

Tortoise Club Newsletter Hilary Term 2018

Double Torpids Headship was overwhelming. The captains cannot emphasise enough that on that day we stood on the shoulders of those who had gone before, those who worked so hard to get Oriel to the top and to keep us there. Nor can we say how important the Tortoise Club has been, with so many of its members offering guidance and support to the captains and to the current students throughout the year. It really makes a difference. A special thanks goes to those signed up to be Blades, without your financial support we would not be able to afford coaches and we would not be the best college crews on the river.



W1 and M1 having both gone Head

Oriel Boat Club will be well represented in the Boat Races this Saturday. Renée Koolschijn, who learned to row at Oriel last year, in the Women's Blue Boat; and Ben Bathurst and Chris Wales in Isis - we'll be cheering them on from near the Rutland Arms at Hammersmith Bridge, so please do come along, as always blazers are encouraged.

Women's Captain Report

In -1st week of Hilary, eight refreshed members of the women's squad returned for our Hilary training camp. Their enthusiasm for rowing not quite matched by the weather, many miles on training camp were put in on the ergs – a theme that continued throughout the term. This was no bad thing as we built up strength and fitness off the water, working on technique on the water.

As term started with the Isis on red flag W2 also got stuck into land training building up the strength needed to go fast on the water. With the continuing problem of no minibus driver W1 split their weekday outings between Wallingford and the Isis. Getting in valuable miles at Wallingford and doing some more technical work whilst dodging novice crews on the Isis.

W1 were quickly getting better, with people returning from injury we were no longer reliant on subs and finally everything started to slot into place. We invited University College (coached by Tortoise Max Lau) back to do some more race pieces at Wallingford and over the course of two 1500m pieces we really proved that we were the better crew, winning decisively in each piece. W2 also finally began to find their rhythm, leaving behind them the crabs of Christchurch regatta and starting to do some longer pieces on the Isis. Their enthusiasm for rowing was unstoppable - with every red flagged outing came another request for a tank session and with many of the girls coming to more land training than they had to. As 7th week approached there were still a few hiccups, another injury meant W1 didn't get to row in their crew for the week before Torpids. Yet the determination of the squad shone through with every member doing their utmost to get the training done.



W1 exiting the gut on Saturday of Torpids

Come Torpids week the Beast from the East hit Oxford. W2 began their Torpids week in a blizzard and despite being bumped by St. Peter's W1 off the start they went on to bump St. Anthony's W1, thus maintaining the second highest ever result for an Oriel W2. Sadly the rest of their rowing for the week was cancelled. However, their Oriel spirit ran strong as they went to help clear the towpath of snow to give racing on Saturday a chance of going ahead. A special mention must also go to those members of the tortoise club that rallied together to do the same on Saturday morning – giving W1 and M1 the chance to race and ultimately gain the second ever double headship.

No-one expected W1 to retain the headship this year. Least of all us. Yet on the Wednesday, despite Wadham gaining overlap in the gut, W1 displayed some of the gutsiest rowing many had ever seen on the Isis to finish half a length up on Wadham. Our celebrations at the end probably made it look like we'd won Torpids then and there. The start of Wednesday's race had been rocky and despite finding a good rhythm the girls knew they could have rowed better. Come the Saturday W1 now had all experienced a bumps race and knew what to expect. This time they weren't letting Wadham get anywhere near them.

The Double Headship was a big day for Oriel, and it was especially historic for the women – it was the first time the women's side had retained a headship, and the entirety of W1 learned to row or cox at Oriel – with four women learning to row this year. Yet without all the hard work of the crews that came before us, this would never have been possible, and we are honoured to represent Oriel and all those who got us to the top of the bumps charts. I couldn't be prouder of what the Women's squad have achieved so far this year, and am very excited for what summer eights and the future holds.

President's Report

If there was ever any doubt that Oriel stands head and shoulders above other boat clubs it was put to rest this Torpids. Not only was the double headship secured in emphatic style by the two crews but Oriel sent out a legion of 30 students to clear the towpath to allow racing to take place - Pembroke & Wadham were suspiciously absent. The double headship stands as a testament to the Tortoise spirit which continues to run strong. Long may it continue.

Tortoise Club at Head of the River 2018

After flirting with the idea for some years 2018 has seen the return of the Tortoise Club to the river at the Men's Eights Head. The crew contained a wide selection of vintages ranging from matriculates of 2001 to 2015 coxed by current M1 cox Sophia Fearon (born 1999) who described the crew as "a lot better than I was expecting". This came as no surprise to the crew given the 3-0 result at Wyndhams. The Women's Head the day prior prevented cheating with a training session before the race leaving the crew resting on the 3k to the start, 12 collective Headships (8 in the Courtly Love in which we rowed) and exceptional custom stash to deliver the desired result. Max's optimistic race plan of smashing out the blocks at rate 38 was soon abandoned as the crew settled to a consistent r30 for near the entire course. A deceptive ploy by Sophia telling us we were 200m out with 700m along with a fierce battle against Warwick University delivered a finishing sprint and the result we were after: 170th place, ahead of a number of collegiate crews including Hertford M1 who are currently 7th on the river in Torpids. Despite "the longest row to Barnes Bridge in my life" we left reasonably satisfied and looking forward to the summer racing season which culminates in a race against Sub Rosa (Pembroke alums) at Oriel Regatta.

If you are interested in racing with the Tortoise Club (if only for the stash) drop me an email, we currently plan to enter the following regattas:

Bedford Regatta (12th May - alongside OCBC)

Oriel Regatta (date TBD, early June)

Oxford City Regatta (19th/20th August)

Stevan Boljevic (2014)

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❖ The Head of the River 2018 ❖

S Fearon (2017), S Boljevic (2014), M Georgiou (2014), O Williams (2001), N George (2004), S Peet (2008), M Lau (2010), S Salt (2015), H Shalders (2014)

Men's Captain Report

A rigorous programme over Christmas of training six times a day, meant that when we came back for our training camp we were fighting fit. Nine days of double outings a day brought our blade work into line with our physical fitness and meant that we could hit the term running.

The most promising aspect of all of this was the internal squad competition, with 23 people attending training camp, all having worked hard over the vacation it meant that we could put out matched eights, switch oarsman around and really push each other to improve.

We were also incredibly fortunate to receive a financial gift from Anthony Whittaker, which paid for two NK oarlocks (telemetry which gives feedback to individual rowers of their stroke power, range of arc and more in real time) and a weekend trip to Dorney, at which we did rigorous pieces and seat racing.

We put all of this hard work to the test at Quintin Head on 27th January, putting forward our first eight. The course is 4600m on the Tideway raced with the tide and we did it in 10:32.2. This put us 12th beating the likes of Upper Thames, University of Bristol, Oxford University Lightweight and many others. Later in the term we organised races with Oxford University Lightweight on the Wallingford stretch and against University of Bristol's first eight on the Henley stretch. We won both.

We put forward crews for all of the ISIS Winter League fixtures, which would later form our M2, M3 and M4. They did admirably, in the true Oriel tradition they raced a step above, M2 beating a host of other colleges' M1s, M3 beating M2s and M4 beating M3s.

Torpids was very much a mixed bag. It was a real shame that M4 did not quite qualify, they were of a very respectable standard and had trained hard. M3 performed brilliantly, they went up two on the first day but were robbed of the chance to prove themselves over the whole competition by the snow. M2 were similar, an incredibly strong crew who trained at the same level as M1, with only one less erg session a week. They did Oriel proud but wished they could have had the chance to do so much more.

We trained as a squad as much as possible this year and this spirit of unity showed itself when the entirety of the club (including some spirited alumni!) turned up to shovel snow from the tow path in order to increase the likelihood of racing recommencing.

The job is not finished, we're very proud and thankful to have taken the Torpids Men's Headship back, but we are back training already getting fit for our summer training camp. We will likely race at the Wallingford and Bedford Regattas before Summer Eights. After which we plan to enter a boat for Henley Royal Regatta, we will keep you all updated and hope to see you at the Tortoise Club HRR drinks on the Saturday.



M1 exiting the gut on Saturday of Torpids