



Bell Barge

Photos: Maximilian Stephenson

RIVER PAGEANT BELLS

Of course the main reason I stood for the day on the members' terrace at Tate Modern for the Diamond Jubilee river pageant was because I think that Queen Elizabeth II is the best thing that has happened since (I suppose I should say) George VI, but high on my list of motives was to satisfy myself that the barge of bells would be a cacophonous disaster. I was quite wrong. I actually heard only very faint bells from the barge, and nothing from the City except for St Paul's, as the wind was blowing in the wrong direction. A foolish friend of mine decided at about lunch time that she would *pop down to the river in the City to see the pageant*. Of course she got nowhere near the river but said she arrived at St Paul's to hear the answering bells, and they were charming.

My view of the pageant was a bit like seeing the ballet at Covent Garden from the gods: I got the shapes and the atmosphere, but really didn't see that much. The barge of bells (Paul Taylor saw the newly married Dickon Love ringing on it) was fitted with a horizontal belfry: think *chaise longue* when a conventional belfry

is a 19C chief clerk's desk. One does see so much more and better on television: and that is how I watched the service of thanksgiving in the Cathedral, and wished the children had brushed their hair.

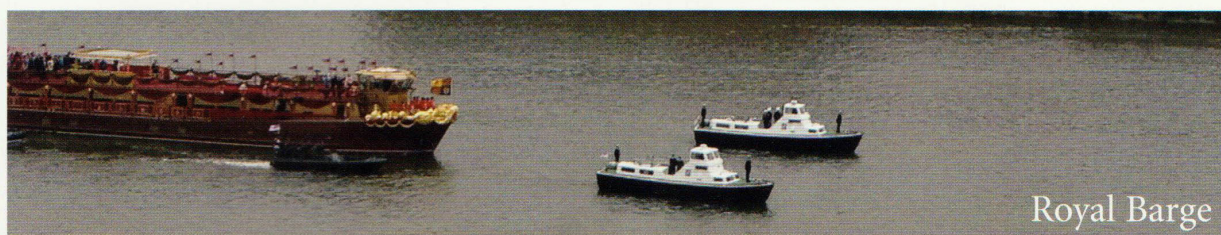
Now, I look forward to hearing these bells ring out from the bell tower of **St James Garlickhythe**: their baptism I missed on 17 June, and sadly have yet to hear them. Three times every working day I see both **St Magnus the Martyr** and **St James Garlickhythe**. The bells of St Magnus seem to ring for the whole of Saturday and Sunday and are lovely. My (im)patience is about to be rewarded. I understand that a quarter peal will have been rung by Sunday 22 July and on Wednesday 25 July at the patronal service, the first full peal. I am told by the Rector that if a bell ringer makes a mistake *it doesn't count as a peal* and so the first peal will be rescheduled.

If only life were like that: I got it wrong: it doesn't count!

Shall we have heard these bells before the FCC newsletter lands on our mats? *Judy Stephenson*



Gloriana Row Barge



Royal Barge