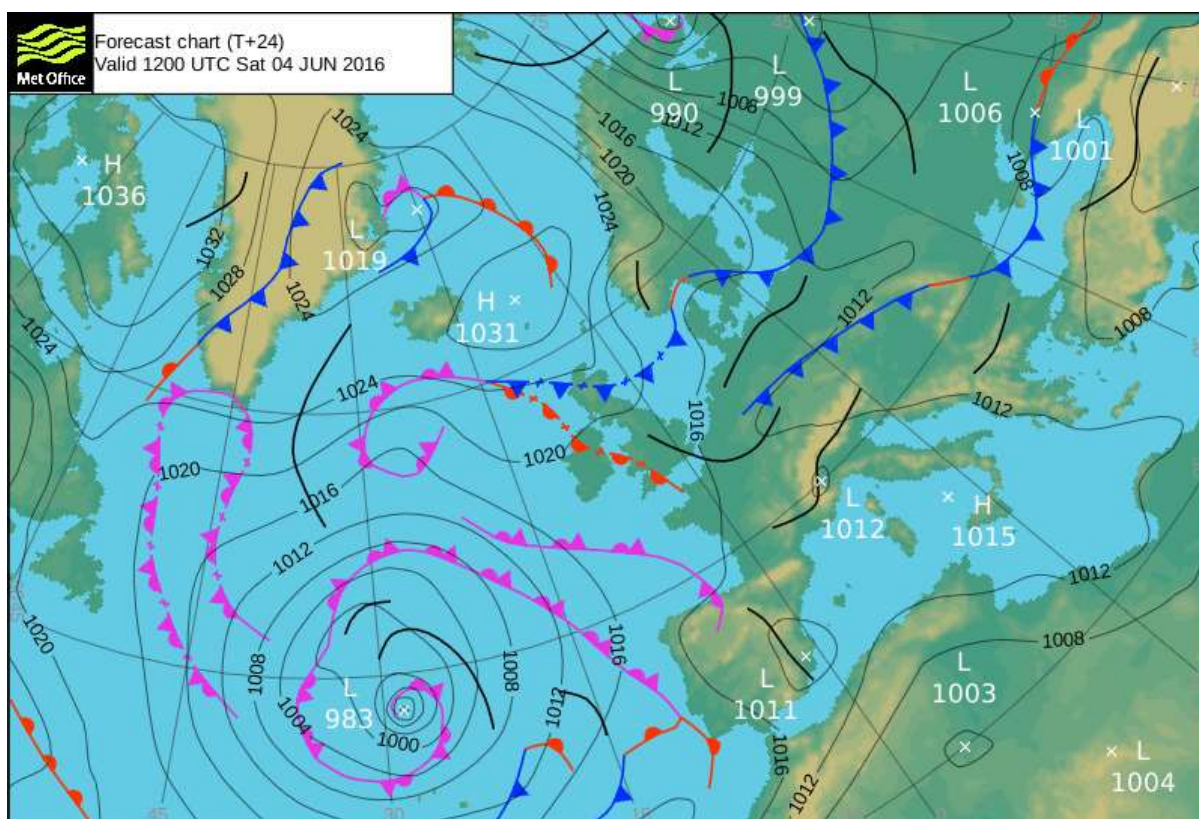


Stack Barge Mirosa 2016

Mirosa was host to a party from the Little Ship Club on Saturday 4th June. In total contrast to the Calais Rally a few days earlier the weather in the Swale was light airs or even calm and after a grey morning the cloud thinned and broke to reveal a genuine patch of sun to shine on us.

The aging weather systems had had enough and fronts were losing their identity. Isobars were widely spaced. A Upper atmosphere trough suggested greater forces aloft but these were of little consequence to us in the relative shelter of The Swale, a curious water feature between The Isle of Sheppey and Mainland Kent. It was once an east flowing river but became a strip of sea with tides ebbing towards Whitstable or the Medway with Streams that begin to run inwards at both entrances, E & W. In-going streams usually meet near Fowley Is, but the actual locality is subject to some variation in gales very high tides, when it may be situated as far west as Elmeley Ferry Causeway.



Peter Dodds the owner, with his reliable colleague Geoff Ingle, known to everyone as Frog, brought the tender to the causeway at Harty Ferry promptly at 0930 and ferried us alongside Mirosa, at anchor in the channel. It was a rising tide (low water at 0638 BST and High at 1250). We were greeted by Maisie the alert ship's dog and by Sally, Peter's wife. This was the last use of a motor until we left the barge, since moving Mirosa herself depends on wind and tide alone.

Sally welcomed us all with tea, coffee and slightly indulgent refreshments while we familiarised ourselves with each other – linking faces to names - and also with our surroundings, first below deck and then on deck.



Peter Dodds. Introductory Advice in the Saloon



John and Aiko Payne, Antony Taylor



Sally Dodds with the tea coffee and croissants, Fiona and Ray Fox



John Nixon, Chris Smart and his friend Marion



John Payne and Aiko, Antony



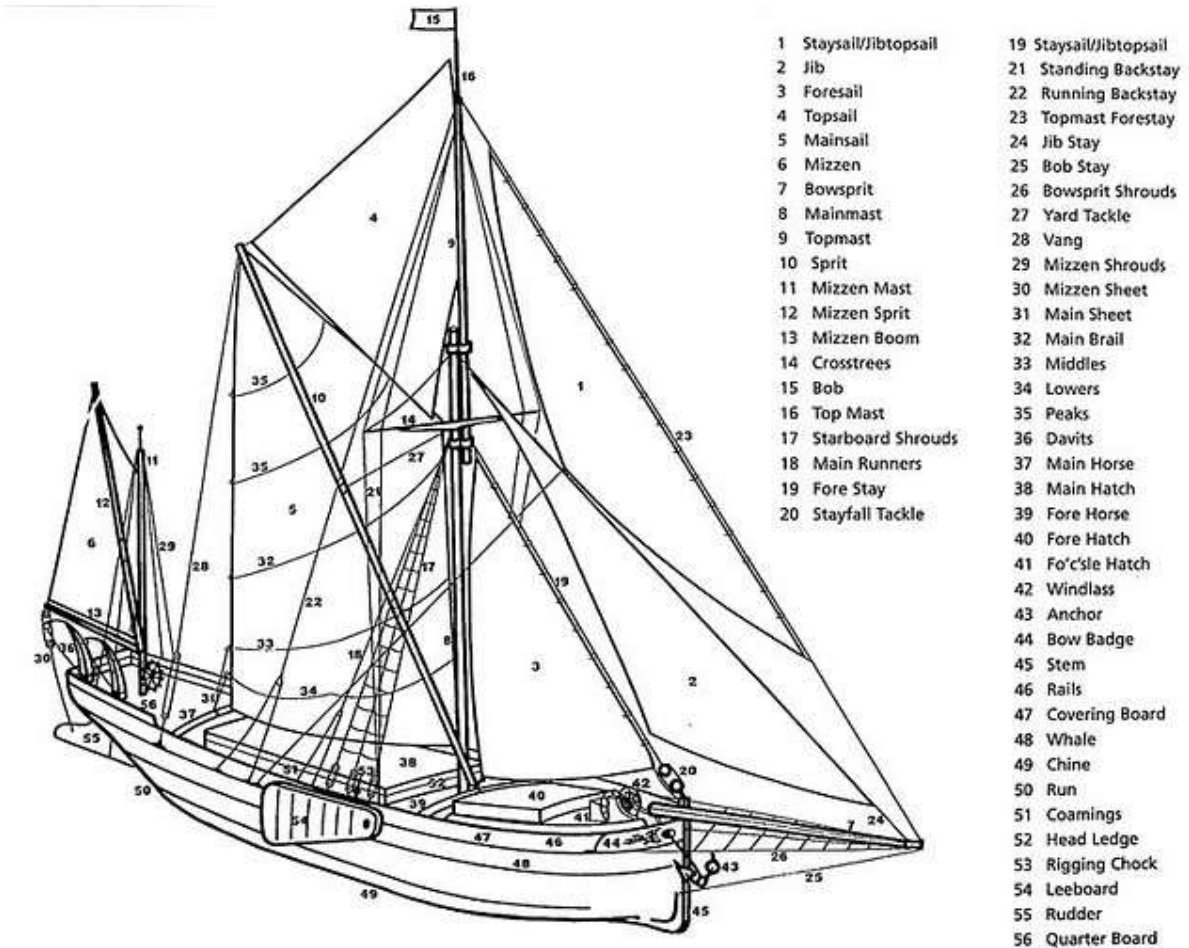
John, Marion, Chris and Ray

The light and comfortable and snug saloon is full of well-kept memorabilia as well as commemorations of Mirosa's long history. It is currently 124 years old, so it will call for a big celebration next year.

However. Back to sailing.



L-R Roger , Antony, Marion, Chris, Crew, Ray, Aiko and Fiona



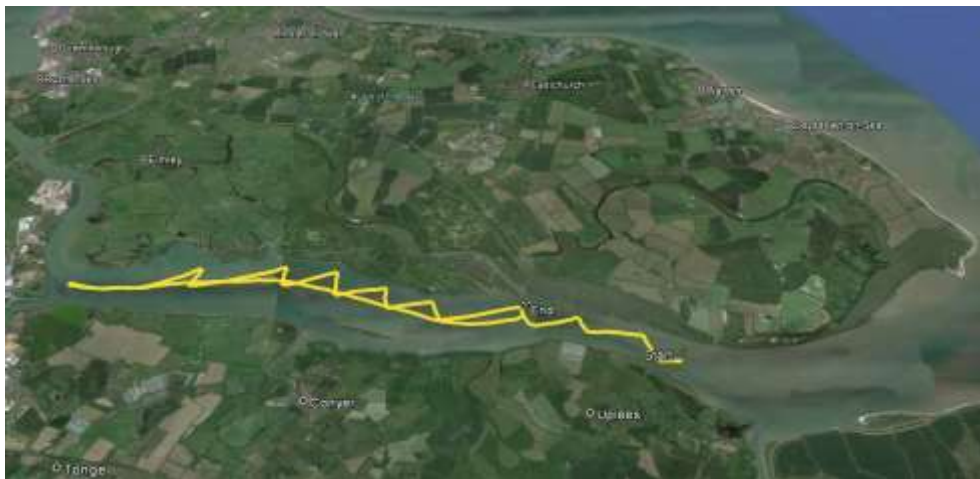
Peter Dodds had anchored overnight in the Swale, having brought Mirosa from Iron Bridge Wharf in the shallow Faversham Creek the day before and anchored astern of a somewhat derelict looking

tug, now with no-one aboard. Overnight this had dragged its anchor and was perilously close to the Mirosa.



He and Frog therefore went in the tender to lay more chain on the tug so that we could set sail safely. The crew carried this out effectively with some gestures of help by the visitors to raise Mirosa's anchor, and in the light air conditions unfurl foresail, mainsail, topsail, and mizzen and get us under way.





Part of our track is shown above. The barge uses no electronic instruments and so sailing is based primarily on familiarity with the waters, tides and depths with occasional use of the lead, much to Maisie's excitement. The lee boards were lowered on the lee side so they hug the side of the barge and are needed when tacking. They are as effective as a keel for a flat bottomed boat drawing about 1 metre (3 feet) and can be raised for the boat to sit flat on the mud if she goes aground.

Most of the rest of the trip was gently observing the Swale and enjoyably discovering some of the traditional equipment needed to propel and guide an 82' long wooden boat in the narrow channel .



Maisie at the wheel?



Anchor Chain



John Nixon at the Wheel, crouching down to see under the mainsail

The anchor chain can be raised using the handle, but to lower it it needs to be wetted to run loose over the drum.



Mainsail with Vang to Windward



Trussing the mainsail

The mainsail is furled using a series of brails



Using the sweeps when the wind is no longer moving the boat



Supervised Ropework. Peter and Roger doing the work



John and Aiko Payne



Coming Ashore

