STRAITSMOUTH RAMP TAKES SHAPE

In early July, Great Eastern Marine Service Inc., the winning bid contractor for the Straitsmouth ramp construction, poured the first of eleven concrete footings to be used as the base for the new 105-foot timber boat ramp. Each footing weighs approximately 10,000 pounds and measures 2 feet high, 2 feet across and 13 feet long. They have rebar-cage reinforcement inside along with rebar loops to enable them to be lifted by Great Eastern’s 50-foot crane. Each has a 3-inch PVC pipe sleeve at either end to allow 2-inch rebar to be driven though the footing to secure it to the sub-surface ledge.

On August 6, Great Eastern’s crew arrived at Gap Cove on the western end of Straitsmouth with two barges, one for their crane and one for their Caterpillar excavator; a small tug boat; and two auxiliary boats to land the excavator on the island for clearing the large boulders. Two “spuds” or pilings were dropped into the water for anchoring the barges into position and preventing their movement during the construction work. The excavator was driven off its barge onto the beach using two 3-foot-wide steel I-beams as a ramp. Once the massive boulders are cleared, crushed stone will be spread to provide an even base for the footings. Continued on Page 3

Towering Repairs

A three-man crew from International Chimney Corporation spent close to a month repairing both lighthouses on Thacher Island. The most extensive work was done on the North Tower, where a stone that had fallen from the parapet two years earlier was epoxied into place. Both towers were fitted with stainless steel corset bands at the base of both lantern and gallery deck parapets to stabilize the structures and ensure that the granite decking does not shift. The North Tower’s repairs were funded by its owner, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, while repairs to the South Tower, owned by the Town of Rockport, were funded by the Thacher Island Association and a grant from the United States Lighthouse Society. Continued on Page 3
Work Crew Profile BILL AND DEBBIE WHITING

To say that Bill and Debbie Whiting are active in the community is an understatement. In addition to the multiple roles they fill in the Thacher Island Association, they row an average of five times a week with the Gloucester Gig Rowers.

After the April to January season ends, they lend their hands to the winter maintenance of the group’s three boats. Bill credits his past eight years of working with Habitat for Humanity for honing many of the carpentry skills he uses on both Thacher and Straitsmouth Island, and both Whitings spend one morning a week at Wellspring House, where Bill teaches math to those studying for the High School Equivalency Test.

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In their spare time, they travel — most often to Europe, with Italy a favorite destination — and sometimes with the gig rowers. Debbie has raced in Bermuda; Bill participated in the 2015 World Pilot Gig Championship in Scilly, Cornwall. In September they both rowed 22 miles of the Thames in England’s Great River Race.

The well-matched couple suspects that they were deliberately matched by friends and family. When Debbie’s college roommate married Bill’s brother, they were paired, usher with bridesmaid, down the aisle. “I’d never met him, but we clicked right away,” Debbie said. They married a year later. After Debbie graduated from the University of Connecticut and Bill emerged from Providence College with a B.A. in Humanities, the couple lived in Simsbury, CT, where Debbie spent 20 years as a teaching assistant in a K-grade 6 public school. Bill spent thirty years with Cigna Healthcare, his last fifteen years as Vice-President of National Accounts, with responsibility for clients like IBM and UPS. They raised three children who reflect their parents’ variety of interests: Brian teaches fourth grade in Newton, MA; Laura, now a swim instructor, is a Physical Therapist who spent two years working with the Catholic Medical Mission Board outside Durban, South Africa.

The Whitings’ choice of Rockport as a retirement destination was natural. Debbie summered on Marimian Way, and her parents still do. When a house became available diagonally across the street from her parents, Bill and Debbie bought it, dividing their time between Connecticut and Massachusetts for several years. In 2009, when they completed their move to Rockport, Bill almost immediately joined the Thacher Island Gig Rowers.

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Summer Work: Straitsmouth Island

Straitsmouth Island volunteers are nearing the completion of an eight-year effort to make the island accessible to visitors. Trails have been cleared, the keeper house made habitable, a barn erected to protect work equipment, and a landing ramp constructed. Rockport’s closest island should be open to the public in the summer of 2019.

Christine Leavren and Dan Southard cleaned windows in the keeper’s house in preparation for storm windows installation.

Ray Moss and John Doua were among those who laid the barn floor.

Straitsmouth’s work crew unloaded building materials from the launch. This is one of 30 6”X6” timbers used for the barn floor.

Bill Whiting and Peter Chick helped Ray Moss remove a boulder.

Syd Wedmore, Bill Whiting and George Grimes secure the liner to the cistern.

Randy Saville prepared the cistern for the addition of a watertight vinyl liner.

Christine Leavren, Tim Quinn, Zach Bruce, bottom row Yuichi Nishi and Keith Anderson.

Ray Moss and John Doua were among those who laid the barn floor.

Bill Whiting, Rich Calnan, and Gail Zuman cleaned a trail to the shoreline revealing a magnificent vista to the twin lights of Thacher.

Volunteers from Cell Signaling Technology came to paint the oil house on Straitsmouth, shown here top row, Suzanne Martin, Tim Quinn, Zach Bruce, bottom row Yuichi Nishi and Keith Anderson.

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**Summer Work: Thacher Island**

George Langer, Dick Morris, and Tom Mikus repaired the storm-damaged boathouse wall. Jamie Erwin and Joe Napolitano, contractors with NAPCO, repaired the assistant keeper house roof.

Ray Moss cleared winter storm thrown boulders from Wedmore Walk. Tom Mikus and Norm Delisle stabilized the walkway to the Whistle House. Dick MacPherson replaced the security camera on the South Tower.

Early-season keepers Christine Lovgren, Jeannette Haynes, and Donna Cusick repaired the safety rope line along Bennett’s Trace at the cliff on the south bluff. The Thacher Island work crew repaired and re-stepped the flagpole on the keeper house lawn. Alice Tewesley patched a hole in the island skiff.

Harry Newell, Christa Clark, Ray Moss, Syd Wedmore and Larry Haynes took advantage of an exceptionally low spring tide to extend the length of the launch landing ramp. Dick Morris’ and Tom Mikus relaxed in front of the new doors they installed on the stone generator house. The Thacher Privy Art Gallery added the work crew creation “Drop-cloth Madonna” to its collection.

Thacher Island maintenance is like housework — it is never permanently done. Winter weather and lush vegetation create a continual need for infrastructure repair and trail maintenance.
HOW YOU CAN HELP

Preservation efforts on Thacher and Straitsmouth islands are both labor and capital intensive. We are extremely fortunate that our members respond with both many volunteer hours and generous contributions. In the next few years the association will be installing a composting toilet and elevated walkway on Straitsmouth, contracting with International Chimney Corporation to make several stone and metal repairs to the South Tower on Thacher, and purchasing a skiff to replace the very old one nearing its end on Thacher.

For members wondering how they can continue to support the efforts of the TIA, we offer the following ideas:

· Volunteer on the islands' work crews (every Wednesday from May-September) or for Shore Crew (year-round opportunities).
· If you haven't already done so, remit your annual dues, $30 for an individual and $60 for a family.
· Consider becoming a life member for $500.
· Make a year-end tax-deductible donation to TIA.
· As part of your estate planning consider adding TIA as a beneficiary.
· Purchase TIA merchandise at Katie’s Gift Shop in Rockport or on our website (www.thacherisland.org). Christmas is near.
· Use the Amazon Smile program when purchasing merchandise from Amazon. With no additional cost to you, Thacher Island Association will receive .05% of all money spent if you select the association as your designated charity.

It Takes a Village to Run an Island

From the day it passed from Coast Guard to local oversight in 1980, Thacher Island has attracted committed volunteers willing to do everything necessary to keep the island accessible to visitors. The addition of Straitsmouth Island to the organization’s mission in 2010 has required even more carpenters and trail workers, additional boat crew to shuttle people and supplies to both the islands, and a newly-formed docent group to answer visitors’ questions. As the organization has grown so have the tasks of the Thacher Island Association board, leading to the formation of Shore Crew for marketing, publicity, events, and merchandising. To everyone who has contributed time and expertise, thank you! For those who would like to volunteer, please contact the Thacher Island Association at info@thacherisland.org or tiashorecrew@gmail.com.

Keepers to Sleep Well next Season

Once again Gardner Mattress of Salem has donated two complete double bed sets for the keeper’s house on Straitsmouth. Keepers have slept well on Thacher for many years on Gardner mattresses and the tradition continues on Straitsmouth thanks to the generosity of owner Gardner Sisk.

Rockport Council on Aging

Thacher Island launch reservationist Paula Eldridge organized a trip for members of the Rockport Council on Aging. Seniors were treated to coffee and doughnuts.

Launch captain Seth Cutter prepared to take the happy visitors back to T-wharf.

Coast Guard Checkup

Seaman Kieran Casey and electrician’s mate Otto O’Neal checked electrical connections in the South Tower during a Coast Guard maintenance visit.

Electrician’s mate Otto O’Neal worked on the foghorn.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Parker River Refuge biologist Nancy Pau brought a crew to Thacher Island as part of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s on-going attempts to diversify bird life on the island.

Parker River Refuge manager Bill Peterson brought Friends of Parker River board members to view the American Oystercatchers.

Lobstering From the Launch

The Kawakami family from Hawaii learned how lobsters are caught. Boat crew-woman Chris Riley showed Kaci and Chelsea Kawakami how to hypnotize a lobster.

Tyson and Charlotte Ober showed off lobsters they helped catch.

Singer/songwriter Chelsea Berry arrived on Thacher Island with a bouquet of flowers for keeper Darlene Fulton.

Syd Wedmore, chairman of the Thacher Town Committee, bids adieu to a short lobster.

Syd Wedmore, chairman of the Thacher Town Committee, displayed his weekly cigar transport system.
New Birds on the Rock
American Oystercatchers have found a home on Thacher Island. Two mating pairs were observed in June, and, although the chicks are hard to spot, sharp-eyed keepers believe at least three were born on the island in July. Once thought to be rare north of Virginia, American Oystercatchers have been sighted intermittently along the Massachusetts coast over the past four decades. The fact that two pair successfully fledged chicks on Thacher bodes well for future nesting on the island.

Gulls Would Like to Rule the Island
The presence of American Oystercatchers has been made possible by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s efforts to reduce the population of Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls on Thacher Island. The remaining gulls can be aggressive, especially when their chicks are young.

But Chickens Rule the Roost
Craig and two other identically named hens purchased from Craig’s list terrorized any gull that ventured near the keepers’ houses.

Go to www.thacherisland.org to order on-line for additional merchandise. Or send checks to Thacher Island Association, Box73, Rockport MA 01966.
2018 Membership Renewals Due Now!
Check the address label on this newsletter above to see if you are paid up for 2018!

If the number next to your name is 2018 then you are paid through May 1, 2019! If not, now is the time to renew. Use the envelope stitched into this newsletter or go on-line to our web site to pay by credit card at www.thacherisland.org

Membership is one of the islands’ most important funding elements for everything from maintenance to preservation projects. For example, Thacher’s South Tower needs more than $250,000 in stone and brick work repairs on the gallery and lantern decks. Renew today.

www.thacherisland.org

Thacher Island Association Board of Directors

President  Paul St. Germain
Vice President  Peter Bergholtz
Treasurer  Bill Whiting
Secretary  Judy Leach

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Bill Braunlich  Lee Marr  Jeff Taylor
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CREDITS
WRITING: Sharron Cohen; Paul St. Germain; Bill Whiting
EDITING: Linda Berard
COVER ART: Mast head photo by Kim Smith.
PHOTOS: Sharron Cohen; Donna Cusick; Camille Glick; Ed Hand; Jeannette Haynes; Nipper Jewett; Christine Lovgren; Skip Montello; Bob Morin; Harry Newell; Paul St Germain, Mike Springer.
COVER MASTHEAD PHOTO: “Two Islands, Three Lights, One Sunset” Courtesy of TIA member Skip Montello. www.skipmontelophotos.com
GRAPHIC DESIGN: Mark Drury, Percolator Design

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