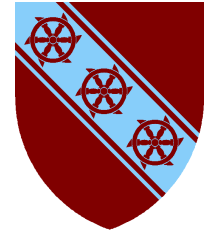




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ



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

14th November, 2015

In this issue . . .

Younger readers may wish to skip over much of this newsletter containing, as it does, recollections of their elders and, hitherto presumptive, betters. Which is no bad thing given some of the questionable behaviour described (and that's just from SCR members).

But first we note the rather more honourable exploits of Zoe de Toledo, who's had sole responsibility for flying the Catz' flag on the international circuit this season.

There was a big turn-out for this year's Gaudy and an equally enthusiastic take-up of our offer to get alumni back on the water again beforehand. The Gaudy booklet handily provided much material for our News from Alumni section (reproduced with permissions from those concerned).

John Lipscomb had intended to write something for last May's newsletter to accompany the reflections of his 1950's contemporaries, but he got somewhat waylaid and so I include it in this edition. And not just because it makes the rest of us feel younger.

Finally, back to the actual youngsters: news of our University triallists and an analysis of the first encounter between next year's prospective Boat Race crews.



Having coxed the men's senior VIII down through Iffley Lock last weekend to escape the novice hordes on the Isis, imagine my horror when turning around to discover that some of the little b*****s had followed us.

Results

World Championships, 30th Aug-6th Sep
Aiguebelette, France

Women's Eights (10 entries)

4th GBR Cox: Zoe de Toledo (M.10)

International Rowing

Zoe de Toledo (M.10), the 'Smallest and least athletic member of the GB rowing team' (her words, not mine) has been Catz' only international representative for the past year. She's been the regular cox for the women's VIII. This event has been dominated by the USA for a number of years, with Canada 2nd and the British among the pack fighting it out for the bronze medal. But in the 2015 World Championships, the most important race before the Olympics, the New Zealanders came through with a late surge to take 2nd place from the Canadians leaving the British crew 4th, although still only a half-a-length off the silver medal. However, by finishing in the top 5, the British women's VIII achieved its primary goal which was to qualify for Rio 2016. As with all Olympic rowing, it's the 'boat' which qualifies and not the crew. Even so, it's probably worth Zoe blocking out a fortnight in mid-August in her 2016 diary.

So now competition for seats in the GB Olympic boats is well underway. Andrew Triggs-Hodge (M.10), having missed the whole of last season due to a viral infection, is back in the mix but with every member of GB men's sweep squad winning a World Championship medal there aren't any 'easy' tickets to Rio. The men's VIII has been the top boat this past season — one of the highlights of which has been their ongoing duel with the Germans in which they generally got the better of a number of tight finishes — but everyone expects that the coxless four will be designated the top boat for the Olympics, and tasked with defending a gold medal run that extends back to Sydney 2000 (and, it should be added, always with a Catz man in the stroke seat).



Crew 2: Tom Skinner (str), Tony Mitchell, Karen Mason, Kevin Skinner, Sara Ramsden, Tracey Robbins, Margaret Lloyd, Rachel Slade (bow).

Gaudy Outing

For the ex-rowers among those attending the College Gaudies, we usually offer the opportunity to get back on the water and this year a large number of alumni took up that offer, which posed a few logistical challenges. There's a well-known adage that everything takes twice as long as you'd expect with novices; to which I can now add a corollary: and one-and-a-half times as long with alumni who haven't set foot in a boat in 30 years. Thanks to everyone for their patience and, in particular, to current Boat Club members Becky Lenihan, Martin Garthwaite, Freja Elbro and Serkan Birgel for (patiently) helping out.



Crew 1: John Kenyon (str), David Webb, Gareth Williams, Simon Morgan, Nigel Freeman, Gail Norbury, Tristram Sutton, Jonah Jones (bow).

News from Alumni

Belinda Bawden (M.76, Geography) As a sporty girl, one of the great joys of arriving at Catz in 1976 was the opportunity to start new sports clubs in college, compete against other colleges and universities and organise staff v. student or men's v. women's

fun matches, which were somehow invariably followed by spectacularly boozy evenings. In our first year we formed a Catz netball team which won Cuppers, much to the astonishment and annoyance of reigning champs St Hugh's. The celebration dinner culminated in noisy bike races round the College at midnight, until John Simopoulos, investigating the rumpus, was nearly mown down by the close tussle through the lodge between the admissions tutor and the Dean.

Rowing in the Blue Boat and for Catz in my second year sobered me up, a little. Isn't it amazing that it has taken until this year for the Women's Boat Race to achieve proper recognition? Rowing later became a huge part of my life in London then even in Chicago, but moving to West Dorset to bring my daughters up near my mother somewhat restricted work, sport and other opportunities.

I am about to start working in a further education college, involving a commute on what must be one of the most stunning roads in the world along Dorset's Jurassic Coast.

Anu Dudhia (M.77, Physics) Since completing my DPhil, I have remained here in Oxford, where I am now a University Research Lecturer in Atmospheric, Oceanic and Planetary Physics, specialising in infrared radiative transfer and satellite remote sensing of the atmosphere. I still manage to take out my sculling boat a few times a week and maintain an involvement with the Boat Club, although these days the demands of a 6-year-old daughter prevent me from doing as much coaching as I used to (on the other hand, I have learned all the song lyrics from 'Frozen').

Siobhan Staunton (M.77, Chemistry) I now live in the South of France with my husband and 15-year-old daughter and work for the French National Agricultural Research Institute. Festering, rowing, JCR discos, tutes with the Brians and all-night essays seem a long time ago, as indeed they are.

(*and in a subsequent email:*) I missed the pre-Gaudy rowing session, BUT association of ideas, then transmitted to my daughter who gave rowing a try (a very minority sport in the South of France), enjoyed it, signed up and so, since I found myself driving her to the far side of town, I gave it a try and am now learning to scull. None of the youngsters in the club and only a tiny minority of the seniors have ever rowed with one blade and I think they do not believe that Bumps races exist.

Anthony Jones (M.78, Chemistry) Noisy Welsh sailing fanatic from Tenbigh, better known as ‘Jonah’. After Catz, a PhD at Southampton before a job on Teeside, becoming an expert on Titanium Dioxide (white stuff). Married to Jane with 4 children — a teacher, 2 engineers (one a Tab), one still at school. Memories: rowing and blades (twice), paddling to The Trout, Chemists’ dinner with the car-park attendant’s hut moved on to the quad, fountains adjusted so that they squirted spectators, standing on a frozen Cherwell (-21°C), punting home from the Vicky Arms in the dark, May balls, croquet, youth and friendship (and hard work and exams).

Gail Norbury, née Wiggins (M.78, Biochemistry) Clinical scientist, genetics centre, Guy’s Hospital, veteran hockey player.

David Webb (M.79, Physics) When not researching into photonics or teaching electronic engineering at Aston University, I am enjoying a second rowing career, taken up in my forties. National level masters medals have been accumulated as a result of my key talent: the ability to persuade better rowers to let me in their boat.

Gareth Williams (M.79, Metallurgy) For the past 15 years I have been working for Cummins in Daventry managing the Applied Mechanics Laboratory — doing vibration, stress, strain and fatigue assessments on big (38–78 litre) V12, V16 and V18 diesel engines. Last year I rediscovered open water swim triathlon and am signed up for a couple of events this year. Married to Rachel Slade (M.80) who has covered all the stuff about children!

Rachel Slade (M.80, Mathematics) Still in Oxford! I worked for 22 years at Oxford Brookes University leading their Database Administration team, before moving down the hill 3 years ago to the University of Oxford IT Services where I’m currently managing the DBA team, from an office overlooking the University Parks. Gareth Williams (M.79) and I married in 1986 and have two daughters: Joanne (24, now a physiotherapist), Kim (21, final year student at Jesus College, Experimental Psychology). Now that the girls are away from home, Gareth and I have taken up exercise in a big way and are training for Triathlons.

Karen Mason (M.81, Mathematics) I qualified as an actuary and spent most my career at Prudential, which I joined because they had a boathouse, but unfortunately I found little time to continue with rowing. I spent a brief but interesting time at post-merger Lloyds/HSBC and am now appointed actuary for an international off-shore life company. I have four children and am married to Mike and enjoy painting, playing clarinet and baking.

Memories of Water Activities

John Lipscomb (M.56)

Before coming up to Oxford I had been a member of Bradford Rowing Club and had therefore learnt the rudiments of handling an oar but not such as current rowers would recognise. I started on fixed pins — the oars were held against the gate which was an opening between two uprights with a cord across the top to stop the oar bouncing out of the gate.

One of the features of fixed pin rowing was that the oar was held against the back pin by water pressure to the end of the stroke. Then the oar had to be raised from the water and turned so that the leather collar which had an angled surface could turn the blade onto the feather. At this stage the oar could move some three or four inches back and forth in the gate. On re-entry for the next stroke, the button was rotated so that the oar caught the water and as it did so, firmly hit the back pin with a clunk. The clunks produced by eight oars all hitting the back pin simultaneously produced a loud and clear note — less clear if not all were in time with stroke! But whilst the styles of Fairburn and Jumbo Edwards were debated, by 1956 racing craft in Oxford all used gates which are similar to those still found on a racing eight.

The most memorable event of my first term was the Worcester College tragedy when their Novice VIII failed to complete its turning manoeuvre above Iffley Lock and was swept onto one of the piles. The river was high and the pressure exerted against this pile strong enough to split the boat in two. The crew struggled to get ashore but one member of the eight was drowned as he was swept away through the sluice. This had a very salutary effect on everyone and rules about swimming ability and controls on going out under difficult river conditions were tightened.

Next term brought a better memory — Catz First Torpid gained four bumps and so the whole College enjoyed a Bump Supper. As a member of the Second Torpid that term, I can confirm that this crew enjoyed itself even more enthusiastically than the First Torpid. Indeed it was out of that crew that the Boat Club Dining Society, ‘The Beer and Blade’ was established. This Society ensured that even though no further Bump Suppers were awarded in my next few years, the members enjoyed a regular dinner together with the Restaurant Elizabeth as our local and favourite haunt.

It was ‘The Beer and Blade’ that was responsible for my only Proctorial Summons. Taking our time dispersing from the Restaurant Elizabeth in St Aldate’s after dinner, a few of us were accosted by Bulldogs and our names taken for being out of Col-

lege after hours. A few days later I appeared in full sub-fusc in front of the Proctors at their office then near the Bodleian Library. I was warned that they deemed it a serious offence to fail to observe the hours when all undergraduates were required to be in college. They concluded that should I offend again, the matter would be raised with my College Dean. They were clearly unaware that Chesney Horwood, Dean of St Catherine's throughout my time there, was our guest at the same dinner and had only just left our company that evening as the Bulldogs arrived! It was with some difficulty that I left the presence of the Proctors whilst maintaining a straight face.

In 1959 and 1960, the College took crews to Henley. Though we enjoyed the experience, neither crew performed with distinction or lived up to the promise that had been shown in the Christ Church (Shell VI-IIs) Regatta in Michaelmas Term 1959. At that time this event was rowed over the home stretch each year. St Catherine's won the final. For its balance and power, this was the strongest VIII in which I rowed during my time at Oxford.

A later Oxford pleasure I recall was taking an American out for his first lessons in a tub pair. Frank Gignac came to Oxford to do a DPhil. at Campion Hall and had never rowed before this. He joined the Boat Club with enthusiasm and proved himself a powerful athlete. From novice in 1958, he was in and out of the 1961 Blue Boat but lost out a week or so before the Boat Race. Oxford lost. Frank competed for Isis. After he returned to the USA he continued to row and run marathons in Washington and we remained in touch until he died recently.

After leaving Oxford, I taught in two schools and enjoyed coaching rowing in both: Hereford Cathedral School and Beaumont College. After Beaumont College closed, due to a lack of religious staff members, the move that came took me from river to sea and to a post at Atlantic College, the newly established International Sixth Form College in South Wales. Atlantic College gave me a great breadth of experience from being the Hon Secretary of an RNLI Lifeboat Station to helping to develop the now famous alternative to A levels, the International Baccalaureate.

Moving on from there I became the founding Principal of a maintained sixth form college on Harrow Hill. Although my links with water activities were becoming more tenuous, I established a new fund raising branch of the RNLI in Harrow which still raises money for this good cause nearly thirty years later.

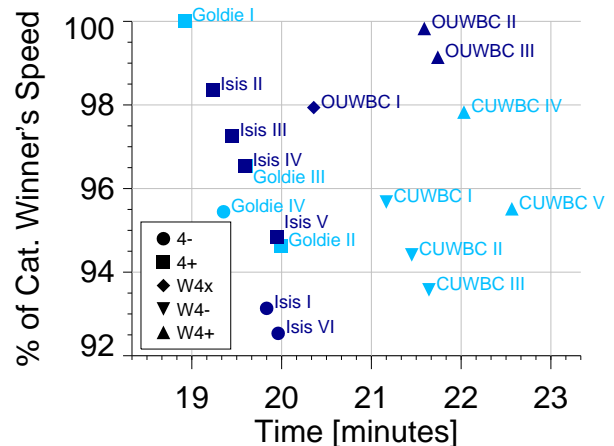
Although my former students went to many universities across the world over the years I was able to steer a few to St Catherine's and, as a result found myself invited back to coach a few crews in pre-term

training in the late 1960s. I am pleased to note one former student listed amongst current Rowing Society members.

University Crews

There are 3 Catz students trialling for University crews this term: Lucy Roberts and cox Anna Corderoy for the women's lightweights (Lucy is also OUWLC President), and Matthias Steiner for the men's lightweights. We'll no doubt be hearing more from them later.

As for the big boys and girls, the first chance to assess their relative strengths came in the Tideway Fours Head earlier this month. As ever, they contrived to make direct comparisons as difficult as possible by entering in different boat classes but, as last year, I've contrived to disentangle the results by plotting speed as a function of the winning time for each boat class.



Oxford & Cambridge results in the 2015 Fours Head So reading top-to-bottom rather than left-to-right Oxford would seem to have the advantage for both men and women but, whichever way you read it, there's no denying that Goldie I were the outstanding crew.

Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter there will be the results and reports on this term's rowing and, space permitting, what we've managed to unearth regarding the origins of St Catherine's Boat Club in the 1870s.

Anu Dudhia

email: anu.dudhia@physics.ox.ac.uk

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

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