



BASINGSTOKE MODEL BOAT CLUB

Newsletter

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Would you believe it, it only seemed like yesterday when June was here and I was earnestly working away on the Newsletter before I went on my holidays and here we are again and it is September. Where oh where have those months gone !

I have not been down to the pond as often as I would have liked, both Wednesday and Sundays, due to various holidays (we are retired you know) and works we have been carrying out on the house. However when I have been down there are a lot of new faces around and I find this very pleasing as it shows we are a Club that seeks to be friendly and welcomes one and all to our super venue.

In the last issue I told you what a good year it had been for recruiting new members and at that time we had gained 5 new members. Well, that trend has continued, another 7 members this time around so we must formally welcome to our midst Reg Rees, Mike Hoare, Ken Stevens, Dave Paget, Graeme Daborn, Derek Swatton and especially Jacob Halloway our first Junior member (he is the son of Ian Halloway). Again I have sent a letter of thanks to them all for joining us hopefully giving them a warm welcome. We hope to see them in continued attendance at the pond on either our Wednesday or Sunday sailings.

Of course this influx of new members must be measured against the members who we seem to have 'lost' this past year. I say 'lost' because, despite my continued requests for membership subscriptions to be paid and we are now in September after all, only one person has told me that he is not going to renew his membership. This member is Len Pomfret who has been a member for many years but is now moving down to Weymouth. On behalf of the Club I thanked him for his support in the past and wished him all the best in his

move. For all the others who didn't respond I gave them the opportunity to either email me or phone me to let me know what their intentions were but again I have heard nothing from them so I must deduce from this that they do not want to remain members of the Club.

Annual Membership fees Due for year 2014/2015

Our Club membership 'on the books' had risen to 55 but will now be reduced by those members who are not renewing so that means our present membership stands at 46. If any paid up members know of 'members' who have not paid but still wish to remain members there is still time to get them to hand their membership fee money over to either myself or our Chairman, Jack Sharp.

To those that are fully paid up, we hope that you will continue to support the club in what remains of the year ahead enjoying the benefits of a friendly and expanding membership, complimentary Public Indemnity Insurance and use of the best model boat pond in the area !

New members are most welcome – if you have a friend that may be interested in model boating or joining the club then please let them know all about us, or tell them to have a look at our website to see for themselves - www.basingstokembc.co.uk

News:

BBC Radio Berkshire

Those members who have email addresses will have already heard the saga about the outside broadcast that BBC Radio wanted to set up with the Basingstoke Model Boat Club at Eastrop Park. They first contacted me whilst I was away on holiday in France earlier in the year and a succession of emails followed. Between us we finally established a common date when this would take place and I let as many members know as possible only to be told the night before the due event that the outside broadcast unit had developed a fault and they had to cancel and that we would have to agree an alternative date. Boy was I annoyed ! This was to be an early morning broadcast and I must apologise once again to Mike Hoare who did turn up at 08.00 hours to find that he was the only one there at the pond (he hadn't opened his latest emails) but I did arrive at 09.00 hours to keep him company. I am still in discussion with BBC Radio to find a common date in the future but that will be sometime after I return from my holidays. Yes, that is correct I am going on holiday again !!

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

In the last Newsletter I told you of our new Council "Community Development Officer – Green Spaces", Sarah Moore.

I have had another meeting with Sarah and a long exchange of emails. From the first meeting Sarah kindly provided me with a copy of the 'notes / minutes' that she took for my observations and corrections. We discussed numerous items such as the environment, pond maintenance, parking, facilities at the pond side, support from the BDBC in publicity, tree maintenance etc. It is very apparent that both Sarah and the Council are pro our activities and see us as a welcome addition to Eastrop Park.

One thing we have discussed at length is the car parking on a Wednesday or should I say lack of it. We now have evidence that the car park is being used by commuters who are queuing at the entrance at 08.00 hours and leave their cars parked all day. It was suggested by Sarah that we could possibly have bays reserved for us by having signs installed but we

as a Club would have to contribute to the cost of signage. Another suggestion was possibly parking charges but I have said we would be totally against any charging and would rather drop our 'complaints' than have that imposed on the genuine users of Eastrop Park. However, Councillors are opposed to charging for parking too which is, in a way, a good thing. Apparently keeping the gate locked until 10.00 hours is being opposed by local users who park there to take their dogs for a walk – sorry, I thought the idea of taking your dog for a walk was exactly that, i.e. walking – not taking it for a drive in the car !!

The Council staff have now cleaned the Eastrop Car Park sign which shows the conditions of use, so that may now make irresponsible parkers think twice (maybe not) and Sarah has also suggested in writing that, if there was ever a return to the thought of charging for parking, we as a Club would be provided with parking passes.

Again I look forward to continuing to work with Basingstoke and Deane Council and in particular Sarah Moore. We have after all, this fantastic facility of a model boat pond to be proud of for both our and the public's use and we must ensure we continue to have the Council on our side. We have always had praise from the Council for our hobby so let us keep it that way.

Alan's mutterings

Gordon, Gill and little Rosie are continuing to visit the pond most weeks and now, for a long time, Gordon can see clearly as he has finally had his eye surgery and now we can look forward to seeing him enjoying his sailing again soon.

Our Chairman Jack has been attending when he can although he still has problems with his leg. He mainly attends on Sundays so our paths do not always cross but he told me recently that he has put right the few problems he had with the new boat that he had made – I look forward to seeing it in 'full flight' soon.

We have certainly had some really great weather for spring and early summer this year with some quite welcome sunshine. Attendance at the pond has been quite varied with healthy numbers turning up on Sundays when it is bright and warm but our Wednesday attendance has not been as good as last year despite having some mild dry days. For a while now our weather has taken a turn for the worse with wind, rain and a drop in temperatures – maybe an Indian summer might be on its way as compensation ?.

In the last issue I mentioned that John Farley, an old hand at building and sailing models yachts, has built an experimental Footy Class model yacht using the Times Newspaper as Papier Mâché and completing it by sealing and varnish. John was not too pleased with its performance, especially when the wind picked up so decided that the next stage was to go ahead and build a plywood version. This John has done and it has turned out fine – much more manoeuvrable in light winds and when it starts to blow a little – well done John.

On the subject of 'Footies' one of our new members, Ken Stevens sent me a letter thanking us for the welcome given him and letting me know how his first attempt at sailing his Footy at Eastrop pond went and telling me of the 'disasters' he had with it plus adding a couple of photos. I emailed Ken to say thank you and asked him if he would allow me to use his letter in the next Newsletter as it was good to hear from one of our new members. He not only said yes but sent me an article with photos which I am more than pleased to include in this edition. Thank you once again and hopefully this may prompt members old and new to provide me with some articles for next time around.

So, on the following page you will find Ken's article which I have included in its entirety.

Musings of a New Member

I started model boating about sixty years ago. My friend went to Australia for a year when his Dad was on a construction project and brought me back a model yacht. My Dad took me to Broomfield Park, north London, where I rapidly discovered that it wouldn't stay upright in the water. It was later in life that I realised it needed an outrigger, presuming it wasn't only meant to be for display.



Then followed a gap in my model boating career until this year.

In the meantime, I had built a couple of full-size dinghies. One of them, a mini sailing punt was hardly larger than some models these days. A neighbour's son-in-law visiting from Australia saw me test-rigging it on the front lawn and wandered over for a chat. He studied it for a while, then declared that he'd caught fish bigger than that!

Balance problems put paid to full-size sailing and I realised that I enjoyed the building as much as the actual sailing anyway, so my mind turned to model boating. Coming across an article about Footies, it was an interesting exercise to build within defined limits and fit the technical gear in a small space. Having finished up with a pretty little boat, the next question was where to sail it, which is how I got to know about the BMBC, resulting in a trip to Eastop pond for the maiden voyage. A disaster! Two knockdowns in five minutes and failure of my supposedly watertight internals did nothing to inspire confidence. I didn't even have time to get a floating photo but this is what it looked like before rigging. Advice from a helpful member was too big a sail and keel not heavy enough. To do anything to the keel would have required radical surgery and I wasn't entirely confident that an already relatively heavy hull could take more weight without being rather low in the water. And so it is already being converted to a small cabin cruiser, with a lengthened hull.



The maiden voyage of my dinghy was more promising. I had made this a few years ago, not specifically as a model but as a small scale test piece for the next fullsize boat I had in mind to construct. Dusted off and with rudimentary sail and rudder settings, it freesailed erratically around the eastern end of the pond, testing the skills of other members as it claimed 'steam gives way to sail' rights. "Don't go near the island at the other send" was the advice given. So it suddenly took off down the pond and tangled in the overhanging branches, being nudged skilfully free by a kindly motor boat.

Anyway, I had a great first outing to Eastrop Park despite the setbacks and look forward to enjoying such congenial company again, once I've finished my motor barge (oh dear, another potential disaster in the offing!) and refined the dinghy setup.

Alan is on his travels again !!

Well, it is time for your potted history lesson again with a little geography thrown in too, because we, that is my long suffering wife and me, have been on our travels again in our motorhome and visited and stayed at a place called Baltic Wharf in the Bristol docks. Our original intention to visit this area was made because we wanted to visit Brunel's SS *Great Britain* but little did we know what a fascinating and historic area this is. So with the immortal words of Daphne Oxenford, the former BBC presenter for Listen With Mother who was the voice behind 15 minutes of magic for a generation of children during the 1950s and 60 as they sat eagerly around the wireless to hear her familiar opening words: *'Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.'*

The City of Bristol and its docks grew up on the banks of the Rivers Avon and Frome. Since the 13th century, the rivers had been modified for use as docks including the diversion of the River Frome in the 1240's into an artificial deep channel known as "Saint Augustine's Reach", which flowed into the River Avon and once complete, it provided a harbour that was accessible for large ships whilst the soft mud of the 'trench' meant it was a place where ships could rest at low tide without fear of damage. This was a major piece of civil engineering for its time and probably the crucial factor in Bristol's emergence as England's second port and city. Thus Saint Augustine's Reach became the heart of Bristol's docks with its quays and wharfs.

As early as 1420, vessels from Bristol were regularly travelling to Iceland and it speculation has it that sailors from Bristol had made landfall in the Americas before Christopher Columbus or John Cabot. By the 16th century Bristol's trading links were extensive reaching as far as the Baltic and North Africa. In the 1630's Bristol was a major Atlantic port and by the end of the 17th century it was part of the transatlantic slave trade. By 1670, the city supported 6,000 tons of shipping, of which half was used for importing tobacco. By the 1730's Bristol was Britain's leading slave port, exporting goods to Africa which were exchanged for people to enslave and transport to the Caribbean to work in the plantations.

The docks were gradually improved but as the 17th century progressed, the harbour came under increasing strain with its almost medieval wharves and struggled to cope with the ever increasing volume of trade. In the 18th century, the docks in other parts of the Country such as Liverpool grew larger and so increased the competition with Bristol for the tobacco trade. Coastal trade was also important, with cargoes from the slate industry in Wales, stone, timber and coal. The limitations of Bristol's docks were causing problems to business, so in 1802 a dam was proposed along with a lock to create the new harbour and construction began in May 1804. The scheme included the construction of the Cumberland Basin and what has become to be known as the Floating Harbour, a large wide stretch of the harbour where Baltic Wharf sits at the western edge. The harbour was officially opened on 1 May 1809. In 1848 the city council bought the docks and employed Isambard Kingdom Brunel to make further improvements to it, including new lock gates, a dredger and sluice gates designed to reduce silting up.

As you can imagine, over the years many boatyards were constructed within the harbour notably Patterson's yard which was used for the construction of many ships such as Brunel's SS *Great Western* in 1838 and the SS *Great Britain* in 1843. They were some of the largest ships to have been built at the time, however building these vessels helped hasten the decline of the city docks. The SS *Great Britain* had to be towed away from her builders, to have her 1,000 hp engines and interior fitted out on the River Thames, but her 48 ft beam was found to be too big to pass through the lock. The SS *Great Britain* had to be moored in the Floating Harbour until December 1844, before proceeding out of the Cumberland Basin after modification to the lock gates, etc. From this it was found the harbour was not suitable for these new very large new fangled ships which were to ply the world with their goods and people.

By 1867, ships were getting even larger and the meanders in the river Avon prevented boats over 300 ft from reaching the harbour. In 1908, the Royal Edward Dock was built in

Avonmouth and in 1972 the large deep water Royal Portbury Dock was constructed on the opposite side of the mouth of the Avon, making the the floating harbour in the Bristol City Docks redundant as a freight dock. So there we have it - Bristol Harbour was the original Port of Bristol, but as ships and their cargo increased in size, it has now largely been replaced by docks at Avonmouth and Portbury.

The Bristol Floating Harbour is now a tourist attraction with museums, galleries, exhibitions, bars and nightclubs. Former workshops and warehouses have now largely been converted or have been replaced by cultural venues, such as an art gallery, media and arts centre, museum and the At-Bristol science exhibition centre, as well as a number of fashionable apartment buildings. It is a vibrant hub, excellently landscaped and designed to retain its old charm and is well used by the local populous, visitors and foreign tourists alike and the water is alive with vessels of all types from Tall Ships to the local dinghy and canoe sailing club boats – an excellent place to visit.

Now we come to the nautical bit !

Just a few of the ships moored around the harbour can be found as follows:-

Isambard Kingdom Brunel's **SS Great Britain** - a revolutionary ship being the first iron-hulled, propeller-driven ocean liner.

A replica of the **Matthew** in which John Cabot sailed to North America in 1497.

The historic vessels alongside M Shed museum, which include the motor tug **John King**, steam tug *Mayflower* and the firefloat **Pyronaut**.

As you all know I love tugs so we shall start with the Tug '**John King**'



Facts:

Launched in 1935: by "Charles Hill & Sons Ltd" at Bristol

GRT: 49 tonnes

Length overall 19.8 metres

Breadth 5.18 metres

Depth 2.6 metres

Engine: Single screw, 4 cylinder Petter diesel of 300bhp

John King is a steel hulled tug built in 1935 by the last major Bristol shipbuilder Charles Hill & Sons Ltd. for Kings Tugs Ltd. and was designed along the lines of a steam tug. The John King was built to tow cargo ships from Bristol City Docks to the mouth of the River Avon. The

cargo ships – carrying goods ranging from paper pulp to sherry – needed the tug boat to steer them round the dangerous bends in the river.

The **John King** spent 35 years towing on the river. She also had special duties, which included supplying drinking water to ships in dry dock, assisting at ship launchings and putting vessels into dry dock and occasionally pulling grounded vessels back into deep water. During the second world war, **John King** spent 17 action-packed days in Pembroke Dock fighting fires in the oil installations and on her way back to Bristol she was attacked by a German aircraft.

As trade to the Bristol docks declined and motor ships became less reliant on tugs, the **John King's** workload gradually disappeared. Her last and most famous job for the towage company was watched by thousands of spectators when on 6 July 1970 she acted as escort to the **SS Great Britain** as the ship was towed from Avonmouth on the last leg of her voyage from the Falkland Islands. **John King** towed the **SS Great Britain** from Canons Marsh to her dry dock in the Floating Harbour at Bristol.

During her working life the **John King** had been re-named 3 times, namely Peter Leigh, Pride and Durdham. Eventually she was bought by Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives and fully restored to her former glory and now lays at berth at Princes Wharf in front of the M Shed exhibition centre. At weekends she takes visitors and tourists for a tour around the docks.

The Tug Mayfair



Facts:

Built by: in 1861 by GK Stothert & Co

Weight Gross: 32 tonnes

Length overall 19.8 metres

Breadth 3.6metres

Depth 2.1 metres

Engine: Single-cylinder steam engine

Re-engined: 1899 with a compound condensing steam engine

Mayflower is a diminutive looking steam tug built in Bristol in 1861 and now preserved by Bristol Museums Galleries & Archives. She is based in Bristol Harbour at M Shed (formerly Bristol Industrial Museum). She is the oldest Bristol-built ship afloat and is believed to be the oldest surviving tug in the world.

She was built by GK Stothert & Co, who were connected with the Bath-based engineering company Stothert & Pitt. A branch of the family came to Bristol to build railway locomotives (later to become the Avonside Engine Company). After 1852, a separate shipbuilding company was established which survived in business until the 1930s.

She was built to work on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal and in the River Severn, and was one of three tugs ordered after trials had shown how much more efficient than horses they were; altogether they cost £3000.

In the late 1890s Mayflower was altered to make her suitable for work in the Bristol Channel. She went back to work outside Sharpness, towing sailing vessels through the dangerous stretches of the Severn Estuary to the mouth of the river Wye and back again. She would eventually work on every part of the navigation from Worcester to Chepstow.

In 1909 **Mayflower** was again altered when the funnel was arranged to hinge down (counterbalanced with large weights) to enable her to pass under the fixed bridges on this stretch of water. She was now capable of working on every part of the navigation from Worcester to Chepstow, and because of this, became regarded as the training tug in the canal's fleet, which she continued to be until the end of her working life.

In 1922, she was again altered when the entire deck was raised by 12 inches (300 mm) which meant that the area beneath the deck at the stern could become another cabin albeit with very low headroom. At the same time the bulwarks were cut away down most of each side and replaced with stanchions and chains; this reflected the increased barge traffic on the canal, allowing the crew to step onto laden barges easily.

In the late 1930s, a wooden wheelhouse replaced the steering shelter, and sometime after this the bulwarks were replaced

When British Waterways took control of the canal in 1948 Mayflower was considered too old to modernize and escaped having a diesel engine installed. In 1962-1963, when the winter was so cold that the canal froze and the diesel tugs had difficulty in working, Mayflower once again took on ship-towing work in the canal.

Finally, British Waterways sold her for scrap in 1967. By chance, she survived a further 14 years, slowly deteriorating at her mooring in Gloucester as she was attacked by the weather and vandals. In 1981 she was bought by us and towed back to her birthplace. Over the next six years Mayflower was restored to working order by a team of volunteers – she steamed again in 1987.

In Closing:

My favourite ship at Bristol Docks has to be of course the **SS Great Britain** and although I have written an article about her for the Club Newsletter I will leave that for another edition if you don't mind.

I hope you enjoyed this edition of the Club Newsletter and hope you don't think it is the ramblings of an idiot, if you do - please send me an article of your own for the next one !

I must close now and just to let you know that there are **4234** words of wisdom plus many pictures in this newsletter which is even more proof that you are getting more and more for your money !! **Ta,Ta, for now.**

Newsletter by Alan Spooner – Secretary / Treasurer Basingstoke Model Boat Club