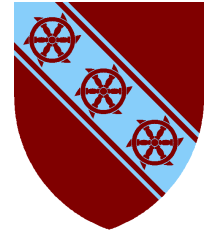




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ



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

5th May, 2018

In this issue . . .

The horror! . . . the horror! It's tempting to pass swiftly over the results of an apocalyptic year for the Dark Blues, but as this is a newsletter of record I feel a certain obligation to revisit the Heart of Darkness. But we've been here before — 25 years ago Cambridge also won all 6 Boat Races — yet we managed to find our way back.

Just to put things into perspective, we also go back 75 years to look at the state of the Boat Club during 1942–1943. And despite low numbers and a rapid turnover, not to mention a rather difficult situation *vis-à-vis* international relations (today's Brexit doesn't really compare), the records suggest a determinedly boisterous mood.

Over Easter one of our students was baffled to find a Catz oar hanging over the bar in a Cornish pub, but it didn't take much time to unearth its story.

Finally we return to the present and consider the prospects for Summer Eights (yes, *Summer* — did someone not get the memo?) The men will be racing at Bedford next weekend, and then Eights is just a week and a half after that (23–26 May).



As Dorney Lake, twinned with Hell, is about to freeze over, the lightweight women's reserve crew provide the only glimmer of warmth for Oxford supporters (Photo: @OUWLRC)

Results

Henley Boat Races, 18th March

<i>Men's Lightweights</i>			
Cambridge bt Oxford	1/3 L	6:26	
<i>Women's Lightweights</i>			
Cambridge bt Oxford	1/2 L	7:24	
<i>Men's Lightweight Reserves (4+)</i>			
Cambridge bt Oxford	3/4 L	7:24	
<i>Women's Lightweight Reserves (4+)</i>			
Oxford bt Cambridge	Easily	8:15	

Veterans' Boat Race, 24th March

Oxford bt Cambridge	3/4 L	8:53	
---------------------	-------	------	--

Tideway Boat Races, 25th March

<i>Men's Blues</i>			
CUBC bt OUBC	3 L	17:51	
<i>Men's Reserves</i>			
Goldie bt Isis	2 1/2 L	18:12	
<i>Women's Reserves</i>			
Blondie bt Osiris	9 L	19:45	
<i>Women's Blues</i>			
CUWBC bt OUWBC*	7 L	19:06	

*Morgan McGovern at No.5

Henley Boat Races

With the Thames in flood, the Henley Boat Races were relocated to Dorney Lake at late notice, and reduced to just four races: the men's and women's lightweight VIII's, and the reserves in coxed fours (the inter-collegiate races, for which Oriel men and Keble women had been selected to represent Oxford, being the most notable casualty). Due to a clash with another event — the Dorney grounds are often used for running, duathlons and triathlons, although I'm pretty sure there was no swimming on this particular day — spectators other than crew family members were asked to stay away. Given the weather forecast I have to

confess that came as something of a relief. Instead, the races were broadcast over the internet, with race footage from the umpire's launch interspersed with lakeside interviews. Outdoors! I did feel for the two student presenters who battled on despite encroaching hypothermia.

It started well for Oxford, with the women's lightweight reserves scoring an easy victory in the first race. The remaining three races were much closer, with no crew establishing clear water. It seemed that the Oxford crews always got ahead at the start but then just gradually got rowed through. All four races were won from the same lane which, being the more sheltered in the crosswind, would have been the lane of choice for whoever won the toss. However, they were using the two middle lanes of the lake so that probably wasn't the key factor.

At least for the Oxford lightweights it was better than last year, when the men and women lost by 2 and 3 lengths respectively.

Tideway Boat Races

The Veterans' Boat Race, which is traditionally raced the day before the main Boat Races, and just over the first half of the course, turned into the most exciting racing of the weekend; not least because the vets tend to treat umpire's warnings with less deference than their student counterparts. Despite surrendering the early lead, Oxford eventually came back to row through Cambridge and win by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a length.

But that was to be the last dark blue win of the year. And, indeed, the last time an Oxford crew led Cambridge.

On the Saturday the Women's Blue Boats were up first. Former US lightweight, Morgan McGovern, was at no.5 in the Oxford boat, Catz' first representative in the Women's Boat Race since Emily Woodeson in 2000. Unfortunately Cambridge were in impressive form and, even with Oxford on Middlesex station having the advantage of the first



Morgan McGovern
(Photo: @OUWBCsquad)

bend, Cambridge soon had clear water and continued to row away to a 7 length victory. The umpire, our own Matt Pinsent, having started the race, then had very little else to do.

In the women's reserves race Blondie recorded an even more emphatic victory, beating Osiris by 9 L.

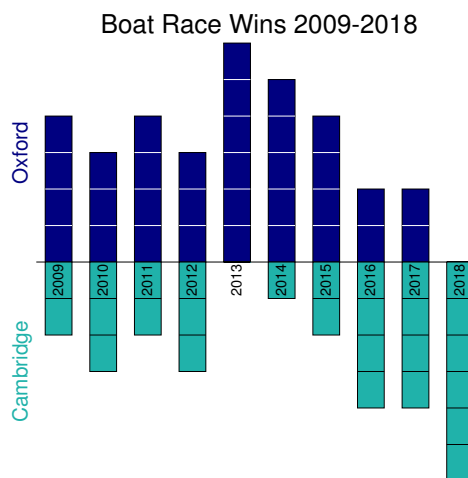
Next were the men's reserves, with Isis defending an 8-year winning streak and therefore Oxford's best hope. Goldie, on Middlesex, took an early lead but Isis managed to stay in contact (literally) long enough to keep the umpire on his toes (I believe I mentioned in the last newsletter that this one the one umpiring launch without any Catz interest aboard). But at Hammersmith Goldie finally broke free and Isis had to hang on to keep the margin of victory down to $2\frac{1}{2}$ lengths.

For the men's Boat Race there had been little to separate the crews based on their form so far this season. But then just a few days before the race Oxford announced that one of their most experienced oarsmen, Joshua Bugajski, had been dropped from the crew 'through illness', although I don't think anyone believes that was the whole story. Even so, it was a bit of an unpleasant surprise to see how quickly Cambridge took control of the race and gained clear water after just a couple of minutes and thereafter never looked in trouble as they finished 3 lengths up.

Dark Days for Dark Blues

With Cambridge taking all six boat races this year, it is as well to remember that Oxford were in the same position just 5 years ago, and again in 2002, while Cambridge's only previous clean sweep was in 1993. So it seems things can completely turn around in 5-10 years.

And at least next year can't get be any worse. In the meantime: GDBC!



75 Years Ago

Perhaps the surprising thing about St Catherine's Boat Club in 1942/43 is that it existed at all, but it seems there was a determined effort during WWII to maintain rowing as a key part of Oxford student life. This included running Torpids and Eights, albeit with most colleges combining in order to make up crews, Catz having an on/off relationship with Jesus. After the war, bumps races resumed from the 1939 finishing order. The following extracts are from the Boat Club minute book.



The 1942 St Catherine's Eight (back row: G. A. Morrison (4), J. H. Kahle (3), A. Green (2), T. J. Brown (B); middle row: S. Solomon (6), R. N. Giles (S), J. Marsh (coach), J. H. Walker (7), W. G. Timms (5); front: G. Knight (cox)

Wednesday, 4th June, 1942

It was decided to try and arrange for a Boat Club dinner to mark the successful Eights Week. Mr. Green was deputed to see what arrangements could be made. The Captain then spoke of the races and commiserated with the crew of the 'Eight' on being bumped by Jesus on the last day of races.

Monday, 8th June, 1942

A very extraordinary meeting of S.C.B.C. was held on the top floor of 'The Noted Restaurant' in the High.

The meeting was preceded by a dinner at which we were pleased to have with us our coach, John Marsh. Members throughout the meal consumed the beer and other drinks in ever increasing amounts so that before the business meeting a right friendly spirit prevailed.

Toasts were drunk and by great ingenuity this managed to go on until 9.30pm when the senior members left. At this stage it was customary for the Boat Club songs to be rendered, but owing to the fact that the

people who knew them were too shy to reveal their contents, Mr. Timms came to the rescue with a number of Cornish ditties, which took the breath away from certain of those present who made this a suitable moment to leave.

For those who read these minutes in years to come I may add that £6 0s 0d was spent on beer, it being divided among some 16 persons.

Wednesday, 17th June, 1942

It was proposed by the Secretary that the Captain write a letter of apology to the Porter's wife for alarming her on the night of the S.C.B.C. dinner. It seems that Mrs. Taylor had misconstrued the purpose of the Captain on the tiles outside her bedroom window. Thus it was suggested that he write explaining his nocturnal meanderings and assure the lady that his intentions were purely honourable.

The Captain then gave his retiring address. He made mention of the team spirit which existed in the Club and suggested that S.C.B.C. had kept the Society together because members had not only distinguished themselves on the river but played their part to the full in the intellectual societies at St Cath's.

Tuesday, 4th May, 1943

The Captain then said that if enough support was forthcoming we should put a 2nd VIII on the river for Eights Week. If not, a IV would be available for those members not in the 1st VIII. The whiff had again been hired and it was hoped that as many members as possible would use it.

Log: Eights Week, June 2nd–5th, 1943

Bumped Exeter/Lincoln/St Peter's Hall (combined) VIII, and Merton & New College II. We started 11th, finished 13th, i.e., 2nd in Second Division.

Catz Blade Spotted in the Wild

Talking of Cornish ditties ... (back there, in 1942), one of the current Boat Club reported sighting an illuminated Catz oar hung over the bar in Cornwall. Identified as from the 1982 men's 2nd Eight and, given its location, it wasn't hard to pin down the original owner: professional Cornishman Will Coleman (nowadays the man behind the 'Man Engine' — Google it!), who admits he '...swapped it for a pint of beer during a very thirsty but penniless after-rowing session several decades ago!'. Anyway, it's in The Tamar Inn, in Calstock, if you want to pay your respects. (The oar, not Will). (Or maybe both).



The Catz oar above the bar in The Tamar Inn, Calstock. (Photo: Kit George)

Trinity Term

Summer has been slow in arriving. And if perpetual February weren't bad enough the council have also decided to widen and resurface the towpath; the various closures and diversions adding to the coaching challenge.

The men's 1st VIII have lost a couple of key oarsmen from the Torpid and have promoted replacements from the 2nd Torpid. But they're now up to speed and will be racing at Bedford Regatta next weekend. I believe that the women have lost one from their 1st Torpid but, on the other hand, they've gained Morgan McGovern (who, rumour has it, is also coxing the men's 2nd VIII). However, they don't plan on racing before Eights.

Summer Eights will be from Wed-Sat 23-26th May. We have three crews in the fixed divisions. If the women's 2nd VIII manage to 'row on' (last year, that just meant managing to turn up for the rowing on races), they will be in W.Div VI (12:30) and if a men's 3rd VIII materialises and rows on, probably in M.Div VI (1.10).

Eights 2018: Wednesday Start Times

Crew	Div	Bunline	Time
Men's 1st Eight	I	10	6.45pm
Women's 1st Eight	II	8	5.15pm
Men's 2nd Eight	IV	3	3.40pm

Racing on Wed-Fri starts at noon and finishes at 6.45pm, while on Saturday everything is one hour earlier. I'll be down at the boathouse maintaining the 'Racedesk Live' web-site, and sending out evening reports as usual to those on the RS mailing list.

Eights 2018

Starting positions of our 1st Eights and last Torpids' change

Men's Div I		Women's Div II	
1 Christ Church	+2	1 Oriel	=
2 Keble	+1	2 St Anne's	+3
3 Oriel	+1	3 Mansfield	-2
4 Pembroke	-1	4 Lincoln	-4
5 Wolfson	+2	5 Trinity	-2
6 Wadham	=	6 Jesus	-2
7 University	+1	7 Linacre	-1
8 Balliol	-1	8 St Catherine's	+2
9 Magdalen	-1	9 Worcester	-2
10 St Catherine's	-1	10 Exeter	+1
11 S.E.H.	+3	11 L.M.H.	+2
12 New College	=	12 Wolfson II	+2
13 Trinity	+1	13 Merton	+2

The men's 1st Eight will have an interesting first day. Magdalen are still rebuilding and should be catchable but behind are S.E.H., who are definitely quick. At the head of the division, Oriel were blown away last year by the 'Blued-up' Christ Church and Keble crews. This year, with 3 Blues and 2 Isis men, I can't see Christ Church getting dislodged, even by Keble (2 Blues, 1 Isis).

The women are starting their campaign in a more comfortable position. Behind them are Worcester, the crew they bumped last term, but all the crews below *them* rose in Torpids. On the other hand, the 5 crews ahead of Catz all dropped in Torpids. Wadham are the current women's Head crew, but Pembroke in 2nd had a good Torpids. Keble, starting 5th, have been rising steadily since 2014 and are just in range of the Headship but behind Keble are Wolfson, who could have 2 Blues, 2 Osiris and a lightweight on board. That should get nice and messy.

Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter there will be results and photos from Eights, the Captains' reports on the term's rowing, and the announcement of this year's winner of the Ben Sylvester Award.

Anu Dudhia

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

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

Diary

12 May 2018	Bedford Regatta
23-26 May 2018	Summer Eights
26 May 2018	Boat Club Dinner
23 Jun 2018	Gaudy Paddle