

The Birth of HRRC

The story of HRRC begins in 1984 – 1987 when James Thomson built three Glauster gull rowing doreys and kept them in his back yard for people to row. Soon enough people came to use these boats regularly, Frank Sellew (Deputy Superintendent of Schools in Norfolk) being one of them. He later became a strong advocate of rowing in the NPS

In 1987 T Oliver, a neighbor of James, had a restaurant at the Colley Avenue bridge where the YWCA is now situated. He approached James wanting to host an event at the Rivers End Resturant to help publicize the place. It was therefore decided to hold a rowing regatta in June of 1987. The names of all people around town that had any, and all types of row boats were collected. There was one heat from the Granby Street Bridge to the Colley Avenue Bridge with all types of boats. Sandy Harris won the race because he had borrowed a racing single from a friend. There was a group of ODU students who had an old four that they rowed out of the university property on 52nd Street in the race also. The race was newsworthy and written up in the Compass. As a result more people contacted James wanting to take part. From then on it was decided to meet at the Rivers End every other Saturday to row. It was then that the Tidewater Rowing Club was established to help promote rowing in the area and also to support the ODU club. Money was then raised to build a dock on 52nd Street. \$10,000.00 was raised in total, Richard Cohen donating half of this.

1989 saw the construction of the dock, and yet more money raised for the purchase of a four for ODU. By that time James had up to 11 boats in his back yard, owned by club members.

In 1990 O'Sullivan's donated funds to build a dock, and the first club learn to row sessions were taught with the help of the Norfolk Parks and Rec. Department. The dock is still being used and is anchored behind O'Sullivan's with fountains on it. First Colony Coffee and Tea donated half of the money for the club to buy a new Kaschper four the following year. It was kept on a trailer at James' house, and taken back and forth to the Norfolk Yacht and Country Club on weekends. That year, saw the first HRRC Fall Regatta with Virginia Boat Club from Richmond and Virginia Rowing Club from Hampton. By then HRRC were also traveling to Richmond and Hampton to compete. Roy Newton put together the first junior boat with rowers from Maury and Cox. HRRC was participating in events at Town Point Park which brought more recognition to the club. By 1992 the roster had grown to 50 plus people and Stan Czliniski (gold medal 1964 men's 8 in Olympics) was coaching.

In 1993 ODU let HRRC build a fenced in area at 52nd Street. Nautical Adventures helped raise money and buy more boats. The club also borrowed an old 8 and 4 from Matthews County High School. E.K. Sloane gave HRRC \$65,000 to build a boathouse at 52nd St. Before we could get the boathouse built, it was becoming obvious that we were quickly out growing the 52nd St location and needed to move.

More to come!