



The Never Setting Sun



C.S.P.S.

# Smack Dock Soundings

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Under a threatening sky, *Maria* CK21 and *Alberta* CK318 approach the Colne Bar buoy in the 2017 Colne Match. Photo 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...**

A new year seems to be bringing changes into the smack scene. Since I last wrote, *Iris Mary* CK 105 has gone to a new home in the Plymouth area, *Alberta* has been sold to West Mersea, and *William & Emily* (aka 'Odd Times') CK212 has also changed hands and will be heading off to the South Coast, according to the grapevine. Bawley *Thistle's* new owners are going ahead well, having put her back in the water after repairing her bottom she floats once more without taking on water. It is the surprising news that Burnham Council have taken an interest in the motor smack *Vanguard* CK69 that really catches my eye though; how wonderful that a local authority appreciate their maritime heritage. Hopefully their example will inspire others to follow suit!





### From the Chair – Martin Doe

I would like to draw your attention to a few of the dates for your diary listed in the calendar on the back page.

On **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April**, we will be holding another of the popular **cheese and wine with vintage film evenings**. The venue is the Colne Yacht Club; be there 7pm for a 7.30 start. Price is £11.50 per head.

Best not drink too much wine with your cheese and films, as on **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April**, there will be a **smack dock working party**. On the agenda are a clear-up, weedkilling and tarring/painting the Smacksman's Return (this last item is of course weather permitting). There will be refreshments available for the workers all morning, so put your wellies on and lend a hand. Many of them make for light work!

The annual **Sail and Picnic** date has been set for **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July**. All those wishing to participate will need to book a berth with me (phone 01206 272000), and on the day, should wear soft shoes and bring your own picnic.

### Gypsy

Longstanding CSPS member Barry Potter's small yacht, which he successfully salvaged from Cindery Island fifty years ago, has now finally given up the ghost; after sinking in her berth, she is now laying on the foreshore at the smack dock. Sadly, this is now the end of the road for *Gypsy* as she is past repair. Anyone willing to form a work party to clear the wreck please contact Jim Lawrence (ph. 01206 304204), who will arrange a suitable day for the job. In the meantime, Barry is in good heart, and looking forward to his new venture.

### Brightlingsea's Blessing & Reclaiming of the Waters 2018 – Roger Tabor

An invitation to all smack owners/captains:

The Deputy of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea invites you & your craft to attend and take part in Brightlingsea's Blessing & Reclaiming of the Waters event, which this year will be on **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May**.



Photo by Lynn Ballard

Last year's Deputy, Peter Beadles, was delighted with how the 2017 event went, reporting back how much all of the Cinque Port mayors from Kent, local mayors from Essex and other civic dignitaries really enjoyed and appreciated this event unique to Brightlingsea. He said they all commented that it was going out onto the water on the historic wooden boats that made it so special.

The flotilla, all dressed in bunting, including Brightlingsea's Cinque Port flag, looked magnificent consisting of smacks *Pioneer* and *My Alice* with sailing barge *Edme*. The various mayors and clergy on board in their colourful robes added to the splendour. Gigs and other boats followed behind.

Last year the Bishop of Colchester, the Right Rev Roger Morris arrived on foot from St Osyth as part of a pilgrimage, and was ferried over for the event. 2017 was the last Blessing for Lord Petre, in his role as the Lord Lieutenant of Essex. He has been a great supporter of the event. 2018 will be the first for the new Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst. The new Deputy of the Cinque Port Liberty, Mike Holding, is a strong supporter of the event, having been part of the organising team for a number of years.

The event in 2018 will be slightly later due to the tide on the day (HT 4.38pmBST 4.7m). The Harbour Master has advised that *Pioneer* should



Photo by Jon Sturdy

be able to berth at the Hammerhead at half-tide, to be able to be in place by 1.15am. We are grateful for the support of the Harbour, the Pioneer Trust, the Colne Smack Preservation Society, and all the owners & individuals who take part in this great showcase of Brightlingsea's maritime heritage.

The robed procession from the centre of town will walk down to the top of the Hard where the Town Crier's address and first part of the service is scheduled to begin at 1.15pm. The procession then moves to the hammerhead and *Pioneer*, where the second part of the service will begin at 1.30pm. That is when the Bishop and other clergy sprinkle water onto the creek & boats in blessing - and sometimes onto crew!

The dressed boats will set off from the jetty for the Reclaiming of the Waters at 2.15pm heading for just off Bateman's Tower. The Reclaiming of the Waters is the procession of Brightlingsea's historic vessels along Brightlingsea Creek to the accompaniment of cheers and noise from those watching and those on board! Due to the later start a packed lunch for the guests to eat on board will be provided by the Liberty, along with the 'Gang Beer' for the traditional toast, "Gang Ho!"



Photo by Jon Sturdy

If you would like to take part in the 2018 event please contact Roger Tabor, chair of the Blessing of the Waters committee on 01206 306900, or inform the CSPA chairman, Martin Doe.

### **Vanguard CK69**

*Whilst listening to BBC Essex radio one Saturday morning recently, my editorial ears pricked up at the mention of an 'oyster smack' being returned to Burnham. It was wonderful to hear of people showing the energy to not just bemoan the demise of another boat, but to get out there and get their hands dirty and lighten their pockets to save her. Well done so far, and best of luck to the 'Vanguardians' with the project.*



*The Vanguard in her working days.*

*The following has all been culled from the internet:-*

### **Nick Skeens, Burnham and Dengie Hundred Review (5th February 2018)**

*Vanguard* is a Dunkirk Little Ship which was among three that left here on 30th May, 1940, to rescue WW2 soldiers stranded on the beaches of Dunkirk. An open boat and so lacking the protection of a deckhouse, she braved shellfire and strafing from the air, as she and her Burnham colleagues, *Ma Joie* and *Seasalter*, rescued around 600 soldiers. She is an oyster dredger, designed by Norman Dallimore in 1937 and built at Priors boatyard. Her lines are extraordinarily beautiful and she had the reputation of being a fast river boat, gliding through the water with nary a wake. I first saw her last November, in a very sorry state, at



Smallgains Yard on Canvey Island; she'd been brought to my attention by Alan Bellchambers, a local resident who had approached the Town Council with the proposal to create a memorial plaque for Burnham Little Ships. She had been set alight by vandals (happily the local fire brigade saved her from total destruction) and had been cannibalised for her slow-grown pitchpine planking, which no doubt, make excellent firewood, but really, come on, this was a Dunkirk Little Ship!



Anton Weekes, the yard owner, kindly offered to donate her to the Burnham Town Council, also offering to lift her onto any transport we could arrange for free. Fired up by this idea, I gained the support of the Council to bring her home and then set about contacting people who could help restore her. I approached a number of people at the Royal Burnham Yacht Club – Jeremy Polturak, a keen wooden boat enthusiast, the Commodore, Martin Smith, who was responsible for leading the restoration of the Royal Burnham One Design fleet, themselves also designed by Dallimore back in the '30s, and Will Dallimore, the designer's grandson. Will and Martin came on a second visit, which revealed more damage – we came away very glum, with Martin

describing her return and restoration as 'mission impossible.'

Somehow undeterred, I contacted Squirrel Marine of Maidstone who quoted a good price to move her (around £1,000) and then, via Alan, spoke to Burnham resident David Hopkins who, in an act of immense generosity, offered to pay for her move. Where to put her, how to get her off this end? I thought of John Jolly at the Mangapps Railway Museum. He said he'd be delighted to store her for a while, and co-opted Stuart Robinson of SRS Ltd to do the lifting from the transporter.



The whole operation was heart-in-the mouth. Getting her onto the transporter at Smallgains on the morning of Friday 26th January was a nail-biting affair, and transporting her through the right angles of central Canvey, complete with a police escort, were moments of trepidation and pride – how people stared.

The most moving moment was bringing her past the Burnham Town sign – I confess to tears in my eyes and a swelling sense of pride. She was home. But the real anxiety started at Mangapps. With her port gunwale cut away by vandals, she twisted and groaned, her stern sagging as Stuart Robinson, with immense care and much concern, lifted her into her new resting place. Would she snap? No, she wouldn't. Despite the damage, she survived the lift. They don't make 'em like that anymore.

To keep up to date with *Vanguard's* progress, search for 'The Vanguard: a Dunkirk Little Ship' on Facebook.



*Extracts from an article by*  
**Ellis Whitehouse, Maldon & Burnham**  
**Standard** (29th January 2018)

*Vanguard*, a 45ft flush-decked river boat, was one of the little ships which set off from the Petticrow's Steps in Burnham, joined by the larger *Seasalter*, another oyster craft, and the pleasure yacht *Ma Joie*. They arrived off the Dunkirk beaches at around 6.45pm, to find themselves the only little ships there. They were directed away from the harbour mole, which was crowded with men, towards the beaches where they began ferrying soldiers out to the larger naval boats. Under heavy fire from dive-bombers and fighters, they struggled through that perilous spring evening, weaving through the detonating fountains of water in their heroic efforts to bring as many soldiers to safety as possible. *Ma Joie* had to be abandoned on the beach with a damaged rudder. Between them they saved around 600 soldiers from the Dunkirk beaches.

...  
 Burnham Town Councillor Nick Skeens announced the news at a town council meeting on Tuesday. He said: "This is a fantastically exciting development which I'm so pleased to be sharing with council members. The *Vanguard* represents an extremely proud piece of Burnham's history which I feel has the potential to turn into a fantastic project for the town. John Jolly, owner of the railway museum, has kindly agreed to store her there for the foreseeable future, and we have a committed group of Burnham residents keen to get her restored to former glory. At the moment, she is in extremely poor condition and worth next to nothing, but I propose that we as a council take ownership of her and oversee the project to change that."

*The National Historic Ships Register's website provided a brief outline of Vanguard's history:-*

- 1937 Purpose built for dredging for Burnham Oyster Company by R. & J. Prior at Burnham
- 1940 Assisted in the Dunkirk evacuations in the Second World War
- 1945 At end of war bought by Keeble & Sons of Paglesham, Essex and work as an oyster dredger resumed
- 1962 Sold to private owner at Burnham-on-Crouch who used her for inshore fishing

1972 Sold again for work as shrimping boat on rivers Roach and Crouch based at Battlesbridge

1996 In commercial use by present owner

*And finally, the Royal Burnham YC's website has a brief mention of her on their page about the RB One-Designs and Norman Dallimore's other work:-*

... Another of his motor boats was *Vanguard*, an oyster dredger, built by R.J. Prior & Son of Burnham in 1936 [sic] for Arnold Smith who gave him the three main dimensions and just one other instruction which was that she was to have a bow like *Joyce* (Harry Covington's fine old yawl).

*An interesting insight into Vanguard's extraordinary shape!*

### Sale of *Saxonia* LO32



Due to bereavement, the *Saxonia* is being offered for sale. Currently laying at West Mersea, she has a full inventory of sails, and, with her stable shape and an engine, is an ideal bawley for chartering. Offers can be made to Ralph Spence at East Mersea 01206 385877, or Jim Lawrence 01206 304204, who are her joint guardians on behalf of the estate.



Colne Match 2017 in pictures – David Chandler



In a light breeze, *Our Boys* leads a group of smacks slowly downstream.



*Gracie*, heading for the Colne Bar, passes *Maria* and *Alberta*.



*Thallata* and *Reminder* already losing ground to *Edme* soon after the start.



*Sunbeam* rounds the Bench Head and sets off after *Our Boys*.



*My Alice* and *Maria* at close quarters as they negotiate the Colne Bar buoy.



*Gladys* and *Electron* make a fine sight as they head for the finish.



## A pub with a salty story – Peter Fisher

The Rosebud pub, facing onto Brightlingsea's Hurst Green, comprises of two end of terrace cottages knocked into one and were built on a strip of land that once formed part of Lower Barn Field. The first publican of The Rosebud was a chap called John Harris Lee, whose main occupation was 'oyster man'. In 1838 he bought the land from the late Samuel Abraham's estate, although he had been tenant on the land since 1824, using it to grow vegetables and rear chickens in order to supplement his income as a fisherman. It was in Lee's case was especially important due to the frequently lean times at sea.

Judging by its small size, it's doubtful that 66 Hurst Green was purpose built as a public house; no. 67 was added in 1962. It more probably started out as a residence for Lee which he later converted to a 'beer house'. In the olden days without proper sanitation, beer was considered to be safer than drinking unpurified water, and as a result it was common for ales and beers to be sold from a person's house. Licensing laws were not as stringent as they are today - the 'Mad Officials' of the time obviously hadn't realized how much fun they could have by restricting how and when grown people could use their relaxation time! Anyway, a map of the area dated 1841 shows only farmland to the south of Hearse Green, so it's fair to say the cottages were built after then.

Old documents found in the pub's loft indicate that the cottages appear to have been built sometime around 1842. In that year, John Harris Lee borrowed £50 from Mary Anne Warner, a rich widow who lived in Great Clacton, and it is possible that this money was used to finance the cottages' construction. The first known reference to a pub at the site came in 1844 when a further £50 was borrowed and secured against the land and 'the premises including beer house built thereon'.

In the summer of 1863, ownership of the land and premises, including the beer house and £200 debt were passed to John Harris Lee's only son William. Described as an 'Essex Oyster Smack Owner' it is clear that William Lee had followed in his father's footsteps and made a living from both the sea and beer!

Earlier in 1863, in January, a ship called the *Rosebud* was wrecked on the Barrow, one of

the many submerged sandbanks that pose a natural but deadly hazard to ships trying to find passage from the North Sea into the Thames Estuary. She was on a voyage from her home port of Arbroath in Scotland when she was swept from Barrow Deep channel during a winter storm and was sunk.

The Barrow, Gunfleet and Goodwin Sands are perhaps the most infamous of these sandbanks, and are known to Essex boatmen as the 'Burying Grounds'. These treacherous, shifting sands are a graveyard to thousands of ships lost over the centuries. The Barrow is 15 miles south-east from Brightlingsea, and at low tide lies just a few feet beneath the surface. During a storm, with a running tide, the boiling water turns white for miles and the roar of crashing waves carried by the wind can be heard on shore.

According to local newspaper reports of the time, the *Rosebud's* crew were fortunate to be rescued by the smack *Alarm* of Colchester (incidentally, the Port of Colchester is made up of Rowhedge, Wivenhoe and Brightlingsea). Thrown onto the sands, the *Rosebud's* hull was quickly broken open and she began to take on water and disintegrate. To avoid being washed away, the crew had tied themselves to the ship's rigging, waiting for the storm to blow itself out. Later, at high tide, the *Alarm* was able to get alongside and pull the exhausted men aboard, and they were brought ashore to safety at Brightlingsea. The 'Burying Grounds' are aptly named, for these hidden banks and shoals become quicksand during such storms. The *Rosebud* was quickly sucked down and swallowed whole.

One wonders if the *Alarm* was the same smack as the one owned by William Lee, and the pub was subsequently named in honour of the rescue and the unfortunate wreck.





## Events calendar 2018

Blackwater Match film night (Maldon, 7.30pm)	24 <sup>th</sup> February
<b>CSPS Wine, cheese and vintage film evening</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup> April</b>
<b>Smack Dock clear-up day</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April</b>
Brightlingsea regatta and boat show	2 <sup>nd</sup> June
Wivenhoe town regatta	16 <sup>th</sup> June
OGA Swallows & Amazons	16 <sup>th</sup> – 17 <sup>th</sup> June
Rowhedge regatta	30 <sup>th</sup> June
Pin Mill smack race	30 <sup>th</sup> June
Blackwater smack and barge match	7 <sup>th</sup> July
Heybridge Basin regatta	14 <sup>th</sup> July
OGA East Coast race	21 <sup>st</sup> July
<b>CSPS Sail &amp; Picnic</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> July</b>
Swale Match	4 <sup>th</sup> August
Whitstable	11 <sup>th</sup> August
Ipswich Maritime Festival	18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> August
Mersea Week	26 <sup>th</sup> – 31 <sup>st</sup> August
West Mersea Town regatta	1 <sup>st</sup> September
Woodbridge Maritime Festival	8 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> September
<b>CSPS Colne Match</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> September</b>
Mersea Dredging Match	16 <sup>th</sup> September
Maldon Town regatta	22 <sup>nd</sup> September
Tollesbury regatta	29 <sup>th</sup> September



*Pioneer* approaches the Bench Head buoy in last year's Colne Match – photo by David Chandler

*All dates believed to be correct at the time of going to press.*

*Please contact the Editor with any alterations/corrections.*