

## = The Boat Race 1861 =

The 18th Boat Race took place on the River Thames on 16 March 1861 . Held annually , The Boat Race is a side @-@ by @-@ side rowing race between crews from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge . The 1861 event , which featured the first ever non @-@ British competitor , suffered numerous interruptions from river traffic . Oxford won by 16 lengths .

## = = 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 . Cambridge went into the race as reigning champions , having defeated Oxford by one length in the previous year 's race and led overall with ten wins to Oxford 's seven .

The challenge to race was sent from Oxford in the October term which was accepted by Cambridge . Both boats were built specifically for the race , Cambridge 's by Searle and Oxford 's by Salter . Oxford were " occasionally looked after " by H. Baxter , who rowed in the 1860 race , and C. G. Lane who represented the Dark Blues in the 1858 and 1859 races . The race was umpired by Joseph William Chitty who had rowed for Oxford twice in 1849 ( in the March and December races ) and the 1852 race .

## = = Crews = =

The Cambridge crew weighed an average of 11 st 4 @. @ 875 lb ( 71 @. @ 9 kg ) , 0 @. @ 875 pounds ( 0 @. @ 4 kg ) per rower more than their Dark Blue opposition . George Morrison returned to the Oxford crew , having rowed in the previous year 's race . Cambridge saw Chaytor , Blake , Coventry and Hall return . The race featured the first non @-@ British rower in the history of the event : William Robertson of Wadham College , Oxford was educated at Geelong Grammar School in Australia before representing the Dark Blues at number four .

## = = Race = =

As a result of strong winds and a large volume of land water running into the river , the race was re @-@ scheduled for 11am . Cambridge won the toss and elected to start from the Middlesex station , handing the Surrey station to Oxford . The starter , Edward Searle , gave the command to start , with neither boat taking an early advantage . By the Star and Garter pub , Cambridge had edged ahead and spurted to take a half @-@ length lead and by the Duke 's Head pub , the Light Blues had moved further in front . A steering error from Gaskell , the Cambridge cox , saw their lead eroded such that Oxford led by Craven Cottage . At the football ground , rough water created by one of the nearby steamboats ( who , according to MacMichael , had " shamefully put her paddle @-@ wheels into motion " ) caused a swell to slow the Oxford boat .

The Dark Blue crew 's rhythm combined with more poor steering from Cambridge allowed Oxford to pull away , three lengths ahead by the Crab Tree and six by Hammersmith Bridge . Further interruption to Cambridge 's passage came from a sailing barge which they forced to steer around , and by Chiswick , they were ten lengths behind . Oxford suffered briefly at the hands of a barge blocking their route but by Barnes Bridge were at least twelve lengths ahead . They passed the flag boat ( indicating the finish of the race ) at the Ship Tavern in a time of 23 minutes 30 seconds , and a lead of 16 lengths . It was the largest winning margin since the 1841 race and would be the first in a series of nine consecutive victories for Oxford .