

COLLEGE CLUBS

FIRST AND THIRD TRINITY BOAT CLUB. After forty years, the First and Third Trinity Boat Club is back where it belongs – with the men's club at the head of the river in both Lent and May bumps. It has also been a year of firsts, with the successful defence of the men's and women's headships in the Lent bumps. Though these are the most obvious triumphs of the year, it has been a very successful season at all levels within the club, and there is only space here for a summary of what we have achieved. Full accounts can, of course, be found on our website www.firstandthird.org, which is itself one of the club's ongoing successes.

The start of the Michaelmas Term brought different challenges for the men's and women's clubs. The men's squad had to maintain commitment in order to progress throughout the term and, also playing the long game, the women faced the task of rebuilding after losing several squad members from last year. Both sides of the club acquitted themselves impressively well, with the novices, led by the lower boats' captains (Harry Braviner, Ji-Jian Chow, Thomas O'Neill, Charley Bates, Rachel Croft, Liz Hill, and Alex Sye) also showing considerable potential for the coming years.

The club started the year in style, with a clean sweep for the men's clubs at the University IVs competition, winning the light IVs and the first and second men's coxed fours events. The first women's IV proved to be among the quickest crews in the competition, but was ultimately not quick enough to retain their title. Meanwhile, Clare Novices was the first major race for the novice squad. The first novice men showed the progress they had made, winning three rounds before losing in the semi-final. The first novice women were out-sprinted in the quarter-finals by a determined Lucy Cavendish/Hughes Hall composite.

For the rest of the Michaelmas Term the men's club underlined its dominance of Cambridge College rowing, losing only one race in seventeen on the Cam. The term concluded with the most important race of the year thus far, the Fairbairn Cup. The first women's VIII finished a respectable fifth, having made good progress throughout the term. The men's club fielded nine crews, all of which were the fastest in their class, giving the club its first Fairbairn Cup victory since 1997. The

Fairbairn IVs title was also retained and five trophies were collected on the way.

Following on from good progress in Michaelmas, there was a lot of hard work still to be done if we were to repeat the successes of last year's Lents. We had a double headship to defend, and lower boats looking to improve on already strong positions. The Cambridge Head-2-Head provided the traditional start-of-term shock to the system. The first women's VIII maintained their rate of improvement against the other Colleges, losing by only a second, and the first men's VIII completed their unbeaten year against College crews.

Next came a trip to Peterborough for the Head of the Nene. In their first race of the term the second men's VIII carried the mantle of First and Third, following the first men's VIII's aborted attempt due to injury, and showed straight away that they were competitive even for a first VIII. The first women's VIII came in as the second fastest College crew, beating Jesus for the first time – good news, as Jesus were starting second in the bumps. Pembroke Regatta was the last chance to practise before the bumps, and the club had plenty of reason for optimism. The second men's VIII competed in the first VIII's division and lost a close battle in the quarter-finals, yet again showing their speed to be comparable to that of the quickest first VIII's. The second women's VIII won two races but lost to a very strong Jesus crew at the same stage. The third women's VIII won their category, as did the first men's VIII for the third year running. However, the result of the day came from the first women's VIII, who won their first title of the academic year at the perfect time, beating a field containing all of their rivals for the headship.

The bumps campaign started disappointingly, with the fifth men's and the third women's VIII's narrowly failing to get on in the Getting-on Race. Fortunately, this proved to be the last disappointment of the week, with the Lent Bumps themselves surpassing even the most optimistic of expectations. The fourth men's VIII went up two places, leaving them sixteen places ahead of LMBC IV, the only other fourth VIII in the bumps, and with only three third VIII's ahead of them. The Gents VIII won their blades and a place in the second division. The second women's VIII went up three places, and for the second year running the second men's VIII proved to be much too quick for their position in the bumps charts. Five quick bumps earned them their blades, the second VIII headship, and a place in the first division.

The two headship crews were aiming to slog it out over the course for four consecutive days. The first men's VIII did this in unspectacular fashion, never putting in a devastating performance but never being threatened from behind. The first women's VIII left Jesus for dead on the

first two days and held off Emma without too much difficulty on the third day. On the final day, Emma gave it their all, but our women put in the effort of their lives to row over a canvas clear.

By any measure, this was a phenomenally successful set of bumps. This is only the third ever double headship and the first time that any club has retained one. It is the first time that a First and Third crew has ever retained a Lents headship (although 1st Trinity retained the Lents headship in 1902 and earlier years), and the first time that a First and Third crew has retained a headship of any sort since 1967. The last time that any crew was higher than it is now was in 1987, and this was the first Lents since 1944 when no Trinity boat was bumped. The men's club now holds headships at all levels in the Lents. First and Third earned more Michell Cup points from the Lents than any other club, which is a remarkable feat for a large club in an already strong position.

In the last event of the Lent Term, the top two men's VIIIs, each with only two subs since the Lents, went to London for the annual Head of the River Race. As new entrants, both crews were low in the starting order, but came in 88th and 263rd, the best results recorded on this website for the first and second VIIIs. The first VIII beat all College opposition, while the second VIII beat six College first VIIIs (as well as both the other second VIIIs).

Over the Easter vacation, no less than five members of First and Third were selected to represent the University in the races against Oxford. Tobias Garnett, who rowed in Goldie last year, earned his Blue this year but was denied a victory by a very strong Oxford crew in an exciting race. At the Henley boat races Rachel Croft rowed in a Blondie crew, which struggled with the rough conditions and never really got to show its true potential. The women's lightweights boat, captained by Fran Rawlins with Julia Summers and cox Abigail Fox, prevented a clean sweep by Oxford, winning by a narrow margin.

With academic pressures peaking, the Easter Term brought with it renewed challenges, and it was going to be very difficult to match the success of the Lents. For the men's squad, though, the year's objective of claiming the Mays headship remained clear throughout, whatever difficulties they experienced. For both the men's and women's clubs there would be few opportunities to test themselves against College competition, owing to the time constraints of the term. So the crews which lined up on the bumps start would be untested if relatively experienced.

Both the men's second and third VIIIs were starting high up the river for their boat classes, and faced a tough week of racing. Both crews, however, performed admirably, with the second VIII staying level and the

third VIII going up two places. Unfortunately for the women, their relatively inexperienced squad suffered when put to the test by other Colleges strengthened by the return of their University squad rowers. Despite showing real heart in every one of their races, both the first and the second VIIIs went down three places. This has only served to strengthen their resolve and renew their enthusiasm for the next racing season.

The news of the week, however, was happening at the head of the first division, where the first men ended Caius' run of twenty-one consecutive row-overs to take the headship for the first time since 1973. After two years of unrelenting effort, it was a fitting reward for the crew. We could not, however, have taken the headship without the efforts of all those who have rowed over behind Caius these past years and placed us within striking distance. To these people we are immensely grateful.

The year drew to a close at the Henley Royal Regatta, which traditionally provides the toughest test for any crew – even qualifying represents a significant achievement. Having peaked for the May bumps just two weeks before, it would have been an almost impossible task to regroup the VIII, particularly as two of the eight were representing the University club in the Stewards and Prince Albert events. So a coxed four represented the Club in the Prince Albert Challenge Cup. Following two weeks of intensive coaching from Jon Davies and Tom Rose, the IV acquitted itself wonderfully, both qualifying and, despite going out in the first round, giving semi-finalists Glasgow University their closest race of the week.

Off the water, this year has seen the very generous donation of a new men's racing eight from a past First and Third captain. The new Empacher eight will be invaluable in allowing us to remain competitive with other clubs both on and off the Cam. We have also purchased a women's double/pair and a 'Tracer' scull which should be of great benefit to our novice rowers. We look forward to naming them at the biennial dinner in October.

The Club truly is in a fantastic position at the moment. There is tremendous momentum throughout and, though many of the more experienced club members may be moving on, perhaps this is the moment to develop our novice rowers to ensure the continued success of the Club. Leading the Club on from such a strong position is no easy task but we are sure that new captains Florian Gruessing and Liz Hill will come through with flying colours. We wish them the best of luck for the coming season. All that remains is to thank the coaches who have made our successes possible: Jon Davies, Chris Ingram, David Jones, Jenny Lee, Damien Maltarp, Seb Pancratz, Tom Rose, Peter Summers, Neil Talbot, and boatman Iain Law.