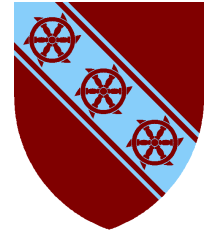




*St Catherine's College Rowing Society*  
*St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ*



President: Colin Smith  
Vice-Presidents: Neil Chugani, Richard Peters,  
Sir Matthew Pinsent CBE, Ben Sylvester,  
Zoe de Toledo, Andrew Triggs Hodge OBE.

24th March, 2020

**In this issue . . .**

As we all struggle to get to grips with the new way of living — I note last weekend's papers still contained restaurant reviews and adverts for holiday cruises — let's just pause for one final backward glance at the land we've left behind.

A wet February resulted in the cancellation of Torpids, both in 6th week and the fall-back dates in 8th week. I believe that's the first time we've lost two consecutive term's rowing to flooding. Our 1st Torpids remained in training right until the end of 8th week, just in case, but yet again the Captains can only report on the off-water activities.

Is it better to have raced and lost than to never have raced at all? Well, obviously it is, but we have both perspectives from our University representatives.



A beautiful Spring morning in Radcliffe Square yesterday, appreciated by just a few abandoned bicycles, some pigeons, and me, on my last trip into the lab for a while.

**Results**

**Lightweight Boat Races, 15th March**

<i>Women's Race</i>	Dist	Time <sup>†</sup>
Cambridge bt Oxford*	6 L	23:24
<i>Men's Race</i>	Dist	Time <sup>†</sup>
Oxford bt Cambridge	3 1/2 L	18:50

<sup>†</sup>Free start, so times are unofficial

\*S: Clare Leckie, 7: Emily Hoogkamer (M.14)

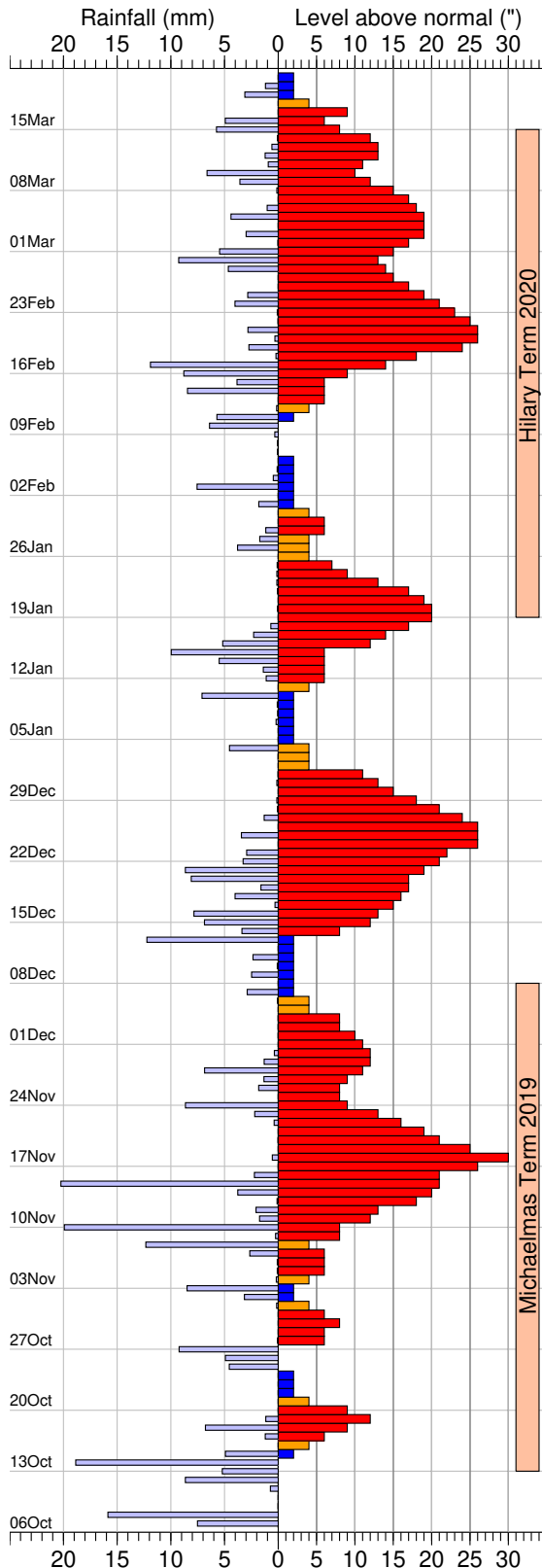
**Rainfall and River Levels**

Training through Michaelmas and Hilary Terms is frequently interrupted by river closures or restrictions, but this is the first time that we've effectively lost two full terms of rowing, with just a single event, an IWL race, being run on the Isis.

The difference this year was the *persistence* of the rain: five out of the past 6 months had about 50% more rain than usual, the exception being January which had close to average, hence the opportunity to run the IWL and my hope, expressed in the last newsletter, that normal rowing could resume. But February brought in a series of storms: Ciara, Dennis and Jorge. The overall effect, as can be seen from the plot over the page, has been to continuously push the flow back into the Red Flag zone, leaving very few days in which to snatch an outing.

The complete cancellation of Torpids is not as common an occurrence as many people think. It has happened just five times since 2000 (2000, '02, '07, '14 and this year). On a further four occasions Torpids has been run in restricted form, although the most recent of those, 2018, was due to the 'Beast from the East' rather than rainfall. The other fourteen years we've had the full event.

Torpids has been held in Hilary Term since 1852 (prior to that it was in Trinity Term, an event for 2nd boats alongside Eights). However the first cancellation due to a high stream didn't take place until 1977. Of course, rather than evidence of climate change, this is more likely a reflection of the changing attitudes towards safety. Prior to that there are many cheerful accounts of Torpids being run with the towpath fully submerged.



Daily rainfall (left) and height of river level above normal (right), together with flag colour, for the past two terms.

## Women's Boat Club Report

### Ilayda Karadag, Women's Co-Captain

Being plagued with unfavourable river conditions throughout Michaelmas, we were very much ready to hit the ground running when term commenced. Alas, British weather had other plans for us. Hilary had been much the same as its predecessor, except with the added bonuses of storms Ciara and Dennis.

Our main focus for this term was Torpids. However, with persistently high river levels we first saw races being made 'pseudo', followed by 6th week races being cancelled and ultimately the cancellation of the 8th week replacements. Although we were unable to race as we would have liked, we did have the pleasure of welcoming some new faces to our squad; experienced rowers and enthusiastic novices.

A lack of water time had meant that training was again heavily land-based: strength and conditioning sessions, erg sessions, tank sessions, bodyweight circuits and a rather muddy squad run. Early in the term we were able to get the novices in for a fair few tank sessions, which proved their merits on those



Ilayda Karadag

blissful 3 days of green flag. The novices were able to put their training into practice and managed to get up to all eight rowing on their very first outing!

Many of our novices got their first taste of erg testing. A couple of our novices had faster splits in their 1500m ergs than their 1000m ergs which they had taken a mere 2 weeks earlier, demonstrating the rapid improvements seen this term. Although Rowing On divisions had been cancelled quite early on, this in no way diminished their enthusiasm. They continually came to training sessions determined, giving it their all and looking towards their next goal. We still hope that there will be Summer Eights, but with talk of Trinity term going ahead 'remotely', the fate of summer racing hangs in the air.

Much credit to our coach Rowan Nicholls for keeping us motivated through these difficult times, to Alex Bowmer for volunteering his time to run strength and conditioning sessions, to Anu for coxing many of the women's outings this term and to RS for their continued support. Stay safe everyone!

## Men's Boat Club Report

### Joe Grey, Men's Co-Captain

Once again we come to the end of a term with not much actual rowing to report on. The weather has kept the flag on red for all but a handful of days over the past 8 weeks, meaning the majority of training has been land-based. Aside from racing IWL C, all planned races, including Torpids, were unfortunately cancelled. This has proven highly disappointing for the whole squad, which retained much of its strength and depth coming into the new year. Months of training on the ergs and strength and conditioning sessions had forged a resilient and highly motivated team, and we were excited to see how this would play out on the water during Torpids.

Due to river conditions, IWL C was the first water session M1 had together this term. The first division was klaxoned due to the misidentification of a goose as a swan; however the second division was a triumphant success for what was effectively a scratch crew, posting a time of 4:36, eight seconds ahead of our nearest competitors. With all other races in the series being cancelled, we are the effective winners of IWL 2019/20! An undoubted highlight of the term was a weekend's training at Dorney Lake for our first boat. While the characteristic wind proved challenging at times, it was great to get some time on the water.



Joe Grey

As the term began to draw to a close, and it became increasingly clear that Torpids would not be going ahead, focus turned to beginning preparations for Eights next term. However, the situation in Italy has sadly forced us to cancel our planned return trip to Monate for Easter Training Camp, and we are unsure of the implications the pandemic may have on Eights or, indeed, the entirety of Trinity term itself. The squad is nonetheless engaging in a training plan over the Easter vacation in earnest. We wish to pay tribute to the relentless drive of every member of the squad this year so far, and thank our coach James Wills for his continued support; alongside Alex Bowmer for his expertise and dedication to the club. It has not been an easy two terms for rowing, and the coming weeks will be testing for all. We wish everyone well during this time — hopefully we'll be able to report on some rowing next term.



Emily Hoogkamer, post-race. Photo from Tim Koch's article on the *Hear the Boat Sing* web-site.

### Lightweight Boat Races

The lightweight races were scheduled for the Sunday immediately after the end of term; earlier than they would have liked but, as it turned out, fortuitously. Ignored by the BBC, they run their own, increasingly sophisticated, live broadcast over the internet and you can find a recording on YouTube.

Stern pair of the Oxford women's lightweights were former Catz women's captains Clare Leckie and Emily Hoogkamer (now at Linacre). Theirs was, as they say, a race of two halves — Clare provides more details — but it *was* a proper race, unlike the one-sided affairs that have characterised the Women's Boat Races since their move to the Tideway.

By the time the men's race started the wind, which seemed to have such a devastating impact on the women's race, had dropped and conditions were near-perfect, as reflected in the difference in finishing times. Despite some unconventional steering across the Fulham Flats, an impressive Oxford crew took the lead early and just continued to row away. The umpire (Caroline Smith, 'guest' cox of the 2001 Catz men's 1st Torpid) may not have thought much of Oxford's line but at least she got to relax and just enjoy watching the race unfold.

One final twist: with their move to the Tideway, Oxford lightweights are now automatically awarded full Blues. Cambridge are less *enlightened*, possibly due to the internal politics of their unified squad system which combines the men's lightweights and all three of their women's crews. But the only Oxford rowing Blues awarded this year will go to the 18 members of the two lightweight crews.



## Women's Lightweights

### Clare Leckie, OUWLRC Stroke

Given the momentous challenges and changes that have swept not only the country but the world in recent weeks, sitting down to write about trialling with OUWLRC and taking part in the first Lightweight Women's Boat Race to be held on the Tideway feels like quite an indulgence.

When I began rowing 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years ago, I wasn't entirely sure that it was for me and I took a fair amount of convincing before agreeing to return for a second year. Before I knew it, however, I was taking part in last year's OUWLRC Development Squad following a successful year with W1.



Clare Leckie

These sessions were a great way to meet the coaches and gain a bit more insight into what being a member of a university squad involves. When I began trialling in September, I lacked confidence and fully expected to return to SCCBC within a matter of weeks. But as the season progressed, I

discovered that I was relatively well equipped to handle the demands of trialling and was well-placed within the squad.

Trialling this year has provided countless opportunities. I made some great friends and learnt almost as much about myself as I did about rowing. Potentially the most exciting opportunity, however, was actually getting to train on the water on a regular basis. That said, our boathouse in Wallingford was subject to significant flooding throughout the year and our pontoon was often unreachable as a result. This meant training was at times disrupted and sessions had to be moved indoors or to other locations such as Dorney and London.

The lightweight boat races were scheduled for the very first day of the Easter break, which at the time seemed less than ideal but now seems like a blessing. Knowing that we were a few seconds slower than Cambridge at Quintin Head, we were anticipating a tough race. We expected them to go out hard from the start, and given they had the early advantage of the Middlesex station, we were pleasantly surprised when we took the lead and began to pull away heading towards Hammersmith Bridge. From there, how-

ever, Cambridge got their act together and put up an impressive fight that had rather unpleasant consequences for us. An email from Anu to me and Emily contained probably the most accurate and eloquent account of what followed. It simply read: 'Ouch!'

Crossing the finish line second is never easy; but, in hindsight, getting there at all was an achievement in itself and this is something that I'll be very proud of for a very long time.

*The day after the lightweight races it was announced that the remaining Boat Races, scheduled two weeks later, had been cancelled. Augustin Wambersie, OUBC President had been rowing at 4 in the Blue Boat and Hannah Morrisey at bow in Osiris. I'll let Hannah have the last word . . .*

### OUBC Trials

#### Hannah Morrisey

While the decision to cancel the race was obviously entirely understandable, it was nevertheless a disappointing end to a year that has been as challenging as it was enjoyable.



Hannah Morrisey  
(from theboatraces.org website)

Having rowed for two years at Catz but with no rowing experience prior to that, there was definitely a steep learning curve this year, which was not helped by last term's unfortunate weather conditions. Not to be beaten by a bit of flooding, however, much of our training was, when possible, relocated to Eton Dorney or the Tideway. While the occasionally endless seeming erging may at times have been discouraging, I have been lucky enough to be part of a positive and supportive team who never forgot the goal we were working towards. One of the main highlights of this season has to be getting to know the other people in OUW who brighten up even miserable rainy days.

This term was mainly focused on our various fixtures and while we did not leave most of them with the result we wanted, they were still valuable experiences on how to race. Our last fixture was against the UL 2nd VIII: at the beginning Osiris took the lead and were two lengths up at Hammersmith, but unfortunately UL then overtook us and won by several lengths. Despite losing, we left London that day feeling confident that we had a fortnight to practise our race plan (namely, not running out of steam), and it is obviously a shame that we never got the chance to show Cambridge what we were capable of.

To be continued . . .!