



The Never Setting Sun



Smack Dock Soundings

THE JOURNAL OF THE COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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ISSUE 70



2014 AGM Photo Competition winner: *Maria CK21* racing to a new course record, by David Chandler

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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...

This issue brings a mixed bag; with the smacks almost all tucked up under their covers for the winter, there's not much activity to report. However, the potted history of the tug *Brent*, and Pauline Lawrence's memories of the barge *Tollesbury* will hopefully be of interest; after all, these are all working boats, just as the smacks were in their day. But just in case you're wondering if anything inside relates to smacks, David Chandler's excellent photos will remind you of last year's final couple of races; and the calendar of events will have many of us reaching for our diaries for this summer. Many thanks to all this Issue's contributors; it makes my job more satisfying when I've got things to put together, and everyone benefits from a well-filled newsletter. Please keep it up!



Important Administrative Note from the CSPS Secretary

We are anxious to compile a completely comprehensive list of the email addresses of our members.

This is principally in order to have a cheap form of contact given the high cost of postage, and indeed telephone calls (if we have your number!).

PLEASE GIVE THIS MATTER A HIGH PRIORITY, and send your email address to me (martindoe@hotmail.co.uk) so we can use it if necessary.

Many thanks, and I hope to be overwhelmed by your response!

I will report in a later issue on the scale of your reply.

Martin Doe

Working Party for Smack Dock Clear-Up

Starting at 10am – all welcome

Sunday 22nd March 2015

New Members

Welcome aboard to the following 6 new members:

Andre Adams, Mark Bradfield, Dick Baldwin, Ingeborg H. Hurren.

Peter Hickman- Peter owns and runs Underwoods Hard on Brightlingsea Creek where he provides moorings, haul-out and launching, scrubbing and antifouling, storage ashore, rigging, and fitting out etc.

Roger Walker- Roger formerly owned CK318 *Alberta*, and was a long-time CSPS committee member. Welcome back Roger.

Forthcoming Social Events- Judy Lawrence

Second Nostalgic Evening of Archive Film, with Wine and Cheese

Saturday March 28th at 7:00 for 7:30

Colne Yacht Club - £10 per head

Tickets available from 1st March at Spirals, Brian House or Judy (01206 304663)

Shanty Night and Fish Supper

Saturday May 9th from 7:30 to 11:00

Colne Yacht Club - £13 per head

Tickets available from 15th April at Spirals or Brian House

To order a vegetarian meal in advance or for any further information, please call Martin Doe on 01206 272000.

New member **Dick Baldwin** has written in response to the discussion about the photograph by Peter Lumley illustrated in Issue 68-

"I started fishing as a living in 1963 at 16 years. I worked on *Enterprise* LO58 stowboating for whitebait out of Holehaven Creek. Usually the bowsprit was starboard of the stem. The stemhead roller was port side. On the starboard bow was the baulk davit bolted to the starboard bitt next to the samson post that was midships; the gap between the bitt and the samson post was to take the bowsprit that slid through the gap, starboard side the same side as the stowboat gear. The anchor usually a fisherman type about 4-5 cwt was port side with its 5/8" chain".



The Photographer's Viewpoint- David Chandler



This year I was fortunate enough to follow the **Colne Match** on board a large Rib. The weather was overcast at the start with a moderate N/NE wind, which increased to about a Force 4 later; in fact conditions proved ideal for a fast race. Unfortunately, for no obvious reason, as in 2013, the number of smacks taking part was disappointingly low- 10.



Once round the Colne Bar the fleet soon spread out, making it difficult to get more than one boat in shot; and as we could only be in one place at a time, some smacks were more photographed than others!



We made a point of seeing the leading smacks at the outer mark off Clacton and off the Wallet

Spitway. Then, as the sun finally broke through, we followed *Maria* as she made an exhilarating fetch back to the finish- and in record time!

For the first time I managed to get afloat at West Mersea to see the start of the **Maldon Regatta** at close quarters. However, I was unable to see more than the opening stages as I had to be dropped off at W. Mersea so I could collect my car.



Ten smacks set out in fairly gloomy conditions and with very little wind to assist. *Maria* and *Alberta* established what was to prove a decisive lead at the first mark; by the time the rest approached it, the tide had begun to flood and several smacks had to have more than one go at getting round! In the end *Maria* and *Alberta* won easily, with the next smack home, *Lizzie Annie*, nearly thirty minutes behind.



Later in the afternoon, I was at Maldon to see seven of the smacks arrive in sunshine at the head of the traditional parade of sail.

Finally, many thanks to all those who have made my photos possible this season, especially Robin Page, Paul winter, Jon Humby, Gerry Courtney and Mike McCarthy.



Events Calendar 2015...

Smack Dock working party
CSPS Archive Film Show evening
CSPS Shanty Night
 Medway Barge Match
 Wivenhoe Regatta
 Rowhedge Regatta
 Pin Mill Barge Match
 Heybridge Basin Regatta
 Brightlingsea Regatta and Boat Show
 OGA Swallows and Amazons weekend
 Pin Mill Smack Race
 East Coast Old Gaffers Race
 Blackwater Smack and Barge Match
 Harwich Sea Festival
 Pyefleet Week
 Swale Match
 Ipswich Maritime Festival
 Mersea Week
 Mersea Town Regatta
 Southend Barge Match
Colne Smack and Barge Match
 Mersea Dredging Match
 Maldon Regatta
 Tollesbury Regatta

22nd March

28th March

9th May

23rd May

6th June

20th June

27th June

4th July

4th - 6th July

4th - 5th July

11th July

18th July

25th July

26th July

1st - 7th August

8th August

15th - 16th August

16th - 22nd August

22nd August

30th August

5th September

6th September

19th September

3rd October



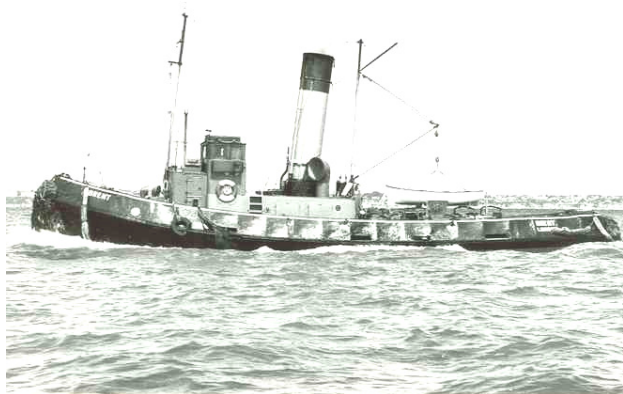
Maldon Regatta 2013- *Charlotte Ellen*, *Alberta* and *Martha 2* heading towards the first mark.
Photo by David Chandler

Details listed are believed to be correct at the time of going to press.
Please notify the Editor with any changes or corrections as soon as possible.



Steam Tug *Brent*

Some of you may remember the tug *Brent* whose owners Ron and Janet Hall supported the Colne Match by providing her as committee boat; she is now cared for by the Steam Tug Brent Trust who are campaigning to raise funds for much-needed repairs and maintenance. The following article is reprinted from a leaflet which CSPS member Peter Allen picked up at the recent London Boat Show. Many thanks to the Trust's website for the accompanying photographs.



Brent attending the 1978 Colne Match

Steam tug *Brent* was one of 182 TID class tugs built for the Admiralty during WW2. *Brent* did not see war service as she was not launched until November 1945.

She was sold to the Port of London Authority, as TID 159, and re-named Brent. She initially worked for the dredging department of the PLA, tending the dredgers, and later worked in the PLA docks system tending barges and lighters. From the mid 1960s onwards, the era of steam vessels drew to a close, with many vessels being sent to the shipbreakers. *Brent* was the last PLA steam tug to be scrapped and went to the breakers' yard in 1970.

Brent's survival is remarkable in that she was a pioneering preservation project, at a time when little thought was given to saving steam boats of any age or design. She was purchased from the shipbreakers in 1971. Her new owners felt that she should be saved for posterity, the best way being by converting her into a family home and tug yacht. Only essential changes were made to the accommodation cabins, with the

engine room, boiler room and superstructure remaining as original.



Brent on her escape from the breakers' yard, from Mistley to Maldon in 1971

Under preservation, during the 1970s and '80s, *Brent* regularly attended rallies around the East Coast, and made several trips to London. In 1977, *Brent* was the only steam vessel to have attended the Queen's Silver Jubilee as well as her Coronation celebrations! She also made two very successful trips to the Netherlands. Nearer to home, she was Committee Boat to sailing barge and fishing smack races on the rivers Colne and Blackwater in Essex. She also acted as a family home during the summer months.

Due to boiler concerns, *Brent* did not steam again after the early 1990s, although the steam engine remains in working condition. Repair work to her hull was carried out in 2001, but between this time and 2011 little maintenance was possible.

Brent was placed under the ownership of Steam Tug Brent Trust in 2011. The initial tasks of the Trust are preventative work on board to halt further deterioration and to raise funds for her restoration. We welcome support, be it hands-on volunteering, general interest or financial. Please see our website for further information- www.steamtugbrent.org or contact us by phone or letter (details on following page).



Steam Tug Brent Trust
12 The Hythe,
Maldon
Essex CM9 5HN

01621 855058



Brent in her berth on Maldon Quay in 2010

A Way of Life - Pauline Lawrence

(Reprinted from the Thames Barge Sailing Club's Members' Bulletin Sept/Oct 2000)

The MV *Tollesbury* was a converted sailing barge belonging to R & W Paul, Ipswich. Her cargoes were mainly cattle food, but sometimes grain and malting products were also carried. As with most sailing barges, she was converted to power as it was no longer viable to earn a living. My husband Jim Lawrence took over being her master in 1962.

One cold, foggy winter day in December 1962, I travelled up to London to go to the theatre. The train kept stopping on route because of the fog, and, as we approached London it got thicker and thicker- a real pea-souper. Eventually, Jim met me off the train when it arrived 2 hours late. London was at a standstill. People were walking about carrying flares; buses were parked here, there and everywhere, it was complete chaos; it was no good making for the theatre, we would be too late. Our best plan was to walk to the West India Dock, where the *Tollesbury* lay. On route I bought myself a pair of short wellington boots; little did I know then that those boots would remain my constant companions for the next ten months!

As we approached the docks, the dock police made us wait until several persons had gathered there and he had to escort us all to our various vessels for safety reasons. It was three days before the fog cleared, and at last I could see what the London docks looked like. I didn't know it then, but that was the last of the notorious 'Great London Smogs'. For the next ten months the *Tollesbury* became my home. No more of the stuffy office for me; my parents called me a water gypsy, and what a happy gypsy I was.

As many of you will recall, the winter of 1962/3 was one of the coldest on record. On Boxing Day 1962 the temperatures dropped below freezing point and did not rise above until March 1963. Our local rivers, Colne, Blackwater and Crouch, all froze up; the army were called in to detonate the ice so that shipping could commence work again. We had no ship's radio in those days, no electric light; everything was candles or paraffin oil.

On Saturdays the London dockers only worked a few hours in the morning. All of Paul's fleet got loaded that particular day, the *Tollesbury* last of all. As we journeyed down the Thames between Gravesend and Tilbury, I noticed very small particles of ice in the water and by the time we reached Southend, the ice was the size of golf balls.

It was a very dull day and the light was beginning to fade. Off the Maplins, the ice was getting bigger and bigger; great lumps of it were hitting the hull and the whole barge shook, it was like bombs dropping. We continued to the SW Middle and, at times, the barge almost came to a halt. Very slowly, we made our way towards the Spitway until the barge was completely surrounded by ice and could move no further. Jim was concerned the ice would cut through the wooden hull, so over the side he went to examine it. So far, so good and no damage was reported but he decided to erect the stack boards around the bows as a precaution. Jim and the mate, Charlie, walked almost around the barge on the ice- not many people have had that experience. It was now about 1800 hrs; dark, with very little moon. The ice floes continued to bombard the ship and I wondered what would happen to us if we got in trouble as no lifeboat would be able to reach us through all the ice, and we were a bigger



vessel than they were. I sat in the wheelhouse and sang the hymn 'Eternal Father, Strong to Save'.

Luckily for us, the tide took the ice away and suddenly we were free. Through the Spitway we went into the Wallet, by now the moon had got up; over towards the Gunfleet you could see another huge ice floe and could just make out the shape of another barge, trapped as we had been. That night we dropped anchor under Fagbury and I thanked God for a safe passage. Sunday morning saw us motoring up the Orwell towards *Tollesbury's* home port of Ipswich. The lock gates opened for us, and in we went. Jim thought we would be 'tail-end Charlie', but the rest of the fleet were nowhere to be seen. Later we learned that they had all gone to Sheerness for the night- and the next day as well.

The Gaffa Essex Girl- Dave Hart

An ode to an Essex girl I once knew
Some sailors say
There is nothing Naffa than a plastic Gaffa!

Sixty years I have been afloat man & boy
Sailing in steel, plastic & wooden boat.

Nothing is as good as a boat made of tree wood
The feeling & sound is so good to be around.

Craftsmanship & History
Of a hand built small ship is no freak.

Under way
A creak, a Leak!

Pressed canvas, forging ahead
Making a course true & dead.

I long for those days when I sailed in wood
It brings back memories of my Essex girl who felt so good!

Time marches on, nearly three score years & ten
I sit in my armchair with glass & pen.

My memories backwards look
I read of others adventures in sailing book!

I dream of the day
When I can once more can sail away.

In today's Gaffa made of wood
She wears paint & varnish good!

Her name again is Essex Girl
She is not plastic & makes me feel almost as good!

Those smacks get everywhere- a letter from Richard Judd and Laure Ferber



I am the present owner of *Sybil* of Wivenhoe. Having retired on Jan 1st this year, I have at last a little time (I hope) for some fun.

Sybil belonged to the Chatters family from almost new (she was built in 1901) until the end of WW2. Although I met Mr Jack or was it Edwin Chatters in the 1960s when I was a teenager, I don't really know much about her early history, except that she won a Rose Bowl when coming in first in a 1926 smack race of which I have a poor photocopy of a newspaper photo.

Sybil was bought by John Howlett, who by coincidence was educated at Gresham's School, Holt, in Norfolk...as were my father and myself. John, or 'Tiny' (because he certainly was NOT), was the editor of the Cruising Association Bulletin in the late 1940s. My parents chartered *Sybil* in 1949 and Tiny sold *Sybil* to my mother Eileen in 1950. He



persuaded my parents to join the CA, and many years later, my father rose to be the president of the association.



At the age of 81 (in 1992), my father was tired of doing most of the fitting out and decided henceforth to rent sailing 'tupperwares' in Greece and Turkey, and did his last channel crossing on *Sybil* from Poole to Le Havre with me at an average speed of over 8 knots. We intended to carry on to the huge rally at Brest, but en route from Le Havre to Cherbourg, we had to pump the bilges for 45mins per hour and decided that it was too risky to go any further. On arrival at Cherbourg we grounded *Sybil* on the slipway at high tide and found she was worn out, many frames were broken, some of her staunchions were rotten and the iron fastenings had virtually disappeared.

Rather than burn her or give her away, which is what any logical person would have done, we put *Sybil* on a lorry and took her home (near Caen) where we spent 8 years of weekends patching her up. Her 23 frames are made up of 188 futtocks and staunchions of which we replaced 100 & also replaced a dozen planks including 3 of the 4 'new' planks fitted by a yard in Tollesbury in 1952. The keel and hog are

original but have been strengthened by adding a stainless steel strap on top of the hog and under the keel. *Sybil* is completely refastened with 10cm and 12cm A4 stainless screws (over 2000 of them). The frames are refastened with 1cm diameter A4 stainless threaded rod (over 90metres of it).

The keel was 'deepened' by the Chatters's (I suppose) by adding a half ton iron insert, this is now fastened with 5 x 1.5 cms diameter A4 rods. We had already replaced the deck beams and deck (now Iroko) in 1967/1968, but had to attend to the covering board which was a trying job. The rigging dates from 1971 (following a dismasting on the way back from Ireland in 1969). Most of the 'new' rigging was made by an old school friend, Mark Trevitt (one time part owner of Lowestoft drifter *Excelsior*). He did an excellent job and it is all still in good condition.

When Howlett bought *Sybil* he removed her engine which was in the fish hold. I think the engine was a Kelvin, but was too big to keep in the 'cabin' and was in very poor shape as the Chatters had hidden *Sybil* from the Germans in 1942 by sinking her in a creek. Howlett fitted a 2hp Stuart Turner with an offset propellor on the wrong side. This enabled *Sybil* to turn in tight circles to port, provided there were no waves or wind. In 1952, from a scrap merchant in Wallington, Godfrey (my father) bought and fitted a second-hand Fowler 2cyl 12hp oil engine, which had been in a small landing craft,





This needed a serious rebuild in 1992, so we sold it to a museum in Leeds for £120(which is what Godfrey had paid in 1952). *Sybil* now boasts a Bukh 25hp engine which I daren't use at more than half throttle... it is far too powerful for such a small boat.

Sybil's home port is in St Vaast La Hougue on E side of Cherbourg peninsular. I hope to sail to England's East Coast within the next 2 years and join an OGA race for the first time in about 30 years! I wonder if anyone remembers her?

richard.judd@club-internet.fr
laureferber@gmail.com

Our Town - Gordon Miles

We don't know we're born in our Town
There is barely a frown in our Town
We look after each other, your father, your
mother, your sister, your brother,
That's how it is in 'Our Town'.

We have the sea, which is blue, and the grass
which is green. The most beautiful countryside
you've ever seen. We have banks of flowers
in the Town to enjoy, and a pond filled with
goldfish, which would please any boy. We
have no graffiti, and little crime, you can
walk our streets, late, at any time.

You don't have to drive many miles to a shop
We've got it all here, we've got the lot.
We have a wet fish shop and fried fish with
Chips that are great, with all shops so friendly
you don't have to wait. A beautiful Lido
where you can swim in the sun, a skate park, a
bike park, you don't need your mum.

We have dances and shows at our Community
Hall,
we don't miss a thing here, we all have a ball.
Our harbour will welcome a visiting yacht,
keeping them safe in a nice quiet spot. You
don't
have to fork out a massive fee; the name of our
town is 'Brightlingsea'.

For Sale - Heavy Duty Trailer/Launching Trolley

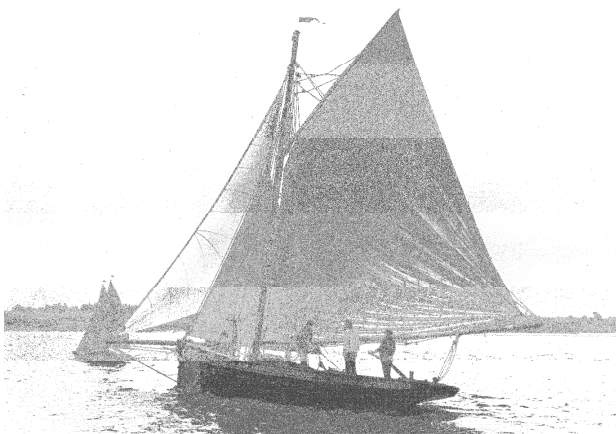


Now takes a yacht of up to 8 tons deadweight and 30' length; adaptable to yachts up to 34' by removing bow docking arm. Built for Brightlingsea Hard. Six wheels on 2 axles with spare wheel. Trailer weight ca. 2 tons with long draw bar. Steering front wheels. Drawbar moves independently to accommodate uneven surfaces. Cranked docking arms sprayed inside with underseal. Iroko bearers for keel. All well maintained.

Built by Brightlingsea ships' blacksmith Keith Ruffle. Design by marine engineer Brian Percival.

PRICE £1500 ONO

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OR E-MAIL andylindley39@yahoo.co.uk



Ethel Alice CK476
Photo Malcolm MacGregor

**Important message from the CSPS Treasurer – Membership Subscriptions**

Thank you for all the many subscriptions we have already received.

However the rate increased this year from the long standing £10 to £12.50, and most members have not altered their payment.

To deal with this please complete the following standing order form to pay £2.50 now and £12.50 for future years. Then return it to me, Andy Lindley, Treasurer, Colne Smack Preservation Society, Strangers Corner, Church Road, Brightlingsea, Colchester, Essex CO7 0QU

Many thanks for your help with this.

Andy Lindley

Colne Smack Preservation Society**Contact Details**

Name.....

Address.....

E-mail.....Telephone.....

Standing Order

To (insert the name of your Bank).....

Address.....

Name of Account.....

Account Number.....

Bank Sort Code.....

Please pay to account of Colne Smack Preservation Society
(Barclays Bank PLC, Clacton, Essex, A/C No 00100498. Sort Code 20-21-73) the sum of £2.50 (Two Pounds Fifty Pence) immediately and thereafter the sum of £12.50 (Twelve Pounds Fifty Pence) on the 1st November annually until this order is cancelled in writing.

This supercedes any previous order.

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

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