



MERTON  
COLLEGE  
OXFORD

# Boat Club Newsletter

Merton College Boat Club Newsletter | Hilary Term 2019



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## Words from the river

by Henrik Hannemann

Watching from afar one can only imagine how the dynamism and energy which has seemingly taken hold in the Club must feel from the boats! I wrote last year that Merton has had some successful years on the river and moving up the bumps tables. Last Eights Week and this Torpids has certainly supported that claim.

As promised last year, this newsletter will make a reappearance to keep everyone abreast of developments both on and off the river. I am very happy to say that Merton blades being seen beyond the Isis has become a standard occurrence once more. Fully utilising the facilities at hand, both in terms of fleet and land training options, crews have ventured for summer regatta racing and Tideway Heads among others.

While it may seem that the special few years at university are far removed and out of mind once work and family life takes us away from Oxford, it is certainly not quite the case for the Boat Club alumni. How I have experienced fellow alumni engaging from far afield and across many years is a testament to the comradeship of the oar, as Theodore Cook put it. While the times of telegrams may be over, well wishes reached the crews from as far afield as Australia spurring them on to blades. Also, seeing more and more alumni coming down to the Isis for bumps, I do hope this trend will continue. There is always a place for you at the boathouse and, of course, everyone is warmly invited to the Summer Eights Dinner.

Having seen the dedication first hand at this year's Torpids, I can only congratulate the crews, coaches, and boatman and hope for many more good years to come!

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# Novice rowers off to a promising start

by Charlotte Kilpatrick

The Michaelmas novice programme began in 0<sup>th</sup> week with a rainy taster afternoon on the Isis supplemented by a wonderful BBQ masterfully overseen by Wick Willet, in defiance of the conditions. The recruitment of 55 keen novices, only partially motivated by the promise of free food, hinted at the success that Michaelmas was to hold for the Boat Club. Under the guidance of Ty Rallens the novices passed their swim tests and got onto the water in mixed crews. The following weeks saw progression from square blades to feathered, sixes to eights, and the almost immediate realisation that an evening erg session with Lukas Koch at the Sports Pavilion was an opportunity not to be missed. Although the mornings got darker and colder the novices were urged on by the support of the Club and the promise of stash, expertly advised by Tom Murphy. Weeks of early mornings on the Isis went by quickly, and the novice crews were mistaken for senior rowers by bank riders from other colleges on several occasions. In time for Nephthys Regatta in 6<sup>th</sup> week the novices were able to field two crews for a thrilling first day of racing. The men's boat faced tough opposition from Wolfson College but continued the challenge right up to the finish. The women raced three times throughout the day in a suitable warmup for their Christ Church campaign. The next week held an impressive number of races for the four crews entered from Merton in Christ Church Regatta, watched by many current members of the Boat Club. The two mixed crews provided less experienced novices with an opportunity to row with members of last year's squads in a competitive setting and both boats represented Merton impressively. MA and WA made it to round 3. The women progressed to the final day of racing, with what coach Ian Smith described as "magnificent" rowing. On the final day, WA were able to row in the newly sponsored Swift shell for the first time and this contributed to their determination to row four intense races in fairly quick succession. The women eventually

achieved a remarkable 4<sup>th</sup> place to the delight of the supporters and crews who ran alongside, offering much needed vocal support and sympathy. The results from all our crews reflect Ian's excellent coaching, the support of the experienced rowers from the squad, and of course Ty's energy and dedication. Additionally, the novices were able to celebrate the term's achievements at the Regatta Reception appropriately bringing the programme to a close with more delicious food and drink. The first term with the Boat Club was an intense but incredibly rewarding experience and everyone is looking forward to joining current members in Hilary Term in the build-up to Torpids and to wearing the Merton kit with pride.

## Nephthys Regatta - Crews:

Men's novice: C Kilpatrick (Cox), D Testa (S), C Robertson, A Schellinx, M Drake, R Luttner, D Oliver, M Ramirez, F Munro (B)

Women's novice: C Oakes (Cox), G Van Den Berg (S), C Kilpatrick, R Williamson, R Herring, C Lepard, A Hearn, L Buxton, I Carme (B)

## Christ Church Regatta - Crews:

Men's A: C Kilpatrick (Cox), D Testa (S), C Robertson, M Geurts, M Drake, R Luttner, D Oliver, M Ramirez, F Munro (B)

Women's A: C Oakes (Cox), G Van Den Berg (S), C Kilpatrick, R Williamson, R Herring, C Lepard, A Hearn, L Buxton, I Carme (B)

Men's B: GP Milani (Cox), C Burlacu (S), C Groenland, S Mahanta, J Horrobin, S Van Teutem, A Schellinx, L Eck, S Bennett (B)

Men's C [friendly boat with senior subs]: P Jagers (Cox), A Jest (S), U Ristivojevic, D Berry, GP Milani, P Gembis, M Abazorius, T Murphy, C Sheehan (B)

Photo credits: the Boat Club (Men's crew), Joseph Rhee (women's crew)



Merton Novice Men's A crew and coaches after Christ Church Regatta.



Merton Novice Women's A crew during Christ Church Regatta.



# A very full week of bumps - Eights Week 2018

by Tyson Rallens



Merton M1 during warm up and on the way to the bunglines.

Any account of Merton College Boat Club's experience at Summer Eights 2018 must face something important squarely and right at the beginning. On Wednesday of Eights, a Merton boat was involved in a serious racing incident that garnered worldwide attention, a strong and immediate response from the University's rowing authorities, and the full cooperation of the Boat Club. Put simply, in MDiv4 Merton M2 was chasing Wolfson M2, who bumped Magdalen M2 within a few lengths of the start. Magdalen and Wolfson ended up on the left bank, in the racing line, and Merton collided into the back of the Wolfson boat at speed. Significant changes resulted from that event. At the time, the University assessed a penalty bump against M2 and installed a new cox for the crew. Subsequently Merton has internally assessed its coxing programme and made a number of improvements, particularly in putting novice coxes into more race-like situations during training and giving them more coaching on safety, awareness, and steering - the essential jobs of any coxswain. Not everything that can be said about these matters should be said here, but it must be stated that Merton makes the safety of its members, equipment, and all river users its utmost priority. Despite this pall over Wednesday, Eights Week was an overall positive event for the Boat Club, with a record five crews entered, some of them with very impressive results.

## Men's Third Eight:

Assembled from casual rowers and finalists, and coxed by returning alumnus Henrik Hannemann, Merton's M3 crew respectably rowed on 21<sup>st</sup> out of 28 qualifying crews and drew a place heading up MDiv7 for the first day. Their

trajectory was mixed and sometimes gruelling. Beginning with a Mid Gut concession to fast-rising Corpus M2 (+4 overall) on Wednesday but rising back to head of the division Thursday by bumping Keble M4 with a row-over at the bottom of MDiv6. On Friday chasing Keble M4 was quickly bumped from behind by St Hilda's M3, a Schools Eight, leaving Merton M3 to deny Oriel M4 the overbump. Rowing an hour later as sandwich boat in MDiv6 M3 decided to try and catch Corpus Christi M2 in order to prevent a repeat of Thursday. After two promising high-rate practice starts the crew came out of the blocks at rate 40 and the start proved to be considerably better than Corpus' one. Gaining to just three-quarters off

Corpus, Merton M3 unfortunately was out-powered and could not quite keep up. On Saturday M3 once again headed MDiv7, chased by Hilda's M3. They held the schoolboys off through the Gut but were forced to concede and stop by Longbridges. All in all, a -1 record for the week, with many hard-fought races, showed the determination of the crew and the increased depth of the men's squad.

## Women's Second Eight:

After a three-year absence from Summer Eights, Merton W2 roared back into bumps racing with the 14<sup>th</sup> fastest Rowing On time out of 29 qualifying crews. Their racing results are definitive evidence that times are improving for the Boat Club's women's side. The only Merton crew to bump up on Wednesday, W2 caught Green Templeton W3 within just a few bunglines at the start of the race. Since Wolfson W4 behind ended up over-bumping on St Benet's W1, the quick bump on Green Templeton might seem lucky, but nothing was going to stop these women from reaching higher places. On Thursday, Green Templeton W3 was expecting to give some payback, and with Wolfson W4 quickly bumping Somerville W3 there was a lot of open water up ahead. Nevertheless, W2 kept it together (well, mostly) and held Green Templeton off all the way, a feat to be proud of! Somerville was ripe for the taking on Friday. The starting sequence closed the initial length and a half gap to half a length, and an immediate power ten resulted in a Somerville concession at bungline 3. With Green Templeton's trash-talking cox a merciful part of history on Saturday, the crew started quickly again and bumped Pembroke W4 within the bunglines, finishing the week +3!

### Men's Second Eight:

Despite the aforementioned incident on Wednesday, M2 raced well at Summer Eights. Many in the crew went to the Amsterdam training camp in 0th week of Trinity Term. They had trained diligently on land and water and their results showed it. On Thursday M2 bumped Lincoln M2 just past Donnington Bridge, after steering round masses of poorly-cleared bump-outs from higher bunglines. On Friday, starting from a higher bungline, they managed to catch Magdalen M2 even faster, bumping out across from the City of Oxford Rowing Club's raft. Wolfson M2 may not have wanted to see Merton behind them again so soon, but after falling twice during Merton's rise, they started out Saturday directly ahead of M2. Their resistance lasted much longer than any of M2's other races during the week, but by the start of Greenbank it was all over. Wolfson M2 will have to chase Merton next time around.

### Women's First Eight:

Merton W1 boldly announced intentions to defend their WDiv2 place at the beginning of Trinity Term, but going into Eights Week a sudden injury and crew change made this challenge even more difficult. Sandwich boat St Hugh's



Sir Martin Taylor and Joanna Howard. The new Filippi shell was christened by her namesake who was the first blades-winning women's captain.



Merton W1 exiting the Gut on Wednesday pursuit by St Hugh's W1.

W1 had rowed over at the top of WDiv3 after four crews bumped out behind them. An hour later, they chased W1 from bottom bunglines up to Salters' and caught them. Determined to change their fate, W1 showed up the nextday prepared to do anything. They successfully rowed over at the head of WDiv3, but did not manage to take their previous day's place back from St Hughs in the sandwich race. Nevertheless, Thursday of Eights Week, was a historic day for Merton rowing ending a multi-year downward slide in starting order and beginning a new attitude of resolve and optimism about the future. Since Summer Eights is inherently more conservative than Torpids, the results do not reflect a change in a club's trajectory quite so quickly (recall that W1 bumped up both days of Torpids racing in Hilary Term 2018). So, still facing a lot of strong crews in WDiv3, Merton went down two more places Friday and Saturday. However, the feeling at Eights Dinner was that St Hugh's and St Antony's should not be complacent about defending their placement from W1 when Eights Week returns.

### Men's First Eight:

Coming off an exhilarating performance at HoRR, the refinements of training camp, and in the culmination of new coach John Thicknes' training M1 arrived at the bunglines on Wednesday of Summer Eights ready to start their engines. When the cannon did fire, they leapt after St Hugh's from bungline 11. The sustained battle carried all the way to Greenbank where St Hugh's caught Brasenose in the lead of a three-boat sandwich and then failed to clear the racing line. Disappointed and blocked, M1 had to hold it hard and then restart racing. Fortunately, both crews behind had bumped out so M1 became the first Merton crew to reach the finish line this Eights. Thursday saw M1 being chased by rival Exeter (who had chased and been



chased by MI in Torpids 2018, and Eights and Torpids 2017). MI moved past Exeter's early push at Donnington Bridge and gained steadily on Brasenose to gain the bump just past Longbridges. On Friday, a falling St John's conceded before Top Gut and on Saturday Lincoln similarly succumbed to the maroon. MI's near miss on blades this year added further polish to their streak of +II over the last three years. When will they find some competition? We will have to wait for Trinity Term 2019 to find out.

#### Crews:

Men's Third Eight:

H Hannemann (Cox), W Whitehouse (S), A Kenyon-Robert, T Bastianello, T Liau, R McDonald, C Sheehan, F Cheadle, E Thomas (B)

Men's Second Eight:

Z Chen/T Murphy (Cox), P de Jong (S), C Willmes, M Bruckner, R Burke, T Miller, P Klimkowski, B Hartnell-Booth, R Willett (B)

Men's First Eight:

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

Women's Second Eight:

T Rallens (Cox), C Fields, (S), E Ball, R Henzel, A Schreuder, K Gadsby, S Bruce-Smith, H Glattfelder, C Buchuck-Wilsenach (B)

Women's First Eight:

J Barker (Cox), P Jagers (S), C Oakes, E Borsi, B McCullagh, M Soares da Silva, J Friske, E Capstick, V Karppinen (B)

Photo credits: Maria Salaru

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## Summer racing at Reading and Henley

*by Christian Willmes*

Following an exciting Summer Eights campaign, Merton men from both First and Second Eights engaged in more summer racing at Henley Town and Visitors' as well as Reading Town.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> July, as the only college crew from Oxford, Merton headed to Reading for an exciting day of racing in the open 4+ division. Winning their first race against Cambridge 99 easily by three and a half lengths, Merton went through to the final. Knowing they had been about 30 seconds slower than their competition, they prepared for a tough race with the aim of keeping up for as long as possible. The men managed to deliver a good start and a solid row, however, crossed the finish line trailing five lengths behind the victorious Sidney RC and Durham University.

After the useful and challenging experience at Reading, summer training continued for Henley Town & Visitors' on 4<sup>th</sup> August. Keen to build on the success of 2017 where the men rowed to victory in a novice 4+ as well as a 1x, this time they set out to compete in Open Coxless Fours as well as Open Single Scull categories. Boating their 4+ under the clear blue and sunny skies of Henley, Merton

proceeded to beat Vesta RC by four lengths in their first race. This success was matched by Lukas Koch who rowed his 1x over the finish line four lengths ahead of the competition from Fulham Reach RC. The respective final rounds turned out to be slightly less successful with the 4+ being beaten by Twickenham RC (three lengths), and Lukas finishing three lengths behind a Royal Air Force RC rower who managed to cut his race time by almost ten seconds for the final.

Overall, the men can be pleased with managing to continue training over summer and taking away the invaluable racing experience of two challenging regattas – especially considering the overall scarcity of Oxford college crews among the competition.

In addition to entering regattas, under the lead of Tyson Rallens, we offered casual outings to a large squad of rowers from Merton and other colleges. This proved to be a large success and the relations fostered during this period will surely prove invaluable in the future.



Merton men (afar) leading Vesta RC at Henley Town and Visitors'

#### Crews:

Henley: O Hedges (S, New College), L Krone, C Willmes, L Koch (B)

Reading: T Rallens (Cox), R Burke (S), M Abazorius, C Willmes, T Murphy (B)

Photo credits: Tyson Rallens

# Merton sculls to London in aid of Pain Relief

by Samuel Picard



The foursome at Abingdon at the beginning of the journey to London.

With a few Wallingford-trips completed in recent years, this summer there was considerable appetite in the Boat Club to plan a longer distance row down the Thames. Led by the fearless Lukas Koch, and inspired by the 1998 Merton crew that rowed through all 45 Thames locks in 29 hours, a group of four Merton scullers set out to row from Oxford to London (160 km) in two days. With their efforts, the crew looked to raise money for the Pain Relief Foundation, a charity which funds research into the causes and treatment of human chronic pain.

To get through the 32 historic locks separating Oxford from London with good speed and manoeuvrability, the foursome settled onto *Chester White* (Sims 4x-) as their vessel of choice. Meeting on Boathouse Island in the early hours of Saturday, each packing 5000 kcal of energetic food, two litres of water, and considerable amounts of sports tape, the men pushed off at 6:30am. With the sun out and fresh legs, the good-tempered crew made it through the first seven locks unscathed, taking a well-deserved lunch break on the Brookes raft in Wallingford. With the pain starting to settle in over the course of the sunny afternoon, music often provided a welcome distraction: it could be heard from riverside pubs, it blasted from the Reading Festival site, and at times it even emanated from the boat itself. As the sun faded above Henley's famed waters, the promise of a good night's sleep in Marlow made the last few locks of the day pass by without much hassle.

The next morning, with fourteen locks to go, our Mertonians left in good spirits, ignoring the rather unpleasant looking weather forecast. The early morning's trip through the gorgeous Chilterns passed quite quickly, with crewmembers taking turns in operating the locks. Then, as had been feared, the rain started from Windsor

Castle onwards, and it tirelessly fell onto the crew throughout the afternoon. With temperatures dropping and fatigue kicking in, the scullers' protective kit proved to be wholly inadequate, even after a brief stop at Staines Boat Club, where they used hot tea and microwaves to try to warm up. A few locks later, frozen to the bone and almost unable to continue, the crew stranded in Hampton Sailing Club, where they were fortunate enough to be greeted with delicious hot beverages and homemade cake. This was just what they needed to recharge and make it through the last three locks to the Tideway, finally landing on the shores of University of London Boat Club shortly after 6pm.

With its row, Merton is proud to have raised £875 for the Pain Relief Foundation, and very grateful to all the people who donated – many of whom already support the Boat Club's activities as Friends. We are also thankful for the invaluable help we received from Mark Seal, Ty Rallens, the people of Marlow Rowing Club, Staines Boat Club, Hampton Sailing Club, and University of London Boat Club, and of course all 32 lock keepers! A lock-by-lock report of the row to London can be found on the fundraising website (<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/merton-rows-2-london>)

**Crew:** S Picard (S), M Abazorius, L Krone, L Koch (B)

Photo credits: Samuel Picard



After a long and arduous scull the foursome has arrived in London.

# A new erg room in the Pavillion

by Thomas Murphy

This year the college erg room, opened in 2017, has continued to be of immense value to the Club. Having a dedicated space for land training has allowed us to step up the power and fitness of both the men's and women's squads. With eight ergs in one place, whole crews can train together, increasing cohesion and removing the need for captains to set land training to be done in one's own time, making it far more likely that the training will actually be done! As well as this, coached ergs have allowed our crews to get in-depth technique feedback. As ever, Hilary Term has seen its fair share of cancelled outings due to fog, stream, and other adverse weather conditions. The ability to move straight to the erg room has allowed us to make use

of valuable morning training time even when the river is not cooperating.

This new land training facility continues to increase our capacity for training, as well as fostering an increased sense of community – having a dedicated space for workouts as opposed to the college gym has changed the way people view erg training dramatically. With plans in the work for the installation of a free weights room in the Pavilion in the near future once again, hopefully Merton's strength and fitness will only increase in the years to come.

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## Torpids 2019 - a very special vintage

by Lukas Koch

Torpids 2019 was one to remember for the history books, ending with the first ever double set of blades on the men's side. A week before at Rowing On the situation looked less promising. For the first time in memory M3 had trained together throughout the whole term. The crew was mainly comprised of M3 rowers of the last years and former novices of Michaelmas but failed to qualify against a large number of boats with experienced rowers. Nevertheless, they are looking forward to Summer Eights and have already started their campaign with outings in 8<sup>th</sup> week. W2 ended Rowing On joint in time for the last qualifying slot with St Benet's W1.

As this was the first time in history St Benet's has entered a women's boat and the availability of the Merton rowers to field a full boat on every day of Torpids was uncertain, the decision was made to enter a Merton-Benet's composite under the flag of St Benet's.

### Women's First Torpid:

W1 had a mixed Torpids with a bump on a crashed crew on Wednesday, followed by a crab off the start leading to being bumped twice on Thursday. While the crew felt Friday's row was better, it still ended on -2. The highlight of the week for W1 was certainly the Saturday. A good race lead to a solid row-over. At Donny Bridge Oriel W2 had closed to one length behind, but then W1 reset and determinedly pushed Oriel back, never to threaten again. As the crews ahead had bumped out by the time W1 cleared the Gut, their race finished with a dignified row over



Merton M2 during warm up on Saturday of Torpids 2019.

cheered on by the crowd at the boathouse. The final tally of the week was -4.

### Men's First Torpid:

The men's squad had largely trained in matched eights throughout the term and this novelty paid off during bumps with both crews gaining blades. M1 never made it out of the Gut, quickly gaining on and bumping all crews they started behind with cleaner and faster starts on each successive day. In fact, the bumps themselves are perhaps less impressive than the long list of mishaps M1 accumulated during Torpids. On Friday during the warm-up one of the rowers injured himself. Luckily a willing M2 sub was found and a bump gained nevertheless. Getting ready to spin onto the bungline on the Saturday, M1 suddenly found their rudder string snapped. A couple of tense minutes later, the rudder was patched up with some string





Merton WI landing after their row-over on Saturday of Torpids 2019.

and M1 were ready to go. In an anticlimactic end to this Torpid campaign the last bump was gained by a row-past on Pembroke M2 who had suffered a rudder failure at a less opportune moment than M1. The final tally of the week was +4.

#### Men's Second Torpid:

The first three days of Torpids for M2 were somewhat shaped by lining up behind Wolfson M3 each day. Having escaped a bump by obtaining a technical row-over on Thursday, they were finally caught on Friday. Saturday was to deliver one of the most exciting Merton races this year. Due to the M1 injury, M2 had to race with a sub. Quick out of the start, M2 closed in onto Univ to a canvas in the Bottom Gut. Univ then got the bump on Wadham who led the division and the guys had to go for the overbump. In manoeuvring around Univ's bowside the blades hit the bank in the inside corner of Top Gut, leaving around two lengths



Merton M1 racing on Saturday of Torpids after the rudder strings snapping during warm-up.

between M2 and Wadham to bridge. After a strong reset the crew powered their way along Greenbank, closing onto Wadham inch by inch. At the crossover, the crew went for the final push with Wadham conceding at the Cherwell cut. A perfectly timed wind-down brought them to a stop in front of the boathouse and a wildly cheering crowd. The final tally for the week was +4.

After a celebratory reception in the MCR, the Club is now back in vacation training. We are looking forward to HoRR, a training camp in Amsterdam and of course Summer Eights where we hope to see many of you!

#### Crews:

##### Women's First Torpid:

T Rallens (Cox), P Jagers (S), C Oakes, S Bruce-Smith, C Burlacu, R Williamson, G Van Den Berg, M Soares da Silva, R Herring (B)

##### Men's First Torpid:

K Davies (Cox), L Koch (S), S Picard, M Abazorius, L Krone, M Drake, M Geurts, D Gutt, R Burke (B)

##### Men's Second Torpid:

C Kilpatrick (Cox), I Gruev (S), T Murphy, D Testa, F Munro, S Van Teutem, C Robertson, T Rallens, C Lippert (B)

##### Men's Third Torpid [Rowing On only]:

M Abazorius (Cox), J Horrobin (S), A Schellinx, M Ramirez, D Oliver, S Mahanta, C Sheehan, GP Milani, A Kenyon-Roberts (B)

Photo credits: Henrik Hannemann (M2 and WI), Maria Salaru (M1)

## A partnership and new opportunities

by Paris Jagers



In early September last year we came across a Swift Racing sponsoring opportunity. Tyson Rallens and I put together a bid which saw us going into a partnership with Swift Racing for the academic year 2018/19. This included a loan to the Club of an Elite Swift Racing 8+ women's shell, which arrived last November. In Michaelmas it was used by the novices on the last day of Christ Church Regatta and then transported to Cambridge where it was used by our

Fairbairn Cup crew. In Hilary Term it has been used by our Women's First Torpid and was our racing shell for the duration of the week. The arrival of this boat was of great benefit for the whole squad and not just the first crew. It allowed our second crew to train in our also excellent other shell, the *Joe Virden*, for the duration of their Torpids campaign.

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## Merton seniors on the Cam

by Matilde Soares da Silva

At the end of Michaelmas Term and building on the previous year's entry of two senior fours in the Fairbairn Cup in Cambridge, both the men's and the women's squads entered an 8+ in this year's race. The men's crew, composed mostly of senior rowers, raced first and achieved a great result coming 14<sup>th</sup> overall in the senior men's division and 3<sup>rd</sup> out of all Oxford colleges. The women took six first boat returners and three novices who had just competed in Christ Church Regatta and came 35<sup>th</sup> overall. It was also the senior women's first chance to race in our new sponsored Swift Racing shell after the novices' success the week before. Overall it was an excellent racing

experience for all rowers, and the novices who we had the pleasure of rowing with are now amongst the keenest members of the Boat Club!

### Crews:

Senior men: K Davies (Cox), L Koch (S), S Picard, M Abazorius, I Gruev, R Burke, C Lippert, D Gutt, T Murphy (B)

Senior women: T Rallens (Cox), P Jagers (S), C Oakes, C Burlacu, B McCullagh, S Van Den Berg, A Hearn, M Soares da Silva, S Bruce-Smith (B)

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## Coxing - a success factor

by Katie Davies

The coxes contributed greatly to the success in our 2018 Summer Eights campaign. On the women's side, our W1 cox was unexpectedly unavailable on the Wednesday, but it is a credit to the strength and depth of the Club and its alumni members that the cox of the 2016 blades-winning M1 crew, Toby Adkins, stepped in to save the day and open the Eights campaign with W1. One of our new novice coxes last year, Julianna Barker, helped W1 break their unfortunate streak of 17 consecutive days of being bumped with a momentous row-over on the Thursday. W2, coxed by Ty Rallens (a key part of the novice training programme last year), did exceptionally well ending up +3 for the week. For the men, despite an unfortunate crash at the beginning of the week, M2 rallied round with Thomas Murphy as a substitute cox to get three bumps over the last three days in a great display of strength in their division. M3 spent the week as the sandwich boat between Divisions VI and VII, coxed by another alumnus, Henrik Hannemann. M1 also achieved success, despite ending on another frustrating +3 for their Eights campaign, just missing out on blades for the second year in a row.

Over the summer, lots of Merton coxes got

involved in casual summer training in Oxford. This meant we started the academic year 2018-19 with a good selection of able coxes, even before new recruits could be trained up in Michaelmas. Since the beginning of the academic year, we have had four coxes race for the first time in Christ Church Regatta. This was a valuable and exciting experience for all, particularly for Charlotte Oakes who coxed the WA boat to a semi-final finish. Christ Church Regatta has been an excellent spring-board for many of our new coxes to get involved with the main squad in Hilary Term, in the run-up to bumps racing. Tyson Rallens and myself both coxed at the Fairbairn Cup in Cambridge in Michaelmas Term, enjoying the challenge of a new course to steer. Paris Jagers coxed at Fours Head, helping out a Christ Church women's crew in need. We are hoping to keep up participation in external regattas in the coming terms, especially looking towards HoRR and WEHoRR in the Easter Vacation.

Both Tyson Rallens and myself were fortunate to achieve upgrades to Senior status this past year, which has proved immensely useful during times of poor weather conditions, and along with a good number of Experienced

status coxes in the Club, this puts Merton in an excellent position relative to other college clubs when it comes to coxing experience. This will hopefully stand us in good stead for our Torpids 2019 campaign, where we are entering five very competitive crews, with three coxes for whom it

will be their first taste of bumps! Here's hoping that everyone can share in the novelty and excitement of the week and look forward to even more coxing success in the terms to come.

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## Pairs Head – Merton lightweight scullers take on the Tideway

*by Samuel Picard*

A few weeks before Michaelmas rowing would officially kick off, two of Merton's keenest scullers wanted to top off the summer with a campaign in the 2x. Four weeks of coached outings on an empty Isis would culminate in the Pairs Head, which the organisers claim to be 'The most enjoyable Tideway Head race'. The hard work started to pay off when, two weeks before heading to London, Lukas and I clocked the fastest time overall at CORC's Isis Sculls event. On 6<sup>th</sup> October however, the turbulent conditions on the Tideway made the Pairs Head's motto seem rather inappropriate. After a long, rainy wait in the start marshalling area, Merton's *Annette Peel*, carrying race no. 99, shot through the start line at last. The confidence that had built up from

overtaking two crews before Barnes' Bridge was quickly put to the test, when we hurtled into a wall of rough water on the way to Chiswick Steps. After a challenging few minutes ploughing through the waves, side-by-side with Bristol University's Lwt 2x (no. 98), rate and speed were picked up past the Eyot, allowing us to make further gains towards Hammersmith. Despite the finish line being 20 strokes further than expected, Lukas and I were more than happy with a time of 14:53.4 – 30<sup>th</sup> out of 417 overall, and 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 12 in the Open Lightweight 2x category... a most enjoyable race after all!

**Crew:** S Picard (S), L Koch (B)

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## From the Club's archives

*by Henrik Hannemann*

The past months have shown that hard work and dedication to training, race experience, and good fun are all part of the success formula for the Boat Club. While Eights Week seemed to have been, for several years now, focused on the slightly ungratifying three bumps, Torpids painted a very different picture! Also, looking back through the years a few anniversaries spring to mind.

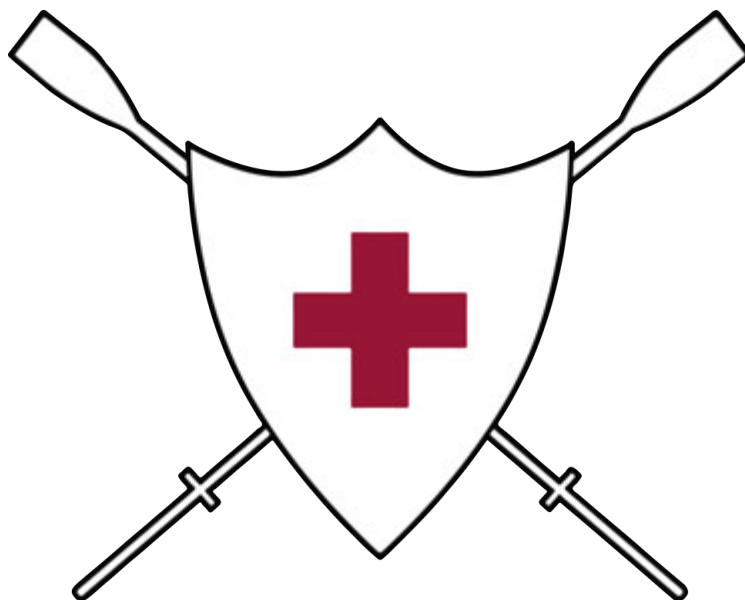
While some anniversaries of successful results might be considered rather tenuous, others are certainly more on the forefront of Club and alumni memory. For the tenuous and Club trivia knowledge: Merton gained Eights Week Headship and successfully rowed over for one night for the first time in 1839 at the second ever Eights Week contested by Merton. Unfortunately, it was not to last and Brasenose claimed the Headship for that week. Slightly more recent and in light of the men's squad achievement of both First and Second Torpids gaining their blades: exactly 20 years ago the First and Second Men's Eights achieved the same feat! A further blades anniversary is quite unique: the first set of blades ever won by our women's squad were gained at Eights Week 1989, a full 30 years ago. Their success story was written forth and fifteen years later, in

2004, they rowed over all four nights of Torpids 2004 defending their Headship gained the previous year.

Each year is special and memorable not only to the crews achieving the results with their dedication and hard work, but also to the Club. The ups and downs of the bumps tables, the friendships made on the river, and the shared stories allow current members to draw on these legacies and alumni to support the pursuit of rowing at Merton. Once again, I can only but thank everyone who has been in touch to share stories and information and yet ask for more in order to create and ever-more complete picture of the Club's history.







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