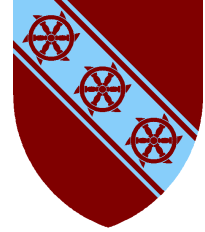




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ

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



4th November, 2018

In this issue ...

For the first time since 1985 I find myself without any detectable activity from our alumni at international level on which to report. Which is, of course, not to say that someone appearing at World, U23 or Junior level this summer won't end up at St Catherine's at a future date.

I'm not sure it counts as 'International Level', but three of our oarsmen did find themselves seats in a (not too slow) boat to China. Catz oarsmen have done well for rowing trips to the Far-East in recent years: Korea, Japan and now this.

On the women's side, the travel was the other direction as various alumnae descended on Oxford for the Gaudy, with a brief diversion to the boathouse. Not quite up to six-lane racing, but navigating a busy Isis poses a different set of challenges.

Beachcombing along the internet shore, I found an old Oxford photograph titled 'The Bump' in an 1894 edition of the New York magazine *Harper's Weekly*. A little more digging unearthed an American viewpoint on the Oxford College rowing of 125 years ago.

We're now well into Michaelmas Term, and both Catz and Oxford University crews have already had their first taste of competition. We have some early results.



The women's IV pushing off for Catz' first race of the 2018/19 season

Results

Autumn Fours, 28th October

Men's IVs, 13 entries

Q/Final Wolfson bt **St Catz** 2 L

Women's IVs, 12 entries

Heat **St Catz** bt University 1 1/4 L

Q/Final **St Catz** bt Brasenose 1/2 L

S/Final Wadham bt **St Catz** 4 L

Rowing Trip to China

Niels Wicke

In July three rowers from SCCBC (Kit George, Mateusz Szczesny and myself) had the opportunity to join a composite crew of Oxford colleges on a trip to China to promote the sport of rowing, entirely sponsored by the Asian Rowing Federation. The first event took place in Nanchang (the capital of the Jiangxi province), consisting of a 1 km sprint followed by a 6 km head race later in the day. Officially racing as St Peter's, we competed against some very strong crews from Sydney University, University of British Columbia, Harvard University, Boston College, University of Tokyo, King's College (Cambridge) and some local crews. St Peter's won the B final ahead of King's College.

After a (short) trip on the bullet train we arrived 500 km north-east in Yangzhou. Here we competed in another 6 km head race on a blisteringly hot and humid day (36°C) followed by a friendly dragon boat race. In Yangzhou we competed on the Grand Canal and boated from a brand-new boathouse that is to house future Chinese Olympic crews. Between racing and practice we were treated to many local delicacies and visited local sites.

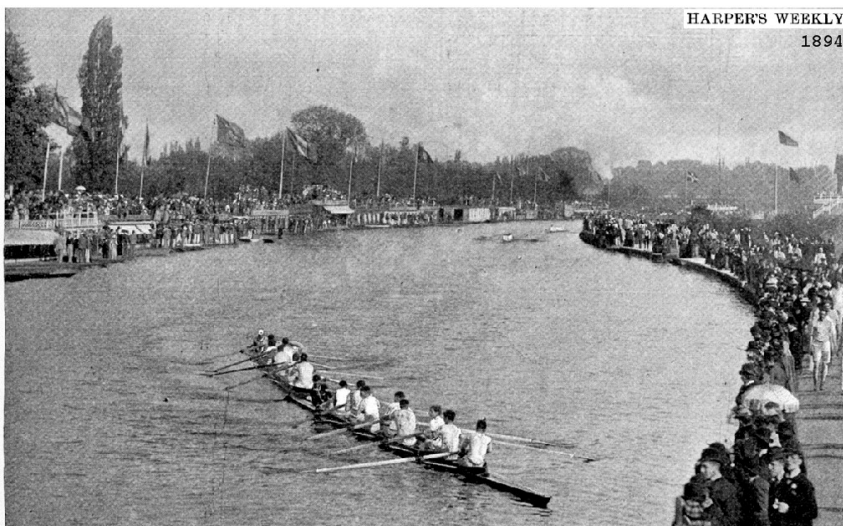
A large part of the trip involved speaking with school children and inspiring them to row, particularly in conjunction with rigorous study to attend the universities that we currently do. Taken together, it was an inspiring trip and a superb opportunity for Catz rowers to race on some very different stretches of water.

125 Years Ago

The following is taken from an article titled A Sporting Pilgrimage, by Caspar W. Whitney, which appeared in the New York magazine Harper's Weekly, on May 5, 1894. It is an account of a trip to England the previous year, in which he describes, for the benefit of American readers, rowing at Oxford and Cambridge.

The form of the torpids is, of course, not very good, and this year it was below the average, I am told. Certainly it was not good, at least from an American point of view.

The coaching of the torpids is done by some member of their college eights, and their training amounts to very little. There is no pretence at gymnasium-work. In fact, I may say there is no gymnasium-work done by any of the English university oarsmen — neither university owning a gymnasium, though each has use of rather ancient affairs.



A "BUMP" IN THE EIGHTS.
College Barges on the left; Men running with the Boats on Right Bank.

The view from the finish. The original was taken by the Oxford photographer H. W. Taunt & Co, so may well have been from before 1893.



The morning of our first practice row in Nanchang (Kit on left, Niels 4th from left and Mateusz far right)

There is very little in-door work of any description except at racquets and fives at either Oxford or Cambridge, and only desultory attempts at fencing, boxing, and single-stick.

Their season permits rowing all the year round, and of course that is much better training for the oarsmen than all the pulleys ever manufactured. Nor is there any regular routine of exercise aside from work on the river, except running, when the condition of the men requires it.

When in training it is customary for them to breakfast together as guests of some member of their particular college, and to dine together at their own expense, and every man who rows joins the University Boat Club and pays £3 10s [about £400 in today's prices].

Although the interest is great in the torpids and their races, that which is evinced in the practice of the eights and in their regatta in May is much keener, which is natural, since the eights, as representatives of their colleges, race for supremacy on the river, and 'eights week' is the most attractive one of the season at either of the universities.

There is very little more pretence made at training: like the

torpids they are invited out to breakfast by the different men of the college, and at times, when the interest is very keen they are even dined.

At the beginning of the season a list is posted at the porter's lodge of each college for the names of those who wish to subscribe themselves as hosts, and it is another instance of the boating spirit to say that the list includes practically all members of the college.

They are coached by an old 'varsity oar who happens to be a member of their college, or, in the event of none being available, by a 'varsity oar of some other college, and during their practice the tow-paths along both the Isis and the Cam will be filled with coaches on horseback, and I have seen one on a bicycle. The bumping race of the eights are conducted on the same system as those of the torpids, the only difference being that they are started 160 feet apart instead of 130 feet, and that their boats have sliding seats.

And that reminds me, by-the-by, I learned in England that the man who masqueraded in New York last winter as a brother of Guy Nickalls, the famous Oxford sculler, and as a representative of the Oxford Boat Club, was an impostor, and his statement that the English crew would come over and row us provided we paid its expenses, pure fiction. The English university man is too good a sportsman to even dream of such a proposition. He will pay his own crew's way when it comes to America, and give ours a royal welcome when it goes to England.

Eights, like Torpids, was raced over 6 days and both under the same basic rules as used for Eights today. However, until 1908, Summer Eights was restricted to a single crew from each College, so Torpids was usually the larger event. St Mary Hall, who only participated sporadically, was incorporated into Oriel in 1902. The Times newspaper had recently started regular daily reports on Eights. The following extracts are from 1893.

Mon 22 May Taking advantage of the Bank Holiday and the glorious weather which prevailed, an immense number of visitors attended the eights yesterday, and they had the satisfaction of witnessing some very interesting struggles, more especially in the second division ... Merton succumbed to Worcester at the New [OUBC] boathouse, St Catherine's being well on to them at the time.

Tue 23 May The racing proved of an interesting character, although in the first division not a single bump was recorded — a most unusual occurrence. . . [Div II] Merton succumbed to St Catherine's at the Freewater Stone.

The Magdalen crew which finished head contained four blues, including Vivian Nickalls, younger brother of Guy.

1893 EIGHTS

MEN	THU	FRI	SAT	MONT	TUE	WED
I Magdalen						
New College						
Brasenose						
Christ Church						
Balliol						
St John's						
Pembroke						
Keble						
Queen's						
Hertford						
Exeter						
II University						
Trinity						
Merton						
Wadham						
Lincoln						
Worcester						
Corpus Christi						
St Catherine's						
Oriel						
S.E.H.						
Jesus						
St Mary Hall						

University Crews

The British Rowing Championships used to be held in late-summer, overshadowed by Henley, and generally not approached with a huge amount of enthusiasm (especially not by university boat clubs). A couple of years ago they were moved to mid-October: a shot of 2000 m multilane racing just when clubs would previously have been settling down for long-distance winter head races (i.e., time trials), and now even the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race squads have started to take notice.

This year both CUBC and OUBC crews competed in coxless fours. Cambridge took the title, 6 seconds ahead of Oxford. Cambridge's other boats finished 4th, 12th and 13th while Oxford's second boat was 7th. OUWBC didn't take part, but Cambridge also won the women's coxless fours, with their second crew 7th. Oxford lightweights — men and women — competed in various boat classes, including our own Oriane Grant in a double scull.

One member of the top OUBC boat was the exotically-named (hence easily Googleable) Augustin Wambersie, resident of Rio de Janeiro, former Belgian junior international sculler and Princeton University oarsman. I only mention this because he now seems to have added St Catherine's College, Oxford to his globetrotting itinerary.

The more traditional showcase for this year's prospective Boat Race crews takes place today, at the Fours Head on the Tideway, with all the squads taking part. But you'll have to wait for the next newsletter for the analysis.

I'm informed that the 2019 Men's Lightweight Boat Race will be held over the Tideway course on 23rd March, rather than at Henley (two weeks before the *other* Tideway races). I've not seen that officially confirmed anywhere yet and I don't know what's happening about the women's lightweights or the Henley Boat Races in general so, as they say, more on that story later.

Gaudy Paddle

On the afternoon of Saturday 23rd June, before the year's Gaudy (for 2003–2012 matriculands) a group of alumnae took to the water. Add in the ex-men's 1st VIII cox, a women's Blue in the stroke-seat and, after a few tentative strokes to remember what goes where, pretty soon they were the fastest boat on the river (admittedly the bar was not high). Sadly, in the absence of any worthy opposition, they had to content themselves with a few practice starts and intimidating what appeared to be a stag party who were already regretting their decision to take to the water in a variety of inflatable animals.

Thanks to Morgan McGovern and James Wills for helping out.

Diary

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 27 Feb – 2 Mar 2019 | Torpids |
| 2 March 2019 | RS AGM & Dinner |
| 7 April 2019 | Tideway Boat Races |
| 29 May – 1 June 2019 | Summer Eights |



Gaudy VIII: James Wills (cox), Morgan McGovern, Rosie Bridson, Imogen Ochoa, Katie Power, Emily Baldock, Miriam Mahmoud, Rosemary Lang and Sarah Boddy.

Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter we'll have the results and reports on the rest of this term's racing, news of the Blues, and the end-of-year report on the current state of the Boat Club.

Anu Dudhia

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

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

Ceri Peach (1939–2018)

We note with sadness the recent death of Professor Peach, former President of the Rowing Society. An obituary can be found on the College web-site.



Just another summer Saturday afternoon on the Isis