



## Newsletter

December 2014

During the past year the Association has consolidated its place as the leading traditional rowing group on the Thames and continued to grow its own events and presence at others, a marvellous achievement.

A very well attended January AGM at Trinity House, who celebrated their 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year (more of this later), ensured we started the year once again with full support for our events and any others that we could get involved in – very heartening for your Secretary!

Mother Nature didn't sign up to the plan though – she dumped untold millions of gallons of water over the South of England resulting in the worst floods seen for decades. We all watched as the river became Lake Thames covering huge areas and flowing at over 500m per *second* under Kingston Bridge (normal rates are around 25mps). Rowing upstream became impossible and even on the tideway numerous boats got in to difficulty as the huge flow rate caused issues.

Fortunately levels dropped and we were able to go ahead with our first event, the Oxbridge Challenge which once again saw us gathering at the University of London boathouse in Chiswick. Ten cutters and gigs arrived with the two Oxbridge cutters, were beached and the crews prepared for the afternoon's event with the usual gusto. The flotilla led by NER safety boats set off downstream against the tide, the toughest part of the day. A Police rib came to check us out – fortunately your Secretary knew one of the crew so after the usual 'pleasantries' being exchanged and they being satisfied we weren't about to disrupt the main event we continued down to the start.

The first Division of the four mixed and ladies crews lined up and were set off with very little enthusiasm from the watching crowds on Hammersmith Bridge. I turned my trusty loudhailer towards them to stir up some support for your endeavours with some success.

As the second division of six abreast men crews set off they received muted cheers from the bank and finally the two Oxbridge gigs lined up rowing under LYR colours. They were sent on their way to chase down the rest of the fleet.



A splendid race ensued with everyone crossing the line within a few minutes of each other. The fastest boat was 'Goldie' closely followed by the very competitive crews of 'Lady Gillet' and 'Gordon Hall' (7 second gap) with the mixed crew in 'Centurion' coming in 4<sup>th</sup> overall and the ladies in 'George Williams' coming in 7<sup>th</sup> across the line.

As usual we retired to the clubroom to watch the main event and surprise, surprise there was a fleeting glimpse of the two leading men's crews battling it out – Clare Balding was, for once, lost for words as she had no idea what she was looking at. I'll work even harder to get information to the BBC producers this year – my personal challenge!

Our friends at Hampton Court Palace used The Queen's Row Barge 'Gloriana' over the Easter week end as part of the 'Glorious George' celebrations with crews of volunteers (some from the TTRA) rowing George I and his entourage to the Palace each morning

We were all back at Hampton Court on the 11<sup>th</sup> May for the start of the Tudor Pull. The ceremony started promptly as the clock struck 10.00, the gates swung open and led by drummer and trumpeter the Stella was paraded out to a crowd of watching tourists. The Beadle to the Water Conservators acted as interpreter informing them what was going on. With great ceremony the Stella was passed to HM Barge Master who accepted his challenge "to carry it under oars to HM Tower of London on the next tide". The Watermen paraded to the Royal barge where the Barge Master of the Tallow Chandlers had already presented a full tallow pot to the Watermen to 'aid there stokes'.

The initial flotilla of nine escort boats set off following QRB as she made her way downstream to Teddington and on to Richmond where once again at the splendid facilities of Richmond Bridge BC they moored to enjoy well deserved victuals.

The flotilla set off and QRB caught up on the Isleworth reach (small issue of rope round the propeller!). The full flotilla of eighteen boats progressed downriver creating that wonderful scene of pageantry and history that is so important to us traditional rowers.

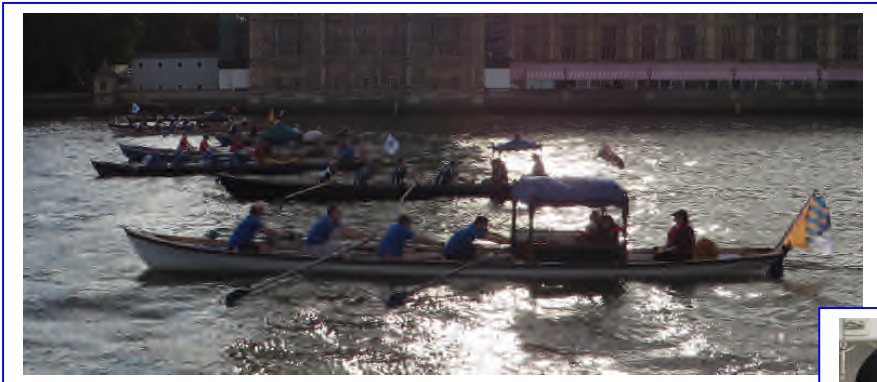


QRB had to rely on the rowing crew for the last few miles as unfortunately the power system had failed once again. The NER ribs made quick work of assisting in manoeuvring her on to the moorings at St. Katherine Pier and the Stella was paraded up to the Tower for the handover to the Deputy Governor.

A wonderful day on the river and once again the crews from the TTRA enhancing the stately progress of the Royal barge as HM Barge Master and the Watermen discharged their duty for another year.

The Associations 'blue ribbon' event was next on the calendar – The Admiral of the Port Challenge on the 5<sup>th</sup> June. An amazing entry of fifteen boats including for the first time a skerry from RBBC arrived at Westminster Pier with all the crews arriving from all directions. The preparation was a little chaotic resulting in one boat starting in the wrong division but you all had a great race.

The Ladies of the Water Conservators romped away by over a minute to take the trophy once again, the five mixed crews had some very close racing with The Founders and RBBC (in their wherry) coming joint second to The Tallow Chandlers in first place a few seconds ahead.



There was a steward's enquiry in the men's division as the Watermen raced without a tilt and as a consequence received a time penalty which meant they had the same time as the Scientific Instrument Makers.



The official starter was the Chief Commoner John Bennett resplendent in his cocked hat who came ashore to present the prizes to the winning crews. As usual we all enjoyed the hospitality of Westminster Boating Base watching the sun set over Old Father Thames from the splendid clubroom.

A change in the launch site for the Port of London Challenge found us all on the beach on the South Bank on the 24<sup>th</sup> July. Originally I had 10 entries but following a breakdown in communications in the PLA their boats had been returned to home base 24 hrs early so no boats!!

The remaining boats formed up and set off, against the end of the ebb tide – Secretary had got it wrong as well! What is usually about a 35 minute row now became a 50+ minute battle with the slower boat taking over the hour.

Eventually all the crews arrived safely at Chelsea and boarded the MV 'Salient' for the cruise back downstream.



Once again a superb evening with the Chairman, and usually a rower for the PLA, Robin Mortimer presenting the prizes to the overall winners The Watermen's Company, with the ladies from The Water Conservators taking the prize in their division. The Founder's mixed crew had no competition and coming in with a time of 1hour 20minutes – best we double check the times of events for 2015!!

A new event was next on the calendar – The Royal Greenwich Tall Ships Row Past & The Trinity 500 Challenge.

Wearing another hat (Director of Thames Alive) the Secretary had been asked by the organisers of the Tall Ships Regatta at Royal Greenwich if he could arrange some kind of event to entertain the crowds on the final Sunday of this marvellous event.

Well who am I to refuse and so it was that the crews for fourteen boats met at the wonderful facilities of The Ahoy Centre with QRB Gloriana on the opposite bank at Masthouse Pier. Langstone cutters had come up to join the fun entering a crew in each of the three divisions with Ahoy themselves crewing three of the boats based there.

A crew from Poplar & Blackwall RC manned QRB and we formed up to row downstream passing the moored tall ships at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich.



Once more you performed your escort duties with style and saluted in the time honoured manner by tossing oars. The crowd were less than enthusiastic but maybe as they get used to seeing us out on the river they'll get the hang of cheering in reply!

Having saluted the largest tall ship the Polish registered 'Dar Mlodziezy' QRB turned and rowed back upstream to act as finish line for the Trinity 500 Challenge.

Trinity House were celebrating their 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary in many ways and when asked agreed to support this race by providing prizes for all the crews. Their own cutter had been out training hoping to take home the winners trophy.

The first division of Ladies and Mixed crews were set off closely followed by the Men's crews for what was to be a short sprint race. The crowds on the north bank got in to the spirit and cheered the boats past as there was some very close racing. Unfortunately the Trinity House crew took a course close to the bank and watched as the Watermen pulled away.

QRB 'Gloriana' was the finish line opposite the Ahoy Centre to which we all returned for well earned refreshments. Captain Roger Barker FNI from Trinity House who had watched the event from aboard QRB also came ashore to present the prizes – the men's to The Watermen, the very closely timed ladies to The Ahoy Centre and the very keenly fought mixed to the PLA.

A wonderful event enjoyed by all in the marvellous facilities of The Ahoy Centre which has become the downriver centre of excellence for the production and rowing of Watermen's cutters. Well done everyone for making it a memorable day on the river.

A few weeks later The Great River Race saw you all once again slogging it out over the 22 mile course. The Trinity House crew finally took the honours in the Watermen's Cutters and the City of London classes by crossing the line in a very credible time of 2hrs 19minutes, ten minutes ahead of their nearest rival cutter.

As was discussed at the last AGM Guy's father had progressed the application for the granting of Letters Patent and thereby a Coat of Arms by the College of Arms. Following great generosity by Brocklebank senior of funding this application we were granted our Arms and a very smart red leather bound box was delivered to the Treasurers home.

When opened this is what we discovered – the hand written Letter Patent with our very own Coat of Arms. They'll be on display at the AGM.



Our final outing was once again to be the now traditional Lord Mayor's Flotilla on the morning of the Lord Mayor's Show.

As in the past few years you all turned out early and boated from WBB with a total of 23 boats from 20 of the City Livery Companies and City Institutions and Organisations ably assisted by Richmond Bridge BC and London Youth Rowing with a new addition of 6 boats from the London Division of the Sea Cadets based at Victoria Docks.



This was the first outing for the newly created TTRA flag which is derived from the Coat of Arms and you all flew the flag with pride

Lord Mayor Alderman Alan Yarrow boarded QRB to a rousing three cheers and on time our splendid flotilla rowed off downstream in good order making very good time. There was support from the bridges and QRB returned with a salute to Fishmonger's Hall and the huge crowds at HM Tower of London (they were there to see the Poppies – not us!) and on schedule the bascules of Tower Bridge opened in salute to the Admiral of the Port of London and his flotilla.

As the Lord Mayor went ashore the now familiar call went up "Watermen of the River Thames, toss oars!" and with another rousing three cheers the TTRA saluted the Lord Mayor and his party.

Having ourselves moored at HMS President we were eventually allowed ashore to consume the much needed and well deserved bacon butties. A truly wonderful morning which has now become a fixed part of the day for the Lord Mayor and one I know next years is looking forward too – he's a Master Mariner!

A splendid year, superb events with great racing, well done everyone. Thank you to all those who work in the background to make the events happen – preparing boats, towing and timing.

As you know there is to be a change of management of the TTRA at the AGM as Chairman Nicholas will move up to be Master of the Tallow Chandlers Company, I will move on to other challenges and Rupert can only cook the books for so long!

Can I take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to you all for your support at the events over the past years, without you it would have been rather lonely out on the river. It's been a pleasure and honour to be involved with you in creating some 'little moments in history' and I look forward to seeing you all out on Old Father Thames enjoying messing about in boats for many years to come.

Keep pulling long and strong!

Malcolm

Malcolm KNIGHT  
Secretary TTRA

