

REGATTA WILL FLOAT YOUR BOAT

PHOTO: MOLESEYLIFE.CO.UK



Hundreds of competitors ready to don lycra and grace the stage in Molesey

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MOVE over Henley, the Molesey Regatta is about to take centre stage along the banks of the Thames on Hurst Park.

This year, it promises to be bigger and better than ever.

Now in its 151st year, it continues to strive to embrace the rowing community and the local residents to make the weekend an enjoyable experience for everyone.

"Obviously we want people to support us and to learn to row and participate whether they are juniors or adults and of any ability and background," said

assistant secretary for the regatta, Fiona Wood.

"The regatta is not a marketing campaign but more of an invitation to celebrate the occasion with the local community and the beautiful meadows of Hurst Park, which provide a glorious habitat for wild flowers, grasses and insect life such as bees and butterflies.

"It is where the communities of the river and the land truly come together. It comes towards the end of the regatta year and is the prom night of rowing."

The regatta is a huge event uniting East and West Molesey.

To set the scene, there are two large white marquees alongside two white witches' hats covered

in bunting and cascading flowering hanging baskets.

There are more than 700 boats of varying sizes and lengths lined up along the banks and more than 400 crews and 1,600 competitors, lycra-clad in their club colours getting ready to row a fiercely-fought two days of racing.

It is a popular event in the racing calendar as it has such a long history of being one of the best regattas and, in its heyday, is understood to have been up there with Henley as being the most popular regatta of the racing year. The Saturday course is 850 metres and is for seniors - adult rowers ranging from complete novices up to elite and ex-Olympians.

Wood says: "It has to be said that some of the most exciting races are between the novice rowers and experienced rowers fighting to the end with hearts pounding hard.

"In the lunch hour we are aiming to run an event in two wooden eights, which were built as copies of the original boats that raced the first Cambridge and Oxford Boat race in 1829.

"People with no rowing or racing experience will be invited to race - a short course only.

"This could be made up of local pubs putting forward teams - who knows? It provides lots of fun during the lunch hour.

"Prizegiving is held twice throughout the day - the first

with the local residing mayor."

The racing on Sunday is dedicated to the juniors (aged 11-18) and is a shorter course of 500 metres downstream.

The racing again attracts a large crowd and is a fun-packed day on the river.

"We encourage families to gather and enjoy a picnic and absorb the racing cheers and smells of a sunny summer's day by the river," adds Wood, who has a PHD in the history of brewing.

"This year we have put a huge effort into making this more of a community event so there is, in addition to two days of a fully-packed racing schedule, a beer festival sponsored by Fuller's, headlined by the Oddly Brewery, which is a micro brewery on the island opposite the racing stretch. This is Platts Eyot, which is linked by a narrow bridge to the Lower Sunbury Road.

"Brian, the brewer, started his first brew last year on the day of our 150th regatta so we just had to get together and do something special. There will be 15 different types of beers, including four from the Oddly Brewery, and the great thing is that in the event we run out of beer, we can get a top-up delivery by river.

"We want people to be there. The regatta wants to involve all local residents and local businesses so we have done a lot to make this happen this year."

In addition to the beer festival, there is a bar with wine, Champagne and Prosecco available.

A regatta would not be a regatta without its sandwich, cakes, teas, barbecue and Hog Roast, with veggie options too.

There is also a luncheon mar-

Factbox

- Rowing is one of the original sports in the modern Olympic Games
- Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, was a rower
- Eight-oared shells are about 60-feet long
- Though rowing looks like an upper-body sport, it's actually the rower's legs that provide power to the oar. At the catch - when the oar goes into the water - the rower's legs provide the drive. The arms and back then finish the stroke.
- If a rower loses control of an oar and does not remove it from the water at the end of the stroke, the oar will act as a brake. This is referred to as catching a crab.



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SPORT