

## = The Boat Race 1869 =

The 26th Boat Race between crews from the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge took place on the River Thames on 17 March 1869 . Oxford won by three lengths in a time of 20 minutes and 4 seconds . It was their ninth consecutive victory and was , at that point , the fastest time ever recorded in the event .

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

Having lost the last eight Boat Races , the Cambridge University Boat Club president William Anderson wrote to G. Morrison of Balliol College , Oxford , inviting him to coach the trials eights and the University eight . Morrison had rowed in the 1859 , 1860 and 1861 races and had also acted as a non @-@ rowing president for the 1862 race . The decision to engage a member of the opposing university was greeted with consternation and considered by many Cantabrigians as " a disgrace to the Club " . Indeed , five Old Blues refused to row , only William MacMichael agreed to row again . After the usual difficulty to agree arrangements , Cambridge eventually sent the traditional challenge and the date of the race was set for 17 March 1869 . Cambridge arrived at Putney a fortnight beforehand and made several practice rows in variable conditions , the worst of which included heavy snow , three days prior to the race .

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 , while the starter was Edward Searle .

## = = Crews = =

The Oxford crew weighed an average of 12 st 0 @. @ 25 lb ( 76 @. @ 1 kg ) , 2 @. @ 125 pounds ( 1 @. @ 0 kg ) more than their opponents . The Cambridge crew contained three returning Blues , William MacMichael , William Anderson ( for his third Boat Race ) and John Still ( his fourth ) , while Oxford saw the return of five rowers , including their boat club president J. C. Tinné for his third appearance and Frank Willan in his fourth Boat Race .

## = = Race = =

According to The Field , " the weather was not the most agreeable for a boat @-@ race ... a raw wind ... leaden @-@ coloured clouds overhanging the river " . Oxford , who were strong pre @-@ race favourites , won the toss and elected to start from the Middlesex station , handing the Surrey station to Cambridge . Although the Light Blues made the faster start , Oxford soon pulled alongside them and by the London Rowing Club boathouse , held a lead of around 10 feet ( 3 m ) . Cambridge closed the gap but Oxford pulled away again . The lead was exchanged once again and Oxford took the lead at Craven Cottage . Despite erratic steering from Oxford 's cox Darbshire , Oxford held the advantage until the crews shot Hammersmith Bridge , at which point the Light Blues held the lead by one third of a length .

Still in the lead by The Doves pub , Cambridge steered too close to the bank and allowed Oxford to close the gap and passed Chiswick Eyot in the lead , with a half @-@ length advantage by Chiswick Church . The Dark Blues passed under Barnes Bridge with a two @-@ length lead and completed the course , passing the Ship Tavern three lengths clear in a time of 20 minutes 4 seconds . It was their ninth consecutive victory and took the overall record to 16 ? 10 in their favour . The winning time was the fastest ever , beating the previous record set in 1868 by 52 seconds , although some

doubt was cast over the positioning of the finish which was believed to have made the course approximately 100 yards ( 91 m ) shorter . The record would stand until the 1873 race .