

Cambria Trust Newsletter September 2011, No 36.

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From Cambria's Cabin

Cambria's first venture after restoration was a Charter with "Sea-Change of Maldon", what follows is their own narrative.

Richard Tichener, Sea-Change Master, noted that in her later trading days **Cambria** became identified with one man and his achievements which are a yardstick for all who follow. But to return her to such a fine condition has taken the combined efforts of a whole team of people, starting with the initial vision of Tony Ellis, Frank Spice, William Collard, Basil Brambleby, and others no longer with us, broadening with success to a strong management team and excellent volunteers. It has been a privilege to get Cambria under way again and a great honour to experience her in a simple stripped down state which may not fall to subsequent skippers. People often say how on earth was it possible to do what these old boats did when they compare them to the current fleet. If they could experience, as we have, Cambria eating up the miles effortlessly, and yet turning up Colliers Reach in six feet of water, no underwater encumbrance, a superb set of easy winches and good gear, with a strong hull as when new, maybe they would understand. I hope that may become her mission – to share that understanding through real, hands-on engagement. This is one of, if not the finest surviving example of British working sail, still able to do what she was designed to do... long may she sail.

Hilary Halajko, Mate, said, "The first time we had five sails set, beating up the Blackwater in the dusk of her first day, sailing for forty years I realized what an amazing machine Cambria is. She has been a home to us for a month, and made us feel at home, which is more. For me it is recognition of what it has made me feel working with others. I feel it challenging, often difficult, and I never stop learning. I feel I have really achieved something when I succeed".

Richard Robinson, known as Stretch, Third Hand, added, "the overall elegance of the ship, the way she heeled, and felt so effortless despite her size. She is amazingly handy and makes working her far easier than I expected".

Now for the Young Peoples experiences:-

For Haydn, the highlights of his time with Cambria were meeting Jim Lawrence, and enjoying Hilary's dinners. He also enjoyed the experience of meeting so many interesting people, and felt proud when they reacted on finding that he had come from Cambria. There were loads of experiences like steering the barge, it was a privilege to be invited to sail amongst the crew of Cambria. Joining the barge at Faversham it was a surprise to find how many people were involved, and excited to see Cambria set out to sea once again, which I felt too was amazing!" As this was the first barge I had ever been on I was very excited to set sail, but also very happy to be a part of helping to get her ready to go as she is a very famous and much loved barge, All the people involved with Cambria made me feel at home straight away which was lovely. When we eventually set off I was amazed how she flew through the sea, and with all seven of the crew on the barge it felt as if we were all a family, doing everything together".

Dean felt very proud to be part of the crew on Cambria's second maiden voyage. "I felt privileged that I could

help get her ready for the sea, for me and many others to enjoy. After two weeks of rigging, painting, etc., we took her down the Creek and anchored in the Swale outside Faversham Creek. When we first set off for Maldon I couldn't believe how amazing she sailed so efficiently through high winds and rough seas. She is unlike any sailing barge I have been on, and am very grateful to have had the experience. I think the shipwrights have done an incredible job over the last four years and should be very proud. I really enjoyed getting to the stage where I can fleet the chain, set up the bobstay, and be really useful on the foredeck. It has been better to be on board for long enough to repeat and remember things. We have become very attached to the barge and she feels like home. We were watching her being put together and now we have been able to sail her and now we have to leave her, hopefully not for ever..."

Luke, a man of few words said," I enjoyed jumping off the barge swimming in the East Swale and going through Tower Bridge in the Lady Daphne".

Dan, who enjoyed his 16th Birthday while with Cambria, said," When I arrived at Standard Quay and saw the barge for the first time I was amazed at what a stunning vessel she was. After two weeks of rigging her out we took her down the Creek and anchored in the Swale, just outside Faversham Creek. After getting underway I realized quickly how capable she was and how well she coped with strong winds and rough seas. After sailing on other barges in the past I can say that Cambria stands out from them all. I think that the Cambria Trust and the shipwrights have done a brilliant job and they should all be very proud of her.

I can do a bowline, know where things are, and what the ropes do, know what to look out for, which knots to use for which tasks, and when the command to tack comes we know where to go and what to do.

It was amazing the number of people who came out to see Cambria off.

The whole thing has been amazing and I cannot really pick out a best point. This trip was more about Cambria than about us. When I was first asked to be part of the crew for the Cambria I was honoured, and didn't really know what to expect. I would love to sail on her again".

The Crew,

SB Cambria's first charter.



‘During her first charter Cambria took time out to sail in the **Thames Match** winning her Class’.

Cambria Restoration News June 2011 – September 2011.

My last report had an undertone of mild panic as we swept towards our launch date knowing that the high tides could not be missed. However, following our rather sedate return to Standard Quay after 4 weeks at Iron Wharf, we were soon reminded that further serious deadlines were on the horizon, with the barge being chartered for 4 weeks by the Sea-Change charity in early July. We had just over 8 weeks to make the vessel sea-worthy and ready to be submitted for its first stringent survey as part of our application for a Thames Sailing Barge certificate.

A summit meeting was held with Tim, the master shipwright, and the remaining works were prioritised to meet the charter requirements. It was agreed that we needed the first 3 cabins to give accommodation for eight, toilets and showers, galley, electrics, hot water and the skipper's cabin, all finished by the 4th July. Deck side all was progressing well with just the main rigging and final sails awaited. The rudder was almost ready to be hung and fitted to the steering gear. Luckily our loyal band of volunteers were popping up most days to assist with absolutely anything.

The most technical part of the final tasks was the electrics. Luckily we had on hand one of our original weekend volunteers Owen Pihama, a professional electrician, who was happy to take on this most complex installation via his business operation. We needed a 240 and 24 volt system working from heavy-duty batteries and powered from a 10kVA generator, inverter and occasional shore power. Energy was required for the cooker, fridge, microwave, lighting, pumps and sundry appliances. All worked perfectly. Thanks Owen, you did a brilliant job.

To reduce the load on Tim, Trust members took over responsibility for all the woodwork back from the after hold bulkhead. Basil continued to reconstruct the old skipper's cabin and weekday volunteer John Bentley constructed the generator room and surrounding panelling. Outside contractors were brought in to build the galley and to help with the complicated timber work within the after bunks. As soon as the 3 main cabins were finished we were able to order 10 mattresses which all had to be made to fit the curves of the hull.

Up forward, Tim and his shipwrights concentrated on building a substantial timber floor that covered the water and sewage tanks together with the complicated associated pipe work. As soon as the floor was finished then the design of the two washrooms was agreed and construction started. A large section of the after steel bulkhead had been left open to take the 1500 litre steel diesel tank which would supply both the generator and heating boiler. There were some tense moments as the new tank was lowered through the hatchway and found to be a squeeze fit! Once the tank was in place, all the electrical equipment was called forward and the heating engineer appeared on board to start installing the hot water system.

It now became a juggling act with people working in every part of the barge, seven days a week. Everybody got on well and helped each other out, and there was a multitude of skills on display. The paint crew mainly worked down below as the deck area was covered in canvas and wire. Nancy and Sue concentrated on kiting the barge out with the myriad of day to day items ranging from potato peelers and first aid kits to all the bedding.

Following some long phone calls, our sail maker confirmed that the mainsail and topsail were ready. This was perfect timing as our first hirer, Richard Titchener, is a highly skilled barge man and sailor as well as a teacher and he brought with him a team of people who were very happy to assist our man Mark Boyle with the final rigging. After over 40 years of neglect the vessel began to look like a working Thames barge again.

Finally Cambria was ready to go and on a very rainy Saturday 16th July she finally left Faversham for her next major assignment, the Thames barge race, being held the following Saturday. Richard had just 7 days to get the vessel in racing trim for a race, which would be a great test of all the skills used in the restoration. Our refurbished old lady did not let us down. The skipper and crew won 7 trophies as Cambria romped home to a convincing win in her coasting barge class, a race she last won in 1938!

In early August, Cambria returned to Faversham after a very successful first charter. Tim then set about building the final cabins and curing a small section of deck leaks. She was then readied for her first Rotary International outing for young carers. So as one part of the story comes to an end a new era starts.

As project manager may I take this opportunity to thank all those who have assisted me over the last 15 years with this major maritime restoration. It has been a very challenging but rewarding venture.

William Collard

Project Manager

September 2011.



Rudder under construction



Tight squeeze for diesel tank



Cabin bunks take shape



Complex electrical equipment



Richard, Tim, and Stretch sorting it out



Donated RIB with outboard and trailer



Up the rigging making ratlines



Thames Barge Race success

Cambria's 2nd Charter and Film slot

After her first very successful charter, Cambria returned to Faversham to catch up on a few outstanding jobs. Amongst these – finishing off the deck, which is now a resplendent blue though, the final anti-slip coat has to be applied.

On Friday 2nd September she towed down the Creek to pick up her next charter at Harty Ferry: A party of six young carers and two chaperones sponsored by Rotary International District 1120. The crew were as before: Richard, Hilary, and Stretch. This charter was used as a trial for what we hope will become a frequent event.

The party were picked up by barge boat and ferried out to Cambria. Following the initial safety briefings and settling –in time the barge set sail in light airs anchoring at the mouth of the Swale with the lights of Whitstable in view.

Saturday proved to be a grand day with sunshine and a reasonable wind. Under the expert guidance of the crew the youngsters worked the boat up river towards Gravesend, anchoring in the evening at Mucking Barge Road, where some went ashore for a muddy paddle. Following a peaceful night Sunday dawned somewhat overcast. Time was spent by the young people working the bowsprit, and climbing the rigging.

Cambria set sail and turned up toward her destination at Gravesend where she picked up a buoy just upstream of Royal Terrace Pier. When all was squared away Rotary Officials came aboard, presentations were made and a meal much enjoyed by all. Cambria was made tidy and left to her own devices, moored between two buoys.

On Monday evening I returned aboard as ship keeper, making ready for the following day.

Tuesday morning two cutters shifted Cambria down on to Royal Terrace Pier where she spent a large part of the day open for inspection by PLA Staff. The cutters moved her back again in the late afternoon and left her ready to slip mooring the following morning since it was to be an early start. She was joined by Master, Richard and Mate Stretch.

Wednesday morning we mustered very early; a BBC film crew, including John Sargent, arrived at the Pier by 7 am. The filming was part of a series about the Victorian photographer Francis Frith in which a sailing barge was required. Who better than SB Cambria?

Tim Goldsack was interviewed on board his recently restored handiwork, adding substance to the story. After some initial static shots, Cambria was got under way, proceeding downriver with the wind astern for the safety of all on board; while the film crew moved around the deck taking footage of the crew working the barge and John Sargent himself employed in specific activities. A motor launch with a separate film crew on board accompanied Cambria for long shots of her sailing. With filming complete it was necessary to work the barge back up towards Gravesend where she had to save her tide to get on the wall at St Andrew's Quay. It being after high water the skipper ran up the topsail and set all the main for a lively turn back up stream (I'm looking forward with interest to see some of the footage). Arriving at her destination Cambria was sailed up to the wall and moored safely alongside to begin another story.

Basil Brambleby, shipkeeper, galley slave, ship's boy, and Hon. Sec.



The Volunteers Go Racing

Writing the "Volunteer Views" blog on the website, I can generally be relied upon to waffle away for a few paragraphs about rigging or painting, how many barges are moored in Faversham, Thomas Seager's foundry or some article I've read in a mag. All good stuff, but generally not buzzing with emotion or excitement. On the 6th of August 2011, however, my post by contrast is positively bubbling about "the best day ever in my life, to do with barges". We the painting volunteers had been allowed to be aboard for the Swale Match as part of the crew. Even better; we were given proper jobs to do in the crew; we'd been worried that as complete novices we'd be asked to just keep out of the way.

My post goes on "This was the Trust's reward to us, the '2nd half' of the painters for all our hard work (there had been too many of us to all go out on race day, so we'd split in two, with half of us going out for a shake-down day the day before, unfortunately with little wind) so volunteers Dave and Julie Brooks, Mark Chapman, Steve Richards and myself joined experienced crew Tim Goldsack (skipper), Tom and John (shipwrights), 'Stretch', Tim (Xylonite), Frank Spice (senior) and Frank Spice (junior).

The short version of this story has us in the Bowsprit class where we were in with Edme, Marjorie and Lady of the Lea. We were a bit slow running down to the easterly mark in lightish airs so that we were outpaced by Edme and Marjorie and ran down alongside Lady of the Lea but when we turned right (south) and harder on an increasing wind we did better, leaving Lady of the Lea behind and regaining on Marjorie. We passed Marjorie just before the SE mark. In the tacking match home we held Marjorie (just) and overtook Edith May, also reeling in Orinoco, despite having disabled our starboard leeboard in the down position.

My job was mainly foresheet-man (bowline-man) which is hard work when you are tacking every 5 minutes in the narrow, low-tide, Swale but I think I did OK and everybody else did well too. We are all very proud of our 2nd in Class and (as I reported as breaking news from the Awards Ceremony which I unfortunately had to miss) the Seamanship Award."

We had all thoroughly enjoyed the day and cannot say enough times to the project team how grateful we were to have the opportunity to go racing like this.

Thank You.





“On the Wall” by Matt Care

The biggest part of the Cambria’s Volunteers lives now that we have all but finished our painting project is about showing our ‘baby’ off to the admiring public and explaining her story to them. None the less we were all a bit wary when told that her next stop was to be ‘The Wall’ in Gravesend; the section of quayside by St Andrew’s Church and the Three Daws pub. This had recently been improved and fitted with mooring bollards, the tidal mud cleared of shopping trolleys and the facilities were to be opened by the Mayor of Gravesham. After this we were to remain alongside over the weekend and through to the Wednesday including overnights.

This part of Gravesend is effectively town-centre and the St Andrews Gardens were a rumoured hang-out for the local youths on weekend nights. Several barge colleagues told us to ‘be careful’ and related tales of past mischief and passing locals expressed concern that we should not leave the barge un-manned overnight. One apparently homeless inebriate took up station on the nearest park bench and was heard telling anyone who’d listen that “there are real bedrooms on that boat”.

We were also the first barge to moor here so we were concerned about how well we could sit on the mildly sloping mud bank, how we’d cope with the enormous tidal range (the tides were going to be big, Spring, 6.4 metre ones), how we’d manage in the wash and wake from big container ships and tankers moving up and down the Thames and how well our very simple gang-plank would serve us for getting the public on and off.

In the event it was a very happy and remarkably problem-free stay which was a definite hit with the locals. There had been little publicity in town but our rig and bob were visible from a way off well into town and drew the curious and the familiar in their hundreds. On the Sunday we saw 363 people round the barge, for example, which compares with the 60’s and 70’s we had seen as ‘busy’ when in Faversham. The total for the week ran to just shy of 1100 souls.

We were delighted with how many river-related folk came down; tug skippers, lightermen and watermen, old barge skippers and mates, the Master of a Thames refuelling ship, shipwrights and yard workers from Everards and other yards. They were all full of memories and stories and were delighted to be able to sit in the re-instated aft Captain’s Cabin and “yarn”. We were equally pleased with the just-plain-curious who’d had nothing to do with barges before “apart from seeing them in the river from a distance”, the young, the old, all

nations, shopping Mums, Grandma looking after the grandchildren, smartly dressed or casual. We'd show them round and they were united in their praise and delight. They wrote reams in our Visitors Book, bought post cards and took away brochures. The main buzz seemed to be that we were "actually in Gravesend" and open to the public and free.

The local youths? They left us alone except for the one eventful Friday night when there were 3 of us sleeping aboard. We were woken several times during the night by music and loud drunken conversation and attempts to get aboard but the lads were fortunately good natured and it never turned ugly. On all the other nights we slept like babies except for having to set the alarms for 01:30 or there-about to check on fenders at the top of the tide. The tankers and container ships proved to be so slow and careful that they generated fewer wakes than the PLA pilot boats and tugs which were fussing about.

All in all it was a very enjoyable and successful visit in which Gravesend from the Mayor downwards made us feel really welcome and pleaded with us to return. We learned a lot about the history of the local area (where we were moored was formerly O'Leary's coal wharf, for example, frequently visited by SB Scone) and were told some lovely stories about barges in general, Cambria in particular, Bob Roberts and other crew members. One old character even invited us into his house to see his models, pictures and memorabilia.

Thank you, Gravesend.

Cambria will be wintering at Standard Quay, Faversham and will be open to the public when work permits and we look forward to seeing many of our Old Friends.

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Current subscriptions: Annual Subscription: £15. Senior Citizens: £7.50.

Please let me know if you have access to a computer, we will add your name to the e-mail address list and keep you informed when the Newsletter is available via the website. This helps us to keep running costs as low as possible whilst at the same time keeping you up to date with latest Cambria happenings.

Thank you.