

= The Boat Race 1840 =

The 4th Boat Race took place on the River Thames on 15 April 1840 . It was the third of the University Boat Races to be held on the Thames , between Westminster Bridge and Putney Bridge . Oxford University Boat Club was formed to assist in the selection of the Oxford crew . Nevertheless , Cambridge won the race by three @-@ quarters of a length to lead the overall record at 3 ? 1 .

= = 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 takes place on the River Thames in southwest London .

Following heavy defeats in the 1836 and 1839 races , and in order to improve the selection of the crew , Oxford University Boat Club was formed on 23 April 1839 , to which anyone at the university could subscribe and which was governed by the various college boat club captains . The initial letter of challenge was delivered to Cambridge from Oxford in February . After considerable discussion , mainly about the restriction of crew selection to undergraduates only , the date of the race , 15 April 1840 , was agreed sixteen days prior to the race itself . The umpires for the race were Calverley Bewicke (for Oxford) and Charles Jasper Selwyn (for Cambridge) , while W. H. Harrison , the Commodore of the Royal Thames Yacht Club , was the referee . The race was to take place on a five @-@ and @-@ three @-@ quarter @-@ mile (9 @.@ 2 km) stretch of the Thames between Westminster Bridge and Putney Bridge .

= = Crews = =

The Oxford crew weighed an average of 11 st 10 @.@ 5 lb (74 @.@ 4 kg) per rower , 2 @.@ 5 pounds (1 @.@ 1 kg) more per man than their opponents . Cambridge saw former Blues Alfred Shadwell and cox Thomas Selby Egan return , while Oxford 's crew also contained two veterans of the race , in Samuel Maberly and R. G. Walls .

= = Race = =

Oxford won the toss and elected to start from the Middlesex side of the river , handing the Surrey side to Cambridge . The race commenced from below Westminster Bridge at 1.30pm , with Edward Searle acting as the starter . With a number of steamers blocking the route , Oxford made a good start and took an early lead . The wake of the steamers caused rough water in which both crews struggled to maintain a consistent rhythm . The lead had extended by the time the crews passed below Vauxhall Bridge and was nearly three lengths by the Spread Eagle pub . At this point Cambridge began to reduce the deficit , but following a warning from Robert Coombes who was steering the umpire 's boat Dolphin , Oxford 's cox Garnett steered across the path of Cambridge . The Light Blues maintained their course and Oxford were forced back again . By the Red House , Cambridge had restored parity and started to pull away . Despite suffering further rough water from the wake of another steamer at Battersea Bridge , Cambridge maintained their lead and passed through the centre arch of Putney Bridge three @-@ quarters of a length ahead of Oxford . The winning time was 29 minutes 3 seconds , and the victory took the overall lead to 3 ? 1 in favour of Cambridge .