

## Behind the Sport—No 8



### GEORGE MUSKER (*Rowing Club Boatman*)

SOMETIME ago Northwich Rowing Club acquired the old and leaking hulk of a racing eight. It had lain dirty and derelict in the corner of a boathouse for years, and Manchester University were glad to give it to anyone who would take it away. The same boat has since been so well repaired and equipped that the Northwich oarsmen have used it to compete in the Thames Head of the River Race.

With new craft of this kind costing £350 or more, this instance shows the value to the club of having an old hand like GEORGE MUSKER—48 years on the river—to look after their fleet of some 20 craft. Members have learned to respect George's shrewd judgment when it comes to buying a craft, too.

His intimate knowledge of local waterways began at the age of seven when, with his brothers he would have to help navigate his father's narrow boats—and then find an excuse for being late for school!

George had just moored a liquor barge at the Crystal Plant Wharf after bringing her down from Port Sunlight when we went with him to the Rowing Club boathouse. We thought he might have had enough of boats for one day; but not a bit of it. Good humouredly as ever, he thumbed through the log book in which

are recorded the occasions on which craft have been taken out. Carefully he noted any remarks made about the boat, such as "Leaking badly."

"Hot weather tends to open the seams of a boat, but they tighten up again after she's been in the water a bit," George explained. For all that, he had a close look at all the craft in his charge, and we had the impression that no detail of shell, riggers, slides, or blades (not oars, please!) escaped his attention.

The busiest period in George's calendar is that immediately preceding the Club's Whit Monday Regatta. He has to see that all racing craft taking part are in good trim, their riggers set at the correct height. Then, on the day itself he is usually to be found standing by, ready to administer first aid to damaged craft, sometimes keeping them afloat with linen and shellac until a more permanent job can be done back in the boathouse.

George has been a part of Northwich Rowing Club long enough now to make him scratch his head trying to work out how long, and then have to give it up as a bad job. As his retirement from the Company approaches, he is looking forward to being able to give even more time to his work at the boathouse, and from what he tells us, there's enough work to keep him busy for a long, long time to come.