



The Never Setting Sun



Smack Dock Soundings

THE JOURNAL OF THE COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Sept/Oct 2014

ISSUE 69



My Alice CK348 and Charlotte Ellen CK258 neck and neck at the finish of the first race, Wivenhoe Regatta 2014

Photo David Chandler.

Chairman Robin Page
49 Colne Road, Brightlingsea, Essex CO7 0DU
Tel: 07768 522957
e-mail: robin@strong-point.co.uk

Journal Editor Lucy Harris
22 The Waterside, Brightlingsea, Essex CO70BB
e-mail: lucy@pangolin.co.nz

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...

I always think the Colne Match marks the end of the sailing season, yet in some ways it's just the beginning. There's the Dredging Match, Maldon Regatta and others still to come in October, but (weather permitting) the autumn and winter can offer some fantastic sailing to those not laid up. The short days are a challenge in some ways, but if it's really cold you don't want to be out on the water for many hours anyway. With the traditional fire going in the stove, and modern clothing to keep the wind out, it is well worth making the effort. The river is often completely empty, and the pace of life seems a bit slower; at least, until another brown sail comes into view!





From the Chair – Robin Page

It does not seem possible that I am now writing this in the week before Maldon Regatta, which is normally the last race of the year; this season has whizzed by. As it happens the tides and other event clashes have conspired against Tollesbury regatta, and this will be the final race of 2014 on the 11th October. The Colne Match was a success with a good time being had by all under near perfect conditions, with the course record being broken once more. It is clear that the smacks are now going faster than they ever have; I wonder what the original skippers would make of our flat sails and pointing ability? I am pleased to be able to report that Jon Brett has made a wonderful job of the repairs to the end of the jetty and the floating pontoon is now working well and accessible; we now need to ensure that it does not become a dumping ground for unattended dinghies. If boats are left without permission we have decided to remove them, so be warned.

I have reluctantly decided to stand down from the committee at the AGM. This decision has been driven by a lack of time to do a proper job. I will continue to help with the organisation of the Colne Match. Judy Lawrence and Amanda Steer have also decided to stand down from the Social Secretary and Treasurer positions; I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Judy and Amanda for all of the effort that has been put in. This as you will appreciate had left some holes on the committee and I would welcome anyone who would like to get involved to contact me on 01206 304690 (or any of the committee) and let us know before the AGM. Getting involved is fun and need not take too much time.

See you all at the AGM.

Subscriptions and berthing fees – Martin Doe

At the a.g.m. last year it was agreed that as the annual subscription had not been raised for many years, it should increase to £12.50 per annum with effect from 1st November

2014. As the old rate was almost swallowed up by the newsletter costs and distribution, nothing was left over for other activities, including the need for regular dredging of the Smack Dock.

Would all those members paying by Standing Order arrange for the amendment to be made, or else contact the Treasurer if they would prefer to switch to a Direct Debit payment which obviates the need to make subsequent changes.

At last year's a.g.m. it was also agreed that the Berthing Fees should rise by the rate of inflation and accordingly will increase by 1.6% next year.

Peter Lumley photograph



In response to the plea for information about the photograph on the front of the last issue of SDS (an atmospheric black and white shot taken in the 1960s by professional photographer Peter Lumley), Ian Wilson wrote to say he believes the boat may be his smack, *Martha 2*. The clue was the fact that the bowsprit is rigged 'left-handed' ie. on the port



side of the stem rather than the usual starboard. When Ian bought *Martha 2* in 1991, he says she was painted black, and had wooden ratlines. He also says the forehatch looks familiar! She had no fishing number on her bulwarks and believes she had a topmast at some stage. After WW2 she was kept at Pin Mill until the 70s, when she went to London.



He sent the accompanying photograph in-note the rather quaint jib! (perhaps cut out of a parachute?). Well-worn and stained sails were the norm with smacks until relatively recently-now there are only a few still setting patched-up old cast-offs, and the keen racers sport gear that the old fishermen could only have dreamed about.

Sir Richard MacCormac – Paul Winter



Richard sailing the *G&A* for the first time in the Blackwater, August 2002. Photo Paul Winter

CSPS member Sir Richard MacCormac died on Saturday 26th July, aged 76, after a long battle against cancer.

Richard, although a celebrated London architect, will be remembered in our part of the world for his time owning and sailing the smack *George & Alice* CK76. Rescued from Devon having been sold away from Brightlingsea, Richard bought the smack in 2002 partially restored and fitted her out for cruising in the Essex Rivers.

I had the pleasure of sailing with Richard aboard *G&A* for a number of years whilst I was rebuilding *Maria*. Richard would travel up from London most Sundays in his Maserati, occasionally bringing office colleagues, friends and family, for leisurely sails in what he once described as “a most glorious place to spend one’s time”. Above all Richard enjoyed lazing about the Rivers soaking up the environment rather than the more competitive racing. I remember badgering Richard to point up and weather a mark one Colne Race to which he calmly replied, “Paul, we are lying 7th or 8th with not much prospect of improvement....and what’s more, I am only competitive when I’m winning”.



G&A sailing in Essex waters. Photo Paul Winter

Richard has kindly bequeathed the *G&A* to The Pioneer Trust, one assumes to ensure the smack is used for the enjoyment of others. This is a reflection of the type of man Richard was as he took immense pleasure in entertaining his guests aboard, introducing them to the peace and tranquillity of his “other world”.



Ian Smith – Lucy Harris

Sadly Ian Smith passed away this summer after being diagnosed with cancer only last winter; he owned the bawley *Bona* LO178 for many years and sailed and raced her regularly. I personally will remember him as an excellent sport (he gave us a bottle of champagne after we beat him by 4sec at the Pin Mill smack race in 2011) and thoughtful and generous (he kindly brought me *Bona's* old peak and throat halliards to use aboard *Marigold* while I had the care of her, although I barely knew him at that time). Hopefully *Bona* will find another owner who will take as good care of her as Ian did.

Smack *Emma* CK369 update

Issue 59 of SDS featured an article about the Tollesbury smack *Emma* CK369, which was written by a descendant of Abraham William Harris, her original owner, who was also looking for more information concerning her subsequent history.

Recently I was contacted by another man with connections to the *Emma*, Paul Gager, who had found the article on the CSPS website. I was able to connect Peter and Paul via email, and Peter Harris has allowed me to include his email to me with the results:-

Thank you for passing on the email from Paul Gager. It led to a happy conclusion! His father Ted and uncle Tom Gager had bought the *Emma* CK369 in 1946 from the Frost brothers boat owners in Tollesbury. They had purchased it from my granddad in 1942. After searching the Internet based on the new information Paul Gager had passed on to me, I came across a website called the Cambria Trust. It was about the restoration of a Thames Barge called the *Cambria* built in the early 1900's. The Trust have restored the *Cambria* to its former good condition and is now used commercially. (See website for details [www.cambriatrust.org.uk]). But this website also advertised a DVD that showed the *Cambria* skippered by Bob Roberts in the 1960's and also covered a bit about the

Cambria's restoration. But more importantly for me the start of the DVD featured a BBC Television programme, presented by the late Chris Chataway, called "Away from it All". This black and white film made in 1956 featured no. 2 of the TV series and was called "In the Backwaters."

Here Chris Chataway interviewed the *Cambria's* skipper Bob Roberts on board the barge, but also he interviewed Doug Mussett collecting oysters off Mersea, an interview with a wildfowler's son who had left school at 11 years old, near the very old church of St Peter at Bradwell, and for me most importantly an interview with Ted Gager who was trawling for seaweed to be dried and then dyed and sent predominantly to the USA for decoration. This interview took place on the *Emma* CK369 whilst at sea!!

Seeing tis DVD, its shots of Tollesbury, Mersea, the Blackwater, was extremely moving for both myself and my mum. Thanks especially to Mark Chapman from the Cambria Trust who sent us the DVD, which can be purchased for £7.50, for free when he heard of my family connection to the *Emma* CK369. Details of this can be found in my article in Magazine Issue 59.

Thanks again.
Best wishes
Peter Harris

It is a pleasure to be able to help in a small way with efforts to track down smacks' history, particularly when things bear such good fruit as Peter and Paul's communications. Best of luck to both of them with finding out more about 'their' smack *Emma*.

The first sail of the 129th year- Robin Page

Sunday the 18th March 2014 was looking like a good day: the forecast was unseasonably good with



23.5 degrees C inland and force 3 winds from the South East. I decided that the first sail of 2014 in *Alberta* was long overdue. During the preceding week I mailed and texted the crew inviting them out for a little blow around, not really believing that the forecast would come good. *Alberta* had been moved out to her pontoon mooring a couple of weeks before, the mainsail had been 'bent on' and with the exception of the new topmast running backstays she was ready to go.

The crew were due to muster on the town jetty at 12.30pm; I took the chance to spend the morning doing a little rigging, fiddling and tidying up. It was turning out to be a grand day, the best of the year. It was hot enough for me to have to retire to the Colne Yacht Club for a long cold drink after my toil before the crew arrived.

At 12.30 on the dot I could spy from the bar that the crew had arrived; I made my way to the tender and picked them up, it was great to see everyone back in summer mode and even better to see the number that had turned up. We had 4 kids aged between 8 and 10, 6 adults and for the first time ever out new crew member, Sparky the dog. Within 10 minutes we had slipped the mooring and were heading out of Brightlingsea creek: *Alberta's* first sail of her 129th year was underway.

We hoisted the mainsail with the inboard diesel engine keeping us just off head to wind, ensuring that the gaff was the right side of the topping lift. The gaff snagged the heel of the lowered topmast, but soon cleared. We then motor-sailed along the Second Beach shore hoisting the headsails as we went; once the working jib and staysail were up we switched off the engine and everyone started to relax. The kids were making themselves at home down below and started to find the food bags that contained snacks and treats; we opened the main hatch to keep an eye on them and ensure that we would still have some snacks to keep us going. We eased the painter on the flubber (rubber dinghy) so that it was a good distance behind. I was starting to get back into the groove with *Alberta*, it had seemed like a very long time since I had sailed her, until now, but everything was familiar again. We decided that there should be enough water to take a short cut across the 'hills' to the Molliette beacon, and eased the sheets to do so, a good call as it turned out- we had just 12 inches under the keel at one point heading towards St Peter's Chapel on a reach at

around 7 knots. We had a real treat, spotting a pair of harbour porpoises in the Blackwater; they surfaced next to us and then behind us a few times. The dog had never been sailing on the smack before, he has had a few rides in the flubber and 'helped' the kids with their crabbing on the mooring. I was a little worried that he would be a right pain, but he seemed to take it all in his stride. I think that we have a real boat dog!

We got close to Sales Point and then eased further onto a very broad reach along the Bradwell shore; we passed between it and what's left of the baffle wall. There was a barge moored against the remains of the wall, and several workers in hard hats appeared to be working hard; as we drew nearer we could see that they were taking part in some kind of pull up competition on the scaffolding. We waved at them and exchanged smiles...

Sparky barked once. Time for tea and cake, and biscuits, and apples, oh yes and some chocolate.

The wind was freshening and we were almost completely dead down wind, by this time passing the Thirslet Spit buoy, it would soon be time to turn around for the inevitable long beat home against the wind. The best time for this it was decided would be at 3pm when most of the flood time would be done. 3 3 o'clock came and we tacked around just before the moored yachts off Stone Sailing Club and hardened onto the wind, using the handy billies on the staysail to point as high as we could; as we did this the wind started to lift us and what should have been a dead beat became a nice fetch- we just managed to sail above the baffle wall again and noticed that tea break was over and the workers were busy working this time. A tack off the beach at West Mersea, and another off the Bradwell beach had us heading for Molliette again; before long we were dropping the headsails off the creek-mouth buoy and stowing the mainsail. Everyone told me that they had enjoyed it and most of had helmed at some point during the afternoon.

I guess that this is not a remarkable afternoon's sailing, and may not be worth writing about, but I wanted to share this with you, we normally write about events, or races, but the real joy of the boat is afternoons like the 18th March.



COLNE MATCH RESULTS

13th September 2014

H.W. 1550 - Wind moderate N veering NE, overcast.

Course 'A'; Smacks start 0730, Barges 0800

Smack	Number	Time	Place
<i>Maria</i>	CK21	3 12 02	1 st (new course record)
<i>Alberta</i>	CK318	3 15 07	2 nd
<i>My Alice</i>	CK348	3 17 38	3 rd
<i>Sallie</i>	CK224		4
<i>Charlotte Ellen</i>	CK258		5
<i>Iris Mary</i>	CK105		6
<i>Peace</i>			7
<i>Fly</i>			8
<i>Marigold</i>			9
<i>Dorana</i>	MN2		- retired -

Barge	Time	Place
<i>Edme</i>	3 35 02	1 st
<i>Edith May</i>	3 36 08	2 nd
<i>Niagara</i>	3 36 55	3 rd
<i>Marjorie</i>	3 49 27	4 th
<i>Repertor</i>		5
<i>Reminder</i>		6
<i>Xylonite</i>		7

First smack over the start line – *Dorana*

First bawley home – *Marigold*

First smack under 36' – *Fly*

Second smack under 36' – *Marigold*

Last smack home - *Marigold*

First barge over the start- *Edme*

Seamanship prize - *Niagara*

Most Traditionally Turned-out Smack - *Sallie*

NB. Unfortunately, only the times shown were recorded.



Summer Races, Through the Lens- David Chandler

I have covered three smack races so far this year: the Blackwater Match in June, Pin Mill in July and the Wivenhoe Regatta in August. As I am not a boat owner, for the most part I am limited to viewing positions on land. The weather has been mixed, as my photos reveal, but that's life- digital technology does help but it mustn't be pushed too far!



Blackwater- *Niagara, Edith May, Reminder* and *Cygnat* passing Bradwell power station.

The **Blackwater Match** was held in fine sunny conditions and I went to the Marconi Sailing Club opposite Osea Island for the start. One surprise- for the first time the bawleys (four of them including the diminutive *Vivid*) set off as a separate class some 40 minutes before the smacks so that the fleet had a better chance of finishing closer together. As soon as the smacks had left, I drove to Bradwell Power Station in time to see most of the smacks come by- an excellent viewpoint, but you do need a long lens! Then a long wait, but the sun stayed out and the boats had a good breeze to help them up the river. The barge *Edme* pursuing *Iris Mary* was a sight to



Blackwater- *Edme* pursues *Iris Mary* past W.Mersea

behold. Because I waited to see most of the smacks and barges pass, I had no chance to see

the end of the race, which *Maria* won convincingly.



Pin Mill- Five's a crowd! *Iris Mary, Helen & Violet, My Alice, Alberta* and *Polly* creeping down-river.

For the **Pin Mill smack race**, in which 8 boats took part, I was on board a RIB. Unfortunately, from the photographic point of view, the weather was extremely dull and almost windless for much of the time! However, the conditions did allow the slower boats to match their faster cousins. The course was shortened, the outer mark becoming the Babergh buoy- plenty of close encounters here!



Pin Mill- *Alberta, Helen & Violet, Maria* and *My Alice* at close quarters again!

Progress was so slow that eventually our RIB called it a day, so again I didn't see the end of the race, which was eventually won by *Polly*. I still don't understand the handicapping formula! [Ed .- *Pin Mill* is one of a few races where the smacks are given some sort of time penalty. Nonetheless most crews are more interested in who wins on the water! In this case *Polly* won both on the water and on handicap.]



Wivenhoe- *Sunbeam, Polly and Maria* just after the start.

For the **Wivenhoe Regatta** at the start of August, I was again on land, this time at East Mersea Stone. It was dull at the start and there wasn't a lot of wind, though by the time the boats returned the sun was out and the wind had picked up. *Maria* won easily- partly because *Alberta* ran aground just after the start, though to her credit she made up a good 15 minutes to finish second.



Wivenhoe- *Alberta and Charlotte Ellen* approaching East Mersea Stone.

The other smacks made a splendid sight as they powered up to the finish. I usually go up to Wivenhoe to see the end of the second part of the race, but this time I stayed to watch the boats depart up the Colne. No master shots so far, but I live in hope- and the Colne Match is soon!

The Colne Smack Preservation Society's Annual General Meeting

And Photographic Competition

Will be held on
Saturday 22nd November at 2pm
in the British Legion Hall, Sydney Street.

NO PARKING (nearest car park is outside the YMCA Hall in the High Street, beside Brian House's Newsagents)

We hope to meet as many of our members as possible for the occasion.



Forthcoming events...

Harwich Sea Shanty Festival
Tollesbury Regatta
Harris Smack Rally
CSPS a.g.m.

10th – 12th October
12th October
26th October
22nd November

...and a selection of dates for next year...

Medway Barge Match
Rowhedge Regatta
Pin Mill Barge Match
Blackwater Match
Swale Match
Colne Match

23rd May 2015
20th June 2015
27th June 2015
25th July 2015
8th August 2015
5th September 2015



CK318 ALBERTA
£140,000



call: 01206 304690 email: robin@strong-point.co.uk



Another of Peter Lumley's photos, this one showing Maldon's 'Bath Wall' taken sometime in the 1960s.



COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (*= optional information)

Name:

Address:.....
.....

Post code: Date of birth:.....

Telephone: Home/*Work/*Fax.....

Email address:

I would prefer to receive the CSPS Newsletter by post / email (please delete as applicable)

Do you own a smack?..... Wish to/have 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 Committee meeting.

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

Return this form to Martin Doe, The Cottage, Straight Road, Boxted, Colchester, Essex CO4 5QX.

STANDING ORDER

To: (the name of your bank) Sort code:

Bank address:

Name of your account:Account number:

Please credit the account of Colne Smack Preservation Society (Barclays Bank PLC, Brightlingsea, Essex; A/c no. 00100498 Sort code 20-21-73) the sum of **£12.50** 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: