

Patron: Lord Cobbold DL
Ivry, Lady Freyberg
Nicholas Cobbold OBE

AN OLYMPIC CENTENARY

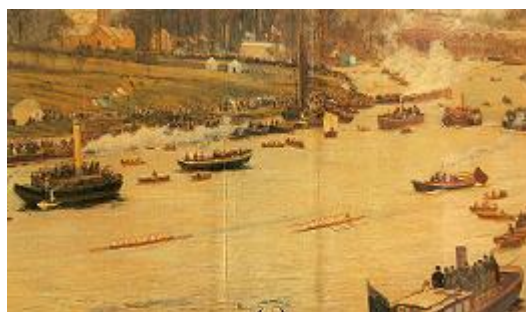
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With the many successes of London 2012 ringing in our ears it is fitting for us to mark the centenary of the Silver Medal won by Robert Croft Bourne, rowing in Stockholm, yes, in 1912. It is a remarkable story. Robert was born on 15th July 1888 in London, the son of Gilbert Charles Bourne (1861-1933) and Constance Margaret Graham Croft.

Gilbert had learned to row at Eton, went up to New College and was the bow man in the winning Oxford crews of 1882 (7 lengths) and 1883 (3½ lengths). He went on to become Professor of Comparative Anatomy, a Fellow of Merton and a Fellow of the Royal Society but never lost his love of rowing. Indeed, he had started to study the muscular actions of rowing whilst at Eton and later published two books on the subject. He was a great friend of Oxford rowing, coaching many crews and is remembered by a memorial stone near the Isis Tavern.

As a child, Robert, or Bob as he became widely know, lost the sight in one eye, playing rounders but followed his father to Eton where he won the School Sculling in 1906 before going up to New College where his rowing career really took off. In 1909 he stroked the Oxford boat to a 3½ length victory over Cambridge; in 1910 he won the University Sculls and stroked the Oxford boat to another 3½ length win. 1911 saw him go Head of the River, win the University Fours, become President of the Oxford University Boat Club and stroke his crew to a third victory, this time by 2¾ lengths. The following year he became the only man ever to stroke four successive winning university crews when in a re-row Oxford beat Cambridge by 6 lengths. The same year he stroked his college boat to the final of the 1912 Stockholm Olympics gaining his silver medal when they were beaten by a Leander VIII. He had already won the Stewards' Challenge Cup at Henley that year and went on to repeat the win in both the next two years.

A nice little tale attaches to the 1912 re-row. In the first race under 'half a gale' conditions Cambridge sank in deep water off Harrods and Oxford, having taken on a lot of water beached their boat and emptied it before getting on with the race. The



umpire, whose launch had gone to help rescue the Cambridge men used his megaphone to declare 'No Race' but it seemed that Oxford were ignoring him. The launch gave chase so the umpire could shout 'What are you doing Oxford? Where are you going? Didn't you understand that I have declared "No Race"?' In reply Bob Bourne shouted, 'We're going to Mortlake,' and paused; 'because our clothes are there'. And to Mortlake they went!

Our Bourne family saga is not yet complete. In 1917 Bob married Lady Hester Margaret Cairns (1895-1985) whose mother was Olive Cobbold (1871-1952), 4th daughter of John Patteson Cobbold (1831-1875). Bob and Hester Margaret's first child, Robert Morice Antony followed his father and his grandfather to Eton and New College, and into the Oxford Blue Boat to chalk up his family's 7th win in 1946. Sadly, Oxford with RMA Bourne rowing 6 went down to a strong Cambridge crew in 1947 ending the family's string of victories.

The Bournes are one of only 2 families in which father, son and grandson have rowed in the same boat and they are the only family to have secured an Olympic Silver in the process. 100 years ago this year.

Bob Bourne is #1187 on the family tree.