



Thames Sailing Barge Trust

NEWSLETTER

Issue No.44

May 2007



IN BRIEF

OPEN DAYS

Though affected by wet weather, Centaur saw a busy couple of days as we invited members of the public aboard to look around and find out about what we do.

We also raised a useful sum of money, the final figure still being calculated, but somewhere in the region of £730.

Many thanks to those who came to help with teas, tombola, book and merchandise sales, information stand and all else.

SALES OFFICER

As mentioned last month, we have a new Sales Officer. Here are his contact details for sales or any queries.

Barry Butler
tel: 01621 851044
email: barrylysette@tiscali.co.uk

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Annual Teddington River Festival and Teddington RNLI Lifeboat Station Open Day
Sunday 1 July 2007.

This event includes a wide range of activities and entertainment spanning the river from the Lifeboat Station to the Tow Path, including boats on display in the Barge Lock, river rescue demonstrations, sea safety road shows, live music, children's entertainment, fairground rides, beer tents, food stalls, art & craft fair, boat rides and more.

We look forward to meeting any of you who can visit us at our stand.



PUDGE

I know that at this moment in time, we are not quite there but...

As one who is unable to make a hands-on contribution to what has been going on at Maylandsea for the best part of 20 months, I would like to record the most sincere of thanks to all of you who have managed to put in time and effort in support of this most massive project, the like of which

we have never before undertaken.

I know that some of you have been there pretty much from the off and some have come forward following appeals made. To all of you who have, those of us who cannot owe you a debt of gratitude that these few lines I hope convey!!

As you will read below, the project has unfortunately overrun a little and it means that some of our early season sails have had to be cancelled. Whilst this is regretted I would also say, "Look what is being achieved for the Trust both now and of course for the Future". So if you have been inconvenienced, please bear with us and talk to Andrew Berry to fix up an alternative

Many, many thanks. *Brian Dawson*

The work on Pudge is going on apace, but with much still to do. Project Manager Peter Boss has been contending with, amongst other things, huge Iroko logs which turned out to have large cracks, making them useless to cut timber from. This problem has necessitated returning logs and having new ones cut and delivered on two occasions, delaying work for the Shipwright.

Fitting out internally is going on as quickly as is practicable and the plumbing is being bravely wrestled with! The weekend of the 19th and 20th saw volunteers delivering and fitting as much of the rigging as possible: the sails and final rigging will have to take place later.

One important job in need of skilled volunteers is deck caulking: until the deck is renewed during the next phase of restoration, we need to stop as many leaks as possible, for everyone's comfort! Any of you able to help? Please get in touch.

With all the delays, Pudge will not be ready to refloat until the beginning of July. To put this in perspective though, for an 18 month project of this scale and complexity to come in only 6 weeks or so behind schedule is an amazing achievement, especially when you consider that much of the work has been done in peoples' spare time. It puts Wembley Stadium to shame...

Ali Mercer



SO I WENT TO SEA

Being the second part of the Harold Mann Saga, from 'AHOY!', August 1957

As I was saying, I left the old "R--" at Ipswich and having walked aboard the "S--" and asked for a berth I sailed within the hour. While the "R--" was 180 tons gross, carried a crew of three and might be called the flagship of the firm's vessels, the "S--" was 945 tons, had a crew of twelve and belonged to one of the largest coasting firms. A ton, by the way, is a unit of volume, 100 cubic feet. Gross tonnage is the capacity of the entire hull and nett tonnage is the "earning space" or holds in the case of a cargo ship. As to weight of cargo, the "R--" carried 210 tons and the "S--" 1050 tons.

The crew of my new ship comprised skipper, two mates, four deck hands, three engineers, cook and cabin-boy. She was eleven years old and provided her crew with a cabin apiece, foc'sle accommodation being a thing of the past except in the older ships. The mate of the "S--" was a Swede, but, having married a Cornish girl, there was no place like Cornwall for him. He used to call himself "The Deputy Mayor of Truro" and had once received a letter addressed to "The Big Swede, Truro". He had learnt his stuff in square-riggers such as the "Viking" and had been in sail until 1933. At first what with his accent and my ignorance there was an occasional crisis. One was due to my misunderstanding of his order "Surge" and another was to mistake "Vast heaving" for "Faster", which might have been disastrous as the heaving was being done by an electric windlass. However, these things all got sorted out and eventually Olaf and I got on quite well.

I soon had new shipmates as the other three deckies as well as the third engineer and cook were all paying off for Christmas. We also had a relief skipper since ours, a former bargeman, had injured his shoulder. Only two hands could be mustered at that time. Ron was an ex-miner and judging by the progress he made is no doubt by now also an ex-sailor. Len had done some trawling and had lost a "cushy number" on a Boom-Defence Vessel through a weakness for certain ladies. In the hope of keeping

out of further mischief he sprouted a set of blonde whiskers but when we went to Brussels a few weeks later he whipped them off again in case that city should yield opportunities too good to be missed. It didn't.

Our main freights at this time were coal and cement. We went North either light or with cement from the Thames to Leith and loaded coal at Blyth, the Tyne or Goole. Bound for Leith one night in a N.E. gale I was roused from my "stand-by" by the A.B. of the watch. Apparently the anchor brake had failed and had allowed the anchor to drop in forty fathoms whilst the ship was steaming full ahead. Wind and tide cut our speed down to four or five knots, which saved the anchor and cable from carrying away. We got power on deck from the engine-room and set about heaving up. The A.B. and I got into the foc'sle to stow the cable so we were at least sheltered. When the five shackles (75 fathoms) were in we secured the anchor with a wire, during which operation the A.B. nearly fell overboard. I don't think I ever saw anyone as cold as the mate was that night. He was heard to say later that it was only by the grace of God that we didn't go to the bottom. I hadn't seen it that way myself, but maybe he was right. It is as well to be ignorant sometimes.

Coastal navigation is now much simplified by the Decca "Navigator" apparatus. This picks up continuous transmissions from shore stations and gives readings on three clocks. The figures are plotted on a special chart overprinted with lattices of red, green and purple lines and a fix is obtained. A check is made on the set when passing a known position such as a buoy or light-vessel.

After delivering our cargo of "Tide" and "Dref" to Brussels we went round to Rotterdam, going alongside a Panamanian ship from which we were to load American coal for Poole. As we were moored in mid-stream, to go ashore meant a trip in the Spido or water-bus and for some reason I was the only one willing to make the effort. A companion would probably have saved me from thinking that a guildler was worth about a shilling and thus paying 14/- for a dinner. However, that meal, eaten in a Chinese restaurant, with nightlights under the dishes to keep the food warm, was one to remember.

From Poole we crossed the Channel to load wheat at Le Treport, where a few members of the Group will remember the Cafe du Bassin and Marie-Helene. The loading was a desultory affair and we spent a lot of time playing a kind of international football on

the quayside until it became too cold to play. The log at this time had a daily entry "crew engaged on various duties", which I suppose was one way of describing it. During our return from Le Treport the cargo shifted and we put into Boulogne outer harbour. The loose grain was covered with bagged stuff to stabilise it, so we had to drag a good number of bags across the hold to get the ship back into reasonable trim. Then the anchor windlass broke down and we spent some time chipping the ice off the fore part of the ship. The second (mate) declared that the spirit in the standard compass on "monkey island" was frozen. I guess he'd gone to draw some off, the old man having confiscated his whiskey, an occasional surfeit of which rendered him unfit for duty.

The wheat was discharged at the Victoria Dock and as we manoeuvred to take the lock into the river at Woolwich there occurred another instance of that lack of sympathy between skippers and lock-masters which I have mentioned before. Astern of us came the "Pindar", 18000tons, with tugs in attendance. As the gates opened, admitting flotillas of tugs and lighters, there came a voice over the loud-hailer "That E-- Company ship keep clear". There was no response from the "S--" and the message was repeated. Clearly we were meant to lose our lock and as it was 11 p.m. and pretty parky no-one thought much of the idea. Then the small craft cleared and Captain C--, officiating as usual in red beret and carpet slippers gave her a splash ahead. The lock-master was, to put it mildly, resentful of this move and various pleasantries were exchanged "I'm master of this b--y lock", "We were here first", "I'll remember you". All very unbecoming to an artery of the nation's commerce. Possession, however, was the whole of the law and in fact "Pindar" was packed-in with us though the "S--" had been expected to stand off for an hour just to make the job easier.

Now the "S--" went in for a lengthy overhaul, dry-docking and four-yearly survey. During this time the ship's articles expired so that the half-dozen of us who were left were technically discharged and wanting to complete twelve months' service before Christmas I was on the look-out for another ship.

The "A--" was in the next dry-dock and I found that she was a seaman short a few days before she was due to sail. I was duly signed on, having lost only eight days, and after the compass had been swung in Yarmouth Roads, was once more bound for Blyth. It was a fine Saturday afternoon when we put to sea, but this was an English June and soon we were shoving into a gale from the

N.N.W. Before very long I was fit for little but my turn on the wheel and off watch I sought the solace of my bunk only to be regularly shaken like a rat by a terrier every time the screw left the water. We reached Blyth about fourteen hours later than normal and were not wanted until afternoon, so the mate, who was a good sort, told us to turn in after breakfast. Bless you, Eric, for that kind thought! The skipper, too, was a gentleman. A former coasting schooner captain he was semi-retired, turning out as relief skipper and neither the elements nor the owners worried John T--. One evening it came on thick down towards Flamboro' Head and we could hear a ship blowing ahead of us. Eventually she appeared fine on the bow and only about 300 yards ahead of us. So it was dead slow and hard astarboard. She was, maybe, five or six thousand tons and as we passed, out came John on the lower bridge. His only comment was "Well, I'm b--d" and he turned and went back into his cabin. After a little the regular skipper and mate returned which placed us under Irish rule and a fresh A.B. joined - a dram-drinking Scot. Alas, poor Jock, I knew him well. Surely he was digging his grave with a corkscrew. We were still in the coal and cement trade and remained so for three months, after which I took some leave.

Upon my return I was sent to another "A --" at Rochester. She was a sister-ship to the last one. For a while the cook was the only hand with an A.B.'s ticket but we soon had some changes, the general effect of which was to make me look forward to paying off at Christmas, not knowing I was destined to do so at the beginning of November. One of the regular coal runs was Blyth to Ipswich which is more or less the home of the surviving sailing barges. Now this whole business began with meeting a barge skipper in the "Ship" at Maldon over two years ago. I was to have gone with him as mate but the job fell through, which was how I came to ship in the "R --". Astern of us at Ipswich lay the "P --" her gear lowered down and the skipper busy freeing the rigging screws. What more natural than to stop and then ask him if he knew of a mate's job anywhere? There was, right there, and rather than delude me the skipper painted as black a picture of it as he could. So I was faced with all the doubts that went with something I had long wanted to do and was unlikely to have the chance of doing again. I don't think, on looking back, that I had much option and I left the "A --" in London with a forecast from her skipper of "dirty nights down Swin in her" and one from the mate that I wouldn't last more than a month. I thought that the old man might well be right, but I ventured to have a doubt about the mate's prophecy.

CENTAUR BOOKING UPDATE - MAY

As you will read elsewhere, due to unforeseen circumstances the re-commissioning of PUDGE has been delayed, and so from a financial viewpoint the Trust has no choice but to use CENTAUR to cover existing charter commitments.

This has impacted everyone booked on trip 6 and trip 7: those people concerned have already been contacted. Ironically trip 6 was the only trip that was fully booked for the year so far.

Trip 7, the passage is not required, but CENTAUR will be moved to Ipswich in time for the Pin Mill Match (TRIP 9), which is now the next chance you have to sail her - there are a few places left if you are quick.

The Blackwater Match (TRIP 4) is safe and there are a few places left - as although we originally planned to enter both barges in the Match, we had in fact kept CENTAUR clear of bookings, so the entire 'PUDGE' crew will be sailing CENTAUR that day.

In addition, the take up of the day sails has been poor, so we will run all of them as family days - you can bring accompanied youths between 5 and 18 years old. If you have not sailed before this is an excellent chance to have a one day taster- 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.

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 23/05/07

CENTAUR BOOKINGS 2007					
TRIP NO.	MONTH	DAY	FROM / TO	TRIP DESCRIPTION	PLACES AVAILABLE
4	June	9	Maldon	BW match now on CENTAUR	2
9	Jul	07/08	Ipswich	Pin Mill Match	3
10		14/15	Ipswich	R.Orwell & R.Stour - Mistley lunch	4
11		21	Ipswich	FAMILY	9
12		22	Ipswich	FAMILY	5
14	Aug	03 - 06	Ipswich	Swale Match (4 day)	10
15		11/12	Ipswich	Staffolk Rivers and Coast	FULL
17		19	Ipswich	Ipswich 1 Day Sail	7
18	Bank Hol	24 to 27	Ipswich	R.Alde and R.Deben 4 Day	6
19	Aug	31/01/02	Ipswich	Colne Match / Brightlingsea	11
20	Sept	08/09	Ipswich	R.Orwell & R.Stour	8
21		15/16	PASSAGE	2 Days Ipswich to Maldon	7
22		22/23	Maldon	PUDGE -R. Blackwater etc	6
24	Oct	6/7	Maldon	River Blackwater and R Colne	10
25		13/14	Maldon	River Blackwater and Essex coast	4
26	Aug	15/16	IPSWICH	YOUTH	10
27	Aug	17	IPSWICH	FAMILY	7

'ONE HUNDRED' CLUB

Pudge is now reaching a significant point in her restoration and the expenditure has depleted our funds. Consequently, I would like to remind you all that you can help raise extra funds by becoming a member of the **Pudge "100" Club**.

Basically, members donate funds for chances for a year. £12 gives them 1 chance in a draw every 2 months, where the prizes are 1st- £50, 2nd - £20, 3rd - £10. Members can donate in multiples of £12, which gives them more chances. This is one way you can give extra fund-raising help, with a chance of getting your money back.

We have just passed over to Brian Dawson £5000 to pay towards an extra log of Iroko that was not in the original estimates. With this in mind, I hope you will consider joining the "100 Club" for the next year.

The S.B.Pudge 21002 Club

The object of the club is to raise funds for the restoration of S.B. Pudge.

Promoter: T. O'Sullivan, 22 Lonsdale Court, Stevenage, Herts. SG1 5EL

Rules.

1. The fee for membership of the Thames Barge Sailing Club "100" Club (the "100" Club) shall be £1 per month per share, payable in advance. No member may be admitted to participate in the draw by chance except after payment.
2. Membership shall be limited to 100 fully paid up members over 18 years of age. Any number of chances may be purchased, but there is no variation permitted to the monthly subscription.
3. There will be a maximum of 6 draws annually.
4. Prizes will be paid as follows: Bi-Monthly, 1st- £50, 2nd- £20, 3rd- £10.
5. No prize will be paid to any member other than the member holding the winning membership share number.
6. Share numbers are not transferable, but on a member's default in paying for their draw number when called upon to do so, it shall be withdrawn and may be reallocated to another member.
7. The draw will take place Bi-Monthly at a general Committee Meeting or at any other time and place as may be decided from time to time. Winners will be paid as soon as is practicable thereafter and details will be published in the Trust Newsletter.
8. In the event that the membership of the "100" Club is less than 100 members, the promoter shall be entitled to reduce the amounts of the prizes or number of draws (or both), provided however that in these circumstances the ratio of prize money to subscriptions shall not be affected. In case of any dispute the Committee ruling shall be final.
9. In the event that demand for membership of the "100" Club exceeds the 100 shares available, an additional 50 shares may be allocated with the proportionate increase in prize money, or increase in the frequency of the draws.
10. The minimum period of membership is one year.

THE S.B. PUDGE "100" CLUB MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2007

Completed forms and cheques where applicable should be sent to:

T.O'Sullivan,
22 Lonsdale Court,
Pin Green,
Stevenage,
Herts.
SG1 5EL

I wish to apply for membership of the Thames Sailing Barge Trust
S.B. Pudge "100" Club. I confirm that I am a Trust member and over
18 years of age. I confirm that I have read and am in agreement with
the "100" Club rules.

Please complete in capitals:

FULL NAME.....

ADDRESS

.....

.....

POSTCODE

SIGNATURE.....

DATE

TEL NO.

I wish to purchase.....chances per month at £1 per chance per
month.

I wish to pay on an annual basis (12 month period) and enclose a
cheque for £..... payable to the: 'Thames Sailing Barge Trust'.



Fed up with seeing my photos yet?

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!

USEFUL CONTACTS...

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For other committee members' details,
please see previous Newsletters.