

Brixham's Heritage Sailing Trawlers

Brixham's ketch rigged, sailing trawlers (Smacks) were the last of Britain's fishing fleet to trawl under sail. (No engines) At the end of the 19th century there were over 300 of these strong and speedy, wooden, red sailed trawlers fishing out of Brixham; "Mother of Trawling" and the busiest fishing port in Britain at that time.

Pilgrim is the last Brixham built, registered trawler, to have worked amongst the fleet of the 19th century. Most were lost within 25 years of their launch. Now increasingly rare, a few examples of vessels of this type can still be seen in and around Brixham. They include the following vessels:



Leader, Provident, Golden Vanity and Vigilance.

The Heritage Pontoon, adjacent to Brixham Marina, offers the best chance of seeing one of Brixham's heritage fleet.

Recently returned to her home port. A freshly restored Pilgrim will be undergoing her internal fit out and topside rigging in the harbour from autumn 2011 to spring/summer 2012.

Pilgrim's (potted) history

PILGRIM was built in 1895 at Upham's Yard, (adjacent to the site of the present Marina). Her first owner was Silas Pine aged 28, younger than most other owner/skippers in the Town. Originally registered in Dartmouth (DH394) Her official number was 102989 and later BM45 (which she carries today).

PILGRIM fished out of Brixham for 17 years. Auctioned in 1912, to a Lowestoft shipbroker she was then sold on to Swedish owners. She had a varied life in Scandinavia.

Unsubstantiated folklore even says this might have included gun running for the Norwegian resistance against the Nazi's when she was fired at by German gunboats. Another "yarn" is that she may have transported a huge block of Granite used for a now destroyed statue of Hitler. We do know that Pilgrim took part in the Tall Ships race in 1983 but retired after losing her mainmast and bowsprit. Most recently, before returning to Brixham, she was used as a sail training vessel.



Pilgrim's restoration

In June 1999 she returned home to Brixham in a very sad state; The Pilgrim Preservation Project Ltd., was incorporated to manage her restoration and a great deal of work was carried out to make her watertight and able to sail. Founders of this enterprise were her Finnish owner Johan Skibdahl and local fisherman Bill Wakeham.

Although she could not operate commercially, controlled sail training commenced in 2000.

A huge amount of effort and hard work was put into generating interest in the project but by 2004 it became apparent that serious and significant funding would be required to fully restore her.



She was moved to Plymouth and work started on a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £50,000, granted early in 2005 which paid for a detailed planning project including a full marine survey and advice on a full restoration and conservation programme. A specification for the restored vessel was prepared and costed at just over £1.3 million.

A further HLF grant of up to £950,000 was submitted. Meanwhile, Pilgrim was towed to



Old Mill Creek, Dartmouth in 2008 where she sat waiting for news.

The grant was approved and work to secure match funding then stepped up a gear, and although the UK was by now in deep recession, the HLF were very supportive agreeing work on the project could be phased. This enabled us to phase raising the match funding too. A further £60,000 was secured from South Devon Coastal Local Action Group prior to cuts announced by the new government of 2010.

In 2009 she was finally put into a dry dock where work on her began. Variations to the phases were required to keep to funding deadlines and finally, a little later than planned, the hull of PILGRIM returned to Brixham on October 4th 2011 under her own engine power.

Work will carry on in Brixham Harbour where we will continue with the painting of the hull, she will be rigged with masts and top deck equipment and her below deck area "Fitted Out".

PILGRIM looks quiet different to the vessel that left Brixham; now restored to her original elegant lines; typical of her type.



An engine room has been built and equipped. Rigging and top deck fixtures will be fitted so she looks as much like the original vessel as possible. Below decks will be more in keeping with life in the 21st century with accommodation for 12 plus crew and state of the art equipment for safe passage to be included.

Volunteers (we always need more) continue to work hard, with various aspects of physical work whilst others continue to beaver away at endless paper work and meetings required to keep the project on track.

Thanks to the crew at Butler's Boat Yard. The wonderful finish of the hull was achieved by regular collaboration with Stanley John Wilson, our Wooden Vessel Specialist Advisor, "John" worked at Upham's yard where Pilgrim was built – a few years earlier of course!

Pilgrim's future

She will be used for education and enjoyment; heritage cruises, our unique "Fishing under Sail" programme, sail training, local and longer cruises and chartering. Sailing and quayside based activities and events will mean that **YOU** can share in the experience.

PILGRIM BM45 TRUST LIMITED, a registered charity (Inc. Friends of Pilgrim) formed to raise funds, continues to work alongside the restoration to work on further grant bids and generate income. (Gift Aid is an added bonus for the trust in respect of tax paying donations).

Further information or to join us, please contact

Rod Coveney
5 Bala Brook Close
Brixham, TQ5 0RQ: 01803 882915
e-mail rbcabala@talktalk.net
or visit our website:

www.pilgrimofbrixham.co.uk



Fundraising functions are held around the port, look out for posters, or check out the website; you are most welcome to join us.

Supported by:



PILGRIM BM45 HOME AGAIN!



Built in 1895 at Brixham
Major Restoration 2011

1895, 2011.....

**Keep Britain's Maritime
Heritage alive.**

