

NUNQUAM CAPUT FLUMINIS:
CHRONICLE OF THE LADY MARGARET
FELLOWS BOAT, 1970-2011

Updated to 18th June 2011

by Tim Bayliss-Smith

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PROLOGUE

A few years ago, in an upstairs room in New Court, St John's College, archaeologists discovered an interesting artefact, believed to be an oar. It is shaped like a gigantic toothpick and is a faded red colour. Engraved upon there are some unlikely names, written in an archaic gothic script. They include “**G.A. Reid**”, “**R.N. Perham**”, “**A.A. Macintosh**”, and the date “1973”. It was once possible to study the artefact itself on the wall of the Senior Bursar's office, during quieter moments of Finance Committee meetings. There is a matching example in the Small Combination Room.

These objects are surviving traces of the original Fellows Boat, whose very existence had faded into the realms of myth and legend before the onset of my own chronicle, begun in 1983 and periodically updated ever since. Before that history begins, I will piece together some recollections from this prehistoric era (the Dark Ages), before time has eroded all remembrance.

THE DARK AGES

The story of the Fellows Boat began in 1970, at least 135 years after the first establishment of the Cambridge Bumps. In setting the scene, I am indebted to the account provided by John Durack, George Gilbert and John Marks in their book *The Bumps: An Account of the Cambridge University Bumping Races, 1827-1999*, which was published in 2000 by George Gilbert, Clare College, Cambridge. LMBC's own *History* (volume 3, 2008) has the lists of crews of the first four Fellows' Boats, which I reproduce here together with some eye-witness testimony.

By 1970 the May Races had grown to gigantic proportions from its remote origins. It is almost certain that the Lady Margaret Boat Club of St John's College (LMBC) was the very first college to row an eight on the Cam, back in 1825. The idea of bumping races evolved rapidly in the following decade. In 1835 the Bumps were organised for eights in their modern form, and from that time up to the First World War the May Races involved 30-40 boats containing at most 300 oarsmen, the boats rowing in two or three divisions.

The competition began to expand after 1918, and especially in the two decades after 1945. By 1970 it was a huge regatta consisting of eight divisions and about 1,200 oarsmen, mostly undergraduates, plus one women's crew. The Cambridge University Women's Boat Club -- in effect, Newnham, Girton and New Hall -- had been allowed since 1962 to race one eight in the bottom division, but alas, in 56 races between 1962 and 1973 CUWBC were bumped by men's crews 37 times. Contrast this sad story of gender inequality to the situation today. The very best Grind times of the LMBC Fellows boat -- about 4 minutes 30 seconds -- would usually be exceeded by the LMBC Women's 1st Boat. As for CUWBC, were they allowed to row against us there is no doubt that the ladies would reel us in and bump us hard, probably before First Post Corner. Shocking prospect but no longer feasible, as the women have rowed in their own divisions since the 1970s, the number of men's boats shrinking to allow them space.

Mays 1970: LMBC 6th Boat, Division 4

In the 1950s, in the eight divisions of the Mays, LMBC generally managed to put out at least twelve men's boats. In the 1963 Mays the club actually had a 15th boat rowing in the 8th

division. However, by the end of the 1960s LMBC had, relatively speaking, fallen on hard times. In 1970 only ten crews could be found to fill the eleven slots available. Our correspondent **Richard Perham** takes up the story:

"Briefly, the first Fellows Boat raced in the Mays of 1970. I was very active coaching undergraduate crews in those days, and conceived the idea to conserve a place on the river left vacant by LMBC having too few oarsmen to fill all our slots from the previous year (*plus ça change...!*). It would be one in the eye for the (then anti-team sports) junior members."

One of the victims of Richard's enthusiasm was **Peter Linehan** who had rowed in his first four terms as an undergraduate until he "took the opportunity of the river being frozen throughout the Lent Term 1963 discreetly to retire". Peter recalls the occasion when he made his come-back:

"What I remember ... is that the whole sorry story began late one Sunday night wine circle not long before the Mays when RNP [**Richard Perham**] announced that LMBC would be losing its entitlement to its lowest place on the river because the young gentlemen were all too busy on the barricades. This was thought to be very shocking and sometime into the next decanter it was agreed (I suppose) by those present that the Fellows should offer themselves as Lady Margaret's "Last Resort". RNP's memory was certainly sharper than that of some of us the morning after the night before, and he contrived to get us into an VIII. Since the only object of the exercise was to keep the place in being for the young gentlemen when they had recovered from their revolutionary zeal, we had a very small number of outings in advance of the races. However, on perhaps the second of these, we happened to coincide at the bottom of the Long Reach with the Second Boat, some damned fool proposed a race, we won it, and so finished up not as 10th but as 6th boat, placing us amongst second and third VIIIs of pretty serious year-long rowers."

Richard Perham was in charge of recruitment:

"The crew list eventually was **P.R. Ayton** and **T.R.G. Hill** (both good undergraduate friends of mine through the Eagles Club), myself, **Peter Linehan**, **R.A. Cutting** (local O.J. engineer and 1st May colour a few years earlier), **John Hutchison** (later a fellow), **Frank Hinde** (son of the former Master, medical student whom I had taught), **David McMullen**, and (as cox) **John Durack** (undergraduate reading Law, and one of my tutorial pupils)":

bow	Mr P.R. Ayton
2	Mr T.R.G. Hill
3	Dr J.A.P. Hutchison
4	Dr P.A. Linehan
5	Dr R.N. Perham
6	Mr R.A. Cutting
7	Mr F.R.J. Hinde
stroke	Dr D.L. McMullen
cox	Fitzwilliam (Mr J.F. Durack)
coach	Mr R. Aikens

"Thus there were only three actual fellows in the first crew [**Peter Linehan, Richard Perham** and **David McMullen**]. We called ourselves 'The Last Resort', and the coach was **Richard Aikens**, now Sir Richard Aikens and a judge. We raced as the 6th boat: three row-overs and a bump on the last night".

John Durack was also coxing the first boat, and so he had to hide his identity under a false name ("Fitzwilliam"). The report on the Bumps in *The Eagle* is tantalisingly brief:

"Of the Gentlemen's boats, the 6th (Fellows') and 9th (Anonymous) looked most like getting their oars, but both were foiled at the crucial moments by crabs".

A key eye-witness is **George Reid**, but he would only say: "I have a sense that **Peter Linehan** was rather adept at catching crabs, but you must consult him on that". Fortunately Peter is happy to reveal all:

"My own part in the races themselves was wholly inglorious ... Despite our recent triumph [being promoted to become 6th boat], we had no high hopes on the first night. We were quite nippy off the start, but after two minutes it was anyone's guess. Imagine, therefore, our delight when as we approached The Plough we found ourselves overlapping the boat ahead of us. Imagine equally the shared sentiment when, as the cox set us on a crash course in full view of the beering multitudes, **Linehan** caught the mother and father of all crabs (something he had never previously done): a crab of the sort with which the modern Russian navy is unable to cope. Somehow, however, we escaped and rowed over.

Second night (would you believe it), *ditto*, and in precisely the same situation. Bloody **Linehan** again. By the third, Old Johnians and others were descending on The Plough from all over the Home Counties baying for more. Mercifully, I failed to oblige.

The net result, however, was that, having commenced with only the ambition of quick death or glory, in the event we rowed over three times (four really since our one bump was achieved within about 50 yards of the finish). I then retired again, this time definitively."

Starting position: 67th
Finishing position: 66th

Day 1	rowed over
Day 2	rowed over
Day 3	bumped Corpus III
Day 4	rowed over

Mays 1971: LMBC Sixth Boat, Division 4

After this remarkable performance **Richard Perham, David McMullen** and **P.R. Ayton** returned to the river in 1971, having recruited five new oarsmen and a new cox:

bow	Mr P.R. Ayton
2	Mr G.T.H. Clarke
3	Mr T.P. McGing
4	Mr J.C. Kirkman

5	Dr R.N. Perham
6	Mr R.A. Cutting
7	Mr S.K.R. Johnson
stroke	Dr D.L. McMullen
cox	Mr I.M. Barnes
coach	unrecorded

Unfortunately the club decided to retain the Fellows' Boat as its sixth boat in the May Bumps, in a year when the club managed to put out eleven boats altogether, more than any other college. The boat was stroked by **David McMullen** and had **Richard Perham** at 5. Sadly that year only the 'B.A.s' in the 11th Boat gained four bumps for LMBC and were awarded blades. For the fellows the outcome was much less successful:

Starting position: 66th
Finishing position: 69th

Day 1	bumped by Corpus III
Day 2	bumped by 1 st & 3 rd VI
Day 3	bumped by Churchill IV
Day 4	rowed over

Mays 1972: LMBC 8th Boat, Divisions 5-6

The official LMBC *History of the Lady Margaret Boat Club*, vol. 3 (2008: 196), provides us with the only surviving record of this crew, which rowed as the 8th Boat:

“The ‘Fellows’ VIII had four genuine fellows, including **Andrew Macintosh** and **George Reid** who began as novices. The 9th VIII made five bumps and were the only LMBC crew to win their oars”.

Sad to relate, one of the 9th Boat's victims was the 8th Boat which was also the Fellow's Boat. This unfortunate event took place on the second night of the Bumps. Happily the 8th Boat recovered its self-esteem sufficiently to manage two row-overs on the last day as the sandwich boat.

bow	Dr G.A. Reid
2	Mr J.J. Hughes
3	Dr J.E. Inglesfield
4	Rev. A.A. Macintosh
5	Mr P.A. Brennan
6	Mr C.R. Dick
7	Mr R.H. Morton
stroke	Dr D.L. McMullen
cox	Mr C.J. Morgan
coach	unrecorded

Starting position: 78th
 Finishing position: 81st

Day 1	bumped by Selwyn IV
Day 2	bumped by LMBC IX
Day 3	bumped by Queens' IV
Day 4	rowed over / rowed over

Mays 1973: LMBC 11th Boat, 5th Division

bow	Dr J.E. Inglesfield
2	Dr G.A. Reid
3	Dr L.J. Kirsch
4	Rev. A.A. Macintosh
5	Mr G.E.J. Llewellyn
6	Dr D.L. McMullen
7	Dr R.N. Perham
stroke	Dr J.A. Olley
cox	Mr M.A. King ("Merve the Swerve")
coaches:	Lt. Col. J.M. Faulkner Revd. Canon Noel Duckworth

starting position: 99th
 finishing position: 95th

Day 1	bumped Downing V
Day 2	bumped Christ's V bumped 1 st & 3 rd Trinity VIII
Day 3	rowed over
Day 4	bumped Selwyn V

The magnificent exploits of this crew attracted the attention of the press. In the *Times Higher Educational Supplement* for 29 June 1973 there appeared a cartoon (by Horner) showing a crew in full academic dress rowing rather splashily in an upstream direction past King's College chapel. It included also the following account (entitled 'OLD HEAVIES'):

"Old hearties never die, nor do they fade away -- they become fellows of Cambridge colleges. Of all the boats to make four bumps and win their oars in this year's Cambridge May Races, no crew was more bizarre than Lady Margaret XI, which was made up entirely of fellows and tutors of St John's College.

Ranging in age from their 24-year old stroke, Dr **John Olley** to the 36-year old Reverend **Andrew Macintosh**, assistant dean of the College, at first sight they reminded one of the *cri de coeur* of the Ancient Mariner -- "they were a ghastly crew!" But to see them in action was a revelation -- a monument to mind over matter, resolution over flab.

Mervyn King [now Governor of the Bank of England], his lungs and throat normally reserved for the relatively undemanding pursuit of teaching economics, shouted himself hoarse coxing them to victory. A plethora of PhDs and a welter of academic distinctions, their collective IQ must have been the greatest of any crew ever seen on the Cam.

The fellows' boat was well served by its coaches, Col. **H.J. Faulkner** and the Reverend Canon **Noel Duckworth**, chaplain of Churchill College. Col. Faulkner, a protean heavy hewn from the original granite who was captain of Lady Margaret in 1934, thought the excessive brain-power of his crew was an advantage. 'If you put something logically to them they see it. What you say has to make sense or you're in trouble', he said.

Canon Duckworth, a legendary figure along the banks of the Cam, who had the habit of referring to the crew as The Scarlet Women (a reference, no doubt, to their blood red oars and singlets), was rhapsodic in their praise. 'If other colleges had tutor fellows like these, they'd be a lot better', he said. 'You wouldn't have these airy-fairy beardie-weirdies howling for justice outside the Senate House'."

Peter Linehan says he believes the *THES* account was written by **Peter Hennessy**, "whom I had supervised in the mid sixties, now Professor of Contemporary History at QMWC, but then a hack working for that rag".

Easter Term 1974

Sad to recount, the triumphs of 1973 were never again matched by this particular crew. In the Mays of 1974 **John Olley** was recruited to the 2nd boat, which gained its oars -- as did the 1st boat, which went Head of the River. The patched-up Fellows' Boat was rather less successful. As **George Reid** recalls,

"We rowed in 1974, but were in the rowing-on race and did not get on. I think that that was the last year when there was a Fellows' Boat until your History picks up the story in 1979. So far as I know there was never a Fellows' Boat before 1970".

Following the setback in 1974 most of this generation of the fellowship retired from rowing altogether. It was much later that **David McMullen** and **Peter Clarke** were persuaded to make come-backs. However, **Richard Perham** and **Andrew Macintosh** kept in close touch with LMBC, and both were prominent as coaches in the revival that took place some years later.

As an epilogue to this Dark Age era, it is worth quoting from an article by Keith Jeffrey (a graduate student) in *The Eagle* for 1975:

"In 1974 nine out of the thirteen crews rowing ... [were] 'Gentlemen's Boats' In sketching the history of these LMBC leisure craft we should not, of course, forget the Fellows' Boat, which first seems to have appeared for Lady Margaret in 1970 and whose moment of glory came in 1973 when a boat composed *entirely* of fellows gained its oars. Lady Margaret, however, cannot claim the distinction of having the first such boat on the river, for in the Lents of 1857 there appeared a composite crew from several colleges called the 'Ancient Mariners' whose uniform is given as 'a dark straw hat and black ribbon, beards and moustaches, and motto *Seniores Priores*'"

THE MIDDLE AGES

Easter Term 1979

Among the current Fellowship of St John's there are three surviving witnesses to a dreadful Fellows Boat that emerged in what might be called The Middle Ages of the historical era: **Steve Gull** (bow), **Tim Bayliss-Smith** (no. 3) and **Ian Hutchings** (cox). It was the summer of 1979, and these three were among a crew of novices whose mad idea was to qualify to row in the May Bumps by means of the getting-on race. The photograph shows nine hairy young men, mostly bearded, failing to balance a clinker. Each oarsman is staring at his own oar. Needless to say, in the getting-on race they failed to get on.

Despite this setback the fellows decided to wager a case of vintage claret with the Trinity Fellows Boat (which *had* rowed in the Bumps), believing that they could win a private race against them. The race took place in the Long Reach, the two boats rowing side by side. Alas, the St John's Fellows lost their wager, and on High Table no more was spoken of rowing for several years.

MODERN TIMES

Mays 1983: LMBC 8th Boat, Division 5

bow	Dr J. Secada
2	Dr D. Jones
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr D.L. McMullen
5	Dr M. Pashley
6	Dr R.E. McConnel
7	Dr B. Derby
stroke	Dr J. Plane
cox	Dr A. Munro
coach	Dr R.N. Perham

starting position: 77th
finishing position: 75th

Day 1 bumped St Catherine's IV
Day 2 bumped Queens' IV
Day 3 rowed over
Day 4 rowed over

In the summer of 1983 **John Plane**, a research fellow formerly in Jesus 1st boat, got the fellows organised again with the help of **Richard Perham**. Other than Richard, **David McMullen** was the only survivor from the glory days of the early 1970s, but everyone else except bow had already rowed before at some sort of level.

In the races Days 1 and 2 were quick and easy triumphs. On Day 3 we had an overlap on Churchill IV on Ditton Corner but the cox took us over a fraction too soon, missed the bump

by inches, and we had to row over. Day 4 was an epic row-over, with our boat being chased all the way by Clare V, which was also a Fellows Boat. By holding them off we prevented them from getting their fourth bump and hence their oars, so the year ended in a triumph of sorts.

That year ten LMBC boats competed in the seven divisions of the men's races -- the last year that the club managed to put out so many boats, and the last year there were seven men's divisions: one was axed in 1984, to accommodate a third women's division. In 1983 our 1st boat went Head of the River on the final night and two other boats won their oars. It was reported in *The Eagle* that "the Ladies and the Fellows narrowly missed theirs", which for us was possibly true. Sadly 1983 was the one and only occasion that **Dyfrig Jones** (British Antarctic Survey) rowed for our boat -- he died of cancer seven years later.

Mays 1984: LMBC 9th Boat, Division 6

bow	Dr J. Secada
2	Revd. the Hon. P. Templeman
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr D.L. McMullen
5	Dr M. Pashley
6	Dr R.E. McConnel
7	Dr B. Derby
stroke	Dr J. Plane
cox	Dr G. Burton/Dr A. Munro
coaches	Dr R.N. Perham, Mr A.A. Macintosh, Mr R.B.T. Langhorne

starting position: 89th
finishing position: 88th

Day 1 bumped by Queens' V
Day 2 rowed over
Day 3 bumped King's III
Day 4 bumped Queens' V

It was a young(ish), eager and not inexperienced crew that deserved better fortune, especially as we had been demoted to become LMBC's bottom boat in the bottom division. **John Plane** got us even more organised than the previous year, and even persuaded everyone except **Jorge Secada** to do warm-up exercises outside the boathouse before each outing. **Richard Perham**, **Andrew Macintosh** and **Richard Langhorne** took turns to yell at us from the towpath. Despite all this, soon after the start on Day 1 **Tim Bayliss-Smith** caught a huge crab under the motorway bridge, and as a result we were quickly bumped by an inferior boat, Queens' V. We had to wait until the final day, after bumping King's III, to get our revenge on the same Queens' boat.

Mays 1985: LMBC 9th Boat, Division 6

bow	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
2	Dr S.C. Palmer
3	Revd. M. Jones

4	Dr J. Secada
5	Mr T. Whitelaw
6	Dr R.E. McConnel
7	Dr M. Pashley
stroke	Dr J. Plane

cox	Dr G. Burton
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coaches:	as before, probably
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starting position: 61st
finishing position: 59th

Day 1	bumped Christ's V
Day 2	bumped Selwyn IV
Day 3	bumped Jesus V
Day 4	rowed over

The year's events have faded from memory, so history must be pieced together from the bumps chart. Our new chaplain, **Mark Jones**, a novice oarsman, replaced Peter Templeman, and **Todd Whitelaw** replaced David McMullen. It is clear that Division 6 that year included some very unevenly-matched boats, and the fellows were lucky to find three easy targets to bump on Days 1, 2 and 3. However on the final day, with two boats bumping out behind us, we chased Magdalene IV for the whole course without (I think) ever getting close to catching them.

Mays 1987: LMBC 8th Boat, Divisions 5-6

bow	Revd. M. Jones
2	Dr E. da Fonseca
3	Dr T. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr S.C. Palmer
5	Dr M. Welland
6	Dr D. McMullen
7	Prof. I.N. McCave
stroke	Dr R.E. McConnel

cox	Dr G. Burton
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coaches:	Mr A.A. Macintosh, Mr R.B.T. Langhorne, Dr R.N. Perham
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With six persons departed, or retired from the boat, or abroad on leave, no Fellows' Boat was formed in 1986, but the following year **Dick McConnel** took the lead in trying to organise (and stroke) a worthy successor to John Plane's promising crew of the mid-1980s. Frustrated by his attempts to row on the river Wensum which piddles through Norwich, **Nick McCave** arrived on the Cam to begin his long and distinguished occupancy of the no.7 seat. As usual we were coached by **Andrew Macintosh**, **Richard Langhorne** and **Richard Perham**, but even their experience could not make a fast boat out of some rather raw material, including at least two complete novices. We fully deserved to be 8th boat out of the eight that LMBC put out in the Mays.

starting position: 80th

finishing position: 83rd

Day 1 bumped by 1st & 3rd Trinity V
 Day 2 bumped by Caius IV
 Day 3 bumped by Magdalene V
 Day 4 rowed over

In terms of results it was not a successful year. Starting at the bottom of Division 5, we were bumped on Day 1 by a nicely warmed-up sandwich boat, Trinity V, before we ourselves had really got going. On Day 2 we got round First Post Corner before being overhauled by Caius IV in the Gut. On Day 3 we did at least survive into the Plough Reach before being caught by Magdalene V. Some pride was restored on Day 4 in a storming row-over.

This was **Graham Burton's** last year as cox (shame). It was also positively the last appearance for **Xander Munro's** moth-eaten 1930 blazer, worn by Fellows' Boat coxes for many a summer.

Mays 1988: LMBC 8th Boat, Division 6

bow	Revd. M. Jones
2	Dr P.F. Clarke
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Mr T. Mito
5	Dr S.F. Gull
6	Dr D.L. McMullen
7	Prof. I.N. McCave
stroke	Mr A.W. Woods
cox	Miss H.L. Geen
coaches	Chris Atkin, Mr R.B.T. Langhorne, Dr R.N. Perham

Helen Geen, a graduate student, was the first woman to cox for the Fellows. **Andy Woods**, a newly-elected fellow, gave us both power and precision at stroke. We had one novice and secret weapon in **Tam Mito**, a Japanese Sumo wrestler in disguise. **Peter Clarke** made a welcome return to rowing after many years of retirement, and **Steve Gull** made his debut. Steve had last been seen in a dreadful novice Fellows' Boat of 1979 which had narrowly failed to qualify in the getting-on race, but ten years later he emerged from the Cavendish blinking in the unaccustomed light, a born-again oarsman.

starting position: 83rd
 finishing position: 85th

Day 1 rowed over
 Day 2 bumped by Selwyn IV
 Day 3 bumped by St Catharine's IV
 Day 4 rowed over

On the first day the boats ahead and behind us all bumped out, so we rowed over in solitary splendour. Reality hit us on Day 2, when we were caught by some pot-hunters from Selwyn who went on to get their oars. The last day was our best. By rowing over in fine style we stopped the boat behind us, Christ's V, from getting their blades

Mays 1989: LMBC 9th Boat, Division 7

bow	Revd. M. Jones
2	Dr R.G. McCorquodale
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr D.L. McMullen
5	Dr S.F. Gull
6	Dr P.F. Clarke
7	Prof. I.N. McCave
stroke	Dr R.E. McConnel
cox	Miss Ceryl Rhys
coaches	Chris Atkin, Mr R.B.T. Langhorne, Mr A.A. Macintosh, Dr R.N. Perham

Annus Mirabilis for the Fellows' Boat. **David McMullen** in his 50th year was rowing exactly 30 years after he had first won his blades as an undergraduate. At the other end of the age scale was **Rob McCorquodale**, a novice aged 29, the rest of us being experienced oarsmen and perhaps approaching that elusive moment, the prime of life. Happily our token novice ensured that we became LMBC's bottom boat. It was the last year that we rowed the races in a clinker, an entirely appropriate technology given our lowly position on the river:

starting position: 101st
finishing position: 97th

Day 1 bumped St Edmunds
Day 2 overbumped Girton III
Day 3 bumped by Peterhouse III
Day 4 bumped Corpus Christi IV
rowed over

When did the fellows boat ever manage to bump a 1st boat (St Edmund's)? When did any clinker manage to overbump a shell (Girton III)? This extraordinary feat occurred on Day 2 despite us rowing for part of the course without the services of the no. 6 oarsman, whose seat had jumped off its slide at Grassy Corner, where we had collided with the bank. **Peter Clarke** stopped rowing and was busy fixing his seat all the way from Grassy to Ditton Corner. Once all eight were restored to working order we not only avoided an imminent bump from behind, we also surprised and then, far down the Long Reach, we overhauled the Girton boys in their shiny new plastic boat.

Day 3 is a closely-kept secret. Sadly, we were bumped. However, the Peterhouse crew who, seemingly, wrecked our bid for blades were impostors, the boat containing six former 1st boat members. **Chris Atkin** was inspirational in coaching a crew which included both his Research Supervisor (**Steve Gull**) and his Tutor (**Tim Bayliss-Smith**). Chris was also Boat Club Captain, and at an emotional Bumps Supper (the Men's 1st boat had become Head of the River), he wisely used his discretion in awarding the Fellows' Boat their oars, "for rising four places on the river". On the Backs after the Bumps Supper there was the ritual boat burning. Was it that year when **Robert Hinde**, perhaps not in his capacity as Master, led the way by leaping through the flames?

Lawyer **Rob McCorquodale**'s eye-witness account of Day 2 in *The Eagle* is not your typical piece of dry legal testimony:

“THE ROWING FELLOWS: 'AGE WILL NOT WEARY THEM'

By the river. Some confusion. The May Bumps are in progress.

A sudden shout. Two boats have bumped and the following boat has run into the bank in its cox's attempt to avoid them. In that following boat one oarsman's seat has just broken so that only seven men now row -- quite frantically. The boat behind must catch them. But wait. The boat in front, with only seven men rowing, is full of older men, indeed, only two of them are under 40! This must be the St John's Fellows Eight, the only Fellows Eight in the Bumps. It must be bumped, as 40-year-olds, even with up to 30 years experience, cannot keep going: 'old men have grey beards, ... their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plumtree gum, and ... they have plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams'. This year they have the added handicap of a complete novice on board. They must be bumped.

Yet wait. Behold, it is pulling away. Yes. Look at the agony on their faces, 'it harrows me with fear and wonder'. 'My lord, what ho', it is now catching the boat three, yes three, places above it. Incredible. It can't last. The finish is too close. They can't keep up this energy with younger men in the crew in front. No, impossible, 'strange and unnatural'. Alas, they won't make it, despite the noble effort. Only 200 metres to go. Soft, soft. 'List, list, O list'. Yes. 'O, wonderful'. They have done it. The incredible, the impossible. They have bumped the boat three ahead. Who has done this? A crew of fellows. Of older men. Truly amazing! The gathering company are in amazement and the Fellow's crew are in exhilaration. 'What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how intimate in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable in action...!'

By continuing this form over the four days, for the first time in many memories, the St John's College Fellows Eight won its blades. Fanfare of trumpets.”

Mays 1990: LMBC 8th Boat, Division 6

bow	Dr S.C. Palmer
2	Mr R.G. McCorquodale
3	Dr H.R. Matthews
4	Dr M. Carrington
5	Dr S.F. Gull
6	Dr P.F. Clarke (days 1-3); Dr D.L. McMullen (day 4)
7	Prof. I.N. McCave (days 1-2); Mr M. Jones (days 3-4)
stroke	Dr R.E. McConnel (1-3); Dr P.F. Clarke (day 4)
cox	Dr R.A.W. Rex
coaches:	Prof. R.N. Perham, Mr R.B.T. Langhorne, Nigel Killick, Chris Atkin
Day 1	bumped Selwyn IV

Day 2	rowed over
Day 3	bumped Magdalene IV
Day 4	overbumped by Trinity V

Our correspondent **Richard Rex** wrote in *The Eagle*:

"After the unparalleled successes of 1989, the fair weather oarsmen among the Fellowship laundered their kit for the Easter Term 1990 with every hope of taking LMBC VIII up from the sixth to the fifth division. Many of the old faces, and all the old faults, were there. **Steve Gull** continued to investigate whether it was possible to drink from the river on one side while pulling with an oar from the other. **Dick McConnell**, replacing Andy Woods at stroke, sought in the interests of balance to reduce time on the slide as far as possible. **Steve Palmer** at bow gave his renowned impersonation of a man rowing with a ramrod for a backbone, while **Rob McCorquodale** gave his impersonation of a man rowing. Thanks to the inspired coaching of **Chris Atkin, Nigel Killick, Richard Perham, Richard Langhorne** and **Roger Silk**, the crew approached the bumps overflowing with confidence."

Nick McCave takes up the story:

"A year of supreme effort crowned by disaster. On the first day, starting at the 4th station, we set off quickly and surprised Selwyn IV in the Gut. On the second day we chased a fast Caius IV who bumped out leaving us no target but an angry Selwyn IV astern who pushed us all the way up the Long Reach to the top finish. That this was the first time we had rowed the whole course since last year manifested itself in the Fort St George when the true state of **Nick McCave's** back declared itself as the adrenalin wore off (and before the alcohol took over). On Friday, with **Mick Jones** of Maximum Entropy in the 7 seat and McCave at the osteopath, we went up again bumping Magdalene IV (don't know where; *Eagle* account is wrong).

Now poised at station 2 for the last night, could we get two more bumps? No! **Dick McConnell** was laid low by a virus (for a week) but frantic pleas persuaded **David McMullen** to come out of retirement for one last race and **Peter Clarke** moved to stroke. Having two subs and a changed order made the battle of the clinkers at the top of the division more even. We came within a canvas of Queens IV at Ditton Corner but were unable to finish them off, fell back in the Long Reach and finally succumbed at the Railway Bridge to the usual (as in 1987) bunch of Trinity pot hunters sharking around the bottom of the river and masquerading as their 5th boat (they went up six places). The overbump put us back to one place behind where we had started off. Perhaps a time for thought, regrouping and blending some youth with our ever-ripening experience?"

Mays 1991: LMBC 8th Boat, Divisions 6 and 5

bow	Dr S.C. Palmer
2	Mr R.G. McCorquodale
3	Dr H.R. Matthews
4	Dr R.A. Leese
5	Dr M.E. Welland
6	Dr S.F. Gull
7	Prof. I.N. McCave

stroke	Dr A.W. Woods
cox	Dr R.A.W. Rex
coaches:	Prof. R.N. Perham, Mr R. Silk, D.G. Reid, J. Welch
starting position:	83rd
finishing position:	79th
Day 1	rowed over
Day 2	bumped 1st & 3rd Trinity V
Day 3	bumped Kings III
Day 4	bumped Jesus V bumped Sidney Sussex III

Last year's prayers for rejuvenation were answered. The Fellows Boat found their youths in **Andy Woods** and **Rob Leese**, to bring the average age down to below 40. **Richard Rex**, who coxed the boat to victory, later gave this account in the pages of *The Eagle*:

"Undeterred by this tale of disaster [the previous year], the old men's thoughts once more turned to dreams of glory on the river as Easter came round again. Dick McConnel, pulling out to finish building a house around his new-born daughter, was replaced by **Andy Woods**, back from the States; and Mark Carrington by **Robert Leese**. The replacement of Peter Clarke by **Mark Welland** left us with an imbalance: a problem solved by **Steve Gull**'s desire to find out if the water on the other side of the boat tasted any better (referring to a slight tendency to lean out). An ambitious decision to row in the old red carbo bore fruit when, two weeks before the Bumps, we finally learned how to send it level. This and a training programme predicated on the unlikelihood of making all our bumps before the Plough, meant that the fastest and fittest Fellows' VIII ever was ready for the Mays.

Heartened by the familiar sight ahead of us of Magdalene IV trying to work out what the oars did, we shot off from our station at prodigious speed. Unfortunately high winds at the start had left us pointing at the opposite bank. Some inspired coxing ("slacken off bow side") averted imminent impact, only for **Nick 'Old Man of the Sea' McCave** to forget to remove his blade from the water at the end of the seventeenth stroke. A policy disagreement between stroke ("row on") and cox was resolved after some seconds by the superior power of the cox-box. We stopped and restarted. Kings III came within a canvas, only to see us pull away like a Porsche at traffic lights. By this stage, however, a bump ahead had left the Fellows with no alternative but a comfortable row-over six lengths clear.

After this extraordinary performance, four bumps in the remaining three days (1st & 3rd Trinity V, King's III, Jesus V as sandwich boat, and Sidney Sussex III -- all before the Plough) were almost an anticlimax. The most remarkable thing was that having left King's III standing on the first two days, we had to bump them on the third, only to be vainly chased by them yet again on the fourth. Our thanks for all their hard work go to coaches **Jason Welch**, **Donald Reid**, **Richard Perham** and **Roger Silk**."

The captain of the club kindly overlooked the slight blemish on the first night, and awarded the fellows their blades.

Lents 1992: LMBC 5th Boat, Division 4

bow	Dr H.R. Matthews
2	Dr R.G. McCorquodale
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr A.W. Woods
5.	Dr M. Welland
6	Dr S.F. Gull
7	Prof. I.N. McCave
stroke	Dr R. Leese
cox	Miss S. Pett
coaches	Richard Langrish, Chris Morgan

starting position: 68th
finishing position: 68th

Tim Bayliss-Smith wrote in *The Eagle*:

"The Lent Bumps of 1992 was the first exposure by Fellows in recent history to the joys of winter rowing. An experienced crew, we were elevated to become LMBC's 5th boat in Division 4, and predictably we enjoyed mixed fortunes:

Day 1	bumped Addenbrookes
Day 2	rowed over
Day 3	bumped by St Catharine's II
Day 4	rowed over

Our bump on Day 1 was an epic which did not come until the railway bridge, but in fact it was the last day which was the most memorable. On Grassy Corner we were being chased hard by Queens' III, who were after their fourth bump to get their oars. Skilful coxing saw us scrape round Grassy despite a badly parked boat blocking the inside of the corner. Queens', going for the bump on us, went across too soon, misjudged the corner completely and hit the bank. Addenbrookes, who were about to be caught by Wolfson (also after their blades), got a technical bump (in an actual pile-up) on the stationary Queens' boat. Wolfson smashed into Queens', and sank them. All this drama was unfolding behind us, as we rowed on serenely."

Mays 1992: LMBC 5th Boat, Division 4

bow	Dr H.R. Matthews
2	Dr A.W. Woods
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr S.F. Gull
5	Dr M. Welland
6	Dr R.E. McConnel
7	Prof. I.N. McCave
stroke	Dr R. Leese
cox	Ms Sophia Pett
coaches	Jason Welch, Adrian Hyncica, Mr Roger Silk, Prof. R.N. Perham

starting position: 58th
finishing position: 57th

In the Mays we had the same crew as in the Lents, except **Dick McConnel** returned in place of Rob McCorquodale, and the seating order was changed somewhat. As LMBC V we found ourselves in the initial starting order just in front of LMBC VI, but thanks to a good start on Day 1 we were never in danger of being embarrassed by our own club's lower boat -- which in any case was overbumped that day, and soon subsided even further down the starting order.

Tim Bayliss-Smith wrote in *The Eagle*:

"We had more outings than any other LMBC boat, even the first boat. Sarcastic remarks were made about any absentees at Tuesday nights circuit training. As a result of all this our grind times were better than ever before (4 minutes 15 seconds?), and this unfortunately assured our elevation to Division 4. There was even a rumour at one point that we were going to become the 2nd boat.

Day 1 bumped Girton II
Day 2 rowed over
Day 3 rowed over
Day 4 technical row over

Our fitness and training helped us on Day 1, when Girton II (not at all a bad crew) were persuaded to melt in the face of our initial onslaught and were bumped within the first two minutes. Unfortunately bad starts on the two windy days that followed, plus the quality of the boats ahead, prevented any more triumphs, and we were obliged on both days to hold off strong challenges by Girton II (themselves hard pressed but never caught by a Jesus boat behind them).

On the final day we at last had a good start, and made up half a length on Wolfson I (the same boat we had helped to frustrate in the Lents). They pulled away somewhat in the Gut, but we were still going well when, going into Grassy Corner, our bow side hit the blades and then the riggers of a badly parked Magdalene boat, scattering the picnickers on the bank as we came to an abrupt halt. Two blades were minced up and no. 3's slide and gate were put out of action. Our old adversaries Girton II rowed past and claimed a bump. The Umpire ruled otherwise, on the grounds that we were obstructed and that Girton were at least two lengths adrift at the time of our obstruction. Subsequent inspection of the rudder suggested our problems getting round Grassy were somewhat more fundamental than obstruction, but Fellows never like to question the rulings of Umpires!"

Mays 1993: LMBC 6th Boat, Division 4

bow	Dr H.R. Matthews
2	Dr A.W. Woods
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr S.F. Gull
5	Dr M. Welland
6	Dr R.E. McConnel
7	Prof. I.N. McCave
stroke	Mr R. Leese
cox	Mr Mark Hayter

coaches: D. Hedges, J. Simpson, A. Moore, Claire Sweeney, L. Harle,
Mr Roger Silk

starting position: 63rd
finishing position: 63rd

This crew did well to hold its place in the 4th division, after two LMBC rigger boats had been placed below them, namely 'The Wasters' and 'Badgers II' (the latter failed to get on the river). We were an experienced crew well organised by **Nick McCave** -- the Pre-Bumps supper at his house on 7th June was an innovation that was particularly appreciated.

Day 1	rowed over
Day 2	bumped Christ's III
Day 3	rowed over
Day 4	bumped by Churchill IV

On Day 1 we were chased all the way by CCAT, a boat that went on the following day to gain an overbump. Our success on Day 2 was at the expense of a rather poor Christ's III boat (I don't remember where the bump happened) -- a slow boat which went on getting bumped on all four days. Day 3 looks good on paper, but in fact the pairs of boats both ahead and behind us all bumped out, so we were not exactly challenged. Reality hit on the final day, when Churchill IV, overbumped through some shipwreck on the second day, came storming back to secure their third bump of the races at our expense.

It was an enjoyable year of mixed fortunes, from which the overall lesson to be learnt was that Division 4 is not where the fellows might expect to enjoy the rich pickings of yesteryear (cf. 1973, 1989 and 1991).

"Sir, was it done well?" Samuel Johnson was asked, after attending a soirée at which there was a performance by a dancing dog. "Madam", he replied, "the remarkable thing is not whether it was done well, but that it was done at all". That was more or less the tone of the year's entry in *The Eagle*:

"Again the club was very proud to boast the only fellows boat on the river who fought well to maintain their starting position"

Mays 1994: LMBC 5th Boat, Division 4

bow	Dr H.R. Matthews
2	Mr R.G. McCorquodale
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr A.W. Woods
5	Mr J. Freeman
6	Dr C.M. Warwick
7	Prof. I.N. McCave
stroke	Dr S.F. Gull
cox	Miss Sophia Pett

coaches: Dr M.E. Jones, Mr Roger Silk

Following the departure of Rob Leese and Mark Welland's withdrawal with back problems, the boat could only be kept going by enlisting the services of two newcomers. From **Steve Gull's** private rowing club Maximum Entropy we welcomed **Marcus Warwick**, and from high table **Jim Freeman**, a Johnian and former rugby blue who had come back into residence as a schoolmaster fellow-commoner. Steve himself occupied the hot seat at stroke for the first time.

starting position: 60th
finishing position: 63rd

Day 1	bumped by Jesus IV
Day 2	rowed over
Day 3	bumped by Robinson II
Day 4	bumped by Churchill IV

It was an unsuccessful year for the fellows in terms of results, showing again that our ranking in the club flattered us considerably (both the LMBC 'Grads' and 'Badgers' boats rowed in the divisions below us). As we again discovered, Division 4 is where you find ruthless tiger sharks like Robinson II, surging up hungrily from the depths, with inevitable consequences for more sedate fish swimming a little outside their proper ecological niche.

Mays 1996: LMBC 5th Boat, Division IV

bow	Dr H.R. Matthews
2	Revd. N. Moir
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr C. Spence
5	Dr M.K. Charter
6	Dr S.F. Gull
7	Prof. I.N. McCave
stroke	Mr H.J. Gibson
cox	Mr J.R. Marsh
coach:	Mr Roger Silk (and others)

In 1995 the Fellow's Boat lapsed -- was this the first year of the Research Assessment Exercise? In 1996, sated by their labours in library and laboratory, the old lags came back to the river and brought in new blood in the shape of **Nick Moir** (rowing in the Fellows Boat seems to be firmly established in the job description of the college chaplain); and **Charles Spence**, a new research fellow, who came in at number 4. Even so St John's High Table was able to fill only six of the nine places needed. From Maximum Entropy we welcomed **Mark Charter** and **Hugh Gibson**, already known to us as emergency subs, and from the graduates we secured the services of an expert cox in **Richard Marsh**.

Unfortunately, in the event even this strengthened crew could not withstand the rigours of Division 4:

starting position: 59th
finishing position: 63rd

Day 1	bumped by Sidney Sussex III
Day 2	bumped by Hughes Hall
Day 3	bumped by Jesus IV
Day 4	bumped by St Edmunds

To encounter two College 1st boats was bad luck indeed, but we could hardly blame the club for placing us too high on the river: we were in fact the bottom Lady Margaret boat (a club fallen on hard times?). So, for the first time in history, it was spoons for the Fellows. *The Eagle* in its annual report on LMBC drew a veil of silence over the whole sorry business.

Mays 1997: LMBC 5th Boat, Division 4

This year we welcomed back **Mark Welland** and **Dick McConnel** to a crew rich in the quality of 'ever-ripening experience' referred to by Nick McCave in his 1991 report. Although we were the bottom boat of LMBC we again felt ourselves to be placed too high on the river. A projected LMBC 6th ('Beaver') boat failed in the getting on race. Not just the fellows but the whole club was apparently going through a lean period.

bow	Dr H.R. Matthews
2	Revd. N. Moir
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr S.F. Gull
5	Dr M. Welland
6	Dr R.E. McConnel
7	Prof. I.N. McCave
stroke	Dr C. Spence
cox	different every day!
coaches:	Mr Roger Silk, Ben Richardson

starting position: 63rd
finishing position: 67th

Day 1	bumped by St Catharine's III
Day 2	bumped by Downing IV
Day 3	bumped by St Catharine's III
Day 4	bumped by Clare IV

To be bumped twice by the same boat on days 1 and 3 looks careless, and was the consequence of an overbump (we and Downing IV having bumped out) on the second day. So it was another hard year of grinning and bearing it. At the Bumps Supper some joker from the Engineering Department handed out nine wooden spoons, each painted bright red. Perhaps the unkindest cut of all was the rather patronising account in *The Eagle*:

"The Fellows managed to put out an VIII this year which struggled in the 4th division, going down on each day to crews at least half their age (and often more), but they remain the only Fellows boat on the river, an achievement of which to be proud in itself"

No part of this pitying gaze was directed at Professor **Nick McCave** (aged 56.4), whose puddle at number 7 was invariably a model of accelerated subduction (inspiration for the still unpublished Cam Vortex theory of continental drift?). Nonetheless, Nick decided to hang up his tattered rowing vest after eleven consecutive seasons in Fellows' Boats. Thank you, Nick, for so many good outings.

Easter Term 1998

It was a year of repose and regrouping for most Fellows (and another Research Assessment Exercise). The spirit was, however, kept alive (not to mention a valuable slot on the river) by the recruitment of **Steve Gull** (at no. 6) and **Tim Bayliss-Smith** (at no. 5) to the 6th boat. *The Eagle* takes up the story:

“The 6th VIII, coached by Rob Milner and Phil Clatworthy and comprised of undergraduates and two members from last year's Fellow's boat, after only a handful of outings rowed over three days bumping St Catherine's IV on the Thursday”.

Mays 1999: LMBC 6th Boat, Divisions 5 and 6

bow	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
2	Dr Y. Mao
3	Prof. R. Zimmerman
4	Revd. D.J. Dormor (Days 2-4); Dr W.M. Adams (Day 1)
5	Dr M.K. Charter
6	Dr R.E. McConnel
7	Dr S.F. Gull
stroke	Dr N.S Arnold
cox	Dr R.P. Cowburn
coaches:	Dr A. A. Macintosh, among others. Too many others, perhaps.

We well deserved to secure our place as LMBC's bottom boat, thanks to last year's efforts and in recognition of the presence in our crew of three novices. We welcomed new, young blood (**Duncan Dormor**, **Yong Mao**), and more mature muscle in the shape of a larger-than-life High Court judge (**Reinhard Zimmerman**) who must have found the Cam a little restricting after the wide open spaces of the Rhine.

In addition, the arrival in the fellowship of **Neil Arnold** gave us an expert stroke. Neil, it transpired, had rowed for England as a schoolboy (not to mention Christ's 1st boat), before discovering the alternative joys of glaciology. **Bill Adams** (fellow of Downing College), subbing for the chaplain on the first day, gave us three geographers in the same boat. Alas, we still managed to lose our way. It was the presence of some very strong boats around us in the starting line-up that doomed us to misfortune:

starting position: 99th
finishing position: 102nd

Day 1	bumped by Homerton II
Day 2	bumped by Darwin III
Day 3	rowed over
Day 4	bumped by Jesus VI

The row-over on the third day was highly enjoyable. Behind us Trinity VII had come up to within a canvas but we rallied to hold them off, before they themselves were overtaken in the Gut by a fast Jesus VI boat -- the same boat which got us fair and square the following day. The account in *The Eagle* is accurate enough, although the 'poor old buffers' theme seems now to have become permanent:

"The Fellows Boat fought well among crews many years younger than themselves, and were rewarded with a row over on the third night. The crew contained some novice rowing talent, and it is gratifying that the Fellowship have sought to boost their rowing numbers to strengthen what has become something of a tradition at Lady Margaret. We remain the only club to have a Fellows boat - an achievement of which to be proud in itself".

So the Fellows' Boat went down another three places. Some began to wonder, would the tide ever turn? Could the LMBC Fellows' Boat ever again become an unstoppable force in the lower divisions of the river?

Mays 2000: LMBC 6th Boat, Divisions 6 and 5

bow	Dr S. Clarke
2	Dr Y. Mao
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Revd. D.J. Dormor (Days 2-4); Mr J. Browning (Day 1)
5	Dr H.R. Matthews
6	Dr R.E. McConnel (Days 2-4); Mr H.J. Gibson (Day 1)
7	Dr S.F. Gull
stroke	Prof. A.W. Woods
cox	Dr N.S. Arnold
coaches:	Prof. I.N. McCave, Mr John Browning, Mr Roger Silk, Jim Kemp

At the beginning of the Easter Term there were rumours of other fellows' boats preparing to challenge our long-established hegemony, both at Christ's College and at Sidney Sussex (only the latter survived the getting-on race). Our own preparations were more leisurely, and only in the third week of term did **Steve Gull** start to get us organised. Thereafter there were three outings a week, but with a different crew and cox on almost every occasion (deputy coach **John Browning** soon learnt to bring along a pair of shorts just in case).

Having maintained the LMBC VI place through our gallant but doomed efforts last year, we assumed occupancy of that place on the river by squatter's rights. After a brief disagreement with LMBC V, who felt they might be worse than us, we did secure the sixth boat slot. The fellows' recent track record (down eleven places in the previous 12 days of bumping races) must have helped to swing our case.

In the boat we were pleased to welcome back at stroke **Andy Woods**, whose last appearance for the fellows had been in the 1994 boat. He quickly demonstrated that the six years spent paddling on the River Severn had not been wasted. **Neil Arnold** moved from stroke to the cox's seat, and promptly showed us how to steal yards of distance by steering immaculately across the corners. Otherwise it was a crew of experienced oarsmen, even though some had to be coaxed out of premature or even *early* retirement (notably **Hugh** 'My experiments start at nine' **Matthews**, and **Dick** 'We're all too old' **McConnel**). The only genuine newcomer was **Stuart Clarke** (Cavendish Lab), recruited from that virtual cornucopia of rowing talent, Maximum Entropy.

We rowed in the old 1971 First Boat, a plywood shell, after an experimental first outing in an even older clinker. That outing had been solid but slow, with the balance of the boat increasingly helped by an ever-deepening pool of bilge-water. This year was the last occasion, in all probability, that any of us will row in a clinker. It was also the first time that the fellows rowed with those new-fangled cleavers, which had first been used by top oarsmen just eight years before, in the 1992 Olympics (by contrast, it took more than 60 years for sliding seats to be adopted by LMBC's lower boats).

Our best grind time was only 4 minutes 29 seconds, but unlike some boats of recent memory this particular one got steadily better, thanks in so small measure to **Nick McCave's** excellent coaching from the towpath. We started on the first day with the usual high hopes. After going down four places in 1996, four in 1997 and 3 in 1999, had the rot stopped?

starting position: 86th
finishing position: 82nd

Day 1	bumped by 1st & 3rd Trinity VII
Day 2	bumped 1st & 3rd Trinity VII bumped Addenbrookes
Day 3	bumped Jesus VI
Day 4	bumped 1st & 3rd Trinity VI

Day 1 was agreed by all to have been a very good row, by a somewhat scratchy crew that included Suffolk farmer (retired) **John Browning** (brother-in-law of Andrew Macintosh), whose last competitive race had been as a schoolboy in 1963! Being the top boat in Division 6 we had no immediate target and merely needed to keep ahead of Trinity VII behind. We negotiated all the corners in the first half of the course in fine style, but were slowed down disastrously by a blustery Force 5 blowing up the Long Reach. Our two-length lead on Trinity was all used up by the time we reached the railway bridge, we rallied briefly, but soon after we were bumped. This Trinity boat then became the sandwich boat, but in the next race 45 minutes later they signally failed to make any impact at all on Addenbrookes, their target at the bottom of Division 5. Perhaps we might have a chance of bumping them back on the second day?

On Day 2 our crew was restored by the return of our senior oarsman, **Dick McConnel**, and our second youngest, Revd. **Duncan Dormor**. Perhaps the combination of engineering guile and divine inspiration gave us an extra push off the start? After a storming row we overhauled Trinity VII at the end of the Plough Reach, and recorded the fellows' boat first bump since 1993. Elated at having reached the end of the Seven Year Drought, we headed back to the start as sandwich boat, to have a crack at the young doctors of Addenbrookes. Our second start was equally beefy and the medical men melted before our onslaught, crabbing as we closed on them just after the gun shed.

After these triumphs Days 3 and 4 were almost an anticlimax, so swiftly were our victims transfixed by the scarlet tide bearing down upon them. Jesus VI (a boat which bumped us last year) crabbed, and we bumped them just before the motorway bridge. On the final day Trinity VI lasted only a little longer before becoming our fourth victims of the week, midway between the motorway bridge and First Post Corner.

So overall the fellows gained four solid bumps, the boat went up into the next division, we numbered two Trinity crews among our victims, and we ended up as the highest sixth boat on the river (ahead of Trinity and Christ's). Because of the disqualification and banishment from the river of a boat just ahead of us -- Churchill IV, "a singular liability" according to Senior Umpire Peter Convey -- LMBC VI actually went up four *real* places overall.

In a lean year for the club (the other five men's boats between them gained only two bumps and went down 13 places), the captain acted generously. It was *pour encourager les autres* perhaps, but also to honour the best fellows' boat since 1991 -- we were awarded our blades.

Mays 2001, LMBC 6th boat, Division 5

After the triumphs of last year there were several fellows volunteering to row, but unfortunately for reasons of gender most were ineligible. The old lags, returning to the refurbished boat house, found that their access to the ergos was often challenged by the makings of a first-ever Women's Fellows' Boat, under the leadership of the President, **Jane Heal**. The women adopted a cautious strategy (practice one summer, row the next), whereas as usual the men blundered straight in, with a patched-up crew that did not manage its first outing until week 3 of term, and thereafter was regularly disrupted by the inevitable academic absences. Once again it was **Steve Gull** who organised us, communication by e-mail entirely replacing the frantic notes in pigeon holes of yesteryear.

It was never going to be easy to replace our losses -- Yong Mao (recruited to Christ's College fellows boat), Dick McConnell (retired hurt), and our two stalwarts from Max Ent Boat Club, Stuart Clarke and Hugh Gibson. However we were fortunate to recruit three new fellows, **Oliver Choroba** at stroke, **Jason Konig** at number 6, and **Paul Wood** at bow. Oli had rowed in LMBC 1st boat in the ill-fated Lent Bumps of 2001, until those races were terminated by foot-and-mouth disease. Jason had participated in some peculiar ritual called the Torpids at Oxford. Only Paul was a novice oarsman, but on a steep learning curve. **Simon Leslie**, an experienced graduate student, put on the cox-box, and **Nick McCave** and **John Browning** again cycled the tow path.

We reached the Bumps with that false sense of security that comes from finally getting the grind time down to below 5 minutes. We were LMBC VI, the lowest Maggie boat in the bumps, an intended gents crew (LMBC VII) having failed to get organised enough to enter the getting-on race.

bow	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
2	Revd. D.J. Dormer
	[Day 1: Mr E. Kerrigan]
3.	Dr P.T. Wood
4.	Prof. A.W. Woods
	[Day 3: Mr E. Kerrigan]
5.	Dr S.F. Gull
6.	Dr J.P. Konig

7.	Dr H.R. Matthews
stroke	Dr O.W. Choroba
cox	Mr S.T. Leslie
coaches:	Prof. I.N. McCave, Mr J. Browning, Mr T.A. Leake, Mr R. Silk

Sad to relate, in the Bumps this new crew never got beyond the motorway bridge before being comprehensively bumped by the crews behind. On Day 1 it was a Trinity V boat that surprised us with the quality of their start. Robinson III on the second day gave us such a fright that we ourselves fell apart and contributed to an even speedier fate. The third day we managed a more chunky row, but the outcome was the same. We became the victims of a Caius IV boat which had been the quickest boat of any in the getting-on race, and was steaming up from their position at the head of the 6th Division into our division, swallowing us up in the process.

We had been bumped by three good-looking boats, one in a booming club (Caius) that started the Bumps as Head of both Men's and Women's divisions. Perhaps it was just our bad luck? Moreover, those three crews all rowed in lighter shells and had cleavers, whereas we only had spades and were rowing the 1972 plywood craft (a boat once Head of the River, but long ago in LMBC's Golden Age). At the end of Day 3 it was comforting to imagine that the hardware had made all the difference. Addenbrookes, chasing us on the final day, looked to be more in our league, having escaped a bump the previous day only because the bowman in the chasing boat (Trinity VI) had fallen off his seat at First Post Corner. Was Day 4 our chance for a storming row over? Alas, the young doctors of Addenbrookes exacted revenge for the bump that we made on them last year. They got us about the same place that we bumped them last year, under the motorway bridge. Clearly this time we were simply not good enough, not even for the murky depths of the 5th Division.

Day 1	bumped by Trinity V
Day 2	bumped by Robinson III
Day 3	bumped by Caius IV
Day 4	bumped by Addenbrookes
Starting position:	80 th
Finishing position:	84 th

A thunderstorm broke as we sat outside the Fort St George afterwards, drenching and then scattering a very chastened Fellows Boat crew. The sad truth is that it was a promising boat that achieved basic competence but never really managed to get any better. Back to the drawing board?

Mays 2002, LMBC 6th Boat, Division 5

Chastened by the humiliations of last year, the hard core members of the Fellows Boat were urged by our new captain, **Oliver Choroba**, to begin preparations for the forthcoming campaign three months earlier, in the middle of the Lent Term. Six fellows were persuaded to come along to ergo sessions, or at least were persuaded to send along their regrets. We welcomed one novice in the shape of **Preston Miracle**, fellow in archaeology and surely very fit from all those excavations? In due course, persuading Preston not to excavate the bed of the Cam with his oar proved to be the coach's first challenge.

When the Easter Term began the search was on for a 7th and an 8th crew member. Where was the new blood to come from? Our cox from the 1973 Fellows Boat, Professor **Mervyn King** ('Merve the Swerve', Deputy Director of the Bank of England) was one of the guests at the Port Latin Feast on May 6th. He announced to those within earshot that in his experience, coxing the fellows boat had been excellent practice for managing the Bank of England's interest rates. In both cases you had to foresee the corners a little while before you reached them, and steer a course accordingly. Alas, even this example of the career advantages of rowing could not stir the fellowship. For lack of oarsmen, it looked as if the 2002 Fellows Boat would be landlocked, or restricted to paddling tubs in frustrated pairs.

Our problem was not resolved until week 3 when we recruited two excellent students in the shape of **Steve Egli** (4th year Engineering, stroke) and **Chris Fox** (Part III Maths, no. 2). We were also extremely fortunate to find a new cox in the shape of **Kate Fielder**. Kate was a 3rd year medic with only slightly split loyalties (Addenbrookes being our probable 1st day bumping target). More to the point she had immense experience coxing successful boats including last year's 1st Men's boat. It crossed the mind of some fellows that Kate's budding skills in coronary resuscitation might come in handy should emergency First Aid be required, somewhere along The Gut perhaps or just past Grassy Corner.

The final crew, after some shuffling of seats, emerged as follows:

bow	Dr P.T. Wood [Days 2 and 4: Mr A. Webb]
2.	Mr C. Fox
3.	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4.	Dr P. Miracle
5.	Dr H.R. Matthews
6.	Dr O.W. Choroba
7.	Dr S.F. Gull
stroke	Mr S. Egli
cox	Miss K. Fielder
coaches:	Prof. I.N. McCave, Mr P. Fry, Mr M. Brand, Mr R. Silk

We managed to acquire a set of cleavers, and averaged three outings a week. Having squeezed the grind time down to 4 minutes 30 seconds ('better than the 5th boat'), we made a final attempt on the Saturday before the Bumps to break our grind time record. The bid was thwarted by complete loss of rudder and, consequently, all sense of direction on Grassy Corner. At this point our confidence was deflated further by the news that the overworked doctors of Addenbrooke's had scratched from the races, so instead of them our target for Day 1 became Jesus V. However, approaching the start on Day 1 we were encouraged to see that Jesus were rowing with Macon blades, supposedly heavier and less efficient. Moreover the Sidney crew behind us all seemed to have on their heads outrageous wigs of silver blonde hair. Maybe Sidney III was just a rugger boat, just out on the river to make up the numbers?

Starting only four places above Bait's Bite Lock, we got off to a good start and had reduced the gap on Jesus V to about a length by the motorway bridge. At this point our attention was slightly distracted by the sight of eight tossing wigs coming up fast behind us, as the very proficient Sidney boat steadily rowed us down as we approached First Post Corner. They turned out to be a crew of retired 1st and 2nd boat veterans, out for a final hurrah at the bottom of the lowest division. It was just bad luck for us, but depressingly reminiscent of last year where we had experienced four similar humiliations at around the same spot.

Day 2 was a welcome turning of the tide, and almost a triumph of epic proportions. Third-year medic **Alistair Webb** was subbing for Paul Wood at bow. Ahead of us eight bewigged Sidney men were even quicker off the start than we had been the previous day, and they quickly caught Jesus V. This left for us a potential victim far ahead, a possible overbump in the shape of Clare IV. This boat was a particularly juicy target as it contained two Clare fellows and had been double-overbumped the previous day. Rowing well, we were gaining on Clare IV as we moved into the Gut. The six and a half lengths that separated us at the start had been cut to two lengths as we approached Grassy Corner.

At this point the stealthy approach of Emmanuel IV, the boat behind us, could no longer be ignored. Their huge push in The Gut brought them up to within a canvas, and as they went across to bump us on Grassy they missed our stern only by inches. Expert coxing and a well-timed last-ditch push by **Steve Egli** at stroke (rating an unbelievable 39 strokes a minute) had kept us alive. However, in the Plough Reach an exhausted Fellows' Boat started to fall apart, and we also lost any possibility of an overbump, as Clare escaped from our pursuit by bumping Fitzwilliam III. After all, and despite heroic efforts, was there to be no happy ending for LMBC VI?

Fortunately Emmanuel IV had also shot their bolt. By Ditton Corner they had fallen back to half a length, and the gap widened in the Long Reach. All those outings began to pay off, as the fellows showed their stamina and rowed their best piece of the entire course. At the finish we rowed over about two and a half lengths clear of Emmanuel, in an exhilarating race which reminded us why we bother to torture ourselves with this extraordinary annual ritual.

The third day seemed like our best chance for a bump, as again we were chasing the Jesus V boat upon which we had made some inroads on Day 1 before we ourselves had been bumped. With rain falling and the coxbox out of order, things looked grim at the start, but then the skies cleared and the arrival of a screw driver as the minute gun sounded allowed **Kate Fielder** the chance to practice her keyhole surgery, with immediate success. With 35 seconds remaining, Kate's voice at last sounded out loud and clear in the bows. The gun went and by First Post Corner we had managed to make some inroads on Jesus V. Meanwhile Emmanuel IV crept up to within half a length of us but we did not panic, and later they faded and were bumped by Caius V in the Plough Reach. Our own target was about two lengths ahead when

Grassy Corner's long cruel curve proved too much for the lack of puff at bow and three, and only swift emergency action by **Steve Egli** at stroke prevented a disaster. We lost a length on Jesus V, and though we rallied briefly in the Long Reach the gap was still about three lengths at the finish. A successful row-over (and a better start than the previous day), but none of the excitement of our narrow escape/almost triumph on Day 2.

The final day saw another storming row-over. This time getting a bump seemed improbable, as Jesus V ahead of us had proved muscular and skilful despite their archaic equipment. We again gained on them marginally at the start, but **Nick McCave's** single whistle from the towpath was a signal verging on the desperately optimistic. The real threat was behind us, where Caius V had had three days of steady upwards progress including an overbump, as they surged up from the 6th Division. Caius was a serious looking crew with a good prospect of blades, especially if LMBC VI would consent to be their final victim.

The Caius boys did indeed threaten us, but each time we responded. They had a canvas on Grassy, but bow and 3 managed to drag us round this time, and by Ditton Corner Caius V were half a length adrift. Again we rowed well in the Long Reach, and crossed the finish line with a tiring Caius boat more than two lengths behind. A satisfying outcome, and one seemingly greeted by cheers from the Fort St George, although we soon discovered that in the pub there was a rival attraction as England went three-nil ahead in their World Cup match against Denmark. A good Bumps for England, and not a bad one for the Fellows' Boat.

		Starting position:
	82 nd	
		Finishing position:
	83 rd	
Day 1	bumped by Sidney Sussex III	
Day 2	rowed over	
Day 3	rowed over	
Day 4	rowed over	

The Captain of LMBC Men, Mark Brand, wrote in *The Eagle*:

“The 4th and 5th VIII's suffered from their high placing and both gained their spoons. They would do well to take note of the skilled and courageous example of the Fellows' Boat, rowing as the 6th VIII. Despite being caught by a rapid Sidney III on the first night, the fellows rowed over the course the next three nights, holding off crews in fierce pursuit, some even overlapping them early in the course”.

This year there were three more fellows rowing for LMBC, in the women's 4th boat – **Sue Colwell, Janet Lees** and **Susanna Sällström**. One of their two bumps was technical, as was their row-over, and apparently also something unfortunate happened on their first day when they were bumped from behind. However they seemed philosophical about the ups and down of bumping races, and maybe they will be out again in the future.

Mays 2003: LMBC 5th Boat

Six of last year's boat survived, and we welcomed back our new Dean, **Duncan Dormer**, revived after a year of premature retirement. We also recruited one newcomer in **Alex Weber**, a Ph.D student in Biochemistry. To mark his promotion to full professor, **Steve Gull** signalled his intention to focus on the more important things in life, and moved to the Stroke

seat for the first time since 1994. **Oliver Choroba** kept us on our toes with almost daily e-mails (two, some days) suggesting new, alternative times for more and more outings. There were ergo sessions for the dedicated few in the Lent Term, and in the Easter Term we met up on 21 occasions. We were coxed again by **Kate Fielder** when her patients at King's Lynn hospital were adequately sedated, and at other times by Krazy Kris, who on one occasion arrived to cox us at 7 a.m. straight from an all-night party (lucky no bobbies on the Cam with breathalysers). We rowed in the old, familiar smooth-running, easily-sat plywood shell, Head of the River in 1974, and virtually identical in design to the boat of the New Zealand VIII at the 1968 Munich Olympics (they won the gold medal). Almost no plastic or carbon fibre -- cleavers were our one concession to post-modernity. We were determined to occupy LMBC's bottom slot, the 6th boat.

Although cheated at every attempt to record a grind time because of severe congestion on the river around 8 a.m., by the first week in June we felt ready for the rigours of the Men's 5th Division. Not even the non-emergence of the LMBC 5th boat, and consequently our promotion into that slot, could dampen our ardour. Whereas Christ's fellows (Christ's V) and Trinity fellows (Trinity VII -- crew motto '*Shock and Oar*') were way down in the 6th Division, we were in amongst semi-serious boats. Fortunately for us, in the starting order a juicy target presented itself -- an ill-assorted and slightly puny Black Prince (Trinity V), rowing with macon blades and looking like an excellent soft target to ease us into the May Bumps.

bow	Dr P.T. Wood
2.	Revd. D.J. Dormer [Day 3: Mr Alex Goldsmith]
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4.	Dr P. Miracle
5.	Mr A.N. Weber
6.	Dr O.W. Choroba
7	Dr H.R. Matthews
stroke	Prof. S.F. Gull
cox	Miss Kate Fielder
coaches	Roger Silk, Geoff Ball, Gerald Roebroeks, Prof. Nick McCave

At the boathouse on the 1st day of the Bumps, Oliver distributed the new T-shirts. Printed in red, the crew's slogan for the year provided much food for thought: '***Pain is weakness leaving the body!!!***'. At the start, just as the 4-minute gun sounded, the painful news from the umpire was that Corpus III, two boats ahead of us, had not showed up. Therefore Trinity V were to be awarded a Technical Bump if they managed to row past the missing boat's station. Despite losing an oar from a gate on the start, this they managed to do. In an instant our Bump-In-Prospect had been snatched away, and we faced the unwelcome task of avoiding being bumped by our boathouse stable mates, a young but super-fit Robinson III. After the pain, an end to weakness? Not exactly. We started well with a chunky 41 strokes a minute, strode at 36, and held off Robinson in the Gut. Who could avoid glancing back with growing hope, as the boat behind Robinson, Downing IV, came up to within a length of them? But having peeked his head out, Salvation slid back into the closet. Downing faded, the Robinson boys crept up on a tiring Fellows' Boat, and they bumped us just after Ditton corner. With a bit more puff, could we have escaped into the wide open straits of the Long Reach? Probably not. If given the chance, would we have bumped Trinity? YES OF COURSE. (Expressions of pain are anguish leaving the body).

Day 2 dawned with the phantom Corpus Christi boat still in the list, and now the notional target of the Robinson boat ahead of us. But Corpus remained ethereal, Robinson III got their technical bump, and we were faced with no prospects beyond the improbable task of overbumping the Black Prince, Trinity V, three ahead of us. Meanwhile, behind us Downing IV looked very determined not to repeat their exhausting row-over of the previous afternoon. As on Day 1, it became a three-horse race, the only question being whether LMBC V (the meat in the sandwich, as it were) could make up 4½ lengths on Trinity before being overhauled by Downing, starting 1½ lengths behind us.

Like the Battle of Waterloo, it was a close run thing. Expert coxing and some amazing out-of-body pain saw us round First Post Corner and Grassy, and we closed the gap on the Black Prince. Downing meanwhile closed on us, and by the time we passed the pub the three boats were almost overlapping. By following Trinity V on a wide track round the outside of Ditton Corner, **Kate Fielder** broke all the rules of coxing as Downing IV got the inside line and swooped for the kill. But our canny corner meant that Downing's substantial overlap counted for nothing, as their blades were still out of reach of ours. In the nick of time **Paul Wood's** oar at bow smashed into Trinity's stern. On the same stroke **Preston Miracle** crabbed and our boat slewed into the far bank. But contact had been made, the overbump was acknowledged, and Downing rowed past us well inside our line, cursing their luck.

The third day saw the same super-fit, super-keen Robinson boys lining up behind us, confident that they could repeat their bump of Day 1. Ahead of us was a lycra-clad Caius IV crew, with heavyweight professional advice from the towpath (Caius Men being, at the time, Head of the River by about six lengths). Caius IV had already rowed over twice, and probably expected the same outcome again. **Duncan Dormer** had been summoned to the BMA to give tutorial testimony, which meant that we had **Alex Goldsmith** as substitute in the no. 2 seat. Alex was a grad student who had not rowed for two years, apart from one earlier outing with us. But surprisingly, on a perfect summer's day we moved up to our starting position enjoying a perfectly balanced practice row.

Again the fellows had a splashy start, but after winding at 42 **Steve Gull** maintained an astonishingly high rate of 38 strokes per minute for almost two minutes, without even referring it to the Governing Body. As a result the Robinson boys only got one whistle from their bank party, an optimistic signal (all boats stoop to psychological warfare), before they eased back to two lengths. Ahead of us Caius managed to keep their distance until the Plough Reach, at which point our thrice-weekly outings and slick bladework started to pay off and we started to haul them in. We followed them into Ditton Corner and bumped them surgically with our bow ball just behind their rudder -- the bump occurring a few yards short of the previous day's triumph. Robinson swept past for a row-over, wondering why those old blokes were so much harder to catch than on the first day. It was all down to beefy rowing, expert coxing, and a bold strategy by Stroke. Down one place, but then up four places -- could we keep it up on the final day? It was to be (at last) a new target -- Selwyn III, a powerful looking crew.

The last day's row was probably out best of the week, but not good enough to catch Selwyn III before they made their own bump. We had kept station on them from the start, but they caught Wolfson II coming into Grassy and thereafter there was no target ahead of us. It was just a question of keeping away from Caius IV, who stuck to us like glue, and at first seemed unthreatened by the Robinson boys behind them. Caius came up to within a length of us in the Plough Reach, but it was probably a panic response by them to growing pressure from behind. Again in the Long Reach they stepped up the rate and briefly closed the gap on us,

but it proved to be their death rattle. Robinson III caught them, while a good distance ahead we rowed over in fine style.

Far far behind, on First Post Corner, the Black Prince (Trinity V) continued their nightmare week. They had had a technical bump on Corpus III on the 1st day; were overbumped by us on the 2nd day; experienced the tedium of yet another technical bump on Corpus III on the 3rd day; and then on the last day, the phantom boat having materialised at last, they were (really) bumped by ... Corpus III.

So overall it was good year for the Fellows – up 3 places overall, up to 4th place in the division, and the highest 5th boat on the river by a long way.

Starting position: 75th
Finishing position: 72nd

Day 1 bumped by Robinson III
Day 2 overbumped Trinity V
Day 3 bumped Caius IV
Day 4 rowed over

Historical Note. The triumph on Day 2 was the first overbump by the Fellows since the same day in the 1989 Bumps, when as LMBC 8th boat we surprised Girton III for an improbable overbump in the Long Reach. On Day 2 fourteen years later, the three survivors of that day, **Steve Gull**, **Tim Bayliss-Smith** and (on the tow path) **Nick McCave**, could hardly have dared to imagine that lightning would strike twice on the same boat, at least not in the course of one rowing life. Perhaps this remarkable phenomenon was worth a quick note to *Nature*?

Perhaps not, for even if one law (lightning never strikes twice...) was spectacularly broken by the Lady Margaret Fellows' Boat, the truth of other laws of physics had been demonstrated by Trinity. **Steve Gull** and **Hugh Matthews**, survivors of the unfortunate 1990 Fellows Boat, recalled that it was Trinity V, the same boat we overbumped this year, that had overbumped our fellows on that fateful day thirteen years ago. In other words for us it was revenge at last, but for Trinity it was more a case of Sod's Law and Unlucky Thirteen.

Michaelmas Term 2003

After these triumphs four fellows found their craving for the Boathouse was too strong to resist in the autumn term. The Men's Club Captain, Chris Crawshaw, reported in *The Eagle* (2004: 116) their exploits in the University Fours Competition:

“It was excellent this term to see a Fellows' IV out for the first time in the Club's history. LMBC III were unfortunately knocked out in the first round by the eventual winners of their Division, but had fun nevertheless. Respect is due to Dr Choroba for whipping them into shape, though I trust not literally”

The crew consisted of **Ollie Choroba**, **Paul Wood**, **Preston Miracle** and **Steve Gull**. Three of them continued the whipping-into-shape process and entered also the Fairbairn's Competition. Chris Crawshaw again:

“I took great pleasure in again entering a Fellows’ IV in the competition. Ably assisted by Professor Milton in the 2 seat, they cruised to nineteenth place in the IVs competition, the highest position ever achieved by a Fellows’ IV in Fairbairn’s, although there has only ever been one... Once again thanks to Dr Choroba for organising everything.”

Mays 2004. LMBC 5th Boat

After Christmas there was some talk of a Lent Bumps fellows boat, but nothing came of it beyond some occasional ergo sessions for a dedicated few, trying to keep half-fit and psyched up for the Easter term. By week 1 of term a crew of sorts had emerged, but as yet no cox. Oli moved up to Stroke, Steve (ever versatile) returned to Bow, while Hugh and Paul swapped places. The gap created by Duncan Dormor’s retirement was ably filled by the new chaplain **Clive Hillman** -- Clive had already dabbled in a Lent Bumps novices boat. The rest of us crept back into our familiar seats. That left a gap at 6, a place very ably filled by **Chester Brown**, a graduate student much in need of being prevented from completing his Ph.D in Law. But still no cox, so for a while we just practised keeping the ergos well balanced, in some strenuous boathouse sessions. Finally, to universal joy we managed to persuade **Kate Fielder** back into the cox-box harness, despite her problems with early morning outings (fellows start work at 7 a.m.). **Richard Tambllyn** kindly helped out as super-sub when one or other fellow was away. It looked like a promising crew.

bow	Prof. S.F. Gull
2	Rev’d. Clive Hillman
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
7.	Dr P. Miracle
8.	Dr H.R. Matthews
9.	Dr O.W. Choroba (Mr C. Brown on Day 1)
7	Dr P.T. Wood
stroke	Mr C. Brown (Dr O.W. Choroba on Day 1)
cox	Miss Kate Fielder
coaches	Roger Silk, Chris Crayshaw, Prof. Richard Perham, Prof. Nick McCave

We rowed with the now-traditional cleavers in the old, familiar plywood shell, re-constructed by Roger Silk in 1970. As Roger told us from the towpath (while Kate steered to avoid yet another Canada goose), we could do what we liked with it but we should always remember, he was the only man left on the Cam who had the skills to repair the thing. Once again Oli organised some expert coaching -- first **Roger Silk**, then Club Captain **Chris Crawshaw**, then the Master **Richard Perham** (“first find that peg in the water, then lock your oar in behind it”), and then Old Man of the Sea (and its fluvial extensions) **Nick McCave**. It was a particular pleasure to welcome back to the towpath the Master, who first established the Fellows Boat back in 1970. And a pleasure also to be steered once again by **Kate Fielder**, prime expert in the avoidance of all swimming dogs, blind scullers, aggressive kayackers, and sundry wildlife, and expert too in coaxing us into life (or at least, half-life) as well as gaining for us yards of distance on the corners.

Complete with cox, and after sixteen outings on the water we approached June 8th, the morning before the Bumps, with growing confidence. It was time to practice the bung starts. At 8 a.m. on a hot sunny morning we assembled outside the Boathouse. At that precise

moment Venus was starting to make its transit across the face of the Sun (the first time since 1882). The fellows boat was also making a transition of sorts, from Rocky Rabble to Mean Machine (first time since the 1980s?). The men's 1st Boat was also at the Boathouse, and their starts were recognisably the same animal as ours, merely a different sub-species perhaps. In our division we were ranked fourth in the starting order. There was talk of the fellows aiming for an overbump on the first day, since the quick-looking Wolfson II boat ahead of us looked like catching Selwyn III, leaving for us the head boat, Jesus IV, a slow, disorganised boat and juicy-looking target. After that, sandwich boat status and further glory? Our hopes were high.

Too high perhaps. On Day 1 we learned that CCAT I in Division 4 had scratched, so Jesus IV was elevated. We were now third in the starting order for Division 5, so an overbump was impossible. Our thoughts now turned to the need to keep away from Robinson III behind us. Ominously, this was the same boat that had bumped us on the opening day last year.

In the event, Day 1 could hardly have been a greater anti-climax. The gun went, and Oli at stroke set a blistering pace, striding at 40 strokes per minute and probably beyond. Much water in the air, much consternation in the boat. First to crack was Preston, who crabbed and then recovered. Robinson surged towards us as we did a manic Jumps 10. Amid general confusion Preston crabbed again and we were bumped by Robinson before First Post Corner. It was in deadly silence that a chastened crew returned to the Boathouse. *Sic transit gloria fluminis* (or something). Gloomy forebodings about loss of vitality, bored retirement, shared ground-floor set, zimmer frame, quavering voice at 80th Birthday speech in the Combination Room, final bump at St Peter's Gate.

Day 2 could not have been worse, and indeed was somewhat better. Oli swapped places with Chester Brown, to see if a more stately rating would help us to get the boat running. This time it was Corpus Christi III, last year's phantom boat but this year looking distinctly alive and well. We started better, and survived almost as far as Grassy Corner. Had we managed three more strokes, we might have escaped at that point, as Corpus had a poor line on Grassy and might have hit the bank. But we were not strong enough to hold them off.

It was the same story on Day 3, when we lost the Fifth Boat Headship to Trinity V (the boat we overbumped last year). Trinity caught us coming into the Plough Reach, after a better row for LMBC V including the successful navigation of Grassy. It could have been worse – Trinity V was at least an undergraduate boat, not their fellows' boat. As we rowed back to the Boathouse our counterparts, Trinity VI Fellows Boat, were actually still in the race. They were attempting a gentle row-over, having gone down four places on the previous two days, as we came into the Long Reach. We gave chase, and reduced the six lengths between the two boats to a mere length by the Railway Bridge. Unfortunately, having made our point we failed to overtake them (and no doubt incur a whopping fine) because of another Flipping Miracle Crab.

By Day 4 Preston seemed to have stopped his archaeological investigations of the Cam river bed. We rowed well, but were caught again in the Gut by Downing IV, once again beaten in the second minute of a race by a better crew. Sadly, **Oli Choroba's** last bumps as fellows' captain, and **Kate Fielder's** last service to the Fellows as cox, ended as it had started for them both three years ago, with Spoons.

Day 1	bumped by Robinson III
Day 2	bumped by Corpus Christi III
Day 3	bumped by Trinity V
Day 4	bumped by Downing IV

Starting position	71 st
Finishing position	75 th

The account by Club Captain Chris Crawshaw (one of our coaches) in *The Eagle* was surprisingly charitable:

“The fellows rowed as LMBC Men V and struggled with the high position in which they found themselves. A somewhat tense row on the first day began their downward trend, and they finished down four. Nevertheless they enjoyed themselves and I am pleased with the progress they made during the term”.

Nice to be able to put a precise date on the beginning of one’s downward trend.

Mays 2006: LMBC 5th Boat

In 2006 the spring came late, and the daffodils were still in bloom when the fellows first touched the water in late April, organised by the Chaplain **Clive Hillman**. In 2005 there had been a rowing sabbatical for the entire crew, except for Clive who found an undergraduate boat and Steve Gull who had rowed as usual in the Town Bumps. Indeed there were only five survivors from the 2004 Spoons boat, namely **Steve Gull, Tim Bayliss-Smith, Preston Miracle, Clive Hillman** and **Paul Wood**. However **Duncan Dormor** was lured away from his Dean’s sabbatical, and we were lucky also to recruit bio-archaeologist **Tamsin O’Connell** from City of Cambridge rowing club as our new cox. Tamsin was relatively new to the Cam, but she came with a wealth of Isis experience along with some curious Oxonian expressions: “Just your spoons in the water” must refer to some extinct part of the oar’s anatomy, an appendage that Darwinian evolution has replaced in Cambridge with the cleaver. She had to learn that the Penny Ferry pub is always called the Pike and Eel, and she also had to memorise the position of a particular clump of grass that is still mysteriously named Morley’s Halt. Fortunately river congestion meant we only managed one proper Grind, so fewer explanations were needed in that part of the river.

Eight recruits and just one person missing, so Paul twisted the arm of a Chemistry Ph.D student **Wiktor Banachewicz**, a relative rowing novice but a man with a black Solzhenitsyn beard sufficient to scare off any undergraduate opposition. Many outings later we were more or less licked into shape by **Nick McCave** on the towpath. Unfortunately six days before the bumps **Paul Wood** had to withdraw on doctor’s orders. He was replaced by **James Diggle**, a 1st year undergraduate who had already subbed for us at no. 7 with huge distinction. We were rowing as LMBC 5th boat in Division V.

bow	Prof. S.F. Gull
2.	Revd. D.J. Dormer
3	Dr T.P. Bayliss-Smith
4	Dr P.T. Miracle
5	Revd. C.R. Hillman
6	Mr W. Banachewicz
7	Mr J.W.L. Diggle
stroke	Prof. A. Woods
cox	Dr T. C. O’Connell
coach	Prof. N. McCave

This final crew, whose ages ranged from 19 to 58 years, only managed one full outing before the first day of the bumps. ‘Naturally sepia’ was one of the mottos on the T-shirt, a slogan very applicable to the bow section of the crew. Our other motto, the McCavian slogan “it’s a body thing”, better matched the youth and vitality of our stroke four, and it certainly constituted our best hope of reversing the downward slide of 2004.

Starting position: 79th
 Finishing position: 80th

Day 1 bumped Downing IV
 Day 2 rowed over
 Day 3 bumped by Clare Hall
 Day 4 bumped by Clare IV

Day 1 dawned overcast but breezy, and we managed one decent practice start before the real thing. Behind us was Clare IV and ahead Downing IV, a motley looking crew but possibly full of retired 1st boat veterans out for a final fling? Starting in 11th position in Division V, just on the bend below the motorway bridge, we had taken half a length off Downing IV by First Post Corner, and gained further ground on them along the Gut. Behind we were briefly pressed by the yellow oars of Clare IV but we could see that relief was at hand, as another yellowish boat, Clare Hall, steadily gained on them. As Grassy Corner approached there were whistles from the bank signalling that with a final push we would now catch Downing IV if we took an inside line on the corner. Alas, that line suddenly looked suicidal as a badly parked Caius boat occupied the inside space, so we had to change course and negotiate what was now a massively tight corner. Despite their best efforts all of bow side’s oars crashed into the bank and the boat came to a virtual halt. There was pandemonium on the towpath, and no. 3 remembers yelling at Gerald the boatman to stop him pushing us off the bank. Somehow we got going again without help, and lurched into the Plough Reach.

At this point Tamsin lost all electrical contact with her cox-box and so became inaudible, although she was unaware of the fact. However, from the yells and whistles coming from Nick and Gerald on the towpath we dimly understood that the Downing boat was still a target worth chasing. Overdosed on adrenalin, and through a tremendous effort of Tamsin-free concentration, we strode into the Long Reach and eventually overhauled Downing IV near the Railings. Two bumps on the day (one with the bank), and the first triumph for the Fellows boat since Day 3 in 2003.

Day 2 saw the fellows looking for a bump on Fitzwilliam III, a boat that had fallen to Caius V the previous day. We had realised it might not be easy when we heard in the Fort St George over beers that one of the Fitz oarsman had fallen off his seat in that race, contributing hugely to their downfall. But we had no fears of being pressed from behind, and therefore we should have managed a good start. Unfortunately our start was both rocky and splashy, and not until the Gut did we get properly into gear. Bank signals (surely never false?) suggested we had taken at least half a length off Fitzwilliam in front, but unfortunately they were having a much better row than the previous day, and soon afterwards they got their revenge on Caius V.

We therefore had no obvious prospects beyond a row-over, as Downing IV behind us had fallen, with ominous swiftness, to the yellow oars of Clare Hall. Cornering well round Grassy and Ditton corners, we went into our low-rating stride down the Long Reach in perhaps too relaxed a style. By the Railings another yellow boat, Clare IV, had crept up on us to about two lengths, in search of an overbump. It was now that all those outings during the

Tripos began to pay off, and we found we could hold off Clare comfortably even though they were over-rating us by about 4 strokes a minute. Clive's mini-crab just beyond the railway bridge was only a momentary lapse, as the fellows rowed over in fine style still two lengths ahead of Clare at the finish.

We needed a miracle on Day 3, seeing as Clare Hall's first and only men's boat were sitting behind us again full of fit-looking German graduate students in search of their third bump of the week. Our cunning plan was to do a power-twenty after the wind up, and then to forget altogether about striding out in the relaxed style of the previous day. In this way we would frighten Caius V ahead of us, they would panic and crab (or something), meanwhile frustrating the German boys behind us. Not a bad plan and it half worked, as we took half a length off Caius with a storming start. However Clare Hall were not going to co-operate, and they hoovered us up with Teutonic efficiency still some way short of First Post Corner.

On the last day it was therefore going to be another tussle with Clare IV who on Friday had bumped the hapless Downing IV, unless our two clergymen could organise a lightning strike on the Clare Hall boat ahead of us. Saturday was indeed a sultry morning, and there had been rumblings of thunder overnight. We knew that we could hold off Clare in the wide open spaces of the Long Reach, as we had done on Thursday, but could we actually get there? "Smile to release those endomorphins" was Tamsin's advice, as we prepared for the gun.

We had a good start and got round First Post Corner into the Gut, where Clare mounted their first onslaught. At this point we were advised by an umpire to take a wide line on Grassy Corner because of a bumped boat "on the inside of the corner". The fool should have said "the outside of the corner", and the result was an enforced last-minute change of direction, and a titanic effort by bow side to scrape us round the bend, the Clare boat pressing us all the time. Grassy may have lost us half a length, but even so in the Plough Reach we managed to rally, and began to draw away. Finding relief in the Long Reach was an almost tangible prospect, but at their second effort the Clare boat found a new gear and they bumped us a few strokes from the Grind, and well within sight of the Plough's bulging beer tent.

The last two days were disappointing, but to encounter a boat like Clare Hall in the fifth division was bizarre and unfortunate, and we could scarcely have rowed better than we did against Clare IV on the final day. Overall the Fellows boat only went down one place during four days of racing, in a year when every other Maggie boat bar one (Women's 2nd) also lost ground, some by two, three or four places. In fact the fellows contributed 50 % of all the bumps in the men's club. So not a vintage year but not a bad one, and with some good memories to keep alive our dreams for the future.

Mays 2011: LMBC 5th Boat

After 2006 there were various sporadic attempts to reconstitute the Fellows Boat but none succeeded. Some of the old lags were still keen but others had paternity, decanal duties or even research commitments, and new blood was desperately needed. However, the arrival of **Andy Truman** into the Fellowship (special subject: Triathlon) signalled a partial revival in 2010 when he and **Steve Gull** rowed in a mixed Grads and Fellows boat, were bumped three times but managed to avoid spoons. Surely, with more fellows in the boat things could only get better?

Spring came early in 2011, almost no rain fell in the months of March, April and May, and morning after morning it dawned sunny. The college, it sometimes seemed, was on permanent holiday celebrating its 500th anniversary. Just after the Queen made her visit **Andy Truman**

sent round an enquiring email and exactly eight oarsmen replied plus a sub, so a new Fellows Boat came together as if by magic to mark the college's Quincentenary. It was, of course, only 41 years since the first Fellows Boat came together in 1970, but LMBC historian **John Hall-Craggs**, on seeing the T-shirt of the Fellows Boat crew with its motto 'Still bumping along after 500 years', claimed it should be 501 years for the Lady Margaret Boat Club. It was actually in 1510 that Bishop John Fisher first rowed to Cambridge from Ely (or perhaps, encumbered by his mitre, he just coxed the boat) in order to kick-start negotiations for the establishment of Lady Margaret Beaufort's new college.

There were only two survivors from the last full Fellows Boat of 2006, **Steve Gull** and **Tim Bayliss-Smith**, but **Paul Wood** was also back after a two-year rest from rowing. All the new fellows also had rowing experience (**Andy Truman** at stroke, **Gideon Mailer**, **Martin Goodhand**, **Stephen Thompson**) apart from novice **Henri Johnston**, who therefore embarked on a steep learning curve, something he could easily model in various dimensions given his Pure Maths expertise. The only non-fellow was **Justin Holt**, Lieutenant-Colonel in the Royal Marines and M.Phil student in International Relations. It turned out that Justin was secretly training to row to the North Pole with fellow marines in the summer of 2011 in order to prove the reality of global warming, or perhaps to show how to bump icebergs rather than Grassy Corner. Apart from his commando-trained, Australian-beef physique, Justin brought with him another bonus for the crew, namely his partner **Theodora Harold** who proved to be a fearless and highly skilled cox. **Nick McCave** again made a massive contribution as our coach.

After our first early morning outing on 6th May, the day of St John before the Latin Gate (conveniently, a big carbo-loading Feast), we managed eleven more outings before the bumps. There were also three Ergo sessions in the boat house, one crew dinner on High Table that continued in the bar afterwards, and, on the eve of the Bumps, one carbo-loading supper (beer and pasta) courtesy of **Paul Wood** in A10 New Court. We were rowing in a Burgess Shell modelled on the boat rowed by the British eight in the 2000 Olympics. In mock races in the Long Reach we had proved that we were no worse and possibly somewhat better than LMBC IV, but they were "fast improving" so we managed to retain the 5th boat slot. However, we were not the bottom boat – the 6th boat (the Red Boys) were also in the – a boat we liked, and could generally balance. In one of our last outings we managed 9 minutes 45 for the whole course and 4 minutes 25 for the Grind, which we thought were promising times indeed.

The only shadow on the horizon was the result of rowing history – our destiny, because of bumps or rather the lack of them last year, as the sandwich boat. We would be rowing at the top of Division 6, with no target in the first race beyond a row-over provided that we could escape from the bumping intentions of a quick-looking Girton III boat behind us. In a previous regatta which we did not enter (fellows do not row at weekends), Girton III had recorded a time for the course one whole minute quicker than LMBC IV. Possibly, in the last three weeks LMBC V had become a better boat than LMBC IV in the regatta, but surely not a whole minute better?

bow	Dr Gideon Mailer (Day 1a, Day 2, Day 4) Dr Stephen Thompson (Day 1b, Day 3)
2.	Prof Steve Gull
3.	Dr Tim Bayliss-Smith
4.	Dr Henri Johnston
5	Dr Paul Wood
6	Lt.Col. Justin Holt MBE
7	Dr Martin Goodhand

stroke	Dr Andy Truman
cox	Miss Theo Harold
coach	Prof. Nick McCave

Cox plus nine crew members assembled on Day 1 of the Bumps with an agreement that **Gideon Mailer** would row in the first race and super-sub **Stephen Thompson** in the second race (if we managed a row-over), with an exchange at the Pike and Eel involving shoes and bicycle as well as the Bow seat in the boat.

Starting position: 85th
 Finishing position: 87th

Day 1 Rowed over at top of Division 6
 Rowed over as sandwich boat at the bottom of Division 5
 Day 2 Bumped by Girton III
 Day 3 Bumped by Queens IV
 Day 4 Rowed over

Triumph and frustration are the best words to describe Day 1. LMBC V managed a good start at the top of the division, rowed in smooth water and took good corners, but soon were being menaced by Girton III. The undergrads came up to within a boat length or less on Grassy but they took too wide a corner and lost half a length, and we managed to push them away. They kept well in touch all along the Gut and made a big push on Ditton Corner, but again we held them off. The race was less than half over, but our stamina began to tell. In the Long Reach Girton III lost heart and faded away, while we strode along with increasing confidence. The gap at the finish was at least two boat lengths and we were justifiably pleased with a storming performance.

Also rather a draining performance, though. Half an hour later we had our chance to bump up into the next division, starting at Baits Bite Lock with nothing behind us but Ely Cathedral somewhere downstream, and with the Addenbrookes boat our target ahead. The clinical medics all wore blue surgical gowns and white hospital hats, but this was no scratch crew out for few laughs. Twice we pushed up to within a length and got some encouraging whistles from **Nick McCave** on the tow-path, but each whistle just seemed to invigorate the doctors (could they have access to stimulants not available on High Table?) and they held us off. By the Long Reach the fellows' tank was empty and we could not manage the inexorable steady push needed to narrow the gap. A good row but not quite good enough, so another row-over and a very frustrating one as it meant that the starting order for Day 2 could only offer us more of the same -- another day of Girton III behind, and (if we rowed over) Addenbrookes in the next division once again the boat ahead.

Day 2 dawned cloudy and by 11 o'clock it was raining. Rather damp and cold, we returned to the scene of yesterday's row-over and took our place once again at the head of Division 6. The crew then had to shelter under willow trees on the bank because of a delay caused by a re-row in another division of two boats whose race had been obstructed the previous day. When our division got under way at last, Nick's expert pushing-off earned us a good start and after the first 10 strokes we managed a stride rating 38 strokes per minute, whereas Girton III behind us were not pointing in the right direction at the start and lost ground. Behind the Girton boat was Queens IV, and they began to close the gap on Girton III. However, once round First Post Corner a startled Girton crew saw the threat behind them and put on a massive push, and although we tried to respond (as we had the previous day) they steadily

closed the gap and we were bumped just before Grassy Corner. Our cox acknowledged the bump and Girton III stopped rowing and started to celebrate. As a result Queens IV quickly closed up on them and thought they had bumped, and they too stopped rowing. Fortunately for Queens there was nothing much coming up behind, and once they had realised their mistake and the punch-drunk Girton crew had cleared the river, Queens IV got going again and began their disappointed row-over. With their race over, somewhat chastened the fellows rowed back to the Lady Margaret boathouse in the rain, well aware that this disappointed Queens crew would have us in their sights at the gun on Day 3.

The forecast for Day 3 was again rain, but it held off until shortly before the start. We rowed well for 40 strokes and made some ground on Girton III ahead, but it was slow progress. Meanwhile, behind us a slick-looking Queens IV crew shot into view and soon hoovered us up, bumping at First Post Corner and gaining perhaps some compensation for their imaginary bump on Girton III the previous day. Ahead of us that Girton boat rowed over top of the division and soon after achieved what we failed to do on Day 1, bumping up into Division 5.

Queens IV boat looked too good for the crews they were likely to encounter down in the bowels of the 6th Division, and they must have had hopes of earning their oars. As we rowed home in the rain there was only small satisfaction in the knowledge that our titanic efforts on Day 1 had in the end cooked Queens's goose just as it had messed up Girton III's prospect of blades. On Day 3 the boat behind Queens, Christs IV, had narrowly escaped being caught by our rigger boat, LMBC VI. Could the Red Boys get revenge and by bumping Christs help us towards another row-over on the final day?

Saturday morning was both sunny and windy, resulting in much cross-river drift as Nick pushed our boat out. As a result Theo lost the bung five seconds before the gun but pretended that bung and chain were still in her hand (the umpire turned a blind eye), meanwhile expertly superintending some panicky last-second straightening, and in the event we managed a beefy start. We held our distance on Queens IV ahead but they quickly overhauled Pembroke V, a sad piece of driftwood floating down from the division above. Meanwhile behind us the Red Boys were gaining on Christs IV who, after a desperate push, came up to within half a length of us in the Gut. Theo called for an 'Up 2' and we responded, pushing them away. After Grassy Corner they blew up and were bumped by LMBC VI in the Plough Reach – amazingly, the first bump of the week for LMBC in a lean year. Continuing around Ditton Corner we rowed smack into half a gale blowing up the Long Reach, but we managed a disciplined stride at 29 which kept the fellows well away from a Magdalene crew coming up behind in search of an overbump. Magdalene never seriously threatened and despite the wind the course was rowed over in 10 minutes 45, making a rather satisfying end to the week for the Fellows Boat of 2011.

Ups and Downs, 1970 up to 2011

Since its initial formation in 1970 the Fellows' Boat has rowed in 21 Bumps races (20 Mays, one Lents). Over this period (not counting occasional subs) 37 different fellows have rowed or coxed, plus five different chaplains, eleven graduate students (six of them coxes), and 15 others including six from Maximum Entropy.

Eleven fellows have taken part in at least 20 bumping races in 'proper' Fellows Boats: **Tim Bayliss-Smith** (83 races), **Steve Gull** (78), **Hugh Matthews** (54), **Nick McCave** (44, plus many as coach), **Dick McConnell** (44), **Andy Woods** (37), Paul Wood (25), **Mark Welland** (25), **David McMullen** (22 since 1983, more in the Dark Ages), **Rob McCorquodale** (22),

and **Oliver Choroba** (20). [Steve of course has also rowed an even larger number of races for Max Ent in the Town Bumps].

Several have assisted in the vital role of coach -- **Richard Perham**, **Andrew Macintosh** and **Roger Silk** must be singled out for their long service and persistent, irrational optimism, tinged in Roger's case by a well-founded concern to avoid too much damage to the hardware. In more recent years **Nick McCave** has stood alongside Roger in that pivotal position.

There have been good years and bad, but overall the Fellows' Boat has almost held its place on the river -- behaving just like any other boat in other words, in the wonderful, self-regulating system that is the Cambridge Bumps:

Number of races, 1970-2011:	114
Bumps made on other boats:	31 (including two overbumps)
Row-overs:	34 (one of them technical)
Bumped by other boats:	45 (including one overbump)

So overall the fellows have gone down just 12 places during the course of 114 races, a remarkable record. One could say that collectively we are not far from achieving *homeostasis*, even if individually some small signs of increased *entropy* may be detected. In relation to the number of times Blades have been awarded, we can perhaps count ourselves a little fortunate. Blades were awarded in 1973, 1989, 1991 and 2000, helped on two occasions by the generosity of club captains who overlooked small blemishes in the fellows' academic record. So we paddle on, *nunquam caput fluminis* admittedly, but even so still singing the same boat club song.

TBS
18.06.11
