

MARITIME HISTORY LECTURES

Non-Newport Ship events... the Monmouth Town Heritage Trust have organised an impressive season of maritime history lectures under the banner 'Sea Britain - Sea Monmouth'. This may well be of interest to Friends of the Newport Ship (especially the 8th April), so here's the programme.

2005 PROGRAMME, Fridays 18th March - 13th May, 7-9pm, in the Ballroom, Drybridge House, Overmonnow, Monmouth, unless otherwise stated.

18th March - Dr. Colin White, National Maritime Museum, Director 'Trafalgar 200'. 5 pm in the Shire Hall.

19th March - Tony Gardiner ('Tony the Boat'), from Symonds Yat. Nelson's Journey down the Wye: what he saw and how the river has changed since 1802.

1st April - Mystery Lecture contact Kirstie (01600 712 469) for details

8th April - Bob Trett and Charles Ferris. The Newport Ship, 1465 - Excavations.

15th April - Dr. Tony Dickens. S.S. Great Britain, International Liner 1840s-1870s. In the Shire Hall.

22nd April - Dr. Julie Gardiner, Archaeologist / Editor, The Mary Rose Trust. The Mary Rose: Life and Death on Board. 1545.

29th April - Adrian Small, ship builder and seaman. The Mayflower (Pilgrim Fathers) 1620.

13th May - Keith Kissack, F.S.A.. Coronel and H.M.S. Monmouth.

To book, please call:
Kirstie Buckland (01600 712 469) or
Debbie McCarty (01600 710 623)

outside the Museum entrance. Small entrance charge to Roman Baths. Pub lunch, or bring your own picnic!

Tuesday evening TBA, June at 7.30 pm

Medieval History - get your hands on medieval arrows, armour and other artefacts, while our Medieval archer and apothecary discuss their Medieval lives with you! Downstairs at the St. Julian's (Caerleon Road). £3, buffet included

Saturday, 9th July at 10am

Trip to Steepholm. This is a boat trip, and you will have to disembark/embark down/up a gangway onto the beach on the island. This is a wonderful trip, and the island is packed with history and if the weather is good the views are fantastic. Book with Jerry on 02920 418858, meet at Weston at 10 - the boat will leave without you if you're late.

Weekday evening in July

Usk River Trip - check date with Jerry on 02920 418858 - We hope to run another of the very popular trips up the Usk from Newport to Caerleon and back by boat in July.

Major forthcoming event... Warwick Castle (with Warwick the Kingmaker exhibition)



Wednesday, 23rd February from 7.30 pm

Pub Night - Social Evening - come out for a drink with the friends and catch up with the news on the Ship... at the St. Julian's (Caerleon Road).

Sunday, 12th March at 9am

Severn Bore - Meet at the Severn Bore pub, Minsterworth, A48, South West of Gloucester.

No, the sun will not be over the yardarm, but this will be the biggest and best bore of 2005 - don't miss it!

Sunday, 12th March at noon

Usk Foreshore walk - with Jerry Cross - the mud can be thick, so this is one for the fit amongst us! Wellies and outdoor clothing essential. Meet at noon at the Wheatsheaf, Magor. Free event, but please book with Jerry on 02920 418 858.

21st March at 7.30pm

Maritime Archaeology Update - with Nigel Nayling. Significant Medieval finds in the Thames - Big Archaeological News from Nigel - be there! At the Rathmael Lecture Theatre, University of Newport.

Sunday, 24th April at 8.30am

Severn Safari - A walk around some of the historic shipping and boat remains on the Severn Estuary. Including ships and barge wrecks at Purton, Gloucester old docks, Bullo Pill (a small harbour used for exporting Forest of Dean coal), Lydney Harbour with its wrecks on the foreshore, Stop boats at Gatcombe where Drake was said to have stayed when searching for shipbuilding timber, and ending at the last Severn Ferry at Berkeley. Meet at Magor Services, book with Jerry on 02920 418858.

Saturday, 11th June at 11am

Caerleon History Walk with Ship and Caerleon Historian, Bob Trett - a walk through the history of this charming town, including significant Roman sites. Meeting at 11am

EVENTS 2005 (PART 1)

We have another great events programme for the first half of 2005 thanks to the hard work of the events team - Alan Smith (coach trips), Charles Ferris (pub events) and the endlessly hard working Jerry Cross (everything else). Please support the Friends events, and let us know if you want anything different - we're here for you.



LET'S COMMUNICATE!

FRIENDS WEB-SITE - The Friends web-site has been refurbished and is now looking much better. As well as being very much up to date and stuffed full of information, pictures and Friends events, it is the best place for the most up-to-date news of things like OPEN DAYS - do check it when you can!

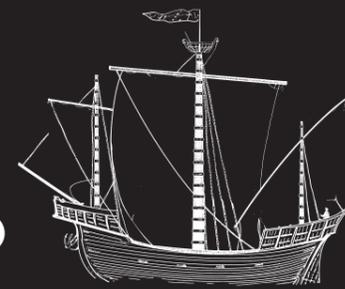
TALK TO US - We at the Friends work hard throughout the year to bring you news of the ship, articles of interest in the newsletters, a varied programme of events to inform and entertain, and, most importantly, to keep a careful eye on the ship on your behalf. We are all delighted that she is now in the Conservation Centre, being looked after very carefully and starting to give up some of her story to the team. However, while her long-term future is not yet guaranteed, we will be here. Please let us know if there is anything particular you would like from us - information, events, opportunities to fundraise or get involved in any other way - we need your support, and we want to do the best we can for our members.

Please write to 'The Editor', 'The Chairman' or 'The Secretary' at the Friends address.



S.O.S.

the Newsletter of the
Friends of the Newport Ship



'PAST MEMORIES & CURRENT THOUGHTS'

For those of you who don't know Charlie, he was the original voice of the SOS campaign to save the ship. He is a great ambassador for the friends, in civvies or as 'Jester Minute', medieval jester, on the television or talking to local groups. If you've been to a Friends event, chances are you remember him...

It seems a long time ago, when we had just two open evenings to see the ship as she was being excavated. At that time we feared that the ship would be demolished. It was important that we demonstrated how deeply the public felt about the preserving her - that was the core of the campaign.

For many of us, that was the only time that we saw the ship in her entirety. Now she is in 2,300 pieces being cleaned and recorded in Maesglas. Its fascinating work to watch and even in pieces she still tells her story, yet

seeing her disassembled you realise how great the privilege of seeing the ship 'whole' was.

I'm reminded of a lady in her eighties who queued for two hours to see the ship on the second

open evening - only to be turned away by the site management as she was wearing open toed shoes! I kicked off my 'loafers' which she wore into the site and I continued collecting signatures for the petition in my socks! I was impressed by this lady's enthusiasm and determination to see the ship. When she returned my shoes, I thought it only fair to explain that even if we succeed in saving the ship, conservation and final reconstruction would take over ten years. Far from being

daunted by this long term prospect, she replied with something I try to remember when the display of the finished ship seems such a long way away. Fixing me with a steely gaze she said "WELL GOOD! THEN THERE'S SOMETHING WORTH HANGING ON FOR!"

As we know the support for the ship was phenomenal and soon the friends had over 800 members. Sadly that number has fallen to under 200 - maybe people feel that it's not so important now that the ship has been saved and

"it's all in the bag". Without being unnecessarily alarmist this may not be the case.

I think it's important to continue to show the passion we feel for the ship and it's important for the credibility of the

friends that we keep our membership numbers up. To these ends we've kept the subscription to a nominal fiver - even if that means we may not be able to print such a large newsletter as we've done previously. I ask all the Friends whose membership has lapsed to rejoin and those who have rejoined I ask to "spread the word" and introduce a friend to the Friends. On the long road to her final reconstruction and display our wonderful ship needs as many friends as she can get.

Yours in "Friend's-ship"! *Charles Ferris*



No. 6

Spring 2005

£1.00

Free to Members

We now have a new newsletter programme, with three newsletters during the year, and one BIG, GLOSSY, COLOURED annual ship update in the Autumn. If you have any items for inclusion, please send them to the Friends address, clearly marked 'Newsletter'. Any offers to edit the newsletter would be appreciated!

Inside this edition

- **Charlie's memories and thoughts**
From our very own Charlie Ferris
- **BIG NEWS - Open day coming up**
And we need your help
- **What have the friends been up to?**
News and reviews from the last few months
- **High tech, low tech**
The conservation centre uses technology ancient and modern
- **So just who is looking after our ship?**
Meet the team who are conserving, recording and caring for our ship.
- **What did the ship carry and what did the crew eat?**
Grant news
- **Events programme 2005 part 1**
And some maritime lectures we thought you might be interested in...
- **Communications...**
The newly updated web-site and a plea to talk to us!

Friends of the Newport Ship

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WHAT HAVE THE FRIENDS BEEN UP TO?

OPEN DAYS – BIG NEWS!



There are plans afoot to open the ship to the public again – this time in the Conservation Centre. This will be hugely rewarding if the public turn up as they did when she was first opened to the public in Newport, and the plan is to publicise the opening well. There is no date yet for the first big open day, but it will probably be a Saturday in April. This is where we need you! The Open Day will need a lot of work, to turn a working conservation centre into a safe and interesting experience for the public visiting their ship. We will need help the evening before to set up displays, barriers, etc. and help on the day marshalling crowds, telling them about the Friends, serving tea and coffee and directing them to the loos! We will need you to help pack everything away again afterwards, so that the Conservation team can get back to work as soon as possible! Finally, we will need stewards to take groups of people through the maze of tanks and tell them about the ship, her life and times, and the work going on at the moment to conserve and record her. This will need a training evening during the week beforehand and some preparation on the day. Please drop us a line – even a postcard – letting us know how you can help and how we can get hold of you so that we can maximise this excellent opportunity for the Friends, the public and the ship.

Most importantly, the Ship is currently safe and work on her conservation and recording is underway at the Conservation Centre in Maesglas, Newport. This has been a massive achievement from the first news of her discovery and the announcement that just a few timbers would be recovered. Further funding must be secured, and there is a long way to go before we see her on permanent display to the public in a suitable building, with the best information published. We have a key role in her future. The big news is that we have achieved **Charitable Status**, which enables us to optimise all donations, membership money, etc. for the ship – excellent news. Many thanks and congratulations to those on the Friends committee who worked so hard for this to happen.



The **Eisteddfod** was a great experience – for those who missed it, we spent the whole week with an excellent stand (for which we received a grant) in the Science and Technology pavilion. (Note: there was no mention of ‘modern technology’!) The stand was manned by Friends all week, and a lot of Welsh Language support was provided by Rhys Brooks – thank you! Thanks also to all the volunteers, Jeff Brooks for organising them, and to Charlie (‘Jester Minute’) Ferris, who spent the whole scorching week dressed as a Medieval court jester, drumming up interest and donations – good job!

The Friends’ visit to the **National Maritime Museum in Greenwich** (with the Cutty Sark, Royal Observatory, Queen’s House and Naval College) was a great success, thanks to Alan, and even attracted one of the Welsh craftsmen who worked on the Cutty Sark restoration in 1957! His handiwork on one of the lifeboats above the deck looks as good as new, nearly 50 years on. Perhaps in years to come, some of the Friends will visit the Newport Ship with the same sense of nostalgia and contribution. The 200th anniversary of Nelson’s death (and victory) will be marked at the National Maritime Museum with a big new exhibition entitled ‘Nelson and Napoleon’ – if you haven’t been, this is a great excuse to go. The exhibition starts later in the year.

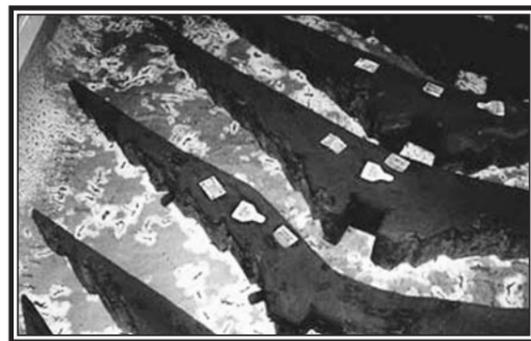
The ship has a new friend in **Tony Robinson**, now better known for televised archaeology than as Baldrick, ‘The stupidest man in history’. He came to the Riverside Centre in Newport for his one-man history show (his history, and our common history), where he was a great success, and many of the friends bumped into each other there. Before the show, Kate showed him around the Newport Ship – and he complained that due to publicity events he ‘only had thirty five minutes with the ship’! The Friends had a good chat with Tony, and asked him to come and retrieve the missing section of the stern of the ship, and to make another documentary on the vessel herself – and he didn’t say no to either...

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

Alongside some of the most technologically advanced instrumentation available and some truly cutting edge software, a lower tech instrument is in use – on an experimental basis – at the conservation centre.

The ship is currently in huge tanks of fresh (tap) water. This is excellent, as it keeps the timbers wet and as stable as possible at this stage of the conservation process. The water contains no nasty chemicals to damage the timbers or the workforce – but it does contain some harmless little invertebrates (pond life to you and me). Sticking lots of chemicals into the tanks to poison the little critters isn’t really an option, so a bit of lateral thinking was called for.

Kate had the brainwave of shoals of goldfish sweeping round the tanks, vacuuming up the little bugs as they go, and so a couple of standard (non-fancy) goldfish were donated by one of the Friends Committee for a trial. They are currently resident in one of the tanks, making a little bit of history themselves, in the hopes that they will control the pests in a ship-friendly manner. Come and see them at the Open Day!



GLENYS YVONNE SILVERSON

A true friend to so many to so many and a true friend to the Newport Ship. The Friends lost one of their founder members on Monday 14th February 2005. If you signed a petition on one of the open days or bought a mug from one of our fundraising stalls, the chances are you spoke to Glenys. She campaigned and continued as a tireless fundraiser once the ship was saved spending every Saturday on our market stall. Glenys commissioned the wonderful pottery liaising with the potter, moving boxes and boxes of mugs to all our fundraising events. Glenys was always, cheerful, open and friendly and will be deeply missed by all of us.



Glenys at start of the campaign

INTRODUCTIONS...



The conservation and recording on The Ship is underway, so we thought you should know a little about the people who are working on her. Having spent some time at the Conservation Centre, I am delighted to report we have a totally dedicated, highly skilled and experienced team, with incredible patience and commitment... The 1700+ timbers will take a LONG time to conserve and record (there are around 1.2 km of planking alone), but Kate and the team really are the very best people for the job...

The **international ship team** started work on November 1st 2004. The ship’s new crew consists of **Toby Jones** (from the USA), a graduate from the Nautical Archaeology programme at Texas A&M University, **Hefin Meara** (Welsh), an archaeology graduate of Sheffield University, **Angela Karsten** (German), conservator and graduate both of the University of Applied Sciences Berlin and Maritime Conservation at the University of Portsmouth and **Monika Maleszka** (Polish), an archaeology graduate from Poznari Poland, now undertaking a PhD at York University. They speak a formidable range of languages (including, of course, Welsh), which is a huge relief as international interest has been considerable!

Toby has worked and dived on the early C19th Mica shipwreck, sunk in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, as well as surveying vessels of all ages in Episkopi Bay, Cyprus. Hefin, a Welsh speaker, was one of the most valued members of the original excavation team for the Newport Ship, and brings that invaluable experience with him. In site photographs he can usually be recognised as the muddiest individual present (although he insists that Nigel Nayling was at least as muddy...). Angela has worked on several waterlogged sites, in particular conserving leather artefacts from the Darss Cog (1293). Monika has worked on waterlogged sites in Poland and is currently researching Viking Age trade and exchange in the Baltic area.

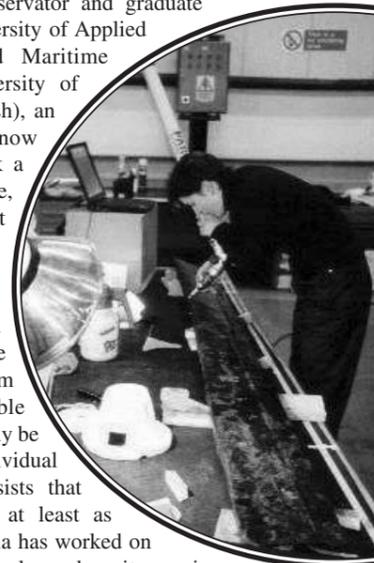
We could hardly have anticipated such a highly skilled and experienced group moving to Newport from far and wide to ‘save our ship’ – but with Kate at the helm, we should not really be surprised. This is a very professional team looking after one of the most exciting maritime archaeology projects in Europe – if not the world – at this time. **Kate Hunter** herself should need no introduction – those of you who have not met her in person will almost certainly have seen Kate on television – but in case any of you aren’t familiar with the **Captain of the Ship’s current crew...**

Kate read both Archaeology and Conservation at Durham, and has worked on many waterlogged sites, including one in Norway (even colder than the Newport Ship excavation!) Kate worked the Barland’s Farm boat with Nigel Nayling in 1993, and has been Keeper of Conservation with Newport Museum and Art Gallery for 13 years. Kate is now co-ordinator of research in large projects for a conservation group attached to the International Council of Museums. The group specialises in conserving material from waterlogged archeological sites. This means that Knowledge gained from similar projects is available to staff working on the Newport Ship.

Nigel Nayling is the Quality Control consultant for the current work on the ship. He’s a waterlogged wood specialist, and has had a key role in saving the ship from the start. His current role is a bit cleaner and drier than his first involvement in getting her out of the mud – Nigel was key to getting her out in such good shape, but spent the duration covered in mud and soaked to the skin. You may have seen him on one of the television programmes showing the excavation – Nigel was tireless and enthusiastic – and top-to-toe muddy! Nigel’s role with the ship project is best summed up by Kate – “Without Nigel we can’t do it!”

Bob Trett has worked tirelessly on the Newport Ship, and most of that work has been as a historian. Digging through records, excavating reports and sweating over Medieval paperwork, rather than getting very muddy a lot of the time, Bob has also given dozens of talks on behalf of the Ship, maintaining the profile of the ship locally. Bob did the Usk tours with us last year, and will be taking the Caerleon History Tour in June.

Mike Lewis is the overall manager of the project to record and conserve the ship. Despite his role away from the day-to-day work of the project, Mike attends the Friends committee meetings and is more communicative and committed to the ship than we could have hoped.



The ship team have received a grant of £3,000 to enable investigation of some of the environmental samples taken from inside and outside the ship as she was excavated. The Ship was at sea at a time when improvements to instruments and navigation techniques were allowing the first great voyages of discovery to be undertaken along the West African coast. These longer voyages required construction changes in the ships being built, and our ship is part of that development. While we don’t yet know exactly where or when our ship was built, she was part of an exciting age of seafaring, and has much to teach us about that time.

The samples taken should be able to tell us about cargoes carried, crews’ diets and even some of the places the ship visited. Soil samples deteriorate, so we need to learn what we can from this material as soon as possible.

The grant from the Headley Trust will enable some of this investigation to take place – we already know a grape seed (from Southern Europe), raw flax (probably from Ireland), walnuts and hazelnuts and fish and marine mammal bones have been found... 16 samples will be investigated in depth – and this will include pollen analysis.

The work will be undertaken at the Department of Archaeology at Lampeter University, which has experience of environmental sampling, and a good selection of medieval material to compare the Newport Ship samples with. This initial analysis will enable a programme of further analysis to be drawn up and costed.

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