

Tortoise President

I'm sad to share the news that Michael Chamberlayne (1967) died last year. Mike was a generous correspondent with the Tortoise Club and shared photos and memories that now live on the [Crew Book](#). If you knew Mike and would like to share a memory or a photo, please send it to tortoise-president@orielrowing.org and I will add it to his page.

We are raising [£1,000,000](#) for a permanent endowment for Oriel College Boat Club, to mark 700 years of Oriel College and 40 years of women at Oriel, and so that the Boat Club is still thriving in another 700 years. At time of writing we've raised over £275,000 through the generosity of alumni, current students, family, and friends, which has been humbling. Our deadline is Saturday of Summer Eights, 30th May, also the day the final crew rows to France.

Most student rowers first discover the sport at university. Oriel prides itself on being open to all, with no cost to row, and on putting out more crews per capita than any other college. This free access and good coaching is what turns a novice who rows for one term into someone who stays with the sport for years. An endowment is the best way to make that coaching reliable rather than hand-to-mouth. The fund will sit inside and grow alongside Oriel's wider charity endowment, the principal can't be touched, and it will pay a stable 3% annual income supporting the Boat Club in perpetuity. The College has separately committed in writing that its existing funding (boathouse rent, maintenance, Boatman's salary, insurance, annual stipend) will not be reduced as a consequence of alumni generosity. I can share this commitment letter signed by the Provost at the College Treasurer upon request.



Donations: <https://giving.oriel.ox.ac.uk/p/boat-club-endowment-appeal/> For larger donations, or to talk through the appeal, please contact Tom Barry (tom@willitmaketheboatgofaster.com) or Emma Davis at the Development Office (emma.davis@oriel.ox.ac.uk).

The crossings

To celebrate our anniversaries and to draw attention to our fundraising sixty-one Orielenes have taken up gig rowing either to cross the English Channel or take on the Solent Marathon. Across seven crews, men and women, students and alumni, matriculating from 1968 through to the current undergraduates. The range of people who have come together for this is extraordinary, and the spirit around it has been the best part of the whole effort. The Channel route is 35 nautical miles from Ramsgate to Dunkirk in fixed-seat Cornish gigs, around eight to ten hours of rowing. The Solent Marathon is a parallel route around the north of the Isle of Wight, taken on by the all-student crew.

The crews:

1. Monday 13 April: Crew 1, the Solent Marathon, all-student. Emma Kate Price, Michael Simmons, Richard Stancu, Tom Kennedy, Garry Cherpaakhov, Artin Manafi-Khosroshahi, Olivia Richardson. Completed.
2. Monday 13 April: Crew 2, Channel. Martin Richmond-Coggan (1968), Tim Knight (1987), Al Tyndall (1998), Deborah

- Potter (2008), Thomas Brockwell (2016), Leo von Malaise (2018), Tom Macintosh (2024), Will O'Connell (2024). Completed. At 76, Martin is believed to be the oldest person ever to row the Channel.
3. Friday 25 April: Crew 3, Channel. Richard Metcalf (1974), Richard Hull (1986), Adam Frost (1994), Karri Chandler (2006), Christopher Hull (2021), Alex Abel (2021), Amelia Monaghan (2021), with student rowers Ivana Kuric and Ryan Edmiston. Completed.
 4. Friday 25 April: Crew 4, Channel. Henry Shalders (2014), Robert Boswall (2016), Philip Grunewald (2017), Tom Lister (2018), Daniel Brennan (2021), Hal Bigland (2011), with student rowers Yicheng Su, James Fetter and Benedetta Marchegiani. Completed.
 5. Thursday 8 May: Crew 5, Channel. Tim Shepheard Walwyn (1972), Tom Barry (1977), Mark Tyndall (1977), John Stenzel (1979), Nick Goodwin (1989), Neil Mayfield (1989), Jessica Webb (1999), Matthew Gardiner (1999), Rhiannon Stevens (2000). Completed.
 6. Thursday 8 May: Crew 6, Channel. Roger Hirst (1989), Justin Hodges (1989), Ed Haddon (1991), Tom Anderson (1993), Felix Lepetit (1993), Tom MacMillan (1995), Charlie Humphreys (1995), Guy Anderson (1998), Joe Hubback. Completed.
 7. 30-31 May (Eights weekend): Crew 7, the all-women crossing, rowing into Dunkirk on Saturday of Summer Eights. **We believe this will be the first all-women crew to row from Ramsgate to Dunkirk.** Roz Lawson (1987), Sian Gill (1990), Claire Edwards (1990), Wendy Armstrong (1998), Sally Foster (2014), Meredith Ellis (2014), Aigerim Saidabbayeva (2015), Kate Taylor (2020), Nile Verleur (2021).

You can follow them on Instagram (@[oriel.channel.crossing](https://www.instagram.com/oriel.channel.crossing)), Facebook (Oriel Alumni – The Channel Crossing), or through https://linktr.ee/oriel_crossing

Other dates for the diary

Saturday 30 May is Eights Saturday, the day of the all-women crossing and our deadline for the £1m endowment. Saturday 20 June is the Day of Sport at Oriel, when we'll bring everyone back to College to celebrate the crossings and Oriel sport more broadly; more to follow on format and registration.

Then to Henley. This year's Tortoise picnic at Henley Royal Regatta will run on **both Friday 3rd and Saturday 4th July**, as on the Friday an Oriel crew has the honour of a ceremonial rowpast in the tea break to mark our anniversaries.

The Crew Book

Off the river, the Oriel Crew Book (theorielcrewbook.com) continues to grow. It now holds 2,947 rowers across 1,031 crews, with photographs going back to a [1929 M3 group portrait](#). If you rowed for Oriel you should be in there; if you spot a gap, a misspelling, or have a photograph tucked away, please send it to me. I am particularly hoping for more information on women's Torpids crews from 2006 and earlier.

 **The Oriel Crew Book**
Oriel College Boat Club

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The Oriel Crew Book

A collaborative history of Oriel College Boat Club. 2,946 rowers, coxes, coaches, boatmen, and officers drawn from programmes back to 1828, verified where possible against multiple sources.

Inspired by the 700th anniversary of Oriel College and 40 years of women rowing at Oriel.

Tortoise Council

A warm welcome to Jack Delaney, who is our new Events Officer, picking up where Aysha Strachan left off; we are very grateful to both. My term as President ends in November, so this is a good moment to say again that anyone interested in joining the Council in any capacity, please do reach out.

Floreat Oriel!

Robert Boswall (2016)

Tortoise President

tortoise-president@orielrowing.org

Captains' Report



Hilary term started off with many challenges. After the highs of training camp in Porto, the crews were looking forward to what was starting to look like a very successful Torpids campaign for both the men's and women's sides. Unfortunately, continuous torrential rain throughout the months of January and February rendered the river unsafe to row on.

However, the squad remained determined not to let the weather and the over-zealous cautiousness of OURCs dampen their spirits. Both the men and women replaced every single missed water session with an appropriate land substitute and so we managed to stay fit and get a lot of winter mileage in - something that we're sure will convert into some serious summer speed.

This was supplemented by trips to Eton Dorney lake every weekend. Although many members of the crew lamented missing an entire day to re-erg, everyone united behind the common goal of maintaining a reasonable technical standard. Arguably, the limited rowing at Dorney made us appreciate what we normally take for granted and get to experience every day at Wallingford and Oxford. Moreover, these trips were invaluable in ensuring that we didn't fall out of touch with the sport and put us ahead of other colleges on the water.

What was already becoming a difficult term only worsened when boat house island was shut. This forbade us access to our erg room which is normally at the boathouse. Although, you will be pleased to know that we reappropriated one of the college gyms into a makeshift erg room by moving every available erg there and coordinating training times across the men's and women's crews to allow everyone to get time on the erg. This clearly worked and we were one of the few colleges that continued to train with minimal disruption leading to 7 PB's across the men's and women's first boats.

Eventually, towards the end of February, the weather started clearing up and we harboured hopes that Torpids would indeed go ahead. Alas, what seemed like a rapidly decreasing river that any Oriel crew would be able to master proved unsafe for other colleges and the Oxford rowing committee (OURCs) decided to cancel bumps racing and instead run a head race that would not affect historical bumps charts.



Despite our disappointment at the crushed dream of a Toprids double headship (there's always next year), we soon realised and rallied behind the idea that we weren't just training for a cancelled Torpids but that we were training for eights and that our hard work over Hilary would pay dividends in Trinity. With this in mind we saw the Torpids head race as a stepping stone to a men's headship and women's blades in the summer.

With a spell of nice weather and what looked like a calm river we hastily organised a gin stand featuring our famous Gilpin's Gin and invited alumni to a Torpids dinner (with no Torpids). On the day, our crews delivered with the men coming first to win the event outright and the women coming 3rd. This put our first crews at the highest combined average of all the colleges and is yet another confirmation of Oriel's place at the pinnacle of Oxford college rowing. It was also so nice to see all the hard

work and gruelling winter training paying off in some way - albeit not in the bumps that we so desperately crave. An incredibly fun Torpids dinner followed, in which we were congratulated by alumni with celebrations of the term's successes continuing long into the night.



Despite the challenges of the term, we now sit poised for a historic eights with the men starting 2nd and now the fastest Oxford college crew and the women starting 11th with a host of crews which they have defeated lying between them and blades. We are also excited to be joined by Alex Sullivan and James Fetter (who rowed for the blue boat in the boat race representing Oriel and Oxford) on the men's side and are sure that they will bolster the ranks.

We look forward to it incredibly and hope that we will have a sunny term filled with time on the water and successful races. We hope to see you cheering us on the river banks come eights and celebrating with us in The Bear, the bar and the hall afterwards. See as many of you as possible on the 30th May!

Floreat Oriel!

Freiderikos Vassos & Merle Beerens

Captains 2025-26

