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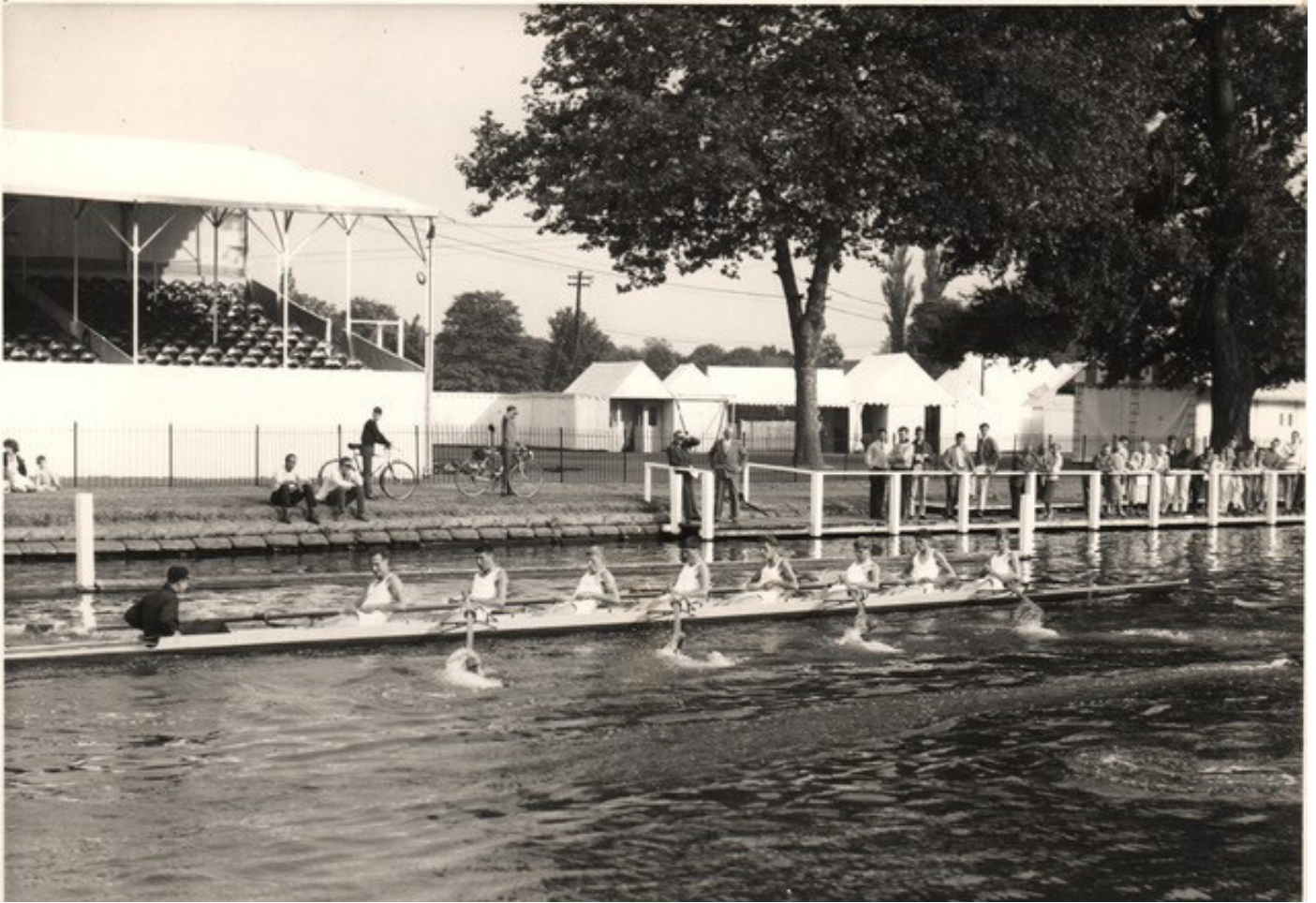
Peter Reason (OEI 955-63)

A little while ago, Peter Reason (OEI 955-63) sent us a lovely collection of early to mid-1960s rowing photos. Peter was a highly distinguished pupil, who was appointed School Captain, Captain of Marlborough House and Captain of Boats before attending Emmanuel College, Cambridge where he was also Captain of Boats from 1965-66.

The photo archive Peter sent includes a picture of Emanuel practicing with Emmanuel College in 1965, Peter thinks, at Henley. Peter was rowing for Emmanuel College and this might have been the only occasion when Emmanuel rowed beside Emanuel!



1. Emanuel School practicing with Emmanuel College in 1965 at Henley



2. Emanuel 1st VIII at Henley



3. Emanuel 1st VIII on the Tideway, Barnes



4. Emanuel 1st VIII on the Upper Thames, 1962



5. Emanuel 1st VIII at Barnes Boathouse, 1961/2



6. Emanuel 1st VIII at Reading Head, 1962

Peter also sent us his recollections of rowing at Emanuel:

York Regatta 2021: Watching my grandson stirs old memories

It's a fine afternoon for the York Regatta with sunny intervals and little wind. Four of us—parents and grandparents—have found a bench overlooking the river near the finish line. We have a good view of the last few yards of the races, and if we stand and walk to the edge of the bank, we can just peer under the steel girders of the railway bridge upstream and see the racing boats as they come round the bend in the river.

For the most part the racing is unexciting. Quad and double sculls pass in procession, the trailing crew often completely outclassed. We admire the stronger crews and feel sorry for the stragglers. But mainly we are waiting for the Junior 16 double sculls race that Nate—our son and grandson—is in.

There is momentary excitement when a cruising motorboat ignores the warnings of the marshal's boat and proceeds along the course in the middle of the river, seemingly oblivious to the race coming toward them. The leading quad has to dig their sculls deep in the water to avoid a head-on collision but is able to find a track around the cruiser and keep its lead to the finishing line. But soon there is more alarm: a junior 14 sculler, making an enormous effort to catch up in the last yards of the race, catches a crab with one scull and tips over into the water. Everyone on the bank watches urgently as he climbs onto the upturned boat, then with some alarm as he seems to collapse forward and lie still. The Marshal's boat is quickly to hand.

Sixty years previously, on an early spring afternoon, I am in a sculling boat on the Tideway. Barney Whalen and I have sculled down to Hammersmith from the Emanuel School

boathouse just upstream of Dukes Meadows at Barnes Bridge, and are now returning on a high flood tide. The Thames lies wide and full between stone embankments. Grey water surges upriver in long waves under a lowering sky. We are both around seventeen, sculling in line ahead past the muddy banks of Chiswick Eyot, following to the main stream in the middle of the river, all the while keeping a careful eye on the tugboat with its raft of six barges that is steaming up behind us. We can just keep comfortably ahead if we scull at a steady pace.

Barney is the stronger sculler, so I am having to work hard to keep to his pace. Maybe that is why my right scull momentarily catches in the water at the end of a stroke. My boat slows down and slews sideways. Barney, right on my tail, runs hard into the side of my sculling boat toward the stern. No matter, we soon recover from this mishap and resume our steady course upstream. But the tugboat is quite a bit closer.

Soon, I notice that my boat feels heavy; it doesn't take long to realize that the impact split the fragile wooden skin: the stern section is flooding. Soon it is clear that my boat will either sink under me or break in two pieces. Glancing astern, I can see the tugboat is ominously closer. Barney stops next to me, but there is nothing he can do to help. And so, without thinking too much, I slip over the side into the water and start to swim, out of the track of the tugboat, toward the Middlesex bank just upstream of the Eyot, propelling the sculling boat in front to me.

I remember very little of that swim. Maybe it was a hundred metres to the bank, so it must have taken a while. I am not sure if I kept the boat with me as a safety measure or to save it from being wrecked by the tugboat. I probably had in mind the maxim for dinghy sailors in the event of capsizing, "Never leave your boat". All I can remember is that I swam round the end of the Eyot, found a flight of steps up the steep embankment, and climbed dripping from the water.

There was no one around to help, but we senior members of the School Boat club were very proud of our ability to handle our boats unassisted both in and out of the water, so it was obvious what to do next. I took the sculls from their swivels and stowed them safely on the bank. I lifted the boat slowly to let the water drain out. Once it was empty, I swung it up in the air onto my head. With one hand to steady it, I squatted down, picked up the sculls in my free hand, and walked in my sodden rowing shorts, vest, and socks along Chiswick Mall and the residential streets, and through Dukes Meadows. It took about fifteen minutes to arrive, triumphant, back at the boathouse.

I suppose this was quite a serious incident. But I remember no alarm, no 'health and safety' investigations, no new regulations about supervising sculling. John Crook, our boatman, quickly mended the crack so the boat was good as before. I suspect I gained quite a bit of kudos from managing the whole situation well. All was as it should be.

In York, the Marshal's dinghy was soon alongside the capsized sculling boat, their first concern to get the boy out of the water. As they manoeuvred to get him around the upturned boat, it drifted sideways across the river, blocking the racecourse. Now we could see two double sculls coming through the bridge, racing hard side by side. Spectators called out from all sides—but how does a racing crew tell the difference between cheers of

encouragement and warning shouts? It was not until the very last moment that Nate and his mate Louis

realized their peril, dug their skulls deep, and in a flurry of foam, brought their boat to a halt. Of course, their competitors stopped as well... the officials declared the race abandoned and instructed them to return immediately to the start.

Not so very long afterwards, two double sculls appeared beyond the bridge. Who was ahead? It was impossible to tell. As the boats passed us on their final strokes to the finishing line, I found myself shouting loud and long through cupped hands, "Well done, Nate! Well done, York!" Nate and Louis won by a whisker; it took my voice two days to recover.

I am not sure if there is a moral to this story. This little emergency on the River Ouse was a moment of excitement and some danger. It stirred old memories that deserved their due.

Peter Reason

July 2021