

The Tidal Crane Association

# Thirty-five years of river clearing: the tidal Crane 1977 - 2012



Royal Wedding river clearing, 1981.

During the mid-1970s a new generation of young couples began moving into the area adjoining our tidal end of the River Crane. The houses with long gardens, which backed onto the river, held a special attraction and many of the new residents began to access the river with small boats.

For almost 100 years residents had been layering their banks with household rubbish. While this might be an industrial archaeologist's dream, it was a nightmare for these keen new boatowners. At the bottom of the Bloore's garden, years of amateur bank raising/flood protection needed 'excavation'.

Among the objects found in the bank were a rusted fender, bed springs, mud thickened cloth, a water tank and corrugated iron, clay ginger beer bottles and part of a marble hearth. There were also two islands in the river, mainly made of garden waste which had caught on snags, one of which was the saddle of a bike which was buried in the river bed.

A small number of residents from both sides of the river also celebrated jointly: among the photographs of the occasion is one of Adam Cade on the River Crane with his canoe of celebratory 'visitors'.



1977, Adam Cade in a decorated canoe with royal visitors!



1982

The 1977 Queen's Jubilee was central to the coming together of residents from the banks of the Crane and the first River Clearing via jubilee organizing committees and street parties. Residents from the old 'Four Roads Association' (Northcote, Haliburton, Heron and Newry – the forerunner of the North St Margarets Residents' Association) held their street party in Newry Road. This included a performing 'bear' and a visit from the local Pearly King and Queen.

There was also something else to celebrate around this time. High spring tides in 1978 had coincided with a North Sea surge and caused bad flooding. Houses along the Crane were flooded by water coming up their gardens and also up the drains in the road. (A picture at the time shows Jonathan and Kate Griffin canoing up Haliburton Road!) The GLC announced plans to make the tidal Crane into an open concrete channel with a road running alongside it – their plans showed a Landrover driving along it. They had reckoned without the tenacity of the Haliburton Road residents who eventually, after a long battle, succeeded in getting the plans changed to the much more sympathetic 'staggered' culverting and landscaping seen today. As part of the agreement, their boats were also moored free of charge at local marinas while the works were completed.

Adam and Mary Cade had moved to the northern bank of the Crane (Eve Road) in 1976. Barney and Angie King also lived there and already had a boat. Doug and Celia Goodman (the last terraced house in Northcote Road), Pete and Sue Black (Haliburton Road) and Richard and Carolyn Bloore (Haliburton Road) were on the organizing committee for the 'Four Roads' and owned small boats as did Graham and Mary Paul (Haliburton Road). At that time, navigation was an intricate art and boating conversations centred round advice such as 'Watch out for the metal bedstead on the bend!' or 'There's a submerged post half into the river just before the bridge!'



In the early years there were major obstacles to clear like a fridge freezer and a motor scooter. Over time, the early clear-ups, tea and end-of-day barbecues developed into an annual event.

Initially, Mary Cade and Carolyn Bloore played a main role in the planning and organisation. Jonathan Griffin took on the role of liaison with the Port of London Authority arranging punts and skips and one year they provided a Thames lighter below the Talbot Road bridge. Adam Cade led the clearing with Bill Dixon and Chris Mac.

Days were chosen carefully for a late afternoon high tide when the aluminium punts loaned Port of London could be towed down taking the cleared rubbish to the slipway by the Railshead Road bridge to be picked up on the following Monday. Residents with boats would arrive at the afternoon tea by water!

For the 1981 Royal Wedding (and long weekend) small boats processed down the Crane and into the Thames. The Port of London Authority provided extra help and there is a photo of residents posing in the Crane for the Richmond and Twickenham Times.



An early barbecue

Post-jubilee heralded the arrival of Chris and Judy Macieokowski and Jonathan and Kate Griffin. By the end of the decade, other boat owners in Haliburton Road included Denis and Hilary ?, Simon and Annie Rouse, Keith and Bobby Hulse, Susie and Gareth and Kay Hoskins (who subsequently moved to Willow Cottage, now owned by Zina and Laura who host the River Clearing coffee). Bill Dixon accessed the Crane via a street manhole outside his house (worth investigation perhaps!)

The 1982 photographs show Port of London Authority employees removing old kitchen appliances and the skip outside Daisy Cottage has Sarah Dixon, on top of a skip full of rubbish with from the left Adam Cade, Carolyn Bloore, Mary Cade, Chris Mac, Richard Bloore, Adrian and Judy Mac.

As the river got cleaner, small children also got involved with events like 'fishing' and treasure hunts.

The popular format of coffee, river clearing, family tea and barbecue continues to this day. Thames 21, the London Rivers charity, became involved in 2008, supporting us with equipment, advice, insurance and the all-important waders and for the past few years River Dipping for children has become a popular feature.



Swimming in the Crane



With thanks to- Richard Bloore, 89 Haliburton Road

**Like to get involved in running River Clearing?** Please email [hilary.thomson@btinternet.com](mailto:hilary.thomson@btinternet.com)

**Interested in having a boat on the Crane and want to find out more?** Roberto Coladangelo at 57 Haliburton Road is planning a get-together with a view to bringing back more boats to the Crane. Please email him at [robertocoladangelo@gmail.com](mailto:robertocoladangelo@gmail.com)

### **Japanese Knotweed alert!**

Classified as the UK's most invasive species, Japanese Knotweed loves river banks, is capable of pushing through 3m of concrete and is currently breaking through patios and docks along the River Crane. **The Environment Agency ([www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk))** is continuing to spray the Knotweed on the banks and has asked if householders backing onto the Crane can tackle Knotweed in their gardens. *Their advice: in gardens wait until autumn, after it has flowered, then spray or paint on both sides of leaves where possible with a Glyphosate-based weedkiller such as Roundup, available from all garden centres.* For more information about Knotweed and some dramatic images see [www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/)

