

© David Ponting



First women chase Emmanuel in the Lents. Stroke to bow: Eva Gillis-Buck, Julia Attwood, Daisy Gomersall, Nina Kamcev, Angela Evans, Laura Fox, Alexa Pohl, Sophia Michael

Lorenzo Santinelli



First men chase St Catharine's in Mays. Stroke to bow: Bence Banhalmi, Yimin Ge, Alex Barrell, Ali Abbasi, Sam Bell, Jack Mills, Matthew Griffiths, Jason Long. Cox: Michael Thornton



College Activities

First and Third Trinity Boat Club

by Peter Ford (2007)

After several seasons of going outside the Club for paid coaching, we started 2012–13 with an all-student coaching team. I was delighted throughout the year to see Club members of all ages doing their bit to help out when coaches or subs were needed. We are particularly grateful to the dedicated band of alumni who gave up their time and energy to come down to Cambridge and help the crews reach their full potential.

With a large but relatively inexperienced squad, Ali Abbasi's men's squad was split into matched crews for much of the term, culminating in a Trial VIII's race in early November. Ming-Chee Chung must be congratulated on his skill in balancing the crews for this. After nineteen minutes of racing the crews were separated by less than a second and the race was declared a dead heat! Meanwhile, a collection of Boat Club captains past and present had jumped into a coxless four to defend the Club's honour in the University Fours. With very little time together owing to lab work and injuries, they performed well, beating Jesus easily and losing narrowly to Caius in the final. With a rather smaller squad of nine rowers, the women's side focused on individual improvements to technique and fitness, with busy timetables preventing the forming of regular crews. A top four lost heavily to the eventual winners, Lady Margaret, in the first round of the University Fours.

In the last weeks of Michaelmas both sides of the Club turned their attentions to the Fairbairn Cup races, with the men selecting first and second eights. Peter Summers and Neil Talbott lent their coaching skills to both squads, as well as to the five crews of novices. At times it seemed Neil was coaching dawn till dusk with barely a break! When the results came in it could be seen that, while

respectable, both first VIII's were a little off the pace. The best performances came from the first novice women who placed 4th, and the men's second VIII who were only a few seconds from winning their category. After a few weeks off, 35 members of the club reconvened in Chester (hosted by Grosvenor Rowing Club) to enjoy a week's intensive training prior to the Lent Term. Thomas O'Neill gave up his holiday to come and sit in a chilly launch for the week, and a productive camp ended with some entertaining mixed eights racing.

Returning to the Cam, preparations were quickly under way for the Lent Bumps. It was clear that our crews were gaining ground on the competition, but the question remained: could we get there in time? Pembroke Regatta provided an unexpectedly sunny day out and a win for the third men, but losses for both first VIII's to the Caius men and Downing women. For the men, reaching the final by edging out the fast Downing men's VIII was an impressive achievement, but for the women the loss to the incumbent headship crew was rather demoralising. We had two more weeks to find more speed, but it looked likely that we would be faster than every crew apart from the one that mattered.

With that in mind, I was very proud of the commitment W1 showed when Bumps week finally came around. After a nervy first day in which what looked like a certain bump on Emmanuel evaporated in a flurry of missed strokes and exhaustion, the following three days of performances were nothing short of clinical. On the second day, chased hard by a sprinting Jesus crew, W1 held their nerve to close out the bump on Emmanuel with a matter of feet to spare behind. We had two days left to chase Downing, which had clearly produced the best crew on the river once again, but the girls threw everything at them in the hope that the pressure of headship might lead to a mistake or an off day. On the final day's racing, the plan called for a sprint, ignoring the problems that this would cause in the second half of the course. The problems showed up in style, with Jesus closing to a few feet with three minutes of racing still to go. With the closest missed bump anyone on the bank could remember (around two inches of vertical space separating bow and stern for a moment) the girls scrambled over the line to finish second for the week.

While the men's result for the week (up one place) reads the same, their story was rather different. While the headship looked little more than a hopeful possibility, their speed in training suggested that rising several places from fifth should be achievable. Sadly, when it came to it they struggled to finish off their bumps, gaining overlap on Queens' ahead of them on several days but failing

to gain the last few feet required to make contact. Bumping a spooning Lady Margaret crew on the second day did little to lift their spirits, and they ended the week determined to come back and get it right next time. The rest of the club achieved a mixed set of results, with W2 finally finding their speed on the final day to row over under sustained pressure from behind; M3 managing to make a bump through the cunning tactic of ‘remembering where the finish line is’ (in contrast to Churchill II, who stopped somewhat before it); and M2 and M4 fighting hard and finishing level for the week.

After an Easter break that included some novice eights racing, an assortment of small boats training and racing, and wins for Chris Black and Bence Banhalmi in the Freshman’s Sculls and Men’s Double Sculls events, attention turned to the May Bumps. The men settled on an almost unchanged crew, just losing Chris to the University development squad. In contrast, the women’s crew gained Sara Lackner fresh (!) from racing against Oxford in Blondie, along with Blanka Kesek and Roisin Hannon who joined Alexa Pohl in progressing from the Fairbairn novice crew to race in the first VIII for Mays.

A very welcome addition to the coaching team was our boatman, Iain Law. With fewer lectures and labs to attend in exam term, M1 was able to train in

Darren Xu (2010)



Whole club before the Mays Dinner

the afternoons and therefore reap the benefits of Iain's wisdom and inimitable coaching style. From a rocky start they came on in leaps and bounds and again performed strongly at the Nines' Regatta, defeating crews from St Catharine's and Lady Margaret that were filled with University rowers and an Olympian. Unfortunately the weather was against them come Bumps. The strong headwinds they faced will always favour the larger crews around them, and they fell to St Catharine's on the first day before rowing over for the rest of the week.

The women faced a much more unsettled Term. Inconsistent coaching, the difficulties of nursing long-term injuries, and an unfortunately timed trip to the US, led to a demoralised and underperforming crew only a few days before the Bumps began. Yet again we were rescued by our alumni. Jonathan Davies and Neil Talbott came up for the weekend before the Mays and produced a spectacular improvement in just a few outings. As well as changes to the rowing, they gave the women belief in their speed. This meant that, even when twenty seconds behind Christ's halfway through the second day of racing, they had the confidence to stick to their rhythm and grind out the bump. Up two for the week leaves them equalling the highest ever position for a First and Third women's May VIII.

The rest of the Club's crews, already struggling with high starting positions and a lack of preparation through their exams, were further hit by a stomach bug which made its way around the men's side during the week, leaving the second men racing with a different crew on each day. Some crews were particularly unlucky to go down four, some were simply not fast enough for their starting position, but I hope that everyone who returns will realise what a difference they are capable of making throughout the term and year.

It has been an honour and a delight to guide the club through this year, and whether on the bank, in the boat, or frantically refreshing results pages, I hope everyone involved with the Club has enjoyed working together and learning together. I wish Rob Stroud and his committee the best of luck for the coming year.

Ra Ra First and Third!