

THAMES BARRIER VISIT:

'HOW THINGS WORK' GROUP, 28TH MARCH 2017

Our arrival at the Barrier was heralded by bright sunshine reflecting impressively on the armadillo shaped covers on the machinery housings of the ten gates. The only activity on the river for a while was a lone log moving swiftly with the flow - not a crocodile, as suggested by a mischievous member of our Group!

Later we saw far more activity including pleasure boats, & boats carrying building material to nearby sites.

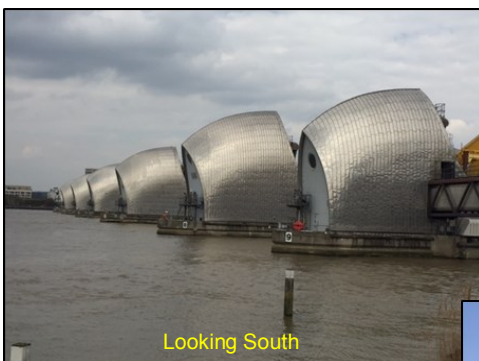
When needed the Barrier is closed (raised) during high tide. At low tide it can be opened to restore the river's flow towards the sea. We met with our guide, Pam, for welcome refreshments before receiving her excellent PowerPoint presentation packed with interesting information which certainly held our full attention.



Our Group

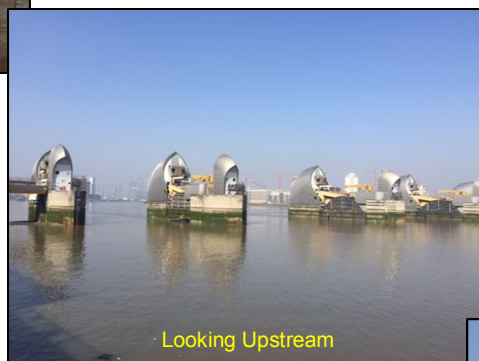
Among the aspects covered was the history of flooding in the London area dating back to Roman times. We touched on the potential consequences from September to March each year of low pressure, high tides & storm surges from the North Sea. Pam stressed the constant monitoring of conditions likely to result in flooding & the corresponding decisions on whether to close the Barrier.

We were informed about the concept arrived at by Reginald Charles Draper circa 1969 of a rotating gated Barrier originating from his observations of his gas taps! This led to the massive project in 1974 of erecting the barrier, which was primarily a British & Dutch project. It was completed in 1982.



The Barrier has been shut only three times this year – a notable contrast to the season, September to April 2013/14, when it was closed 50 times. The Environment Agency runs & maintains the Thames Barrier as well as London's other flood defences.

On current assessment the Barrier is expected to be adequate up to 2070. A replacement is expected to be sited in the region of the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge. It will cost billions of pounds.



Following the presentation & question time we headed for the impressive information centre. This included a working model of a 'gate', plus a video & a great deal more. Finally, Pam took us on a short walk alongside the river before passing through a tunnel which exhibits past flood levels & key landmarks along the Thames.

- ◆ The Thames Barrier is one of the largest movable flood barriers in the world.

This was a notably interesting & enjoyable morning's visit. The above is a brief summary

Ken Dare, 31st March 2017

