

OPEN DAYS FOR 2007

Following a series of successful Open Days in 2006 seven more Open Days are planned for 2007. Anyone will be able to view the timbers, have a guided tour, listen to the experts, see the new exhibition and enjoy the events completely free of charge.

The Conservation Centre is based in Unit 22, Maesglas Industrial Estate (behind Parcel Force). The Industrial Estate entrance is opposite Big W, on Docks Way, Newport. Further details are available from the Ship Team on 01633 215707.

Saturday 14th April	2 pm - 5 pm
Saturday 12th May	11am - 5 pm
Sunday 10th June	11 am - 5 pm
Saturday 14th July	11 am - 5 pm
Saturday 18th August	11am - 5 pm
Saturday 29th September	2 pm - 5 pm
Saturday 10th November	1 pm - 4 pm

S.O.S.



The Newsletter of the
Friends of the Newport Ship



A BRONZE AGE FIND FROM MILFORD HAVEN

The Newport Ship Conservation Centre has received temporary custody of a Bronze Age dug-out canoe (or possibly a cooking trough). It was removed in October 2006 from the site where a gas pipeline was being constructed near Milford Haven in Pembrokeshire. After talks between archaeologists and contractors for the pipeline it was agreed that the canoe (or cooking trough) should be stored at Newport. It is carved from a single trunk of oak and measuring 4.5 metres long by 0.9 metres wide, and it is vitally important that it is kept in the correct conditions to help preserve it. A properly detailed examination is now possible. Further investigations may take up to 18 months to identify the wooden object's use as a canoe, trough or both. Neil Fairburn for Cambrian Archaeology said he had had an amazing amount of interest in the find. Its proximity to a Bronze Age burnt mound which would have been used as an open air cooking place or sauna and bath area has meant they have been able to learn a lot about Bronze Age activities in the area.

OPEN DAYS 'VERY SUCCESSFUL' - MAYOR

The open day put on by the Friends of the Newport Medieval Ship on 30th September appeared to have been very successful. On arrival the Mayoress and I were welcomed very warmly by Mr Alan Smith and some of his colleagues. There were already many members of the public at the site enjoying a look around the large water tanks holding the rescued timbers of the very impressive ship. The ship is believed to be 35 metres long and 12-15 metres wide. For me this was the first time I experienced seeing the large timbers recovered from the River Usk bank during the excavation of the foundations for the Riverfront Theatre and Art Centre. They were truly amazing given the length of time these timbers have laid in the muddy bank. It was very interesting to see the work that is going on cleaning the timbers and ensuring their preservation prior to the reconstruction of the ship.

I was very impressed also by the recording work that is going on to record in computer data every piece and timber of the ship. Such recording would be valuable in

using computer technology to fit pieces together in the attempt to build a visual computer model of the entire ship. Such computer reconstruction would also help in testing various possibilities and identifying missing pieces which might have perished during the past few hundred years.

On the open day visitors enjoyed conducted tours with a guide, meeting with actors demonstrating life on the ship in medieval times and having explained to them the weapons which might have been used to defend the ship and its cargo against attack.

The Mayoress and I were accompanied by our grandson Arun 11 and some relatives. They were very impressed and enjoyed seeing this unique treasure of our City.

On leaving I felt truly proud of the medieval ship and the centre of expertise that is now developing around its restoration and preservation for the people of Newport. Newport has recently attracted the Bronze Age canoe discovered in Pembrokeshire, thereby demonstrating its

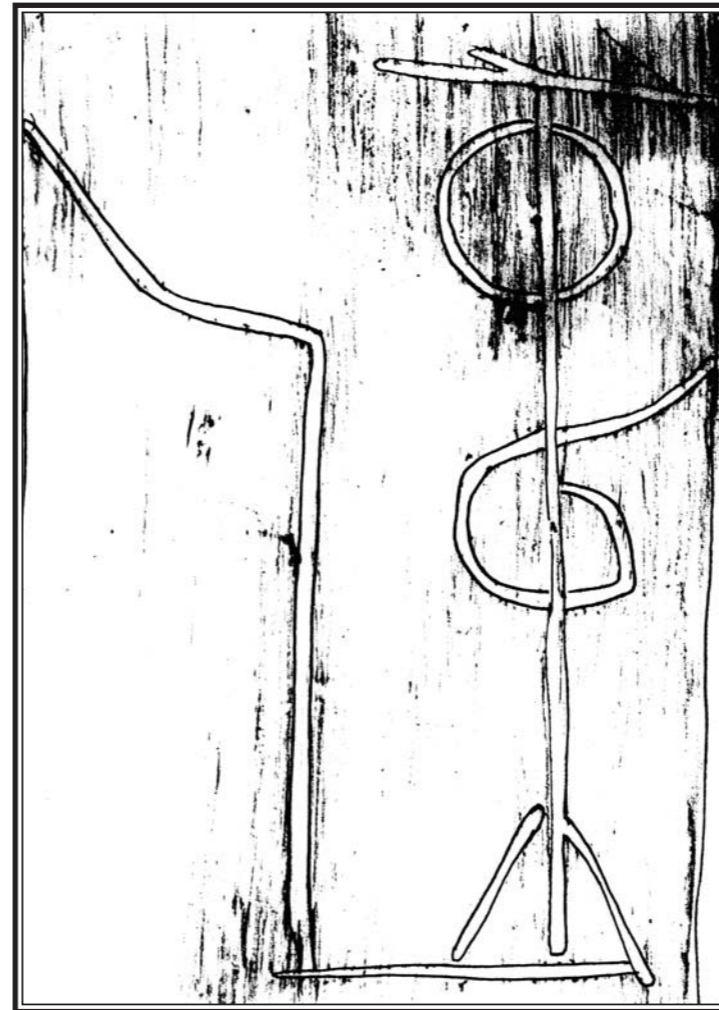


newly acquired capability for keeping and restoring maritime relics.

I cannot wait to see this magnificent ship being reconstructed and placed somewhere fitting for all visitors to see and admire. I have no doubt that when the ship is ready in a few years time, it will be a tremendous asset for tourism in the city. Newport is indeed very lucky to have unearthed its medieval ship and many thanks to the Friends of the Ship, NCC and the WAG for their joint efforts in its reconstruction.

Councillor Miqdad Al-Nuaimi,
Mayor of the City of Newport.

MERCHANTS MARKS



A rubbing made from the new merchant mark found inscribed on a barrel stave from the Newport Ship.

No. 10 **£1.50**
Spring 2007 **Free to Members**

Inside this edition

- More Merchant marks from the Ship
Discovery from the ships' timbers
- Letter from the editors
A few words from our Editors.
- A New Coin Replica
Portuguese coins from the ship.
- The Year Ahead
What's next for the Ship
- The Golden age of paddle Steamers
Part 2 of our look at the kings of the river
- A Bronze Age find in Milford Haven
Canoe? Trough? Both??
- Open Days for 2007
Your next chance to see the Ship.
- A letter from the Mayor
What the Mayor thought of the last Open Day.

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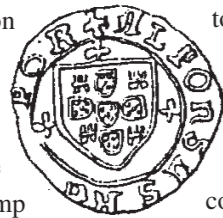
In Newsletter No 5 we reported the discovery of a merchant's mark on one of the loose planks excavated from within the ship. Merchants' marks were personal marks, often carved on the outside of barrels, so that merchants could identify their own goods from those of other merchants. The mark discovered was very similar to a 1437 mark

used by William Fish, a Bristol merchant. However because our mark was incomplete we can not be certain that the merchant was in fact William Fish.

Now more merchants' marks have been discovered, including this complete one. So far the merchant has not been identified. On the left side of the mark a vertical line attached with a kink may have been a mistake or practice cut, and therefore not part of the proper mark. Part of another mark has also been found and what appears to have been a practice piece, with several quartered circles. We wait for further discoveries!

A NEW COIN REPLICA

The Friends' patron and leading member, Charles Ferris, has organised the purchase of a new coin die so that we can hand-stamp copies of coins associated with the Newport Ship. The replica of the French "petit blanc" is mentioned in the last newsletter. Now we can also make replicas of a Portuguese "ceitil" of Afonso V (1438-1481), and which are similar



to three coins found in the ship's bilges. According to Edward Besly of the National Museum of Wales the "ceitil" was a copper coin which was produced in large numbers, and although not proper currency in England and Wales is found widely in south Wales and occasionally in south-western England. Come along to the Open Days and for a small fee strike your own copy.

THE YEAR AHEAD

We are now halfway through the Heritage Lottery Fund project to record the ship. It seems hard to believe that it is twelve months since the award was made. The team must be congratulated on the way they have got to grips with the recording technology and have reached all the targets set. I am sure that the task will be completed this year, and a considerable step forward in the project will have been made. The quality of the output is everything we set out to achieve, and the Newport Ship Project continues to set standards for excellence in ship recording in Britain.

The learning and access element of the project has also achieved more than we expected, and the enthusiasm of our Learning and Access Officer, Neil Stevenson, has made this element of the project a model in audience development and maximising learning potential. The new exhibition 'The Ship Centre' has been completed and we all look forward to welcoming lots of school children in the coming months.

This success is important for the future of the Ship Project, but we are aware that we find ourselves in a good position both in terms of staffing and budget available for the project. We now need to start planning the next phase of the project - the conservation of the timbers. The project will commission external experts to examine a sample of the timbers to tell us what kind of treatment is required and its likely resource implications. This information will be used to underpin the business plan of a second Heritage Lottery Fund application that we hope to make this year.

Learning and access will be just as important to the second phase of the project as it was to the recording project, possibly more so as many of the timbers will be hidden from view during conservation, as they lie in a murky 'PEG' solution for a couple of years. We will want to ensure that we continue to encourage visitors to the centre through this period and we want to develop all sorts of interesting and fun related activities.

We want to ensure that the Welsh Assembly Government continues to be directly involved with the project in years to come. To this end several of the team accepted a request from Rosemary Butler, Newport's member of the Assembly, to demonstrate the work of the project at the Welsh Assembly building. In January we took a 'FaroArm' and computers used in the recording of the ship's timbers to Cardiff, to demonstrate the technology and we also invited a class from Gaer Junior School to join us, to show the learning potential of the project.

Mike Lewis

Museums and Heritage Officer, Newport City Council



FROM THE EDITORS

This is another short newsletter in order to advertise the Open Days to view the Ship timbers during 2007. In the next edition we hope to include some major articles from people involved with the Project. So please keep the articles coming in!

The Friends continue to keep active with some well attended meetings for talks given by members of the Ship Project team. These have been fascinating and show how lucky the Project is to have archaeologists of such experience and talent. Many thanks to them all.

Mike Lewis writes in this edition of his view of the way ahead. One thing is certain -the continued support of the Friends will be crucial. There will be a time soon when many of the timbers will be undergoing conservation and will not be visible. The Friends activities and the new displays in the Maesglas warehouse will be aimed at keeping interest high. We have already contributed £3,000 towards the cost of replicas of the tools that would have been used by medieval shipwrights. These will be demonstrated at future Open Days.

We also will be closely watching the effect that the London Olympics has on Lottery funding for the Ship. It is vital that funding comes from as many sources as possible and the Friends contribution is important both as a 'pump-primer' for new grants, and as a reserve for leaner times.

Finally apologies to committee member Jeff Brooks, whose articles "Nine Hours on Steep Holm" and "Of Guns, Cannonballs & Harry" were not credited in the last newsletter.

Bob Trett & Alan Smith.

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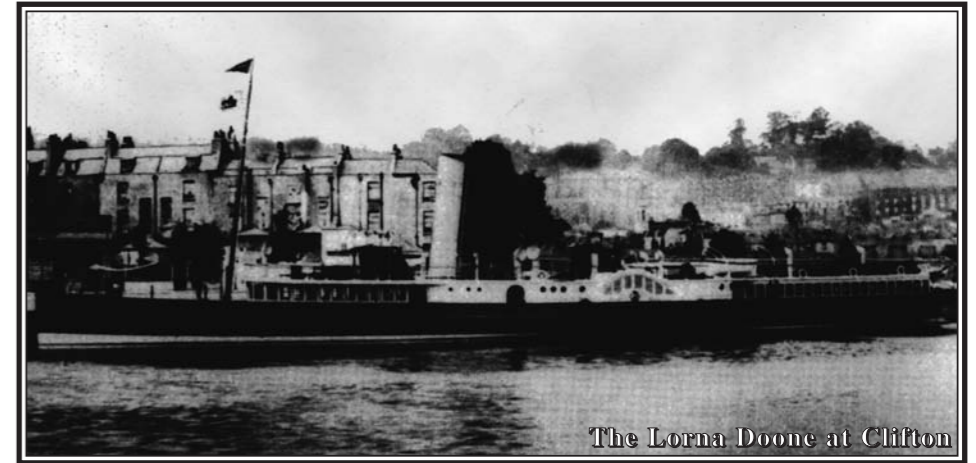
GOLDEN AGE OF STEAMERS (PART 2)

To leave the golden age of Steamers without mentioning at least one of Campbell's competitors might give the wrong impression. Competition was fierce, the Bristol Channel was a hard hostile environment, and every Steamer had a story to tell. Many Steamer Companies went to the wall. One Company that fought alongside Campbell was Messrs Edwards and Robinson and Company of Newport and Cardiff.

In 1891, they announced that they were having a new Steamer built on the Clyde, a magnificent Paddle Steamer to be named Lorna Doone. She would replace the rather less successful Lady Gwendoline, which they had sold to a North German Lloyd's Company.

The new Steamer was to be three foot wider and 20 foot longer than the Lady Gwendoline. A special feature of the new Steamer would be a splendid promenade deck two hundred feet long and the full width of the ship, her fine saloons would be fitted with every modern convenience and comfort and upholstered in the most artistic manner. She would be propelled by a powerful pair of compound engines and have a guaranteed speed of about 20 knots. This combined with her large dimensions would reduce the trip to Ilfracombe to a pleasant sail of three hours. Captain D. Evans who was well-known in the Bristol Channel was to be her Commander. Lorna Doone entered service early in June 1882 and settled in to the South Wales - Ilfracombe run and performed exceptionally well. Her master was well pleased with her, but her most severest test was still to come. The Channel was about to throw a tantrum that would test her to the limits.

The Lorna Doone left Bristol at 7.40am one morning for Ilfracombe with about 180 passengers on board. The weather was moderate as Lorna Doone proceeded down Channel, but the wind freshened into a gale shortly after noon and she was seen rounding Rillage point and making for Ilfracombe harbour. About a thousand people had assembled on the pier and watched with great excitement the progress of the Steamer as she entered the well-known Buggy Pit. Suddenly, a tremendous wave struck her in the starboard quarter washing her fore and aft, for a moment or two she was lost to sight and the fear was that she had floundered. To the great relief of those anxiously watching on the shore, out of the trough of the sea water pouring from her at all points she rose. She was never the less on her beam ends and her passengers were



The Lorna Doone at Clifton

clinging to the port rails. However, she steadily steamed into the harbour and berthed alongside the pier, but it was obvious that she had suffered much damage. The starboard half of the saloon was smashed and lay in a heap of wreckage on the deck, leaving the refreshment bar alone standing. Chairs and bench seats were scattered in all directions and a portion of the upper deck was torn up.

A large quantity of water had rushed down the hatchway but fortunately had not reached the fires. All the passengers were soaked to the skin and many had slight cuts and bruises, six people were seriously hurt and received immediate medical attention. Mr. William Day of Bristol and the Lorna Doones cabin boy were taken to the Ilfracombe hospital. Many passengers escaped being washed overboard, a lady on board had a three months old baby in her arms. The baby was washed to the deck where it was carried for some distance by the water and was grasped by a gentleman just as it was a going over board. A passenger described the wave as a great green wall nearly as high as the mast of the Steamer. The wave fell with a crash and they were instantly up to their knees in water. Most of the passengers were sent in the Steamship Earl of Dunraven to Cardiff and then by train to Bristol. The Edward Robinson business passed to John Gunn of Cardiff at the end of the 1895 season. John Gunn sold the vessel in March 1898 to the Southampton Isle of Wight and South of England Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. She went to war in August 1914 and again served in World War II. She was released from Admiralty service in January 1947. It was decided she was beyond economic repair and on October 14th 1948 she was taken to the Pollock Brown yard at Northam for scrapping.

On another occasion on August 11 1892, passengers on board the Campbell's Steamer Waverley witnessed a spectacular

event on route from Ilfracombe to Newport, when just off Sully they witnessed the Steam Tug Isca from Newport ablaze in the Channel. It was a wooden Steam Tug of 23 tons gross and 25 hp, owned by Mr. Henry Price of Dock Parade Newport. When seen by the Waverley, flames were bursting from all sides and illuminating the water around her for miles. At about 6.30 in the evening when off Sully Island the engineer asked one of the crew to fill a kettle for tea, and whilst doing this he observed smoke coming from the engine room. The alarm was given and a search revealed that fire had broken out between the boiler and bunkers on the port side. They were prompt and energetic in their endeavours to stop the spread of the flames, but were unsuccessful. Meanwhile, they had signaled to the shore and three or four boats came to their assistance. It was evident however, that nothing could be done to save the craft and they merely stood by with the crew watching the progress of the flames. They gave her a pretty wide berth, fearing that her boilers would burst. But this did not happen. She continued to burn till about 9.30 when most of the woodwork had been destroyed. She then slipped below the water. Her master and crew then pulled away from the scene of the disaster and went aboard the Tug New Stour of Cardiff, in which they proceeded to Barry Roads.

Alan Smith

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