

THE BOOKIES BACK THE SHIP (or any more out there)

Back at the start of the campaign, William Hill gave the Friends of the Newport Ship a charity bet that another ship would be discovered before the first of January 2008. To qualify, the ship must be pre 1800, over 30 feet in length, and of a seagoing capacity. She must be found on the Welsh side of the river Severn between Cardiff and Chepstow. If we lose the bet, William Hill will donate the £250 stake that they put up to the Noah's Ark appeal to establish a children's hospital in Wales, however, if we are successful, and a new ship is discovered, William Hill, (having given us generous odds of 2:1) will donate £500 to the Noah's Ark Appeal.



KEEP LOOKING EVERYBODY !

MEDIEVAL SHIP EXHIBITION – RIVERFRONT THEATRE

- By Mike Lewis

When the Riverfront Theatre opens in October public will have access to the subterranean gallery designed to house the ship once it has been conserved. The project to conserve the ship is going to take a considerable time so in the meantime the exhibition space will be used to interpret the ship find using the information we have found so far.

The first thing that will strike visitors is the depth of the gallery underground. The floor of the gallery is at the same level at which the ship was abandoned and subsequently found. The space is also just a few metres from the excavation site. It is intended to try and convey a sense of hallowed space through the exhibition.

The exhibition will use the latest evidence to interpret the ship find, but of course it will not be possible to make any authoritative statements about the ship's origins. Rather the exhibition will present the evidence we have and let visitors make their own mind up.

A number of the objects recovered during the excavation will be displayed and will include the medieval shoe, cannon balls, coins, pottery and the archer's wrist guard. It will not be possible to display some of the wooden objects because they have to undergo a long conservation treatment, but the intention is to display everything as it becomes available.

Central to the exhibition will be an audiovisual presentation that will tell the story of the ship's discovery. A number of the Friends of the Newport Ship will feature in the presentation which will focus on the importance of the popular campaign in getting the ship excavated. The presentation will end with a virtual full size rendering of the ship.

The exhibition will open approximately two years after the ship excavation was completed, and will be the first in step in interpreting the find in a traditional exhibition format. However we appreciate just how little we know, and over the life of the ship project, the information available will increase. We want to ensure from the outset, that this exhibition will be able to be reconfigured to ensure that new information is interpreted as it becomes available.

The opening of this exhibition will coincide with the first steps of the Ship Project being taken as recording work begins in earnest in the autumn. With these two endeavours we will start to see the realisation of a project that is set to be increasingly recognised as an internationally important endeavour. Members of the original SOS campaign and the Friends of the Newport Ship were invited to participate by the City Council and

have been interviewed in a variety of locations, including the Conservation Centre, the Ferris Bistro and St. Woolos. Fame at last?



S.O.S.

the Newsletter of the
Friends of the Newport Ship



It gives me great pleasure to write a foreword to this newsletter from the "Save Our Ship" Campaign

The discovery of the remains of the ship was something very exciting for Newport people. For two centuries, we had thought of ourselves as a new town on the map of Wales. Suddenly we realised that we also had a much older history. The discovery has opened up new fields in our history. After all, this ship is older than the "Mary Rose" in Portsmouth or the "Vasa" in Stockholm.

We are also grateful to the society for putting pressure on the council to save the ship for future generations and for mobilising the outpouring of interest and of pride in the city. We should all support them in any way we can.

John Hughes

Chairman Organising Committee
Newport National Eisteddfod 2004

Mae'n bleser mawr gennyf ysgrifennu rhagair i'r wybodaeth yma am y gymdeithas "Save Our Ship" yng Nghasnewydd.

Yr oedd y darganfyddiad o adfeilion y llong yn rhywbeth cyffrous iawn yn y ddinas. Wedi'r cwbl, dyna ni wedi meddwl am ddwy ganrif am Gasnewydd fel dref newydd ar fap Gymru ond yn sydyn dealodd y boblogaeth leol bod hen hanes gyda ni. Mae'r darganfyddiad wedi agor meysydd newydd yn ein hanes. Wrth gwrs mae'r llong yn henach na'r "Mary Rose" yn Portsmouth a'r "Vasa" yn Stockholm.

Yr ydym yn ddyledus hefyd i'r gymdeithas am bwysleisio ar y Cyngor i achub gweddillion y llong i genhedloedd y dyfodol ac am drefnu y tywalltiad o ddiddordeb ac o falchter yn y ddinas.

Felly cefnogwch y gymdeithas hon unrhywfordd y gellwch

John Hughes

Cadeirydd Pwyllgor Gwaith
Eisteddfod Casnewydd 2004

No. 5

Summer 2004

£1.50

Free to Members

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New Address for Friends of the Ship

Please send all subscription renewals, donations and correspondence to our new address.

The Friends of the Newport Ship
c/o FWD Law
Clifton Chambers
12 Clifton Road
St. Woolos
Newport
NP20 4EW

A.G.M. & MEMBERSHIP

2nd AGM, Rathmell Lecture Theatre E10, University of Wales Newport, Caerleon Campus
2.30 pm Saturday 23rd October. Special Guest Speaker.

Membership renewals are now due, but reports have reached the committee of lost memberships, lost contact and members not being notified of events in good time. The committee are not aware of any major inconveniences, but feel free to tell us. The committee apologises, but we are a volunteer organisation - any poor performance is inexcusable, but an email or contact with a committee member detailing problems will be promptly investigated - secretary@thenewportship.com.

Adult £5 Family £8 Institutional £10 International \$20

as we move on it is vitally important we maintain our support and you, our members have a chance to express your views on the future of the Ship. If any member feels they wish to support our activities more actively feel free to contact the committee members, or become one yourself. Snakehips Rutherford, our Chairman, was a silf like figure with a full head of hair when he started - look what it has done for him. Special Guest editor Charlie Ferris was a prosperous Newport businessman before he discovered the Friends – look what it has done for him.



The Friends of Newport Ship lead the parade to celebrate the National Eisteddfod coming to Newport

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Well it is now two years since the momentous campaign that resulted in Saving Our Ship, and the recovery of the vessel. It seems to have been a tumultuous period for campaigners and the Friends – with great elation tempered with some disappointments (Stern RIP). However, your support for the Friends has ensured we continued as an organisation, and will soon have full charitable status. We are quoted as a prime example of a campaigning group with both popular and academic support, and we will need your support as we consolidate our efforts and organisation as a charity. The Ship is now in safe storage at Maesglas, as recording starts and decisions are taken on conservation and ultimate preservation/display. As you will gather from this newsletter the Friends have an important role to play in supporting the conservation efforts, and in promoting the Newport Ship. Some of you may have visited us at our splendid Eisteddfod exhibition and we hope to attend many more such events in the future to publicise our Ship. We are also maintaining our international reputation and building links with other institutions and organisations – next year we plan to give papers at international conferences. Locally we have a thriving programme of trips, events and lectures, and are building up our social network.

Our public support of the Ship remains vital to ensure that this proud symbol of Newport, which seized the public's imagination in 2002, continues on the road to full recording, conservation, reconstruction and display. I'd like to thank Charles and Alan who've edited this edition of the Newsletter.

Post August 23rd 2002 the SOS Campaign and its successors the Friends might have been said to enjoy an abrasive relationship with the City Council. Whilst a level of independence might be good for a watchdog, conflict with the establishment could be counter-productive now we are in a period of consultation. We are now happy to enjoy much greater links with the City Council, particularly the museum & curatorial staff, and have been holding committee meetings at the Conservation Centre. Ultimately we may have a base for supporting the Ship at the Conservation Centre - watch this space. As the Conservation Centre and our activities develop we will be seeking volunteers for exhibitions and stewarding, so please contact the membership secretary if you wish to help out. ~ Simon Rutherford

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Published by

Friends of the Newport Ship S.O.S.

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12 Clifton Road, St. Woolos, Newport, NP20 4EW.

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Designed & Printed by:

A Print & Design Ltd,

Unit 23 Enterprise Business Park,
Newport, South Wales, NP20 2AQ.
(01633) 264 815 roger@a-print.com

To keep up to date with all the latest developments and for a clearer view our website is

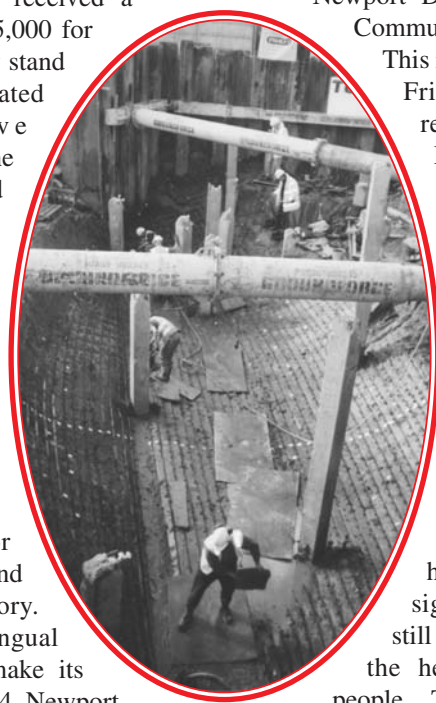
www.thenewportship.com

"AWARDS FOR ALL WALES"

GRANT FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE NEWPORT SHIP

The Friends of the Newport Ship have received a grant of £5,000 for a portable display stand and associated interpretative materials from the lottery funded grants programme "Awards for All Wales".

The Portable Display tells the story to date of the Newport Medieval Ship and its significance for Welsh culture and maritime history. The bilingual exhibition will make its debut at the 2004 Newport Eisteddfod. It will then be shown at the Newport Ship Conservation Centre and other venues across Wales. The Friends have developed



the stand with the support of local Newport Design consultancy Communimedia.

This is the first grant the Friends have received. The Friends of the Newport Ship Chairman S.C.Rutherford is delighted with the award, saying, "The new exhibition will reinforce the significance of the Newport Ship – not only is it of immense historical significance, but it still occupies a place in the hearts of Newport people. The Friends of the Newport Ship are very grateful to Awards for All Wales for their help – the grant application was simple, with a speedy turnaround."

ANOTHER MEDIEVAL SHIP FROM NEWPORT

by Bob Trett - Curator of Newport Museum (retired)

In the Customs Accounts for Bristol is the following reference:

"17 February 1480. The arrival of the Christopher of Newport. The Master is Morris Hagharn. The ship was carrying a cargo from Ireland of 'herring, pollack, hake, salt fish, scalpin, hides, mantles, harburden and shorlings'.

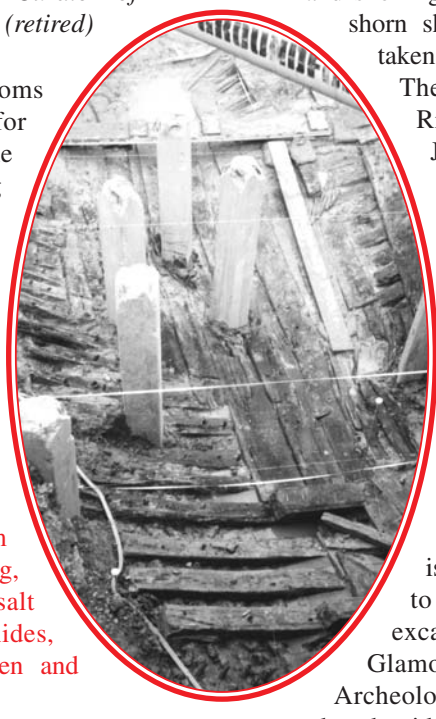
Scalpin refers to whiting, haburden (harberdine) is salted cod,

and shorlings are the skins of shorn sheep or the wool taken from such skins.

The shippers were Richard ap Meric, John Parkyns, Walter Lincoln, William Kemes, John ap Prine and John Develyn.

Whilst this ship can not be the Newport Ship it is rare to find names of any medieval ships from Newport. It is also interesting to note that the excavations by the Glamorgan Gwent Archeological Trust

produced evidence of fish scales on the Newport Ship.



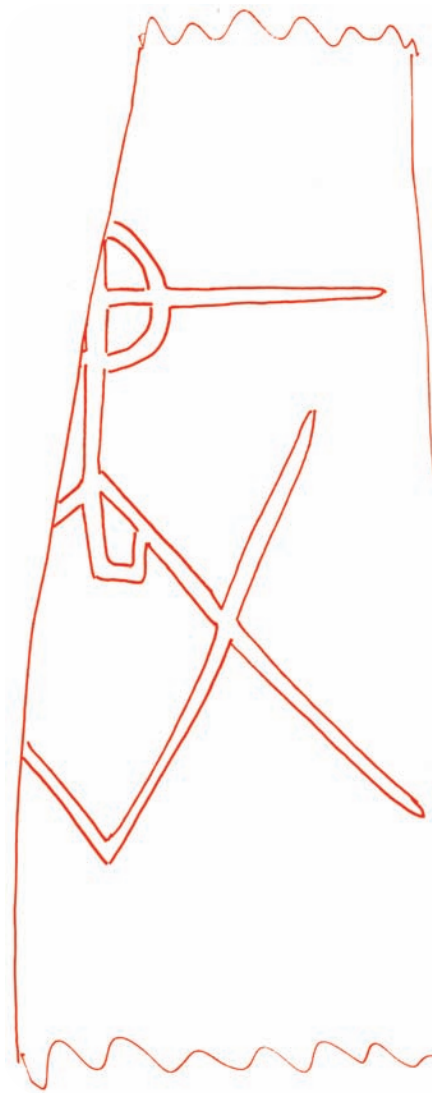
A MERCHANT ON THE NEWPORT SHIP

by Bob Trett - Curator of Newport Museum (retired)

One of the most interesting discoveries made when sorting out the 'odd' pieces found inside the Newport ship was a short length of plank with a strange mark on it. I was shown the piece by Kate Hunter and it was immediately apparent that this was a merchant's mark.

Merchants' marks were very common between about 1400 and 1700. In the Middle Ages there was a great risk of shipwreck or piracy, and individual traders were careful to put only a small consignment of goods in any one ship. By carrying their goods in several ships they reduced the chance of losing an entire stock.

Therefore it was important that they could easily identify their own goods from the goods of other merchants, and they did this by having their own distinct personal marks, like a present day logos. Merchants' marks have been found on other early ships. There is one on a barrel lid from the Bremen Cog and others have been found on



various artifacts on the Mary Rose.

Merchant marks had to be fairly simple to apply and were often simple designs, based on runes. The Newport Ship mark has an upright stem on top of a double "W", one of which is inverted. At the stop of the stem is a quartered circle. It is similar to some known from Bristol and elsewhere, but at present the name of the merchant has not been identified.

It is not known what the plank from the Newport Ship was part of, possibly a box, although the most common containers were barrels.

It is just possible that one day we may find the name of a merchant that actually used the Newport Ship.



MERCHANTS' MARKS 2004

(or the more things change the more they stay the same)

by Emma Lewis – operations manager,
Associated British Ports, Newport

We have all noticed that brand-names have extended into the transport industries – where the old delivery vans used to advertise the shop or business they delivered for, hauliers now advertise themselves – with 'Eddie Stobart' lorries attracting 'spotters' just as trains do ('EWS', 'Virgin' and the like). Those of you close to shipping routes may have noticed 'UCC' ships (United Car Carriers), 'P&O' Ferries and 'Jumbo' ships (specialist heavy lift vessels) with these names painted prominently on their sides. It is almost odd now to find commercial transport without an owner or operator's insignia on show.

While these are all highly visible, they are not the equivalent of the traditional merchants' marks. To find these, we must look a little further down the transportation chain – to the sides and tops of boxes of fish in the fish markets, of banana boxes in the supermarkets and of bakers' trays delivered all over the country every morning. All these are re-useable (although the banana boxes don't return to Jamaica or the Windward Isles), and all of them are purpose designed and made – just as the medieval equivalents were – and none of them have quite as much style or durability or craftsmanship involved as the modern, mostly plastic equivalent. That must be progress...

The modern equivalent of the medieval barrel, for the purposes of transportation rather than storage, must be the international shipping container – which come in standard 20 foot and 40 foot lengths, by about 8 foot by about 8 foot. The standard unit have doors at one or both ends, but there are 'flat', refrigerated and ventilated versions and so on, accommodating transportation of everything from cars to coal, computers to carrot juice and campaign posters to chemical weapons. They are standardised across the world to facilitate cheap, quick discharge and loading of lorries, ships and trains, and are taking over the world. Many people in poorer countries live in them... They usually show the marks of the container owners, not the merchants, and here lies the major change from medieval trade – the sheer volume of world trade, and the perishability of some of it demands massive capacity and fearful efficiency, and competition is fierce. There could never be enough coopers, and the goods could not be packed, handled or unpacked quickly enough for barrels to work today.

Barrels in the modern world – certainly in the western world – are mostly plastic, or used for beer or cider... the rest are relegated to gardens, pub car parks and museums, filled with water or crisp packets or planted with daffodils. This is a sad state of affairs, but our demand for cheap goods from all over the world has driven the changes – cup of coffee, anyone?

THE MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT OF NEWPORT

By Dr. Spencer Dimmock



Newport was among the largest towns in medieval Wales. It was walled and entered and departed through three large gates. Eastgate stood next to the castle and allowed traffic into the High Street from the bridge over the Usk. Westgate was situated at the other end of the High street and Northgate to the north of the castle. Near the latter stood the town's grain and cloth fulling mills. St Woolos church stood outside the walls to the south-west, and the Augustinian Friary, possibly unique in Wales, stood near the quay a short distance from the bridge. The Market House stood in the High Street. The ground floor would have contained many rows of market stalls - a medieval shopping mall. An upper story probably accommodated the guild-hall and town government. The High Street would have exhibited the colourful workshops and shop fronts of skilled craftsmen and women. Possibly up to twenty taverns and inns would have been made available for large numbers of visitors who came to the market, to the lordship courts held in the castle, and to the port. The port's harbour would have bustled with porters, brokers, agents, sailors, merchants, and port officials collecting customs duties and tolls, and granting licenses to exporters. Ships would have either been unloaded directly into the castle through a water gate at high tide, or by cranes onto the quay and into smaller coastal craft, much of it stored in nearby warehouses and wine yards.

MEDIEVAL MARITIME TRADE

To buy a medieval ship cost on average £1 10s per ton of ship. This initial outlay could be returned within a year,

although risk of wreck in storms, and piracy were high. Ships also incurred many taxes, and a crew of forty was needed for a 200 ton ship. Still, profits on merchandise were between 10 and 20 per cent. Wealthy Bristol merchant families such as Canynges and

Straunge owned ten ships and more, but shareholding by those of more modest means was typical. The trade of the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary was mostly centred on the Bristol metropolis, the second largest English town. It drew Welsh products such as high quality wool, tanned leather, hides and cloth from the Welsh ports, and wool, corn and beans from the inland ports of Gloucestershire and the west midlands of England. It then exported them to Iberia, France and the Low Countries. In return, Spain and Portugal traded luxuries such as salt, wine, olive oil, fruit and dried fruits such as raisins and spices from the east, cloth dyeing products, and iron. France traded largely wine and dyeing products, and Flanders and Holland, high quality mercery and haberdashery. Grain, furs and timber products could be derived from the Baltic. The independence of the Welsh ports from royal customs made them attractive to continental merchants, and ports such as Newport re-shipped continental merchandise in small trows inland, along the Welsh coast, to Ireland,

Bristol, west-country ports, and up the Severn.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The ship was laid up at Newport in the late 1460s. This was a particularly tempestuous time in the port's history. The English Crown's loss of the wine-growing region of Gascony in south-western France to the French in the early 1450s marked the end of the 'Hundred Years War'. Following this loss of lucrative territory the English aristocracy turned in on itself and almost immediately began the civil war known as the Wars of the Roses. The battles between major aristocratic houses lasted until the Tudors took the Crown in 1485. It was in 1469, during this time of lawlessness, assassination and piracy by the governing class, that the Earl of Warwick, one of the most powerful English lords, violently gained possession of Newport lordship from its previous lord, Sir William Herbert. Warwick possessed a fleet of ten ships with which he plundered others of diverse nationalities. This helped him to finance his political ambitions. In Newport he gained not only more territorial income, but also a strategically situated port and harbour capable of shipbuilding and accommodating the largest ships. However, Warwick would have required cooperation from the Newport's merchants, and they would have been wary of taking sides in such an unstable political climate. He was killed in battle within two years.



PAST ADVENTURES AND FUTURE EVENTS

by Jerry Cross News Cameraman HTV

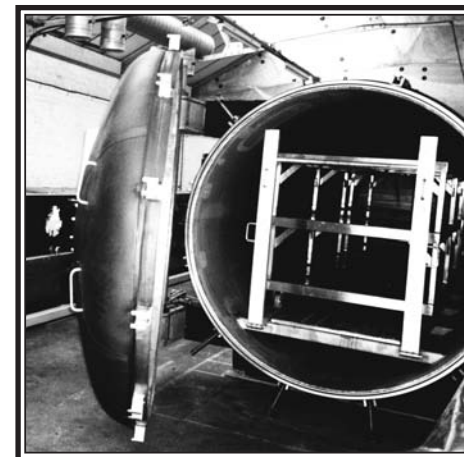
Jerry has literally a depth of experience having scuba dived on the Studland Wreck (Spanish Merchantman which sank circa 1520).

Keeping the membership of "The Friends" together and committed enough to renew their subscriptions every year for the estimated ten years that it will take before the Newport ship goes on display will mean that we will need to organise many different and varied events. With this in mind the inevitable committee has been formed and has been meeting in smoke filled rooms of various public houses in and around the Newport area. Any event that involves archaeology, maritime history and real ale (preferably all three) has been considered. This is a brief summary of what we have achieved. At the beginning of the year we organised social evenings at the St Julians Pub with Kate Hunter and Bob Trett updating us on what has been happening to the ship. Another evening was spent viewing old HTV news items of various ship excavations that had taken place in and around the Severn Estuary over the last twenty years, all of which had the common theme of having been excavated, conserved but had not yet managed to be displayed. Lets not let this happen to our ship!

We mistakenly thought that by the end of March that summer was just around the corner and so Nigel Nayling was persuaded to guide an intrepid band of Friends out onto the foreshore at Magor. Accompanied by gale force winds, horizontal rain and the occasional rainbow Nigel attempted to lecture the group on the

group examined the area where the Major Pill wreck was discovered, investigated traces of medieval fishing weirs, stumbled over masses of Roman pottery whilst at the same time being kept amused by Charlie desperately trying not to lose his boots in the thick gloopy mud. Needless to say a tired, cold, muddy but educationally fulfilled band of Friends retreated to the "Wheatsheaf" for appropriate medication and to wait for better weather.

April saw several of us heading for Portsmouth and the "Mary Rose" on one of Alan Smith's coaches. Charles Barker of the "Mary Rose Trust" had offered to show us around the ship and to give us a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes. I have seen the "Mary Rose" a few times and have found her really awe



inspiring and so it was a real privilege to be shown around the conservation centre with its rooms packed with objects such as pulley blocks, navigational instruments and longbows that had been found on the wreck, conserved but had not yet gone on display.

Although many of the party were determined to view more of Portsmouth's nautical attractions in the remaining time only a few had the willpower and moral fibre to pass some of the fine dockside taverns (well I did have just one). The few who did avoid being "Shanghaied" by the unscrupulous landlords of Portsmouth managed to either view the "Warrior", the "Submarine Museum" or took a boat ride around the harbour leaving Charlie to try his luck selling prints and mugs of Newport ship to the crowds of bemused people queuing up to see the "Mary Rose".



Hands on sailing experience is I believe is important for our understanding of the Newport Ship and what better way to achieve this than being able to sail one of Thomas Stach's beautifully presented "Neptune" class, classic wooden yachts based on Cardiff Bay. Our first outing was in very strong winds sailing under the jib alone (that's the one at the front) giving us a very exhilarating experience and an opportunity to view the Barrage at very close quarters - some viewed it closer than others but that is another story! Such was the demand for this event that it we repeated it at the end of May and this time we were blessed with perfect sailing conditions allowing us to appreciate the qualities of these lovely vessels to the full. An event that has become popular with the membership are the trips up the river Usk. It seems incredible that there are no opportunities for the good folk of Newport to view their fair city (and their new arts centre) from the deck of a boat. To satisfy this need we chartered an angling boat in June and July and setting off from Newport Docks we have ventured under the Transporter Bridge, past the site where the ship was found and up the river Usk to a little way above Caerleon Bridge. Bob Trett battled with the noise of the boat's engine and pointed out various historical features on the way. On our last trip we were rewarded with a magnificent sight of ten herons perched in a clump of trees waiting for their dinner and no doubt watching with some amusement as our boat, buoyed up by a large tide, scraped its way under the bridges on its way upstream. It was deemed impossible to return under the Newport to Pontypool railway bridge until the tide had dropped a little forcing us, against our will, to make an unscheduled stop at the Saint Julians pub and a unexpected rendezvous with Charlie who had mercifully left his prints and mugs of the Newport ship behind.

I apologise to those who have expressed an interest in these trips but have not



changing nature and man's involvement with this wild and beautiful area. The

managed to secure a place. Spaces on many boat trips are usually confined to only 12 because of Department of Trade regulations, however we will run these trips again. The forthcoming events are published below but after that who knows what we can do, trips to Steepholm, the National Maritime Museum, the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde and courses in nautical archaeology run by the Nautical Archaeology Society are just some of the suggestions that have been put forward. Please tell us what you would like to see happen.



Saturday 25th September - Trip to Flatholm leaving Barry at 13:45 and returning at 18:00
Cost: £13.00 per adult and £6.50 for children. Please send a Cheque payable to The Friends of the Newport Ship to:- Alan Smith, 21 Beaufort Road, Newport, NP19 7ND
Saturday 16th October - Trip on the “Waverley” around the Holm islands and the Somerset coast. Meet on Penarth Pier at 11:45.
Cost £15.95. Pay On board.

ARCHERS AND THE NEWPORT SHIP

by Mike Jones

The bow and arrow along with the archer was an important part of medieval life at the time the Newport ship was constructed and also during her lifetime. It was not long after the battle of Agincourt and very close to the battle of Towton during the Wars of the Roses in 1461. The battle of Towton saw an archery duel as the opening strike, making use of the longbow’s rate of shooting and also the penetrating effects of the various arrow heads. The use of the bow was to immobilise the enemy, create confusion and disarray. This gave an upper hand in the close quarter combat that would follow. These tactics were not confined to land battles and a number of sea battles of the time and earlier saw the use of the bow to immobilise the enemy, to pin down the enemy crew and allow the attacking ship to get in close to carry out the hand to hand



fighting. As part of the ongoing development of arms and armour throughout this period a range of arrow heads were developed for different purposes. The range of arrow

heads covered armour penetration, hunting, and in the case of sea battles the development of arrow heads to cut through rope and sail. All males were expected to be able to use a bow and arrow and it may have been that the crew of the ship were all able to use the bow, or that the ship held a small group of archers / men at arms. The discovery of an archer’s wrist-guard with an inscription ‘armilla’ along with punched decorations of hearts and roses creates a clear connection with archers. The medieval re-enactment group Bowmen of the Rose, re-create the life and skills of the medieval archer, soldier and living conditions. The Friends of the Newport Ship are arranging for a demonstration to be provided for it’s members later in the year.



be that of an English merchantman sunk at the mouth of the river in 1435 (L’Hour & Veyrat 1994). It was the French authors’ hope to establish a dendrochronological series for the southern coasts of the Bay of Biscay though this is not yet realised. There are similarities to be seen in the structure of both vessels. Until 1451 the Duchy of Aquitaine had been within the King of England’s realm since 1204 with Bayonne a centre of shipbuilding, (Rose 2000). The writer believes it possible that the Newport Ship was built in that area early in the fifteenth century.

Conclusion
Despite research into contemporary documents nothing has emerged which could identify the Newport Ship in any way. Her possible appearance has caused much discussion without conclusion. Because she is a big ship for her period it is likely that she had a poop and possibly a fore-castle. Only one mast-step survives and from evidence such as the Tenby Seal from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, (Williams 1982.26 fig.55), a single masted rig would suffice, except that that period is when multiple mast rigs were being developed. Is it possible that the Newport Ship had three masts and would have been recognised as a carrack by contemporary seamen? The next ten years of research into this important late-medieval ship should produce much fascinating material from the century before the building of the *Mary Rose*.

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EISTEDDFOD LECTURE
Don’t forget, Owain Roberts will be delivering the Cambrian Archeological Association lecture in the Science pavilion at 12 noon on Wednesday the fourth of August in the medium of Welsh. The title of the lecture is ‘The Early Ships of the Severn Estuary’

MEMORIES OF THE VIGIL

by Jeff Brooks

A hot Saturday afternoon; our family go to the riverside to see what the fuss is about. The fuss is considerable. A makeshift shelter is surrounded by small band of folk; waving placards at passing vehicles, tying protest notices and bunting to railings and collecting signatures from eagerly supportive **passers-by**. From this scene emerges an avuncular figure who turns out to be Simon Rutherford; eager to recruit yet more support to ensure that the structure emerging from the mud is properly recovered and studied. It seems chaotic, but cheerful and sincere. People wave, others sound their horns and I immediately volunteer to help and find myself placed on the **24-hour** vigil rota for the small hours of the following morning. It will be the first of several mornings. Darkness; a cool and sometimes chilling breeze off the river. The road, the bus station, the car parks all deserted and quiet. The orange glow of sodium lights illuminate the view. Central Newport at 2.15 a.m.; a sight I have not seen before. In the little shelter sits a volunteer who has been joined by a handful of youngsters. Some also support us, others come in for the company having nowhere else to go. I join them. A few vehicles pass, a big truck flashes its lights and those within give waves of support. People in occasional cars (including police cars) wave their

support. The police reappear and return yet again at frequent intervals. Some days later we find out that they are “keeping an eye” on the security of our vigil. This is the first night of several vigils with numbers varying from a dozen to just two. It’s not getting any warmer. The big doors of the building site open a fraction. A tubby figure appears. “Want to have a look?” he asks. “At the ship?” we ask. “Yeah, come on.”

We inch across the uneven site and our guide shines the light of his large torch into the huge excavation. The floor is made up of the partly exposed and muddy keel, ribs and hull planking of a very large ship. Pieces of timber lie around in the bottom. It looks sad and magnificent. My very first view of The Newport Ship at 3.37 a.m. and on a date I neglected to note down. Typical. In these small ways the campaign to save the Ship began





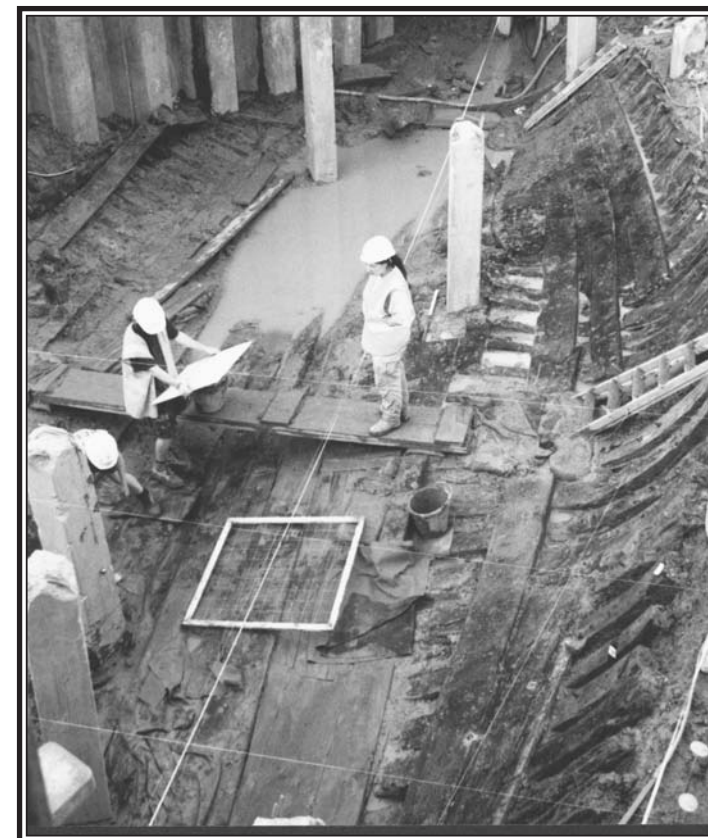
remains for public display.

What does the Newport Ship represent?

This is a large ship with echoes of Scandinavian techniques in her structure. However, the mass of timber built into the hull suggests a developing awareness of the need for greatly increased strength in a capacious hull used on the European Atlantic seaboard, from north Africa to Iceland, prior to the fifteenth century. Indeed the closeness of the frame spacing, the large sections used for the framing and the tightly fitted strong ceiling would not be out of place in nineteenth century shipbuilding. The weaknesses persisting are:- (a) in the keel-stem scarph, having some similarities to that in the *Magor Pill* boat, (Nayling 1998.fig.33) and (b) the small-sectioned keel combined with built-down garboards as the main source of centre-line stiffness in the absence of a kelson, supplemented by the edge-joined strakes of what is effectively, a monocoque hull.

Nigel Nayling, having had experience recovering the *Magor Pill*, (Nayling 1998) and the *Barland's Farm* boats, (McGrail & Roberts 1999, Nayling & McGrail 2004), guided the dismantling of the Newport Ship throughout her recovery. As a dendrochronologist he attempted to match samples from the ship with the dendro series available in northern Europe but found none. Sampling the shores found under the hull and the unrelated piece of timber from within resulted in a date *terminus ante quem* of about 1467, (N. Nayling *pers.com.*) for her being beached. This related to the earlier Portuguese coins' dates and the Iberian pottery. A life of about thirty years would not be unreasonable for a lucky trading vessel. However, the possibility of the ship having been built anywhere in the Bristol Channel or the British Isles is remote.

During the final stages of dismantling the first piece of keel was lifted. Because of its seemingly unmarked and unworn condition the writer suggested at the time that the ship had been re-keeled but this possibility can only be addressed when recording takes place. Of greater interest is that it is of beech whereas the remainder of the ship is of unidentified oak. Similar details plagued the identification of the Aber Wrac'h wreck, thought to



were nearly vertical and fitted flush against the latter. Both ends of the ship were cut off by the coffer-dam. Intractable considerations of safety prevented recovery of the stern. From the run of the planking within the dam it is probable that there would have been a nearly vertical stern post. It should be possible to reconstruct the shape of the stern quite accurately when all the ship elements have been drawn. Of interest would have been the stern-post-to-keel structure and perhaps even some of the rudder fittings. The fore end was eventually recovered but no higher than the port side which suggests it was cut off at the same time. Here the crush damage was extensive but with careful measurement and interpretation it should be possible to link this area to that of the long section of stem from within the coffer dam.

Associated artifacts and wet storage

Kate Hunter, Conservator at the Newport Museum, was on site much of the time to receive and place in appropriate safe conditions associated finds and environmental samples gathered as the uncovering of the ship proceeded. The finds included leather shoes and other leather objects, textiles including sail cloth and woollen clothing, rope and blocks, a mast parrel, cork, Portuguese pottery and coins, stone cannon balls, barrel staves, two combs, a gaming piece and an inscribed brass strapping, the Latin inscription being identified by Dr. Mark Rednap as a quotation from Luke 4:verse 30. (Kate Hunter *pers.com.*) Many hundreds of very important samples, taken from all the nooks and crannies which exist as dirt traps in clinker-planked ships, await examination. Beneath the ship was found the partial, skeletal remains of a man which are in no way to be associated with the history of the ship.

Kate Hunter was responsible throughout the excavation period for establishing safe wet storage for all wood in tanks set up in enormous sheds provisionally and graciously made available by the steel company Corus. This aspect of her commitment to the Newport Ship continues and recently the entire wet timber collection was re-established in a new, vast shed under her guidance. The opportunity was taken to rationalise the collection into groups of similar ship parts, a process which had been impossible during the pressure of dismantling the ship and removing piecemeal to the first location. Charles Barker of the *Mary Rose Archaeology Unit* has been charged with organising the long haul of recording, conservation and re-building of the

A VISIT TO THE BREMEN COG

by Charles Ferris

For the past ten years I have been involved with convoys taking aid firstly to the former Yugoslavia and latterly to orphanages in Belarus. I often feel like a medieval merchant heading off into the blue with a seven-ton truck of assorted goods. On my last trip (my fifteenth) I decided to play truant on the way home and made a detour to Bremerhaven (about forty miles north of Bremen) to see the Deutsches Shiffahrtsmuseum. The prize exhibit there is the Bremerhaven Cog retrieved from the River Weser in the 1960's.

Cogs were the fore runners to our Newport ship (which was most probably a carrack). They were extensively used by the Hanse League. Hanse is German for "the company" and what a company it was with at one time over 200 town and city-states being members. The Hanse had offices in all major trading cities throughout Europe – including Bristol.

The cog is displayed in a hall against a glass wall and you can walk around her on three different galleries. She is suspended by cables from the roof of the hall, which is less obtrusive to the viewer than support from the floor would be. With her long prow touching the ceiling she reminded me of a brontosaurus skeleton in a natural history museum!

Bemerhaven was the sort of museum you would need a day or two to visit properly but sadly I only had a few hours to see the cog. It was good to see a ship from the same era as ours and thank of trading links with that part of the world that go back centuries, and I hope the future display facilities for the Newport Ship will do our ship 'justice' as the Germans have done theirs.



CREATING AN ARCHIVE

by Sherrie Parker

We are all beginning to understand the enormity of the project before us. In the early days of our campaign to save this wonderful ship, all of us involved in the roadside vigil blithely spoke of the years that would pass before the ship would be ready to be displayed, and of our fervent hope that she would become the centrepiece of a ship museum, which we believed would give the new city of Newport a sense of pride in its long and important heritage. Now we are two years into the process of trying to turn those dreams into a reality, it has become obvious that we face a huge challenge keeping up the momentum of the campaign. We must maintain public awareness of the long term importance of the vessel.

Many years of careful recording, planning and conservation lie ahead. Exciting findings will come to light during that time, and knowledge of world shipping history will increase as a result, but we must be mindful that, unless we keep up the pressure, interest will wane. As supporters of the ship we can all do our part to spread the word. There is one thing that we can do now, however, and it falls within the scope of all of the members of the Friends. We have been invited to put together an archive which will document our campaign to save the ship. We are hoping to gather together, whilst memories are still fresh and reliable, any and all material that you, the members, have in

your possession. We would like you to gather every memory, photograph, press clipping or anecdote you may have, and to send whatever you can to the Friends organisation at:

c/o 7 Fields Park Avenue,
Newport, NP20 5BG.

for inclusion in the archive. Our campaign has won the admiration of many respected historians and archaeologists worldwide. Nothing of its kind has happened before in the world of marine archaeology. In and of itself the campaign is an important part of the history of our ship, and should be recorded for posterity. Every memory, observation and experience you could

share is valuable. Every photograph you contribute could prove to be a vital aid in the final reconstruction of the ship. Please don't dismiss your potential contributions as unimportant. However small a detail you remember, you may jog the memories of others. Your photograph of a muddy hole in the ground might show something that has been missed or overlooked. Please take some time to contribute to this endeavour. You are, after all, a crucial part of this piece of history. We will look forward to seeing and reading all you can send, and in turn, I'm sure that you will all, in time to come, be proud to have been a part of this campaign.



LLONG CASNEWYDD: THE NEWPORT SHIP

-A PERSONAL VIEW. BY OWAIN T. P. ROBERTS.

The discovery of a late medieval ship on a building site at Casnewydd / Newport in south Wales in 2002 raised public awareness of the fragility of such discoveries where they interrupt municipal building programmes. Within a tight schedule the ship remains were recovered and now await further work. The origins of the ship are unknown since the dendrochronology is as yet unmatched though the structure indicates Scandinavian and possibly Basque influences. artifacts indicate trading with Iberia during the first half of the fifteenth century. Much of the ship had been salvaged at the end of her useful life about 1467.

Casnewydd/Newport is sited on the tidal Afon Wisg/River Usk in south Wales. The river drains into the Severn Estuary which itself broadens out to become the Bristol Channel. In June 2002 archaeologist Kate Howell of the Gwent & Glamorgan Archeological Trust, attending the site of a new construction project beside the river, stopped the industrial excavation when ancient woodwork was revealed. The Trust confirmed the presence of ship's timbers and was given a week in which to record what they could. Despite the revelation of a large ship's remains of apparent historic value, the Newport City Council was prepared to proceed with concreting over the site, designated for its new theatre and arts centre, unaware of the irony. Many well known societies and international names from the sphere of nautical and land archaeology reacted to this through powerful correspondence with the City Council, the Welsh Assembly, Members of Parliament and the Press. At the behest of CADW the writer in June inspected what had been revealed during the first week and suggested fifteenth or sixteenth century as a likely period and emphasised the importance of the discovery. This enabled official civil service advice to be given to the Assembly. In the meantime public support had exploded in the face of the Council with meetings, deputations, press conferences and a newly formed *Save Our Ship* society co-ordinating the outcry against destruction of the ship. Bowing to such interest the site

contractors established a viewing area which had constant use. Queues four-deep during one weekend led to an estimate of 30,000 viewers. An armada of yachts sailed up on the tide to add to the protest. The importance of this emotional ground swell to the successful recovery of the ship should not be underestimated. In a series of gradually extended periods granted to the Trust proper excavation and recording could be planned. Never-the-less, the still-limited time allowed required that the dig proceed with all the drive of a rescue operation. Frequent visits on site enabled the writer to gauge the tremendous pressure under which Kate Howell and her team of archaeologists worked and the enthusiastic commitment they gave to their careful work in very wet and dirty conditions. On the final November day allowed them, they worked into the dark to recover the last piece of the keel. In Newport they were the heroes of the hour!

The discovery lay within a T-shaped area delineated by a coffer dam

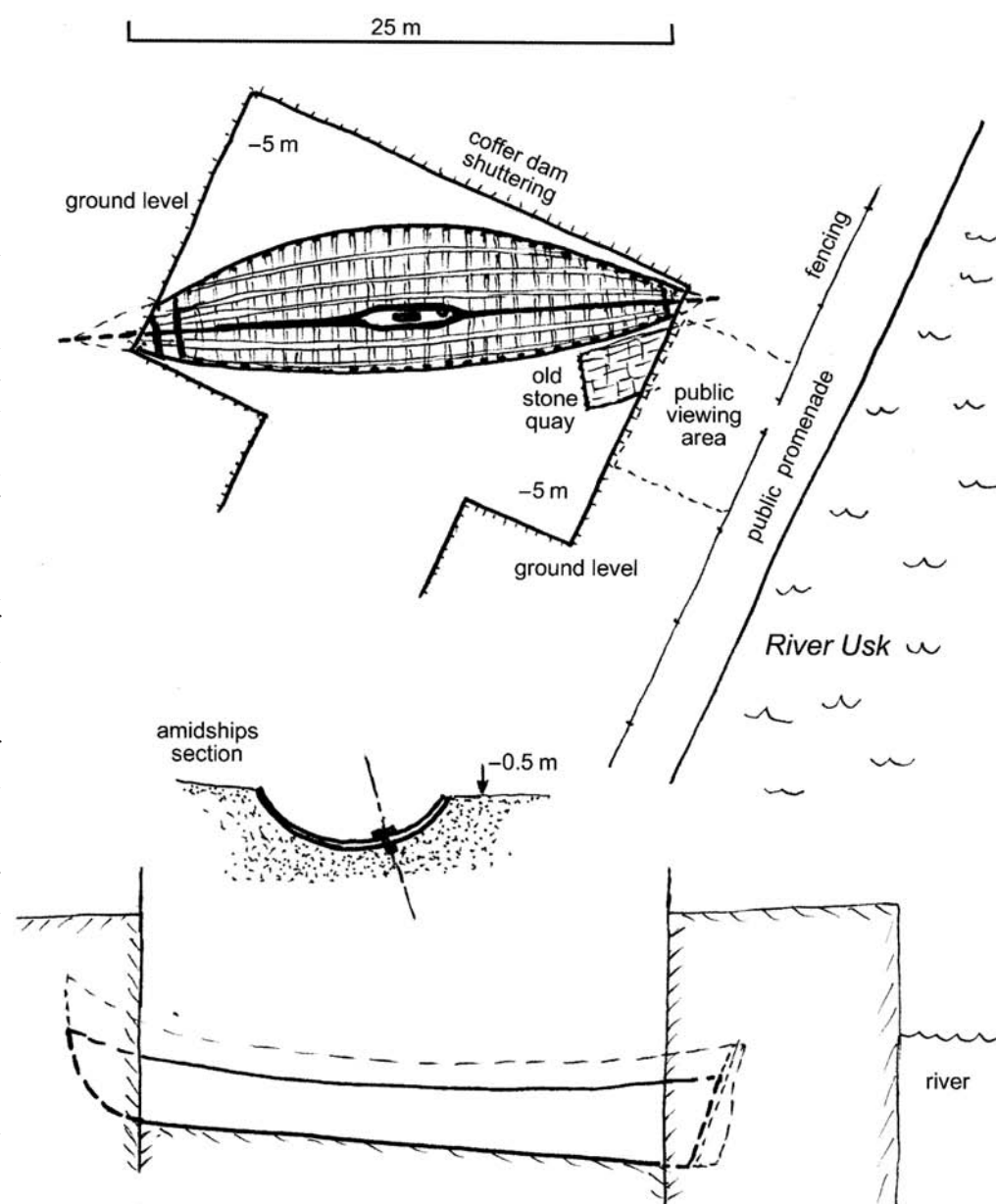


Figure 1. Sketch plan of the general layout of the site (Owain Roberts).

which had been mechanically excavated to about 5m below ground level. The area was then liberally pierced with concrete piles. It was at this point that timber appeared together with the remains of a stone quay which had been noted on an early eighteenth century map of lands belonging to a long-gone monastery. The fortuitous diagonal disposition of the ship's remains within the coffer-dam ensured the recovery of most of them. Figure 1 is a sketch to an approximate scale showing the general arrangement of the site. Being heeled over to starboard had ensured that parts of that side remained intact to the height of the sheer strake. The port side had been cut level to just above the ends of the floors which coincided with the level of the stone quay and presumably that of the ancient land level beside the river.

The Newport ship was uncovered to reveal a stripped-out hull even to the extent of a door-way being cut in the starboard side to make dismantling easier. A few holes had been hacked in the after bottom planking between the floors, perhaps to prevent the hull's trying to float on a rising tide.

Two sections of beam shelving were recorded on the starboard side. Half of what may be a massive built-up deck beam, notched to lock over the side planking where it protruded, was recovered from the site together with what could be a hanging knee and the remains of a windlass. These are massive pieces of timber. It would seem that any part of the ship that could be re-cycled into the repair or building of other ships or even into local buildings had been removed. Probably the hull was left alone because of its having filled with the silt arriving with each tide. Evidence for its having reached the end of a long working life may be indicated by:- the split mast-step; repairs to split planking using battens and lead tingles; long, tapering, square-sectioned pegs replacing rivetted nails at some scarphs, driven in from both inboard and outboard; and attempts to repair a rider. Much of this is on-site deduction which may be confirmed later.

The ship was dried as far as possible up a creek off the river and to begin with would have leant with her port side against the bank. There are what probably were once shores or even temporary legs under her starboard side, which suggests that these have moved at a state of high water and been trapped under the starboard bilge as the hull fell out from the bank. This scenario would have saved the starboard side from being levelled off. These shores or legs and other unrelated timbers found within the hull have become important for obtaining a date for the ship. Over the centuries the creek filled and the bank built up another 5m. A river wall consolidated it in the nineteenth century.

Provisional assessment of the structure

The remains are of a very large, clinker-planked ship, about 29m long and about 8m beam, her planking edge-fastened by iron nails, their tips nipped off and rivetted down over square roves. Trenails

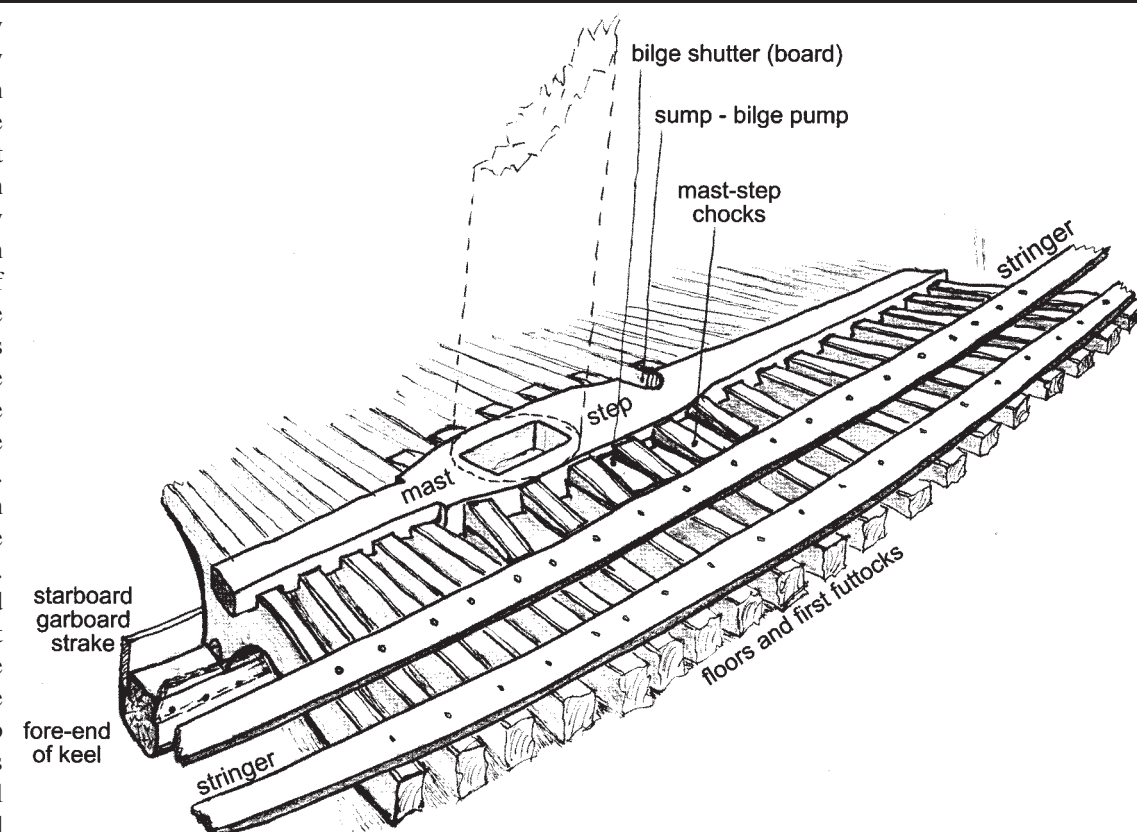


Figure 2. Provisional sketch of the mast-step and adjoining structure (Owain Roberts).

fixed the planking to closely-spaced, heavy framing composed of floors and futtocks. A number of heavy, broad planks were scarphed and fitted as stringers. Between these were fitted the ceiling planks up to the deck beams. Forward and abaft the mast-step were fitted risers, shaped from forked timbers having large dimensions, right into the hull's ends. No kelson was fitted. Sixty-four incomplete frames, thirty-two starboard strakes and sixteen port strakes survived.

The major eye-catching structure was the central mast-step which, because of its 10m length was joggled over all of the midships floors to resist the fore-and-aft strains imposed on it. The writer estimated the mast diameter to have been two-thirds of a metre at its base. As seen in Figure 2 there was a cut-out in the mast-step for the trunk of the bilge pump. Beneath this was found a wicker basket-type strum-box of a design closely comparable with that fitted by Newport Fire Service to the end of their force-pump's flexible suction pipe when assisting with drainage on the site. The pump's leather plunger and its rod were recovered from deep in the silt which filled the ship.

As well as being locked in a fore-and-aft direction the mast-step was secured, adjacent to the mast, against sideways movement by shaped chocks of timber pinned to the floors. These acted as struts against the first, massive bilge-stringer each side of the mast-step.

This immensely strong arrangement was necessary because about thirty metres of mast, steadied only by stretching, hempen shrouds, would be trying to lever the mast-step sideways and fore-and-aft against the fulcrum of the deck structure at every roll. Such massive strains over many years may have been the cause of its split condition.

Between the mast-step chocks were fitted bilge-shutters which lay flush in the rebate cut into the edge of each chock. These boards were to close the gaps that would otherwise have let the bilges fill with detritus from cargoes, so blocking the pump.

The concrete piles had pierced the ship in many places but one went precisely through the mast mortise without damaging the step but crushing the structure beneath, including the keel.

The last few strakes from the bilge to the keel developed a steep reverse curve in the hull's sections, to where the garboard strakes