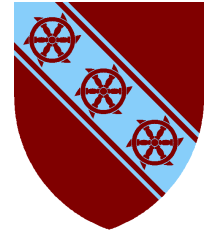




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ



President: Colin Smith
 Vice-Presidents: Neil Chugani, Richard Peters,
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 Zoe de Toledo, Andrew Triggs Hodge OBE.

1st February, 2020

In this issue . . .

And still it rained. The new decade began under the same old Red Flag that washed out last term's rowing. Last weekend it dropped to Amber just long enough to squeeze in an IWL race but yesterday it finally went to Blue, which allows novice rowers (if not coxes) to get out on the water and try and squeeze in a few desperate weeks of training before Torpids (currently, possibly optimistically, scheduled for 26th–29th February).

The University squads benefit from rowing at Wallingford which is less affected by high stream. Having completed their New Year training camps, many of our triallists were in action at Quintin Head last weekend. As were their rivals from the Fens. It was . . . informative.

Last night the UK's 47-year membership of the EU came to an end. It seems appropriate to mark the occasion by visiting the archives to see how things stood in 1972 — the year before we 'joined' Europe.

Finally a reminder of the Rowing Society AGM and Dinner, which will be on Saturday, 29th February. Further details to follow.

Results

Quintin Head, 25th January

235 crews raced

Results of Oxford & Cambridge University crews

10th	14:15.5	Granta	1st/12 Int 1
11th	14:25.6	OULRC I	8th/13 Champ
12th	14:26.0	Isis	1st/9 Sen
48th	15:10.2	^a OULRC II	8th/9 Sen
53rd	15:14.1	OUBC I	3rd/10 W Champ
59th	15:21.0	CUWBC II	4th/10 W Champ
79th	15:44.6	^b OUBC II	7th/10 W Champ
83rd	15:51.2	CUWBC III	1st/9 W Int 1
87th	15:58.5	^c OULRC	2nd/9 W Int 1

^aB: Niels Wicke, ^b2: Hannah Morrisey

^cS: Clare Leckie, 7: Emily Hoogkamer (M.14)

Isis Winter League C, 26th January

17 crews raced

1st	4:36	St Catherine's	1st/8 M8
2nd	4:44	Wolfson	2nd/8 M8
3rd	5:03	St Peter's	3rd/8 M8

University Triallists

Quintin Head takes place towards the end of January and, as it is raced over part of the Boat Race course, it's an obvious target event for University squads to try out their initial crew selections. Incidentally Quintin BC, who organise the event, get their name from Quintin Hogg (1845–1903), great-great grandfather of another Quintin Hogg who coxed Catz 1st VIII in 1993 and '94.

OUBC and CUBC tend to prefer private fixtures rather than open events, which at least maintains some uncertainty over the outcome on Boat Race day. This year, however, there was a mysterious 'Isis' crew in the Quintin Head. Given their relatively slow time, I was a bit worried, but it turns out OUBC are running a third VIII.



As the sprouting of leaves marks the return of spring, so the gathering of bicycles outside the Head of the River pub heralds the return of rowing on the Isis.

The women's and lightweight squads, who can't afford to be so picky, were out in force. Fastest of the OxBridge crews were Granta, the Cambridge lightweights, 3 s ahead of OULRC. This was a bit of shock given Oxford's dominance in last term's Fours Head, but Oxford are playing the dangerous game of ascribing it to Granta's later start time giving them the better of the tide.

Cambridge have been the fastest women's crew at Quintin Head for the previous three years but this year their top boat scratched, leaving UL to take the title, one second ahead of Oxford Brookes, with OUWBC coming in third, a further 11 s back. I expect CUWBC will be taking on at least one of these crews in private matches in the next few weeks. Worryingly for Oxford, Blondie came in just 7 s behind OUWBC and a full 23 s ahead of Osiris.

Cambridge also won the battle between the women's lightweights. Rowing as CUWBC III they started immediately ahead of Oxford and took 7 s out of them over the course.

I'm guessing the atmosphere in the minibuses heading back up the M11 was rather more convivial than in those returning along the M40.

Hannah Morrissey rowed 2 in Osiris; Niels Wicke bow in the OULRC second boat (they have no Cambridge counterpart); the OUWLRC stern pair were ex-Catz captains, Clare Leckie and Emily Hoogkamer. Kan Li is currently an OUWLRC spare.

The following day, the prospective OUBC crew took on Leander for some side-by-side racing. The official report isn't yet out, but I believe Augustin Wambersie, the OUBC President, was rowing at 4.

48 Years Ago ...

1972 was still three years before Catz, and four other colleges, went 'mixed', which in turn prompted the introduction of separate women's divisions. But since 1969 crews from the women's colleges had been allowed to enter bumps races to compete alongside the men. At least in principle; in practice, not that often.

At that time we kept our boats in the old O.U.B.C. boathouse, on the site currently occupied by the Univ boathouse, and we used the Barge, moored alongside Christ Church meadow, as our Club room. Quaint, but hardly convenient.



The 1972 1st Torpid (racing on the OUBC station): C Woolley (B), P Knox, I Salisbury, P Rushbrook, R Forsyth, P Kelen, C Taylor, P Marx (S) and I Pettman (C). Photo from Chris Taylor.

Eights was run under the same rules as today. Torpids, however, was raced in two-lanes, with boats splitting off alternately after the start and gaining places either by bumping the boat in your own lane or finishing ahead of boats in the other lane. As if things weren't already complicated enough, the weather in 1972 didn't help. Due to strong winds, Friday's racing had been postponed to Saturday morning ...

Boat Club Minute Book, Sat 4th March 1972

The third round races were held in the morning. Catz now had Jesus behind them. Conditions were still bad, and the O.U.B.C. side which Catz was rowing on had an advantage up to the Green Bank. After a fair start Catz held off Jesus up to the Gut. At the beginning of the Green Bank, Jesus gave a bumping spurt and passed Catz. They bumped John's just before the boathouses, and Catz began to close on a dispirited John's. There was an overlap past O.U.B.C. and Catz pulled past, leading by a canvas at the Finish. So, Catz finished one place up, above Jesus.

For the fourth round Catz again had the O.U.B.C. side. The start of the race was delayed by 10 minutes because of the snow. Despite foot high waves Catz managed to sit the boat well, despite a couple of 'shipwrecks', and again held off Jesus up to the Gut. Jesus made a bumping spurt for Queen's along the Green Bank and passed Catz once again, but this time they failed to make the bump. Catz began to pull back past O.U.B.C. and rowing their best of the four days they overtook Jesus, beating them by a canvas.

Boat Club Minute Book, Mon 6th March 1972

The Captain congratulated the 1st VIII for having reached 6th place on the river in Torpids and establishing themselves in the First Division.

There had been a couple of mishaps during the term. *Phoenix* had been damaged badly when she got caught up in a bash during a second VIII outing and the estimate for the repair was £87.50. Unfortunately the insurance policies were out of date as they had last been reviewed in 1959, and *Phoenix* was uninsured ... When *Phoenix* was repaired she should be renamed *Trespassers W*.



The Men's 1st Torpid training at Dorney Lake this morning.

These were lean times for Oxford in the Boat Races. In 1972 they were trounced by 9¹/₂ lengths, but even that was better than the previous and subsequent years. As the *The Times* correspondent put it: 'the race was once again an anti-climax, painful to watch, with a merciful release as Oxford crawled past the timber post marking the race finish'.

While they may have fallen far short of Cambridge's standards on the Tideway, the concentration of Blues and Isis men in Keble and Christ Church ensured that the battle for the Eights Headship in the early 1970s was dominated by these two colleges (a pattern repeated in recent years). In 1972 Christ Church started head and rowed over comfortably enough on the first day. However, each day Keble reduced the deficit and finally got their bump on the Saturday.

From our perspective, the notable achievement of the previous year had been the return of the St Catherine's 1st Eight to Div I after an absence of 87 years (1884). But Wednesday of Eights 1972 was also to be their last appearance in the top division for another 27 years; they were bumped each day and thus began a 5-year descent to the foot of Div II with only one bump gained in all that time. The 2nd Eight also got spoons and went into an even steeper decline. The only bright spot was that the 3rd (Schools) Eight won blades (but probably not many friends).

Hilary Term 2020

Torpid this year has been brought forward to 6th week (26–29th Feb) to avoid clashing with the Women's Eights Head. However with the river only just opening up that leaves little more than 3 weeks of water time. Since last term was a complete washout, that's just three weeks to teach novices how to row and get them ready to race.

Last weekend the river dropped to Amber long enough for OURCs to squeeze in an IWL time trial. Unsurprisingly, there weren't many takers; those crews training elsewhere presumably feeling a round-trip for a short head race wouldn't be time well-spent, while most Isis-based crews were just not prepared to jump straight into a race for their first outing in months.

Our men's 1st VIII haven't been on the water for months but *were* prepared to give it a go. They were expecting to race twice, in both divisions, but the first race was klaxoned shortly after the start when a marshal decided that a swan on the course was sufficient grounds for halting the race. It subsequently turned out that it wasn't even a swan, just a white goose (OURCs state that one of the purposes of running regular IWL races is so that marshals can be trained to a competent level by the time Torpids comes around). Anyway, ornithological re-education completed, the second division proceeded normally. Catz covered the course rating a comfortable 32, proved themselves the fastest crew on the day and, usefully, beat Wolfson by 8 seconds (Wolfson start behind them in Torpids).

Reassuringly, they're not planning on just leaving it to natural talent to get them through Torpids as well. This weekend they're having double-sessions down at Dorney Lake, getting in some proper mileage before returning to the Isis where they'll no doubt be picking their way through the flotsam of novice boats for the next few weeks.

The women are not in such a strong position. Losing 3 rowers to trials has been a problem but, on paper at least, they can just about muster 8 experienced rowers for the 1st Torpid. The problem is getting all of them in the same place at the same time when it's not Red Flag. So far they've been training as fours.

Torpids 2020

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

Men's Div I		Women's Div II	
1 Oriel	=	1 Jesus	=
2 Pembroke	=	2 St Anne's	+2
3 Wadham	=	3 L.M.H.	+3
4 St Catherine's	+1	4 Trinity	+3
5 Wolfson	+1	5 St John's	-9
6 Christ Church	-2	6 Somerville	+2
7 S.E.H.	+4	7 Lincoln	-5
8 Balliol	=	8 Brasenose	+3
9 Trinity	+3	9 St Catherine's	+4
10 Hertford	-3	10 Mansfield	+2
11 Keble	+6	11 Wolfson II	-2
12 Jesus	-3	12 St Hilda's	+5

Last year's Torpids finishing order is shown above. Catz men start 4th in Div I, equalling their highest ever position, and making their 11th attempt to break into the top 3. I assume Oriel, Pembroke and Wadham have all been training somewhere. Oriel certainly, since they raced in Quintin Head (10 s slower than OUWBC). Wadham were also entered, but scratched.

Of the Women's Div II crews, Wolfson II raced at Quintin. Quite slowly, but they've clearly been getting in some water time. Lincoln also looked like they've been practising. They were the fastest women's VIII in IWL-C, finishing 30 s ahead of Somerville and 40 s ahead of St Hilda's, both of whom looked like they were having their first outings. No idea about Brasenose, Mansfield, or indeed how Catz would get on by comparison.

IWL-D is scheduled for next Sunday. I assume this will attract a much larger entry and then we'll have a better idea who's in any sort of shape to race.

So will Torpids actually happen? In the past when Torpids has been cancelled or restricted it has usually been due to conditions on the day rather than during training. But we have a precedent: in 2001, when the river was closed for much of Hilary Term, Captains were given the option scratching, without any penalty, crews that they felt were not ready to race. Catz opted to enter just their first boats, but the men won blades and the women came away with the Headship.

There is another option. Normally OURCs are the first to squash such ideas as impractical, but this year they themselves have proposed a contingency plan to move Torpids back to 8th week (11-13th March). I assume a decision will be reached at the next Captains' meeting.



Catz senior women out in a four this afternoon

AGM & Dinner

Whatever the outcome of the deliberations regarding Torpids, the Rowing Society AGM & Dinner *will* take place on Saturday, 29th February. Having completed the brief formalities of the AGM we shall be joined by the current Boat Club members for a few drinks before collectively moving to the Hall to enjoy a celebratory/comiseratory/anticipatory (delete as appropriate) dinner. Further details will be sent once these have been finalised with the College.

New Fours

We have recently purchased two new coxed fours, one for the men and one for the women (the women's isn't so new any more — they've been using it quite a bit). However, the boats haven't yet been officially 'launched'. So we're going to have a ceremony on Saturday 29th Feb. Timings will depend on whether or not any racing is scheduled, but we hope if you're coming to the the dinner you'll also be able to attend the launch. Again, details to follow.

Coming Up ...

The next newsletter will include the captains reports and further updates on our triallists. Hopefully something about Torpids as well.

Diary

26-29 Feb 2020	Torpids (tbc)
29 Feb 2020	RS AGM & Dinner
15 Mar 2020	Lightweight Boat Races
29 Mar 2020	Heavyweight Boat Races

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