



College Activities

First & Third Trinity Boat Club by Richard Fletcher (2006)

In the long and distinguished history of Cambridge rowing, many colleges have had exceptional years, only to fall back into mediocrity. The recent performance of First and Third does not fall into that category, indeed it represents one of the most successful periods in Trinity's rowing history.

The Men's club saw many new recruits at the start of the year, with experience but also a variety of rowing styles. So we decided to operate a squad system to begin with, in which crews were mixed around at every outing. Crews were finally decided upon only two weeks before The Fairbairn Cup, the major race at the end of Michaelmas term. Following steady progress throughout the term, M1 achieved second place in this prestigious event, and M2 finished 13 seconds clear of all other second boats, thus capping off a solid start to the year.

The Women's club on the other hand had the luxury of several returning May colours. These, together with some determined lower boats rowers, formed an immediately competitive squad, and made clear progress throughout the Michaelmas term. In the Fairbairn Cup itself, W1 became the first-ever Trinity crew to win the event, finishing a whopping 27 seconds clear of the next college crew. In addition, the top women's Four won the Coxed IVs category outright, defeating two CUWBC crews as well as all other college entries, so defending their college title in spectacular fashion.

Alongside the senior squads, the Lower Boats Captains worked hard to develop and encourage the novices, from the frantic Queens' Ergs through to Clare Novices and the finale of Novice Fairbairns. Strong performances were seen all round, with the men's and women's top novice crews each coming fourth in their respective events.

Building on these successes, January saw a good start to the **Lent Bumps** campaigns. The men enjoyed an excellent, if very cold, pre-Lent training camp on the river Dee in Chester, making the most of the experience not only to improve their rowing but also to bond as a team.

The women meanwhile trained in Cambridge, and their victories at the Head of the Nene race and Pembroke Regatta showed that the Lents Headship was achievable from the starting position of second on the river—having lost to Emmanuel the previous year. The women did not disappoint! On the first day of Bumps, W1 regained the Lents Headship early in the race, leaving them in a position to cruise comfortably ahead of the opposition for the remaining three days.

The men on the other hand were holding the Headship from the previous year and had to defend it from a similarly-paced, hungry, Downing crew in second place. M1 improved daily, as the hard winter's training paid off. The first three days of Bumps saw reasonably comfortable row-overs, with Downing never seeming to make an impression. On the fourth day, however, Downing produced a formidable sprint and got to within a canvas length but no more! So it was an excellent race, making the Headship wonderfully satisfying to defend. Also, true to form, M2 comfortably held the second men's Headship, despite being plagued by illness and injury.

The Easter vacation saw First and Third boats compete at a number of off-Cam events, including the important Head of the River Race and Women's Head of the River Race, both in London.

Easter term saw the start of the regatta season, which brought a welcome change from the long, cold Head Races of winter. W1 benefited from a few returning University rowers, but lost crew members to academic commitments, giving some ex-novices opportunities to trial for W1. M2 were consistently faster than all second boats, and many first boats, while M1 attended and won a number of prestigious multi-lane regattas. It is fantastic to see 1st & 3rd boats compete at the national level, and is testament to the progress made over recent years.

The May Bumps again saw M1 row over to defend the Headship, holding off an impressive push from Caius on the third day. W1 stayed level, bumping up under pressure on the first day, but later falling to a rising Newnham crew. M2 stayed level at 15th in the first division, a fantastic result that saw them six places above the next second boat. M3 unfortunately had a disappointing

week, being bumped each day, but produced some brave races. W2 and W3 were both bumped on three occasions. While M4 had a brilliant set of bumps, going up three positions, M5 went down three, the Rugby Boat down one, and our Fellows' Boat also down one, after having achieved a well-deserved bump on the first day. The Headship was celebrated in the usual manner, by a boat burning on the Backs—these days a familiar sight in Trinity!

Crews were then sent to Henley Royal Regatta and to Women's Henley, where brave performances were seen all round, bringing closure to yet another excellent year on the river for Trinity.

A footnote from William Close (1969): *Whilst not wishing to detract from the club's magnificent achievements in 2008/09, the statement in last year's Annual Record that 1967 was the last time that 1st & 3rd won a race at Henley is not strictly correct. I myself won several races at Henley, in particular to get to the semi-final of the Ladies Plate and the final of the Visitor's Cup in 1972 when I was Captain. We may not have won a cup, but we did win races.*



Boat-burning by the men's first boat