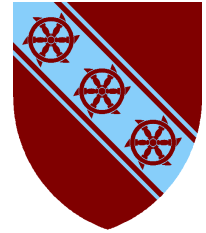




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College
Oxford OX1 3UJ



5th May, 2012

In this issue . . .

An eventful Boat Race this year; I didn't dare ask Zoë so you'll have to have my view from the sofa instead, and also a round up of the Henley Boat races where Catz women had a happier ending.

The events of 30 years include the formal launch of what was to be Catz' last wooden boat, which is in marked contrast to last term's rather more low-key christening of the latest men's VIII.

Assuming the red flag ever comes down (it's been up for a week now — how's the 'drought' in your area?), there are dates and times for a slightly expanded Summer Eights, and the Olympic prospects for one of our old boys.

Results

Henley Boat Races, 25th March

Women's Reserves†	Oxford	3 ¹ / ₂ L	6:57
Women's Lightweights	Oxford	1 ¹ / ₃ L	6:48
Women's Blue Boat	Cambridge	1/4 L	6:38
Men's Lightweights	Cambridge	3/4 L	6:00

†Inge Hertzog (6) and Charlotte Marshall (5)



Sometimes you just don't need to ask how the race went. Inge Hertzog (left) and Charlotte Marshall. Photo from Olive Law.

Tideway Boat Races, 7th April

Men's Reserves	Oxford	5 L	16:41
Men's Blue Boat†	Cambridge	4 ¹ / ₄ L	ntt

†Zoe de Toledo (cox)

Henley Boat Races

A bit of an odd atmosphere this year with the central spectator facilities being relocated from Remenham Farm down towards the finish, by which time most races really are all over bar the shouting. The absence of an extensive PA system meant anyone standing along the course had little idea what was happening, or happened, apart from when the boats passed in front of them.

The programme started with the 'informal' inter-collegiate races, Oxford being represented by Pembroke in both the men's and women's events. The men lost to Gonville & Caius but the women beat Emmanuel (Oxford's first victory since this competition was started a couple of years ago).

Catz' main interest was in the Women's Reserves race — see Charlotte's report. There were several blade clashes in the first part of the race but nothing major enough to cause the umpire (Matt Pinsent on this occasion) to have to repeat last year's disqualification. Eventually Osiris broke clear and a subsequent crab in the Blondie crew helped them achieve the biggest winning margin of the day.

Catz had a less direct interest in the women's lightweight race, with the daughter of one of our alumnae (Olive Law, née Spurway, M.79) in the Oxford crew. I was standing with Olive and the rest of her family on the bank, peering into the distance as the crews approached, trying to decide who was winning. We eventually convinced ourselves that Oxford were ahead and by the time the crews reached us it was even looking comfortable. So, a relaxed evening in the Law household.

Cambridge were favourites for the Women's Boat Race, having finished 9th in the Women's Eights Head, 12 places and 26 seconds ahead of Oxford. The race unfolded as expected with Cambridge gradually drawing away. It was even starting to look a bit embarrassing but, with about 300 m to go, one of the Cambridge crew caught a boat-stopping crab. Realising that this particular race wasn't yet over, there

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

was a huge roar from the Oxford supporters but, despite an undignified scramble for the line, Cambridge had just enough in hand to win by $\frac{1}{4}$ of a length.

In the final race of the day the Cambridge men's lightweights took an early lead, and held it to the finish line without ever managing to break away from Oxford.

It has been announced that, from 2015, the Women's Boat Race will be held on the Tideway on the same day as the men's race. This will almost certainly raise the profile, and standard, of women's rowing in the two Universities. At least let's hope for fewer crabs by then.

The Osiris-Blondie Race

Charlotte Marshall, Osiris

Winning the Osiris-Blondie Boat Race is unquestionably the highlight of my rowing career. The trialling season was challenging; due to a broken wrist I spent the earlier months limited to Wattbike training but managed to get back in the boat for our New Year training camp in Temple-sur-Lot. Henley week was a fantastic experience. As captain I felt a great responsibility for the crew and did absolutely everything both on and off the water to ensure we maximised our potential. I am so proud of how the crew responded and how we all came together — our strength was in our team. We had absolute commitment from every seat in the boat and our race plan was 'an explosive start then keep it going until we cross the line first'. Numerous blade clashes at the start made the race into a real fight, but going through Cambridge and getting across the line in front made it all worthwhile. It certainly seems a world away from my first ever race at Christ Church Regatta 2010 and I am very grateful to both SCCBC and OUWBC for the opportunity to progress so far in such a relatively short time.



Osiris pulling ahead of Blondie in this year's Henley Boat Races.
Photo from Charlotte Marshall.

Tideway Boat Races

'Busy', was Matt Pinsent's understated summary as he stepped off the umpire's launch, while Oxford must have been left wondering just what they had to do to win this race, having got themselves into a winning position not just once, but twice, before something unexpected happened.

Despite being almost a stone (7.9 kg) a man lighter than Cambridge, their performances in the pre-race fixtures meant that Oxford came to this race as favourites and a fast start put Cambridge under pressure straightaway. Rowing on the inside around the long Surrey bend, Cambridge managed to get back into contention and even got a few seats ahead, but, still rowing on the outside, Oxford drew back level. From this position, there's usually only one outcome, but then a protestor was spotted swimming in the river and the race was stopped.

After 20 minutes of faffing — mostly due to difficulties in getting the chasing flotilla back in position — the race was restarted at the same point. Once again Oxford were away much more sharply and took the lead. With the final bend in their favour, it was again looking good for the Dark Blues. But they were being warned for encroaching into Cambridge's water, there was a clash of blades, and the oar of the Oxford no. 6 was broken in two. The umpire allowed the race continue, leaving Cambridge to row away from an Oxford boat reduced to 7 rowers and one large extra passenger.

Even that wasn't the end of the drama. At the finish of the race the Oxford bow collapsed and had to be taken to hospital (he subsequently made a full recovery).

There has been much debate on that clash of blades. Zoë is far too experienced a cox to risk a heavy collision when the race was clearly going their way. My own theory is that she was victim of the physics of side-by-side racing rough water.

Boats rowing side-by-side naturally tend to converge due to wave pressure being mostly on the outer sides (they shelter each other from waves from the inner sides). Usually the effect is small but, the bigger the waves, the bigger the effect. And on this occasion, with all the wash of the flotilla still bouncing around, the waves would have been unusually large, making it impossible to steer away after the umpire's warning.

A second question is whether the umpire should have stopped the race again after

the broken blade. His opinion was that, since Oxford were deemed to be in Cambridge's water at the time, they would have accept the consequences of any damage. Blade clashes are a regular occurrence in Boat Races, but I can only recollect one other occasion when such a clash caused serious damage. This was in the 1990 Isis-Goldie race when Goldie broke a gate. On that occasion Isis were disqualified since the collision occurred while they were in Goldie's water (It was actually the same umpire, and again a Catz cox, but that's by-the-bye). So it was harsh, but not unreasonable or inconsistent.

OUBC Crews 2003–2012
Colleges ranked by no. seats

1.	Oriel	15
=2.	Christ Church	12
=2.	St Catherine's	12
4.	University	6
5.	Kellogg	5
6.	Pembroke	4

Isis may also consider themselves slightly aggrieved. Given subsequent events, few people will have noticed their 5 length victory over a fully-functioning Goldie crew (more than CUBC's margin over Oxford) and that their time, 16:41 (in not particularly helpful conditions) was not only a record for the Isis-Goldie race, it was also equalled the third fastest time of any Blue Boat.

30 Years Ago

The men's 1st Eight started the year 27th on the river, their lowest position since 1949. However, as in 1949, fortunes were turned around in spectacular fashion with the Men's 1st and 2nd Eights and the Women's 1st Eight all gaining blades. Three members of the Boat Club, all of whom had started rowing at St Catherine's, gained seats in University boats: Tony Mitchell (Isis), Meg Jollands (OUWBC) and Olive Spurway (Osiris). The new Master, Sir Patrick Nairne, was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Boat Club, and arranged coaching for the men's 1st VIII at Radley.

St Catherine's first competed in Eights in 1876, a fact which seems to have passed completely unnoticed in 1976. Anyway, 1882 was the year from which we *regularly* competed in Eights so, in 1982, it was decided that that was good enough for a overdue centenary celebration.

The following extracts are from the Captain's Diary.

Hilary 1982

A gentleman of the press was on hand to witness the launch of *Alexander Beetle*. Tony showed immaculate timing and positioning in popping the champagne cork on cue and getting in the Oxford Mail photo. Lady Nairne poured a whole bottle of champagne over the bows and some of the first Eight looking on couldn't help shed a tear at such a moving occasion. Fortunately they resisted the temptation to lie under the bows and catch the drips.

Trinity 1982

The 1st VIII trained for a week on the Isis before moving to our new stretch at Radley. The lock gates at Sandford opened up and, as we paddled out, a blue launch takes up pursuit. Its loudspeaker crackles a deafening welcome, the crew sits bolt upright to attention. Coaching at Radley had begun. Under the supervision of Jock Mullard we start to concentrate. But Andy Trotman is the chap who really starts to get inside the crew and after a couple of days was tearing apart our finishes and rebuilding them. The crew showed tremendous improvement and really responded well to being treated like schoolboys.



1982 Women's 1st Eight, about to bump Wolfson. Janet Rogers (B), Mary Murphy, Angela Megson, Selina Goodman, Meg Jollands, Penny Studholme, Sandy Leggett, Olive Spurway (S) and Nick Bolas (C).

By the time it came to our Centenary Dinner I was extremely happy as the full implication of our achievement was that we had equalled the best of 1949 when the first three College crews each got six bumps in six days. A marvellous dinner with the Master and Lady Nairne present. I managed to dig up a speech from somewhere and quoted bits from the record of the last 100 years. Some of my quotes were actually written by old members present at the dinner. The oldest member present was Alfred Drew from 1928 and he gave a marvellous speech which was

well received by all. It was tremendous talking to the old boys, many of whom had appeared for drinks in the marquee in their Catz rowing caps and fantastic moth-eaten blazers.

Beginning The Hunt

The men acquired a new(ish) 1st VIII shell — a Canadian-built ‘Hudson’ — over Christmas and have been rowing it all last term. After some deliberation, the name chosen was *Beginning the Hunt*, which is (almost) a return to the A.A. Milne theme

Before beginning a hunt, it is wise to ask someone what you are looking for before you begin looking for it.

Unfortunately, nobody got around to organising an official boat launch so, just before their first race in Torpids, I found a bottle of champagne thrust into my hands and asked to do the necessary (all very different from the way these things were done back in 1982!). Although they subsequently rowed over, it was their best day of Torpids.



Your correspondent pouring champagne over the bows of the new men’s 1st boat, while a bemused, and possibly slightly thirsty, Martin Ramsdale looks on.

Summer Eights

Eights will be from 23–26th May. Catz have three crews in the fixed divisions, and several more trying to qualify in Rowing On on the preceding Friday. However, their task will be slightly easier this year as more places will be available: Eights divisions are being expanded from 12 to 13 boats (plus the Sandwich Boat). The number of divisions and the race times for each division, remain the same.

Eights 2012: Wednesday Start times

Crew	Div	Bunghline	Time
Men’s 1st Eight	I	8	6.45pm
Women’s 1st Eight	II	5	5.15pm
Men’s 2nd Eight	IV	1	3.30pm

NB: on Sat. all divisions race 1 hour earlier

Supporters are encouraged to come to the Catz Boathouse at 4.45pm on the Saturday, when the winner of this year’s Ben Sylvester Award will be announced. As usual, Saturday will be a ‘no bikes’ day, which makes for a more relaxed atmosphere on the towpath but you are advised to approach the boathouse from Donnington Bridge to avoid the worst of the crowds along the Green Bank.

In the evenings I’ll send out the usual email summaries to those on the RS email list, as well as update our web-page with results and photos from the day’s racing. But if you’re looking for something more immersive, I can recommend the ever-evolving ‘live-content’ offered by the OURCs web-pages (loved and loathed in equal measure by a number of supposedly-revising finalists).

International Rowing

Andy Triggs Hodge (M.04), together with Peter Reed, have consistently been the top rated sweep oarsmen in GB trials but have spent the past three years coming second to the New Zealanders in every competition. With the Olympics coming up (Jul 28 – Aug 4 for the rowing), it’s no great surprise that they now find themselves back in the coxless four in order to boost that crew’s chance of a gold medal (not that it’s been doing badly in the intervening years). Their first racing is this weekend in Belgrade, at the first of three World Cup events before the Olympics.

Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter there will be the reports and photos from Eights, and further updates on the progress of the GB coxless four. Items for the News from Alumni section always welcome.

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

www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=93221115264

Diary

18 May 2012	Rowing On
23–26 May 2012	Eights
28 Jul – 4 Aug 2012	Olympic Rowing