

Sailing with old shipmates: a voyage on the Thames SB *Repertor* By Alan Rouse

As always it was the companionship of sailing with old shipmates that made this such a wonderful experience.

Now we are faced with the possibility of the club dissolving, it makes this type of experience all the more valuable. We had five club members aboard, all working together on deck, raising and lowering sails, taking the helm, enjoying the thrill of the sailing ...

There's a special comradeship about doing these jobs together, winding up the anchor, heaving on the brails and halyards, doing all we can to urge the ship to sail better than the others.

And afterwards, enjoying a meal below, going ashore in the evenings and just quietly sitting together on deck, talking about past voyages and enjoying the sounds and smells of the ship and the lapping water.

It was a thrill to see this heavy old ship, 85 feet long, hurtling through the water at over nine knots, 4,000 square feet of sails full and pulling, the deck leaning and the water churning past the lee rail.

It was a bit different from the first time we had chartered *Repertor*, about six years ago, when we gently cruised along the rivers Orwell and Stour.

We joined the bargemen at the prize giving, where our skipper collected his two trophies for a race well sailed, and we passed around details of Mariners International Club for those who were interested.

Many of the barges had spruced themselves up beautifully for this event, with bright new paintwork, including gold leaf on the scrollwork, and spotless blue and green decks that dared you to tread on them.

Afterwards we sailed *Repertor* back to Faversham on a hot and sunny afternoon, enjoying the passage through the winding marshes as we heading for our berth, following another beautiful barge, *The Lady Of The Lea*.

As we packed our bags to head home, I for one hoped that, after 40 years, this wouldn't be the last time I would go afloat with club members.



Left: One of the smartest ships on parade: **Adieu** displays blue decks and red hatch covers. Right: **Edith May** trying to overtake to windward. She eventually crossed our stern and overtook to leeward. We later caught and passed her on the beat to windward



Two close rivals during the race, **Decima** and **Edith May**. We eventually showed them our heels.



Enjoying a welcome lunch, Bowie, Liz and Tim Dodwell, Alan Rouse, our skipper David Pollock, Dennis and Doug.

Stephen Chapman, Dennis and Doug



Mariners Stephen, Liz, Tim (chairman), Ann and Alan (past chairman) gather around the binnacle