

A reaction to Christmas 2018 Touchpaper

Allen Clarke was a great friend who did a lot of design for me in the Ballistics Section. We also met socially as he was the Badminton Club Treasurer until he left for Australia; even then we kept in touch with Christmas cards. I was sorry to have missed meeting Ann Clarke as I knew her sister, Brenda, who also played badminton at one time.

The picture of the barge is almost certain to be of 'Elmira' which was obtained from the Civil Service Sailing Association as a basic 'shell'. I recall Eric Speller, Vic Clifford, Ron Treadgold and Pete Topley (to mention a few) casting cement blocks for ballast in the lunch hour.

'Elmira' provided some happy times on the Lea but eventually the 'call of the sea' meant that she was traded in for a small sailing cruiser, whose name I forget, kept on the Blackwater.

Bryan Howard

At this point I hand over this article to Tony Barratt who sailed with Ron Long (skipper) and Bill Smith.

The Civil Service Sailing Association's yacht 'Demijohn' was taken to Waltham Abbey for minor works to be carried out during a winter in the early 60s. The boat was moored outside the old North Site Surgery, which was the ERDE Sailing Club base, just inside the Refinery Gate. The work was supervised by Bob Simkins. I was a crew member with Bob and Eric Speller when it was returned to its base at Maldon in the Blackwater. This involved passing under the cast iron humped backed road bridge outside Refinery Gate. We then followed the route of the gunpowder barges by motoring down the Lea and sailing down the Thames past Woolwich Arsenal then round to the Blackwater.

Bob Simkins was a keen rally driver . One evening we had an exciting ride in his Mini to the 'Demijohn' which was moored next to Bradwell nuclear power station. A rope was wrapped round the propeller so Bob stripped off, went over the side and removed the rope. We did a few other minor jobs and returned to Waltham Abbey in the dark.

The following summer I sailed in the 'Demijohn' round the Blackwater and up the Colne to Wivenhoe. The other crew were Bill Smith, Gudge Taylor and skipper Ron Long. We had a good week but some rain as shown in the photo taken by Gudge. He was a very good photographer and put on slide shows in Waltham Abbey Town Hall.

Tony Barratt

Open Day 1968 and the Whiskers Demonstration

I was very interested to read Geoff Hooper's articles in the Winter 2018 edition of Touchpaper. Unfortunately I have no recollection of the Open Day because I did not join ERDE until 1969, but I do have a copy of the Mintech ERDE leaflet 'Composites – The Right Material for Your Job?' that was one of a number produced for the occasion on a variety of topics. As its title suggests, the leaflet was part of an initiative to make industry more aware of the expertise and facilities available within the Establishment, as indeed were the Open Day itself and the ERDE brochure 'Research and Development Activities and Facilities' produced at about the same time. The leaflets and the brochure included advice on how to consult ERDE.

The leaflet on composites covers the displays at the Open Day as well as outlining ERDE's research and development work on materials reinforced with fibres and on the growth of ceramic