

MERTON  
COLLEGE  
OXFORD

# Boat Club Newsletter

Merton College Boat Club Newsletter | Hilary Term 2018



## Success at HoRR

Men's First Boat placing 119th

## Generous MC3 Donation

New Filippi F42 shell purchased for men

## Two-day Torpids

Half-division racing on Saturday



**Secretary of the Boat Club**  
Charlotte Oakes

**Men's Vice-Captain**  
Thomas Murphy



**Men's Captain of Boats**  
Samuel Picard

**Women's Vice-Captain**  
Venla Karppinen

**Women's Captain of Boats**  
Paris Jagers

**Water Safety Advisor**  
Lukas Koch

**Senior Member**  
Jonathan Prag

**Captain of Coxswains**  
Katherine Davies

**Alumni Officer**  
Tyson Rallens

**Boatman**  
Mark Seal

**Treasurer**  
Jacob White

**Social Secretary**  
Paul de Jong & Julia Zlotkowska

**Secretary of the Friends**  
Henry Braun

## Words from the river...

*by Henrik Hannemann*

... to those who have ventured further afield, but have not forgotten their times in a Merton boat on the Isis. The Boat Club has had a rather successful run over the last few years and everything is well poised for this to continue. In order to be able to share more details from the life and spirit of the Boat Club, as well as to give more detailed accounts of regattas and head races, the idea for this newsletter was developed. As you will recall from your own student times, there is an unfortunate disparity between having ideas and getting round to enacting the good ones. Nonetheless, I hope this newsletter will act as a small window to the current success.

Very notable are the development of club spirit, a significant growth in membership, expansion of training facilities, addition to and redevelopment of parts of the existing fleet, and representation of Merton by crews at events further afield. Over the last twelve months, Merton blades will have been visible on the Tideway, the Henley Reach, the Cam, and of course the Isis. The Club has shown a great deal of commitment on and off the water and has carried on the momentum from last year's victories and numerous bumps.

The plan is for this newsletter to become a more regular occurrence and to not only welcome all the old oars and Friends of Merton College Boat Club to the boathouse for Eights Week, but to keep and develop closer links. I hope the next few pages will spur your enthusiasm to venture down to the Isis once more come Eights week in late May, "when we gather for the happiest week in all the year, [...] the brotherhood of rowing, the comradeship of the oar [...]"

## Contents

Merton men on the Tideway for HoRR	p. 2
From the Club's archives	p. 2
New boats renewed boars, and plans for more	p. 3
Torpids - only two days of racing, but five bumps	p. 4
Isis Winter Leagues	p. 4
Reports from the coxswain's seat	p. 6
End of Term racing and Winter vac training	p. 6
Racing at The Other Place - Fairbairn	p. 7
Michaelmas Term - Novices, Nephthys, and ChCh	p. 7
Training across the Channel	p. 8
Eights Week 2017 - a look back	p. 8
Alumni - Supporting the Boat Club	p. 10

Photo credits cover page (top to bottom):

Women's First Torpid taken by Ryan Burke, Men's squad at HoRR on the Tideway, taken by Big Blade Photography (reproduced with permission)



# Merton men on the Tideway for HoRR

by Katie Davies

Merton's men's first boat entered the Head of the River Race on the Tideway this year on the 11th March in London. The crew boated from the Civil Service Boathouse at Barnes Bridge. This proved to be an excellent experience for all involved! A highly pleasing time of 19 minutes 53 seconds was achieved over the 6.8km course, leaving Merton in 119th position overall. Especially satisfying was our faster time than many of the other Oxford college crews who entered the race, such as Trinity, Lady Margaret Hall, Oriel, Hertford, Brasenose, University, and Worcester. Only Christ Church and Teddy Hall posting faster times than the Merton men. The course was raced well, with a comprehensive and well-adhered-to race-plan. The Merton men managed to overtake five crews before Hammersmith Bridge, leaving nothing in the tank by the time the finish line was crossed. This race was the first taste of the Tideway for all nine

members of the crew and as such was a valuable and highly enjoyable experience for all. A training outing the previous day (with the help of two of our London-based alumni) enabled us to get our bearings on the Tideway, which is really rather different from the Isis, and practice getting on and off the water from wet-dock which was also good fun. Overall the race proved a good opportunity for the first boat to build on the momentum from Hilary Term and some strong races in Torpids. It has also inspired all to work hard over the Easter vacation to maintain the momentum through to the training camp in the Netherlands and ultimately to Summer Eights.

Crew: K Davies (Cox), J White (S), S Picard, M Abazorius, L Koch, I Gruev, R Burke, D Gutt, T Murphy (B)

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## From the Club's archives

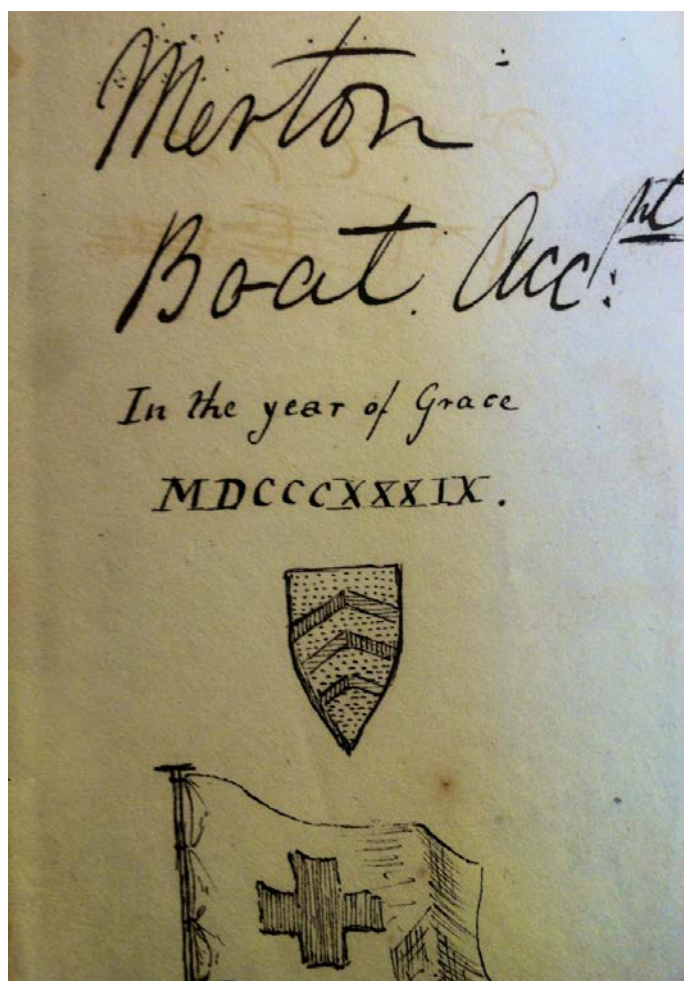
by Henrik Hannemann

While 2018 may appear at first glance like any other year it hides a few important anniversaries for the Boat Club. Most important might be the 180th year since the foundation of the Club though a few more recent ones are of distinctive importance, too. While collating all available reports from the Postmasters or otherwise available sources in the College Archives, numerous interesting stories from now long forgotten long-distance races, sunken shells, and success at Henley have emerged.

College had opened its gates to female students in the early 1980s and first crews were fielded by the women as early as 1981, it took until 1983 for a "Ladies First Eight" to appear on the programme after Rowing-On was successfully completed. For over 35 years we have now had the fortune to have women in the Boat Club. The bumps charts and the University crews also tell a story of very successful years. For long times Merton featured as the college with the most representatives in OUWBC and OUWLRC.

Returning to the bumps charts, we can celebrate that a mere 15 years ago the Women's First Torpid gained Headship and rowed over to defend their title in 2004.

Celebrating these anniversaries leaves me also with a plea to all our old members: please let us know about your memorable rowing stories, your crews, your successes, the bumps, and memorable stories from your time on the river. While venturing into the archives this summer I unfortunately found very little and I hope I will be able to patch a few gaps in the Clubs history – with your help.



Merton College Boat Club accounts book; Merton College Archives

Photo credits: Henrik Hannemann

# New boats, renewed boats, and plans for more

by Tyson Rallens



Thanks to the generous support of Merton College Charitable Corporation (MC3), the Club was able to purchase a custom-made Filippi F42 M8+ shell for the Men's First Boat. The Boat Club has not been in a position to buy new shells for more than a decade, but now we are grateful for this new shell and the contribution towards a new Women's First Boat shell, for which additional fundraising has now begun and which we expect to be able to buy

by 2021 or earlier. The new Filippi arrived only a few days before Torpids but through an ambitious trailering scheme the men managed several training sessions at Godstow and on the Isis before racing began. The Filippi also travelled to London for the Head of the River Race. Come to the Summer Eights Dinner for the boat naming ceremony!

Mark Seal has also been refurbishing our existing fleet. Thanks to donations from the Friends of Merton College Boat Club, *Joe Virden*, our 2001 Stämpfli W8+ shell, received all-new sliders, seats, shoes and paint over Easter Vacation 2017. Then, the Friends funds also enabled our tireless boatman to conduct a down-to-the-carbon-fibre rebuild of *Harry Quick*, our 2005 Stämpfli M8+.

The Men's Second Boat crew expects to receive *Harry* in Trinity Term in time for their campaign for blades in Summer Eights! With the Boat Club significantly expanding its ranks this year and a rising standard of technique and speed across the Club, we are incredibly grateful to our supporters for the equipment we have been given to use and that is in the pipeline.

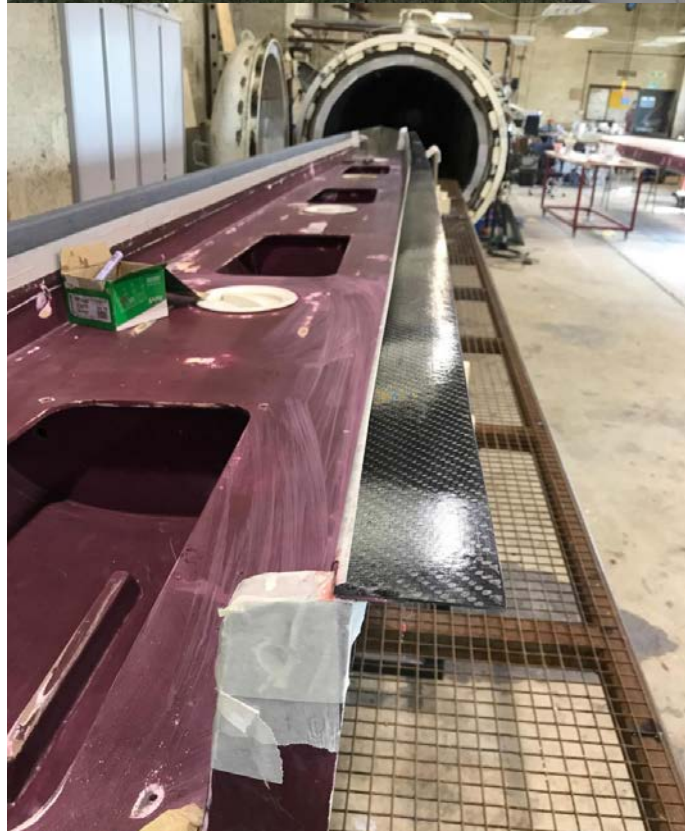


Photo credits (clockwise from the top left): J White, J White, M Seal, Valerian Chen Photography (used with permission)



# Torpids - only two days of racing, but five bumps

by Samuel Picard and Paris Jagers

For the rowing highlight of Hilary Term, for the first time in six years, Merton planned to enter two women's and three men's crews. This would allow every Merton rower to compete irrespective of their level of commitment. However, whether all our rowers would be strong enough to qualify was yet to be proven...

## Rowing On

At Rowing On, both M3 and W2 had to finish within the top half of their divisions in order to be given a bungline on Day I. Despite the presence of a few subs, W2 had a good race and finished 12<sup>th</sup>, earning themselves a place into

Division V. The highlight came when M3 clocked the fastest time of the day... making the competition shiver at the thought of racing against them in Division VI during bumps.

## Day 1 - Wednesday

The Wednesday started with a solid performance from our M3: despite a messy start from bungline 10, the crew quickly and relentlessly caught up with Teddy Hall's M3, bumping out well before Donnington Bridge.

W2 started from bungline 7 in Division V, chasing St Hilda's W2 and followed by St Hugh's W2. The crew were excited to enter their second-ever regatta, having all started rowing in the Michaelmas Christ Church campaign. At the gun the crew jumped right up to a high rate 38, leading to difficulties settling and a concession to St Hugh's under Donnington Bridge. Afterward, the crew settled and rowed determinedly over the full course, holding Christ Church W3 at bay behind and approaching within a length or so of



Magdalen M2 conceding to Merton M2 just across from Salter's Boatyard

St Anne's, who had fallen all the way down from the head of the division.

The M2 crew were placed low down in Division V, giving them high hopes for a strong campaign. A strong push off the start put them within half a length of Magdalen in the first ten strokes and with a call to finish it they made the bump within the first 30 strokes. Definitely the quickest bump Merton has seen in a long while!

With optimistic predictions from along the river, W1 were feeling positive about this year's Torpids. Setting up to chase St Hilda's, they had a strong start and held a close distance on Hilda's until they bumped Queen's. Settling into the long game, they pushed through the Gut and onto the Green Bank at full power to close the distance on Queen's, achieving overlap before the Cherwell Cut. However, obstinate coxing on behalf of Queen's meant a fierce head-to-head ensued, with Merton reaching full overlap before getting a concession. Fortunately, this put the bump right

outside the boathouse so made an exciting race for the Merton supporters!

Given their placement in Division II, Merton's M1 knew that this year was going to be a challenge. Indeed, the men had to concede to a strong Exeter crew early in the race. Settling into a solid race rhythm, they then made up for the concession with a double overbump onto St Anne's M1 as they got out of the Gut... finishing the day level.



Merton W1 in close pursuit of Wadham W2 at the exit of the Gut

## Day 2 - Thursday

Racing cancelled due to safety concerns from cold and snow.

## Day 3 - Friday

Racing cancelled again. Many Merton rowers worked with OURCs to clear the towpath and lay down grit in the hope that Saturday racing could continue.

## Day 4 - Saturday

Some respite in weather ahead of Saturday's racing meant racing was back on, but unfortunately this was reserved for the top half of crews only to allow half divisions to be run for safety. This left only M1 and W1 racing for Merton.

Despite the bitter disappointment of two cancelled days of racing, W1 were looking forward to following Wednesday's bump with another. Chasing St Hilda's for the second time, they were quietly optimistic given how close they had followed them on Wednesday, but it was not to be, as they out on Wadham W2 before the Gut. However, a very smooth start allowed W1 to establish a strong and controlled rhythm that brought them up to Wadham W2 just after the Gut, closing the distance to the bump rapidly and leaving W1 up two places overall.

For their last race, M1 were chasing a trio of increasingly strong crews (Lincoln, Lady Margaret Hall, and Exeter) who were all equally likely to bump out against one another. Indeed, as the crews made their pushes, a three-boat sandwich formed across the boathouses, with Merton looking to bump anyone left racing. While M1 initially thought they'd caught Lady Margaret Hall right before the finish, preliminary results suggested that Merton had actually cleanly rowed past Exeter after they wrongfully stopped racing. However, after a long and tense appeal, the consensus was that both Lady Margaret Hall and Exeter had indeed bumped out, and M1 had to do with a row-over, finishing their Torpids campaign level.



Merton M1 at full pace coming out of the Gut

### Crews

#### Men's Third Torpid:

Z Chen (Cox), W Wohns (S), P Khrkowski, T Bastianello, A Kenyon-Roberts, T Liau, W Whitehouse, GP Milani, F Cheatle (B)

#### Men's Second Torpid:

P Jagers (Cox), P de Jong (S), T Murphy, M Bruckner, C Willmes, R Willet, T Miller, B Hartnell-Booth, W Ngia (B)

#### Men's First Torpid:

K Davies (Cox), J White (S), S Picard, M Abazorius, L Koch, I Gruev, L Krone, D Gutt, R Burke (B)

#### Women's Second Torpid:

T Rallens (Cox), C Fields (S), H Glattfelder, E Capstick, B McCullagh, E Ball, M da Silva, K Gadsby, K Mitchell/C Buchuck-Wilsenach (B)

#### Women's First Torpid:

T Murphy (Cox), C Oakes (S), P Jagers, E Borsi, A Schreuder, H Grassi, J Friske, J Smith, V Karppinen (B)

Photo credits (from the top): Gareth Andron, AllMarkOne Media Ltd, AllMarkOne Media Ltd. (all used with permission)

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## Isis Winter Leagues

*by Paris Jagers*

The Isis Winter League (IWL) C at the end of January saw Merton enter a women's eight and mixed pair, with some strong rowing despite bitter cold and torrential rain. This paved the way for a very strong Merton performance at the next IWL D, with the two women's crews placing 6<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> fastest W2) out of a total 20 women's crews. News of this abnormally strong Merton women's crew somehow reached the infamous rumor mills along the river, leading them to put W1 on 'blades watch' for Torpids 2018.

Since the men were primarily training at Godstow and fast river currents inhibited transporting the shell back to the Isis, only M2 entered IWLs this term. However, their performance was impressive and set the stage for an upward trajectory in bumps racing.



# Reports from the coxswain's seat

by Katie Davies

Coxing at Merton has gone from strength to strength this year. With five boats entered for Torpids, a variety of people, including our novice coxes, managed to get some bumps racing experience. Due to the ever-disruptive British winter and in particular the freezing temperatures and snow that we have had this year there have been some short periods of disruption to our training for novice coxes as a result of a high flag. Nevertheless, the presence of four coxes in the club who are X-status or above helped us out to keep our boats on the water and training through these

periods. We are hoping for several more status upgrades next term, from Novice to Experienced and Experienced to Senior. We also hope to recruit a few new coxes either from the existing body of rowers in the Club or from the college more widely to bolster our training in the run-up to our Summer Eights campaign. Three coxes from the boat club will be attending the training camp in Amsterdam in April, which will be a fantastic opportunity to get experience in a new location and will hopefully boost coxing confidence at the club before next term.

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## End of Term racing and Winter Vac training

by Tyson Rallens

With 51 members on the water simultaneously, two old members on the bank, one coach, and our wonderful boatman, this year's Christmas Racing event was most likely the largest Merton outing in history. The Club not only fielded four eights, two coxed fours, one quad, and one single scull, but we also caused a bit of a stir by taking over most of the rafts on Boathouse Island at 06:30 in the morning. The other college clubs were definitely not used to the numbers fielded by Merton and the sight of such a fleet being fielded by a club not normally considered one of the big ones on the Isis gave a fair few other clubs and coaches something to ponder over Christmas as Torpids approached. Afterwards the Club descended on breakfast in hall.

Additionally those Boat Club members who remained in Oxford a little longer were able to go for a winter paddle and boat from snowy rafts on 10<sup>th</sup> December, with *John Shore* (4+) and *Chester White* (4x) once more a sizable contingent was fielded considering it was 10<sup>th</sup> week already.



Above: T Murphy during the winter outing preparations

Below: Group photo after the Christmas racing

Photo credits: Merton College Boat Club



## Racing at The Other Place - Fairbairn

by Tyson Rallens

After several years of absence on the Cam, Merton once more sent two senior coxed fours to Cambridge in December to compete in the Fairbairn Cup. The Women's 4+ finished 15<sup>th</sup> and the men finished 13<sup>th</sup>, higher than any other Oxford 4+! Fairbairn's kicked off a focus for the Boat Club this year in venturing to more external regattas.

### Crews

Men's Senior 4+ (S to B):

K Davies (cox), S Picard, J White, M Abazorius, W Wohns

Women's Senior 4+ (S to B):

T Rallens (cox), J Smith, P Jagers, J Friske, C Oakes

Photo credits: Merton College Boat Club



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## Michaelmas Term - Novices, Nephthys, and Christ Church

by Samuel Picard and Tyson Rallens

At the start of last Michaelmas Term, we had the pleasure of welcoming close to 30 novice rowers and coxes to Merton College Boat Club. A team of coaches and rowers from within the Club took on the challenge of coordinating and carrying out novice training, using our river slots to full capacity. In the meantime, the Women's Development Squad started training under Ian Smith's familiar supervision, while the men's squad recruited a new coach, John Thicknes, who set out to bring new and exciting ideas to Merton's training programme. In light of these developments, the new indoor training room set up at the Sports Pavilion turned out to be a valuable and timely addition to the Club's training facilities.

The new training programme seemed to pay off within a few weeks of training: at the Autumn Fours Regatta, Lukas Koch won the Men's 1x event, after our coxed men's four narrowly lost to a strong Jesus College crew in the semi-finals.

Two weeks later at Nephthys Regatta, the women's development squad had their first race of the season, while the men's side lined-up next to Jesus once again, now in our oldest eight, *Barney Henderson*. This led to an unexpected victory over Jesus in the heats, proving that 'good-ol' *Barney* has no problem beating fancy yellow Empachers! The next day, three novice crews also competed on the Isis in preparation for Christ Church Regatta. Results were somewhat disappointing, but the men's novice crew made quite an appearance nevertheless when they elegantly steered their bow under the Magdalen raft for all of Boathouse Island to see and to hear.

Just over a week later, after having made considerable steps forward during training at Godstow, the Men's Development Squad drew notice on the river with a fifth-place finish in Isis Winter League B, only 13 seconds off the winning boat's time.



In the highlight of the term, Merton fielded two men's novice boats and one women's novice boat in the Christ Church Regatta. Although both men's boats were knocked out in the repechage, the WA crew did very well, proving that last year's victory was no fluke and Merton's novice programme is an established contender. In Wednesday's Round 1 WA was disconcertingly rammed by Lincoln College after five strokes, due to Lincoln's starting the race with a bad line. The Lincoln bow managed to snap one of Merton's blades! After a clueless bystander yelled "the race is live!", Lincoln rowed on down the course. Rightly, the officials disqualified Lincoln, and subsequent racing showed WA was much faster anyway. WA received a bye in Round 2, then beat Exeter WC with open water on Friday in Round 3. In the quarterfinals on Saturday WA beat Queens by three lengths and gave Wolfson a fierce battle in the semis, though Wolfson pulled ahead and ultimately took first overall. Regardless, Merton WA proudly regarded their 4th place finish as an omen of further successes on the women's side this year.

Photos: Successful WA Christ Church Regatta crew with coach Ian Smith (top), Not even a Lincoln crew and a snapped blade could stop them (bottom)

Photo Credits: Merton College Boat Club



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## Training across the Channel

*by Samuel Picard*

One week before the start of Trinity Term, a group of twenty rowers, three coxes and three coaches from Merton College Boat Club will travel to the beautiful city of Amsterdam, where they will be training on the Amstel River for one week. Boating from the storied 'Willem III' rowing club and sleeping on the 'Chateauroux' sailing ship, Merton

rowers will be spending more time on the water than on land! The club is grateful that the Friends have been able to offer generous funds for the camp equipment and coaching budget - this intense period of preparation will play a crucial part in the lead-up to Summer Eights.

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## Eights Week 2017 - a look back

*by Lukas Koch*

At the end of four days of racing the tally for Merton stood at +4 for M1, -4 for W1, +3 for M2, -4 for M3. However much more interesting than these plain figures are the stories that are hidden behind them. I want to use this space to remind you of the two of these that have stuck in my memory.

First, there's the story of M2's rise from the ashes. After

three days of racing, they were at -2 due to a mixture of unfortunate bumps and the general consensus was that they had not been able to transfer the progress they had made in training into racing. The aim for the last day was simple: show some good racing to hold off a strong Regent's Park crew who were on for blades behind them. By Donnington Bridge Regents had overlap, M2 put in a push and moved out to a canvas. This was to repeat itself again

and again and again. However, M2 never lost their confidence, rowed well and at University College Boathouse managed to break the chase and move to clear water. Ecstatic about an exciting chase they came back to the boathouse to hear over the tannoy that they had bumped Brasenose M2 without even realising: +5!

The second story may be less exciting, but I believe it highlights the culture we want to cultivate at Merton College Boat Club. For the second year in a row M3 managed to qualify as the last qualifying crew, this year with just a second to spare. While this does not sound

impressive, however both the crew name and the result are misleading. M3 has been a large conglomerate of casual rowers, alumni, as well as a fair few of the W2 crew of Torpids. Giving everyone the chance to row at their own chosen commitment level, and enabling contacts between alumni, grad students, undergrad students, senior rowers, novices, and the men's and women's sides is what lies at the core of the Boat Club to me. Doing well and having Rowing-On crews are natural consequences of a boat club that manages to engage all its members. Our results show, I believe, that Merton is indeed creating just this kind of club culture.



Men's Second Eight passing the boathouses on Saturday of Eights Week 2017

Photo credits: Bertie Beor-Roberts

Summer Eights --- 23rd - 26th May 2018

Summer Eights Dinner --- 26th May 2018



# Alumni - Supporting the Boat Club

by Henrik Hannemann and Tyson Rallens

While it is always great to meet former rowers at events such as the Summer Eights the Boat Club is try to reinvigorate the alumni network and we do our best to keep in touch. This being said, please do introduce yourself so we can keep you up to date with how the Club is doing and what is going on.

Every year had its ups and downs and special stories to remember and wisdom to pass on to current students and active oarsmen. The Summer Eights Dinner has established itself over the past few years with attendance by the Warden and a great number of familiar old faces. We would love to welcome even more friends and alumni than previously.

Every year, we warmly invite every former oarsman and woman and everyone who feels connected to the Boat Club back up to Oxford to hopefully watch some decent rowing on the Saturday of Summer Eights and join us for the dinner in the evening.

The existing fleet has been well looked after and some boats have recently undergone major refurbishments, others only required the occasional touch up. The most significant addition in recent years was the first new eights shell in over fifteen years thanks to the generous fundraising of MC3.

At Merton students can easily access rowing due to low subscription fees (currently 20 GBP per term) and good equipment and coaching. In order for future generations of students to have the same chance of rowing at Merton as we all had, we would like to encourage you to support the Boat Club.

Information about how to support the Boat Club and Merton College can be found on the Development Office's webpage here: <https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/alumni-and-friends/supporting-merton>

On behalf of the Club, we would like to thank all our alumni who have already supported us generously in the past!

More regular updates are available via:



@mertonboatclub



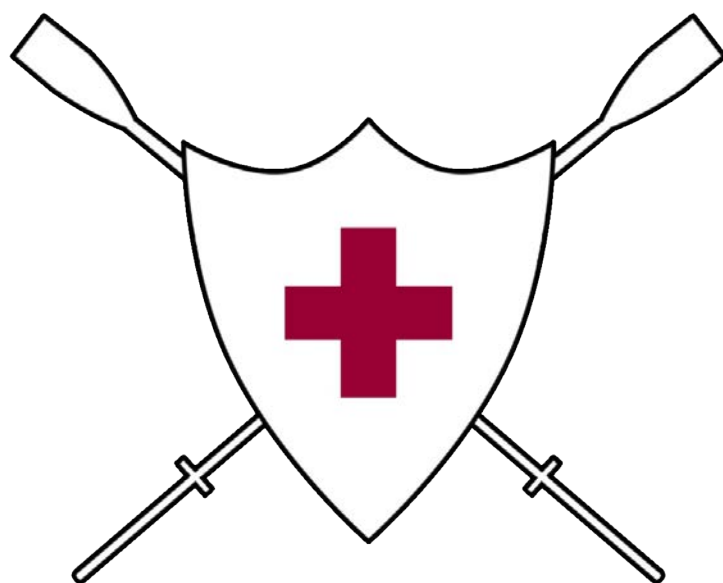
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Photo credits (top to bottom): 2015 Summer Eights Dinner by Bertie Beor-Roberts, 1956 HRR Visitors' Cup winning crew by John Shore, 2009 Alumni Dinner by Merton College Boat Club, 2014 Boats and Blades by John Cairns





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c/o The Secretary of the Boat Club

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