

Memoryscape

Voices from the hidden history of the Thames

Memoryscape excerpt: Thames Motor Yacht Club

Peter Horsfield and Lynn Jones

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 relationship 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.

Memoryscape Audio Walks

<http://www.memoryscape.org.uk/index.htm>