

S.O.S.

the Newsletter of the

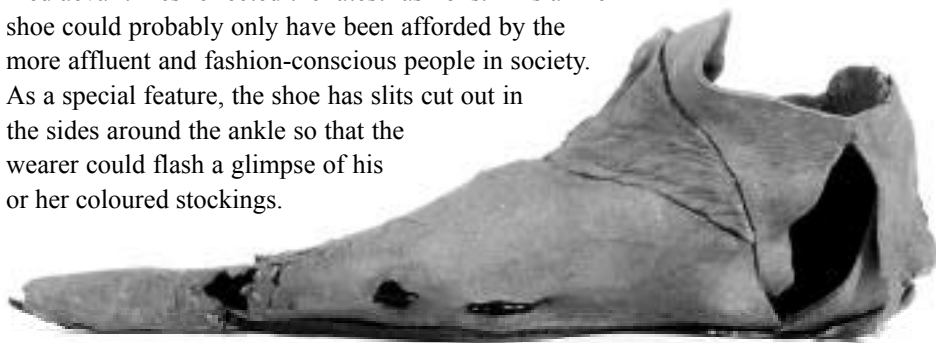
Friends of the Newport Ship



Piecing together the history

by Victoria Newton-Davies

One of the most easily recognisable artefacts to be recovered from the excavation of the Newport Mediaeval Ship is this leather shoe. It was carefully excavated in seven pieces and has now been conserved and reconstructed to show how it would have looked originally. It is a slip-on ankle shoe with a distinctive long pointed toe that was very fashionable in the late 14th and mid 15th Centuries. Like today, footwear in mediaeval times reflected the latest fashions. This ankle shoe could probably only have been afforded by the more affluent and fashion-conscious people in society. As a special feature, the shoe has slits cut out in the sides around the ankle so that the wearer could flash a glimpse of his or her coloured stockings.



Photograph courtesy of Newport City Council Museums & Heritage Service

A Mediaeval Ankle Shoe from the Newport Ship

Poulaine

The long pointed toe of the shoe is called a poulaine. Originally the poulaine would have been stuffed with moss or hair so that it curved up slightly. This would have helped the wearer not to trip over their own feet and also helped keep the elegant shape of the shoe. The Newport shoe was discovered with the poulaine stuffing still in place. Points on shoes could vary from just a couple of centimetres up to ten centimetres in length. The poulaine on the Newport ankle shoe measures 7.5 cm making it one of the more pointed shoes of the period.

Shoe Size & Signs of Wear

By measuring the length of the sole of the ankle shoe and comparing this to the modern shoe scale it is possible to get an approximate idea of shoe size. The measurement was taken from the point where the big toe is

estimated to have been and the length of the poulaine is discounted. Taking into account possible shrinkage of the shoe, both in the ground and during conservation, it is thought that the shoe is roughly equivalent to a modern day size 4 - 6. It is probably a man's shoe as Mediaeval people had smaller feet than we do today.

The ankle shoe has obviously been well worn. It has several interesting signs of wear and tear that can tell us a bit more about the person who wore it. The wear pattern on the sole suggests two possibilities. It may have been worn on the right foot and the wearer rolled their foot out to the right when they walked. There is also a hole towards the front of the shoe that could be evidence for a bunion. This happens when the joint at the

continued on back page

No. 4

Spring 2004

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Free to Members

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...STOP PRESS...

Please note our new address

Friends of the Newport Ship
C/O fwdlaw associates
Clifton Chambers
12 Clifton Road
St Woolos
Newport
South Wales NP20 4EW

We would like to thank Jonathan Edwards of the Edwards Partnership for his support over the last two years. Jonathan allowed his offices to be used for mail and gave legal advice and support on many occasions. We wish him well for the future.

F.W.D. Law Associates is a well-known and respected firm of solicitors who, apart from taking in our mail, will be handling our application for charitable status. Again our grateful thanks to them for this tremendous support.

S.O.S. COMMENT

As we approach the second anniversary of the discovery of the Mediaeval Ship it is a time to take stock of what has been achieved so far. Faced with the premature dismissal of its significance by understandably nervous city authorities, an unprecedented protest by ordinary Newport people and international ship experts quickly gained momentum. It was backed by people from around the world, equally shocked by barbarous proposals to destroy the wreck, and they wrote letters of support in their thousands.

It was a popular cause that shook the city council and brought the Wales National Assembly Government into the foray. The ship was 'temporarily' rescued with a promise of £3.5 million funding to "recover, conserve and display the ship". Some consider that the plan was poorly devised and the scheme to display the reconstructed ship in the new arts centre complex will prove to be inadequate.

There are many experts who claim the ship is of international significance and could be the centre of a new maritime museum devoted to Wales' shipping history. Programmes like the recent BBC Timewatch have underlined the need for a thorough re-evaluation of the decisions made so far. The appointment of a panel of "expert advisors" is to be applauded. Let us hope their recommendations will be heard and a more imaginative policy adopted, one that will capitalize on the benefits the Mediaeval Ship could bring to the citizens of Newport and Wales as a whole.

The unnecessary legal battle now being fought between Newport Council and GGAT only diverts attention away from the real job of securing a future for the Newport Ship.

The Editor

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www.thenewportship.com

Just Good Friends?

The Friends of the Newport Ship have not been afraid of being critical of Newport City Council when they have felt it necessary. The Friends have fought (with partial success) for the recovery of the bow and stern and continue to be severely critical of plans to display the conserved ship in a basement of the new Arts Centre.

At times our relationship has been fraught, and so it is with great pleasure that we welcome the efforts by Mike Lewis, the new Museums and Heritage Officer, to build bridges with us. No better example of this spirit of co-operation can be shown than by the fact that he and two of his staff have contributed articles to this newsletter. We also welcome the news that Kate Hunter, the Keeper of Conservation for Newport Museums and Heritage Service, is to be a leading player in the Council's post excavation work on the ship and is to liaise with the Friends. She has a wealth of experience with conservation problems associated with waterlogged wood, and was responsible for the work to conserve the Barlands Farm Romano-Celtic boat. Finally the proposed project review meeting with leading experts (*see page 3*) is an essential step in the long process of recording, conserving and re-assembling the ship.

In turn the Friends hope to give practical support to the project by acting as volunteers, raising money and giving the ship as high a profile as we can. Details of our events and stand at the Newport based Eisteddfod can be seen elsewhere in the newsletter. A much-needed boost to the

ship's public profile was the well-acclaimed BBC Timewatch programme **The Mysteries of the Medieval Ship** shown on the 30th January. The possible connections with Warwick the Kingmaker (*made public in our last newsletter*) is just one of the theories relating to what the ship was doing at Newport, where it came from and where it was built. Please BBC, repeat the programme soon, and let us have a follow up.

It is therefore a great shame that the Council has not yet resolved its legal dispute with the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust over the payment for the excavation and raising of the ship. Those of us who saw the hard work undertaken by the Trust and heard the accolades for their work from leading ship experts and archaeologists, will wonder why this dispute has not been resolved. The absence of archaeologists from the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust from the post excavation advisory process will inevitably harm the project. Without involving GGAT the proper publication of the excavation of the ship may not be possible.

It is certainly ironic that a launch of the excavation report for the Barlands Farm Romano-Celtic boat is to be held on 22nd. May. It is a tribute to both the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust and Newport City Council on the recovery of the most complete boat of the Roman period yet found in Britain. Maybe the launch will be a chance for the parties to talk. We hope so.

BBC Probes Mystery of the Medieval Ship

The BBC **Timewatch** programme, broadcast in January, investigated what the ship was doing in Newport, when and where it was built, what it might have looked like, its links to the political changes of the Wars of the Roses and links to Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick the 15th century Chancellor of England.

Despite strong evidence for a Portuguese connection, the programme aired questions about whether the ship was actually built in Portugal as its clinker construction is more common in Northern Europe. Investigations in Portugal, Germany and elsewhere produced a theory that it may have been constructed in France during the 100 Years War, when the English Crown controlled much of the French coast.

While the full size of the vessel is yet to be determined, the keel appears to be over 23 metres long, suggesting that the ship may have weighed 200 tons or more (*see our*

article on its size - page 5). Computer reconstructions of the ship suggested that it might have needed additional smaller masts to help with its steering. (see new drawing - opposite). The Newport ship remains the only example of a large 15th century "clinker built", seagoing ship following in the Viking tradition. The programme presented the most comprehensive presentation to date of current thinking on the origins of the Newport ship. The theories of the small group of people working on the project were examined and opinions sought from experts at the National Museum of Wales, the Warwick Record Office and other specialists from Britain, Germany and Portugal.

All in all it was the most encouraging and positive distillation of everything that we currently know about the Newport Ship and served to underline the historical and international importance of this remarkable find.

UPDATE

CONSERVATION PLANS

Developing the Plan - by Mike Lewis

The Project Plan review meeting is set to take place on 22nd April. It is intended that the panel of invited experts will examine the proposed plan and make recommendations. Contributors will include representatives from leading European ship preservation projects including Roskilde, Bremen Cog and Mary Rose, together with

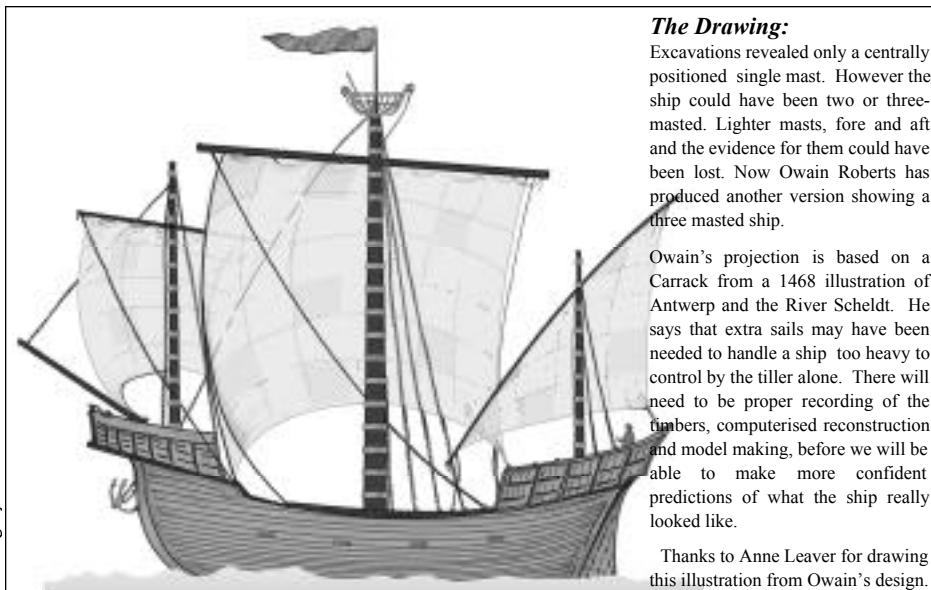
of the project some years down the line. The meeting will also evaluate the recording methods proposed for the project. Two new technologies and hand drawing have recently been tested and compared, to find out which method is the most efficient whilst giving the project all the information it needs. The recording phase of the project

place in May to coincide with Museums and Galleries Month. Planning permissions restrict us from holding more than three public open days a year, but we are free to host visits "by appointment", and for the time being that will allow the project to start the audience development work needed over the next couple of years.

Exhibition proposals

The Newport Ship exhibition opening in October in the basement space of the new Riverside Arts centre is currently in production. Central to the exhibition will be an exciting audio-visual interpretative "experience" that will pose the many questions surrounding the origins of the vessel and provide as much information as we currently have. It will also look at the vessel's discovery, and the campaign to save the ship. The exhibition will feature all the artefacts it is possible to display, although many of the organic objects will still be going through the long conservation process. The exhibition will also seek to interpret the conservation process and inform visitors of the long and complex procedures necessary before the ship can be displayed. Underlying the whole experience will be the notion of leading visitors to reach their own conclusions about where the ship came from. Interpreting the Medieval port of Newport and examining the importance of medieval maritime trade will also be an important visitor "take out".

It's going to be a busy year, and I am anxious not to lose too much momentum with the project. I am hoping that a "permanent" staff establishment will be based at Maesglas before the end of May and once this has been achieved the post-excavation project will become a reality.



The Drawing:

Excavations revealed only a centrally positioned single mast. However the ship could have been two or three-masted. Lighter masts, fore and aft and the evidence for them could have been lost. Now Owain Roberts has produced another version showing a three masted ship.

Owain's projection is based on a Carrack from a 1468 illustration of Antwerp and the River Scheldt. He says that extra sails may have been needed to handle a ship too heavy to control by the tiller alone. There will need to be proper recording of the timbers, computerised reconstruction and model making, before we will be able to make more confident predictions of what the ship really looked like.

Thanks to Anne Leaver for drawing this illustration from Owain's design.

experts from The National Museum of Wales and Cadw. We hope that the meeting will produce a plan for which there is a high degree of consensus with the Ship preservation and Archaeological communities.

Resources have been identified to finance the revenue cost of running the Maesglas facility for the coming year, and subject to Council approval work will commence on the cleaning and recording phase of the project by the early summer. A second outcome of the meeting on the 22nd will hopefully be a set of policies to guide the cleaning process, to ensure we capture the information crucial to the rebuilding phase

is an enormous task given that 1700 individual wooden components have to be painstakingly cleaned and recorded in three dimensions with every nail hole, mark or any other surface detail being documented.

Working with the public

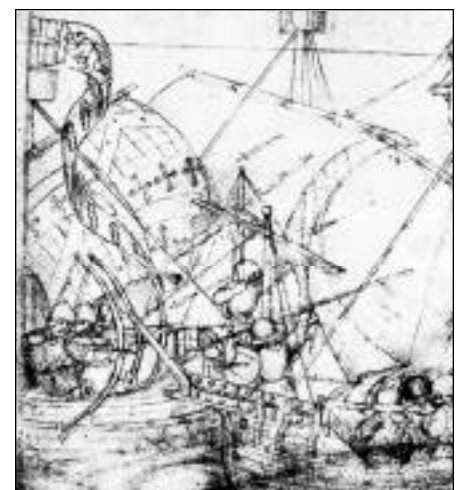
I want to submit a heritage lottery fund application for a project planning grant in the next few months. A successful grant will underpin the finances available for the recording work, as this process will give us the information needed to cost-model the main conservation phase of the project.

I want to start planning open days for the coming year, and I would like one to take



Mike Lewis - recently left the National Museums of Wales, Industrial and Maritime Museum at Swansea to take up the post of Museums and Heritage Officer at Newport with responsibility for the Mediaeval ship.

He is seen here talking with Friends of the Newport Ship on a recent visit to the Maesglas Conservation Centre.



15th Century ships in battle. Note the standard of the Earl of Warwick flying above the archers (top left).
Drawing courtesy of the British Museum

Waterlogged Wood! - a bit of a dry subject?

by Kate Hunter

Why does it survive?

Under normal circumstances wood and other organic materials, such as leather and textile, undergo rapid decay when abandoned and especially if, for whatever reason, they are subsequently buried. The principal causes of decay are organic and range from animals such as mice and rats, through insects like woodworm or deathwatch beetle, to fungi and microscopic bacteria. Only in especial circumstances do organic materials survive, for instance within the desiccation of an Egyptian tomb or the freezing cold of a Siberian burial.



In Britain organic materials are not normally found on archaeological sites, except those which are waterlogged. A waterlogged soil is one which is permanently saturated with water, in effect excluding oxygen and therefore anaerobic. The most efficient wood decaying organisms are aerobic and cannot exist under true waterlogged conditions, hence the survival of organic objects in anaerobic soils. A soil which goes through cycles of wet and dry is not truly anaerobic and organic materials buried within it are much less likely to survive. In the absence of the usual agents of decay, timbers will still undergo slow physical and chemical deterioration.

The low lying alluvial mud of the Severn Estuary, and its environs, has provided many waterlogged sites, the Newport Ship site being one.

There are some organisms, however, which operate under anaerobic conditions, the most notable for archaeological purposes being sulphate reducing bacteria, commonly found in

sewage. These are the organisms responsible for generating sulphur within the wood of the Swedish Warship Vasa, which was recovered from what had been the sewage rich waters of Stockholm Harbour after 350 years of immersion under sediment. In the Vasa the sulphur deposits have been catalysed, eventually forming sulphuric acid. Research is now underway to find ways of neutralising the acid. As the reactions are understood, it is becoming clear that the decay process can be controlled by controlling the humidity of the display environment.

At present I do not believe that the mud in which the Newport Ship was buried had been subject to anything like the same levels of sulphur deposition. However, Dr Mark Jones, of the Mary Rose Trust, has taken samples to establish what levels of sulphur may exist. By the time it comes to putting the Newport Ship on display I anticipate that the research presently being undertaken in Sweden will be able to inform the nature of the display environment.

Another complicating factor is the presence of iron salts, arising from the huge quantity of iron nails used in the ship's construction. This is a well known problem found in other waterlogged archaeological timbers and treatments exist to remove them if necessary. Fortunately for any later conservation treatment I could detect no chlorides in the alluvial mud in which the Ship was found.

Condition of the Newport Ship

Initial analysis of a few timbers indicates that the oak timbers from the Newport Ship are particularly well preserved. A detailed examination of many more timbers would be a standard part of any conservation condition assessment, carried out before any treatment is chosen. Even so, from the work already done, it is clear that if the timbers are allowed to dry out, they will permanently crack and shrink. At present the ship's timbers are stored in 16 large tanks of fresh water to prevent this happening.

Conservation

Until the 1960's, treatments to ensure the longterm survival of even the most well preserved waterlogged wooden objects were not particularly successful. Many important ships, such as the Romano Celtic boat from Blackfriars in London or some of the Bronze Age Ferriby boats could not be saved. In Scandinavia there was a longer tradition of treating waterlogged timbers with success. However in the UK a particular problem is that many of the larger archaeological waterlogged timbers are oak, which presents especial difficulties for conservation.

The introduction of polyethylene glycol (PEG for short) from the 1959 onwards was a sea change. It became possible to undertake, with increasing reliability, the conservation of large waterlogged wooden items. PEG is manufactured in a number of molecular weights, ranging from liquid through to a hard wax. Over the years conservation techniques have become more sophisticated so it is possible to select molecular weights appropriate to the decayed state of individual timbers. It is usual to use two different molecular weights in one treatment – a low molecular weight to replace losses within the wood cell walls and a higher molecular weight, to act as a bulking agent. One of the advantages of

having 16 separate and chemically resistant tanks is that, if necessary, different tanks can be used for different treatment regimes.

PEG is soluble in water and can be used in different ways. In the Mary Rose and the Vasa, both of which were lifted as a whole and treated as such, it has been sprayed on, because that was the only feasible option. However, better penetration of waterlogged wood can be achieved via prolonged immersion in PEG. For both spraying and immersion, concentrations are gradually increased over a long period, often years. Because the Newport Ship was taken apart piece by piece, all conservation options are available, including treatment by immersion.

If PEG impregnation via immersion is chosen, two treatment systems are available. The first involves replacing nearly all the water in the wood with PEG, a very time-consuming process. The second, freeze drying, requires a lower final concentration of PEG and therefore takes less time. Via a process known as sublimation, water is driven off the timber, avoiding the cellular collapse, warpage and shrinking, which usually accompanies the air drying of waterlogged wood. The finished results for both processes are usually good.

Further more detailed discussions of the pros and cons of each treatment will be in forthcoming Newsletters.



Kate Hunter is Keeper of Conservation at the Newport Museum and Art Gallery. She is seen here explaining the timber storage systems employed at the Maesglas Conservation Centre, to Friends of the Newport Ship at the recent 'Open Day' for members of FONS

How big was the Newport Ship?

Tonnage-measuring in medieval England seems to be based on two types of measure:

- Cargo-carrying capacity, called "burden" or "portage", later expressed as "tons burden".
- A measure akin to deadweight tonnage, which took account of the weight of the crew, gear, etc.: this seems to have been less common.

Mediaeval documents are full of references to ships' tonnages, although the most accurate figures are probably provided by the customs accounts which show the amounts of goods that ships actually carried. The big merchant ships, vessels in the 300 to 500 ton (or possibly larger) range, seem to have been more common between the 1430s and 1460s. The decline in their numbers in the later decades of the 15th century was remarked on by contemporaries and can be demonstrated from various sources, although clinker-built vessels of this size did exist both before and after this period.



The earliest clear statement on tons burden calculation was given by the English master shipwright Matthew Baker (c 1530-1613) in 1582, and became known as 'Baker's Old Rule', although it may well have predated him by a long way. In its basic form it ran: Keel length x beam (maximum hull breadth) x depth in hold (depth from the main beam to the keel), divided by 100 (a divisor of 94 was also used in the late 1500s).

Estimating the tons burden tonnage of the Newport Ship from the keel length alone involves a lot of guesswork, but here goes:

Keel: 24 m = 79 ft

Assume that the keel to beam ratio was 1 : 2.5, beam would = 31 ft
From this, assume depth in hold = half of beam = 15.5ft

$$\frac{78 \times 31 \times 15.5}{100} = 375 \text{ tons burden}$$

If the keel to beam ratio was 1 : 2.25 (not at all unlikely in a merchant ship), the tonnage would be about 478 tons burden.

These are just orders of magnitude, and should not be taken as figures with any accuracy. Once the hull has been reconstructed, it should prove possible to make a more accurate *Baker's Old Rule* calculation and then to see how this might match (or not) with a computer-modelled version of the ship's carrying capacity.

Whatever the true figure, I am of the opinion that the Newport Ship belonged to this group of mid-15th century big merchant ships, making its discovery even more interesting. It is also possible - unless the timbers really do prove to have come from Iberia - that it was not a Portuguese-built ship. Ships changed hands readily, by fair means or foul!

Ian Friel MA, PhD, FSA
Principal Curator, Chichester District Museum

BOOK REVIEWS

Boats of the World *From the Stone Age to Medieval Times*

By Seán McGrail, Visiting Professor in the Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton.

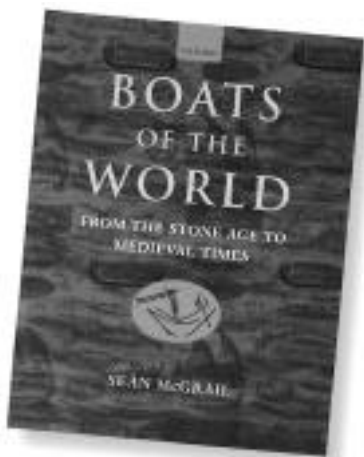
This is the first comprehensive study of the archaeology of rafts, boats, and ships from the Stone Age to Medieval times. All the regions of the world are covered, from Atlantic Europe and the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, the China Sea, and the Pacific.

Maritime archaeology, the study of man's early encounter with the rivers and seas of the world, only came to the fore in the last decades of the twentieth century, long after its parent discipline, terrestrial archaeology, had been established. Yet there were seamen long before there were farmers, navigators before there were potters, and boatbuilders before there were wainwrights. In this book Professor McGrail attempts to correct some of the imbalance in our knowledge of the past by presenting the evidence for the building and use of early water transport: rafts, boats, and ships.

Professor McGrail presents a history of water transport as it has developed over the millennia, from before 40,000 BC to the mid-second millennium AD. The coverage is world-wide: from the Baltic and North Seas to the Bay of Bengal and the Tasman Sea; and from the Gulf of Mexico to the China Seas and the Baring Strait.

Will be of interest to scholars and students interested in archaeology, especially maritime archaeology; maritime historians; and readers with a general interest in boats.

Oxford University Press ISBN: 0-19-927186-0
510 pages, numerous maps, halftones & line drawings,
276mm x 219mm
Published January 2003 Price: £40.00 (Paperback)



The Barland's Farm Romano-Celtic Boat

by Nigel Nayling & Seán McGrail

It is not generally known that Newport City Council has not just one, but two unique boats of major archaeological importance. Newport Museum and Art Gallery has in store a boat known as The Barland's Farm Romano-Celtic Boat. This was found in 1993 near the small town of Magor, during the construction work for a storage depot for Tesco Stores.

The substantial remains of this well-preserved Romano-Celtic boat were discovered during survey work in advance of construction at this former agricultural site in the Gwent Levels in south-east Wales. The boat was recorded in situ, and then dismantled and recovered for detailed recording prior to conservation. This research report covers the detailed excavation evidence, an examination of the environmental context, theoretical reconstructions, methods of dating and conservation, and general conclusions about the contribution made by this crucial find to understanding of Romano-British technology and shipbuilding, as well as networks of transport; commerce and communication.

The boat, constructed of oak, was found in the bed of a silted-up river channel. Much of it survives, including the bow, the lower hull and most of one side.

Overall the remains measured 9.5 metres long (much smaller than the Newport Medieval Ship). Tree-ring dating of the boat timbers help show it was abandoned in the early 4th Century AD and was probably reused as a landing stage! Study of plant remains show evidence of chaff from cereal grains and the boat would have no doubt been used to transport grain and other goods up the small tidal rivers along the Severn.



A detailed account of the boat-find, and the environment in which it was used, is being published by the Council for British Archaeology. The major authors of the report are Nigel Nayling (who also excavated the Newport Mediaeval Ship) and Professor Sean McGrail (a leading expert in early ships and boats).

The Barland's Farm Romano-Celtic Boat

Council for British Archaeology - Research Report No. 138
ISBN 1 902771 40 0 publication April 2004. Price £30

FONS - Friends organise launch of new book

Sean McGrail and Nigel Nayling are longstanding active supporters of FONS in its efforts to preserve the mediaeval ship and we are honoured to be able to sponsor the launch.

Newport Museum and Art Gallery has kindly agreed to host the public launch of the Barlands Farm book on **Saturday 22nd May 2004**. It is hoped that copies of the book, signed by the authors, will be on sale after 12 noon. Visitors to the Museum will also be able to see an excellent model of the boat, although the actual ship timbers remain in store until a suitable display area can be found.

Eisteddfod lecture

Early Ships of the Severn Estuary

by Owain Roberts

The **Cambrian Archaeological Association** lecture at the 2004 National Eisteddfod will be on Early ships of the Severn Estuary with special reference to the Newport Ship and will be given by **Owain Roberts**. Owain Roberts is a world renowned expert on early ship construction and has been advising on the construction of the Newport Mediaeval Ship.

This talk will be held in the lecture room of the Science Pavilion at 12 noon on Wednesday 4th August

Committee Matters

OFFICERS

Chairman: Simon Rutherford
 Vice Chairman: Ron McCormick
 Secretary: Adrienne Jones
 Treasurer: Terry Underwood
 Membership Secretary Emma Lewis

Committee

(elected at the A.G.M. on 25th. October 2003)

Jeff Brooks
 Sheila Dyke
 Charles Ferris
 Jean Gray
 Alan Smith

Co-opted Committee Members

Jerry Cross
 Sherry Parker
 Chris Plaister
 Jan Preece
 Glenys Silverson
 Bob Trett

Hang on to your Membership cards

New membership cards will not be issued each year except to new members. The Friends of the Newport Ship keeps track of its members by database, and we take this around with us on lap top computers when needed. Reissuing new Membership Cards each year would be an unnecessary expense and add to administration for the Secretary (Emma Lewis). A limited number of cards remain and she will send one on request to any member who really wants one.

If you received a mailing of the Friends' Events 2004 – Part 1, or this newsletter by post then you are a current member, on our database and will receive all the benefits of membership, including a lovely warm feeling that you are continuing to ensure a safe and public future for our wonderful ship and all she can teach us.

Members Events

Those of you living within a ship's cannon shot distance of South Wales should have received a flier listing forthcoming events. On 8th March we had an update on the Ship by Kate Hunter and Bob Trett; on 21st March a group took a walk on the Severn foreshore with Nigel Nayling; and on 31st. March Nigel Nayling did a talk at the Cardiff Bay Norwegian Church.

Forthcoming Events include:

Saturday April 24th. - A visit to the Mary Rose

A day trip to Portsmouth and guided tour of this ancient wreck arranged courtesy of the Mary Rose Archaeological Trust. At the time of printing this is almost fully booked, but contact Alan Smith tel. 01633 761397 for details.

Saturday 8th. May - Cardiff Bay Day

Meet at the Norwegian Church 10am for coffee and a fast boat trip into the Bristol Channel and around Flatholm (£12). Followed by Lunch on the Lightship, then sailing on Classic Swedish Yachts in Cardiff Bay. If you can't sail, we'll provide a skipper! (£10). Join all or part of the day. Booking essential – Ring Jerry Cross on 02920 418 858.

Wednesday June 16th. - Boat trip up the River Usk - **SOLD OUT**

As this was quickly booked up we have now arranged a second trip for **Thursday 1st July at 6 pm.** for those who failed to get tickets for the 16th. Anyone interested telephone Jerry on 02920 418 858.

Other events are being planned – including a display by Bowmen of the Rose, a long bow group who undertake re-enactments of 15th. century archery. Details of this and other events in the next newsletter.

National Eisteddfod Volunteers Wanted

JULY 31st. – 7th. August 2004

This year the National Eisteddfod will be held in Newport. FONS have been invited to present an exhibition on the mediaeval ship. Plans are well in hand and we hope that it will help to raise the profile of the ship.

We urgently require volunteers to man the exhibition and we would like to hear from any Welsh speakers who would be prepared to give us a hand. If you can help please contact us via letter to our new address (front cover). Alternatively use the contacts on our website www.thenewportship.com

Letters @

editor@thenewportship.com

From a younger member

Dear Friends of the Newport ship,
 I am very happy to be ten as I can go on all the events and see these things as a child. I would just like to say a big thank you to everyone who has arranged all the outings and trips I have been on over the past year or so. I had a fabulous time when I went to Bristol and went in the transport museum and saw all of the transport that was from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. I went on the S.S.Great Britain and had a guided tour of the ship and got to go inside and see what all the rooms would look like. Then it was the moment I had been waiting for, it was time for everyone to go on the boat and sailed up the river and back again. I had a great time and lots of fun. I'm glad to be a member of friends of the Newport ship Because there is lots of events and trips to go on .

Joe Sullivan, Caerleon

Newport Oaks

I was reading your website and half remembered a story which my Dad once told me about medieval Newport that I thought might be of some interest. it went a bit like this - Once in Newport there used to be Oak trees growing along the length of Stow Hill from the West Gate all the way up to St Woolos. Somehow the inhabitants managed to upset either the lord of the castle or the king, and as punishment for their misdemeanours he ordered that the oaks be chopped down and used for shipbuilding.

It may be only a story, and I know that these things often get changed in the telling, but I was wondering whether anyone else has heard it before and whether it can be verified? I've not managed to find any more information about it anywhere, but it gives a tantalising glimpse into the availability of

raw materials and possible shipbuilding activity in Medieval Newport. I know it's unlikely, but wouldn't it be great if it somehow linked in with the story of "the Isca"!

Best wishes,
Brian Wilkinson, Newport

Mathew Trip

Dear Newsletter
 I am glad I am 10 because I have already learnt loads of information from the newsletter about the Newport- ship. I have also had a brilliant time on 'the Matthew' with the vice chairman (Ron McCormick). We saw a lot of Bristol on the Matthew and even brought back a few souvenirs of remembrance. I reckon more children should join the Newport Ship and find out more of its history.

Yours sincerely
Joshua Sullivan, Caerleon

continued from page 1

Piecing together the History

base of the big toe swells, bulges outwards and rubs uncomfortably on the inside of the shoe. This condition probably would have been made worse by wearing narrow pointed shoes like this one. Or it was worn on the left foot and the holes on the side are where the smaller toes have rubbed through the leather.

The Heel

Some Mediaeval shoes were made up of just one piece of leather which had been cut in such a way that it could be stitched up simply and formed into a shoe shape. The Newport ankle shoe has a more complicated pattern. This can be seen especially in the construction of the heel of the shoe. Two pieces of leather (the quarters) have been stitched together neatly down the



back. Shoes are often constructed like this today. Also it is just possible to see the top of the heel stiffener which was an extra piece of leather stitched in place inside the shoe to provide more substantial support.

Cut Outs

Some Mediaeval shoes were decorated with embroidery or even dyed. The Newport shoe has an interesting form of decoration. On either side of the shoe around the ankle area are two elliptical cutouts. These "peep holes" would have allowed the wearer to flash a glimpse of their coloured hose through the shoe.



Photographs courtesy of Newport City Council Museums & Heritage Service

City Council claims £500k from ship archaeologists!



GGAT, the organisation that excavated the medieval ship has served a writ on Newport City Council to recover £118,000 still owed for the recovery work. Newport City Council retaliated with a counterclaim for £500K for delays to the Arts Centre construction schedule that resulted in heavy compensation payments to the building contractors.

Andrew Marvell, acting-director of GGAT, insisted it had given the council every opportunity to resolve the row over Newport's ship before issuing the writ. Mr Marvell said: "Prior to issue of the writ GGAT took counsel's advice and received confirmation that the sum in question was rightfully due and owing from Newport City Council".

GGAT claims to have made every attempt to seek a resolution of this issue with Newport City Council including requests for meetings, a letter of claim under the construction and engineering industry protocol and an offer of mediation through the mercantile division of Cardiff Crown Court.

A Newport City spokeswoman said "The lifting of the ship took over 40 weeks. The costs that GGAT is claiming are for an over-run to its three-week fixed contract, the additional costs of which was never agreed, and which were incurred solely as a result of GGAT's own failure to complete the work on time."

These conflicting claims beg the following questions which are not difficult to answer.

- Was the Council unaware that GGAT remained working on site after the initial three week period?

- Was there not a council officer appointed at the time to manage the Ship project, albeit a middle manager answerable to the Head of Service?
- Was neither of those officers present at the scheduled weekly site meetings attended by the interested parties, i.e. the archaeologists, the Council and the building contractors?

Perhaps it was expected that GGAT employees would work what sometimes amounted to a 24 hour shift for nothing, or Council somehow imagined that it was feasible to raise the largest and most significant medieval wreck ever to be found in a mere three weeks!

Could it be that the citizens of Newport once more (as has been the case since the Ship's initial discovery) find themselves in a position where their paid employees are resorting to denials and blatant untruths to mask their own incompetence?

It is surely worth noting that, had the Council acted upon the specialist advice they received at the onset of this riverside development project and insured against construction delays for finds of archaeological significance, the issues relating to this court action would never have arisen.

In conclusion, rather than waste yet more public funds on a fruitless legal challenge the Council should be conducting an enquiry into its own management of the project. Two years on, all the publicity about the ship should be positive and helping to promote Newport, rather than it being embarrassing headline news because of yet more controversy.



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