

= The Boat Race 1859 =

The 16th Boat Race took place on 15 April 1859 . Held annually , the event is a side @-@ by @-@ side rowing race between crews from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge along the River Thames . In extremely rough conditions , and after Cambridge 's request for a postponement was rejected , Oxford won as Cambridge sank , the first time in the history of the event that one of the crews did not complete the course .

= 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 seven @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths in the previous year 's race . They led overall with nine wins to Oxford 's six .

For the 1859 race , Oxford instigated a new method of crew selection : trial eights . Prior to this , the selection of crew was made on the recommendations of the College boat club captains . Oxford boat club president John Arkell remarked " it will not do to trust too much the judgment (sic) of the College captains . " Following a race between the two trial eights , the final crew was selected eight weeks prior to the race . Cambridge would not introduce this selection method until the 1868 race . Oxford began training on 14 March with an outing almost every day between then and 13 April . Cambridge , on the other hand , arrived in London six days before the race and made just three outings on the Thames . 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 =

Oxford saw the return of three former Blues in Lane , Risley and Arkell , all of whom rowed in the 1858 race . Cambridge welcomed back five former rowers , including Archibald Levin Smith who had rowed in both the 1857 and 1858 races . Oxford 's crew weighed an average of 11 st 8 @. @ 75 lb (73 @. @ 6 kg) , approximately 3 @. @ 25 pounds (1 @. @ 47 kg) per man more than their opponents .

= Race =

The weather was inclement , with the sky overcast by heavy clouds and gale @-@ force winds ; according to a report in The Times , " it would not have been easy to pitch on a more unfavourable day for an eight @-@ oared race " . Although Cambridge were pre @-@ race favourites , they requested a postponement because of the conditions . Oxford refused the request ; Cambridge lost the toss and were handed the Surrey station for the start . The Middlesex station provided Oxford considerable relief from the rough water and wind .

Oxford 's boat was heavily criticised : " it was everything but what was right " , but it became quickly apparent that the Cambridge boat was too light for the conditions , and began taking on water from the moment it left the shore . Oxford made a good start and after the first mile , were two @-@ to @-@ three lengths ahead of Cambridge . Conditions soon worsened : some of the steamboats in the flotilla following the crews looked " bound to capsize " . By Hammersmith Bridge the Cambridge boat was " ankle deep in water " and was sinking under the rough water . Oxford took the opportunity to extend their lead and pulled away from their opponents and the boats following . As Cambridge 's vessel sank opposite The White Hart pub at Mortlake , some crew were picked up by boats , others swam to the shore .

Oxford recorded a winning time of 24 minutes and 4 seconds and took the overall record to 9 ? 7 in

favour of Cambridge . It was the first time in the event 's history that a boat sank .