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.

9th May, 2026

In this issue . . .

No doubt you'll have heard of Oxford's win in the Women's Boat Race but, looking a bit deeper one might get the impression that Cambridge are in danger, almost literally, of disappearing over the horizon.

The Boat Club enjoyed last year's training camp in Bled so much they've been back there again, and this time there were a lot more of them.

We preview Eights (27–30th May) and I give you advanced notice that there will be a formal dinner, in the newly-reopened college dining hall, on the Saturday of Eights to mark the 150th anniversary of the Boat Club, and the 50th anniversary of the first women's crew. We also look at the Boat Club's results from that first appearance in Torpids 1876.

Finally, if you've been into the boathouse at any point in the last 20 years and wondered if those honours boards will ever be updated . . .

'This sure ain't Reading'.

Results

The Boat Races, 3rd/4th April

Women's Lightweights				
Cambridge	bt	Oxford	7 L	20:58
Men's Lightweights				
Cambridge	bt	Oxford	7 L	18:33
Women's Reserves				
Blondie	bt	Osiris	9 L	19:51
Men's Reserves				
Goldie	bt	Isis	19 L	18:11
Women's Boat Race				
Oxford	bt	Cambridge	3 L	19:15
Men's Boat Race				
Cambridge	bt	Oxford	3½ L	17:57

Veterans' Boat Races, 3rd April

Men's Veterans				
Cambridge	bt	Oxford	1¾ L	7:26
Women's Veterans				
Cambridge	bt	Oxford	1 L	8:38

BUCS Regatta, 1st–4th May

Open Beginners 8s		
Time Trial (25 crews)		
1st	5:05.6	Nottingham Univ.
14th	5:31.3	University Coll. Oxf
23rd	6:03.6	**St Catherine's**
D Final (6 crews)		
1st	7:27.4	Liverpool Univ.
3rd	7:37.5	**St Catherine's**

Isis Spring League, 3rd May

60 crews raced			
1st	4:12.5	Wolfson MB	1st/27 M8
21st	5:12.0	Oriel WA	1st/22 W8
25th	5:19.5	**St Catz WA**	3rd/22 W8
37th	5:40.5	**St Catz WB**	12th/22 W8

The Easter Training Camp on Lake Bled.

The Boat Races

The bookies were right; victories went to the Cambridge men and the Oxford women. A southwesterly wind led to rough water in the second half and I started to worry when the Cambridge women, by then a couple of lengths down, made a dash for the calmer water on the inside of the Surrey bend, leaving Oxford to battle their way through the waves, sinking ever lower as they shipped more water. However the Oxford cox realised their peril, moved across to cover Cambridge, and the onboard pumps gradually did their work.

The Oxford reserve crews really struggled in the conditions; Osiris finishing 9 lengths down and Isis 19 (yes nineteen) lengths — I have no idea how they even judge that. The lightweights were racing the previous day but in similar conditions, and once again the Oxford crews went down to heavy defeats: seven lengths each.

Last Oxford Wins & No. Successive Losses

Women's Lwt	2019	7
Men's Lwt	2021	5
Men's Blues	2022	4
Isis	2022	4
Osiris	2024	2
Women's Blues	2026	0

While we can enjoy the rare Oxford victory in the Women's Boat Race, and take some encouragement from halving the margin the Men's Boat Race, there's no hiding from the fact that Cambridge won the other four races by huge distances.

Easter Training Camp

Sam Lennon, Men's Co-Captain

The Boat Club returned to Lake Bled in Slovenia for their Easter training camp. Thirty-four athletes and coaches (nearly double the number last year) spent five days boating from the Slovenian Olympic Centre, in eights and fours as well as small boats.

Lake Bled offers a championship course set below the beautiful Julian Alps that allowed us to train on a stretch of water longer than the Summer Eights course which gave our athletes a chance to develop their endurance for the upcoming bumping races.

Our first VIIIs trained together morning and afternoon and were able to gel as crews heading into Summer Eights. Our novices were able to spend a larger amount of time on the water over the week than they had during all of Hilary term. On the final day, we hosted a side-by-side race which was thoroughly enjoyed by the athletes.

The real privilege for me, despite the work required to run a successful camp, was seeing the improvement of our novices, watching them gain confidence on the water and becoming hooked on rowing. Many of our athletes had never sculled in a small boat before but, under the supervision of our coaches, they got stuck-in and learned a new and valuable skill that will surely benefit them for our Eights Campaign.

I am very appreciative for the support that the Rowing Society offered to the club for this Camp and would like to pass on the praise from attendees they were all so grateful for the opportunity to train together on some absolutely perfect water.

St Catherine's B boating for the ISL last weekend.

Eights 2026

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

Men's Div II		Women's Div II	
1 Wadham	−2	8 Merton	+3
2 Jesus	=	9 Somerville	+4
3 Hertford	+3	10 L.M.H.	−1
4 L.M.H.	−3	11 Mansfield	−3
5 Worcester	+3	12 Queen's	+4
6 St Hugh's	−1	**Women's Div III**	
7 Oriel II	+2	1 St Peter's	+1
8 **St Catherine's**	−4	2 **St Catherine's**	−4
9 Exeter	+4	3 Brasenose	+2
10 Lincoln	−3	4 Trinity	−4
11 St John's	−1	5 Worcester	−2
12 Queen's	−1	6 St Antony's	=

Our first VIIIs are training at Godstow this term (borrowing a launch from L.M.H.). Less congestion, but more travel time. We'll see how that works out.

Eights will be from 27–30th May, with racing from 12:15–18:45 Wed–Fri, and one hour earlier on the Saturday. Last year Catz had a net loss of 12 places, the worst result of any college, including both 1st Eights getting bumped every day. So . . . what to expect this year?

The men's 1st Eight start in the middle of Division II, racing at 5:15/4:15. They'll be chasing Oriel II who, like Catz, don't seem to have raced this term, at least not locally, but one imagines Oriel will be going all out to regain the Headship so I'd expect some of that effort to filter down to their 2nd boat. St Hugh's, Exeter, Lincoln and St John's *were* all racing at Bedford today. Exeter and Lincoln seem to be continuing their good form from last term's TorpHeads, where they were 20 s faster than Catz. St Hugh's and St John's were several lengths slower over the 1200 m course.

The women's 1st Eight start 2nd in Div III, racing at 4:45 on the Wednesday. In last week's ISL St Peter's, Mansfield, Brasenose and Queen's were all about the same speed as each other but Catz were 15 s quicker. If, as seems quite possible, Catz women do get promoted to Div II at some point during the week they will then be racing at 5:45, the last Catz crew racing each day, which I don't think has happened this millennium. They may even finish higher than the men.

Summer Eights

Last weekend two Women's VIIIs raced in the Isis Spring League and the men sent a crew approximating the 2nd Eight to the BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) Regatta at Nottingham. For some of that crew — those who didn't get to race in Tamesis Regatta at the end of Michaelmas Term — their first regatta was therefore racing as 'Oxford University' on the 6-lane international course at Holme Pierrepont (it is a quirk of BUCS that all colleges race as their parent university).

St Catherine's A racing in the ISL last weekend.

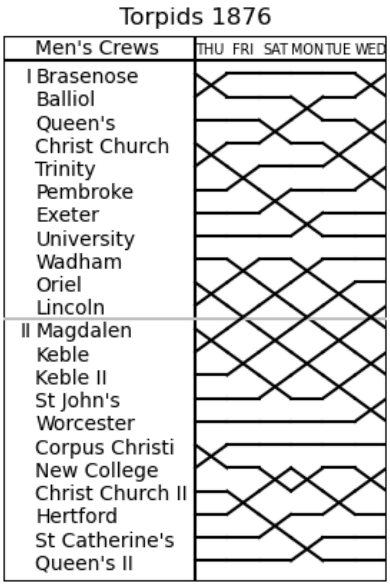
The men's 2nd Eight dropped into Div V last year, which means that they'll have to qualify in Rowing On on 23rd May. I'm not sure when or, indeed, if our men's 2nd Eight has ever been required to qualify before. If successful they'll be probably be starting on bungline 4 racing 1:15/12:15. The Women's 2nd Eight finished 4th in Div VI so will also have to Row On and, if successful, probably racing at 12:45/11:45.

I'll be doing my usual online commentary during racing and sending an evening round-up to everyone on the RS email list.

Torpids 1876

So we get finally to Torpids 1876, and the first appearance of St Catherine's Boat Club in the Oxford bumps. We can see over the 6 days racing (9–15 March) they gained bumps on Christ Church II, Hertford and Corpus Christi. This year was also the debut of Hertford College, although they had competed previously as Magdalen Hall.

Unfortunately we have no records of our own from this period, and this was before newspapers covered the event. The bumps chart is taken from W. E. Sherwood's *Oxford Rowing* (1900) In the footnotes he states 'Floods and the weather much against coaching; during the races there were snow, floods, and hurricanes.' He also says 'Hertford were rebumped by Corpus, after changing a man in the crew', which probably also explains why Catz also managed to bump them at their second attempt.



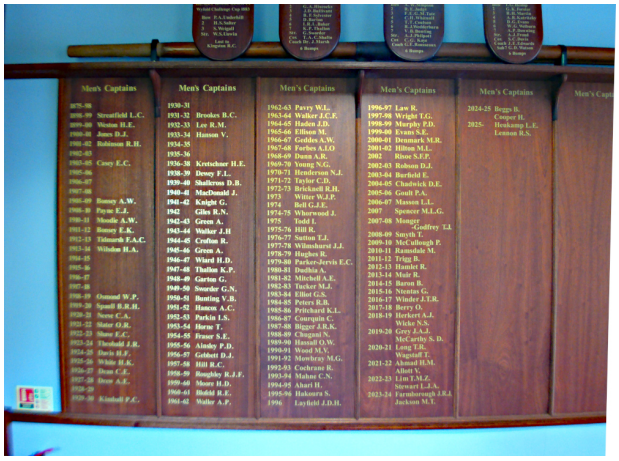
New Boards

It's been a while — 20 years in fact — but we have finally updated the honours boards in the boathouse club room. These are, from left to right,

- Men's Captains since 1899
- Women's Captains since 1977
- University Representatives since 1945
- Internationals since 1912

So if you've fulfilled one of these categories in the last 20 years you are most welcome to bring your family along to the boathouse during Summer Eights, find your name, and say 'See! I told you!'.

Thanks to Matt Smith (M.15), on the Rowing Society committee, for finally getting the ball rolling on this, and to Sam Lennon, men's Co-Captain, for getting it across the line. Let's maybe not wait quite so long before the next update.



Updated boards listing Men's Captains, 1899–2026

Coming up . . .

In the next issue there will be reports from Eights, the sesquicentennial dinner, and other activities. Seeing that the College has resumed the Gaudies (now that the Dining Hall is back in use). I expect we'll also be inviting rowing alumni for a pre-Gaudy paddle.

Expect more details regarding the dinner in the next few days.

Diary

27–30 May 2026	Eights
30 May 2026	150th Anniversary Dinner
27 June 2026	Gaudy for m03–m12
5 September 2026	Gaudy for m13–m19

Anu Dudhia