

Day-Break

The years between 1938 and 1951 began inauspiciously and ended with Queen's moving into a boathouse of their own. In 1938 there were three very active clubs boating out of B.C.B.C. premises in Balfour Avenue and, on many occasions, congestion at the slip led to crews having to wait for a considerable time to get afloat or come ashore. The outbreak of the 1939-45 War brought with it the additional inconveniences of the blackout, petrol rationing and equipment famine. Nevertheless it was during this period that Queen's won the Wylie Cup, the Blue Riband for fours and made their first appearance at Henley Royal Regatta. M.C.B., who were still tenants at B.C.B.C., had numerous successes including the winning of the Connor Cup in 1942, and the host club, B.C.B.C., won the All Ireland Junior Eight's Championship in 1946 and four years later also obtained the Blue Riband for fours.

The season 1938-39 started badly. In October the B.C.B.C. tub pairs and heavy fours were all under repair and the Queen's captain, P. Creighton, was unable to commence tubbing until the end of the Christmas Term. This handicap was mitigated, to some extent, by a large influx of freshmen from rowing schools, but the slow start to the season seems to have cast a blight over the club, for there is scant reference to rowing successes in the annual report for the season. On the other hand, there must have been considerable activity for, in addition to the award of senior, junior and maiden colours, blues were given for the first time when the recipients were P. Creighton, W. H. Laird and R. M. McLeod. The last mentioned read dentistry and was an excellent stroke who contributed much to the running of the club. Laird, like Creighton, had at one time rowed at R.B.A.I. and followed his fellow Instonian as captain in the 1939-40 season.

The next season brought with it a revival in the fortune of the club and by the end of October 1939 the average attendance on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons had been restored again to around fifty. This increase had been achieved against a background of the black out and petrol rationing; the former made travelling after dark very slow as there was no street lighting and tram services were reduced, whilst petrol rationing restricted the travelling of the ordinary motorist to 200 miles per month. In addition, the severe weather in the early months of 1940 made both the Lagan and the Liffey ice-bound. However, by 17th February the former was sufficiently ice-free for scratch crews from D.U.B.C., U.C.D. and Queens to meet at an informal regatta in Belfast at which the senior eights event was won by Queens with D.U.B.C. being successful in those for junior and maiden crews. Food rationing, which had just come into force, did not prevent the regatta being followed by a dinner in the Orpheus Restaurant in York Street, but how the revellers found their way home in the blackout is not recorded in club annals. Incidentally the subscription for the dinner was four shillings (20p) and among those who attended was the Vice-Chancellor, Mr David Lindsay Keir, who throughout his time at Queen's was always present at club dinners. The 1939-40 season was the first since 1932-33 when crews kept together during the summer term, the club being represented at Belfast, Dublin Metropolitan and Portadown Regattas. At the first mentioned the senior four lost to M.C.B. in the Connor Cup, the maiden eight lost to Carrickfergus A.R.C., but the junior boat won the Williams Plate. An eight went to Dublin Metro where it lost to Cork B.C. by half a length in the first round of the competition for the I.A.R.U. Junior Eight's Championship of Ireland; the members of this crew also rowed as two fours at this regatta, but both boats lost in the first heats of the junior and under age events. At

Portadown the junior eight rowed over but the junior four reached the final where it lost to D.U.B.C. Earlier in the season the senior eight was not entered for the Wylie Cup as the club's fine boat had been wrecked during practice on the Lagan. Despite the lack of success at senior level, seven blues were awarded; S.A.P. Clarke, C.A.Craig, J.A.C. Craig, W.H. Laird (re-award) D.C Simpson, A.McI. Smyth, and R. Thompson.

The captain in 1940-41 was A McI. Smyth, the first oarsman from C.A.I. to hold this position. In the autumn term the club changed from fixed pins to swivel rowlocks and, in December, were very fortunate in being able to purchase twenty new oars from Putney which were stated to have been the last oars fabricated in the 1939-45 War. A few years later Harland & Wolff made a set of oars for the club, but they were very heavy and lacked balance. Nevertheless, they helped the club to make equipment shortage less acute. Also in 1941 the club acquired two eights, but they were very heavy, and five oars from Derry City Boat Club, the cost of which was met by a donation of £20.00 from the Queen's University Guild and a special grant from the Athletic Field Committee.

The season started vigorously, with six fours being on the water during the autumn term, and began a decade of mounting success which culminated in the club winning the Senior Eights Championship of Ireland in 1952. Although no mention is made of the Wylie Cup in the secretary's report, a race for the senior eights did take place on the Liffey in which Queen's lost to U.C.D. The crew, however, had been able to train continuously for only three consecutive days before the event owing to the numerous air raid warnings received in Belfast during April and May¹. Later in the season the senior four entered for the second senior fours event at Dublin Metropolitan Regatta where it won against Lady Elizabeth in the first round but lost to Neptune in the semi-final. The same crew also rowed at Belfast where it lost to B.C.B.C. in the Connor Cup and at which the maiden four also lost to the same club. Only one blue was awarded. This went to D. B. Taylor who, seven years later, rowed in the Irish eight at the Olympic Games and later became Vice-Chancellor of Auckland University, New Zealand. Throughout the season the principal cox was R. C. Crook from C.A.I. He was the younger brother of A. F. Crook, who had coxed C.A.I. and Q.U.B.C. in the 1930s and, like his elder brother, had an active association with Newry Rowing Club. Throughout his long and distinguished career as cox and treasurer, which extended from 1941 to 1946, he had taken part in 55 races and had kept a very complete diary of every event in which his crews had rowed.

F. R. Thompson from M.C.B. was captain in 1941-42. At the end of the season he joined the Royal Engineers in which he rose to the rank of captain and was the last of the ten successive captains to join the forces during the 1939-45 War. Nine of these survived. The tenth, Alexander McIntosh Smyth, was killed in action at Casino when serving as a lieutenant with the Royal Irish Fusiliers. During Thompson's season the momentum of the previous year was maintained, for although there was only one regatta success, nevertheless a junior eight rowed in the Wylie Cup and two fours (second senior and maiden) competed at the Metropolitan Regatta in Dublin, and two fours (senior and

¹ The majority of those in the boat club were involved in civil defence, either as air raid wardens or as members of the auxiliary fire service. Many dental and medical oarsmen were in the latter and were responsible for the manning of three fire pumps at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

All civil defence personnel, provided they could be contacted by telephone or by messenger, were expected to report to their posts whenever a purple air raid alert was in force. This warning was given when hostile aircraft were in the vicinity. A red warning indicated that a raid was about to take place; on receipt of this the sirens would be sounded and all civil defence personnel had to proceed to their posts immediately.

junior) at the Belfast Lough Championships at which the senior boat² won the Connor Cup, the first success of the club in a senior event at an open regatta.

D. B. Taylor, from Coleraine, was captain in 1942-43. At the start of the season the club was inundated by a crowd of enthusiastic young freshmen with no rowing experience, which included among their numbers F. J. Boyle, J. Byrne, J. G. Clarkin, A. M. Dempsey, H. F. Jackson, J. D. H. Mahony - oarsmen who contributed much to the success of the club during their time at Queens. Early in Taylor's captaincy the coaching panel of the club was re-juvenated by the addition of Harold Craig from Dundalk, and Ian Wilson, a trial's eight man from Cambridge. Mr Craig had no previous connection with Queens but had business interests in the North and just lived for rowing. His enthusiasm infected every crew and individual oarsman with whom he came into contact and today his name is commemorated by the Craig Cup which is competed for, annually, by the younger oarsmen from Ulster schools. Craig and Taylor were a formidable combination, for the former was an inspiring coach and the latter not only an enthusiastic and hard working captain, but he was also a most competent administrator. When his term of office ended he continued to make himself unobtrusively useful to the club for several years, and ended his rowing career by rowing for Ireland in the 1948 Olympic Games. During his captaincy he discouraged the practice whereby some people, who had either a somewhat tenuous connection with Queen's or had gone down from the university, continued to get places in the boats, thereby ousting young and less experienced members who had shown keenness by regular attendance at the boat house. In conjunction with R.C. Crook, D.B. McLaughlan and J.D.H. Mahony he revised the club constitution and drew up fresh criteria for the award of blues. The latter had been discussed in 1934 by Harold Cunningham, Bert Timmins and several other patriarchs, all of whom maintained that no blues should be awarded until after the club had won a senior national championship, such as the Wylie Cup, and that thereafter blues would only be given to outstanding oarsmen at senior level (Senior A). This precedent was ignored in 1938-39 and again in 1939-40; after this only one other blue was awarded until the introduction of the new criteria in 1942-43.

One of the minor changes made during the Taylor regime was that senior boats began to row in blue vests embellished with the university badge. Early in the War the club had changed from green to white and, when the decision was taken to row in blue vests, the treasurer (R.C. Crook) merely collected one white garment and one shilling (5p) from each oarsman and then took the lot to a cleaners for dyeing. Finally, it was during the 1942-43 season that the Students' Representative Council permitted the Boat Club to run one of the five formal dances (white ties) which the University permitted the student body to hold each session; the cost of a double ticket was 42 1/2p, inclusive of supper.

In February 1943 the club entered two eights for the Wylie Cup; neither was successful but the maidens lost by only a few feet. In May a four's head of the river was held in Belfast. It was organised by Harold Craig and T. Forde Hall as a war time replacement for the Lagan Regatta. The crews rowed from Stranmillis Locks to B.C.B.C. Boat House and the competition was divided into two divisions, one for junior boats and the other, which was for maidens, was rowed in two sections. At the time Queen's had four maiden fours. So, one rowed in the junior division which it won in 8 min. 2sec. . Another won the maiden division with a time of 8 min. 15 sec. and a third also took part. The fourth had to

² Connor Cup, 19 June 1943, Q.U.B.B.B. Senior Four: D. B. Taylor, 2 F. R. Thompson, 3 J. Neill, J. Bates (str), C. G. A. Bailie (cox). All the oarsmen in the boat were engineers.

be scrapped owing to lack of boats. A maiden eight and four were also entered for Trinity Regatta, and both won their first heats but each succumbed to Bann in the next round. A week later, the club entered three fours in the Belfast Lough Championships when the maiden boat won the Crawford Cup. Early in July the maiden eight went to Dublin Metropolitan Regatta where it lost to U.C.D., but a four from the same boat got to the final where it lost to Rockwell College. The members of this crew had not only been over the course four times within a space of six hours on a hot and sultry afternoon, but they had to row the final in a different boat from that which they had used in the heats, as Rockwell had first option on the boat which Q.U.B. had borrowed for their earlier races. Finally, when the regatta was over, it was so late that public transport had stopped for the night, and the crew had to walk for several miles to get to their hotel in Dublin.

The solid preparation of Craig and Taylor got its reward in the next season (1943-44) when J. Neill became the fourth oarsman from M.C.B. to be captain of Queen's. At the end of the Christmas Term the club held its first 'At Home' when invitations were issued to D.U.B.C, U.C.D., and University College Galway. The latter had to decline for at that time public transport in Eire was so bad that it would have taken them several days to travel to Belfast. The rest of the season was one of great success for the maiden crews. The first maiden eight was unbeaten as maidens with wins at Bann and Dublin Metropolitan Regattas; the second maiden boat won their class in the Wylie Cup. In the Wylie Cup the first maiden boat rowed in the junior section and in the final were well ahead of U.C.D. and near the finish when six's seat disintegrated. In the chaos which followed the stern four became thoroughly disorganised for a few strokes thereby allowing their opponents to slip ahead and win by a few feet. The second maiden boat had comfortable wins in their part of the event. There was no senior eight in that season, but a senior four made an appearance at Bann and Dublin Metropolitan Regattas and won their class in the Belfast Head with B.C.B.C. and Portadown sharing second place. The second maiden four won the maiden event at this head and the first maiden crew was only one fifth of a second behind the winners of the junior class. The Head attracted a larger entry than the previous year with crews competing from Bann, Carrickfergus, Portadown and Drogheda; the last mentioned providing a four in each of the three classes.

Throughout 1944 war time restrictions were very severe, especially south of the border where petrol was restricted for emergency use only and trains on main lines ran on alternate days with no services whatsoever on branch lines. This, however, did not deter the maiden eight from travelling to Carrick-on-Shannon for the August Bank Holiday Regatta. The crew obtained bicycles, which they took on the train to Enniskillen, whence they cycled the 40 miles to Carrick where they rowed in a borrowed boat with borrowed oars. After their victory they spent several days in the area and when the time came for them to return, the owner of a turf lorry transported the crew, and their bicycles, to the border whence they cycled to the train in Enniskillen.

The season 1944-45 was an annus mirabilis for the club. F.J. Boyle from Ballymoney, was captain. He had never rowed before coming to the university. However, in his school days (quite unknown to him) he had already made contact with the boat club for he had been taught Latin at Dalriada School by J.B. Kyle, captain 1936-37. Boyle had the gift of getting onto good terms with everybody and had an excellent relationship with the members of B.C.B.C., especially with the captain D. G Gourley, and with Cecil Goodwin and Tom Newman; all men with whom he shared a great enthusiasm for rowing. In particular, he was privileged to use the B.C.B.C. social hall, which had one of the best

maple dance floors in Belfast, for gym sessions for the Q.U.B. crews. This was at a time when one of the principal sources of B.C.B.C. income came from admission charges to the dances which they held on several nights each week in the hall. Boyle, who was also interested in boxing, not only instituted regular gym sessions for all crew members, but he also introduced morning runs for which all were expected to assemble in the Botanic Gardens at 0800 hrs!

The winning of the Wylie Cup was the event of his year. The competition was rowed on the Liffey on 24 and 25 February 1945 when Queen's were represented by a junior and a maiden eight. The former had a bye into the final which it won against D.U.B.C. by several lengths. The maidens were successful in their heat with D.U.B.C., winning by three lengths and won comfortably from U.C.D. in the final. In the senior event there was only one race in which D.U.B.C. defeated U.C.D. by two lengths. Both Queen's crews received very favourable press comments, particular emphasis being placed on their 'beautiful long swing' and their carefully controlled strokes. The result was certainly a great tribute to the physical fitness impressed upon the crews by the captain and the capable and realistic coaching of Harold Craig and his associates. Amongst the spectators travelling to Dublin were T. Forde Hall, Professor R.G. Baskett and Professor H.O. Meredith. The last mentioned created quite a stir on the bank with his enthusiastic performance complete with 'a beard, a brilliant blazer and a waving umbrella'.

In contrast the rest of the season was almost an anti-climax. The senior four won the Lagan Head of the River and the Connor Cup and the senior eight moved up from seventh to fifth place in the Liffey Head. The juniors won the fours and eights at Drogheda where the club was making its first appearance since the Tailtean Games in 1932 but the eight, which also entered for the I.A.R.U. Junior Championship at Cork, came fourth out of five entries in their first heat; the same crew also lost at Athlone. The maidens, however, fared better with the four returning the fastest time at Belfast Head and getting to the final at Athlone where it lost to Carrick-on-Shannon. A maiden eight also went to Dublin Metropolitan Regatta where it lost to Rockwell College in its first heat and a four from the same crew also lost to Dublin Commercial R.C. Earlier in the season the club sent a maiden four to Trinity Regatta where it also lost.

Despite seven visits South of the Border, the total expenditure in the club current account amounted to £189.90, a figure which only exceeded the Games fund grant by £16.90! Also, in the same year, the club was in receipt of £65.00 from the Athletic Field Committee for the purchase of a second hand eight from Dublin and also obtained £71.00 to cover their annual rent to B.C.B.C.

After a lapse of five years the club chose a medical student, H.F. Jackson from Glensalmond School, Perthshire, as captain for 1945-46. His tour of duty was during one of the best years ever experienced by the Lagan clubs, with B.C.B.C. winning the Junior Eights Championships of Ireland and Q.U.B.C. retaining the Wylie Cup. The latter was rowed on the Lagan on Saturday 2 March 1946, the first occasion the event had taken place other than on the Liffey. On the day the embankments on both sides of the river were crowded with spectators and, among the distinguished gathering at the B.C.B.C. Boat House, were the Governor of Northern Ireland, the Earl Granville, and the Chancellor of Queen's University, Lord Londonderry. In the maiden section Q.U.B. defeated D.U.B.C. in their first heat and won their final comfortably from U.C.D.; the same pattern was followed in the junior races and in the final of the senior event Q.U.B.

lost to D.U.B.C. by ten feet, after a race in which every stroke had been contested from Stranmillis to the boat house. Later in the season an eight rowed in the Dublin head. The senior four won the Connor Cup and rowed unsuccessfully at Drogheda and Trinity Regattas, the two senior fours, which visited Carrick-on-Shannon, fared no better. The junior and maiden boats did not stay together after the Wylie Cup but a maiden four went to Trinity where it lost in the final to Athlone, having disposed of Dublin Commercial R.C. and U.C.D. on the way.

The next captain was R.K. Bloomfield, the first Arts man to hold this post. He had rowed at Portora and at the end of his first year at Queen's was in the maiden eight which cycled to Carrick-on-Shannon. When at the university he was reputed to spend all his time at the boathouse but this does not seem to have prevented him from getting a pass degree in arts in 1949. The season opened with the Wylie Cup which was held on 1 March during a spell of severe cold which resulted in part of the Lagan being frozen, which led to the venue of the race being moved to the 'Old Course'. This was on the reach between the Thompson Wharf and the Clarendon Dock which had been used during the Belfast Regattas in the 1890s. Here the river was sufficiently wide for several boats to row abreast which meant that, since there were three entries for section it was not necessary to row heats. U.C.D. won the senior and junior events with Q.U.B. second and D.U.B.C. third. The maiden race was won by Q.U.B. followed by U.C.D. with D.U.B.C. in third place. The senior boat kept together throughout the summer term and went to Henley Royal Regatta, where they failed to reproduce the form they had shown in Ireland. This was due in the main to their 'finishing coach' who tried to change their method of starting and style of rowing during their week of pre-regatta practice on the Thames. In the Regatta they drew King's College, London, in the Thames Cup and lost by several lengths. The only Irish Regatta attended by the eight was Carrick-on-Shannon where it lost to Bann in the final. However, a four rowed at Bann, Dublin Metropolitan, Belfast and Portadown but were only successful in the last two places. The junior boat broke up after the Wylie Cup, but the maiden eight went to Dublin Metropolitan and rowed at Belfast and a maiden four represented Q.U.B. at Trinity Regatta. In none of the three events did the crews survive their first heat.

The junior and maiden boats has a mediocre season during W.J. Fulton's captaincy (1947-48) but the seniors, especially the senior four, were outstanding with the latter winning the Metropolitan Challenge Cup, the blue Ribband of four's rowing in Ireland. The race was rowed at Dublin Metropolitan Regatta on 16 and 17 July when, in their first heat Q.U.B. won from D.U.B.C. by two lengths; in the next round they defeated Neptune and won the final against U.C.D. by two lengths in a time of 8 min. 24 sec. The crew were H.F. Jackson (bow) R.K. Bloomfield, J.E. Sutcliffe, D.B. Taylor (str) and S.V. Warnock (cox); all had been in the Henley boat in the previous year. At the same regatta the senior eight lost to Neptune by a canvas, the Neptune boat being stroked by W. Stevens who, thirty years later, became the President of the I.A.R.U. The Belfast clubs excelled themselves at this regatta with Q.U.B. winning the blue Ribband, B.C.B.C. the junior and maiden fours, and M.C.B. the schools event.

Earlier in the same month the I.A.R.U. senior championship of Ireland was rowed at Belfast Regatta; this was the first, and the only time, in which an open senior championship was held on the Lagan. Queen's entered their senior eight which lost in their first heat to D.U.B.C., who themselves were beaten by B.C.B.C. in the next round. On the other side of the draw, U.C. D. defeated Neptune and went on to win the final

against B.C.B.C., who failed to reproduce the form they had shown in earlier races. No junior boats were entered from Queen's at this regatta, but there were maiden entries in which the eight lost to Portadown and the four to D.U.B.C. Senior crews were also entered at Bann but they won no trophies; indeed at this regatta B.C.B.C. excelled themselves by bringing home nine cups awarded to winning crews. The Q.U.B. senior four also travelled to Athlone, Carrick-on-Shannon and Drogheda Regattas and returned laden with the appropriate silver ware. At Drogheda Regatta Q.U.B. dead heated in their race but both crews were allowed to row in the final which was won by Q.U.B. with B.C.B.C. second and Neptune third. The maiden four also won at Drogheda but the maiden crews entered at Athlone and Carrick-on-Shannon met with no success.

The captain in 1948-49 was C.A. Boddie, a medical student, who was fortunate in being able to call on F.J. Boyle, now a practising dentist, to coach the junior eight. Boyle had the gift of getting his crews to move faster than they believed they could and, in the words of one of his junior eight 'victims' they were "ferociously coached, brainwashed and disciplined throughout the season". The result was that they won the junior eight's events at every Northern regatta as well as at Dublin Metropolitan; indeed, the only race they lost was in the I.A.R.U. junior championship at Cork where they lost to Galway Rowing Club by one length. The first regatta of the season was Wylie Cup, held on 3 March. In this Q.U.B. lost to D.U.B.C. by two lengths in the senior eights; the junior boat, after winning against University College Galway, won their final with D.U.B.C.; and in the maiden event Q.U.B. lost to U.C.G. who themselves lost to D.U.B.C. in the final. Since Q.U.B., T.C.D. and U.C.D. had each one win, the cup was awarded to the winner of the senior race.

The senior boat did not stay together after the Wylie Cup but a four was made up of those who could spare the time. This went to several regattas and reached the final of the second senior fours event at the Dublin Metropolitan Regatta where it lost to D.U.B.C. by one length. Portadown Regatta was held that year in mid-July and scratch senior crews were entered from Queen's who rowed as Lady Victoria Boat Club. The exploits of the junior eight in the 1949 regatta season have already been mentioned but examination pressure reduced the maiden boat to a four, which won at Dublin Metropolitan and reached the finals at Bann, Belfast, Drogheda and Portadown Regattas.

When G.B. Weston, Arts, became captain at the beginning of the 1949-50 season, he was immediately faced with the prospect that the club would be homeless in a few months time. During the later 1940s facilities at the B.C.B.C. Boat House had become very congested because, not only were the host club enjoying a period of intense activity and success, but Q.U.B. were also in this category, as were M.C.B. Finally on 26 July 1949 B.C.B.C. informed the University that they would not be renewing their agreement at the end of the year. The immediate crisis was somewhat mitigated when Belfast Boat Club allowed Queens to keep their boats in a derelict shed in their grounds at Stranmillis. This enabled the club to continue rowing, but it was rowing under great difficulties especially during the dark winter evenings. In general the river is well illuminated from the street lights on the embankments between B.C.B.C. and Stranmillis; but from the latter to the Belfast Boat Club slip there are no street lights and the river is tree-lined thereby making darkness 'doubly dark'. The lighting deficiency was finally overcome by placing hurricane lamps at key points along the river bank, and it was then the duty of the cox to see that all these lamps were lighted and in their correct place before setting out in the evenings.

Despite the numerous difficulties experienced at this time, the club had a most satisfactory year. In March a crew went to the Chester Head of the River where they came second in the clinker division. The junior and maiden eights rowed in the Wylie Cup on 4 March 1950. The former won their heat against U.C.G. but lost to D.U.B.C. by a canvas in the final. The maiden event was also won by T.C.D., who disposed of Q.U.B. in the first round, and the senior event was won by U.C.D. Junior and maiden crews were also entered for Dublin Metropolitan Regatta (8-10 July) at which the junior eight lost to D.U.B.C. in the final. This regatta was dominated by northern entrants with the B.C.B.C. senior four winning the Blue Ribband, Carrickfergus the junior fours, R.B.A.I. the under age fours, and B.C.B.C. also winning the junior sculls. In addition, northern clubs had rowed as the losers in three finals - B.C.B.C., Portora, Q.U.B. The junior eight also won at Belfast. During the summer a junior four from Southampton University came over to Ireland and rowed at Bann, Dublin Metropolitan and Belfast. In the last mentioned they rowed in the Ulster Cup but lost to Carrickfergus, the winners of the event, who had defeated them a week previously, in the final of the junior fours at Dublin Metro.

Toward the end of the season Queen's were able to move their boats into their own boat house. This was described as a temporary wooden structure which the University had built for them on the site on which their permanent boat house stands today. The building was erected by Messrs. D.S. Caldwell of Bedford Street Belfast, who were the local representatives of Medway Building and Supplies Ltd. of London. During the next season the building was officially opened on Saturday 3 February 1951 by Dr Dennis Rebbeck of Messrs. Harland and Wolff Ltd., after which J. Gorman and R.A. Duncan, captain and vice-captain respectively, took over the premises on behalf of the Boat Club. Among those present were the new Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Eric Ashby, and the Commanding Officer of the Senior Training Corps, Major W.S. Craig who had been vice-captain of the boat club in 1933-34. Immediately after the opening Mrs Ashby named the club's new clinker eight 'Slieve Bernagh'. The event was well covered by the press and included photographs of the platform party as well, and one of an oarsman taking practical steps to ensure that no residues were left in the champagne bottle after the naming! No doubt he was celebrating that, after waiting twenty years, Queen's now had a boat house of their own.

During its first decade in its new home the club again won the Wylie Cup and the Blue Ribband for fours, and also brought home the I.A.R.U. Cup for the senior eight's championship on its first visit to the Lagan. There is now little doubt that when M.C.B. and R.B.A.I. took up rowing during the school year 1929-30, it would not have been long before a boat club would have started at the university. Once started, the club would probably never have really got properly on its feet before the outbreak of the 1939-40 War, but for the interest and encouragement it received from senior members of the University and the committee of B.C.B.C. It was most fortunate that Maunsell and his colleagues accepted Forde Hall's advice to approach his club about rowing facilities because, at that time B.C.B.C. was the only boat club in Belfast with the necessary experience and expertise to guide new-comers in the art of rowing management. The author, on looking back to half a century ago, now realises how much the Cunningham brothers, Craig, Stephens, Stuart, Timmins, and himself were indebted to Professor Walmsley and Messrs. R.G. Baskett, T. Forde Hall and Harry Murphy for the help and guidance they gave the fledgling boat club as it lumbered from crisis to crisis in its early days.

Belfast Commercial Boating Club

The Queen's University Boat Club enjoyed the hospitality of the Belfast Commercial Boating Club for nearly twenty years and, there is little doubt, many of the Queen's men who rowed from Balfour Avenue during this period would like to know more about the history of this club. A brief account of this is given below and a definitive history of the club has now being written by W.F. Mitchell, President of Belfast Commercial Boating Club.

B.C.B.C. was formed in 1882 and, during its first twenty years, rowed from a boat house at St. John's Quay on the Laganbank Road, Belfast. In 1904 it moved to new premises in the Ormeau Park, but it stayed here for only a short time as its club house was destroyed by fire on 15 February 1911. In the summer of 1912 it acquired the premises in Balfour Avenue which it occupied until 25 May 1974 when a self-appointed welfare committee 'requisitioned' the buildings during the Ulster Workers' Council Strike of that year. After several years of haggling, this welfare committee obtained sufficient financial aid from the Government to enable it to pay for the premises. Nevertheless, B.C.B.C. was homeless for the next three years. During this time a small group of members, led by Jimmy McIntyre (captain), Billy McSorley and George Morrison kept the name of the club before the rowing fraternity by entering a coxed four at northern regattas. In the same period Ken Morrow was carrying out protracted negotiations with government to procure a grant with which to obtain suitable premises for the club. The latter were ready for occupancy at the end of February 1977 and on 18 June of that year the club complex at Stranmillis was opened by Mr J.D. Concannon, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office. Among the distinguished guests at that occasion were the Lord Mayor of Belfast (David Cook who was also an active member of Lady Victoria Boat Club) and the President of the Irish Amateur Rowing Union (Rev. Eddie Diffley, S.J.). Shortly after its move to Stranmillis the club became mixed and today oarsmen and oarswomen are equally active both on and off the river.

B.C.B.C. has had it ups and downs. In 1946 it won the I.A.R.U. Junior Eights Championships of Ireland and, four years later brought home the Blue Ribband for Irish Senior fours rowing for its second visit to the Lagan. Furthermore, three members of the club have been Presidents of the I.A.R.U. Namely, T. Forde Hall, 1938,1939, T.H. Murphy, 1954,1955 and D.C. Gourley, 1963. The first mentioned had been secretary of B.C.B.C. for many years and was considered to be one of the leading rowing statesmen of his time in Ireland. Harry Murphy had been treasurer of the club for over half a century. And David Gourley was captain between 1944 and 1950, years when the club had been at its peak, and during the late 1960s and early 1970s was also President of the club.

During its time at Balfour Avenue B.C.B.C. provided accommodation for four other clubs. The first was M.C.B. who began to row during the winter of 1929-30 and continued to boat from Balfour Avenue until the College acquired its own boat house at Stranmillis in 1960. In September 1962 R.B.A.I. moved to Balfour Avenue from Belfast Boat Club, where it had been accommodated since rowing had begun during the winter of 1929-30. R.B.A.I. was still using the B.C.B.C. premises when the club house was 'requisitioned' in 1974, after which the school rowed from Queen's Boat House until

moving into its own boat house, adjacent to that of B.C.B.C. at Stranmillis, in the spring of 1977. Queen's University rowed from Balfour Avenue from the end of January 1932 until December 1949 and the Ulster Polytechnic at Jordanstown began to row from B.C.B.C. in 1973 but the club was 'evicted' by the 'welfare committee' in May 1974, after which rowing ceased at the Polytechnic. However, the club was revived in the early 1980s and was accommodated at the R.B.A.I. boat house.

When the B.C.B.C. opened in 1882 it was constituted as the Commercial Boating Club and retained its name when the Antrim Rowing Club amalgamated with it a year later. In February 1938 it changed its name to the Belfast Commercial Boating Club and, just before the opening of the boat house at Stranmillis, it became Belfast Rowing Club; a change of name which bestowed upon the City of Derry Boating Club the distinction of being the only 'boating club' in Ireland.