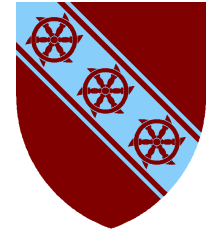




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College,
Oxford OX1 3UJ



4th February, 2007

In this issue . . .

The river's only been rowable for the past week, so not too much water activity to report on so far, apart from our University triallists, but there are details of Torpids, a look at events of 30 years ago (when Torpids was actually cancelled, and that before either global warming or litigation were invented), details of the old tankards which have recently emerged, news from alumni, crew shields and the AGM & Dinner on March 3rd.

University Triallists

We currently have 4 people trialling for the OUBC Squad. Apart from Nick Brodie and Ante Kusurin, both of whom featured in last term's Trial Eights race, there's also Anthony Mullin, from Leeds via Boston, and an ex-Yale cox, Dane van den Akker who, I've just discovered, was the cox of the US Men's IV+ which finished 4th at the 2006 World Championships. With Ante Kusurin's appearance in the Croatian 2x that brings the number of Catz' participants at Eton up to six, more than some of the well-established national federations.

Mal Spencer and Alex Zdravkovic both attended the Lightweights' January training camp in the south of France. They currently have a squad of 20 rowers but, with Cambridge looking unlikely to field a 'lightweight reserve boat' for this year's Nephthys-Granta race, no one's quite sure whether the Oxford Lightweights will end up selecting one or two boats.



A couple of scullers getting in an early start in an attempt to avoid the Saturday morning crowds.

In his article in the recent *St Catherine's Year*, Bastien Ripoll referred to Catz' recent occupation of the stroke seat of the Blue Boat. In fact, a Catz man has stroked OUBC in 5 of the last 6 Boat Races: Matt Smith (twice), Colin Smith, Andrew Triggs Hodge and Bastien Ripoll. The records show that in 2003 we missed out to someone from St Anne's, but that someone turns out to be Matt Smith again, having transferred college for a post-graduate year. As stroke of the winning Trial Eight last December, one feels that Mr Kusurin may not be the man to break with tradition.

Torpids

Between the end of November last year, when the rising river level brought a premature end to Christ Church Regatta, and the end of January this year, there has only been one week when the Red Flag was not flying, and that was between Christmas and the New Year when no one was around anyway.

At the start of term people were fairly confident of having at least 2 men's boats and 2 women's boats, but the subsequent three weeks of nothing but land-training have taken their toll so at the moment our first Torpids are still fluid and our second Torpids decidedly vaporous. Nevertheless, men's and women's VIIIs have been entered for Bedford Head on 11th February which should be a first opportunity to see how things stand compared with the other colleges.

Torpids this year will run from Wednesday 28th February until Saturday 3rd March. Racing starts at noon each day, with divisions every half hour until 5pm. Our 1st Torpids and Men's 2nd Torpid have fixed places, while any other crews will have to qualify in the Rowing On races to be held on Friday 23rd February.

Torpids 2007: 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

President: Bruce Mitchell

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



Possible variations the Men's (above) and Women's (below) 1st Torpids in training over the weekend.



30 Years Ago ...

In 1977, St Catherine's was one of only 5 Colleges that had recently become 'mixed'. Along with the 5 women-only Colleges, there were now sufficient women's crews to justify their own division in bumps racing. The previous summer saw the first women's division in Eights but, with the 1977 Torpids cancelled due to high stream, they had to wait another year before competing in Torpids.

At that time St Catherine's was captained by Tristram Sutton, an Isis oarsman who, the following year, was to become our first ever men's *rowing* Blue (we'd had our first *coxing* Blue 10 years previously). But in 1977 we'd already had our first two women's Blues.

The following article, taken from the annual College magazine, also appears in the Boat Club *History*.

1977 St Catherine's Year

The progress of the Boat Club over the year was varied, though finally magnificent. One could almost have foretold that Hilary term was going to be a disaster when for the first outing in the octalogue¹ the weather decided to turn on a blizzard. The whole term was dominated by a rising flood stream with which experienced coxes found difficulty in contending, the evidence of which could be found in any boathouse with damaged bows frequent and chipped

¹ A catamaran-type of training boat, with four rowers either side of a central gangplank.

blades the rule rather than the exception. However, although training went on, all was in vain as finally Torpids were cancelled due to the danger involved. Attempts to stage an unofficial event, the so-called 'Rapids', failed when the Water Authority issued a red alert flood warning closing the river to all traffic.

Summer Eights, however, was to bring the greatest success and enjoyment. Catz Ladies' rowing this year again made good progress with the gaining of three Blues, and the 1st Eight rowing well to make two bumps.

The Men's 1st Eight, however, pulled off one of the biggest surprises of the week. The first day saw St Peter's ahead, and just coming out of the Gut we got the finest of edges on their stern post and we had our first bump. On the second day luck was with us as Oriol II ahead had a poor start and within 25 strokes we had our second bump. The third day brought the most tension and worry because it was in the back of everyone's mind that four bumps were on if only we could keep our cool. We set off with a poor start but by the Gut we were on Brasenose' tail. They took what they thought was the finest course but our cox, Paul Spedding, came inside them and the bump came half way through the Gut. On the last day tension was running really high; Jesus were ahead and although we thought we could catch them, nobody was over-confident. We had our supporters in force on the bank and they certainly inspired us, but it was not until coming out of the Gut that Jesus steered too wide and keeping on a straight course we took them with a broadside bump. We rowed up to the barge and received a marvellous ovation followed by champagne and the traditional ducking. Earlier in the week someone commented that if the 1st VIII got four bumps then the barge was going to sink and indeed as we were about to leave it did begin to capsize and later in the week actually sank.



The 1977 Men's 1st Eight, which won blades, rising to 20th on the River. Crew: John Greenway (bow), Paul Travers, Tim Alderson, Simon Morgan, Tristram Sutton, Colin Please, Jon Wilmshurst, Robert Hughes (str), Paul Spedding (cox).

Torpid Fours Tankards

You may have read in the *St Catherine's Year* about a pair of tankards from the 1880's which have recently resurfaced. Although our records from that era are almost non-existent, E. F. Shepherd, who is listed as the cox on the 1885 trophy, is also listed in OUBC records for the following year as the steersman of a *St Catharine's* boat racing in the inter-college coxless fours event.



The 1885 pewter tankard donated by Geoffrey Reeve (who also supplied this photo).

Apart from the names, the inscriptions on the tankards read *Oxford University, St Catherine's* and *Torpid Fours*. The spelling of Catherine, with an 'e', is a bit of a surprise since we'd always thought it was spelled with an 'a' at that time (as in the OUBC records), but what were *Torpid Fours*? Torpids, as a University event, has only ever been for VIIIs, and the OUBC records refer only to a *coxless* fours competition, which had no entry from St Catherine's in 1883 or 1885, let alone a winning entry, and a *clinker* fours competition which started in 1889. So my guess is that it must have been an internal Boat Club competition, which perhaps evolved into the *Baker Fours* first recorded in 1910.

We do at least know that in 1885 J. B. Baker, after whom the *Baker Fours* were named, stroked one of the OUBC Trial Eights. And that rather tenuous link is all the excuse I need to include one of my favourite photos from the archives.

News from Alumni

Don Barton (M.48)

Last autumn a 3 week visit to several destinations in North America included a 3-night stay with Ben and Lee Sylvester at their home on Lake Quonnipaug. This is in Connecticut, some miles from New Haven (and Yale), the nearest town being Guilford.



The St Catharine's crew which lost the final of 1899 OUBC Clinker Fours competition (to Lincoln). *From left to right, back row:* H. E. Weston, F. G. D'aeth, J. B. Baker (coach & Censor); *front:* C. H. Barber, W. A. Chevalier (cox), L. C. Streatfield. (The canine has not been identified.)

Most time was spent reminiscing and putting the Middle East to rights; but there was time to enjoy a musical at a small *fin de siècle* opera house on the Connecticut river, and a round of putting on the Quonnipaug communal astroturf green. Creaking joints precluded an outing in one of Ben's sculling boats; so I had to be content with a circuit of the lake in Ben's outboard dinghy, from which we cast a critical but appreciative eye at two girls rowing fours which, a few years ago, Ben might have been coaching.

Paul Miron (M.84)

Well, I 'celebrated', if celebrating is the correct term, my 20th year working in finance this year and what have I got to show for this accumulated effort? Well, marginally less hair, higher blood pressure, no holiday to speak of, a bad back (I blame the poor rowing technique I was taught), expensive kids and ex's, although, to my surprise, I am still getting into the same sized trousers as when I was at Catz. I constantly reassure myself that life can't be that bad, though, by meeting up regularly with old Catz mates James Sergeant and Keith Pritchard and comparing waist measurements, hair loss and general *weltschmerz*. Sad to say that I ceased to have time to carry on sculling some time back and, having run

a few marathons, I managed to successfully mess up my back sufficiently badly to stop me doing another this year. Notwithstanding, I remain the same cheery old soul that many will remember me as. Well, old at least. Those who want to catch up and reminisce please mail me at miron (at) aigfpc.com

Charlotte Alldritt (M.03)

My rowing news: won S3 Boston Rowing Marathon with Wallingford RC, smashing the record by 20minutes in September 2006. Now rowing with Furnivall Sculling Club at Hammersmith, training for Henley Head and Women's Head!



Charlotte Alldritt, no.6, in the Wallingford Women's VIII on the start at last summer's City of Oxford Regatta.

Crew Shields²

There has been a recent addition to the set of Crew Shields that adorn the walls of the Club Room in the boathouse: that of the 1987 Men's 2nd Torpid, which rose 5 places to 7th in Div 3.

We still have plenty of space around the walls so, if you feel that your crew deserves to be similarly commemorated for whatever reason — for these purposes, triumph and disaster are treated just the same — contact either myself or the Rowing Society President, Bruce Mitchell, and we'll quote you a price (which was of the order of £100 when last I checked, or £11 each if you're still on speaking terms with all your crewmates).

²Given the recent College appointment of Patrick Stewart as this year's Cameron Mackintosh Visiting Fellow, I just want everyone to appreciate how difficult it was to resist titling this section 'Shields Up'.



Rowing Society AGM & Dinner

You should, by now, have received notification of this year's AGM & Dinner, which will be held on the Saturday of Torpids, 3rd March. In particular, we're trying to encourage those who rowed in 1982 and 1957 (25 and 50 years ago) to turn up and see if we can finally outnumber the present members of the Boat Club who also attend these events. But your cheques (£22, not including wine) need to reach the RS Chairman, Kevin Skinner, by 23rd February. In theory, you could just turn up for the AGM (at 6.30pm), which would cost you nothing, but that would be a bit weird and likely to result in immediate induction onto the Committee.

Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter there will either be reports on Torpids or, if the floods return, possibly just a very extended write-up of the AGM complete with embarrassing photos from the Dinner. There definitely will be news on which of our triallists have been selected for the University crews, and a look at the Boat Club of 40 years ago, when Andrews Geddes was Captain and women confined to just 5 colleges. Contributions for the News from Alumni section are always welcome.

Anu Dudhia

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

Diary	11 Feb2007	Bedford Head
	23 Feb2007	Deadline for RS Dinner payment
	28 Feb-3 Mar 2007	Torpids
	3 Mar 2007	RS AGM & Dinner
	1 Apr 2007	Henley Boat Races
	7 Apr 2007	The Boat Race
	23-26 May 2007	Eights
	26 May 2007	Boathouse lunch