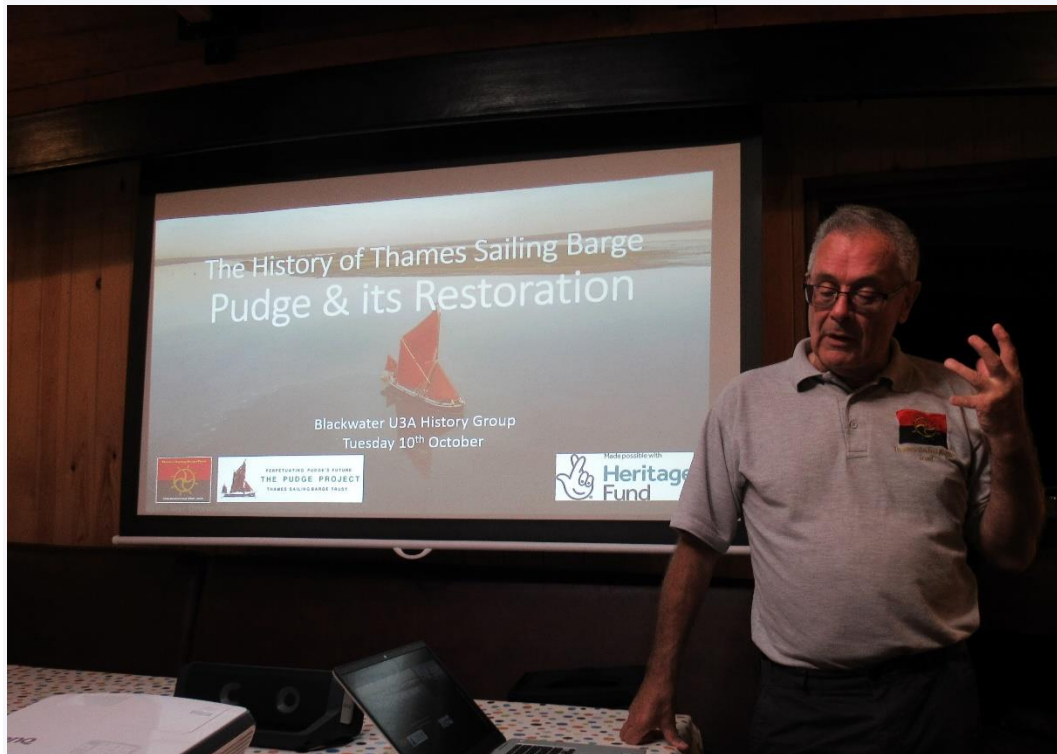


HISTORY & STEAM GROUP

On a fine, warm, sunny Tuesday 10th October we were treated to an illustrated talk and presentation given John Rayment on board the sailing barge 'Pudge'.

Pudge was built in Rochester, Kent by the London & Rochester Trading Company and was one of the last wooden barges to be built. Most of her working life was spent carrying goods between London and Ipswich. In 1940 she was involved in 'Operation Dynamo' to help evacuate troops from the beach at Dunkirk.



The barge was acquired by the Thames Sailing Barge Trust in 1968 and was progressively restored over many years. In 2018, the Trust applied for Lottery Funding and was awarded £328,000. In addition to this, funding came from charitable trusts including Essex Heritage Trust, Garfield Weston, Foyle Foundation and Trinity House as well as members donations.

Initially, the project had a projected cost of £738,000. The work to remove her fittings began during the summer of 2019 by volunteers and she moved into dry dock in May 2020 for the major works to begin and was finally completed in April 2023.

Pudge is now back sailing following her restoration by the Trust. The restoration which included replacing her decks, coamings, carlings, beams as well as a complete refit below deck was carried out by KJ Finch Shipwrights Ltd at Fullbridge and Trust volunteers.

PUDGE

VITAL STATISTICS

Registered 127274—Rochester
1922 Gross Tons 82, (1931 Net Tons 70)
Length 25.2 meters
Width 6.4 meters
Depth 2 meters

Timeline

1922
Built by London & Rochester Barge Co. for London & Ipswich oil seed trade
Launched 13th July
Reputedly named after director's youngest daughter— Elsie Nora Gill - whose nickname was Pudge

1923
William Watson (Bill) becomes longest serving skipper retiring in 1949 aged 69

1931
Fitted with a 2 cylinder, 30hp Kelvin Ricardo G2 petrol/paraffin engine made by Bergius Company Ltd, Glasgow

1933
Arthur Ransome author of Swallows & Amazon moors alongside Pudge at Beccles and Pudge becomes Welcome of Rochester in the Coot Club

1935
Fitted with 66hp K3 diesel engine

1938
Travelling from London to Newport IOW, overturned oil lamp starts fire onboard
Rescued and towed to Deal Pier by Deal motor boat, Rose

1939
In collision with SS Lapwing southwest of Chapman Head Lighthouse whilst carrying 110 tons of oilcake. Crew saved, Pudge repaired and lawsuit follows which Pudge loses.

1940
One of the 'Dunkirk Little Ships' evacuating troops from Dunkirk as part of Operation Dynamo under skipper Bill Watson

1954
In collision with SS Dunnet Head off Shotley whilst travelling from London to Kings Lynn. Skipper Thompson beaches Pudge hoping to carry out repairs but water flooding in and coals from fire set paneling alight. Pudge towed to Ipswich

1955
On way to Hull starts taking in water. Towed to Grimsby by Hull Lifeboat

Late 1950's
Converted to motor barge

1960
Engine fails. Towed to Margate by local lifeboat for repair

1968
Sold by London & Rochester Trading Co. Ltd to Thames Barge Sailing Club - now the Thames Sailing Barge Trust for £750

1969 Onwards
Pudge undergoes various periods of restoration and in between takes passengers on sailing weekends and charters.

1990 & 2015
Returns to Dunkirk for 50th & 75th Anniversary Commemorations


2012
Takes part in the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant

2018
Pudge awarded a National Heritage Lottery Fund grant to complete her restoration


To date
Sails throughout summer months carrying passengers on day and weekend trips and charters



Pudge at Maidstone July 1927
By Rev. J. Hughes
Thames Sailing Barge Trust




Pudge as a Motor Barge at Woolwich
18 July 1967
By C C Beasley
Thames Sailing Barge Trust



Pudge in the Blackwater
Thames Sailing Barge Trust

Members of:




Visit our website at www.bargetrust.org

Dates for your diary:

14th November –The Fire Service – WMCC 2.00p.m. in Linton Room

Geoff Pugh