

9th February, 2014

In this issue . . .

I mentioned in the last newsletter, just before Christmas, that the river had recently gone to 'red flag'. Well, metaphorically (there is no actual flag these days), it's been nailed there ever since. It has been the wettest Oxford January on record, and Oxford records go back further than most.

Now at the end of 3rd week, two out of this term's three IWL races have already been cancelled (the third is scheduled for 23rd Feb). Our senior crews had hoped to be racing at Bedford this weekend, but that's also been cancelled. So in the absence of any results, I've included a flooding report.

Thanks to the connections of one of our readers, we now have some more information on our eminent Estonian, Mart Kuusik. It seems that winning a bronze medal at the 1912 Olympics was far from the end of his adventures.

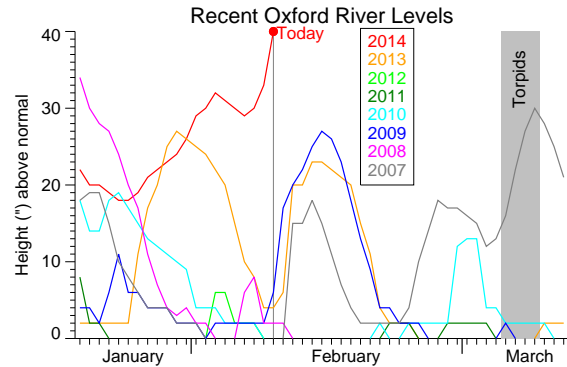
Five years ago, ice was the major concern at this time of year. But, for Torpids at least, it all worked out rather well for us. A number of alumni from that period have responded to my call to contribute to the News from Alumni section.

Ever-hopeful, there are also details of Torpids (5–8th March) and finally a reminder of the RS AGM and Dinner on Saturday, 8th March, for which you should have already received details.



Oxford, twinned with Venice. Except that in Venice the bridges link one bit of dry land with another.

Flooding



Michaelmas Term last year had been unusually dry and it really only started raining seriously in mid-December. But since then it's been relentless: 147mm of rain fell in January, almost three times the average amount for the month.

The river has now been at 'red flag' for 51 consecutive days (since 21 December). I suppose one minor consolation is that, in all that time, it hasn't even been close to the 'amber flag' transition, so there's been none of this frustrating 'let's try and organise an outing just in case . . .' business.

Just before the start of term, so not shown on the above plot, the river reached 43" above normal, an inch higher than during the summer flooding of 2007 and possibly the highest level since 1947. For about a week both the Abingdon and Botley Roads — the major south and west access routes to Oxford — were closed and for several days the City centre was grid-locked as motorists experimented with alternative routes. Having thought we were over the worst, I note that the river has been rising rapidly the past couple of days, once again lapping at the boathouse doors, while flood warnings and sandbags have been re-issued.

There are still 24 days until Torpids, so it *is* still possible that Torpids will go ahead: you can judge for yourself whether that red line in the plot is likely to come down in time. 2007 (grey line) was the last time that Torpids was cancelled completely, while in 2010 (light blue) it was run in restricted form.

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

H. M. Kuusik (1877–1965)

In the first newsletter of last term I wrote about an Estonian 1912 Olympic bronze medallist who came to St Catherine's in 1913. In the last newsletter I mentioned I was looking for someone to translate some Estonian web-pages containing more information on the man. Ian Du Pré noted my request, mentioned it to his niece, Marina d'Ansembourg, visiting from Luxembourg. She passed it on to her Estonian friend, Margit Liivo, who provided the following.



H M Kuusik
(www.esbl.ee/biograafia/Mart_Kuusik)

Born: 9 Dec 1877, Estonia. Died: 24 Aug 1965, Battle Ground, Washington, USA.

Mart Kuusik, (also known as Hugo-Maksimilian Kusik or Kusick) was an Estonian-born rower. After graduating from a grammar school in St Petersburg he continued his studies at Oxford University, where he obtained a degree in engineering. As a rower, Kuusik made a name for himself already at boat races at Oxford University. In 1908, Kuusik won the regatta at the Amsterdam Unofficial World Championships. In 1909 and 1910, he won the Dutch Open in rowing. At that time it was considered to be the Unofficial European Championships. After Oxford, Kuusik returned to Russia and continued training.

He was one of the founding members (1900) and the secretary (1903) of the 'Kalev' sports club in St Petersburg. He took part in many Russian and international regattas, winning the Russian Championships in 1910, 1911 and 1913.

Mart Kuusik competed for the Russian Empire in the 1912 Summer Olympics in single sculls, where he convincingly won his heat. In the semi-final his racing shell broke and he had to continue with a borrowed shell and oars, thus losing to the Belgian Polydore

Veirman, who later won the silver medal in the finals. According to the International Rowing Federation database, Mart Kuusik came fourth. However, earlier data mention that he shared the third and the fourth place with the Canadian Everard Butler. This is explained by the fact that at that time, rowing races were held boat against boat and there was no race for the losers of the semi-finals to determine who came third.

In 1913, Mart Kuusik made history by becoming the first foreigner in 60 years to beat the English at the Oxford regatta.

Mart Kuusik's last competition took place in 1914 on the river Aa in Latvia. In 1918, during the Russian Civil War, Kuusik served as an interpreter for the British Fleet in Arkhangelsk and fell prisoner to the Bolsheviks. He was freed from Lubjanka prison after the signing of the Estonian-Russian peace treaty. In 1920–1922, Kuusik worked as a boxing trainer at the 'Sport' club in Tallinn. He left Estonia in the 1920s and settled in Washington where he started a family.

Sources: www.esbl.ee/biograafia/Mart_Kuusik
et.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mart_Kuusik

I assume the '1913 Oxford regatta' refers to his win in the University Sculls, mentioned in the Non-Collegiate Society Magazine. I also found a couple of mentions of him in *The Times* archives.

19 Sep 1910 (Amsterdam Sep 18) The sculling championship of Holland was won here today by M M J Kusik of the St Petersburg Boat Club by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a length.

13 Jun 1914 Oxford University Challenge Sculls. There were only four entries, and of these Mr H M Kusik (Private and Streatham) decided not to take part, owing to indisposition.

'(Private and Streatham)' would usually indicate school and college. Being a member of St Catherine's he wouldn't have had any College affiliation but I have no idea what 'Streatham' refers to.

On the internet one can also find a record of the application for US Citizenship lodged by Hugo Maximilian Kuusik on 17 May 1933. This gives his place of birth as Narva (close to the present Estonian border with Russia), and his last foreign residence as Reval (now Tallinn). He had been living in New York since his arrival on 23 Oct 1924 and lists his occupation as 'garage owner'. Finally it notes his intention to change his name, upon acceptance, from 'Kuusik' to 'Kusick'.

News from Alumni

Kim Harley (M.06)

I'm currently living up in Nantwich in Cheshire. I'm working for Bentley Motors as a Pre-Series Logistics Module Rep. I'm working on the new Bentley SUV, due to be launched in 2016. At the moment my role involves bringing in the Exterior parts to allow prototype models to be built.

After leaving Catz I worked as a Graduate Consultant in the Transportation division of AECOM, a global consultancy company. I worked there for 2 years before joining the Logistics department at Bentley on their Graduate Scheme. I completed the Graduate Scheme in July 2013 and was given the position of Module Rep.

Tim Monger-Godfrey (M.06)

I moved back down to London straight after university. I started working for a surveying firm, and completed my Chartered Surveyor qualification in 2011. I have now moved into real estate fund management, focusing on UK retail parks. Unfortunately I have not managed to keep up with the rowing as much as I would like to, but still look forward to making it up for bumps every now and again!

Caroline Woffindale (M.06)

After graduating I worked for just under a year as a research assistant at Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry and continued rowing at Dart Totnes Rowing club before returning to Oxford (St Cross College) to do a MSc in Neuroscience in 2010. I then started a DPhil in Neuroscience in 2011 (Somerville College) and am currently in my final year (technically!). I haven't managed to fit in rowing since I have been in Oxford and have instead switched it for Cricket. Looking forward to getting back to the rowing after I have finally finished the DPhil!

Sam Boaden (M.07)

I am living in Dulwich, South London, and work as an actuary in Lloyd's of London. I have recently managed to get engaged, so we are planning our wedding for 2015. Unfortunately it's a while since I've rowed properly. I still try to get on a rowing machine regularly, but it's fair to say it doesn't happen as often as it should!

Toby Smyth (M.07)

I'm currently living and working in Cambridge as a Test Engineer at Red Gate Software. Unfortunately I'm not rowing anymore, but at least I'm preventing our rivals here from learning any of my special techniques.

Catherine Wherity (M.07)

Since finishing at Catz in 2010 I've been working in

London as an executive remuneration consultant for a small independent firm. I haven't rowed whilst I've been in London but I did take up white water kayaking for a couple of years before deciding that I prefer travelling backwards rather than dropping down waterfalls! Instead I'm currently learning to do flying trapeze and tumbling at circus school.

Zevic Mishor (M.08)

As I write this, I've just landed at Heathrow for a visit, and for Catz Ball. I'm finishing my PhD in anthropology at the University of Sydney, having done my fieldwork for it in Israel. I've also been teaching anthropology and neuroscience at the same university. No rowing for me, but I've been doing a fair bit of long distance running, including training for an ultra event.

5 Years Ago

Catz women had taken the 2008 Torpids Headship rather surprisingly given their lack of size and experience. But with most of crew returning in Michaelmas Term there was a determination to leave very little to chance in defending it. Rob Hollis, their coach, would set evening training sessions consisting of a 10km run followed by circuits at Brookes gym. Nor did they pass-up any opportunity to intimidate the opposition: they entered, and won, all three IWL events leading up to Torpids as well as Senior VIIIs in Nephthys Regatta. The only thing they couldn't control was the weather. 2009 started with heavy snow, which turned to ice and made the towpath uncyclable. Eventually the thaw came, but with it the inevitable flooding. However everything settled down just in time and Catz women had about as relaxed a defence of the Headship as anyone could hope for. Lower down the 3rd Torpid gained blades, including a bump on the unfortunate 2nd Torpid.



The 2009 Women's 1st Torpid before an IWL race.

The men had a successful Torpids too, bumping Oriel to rise to 4th, their highest ever position on the river while the 2nd Torpid managed to extricate itself from the Rowing On divisions (and they haven't looked back since).



The 2009 Men's 1st Torpid, about to bump Oriel.

In the decade 2000–2009 St Catherine's were the top-ranked College for filling OUBC seats, and the 2009 crew contained the President, Colin Smith and cox Colin Groshong. The stroke, Ante Kusurin, had also been at Catz when he rowed for OUBC two years previously but this year he was representing Kellogg College. Another Catz man, Martin Walsh, rowed in the Isis crew. The following extract is from Colin Groshong's report in the subsequent RS newsletter

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

OUBC won by 3½ L, and Isis by 4 L.

Trinity Term was something of an anti-climax. The women's 1st Eight, starting 3rd in Div 2, gained a couple of places but couldn't re-establish themselves in Div 1. The men had hoped for reinforcements from the OUBC squad but Colin Smith was injured and Martin Walsh was called up for international duty with Ireland so it was a significantly weakened 1st boat which dropped a couple of places in Eights to finish 10th.

Torpids

Torpids, if it's run at all, will be from 5–8th March (7th week), with Rowing On races scheduled for Friday, 28th February. It's conceivable that Rowing On could be postponed but Torpids will either be those dates or not at all. Assuming full divisions, the following are the starting times and positions of the St Catherine's crews which were placed from last year.

Torpids 2014: Wednesday Start times

Crew	Div	Bungline	Time
Men's 1st Torpid	I	5	5.00pm
Women's 1st Torpid	I	8	4.30pm
Men's 2nd Torpid	IV	5	2.00pm
Women's 2nd Torpid*	V	4	12.30pm
Men's 3rd Torpid*	VI	2	12.00pm

*subject to Rowing On

If Torpids *does* go ahead, I'll be sending out the usual evening race reports to everyone on the RS email list.

Coming Up ...

In the next issue (fingers crossed) we will have the Captains reports on this term's rowing, updates on the University crews and, space permitting, a look at the events of 15 years ago. I'm also expecting significant news from the AGM as we attempt to transfer our finances to a more tax-efficient basis. Contributions for the News from Alumni section are always welcome.

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email: dudhia@atm.ox.ac.uk

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

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

Diary

- 5–8 Mar 2014 Torpids
- 8 Mar 2014 RS AGM & Dinner
- 30 Mar 2014 Henley Boat Races
- 6 Apr 2014 Tideway Boat Races
- 28–31 May 2014 Eights