

College Activities

Trinity College First & Third Boat Club

Joshua Hampson (2016)

First and Third is Trinity's historic Boat Club and one of the largest clubs on the Cam. Led by Captains Joshua Hampson and Juliette Wrixon and its devoted Committee, it has been a short and sweet season for rowing at First and Third this year. We started out in Michaelmas with a characteristically large and enthusiastic novice intake, many of whom graduated to become fully fledged seniors. The seeds of Lent successes were sown in Seville – a valuable week of training that was a highlight of the year for many. The year was set to climax in Easter, with boats poised to succeed at Bumps and M1 to have a crack at Henley, before the global pandemic caused a rethink. The Club adapted, and we kept our fitness going over Zoom and competed in Cambridge's first virtual May Bumps.

In Michaelmas this year we decided to drag everyone back a few days early from their holidays in order to ease them back into training and give our boatman, Bomber, a chance to see how people had progressed/regressed over the summer. We were in a strong position to compete, with two men's VIIIs and a women's IV selected by the end of Week 1. The women's side had a fairly clean state this year, with a number of members having graduated and Georgie Archer trialling for CUWBC. Promising times across the board at Autumn Head were backed up with division wins at Winter Head for M1 and the Women's IV. This litmus test for speed was confirmed with a historic win by M1 at the Fairbairn's, the culmination of the term's racing – a win which was the first by a Cambridge College in six years, and the first time back at the top for First and Third in eleven years. M2 and the women's IV also finished strongly – a shout-out goes to First and Third vet Neil Ibata for standing in at the last minute to row the 5k course for M2.



Fairbairns M1 winners.

First and Third's successes this year were due in no small part to the recruitment and training of novices, from undergraduate Freshers to established graduates. Having introduced over 100 people to our sport in October, we recruited six boats of novices to the Club. These boats were the definition of strength in depth: NM1, NW1, NM2 all achieved runner-up positions in races, with NM3 finally tasting victory at the Novice Fairbairn Cup as the quickest NM3, faster than most NM1s. Aside from racing successes, our novice programme allowed us to accommodate dozens into our community, which many of us appreciate as a home away from home. A Lent novice programme allowed us to plug gaps in the lowest boats and push for another big fleet. This, combined with our intake in Michaelmas, meant our selection was very competitive, leading to great success at every level.

Whilst most were still recovering from bringing in the New Year, twenty-six First and Third rowers made their way from all corners of the world to Seville for a week's worth of intense training. The training setup in Seville was world class, in terms of boats, river, and coaching. Having two men's VIIIs and one women's VIII allowed for near-constant utilisation of the equipment and our two Coaches, Bomber and Neil Talbott (alumnus, 1999), to whom we are eternally grateful. The daily routine quickly became one long row in the morning as the sun rose,

followed by a technical paddle in the afternoon, interspersed with a three-course lunch (without wine) at our hotel.

The weather was quite unlike anything seen in the UK, with daily highs of about 18–20°C and full sun from sunrise to sunset. The objectively very wide and straight Guadalquivir river allowed for long and genuinely enjoyable sessions (though our coxes might disagree). The Club's members came closer together on this trip, from the evening games, our shared endurance of the hotel's bizarre (and sometimes dangerous) menu choices, or from sharing strategies to deal with an ever-growing number of blisters and callouses. We also managed to fit in afternoons of sightseeing and evenings out in Seville, despite our hotel seemingly being chosen so as to be as far away from any drinking establishment as possible whilst still being technically within the Seville environs.

My personal highlight on the rowing front was the "battle paddling" sessions between two matched eights, each a mixture of novices and seniors, where each eight, spurred on by a coach giving an emotional verbal diatribe, would attempt to out-paddle the other. Our efforts attracted many tourist photos as we thrashed our way through downtown Seville, looking, I am sure, very professional. In all seriousness, however, with each person having up to twenty hours on the water over the week, it goes without saying that every rower made very significant progress over the course of this training camp, and this can be seen, if you look in the correct way, in our results at Lent Bumps.



First and Third training camp.



W1 Racing 2020.

After an early Lent selection week back in Cambridge we had five men's VIIIs and two women's VIIIs set to go. Murmurs of returners meant that, in Lent, M1 were tipped to go even faster – both Peter Robinson and Reggie Mitchell, former CUBC rowers, were convinced to come back to don the blue and gold. Our M3 and M4 showed out with high finishes at Newnham, even with Storm Ciara blowing. Pembroke regatta was cancelled due to Storm Dennis – a distant memory now. Unfortunately, our determined but relatively inexperienced M4 and W2 narrowly missed out on qualifying for Lent Bumps with large numbers of boats entering their respective divisions. The week saw mixed success with M1 continuing their upward trajectory going up three, narrowly missing out on blades. W1 showed great commitment to training, which helped create a vibrant community filled with fantastic friendships. This commitment in Lent was gearing up for a successful May Bumps campaign with several returners to make seats competitive, but Lent Bumps probably came too early, with the crew unfortunately earning spoons – hard-earned, though, so expect this crew to bounce back. Meanwhile, M2 reversed results of recent years bumping up two, including a thrilling sprint to catch Jesus M2 – much to the relief of coach-come-secret weapon James Edgeley, who was forced to step into the five seat despite not having seen the inside of a boat for eight months. M3 retained their headship, but many members were left waiting for their first bump.

Lent Bumps were seen as a stepping-stone onto Head of the River Race in London, which unfortunately was cancelled due to COVID-19 – a temporary blip no doubt? Unfortunately, the devastating news broke that we would not be returning for Easter Term and all sporting events for the foreseeable future would be cancelled. One of the last group of events to happen before the lockdown was First and Third's Second Trinity Sculls, Talbott Cup and John Grenfell-Shaw Trophy. Despite threatening winds, all went ahead without a hitch thanks to the organisation of race secretary Bethany Ladd. At prizegiving, Mark Grenfell-Shaw, John's father, who ran up and down the river throughout the regatta, emphasised the importance of seizing the moment and having a just-do-it mentality – a message that is even more pertinent now we found ourselves sitting indoors having missed out on the opportunity for many Trinity farewells.

Despite the lockdown, the Boat Club community remained strong. We set up a Club account on Strava for people to share their fitness activities and keep the competitive spirit alive. We also introduced a programme of Zoom circuits sessions: each week one was run by Trinity's own Harry Veysey and the other was a joint session with the Field Club run by London-based, South African instructor extraordinaire Carl van Heerden – we are incredibly grateful to both of them. The Boat Club also ran its first online AGM and subsequently its first online elections via Zoom – streamlining both processes massively, a welcome change for many. The culmination of the term's video workouts came in Virtual May Bumps, which saw us rowers try to run 800m every day for four days. The organiser's algorithm informed us that as a club we went up six places over the week – hill-assisted or not… .It was particularly pleasing to see the participation of two alumni VIIIs organised principally by Peter Ford.

Whilst I am incredibly sad about the truncation of this year and missing out on the chance to compete at Henley, I hope that those lucky enough to be returning next year will use the open ends to spur them on – may M4 and W2 avenge their Bumps snubbery, may M3 go out and get their first bump, may W1 start to undo their spoons,and may M1 get to Henley!

This year collectively we have nurtured at the Club a fantastic atmosphere of supportive competition through tough training and a great social calendar of pub trips, games nights, and our famous, or notorious, Boat Cub dinners. I cannot wait to see how this cohort fairs next year and adapts to the challenges they face – they have all the tools to go on and be successful and are in very safe hands with Bomber and the new Committee. The best of luck to all!