

## From the President

Dear Friends,

Writing this newsletter following on from another very wet term, there is unfortunately not much Oxford-based rowing to report on. With Torpids sadly cancelled, and the river unrowable for most of Hilary term. However, that hasn't stopped all at UCBC from rowing elsewhere!

Our senior crews have been making regular trips to Eton Dorney Rowing Lake and quickly shifted their focus to putting out strong tideway performances at WeHoRR and HoRR. The Martlet/Univ composite crew at WeHoRR performed excellently and a full account of the race is included in the Martlet section. We are all wishing our HoRR crew the best of luck and I would encourage you to keep a look out on the boat club's social media for HoRR race updates!

Off the water, we started the term with a 100-hour ergathon club fundraiser and covered over 1.5 million metres collectively to complete this! With this kind of distance our rowers could have reached several international destinations including Rome, Stockholm, Warsaw, Krakow, and Budapest or made it to the ISS and back twice (almost)! We raised a grand total of £1800 which has allowed us to rehandle all of the W2 blades and send almost £900 to an excellent local cause - Oxford Mutual Aid. We are very grateful to all those who contributed towards our fundraising target, and a special shoutout goes to the generous Dinos & Cassies who carried us over the finish line at our annual dinner!! The new W2 blades have been returned and our crews are looking forward to using the blades in their debut bumps campaign at Summer Eights this year!

Continuing with the fundraising theme, the boat club will be a focus area for the college's **Giving Day on 30 April – 1 May!** Save the date and watch out for updates on the Univ website and social media platforms for further news and to get involved. UCBC members will be getting involved across Giving Day by doing various challenges in addition to some live May Day morning rowing and featuring in the Univ Giving Day video!

And finally, it's not just our students who have sought out alternate training locations. UCBC's very own boatman, Jim Ronaldson, took on the tremendous challenge of rowing across the Atlantic Ocean this winter! Jim, along with his friend, Ian, finished the 3000 mile race across the Atlantic on Saturday 17th February, rowing as team Never2Late and crossing in a time of 66 days, 17 hours and 12 minutes. And if completing the 'World's Toughest Row' wasn't already impressive enough, they paired this with a new world record as the oldest men's pairs team to row any ocean. All members of UCBC are seriously impressed and inspired by Jim and Ian's achievement. We are incredibly grateful for the many years of support Jim has shown UCBC, poling off our boats for bumps racing with the best possible lines, and expertly repairing our boats day to day. It has been a pleasure to have the opportunity to watch and support Jim in such an enormous challenge and we couldn't be more proud!

**Best wishes, and I hope to see many of you soon**

**Charlie Kniebe-Evans**  
**UCBC President 2023-24**

*Jim (left) and Ian, before crossing the Atlantic*



*A 4+ training at Eton Dorney*



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## From the Women\*s Captain

The women\*s side have continued to train hard, building a strong base level fitness to build off in the summer, despite the lack of racing and training on the Isis this term due to flooding and river closures. In addition to the group erg sessions and weights training, several wholesome crew dinners have been a great bonding opportunity for the crew. W1 have also had several very successful training sessions at Dorney. These have been extremely beneficial as they have enabled the crew to have some valuable water time. The long and tough paddles will therefore stand the crew in good stead looking forward to next term, which will hopefully involve a lot more rowing and racing on the water! The women\*s side have entered two strong crews into WEHARR, and at the time of writing, the race has not yet been cancelled so fingers crossed it goes ahead! I wish the crew every success next term as they look to win back their headship title. It has been a pleasure to be captain the last two terms and I hope that Alexandra, the new women\*s captain, will be able to report back at the end of next term about many successful races and lots of training sessions on the Isis.

**Alex Jones, Women\*s Captain 2023-24**

## From the Men\*s Captain

If newsletter word count is proportional to time spent on the water, this would be an extremely short entry. The term got off to a positive start with the 100-hour ergathon, and when we met many of you at Dinos and Cassies, we had high hopes for the rest of the term. Unfortunately, what actually lay ahead was rain, more rain, and race cancellations—Bedford Head and Torpids, the two principal targets for the term, were both modified and ultimately cancelled owing to bad conditions. On the upside, though, it's now been three years since Univ M1 last failed to bump a boat on a day of Torpids; few current members remain who have seen such a thing. It was also some consolation to enter the two Torpids replacements on offer: New's Indoorpids erg relay and Pembroke's Tug-of-Warpids.

For Indoorpids, the rules of the race were such that, as the highest placed of the three division I crews that entered, we started at Head. But we could still 'bump out' by extending our lead on the chasing crew by 40 metres. This meant an easy first two races for most of the crew, since our starters—Paolo '175 kg squat for reps' Cicuta and Andy 'Cross Fit' Bridger—put 40 metres into the opposition almost immediately. In the third and final race we changed the order and rowed the full course, setting the fastest time of the day despite a few falling-off-the-seat hiccups along the way.

For Tug-of-Warpids, M1 entered two composites with W1. Both teams won their matches in the round of 64, the first against St Antony's and the second against Teddy Hall. Tragically, the bracket then placed us one against the other in the round of 32—and in a surprise upset the second team



*Isaac Robinson (left) and Lloyd Arnold about to lose tug of war to team Greg*

prevailed, though the extended fight was much to the detriment of everyone's back and hip health.

The remaining Univ team deployed the same technique in the round of 16 on Oriol with great success (judging by their performance, Oriol are fortunate that bumps didn't go ahead). Next in the quarter-final, we faced Pembroke for a very close match. Though Pembroke started strong and had us a few feet from defeat, our Trenaman-Sakabani anchor combination held firm until Pembroke faded and capitulated. Though, unfortunately, with a quick turnaround to the next match and shaky legs after this effort, we quickly gave in to Magdalen in the semi-final.

Looking ahead to next term, the training we were able to do over the past couple months—on the ergs and at Dorney—won't have gone to waste. Rather, it's kept everyone ticking over, doing our best given the conditions to sustain momentum for the Head of the River Race and onwards. In Trinity Term we have our eyes on an extravagant menu of races to choose from, and much to catch up on. We hope to enter some crew or other into possibly all of Bedford Spring Fours & Small Boats Head, Oxford City Bumps, BUCS Regatta, Bedford Amateur Regatta, Summer Vllls (and the Martlet Regatta!), Metropolitan Regatta, Marlow Regatta, and finally Henley Royal Regatta. Then come next year, we'll have our chance at Torpids again, starting once more just four bumps from headship.

**Gregory Cuff**  
**UCBC Men\*s Captain 2023-24**



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## From the Women\*s Vice-Captains

This term has had lots of land training for the women\*s side in our lower boats, with impressive numbers coming to ergs, tank sessions, spin classes and even a few outings at Dorney. These were then obviously followed by brunch wherever possible! W2 and W3 worked hard to improve technique in preparation for any racing that might happen, and made heaps of progress. There was so much enthusiasm and crew bonding among them, which was really demonstrated in their self-organised socials, such as a W2 pizza evening, and additional tank and spin sessions that they did as crews. We also enjoyed multiple socials this term such as Sportsperson formal and Torpids dinner. We all look forward to getting out on the river more next term to get some more water time!

### **Ali Gowlett, Women\*s Vice Captain 2023-24** **Grace Kimber, Women\*s Vice Captain 2023-24** From the Men\*s Vice-Captains

Owing to the unforgiving river conditions this term, much of our Hilary has been bundling into cars (and sometimes trains) and making the short journey to Eton Dorney Lake for training. Eager to replicate the success of last year\*s M2 Torpids blades, our men\*s second boat were regular attendees at Dorney this term and have quickly honed their expertise in boat rigging, de-rigging, and loading. Unfortunately, there wasn\*t much of a chance to show off their rowing. In 4th week, the Isis reopened as flood waters receded, the scene was set and M2 stood ready to continue the successes of last year. They put on a good show in IWL D at the end of that week, little did they know at the time that this would be the only matchup against other colleges that occurred this Hilary term. Coming off the back of IWL success M2 began gearing up for Bedford Head just for it to be indefinitely postponed. Not to worry, M2 then began regearing up for IWL E only for the Isis to flood again.

At this point, the prospect of Torpids going ahead as planned seemed slimmer and slimmer as the water level crept back over the towpath. Nevertheless, M2 will press on to convert the hard work this term to have a very solid foundation for Eights.

This term our M3 crew was a continuation of our novice programme owing to a similarly rainy Michaelmas term. M3 progressed massively under the close guidance of our lower boats coach Mark Proberts. Many of our novices partook in the weekly pilgrimage to Dorney, we aimed to rotate novices within our M2 outings in order to boost their experience on the water, before building up to a mostly novice 8 in 6th week! Overall we would like to pay tribute to the massive enthusiasm of our novice athletes who erged multiple times per week and attended tank sessions in impressive numbers, all their hard work will undoubtedly pay off in Summer Eights next term!

Looking to Trinity Term, as with other years, M2/3 are looking to enter external regattas including Bedford Spring Head, City Bumps, and Bedford Regatta. Excitement is building as we head towards what will be our novices\* first experience of racing on the Isis and for some their first ever time on the water in Oxford. In an exciting addition to our Trinity calendars, we intend to send our first-ever novice four to BUCs regatta in Nottingham this May. This will see our novices going toe to toe with other novice crews from Universities across the country. Of course, we cannot forget Summer Eights and the excitement this will undoubtedly bring. Across the club, we are really looking forward to finally introducing another year of athletes to the joys of bumps racing!

### **Alex Rigamonti, Men\*s Vice Captain 2023-24** **Ciaran Moscrop, Men\*s Vice Captain 2023,24**



*Members of W2 and W3 at Torpids Dinner*



## From the Social Secretary

This term, the club organised a variety of social events that brought members together both on and off the water. A notable highlight was the crewdate with Hertford and St John's boat clubs, continuing the connection with these colleges after our much loved social in Michaelmas.

As always, we have our annual Dinos and Cassies dinner at the end of January – it was lovely seeing many of you for this. We also had a very exciting M1 2024 vs. M1 2008(ish) race, which was a great success – we hope that this was just a taste of what is to come at the Martlet regatta this summer.

In contrast to our usual high-energy socials, we arranged a welfare social that offered a more relaxed setting, prioritising mental well-being and providing a space for members to unwind and connect informally.

A significant event this term was the Torpids dinner, held despite the cancellation of the Torpids regatta. The evening featured a pizza van, serving unlimited pizza all night, which went down very well with all in attendance. Adding their own unique touch, Hari and Bertie organised "the Torlympics," a series of games including that added a competitive element to the night. The games included egg and spoon race, boat race, and a three legged race, going some way to make up for the competition we missed out on with the cancellation of Torpids.

Looking to next term, we hope to continue our successful run of social events in the build up to Summer Eights. We hope to see you all here at univ for Eights Dinner on May 25th for what I'm sure will be another excellent night.

**James Trenaman (social secretary)**



*Attendants of Dinos and Cassies*

## From the Martlets

As with most clubs this term, it's been a quiet start to the year with river closures stopping us from training on the Isis. However, despite this, some members managed to wrangle some more occasional water time at Dorney as subs for the men and women's first boats. The one and only competition of the year, given that everything else has been cancelled was WeHoRR. The 5 members of the martlet club joined forces with 3 of Univ's women's first boat to form a strong experienced composite eight. With just two water sessions as a crew-ish (the full 8 of the day had not trained together), they put in a respectable and solid performance, finishing 90th overall in a time of 21:20:03.

The Martlets look forward to donning their new Martlet unisuits for summer regattas and enjoying training in spring and summer weather (if it ever arrives!).

**Sophie Wicken**  
**Martlet Captain**

*Martlet/W1 Composite  
mid race at WeHoRR*



## From The Archive - The Fog of Torpids, 1974

This is the story of the 'Clash in the Gut' between the First Vllls of Univ and Balliol in Torpids 1974. Or as The Daily Telegraph described it: the 'Crack of Oars'.

It can be hard for a college to fill the seats in three or four Vllls during Torpids. The weather trends frigid and rainy; many outings begin or end in the dark. Where do you find students who have the requisite raw talent and are happy to bundle up and head to the river, only to have to shed their outerwear?

Inevitably a college boat club turns in the winter to novices, those who have never before rowed. We were fortunate in our recruitment in Michaelmas 1973. Among all Oxford colleges, amazingly the two fastest Vllls in that November's Christ Church Regatta – in races open only to Novice Vllls – were both from University College. Almost 100 Univ Members would row in at least one College race that academic year. By February five of our brand new rowers had graduated to the First VIII, now training for Torpids. Our coxswain was a novice as well.

Oxford had record rains that winter. During the week before Torpids, the Isis was approaching flood stage. Navigating the currents in the Gut was sure to be difficult.

Our 1973 First VIII had bequeathed us an excellent starting position: 3rd in the First Division. We were right behind Balliol, described by some as a serious challenger to Oriel at number one. Univ, having only two oarsmen who had rowed more than a year, was an afterthought.

As Day 1 unfolded, it was Balliol's coxswain who had trouble steering through the swollen Gut – just when our (mostly) novice crew was kicking into high gear to try to overtake them. I felt a jolt and heard the crack of oars on oars. Although invisible to us rowers sitting with backs to the action, Balliol had crossed into our lane. Or as Balliol would claim, Univ steered into theirs. Unfazed amidst the chaos, coxing in his first bump race ever, coxswain Dave McCann called for us to take it up two notches – as if starting a new race from nearly dead in the water in the Gut. Led by our Australian stroke Hugh Watson, Univ pulled steadily away from Balliol and Christ Church to finish second behind Oriel that day. Little did we know, gasping for air short of Folly Bridge, that a clamour was rising from the Balliol boathouse.

Balliol lodged a formal protest. They accused Univ of crossing into their lane, attacking their rowers with our oars, and perhaps deliberately causing damage to their boat! These claims seemed preposterous, but the clash had been so chaotic that nobody in either boat had a full picture of what had happened.

The Oxford Mail headline read, 'Rowing Row Mars Torpids'. Other, more dispassionate voices weighed in. A Torpids umpire, initially silent, ruled that Balliol was at fault. But afraid that Balliol's claims might hold some truth, I sent a conciliatory note to the Balliol captain saying, let's decide this on the river: surely the better boat will win on Day 2. This tactic calmed the waters, as Balliol were quite sure they were the better boat.

On the Isis the next afternoon, Univ stroked to a four length lead over a shocked Balliol crew. Even with six novices, Univ would hold off Christ Church four straight days to finish second in the 1st Division. Only four times in the previous century had Univ risen to this level in Torpids!

Recently five members of our 1974 Torpids VIII reconvened to discuss the clash in the Gut. Though what actually happened that day remains shrouded in fog, we are sticking with the umpire's ruling. Balliol ran into us.

**Jack Zoeller**  
UCBC Captain 1973 - 74

	1st TORPID	st.	lbs.
Bow	P. SCHOLL - - - -	11	0
2	P. SKEET - - - -	12	1
3	K. BUTLER - - - -	12	2
4	A. WARD - - - -	14	2
5	G. KEIRSTEAD - - - -	15	0
6	J. ZOELLER - - - -	12	0
7	J. HAIGH - - - -	11	12
Str.	H. WATSON - - - -	12	10
Cox	D. MCCANN - - - -	9	0
Coaches: D. BURGESS, N. DIX, J. MORRISON, P. LEROY			



*The 1974 crew in action and their crew list*



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## Eights Reunion

As you will hopefully have seen by now, we are very excited to be organizing a 50 year reunion for members of the 1973-75 crews, this summer eights (May 25th). This will be a lovely event, in which you are invited to watch our current crews racing in the day, before heading to a private drinks reception with the master of the college and then moving on to a high table dinner.

A lot of work has gone into making sure this is a wonderful event, and we very much hope that you are able to join us. Formal invites will be sent out roughly a week after this newsletter, but in the meantime please do RSVP via email, to [ucbc.alumni@univ.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ucbc.alumni@univ.ox.ac.uk).

Best wishes and I hope to see many of you in the summer,

**Lloyd Arnold**  
**UCBC Vice-President 2023-24**

## Martlet Regatta

This summer we will be hosting the inaugural martlet regatta, which will give all alumni of the club the opportunity to take boats out, either for a paddle or for some races, including against current students. Further details about this will follow soon, but for now please save the date, May 26th, and if you would like to be amongst the first to get updates relating to this event then please drop us an email at [ucbc.alumni@univ.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ucbc.alumni@univ.ox.ac.uk)

## Dates for the Diary

- HoRR 23/03/24
- Bedford Small Boats Head 15/04/24
- City Bumps 21/04/24
- BUCS Regatta 04/05/24 - 06/05/24
- Summer VIIIs Rowing On 18/05/24
- Summer VIIIs 22/05/24 - 25/05/24
- Martlet Regatta 26/05/24
- Met Regatta 01/06/24 - 02/06/24
- HWR 21/06/24 - 23/06/24
- Marlow Regatta 22/06/24
- HRR Qualifiers 28/06/24
- HRR 02/07/24 - 07/07/24
- Oxford City Royal Regatta 17 – 18 /07/24