The University Year

The academic year at Oxford University runs from October to June. The year is divided into three eight week terms, Michaelmas (autumn), Hilary (spring), and Trinity (summer).

Major events which take place during the academic year include:

The Boat Race

Oxford won the 155th Boat Race (29th March 2009) by three-and-a-half lengths taking exactly 17 minutes.

The first boat race was the result of a challenge issued to Oxford by Cambridge in 1829. It was rowed on the Thames at Henley. Oxford wore dark blue jerseys, later to become the Oxford blue, and Cambridge donned pink sashes. Oxford were the first winners. The second race was staged in 1836 when Cambridge adopted their own light blue, and was rowed on a five and three-quarter mile stretch of the Thames between Westminster and Putney.

Today the 4.5 mile course, which was first used in 1845, stretches from Putney to Mortlake. The race is held in March or early April, after the captain of the previous

year's losing team issues a formal challenge. The average time taken to complete the course is 20 minutes, but Cambridge holds the record for the fastest time of 16 minutes and 19 seconds, achieved in 1998.

Cambridge sank in 1859 and 1978, Oxford in 1925 and 1951, and both boats went down in 1912 when the race was started in a virtual gale. The most recent sinking occurred in 1984, when Cambridge sank after ramming a barge before they were even under starter's orders. The remains of the boat now have pride of place in a Cambridge public house, and have been signed by all crew members.

Oxford made history in 1981 with the selection of the first female cox, Sue Brown. She coxed crews to victory in both 1981 and 1982.

The current score stands at 79 to Cambridge, 75 to Oxford, with one controversial dead heat in 1877. There have been other very close results: Oxford won by a canvas in 1952 and 1980, and the 2003 race was won by just 12 inches. The race is the most famous of the Varsity Matches and has a huge audience on television, radio and online. 7.2 million people in the UK alone tuned into the 2006 Race, and on average more than 100 million watch the race worldwide each year. Around a quarter of a million people are estimated to watch the race from the riverbank.

Varsity Football Match

In 2009, Oxford won the 125th Varsity match 1-0.

The Varsity Football match is one of the oldest regular fixtures in world football, having been played every year since 1873 (with a break for the First and Second World Wars).

The first Varsity match resulted in a 1-0 victory for Oxford, with England international Robert Vidal scoring the only goal. In 1964 Bobby Robson managed the Oxford team to a 3-1 victory at Wembley. The current running total for the matches won stands at 48 to Oxford and 48 to Cambridge, with 28 draws.

Those who compete in the Varsity match receive the much sought-after Full Blue in addition to playing a part in the history of one of football's longest-running rivalries.

Varsity Rugby Match

Rugby has a long history at Oxford. William Webb Ellis, the founder of the sport, was a student at Brasenose College. The Oxford University Rugby Football Club (OURFC) was founded in 1869, fifteen months before the foundation of the Rugby Union in 1871, and is regarded as the oldest club in this country.

During the Varsity campaign, the Blues compete against top quality opposition. The highlight of the Varsity build-up is the match versus the Major Stanley's team. Once used as a trial for the England XV it is named after the selector who first acquired Iffley Road for the use of OURFC. All the games and preparations build up to what is the defining moment, and highlight, of the season – the Varsity.

The sole focus of Oxford and Cambridge University rugby teams is to win The MMC Trophy (originally known as the Bowring Bowl) and the title of Varsity holders. In February 1872 the first ever Varsity match was played in Oxford at 'The Parks'. The following year (February 1873) the return match was played in Cambridge on 'Parkers Piece'. In 1877 it was decided to move the match to a neutral ground and the Kennington Oval - scene of England's first home international fixture the previous year - was chosen. The game had a number of different venues, each offering the current best facilities. In December 1921 it was moved to the Rugby Football Union's ground at Twickenham, where it has been played ever since.

Results

Oxford won the first Varsity Rugby match. In the 127 times the match has been played, Cambridge have won 60 times and Oxford 53. There have been 14 draws, the most recent being 2003 (11-11). **Last year (2008) Oxford beat Cambridge 33-29.**

Encaenia

'Encaenia' is the ceremony at which the University of Oxford awards honorary degrees to distinguished men and women and commemorates its benefactors. It is held annually on the Wednesday of ninth week during Trinity Term.

Dates of Encaenia:

- Wednesday, 23 June 2010
- Wednesday, 22 June 2011

Encaenia is a Greek word for a festival of renewal; in St John's gospel it is traditionally translated 'festival of dedication'. The word corresponds to the term 'Commencement', from the Latin, used in many North American universities for the chief ceremony of the academic year.

The Oxford Encaenia is the surviving part of a more extensive ceremony called 'The Act'. This used to include ambitious musical works, often composed for the occasion, and traditional features such as a satirical speech, often scurrilous and sometimes scandalous, by an anonymous speaker known as Terrae Filius, 'Son of the Earth'. The Act was originally held in St Mary's Church, a setting many people thought unsuitable. Such feeling prompted its move in 1670 to the Sheldonian Theatre.

By 1760 the ceremony had assumed a form much like today. It was largely reshaped by the will of Nathaniel, Lord Crewe (1633-1721), successively Rector of Lincoln

College, Bishop of Oxford and Bishop of Durham, who left money to the University for this and other purposes.

On the morning of the ceremony, the Heads of Colleges, university dignitaries and the honorands assemble, in full academic dress, in one of the colleges, where they enjoy Lord Crewe's benefaction of peaches, strawberries and champagne. They then walk in procession to the Sheldonian Theatre on Broad Street. The University dignitaries enter the theatre in procession; those who are to receive honorary degrees wait in the Divinity School where they sign their names in the Honorary Degrees Book. They are then escorted into the theatre by the bedels. Once the proceedings have been opened by the Chancellor, or in his absence by the Vice-Chancellor, each honorand is introduced by the Public Orator with a speech in Latin and admitted to his or her new degree by the Chancellor. The Orator then delivers the Creweian Oration on the events of the past year and in commemoration of the University's benefactors. In alternate years the Professor of Poetry delivers the second part of this speech.

Varsity Twenty20 Match

Charles Russell Varsity Twenty20 Cricket

The inaugural Varsity Twenty20 match held on Friday 6th June marked another milestone as the game was incorporated into Oxbridge's ancient Varsity tradition for the first time. Preceding the four and one-day Varsities, the Twenty20 match will serve as a great chance to see the form of the university's men ahead of their Lord's one-day game. In welcoming this exciting new development to the Parks Oxford University's Sports Federation are innovating in a way that should raise the profile of our top-class cricket program and provide a fabulous day out for spectators – one that

we hope will become a fixture in your diaries for years to come. Charles Russell LLP are the generous sponsors of the event and they are suitably supportive of and excited about the event's inclusion in the prestigious Varsity calendar.

The inaugural game was accessible to cricket fans and Oxford alumni around the world thanks to the live internet video streaming of the match on www.cricketintheparks.org.uk – M3U.com arranged the webcast and BBC radio commentator Ralph Dellor covered the match. In addition to following the fortunes of captain Oli Sadler's men, viewers both live and online witnessed the MCC trial of the revolutionary new pink ball, developed to combat some of the visibility problems of the deteriorating white ball and currently on test at several hand-picked fixtures – yet another first for Oxford and the Parks.