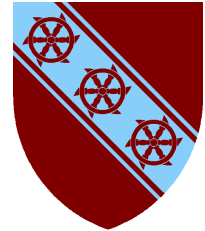




*St Catherine's College Rowing Society*  
*St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ*



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

4th February, 2018

**In this issue ...**

It's been a bit of an on-off term for actual rowing: we have already had two periods of Red Flag and, with all the rain this weekend, it may be back to weights and ergs again next week. There is a report on the term's training so far, and the prospects for Torpids (28 February – 3 March).

For this edition's historical diversion, we head back 50 years: the days when rowers were men and rudders were the size of a barn door, necessary for navigating the multilane Torpids course on a river where (according to popular lore) bumps racing was invented *because* it was too narrow for side-by-side racing. The good old days when, having put the boat away, our rowers had a bleak 500-yard walk along the towpath and a ferry punt to get to the meagre hospitality on offer in our floating club room. While that all sounds very Edwardian, it was just one year later that a man stepped out on to the surface of the Moon.

On the University rowing front, Cambridge seem to be making all the early running, but a new Catz graduate student has slipped under our radar and is in contention for an OUWBC seat.



... and Now: The Women's 1st Torpid racing in IWL-D earlier this afternoon.

Somewhere in connection with this newsletter you'll have an invitation to the Rowing Society Annual General Meeting & Dinner, to be held in College on the Saturday of Torpids, 3rd March. If you do make it down to the river beforehand, I'll no doubt be found somewhere around the Boathouse.

And regrettably, once again I have to finish by noting the death of another of the Rowing Society founding fathers, and our first chairman, Tony Hancox.



Then: members of the 1968 1st Torpid on the College Barge ...

**Results**

**Isis Winter League C, 21st January**

40 crews raced

14th	5:21.0	L.M.H.	1st/14 W8
24th	5:53.0	<b>Catz (W1)</b>	6th/14 W8

**Isis Winter League D, 4th February**

51 crews raced

1st	4:28.5	Wolfson A	1st/27 M8
20th	5:38.5	L.M.H.	1st/20 W8
21st	5:41.0	<b>Catz (M2)</b>	21st/27 M8
28th	5:50.5	<b>Catz (W1)</b>	6th/20 W8



The men's 2nd Torpid racing in today's IWL-D

## Torpids 2018

Torpids will be from Wednesday 28th February until Saturday 3rd March, with racing every half hour from noon until 5 pm. If our women's 2nd Torpid row on (23rd Feb) they're likely to be racing at 12:30. The men's 2nd Torpid start 7th in Div IV (2pm), immediately followed by the women's 1st (3rd in Div III, 2:30pm). Then time for a leisurely tea-break until the men's 1st Torpid take to the water (4th in Div I, 5 pm).

## Hilary Term

We've lost a few days this term due to river closures. Even when the river has been open, it's often been cold and/or wet (see photo below from IWL-C) and/or windy. Less of an issue for our experienced 1st VIIIs, who've by now acquired all the knowledge and kit required for winter survival, but a little disheartening for our largely novice 2nd VIIIs.

The men's 1st Torpid have been loading up a trailer most weekends and heading down to the empty river at Abingdon (their coach, Rory Copus, coaches Abingdon School in his weekday job). They've not raced this term but, then again, neither have most crews in Men's Division I, so Wednesday of Torpids could be full of surprises for everyone.

The women's 1st VIII, coached by ex-Blue Chloe Laverack and M1 stroke Matthias Mergenthaler, have remained on the Isis. They've been competing regularly in the Sunday afternoon IWL races, which is more than many of the crews around them have managed.

## Torpids 2018

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

Men's Div I		Women's Div III	
1 Pembroke	=	1 Brasenose	-1
2 Oriel	=	2 Wadham II	+3
3 Wadham	+2	3 <b>St Catherine's</b>	-10
4 <b>St Catherine's</b>	+4	4 Exeter	+2
5 Hertford	+2	5 St Hugh's	-6
6 Christ Church	=	6 Queen's	+1
7 Balliol	+2	7 St Hilda's	+1
8 Wolfson	-4	8 Merton	+2
9 Magdalen	-6*	9 St Antony's	+2
10 St John's	+3	10 Oriel II	+8
11 Jesus	+7	11 St Peter's	-2
12 Pembroke II	-1	12 Pembroke II	+3

\*Magdalen chose not to participate in 2017 so, according to the rules, forfeit 6 places. Crews 3-8 are therefore shown here as gaining a place in addition to those gained during last year's racing.



The women's 1st Torpid racing in IWL-C earlier this term.

The Men's 1st Torpid are currently equal to their highest ever position. Since 2009 they've had 8 attempts to move into the top 3, getting pretty close on the last day of Torpids 2017.

In complete contrast the Women's 1st Torpid are at their lowest ever position. Apart from putting the brakes on the descent, they'll be hoping to climb back into Div II by the end of the week.



## 50 Years Ago ...

In 1968, women were confined to just 5 colleges and bumps racing was an all-male affair. The main boathouse-building phase had just been completed and only St Catherine's and Wadham, without boathouses of their own, continued to maintain barges moored along Christ Church meadow. These were used as club rooms, while our boats were kept in the O.U.B.C. boathouse (on the site of the current Univ boathouse).

Torpid in the 1960s and 70s was run as a multilane event: crews splitting into two, then three lanes and gaining places either by bumping the crew in their lane or, more commonly, by crossing the finish line ahead of crews in other lanes. This allowed faster crews to make spectacular progress and the 'Schools' 2nd Torpid rose 7 places, 4 of those in one day (also that year, Queen's II rose 12 places). Eights remained under conventional rules, but the 2nd Eight still gained 5 places and the 1st Eight 3, finishing 3rd in Div II.

We have no records from the 1960s — possibly lost when the College Barge sank in 1977 — but several alumni provided their recollections when a call was put out for the 1999 Boat Club History

### Peter Miller (M.65)

*In 1967 Peter Miller had become St Catherine's first Blue, coxing OUBC to victory in the Boat Race.*

In my third year, 1967/68, I was Secretary of the OUBC and was heavily involved with organising college rowing throughout the University, particularly with trying to persuade the senior oarsmen to do some coaching.

I was still the Blue Boat cox until a fortnight before the 1968 Boat Race, but I was around 10 stone, really too heavy to cox, and I was definitely not coxing as well as I had been in the past. After a defeat by the University of London in the Reading Head of the River Race, I was replaced by a lighter cox, so I did not steer in the 1968 Boat Race defeat.

That was not quite the end of my rowing career at Oxford, as I pulled an oar in a scratch St Catherine's eight in the bumps, full of stars of yesteryear, which made four bumps somewhere down in the lower divisions. As OUBC Secretary I was also responsible for organising the Summer Eights, although frankly that



The 2nd Torpid (centre lane) heading for the finish. The Catz barge is farthest away (the other is Wadham's). Photo from Nigel Bennett (M.65).

that was not much of a burden. I remember worrying about whether the man with the starting gun would fail to turn up, never having met him, and being relieved that the College Watermen somehow secured his attendance. He had probably had it in his diary since the previous year.

Looking back, I think the main differences between then and now are first the equipment, both the type and the quality of materials used and particularly the very lightweight oars and cleaver blades, which I find make rowing so much easier; the use of ergometers and better weight training equipment. Secondly the standard of rowing, as in all other sports, has improved. The Boat Race crews in recent years have been quite outstanding, treating Putney to Mortlake, which we regarded as an endurance test, as a 17 minute dash. The young men, especially at Blue Boat level, are just larger than we were. Thirdly, there are far more women rowing. St Catherine's was single-sex in the 1960's, as were all the Colleges, and women's crews were rare on the Isis.

### Leslie Singleton (M.65)

In 1968 a French crew from the Haute Etude Commerciale, Jouy-en-Josas, near Paris, arrived at the College by invitation. During a conversation with me they asked to take part in a bumping race. In the event we put a crew together, lent them an eight, and contrived a two-boat bumping race. First they chased us, then we them. I can't remember who bumped whom, but they were very happy about the occasion. The HEC crew had no cox — she was a girl of tender years whose protective Mama refused to let her travel with them to Angleterre. I was unaccountably volunteered to cox them, as I had never coxed before,

spoke little French, and was no lightweight! However, all went well and I remember to this day the French for ‘to back down’ — *renager*. The HEC people were so appreciative that we were later invited to their regatta. We didn’t do too badly, but we were not well briefed on the local starting procedures. Thus we were sitting at the start waiting for the pistol shot when this French chap shouted at us ‘Etes vous prêts — Partez!’ at which time the other crews were already 100 yards down the course. But a memorable occasion nonetheless.

On a less happy note, I witnessed the Barge gently rotting away; I was then Hon. Bargee for one year, which involved pumping it out once a week, and — with others — seeking ways and means of preserving the few remaining barges. I was a member of the Oxford College Barge Preservation Trust, and still have a copy of the Trust Deed. Our failure was absolute.

### University Crews

A mystery Catz student popped up to feature in the OUWBC Trials Race, which was finally held on the Tideway on 21st January. Morgan McGovern, studying for an MBA, arrived last October and must have headed straight off for OUWBC Trials (she was in the 2016 US lightweight quad). She rowed no.5 in *Coursing River* which, after an epic battle, went down by half a length to *Great Typhoon*. My well-informed colleague, Mr G. Oogle, tells me that these names are from the lyrics to *I’ll make a man out of you* from the Disney film *Mulan* — it makes a little more sense if you’ve seen the film.

No news of OUBC, but Cambridge were racing in VIIIIs last weekend in Quintin Head, which suggests that they’re already close to final crew selection. They had the fastest men’s and women’s VIIIIs on the day, but in the men’s case only 5 seconds (over 10 minutes) ahead of University of London, 18 seconds ahead of their second crew (5th) and 37 seconds ahead of Oriol (12th). CUWBC were more convincing, finishing 33rd overall, 14 seconds ahead of their 2nd boat with the UL women another second further back.

### Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter we’ll have results and reports from Torpids, any developments from the AGM and a further update on the University crews.

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

### Diary

28 Feb – 3 Mar 2018	Torpids
3 Mar 2018	RS AGM & Dinner
18 Mar 2018	Henley Boat Races
24 Mar 2018	Tideway Boat Races
23–26 May 2018	Summer Eights
23 Jun 2018	Gaudy Paddle

### Tony Hancox (1927–2017)

Tony Hancox died on 18th December. He arrived at St Catherine’s in 1949 and rowed in the 1st VIII from 1950–52, taking on the Captaincy in his final year. After going down he continued to row for Thames RC and was part of the crew that represented England in the 1958 Empire & Commonwealth Games, held in Wales. He was the first Chairman of the Rowing Society (1984–1992), and then served as President until 2005.

His funeral service was held on 16th January, at St Andrew Church, South Stoke (near his home in Wargrave). Apart from myself and Kevin Skinner, the College was represented by the Master, Prof. Roger Ainsworth, and the Domestic Bursar, James Bennett.



Members of the 1958 England VIII. Tony Hancox, standing, third from left.