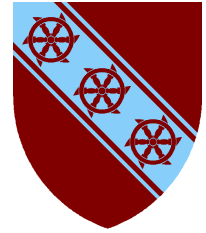




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College
Oxford OX1 3UJ



17th May, 2009

In this issue . . .

The Oxford and Cambridge Boat Races are the main news item since the last newsletter and once again we've managed to obtain the view from the OUBC cox's seat. A couple of entries in this year's London Marathon prompted me to remember an overlooked result from the end of last term, when the Boat Club entered a couple of teams for the 'Teddy Hall Relays' and won the Boat Club category (one of the benefits of additional land-training brought on by the river closures). Bill Witter writes of the events of 35 years ago and we have the plans for this coming Summer Eights (27-30th May) and the Boathouse Buffet on the Saturday.

Results

Henley Boat Races, 23rd March

Men's Lwt Reserves	Oxford	R.O.	6:15
Women's Reserves	Cambridge	1½ L	6:50
Women's Lightweights	Oxford	2½ L	6:30
Women's Blue Boat	Oxford	1¼ L	6:24
Men's Lightweights	Cambridge	3 L	5:49



Spectators lodged precariously along bank at this year's Henley Boat Races. Fortunately crowd trouble isn't usually an issue at this event.

Tideway Boat Races, 29th March

Men's Reserves†	Oxford	4 L	17:24
Men's Blue Boat‡	Oxford	3½ L	17:00

†Str: Martin Walsh

‡2: Colin Smith, Cox: Colin Groshong

Str: Ante Kusurin (M06, now at Kellogg)

Teddy Hall Relays, 11th March

<i>Boat Club teams</i>			
SCCBC A	85:33	1st	
SCCBC B	107:14	12th	

London Marathon, 29th April

Tim Monger-Godfrey (M.06)	3:38:24	4766th M
Jana Bakunina (M.99)	3:59:22	1831st W

The Henley Boat Races

There were no Catz competitors in this year's Henley Boat Races, but I made my usual pilgrimage to join those thronging the banks. And the weather was much more pleasant than last year, for the competitors and spectators.

Oxford started the day defending the two longest running winning streaks: Osiris having beaten Blondie 8 years in a row, and the Men's Lightweights on 7 straight wins. Both those runs came to an end, but those were the only two Cambridge victories. The Oxford Women's Blue Boat, being the favourites after their performance in the Women's Eights Head of the River, managed to convert their superiority over the Tideway course to the 2 km Henley stretch, and the Oxford Women's Lightweights turned around their defeat from last year. For the third successive year, Cambridge declined to compete in the men's lightweight reserves race, leaving Nephthys to row over. With their 3 earlier wins over Granta when Cambridge did actually race, that now makes the Nephthys run of 6 wins the new longest winning sequence. However, in terms of 'real' races, OUBC, Isis and OUWBC have two successive wins apiece. No Cambridge crew has successfully defended a win since 2007 (Goldie), and since 2001 in the Henley Races.

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

The 2009 Boat Race

Colin Groshong, OUBC Cox

The Boat Race was the most surreal experience of my life. For me, the race was the last and final piece of what I consider the Boat Race to be about. The Boat Race is not just 17 minutes, but rather a six month long process during which time each crew member is tested and prepared for the show down against Cambridge on the day.

When the time came to take our boat down to the water, I do not think I have ever been prepared for anything so well in my life. To be honest, I do not remember the people or the cameras, all I was focusing on was each task that I had tirelessly rehearsed day in day out and making sure that I executed everything to perfection.

OUBC Crews 2000–2009

Colleges ranked by no. seats

1.	St Catherine's	14
2.	Oriel	12
3.	Christ Church	11
4.	Pembroke	8
5.	University	5
=6.	Brasenose	4
=6.	Kellogg	4
=6.	Lincoln	4
=9.	Jesus	3
=9.	Keble	3
=9.	St Edmund Hall	3

immediately before the competition begins, I have to say that our coach, Sean Bowden, helped the crew be prepared for anything, and specifically how to prepare our minds in the seconds before the race in order to not waste any strokes on the Attention, Go!

When that moment came, we were off in a hurry. I had no idea how fast Cambridge were going to be, so I was just focused on executing our race plan for the first minute, like we had done countless times in the weeks before the race. In that minute we were able to gain up to a three seat advantage passing all the Putney boathouses up to the Black Buoy. We had the advantage of the first bend, so I was pleased to have a lead at this point because I knew that we would gain some more advantage as we passed the Fulham Football Club. We moved out to a half length lead coming up to the Mile Post, but Cambridge began pulling us back as we approached Harrods, and even took a few seats advantage.

Once we passed Harrods, we made some technical changes, began to be a bit more patient, and our

boat started to move a bit better. Unfortunately, Cambridge was also moving well and our change of speed barely made a dent into their lead, which approaching Hammersmith Bridge was roughly half a length.

The next three minutes were particularly exciting. Both crews tucked in under the fabled second lamp-post from the left on Hammersmith Bridge and the oars began to come quite close to each other. To be honest I do not remember who got warnings from the umpire, but both set of oars were close from the Bridge until St Paul's.

I consider the following events the period in which the race was decided. Still trailing Cambridge by three quarters of a length, perhaps coming up to a full length, we began to inch slowly back on the outside of the bend. I do remember at this point that Cambridge were being warned and I felt comfortable with my position on the river and could not stay wide in this instance. As such, I kept to my line and there was some clashing between Colin Smith in two seat and the seven man from Cambridge. Having experienced a good amount of clashing in our previous fixture against the University of Washington, we were prepared to respond. I called a clash ten, calling on the stern four, whose blades were not in danger of clashing, to push on and help move our boat out of danger. We came out of this clash with a vengeance.

The next thirty strokes I felt as if I were in a rocket ship. Down three seats after moving a bit after the clash, we took a large push and motored down the Chiswick Eyot gaining roughly two lengths. Although the race was still six minutes from being finished, it was a good feeling to have open water as we passed the



Colin Groshong, rowing for Catz II last summer.

Chiswick Steps because we had the advantage of the final bend towards the finish line.

In the last three minutes of the race, after we passed through Barnes Bridge, I think for the first time in my coxing career I just didn't know what to say. I have watched the race via my cox camera and

I do not remember saying what I did say. The boat was moving well and I was getting fired up and really wanted the guys to keep pushing hard all the way to the line. The last twenty strokes were maybe some of the best feeling strokes in the race. Although I know they were in pain, the boys just pushed on and we crossed the line 12 seconds ahead of Cambridge.

Writing about this again brings back some very good memories. Coxing and winning the Boat Race was a dream of mine for 7 years and I still cannot believe really that I did what I set out to do. It was not a smooth ride to say the least, but all the hardship has made this experience truly inspiring to myself. I know that after pushing through adversity I am a better person for it. I really want to thank St Catherine's for all the support over the past two years. The Rowing Society and Master, Roger Ainsworth, have really been there for the OUBC, and for that I am truly grateful.

35 Years Ago

Bill Witter, Captain MT 1973

Well, it was an interesting year not least because for only I think the second (or possibly third?) time in the history of Catz rowing there were two Captains of Boats in the one year.

I was elected Captain of Boats following Eights week in 1973 in the customary manner but resigned in January 1974 and Graham Bell kindly agreed to take over as Captain. The reasons behind my resignation require a little background filling in.

The previous year's crew under (sadly now the late) Roger Bricknell's captaincy was stacked with leavers, including Roger himself: in fact I was the only fresher in the 1st VIII and I don't recall there being any second years' either. So it was, as Roger told me in his inimitable direct style, that I had been elected Captain of Boats 'because there's nobody else'.

Roger was a fiercely competitive sportsman, whether at rowing or rugby, and his ambition had influenced his selection for the boat. It so nearly succeeded: the Monday before Eights, our final outing, we broke the all time college record for a 'pinker'¹ (it was truly the best piece of rowing I experienced at school, college or subsequently).

So it was with some surprise that in our first race we were bumped, the boat feeling it was like a six cylinder engine trying to run on 4 or even 3 cylinders! Our bowman virtually collapsed at the end of it and I believe spent the next 3 days in hospital for treatment. So we borrowed the bowman from the

¹I believe this means from Haystacks Corner to a pink post formerly sited at the top of the Green Bank -AD

2nd Eight and so on ... not a happy time, practising with a new crew member each morning, racing in the afternoon and getting bumped each day ... until the final day, when right in front of the packed crowds at boathouses and the second boat in a closing group of four, crews 3 and 4 bumped out and we rowed over.

But back to 1973/4: I had already agreed to be captain of the College rugby club when I (foolishly?) agreed to be Captain of Boats. I was also studying jurisprudence with a correspondingly heavy workload (even College collections were taken seriously as I was about to find out). Summer of 1973 also saw me punting for Oxford against Cambridge (we won!) as well as rowing 1st VIII, and with no exams to worry about.

So it was that with a resoundingly bad set of October collections, Sir Alan Bullock (as he then still was) summoned me and threatened me with rustication. To the rescue came the Boat Club secretary, Richard 'Boots' Barraclough (now QC). With a very small squad of experienced rowers available, training freshers took on an additional importance and much of the successful medium term development of the Club can be credited to Richard.



Catz (left) and Wadham (right) barges in 1972. Photo from Ian Martin (M.71).

But disaster struck in the form of a serious shoulder injury on the rugby pitch that put me out of either sport for many months. Coupled with the potential academic disaster threatening me, and unfit to row for the foreseeable future (and it was not my style to Captain from outside the boat), I resigned January 1974 and tried to get my academic performance back on track (which I did). [The next Captain] Graham did a marvellous job in very difficult circumstances.

There is one last twist to the story: my injury recovered sufficiently to allow me to row at about 1/2 power by second week of Trinity term. Encouraged by friends, I put together a rugby VIII, virtually all of whom were novices. With only three weeks training we completed the 'Getting On' races most successfully, and then (not something to be proud about

in hindsight) won a pinker challenge thrown down by the 1st VIII just before Eights week. The rugby boat, seemingly so certain of blades, got 4 bumps, but two of them were the bank off the start, Graham manfully trying to pole us out in the absence of a College boatman: the two true bumps we did get were each within 10 strokes!

That rugby crew was the birth place of a number of first VIII rowers and indeed captains of boats of the future, including Rowland Hill and Steve Thompson.

A long story: even after 35 years it hurts me to recount it and it shames me to acknowledge that I did not at the time realise how much I could in fact have contributed to the Club from outside the Boat without resigning: or what a smudge of history on the honours board I left behind!

News from Alumni

Paul Miron (M.84) Well, I managed to escape City life after 20 years of grinding away at the banking coal-face (ending in the centre of the cataclysm that was AIG), and am now teaching maths to the unsuspecting youths of Radley College, something of a lifestyle change to say the least. I started at the beginning of this term with precisely zero teaching qualifications, and only vague recollections of what maths actually was, but have managed to spoof my way through the first few weeks somehow. In addition, I also volunteered to coach Radley's J14 octuplets this term, not realising how terrifying 8 novice oarsmen-lets and 16 sculling blades can be when all put in the same boat. I took them to my first regatta for yonks at Wallingford last weekend (a somewhat bigger event than I recall from my racing days) and will be at various other local regattas over the term. I've also had the pleasure of re-associating myself with the legendary Monsieur le Manac'h, who will be familiar to many at Catz. He still strikes a gibbering degree of fear into the unwary oarsman, I'm pleased to report. I've also had a chance to get back in a scull ... puddle definitely no bigger than in college days unsurprisingly!

Jana Bakunina (M.99) Despite the really hot day (is there a way I can complain about the incompetency of the Met Office?), the constant struggle to find some space to run and the fact that I stopped enjoying myself (i.e. started struggling) as early as mile 13, I managed to finish in ... under 4 hours! Just. My time is 3 hours 59 minutes and 22 seconds and I am VERY, VERY pleased. Now that I've done it in under 4 hours, I can tell you with certainty that I will never ever run a marathon again!

At home I enjoyed an ice bath (interesting but predictably freezing) while a hot shower over bra blisters was rather less fun. My mother has cooked my favourite *pelmeni* (dumplings) with cabbage (trust me, it is glorious) and I am having the pint of lager I have been dreaming of since mile 17.

What a day. I am glad it's over :-)

Summer Eights

Eights 2009 will run from 27–30th May. Racing is from noon–6.45pm, Wed–Fri, and 11am–5.45pm on Saturday. Catz have 4 crews in the fixed divisions, plus several more who will attempt to qualify in this Friday's Rowing On races. As usual, I'll be sending evening updates to everyone on the Rowing Society email list.

Eights 2009: Wednesday Start times

Crew	Div	Bungline	Time
Men's 1st Eight	I	7	6.45pm
Women's 1st Eight	II	3	5.15pm
Men's 2nd Eight	IV	4	3.30pm
Women's 2nd Eight	IV	10	2.55pm

NB: on Saturday all divisions race 1 hour earlier

The '49ers are having their 60 year reunion dinner in College on the Saturday evening, but I expect we'll see a number of them on the towpath during the day.

Boathouse Lunch

Another reminder about the Boathouse lunch at 1pm on the Saturday (30th May). Tickets at £10 each can be obtained in advance from Franca Potts in the Development Office (franca.potts@stcatz.ox.ac.uk, or phone 01865 271705).

Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter there will be the Captains' reports, results of the first round of the Rowing World Cup (featuring Andy Triggs-Hodge in the GB pair), and plans for Women's Henley. The grand-daughter of a cox in 1907 has offered to send us an original photo of that crew and another 'Torpids Four' tankard has emerged in the US. News items from living alumni are no less welcome.

Anu Dudhia

email: dudhia@atm.ox.ac.uk

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

Diary

27–30 May 2009	Eights
30 May 2009	Boathouse Lunch
30 May 2009	'49ers Reunion Dinner
19–21 June 2009	Henley Women's Regatta