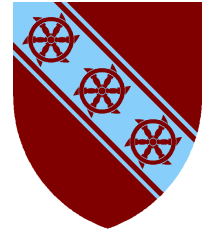




*St Catherine's College Rowing Society*  
*St Catherine's College*  
*Oxford OX1 3UJ*



2nd February, 2009

**In this issue . . .**

Some early flooding resulted in the loss of a few day's rowing, and also the first of the local 'Isis Winter League' competitions. So, not much by way of results to report since the last newsletter, except for our internationals (no, I didn't know he could scull either). And, just when it was safe enough get back back on the water, we've been plunged into arctic conditions. However, the present weather sets the scene for David Morris' recollections of an epic journey up the Thames 50 years ago. The Captain's Diary of 25 years ago include mention of the first ever Rowing Society Dinner, and several from that era have contributed to the well-stocked 'News from Alumni' section. Finally we have information on Torpids and, of course, the arrangements for this year's AGM & Dinner on the Saturday.

**Results**

**GB Winter Trials, Boston, 20th Dec**

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<i>Men's Heavyweight Single Sculls</i>		
18:15.4	1st	Andy Triggs Hodge (M.04)
18:56.6	14th	Colin Smith (M.03)

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No time for a Novice? The chill blast of winter returns to Oxford. Now imagine what it's like before sunrise, when most crews start their early morning outings.

**50th Anniversary Memories**

**David Morris (M.57)**

Sometime at the beginning of September 1957 while I was waiting to go up to Oxford, I received a letter in Broadstairs from a Richard Hill (RGCH) who was then Captain of Boats at St Catherine's, asking me to consider trying out for the college rowing club. This was quite an awakening for me. How could a RGCH have known that from the age of 11 or so I had been fascinated by the water, both sea and sailing, river and rowing? How could he have known that my aunt, who liked outside activities, had asked when I visited her in London during school holidays as to what we could do on her weekends off from her work? In addition to taking me with her to her Rambling Club, she arranged several times to take me to Windsor or Richmond where she rented a rowing boat for the day. We would then row along the Thames — just Heaven — and have a picnic lunch moored up against the river bank.

The second thing about this letter that startles me was that never in my seven years at grammar school had anyone been sufficiently interested in me to ask what kind of sport I liked or offered to train/coach me in how to play that sport. As good as my school was scholastically, no-one, none of the captains of cricket, hockey, rugby, ever approached this apparently undeveloped youngster and said, 'I believe you have talent or interest and we would like to teach you'. And yet here was this unknown person, sight unseen, with sufficient confidence in me as to offer to teach me how to row. What a gift he had made me.

And so I found myself at Paddington Station shortly after New Year, 1959, meeting up with my colleagues to be trained in a brand new clinker Eight, built in Putney. We had all rowed in it the previous day and were now on our first leg of rowing it from London to Oxford. The heavy rains had added to the downstream current so plans had been made to commence our training at Henley. We took the train down to Henley and then started two days of training in our new boat, *All Rabbits Friends and Relations*, at the Leander Club.

The camaraderie, dinners together, walking around the foggy, shining streets of Henley at night, the con-

**President: Bruce Mitchell**  
 Vice Presidents: Don Barton,  
 Richard Peters,  
 Sir Matthew Pinsent CBE,  
 Ben Sylvester.

fidence in each other as a team was magical and it reached out to everyone one of us. We stayed at the White Hart Hotel on those frosty nights in cosy rooms with beams, very snug and warm. Rob Roughly (RR), who was then Captain of Boats, despite his large size, coached and even coxed the boat, standing precariously in the stern explaining the various intricacies of the stroke in his own inimitable way while we struggled manfully to keep the boat in balance!

On our departure from Henley one cold, frosty morning, we rowed up to our first lock, Marsh I believe. I rowed bow and Peter Davies, who by then had become a great friend, at number two. Suddenly as we approached the lock, a small cry went up from the cox and we found ourselves sliding freely over the surface of the water and then the whole brand new boat sitting on a thin layer of ice. The bow compartment had been punctured and although no water had as yet come through into the boat where we sat, orders were given for the bow side to break the ice with our blades and to manoeuvre the boat closer to the river bank. This was ultimately accomplished and after one or two of use had managed to get ashore, the boat was hauled out. Evidently the lock was undergoing repair, the water having been diverted. The lack of flow in this section of the river had resulted in the surface freezing over. I guess the cox must have been surprised on suddenly seeing a fine line on the water not knowing what this represented before calling out ‘Easy Oars!’.

The lorry which was following our travels with our gear finally transported us to the Beetle and Wedge Inn (‘The History of Mr Polly’) just outside Wallingford. There we trained for another day or two, with a temporary patch on the boat, on the stretch of river by Sonning. As the water was so high and partly overflowing the river banks, it was not deemed prudent to continue all the journey to Oxford by river. A further memory I have is of Rob moving people around in the boat so as to better focus on them, so that one day at Sonning Reach he assigned Peter to stroke and me to number 7. What an exhilarating and inspiring leader he was.

The trip as always remained with me as it signified so much what Oxford was for me. It was a turning-point in my life, a transition from a somewhat puny, diffident, fearful boy growing up in the shadow of post-war England, to someone who suddenly had opportunities opened up to him and confidence placed in him. This was certainly not how I had felt at school, even though I had excelled scholastically. This was a freedom offered with no bounds; the sense of it has stayed with me to this day. Thank you RGCH and RR, my thoughts are always with you; you have

no idea what this rowing experience meant to me.

David J Morris  
Providence  
Rhode Island  
U.S.A.

## 25 Years Ago

*The following extracts are taken from Graham Elliot’s ‘Captain’s Diary’, and also appeared in the History.*

### 1984 Bumps Results & Finish Positions

(2008 finish positions in brackets)

<i>Torpid</i>	M1	up 1	16th	(5th)
	M2	up 4	39th	(61st)
<i>Eights</i>	W1	up 2	2nd	(1st)
	M1	up 2	22nd	(8th)
	M2	level	47th	(40th)
	M3	up 1	83rd	—
	M4	level	88th	—
	M5	level	101st	—
	W1	level	5th	(15th)
W2	up 1	32nd	(46th)	

### Michaelmas 1983

A new ladies Carbo<sup>1</sup>? Why not? — a snip at £5200. At the final JCR meeting of Trinity 1983 Meg Jollands secures £3000 from the JCR unopposed. We promise to chip in by selling *Trespassers W*, with a sponsored row and an appeal. The latter consists of three attack fronts:

1. Boaties who went down in the last year or two.
2. Boaties from the more distant past.
3. Alumni who expressed an interest in sport at the College on a recent questionnaire.

Reaction to the possibility of a Rowing Society for old Boaties to keep in touch has been favourable.

The novices get up to usual exploits, with mercifully little damage. Sad to say (perhaps the only time this Captain has had to say), there were times when Liz [Ilett, Women’s Captain] and I came close to losing our patience. We would have to admit there were those occasional moments when we would feel certain urges, certain desires perhaps to dismount our bikes and yes, it has to be said, to pound the towpath with our fists in sheer frustration, sheer agony. Just what would those dingbats do next? This crew came up with some of the most original ideas to slow a boat

<sup>1</sup>Carbocraft, the high-tech alternative to wooden boats at that time

down. Six and five, those vital members of an Eight linking the rhythm of stern pair to the engine house of bow four, couldn't even stay in time on single strokes — a vivid demonstration of the physical concept of 180 degree antiphase. No-one could have such bad timing if they had trained for it for weeks. Stroke Susannah never rowed better than when her hair covered her face and she couldn't see a thing. Somehow, somehow, despite all the coaches' secret wishes, Tabby's scarf, longer than the boat itself, didn't get tangled up in her slide. Finally there was the cox Leyla. I could write a whole book full of Leyla anecdotes. After about one week, we persuaded her to part with her photocopied instructions and instead to place her hands on the two pieces of rope at either side of her. This was the rudder she had been reading about for so long!

Just before Christmas the Carbo is delivered — a few brave souls carefully carry it to OUBC. We are ordered not to take the covers off until it is finally paid for. For some reason nothing in a Boat Club seems to create more bickering than the name of a new boat; the decision is left to Liz and the lady rowers. A secret ballot is held and *Piglet* comes top. A good choice when paying by the letter.



The 1984 Men's 1st Eight: Anu Dudhia (bow), Simon Church, Bob Coe, Keith Pritchard, Tim Marvin, Mark Tucker, Richard Pullinger, Graham Elliot (str), Helen Sagar (cox).

### Hilary 1984

Later in term the stream gets up and the bows of the Clinker<sup>2</sup> and Restricted are removed on the same day. The next day I become Captain of *Boat* as the 2nd VIII put a hole in *Toes*.

<sup>2</sup>The same boat as mentioned in David Morris' article

The inaugural dinner of the Rowing Society was held on the Saturday of Torpids in Hall. It was a good occasion, attended by Sir Patrick Nairne [The Master], Tony Hancox and many of the 1949 crews who got their blades.

The ladies' 1st VIII did the college proud, becoming second on the river. This comes only 10 years after women were admitted to Catz. They probably spent more time on the water than the men — 2 hours seemed to be the typical outing time.

### News from Alumni

**Graham Elliot (M.80)** *I occasionally bump into Graham at various rowing venues, acting in his capacity as Head of Rowing at Bryanston School. He still wears his trademark 'pretend you're not hassled' expression from his Catz days where his experiences with novices have clearly served him well. I believe he also teaches some chemistry in his spare time.*

**Liz Ilett (M.80)** We are living fairly close to Leeds and I am currently a Research Fellow at the University working in the field of immunology/cancer research. Chris, with that logic peculiar to physicists, has managed to find work in Bristol; I see him occasionally. One daughter is studying law (useful); second daughter is studying art in Glasgow (amazing what constitutes art these days, but apparently my mind is just not broad enough); and third daughter is planning to study chemistry, so one scientist at least. Have good memories of my time rowing and am thrilled that the women's 1st are head, we came close; good luck to them this time.

**Janet Rogers (M.81)** 25 years? That's really scary! Apart from a very brief brainstorm in Nottingham, I haven't been near a boat in the last quarter of a century! Much more civilized watching other people at Holme Pierrepont and/or Trent Bridge. After 20 years in Nottingham, I moved to Berkshire 4 years ago for work, and recall how much hassle my blade — 'that b\*\*\*\*\* oar' — (Eights '82) caused the movers! Just to reassure you that I have no intention of going anywhere near Dorney Lake or the Caversham training centre, unless in a spectating capacity

**Mark Tucker (M.81)** Still with BP, UK and North European director for their industrial lubricants business for the past 2 years, after returning from a 4 year stint in Chennai, India. Living in Maidenhead, with my wife Cathy. Have a son who's 5, Luc. Still rowing, only on dry land with my C2 erg, 3 times a week, 30mins or 10km whichever feels less painful at the time!

**Richard Peters (M.82)** Well, still working for PricewaterhouseCoopers. Now living in Bangkok but have a regional role so spend a lot of time traveling and stay about 10 days a month in Hong Kong. Escape down to my house in Phuket when I can and try and keep fit by swimming and running along the beach. Come back to the UK every year for Wimbledon Tennis and Henley Royal Regatta. Always look forward to reading the Row Soc newsletter and checking out the bumping results.

**Keith Pritchard (M.82)** Must be a different Keith — can't be 25 years ago. So, what am I doing now? Still working in banking, trying to keep the system afloat, despite Mr Miron's best efforts. Kids are getting bigger, Jessica is now 14 (aghhh) and Adam nearly 12. Both are very much into their water sports, but *in* it instead of the more natural way of sitting *on* it, going backwards. I get my exercise either running for the train or thrashing the erg in the garage, though the aforementioned Mr Miron and I have started a regular squash challenge. Still keep in regular contact with the Miron, Sergeants and Browns (none of them is ageing as well as I am) and have also started painting (pictures as opposed to walls). My final guilty secret: I do have a chemistry set under the sofa that I still 'help the children' do experiments with.

**Cheryl Hardy (M.93)** After leaving Catz I undertook a Psychology degree at Lancaster University and went on to complete a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, again at Lancaster University. I qualified in 2002 and have worked since as a Child and Family Clinical Psychologist in the NHS in Blackpool. I married Mark in 2000 and we have two great children, Riley aged 3 years and Kerry who is 2 years old in January. I now work part time — 3 days a week — and have recently started a part time Family Therapy Training course at Leeds University. I haven't done much rowing since leaving Catz, but may return to it one day, when the children are a bit older, as there is a city club in Lancaster. These days my sporting life mainly consists of walking, mountain biking and snowboarding holidays.

**Frank Wagner (M.93)** Alas, I have not rowed since leaving Oxford. I am now in Lyon, married (which I was already at Catz) with two kids, Oriel, 5, (sorry, we preferred that name to Catherine) and Loki, 1. I got a professorship at Lyon University, and I am currently head of the Maths Institute.

**Richard Law (M.95)** I'm actually back living near Oxford (for a few years at least!) working as the head of computational chemistry for a drug company in Abingdon.

## Torpids

Torpids 2009 will be from Wed–Sat, 25–28th February (ignore what it says in the recent College newsletter — Torpids is a week early this year). Racing each day starts at noon with divisions every half hour until 5.00pm. Assuming that both the second boats manage to qualify, we should have at least four crews racing. They have thoughtfully paired themselves up in successive divisions with time for a leisurely lunch/tea break in between.

### Torpids 2009: Wednesday Start times

Crew	Div	Buncline	Time
Men's 1st Torpid	I	5	5.00pm
Women's 1st Torpid	I	1	4.30pm
*Men's 2nd Torpid	VI	3	12.00pm
*Women's 2nd Torpid	V	5	12.30pm

\*Subject to qualifying in Rowing On

## Rowing Society Dinner & AGM

You should, by now, have received information on the AGM and Rowing Society Dinner on 28th February, and note that there is a wine reception beforehand, hosted by the College. As it's the larger four-year do open to all alumni rather than just the Rowing Society, we're also hoping to attract some distinguished guests and might even persuade them to say a few words, but nothing has been confirmed yet. Details and updates on the RS web-page.

## Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter we'll have the Torpids results and Captains reports, news of our University Trialists, a look at the Boat Club of 35 years ago (Graham Bell's Captaincy). Contributions to the News from Alumni section always welcome — I know of at least one who's running the London Marathon, any others out there?

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

## Diary

25–28 February 2009	Torpids
28 February 2009	RS AGM & Dinner
22 March 2009	The Henley Boat Races
29 March 2009	The Tideway Boat Races
27–30 May 2009	Eights
30 May 2009	'49ers Reunion Dinner