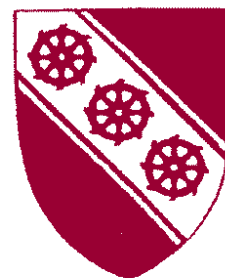


St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College
Oxford OX1 3UJ



6th May, 2006

In this issue ...

There is an insider's view of a wild and windy Boat Race from our man in the 2 seat and an account of the Henley Boat Races the previous day. Also over the Easter break, the Boat Club had a week-long training camp at Eton (partly funded by the Rowing Society). The Boat Club of 45 years ago is recalled by the Captain at the time. There are the prospects for this year's summer Eights (24–27th May), including arrangements for the boathouse buffet lunch on the Saturday and a call to arms for those who would like to enjoy the spectacle in rather more style in future years.

Some of the women have already been in action this term, entering a coxed four in the City of Oxford Bumping Races, and both 1st VIIIs will be getting in some further racing at Bedford on 13th May.

Catz 22

The Boat Club has received a letter from Valerie, widow of Joseph Heller, thanking them for naming the new men's 2nd VIII (almost) after his most famous novel. Joseph Heller spent 1949/50 at St Catherine's as a Fullbright scholar and had returned regularly since then until his death in 1999 (although we don't think he ever rowed).



Charlotte Alldritt (bow), Clare Shakespeare, Caroline Barnes (Pembroke), Amy Banham-Hall (str) and Kirsten Claiden-Yardley (Merton, cox) exiting the Gut in pursuit of City of Oxford I and II in the last race of City Bumps.

Results

City Bumps 22nd April Catz/Pembroke, Women's Div I

| | | |
|--------|---------------------------|-----|
| Race 1 | Rowed Over | 5th |
| Race 2 | Bumped City of Oxford III | 4th |
| Race 3 | Bumped Hertford I | 3rd |
| Race 4 | Rowed Over | 3rd |

2006 Oxford v Cambridge Boat Races

| | Winner | Distance | Time |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|----------|-------|
| Henley Boat Races, 1st April | | | |
| Men's Lwt Reserves | Oxford | 5 L | 5.26* |
| Women's Reserves | Oxford | 2½ L | 5.54* |
| Women's Lightweights | Cambridge | canvas | 6.00* |
| Women's Blue Boat | Oxford | ½ L | 5.44* |
| Men's Lightweights | Oxford | 2¼ L | 5.26* |

Tideway Boat Races, 2nd April

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|------|-------|
| Men's Reserves | Cambridge | 4¼ L | 19.10 |
| Men's Blue Boat | Oxford | 5 L | 18.26 |

*new record time

Henley Boat Races

A slightly different feel to this year's event with the central organisation moving down the course to Remenham Farm. As usual, however, the banks were packed with spectators and, despite the wind, rain and hail, there was some very determined picnicking from those who had arrived early to secure their spot.

There was no Catz involvement in this year's crews but the day belonged to Oxford. Dark blue crews won 4 out of the 5 races with only the Lightweight Women returning to Fens as happy bunnies. Thanks to the fast stream and roaring tailwind, every race was won in a record time (the same wind having a significant adverse effect on the the Tideway Boat Races the next day, which are rowed in the opposite direction).

This brings Oxford's tally to 22 wins out of the 25 Henley Boat Races held since 2001. Cambridge were equally dominant in the early 1990's so, if you haven't been recently, I strongly recommend turning up to enjoy the phenomenon while it lasts.

President: Bruce Mitchell

Vice Presidents: Don Barton, Rev. Joseph Bell,
 Lord Garden KCB, Richard Peters,
 Sir Matthew Pinsent CBE, Ben Sylvester

The Boat Race

Colin Smith, rowing no.2 in OUBC

Ten days before race day, the Blue Boat sat around for what turned out to be not just another crew meeting. We had just finished a below-par outing on the race course on the first really rough day down there this whole season. It was clear we were simply average in rough water, and if it was going to stay rough, we had better do something about it!

The press and bookies have been getting their predictions on the Boat Race wrong for a number of years. Because of our smaller crews (last year was an exception), younger athletes, and of course, the ‘agricultural’ rowing style, Oxford tend not to be favoured. This year was no different, despite Oxford crews beating Cambridge’s convincingly in the two events on the water earlier in the season.

So when the press saw Oxford rowing backwards and forwards in the rough water, and ‘yanking their finishes’ to quote the Daily Telegraph, they had a field day. Cambridge looked ‘better’, had more experience, were more serious in their approach, and as if they didn’t have it all already, the press claimed that Cambridge had a lightning fast start. Clearly they didn’t do their homework properly!

We dominated off the start, forcing Cambridge to work very hard just to stay in contention early on, and then made our move right before Hammersmith and went on to win by five lengths. There is a difference between pretty rowing and effective rowing!

In all my life, I don’t think I have been through an experience that has been so well planned and so well executed. The Boat Race is famous for being unpredictable. No one has a race plan that goes past the first four minutes. And normally, there is some point in the race where you have to do something superhuman to win. That wasn’t the case this year. The amount of effort, physical and mental, that went into our preparation, from the first day of training to the way we conducted ourselves in front of the media during the final week, was far beyond my previous OUBC years, and far beyond the effort that I have seen put into any other project. It is an incredible feeling for that effort to pay off, especially so hand-somely.

Now I must try and pass my finals in 2 weeks time! *Bastien Ripoll stroked OUBC, thereby becoming not only the most famous Frenchman in Oxford but also, thanks to excessive French media interest, probably the most famous oarsman in France (no, of course it doesn’t make any sense). Bruce Magee (stroke) and Nick Brodie (cox) were unfortunate to be on the wrong end of a one-sided Isis-Goldie race.*

Eton Training Camp

Peter Goult, Men’s Captain

The Boat Club took 16 individuals to Eton for one week before Trinity Term started. We stayed in my old house and used the (now redundant) boathouses upstream of Eton and Windsor. We put out up to 2 VIIIs at one point, with Matthew Elliott coaching in the launch. However, there was a variety of small boats training, making full use of the beautiful 3 km stretch, and several members of the Boat Club learned to scull during the week too. Bad weather cut one day short, but we had a visit from a few finalists and Isis Stroke, Bruce Magee to provide some good coaching to the scullers. We had a very successful week, ended on a beautiful day and all went out for a great meal in Windsor. Better still, Eton have invited us back again next year!

Well done to Amy for organising such a great camp.



Boat Club members at the Eton training camp. Judging by the smiles, I’m guessing that this is the ‘before’ photo.

45 Years Ago

Official records are pretty scarce for this period so the 1960/61 Boat Club Captain contributed the following for The History.

Robert Blofeld (M.59)

In 1960, St Catherine’s was still the Society. Our catchment area for rowing was pretty broad for both oarsmen and coaching (e.g., St Stephen’s Hall, Champion Hall, Mansfield). However, the actual number of active oarsmen was not large. We just had two VI-Is in Torpids and three in Eights. I was one of the very few who had done any rowing — at St Edward’s School — before coming up to Oxford. But we few had plenty of enthusiasm and some talent. One of our

number, Frank Gignac, a large and genial American who was studying to be a Jesuit priest at Campion, did well in the University trials¹. Another oarsman, John Linklater, had left the army to read medicine at what then seemed to us the incredibly advanced age of around 40. He proved a stalwart member of the club, too. Overall, though, we could not approach the heights of the senior rowing colleges.

On the rowing front we had mixed success. In Torpids we went up four places [finishing 18th on the River] and earned a Bump Supper. That event is somewhat lost in an alcoholic haze but the whole Society was present in hall with Alan Bullock in the chair. We also burnt an otherwise useless old boat in the front of the Society.

Unfortunately the summer brought us down to earth. Despite some training pre-term, and some theoretical strengthening of the crew, results in Eights Week were equally moving — but in the other direction [finishing 25th].

In those days we were still based on one of the remaining barges. In the summer of 1961 we undertook the task of redecorating it ourselves. It did not take us long to discover how much woodwork there was in those boats!

Boats were stored at Salter's boat house. The club seemed to be going through an A. A. Milne phase²; boats had names such as *Piglet* and *Winnie the Pooh*.

Socially a good time was had by all. The Bird and Baby (Eagle and Child in St Giles) was 'our' pub — in those days unmodernized and beer at 1s 4d. There was also a tradition (although that may suggest more years than reality!) of Christmas Pudding races. This was a knockout competition for pairs in the heavy teaching tubs with a cox. Winners received Christmas Puddings made for us by friends of the club.

News from Alumni

Geoffrey Sworder (M.47), captain 1949/50.

I am well and looking forward to the 60th anniversary of the fabulous year 1949. I hope we can then get as many relics onto the river in 2009!

Ester Takacs (M.85)

I haven't actually heard from Ester, but I noticed her picture in the May edition of Rowing & Regatta and it seems that she's sculling in a far-too-serious Vet Women's quad at Tees Rowing Club.

¹A trialist in 1959 and 1960, he rowed in the Isis crew in 1961 which, at that time, 'competed' against Goldie in the annual Tideway Head of the River Race, one week before the Boat Race. The 'Isis-Goldie' races proper began in 1965.

²A 'phase' that was to continue for another 40 years.

Heather Townsend (née Balmer) (M.94)

Mike and I became parents to Aled on 26th Dec 2005. I am enjoying life as a mother, and have been blessed with a happy contented baby who sleeps exceptionally well at night. But I am looking forward to my first lie-in for 5 months!

Hansen Wendlandt (M.97)

I am finishing my first year as Head Coach for the University of Colorado Men's Crew. Although I have failed terribly to teach them how to row as prettily as Anu expected from us all, they did just grunt and spit their way to a first conference championship in school history [Colin Smith would have approved]. Thank you Anu, for helping so many of us share this wonderful sport with new generations. When I'm not complaining about their finishes, I serve as a Youth Pastor for a charming church at the foot of the Rockies.

Paul Halfpenny (M.97)

Once again came over with SN de Genève for the Head of the River Race — finished 58th.

Barge & Flag

Leslie Singleton (M.65)

At the latest RS Committee Meeting I suggested we consider hiring a Salters steamer to resurrect the Barge, best we can.

The Steamer would be moored during Eights where the Barge used to be and we would do what we could to dress it up as the College Barge with Flag, Pontoon and Ferry Punt as in the days of yore. We could charge for admission and perhaps have a Party on it the Saturday night. I checked with Salters who are all for it and willing in particular to fit a Flag Pole and the necessary extended gang plank, needed because of shallow water, now as then, alongside Christ Church Meadow.

With the Annual Dinner now being moved to the Summer in any event, perhaps this could be held on the barge rather than just a party.

I had in fact mentioned this idea of a Steamer to one or two Committee Members following Torpids and I learnt at the Meeting that another idea is already being considered, viz to indeed hire a Steamer but for it either to steam up and down or be moored by the new boathouse to give room for a Party or Dinner there (My idea of moving the boathouse commanded little support).

It may be that we would be restricted to steaming up and down only after the Races are over. If this is so, even one trip would be all that was really needed to the Gut to collect Party or Dinner guests from the

boathouse on the OUBC side. I think there is room there, or just above, for the Steamer to turn.

I brought to the meeting the flag that had flown on the (real!) Barge half-a-century ago. This old flag is a magenta wheel on a plain background (presumably to match the blazer pocket) but was replaced when the Boat Club at the time decided that the flag should match the blades. I wondered whether we could find a sempstress who could unpick the old wheel and sew it on to a french grey background. However, there was little support for this. Others thought, rather, that the old flag should be kept as a memento rather than being recycled, though nobody had any idea what to do with it.

I came round to their view upon realising that the flag could perhaps hang as is in or on the Steamer cum Barge. Catz has after all so little by way of visual tradition. We would need a separate flag (the Barge, whether steaming or static, without its flag seems out of the question to me) and I vote as you know for a magenta wheel sewn on a french grey background. The new flag is perhaps more at home on the new boathouse.

I wonder what interest there would be among RS Members in supporting a Party or Dinner or both on a latter-day Barge along lines above?

If you have any comments on this, please send them to me by email, or in writing to the Rowing Society chairman, address as under 'Boathouse Lunch'.

Summer Eights

Eights will run from 24th–27th May. On Wednesday–Friday racing starts at noon with the last division at 6.45pm, with racing on Saturday moved forwards one hour (i.e., 11am–5.45pm).

Eights 2006: Wednesday Start times

| Crew | Div | Bunline | Time |
|-------------------|-----|---------|--------|
| Men's 1st Eight | I | 9 | 6.45pm |
| Women's 1st Eight | II | 3 | 5.15pm |
| Men's 2nd Eight | IV | 5 | 3.30pm |
| Women's 2nd Eight | IV | 10 | 2.55pm |

Crews aren't yet finalised but I think there are about 3 men's eights and 2 women's eights in training (if the Men's 3rd Eight manage to 'row-on' they will be in Div VII racing at noon/11am). Close approximations to the eventual 1st Eights will be racing at Bedford Amateur Regatta on May 13th. Any support from alumni in the area will be welcome (and please introduce yourselves).

Boathouse Lunch

On the last day of Eights, Saturday, 27th May, there will again be a buffet lunch in the Boathouse at 12:30pm. The cost will be £8.50 per person and drinks will be available at the bar. Bring your family and friends. All will be welcome.

However, to help the caterers with arrangements, please book as soon as possible beforehand, and no later than 21st May, by sending cheques to Kevin Skinner, the Rowing Society Chairman, at

18 Wheelers Orchard,
Chalfont St Peter,
Gerrards Cross,
Bucks SL9 0HL
(Mob: 07775 897284)

After the lunch, strawberry teas and drinks will be available for all throughout the afternoon.

GB Trials

In last month's GB trials (held in Belgium, obviously), Andrew Triggs Hodge (M.04), rowing with Peter Reed, scored his third successive win in the pairs. The other half of last year's coxless 4 came second. In the single sculls, Colin Smith — how does he find the time? — came fourth.

On 29th April Sir Matthew Pinsent (M.87) was on hand to open the new Redgrave Pinsent Rowing Lake at Caversham (near Reading) which will be used as a training facility for GB Internationals, Oxford University Boat Race crews and, somewhat obscurely, crews from University College, Oxford. Now that he's retired from rowing, Matt himself has been relaxing by running the London Marathon (4h 8m 3s).

Coming Up ...

In the next issue there will be the reports on Eights, the announcement of the winner of this year's Ben Sylvester Award, a look at the Boat Club of 1950/51 when Victor Bunting was Captain. All contributions for the News from Alumni section are welcome, but I'd particularly like to encourage those who rowed in that year.

Anu Dudhia

email: dudhia@atm.ox.ac.uk

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

Diary

13 May 2006 Bedford Amateur Regatta
24–27 May 2006 Eights
27 May 2006 Boathouse lunch