

Oxbridge Watermens Challenge, 2019



Held this year on Sunday 7th April.

First of all may we give a very big THANK YOU to all of those that supported this event.

We had support on the river that started on Friday when a RIB set off from the Ahoy centre headed up by Tony Mason of Thames Active, towing the first group of three boats up to Richmond for us. Having met Roger G at Richmond and deposited their cargo, they continued upstream to Eel Pie Island to prepare Molly Brown for her duty as committee boat on Sunday. Unfortunately, she had issues with her batteries that meant she could not attend on the day. This duty as committee boat was taken on at short notice by Our Lad with Ben Gould as skipper on the actual day. The Ahoy crew returned to the Ahoy late on Friday night ready for the next leg.

On Saturday they set off again, this time in two RIB's for Richmond where they again met Roger G. The final boats were left moored up in rafts ready to be towed down on the very early tide on Sunday morning. The crews from the Ahoy slept on board Molly Brown overnight.

Late in the evening our Secretary received bad news from the Chairman Guy Brocklebank who was ready to be our Timekeeper for the TTRA events. He had suffered a bad back and could hardly stand. This meant frantic phone calls to find someone that might stand in at VERY late notice to do the most difficult job one can imagine. This is no easy task as the person performing this duty has to be able ideally, to recognise all of the boats as they cross the finishing line! We could not find anyone willing and able to stand in and were testing all options.

Plan B was to ask Tim Tomlinson and Paul (Boysie) Reynolds. They were already on hand to be timekeepers for the skiff event and fortunately, they readily stepped into the breach, not knowing the full gravity of what this might require of them.

Our plan was to include filming the boats as they came across the finishing line so that more 'expert' eyes could work out the order in which boats arrived. What could possibly go wrong?

Sunday morning at 04:30 saw the Safety / Support crews rise and almost shine. They set off from Eel Pie Island for Richmond where they collected between them 21 boats and took them to the start line.

By 09:00 Northern Exposure Rescue had towed the three remaining skerries from Richmond Bridge down to ULBC too. Thank you to Chris Lowe and his team of volunteers that also give up their time to help on our events.

After a 'short' wait outside ULBC, the crews started to arrive and collect their boats in readiness for the races to follow.

They also had a choice of a Full English Breakfast both in vegetarian and traditional formats, lovingly prepared by the catering staff that had been on site since 07:30.

After the Briefing for coxes had been delivered by Roger G for the racers, and Malcolm K for the skiff racers and the Flotilla, thirty three rowing boats set off in search of Putney. By 12:00 all had arrived and made themselves ready for the events to follow.

The Flotilla set off to follow the shallop Jubilant.

She looked splendid and was attended by ten traditional rowing boats. Molly, (Henley Whalers), One and All (Goldsmiths), Rose (RBBC), Weddle (RBBC), Sian Dubh (TTBS), Thomasina (TTBS) and four skiffs (from DSPC). They received warm applause from the crowds gathered on the embankment as they set off and again as they crossed the finishing line at Chiswick.

The first race of the day set off shortly afterwards.

This was for skiffs and was won by Thames Valley Skiff Club crewed by Hassan & Clark with a time of 32:30 seconds

Second place went to DSPC & SSPC Evan & Millward with a time of 32:44 seconds

Third place went to Dittons Skiff & Punting Club crewed by Hurley & Brennan with a time of 33:28 seconds

And finally in fourth DSPC & SSPC Cowling & Ronald with a time of 34:11 seconds. So a really close run event over this lengthy course.

Then it was the turn of the TTRA crews to show their metal.

The full result sheet with timings is shown on the Events Page.

A slight hiccough regarding the start times is attributed to Roger G who, under pressure lost all sense of reasoning and started the Women's Division three minutes early! The results have been adjusted accordingly as only two out of four teams were on the start line when the command to ROW was given. Apologies to the two affected crews are offered and hopefully accepted.

We will improve our performance and your sympathy was appreciated.

The Oxbridge Gigs set off next.

ISIS was crewed by the Cornish Pilot Gig Barbarians and CAM was crewed by The London Cornish Pilot Gig Association.

It was won by CPGA in ISIS with a time of 25:39

And runners up were LCPGA with a respectable time of 27:35

After the races finished, the assessment of who was where began. What a mammoth task this became. After an hour or so of labouring over a mobile phone screen to determine who was where on the river, we arrived at the times shown on the Events Page.

It became evident that there is still uncertainty what constitutes a Men's, Mixed and Women's crew.

To reiterate,

A Men's crew is one **solely made from male rowers OR one that has one or more male rowers**, no matter how many women.

A Mixed is a definite **50/50 mix of Men and Women**.

A Women's crew consists of **ALL female rowers**. (Remember one Male rower makes it a Men's crew).

This is established protocol by British Rowing and The Great River Race.

There were **THREE** out of **FIVE** entries in the Mixed Division that were in fact Men's crews according to this ruling.

It only added to the confusion regarding Timekeeping when two of them started in the Mixed Division.

Please study the above carefully and follow it when entering the events.

Afterwards at ULBC, we were looked after by the catering staff there once again. Thanks are due to Sam Appiah and his team for all they have done for us.

The prize giving consisted this year of a certificate for each member of the winning crews.

The Women's was won by
The Mixed by
And the Men's by

George Williams II
Barbers & Surgeons
Centurion

For the Safety / Support crews the day was far from over. The boats had to be towed back to each end of the river.

A big thank you to those that gave up their free time to get the boats ready, transport them to and from the event and for providing such excellent Safety / Support before, during and afterwards.

Our Timekeepers Paul (Boysie) Reynolds and Tim Tomlinson

And organiser of the Flotilla and Skiff races Malcolm Knight.

Finally, a personal thank you to all those that took part and those that made time to send congratulations and thanks by email and phone calls. It is appreciated.

Roger Gould

Secretary & Treasurer for the TTRA.