



The Never Setting Sun



Smack Dock Soundings

THE JOURNAL OF THE COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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Fly and Primrose battle it out in the 2006 Colne match. Fly is currently in the smack dock having a new deck fitted. Martin Worth is doing the work himself, you can read about his experiences inside.

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The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily the views of the CSPS or its committee.

From the editor.

We have a bumper edition of smack dock soundings this edition. My thanks go out to all of you who have contributed.

We are all looking forward to a better season in 2009, with warm sun, and nice breezes (fingers crossed).

We have made some progress with the website, please have a look www.smackdock.co.uk.

I would like owners to send up to date pictures and details of their boats to me.

Robin Page. 01206 304690



Contents

From the editor.....	Robin Page	Page 1
Contents.....		Page 2
Beyond the Bench Head.....	Judy Harris	Page 2
Memories and anecdotes of bygone days.	Dick Harman	Page 3
New Deck for Fly.....	Martin Worth (Ferret)	Page 5
LES VIEUX GREEMENTS DES BANCS DE FLANDRE	Andy Lindley	Page 8
Exert from Boadicea CK213.....	Michael Frost	Page 9
Chairman's reports.....	Simon Fox	Page 10
Dorana.....	Gary Humm	Page 12
Local marine art.....	Robin Page	Page 14
Dates for your diary.....		Page 15
Gaff mainsail setting.....	Mark Butler	Page 17

Beyond the Bench-Head...

'Complete discomfort guaranteed' wrote the owner and skipper of the gaff cutter Katrine during a cruise from her moorings at Greenhithe to Brussels, to visit the Belgian International Exhibition in 1935.

More than seventy years have passed since that log was written. Yet for Katrine time has almost stood still. Much of the log of 1935 could have been written today. Katrine is a survivor in the fast changing world of yachting. Complete discomfort can still be guaranteed. In fact it is one of the striking features about cruising in her. We are almost ashamed to invite friends aboard because it is impossible to describe the level of discomfort one has to endure to get from one place to another if it involves much time at sea.

Our summer Cruise this year began with a North Sea crossing from Brightlingsea to the little harbour of Oudeschilde on the Dutch Frisian Island of Texel. Our passage to Texel lasted 37 hours. We left Brightlingsea at 11:00 on Thursday morning, arriving at Texel during the early hours of Saturday morning. With just Skipper and Mate aboard we soon adopted our tried and tested method of surviving the miles by standing one hour watches. On watch means steering. Off watch means all the other contributory tasks that keep Katrine safe at sea – trimming sails, transferring diesel and doing engine checks if we are motoring, navigating and preparing food and drinks. Oh, and sleeping. Our sleep is taken in full oilskins, lifejacket and harness, lying on the deck with an empty sail-bag as a pillow, usually at the feet of the person at the helm so as to quite literally be 'booted' into action if necessary.

After a 'rest' in Oudeschilde we started our homeward cruise, heading across the water to Den Helder on the northern tip of the Dutch mainland. We have taken Katrine to Den Helder

several times before, but usually as a much needed stop-over on a longer passage. This time we were there for the



arrival of the Tall Ship's Race from Norway. Den Helder had come alive to celebrate the arrival of the Tall Ships and hundreds of young crew from many nations. It was a magnificent sight to see the normally dreary naval harbour crowded with fine vessels all bedecked with flags.

Amongst the vessels in the Museum Harbour we spotted a more familiar boat. It was Vera of Wyvenhoe, built in 1893 and once belonging to the acclaimed marine artist Arthur Briscoe, but now in Dutch ownership.

When the festivities were at an end Katrine put to sea for the Parade of Sail and we enjoyed the thrill of some close quarters sailing amongst the big Tall Ships.

Our voyage home was to be through the inland waterways from the North of Holland to the South. We exchanged the shallow tidal waters of the Waddenzee and the ghosts of the Riddle of the Sands, for the now land-locked IJsselmeer and headed for Medemblik and Enkhuizen.



Katrine's engine featured prominently in the log of 1935. It had been christened 'Mae West' for it occupied the ladies cabin; it was temperamental, had extravagant tastes and was in every respect "no angel". Mae West met her end during the war years when Katrine was laid up in Erith Creek and filled with water. The 1952 Perkins diesel that starts without priming or swinging is a 'modern' addition that we are glad to have. Through the IJsselmeer and Markermeer the wind blew strongly from ahead, and Katrine's seven foot draught left little room for long tacks outside the narrow channels.

From Amsterdam we followed the canals and big commercial waterways further south. If you think the Colne is busy at times, try the three-way junction near Willemstadt where the Dordtse Kil joins the Hollands Diep and the Biesbosch!

On our travels through the Netherlands Katrine was warmly welcomed in every port she visited. The Dutch have an eye for style – their homes, bicycles and boats are good looking. They are also traditionalists and proud of their heritage. They seemed delighted to have a boat from a bygone era in their country, and were not shy in showing it.

Autumn was in the air and we were keen to get back across the North Sea, but the weather was unsettled and, after visiting the old harbours of Dordrecht, Willemstadt and Zierikzee we found ourselves having an enforced wait in the attractive town of Middelburg. Whilst the wind howled we busied ourselves with our routine preparations for a North Sea crossing. The topmast was lowered and the bowsprit shortened up, gear was checked and stowed, the forehatch cover was lashed down and the sails made ready. Eventually the wind eased and Katrine headed out of the lock at Flushing

and turned towards Brightlingsea. In the log of all those years ago bad weather meant Katrine was left in Breskens whilst the crew returned to England on a steamer. Breskens is just over the water from Flushing. We looked across. Seventy years on it probably hadn't changed much; neither has Katrine.

In 1935 the Skipper described 'shifting his head uneasily on his pillow as a stream of water poured freely through the deck head and into his ear'. Over the last few years we have worked hard to keep the water out of the cabin, and we no longer have that discomfort to contend with. We heat the cabin with a solid fuel stove and for lighting we have a Tilley lamp, or a candle. Do you know why we sail a boat like this? It's because we have slipped back in a kind of time warp to where the people, the experiences and the very passing of

the hours have shaped our journeys on Katrine and left us all the richer for it!

Memories of a bygone time Dick Harman

Winter showboat.

It was a cold old job stowboating two or three days at a time. Most of the tackles were rove with coir rope that had hair on and when wet and frozen it was like gripping barbed wire. At anchor in the steamboat lanes in bad visibility and frost. One time Mac was on watch and came down for a warm up looking like a half alive snowman on his third day without sleep and at around 17 he fell asleep and slumped over the stove. Dennis remarked 'That boy doesn't seem to show much interest in the Job, does he?'

Caught out anywhere in the south channels with east or north east gales, the Medway or east Swale were the harbours, East Swale mostly., lying under Hungry Hill, just above Harty Ferry off Windmill creek. We lived off the land, this on winkles, fish and watercress. After about five days Mac was put ashore at Harty Ferry hard to walk up to Oare for a sack of bread, walking in thigh boots is not fun at the best of times, but when he got to Oare the bakers were closed. He asked an old boy where the next baker was. 'Faversham' said the old boy. So Mac walked to Faversham and back having found the bakers shut there also. On his return to Oare the same old boy said 'Git yer bread Bor?'

'No' said Mac

'Well you knock at the side door there' came the reply. 'We all do.'

So Mac came back with the bread after all, but only after a 10 mile walk.

There was a wonderful spring there with plenty of watercress near the hard. One day I was talking to a chap working on the sea wall and as it was a very remote spot, I asked him if he ever caught the ferry to the pub the other side. He said no as they charged him full price on the ferry and the landlord was a miserable sod anyway. The ferry went with the pub I later found out. The practice was to stand in front of a white painted patch on the ferry shelter and wave your arms. The publican had to launch a row boat, unmoor a little motor boat, cross the creek, pick up, then return, land, moor up the boat, row ashore and pull the row boat up to the top of the hard ready for the next few coppers. As he was a new landlord (a retired army Major) the local lads were having a real game with him. Anyway after the 53 flood it was decided to Dam off Windmill creek and Alec Cox from Pin Mill was working on that project using the ferry boat inn. A great jar, like the forty thieves came in, stood in the bar and Alec was bet that he couldn't pick it up. Anyway Alec did, but crashing it down sent it through the floor into the



cellar. The Major got his sword off the wall and made every effort to cut Alec's head off.

It was custom for local coal-laden barges to lay at anchor with the after hatch board off and the hatch cloth turned back, anyone helped themselves to coal without asking, but were expected to leave a feed of fish for the crew when possible.

We used to put the sprats out of Wivenhoe to Worsps the North sea canners. Thick fog was the stow boaters best time as there was no wind or rough sea and the steam boats would bring up at anchor in the south channels and the Barrows. Navigation would appear to be difficult but was not as the old men had been brought up to really understand the job and never even had to think much. One thick day I had the helm going up the Swin, the Spitway was nearly off Clacton then and you only had to go 10 minutes due South after the Spitway to clear a wreck on the Whitaker spit before going south west up Swin. Mac and Dennis were down below having breakfast. It was foggy and dark, when Dennis called up to me.

'You're too far Southerly. Come off a bit or you'll be on the middle sand'. I was very surprised by this of course, but Dennis was unconsciously tuned in to the sound of the prop and engine noise. It was ebb tide and I was being set off to the south. He knew by the change of tune that we were not in the right depth of water. The real skill was having found the birds and by their action judging the depth the fish were swimming at then leaving them out of sight in the dark and fog far enough straight down tide of them about 15 minutes to allow time to anchor and set the net. As they had to know exactly where they were and the exact direction of the tide at anywhere in the maze of sands that confuse the tides in the Thames estuary. In dark, freezing fog, perishing cold and very often hungry without sleep for up to three days, such was the skill obtained by one's whole intelligence being devoted to one subject- the tide.

Danger of a windmill

The upper baulk of the gear is suspended by a pair of ropes from it to cleats each side of the smack's bow just forward of the rigging inside the bulwarks. If by jumping into a sea these part, the baulks and all of the gear can windmill the chain and round handfleets. If the net has two or three tons of fish in when they die and become dead weight, straight up and down in around 10 fathoms of water in server weather it is real trouble. Navvy Musset who had William and Emily (odd times) told me, he had this happen and the men below off watch were on deck in their long johns for 24 hours before they had time to put their trousers on.

Charlotte Ellen. Dennis Heard, Malcolm McGregor and I were looking for birds well down the east Barrow one day in December and there were plenty of birds (the sign for sprats), but it was low water and a stiff breeze easterly. Dennis was very wary of putting in as it would have meant a high water pick up with no shelter from the sands, which is the worst circumstance with the westerly. Several smacks were in sight, gilling about undecided. Suddenly Mac said 'Navvy has put in'. Dennis's answer to that was; 'what the hell notice can I take of Navvy? He was in the Siberian salt mines in the 14 war. A gale of wind out here would be a bloody holiday for him.!'

One day we gave assistance to a barge loaded with wheat. The skipper said he was loaded from Faversham with wheat for London and with wheat from London to Faversham and he had done that for years and thought that they just wanted wheat taken for a ride. I told a baker at Clacton this story and he said he must have taken English wheat to London for export to the biscuit industry and brought imported Canadian or Australian wheat from London to Faversham for bakers in the UK. He went on to tell me that when he was a boy the dray came from Colchester with the flour for his father and he used to go into the road and put his head n among the sacks of flour and turn them away if he could smell English having been mixed in with the hard wheat flour.

My First Day Shrimping Dick Harman

Shrimping is a very, very hard trade and was ferociously competitive, to an extent that can not even be understood today.

Tollesbury, Brightlingsea and Harwich boats had mostly owner skippers and each skipper took pride in saying that every one of the others were putting out rubbish and trying to steal his market. They were right about the market.

The Tollesbury fleet brought up in Pyefleet (or 'up the pictures' as they called it) starting at about 1.30 am and landing the last baskets or peds around 4.00 pm to go away by bus or train. In the meantime they would have landed shrimps at Walton, Clacton or Jaywick.

My brother worked at Curtiss's fish shop at Clacton and in those days, around 1937-8, it was usual to sell 50 – 60 gallons of shrimps before 9 to 10 in the morning... there were of course several other shops and stalls as well.

I went on Charlotte Ellen as a sort of fill in job about 1951. I had a 16H Norton motor bike in those days. Malcolm McGregor who was crew with Dennis Heard walked from his home at Lee over sands across the marshes to Point Clear to start at 1.30 in the morning and back in the evening at around 6.00.

I lived in Clacton and so agreed to pick Malcolm up on the way. I left home at 1.00 am on



Wednesday morning, picked Mac up and arrived at Point Clear at 1.30. In those days there was a wartime track to the point and just bungalows on the sea wall. Speed had to be around 10 mph to get through the rabbits or they would have you off the bike.

After struggling the boat down from high water mark, I was put on the smack to light the fire while Mac picked up Denis from Brightlingsea with coal, water, fuel and rock salt.

Off we'd go eventually after about quarter of an hour hand starting the 3 cylinder Russell Newbury engine, one on each side of the handle and one standing over the hatch with a looped cord on the handle to give a jerk when possible. After rounding the creek buoy I went below to make the tea and I was instructed to just add tea and water before putting the kettle on the fire and the tinned condensed milk when it boiled. I lifted the lid with the poker as the sea hit the chimney and a shower of scale and soot dropped in the kettle. The kettle was more than half full of leaves anyway so it was a stiff brew, however after we had our tea I decided to clean the kettle out and get a fresh start. To my surprise I found a black object about 2 x 1 inches long and about ½ inch thick. I asked what it was and was told not to lose it as its purpose was to stop the tea tasting smokey.

We put the gear in by finding the ground with the 'tell tale', an oyster dredge with close mesh, as it was still dark and marks ashore that were used in daylight could not be seen. Shrimps are only found on a type of soft coral built by the Ross worm. Shrimps are to be found around these hills and they feed on the Ross worm and winkle them out with a spike they have on their heads. These are akin to flight or swarms, like locusts and they leave one patch and settle on another without apparent reason. So each skipper watches all the others and by various signs can tell who is doing best and where and keeps a mental note of the bearings off shore marks, all in his head. Anyway as soon as the first haul is made and shrimps cooked and dried, they have to be landed to shop or stall, in Frinton, Walton, Clacton and Jaywick by boat onto the beach and arrangement made for the pick up.

The smack tows the boat as near as possible then stands off to the grounds for the next haul and puts in. The chap in the boat usually has a decent old scull to get back aboard to start all over again. This went on until about 4.30 in the afternoon when the net fouled an obstruction and was badly torn. We motored into land and brought up to repair but had to change the net and completed this by the light of the moon.

The alarm for 1.30am Thursday went off very soon after and off we went again on the same routine, coming back into the Colne at about 5.00 pm on the last of the flood. Denis decided to give the engine full revs to see how it went. That lasted

for 6 minutes, then seized up solid just by the inner bench head. Mac and I rowed the smack until we lost the tide by number 13 buoy, just below Brightlingsea creek mouth in the Colne and a yacht towed us to inside the creek buoy. Denis set an alarm for 1.30 am. We took down the engine room bulkhead, shifted out all the winch gear and got the engine into the hold. Denis started to operate and we were just putting the bulkhead back when the alarm went off and away we went for the same routine on Friday.

We got back at 4.30 pm and after clearing up, Denis said as it was Saturday the next day and we deserved a break, daylight would be soon enough in the morning at 4.00 am. And so I got over my first days shrimping, that lasted from 1.30 Wednesday morning until 6.30 on Friday evening!

New Deck for Fly.

When we bought Fly we knew from the survey that she was in pretty desperate need of a new deck. Her original deck was a composite made up from a 6mm ply pinned to the deck beams then a layer of what appeared to be roofing felt type material but in some way more malleable. This was then topped off with a traditional laid deck calked and pitched.

Inevitably the laid deck at some point had started to leak but due to the impermeable nature of the layers below the laid deck two things happened. First water started to leak into the hull through any apertures in the deck such as around light prisms, hatches, mast hole etc. The second thing which happened was the laid deck started to rot from the bottom up, so we had patches of rot springing up in what appeared to be good deck.

Time for action !! We had carried out some remedial repairs but this was just a stop-gap operation to keep her sailing. Having made the decision to completely remove the old deck we needed to decide what to put back. We considered two options for re-decking Fly, plywood with glass fibre sheathing and a traditional laid deck.

Cost wise the two options were about the same. Time wise the plywood would have been quicker but we elected to go traditional (never any real question in it).

Having spoken to a number of people about materials to use and researched the ourselves we choose to go for quarter sawn Douglas Fir which we eventually ordered from Capricorn Timber. As the day of the delivery drew closer I started to panic about what would arrive, we had asked for long lengths, machined to section, tight grain, knot free, quarter sawn. As it turned out we needn't have worried the timber delivered was excellent, what a relief.

With the help of many friends we took the gear off her (including Ballast). Next the rig out and spars off her. Up went the frame and cover (thanks for



the loan) and it was time to start ripping up the old deck. Quite a simple task as we were not intending to re-use any of the decking, we drilled from the inside between the deck beams and joined the holes up from above with a jigsaw. Split of the small sections of deck over the deck beams and hay presto holes everywhere.

The time consuming bit was getting the old steel screws and nails out of the deck beams, we used a combination of mole grips and if they sheared of angle grinder.

We did the work in sections so we had somewhere to work from first off was the starboard side from the coach roof to the covering board. Nervous times uncovering the beams and covering board but to our great relief no rot or soft spots anywhere.

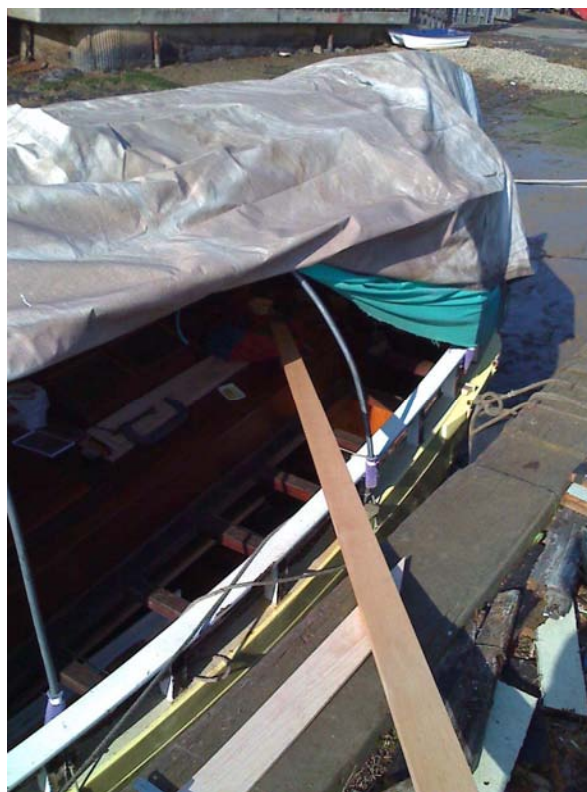


Once all this area had been cleaned up ready to take the new decking (and following great advice)



we striped the deck of around the counter. If we were going to find any bad bits under the deck this would be where they were most likely to be. And shore enough there they were. Two of the five internal horn timbers which run from inside the boat through the deck to form the counter had suffered form wet rot and would need replacing. Not the best day I have had down on the boat, but following a flurry of visitors with much more knowledge and skill that me it was decided that it was not a big problem to replace them, so we did with a great deal of help from friends.

While this work was going on at the stern I got on with stating to deck the foredeck. The picture below is the first new bit of wood going in. This one butted up against the side of the coach roof and runs all the way forward to the covering board. Hard to believe how that it took me most of the day to get it in straight and true, thank god the rest didn't take as long as that one.



Before I started the work I drew up a plan of the deck area to scale, once the wood was delivered I then spent a long time planning where each piece would go to use it as efficiently as possible and limit the joints as much as possible. This resulted in only 6 joints the whole of the deck.

Work carried on and I got into a bit of a routine laying the deck cutting, planning, drilling, sanding, clamping, screwing, and next plank.



By the time I had done half the foredeck the new horn timbers had been fitted, which allowed me to deck out to the covering board on the starboard side.

With this completed we striped the port side (thanks ed) ready for new deck. I followed the same process as on the starboard side.

With the first one in I decided to complete the foredeck which was very satisfying.

We then decked out the covering board on the port side which left the rear deck to do.

Conches that this was an area which had suffered from leaks before and it was not an area where leaks would be easily detectable we spent quite some time trying to make the joints around the horn timbers as watertight as possible. The first thing we did was to fill the whole area up with pitch, this should do two things. First surround the horn timbers and prevent them from becoming wet. Second should any water get into these areas in the future it will not have any areas in which it can get trapped.

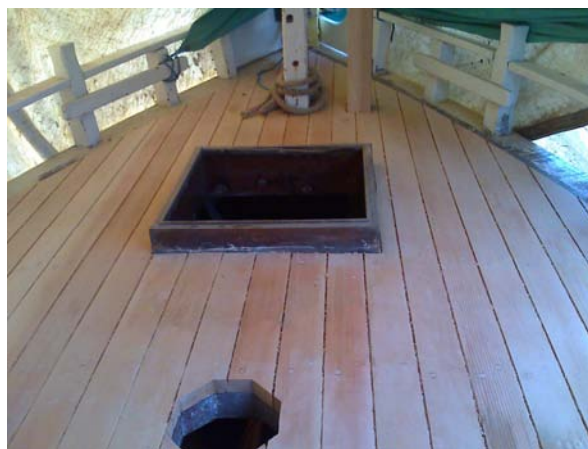
Because Fly is very fine aft she does not have the traditional arch board for the deck to run into which means the deck has to be trimmed around the horn timbers.

To do this we put a shallow rebate in the horn timber and rebated the underside of the deck planks to suit which will give a watertight joint.



Baring one or two hiccups like when I put my just sharpened chisel through my leg the rest of the deck went down according to plan.

We then glued in just under 1000 plugs !! and then had the clean them all off to deck level but the result is worth it.





As I write we are in the process of calking and pitching which will be complete soon. Then it will be on with all the other jobs like new fife rail and Sampson post. Making good around the stanchions new bulwarks and so on and so on.



We will be out this summer so look out for us on the water and please come and have a look. And finally a huge thanks to all those of you who have helped us with this, I have given up counting the amount of things I have begged borrowed and the free advice I have got from you all. But the biggest thanks of all must go to my wife and the girls for there support.

Ferret MN17

LES VIEUX GREEMENTS DES BANCS DE FLANDRE

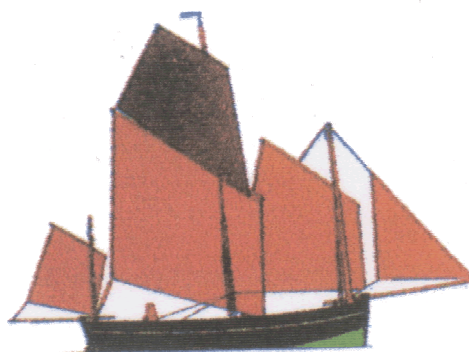
by
Andy Lindley

This is an association like the CSPS, although at present smaller. In English the name literally means The Old Rigging of the Banks of Flanders. Old Rigging is the French expression for old vessels. They include smacks, work boats and also classic yachts and cover the stretch of coast from Boulogne up to Ostend. This is all inside the banks on which the smacks used to fish. The President of the VGBF m. Francois Ahond is joining the CSPS and I have joined them. They are based at Gravelines midway between Calais and Dunkirk where the enclosed wet dock Bassin Vauban provides a perfect setting beside the small fortified town. The original massive fortifications are intact with Gravelines nestling inside them. Just near the Bassin a replica galleon of the Flemish/French 17th century privateer Jean Bart is being built. The local smacks are luggers, as above, of different types from Gravelines itself, Ostend and

Equihen just south of Boulogne, with from one to three masts. The general sailing conditions are somewhat fresher than in the Thames estuary as the wind funnels through the Straits of Dover. The smacks are heavily built with a strong sheerline in the french tradition. They reached out to the fishing grounds and back like Whitstable yawls.

The VGBF has a rally at Gravelines on the spring bank holiday weekend of the 23rd and 24th of May 2009, that is the week before Ostend at Anchor. Any vessel is welcome then in the Bassin Vauban. A mooring there is free for 8 days before or after the rally. Unfortunately they do not as yet have a race, just a parade of sail in the long canalised approach channel and a party onshore. They usually have Dutch, French, Belgian and English vessels attending.

Anybody who would like to bring their smack, Thames sailing barge, tug, work boat or classic to the rally, perhaps en-route to Ostend, or just for a bit of french leave please contact me Andy Lindley on 01206 306702 or e-mail me at andyindley@yahoo.co.uk and I can give you the registration form.



ESCALE A GRAVELINES A STOPOVER AT GRAVELINES

The weekend of 23rd & 24th May in the Bassin Vauban for some French leave.
Free Mooring, and Big Party.
Contact Les Vieux Greements des Bances de Flandre, Port de Plaisance, Quai Ouest, Bassin Vauban, 59820 Gravelines, France
e-mail vgbfgavelines@free.fr

Or Andy Lindley on 01206 306702
e-mail andyindley@yahoo.co.uk

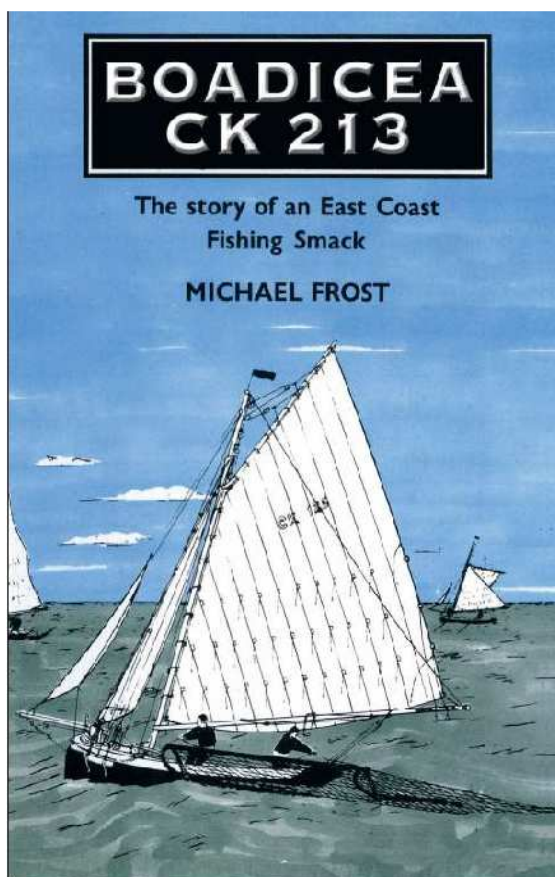


Exert from Boadicea CK213 by Michael Frost

The following is taken from the excellent book written by Michael Frost about his adventures in Boadicea. The book has been reprinted and is available from his grandson Rueben Frost, who is now custodian of Boadicea. If you are interested in purchasing the book please contact Rue via the following;

9 victory road west Mersea Essex co58ly

Email reufrost@oystersmack.org.uk , details are on the web site; www.oystersmack.org.uk



The incident occurred just before high water on a cold rough day with the wind blowing hard on shore. The tide was a big one with the water rising well up the cliff which topped the beach so that it was almost level with the greensward itself.

Offshore from where I stood the water was grey and windswept, but fairly smooth as the eel-grass out on the flats was breaking the force of the sea. Further to the east where the outfall turned away offshore there was much more swell, and the surf was breaking continuously over the greensward edge.

When the smack first came in sight she was coming out of Bussand under three reefs with a reefed staysail, and at her bowsprit end she was carrying a very small storm jib. This combination of sails gave her the open-rigged appearance typical of fishing smacks in gale conditions, and even from a distance she looked exciting. From the moment she began to bear away to come inshore I felt certain that this smack would indeed sail past me so close that I could almost touch her.

Close reefs can be set in different ways but smacks, which are heavily ballasted and low in the water, very often set their sails high even when reefed. At sea this gives the vessel more drive, but not the least of the reasons for doing it is the far better appearance of a vessel when she is slightly high-reefed. This smack had her reefs set high and as she swept in to cross the King's Hard fairly well inshore she was sailing fast with her bow-wave rising up round her rail though she was not heeling very much.

As the smack approached she was still drawing in closer to the shore until eventually, when she had fairly reached the beginning of the outfall, she was not much more than her own length distant from the greensward edge. She then held along the shore at about this distance out and quickly drew towards the place where I was standing.

I surmise now that she was almost certainly one of the smaller smacks, but at the time she seemed enormously big and strong. This impressed me, as also did the stormy appearance of her bow-wave, but surprisingly the noise of her going through the water was far less than the shrill noise of the wind in her rigging. Perhaps most of all I was impressed by the appearance of ease and safety of the men on board of her. Before she was fully past me her bow-wave swept in and topped the cliff, but I hardly noticed this in the excitement of waving and shouting to her crew. There were two men on board, one of them, young and fresh-faced, was sitting on the rail just aft of the rigging. This one waved and laughed but the second man who was half-crouching at the helm was older and severe-looking, and paid no attention to my shouting. This did not surprise me as even in the little winkle brigs I had learned that

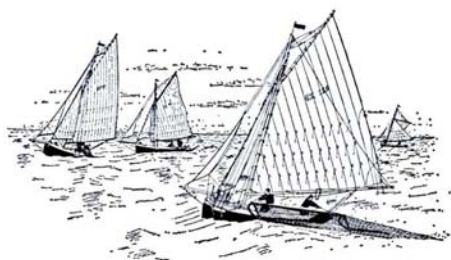


the helmsman is remotely unapproachable. I watched him glance from ahead to aloft and then to seaward and then aloft again - the glance aloft was long and searching.

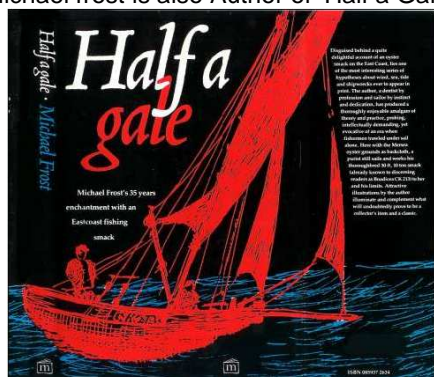
After the smack had passed she continued close in for a short distance, but then began to ease away gradually from the shore, so that by the time she reached the rougher water to the east she was fairly well out. I watched the younger man move aft and begin hauling in the mainsheet. He hauled quickly, hand over fist, with the rope snaking out behind him to the deck and I could easily imagine the weight and the pull of the smack's mainsail. As the sail came in the smack headed away more offshore and came close up on the wind. She was clear of the sheltering grass beds now and I watched the first sea of the rougher water break round her bows.

I had not seen anything like this before and for a moment was anxious, but before the thought had barely time to form the younger man moved over and took the place of the skipper at the helm. The old man moved across to weather and then for a few moments stood looking aft as though weighing up and judging the passage he had just completed.

The act was simple but its meaning was clear enough. The passage down the length of the beach had indeed been skipper's work but now, forging her way out to the Sandbar end and the open sea beyond, the smack needed no more than a boy to manage her. My fears dispersed and were followed by a relief and a faith in Fishing smacks which no other kind of vessel since has ever stolen.



Michael frost is also Author of 'Half a Gale'.



Chairman's reports:

To AGM 22nd November 2008

Before I start my report I would like to thank Brightlingsea Sailing Club for allowing us to use their Clubhouse for the AGM and for the talk evenings and the Colne Match Prize Giving and Supper.

The Society has not had such an active year as usual which was disappointing. In March we had a very entertaining talk by Dick Harman and Malcolm MacGregor. The main thing I learnt that night about fishing was that if you wanted to catch anything you had to have a bath in petrol first.

In April we had the Shanty Night. This raised £500 for charity and was donated to

Brightlingsea Toy Library: £100

Brightlingsea Community Support Bus: £100

Deputies Christmas Fund: £100

St Helena's Children's Hospice: £200

Martin Worth and his wife Nicki organised the Shanty and had several helpers on the day. I would like to thank everyone concerned.

Martin would like to hear from anyone who would like to get involved either helping or performing, in next years Shanty Night which is on the 28th of March

On the 22nd of June we had the Open Day. This coincided with the Brightlingsea Boat Show. Those who came will remember what a windy day it was. It was decided not to take any smacks out sailing. The usual attractions activities took place on the Dock and Martin Worth had Fly uncovered so visitors could see how the work on replacing the deck was progressing. I would like to thank all those who helped out on the day. On the same weekend, the Old Gaffers used the Smacksman's Return on the Friday evening and on the Saturday afternoon in connection with their race.

On the 20th of July we were due to hold the Sail and Picnic. This unfortunately had to be cancelled at very short notice on the evening before it was due to take place. We had 9 smacks lined up and had passengers to fill all of them. On the Saturday afternoon I was told by one of the smack owners that he had broken some gear the week before, and despite trying, had not managed to get it repaired. We then started re-arranging the passengers for the remaining smacks and when Jim Lawrence spoke to one of the other of the smack owners he was told that he wouldn't be coming along. Unfortunately the 2 smacks that dropped out were 2 of the larger ones and it was impossible then to take all those people who had



booked. We decided that we could not allow some people to come and not others as it would have been unfair and so Jim had the thankless task of ringing everyone up with the bad news. We tried to fix another date to hold it but it proved impossible to get enough smacks together on a day with a suitable tide because of other commitments. This is the first time the Sail and Picnic has been cancelled. To avoid this happening again we will inform everyone which smack they have been allocated to and then if that smack does not sail for whatever reason, only that party will be cancelled. I would like to thank the crews of the smacks that were available to take part which were Primrose, Blackbird, William, Harriet Blanche, Electron, Saxonia and Nellie, and I would especially like to thank Jim Lawrence for all the work he put in.

The Colne Match took place on the 6th of September, and you will remember that the weather affected this as well. There was a shortened course and 8 smacks and 4 barges took part. Congratulations to all the prize winners and to everyone who took part on a testing day. I would like to thank Brian Webb for organising the match together with his helpers.

Jon Brett and Brian Croucher have rebuilt the Jetty and made a marvellous job, which is a real credit to them. It has made a vast improvement to the dock, and has received many favourable comments. We will have to do some dredging in the dock and we are still making investigations into the best and most cost effective way of doing it.

The smack dock is full again for this winter with William and Emily, Nellie, Iris Mary, Helen and Violet, Marigold, Electron, Polly, Fly, Dorana and Tess. There are an increasing number of dinghies in the dock and so that we can keep a track of them we are introducing a system of numbered tags. Dinghy owners will have to fill out a short form with their contact details when they want to keep a dinghy in the dock and they will be allocated a numbered brass tag, which will need to be affixed to the dinghy. This is to allow the berthing master know who the dinghies belong to. We are also drafting berthing rules specifically relating to dinghies, which will be published in due course. The primary purpose of the dock is for the smacks and dinghies must not impede the smacks entering or leaving the dock. No dinghies will be allowed on or in the dock without the berthing master's permission, but he will try to accommodate them where possible. If anyone has a dinghy in the dock would they have a word with Martin.

Chairman's Report February 2009

Since the last newsletter we have had the AGM and there have been a few changes to the Committee. Andy Lindley, Cindy Rowlands and Crispin Yarker are no longer on the Committee and I would like to thank them for all the work they have put in. Andy's place editing the newsletter has been taken over permanently by Robin Page. He produced the last edition whilst Andy was unwell, and I am sure he would welcome contributions for future issues. Long standing Committee member, Bill Williams, has taken over as Secretary and was voted in for one year to bring the post into line with the biennial votes for the officers which will take place at the next AGM. We have one new Committee member, Amanda Stear, who is one of the owners of Polly, and it is good to have her on board. The remaining committee members, Martin Worth, Brian Foulger and Tony Brett were all re-elected. Nicky Ennion remains the Treasurer and was voted in last year.

You will see the programme of events for the year on the front of the newsletter. Please support as many of the CSPS events that you can. We are making a slight change to the Smack Dock Open Day this year. Instead of the Dock being open all day on the Saturday we are going to open it from lunchtime onwards and all activities will be shore based. Hopefully there will be a smack open if any one would like to look round one. Then on Sunday we hope to take members out for a sail up to Wivenhoe in conjunction with the Old Gaffers. More details will be provided nearer the time, but as with the Sail and Picnic, would any one who would like to go for a sail please book a place beforehand. We would appreciate any help that could be given at the Open Day and if you could assist please contact me.

The Sail and Picnic will take place this year, weather permitting. To avoid the problems we had last year, when people reserve a place, they will be allocated to a particular smack. If for any reason that smack can not attend then only that party will be cancelled, though we will try to re-allocate to a different smack if it is possible to do so. All smacks are welcome to take part in both events and I will be contacting the normal participants nearer the time. Any owner who has not come along before, and would like to do so, please ring or email me. You will be very welcome.

We have had a some problems in the last year or so with the secretary's side of things and a few minor problems have arisen. These have all been resolved, but in future if you do not receive a newsletter, or hear of anyone who applies to join the Society and does not hear back within the

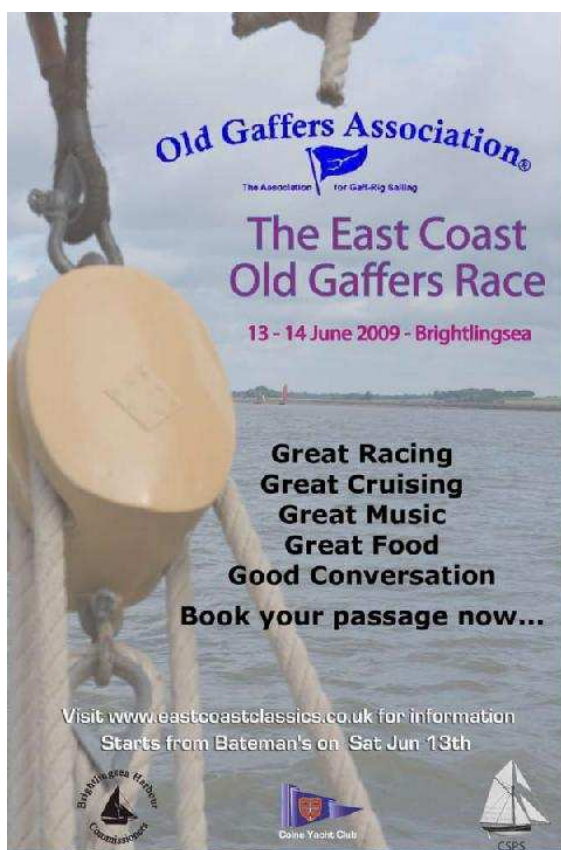


month please contact me. The sooner I hear of problems, the sooner they can be rectified. I am sure that this was just a one off and will not happen again.

All subscriptions and mooring fees are now due. If you have not paid yet it would be appreciated if you would do so as soon as possible. If you pay by cash or cheque you might like to switch to standing order. It makes the treasurer's job a lot easier.

Let us hope for better weather than last year.

Simon Fox.



Dorana

The Story of Leigh Cockler " and her new owner

It was September 6 2008 the day of the Colne smack race I had a party of four onboard Jassa to follow the race round, I always followed them round but this year Jassa was coded for charter so I made my passion available to others as usual but this year it was for a fee.

I watched the smacks charge out of the creek but this year on race day I made a decision. I would be racing my own next year. I am known for my

fast decisions and my act now worry later attitude, but I was determined. As smack owners know there are not many vessels left that need new owners especially ones that float. I started to trawl the internet in search for the right boat at the right price. One smack came up the Rosena so I made the phone call it turned out she had been moved to toosey by a ship wright who hoped to gain work rebuilding her for somebody else, Andy Harmon owner of Toosey (St Osyth) boatyard allowed me to have a look. Well I have turned some sorry looking craft into useable boats but this just about exceeded my limited talent it was a start from scratch job. Next to her was the Grace Darling which was even worse.

My lack of money and expertise seemed to push my dream further away, these two smacks had the purchase price of two thousand pounds which was more than I had to spend. With the rebuild costs to be added as well, I went away undeterred but dismayed at what I had seen. It seemed that any boat, good enough and up and sailing was well out of my reach. By this time everyone had heard of my quest and different boat names were flung up in the air no one knowing if they were available or exactly where they were, three weeks had passed which is a very short time in a hunt for one of these craft when, while on one of my chats on the smack dock Mandy who owns Polly mentioned that she had seen a craft at althorn up the crouch. Within two minuets a phone call had been made and I was due to see her the following Monday the price three thousand five hundred pounds, well I had the five hundred of that, but I thought that having a look couldn't hurt.

Monday came and I set out along the A12 full of anticipation and armed with a camera and check book. I arrived at the boat yard at about 10.30 am and spotted her straight away fully rigged, but generally looking sorry for her self. There was a hole in the side, boarded up and various other bits of boards on the decks, all covering holes!



I stepped aboard and started prodding rotten this and rotten that, but nothing that I could describe as a major problem. The mast was severely rotted



and not safe to take any sort of load so a new one of those would be needed along with all the other bits. There was lots to do, but not unachievable so I decided to go and have a chat with the owner.

Twenty minuets later I was her new owner. I drove home happy, but thinking, oh my god what have I done? would I be able to get it back without it going to a watery grave? I had no real clue what she was like underneath and we all know about mud caulking it doesn't stay in long when you start to move, anyway I chose to pick her up that same Saturday the tides were right. Lucky for me I have met some really wonderful people in the last couple of years and two of them jumped at the chance to bring her back with me. Now I know they were willing to help me as a friend but I think the thought of having a small adventure also had something to do with it.

Tony Brett, Brian Croucher and I set of on Saturday morning at 5.00 am on Jassa my other trusted lady bound for the crouch. It was dark foggy and visibility was very poor, so I slowly coaxed Jassa out of the creek. Lucky I have radar and all the other gadgets which made it easy we made it to the Wallet spit-way as scheduled and the visibility improved the trip up was fairly straight forward. We arrived at about 9.45 Dorana was still on the mud but that was ok, it gave Brian and tony time to have a look and to assure me that they were happy to make the journey on her, because as I said earlier I hadn't a clue what she was really like. An hour of tea drinking and preparing pumps and things soon passed and we were on our way. Leaving berth was interesting with two long keeled boats trying to turn into the tide in a relatively small space, it was interesting but we managed it. We were off. The trip back up the crouch was uneventful, with the sun out it was quite nice. We decided not to cross the ray sand but to go through the spit way due to the tide that was ebbing, just as well we did as halfway through the spit way Jassa came to a halt, drifting where the tide took us. Perhaps it was Jassa's disgust that there was another boat in my life as well as her, or maybe just a blocked diesel filter, ill never know. With the filter changed we were back on track albeit 45 mins behind schedule. We arrived at number 13 and I noticed quite a few yachts milling in the creek mouth, obviously there was not enough water for them to get in. I decided not to stop but to have a go at getting in so I opened the throttle and stuck on the leading lights, we were in! We headed for the smack dock passing Bernie in the harbour launch to which Brian shouted "port of refuge" just in case Bernie decided he wanted me to turn around, of course he didn't, as we passed the jetties I realised how big the ebb was. I was surprised to make it all the way to the smack dock. We had made it no dramas, no leaks, great

all that remained was for me to get into a berth on the nights tide .

Sunday morning was another sunny day and Dorana had created a bit of interest on the dock, with everyone wanting to know what she was like. Instead of standing on the dock explaining what she was like I put the gang plank down and made it open day. About 20 people had a look, this was a wise move in the long run, for when the work started they would all of had at some point and distracted me, now I could work in peace without the constant run of people wanting to have a look and a chat. I might add that is all part of the fun of owning a smack, but I have a fairly tight schedule. I planed to be sailing for summer 2009, or so I keep telling my self. The general feeling from others was there was not a hope of this happening as most of them had been in my position and they were speaking from experience. However I have a very strong attitude to get boats back to a useable state very quickly. I am not saying that down below will be a palace but she will be sailing, which of course is the whole point of owning one of these craft.

I had to wait till October before the tides were big enough to get her on the slip and I planned to get the mast out all on the same tide so I de-rigged her, again with the help of Brian and Tony. I had the mast lifted by one of the grabs on the wharf, it all went well but the mast was scrap, it was rotten from top to bottom and it was only ten years old! Never mind I just added it to the ever growing list, on the plus side the engine which had stood for about five years started an ran perfectly, one less thing to worry about.

The next tide came and I was on the slip, finally I could look underneath The bottom was really good, better than I could have hoped for. That left me with the hole in the starboard side to sort out. Out came the interior the ballast and the job of cleaning the bilge started, it was quite bad full of silt and everything else you can imagine you might find in bilges, but that said it still only took a day with a pressure washer and patience.





That job done and on inspection the inside of the hull was also good so I started to prepare the side for re-planking

After a short discussion with John Brett I decided where the butt joints should be and cut out the rot I managed to source some Siberian larch locally at the right price and started to put the planks in. what a big learning curve. By December all the planks were in and just needed caulking, good. However another issue had come up. I no longer had a hole in side but now had one in the deck.

This was a result of too much investigation. Never mind I cut out the worst and decided to just patch up and make good, further down the line I intend to change the cabin top to something more in keeping with the boat.

Gary Humm.

There will be more news from Gary in the spring issue as we see how work progresses on Dorana.

Local Marine Art

The images below in no way do justice to the paintings that they attempt to show, but give an idea of the subject matter and the style.

They have been painted by local artists who have a keen interest in the aesthetics and heritage of our fine local vessels. All are available for sale, and if sold as a result of this article the CSPS will receive a commission.

It is worth noting that the artists are willing to take commissions from photographs at reasonable prices.



1 Ethel Alice, CK476, 16"x20", Acrylic. £160 Framed. Don Page,



2 Dorothy and Little Mary 16"x20" Acrylic £150 Framed. Don Page



3 Smacks Ellen CK222 and CK48 Colne match 2003, watercolour. Edwin Meayers



4 Smack G&A CK76 and Marigold MN119 Colne 2003, Watercolour. Edwin Meayers

Paintings 3 and 4 are now sold, but if you are interested in the others, or would like to enquire about a commission please contact me.

There will be more paintings from local artists in future editions of smack dock soundings.

Robin Page



Dates for your 2009 Diary

Water based

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>High water (Brightlingsea)</u>
30 th May	Wivenhoe Town Regatta	17.32
13-14 th June	Brightlingsea OGA.	16.12
14 th June	CSPS sailing day	16.57
27 th June	Blackwater match	16.25
11 th July	Rowhedge Regatta	14.16
12 th July	Sail and Picnic.	15.51
18 th July	PIN Mill Smack race	08.51
25 th July	Heybridge Basin Regatta	15.19
8 th August	Whitstable Smack Race	14.28
15 th August	Swale Smack and Barge Match	9.28
16 th -21 st August	Mersea week	08.18-13.29
22 nd August	Mersea Town Regatta	14.13
5 th September	Tollesbury Regatta	13.31
12 th September	Colne Smack and Barge Match	17.48
19 th September	Maldon Town Regatta	13.05

Land Based

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Venue</u>
28 th March	Shanty night and seafood	Brightlingsea Community Centre.
13 th June	Open afternoon	Smack Dock.
30 th April	Sail workshop	James Lawrence Sail loft.
Autumn	Jim Lawrence talk	Brightlingsea sailing club

West Mersea Regatta 2008 'a good lead'. Photo L Page.

CSPS sailing day 14th June 2009.

This event is aimed at getting people afloat, in particular those who are interested in crewing on a smack for races, or cruising.

The format will be a sail up the river to Wivenhoe, or Rowhedge and back, from Brightlingsea. To attend you will have to book a space in advance. Please contact Brian Croucher on 07865058011.

CSPS Open afternoon.

This year the open day has become an open afternoon. It is to be held on the dock after the East coast OGA race, there will be the chance to look over some of the smacks either on the dock,

or on the pontoons. We are planning to have music and beer, it should be a good afternoon.

Sea shanty night.

The Colne Smack Preservation Society will be holding their annual Sea Shanty Night on Saturday 28th March at Brightlingsea Community Centre. Amongst the invited performers are Motley Crew, Joan Gifford, Jimmy Lawrence and Peter Scott. Last years event raised over £500 with all of the profits going to local charities. Local charities who would like to apply for funds are encouraged to contact Simon Fox, Chairperson on 01206 230254



Tickets will be £11 and are available from The Sail Loft or on 01206 302877 from the 1st March.

This year we need volunteers to help with the following tasks:

Distributing posters to the local shops etc.

Selling raffle tickets on the night.

Help on the door on the night collecting tickets.

Preparing some of the salad in the afternoon.

Any help would be much appreciated.

We also need **RAFFLE PRIZES** if you have any suitable items. Please call me on 01206 302877 Martin Worth

The Colne Smack Preservation Society presents



SHANTY NIGHT & Seafood Supper

in support of local charities

Saturday 28th March 2009

7.30 pm

At

Brightlingsea Community Centre

Tickets £11

Admission by advance ticket purchase or phone reservation only.

Available from:

Martin or Nicki Worth 01206 302877

James Lawrence Sail Loft, Tower Street 01206 302863 or Jim Lawrence 01206 304204.

Sail Workshop 30th April 2009.

This is a first for the society. Mark Butler of James and Lawrence Sailmakers has kindly offered to hold an evening sail workshop at the sail loft in Tower street Brightlingsea. The idea is that smack and Bawley owners bring along their sails and we stretch them out in the loft, Mark will then look at them and explain how to get the best out of them. It will be of particular interest of owners bring along 'problem sails'. There will be time for a question session. We think that this will be an interesting evening for owners and crew. Non sailors are more than welcome as are owners and crew who are not members of the CSPS.

Jim Lawrence Talk.

Jim has kindly offered to give one of his very interesting talks this autumn.

Details will e posted in smack dock soundings and on the web site nearer the date.

For Sale



12ft Clinker Rowing Boat

Traditional wooden clinker rowing boat, Mahogany over steamed oak frames and elm keel. LOA 12ft, beam 4ft 11 ins moulded depth 20 ins. Built by Fred Mitchell of Brightlingsea c1970. Very good condition, the ideal tender.

£1,700.

**Call Chris 01206 822007 (w)
 01225 821505 (H)**

Place your advert free of charge.

If you have any items for sale please let me know and I will put them on the web site and in the next edition of smack dock soundings, it could be anything from a bucket to a Bawley, provided that it is related to the society.

Adverts are free to members, £10 to non members (the cost of membership)....bargain!

Robin Page email: robin@strong-point.co.uk



GAFF MAINSAIL SETTING

Many gaff mainsails are often set incorrectly and as many of us sail for relaxation some may ask "What difference does it make?" Mark Butler of James Lawrence Sailmakers answers this question and explains how to achieve better results.

The mainsail in most gaffers is the primary driving force and correct setting and adjustment can make amazing differences in how that boat sails. The widely held view that most gaffers are inefficient to windward, often heavy on the helm, generally slow and with excessive leeway, makes me want to point out that all these problems can be either eradicated or lessened by correct sail setting and with its biggest effect, correct mainsail setting. Of course all the sails set on board any boat contribute to the driving forces acting on it, with correct headsail setting and sheeting being crucial for good balance and drive. Of course other factors have a far greater control over a boat's sailing abilities, not least of which is the boat itself. I am not, in this brief space, going to enter into the vast area of correct design, proportioning and shaping of gaff sails, because the whole rig, hull and owners' particular details and requirements need to be taken into consideration. For now, let me just describe how I prepare, set and adjust a typical gaff mainsail.

The first things I check is how the sail is attached to the spars. To avoid hoisting the lowering the main more than I have to, I start at the top.

I check that the throat is correctly attached and that the head is pulled out taut along the gaff with its own separate peak lashing. This should be laced at the peak with the sail being pulled out along the gaff and also securely laced to it, to prevent the sail pulling away from the spar.

Some owners will have alloy, or even high tech fibre spars and use slides, or bolt rope and track, for head attachment. This is fine, but for those using the more traditional lacing eyes, I usually advise a firmly spiralled lacing around the gaff. This leaves the sail setting away from the spar with a small gap, but unstressed. I find a tightly marline hitched lacing unnecessary and it can pull out the lacing eyes or at least induce creasing in the head area. On larger vessels I would suggest separate robands but still adjust these to let the sail find its own location along the spar.

Some throat attachments are connected through the gaff to the throat halyard and tighten the head when the sail is hoisted and the luff tension set

up. Some just swivel below the gaff and work in a similar manner. I approve of these methods and when present I allow for them when adjusting the head.

Now I check the foot attachment and, if laced, treat in a similar manner to the head, again using a spiralled lacing to look consistent with the head, but if a marlin-hitched lacing is preferred then this is fine as long as it is not over restricting the free movement of the foot. If the foot is attached with slides check these are free and not gummed up with dirt or corrosion. I've even found them stuck fast with varnish which doesn't help when you wish to tension the foot out a little with the clew lacing. I also check the tack attachment is sound.

If the mainsail is loose footed I check that the clew outhaul system is in good order. There are several different systems and methods of attaching the clew but all must involve holding the clew at a set distance from the boom in a near vertical direction and then controlling its horizontal position. In simple terms this enables the sail to be made flatter or fuller. I usually find clew outhauls have been left with the foot pulled out tight even with the sail stowed which is, I am sure, as harmful to the sail as leaving reefs tied tightly in. Because of this, I usually rather pointedly loosen this right off, and then adjust a little later.

At this stage the sail is ready to hoist but not before I have looked at the peak halyard and gaff span set up and taken into consideration the gaff angle and mast head length and strength. I often suggest moving the span or spans nearer to the outer end of the gaff and nearer to the downward pull of the leech of the mainsail. On many gaffers these spans are located too low down the gaff and this fails to set up the peaking of the gaff properly. A vessel with a badly supported gaff with invariably have excessive mainsail twist and too much gaff bend, which adversely affect the mainsail shape and possible leads to the leech flopping off or motor-boating. In most cases moving the gaff spans can make big improvements.

As for the peak halyard, I believe this to be the most important rope aboard, but probably the most underused. It needs to be powerful and infinitely adjustable, as it is this adjustment that greatly affects the boat's balance, weather helm, angle of heel and, to some extent, its speed and ability to point. The peak halyard purchase is being increased with a hardener tackle set up on one of the falls.

So now with the boat head to wind, ease the mainsheet, top up boom if present, boomless bawleys, luggers and wherries ignore this, and



hoist the gaff. Check all reef pendants and points are free, check both parts of topsail sheet, if present, are running and raise the gaff using the peak halyard to keep the gaff horizontal.

If you are setting the whole mainsail and will not be reefing, take the throat all the way up. If the tack is standing this is just a matter of pulling up taut. Remember that unless on wire halyards the rope will stretch, so swing hard and take the stretch out. If you are rigged with a tack downhall and perhaps a floating boom height you can take the throat higher at first and then let things ease down later with gravity helping. Now pull on the peak halyard, if this is rigged with a hardener tackle on one end, this should already be eased off fully to its knot. Take the peak up until the sail is flat and ease the topping lifts, then past this point until diagonal creases form from peak to tack, and make fast the peak halyard. This creasing or tension should be quite strong at this stage and is deliberately put in to pull the draft forward and with it the centre of effort. Holding this COE as far forward as possible in the mainsail by this peaking method is the biggest single adjustment that can be made with any existing gear, and I cannot over emphasise its importance. If all other sails are set correctly, it will often reduce weather helm, excessive heeling and leeway. It can also improve speed and pointing ability.

I will add that the gaff angle and stability of the mainsail cloth play an important part, but these again are another area.

With the sail now hoisted, I look carefully at the luff attachment, whether lacing, hoops or slides. Make sure that tension is spread as equally as possible over all of them, and the sail has a smooth entry with no creases. Adjust these if required. At this stage I need to see the sail full and if the vessel is underway I have the helmsman bear off and put her on the wind. The previously mentioned diagonal creases should now smooth out as the sail fills. If the sail is still creased it is overpeaked and this requires easing, but only sufficiently. Now put the vessel about and as she comes through the wind check for those peaking creases, which should be apparent every time the vessel goes through the wind, if no longer present peak up a little.

This "overpeaking" requires adjusting depending on wind strengths and the boat's heading to the wind. If you're keen you will lower the peak when sailing downwind, not forgetting to raise it again, as you luff! - and this is where the peak hardener tackle comes into its own.

If the style of boat and its deck layout allows, I recommend a full width main horse which enables the boom to be pulled downward when working to windward. This tensions the leech and reduces excessive twist in the mainsail. Because of their boom length most gaffers are not equipped with a kicking strap or vang which would assist in this leech tensioning.

Gaff rig can be very efficient and improvements can usually be made very easily. I often tell gaff owners that a gaff mainsail requires "setting up" not just "pulling up"! The benefits are worth it as most gaffers handling can be transformed and her owner's pleasure greatly increased.

Mark Butler
James Lawrence Sailmakers

JAMES LAWRENCE SAILMAKERS

Gaff and Lug Rig Specialists



"BOADICEA" CK213
New Lawrence sails for her 200th year

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