



# THAMES SAILING BARGE MATCH

Saturday 8th July 2023

**MATCH PROGRAMME**

91st Thames Sailing Barge Match  
DONATIONS WELCOME

## THE SAILING BARGE A USEFUL CRAFT

From a correspondent: *The Times* 1932

The sailing barge is often looked upon as a steadily decreasing factor in the trade of the Port of London, but the number of entries for this year's barge races on the Thames and Medway justifies the minority who believe that the end of the barge's usefulness is not yet; and when certain facts are taken into consideration, it is easy to agree with them. There are, however, many captains of ships who would not deplore their total disappearance from the reaches of the river.

The manner in which barges are kept under control by their small crews (for each of the river barges there is usually a captain and a mate, who is also cook, while the coasters carry about four hands all told) is a mystery to seamen who have been used to craft of different build and rig. To watch these shallow vessels so heavily laden that every swell threatens to overwhelm them, is to be fascinated by the ease with which they ride out a rough sea. Easy it looks, but after how many years of practice! Like poets, bargemasters are born, not made. From their childhood they have been taught to think of nothing but the barge. In an older generation the barge was not only the livelihood of many, it was their only habitation; and wives undertook the dual duties of mothers and mates. Happily these conditions belong to the past.

### THAMES SAILING BARGE MATCH 2023

Entries

BARGE	BUILT	YEAR	REG TONS	START	MARK	FINISH
<b>COASTING CLASS (Start 08.00 hrs)</b>						
Gladys	Harwich	1901	68			
Pudge	Rochester	1922	70			
<b>CHAMPION STAYSAIL CLASS (Start 08.15 hrs)</b>						
Repertor	Mistley	1924	69			
Wyvenhoe	Wivenhoe	1898	83			
<b>CHAMPION BOWSPRIT CLASS (Start 08.30 hrs)</b>						
Blue Mermaid	Polruan	2019	83			
Marjorie	Ipswich	1902	56			
Niagara	Wivenhoe	1898	79			

## THAMES SAILING BARGE MATCH 2023 PROGRAMME

This year's Match will be held on Saturday 8th July 2023 and will be sailed from the Lower Hope to the North Oaze Buoy, returning to finish at Gravesend.

### Friday 7th July

Briefing for Masters and Mainsheetmen at 19.30 at the Port of London Authority, London River House, Gravesend.

Please return engraved cups awarded in 2022 at this meeting.

### Saturday 8th July

The three classes will start at the following times, with a ten minute and five minute horn and flag before each start:

#### COASTING CLASS

START 08.00

#### CHAMPION STAYSAIL CLASS

START 08.15

#### CHAMPION BOWSPRIT CLASS

START 08.30

### COURSE (Weather permitting)

The race starts in Lower Hope Reach (off Stanford-le-Hope in Essex, about four miles down river from Gravesend) and runs down river past Southend-on-Sea to the North Oaze Buoy before returning to finish at Gravesend – a total distance of 43 nautical miles.

The finish line is Clarendon Gardens next to the Three Daws public house in Gravesend.

### PRIZE GIVING AND SUPPER

The prize giving will be held in Clarendon Gardens.  
It will commence at 19.00

Barges are requested to make their own arrangements for supper this year.



## THAMES MATCH REPORT 2022

The 90th Thames Sailing Barge Match was sailed on Saturday 18 June at the end of a week of increasingly hot sunny weather and light southerly winds, culminating on Friday in the hottest day (and warmest night) of the year. Overnight the wind veered right round to north-easterly with the temperature plummeting and an increasingly cloudy sky. Just as last year a couple of late withdrawals reduced the number of starters, this time to six, the same number that had made it to the Medway Match a month earlier.

An excellent start in the Coasting class at 0730 saw *Thalatta* lead *Centaur* over the line about half a minute after the gun with both sailing nicely close hauled. The sole entry in the staysail class, *Repertor*, found herself below the line at the ten-minute gun, had to motor back quickly upstream and then started in more leisurely fashion. The bowsprit class was more keenly contested. *Niagara* got to the line too early and turned back upstream on the starboard tack but the wind failed her and she inexorably drifted back stern first below the line before the gun. Meanwhile *Blue Mermaid* on starboard tack and *Marjorie* on port tack sailing down the Kent shore approached the line, both making excellent starts at good speed. Unfortunately, *Blue Mermaid* mistook the recall signal hoisted for *Niagara* as applying to her and bore away to re-start leaving *Marjorie* to lead the class away down the river five minutes ahead. *Niagara* hauled across to the slacker water over Mucking flats and gybed round No 3 buoy to cross the line correctly at 0818. Particularly when considering the light wind and strong tide, it was impressive that four out of six barges had got away within a minute of their official start times.

There followed a gentle turn down Sea Reach with the ebb tide doing most of the work in a light breeze that was now blowing straight up the river. *Blue Mermaid* caught and passed *Marjorie* and was chasing after *Repertor* but the Coasters held on to their half hour head start with *Centaur* having passed *Thalatta*. Approaching Southend as the ebb tide slackened it was decided to shorten the course to the Sea Reach 4 North buoy as it was clear that the slower barges would struggle to make further progress against the young flood tide and an uncomfortable choppiness had built up as the breeze filled in. *Centaur*, smartly turned out, freshly antifouled and showing an unusual turn of speed, was the first to tack round the buoy at 1005 shortly followed by *Thalatta*. At 1030 *Repertor*, approaching the mark at the same time as *Blue Mermaid*, found herself short of space and had to execute a tight 360 degree gybe to round three minutes later at 1033. *Marjorie* followed at 1040 and *Niagara* at 1100 just as the flood was beginning to run.

By the time *Niagara* had rounded the leading barges were almost out of sight on the return leg hastened on their way by a freshening easterly breeze. It was fortunate that the *Sea Echo* acting as this year's committee boat had a good turn of speed for even at fifteen knots it took us until the London Gateway container

terminal to catch *Blue Mermaid* which by then had overtaken all the slower barges to lead the fleet. A range of downwind sails were seen on the run up Sea Reach: *Centaur* set her staysail to windward up and down the mast Chubb Horlock style, *Thalatta* boomed out the foresail, *Blue Mermaid* squared off her enormous light weather headsail and *Marjorie* at one point had both a running sail and a huge flying jib filling. An interesting sight was the yacht barge *Snark*, now based in the West Country, but built in steel in Essex to the lines of the old *British King* and re-rigged with a modern interpretation of the spritsail barge tradition.

With a fair wind and a strong tide running the barges were soon back at Gravesend with *Blue Mermaid* crossing the finishing line first at 1233 to win the Bowsprit class, followed by *Thalatta* at 1238 the first in the Coasting class. The second bowsprit barge *Marjorie* crossed the line at 1241 ahead of *Centaur* while *Repertor* just held off a late challenge from *Niagara* which had run back from Southend more quickly than any of the others. The barges finishing at speed and under full sail made a fine sight for those who had turned out to appreciate it.

In the evening after the traditional bangers-and-mash supper at the Three Daws, prizes were awarded by Christine Lawrence who for many years had played a key role in the organisation of the Match. First prize in the Bowsprit class and, being the fastest around the course, this year's Champion of the Thames was *Blue Mermaid*, master Richard Titchener. *Repertor* duly collected the prize for the Staysail class and *Thalatta* won the Coasting class, with her master Cyril Varley collecting the prize for the day's fastest start at 32 seconds.

In the open awards the seamanship prize went to Noddy Cardy sailing *Niagara* who had continued to sail a competitive race despite the initial setback. The Majestic Trophy for the best rounding of the mark as judged by Michael Mainelli was given to *Centaur*. *Centaur* also won the Gold Belt Trophy for her excellent and much improved performance: many of the bargemen present said that they had never seen her go so well as today. The award for best performing mainsheetman went to Jim Green of *Blue Mermaid*, that for a valued crew member to Tom Curtis of *Thalatta* and for a contribution by a young person to Sophie Burgess of *Marjorie*.

Thanks were expressed to those who had helped with organisation of the Match: to Tim McQuillan and his team at the PLA, to the Three Daws for hosting us, to Christine Lawrence for presenting the prizes, to Dawn Franklyn for making winners pennants at short notice, and particularly to Rachel deBont without whose enthusiasm, competence and sheer hard work we could not have run this year's Match.

Next year's Match is to be held on Saturday 8 July 2023. We look forward to seeing everyone again then.

**Julian Cass**  
Officer of the Day, 2022



## THAMES SAILING BARGE MATCH 2022 RESULTS

### COASTING CLASS

1. THALATTA
2. CENTAUR

### CHAMPION STAYSAIL CLASS

1. REPERTOR

### CHAMPION BOWSPRIT CLASS

1. BLUE MERMAID
2. MARJORIE
3. NIAGARA

### TROPHIES AWARDED

#### COASTING CLASS

First barge home: THALATTA. Hays Cup

First to outer mark: CENTAUR. PLA Cup

Master of winning barge: Cyril Varley, THALATTA. Jim Uglow Cup

#### CHAMPION STAYSAIL

First barge home: REPERTOR. Shipowners' Mutual Cup

First to outer mark: REPERTOR. Watermen's Company Shield

Master of winning barge: David Polooch, REPERTOR. John Kemp Cup

#### CHAMPION BOWSPRIT

First barge home: BLUE MERMAID. FT Everard Cup

Second place: MARJORIE. Allied Mills Cup

Third Place: NIAGARA. Royal Thames YC Cup

First to outer mark: BLUE MERMAID. Fishmonger's Cup

Master of winning barge: Richard Titchener BLUE MERMAID. Hervey Benham Trophy

### OTHER PRIZES

Master Fastest Start of Day: C. Varley, THALATTA.

Master Fastest Barge to the Mark: R. Titchener, BLUE MERMAID.

Master Fastest Barge Over the Course: R. Titchener, BLUE MERMAID.

Master of First Barge Home: R. Titchener, BLUE MERMAID.

Master Exhibiting Best Seamanship during the Match: N. Cardy, NIAGARA.

Master Exhibiting Best Seamanship Rounding Outer Mark:

T. De Winton, CENTAUR.

The Best Performing Mainsheetman: J. Green, BLUE MERMAID.

The most valued Crew Member (excl mainsheetman) T. Curtis, THALATTA.

For Achievement of a Young Crewmember (under 16) S. Burgess, MARJORIE.

For Achievement - Barge: CENTAUR.



### Race Committee

Honorary Chairman: F M Everard CBE BA

Honorary Match Secretary: B Pain

Capt J Cass

M Mainelli

R Newlyn

S Akhurst

Rachel de Bont, PLA

### Bridge Committee

Commodore: Capt J Cass

Timekeeper: J Hargreaves

R Newlyn

### Thames Sailing Barge Match Patrons

Mrs Sue Akhurst

Mr John Allan

Mr John Austin

Mr & Mrs Basil Brambleby

Mr & Mrs Julian and Bridget Cass

Mr Nick Fulcher & Ms Hilary Davies

Mr & Mrs Graham & Margaret Dent

Mr Michael Everard

Mr & Mrs Tony & Sandy Farnham

Mr Paul Goldsmith

Mr John Hargreaves

Mr Duncan Hempstock

Ms Christine Lawrence

Mr & Mrs Michael & Elisabeth Mainelli

Mr Roger Newlyn

Mr Brian Pain

Ms Heather Rooke

Mr David Rye

Mr & Mrs Richard & Mary Walsh

Dr & Mrs Mike Wignall

Allied Mills

Chaffcutter Books

Faversham Creek Trust

The Shipowners' Club

Society for Sailing Barge Research

Thames Sailing Barge Trust

The Fishmongers' Company

Worshipful Company of World Traders

### Thanks also to:

*Demeter* – Committee boat  
and trot boat

The Three Daws Public House  
Clarendon Royal Hotel

With special thanks to the Port of  
London Authority for all their valuable  
advice, information and practical  
assistance.

### Contact

Thames Match Committee  
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Date of Next Year's Match  
Saturday 15th June 2024

## THAMES SAILING BARGE MATCH

8th JULY 2023

Start from Mucking No. 3 buoy, Lower Hope Reach, River Thames to North Ooze Buoy (weather permitting), returning to the finish off Gravesend.

High Water Tilbury 05:30 BST

Low Water Southend 10:59 BST

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