

Golden Chaffcutter

October 2026
Issue 166

www.bargetrust.org

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From the Helm

Mick Nolan - Chairman

I guess it always had to come. The most glorious of summers couldn't last forever.

Last weekend we de-rigged Centaur. Pudge will soon follow, and then we can look forward to countless volunteer hours providing essential TLC to all their parts, ready to do it all again next year.

We have had a great season. We've taken hundreds of people sailing throughout Kent, Essex, Suffolk and London. New friendships have been made, old friendships reignited, tales told, songs sung and much laughter shared.

Thank you, everyone, for your incredibly valued support. To all the volunteers who make it all possible; to those who come sailing and make it all worthwhile; to the crews for keeping everything on board in order; to all the committee members and Trustees who work tirelessly behind the scenes, making sure we are functioning effectively and ensuring we have a bright future; and to all of you, our members, for your support, care and contributions.

Things are moving along with our Centaur Heritage Lottery bid. It is such a huge piece of work, and we are blessed to have a hard-working team of good people behind it. There is a mountain to climb, but we are jumping through all the hoops and will continue to do so.

There is always room for more active people. If you would like to be part of this great team and are good with a bit of admin or letter writing, please get in touch. We would love to hear from you.

Sailorman is back on the quay. She has been fully repaired below the waterline, which will give her a much-needed new lease of life. The Thursday gang are currently adding the finishing touches to make her look smart again.

We have had a couple of significant bereavements in the barging community recently.

Richard Walsh was a strong supporter of the Society for Sailing Barge Research for many years. Richard was Vice President of the SSBR and produced the much-loved Topsail magazine, along with countless other publications. His contribution to the sailing barge world was considerable, and he will be greatly missed.

We also lost former Barge Master for the Trust, and owner of Betula, Eddie Smith. Eddie was a young lad in trade, and I can recall many hilarious stories he shared of his time afloat. Eddie was one of our longest-standing members and a great supporter of the Trust.

As a timber merchant, Eddie played no small part in sourcing timber for both Centaur and Pudge's recent works, which has certainly helped to keep them going. Both Eddie and Richard will be missed by many.

We will soon be adding our first batch of 2027 trips to the website. Do book early and take advantage of being an early bird.

For those of you thinking about a charter next year, if you contact Carey at bookings@bargetrust.org before Christmas, you can secure your charter trip at the 2026 rates.

And don't be a stranger over the winter. Come along to some of the events advertised in this edition, or come on down to the barges to join a work party, or just pop in for a cup of tea and a catch-up.

If the kettle isn't already on, you know what to do...

Change of Design for Golden Chaffcutter

Welcome to the new design of the Golden Chaffcutter. I have been producing the newsletter since October 2011 and have used Microsoft Publisher as the template. This software is now being discontinued and I have had to find an alternative way to produce the newsletter. I hope that you enjoy the new design

Dates for your Diary

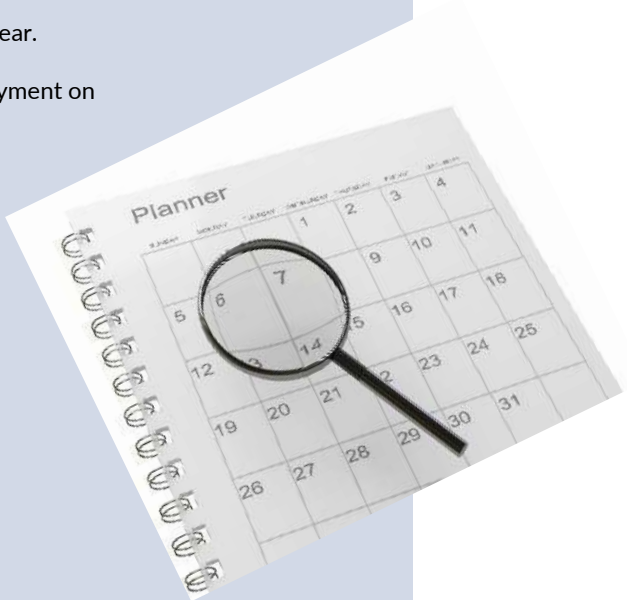
Working Parties

The Thursday Group are continuing to work throughout the year.

Anyone interested in getting involved please contact John Rayment on 07587 141054. No specific skills needed.

Centaur Weekend Working Party

Winter Working Parties on Centaur. Initial dates for are:
October 10th &11th, 24th & 25th
November 7th & 8th, 21st & 22nd December 5th & 6th



Events

Laying Up Supper -
31st October
Maldon Little Ship Club
18:30 for 19:30

ADVANCE NOTICE
2027
3rd Maldon Shanty Festival
5th June 2027
Hythe Quay, Maldon

How to Come Last in Style

There are certain events and occasions which deserve recording for posterity and the voyage of Pudge to the Colne barge match is one of them. Let us start with the cast list, beginning with Pudge, a portly, luxurious and seriously overweight example of what anyone in their right mind would enter for a race. Next, the crew, starting of course with the skipper...a man of understated demeanor who nevertheless exudes from every pore such devastating authority that the slightest flick of a finger reduced all of us to unquestioning and instant obedience; the mate, a charming example of demonic energy when roused and a great taste in beer; and the third hand, a combination of such style and youthfulness that she single handedly reduced the average age of the occupants to slightly less than the age of the boat....1922,for those not in the know.

The passengers are next, a motley bunch pressganged from the old and infirm with the occasional youngster, hence the title of this piece. I have very slightly disguised the details but in essence the list managed to contain a Cape Horn veteran (in nappies, I hasten to add, so she had no choice in such a suicidal event), a master baker from the Savoy, a chanteuse of distinction, garrulous opinionated upstarts like the author of this piece, people who had been misguided enough to travel from some little heard part of Europe and an apparent canal builder etc. etc., but none of them dull!

We started in fine style by listening dumb struck to the skipper announcing a 4am start...does sentient life actually exist at that ungodly hour...but bravely arose, made gallons of tea and set off into a stiff breeze and the first rain on the East coast for the last century. Sailing, eh!! At this point we invented the competitive breakfast, where any departure from culinary excellence was met with a charming mixture of scorn and derision. You get the picture.. no quarter asked or given!

Arrival in Brightlingsea was the occasion for a line squall, one of those weather events that dismast you and reduce everyone to a quivering wreck, including the boat...but the skipper, clearly auditioning rather late for a role in the Odyssey, did the Greek Stoic bit and anchored up without raising his heartbeat above comatose.

Now, lurking alongside us was the competition, lean, wolflike barges bristling with bowsprits (we, of course, deigned to do without such things) and a superfluity of sails and to add insult to injury, crews with monogrammed gear. What. Presumptuous show offs, in my opinion.

That evening really brought the qualities of the group to the fore, as given that we were anchored close to Farage territory a competitive debate from an obvious collection of Guardian readers led set the saloon alight with inflammatory liberalness.. a sight to behold and I am sure the barge Trust has apolitical vetting tool that is surreptitiously deployed. The next trip will be exclusively Daily Telegraph, so watch this space.



The race I hear you say.. get down to the meat of the matter. Well, as we waddled up to the start line with our near 100 tons displacement the monogrammed wolf barges shot past and disappeared, leaving us to get on with life in our own sweet way, even to the point where the race officials said the race was probably over but as we were nowhere to be seen perhaps we would like to relax. Oh no, said the skipper, so our morbidly obese craft lurched across the line several hours later with two fingers to the monogrammed wolf boats.

On to the presentation, where all the cups bar one were hoovered up by the monogrammed yuppies.. boo, hiss.. until one cup was left, for the boat that had apparently rounded the last race marker with style.. us, if you hadn't guessed. We greeted

this with a raucous performance and more drinks, and as an afterthought felt grateful to the race organisers for finding a form of words that didn't include last!!!

With somewhat sore heads next day was spent weaving our way back to Maldon, and I say weaving as we all had a go on the wheel, testing our skipper's inexhaustible patience but not a sign did he show. What a man, but one final shot in his locker was reserved for mooring up. Deliberately choosing only 6 inches under the keel he executed a handbrake turn in front of the Queens Head waterside spectators and brought us up to Centaur to moor without breaking sweat.

Never ever has such an outrageously good time been had and it says a lot for the quality of skipper and crew, including guest skipper and crew on race day, that they coped with our noisy, garrulous geriatric extravagance with such good grace. What they thought in their quieter moments might well be material for another contribution. Great stuff, guys!!!

Joe Dowdall

Pudge Update

As I write, Pudge has one last trip to make this season. She is off to Harwich for the Harwich International Shanty Festival.
It's a fantastic weekend for anyone who likes shanties and a good sing-along, washed down with a pint or two.

It's another sold-out trip, which not only provides much-needed extra bunks for the weekend, but also a great opportunity to promote the Trust and the work we do.

Pudge has been at sea for 74 days this summer.

We've seen an interesting change this year, with our public sails outnumbering the charter trips. We had a great article published in The Guardian in August, which brought in a rake of bookings. In fact, we sold out all our remaining trips on the back of it.

Our thoughts now turn to laying up and the winter maintenance. It's currently early October; it's 21 degrees and the sun is shining. It feels more like rigging-out weather than laying-up weather, but lay-up we must.
One of the good things about the winter maintenance work parties is that they provide an opportunity to catch up with friends, old and new. We have a strong sense of community at the Trust, and all are welcome to come along and be part of the team.

There are always plenty of jobs to do, large and small. You don't need any particular skills; you may even learn some new ones along the way.

It's not all work, though. There will be plenty of tea and cake, all washed down with a quart pot full of laughter.

We have good accommodation on board if you want to stay over and make a weekend of it. We'll have a communal meal on the Saturday evening, and we'll also refloat the popular "Barge School", where you can learn about all things barging and sailing.

Our working weekend dates are on the website, so do come along, be part of the fun and do some good for the barges, which all helps to keep them sailing.

Mick Nolan



Pudge in the Colne Match
Picture by Tim Bees



A group of Carers from Carers First enjoying an on-the-tide sail on Pudge sponsored by Maldon Mud Race

"We had a great article published in The Guardian in August, which brought in a rake of bookings. In fact, we sold out all our remaining trips on the back of it."



Trust stand at Maldon's U-Fest in August

Centaur Update

Sailorman returned to the Hythe in mid-August following the major hull repairs which has made life much easier, no more walking or driving up to Fullbridge when we need tools or materials. We noticed that there was a build-up of water in the fore peak which was coming from an area of new plating. The yard came along and rewelded a seam which cured the leak, luckily it could be accessed easily at low water without moving the lighter back into the dock. Whilst working on the lighter we noticed that there was already a build-up of 18 inches of mud alongside the quay wall. The river has a lot of silt in suspension, when the dry dock at Fullbridge is drained down the amount of silt left in the bottom is considerable and has to be washed out with a 2-inch hose.

Inside the lighter we have had a good tidy up and disposed of some unwanted items which has made a bit more room. Before the winter sets in, the deck will get a coat of high-performance paint after de-rusting.

Work is progressing on the rebuild of Pudge's 10-foot dinghy which had been left dismantled for some years under the cover on the lighter. New timber has been steam bent round the gunwale and the thwart and various knees have been fitted after cleaning and painting the inside, the outside is currently getting a coat of paint and it is now looking quite smart. Centaur's boat has also had a coat of paint on the inside and a coat of sadolin on the woodwork.

It was sad to hear of the passing of Eddie Smith recently, he worked with John Prime, skipper Tommy Baker and John Pitt when Centaur was converted from a trading barge to passenger carrying work in the mid nineteen sixties. The ex-Goldsmith's steel sailing barge Scotia was their workshop alongside the Hythe; she is now abandoned over in the back channel not far from the Hythe. There is a picture of a young Eddie and Tommy Baker aboard Centaur on page 49 in David Wood's Centaur Centenary book published in her centenary year.



The deck leaks following the extremely hot weather during the summer which have shown up in the recent rain, are largely sorted out now, the cabin top over the skipper's cabin had a surprising number of drips where some of the original Arbokol seam caulking had given up after 39 years.

We had a couple of open days recently on Centaur. On August 20th we had an open day for children and their parents and had various activities for them to do, it was a busy day enjoyed by all. The next open day was during the regatta, the shop was manned on the Hythe, we put the display boards out on the hatch top and there was tea and cakes down below in the saloon, it was a hectic day and blessed with good weather and I think we were all glad to close up and go home for a rest.

Winter working weekends start on October 11th/12th. If the weather is suitable I would like to unrig Centaur. Pudge will be down at Harwich over that weekend again depending on the weather and will be unrigged later on. With our natural fibre ropes we have to be careful that they are dry before stowing them away for the winter or they will just rot so we need to have fine weather for unrigging.

We are getting new shore mooring ropes for both barges to use for the summer, the ones that we have been using for the last 10 years or so are showing signs of their age. They will be used during the winter, as they tend to get very fouled up with weed and mud where they dip into the water and then make a lot of mess on the barge in the early part of the season until they clean up. They are also a bit bigger than intended and will be replaced by slightly smaller rope.

A bit of local barge history berthed at the Hythe yesterday when the sailing barge Dawn moored up alongside. As is well known she is the only survivor of three that were built by Walter Cook at Maldon. She is flying the bob of Francis and Gilders of Colchester and with the George Smeed and Centaur worked for them for a number of years often running up to Marriages mill at East Mills. This required lowering the gear down flat to get under the Hythe bridge and East bridge at the mill which, sounds like a lot of very hard work when you realise that the gear had to be hove up to get the cargo out and then lowered away for the bridges again.

Tim Jepson

Recently found image of Centaur heaving up alongside a motor barge coming out of the Medway

Barge Sails In

Following some work on the Trust's archive, I found this article from the Eastern Daily Press, about a visit by Pudge to Norwich. Searching past copies of the TBSC Bulletins, the following report appeared.

During the first weekend in August 1985, Geoff Harris took Pudge on a passage to Norwich on a 14-day charter organised by the Society for Sailing Barge Research. She spent two days windbound in the Orwell, then made the passage to Yarmouth through Breydon Water, up the river Yare, lowering her gear right down on deck to get through bridges, and finally to the Town Quay at Norwich where she had the Saturday open to the public.

A second crew took over for the trip back to Maldon but she again was dogged by bad weather with more SW to gale force winds. She had a long hard thrash going south which was even worse after rounding Orford Ness when she had to turn directly into the fresh to strong southwest winds. By Thursday night she was in the Deben although due in Maldon Friday afternoon. Geoff telephoned so we were able to change the next charter party at Waldingfield on the Friday evening. Due to the time of the tide for getting out over the Deben Bar she was once again unable to make it back to Maldon by Sunday, so the next party, which was a seven-day charter was changed at Ipswich Dock.

During that week she developed a fault in her engine cooling water circulation pump which put her engine out of action, and with yet another gale forecast, this time southerly, Geoff discharged the party on Pin Mill hard, as Pudge had no further commitments for the next five days.

Wouldn't it be great if we could travel beyond Lowestoft these days. The last barge in Norwich was Cambria in 2014

Editor



Barge sails in

THE THAMES barge Pudge (right) which is owned by the Thames Barge Sailing Club, is in Norwich this week after sailing from Maldon, Essex, giving club members a taste of sea sailing.

Our picture (below) shows the skipper Geoff Harris (right) his "mate" Doug Nicholls (centre) and a club member Kevin Holland, operating a windlass on the bow of the vessel.

Clothing - Purchases now available on Trust Website

The Trust has for many years sold its clothing stock through a third party or from the 'slop chests' on the barges or from our pop-up shop.

However following a few issues with the third party, we have decided to add our clothing stock to our website.

If you would like to check out the items, especially with Christmas not being too far away, then please visit our website and view the Shop.

Clothing items for sale include: Fleeces, Rugby Shirts, Polo Shirts, Sweat Shirts and Hats.

Shop sales aid the Trust's income and enable us to continue to maintain the barges.

So, visit www.bargetrust.org/shop

Barging to Burnham

On Saturday, 22nd August, a little bit of East Coast history was made when five barges took part in a new iteration of the Passage Barge Match. Originally started in 1979 as the Blue Circle Challenge Match, various barges would meet each year to race from Gravesend to Pin Mill. This race has not taken place for a few years, and many had begun to wonder if it would ever return.

Fortunately, some sailors in Burham-on-Crouch decided that it would be great to bring more barges to this iconic sailing town. The race was organised by Burnham Wharf Heritage, with the participating barges coming from both directions. The Pudge, Edme and Ironsides came from the Essex side, while Edith May and Lady Daphne came up from Kent. It was commented on multiple times that this was perhaps the greatest concentration of barges seen on the River Crouch for many decades, and was exactly the ambition of the organisers, who hoped to put the River Crouch firmly back in the bargeman's map!

It has already been said how this summer has stood out among many; consistent sun, clear skies, and good breezes have allowed for remarkable sailing. Our first day, Saturday 22nd August, was no exception. We awoke to a light Northerly wind – perfect for sailing off the Quay. On a personal note, having been obsessed with barges since my early teenage years, this was a significant 'bucket list' moment. Our graceful departure from Hythe Quay, expertly executed by skipper Mick Nolan, was set to an exquisite sunrise. It is very fortunate that James Crisp was present to capture this moment, and his artistic result is shown below.

Another advantage to a North-Nor-Westerly breeze is it allows for easy passage to Burnham. A beam-reach out of the Blackwater made great use of the large, green-striped staysail, a hand-me-down from the Marjorie. A gybe round the Whitaker then gave us a good heading along the Buxey and Ray Sands and into the inner-Crouch.

This was only my second passage down this river, and two things struck me. Firstly, the allusive nature of the sand banks, particularly the one that lies between Whitaker Channel and the Crouch – easy to mis-interpret the buoyage there! Secondly, the length of the outer-Crouch. It is unlike many rivers on the Thames Estuary as it really takes a long time for anything of interest to appear on the shore. In fact, it is only really when you arrive into Burnham that you get to sense any sign of life!

It was on this long stretch that everyone could relax. The weather was hot and sunny; the breeze was moderate and all onboard could take stock of how peaceful it is to be sailing a beautiful historic craft in the waters it was built for. As we entered the inner-Crouch we passed the Ironsides, who was tacking down river to meet some of us while we ran up. She is no stranger to this river, with the Skipper/Owner, Toby Lester, basing her at North Fambridge for many years.

As we began our final approach to Burnham, the wind started to die away. This did mean we had to keep our wits about us; we were close hauled, nearing the yacht moorings opposite the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club and the channel did not seem much more than a barge-length in width. The exceptional weather of the summer decided that this was the time to prove it was truly one-of-a-kind. I have never experienced such a well-timed repetition of the wind being becalmed, giving a small gust which perfectly carried us beyond our next obstacle, then duly dying away. This sequence of events carried us until we anchored under sail, in company with Edme who had arrived an hour or so earlier.

Following some well-earned rest and a hearty dinner courtesy of the Queen's Head, we took the barge boat to the reception at Burnham Yacht Club. The atmosphere was wonderful – a shanty band serenaded the generous gathering of locals and crews. You could really sense the excitement in the air at seeing so many barges in Burnham, and this was more directly expressed by the offer of free beer to all the crew! The buzz was truly memorable, and it was refreshing to be assembled with a group of people passionate about East Coast Sail who were all satisfied having done something new.

The next day we awoke to very light airs. The Edme and Edith May had been keener and set off while there was slightly more breeze, successfully getting to the cleaner air beyond the inner Crouch. For us and Lady Daphne, yet to get underway, this breeze had become barely enough to make way. This did not dissuade us, and we engaged in an informal race getting away under sail. We set our green-striped staysail and Lady Daphne, who has proved to be a dark-horse in races this year, put on an impressive show setting almost all the canvas they had to hand. Sadly, both barges realised that, to make any meaningful progress, they would have to motor out to where the other barges were. However, it is worth noting Pudge was a few barge-lengths ahead when this happened…

Once again, the breeze was ideal. Only two tacks were needed to get out to the Whitaker and then, before we knew it, we were closing in on Osea. The now Easterly breeze was ideal for sailing onto the Quay, and it was inspiring watching Mick crawl his way up past Heybridge at the soonest possible state of tide.

What made this trip special was, as is normally the case, the guests we were hosting onboard. Many of them were keen sailors, and those who weren't were still very ready to throw themselves in. Be it hauling on halyards, trimming staysail sheets, or winding in the anchor, their willingness to get involved meant the crew had very little to do! It really showed me that one of the great assets of the TSBT is exposing people, in a practical way, to sailing on a craft they would otherwise never get to do so. The effect this has is fundamental to the success of the trip as the group on board, crew and guests alike, bond as a single team.

As I continue to grow within the training programme, I cannot wait to teach new people why barges are the most magical craft ever developed. My first season with the Trust has produced many magical memories, and our weekend to Burnham will stand out for many years to come.

Charles Frances - Trainee



Pudge leaving Maldon under full sail
Picture courtesy of James Crisp

Events

The Trust has now completed its events for 2026 and we are pleased to say that they have all been well supported by the public and of course the volunteers who have made sure that each one has been a success.

At the start of the season we hope that the public will come along and learn about our two historic barges and enjoy their visit.

With Pudge out and about on sailing trips and charters, Centaur has been the barge most people have visited and she has hosted most of the events.

The Children's Days have again been very popular and we had two general activity days and one art day and a storytelling day. We opened for the May Day Bank Holiday along with the Maldon Mud Race. The Maldon Regatta Open Day proved a big success financially as we sold refreshments on Centaur and had the shop open selling our normal sales plus secondhand books and pictures.

The Trust in association with Mains'l Haul held the second Maldon Shanty Festival. This was a bigger event than the previous year, and plans are in place for it to be even bigger in 2027.

We had a great day at the Hatfield Peverel Party in the Park, with many families coming and talking to us about what we do.

Maldon District Council have for a number of years held the U-Fest. A day for families to learn about what is available in Maldon. The Trust for the first time had an activity stand for children and on a very hot August Day we were able to get children to undertake a number of activities and talk to their parents about what the Trust does.

None of the above would take place without the support of our volunteers and we are truly thankful for everyone who gives their time for these events.

We already have plans for events next year and these will be published in the newsletter during 2027.

Trustees

"What made this trip special was, as is normally the case, the guests we were hosting onboard."



Barges moored off Burnham on Crouch with Pudge on the right
Picture courtesy of David Purkiss



Maldon Regatta Open Day

100 Clubs

Here are the results for the September/October draws:
PUDGE
1st. John Howard
2nd. Peter Holmes
3rd. John Howard

For Pudge 100 Club members, it is now time to renew for the year 2026/27. So, by the time you read this I will have sent out new application forms. Anyone else who would like to join, you are welcome to do so now. Just contact me, details below.

CENTAUR 100 CLUB
There are still some Centaur shares available. If you 'haven't got round to it' yet but have been meaning to, brief details are as follows:
1. Shares are £12 each. You can make a one-off payment for each share that you wish to purchase.
2. If you are going to support by purchasing several shares you may set up a standing order with your bank for £1 per share per month. i.e. for £5 shares it will be £5 per month.
3. We prefer payment by BACs please for accounting purposes, but cheques are acceptable.
4. Payment details: Thames Sailing Barge Trust HSBC - Account No. 61180789 - Sort Code: 40-01-04
Reference: YOURNAMECENTAUR

Cheques should be made payable to THAMES SAILING BARGE TRUST. I can be contacted at p.p.boss@btinternet.com or 01621 851147 for more details. 24 Church Street, Maldon, Essex CM9 5HP.

CENTAUR
1st. Dave Wallder
2nd. Dave Hunt
3rd. Marie Woodman

Well done all.

The Centaur 100 Club started on a different date, so no action is needed from members at this time.
Hope some of you have managed a sail this year. If not there's next year to look forward to!

Pat Boss

Membership Matters

If you have any questions about membership, please contact the membership secretary, Gerald Moore at 20 Church End, Panfield, Essex CM7 5AJ
Tel: 07720 402298 or at:
membership@bargetrust.org.

Membership rates as from 1st January 2026:
Full Member: £37.50 pa
Pre April 2018 Concession: £30pa
Joint Membership £55 pa
Joint Concession £45 pa
Corporate Membership £360 pa
Life Membership £600 (Concession [65+] £400)
Joint Life Membership £900 (Concession [65+] £600)

We welcome the following new members
Nick Avery – Colchester
Alan Reed - Colchester
Heath Brand - Maldon
Phil & Jo Wilson – West Byfleet
Philip Waring - Harleston
Peter Snowden - London
Pamela & Malcolm Parsons - Potters Bar
Deborah Power – Finchley
Peter & Michelle Collings – Maldon
Susan Ware – Chelmsford
Graham Jenkins – Gt. Dunmow
Susan & Malcom Peake – Waterlooville
Anne Marie Garner & Partner – Stowmarket

Gerald Moore

Obituaries – provided by Terry O'Sullivan

Eddie Smith

The Trust are very sad to pass on the news of the death of Eddie Smith. Eddie was a well-known, larger than life character in the Barge fraternity, and long-time supporter of the Barge Club/Trust.

Eddie's early experiences of barges was in the early nineteen sixties. He joined the club and sailed on "Asphodel" and "Westmoreland" with skippers Chris Dickenson, Harold Farrington-House, and Vic Wadhams.

In early 1966 Eddie moved from London to Maldon and became embroiled with the Barges there. John Prime was in the process of fitting out Centaur for chartering, and enlisted Eddies help. In fact, most of the tongue and grooved paneling still existing in Centaur was installed by Eddie & John. The rigging out was overseen by Skipper Tommy Baker and when finished for the 1966 sailing season he was skipper, with Eddie as mate every weekend. the next few years, he shared the mate's job with Peter Little and John Prime. In 1969 Tommy Baker managed to get a promotional job for "Centaur" with Bells Whisky for a couple of years. This took Centaur west and back. Again, Eddie shared the mate's job with Peter Little, each doing an outward or homeward leg. Eddie always said he learnt most about barging from when mate with Tommy and orders were usually by signals between them! In 1970/71 they raced Centaur with some success.

Tommy Baker retired in 1972, and Centaur was laid up at Pin Mill. Eddie went with Bob Wells in "May", and then decided to go back to, as he put it, "office pen pushing". Then he spent a couple of years in the far east.

When he returned, Eddie got to working on smacks and even a motor launch. Eddie also became involved in the "Association of Bargemen" (AOB) which was formed to give the barge crews a voice in looming bureaucracy. The barge owners had also formed the "Sailing Barge Association" (SBA). Eddie rose to be AOB Vice Chairman, and was a long-standing member of the joint Exemption Panel (AOB & SBA) who dealt with the Marine and Coastguard Agency (MCA), regarding any matters that may affect us sailing Barges.

Over the years Eddie and his wife Debbie have attended the AOB annual Bun fight, and AGM's.

Eddie surprised us all by purchasing a Dutch barge and removing the counter stern and fitted a transom stern, and lee boards. Then rigging her, "Betula", out as a Spritsail barge.

Eddie rejoined the TBSC in 1988 and for a time offered his services to the Barge Club/Trust as mate to get back into the swing of barging and this was much appreciated.

However, the crew were sometimes surprised when their well-spoken mate's speech became quite colourful if things didn't go according to plan. Once alongside all was sweetness and light again.

Eddie entered Betula in the barge matches staysail class, so she raced with Centaur and Pudge, which added to the number of entrants, which could be small at some matches. Gordon Wright was often Eddie's Skipper on the matches.

In recent years Betula has been lain up at Pin Mill, Colchester, and Maylandsea. Whilst Betula was at Colchester, Pudge broke the port leeboard, and Eddie generously loaned us Betula's, until we had a replacement made.

Eddie has for some time, run his own timber supply business which took him worldwide, but mostly to Europe. In recent times this helped the Trust, as Eddie was able to source all the Oak and Iroko required for Kevin Finch to complete the recent restoration of Pudge.

Eddie certainly enjoyed his Barging. He was a good friend to the Trust and the barging fraternity. We will all miss him.



Eddie Smith
By Martin Phillips

Richard Walsh

We are saddened to hear Richard Walsh has passed away.

Richard became interested in Thames sailing barges in the early 1960's. Whilst dinghy sailing in the Blackwater, he saw Marjorie sail by and was bitten. Soon after he visited Heybridge Basin where he found they were selling off their lighter fleet of cut down sailing barges. So, Richard bought the hull of Kathleen for £500 in April 1965. He then, with help from Fred Cooper, sought out all the parts needed, and rerigged her. Then Richard sailed her for 10 years before selling her to a Dutch owner. Richard documented this in detail in his book "Kathleen".

Not content with resurrecting one barge, Richard later took on the Steel Barge Wyvenhoe, which sailed into the millennium and is now sailing with Jim Dines from Maldon.

Although a member of the Trust, Richard has for many years been a keystone in the Society for Sailing Barge Research (SSBR). He has held several different posts on their committee, becoming Chairman in 2015-18 and was a current vice chairman.

He helped many people get their articles or books published, including the Trust's book, "PUDGE... A Survivor". Many interesting books have been published via his Chaffcutter brand.

He was a contacts person, always ready to have a chat about all things maritime, and if he could not answer your question he knew someone who could.

He served on the Sailing Barge Masters Qualification for thirty years and for years chaired the Thames Barge Match Committee.

In recent years Richard helped in the enlarging and set-up of the present SSBR's extensive archives. Richard did all these things despite several injuries and ailments, and caring for his wife. He was highly committed to the aims of the SSBR, and he will be a hard act to follow.



Richard Walsh at the wheel of Wyvenhoe
Courtesy of SSBR

Saltmarsh Coast Walking Festival

The Trust was pleased to host a group of walkers taking part in The Saltmarsh Coast Walking Festival a 10-day celebration of stunning coastline, peaceful estuaries and charming countryside paths — with guided walks during the festival led by knowledgeable local experts.
From sweeping salt flats and vibrant birdlife to hidden village trails and big-sky views, there's something for every pace and passion.

The Trust arranged a ploughman's lunch for the walkers undertaking a maritime heritage walk, on the 3rd October, around Maldon, taking in the Custom House to the barge graveyard.



Enjoy an evening aboard Pudge and Centaur for the Maldon Fireworks on Saturday 7th November from 6:00pm. Sausages and Mash dinner. Bring own drinks. Price £10 per person.
Contact Mick Nolan at chairman@bargetrust.org to book your place

Golden Chaffcutter

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Newsletter produced and edited by John Rayment. Your comments are welcomed about the content. Email the Editor at editor@bargetrust.org

Articles for the next issue should be sent to John Rayment at editor@bargetrust.org by the 30th November 2026



Pudge sailing off the Quay at Maldon - Skipper Mick Nolan
Picture courtesy of James Crisp

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