

Tortoise Club Newsletter Hilary Term 2019

Dates for the diary:

Eights: 29th May - 1st June

Tortoise Club at HRR: 6th July

President's Report

I must begin by again congratulating the M1 on a commanding set of rowers that set up a strong foundation of success to come. 2 down and many more to come. After the jubilant success of 2018 it was bittersweet that the week saw a promising looking W1 taken down by Wadham. I admire the guts of trying to bump back the crew that bumped you the day before but ultimately the risk did not pay off this year. Credit also to M2 who won blades proving that at Oriel what goes down must come back up. A return to M2 headship in 2020 would be quite a sight.

The Torpids crews seemed to be stacked full of freshers with all four racing crews stroked by them. While this bodes very well for the future of Oriel rowing it does hamstring the Tortoise Club's own rowing squad if none of you graduate. Unfortunately we were unable to put out a crew at this year's Head of the River or Women's Head. I hope Tortoises will return in 2020 older, wiser and crucially larger in number.

Looking ahead to Eights with athletes returning from three of the university squads I greatly look forward to seeing what awaits. You'd be a fool to miss it.

Floreat Oriel
Stevan Boljevic



Women's Captain Report

The Women's squad hit the ground running at the beginning of term getting straight into the eights at Wallingford. Our coach Sophia Heath was very quickly putting us through our paces with regular side by side pieces between W1 and W2 in the mornings and battle paddling between W1 and M2 on weekends. Land training was relentless, with the first boat completing 2 ergs and 2 weights sessions a week on top of the 5 water sessions. The drive and motivation to train was incredible to see and truly epitomised the Oriel hunger and spirit.

Sadly Hilary term took its toll, resulting in a large number of illnesses right up through Torpids. However, what was great to see was girls always willing to sub up into higher boats to keep us out on the water training. Very few training sessions were missed.

Torpids didn't bring us the result that we were hoping for nor did it reflect the hard work, athleticism or skill of the crew. Against some incredibly strong competition, W1 fell four places but this leaves us within distance of Headship next year and with such a young and talented squad this is a real possibility. Despite having four tough days of racing, W1 showed tremendous guts and spirit. Each day the girls flew off the bungline, moving to within a quarter of a length of Hertford and Pembroke who had bumped us the day before. Sadly it wasn't to be our year but the girls did themselves extremely proud, rowing with determination and pride.

In division 3 W2 fell one place overall over the four days of racing, surrounded by other college first boats. The training they had been doing all term with W1 showed as they demonstrated once again that they were at the standard of many other college first boats. It was very clear that there was a lot of talent in this boat and I full well to expect some of these girls to move up to the first boat and become tortoises in the next couple of years. W3 came tantalisingly close to qualifying for Torpids for the first time in many years, missing out by only 2 seconds. They put in an impressive amount of miles over the last two terms and I have every confidence they will keep getting quicker and be a seriously competitive boat come Summer Eights.

We now look forward to Summer Eights. W1 will be looking to solidify their place in division 1 and move up, continuing the pursuit for our first Summer Eights headship within the next 10 years. W2 are out looking for bumps and putting in the miles over the vac to show what a dominant second boat they are. W3 will push on again to qualify for Summer Eights and with so many girls keen to get involved there's potential for a W4 to be fielded as well.

I am incredibly grateful for all the support we receive from the Tortoises, whether it be advice and support during bumps week or cheering on from the bank or financial support to keep the club running.

I have every confidence in the squad moving forward. Exceptional coaching from Sophia Heath has left us with an incredibly technically skilled and deep squad and I know we will be reaping the rewards of this in the years to come.



Men's Captain Report

We approached this Torpids with the same hunger and desire that was present in the previous campaign. Throughout the squad, we refused to be complacent and every member fully committed to the training programme laid out by our head coach, Lenny Robertson. Around three 8s worth of boys returned for preseason camp, ensuring there was competition for every seat. Athletes were cycled in and out of seats, allowing for greater squad development at every level in the squad.

Unfortunately, we were heavily plagued with injury and illness in this term, leading to an often depleted top boat. Although we had our nine strongest out there representing Oriel when it mattered, we prioritised training over fixtures. A perfect example of our misfortune was three (!) injuries in the weeks running up to Quintin Head, leading to a last minute scratch. This is where we have room to build, and we hope to stride on in Trinity and representing the college in a wider setting.

Our representation at Isis Winter League (IWL) fixtures was strong throughout, often putting out both an M2 and M3. This provided them with suitable race experience, and although M3 and M4 failed to qualify for Torpids, they continue to build towards developing a deeper squad for Eights.

Indeed, it was M2 that really stood out. Their IWL performances were stellar, improving immensely after each and every race. The final fixture before Torpids saw them beat the majority of college's M1 crews, and really assert themselves as a contender for Division 1. This run of form carried into Torpids, leading to four individual bumps, an unfortunate 'Technical Row Over' but ultimately a promotion to 10th in Division 3. Although these results speak for themselves, it was the manner in which they conducted themselves that was most impressive. During racing, they were not only visibly proud to represent the Oriel, but also fully concentrated on succeeding. All four of their bumps were completed within 40 seconds, showing just how dominant the crew was. The boat, including 5 freshers, really epitomised the Oriel spirit, and I am sure they will progress to be even greater oarsmen in the future.

The M1 performance was professional, calm and collected throughout. I would safely say that there was never a moment at which any member in the crew did not trust the process and the position it put us in. Although at times unstable with injury, M1 went out and delivered on all four days. The racing was mature and composed, comfortably holding Pembroke off at a length and a half for the first two days, and promptly emptying the tank on the last two days, to a lead of over 3 lengths as we crossed the line. Last year returned Oriel to Head of the River, but performances like this year's showed the mindset that can keep Oriel on top for many years to come.

Outside of Torpids, we are happy to see many an Orielensis representing the University. Achim Harzeim has been selected for Blue boat, with Leo von Malaise and Hal Frigaard on track for seats in Isis. We also have a strong lightweight contingent, namely Jan Ole Ernst and Iain McGurgan named in the Lightweight Blue Boat coxed by Frankie Satchwell

However, the real challenge still lies ahead. As I write this, the boys have returned to a rigorous Easter training programme of six sessions a week. With so many great athletes returning to OCBC for Eights, it is sure to be a very quick fleet of boats. We aim to be sending M1 and M2 crews to Wallingford and Bedford regattas, and look to be collecting our fair share of silverware. We will keep you updated via our several social media platforms, and we hope to see you at the boathouse for a successful Summer Eights campaign.

