

2002

Girls First Boat (22-2)

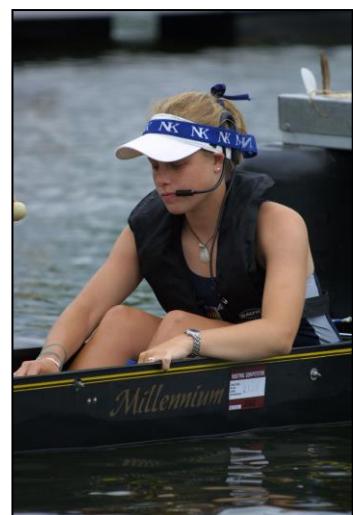
Bow	Megan Allison Ladd '02
2	Austin Elizabeth Phillips '03
3	Sarah Megan Vincent '03
4	Kateryna Chupryna '04
5	Samantha Robin Pitter '03
6	Jacqueline Joy Finkeldey '02
7	Meredith Leigh Danberg-Ficarelli '03
Stroke	Kathleen Elizabeth "Kaki" Alexander '03
Coxswain	Kate Elizabeth Hobart '02 (Captain)



First Boat Shell	Vespoli <i>Millennium</i> , borrowed from Trinity College
Coach	Daniel Stewart Tucker
Assistant Coach	Kathryn Farrington Sullivan '94
Assistant Coach	Lisa Helgerson

Kent 13 seconds ahead of Phillips Academy Andover
First of 6 in St. Andrew's School Invitational (0.86 seconds ahead of Holy Spirit High School)
Kent 5.0 seconds ahead of Phillips Exeter Academy
Kent 22 seconds ahead of Northfield-Mount Hermon
First of 4 in Connecticut Interscholastic Rowing Championships (9.0 seconds ahead of Simsbury High School)
Third of 14 in New England Interscholastic Regatta (4.72 seconds behind St. Paul's School)

William Hartwell Perry, Jr. Bowl: Austin Elizabeth Phillips '03
Mark C. McWhinney Award: Christina E. Giordano '03



First-Year Assistant Coach **Kathryn Farrington Sullivan '94**, referred to as "Sully" by the girls: "Coach Tucker had a great knowledge of rowing, and he had an excellent ability to connect with the girls. He knew how to get the best out of them."

Henley Coxswain and Captain **Kate Elizabeth Hobart '02**: "Coach was so well respected by all of KGBC, and especially by our First Boat. We all felt very lucky to be coached by him and were so thankful for the ways he encouraged our boat's focus, sense of teamwork, work ethic, and the bonds we girls created amongst ourselves along the way. He went along with our antics on the bus as we sang and danced on our way to races rather than resting, and he shrugged off our schoolgirl gossip and storytelling that would sometimes leave him blushing as the only male on the bus."

Coach Tucker: "Every van trip was its own adventure. There was always going to be something funny happening, and I would also say that they were quite humble in their successes, and when things didn't work out, they just got back on the bike, so to speak."

Kate: "We were doing really well that season, but we were still not really a presence in the boathouse. Back in 2002, we didn't yet have the Rowing Center with its separate girls' locker room, and there was a lot of good-natured ribbing back and forth about the boys *owning* the basement in the boathouse – it was a pit, with maybe a couple of couches, but it was very much *boys'* territory – while we didn't have anywhere to call our own. We were allowed to do our erg practices down there while we were all waiting for the ice on the river to break and maybe a couple of times later in the season, but otherwise it was just for the boys.

"Girls, go in, do your thing . . . and get back upstairs!"

"The room had very much of a clubhouse feel, and we were not members of the club. It was *sort of* a cool place, but it actually was pretty gross. Cold and dark and dank. I suspect the smell still lingers today. [It does.]"

Coach Tucker: "After a few outings that spring, it became clear that our newest Vespoli, the **Metta Ann Rehnberg '94**, could not float these girls, and we had heard of other programs who were having similar experiences with too-small shells. So for most of the 2002 season, including NEIRA and Henley Women's Regatta, we borrowed a midweight Vespoli from Trinity College — hence the yellow piping visible in the photos."

Sully: "When I first started, it seemed to me the boys were not great to the girls. There was a lot of fat shaming concerning the new boat. I thought it was a bummer. The girls endured a lot, but they were awesome and didn't let it bother them."

Henley stroke-oar **Kathleen Elizabeth Alexander '03**: "The only thing I remember is there was some teasing from the Boys First Boat when we had to get a bigger boat. That was the year of Alex Glass, Starling Childs, and David James, who ended up at Cornell when I was there. We were all friendly. We certainly might not always have been the girls that they wanted to *date*, but . . ."

"There was teasing, but any time they got too rough on us, we figured it was just because they were jealous because we had a better record than they did."

"I sort of got the sense that Mr. Tucker and Coach Houston both did a really good job of managing the programs so that all of us were able to accomplish what we were there to do, which was to *row*."

Kate: "I remember our First Boats being comprised of many solid friendships spanning the KGBC / KSBC divide, regularly spending time with each other at meals and after study halls on weeknights. There was perhaps some good-natured ribbing from the Boys First Boat, but I'm sure it hardly went unreturned."

"You may also know that I have since gone on to marry my counterpart from KSBC, Alex Glass, Co-Captain of the 2002 KSBC Crew."

Waterbury Republican-American “Undefeated and seeded No. 1 going into the New Englands, Kent lost to a fast St. Paul’s boat from New Hampshire and by one-half of a second to Exeter, which finished second.”

By the end of the season, the Third Boat had lost only to T. C. Williams at St. Andrews and to Exeter at NEIRA, the Second Boat was undefeated, and the First Boat lost only to St. Paul’s and Exeter at NEIRA. Their combined record was 63-4, a 93.7% success rate!

Tucker: “The girls hadn’t really been challenged all season, with our toughest races coming in the first three weeks. At New Englands, St. Paul’s and Exeter pushed us more than we’d been used to. It was a learning experience.”

Kate: “Meredith Ficarelli would go on to row at UVA, and I became a men’s coxswain at George Washington, so I would race against a lot of our former KSBC counterparts.

“We were such a tight boat. We bickered like the best of them, but at the end of the day, we were really, really close.”

Kate Hobart was also co-captain of the ice hockey team.

2002 Henley Women’s Regatta



Kate: “I think KSBC might have been a bit of a mystery to KGBC. The boys had a long history of Henley trips, which up to that point had never been considered an option for the girls.”

Indeed, there was no event for girls at Henley Royal Regatta, but **Henley Women’s Regatta**, held annually two weeks before HRR, was in its fifteenth year by 2002.

Kaki: “Henley wasn’t something that had been on our radar before Coach Tucker brought it up that season, but by the time we were preparing for NEIRA I remember thinking, ‘If we don’t win in Worcester, we’re not going to get to go to Henley.’”

“For a lot of us, it came as a huge surprise when we didn’t win, but we got to go anyway.”

Kent News: “The girls didn’t have an ideal race at the NEIRA, and were plagued with two injuries during the preparation for it. A healthy lineup, coupled with a month more training, should have the girls in top condition for Henley.”

Coach Tucker: “Our crew had a feeling it didn’t row a great race. Now, with the opportunity to row at Henley, it feels it has something of a point to prove. This will be the first time the Kent Girls Crew has gone to Henley, and it will establish an important precedent. It will mean great things, not only for this crew, but for future crews as well.”

Theresa Mary Casey ’02 took over the bow-seat at Henley for the aged-out **Megan Allison Ladd ’02**, who would row a pair with **Elizabeth Hollister Guernsey ’02**.

After Prize Day, the crew spent a week in Cambridge, Massachusetts staying with the family of 7-oar Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli and rowing out of the Radcliffe Boathouse at Harvard as a guest of Cécile Tucker (see 2000) before flying to London.

Coach Tucker: “When we got to England, our shell was still on the Vespoli trailer on the dock in Liverpool, and so we were without our boat for the



Ladd, Guernsey

first four days, including our races at Reading Amateur Regatta.

"We ended up borrowing Groton School's eight to train in between their practices. Lawrenceville was not yet there, but their boat was, so we were able to use the Lawrenceville eight to race in at Reading. Both of them were Resolutes, so we had a lot to learn in a hurry because we only used Vespolis at home."

"Thank goodness for Groton coach **Andy Anderson** [see 1971], for how much he helped us and for the graciousness of his crew, something that to me is emblematic of the rowing community. All this is characteristic of what the sport is all about, and the girls realized what a kind and generous act this was in a time of real stress for them."

"And many thanks as well to Lawrenceville coach **Mark Schoeffel**."

This was **Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli's** third trip to Henley (see 2001 Boys).

Meredith: "Some of my best memories are of walking through the countryside to get from where we were staying to the regatta course, going to the supermarket to get snacks in the middle of the day, recognizing that supermarkets in the UK are completely different from the States. Cultural challenges and differences . . .

"Mr. Tucker would race his bike along the riverbank to stay in line with us during practice. We were all shocked that he never crashed, considering the speeds that he was getting up to."

"The Lawrenceville boat we were rowing in at Reading was port stroke, so I had to exchange seats with Kaki. I remember the nerves. I had never been in the stroke-seat before, so I remember facing Kate before the Groton race and thinking, 'Well, I sure hope I don't screw this one up.'"

Coach Tucker: "There were a lot of things compromising our preparation for that regatta, including rowing in different seats in a type of boat unfamiliar to us and practicing at midday between Groton's practices. Everything was sort of upside down for several days, and then we had to get into *another* boat and race."

"And by the time we had gotten overseas we had already been on top of each other for a week, and then we were all in one house at Henley, so I can understand if the girls might have felt some additional stress."

At the **Reading Amateur Regatta**, Kent lost badly to Groton in the final for the **Royal Military Academy Challenge Cup** for Junior Eights.

Coach Tucker: "The girls had clearly underperformed and were very disappointed. When they came back to the dock after that race, there was definitely some tension expressing itself."

"But in our debrief, it was kind of, 'All right, let's put that behind us, focus on the controllables and the future, and remember why we are doing this together.'

"We had had a major low point as a group after the Groton race, and I hand it to the girls for getting that out of their system and regrouping. Just 30 minutes later, they became the first US crew ever to win the **James E. Mallard Cup** for Senior Second Eights over City of Oxford in the final."

"After Reading, our boat finally arrived in the trailer park near the HRR finish line, but the only docks near there belonged to Leander Club and to HRR, and we did not have launching rights at either one. The irony of our situation was remarkable. Our boat was finally there, but we *still* could not row it.

"We started thinking about walking our shell down to the Women's Regatta boat racks near the start, well over 2000m away around turns and hedges that seemed impassable carrying an eight. As always, the girls were game for anything, but in addition to the fatigue and possible injury we risked during our taper days, there was substantial risk of damage to the boat."

"In a moment of great goodwill, the Williams College men, who were there early to train for HRR, offered to launch our boat from the Royal Regatta docks and row it down to the women's

docks where we could hop in. It was so good of them to notice that we could use help, and even kinder to offer that solution.”

The Peabody Cup

Bow	Theresa Mary Casey '02
2	Austin Elizabeth Phillips '03
3	Sarah Megan Vincent '03
4	Kateryna Chupryna '04
5	Samantha Robin Pitter '03
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Coxswain	Kate Elizabeth Hobart '02 (Captain)



The Peabody Cup is awarded to the top school / junior eight at Henley Women’s Regatta. The draw was reduced to eight through a time trial for all entries. Lawrenceville, Groton and Kent all made the cut.

Kate: “Getting to the Henley course, after all the grandeur and tradition that had built up in our minds . . . it just all felt so small to me, so *tiny, so tight!*”

“From my perspective, the log booms along the race course were *very* intimidating. Except for Kaki in front of me at stroke, they were the only things in my field of vision, and they were ever present. There really was no room for error.”

“I thought it was really funny when we debriefed after our first brushes on the course and Mr. Tucker said, ‘Kate, you have to keep your microphone low because you don’t want the other boat hearing when you’re going to make your moves.’ That was the first time I had experienced that. Our previous big race was New England on Lake Quinsigamond, which is gigantic, and you can hardly see a boat on the other side of the racecourse, let alone have them hear you.”

In the first round, Kent finished “easily” ahead of **Maidenhead Rowing Club**, located along the Thames a bit downstream of Henley.

Coach Tucker: “Right after our race, I turned my bike around and followed the next race on the schedule which would determine whom we would meet next, either King’s School Worcester

or our good friends from Groton School. I was riding right behind Andy, the Groton coach. Groton immediately took the lead but then seemed to lose its ability to steer, and though they were far ahead, they appeared powerless to avoid taking King's School's lane and were disqualified.

"When their boat was lifted from the water, their skeg was missing.

"Andy went the King's coach, **Nick Maloney**, and said, 'Look, this is a terrible way to lose a race. Would you agree to a rerow?'

"It's a poor way to win a race, too,' Nick agreed. 'Let me think about it and talk with my crew. Give me five minutes.'

"He was back in two. Yes, they were willing to rerow. It was all about honoring the sport.

"There was no rule for breakage in Britain, and the Regatta officials were very concerned about setting a precedent, but they finally agreed to allow the rerow at the end of the schedule.

"Hart Perry was watching the regatta, and he advised me to stay at the course to find out who would win — King's Worcester or Groton — so we could be mentally prepared for our race against them the next morning. No surprise, given the source, that this was very good advice, so I sent the girls back to the house and hung around until after dark.

"In the rerow, Andy's crew again took an immediate lead and moved away to win by more than three lengths. Groton School would be our semi-final opponent."

Kate: "The next morning as I was steering our boat down the course against Groton, I remember making *eye contact* with some of the spectators. *They were so close to us!* Even compared to the Housatonic at home, it felt like such a narrow river, which I wasn't prepared for. On the other hand, I hadn't felt comfortable on the Henley course until that race. Having such a tight battle against Groton made everything not feel foreign anymore. It was like we knew what we were doing. It all became very familiar at that point."



Meredith: "While we were racing Groton, and we were neck and neck and had no idea who was ahead, I caught like a mini-crab over the finish line and could have sworn that I was going to be the reason why we lost by a millisecond. The two minutes we waited for the result seemed like forever. Thankfully, when the news came it was good, but if we had lost, it would have been my fault."

The official call: Kent over Groton by 3 feet.

Kate, describing their final, held just two hours and 45 minutes later: “We were up against **Headington School Oxford Boat Club**, the British National Schools champion. We were so aware of why we were there. This was it, our one and only chance. We were the first team of Kent girl rowers to get to Henley, and we were determined to win.

“Believe me, we were *psyched!*”

“Headington took the lead in the first half and led by three or four seats at about 600m. Then we started really whaling. We didn’t stop, and in the end they couldn’t keep up with us.”

Kent versus Headington (first race shown): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTK-a4Mvu6Q>

Coach Tucker. “I remember the girls being behind Headington, and they just kept after it. It was really a kind of Harvard confidence. Harry Parker [Tucker’s coach at Harvard] would almost never practice the start. It was almost like an afterthought for him. After months, perhaps years, of training, it was during the body of the race that you just had to have the strength and the stamina and the determination and the commitment . . . and then you would prevail.

“And that’s how we raced that day. I really give our girls all the credit because we had done a lot of miles on the Housatonic without much fanfare, and it paid off because they decided to make it pay off. It was a classic.”

The final margin was one length in favor of Kent.



Above: the 2019 Henley Crew, below: the 2002 Henley Crew on the balcony at “Mariners” (see 1994)

Behind: Tucker, Danberg-Ficarelli, Guernsey, Chupryna, Ladd, Helgerson

At rail: Vincent, Finkeldey, Phillips, Casey, Hobart, Alexander, Pitter,

Kaki: "We had all seen the old, historic photos of boys teams in their Henley blazers, but being the first Kent Girls Crew to go to Henley, no one had thought of blazers in our original plan. Only later did we realize that they were important.

"Some of the mothers got together to arrange for blazers, which were male-fit, and skirts that were made out of almost a sail material. It was lucky that we were a good crew and had the confidence not to care what we looked like.

"In 2019, Austin Phillips would send me a photo of that year's crew, beautiful in their white dresses and fitted, feminine blazers in contrast to our home-made outfits. They looked like Grecian goddesses, but I remembered how happy we had been that we had had the Henley experience and how much fun we had together. We were such a silly group."

Coach Tucker: "The 2002 Henley trip was successful because the girls worked well together and stayed focused. Everyone in the Boat Club mattered. They were hardworking, humble, kind, and resilient, and they had an excellent sense of humor. Practices, road trips, and race days saw effort, support, bonding, and joy that was more than rowing, that went beyond any sport."

Not only was this the first trip to Henley for a Kent Girls Crew, but it was also the first win at Henley for any Kent Crew since 1972 . . . and the last Henley win during the First 100 Years of Kent School Rowing.

The 2002 girls were not gifted their Henley oars after the Regatta, but at the end of Kent Rowing's First Century, a 2002 trophy oar has proudly taken its place alongside the trophy oars representing the five past Boys Henley winners.



After Henley, Coach **Daniel Stewart Tucker** would leave Kent for Boston to join his wife, Cécile, who was coaching the Radcliffe Lightweights.

Coach Tucker: "Somehow the girls had figured out that my wife was expecting, so after the final at Henley they basically put together a Father's Day celebration for me before we left.

"For years I kept a collection of Father's Day cards from before I was a father.

"It was a privilege for me to be part of the Kent Rowing community even for a short time. The extraordinary traditions of simplicity of life, directness of purpose, and self-reliance were all evident in these impressive young women."



Tucker, Casey, Phillips, Vincent, Chupryna, Pitter, Finkeldey, Danberg-Ficarelli, Alexander, Hobart, Helgerson

Kate: “We all learned so much from Coach Tucker and were so sad to see him leave. We would not have gone to Henley had it not been for him. During the following fall, I’m sure the 2002 Henley crew were honored in chapel services, but I feel bad that Mr. Tucker was not there to savor the success he had achieved with our crew.”

Daniel Stewart Tucker would go on to teach and coach at Middlesex and Dexter Southfield Schools, coaching until 2014 and teaching until 2018. At the end of Kent’s First 100 Years, he was Assistant Head of School at Dexter Southfield.

Kaki: “One last Henley story, maybe the low point of the trip for me. After the races, we were invited to dinner at Leander Club, and we were told beforehand what a remarkable history the club had and what a *huge* deal this was. We had a delicious dinner surrounded by historic trophies and oars, wearing our Henley blazers and white sail skirts and talking about where we were and who’d been there before us and who would follow us . . . when all of a sudden I had to jump up from the table and run out of the club.

“I vomited all over the parking lot . . .

“Here we had been prepped for this special evening, told to be on our very best behavior, our very best manners, and now my teammates just remember it as the night that Kaki threw up at Leander Club.”