

## MERSEA WEEK – IN A CLASS OF ITS OWN

Mersea Week Celebrates 50 years of Sail with a Different and Distinctive Logo



The design of the commemorative logo a 'wavy' **M** and a 'wavy' **W** on a background of sea blue is envisioned to represent the Spirit of Fifty Years of Mersea Week and the timespan of holding our sailing regatta on the River Blackwater.

### **50 years ago, life was much simpler, but was it really?**

**Sailing on the Blackwater** and indeed everywhere would have been quite different.

The 1960/70s, was a time of change in boat design and construction, both for dinghies and yachts. Boats started to be mass produced, going from wood to fibreglass to make sailing more affordable and accessible. So popular in the 1960s, amateur building of dinghies using plywood gradually faded out. Spars evolved from wood to aluminium and, more recently to carbon. Throughout the 1970s there were many advances in boat design, with some yacht designs becoming swiftly surpassed. Over the years, racing yacht design has seen skegs disappear and heavy lead bulbs added to fin keel tips. It was also in the 70's a new rule for rating race boats, the International Offshore Rule (IOR) came into being. This was published and effectively dictated the nature of designs, leading to some 'rule bending' designs to gain a better rating. IOR was then superseded by CHS (Channel Handicap System) which then morphed into IRC (International Rating Certificate) which is not published and is now used in all major regattas and events. In dinghies, the designs of single manufacturers such as Laser and especially RS have had a major impact, to the detriment of some traditional classes. Sails once made by hand in natural fibres progressed to nylon and Dacron, the materials of the time, and were still being made by hand. Sails today are made using advanced digital technology and involve using materials like carbon and Kevlar, which can increase efficiency by as much as 100 percent compared to those sails of the 70's. The other major development in sails is the widespread use in both dinghies and keelboats of asymmetric spinnakers, larger than a conventional downwind sail and set off a short sprit rather than a spinnaker pole attached to the mast.

**Navigation & Communication** Paper charts, parallel rules and pencils made way for the first simple low-frequency Global Positioning Satellite [GPS] navigation system which began operating in 1971. This system, which is now combined with electronic nautical charts,

displayed on a screen, replaced mechanical navigators on almost all sailboats. Some receivers are now so accurate they can establish a location within one centimetre. Also networked to the GPS are instruments that assess wind speed, water depth and temperature. In addition, you can now even get a waterproof mobile phone and all thanks to social media, some just can't resist posting their photos which capture literally every sailing moment. 50 years ago, it was definitely much easier to keep embarrassing events quiet!!

**Clothing** then was pretty basic, probably a pair of canvas shoes and a lace-up life jacket covered with PVC and stuffed with kapok. The only available waterproofs were vinyl, they always seemed heavy and thick, and they fitted so badly that you often got cold and wet. How different to today, when we can just pop in to our lovely <https://marinestore.co.uk/> chandlery and purchase comfortable, warm, and trendy clothing that offers protection in the most challenging of weather.

**Mersea Week** has always embraced the many scientific and technological advances that have been introduced over time. Yet it remains a beacon of tradition and custom, continuing to be the most successful and enjoyable of events. The peaceful creeks and estuaries of the River Blackwater are home to a bevy of Classic Boats and fleets of Fishing Smacks, Bumpkins, Bawleys and Winklebrigs. To be amongst them, or just to see these vessels sailing during Mersea Week is such a privilege, and a timeless sight to behold.

**Mersea Week takes place from Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> until Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> August**

**COME AND JOIN US** There are races for all classes of sail boats – Dinghies – Keelboats – Open Boats Smacks - Free Moorings - Start Party - Daily and Weekly Prizegiving with Commemorative Glassware and Sponsor Prizes Shoreside Activities – Stylish Clothing Obtainable – Accommodation Available on Land Delicious Food - Entertainment - Great Company.

*We are also pleased to welcome the GBR IRC East Coast Championships & Sonata East Coast Championships*

**Early Bird Entries Are Now Open**

[www.merseaweek.org](http://www.merseaweek.org)

