



**Name:** Beth Murray

**College:** Jesus

**Degree:** Chemistry

**Years of Study:** 2013-2017



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### **Early Days**

Before coming to Oxford, Beth was new to the world of racing herself having spent her childhood focusing on other sports.

*“I never ran competitively before starting Oxford, netball was my main sport at school. My sister did a lot of cross country so I spent many weekends watching in a muddy field. I actually spent some time working for Athleticos website, making all their cross country videos!”*

Upon reaching sixth form, Beth began to run for general fitness, and entered the great north run to raise money for charity. During this time however, she hadn’t yet engaged in the structured training that she would encounter at university.

### **Joining OUCCC**

When Beth began her studies at Oxford, she had to make a decision about what sport would be most accessible to her during her busy lab schedule.

*“I joined OUCCC as a fresher because I wanted to be part of a sports team at Uni. I thought netball would be hard to commit to alongside my Chemistry labs. One of the things that drew me to OUCCC was the fact that everyone could be part of the team and compete at Varsity. Throughout my 4 years I was able to move my way up from MOB match to Seconds, to Blues”.*

Very quickly, Beth felt at home within the club.

*“Everyone was super welcoming when I joined. I remember doing my first club long run at the end of freshers week, splashing through Port Meadow in the rain and immediately making friends (some of whom I’m still close with today). One of my favourite routes in Oxford remains Port Meadow’s nature reserve- I have lots of good memories on that loop”.*

It was through OUCCC that Beth was introduced to her first structured training plan, which was executed alongside other members throughout the week.

*“A typical week normally involved Exeter-Hertford (EH) sessions on a Tuesday, Uni Parks tempos on a Thursday and South Park hills on a Saturday. We’d do a club run on Wednesdays from the Rad Cam (often a classic Marston Ferry loop) and long run on Sunday (Shotover, Wytham or Boars Hill).”*

Today, the weekly structure has changed somewhat, with key sessions taking place on Wednesdays and Saturdays, with drills and speed on a Monday. However, weekly club runs beginning from the Rad Cam remain a core part of OUCCC and a great place to meet fellow runners.

*“I was lucky to train with so many great athletes while I was at Oxford. Particular sessions that stick in my mind are flying around EH with Sophia Saller in preparation for Varsity. I had 3 coaches whilst at Oxford: Jenny Harris, Eric Shirley and Kyle Bennett. In my first year I had just started running so didn’t have too many interactions with Jenny. When Eric joined however he got really heavily involved in the club and really helped me improve. By the time Kyle joined I was in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year and his coaching helped me make the jump to the Blues team”.*

Beth’s journey at OUCCC is one of progression during her time at Oxford, joining the university as a beginner, and leaving as an experienced athlete. For many athletes like Beth, OUCCC is a welcoming space that allows individuals to develop their running at their own pace, at a unique starting point for each athlete that joins the club.

### **OUCCC Life**

*“While I was at Oxford OUCCC / OUAC was definitely a key part of my social life. We’d regularly do women’s coffee at Combibos on a Friday morning before lectures where they did incredible pancakes for breakfast and then we’d end up in Vinnies for lunch. I have great memories of my favourite training camp at Rydal Hall in 2015, where we had incredible sunny weather (unheard of in the Lake District!) and enjoyed some beautiful runs with some dips in the lake after”.*



*Training Camp at Rydal Hall, 2015*

For many, the social hub of OUCCC is a source of friendships whilst at university, but for Beth, like others, the enduring community for created lasting friendships even after leaving Oxford.

*“Most of my closest friends today are people I met through OUCCC. Some of us didn’t actually overlap whilst at Oxford, but have met through connections to the club since then. I also met my boyfriend, Alex, through OUCCC so that’s definitely a key relationship that came from the club!”*



*OUCCC friendships continuing on in 2025, “The Cowley Club” racing in Mallorca*

As Beth’s time at Oxford went on, she became more and more involved in the club, going on to become the sixth female Club Captain of OUCCC.

*“I spent 3 years on the committee first as MOB Match Captain, then Club Captain, and finally became Teddy Hall Relays organiser. As the MOB Match captain I wanted to get a strong team out for an away match and encourage as many as women to be part of the club as possible. Unfortunately we lost that year but we did manage to build a strong culture in the club which was followed up by a win the next year!*

*As club captain I wanted to continue this aim and we did manage to bring back the overall Varsity trophy to Oxford! As captain it was great to get to know everyone in the club and be able to shape the way we did things. As Teddy Hall Relays Rep the following year, it was great to be able to organise a successful relay and raise a chunk of money for the club. A key part of the job was organising cuppers where we introduced trophies for the first time (hopefully these are still in use today?!).”*

We are glad to say they are!!

### **Racing**

The big competitions on the OUCCC racing calendar were, and still remain, the Varsity Matches and BUCS. Beth, having raced in all the teams during her time at Oxford, recalls her final and favourite Varsity Match, where the 2016 Oxford Women’s team brought home the first Women’s Blues Victory since 2011.

*“My favourite Varsity match was my last one in 2016 where we managed to win. Pre-race we had a team dinner one evening and a nail painting session, Helene really didn’t want to paint her nails and then panicked ‘what if we don’t win because I haven’t painted my nails?’. My preparation was slightly different to normal because I’d actually done the Irish trials for Euro Cross the weekend*

*before and secured my spot in the U23 team. I managed to convince the team manager that I would treat it as a session 'it's just this low key race between two universities' so I had the green light to run. Of course Varsity is never actually low key.*

*Kyle instructed Sophia, Dani and I to race together and that's what we did, passing the windmill in sync with each other in the top 3 positions with Lizzy from Cambridge just behind. I remember coming out of the bushes with the 3 of us in 1,2,3 and Caspar telling us we mathematically couldn't lose (there were only 7 in the women's teams at the time, so it was 5 to score). It was the first time the Oxford women had won for quite a few years and a really special day".*



*Beth, Sophia and Dani running past the Windmill*



*The winning Women's Blues Team, Oxford, 2016*

The annual BUCS trip was of course also part of the OUCCC adventures, with Beth travelling to destinations of Stirling, Brighton, Gloucester and Sheffield during her four years. She recalls bringing increasing numbers of athletes to the competition year on year, and always having a great time for the occasion.

*“Stirling was a bit of an epic, we got the coach up on Friday evening but stayed south of the border then had to get up early to drive the rest of the way. The course in Brighton was really tough with lots of hill and the after party was in a club on the beach which was pretty cool. Gloucester was basically just flooded football pitches so was incredibly muddy. The highlight of that after party was probably Jonny Davies getting kicked out of the club (lowlight was Luke losing his coat and blazer). I just about managed to improve my position each year at BUCS which was fun but we never quite managed to get a competitive women’s team fighting for medals while I was there. A key BUCS tradition that happened every year was Will Christofi always working hard on the bus with his trusty ruler there to underline all the titles .... and then him refusing to get involved with the after party”.*



The Oxford team at BUCS

### **Life after Oxford**

*“Post Uni I moved to London and joined Thames Hare and Hounds like many other Oxbridge runners. It’s been really fun competing with old teammates and have some of my Cambridge rivals turn into teammates. I train with the Cottage relocated group in Battersea Park which has allowed me to keep training with lots of talented women. I’m now captain of TH&H which has been really fun and in some ways similar to being captain of OUCCC, it’s just Belgrave are our rivals instead of Cambridge!”*

*In terms of my job, I went into strategy consulting as a grad and then moved into product management. I’m now the Head of Product for loans at a fintech which I enjoy. I studied Chemistry at university but haven’t used much of that post-uni other than putting my lab skills to use when baking!”*



Beth as Thames Hare and Hounds Club Captain, as part of the bronze medal winning team 2025, including OUCCC Alumni Lizzy Apsley and Lauren Major