

Friends of the Newport Ship

Registered Charity No 1105449

www.newportship.org



News : May 2014

Still No News

In the last Newsletter we reported our discussions with Councillor Debbie Wilcox about new premises for the Ship, and said we were expecting Newport Council to make a decision by mid-April. Alas, the wheels of the Council grind exceedingly slowly. Mid-April passed with no decision, and then mid-May brought further setbacks. First, the site we were pressing the Council to rent was let to someone else. Then Debbie Wilcox was promoted to cabinet member for Education. Congratulations to Debbie, but it was a setback for us because we had been establishing a good working relationship with her and we'll now have to start discussions all over again with her successor, Councillor Mark Whitcutt. To cap it all, the Council official responsible for Heritage and Leisure is moving on to pastures new, so we'll have a new face on the official side too.

Time is ticking by, and this is worrying. We've asked for an urgent meeting with Councillor Whitcutt, but whether we'll be able to report any specific developments by the next Newsletter remains to be seen.

Every little helps! (As they never say at Sainsbury's).

On April 22nd Phil and Rosi (our publicity team) accepted an invitation to meet the management of Sainsbury's Newport who turned out to be most enthusiastic about the Ship as a part of their current programme of supporting projects in the community.

Sainsbury's will be supplying beverages at our refreshment area on Open Days so that we can provide Fairtrade tea and coffee to our thirsty visitors! In addition you will regularly see FONS members at the front of the Newport Sainsbury's store. We will be able to meet the public, discuss the progress we are making and answer (hopefully) questions about the Project's present position and the Ship's future.

So, for the foreseeable future, Sainsbury's will be helping us to secure the Newport Ship Project for the people of Newport and the wider world.

FONS Mary Rose Visit

On May 9th 51 members of the FONS visited the new Mary Rose Museum in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. In addition to seeing the museum, the group were taken to two conservation facilities not open to the general public. One of these, the Chain Test House, now contains very large items being conserved in tanks of PEG or stored in plastic sheeting. A mast step, an iron anchor and cannon barrels are examples of artefacts found in this facility. A second area, within the main museum building, contains many small objects, some of them personal possessions, which gave a fascinating insight into life on board the Mary Rose.



Above: a replica bronze culverin in the Chain Test House. The gun was cast to test the range and power of the Mary Rose' biggest weapons. The results were alarmingly impressive! On the left is Dr. Mark Jones, Head of Conservation at the Mary Rose Museum.

The actual museum is wonderful. Designed to echo the shape of the ship right down to the carvel laid planking engraved with a carpenter's marks. The building is a marvel of interactive displays. Whatever your interest there is something to engage your attention. Static displays of weaponry and clothing, furniture and tools mingle with the haunting skeletal remains of some of the 172 bodies recovered from the wreck. Using the latest technology osteo archaeologists have been able to reconstruct the heads and faces of some of the crew. There is even a Madame Tussaud-style full size crew member who, in different clothing, could just walk off his plinth and join the visitors passing by.

The visit left us determined to pursue our vision of getting a museum for the Newport Medieval Ship and not to be discouraged by the present problems we face.

Many thanks to Phil Cox and Alan Smith for organising the visit.

Below, A damaged anchor from the Mary Rose under conservation in the Chain Test House.



May Open Day



Councillor Matthew Evans, newly installed mayor of Newport, opens the Open Day at 11.00 a.m.

The Open Day held on May 24th. was extremely successful with visitors coming from as far afield as Aberystwyth and Buckingham to visit us. Our new visitor questionnaires worked well and showed that all 13 avenues of publicity are effective (but we are now trying to work out which are the *most* effective). The visitor comments below have been taken at random and are typical of many more on our questionnaires.....

- “The medieval ship could be a great attraction for Newport and would give us something people would want to visit and would generate a lot of income.”

- “It was a long way to come but well worth the long journey”
- “It is an excellent format in bringing the Newport ship to life. It also keeps the public up to date on new discoveries and also the lack of progress in finding a permanent home for the ship and its artefacts”
- “Very informative project. Vital to future of Newport – if it really wants to be Newport “city” it needs something like this to put it on the map”
- “So fascinating – so glad to have been”

Business Planning

The small group working on the business plan for our proposed trust is continuing to make slow but careful progress and hopes to have a plan ready for presentation by the Autumn.

And lastly for this issue.....

Correction!

In the March News Sheet we listed the last Open Day date for 2014 as August 12th. It should have read JULY 12TH. Apologies. However, because the move from the Maesglas premises is not taking place as early as we thought, we have now agreed a further Open Day in August, and if the delay continues, we may have yet another in September.

Forthcoming Open Days; July 12th and August 16th

11.00 am to 4.00 pm, last admission 3.30 pm.

“The World of the Newport Ship” Conference; July 17th. - 18th. at Bristol University

Fee £10-00 to cover meals on both days. Still some places available .

Contact; richard.stone@bristol.ac.uk or ring Toby Jones on 01633 215707 to check ticket availability.

Newport Civic Society; October 9th. at 7.00 for 7.30 pm, Civic Centre, Newport.

“Trade between the West Country and Spain in the 15th. Century”

Talk by Dr. A J Parker , Bristol University. No fee but a small contribution to Newport Civic Society funds on the night would be welcome.