



The Never Setting Sun



Smack Dock Soundings

THE JOURNAL OF THE COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Winter 2012

ISSUE 61



Smacks and barges milling about off Mersea Stone before the start of last year's Colne Match.

Photo Max and Christine Brown.

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From the editor...

Winter's dragging on as usual but at least the days are starting to draw out now and there's the whole sailing season to look forward to. The seasons do have their uses though- dark evenings are good for music and tall tales, and if we didn't have fitting-out time there wouldn't be the fine sight of a fleet of smacks all freshly painted and smart at the beginning of summer. Although, if you're like me, the start of summer is bound to find me grumbling that I'm not ready for it as usual...





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Chairman's Report- Nicky Ennion

So much good news! The grapevine has been working overtime with Robin Page's recent purchase of *Alberta* CK318. Also back in the Aldous Heritage Smack Dock is *Ellen* CK222, with her new deck, which is wonderful to see. So a full winter layup in the dock, all of this under the watchful eye of Gary Humm, our new dock master.

Of course, it will be wonderful to see *Alberta* around Brightlingsea, but on the other hand we hope the new owner of *Primrose* will soon tire of the Wash and bring her back to enjoy the Thames Estuary.

By the time this is published, The Pioneer Trust's new gig *Velocity* will have been launched [The editor says, Come and see her at the 'official' launching on the Hard at 12pm on 24th March!]. Also, through the Pioneer Trust the committee have agreed to sponsor a group from Brightlingsea's 4Youth to take a trip on *Pioneer*.

As this is the first Newsletter since the 2011 AGM I think it may be helpful to list the society's committee and sub-committee members. On the main committee are myself as Chair, Amanda Stear the Treasurer, Bill Williams the Secretary, Valerie Waters the Membership Secretary, Gary Humm the Dock Master, Brian Croucher and Tony Brett. The Race Committee has Brian Webb the Race Secretary with Robin Page and Martin Worth. Also not forgetting Lucy Harris who is Editor of the Newsletter.

Our two current projects, signs for the dock and a work shelter are progressing. Madeline Geikie has successfully sought funding from the Town Council for the signage. The work shelter will need planning

permission; but the planning department has signalled that it should receive approval. We have one quote in hand and another is out to tender, but if anyone is interested in quoting, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

As we go to press the current date for the Shanty Night is fixed (see elsewhere in the Newsletter for dates), but the venue has not been finalised. We'll keep you posted.

Wishing everyone a good commissioning spring,

Nicky Ennion

Ps. Just a little note to say that Malcolm Macgregor will be on *Pioneer* for the Colne Smack & Barge Race this year, a well earned place. But this does mean that a Spotter/identifier is needed in Batemans' Tower for the race. So if anyone feels their smack & barge recognition is spot-on please talk to Brian Webb.

Pps. Would all smack owners in the dock please ensure that Gary has your emergency telephone numbers.

Below is an excerpt from a letter with details of the projects Nicky mentioned above in his Report-

Dear Madeline

Re: Signage & Work shelter projects

I have pleasure in noting our thanks to you & through you our thanks to the Town Council for their interest & backing in beginning to smarten up this part of the waterfront and make it a more attractive amenity.



So here is a roundup of the current position:

Signs

We are looking to place 3 signs. The first is a large 2' by 10', possibly stainless steel "Place Sign" facing west towards the Yacht Club. The second sign a plastic "Information Sign", similar to the signs along the railway line on the marshes, which would be angled at 45°, midway along the main part of the dock. The third sign again a "Place Sign" would be positioned at the end of the jetty facing out over the creek. This we are hoping to involve the Pioneer Trust in using their trainees to refurbish a wooden sign that we already have.

I am pleased to say that Jim Lawrence, our President, has managed to get James Dodd Involved. James is a well respected local artist & co-author of several books including the new bible for our region RIVER COLNE SHIPBUILDERS, A Portrait of Shipbuilding, 1786 - 1988.

Work shelter

... It should be an attractive resource and provide shelter from the weather when working on varnishing, painting and repairing of the smacks' spars etc.. We believe that using telegraph poles as the uprights would ensure the structural integrity of the shelter against any fierce winds. The back would be alternately slatted, to be both visually attractive and structurally strong. We have received an indication of officer support from the draft planning permission submitted, which is very welcome. We are seeking alternative quotes as well as submitting a full planning application ...

Hopefully you'll appreciate that we wish to tread carefully in completing these projects, as the need to enhance the waterfront's attractiveness has to be married with the need for purposeful designs.

Yours Sincerely, ...

Visit the 'Smacksman's Return'- Judy Lawrence



Open Afternoons on Thursdays at the 'Smacksman's Return' have been well attended during the past two months, whatever the weather, and have proved popular with locals, as well as visitors from around the UK. All have enjoyed the views, admired the smacks, learnt of their history and watched our lovely sunsets. The Music Nights on a Monday evening have been great fun and also well attended, but may be moved to the Waterside Yacht Club house to accommodate the numbers, until it is warm enough to have the 'Smacksman's Return's doors open.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to both events- for further details call Madeleine 01206 304802, or Judy 01206 304663.

Judy Lawrence says- Would the gentleman who sat in front of me at the AGM, who gave me his raffle tickets as he had to leave early, please contact me as he won a prize – ph 01206 304663.

The Ed would like to remind members that the 'Smacksman's Return' also contains an extensive library of maritime and local interest, with a mix of fiction and non-fiction on the shelves as well as collections of various magazines.

Members are entitled to borrow any of the books, on an Honesty system. Please, return any books you borrow- for the benefit of other members, and the appreciation of those who have donated them!

Andy Lindley is custodian of around 40 books belonging to the late Johnny Welch which may be borrowed on the same basis. The



titles were listed in SDS issue 51 (summer 2008); contact Andy on 01206 306702.

Regarding the above, does anyone know the whereabouts of the blue plastic folder containing a copy of a full list of all CK registered smacks?

It was lent to the CSPS by the Pioneer Trust and is no longer in the 'Smacksman's Return'.

If you have it, please return it to the hut as soon as possible.

MN12 *Polly's* Return- Sid Smith



Polly at the Colne Match start last year – photo Max and Christine Brown

We were to take *Polly* from Pinmill back to Brightlingsea on the Tuesday following the Pinmill Smack Race last year. A little arrow on the TV screen showed a 3mph breeze from the SW running straight down the Wallet, right on the nose, as would be the strongly ebbing tide. How could this possibly work out?

Joining Skipper Mandy Stear, Robert Farrow and Russell Harvey at Manningtree we drove to the Royal Harwich marina, embarking in the inflatable with stores. We ran downstream to *Polly* on a mooring below the cliff. The water was as glass, the sun warm and welcoming. We could scarcely leave without wind as *Polly* has no engine, so perhaps a day's sunbathing and a swim at slack water? Robert Gee and Stuart Howells were collected from Pinmill hard, and we continued

preparing *Polly* for the passage. Sail cover off, boom prop removed, tiller exchanged for the highly varnished one- what was the point of it all?

As our preparations became complete, would you believe a lovely little SE breeze sprang up. No knife driven into the mast could be seen, no member of the crew had been sufficiently generous to cast money into the tide, not even a euro from Stuart.

Wasting no time in saluting this miracle, we dropped the mooring and with Robert G at the helm beat away down tide. Viewed from the helm *Polly* looked extremely shipshape. Reefing tackles slung under the boom, anchor stowed by the windlass she looked every inch a little ship and felt like it too. Robert F had gleaned information on the web concerning the forecast and most importantly tidal patterns in Pennyhole Bay, approaching the Naze.

Having pushed *Polly* into the shipping channel as often as we dared to pick up tide speed, approaching Beach End, we eventually came onto port tack to stand to just the SE side of the Pye End buoy. Calling for track over the ground, it was given as 211°. Plotted on the chart, this gave us the ability to stand along the edge of the Pye sand, the ebbing tide from the Backwaters on our lee bow. A tacking point was established as Crab End buoy abeam, the mark clearly visible on the other side of the Sunken Pye sand. Using the compass page on the GPS, and the beading running across the aft hatch, we duly tacked and went away towards the Stone Banks buoy.

Going about to the west of Stone Banks, we stood in towards the Naze saltings, Skipper Stear swinging the lead in the close approaches. Watching the lead line and out relative position to a yellow racing mark, we tacked in good time to gain the east of Stone Banks. Eventually going below the navigator established a tacking point of no less than 1° 18', but on emerging from the forehatch called for a tack with no reference to the GPS; although the lead line was positive, there are obstructions close in, and we certainly appeared close in. *Polly* had really gained to windward.

Now on starboard tack, black rolling objects appeared off the weather bow. Rather than marine wildlife they proved to be lobster pots. We continued on, very alert. At this point the



smack *Maria* was seen beyond the Medusa on starboard tack; she had left Pinmill getting on for three hours before our departure so this gave indication that we were doing well. After a time it was suggested that we could lay the end of Walton Pier. Laying our track to the end of the pier it was found that we had water to spare as it was not yet half ebb. With Robert G at the helm the tide set us a cable off the end of the pier. We were making about 5 knots.

Putting the Knoll cardinal mark up on the GPS screen we found we were laying it exactly. Our speed began to lift from time to time to 6 knots. The skipper began to long for the tow sail, but as we were hauling our wind so well and making handsomely to a position windward of the North Eagle it was decided to postpone this decision for two hours. The tow sail is a replacement for the staysail giving larger area, the clew sheeting abaft the mast when close winded.

As we approached the longitude of Clacton Pier Robert G kindly surrendered the helm to the navigator who wanted to try his hand to windward. The tiller felt attached to a giant spring. This sensation immediately disappeared if the course wandered above or below where it should be. Mandy tried to coach me, and I felt sympathy for her, as I could not quite get the hang of it.

Stuart took over the helm; North Eagle cardinal buoy was put up on the screen and it proved that we could bear away some 7 degrees still on port tack and head for the mark. Our track over the ground plotted on the chart, as the tide was only just turning and again we had plenty of water. Stuart called for the mainsheet to be eased as the helm was becoming a bit heavy. We shot up to a steady seven knots with the water lapping along the lee deck as if it were inviting us for a paddle. We settled for this and North Eagle buoy rapidly approached. Conditions had been idyllic all the way. In the shelter of the Gunfleet and Buxey sands the water had remained flat with no discernable sea running, just small wavelets and ripples. The sunlight reflected from these with an entrancing sparkle, the coast slid past, familiar landmarks clearly visible in the distance. Sailing should always be like this we thought, but after all variety is the spice of

life, and our home waters can certainly be spicy.

Turning to starboard at the Colne Bar buoy, we were soon in the channel to Brightlingsea. Achieving this at good speed we were soon reducing speed by dipping the gaff, Robert and Russell rigging the inflatable ready for pushing with in the harbour.

We had experienced such a successful run we were early on the tide and Brightlingsea creek was not yet available to *Polly*, so where should we take her? We saw a sizeable smack on the pontoon opposite the Hard- we would raft up there. But were we wind- or tide-ride? We were wind-ride, and Russell executed a magnificent 180° turn across the incoming tide to put us alongside, but just then the wind dropped. A crewman from a windfarm service vessel resolved the hiatus by running across the pontoon to take our warps. We stowed all and enjoyed lashings of tea and Dundee cake.



Hyacinth CK256

Photo Malcolm Macgregor

Smack Profile – *Helen & Violet* LO 262



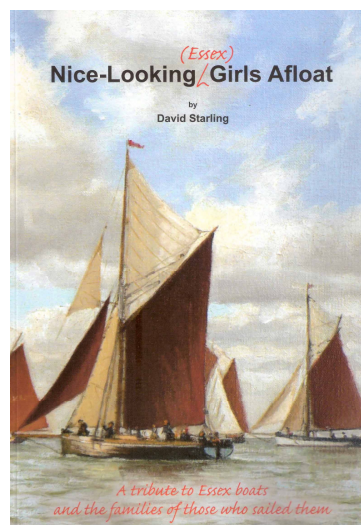
Photo Max and Christine Brown

Many of you may know of *Helen & Violet* by her formidable racing reputation whilst owned by the partnership of Jim Lawrence, Cyril White and Johnny Welch; she has had a long winning streak having had several successes at Leigh Fishermens' Regattas in the 1920s. Built in 1906 by J and H Cann in Harwich, she is believed to be named after her first owner's two daughters. She fished out of Leigh with several changes of ownership until sold to William Annis in the 1930's, when she came to the Colne. She was fitted with her first engine about this time, and is believed to have been given a boomed rig; she was reregistered CK15. She worked as a motor bawley into the '60s with a derrick mast and small wheelhouse, and Richie Jacobs remembers her doing a trip to The Wash at that time. By the late '70s she belonged to the Tollesbury Oyster Co, when Johnny Welch bought her; he had got into trawling with his little yacht *Badger* and she was getting knocked about, so he wanted a real fishing boat. Not long after, Jim and Cyril became involved, her engine was removed and she was restored to her original sailing rig. With her, they proved the wide bawleys' hull shape could equal the sleek smacks for speed. The partnership went separate ways

in the early '90's, with Johnny remaining in sole ownership until his death in 2007, when I was lucky (or daft!) enough to become her new owner.

With your help, I'd like to make 'Smack Profile' a regular feature, so come on, now it's your turn! Please provide a photo of your boat with a brief history for inclusion in future Smack Dock Soundings (it's that easy...)

Book review- 'Nice-Looking Essex Girls Afloat' by David Starling



This slim A4 size volume caught my eye as it lay on the desk in the local chandlery with its picture of a bawley on the cover. As well as local fishing boats, barges, yachts and even the Trinity House tenders make appearances in a book themed on the girls' names given them. This isn't a book filled with exhaustive detail on the vessels mentioned, but there are plenty of little titbits and not just about the boats. Full of nice photos and paintings, it's pleasant to delve into, and should whet the appetite of anyone not already familiar with the delights of East Coast working boats. Price is £12.95- all proceeds go to Essex Womens Advisory Group, a fund supporting local women's charities, and you can find a copy in French Marine in Brightlingsea.

Winter Nature Notes – Brian Percival



The last ten years of Brian Percival's working life, from 1995 to 2005, he spent as assistant harbour master in Brightlingsea Harbour-

'Always having had a countryman's interest in nature, if anything caught my attention afloat I wrote it down in the harbour logbook. The then-chairman of the Harbour Commissioners, Barry Newman, noticed this and included in the "Harbour News" a *Nature Notes* column which proved popular, so I could write as much as I liked! In actual fact I was so keen to jot down the daily sightings that *Nature Notes* really wrote itself; the problem was to decide what to leave out.'

They make an interesting record over the years. In 1996 Brian wrote-

'This winter has been an interesting one for birdlife in the harbour. Since November I have seen three white egrets, black- and bar-tailed godwits, 12 mergansers, a kingfisher and our regular seal visitor affectionately known as 'Dunlop'. On Christmas eve we had an early present when three greenshank paid us a visit.

Also of interest when suitable cargoes of grain are being unloaded on the wharf I counted 105 mallard and 87 swans!'

The following year, 1997, Brian had spotted a brood of pied wagtails being reared in the instrument panel of a motorboat moored in the creek, which had flown by 4th June, with a second brood being raised later on. Another unusual nest was that of a mallard which laid its eggs on a pile of nets in a little-used fishing boat.

The foodstuff being shipped from the wharf attracted plenty of hungry birds; a cargo of rice brought 67 swans.

A change which many people remark on is the increase in egrets- Brian thought a lone white egret roosting on the wreck between the Cindery Islands on 3rd August 1997 noteworthy, with a companion on 12th September and three more on the Priory saltings later that month. These days it is common to see half a dozen at a time, lining the edge of the saltings at seemingly perfectly equal distances, and they seem

almost commonplace, hardly worth writing down.



Peace CK171

Photo Malcolm Macgregor



Lizzie Annie MN23

Photo Lucy Harris



Events Calendar 2012

CSPS Shanty Night

Medway Barge Match

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant- London

Old Gaffers East Coast Race- Brightlingsea

Pinmill Smack Race

Barge Passage Match

Pinmill Barge Match

Rowhedge Regatta

Blackwater Smack and Barge Match

Wivenhoe Regatta

CSPS Sail and Picnic

Thames Barge Match

Swale Race - smacks, barges and classic yachts

Mersea Week

West Mersea Town Regatta

Southend Barge Match

Tollesbury Regatta

Mersea Dredging Match

Colne Smack and Barge Match

Maldon Town Regatta

Mersea Smack Challenge

Whitstable Smack and Barge Race

Heybridge Basin Regatta

Thames Oyster Run

14th April (TBC)

26th May

3rd June

9th June

23rd June

23rd June

30th June

7th July

14th July

21st July

21st July

28th July

11th August

19th – 24th August

25th August

26th August

1st September

2nd September

8th September

22nd September

TBC

TBC

TBC

TBC

TBC- date to be confirmed.

Dates in this colour are supported/organized by the Colne Smack Preservation Society.

Photo- Max and Christine Brown