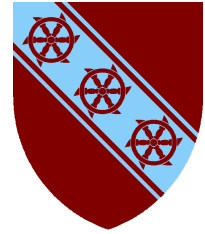




# St Catherine's College Rowing Society

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.

7th November, 2020

## The Summer that wasn't

Where was I? Ah, yes ... March, and we had just gone into lock-down. I'm glad that's all been sorted out.

Well, what a strange summer that was. Devoid of students and tourists, Oxford was eerily quiet. The combination of an empty river and glorious weather in what should have been Eights Week was all the more jarring. Yet lectures were taking place, tutorials were being given — all in a parallel universe.

The group of 6 post-grad students I'd been teaching managed to redistribute themselves over 4 different time zones spanning 9 hours. Yet the only one who failed to join our final class on-line was the one still resident in Oxford.

This term the students are back. Oxford Brookes were first, and immediately attracted screaming headlines in the local press for racking up a 100 positive coronavirus tests. Our own undergraduates arrived two weeks later and, while they have been consistently registering 200 cases a week — half the total in Oxford — 'students behaving like students' is no longer regarded as newsworthy. Meanwhile the locals just get on with life ... while, obviously, avoiding students like the plague.



Across the River and into the Trees: weekends on the Isis return to normal as crews disentangle themselves opposite Christ Church Meadow.

## Results

### Isis Winter League A, 1st November 67 crews raced

1st	4:35.5	Wolfson B	1st/14 M8
=6th	5:08.0	<b>St Catherine's A</b>	=6th/14 M8
8th	5:08.5	<b>St Catherine's B</b>	8th/14 M8

## Back on the Water

British Rowing — that's the ARA to older readers — are responsible for casting government Covid rules into rowing terms. Starting with a complete ban, restrictions were gradually eased to allow single sculls, then pairs and doubles from the same household, eventually fours and quads, and finally, at the end of August, eights. Masks are still to be worn inside the boathouses, equipment to be disinfected after every outing, and coxes require both face masks and eye-protection within the boat. Changing rooms remain out-of-bounds and all competitions — which might involve travel — are suspended. I'll just have to assume that the many hired punts, rowing boats and motor launches that filled the Isis over the summer were following a similarly strict set of guidelines.



The Sun also Rises: after weeks of persistent wind and rain, finally a glimpse of a sunrise on an early morning outing. Just before the new lock-down.



'Masks on, feet out!'. Catz getting used to the new rules after their first outing of the term.

The ban on *external* competitions didn't prevent OURCs from setting up a full programme of local racing for Michaelmas Term, although only the first of these, an Isis Winter League time-trial, actually took place before we went back into lock-down. Unlike most OURCs events, the IWL races are also open to the local clubs. Given the lack of any other opportunity to race, this was an offer gratefully accepted, with nearly half the entries coming from City of Oxford, Falcon and Oxford Academicals. Perhaps the University students have gone some way towards making reparations with the local populace.

The professionally-administered Blues squads were all up and running by the start of term but, for the student-run college boat clubs, things haven't been quite so simple. Each College, and each boathouse, has different arrangements for complying with the Covid restrictions and so every boat club has had to come up with its own ad-hoc protocols and get these signed off. Throw in the training up of large numbers of novice rowers — never easy at the best of times — and you can understand why it's been a slow restart. Even when you do finally get back on the water, your problems are not over; I know of one squad (not Catz) that has had to go back into self-isolation when one of its members tested positive.

Could rowing this term be made any more difficult? Yes, of course it can. October was the wettest month in Oxford since 1875. Storm Alex, at the start of the month, brought out the red flag although fortunately the river had subsided by 1st week. Even so, as various other storms blew over, there were only 4 rain-free days in the entire month, and we were back up to amber again before the latest lock-down.

## Catz Rowing

Ilayda Karadag, the boat club President, nobly took charge of getting all the paperwork in order and by the Saturday of 2nd week the men's senior VIII became the first Catz crew to dip their blades into the water since February, as recorded in the pictures on this page. The following Saturday was particularly wet and windy but late in the afternoon the wind dropped, the sun came out, and some novices took to the water (justifying our faith in the BBC weather forecast).

The next day was the IWL and the men's senior squad entered twice, with slightly different line-ups but recording very similar times. The event was won by Wolfson, a graduate college who'd already been rowing for a couple of months, but

New College (3rd) were the only other college VIII faster than Catz — not a bad result for just a week's rowing.

The women had been planning on racing in Autumn Fours the following week, but that fell foul of the second lock-down.

Former captain Niels Wicke is now coaching the men while Rowan Nicholls continues as the women's coach. Rowan's definitely won the prize for most out-of-control lock-down beard.

Lessons learned this term:

1. Enter everything — there may not be another opportunity
2. Face masks and steamed up glasses — only surgical tape works
3. Blisters and alcohol-based hand rubs — not great.



Oh yes, and just one more thing ...



St Catherine's A racing in the IWL on 1st November (Photo: Kaylin Chong)

### 1950 3rd Eight Blade

I was sent a photo of an illuminated St Catherine's spoon from the 1950 3rd Eight. The oar belonged to David Daniell, who later became Professor of English at University College London (in passing, I feel we should acknowledge the recent appointment of another former Catz oarsman, Michael Spence, as the Provost of UCL). The photo was sent to me by his son, who has also offered to bring us the oar itself once such things again become possible.

In 1950 Eights was run over 6 days (it was reduced to 4 days in 1954), and the 3rd Eight gained an overbump on the first day, two bumps on the next day rowing as sandwich boat, and three further bumps to finish eight places up, the most successful crew on the river that year. The crew was coached by former Rowing Society vice-president, Don Barton.

That was a golden period for the Boat Club, and we finished top of the bumps charts for three successive years from 1949–1951. The cumulative total of 20 bumps achieved by St Catherine's crews in 1950 was also a record at that time, overtaking the previous record of 18 set by the 'glorious 49ers' the year before. Of course, starting from a low point helped; in 1948 we were the lowest placed of the 23 competing colleges, but by the end of 1951 we had risen to 16th



The 1950 3rd Eight. Back row, left to right: Yinka Olumide (4), B.P. Green (3), Alex Currie (2), Ian Heslop (B). Middle row: David Daniell (6), John Bradshaw (S), Donald Barton (coach), Leslie Phillips (7), Desmond Hackett (5). Front: Raymond Taylor (cox).

Further investigation reveals that Prof. Daniell, who died in 2016, was a distinguished academic who merits his own Wikipedia page. I don't know where he kept the oar but it's nice to think of him occasionally pausing in the middle of a learned dissection of one of William Tyndale's more obscure passages to think back, wistfully, to the far simpler pleasures of thrashing along the Isis on a sunny summer afternoon, roared on by the crowds, in hot pursuit of the next bump.



D J Daniell's oar from the 1950 3rd Eight

## Bumps Starts

Having recently applauded Mal Spencer's achievement of his 100th bumps start in a Catz boat, followed by establishing a list of women with more than 30 starts to their name, the time has come to reveal the definitive list of every Boat Club member with more than 30 starts — and it seems there are 46 of you. We all know Mal is top, and you might have a pretty shrewd idea who is second, but I doubt even the person in 3rd place knows/knew they were third.

However, I'm also aware that if we're returning to bi-termly newsletters, there might be a shortage of actual rowing news to fill these pages. So, in finest Radio 1 tradition (no, I really have no idea if that is still how they do things), I'm going to give you the list, bit by bit, in reverse order over the next few issues and if I've miscounted your starts I'm sure you'll correct me.

Actually, I'll begin with apologies to Sarah Frost, Antony Froud, Keith Fuller, Peter Marx, Holly Smith, Matt Smith, Ben Sylvester (yes, *that* one), Hugh Taylor and Stephen 'Stonker' Thompson — I'm afraid that I've got you all on 29 starts, so you don't make the list. Well, not yet. You might still find your way back into a Catz boat via the joker in the pack that is the Associate Member Rule.

So, now let's begin with all those on 30 and 31 starts, occupying places 42–46 on the list.



A Farewell to Oars: the women's senior VIII, after the last outing of the year

Posn	Starts	Name	Active
=42nd	31	Tony Hancox	1950–52
=42nd	31	Paul Spedding	1977–80
=42nd	31	Paul Wilmott	1979–84
=45th	30	Julian Malisano	2015–18
=45th	30	Emily Thomas	1993–98

Em Thomas was women's Captain in 96/97 and is the 5th highest woman on the list. Julian Malisano's total is boosted by being in the men's 1st Eight in 2016 when they rowed over all four days as sandwich boat. Paul Wilmott, then a cox but is now better known, at least to Radio 4 listeners, for applying mathematical rigour to finance. Paul Spedding, the M1 cox for four years, is now an advisor for the Carbon Tracker Initiative. Tony Hancox, the former RS President, rowed in in just two Torpids (including once as sandwich boat) and three Eights, but the events lasted 6 days back then.

## Lock-down II

As of last Thursday, 5th November (4th week) the whole of England went back into lock-down. For the benefit of overseas readers: this isn't as severe as last March as schools and universities remain open. So while this makes little difference to the academic side of University

life, all rowing in England has been stopped (except for National squad athletes). And since this state of affairs will last at least until 2nd December (Wednesday of 8th week) that's almost certainly the end of college rowing for 2020. But I suppose everything is now in place for a quicker restart in 2021, assuming the river plays nice.

I'll send out another newsletter before Christmas.

Anu Dudhia