

## **Information Pack for Group Leaders**

### ***Things to know before your bring a Group***



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# 1. The Charity

Sea-ChangeSailingTrust is a registered charity. It was formed in March 2007 to provide residential opportunities afloat, to embed personal development and offer accredited learning. This is done by working together on a large traditional sailing vessel. People participate in the whole range of domestic and sailing activities and are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their contribution and group decisions.

## Our Staff

All staff are selected for their experience and attributes when working with young people and all have enhanced DBS certificates.



**Richard Titchener, Barge Skipper:** After a career in Personnel Management, Richard has spent 15 years taking groups of young people sailing on a Thames Barge and is a qualified Barge Master, Yacht Master with a Commercial Endorsement, and First Aider. He is the primary skipper of 'Blue Mermaid' and the Executive Officer of Sea-Change Sailing Trust.



**Diggory Rose, Barge Mate:** Diggory joined SeaChange in March 2025 from running Boat House 4 at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Prior to this he had a career in sail training, both on traditional and modern boats. Diggory is also a Yacht Master Instructor and Examiner.



**Hilary Halajko, Youth Mentor:** Hilary has worked extensively with young people in a variety of age groups and settings. She has sailed with groups of young people as mate for 8 years. She is the retired Officer in Charge of a 24-place day nursery linked to an educational establishment. Hilary is also the Chair of Sea-Change Trustees.



## Staff Contact Information

### Operational Crew:

Richard Titchener :: 07895 063838 :: [richard@seachangesailingtrust.org.uk](mailto:richard@seachangesailingtrust.org.uk)

Hilary Halajko :: 07597 355782 :: [hilary@seachangesailingtrust.org.uk](mailto:hilary@seachangesailingtrust.org.uk)

Diggory Rose :: [diggory@seachangesailingtrust.org.uk](mailto:diggory@seachangesailingtrust.org.uk)

### Safeguarding Officer:

Paul Bowen :: 07850832367 :: [paulbowen62@aol.com](mailto:paulbowen62@aol.com)

### Shoreside Contact:

Peter Collings :: 07738995403 :: [peter.david.collings01@gmail.com](mailto:peter.david.collings01@gmail.com)

## Environmental awareness

We are a very low carbon organisation. Our Thames sailing barge Blue Mermaid does not have an engine. Our voyages are carried out using just wind and tide. We pay to offset the little carbon that we do produce.

We are very proud to be the very first operator on the River Thames to be awarded the Gold Award under the Thames Green Scheme, and to have received the ASTO Environmental Excellence Award in 2022.



## 2. The Thames Barge ‘Blue Mermaid’

We successfully raised the money to build our own Thames Sailing Barge. ‘Blue Mermaid’ was commissioned in 2019. She is built of steel and is a replica of the last Thames Barge to be built in 1930 which became a casualty of WW2. She is the first full-size Thames Sailing Barge to be built in 86 years. Her deck is 26 metres long and provides a wide and stable platform for the inexperienced sailor.



We have retained her original appearance on deck and have kept the open cargo hold inside to allow for possible shipments.

Blue Mermaid meets or exceeds all current Maritime and Coastguard Agency safety standards for carrying passengers and is equipped with lifejackets, safety harnesses, and waterproofs for each passenger to use whilst on board.

Blue Mermaid does not have an engine. This means that life on board has a special connection to the natural elements, and peace that is excellent for wellbeing. It also means that the daily routine is very much dictated by the wind and tide and the plan for the day can change with very short notice. Some flexibility is essential, especially regarding such things as meal-times and wake-up times.

### Electricity:

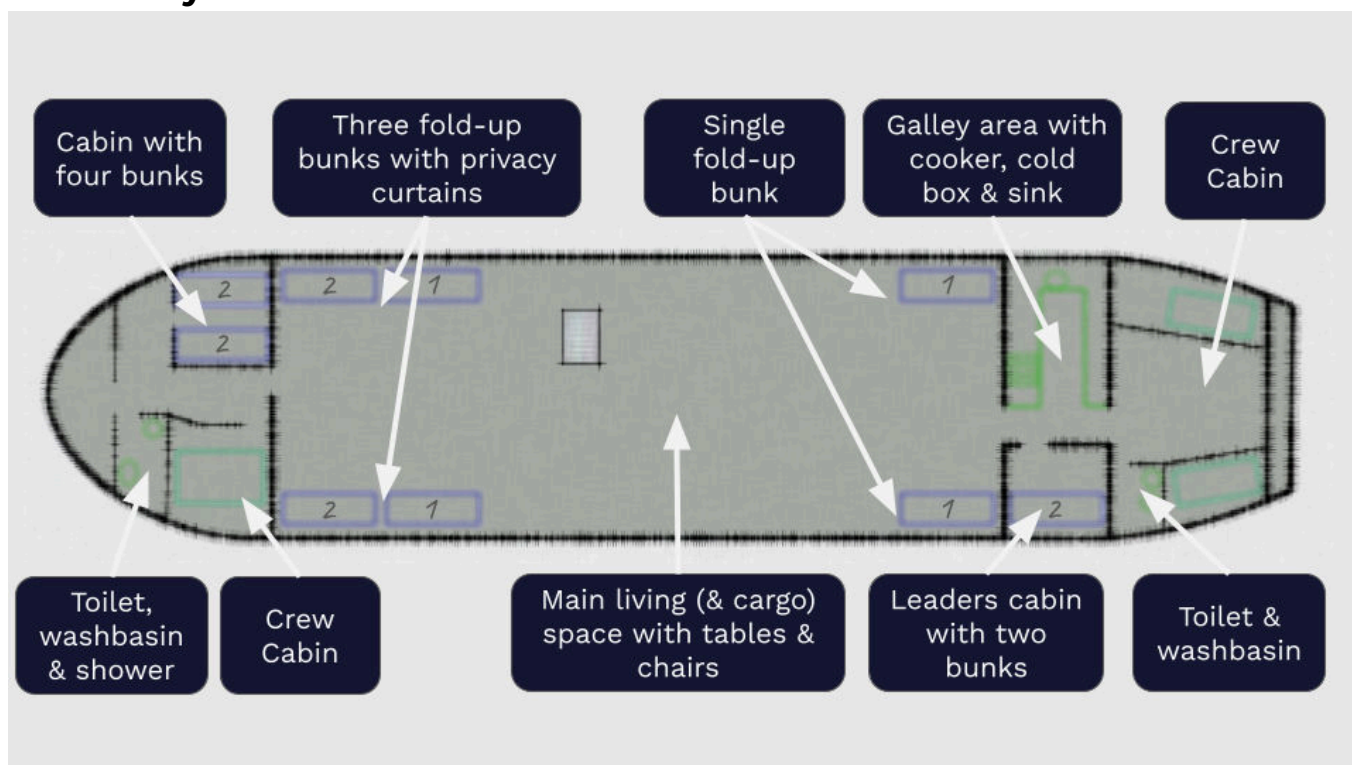
Blue Mermaid has a 12volt electric system topped up by solar panels. These power electrical lights below decks and navigational equipment. There are some USB charging points and these can be used for charging mobile phones but cannot be used for charging high power items. You will see some conventional 3 pin 240volt sockets onboard. These will only work when we are moored to a quayside and a shore power lead is available, or if we are running our generator. In summer we rarely run the generator as the solar panels provide enough power for Blue Mermaid’s needs, and we are unlikely to moor the barge alongside a quay during your voyage. There is no Wi-Fi onboard and phone signal is poor inside the accommodation.



### Sleeping Accommodation:

Blue Mermaid is fitted out down below to accommodate up to 15 people including our three sea-staff who have cabins separate from the voyage crew. Accommodation is basic as the hold space has been retained to enable us to sometimes carry cargo under sail. The 12 bunks for the groups and their leaders are organised in a configuration of 4 permanent bunks in a cabin in the fo'c'sle, 6 demountable bunks with privacy curtains in the hold, and two bunks in a cabin beside the galley. Group leaders usually sleep in the galley cabin, though some choose to be in the hold with the group.

### Interior Layout:



### Toilets and Amenities:

There are two toilets on board, each in a cubicle with a handbasin. There is a small manual-pump shower in one cubicle. This is normally reserved for the use of staff if they are resident onboard for a longer period of time. Blue Mermaid has to carry fresh water in tanks, and with no mains electricity hot water is very limited. It is sometimes possible for crew on short trips to shower if necessary, if other facilities ashore are not available.



## Catering:

Cooking and eating is, where possible, done communally with everyone eating meals around a table in the cargo hold.

Victualling and catering is usually the responsibility of the group, who also need to cater for the sea-staff.

Blue Mermaid has a four-burner domestic gas oven with one oven shelf and a grill. Meals should be planned to take account of limited oven space when catering for a whole crew.

Hot water in the galley is boiled on the stovetop in kettles. Fresh water has to be pumped from the on-board water tanks using foot pumps.

Blue Mermaid has a full complement of knives and chopping boards and so cooking fresh meals from scratch is a highly beneficial group activity. Organising mass vegetable chopping sessions can be good for teamwork! There is no electric fridge or freezer, just a highly efficient cool box beneath the floor. Therefore, freezer blocks are recommended. The cool-box has managed to keep ice cubes from melting for four days in summer and is safe for storing meat for similar short periods; however meal plans should take into account the lack of refrigeration, perhaps with vegetarian meals towards the end of voyages.



### 3. Programme Contents

During the voyage everyone participates in sailing the barge from place to place. The nature of working on the water is one of variety, whether it be the result of the changing tidal pattern each day, the weather or destination. The crew will work a watch system whilst the barge is sailing. The watch system ensures that each person gets a chance to cover every job, and nobody ends up doing either only popular or unpopular work. It also ensures that all times there are enough people available for the safe sailing of the ship.

In addition to the sailing related tasks, everyone takes a turn at helping to prepare meals, wash-up, and to help clean and maintain the barge.



On arrival, crew members will be allocated a bunk and will stow their gear for the trip and then there will be an initial safety brief while the barge is still moored up, and a longer safety brief for sailing, and familiarisation with work on deck and with the facilities below.

The whole crew are fully involved in the sailing of the barge so that after the first few days they will play active and responsible roles. Usually there will be a de-brief and reinforcement of learning after the evening meal.

Night times are usually spent at anchor somewhere sheltered. Sometimes we sail into the night. It is unlikely that the barge will be tied alongside a quay during your voyage, and so the opportunities for shore-leave are limited. If possible, there will be at least one opportunity for a shore visit with the emphasis on experiencing the natural environment by taking the barge-boat to a riverside beach and there may be a chance for a game of rounders or football whilst ashore if the location is suitable. The sailing area around the Thames Estuary and coasts and rivers of Suffolk, Kent and Essex are ideal for exploration, gaining an understanding of the environment and the historical context of the barge.



## 4. The Accreditation Process

All participants will receive a course completion certificate at the end of their time aboard.



We offer the Royal Yachting Association's Start Yachting and Competent Crew certificates requiring three and five days aboard respectively.

As part of the Skippers of the Future Project in 2023-4 we developed the Introductory Certificate in Traditional Seafaring with the National Historic Ships Unit and this may be covered on your trip if requested.

Both sets of qualifications require some study and commitment and although much of the contents are naturally covered in normal activity, it is important to consider whether taking the structured training is right for your group. One of the benefits of working with young people in this environment is that they learn without it seeming like school.



## 5. What we supply and what you should bring

**We supply:** the vessel, qualified staff and safety equipment including lifejackets, waterproofs and harnesses.

**The group supply:** food and cleaning materials for the duration of the voyage. We can offer advice on a suitable menu for the voyage.

**Young people should bring the following kit in a soft bag if possible:**

### Essential

Sleeping Bag  
Pillow  
Warm sleeping clothes  
A complete change of clothes  
Warm clothes  
Suntan Lotion  
Old Trainers  
Wash kit  
Towel  
Sun Hat  
Warm hat & gloves

### Desirable

Musical instruments  
A little spending money  
Wellington Boots  
Shorts/swimming gear  
Personal Reading Material  
Communal Music Player

We cannot emphasise enough that the temperature afloat is always cooler than people are expecting, and warm clothes really are essential. There is no heating on board the barge and for voyages in spring and autumn we suggest adding a blanket to the kit list in case the nights are chilly.



## 6. Safety and other policies

Safety is of paramount importance to us. The vessel is operated according to and exceeding the requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Every possible attempt is made through explanation and example to instil a safe working attitude and thereby to mitigate risk. Where risk does exist, reasonable steps are taken to guard against accidents by using safe working methods, for example, no person is allowed on deck alone after dark and anyone under eighteen years is always required to wear a lifejacket on deck. Certain conditions may make it appropriate for everyone to wear a lifejacket on deck at the discretion of the skipper.

Mobile phones tend to be a normal personal item and may be brought onboard unless agreed otherwise with your staff and group. However, they must not be used when people are engaged in an activity. There will be free time built into each day in which phones can be used. Phones and other personal electronics must not be used on deck when the vessel is moving as they can pose a hazard to safety.

Jewellery must not be worn when working the ship. Long hair should be tied back.

We often have the opportunity for swimming during voyages. Swimming will only take place from a beach when a safety boat is present and at the discretion of the skipper.

No alcohol is to be brought aboard the vessel and the law concerning consumption by young people will be adhered to. No drugs are allowed aboard the vessel unless prescribed by a medical practitioner. Any person found to be in possession of an illegal substance, or any form of weapon, will not be able to continue the trip.

Smoking and electronic cigarettes is not allowed below decks for safety reasons but is permitted on deck when not engaged in activity, and only if pursued with consideration for non-smokers present.

We have a comprehensive Child Protection Policy.



## 7. Applicant Details

We provide a consent form for you to give to each individual. These forms must be completed, signed, and returned to us in advance of your group joining the barge.

We expect the group leader to have obtained informed parent/guardian consent for the sailing trip, and swimming if intended. Swimming will only take place when a safety boat is present and at the discretion of the skipper.

We also require details of any medical conditions and prescribed medication for all those on board, together with details of an emergency contact ashore that will be available for the duration of the voyage.

Finally, we ask permission to use photographs which may include students for publicity and fundraising purposes.

## 8. Things you may be asked to check:

On our website [www.seachangesailingtrust.org.uk/information-for-clients/](http://www.seachangesailingtrust.org.uk/information-for-clients/) you will find copies of all our policies:

- Safeguarding
- Vulnerable Adult
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- GDPR
- Data Privacy
- Health and Safety

You will also find:

- A copy of our insurance certificate
- Our terms and conditions of charter

If you have any questions about the booking process, or bringing a group with us, please call our office. We will be pleased to help you.

