

# *Thames Traditional Rowing Association*

## *Newsletter 2025*

### **The Thames Traditional Rowing Association 2025 season**

Our 2025 season started with a well attended AGM at which Joe Lane was appointed as Chair of the Thames Traditional Rowing Association (TTRA). Joe has a long association with the TTRA; Trinity house and the river, we welcome the knowledge Joe brings as our new Chair.

Jon Averns, our outgoing Chair, remains on the board as does Mark Smith, the TTRA's treasurer. We equally welcome their continued support in managing the TTRA's activities.

New to the board is John Dillon-Leetch, who was the PLA Port Hydrographer at the time of his appointment. John's knowledge of the river is and will be very useful in the planning of our events. Nick Ronald was appointed to the vacant role of Events Organiser. Nick has participated in many of the TTRA events and until recently was captain of Dittons Skiff and Punting Club.

### **Support**

The TTRA can't run our events without the input and help of others. We are grateful to the Port of London Authority; Port Health; the Royal Watermen; the Company of Watermen and Lightermen; Northern Exposure and Thames Alive for their support. Likewise, those who tow the boats to and from events.



## The Festival of Rowing

During the course of the 2025 season, we ran several successful events commencing with the Festival of Rowing and the Oxbridge Challenge in April. Held on the same day of the Boat Race and over the same course, we are grateful to the Boat Race organisers for allowing us to run the Festival of Rowing on race day. The festival combines a flotilla followed by races. As ever the flotilla, which this year was led by Jubilant, the Royal Shallop, drew cheers from the crowds thronging along the river bank. The Oxbridge Challenge for Thames Watermen's cutters, produced close and entertaining racing.



## Tudor Pull

Our second event of the season was the Tudor Pull, held in May. This is a challenge resulting from a conversation between the late Duke of Edinburgh and the Royal Watermen. Conceived in 1986, the first Tudor Pull was in 1987 and has continued to this day. A slice of ancient City of London water pipe is rowed by boat between Hampton Court and the Tower of London by the Royal Watermen, accompanied by a supporting flotilla consisting mainly of Thames Watermen's cutters rowed by members of the TTRA. The Tudor Pull reflects times gone by when the Royal Watermen conveyed kings and queens between palaces along the Thames. With ceremonies and each end, we are grateful to Hampton Court Palace and the Tower of London for their support.

## Races

As well as keeping alive the tradition of fixed seat rowing on the Thames, racing is at the heart of our activities. The Admiral of the Port Challenge in June and the Port of London Challenge in July were hotly contested. There is a slightly different format for each, but the course is similar. Both races are over approximately 4 miles between Waterloo and Chelsea. Thanks to the excellent entry, we were able to run 3 divisions - women's, mixed and men's.



Many of our members also take part in the annual and highly popular Great River Race (GRR) in September which includes a category for Thames Watermen's cutters. The marathon of the Thames, the GRR is a fantastic spectacle involving around 300 boats. As some of the fastest boats in the GRR, cutters start near the back of the field. Not

only is there the excitement of the competition, but there is the challenge of overtaking well over 200 boats that started ahead. It requires the coxswain to hold their nerve.

### **King Aethelstan Celebrations**

To celebrate the coronation of King Aethelstan (also known as Althelstan) 1100 years ago, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames held a festival to celebrate his coronation. A Saxon king, Aethelstan was regarded as the first king of all England.



Photo credit Thames Alive

The festival incorporated a procession of 70 different craft down the river from Thames Ditton to Kingston. Seven of our members in their cutters joined the procession which culminated with a royal salute taken by the Duke of Edinburgh. Afterwards some participated in demonstration side by side cutter racing which is very different to our normal long-distance races. This not only entertained the large crowd attending the festival, but the crews taking part who enjoyed the thrill of sprint racing.

### **Looking Ahead to 2026**

The planning process is well underway. We are looking at extending our season and further announcements will be made in our spring newsletter