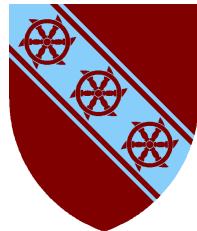


St Catherine's College Rowing Society

St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ

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



16th May 2025

In this issue ...

Finally it stopped raining. Then it carried on stopping raining, leading to the driest March in Oxford since 1929 and most likely the driest spring on record. On the plus side that means the river is no longer polluted with sewage (well, not as regularly) but we can be sure that Thames Water is now busy shoring-up its defences for the next flood of criticism heading its way: hosepipe bans, remember those?

Straight after the end of term members of the Boat Club flew out to Slovenia for a training camp on Lake Bled, surely one of the most spectacular courses on the international rowing scene. The men's co-captain sends a report, and photographs.

The Boat Races came and went. And once again they went Cambridge's way, but at least no Catz students were involved in this now perennial humiliation. The Oxford alumni crews did restore some honour, finishing ahead of Cambridge in both their races, and one of those even legally.

We're now at the end of 3rd week of term and the Boat Club has had its first and only competition before Eights in the 'Isis Spring League', an occasional extension of the Isis Winter League format into Trinity Term when too many IWL races have been cancelled. Looking over the results we can make some conjectures as to the fortunes of our crews in Summer Eights (28–31 May). And those fortunes look, shall we say, mixed?



It was a dark and stormy night, somewhere in the middle of Europe. Are there lights on in that old church across the lake? What could possibly go wrong ...

Results

The Boat Races, 12/13th April

<i>Women's Lightweights</i>			
Cambridge bt Oxford	3 L	19:08	
<i>Men's Lightweights</i>			
Cambridge bt Oxford	4½ L	17:35	
<i>Women's Reserves</i>			
Blondie bt Osiris	4 L	19:17	
<i>Men's Reserves</i>			
Goldie bt Isis	4½ L	ntt	
<i>Women's Boat Race</i>			
Cambridge bt Oxford	2½ L	19:25*	
<i>Men's Boat Race</i>			
Cambridge bt Oxford	5½ L	16:57	

* Race stopped, then restarted

Veterans' Boat Races, 12th April

<i>Men's Veterans</i>			
Cambridge bt Oxford	dqd	7:35*	
<i>Women's Veterans</i>			
Oxford bt Cambridge	4 L	8:25	

* Oxford's time, Cambridge at 7:37

Isis Spring League A, 4th May

83 crews raced

1st	4:04.5	Wolfson MB	1st/32 M8
21st	5:55.0	St Catz MB ¹	21st/32 M8
28th	5:07.5	Lincoln WA	1st/25 W8
35th	5:14.5	St Catz WB ¹	3rd/25 W8
38th	5:17.0	St Catz MD ²	30th/32 M8
50th	5:33.0	St Catz MC ²	32nd/32 M8
58th	5:45.5	St Catz WA ²	13th/25 W8
—	ntt	St Catz MA ¹	[klaxon]

¹Variations of the probable 1st Eights

²Variations of the probable 2nd Eights



Easter training camp on Lake Bled in Slovenia (Photos from Hugo Cooper)

Lake Bled Training Camp

Hugo Cooper, Men's Co-Captain

Our training camp this year took us to the edge of the Alps to Lake Bled in Slovenia. Driving in from Ljubljana airport we were greeted by a double Olympic medallist as our driver — who was happy to tell us that he thought Lake Bled was the best place in the world to row!

We started our camp with a little bit of snow fall, whilst rowing in coxless fours that the Slovenian national team had taken to multiple Olympic games. This then built a good platform and technique improvements for moving into eights later in the week. However after this the weather luckily turned for the better with sunshine and smooth water, perfect for training. Our mixed boat of novices enjoyed developing their skills amongst scenic views of churches, castles and mountains, whilst our men's first boat had a point to prove after a disappointing Torpids campaign. With our coaches Sydney and Lauren (who'd kindly stepped in), strong progress was seen throughout with M1 finding a great rhythm and strong platform for Trinity.

Four days were well spent making the most of open water and consistent training. We ended with a few battle paddles between eights and a small boats session in which some of our doubles had to rescue a stranded launch.

The last evening saw most go for a dip in the lake followed by a social in the house we were being put up in for the week, with our lovely hosts David and Suzana being very accommodating. Overall it was a great week of rowing and team bonding, with everyone feeling lots of progress and we hope to be back in Bled next year!



Sydney, either being rescued or, more likely, taking charge of the rescue operation.

The Boat Races

Last year it had looked like Oxford might be on the road to recovery but that proved to be a cul-de-sac as Cambridge dominated every race this year, taking the men's and women's Blue Boats, reserves, and lightweight races (yes, I did put an 'Oxford comma' into that list — small victories wherever we can get them).

The only Dark Blue crews providing any cheer over the whole weekend were the Veterans. The Oxford men crossed the line first but were subsequently disqualified due to an earlier infringement (being 'dq'd becomes a bit of a badge of honour once you reach a certain age). No doubt about the Oxford women's win, though, despite Cambridge fielding a couple of ex-Olympic oarswomen. Unfortunately I could not find any list of the crew members in these boats so I am not aware if any Catz alumni were involved. But even those victories just serve to remind us of how things used to be.

Oxford has recently changed its club structure and both men's and women's head coaches, to no avail. Even the usually-reliable OUBC post-Olympic year recruitment failed to turn the tide. All that's left is to have a board of enquiry (or, an 'alumni-led review of OUBC's performance', as it has been phrased).



The Men's A crew about to boat for the ISL.

Eights 2025

Eights will be from Wednesday until Saturday, 28–31st May. Racing starts at 12:15 with Women's Division VII, finishing with Men's Division I at 6:45. As usual, everything is moved forwards an hour on the Saturday, ending at 5:45 although the last Catz crew racing is likely to be the men's 1st Eight at 4:45.

Oriel men have been Head of the River since 2019 and, since they had 5 oarsmen in this year's Blue Boat, we're not expecting any change there. Christ Church took the women's headship on the first day of racing in 2023 and defended it successfully last year. They had no University rowers this year but neither did the two colleges behind them (Wadham and Univ); Oxford women's crews are usually drawn from a more diverse pool of colleges than the men.

This year Catz have entered 2 men's and 2 women's crews (one more than last year).

The **Men's 1st Eight** start 4th in Div II at 5:45. The crew has 2 changes from Torpids: the bow and cox. Our men's 1st Eight has dropped 7 places in the past 2 years they are now at their lowest position since 1998. The 1st Torpid went down 11 places this year, including being bumped by the three crews starting immediately behind them in Eights while the next crew, Worcester, won Band 4 Eights at Bedford last weekend. So, barring klaxons, down another 4 places seems the most likely outcome.



Juan, from Texas, getting ready to cox Catz' first race of this term in the ISL. Unfortunately that particular race was klaxoned (due to stray river traffic) but he had three further, successfully timed, runs up the course with different crews.



The Women's A crew (2nd VIII-ish) racing in the ISL.

Eights 2025

Starting positions of St Catherine's 1st Eights and last year's changes in position

Men's Div II		Women's Div II	
1 L.M.H.	-2	1 New College	+1
2 Jesus	-1	2 Lincoln	+3
3 Merton	+3	3 St Anne's	-3
4 St Catherine's	-4	4 G.T.C.	-1
5 St Hugh's	+3	5 Exeter	+3
6 Hertford	-3	6 Linacre	+3
7 Lincoln	-2	7 Hertford	-3
8 Worcester	+3	8 Mansfield	+2
9 Oriel II	+1	9 L.M.H.	+2
10 St John's	+3	10 St Catherine's	-3
11 Queen's	-4	11 Merton	+5
12 Brasenose	=	12 Trinity	-6

The **Women's 1st Eight** start 10th in Div II at 5:15. They have 3 changes from the 1st Torpid, including the cox, but retain an experienced core. Last year they went down 3 places to finish at their lowest position since 2017 but, having (finally) picked up a couple of bumps in Torpids they'll be hoping for more of the same in Eights. The ISL performance was encouraging; they were the 3rd fastest women's crew, comfortably quicker than the crews starting around them in Eights (apart from Hertford, 5 s faster). However the Sunday-afternoon ISL line-ups are often *ad hoc* compared to the crews that train for Eights and actually make it on to the bunglines.

The **Men's 2nd Eight** will start 12th in Div IV at 3:45, the bottom of the fixed divisions, so chased by a crew that has not only qualified in Rowing On but also either successfully rowed over or bumped up earlier in the day. For the novices of Catz II, on the other hand, it will be their first ever bumps race, the ISL being their first ever race of any kind. I'm hoping

that by the end of the week they'll at least be a bit more settled and have crossed the finish line at least once.

There was no Catz **Women's 2nd Eight** last year but under the new rules if they qualify in Rowing On (Saturday 24th May) they 'inherit' a position 4 places lower than where they finished in 2023, which would put them 6th in Div VI (1:15pm) at the lowest, but moving up for any crews above which either don't enter or fail to qualify. That being said, there are usually

more places available in Eights than women's crews entered, so only the slowest boat in Rowing On gets eliminated. I would not put too much store in their ISL result, where they finished in the middle of the pack, since that crew contained several 1st VIII oarswomen doubling up, but the 2nd Eight is essentially the same crew that succeeded in qualifying comfortably for Torpids. They didn't get to race in Torpids due to the high stream so, as with the men's 2nd Eight, and most of the crews around them, this will be their first bumps racing.

There are plans to run a bar in the Catz boathouse on the Saturday for students and alumni, as well as the Boat Club/Rowing Society dinner later in the evening at Brown's.

As ever, I shall be providing a live text commentary on racing throughout the day (Google 'racedesk live') and, in the evenings, sending out a round-up to those on the RS email list.

Coming Up ...

In the next newsletter we'll have results and photos from Eights along with the Captains' reports, and an announcement of the winner of this year's Ben Sylvester Award. There are plans to put in a mass order for Boat Club blazers (someone's found a cheap source) — I'll email details when I have them — and, after 20-odd years, we might finally get around to updating the honours boards in the Boathouse Club Room. But not before Eights.

Diary

24 May 2025	Rowing On
28-31 May 2025	Eights
31 May 2025	Boat Club Dinner

Anu Dudhia