

Tudor Pull, Saturday 29th July 2019



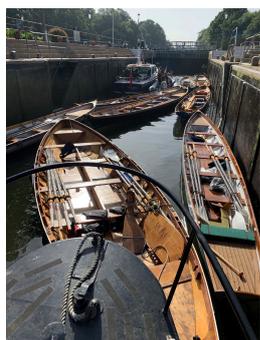
Secretary's Report

At this stage we really have to say a big THANK YOU to everyone that made the event happen.

From months ago there have been dozens of emails shunting back and forth between the TTRA, RBBC, The Ahoy Centre, Thames Active, St Katherine's Pier, Hampton Court Palace, and the pier owners there. The Tower of London, Richmond Bridge Boat Houses, the Royal Watermen, the Queens Row Barge Gloriana, the PLA and many others, including yourselves in responding to the Entry Forms and your intentions and needs for feeding on arrival at RBBC - our midway point.

Moving on, the day was forecast as being an ultra hot one. Reminders, if any were needed, were sent out that everyone needed to make provision for the expected heat wave. Whatever those arrangements might have been, little could have prepared us for what actually took place.

Starting off at 06:00 from Eel Pie Island to try and get ahead of the game, 10 assorted rowing boats to Hampton Court Palace.



(Photo on the way to Hampton Court through the lock).

Arriving on time, we found some crews already on the bank waiting to take charge of their boats.

Our coxes briefing took place on the tow path and many of the rowers were able to watch the ceremony of the Stela being handed over for transportation to the Tower of London. It was processed out of the Palace by the Royal Watermen and was escorted by members of the Worshipful Companies of Tallow Chandlers and Information Technologists with members from the crew of the Queens Shallop Jubilant forming a guard of honour. Thanks given to David Packer and the HRP Team at Hampton Court.

At this stage it was made clear to both the skipper of the QRB Gloriana, and all coxes on the briefing that this year was the first time we had no time restrictions placed on us for our arrival time at the Tower. We left Hampton Court with Tudor style musical accompaniment on board, to applause from the many onlookers, and a rousing three cheers from the assorted escort rowing boats.

At Teddington Lock, the Environment Agency aided our progress by allowing us to use half of the long lock. Thank you for the service.

(Photo shows the QRB arriving in the lock alongside Our Lad)



Again, this progress was slow due to the many other river users that had come out to enjoy the weather. Time was slipping by and we were aware that our time at Richmond might be limited before everyone waiting there could be briefed and fed.

Approaching Ham Common, there was a pre-planned major regatta taking place and we had arranged with them that we might be allowed to pass by just as they were enjoying a break in proceedings. However, it still meant that many of their competitors were out on the water warming up (if that were needed on the day). This slowed down progress further. QRB Gloriana received three cheers as she passed.

At Richmond Bridge, we were met by the remaining 11 rowing boats. Richmond Bridge Boat Club made sure all of our needs for food and drink were met. My personal thanks go out on your behalf to Rosie, Cathy and the entire team of helpers at the club that sourced, cooked, counted and bagged up our goodies for the day. It was also brilliant to see they had put aside jugs of cold water in their coolers and made available the waterside tap for all to replenish their water bottles before setting off.

The coxes briefing at Richmond stated clearly that we were this year under no pressure to arrive at the Tower until we arrived. (If that makes sense). In hindsight it is realised that this message did not get through to the Queens Barge Master, who labouring under the impression through no fault of his own, that we had to reach the Tower by 16:00, and so pressed ahead with that time in mind. Having given the 'no pressure of time' instruction to the actual master / skipper of QRB Gloriana at Hampton Court, the impression was this message would be passed to the Queens Barge Master; apparently it was lost in translation. A **very** important lesson learned for future events.

Setting off from Richmond on time, the safety / support vessels were spread out along the length of the flotilla. Two boats were still tied alongside Richmond riverside as everyone else departed. As we rowed into the distance, these two boats were still alongside sorting out their regalia. One safety / support RIB was left there with their VHF radio, to report progress. By the time the flotilla reached the London Apprentice, Isleworth, the two cutters had still to depart Richmond. This proved very costly to their crews.

Messages were being passed both by VHF and mobile phones, between the safety / support boats as we learned that QRB was already at Fulham Football Ground while the tail end was now only at ULBC (where we boat each year for the Oxbridge Challenge). Far too much of a gap for the tailenders to dream of catching up.

By this time, the final two cutters were in sight and as we reached Putney it became obvious that the Goldsmiths were also struggling with the heat in the skerry One & All. Due to their obvious difficulty, the decision was made there and then to take them in tow.

One of the other cutters that had left Richmond really late, was also taken in tow at this stage. It was very apparent that the heat had taken its toll on them too. We were able to provide water and Haribo sweets to gently replenish their sugar and fluid levels.

Within a mile, we had to take the other of the late departure cutters in tow as well. We now had three boats in tow and were made aware that QRB Gloriana had already made it the St, Katherine's Pier and the procession were entering the Tower of London! The rear of the flotilla was still only just approaching Chelsea Bridge.

One of the towed cutters was set adrift from the tow at their request, as we passed HMS Belfast and they valiantly rowed the rest of the way in. The other two were towed onto St Kat's Pier by the attending RIB's.

Speaking of thanks again, it is really appreciated that Robbie Coleman and Will Woods of Silverfleet allow us to use the Pier at St Kat's. We hope we didn't get in the way of the operations side of things too much.

For those that managed to stay with Gloriana, we are in awe of your persistence and stamina. One can only hope you had the opportunity to replenish your liquid levels afterwards when you got on shore.

On arrival at St. Kat's my personal thanks go out to the young people from the Ahoy again. Without a break, they immediately set to and rafted together all our boats for towing back to their respective ends of the river while everyone else went ashore. Without quibbling at all, they started their tow on the tide toward the Ahoy.

They were accompanied by Sgain Dubh that had made it to Richmond and set off with the Flotilla. They rowed on from the finishing line, to Poplar Rowing Club where their boat was taken onto its trailer! When one considers the seniority of their crews years, it is in itself an amazing feat. Their sheer elation at having completed the task at hand is apparent from the emails since the event. They are looking forward to next years Tudor Pull already!

As for the rest of the boats heading upstream to Richmond, the tide was not due to turn at Tower until 18:20. By 17:00 we were all fried aboard the remaining safety / support boats and bit the bullet by deciding to bash back toward home against the ebb tide. By the time we reached Putney we had had enough. Tying up alongside the driftwood collector platform, we rested for the next two hours until the tide started to turn before riding it toward Richmond lock. By 23:30 we were tying up the rowing boats on Mark Edwards pontoon and setting off for home. The remaining two safety / support boats went ashore at 00:30. Tony Mason and Alfie from Molly Brown still had to get all the way back to The Ahoy to collect a car before going home. For the two of you, my undying respect and gratitude is given.

It doesn't end there though. Thanks go to Mark Edwards and the boat owners that took charge of their boats the next day; cleaned, covered and put them away. Shame not everyone did the same thing. Maybe next time, eh? These things don't 'just happen'.

Once again, thank you to everyone that made this event possible. And please, remember to organise your own boats for towing prior to, and for storage after events.



Roger Gould
Secretary and Treasurer for the TTRA