

## Local clubs' success at Fours Head

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“FIRST is first and second’s nowhere” is an axiom which sits well in most competitive sports but perhaps less well when the event includes some of the best crews in the world and junior novices, all rowing at timed intervals of roughly 10 seconds, one behind the other, over four and a quarter miles.

Such was the case with the Fullers Tideway Head of the River Fours on Saturday.

More than 500 crews from all over the United Kingdom and Continental Europe descended on the Thames to race over the University Boat Race course in reverse (from Mortlake to Putney) in quadruple sculls and coxed and coxless fours.

In near perfect conditions the event was won in the record time of 17 minutes 21 seconds by a quadruple scull from Tideway Scullers School. Its all-star crew comprised the current world champion single sculler, New Zealander Mahe Drysdale, Olympic gold medallist Slovenian Iztok Cop, and GB internationals Alan Campbell (Diamond Sculls winner) and Mike Hennessy.

Among the crews behind them came a Cambridge University coxed four (with four world champions aboard) a Leander coxless four missing only Andy Hodges from the Olympic gold medal and World Championships crew, the Olympic women’s GB quad rowing as London RC/Marlow RC, Oxford Brookes and Imperial College.

It was against competition of this quality that local clubs Upper Thames RC and Henley RC did so well, with an Upper Thames quad coming 15th and a superb Henley RC Junior quad 21st.

In their own words the Upper Thames quad rowed out of their socks, pacing themselves over the first half of the course and then blasting the second half in the best row they have ever had, finishing in a time of 18 minutes 34 seconds The crew comprised Adam Rennie (bow) Mark Shimmin, Will Hoodless and Dan Sadler (stroke).

Henley Rowing Club entered ten crews, coming first in one category, second in two others and with four crews in the first 27 finishers.

Henley’s Junior Men had an excellent race winning a well deserved Junior Quad Sculls pennant in a fast time of 18 minutes 47 seconds which put them in 21st position overall out of the 500 crews that took part. The Quad was stroked by Chris Clark with, Drew Ford, Alex Walker and Tom Pocock in the bow seat.

Another excellent result was Henley’s Senior 1 Coxless Four, stroked by Jasper Hasell with Charlie Friend, Ross Barnes and Adam Wood at bow who came second in the category behind Oxford Brookes with only three seconds separating them over the 4½ mile course.

The Henley Women’s Junior Quad also did very well coming second in their category behind Maidenhead. It was a good result for Henley in this Junior event considering they can still compete in this same category for the next two years.

Captain, Ian Desmond said the club performed well overall although there was some disappointment with the Mens Senior 2 Quad with their 20th position. At recent events they had shown every signs of doing better, however their overall position was not helped by a ten second penalty, awarded for being late at the start due to equipment failure which resulted in the quad having to paddle very hard to get to the start on time. They had 35 minutes once the repairs were completed against the stream and traffic which had a significant bearing on their final result.

Meanwhile Leander Rowing Club’s crews won two pennants. Ten of their crews took to the water hoping to better the four wins they took at last year’s event, but the late release of many of their athletes from international training commitments caused severely restricted outings for the club crews, with inevitable results.

After their overall win last year, the Leander men’s quad scull started as lead boat but had a tough race against Tideway Scullers, who were boating two world champions. Both crews beat the previous course record but scullers won by more than 11 seconds over the 4 ¼ mile course.

First of the Leander pennants went to their men’s elite coxless four who were 31 seconds faster than the second-placed crew in their event.

The Leander women’s quad scull had to withdraw after Olympic silver medallist Debbie Flood sustained a shoulder injury, but in their absence the club’s coxless four – Jo Cook, Lou Reeve, Anna Bebington and Vicky Myers, won by 18 seconds ahead of the rest of the field.

