



Newsletter

November 2012

A truly **OARSOME** year!

We had heard so much about what was being planned, what people hoped would happen on the River Thames and in London but no one could have prepared us for the amazing events that we were all to be involved in.

To take our year from the Lord Mayor's Show Flotilla 2011 to the Flotilla a couple of weeks ago – a few years ago no one could have dreamt that we would have so much happening on the Thames in London.

We held our AGM in January in the splendid surroundings of the Master Mariner's Hall aboard HQS 'Wellington' at Temple. It reminded me of my days in court with the bench of Magistrates handing down fines to the villains of the peace in the dock – not that any fines were issued just discussions about time penalties for no tilts on boats!

The last of the Exchanging sponsored Boat Races was run on the 7th April once again including the pre race Oxbridge Watermen's Challenge. The flood tide beat us this year so the Hammersmith Bridge start line became Chiswick Pier once again.

Eight crews finally made it to the start line and were set off in two divisions. No clashes this year and plenty of hard fought racing between the crews saw the men of the Scientific Instrument Makers fastest across the line (7.14) with their Ladies coming in



6th overall (8.08) and the Tallow Chandlers taking the mixed crew honours in a time of 7.46.

The main event had a first – a swimmer/demonstrator who disrupted the whole event and in some opinions changed the final result. We may see a change in the security for future events, we'll keep you posted.

Thanks as always to all those who assisted with timing and the ever present NER Safety boats. We will be discussing with BNY Mellon, the new sponsors, how we can develop the event in 2013 and beyond.

Some of you might ask how I got away with it but I did somehow – I scheduled the Admiral of the Port Challenge on my wife's birthday!

The Lady Mayoress Elizabeth Wootton joined us aboard 'Londinium III' as the official starter and later to present the prizes. The fourteen crews gathered at Westminster Pier as instructed with the guest Starter for Division One of Bob Crouch getting the Division 1 crews organised on the water and cleanly away. The second division of the remaining seven boats set off in pursuit a few minutes later.

Once again we had some very close hard fought racing with crews crossing the line separated by as little as ONE second! Thank you at this point to the wonderful timing team who managed to identify your boats and give you accurate timings.

The winners overall were the 'Jim Holt' (the Watermen) in 8:33, the ladies honours were taken in a time of 9:48 by 'Water Forget me Not' (Water Conservators) and the mixed crew in the 'Master Shipbroker' (Ahoy Centre) in a time of 11:16.



Bob Crouch, Ruth Knight & Simon Hall – Happy Birthday!

In fact it was not only Ruth's birthday but also that of Bob Crouch and Simon Hall so after the prize giving a rousing rendition of 'Happy Birthday' was sung by the attending crews and supporters.

Once again a superb event at the Westminster Boating Base followed the very successful event on the river – we still have to resolve the identifying numbers of the boats however!.

As the weeks went by you were receiving more and more information and instructions for the event of the decade if not a lifetime – the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant. The culmination of years of planning, dozens of meetings and hours of writing all came together over that memorable week end.

All manner of events were happening around the country and throughout London but we were all focused on the river and the largest flotilla seen for 100's of years and certainly the first to mix manpowered and powered craft over the 7 mile Pageant.

The Environment Agency finally agreed to close the barrier (for their annual tests) thereby creating Lake Thames which eased the pressure on the organisers as there was no longer the tidal flow to take in to account.

You all followed your instructions to the letter – THANK YOU! – arriving at your various launch sites during the preceding days.

June 3rd dawned dank and murky but at no time did this dampen your spirits, you all launched and made your way downstream through the moored 'Little Ships' and classic launches of the Thames and UK to the muster lines below Wandsworth Bridge and then waited.

The steam locomotive on Battersea Bridge signalled the start of a truly amazing maritime event – HM Queen left Chelsea Harbour Pier aboard ‘Britannia’s’ launch, the newly launched Queen’s Row Barge ‘Gloriana’ came out and sat mid river oars raised, I called you off the moorings and then we all waited, silently, for our signal from Gold Controller David Phillips (Chief Harbour Master PLA).



The Manpowered flotilla waiting for the “Go!”

“OK, all crews, let’s go for a paddle – Go!” well I think that’s what I said, it was all too emotional. All 225 manpowered boats led by the Waterman’s cutters of the TTRA moved off as one following in the wake of QRB ‘Gloriana’ to rousing cheers from the 1000’s lining the banks.

As we rowed past the Royal Barge RSM Bill Mott MVO called “Easy Oars!” the only problem was none of you could hear him with all the cheering, whistles, hooters and bells ringing! The crew of ‘Gloriana’ took the lead, tossed oars in salute and you all followed in a Mexican wave of oars – well done!

The flotilla moved off again to sights not seen on the Thames in living memory – every balcony, roof top and all the river banks were crammed with cheering, waving spectators – spectacular!!

There are 100’s of pictures of our flotilla, you stole the show from the other 700 boats in the media and on television – we won’t discuss the BBC coverage here!! – and it didn’t rain on our parade. You created the much spoken about ‘Canaletto moment’ and replicated the header picture we now use on this publication – fantastic!



Passing under the Millennium Bridge

For me it made all the hours of discussions and planning worth while to see you all so obviously enjoying yourselves being a part of this momentous occasion.



The Manpowered Flotilla approaching Tower Bridge – you are all there somewhere!

I have a high resolution copy of the Tim Clarke picture (above) and all my pictures are on the TTRA and Thames Alive web sites or Facebook pages – if you would like copies please let me know.

I realise the dispersal became a torturous struggle – the rain and cold and worst of all the waiting for many of you. Thank you for bearing it with your usual good humour and I'm sure these memories are fading whilst those of the Pageant will remain.

Our normal racing calendar continued with the Port of London Challenge with twelve crews making the start line at HQS 'Wellington'.

The Ladies and Mixed crews got away followed by the Men where there was some extremely keen racing between 'Trinity Tide', 'Dove' and 'Master Shipbroker' with the lead changing every few minutes.

Maybe the crew of 'Master Shipbroker' paused to look for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow?!



The fastest men's crew in 'Jim Holt' caught the first division crossing the line in a time of 31.01, the Ladies division was won by 'Water Forget me Not' in 34.06 with the Mixed crew in 'Mellifera' crossing the line in 35.49.

A small miscalculation on my part meant that the return trip had to be delayed whilst we waited for the tide to turn and even then the skipper of MV 'Salient' had to perform a very clever reversing manoeuvre through Battersea Bridge clearing it by only a couple of inches – back to the tide tables Malcolm!

Meanwhile the Olympic Torch was travelling around the country getting ever closer to London when we would once again play a major role.

At all the meeting I attended the one question I kept being asked was "How many spectators can we expect on the banks and bridges?" all I could answer was "I have no idea".

Who would have thought that after such low key advertising of the event and that we were all out there at 7:00 in the morning so many people would turn up to see the Olympic Flame being carried aboard the Queen's Row Barge 'Gloriana' by Sir Matthew Pinsent.



Sir Matt lights the cauldron aboard QRB 'Gloriana'

The Olympians crew, organised by Chris Baillieu, cheered Matt on as he lit the flame and then prepared for their five hour row – a first on fixed thole pins for many!

The crowds came out in their thousands all along the bank and the small river craft created an amazing spectacle all the way to Richmond.

Here you waved goodbye and 'Gloriana' rowed on to be met at Kew by the boats and crews of London Youth Rowing – the youngsters of local rowing clubs supporting their two fellow oarsmen aboard QRB, future Olympians?

LYR left at Putney and 'Gloriana' rowed on down to Chelsea to be met by the third and final flotilla – 15 cutters from the TTRA – to act as escort in to the City of London and the finale at Tower Bridge.

The crowds were still out on all the bridges but once more it was the splendour of you rowing in close formation with QRB that created the sight that we had hoped for as the Olympic flame made its final journey in to central London... unforgettable!



Passing under Vauxhall Bridge



The final torch bearer at the Olympic rings, Tower Bridge

The only issue was we got there early! All the concerns had been about arriving late but the ebb tide ensured we went through London at a cracking pace.

Well done everyone for making a magic moment as the final torch bearer took the flame aboard the rings barge and showed the whole world how London can put on a pageant on the River Thames before the 'greatest show on earth' started later that night.

The organiser of the whole torch relay for LOCOG, Deborah Hale, mailed me a few weeks later commenting "I have to say that Day 70 was a real highlight for me. It seemed a genuinely fitting end to our epic journey and I thoroughly

enjoyed the peaceful and sedate finish after what was a pretty hectic 69 days"

The three flotillas totalling 80 boats was a true rowing event (if you ignore the safety & security boats!) Thank you all for making it a fantastic day and I'm sure you will agree it was a very fitting start to the most incredible six weeks of sport this country has ever seen – well done the girls for bringing in the first Gold at Dorney, rowing does it again!!!

But we weren't finished yet...

You were all out on the 15th September for the annual 'Marathon of the River' the Great River Race. For once I was rowing with you having decided that taking part in the 25th Anniversary GRR was a *must* even if my training hadn't been very effective - I wouldn't be doing my winning times of yesteryear!

We all lined up down at Millwall in the sunshine for a great day – thank you for the cheers as you came past me in my double skiff. I know many of you had a keen race with the honours of fastest Watermen's cutter going to the Leander GB crew 'Team Lady Mayoress' in 'Water Forget me Not', the first TTRA crew, the Scientific Instrument Makers in 'Gordon Hall' came in 4 minutes behind in a great time of 2hrs 33mins.

The Leander crew had hoped to take the Riparian trophy from Dittons Skiff Club but as the GB boys didn't take my advice to scull the cutter they were beaten (on handicap) by 46 seconds – keep trying chaps!

QRB 'Gloriana' was at the finish line with a crew from the Rowing Foundation and Olympic medallists Sophie Hoskings and Rob Williams aboard cheering you all across the line – they received a GRR certificate to add to their medals!

To celebrate the first Lord Mayors Flotilla for 156 years last year we, the TTRA, commissioned a painting from a photo taken. The artist, Rod Pearson, used a little magic to make the French frigate disappear and lighten the sky. The result was presented to the Lord Mayor Alderman David Wootton at the Mansion House, where it now hangs.

The officers of the TTRA were joined by the Pageant Master Dominic Reid for the presentation.

Signed copies are now available through the TTRA Secretary – e mail me for details.



Our last event of the year was to continue the now 'tradition' of the TTRA escorting the new Lord Mayor to the City of London on the morning of the Lord Mayor's Show.

Due to the draw off at Richmond, tide times and the usual early start many of the boats arrived at Westminster Boating Base on the 9th – thank you to them for facilitating this.

On the 10th November you all arrived in the cold morning rain and following the briefing made your way afloat to await 'Gloriana' and the Lord Mayor and his guests. The crew were Watermen assisted by oarsmen from Trinity College, Oxford where Alderman Gifford used to row.

On time 'Gloriana' pushed away from WBB and after a rousing three cheers you led the way downstream against the incoming tide – a tough row that time of the morning!



Passing under Vauxhall Bridge

The flotilla of twenty four boats, with visiting crews from the Thames Traditional Boat Society, River Thames Society, London Youth Rowing and Kingston Grammar School RC Veterans, stretched out as we made our way down through the bridges of central London.



Tower Bridge opens in salute to the Lord Mayor

The Lord Mayor was delivered on time to HMS 'President' going ashore to the rousing cheers and salute of tossed oars from you all – another triumph.

The ceremonials complete you made your way ashore to the welcome warmth of the canteen, bacon butties, tea and coffee whilst your boats disappeared whence they came.

Thank you to everyone who made this possible by towing or rowing boats to the start or from the finish and a big thank you to the crews of Northern Exposure Rescue who came out, once again, to provide our safety cover.

And so ends 2012, the year to remember. I'm not going to apologise for this BUMPER issue – there's just been too much to report on!

In an after dinner speech recently I said "Thank you to you all for coming and making these events what they are because no matter how much planning we do it would be rather lonely out there on the day if you didn't come!" – this applies to you all, THANK YOU! I have thoroughly enjoyed everything that we have achieved this year and look forward to more of the same in the future.

Look after your boats, give them the TLC they deserve after a busy season, keep up the training (when river levels allow) and plan for next years events.

Have a well earned rest over the festive season and we look forward to seeing you at the AGM at Watermen's Hall on the 21st January.

Malcolm

Secretary TTRA

Merry 
 *Christmas*