1930 Was it called originally, the motor, Thames motor cruising club, yeah. 
Started off next door actually and we switched over … during the war time, its quite an 
interesting, yeah, side of it, during the war.

We had five boats go down to Dunkirk, two were lost, 
there were more than five 
not from our club - it was a certain amount, two were lost, yeah, two didn’t come back.

They towed them down to Dover and then towed them across and then they left them and let 
them go, went to the shore to pick troops up and came back to the bigger ship and unloaded 
them. And they took a hell of a lot of boats, from all different clubs, all the way down the 
river.

And some of the owners insisted on going with their own boats otherwise the Navy was 
supposed to handle them. Some skippers weren’t going to part with theirs, anyway, I think 
we lost two boats and that’s why we have the right to fly the blue ensign. If you look most 
ensigns are red, ours are blue, has no-one got one out at the moment, no, it is a defaced 
ensign its blue with an ensign in the centre and our own badge on the side. It’s a special 
concession that we are allowed to fly it.

We have taken the boat across to France, Belgium, Holland and we’ve also been up river 
quite a lot, which is a bit more work because of all the locks to go through. I’m always on 
the front throwing the line, yes, he’s at the helm, he’s alright. But you do get some in the boat 
club and the wives on the front are not allowed to do anything until they are told to do it. But 
I always think I’m on the front of the boat and I can see what’s in front of me and I can see 
what’s there. We understand each other fairly well, anyway. He always takes the back line, I 
don’t have to run back, some of them have to do the front line then run to the back of the boat 
to tie that up you know. The general saying in the club is if there’s anything a bit difficult, the 
men usually say that’s a job for the wife.

Please note: the information contained in these interviews are the recollections and opinions 
of individuals and do not represent the official views of any organisation.

Drifting
Making a float out of driftwood and rubbish that collected behind his boat, Toby Butler spent 
weeks following the float into London guided by the current of the river. Wherever the float 
collided with the bank, he looked for someone to interview about their life and their relation-
ship with the Thames.

Toby Butler
I have been involved with oral history since I was a history undergraduate, and have 
organised/worked on oral history projects with communities in the USA, Wales and India.