



BASINGSTOKE MODEL BOAT CLUB

Newsletter

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June 2014

Remembering the immortal lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein (of Rogers and Hammerstein fame) 'June is Bustin' Out All Over' - it is time again for your BMBC Newsletter. As you all know we started a new year in the Club from April this year and it has been a good time for new members joining our Club. To date we have had 5 new members that, following receipt of their membership application, I have sent a letter of thanks to them for joining us and giving them a warm welcome. The welcome to our Club is hopefully more than matched by our existing members' friendliness at the pond side at regular Wednesday and Sunday meets.

So, in this Newsletter we must formally welcome John Farley, Ian Holliday, Ron Shaddick, Andrew Will and Graham Woodhams to our midst and we hope to see them in regular attendance at the pond.

Annual Membership fees Due for year 2014/2015

In the last Newsletter I reminded all our members that the annual membership fees for the year 2014/2015 were due and what a fantastic response I have had from many of you. To date I have received about 35 membership subscriptions which is great and a welcome improvement on previous years. **If you do not wish to renew your membership please let me know immediately by phone, email or letter and I will remove you from our list - this will be your final Newsletter.**

To remind those who haven't yet paid, the Club year runs from the 1st April to 31st March each year so please can I have your subscriptions in as soon as possible. We have held the membership fee at £10 this year and £5 for juniors under the age of 16 years and I am sure you will agree that this is excellent value as the membership has to cover the cost of Club insurance, 4 Club Newsletters each year and Internet web hosting costs for our Club web site, etc.

Our membership 'on the books' has now risen to 49 which is great so, for those members whose subscriptions for the 2014 / 2015 year are still outstanding please hand your membership fee money over to either myself or our Chairman, Jack Sharp at the lake side by putting it in an envelope with your name on the outside, or post a cheque to me, made payable to **Basingstoke Model Boat Club** to the following address:-

Alan Spooner
Hathaway, Stratford Road,
Ash Vale, Hants GU12 5PT

We hope that you will continue to support the club in the year ahead and enjoy 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:

Basingstoke & District Model Engineering Society Rally, Viables - April 2014

This year there was some confusion as to when and if the above show would be held. We usually get the invitation from our friends in the Basingstoke MES whilst we are at the Midhurst Show at the beginning of the year but it wasn't much before the planned exhibition was almost upon us that I got the word that it was on and that our attendance would be welcomed.

The Club attended this 2-day exhibition and thanks must go to all members that helped. Robin Lock 'dressed' the tables on the Friday evening before the event and Charlie Redford and Joe Harwood manned the Club stand on the Saturday. Sunday with the weather fine but breezy our stand was manned by our Chairman Jack Sharp and Robin Lock.

Forthcoming Shows

Old Basing Carnival 2014

Last year our Club had been asked by the organisers of the Old Basing Parish Carnival if a group of BMBC members would care to display their model boats and chat to the public on the day of their event; all I was told at the time was that the event would take place in June of 2014. I had tried to make contact with the organisers earlier this year but to no avail so I phoned last year's organiser to see if he could forward my message on to them. I eventually received a phone call towards the middle of May letting me know that the Carnival is due to take place on Saturday 21st June and that they would now have to see if they could

accommodate us but we may possibly need to provide our own tent to display our models in. I did try to get some support at the pond from our members but June seems a busy month for many of us so I have reluctantly told them that due to the late notice we wouldn't be able to attend their event and maybe they could consider us for next year.

Midhurst 2015

Following sending my congratulations to the organisers of the Midhurst Model Engineering Show for this year's event I have had further information from them regarding next year. Many of us who attend this event enjoy this show, meeting up with fellow boat clubs/members and looking at all the other interesting engineering hobbies that are in attendance. We have been advised that the annual Midhurst show is alive and kicking and will be held again on 15 February 2015 in the new centre. I have confirmed that the Basingstoke Model Boat Club would be more than willing to attend and would like to be very much part of this show as it is one that we look forward to each year.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

I have been informed by the Council that Katie Hooper, the previous incumbent for the role of "Community Development Officer – Green Spaces" has been replaced by Sarah Moore. We had a good working relationship with Katie and she helped us to promote our Club with putting our advertising posters on park notice boards and adding our details and web link on the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Website. Sarah has already met and spoken to a couple of the members down at the pond on an earlier visit and I had a meeting with her on 28th May.

Sarah met me at Eastrop pond to discuss our Club and to find out how she can help us. Although new to the job, she intends to carry on the good work of her predecessor, Katie Hooper. She was very interested in our boats and had not seen anything like them before. We discussed access to the pond for our members and parking facilities which are a bit of a problem at times for the Wednesday sailors. Joe Harwood and Andy Clarke joined us in our discussions and we had a look at the car park which was full – most of the cars we believe to be commuters parking there. Joe pointed out that the Eastrop car park sign was not visible, which turned out to have been vandalised by someone spraying paint over it – the sign explains that the car park is for the users of the park only, Sarah said she would get it repaired and would look into whether the gate is being locked at night and opened after 10.00 hrs. She also said that it may be possible to put a few signs up saying "Reserved for BMBC Member" on the dates of our meets, but they may ask us for a contribution towards the cost of the signs. Many other things were discussed including Club insurance, publicity for our Club, Council budgets and facilities around the pond such as a picnic table, bench tops (seating) etc.

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

This is the first newsletter for the current Club year. To date I have still not had any articles from any of you - Charlie Redford made a start last time so come on lads.

Gordon, Gill and little Rosie are welcome visitors to the pond most weeks but Gordon's eyesight is not good enough to sail his boats at the moment as he is awaiting eye surgery

which we now believe to be happening sometime in July. Let us hope that his operation comes around quickly so that we can see him enjoying his sailing again soon.

Our Chairman Jack has been attending when he can although he still has problems with his leg. He is presently walking with the aid of a stick but is managing to bring his boats down to the pond. Recently Jack brought a new boat that he has just completed along to the pond for its trial run and maiden voyage (he kept that quiet didn't he !). Apart from one of the motor mounts parting company from its fixing all went well with the launch.

We have certainly had some really great weather for spring 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.

Following on from our 'webmaster' Andy having a new yacht to play with – the Pro Boat Ragazza yacht based on the One Metre Class, along comes Brian Osborn with his new yacht, a Joysway Dragon Force. This yacht is only 700mm long but sails very well in light to medium winds – it is well worth a look for those who want a small yacht.

One of our newer members, John Farley, an old hand at building and sailing models yachts, has built an experimental Footy Class model yacht. He has designed and built the hull using the Times Newspaper (as Papier Mâché) completing it by sealing and varnish. It has a plywood deck and wooden mast with cotton sails. John has simplified the sail rigging by installing a swing rig controlled from a miniature servo. Steering is via another miniature servo. On it's maiden launch the yacht sailed well but wasn't so happy with the light winds and needed a bit of a puff to control her properly – John was pleased with it and now intends to build a plywood version.

Keith Dolton has completed the build of his Caldercraft North Light – Clyde Puffer, a representative model of a typical small coaster from the western isles of Scotland. It had over 200 white metal parts which Keith told me needed a lot of fettling to get them looking good. He has made an excellent job of it as usual, and he has even added a miniature toilet roll in the loo. He has been experimenting with different motors for it as his initial choice was not so much a plodding coaster but a flying Scotsman ! He is now hooked on sound units and has one for the North Light too.

Jim Dewar, a regular Wednesday sailor, had a lucky escape with a miniature version of his Thames sailing barge – he decided to sail it in quite a strong breeze and it sank quite close to the other side of the pond. Jim was there with his coat off fishing around with an old fishing rod to see if he could hook it, when Joe Harwood walked around looking into the murky waters and he spotted something white looking under the water – yes it was Jim's model boat which he then successfully hooked and reeled in – Oh Lucky Jim !

Caldercraft Mini Fleet kit of the PLA Tug 'Westbourne'

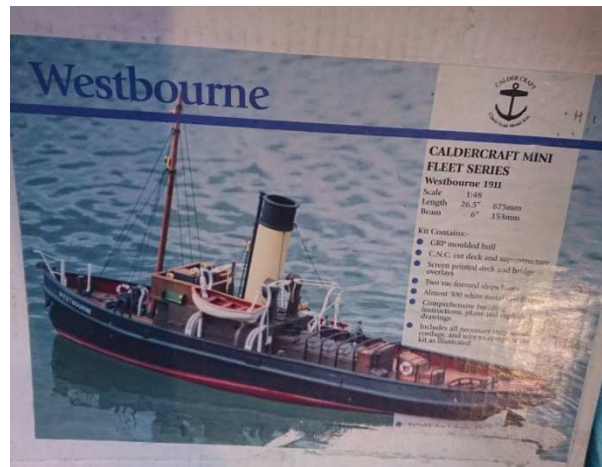
In my last Newsletter I told you that I had purchased a new model to build during this coming winter period. I had been looking for some time for a kit of a small tug as, although the large tugs are great to build and sail, they do need a lot of ballast and therefore weigh a lot. As I keep all my boats in one of the rooms upstairs in our house I now need to build boats that are a bit lighter and more compact – much easier to move around as one gets older !

Keith Dolton has built the Mountfleet Model's tug 'Active' and what a great job he has made of that and it looks really smart on the water. His tug was just about the size I wanted and is of a similar size to the 'Westbourne'. When mine is built, I hope it turns out just as good as Keith's.

The Caldercraft Models Tug 'Westbourne' is from their original mini-fleet range, the other two boats being the MFV 'Ocean Crest' and the Motor FiFie 'Amaranth'. Of these only the 'Amaranth' exists today in the range. I was lucky enough to find a kit of the Caldercraft 'Westbourne' on Ebay – it was complete and unopened in its box and I was fortunate to win the auction.



Jotika's advert for the Westbourne



The Box label for my Westbourne

As is usual for me, I thought I would investigate if the tug 'Westbourne', on which my model is based, had any previous history, so a search of the internet began. I was certainly lucky in my searching and I found a few links to the tug that began its life at Birkenhead and was delivered to London to serve with the Port of London Authority (PLA). My searches also brought up some interesting information on its service during World War II.

History of the PLA Tug Westbourne

The tug was built by Cammell Laird, Birkenhead, Liverpool. The shipyard was founded in 1824 by William Laird who started the Birkenhead Iron Works (boilermaking). He was joined by his son, John Laird in 1828 and then the company started building ships. The company soon became well known in the manufacture of iron ships. In 1903 the Sheffield steel firm of Charles Cammell and Co. Ltd. amalgamated with the Laird Brothers forming Cammell Laird and between 1829 and 1947 over 1,100 different kind of vessels were built.

'Westbourne' was completed in 1911 and was delivered to the Port of London Authority in January 1912. She was 96 feet in length, 24 feet in width and had a depth of 10 feet. She weighed 185 gross tons and was fitted with a 575 horse power 3 cylinder, triple expansion steam engine that operated at 180 pounds per square inch pressure – the engine being manufactured by the Vauxhall Engine Company. This was the very company that was to become the famous Vauxhall Motor works in Luton.

As an aside, Vauxhall's roots began on the banks of the River Thames in the manufacture of steam engines for tugboats and Admiralty pinnaces.

The Vauxhall Iron Works had been founded by Alexander Wilson in 1857 on a riverside site in the Vauxhall area of South London. It entered receivership in 1895 but the potential of the company in the work it undertook impressed the Receiver and the company was revived the following year as the Vauxhall Iron Works Company Limited.

'Westbourne' was delivered to the Port of London Authority in 1912 and survived until 1967 when she was disposed of and scrapped in the same year by Jacques Bakker & Zonen of Brugge.

Below is a very old photograph of the tug 'Westbourne' tied up at a London port.



During her time she was hired by the Royal Navy as a rescue tug. She saw service with them between October 1916 and July 1919 in the HM Dockyard. Prior to that she was on general towing service duties on the Thames.

Following the first world war, 'Westbourne' was one of three tugs attached to the Port of London Authority (PLA) Dredging Service. They were the "Westbourne", "Thorny" and "Brent", and were all fitted with a drag and under running gear. A large rake was suspended over the stern from a gallows which could be raised or lowered by means of a duplex steam winch located aft of the engine room casing. This apparatus would be lowered against a dock wall or similar position that the dredgers could not reach, and tow or drag mud and silt to the middle of the river where it would have been carried away by the out flowing tide. In the bows was a small jib with a roller suspended by a shackle from it, this jib was used for running the dredgers large kedge anchors out to a new position. The "Westbourne" was the largest of the three tugs.

Now to her claim to fame or that of her crew:-

During World War II the River Thames played its part in goods and equipment being brought to its docks. Fuel was also transported across the Atlantic from Nova Scotia via Liverpool docks to one of its destinations at Thames Haven. However during World War 2 the refineries and oil storage tanks at Thames Haven, Shell Haven and Coryton became sitting targets for air raids, notably in 1940 during the Battle of Britain. 'Westbourne' and many other tugs were used in assisting the berthing of these large ships that entered the Thames.

In 1941 the SS 'Lunula' was part of a convoy that departed Halifax, Nova Scotia on the 11th March, destined for the Thames Haven refinery with a cargo of gasoline oil. The convoy arrived at Liverpool on the 30th March, from where the vessels in the convoy dispersed to their final destinations. The 'Lunula' arrived at the northern banks of the Thames estuary at Thames Haven on the 9th April 1941 and commenced to berth at No. 4 Jetty with the assistance of the PLA tug 'Persia'. While the vessel was berthing, an air raid began.

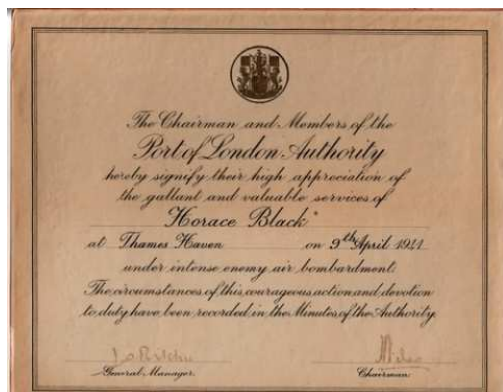
Not being able to abort the operation, the 'Lunula' continued to dock during the bombardment. There are two schools of thought as to what happened next. Either an aerial landmine hit the vessel and penetrated one of the holds, detonating as it hit or whilst berthing, the ship hit a mine dropped in an air raid the previous night. The explosion sent

flaming gasoline oil to erupt upwards through the deck. The fuel ignited and fell back down on the 'Lunula' and everything in its vicinity including the PLA tug 'Persia' and the jetty. The explosion also holed the bottom of the tanker, which promptly began to settle with its stern against the jetty.

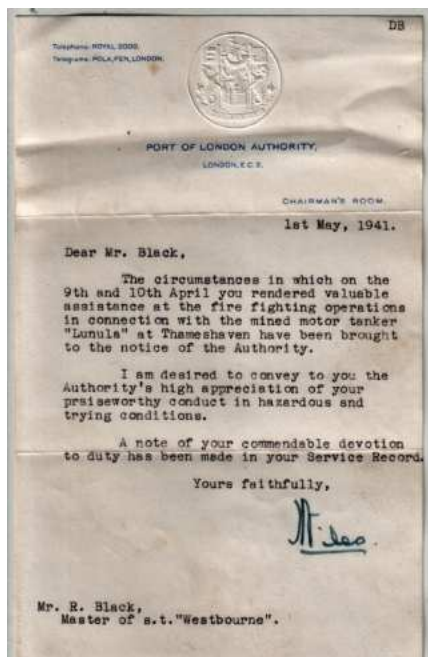
The tug 'Westbourne' which was equipped with water pumps was called to the incident to assist in the fire-fighting. However it quickly became apparent that the 'Lunula' was in danger of exploding and destroying the whole Thames Haven refinery as there were still three undamaged holds of gasoline on board. The decision was taken to move the 'Lunula' away from Thames Haven. While water hoses played across the deck of the 'Lunula' to keep the fire away from the bow, a member of the tug 'Westbourne's' crew climbed onto the stricken tanker and fixed a hawser to the bow of the ship. Once the line was fixed to the 'Westbourne', the tug started pulling the 'Lunula' against the drag of the vessel's stern which had settled into the mud, upstream to Mucking Flats, where it was eventually grounded. The Lunula continued to burn for 97 hours, eventually settling its bow into the flats as well as its stern.

Twenty eight of the crew of SS Lunula and seven of the crew of the tug 'Persia' were killed in this incident. The Master of the tug 'Westbourne', Mr. Horace Black, was commended for his gallantry and below are copies of a letter and certificate from the Port of London Authority in recognition of his actions.

The citation and letter read :-



"The Chairman and members of the Port of London Authority hereby signify their high appreciation of the gallant and valuable services of Horace Black at Thames Haven on 9th April 1941 under intense enemy air bombardment. The circumstances of this courageous devotion to duty have been recorded in the minutes of the Authority"

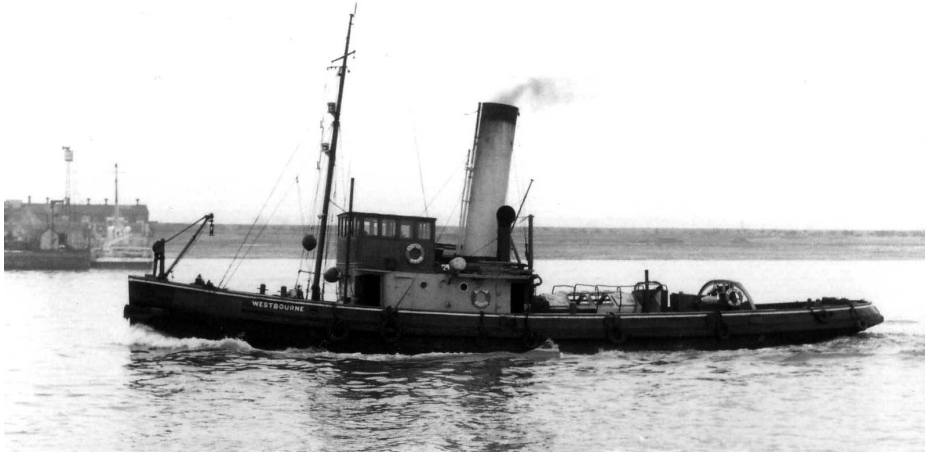


Mr H Black – Master of S.T. 'Westbourne'

Dear Mr Black

The circumstances in which on the 9th and 10th April you rendered valuable assistance at the fire fighting operation in connection with the mined motor tanker 'Lanula' at Thames Haven have been brought to the attention of the Authority. I am desirous to convey to you the Authority's high appreciation of your praiseworthy conduct in hazardous and trying conditions. A note of your commendable devotion to duty has been made in your service records.

Yours faithfully.



The Tug 'Westbourne' under steam on the River Thames

So there you go, who would have thought that model boat building and sailing could be so interesting and provide little gems in terms of history. How about some of your models out there – why not try a bit of digging on the internet to find out more about them. You can then provide me with a little article for next issue.

In Closing

In the last Newsletter I tried to explain about the Club Public Liability Insurance – many of our members understood the position with regards to insurance but for others can I reiterate that our Club and you as individuals are covered for :-

Our normal activity of sailing model boats at the pond or other ponds is covered in respect to any member causing damage to either the pond and its surroundings and to members and members of the public. An example could be given such; if a member of public tripped over our equipment at the pond side, fell and broke their leg, rolled into the pond and died of a heart attack or hypothermia then we would be covered subject of course to us not being reckless in what we are doing – a claim against the Club by the deceased would be dealt with by our insurance.

Similarly if one of our members contaminated the pond or surroundings by their misdoings, then we are covered.

What we are not covered for is damage to our own property or other members property. This is not new and has always been so in our previous insurance policies.

What I did this year was to look around at Insurances at renewal time and got a better level of cover for our Club and its members whilst keeping costs reasonable.

However, I must close now and just to let you know that there are only **3896** words of wisdom plus many pictures in this newsletter which is less than normal so get your fingers working and send me your articles for inclusion in the next Newsletter ! **Ta,Ta, for now.**

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