

BRIXHAM ROYAL TORBAY HERITAGE SAILING REGATTA 25th & 26th May 2024

From Penny Jolley, Regatta Organiser

Brixham blossomed with beautiful boats over the late May bank holiday if not with beautiful weather! Crews arrived from all over the South West of England and the Isle of Wight to sail in company with a wide variety of heritage boats

It is now 28 years since the revival of the Heritage Regatta in its present form; the original event took place over 100 years ago under the auspices of King George V, whose Perpetual Challenge Cup(1914) is awarded annually to the fastest trawler. The King would have none other than Brixham Fishermen sailing his yacht as they 'are the best there is' – quite right!

The popularity and success are a tribute to the hard work of the Heritage Regatta Committee, its crew of stalwart volunteers, Brixham Yacht Club and Torbay Harbour Authority; the latter kindly extending special berthing facilities to our visiting Heritage vessels over the entire weekend, allowing the Regatta entry fee to be kept as low as possible, so a big thanks to them.

A total of 32 boats entered in the Regatta this year; the weather forecast for the days following was not friendly, which deterred some, especially those returning to work on Tuesday. Others stayed on a few more days and so we were able to enjoy their company longer with coffee and wine stops!

Boats and crews were met by the Regatta Bosun in the 'Follow Me' boat and pontoon crews assisted with mooring on Friday and Saturday. They were also met by the majestic sight of TS Royalist tied up on the Heritage pontoon. A full list of all boats at the regatta appears at the end of this article.

We started the Regatta this year with a visit from the local art studio 'Kick Up the Arts' and their Friday morning Home Education group. Royalist skipper, Angie Morris, very kindly had them on board with their parents – a fantastic experience for them evidenced by the broad smiles and happy faces of the youngsters. Thank you Royalist and 'Kick Up'. In addition the Brixham Art Society organised a Heritage Regatta Art Exhibition over the weekend generating much interest from locals, crews and visitors alike.

MDL kindly hosted a Reception on Friday evening. With the beautiful harmonies of the singing duo of Black Duo on the pontoon in the late sunshine increasing the enjoyment of the Reception. This was run by our new Regatta partners, Brixham Pirates, who have been a huge help and great fun, in amongst the visitors in their splendid costumes both as part of the Shanty Event on the Our Daddy and distributing our publicity leaflets on Sunday. The Town Heritage pontoon looked particularly spectacular with the TS Royalist lying alongside amongst the regatta boats dressed overall. And thanks to MDL for working so closely with the Regatta committee.

Following the reception Brixham Yacht Club invited the crews to their Friday evening 'Happy Hour' and the club continued to extend the warmest hospitality over the entire weekend, staff coping enthusiastically with the record numbers.

The scuddy skies gave arrivals an interesting sail to Brixham; an informal start to the proceedings was on offer to boats sailing up from the west who were able to join in the passage race from Dartmouth. This is a self-timed competition for boats both over and under 30'. Matawa (over 30') whistled around in just 9 minutes over the hour and Serentiy (under 30') just 6 minutes slower. Boats coming down from the Isle of Wight arrived on Thursday in calmer conditions and Minnow (with our seasoned regatta dog, Meg) won the Peter Blanchard trophy for the furthest distance travelled.

Everyone soon embraced the reality that actually regattas are all about moving boats around and socialising, interspersed with occasional bouts of sailing, amiable seamanship and entertainment. Saturday afternoon started with Missin' Tackle and All Hands On Deck singing shanties and songs of the sea on board the deck of the Our Daddy. The Heritage pontoon buzzed with sailors, pirates and visitors thoroughly enjoying themselves, not to mention the slightly bemused parents bring their children to the crew change on the Royalist!

An unexpected additional feature was the Aqua Adrenaline competition taking place on the other side of the Breakwater; after initial concerns re safety in passage for those small craft launching from the public slipway, we understand that they too had a great event. It shows that, as ever, most of us can work together happily side by side with a bit of give and take.

Registration at Brixham Yacht Club included distribution of excellent goodies bags, supported by Smugglers' Hotel, Regatta mugs courtesy of Dolphin boatyard and Regatta flags from Rockfish, was followed by the crews' traditional fish pie supper. This year numbers necessitated two sittings which all the crews worked around with good humour and much ale!

Our thanks to the Concours d'Elegance judge, Chris Coote, who assessed the assembled boats over the course of the weekend; Chris was the Chairman of Brixham Heritage Regatta for many years and has both a 'back catalogue' and an enthusiasm for BHR and its boats. An unenviable task amongst such a variety of yachts, trawlers, working boats, replicas and dinghies; thanks to him for the careful time and consideration he gave to the Regatta. The Our Daddy was Chris' well deserved and popular winner.

Sunday morning was gusty! A brisk westerly wind gave us practically dry conditions with frequent visiting clouds keeping the temperature down and the wind up. The presence of other boats and the safety boat gave some sailors the confidence (courage?) to head out and sail in conditions they hadn't experienced before. Well done! And thank you Tom Morrison for running the safety boat with your usual professional manner.

The Parade of Sail was led out by Royalist giving spectators on the Breakwater excellent views of the fleet. The Corinthian Sail in Company was started with the trawler Pilgrim leading out the 7 classes of boats. The regatta officer took the Heritage fleet on a reach due ENE from Battery Point beyond Breakwater Bay, then a fetch out into the middle of Torbay and a beat down towards the Paignton mark. The majority of the boats had a superb sail, with the fastest lap recorded for Matawa, winning the Ibex trophy.

Nearly all boats finished the 3 lap course; hard work but exhilarating sailing, and very commendable for the small working boats and ideal for the large boats. I think that every boat was (wisely) reefed.

Have a look at the Brixham Heritage Regatta Website and Facebook page for the photographs, taken by members of Paignton Photographic club, as well as those taken by individuals out on the Bay. Conditions didn't allow for the photographer's boat to launch so thanks to the Regatta crews for sharing.

Our Sunday curry buffet was followed by prize-giving; Rob Murray, chair of the Vigilance Trustees, presented the trophies and was proud to represent her. We are all delighted that Vigilance has returned looking very beautiful, but without masts, from her stay at Will Sterling's yard for 'major surgery'. Vigilance will be celebrating her 100th birthday next year, so watch this space! Regatta Chairman, Richard Spreckley had computed results in his inimitable manner. For full results please visit the Regatta website.

An additional award this year: the Junk Rig Association Medallion. JRA represents 37 countries and made this special award (the first of its kind) to Brixham Heritage Regatta “in appreciation”. It was accepted, with reciprocal appreciation and thanks, by Regatta Organiser, Penny Jolley.

A vote of thanks was made to BHR by Steve Dawe (Serenity) – his first regatta and he thought it was all incredible – the company, the sailing, the club, and the organisation – the first of many we hope Steve. Serenity won the Coronation Cup for the best newcomer.

Thanks go too to all the volunteers and the hard work by the berthing party was an enormous help; the behind the scenes staff at the Harbour Authority, Brixham Yacht Club, the ‘front of house’ and Regatta volunteers crew in their turquoise polo shirts. We wouldn’t be able to run the Regatta without them – or without all the lovely boats that come and take part. Thank you.

“We couldn’t believe the number of beautiful boats assembled – what hard work!”

“The friendliest Regatta – and gets better every year”

“We had to miss last year and feel as if we’re coming home!”

“The highlight of my sailing year!”

ENTRIES 2025

BOAT NAME

Bluebell
Charlie Bravo
Caupona
Chopsticks
Cynthia
Fly
Gap Year
Gladys
Isobel
Iskra
Krka
Little Tern
Matawa
Minnow
Mischief
Nora
Our Daddy
Periwinkle
Pilgrim
Puffin Billie
Radiance
Serenity
Squiggles
Susan J
Tamarind
Trio
Wender
Windsong

2026 dates:

Brixham Heritage Regatta 23rd – 24th May 2026