

THE BOAT RACE

July 2021

The addition to the family tree of **Jeremy Fox Eric Smith DL (1928-2021)** #14322 who rowed bow in the Oxford boat in 1951, prompted us to have a closer look at the Boat Race. He was one of at least 3 family members, to have taken part. Jeremy was at Eton and went up to New College, Oxford. The 1951 race is remembered because Oxford sank near the start. We will return to sinkings in a minute.

Robert (Bob) Croft Bourne PC JP MP (1888-1936) #1187 also at Eton and New College, Oxford was a talented oarsman who won the University Sculls in 1910, the University Fours in 1911, went head of the river in 1911-12, won the Stewards' Cup at Henley in 1912, 13 and 14 and stroked the New College eight to win Silver for Great Britain at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm. He stroked the Oxford VIII in 1909, 10, 11 and 12 being President of the Oxford University Boat Club the last two years.

The Revd. Robert Henry Cobbold (1816-1893) #148 went to Shrewsbury and on to Peterhouse, Cambridge and rowed 5 in the Cambridge VIII in 1841 and 1842 becoming President of the Cambridge University Boat Club in October 1842.

Sinkings are not as frequent as one might expect considering the weather's propensity for making Putney to Mortlake what one writer described as 'a highway of hell.' Cambridge sank in 1895, 1912 and 1978. Oxford beached in 1912 and sank in 1925 and 1951. Of these the 1912 beaching is perhaps the most unusual.

The race started in half a gale with a north westerly wind. Cambridge shipped a lot of water and were three lengths behind when they went down off Harrods. The umpire's launch stopped to help. Wells, the Oxford cox hugged the Surrey shore for calmer water but had to come out so as to pass under the centre arch of Hammersmith Bridge. They continued to take on water so Wells edged the boat on to the Surrey beach. The crew got out, emptied their boat and set off again at which moment the umpire's launch arrived. The umpire shouted that he had declared "No Race" but Bob Bourne told Wells to get the boat moving whereupon the



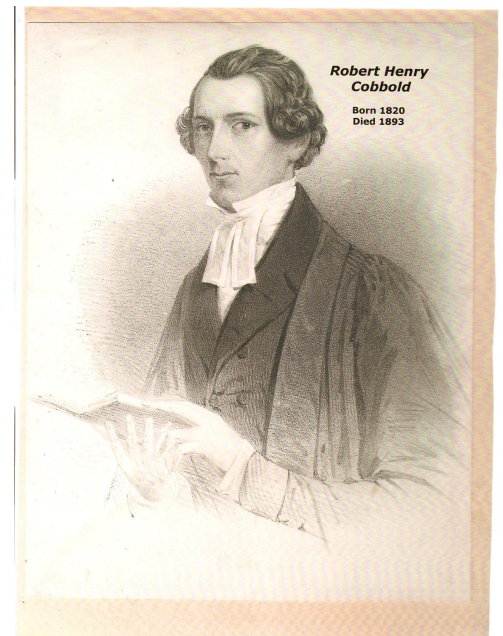
Jeremy Smith in retirement



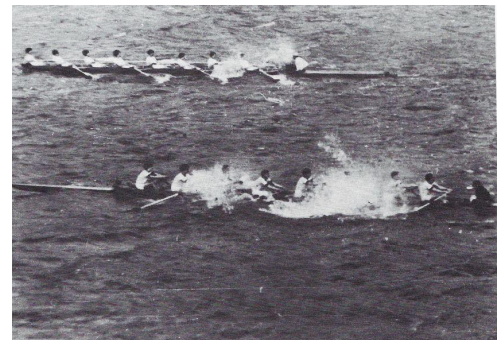
Bob Bourne in Vanity Fair

umpire gave chase shouting 'What are you doing Oxford, where are you going – I have declared no Race?' Bob Bourne shouted back 'We're going to Mortlake' pausing 'because our clothes are there!' and to Mortlake they went. The official records show that both crews sank but a great debate followed as to what constituted a sinking and had Oxford broken the rules? Oxford won the re-row by 6 lengths.

In 1951 the Oxford boat with Jeremy Smith at bow was stroked by Christopher Davidge when they chose the Surrey station; they were waterlogged within one minute and had sunk a minute later whilst Cambridge were sheltered by the Fulham Wall. The umpire, Gerald Ellison, by then the Bishop of Willesden, contrary to the rules, declared a re-row on the grounds that neither crew had reached the end of the Fulham Wall. Cambridge won the re-row the following Monday.



Revd Robert H Cobbold Rector of St. Mary, Ross



Oxford sinking 1951, Jeremy Smith at Bow