

THE WINGFIELD SCULLS

BRITISH AMATEUR SCULLING CHAMPIONSHIP AND CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE THAMES

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2005 Championship

	Mile Post	Hammersmith Bridge	Chiswick Steps	Barnes Bridge	Finish
Matthew Wells (UL)	4.12*	7.32*	13.03	18.50	23.14
Stephen Rowbotham (Leander)	4.16	7.38	14.40	20.30	24.19
Umpire Graeme Mulcahy (1976 Champion)					

165th race for Henry C Wingfield's silver sculls and the title Champion of the Thames produced a few firsts in the races' long history. Wells set new records to both the mile post and Hammersmith Bridge, breaking Farnie Carpmael's 1950 record to the mile and Ian Lawson's 2003 record to Hammersmith. Unfortunately for his challenger, the record he claimed was for the first man to capsize in the final of the Wingfield Sculls.

The heats for the Championship have seen several capsizings first by E.B.Michell in 1868. The press of the time frowned on Michell racing without a shirt, this habit may have come from his boxing as he held the English title at three different weights. He went on to buy Wimbledon for the Lawn Tennis Association. In 1896 Guy Nickalls gate burst open just short of the line in a very closely fought race with Rupert Guinness. Similarly Southwood was sculled to a standstill by Brocklebank in 1931 and fell in. 1964 saw a double capsizing after Barnes first by Ray Carter then Nick Cooper's gate opened, allowing the third and fourth scullers to qualify for the final. So Rowbotham is in illustrious company.

Wells' plan was to lead at the Black Buoy and there was little doubt in how he set off. Unlike Rowbotham who miscued his first stroke going off at 37 to Wells' 40. Wells had two lengths at the Black Buoy and was under-rating Rowbotham by a pip 34 to 35. Both scullers settled further and made use of the good water to scull well to Harrods, Wells at 30 and Rowbotham 32. Rowbotham was a second outside the 1950 record to the mile and only two outside the 2003 Hammersmith record. The PLA driftwood barge had stopped at Hammersmith but the swell lingered. Whilst Wells cut into the bank, Rowbotham had been advised to stay out and suffered badly in the poor conditions. He caught his strokeside scull in a wave and for a moment looked as though he would pull his rigger up out of the water. It took him less than 90" to get back in and start sculling again. However from here on the conditions were atrocious and Wells picked his way through the waves well. To claim the title Champion of the Thames you must master the Tideway as well as the opposition.

The reigning world champion single sculler Mahe Drysdale of New Zealand was the finish judge and presented the silver sculls back to Wells.