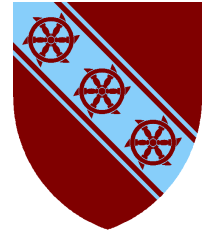




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ



President: Prof. Ceri Peach
 Vice-Presidents: Don Barton, Neil Chugani, Richard Peters,
 Andrew Triggs Hodge MBE, Sir Matthew Pinsent CBE,
 Ben Sylvester

6th February, 2016

In this issue . . .

A sizeable Boat Club contingent took themselves off to Holme Pierrepont (Nottingham) for a training camp just before the start of term. This proved to be well-timed as the Isis remained closed until the middle of 1st week due to flooding, leaving barely enough water time to sharpen up for the first of the term's IWL races.

Christmas is a time when we traditionally spare a thought for those less fortunate than ourselves: there is news of our lightweight triallists as well as the other, calorifically uninhibited, University crews.

Last year we covered the origins of Eights, so this term seems an appropriate time to investigate how Torpids began (c.1838), and an illuminated Catz rudder from 1928 which has recently washed up on the shores of the internet.

River permitting (it's raining again as I write this), Torpids 2016, will be from 24–27th February. Torpids or not, the Rowing Society AGM & Dinner *will* be on Saturday, 27th February.



For University triallists the January training camp means flying south in search of sunshine and warmth. For Catz, it meant Nottingham. Yay.



Dawn outing at the Holme Pierrepont training camp

Thanks to Josephine Barnett-Neefs for the training camp photos.

Results

Isis Winter League C, 31st January

68 crews were timed

1st	4:07	Wolfson A	1st/33 M8
=5th	4:34	St Catz M1	5th/33 M8
20th	5:07	University A	1st/22 W8
24th	5:13	St Catz M2	21st/33 M8
42nd	5:35	St Catz W1	11th/22 W8
66th	6:26	St Catz W2	21st/22 W8

Below, recent St Catherine's 1st VIII performances in IWL races, as a percentage of the winner's speed.

Term	Event	Men	Women
HT 2016	IWL-C	90.1%	91.6%
MT 2015	IWL-B		95.6%
	IWL-A	95.9%	
HT 2015	IWL-E	87.9%	90.7%
	IWL-D		84.5%
	IWL-C	86.8%	



The Men's 2nd Torpid racing in IWL-C

University Crews

Matt Steiner has been competing for a seat in the Oxford men's lightweight crew. He raced at no.5 in the winning boat in their trials race last December, attended their New Year training camp near the border between France and Spain, endured months of dieting, toil and sweat, and has just been told . . . that he hasn't made the final selection. But on the plus side: cake!

Lucy Roberts (as President) and Anna Corderoy (cox, and blogger) are trialling for the women's lightweights. They've also been on a training camp in Ourense, Spain, where apparently it was mostly wet and windy — they could have had that at Nottingham. Their crew has yet to be announced.



Lucy Roberts (front, left) and OUWLRC in Spain.

There are no Catz students trialling for the Tideway Boat Races, although I see that alumnus and quadruple Blue Matt Smith (M.99) has been appointed 'assistant umpire' for this year's Men's Boat Race. The only time I recall ever noticing what an assistant umpire actually does was in the 2012 Boat Race, with Matt Pinsent rather disdainfully hauling that protester out of the water.

Last Saturday, the Cambridge Blue Boats beat (although not without a struggle) their counterparts

from Oxford Brookes University in a series of side-by-side races on the Tideway. Goldie, however, lost to their OBU opposition.

The following day, OUWBC rather boldly competed in the Quintin Head. I say boldly because this is a major event (200 VIIIs), raced over the latter part of the Boat Race course, attracting many of the top women's crews in the country, most of whom would understandably love to claim bragging rights in their club bar when

the Women's Boat Race is shown on TV. As it turned out, OUWBC finished a good 20 seconds clear, with Osiris 4th. I'd say that gives Oxford women the edge at the moment.

No news yet from the OUBC camp.

The Origins of Torpids

'Torpids' was originally the slightly pejorative term used for a college's 2nd VIII. The first appearance of a second boat in Eights was in 1836 when Christ Church II competed as one of 7 crews. The following year they were joined by the second boats of Exeter and Wadham, making 12 crews in total. In those days, the crews paddled down to Sandford during the afternoon and racing only commenced on the final stretch home. Presumably it was decided that it took too long for 12 boats to negotiate Iffley Lock and the following year it was decreed that 2nd boats should race in their own event, held on the evenings between Eights races (which were typically 2 or 3 days apart).

Thus the first distinct Torpids event was held 1838, with Worcester taking the first Headship.

It had been generally accepted that those rowing in Eights were ineligible for Torpids but whether someone was actually rowing for an Eight or just subbing-in was a bit of a grey area. During the 1840 Torpids races Exeter complained that they had been bumped by a Wadham crew whose stroke had rowed for 'several days' in Eights. In response, OUBC decided to crack down and bar anyone who had *ever* rowed in Eights from rowing in Torpids. It seems that this ruling went rather beyond what Exeter had been hoping for: only one college could put together a Torpid which complied with the new regulation, and that was Wadham, who therefore took the 1840 Headship by default. It's probably no coincidence that there are no details of any Torpids racing the following year, and fairly soon the rules were relaxed to allow oarsmen with up to 3 days Eights racing to compete.



The 1913 St Catherine's Torpid at the start

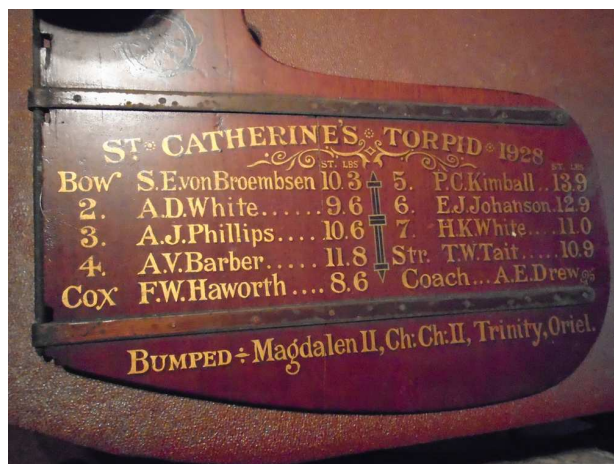
Even so, Eights oarsmen apart, the eligibility criteria seemed to have remained rather loose, with recruits being brought in from far and wide, and sometimes even paid, to fill up the crews (2s 6d, or 12½ p, was the going rate in 1849, for the bow seat in the Exeter Torpid).

The big change came in 1852 when Torpids was moved to Hilary Term. Despite the less appealing weather and periodic hazards associated with floods and ice, it was noted that Torpids could now be used to develop oarsmen for Eights and people started to take the event more seriously. 2nd boats were briefly allowed back into Eights in the 1850s but barred again until 1908, while Torpids had no such restrictions and, between 1878–1912, was always the bigger event.

1928 Torpid Rudder

I've received this in an email from Andrew Brunch:

'I have in my possession the tiller/rudder (or a commemorative replica?) from what I assume to be the 1928 St Catherine's Torpid — which is what is painted on it, along with crew.



'It was in my father's possession on his death, and although I am unsure how it came into his keeping, my father's first name was Kimball — so possibly a crew member (5) was his cousin/uncle (my father was born in 1925, a few years before the event).'

He refers to P. C. Kimball. The crew names, and four recorded bumps, tally with our records, and indeed the coach, A. E. Drew, was one of the founder members of the Rowing Society. Torpids then was raced over 6 days, with St Catz rowing over on the first 2 days. So the first question is why was a commemorative rudder was produced?

I couldn't find any trace of Kimball but, pursuing a different line and assuming that the rudder went to the cox, Google shows a Rev F. W. Haworth serving in the Chaplain's branch of the RAF, with the rank of Squadron Leader, from 1939–1954, and that in 1941 he conducted a graveside service for two German airmen shot down over Merseyside. The age seems about right, and would consistent with the large clerical contingent within the St Catherine's Society, so I think we've got the right man.

But none of this explains how the rudder came to Mr Brunch Snr who, apparently, had no Oxford connection let alone St Catherine's. Perhaps he was just passing a junk-store, noticed the name Kimball, and thought 'why not?'

Torpids 2016

Torpids will be from Wed 24th – Sat 27th February, with racing from noon until 5 pm each day.

Torpids 2016

Starting positions of our 1st Torpids and last year's change

Men's Div I		Women's Div II	
1 Pembroke	=	1 New College	-8
2 Oriel	+4	2 Lincoln	+3
3 Magdalen	-1	3 L.M.H.	=
4 Christ Church	-1	4 Keble	+4
5 Wolfson	+2	5 Trinity	+5
6 Wadham	+5	6 St Catherine's	-10
7 Hertford	+6	7 Corpus Christi	+2
8 Trinity	=	8 Jesus	-2
9 St Catherine's	-4	9 Somerville	-2
10 Worcester	=	10 Wadham II	+5
11 Balliol	-7	11 Brasenose	+4
12 New College	+5	12 Linacre	+6



The Men's 1st Torpid racing in IWL-C

Men's Div I races at 5 pm, Women's Div II at 3:30 pm, and the men's 2nd Torpid, starting 11th in Div IV, will be racing at 2 pm. There was no women's 2nd Torpid last year, so this year they'll have to qualify, along with any yet-to-materialise 3rd Torpids, in the Rowing On races, scheduled for Friday, 19th February.



The Women's 2nd Torpid racing in IWL-C

AGM & Dinner

The Rowing Society AGM & Dinner will be in College on Saturday, 27th February (the last day of Torpids). You should find further details enclosed with this newsletter. The AGM starts at 6:30 pm, followed by drinks and dinner in Hall where we will be joined by present members of the Boat Club, no doubt keen either to celebrate or obliterate the events of the preceding 4 days.

As ever, the RS committee is hunting for fresh blood. The basic duties of an ordinary committee member are not onerous: attending the termly committee meetings



The women's 1st Torpid (photo: JB-N)

in Oxford. However, we are particularly keen to find someone to act as Treasurer, a role currently undertaken by our over-worked Chairman. Please contact me if you are interested in serving in either capacity.

Coming Up . . .

In the next newsletter there will be results, photos and reports on Torpids, updates on the University crews and any pressing matters arising from the AGM.

Anu Dudhia

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

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

Diary

19 Feb 2016	Rowing On
24-27 Feb 2016	Torpids
27 Feb 2016	RS AGM & Dinner
12 Mar 2016	Kingston Head
19 Mar 2016	Henley Boat Races
27 Mar 2016	Tideway Boat Races
25-28 May 2016	Eights