The 2003 Boat Race went right to the wire with Oxford crossing the line a foot ahead of Cambridge.
Donald Legget’s dream Cambridge Eight
Donald Legget rowed in the 1962 Goldie crew, and the 1963 and 1964 Cambridge crews. He has coached at CUBC continuously since 1968.

Bow – Tom James
(King’s Chester and Trinity Hall)
“Bow was obvious – it just has to be Tom James.”

2 – David Maxwell
(Eton and Jesus)
Boat Races: 1971, 1972
“David is probably one of the most gifted natural oarsmen I have ever coached and he went on to row at 4 in the GB silver medal eight in 1976.”

3 – John Lecky
(University of British Columbia and Jesus) Boat Races: 1962, 1964
“My old friend, the late John Lecky fills the 3 seat. Hugely talented, John never envisaged defeat and set the Goblets record at Henley in 1964 as well as winning a silver medal for Canada in the eight in Rome in 1960.”

4 – Malcolm Baker
(Brown University and St. Edmund’s) Boat Races: 1993
“So who is at 4? A stream of blues come to mind. I have gone for Malcolm Baker, 6 in the 1993 crew, who rowed for the USA in Banyoles in 1992. Never a pretty oar, Malcolm always raised his game to another level when it came to racing, as Oxford found out.”

5 – Josh West
“And so to 5 where perhaps I have been swayed by his continual improvement since he was ‘found’ in Caius in 1998 and persuaded to start rowing for the CUBC. Yes, it is Josh West who fills that space.”

6 – Boyce Budd
(Yale and 1st and 3rd Trinity) Boat Races: 1962
“My anchorman on stroke-side is Boyce Budd, who rowed 6 in 1962 and was the heaviest man ever to row for Cambridge up to that point at 15st
real handful for Cambridge. That was not the case in Oxford’s fixture against the University of Washington. For the first five minutes, Oxford looked uncomfortable at the higher rates and were led by almost a length. But when down under pressure, Oxford showed just why they will start as the bookies’ favourites when they moved from a length down to head the Huskies in just 20 strokes. In that moment, it was easy to see why coach Sean Bowden could label his crew “one of the strongest Oxford crews in years”.

They are a crew of giants, with most men weighing in at close to 100kg. At 6’9”, the Dutch Olympic single sculler Sjord Hamburger stands out in the five seat, while the outstanding Kiwi giant George Bridgewater, who won an Olympic pairs bronze in 2008, sits at seven. The strength of the boat is such that the President, Colin Smith, who stroked the British pairs bronze in 2008, sits at seven. Bowden, whose challenge has been to mould his two seat, with the Croatian Olympic sculler, Ante Groshong, he is potentially the better cox. And whichever station she ends up on, Dowbiggin will be strongly backed up by a group of three talented young British rowers anxious to show they can avenge last year’s defeat. In winning the Stewards Challenge Cup last year, Henry Pelly, Pete Marsland and Tom Ransley showed they have the X-factor. Their ability to deliver will be crucial to the outcome of this race.

That line-up gives the Cambridge cox Rebecca Dowbiggin great confidence and the experience of the 25-year-old double-blue cox could prove the Light Blues’ trump card. Head to head against the American rookie Colin Groshong, she is potentially the better cox. And whichever station she ends up on, Dowbiggin feels confident that she will find the right line and provide the calm, collected calls needed to get the maximum speed out of her crew.

If the race does go all the way, expect the advantage of the Middlesex station to play a key role towards the end of the race. Both crews will handle most conditions with impunity, unless the near sinking conditions of 2006 appear again along Chiswick Eyot when the Surrey station proved a real advantage.

And Nilsson has put a lot of faith in the ability of his new American stroke Silas Stafford and described him as “a real find”. Stafford will be strongly backed up by a group of three talented young British rowers anxious to show they can avenge last year’s defeat. In winning the Stewards Challenge Cup last year, Henry Pelly, Pete Marsland and Tom Ransley showed they have the X-factor. Their ability to deliver will be crucial to the outcome of this race.

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Boat Race squads attract a high level of foreign internationals – a matter of concern, or is it? Former Oxford coach Daniel Topolski assesses the issue

T here have always been non-Brits in the Boat Race - lots of them. The first were Australians - Oxford’s Robertson in 1860 and Warner for Cambridge eight years later. The first American, Peabody rowed for Cambridge in 1873. I remember in my first year at Oxford in 1965 there were four Americans in the stern of the crew.

The same goes for graduates studying for MAs: there’s nothing new there either – and what’s more, graduates don’t always add to the speed of a crew. In my second Boat Race, I was bow in an eight that contained just one undergraduate - and we lost to an all-undergraduate Cambridge crew.

These things go in cycles; but there is a trend that has grown more pronounced in recent years. There is a greater proportion of graduates and ‘foreigners’ rowing in the Boat Race on a regular basis now than there used to be - why? Where are the Brits?

The make-up of the student body at both universities has changed dramatically. Until the 1970s the ratio between male and female undergraduates was ten to one. There were just five women’s colleges at Oxford compared to 35 men’s colleges. Today the student split is close to 50-50 and colleges are all co-educational. Furthermore, the two universities derive greater income from graduates, and especially foreign graduates from outside the Euro zone, than they do from undergraduates. The result is that the male undergraduate population at Oxford and Cambridge has shrunk irreversibly.

"Where are the Brits?"

Consequently, the competition to win a place has intensified and the pressure has grown on undergraduates to focus on their career path rather than indulge outside interests. The job market has little room for the fully rounded Renaissance students of old. Graduates have a degree under their belts and are more secure in their future career paths.

One of the most pressing problems for British athletes is that they are expected to train full time with the national squad during the full four-year Olympiad leading to London 2012. In doing so, decisions have to be made about their priorities in balancing academic and career requirements.

For an international British athlete to apply to study at Oxbridge and try out for the Boat Race is to risk losing funding while possibly being sidelined from the selection process. This policy has not only left the door open to overseas students to fill the gap, but is threatening to undermine a system that has regularly provided up to a third of Britain’s Olympic rowing team. Of the 22 men in the British heavyweight team in Beijing, three of the gold medal four were recent Boat Race athletes and another four won silver. Four more raced for other nations. Under the national selection system the Boat Race will find it harder to help prepare the Olympians of the future.

Post-Olympic years tend to attract particularly strong, highly qualified applicants from different countries, who, having done four years of intensive rowing in their national squads (putting their education on hold to take part in the Olympics) are keen to further their careers academically and take time away from the high-octane blinkered world of international rowing. In the past the Boat Race was seen by non-Brits, especially Europeans, as a purely British affair. That is no longer true.

So the competition for Boat Race seats puts further pressure on British athletes to succeed. There is a potential downside in this for British rowing but artificially limiting the eligibility of overseas students or graduates to participate in the race would be a backward step. Trailling for the Boat Race has always been open to all students and the aim of the two university squads is excellence at the highest level.

Be sure too that academic standards are tighter than ever; there are no easy options. Four of this year’s participants will have been sitting exams for their masters degrees back in Oxford in the week of the race. The ability needed to balance study and rowing, to set priorities in your university life, takes a lot of discipline since the training challenges too have increased exponentially.

While the Boat Race, like all of us, has to adapt to fast-changing times the ingredients that make it special - amateur unpaid student athletes racing for the honour alone, great history, a worldwide audience and the fact that it’s always the same two crews in the final - remain the same. The driving motivation, as it has always been, is to be the best they can be and to win their struggle against the old enemy. That is what makes it one of the greatest sporting events of the year.


Earlier this season our squad responded to an article in Cherwell, an Oxford student newspaper, titled 'True Blues or Mercenaries?'. We were forced to defend accusations that postgraduate OUBC members were given easy entrance into Oxford, flexible work deadlines and lenient exam marking.

We reminded them that we are students first and athletes second. Rowing comes out of our personal time and completing an Oxbridge degree and an international-level rowing programme at the same time is no small achievement.

The Boat Race is often described as a ‘private match between students, enjoyed by the public’. Although some call for exclusively British undergraduate crews or to transform Oxbridge into a development centre for British rowing talent, the culture of the race will always be determined by the two universities themselves. Oxford and Cambridge are international universities, who attract the best and brightest. This is true for the classroom and the rowing squad.

Spectators are drawn to heroic battles between the best athletes in the world. To limit the race to British undergraduates would remove that vibe, in the same way that limiting the Premier League to British players would reduce its reputation as the greatest league in the world.

By showcasing the sport on TV and inspiring many to begin rowing, perhaps the modern, multicultural Boat Race does more to generate British rowing talent than expected. And at OUBC young British undergraduates are free to train with, and learn from, Olympians.

Mike Valli is representing Oxford in Isis later this month. You can read his latest Boat Race column on www.ara-rowing.org/boat-race
Sitting in his study at University of London’s Royal Holloway, Boris Rankov, Professor of Ancient History, is under no illusions about what it takes to umpire the Boat Race. An Oxford blue, Rankov has been in the winning crew a record six times and has umpired the race twice already.

“Umpiring the Boat Race is different from any other rowing event,” he explains. “It’s a side by side race for two crews that goes on for 20 minutes or so and is watched by millions of people.”

“It’s neither a normal regatta where crews compete, in general, for less than eight minutes, nor a head race. The course is not buoyed, unlike international events, Henley and most other domestic regattas and you are the sole judge of where the crews should be.”

A qualified umpire since 1996, multi-lane endorsed in 1999, Rankov became an international FISA umpire in 2002 and is one of the eight race umpires at Henley Royal Regatta. But umpiring his first Boat Race in 2003 is ‘etched on his forehead’.

“It’s the hardest I’ve ever had to work in an umpiring situation,” he reveals.

“I knew I was going to wave a flag at some stage but it was non-stop as the crews were so evenly matched – I really had to concentrate from start to finish.”

In a race that saw the lead exchanged three times, when the crews finally crossed the line, they were so close it was unclear who had won. Rankov immediately liaised with the finish judge who confirmed that Oxford had in fact clinched it – by a foot – the narrowest margin ever.

“Those 30 seconds felt like a lifetime,” remembers Rankov, “not just for me but for the crews and media as well.”

The 2005 race was easier. “The crews were determined to bash the hell out of each other over the first part of the course but as Oxford pulled away at Chiswick Eyot I turned from umpire to spectator – but concentrating to the very end.”

As the 2009 race umpire, Rankov presided over the Trial Eight races for Oxford and Cambridge in December. Both demanded his full attention with the drama in Cambridge’s race continuing even after the finish line. Crews ‘Looks’ and ‘Personality’ clashed after Hammersmith Bridge, forcing the history professor to restart the race. ‘Looks’ went on to cross the line first, but Rankov decided to award the race to ‘Personality’.

“At the clash, ‘Looks’ were definitely in the wrong place,” he explains. “In a proper Boat Race I would have red flagged it right there but agreed with the coaches to stop it and restart because it was a trials race.”

The role of a Boat Race umpire is clearly not for the faint-hearted. In 2002, an umpires’ panel was created with six blues, three from each university, to share the load. Each member is involved in the race build-up with discussions with the crews, coxes and coaches, pre-race outings and activities on the big day, including setting the stakeboats, aligning and judging at the finish. The panel works as a team to ensure a consistent approach to all aspects of umpiring the race.

As the clock strikes 4pm on Sunday March 29, the 2009 Boat Race may well be decided.

What would be the best outcome for Rankov?

“If I’m not mentioned on the TV there and then or in the newspapers the next day then it’s been fine,” he replies.

“It’s the hardest I’ve ever had to work in an umpiring situation”
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No longer the maverick

If you want to learn something about what it takes to become a Boat Race winning cox, few can be better to talk to than Oxford’s Nick Brodie, says Ross Furlong

The victory of Brodie’s crew last year marked the triumphant end of a turbulent personal Boat Race journey in which he had lost three times (twice in Isis) and was dramatically demoted from the top seat 24 hours before the 2006 race. In 2008, Brodie also became the first coxswain since 1972 to be elected boat club president.

Trust is a word that keeps coming up during the course of our conversation: the need for trust between the cox and the crew and between the cox and the coach. “That is the number one selection criteria for coxes,” says Brodie. “You’ve got to have eight guys that trust you. They don’t want to be sitting on the start line thinking ‘is the guy with the rudder going to get us over the finish line cleanly?’.”

Asked by his crew mates in the wake of their 2007 defeat to stand for OUBC president, it’s clear Brodie had won that trust, both on and off the water, but he’ll readily confess it was not always thus.

“I originally thought a cox should be very arrogant”

Brodie admits that, despite having won practically everything there was to win as a junior, his experience of aggressive six lane rowing was not what was required for the Boat Race. “It took a long time to realise that. I originally thought a cox should be very arrogant, very loud, someone who jokes around a bit.”

His epiphany came in 2006 when Oxford coach Sean Bowden replaced him with Isis cox Seb Pearce 24 hours before the race. “I went back to Sean at the start of the following year and asked what I could do differently to prevent this happening again. I went over some steering issues with Dan Topolski on the Boat Race course and read articles on the personality profiles of fighter pilots and other people operating in high stress environments to learn how they approached it.”

On Bowden’s recommendation, Brodie also took a step back from the crew, listening to his iPod on the mini-bus rather than getting involved in crew banter. “You’ve almost got to create this presence about yourself, for me so much of the Boat Race comes off the water and the impression you build of yourself.”

This new approach also helped with his role as OUBC President. Amongst Brodie’s team building initiatives was to foster more of a squad culture between the Isis and Blue boat which culminated in both crews leaping onto the podium together last year.

Currently on a six month placement with sponsors Xchanging, Brodie is now involved in a different type of team building role in graduate recruitment. This includes attracting CVs of some of the Boat Race oarsmen who he says make good recruits, as many of the qualities you need to be a good rower work in the corporate environment too.

For Brodie personally it’s clear that the Boat Race experience and, in particular 2006, runs a bit deeper than an education on how to become a winning cox or a successful team player in the corporate environment: “I always say that was the best thing that happened to me, it was a huge life lesson getting dropped that year.”
The Amateur Rowing Association is about to launch several new programmes designed to increase the number of people who take part in rowing by 10,000 over the next four years. To help us meet our challenging and exciting targets we’re looking for two highly motivated individuals to join our National team.

The main focus of this programme will be to place stable rowing boats in rowing clubs throughout the country, to encourage more people to learn to row and to create a whole new programme of rowing activities to suit the lifestyles of those who may not want, or be able, to commit to regular training and competition.

Both of these new positions are based at our ARA Head Office in Hammersmith but will involve travel to clubs in the scheme. We are looking for individuals who can work well as a member of our team but also independently, they should be able to motivate, support and inspire others, and have a proven record of excellent administrative, communication and IT skills.

Further details and a job description are available from pippa.randolph@ara-rowing.org

Closing date for applications is Thursday 16th April 2009. Interviews will be held late April/May.

The ARA is an equal opportunities employer
The winner of the toss chooses their station – either Surrey (south) or Middlesex (north). The Middlesex crew will try to hold the fastest water in the centre of the stream.

Fulham Football Club
Coxes steer towards the Surrey bend to avoid the slack water of the Fulham flats as they come up to Hammersmith Bridge.

The Mile Post
A traditional timing point – stone memorial to the legendary coach Steve Fairbairn.

Harrods Furniture Depository
The Surrey bend favours the crew on this side for the next eight or nine minutes.

Hammersmith Bridge
Coxes aim for the second lamp post from the left where the fastest stream lies.

St Paul’s School
As the river straightens, the Surrey crew knows that its advantage is about to run out.

Chiswick Eyot
The deepest – and fastest – water is halfway between the Eyot and the Surrey side. As they leave the Eyot, the boats approach the windiest part of the course.

Barnes Railway Bridge
Coxes have to navigate through the centre arch which unfolds into a tight bend – a stern test if the crews are abreast.

Finish, Chiswick Bridge
The first crew to pass the markers on the Surrey and Middlesex banks, just before Chiswick Bridge, win the race.

Adapted from Coxing a Tideway Head – visit www.wehorr.org to watch the video.

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### Points of view


**Damian West**

The place I watch from most often is outside the White Hart by Barnes Bridge. You can see quite a lot of the race from there, from the Bandstand round most of the bend towards the finish. You should have a clear idea of who’s going to win by this point as well. It’s also near a pub which is always useful – but most importantly, I used to live just round the corner which meant I could watch the first half on TV and then peg it down the road to watch the second half as the race came past!

**Kieran West**

For me, Boat Race viewing is all about the Putney Embankment. Yes, it’s crowded, but there’s a good flow of people so it doesn’t feel too claustrophobic. It’s easy to get there by underground or bus, and with the Duke’s Head and Bar M, or more options on the Putney High Street or the north end of the bridge, it’s easy to get a drink and meet friends. On the racing side, you see the crews boat – and return, if you wait long enough – the race start and there’s even a large screen across the river so you can see it through to the end.

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**Cambridge**

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**Goldie**

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The Boat Race is about sheer grit. Harsh, unforgiving and ruthless, it’s a primeval animal born to break the human soul. And I’m not talking about the athletes. In order to succeed on the Thames, we need to kick off with a bit of talented raw material – i.e. you.

You see, as Milli Vanilli would no doubt tell you, the truth will always out. So maybe you never were a Blue, but stick up your hand if you know what it’s like to haul an eight along the Tideway when the surf’s up. Remember that Head of the River, when you almost died of hypothermia and your poor hands were more shredded than a Peking duck? You raced the Boat Race course; just the harder and more dangerous route. You have currency to trade, and that’s more than can be said for most bankers these days.

“There’s no admiring glance for knowing who won in 1829”

So when your bit of the pavement becomes prime viewing for a fleeting moment of history, be enthusiastic. You know better than most how much it hurts. Be relieved that this time it’s not you. Talk with quiet, self-deprecating modesty about the blisters you’ve known, and the crabs you’ve caught. You see, any old fool can google a mouthful of spurious Boat Race facts, but experience counts and there’s no admiring glance for knowing who won in 1829. A quick word about dress. Let’s be brutal. Blazers are about as synonymous with Boat Race credibility as St Neots is with sobriety. You might just get away with it if you’re Bluer than a weekend in Prague, but if that’s the case then bluffing’s the last thing on your mind.

My tip: the consummate bluffer will wear Wellingtons. Nothing is more indicative of rightness than your readiness to walk a boat out if called upon in an emergency. Incidentally, if your wellies are muddy you’re certainly members of the new Royal Agricultural College Rowing Club. Welcome to London, boys. Big, isn’t it? Don’t talk to any strangers.

The thing is, even after 180 years of this archaic challenge, the prospect is still utterly magnificent. Don’t be bitter that it’s Oxbridge on the telly yet again. Things have moved on in the lycra age, and the Boat Race is a truly international preserve. You don’t believe me? Come on, even Hugh Laurie’s an American now.

Boat Race bluffing is tricky, and you can’t buy or fake it, writes Dan Scoular

Fancy a flutter on the Boat Race? Well, take heed – Peter Crush spotlights five times when the favourites famously lost

1949: Described as the ‘20th Century Classic’, the race featured two strokes widely believed to have been the best ever – Chris Davidge for Oxford and David Jennens for Cambridge. Oxford chose Middlesex and were one and a half lengths up by the Mile Post. Cambridge, who now took the advantage of the Surrey bend, could only move up to a length behind by Chiswick Steps. Despite the next bend being in Oxford’s favour, Cambridge battled to win by less than one second. By then both crews were enveloped in thick fog. Commentator John Snagge famously uttered: “Oxford are ahead. No, Cambridge are ahead. I don’t know who’s ahead – but it’s either Oxford or Cambridge.”

1952: The race was contested in the most extreme weather in Boat Race history, with underdogs Oxford prevailing in the midst of a snow blizzard to end Cambridge’s run of five victories. Neither crew ever gained more than one length’s advantage. The official verdict was a close one canvas, although in those days boats were bigger and a canvas was six feet.

1987: The famous ‘Oxford Mutiny’ when US Olympic and World Championship oarsmen refused to row when one of them was dropped in favour of Oxford President Donald Macdonald. With six weeks to go a boat largely comprising unprepared reserves went on to take a surprising victory. The win was partly attributed to coach Daniel Topolski’s tactic of getting Oxford to take shelter from the rough water in the middle of the river at the start, ignoring conventional wisdom that centre stream is fastest even if rowing conditions are poor.

2002: Cambridge were the bookies’ favourite and the Light Blues led a closely fought race with only a few hundred metres to go. That was until Cambridge oarsman Sebastian Mayer suddenly collapsed from exhaustion and Oxford rowed through to win by just three-quarters of a length. What also made the victory so sensational was that Oxford won rowing on the outside of the final bend in the river. The last time this happened was in 1952.

2006: Oxford won in terrible weather, yet Cambridge were the strong favourites. But, in the rough rain and choppy water Cambridge had made a tactical decision not to use pumps to remove excess water from their boat. Oxford did and overtook Cambridge to win.
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Martin Cross finds out why Duncan Holland will still be rooting for Cambridge

It’s easy to see why Duncan Holland feels at home as he watches his crews race on the warm, still waters of Lake Ruataniwha in the middle of a scorching Kiwi summer.

In a very real sense, the 55-year-old has come back to his roots. He is passionate about nurturing the young rowers of Avon RC. Yet talk to Holland about his last job – Chief Coach at Cambridge University Boat Club – and it’s apparent that this Hull-born Kiwi still cares deeply about the Light Blues winning this year’s Boat Race.

He might be forgiven for thinking otherwise after his replacement last year by Chris Nilsson – another top Kiwi coach. But Holland has invested too much in the young British rowers who will line up against Oxford on March 29 not to care.

Indeed it was his enlightened policy of developing British talent that has brought exciting new prospects such as Pete Marsland, Henry Pelly and Tom Ransley to the top of the sport.

Perhaps in not renewing his contract, the Light Blue management succumbed to the immediate pressure of the need to win in 2009 – Holland’s record of two losses to one victory was not the stuff that legendary coaches’ CVs are built on.

But while victory was crucial for Holland, the Kiwi was playing a long game, the fruits of which may be more apparent in the next few years.

Nevertheless, as Holland readily admits: “There’s no second in the Boat Race and that feeling of vulnerability when you lose is intense.” He experienced it most keenly in 2006. Then his excellent crew floundered in the North Sea like conditions down Chiswick Eyot.

In 2008 it was there again against a strong Oxford boat.

All that made Holland’s one victory in 2007, with his star-studded crew of internationals, the more sweet. And in many ways, it showed the Kiwi at his best – as a facilitator, or conductor, bringing together the many different skills of his coaching team to get his crew up to a perfect pitch.

“The biggest challenge was putting that crew together, rather than teaching people to row,” explained Holland, who fashioned a winning unit from very different athletes, including a single-minded Olympic champion and “a couple of strong-willed Germans who disagreed on how to row a boat”.

But Holland’s methods of resolving the crucial issues surrounding the selection of the 2007 Cambridge boat have been questioned. In particular, his decision to let author Mark de Rond facilitate crucial crew discussions over the final line-up, rather than run it himself. De Rond’s account of Cambridge’s 2007 Boat Race campaign can be found in his book, The Last Amateurs.

Of the picture painted by de Rond, Holland says: “My memories are not the same as Mark’s. But the criticisms are ones that go right to the core of Holland’s beliefs as to how a coach should work. To get the best out of a crew sometimes it’s necessary for the coach to bury his own ego. And it’s no surprise that Holland answers them vigorously. “It’s my view that too many coaches let their ego get in the way of what they’re doing. I’ve always tried to keep my ego out of my coaching because it’s the athletes who are the important people, not the coaches! Mark was liked and trusted by most of the crew and while I have reasonable skills in that area, then, the crew was better served by being able to use Mark’s business-consultancy expertise.”

Holland admits that his values may grate with the media’s current image of a ‘strong’ coach and says: “To some extent I’m not in tune with the modern world.” But there are many who would be willing to champion his athlete-centred approach.

The Cambridge crew that lines up later this month, with Pete Marsland set to be a key member, will bear the imprint of Chris Nilsson. But part of Holland will line up too. As he explains: “Any athlete you’ve worked with is always your athlete and I’m not claiming the credit for the way that someone like Pete Marsland has developed. But coaching is an intense relationship – every time Pete rows that relationship will be there.”
Whether or not they have any loyalty to Oxford or Cambridge, millions of people have an interest in the Boat Race – once a year they turn up to the Tideway or tune in the television and watch one of the key events of the rowing calendar.

Back in 1829, when the first Oxford versus Cambridge Boat Race took place at Henley, only men were admitted to the universities and other forms of rowing were largely either recreational or a means of earning a living. Rowing as a competitive sport was new. The Boat Race had reached its 79th contest before there was a women’s race between the two universities.

Oxford University Women’s Boat Club (OUWBC) was founded in 1926 and the following spring they challenged Newnham College, Cambridge (CUWBC was not founded until 1941) to a race over half a mile on the Isis. In 1975, the first men’s Lightweight Race was held on the Henley course where it has remained having been joined by the women in 1977 and, from 1984, the Lightweight Women’s Race.

Holding the women’s and lightweights’ races at Henley puts them on the course that is surely the best known and most historically significant stretch of river, but the event lives in the shadow of the men’s race on the Tideway. Is this simply historical, or because it is on television, or the sponsorship, or the presence of international oarsmen? Perhaps it is because women’s sports often seem to play second fiddle to men’s and lightweights to heavyweights.

Within these differences are other factors too. George Blessley, President of the Cambridge University Lightweight Rowing Club (CULRC) says, “The greatest difference between the CUBC and us is that every year we have rowers in our blue boat who have only started rowing as undergraduates. The CUBC is composed largely of experienced university or international rowers who are undertaking graduate studies, whilst CULRC is much more undergraduate-based and the level of experience is that of college or school rowing.”

“The women and lightweights... rely instead on individual club sponsors”

The contrasts between the women’s and lightweight crews with their heavyweight male counterparts are much more than the races themselves. Though they all begin their squad training in September and train equally hard in terms of time on the water and in the gym, the parallels end about there. Money, perhaps inevitably, has much to do with it. The ability to fund coaches, equipment and transport is where the divide is found. Over the last 20 or so years sponsors for the women and lightweights have come and gone – their support has been invaluable but it has never been on the scale that television coverage would have brought. A key difference has been that whilst the Boat Race, as an event, has had a sponsor and jointly the universities display the same business brand, the women and lightweights do not have a similar structure and rely instead on individual club sponsors. This is material as the sponsor feels the highs and lows of the club’s record and has less engagement with the day of the event itself beyond that loyalty. For a short while there was an event sponsor at Henley which provided some further income to the crews but this was not providing full support to the clubs and so did not preclude a club sponsor as well.
“Money, perhaps inevitably, has much to do with it”

typically a week before the Tideway race, is very good and often excellent. The times put down by these crews in the big head races and in matches with other clubs during February are testament to that and thus a credit to coaches and crews alike.

The women’s and lightweights’ crews intend to have paid coaches as the norm now – often young enthusiastic folk seeking to make their mark as a professional coach, often with volunteer support from old members and others. Whether or not these crews are in the shadow of the Boat Race, coaching for Oxford or Cambridge carries with it the prestige associated with two of the world’s leading universities (in fact it can be argued that part of what makes these universities great, and, crucially, keeps them in the general public eye, is the contribution of these sporting events). Much of their hard-fought income goes on coaching, that is the way our sport is gradually moving – ten years ago few Oxbridge colleges had any paid coaches, now most do to one degree or another. The volunteer coach remains important but now rarely dominant.

Lightweights have, of course, that extra dimension to their training. They are a tough bunch. Not for them the big meals in a college hall, following the afternoon outing or evening gym session. More likely back to college or house to carefully weigh out appropriate foods to ensure the maximum energy and minimum fat. Lightweight rowing was added to the World Championships in 1974 for men and 1985 for women, so the arrival of the Oxford and Cambridge races showed that students who were, as FISA put it ‘less statuesque people’ were keen to race each other. Back in the Victorian period they might have been in the Boat Race - the crew weights of that era often contained men who nowadays fit the lightweight range.

As race day approaches, the Boat Race crews are subject to considerable media interest and pressure. The women’s and lightweights’ crews don’t get this – despite many attempts to obtain some television coverage. The best that has happened has been a couple of minutes of the women’s race run a week later in the warm-up on the Tideway. This has led to debates about whether the women should move their race to join the men.

“It would be lovely to race in the same way as the openweight men on the Tideway for the same reasons they benefit from it – sponsorship and publicity etc,” says Galloway. “At the moment, it just isn’t possible.”

Blessley agrees. He points out, “The much longer course would require a complete rethink of making weight both in the race’s rules and strategy. I think that racing the Boat Race course side by side does require a higher level of rowing strategy. I think that racing the Boat Race course – the crew weights of that era often contained men who nowadays fit the lightweight range.

As ITV ditches the Boat Race coverage after this year and the BBC look like taking it back for next to nothing, the role of the media may change. And while millions will be watching the Boat Race later this month, hundreds will also line the Henley towpath to see the ‘other’ races – it’s a great afternoon for the spectator at the home of rowing.

A full Henley Boat Races report will appear in May’s R&R.

Win, win, win!

Rock the Boat is kindly offering the stunning print on the right as a prize to one lucky reader. Just tell us who won the first race between OUWBC and Newnham College, Cambridge in 1927? Email your reply to magazine@ara-rowing.org

One of a range of limited edition prints by Annabel Eyres, this image is available from www.rock-the-boat.co.uk. Mini prints of single sculls, quads and eights are also available in club colours. Contact prints@rock-the-boat.co.uk for more information or call 01293 822 472.

Also in training...

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<th>Two Cities Boat Race – first held 1917</th>
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<tr>
<td>University of Manchester vs University of Salford</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.twocitiesboatace.co.uk">www.twocitiesboatace.co.uk</a></td>
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<td>Race date: Sunday May 10, 2009</td>
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<th>Welsh Boat Race</th>
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<td>University of Cardiff vs University of Swansea</td>
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<td>First held 2006</td>
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<td>Race date: Wednesday April 22, 2009</td>
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<th>University of Edinburgh vs University of Glasgow Boat Race</th>
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<td>First held 1877 – the second oldest varsity race in Britain</td>
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<td>Race date: 1pm on Saturday May 16, 2009</td>
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<td>University of Durham vs University of Newcastle</td>
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<th>The Aberdeen Universities’ Boat Race</th>
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<td>Aberdeen University vs The Robert Gordon University</td>
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<td>Started in 1996</td>
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<th>University of Birmingham vs University of Warwick</th>
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<th>Universities of Medway Boat Race</th>
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<td>First race 2007</td>
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<th>The Varsity Boat Race</th>
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<td>Bristol University vs The University of the West of England</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.thevarsity.co.uk">www.thevarsity.co.uk</a></td>
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<td>First held in 1995</td>
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<td>Race date: April 25, 2009</td>
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<th>Queen’s University, Belfast vs Trinity College, Dublin</th>
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The ARA and BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) are happy to help promote university boat races and are keen to receive further information about these events and also details of other varsity events. Information can be sent to rowing@bucs.org.uk and magazine@ara-rowing.org

A full Henley Boat Races report will appear in May’s R&R.
n 2003, David and James Livingston lined up against each other to row in the same Boat Race, the first time two siblings had done so for 103 years. The contest was to become regarded as the most dramatic ever, with Oxford winning by a thrilling single foot.

For these two men though, the 2003 Boat Race will only be remembered as the culmination of a nine-month training programme where each knew only one could emerge the victor.

James came to the race having lost the previous year’s Boat Race, when Oxford came from behind in the final two minutes. He was rowing for the very last time.

For younger brother David, it was his first time rowing in the top boat, and it was his chance to emerge from his older brother's shadow. The duel almost split the family apart. Six years on, the brothers have told their side of the story in a book, Blood Over Water, published this month.

RA: It’s six years since the epic duel between you guys. One won, one lost; was the book your way of coming to terms with this?

David: Yes, without a doubt. I wrote James a letter immediately after the race expressing my guilt about beating him. I’d denied him his last chance of winning; ever since that day I felt we’d locked away these feelings; it was very cathartic...

James: I was heartbroken, I still am. Even now I watch the race and think we’re going to pull away at Hammersmith.

What were you trying to achieve in remembering the race?

James: The book is about everything between us behind that one foot, that 0.0034% margin of performance, a trillion 'what ifs?' in my mind, and how brotherhood was destroyed by the race and how we’ve rebuilt it....

David: James isn’t actually bitter [James laughs]; the book is about the loss of brotherhood and the development of teams. We’re both very protective of our own squads; a lot of it is describing teams and how they work.

It must have been difficult, especially as James, you were the favourites that year weren’t you?

James: We were ten seconds per man quicker, and had beaten Oxford in the British Indoor Rowing Champs, so yes it was all very rosy...

David: ...yeah, and you guys also weighed in a stone heavier per man, but we still thought we had something to believe in... I think there was the underdog spirit. For me though, everything just heaped pressure on me. I was paranoid I wouldn’t even make the crew! When I found out for definite, we were both on camp in January...

James: I texted you saying I’d got in – your response was muted...

David: ‘That’s good, me too’ or something unemotional like that!

Didn’t you see each other at home?

David: The only time we were together was Christmas and neither of us definitely knew we were in. We have a rowing machine at home, and Dave used to sneak in and check my splits...

James: Yeah, yeah, so did you!

“The Boat Race had bred this hatred”

What about the build-up to the actual race?

James: The last time we saw each other was a week before the race – we bumped into one another accidentally at home! We gave each other a cold ‘good luck’ but by then we’d given so much, sweated blood and tears.

David: I was like any younger brother, I had a chip on my shoulder about James always doing things first; this was my time... I’d gone to Oxford to be my own man. The Boat Race had bred this hatred by then... ultra competitiveness at the very least.

Who remembers the race most vividly?

James: For me, the book has helped put this behind us. The Boat Race matters a huge amount to me...

David: We still both have our own opinions, but I know we both feel immensely proud to have been involved in such an amazing race.

James: Best of all... we now see each other regularly. We hang out!

Published by Bloomsbury Publishing, Blood over Water is available now priced at £17.99. James and David have signed five copies to give away. The first five readers to email magazine@ara-rowing.org will receive a signed copy.
We knew we could count on you

| 2008 JUNIOR AND LIGHT WEIGHT: WORLD ROWING CHAMPIONSHIP LINZ - AUSTRIA |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| **Gold Medal:** | **Silver Medal:** | **Bronze Medal:** |
| 2x LM Greece | 2x LW Italy | 2x LM Germany |
| 4x LM Australia | 4x M Italy | 4x LM Belarus |
| 4x LM Italy | 4x M Great Britain | 2x LW Australia |
| 2x JW Germany | 2x LW Romania | 4x LW Belgium |
| 2x JM Greece | 2x M Greece | 2x LW Belarus |
| 2x JW Germany | 4x LM Denmark | 2x LM Belarus |
| 4x JM Spain | 2x LM Italy | 2x LW Australia |
| 4x JM Germany | 4x M Italy | 2x LW Italy |
| 8x JM Germany | 4x W Romania | 2x LW Finland |

| 2008 UNDER 23 - WORLD ROWING CHAMPIONSHIP BRANDENBURG - GERMANY |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| **Gold Medal:** | **Silver Medal:** | **Bronze Medal:** |
| 4x W Italy | 4x M Ukraine | 1x LW Belarus |
| 4x M Italy | 1x LM Ireland | 2x WM Great Britain |
| 2x LM Italy | 2x LW Italy | 2x LM Ukraine |
| 4x LM Denmark | 2x LW Romania | 4x M Ukraine |
| 2x W Romania | 2x M Greece | 1x W Czech Republic |
| 2x M Greece | 2x LW Czech Republic | 4x M Ukraine |
| 2x LM Denmark | 4x M Italy | 2x LW Germany |
| 2x LW Germany | 2x LM Germany | 4x M Czech Republic |
| 2x LM Italy | 2x MW Germany | 4x M Ukraine |
| 4x W Romania | 4x LM Czech Republic | 2x LW Belarus |

| 2008 OLYMPIC GAMES BEIJING - CHINA |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| **Gold Medal:** | **Silver Medal:** | **Bronze Medal:** |
| 2x W New Zealand | 1x M Czech Republic | 2x M New Zealand |
| 2x M Australia | 4x M Italy | 2x LM Denmark |
| 2x LM Great Britain | 2x LW Italy | 2x LW Canada |
| 2x LW Holland | 2x LW Czech Republic | 2x JM Ukraine |
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