

Friends

250 years ago in June 1775, the first Thames Regatta was held. Initial plans were made in April, and it was to be held on a date between the 20th and the 24th of June, weather dependent. The signal that the Regatta would go ahead was a red flag displayed over the centre arch of Westminster Bridge at 10am, and the bells of St. Margaret's would ring from 10am until 1pm. Without such a signal, it was to be understood that the committee had decided the weather was not on their side. As it happened, it was not until the 23rd that the great show was able to get on the road. Between twelve and thirteen hundred tickets were issued, and the parties were to supply their own boat or barge and were to congregate under Westminster Bridge in the early evening. There were also tickets available for some public barges. The race was between professional watermen, with rowers racing from Westminster Bridge to London Bridge and back again, against the tide. There would then be a concert and food at the Rotunda at Ranelagh. It was a great day and open to all. However, according to the Morning Chronicle of the 20th of June 1775, the Duchess of Devonshire expressed concerns about "being mixed with the mob" and asked her husband the Duke why he could not hire the Thames for the day.

The Duke and Duchess did attend, but it leaves us with an interesting thought. The Thames is in many ways a living river, the lifeblood of London which grew up around it, so much so, that songs have been written about "Old Father Thames", who keeps "rolling along, down to the mighty sea." However, we have a different source of living water, one which, like the Thames, is not available for private hire, but freely given to all who seek it. When Jesus offers this water to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well, she initially misunderstands him, thinking about how much easier her life would be if she didn't have to come and draw water from the well every day. The living water that Jesus gives however, is not the H₂O that our bodies need to thrive, but the deep, lifegiving water of the Spirit that flows through us body, mind and soul if we do but allow it. As we set sail each day on this great river of life, may we continue to allow the Spirit to flow through us and out into the world in which we live.

God bless, Vicci