

PAC Thames Skiff Rowing and Thames Path Waddle 11th– 16th June 2026

This year the intrepid Penguins rashly attempted to find the source of the Thames and then, via a combination of walking and rowing, reach The Beetle and Wedge pub in Moultsford, some 72 miles away whilst raising some money for Penguins Against Cancer (PAC). The trip began inauspiciously in heavy rain. Mick the Pathfinder led the party from a busy lay-by on the Oxfordshire/Gloucestershire border through a number of sodden fields to a large stone set in a field. The recent deluge had clearly put paid to any hope of finding fire, and we had air and earth in abundance. Rather puzzlingly, however, we could find no water at the 'source of the Thames', merely a large hole. We therefore fell in behind Mick to follow the 'Thames' which consisted of a dry ditch. After approximately half a mile we came across a sizeable puddle and thereafter, by peering very hard, and using imagination, one could perhaps discern a trickle of flow. This called for a celebration, so some fine dry sherry was opened. The weather lifted and the remainder of the day saw us striding by what was now at least a modest stream. Lunch was eaten at the White Hart (symbol of Richard II). The afternoon passed pleasantly under blue skies and we eventually reached Cricklade by which time the Thames was recognisably a river. An evening of ribald humour and a pub supper preceded a much needed rest.



The source of the Thames



Walkers' lunch

The following day saw us rise early and walk along the Thames path in good weather supported by an occasional sweet sherry. Lunch was taken at the Red Lion (symbol of John of Gaunt). The day grew steadily hotter, and by the time we reached Lechlade, a long cool drink was called for. Unfortunately, our previous favourite haunt for pub games including pool, dominoes, darts and cribbage had closed down so we visited a number of other local hostelrys before enjoying an excellent curry.



Hanging tough at the Riverside, Lechlade

Day 3 brought the start of rowing with Tom the Boatmen supplying us with 2 skiffs this year. It's a bit like rowing a wheelbarrow. The crewing roster was hotly contested but eventually the Black Pig held Geraint, Tony, Graham and Charlie and the Good Ship Mars held Dai, Jem and Mick. We somehow managed to successfully transit through 5 locks and many miles of river, sustained by the on board Eski contents, and occasional riverside pub stops. We finally reached the delights of the Rose Revived at Newbridge and partook of an excellent dinner at the Harcourt Arms.



Dai and Mick are all ears for the H&S brief



The Black Pig underway

Following a splendid evening's social discourse and a good night's rest we set off for Oxford and the delights of the Head of the River Inn where we met up with the wonderful Terry McHugh and listened to an impromptu concert. After some sustenance, Geraint conducted us on a fascinating evening tour of Wadham College and associated venues.

Day 4 saw the walking party reformed with Mick, Charlotte and Charlie G, and Pat taking over Mick's place in the rowing squad. A languid passage including 5 locks saw us reach our overnight accommodation at the Chequers Inn, Burcot, access from the river being gained by transiting through the extensive gardens of a care home. This promoted some comment from the residents.



Reliving the water pistol scandal of 1982 Amphibious landing in Care Home garden.

The last day of rowing passed quickly with journey's end near the outstanding Beetle and Wedge pub in Moulsoford where we had an excellent overnight stay. Overall, a superb 6 days, searching for the source of the Thames, rowing and walking a considerable distance, raising money for PAC, seeing fascinating wildlife (including a kingfisher) and experiencing buffoonery, jests and japes of the highest order, and most puerile kind. Roll on next year.



Larks in the Lock



Journey's End

Charlie Beardmore