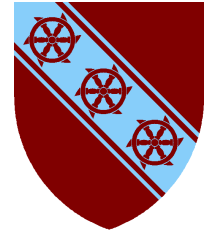




*St Catherine's College Rowing Society*  
*St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ*



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

24th March, 2024

**In this issue ...**

That turned out to be Oxford's wettest February on record (even allowing for the leap day), and also the warmest. It would have been even more annoying if it only turned out to be the 2nd wettest February. Even OURCs managed to overcome their usual irrational optimism and cancel Torpids a full week before the event was due to start, allowing people to get on with their other lives.

It's now 157 days since the last 'Green Flag' and, although the river is dropping, we might have to wait until the other side of Easter before we see it again. By comparison, the Great Washout of 2019/20 started a week earlier but was over by 21st March. (Two days later the Covid lockdown came into force.)

In this issue we have the captains reports on the term's training and a preview of the Boat Races, likely to involve one former and two current Catz students. I've received an old Catz programme from Eights 1979, quantitatively, if not qualitatively, the high point of Catz rowing with 9 crews racing. However members of the one crew which failed to row on seem to have found other outlets for their talent. Our boatman completed his transatlantic row and has been seen back in his usual habitat, but it's only when I see him out in his sculling boat that I'll know he's truly recovered. I also notice some distinguished former Catz rowers have turned their attentions to the local Park Run of a Saturday morning.

**Results**

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

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<i>63 crews raced</i>			
=20th	5:35.0	Wolfson A	=1st/23 W8
=20th	5:35.0	Pembroke A	=1st/23 W8
50th	6:12.0	<b>St Catherine's A</b>	18th/23 W8

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**Women's Boat Club**

**Freya Waterworth, Women's Co-Captain**

After some land training due to the river flooding, we went to Dorney for the day, having pre-empted the extensive river closures. This proved to be a successful and useful day with lots of race piece practice and getting our novice coxes some water time, prepping for Torpids at this point.



Freya Waterworth

Once the river opened again, we managed to get a few outings in and raced in IWL-D before the river closed again.



Catz men's novice VIII training at Dorney Lake earlier this term. It's a 2 km course with an accessible bank; couldn't we just run Torpids here? (Photo from James Farmborough)

After that, we moved back to erg training, maintaining strong numbers and were trying to remain optimistic about Torpids before they were cancelled. We continued to have land training until the end of term looking forward to Summer Eights. Hopefully the next report will be longer and include more (and successful) racing.

### 2024 St Catherine's Torpids

#### Men's 1st Torpid

B Cameron Doyle  
 2 Matthew Jackson  
 3 Jacob Bowhay  
 4 Hamza Ahmad  
 5 Vincent Allott  
 6 James Farmborough  
 7 Thomas Aston  
 S Alexander Scruton  
 C Malcolm Spencer

#### Women's 1st Torpid

B Lucia Pyne  
 2 Emma Coakley  
 3 Valentina Antonaccio  
 4 Freya Waterworth  
 5 Emma O'Donnell  
 6 Millie O'Brien  
 7 Emma Halliday  
 S Tara Baumann  
 C Rowan Nicholls

#### Men's 2nd Torpid

B Andrew Dilts  
 2 Severin Scheiwiller  
 3 Jonas De Schouwer  
 4 Henry Williams  
 5 Leslie Cheng  
 6 William Rodriguez Jimenez  
 7 Ben Beggs  
 S Hugo Cooper  
 C Kan Li

*Men's Coach*  
 Matthew Gissen

*Women's Coach*  
 Rowan Nicholls

## Men's Boat Club

### James Farmborough, Men's Co-Captain

We started Hilary with two weeks of land training (the river closed for flooding), getting our first water sessions of term on a trip to Eton Dorney Lake.

Soon after, the river opened, and with Torpids quickly approaching, we focussed on maximising the little water time we had left. The squad showed strong



James Farmborough

commitment, especially our novices who made good progress despite only having had a handful of water sessions this year.

Unfortunately, as more rain came down, the river reclosed, OURCs decided to cancel Torpids, and we finished the term without seeing any racing.

We look forward to (a hopefully dry) Trinity term, and finally getting to put all our land training to good use on the river.

## The Boat Races

The Boat Races are next weekend. The Blue Boats were announced — with considerable ceremony — 10 days ago, while the Reserve crews were discreetly added the official Boat Race web-site a few days later. For the lightweight crews, however, I had to search elsewhere.

Two Catz students have been selected: Freddy Orpin, a Blue from last year, is now at no.4 in Isis while newcomer Luca Nadig is no.6 in the lightweight crew.

For the men's race, if you look past Cambridge's five returning Blues to Oxford's one, you'd note that the new faces in the Oxford boat have considerable previous experience. Neither Oxford nor Cambridge has raced in open competition, but both have taken on Leander and Oxford Brookes (the top two crews in yesterday's Head of the River Race) in private fixtures and, on the whole, Oxford seem to have performed better than Cambridge.

With the women it's a different story with Oxford now having 4 returning Blues to Cambridge's two, and while Oxford make up the numbers with experienced outsiders, 5 of the Cambridge boat are Blondie promotions. They've both raced the Brookes women, with Oxford again seemingly quicker than Cambridge. Unlike Oxford, the Cambridge Women have raced in open competition, finishing 7th in the Women's Eights Head of River, which serves to underline the notion that this just might, for the first time in quite a few years, be a beatable crew.

I'm afraid I have no information on the lightweights.

This year's Boat Race 'story' will no doubt focus on the sisters, a pair from Oxford and a pair from Cambridge who, having rowed together for their Universities now find themselves in opposing camps. In particular, Helen Nielsen-Scott, former Catz women's captain, has been selected for Blondie so she'll be racing her older sister, stroking Osiris. One benefit of the great N-S divide is that it might persuade the TV people cover at least some of the Osiris-Blondie race (immediately following the Women's Blue Boats).





The 1979 men's 1st Eight: Nick Taylor (B), Ed Parker-Jervis, Mike Halson, Tony van de Vusse, John Greenway, Joe Quinsey, Jon Wilmshurst, Rob Hughes (S), Paul Spedding (C). Photo from Rob Hughes.

## Eights 1979

Phil Penketh (M.76), recently retired from the Pharmacology department at Yale, has been going through his old papers and sent me a copy of the Catz programme produced for Eights 1979. (Don't snigger — a black-and-white photocopier represented the highest level of technology available to students at the time. But we were happy.)

This was a record year for the Boat Club: we had 9 crews competing in Eights — two more than any other college — yet still no boathouse to call our own. Our boats were on rented racks in the old OUBC (on the site of the present Univ boathouse), but for Eights we put up a marquee on Christ Church meadow, next to where the barge was moored (which, by then, was off limits due to its fragile state). The Captain, Rob Hughes, used the programme to make this point:

'After several years of great effort trying to save the barge it was finally decided at the beginning of the year that it was more of a liability than an asset. As such this landmark of rowing on the Isis will shortly be no more, it having been sold. On the brighter side its future is probably now secure and within a year or so it should again be fit for use, but not for us!

'This being the case the question of a replacement permanent residence for the Boat Club and its spectators comes to mind. The marquee arrangements provide a reasonable temporary substitute for Eights but at a cost of approximately £3000 a year for just four days this cannot be considered as a permanent solution. We are thus drawn inevitably to consider the possibility — yes you've guessed it — of the building of a boathouse for the College and the Boat Club. This suggestion has always been met with cries of 'but what of the expense' and 'where do you build it?' However, over the past few years there has built

up an acute shortage of racking space at the OUBC, where we share facilities with six other colleges, due to the expansion of women's and graduate rowing. This means that sooner or later someone, somewhere, will have to build. Since St Catherine's, together with Wadham and St Peter's, are the colleges without their own boathouse it is clear that it is with them that the responsibility lies, although it is clear that the graduate colleges would also benefit from joining a corporate effort.



Catz marquee in Eights 1979 (Photo from N Taylor)

'It is, of course, cooperation that is the key to the formulation of any realistic plan to provide facilities for all clubs at a reasonable cost to each. Exactly how plans should be co-ordinated is a big question but it has been suggested that Jim Railton (University Sports Officer) and the Senior Treasurers' Committee should be approached. However, 'back at the ranch' as it were, the College itself must be convinced of the importance of this possibility and persuaded to put all its effort into it. On this note it should perhaps be pointed out that a fifth of the College now rows regularly and this year we have managed to get nine crews on in Summer Eights, two more than any other

college. Indeed, we have as many women's crews as any of the women's colleges and only Oriel and St Edmund Hall have more men's crews. As such I believe that it is about time that the College took a realistic view of its responsibilities and lead the way in relieving what is becoming an ever-increasing problem.'

*The Rowing Society was formed 5 years later and by 1997 we finally had our own boathouse at Longbridges.*

Casting an eye over the 1979 crew lists, pausing only briefly to note the appearance of K Skinner in the men's 2nd VIII and A Dudhia in the 5th, I realise that the women's 4th VIII — the one crew which failed to row on — contains more than its fair share of Wikipediated members. At 7 is Cathy Panter-Brick, Professor of Anthropology and head of Morse College at Yale (has she met Phil?). At 2, Carolyne Larrington, Professor of Medieval European Literature and fellow of St John's, Oxford, specialist in Norse mythology and (clearly inspired by her time pulling an oar in a Catz boat) a former President of the Viking Society. And finally, in the bow seat, an aspiring young novelist by the name of Jeanette Winterson. I recall an article in which she wrote that, newly arrived in Oxford with just a deeply unfashionable cagoule by way of a coat, she always felt a bit self-conscious amongst her more conventionally attired fellow students. Apart, that is, from the Boat Club.

## Atlantic Row

Our boatman, Jim Ronaldson, and Ian Davies reached Antigua in the early hours of 18th February, after 66 days at sea, setting a record for the oldest men's pair to row across the Atlantic. In his just-off-the-boat interview Jim mentioned that a lot of people had told him he was mad to attempt it. I'm proud to count myself as one of that number (and I have not changed my opinion on the matter).



Jim Ronaldson (left) and Ian Davies shortly after landing.

Jim's now back in Oxford and (after a family vote, I heard), once again clean-shaven. Which is a shame because I'd been planning to greet him with 'Arr — Jim lad!'. He's still not sorted out that beached pontoon outside the Univ boathouse, though.

## Park Runs

In the absence of rowing a student's thoughts turn to other pursuits. If you're familiar with the 5 km Park Runs that happen at 9 am every Saturday morning all around the country, you won't be surprised to hear that the one held in the University Parks has been popular of late, regularly topping 600 participants this past term. Glancing over yesterday's results, I did spot a few familiar ex-Catz names among the sub-20 min finishers:

- 19:06 Augustin Wambersie (Blue 19-21, Isis 22)
- 19:17 Nicholas Brodie (Isis cox 05-06, OUBC 07)
- 19:22 Zac Abel (Lightweights 23)

Mal Spencer would normally also be among their number, but yesterday he was a course marshal.

## Coming up ...

In the next newsletter there will be a report on the Boat Races. I'm quietly hopeful that Catz student Cici Hong, cox of the 2021 men's lightweights, will then no longer be the correct answer to the question: 'Who was the last Oxford woman to win a Boat Race?' But, then again, the answer might just become: Helen Nielsen-Scott.

The Boat Club hasn't arranged an Easter training camp this year, but I'm hoping they'll be organised enough to get an VIII or two entered for City Bumps at the end of 0th week (this is likely to fill up early). I'd also expect OURCs to lay on an extra IWL time trial to make up for all the racing missed over the past two terms. All this, and prospects for Eights, will be covered in the next newsletter.

In case you're wondering: yes, Eights has occasionally been affected by high stream conditions, although never cancelled completely. The last time was in 2000, when the first two days were restricted to the top crews rowing in half-divisions.

Anu Dudhia

## Diary

- |                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 29 Mar 2024    | Lightweight & Vets Boat Races |
| 30 Mar 2024    | The Boat Races                |
| 21 Apr 2024    | City Bumps                    |
| 22-25 May 2024 | Eights                        |