



The Never Setting Sun



# Smack Dock Soundings

THE JOURNAL OF THE COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Autumn 2010

ISSUE 57



*Maria, Sunbeam and Primrose, all reefed down at the start of the 2010 Tollesbury Regatta.  
Photo Kees Spitters.*

**Chairman;** Simon Fox.  
Cherry Tree Farm, Bromley Road, Ardleigh, CO7 7SG.  
Tel 07814505786

**Journal Editor;** Robin Page.  
49 Colne Road, Brightlingsea, Essex, CO7 0DU.  
Tel. 07768522957 e-mail robin@strong-point.co.uk

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

## From the editor.

I must thank all of the contributors to this edition, the response to my pleas has been great. Keep the good work up.

This time we even have 2 reports for the same race.

The next edition will be out around Christmas provided that the articles continue to come in.

Liaise

Robin Page. 01206 304690



## Contents

From the editor.....	Robin Page	Page 1
Contents.....		Page 2
The future of the society.....	Robin Page	Page 2
2010 sail and picnic.....	Jean Wilson	Page 3
The Birkenhead drill.....	Judy Lawrence/Valerie Walters	Page 4
Pin Mill smack race and parade of sail.....	Noel Dilly	Page 6
Pin Mill race.....	Martin Worth	Page 8
Obituary, John Hickman.....	Jimmy Lawrence	Page 9
Shanty night.....	Martin Worth	Page 9
Chairman's report.....	Simon Fox	Page 9
Dock dredging guide.....	Robin Page	Page 10
Oyster dredging match.....	Robin Page	Page 11
For Sale.....		Page 13
Membership Form.....		Page 14

### **The future of the society, help needed.**

This is not intended to be a rant, so please take the time to read through, it is my personal take on things and does not necessarily reflect the views of the committee.

Simon Fox and I have received criticism from some members recently for not carrying out our duties in a diligent manner and risking the future of the society, it was even suggested that we stand down and allow people more capable to take on the duties. This criticism has been from a very small minority, but we have taken it seriously.

#### General

Before I get into the specifics I think that it may be worth outlining the way that the society functions.

The committee meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month. The meetings are formal, but friendly and we discuss agenda items and run through normal items such as finance. Meetings minutes are taken etc.

Members of the committee take on additional responsibilities, Nicky Enion is treasurer, Simon Fox is chairman, Martin Worth is berthing master and until this year has organised the shanty night, Bill Williams is secretary, Amanda Stear is membership secretary and I edit the newsletter. All committee members are volunteers and put in a considerable amount of time. Six of the committee members are smack owners.

The society generates a small surplus each year and currently has around £10,000 in the bank. Membership hovers around the 200 mark and each member yields the society around £4/year gross profit once the newsletter expenses have been taken into account. The remainder of the income is from berths on the dock and donations.

#### Events

We typically organise the following events;

1. The Colne Smack and Barge match, including the prize giving evening and meal at Brightlingsea sailing club.
2. The Sea shanty night at Brightlingsea community centre. All profits from this event go to local charities. Valerie Walters has

kindly agreed to take on the running of this event for 2011.

3. Smack dock open day/sailing day. We have tried different versions of this and attendance has been low, so we are unlikely to continue this one for 2011.
4. Winter evening talks. Over the last few years we have tried to organise one or 2 events, talks or film shows etc. We typically make a small loss on each evening, but they have been quite well attended.

#### Newsletter

The predominant criticism has been that the newsletter is not produced on time. I take this on the chin and accept that as editor it is my responsibility to get it out, however for a long period there has been nothing to edit and I have been writing a good proportion of the articles, thankfully the contributions have been coming in since the last edition, fingers crossed that this continues.

#### So what do we need?

I think that it is fair to say that it would be good for us to have more help, or some fresh blood on the committee. Nicky Enion will be unable to attend meetings for the next few months, so a temporary treasurer would be a big help. I would be happy to stand down from editing the magazine, I find it very difficult to give it the time that it deserves and I am sure that a fresh approach would not hurt. In addition if any members would like to organise any additional events, such as winter evening talks etc that would be great. One last thing; if you are too busy to help, please think before criticising those who are making an effort.

If you are interested in offering genuine help please contact Simon Fox, his details are on the front.

Robin Page





### **2010 sail and picnic.**

After an overcast start with mild, light winds, the clouds eventually broke up and the sun shone ever warmer. There was a good attendance of about 50 people and 7 smacks and bawleys, namely Pioneer, Blackbird, Saxonia, Fly, Primrose, Polly and Nellie.

Once we were all deployed aboard these excellent craft, the pleasure of sailing from spectating to crewing began. Calling out to one another on our voyages and admiring the boats, all added to our pleasure of the day.

Eventually it was time to moor up for lunch in a raft, starting either side of Pioneer, then enjoy our picnics and listen to or join in the singing enhanced by the musicians among us.

Membership forms were handed out, so hopefully our numbers have risen.

The afternoon was thus spent very enjoyably and I for one went below deck on Pioneer to look at the large album with photographs and details of how she was rescued out of the mud and gradually restored to the fine vessel that she now is.

I can only give the highest praise to all concerned in her restoration and current use.

Thank goodness for the skills that continue to restore so many old boats to sail once again, and give much pleasure for further generations.

Words; Jean Wilson, Photos Toni Baron.





## **THE BIRKENHEAD DRILL**

### **"WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST"**

### **THE SILENT HEROES OF THE BIRKENHEAD**

Under the command of Captain Robert Salmond, H.M.S. Birkenhead left Portsmouth in January 1852 taking troops to fight in the Frontier War in South Africa. The Birkenhead, one of the first iron hulled paddle steamers in service travelled to southern Ireland, before heading for the Cape on 17th January.

The troops onboard included drafts of Fusiliers, Highlanders, Lancers, Foresters, Rifles, Green Jackets and assorted other regiments.

After taking on fresh water and supplies the Birkenhead steamed out of Simon's Bay near Cape Town, in the late afternoon of 25th February, with about 634 men, women and children on board. With weather conditions perfect, a clear blue sky and a flat and calm sea, the Birkenhead continued steadily on her passage.

Captain Salmond, whose family had served in the Royal Navy since the reign of Elizabeth I, had received orders to use all possible haste to reach his destination of Algoa Bay. In order to speed up the trip he decided to hug the South African coastline as closely as possible. This course kept the Birkenhead within approximately three miles of the coast, maintaining a speed of approximately 8 knots.

It was in the early hours of 26th February, approaching a rocky outcrop called Danger Point, some 180 km from Cape Town that disaster struck. With the exception of the duty watch, everyone else was tucked up asleep in their quarters. The watch were scanning the clear glowing waters ahead and the Leadman had just called "Sounding 12 Fathoms" when the Birkenhead rammed an uncharted rock.



The churning paddle wheels of the Birkenhead drove her on with such force that the rock sliced through into the hull ripping open the compartment between the engine-room and forepeak. Water flooded into the forward compartment of the lower troop deck filling it instantly. Hundreds of soldiers were trapped and drowned in their hammocks as they slept.

All the surviving officers and men who could, assembled on deck. Some of the soldiers stood barefoot dressed only in their night-clothes, others less lucky were naked and many with the injuries sustained as they clawed their way from the flooded troop quarters. The senior officer on board, Lieutenant-Colonel Seton of the 74th Royal Highland Fusiliers took charge of all military personnel. He immediately summoned his officers around him and stressed the importance of maintaining order and discipline amongst the inexperienced soldiers.

Distress rockets were fired, but there was no help at hand. Realising the hopeless position they were in, the captain ordered the lifeboats to be lowered. Much of the lowering equipment would not function, due to a lack of maintenance and a thick layer of paint that clogged the mechanisms.

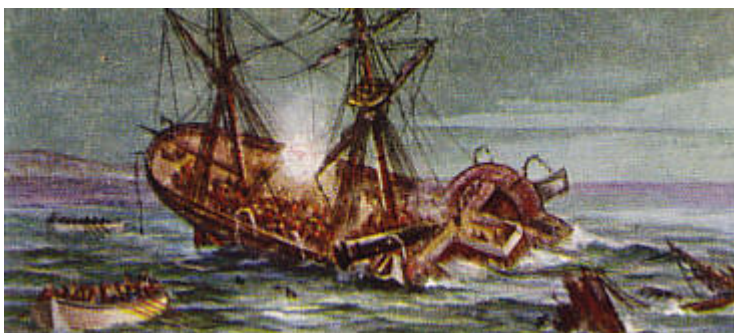
That night under a clear starry sky the great naval tradition of "women and children first" was established as eventually two cutters and a gig were launched and the seven women and thirteen children were rowed away from the wreck to safety.

The horses were cut loose and thrown overboard. Only then did Captain Salmond shout to the men that everyone who could swim must save themselves by jumping into the sea and make for the boats.

Lieutenant-Colonel Seton, the soldier's commanding officer, quickly recognised that such a rush would mean that the lifeboats could be swamped and the lives of the women and children onboard would thus be endangered. He drew his sword and ordered his men to stand fast. The untried soldiers did not move even as the ship split in two and the gallant company slipped down into the waves.

The Birkenhead sank only twenty-five minutes after she had struck the rocks, only the topmast and sailcloth remained visible above the water with about fifty men still clinging to them. The sea was full of men desperate for anything that could float. Death by drowning came quickly to many of them, but the more unfortunate were taken by the Great White sharks.





The next morning the schooner *Lioness* reached the lifeboats rescuing those onboard, after which she headed for the scene of the disaster reaching the wreck that afternoon, picking up the remaining survivors. Of the 634 people onboard the *Birkenhead*, only 193 were saved.

Rudyard Kipling immortalised the silent heroes when he wrote;  
*'To stand and be still  
 to the Birken'ead Drill  
 is a damn tough bullet to chew'.*

Before the *Birkenhead* disaster, when a ship was stricken, it was usually 'every man for himself' and the ensuing panic led to bestial stampedes; the strongest got the lifeboats and women and children were often left to die. The tradition of 'women and children first' made immortal by the famous troopship in 1852 has saved innumerable lives, for example in March 1954, in the terror of the burning *Empire Windrush* it saved one thousand, one hundred and ninety-four more.

On the wall of St Mary's Church in Bury St Edmunds is a memorial to the men of the Suffolk Regiment who were lost in the HMS *Birkenhead* disaster of 1852:



*By kind permission, St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds*

Historic UK would like to thank: The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum (Warwickshire), St. John's House, Warwick, for their help in researching this article; and St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds.

Article suggested by Judy Lawrence, Typed by Valerie Walters.



### **Pin Mill Smack Race and Parade of Sail July 24<sup>th</sup> 2010**

Our well-known reporter and contributor to "Smackdock Soundings" is unable to supply his usual high quality account of this race. Somehow soon after the start his Smack disappeared far ahead of the fleet to sail a lonely cruise around the course, and to finish so far ahead that he had gone back to his hijacked mooring long before the rest of us who had been racing each other finished.

It was a truly splendid race with over 17 craft competing. The event is unusual and a delightful change, since for most of us it is really a weekend cruise with a race squeezed in the middle. Cruising a Smack is a real joy, the owner stops tweaking sails and incessantly tightening and loosening ropes. Strange sails of most unlikely design and exaggerated dimension are not produced at irregular intervals, neither is the crew challenged to ascertain the highly improbable methods for using them. Nor is the crew expected to realise that the long pole that they thought was a salvaged part of a wind farm is actually a booming out pole longer than the main mast. I looked at the pole and shuddered when I thought that in olden traditional days it would have been solid wood. Was it necessary to be a caber- tossing expert in order to be able to rig it?

So what on Earth is there to do? There are no intense debates about which is the next mark of the course, the buoys arrive just like they are marked on the chart. That is fine as long as you have a chart. Thank goodness for mobile phones, can you imagine the embarrassment of having to ask another Smack on VHF channel 16 with every Tom Dick and Harry listening in "Which side should I pass Stone Banks buoy?" "Follow us we will show you the way" is a fun reply from a minnow as some leviathan then has to follow in your wake. It gives them useful experience in slowing down and sailing slowly. Good practice for coming up to line ahead of the gun.

Cruising has delightful contrasts to racing, everyone gets a chance on the helm, and no one is persecuted for not being exactly on the wind, the jib tell tales no longer are a God demanding instant obedience. Things are explained at leisure, tea is brewed and no manoeuvre is allowed until it has been drunk. Sandwiches are consumed and if you have a well-trained skipper bacon butties appear at regular intervals. Young athletic members of the crew incessantly eat calorie stuffed food. I wonder if sometimes when they sleep they are woken up by the noise of their worms snapping at each other.

There are however some minor disadvantages, the miniscule capacity of the human bladder means that when cruising, eventually it is necessary to "pump bilges". The choice of the available methods for undertaking this activity will reveal much about the participants. For modesty "the bucket and get someone else to chuck it" brigade are the winners. A bucket fitted with a loo seat in such circumstances must be near paradise. Probably the other end of the comfort scale are the older male participants hanging in the lee rigging, regret the loss of the powerful stream of youth and looking about anxiously in the hope that no member of the fore deck crew is watching whilst they dribble over the gunwale onto the jib sheet.

Pin Mill is a delightful spot and there were mooring organised for most. Ours had been hijacked by an anonymous skipper who knows who he is! So on we went to the marina at Woolverstone where we lay alongside the Bawley "Bona".

There is a delightful walk through the woods along the riverbank to the Pin Mill Sailing Club. The briefing was fraught because the weather forecast for the race was awful. Virtually no wind was predicted. The start next day was delayed until there might be some hope of land breezes. Valuable drinking time was lost discussing the hoary perennial of "what is a working sail?" "Rule benders" to a man tried to be conciliatory but stuck resolutely to their personally advantageous preconceptions, whilst at the same time doubting the equally dubious suggestions of others. It was a well-rehearsed performance worthy of a military tattoo. And just as pointless. Just how big could a jib or staysail be was beyond resolution, and the conclusion seemed to be "what you thought you could get away with."

The day dawned windless and we all got to the start either under engine, or being towed or pushed. At the five-minute gun, still no wind, kedges began to splash into the water, we were just about to deploy ours when the wind filled in sufficiently for a splendid massed start. It was a beat to the start. Nearly seventeen smacks in a great crescent crossing the starting line together was a gladsome sight. The "Laura Ashley" Smacks, Primrose and Harriet Blanche, the giant boats, the minnows and the business like brutal black hulled Bawleys were all vying for position.

The start was a crescent and not a line of boats, because in true Americas Cup tradition the boats on the side away from the committee boat realised that they were obscured from it by other



nearer craft and without waiting for the gun, just started

Immediately the greatest attraction of Smack racing was obvious. Local tussles between closely matched craft broke out everywhere. Banter between adjacent boats was quite revealing." Dorothy, if you are going to put me on the mud please do it now whilst I still have time to do something else today" was amongst the best. The close encounter between Fly and Dorothy was fascinating to observe and continued for the duration of the race. In light airs they romped ahead, but even at the height of battle they were scrupulous in observing the racing rules and courteous to others. Which of them was leading their encounter changed with almost every tack. The Orwell River is a busy river with much traffic. The understanding and good grace of so many other sailors towards our race was exemplary. Yachts, Powerboats and Working vessels all yielded their rights to us. Slowing down so that we could exploit the light airs. Only one massive Oyster Yacht without a mast powered through the fleet. I can only assume it was some critical engine trial.

The Bawleys Bona and Helen and Violet too were having a great tussle. Maria and Sunbeam both looked majestic. The power and windward ability of Ethyl was remarkable. The straight-line speed of Pioneer was awesome, especially when we passed across her bow.

The wind continued to fill in. The winds distorted by the massive vessels and structures of Felixstow dock became the challenge. The fleet began to spread out and the light airs advantages of the lighter craft began to be lost as they were pressed. It was a good force four gusting five by the time we were in the bay. The dead run back through the harbour concentrated the mind on avoiding a gybe. Looking at the bootlace thick preventer on our boom I was left wondering if it was more desirable to be brained by the blocks of a Bawley or swept swiftly into oblivion by a swipe from the scything boom of a Smack.

The choice of the river Stour as the site of the finishing line was splendid. This delightful river is much neglected, but it is wide and uncluttered. It is possible to sail far up river to Manningtree and Mistley, but sadly voracious developers have fenced off the superb alongside moorings at Mistley, and have taken away the ability to go ashore to the attractive pubs and quality restaurants. Nowadays Wrabness is an easier alternative. Beware of trying to anchor as is suggested. All the shingle that produced such secure holding has long ago been dredged away. The highlight and low for me was the finish. We saw Bona and Helen and Violet under full sail a

bowsprit apart rushing for the line after several hours of racing. It was only saddened by seeing the equally impressive, but now sadly dilapidated Bawley "Saxonia" lying tamely at anchor on the finishing line as a spectator. Surely she had been invited to race. It is a long way to sail from Brightlingsea just to watch, she would have been a welcome addition to the fleet.

The parade of sail? What parade of sail?

It is hard to find words sufficient to thank the members of the Pin Mill sailing club who did so much to make us feel honoured and welcome guests. Their after Race Buffet at five Pounds a head was an absolute bargain, food enough even for the gorillas. A great variety of different dishes each of them in abundance. There was plenty of space to sit down and eat in comfort. The deserts were sufficient to have one's tongue slapping at the palate. Even the more ardent eaters amongst us found it difficult to mop up with a second helping.

Beer at £2 per pint made a splendid contrast to the astronomical prices at the pretentious Butt & Oyster. The yacht club actively welcomes visiting yachtsmen, and provides a realistic and genuine alternative to being exploited at the pub.

Vast numbers of the club members must have worked hard to make sure that our weekend was to be memorable. The team that served the buffet were humorous, efficient and maintained a continuous supply of food. The bar staff were so effective that even in the crush of members and guests there was no significant wait to be served. The sacrifice of the Race Officer will take some beating, he prayed for wind for us, and we got the ideal wind just for the duration of the race, I am left wondering what might have happened if he had asked instead for the winning numbers of the next lottery roll over jackpot.

With such superb sailing possibilities and hospitality, it cannot be long before this youthful race outshines even the Colne Match as the event of the racing season. For owners who suffer acute withdrawal symptoms if they are not racing, perhaps feeder races to the Orwell could be organised.

The cruise back to Brightlingsea was delightful despite the five am start. The wind was kind again, and some of us even managed the strange experience of tacking amongst the giant windmills of the Gunfleet wind farm. The pervading spirit of cooperation and selfless help for others was obvious throughout the weekend, with much towing and ferrying in dinghies. Even in the dying moments, one of our boats decided to use the age-old trick of putting the craft onto the mud whilst lowering the sails. Just one minor point seemed to have escaped their attention. It



was at the top of the tide. Another owner realising what had happened immediately gave up securing his Smack and took his powerful smack's dinghy up the river to offer assistance. With such natural generosity all around, little wonder we all find Smacks such fun.

### **Pin Mill Race**

Our weekend began on the Thursday night putting Fly on the hard at 11:30 ready for a scrub the next morning. This was followed by a listless night's sleep wondering if she was still standing on the legs. Needless to say early next morning she was sat bolt upright waiting patiently for her bottom to be cleaned.

As we scrubbed the creek came to life with other smack crews making ready to sail on Primrose, Harriet Blanch, Odd Times (William & Emily), Polly, Helen & Violet and Maria. All making ready to sail round on the tide.

After scrubbing and with an hour to wait for the tide we went to the café for a well-earned breakfast. By the time we had floated all the others had gone and were down at Colne Bar, the chase was on. With the forecast of 3-4 northerly we had a fast sail out to Colne Bar with the wind and tide on our tail. As with all passage making it's all in the planning of the tides. We made the most of the ebb as we reached along the coast past Jaywick and on to Clacton. One of the benefits of being behind the others was we could see the boats getting headed off so we could pick the best course. We hugged the shore as close as possible, which paid off handsomely and brought us up with some of the boats that had had a good start on us. (Once a racer always a racer!)

As the coast rolled by we hit new waters for us and by the time we reached Harwich harbour we were sailing with the pack. What a sail! As we tacked up the Orwell past the container port it made us realize the scale of the trade we do across the world. We made Pin Mill around five with a meal booked at the pub for later. Time for some R&R. We all slept like babies that night and didn't wake until eight the next morning.

The race day was hot and windless as the boats assembled fighting to get to the line over the tide. As the start time approached a faint breeze filled in from the southeast and as the gun went 23 boats set off to windward over the flood. The early leaders were Primrose and Dorothy, closely pursued by Fly and Harriett Blanche, the smaller boats making the most of the confines of the river and the light breeze. As the river widened Primrose moved ahead of the pack being chased hard by Fly, with the rest of the fleet bunched together in the river. Out into Harwich harbour and the wind started to freshen. Some of the small

The results are quite academic. After such a splendid weekend of sailing, for once it is true that taking part was the joy.

Noel Dilly

boats started to shorten sail allowing the larger boats to stretch their legs. By the time we were outside the harbour the wind was up to a steady force 4. Primrose was revelling in the conditions and on the long beat out forged well ahead of the pack in one of the most impressive sailing displays seen for a long time.

The race by this time was starting to settle down with the larger boats pulling through to the front of the fleet but a good many tussles going on over the course. With the tide running at its strongest it was a long beat to the Stoney Banks. We were having a great race with Dorothy swapping places on every leg of the course. Pioneer made an impressive sight serenely sailing through our lee, waving their cups of tea at us as we careered along.

Once we rounded the outer mark we had a long downwind leg back to Harwich harbour for a tricky gybe and a reach up into the Orwell to the finish, just off Parkston quay. Over the water Primrose was well in front of the fleet to take line honours, followed by Maria and Ethel Alice. Once the rest of us had finished we set off back to Pin Mill at a more sedate pace for the Parade of Sail.

That evening the club laid on a fantastic spread of food and entertainment (including a man in a sequined thong!) for all the entrants, friends and family and made everyone thoroughly welcome.

As this is one of the handicapped events the prize giving was eagerly awaited, first went to Primrose, second to Dorothy and third was Harriet Blanche - all well deserved.

Sunday morning dawned all too soon and at the top of the tide the little fleet set off for their home ports. This time with the wind due south - just our luck! With the tide under our keels and our heads clearing we all made quick progress home via the wind farm. Personally I will remember the journey with the boat and crew even more than the race - we will definitely be back.



Fly MN17, Martin Worth





### **Obituary**

On Friday the 30<sup>th</sup> July, the funeral of John Hickman took place, attended by family and friends. Many of the attendees were local Brightlingsea people who had seen John grow up from boyhood. A tribute was said by Andy Mortlock and readings by Jane Hickman and Mary Hickman, with thanks being made by his son, Fred.

The wake was held at the 'Rose Bud' which overlooks Underwoods Hard where John had spent so much of his life and it is hoped that sons, Fred and Peter will continue operating the small boat yard that John built up there.

John was a natural-born sailor and after spending time at a Merchant Navy training college, went into deep-sea tankers for several years. He was Brightlingsea's Harbour Master and his agility in small boats was a joy to watch. With his thirteen-foot clinker boat and a four-horse outboard, he could coax the most stubborn yacht into the tightest of corners.

John owned the smack 'Polly' which he campaigned very successfully in our local races and was a very early member of the Colne 'Smack Preservation Society'. John did an immense amount of work during our early rebuild of the dock and even constructed a floating pile driver which proved highly successful.

John always gave one hundred percent to anything he supported and could be relied upon implicitly.

A great character and one that will be sadly missed.

James Lawrence.

## **AGM**

20<sup>th</sup> November 2010. 2pm  
Brightlingsea sailing club.  
Come and make your views known.



### **CSPS Annual Shanty Night**

This year's Shanty Night took part over the Easter weekend at the Community Centre. The room had been decorated beautifully by Judy Lawrence with nautical memorabilia and candles to create a pleasant atmosphere. There were also helium balloons holding pictures of different types of fish to test the audience's knowledge.

The music for the night had been co-ordinated by Wendy of the Scotty Brothers and Co. and provided a pleasing mix. Threnody performed some traditional and humorous songs. The Scotty brothers and co. delivered some soulful harmonies accompanied as ever by Peter Scott with his fabulous spoons. Jim Lawrence raised a lot of laughs with his humorous odes. This contrasted with a thought provoking tune from Richard Patterson recently back from Afghanistan to join us. A modern twist was added to the evening by EMU, a local talented band, who combined traditional and contemporary instruments in their style.

Seafood platters were well received in the interval. The evening was concluded by some excellent audience participation led by Threnody and Scotty Brothers and Co.

The proceeds from the evening have been donated to the Deputies Christmas Lunch fund and the Brightlingsea Toy Library. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this another successful evening.

### **Book return**

Could anyone who has borrowed a book from the hut please ensure that they return it when they have finished reading it.

### **Chairman's report October 2010**

I have received a number of complaints regarding the fact that the last newsletter was not published before the Shanty Night and therefore people outside of Brightlingsea didn't know of it. This is regrettable but you will recall that in the last issue there was only one article from a member, the rest was compiled by the editor. It is not the editor's job to write the newsletter, but to put it together and publish it from contributions made by the members. It is expensive to produce and send out a newsletter in both time and money so if you want the Society to keep on publishing them you need to put pen to paper or preferably fingers to keyboards and let Robin have some articles. Everyone is capable of writing something. You could do a race report, or an item on a cruise. A memorable days sail, or an account of the work you have carried out on your smack. Other people could recount stories of when the smacks were



working out of Brightlingsea or an article on the Sail and Picnic. If it was of interest to you it will be interesting to all of us, so please make a contribution. If not then the newsletter will just end up as a list of events published at the beginning of the year, and none of us would want that.

Over the summer we have had the Sail and Picnic which was very successful and well attended, and the Sailing Day which wasn't so well supported. It is likely that this will be dropped as the general lack of interest does not justify the effort put in. I would like to thank the owners and crews of the smacks Blackbird, Fly, Primrose, Pioneer, and Polly, and to Ellen who although didn't attend made themselves available. I would also like to thank Jim Lawrence and Brian Croucher for all the work they put in to organising both days. If members would like another type of event put on during the summer the Committee would be pleased to receive ideas and help to put something on.

The Colne Match was another good day with a large entry of smacks and barges, and although no records were broken this year, a good days racing was had. It was nice to see Betty over from Germany and the bawley Emma fresh from a rebuild. Bernie Hetherington gave out the prizes in Brightlingsea Sailing Club and made a very positive speech about the harbour and the smacks which was warmly received. Thanks are

### **Dock dredging, a layman's guide.**

As some of you will have noticed the dock is gradually silting up. This has the effect of restricting the passage of smacks in and out of their berths, meaning that the tidal range over which they can navigate is slowly decreasing. This is not a new problem, we have had to dredge in the past and it is likely that we will always have to perform a maintenance dredge every 5 to 10 years. The aim of the planned dredge is to remove mud from the area between the bows of the smacks as they sit in their berths and the Colne yacht club jetty, whilst maintaining a reasonable amount of mud in the berth area to provide a safe soft berth for the boats.

The plan is to dredge a trench that is a few metres wide in the area described above, over time the mud will move and find a level that will result in the desired effect.

There are various options when it comes to dredging. One method is to use a digger that sits on a barge and simply dig material up. Another method is to tow a plough behind a vessel and move mud underwater from one place to another,

due to the Harbour Commissioners, the Sailing Club and to the Colne Yacht Club for their help.

It is looking like the harbour and the dock will be dredged in October. This has been arranged with the help of the Harbour Commissioners. It is likely that we will get very short notice to move the smacks out of the dock and I believe that alternative berths will be found in the harbour whilst the work is being carried out. All smack owners need to be ready to move their vessels when requested.

The AGM is coming up on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November at Brightlingsea Sailing Club at 2pm, and it would be good to see as many members there as possible. If anyone would like to stand for the Committee please let me know. We would welcome new members to help bring in new ideas. My telephone number is on the front of the newsletter. This is your Society so please get involved to ensure it continues to flourish.

Simon Fox. (Chairman)

Your committee  
Chair  
Simon Fox

in this case it would be into the channel on a falling tide to be washed out to sea. It is also possible to use high pressure water jets to liquify the mud and allow it to disperse.

One major problem with dredging is getting rid of the material that needs to be removed. Due to environmental concerns it is increasingly difficult to get permission to deposit material at sea or into the creek. Another problem is in obtaining permission to dredge at all. There are several bodies that need to give approval before it is possible to dredge, gaining these permissions is a time consuming process and is very expensive. The last hurdle to be overcome once permission has been obtained is cost. A large proportion of the cost for dredging a relatively small area such as the smack dock is in mobilisation of the equipment. Getting the equipment on site and setting it up can cost more than operating it to remove the unwanted mud.

Looking at all of the above one would be tempted to just give up, but the CSPA have been very fortunate.

Brightlingsea Harbour in conjunction with DONG energy have a requirement for some dredging in close proximity to the smack dock. I am a harbour



commissioner and my ears pricked up in a meeting when we were discussing dredging the North-channel in preparation for a diesel fuelling barge. I asked if it would be possible for the CSPS dredge to be piggy backed onto the plan. This gained the full support of the harbour commissioners and as a result our application was included in the main application, mud samples were taken, environmental experts consulted etc etc. We now have permission, but the good news does not end there. We are also saving on mobilisation.

The method that will be used is to use a machine that blasts the mud into suspension and then pumps a slurry mixture long distances. In this **Oyster dredging match.**

The day after The Maldon race was set to be the West Mersea oyster dredging match. We on Primrose decided that it was a crying shame that we have never done this event and decided to rectify the situation. The timing was lousy as tides dictated that we would either have to leave Maldon at 3.00am or miss out on the drink, music and fun. The idea of leaving in the small hours full of free beer sounded a little too risky for me (based on past experience) so we elected to turn around straight after the first race rather than face the temptation that free beer presents. The next morning we set out from Brightlingsea for the dredging area off the East Mersea youth camp. We were armed with 2 of Mac Macgregor's new dredges and one authentic old dredge on loan from Fly. No one on our boat had ever dredged before, so we expected to make a right mess of it all. I had spoken to some other owners and warned them of our inexperience and the likelihood that we would get in a tangle.

In the days and weeks preceding the event I had been doing all the reading and asking about technique that I could and had a reasonable idea of the potential problems and how it is meant to be done. Reading is one thing, doing is another.

The format of the event is that we all boats have to follow the lead of the foreman's smack, Sallie this year. All smacks must dredge in the direction of the foreman's smack and can't start until she has. There is a defined area that is marked with flagged buoys.

My understanding is that the basic technique is to dredge down tide with the boat hove to making very little way through the water, the dredges should be set evenly along the length of the boat and should pull at around 45 degrees to the line of the boat. Also one should not attend the tiller and should not drop the peak, or scandalise the main unless conditions dictate that it is a necessity to do so.

case the experts have decided that depositing the mud on Cindry island will be beneficial to wild life providing habitat and raising the level of the salt marshes could enhance nesting for birds.

The dredge should take place in the next couple of months.

When the dredging is being done all boats will have to be moved out of the dock. The cooperation of Bernie, DONG energy and the Harbour has been great for the CSPS. A big thanks from the committee to them.

Robin Page

We kept close to Sallie, watching Richards' moves and got the boat ready.



*Sallie leading the way*

Before the planned start of dredging at 11.00am, we used canvas to protect the topsides and gunnels, got a big sturdy fish box on deck ready to empty the dredges into and made up warps with floats on their ends. These are of use if the dredge comes fast (gets stuck on the bottom) as one can cast the dredge free and retrieve it later.



*Felix and Sallie with a starfish.*

At 11.00 sharp we started dredging. Tacking with the jib held backed and the main sheeted quite close to set Primrose at the desired angle to the beach, the dredges were then set, we were in 3-4m of water and then we waited for a while before pulling up one dredge to have a look and see how it was doing, to our amazement it all looked good,





there were some native shells and not too much mud.



*Dave Youngs checking the dredge.*



*Our catch, not much for 2 hours.*

To the kids delight there also was an amazing selection of sea creatures that were landed, including a spider crab, star fish, slipper limpets and a small edible crab. During that first run we managed to get around 10 native oysters. We continued to dredge for the maximum time of 2 hours and landed a few more oysters.

We then sailed into Mersea quarters, picked up a mooring and landed the dinghy on packing-shed island for the weigh in. This was a typically fun affair with plenty of gamesmanship, careful checks were made to ensure that the catch was live, native and clean, many dead oysters were rejected and there was a degree of secrecy to ensure that none of the competitors knew how they had done until the prize giving. Before the results were announced there was time for a drink, a seafood platter and entertainment in the form of an oyster opening competition and free tasting. During all of this the island was getting smaller and smaller as the spring tide did it's best to get us all wet, in fact by the end of the prize giving only the shed remained above water.

We couldn't believe the results, we had managed to come second, with Mermaid first and Maria having been judged to have done the best job of dredging, Paul Winter on Maria will be the foreman for 2011. Our catch was a total of 1.95kg of natives.

What we found most interesting was how good Primrose was, after each run we sailed up tide and then tacked back to our hove to dredging mode, after we had started to tack the boat just looked after itself it was very stable and was the perfect platform to work from. We only played at dredging and it was clear that it is one thing to randomly dredge, but to cover the area of the layings as a ploughman does a field must be a very different thing.

Robin Page





## For Sale

### GRP smack yacht K and M



A 6ton Essex Smack Yacht built Tyrell & Young. Kent, launched July 1997. Length on deck 29ft 6ins. In extremely good condition. For photos, detailed description and inventory contact Andy Lindley. Tel 01206 306702, e-mail: andylindley@yahoo.co.uk

**Price £34,000**

### **Smack CK36 Electron**



Electron CK36, worked for most of her life, fishing off the East Coast until she was converted for pleasure. In 1984 she was rebuilt from the keel up. LOD 36'

**Price £55,000**

All enquiries MJ Lewis +44 (0) 1621 859373

### Smack QUIZ - CK210



#### Dimensions

Length overall 51-0  
Length on deck 36-0  
Beam (max) 11-3  
Draft 4-6"

Displacement 7.81 tons.

Built Halls of Paglesham 1872  
Re-built 1981 by Frank Knights of Woodbridge.

#### Location

Pin Mill/ Woodbridge

#### Contact

Paul Webster  
Mob - 07710 209167  
E-mail -

paulwebster@wheresoever.co.uk

**Price £38,000**

#### **New Oyster Dredges.**

**For details please contact Mac McGregor**



**01206 302462**



## COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (\*= optional information)

Name: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: ..... Date of Birth: .....

Tels: Home/\*Work/\*Mobile/\*Fax .....

\*Email Address: .....Occupation: .....

Do you own a smack?..... Wish to / crewed on a smack?..... Have history of a smack?.....

\*Details of Smack; Name: .....Number:..... Builder:.....  
Date:.....

I wish to apply for membership of the Colne Smack Preservation Society. If elected, I will abide by the Rules.

Signed: .....Date:.....

Proposer: .....Signed .....Date:.....

Seconder: .....Signed .....Date:.....

Both Proposer and Seconder must be Members of the Society. Leave blank if none known to you.

Your application will be considered at the next monthly Committee meeting.

The Standing Order will not be submitted to your bank until you have been elected.

Return this form to Amanda Stear, 42a High Street, Manningtree, Essex, CO11 2QJ

### STANDING ORDER

To: (the name of your bank)..... Sort Code:.....

Bank Address: .....

Name of your Account: ..... Account Number:.....

Please credit account of Colne Smack Preservation Society ( Barclays Bank PLC, Brightlingsea, Essex:

A/c No. 00100498 Sort Code: 20 21 73 ) the sum of ☐ 10 (Ten Pounds) immediately and thereafter on

1st. November annually, until this order is cancelled in writing. This supersedes any previous order.

Please notify with payment; Subs from ..... (your name)

Signature ..... Date: .....