**Wycliffe Big Head**

Despite uncertainty over windy conditions, last Saturday Winchester College Boat Club made the trek to Gloucester to compete in the Wycliffe Big Head. All year groups raced down the 4,500m course in a wide variety of boat types. The J14 squad fielded an octo that finished a whole four minutes faster than the second-place boat in their category. This was particularly impressive as they report that one of the rowers managed to catch a crab just as they were passing through a narrow bridge! The crew recovered well thanks to their cox Will Knapman’s great control. Despite the wind, as well as being chased by a university coxed quad, the crew were not nervous at all, which shows real grit. Overall, a really strong performance considering the little racing experience they have.

The J15 eight raced in the morning division, showing a great racing spirit. They looked strong and composed throughout the final straight of the race, ending up in second place out of five. Following them down the course was the J16 coxless quad. Previous racing for this crew has been in the coxed four, a sweep boat. This was the first competitive outing for them in the quad – a sculling boat. It is a vastly different experience moving across the disciplines and the boys handled it very well. Moreover, the coxless quad does not have a steersperson, therefore all credit must go to Jake Crehan Mills, who not only had to row, but also steer through a cable connected to his foot. He did it with both great skill and maturity. Gaining a third place out of a field of seven shows that there is a lot to be excited about moving forward and a great step in their development.

After swapping out a rower and the cox, the senior eight were seriously tested by having to race in both divisions, with the aim of building up habits and showing strength in depth. Set back by having to slow down for 150m before a narrow bridge where they were not allowed to overtake the eight in front, the boys really held on to the power that they had built up through previous land training, maintaining control and cohesion in their rhythm. Although slightly faster in the morning division, the times achieved should bring confidence that they can compete with some very large rowing programmes later in the year, beating several crews and falling within a small time of Radley and Monmouth.

Dom Du Boulay, Captain of Boats