

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 19

Thomas Doggett's Coat and Badge race



Access Information

Access to some of the records described in this leaflet may be at Guildhall Library. Please see our online catalogue or contact us for specific advice before making a special journey.

Background

Thomas Doggett, an Irish comedian and joint manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, provided in his will dated 10th September 1721, for a prize of a coat and silver badge to be rowed for annually by six watermen within a year of completing their apprenticeships.

"... Five Pounds for a Badge of Silver weighing about Twelve Ounces and representing Liberty to be given to be rowed for by Six Young Watermen according to my Custom, Eighteen Shillings for Cloath for a Livery whereon the said Badge is to be put, One Pound One Shilling for making up the said Livery and Buttons and Appurtenances to it.....all which I would have to be continued yearly forever in Commemoration of His Majesty King Georges happy Accession to the British Throne..."

Doggett was no innovator in founding a race, as it was common custom for rowing wagers to take place on the river. Being a Whig, he was passionately devoted to the House of Hanover and laid down that the race was to be held each "1st day of August forever" to commemorate the accession of George I, and he even adopted upon his silver badge the White Horse of Hanover with "Liberty" for the motto.

Doggett organised the race himself from 1715 until his death in 1721, when he left instructions for the event to be managed by Mr Edward Burt of the Admiralty Office. However, as this proved too much of a burden, it was arranged that the executors of his will paid over to the Fishmongers' Company £300 and that the Company, who also added £50 to the fund, should carry out Doggett's instructions.

The course was originally four and half miles long from "The Swan" at London Bridge to "The Swan" at Chelsea. The Barge Master of the Fishmongers' Company would start the race and the Clerk of Watermen and Lightermen's Hall would receive a fee of thirty shillings from each competitor (indicating that at one time the whole event was arranged by that Company). As a real test of stay and endurance, the race used to be rowed in heavy old wherries which had to be pulled up against the ebb tide - sometimes it took contestants nearly two hours to row the distance!

The race soon became open to abuses as contestants realised the advantages of using lighter undersized vessels. In some instances riotous behaviour was reported between competitors. In 1723, one of the leaders of the race had his "scull knocked away and a

big boat rowed across his bows". As a result, in 1769, the Fishmongers' Company decided to draw up some regulations to prevent such abuses. All vessels had to be "common Scullers Boats" and examined by the company. Originally, the six watermen were drawn by lots which meant that not all contestants had a fair chance of winning. Later in the 19th century a trial heat system at Putney was introduced to select the final best six men for the race.

The winner was paraded every year at a banquet at Fishmongers' Hall wearing a bright crimson coat with the silver badge on his right arm. At first the Coat and Badge formed the only prize, although later it was decided that the Fishmongers' Company should add ten pounds for the first prize and smaller sums of money for the runners up. A famous winner in 1730 was John Broughton, a champion pugilist. Another famous name was William Giles East, who won the race in 1887, the Sculling Championship of England in 1891, became a Queen's Waterman in 1898 and Barge Master to the King in 1906.

Doggett's Coat & Badge race is the oldest annually-contested event in the British sporting calendar. However, over the years there have been changes to Doggett's original instructions for the race. For example, from the 1950's amateur rowers were allowed to compete on the condition that they could not accept any prize money if they won. Today the race is held at the end of July, instead of the 1st of August, and in place of heavy wherries light sculling boats are rowed against the ebb tide. The average time taken is about 30 minutes.

Sources Available

A great deal of information can be found in the archives of the Fishmongers' Company (CLC/L/FE). The papers about Thomas Doggett's Coat and Badge, 1721-1832 (CLC/L/FE/G/055/MS07269) include: a copy of the will of Thomas Doggett, 1721; some lists of competitors and winners, 1815-32; a selection of posters for the race; and the Fishmongers' Company articles for starting the race, 1769.

A complete list of winners of Doggett's Coat and Badge race for the years 1716-1907 may be found in T. A. Cook & G. Nickalls, *Thomas Doggett Deceased*, 1908 (44.09 DOG). Further incomplete lists for the years 1780-1880 are included in the Autumn 1991 issue of *Cockney Ancestor*, and for 1902-1963 in the Fishmongers' Company programme of Livery Receptions, 1964 (Guildhall Library Pam 11200. Copy held at Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2V 7HH; email guildhall.library@cityoflondon.gov.uk). A list of winners of Doggett's Coat and Badge race 1780-2004 is appended below. A complete list of winners is to be found on the CD-ROM version of R. J. Cottrell's index to the apprentice bindings of the Waterman and Lightermen's Company (see Information Leaflet No. 18, 'Records of the Company of Watermen & Lightermen').

Various prints, photographs and newspaper cuttings about the race can be found in the Noble Collection of ephemera, as well as caricatures of Watermen and Lightermen by the famous early 19th century artist Thomas Rowlandson, all held at LMA.

The following sources relating to the history of Thomas Doggett's prize may also be of interest: The coat: the origin and times of Thomas Doggett's immortal wager: the story of the oldest annual sporting contest by R. G. Crouch, 2005; Thomas Doggett Pictured by Walter Leon, 1980 (44.09 DOG); "Notes on old Chelsea" by J. Jeffery, Home Counties Magazine, vol.8, 1906, p.279-82 and The Antiquary, vol.19, 1889, p.22-8.

Any enquiries concerning records of Thomas Doggett's Coat & Badge race not in the custody of LMA should be addressed to the Clerk, Fishmongers' Hall, London Bridge, London, EC4R 9EL.

Further information about the race can be found at www.ParishRegister.com, www.portcities.org.uk and at www.watermenhall.org.

Winners of Doggett's Coat and Badge Race between 1780 and 2004:

Year Won	Name	District
1780	Bradshaw, John J.	Pickle Herring
1781	Reeves, W.	Not known
1782	Trucke.	Tower
1783	Bowler, James.	Not Known
1784	Davis, John.	Queenhithe
1785	Not Known	Not Known
1786	Nash, James.	King Stairs, Horsleydown
1787	Rawlinson, B.	Bankside
1788	Radbourne, Thomas.	Wandsworth
1789	Curtis, J.	Not Known
1790	Byers.	Not Known
1791	Easton, Thomas.	Old Swan
1792	Kettleby, James.	Westminster
1793	Haley, Abraham.	Horseleydown
1794	Franklin, James.	Putney
1795	Parry, William.	Hungerford
1796	Thompson, James.	Wapping, Old Stairs
1797	Hill, James.	Bankside
1798	Williams, Thomas.	Ratcliffe Cross
1799	Dixon, John.	Paddington
1800	Burgoyne, John.	Blackfriars
1801	Curtis, John Robert.	Queenhithe
1802	Burns, William.	Limehouse
1803	Flower, John.	Hungerford
1804	Gingle, Charles.	Temple

Year Won	Name	District
1805	Johnson, Thomas.	Vauxhall
1806	Goodwin, John.	Ratcliffe Cross
1807	Evans, John A.	Mill Stairs
1808	Newell, George.	Battle Bridge
1809	Jury, Francis.	Hermitage
1810	Smart, James.	Strand
1811	Thorton, William.	Hungerford
1812	May, Richard.	Westminster
1813	Farson, Richard.	Bankside
1814	Harris, Richard.	Bankside
1815	Scott, John.	Bankside
1816	Tenham, Thomas.	Blackfriars
1817	Robson, James.	Wapping O Stairs
1818	Nicholls, William.	Greenwich
1819	Emery, William.	Hungerford
1820	Hartley, Joseph.	Strand
1821	Cole Senr., Thomas.	Chelsea
1822	Noulton, William.	Lambeth
1823	Butcher, George.	Hungerford
1824	Fogo, George.	Battle-Bridge
1825	Staples, George.	Battle-Bridge
1826	Poett, John.	Bankside
1827	Voss, James.	Fountain Stairs
1828	Mallett, R.	Lambeth
1829	Stubbs, S.	Old Barge House
1830	Butler, William.	Vauxhall
1831	Oliver, R.	Deptford
1832	Waight, Robert.	Bankside
1833	Maynard, George.	Lambeth
1834	Tomlinson, William.	Whitehall
1835	Dryson, William.	Kidney Stairs
1836	Morris, James.	Horselydown
1837	Harrison, Thomas.	Bankside
1838	Bridge, Samuel W.	Kidney Stairs
1839	Goodrum, Thomas.	Vauxhall Stairs
1840	Hawkins, William.	Kidney Stairs
1841	Moore, Richard.	Surrey Canal
1842	Liddey, James.	Wandsworth
1843	Fry, James.	Kidney Stairs
1844	Lett, Frederick.	Lambeth
1845	Cobb, F.	Greenwich
1846	Wing, John F.	Vimlico
1847	Ellis, William H.	Westminster
1848	Ash, John.	Rotherhithe
1849	Cole, Thomas.	Chelsea
1850	Campbell, William.	Westminster
1851	Wigget, George D.	Somers Quay

Year Won	Name	District
1852	Constable, Charles.	Lambeth
1853	Finnis, James R.	Tower
1854	Hemmings, David J.	Bankside
1855	White, Henry J.	Mill Stairs
1856	Everson, George W.	Greenwich
1857	White, Thomas C.	Mill Stairs
1858	Turner, Charles J.	Rotherhithe
1859	Farrow, Charles S.	Mill Stairs
1860	Phelps, Henry J.M.	Fulham
1861	Short, Samuel.	Bermondsey
1862	Messenger, John	Cherry Garden Stairs
1863	Young, Thomas.	Rotherhithe
1864	Coombes, David.	Horseleydown
1865	Wood, John W.	Mill Stairs
1866	Iles, Arthur.	Kew
1867	Maxwell, Henry M.	Custom House
1868	Egalton, Alfred.	Blackwall
1869	Wright, George.	Bermondsey
1870	Harding, Richard.	Blackwall
1871	MacKinney, Thomas J.	Richmond
1872	Green, Thomas G.	Hammersmith
1873	Messum, Henry.	Richmond
1874	Burwood, Robert W.	Wapping
1875	Phelps, William.	Putney
1876	Bulman, Charles T.	Shadwell
1877	Tarryer, John.	Rotherhithe
1878	Taylor, Thomas E.	Hermitage Stairs
1879	Cordery, Henry.	Putney
1880	Cobb, William J.	Putney
1881	Claridge, G. Richmond	Richmond
1882	Audsley, H.A.	Lambeth
1883	Lloyd, J.	Wandsworth
1884	Phelps, C.	Putney
1885	Mackinney, J.	Twickenham
1886	Cole, H.	Deptford
1887	East, W.G.	Richmond
1888	Harding, C.R.	Chelsea
1889	Green, G.M.	Lambeth
1890	Sanson, J.T.G.	Chiswick
1891	Barry, W.A.	Victoria Docks
1892	Webb, G.	Gravesend
1893	Harding, J. Jnr.	Chelsea
1894	Pearce, F.	Hammersmith
1895	Gibson, J.H.	Putney
1896	Carter, R.J.	Greenwich
1897	Bullman, T.	Wapping
1898	Carter, A.J.	Greenwich

Year Won	Name	District
1899	See, J.	Fulham
1900	Turffrey, J.J.	Bankside
1901	Brewer, A.H.	Putney
1902	Odell, R.G.	Lambeth
1903	Barry,E.	Wandsworth
1904	Pizzey, W.A.	Lambeth
1905	Silvester, H.	Hammersmith
1906	Brewer, E.L.	Putney
1907	Cook, A.T.	Hammersmith
1908	Graham, J.	Erith
1909	Luck, G.R.	Erith
1910	Pocock, R.J.	Elton
1911	Woodward Fisher, W.J.	Millwall
1912	Francis, L.E.	Kingston
1913	Gobbett, G.H.J.	Greenwich
1914	Mason, S.G.	Charlton
1915	West, L.P.J.	Wapping
1916	Pearce, F.W.	Hammersmith
1917	Blackman, J.H.	Gravesend
1918	Gibbs, A.	Richmond
1919	Phelps, H.T.	Putney
1920	Hayes, H.	Deptford
1921	Briggs, A.E.	Ratcliff Cross
1922	Phelps, T.J.	Putney
1923	Phelps, R.W.	Putney
1924	Green, H.C.	Poplar
1925	Barry, H.A.	Barnes Bridge
1926	Green, T.G.M.	Mortlake
1927	Barry, L.B.	Herne Hill
1928	Phelps, J.L.	Henley
1929	Taylor, C.F.	Blackwall
1930	Phelps, E.L.	Henley
1931	Harding, T.J.	Putney
1932	Silvester, H.T.	Hammersmith
1933	Phelps, E.L.	Putney
1934	Smith, H.J.	Gravesend
1935	Gobbett, A.E.	Blackwall
1936	Taylor, J.A.	Gravesend
1937	Silvester, W.F.	Hammersmith
1938	Phelps, E.H.	Putney
1939	Thomas, D.E.	Dagenham
1940	Lupton, E.G.	Northfleet
1941	Bowles, G.D.	Isleworth
1942	Dott, F. Erith	Erith
1943	McGuinness, E.F.	Greenwich
1944	Ambler, F. E.	Twickenham
1945	Thomas, S.	Dagenham

Year Won	Name	District
1946	Amson, J. D.	Northfleet
1947	Palmer, J. V.	Gravesend
1948	Clark, H. F.	Ilford
1949	Dymott, A. H.	Gravesend
1950	Palmer, G. J.	Gravesend
1951	Martin, M. J. A.	Upminster
1952	Green, G. E.	Putney
1953	Bowles, R. E.	Brentford
1954	Everest, K. C.	Hornchurch
1955	Goulding, J. T.	New Cross
1956	Williams, C.	Deptford
1957	Collins, K. C.	Downham
1958	Crouch, R. G.	East Greenwich
1959	Saunders, G. L.	Erith
1960	Easterling, R. W.	Lee
1961	Usher, K. R.	Limehouse
1962	Dearsley, C. A.	North Woolwich
1963	Alien, D.	Erith
1964	Walker, F. F.	Eltham
1965	Collins, A. G.	Bromley
1966	Stent, D.	Eltham
1967	Briggs, C. M.	East Ham
1968	Lupton, J. E.	Gravesend
1969	Grieves, L. E.,	Mile End
1970	Spencer, M. S.	Greenwich
1971	Dwan, K. V.	Gravesend
1972	Wilson, P.	Catford
1973	Prentice, R. A.	Wapping
1974	Lupton, R. E.	Gravesend
1975	Drury, C. M.	Battersea
1976	Prentice, P.	Wapping
1977	Dwan, J.	Dartford
1978	Macpherson, A. L.	Poplar
1979	Burwood, F. J.	Plaistow
1980	Woodward-Fisher, W.R.	Battersea
1981	Hickman, W. D.	Greenwich
1982	Anness, G. B.	West Ham
1983	Hickman, P. J.	Charlton
1984	McCarthy, S. J.	Blackheath
1985	Spencer, R. B.	Rainham
1986	Woodward-Fisher, C.J.	Westminster
1987	Spencer, C.	Dagenham
1988	Hayes, G. A.	Mottingham
1989	Humphrey, R.A.	Blackheath
1990	Collins, S. C.	Rotherhithe
1991	Neicho, L. C.	Sevenoaks
1992	McCarthy, J. J.	Blackheath

Year Won	Name	District
1993	Clifford, J. D.	Gravesend
1994	Bullas, C.	Higham
1995	Neicho, S.	Isle of Dogs
1996	Coleman, R. G.	Ladywell
1997	Russell, M. J.	Gravesend
1998	Bushnell, D. J.	Wargrave
1999	Woods, T.W.	Wapping
2000	Rickner B.	Greenwich
2001	Beasley, N.	Barking
2002	Dwan, N. R.	Swanley
2003	Cairns, Liam M. G	Greenwich
2004	Dwan, R. E.	Swanley

Published in March 2010 (rev. May 2011) by
London Metropolitan Archives
40 Northampton Road
London
EC1R OHB

Telephone: 020 7332 3820
Fax: 020 7833 9136
Email: ask.lma@cityoflondon.gov.uk

© London Metropolitan Archives

Except as otherwise permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the publisher, or in the case of reprographic reproduction, in accordance with the terms of a licence issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside those terms should be sent to the London Metropolitan Archives at the above address.