

# Tortoise Club: Michaelmas 2025

## Tortoise President

Dates for the diary:  
Saturday Torpids: 7th March  
Boat Races: 4th April  
Saturday Eights: 30th May  
Saturday Henley: 4th July

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the Tortoise Dinner in November where we said thank you to Aysha Strachan who is now stepping down after her successful years running events for the Tortoise Club. Anyone with an interest in working with or serving on the Council please do reach out as we have open positions as well as a general desire to get people involved.

As you will read from the Captains below, the Club is in fine fettle with the students doing great work both on the water training abroad and off the water fundraising with events and appeals. But what the Boat Club needs is stability, a financial foundation to build on and make sure that their efforts can be best deployed to build Oriel's success and grow the club by keeping it open to all. That is why we are establishing a Boat Club Endowment, right now all I ask is that you spread the word and get in touch if you are willing and able to help. I will be sending out more information in due course on how best to donate and to get involved. But we have a great year ahead planned with row overs, dinners, and an adventure to cross the channel!

**Join our generational adventure to cross the Channel and break a world record.**



On the weekend of the 9th May 2026 Oriel alumni will row across the English Channel to celebrate Oriel's 700th anniversary, the 40th anniversary of women at Oriel, and in support of Oriel rowing. This is open to all Orielenses so please encourage others to join.

Oriel is rare among Oxford colleges as students do not pay a membership fee to row. We want to keep it that way. Today students raise their own funds hand-to-mouth each year from alumni (£18,500) and from events (£24,000). This only covers annual costs which are growing and so the Boat Club's position is increasingly at risk with little long-term stability or ability to plan ahead.

Our aim is to solve this problem by raising one million pounds over 2026 towards a permanent endowment. This will generate sufficient annual income (£30,000) to cover base costs and provide a foundation that will allow rowing to be open to all Oriel students at no charge.

A collective alumni Channel crossing felt like an appropriately Oriel way to do this. For this crossing we want to have eight crews rowing together, and so break the current record of seven.

## **Where we are now**

We announced this plan in December and already we have an interested group of over 90 Orielenses, men and women, matriculating from 2021 back to 1964. That breadth is exactly the spirit we were hoping for, as this is not a race but a celebration of Oriel rowing.

At this stage, people are registering interest with no commitment required. We are planning explanatory sessions in person and online in January so that everyone can understand what is involved.

## **Sign up**

Click on the link below to learn more and sign up if this is something you might want to join, support, or simply stay informed. We will follow up in January with details of the introductory sessions in London and online.

[<https://forms.gle/NYG1kcujp85HQTUP7>]

With the strength of the responses so far this is shaping up to be something special.

Floreat Oriel!

Robert Boswall  
President, Tortoise Club  
tortoise-president@orielrowing.org

# Captain's Report

Oriel rowing started early in the summer months this year. We successfully ran four days of learn-to-row sessions for high school kids from the Oxford Scholars Programme for the second consecutive year. Thanks to the help from our coaches, committee members, many rowers and friends from other colleges we had some very successful days and raised around £6,000 for the boat club.



This led to the acquisition of the long-awaited new W2 shell; a fully refurbished couple year old Janousek that will be named Vittoria, as she will hopefully lead the women to many bumps and victories on the Isis and beyond. A successful renewal of the sponsorship contract with Newmark watches enabled us to buy a new set of blades for the W1. Thanks to the donations this giving day, we were also able to service our launch with a new engine, after it had been out of action for over a year. We are now able to have more sessions at Wallingford again because we are no longer dependent on Wallingford's launches and availabilities. In addition to this, we bought a new speedcoach, boat lights and refurbished coxing equipment. Many thanks to all our tortoises for their donations that made this possible!

The academic year started off very successfully with over 90 excited freshers. Many thanks to our amazing vice-captains Freddie and Milly, who managed to put out a novice crew every day for the first three weeks of novice training, next to multiple tanks and ergo sessions, to get all these interested freshers out on the water. The first novices already came to action in IWL A at the end of week 3. Here we showed once more we are the biggest rowing college, with a total of 5 crews entered, including a fully novice W3. We also showed once again who dominates the Isis, with a victory for both sides. The M1 won the event outright beating strong competition from other colleges. The W2 beat half of the other W1 crews and the Oriel W1 won by a lead of 16 seconds over the 2nd fastest women's crew, Wadham W1. At Autumn 4s, an unexpected result saw the 1st 4+ knocked out by Lincoln, prohibiting the Oriel-Oriel final that we all wanted. However, the 2nd 4+ came to the rescue, rallying together to avenge their comrades in a series of toughly-fought knockout contests that saw them eventually triumph over all other crews and win the final.



After IWL, the novices were on the water daily in preparation for Michaelmas Novice Regatta, while the seniors prepared for Wallingford Head and Fairbairns. With the weather on our side we managed to get in a couple of solid weeks of training, before both the men's and women's side got hit hard by a series of illnesses/flu's/tonsillitis cases and many of our rowers

were bed-bound and had to unfortunately miss out on racing. We still managed to get out all senior and novice crews for races, albeit not with the results we had hoped for after IWL. The crews however showed resilience and good team spirit, by adjusting to last-minute crew swaps and changes, with Wallingford head yielding a 19 second victory over Pembroke for the men - despite a chaotic race.



After a couple weeks of recovering and refuelling over Christmas, our rowers and coaches returned fresh and excited at Gatwick airport in week -1, from where we flew to Porto for our training camp. We brought along 12 male athletes, 8 female athletes and 3 coxes as well as our coaches. It has been an incredibly successful week, with approximately 4 hours of water time each day for both sides, a wide range of training in 8's, 4's and pairs and the occasional S&C in the weights room. We also got the chance to race, as well as train in composite crews, with the rowers from Porto's Infante D. Henrique rowing club. We learned from their technique, speed and (inter)national experience. Additionally, we got some competition going with a 10x500m race between the M1 and W1 as well as seat races for the M1. Spending a week together in one house was also excellent for crew and club bonding. New connections were made, after we reassured the freshers that they were - on this occasion - allowed to sit with us and did not need to eat at a separate table by themselves as they initially did...



We are looking forward to returning back to Oxford for 6 more weeks of training, before we take on the other colleges for headship in Torpids 2026.

Floreat Oriel!  
Freiderikos Vassos & Merle Beerens  
Captains 2025-26