

# Golden Chaffcutter

## Thames Sailing Barge Trust



Issue 136

[www.bargetrust.org](http://www.bargetrust.org)

October 2021

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*Centaur on the Orwell this Summer. Picture taken by Tim Craske*

## From the Helm

As I write these notes, there is a definite chill in the air, suggesting that barge sailing is all but finished for this season. Of course, that means derig and start on the maintenance all over again. Hopefully this winter we will be able to get more volunteers down to support Tim on Centaur.

In the end it has been a funny season again, very much for reasons beyond our control. Covid has had an impact in some unexpected ways, and we must learn to adapt and manage as best we can going forward. One of the problems we have experienced has been the shortage of available

crew. I believe that, as restrictions have lifted people in general have been busy catching up on all sorts of things, and sometimes we have been lower down the list than we would have liked.

Of course, this highlights the importance of the training scheme and the need to get trainees through to sail as mates, and of course skippers.

I am delighted that some of our more experienced Mates are now being prepared for their first crack at the Bargemasters Qualification Panel. I will not put any more pressure on them by naming names, but I do wish everyone sitting a panel this

winter the very best of luck. We will also hold the annual Skippers and Mates meeting to assess how our Third Hands have been getting on.

Inside this edition of the Golden Chaffcutter you will find the notice for the 2021 AGM Although we have had to set a date at the end rather than the beginning of the season, I hope many will attend. All things being equal, this will be a more familiar experience than last time. The AGM is the main opportunity for new faces to come forward and join the committee or take on roles within the Trust. Whilst, in my opinion, we have an exceptional group of people looking after the Trust, at



the moment, there is always a space for new blood, and I would urge you to consider offering your services if you can.

I have taken the decision to step down as Chairman from the AGM. This is a personal decision influenced by increasing work commitments and a recent house move. I had only ever intended to be the interim Chair as we bedded in new Trustees and completed the Pudge project. The time is now right to pass over to someone new, possibly younger, to lead the next phase of the Trust's development. With Pudge coming back on board for 2022 that can only be an exciting posi-

tive future.

It has been a privilege to act as Chairman and I am very grateful to everyone who has been so supportive, Trustees and Committee members of course, but also all the skippers and mates, the maintenance teams, the pop up shop volunteers and so many more, who all, unselfishly make the Trust work. You all know who you are, thank you. I will still be around doing some painting and oiling, and of course back behind the wheel for 2022.

On the subject of Pudge, and as I write, Kevin is starting the internal refit work. A detailed specification has been prepared for the work, however a very

careful eye has to be kept on spending as we near the total of our budget. The technical group is being led by Mick Nolan for this part of the contract, and already Mick, together with John Rayment have had volunteer teams preparing the hold for Kevin to get started. It all looks great. The priority will be to get Pudge ready to sail next season. It may be that some of the internal work will carry over and some additional fundraising undertaken.

I look forward to seeing as many members as possible at the AGM and wish you all a safe and healthy close season.

*Peter Taylor*

## Membership Matters

We welcome the following new members to the Trust in the last two months:

Mr & Mrs A. Lay - Maldon

Mr & Mrs A. Vincent—Maldon

Mr K. Paxman—Manningtree

Mr R. Deering—Chingford

Mr & Mrs T. Jones—Maldon

The Trust has a life membership category and we are happy for members to upgrade their membership at anytime.

If any members would like to consider upgrading then please contact the membership secretary.

Trust membership may also be a good Birthday/Christmas present so if you have a friend who you know is interested in sailing barges then why not get them a years membership subscription.

If you have any questions about membership, please contact the membership secretary, John Rayment at: 25 Repertor Drive, Maldon, Essex

CM9 6FQ.  
Tel: 07587 141054 or at:  
membership@bargetrust.org.

Membership rates for new members are now:  
Full Member: £35 pa  
Joint Membership £50 pa  
Joint Concession £40 pa  
Corporate Membership £360 pa  
Life Membership £600  
(Concession [65+] £400)  
Joint Life Membership £900  
(Concession [65+] £600)

*John Rayment*

## Laying Up Supper

The Trust are holding the Laying Up Supper on Saturday 20th November. This will be the first social event since Covid and we are hoping that the event is well attended as in the past.

A form for tickets was included with the last edition of the newsletter. As normal, places are restricted so it is first come

first serve in terms of bookings.

At the time of publication there are some spaces remaining so if you would like to attend you need to get your booking form in to John Rayment by the 31st October.

Unfortunately costs have risen since the last event so there has had to be a small increase in the

ticket price.

The supper will follow this years AGM, details of which will appear later in this newsletter.

Those members who may have a distance to travel, a new Travelodge has recently opened in Maldon.

## Dates for your Diary



### Working Parties

The Thursday Group are working on Pudge and have now reverted back to just Thursdays for the time being. Anyone interested in getting involved

please contact John Rayment on 07587 141054. No specific skills needed.

### Centaur Weekend Working Party Dates to the end of December

Sat & Sun 30th & 31st October  
Sat & Sun 13th & 14th November  
Sat & Sun 27th & 28th November  
Sat & Sun 11th & 12th December

### Events

**Annual General Meeting and Laying Up Supper**  
Saturday 20th November 2021

Maldon Little Ship Club, Hythe, Maldon Full details on the AGM are towards the back of this newsletter.

A form to purchase tickets for the Laying Up Supper was enclosed with the last newsletter.

### Advance Notice Pudge 100th Birthday Dinner

Saturday 16th July 2022  
Maldon Town Hall, Market Hill, Maldon

## Centaur Update

Centaur came back from Ipswich in mid-August after a couple of weeks away followed by a charter out of Maldon the next weekend and then a trip to the Medway for the Medway barge match at the end of August. She then went back to Ipswich for another charter in early September returning to Maldon again for a training trip for our trainee crew members who hopefully go on to become the next generation of barge mates and then skippers.

The last sail of the season was a charter at the end of the month which was going to be followed the next weekend by another training weekend but unfortunately the weather put paid to that with gales in the forecast.

Now we have to think about unrig-



**Centaur in the Medway Barge Match  
Picture by Rebecca de Bont**

ging, it does not seem that long ago when we rigged Centaur back in April !

With the barge working out of Maldon most of the time this year it has been easy to carry out any jobs which needed doing between trips the worst of which was to replace an outgoing pipe from one of the loos, never a pleasant job!. Most of the deck leaks have been rectified and the paintwork is in good order ready for the winter. Before we unrig, the ropes and sails have to be dry otherwise the natural fibre ropes will rot and the sails will get mildew on them. This is not going to be easy with the weather as it is in its very changeable state at the moment but we would like to complete the job on 16<sup>th</sup> October if possible.

*Tim Jepson*

## Les Foreman ex Skipper of Pudge

As part of the research work for the Pudge Project, we managed to track down relatives of Les Foreman who was Skipper of Pudge when she was a motor barge from 21st April 1963 to the 25th February 1966. He was also Skipper from the 7th March 1967 during Pudge's last trading days.

Wow! I have never been asked to write about my Dad before, well not

as an adult anyway.

I will tell you things that either we (my Brother & I), family/friends or people who worked with him have told us or experienced, whether they are funny or just a short story, so here goes.

My Dad's name was Leslie Forman. He was one of 8 children. My Grandad had the Barbers/Hairdressers in Queenborough. The living accommodation was at the back of the

shop. Queenborough Creek ran at the back of the premises and all around the back of the houses.

When my Dad was still at school, he used to spend his weekends helping out in the back of the chip shop which was just up the road from his home. He used to peel the potatoes and gradually as time went on he was taught how to make the batter for the fish. So while he was helping

out at the chip shop he could easily get to see the boats in the creek.

My Dad absolutely loved the sea. When the tide was out you could walk along the bottom of the creek as there was hardly ever any water left, although we are about the early to mid-sixties. It was during a time like that when he was down in the creek that he got asked if he would like to be the deck hand on a boat as a crew member had not turned up. I don't know how old he was but I do know that he was very young.

He got to know quite a few people when he was down the creek. I had been told that he was eager to get back out on a boat after that first trip. And that he was then desperate to get his Masters/Skippers license. He was also a shipwright.

This was the beginning of his life at sea. He didn't know any other job apart from being at sea.

Les completed his National Service patrolling the Suez Canal on a boat to make sure all the shipping could get through, for which he has 3 medals.

He was Master/Skipper of quite a few barges & coasters. He used to work the coastline anywhere from Rushenden Coal Washer to Rochester, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Felixstowe, Ipswich, Harwich, Lon-

don, & Essex, to name but a few!

Here is a list of the barges and coasters that I can remember that Les sailed on. The Pudge which he sailed twice, Nicola Dawn, Sevenside, Borelly, Saxon & Ruffen.

#### **Memories from his brother Jeff.**

My niece Rita has asked me to put a few stories about her dad. Les and myself were two of eight children four girls and four boys. I can remember when I was young we shared a bedroom and remember Les getting up about 5 o'clock in the morning and catching the 'milk train' to Rochester to pick up the barge. Before he left he would roll me up in a bed sheet and leave me shouting out. Dad used to go mad but I often think back on those days and laugh as Les could be quite a character and had a heart of gold.

We lived in Queenborough and out the back was Tom Alsworth's yard where he had a couple of barges and that was where Les started his working career on the barges.

Eventually he joined the London & Rochester Trading Co. and I remember him getting a barge called the Pudge. When I was about 12 years old I used to go with Les in the school summer holidays. We went to places like Ipswich, Colchester and the Royal Albert Docks. It was great and I used to love it. The first time I went with him, we

were loaded so very low in the water and he asked me to make a cuppa but as I made my way to the galley I saw a tug passing in the other direction to us so I ran back to the wheelhouse, I suppose I panicked, but when I look back it was funny.

If Les was tied up off Queenborough for the weekend we would often take to the barge off Ramsgate with our dad and two brother in laws and go fishing, great fun. I recall one time we saw a small yacht in trouble it had gone on its side so Les being Les went alongside tied a rope to the mast and pulled it back upright. A line had to be fixed to the top of the mast so who had to shin up the mast, yes me. When we got them all shipshape the guys gave all the men a fiver each, what did I get, you have got it, nothing, but a fond memory to look back on.

Les was someone who kept himself to himself quite a bit but I believe he was very well respected with the other barge guys. He knew all the waterways like the back of his hand. He was a lovely guy and I was proud to call him my brother.

*Editor, Les's first trip on joining Pudge was to travel with a cargo from London to Dover. Unfortunately we do not have details of what it was. His last trip with a cargo was on the London to Ipswich on the 21st January.*

## **Mary Gilder 1925 - 2021 An Appreciation**



The Brotherhood of Revelry (BOR) was started in 1950 by some Vickers Armstrong aircraft apprentices from Weybridge, Surrey, who enjoyed an annual sail on the Norfolk Broads. Girl-friends and wives soon joined in, and the tradition still continues.

Mary and late husband John were enthusiastic BOR members who sailed

regularly on the Broads, both competent helms. Having discovered Thames barge sailing in the 1980s Mary introduced the BOR to Pudge and Centaur, organising the first BOR charter on Pudge in 1987. Later, a health problem caused John to remain at home, but with his blessing Mary continued to organise the charters. These became an annual four day charter, and Mary organised one every year until 2013, continuing as an active crew member right up to 2018. Covid cancelled the last two barge charters, with 2019 being the BOR's thirty-second consecutive one, and the first that Mary had had to miss after she left her home in Surrey for a nursing home in Shropshire to be nearer her daughters Sarah and Jane.

Not only did she organise the charters, Mary planned and supervised the provi-

sioning. Dinners on the BOR charters were legendary with roast lamb, gammon, and beef casserole with dumplings frequently on the menu, together with all the trimmings **and drinks were always accompanied by a delicious array of homemade cakes and biscuits.** In the usual way, Mary efficiently organised crews into watches, ensuring everyone contributed to preparing, cooking and serving each meal, washing up afterwards and keeping the below decks clean and tidy.

On deck she assisted with sail raising and lowering, tended the backstays and bowlines, helmed – and even helped man the windlass in the early years. She thoroughly enjoyed every part of barge sailing, enthusiastically suggesting new anchorages.

The Trust is especially grateful to Mary for introducing to barge sailing BOR members Peter Hearn ("Sailing a Thames Barge Sail-by-Sail") and Mick Nolan (our mate-training scheme initiator, Trustee, and overseer of the Pudge rebuilding project).

Mary's daughters have asked that donations in her memory should go to the Pudge rebuild fund – a barge of which she was particularly fond. They have set up an online tribute page [marygil-der.muchloved.com](http://marygil-der.muchloved.com) for Trust members and others who would like to donate.

Donations may also be paid by bacs to the Thames Sailing Barge Trust. HSBC Sort Code: 40-01-04 Account No: 21180770

Don Baines  
Commodore, BORSC

## 2021 Sailing Barge Championship

Below are the results of the various Barge Matches that have taken place this year.

### **PIN MILL 3rd July**

#### **Class A**

**1st** BLUE MERMAID  
**2nd** MIROSA  
**3rd** MARJORIE

#### **Class B**

**1st** NIAGARA  
**2nd** EDITH MAY  
**3rd** REPERTOR

### **BLACKWATER 18th July**

#### **Class 1**

**1st** NIAGARA  
**2nd** REPERTOR  
**3rd** REMINDER

#### **Class 2**

**1st** BLUE MERMAID  
**2nd** MARJORIE  
**3rd** MIROSA

### **SWALE 31st July**

#### **Class 3 Bowsprit barges**

**1st** BLUE MERMAID  
**2nd** EDITH MAY

### **Class 4 Staysail Barges**

**1st** REPERTOR

**2nd** NIAGARA

### **Class 5 Restricted Staysail barges**

**1st** CAMBRIA

**2nd** ORINOCO

### **THAMES 14th August**

#### **Coasting Class**

**1st** CAMBRIA

#### **Champion Staysail Class**

**1st** NIAGARA

**2nd** REPERTOR

#### **Champion Bowsprit Class**

**1st** BLUE MERMAID

**2nd** MARJORIE

**3rd** EDITH MAY

### **MEDWAY 28th August**

#### **Coasting Class**

**1st** CAMBRIA

**2nd** ORINOCO

**3rd** CENTAUR

#### **Restricted Staysail Class**

**1st** NIAGARA

**2nd** REPERTOR

**3rd** EDITH MAY

#### **Bowsprit Class**

**1st** BLUE MERMAID

**2nd** MARJORIE

### **COLNE 11th September**

**1st** MARJORIE

**2nd** BLUE MERMAID

**3rd** NIAGARA

**4th** REPERTOR

**5th** REMINDER

**6th** CAMBRIA

**7th** THALATTA

**8th** CENTAUR

### **Overall Championship Results**

**1st** NIAGARA

**2nd** BLUE MERMAID

**3rd** CAMBRIA

**4th** REPERTOR

**5th** MARJORIE

**6th** EDITH MAY

**7th** MIROSA

**8th** ORINOCO

**9th** REMINDER

**10th** CENTAUR

**11th** THALATTA

**12th** ADIEU

**13th** BLACKTHORN

Results have been provided by Sailing Barge Association

## 100 Club

All income raised through the 100 Club is put aside towards large scale projects such as the new decks on Pudge.

Due to the Annual Renewal of members to the 100 Club we have not been able to make any draws recently, however we have now caught up and the winners are as follows.

Thank you for your support by helping the Trust raise funds this way.

The results from the Pudge 100 Club draws are:

#### **May/June**

**1<sup>st</sup>** Glen Fenemore-Jones £50

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Roger Newlyn £20

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Andrew Berry £10

#### **July/August**

**1<sup>st</sup>** Terry O'Sullivan £50

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Doug Nicholls £20

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Glen Fenemore-Jones £10

#### **Sept/Oct**

**1<sup>st</sup>** Peter Holmes £50

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Peter Boss £20

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Glen Fenemore-Jones £10

If you would like to take part in the 100 Club, and help raise funds for the Trust, then please contact me on 01621 788276

Thank you for your support.

*Terry O'Sullivan*

### **Advance Notice Pudge 100th Birthday Dinner**

The Trust are planning to hold a 100th Birthday Party for Pudge on Saturday July 16th 2022 at the Maldon Town Hall, Market Hill, Maldon. We have booked the Town Hall so that we can cater for more members. The venue and caterer are booked and we are currently planning a speaker and other entertainment.

Further details will be advised in due course, but please put this date in your diary if you would like to attend. If you have to travel, then you may wish to book hotel accommodation at the same time.

# The Late Roy Emmins

The Trust recently heard that long standing members Roy Emmins had passed away on the 14th July aged 82.

Roy was a keen supporter of the Trust and over the years sailed many times on either Centaur or Pudge with charterers Bob and Mary Bryan.

Roy lived in Whitechapel and before his retirement was a porter at the Royal London Hospital. After more than thirty years service Roy took early retirement to devote himself to sculpture, and his studio in Cable Street was crammed to

the roof with innumerable creations that bore testimony to his prodigious talent and potent imagination.

Roy's family contacted the Trust to advise us that Roy wished that some of his artwork passed to the Trust with the hope that it would be preserved, but maybe put on display at sometime.

Roy often painted pictures during his trips on the barges and the Trust was only to pleased to receive this generous offer.

Below and on the rear cover are some photographs of the drawings that Roy left to the Trust. The picture of Pudge lying on the Quay at Maldon in front of the Jolly Sailor, on the rear cover, has some political license, but we were able to display this for three weeks in Maldon with the 'Red Sails Over The Blackwater' exhibition during September and his family were please to see it displayed.



## Limited Edition Prints of Centaur and Pudge (Great Christmas Gift)



the frame used is sized A2. Ideal purchase for Christmas

The prints can be ordered online on the Trust's website under the 'shop' tab. Each print costs £53 + £2 postage and packing.

*John Rayment*

All funds received from the sale of the limited-edition prints will go towards Trust funds.

The Trust still has a number of the limited edition Anne Plummer prints of Pudge and Centaur for sale.

Each is personally signed and numbered and only 20 of each picture is available for purchase.

The pictures come unframed, so that you can mount the prints in your own style of frame. The images shown are framed just for display purposes but

Anne only usually sells originals and so this is a good opportunity to purchase at a reduced price a good quality print.

All prints will be posted in a cardboard tube by Royal Mail within a few days of your order being placed.



# Pudge Update

At the time of our last update on the progress with Pudge we advised that the volunteers had started to paint the various items of new timber that had been replaced by Kevin Finch. This had to initially be cleaned and then at least six coats of paint or other finish added to the timber.

We have now finished the painting and wood preparation work, which was scheduled to be completed before September and Pudge has now been taken back by Kevin and work started on her re-fit, which includes completing the main hatch boards and replacing the

off white. The head ledges and coamings have also had the similar type and number of coats but have been finished in beech brown as they were before.

All the bare wood, i.e., fore hatch boards, under deck, inside of the head ledges and coamings have had six coats of Danish oil. We still have the main hatch to do once this is completed by Kevin and his team. The decks as previously reported have had

two primers, two undercoats and two top coats, once the work is fully completed the deck will get a further non slip top coat added.

The longest job has been the rails. As mentioned in the last report we had decided to burn off all the paint die to a patch of rot appearing in the port side close to the bitt knee. Having removed all the paint, we noticed that the rails were in generally good condition although areas

around the dumps in the quarter boards do need some filling. The major repair to the area near the bitt knee, has been repaired by our trainee mate Lawrie Watkins, who is also training as a ship wright.

The remaining rails have been painted with the usual six coats being finished in Indian Stone.

The last job to be completed were the ceilings. These had been covered up since being replaced with hard board so as to protect them. These had to be removed, one side at a time and then the boards cleaned with a brush and white spirit and then a varnish rolled on. This took a couple of weeks whilst we had to have room to move around and store our



**Not morning prayers, but volunteers from Tuesday Group cleaning the prepared ceilings with white spirit before the first coat of varnish is added.**

materials, including tea making facilities and also to leave time between each coat for it to dry.

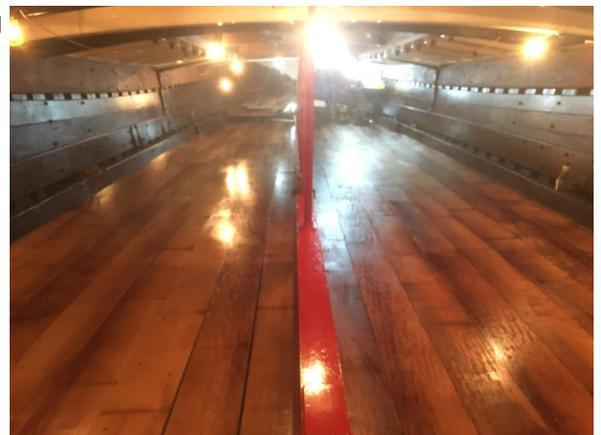
The whole three months of the painting project has seen a great effort by all the volunteers and everyone has worked with a great spirit. The Monday Group worked hard on the rails, the Tuesday evening group and Thursday Group got on with the majority of



**Top coats finished on carlings, inwales, linings, chine keelson and keelson**

deck fittings before we move onto the below deck accommodation.

In terms of the painting, all carlings, beams, bitts (below deck) have received two coats of primer, two coats of undercoat and have been finished in



**The finished product, five coats of varnish on the ceilings.**

painting and varnishing. The Trust would like to thank everyone who gave their time for this part of the project. The value of hours worked over this period by the volunteers for the painting amounted to over £17,000 in terms of the project.

Now we have left Pudge, below deck she looks fantastic as you will see from



**Team from Tesco's who helped as part of their community support**

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

the images in the newsletter. More images are being posted on our two websites, [www.bargetrust.org/ourbarges/pudgeproject](http://www.bargetrust.org/ourbarges/pudgeproject) or [www.thepudgeproject.com](http://www.thepudgeproject.com)

The Trust also had the help of a group of nine ladies from Tesco stores around Maldon and Colchester as part of their community programme. They spent a morning early in September helping

with some last minute painting. Tesco have also been kind enough in donating painting materials to the Trust and provided free car parking to those volunteers working on Mondays and Thursdays. The Trust hope to work with them again later in the project.

The Monday, Tuesday Groups have ceased for the time being until we can get back on board Pudge. When Pudge is finished we still have the outside to

fully repaint amongst many other tasks. The Thursday Group have moved back to the Hythe and will work on some of Pudge's rigging and other items getting them ready for refitting when required.

*John Rayment*

## More about the Kelvin

**Following the completion of the story of the Kelvin engine, we have received the following two items from Terry O' Sullivan which we thought you may like to see. Editor**

### **Kelvin**

Aboard the s.b. Pudge, far below deck, in a dank and dismal box lives Kelvin. He is dirty, foul tempered, stubborn Scotsman of Glaswegian descent. Although he is an essential member of the crew he has never been seen on deck.

Occasionally the Skipper or the Mate go below to talk to him, try to cheer him up, jolly him along a little, as one does with an old acquaintance. But Kelvin is a simple brute and when he is in one of his moods they have to be rather cautious as he has and evil temper. He also drinks heavily, spits and kicks the unwary, so they often return on deck forlorn and defeated in their attempts to make him sing.

For he can sing, oh yes! Sometimes his songs can be heard mumbling out across the waters. Only one tune

though—a waltz, one two three, one two three. And so on. Rather monotonous, but when Kelvin bursts into song he is remembering the days of his youth among the locks and hills of his native Clyde for he is a good old boy at heart, and often after a good swig of the hard stuff just a tickle will set him off.

He puffs at his pipe with his song, vast clouds of acrid smoke issue forth and all is well. Smiles appear on the faces of the crew. Kelvin is singing.

By Chippy

### **A reflection from Terry O'Sullivan**

In late seventies and when the Club, was still based a Hoo on the Medway. I was mate with Vic Wadhams on a charter.

We were making a passage from Hoo to Maldon I think. In order to get to the 'Spitways' at low water we had the Kelvin on. After getting through the engine was turned off so we could sail. The wind was slight and variable, and it

was an extremely hot sunny day. However, before we reached the Knoll buoy we became becalmed, and wallowed awaiting a breeze.

Suddenly, we were in a cloud of aphids (greenfly). The crew disappeared below deck leaving Vic and I to be engulfed. Vic said start the engine and get us out of this lot! I jumped down the engine room, and got stuck in. The engine was still hot, so I knew it might be a bit obstinate. The heat down there was unbearable but at least the aphids had left me.

My first attempt to start the Kelvin failed, and from above I heard Vic cursing loudly. I looked up through the engine room hatch to see an awful apparition. A slant eyed Green Monster glaring down at me. Vic totally green from bobble hat to the deck. I continued to re-prime the Kelvin and thankfully at the second attempt it started. I couldn't help but laugh to myself, and if only I'd had a camera.

## Medway Barge Match 2021– The Fastest Match Ever — A view From The Centaur

One of the great attractions of a trip on a Thames sailing barge is the opportunity to free oneself from the humdrum routines of everyday living and to block out the usually unwelcome intrusions of world events. For a short while one is forced to submit to the time-honoured rhythms of nature, the inexorable cycle of the tides and the quixotic caprices of the wind. On this particular passage, from Maldon to the Medway for the Medway Barge Match on 28-8-2021, there was the added attraction of knowing that we were following in the

wake of generations of sailormen as we left the Blackwater, proceeded down the Wallet and through the Spitway into the Swin. Instead of carrying on down Sea Reach into the London River we tracked across the shipping lanes (still busy enough to cause the skipper a moments anxiety although nothing like in its heyday 50 years ago) and into the Medway channel. Needless to say we were praying for a Northerly wind and as we mustered at the usual unholy hour to catch high water at Maldon that's exactly what

we got. We needed a little help from the "iron topsail" to get away from the berth but by five o'clock in the morning we were heading into the dawn skies past Osea serenely under sail alone. By mid-morning we were driving down the Wallet and through the Spitway at over 8 knots over the ground, an extraordinary sensation of powerful impetus as the Centaur's bluff bows swept aside the troubled waters of the shallow channel between the Buxey and Gunfleet Sands. Silent thanks were offered to Commander E.G. Martin, author of

the book- Sailor- that has accompanied the re-rigging of many a sprit-sail barge. He skippered the famous Jolie Brise to success in the 1925 Fast-net Race, and in the early 30s he prevailed upon the Horlock family to allow him to experience sailing as a Mate on the Vigilant which gave him a healthy appreciation of the dangers of navigation on the E. Coast. His dogged persistence finally resulted in the bell buoys we see today being installed after World War 1. He had to overcome the ignorant indifference of the Brethren of Trinity House to mere bargemen who risked their lives every day as they headed for this dangerous shifting channel which was totally unmarked yet provided the main thoroughfare for all barges bound from London River to the Colne, Blackwater, Harwich and the North. This area also had another poignant connotation: it was near here that the last of the steel Horlock barges, the big Blue Mermaid, built in 1931 at Mistle, was sadly sunk by a mine on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1941, with both Master and Mate losing their lives. Later on we were to have the pleasure of seeing the new steel replica of the Blue Mermaid, built down in Cornwall at Tom's yard at Poluan near Fowey in her memory, dazzling her older cousins in the Medway race. After only a couple of gybes we arrived at Chatham at about 6 pm, a good passage, hoping for a similar breeze for the race next day.

**The Match**

Fortified by the customary full English we mustered on deck at 6am ready for the 7am Coasting Class start with a nice North-North Easterly breeze as ordered. For the race we were reinforced by Terry O'Sullivan as Main-sheetman and his wife Pat as timekeeper, as well as another third hand, Pat Schulenburg, joining fellow graduate of Mick Nolan's training scheme Steve who had embarked at Maldon as third hand. Charter crew Guy was deputised to look after the staysail utilising his deep-sea sailing experience on the bark Europa, while fellow charter crew Mel, Peter and Tim added more experience and enthusiasm. Charlie bravely tended the sometimes unruly staysail sheets and helped on the leeboards, so we

were lucky to have a very competent racing crew. Orinoco just pipped us across the start line (allegedly we were impeded by another barge) but we followed at 2 mins 16 seconds after the gun giving us a 2-minute lead over Cambria, who had "our" Mick Nolan aboard. The wind allowed a reach down



***Repertor prudently stows her staysail as she passes the slower Centaur, while the Edith May (right) struggled to overcome her 15 minute penalty for crossing the line early as she heads to the outer mark behind Niagara.***

the Medway as we managed to hold off the Cambria despite the impressive jib topsail set on her bowsprit. By 0800 we were off Grain sand and a vision in white appeared overhauling first the Cambria and then us to windward. The three Restricted Staysail Class barges had started 30 minutes after us but it seems the 1898-built ironpot Niagara, resplendent in all white with gold lettering, already has a reputation as a bit of a flyer and she was to go on and complete the course in only 3 hours 13 mins, one minute less than the Bowsprit class Blue Mermaid. I can remember being invited aboard her at Hoo as a bare hulk, with only one hatch and no sailing deck, about 20 years ago. Peter Sands, her new owner, assured me he would have her sailing again and I am delighted that my scepticism at the time has been proved dramatically wrong. She has won many races since completing her rebuild in 2012. Both she and the Wyvenhoe were built for the London & Rochester Trading Co. by Forrestt & Son at Wyvenhoe and were soon converted into motor barges in the 1920's.

Off Sheerness we were forced to put in a number of boards against the head wind and the Cambria finally managed

to sneak through our lee, as did the renowned racer Edith May. Normally a bowsprit barge she was under staysail rig due to a sprung bowsprit and was to give the Niagara and the third member of the Restricted Staysail Class, the ironpot Repertor, a run for their money. Off the wreck of the Richard Montgomery Repertor also overhauled us to leeward and the press of wind had her deck at an alarming angle. We were soon obliged to lower our staysail and Orinoco, safely in the lead in our class, prudently rucked her topsail. As we neared the outer mark the last two barges, the Marjorie and the Blue Mermaid, appeared like greyhounds out of a trap as they emerged past Garrison Point almost abreast each other. Niagara was first round the outer mark at 08:41, closely followed by Edith May then Repertor eight minutes behind. Orinoco was first round the mark in our class at 08:47, followed by Cambria at 08:51 and Centaur making a smart turn four minutes later. The Marjorie just pipped Blue Mermaid at 09:03, with Blue Mermaid two minutes behind. The run back up the river provided an opportunity for different strategies; Centaur and Marjorie chose the direct route while Orinoco, Edith May and Blue Mermaid tried cheating the tide still flowing out of the Medway by hugging the Sheppey shore. It has to be said that "inshore" tactic seemed to pay off as Blue Mermaid edged in front of Simon Devonshire's Marjorie and eventually took the line at 10:45, seven minutes ahead of her rival, with an amazing elapsed time of 3 hrs. 13 mins. However the Orinoco could not match the Cambria's spread of sails and the latter took 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Coasting class crossing the line at 11:01 after an elapsed time of 3 hrs. 57 mins. Centaur bought up the rear at 11:17 but it has to be said that her skipper and crew spared nothing in their determination to get the best out of her old timbers, and the elapsed time of 4 hours 17 minutes has probably rarely if ever been bettered in her racing career. Niagara took the honours in the Restricted Staysail Class with an elapsed time of 3 hours 13 mins., with Repertor second and Edith

May third. However it has to be noted that had the Edith May not incurred a 15 minute penalty for crossing the line early she would have won. All the crews made their way across the river to Upnor where the Medway Yacht Club kindly hosted the prizegiving and Geoff Gransden of the Edith May presided over proceedings. Geoffrey Ingle is the owner of the 1895- built Orinoco and one of the highlights of the ceremony was when his young daughter came up to collect the prize for first across the line and round the outer mark.

### **The Return (Sunday)**

Next morning the usual routine of a start in the dark resumed as we motor-sailed down the river past the winking

buoys helped by a light South Westerly breeze. Time was of the essence if we were to beat the tide up the Swin and get through the Spitway to the Essex shore where we could lie until taking the Monday tide up to Maldon. By the time we got to Sheerness the Northerly had returned and it became a struggle, especially through the Spitway against wind and tide when progress over the ground became painfully slow even once we reduced sail and gave the engine more revs. The slightly unreal sight of the Gunfleet Sands windfarm, which supplies 124,000 houses in Tending and Colchester with their energy needs, became frustratingly familiar.

With Geoff Harris, whose volunteering for mate duties (despite his status as a club skipper) when the original Mate

was forced to cry off because of Covid had saved the trip from complete cancellation, fighting the bucking vessel at the wheel we finally made it to the peace of West Mersea. Amazingly Cambria, without a motor, made it a couple of hours later. Next day we enjoyed some recreational sailing before fond farewells were taken of a group who had been forged into harmonious team of fellow mariners under the auspices of the good ship Centaur. Thanks to all the crew and those who maintain her so well during the winter.

*David Eeles from Torquay*

## **Notice of Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting of the Thames Sailing Barge Trust and TSBT Sailing & Charters Limited will take place on Saturday 20th November 2021.

The formal notice is detailed below with the Agenda, a proxy form and a form for members to use if they would like to be considered for a position on the Trust's Manage-

ment Committee.

The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30th October 2019 will be emailed to all members for whom we have an email address. This will be sent before the end of October. If you do not receive a copy then this is because we do not have your email. However if you

contact John Rayment on 07587 141054 or by email at [membership@bargetrust.org](mailto:membership@bargetrust.org) then a copy will be emailed or sent to you in the post before the meeting along with a copy of the accounts for the year ended 30th October 2020.

We look forward to seeing you.

### **Thames Sailing Barge Trust & TSBT Sailing & Charters Ltd 17<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting**

#### **Agenda**

**To be held on Saturday 20th November 2021  
Maldon Little Ship Club, Hythe, Maldon, Essex  
Commencing at 2:30 pm**

1. Welcome from Peter Taylor, Trustee and Chairman for the Meeting
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020 (emailed to members for whom we have emails Those without can obtain a copy by contacting John Rayment on 07587 141054)
4. Matters Arising from the of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting
5. Presentation and adoption of Annual Report by Peter Taylor (Chairman & Trustee)
6. Presentation and adoption of annual accounts for Thames Sailing Barge Trust and TSBT Sailing & Charters Ltd to 31st October 2020 by Keith Foster, Acting Treasurer (emailed to members for whom we have emails. Those without can obtain a copy by contacting John Rayment on 07587 141054)
7. Election of new Chairman on the retirement of Peter Taylor
8. The following Trustees will be retiring at the AGM in line with the Trust's rotation rules. The Trustees are happy to be re-elected: Peter Taylor, David Perkins and David Gibson
9. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Accounts
10. Election of Keith Foster as Treasurer on retirement of Gerald Moore.

- 11. Amendment to Rule 6 – Officers of the Trust. Update list of Trust Officers to reflect current Trust positions.
- 12. To propose and elect members of the management committee (see voting form enclosed with this newsletter)
- 13. Update on Pudge Project
- 14. Award of Trophies for 2020/21
- 15. Any Other Business

*Attendance at the meeting, is open to all Trust members.*

**Form of Proxy**

If appropriate, please complete, detach and despatch to TSBT, Handsel House, Walden Close, Gt Totham, Essex CM9 8UJ  
I .....a Trust member **will not** be attending the Annual General Meetings on the  
20th November 2021 and therefore appoint ..... or in his/her absence, the Secretary to  
vote on my behalf on any resolutions put to the above meetings.

Signed.....Dated.....

Proposal for becoming a member of the management committee of the Thames Sailing Barge Trust

I..... would like to be considered for election as a member of the management committee for the Thames Sailing Barge Trust.

(Members can elect for any of the committee positions detailed below)

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Trustee                                | Marketing Officer                |
| Chairman,                              | Webmaster                        |
| Crewing Manager,                       | Newsletter Editor                |
| Treasurer,                             | Social Secretary                 |
| Secretary,                             | Sales Officer                    |
| Assistant Secretary,                   | Safety Officer                   |
| Membership Secretary,                  | Archivist                        |
| Bookings Manager                       | Charity/Fundraising Co-ordinator |
| Charter Secretary,                     | Open Day Organiser               |
| Training Officer                       | 100 Club Organiser               |
| Maintenance Organiser – Pudge          | Victualling Officer              |
| Winter Maintenance Organiser – Centaur |                                  |

Position for which I am interested .....

**Contact Details:**

Address .....

Telephone Number.....

I confirm that I am a member of the Thames Sailing Barge Trust

Signature ..... Date .....

**Please send to the Secretary Thames Sailing Barge Trust, Handsel House, Walden Close, Great Totham, Maldon, Essex CM9 8UJ by the 6th November 2021.**

Registered Address: Thames Sailing Barge Trust, Handsel House, Walden Close, Great Totham, Maldon, Essex CM9 8UJ

Registered Charity Number 1102840; A company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales no. 04726591

Visit our web sites  
[www.bargetrust.org](http://www.bargetrust.org) &  
[www.thepudgeproject.com](http://www.thepudgeproject.com)

Newsletter produced and edited by John Rayment. Your comments are welcomed about the newsletter. Email or write to the Editor or Trust.

Deadline date for articles for the next issue should be sent to John Rayment by the 30th November 2021



*Pudge off Hythe Quay, Maldon  
By Roy Emmins*

**CONTACTS**

**Chairman— Peter Taylor**  
[chairman@bargetrust.org](mailto:chairman@bargetrust.org)

**Secretary—David Gibson**  
[secretary@bargetrust.org](mailto:secretary@bargetrust.org)

**Treasurers—Keith Foster**  
[treasurer@bargetrust.org](mailto:treasurer@bargetrust.org)

**Membership—John Rayment**  
[membership@bargetrust.org](mailto:membership@bargetrust.org)

**Sales—Peter Holmes**  
01621 854108  
[sales@bargetrust.org](mailto:sales@bargetrust.org)

**Open Days—John Rayment**  
07587 141054  
[events@bargetrust.org](mailto:events@bargetrust.org)

**Crewing & Charter Secretary—David Gibson**  
07840 862685  
[bookings@bargetrust.org](mailto:bookings@bargetrust.org)

**Newsletter—John Rayment**  
[editor@bargetrust.org](mailto:editor@bargetrust.org)

**100 Club—Terry O'Sullivan**  
01621 788276  
[100club@bargetrust.org](mailto:100club@bargetrust.org)  
**Training Manager—Mick Nolan**

[training@bargetrust.org](mailto:training@bargetrust.org)

**Working Volunteers Liaison  
Thursday Group—John Rayment**  
07587 141054

**Weekend Working Group—Tim Jepson**  
01621 851817  
[timjepson411@gmail.com](mailto:timjepson411@gmail.com)