



# Bobby Platt MBE



On behalf of all the members and friends of COBRA, I would like to pass on our congratulations to our Patron, Bobby Platt, who has awarded the MBE in the 2006 New Year Honours. This means that Bobby is a "Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire". In our opinion, the MBE is long overdue, and no-one deserves it more for dedication to sport, than Bobby Platt.



Bobby with members of the British and Irish Squads

Before Bobby got involved in rowing, he was a director of the Coleraine Football Club and coached the Reserves team to Cup success in the George Wilson Cup, the Louis Moore Cup and the North West Cup. After Bobby turned his attention to rowing in the 1940s (not mentioning his badminton career), Bobby saw many successes at Bann Rowing Club as an oarsman, a cox and a coach. Bann RC had the honour of Bobby being their captain in 1959/60 and again for a record spell of 10 years from 1972 to 1983.

Bobby started coaching full-time at Coleraine Inst Boat Club in 1986, although being Bobby he had been helping out regularly for years before that. For example, Bobby (as Bann RC Captain) was involved coaching the composite Coleraine Inst/Bann VIII+ that won the Irish Schools/Junior Championships in 1975. Since 1986 he has been heavily involved in running Coleraine Inst Boat Club, especially after the retirement of Sid Grey in 1997. There is no doubt that

without Bobby, the boat club would be in a bad way and may even have closed by now.

There are a large number of successful oarsmen who owe their rowing foundation to Coleraine Inst Boat Club, during the time when Bobby was involved with the club; Brian Steele, Richard Archibald, Alan Campbell, Richard Chambers and Stephen Feeney to name just a few. This is why COBRA has appointed Bobby as Patron, in appreciation for all the years of service he has put into Rowing in Coleraine.

Being typically modest Bobby has said that "the award is for sports coaches throughout Coleraine Borough, especially in rowing". However, I can't think of anyone who deserves the MBE for services to sport, more than our own Bobby Platt.

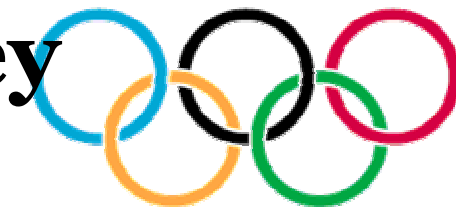
William Wright (honoured to have been coached by Bobby Platt MBE from 1992 to the present day.)

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# A Personal Journey



Richard Archibald tells us of his personal journey from CAI to making the Ireland Olympic 4 for Athens 2004

The last couple of years have been quite interesting for me. Having watched the Olympics every four years since I was very young and dreamt about them since I started rowing in 1993, it was quite bizarre to find myself gradually moving up the international ladder as part of the Irish



Team. As my old CAI crew-mates keep reminding me, I was the weedy one that they had to drag down the river. When I chose to go to Queen's University in 1996, the decision was based on Henley and Irish Championship results (what else matters?), but the aim was always the Irish lightweight rowing squad, and ultimately, the Olympics.

In November 2003 I headed off to Seville in Spain to start a year of training that would hopefully lead me to my goal.

Training 3 and 4 times a day was not as bad as you might think, especially because even in the middle of December you could get a tan. I was aiming to be part of the Lightweight Four, but I was not alone, because 9 other people wanted seats in the boat, and as Maths was the only

class I paid attention in, I know that 10 into 4 will not go. Therefore every training session became a competition, which was hard at the time, but paid dividends in the long run.

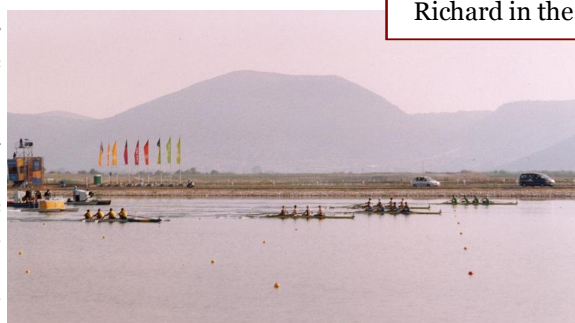
We competed at four regattas during the year, with the crews constantly changing, but the winter had been good, and we finished with two wins, a second and a fourth

place. In June the crew was finally selected. It had come down to 5 people, and of course 3 happened to be on my side, but the final crew was Paul, Niall, Eugene and.....me. There were no big celebrations, just relief, but there was still much to be done.

Arriving in Athens and seeing the Olympic village for the first time was unbelievable, but we kept our heads down and tried not to be distracted. There would be plenty of time after the rowing was finished for sightseeing and taking in the atmosphere. When the races started it felt just like any other regatta, except that the food was better and there were security checkpoints everywhere. The final was the race we had come for and lining up against the best in the

world didn't scare me as much as it should have. Finishing sixth was not what we had wanted, but we had rowed the best race of our year so were happy with the result.

*"Lining up against the best in the world didn't scare me as much as it should have."*



Richard in the Final

What now? Will I stick with this rowing lark for another four years, or have I had enough? I enjoyed the Olympics, and I would love to do it again, but I will have to see what happens in the coming years. It was great to see other Coleraine Old Boys supporting in Athens, and Alan competing, so hopefully there might be other Old Boys competing next time round.

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[www.COBRARowing.co.uk](http://www.COBRARowing.co.uk)





# On Route to Athens

William Wright's journey across Europe to witness Olympic glory intermingled with COBRA pride.

Undoubtedly, one of the recent highlights was being able to be in Athens for the Olympic Games, to see two COBRA members, Richard Archibald and Alan Campbell competing in the Olympic Regatta at Schinias.

The treasurer of COBRA, Geoff Macdiarmid, and I took the rather unorthodox route to Athens by flying into Berlin, then taking the train to Vienna, Venice, Zagreb and then Split; a ferry to Ancona; a train to Rome and then Bari; a ferry to Igoumenitsa and finally a coach trip to Athens! I'm still not sure exactly why this route was chosen as the

*"It was strange enough to be at an Olympic Regatta, but to be watching two old boys from Inst, made it very special."*

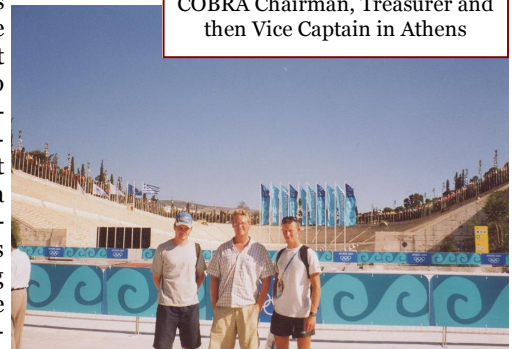
"best" option, but you won't be surprised to hear that on the return journey, we ended up on a train going through Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, before flying home from Prague!?!"

After arriving in Athens with nowhere to stay, we got everything sorted out in time to see all of Richard and Alan's races during the week. I must admit, it was strange enough to be at an Olympic Regatta, but to be watching two old boys from Inst, made it very special. It says a lot about a club that can produce such exceptional oarsmen, especially ones who keep such an active ongoing interest in the club, and even give up their limited free time in Cole-

raine to coach at the boat club.

As chairman, I would like to again pass on congratulations from COBRA to Richard and Alan, and wish them all the best in the future, especially for Beijing. I can't promise that Geoff and I will take the train to get to China, but you never know....

COBRA Chairman, Treasurer and then Vice Captain in Athens



**splash jacket**  
**all-in-one**  
**next kit order march '06**  
**ties and silver CAI rowing badges currently in stock**  
**merchandise@cobrarowing.co.uk**  
 cap  
 socks  
 t-shirt  
 hoddie

## COBRA AGM and Annual Dinner 2005

This years AGM started at 17:30 in the Royal Court Hotel, Portush. As well as a chance for all the members present to hear what had happened within COBRA in 2005 there was also the opportunity for all those who attended to have their say and many choose to do so. A new fundraising committee was also appointed, consisting of P Braithwaite, A Humphrey, R Cochrane, C Cochrane and C Campbell.



Ross Cochrane and Philip Braithwaite being presented with COBRA merchandise by Richard Archibald, for their time spent coaching the school.

During the meeting Richard Archibald (COBRA captain) presented, on behalf of COBRA, a small token of appreciation to Ross Cochrane, Philip Braithwaite, Andrew

Wright and William Wright for taking an extended period of time out of study and work to coach at CAIBC.

The day was finished of with a

dinner in the Royal Court with 26 people in attendance. Everyone had a great night and as an association we are all looking forward to another, even more successful year.



# COBRA Clinch Victory

A strong and steady COBRA crew take on CAIBC to win annual race for third year running

*Once again, the cobra awakes from its slumber. Every year just after Christmas, while the rest of the world recovers from its overindulgent and materialistic festivals, the cobra does battle with anyone brave enough to take on its supremacy. As long as anyone can remember the cobra has fought with it's worthy opponents in the time honoured tradition - the head to head race from The Cutts weir to Bann Rowing Club boathouse. In this challenge the cobra excels, and has never been defeated.*

members from both clubs gathered at the Inst. Boat house, to determine which crew was the fastest.

This year the school boys really had a challenge, racing against arguably the strongest COBRA crew ever put out, despite it being almost completely lightweight. Two Olympic, three other International athletes and three University oarsmen competed in the 'Cranagh' for the old boys. Unfortunately for their captain, Richard Archibald, rowing for Ireland does not help one win the toss of a coin, and so the school boys chose the inside (Bann) lane of the course.



It was clear to see that CAI we not going to give in to the old boys, but in the end the more experienced crew pushed through the young pretenders and crossed the line with 2 lengths clear water, as judged by the umpire Bobby Platt.

Alex Humphrey



The Competing Crews with Umpire Bobby Platt

The umpires lined the two crews up at the start, giving the

CAI VIII: Mark Reid (stk), Michael McNaul (7), Aimal Khan (6), David Stafford (5), Michael Topping (4), Ryan Dinsmore (3), Robert Hart (2), Jamie McBurney (bow), Callum McBurney (cox)

COBRA VIII: Richard Archibald (stk), Alan Campbell (7), Richard Chambers (6) and Stephen Feeney (5) as well as Steven Archibald (4), Iain Giffin (3), Alex Humphrey (2) and Jason Taggart (bow), Johnny Mitchell (cox, CAI)

While the tradition may not be that old, 'COBRA day', beginning with the annual Boxing Day race between the CAI 1<sup>st</sup> VIII and a COBRA VIII is one of the highlights of the season. It is a viciously fought contest over the two thousand meters from The Cutts, to Bann Rowing Club. So on the 27<sup>th</sup> December,

school boys a slight advantage that disgruntled the old boys. However it was too late to complain as the race began and Richard Archibald at stroke set the pace for the veteran oarsmen from the first stroke. Both crews fought hard and it wasn't until just before the new bridge that COBRA got level with the school boys.



# BBQ and family day '05

An "outstanding success" was how the annual COBRA BBQ, held on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, was described. For the third year running the COBRA fundraising committee managed to draw a crowd to CAIBC and with a fully packed programme of events, everyone was kept well entertained and of course, fed.



Ian Harvey with Andrew Wright

The day commenced at 12 midday with the traditional COBRA vs CAIBC sprint race umpired by COBRA member Ian Harvey, who had just completed his marathon row across Lake Superior for charity. Although CAIBC were half a length up on the start, the COBRA crew pulled together to row through the school and win by just under a length (again)...

*Representing the school: P Stynes (cox), M Reid (stk), R Dinsmore (7), P Calvin (6), C Cochrane (5), R Hart (4), M McNaul (3), M Ewing (2), J M c B u r n e y ( b o w ) .*

*Representing COBRA: C McBurney (cox), S Archibald (stk), I Giffin (7), C Stewart (6), C Bradley (5), D Ewart (4), A Wright (3), A Humphrey (2), P Braithwaite (bow).*

After the first race everyone took some time to get fed, soak up the atmosphere and take part in the various activities available, such as sponge throwing, the bouncy castle, eating from the barbeque and the opportunity to sample rowing for themselves. The vast range of activities kept young and old smiling until the time came for the 200m erg challenge.

There were 2 categories, under 16 and open, with over 20 people competing in the time trial which made for some interesting head to head racing. Ryan Dinsmore fought off all competition to win the U16 category and Andy Wright won the Open category, although some competitors blamed self indulgence at the bbq for their poor performances on the day!

To top the day off Ian Harvey took some time to tell us about his record breaking row across Lake Superior. Ian explained how and why he took on such a challenge and told us a few tales of his time at Lake Superior. Ian also presented various awards to the boys of CAIBC and along with the help of some dodgy music, pulled the winning raffle tickets out of the hat to conclude the day's events.

The money raised on the day was split between COBRA and the charities that Ian Harvey supports, Children in Need



Parents finding out what rowing is really like

and the Fields of Life Trust.

Special thanks is owed to Ian Harvey for taking the time to come and speak to us, Iain Giffin and the fund raising committee for organising the event, those who kept the bbq "a-cookin" and of course all the friends and families of CAIBC and COBRA who attended for making the day such a big success.

Ross Cochrane

For more information on Ian Harvey's amazing feat or how to donate to Children in Need or the Fields of Life Trust, go to Ian's website <http://www.world-marathon-charity-row.co.uk/>

*Thank you so much for the cheque, which COBRA has so very generously donated to `Fields of Life` - Lake Superior Rowing Fund. On behalf of the charity, sincere and heartfelt thanks and, rest assured, that the money will be put to good use helping to build a primary school for poverty-stricken children, in the foothills of Mount Elgon, Kenya, 70 kilometres from the Ugandan border. I know the Association can ill afford the money, so it makes the effort all the more precious and a true Christian gesture.*

Ian Harvey



# Rowing at CAI 04/05



September began with roughly 25 boys in the club training full-time. Unfortunately not many of these boys were senior, but despite this it is encouraging to have such a large junior squad.

River conditions were fairly good, and this allowed a lot of water outings as the boys started to get back into the swing of things after the summer holidays. However by the end of September conditions were deteriorating and a weekly pattern was soon established, with training sessions after school Monday to Thursday, and Saturday mornings. The land training consisted of 5K ergs, 30min ergs, circuit training, runs, weights and tank sessions. This was accompanied by long river outings on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

We'd had our fair-share of back injuries, leg problems and illnesses already this year. However on the up side some of the junior boys who stepped into the Senior Squad as replacements performed very well, and showed we had a good depth to the young squad.

November and December brought two mini-heads, at Bann and Lagan respectively, giving us a chance to see how effective the training had been and what sort of results the relatively young 1<sup>st</sup> VIII could achieve. At Bann, despite an entrance of 60-odd crews, there wasn't much junior competition, but credit must still go to the boys, who won all their events, and finished 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> overall in the 4s race, and 1<sup>st</sup> overall in the 8s race. Lagan was a different story, as both the 1<sup>st</sup> VIII and the J16 VIII came up against other crews of their own age group. Unfortunately the young 1<sup>st</sup> VIII lost to RBAI by 27secs and MCB by 39secs, finishing the event in 3<sup>rd</sup> place overall. However, the J16 VIII performed extremely well to win their category, beating MCB by 23secs.

Head Season saw the club travel to Lagan and Erne as usual, but also venturing to Tribesmen Head, Galway.

As usual conditions at Lagan were pretty bad, with race 2 (5000m) being shortened to 2500m. Unfortunately the week prior to the race saw injuries and illness decimate the squad, so



1st VIII at Lagan Head

much so that the 1<sup>st</sup> VIII had to re-enter as a 1<sup>st</sup> IV. However all the boys rowing did very well, and the J16 squad finished the day unbeaten by winning J16 IV and VIII, and the 1<sup>st</sup> IV were only beaten by BBC in race 1 and UCD in race 2.

At Erne Head, gale force winds forced the organisers to make the difficult decision of not allowing junior crews to race. Hastily we scratched together a Nov VIII and got it entered, albeit at the very back of the field. The scratch VIII went out and performed extremely well, rowing in fierce conditions with an extremely strong head wind. They passed 6 women's crews, 5 veteran crews and finished a very credible 10<sup>th</sup> place overall – joint 2<sup>nd</sup> with Queen's University in the Novice VIII category.

For the first time in a few years the club travelled to Galway for Tribesmen Head - the biggest Head Race in Ireland. Over 400 crews entered and over the 3 races we entered a J18 four, J18 pair, J16 eight and J16 four. None of the crews managed wins in their categories, but it was a very useful experience as the boys had the chance to compare themselves to top opposition from all over Ireland.

Regatta season started with Queen's

Regatta, Castlewellan. All the crews entered performed well to reach their respective finals, and the J16 squad achieved two 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishes. However the J15 quad, rowing together for the first time, surpassed all of our expectations, bringing a medal home by easily beating the rest of their opposition.

Next up was Portadown Regatta, and this saw a mixed bag of results for the club. The J18 IV were beaten early on by a strong RBAI IV, the scratch NOV 2X lost narrowly,

and the J18 1X lost out in a sprint finish to the Portora sculler. However the lowest point of the day was undoubtedly when the promising J16 VIII 'A' had a poor row and lost their semi-final to MCB by a distance. Very slight recompense was felt when the J16 VIII 'B' made it to the final and gave MCB a hard race, pushing them right to the end.

On the other end of the scale, the 1<sup>st</sup> IV, once again rowing as Novice, performed extremely well to win their event, beating Belfast Boat Club convincingly in the final, picking up the first set of medals of the day for the club. The ever-strengthening J15 squad continued to impress by extending their unbeaten run and getting their hands on some medals – the J15 eight beating MCB by a distance in the final, and the exciting J15 quad coming through three rounds to eventually beat Portadown by a distance in their final.

Portora Regatta ran as a Junior Regatta, and this led to a very small entry and only a limited amount of categories were available. The J16 double, the Nov double, and the J16 eight lost out in their finals, however the J18 pair beat the strong RBAI pair and the J15



squad once again had a clean sweep, this time winning J15 quad and J15 double – both by 3 lengths.



Training on the Bann

BRC Sprints Regatta saw a good set of results for the club, with eight of our crews making their finals, and four of them going on to win their events. There were hard-earned victories for the J18 pair, the J15 double, the J15 eight and the J16 eight.

The last race for us in the North was the Craig Cup, the Ulster Championship for J16 VIIIs, and this was undoubtedly the big race that our J16 squad had been training for all year. The J16 VIII's from CAIBC, Methody and RBAI were of exceptional quality and had been battling it out in close races right through regatta season.



Craig Cup Winners '05

The race was held on Saturday 4th June on the River Bann, on the 900m course between Sandleford Bridge and Bann Boathouse. The CAIBC

crew had the quickest start and opened up a ¼ length advantage over MCB in the first 500m, with RBAI a canvas behind. Methody then made a big push for the line, with the CAIBC crew just able to hold on to the lead and cross the finish line a mere half a canvas ahead of Methody, who had opened over half a length on the RBAI crew. The crew, the coaches and the whole club were delighted that we were able to win this prestigious trophy for the second year running.

Next was a trip down South for the extremely well organised and highly-competitive Athlone Regatta. This was a very important regatta in the rowing calendar as the J18 pair event pair served as an Irish qualifier, with the top 3 pairs in the final being given Irish caps at the Home Internationals. 19 crews entered the category. The CAIBC pair of Ewart and Taggart rowed very well to qualify for the final of this event packed with quality, where they finished 4<sup>th</sup> – possibly the worst position possible as they were only 1 length off 3<sup>rd</sup> position and an Irish cap.

In other categories a weakened J15 eight finished second to an technically proficient St. Joseph's crew and the CAIBC novice sculler Cochrane failed to qualify for his final, despite having a good row

In the absence of a J16 eight category, our hopes were on the J16 IV, who hadn't trained together much in this crew. Despite this they performed exceptionally well, and made the final where, in a very tightly contested race they were beaten into second place by a very strong St. Joseph's crew, the final verdict being a mere canvas.

Possibly our best contenders for medals at this regatta were the J15 quad, as they had remained untouched in the North and were eager to sample the competition in the South. Sadly, whilst in a qualifying position, they were struck with an equipment failure in their semi-final, with disastrous consequences.

The finale of the rowing year was the Irish Championships in Cork. Due to the very small senior squad, and many J16s not being available, CAI only sent a J18 2- to this years Champs. The pair of Ewart and Taggart had been the only crew to continue training after Athlone Regatta, and they put in 4 weeks of very hard work in the run up to the pinnacle of their rowing year, still disappointed from missing out on Irish qualification at Athlone.



D Ewart and D Taggart training for National Championships

After a poor start in the semi-final, they fought hard to get themselves into a qualifying position with 200m to go, but were unable to hold on to the Neptune pair in a sprint finish, eventually losing out by the smallest of margins.

The club also took part in many fundraising events throughout the year, including the Belfast City Marathon Team Relay and Fun Run, bag-packing events at local supermarkets, and also the table-quizzes and BBQs arranged by COBRA.

P. Braithwaite





## New Oars for the School

The morning of 'Cobra Day' finished with our chairman, William Wright, and previous head of the fundraising committee, Iain Giffin, presenting CAI head coach, Bobby Platt, vice captain, Mark Reid and secretary, David Stafford

with eight Concept 2 'Smoothie' Oars. The oars were much needed, but not within the School's budget, and will hopefully propel the boys to more victories in the years to come.

## C.A.I.B.C. 1994/1995 1<sup>st</sup> VIII Reunion

The 27<sup>th</sup> December 2004, marked the annual C.A.I.B.C. 1<sup>st</sup> VIII+ v C.O.B.R.A. race, however, on this occasion spectators were treated to a further highlight - the 1994/1995 1<sup>st</sup> VIII+ took to the water for the first time in ten years.

The weather was fine and the river was calm despite the time of year, thus dispelling any concerns regarding the rowing conditions. There were rumours regarding plummeting fitness levels amongst the crew but these whispered anxieties were rapidly quietened as the VIII+ embarked with ease on a gentle 'paddle' to the Cutts and back.

The original crew consisted of: Geoff MacDiarmid (Stk), William Wright (7), Steven Wisener (6), John Millar (5), Richard Archi-

bald (4), Dara Henry (3), Niels Kee (2), Leslie Wasson (Bow) and Mark Black (Cox).

John was unable to attend, however, Mark substituted for him at five. Alex Humphrey (C.A.I.B.C. 2000-2004) kindly offered to cox the crew. Despite the years the crew quickly settled back into the familiar rhythm and the boat moved with surprising ease. Perhaps the power in the strokes was not what it was ten years ago but technique was still very pleasing.

The years have brought forth many changes for the members of the C.A.I.B.C. 1994/1995 1<sup>st</sup> VIII+, not least the fact that Richard Archibald (4) was a finalist at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. It was indeed a privilege to row again with an oarsman of this stan-



'95 crew in 'action'

dard, who commenced his rowing career at C.A.I. a decade ago.

The crew would like to express their sincere thanks to C.O.B.R.A. for organising such an enjoyable event and perhaps another decade will see a further reunion of the 1994/1995 1<sup>st</sup> VIII.

Leslie Wasson

### Coming up in 2006:

#### **COBRA events:**

Table Quiz: Friday 21st April (everyone welcome)  
BBQ and family day: September  
Christmas races: shortly after Christmas day

#### **Major Races:**

(Eights) Head of the River, London: 25 March, 11.30  
Henley Royal Regatta: 28th June-2nd July  
National Championships: Irish, Cork: 14/15 July  
British, Strathclyde: 14/15 July

For more information on COBRA or rowing past or present at CAI, visit the website at [www.cobrarowing.co.uk](http://www.cobrarowing.co.uk) or contact William Wright:

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If you have any comments or would like to contribute to the next newsletter, please email us.

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The editors would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this edition, and we hope that we have acknowledged you all!

