

# Friends of the Newport Ship

Registered Charity No 1105449

www.newportship.org



## News November 2013

### Rumours galore

Uncertainties breed rumours, and the uncertainty over the future of the Ship is no exception. The most bizarre recent rumour came from a member of the public on a phone-in programme, saying that the Ship had been sold to Canada. Where did that idea come from?

Newport City Council's chief rumour-destroyer, Mike Lewis, put the record straight in our October meeting at Malpas Court. Nearly 60 members turned up for this, a fascinating talk on medieval shipping and our AGM. In the last year, our understanding of the Ship has grown immensely as a result of the specialist investigations and work on the hull shape. Conservation continues, but freeze drying of the timbers may take a further 3-4 years, much longer than predicted. However, next Autumn the Project will have to vacate its current premises, so what happens then?



York Archaeological Trust is responsible for the freeze drying, so the freeze drier will be taken up to York and the timbers taken up there in batches and then brought back. In the meantime, Newport Council is looking for a building in which the both the fully-conserved timbers and those in the queue for the freeze drier can be stored. The conserved timbers don't require a vast amount of room, but for a year or two there will need to be enough space for two of the tanks currently in the warehouse. The Council would like to find a building which is accessible to the public, and ideally in the city centre, so that the Friends can run it as a museum for the next few years. We would have an interpretive display, using some of the material currently used for Open Days at the Ship Centre, and would open to the public regularly. The Committee supports this proposal because it would allow us to keep the Ship in the public eye whilst we work out a long term solution. The Council has applied for a grant to allow this to go ahead, but won't know until March whether it has been successful.

In the long term, the Council does not see itself as able to fund the creation of a permanent museum in which the Ship could be re-assembled. That's disappointing news, but not surprising in the current economic climate. The Committee anticipated it and had already concluded that the only way forward is to set up a Trust to create and run a permanent museum. The Council would support this approach. It's a big undertaking, which is why we've been asking for members with appropriate business, legal, financial, marketing and project-management skills to come forward as we'll need their help. During the forthcoming year our priorities will be to look at long-term viability, what is needed to make the museum a success and how we could raise funds.

## Shop online – and help FONS

Do you ever shop online? If so, please register with 'Easy Fundraising'. The Friends of the Newport Ship have just opened an account with them, so whenever you buy something from any of the 2700+ retailers who support them, FONS will get a donation. It costs you absolutely nothing! You can't ask for a more painless way of giving than that. The retailers include numerous well-known names such as Amazon, Argos, John Lewis, laterooms.com, M&S, National Lottery, Screwfix, Sky and Tesco, as well as hundreds of smaller ones.



To register, please visit <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/invite/2EXHNS/>. The process is very quick and simple. Click 'Support a Good Cause' and then enter 'Friends of the Newport Ship' as your cause. You'll need to click 'Find' and then 'Support this Cause'. Enter the details requested. Don't forget to tick the 'Terms & Conditions' box, and tick the next box if you want to opt out of marketing e-mails. The final page gives you the option of installing 'Find & Remind'. It's worth doing this because you will then be alerted whenever you are about to buy something from a participating retailer.

If you use the link above to register (rather than going direct to Easy Fundraising's home page) there's an added benefit. Once you've raised £10 yourself, the Friends will automatically get an extra £5 donation. You won't see any mention of this when you register, but don't worry, it's set up automatically behind the scenes. To Gift Aid your donations, after you have registered you will need to go the Easy Fundraising home page and sign into your account.

Of course you don't have to shop online to make a donation to the Friends. By going to the 'Support Us' page on our website (<http://www.newportship.org/join-us.aspx>) you can donate online using PayPal or download a donation form. Alternatively, simply send a cheque, made payable to 'Friends of the Newport Ship', to Treasurer, Friends of the Newport Ship, c/o FWD Law, Clifton Chambers, 12 Clifton Road, Newport NP20 4EW. If you are a UK taxpayer, please Gift Aid your donation as that gives us an extra 20% at no cost to yourself, though we must have your name and address for this.

## What makes a good maritime museum?

On a peninsular just outside the centre of Oslo there are three maritime museums next door to each other – the Kon-Tiki, Norwegian Maritime and Fram Museums. The Norwegian Maritime Museum averages only 50,000 visitors per annum, whilst numbers at the Kon-Tiki Museum have dropped from 400,000 to 200,000. The Fram Museum, in contrast, is thriving, with visitor numbers increasing from 200,000 to 300,000. It receives no government support for its running costs, but manages to employ 6 full-time staff. In 2011 it completed a £3 million refurbishment of the original museum and a £7 million new building to house a second ship, the Gjøa.

At the Maritime Heritage Conference in Swansea in October, the Director of the Fram Museum, Geir Kløver, explained their success. In the recent refurbishment they moved away from just displaying objects towards telling a story. They introduced plenty of hands-on exhibits, and innovative features like a Northern Lights display every 20 minutes. They appealed to an international audience by explaining everything in 8 languages – Norwegian and English as printed displays and 6 other languages on iPhones – and have had exhibitions around the world to promote the museum. To help raise money, they introduced a large shop and café, and involved commercial partners in developing content. They have also expanded the use of the Museum for events, and are aiming to hold 300



every year. However, they aim to keep their admission and café charges 25% cheaper than other Oslo museums because they find this increases visitor numbers and hence total income.

There are important lessons for us here. We can't just put the Ship into a building and assume everyone will flock to the door. We need to do something sexy with the Ship. Today's visitors are looking for a fun experience rather than a static display, and meeting that need will require imagination. We also need to broaden its appeal by using the Ship as a peg on which to hang a museum with a wider perspective. Then we need to get the 'extras' like a shop, café and loos right, market it effectively and exploit other income streams such as hiring the venue for events. Quite a challenge, but if we don't, we'll end up like the Fram Museum's neighbours.

We also need to get pricing right, so we don't deter visitors but still get the income we need from them. Two years ago the Trust that runs the Goole Waterways Museum took the bold step of scrapping the admission fee - and the net result was an increase in income because more people came into the Museum and used the café and the shop.

## Your new Committee

At the AGM our former Chair, Emma Lewis, stood down. She has been an active member of FONS since the very start, and our Chair for 4 years. However, she is now living in Tenby and finding it difficult to attend Committee Meetings as regularly as she would like. The new Committee is:

Chair	Peter Hayward	Secretary	Sian King
Vice-Chair	Alan Aberg	Treasurer	Jean Gray
Other Trustees	Jeff Brooks	Rhys Brooks	
	Charles Ferris	Rosi Hollister	
	Alan Smith	Bob Trett	

Sian and Rhys were both co-opted to the Committee during last year, and we're pleased to see them now being elected as Trustees. For this year, Phil Cox and Sheila Dyke have already offered to join the Committee as co-opted members. You can find the minutes of the AGM on our website.

*This News Sheet is on our website in full colour. Because colour photocopying is so expensive, if you're receiving a paper copy because you haven't given us an e-mail address, it will not be in colour.*

## DATES

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November**

**St Julian Inn**

**7.30pm**

*Voyage along the Basque coast.* Charles Ferris and reporter Jean Phillipe Manuel from the South Wales Argus will describe their exciting week-long trip in a replica 18<sup>th</sup> century iron-ore-carrying coaster.

**Wednesday 15<sup>h</sup> January**

**St Julian Inn**

**7.30pm**

*Early archaeological discoveries in the Severn Estuary.* A talk by former Museum Curator Bob Trett about discoveries prior to 2000 in the coastal area of Gwent.

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February**

**St Julian Inn**

**7.30pm**

*The Ship that never was.* Newport Ship's Conservator, Marie Jordan, will tell us about other approaches to conservation.

This will be the last News Sheet before Christmas, so

**Merry Christmas and  
a Happy New Year**

