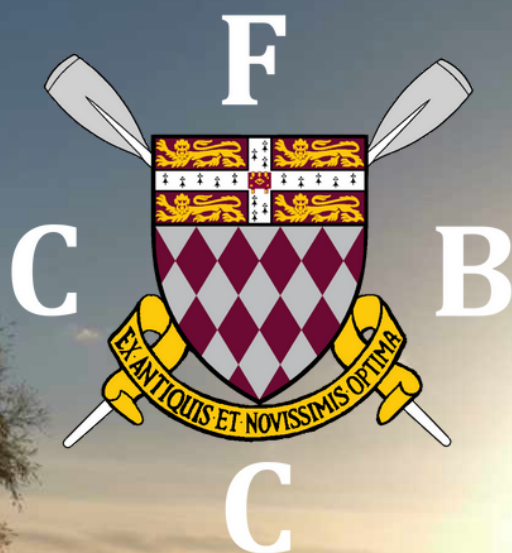




Fitzwilliam College Boat Club

MICHAELMAS 2023
NEWSLETTER

Some of our favourite memories from

Michaelmas 23



What makes the early starts worth it!



Senior Qerg Team



NW2 posing with the John Jenner post-Fairbairns



W1 heading home after Fairbairns



A flock of rowers in fancy dress for Emma Sprints!



Getting out in the tubs for novice recruitment!



Novice Womens first race!



M1 relaxing at the lock!



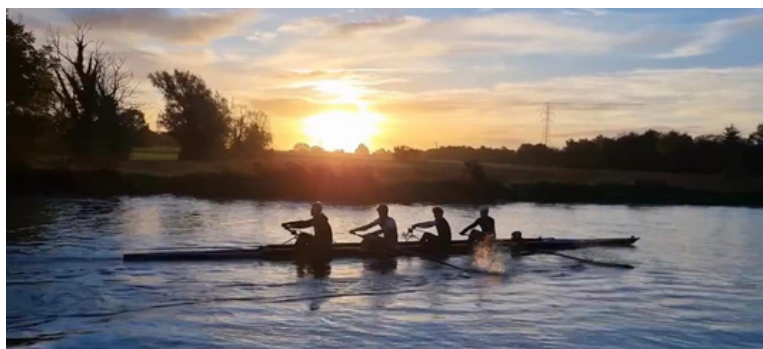
NM2 just about visible through the fog!

Senior Men

To start the term, the men's side knew it would have to overcome the challenge of not having 8 regular rowers as many of the seniors who competed in the may bumps campaign had been lost to graduation or were unavailable as they are nearing the end of their degrees. Despite this, the focus was still on putting out a competitive 8+ for Fairbairns and creating a solid backbone for the squad that could be built on when the novices moved up in Lent.



Although it was not always possible to get an 8+ out during the week, those that had committed showed great enthusiasm to still get out any way they could whether it was in a four, quad or even a double. From the off, the weather was not in our favor, which, along with having to row in near scratch crews as people's availability changed, led to some miserable mornings. However, the determination to get the miles in proved invaluable and helped bring the team together.



After many cold and wet outings, some grueling ergs and weights sessions the team managed to get an 8+ out for Winter Head employing two subs who, although they had raced with Fitz in the past, were slightly out of practice. They still managed to have a very solid row placing 10th out of 19 beating Christ's, Pembroke and FaT M1. For Fairbairns only one sub had to be called upon, namely Octave Oliviers (last year's men's captain and captain of boats) so the crew felt more familiar, and this showed in the performance. They placed 11th out of 27 college M1s beating Caius M2 and Trinity Hall by significant margins. Given these are the two boats they are chasing on the second and first days in the Lent and May bumps respectively this gave a great boost in confidence and shows the work done this term has paid off.

With the success of the novice campaign and the result at Fairbairns, the men's side is showing very strong potential for the upcoming bumps campaigns!

Senior Women

With pesky graduations stealing so many of last years seniors we started the term with limited numbers and some slightly wobbly 4s outings. However this gave us the space to focus on technique and making sure we were in a strong position for the lents campaigns when the novice rowers would come and join us!

The biggest enemy this term was the yellow flag and there were quite a few outings with last minute cancellations but that made us determined to get every second out of the outings we could do! Qergs was a nice touchstone in the middle of term and it was great to enter a team with members from both sides of the boat club. We also were able to get an 8 together for winter head thanks to some magnificent super subs and the whole boat put in a great performance and a pint afterwards made the it a fantastic first race of the year!



With every outing we were getting stronger and the use of subs helped us prepare for our Fairbairns campaign as did the slightly inconsistent 5k ergs. Many members of the crew had never done Fairbairns so the 5k distance was intimidating but everyone kept turning up to training and week by week we got tighter as a crew and our rowing kept improving!



Thanks to a couple of super subs our 8 headed out the morning of Fairbairns (only slightly worse for wear as a result of the Fitz winter ball the previous night). The atmosphere at the boathouse was electric with several alumni crews returning when we arrived and this gave us a real boost and motivated us to give it our all! Cheered on by the alumni we set off and a very challenging 19 minutes later we were done! We were all so proud of making it we had a great celebration at Baitsbite lock and decided to row home with everyone switching sides and having our cox row in bow making it a great end to the rowing term! All the senior women are so excited to get the novices into the senior boats and know we're looking forward to a great Lent Term for the boat club!

Novice Men

Despite the many hurdles this term, the men's novices have brought fantastic commitment and enthusiasm, and the results showed! After a large uptake for the taster sessions, novice term was under way. Ishaka and I spent long evenings discussing crews, and soon we had three eager crews of novices, ready to unleash onto the Cam. Unfortunately, the first couple of weeks were fraught with red and yellow flags, meaning the novice crews couldn't train on the water.

Things only got more dramatic when I awoke one morning to a call from a rather excited Ishaka to say that NM2 had capsized and the crew had all run home and abandoned the boat after a gentleman from CUCBC had instructed them to do so. I raced down to the scene and rowed the 8 home with another senior (shoutout to Daan), with the other 6 blades in the stern and our bikes in the bow. We got many strange looks from passers by, many of whom had their phones out to record such an unusual sight. Once we made sure everyone was safe and dry, we became concerned that NM2 may not have enjoyed their swim in the Cam as much as everyone on Facebook did. But it soon became clear that NM2 were more inspired than ever.

Very quickly the races were upon us. For Qergs, two crews entered: a mix of NM1 and NM2, and an NM3 crew. The first crew got the 7th fastest time overall, and the NM3 crew came mid way through their division. During the race, Alex (NM1) decided to go off at a 1:14 split which left our race official clinging onto the erg for dear life to stop it leaping across the room. In Winter Head NM1's potential was realised for the first time. After a great row down, the boys gave it their all in the race and they maintained the intensity for the entire 2.5k. Some tight lines from Ishaka, they won their category (novice men's VIII) by 38 seconds, beating out several M2 boats and even Sidney M1. This was followed by a prize ceremony at the pub where we had a jolly celebration - a quality team building exercise!



Emma Sprints was next up, with NM1 racing. NM1 dressed up as sheep, with their newly acquired shepherd, Megan, as their new cox. This was Megan's first race with NM1, and she handled it fabulously. For their first race against Maggie's NM1, pulled away easily to win. Lucy Cav NM1 was next, but unfortunately the Marshalls started us at an angle, and we clashed blades 40 metres off the start, by which point we were already half a length ahead. Even though we 'won' the race comfortably, it was announced that we were disqualified for impeding the other crew by causing a crab. This was a hard loss to take, but it only acted as motivation to work even harder. Clare Novices was a chance for NM2 to show how far they'd come from the bottom of the Cam just two weeks prior. They beat Maggie's NM2 and Catz NM2 to reach the semi-finals of the plate, where they were narrowly beaten by Jesus NM2. This was a strong performance and really boosted morale leading up to Fairbairns.

Final race of the term - Fairbairns. NM1 put in a tremendous effort, and Megan steered the corners expertly. Despite a slight mishap resulting in a pause in the rowing, they still came 6th place overall with a time of 10:24, which is an incredible achievement. NM2 also performed admirably, coming 7th in their category and beating out many NM1 crews with a time of 11:47. Despite Fairbairns being their first race of the term, NM3 stepped up to the challenge like champions, finishing with a time of 12:33 which was faster than four NM1 boats. It was fantastic that we could get three boats to race, and it bodes well for the future of the boat club.

Looking to the future, there is huge potential in this cohort of novices. Already, half of NM1 have 2k times of 7:00 or lower. More importantly, there have been strong bonds formed already within crews, and much enthusiasm for rowing as a senior in Lent. The future is bright for the boat club and as novice captains we wish all last term's novices success in their rowing journey.

Novice Women

This year started off with an amazing level of recruitment, with the highest intake since 2016 and 3x the amount of novices from last year! Quality certainly did not diminish with quantity, and we quickly realised we had three full women's novice crews that had the potential to be extremely competitive.

Our keen beans started off with Qergs, with NW1 making it into the grand final after an extremely intense (down to the millisecond!) draw, and NW2 just being pipped at the post by Caius and coming fourth in their division. Their determination and drive was shown once again at Winter Head the following weekend, their first race on the water. A strong and solid row meant they completed the 2.5km race easily, coming fourth in their category and more importantly enjoying the experience of rowing uninterrupted down the Cam without queues or yellow flags getting in their way!

NW1's team spirit shone through at Emma Sprints with their stunning timing and even more beautiful coordinated Minion headgear! After a phenomenal start that could have rivalled the seniors, they encountered some bad luck with crabs in their first race but didn't let this phase them and came back to win their second race (against another boat of Minions) by a huge margin, proving that they were in fact the superior Minions on the river. Despite the unprecedented number of yellow flags this term, we were able to enter two crews for Clare Novices, and NW2 took this opportunity to really shine, making it all the way to the semi finals!



We had huge faith in both NW1 and NW2 as they prepared for Fairbairns, and neither crew disappointed, with NW1 putting in an epic performance and overtaking the boat in front of them (well done Jack!), and NW2 coming second in their category! Big shoutout to all of our novice coxes this year who struggled with the amount of cancelled outings due to weather conditions, but still progressed amazingly and are all showing great potential! A particular thanks to Alice and Jack for taking the challenge of novice Fairbairns in their stride and doing an incredible job.

All of our novice women have been absolutely amazing this year, and we could not be more proud of them. The thing that has stood out most throughout the term has been their unwavering enthusiasm and team spirit, and we are extremely confident that the boat club will be in excellent hands with them as seniors!

Qergs-NW2

Queen's ergs was our first race as novice rowers and the tension was understandably high! We were ready to deliver a worthy performance and after a quick warm-up in the cold weather that is just what we did. NW2 finished fourth in our division—we almost made it to finals!—which I think is a result to be proud of, especially considering we had some issues with one of the straps on the machine. I really enjoyed the sense of camaraderie amongst all of the rowers present and it was great to see so many people cheering us on. I can only imagine what the energy during a race on the river must feel like.

Race Reports!

Fairbairns Cup-W1

For W1 the Fairbairn's cup had been looming all term, a term where it seemed like even getting an 8 together would be a struggle. The morning of had a sense of excitement for having been able to get an eight together and from seeing some familiar faces returning in the alumni boats! Seemingly seconds after we put the boat on the river we were off under the guidance and expert lines of Emily our cox! As we got more tired we got more determined and a few well-timed stride calls kept us powerful. Despite a footplate malfunction and the very long racecourse, we crossed the finish line with a strong sense of pride! It may not have been our best time but after a term with so much uncertainty, we were all so proud to have made it to the end! After a few sips of whisky (thanks Tony) we were off home! For our final piece of rowing for the term, we celebrated by all moving up a seat in the boat with everyone trying a new side and our cox rowing in bow making for a chaotic and hilarious row home!

Winter Head- NM1

Absolutely insane Winter Head race from the Fitz NM1 crew! Nerves made for some shaky exercises on the way down, but our 6 insisted all we had to do was smile. Then we were off! All eight were in sync and our Cox's fascination with "LEGS!" held the rate up at or above 30s/m the entire race. Huge effort from bow 4 putting in extra power to take us tight round the corners – two overtakes even before the long reach. Just when we thought we still had most of the reach left, the last 500m was called from the bank. Grunts filled the air as the whole crew emptied the tank. Surprise all down the boat at how short the race felt, we knew we'd done a decent time. But sliding in under 10 minutes, taking out the division and even beating an M1 boat had spirits soaring and huge grins. Couldn't ask for a better first race on the water or for a better crew to do it with! Now it's time to get some proper technique...

MICHAELMAS 2023 IN NUMBERS

1st

Place finish for
NM1 in Winter
Head

Place finish for
NW2 in the
Fairbairns Cup

2nd

**83.9
km
raced**

**5 Novice
Coxes**

**22
Novice
Coaches**

**3 returning
senior
coaches**

57 Novice
Rowers

79 Fairbairns
Competitors

52 Sign-ups to
Lent training
camp

**81 Billy Goats
Dinner
Attendees**



06:21 Earliest
Lighting
down

07:19 Latest
Lighting
down