

SBA Newsletter:

Recent News:

The barges enjoyed a high profile year with the media in 2017, with Xylonite featured in film epic Dunkirk, Dinah and Edith May in the box office hit Wonder Woman and the release of a well-received BBC 2 documentary – Britain Afloat. The barges were the subject of the first episode and there was some fantastic footage shot aboard Edme.

Resourceful, owned by Topsail Charters, has undergone a refit at Cooks Yard, Maldon, converting her from house barge into a fully functioning tea room. Tea aboard a sailing barge has proved popular with several barges in recent years and Resourceful is the first barge to adopt it as her sole purpose. Lorna Jeffries and her team must be doing something right as they welcomed nearly 1000 visitors aboard in the first week of 2018. Keep up the good work!

Elsewhere in Maldon, Kitty is in dry dock having some work done on her after end by Kevin Finch and Ben Cardy. George Smeed looked ready to depart the Hythe in 2017, a first class restoration. Blue Mermaid continues to progress toward re-rigging at Downs Road Boatyard, with the mast expected to be up in January 2018. The Sea Change Trust will be operating the vessel and it will expand on their already sterling work over the past decade as they offer an ever expanding list of courses aimed at introducing and improving seamanship for young people – the skippers and owners of tomorrow.

Gladys is going West to enjoy a complete rebuild at Tommi Nielsens Yard in Gloucester. This will enable her to obtain a passenger certificate for over 20 people, as the MCA continue to state they will not issue any new 40 man tickets to the fleet, apart from new builds. Gladys' former skipper Terry Everett sadly passed away in January but he would no doubt have been pleased to hear the future of his former command will be secure for another generation. His funeral is on 30th January at Nacton Crematorium, Ipswich at 215pm.

Ironsides had the misfortune to suffer a serious fire in November. Fortunately no one was hurt and the barge survived, although suffering extensive damage to her forehold. It has been great to see her back underway in recent years, which is credit to Toby and Linda's hard work and they've just launched their new website – www.ironsidessailingbarge.co.uk.

Decima is overwintering in an unusual location this year, heading up to Dartford via the River Darent. Owner David Leal had to have his calculations correct as he shot the road bridge that has been built over the creek. Good to see old barge haunts being re-established.

Lady Jean has been underway recently, moving to her new home in Small Gains Creek, Canvey Island. New owner Garth Spann is hoping to undertake a long term restoration and is not intending for her to remain a static houseboat.

Lady Daphne's restoration in Tim Goldsack's dry dock at Oare continues with the starboard side completely re-planked and looking splendid.

Gary Diddams long term restoration of Ethel Maud continues at Shoregate Wharf on the Medway. New chines have been fitted and rails and rigging chocks are on. Seagull II is beginning to be re-rigged at Gillingham.

Orinoco spent 2017 laid up whilst Geoff Ingle replaced the wooden keelson with a new steel one. He undertook the work virtually unaided, which is quite an achievement and we hope to see her out again in 2018.

Henry has had a bit of attention in recent months, with the gear lowered and a fresh coat of paint being applied.

Online, the SBA's new website was launched in December – www.sailingbargeassociation.co.uk. David Renouf's www.thamesbarge.org.uk has also been remodelled and will be live by the end of January. We hope that SBA members will see some benefit from the improved signposting and information resource.

Congratulations to Jane Harman and Gary Diddams for organising another successful barge parade in London. Bad weather initially looked like it may scupper the event, but fortunately all turned out well. The barges looked fantastic as they paraded through Tower Bridge.

Edme was crowned the overall Championship winner having competed successfully in all the qualifying races. Her start at Pin Mill will surely take some beating, crossing 1 second after the gun with Miroso only 1 second later. Niagara was the leading Staysail barge and Cambria and Lady of the Lea shared the spoils in the Coasting Class.

Your Committee wish you well for the coming Spring fit out and the 2018 sailing season.