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The Olney race

In a small Buckinghamshire town, Shrove Tuesday is a race, a church service, and a contest with a town in Kansas.

The organisers say the next world-famous pancake race is on Shrove Tuesday, 9 February 2027. “The event supposedly has been in existance for over 550 years, having first taken place after 1445.” They keep the word “supposedly,” and this sheet keeps it too. What they date firmly is the modern era: 2027 will be the 80th race since the event was re-established in 1948, and the 78th race against Liberal, Kansas.

The course is 415 yards (379.5m). It is open only to female residents of Olney, aged 18 and over, resident for at least three months, or who work in the town. The official results page says the international competition started in 1950, and prints running totals of Olney 32 wins, Liberal 42 wins, and three no-results or draws.

After the finish in Church Street, the parish holds a Shriving Service, and sings Amazing Grace — first heard, the parish says, on 1 January 1773, when John Newton was the priest in charge.

Two official stories of 2026

The official results table lists 2026 as a Liberal win, with Eloise Kramer running for Olney and Hannah McCarter for Liberal. A homepage news item, separately, says Kramer triumphed for the third time at Olney, with Nicolle Murfitt second and Sophie Reynolds third. Both are official, and they are answering different questions.

A short quiz

1. When was the modern Olney race re-established?
2. How long is the official course?
3. When does the parish say Amazing Grace was first heard?

Answers. 1. In 1948. 2. 415 yards (379.5m). 3. 1 January 1773.

Wording from the Olney Pancake Race organisers, the official results page, and St Peter and St Paul, Olney, checked 17 November 2026.
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