

THOARBOER

"Mosselrace" in Bruinisse. The adventure started the day before the race. In Amsterdam we had to load the BigLift boat on a trailer, to be pulled by a Landrover to Bruinisse in the province of Zeeland. The next morning a mobile crane lowered the boat in the water and we were towed towards the starting line. The 42 participating boats gathered at the start. There are slow, heavy rescue sloops participating as well as light and fast whaler type sloops. With intervals of one minute the boats were started in stes of two.

To plan a close finish with as many boats together as possible the slower boats set off first. A special formula for every sloop calculates the effort made by the crew which ultimately determines the winner.

The BigLift boat is a heavy and sturdy sloop that takes power to move. We were in the first start group. Wind and current were against us, but these women have what it takes. They rowed like mad-men and we managed to stay ahead of the whole fleet until we were almost halfway the race.

Every 20 minutes different rowers were allowed to have a drink, which prevented the sloop from slowing down too much. After rounding the half-way buoy, wind and current helped a bit and the tempo went up.

It is a friendly happening with lots of people knowing each other and when a sloop is overtaken by another the slower sloop cheers the faster one on. Ashore, the gathered crowd cheers for each sloop that passes the finish-line.

It took the women 1 hour and 40 minutes to complete the 12.6 km race. When the final results were announced we were fourth of the eight women teams. A 'rower's meal' of fresh mussels with bread was served for all and the evening was spent in the village of Bruinisse that had a fun fair with a shooting gallery and a ferris wheel. The pubs closed late that evening.

The next morning the sloop was again loaded on the trailer and pulled back to Amsterdam by the hired Landrover. The following Wednesday the women were training again in the "grachten" for the next race to come.

The H-T-race and the Mossel-race are not the only races in the annual calendar. There is a competition with several



Photo: Enk Fleumer

The crew.

classes that runs throughout the year which takes the teams to all corners of The Netherlands.

For the adventurous, there is a race on the Thames in London, one in Venice, Italy and next year there will be a chance for the BigLift team to join a race on the Volga in Russia.

The Harlingen-Terschelling race is considered to be one of the tougher races. It can be rough with strong winds, currents and rain or a blistering sunshine. That race usually takes about 4 or 5 hours. The race on the Volga is something else entirely. It will be a 145 km race, in the same class of sloops and the race may take up to 24 hours to complete!!! The double crew will row, eat and sleep all together in the sloop. 20 minutes rowing, 20 minutes resting. I hope they need a helmsman again.



The finish.