



Thames Sailing Barge Trust

NEWSLETTER

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2007 BLACKWATER MATCH



Rounding the Outer Mark, from left: Victor, Thistle, Mirosa, Decima and Adieu

With the delay of *Pudge's* return to the water, *Centaur* went it alone for the Match and even led... for a while...

The tides were kind to her passengers this year, who only had to rise at 6am. The third Barge to get under way towards the start line, we looked back at the gathered fleet moored below the hill of Maldon: a sight worth seeing.

Gladys joined the procession motoring down river, finding *Cygnnet* and others anchored near the start off Osea Island. Dropping anchor for a while, a discussion of Barge Match Classes, what makes a Barge fast or slow and *Centaur's* prospects was had over a filling breakfast.

To help that go down we wound up the anchor and did a trial run over the start line. It must have helped as *Centaur*, just ahead of *Cygnnet*, took the prize for 1st across the line, 32 seconds after the start cannon. So we were off, swapping the lead with *Victor* once or twice as the almost non-existent wind played games with us all. We held our own for a while, exchanged a kiss with *Betula* during a drifting moment, but slowly the wind built up and the other 12 Barges and assorted Smacks and Bawleys were catching us steadily as we passed the bulk of Bradwell Power Station.

As everyone started to make their tactical turns for the first mark, it became difficult to tell who was in front of who, but by the time *Centaur* had a close encounter with the final mark, the only Barge behind us was little *Cygnnet*. The one advantage of being on a slower

Barge is the view you get of the others as they catch and pass you by: perfect for photographers!

We enjoyed hazy sunshine and battled to make the most of a light following wind on our return upriver, setting everything as square as possible and eventually managing to get the stays'l set out on the booming-out pole after a couple of false starts... when the Skipper asks 'What's it doing in the water?', you know something hasn't gone quite right...

We finally passed the patiently waiting Committee boat for our cannon blast and carried straight on to moor up at Maldon and get ashore for a well-earned drink, dinner and the prize-giving.



Repertor and Decima coming up fast...

2007 Blackwater Sailing Barge Match Results.

Class 1, Stays'l:

- 1st *Victor*
- 2nd *Betula*
- 3rd *Centaur*

1st Over Line:

Centaur, 32 sec.

1st Round Outer Mark:

Victor

Class 2, Snr. Stays'l:

- 1st *Repertor*
- 2nd *Decima*
- 3rd *Wyvenhoe*

1st Over Line:

Phoenician, 1m 48s

1st Round Outer Mark:

Repertor

Class 3, Bowsprit:

- 1st *Mirosa*
- 2nd *Thistle*
- 3rd *Adieu*

1st Over Line:

Gladys, 30 sec.

1st Round Outer Mark:

Mirosa

Best Rounding of the Outer Mark: *Thistle*

Mirosa was the fastest Barge overall, finishing with a time of 4 hours 56 mins.

Alison Mercer

Matches are the ideal way to view Barges in action and they are the only time you'll see so many of the remaining active Barge fleet all together. You don't need to be experienced to come sailing on a Match day, first-timers are welcome. Check the Sailing Update for available places.

IN BRIEF

'100 CLUB'

Thank you to those who applied to join the '100' Club after last month's Newsletter article. We wish you all good luck in the coming year's draws.

Anyone who would still like to apply is welcome to do so: *Pudge* will benefit from your generosity and you may be a lucky winner in the future...

'OTHER' BARGE NEWS

The trustees of the *Dawn Sailing Barge Trust* relaunched *Dawn* on Saturday 19th May at Heybridge Basin.

Her refloating follows a ten-year restoration project and she is now having the finishing touches put to her. They were fortunate in being able to secure Heritage Lottery Funding for their work.

The plan is to have her available for charters and educational work by the end of this summer.

Meanwhile *Xylonite*, owned and run by the *Cirdan Trust* has serious problems with her metal hull and is unable to carry on her work until adequate repairs are done.

Elsewhere, *Thalatta* is being largely rebuilt, also after attracting a Lottery grant. Your Committee wishes they were more even-handed with their largesse...



BLACKWATER MATCH
clockwise from above:
Gladys makes her pass;
Adieu on the horizon; *Victor* creeps
past in low winds;
A *Smack* and *Thistle* carrying
everything she's got;
Part of the fleet at Maldon.



SAILING UPDATE

As you will know from the last newsletter, Pudge is nearing the end of her intensive rebuild - I saw her recently - and she's starting to look great. A lot of people have been doing a lot of hard work on her . I'm very grateful that everyone affected by chops and changes to the programme has without fail viewed their personal disappointment from the fuller picture of the Trust doing what we set out to do - preserving our barges for the future.

Meanwhile we are juggling to meet existing commitments with the one barge available. The Pin Mill Match Day itself is safe, but it has had to be shortened to a one day sail, so we can also honour a long standing charter booking. In addition we have been forced to cancel trip 10.

The next trip that needs some help is the SWALE MATCH - trip 14. Its a great Match, with a lovely atmosphere, and the prize giving at a really delightful and remote pub. Nowadays it's also our annual trip to Kent on a Trust sail.



We start at Ipswich and return there, so you have a superb coastal passage on either end of the match itself. As we cross the mouth of the Thames, close views of the WW2 Army Forts are a possibility, and of the new wind turbine farm on the Kentish flats.

Just a reminder about the day sails: all of them are 'family days' - you can bring children from 5 years old and Granny and Grandad too! If you have not sailed before, this is an excellent chance to have a one day taste, although you will be advised to join the barge the night before to be ready for the early start.

On the family sails and the youth charter young persons sail at a special rate: £56 for 2 days on the youth charter or £28 for the one day sail. The youth charter is an excellent chance for 12-18 year olds to have a sail without their parents in tow...

If you have any queries whatsoever please contact me on 02392 469139 to discuss, (but no later than 9 pm please), or via CREWING@BARGETRUST.ORG.

Andrew Berry

Trip No.	MONTH	DATE	FROM/TO	TRIP DESCRIPTION	PLACES AVAILABLE
9	July	7	IPSWICH	Pin Mill Match 1 day	full
11		21	IPSWICH	Family Day Sail	7
12		22	IPSWICH	Family Day Sail	7
14	August	3/4/5/6	IPSWICH	Swale Match (4 day)	7
15		11/12	IPSWICH	Suffolk Rivers and Coast	1
17		19	IPSWICH	Family Day Sail	7
18	Bank Hol	24/25/26/27	IPSWICH	R.Alde & R.Deben 4 day	6
19	Sep	1/2	IPSWICH	Colne Match / Brightlingsea	11
20		8/9	IPSWICH	R.Orwell & R.Stour	1
21		15/16	PASSAGE	Ipswich to Maldon 2 day	7
22		22/23	MALDON	PUDGE- R.Blackwater etc.	5
24	October	6/7	MALDON	R.Blackwater & R.Colne	10
25		13/14	MALDON	R.Blackwater & Essex Coast	1
26	August	15/16	IPSWICH	Youth Sail	10
27	August	17	IPSWICH	Family Day Sail	5

TRUST SAILS

I know that some of you have been experiencing the frustration of a cancelled sail, in some cases more than one and I want to express sincere apologies to all of you who have been disappointed as a result.

Your committee team have been working overtime to try and minimise these disappointments and at the same time fit as much work as we can around *Centaur* and whilst we may not always get it quite right, we are doing the very best we can and we do really appreciate your patience.

Those who have been working away at Maylandsea so hard for so long can see that Pudge really should be under way at some point in July, when hopefully these trials and tribulations will largely be behind us and we will have made a massive step forward towards *Pudge's* restoration.

To all of you who have contributed to this work and to those who have had sails cancelled, THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING. Without you all there would be little point in anything we try to do.

Brian Dawson

WARTIME EXPERIENCES OF A MERCHANT NAVY WIRELESS OPERATOR.'

As an aside to PUDGE's exploits at Dunkirk, readers might be interested in the experiences of long-time TSBT member Dick Wilkins who was in the Merchant Navy in the war years. He joined the TBSC with wife Joyce in 1975. The following is a summary of an incident he recounted in a talk he gave at a muster in 2004.

War Chronology:

Germany marches into Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg, May 10 th 1940.
Germany invades France in the North, May 15 th.
Dunkirk evacuation completed, June 4 th.
Paris falls, June 14 th.
British troopship ss LANCASTRIA bombed and sunk at St Nazaire, June 17th.
France surrenders, June 21 st.
It took a little longer to occupy the whole of France.

Richard tells about training as a Marconi wireless operator. Then in late May 1940, Richard was sailing on the CYMBULA a Shell tanker of 8000 grt. The voyage was to Constanza, Roumania, on the Black Sea, to load benzene. After loading a full cargo, she was ordered to sail for France but no definite port.

It was just after Dunkirk in early June 1940, and there were doubts about whether the cargo when unloaded would fall into enemy hands. The consequence was time spent waiting for instructions in Brest and Bordeaux. Finally they were told to go to Donges up the river Loire. It took a week to unload the cargo because only a small two-inch pipe was available.

The captain then phoned Shell in Paris for further orders. His story was that the phone was answered by a teutonic voice who told him to reload it all. He distrusted this and shortly afterwards an RN ship arrived and advised him to leave immediately.

They started down river, arriving at St Nazaire near the mouth of the Loire to find the place in chaos. Hundreds of bodies floating about and oil-covered survivors in the water. They had arrived on the 17th June within an hour of the sinking of the troopship ss LANCASTRIA, carrying 4000 men. She had been bombed, and sank in 30 minutes.

At the time Churchill considered the consequences for British morale to be so serious that the news was suppressed. There was fear that the bombers could return at any moment, but CYMBULA stayed on for an hour and picked up 243 survivors, and one dog that had been a mascot on the ship, completing five trips. Many of the rescued men when brought on board had no clothes on and were covered in oil. They were cleaned up and dressed in all the crew's spare clothing. As the crew consisted mostly of Chinese seamen, the survivors presented a bizarre sight in borrowed Chinese costume. CYMBULA made her escape before the bombers returned.

END

Continuing.

In January 1942, Richard was wireless operator on EMPIRE ACTIVITY which sailed from Birkenhead to join convoy PQ7 in Iceland en route to Murmansk carrying hurricane fighters as deck cargo. She returned with convoy PQ6 carrying some Russian diplomats who were very concerned at seeing mines floating by. They were however reassured on being told that the mines were British, and safe when seen floating. Fortunately visibility was good, and the ship was able to steer to avoid them.

Sent in by John Morgan

SUBMISSIONS.

We are always in need of articles, pictures, poems, sketches etc. for the newsletter. Do you have something you'd like to share? If you have, you can send it via e-mail or post: see contacts below. I'm happy to type up handwritten or typed copy and scan photos or other pictures. If you'd like something returned, please supply a S.A.E. Please don't post anything valuable or precious!

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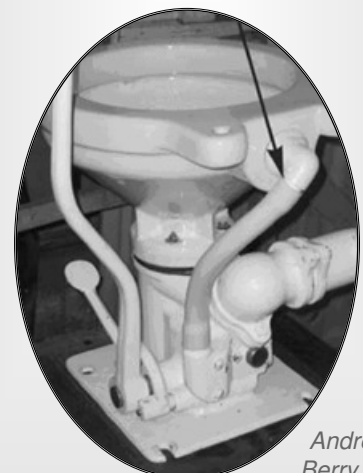
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REST IN PEACE

It is my sad duty to record the passing of a long term sailing companion in *Centaur*. A gentleman of somewhat unpredictable temperament, his ancestry - often questioned - was American, although whether his parents had been legally married was always the subject of much debate amongst those that knew him too intimately. In any argument he was never averse to giving back as good as he got.

Feared and respected in equal measures by the Mates, and seen as a sort of throne figure to be worshipped at on bended knee by Third Hands, he always occupied his own cabin in *Centaur*.

THE FORWARD HEADS 'GONE BUT NOT FORGIVEN'



Andrew
Berry