

2015:

A busy summer and we have had the Brent open to the public on several weekends. Many visitors have made generous donations to our funds and signed up to our Facebook and Twitter feeds. Brent is becoming more widely known and loved! The highlight of this summer was our Star Tugs day which went down well with younger folk onboard. Volunteers have also been hard at work and the deck has been fully wire brushed, chipped and painted, along with the wheelhouse which has been stripped and re-varnished, cabins inside have been cleaned and partially repainted and a companionway ladder has been reinstated. Between 9th and 18th January 2015 we were at the London Boatshow. Not the Brent herself, but our Trust stand and the launch of our first fundraising campaign. We made some fantastic contacts, and raised nearly £3,000!

2014:

As of the 9th of August 2014 we now have a small volunteer team working onboard several times per month. We opened the tug up for public view at the Maldon Regatta 2014 for the very first time. A great day which raised nearly £300 for the Trust and allowed us to launch our Facebook and Twitter page.

With the formation of a Company and award of Charitable Status in December 2010, the Trust has since carried out limited work onboard to help assess the condition of the vessel and its steam plant and to keep the boat weather tight, safe and dry. It has also been considering restoration plans, obtaining estimates for repairs and exploring sources of funding through grants or donations. Finding new uses for the tug which will maximise its chances of preservation success and funding eligibility will be our biggest challenge.

There has been considerable progress and several setbacks:

A major breakthrough came in November 2011 when the Trust were contacted by the Ballymore Group who are redeveloping the town of Brentford into a larger residential area. The River Brent joins the Thames at this location and the tug is named after this tributary. Ballymore have kindly offered us a permanent free mooring within the old Brentford docks area both for the tug and a proposed local waterside history museum which would be installed in a typical 'Thames' Lighter' or barge afloat alongside. Considerable research and negotiations took place, which even included exploring unsuccessfully trying to get the Brent working in time for the Queen's Jubilee Pageant which took place in June 2012. We held a successful public meeting outlining our aims in 2012 which was well received, both by the public, planning officials and local M.P's.

Sadly the pace of the major development and planning proposals is taking far longer than anyone anticipated with delays of years rather than months, making it very difficult for both Ballymore and the Trust to plan the Brent's future and prevent her ongoing deterioration. We have now in 2014 reluctantly decided to withdraw from the Ballymore scheme so that we can again 'go it alone'. We are now looking to relocate the vessel to the London Dockland area and use her in an imaginative way which allows her to be regularly operated under steam. This will require a new HLF application to be made which will take time.

Older news and some of the tasks carried out to date:

Removal of later addition or non original woodwork, fixtures and fittings to aft cabin.
General tidying up and removal of non essential or obsolete stores from Cabins, Forward Store, Engine & Boiler Rooms.

Basic visual survey to establish condition of vessel both inside and out.

Checking and reinstating 240 volt shore lighting and power supplies and Calor gas cooker.

Washing out Boiler and cleaning out Smokebox and Furnace Tubes to allow full visual internal inspection, with some ultrasonic test readings to measure Boiler plate thickness.

Clearing out bilge spaces around front of Boiler.

Freeing off and revolving Main Engine by hand and general cleaning up.

Setting up Limited Company, Registered Charity, Trust Web Site and Bank account.

Getting onto the BBC ESSEX web site:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-13297969>

Obtaining estimates for works to be carried out by contractors and drawing up schedules of work and project proposals as part of a pre application for asking for an award from the Heritage Lottery Fund.