



The Never Setting Sun



Smack Dock Soundings

THE JOURNAL OF THE COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Autumn 2011

ISSUE 60



Perhaps a record in recent times- six smacks on the Hard at once. From l to r *Harriet Blanche*, *Nellie*, *Maria* (behind *Nellie*), *Polly*, *Primrose* and *Fly*, having a scrub and paint just before the Wivenhoe Regatta in July this year.

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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...

The local smacks have been pretty active this summer despite the wind and rain, and it's nice to have a new one join them- *Pembeth* (built by Aldous) who has been at Woodbridge until recently.

The Smack Dock has half a dozen boats in at present, one of which is *Dorana*, having a new deck. The Dock has been the saving place of many smacks sailing today, and it is good to see that it is still fulfilling that function.

The Colne Match has been and gone (results inside)- next year's match has been set for **8th September 2012**, start 0800. Get that in your diaries!





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Chairman's Report- Simon Fox

On the 19th of June we had the annual Sail and Picnic, which, again was well attended despite the poor forecast that was given. It turned out to be a windy day and so a couple of the smaller smacks didn't go out, but all who turned up and wanted to go were accommodated on the larger ones. Most of the sailing was confined to the Colne and then the smacks rafted up to *Pioneer* on her mooring for lunch. The smacks in attendance were *Pioneer*, *Ellen*, *Maria*, *Electron* and *Fly*. Many thanks to all the skippers and crews, and to Robin Page and Jim Lawrence for organizing it.

On the 17th of July a barbeque was held on the dock and despite suffering inclement weather it was well attended. In fact at one point they ran out of cooking capacity as so many sausages were on the go. A good time was had by all, and they were entertained by Jim Lawrence and the Verrier family from Harwich singing and playing. Thanks are due to Judy Lawrence and Madeleine for putting it on, those who performed and all those who helped on the day.

On the 3rd of September the Colne Match and Barge Race was held. There were 20 smacks and 6 barges competing on a day which started with very little breeze, got up well when the competitors were offshore and then dropped away again. Well done to *Primrose* and *Edme* for winning, but also to all the others who took part. It was very good to see you all there and hope you will come back next year. We on *Nellie* had a good tussle with *Emma* most of the way round, and although just managed to pip her at the end, there was nothing in it, and look forward to

seeing her again next year for a re match. Congratulations to Ferret with *Fly* for first over the line in trying conditions and to Jon Brett for having the most traditional smack.

The AGM will take place 19th of November 2011 at Brightlingsea Sailing Club, more details of which can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. I will not be seeking re-election as Chairman as I feel that it is time for someone else to take the Society forward. We will need three new Committee members to replace those who wish to retire and it would be especially good to see some smack owners or those who crew on them to stand.

Meetings take place once a month in the shed on the dock and are fairly informal. You will be helping keeping the Society going and for a little effort you will find it very rewarding. Please give it some thought, and if you can help, get in touch with me or one of the other Committee members and we will give you some more details.

Simon Fox.

LOST YOUR CAMERA??

Penny Verrier found a camera at the smack picnic.

She has saved the images so as to be able to verify the rightful owner.

If you have lost one please contact Penny-

Tel: 07855756037

Email: Pennywhistles@gmail.com



COLNE MATCH RESULTS

3rd September 2011

H.W.1640 Wind light SE, sunny and warm. Smacks start 0730, Barges 0800; Course 'A'

Smacks	Sail no	Corrected time	Place
<i>Primrose</i>	CK273	4 07 32	1 st
<i>Maria</i>	CK21	4 15 11	2 nd
<i>Ethel Alice</i>	CK476	4 16 54	3 rd
<i>Lizzie Annie</i>	MN23	4 27 34	
<i>Fly</i>	MN17	4 35 57	
<i>Sunbeam</i>	CK328	4 38 40	
<i>Harriet Blanche</i>	CK9	4 43 47	
<i>My Alice</i>	CK348	4 38 05	
<i>Iris Mary</i>	CK105	4 56 02	
<i>Emeline</i>	F14	4 57 13	
<i>Helen & Violet</i>	LO262	5 09 54	
<i>Peace</i>	CK171	5 10 26	
<i>Ellen</i>	CK222	5 22 34	
<i>Electron</i>	CK36	5 27 16	
<i>Polly</i>	MN12	5 27 45	
<i>Nellie</i>	CK276	5 29 55	
<i>Emma</i>	F22	5 30 31	
<i>Pioneer</i>	CK18	5 37 28	
<i>Mary Amelia</i>	LO502	6 20 38	
<i>Dorana</i>	MN2	6 22 03	
<i>Charlotte Ellen</i>	CK258	-Retired-	

Barges	Corrected time	Place
<i>Edme</i>	4 42 22	1 st
<i>Decima</i>	4 59 45	2 nd
<i>Repertor</i>	5 00 00	3 rd
<i>Edith May</i>	5 14 29	
<i>Phoenician</i>	5 43 48	
<i>Reminder</i>	5 48 20	
<i>Marjorie</i>	-Retired-	

First barge over the start- *Edith May*



Charlotte Ellen gets her gear up

First smack over the start- *Fly* MN17

**Most traditionally turned out smack-
Iris Mary CK105**



A close finish- 1975

Colne Smack Race, early days- Malcolm Macgregor

There was not a smack race on the Colne for many years; the last one had been back in 1922. Friends kept saying that they would like one here again.

My wife Lillian took on getting the race going again- that was in 1971; seven smacks turned up. She tried to stick as closely as possible to the original course of 1922 with her handicap. After the first year, barges were asked to join in; Dutch barges, ex-working boats and steam tugs all attended a rally and things went well. The committee boat was the steam pinnace *Puffin* owned by Bob Partes. Ernest and Sue Last delivered the course cards and brought cups ashore.



The trophies and cups soon came in for the race, with a lot of very nice letters to Lillian, and many friends came and gave her great help. On many occasions the Oliver brothers of the shipyard estate loaned a building for the prizegiving- at times over 400 sailors and supporters attended... Grand times!

Lillian had a team of helpers which came to her aid whenever she needed help; David Gowing used to do a very good job with the program, which Peter Allen took over after David passed away. Hervey Benham too always gave us his support if ever we needed him.



Reg White presenting the prizes

After all the trophies and cups had been given out to the winners, the raffle was drawn. We then had a sale of all the photos of smacks and barges and all the monies went towards the next year's race.

In 1980 Lillian joined in with the CSPS until 1987 when she felt that she had done enough.

Last but not least was that all food was done by Lillian and her excellent helpers, Pauline Lawrence, Caroline Allen and her daughter serving 300 to 400 people with rolls, sausage rolls etc. Some of the raffle prizes were donated by businesses around the town.





***Polly* MN12 and *Dorana* MN2 go 'home' to Maldon**

17th of August 2011- *Polly* and *Dorana* decided on a jolly to Maldon, or as the yachties would call it, a cruise in company. We decided to anchor in Pyefleet the night before so we could catch the last two hours of ebb to get us to the Bench Head ready for the flood up to Maldon. Forecast for the day was NE 3-4, lovely- just right for the crews to enjoy. *Polly* had Amanda and one of her occasional crew, Mark Francis, and George, age 11³/₄. George was previously my main crew on *Dorana*, but has been lured away with cornish pasties and coke. This has left me a little short on good crew, but lucky for me I'd had the sense to put Marie, my other half, through the birthing process so as to have another crew member waiting in the wings!- so *Dorana's* crew was just me and Jacob, age 5. He is very keen, and while I spent half an hour up the mast trying to sort my topsail halyard he helmed (although it had turned into more of a drift, hence the topsail). *Polly* was always ahead, but at least I'm used to that.

Osea Island appeared and the wind dropped even more, but both boats had vowed to sail the whole way. Once past Osea it seems to shallow up quite quickly as you round up to Heybridge Basin and occasionally we were just skipping the humps. Another few bends and Maldon was in sight; still with everything set I pondered how to tackle my sails. With everything up, and just me and Jacob to get it all down before we hit the quay, we decided to brail the mains'l, drop the jib and carry on with just topsail and staysail. It seemed to work and as we drew up next to the barges, I fired up the engine, dropped the sails and turned through 180° to go alongside the visitor pontoon. We stopped 30 feet away- not much water there at all! *Polly* slipped alongside and made fast so we could send George ashore to put a rope on.

Someone I have forgotten to mention is my brother, who had recently purchased an Eventide. He is a bit green when it comes to 'flappy white things', and attempted to come alongside *Polly* under engine but with the

sails still up. The look of fear on Mandy's face as he came hurtling towards *Polly* was enough for me to shout at him to get his sails down before coming alongside; this threw him into a panic as the tide was now moving fast and he had a pontoon in front of him. He pushed the panic stick as far as it would go, and just missed the pontoon, but his engine was no more- it stopped pumping water, got hot and stopped. It was George to the rescue as he towed them back alongside *Polly*; at least we were keeping the hoards of crabbers and the pub customers amused.



Half an hour later we were tied up and settled in; the boys needed a run so we found the pirate ship and an ice cream shop. Things quietened down from then on, and all attention was on getting a meal and a pint and the weather whilst trying to decide how to get an Eventide with no sailing experience back down river in the dark. As this was my brother's first sailing boat of three weeks, it was down to *Dorana* to tow them down at least to Osea; then we would all set sail and make our way down the Blackwater. The weather was going to turn into NE 5-7; great, should be a good sail back; a bit bumpy though... I suggested 3 am for our departure time and with alarms set we headed off to bed.

3 am- wide awake. Well I was- Mandy needed two cups of tea! Jacob stayed asleep and everyone else just grunted. We made the tricky manoeuvre of transferring my brother's Eventide from *Polly* to me whilst under way in the dark; all went well and we motored out. Having negotiated Heybridge, which is quite well buoyed, we arrived at Osea just as



daylight appeared so we all set sail. I cast my brother off thinking he would just follow me- unfortunately he decided not to let his main sheet out so went sideways straight into the Marconi SC moorings and a lee shore. It was blowing a 5 by now and he was getting in to a situation, so I decided to try and sail through and catch him. Slightly daft I admit- lee shore, single handed, but I did it anyway. I managed to catch a rope off them but was going at such a speed it ripped my cleat off the rail (add that to the winter list). I decided not to go in again, so called him on the radio to start his engine and if it blew up so be it- at least he would get to me out in open water so I could reattach the tow line. With the weather and his lack of sailing knowledge I thought it would be safer just to get home; *Dorana* motor sailed all the way back to Brightlingsea following *Polly* the whole time; we all managed to get back in to Brightlingsea with no more fuss.

The two-day trip was on the whole a very enjoyable time- every one enjoyed themselves, especially the boats. Cruising is definitely something that should be encouraged- these types of vessels are very laid back craft that can take their time and enjoy the view; when they are not charging round a race course time on board goes back to the pace of years gone by.

Race Report - Maldon Regatta 2011- Robin Page

17th September- During the week leading up to the weekend of the Maldon Regatta the weather forecast was terrible, with force 7 and even at one point force 8 gusts predicted, which in combination with a South Westerly didn't bode well for a comfortable race. Right up to the morning of the event I was not one hundred percent sure that *Primrose* would be going. But a reduction to a force 6 forecast made us more comfortable to go. Due to the uncertainty I elected not to scrub (an excuse for poor performance in the bag!). The boat had been scrubbed for the Colne Match 2 weeks earlier, and was a little slimy, but with no weed.

The race start was at 9.00 at the Nass Beacon off West Mersea, so we met at 7.00 on the Hard, and pushed *Primrose* with the dinghy to Bench Head before setting sail; with a foul tide and a fetch to the line it was a close thing to get to the start line on time but motor sailing, we managed to make it with 5 minutes to spare. We dropped the dinghy with Brian Kennel who had kindly offered to tow dinghies to the finish, then did a loop and got a very average start, around 30 seconds late for the line. Once we had started we had a chance to have a look around and could see that there was a reasonable entry given the conditions.

The course was to start Westerly from the Nass, then No.3 to port (off Tollesbury), Bench Head to starboard, No.6 to starboard and then Thirslet Spit to port. The finish was off the pier at Osea Island.

We decided to set a conservative rig consisting of working jib and staysail along with one reef in the main. We made good progress up the beat, and managed to get to No.3 with *Lizzie Annie* and *Charlotte Ellen*. There was a long broad reach to Bench Head, but some indecisiveness on my part cost us time down the run. We changed staysail to the big tow poled out, but this was not working well and too late in the day we set it behind the main, dropped the jib and set a very big jib off the bowsprit. We should have set the big pole and spinny from the start. Ho hum... We were in a solid 3rd, but still in touch with *Charlotte Ellen*. The close reach from Bench Head to No.6 was uneventful, we had changed both headsails back to working ones before rounding Bench Head.

Still in with a chance of taking both boats in front of us on the long reach we decided to take a punt and carry on up the Mersea beach on port tack, rather than getting out in the tide as logic would dictate; the logic was that we seemed to be on a lift, but it didn't pay at all. We popped out a long way behind the two lead boats, and that is how we finished.

The conditions were up and down, but always fresh, we occasionally dipped the rail under and needed our reef. We all noted how well Bob Fawkes was going in *Lizzie Annie*, he



stormed away, sailing an excellent race to a very well deserved win. *Lizzie* managed to carry a tow staysail, with a reef in the main, but didn't look too pressed.

After the finish we dropped the anchor and had lunch of sausage and bacon rolls (which was really breakfast) and watch the rest of the fleet finish, we were nice and relaxed when the radio barked into life, Andy Abraham on *Electron* had noticed that a Dart catamaran was in trouble and suggested that we got in our dinghy to assist. Brian had dropped it back to us; it was a little flat so we pumped it up again. We jumped in and noticed that it was going flat quite quickly! Anyway Dave and I were off to the rescue, when we got there the cat was upside down, with the mast floating under and lines and sails everywhere. There were two faces who were very pleased to see us; we towed them to the beach and kept an eye on them- we later got a radio message from them to say that they were safely back at Marconi Sailing Club.

After all that excitement it was time for the second race, or parade of sail; we were a little short on time and the wind had increased once more so we elected to put a second reef in and got underway. After hoisting the anchor a big squall came through as we were hoisting the jib; this one was quite violent and at that point I decided that I didn't fancy racing through the moorings up to Hythe Quay in a good force 6. So I told the crew that we were going home, there was a look of relief on their faces, so I guess that I made the right call.

On the return passage we had loads of wind, no wind, sunshine and very heavy rain..... what a day.

Sadly the prize giving was earlier this year and I couldn't make it back around to Maldon by car in time for it. It was a shame that the conditions this year were so unfavourable, I think that only 3 Smacks entered the 2nd race. The event as always is very well organised and remains one of our favourite events. A big thanks to all who put in the effort to organise it.

Smack Dock Barbecue- Roger Bates



Pictured above are some of the hardy folk who turned up for the barbecue on Sunday the 17th July.

Showing the typical spirit of sailors everywhere, they were going to enjoy themselves despite the weather, and they did.

Over fifty people were there, and some had passed from as far away as Lowestoft, Harwich and Mersea.

The sun eventually did shine, the rain did stop, and great music played on, not to mention that a great deal of sausages, burgers, and fish disappeared down the hatch!

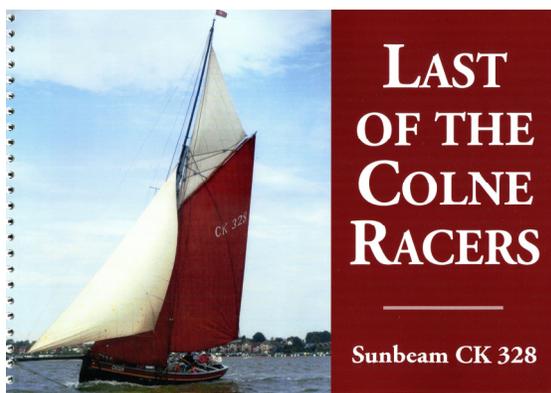
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Book review- Brian Webb



I have just obtained a very good book called "Last of the Colne Racers, *Sunbeam CK328*". It's A4 landscape format, glossy, and is about *Sunbeam* from when she was lifted out of our dock, restored at John Millgate's, Peldon, and her racing and cruising history since. I thoroughly recommend it to all interested in the smacks- it's a very reasonable £12.95 plus £1.50 p&p. obtainable from Nigel Butt, de Bohuns, Church Street, Tollesbury, Maldon CM9 8QL.

Obituary- Steven Swann 1947-19th March 2011

During the spring of this year, Stephen passed away after a very short illness with cancer. This short narrative is about my journey with him in our shared interest in the working craft of the Thames estuary.

Although we were cousins, we were also good friends and this is my opportunity to thank him for opening my interest in traditional sailing, particularly with *Bona* LO178 which at one time we co-owned. He also introduced me to some great characters with many memorable yarns to tell which will be with me always.

His passion for Thames barges started when he was at grammar school. He would spend his weekends at Maldon or wherever the opportunity arose to crew or gain experience on one of these fine vessels. This eventually lead him to considering the possibility of owning something slightly smaller- a smack maybe? It must have been fate that a boat that almost met this description was waiting for a new owner with a dream and plenty of determination. Not a smack, but the bawley *Bona*! Stephen negotiated the purchase for a nominal sum and *Bona* was motored to a mudberth at Aldous's shipyard in Brightlingsea, which was in Stephen's words, 250 yards from where she was built in 1903. He sought the help and financial assistance of three mates, of whom I was one, and with very limited funds she was re-rigged and sailing in the Colne again. Stephen had somewhat fulfilled his dream! Of course, putting 1200 sq ft of sail on an old hull made

the dream short lived and we had to admit some serious restoration work was needed but that's another story. At this time, Stephen was assistant ed of the magazine 'Yachts and Yachting', which gave him the opportunity to write and publish an very readable account of these events. I still have a copy of this publication and look back with interest at "The Rebirth of a Bawley".

Stephen left the magazine and started work at Jim Lawrence's sail loft in James St and subsequently at Tower St, Brightlingsea where it remains today. I can still see him sitting on his long bench hand-sewing the boltrope onto a smack's mainsail.

After a few years however, Stephen and his wife Bridget left Brightlingsea and set off for the Yorkshire Dales. The dales were his other passion in life and he always vowed to return having loved the several years he spent there as a boy. He became a dealer in rare books and paintings, visiting various auctions- no Ebay in those days- taking a complete break from boats and the water. After a move to Dorset though, all that boating background would reappear when he became editor of another sailing publication- 'Traditional Boats and Tall Ships'. Through this magazine, he was able to publish superb photographs of smacks and barges and feature vessels under restoration together with some memorable articles, all of which was second nature to him. He was a gifted writer and, in his own way, fostered and promoted the working craft of this area which were very precious to him. In his writing, he was



romantic, nostalgic and sentimental, but could be very forthright if necessary. Like the tide, he left his mark on me and many others who had the pleasure of meeting him.

Our thoughts go out to his wife, Bridget, and his mother, my Aunt Dorrie.

He will be missed. -Peter Allen, former CSPA Trustee.

Ed- Apologies for not printing this in the previous issue; it didn't reach me until it was too late to include it!

Further tales of *Emma* CK369- Peter Harris

As readers of issue 59 will know, *Emma* CK369 was originally built for my great-grandfather William Abraham Harris in 1908 by Aldous of Brightlingsea. The boat then passed down to my grandfather; following the moving of my grandfather and his family at the beginning of the Second World War to Stamford, Lincolnshire, all contact with the boat has been lost.

However, last year on one of our annual visits to Tollesbury, the birth place of my late father Frederic Abraham Harris 1926-1996, my wife and my mother visited Brightlingsea and came across a notice advertising the CSPA with Jim Lawrence's name and telephone number on it. Cutting a long story short after speaking to Jim, who was extremely helpful, I was put in touch with a number of other people who attempted to assist me in my investigations. This finally culminated me writing the previously mentioned article.

I must admit I felt I had probably reached a dead end but then after the publication of the article, Janet Harker contacted me to explain that in her younger days, in the 1960's, she had sailed on this smack, now converted into a yacht, for pleasure sailing. Janet kindly sent me some black and white photographs of the boat. But more than that, she put me in touch with the last registered owners of the *Emma* that I knew of: Dennis Hill and Terry Miller.

After speaking to them both Terry has sent me some black and white photographs, and some A4 size colour photos of the *Emma*

under sail. More than that, we are hoping to meet up soon; Terry still has many more photos to show me and has already filled me in on some lovely stories concerning him sailing the boat.

As to the boat's location after he sold her around 1970, we are unsure. She was berthed at Maldon and sold through a Maldon agent (now gone) but the peculiar irony is that the boat probably went up to the North West of England, which is both my mum's and my birthplace, and where we both still live!

I suppose I will be able to get no further now in pursuing the whereabouts of the *Emma*, but it is with great thanks to all of the aforementioned people in helping me get so far. This happiness is only tinged with a great pity that my dad was not able to view these developments. For despite him living in Lancashire for nearly 50 years, he like his forefathers of the last 300 years, saw himself proudly as an Essex (Tollesbury) fisherman.

Ed: It's been really satisfying for me to have been able to help in a small way in piecing a little of this smack's history together. To me, that's what the Society is all about- preserving smacks- both the boats still remaining, and recording the history of boats, people and skills now gone. I'm glad Peter has been able to add a few more pieces to his personal puzzle!



If this reaches you in time...

**Smack Dock Working Party
1100, 16th October 2011**

We hope to paint the sheds, and have a general tidy-up and move the boats.

All welcome- the more hands, the less work! There might even be a cup of tea...



Edme, Mary Amelia and Dorana



Emma F22

The Colne Smack Preservation Society's

Annual General Meeting

Will take place on

19th November 2011

At

Brightlingsea Sailing Club

At 2.00 pm

All nominations for the Committee, and all motions from the floor, to be notified in writing to the Chairman or the Secretary by 5th November 2011.

After the meeting, Brian Percival will talk about the Colne Maritime oral history project.