

# GIRL ON THE RIVER *Blues*

Patricia Carswell details how Cheney School received the attention of Oxford Boat Race President Karl Hudspith

There are few people busier than Karl Hudspith, President of the Oxford University Boat Club, who combines an MSc in Clinical Medicine with a training regime that would give most of us the vapours. Yet when Hudspith read on the Girl on the River rowing blog about the struggles of a local state school rowing club, he didn't hesitate to offer an afternoon of his time to coach the students.

Cheney School in east Oxford is close to the river, but with its inner-city setting and a high proportion of children receiving free school meals it is a far cry from the public schools that dominate school rowing. However, with the encouragement of former world champion rower Peter Haining and the determination of a persistent bunch of parent volunteers the school has established a rowing club, Cheney Falcon, based at nearby Falcon Rowing and Canoe Club.

Grants and Lottery funding got them off the ground, but the school desperately needs further funding to pay for coaching, maintenance and a contribution to their host club whose own annual rent has just been trebled to an eye-watering £15,000.

Yet for all the obstacles, the club has made a huge difference to the students. "It's brilliant," said Matt Timms, 14. "It keeps you fit and everyone's really nice. There's more team spirit than in other sports because everyone suffers a bit more in rowing!"

Hudspith visited on a cold, rain-soaked afternoon, but nobody complained about the conditions as the students were divided into scratch crews for an impromptu regatta, with Hudspith coaching from the towpath.

PHOTO: PATRICIA CARSWELL



Karl Hudspith at Falcon Rowing Club

"We were doing short sprints," explained Matt, "getting the power down and working on the placement of blades and slowing the slide down. We really made progress."

"We practised the catches", added Alice Roberts, 14. "Karl told us that we needed to square earlier and work on our timing, slowing it down so that we'd stop catching crabs."

Later, Hudspith talked about his own experiences: "My first major win was at Henley and we rowed in a boat that was 20 years old," he said. "The crew we were racing against had a nice new Empacher but we beat them by five lengths, so you can have your success without much equipment; it's about how hard you train."

"Rowing's taught me so much, but the main thing is that if you really want to be successful at

something then it's just a question of how hard you're prepared to work."

Asked about this year's controversial Boat Race, Hudspith smiled. "If anything I blame the broken blade more than I blame that swimmer! But you've got to put those kinds of things behind you."

Hudspith's visit was great for morale. "There's been a real buzz", said Zena Forster, parent volunteer and co-founder of the club. "You could see a marked improvement in their posture when Karl came along on his bike!"

"I'm amazed that he would bother with something like this", said Matt. And as he and his fellow students queued to be photographed with Hudspith, it was clear they had a new hero.

More details at [www.cheneyfalcon.co.uk](http://www.cheneyfalcon.co.uk) – follow Patricia Carswell on Twitter @girlontheriver

## No more wet socks!

BY ANDREW CURRY

Innovative students at Kingston Grammar School have finally solved the age old problem of wet socks.

Supported by Young Enterprise, the UK's leading enterprise education charity, the 16-17 year-olds have developed a waterproof sock suitable for rowers and watersport enthusiasts.

They came up with the idea after Callum Anderson, the group's managing director, related the issues he faced when training in the wet winter months.

Izzy DuBois, the group's publicity executive, said: "Our design idea initially came from rowing and so rowers and other watersports were our target

market. From trade fairs and talking to lots of different people we realised that our socks had a much greater market with people buying them for all reasons from skiing to aqua-aerobics."

They successfully pitched their concept to both the Oxford and Cambridge Blue Boat crews, who used the socks through training, though not in the actual race.

The Young Enterprise group has already won 'best product', 'most innovative product' and 'best company' at three separate Young Enterprise trade fairs and will be competing in the annual Young Enterprise competition.

The contest is part of a Young Enterprise programme where pupils aged 16 to 19 set up and run their own company for a year, with a professional business mentor guiding them.

The teenagers also hope to include 'festival socks' – designed to wear inside wellies – and a range of children's socks.

Fancy some waterproof socks? The socks retail at £15.99 + p&p and come in sizes 4-13. You can find out more about the product on the Facebook page 'The Waterproof Sock Company'.