



History of the Marlow Town Regatta & Festival

Traditionally, the annual Rowing Regatta at Marlow has been the premier social and sporting event in the life of the Town since 1855. For rowers, its June date, just two weeks before Henley Royal Regatta each year, meant that foreign crews, particularly, came to Marlow to fine-tune their racing and enjoy 'Regatta Day'. The opening of a multi-lane 2000 metre international course at Dorney Lake in 2000 meant that most Henley Royal Regatta contenders would wish to race there, despite the charms of Marlow. A Marlow Regatta Subscribers' meeting accepted Dorney's offer to race there, in their pre-Henley slot, from 2001.

Marlow Regatta's decision to move to Dorney had been expected in Marlow. There was a positive reaction to the potential loss of our popular 'Regatta Day'. A Committee had been set-up, made-up of volunteers from other Marlow organisations, including Marlow Rowing Club and the Town Council, to plan for the continuation of a traditional 'Regatta Day' each year. With 6 months to go to June 2001 and its first Regatta – scheduled one week ahead of the Marlow Regatta at Dorney – the 'Marlow Town Regatta & Festival (MTRF)' was born!

The first 'MTRF', on Saturday 16th June 2001, set out to replicate the 'Garden Party' atmosphere of the earlier Regattas – and succeeded! In pouring rain, the good-humoured crowd in the Enclosures enjoyed the youth rowing programme with its mix of a few dragon boats and welcomed the MTRF Joint Presidents, Sir Steve and Lady Redgrave, still fresh from Sir Steve's 5th gold victory at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. The MTRF Committee was thus encouraged to proceed to a two day event in 2002.

MTRF 2002 established a 'Regatta Day' on Saturday which replicated the format of previous Regattas, with a full rowing programme during the day and a parking/picnic area on the Cricket ground. The new 'Festival Day' on Sunday was a more relaxed, family oriented event, with children's activities, a music programme, food court and bars in the general enclosure, and a full Dragon Boat programme on the river. Additionally, on both days, Exhibition and Trade Stands in the park were joined by a large Art & Craft Marquee and, for local clubs and societies, the 'Marlow Showcase'.

Despite some hiccoughs, the experimental two day formula had proved itself and became the norm for future MTRFs. A new 'Festival Day' activity from 2003 onwards - now an established success - would be an evening concert in the Enclosure featuring well-established 'Tribute Bands'.

After nine highly successful MTRF weekends, the Marlow Town Regatta and Festival is now firmly on the map as an annual event which combines a traditional rowing Regatta and its garden party ambiance with a 'family day' of Dragon Boat racing and a superb 'Tribute Band' concert to finish. Add-in an increasing number each year of Trade Stands, a large and popular Craft Fair, and the 'Marlow Showcase' - and there is more to do, and see, each year.