

u3a Bike Rides The Boat Race Route Friday 10th April 2026

After record-breaking temperatures earlier in the week, there was a cool feel to the morning in Brockwell Park as the group assembled.

In two groups we headed out of the park and up Brixton Water Lane, across Clapham and Wandsworth Commons and along Garrett Lane and Ram Street.

It was the Easter holidays and the traffic was light as we headed for the Thames Path at the estuary of the River Wandle,.

Andrew spotted a heron on the far bank of the river as we rode across Wandsworth Park to St Mary's Church, and the Putney Pantry for coffee.

The café had been renovated since the last visit. It was not too busy and we were soon all served.

Leaving the café, we waited patiently at the crossing at Putney Bridge and then joined the path along Putney Reach and the club boat houses, then on gravel surfaces around the long sweep of the Thames to Bazalgette's Grade II*Hammersmith Bridge (1887), still closed to motor traffic and awaiting resolution of who pays for the repairs.



We were on the route of the Boat Race on the Thames Path towards Mortlake, then past the Brewery, noting that the path was in fair condition.



The final stretch, along Thames Bank, provided a good surface as we approached Chiswick Bridge arriving at the two marker posts, one each side of the river, for the finish line for the Boat Race. The posts have rings painted in light and dark blue, the colours of the two university teams.

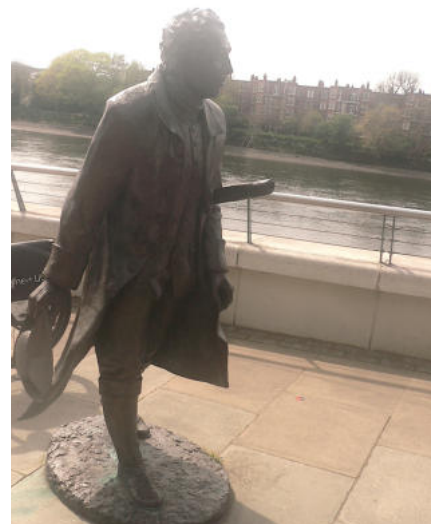
The groups paused on Chiswick Bridge for a view down the river.



Once across the river, the groups set off downstream, past Dukes Meadow, a very pleasant stretch of the river path, complete with the Bandstand (opened in 1926). However, a closure of the path caused us a minor difficulty, it being necessary to lift the cycles up and down steps.

There have been plans to build on Dukes Meadow over the years and it was fortunate that these came to nothing. In 1914 the Brentford Gas Company planned to cover 80 acres of the Meadow with a huge gasworks. The people of Chiswick and surrounding areas raised strong objections and the plan was abandoned.

And there was a plan in 1926 to build a power station the size of Battersea on the meadows; the plan was dropped and in 1928 Fulham Power Station was built just downstream of Wandsworth Bridge. The power station was subsequently demolished and a housing development was built - The "Regent on the River", which claims to reflect the appearance of the former power station.



We passed Chiswick Eyot and just beyond Hammersmith Bridge we found the statue of Lancelot “Capability” Brown. Apparently his nickname came from his fondness for describing country estates as having great “capabilities” for improvement!

There is an information board on Hammersmith Mall, at Riverside Walk. Local features included a Quaker Burial Ground, two pubs, Hammersmith Pier, Kelmscott House (the home of William Morris for 18 years), and a pumping station.

Other details were about indigenous trees (black poplar and alder) and the wildlife (cormorant, grey heron, black-headed gulls, mallard and tufted ducks) and now Egyptian geese.

Along this stretch of the river, Jan kindly stopped to assist a cyclist who had a flat tyre by lending him her cycle pump. I joined them and helped to attach the pump. Thinking the pump was the property of the cyclist, I left him to complete the inflation and it was only later that we realised that Jan’s pump had remained with him. Ah well....

Bishop’s Park was the lunch stop. The café was serving soup and toasted sandwiches, and it was warm enough to sit outside.

The return route was past Fulham Palace, inland around Hurlingham Park, beneath Wandsworth Bridge, past Lots Road Power Station (now renovated) and Chelsea Harbour on the shared path of Chelsea Embankment (quite narrow) to the Albert Bridge.



The bridge had been completely closed to all traffic two days ago but had just been re-opened to pedestrians and cyclists; and so to Battersea Park, past the Power Station, on through the Patmore Estate and return to Brockwell Park.

A big “thank you” to Mary and Andrew for leading this ride.

Distance: 23 miles.

Riders: *Alex Murdock. Andrew Burke. Caroline Strallen.. Eileen Hogan, Eunice Zeffertt, Jan Rae. Jeremy Burke, Joanne Skidwalls, John Clements. Joyce Webb, Mary Burke.. Patrick Mulhern. Peter J LeVoir, Tom Parker*

Ride leaders: Mary and Andrew

Report by John, 12th April 2026

Route map: [https://www.outdooractive.com/en/track/2-april-2026-boat-race-bike-route/337759237/?utm_source=unknown&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=user-shared-social-content&share=~34foydi\\$4ossoc9o](https://www.outdooractive.com/en/track/2-april-2026-boat-race-bike-route/337759237/?utm_source=unknown&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=user-shared-social-content&share=~34foydi$4ossoc9o)

The Oxford and Cambridge Boat Races 2026

The 80th Women's Boat Race and the 171st Men's Boat Race were on Saturday 4th April. The Boat Race is raced over the Championship Course, the stretch of the River Thames between Mortlake and Putney. The river is tidal here and is commonly referred to as the Tideway.

For those taking part in pub quizzes.....the first race was held in 1829 on a course near Henley and it was not until 1845 that the race was held on the course used today. The course was later marked by two stones on the southern bank of the river, inscribed "U.B.R." (University Boat Race). The Mortlake end was marked by a stone a few yards downstream from Chiswick Bridge, near The Ship Inn, and the other one is just upstream of Putney Bridge, a distance of 4 miles and 374 yards.

Races are always rowed with the tidal current; Putney to Mortlake on a flood tide and Mortlake to Putney on an ebb tide. The boats ("shells") used in the races are coxed eights, 62 feet long; each rower has a single oar. In the Men's race, Cambridge (the light blues) lead Oxford (the dark blues) by 88 to 81. In the Women's race, Cambridge lead Oxford 47 to 31.

In 1859 the Cambridge boat sank; in 1912 both boats sank and a re-row was held. In 1877 the result was declared as a dead heat. The first women's boat race was held in 1927. It has been held each year since 1964. From 2015, the women's race has been held on the same day and course. "The Boat Race" refers to the combined event of the two races.

Acknowledgement: source material from Wikipedia