

= The Boat Race 1881 =

The 38th Boat Race , an annual side @-@ by @-@ side rowing race between crews from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge along the River Thames , took place on 8 April 1881 . In a race umpired by Robert Lewis @-@ Lloyd , Oxford won by a margin of three lengths in a time of 21 minutes 51 seconds taking the overall record to 20 ? 17 in their favour .

= = Background = =

The Boat Race is an annual rowing eight competition between the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge . First held in 1829 , the competition is a 4 @.@ 2 @-@ mile (6 @.@ 8 km) race along The Championship Course on the River Thames in southwest London . The rivalry is a major point of honour between the two universities and followed throughout the United Kingdom and worldwide . Oxford went into the race as reigning champions having won the previous year 's race by three @-@ and @-@ three @-@ quarter lengths , and held the overall lead , with 19 victories to Cambridge 's 17 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) .

Cambridge were coached by Constantine William Benson (who rowed for Cambridge in the 1872 , 1873 and 1875 races) , Charles Gurdon (a Blue four times from 1876 to 1879) , Thomas Edmund Hockin (also rowed four times from 1876 to 1879) and Edward Henry Prest (who represented Cambridge in the 1878 , 1879 and 1880 races) . Oxford 's coaches were S. D. Darbishire (who rowed for Oxford in the 1868 , 1869 and 1870 races) , William Grenfell (who rowed in 1877 and 1879 , and was non @-@ rowing boat club president in 1879) , H. B. Southwell (a Blue three times from 1878 to 1880) and W. B. Woodgate (who rowed twice , in the 1862 and 1863 races) . The umpire for the race was Robert Lewis @-@ Lloyd (who had rowed for Cambridge four times between 1856 and 1859) and the starter was Edward Searle .

The night before the race , an anniversary dinner was held to belatedly commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the event .

= = Crews = =

The Oxford crew weighed an average of 11 st 11 @.@ 75 lb (75 @.@ 0 kg) , 2 pounds (0 @.@ 9 kg) more than their opponents . Cambridge 's crew included two former Blues , with Humphrey Sandford making his third appearance in the event . Oxford saw five rowers with Boat Race experience return , including J. H. T. Wharton who was rowing for a third time .

= = Race = =

On the day of the race , Oxford 's number six David Edward Brown was ill ? author and rower George Drinkwater suggested that " it was necessary for West [Oxford 's stroke] to nurse him as much as possible . " Oxford won the toss and elected to start from the Middlesex station , handing the Surrey side of the river to Cambridge . In a cold north @-@ easterly wind , the race commenced at 8.24am with the Dark Blues outrating Cambridge and taking an early lead . Taking advantage of the favourable bend in the river , Oxford were half @-@ a @-@ length ahead by the Crab Tree pub .

Cambridge began to reduce the deficit as Oxford decreased their stroke rate , and by Harrods Furniture Depository the crews were nearly level . Although the bend of the river now was in favour of Cambridge , Oxford increased their rating once again and by Hammersmith Bridge held a three @-@ quarter @-@ length lead . They held off spurts from the Light Blues along Chiswick Reach and by Chiswick Eyot were clear . A two @-@ length lead at Barnes Railway Bridge was increased to three by the time Oxford passed the finishing post , winning in a time of 21 minutes 51 seconds . It was Oxford 's second consecutive victory and took the overall record to 20 ? 17 in their favour .