

Eton Excelsior RC



Over Eton Excelsior Rowing Club's long history, its fortunes have ebbed and flowed, like many other small clubs. In 1996 the Club had to leave its home of over 150 years in Kingstable Street, Eton, but this proved to be a turning point in the Club's history.

Whilst looking for a permanent home, the Club relocated temporarily to Andrew's Boathouse, situated behind Dorney Lake. Although membership dropped the Club survived, maintained by a squad of about 20 hardy and competitive rowers through its five-year stay.

Thanks to the dedication of a small group of members a site on the 'Windsor Bank' just upstream from Andrew's Boathouse was purchased and a successful Lottery Grant application made for funds to build a new boathouse.

With the opening of the new clubhouse in 2001, the latest exciting chapter in Eton's story began and the Club has flourished not only in membership numbers but also in racing success.

The clubhouse offers modern facilities (including on-site gym and ergo room), has plenty of room for boat storage inside and out plus room for expansion. Club members enjoy an uninterrupted 5km stretch of the Thames right opposite the world-class Dorney Lake.

Junior rowing is seen as an essential area for development of the Club. Numbers and success has grown since the squad started in 2001. The 2006 season saw over 50 juniors racing, winning 28 events. This success has been due to a determination to win coupled with a strong sense of squad spirit and fun (epitomised by the annual rowing tour).

In the early days the key challenges were boats and coaches. On the coaching front, the parents are actively encouraged to participate in running pilates



classes, ergo sessions and circuit training. Several parents have also taken coaching qualifications.

In 2005 the Club, with Windsor Boys School BC, were awarded a grant to fund a full-time Community Sports Coach, as part of an ARA led initiative to promote rowing in local schools. New boats have been purchased thanks to grants from Project Oarsome Xtra, The Rowing Foundation, The Berkshire Community Foundation and the local council.

To increase adult participation in rowing, regular Learn-to-Row courses are run. The Club also ran its first highly successful Pubs & Clubs Regatta in 2005. 2006 saw another success plus a similar style charity event for local telecoms company, O2. In total nearly 300 adults have been introduced to the sport of rowing through these initiatives over the last 2 years.

These events have raised the profile of rowing in the local community and boosted membership, so that total membership is now edging toward 300.

During the last five years the women's squad has been the most consistent performer across the Club, continuing to deliver regatta wins particularly in sculling. Building on their success as Silver medallists in the National Championships in 2003, this year saw 30 women race for the Club, winning 18 events. There are high hopes for yet another successful year to come.

The last three years have seen numbers steadily increase in the men's squad and with this has come success. The 2006 season saw over 30 men race, notching up 22 wins. The Club now has a strong racing squad from whom the coaches hope to build a crew to qualify for Henley in 2007.

The 2006 regatta season was the best Eton Excelsior has had in many a year, evidenced by the Club winning the Victor Ludorum prize at a local regatta and being the most successful visiting club at two others.

In addition to competitive rowing, Eton also cater for those members who wish to row recreationally and the new 'Foundation Squad' continues to grow ensuring the Club truly remains "open".

Whilst the Club has had its success at national level, in recent years appearances and success at the high profile events have been limited. However, having established a firm base over the last 5 years, Eton Excelsior's ambitions for the future are high with sights set on competing and winning at local and national regattas without losing their friendly welcoming atmosphere. ■

Eton Excelsior is ARA Clubmark accredited.



Eton Excelsior Rowing Club

Founded: 1852

Region: Thames

Colours: Dark blue and amber

Membership: Junior – 33% • Senior – 33%
Veteran – 33% • Male – 48% • Female – 52%

Rowing offered: Competitive and recreational

Boathouse & water: New two storey purpose-built boathouse with gym and ergo room. Rowing is on a 5,000m stretch of the non-tidal Thames between Boveney and Bray Locks to the west of Windsor, the closest stretch of the River Thames to Dorney Lake.

Contact: www.etonexcelsiorrowingclub.org

Captain: James Marshall

Women's Coaches: Jenny Rachel / Mark Bradford

Men's Coaches: John Spencer / Jane Kerr

Junior Head Coach: Tim Cook