

Monthly News Letter

Boathouse 4 Volunteers

March 2020



Needless to say this has been an interesting month in the history of B/H 4. All was going well until new phrases crept into our vocabulary. 'Self Isolating', 'Covid 19', and 'Social Distancing' all had a big impact. Watch this space for next month's developments and stay safe.

Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust



Safety Launch RSL1668.

Harbour Launch D49 – She remains on the top of the main slip way well out of the water pending funding and any subsequent work yet to be defined.

Cyclops -

Planking has continued with several players: Tony P, John C, Linden T, Trevor N, Les P and Fay P.



Above right the guys are fitting the first outer plank replacement section. This shot shows the red lead linseed oil slurry covered calico membrane between the edges.

We've recently unearthed plans showing some 42 ft pinnaces were built with masts. Some were

equipped with a cannon fore and aft on oak slides. We know the Cyclops carried a Maxim machine gun on her forward gun deck



witnessed by the bronze fittings. We believe that she was retro modified and fitted with a diesel engine at some time during the late 1920's to early 1930's. Diggory decided that we would settle just for the mast for now.... So now, a mast is being built by students, under the direction of Matt, now full-time on the IBTC side of her mast.

Motor Whaler – Danae – She remains operational and has been in general use in the month

The Power Boats HSL 102, ST 1502 and MGB 81 – ST

1502 Remains afloat in the dock waiting her turn to be lifted for her annual refit and bottom scrub, MGB81 is now back from Lymington where the boat yard has been looking at her hull to locate a leaky joint HSL 102 was taken to Berthon in Lymington back on February 15th, where the expectation was that she would only be there for her annual lift-out, for purposes of antifouling. However, examination of prop shafts revealed, that the center prop shaft was parting company from the log, she therefore needed more extensive work. Given the current circumstances with the country on lock down, her return will be delayed indefinitely.

A new arrival – Here might be a good time to mention yet another new acquisition to our collection. This month saw us take delivery of 43ft Range

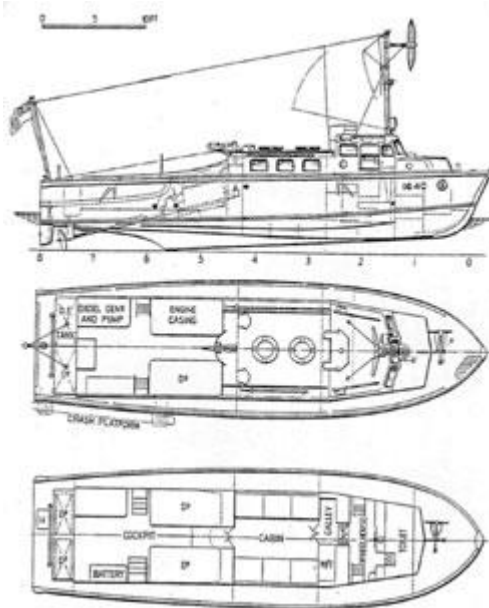
New Boat for the Collection – 43 Ft. Range Safety Launch 1668



Our new boat, Range Safety Launch RSL 1668 finally arrived on the PNBPT pontoon on Thursday 19th March. She had been at Berthon in Lymington for about two weeks for a survey and a clean -up. She's had her old number reapplied alongside the RAF roundel, and after two days of false starts and new batteries being put in, she finally

coughed into life on the Thursday, and the decision was made that she was capable of the run to Portsmouth, which was done in about 1 hr and 20 minutes. Above left she is alongside our pontoons whilst above right she is steaming past Egypt Point approaching Cowes.

When the RAF made the decision to switch to Rolls Royce power units, the replacement Range Safety Launch for the ageing conversions of 41.5ft Seaplane Tenders was proposed, and the task of evolving a craft to meet staff requirements was given to the Research and Development of Marine Craft department of the Ministry of Supply. Subsequently the M.O.S. entrusted to Thornycroft the task of designing the new launch. Some of the requirements for the 43ft RSL were a continuous speed of 20 knots in coastal sea conditions, a very heavy construction suitable for rough usage in tropical or arctic conditions, a 2-ton tow hook, a range of 200 miles, accommodation for four stretcher cases under cover and space and stability to carry up to 30 passengers. Other requirements included good all-round visibility for the coxswain, separate radio office, galley and heads.



Originally designated the 43ft Seaplane Tender, but later known as the 43ft Range Safety Launch, the Thornycroft 43ft RSL met the RAF requirements for a robust, fast seagoing launch for duties which were to include clearance of air/sea practice bombing ranges and SAR.

<https://www.berthon.co.uk/berthon-blog/marine-services/busy-times-for-the-berthon-historical-boats-team/>

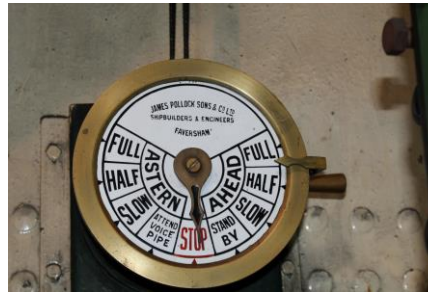
Please take the time to look at Berthon's Historic Boat Blog as it covers some of the work they have carried out on some of our fleet. Click on the above link or paste it into your web browser.

VIC 56 – She is still lying on our pontoons albeit she has been moved over away from the main pontoon so that it can be moved out for long term

maintenance. Work has continued with frequent visits from Henry C and chief engineer Bob C. A boiler inspection was



successful and work now proceeds toward getting her ready for her first steaming of the year, whenever that will be. Juliet H has been on board alongside photographs of the boiler and engine preparing an outline of engine room shortly be available for interested The photographs shown here are courtesy

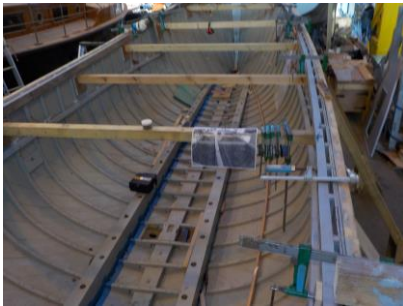


Henry and has taken room. Henry has been procedures and this will volunteers. of Juliet and Aron and the little write up courtesy of David G so all in all a combined effort with our trainee reporters.

LIBOR Projects “Funded by the Chancellor using LIBOR funds”

Landing Craft Assault LCA F 8 – She is still on hold pending repair of our 20ton crane, it isn't the electric motor but the feed to it that has failed.

Armed Steam Cutter ASC 26 'Falmouth' – Engine bearers have now been fully fitted and secured, along with a pair of risers running through the bilges at the height of the top of the engine bearers, these will be taking the bottom boards eventually. In the photo over left the first of these risers can be seen to the right of the engine bearers. Work has also been continuing with



removal for replacement of the portside gunwale. Principal players: Aron C, Susan D,

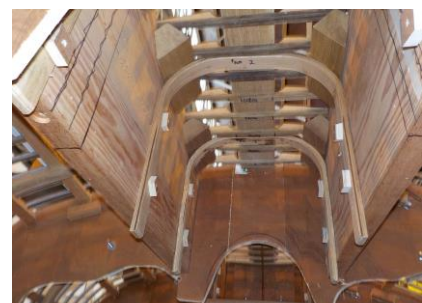


Ros R and Mark S. In the photos over right we can see Olly in the centre with some of his team as they are cutting a scarf in the new risers. In the photo far right we can see the



pure relief and delight on Brian D's face at finally escaping the clutches of the CMB4 build and the curse of long boarding. Trust me he will get his come-uppance later once the dreaded virus is beaten. Over left Olly and Susan D are working on the gunwale. Former student Olly Howard is now full-time shipwright on the LIBOR side, and is focusing his efforts on ASC26 restoration and fit out.

New Build CMB4 – Keith D and John P have continued to come in and have occupied themselves with constructing and



installing more of their "unmentionables." The teams have continued with the deck infills around the fore-deck hatch as seen above left A significant amount of fairing of the hull has taken place. Some of the students had a go at this, as well as a short-hand from Adm. Neil Rankin. Most of the hull aft of station four has now had an initial pass, with high spots being identified and

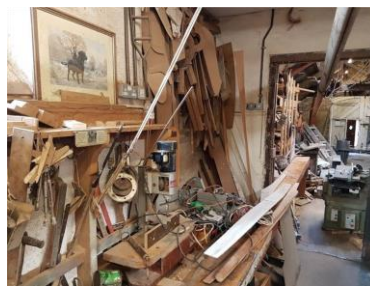
brought down, as well as a few low spots having had a veneer added. Principal players have been Ian B, Tim D, John B, Jeremy C, Steve B, Janet C, Beth H, Bob H, Peter L, Chris L, Martin P, and Pauline P. Over the break, we will need to establish the lining out plan, and then when we can get back in, start marking up the boat. About a dozen planks have been cut, but not yet thickened. That will be front and center when we get back in — making planks — while others get the boat lined out and modify the scaffolding so it is safe yet flexible.



Above left John and Keith's next unmentionable in work whilst over left they are clamping up the next set with John over right looking as though he is testing his strength just to see how far it will bend. In the middle photo above our illustrious Admiral Neil Rankin is trying his arm with long board sanding giving John S a hand.

Moving the main pontoon – As I mentioned earlier the main pontoon is about to be removed for long term maintenance. It was moved in the month.

John Perry Workshop – Last month I briefly mentioned one of Portsmouth's long-term boat builder's family donating the contents of his workshop in Old Portsmouth. Below Courtesy of Max T we can show you some more photographs of this



very traditional set up. John's family the Property Trust along with all his tooling and materials.

kindly donated the full contents to

Other Activities under way - Linden T is now managing the servicing of life jackets, as well as working on SC 438, "Mischief," Tim Hollins' boat. 438 is having some fiber-glass sheathing repaired and replaced below her water-line, a project being lead by Linden.

Library: -Sandra B and Mel S have continued, diligently, to log all of the books' ISBN numbers on to a database which we will then be able to run through a library software program. Given the current coronavirus crisis, the Trust has put the brakes on any unnecessary spending, so we will have to wait a while yet for the library automation software. The ultimate goal is to have searchable databases and proper check-in/out of materials, just as in any other library. We have over 2,000 titles plus 25+ years of Classic Boats, Wooden Boats, Watercraft, and other periodicals. Books and periodicals are now organized on the shelves. Students, staff and volunteers alike are welcome to make use of the library which currently runs on an honesty system. Write in the book what you take out and note when you return it.

Thank you to everyone that helped to put this News Letter together as without them it would have been slim pickings. Make sure you all stay safe until we can get back to normal, Whatever and whenever that is going to be.

Suggestions for next month - If you have got any ditties, lies, scandal or photos that you would like to see in print just let me know, my 'e' mail address is: - boatbitsisus@ntlworld.com. Fred is the name.

. It goes almost without saying that this has been a different kind of month at Boathouse 4. As soon as

the government issued the guideline that over-70s should isolate, attendance dropped off dramatically. And attendance continued to whither as the month went through. Last week we had very few attendees.

As of Friday, 20

th

March, all volunteers were asked to stand down. This followed the NMRN issuing a similar order on Wednesday 18

th

, followed by the Mary Rose Trust the next day. As of Monday 21

st

, the

PNBPT has decided that the entire Historic Dockyard (and Priddy's Hard) is closed to all operations until further notice. There will be no volunteer access for the duration of the crisis. Limited access maybe for some of us, but only for purposes of periodically checking the boats.

Leading up to full closure, some work, nevertheless, continued. For purposes of the newsletter, here are some comments and observations over the course of the last month:

CMB Project:

ASC 26 , "Falmouth":

New Arrival: RSL 1668:

1

HSL 102 Update:

Classic Boat

Wooden Boat

'New" bomb trolley:

We acquired a substantial bomb trolley from the clear-out of the late John Parry's boathouse in Old Portsmouth, and this has been slowly fixed up by Carl S and Ivor H.

[Fred: the clear-out of the

boathouse was the tail end of February. Do you want a picture or two?]

So there you are. Ask me for further info on anything you want and I'll try and fill in the gaps.

Best wishes always,

DG

Little Pisser

Good morning all. I thought I'd use this time to conduct some research and the results are fruitful. The two images enclosed depict a clinker built boat on the back of an MTB seen leaving HMS Hornet. The college is currently building two of these and is good to find an image of one in service.

The other is more interesting. It shows MTB344, an experimental boat built by Thorneycroft and very similar to a CMB though built much later and for a different war.

MTB344 was delightfully known as "Little Pisser" and was engaged in a number of incursions to the Channel Islands during the war to inspire the local population who were experiencing the horrors of Nazi occupation. One of these operations was "Operation Basalt", an 'invasion' of the island of Sark, an event that Peter and I have been very conscious of for some time. The Lt Gov's adjutant Marco has been in touch with both Peter and I historically about commemorating Basalt at some point and indeed last summer it was proposed to run 81 over to Sark during our visit to the islands for this purpose. Where this gets really interesting is if you look more closely at 344.

She was built to carry two torpedoes aft in the same way the CMB does but these were removed to make way for an 18' dory to suit her new role in clandestine ops. This dory can be made out in the photo.

This is the same type of dory we have been offered and discussed that Peter and I visited in August up in Felixstowe. Its not a high priority and we can do nothing just yet but I wonder Peter if its worth contacting the owners again (Louise Lennard?) to see if the boat is still on offer. We can arrange collection when the world returns to normal.

My thought is that, properly restored, she might make a good exhibition piece or perhaps seeing if we cant put her on 102 or 81 for a future visit to the Channel Islands. She is too big to be accommodated on either vessel permanently but for a special visit, this might be worthwhile.

Just a thought really, keeping myself busy.