



The Never Setting Sun



Smack Dock Soundings

THE JOURNAL OF THE COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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*Electron, Blackbird, Odd times, Pioneer, Maria Primrose and Nelly moor for lunch at the sail and picnic
Photo: 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 C.S.P.S or its committee.

From the editor.

Summer is almost over and we have had a good year, Fly, Ellen and Charlotte Ellen are now back in commission which is great.

We have a bumper edition with a wide range of articles and even a letter to the editor.. this is starting to feel like a broad sheet rather than a newsletter.

Thanks to all who have contributed, and a kick up the bum to those who haven't.

Robin Page. 01206 304690





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Pin Mill Smack race 2009.



Smacks and yachts in well ordered chaos before the start of the race. Photo Simon Everitt (PMSC)



Ethel Alice just after the start. Photo Simon Everitt (PMSC)



Pin Mill smack race. A view from the deck of Iris Mary.

Picture this, a famous Pub, Barges on the hard, boatyards, a very welcoming sailing club. All set in a bend of the beautifully wooded river Orwell.

Where else but Pin Mill, the gem of the east coast. Add in good weather, a group of smacks and Bawleys and you have the Pin Mill Smack race.

As promised on Friday night's briefing, a light breeze came in about ten minutes before the start of the race, giving a beat to windward, aided by the tide down the Orwell to Harwich harbour where the real fun began.

Moored dredgers, light ships, many MSC container ships, tugs and pilot boats all added to the hazards.

The course followed the yacht track, but involved tacking in under the looming container ships at Felixstowe dock and out around dredgers etc over the shelf.

At this stage Ethel Alice and Primrose were fighting it out for the lead.

We on Iris Mary Bona, Mayfly and Mary were in the next bunch.

Out to Penny hole bay via Outer ridge, Stone Banks to the Medusa, all in a now foul tide.

The trick here was to tack up to the Walton shore, local knowledge and nerve paid off, some boats were almost amongst the groynes on the Walton beach, even Pioneer with a Pin Mill Family onboard looked to be beachcombing.

Mayfly made a perfectly judged tack out from the shore into third place. We had tacked too soon and Bona over-stood, allowing us to stay ahead round the mark, then came Pioneer and Mary.

A run back into the harbour on opposite gybes still meant that we were abreast of Bona at Shotley spit. Local knowledge paid off for Bona at Colliers, but Iris Mary fought back from a leeward position. Then followed a dramatic neck and neck

fight to the line, at times inches apart with bowsprits overlapping. A container ship generously held back to allow us to finish.

A fantastic days sailing.



Mary looking great, Photo Adam Kendall

Final results for the race on handicap;

- 1st Primrose
- 2nd Mayfly
- 3rd Mary
- 4th Ethel Alice
- 5th Iris Mary

Will we be back next year.... Try to stop us... Well done Pin Mill sailing club!
Tony Bret.

A big thanks to Pin Mill SC for hosting this excellent event. Ed.



Parking at the smack dock.

We have received an instruction from Brightlingsea harbour office that parking of cars and vans near the smack dock is causing some problems. The boat park is not to be used for car parking except in the following circumstances;

1. People who store boats in the dinghy park may leave their car in their own space when their boat is removed.
- It is permissible to load and unload in the shaded yellow. Cars that are in this area must be attended so that they can be moved if necessary



The Hazards of Brightlingsea Creek in the 1920s

Jane Blanchflower shares and exert from one of her favourite books. Ed.

A few months ago I acquired a small collection of early 20th century nautical books, all carefully covered in brown parcel paper by their previous owner. The books belonged to the late Eugene Prentice and were given to me by his family after his death in May, aged 91.

Eugene was both sailor and aviator, working on Thames barges as a teenager before becoming an apprentice at Rollasons, Hanworth. From here he enjoyed taking passengers on low level 'charter flights' up the Thames and over St Paul's to earn a little pocket money. Over the years it is reckoned that, apart from dinghies, Eugene owned some 20 different vessels including family cruisers, an eight-metre racing yacht and a fifty-foot motor fishing vessel the *Silver Quest* which the family lived on for three years.

During the winter months Eugene would do a bit of thinking and a bit of knitting. He would knit his own bobble hats from a knitting pattern written on the back of a cornflakes packet. With his

engineering hat on he would design things; for instance in his log book dated 1974 there is a complete dissertation for the Prentice Thames/Severn hydro-electric scheme where tidal flow would build up air pressure which could be used to drive a traditional steam generating plant. It comes complete with drawings of culverts, valves, hydraulics and air reservoirs, all as part of solving the oil shortage and the wasteful use of fossil fuels....

The book collection includes some on working vessels, cruising books by Francis B Cooke, a book on net making and a number on the maintenance of traditional craft: 'Every Man His Own Shipwright', 'Trim Little Craft' and 'Prevention of Decay of Wood in Boats'. CSPA members are welcome to borrow any of the books and, as an sample of their delights, here is an extract from 'Coastwise Cruising from Erith to Lowestoft' (published 1929) by Francis B Cooke:-

'The worst feature of Brightlingsea from the yachting point of view is the congested state of the anchorage. It is usually difficult to find a clear berth in the creek, and even when you do, you can never be sure it will remain a clear berth. If you go ashore for a few hours it is quite likely that you will return to find some dirty old smack rubbing her tarred side against your new white paint. The local fishermen, when they return to the creek after their day's work on the oyster beds, are apt to be a trifle careless in bringing up. They throw over the anchor, run out a good scope of chain and go ashore with as little delay as possible. They know their craft are not likely to suffer should they get foul of another, and they do not seem to be interested in the welfare of other people's. I have spent many a sleepless night in Brightlingsea Creek, fending off smacks, and I would sooner seek a berth in the Pyefleet, or even lie out in the Colne, should the weather be fine.

Another annoyance is the crowd of small boys at the Hard who pester the yacht owner, when he goes ashore, with "Mind your boat, sir." This is sheer blackmail, for if the owner declines to have his boat minded, he will probably find her anchored in the middle of the creek when he returns.

Speaking of the ways of the Brightlingsea smacksmen reminds me of an incident that happened years ago of which I was the victim. I had brought up in the creek early in the afternoon in my little canoe-yacht *Snipe*, and later on a



smack had come in and anchored close by. She was rather closer than I cared about, but by paying out more cable and giving my boat a sheer I contrived to keep clear of her. Early the next morning I was awakened by the sound of rippling water alongside my craft. I could hear the trampling of the smacksmen on their decks and the sound of their voices as they got underway. For a time I lay in my bunk in that pleasant condition of being neither awake asleep nor yet quite awake and too lazy to move. But that rippling noise continued, and, after considering for perhaps a quarter of an hour what the cause could be, I decided I had better get up and investigate. When I went out into the well, I found to my amazement that I was out in the Colne, apparently in tow of the smack. I hailed her and enquired where they were taking me. A man on her fore-deck looked over her bow and shouted to his mate, "Lord lumme, Bill, if we ain't got the little bwot's anchor." And sure enough they had. Leaning over the bow the man cleared my anchor from theirs and dropped it, leaving *Snipe* riding half a mile away from the entrance to the creek. They went on their way laughing. I laughed too until I remembered that we had run out of bread, and a visit to the baker was necessary before we could have any breakfast.'

Colne Race 2009 Primrose's take on it.



Primrose just after the start. Photo Don Page.

After the very high winds of the 2008 race that caused a low turnout the moderate breezes forecast for this year's race were very welcome. We had a good turnout of boats and a good turnout of cameras, I am not sure if the two are linked, but the BBC were filming for their excellent series 'Coast' and in addition there was another

camera out for a heritage film. I think that they call it the 'songs of praise effect' (there is never an empty church when they film that show, but the week before and after are not quite as popular. Anyway it all added to the excitement, a helicopter over the Clacton pier mark and all.

From the forecast it was always looking like a fast race with flat water and a breeze that was perfect in strength and direction, if a little light for the first leg out of the Colne.

The course set was the traditional one; Colne Bar, Clacton Pier, Wallet spitway, Colne Bar, Home.

The Start

We had a down wind start in a force 2 or so. The difficulty was predicting where to start that would give clear air, the East Mersea end of the line was the obvious choice as far as line bias and tide were concerned, but surely everyone would have the same idea? It appeared that they all did assuming that it would be crowded there the bulk of the fleet bunched up in the middle of the line leaving the best spot clear.

We took full advantage of this and got a good start.



The pack of boats behind us. Photo Don Page



Great conditions out there. Photo R Page.



*Onlookers at East Mersea see the fleet off.
Photo Don Page.*

The race

The next dilemma was what to fly, the rules stated that all sails must be up wind, and no balloon jibs etc are allowed, we poled out our working tow staysail and watched the boats around us set big light headsails on setting poles. In hindsight we should have done the same, but in any case we were struggling with the beautifully rebuilt Charlotte Ellen, Maria and Sallie all in a row with us, there was no way forward as the wind shadows dictated that we were together until the bar buoy. Ethel Alice made a move on the Mersea flats that paid off well.

We then rounded the bar buoy and had a long leg to the pier mark, Ethel Alice, Maria and Sallie were ahead of us and were all pinched, we could not stay up with them and decided to ease the sheets and go for more boat speed, they were pinched and all trying to out point each other. This seemed to be the best of a bad job. We had to put a short tack in for the mark and then had the long run down to the spitway. We set our biggest light weight Jib on our 18 foot setting pole and relaxed.... Time for a brew before the mark. At this point we were third, with Charlotte Ellen on our heels to keep us honest. Maria and Ethel were fighting it out for first and second. The leg to Bar buoy was a reach which tightened as to a fetch upon rounding. Charlotte was on very close all the way in the Colne, but she had to bear away sharply to avoid a sand bar off second beach which gave us enough breathing space to relax once more.

After the finish we decided that the race was over so quickly and it was such a nice day.... Let's go

sailing, so we picked up a film crew and went out to sail back in with the Barges.

The prize giving

Brightlingsea sailing club once more hosted the prize giving and meal, it was a great evening and many pints were sunk. Congratulations must go to Paul Winter (Maria) who was first boat home smashing Alberta's course record and to second placed Darren Burton, who also broke the previous course record.

We were a minute or so outside of the old record and were chuffed.

Robin Page

Letters to the editor.

This is a new feature to Smack dock soundings. The last edition prompted one email and one letter to the editor. I like this new feature as feedback is much better than silence. Provided that letters are reasonable and sensible I will happily print any received, good or bad.

Sir

I have but the most tenuous association with, and the mildest interest in the "shackleton Story", but as a result of that, your club magazine was passed to me.

So, IBTC in Lowestoft have built a replica of the James Caird. Well done, but why? The original is at Dulwich College, and is quite obviously from another era., as are the men who sailed/rowed her. Your own article makes clear that some modern materials and techniques are being incorporated, which even without the use if artists oils and seal blood, makes her a copy and not a replica.

I wish Tim Jarvis success and above all a safe return. But his voyage is a pale re-enactment not a recreation.



Will he go with the same rations, and the same equipment? Of course not. Can he have the same feeling of the unknown? In the era of internet history and Google Earth, never. Will he go without GPS and radio? I doubt he would even be allowed. Is he in debt and are we on the brink of war? Well who knows.

Can we assume his party will climb over the south Georgia Island in worn out tweeds, oilskins and hob nailed boots and arrive, for these days they certainly will arrive, exhausted, but with civility, and graciousness, and above all modesty.

Well we shall see. These adventures are for the most part undertaken for personal gain, and notoriety, about the only true and common link with Shackleton, but they are not pioneering they contribute little new and only diminish in the eyes of future generations, the achievements of the originals.

I don't say don't do it, it will be a fine adventure and I shall relish reading about it, but beg of the participants, in everything that is said and done subsequently, honour the name of the true pioneers, and acknowledge the debt we owe them.

By the way. I am not an "old fart", and know what you face Mr Jarvis. Take care!

Yours sincerely

David Monk
La Chapelle en Vercors
France

Dear Robin,

What an excellent review of the "state of the nation" you have written in Smack Dock Soundings. You have managed to be fair to all the points of view, and as you say it is an issue that will probably run and run just as it has been discussed for generations already. Incidentally this is my personal view but I have copied Paul out of courtesy.

I suspect you are right when you hint that there needs to be some special allowance made for boats that are not the norm, if that is a fair way of putting it. The fact that most boats have counters and some do not could be something that should be taken into account when things related to length are considered. I doubt the perfect set of rules or guidelines for any activity have yet been written. I am not sure what one does about an original feature on a boat which departed from the norm at that time, but there must be a way of dealing with it so as not to either open the floodgates or treat that boat unfairly.

I hope very much the use of the voluntary sign up to the SSA scheme and the general meetings it has and will continue to entail can be a means of keeping everyone as involved as they wish to be in the process. At the very least a stake has been placed in the ground.

All the best,

Richard Titchener.

Sail and Picnic 2009.

We were blessed with a good sailing day for the 2009 sail and picnic. It was fantastic, on Primrose we had a nice reach out to the bench head buoy with Blackbird and Pioneer, then sailed up the Colne a short distance before rafting up with the other boats around Pioneer which had by this time picked up her mooring.



Pioneer, Primrose and Maria enjoying the blustery conditions. Photo Valerie Waters.



Electron. Photo David Chandler
We all had a bite to eat and a drink while listening to Jimmy and Friends do their stuff... days don't get much better than this.



Here are some more photos of the day



A boatful on Primrose Photo David Chandler



A beautiful photo of Maria. Photo Valerie Waters.



The raft. Photo Valerie Waters



Some Music with lunch. Photo Valerie Waters

I understand that there were around 80 guests on the seven boats that attended. Big thanks to all who came along and in particular to the owners and skippers of the boats that attended; Electron, Blackbird, William and Emily, Pioneer, Maria, Primrose and Nelly. I am sure that next years event will be a great success.

Robin Page

Thames Oyster run 2009.



Our cargo Photo Jane Blanchflower

There has not been a smack race on the Thames since the 1970s and after some interest was expressed by smack owners Paul Winter (Maria) took it upon himself to have a go at organising an event this year, reinstating the prestigious race.

The original plan was to have 5 topmast smacks from different parts of the east coast race their local oysters to the mayor of London, Boris Johnson. The race was to be in September.

Things didn't go to plan, the weather was terrible and some boats pulled out due to the stress and strain of a very windy Swale race causing them to spring leaks.

Paul is not one to quit so he re-arranged the race for the 9th October and invited some other boats. I felt very privileged to receive an invitation for Primrose. In the new plan the 5 boats would be Maria (top mast Smack), Emeline (top mast smack), Mary Amelia (Cockler), Charlotte Ellen (Top Mast smack) and Primrose (Pole mast smack). Sadly Charlotte Ellen had to withdraw at the 11th hour, so it was down to 4 of us.

I was quite anxious about sailing up the river and asked many people about it, the more I asked the more worried I became, I had no warnings of dragons or monsters, but did get warned about almost everything else.

We on Primrose set out with Maria at 5.00am on the Thursday Morning before the race, we made very good progress, passing Southend pier at 11.00 am after just 5 hours, the wind was



favorable and forecast to be for the entire adventure. Once in the Thames the wind dropped and we took our time getting to our overnight stop at Gravesend, arriving early afternoon.

The Port of London Authority (PLA) had arranged for one of their maintenance pontoons to be cleared of boats so that we could lay alongside, protected from the worse of the washes from the numerous ships that passed. The smell was quite special, as a large buoy had been lifted from the water a day or so before and placed on the pontoon, its underside was populated by rotting muscles, Maria had arrived ahead of us and left us with the spot directly down wind of the buoy. I am sure that this was not a tactic. Unable to stand the smell and keen to get ashore I embarked on a tour of the pubs of Gravesend with Richard Titchener. After picking up the last of the crew at 9.00pm I had a restless night, waking each time a ship passed rolling Primrose.

Before breakfast my wife Line received a call, her mother who had made the journey from Copenhagen to babysit for the weekend had fallen over and broken her wrist, Line jumped in the car, off to the hospital.

Next we had a skipper's meeting, up wind from the smelly buoy, the policy was set, working sails, no running sails, and a nice genteel 'race'. Starting at 11.00am and finishing just below the Thames Barrier. The wind was from the east force 4-5 so we would gather up the above the barrier and sail in company to Tower Bridge. The PLA were not keen on us racing through or above the barrier and we were keen to respect their wishes. On Primrose we decided that if we were to have a chance of keeping up we would have to go for it and set full main, topsail. This was way too much sail for windward work, but we decided that it should be okay for a run.

As we set the topsail on the third attempt (it seems to take 4 people, 5 ropes 15 minutes and 100 swear words to get the topsail up in a blow) we realised that the wind had increased to a good 5, maybe a 6. We found that we were on the edge of control when jiggling around before the start, broaching after each gybe and struggling to bear away. Just before the start we realised that we were early for the line and just to make it more interesting there was a big ship that would be right on the line at the start, we tacked back across the front of the ship (plenty of room) and the gybed behind Maria. The start worked out well for all, we were all in a row and pointing in the same direction. Primrose was going well, none of the other boats had set topsails, we were first for a short time, but as we rounded the turns of the river the wind slowly decreased and Maria set her topsail, it didn't take long before she took us,

from that point on the race order stood. Maria, Primrose, Emeline and then Mary Amelia.



Maria at close quarters. Photo Jane Blanchflower



Maria at the Dartford QE2 Bridge. Photo Jane Blanchflower.



Maria and Emeline off Greenwich. Photo Jane Blanchflower

It was my first time in the Thames and it made an impression, believe it or not we spotted a porpoise the reaches between Gravesend and the barrier are very industrial, with wharfs jetties and cranes at every point. I imagined what it must have been like 100 years ago sailing up, with all the barges. Once through the barrier we suddenly seemed to be in the city. The buildings are so high that even though there was a very good breeze blowing up high it was a drift, punctuated by the odd gust. One of these gusts caught out my mainsheet man during a gybe, he managed to



get carried over the side by the mainsheet, he managed to hang on reporting that the water was quite warm really (teeth chattering).



Mary Amelia Photo Robin Page

Before we knew it we had passed the dome, Greenwich and all of the other points of interest on the opening titles of Eastenders and had clear view of tower bridge. We dropped the gear, started the outboard and picked up one of the holding buoys outside St Katherine's dock.



Waiting to lock in. Photo Jane Blanchflower.

After a short wait we locked in and tied up to the pontoon that was cleared ready for us. We had the VIP treatment, Oysters and good beer, even a celebrity; David Suchet was there to present the trophies.



The prize giving. Photo Robin Page

The main trophy is so valuable that Paul was only allowed to cuddle it for an hour before giving it back. Mary Amelia was awarded most traditionally rigged boat.

Unfortunately things were not good at home, Line's mother was in the operating theater, so I had to get home by train, luckily Richard Titchener seemed happy to take responsibility for getting the boat and crew back to Brightlingsea, my thanks go out to him.

Boat and crew returned to Brightlingsea at 6.00pm on the Saturday, mother in law was returned to Denmark on the Monday and another racing season is over. Now we can get some nice relaxed sailing in over the next few months before laying up.

So, what was it like? It was great fun and a great experience, I never saw the commercial vessels that head for you whatever you do, I never experienced the promised 5 knot tides. In fact I didn't find many of the things that I was warned about. If anyone asked me what to look out for I would say... porpoises, putting too much sail up, the step between the dining room and the kitchen and the mainsheet during gybes.

Thanks to Paul, the PLA, St Katherine's dock and all who made this possible.

Robin Page

Sunday 6th September 09 **Smack Dock Clean – Up**

As often happens in life, it was a chance remark made to me by Jim Lawrence that got me involved. Ha, perhaps I am giving this too much importance, Life, the Universe and er, the Smack Dock, (perspective please!). Anyway, Jim mentioned that he was trying to get people enthusiastic enough to come along and clean-up the Dock, saying how unhappy he was with its rather sorry state.

I offered to send-out e-mails to those the Society had addresses for. After fighting through the bureaucracy of the organisation, (only joking!) I wrote to everyone on the list, offering folk plenty of fun. Well, I managed to fool some of the people... for, as you can see, a few members turned-up and worked very hard. We cleared the Dock and as the picture shows, celebrated our achievements with a few cups of tea and a large quantity of biscuits (these were also promised, along with the fun).



Nikki Ennion burning rubbish. Photo Valerie Waters.
There, I bet you are sorry you missed it now. Still, I am sure next year... (I have started taking names).



Jimmy looking happy with a clean dock. photo Valerie Waters
P.S. It would be a great help if you would let Max have your em address, if either he does not have it or you have changed it. Please send to tidtug@globalnet.co.uk

Valerie Waters.

Chairman's report, October 2009.

We have now had the warm, sunny days of summer and are into the cooler and changeable autumn. However, I have been told that the herrings are in, so that those who are so inclined can go out and waste a few hours trying to get them. Well that's my general experience, but I'm sure there are others who know what they are doing and manage to catch a few.

Since the last newsletter we have had the Open Afternoon, which wasn't very well attended, so will probably be abandoned for the future. But the following day we had the Sailing Day which was successful and that is where we will be putting our future efforts. We also had the Sail and Picnic which was well attended and it was particularly

good to see Pioneer taking part for the first time. These sailing events seem to be popular with members and we will try to keep them going. They are only possible by the generosity of the owners and crews of the smacks taking part and I would like to thank them all. I would also like to thank Brian Croucher and Jim Lawrence for their help in organising these events.

The Colne Match took place in ideal conditions and the Course Record was broken by the first two smacks home and narrowly missed by the third. It was well attended and I think was enjoyed by all, and it is always good to see such a large fleet of competitors. Some of you may know that the Match was filmed by the BBC to include some of the footage in one of their Coast programmes. I understand that filming took place on Edme and a helicopter was hovering about over them on the way to the Clacton mark. However it seemed that when there was any danger of Nellie getting in on the action the helicopter buzzed off to the other side. I don't know why that could possibly be! Congratulations to all the winners, and thank you to all who took part and those who helped put on the race, particularly Brian Webb who did a sterling job as usual.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on the 28th of November in Brightlingsea Sailing Club and it would be good to see as many of you attend who can make it. It is your Society and the Committee would welcome your support and any questions or suggestions you may have. There will be a talk which has yet to be arranged afterwards, and that will be advertised on the website. The present Committee members are willing to stand again but we still have two vacancies. If any one would like to stand for the Committee please let me know. It is a rewarding job and if we want the Society to flourish, we all have to put in a little effort at some time. Formal notice of the AGM can be found elsewhere. Please don't forget the annual photograph competition to be judged at the AGM.

One small housekeeping matter, when we have working parties on the dock to have a clear up, it is difficult to know who gear belongs to and whether it is likely to be used. Would all members who have any gear on the dock please mark it with their name by painting it on or using a cable tie with a label or some other means, so that useful things are kept, but rubbish can be disposed with.

Simon Fox.



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COLNE SMACK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (*= optional information)

Name:

Address:

Postcode: Date of Birth:

Tels: Home/*Work/*Mobile/*Fax

*Email Address:Occupation:

Do you own a smack?..... Wish to / 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:SignedDate:.....

Seconder:SignedDate:.....

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 monthly Committee meeting.

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

Return this form to Amanda Stear, 42a High Street, Manningtree, Essex, CO11 2QJ

STANDING ORDER

To: (the name of your bank)..... Sort Code:.....

Bank Address:

Name of your Account: Account Number:.....

Please credit account of Colne Smack Preservation Society (Barclays Bank PLC, Brightlingsea, Essex:

A/c No. 00100498 Sort Code: 20 21 73) the sum of 10 (Ten Pounds) 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: