

Egham Regatta 1909 – 2000

Archives suggest that Egham Regatta was first held in 1909 on the reach above Bell Lock where it is still held today. Although there have been periods when the Regatta was not run such as during the First World War and during the Thirties, it has been and still is one of the most enjoyable junior regattas on the Thames.

The first formal Regatta was held in September 1909 and it took just a month to organise! The Minute Book of the Association are held in the Surrey History Centre in Woking and give a fascinating insight into the both the sport and the workings and attitudes of a small town at the beginning of the century. Certain themes keep cropping up such as the rivalries between local bands wishing to play at the event and which local firm would be given the tender to provide the catering. Would that people fight over that role today!

The first meeting was minuted thus:

10th August 1909 – Catherine Wheel Hotel, Egham High Street

F P Stock in the chair

A vote was taken that a Regatta be held on 9th September 1909 opposite the Varnish Works. It was proposed by Mr Leach and seconded by J Adams that the following races be held:

Rum Tum, Double Sculling (lady cox), Ditto mixed, Single Sculling (lady cox) ? Double Punting, Single Punting, Canoe, Tub and Elopement races and swimming – to finish with King of the Mop in canoes and Fancy Dress.

Entrance Fees: 1/6 single, 2/6 double punting and sculling, 1/- for any other.

It was decided to ask Messrs G W Herd & Sons whether they would lend a piece of ground for the purpose of an enclosure and charge admission of 1/-.

It was resolved that the Regatta would be advertised in the current week's paper with circulars asking for subscriptions etc etc.

It was resolved that a Band be engaged and the Town Band being at practice in a room adjoining, Mr Leach asked the secretary about how much they would attend for and he replied about £4 4/-, but this question was left to see how the subscriptions would come in.

Some well known Residents and Tradesmen were to be asked to be Vice-Presidents and this closed the business of the meeting, except that Mrs Rigden be asked to distribute the prizes.

17th August 1909 – Catherine Wheel Hotel, Egham High Street

Letters were received from various locals offering to be VPs and supporters and offering subscriptions and prizes. The Secretary reported Messrs Herd had kindly offered a piece of land for an enclosure and would become a subscriber. A letter was read from Mr W Beach suggesting to bring his steam launch. It was resolved that the Secretary write to the owner of the piece of land between the Varnish Works and the boathouses if he would lend this for access. The proposed entrance fees were raised to 2/- single, 4/- double, Tub Race, Elopement. Swimming and the King of the Mop 1/- each.

It was resolved that if sufficient funds be obtained, a prize should be given for the best illuminated (?) boat or punt. (Entrance fee 1/-)

It was resolved that the Secretary obtain tenders from Messrs H Loe and G Nye to the supply of refreshments and Mr J Hopkins be asked to supply the Tea Tent.

Tenders were submitted from the Egham Town Band (£4) and Egham and Englefield Green Public Brass Band (£4 10/-) for the playing of selections of music. The latter would give a subscription of 3/-.

It was resolved that the EEGPBB be engaged on the terms suggested provided that they guarantee not less than 18 performances.

It was resolved that the prizes (subject to funds received) be as follows:

Rum Tum £1 1/-, Souble Sculls £4/0/0. Single £1/5/0 Double Punt £1/10/-, Canoe £1/1/-, Tub 10/6, Elopement £1/0/0, Swimming Mr Loveragan's cup, single punting MRA Notley's prize. Total value £10/7/6.

The next meeting was held a week later 24th August 1909 – same venue.

It was reported that more subscriptions had been received and that the band had been confirmed.

It was resolved that the Regatta would adopt the Rules and Regulations of Staines Regatta – the same to be printed and used for the purpose. The Secretary to write to Mr Nelson of Staines requesting the use of his launch for umpires and also to write to the Thames Conservancy to notify them of the event.

There were to be prizes for starters as well (?) Mrs G Campbell Gifford to present the prizes to the successful competitors.

*It was proposed that 2 policemen be engaged on Regatta Day.
The Judges to be Messrs Shuffley, Grimes and Claypole.
The Umpires to be Messrs Campbell, Maudbridge, Menzies and Stock.
The Boat Stewards to be Messrs Nicholes, Richards and Wharton.*

A small Sub Committee is proposed to settle any matters not necessary for the attention of the whole committee.

*Mr Nicholls kindly offered boats, punts and canoes.
Mr Wharton offered Dressing Rooms for the Ladies and Gentlemen.*

*Mr Loe's offer for catering was accepted. 30 teas were offered at 9d per head, 25 luncheons at 2/- per head. It was resolved that luncheons and teas be provided for the Officials, Press and Police.
The Draw to take place on Friday 3rd September*

The Regatta was duly held and was considered a success.

The Post Mortem Meeting 15th September 1909

The offer of a launch had been gratefully accepted, as the original one had been unavailable on the day. Mr Nicholls had found 2 men to take the place of the Thames Conservancy officials till they arrived on Regatta Day.

*The Treasurer produced the accounts.
It was resolved that Mr Evershall of Grange Farm, Egham to audit the accounts and in future be Hon Auditor.*

Thanks were to be sent to all officials and subscribers.

The first AGM was held on 30th March 1910

All letters had been sent. The Auditors report and the Accounts had been printed and circulated.

The next Regatta was to be on Thursday August 18th.

The Committee was re-elected.

The proprietor of the Kings Head Hotel (Mr Nye) offered a Challenge Cup and a hearty vote of thanks was made.

The first meeting to arrange the 1910 Regatta was held at the Catherine Wheel Hotel, Egham. It was obvious that the committee wanted to improve on the first regatta with the introduction of horses and costumes! Thank goodness the committee do not have to worry about such things today.

10th June 1910

The Secretary had seen Mr Simmons of Chertsey regarding the purchase of staging.

It was resolved that Mr Beach's tender of £5 for ground for galloping horses be accepted and advertised.

Other events were to be included in the programme: Costume Race across the river and back (costumes to be provided by the committee), Tug of War in Punts, King of the Mop in canoes and Fancy Dress, Tub racing and Swimming (220 yards).

Egham and Staines Swimming Club to give a display and a box to be passed round.

The Regatta was once again a success as the surviving photos show. There was, however a small note of discord as minuted in the meeting of 30th October 1910:

The Secretary reported having had an interview with Mr Snelling regarding the Illuminated Boat for which he had claimed a prize. The Secretary had told him that the matter would be placed before the Committee. It was resolved to purchase a prize and present it. (Mr Snelling had seen fit to send a letter).

Mr Chapman having made application for the return of his entrance fees as the Regatta was not being held under ARA or SRA Rules, the Treasurer to draw a cheque.

The battle of the Bands was still continuing in 1914 with both of them offering good 'deals'! However, this was not to be resolved.....

Special Meeting August 7th 1914

A proposal was made that due to the very serious hostilities now taking place, that the Regatta be indefinitely postponed.

The Secretary was instructed to have some slips 'POSTPONED' printed and these to be pasted across the Posters of Announcement.

The Great War precluded any further regattas until 1919. On April 23rd, a meeting was held and a proposal made to re-institute the Regatta to be held on August 21st 1919.

This year the Windsor Borough Band came into the fray and undercut the others with a fee of 6 guineas!

By 1921 the entry fees were set as:

Double Sculling 7/6, Single Sculling 5/- Punting 5/- and 2/6 respectively. The meetings were by then held at the F Nicholes Boathouse.

One of the Twenties regattas was held in the grounds of the Bungalow site next to the Waterworks. 'Transport across to be arranged, cost to be included in entrance fee'

In 1928 a ladies Dinghy Race was introduced and the venue of meetings changed to the Anglers Hotel.

In 1930 the Refreshments were supplied by Horlicks & Sons of Slough! We assume this did not send the spectators to sleep!

In 1934 there were still Rum Tum Races held for the Egham Town Cup.

The Regatta was not held during the late Thirties and Forties but was reintroduced after the Second World War.

Why Egham 'International'?!

The present day Egham regatta is held the Sunday before Henley and has established itself as a popular fixture being the only one to host rowing, skiffing and punting events. During the 90's, quad and double sculling events have become increasingly popular, particularly with the schools whilst over half the events are now for women's or mixed crews. For school rowers it is an End of Term event and for skiffers and punters it is the first of the summer regattas. The 650 metre sprint course is rowed upstream and favours such as fours and scullers. In terms of numbers of events and races, Egham is placed within the top 10 regattas in England. Local schools and clubs competing have provided training and experience for future international rowers whilst overseas entries have included crews from as far afield as South Africa and Canada.