

THE PHOENIX IS RISING!



There's a special sense of tradition and heritage in the School Boat Club. I remember learning to row as a fourth and remove former, glancing into the 1st VIII room with a sense of reverence. It's adorned with memorabilia from past crews. There are pictures of Bas Dixon (93-00) rowing in the Oxford Blue Boat in the early '00s. A 'Goldie' lycra hangs high and framed, marking the time a School VIII out-sprinted Cambridge at Bedford Regatta. A member of the university crew was so impressed that as soon as he got off the water, he asked his crewmates to sign his racing kit and presented it immediately to the Bedford Captain of Boats.

Rickety artefacts point to earlier glories. Bedford won the first three Princess Elizabeth cups at Henley in '46, '47 and '48. The first victorious crew contained James Crowden (41-



46), who went on to compete for Great Britain in the 1952 Olympics. There was a Bedford man in the British VIII that year also - William Windham (40-44). At 93 he's the most senior steward at Henley. A legend! Phelan Hill (87-97), current Olympic champion from the Rio Games follows in the puddles of OB Jack Beresford (13-17), who won five medals at five Games in succession. This record in Olympic rowing was not matched until 2000 when Sir Steve Redgrave won his sixth Olympic medal at his fifth Olympic Games.

There were occasional mentions in the boathouse of alumni crews, OBs of the '60s and '70s who would reunite, launching racing campaigns under the name of 'Phoenix'. Records are hazy, but the institute that was Phoenix seems to have faded into ashes sometime in the '80s.

True to the mythological motif, Phoenix is rising again. Schoolboy rowing is as strong as ever, and this is mirrored in the achievements of alumni across Europe. Phoenix has now been established as an official club, to serve as a community of OB oarsmen and a platform for alumni crews to compete. The time for Bedford alumni rowing is now!

Leading the charge are the Sheridan brothers, Connor (07-18) and Jared (07-16), both established members of Oxford Brookes' programme. Following on from a Junior Worlds gold medal, Connor sat in the bows of the Brookes Prince Albert coxed four at Henley this year. They lost by the narrowest of margins (a foot!) in the semi-final to Harvard - the eventual winners. A rerun of the race could easily have seen the opposite result. Despite a recent injury, Jared featured in a Brookes Ladies Plate crew. He's set for a fiery comeback this



year. Both brothers will be hoping for a red box at HRR 2020. Also competing at Henley this year was Giles Moon (96-07), who coxed the Great Britain eight in the King's Cup, which was held in commemoration of the centenary of the 1919 Royal Henley Peace Regatta.

At Oxford's other reputable institution, Ed 'Teddy' Lamb (10-17) has established himself within the lightweight squad, winning a silver medal for OULRC at this summer's European University championships. The squad is now looking ahead to the lightweight Boat Race next March - hosted on the tideway. To the East, Harry Sivills (06-17) has made his mark on the Cam. Harry was a spare oar for Goldie this year, a particularly impressive achievement given the strength of the squad. Further North, George Christian (08-18) leads the Birmingham men's side. He's also been spotted spear-heading an embryonic Phoenix four on the Ouse.

In Germany, Benedict Eggeling (14-17) - another member of the 2017 1st VIII - is building an international rowing career. He was selected for the coxless four at this year's U23 European Championships, finishing fifth in a highly competitive field. Albrecht Dunkel (07-09) raced for Dresdner Ruderverein E.V. in the Wyfold this year - a seeded crew - and made the Friday.

Phoenix will be a chance for these - and other - alumni in the rowing world to support each other, support the School, and compete under Bedford colours. There are already plans

afoot for potential Phoenix boats at Bedford Regatta and HRR in years to come. The Club can also serve as a social tribe; a catalyst for the reassembly of OBs at events throughout the regatta season.

On behalf of boat club alumni, I would like to thank Hugh Maltby (73-83), Pete Mulkerrins (staff) and Will Suthers (staff) for their support in the reestablishment of Phoenix. We look forward to igniting the club, to support and flourish alongside BSBC.

George Lamb (02-09)

Photos courtesy of Richard Man (13-17)

