



Friends of the
Newport Ship

Newsletter

January 2016

Registered Charity No.1105449

Unit 20, Estuary Road, Queensway Meadows Industrial Estate, Newport, NP19 4SP www.newportship.org

Welcome to 2016

Doubtless I'm not the first to wish all our readers a very good, prosperous, healthy and happy New Year, but I do so anyway! This new year offers us all an opportunity to make a difference with our amazing project. It's this year that we need to encourage Newport Council to put together their strategy for the Newport Medieval Ship project and heritage in general; they need to decide whether they will keep the project within Council control or put it out into the hands of people who really care about heritage and could make our dream a reality. We also need to understand what this really means to us as the catalyst for taking the project forward, to ensure that all of the timbers are reassembled and visible to the public in a permanent home that will last for hundreds of years. If this is going to happen, it needs everybody helping and pulling in the same direction. Please ask yourself, 'what can I do to help?' and come and have a chat with me or any of the committee members or volunteers at the Ship Centre.

Looking back at the results from 2015: we had 1,261 visitors to the Ship Centre, the membership database has been 'cleaned', but we now have some 325 'Friends' signed up and paying subscriptions, with over 80% now receiving these Newsletters by email. If your membership has lapsed, or your subscription remains outstanding, please contact Sian by email at secretary@newportship.org or drop into the Ship Centre when we reopen on 12 February 2016.

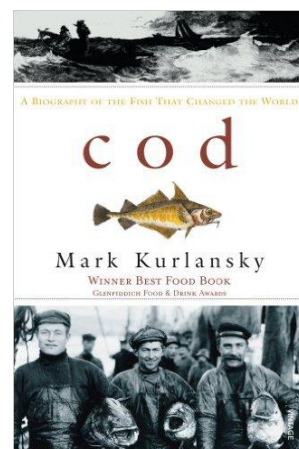
Phil Cox, Chairman

Fisherman's Tales?

According to the book "Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World" by Mark Kurlansky, the Basques were fishing for cod off Newfoundland for several hundred years before Columbus and Cabot had the temerity to ask for Royal patronage for their trips to the West. Kurlansky makes a fairly convincing case that Basque cod fishermen were obliged to land on the North America coast during the summer to dry the fish. They sold the dried fish all over Europe. To this day, dried cod (Baccala) is a common dish across the Mediterranean, even though the fish is essentially absent from the Mediterranean. Naturally the Basques kept this source as secret as possible, although fishermen from Bristol and Ireland may have joined the trade well before 1492. It is also alleged that John Cabot stopped in southern Ireland after leaving Bristol in 1497 to pick up Irish 'guides' to assist his quest for the Americas.

The key question is – could our Ship have crossed the Atlantic during its service? If so, is there any way of detecting this?

Dr Richard Stevens



Support JORVIK

The severe flooding in York over the Christmas period has caused major damage at JORVIK Viking Centre. The visitor attraction, owned by [York Archaeological Trust](http://www.yorkarchaeologicaltrust.org) is located at basement level and due to the substantial flooding over the Christmas period, this caused parts of the attraction including areas of



the world-famous ride around a recreation of the Viking-age street of Coppergate, to be submerged under 50cm of water. York Archaeological Trust is currently freeze-drying the Newport Ship's wet timbers in their separate Conservation Centre, estimated completion in 2018.

If you would like to offer financial support to [JORVIK Viking Centre](http://www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk) please donate via their website (www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk/flood) – any amount will be greatly appreciated. If you would like to offer voluntary support or donate other items that will assist them during the

redevelopment, please email jorvik@yorkat.co.uk

FoNS Blog

Why not keep up to date with all our news as it is pushed out to other media sites? Go to our website (www.newportship.org) and click on 'Blog' (on the brown banner top right of the screen) and you can subscribe – that way you get all articles emailed to you as soon as they are published.

Feature Article: What's in a Name?

Looking for possible names for the Newport Ship I came across a recent MA thesis on the wine trade to Bristol. While the thesis presented no leads it did underline the importance and currency of the work that Carus-Wilson had undertaken in the 1920s and 1930s.

Eleanora Mary Carus-Wilson (1897 -1977) was a Canadian by birth who became Professor of Economic History at London University. A great deal of her work involved the records of English ports, including Bristol, in the medieval period. So I returned to her *The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Later Middle Ages*, *Bristol Record Society 1937*. Although records for the period in which we are interested, 1450 – 1470, are scarce, two sets of accounts are of interest.

The first are the accounts of Thomas Gybbes and Robert Strangeway, collectors of the custom in Bristol and adjacent ports, 26 March – 29 Sept 1461. The accounts only note vessels carrying goods, on which duty was payable, and ignores vessels entering or leaving the port in ballast.

In the six month period covered thirty seven vessels entered or left Bristol, twenty six of which were involved in the coastal trade with Bristol Channel ports and Ireland. Of the other eleven, three entered from Bergen with fish; five left for Bordeaux or Spain carrying finished cloth and three entered from Spain. The “*Marie*” of Spain, the “*Marye*” of Guipuscoa and the “*Marie*” of Guipuscoa; - both Guipuscoa vessels entered on the same day – carrying iron, rosin, honey, woad; but no wine. In 2016 Guipuscoa is a region of the Spanish Basque country whose capital is San Sebastian.

In the same period seven vessels entered from Chepstow all of which carried wine. While some of this wine could have been grown in south Wales or the Wye valley, I had already noted complaints by the Bristol customs officers that wine was entering the Marcher ports of south Wales and paying a lower rate of duty than that entering Bristol directly.

The second set of accounts of interest is those of Thomas Croftes and John Wildegar 29 Sept 1479 – 3 July 1480. Although these accounts are too late for our purposes they give an interesting snapshot of trade in the Bristol Channel.

By 1479 trade had increased considerably, 180 vessels paid duty on entry or departure from Bristol. Of these two thirds were involved in the coastal trade. Of those engaged in foreign trade, nine were from Bristol; four were from Breton ports, four from La Rochelle or Bayonne, four from Horfleur, two from Caen and two from Oporto.

The other vessels came from the Basque country. The *Marie* and *Seynt Spirit* of Fuenterrabia, a medieval walled town on the present border between Spain and France; the *Seynt Spirit* of St. Jean de Luz, between St Sebastian and Bayonne; the St John of Portugalete, at the mouth of the river that flows through Bilbao; and the *St Sebastian* of Guetaria, an ancient seaport a few miles west of St Sebastian and the home of the first man to circumnavigate the globe, Juan Sebastian Eleano. If we are working on the idea that the Newport Ship came from the Basque country then the numbers of likely vessels are relatively small.

Almost all vessels entering Bristol from southern Europe carried wine, sometimes along with iron ore and occasionally dried fruit. Wine was still coming in from Chepstow but in smaller quantities.

Rarely was a whole shipment the property of one merchant, sometimes as few as four merchants shared a vessel but in the case of the Bristol vessel, the *Trinitee*, no fewer than one hundred merchants are listed. A reason why individual casks would carry its merchant's mark. A port is not a single harbour but a stretch of coast over which the customs officer has authority. In 1479-80 the customs officials of Bristol clearly had control of the river ports on the Severn. They list eleven vessels unloading at the “creeks” of Franampton, Gadcombe, Gloucester etc. Most of these were coastal vessels, but one, the *Seinte Spirite* of St Jean from Bordeaux, unloaded a cargo of 74 tuns of wine as well as woad, rosin, and iron at one of them.

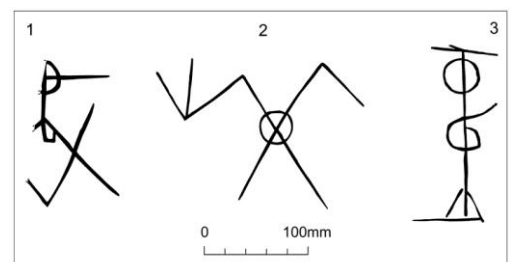


Figure 1: Merchants' marks found on barrel staves within the Newport Ship. Over 100 separate barrel staves were recovered. The right hand mark is from a Bristol merchant, William Fish

Carus-Wilson also had a Miscellaneous section of petitions to the King, the Chancellor or the clerk of the rolls, asking for licenses to trade with certain countries, to export certain goods, that the cocket (the document that stated that duty had been paid at the port of origin) was not accepted in Cork, or the capture of seven Bristol ships by Spanish pirates.

In 1451 there is a flurry of requests to do with the fact that Bordeaux opened its gates to the French on June 12th 1451, on condition “that her privileges should be confirmed and any who wished to do so should be allowed six months in which to collect their property and migrate”.

On the 23rd Sept a group of Bristol merchants petitioned to send a ship of “300 tuns or less to Bordeaux to fetch goods and money held by them in that city when it fell to the French”. Another petition was made to take goods to ransom the Bristol merchant, Nicholas Parker, to the sum of 450 marks. Other merchants petitioned for licenses to use the *Mary*, of St Sebastian, to trade for two years. Few of these give much detail of the vessel, sometimes they specify an English vessel, or give the maximum tonnage, “200 tons or less”.

Perhaps the most interesting of these miscellaneous petitions is a safe conduct for three months requested by Philip Mede merchant of Bristol on the 2 July 1453, for the “*Holy Cross* of Fuenterrabia in Spain of 300 tuns or less with a crew of 60 or less, sailing to Spain with non staple wares, subject to the good behaviour of the crew to the English”.

Carus-Wilson adds a footnote that the *Holy Cross* had been captured by two Cornish ships and taken to Fowey, in spite of a safe conduct. Mede had secured a commission of enquiry to discover the offenders and make restitution. Obviously the *Holy Cross* still had its original “Spanish” crew; otherwise there would have been no need for the clause about the crew's good behaviour towards the English.

So far in this article I have always assumed that the Newport Ship had remained in Basque / Spanish hands. This is not necessarily so. We know that the ship re-named by Henry V the *Holigost*, had been captured from the Spanish. Had the *Holy Cross* been renamed by the Cornish pirates and was her real name the *Santa Cruz* or its Basque equivalent? Whenever I hear the name *Holy Cross* I see the cross on the reverse of the petit blanc, but we must remember that the majority of coins of this period carried crosses of one kind or another.

More work needs to be done on coins in the keels of medieval vessels. How common was it? Is there a correlation between the coin selected and the ships name?

Allan Cook

Fundraising

Our Ship Centre has proved to be a great success in its first year attracting over 1,200 visitors in our six months of opening. There is however, much that needs doing to enhance the displays to attract more visitors in the coming year and for this we need to continue our fund raising campaign. The success of the Centre is and will be a powerful argument if and when we need to put forward the case for a trust-run museum in which we can reconstruct and display our Ship. **We need your help** so please support this year's Uskmouth raffle – we keep all the sales revenue; and see also the EasyFundraising section below.

Fundraising 1: Raffle Tickets – Win £500, Win £250

Uskmouth Rotary Raffle tickets will shortly be available from the Cabin at the Ship Centre. Please visit, or send a cheque and your address details to **FONS Raffle** at the address above, and we will fill out the counterfoils and return the tickets to you. Minimum order is 10 x £1 tickets. Closing date is 20th April. We can also take your money by Electronic Funds Transfer: contact treasurer@newportship.org for details.

Fundraising 2: EasyFundraising

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online, from your weekly shop to your annual holiday, you could be raising a free donation for FoNS? There are nearly 3,000 retailers including Amazon, John Lewis, Aviva, thetrainline and Sainsbury's, who will donate a percentage of the amount you spend to FoNS to say thank you for shopping with them. It's really simple, and doesn't cost you anything. So far we have raised £60 with just 16 supporters – imagine what we could do if all 330 members pushed their entire internet shopping through this portal! **All you have to do is:**

1. **Go to** <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/newportship>

2. **Sign up for free**

3. **Get shopping** - your donations will be collected by easyfundraising and automatically sent to FoNS. It couldn't be easier! There are no catches or hidden charges and FoNS will be really grateful for your donations. Thank you for your support.



Redevelopment of the FoNS Website

As you may have guessed from the above articles, the Friends of the Newport Ship are at a critical stage and we need a website better suited to us. More than ever we need a place where people can go not just to get information on the ship but where we can reach out to our members and coordinate our efforts in raising awareness about the ship and organize our volunteers. These are some of the things we want to do, but we also want to hear from you as the lifeblood of the FONS we'd like to your views on what our new website needs or what you would like to see. Please forward all suggestions to website@newportship.org

Keeping in Touch

We are always very keen to keep in touch with our membership. Please let us know if you move home, or change email address so that we can continue to keep you informed (and let you know when your subscriptions are due for renewal!)

Spotlight on Volunteers

This is intended to be a regular slot where any of our volunteers can express why they are drawn towards supporting the Newport Ship. This issue we hear from Tim White.



I'm Black Country: raised near the birth-place of the Industrial Age. I live in Malvern: an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; with Victorian heritage; home of the iconic Morgan sports-car; and once home to Government hi-tech research (my former employer) - a contributor to the dawn of the Information Age. I remember my excitement when Bletchley Park's work was de-classified and when, about the same time but far more publicly, the 'Mary Rose' was raised. ***This is heritage:*** by definition, it is ***what we decide to value*** and, so, ***what we must preserve***. I learnt of our Ship by accident. But this project has it all. There is: a detective story that's still going on; an association with a world-class project; a ***vision to go beyond (mere) conservation and to reconstruct, and display to the public, this unique heritage asset***. This was a far-off goal in 2002. Formerly, I could attend Open Days only but, in 2015, things changed. The Friends needed greater 'hands-on' support to realise the vision. It's a professional job but 'amateurs' can fulfil a role: offering support of practical help at the Medieval Ship Centre, 'spreading the message' of the Ship, and showing what visionary enthusiasm can achieve for all.

If you can tell others what inspires you to support the Newport Ship through the Friends, please send your story and a photo of yourself to me at chair@newportship.org and you can be in the next issue!

Sad News

We regret to advise readers of the passing of Paul Wilshaw who was taken by pancreatic cancer in November. He was a fervent supporter of the Newport Ship project and will be sadly missed by his widow Lindsay and other Friends of the Ship.

Follow us on facebook (newportship) and twitter (FONSnewportship)!

