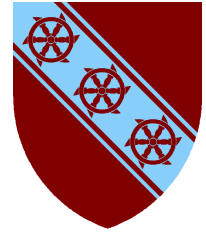




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College
Oxford OX1 3UJ

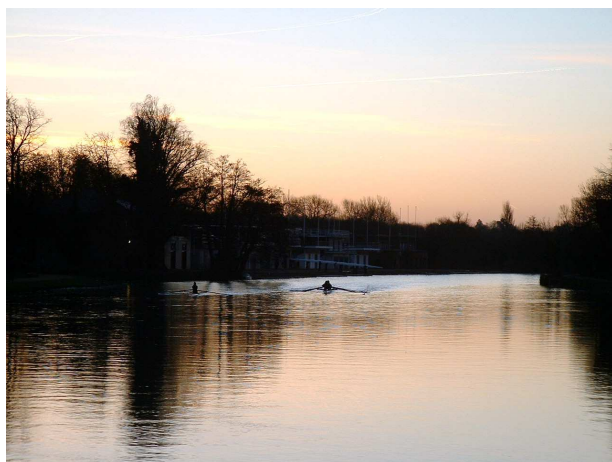


3rd February, 2008

In this issue ...

First, a reminder that the RS Dinner & AGM is on 23rd February (*not* the date advertised in the *St Catherine's Year*). If you get the postal version of this newsletter you'll find details enclosed, those on the email list will have received the information a couple of weeks ago (also on the RS website). If you're coming, cheques in by 15th February, please.

The river has been in flood for most of January, so there is not much rowing to report, nor any further news of our OUBC triallists. However, the Isis now open once again and the sun is shining, so we'll provide the details for Torpids and hope for the best, and also an explanation as to how it became a movable feast. Our top boats have been training on the Tideway this weekend, fitting in the London party on Saturday night, and Darren Chadwick reports on those. Following the last edition's investigation of what happens to all the novices, this time there's an analysis of how we fill our top boats. There is a look at the Boat Club of 30 years ago and a request for electronic copies of old rowing photos to add to our web-archive.



The calm before the storm. The Isis at dawn last Saturday morning. With the river reopened the day before, and less than 3 weeks to the start of Torpids, it's about to get busier ...

Torpids 2008

Torpids this year will be from Wednesday–Saturday, 20–23rd February with racing every half hour from noon to 5pm each day. With the event being cancelled last year, crews will start in their finishing positions of 2 years ago and, given the limited water time so far, more than the usual level 'carnage in the Gut' can be anticipated.



... a few hours later, the women's 2nd Torpid finally get their first outing of 2008.

Torpids 2008: Wednesday Start times

Crew	Div	Bungline	Time
Men's 1st Torpid	I	6	5.00pm
Women's 1st Torpid	I	3	4.30pm
Men's 2nd Torpid	V	9	1.00pm
Women's 2nd Torpid	V	?	12.30pm

St Catherine's have 3 crews in the fixed divisions and, if the women's 2nd Torpid succeed in Rowing On, they will probably be starting in Women's Div V.

As in previous years, I hope to be sending out email reports after each day's racing and putting up photos on the RS web-page. Last summer, the OURCs web-page maintained quite a successful live report of the action, so if you're having a quiet moment at work you might also wish to follow things from the warmth and safety of your desk: <http://www.ourcs.org.uk/>

President: Bruce Mitchell

Vice Presidents: Don Barton, Rev. Joseph Bell,
 Richard Peters, Sir Matthew Pinsent CBE,
 Ben Sylvester.

Moving Torpids

The older among you will remember (or perhaps not) that Torpids always used to be in 6th week of Hilary Term. However, with training becoming increasingly disrupted by flooding, in 1996 it was decided to move Torpids back to 7th week in order that crews might benefit from an extra week's training in between the now routine river-closures.

All very reasonable. Nevertheless, in 2004 the College Captains decided that whenever the Saturday of 7th week coincided with the Women's Eights Head of the River Race (WEHORR), as is the case this year, Torpids would be moved back to 6th week to allow crews to participate in both.

A laudable ambition but, since barely a handful of crews ever competed in the WEHORR anyway, it seemed a strange decision at the time and this year has the unfortunate consequence of compressing the available water time to a mere three weeks rather than the four we would have had.

Rumour had it that the whole WEHORR participation argument was just a ruse anyway: that year, 6th week coincided with the school half-term and some Captains had spotted an opportunity to get their PGCE students — normally confined to classrooms — racing in their Torpids crews. These Boat Club Captains may be short-sighted but it doesn't mean that they're not cunning.

So why not simply vote Torpids back to 7th week this term? Unfortunately, nowadays Torpids is such a juggernaut, with safety plans, liaison with other river users, Proctors etc., changing dates at such short notice is not feasible; so we're stuck with it.

Anyway, let's hope they finally see sense and decide to firmly nail Torpids into 7th week in future. We can claim it's to maximise the water time for training, but really it's so we can organise our Rowing Society Dinners without the confusion we had this year.



Things to do while the river is closed (1) Catz women training in the boathouse erg room.



Things to do while the river is closed (2) Catz men derigging their boat prior to the London training weekend.

How do we fill the 1st VIII's?

Having pondered the question of 'what happens to all the novices that we teach each year?' in the last newsletter, this time I thought I'd tackle the question from the other end and figure out where all the people who fill seats in our 1st Torpids and 1st Eights come from.

The table below shows the total number of different rowers (and coxes) in the Men's and Women's top boats in the five-years from 2003–2007, divided into those who came to Catz with previous rowing experience, those who were promoted from 2nd boats, and those who were promoted directly from the novice boats after 1 term (or less) rowing.

Origins of Catz 1st VIII rowers and coxes 2003–2007

	Men		Women	
Experienced	22	(42%)	13	(30%)
2nd Boats	13	(25%)	8	(18%)
Novices	17	(33%)	23	(52%)
Total	52		44	

First of all, from the totals, we can conclude that, out of 9 seats in each boat, the Men's 1st VIII's bring in an average of just under 5 new rowers each bumps event while the women have slightly better continuity with just under 4 changes.

As with almost every other College, the majority of our 1st VIII rowers have never rowed before coming to Oxford, but perhaps the surprising statistic for Catz is the large number of people who *have* rowed before. In the case of the men's crews, the figures include a significant number of Blues and Isis oarsmen just 'stepping in' for Eights. However, almost a third of the women have also rowed before coming up.

Another oddity is that the *least* likely route into the 1st VIII is to be promoted from the 2nd VIII. Or, to put it another way, if you don't make the 1st VIII after your novice term, you are unlikely to make it at any future date. Is it that our 2nd VIIIs are so poor that complete novices can usually out-do them for 1st VIII places? Or that 2nd VIII rowers have no 1st VIII aspirations? Or that we coach them so badly that they give up? Anyway, if we are to achieve better consistency for our 1st VIIIs, that would seem to be the area to target.

News from Alumni

Simon Brayton (M.90)

I have been working in banking law in London for 10 years in a succession of firms, having started at the latest (Berwin Leighton Paisner) at the beginning of 2008. Joanna and I now have two children, Thomas and Lucy (as at the time of writing — January 2008 — Thomas is 3 and Lucy is 10 months). We live in Kingston-upon-Thames, and every weekend when I see the river running through Kingston I am reminded of fun times at Catz rowing and coaching. But there's no danger of me setting foot in a boat! That said, we were on holiday with Jon Haynes and his family in Devon last summer and Jon and I had fun taking out an ocean-going double scull on the sea. I'm always interested to hear from anyone who I have lost touch with, so feel free to drop me an email [see RS 'former members' web-page for details]

30 Years Ago

I'll confess straightaway that 1977 was the year I first arrived at Catz, but I was to spend my undergraduate years pottering around in the lower boats. Kev Skinner, the Rowing Society Chairman, also arrived that year but had a slightly higher profile.

Catz Men had had a good previous summer with the 1st Eight winning blades but unfortunately most of that crew chose not to continue into 1977/78. 1978 was the first year that Torpids included a women's division (suddenly I feel very old), participants being drawn from the 5 women's colleges, 5 mixed colleges (including Catz) and the graduate colleges. It had been planned to include a women's division in the 1977 Torpids, but that was cancelled due to flooding (at least I'm so not old on a climatological timescale). In those days Catz boated from the old OUBC boathouse (site of the current University College Boathouse) but we had no other facilities there. However, we did maintain the last of the College Barges, moored alongside Christ Church

meadow, which had been used as a base for our supporters during Summer Eights but was, by then, in a terminal state of decay.

The following extracts are taken from student publications from that time, plus the review from the *St Catherine's Year*. Thanks to Phil Penketh for the photos.



The 1978 Men's 1st Eight. Nick Taylor (B), Paul Travers, Joe Quinsey, Kevin Skinner, John Greenway, Tony van de Vusse, Jon Wilmshurst, Rob Hughes (S), Paul Spedding (C).

Catz Eye, May 1978

Tristram Sutton distinguished himself, rowing bow in the Blue Boat which easily defeated a fast sinking Cambridge crew in this year's Boat Race. Sally Holden and Belinda Bawden were also awarded Blues last term, Sally stroking the Blue Boat and Belinda rowing at number three.



The 1978 Women's 1st Eight. Fiona Stewart (B), Angela Megson, Sarah Forster, Helen Platts, Karen Troy, Jane Griffiths, Belinda Bawden, Sally Holden (S), Jon Wilmshurst (C).

St Catherine's Guide to Eights, 1978

This year Catz has a marquee to serve drinks to the crews and spectating College members on the Christ Church bank by the Barge. Strawberries and cream can also be obtained. Due to the Barge's advanced state of decay only persons wishing to buy lottery tickets will be allowed on it. Any profits will be put into the J.C.R. deposit account, earmarked for the barge. A detailed survey of what is required to save the barge is being carried out and preliminary cost estimates will be available by the beginning of the next term. The Governing body has said that the barge or the pavilion should be next in line for money

received from the lottery, but which one it is to be has not been decided yet.

1978 St Catherine's Year

Following on from the triumph of Summer Eights 1978 was bound to be difficult, and so it proved, not helped by the fact that most members from that successful crew still at College decided not to row last year. However, with stern training by largely inexperienced crews, a certain amount of honour was won by Catz on the Isis last year.

In all, a satisfying year. As far as 1978–79 is concerned, Jon Wilmshurst and I [John Greenway] have both decided to carry on rowing in our final years, at top College level when selected. How different it might have been last year if those heroes of '76 had said the same ...



Catz crews unloading the trailer on Putney Embankment at the start of the weekend's training on the Tideway ...

SCCBC London Party

Darren Chadwick, RS Committee

On the weekend of 2nd February, Catz descended on the Tideway. The men's and women's first VIII's had an intense training camp over the 2 days, rowing out of Imperial College Boat Club in Putney. On the Saturday evening, the IC Boat House also played host to the first London Alumni party for some years and over 60 current and past members of the club and friends attended the drinks party on the banks of the Thames.

The party guests were treated to an evening of revelry and live entertainment, including the world debut performance of 'In the Smoke', London's premier *a cappella* group¹.

The RS committee would like to thank IC for generously hosting the club for the weekend and providing the perfect venue for the first of many social

¹Perhaps Darren should be declaring an interest here - Ed

events to keep our alumni network in contact. Alumni events planned for this summer include dinner on an old college barge, a Pimms party on the Saturday of Eights in a marquee and possibly even a croquet tournament too!



...and, later that day, taking a break from training to attend the London Party.

Photoarchives

Those of you who visit the RS web-page may have noticed I'm trying to collect an archive of photos of past crews. If you do have any photos and the ability to scan them, please email them to me for inclusion at the best resolution that your system can handle, along with any crew details if you have them.

Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter there *may* be the results from Torpids and reports from our Captains, possibly a photo or two from the dinner, and we should know by then which of our triallists have been selected for OUBC and Isis. There will also be a look at the Boat Club of 40 years ago, when Andrew Forbes was Captain and the river was no place for a woman. Contributions for the News from Alumni section are always welcome — those of you on the RS email list will receive a prompt a few days before publication.

Anu Dudhia

email: dudhia@atm.ox.ac.uk

Row.Soc: <http://www.atm.ox.ac.uk/rowing/rs.html>

Diary

20–23 Feb 2008	Torpids
23 Feb 2008	RS AGM & Dinner
23 Mar 2008	The Henley Boat Races
29 Mar 2008	The Boat Race
21–24 May 2008	Summer Eights