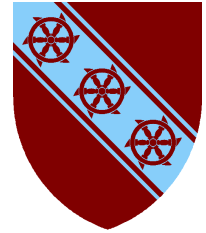




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College
Oxford OX1 3UJ



27th October, 2012

In this issue . . .

So how was the Olympics for you? I went to watch the rowing on the Friday and, as an occasional visitor to Dorney Lake in quieter times, the scale of the whole operation all came as a bit of a shock. The following day, Andy Triggs Hodge extended our alumni Olympic gold medal run to 6 successive games. Zoe de Toledo, after last summer's brief diversion with our men's 3rd Eight, also got back into medal-winning ways at the European Championships. We reproduce the text from the Rowing Society contribution to the exhibition for the Catz 50th Anniversary, and note that Donnington Bridge also turns 50 this year. The Boat Club, of course, is much older and Don Barton contributes an article of the Henley crew of 1951. Finally a plea for a Rowing Club who can host weekend training sessions for our 1st VIIIs.



Behind the scenes at the Olympic Regatta. I can remember when all of this was just fields . . .

Results

Olympic Regatta, Eton Dorney, 28 Jul-4 Aug

Men's Coxless Fours

1st GBR Andy Triggs Hodge (str)

European Champ., Varese (Italy), 14-16 Sep

Women's Eights

3rd GBR Zoe de Toledo (cox)

2012 Olympic Regatta

For those of our readers not resident in the UK, it is difficult to convey the extraordinary grip that the Olympics (and indeed Paralympics) held over this country during the summer.

British rowing has a particularly good Games. With crews qualified in 13 out of the 14 events (all except the women's single sculls), every crew reached its final, 9 of those won medals, and 4 of those were gold. Their official target had been 6 medals of any colour, so British Rowing's management could be forgiven a certain jauntiness as they walk into their next funding discussions with UK Sport, perhaps pausing for a consolation pat on the back for the tearful swimming rep just coming out the door (target: 5 medals; achieved: 3).

The first of 29 British gold medals in the 2012 Games went to the women's pair. It came on the first day of the rowing finals but, by now, the 5th day of the Games and the press had been getting worried (leading James Cracknell to tweet: Don't panic — The rowers are here!). It was also Britain's first ever Olympic gold for women's rowing.

I was in the stands on the Friday to watch Katherine Grainger in the women's double scull. Following silver medals in the last three Games, she was top of everyone's 'deserves to win' list. The crowds had already been loud during the earlier races — the sculler from the Niger in the Men's F-final being particularly well supported — but the volume went up to '11' as the A-final of the women's doubles came past. The TV coverage just doesn't give any idea of the sheer noise! Not that they ever looked to be in need of any encouragement.

President: Bruce Mitchell
Vice Presidents: Don Barton,
Richard Peters,
Sir Matthew Pinsent CBE,
Ben Sylvester.



The view from the top of the stands as the GB Women's Double cross the line to take gold.

While those two crews had been unbeaten all season, and therefore 'expected' to win gold, Andy Triggs Hodge's men's four had lost to the Australians in their last competitive race before the Olympics. Saturday's TV coverage started with Matt Pinsent down at the start doing a hushed commentary while the men's fours prepared to race behind him, with GB in the lane nearest the camera. If that wasn't tense enough, once the race got underway it remained nail-bitingly close, with GB leading the Australians but never by much. However, once they reached the last 500 m, and the packed grandstands, there was never going to be any other result. So Andy Triggs Hodge successfully defends his Beijing title.

The final GB rowing gold came later that morning, very much a 'bonus' gold from the women's lightweight double who'd really only hit top form at these Games.

You'll note from the table listing Catz medallists over the past 6 Olympiads that these are all men. Our own Jo Gough was part of the first British women's crew ever to qualify for an Olympic final back in 1988 in Seoul, where they finished 6th. Since then, several Cambridge women have won Olympic rowing medals but so far, I believe, none from Oxford University.

St Catherine's Olympic Rowing Medallists

2012 London

Gold Andy Triggs Hodge GBR 4-

2008 Beijing

Gold Andy Triggs Hodge GBR 4-

Silver Colin Smith GBR 8

2004 Athens

Gold Stephan Moelvig DEN Lw4-

Gold Matthew Pinsent GBR 4-

2000 Sydney

Gold Matthew Pinsent GBR 4-

1996 Atlanta

Gold Matthew Pinsent GBR 2-

Bronze Rupert Obholzer GBR 4-

1992 Barcelona

Gold Matthew Pinsent GBR 2-

Catz 50th Anniversary Exhibition

The following is the text from one of the display boards covering the Rowing Society which was part of the exhibition at the 50th Anniversary weekend

Rowing was one of the very first extra-curricular activities adopted by members of the Delegacy for non-collegiate students, having begun in 1874. Indeed it can be claimed that 'St Catherine's' as a name was first adopted by the rowers.

The St Catherine's College Rowing Society was formed in 1984, in response to a request from the Boat Club for alumni assistance in the purchase of a boat for the women.

The main purpose of the Rowing Society is to ensure a regular source of income to enhance the College's provision for rowing and its reputation as a rowing College. In addition, it seeks to generate a congenial relationship between current and former rowers. Rising costs necessitate external sponsorship and the Society has been instrumental in securing these, most notably, over many years and presently from the accounting and business advisory firm PwC.

In early years the Rowing Society devoted its energies to the Long Bridges Boathouse project. St Catherine's joined a consortium of five colleges and a community boat club to redevelop the site of the old Hertford College boathouse. A combined appeal by the College and the Rowing Society raised £150 000, St Catherine's share of the development costs. The Boathouse was officially opened on 26 April 1997.

For those who recall only a Barge, a marquee, or just a shared boat rack, the boathouse represents a magnificent facility, with storage for a fleet of boats, a clubroom, changing room and a viewing balcony.

The Society also channelled contributions from its alumni members towards the cost of Arumugam building and new quad. This was recognised in the form of two College residential rooms set aside for Captains of Boats.

St Catherine's reputation as a rowing College has risen steadily over the last 40 years or so. After gaining its first representative in the University Boat Race of 1967, the College has produced a steady flow of University representatives, both men and women. Several of those, again both men and women, have gone on to represent their respective countries in international events and at the Olympic Games.

The Society continues to contribute to the cost of new boats and to finance coaching and training costs for College oarsmen and women.

Henley 1951

Don Barton (M.48)

In 1951 the Captain of Boats, Vic Bunting, decided to enter an eight for the Thames Cup event at Henley Royal Regatta, St Catherine's first appearance there for many years. We mustered a reasonably good crew comprising 7 of the previous term's 1st VIII plus two from the second boat. Training for Henley continued on the Isis after the end of term, with some outings on Port Meadow and below Iffley and Sandford locks. For the week before the regatta we migrated to Henley — or, more accurately, to a farm about 2 miles west of the town, opposite Wargrave. Here some of us slept in a hired caravan, the rest in an adjacent barn or in the open air.



The 1951 St Catherine's Henley Eight: Tom Gray (B), Victor Bunting, Robert Wedderburn, Walter Welburn Tony Hancox, William Wright, Donald Barton, Geoffrey Sworder (str), Graham Kaye (cox).

We trained hard every day, and relaxed in the evenings swimming in the river, walking into Henley and the Catherine Wheel — then a proper pub — or generally horsing around. We were mostly ex-servicemen, so older than today's students. Sadly our last few days of training failed to show any improvement, despite a change of stroke — this itself pretty demoralising. We were drawn against Reading RC, and beaten in the preliminary heat.

At the time we had recently adopted the technique devised by Roy Meldrum, Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge. Following his precepts and coached by him, Lady Margaret Boat Club (i.e., St John's College, Cambridge) won the Grand in 1951 at what seemed a leisurely and elegant paddle. Cambridge, similarly coached, won the Boat Race by 12 lengths, thrashed Harvard and Yale on their home waters, and became European Champions in the same year.

The Meldrum 'style' was characterised by a long accelerating stroke with an exaggerated lie-back, prolonged until the hands were fully away, giving a misleading impression of languor. It was a delight to see.

News from Alumni

Neil Chugani (M.87)

I'm still at it [coxing] — I was in the Molesey VIII with three Olympic Gold medallists aboard which came 27th in the Head — not bad for a bunch of old-timers who paddle once a week and have an average age in the 40s.

Later this year we'll contest Masters Vllls at the Head of the Charles in Boston (we did so in 2009 and came third).

And at long last I am earning my umpiring spurs and am on course to get my British Rowing Umpire's Licence by the end of the year.

Update: Molesey won the Masters Category. Apart from Neil the crew contained two other Catz alumni: Matt Pinsent and Rupert Obholzer.

Frances Burge (M.96)

I encountered Fran at City of Oxford Regatta this summer, rowing in an Abingdon women's VIII which I was asked to cox at late notice. Our first race was started by a trainee umpire serving his apprenticeship: Neil Chugani.

Donnington Bridge

It's not only St Catherine's College celebrating its Golden Anniversary this year. On 22nd October 1962 Lord Hailsham declared open the new Donnington Bridge (previously there had just been a footbridge over the river at that point), and there has been a bit of a celebration this weekend to mark its 50th birthday. It's even made the BBC web-pages, although largely thanks to some 'app' that has been developed to overlay old photos.

It was a difficult birth, with delays over financing and the big winter freeze of 1961. Nowadays commuters and graffiti artists love it, but local opinion remains divided.



Men's Div 6 approaching Donnington Bridge last summer. The recommended racing line is to pass under the under the lamppost on the left.

Michaelmas Term 2012

The new Captains of Boats are Robert Hamlet and Isobel Renton, both of whom rowed in last year's 1st VIIIs as freshers. Robert Hamlet had previously rowed while at school in Aberdeen but Izzy started as a novice at Catz. Most of last year's 1st VIIIs are still around, although the men also have a number of freshers arriving with previous rowing experience. Rory Copus continues to coach the men but Malcolm Spencer takes over as women's coach.

With the high-profile that rowing achieved in the Olympics you might have thought the Oxford College Boat Clubs would all be inundated with novices keen to take up the sport. Unfortunately, as a wet summer turns into a wet autumn, the other sort of inundation has kept the river closed for most of the first three weeks of term. Our senior women's first competitive fixture has actually been in cross-country cuppers this weekend.

As the stream finally subsides, we can expect hordes of novices trying to cram in as much water time as possible between now and Christ Church Regatta at the end of November. Under such circumstances, our senior crews' usual bolt hole is to head for quieter waters downstream of Iffley Lock but that will be closed for the next few months while the lock gates are replaced. So this is where we're hoping some of our alumni might be able to help ...

Training locations wanted

Our top crews hope to find somewhere off the Isis to train for several weekends between now and Torpids, so we're looking for Boat Clubs within commuting distance of Oxford who could provide overnight racking space and use of a coaching launch if towpath coaching isn't an option (all for a reasonable fee). Contact me if you think you can help.

Coming Up ...

In the next issue there will be the Captains reports on the term's rowing, news of any University triallists, and a piece on the Boat Club of 40 years ago which didn't make it into this issue. News items or other contributions from alumni always welcome.

Anu Dudhia

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Row.Soc: <http://www.atm.ox.ac.uk/rowing/rs.html>
www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=93221115264

Diary

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|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 3 Nov 2012 | Autumn Fours |
| 21-24 Nov 2012 | Christ Church Regatta |
| 27 Feb - 2 Mar 2013 | Torpids |
| 2 Mar 2013 | RS AGM & Dinner |
| 21-24 May 2013 | Eights |

