

= The Boat Race 1856 =

The 13th Boat Race took place on the River Thames on 15 March 1856 . Typically held annually , the event is a side @-@ by @-@ side rowing race between crews from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge . The race , the second to be held on the ebb tide , was won by Cambridge who beat Oxford by half a length .

= = Background = =

The Boat Race is a side @-@ by @-@ side rowing competition between the University of Oxford (sometimes referred to as the " Dark Blues ") and the University of Cambridge (sometimes referred to as the " Light Blues ") . The race was first held in 1829 , and since 1845 has taken place on the 4 @. @ 2 @-@ mile (6 @. @ 8 km) Championship Course on the River Thames in southwest London . It was the second race to be held on the ebb tide , the first time since the 1846 race , from Barker 's Rails to Putney , approximately 1 @, @ 200 yards (1 @, @ 097 m) longer than the conventional course . Oxford went into the race as reigning champions , having defeated Cambridge by seven lengths in the previous race held in 1854 . Cambridge led overall with seven wins to Oxford 's five .

No Boat Race took place in 1855 ? severe frost had caused both the Thames (from Oxford to Henley) and the River Cam to freeze , and heavy snow curtailed efforts to practice for the race . Instead the universities faced each other at the Henley Royal Regatta where Cambridge won the Grand Challenge Cup . Despite the victory , Cambridge agreed that they should propose the challenge to Oxford and did so during the October term ; it was duly accepted . Both crews raced in boats constructed by Searle . The umpire for the race was W. G. Rich , the former Cambridge University Boat Club president who had rowed in both the March and December races of 1849 . The starter was Edward Searle .

= = Crews = =

The Cambridge crew weighed an average of 11 st 9 @. @ 375 lb (73 @. @ 9 kg) , 8 @. @ 75 pounds (4 @. @ 0 kg) per rower more than their opponents . None of the competitors had taken part in a previous Boat Race .

= = Race = =

Cambridge won the toss and elected to start from the Middlesex station , handing the Surrey side of the river to Oxford . The race commenced shortly after 11am with Oxford taking an early lead . Cambridge 's number six , M 'Cormick , caught a wave with his oar by the Ship pub and lost his seat , allowing Oxford to extend their lead . After recovering , Cambridge made a substantial push and passed Oxford to hold a small advantage , to hold a half @-@ a @-@ length by Barnes Bridge . Although they nearly increased their lead to a length , the Light Blues encountered a barge at Corney Reach which caused them to change course and lose ground , enabling Oxford to draw level once again . The crews exchanged leads with Oxford shooting Hammersmith Bridge with a half @-@ length advantage . Cambridge steered closer to the shore and retook the lead . Despite a late surge from the Dark Blues , Cambridge passed the finish first , winning by half a length in a time of 25 minutes 45 seconds . It was Cambridge 's first win in four attempts and their eighth win overall against Oxford 's five victories .