant to other people and then feel proud to be part of it. At UL you're encouraged to be better athletes and better students, but also just better people. As for advice: make the most of it.

It's a privilege to be stressed about performance. There really isn't anything like being a student athlete – savour every minute of it that you can.

7) Have you stayed in touch with old crewmates, and what would you say to graduates unsure about staying involved?

Definitely stayed in touch – I also met my partner Henry at UL, which is a cool thing to have got out of it. To anyone unsure: just do it. You can rock up once a year to race Molesey and see your friends, or just come to the dinner. There's really no reason not to do at least a little bit.



The trail blazers, 1959 UL's First HRR finalists

1951 marked the first UL crew to race at HRR and by the end of the decade, UL had its first finalists. The 1959 Henley records for the Thames Cup tells us that UL beat Tideway Scullers, RAF Cardington and Queens University Belfast reasonably comfortably. The Stewards find three ways of describing the same race pattern, “gained slowly”, “gained steadily” and “gradually drew ahead”. The semi-final was a much more fraught affair, with UL at one point leading by a length before crossing the line a third of a length ahead. Unfortunately in the final it was Harvard University who “drew steadily ahead”.

Despite losing the 1959 crew showed that UL could compete at this level and in just two years we had won the Thames Cup, and in four years the famous 1963 Grand win.

The archive's 1950 to 1959 gallery contains 28 pictures of both mens and womens crews. And can be accessed [here](#) , using the password ULBC
If you have any pictures, documents or memorabilia please send them to archive@ulbc.co.uk



Cover Page:

Whilst the Henley bank has changed considerably, UL has not in its legacy of high-performance. In order to sustain this, any donation is always welcome.



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

Henley Events

We are delighted to invite you to the ULBC Henley BBQ, taking place on Friday 4th July at Henley Cricket Club. The evening will kick off at 4pm, and promises to be a wonderful occasion to reconnect with fellow alumni, meet our current athletes, and raise a glass to the season.

Tickets are priced at:

Students: £10

Alumni, supporters & guests: £15

We'd strongly encourage you to purchase your tickets in advance as they will be selling out fast! That said, we will also be accepting cash and card payments on the day if needed.

If you have any questions in the meantime, don't hesitate to get in touch.

We look forward to seeing a sea of purple!



Get your tickets here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ulbc-henley-bbq-tickets-1992368419576?aff=oddttdtcreator>

Looking ahead

We will have 3 crews racing at Henley qualifiers on Saturday, with 5 crews already prequalified for the main draw. We look forward to seeing the banks lined with purple support at qualifiers and beyond!

Supporters events:

Parents' support (Wednesday 1 July)

Summer BBQ (Saturday 4 July, Henley Cricket Club).

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: Sunset over Lac du Causse

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.