

# FORWARD

## NEWSLETTER

Edition 1

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Welcome to the first edition of Forward, Churchill College Boat Club's termly newsletter. The aim of this newsletter is to keep you up to date with race results and Boat Club events, as well as providing some stories of rowing interest from both students and alumni.



# 2017/2018 in Review



Above: W1 about to bump FaT W1 on the last day of May Bumps. Photo Giorgio Diviniti

I hope that every member of the club can look back on this year and feel pride for their hard work and commitment to the club. From those who organised endless novice outings, coordinating coaches, coxes and rowers, to those who turned up to race Lent Bumps in windchill which reached minus fourteen, to those who bankpartied, coached, coxed, rowed, or even just gave a cheer from the sideline, I can only say thank you. The boat club can only run with a lot of work behind the scenes, and I can truthfully say that the 'blood, toil, tears and sweat' have been worth it.

## Michaelmas:

The novice drive is always a challenge, and this year proved no different. Unfortunately, there was a severe lack of women showing interest in rowing this year, and, for the first time, I became acutely aware of the unbalanced gender divide at Churchill. Those who we did recruit, however, turned out to be committed and fun, and, despite a disjointed term, raced at Fairbairns in a mixed gender boat with some of the novice men. From the novice men, we have found some rowing talent, and I hope that the boys who have picked up the sport this year will continue to row throughout their time at Churchill. We came through novice term with our equipment relatively unscathed, only one minor bank collision at Emma Sprints to our name, which is perhaps testament to the hard work our coxing rep, Katie, put into ensuring the novice coxes were confident and well-equipped. I hope that a focus on ensuring that high quality coxes come through the club will continue into the future.

## Lents:

Entering into Lents, I don't think anyone could have predicted the dismal conditions which would plague Bumps. It was a term in which only M1 raced before bumps, leaving Churchill as an unknown quantity, not only to our competition, but also to ourselves. I frankly had no idea what to expect of our crews, and the weather only served to throw a further layer of unknown into the equation. With one-and-three-quarters

days of racing completely cancelled, our crews each only raced twice. M2 were unlucky to have an equipment failure on the first day, in which one of their blades lost its collar, leaving them to try and race with only seven rowers. Unsurprisingly, they were bumped by the chasing crew. Not all was lost, however, as they did receive a shout out from the umpires for having to turn around and retrieve their floating blade once racing was over.

Both M1 and W1 rowed over on both their days of racing, the boys in front of Kings, and the girls in front of St Catz. Perhaps unexciting racing on paper, but notable for both crews, who managed to hold chasing crews who reached three whistles and successfully avoided being bumped.

Perhaps not the most successful bumps campaign on record, but it was far from the worst - it left a stable platform to be built on going into Mays. A training week organised on the Cam culminated in some exciting bumps-style pieces (maybe not for the mens IV+, who were too slow to be included). The prospect of summer evening rowing and the end of the university trialing period bolstered the women with the return of three experienced rowers (of which two were University triallists), and the men with one, crews were set, and training was on.

### Mays:



Left: M1 winning their pots at Peterborough Regatta. Right: M3 bumping Magdelene M3 on the first day of May Bumps.  
Second Photo- Giorgio Diviniti

M3 and M2 both committed to a more regular training schedule, with thanks to Sam and Thiago, who captained these crews, and this showed, with both crews winning their divisions at Xpress Head. M1 also won pots at Peterborough Regatta, leaving all of the men of the club with some form of silverware for their efforts (if not any bumps, sorry Elliot). A term with more racing and piecing meant that the prospect of May Bumps was exciting, rather than nerve-racking, and each crew did the club proud in their own way. M3 finished the week up two, cementing their place in the men's fourth division. Lower boats racing is always unpredictable, and one of these bumps was on a FaT boat, who were apparently 'too hung-over to race', and failed to turn up at the start. M2 held their own in the third division, giving this crew its first bumps in my time at Churchill. They finished the week up one, and were a much stronger crew than they had been at the start of the term. M1 perhaps had the unluckiest campaign. The crew successfully denied

Wolfson their blades (no matter what Wolfson say, a row-over does not equal blades), by rowing over on the second day, before being bumped down to sandwich boat. Unfortunately, on the last day, tragedy struck, and, as the canon went off for the start of the second division, the boys suffered a rudder failure, and were left with no option but to collide with the outside of first post corner. A relegation to division 2 does not reflect the hard work and improvement these boys have experienced this year. They are a much stronger crew than that which raced last year, and I can only hope this trajectory continues.

The women were an unrecognisable crew from Lents. With, sadly, only one women's boat this year, and the mens crew all having won pots, the women went into Mays with something to prove. And prove it they did. A row-over on day two was unfortunate, as the boats in front bumped out before first post, but three bumps left the girls in ninth position on the river after a week of excellent racing. With a new women's eight to look forward to next year, I can only hope this success will inspire more girls to give rowing a try next year to end our drought of female rowers.

It has been a year of ups and downs, but one I think the club can look back on with pride. We've made the best of everything that's been thrown at us, and have always found a way to make things work. We may not be the richest club on the river, have the longest history, the best boats or a half a million pound rowing tank, but we have a sense of spirit and determination that is infectious, and something to be proud of.

On a personal note, it has been an honour and a privilege to captain the club this year. Perhaps the question I have been asked most in my three years at Cambridge is 'Why would you row?'. This is usually accompanied by a comment about early mornings, long training hours or not having enough time to work. I normally reply with something along the lines of 'I like it', or, 'it's not that bad'. But the truth is, rowing has made my time at Cambridge. It has taught me lessons that my degree simply never could have, introduced me to friends I would never otherwise have met, and, honestly, made me a better person - I've learnt how to work in a team, how to discipline myself, how to push myself to the limit and the value of hard work. To the club, I say thank you, for making me better. I hope that everyone who comes through the club in the years to come feels this same passion. I know I leave it in the capable hands of Tom and the rest of the committee. Keep winning, please.

For the last time,  
Forward,  
Vicky



Above: M1 warming up for May Bumps. Photo Giorgio Diviniti

# Thoughts from a CUW Trialist



Above: W1 2015 bumping Catz W1 in May Bumps

Arriving in Cambridge in October 2014, I knew that I wanted to try out rowing. I hadn't been particularly sporty in school, but my dad had rowed in his time at Churchill and so I had grown up hearing stories of bumps races; I also had a vague idea that it was the thing that people did in Cambridge, though if I'm honest I didn't actually have that much idea of what it actually entailed. With an open mind, and having been encouraged by various people that "you'll be good at rowing because you're tall", I turned up to try rowing day towards the end of freshers week.

Little did I know then how much rowing would come to define my experience of Cambridge. As a novice, I had a great time learning to (questionably) row, seeing myself get fitter and stronger while discovering a love of the sport; I was lucky to be in a boat with similarly keen and motivated people, some of whom have become lifelong friends. Moving into Lent term, I had the chance to learn from more experienced rowers in the boat, and race bumps for the first time; I don't think I've ever been as scared as I was hearing the cannons go off on that first day, but I've since learnt to enjoy that feeling of adrenaline and the racing heartbeat. My love affair with rowing naturally progressed into Mays, and another amazing bumps campaign; that year, Churchill W1 went up two in Lents and up 3 in Mays, in addition to the boat club winning both the Pegasus and Marconi cups, so it's fair to say that my first year of rowing was about as good as it could get!

During the year, I received an email from the assistant coach of CUWBC about the university development squad and opportunities for summer rowing. Since I was enjoying rowing so much, it seemed like a no-brainer to get involved, and I ended up racing BUCS in a beginner 8+ of people from various colleges who had learnt to row that year; despite not having many sessions together, we won our event, which really shows how strong Cambridge College rowing is in general. I then went on to do the summer development squad which acts as a simulation of the trialling process, equipping people with the skills and knowledge to go on to trial. Going into the summer, I hadn't fully decided whether or not to trial, but decided that it was an opportunity that I couldn't miss.

Since the trialling process started in September, I came back to Cambridge early and had a chance to get into the training before the start of term kicked in. A lot of the Dev Squad were also back, meaning that I already knew a fair amount of people in the squad, and soon got to know everyone else. These would be the people who would get me through my first year of trialling: the times when I forgot (or ignored) the importance of getting enough sleep; the dark period where the erg was my worst enemy; when race selection went my way and when it didn't... It was simultaneously the hardest and most rewarding year that I've had, and even when I hated it I still loved it. Ultimately, I didn't make a boat that year, but being part of the team on Boat Race day was truly special.

Being an MML student, my third year was spend abroad, and I chose to work in two different parts of France. For the first half of the year I was without a nearby boat club, but soon missed the early mornings and the exercise so moved back into something resembling training. For the second half of the year, however, I moved to Lille which luckily did have a rowing club. Within a week, I had signed up and was (finally!) back in a boat. My need to feel prepared for everything had made me try to learn all the rowing vocabulary I could find in advance (sadly rowing vocab lists aren't a big feature of language learning), so I turned up with a vague idea which I hoped would get me through the initial conversations. A potential hazard came when I realised I'd mixed up 'port' and 'starboard' in the limited translations I found (I don't speak American...); I was only saved by the fact I could row both sides, so just had to conceal my surprise when I was handed a strokeside oar instead of the bowside one I was expecting.

After muddling my way through the first few outings, I managed to acquire a very niche and almost entirely useless set of vocabulary, but one which gave me a great sense of achievement; one of my proudest year abroad moments was being able to supply a French crewmate with the word for "rigger" when she blanked on it. Other highlights included racing a quad after having sculled about 15 times in my life (I somehow didn't crab), and finding out that all the boats in France seem to be stroke steered, only once I'd sat down in the stroke seat. I also got to do various different races, including the French championships, where it was mostly just exciting to see so many boats and rowers in one space – it had been a while! In general, though, it was great to discover that the rowing community is worldwide, and it's probably no coincidence that the closest friends I made on my year abroad were the people I rowed with.



Left: Sarah winning the Spare Pair's Race on the tideway with her partner Abigail Parker by 3.5 lengths.  
Right: This years' W1 after bumping Christ's W1 on day 3 of May Bumps.

After a year of taking rowing less seriously, I was excited to come back to Cambridge and step up my rowing by trialling again, especially after watching the CUWBC clean sweep that year. I knew that the squad had made huge progress and the standard had gone up a lot, but with nothing to lose I had no real reason not to do it again. It's a decision I definitely haven't regretted, as I've learnt so much this year, and seen myself improve so much. Not making a crew was tough, but it was amazing to race Oxford in the second ever Spare Pair race on the Tideway - won by another Churchillian, Paula, last year. I then had loads of fun jumping back into a Churchill crew again for May Bumps this year, alongside training in a pair for Met Regatta and Henley Women's. It was amazing to end my time rowing at Cambridge the way it started, in pink, and with a brilliant +3 in a wonderful crew.

In my 4 years of rowing so far, I've won multiple pots, gone up in every bumps I've rowed in, won BUCS medals, competed at national championships in two different countries, beaten Oxford and raced at Henley. To think that none of this would have happened if I hadn't been drawn into CCBC in my first week here seems so crazy to think about now. My love of the pink definitely equals my love of the light blue, and I can't wait to come back on the other side of things and cheer very loudly from the towpath next year.

Sarah Carlotti

# Alumni

From the 24<sup>th</sup> June to the 8<sup>th</sup> July this year, I was given the opportunity to talk to alumni as part of the College's Calling Campaign. While this was primarily a fundraising scheme, it did allow me to talk (often for a lot longer than I was meant to) about the Boat Club. The conversations I have had during this campaign, have given me a new insight into the history of the boat club and provided some great stories which I'd like to share with you now...

One of the most common things people remembered about their rowing experience at Churchill was, unsurprisingly, Bumps. I was fortunate to speak to a couple of rowers from the first years of the boat club who, placed 10 positions lower than their lowest equivalent boat, proceeded to bump everything ahead of them and win their oars an impressive 4 times. On the other hand, as unlucky as bumps can be, I spoke to a lady who had been chasing the headship of the women's divisions when an equipment malfunction took a rower out of action, costing them the bump. Perhaps one of the most relatable bumps stories came from a Michael Jacobson, who was recruited straight off the plane from the US, put in a boat and made to row to a pub. During a day of May Bumps, Michael (in stroke) caught an impressive crab, forcing the boat to stop and restart before they eventually caught the crew they were chasing. Overall the crew went up three, with the crab conveniently photographed (and generously shared)!



It was great to hear of crews that had gone to Henley Royal and won at York Regatta. More comically, I was informed of near-misses with parental swans and unsuspecting coxes, as well as the more bizarre tale of an M1 crew downstream of Baitsbite lock encountering Queens' W1 posing for a naked calendar halfway through a piece (who were apparently alerted to this when their cox mysteriously went silent). Many also shared their fondness for the Boat Club Dinners, which certainly seems to have gotten far tamer over the years...

Throughout my conversations it was hard to miss the impact the Canon Duckworth had both on the formation of the boat club, and its success throughout the years. Many spoke fondly of his coaching, suggesting that it was surprising he hadn't fallen off his bike and into the Cam more often, such was his focus. It is clear to me that he was certainly a character, with incredible perseverance (notably while in a prisoner of war camp in Singapore during the Second World War) and a passion for rowing, coaching all levels of college rowing. It certainly seems right that we continue to toast him at every Boat Club Dinner.

Personally, I found it inspiring to hear from people who had continued their rowing after leaving Churchill. Two people I spoke to have competed in their national indoor rowing championships in the past (Canadian and British), with the latter going on to place 10<sup>th</sup> in his category at the World Championships. Someone else had since taken up coaching part time, while another had retired to France where he is still an active sculler (which a current rower described as 'the dream').

I'm really grateful to everyone who took the time to speak to me during this campaign, it was fascinating to find out more about Churchill, and what alumni had gone on to do both in and outside of rowing. If there are any Alumni who might be interested in writing for the Boat Club's newsletter in the future, please do get in contact with us (I know I'd love to hear even more!).

Katie Kirk

# Dates for your diary

- Unveiling of the new Women's Eight: 20th September
- Freshers BBQ: Tuesday 2nd October, 5pm
- Try Rowing Day: Saturday 6th October
  
- Novice Fairbairn's: Thursday 29th November
- Senior Fairbairn's: Friday 30th November
- Michaelmas Boat Club Dinner: 24th November
  
- Lent Bumps: 5th-9th March
- Lent Boat Club Dinner: 10th March
  
- May Bumps: 12th-15th June
- May Boat Club Dinner: 15th June

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