

Queen's University Belfast Boat Club 1952-62 - A Personal View

by Dusty Anderson

I have chosen to write about this decade, or rather undecade, in Queen's History because in 1952 we won the Senior Eights (Elite) Championship for the first time and in 1962 for, alas, the last time to date. My brother Sam rowed 2 in the 1952 crew, I stroked the senior crews in 1956 and 1957 and helped to coach the 1962 crew; so my information about the era is very immediate and, of necessity, very personal. If my view of events, trends and policies at Queen's during that time differs from others, then I can only reiterate that this is a personal view of the period. For modern readers I refer to what used to be called 'Maiden' and 'Junior' crews in the modern idiom - 'Novice' and 'Intermediate', but I continue to call 'Senior' crews senior; somehow it seems appropriate.

The fifties and early sixties were of course, as far as the major championships were concerned, the most successful period in Queen's history. The period saw a dramatic decline in the power of Trinity College Dublin as the pre-eminent Irish club, but it also witnessed the even more dramatic rise of the Garda Síochána as a major force to be reckoned with. University College Dublin, Portora Royal School, Bann Rowing Club and on occasions, Belfast Commercial Boating Club fielded strong crews throughout the period; and, more sporadically, Athlone, St Michael's, Galway and Cork crews rose to stardom. School crews could never be discounted at Maiden (Novice) level and Methody, Coleraine Inst. and Belfast Inst. were frequently serious contenders. There was plenty of opposition for Queens' crews.

An intimation of things to come was given at Putney H-O-R in 1951. No fewer than five Irish crews competed; Trinity first and second, Lady Elizabeth, UCD and Queen's. Trinity had been fourth in the Head in 1950 but Queen's was the first Irish crew home this time in 13th place half a minute ahead of Trinity and UCD. The Queen's crew unfortunately did not maintain their form through the summer, when Trinity and UCD were dominant, the latter winning the Big Pot. Nevertheless, no Queen's crew has yet come higher in the Putney Head.

When my brother Sam rowed at Queen's the club was dominated by Medical/Dental students. In 1952 no fewer than six of the crew were medicals. John Gorman, Captain in 1951 was bow and a Dental student, Sam at 2 was a medic, as was Marshall Young at 3, Hugo Morrison at 6, John ('Grumpy') Alexander, Captain and stroke and Brian Crossley at cox. Medical students, it seemed, had a long shelf life then at the university and time, at least in some years, to devote to rowing.

The memory and traditions of the club were therefore retained through the services of these experienced oarsmen. 1952 was also one of the three years when Queen's had a grand slam at Wylie, winning all three eights races - the other two years were 1956 and 1957.

John Alexander was an old Portoran and had stroked the 1951 crew. A man of few words (but usually the right ones), he stood no nonsense from anyone. The 1952 crew was undefeated in Ireland and came through the first round at Henley, going out in the second after a good race with London University. They came back to win the Big Pot.

A nice story about the championships, held at Portadown that year, was that Trinity (who met Queens in the final) stacked their oars up against a rather rickety fence which collapsed on top of the Queen's boat (the Milne Barbour), inflicting a three foot long crack in the skin. Andy Downes, the Queen's Boatman, repaired it with sellotape, and said "get back as quick as you can, or you'll sink!" They took him at his word and got back very quickly, beating Trinity by one and half lengths.

The Intermediate and Novice crews were useful as well, as evidenced by their wins at Wylie (held in Dublin that year). Cowan McKinney stroked the Intermediate boat, in which John Lewis rowed 6; his brother Arthur rowed 7 in the Novice eight, which was stroked by Des McLoughlin.

In March 1953, a photograph of the Queen's Boat Club posing with their trophies appeared in the press under an article entitled "Will 1953 be a record season?" The article went on to describe how there was a new and growing interest in rowing in Ulster and how Queen's was now the brightest star in the Ulster firmament.

Under the Captaincy of John ('Jock') Shearer, 1953 saw a strong growth at the bottom of the club with two novice eights rowing through the summer and the faster of the two winning the Novice Championship for Queen's for the first time, at New Ross Regatta. That crew was stroked by Charlie Pearson and contained a number of oarsmen who would go through to Senior crews in the next two years. Many fine oarsmen also came from the Novice 'B' crew that year, including Donal Murphy - Captain in 1955.

Queen's retained the Senior Championships in 1953, although their victory over UCD in the final was attributed by many to their advantageous draw on the inside of the horse-shoe bend on the Carrick-on-Shannon course where the Championships were held. Certainly UCD had previously beaten them at Metro by three and a half lengths, but on the other hand the two fours from the Queen's eight had won at that regatta; the first four winning the Blue Ribband easily, against a much fancied Neptune crew. The Southern press was much excited by this four, "stroked by a giant of a man" and declared it was the best seen on Irish waters for a long time. For the record, this crew consisted of John Shearer, John Alexander, Jeremy MacAfee and Louis McKinney, coxed by Brian Crossley; Louis' younger (and smaller) brother Cowan stroked the eight; both had previously rowed at Portora. Louis had rowed for Tabor Academy USA before coming to Queen's. Their coaches that year were "Cocky" Brignall and John Patton-Phillips.

When I came to Queen's for the 1954 season, the club seemed on the crest of a wave and I remember great activity in the club during the Autumn of 1953, with lots of bank and moving tubbing by members of previous years' crews. There was the usual competition at the end of term for the Milne Barbour Cup for tub pairs - won, if I remember rightly, by Ian ('Icy') Henderson and Gerry Carew, against myself and a large Belfast Instonian. Icy was to be Captain in 1956 and had rowed at Coleraine Inst., as had I; while Gerry Carew had rowed at Portora.

There were also lots of social eights events races in the first term, usually featuring medical students versus the rest - but for the potentially 'serious' crews, the year started in a fairly relaxed fashion; on the river at any rate. Off the water, this term was the social term, with the Boat Club Formal Dance in the Whitla Hall as the first big event of the season. In the New

Year, however, the whole atmosphere changed; crews were selected by the Captain and posted on the noticeboard in the Students' Union. The Training Rules, including the infamous rule 6 ("as usual") constrained us to no smoking, no more than one pint of beer a day, regular meals and hours, and of course, rowing 6 days a week; 5.15 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and Wednesday and Saturday afternoon. The Boat Club Dinner (a notorious affair then, as now) was held in January, just after serious training started for the Wylie Cup (University Championships) held at the beginning of March.

In 1954 the Wylie Cup was on the Lagan, since Queen's had won in 1953, and the course was upstream from below Commercial slip to a point just opposite Methody's present slipway. (Methody Boat House did not then exist; indeed barges were still occasionally passing through locks on their way to Lisburn.)

At this juncture, I should explain to modern readers that the (British) rowing world was then split into factions - the 'Orthodox' and the 'Fairbairn'. The former believed rowing could be taught by trying to get the oarsmen to copy 'perfect' or ideal body positions throughout the cycle of the stroke, while Fairbairnites preached that the important thing was what the blade was doing and that if the action of the blade was correct, then the body would more or less naturally take up its strongest position.

I simplify a most complex and acrimonious argument which split Oxbridge Colleges and the whole of the rowing community. Again to oversimplify, the Oxbridge blue boats, Eton and Leander were orthodox, while the Tideway clubs and some College crews were Fairbairn. Since most boats had short slides - 16" or 17" - and single action wheels, all oarsmen had to have a big forward reach and considerable 'lie back' to achieve a reasonable length of stroke. The big 'lie back' of some orthodox crews was quite remarkable; modern oarsmen would find such an action quite unbearable. (Very successful Lady Margaret crews had compromised rowing 'flexible orthodox' style.)

The argument between the factions lost its impetus later in the decade when longer slides were introduced. American and Continental crews had, by the early and mid-fifties, adopted longer slides and evolved a style which still kept a considerable swing but shortened the 'lie back' or, in the case of American crews, eliminated it completely. But more of that anon, and back to 1954!

John Lewis, the Captain in 1954, opted for the 'Orthodox' approach; furthermore, he had as chief coach John Patton-Phillips, an ex-President of Cambridge. In best Oxbridge tradition two crews (Castor and Pollux) were chosen, raced against each other and the final selection was made some two or three weeks before Wylie. The result was that the first boat came a sad cropper against Trinity, while a useful second boat, stroked by Donal Murphy, won the Intermediate division. The Wylie Cup was only won by the Novice VIII in the final race of the day against UCD. Thereafter some oarsmen were moved up from both Intermediate and Novice VIII, but the pattern set at Wylie remained throughout the season.

The Senior VIII, although a very big crew physically, were very disappointing and on their return from Henley, were advised by John Alexander not to compete in the Senior Championship, which was duly won by Trinity, closely pursued by Belfast Commercial. It was a disappointing result for John Lewis, who subsequently went on to postgraduate studies in Oxford and rowed in a Christ Church eight, coached by 'Jumbo' Edwards, which got to the

finals of the Ladies' Plate. (John's youngest son was Captain of Trinity College Dublin in 1992.)

The very useful Junior (Intermediate) VIII stroked by Donal Murphy, had the misfortune to meet an outstanding Bann Rowing Club VIII at every regatta and suffer the indignity of being rowed down from behind. Fortunately, there was an outstanding IV formed from the Queen's eight, which not only beat Bann every time, but won in Scotland where the competition was very tough at the time. The Novice VIII, despite being very light (the cox, Donald Tomb, was heavier than three of the oarsmen) won a few local events, rowed a dead heat with Belfast Inst. at Belfast Regatta, and got to the final of the Novice Championship at Limerick. Belfast Inst., incidentally, had a very strong IV from their VIII and should have won the fours at Limerick, but didn't get a good row in the final, which saw 14 crews start abreast in a flying start in the dark and in mountainous seas. Quite a few boats (fours and eights) sank that day!

Donal Murphy was elected Captain for the 1954-55 season and adopted a policy of recruiting and training as many novices as possible, and getting them into eights as soon as they were competent. This policy succeeded handsomely, despite the pressure it put on existing club members, as coaches, and on equipment. Four Novice eights were on the water before Christmas, two went through to Wylie and came through to the summer season. This meant that there were good recruits to fill the spaces left in the best selected novice eights as the inevitable drop-outs occurred in winter.

Donal also had a policy of "handsome is as handsome does", which meant that crews were picked by competition rather than by appearance. Thus it was that Dick McCaughey's eight beat a much showier and bigger eight and won the honour to represent Queen's at an invitation race with UCD. Dick was then hoisted on his own (or Murphy's) petard when the rejects for the Novice four (Ian Nelson, Gerry Nickell, Peter Rowan, and Kevin MacLavery) beat the selected four, stroked by Dick. The rejects turned out to be an outstanding novice four, unbeaten in Ireland and beaten only once (in the final of the Novice IVs in Glasgow).

Two of the outstanding characters of the novice intake were Dick McCaughey and Peter Rowan who rowed at Stroke and Seven in the eight which won all their races, including the Novice Championships. These two had turned up at the Boat Club for sailing lessons (the Sailing Club had a sailing boat on the bank to boost their own recruitment) but were quickly seduced by the Boat Club. The large intake in the autumn of 1954 was to sustain the success of Queen's for the next two or three years.

Up the club, however, the picture was not so rosy. Although Wylie was won by the Novices and the Intermediates, the Senior boat had been defeated despite the recall of my brother Sam to stroke it, and the appointment of Oliver McCutcheon, an ex-Trinity Captain and 'Fairbairnite', as coach. Sam had been under orders from home NOT to row and performed under the 'nom de guerre' of P. Murray-Smythe.

The commentator at Wylie Regatta raised a laugh from the crowd when he announced that "J. Anderson, stroke of the junior eight is brother of P. Murray-Smythe, stroke of the Senior eight". Sam dropped out after Wylie, as did others, and their places were taken by stronger members of the Intermediate VIII, which - thus weakened - had little success during the remainder of the season. The strengthened Senior VIII, unfortunately, had little success either and was again beaten by Bann, despite racing well. UCD won the Big Pot. While

writing this I was given the sad news of the death of Peter Rice, who rowed Seven behind me until Wylie, when he gave up rowing to concentrate on his studies; obviously to some effect because he had very distinguished career which included work on Sydney Opera House and the Pompidou Museum in Paris. Just before he died he was awarded the RIBA Gold Medal for the year, one of only three civil engineers to receive that honour.

1956: Ian C. Henderson ('Icy'), as Captain for the 1956 season, had the over-riding problem of reinstating confidence in Queen's ability to field a successful Senior eight. The Intermediate section of the club was strong, with Dick McCaughey's championship crew back in toto. Icy continued Donal Murphy's policy of recruiting and training novices and the club had a healthy intake of members. The senior membership of the club consisted of only ten people; one of these was 'Mickey' Dunn from the victorious UCD crew of the year before. Mickey was an American with a great faith in the UCD method of training. UCD had started serious training in October, had concentrated on fitness out of the boat and had sacrificed the annual Henley trip to concentrate on peaking for the Big Pot. "You gotta be tough" was Mickey's constant refrain.

The squad decided to start serious training early in the first term, to give up smoking, and with the approval of Alastair McDonald, Director of the P.E. Centre, to step up our interval and other off-the-water training. Things soon became so tough that Mickey Dunn dropped out of the squad, pleading pressure of studies and Willie Scott, one of the only two smokers in the crew (the other was myself) also threw in the towel. This left eight people who rowed throughout the season, fortunately without major illness or injury. We adopted a new 'modern' style of rowing with a short lie back, experimented with different rates and bought the first set of 'barrel' oars in Ireland. It was in this year that Queen's bought a fine sculling boat with the main aim of improving the Senior eight's watermanship.

We won Wylie handsomely (all three eights were victorious), Metropolitan Regatta and the Senior Championship at Coleraine. Our disappointments were losing Belfast HOR to Portora and also at Belfast regatta when our Five man, Seamus McBride, took cramp and stopped rowing just about a minute into the final. We competed at Putney HOR, rising from 296 to 45 and at Henley, where we emulated the 1952 crew's achievement of getting through the first round and being narrowly beaten in the second.

Our coaches were 'Jake' Stratford, rowing teacher at Methody, and two Ian Wilsons - one a director of Ormeau Bakery and ex-Captain of the 1st and 3rd Trinity Cambridge, the other a surgeon and ex-Captain of Trinity. The other divisions of the club also prospered; the Intermediate eight won every event they entered except the Championship, where they were narrowly beaten in a re-row, after dead-heating with a strong Garda Siochana eight. The Novices, stroked by Billy Greaves, also won all before them except (again) the Championships, where they were also defeated by the Garda Siochana.

1957 was my year as Captain and the results at the end of the year exemplified the enormous strengths - and depths - that the Club now commanded. Membership of the club once again passed the 100 mark. In the summer term there were two Senior eights; one went to Henley and the other won the Senior Championships which had seemed to be a 'cert' for the Garda, since most of the other fancied crews - the Universities and Portora - were at Henley.

Overall, the club won 37 trophies, a record which I believe still stands. However, there had not been progress at Senior level and the Novice intake was the weakest for some time (in

terms of level of achievement). Despite winning Wylie and performing creditably at the first Head of the River at Erne and Putney, where the previous year's place was maintained, the first crew never managed to achieve proper cohesion in the summer time after the first twenty strokes of the start, over which they were invincible. The second crew, stroked by Graham Leckey, reached its peak solely at the Championship and so neither crew was awarded 'blues'. A feature of the year, however, was the emergence of a serious sculler at elite level (Kevin MacLaverty) who, in addition to acting as a useful sub for the eight, was to finally break into the big time the following year by defeating the previously unchallenged scullers from Lady Elizabeth on their own home waters, and by sculling in the Diamonds at Henley in 1959. Kevin and his brother Colm were enthusiastic watermen (and still are) and were well known as sailors and canoeists.

Billy Greaves' novice eight progressed to the intermediate division where they had a most successful year, although, once again, the Championship eluded Queen's. The Novice VII, stroked by Len Harris, was useful but not strong enough physically to win the major trophies. However, there was plenty of enthusiasm in the novice ranks and a useful second novice eight rowed on to the summer, bearing in its ranks a lad called Russell Kernohan, who was to give a long term commitment to rowing in England and at Bann, where he was an indefatigable secretary for Bann's last period of success. Gerry Carew won a number of races in the Junior Sculling division, rounding off the club's capability.

Socially, the Club continued to prosper, running a successful formal and Annual Dinner. During the year there was some difficulty, especially at Henley, in obtaining coaches and eventually George Andrews of Portora took pity on us and stepped into the breach.

George was a great supporter of all rowing clubs in Ireland and he was prepared to do all he could to raise standards in Irish rowing. In 1957 he established the Erne HOR to help crews going to Putney, and the school acted as host to Queen's for a successful training week-end - the first of many over the years. Lady Victoria Boat Club was also developing and beginning to make a significant contribution to the club's coaching policy.

I think it is now time to pause in the narrative and to comment on specific aspects of rowing at Queen's in the mid fifties. These 'excursions' are about the University and the Club, the Coaches, Lady Victoria Boat Club and Henley Regatta. Bear with me for a while ...

Excursion No. 1 The University and the Club

When I came to Queen's in 1953, the entire student body attended lectures in and around the old campus at University Road; the entire Economics faculty had 40 students. I think from memory that the student population was about 2,500-3,000. Everyone - medicals, engineers, Arts and Science students - passed through the old Students' Union (now the Department of Music). The University was a much more intimate institution than it is now. Indeed by the early sixties many of the medicals had moved out to buildings at the Lisburn Road and the Royal; the engineers had moved up the Stranmillis Road, as had some scientists. It is very surprising, in retrospect, that the Club could achieve such a high membership from such a small student body. Support for the club in the University was terrific - crowds came down to cheer the crews at Wylie, and quite a few supporters travelled to Dublin and other venues - they knew they would have a good time after the Regattas. There were, of course, no

women rowing at this time; there was a 'ladies committee' whose functions were to make tea, look decorative and support the crews.

The Club's relationship with the 'Front' of the University was close and, by and large, amicable, although there were occasions of tension.

We were very fortunate that George Burland, the Bursar, Dr Wilson Johnson, the Medical Officer, and Alastair McDonald, the Director of the P.E. Centre, all took a keen personal interest in the Club. They attended every Club Formal Dinner and Dance, joined the spirit of the evening and gave the Captains very wise advice. Wilson Johnston and Alastair McDonald worked very closely together to monitor the physical fitness of the crews; Wilson Johnston inspected every member of the club each year, kept records of lung capacity, heart rates and so on. He also started the crews on additional intakes of Vitamin C to help prevent winter colds and counter any build up of lactic acid. Alastair McDonald started off-the-water training, including circuits and sweat sessions, in Winter months.

The Bursar was invaluable for financial advice and also for steering Captains through the Byzantine bureaucracy and politics of the 'Front'. His advice was especially useful after Dinners and Dances when the Captain and/or secretary was hauled up before the Vice-Chancellor (yes, it happened then too!) to explain damage, or misdemeanour. He was a most jovial man. I remember when he made a speech at the Dinner one year and the Menu card designated him as Geo D Burland A.C.E. (instead of A.C.A.), He remarked that he supposed next year we would put an 'R' in it.

The Officers of the University and many Professors and senior staff were pleased to come to club functions and join the fun. Their moral support also made a great contribution to Captains' morale. I can remember waiting to see Wilson Johnston in the Medical Centre and, as in previous years, joined the queue. When my turn came, Wilson Johnston said to his secretary that when the Captain of the Boat Club came to see him, he was to be shown right in!

Our relationships with other University bodies were not always quite so jocular. The 'Major' who commanded the Students' Union (one Colonel Billington) could become quite prickly about the Boat Club's behaviour at the Saturday night 'Hop' held in the Union. These were sedate affairs when the Boat Club was in training, but explosive after Regattas, especially when Queen's won the Wylie Cup. My breast swelled with pride on the Monday after Wylie in 1956 when, as secretary of the club that year, I was cornered by the Major and told that "Saturday night was a disgrace - worse than Students' night last year!" Next year, when I was Captain, the Major was really nervous and had the hatches battened down for a really bad night after Wylie. Much to his surprise, it was very quiet, the reason being that the club had made a 'Wylie' brew in our Burco Boiler. This concoction, made from raisins, apples, yeast, sugar and bits and pieces of fermentable material, was so lethal that most of the stockholders in this Victory brew never reached the Hop.

Many of the bottles exploded in lockers, bedrooms and other places, and the effects were just as explosive on the innards. A night of monumental chundering and collapse made 1957 the quietest Wylie night for years. Much to my chagrin, the Major complimented me on the good behaviour of the Club on Wylie night.

A rather more serious bone of contention between the Club and the University was the Boat House or, as we referred to it in official correspondence, the "Boat Shack". Erected in 1949 as a temporary (5 year) measure, the old sectional wooden building was well past its best in the mid 1950s. The Club kept pressing the Front for a new club house; the Front kept pleading poverty (what's new?).

The House and Grounds Committee visited the Club from time to time and each Captain tried to make sure every available oarsman was in the Clubhouse at the time of their visit, to demonstrate the complete inadequacy of the building for the numbers in the club. In truth, various fungal infections spread to the groins and armpits of the members (as well as the endemic athlete's foot). To counteract one particularly vicious infestation, alleged to have been imported from New Ross by Bob Kearney, Harvey Jackson left a bottle of fluorescent liquid to be painted on infected parts. Thereafter Boat Club members could be easily identified in the dark, by sight and smell.

A chore which had to be carried out by the Boat Club before the House and Grounds Committee visit was the tidy-up of the Clubhouse, including moving four or five of Harvey Jackson's cars up the side streets opposite the club.

Eventually, in 1958, the boat shed was extended to give rather better shower and accommodation facilities and the present fours hut was erected. While not ideal, this was a big improvement and kept the club going until 1975. Despite (or because of?) the primitive facilities, the club continued to flourish; perhaps in those days it was easier to use university facilities for running dances and functions. Certainly, the Boat Club and the University were much closer together in the fifties than they were ever to be again.

Excursion No. 2 Coaches, Coxes and the Lady Victoria Boat Club

In the early fifties it was felt (perhaps correctly) that while Novice and Intermediate oarsmen could be brought on successfully by home coaches, the Senior eight required the services of (preferably) Oxbridge coaches to make the transition to Henley standard crews and to do the final sharpening of the crew for the Thames Cup.

The 1952 crew was coached by 'Cocky' Brignall, Commander of Queen's Air Squadron and ex-Cambridge Cox. He was a Fairbairnite and taught Queen's an effective final sprint which was put into operation by Cocky shouting "Ole! Ole! Queen's!". The other main coach was Jack Barbour, who coached standing up in the back of a chauffeur driven open limousine. Whatever they did seemed to work! As I described in the section on 1954, the system seemed to have broken down, revealing the underlying difficulty of the crew's style being changed when they had reached senior level; even worse, sometimes when the crews reached Henley the finishing coach decided he didn't like their 'style' and spent the pre-regatta week paddling the crew and re-organising their technique. To add to the confusion coaches taking the Novice and Intermediate eights very often had conflicting ideas of how things should be done. Lady Victoria held meetings every year about how to rationalise the style to be coached that year - it must be said with limited success. Furthermore, by 1954, the visiting American and Russian crews at Henley proceeded to sweep the boards, despite the sneers of the English rowing journalists about the inferior 'style' of these "backwoodsmen". English

rowing and particularly Oxbridge rowing was, in fact, beginning a long period of decline. New ideas in boats, rigging, oars and training fortunately began to filter through to Ireland, quite often by-passing the English rowing scene.

But the basis for coaching at Queen's, for beginners and experienced oarsmen alike, was the bank tub, moored to the bank where the fours house now stands. It had a tendency to sink in rough weather and became more prone to this as it grew older. It was used extensively, especially in the first term. How the club does without a bank tub I do not know!

The vast bulk of coaching, it must be said, was undertaken by club members, working on a rota basis, on bank tub and moving tub. When the crews were settled after Christmas, it seemed natural to turn to last year's oarsmen who, for one reason or another, had decided not to row. As the club progressed, a cadre built up of graduates who were prepared to give their time to the coaching of crews for Wylie and in the summer.

For some years the novice and intermediate crews were coached by a combination of Harvey Jackson, Frank Boyle, John Alexander and Sam Anderson. In the days before video recorders Harvey had the knack of describing clearly and concisely what the oarsmen were doing, and leaving it up to the individual to correct any errors. Harvey could also be depended upon to add a touch of colour to the proceedings by turning up for early morning outings in evening dress (obviously obeying the definition of a bachelor as being someone who approached his home from a different direction each morning).

Frank Boyle, by contrast, was an advocate of physical fitness and high ratings. His style was fiery and passionate, his command of invective legendary. In 1955, realising the Intermediate eight was somewhat unfit he prescribed skipping, press-ups, deep knee bends and other exercises before the outing to cure this defect. Frank joined in each exercise which lasted until no-one (except Frank) was able to continue. This regime might have worked well had the membership of the eight remained constant, but since we had many changes in the boat, new-comers inevitably ended up being sick before or during the outing as Frank would instruct "Paddle off firm, at a reasonable rate - about 36", or even worse, "We'll practice some racing starts: go off at no known rate and settle down to 40.". No crew coached by Frank Boyle was ever led of the start, but their ability to reach the finish in front varied with their cohesion and fitness.

Harvey is no longer with us, of course, and Frank, after surviving a stroke, also later passed away.

John Alexander was the most laconic of coaches, but his advice or instruction, when it came, was always to the point and had the ring of common sense about it. One of my brother's favourite stories in this respect was that when a system of bank tub coaching was introduced which required coaches to write comments in a 'coaching book' with a section for each learner, other coaches wrote about a difficult case, things like: "needs more attention to the finish", "his blade tends to go too deep" or "has difficulty squaring and feathering"; whereas John wrote simply "Discourage this ----er," recognising (quite rightly) that the oarsman in question had absolutely no talent for the sport.

My brother Sam had probably the longest run and the most success of any novice coach during and indeed beyond the fifties. His ability to inspire crews to give of their best was legendary, and often the pre-race harangue was partly inspired by Bacchus. Sam used to get

a terrific 'needle' before races, but somehow this was always transmitted to the crew as being divine inspiration as to how the race should be rowed and won. Over the year I've met many people, at work, or socially, who would remember being coached by Sam; invariably the comment would be "We would have done anything he asked us to do."

A very dominant personality on the Lagan at that time was 'Jake' Stratford, the rowing master in charge of Methody. Many old ladies dropped their shopping baskets in horror along the embankments or on the Ormeau Bridge when they heard Jake's stentorian tones instructing a crew of fifteen year olds that "I want you to vomit after this" or, when he was coaching for a good finish, "Pull it up to your tits, down to your balls, over your knees and away!" or roaring "Nipple, Navel, Penis!" Letters of complaint flooded into Methody from old ladies and residents. Needless to say, totally without effect. He coached the Queen's Senior eight before Wylie in 1956 and I must say that we found him a much more civilised and intellectual coach than his reputation would suggest. But he was a formidable character and his reputation as an ogre was not without foundation; nevertheless he could be very sensitive to criticism and was not without the ability to laugh at himself. On one famous occasion he went down to see Portora off to Henley, overstayed his time on the boat and so ended up staying the Saturday night in Liverpool Word spread quickly and when he came into the Methody staff room on Monday morning, his colleagues greeted him by singing "The Happy Wanderer".

The most unusual and unexpected influence on Queen's Senior rowing materialised in 1958. A new lecturer in the Physics Department mentioned casually that he had coxed (in Wales) to a Boat Club member, who suggested he might like to call down and speak to the Captain. He did so and, by one of those quirks of fate, Gordon Gray took a shine to him and invited him to coach.

So, for the next three years John 'Jumbo' James coached the Senior eight virtually without interruption.

Jumbo was not without his critics, especially among the rowing 'establishment' who were in Lady Victoria. For a start off, he was a cox, had not coxed at a high level, was supremely confident that his methods were right, and was not a member of Lady Vic. He approached rowing with a clean sheet and subjected everything to measurement and analysis. In many ways he was far ahead of his time; he measured Henley times, and came up with the 'fade factor' which he set about eliminating from the Queen's crews. He was a fanatical stop-watch watcher and made crews do measured distances time after time after time. He had no conception of fatigue, either mental or physical, and subjected crews to outings which would have been considered actionable on grounds of mental cruelty in previous years. He himself devoted enormous amounts of time to coaching and expected crews to do the same. He also insisted (quite early in his coaching career) on coaching from a launch, thereby diverting a lot more of the boatman's time to (a) driving and (b) repairing it. At least he had the honesty to discard some of his theories - such as the one about taking rest or 'poise' in the strike position rather than coming up frontstops. He was eventually persuaded that oarsmen could not be selected on the basis of how far up the Stranmillis hill they could push his car from a set point at the bottom, although it required a virtual tantrum on Davy Campbell's part to quell this particular theory. His two most dangerous and tenacious fallacies were 'adjusting' the 'Henley' course on the Lagan by timing the drift of a piece of wood past the boat house, and his theory that the rate should be dropped in an instant after the start and 10 to a rate of 32.

The former fallacy caused him to announce to crews in 1959 and 1960 that they could win the Thames Cup comfortably, which unfortunately deluded the crews and gave them a certain over-confidence. The latter fallacy caused Queen's crews, time after time, to concede a length in the first minute, which they seldom regained in the last quarter of the race. This was particularly evident on short courses on narrow rivers where a length conceded was a race lost.

Nonetheless, Jumbo's overall effect was beneficial to Queen's rowing and also to the attitude of the coaching establishment. Before his time a crew would log 600-650 miles in a season; after him it was more like 1,000. He focussed more attention on boats, equipment, rigging rates and 'set pieces' than ever before. Indeed, he designed a new rudder, similar in size and shape to today's rudders, in place of the very large old fashioned type which was then affixed to the very stern of the boat. Sadly, he designed it in wood and had not got the proper fitments so that it snapped off just after the start of its maiden voyage, much to the amusement of the crew and onlookers. Still, he was eventually proved right and his era was remarkable for the overthrow of old methods and attitudes. Unfortunately, he was not a finishing coach, having no idea how to 'psyche up' crews and since he accompanied crews to Henley, they did not have the benefit of a finishing coach, who might have taken the crews in 1958, 59 or 60 through to victory.

A cox is supposed to be an understudy for the coach, and in many ways is the most important person in the boat. He (or she) should not just be a steersman, but also a motivator of his crew, an intimidator of the opposition, as cunning as Ulysses, as devious as Machiavelli, as aggressive as Attila the Hun, and, above all, s/he must be lucky. It was that last quality, for example, that distinguished our cox in 1956 (Billy Kyle) from his counterpart in Trinity (John Connor). John was in all other respects a fine cox, but never seemed to escape Nemesis when he took a chance. In the final of the Senior Championships that year, at Bann Regatta, both coxes steered as close to the borderline of their courses as they dared; one or other (or both) must have strayed beyond this, for after about a minute's rowing our blades interlocked. We were in the lead at the time and from the stroke seat I could hear 'Icy' at Six shout "I've got a Trinity blade!" as fragments of the same showered over the scene.

The race was stopped; the umpire's launch was despatched for a replacement oar for the Trinity 3-man and both coxes were admonished by the umpire. On the re-row precisely the same thing happened, but John Connor decided to stop his crew. We rowed on and won; the umpire having decided that we were on our correct station at the time of the incident. I am totally convinced that we would have won in any case; we were leading at the time and had defeated Trinity with ease a week before at Dublin Metropolitan on their home water. However, the incident soured an otherwise memorable year and led to quite unnecessary bad feelings between the two crews, which took some time to repair. Billy Kyle was an excellent cox quite (apparently) without doubts or nerves, and impervious to the fatigue of the crew. I felt that I had an almost mystical rapport with him as stroke and it was only many years later that he revealed to me that during the race I talked all the time, so that he had no difficulty reading my thoughts! Until then, I always believed I maintained silence during racing, since talking in the boat, beyond that which is absolutely necessary, is a practice I abhor.

Sorry to talk about Billy Kyle for so long, but he is probably the cox I remember most vividly. There were, of course, many memorable characters who coxed. Haldane Mitchell,

who coxed us in 1957 had another, more readily defined quality of a cox in the days before electronic enhancement of the voice - a really powerful voice. In the previous year in a calm evening at Athlone Regatta, 'Mitch' could be heard at the finishing enclosure counting out the start and ten, a mile and a quarter away! My brother claimed that Brian Crossley (cox in 1952 and 53) was "King of the coxes" and I am sure many of the 1962 crew would say that Sam Hay would be a contender for that title. The cox in 1958, Des Grey, was a flamboyant personality. In 1957 he broke his leg in a motor bike accident and was obliged to wear plaster up to his thigh. The Intermediate eight that year, nothing daunted, had a special seat built over the stern canvas for him, and he coxed all year from that position with his 'peg leg' stuck out in front of him. In one of the Regatta Programmes that year he was even entered as "P. Leg". His injury didn't stop him and the crew was frequently called upon to repair the very substantial damage inflicted on the plaster cast after virtually every regatta.

Strangely enough, I never remember any shortage of coxes during the period - but just where they came from, I'm not at all sure.

The Lady Victoria Boat Club was founded in 1951 with the stated objectives of encouraging rowing at Queen's and in Ireland in general. It rapidly became a social institution which held an annual Dinner of notorious destructiveness and concentrated, in practice, on providing coaches for Queen's. The founder Captain was Frank Boyle, who was followed in turn by Harvey Jackson, Bert Timmins and John Alexander. My brother Sam was Captain in 1957, thus overlapping my year as Captain of Queen's; so far a unique occurrence in the 50 year history of the Lady Victoria Boat Club.. Throughout the period I am reviewing Victor Warnock was the indefatigable secretary.

Even by 1957, I began to think that Lady Vic was becoming too intrusive in the Club's affairs and was bringing too much influence to bear on the Captain. This led to extremely heated discussions between Sam, Victor and myself. I can remember on several occasions waking in the digs where I shared a bedroom with Sam, to find Victor perched at the foot of my bed, intent on continuing the previous evening's argument. Having got my response he would then move over to Sam's bed to get his rejoinder. It must be said that on some occasions it was a case of the Captains of Queen's and Lady Vic versus the secretary!

In 1958 Lady Vic began to have regular outings and to take part in the Dublin HOR, thus inaugurating veteran rowing on the Lagan. In 1959, I succeeded Sam as Captain of Lady Vic and held the post until 1962. To some extent, the fortunes of Lady Vic followed the fortunes of Queen's, but it would seem that the propensity of Lady Vic to try to run the Club does not diminish with the years; one can only hope that Queen's Captains will continue to resist this tendency, while being open to sensible advice on occasions.

Excursion No. 3 Henley Regatta.

I am not really sure if Queen's crews in my day went to Henley as part of the process of becoming a 'quality' oarsman and gaining experience which would be passed on to the Club, or whether there was an aim to WIN at Henley. All the Queen's crews in this period entered the Thames Cup, which at the time was the preserve of the Oxbridge Colleges' second eights (or first eights avoiding the 'heat' in the Ladies' Plate), other University crews, American Lightweight eights and other non-university crews, including the RAF and various Tideway

Clubs. It had already, by 1954, become the preserve of American Lightweight (150 pound) crews.

It was 'Jumbo' James, I think, who first seriously floated the idea that a Queen's eight might become the first Irish crew to win at Henley since Trinity's victory before the turn of the century. As I have already said, that was not to be, but since that time Irish crews have often been confused over which event was the aim of the season - the Big Pot or Henley. If the Big Pot, why go to Henley at all? UCD had forgone the luxury of Henley in 1955 and had collected the Championship. Perhaps in that sense Henley was a luxury, but it was part of the process of measuring Irish rowing in the International scene, and the only chance Irish oarsmen had (in those days) of experiencing the atmosphere of an International Regatta, observing and learning from the best crews in the world and meeting famous rowing people. Yet, despite the toughness of the competition and the training, Henley was also FUN and my fondest memories are of activities off the water, most of them, for some strange reason, involving Kevin MacLavery.

It was Kevin who shadowed the 1957 Princeton Lightweight eight so assiduously that their coach wouldn't speak to the crew when Kevin was there. The same crew (who were victorious in the Thames Cup) came to a celebration party on the Saturday night in our rented house in Gravel Hill. The Captain explained to me that the coach didn't want Kevin to find out the secret of American rowing "which he considers to be legs" added the Captain, letting the cat out of the bag. The Captain apologised for the absence of their 4 man, who wouldn't come because he was an Irish American Catholic and was certain that the Queen's squad was an all-Protestant outfit. "He'll be bloody annoyed when he finds out Kevin's a Catholic," he said, when I explained that we weren't all true-blue loyalists.

While I was talking to the Captain, the two crews had been having a 'drinking a bottle of beer while standing on your head' competition. Their cox, Allsop by name, was being held up by the legs and force fed beer by the crew. He had a particularly blasphemous turn of phrase. "What does he study?" I asked the Captain. "Religion!" was the terse reply. The Princeton athletes eventually left in the small hours of the morning, still marvelling at Kevin's ability to steal flags. On their way home they tried to steal a Union Jack and managed to get arrested, causing the American Ambassador to be called out in the middle of the night to rescue them from the clutches of the law.

Kevin was also responsible for striking up a friendship with an American sculler, Tom McDonough. He was a really chunky, muscular guy from Mid-America who rowed for the US Navy. He used to visit Gravel Hill for a chat and relaxation and on every visit he managed to break a chair. This was because he didn't so much sit down as launch his muscular frame at high velocity into the nearest seat, which promptly disintegrated. I asked several other Americans how good he was and got the strange reply, "He can't beat Kelly, but he's the best we've got". It was only many years later that (I think) I understood that cryptic response.

The Kelly referred to was, of course, John B Kelly Junior (brother of Grace Kelly), who had won the Diamonds twice in the early fifties. The 'Angel' (pub) had a little brass plate on its floor commemorating an alleged visit by the future Princess. It said "Grace Kelly stood here". Thanks to Kevin MacLavery, it mysteriously relocated in the concrete floor of Queen's Boat Club's showers.

Just to dispel the notion that Kevin was up to nothing but mischief that year (1957), when he was spare man for the crew, I must record that he did a lot of sculling and also entered the "spare man's pairs" event, which was held on the Wednesday and Thursday nights to give spare men something to do. Kevin had entered with Paddy Holmes, spare man from Portora. On the first evening of the event Paddy did not turn up; he had gone to Cambridge for an interview, where he had incautiously parked his mother's car in a no-parking zone and returned to find it towed away by the police. Kevin was really downhearted at the prospect of not competing, so to give him a row I went out wearing a Portora vest and a white hat pulled over my eyes, in case some of the starters recognised me. Despite our lack of practice we won both heats easily. So easily, in fact, that I wanted to let the rate down when we were ten lengths up. Kevin would have none of this, and in both races we stopped to have an argument about the rate, by which time the opposition was beginning to close and we were forced to take off at a high rate again.

Paddy Holmes turned up the next night and Kevin and he got to the final, but were beaten by the spare giants from Cornell Grand eight, which broke the record for the grand that year. Paddy went on to stroke Cambridge (not to victory, unfortunately) and met a tragically early death in a motor accident in North Africa.

Anyone who has been to Henley could, I am sure, indulge in similar reminiscences as nauseam - maybe there's a task for some rowing person to collect such stories and make a highly libellous book out of them. I found Henley a marvellous experience and even now, despite the 'hostility' tents, the river and the atmosphere remain the same.

As far as rowing is concerned, anyone who wants details can browse through the Henley records and find out how Queen's did. I have a nice memory of the race which we won in 1956 against Jesus College Cambridge Senior Eight. Jesus College was at the end of its greatest days; the first boat was in the grand (where it was disasterously defeated by the French Army) and even the second boat was expected to be a very tough proposition. We went into Bushell's Photographic shop on the Monday before the race; the Jesus crew were in also, rummaging through the photographs. One of them remarked in a loud voice, "Who are we rowing anyway? Queen's Belfast? I didn't know there was a university in Belfast but I don't suppose they'll be much good." That remark was fresh in our minds as we went off the start; and when Jesus were one and a quarter lengths down at the first barrier (a distance we were to maintain) they knew to their cost that there was a university in Belfast!

But enough of these wanderings - back to the history.

1957-58. Gordon Gray was elected Captain for this year and set about a long term project for the Senior eight to represent Northern Ireland in the Empire (now Commonwealth) Games which were to be held in Wales in the Summer of 1958. The advantage of aiming high, and long term, turned out to be that this crew thought more about establishing a solid technique and togetherness than previous crews. It also (as it turned out, correctly) sacrificed short term gains for the longer term programme. In practical terms this meant not competing at Wylie, then held at the beginning of March, before the HOR season, such as it then was.

It was also to mean the sacrifice of the Big Pot, which the crew could easily have won (as was admitted, even by Trinity, who won the event, much to their own surprise and delight.) Gordon, having rowed in 1956 and in the Second VIII in 1957, already had two Championships under his belt.

By most judgements the Senior eight of 1958 turned out to be the fastest crew ever, and its achievements have arguably only been surpassed (and then only at Henley) by the 1976 crew. By the end of the season it was predominant in Ireland, and at the Empire Games was most unlucky not to reach the final. The repechage involved England, Scotland and Northern Ireland; at the end only a canvas separated the three crews, with Scotland just pipping Queen's for a place in the final. Before getting to Wales the crew had a few sticky patches but appropriately enough, mostly in the second term. While the crew were settling down and while the final selections were made, there was an Ulster trial for the Games held on Newry Canal over 2,000 metres between Queen's, Portora and Methody. This was comparatively early in the season (April, I seem to recall) and while Methody posed no problem, Queen's, who were still striking a comparatively low rate, had difficulty holding off a lively Portora eight.

This year saw the impact of John 'Jumbo' James as coach and also saw the slaughter of a few sacred cows. (My diversion on coaches will have already covered this.)

It is worth noting that both Seven and Stroke (Robin Davidson and Hugh Nesbitt Porter) were ex-Portorans. The rest of the club prospered as well, The Novice eight lost only twice - at the beginning of the season, to Drogheda and then, unexpectedly, in the Championships, to St Ignatius, Galway. To compensate for this the Intermediate eight, stroked by Sean Doherty, won the Championships, also against the run of form for the year; in fact the crew won the Championships at Portadown and were beaten next day, at Belfast, by Cork.

Sculling was beginning to grow in popularity, with Paddy Kemp putting in an appearance on the river for the first time, and inspiring Kevin MacLavery to break the Trinity stranglehold on this branch of the sport. So strong was the Club that at Dublin Metropolitan Regatta I tried to drink a bottle of Guinness for every race that Queen's won and had to give up in the middle of the afternoon, so thick and fast were the victories arriving. I believe that Queen's won every event except the schoolboys races and the under age fours. A glorious day!

Toward the end of the season a four from the first eight competed in an international regatta in Lisbon, under the benign gaze of the Portuguese dictator, Senor Salazar, while most of the rest of the club ended in Carrick-on-Shannon under the benign gaze of 'Ging' and the local Garda. The memorable task of "following that" fell to David Campbell in 1958-59.

David Campbell had a difficult year from several points of view; he had to resist 'Jumbo' James' attempts to run the senior division of the club; it was in this year that many of jumbo's sillier ideas emerged - fortunately he was kept under control. 'Davy' also had to keep an eye on the increasing tendency of Lady Victoria to take over the general administration of the Club. To add to his problems the City Council decided to lift the weir and spend some months grouting the banks. Externally, however, the big problem was how to combat the growing strength of the Garda Siochana, who were to win both Novice and Intermediate Championships. Indeed, it looked as if they might do the grand slam.

The Senior eight contained the nucleus of the successful Novice crew of the year before; they were big and strong, but (despite a nippy enough start) their equipment and coaching dictated that they row at a lowish rate. As a result they were always coming from behind. At Wylie, held in Dublin, they lost to UCD by a canvas, convinced nevertheless, that had the course been 100 yards longer, they would have won. Going on last year's programme,

however, they were aiming for Henley and the Championships. They performed well at Putney and got to the third round at Henley. At the Championships, held at Waterford, they were heavily handicapped by a counter-flow on their station at the start, and were two lengths down in no time at all! However, for once the course was long enough and at the end they flashed past UCD and the Garda to bring the Big Pot back to Queen's.

Mention must be made of an historic journey at Henley that year, which involved the removal of a stage coach from outside a pub on the Maidenhead Road, and its transportation to a new position outside the Little Angel in Henley with a short pause at the Flowerpot. This was accomplished by courtesy of Harvey Jackson's Rolls Royce, generously donated for the regatta, and by the driver, who bore an astonishing resemblance to the Captain of the Club. This stage coach was returned to its proper place and I believe is still there, but now with its wheels firmly cemented into the forecourt.

This was the first year that a sculler from Queen's entered the Diamonds; Kevin was, admittedly, beaten comfortably, but it was a first and he was not to be followed by a Queen's sculler until John Armstrong followed suit some thirty years later and rowing in Lady Victoria Colours.

The Intermediate VIII, stroked by Ronnie Ewins, won at Wylie, Belfast and Coleraine; and the Novice VIII, stroked by Brian Taylor, won at Boyne, Belfast and Coleraine. Neither, however, was strong enough to present a challenge to the Garda.

Hugh Nesbitt Porter was the natural choice for Captain in 1959-60. A very gifted oarsman, he had rowed Seven in both previous years and was held in high regard by the club and coaches alike. (His son was to stroke the Canadian eight which won the Olympic Gold Medal in 1992.) Again with Jumbo James providing the main coaching input, the crew showed great promise during the Winter season, culminating in a fine performance at Putney, where they came 20th - the second highest position any Queen's crew was to achieve. The other sections of the club did well at Wylie, winning the Intermediate and Novice events.

The senior boat seemed poised to make the big break through, but in the summer they seemed unable to change gear and row at the more intensive pressure in the water required for the shorter racing distances. (Mention has already been made in Excursion No. 2 of the problems posed by Jumbo's insistence on a drop in the rate to about 32 after about 15 strokes.) Trinity and more particularly UCD were showing signs of a revival of form; the Trinity Senior VIII won at Wylie and UCD took the championships, inspired by Tom Sullivan, who was to exert a strong influence on UCD and Old Collegian rowing over the next decade and beyond. If the Queen's Senior VIII disappointed by not living up to their early promise, it must be said that they were always in at the hunt in the summer, and were certainly not a bad crew. At Henley they met Elliott House, Harvard, and after leading them for the first half of the course, lost by three quarters of a length.

Elliott House beat UCD in the next round and went on to lose a close final to their own university crew by about half a length. A four from the Queen's eight, however, had a very good season and were only baulked from winning the Blue Ribband by a visiting German crew; no other crew was close to Queen's and the Germans on that occasion.

The Intermediate VIII that year was stroked by Mike Nattras, a laconic South African, who won every race, including the Championships, from behind! I had been coaching the crew and taught them the famous 'Jesus' finish; they took to it to such an extent that they were happy to cruise along half a length to a length behind the opposition striking about 30-32 and then suddenly deliver a dramatic coup de grace in the last minute. In vain did I (and other coaches) plead with them to go out front and put us out of our nail-biting agony that they might not make it this time - they always did. I was unable to go to the Championships with them and my brother Sam looked after them for me. He returned a nervous wreck, convinced that there was something wrong with a crew that came into the enclosure (at Blessington, I think) a length down on a strong Garda VIII and then sprinted past to take the Championship by half a length.

The Novice VIII, stroked by B. Morris has a reasonably good season but could not prevent the Garda taking their second successive Championship in the division.

Although the club was maintaining its overall strength, there were ominous signs that other clubs, notably Garda Siochana and UCD, were beginning to introduce innovations, particularly in training methods, which were to leave Queen's struggling. This was also Jumbo James' last year at Queen's and it must be said that while not everyone agreed with all his theories and methods, his sheer dedication and interest in rowing was to be badly missed.

Mike Nattras graduated from stroke of the successful Intermediate VIII to captaincy of the club; his Senior VIII was really not physically big enough to repeat its Intermediate success in the increasingly competitive senior division. Nor could a crew afford to cruise along behind UCD Senior VIII and hope to overtake them with a last minute burst. I am also of the opinion that several of his crew were not sufficiently well motivated to train hard and give all that they could, and that these members let down the Captain and the Club.

The shape of things to come was unmercifully demonstrated at Wylie, when UCD triumphed in all three divisions. UCD went on to take the Senior Championship, and the Garda took the Intermediate.

For the first time in a decade, Queen's did not have an Intermediate VIII that summer; the Wylie crew broke up and only a four carried on to the Regatta season.

At the Novice level Queen's star seemed to be in the ascendant; Jimmy Riddell, who had rowed at Coleraine Inst., stroked the eight which was to display a very aggressive and gutsy form throughout the season and won the Championships . At Belfast Regatta, Coleraine Inst., stroked by Roddy Clarke, was incautious enough, thinking Jimmy and his crew were soft touches, to shout a few insults at Jimmy before the race started. Jimmy said nothing, but he and his crew put their annoyance into the water and absolutely demolished the much-fancied CAI crew.

Jimmy also stroked a very good four, out of the eight, and between eights and fours, won a lot of good quality cups. The crew formed a particular friendship with novices from a small Dublin club struggling to make a come-back in rowing - called Neptune!

And so I come to the last year in this review. David Porteus was Captain and had rowed in the Senior Eights of the two previous years, after coming to Queen's as Captain of Portora. He decided to allow Jimmy Riddell's Novice VIII to advance virtually intact into the

Intermediate division, and set about building a Senior VIII from that previously almost unknown resource at Queen's - last year's schoolboys. The result was an eight that, at its best, was potentially the fastest ever Queen's crew but was, alas, accident prone and somewhat unstable. They won Wylie most convincingly, giving an arrogant performance of paddling in front of the opposition. However, a series of accidents, upheavals and upsets plagued them during the summer. Eventually they returned from Henley, where they had not acquitted themselves very well, with only three outings before the Senior Pot at Coleraine. They faced UCD who had performed very well at Henley and were favourites to win the cup, and Garda, who were also regarded as tough opposition.

The three days before the Championships were spent concentrating on two things - a lightning fast start, to lead UCD off the start, and a counter attack when UCD put in their big push at the half-way mark. The crew did three courses in the three days left to them and at Bann duly lead UCD off the start for the first time ever; held off their big counter attack in the middle of the course and went on to win by two thirds of a length. They had almost given their all in that race, but had just enough left to go out and repeat the dose on the Garda in the final. Roddy Clarke stroked the boat (ex-CAI), Sid Grey rowed 7 (ex-Methody), Al Martin at 4 (ex-RBAI). The most astounding feat, however, was achieved by Eric Woods, who had rowed in the Novice VIII which won the Championship in 1961, the Intermediate VIII which won that year's Championship (held before the Senior Championship) and was brought in as a sub, to achieve all three Championships in two years! According to my researches, he is the only Queen's man ever to win all three pots.

As I mentioned before, Jimmy Riddell's Intermediate VIII won the Championship, having been dominant in their division all year; the Novice VIII unfortunately couldn't emulate their success, but the next best thing to them winning occurred. RBAI had had to leave their home in Belfast Boat Club and had been given space in Queen's boathouse. Their crew won both the Schools and the Novice Championships, so all three 'pots' were won by crews rowing out of Queen's.

Queen's were selected to represent Ireland in the embryo 'Home Internationals' on the Serpentine in London. With the addition of Jimmy Riddell and Ken Morrow to plug the gaps left by holiday drop outs, the crew came second to England after rowing Scotland down from behind.

1962 gave great hope for the future. It showed that Queen's could still produce the goods and with the 'crew of schoolboys' promising to give continuity for some years to come, it seemed that 1961 had been an unfortunate blip in the run of success at Senior level. I left Belfast and went to Coleraine in 1962, where I did some coaching at Bann Rowing Club. It was from that perspective that I had to watch Queen's while still a force in the land, go 'off the boil' to be replaced as the dominant University by UCD.

For completeness' sake, I attach the names of the oarsmen who rowed for Queens in the summer events during the period. My thanks are due to all who have helped me compile this history; in particular I wish to thank John Alexander, David Campbell and Ivan Nelson, archivists as well as oarsmen!